



The Ebbing of Euphoria

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SEVERAL MONTHS have passed since the feats of the Israeli Army lifted Jews throughout the world to one of the greatest emotional peaks in their turbulent history. Its effects have not yet worn off—not in Israel and not in the United States. But the reaction is well under way. Unless things are handled with great skill, Israel will gradually return to the discomforts and problems that beset it before the June war.

The key word to describe Israel's condition and mood during the months before the war is "*mitun*," which means "moderation," but which in effect resulted in a recession. On the economic level Israel's recession was severe. But the country as a whole understood the need for the government's program and was even proud of a policy designed to increase efficiency and make the state less dependent on charitable contributions from abroad. The recession that most worried Israel and its leaders had its roots in less tangible but far more dangerous layers of reality. During the year

preceding the war, Israel was overcome by a recession of spirit—a recession of self-confidence and belief in its own future, a mood that if continued could only point toward the demise of the Jewish state, with or without the help of the Arabs.

The Days of Disquiet

What was it that brought about this mood? First and foremost, the economic downturn, which was felt most by the poorest and least secure elements of the population, namely, the recent immigrants who had been directed to settle in outlying towns and border villages. This was accompanied by the dwindling of immigration to a mere trickle and a notable rise in the emigration of recently graduated technicians, engineers, and doctors—more than forty per cent of the latter were said to have left Israel over the past few years. But in the Israeli press this news usually appeared in the back pages. The front pages were filled with news of political battles.

Now, political controversy in Is-

rael, where a dozen parties are forever splitting into splinter parties or merging into coalitions needed to form a governing majority, is not a new phenomenon. What was new this year was the ugly personal nature of the debates. Schoolchildren brought home jokebooks mocking the government and its leadership. Nobody escaped besmirching: Abba Eban needed a translator in Israel for his fancy Hebrew and a translator in the United States for his grandiloquent English; Golda Meir was the only "man" in the ruling circles. But the most popular subject for public lampooning was Premier Levi Eshkol.

There is an element of pathos in Eshkol's attempt to play the role of a national leader in a time of crisis. He seems to have an unfortunate gift for the inappropriate gesture or word, whether it be the needless—and, in the light of Israel's policy on Jerusalem, embarrassing—statement on the first day of the war that Israel had no interest in territorial acquisition, or

the self-diminishing attempt to publicly lessen General Moshe Dayan's achievements with the wistful statement that all would have been the same if he, Levi Eshkol, had remained Minister of Defense during the war. Either the timing or the words or both are out of place. When, after the elections, people accused him of not knowing his own mind, he replied, "I compromise and compromise until I get my own way." In fact, it was this willingness to listen to all sides that made him appear to the public as the kind of "reasonable" man they wanted after the reign of the impetuous, dictatorial David Ben Gurion.

ONE is tempted to think in terms of the unconscious to explain the complex of emotions underlying Israeli politics before the war. During the decades that preceded and followed the establishment of the Jewish state in 1948, it might be argued, Ben Gurion was the father figure of the nation. But in 1965, Ben Gurion resigned from the Mapai Party when the majority refused to accept his views on an intraparty controversy, forming a new party called Rafi. After the Old Man resigned his seat of power, the revolt and revenge of his formerly docile children did have Oedipal overtones. Ben Gurion's decisions were always made in the light of a stern vision which took little account of individual or even party interests. The result, over the years, was many bruised egos and many unsettled personal accounts. Golda Meir was Foreign Minister during the Sinai Campaign in 1956, yet the launching of the campaign was as much a surprise to her as it was to almost everybody else in the country. The official reason given was the need for utmost secrecy. Today, there is no more virulent anti-Ben Gurion and anti-Rafi voice than Golda Meir's. We may see the feelings between Ben Gurion and his former subordinates in terms of the Oedipus complex, the settling of old accounts, or simply as the natural desire of properly elected leaders to prove their mettle. Whatever the analysis, the present leadership of Mapai is still haunted by the image of Ben Gurion and those who follow his leadership—to the extent that

the most crucial government decisions are seen in terms of their personal struggle with him.

This is not to say that one party thinks only in terms of national interests while the other thinks in terms of party and personal prestige. But the normal exchange between the ins and the outs is, in this case, complicated by a maze of personal memories, loves, hates, and antagonisms, such as develop in a family over a lifetime of too close relationships.

And Israel's politicians are a long-lived family. A foreign visitor, Senator Joseph S. Clark of Pennsylvania, put his finger on the major weakness of Israeli politics when he pointed out that the median age of the Knesset was probably higher than in any other parliamentary body in the world. Israelis say that their present system of government is neither a theocracy nor a democracy but a gerontocracy.

This is no reflection on the character of the Knesset members, most of whom were indeed the founding fathers of the country. But its negative effect, outside of an understandable degree of personal and party nepotism, is a tendency to think in terms of old formulas, even when the old solutions are obviously unrelated to new realities.

A Problem of Numbers

The most urgent of these new realities was the fact that immigration into Israel was on the verge of being overtaken by emigration. This fact had a number of clear-cut statistical implications that could not help but undermine morale. The nearly two and a half million Jews of Israel are surrounded by sixty million Arabs sworn to their destruction. The birthrate of the Arab minority within Israel is much higher than the Jewish rate of 1.6 per cent. Thus, the present Arab minority in Israel—not counting the increase of Arab population as a result of the war—could become a majority in the foreseeable future.

The presupposition upon which the Jewish state based its existence and future was that a substantial percentage of Jews in the Diaspora would want to live in Israel as a matter of free choice. This thesis has been shaken by a number of

events over the past years. There has not been any substantial immigration from the Jewish populations in the West. Even when Jews had been forced to leave their native lands, as in Algeria or Cuba, most did not go to Israel. And the Soviet Union, the land at which longing eyes were cast as the source some day for a mass immigration, seemed nowhere near allowing such an exodus of its Jews.

To this situation, the country's leaders responded with the same formulas that they had been using for years. Jews were told to come to Israel in order to avoid a future debacle, either physical or spiritual, in the lands of their birth. Only in Israel would they be able to lead "full" Jewish lives. And even as they would benefit, physically and spiritually, from Israel, so would Israel benefit from the skill, technical training, and capital they brought from the Diaspora. Ignored in these calls was the fact that Jews in western lands did not anticipate a physical debacle or, if they did anticipate it, saw no greater security in Israel; or the fact that Israeli skill and training were emigrating from the land because of unemployment; or the fact that the great majority of Jews were not at all interested in leading a "full" Jewish life. The answers were old; the reality was new. Adding it all up together—the economic *mitun*, the drying up of immigration, the occupation of the old leaders with personal accounts, jealousies, and rages, the absence of any answers other than the old slogans—all this combined to give everybody a feeling of being on a becalmed vessel with no prospect of wind.

EVERYTHING was changed the third week of May. The question of whether the Israeli government anticipated President Nasser's moves or reacted in the proper manner is now a subject of political controversy. But for anyone living in Israel those weeks, it was obvious beyond any argument that the government and its intelligence services had not expected the sudden turn of events. It was only after the U.N. had been removed from the Egyptian border and Nasser had moved thousands of troops into the Sinai that the most elementary procedures of civil de-

fense were instituted. Bomb shelters and air-raid drills had not been thought about for years.

The weather was lovely and the soldiers sang as they readied their weapons and gathered around campfires in the evening. But in the cities there was a stillness that was rooted in more than sad anticipation of war. It was a stillness that spoke of endings. The months of the *mitun* had produced a joke. Somebody had put up a sign at Lydda Airport: "Will the last Jew to leave the country please put out the lights." There was another joke, more difficult to translate. A Sabra shrugs his shoulders and says, "Nu, so we didn't succeed in building a third Jewish state. What can you do." A month before, people had laughed at such stories. Now they were too close to reality for laughter.

It seemed to everybody except the army that there was no way of postponing a catastrophe. If there was war, it would be survived, but at a cost that would bleed the government of its youth and future. If there was no war, there would be slow strangulation.

The significance of the feelings that characterized the Israeli response to the war will be discussed for years to come. Some people have no hesitation in comparing the historic meaning of this war to Biblical episodes like the Exodus from Egypt and the crossing of the Red Sea. The quality of the sacrifice—and the style of the fighting—must be judged in the light of the fact that almost a third of those killed were officers.

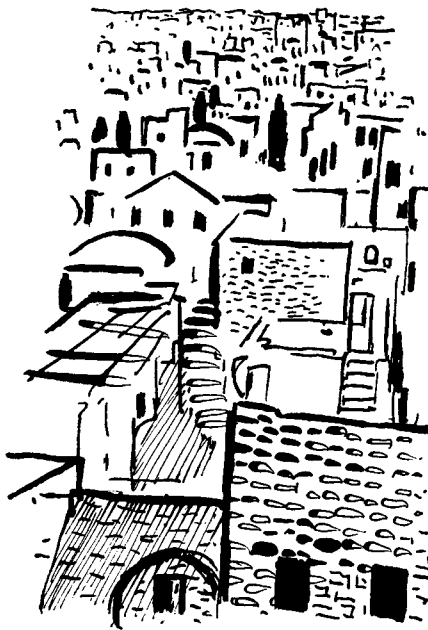
Another statistic is the fact that nearly a third of Israel's dead were killed in the battle for the Old City of Jerusalem—this loss being caused in part by the order forbidding the use of artillery in order to spare the holy sites. Any Israeli government engineering the return to peace knows that this figure is a more persuasive reality in its people's mind than any amount of diplomatic pressure. Putting it bluntly, a government that tried to return the Old City to anything like its former status would fall. The same limitations on government policy would apply to heights from which Syrian guns were able almost at will to destroy settlements ringing the Sea of Galilee. They would obvious-

ly also apply to the Strait of Tiran, whose blockade initiated the events leading to the war.

All these facts are crystal clear, both to the government and the population. They set very severe limits on any geographical compromise for a postwar settlement.

The Changing Spirit

Far less clear are the implications of certain moods and feelings that swept the population during and immediately following the war. Why



battle-hardened paratroopers with no claim to religious feelings cried and rubbed their cheeks on the stones of the western wall of the Temple in Jerusalem is a question to which Israelis themselves cannot offer a clear answer. After all, most of these soldiers are the younger brothers and sisters of veterans, who, after the Israeli War of Independence, couldn't stand speeches beginning "Two thousand years ago. . . ." These were the young people ostensibly so lacking in feeling for the Jewish past as to have impelled educational authorities to create an ineffectual course in Jewish consciousness. Why, then, this feeling for some old stones belonging to a Temple whose religious rites very few would like to see restored? The Wall is, of course, a symbol of historic continuity, a place throbbing with past memories. Not that most

Israelis think about the Wall in terms of religious orthodoxy. Nevertheless, the most confirmed secularist could scarcely repress within himself a feeling that its return implied that Jewish history had taken a great and decisive turn.

Adding impetus to this sense of an utterly new phase of national history was the sudden melting of the boundaries. For weeks after the war, Israeli roads leading to Jerusalem and into the West Bank of the Jordan resembled the rush-hour traffic jam of a major American city.

For nineteen years, Israelis had walked up streets and traveled along roads that ended with the sign "Border—No Passing." The bursting of Israel's physical borders had, then, a psychological component. It was again a foretaste of that time when all artificial borders would be eliminated. And in this case, even as promised in Messiah's times, the breakthrough of physical barriers was accompanied by a breakthrough of human barriers on a personal and national level. Ephraim Kishon, a popular Israeli columnist, has satirized Israel's wartime "crisis of politeness." It was a time, writes Kishon, when automobile drivers not only hastened to pick up hitch-hikers but deliberately chose elderly ladies with glasses over young pretty army girls. A member of a kibbutz reminisces how only a few days after the war "We became aware of how precious everyone was to us. . . . Suddenly we knew how to be better to each other, more tolerant."

Even more dramatic and inspiring was the melting of political and personal boundaries on the level of national leadership. Ben Gurion and his lifelong political and ideological enemy Menachem Beigen embraced each other on the floor of the Knesset. Mapai, the dominant party, agreed to form a "wall-to-wall" cabinet that would include the opposition. It was a taste of unity which, people said, they did not expect to see until the Messiah's times.

Not the smallest part of Israel's Messianic mood was the news of the reaction of Jewish communities throughout the world. And there was indeed something extraordinary about this reaction. At last counting,

contributions of world Jewry to the Israel Emergency Fund amounted to more than \$350 million. In the United States people mortgaged homes, sold jewelry, stock, and—the acme of all paper heroism—gave from capital. But the fact in itself does not tell the full story of what Israel's battle for survival meant to Jews who were themselves not personally threatened by annihilation. "Give now or you may never have a chance to give again" was the slogan used at fund-raising efforts.

Logically, this didn't make sense. If Israel were destroyed, there would obviously be plenty of opportunity and need for giving again. Yet there was the feeling that this was indeed the last chance. For what? My own guess is that the "what" had to do with layers of consciousness that surround what the theologians call ultimate questions. To understand this feeling, one must realize that the destruction of six million innocent men, women, and children has not yet been digested by Jews and Judaism. That is to say, Jews who want to make some sort of sense out of their history and out of the claim of this history—that there is some kind of moral arithmetic "up there," have not really been able to shake off the "lesson" of this catastrophe. For individual Jews, its pragmatic implication would be an agreement with Heine's definition of Judaism as a misfortune and desire to "want out." On a theological level, it seemed to say that there was "no judge and no judgment."

In other words, the lesson of holocaust would be the conclusion that there is no sense in Jewish historic existence. Seeking to escape from this abyss of negation, Jews were able to turn to only one fact—the emergence of the State of Israel. Rightly or wrongly, many Jews felt that the survival of Israel was their last chance to give some measure of meaning to the suffering of the innocents who perished in Auschwitz and Treblinka—indeed, a last chance to make any sense out of Jewish history. Consciously or unconsciously, then, Israel's victory took on the significance of a sign in the old Biblical sense. Few used that kind of language, but the feeling was there. It looked as though Israel was to

become the instrument and sense for an utterly new and brighter phase of Jewish history. It had turned into a symbol of the old Messianic dream.

In Victory's Wake

And here is the damper. For Messianic dreams and efforts to turn nations into symbols are likely to be followed by a painful reawakening—and the loftier the dream, the more dangerous the reawakening.

Outside Israel, this reawakening is not likely to be very dramatic. From the Jewish communities will still come generous contributions to the Israel Emergency Fund. But the excitement will be gone—in fact, replaced by some troublesome "back-

of economic forces that brought about the *mitun*—namely, the absence of local markets and the inability of Israeli products to compete in either price or quality—remains unchanged. The political battlefield is again fiercely alive. The energy expended on this intramural battling leaves little over for the awesome problems involved in the administration of the newly acquired Arab territories.

As for immigration, all agree that today, with the access of a million Arabs, the need is greater than ever before. Every convention and gathering of Jews from abroad has been bombarded with fruitless calls for immediate *Aliyah*. At the same time, the agencies in charge of attracting and assimilating new immigrants have missed the opportunity of even temporarily absorbing some of the volunteers who did come to Israel during the war.



IN SHORT, the economic and political factors that produced Israel's *mitun* before the war are present again, and the demographic problem—the danger of the Jews' becoming a minority in their own land—is even more severe. But a change has taken place. It is not a Messianic change but it is a change of spirit that can be seen in the eyes of the gas-station attendant or the waiter who has just taken off his army uniform. The fact of the matter is that Israel, as a result of the Six Day War in June, has established once and for all the right to exist. After two thousand years, Israel once again *belongs* in the Middle East. And it has been made clear that it is the commitment of the United States that this should be so.

But a change has also taken place on another level. Those not diffident about using religious terminology could call it a renewed belief in the Covenant—a conviction that whatever force uses history to display its will, obviously wants the Jews to live. Such a conviction may not be given much weight in a cold analysis of the prospects of a small Middle Eastern state. But it is precisely this conviction that has kept Jewish history going and brought the State of Israel into being. It is likely to again be the decisive element for the future.

lash" to the Israeli victory. If the Jew can no longer be despised for his powerlessness or alienation from the soil and healthy physical labor, then he can be denounced as an aggressor and persecutor of innocent Arab men, women, and children. This is not to say that all non-Jewish opinion must take this path. As a matter of fact, most American non-Jews are still very pro-Israel in their sentiments. Nevertheless, a pro-Israel position in days to come will not be as comfortable as during the weeks when it was clear that only Israel stood in the way of a complete Soviet take-over in the Middle East.

As for Israel itself, the basic mix

The Strange World Of UNRWA

GEORGE BAILEY

PROBABLY the most significant result of the Six Day War to date is the direct confrontation of the State of Israel with its political antibody, the Arab refugee community, as institutionalized in UNRWA, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees. The confrontation was inevitable because the solving of one moral issue—the resettlement of the Jewish victims of Nazism—inadvertently begot the moral counterissue of the repatriation of the Palestinian exiles; but it was critically prejudiced when the Palestinian refugees became, in effect, wards of the United Nations. The degeneration and final corruption of this wardship is exposed—in a kind of agony between reticence and resoluteness—in the seventeenth annual report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, released to the public on October 18.

In December, 1948, shortly before the first Arab-Israeli war ended, the U.N. General Assembly adopted Resolution 194, which stipulated that the refugees be permitted to return to their homes and that compensation be paid to those not choosing to return. To care for the refugees, the United Nations Relief for Palestine was set up as a temporary mission. In 1950, in response to the recommendation of a U.N. economic survey that employment be found for the refugees, "Works" was coupled with "Relief" and UNRWA was born with a three-year mandate. Its latest report recalls that the 1948 resolution "has been reaffirmed year after year by the Assembly but has remained unimplemented." Instead, the refugee community has grown steadily from 800,000 in 1948 to some one and a quarter million at the time of the outbreak of the Arab-Israeli war in June, since when it has increased by 220,000.

On June 14, hardly three days after the Syrian cease-fire, the Security Council passed Resolution 237, which stipulated that the second

wave of refugees be permitted to return to their homes. Meanwhile Arabs continued to flee from the West Bank to the East Bank of the Jordan by the thousands, most of them in army trucks provided by the Israeli government. Only half of these 200,000 refugees were already registered with UNRWA; and with the overrunning of the Golan Heights in Syria and the Sinai Peninsula by the Israeli Army, their ranks were swollen by Syrian and Egyptian nationals.

Despite the resolution, there has been no question of returning this last group, numbering some 150,000, to Syria and the United Arab Republic, since the Syrian and U.A.R. governments have refused to enter into negotiations with the Israelis. With Jordan the case was different. In early July, it was arranged through the Red Cross intermediary to repatriate refugees there to the West Bank once they had filled in applications and been investigated. After a number of delays, on August 6, at a meeting on the Allenby Bridge, representatives of the Israeli government, the International Red Cross, and the Jordanian Red Crescent agreed on the format and text of the applications, which were then printed in Hebrew, Arab, and English. August 31 was set as the deadline, apparently for the submission of applications only and not the physical return.

During this period the Israelis set up a refreshment stand for the refugees under the trees just off the approach to the Allenby Bridge. Since the bridge is about seven miles from the Dead Sea, where temperatures register more than thirty degrees higher than in Amman or Jerusalem, the refugees, most of them couples with small children, proceeded across the bridge in the cool of the morning. When necessary, Israeli soldiers lent a hand. The operation proceeded smoothly. There were no incidents, but neither

were there ever very many refugees. Only slightly more than fourteen thousand—less than a tenth of those who fled—have returned over the Jordan to the West Bank. The Israelis have agreed to admit the remaining six thousand of those they have authorized to return, but negotiations seem to hang fire.

Conflicting Aims

Apart from the fact that the deadline of August 31, announced as the cutoff date for repatriation itself by Foreign Minister Abba Eban on August 14, was deplored as entirely out of keeping with the spirit and the wording of the two United Nations resolutions, something was obviously wrong.

In the two weeks between the announcement of the deadline and the deadline proper, UNRWA in Jordan, by working day and night, had processed forty thousand applications of at least 150,000 people for return to the West Bank. Only about thirteen per cent of these were returned by the Israeli authorities with the requisite pink passage slips denoting acceptance. The Jordanian authorities complained that they were usually given only twelve hours to round up and present several hundred refugees scattered throughout nine camps. When the Israelis, as they often did, accepted some and rejected others of the same family, the entire family usually refused to go. Old refugees from the townships of Jericho, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem were rejected out of hand: the report states that only three thousand of the 93,000 old refugees were permitted to return.

From the beginning, the furtive, almost clandestine behavior of the Jordanian officials in negotiations was accompanied by publicized incitements to the returning refugees to act as saboteurs, "as advance guerrilla groups," or as mere practitioners of civil disobedience. One Amman newspaper quoted a Jordanian cabinet minister in an impassioned plea to all West Bank residents to resist the Israeli occupying authority by every possible means. The minister denied that he had ever made such a statement, but such incitements were repeatedly broadcast by Radio Amman. These were branded by the