

VT-981 Transcription

Friedman, Herbert A. "Current Peace Initiatives and the Status  
of the Campaign." 24 February 1971.

Herbert A. Friedman: In the past few weeks people have been saying at various meetings and in various discussions which I have been having with executive directors and campaign chairmen around the country, that they seem to have a feeling that a sense of urgency has gone out of the campaign -- that there was a great feeling of urgency some months ago when we started this enormous campaign -- but, that now something seems to have gone out of it. It somehow doesn't seem so necessary. And then, this general feeling has become compounded in the past two weeks or so as Egypt has suddenly and unexpectedly made some peace moves. This further compounds the question and causes people to say, "Well, if we're on the road to peace, why are such enormous sums of money required? Why is such a large campaign necessary?"

[01:00]

I would like, very quietly, to try and answer this because the answer to this question will determine whether the campaign at this point will continue at the high level at which it's gotten started, or whether it will take some sag, which would be a tragedy in view of the beginning of this campaign. Let me state as simply as I know how that no state of urgency has

disappeared, and let me state further that nothing has occurred in the past two or three weeks with these Egyptian peace moves which in anyway alters the premise upon which the campaign was based. Why was a campaign of this size projected in the first place? Let me remind you -- in order to provide Israel with a security and thus survival, while at the same time permitting her to [02:00] continue the influx of immigrants on a very high level who's desire it was to find a home in that Israel which made the war worth fighting in the first place. The security of the country and the taking in of people to that country required, in the face of 1971, enormous money. The military bill was going to be over \$1.5 billion of which only \$500 million came in the form of outside help -- that loan from Congress -- and the immigration bill was going to be over \$600 million, and these two bills continue whether new peace moves are made or not -- that's the crux of the matter. This sudden flurry of diplomatic activity in the last couple of weeks in which Sadat has used the word [03:00] *agreement*, gives a false impression to some unsophisticated people that suddenly peace is about to break out.

Peace isn't about to break out. Let's understand exactly and not have any foolish optimism. Israel is only now about to face the crunch -- the real crunch -- which we define as being the most delicate difficult situation at a given moment. Up to

now, it was war, threat of war, ceasefire, then renewed war -- since the enemy preferred war no one had to think about a definition of peace; no one had to think of what that meant. All Israel had to do was keep her head low, try to minimize her casualties, try to maximize the damage she did to the enemy. Now, this change has taken place -- [04:00] Sadat has used the word *agreement*. There is no doubt that this is a departure from the old cartoon formula of no peace, no recognition, no negotiations -- but how much of a departure, we don't know because he still hasn't used the key words like, *peace treaty*, *recognition of Israel*. He still hasn't removed that sword hanging over our heads of March 7<sup>th</sup> when the ceasefire expires, in only two short week. He still hasn't changed his call for total withdrawal. So, that there's been a change, but we don't know how much of a change. Therefore, there are two immediate possibilities, as always, in these things; one is that this path of negotiations will continue, the other is a path of renewed hostilities.

There's no doubt in my mind that the future could go either way, but let's take [05:00] the assumption that we go on the path of negotiations toward peace, because that's why people think we don't need money anymore. Even if the negotiations continue, even if the March 7<sup>th</sup> deadline is removed, let's say, by the postponement for another 30 days -- I don't think it'll

be longer than that -- they're going to continue to try to use negotiations by ultimatum and deadlines. An agreement is still a long, long way off. The most crucial fact of all is whether Israel will be able to hold out for another long and heavy pressure period. If she shows any weakness, either military or economic, then you can be sure that Egypt will put the pressure on again -- political and military -- to crack Israel and force her into this total withdrawal picture. You see, we've now entered the phase where the problem [06:00] is territorial. Should Israel submit to the Egyptian request for total withdrawal back behind the El Arish line? Shimon Peres said a few days ago in the cabin of discussion last Thursday, "We mustn't lose our cool. We mustn't allow ourselves to be pressured into any decisions that we may regret in future years. We are strong enough to hold out for nothing less than peace." And, that's the problem in a nutshell. Are we strong enough? The Jewish people must be strong enough to hold out so that the Egyptians will remain on this path of negotiation and not be tempted back to the path of war. Look, understand it -- it took them three and half years of war before they decided to utter the word agreement [07:00] only because Israel held out stubbornly -- yes, use the word *stubbornly* -- and the Jewish people supported her stubbornly. Did the Egyptians finally see that they could not defeat Israel on the battle field and

therefore they turned to this stage of diplomacy in which we are now at last. Now they're demanding total withdrawal; again, we must be able to hold out long enough -- yes and stubbornly enough, if you will -- so they'll finally see that this demand also will not be met. Again, they will give in, and they'll modify their request, and they'll put it in a form to which we will be able to accede and that's how the negotiations will go forward another step. We might withdraw to some agreed upon point if they in turn would settle one issue after another -- there are a dozen issues that have to be settled: navigation, refugees [08:00], Tiran, demilitarized zones -- god knows what has to be settled. In other words, they say, "Total withdrawal in return for nothing," Israel says, "No." Partial and gradual withdrawal accompanied by the settlement of one issue, after another issue, after another issue -- Israel would say, "Yes."

This process will take time, will require enormous will-power, strength, courage. We must hold out until we can trade withdrawal for peace -- that's the long and the short of it. Now, the other path I referred to is the path of possible renewed hostilities. Since this is very real, Israel is not reducing her purchases of equipment in the United States, let's understand that. Nor is the United States threatening Israel or pressuring [09:00] Israel in any way to make a political settlement or our arms will not be sold -- no. There is no such

pressure or threat of pressure from America. Therefore, it would be foolhardy -- I would say even suicidal -- if in the face of this possibility of peace negotiations Israel were to be fooled and say suddenly, "Well, we're really on the road to peace, so therefore we can save some money -- we don't have to buy so much equipment." That would be suicidal. And so, you see the enormous spending continues even as they are in talks, continue. There's no relationship and that's what everyone must understand very, very carefully. Even if the so-called talks about peace continue, the financial facts of 1971 are exactly as we described them to you months and months ago. [10:00] Let me try to put it another way: if Israel's ability to defend herself in case of war required large expenditures, then Israel's ability to obtain peace may require even larger expenditures because it will take longer to go through this step-by-step process I've described.

No, peace is certainly not breaking out at any moment, but as we hopefully, hopefully await each new development -- and the next move will be to see if they will remove the March 7<sup>th</sup> deadline. As we face a long period of hard negotiating we must understand that the greatest danger of coming under the gun once again will be any weakness on our part. The greatest guarantee of finally arriving at peace will be our ability to hold out long enough and to negotiate hard enough. [11:00] Now, let's

speaking frankly -- the ability to hold out depends upon the morale of the people in Israel and the condition of their pocketbook. Their morale and the condition of the pocketbook depends upon how we react; if we flag in our support, they will flag; if we hold up a very high, strong, exciting, electric attitude of tension, and concern, and urgency, they'll feel it over there and they'll act accordingly. If the fabric of life in Israel were to begin to crumble in anyway because of lack of money, or if the immigration in Israel were to go down, for instance, because of lack of money, morale would sag because these would be signs of weakness. Then this weakness would feed upon itself like a vicious circle, and this vicious circle could lead to a terrible defeat. [12:00] Signs of weakness would invite greater pressure from the outside -- greater pressure from the outside without money would further erode the will to resist, and we would be on the way downhill.

No -- our maintenance of the highest level of financial support will ultimately win either at the conference table toward peace, or -- god forbid -- if once again necessary on the battle field. Let this message go out very loud and very clear to those who think that they are in talks make less money necessary. On the contrary, the message must now be -- on the contrary -- even more money is required for a longer pull. Let me close by giving you the figures; on February 19<sup>th</sup>, five days

ago, the print-out [13:00] of the state of the campaign across the nation showed that just over \$111 million has been raised compared to just over \$73 million of last year's money -- this makes for a 51% increase. I would like to say two simple things: only one quarter of the gifts above \$10,000 have come in, so there's a great deal of room to increase this level of 51% by hard soliciting. Below \$10,000 I think there's an even greater chance to obtain an higher level than an average 51% increase. I would beg you therefore at this point not to let the campaign sag after it's gotten off with a 51% start; on the contrary, shoot that level up and let there be no false logic or false reasoning that some peace is in the air which suddenly causes [14:00] the need for money to disappear and evaporate -- that's nonsense.

We have a chance to do what's expected of us -- the campaign has started well, I beg you to let it finish well. Let it finish -- we're only a third of the way gone. We've got two-thirds of the way in which to improve what we've done so far. I'd like to summarize: number one, we are now entering the phase of territorial negotiations -- there will be heavy pressure, and there may even begin to be some US pressure, although I've said nothing up to now, but there may even begin to be -- pressure to withdraw totally. Number two, Israel will resist this pressure - - you must know it now. Number three, withdrawal will be made

stage by stage in exchange for peace, item by item. Number four, Israel must be helped to remain [15:00] strong during these long difficult months of negotiation under pressure. Number five, there is ever-present, every day the sudden danger of renewed hostilities if a level of frustration is reached in these negotiations; this also requires strength for the long pull. Number six, strength means money; no reduction in spending is contemplated.

We go on working as hard as we know how to do something which we started. Perhaps in 1971, finally to win -- there's as good a chance that we can win peace as that we will be forced back into war; whichever way it goes, the thing which American Jews started out to do so well [16:00] a few months ago, they must maintain at a higher and even more accelerated pace of work. Thank you very much.

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