

TR-3821 Transcription

Friedman, Herbert A. and Golda Meir. United Jewish Appeal
address. [Dallas, Tex.]. undated.

GOLDA MEIR:

[00:00] Believe me, my dear friends of Dallas, that I regret very much that I am not with you today. I was looking forward -- I would have liked to sit with you, sit with my very dear friend Jack Feldman and discuss these matters face-to-face, but as you know, the prime minister has asked me to be at the United Nations and I guess I have to follow his instructions. So I hope that you will listen to me. And I know how you reacted in the past, and I'm convinced that you will do so also at this hour.

Friends, we are all -- we in Israel, Jews in the United States and Jews all over the world, and very many non-Jewish friends are elated over the great victory [01:00] of the Israel Defense Army. It now seems as though it is natural that it should have been that way. But may I take you back for a few days before the fifth of June and before this great memorable day, when the fate of the State of Israel, the people of Israel, and I daresay, maybe to a very large extent, the fate of the Jewish people all over the world was decided.

For over two weeks, we watched with great anxiety what was happening in the Sinai Desert and in the Gaza Strip. We knew that Nasser was massing these entire army practically into the Sinai Desert. He brought back some of the divisions from Yemen. [02:00] We knew that he had over 1,000 tanks there. We knew that he had hundreds of planes and bombers of the best that are produced in the world. We know that he had air to ground missiles. We suspected -- and I think we were right -- that he also intended to use gas.

We saw and hear like everybody else in the world how the UN Emergency Force disappeared, evaporated in a matter of minutes. And the Gaza Strip and Sharm el-Sheikh at the Tiran Straits and in the Sinai Desert. And there we were, face-to-face with this great army that was massed in the desert. Again, free shipping through the Tiran Straits to Aqaba was stopped. Hussein had gone to Egypt [03:00] and signed an agreement for cooperation, military cooperation against Israel, put his army under the command of an Egyptian commanders. The Syrians naturally were going to be part and parcel of it. We listened to the speeches of Nasser and his commander in the Sinai Desert declaring this a holy war, that this is the great hour when they will destroy Israel and its people.

And we waited, in hope, maybe, something will be done. Maybe something meaningful will be said so that Nasser will have to think twice before he begins his attack. Nothing happened. And on the fifth of June, Monday morning, his planes [04:00] went up on their way to Israel and his tanks in the Sinai started moving across the border. We knew right along -- and not only military experts -- our children, our youngsters knew that the great question was, who is going to destroy whose airfields first? We in Israel have very, very few. If we were to have as many airfields as Egypt and Syria, I don't think there would be room in Israel for anything else. We knew that he had many, and this was the great question. Thank God, you know what happened early Monday morning.

When his planes went up, our pilots reached his airfields and his hundreds of planes first. And our tanks began [05:00] moving. And people now ask from one part of the country to the other, individually, when I meet friends, Jews and non-Jews: tell me, was this a miracle? What is a miracle? In the 10th century, in modern times, maybe this is the miracle: that we, the people of Israel want nothing and never wanted anything from our neighbors. We did not want any territorial annexations. We

didn't want to kill their children. We didn't want to go to war. All we want is to live in peace and to fulfill the great historic mission that was placed upon us, our generation, to build and rebuild Jewish independence and Jewish sovereignty. And I admit, we were anxious.

We were also anxious because there are so many of the people in Israel [06:00] who have come after the Second World War, who have come out of Auschwitz and have come out of Dachau. They've seen war at its worst. They're the remnants of the six million. We have many that have come to us from all the Muslim countries, where Jews were second-class citizens, where they lived in fright and fear. And we wondered, how are they going to react? And the greatest hour was when -- to see the entire Jewish people in Israel, children, youngsters, old men, old women, grandmothers sending their grandchildren to battle without a tear. Mothers who have sent their first sons in '48 and their second sons in '56 and their third sons now in '67. And you know that even a war that's victorious has its price. Not all the sons and grandsons come back. [07:00]

But there was 100% mobilization. Not one single person that was called up from the reserve forces failed to report on the dot,

exactly as he was called. If there was one break in discipline, it was that at some bases, 110 and 120% of the men reported, because some, because of medical reasons, were not called up, came and demanded that right there and then, they should have another medical examination.

And our people in the villages, the border villages, on the Syrian, we're down in the valley, and they're the Syrians up on the hills, and they shelled; and they bombed. And the mothers and the babies were in the shelters. I'm proud of these mothers. Not one single mother asked for her children to be evacuated.

[08:00]

But you know what this means? For 30 and 36, up north and down near the Gaza Strip, these villages were shelled. Thank God, no casualties. The shelters were good, but they were not guaranteed beforehand.

As though I could take you from one place of the country to the other, from a city to a village, from a village to a factory, to Jerusalem, where conveniently from across the Jordanian border, this city was shelled at least for 48 hours. And then, the great day, the old city of Jerusalem was again in our hands.

And last Friday -- and you know, time [09:00] lost all its meaning now. It seems like a century ago. Just a few hours before I took the plane to come to the United States, I went to Jerusalem, out, walked into the Old City. I went to the Wailing Wall. We called it always, and people in the world call it the Wailing Wall because Jews throughout the centuries would come and weep at this wall. This big, massive wall, the massive rocks that stand there throughout the centuries, we've always seen it as a remnant and a memory of the destruction. This was all that was left of Jewish sovereignty and Jewish independence. And all of a sudden, I had the great privilege of standing before this wall and saw on it, not as a symbol of destruction, [10:00] no. This was the great symbol of Jewish redemption and the rebirth of Jewish sovereignty. Again, we stand before it as a free and sovereign people.

And then something happened that I know I cannot explain in words. A group of paratroopers who were the first to break into the Old City with heavy casualties, came in their paratrooper uniforms and on that, they put on the talasim, their prayer shawls, put their sten guns away on a table there, put on the tefillin and they prayed.

Anybody that was privileged to see them [11:00] and to hear them will never forget it. These paratroopers are tough fighters. They don't cry. They don't run. But I saw some of them walk up to the Wailing Wall, kiss the stones and weep like children. Not because of tragedy, but out of sheer joy that here they are. And then one of them, who I don't know and he did not know me before -- we never met -- came up to me and wept as though he were my little son, out of joy, and maybe also these tears were shed for his comrades that fell in battle and were not privileged to pray on that Friday morning before the Wailing Wall.

And my friends, we won. And now, everybody praises [12:00] us. Jews all over the world are proud of us. And our questions are beginning to be asked. What will you give up? When will you pull back? What have we to give up? How will we pull back? We have no intention of doing anything of that kind. We did not go out for territorial expansions, but I want to say as clearly as I can, never -- but never will we pull out of the Old City so that the walls of the Old City can again become convenient bases for shelling and shooting in Jerusalem. Never again will we have to go begging, without results, to be allowed to stand before the Wailing Wall, or to go up to our university on Mount Scopus, or

to the Hadassah Hospital. [13:00] Never will those ridges on the Syrian border become the bases for the shelling of our tens of peaceful villages in the Hula Valley, or in Gev, or Tel Katzir. Or the ridges in the Jordanian border, the western part of Jordan, will never again be convenient places to shell Netanya or other villages in that area.

No, we did not go to war for conquest. We didn't want it. We didn't start it. We're not responsible for it. We wanted peace and we want peace. And all friends and well-meaning people of the world have only one duty to perform, and that is to tell our Arab neighbors to sit down with us and to negotiate directly for a lasting peace. [14:00] Israel wants peace; Israel needs it. The tens of millions of the Arab masses in our area want and need peace. The children in the Nile Valley need life and peace and not destruction. Not one child will remain alive in the Nile Valley because Israeli children were killed. It will remain alive when its leaders and its president will give them food and medical attention and schools. This is what the Arab peoples need, and not the death of Israelis.

This is the task of governments and peoples all over the world. This is the task, and only task -- constructive task that the

United Nations can perform, not to press on Israel to step back so that I should live knowing that in a few years, I'll send my grandchildren again into war. [15:00] Never again will this happen. We will not repeat to depend on promises that were not kept, as in 1957. Thank you. (break in audio)

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

This is Herbert Friedman of the UJA speaking, adding my voice to that of Mrs. Meir, whose message you've just heard. Golda wanted very much to make that message for Dallas, even though she couldn't fly down herself. You have some understanding from the newspapers today of what is happening in the United Nations. The pressure is building up in an enormous fashion. The whole Russian delegation, all their supporters and allies have come into New York, hundreds of people to try storm the UN with the feeling that Israel was the aggressor and Israel must pull back. The pressures here will go on for weeks, therefore Gold couldn't come to Dallas as she would have liked to have done, because she was ordered to stay here with the UN delegation.

Her words to you came from the heart. [16:00] When she said that she wanted to be with you, she really did. Because we have told her here -- we in the UJA -- what a great and marvelous

community you have been, how you have now rallied almost more magnificently than any other place in the country. Your spirit, your enthusiasm, your vigor, and the dollars you're pouring in will stand high as a great, glorious chapter in the history of Dallas Jewry.

Let's see where we stand now. We should pause for a moment in this fantastic excitement that has swept all of us in the last few weeks to see exactly where we are. The war itself, short, swift, incredibly skillful, magnificently efficient, was a tremendous expression of the Jewish capacity for self defense. And it was another thing too. Let's look back on it historically for a moment. This war was a sign, a symbol, a clear, loud call to the world [17:00] that never again are Jews going to be allowed to be slaughtered helplessly without reacting. This is an answer back to Hitler and the Warsaw Ghetto and the gas chambers and a signal to the world that if anybody comes near again to that tender nerve of Jewish survival, they'll be met with a flashing, swift sword. This is not a question of being arrogant. This is a question of saying once and for all that we've had enough, that nobody can come at our jugular vein again with impunity.

And what that war did, fought as it was by the Israeli Jews, what it did nevertheless was to give a surge of pride and a strength of conviction to Jews all over the world that the time for slaughter is ended and the time for peace has come.

No there's a long road ahead before this time of peace will ever be ours. [18:00] I refer to the pressures in the United Nations. These may be expected to last for weeks. There will be all kinds of combinations of suggestions made as to what Israel should do, that she should be magnanimous because she was the victor, that she should give up territory, that she should accept vague guarantees again. You heard Mrs. Meir say very clearly, and I'm certain that even though this is only the first day of the debate, all the Israelis will repeat over and over again, they will not accept vague, undefined guarantees anymore. They want one simple thing, and this is what they're going to hold to with all the power they have: they want face-to-face peace negotiations with the Arab countries. The time for temporary armistices is over. Those armistices lasted 19 years. They proved to be weak reeds. They couldn't [19:00] prevent the outbreak of war.

No more armistices. Peace, firm and definite, which you can work out only when you face your opponent over the table. Now that's the basic Israeli position, and that's what they're going to hammer away it, however long it takes.

Our role in this thing, and I said now we have to define what we should do, our role in this thing is to provide the support during this long period of pressure. We should react not just to six swift days of war, we should react to six long months of standing up under pressure if we have to. The support that's required is financial report. Israel can keep strong for the long pull and fight out the political negotiations so long as she has the financial capacity to do so, and not have an economy which will collapse under her during the time that she has to continue [20:00] these long arguments.

The maintenance of a strong position will depend upon the kind of help that we can give. The huge humanitarian needs, which are legitimately ours to undertake must be undertaken by us fully, and the word here is fully. We've given help over the years, some help, partial help. But always, every single year, we never raised enough money to take care of the humanitarian needs that we said we'd be responsible for. And so every year, the

government of Israel had to chip in millions, tens of millions, scores of millions for money that we failed to raise. Now, that disproportionate ratio simply must be altered. We have to raise all the money -- I repeat, all the money for the humanitarian needs so that we don't burden Israel with one cent of that, so that she can go on holding out [21:00] month after month if she has to, fighting this political fight.

What do I mean by the humanitarian needs? I just have to remind you of them very briefly. All of the immigrants that we've taken in, the housing that we've built for them, a lot of that housing has been destroyed in the war. Whose responsibility is it to replace that? It's our responsibility. This is a need to put a roof back over the heads of those millions of immigrants we brought in. It's our responsibility to support all of the installations of the UJA, like the art schools which have been bombed and Mal Ben Homes, which may have been destroyed. We don't even have a clear, factual description of all the destruction that's taken place.

Thirdly, it's our responsibility to put all those farm settlements back into shape. Do you have any idea what happened to them up in the north, particularly on the Syrian border where

they took such fantastically heavy shelling? All of the shelling [22:00] that poured down into all the kibbutzim of Gonen and Gadot and Dan and [Korazim?] all the way down to Ein Gev and Tel Katzir, there's a whole string of them for 30 miles up on that Syrian border. Those farm settlements, we built. We poured UJA money into them year after year. We had almost 500 on them on are list as our responsibility. Everything that's happened there to dislocate that economy, to dislocate those villages and those kibbutzim, all of that has got to be repaired an put back into shape. That's what we have to do.

All the development towns that we've spoken about, not just the farm villages, those development towns have been badly upset. All of them have got to be put back on the tracks so that they become productive so that the economy of Israel can be re-established.

We are not with UJA trying to take the whole responsibility for the whole economy of Israel. We're trying to take the responsibility for our share and our share ought to be [23:00] a full share, not a one third share, of those needs for which we Americans traditionally have assumed responsibility with our philanthropic money.

I'm saying nothing about medical aid; I'm saying nothing about the reconstruction and the rehabilitation of wounded and handicapped people. All of this also should be our responsibility because these immigrants, we are responsible for. We brought them there.

Therefore I am establishing this theory and this thesis for you in Dallas and for every other Jewish community in the country. You started out with a magnificent campaign; I can't applaud you enough for what you've done. What you must do is finish this just as gloriously as you started it. You've got to carry this campaign to a great ending, just as you started with a great beginning, no faltering now. Every contributor must be seen; every Jew and many non-Jewish friends must be asked to contribute. [24:00] Every trade, every division, every group, every profession must be thoroughly penetrated right down to the last human being, so that when this is over -- and I hope it's over swiftly; we should try to end it by the end of the month. By the fourth of July, you know what happens in the American Jewish organized community life, people begin to go away. We've got two weeks and the two week finish should be as great as the two week start. When it's all over, this will be a month which

we will long remember, a glorious month in American Jewish history.

But right now, we're a long way from the end of the month. We're a long way from the final total that you can achieve. Remember, the support during the dramatic days of the war was flashing with electric and with emotion. It would be foolish; it would be ignoble; it would be destroying everything we did a week ago if we had a feeling that we could let down now. We are now in the [25:00] long pull of the crisis, and the long pull requires from you complete support down to the last, final contributor. If you do that, you'll be doing the kind of a job for which Dallas is rightfully being applauded now and for which she will be beautifully applauded when you and I know that you've done it to then end. Thank you very much.

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