

Israel Celebrates Its 60th Birthday

By Samuel L. Blumenfeld

In Tel Aviv, On May 14, 1948 at 4:00 p.m. (the 5th of Iyar in the Hebrew calendar), despite immense international pressure not to declare independence, Israel declared itself a state. David Ben Gurion read the Declaration of Independence over the radio:

“Exiled from Palestine, the Jewish people remained faithful to it in all the countries of the dispersion, never ceasing to pray and hope for their return and restoration of their national freedom.

“Accordingly we, the members of the National Council met together in solemn assembly today and by virtue of the natural and historic right of the Jewish people and with the support of the resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations, hereby proclaim the establishment of the Jewish state in Palestine to be called Israel.”

On November 29, 1947, the United Nations had voted for the partition plan, dividing Palestine into Jewish and Arab states. The Arabs in the UN rejected the partition. Nevertheless, the British were planning to leave Palestine on May 15, 1948. That provided the Jews with their longed-for opportunity to create an independent Jewish state, certainly one of the great miracles of the twentieth century in the making.

Almost immediately five Arab countries declared war and Egypt bombed Tel Aviv. Thus, like the creation of the United States in which the Declaration of Independence of July 4, 1776 was followed by the War of Independence against Great Britain, so was Israel’s declaration of Independence greeted by a ferocious war by its Arab neighbors.

At the time, the Jewish population in Palestine was less than 700,000. Nevertheless, in its fight for survival, the new Jewish state beat back the invaders, capturing more territory than the partition plan had given it.

Despite the cease-fire, the Arabs were determined to destroy Israel, and sixty years later, despite peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan, Arab Palestinian belligerence continues unabated.

Meanwhile, Israel’s population has grown to over 7 million, including 1.2 million Muslims who enjoy equal democratic rights, 140,000 Christians, and 100,000 Druze. In fact, Israel now has a larger population than Jordan, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, New Zealand, Norway, and Lebanon.

In its sixty years, Israel has developed a dynamic high-tech economy, a highly efficient agriculture, world-class universities, and a vibrant cultural life. It provides some of the world's most advanced medical research and technology. The products of its pharmaceutical industry are used throughout the world. Its defense forces are first rate.

While the Arabs are rich in oil, the Israelis are rich in brains. Yet, Israel is the only member of the United Nations threatened with annihilation by another member, Iran. It is the only country whose borders are not internationally recognized, the only country whose capital city has no foreign embassies. And it is the only country expected to jeopardize its security by yielding tangible assets to its enemies.

Indeed, when the Israeli government unilaterally destroyed its highly productive settlements in Gaza, uprooting thousands of Israeli citizens, the Palestinians showed their appreciation by continuing to lob bombs into southern Israel, killing innocent civilians and destroying property.

Despite this ongoing war against Arab terrorists, Israel continues to grow and prosper. It has become a world innovator in science and technology, being second only to America in the number of high-tech start-ups represented on the NASDAQ. In world culture, its musicians and conductors and the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra play in all the great concert halls of the world.

And what have the Palestinians accomplished in the past 60 years? They have been on the receiving end of world charity during all of that time. Despite the fact that Arab nations are rolling in petrodollars, they produce nothing that contributes to the social and economic betterment of mankind. Their exports are radical terrorists, Islamic schools in which to inculcate Islamic extremist doctrines, and the building of mosques throughout the world. They've done virtually nothing to solve the Palestinian refugee problem since 1948.

Israel, on the other hand, has welcomed the hundreds of thousands of Jews who have had to leave Arab countries to escape persecution, has absorbed a million Russian Jews, and continues to rescue Jews from Ethiopia and non-Jews from Darfur and other African troublespots. Israel's record of humanitarian generosity speaks for itself. Indeed, Muslims living within Israel enjoy a higher degree of economic security and freedom than they would in any Arab country.

And so, there is much to celebrate in this 60th anniversary of Israel's birth: the triumph of good over evil, the triumph of brains over terrorism.