

Greetings From Prime Minister Shamir On The Occasion Of Israel's Thirty-Sixth Independence Day

This Yom Ha'atzmaut we complete 36 years of the renewed independence and sovereignty of the Jewish people in our ancient land, Eretz Israel.

As we look back on the long and difficult road we had to traverse in order to reach this stage in our national life, we recall that we paid for our Statehood with precious young lives - the highest price possible. At this moment of national celebration and rededication, we bow our heads in grateful tribute to the memory of our heroes - the fighters of the Haganah, Irgun and Lechi, and the members of all units of our Defense Forces, who gave their lives in order to achieve our independence and preserve it; in order to secure the State and to protect our citizens.

We take pride in the great accomplishment of these 36 years. At the beginning we were only 600,000 Jews in Eretz Israel - now we are more than three-and-a-half million, including immigrants from all parts of the globe who have been educated, housed and integrated into one nation. The challenge of aliyah remains uppermost in our national priorities and our efforts to rescue Jews from areas of danger continue unabated. In recent years the lives of tens of thousands of our poorer families have been transformed by Project Renewal, which turned out to be one of the most successful urban renewal programs in the world. The democracy we have established and maintained is unique in our region and it will again be expressed in the forthcoming Knesset elections.

Our Defense Forces are the pride of our people and our only real guarantee of our safety, existence and future. From the start - and so it will be in the future - we have never called on anyone else to protect us, to defend us, and to sacrifice for us. This is the duty and the privilege of successive generations of our marvellous youth. Their readiness to defend the State and develop it, and to take the helm is the greatest source of our faith in the future.

We have established and maintained close diplomatic relations with many countries in the world and have seen some movement in the past year towards the restoration of ties with us by countries that had severed them because of political pressures. Of course, our most important relationship is with the United States, the leader of the free world, and I am happy to say that those relations are now better than at any previous time. We have found that, in addition to the values and principles we share, we also have many common perceptions, common goals and common interests. This is the cornerstone of our policy and the basis for real peace, security and stability in the Middle East.

The nation is rightly proud of the giant strides we have made in education, in medicine and in science. Although we are facing economic problems, our economy is basically sound and we are confident that we shall overcome the present difficulties. We have attained a high degree of

technological capability and of industrial development.

Israel is today one of the very few countries in the world still seeking to increase its population by immigration. Aliyah is our mission. We have decided to bring to this land as many of our Jewish brethren as possible. This is after all, the principle purpose of our country.

In the course of the past year we have created more Jewish communities in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza district and we have strengthened existing ones. 30,000 Jews who now live in those areas have, by their very presence, reaffirmed our right to live in every part of Eretz Israel. We firmly believe that this will contribute to peace and enhance the prospects of peaceful coexistence.

We have made great sacrifices for the sake of peace and our nation continues to yearn for it and to strive for it. It is now already 5 years since we concluded the Peace Treaty with Egypt, our most important neighbor. There are aspects of our relationship with Egypt which we find worrisome and disturbing. Yet, despite the shortcoming and undeniable fact that since the Peace Treaty was signed our southern border has been calm and secure. We have called on Egypt to return to the spirit of the Camp David Accords. We are ready to resume contacts with Egypt, to discuss all pending issues and to revive the Peace Process and autonomy talks.

In the north we are striving to consolidate the important positive results of Operation Peace for the Galilee, which has enabled our people in the north of the land to lead normal lives without fear of attack and without the necessity for the children, in particular, to spend night after night in shelters. We hope still to see the emergence of a strong and central government that will recognize the mutual benefits that could arise from normal relations with us. Now, however, it is our obligation to make such security arrangements as will ensure that Lebanon will not again be used as a base for attack against our northern population.

It is my firm belief that Israel can face the future with hope and confidence, providing we all make the necessary efforts to overcome the present difficult period which, in the long experience of our nation, must be seen as a passing phase.

Israel today is stronger and more entrenched in its land than at any time before. We have achieved a degree of security such as was not known previously.

Sometimes when we are caught up in the problems of the day and weighed down by the burdens and anxieties we should pause and reflect on the great transformation that has taken place in our own lifetimes.

From Jerusalem our eternal Capital I send heartfelt greetings for a happy Yom Ha'atzmaut celebration to the whole House of Israel.

Chag Sameach!

Gilman Proposes Soviet Mail Interruption Legislation

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Rep. Benjamin A. Gilman (22nd District - New York), who for the past year has led the Congressional inquiry into the interruption of international mail into the Soviet Union, this week introduced legislation which would memorialize the President to take up the subject with Soviet authorities.

Rep. Gilman's legislation would also call upon the U.S. delegation to the Universal Postal Union convention to present the issue before the 167 nations who are members of the U.P.U.

The Universal Postal Union convention will be held in Hamburg, Germany, during the months of June and July, 1984.

Congressman Gilman's House Post Office and Civil Service Committee has held hearings on this issue over the past year. Those hearings have accumulated over 2,000 exhibits which document the interference of International Mail by the Soviets.

Gilman, calling the Soviet efforts "cold and calculated," said that the interruption of the mails has two goals:

a. To "cut the lifelines of communication between those living behind the iron curtain with their friends and family members on the outside." Rep. Gilman has, in the past, contended that often documents upon with emigrants from the Soviet Union and other iron curtain countries would depend for exit visas are often intercepted, thus delaying or preventing an escape from Communism. The most frequent victims of this practice are political and religious dissidents, and members of minority groups.

b. To derive a great amount of hard Western currency by intercepting parcels mailed to individuals within the Soviet Union, and then returning them with exorbitant surcharges to senders under fabricated claims such as "importation prohibited," when in fact the packages are legal.

Gilman noted that "the issue is an emotional one with most ethnic and religious groups not only behind the Iron Curtain but also here in America." The mid-Hudson legislator continued: "I believe that it is incumbent upon the House to move staunchly in announcing its concern over their interruption of the international mails."

Congressman Gilman noted that "the United States contributes upwards of three quarters of a million dollars each year in support of the Universal Postal Union (U.P.U.). I question how interested the U.P.U. has been in responding to our concerns, let alone their interest in resolving the dilemma before them."

Rep. Gilman has received in the past the support of Polish, Jewish, Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Christian, and other ethnic groups who have accused the Soviet K.G.B. of being involved in an international plot to sabotage mail in and out of the Soviet Union.

Congressman Gilman's legislation is co-sponsored by 17 other Members of Congress, including: Gene Taylor and Bill Clay of Missouri; Bill Dannemeyer & Pashayan of California; Dan Crane & Tom Corcoran of Illinois; Connie Mack of Fla.; Frank Wolf of Va.; Jim Courter of N.J.; Bill Ford of Tenn.; Pat Schroeder of Colo.; Mary Rose Oakar of Ohio; Gus Yatron of Penna.; Mickey Leland of Texas; Gerry Sikorski of Minn.; Morris Udall of Arizona; and Robert Garcia of New York.

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