

TR-3814 Transcription

Friedman, Herbert A. United Jewish Appeal address. [Embassy
Ballroom, Dallas, Tex.]. 11 January 1969.

Herbert Friedman: [00:00] -- rows in, ladies and gentlemen. I'm not sure how well you could see that film, or hear it. But we tried to make it, in order to give you one impression, that there is a hard, long, and difficult war in which we are involved. That the quick flash of euphoria and excitement and thrill which we felt 19 months ago was one to which we were legitimately and historically entitled. But that we must pass over it quickly and come immediately [01:00] to an understanding of what we are faced with now and in the future. The purpose of that film was not to dampen the thrill and the glory of the victory, but to remind us, rather, of its temporary nature, and to plunge us immediately into the still unsolved problems. If one has insight, if one has an understanding, perhaps intuitive, of the workings of history, one comes to sense when an epoch is finished, and when something has been secured for good. Or conversely, one comes to understand and feel when [02:00] things are still in flux and not yet determined. The latter is the condition in which we find ourselves.

Since that is now so patently obvious to everyone, then the conclusion and the corollary must be equally clear. As never before, more even than in June of last year, we must understand that a firmness is required of us of which we have never been called upon to give an equivalent demonstration. Never includes the Hitler period [03:00]. Because we were called upon then not at all to give any demonstration. We were supine. We were inactive. We were powerless, we thought. And in the weeks of June, we gave no demonstration. We gave a chemical reaction. We gave a visceral reaction. We gave an electric reaction, which was short-lived. We were not called upon then to make a demonstration of long-term, hard, rock hard solidarity, [04:00] which could perdure over months and months, and even years. We are called upon to do that now, and anyone who doesn't understand it will be guilty of the most abysmal failure of Jewish responsibility, perhaps the most abysmal.

The picture began with Masada. Rome was more powerful than Jerusalem then, and we were destroyed. There is no Rome or combination of Romes on the face of this globe today more powerful [05:00] than the concerted will of the entire Jewish people, if that will is mobilized. And if it isn't mobilized, we

too, God forbid, shall have our Masada, and our Masada shall be a shameful one, as that was not, as that first Masada was not.

I have no other message for the American Jewish community. The facts are clear. I'll rehearse them quickly, but they're known to you. There is one message and one message only: The most incredible demonstration of patience and perseverance [06:00] and courage and determination and willpower will carry us without any question of a doubt to a successful conclusion of this struggle to survive. All else is commentary. All else is simply detail. The details shift. The ambassador said it. There are surprises every day. We'll have more.

The latest surprise of a few days ago was the flat statement of the French. Some could have foretold it. Others were hesitating, thinking that perhaps there would still remain somewhere in the soul of the French people their love for freedom, and their love for liberty, and their love for equality. Well, it does exist in the soul of the French people. The people and the press of France [07:00] are outraged. The Jews of France, yesterday and the day before, and the day before this week, have hardly to say anything, because the public of France is crying for de Gaulle's head.

This is an unpopular and highhanded move on his part. It meets with no favor in the French heart and in the French mind. Nevertheless, it is policy of the government, because he has the power to declare it. The embargo is [purative?] It's intended to bring pressure upon Israel to submit. I can tell you that it does nothing but add difficulties. It doesn't break the spirit [08:00], not in the slightest. It may encourage the Arabs to greater rigidity. It may cause the Arabs to think even more of the possibility of a military solution. It will not break the spirit of the people of Israel, as it does not break your spirit. You, the Jews of America, are actively engaged at this moment in conducting demonstrations in front of French consulates all over America.

The other thing which has happened in the political sphere is no surprise, because it's many months old now, but it may be new to those who don't follow the details, and I refer to the Russian proposal. The Russians have made a proposal for the settlement of the Middle-Eastern problem. Their proposal is quite simple. It seems [09:00] to them to be fair. It's balanced. It calls on the Israelis to do something; it calls upon the Arabs to do something. It calls upon the Israelis to withdraw totally. It calls upon the Arabs to deposit in the

United Nations a written declaration of their non-belligerency. It calls for the stationing of UN troops on both sides of the border. There is some vague talk in it of demilitarization of both sides of the border. The Israelis have rejected it. The French have now said they're in favor of it. The French and the Russians are about to approach the American government to support it. The question of whether the American government supports it will represent the whole thing, which the ambassador was talking about [10:00] in the use of the word Munich.

Should the American government, God forbid, by some unforeseen failure of will, or blindness or ignorance, or political cruel expediency see fit to back this proposal, it will mean very simply that the Jewish people will be faced with a most awkward situation. We shall have to say no, not just to the Russians, but now also to the French, which bothers us little. If, however, we have to say no to the United States, this will cause a confrontation, which no one wants. And yet, no one wants a Munich.

I should like to let you know the clear reasons why we reject this proposal, so that when you come to be more aware of it as it's reported in the press every day from now on, and you hear debates and discussions upon it, you will be properly

[11:00] and clearly oriented as to why this proposal has no merit. Number one, there is not a word in it about a peace treaty. Number two, it fails to provide for secure and recognized borders. Number three, it makes no commitments about free passage of navigation anywhere, Suez or Tiran. Number four, it might, God forbid, even place Russian or French troops inside Israel as part of some UN setup. Number five, this vague hint of demilitarization of a strip on both sides of the border would mean that there would not just be demilitarization, meaning Israeli pullback of troops, on her own side from parts of the Negev, or from Eilat, which is on the border¹, but from [12:00] such places as Kfar Saba, which is on the border; from Kiryat Shmona, which is on the border. There are 50 settled places inside Israel, which by this insane suggestion, would then have to be devoid of military equipment or protective troops. This is not for rational or logical men. And yet I warn you, you will hear much discussion of this in the immediate days and weeks ahead -- I am not even talking months -- as the new administration will be faced with this political dilemma.

To switch from the political to the military [13:00] people ask me the statistics all the time. We've grown unbelievably calloused in this fantastic television culture of ours, so that

we are morbid. We want to know the body count every day. Well, here's the body count: 281 dead; 1,115 wounded in the 19 months of peace since June the 10th, 1967. Now you've got your body count.

Dayan spoke a few days ago, earlier this week -- it was Wednesday -- to one of our groups in Israel. He talked about the military problems and the tasks of the Israel Defense Forces [14:00]. He said number one, the task was to hold a ceasefire line and to try to keep it from being penetrated every day. It's easy to penetrate. All they have to do is shoot over it from a range of 25 kilometers back, when you've got Russian 155 millimeter guns or American Long Toms. He said the second task was to prepare for the eventuality of war. And let there be no illusions, it's a very real possibility. Number three, he said the task was to fight the terrorists. We tried to show you in that film what it means to fight terrorists. You put a policeman in every schoolroom and hold up the objects, and show the children what is a Chinese communist button mine. It's the size of a button [15:00], which if you pick it up, it will blow your hand off. What's a shoe mine? Two hundred grams of explosive in it. If you step on it, it will blow your foot off or take your life, if you're little enough.

This is going on in every schoolroom in Israel today, every day. And let it be perfectly clear, you will not, you cannot prevent episodes. Yes, if every woman stays home from the market every day, nobody will get blown up if an idiot puts a car full of dynamite in a market. If everybody stays home from the cinema, nobody will get hurt, even if some idiot puts a bomb in a cinema. If everybody keeps off of every bus, nobody will get hurt, even though some gangster puts explosives on a bus. If every kid stays home from school, nobody will get hurt, because he won't step on a shoe mine. But then you've paralyzed the [16:00] country. Which is the objective.

And since we are people notorious for our stubbornness and our obstinacy, we refuse to be paralyzed. And so, we crowd the markets. You can't get a ticket to a cinema anywhere in Tel Aviv or Jerusalem. You kids are crowded in school. The buses run, and therefore, there will continue to be deaths.

Task number four of the army is to administer the occupied territories, and task number five is to increase the output of the military industries, and these are the five things that the army is working on. The military industries are reaching the point of self-sufficiency in certain objects, and there are not too many years ahead before there will also be self-sufficiency

even in some of the most [17:00] complex electronic equipment manufactured.

On the military side, I would like to say one thing, again, for the purpose of clarification and your orientation, so that you may know how to answer yourselves, and then your friends and neighbors. Let it be crystal clear, as it is now becoming, what was the meaning of this Athens-Beirut business. Athens was an effort to close down Israel's air lanes. Beirut was a statement that those air lanes shall not be closed, no matter what steps are required to keep them open. Now, understand it that way [18:00]. Nothing disgusted me more than to hear some Jews begin to say, "Well, really, the provocation wasn't equivalent to the reaction."

Do you understand what the provocation was? It was on two levels. First, the immediate level, the possible incineration of 51 people on the plane. If the aim of those young Arab fools had been slightly better, they would have blown up that fully gassed and fully loaded aircraft, whose engines were on, and the fumes were coming out of the back of the engines. And if one of those fire grenades had gone off within range of one of those running motors, that plane would have gone up in a whoosh of kerosene [18:59], and the 51 people in it, many non-Jews, many Americans,

would have been incinerated. Well, then I suppose there might not have been such a violent reaction. I think that then maybe somebody would have said Beirut was really not a big enough reaction.

By the way, one sub-note. Had that aircraft exploded, there were five other aircraft on the tarmac within a few hundred yards. There were 300 tons of aviation fuel loaded on airplanes that would have gone in a bang big enough to take the Parthenon off the top of the mountain. What kind of reaction would Israel have then been entitled to?

So the act in Athens was on one level the incredible audacity of large-scale civilian murder. But on quite another [20:00] level, the act in Athens was on the basis of close down Israel's air lane, one of the two lungs with which she breathes. Her air lane is as important as her sea-lane. She has fought wars to have an open sea-lane. Don't you understand that? If you try to close down her air lane, this forces her, also.

The Beirut thing was remarkable, was one of these neat, surgical operations, unbelievable in terms of its swiftness, its cleanliness, its moderation. There was a moment of wobbling, possible loss of nerve. A day, two is all it lasted [21:00]. Jews were not sure how editorial opinion would swing. First

editorial reaction was bad. Within 48 hours, it was swinging. And now, editorial opinion and press opinion and public opinion, with its second thought, now that we are some two weeks away from the event, people are beginning to say, "Well, it really wasn't over reacting." And for the fun of it, we put together a set of clippings from *Figaro* and *Le Monde* and *Corriere della Sera* and the *London Guardian* and half a dozen papers in the United States, and we sent them around. I should like to read a letter I received from a woman from San Antonio on the second of January. Her insight was good, because it was early.

Not Jewish. Addressed simply to the [22:00] United Jewish Appeal. Maybe it's the only address to which she could think of sending something. No name. Just the United Jewish Appeal. And I think this is typical of non-Jewish enlightened opinion in this country. "Congratulations to Moshe Dayan and his new dimension in deterrent policy. It is a strong and intelligent approach to protecting a nation from a known enemy without shedding blood, no matter what the justifications for the hostility may be on either side." She's being very objective. "War is not a game. It is deadly serious. It should be initiated only for a purpose worth the agony it causes, and it should not be abandoned until the purpose has been accomplished. It is better to knock out

enemy supplies and materiel than to kill, maim, and cause suffering to the adversaries. The Jews also set a rare example of initiative [23:00] and strength by not asking permission of the great powers, simply to protect their own borders in a humane way. The condemnation by the United Nations, in which America concurred, will encourage the Arabs to greater efforts. But I sincerely hope that it will not weaken Israel's determination to deter, rather than to kill, as long as that course is at all possible."

It's an intelligent letter. It's not a crank letter. It's written out of her heart. I haven't called her; I haven't spoken to her. I don't know who she is. This is the voice of America, and don't you ever forget it. But it will be that kind of a voice only so long as your voice is crystal clear and united, and when you wobble, there'll be nobody behind you. [24:00] You hold strong, and you'll find that the pulse beat of America, which is basically fair, will hold strong with you. You wobble, and nobody else will give a damn.

I would like to move to a third point. People say to me, when I make this presentation, you're asking us for perseverance and will power and endurance, and you're asking us to stay with this. And the Israelis will stay with it, and they'll endure the

terrorism, and they'll endure all the hardships on the society, and they'll endure all of the internal conflicts and the deaths. How long can this go on? How long can they do it? How long do you expect us to do it [25:00]? I should like to give you my answer. I should like to say that, during the 19 months in which this war has continued, we have taken in to Israel 42,000 people -- 42,000 people. New Jews, new lives, new children, new happiness, and the land has grown and developed. And when [Dallas?] takes a slogan not to survive, but to flourish during these bloody, brutal 19 months, we have flourished to the extent of embracing with love 42,000 more human beings, from Moslem countries and from communist countries [26:01]. And we've built 10,000 more homes, and we've opened up more farms, and we've opened up more settlements up there on the Golan Heights. And you want to know something? I'd like to go on doing that for a very long time. [applause]

And more tourist hotels. Don't you understand what the answer is? There is something in the genius of this, people, which enables it to face death and concentrate on life at the same time. We take the death and the blood, and we turn it, and we think of life and living and building and creating. And just so long as we have to keep one face turned toward the death and

the war, we will keep the other face turned toward the life and the building. I should like you to know that that figure for 18 months will probably be surpassed in the 12 months ahead, because the anticipated figure for 1969, 12 months, will be almost 40,000 people coming in in 12 months. And they're not idiots. Those are Jews who are coming from communist countries and from Moslem countries. They're not coming from the moon, where they can't read. They know they're moving into a war zone. They know the daily terrorism. Why are they going to Israel now?

Because no matter what they're going into, it is infinitely preferable to them than what they're coming out of. And in their search for life and meaning and dignity and a purposeful existence [28:00], they consider these problems temporary, and insignificant, and unimportant. And as they come in this thirstful, zestful, lustful search for a new life, in a new soil, in a free land for dignity and independence, by God, you and I are going to pay the bill.

I think there is no man in this community who has the right to hold his head up with any pride if he is short-tempered or of short patience or of short faith. This is the destiny, with the political problems being what they are, and with the military problems being what they are. We shall go on with the life-

building process of land and people together [29:00], because all of this is in search of an ideal and a goal, and something millennial and perennial that we believe in.

I think we have entered a new era of Jewish history, and with this, I should like to close. I think it's clear and obvious, clear and obvious, the nineteenth century pattern of the Jew, the eighteenth-, seventeenth-century ghetto patterns are all gone, broken for good. Those molds have been discarded. I think there's another mold which must be discarded, and while David [Schonbrun?] is a close and warm personal friend and I respect him immensely, I think that he has a cliché which must be discarded where he says, always -- and he is also trying to say there's a new era, but I submit he is saying it wrong, because he puts it this way: "We will not run again." I [30:00] don't like it, because it's negative. There's a word "not" in it. We will not run again. There's a negative implication.

He's trying to say we will not be led to the slaughter again. We are in a new period of Jewish history. There is a new image of a Jew. Nobody will ever do again to us what Hitler did. I think it has to be phrased, however, positively, not negatively. And I do not accept this formulation, "We will not go on our knees again. We will not be slaughtered again." I

would recast it positively and simply to say no one shall touch us again, as the ambassador said. We will fight. This is [31:00] the positive formulation. Simply stated, understated if you will, we will fight, and the whole world had better learn it.

You can say it quietly. It need have no bluster in it. It need have no braggadocio in it. It's a statement, declarative statement of intent and purpose, indicating a posture. That's it. That's our posture. Translated for different Jews in different countries, it means different things. The phrase for Jews in Israel implies the shedding of blood and the loss of life. It does not imply that for Jews of the United States. It implied much less, much less, much less [32:00].

But whatever it implies, it's your responsibility to live up to the full depth of the implication. And there are four definitions of it, and here they are, and this is it, and either you do it or you don't, and you live with your own decision. We'll fight. Number one, we'll fight in the battle of the public relations, that silly, stupid, nonsense battle, as though anything is ever decided by public relations. It isn't. But you think it's got to be done; do it. Fight in the battle of public relations to help interpret to people, friendly people or unfriendly people, what this whole business is all about of

terrorism, and right and wrong, and morality and retaliation and reaction and over reaction, and the whole thing. Because I promise you [33:00], you're going to have many, many occasions in the months ahead in which you can enjoy fighting on this battlefield of public relations. I'm slightly cynical about it because I think it determines nothing. But there are some who feel it's very important, and so therefore, do it.

Number two, fight on the political battlefield, and the immediate fight that you have to do is to stave off any American flirtation with the Russian proposal. Next week, there will be something else, and the week after that something else. I can promise you that, too. Fight in the political battle.

Number three, fight in the battle of the morale of the whole Jewish people all over the world. Our fate is linked, and don't anybody squirm about it anymore. [34:00] What happens to Jews in Israel happens to us. We are a fate-linked people. And this is a very clear way of stating what we sometimes say in more poetic language that we are all brothers, that we are one nation, that we are united. I don't mind the poetry or the lyricism, but I also want the hardheaded reality of the implication to come through to you. If we're brothers, then by God, when somebody hurts my brother, he hurts me. And if my

brother is going to fight, I'm going to fight, too. And if my brother gets killed, I am the poorer for it, and my family is damaged.

The fourth field on which we fight is not the least important because I put it last. In a way, I think it's the most important [35:00]. I've saved it for last, and that's to fight on the field of money, because without it we have no power. You can't go on without it. Nothing can be done without it, nothing. You can neither buy a plane nor try to manufacture one yourself if nobody in the world will sell you one. You can't say that you'll take in a Jew from Poland if you can't build a house for him. Forty thousand people coming in this year, you know what it costs? That's 10,000 families. It costs \$15,000 per family. Not a lot of money, is it? Because that includes building a house for him. Not a lot of money. But it's \$150 million [36:00], which is a lot of money.

Fight on the battlefield of accumulating the weapons, and our weapons are hard, green dollars. They buy a lot of things. Those are our responsibilities. This war is not about to come to an end, not for quite a while. The political difficulties and the military difficulties will be faced while we do the human life building, and we'll do the human life building and sustain

ourselves through it if we understand the meaning of willpower, and willpower is not a short-term word. It's a long-term word.

We pray sometimes that [37:00] the guardian of Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. I have great confidence in the guardian of Israel. I would like to make sure, however, that you neither slumber nor sleep. You. Now, you can do what you want about it. You are free. You just decide. All fate, all future, conceptions of honor and dignity, the meaning of freedom and children, the meaning of the God of Israel and the land of Israel and the people of Israel all hang in an historic balance. You act a certain way, we'll win [38:00]. You act a different way, we'll lose. The choice is yours. [applause]

M2: Thank you, Rabbi Friedman.

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