

World Leaders and Friends Hail 'Extraordinary' Woman

By Lesley Oelsner

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Golda Meir was mourned and praised yesterday by presidents and prime ministers, mayors and governors, Jews and non-Jews.

Some called her a seeker of peace, a "giant" in world affairs and a symbol of Israel. Others remembered her as teacher and friend.

Expressions of remembrance came from around the world, especially from New York, where 3,000 Jewish leaders were gathered for a United Jewish Appeal convention.

There were tributes for Mrs. Meir from officials of every level: the United Nations Secretary General, Kurt Waldheim former Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger, and Mayor Henry Maier of Milwaukee, the city where she arrived from Kiev as an 8-year-old immigrant, went to school and became a teacher.

'Extraordinary Human Being'

"In this hour I grieve deeply for the passing of an extraordinary human being," said Mr. Kissinger. "The world will be lonelier without her. Golda Meir's life represented not only the history of an individual but the destiny of a people. It was marked by the faith and idealism that made ordinary men and women fulfill an historic vision in a barren land."

Secretary General Waldheim said in a message to the President of Israel: "Mrs. Meir was a formidable leader whose stern devotion to her duty was combined with warm human qualities."

In New York, Governor Carey and Mayor Koch joined the tributes.

"The passing of Golda Meir is an occasion for sadness among those who knew and admired her," Governor Carey said. "She led Israel effectively in defense of its national security; she yearned and worked for peace and democracy with a special talent."

'Through a Perilous Time'

Mayor Koch said: "Golda Meir was an extraordinary person. The children of Israel will miss her leadership and motherhood. She led the nation of Israel through a perilous time and left her mark on its history."

Former President Richard M. Nixon and former Vice President Nelson A. Rockefeller joined the mourning.

Like many, Mr. Nixon, who was in New York to visit his daughter Tricia Cox, said that the "most fitting monument" to Mrs. Meir would be peace in the Middle East.

Mr. Rockefeller voiced another of the themes that recurred in tributes, saying simply: "She will live in the hearts of those who knew and loved her."

World Leaders Echo Sentiments

Leaders of other nations echoed the sentiments.

Prime Minister James Callaghan of Britain described Mrs. Meir as an outstanding servant of her people.

To former Prime Minister Pierre Mendes-France of France, she was “a very important and impressive woman.”

The statements evoked some of the most memorable moments of Mrs. Meir’s career.

The West German Chancellor, Helmut Schmidt, recalled a trip that Willy Brandt, former Chancellor, made to Israel in 1973, the first by a German leader. West Germans would never forget that, Mr. Schmidt said.

Mr. Brandt, for his part, said that Israel had lost a courageous leader.

Religious leaders offered praise and prayers.

‘Countless Contributions’

“I join with men and women of all nations of all the world,” Terence Cardinal Cooke said in New York, “in expressing gratitude for the countless contributions of this renowned woman and am praying that she will now know the peace that was her life’s quest.”

Claire Randall, general secretary of the National Council of Churches, said: “The breadth of her involvement in political affairs is virtually unmatched by any man or woman of our time.”

Several themes were stressed in the grief and praise.

Womanhood was one. “To women throughout the world she stood as hope and model for what a strong woman can achieve,” said Eugene Fisher, executive secretary of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish relations.

Another was personality, her common sense, humour, and energy.

“Those of us who had the honor of meeting Mrs. Meir will long remember her sharp wit, her extraordinarily keen intellect and her devotion to one of the most important causes of the 20th century — a Jewish homeland in the Middle East,” said Senator Harrison A. Williams Jr., Democrat of New Jersey, in a statement relayed from China where he is visiting as part of a Senate delegation.

Several other Senators praised Mrs. Meir, among them Daniel P. Moynihan, Democrat of New York, who called Mrs. Meir “vigorous, tenacious, heroic;” Jacob K. Javits, Republican of New York, who described her as “one of the great figures, as well as one of the great ladies of our age,” and Abraham A. Ribicoff, Democrat of Connecticut, who talked of her “inspiration and common sense” in “crucial times.”

‘Heritage of Compassion’

Gov. Ella T. Grasso of Connecticut lauded Mrs. Meir’s “heritage of compassion, concern and love of liberty.”

Perhaps the most common themes were Mrs. Meir's contributions to Jews and to Israel. Numerous American Jewish organizations, and Jewish groups in other nations such as Britain, issued statements.

The organizations whose leaders paid tribute to Mrs. Meir included the United Jewish Appeal, the American Jewish Congress, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the State of Israel Bonds, the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, the American Jewish Committee, the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, Hadassah, Central Synagogue in Midtown Manhattan, Labor Zionist Alliance, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

An 'Inspiring Leader'

Mrs. Meir helped found the American Jewish Congress. The group's president, Howard M. Squadron, said:

"Golda Meir was a courageous and inspiring leader of the Jewish people and a uniquely warm and charismatic person. She contributed to the achievement of the Zionist ideal and the establishment of the Jewish state as much as any other single individual. She gave her life to the Jewish people with pride, dignity and hard work."

"Golda was, and is, unforgettable," said Irwin Field, the national chairman of the U. J. A. "She was truly a giant among us, larger than life, and her legacy to us and all Jews everywhere is larger than the death that has overtaken her.

"We're grateful that she lived to see the beginnings of the peace for which she yearned for the sake of the mothers and the children of all the nations of the Middle East. When that peace becomes a reality, she will have been one of its primary architects."

Golda Meir Dies in Jerusalem Hospital at Age of 80

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ment as "one of the great women in Jewish and world history" and as a "stalwart lioness." He recalled tributes paid to her by President Anwar el-Sadat of Egypt during his visit to Israel in November 1977 and added that "the Labor movement is in deep mourning."

Prime Minister Menachem Begin was informed in Oslo, where he arrived earlier in the day for the presentation on Sunday of the Nobel Peace Prize, awarded jointly to him and President Sadat. During the flight to the Norwegian capital in an Israeli military plane, the Prime Minister requested news of Mrs. Meir's condition by radiotelephone and was informed that she was in her last hours.

Begin to Stay in Oslo for Award

Mr. Begin said he would stay in Oslo to receive the peace prize. Officials here said they expected him to be back in Jerusalem for the funeral, probably on Monday.

The Israeli Cabinet is to meet in special session tomorrow, after the Sabbath, to express the nation's mourning and to approve arrangements for a state funeral. The meeting was summoned by Deputy Prime Minister Yigal Yadin, who Mrs. Meir's death as a "tragedy for the entire Jewish people."



At the front lines in Suez in 1970. Defense Minister Moshe Dayan is at left.