

Mrs. Meir's Accidental Jibe at Nixon

Jerusalem

President Nixon paid powerful tribute to former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir at a state banquet last night but Mrs. Meir, through an inadvertent phrase nearly brought down the house in the press room if not the banquet hall.

Mr. Nixon told Israeli leaders assembled in the Knesset (parliament) reception hall, "No leader I have met, no president, no king, no prime minister or any other leader, has demonstrated in the meetings that I have had with that leader greater courage, greater intelligence, greater stamina, greater determination and greater dedication to her country than Prime Minister Meir."

Noting that this was the first state banquet in the Knesset completed under her regime, Mr. Nixon invited her to join him on the podium.

She did so, but the first remark she made seemed to be an unwitting, humorous cut at the President's Watergate troubles.

"As President Nixon said, presidents can do almost anything and President Nixon has done many things that nobody would have thought of doing," she said.

There were a few chuckles in the banquet hall but most of the Israelis present were too polite or simply too unfamiliar with English to laugh.

But in a nearby hotel, where Washington news personnel traveling with the President listened to the speech, there were gales of laughter.

Mrs. Meir saved the day, however, by continuing: "All I can say, Mr. President, as friends and as an Israeli citizen to a great American president, is thank you."

United Press



Earlier yesterday, before the incident at the state banquet, Mr. Nixon paid a courtesy call upon Mrs. Meir in Jerusalem.

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