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Ben-Gurion's Diary for the 1967 Six-Day War: An Introduction

THE FOLLOWING ENTRIES TO BEN-GURION'S 1967 Diary have been divided into three sections. The first part, 18 May to 4 June, deals with political maneuvering prior to the Six-Day War that led to the appointment of Moshe Dayan, a key member in an aggressive opposition party, as Defense Minister. The second part, 5 June to 10 June, provides Ben-Gurion's intimate and personal perspective of the war. The third, 11 June to 17 June, contains Ben-Gurion's outlines for Israeli policy in radically new circumstances. In these Diary entries, one can observe how, in less than one month, Israel was transformed from a country that perceived its survival threatened, into a secure and confident state facing choices that would shape its own future and that of its neighbors.

When the Six-Day War broke out, Ben-Gurion was almost eighty years old. Although he was no longer the Prime Minister, having resigned four years earlier in June 1963, he was still a Member of Knesset and the leader of Rafi (the List of Israel Workers and Non-Partisans), a new party he formed with devoted followers drawn largely from the ranks of Labor. Nevertheless, he possessed enormous authority within both the Israeli public and a large body of political insiders, including leading politicians of other parties.¹ Indeed, he was at the center of the opposition to Levi Eshkol, who replaced him as Prime Minister. The issues that divided them derived from diverging ideas on how to handle "the Lavon Affair," an espionage fiasco carried out in Egypt by Israeli intelligence operators in the mid-1950s. For reasons still murky, plans went awry and the spy ring was captured; the Egyptians executed two members of the spy ring and imprisoned the remainder. Several committees attempted to locate responsibility for the fiasco, but failed to reach an explicit and unambiguous decision.

In the mid-1950s, public attention to the scandal began to wane. But in the early 1960s, Pinhas Lavon, the Minister of Defense at the time of the operation and the person who had borne the burden of blame for the

mishap, claimed that he had obtained new evidence that could prove his innocence. In light of this, the Israeli government decided to establish yet another committee composed of seven Ministers (“The Committee of Seven”). The Minister of Justice, Pinchas Rosen, was chairman, but Levi Eshkol was the dominant figure. This committee concluded that Lavon was innocent of approving the operation.

Ben-Gurion rejected the verdict, arguing that only a judicial committee could decide the matter. The majority in Labor, the party Ben-Gurion had lead for decades, refused to uphold his position and denied his demand for further inquiry into the scandal. They seemed to be eager to relegate the whole affair to the dustbin of history. When Eshkol became Prime Minister, he calculated that continued public preoccupation with the affair could endanger his government’s stability. Consequently, he adamantly refused to yield to Ben-Gurion’s call for a renewed investigation. By 1965, Ben-Gurion felt he could no longer remain in the same party with Eshkol and left to establish Rafi. The bitter and raucous feud with Eshkol resonates throughout the Diary and is here played out under the threat of a catastrophic conflict.

During the tense period before the war, Ben-Gurion charged that the crisis was to a large extent due to Eshkol’s muddled policies and mismanagement of state affairs. Ben-Gurion and his supporters in Rafi openly criticized Eshkol, claiming that he should have known that an aggressive policy toward Syria would culminate in warfare. He also accused Eshkol for a dangerous deterioration in Israel’s relations with France, Israel’s main ally and arms supplier. In the same vein, he admonished Eshkol for allowing the Israeli Intelligence Agency (the Mossad) to assist Moroccan undercover agents to assassinate a well-known Moroccan opposition leader, Mohammed Ben-Barka, on French soil. This reckless decision, asserted Ben-Gurion, could lead to a breakdown in French-Israeli relations. Echoing a long-standing concern, Ben-Gurion worried that, in the event of an all-out war with the Arab world, Israel might find herself short of arms and munitions if the French were further alienated.²

As the crisis with Egypt escalated and war appeared on the horizon, public pressure was exerted on Eshkol to relinquish his position as Defense Minister. The most popular candidate for this post was Moshe Dayan, a former Chief-of-Staff and Ben-Gurion’s trusted associate. Ben-Gurion was not placated by this suggestion. He wanted Eshkol also removed as Prime Minister. For the public record, Ben-Gurion stated that he, himself, was not interested in replacing Eshkol as Prime Minister. There is strong intimation here, however, that Ben-Gurion hoped this would, in fact, happen.



Ben-Gurion at the Western Wall with Col. Chaim Herzog, 1 July 1967.
Courtesy of the Government Press Office

When party leaders began negotiations on the creation of a national unity government to face the escalating crisis, Ben-Gurion agreed to an arrangement whereby he would serve as Israel's Prime Minister with Eshkol as Deputy Prime Minister. In this scenario, Ben-Gurion found an unexpected ally in Menachem Begin, who had been one of his bitterest opponents during the previous twenty years. Begin, the leader of the right-wing Gahal, presented this "compromise" solution to Eshkol, who categorically rejected it declaring: "These two horses [himself and Ben-Gurion] cannot be hitched to the same carriage." With the sinking of this trial-balloon, another idea was launched: the nomination of Moshe Dayan as Defense Minister with Eshkol remaining as Prime Minister. According to this scenario, Ben-Gurion would have no official role in government.³ When he came to realize that he lacked a majority to oust Eshkol and become Prime Minister, he gave tacit approval to the arrangement. As a gesture of good will, Dayan vowed that he would consult Ben-Gurion on every important decision. Yet, Ben-Gurion soon realized that it was totally impractical for a Defense Minister, up to his neck in a full-fledged war, to keep such a promise.

As the threat of war grew imminent following Egypt's massive troop concentration in the Sinai in mid-May 1967, Ben-Gurion urged that military operations against Egypt be undertaken only upon consultation with the Great Powers, particularly the United States. He predicted that the war could be prolonged and exact a high price in casualties. Ben-Gurion was also convinced that Israel would need to be rearmed during the conflict, and that the Western Powers would supply Israel with vital weapons only if they had been consulted prior to the attack on Egypt. His apprehensions are indicative of the widespread anxiety that seized the country during this period.

Ben-Gurion was clearly surprised by the quick and decisive victory achieved by the Israeli army and air force. On 5 June 1967, Ben-Gurion was invited to the General Staff's "situation room" for a briefing, where he learned about the Israeli Air Force's brilliant strike against Egyptian planes and airfields. His response was enthusiastic. He had no doubt that the nation would soon be engulfed in an outburst of euphoria and excitement.⁴

During the course of the war, he opposed attacking Syria. Although he believed that Syria was certainly deserving of severe punishment, he was alarmed that the Soviet Union might intervene on the side of its closest Middle-Eastern ally. Ben-Gurion had long stressed that Israel should never embark upon actions that might entangle it in a violent conflict with a Great Power such as the Soviet Union.⁵

While the war was being waged, as well as after it, Ben-Gurion's attention was focused primarily on Jerusalem. He was manifestly obsessed with the need to guarantee that the Old City of Jerusalem, occupied by Israeli forces on the second day of the war, would quickly become populated by as many Jews as possible in order to solidify and confirm Israeli control.⁶ He warned that the city would not remain in Jewish hands unless the government initiated energetic programs of directed settlement and construction. For Ben-Gurion, this new situation offered an opportunity for rectifying one of the failures of Israel's War of Independence, which had resulted in a divided city, with Israel excluded from the historic core in the eastern sector.

Over the past thirty years, Ben-Gurion's perspective and proposals have become part of the Israeli consensus. Certainly his insistence on maintaining Jewish control over the city is a principle shared by most of the country's leadership and population. So, too, has his willingness to negotiate the withdrawal from other gains on the battlefield for the sake of a lasting accommodation with Israel's neighbors. Finally, there is also widespread appreciation for his view that Israel should not attempt to govern the Arab population on the West Bank. In sum, in these entries one can perceive the initial attempt to grapple with issues that have been central in Israeli society since the Six-Day War.⁷

NOTES

*We are grateful to Moshe Tlamim for translating the Hebrew text.

1. On Ben-Gurion's resignation from office on 16 June 1963, see, Zaki Shalom,

“Ben-Gurion’s Resignation from Government: Ben-Gurion Diary, 16 June 1963,” *Iyunim Bitkumat Yisrael*, 5 (1995) 608–614 [Hebrew].

2. Rafi Secretariat Session, 21 May 1967, Labor Movement Archives, Beit-Berl [Hebrew].

3. *Ibid.*, 24 May 1967.

4. Ben-Gurion’s letter to Yosef Weitz, 12 June 1967, File: Correspondence, Ben-Gurion Archives, Sde-Boker [Hebrew].

5. *Ben-Gurion Diary*, 10 June 1967, Ben-Gurion Archives, Sde-Boker [Hebrew].

6. On Ben-Gurion’s views regarding Jerusalem, see Zaki Shalom, “Israel’s Struggle to thwart UN Resolutions on the Internationalization of Jerusalem in the 1950s,” *Iyunim Bitkumat Yisrael*, 3 (1993) 75–98 [Hebrew].

7. Ben-Gurion Diary, 8 June 1967, Ben-Gurion Archives.

Ben-Gurion Diary May–June 1967

I. Before Hostilities

22 May 1967 (Tuesday)

—I studied the political crisis today. I believe that after [Levi] Eshkol’s report, the Knesset debates should cease immediately and be referred to the Foreign Affairs and Security Committee. Yesterday Yitzhak Rabin told me there were 80 planes in Syria, not 130. There had been 130 sorties. I explained to him that our call up (of 70,000 reservists) was a political and social mistake. I mentioned other mistakes. Yitzhak was depressed. I told him that he’s keeping something from me because he has to follow the Defense Minister’s orders and is not allowed to criticize him . . .

24 May 1967 (Wednesday)

— . . . Shimon [Peres] came over. Yesterday members of the Foreign Affairs and Security Committee met with Eshkol. [Menahem] Begin tried to persuade Eshkol to ask me to head a National Unity Government. Eshkol refused . . . I don’t believe Eshkol will step down, even if he stays on as deputy Prime Minister, or that Golda [Meir] will agree to it, or that the core of the Labor Party will change.

- At 18:30 returned. We held a midnight meeting in the Rafi [Party] office in Jerusalem. Those present: Begin [Gahal],¹ [Aryeh] Ben-Eliezer [Gahal], [Yitzhak] Rafael [NRP],² [Israel Solomon] Ben-Meir [NRP], Yitzhak Navon [Rafi] , [Elimelech] Rimault [Gahal], Yosef Sapir [Independent Liberals], Aryeh Bahir [Rafi],³ Y.[ochanan] Bader [Gahal]. Begin said that he spoke with Shimon Peres yesterday and asked him to suggest that Ben-Gurion head a National Unity Government and take responsibility for defense matters. He believed that Eshkol would be Deputy Prime Minister. A government is needed that can earn the nation's confidence . . . A war cabinet would be formed with Ben-Gurion at its head. In his [Rafael's] opinion this has a good chance. Begin said he was willing to speak with Eshkol about Ben-Gurion's appointment to Prime Minister and Defense Minister. Ben-Meir said that the NRP had no objection to Ben-Gurion as Prime Minister of a National Unity Government, but this would require the Alignment's consent, and he doubted if it would agree. They're willing to pressure Eshkol, but they won't abandon the government in an hour of emergency. Bader is convinced that in the Knesset's present state they won't agree to Ben-Gurion taking charge of military affairs, foreign policy, and finances . . .
- Shimon received an answer from Golda that tomorrow she'll answer his request for discussions.
- A half-hour before midnight, Shimon, Bahir, and Issar [Harel] [Head of the Mossad] came to see me. During the day they had met with members of the Foreign Affairs and Security Committee and with Eshkol. Begin suggested that Eshkol ask me to head a National Unity Government. Eshkol refused . . . I doubt Eshkol will resign, even if they make him Deputy Prime Minister, or that Golda will agree to it, or that the core of the Labor Party will change.
- Paula brought me a new kind of sleeping pill.

25 May 1967 (Thursday)

- From reading *Davar* [Labor's daily newspaper] this morning, it's clear that neither Eshkol nor Golda are willing to make any changes.
- The political crisis grows worse. [Lyndon] Johnson has agreed to De Gaulle's proposal that the four Superpowers become involved—but I don't believe the Russians will go along with this. [Harold] Wilson [British Prime Minister] too is lukewarm.
- Last night Issar [Harel] [ex-Director of the Mossad] told me in absolute secrecy that Yitzhak Rabin was still "unnerved." I phoned Haim [Yisraeli] and learned that [Rabin's] condition had improved. Moshe [Dayan] is

still in the Negev. Went there to raise the troops' morale. No doubt part of the public is expecting a change. Shimon is convinced that the whole country is. But it's the Knesset's decision now, and in the Knesset the Coalition determines things, and in the coalition it's the Alignment,⁴ and in the Alignment it's a handful of people who make the decisions: Golda [Meir], [Israel] Galili, Eshkol, [Pinchas] Sapir, Yigal Allon.

- . . . Shaul [Avigur] [special advisor to Eshkol; colleague of Ben-Gurion.] and Shimon came to see me. Shimon opened the conversation: "The crisis is perhaps more serious now than 19 years ago. We must set up a cross-the-board government. Without stipulations." Shaul told him yesterday that his assessment is no different from mine. Shaul added that the Lavon Affair should be forgotten. I said that I was willing to stop writing about the past, but Shaul missed the most important point—to continue with the present government or not.
- At seven in the evening, Shimon, Yosef [Almogi], Yakov Dori, [Aryeh] Bahir [all members of Rafi], and Issar [Harel] came over . . . If Eban returns empty-handed from Washington, there will be war. Shimon told me that Israel must not commence hostilities. Hussein could be toppled. Saudi Arabia and Iraq are sending their troops to Jordan. Our plan to bomb their planes will not change the situation, the Russians will send over more planes. If we are attacked, their supply lines will not be cut off; if we attack, an embargo will be slapped on us. A message was received from De Gaulle: 1) He wants to see a strong Israel. 2) He advises us not to attack. 3) [He asks us] to give the four Superpowers a chance to meet. Today Eban is meeting with Johnson.
- The Foreign Affairs and Security Committee will probably convene tomorrow. I advised our colleagues to refrain from discussing whether or not to initiate hostilities, unless specific information is asked about our capability, our neighbors' ability, or the extent of information available to our intelligence service. Rafi meeting tonight at ten-thirty.

26 May 1967 (Friday)

- Shimon and Yosef came over this morning. Shimon is certain that we'll attack today. 110,000 troops are deployed in the south, and units are stationed in the north and east. He also spoke with [Meir] Amit [Head of the Secret Service]. We know about their plans. Moshe is visiting the south. It's not known exactly where . . . In the meantime Shimon received Golda's reply:
- "Pursuant to my letter to you dated 24 May 1967, I am informing you that R.[euven] Barkatt and myself are ready to meet with you in the Labor

Party's offices *on Sunday* (my emphasis), 28 May 1967, at 10:30 AM. Sincerely, G.M." This type of rudeness fits Golda's "alignment" of feelings now . . .

- . . . O.[ved] Ben-Ami [Mayor of Netanya; newspaper publisher] came to see me. He suggests holding a newspaper conference on Sunday, together with Begin, on the need for a national government. I told him: 1) Begin's presence is unnecessary, it's preferable for each of us to hold it separately. 2) It's unnecessary today to decide what to do on Sunday—we should wait and see what happens the next two days. In my opinion, Nasser won't do anything; it's enough that he closed the Straits [of Tiran], that has enhanced his image. In my opinion he also won't allow attacks on our settlements from the Gaza Strip. But I don't know what we'll do. I've been told that our army is not only on war footing but wants to attack immediately (although I must add I'm not sure if this is true). However, the army doesn't decide, the Minister of Defense does, in other words, Yigal, Galili, Eshkol, and maybe someone else. So, I don't know what's happening today or tomorrow. We'll have to wait.
- At two o'clock I arrived in Beer-Sheva to meet with Moshe . . . He wants to enlist in the army as a private. He'll present his offer to Eshkol or Rabin. Dayan says the army received an order to launch an assault on the Gaza Strip, but it was later canceled. I told Moshe that if I was his age I'd also enlist, but the crisis still has to be fully understood. Although there's almost no hope for even the minimal change necessary, still we must try. I told him of the reply Shimon received from Golda—that she and Barkat are willing to meet with two Rafi delegates on Sunday . . . He said that if it takes place—he'd come.
- I drove from Beer-Sheva to [my home in] Sde Boker (26 May 1967, Friday) to take back some essential things for these days [of crisis], and in the evening we returned to Tel-Aviv (after the car broke down). We arrived in the city just as the Foreign Affairs and Security Committee meeting was over. They have a new proposal: adding four people to the Cabinet Committee to administer the war. The four will be Begin, Rimalt, Golda, and Moshe (by the way, Moshe said he wouldn't participate in any arrangement with Eshkol). Shimon started telling me what took place in the Foreign Affairs and Security Committee meeting. The head of Intelligence, Areleh Yariv [Head of Military Intelligence] handed in a report. Between 14–26 May two changes have occurred: 1) the West has weakened; 2) the Soviets have made initiatives. After Russia's failure in Ghana and other African countries they're trying to strengthen their position in the Middle East. Israel has grown weak in the eyes of the

Arabs. Syria is apprehensive about an Israeli attack, because she believes we have concentrated fifteen brigades on the Syrian border (this is not true). The Soviet Union has advised Syria to act moderately, but is not pressuring her. Syria was asked not provoke an Israeli attack. Until 19 May relations between Syria and Egypt were not good. A change began on 7 April (due to our air activity in Syria). Then the Arabs' weakness became apparent, and they realized the need to strengthen their position. There are no reports of a Syrian-Egyptian pact, but in the last few weeks Russia has been changing its policy. Two Egyptian delegations paid a visit to Syria. One was headed by Sadki, commander of the air force, who promised assistance in case of a large-scale attack (but an Israeli retaliation [to a Syrian initiative] would be Syria's sole responsibility). The Egyptians saw the weakened state the Syrians are in and have decided to strengthen them by deploying troops in the Sinai. Between 19–22 May, Nasser began to move . . . He did three things: He stationed a huge army in Sinai; he blocked the Straits of Tiran; and he expelled the UN forces. In Sinai there are five divisions (one armored), five air squadrons, and a paratroop battalion. He brought over [Egyptian] armor units from Yemen. One division is stationed in Sharm-el-Sheikh. Missile boats were sent to the Mediterranean to be able to hit Israel . . .

- In the meantime Yosef Sapir came in . . . I told him what I thought about the crisis: It will be an unprecedented test of our strength, our task is to open the straits, but we'll act only after receiving guarantees from friendly countries. Opening the straits by force would lead to war. Without the Western world's approval, the supply of weapons would dwindle. The Egyptian army (perhaps all the Arab armies will be aligned against us) are stronger now than ever. We will suffer losses in human life and arms, so will the Egyptians. Loss of life is not among their worries, and arms they'll receive from Russia as much as they ask for. Without the certainty that we'll be re-armed by America, England, France, or all of them—we will fail. It would be the end, and we'd have to face reality. Our army is excellent, but this time we can't count on a David and Goliath style war.

27 May 1967 (Saturday evening)

- Rafi meeting today. Moshe also showed up. I briefly expressed my opinion on the crisis and what should be done if action is dependent on us. I mentioned by the way that the IDF had been ordered to attack the Egyptians in the Gaza Strip yesterday morning but the order was canceled. Moshe left the room in protest over what I had said, and Yaakov Dori quickly explained that this information had been related to me

confidentially by Moshe, and I had promised not to repeat it. This is the reason he walked out. I told Dori that if Dayan made such a claim then I imagine it's true, but I couldn't remember.

—This evening at seven-thirty, there was a meeting with M. Begin, Ben-Eliezer, Rimalt, Y. Sapir, Almogi, Shimon, and myself. I gave a short lecture (I'd written notes but cut it even shorter while I was speaking) about what we had to do, on the assumption that things were dependent on us:

- Liberate the blockade on Eilat after we inform the leaders of America, England, and France in a statement that we realize this act will push Nasser into war.

- Ask them to guarantee replacing our arms for those lost in battle, because the Egyptians and Syrians have a supplier in Russia. No one argued the point.

—Shimon told me privately, out of hearing range of the others, that an order has been relayed to begin war against Egypt tomorrow, therefore he wants to propose appointing Moshe as Chief-of-Staff or Defense Minister so that they would postpone the order for a few days. I didn't agree . . .

28 May 1967 (Sunday)

— . . . From two until three-thirty there was a meeting of the Foreign Affairs and Security Committee. Eban read his report. De Gaulle was worked-up because of rumors in Paris that we're about to attack . . . Johnson said the US was committed to freedom of navigation . . . This has to be discussed in the UN Security Council. There are a number of countries that have promised to send ships: Canada, Italy, Holland, Argentina. This is what Eban said. He immediately returned to the government (that had met last tonight). Yesterday De Gaulle's memo arrived.

—Begin went to Golda and Pinchas Sapir to propose Moshe Dayan as Defense Minister. They refused . . . Shimon spoke about the crisis and the [nation's] anxiety. Golda asked what he was proposing. Shimon answered that war demands a methodical system and leadership to direct the battle. Golda explained her views without sarcasm. He proposed BG as Prime Minister and M. Dayan as Defense Minister.

—Golda replied that the Alignment had decided to broaden the government and bring in Moshe Dayan as a member of the Ministerial Committee. Eshkol won't be asked to resign. However, they understand BG's criticism of him. The Defense Ministry should not be taken from Eshkol

. . . At four in the afternoon there was a government meeting. According to Shimon, we've already called up 200,000 reservists. I doubt it. This is madness!

- Toward evening, Issar came to see me, and, with heavy heart, he said I was right, "They won't be getting rid of Eshkol, no matter what happens, not from the Prime Minister's office nor from the Defense Ministry."
- According to Shimon, Eshkol called Moshe and asked him to join the government. Moshe rejected the offer.

30 May 1967 (Tuesday)

- . . . The newspapers published my speech last night . . . It made a great impression on the public, which again believes that Labor's leaders will cave in. According to Issar there's unrest in the Tel-Aviv branch. I think he's being naive.
- In the evening, Shimon called from Jerusalem. I'm requested to Jerusalem tomorrow morning for party consultation. I'll go but it seems unnecessary. Apparently somebody has come up with some bright new idea.
- The "Voice of Israel" announced this evening that socialist and international parties are supporting the Labor Party. They don't realize that the Labor Party doesn't represent the needs of Israel.

31 May 1967 (Wednesday)

- Shimon asked me to come to Jerusalem today for party consultations. Again, only Moshe D. is missing. And the question remains: "a unity government" or "a responsible government." Shimon suggested that I accompany him to a meeting with Labor leaders. . . . According to what my colleagues say, he [Ziama Aranne] and Golda, together with Galili and Yigal Allon, all wish to keep Eshkol in office. I told him that I'm considering meeting with Golda on the deepening crisis within the country. He advised me not to. By this I understood that he was convinced that she's incapable of listening to what I had to say. Therefore I did not take Shimon's advice.
- My colleagues want me to replace Eshkol as Prime Minister, with Moshe as Defense Minister. I am in favor of Moshe serving as both Prime Minister and Defense Minister, or someone else from Labor as Prime Minister. As long as Eshkol remains in office we'll continue heading toward an abyss . . .
- I returned to Tel-Aviv in the afternoon. . . .
- At ten past eight in the evening, Shimon called to say that Eshkol has

offered Moshe Dayan a ministerial post, and involvement in security matters. He's offered the Defense Ministry to Yigal Allon. Moshe rejected the offer . . .

- In a radio interview [Yosef] Burg [NRP] announced [unclear text] that the Egyptian attempt to block navigation to Eilat is an act of war. He criticized U Thant's pull-out of UN forces.

1 June 1967 (Thursday)

- . . . Shimon came to see me. He said that Moshe [Dayan] has accepted Eshkol's offer to be Southern Commander. This offended Yitzhak Rabin because it was done without his knowledge. According to Shimon, it all depends upon [Moshe] Kol [Progressive Party] now. Moshe Shapira [NRP] opposes Eshkol, and if the Liberals join, the government won't have a majority. . . .
- At six o'clock Shimon came over to tell me about the debate in the Labor Executive over Allon or Dayan. Those opposed to Dayan said that if he's appointed Defense Minister he'd handle everything without consulting anyone; if Allon is appointed, he'll do what he's told. Moshe was called twice yesterday to see Eshkol: at five in the evening and at nine. Eshkol offered Moshe the post of Deputy Prime Minister, with Allon as Defense Minister. They would be a foursome: Eshkol, Eban, Yigal and Moshe. Moshe replied he wouldn't even consider it, but he was prepared to be Prime Minister, Defense Minister, Chief-of-Staff, or Southern Commander. If he were Defense Minister he would not stay seated in his office, but would direct the war. Concerning a political role, Moshe told Eshkol to talk to Rafi; concerning a military command, "I'll do what I'm assigned." Rabin was also present at the nine o'clock meeting. He asked Dayan if he wanted to take over his job. Moshe answered negatively. Rabin asked if he'd serve under him? Moshe answered affirmatively, but only as commander of the southern front. Rabin wanted to think it over until the morning. Eshkol agreed to Dayan's appointment as Southern Commander. In the meantime Eshkol leaked to the papers that Moshe agreed to take the Southern command, and Shimon agreed to a ministerial post . . .
- . . . At seven-thirty in the evening Shimon, Yosef and Yitzhak Navon came to see me. They'll meet with Eshkol and ask him to resign . . .
- I was told of a demonstration today outside the Labor Executive's offices. About a hundred women were demonstrating. They carried two placards: "Golda—Enough Hatred!" "Eshkol—Let BG Take Over" . . .
- We held a Rafi party meeting this evening but many other people showed

up. In the meantime we heard on the “Voice of Israel” [national radio station] that Yigal Allon is renouncing his candidacy for Defense Minister. At the meeting I suggested we accept the offer for Dayan to be Defense Minister, but remain firm in our position that even after he joins the government, Eshkol should step down from the office of Prime Minister. [But] we wouldn't oppose him as Deputy Prime Minister . . . Moshe stipulated that his entrance into the government would be “linked” to me, i.e. that he would consult with me on a regular basis. Eshkol agreed to this and his colleagues praised his magnanimity.

—On this note the evening ended.

2 June 1967 (Friday)

- [Michael] Bar-Zohar [biographer of Ben-Gurion] brought me questions from Radio Luxembourg . . .
- Question 1*: What is my opinion of a National Unity Government?
- Answer*: The new government has strengthened our army's self-confidence and that of the civilian population, and has even raised the stature of Jews in the Diaspora. The Herut leader, Mr. Begin, displayed great [illegible text] responsibility. Handing the Defense Ministry to M. Dayan, who is not only an experienced general but also a wise statesman, is undoubtedly a great change for the better.
- Question 2*: Do you think Dayan's appointment to Defense Minister will bring about a change in the present crisis?
- Answer*: No doubt that the army is now in capable hands. But the Middle East is not isolated from the rest of the world. Developments can take place that depend to a large extent on the behavior of the democratic nations, first and foremost America, France and Great Britain. The Soviet Union's position is clear, and although it backs Egypt and Syria I am not convinced it's interested in the annihilation of Israel.
- Question 3*: Do you think war is inevitable between Israel and the Arab countries?
- Answer*: If the four Superpowers accept De Gaulle's suggestions and guarantee maritime freedom in the Gulf of Eilat, and they can do this without war, then hostilities would be prevented. However, this is not very likely.
- Question 4*: What is your opinion of the Superpowers' policy toward Israel right now, especially that of France?
- Answer*: I cannot speak for the Superpowers, and I won't speculate on their behavior. I've been out of office for years and I'm not in direct contact with the Superpowers.

- Question 5*: How do you assess Nasser's latest moves, and in your opinion what will be his next moves?
- Answer*: Nasser has already achieved one of his main goals: raising his stature in the Arab World, and Egyptian penetration of Jordan without opposition by the major powers. It's hard to imagine him not continuing his attack on Israel wither directly or indirectly.
- Question 6*: Do you believe an international action under the UN auspices, or independent of the UN, can prevent war?
- Answer*: I have doubts as to the UN's efficiency, although I feel its very existence is important, but the four countries: the US, Soviet Union, England and France can guarantee navigation freedom in the gulf and that can prevent war.
- Question 7*: Do you believe that one day Israel will achieve peace with the Arabs, and what conditions would facilitate this?
- Answer*: In my opinion, peace with the Arabs depends on a genuine rapprochement between Russia and the Western democracies (Europe and America), which can certainly come about through European unity. Russia's greatest threat is from the Chinese. European unity in the near future would permit East-West détente, and guarantee peace in the world and the Middle East. . . .
- In the evening the colleagues met at Shimon's place . . . Tomorrow evening the new government will convene. Teddy [Kolleck, Mayor of Jerusalem] said that an enormous anti-government demonstration had been organized in Jerusalem, but Dayan's appointment led to its cancellation . . .
- Shimon told me that he informed Eshkol about two of Rafi's decisions: Dayan's appointment and calling for Eshkol's resignation.

4 June 1967 (Sunday)

- Shimon arrived. He had a letter from Muka (Madim) [Mordechai Limon, IDF liaison in France] stating that, despite the government's decision, France will continue to supply us with certain weapons (ammunition and spare parts), but this will cease if the French government finds out. French public opinion has expressed great support for us, but De Gaulle hasn't changed his stand. He asked if I were willing to travel to France today . . .
- Shimon said that Moshe would come over tonight. At ten in the evening, after I'd already gotten into bed to read as usual, I heard a knock on the downstairs door. I went to open it thinking that Moshe Dayan had arrived. I was surprised to see it was Haim [Yisraeli]. He said that they

had already left their building at the Defense Ministry because Eshkol had requisitioned the entire top floor.

- Eshkol asked Haim to stay on, but he refused.
- Moshe arrived in the morning. At eleven A.M., he has a meeting with Eshkol because it's been decided to begin tomorrow, probably with an air strike. But he's willing to give me five minutes of his time . . . My heart is troubled by tomorrow's action because I don't know what transpired between us and the American and British leaders. In a brief conversation [with Dayan] I won't learn anything. I'm very worried about the step we're about to take . . . The haste involved here goes beyond my understanding. Would it not really be wiser to consult first, after I find out what was discussed with our friends?

II. War

5 June 1967 (Monday)

- Hostilities began this morning with our air strike in the south. There was also an assault on Khan Yunis and Rafiah [cities in the Gaza Strip]. I'm convinced that this is a grave mistake. We should have told Washington and London that we would initiate hostilities if the Straits of Tiran were not opened. Dayan sent General . . . this morning to inform me of events. He needn't have.
- At ten-thirty, Zvi Zur [assistant to the Defense Minister] phoned. 137 Egyptian planes were damaged, 6 or 7 of ours. Moshe will soon address the nation. The Knesset meeting has been canceled. It's planned to convene at four in the afternoon.
- At a quarter to eleven, Moshe addressed the army. Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Kuwait are aligned against us; Algeria is also sending an army. They are many, and we are brave. He did not mention our losses or the Egyptians', but said that our settlements in the south are under heavy artillery fire.
- At a quarter to twelve, Shimon and Yosef [Almogi] came to see me. I said to Shimon, "It's been done. But it seems to me that they shouldn't have attacked without first informing England and America and explaining our action." Shimon says we did speak with them . . .
- Four o'clock in the afternoon. I've just returned from the basement of the Air Force Headquarters. I spoke with Moshe and Zur and Yigal Yadin [appointed by Eshkol as Special Advisor on Defense Affairs, 1 June 1967], and afterwards with Motti (Hod) [Commander of the Israeli Air Force] and Ezer Weizman [Deputy Chief-of-Staff]. Victory has been won by our Air Force. We're in a class of our own. We've destroyed 362 Arab planes,

mostly Egyptian. We've knocked out almost all of the airfields in Egypt and Syria. We've taken Khan Yunis and Rafiah. Only the Jordanians are still fighting. Egypt and Syria are defeated. Moshe still forbids publicizing our achievements. It's possible that we'll inform American Intelligence this evening. I advised informing French Intelligence too. Our great victory might influence De Gaulle. The Knesset meeting scheduled for four in the afternoon was postponed until six thirty. Moshe will go over for the swearing in ceremony and return immediately. I was advised not to attend.

- We've lost nine or eleven planes, including a Mirage and Vauteur. The rest were Mysteres, Orans, etc. One of our pilots has fallen in Egyptian hands. Another one parachuted into Sinai and there's hope for his recovery. It's likely that the number of Arab casualties is somewhat exaggerated, but it can be said that their air forces have been totally wiped out . . .
- Eshkol told the Knesset about "our [Rafi's] initiative" to broaden the government; the addition of Moshe, Begin, and Sapir to the government; and especially his own "release" from the Defense Ministry. . . .
- At the end of the debates, we returned to Tel-Aviv and heard about other events on the front. We've lost 17 planes and destroyed around four hundred; we're advancing in Sinai, and fighting is still going on in Jerusalem.

6 June 1967 (Tuesday)

- Haim phoned me at nine-thirty to say that our forces are making progress in Sinai and expect to reach Sharm-el-Sheikh by tomorrow. The Old City [Jerusalem] is under attack. Moshe doesn't want to capture it because it would eventually be his fate to be forced to give the order to return the Wailing Wall. In the north the Syrians are venting their anger on us, but Moshe is avoiding them for the present so that he can deal them a devastating blow later. I told him [Haim] not to put it off, because right now civilian settlements are suffering and must be protected. I told him I wanted to see him as soon as Moshe can spare time. He'll see what he can do.
- At eleven-thirty Zur came over. Shimon also arrived. Moshe has gone to Jerusalem. Zur gave us a survey of developments. Jerusalem is surrounded. We've reached the "French Hill." Moshe has ordered not to enter East Jerusalem. The West Bank will be in our hands today. We've taken Latrun, Jenin, and Kalkiliya. Our planes have destroyed 50 Jordanian tanks, and our air force is hunting for Patton tanks.
- Yesterday the Syrians were very quiet. Today, under Egyptian pressure,

they shelled the following kibbutzim: Dan, Dafna, Kfar Sold, Ein Gev, et al. Our forces are in the Gaza Strip and at the gates of the city of Gaza (its southern side is in our hands). At twelve, Zur spoke with Teddy. In Jerusalem thirteen soldiers were killed, 300 wounded, and 1000 houses damaged. In the Negev [Sinai], El-Arish is in our hands and we're approaching Abu Ageila; at Sharm-el-Sheikh four Egyptian battalions (including artillery) are deployed. The remaining Egyptian armor is still intact.

- As of five o'clock this morning our losses are 40 killed, 10 missing (this includes 5 pilots killed and 10 missing), 400 wounded—all IDF forces. 50 settlements were shelled. Nasser is begging the Russians to secure a cease-fire. England has placed an embargo [on the region]. The French have placed an embargo on weapons, but not spare parts. America wants us to finish off Nasser quickly. It turns out that Eban did not relate Johnson's message accurately. Zur is amazed at Moshe. It's a certainty that tomorrow we'll wind up things with Jordan (the West Bank), and Sinai.

7 June 1967 (Wednesday)

- All day yesterday the brunt of the fighting was with the Jordanians. Apparently the Jordanian Arab Legion is still the best fighting force of all the Arab armies.
- Nasser has invented a new fiction. On Sunday it was reported that Egyptian aerial bombing ignited Tel-Aviv. But the bitter news seems to have reached the Egyptians, and yesterday they fabricated a new line: English and American pilots are attacking the Arabs.
- At ten-thirty Yosef Sapir came to see me. He said that he's heard that we've already entered the Old City, and that America is not opposed to our destruction of Nasser's army and his allies' forces. He asks what we should do with the Old City and West Bank?
- I told him we should carry out the victory to its conclusion. It's impossible to forget that there are one million Arabs in the West Bank, any addition to the Arab population in Israel is unnecessary. There are also nearly two hundred thousand refugees in the Gaza Strip and it won't be easy to move them. But these problems will be dealt with after our victory on all the fronts. We still must deliver a fatal blow to the Syrians for what they did to our farming settlements yesterday, albeit under pressure from Nasser. Russia has backed down from its demand that all sides (that is, Israeli forces) withdraw to their positions before hostilities began, it's preferable to refer the matter to the UN Security Council and not the General Assembly (although there won't be a repeat performance of

1956). World support of Israel will increase when our spectacular victory is made fully known.

- Sapir asked if he could turn to me for advice whenever he needs to. I agreed.
- At a quarter to twelve Haim informed me that Nablus was in our hands. Our troops reached there from Jenin. [The Arabs] are in flight . . .
- At twelve-thirty Haim phoned. Our paratroopers landed in Sharm-el-Sheikh and found it empty. Seems like the Egyptians abandoned it. This means the end of the war in the Sinai.
- Toward evening I traveled to Jerusalem to rejoice with Teddy (the mayor) and Moshe Shapira, Minister of the Interior, on the renewal of the Old City's Jewish Quarter and Jewish settlement in vacated houses in other Quarters. I spoke with Teddy about this and emphasized the urgency of our action. He said he'd meet later with Eshkol and speak to him about it. I asked him not to mention my name. .
- I returned to Tel-Aviv.

8 June 1967 (Thursday)

- M. Shapira came at nine [to my home in Tel-Aviv]. I told him that we'd lost a day, and in these times one day should not be taken lightly. I don't know if the war is over already, it's possible there will be complications. We must reinforce the army's victory by settling the Old City as quickly as possible, both in the deserted areas of the Jewish Quarter and in abandoned Arab houses [in other Quarters]. If the Arabs return, we'll provide them with homes in the New City [of Jerusalem]. Shapira agrees.
- I wanted to discuss this with Moshe Dayan as Defense Minister too, but was told that he's in Jerusalem. Because I wanted to go inside the Old City, I traveled to Jerusalem. Ezer Weizman and Mordechai Hod came with me. All the way to Jerusalem and in the New City soldiers cheered us. We entered the Old City and headed straight for the Wailing Wall. I noticed that since the Old City has been closed to us [from 1948], buildings were erected next to the Wall. I was surprised that an order hasn't been given to knock these constructions down. I walked over to the Wall and saw a sign in Arabic and English "el Burak," as if to announce here is where Muhammad met the angel Elkim. I said that first of all this sign should be removed without damaging the Wall's stones. One of the soldiers immediately got a stick and began erasing the sign. I couldn't find Moshe because he'd gone to Hebron, and would return to Tel-Aviv.
- I returned to Tel-Aviv; Moshe is still not here. I wanted to see Begin and

- discuss settling the Old City, I was told he's in Jerusalem, and might return this evening.
- I went to a meeting of Rafi. A large crowd had gathered. Shimon suggested returning to the Labor Party, so that we can oust the Prime Minister. I expressed my doubts that our return to Labor would create a change of government. I don't know if the war is over, but in the political arena we're liable to lose what our army has gained for the nation. I'm worried about [the Foreign Minister] [Abba] Eban's activity in the UN; he should be brought back home. I'm also worried about the lack of government initiative in strengthening the military conquest of Jerusalem, Hebron, and the West Bank. And there are those in favor of rejoining Labor as a means of correcting the present situation. [I would say to them that] we must discuss with Labor members their willingness to help us form a government that will secure the military conquests. The decision was postponed until the second meeting next Sunday.
 - In Jerusalem I met with Edmond [de Rothschild] in Teddy's house, another Rothschild and his entourage, altogether about eight people. All of French Jewry is with Israel and proud of our victory. Edmond said that a French delegation of 8–10 people has been here for two days, some of them De Gaullists, some from other parties. He asked me if I would be willing to meet with them at eight-thirty this evening. I immediately agreed. Edmond also asked me if I'd be willing to travel to France to meet De Gaulle. I said that as a private citizen I couldn't do that because in talks we would probably arrive at certain conclusions, and I couldn't say to De Gaulle that I agree, or vice versa. Rothschild is certain that my visit would be a major gesture for French Jewry and the French people.
 - At eight-thirty the delegation came to see me. The head speaker was [Pierre] Closterman, a [Left-wing] De Gaulle associate [and Deputy in Parliament]. I briefly explained what we had done and asked them as Catholics if they would oppose the Old City remaining in our hands. Some said they wouldn't oppose it . . .
 - [Closterman] told me that tomorrow at four-thirty he'd meet with De Gaulle, and asked me if I wanted to come with him to Paris. I answered him the same way I did to Edmond. According to Closterman, De Gaulle wants to make peace. I told him that if the Arabs agree to make peace, my opinion, as a private citizen, is that we should withdraw from the territories we've captured, except the Old City. But we would not withdraw from anywhere unless there is peace.
 - They have to return to France this evening. We parted the best of friends.

—I invited [Moshe] Shapira and Begin to come and see me. I told them that it's not certain if the war will be over tomorrow. At any rate, the international struggle will begin immediately over four issues: the Old City, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and Sinai. On Jerusalem we must not budge. We have to quickly establish a large Jewish settlement there. The same with Hebron. The West Bank must not be returned to Hussein, but its annexation to Israel would mean the addition of one million Arabs, this would present a terrible danger. There's also a refugee problem in the Gaza Strip. Begin proposed transferring the refugees from Gaza to El-Arish and leaving them there. It's doubtful if they'd go willingly. He's also in favor of incorporating all of the West Bank into Israel. I stressed the political struggle awaiting us. The two people responsible for dealing with this struggle are not suited for the task: Eshkol and Eban. If Eban has a superior to give him instructions, then he's capable of carrying out [even] diametrically opposite instructions with his superb rhetorical skills.

9 June 1967 (Friday)

- The "Voice of Israel" announced this morning that Syria has agreed to a cease-fire. So the war is over. [King] Hussein reported he has suffered defeat, but [contrary to his claims] not one British or American plane appeared in Jordanian skies.
- Yet the fighting with Syria continues. Around seven-thirty I phoned Moshe and asked why we are not smashing the Syrians? He replied that they're fighting bravely, and we have concentrated a huge force of aircraft, armor, artillery, etc. to confront them. Two of our planes were downed, a Super-Mystere and a Fouga. I asked how the cease-fire was broken. Who did it? He preferred not to reply, but even this is answer enough . . .
- A few minutes ago, the "Voice of Israel" broadcast that Nasser has resigned after assuming responsibility for his army's defeat. Zakaria Mohieddin [Deputy President of the U.A.R.] has acceded in his place. I believe this is a clever trick on Nasser's part. He will certainly return to power.
- At eight-thirty in the evening, Zur came to see me. Moshe has launched the battle for the Golan Heights. The Syrians reported a cease-fire at four-thirty in the morning, following Nasser's plea, [but] in yesterday's government meeting the cabinet voted on taking the Heights from Syria. Moshe was opposed, but changed his opinion in the morning.
- 171,000 reservists have been called up; the number of dead has risen to 450 this morning. We'll begin discharging 140,000 soldiers; that will

leave 30,000. In the standing army there are about 56–60,000 men. Zur believes that if they put pressure on Moshe, he'll resign. He needs our support.

- It was a big mistake to break the cease-fire with Syria. We have no need of the Golan Heights, because we won't be staying there; the major error has been to unnecessarily violate the Security Council's ruling. We'll soon be facing issues more vital, and we don't need our enemies knowing that we broke our word. We agreed on a cease-fire yet continued fighting. This was especially unnecessary for us and can injure both our good name and the northern settlements.
- A German phoned me, and asked my opinion on Nasser's resignation. I'm convinced that it was one of the cleverest moves he's ever made. It will return him to government and raise his stature in Egypt.

10 June 1967 (Saturday)

- . . . The battle with Syria is now in progress. I think that much international support and friendship, at least in the democratic world, that our army's defeat of Egypt and Jordan has awakened, is now being lost. For what purpose? The "Voice of Israel" has been broadcasting news reports on the hour, and after five I heard that the fighting [on the Golan] is still raging. I phoned Zur and told him that in my opinion what we've done these past two days has been a grave mistake. At seven this evening the radio announced that Russia broke off diplomatic relations with Israel and is demanding that we recall our ambassador from Moscow as quickly as possible.
- This is the fruit of the battle with Syria—absolutely unnecessary! You can't deceive the world!
- Sure enough, Nasser withdrew his resignation today. From all sides he was called on to remain in office. One group even included the President of Iraq. As I thought, by threatening resignation and publicly announcing his responsibility for [Egypt's] defeat, he has succeeded in retaining his stature.

III. The Aftermath

11 June 1967 (Sunday)

- At nine this morning, a German journalist representing the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, asked me two questions. 1) Is a better future possible between Israel and the Arab countries? I replied that it depends on Egypt. Peace with Egypt would be possible soon if the Russians lent their assistance. [But] Russian assistance is not a foregone conclusion. 2) How do I feel

after the victory? I answered that first of all great joy at the spectacular victory and termination of the war, and mostly because of the Redemption of Jerusalem. This victory has again proven the truth that throughout Jewish history quality is more important than quantity. The Egyptian soldier did not know what he was fighting for or sacrificing his life for. Jewish youth knew it was fighting for the existence of Israel. Even if we are the victors, it is not our intention to annihilate the enemy, but this is not the way with the Egyptians and other Arabs. Our army knew it was fighting for Israel's survival, and perhaps that of the Jewish people.

- In the afternoon the Rafi Executive met . . . While explaining my criticism of the renewed attack against the Syrians after both sides had agreed to a cease-fire, Shimon passed me a secret note that was labeled: Read and destroy! "On Thursday, after the cease-fire, there was a debate in the ministerial Defense Committee concerning Syria. The ministers, I believe all of them, stated that the Syrians should be punished and the Golan Heights captured. Moshe Dayan was opposed (out of fear of Russia's reaction and the price in casualties). It was up to the Prime Minister and Defense Minister to decide what to do according to constantly changing circumstances."
- The next morning, Friday, Moshe reversed his position and personally ordered the Northern Commander to attack the Golan Heights. He informed Eshkol about this a quarter of an hour later (two and half-hours before the scheduled attack at eleven). Eshkol agreed to the plan but was angry about how it had been handled.
- Moshe is convinced that the Alignment people will probably discuss the political question. He revealed his thoughts about what should be done: Transfer the refugees from Gaza to Trans-Jordan; give autonomy to the Arabs; keep Jerusalem. I told him that this was how I saw things, more or less, but I foresaw problems in the transfer of Gaza's refugees. Regarding Sinai, I feel we should insist on direct talks with the Egyptians, and if Nasser agrees to peace, including maritime freedom in the Gulf of Eilat and Suez Canal, then we should withdraw from Sinai. The question was not debated.

12 June 1967 (Monday)

- Today I read Nasser's entire resignation speech, a long speech filled with political wisdom and logic, and it's clear that following this his stature will rise among the Egyptian people.
- This afternoon I went to Jerusalem for a branch meeting, but there was nothing to discuss. I invited Teddy for a conversation . . . I asked him

what he was doing about settling the Old City with Jews. He said that he had the buildings removed that the Arabs constructed next to the Western Wall, and he cleared the road to Jerusalem that passes by the Jaffa Gate, but had not yet dealt with populating the city with Jews. I was extremely sorry about this and said that he must immediately bring Jews into the Jewish Quarter and into every vacated house in the Old City, and if the [Arab] residents return, he should give them houses in the New City. Teddy said that the Jewish Quarter itself wasn't destroyed, only the "Hurva" and other synagogues were, but the Arabs had moved into Jewish homes in the Quarter. I said they have to be evacuated from there. He replied that he was still not legally the mayor of the Old City. I told him there was no need to legalize it; the occupation itself is the most effective law . . .

- I've received telegrams from abroad. Congratulations and support of the IDF victory.
- On the way back from Jerusalem, I encountered cheering and applause from all the soldiers on the road and from crowds of young people in Rehovot and Ramle.

13 June 1967 (Tuesday)

- I went to Jerusalem and told Vivian [Haim Herzog] [political and military broadcaster during the Six-Day War] that I wanted to visit Mt. Scopus, Bethlehem, and Hebron. He supplied me with two cars and a military escort and we set out. First we went to the Jewish Quarter in Jerusalem, it turns out that it wasn't leveled to the ground but was occupied by Arabs. In my opinion we shouldn't settle it as such, but knock it down completely and rebuild it from scratch. It's hard to understand how people lived here twenty years ago. The rooms are niches, the basements narrow, two or three floors; I doubt whether those who used to live here would agree to return to these dark and filthy hovels. On the way I saw a terrible sight. People facing the wall, I was certain that they were standing and urinating. But seeing other people standing like this I asked what's going on. The escort explained that there were cases where [Jewish] people in the city attacked [Arab] passers-by and ordered them to stand facing the wall when our car passed. It's outrageous to degrade and humiliate people this way. It degrades us too.
- Again we went to the Wailing Wall. The buildings attached to the Wall were torn down but the rubble hasn't been removed yet. We found a large crowd gathered by the Wall and everyone was lighting candles. I think it should be forbidden to light candles that blemish the Wall. From there we

drove up to Mt. Scopus. We saw the university's buildings, Hadassah Hospital, the library (the remaining books are safeguarded below but I didn't go down), we stayed a while, drank some soda water, and traveled over to Rachel's Tomb and Bethlehem. Buildings had been erected next to the tomb, and Bethlehem looks like a Christian city with dozens of churches, and beautiful homes apparently belonging to wealthy Arabs. We proceeded on to Hebron. Green fields, orchards, only in the east are the hills bare. We entered Hebron. The Arabs are quiet, many are returning home. A woman is carrying several large jugs on her head, and her husband and children are walking next to her empty-handed. We witnessed the same scene in the Old City, on the road to and from Mt. Scopus, and on the way to Bethlehem and Hebron. In Hebron we went to the Cave of the Patriarchs, ascended the thirty steps. In the past we were allowed to climb only seven, and entered a hall with the Patriarchs' headstones. An Arab came over to us and explained these were Abraham's and Sarah's graves (he didn't say Ibrahim's or Halil's [Arabic names]), Isaac's and Rebecca's, Jacob's and Leah's, and this one he said (and this really surprised me) belonged to Joseph and his wife. It's obvious that Joseph is not buried here. At the end of Genesis (50:13) regarding Jacob it is written: "For his sons carried him into the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, which Abraham bought as a burying place from Ephron the Hittite at Mamre." But regarding Joseph it says: "And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: And God will surely visit you and bring you out of this land up unto the land that he promised to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from here." (50:24-25). It doesn't state where he is to be buried. But in Joshua, Chapter 24, it states: "And the bones of Joseph which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem [present-day Nablus], in a field that Jacob bought from the sons of Hamor for a hundred pieces of silver, and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph." (24:32)

- I became skeptical regarding the whole Machpelah cave story. Also, in a room off to the side, called "Joseph's Room," are two headstones similar to those in the other rooms, all in the same Egyptian Arabic calligraphy. Are Abraham's, Yitzhak's and Jacob's tombs really here? On the Hebron road we went over to the Gush Etzion settlements. The houses are in ruins. The Arab Legion erected houses for themselves here. Then we drove back to Jerusalem. We stopped off at the King David Hotel and I invited Teddy for lunch. . . .

- I spoke with Teddy on arrangements in Jerusalem. In my opinion we should raze the houses in the Jewish Quarter, evacuate the inhabitants, put up new homes and settle Jews in them. If there are vacant houses in other parts of the Old City, Jews should settle there too, and if the Arabs return, then we should give them houses in the New City. . . .

17 June 1967 (Saturday)

- . . . We expect there will soon be a Labor-Rafi union, and that the unified party will renew its institutions and representatives in state leadership.
- I inquired whether renewal of national leadership is a condition and if it means that the leadership agrees to form a new government. His [Peres'] reply was stammering and vacillating.
- Afterwards the central committee convened. Shimon made a lengthy speech, and spoke about the latest incidents. I proposed that, for the sake of Jerusalem's unification, we should raze the wall that Suleiman the Magnificent built [around the Old City] 400 hundred years ago, in 1542. This would unite Jerusalem and facilitate the expansion to the east, south, north, and west. Physically it would look like another city.
- I returned to Tel-Aviv before the end of the meeting.

IV. The Afterthought

28 September 1967 (Thursday)

- . . . Searching through the protocols of the Provisional Government on the debate over the election system, I came across an even more important discussion. On 26 September 1948, I advised the government:
 - 1) to attack Latrun because the Arabs had violated the conditions of the cease-fire (destroying a water pipe from Rosh Ha'ayin to Jerusalem that passed by Latrun)
 - 2) to capture the area from the south of Latrun to the Jordan River.
 Voting in favor (excluding myself): Fishman, Gruenbaum, Zisling, and Bentov. Against: Rosenblueth, Shapira, Levin, Bernstein, Kaplan, Remez, and Sharett (seven against five). In response to this I said, "There will be tears over this for generations." In the Six-Day War, the IDF put an end to the 'generations' . . .

NOTES

1. Gahal—a parliamentary bloc from 1965–1973, led by Menahem Begin, composed of the two main non-socialist parties.
2. NRP (National Religious Party)—Zionist religious party that strives for the revival of Torah as the basis of existence of the Jewish people.
3. Rafi (The List of Israel workers and Non-Partisans)—founded in 1965 by a group that broke from the Labor Party under the leadership of David Ben-Gurion.
4. Alignment (The Alignment for the Unity of Israel Workers)—Left of center political bloc formed in 1965. The Alignment led all of Israel's coalition governments between 1965 and 1977.