

TR-3815 Transcription

Friedman, Herbert A. Address to the United Jewish Appeal of  
Greater New York [Plaza Hotel, New York, N.Y.].

24 February 1971.

Herbert A. Friedman: [0:00:02] Ladies and gentlemen, I think you must all be aware of the extraordinary nature of the experience through which I have just come. I don't know how you feel about it. It's an unbelievable thing. I have never been together in a room where there were two aristocrats of the Jewish people, presenting for me in juxtaposition the real meaning of the survival of this group of people.

You have Elie. This is a man who comes out of two-and-a-half centuries of background, the leading Jewish [0:01:00] aristocratic family on this globe. And a girl, [Ala?] -- and the names, Elie and Ala -- is a 21-year-old young woman who stands up. Aristocratic in her way, which is not with 250 years of family tradition behind her, but maybe 250 days of unbelievable courage, which pushed her against a system, the most brutal in the world, and enabled her to break out of it, and to come to a place where she wanted to be. Which he told you, also, was at the center of his concern, and the two aristocrats converge in time and in space. And he says, "Work hard to build that place,"

and she says [0:02:00], "I fought with my life and left my beloved husband of 12 days behind to go to the same place."

And this is the thrust of the whole Jewish people, of all the centuries, of all the countries converging, knowing one simple, elementary fact. We know it in our genes, in our chromosomes. We know that this is the place from which we draw our life, our nourishment, our sustenance, our destiny, our guidance, our brilliance. Whatever it is we have, whatever it is we have to offer to the whole human race, out of this uniqueness which we are as a people, comes because we're rooted to a place and a source. We always strain back to it, and we always draw from it. And it feeds us [0:03:00], and we feed the world with what we have to give. It's an incredible thing. To see the drama played out in front of the eyes is something that doesn't happen very often.

She spoke about receiving packages. Mr. Broido, the president of the JDC, is in the room. This should be, to his ears, something very good to hear. Because he works very hard with that JDC, which also works in France, and also works in 20 other countries of the world, and works behind the Iron Curtain. Must be good to him to hear that the packages arrive and people receive them. Because he is spending millions of dollars a year

of your money, as your trustee, to try to get those packages to her. It works, and she comes here, and she says thank you.

It's so simple. It's so pure [0:04:00]. It's so beautiful. There's such a linkage. Jews of Russia were called Jews of silence by the author, Elie Wiesel. They're not silent anymore. She yelled loud in order to get out. Wiesel came back, and he wrote in the forward of his book that he's tormented by the fact not only that they had to be silent in Russia, but that it was even worse to come here, back to this country, and find silence here among the Jews of this country in regard to that Russian problem. Well, he's wrong on that count, also, now. Nobody here is silent, either.

You have come up in a big roar of approval and support for her, and what she wants, and what she's striving for. Nobody is silent anymore, and the emotional ties have come out [0:05:00] onto the surface, and they're very strong. Those Jews of Russia, never forget it, gave birth to this community in the United States. Millions of them, after 1880, when the minister to the Czar, [Bobia Danisev?] said, "We shall kill one-third of the Jews of Russia; we shall convert one-third of the Jews of Russia; we shall forcibly expel one-third of the Jews of Russia. That was his solution at that time.

Well, they didn't kill a third, and they didn't convert a third, thank God. But they expelled -- and they didn't have to

expel, because they ran, her great-grandfather. Three million Jews came to these United States between 1881 and 1914, almost 100,000 a year for 30 years. They filled the Lower East Side, and they swarmed into the tenements, and they worked in the sweatshops [0:06:00]. And they are your father and your grandfather, and my father and my grandfather. Who are we, after all?

At the same time that millions of her grandfathers came to this country, only a few hundreds of her grandfathers went the other way, to Palestine. The first early *chalutzim*, the Zionist pioneers, the socialist idealists, they cracked the rock, and they got the malaria, and they fought the Arabs, and they built the whole thing, also beginning almost 100 years ago. History comes all together.

Her future is in Israel. Our interest is to make that Israel so strong, so secure, that it shall survive with no possibility of anyone coming along to destroy it. In so doing [0:07:00], we shall save the Jewish people who live there now, who will go there from this Russia, and who will go there from all over the world, so that the stronger that state becomes, the more the Jewish people is protected by the umbrella of it. And no matter the Jewish people lives on the face of this earth, in Chile, where they are now in trouble, or in another country, where they may someday be in trouble, or in countries where they

are never going to be in trouble, we hope, but where they still need the protection of a strong Jewish central core, spiritual, physically strong, emanating power and security and pride and dignity. The whole Jewish world is wrapped up in one package. We will be the stronger for the more Jews of Russia to go to Israel to make it the stronger. There's no inconsistency [0:08:01].

We're moving now into a very dangerous period as far as the security of this Israel is concerned. War is easy. You keep your head low. You try to minimize your casualties. You try to maximize the damage to the enemy. You fight as hard as you know how. No problems. Just try to stay alive. Peace is difficult, and this is why I say that we are entering now into a much more critical period than we've been going through for the past three-and-a-half years. Be careful, ladies and gentlemen. Don't be trapped by any easy illusions. Peace is not breaking out. Try to understand clearly and exactly what we're going through now.

There has been a change. For three-and-a-half years [0:09:00], by war, Egypt said, "No agreement with Israel. No recognition. No negotiations. No peace." She stuck by Khartoum that that was her declaration, made in August of '67. For three-and-a-half years, she wouldn't alter it. And she tried by every manner or means to smash and destroy and physically obliterate Israel in war, and renewed war, and ceasefire, and more war. Okay. She found she couldn't do it.

The whole lesson of our obduracy, our stubbornness, proved to be successful. She's changed her tactic. Now she drops Khartoum and she says, "Fine, we must change. Now I am willing to use the word agreement. I will make an agreement with Israel." Be careful. He hasn't removed the sword hanging over our heads of March 7th [0:10:00]. He hasn't said the terrible word peace treaty. He doesn't change the words total withdrawal. That's his demand. He says, "I'll make an agreement."

I must admit, that's a change. I never thought they would be capable of that kind of logical thinking. But after three-and-a-half years of not being able to destroy by war, you might as well try by peace. I do say, however, that we are a long, long way from any agreement. There is still a huge basic gulf between us. He says agreement. He does not necessarily mean treaty. He does not necessarily mean recognizing Israel. He does not necessarily mean peace as we mean it, which means establishing normal relations.

Would he exchange an ambassador between Cairo and Jerusalem? Ask him [0:11:00]. His answer is no. He says agreement. We must be very careful. We have to start to ask, "What do you mean? What do you mean?"

Total withdrawal will be answered by the Israeli government in the negative. No. Total withdrawal. Back to the line of pre-1967 with no guarantees or no issues settled? The answer is no.

Why are you so pantingly hot to get back the same territory that you had before 1967? It was yours. What did you start a war for in the first place? You want the same territory now, in return for what? For nothing, with no issues settled? No.

Israel, on the other hand, also has been willing to make a change. Whereas Israel would never use the word withdrawal, because it was a dirty word, now Israel is willing to use the word withdrawal [0:12:00]. But Israel means partial withdrawal, or phased withdrawal, or withdrawal in stages. As issue by issue gets settled, withdraw a bit? Fine. Settle the issue of navigation. Withdraw some more? Fine. Settle the issue of refugees. Withdraw some more? Fine. Settle the issue of demilitarized zones. Withdraw some more? Fine. Discuss the issue of Gaza. One by one by one by one, Israel is willing to withdraw in return for settling of issues. And by the time you finish that salami process, slicing it off, you will ultimately arrive at peace.

That's the only way to get to peace. Anything else is fake, and anything that's fake is doomed to break out again, through rage and frustration, into hostilities. Clear as a bell. Everybody understands it [0:13:00].

Now, this process is going to take a long time. If anyone thinks that we've got peace around the corner, he's a fatuous, nay, foolish optimist. We have a process starting. It could go

in the direction of peace. It will take a long time. It's got to be negotiated step by step, item by item. We could be going in the direction of war. No guarantees either way. Equal chances to go either way.

I will tell you that we have only one lesson to learn, the lesson that by holding out for three-and-a-half years as we did under conditions of war, but holding out and holding out and holding out, Egypt changed her mind and spoke the word agreement. I'm telling you now, if we hold out and hold out and hold out, maybe hopefully not for three-and-a-half more years, but it will be a long time, Egypt will change her mind about insisting upon [0:14:00] total withdrawal. Just as she changed her mind in the first instance, she'll change her mind in the second instance, if we're stubborn enough. And the minute that she changes the word total withdrawal to partial withdrawal and settlement of issue-by-issue, we're on the road.

But that might take time, and during that time, Israel has only one danger: The danger of weakness. Weakness. The moment that anyone sees weakness, they will pounce like a tiger. We can keep Egypt off the track of war only by being as strong as iron. If anybody thinks that because Egypt is willing now to use the word agreement, that Israel should therefore go to the United States government and say, "Okay, we can save some money. Let's



buy 50 airplanes less [0:15:00]." Suicide, ladies and gentlemen. Sheer suicide. Or better yet, invitation to murder.

We may be on the road to peace; we don't know. But I can tell you that, as I understand the movements of history, if you think that it's been expensive up to now to maintain a posture of strength and security for Israel in war conditions, I want to tell you it's going to be much more expensive to maintain Israel for a long time under so-called working toward peace conditions. Because weakness now would be worse than weakness before. Let's not tempt the fates. There's no reduction of expenditures. The airplanes are going to continue to be bought as though the [Yaring?] talks were never going on [0:16:00]. And hopefully, more airplanes will be bought, and more and more. Peace comes from strength, and that's been demonstrated since 1967.

The other part about it is all the [alaoosinicks?]. You want to be strong. You want to be able to negotiate hard and tough, and keep on going tough because you've got the strength behind you. But at the same time, you want to be able to take in -- supposing, God willing, next year 10,000, 20,000. Ben-Gurion once said to me a long time ago, he said, "I have a dream. I have a dream that we can get half a million Jews from Russia. How much money will you have to raise if it costs us \$10,000

apiece?" He got hopelessly lost in the zeros. He was no economist, anyway.

I said to him, "It doesn't matter what the figures comes out to be. I promise you, a half a million Jews [0:17:00] able to come out of the Soviet Union to Israel, the Jews of the United States will raise whatever is required." You don't renege on that. You want that strength also to be injected, not just the aircraft, but the new people, the new immigrants, the people who love Israel, the people who want Israel. All adds to strength.

I think the position is clear. I think it's clear as a bell. We're sitting here in the most magnificent city in the world. We're sitting here at the seat of more Jewish power than has ever been accumulated in one time, in one place, anywhere ever on the face of this globe. We're sitting here with the capacity to do whatever we want, and if you say you want to raise \$150 million, in this town you can do it as easily as rolling off a log.

We gather here, also each one of you the same kind of aristocrats [0:18:00], because you volunteer, you come, you respond, you answer the call. You are here freely, eagerly in many cases, willingly. It's a beautiful thing. You must understand a very simple thing. We have a long fight ahead of us. We're a people which is accustomed to it. We've come through

four millennia of history, not to go down into some kind of polluted atmosphere of assimilation. We've come through in order to carry with us that gorgeous banner of our identity, which means so much to us, and which we believe means so much to the world.

This small people, gathering around this small state, consecrated to some of the noblest ideals that we've ever been able [0:19:00] to express, can manifest its will like men of courage and heroism are able to do whenever they determine. It's not a matter of money at all. It's a matter of willpower.

Something has happened in the American Jewish community today. I think the willpower exists. We see money pouring in large quantities all over America. When you're called upon now, by your friends, your men, who will ask you for your money, I would only ask you to realize that the stakes are very high. And we shall act as noble men do, when faced with a great challenge. Strain every muscle, tighten every nerve, demand the most of your brain [0:20:00] and your body and your treasury to reach the goal of a people at rest in a land at peace. It's absolutely possible, and with your determination, I promise you, I really do, we shall have it.

Now, do your duty, and do it well. The aristocrats have gathered for the display of the power of the family. Thank you very much.

[applause]

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