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Israel: A 65-Year Miracle

One of the proudest accomplishments in world history.

There can be little doubt when, 500 or 1,000 years from now, the history of the world will be written, that the creation and the development of the State of Israel will be considered one of the proudest and most shining successes. Now, as Israel's 65th birthday has just been celebrated, it is a good time, in our own day, to review what has been accomplished.

What are the facts?

The Birth of a Nation: The State of Israel was born out of the ashes of the Nazi Holocaust, probably the most horrible crime in the blood-stained history of mankind. The "yishuv," (the Jewish population of the country) consisted of barely 400,000 people. On the very day of its birth Israel was invaded by the armies of five neighboring Arab states. Almost miraculously, the vastly outnumbered and outgunned Jewish forces managed to overcome the combined Arab might. But they paid a horrendous price for their victory. More than 6,000 combatants and civilians perished in that War of Independence. It was as if the United States were to lose over 6 million people in combat. But the War of Independence was not the only one that Israel's implacable enemies foisted on it. There was, perhaps most importantly, the 1967 Six-Day War, in which Israel gained a spectacular victory, which will be studied and analyzed in military academies of the world until the end of time.

The Jewish People's Renaissance. There is no comparison in history to the Jewish people's renaissance after 2,000 years of persecution, discrimination and exile, and its transformation into a Jewish nation. Jews from all over the globe flooded into the newly established haven of the Jewish nation. All received a brotherly welcome and were seamlessly integrated into the new state. One of the proudest accomplishments of the Jewish State of Israel was the ingathering of the black Jews of Ethiopia. They, also, are now an integral part of their new country. As an aside, the current Miss Israel is a lovely woman of Ethiopian heritage.

Almost one-half of the world's Jews now live in Israel, having immigrated from all corners of the world. These

millions are now fully part of their country, truly an unprecedented accomplishment.

One of Israel's major successes is the revival of the ancient Hebrew language. It had been used only as a religious language for the over 2,000 years of the Jewish diaspora. It has been fully "modernized" and is used as the daily vernacular of Israel for all purposes. There is nothing comparable to it in the history of the world.

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To the amazement of all, including perhaps many Jews, Israel, forced by necessity, has emerged as one of the world's important military powers. It has proven more than able to hold its own though surrounded by enemies, who almost singlemindedly are fixated on its annihilation.

An Economic Powerhouse. Economically, Israel's position at its 65th birthday can only be described as miraculous. It is economically comparable to most European countries and superior to quite a few. It is a font of innovation, a high-tech powerhouse, fueled by the country's world-class universities and technical schools. Most United States high-tech companies have branches and laboratories in Israel. They consider them as a source of creativity and of new development. Next to the U.S. itself and Canada, Israel has more companies listed on U.S. stock exchanges than any other country.

One of the weak parts of Israel's economy is the production of oil and gas. Until now Israel has been almost totally dependent on imports of gas from Egypt, a most unreliable supplier. But discoveries of huge oil and gas fields in its territorial waters in the Mediterranean make it clear that Israel will be independent of oil and gas imports in just a few years and may emerge as a major exporter of such products.

On its 65th birthday Israel is in very good condition. Congratulations are in order. But all is not yet perfect, and improvements can be made. There are social problems. There still is too much disparity between rich and poor. There is also disparity between the largely secular majority and the ultra-orthodox "haredim," and also between the Jewish majority and the over one million Arab citizens who are not yet entirely accepting of their country. The biggest and most intractable problem, however, is the stubborn enmity of the surrounding Muslim countries and those beyond its borders, such as Iran. One can only hope that wise leaders in those Muslim countries will eventually emerge, who will realize that Israel is here to stay and that the welfare of their countries and of their citizens will only be assured by accepting Israel and allowing it to lead the region into a new age of democratic advancement and prosperity.

This message has been published and paid for by

FLAME

Facts and Logic About the Middle East
P.O. Box 590359 ■ San Francisco, CA 94159
Gerardo Joffe, President

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