

16.4.64

PRIME MINISTER'S INDEPENDENCE DAY MESSAGE TO DIASPORA JEWS

On the eve of the 17th year of Israel's Independence I bring to my fellow-Jews, wherever they may be, the cordial greetings of the Government and people of Israel. May it be a year of increased Aliyah peace and development for the homeland, and progress and prosperity for all. It is our hope and prayer that the Jewish people throughout the world will work together for our common objectives, helping to build the State of Israel and enhance the Jewish content of life in the Diaspora.

During the past year we were once again privileged to welcome large numbers of immigrants who came to live and work with us. Before very long we shall have completed the task of bringing to the homeland those Jews from the lands of oppression and distress who are free to leave. We note this with both satisfaction and concern : satisfaction for our achievements and concern for the future.

On this day our thoughts are with our brethren in those Jewish communities that are unable to make contact with us and are not permitted to come and join with us in building the new Israel. We hope that before very long these contacts will be restored and we shall be able to welcome home all those who wish to join us.

We appeal to the prosperous Jewish communities to help us build and strengthen the State of Israel, and encourage their sons and daughters to come here and help to build our common future.

I am glad to say that we have had a comparatively quiet year on our borders, but we cannot afford to be complacent about our security situation. Our neighbours continue to threaten our very existence; openly proclaiming that war with Israel is inevitable, at a date which they themselves intend to determine. In view of those unconcealed preparations for aggression, we must maintain our deterrent power, so as to discourage them from starting such a war, and we must be ready to meet them, if they should decide to make the attempt.

Our efforts for peace will continue. We shall hold out our hands to anyone in the Middle East, who is prepared to work for peace. Over the heads of our recalcitrant neighbours we shall continue to consolidate our friendships with the developing nations in Africa, Asia and elsewhere, sharing with them the experience we have gained in building our economy and society.

The great powers can make an important contribution to stability in the Middle East by offering constructive assistance to the countries of the area. It is important,

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however, that these countries should use the aid they receive for peaceful development and the advancement of their peoples, and not for war preparations.

In this spirit, and in all sincerity and good will, we have accepted the recent proposal of the Prime Minister of the Soviet Union that the use of force should be ruled out as a method of solving international problems. We ask the powers to make it clear that this principal must be universally applied.

We welcome any clear statement by friendly powers that no one will be allowed to commit aggression against us, but we cannot agree to be dependent for our very existence on the good-will of others. We are ready and willing to make our contribution to any effort for peace, but so long as our neighbours openly proclaim their aggressive intentions we must rely for our defence first and foremost on ourselves.

And now a few words on our economic and social objectives.

We are sincerely grateful for all the help we have had from the Jewish people and friendly nations in building our economy and integrating the immigrants. We have done our best to put it to good use.

In one sphere, which is of great importance, not only for our own country but for the entire Middle East, and other areas as well, we hope to play a modest part. This is the solution of the water problem by the desalination of sea water.

In the field of foreign trade, we hope to see before long the first steps in the strengthening of our ties with the European Common Market countries. This is of great importance for our drive to expand exports, which are vitally necessary for our economic independence.

Economic progress, however, depends on the solution of our social problems.

We have dedicated ourselves to a great effort to deepen and broaden our educational work. We must cultivate all our resources in skill, energy and pioneering spirit in order to succeed in the historic tasks that we have undertaken.

In these efforts we are confident that we shall continue to have the wholehearted co-operation of the entire Jewish people.

A Happy Independence Day to you all.