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ADDRESS

BY

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ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

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before the

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of the

Zionist Organization of America

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It gives me great pleasure to participate in this evening's session of the 58th National Convention of the Zionist Organization of America and to convey the warmest greetings of the Government of the United States on this important occasion.

The theme of your convention -- American-Israel Friendship -- is one with which I believe an overwhelming majority of our fellow-Americans would wish to be identified; for the task of creating understanding and promoting friendship between our country and other free nations throughout the world is one of the supreme challenges to Americans at this moment in our country's history. If we are to discharge successfully the tremendous responsibility which America has been called upon to assume in our generation - the obligation to lead the free world towards security, progress and peace - it is imperative that our life should be correctly interpreted to our friends of other lands and that their hopes and aspirations should be fully explained to us.

The young State of Israel stands high on the list of nations whose friendship is of great importance to the American Government and people. The significance of that friendship is not to be measured by Israel's size and numbers, although that country's strategic location and the high calibre of its population are no doubt weighty factors which must be recognized. It is the spirit that animates Israel that is of primary importance to us. We see in Israel a pilot-plant of American ideas in an area of the world that sorely needs these concepts, a striving after goals that are similar to our own.

I recently found striking evidence of this in a field in which I find myself continually occupied - the area of constitutional law. I have had occasion to read a fascinating account of four cases, involving important

constitutional questions of law, which recently came before the Supreme Court of Israel. The central fact that emerged from this paper by Judge Cheshin, Deputy President of Israel's Supreme Court, is that Israel's still-evolving system of justice not only shows a close affinity for our American system, but often utilizes opinions delivered throughout the years by the Supreme Court of the United States. No one who is close to the legal procedures of our nation can fail to be both proud and inspired by what I have just described. This trend augurs well for the citizens of Israel and the protection of their rights. It also reflects the continued vigor and health of our American legal system.

As the chief legal officer of this country, I am naturally interested in comparative law. I am mindful that the Talmudic law has contributed to our own. During all the time that the Jews formed communities in one country after another, often only to be expelled, the elaboration of the Talmud continued. This was, and is, a manifestation of the creative spirit of Israel.

I am also aware - sympathetically aware - of the complex structure of the law in Israel, consisting, as it does, of the law of the old Ottoman Empire, the British Mandatory law, and the laws enacted by the New State. In addition, each religious community applies its own laws to all matters affecting personal status, such as marriage and divorce, guardianship and alimony.

This complicated structure of laws is undoubtedly cumbersome. The government of Israel long has recognized the necessity of developing a new legal system for Israel. It is approaching this momentous task in a manner

which has impressed me from the beginning and which I have spoken of before. It manifests not only a creative spirit, but also a flexibility which is characteristic of youth, strength, and growth.

About three years ago the Ministry of Justice of Israel joined with Harvard Law School in the establishment of the Harvard Law School-Israel Cooperative Research project, supported by voluntary funds. Harvard University, on its part, has made available the resources of its outstanding Library of Comparative Law and the scholarly advice of its staff. But it has done more. It has enlisted the active participation of scholars from many other leading American law schools and is expanding their participation. On its part, Israel has provided representatives of the Ministry of Justice and experts in Hebrew and in jurisprudence. In no sense, of course, are laws for Israel being drafted at the Harvard Law School-Israel Cooperative Research project center. What is being done is the collection and organization of the infinite variety of information necessary to enable the Knesseth, Israel's legislative body, to draft the new code in the light of complete knowledge.

This approach to this problem, which has such huge importance, is of particular significance in this day and age. How good it is to see scholarly cooperation across continents in creating means to enable men and women to live in peace and confidence.

I have no doubt that from this present effort new concepts may arise. They will take their place along with the many gifts which the legal minds of Israel have bestowed upon the philosophy of the law. I believe that when the work at Harvard is utilized by the Knesseth, it will carry with it the conviction that ultimate good and justice can be achieved through peaceful cooperation with neighboring nations.

I am interested not only in the development of the law of Israel, but as a member of the Cabinet I have watched with admiration Israel's growth among the community of nations in almost every area of human endeavor - in science, industry, literature, and other areas of mankind's never ending struggle for progress. There is already a great deal of traffic over the American-Israel "Friendship Bridge." As time goes on, I am convinced, this will increasingly become a two-way movement, for we will surely have much to learn from a people that has produced the ethical values that are held in common by all Americans, particularly after this people has resumed its normal existence in its ancestral homeland. This close collaboration extends to the most important areas of scientific research. All of us were gratified to hear of the atomic energy agreement recently concluded between the United States and Israel. The promise of nuclear energy means much to Israel where natural resources are sparse. The prospect of Israel's scientific genius being brought to bear on the peaceful use of atomic energy means much to the United States and to free peoples everywhere. In dealing with the question of this two-way bridge between the United States and Israel, I wish to express my hearty congratulations to the Zionist Organization of America, whose current work in this field is no less important than the historic role it played in the creation of the State of Israel.

Now, I am persuaded that in our relations with Israel, any differences which may arise from time to time will undoubtedly be resolved to the mutual satisfaction of both countries. Occasional differences are bound to arise between the friendliest of nations, and the Government of the United States has encountered this even in its dealings with its closest allies. But where there are strong ties of mutual interest, identity of outlook and

common aspirations, the disagreements are bound to be temporary. The geographic distance between the Potomac and Jordan Rivers may be great, but there is certainly little difference in spirit between the two countries. I, therefore, firmly believe that our initial premise is that Israel's destiny will remain linked with that of the United States of America.

I know that the continuing tension between Israel and her neighbors figures prominently in your deliberations at this Convention. The absence of peace between Israel and the Arab states certainly provides ample reason for concern. The Government of the United States is not only mindful of the urgency of the problem, but is actively seeking to bring about a solution. This was recently clearly expressed by President Eisenhower. In his message requesting Congressional approval for the new Mutual Security Program, the President stated:

"The continuing tension between the Arab states and Israel handicaps the peoples of all Near East nations. We should continue to work with the governments and peoples of both sides to improve their economic status and accelerate their progress toward lasting peace between them. Our cooperation is beginning to bring results, particularly in the development of water resources. Such developments in the Palestine area can go far to remove present causes of tension."

This government is determined to move forward in the spirit reflected in the President's message and we shall persist in our efforts until we have achieved the peace which is required in the region by all those who seek to achieve a free world, and without which neither Israel nor the Arab states will be able to prosper. The issues of the Arab-Israel conflict can be resolved through patience and understanding. It is the task of everyone to recognize this and to work toward it.

By continuing our economic and technical assistance to both Israel and

the Arab states and by raising living standards throughout the region, we shall be doing much to bring peace to the area. With respect to our planning for regional defense, I should like to say this:

The United States Government - I assure you - is not unmindful of Israel's security and the protection and welfare of its people. It is our hope and our desire that area defense arrangements will develop through which all countries in the area can contribute toward their mutual protection against aggression from the communist menace. This is definitely in our own interest and represents a major element in our policy for the Middle East and for strengthening the defense of the free world.