

**MENACHEM BEGIN'S BROADCAST TO THE NATION**  
**15 MAY 1948**

THE STATE OF ISRAEL HAS ARISEN !

"On the 10th or 11th of May 1948," records Menachem Begin in his published memoirs, *The Revolt*, "the chief of the Hagana informed me that the majority of the official institutions had at last succeeded in overcoming their many doubts and had agreed to the proclamation of a Provisional Hebrew Government immediately on the withdrawal of the mandatory regime. I told my informant that we would recognise the Provisional Government and give it our support without regard to its composition. But I added this grave warning: 'If the Jewish Government is proclaimed on Friday, May the 14th, the first enemy planes will be over Tel Aviv on Saturday morning.'

"Our thoughts were concentrated on the development of the battle for our independence, for our existence, on the many fronts that were about to be opened, in the north, the south and the east, in the air and on the sea. Nevertheless, it was impossible not to dwell on the great and wondrous event occurring before our very eyes. A regime resting on one hundred thousand bayonets had collapsed; and in its place and on its ruins a new regime was about to arise; a nation was coming to life; a very old nation which had gone down into the pit of destruction was being re-born.

"There is no doubt that the revival of Hebrew national independence in our generation has no precedence in human history. A nation had been driven out of its country after the loss of its liberty and the utter failure of its uprisings. It had wandered about the face of the earth for nearly 2,000 years. Its wanderings had been drenched in blood. And now, in the 71st generation of its exile, this wandering people had returned to its Homeland. The global tour was ended. The circle of wanderings was closed and the nation had returned to the Motherland that bore it.

"The miracle of Return was accompanied by the miracle of Revival. Within a generation there developed within the Jewish people the strength to take up arms, to rise against alien rule, to throw off the yoke of oppression. How long, how endless were the years of exile, of humiliation and destruction. And how short, in comparison, were the years of revival, reinvigoration and armed uprising. History has no parallels in its records.

"These were my thoughts as I involved myself in the composition of my radio address. Two days prior to that Saturday night, a personal aide of David Ben-Gurion arrived at our HQ situated in the Freud Hospital. He conveyed to me the request that my text be submitted to Ben-Gurion before the broadcast. The request was made in good spirit and I had no personal reasons not to comply. But my fellow commanders thought otherwise, that there was no justification to hand over the text. I accepted their view. Ben-Gurion's emissary received a negative answer. I did not regret that decision.

On Saturday night, May the 15th, I went to the secret radio station of the Irgun Zvai Leumi opposite Meir Park, in the centre of Tel Aviv. I felt no stage-fright. I was among friends, in "my house", in the radio station from which the voice of Revolt and Freedom had for some years gone forth to every town and village in our land. But the solemnity of the hour overawed me. An hour such as this comes but once to a man who has fought. And this is what I said":-

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Citizens of the Hebrew Homeland, Soldiers of Israel, Hebrew Youth, Sisters and Brothers in Zion!

After many years of underground warfare, years of persecution and moral and physical suffering, the rebels against the oppressors stand before you, with a blessing of thanks on their lips and a prayer in their hearts. The blessing is the age-old blessing with which our fathers and our forefathers have always greeted Holy Days. It was with this blessing that they used to taste any fruit for the first time in the season. Today is truly a holiday, a Holy Day, and a new fruit is visible before our very eyes. The Hebrew Revolt of 1944-1948 has been blessed with success - the first Hebrew revolt since the Hasmonean insurrection that has ended in victory. The rule of oppression in our country has been beaten, uprooted; it has crumbled and been dispersed. The State of Israel has arisen in bloody battle. The high way for the mass return to Zion has been cast up.

The foundation has been laid - but only the foundation - for true independence. One phase of the battle for freedom, for the return of the entire People of Israel to its homeland, for the restoration of the whole Land of Israel to its God-covenanted owners, has ended. But only one phase. We should recall that this event has occurred after 70 generations of dispersion and unending wandering of an unarmed people and after a period of almost total destruction of the Jew as Jew. Thus, although our suffering is not yet over, it is our right and our obligation to proffer thanks to the Rock of Israel and His Redeemer for all the miracles that have been done this day, as in those times. We therefore can say with full heart and soul on this first day of our liberation from the British occupier: Blessed is He who has sustained us and enabled us to have reached this time.

The State of Israel has arisen. And it has risen "Only Thus":- through blood, through fire, with an outstretched hand and a mighty arm, with sufferings and with sacrifices. It could not have been otherwise. And yet, even before our state is able to establish its normal governing institutions, it is compelled to fight, or rather, to continue to fight satanic enemies and blood-thirsty mercenaries, on land, in the air and on the sea. In these circumstances, the warning sounded by the Philosopher-President Thomas Masaryk to the Czechoslovak nation when it attained its freedom after three hundred years of slavery, has a special significance for us.

In 1918, when Masaryk stepped out on to the Wilson railway station in Prague, he warned his cheering countrymen: 'It is difficult to set up a state; it is even more difficult to keep it going'. In truth, it has been difficult for us to set up our state. Tens of generations, and millions of wanderers, from one land of massacre to another, were needed; it was necessary that there be exile, burning at the stake and torture in the dungeons; we had to suffer agonizing disillusionments; we needed the warnings - though they often went unheeded - of prophets and seers; we needed the sweat and toil of generations of pioneers and builders; we had to have an uprising of rebels to crush the enemy; we had to have the gallows, the banishments beyond seas, the prisons and the cages in the deserts - all this was necessary that we might reach the present stage where six hundred thousand Jews are in the Homeland, where the direct rule of oppression has been driven out and Hebrew

independence declared in at least part of the country, the whole of which is ours.

It has been difficult to create our state. But it will be even more difficult to keep it going. We are surrounded by enemies who long for our destruction. And that same oppressor, who has been defeated by us directly, is trying indirectly to make us surrender with the aid of mercenaries from the south, the north and the east. Our one-day old state is set up in the midst of the flames of battle. And the very first pillar of our state must therefore be victory, total victory, in the war which is raging all over the country. For this victory, without which we shall have neither freedom nor life, we need arms; weapons of all sorts, in order to strike the enemies, in order to disperse the invaders, in order to free the entire length and breadth of the country from its would-be destroyers.

But in addition to these arms, each and everyone of us has need of another weapon, a spiritual weapon, the weapon of unflinching endurance in face of attacks from the air; in face of grievous casualties; in face of local disasters and temporary defeats; unflinching resistance to threats and cajolery. If, within the coming days and weeks, we can put on this whole armour of an undying nation in resurrection, we shall in the meantime receive the blessed arms with which to drive off the enemy and bring freedom and peace to our nation and country.

But, even after emerging victorious from this campaign - and victorious we shall be - we shall still have to exert superhuman efforts in order to remain independent, in order to free our country. First of all, it will be necessary to increase and strengthen the fighting arm of Israel, without which there can be no freedom and no survival for our Homeland.

Our Jewish army should be, and must be, one of the best trained and equipped of the world's military forces. In modern warfare, it is not quantity that counts but brainpower and spirit are the determining factors. All of our youth proved that they possess this spirit - those of the Hagana, the Lehi, the Irgun, youth that no other nation has merited. Indeed, no generation since Bar-Kochba and until the Bilu pioneers has seen such spirit. As for brainpower, after 120 generations, the creativity of the Hebrew mind is one of the most developed and unlimited. Our military science will be built up on the Jewish mind and will be the world's best. We will yet achieve strength for we possess the power of the brain.

In order to free our country and maintain our state, we shall need a wise foreign policy. We must turn our declaration of independence into a reality. And we must grasp this fact: that so long as even one British or any other foreign soldier treads the soil of our country, our sovereign independence remains nothing but an aspiration, an aspiration for whose fulfillment we must be ready to fight not only on the battlefield but also in the international arena. Secondly, we must establish and maintain the principle of reciprocity in our relations with the nations of the world. There must be no self-denigration. There must be reciprocity. Enmity for enmity. Aid for aid. Friendship must be repaid with friendship. We must foster friendship and understanding between us and every nation, great or small, strong or weak, near or far, which recognizes our independence, which aids our

national regeneration and which is interested, even as we are, in international justice and peace among nations.

Of no less importance is our internal policy. The first pillar of this policy is the Return to Zion. Ships! For Heaven's sake, let us have ships! Let us not be [complacent] poisoned with inertia. Let us not talk empty words about absorptive capacity. Let us not make restrictions for the sake of so-called order. Quickly, quickly! Our nation has no time! Bring in hundreds of thousands. If there will not be enough houses, we'll find tents or even the skies, the blue skies of our land, as a roof. As we have seen from other nations, there is no limit to the sacrifices a fighting nation is prepared to make in order to obtain its homeland and assure its future. We are now in the midst of a war for survival; and our tomorrow and theirs depend on the quickest concentration of our nation's exiles.

And within our Homeland, justice shall be the supreme ruler, the ruler over all rulers. There must be no tyranny. The Ministers and officials must be the servants of the nation and not their masters. There must be no exploitation. There must be no man within our country - be he citizen or foreigner - compelled to go hungry, to want for a roof over his head or to lack elementary education. 'Remember you were strangers in the land of Egypt' - this supreme rule must continually light our way in our relations with the strangers within our gates. 'Righteousness, righteousness shall you pursue' will be the guiding principle in our relations amongst ourselves.

We will protect our state well, our Israel. It is for these goals and principles, and in the framework of democracy, that the Herut Movement will struggle, arising out of the underground and fashioned by the fighting family, a movement made up of all circles, all exiles, all streams around the flag of the Irgun.

The Irgun Zvai Leumi is leaving the underground inside the boundaries of the Hebrew independent state. We went underground, we arose in the underground, under a rule of oppression in order to strike at oppression and to overthrow it. And right well have we struck. Now, for the time being, we have a Hebrew rule in part of our homeland. And as in this part there will be Hebrew Law - and that is the only rightful law in this country - there is no need for a Hebrew underground. In the State of Israel, we shall be soldiers and builders. And we shall respect its government, for it is our government.

We expect that this provisional government and every other government will take care not to surrender to external elements or act in tyranny against internal bodies. The government must protect human and civil rights, without discrimination and favoritism. It shall safeguard the principles of justice and freedom and our house shall shine with fraternity and brotherly love.

The State of Israel has arisen, but we must remember that our country is not yet liberated. The battle continues, and you see now that the words of your Irgun fighters were not vain words: it is Hebrew arms which decide the boundaries of the Hebrew State. So it is now in this battle; so it will be in the future. Our God-given country is a unity, an integral historical and geographical whole. The attempt to dissect it is not only a crime but a blasphemy and an abortion. Whoever does

not recognize our natural right to our entire homeland, does not recognize our right to any part of it. And we shall never forego this natural right. We shall continue to foster the aspiration of full independence

We shall assume the burden of the vision of complete redemption. There can be no distinction between the nation-state and its homeland. That line of differentiation is artificial. This is not irredentism. We refer to five-sixths of our land, land we need to make bloom, land we need for future generations, land we need for security and peace. We will yet fly the flag of freedom, of peace, of progress. Our soldiers will unfurl that flag over the Tower of David and we will yet plow the fields of the Gilead.

Citizens of the Hebrew State, soldiers of Israel, we are in the midst of battles. Difficult days lie ahead of us. Much blood will be spilled. Fortify yourselves. Strengthen your morale. There is no other way.

We cannot buy peace from our enemies with appeasement. There is only one kind of 'peace' than can be bought - the peace of the graveyard, the peace of Treblinka. Be brave of spirit and ready for more trials. We shall withstand them. The Lord of Hosts will help us; He will sustain the bravery of the Hebrew youth, the bravery of the Hebrew mothers who, like Hannah, offer their sons on the altar of God. This supreme valor will save us from our enemy and bring us out from slavery to freedom, from the danger of annihilation to safety.

And you, brothers of the fighting family, do you remember how we started? With what we started? You were alone and persecuted, rejected, despised and numbered with transgressors. But you fought on with deep faith and did not retreat. You were cast into prison and you were exiled from your country but your spirit was not crushed. You were driven to the gallows but went forth with a song. You have written a glorious page in history. You will not recall past grievances; you will ask for no reward.

But for the time-being, let us think of the battle, for only the outcome of the battle will decide our fate and future. We shall go on our way into battle, soldiers of the Lord of Hosts, inspired by the spirit of our ancient heroes, from the conquerors of Canaan to the Rebels of Judah. We shall be accompanied by the spirit of those who revived our nation, Zeev Benjamin Herzl, Max Nordau, Joseph Trumpeldor and the father of resurrected Hebrew heroism, Zeev Jabotinsky. We shall be accompanied by the spirit of David Raziell, greatest of our Hebrew commanders of our day; and by Dov Gruner, one of the greatest of Hebrew soldiers.

We shall be accompanied into battle by the spirit of the heroes of the gallows, the conquerors of death. And we shall be accompanied by the spirit of the millions of our martyrs, our ancestors tortured and burned for their faith, our murdered fathers and butchered mothers, our murdered brothers and strangled children. And in this battle, we shall break the enemy and bring salvation to our people, tried in the furnace of persecution, thirsting only for freedom, for righteousness and for justice.

God, Lord of Israel, protect your soldiers. Grant blessing to their sword that is renewing the covenant that was made between your chosen people and your chosen land. Arise O Lion of Judea for our people, for our land. On to battle. Forward to victory.