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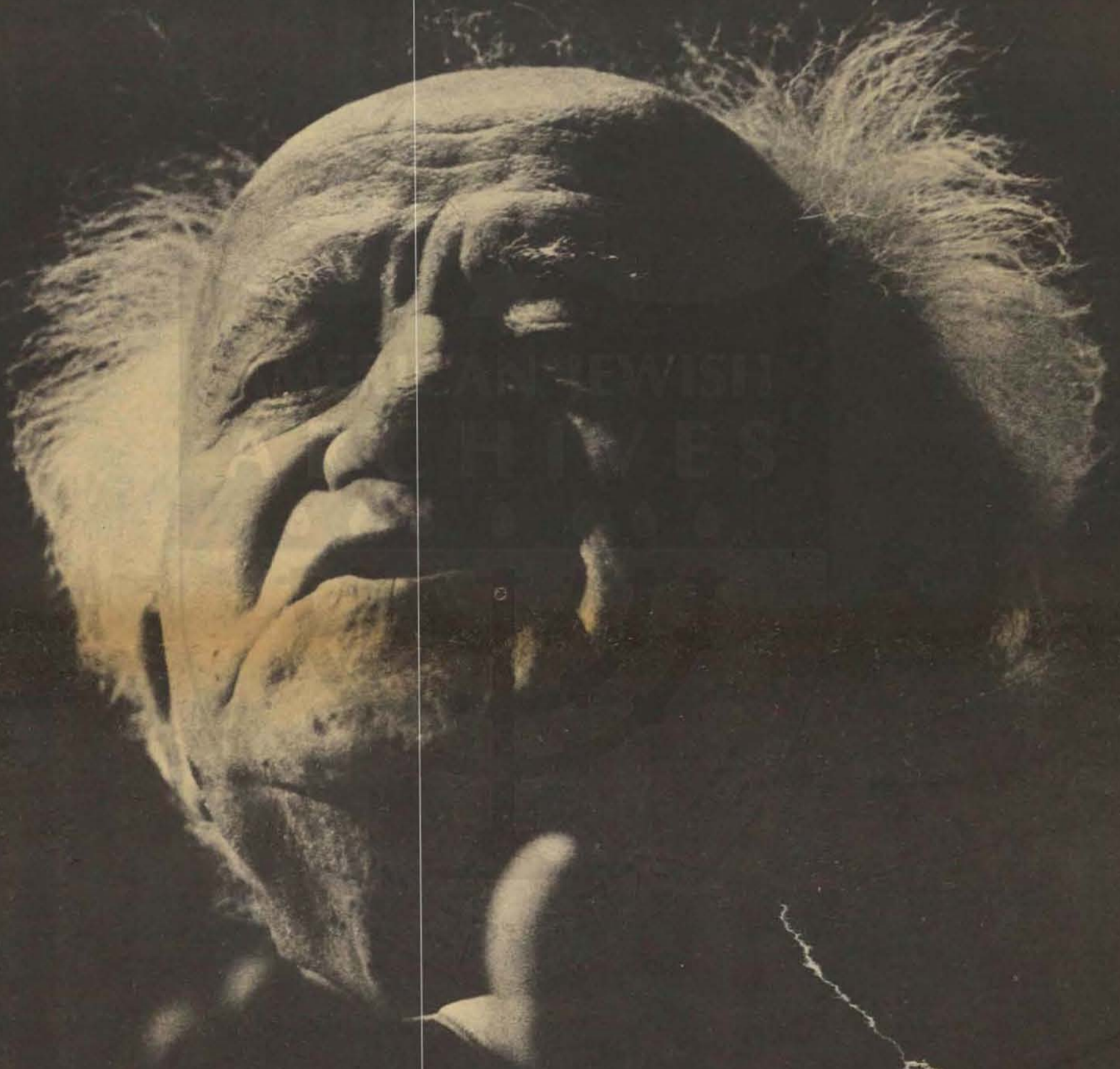
Ben-Gurion, David. 85th birthday. 1971-1972.

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THE JERUSALEM  
**POST**

**WEEK-END MAGAZINE**



**Ben-Gurion at 85**

# Beyond illusions

by Golda Meir

THERE are two categories of people, one type of person for whom no speeches, articles nor endless words will be of help, and will not add one deed they have never performed to their lives. But there is a second category: men whose lives have been one unbroken chain of deeds. In the face of such deeds, what value is there to the words that come to describe them? I imagine that anyone coming in the next few weeks to say something about David Ben-Gurion will be faced by the same dilemma as I am.

Other *haverim*, and myself, were lucky to have had the opportunity of not only following Ben-Gurion's actions. Indeed many of those who watched his actions, know them, sense them, lived them. But I had a special privilege, together with others, to be close to Ben-Gurion for a very long period, to see him achieving many things that were both great and fundamental, and I was sufficiently close in order to learn a few things. I will not enumerate them all; but a few of them, it seems to me, have become the general heritage of our Movement and of the nation as a whole.

When Ben-Gurion, together with his few comrades, set out to achieve the impossible, they did not choose the easy way. It seems to me that it was a characteristic trait of Ben-Gurion not to adopt a decision to do something because it was easy, because it involved no hazard; but because nothing stood in his way.

It seems to me that this is one of the things that he taught all of us, at least this is what I learned from him: for the Almighty's sake, no illusions!

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IT was customary to speak superficially of Ben-Gurion that he regarded public opinion and foreigners with contempt. To my mind, that was not the case. I never heard from Ben-Gurion that we have no link with the outside world and nothing to learn from it. Ben-Gurion's doctrine for his Movement and for each of us who worked with him, was that the world exists and we have to do all in our power to win its understanding, its sympathy. For, in the final analysis, the attitude of people from the outside, of foreign countries and movements, will be influenced not only by our words, not only by our explanations, our capacity and effort to explain the justice of our cause, but by the deeds we perform for the people of Israel that will be decisive in our midst.

One Shabbat, towards evening, at the end of 1947, perhaps early in 1948, Ben-Gurion called me on the telephone: "Come, I want to chat with you on something." Generally speaking, such telephone calls for a chat did not come so often. Naturally, I went to see him. I ascended the second floor of his home on Sderot Keren Kayemet. The electric



(Israel Sun photo)

light had not yet been switched on. It was the hour between light and darkness. Ben-Gurion was walking up and down his big room saying: "What's going to happen? There is going to be a war. Now I know our defence strength, what we have, and much much more of what we don't have. All the Arab armies will face us — what will be?"

It was, perhaps, the first time I ever saw him so troubled by the burden of responsibility. And then he mentioned the name of a *haver* whom we all know was afraid. Ben-Gurion told me two things: That *haver* does not yet know how much one needs to be afraid. And he said something else: You should know, one requires much courage to be afraid.

I also remember that when we were members of the Jewish Agency Executive he suddenly announced — and when Ben-Gurion makes an announcement, that's it! — that he was dropping all routine matters and intended to study right through to the end all about the Hagana, its strength, what it has, who are its people, what they do, how they are trained — everything. He knew what we were heading for.

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I REMEMBER that in August 1946, after the Black Sabbath (when all the leaders of the Yishuv were arrested), Ben-Gurion remained in Europe. It was a miracle that he agreed to our plea: Remain there, if you come here you will only enlarge the population at Latrun, stay out and you can do something. When he did return and we drove to the Agency Executive session, he said with such a surety and such clarity, almost specifying the date — there will be war. He had his say a year beforehand to a group of Jews in America. He told them in three years' time there will be war, and told them what we needed in order to be prepared for it. I saw him on that Shabbat, and, perhaps for the first time, I understood that one must not regard with contempt those men who are afraid. Each of us, in certain situations, is a bit afraid. I want to say that I learned to respect men who admit that they have fear in their hearts, at any rate those men who have fear in their hearts and overcome it and despite that fear do what is necessary — in my eyes that is what makes them important people. Their value is of importance. On that evening when Ben-Gurion told me that one requires much courage to be afraid when there is what to be afraid of, it was the first time I heard it put that way.

Ben-Gurion told me more than once, the same night — or early morning — of the U.N. Assembly vote for partition, that he did not rejoice. He did not rejoice because he did not see it as the end of something. And that was correct. For I wish

to say that Ben-Gurion was never a plasterer. That trade was not his. Perhaps a quarrier, a hewer of stone, but never one to plaster over things, for decades of meetings by day and by night, large meetings and restricted forums. In all of these meetings there was never the element of "it does not matter." This did not apply when we decided on Aliya Bet, nor when we resolved to break the White Paper policy, nor when we set out by night to establish outposts; nor when we engaged in our struggle against the British; nor when we decided on two things ostensibly contradictory — to go to war, to volunteer for the British Army in the war against Hitler; and, at the same time, to resolve to fight the British as if there was no war in Europe. For even in victory over Hitler our cause was not secure. In everything we did there was a risk. But our conclusion was unanimous — it had to be done.

I do not have to underline the measure of Ben-Gurion's influence on the Movement: his concrete proposals and the way he would propose them.

I remember one discussion at my home. The late Peretz Naftali and the late Moshe Sharett were there with us. For some reason the conversation touched on the question: Is there democracy in the Party or not? Ben-Gurion good-humouredly asked Naftali: "You are a parliamentarian, a man of democracy, tell us, do we have democracy?" Those of us who knew Naftali recall his good commonsense. In jocular fashion he turned to Ben-Gurion and said: "I want to tell you, the Movement in the most democratic fashion, always accepts what you propose." I do think that was the precise truth. That was how the Movement behaved. We have nothing to regret. I also hope that in his heart, Ben-Gurion has no regrets that he was in this camp.

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I, TOO, do not wish to plaster over anything. But neither do I now wish to split any stones or raise up from the past any sorrow or pain at anything of what took place.

On the other hand, I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude, and one's heart overflows at this occasion. It is natural; it is true.

Ben-Gurion, what I say is not by any democratic resolution but I have absolute confidence that it is the desire of all our *haverim*. I wish to tell you: You are sitting in our midst, perhaps no formal act is required. But all the same — return to your Party! Ben-Gurion, we deserve it. And, if you permit me — and don't be angry with me — you deserve it. Come, join us, together.

(From an address delivered at the festive session of the Labour Party Secretariat honouring Mr. Ben-Gurion at Beit Berl, Sept. 30, 1971.)

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David Ben-Gurion photographed at Sde Boker this week by John Walker, who is here making a series of portraits to be exhibited at Dublin's Municipal Museum of Modern Art.

DAVID Ben-Gurion at 85 is at peace with both friends and former foes. Bitter disputes of recent years are forgotten and this week's birthday celebrations at Sde Boker climaxed the Year of The Great Reconciliation. Israel's first Prime Minister and elder statesman seems to have reached another pinnacle in his long public career that stretches over almost seven decades. He has become the undisputed national figure *par excellence*, who has survived most members of Israel's Mayflower generation and towers above political supporters and opponents alike, one of only a few leaders in the history of any nation who has lived long enough to see his political visions and dreams come true.

But for the man who is at the focus of this nation-wide expression of appreciation and affection, matters appear simpler and different. In his characteristic "Ben-Gurionistic" manner he is far from being satisfied with the present state of affairs, although he will stress time and again that he would like to point to "necessary improvements," without wanting to criticize or to argue. What appears to all concerned as his great reconciliation with the State's leadership and with the Labour Party, is in Mr. Ben-Gurion's own eyes simply a decision "not to deal any longer with current politics and disputes."

"I have no complaints against anyone, not even against those who fought with me, or said things that were incorrect," he told me this week at his home in Sde Boker.

"I decided to quit the Government (in June 1963) in order to be able to do, chiefly, one thing: To write and put on record for Israel's youth all the things that happened in the past, both the good and the bad ones — and to tell them how to arrange matters for the future. This is also the reason why I left the party later on, because I did not want to be occupied any longer with current affairs and politics."

"I would like to be free to do my work 15 hours a day. I am sure that in 20 years there will be historians who will perhaps know things which I do not know. But right now I know more than anybody else here about what has been done over the years, and to this I decided to devote most of my time. The rest of my time should be for reading."

"But the trouble is that I am not left alone. There are all these people that I am asked to meet, which takes time, and there are these scores of letters that come from all over the world which I have to answer. They often have to wait one, or even two months, for a reply, when I sit down for four or five days at a time to answer them. I write everything myself, because I have never dictated a single letter or article: I just cannot dictate."

"I have now completed and submitted the material for the third volume of my memoirs. It deals with the years 1936-37. There is more material prepared. The second volume which is being worked on covers the years 1934-35, while the first volume, which appeared earlier this year, leads up to 1933. But as the years come closer and events become more intensive, I may need a whole volume for each year. There is the Peel Commission and the great debate over its partition proposal in 1937 and all the big political developments that followed later."

"As I have already written about the 20 years of the State, these memoirs will lead up to 1948, which will still give me plenty of work to do. If I only will be able to complete it! But in this country everything can happen; there could be a road accident, or one could simply fall."

Mr. Ben-Gurion goes on to describe the "true reality" of his attitude towards party life in recent years, explaining why he could not accept Prime Minister Golda Meir's appeal last week to rejoin the Labour Party (see page 3).

"I was actually a member of four parties over the years: Poalei Zion, Ahdut Ha'avoda, Mapai and Rafi. When I left the party (Mapai — in 1965), I meant to quit on my own. But many members left together with me, apparently for the same reasons. I decided that it would be unfair to leave them and when I saw that they also wanted to improve matters, I said that I would help them. But I was determined never again to return to the Government, even when Begin approached me in May 1967, on the eve of the Six Day War."

"Then, the majority of these *haverim* (in Rafi) decided to return to the party (in December 1967) and since I knew that I could not accept their decision, I did not take part in the vote. Afterwards there was pressure on me to remain in the Knesset and I gave in. But I could not attend many Knesset sessions and I soon realized that I could no longer come to the Knesset altogether and resigned (in May 1970). I also informed the members of the State List that I do not belong to them anymore — *halas* — finished."

"Golda asked me a few days ago to join the party, but I have quit all current affairs and politics because I have decided to do only one thing — to write for the young generation. It is not because I am anti-party."

Was he pleased with the fact that there was now a reconciliation between him and the Labour Party leadership?

"It is not a question of reconciliation. I have no complaint against Golda and I even don't have any complaints against people whose actions displease me. I write about the past, but I do not live in the past. People do

David Ben-Gurion is not resting on the laurels with which he has been garlanded this week. While he has firmly decided to have nothing more to do with politics, he would like to point to "necessary improvements," writes **ARI RATH**, in this exclusive interview.

make mistakes, everyone does occasionally."

And then, in an apparent reference to the grave condition of Mr. Pinhas Lavon, Mr. Ben-Gurion added: "I regret the condition of certain *haverim* — I won't mention their names."

Mr. Ben-Gurion was also sorry to hear that Mr. Pinhas Rosen, the former Justice Minister, who headed the seven-man Ministerial Committee that dealt with the Lavon Affair in 1960, was still angry over their differences of 11 years ago. "He is a most decent person and I have no complaints against him. I am sorry that he is still angry; he has no reason for it; he is mistaken, but what can one do?"

Having agreed to keep our interview short and concise, in order not to deprive Mr. Ben-Gurion of too much time, we moved on to matters concerning Israel's relations with its Arab neighbours and other international affairs. Mr. Ben-Gurion, who only the day before made his way down from Tel Aviv to Sde Boker with a high temperature, seemed fully recuperated, despite the heavy burden of press and radio interviews, in addition to the various birthday visits and events that already took up a good part of his daily schedule.

Did he feel he had done all he could to achieve peace with the Arabs?

"Yes, to the extent that I have

been active, I think everything possible was done." Several months ago he agreed to publish details of his contacts with Nasser in the mid-fifties through the American intermediary, Robert Anderson. "In Nasser's lifetime I would never have published this without his consent, but after his death it was another matter. There are other details on contacts with Arab leaders but the people concerned are still alive. There is no urgency — *'es brennt nisht...!*'

"Regarding the present situation, I made my views known immediately after the Six Day War. For true peace, and I mean real peace with friendship, I would return all the territories, except for Jerusalem and the Golan Heights. But only if there is friendship with the Arabs, not just a signature. Four Arab states signed the armistice agreements in 1949, but did not keep them. Without friendship we should not give back anything."

He had read of Moussa al-Alami's television interview ("I don't watch television") in which the veteran Palestinian leader spoke highly of Ben-Gurion and regretted that the Arabs did not have a determined leader like him.

"We were on good terms," said B-G of Alami. "There could be a chance now to hold talks with a Palestinian leadership. A change has taken place among those Arabs who live with us now. There are those who realize they did not treat us properly."

He seems reluctant to elaborate on the difficult political struggle that had followed the 1956 Sinai campaign. "A situation similar to the joint American-Russian pressure of 1956-57 could develop, although there are no imminent signs of it at the moment. But I would say such a possibility should not be ruled out."

And on to his favourite subject of China. "I was very happy to hear that Nixon wants to reach some understanding with China. But I'm not certain he will go as far as he should. America should help China with all its power, chiefly with regard to the tremendous area which Russia took away from China, without being able to populate it. This land is vital to China, because of its enormous population. If America helps China all the way this will be a great thing. It could bring about world peace, because the giving back of territory would restrain Russia once and for all. China's position should be strengthened. There are things to which China is entitled. No, there was no danger that China would want to rule the world. I intend to write about this too."

BEN-Gurion's son Amos, his wife Mary and their youngest, 12-year-old daughter Ruthie, had just walked into the green cottage, together with their black poodle. They were spending the holiday at Sde Boker until after the birthday celebrations. Mr. Ben-Gurion seemed surprised each time one of them came back in with another parcel or suitcase and asked why they brought so much luggage. Ruthie got a big hug from her grandfather who ordered her to stand alongside her mother so that he could see whether she had already grown taller than her. He is pleased to hear that his two daughters Geula and Renana and their families and the rest of the grand and great-grandchildren will also join them.

We return to our interview. Did he still correspond with any international figures?

He paused for a moment: "No, all those with whom I used to correspond are no longer alive. The man with whom I corresponded all the time was de Gaulle. The last thing I received from him was the unfinished volume of his memoirs. His wife sent me the book with whatever he had still managed to write."

Mr. Ben-Gurion has a special admiration for the French leader, because de Gaulle forced his people to fight the Germans, despite the fact that the French had no confidence in their strength and feared new bloodshed.

"He mobilized his people and in the end regained France its freedom. He proved his greatness also many years after the war, when he forced the French to give up Algeria. He possessed a deep sense of history and had rare analytical power."

"But his greatness stood the test chiefly in his lack of fear of losing his popularity..."

"But I do still maintain contact with Truman. When I was last in New York a few years ago we had lunch together at my hotel. As we were about to part, I told him I could not express an opinion on his place in American history. But I was certain that his place in Jewish history was that of an immortal. Truman began to cry and was so moved that he could not stop. I knew that journalists were standing outside in the corridor and waited with him for some time, so that they would not see him in tears. Had I known that he would become so emotional about it, I probably would not have told him that."

Closer to home, Mr. Ben-Gurion is pleased with the recent Cabinet decision to recommend granting university status to the Sde Boker college. "I always wanted the Government to help the college and thought all along that it should eventually become part of the Negev University in Beersheba."

"The Negev University has a great destiny, because only by developing the Negev can we attain economic independence. We should build here a huge industrial centre, whose exports would go to Africa and Asia, chiefly Asia. This would help considerably to narrow the gap between export and import."

Mr. Ben-Gurion evades most questions on current political problems, reiterating that he no longer deals with such issues. Did the question of the future successor to the Prime Minister come up when Mrs. Golda Meir visited him at Sde Boker three months ago? "Nobody speaks with me about the choice of a Prime Minister; they are not supposed to."

He must have been pleased with Mrs. Meir's visit to his kibbutz home which formally put an end to the rift that sundered the party apart six years ago. Last month Kibbutz Revivim in the Negev, where her daughter lives, gave a party for the Prime Minister to mark the 50th anniversary of Golda Meir's Aliya and Ben-Gurion was among the guests. He asked for Mrs. Meir's permission to read out three letters which he wrote in the late 'fifties when she was Foreign Minister, expressing deep appreciation.

People who have been working closely with Mr. Ben-Gurion for many years say he has completely withdrawn from political life, and can give full expression to his feelings for people. The

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TALKING of his former chief, Kollek made it clear that he had no intention of going over "well-trodden" paths.

"I'll try to describe traits of character I believe are less well known. Sometimes it is more interesting to learn about people from their aides and secretaries.

"B-G was a man of the greatest humility. On numerous occasions he was willing to argue and discuss the most important things with people who had no official standing. He would carry on a correspondence, in great detail and at length, with a simple citizen who had written him a letter." Recalling his service with Ben-Gurion, Kollek remembered he was ready to argue tenaciously over a sentence in a speech he was to deliver — more than often unyieldingly, as well as over attitudes to people and issues.

Of Ben-Gurion's working habits, Kollek was most struck by his singular capacity to shut himself off from the Office, insisting on being left alone. He was capable of resisting all pressures and sitting for hours and hours unwilling to take telephone calls or see people, whenever he felt the need to work something out for himself. He wrote all his speeches himself in longhand. Working out an idea was often more important to him than seeing important visitors.

Ben-Gurion must have spent much time in keeping copious diaries, considering his very detailed memoirs, we asked. He made notes during meetings, to the annoyance of everyone participating, but no doubt to the subsequent satisfaction of all. He sat and wrote — people present who weren't accustomed to this didn't know whether he listened through all the meetings. In fact he listened very carefully. He kept himself a very extensive longhand record of all meetings.

In this he was continuing a habit he practised diligently in the Jewish Agency. In the period preceding the State, he met day and night with streams of visitors when he was investigating his own doubts of the Hagana's capability in its then existing form to cope with the military onslaught he saw coming. He filled innumerable copy books on these deliberations. Kollek worked then with Ben-Gurion too in a connecting office in the Jewish Agency. Ben-Gurion was then totally obsessed with the conviction that the real decision on a Jewish State would not be made at the U.N., in the world's foreign ministries, or in the Jewish Agency office in Jerusalem, but on the battlefield.

### Cool in crisis

How did Ben-Gurion appear in moments of crisis?

"I don't think you could notice any difference. I don't think anybody could observe any outward sign of crisis."

Cool in crisis — yet when did he seem most moved?

As it appeared to Kollek, the most difficult time for Ben-Gurion was when he had to take a decision which might possibly cost lives. He remembered as examples the action at Kinneret, and others in the series of reprisal actions. Those were his most troubled moments.

What were the things from which he got most personal pleasure at that time?

"Out of something I could never fully appreciate — the Bible study circle and his other intellectual pursuits. That began very early. Kollek recalls seeing him in 1941 in the Blitz in wartime England, studying Greek, because he wanted to read the Greek philosophers in the original. He got enjoyment out of "intellectual activities." On the other hand he had no understanding whatever for the plastic arts.

Music?

"Yes, a bit, not much, and the theatre a bit more. But, for instance, when I once took him to see the restoration of Old Jaffa, he showed little interest, or in the



Some of David Ben-Gurion's key staff at the Prime Minister's Office in the early 'fifties shown with the P.M. and Paula Ben-Gurion (from left to right) Ze'ev Sharef, Itzhak Navon, Sarah Meltzer, Nehemia Argov, Ruth Havilio-Segal, Teddy Kollek.

# Judgement by an aide

What was it like to work under Ben-Gurion? Teddy Kollek, Mayor of Jerusalem, worked for and alongside Ben-Gurion as Director-General of the Prime Minister's Office in the '50s and early '60s. In the following glimpses from a former aide, one gets a singular, somewhat contradictory picture of B-G as a personality, a man of the people drawn from the people, yet a lone, independent Olympian figure, writes interviewer SHALOM COHEN.

conversations he had occasionally with Chagall — his detachment from the visible arts was clear. It made no difference to him whether he had a very beautiful old edition of Spinoza in his hand, or a pocket-book edition. This wasn't true of nature. He insisted on trees being planted on the first day he moved into the new Prime Minister's Office building in the Kirya — "they'll grow quickly, grow quickly," Ben-Gurion said. If you look now, the P.M.'s Office has a few trees around, while till today the other two buildings, built before, have none. Nostalgia for his old Sejera agricultural days? No, he loved trees. But beauty of architecture, or a modern painting — no.

Ben-Gurion was then — and presumably continues to be — a voracious reader. Did he ever read lighter stuff, novels? He used to read a great deal of thrillers in the early 'forties, but in the mid-'forties he stopped reading fiction altogether, said Kollek.

Then he read mainly philosophy; and in more recent years he took a tremendous interest in science, in the origins of life, how the brain works... He had long discussions with groups of scientists on whether the human brain could eventually be mechanically reproduced, and how far computers could go. He was convinced there was something to the human being far beyond computer technique. "I remember the long discussion with Einstein in 1951 at Princeton, where we stopped for half a day on the way from Philadelphia to Washington. The conception that there was a great unifying idea behind

the universe was common to both of them. When Weizmann passed away, before the argument in the Party on whether Ben Zvi or Sprinzak should succeed as President — Ben-Gurion supported Ben Zvi very strongly — I suggested Einstein to Ben-Gurion and he accepted the idea. However, Einstein refused. There was some correspondence between them — Ben-Gurion and Einstein — on this and other questions." That meeting between perhaps the greatest mind of the century and Ben-Gurion was an extraordinary event, Kollek recalls.

### 'No complexes'

What of Ben-Gurion's reputed lack of understanding of people and absence of a sense of humour?

To some extent that — the former — is based on Paula Ben-Gurion's saying that "he doesn't understand people," and her order that in such matters — "lost me" ("leave it to me," in Yiddish). Paula interfered in this a little bit, and maybe she understood people a bit more than he. He was a man of no complexes. Whatever he said he put "straight on the table." He had great force in himself, but was totally without artifice in his approach to others. It was difficult for him to understand that people might not say things as they thought them, and that people could have after-thoughts, second thoughts. As regards humour: "Well, he wasn't a storyteller, he didn't tell anecdotes."

Ben-Gurion, like other world statesmen, needed very little sleep. He read in the evenings to the

very late hours. Daily newspapers? He read the newspapers pretty extensively; he read very quickly, and he frequently cut out clippings for his very extensive filing system. He never reacted to an attack on himself — or praise. He was more interested in issues. He wasn't really worried what the newspapers or people thought of him. Didn't he have a critical view of the press in general? Well, Kollek observed, he probably had the complaint of every practical politician that the newspapers were only reporting on what they regarded as extraordinary, and the tremendous achievements of Israel that he rightly regarded as extraordinary were not properly described in the papers.

## BEN-GURION INTERVIEW

(Continued from page 4)

political views of others no longer count as much as before.

Which were the most important things that he still would like to see fulfilled?

"I intend in the near future to publish an article on what should be improved here and to explain my views on a number of issues. What is in order and what is not in order.

"Except for peace, which is the most important problem, there is the question of education, immigrant absorption and proper housing. But the main thing is to get a true democratic regime through a proper elec-

To what extent did Ben-Gurion take an interest in the departmental workings in the Prime Minister's Office? Not too much. He was, however, closely interested in agencies such as the Scientific Council, because of his interest in science. There were others in which he took much less interest, such as tourism, for which he had no particular feeling. He felt it was "turning the Jews into a nation of servants." Well, that was a doubtful proposition, Kollek, who was then in charge of tourism, felt compelled to add. He did study his material in connection with his annual report to the Knesset and parliamentary questions. What was his personal liking for the Knesset, for appearing in the House? He was critical of some Knesset members. He thought very often that people brought to State institutions too much of the background of the Diaspora and had insufficient understanding of how a State should be run. But he took the Knesset very seriously and was respectful of parliamentary democracy.

While discussing the Prime Minister's Office, we referred to Ben-Gurion's opposition to television. There was no proposal then to introduce general TV; he was against it, and still doesn't spend time viewing, Kollek, who was then responsible in the Office for broadcasting, said. So maybe he was right on that too, as he was on many other things, he commented drily. The argument then was over instructional TV — in the beginning Ben-Gurion was against because he felt it would be the first step to general TV.

### Relations with Weizmann

Returning to the question of Ben-Gurion's personal relations, we mentioned memoirs just published by Meyer Weisgal in "Ma'ariv" in which he speaks of Chaim Weizmann's bitterness, and intention of resigning the Presidency, for being snubbed and not being kept informed of developments in the newly established State while on an enforced stay abroad. "I think Weisgal is creating a story about a relationship between Ben-Gurion and Weizmann that is more fiction than truth."

When pressed to recapture some of the more dramatic moments in Ben-Gurion's rule at the time, Kollek balked at acting the historian. "Look, I was there both times when Ben-Gurion resigned. To this day I believe that on the Lavon Affair Ben-Gurion was one hundred per cent right, and all the others one hundred per cent wrong. He might not always have been right in his expressions, and tactics but in his wanting the issue decided by juridical procedure and not by political forum he was totally in the right.

He wasn't a man of personal confidences, to tell people what was going on in his heart. He wasn't interested in personal confidences, and did not offer his own to anybody. His best friends were his books, and he consulted with himself a great deal. He listened to others. But there was not much give and take between him and others."

toral reform. There is no democracy in this country. The people have no say on who will form the Government and cannot choose their representatives. All this is done by the party machine.

"The party agreed already many years ago to introduce an electoral reform and even began working in this direction. Then someone suggested to drop it for a while and nothing has been done since. These are the main issues. But I am not saying this out of criticism against the regime or because I am seeking an argument. I only want to say what should be improved.

# Timing and courage in a born leader

by Dov Joseph

LONG before the State became a reality Ben-Gurion's basic traits, his intellectual attainments and his extraordinary qualities of leadership became evident to all who knew him well.

His mind is like a powerful thinking machine operated by an inexorable logic. He makes a merciless analysis of the facts of a situation, with an uncanny ability to differentiate between what is important and what is comparatively unimportant or irrelevant, to disregard completely the irrelevant and the insignificant, to get to the root of the matter. He has always focused his attention on the root of the matter and on it alone, and after logical, analytical examination of all aspects of the problem, the pros and cons of every possible conclusion, he made his decisions.

Ben-Gurion would listen carefully to what his colleagues had to say, but he kept his own counsel in arriving at his decision. Only when he had formed his opinion in this manner would he state and explain his view. He was open to persuasion by rational argument, but he paid little attention to sentimental or inconsequential considerations.

There are some in Israel who charged him in the past with dictatorially imposing his will on his associates. This was not at all the case. The record might show that his view usually prevailed, but that did not happen always; and, what is more important, he never sought to impose his will, but achieved his objective by convincing his colleagues that he was right. Some may have voted with him, not out of conviction, but because they did not wish to be in conflict with him or even to show any disagreement with him. If that was so, they themselves were to blame for lacking the courage to exercise their legitimate right to disagree with him, which was certainly available to them. The fault cannot be ascribed to him.

Indeed, one of Ben-Gurion's most commendable qualities is that from the earliest days he believed fervently in the democratic process. Parenthetically, he was one of the few East European Jewish leaders who really understood the true import and the importance of the democratic process, and sought to apply it in our public life. The others would no doubt be perturbed to find themselves described as not fully understanding what democracy in public affairs means and entails, but in my humble opinion that is, regrettably, the position. Ben-Gurion was one of the few exceptions in this fundamental matter.

## Battle for Jerusalem

A SINGLE illustration will suffice to demonstrate how he loyally respected genuine democratic decisions. When Jerusalem was besieged, at a certain time he formed the opinion that part of our very inadequate military forces should be withdrawn from various positions throughout the country and should be assembled into a unit that would go to the relief of Jerusalem by a wide encircling operation. This operation would also ensure that the entire area of Jerusalem would be in Jewish possession.

Some of his top army commanders opposed his view. They considered there would be serious danger to our general defence in withdrawing these men in numbers sufficient for the pur-

*In 35 years of intimate friendship with Ben-Gurion, Dov Joseph sat with him at hundreds of meetings in the Israel Cabinet, the Executive of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, before the State was established, and on the Secretariat and Central Committee of Mapai. Nevertheless, states Dr. Joseph, it was difficult, within the confines of a short article, to write an appreciation of him as a political leader, a statesman and a man. Below, Dr. Joseph, who was Governor of Jerusalem in 1948, and served in several Cabinets, first as Minister of Commerce and later as Minister of Justice, writes here of some of B-G's unique characteristics.*

pose. As between the general consideration and Jerusalem's need of aid, they opted for the former.

Ben-Gurion brought the matter to the Cabinet, in view of the gravity of the decision one way or another. He pleaded that Jerusalem was the heart of our people. To lose Jerusalem would be tantamount to losing the war. He warned that failure to act now might be a cause of grief to us for generations. The majority decided against his proposed action. No doubt very reluctantly and unhappily, he yielded to the opinion of the majority of his colleagues who, he knew, had decided in good faith and according to the dictates of their conscience. Jewish Jerusalem managed to hold out without that intended aid and, as a result of the Six Day War, Ben-Gurion's apprehension did not materialize. One may say that all's well that ends well, but this result was fortuitous, whilst the danger he foresaw was very real.

From the outset Ben-Gurion displayed keen political acumen. He seemed to foresee or to sense what might happen, what the Government we were dealing with was intending to do or might do. He was so much a realist that he was seldom taken in by any attempt to conceal or to smooth over and sugar-coat any design prejudicial to the Jewish interest.

Together with this rare quality, he also has an unusual instinct as to timing. He never fails to consider the element of timing and seems to know when it is inadvisable to make any particular move and when would be the best time to act. This attribute was obvious when he exercised his leadership of Mapai or of the nation.

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BEN-Gurion is what may be termed a born leader in a double sense. Firstly, by his independence of thought, his initiative in deciding on a desirable policy or course of action and by his persuasive ability to convince his listeners, he brought about their readiness to accept and follow his lead. Secondly, his sense of timing told him when a particular matter was of such importance that it should become an issue to be dealt with there and then, or to be put before the public as an issue on which a stand must be made or vigorous action must be taken, and then saw to it that action was taken.

When the British left Palestine and the question arose whether or not a Jewish State should be declared, it was Ben-Gurion who in effect was the deciding factor. He realized, as if with second sight, that this was the time to act, that the opportunity afforded us by the

U.N. Resolution should be seized, that it might be fatal to temporize, that we must act now and at once. He himself has written that the decision taken in Tel Aviv was unanimous; but it is an open secret that there were some who at first did not agree, who hesitated and thought it might be better to wait a while, not to press forward too vigorously.

In his autobiography, Dr. Nahum Goldmann states that he was convinced it would be a serious mistake to declare the establishment of the State. He wished to fly to Tel Aviv in a special airplane which the U.S. State Department, which then shared his views, wished to place at his disposal, he writes. His purpose was to persuade his colleagues here to desist. Ben-Gurion was able to persuade the doubters and only thus was the decision taken unanimously.

## Sense of statehood

After the State was set up Ben-Gurion displayed what is one of his most remarkable attributes. Judged by his past attainments, one could have expected him to be a statesman of high calibre, as indeed he is. It was gratifyingly surprising however, that, although he had no prior experience in running the affairs of a state, he showed a deep understanding of statehood, an innate sense of what a state should do and what it should not do in diverse circumstances. He instinctively understood what was vital to a state's interests, how its affairs should be conducted, how the State, its Cabinet Ministers and senior officials should behave, what duties and courtesies it owed to other states and to its own citizens, what behaviour towards it could and should not be tolerated. In exercising this sense of statehood, as Prime Minister, he rendered invaluable service to the State and saved it from numerous pitfalls.

Several examples come to mind of the exercise of this invaluable quality, coupled with his extraordinary powers of decision. When the Kibbutz Hameuchad group of leaders (then Mapai) wished to keep the command of the Palmach, which was established as a crack unit of the Hagana, independent of the Army High Command, Ben-Gurion put his foot down. He declared this would in effect mean that there were two distinct armed forces in the State, one subject to the orders of its Government and the other acting on the instructions of a non-governmental body. There could be only one army in the State, he insisted, and as Minister of Defence he terminated this situation, not without quite a struggle. Palmach was declared to be a unit of Zahal, subject to the orders of its High Command exactly like all other Army units. Some of its senior officers resigned in protest but the authority of the State was asserted and it prevailed.

When word was received that a ship controlled by a group of I.Z.L. members, "the Altalena," with a large supply of arms and ammunition aboard was approaching the shores of the newly established State, Ben-Gurion at once realized the inherent danger to the State. He believed that this was a direct challenge to the authority of the State and must be dealt with firmly, as any properly run state would. The Etzel leaders were required to hand over all the arms and ammunition. They refused. Ben-Gurion proposed that he order the Army to take possession of the arms, if need be by force. There was a near crisis in the Govern-



Mr. and Mrs. Dov Joseph with Mr. Ben-Gurion at the door of their home.

ment because several of the Cabinet Ministers were unwilling to agree to Jewish soldiers being ordered to fire at Jews. Ben-Gurion insisted that as a State we had no choice; to fail to do so might make possible civil war in the future. It might undermine the State. His view prevailed, the action was taken. Unfortunately Jews were killed on both sides, but the authority of the State was maintained and, eventually, its integrity.

## Reparations

WHEN Ben-Gurion felt the time was ripe, he proposed that we present a request to the German Government for payment of compensation to Israel, on behalf of the Jewish people, in respect of the destruction and loss of Jewish property by the Nazi madmen during the Holocaust. He knew that for emotional reasons, which he well understood, there would be much opposition to such a proposal. The monstrosity of Nazi deeds against the Jews still engendered hatred and bitterness in very many Jewish hearts. Their feelings would be outraged by our entering into any dealings with the Germans. And how right he was!

He had, however, come to the conclusion that the vital interests of the State, and of the Jewish people, required that we do so. The large number of refugees who had immigrated into Israel from the refugee camps made it indispensable that we find the vast sums of money required to settle them in the country, to rehabilitate them. We were morally entitled to the money and it was the Government's duty to do what the interests of the State dictated and to explain to the people why we had to do so. He believed that ultimately, if we received the reparations, those political parties opposing our action would themselves take their fair share of them.

Once he thought the matter through and decided logically that his view was the sound one and that this was the time to act, he sought and obtained a decision of his Cabinet and went forward.

At the time I agreed completely with his proposal that we seek reparations, because I did not consider we would be taking German money. They would only be giving back to the Jewish people a very small part (probably less than 10 per cent) of the Jewish property and money they had stolen or destroyed. I remembered, too, the question of the prophet Elijah to King Ahab *Haratzachta vegam yarashta?* "Has't thou killed and also taken possession," (Kings I 21, 19).

I felt strongly however that we should not, so soon after the Holocaust, agree to have any dealings ourselves with the Germans. Nor should we bring into the country German goods manufactured by hands which might be sullied with the blood of Jewish victims.

I therefore proposed that we should ask a friendly state to conduct the negotiations for us according to our instructions, as is frequently done when two countries which do not enjoy diplomatic relations wish to reach agreement on a particular matter. I also argued that we should insist on the right to sell abroad the German merchandise we would receive as reparations. I preferred that we lose 5 per cent or 10 per cent of their value on resale of the goods rather than bring them into Israel.

Ben-Gurion had no patience with emotional considerations. If what he proposed was right and morally justified we should disregard marginal matters and not jeopardize the success of our negotiations because of them. The majority shared his view.

As he foresaw, the opposition to the Government's proposal was great and was even accompanied by considerable violence. But the decision had been a sound one, it was approved by the Knesset and was implemented successfully despite the misguided opposition to Israel accepting compensation from Germany.

## The Capital

ONE final instance. When the United Nations decided that Jerusalem, which we had proclaimed was again to be the capital of the Jewish State, should be internationalized, Ben-Gurion immediately proposed that Israel's reply to this decision should be at once to move to Jerusalem all Government Ministries, except the Defence and Police Ministries. Jerusalem was the capital of the Jewish State two thousand years and more before the states that took the decision at the U.N. even existed. The area of Jerusalem we occupied was within Israel territory, the Government of Israel, a sovereign state, had the right to decide where its capital should be, it decided that Jerusalem would be our capital. If it had been so till now only formally we must now make it so in fact, and thus nullify the U.N. decision.

As with all of us, so as regards Ben-Gurion, there is light, and there is shade. It surely would be inappropriate to mention the shade on so festive an occasion as B-G's eighty-fifth birthday. May he continue his work, hale and hearty, for years to come.

# YIGAEEL YADIN: The decisions of 1948



IN his recent book "Bar-Kokhba" (Jerusalem, Weidenfeld and Nicolson), Professor YIGAEEL YADIN tells of showing the documents he found, most of which were written in Aramaic, to Mr. David Ben-Gurion, who was then Prime Minister. He relates (page 124): "Why did they write in Aramaic and not in Hebrew?" was (Mr. Ben-Gurion's) immediate angry reaction, as if the scribes had been members of his staff."

Here, in a conversation with MOSHE KOHN, with the above vignette as a point of departure, Prof. Yadin elaborates on Ben-Gurion the man as he came to know him from his close association with him from the summer of 1947, when, summoned by Mr. Ben-Gurion, Chairman of the Jewish Agency Executive, who about a year earlier had also assumed the Agency's "defiance portfolio," Prof. Yadin became Hagana Chief of Planning and Operations, then Israel Defence Forces Chief of Operations — in both of which capacities he was Acting Chief of Staff for a considerable period during Rav-Aluf Ya'acov Dori's illness — and then, for three years from November 9, 1949, Chief of Staff. Prof. Yadin also discusses some of the issues over which he and Mr. Ben-Gurion had serious quarrels, and over which he several times submitted his resignation, which Mr. Ben-Gurion finally accepted at the end of 1952. And Prof. Yadin stresses that violent as some of these quarrels were, they never became personal, and the relations between the two remain most cordial to this day.

PROF. Yadin opened by saying that he would define Mr. Ben-Gurion's qualities as "a phenomenal or strange combination of politician and statesman, prophet and king." Those who are not fully aware of this combination "misinterpret some of his actions" — and this is done both by his adversaries and by his "naive admirers."

As a politician, Prof. Yadin continued, "Ben-Gurion knew how to use the shrewdest political tactical moves and do what politicians do and talk the way politicians talk — that is to say, not always telling the whole truth in the political sense. Yet at the same time, as a statesman and as a prophet he reached the highest possible heights of statesmanship or prophecy or vision that I can think of. And this strange combination, I think, is what placed him above his whole generation."

It is wrong to portray Mr. Ben-Gurion "only as a man who did not interfere in, or did not understand, or did not want to be active in, what is normally called the dirty aspects of politics." People say that "in the last years" of his Premiership Mr. Ben-Gurion made mistakes here and there — in the Lavon Affair, for example. Prof. Yadin does not believe that anything happened to Mr. Ben-Gurion "in the last years. I think this always characterized him. Of course, sometimes one makes mistakes. But this fury and fighting spirit of Ben-Gurion manifested itself in all spheres — in the spheres of prophecy and statesmanship, and also in the so-called lower sphere of politics. That's the way I knew him."

When did Prof. Yadin first come into contact with Mr. Ben-Gurion?

"Strangely enough, my first direct contact with him — of course, I used to see him in the crowd — was in 1946 I believe it was. In 1944 or '45 I left the Hagana, where I served as Chief of Planning and Operations, sometimes part time, sometimes more, to go back to my studies. In 1946, Ben-Gurion actively assumed what he used to call the Security or Defence Portfolio of the Jewish Agency, and he took more direct interest in the Hagana. Let me say here: A very important thing about Ben-Gurion, which resulted later in many, many misunderstandings between him and some other officers as well as myself, is that before that he was less interested and less active in Hagana matters than is commonly assumed."

"The next time I came directly in contact with him was the summer of 1947, when I suddenly received a message directly from him to return to active service in the Hagana. I went to him, and he told me I was again being appointed Hagana Chief of Operations. And in fact from then on and until the end of 1952, we were never separated; I was always under his direct command."

"To come back to my original point: Ben-Gurion was always a multi-faceted man. And some people ignore his quality as a political tactician, and they distort his image when they try to

paint him as a saint in political life. He was never a saint in the sense that he did not deal with 'lower' problems. He dealt with these problems for as long as and to the extent that he thought necessary. And he was very shrewd in those matters. I think he always involuntarily exploited somewhat the naive attitude of some of his *Hassidim*, who thought that Ben-Gurion did not know anything about, let alone was prepared to deal with, certain questions on which they wanted to approach him. So either they didn't broach these matters to him at all, and in a way made life easier for him. Or when they did approach him, and he raised his eyebrows as though he didn't have an inkling of what they were talking about, they took it more or less at face value. But he always knew precisely more than they did."

"When I look back and vividly recall those furious discussions, even rifts, I'm horrified about the way I sometimes used to raise my voice at him. When I remember that he was about 60, and I was just in my late twenties, and he tolerated me, I really see it as another great point to his credit. Perhaps it was that I was a relative youngster, not a political man, not belonging to any political party, not being used to coming to him as a political leader, and so I may have had more of the *Sabra hutzpa* — or maybe I was just a bit hot-tempered — and when I thought he was not really answering me, I would call a spade a spade."

"By the way this leads me back to my original point: Ben-Gurion was one of the greatest evaders of answers when he didn't want to answer a question. If somebody came to him with a problem — and it could be a serious problem — on which Ben-Gurion did not want to commit himself, it was nearly impossible for that person to get any kind of answer out of Ben-Gurion. He would start to talk about the Bible, about history, about all sorts of things, till the petitioner was completely overwhelmed; and by that time the time was up, and they never got around to the problem. Not always because at that particular moment Ben-Gurion had wanted to discuss the Bible, but because he wanted to evade the issue. And it never dawned on some of those people that this was a tactical move. But those who worked closer with him and were less impressed by these traits of his were more direct. Sometimes, when I couldn't get a straight answer out of him concerning a particular action that had to be taken, and he turned the conversation to all kinds of irrelevant matters, I would finally say: Well, Ben-Gurion, I want you to know then I am going to do such-and-such. And if I didn't get a direct no to that, and it was left open, I took it as an O.K. for the operation."

"But there is something else which impressed me very much in those days, and I'm still impressed by it now, although it may sound a bit trivial. From the time I remember him, Ben-Gurion has kept a diary. And this sometimes was a source of annoyance to those who came to talk to him,

particularly in my case. Normally, particularly during the fighting, I would come to him sometimes several times a day for decisions on matters which seemed urgent to me. And he would always insist that I talk at dictation speed. He would write down every word — I don't know what he wrote, except for the sections that have been published — in any case, he wrote as I talked, and sometimes it took twice or three times as long to finish discussing a question. At that time it annoyed me tremendously, although even then I couldn't get over the fact that here I might be coming to him to tell him, for example, that the Egyptians were 20 miles south of Tel Aviv, and I wanted a decision, let's say, about ordering the Givati Brigade to carry out a certain operation — well, to present my point of view would normally have taken two minutes and for him to answer me yes or no, let's say, another two minutes. But since he had to write down everything, it would take 15 minutes. As I said, it annoyed me, but at the same time I admired him in those days, because it showed the self-control of the man. And this was perhaps one of his most important qualities as a war leader. He really controlled himself. He was not outwardly nervous. He was nervous in certain other things — in political matters, in personal matters with certain people, but not on the major problems of the war."

"But, of course, here we touch upon another of Ben-Gurion's traits. Ben-Gurion, as I see it, always thought: What will history say about Ben-Gurion? I think this was a dominant factor in many of his actions — not only in what he wrote. There is no doubt about his charisma, that he believes that he was God-inspired — not necessarily in the religious sense — that he is a man with a mission, and this is really what drives him all the time. And he is sure that whatever is being done now is as important for 1,000 years from now as it is for today. What people will then say about what is being done now, about what Ben-Gurion did or did not do, is as important as what people are saying today or will say tomorrow."

"So when future historians refer to his diary — as in fact to any diary — they will have to do so very warily. It is not an objective stenotypist who was sitting there recording every word. Even as he wrote — as any diarist does — he did so in terms of the way he thought the things being recorded should have been done."

"Now Ben-Gurion's sincere sense of mission — as in the case of many of the great leaders in Jewish history, or in fact in the history of the world, like Churchill or de Gaulle — also determined many, many of his actions. I always wondered why from time to time he would deliver historical excursions in which he tried to minimize sometimes the role of Moses, sometimes the role of David, of Herzl, of Weizmann. I think — and I'm sure that Ben-Gurion will completely disagree with me on this — that subconsciously he is too clever a man to do things of this sort deliberately — subconsciously he lives with Moses as if Moses were sitting on the other side of the table, he lives with David, he lives with these characters —

Moshe Kohn: "... as though they were members of his staff?"

Prof. Yadin: "... not members of his staff, but as if they were members of the same cabinet of which he is not necessarily Prime Minister, and he is arguing with them. Whether Moses did something this way or that way is important to him not just as a scholar out to establish whether Moses did this or that right. He is arguing with Moses, demanding an immediate explanation of a particular action. So I think that in these excursions he is complimenting or fighting political colleagues or adversaries who are sitting around the table with him, as it were."

Prof. Yadin spoke of Mr. Ben-Gurion's "tremen-

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dous power of concentration" — which served him as a war leader, and in all other respects, Prof. Yadin explained:

"I don't mean mere concentrated attention to whoever might be talking to him. Not at all. Actually, perhaps I ought to use a military term: 'maintenance of aim.' That is — once he defined for himself what the most important thing was, then as far as he was concerned all the rest did not exist even if others thought the whole world was collapsing. When he decided that defence was the most important thing, although he was Prime Minister, he completely neglected all the other fields. And he gave complete independence of action to the Ministers concerned with the other areas. Concerning what people used to say that he didn't understand enough about economics or other things — that is not true, strictly speaking. It was that he did not want to be bothered about these things, because he wanted to concentrate on defence matters. He knew that he had one task, and that if he failed in this task all the efforts of the others would be meaningless.

"The same goes for Ben-Gurion's own frequent declaration that he didn't understand economics. For him to 'understand' a problem means to leave all other problems aside, to sit for several weeks and question hundreds of people. And I'm sure he would have been as knowledgeable as others in any area he chose, once he decided that that particular area was the main thing. This, I think, is a very, very important trait for a leader, and particularly for a leader in time of war."

### Jerusalem and Latrun

IN their own relations, Mr. Ben-Gurion "most of the time" gave Prof. Yadin "complete freedom in the tactical and lower strategical decisions on the conduct of the war." Prof. Yadin continued:

"He was not always really interested in knowing exactly what each move was going to be, and quite satisfied, for his own part, to define the general aims. Nevertheless, one of the saddest and most serious clashes I had with him was not tactical, but definitely in the realm of strategy over the Battle of Latrun. It all really concerned the problem of Jerusalem, on the one hand, and on the other hand his lack of understanding of actual military tactics.

"Jerusalem was under siege, and in Jerusalem at that time the civilian leaders — Dov Joseph and the others — and they — it is true — bombarded Ben-Gurion, who was in Tel Aviv at the time, with desperate messages that Jerusalem would not hold. And Ben-Gurion, of course, like everybody else — but even more so, in view of his responsibility — was afraid that if Jerusalem fell, then the whole thing was gone. And the key to Jerusalem at that time, of course — the key to the road to Jerusalem — was Latrun. So he issued an order to the General Staff that we had to take Latrun by all means and as quickly as possible. The dispute centred mainly on the fact that as we had no forces available for such an operation — our main forces were tied up with the Egyptians in the South, whom at that time I considered the greatest threat, and with the Syrians. So we had to create new forces. And these forces were not really trained yet. There's the by-now very famous Seventh Armoured Brigade, which had just been formed with new immigrants straight out of the immigrant camps. And the timetable which Ben-Gurion set meant a direct tactical assault on Latrun. I thought such an assault would fail — because the Arab Legion was there and knew we were coming, and our forces were untrained.

And we failed at Latrun once and twice and thrice — only, in my opinion, because Ben-Gurion had insisted that we attack immediately, and immediately meant direct assault, with no surprise element whatever in terms of time or topography or tactics.

"This was one of the greatest quarrels I had with Ben-Gurion. Of course, I know one thing: I either carried out his commands and decisions, or, as happened several times, I submitted my resignation. Of course, except for the final one, all these resignations were patched up afterwards.

"Ben-Gurion has since contended—and he may be right from his point of view, or may be proven right by history; I don't know what the historians will write in 20 or 2,000 years from Ben-Gurion's point of view — that it's true that we failed, but our attacks on Latrun diverted some forces of the Arab Legion from Jerusalem, relieving the pressure on Jerusalem, and therefore we achieved at least that much. I cannot say that he is not right on that, but I can say that this was not the object of the operation. This is one time I remember that he really interfered in an actual tactical move, or rather strategic move."

There was another clash over Jerusalem, Prof. Yadin recalls:

"I think that never in the history of warfare — modern warfare in any case — did a Prime Minister and Minister of Defence and his Acting Chief of Staff invest so much time and anger as we did arguing about what to do with two 65-millimetre guns of 1870 vintage. When we got our first four 65-mm. "Napoleons" (one of which is standing in Tiberias), these battles of Latrun were going from bad to worse. At the same time, the Syrians nearly penetrated Degania; in fact, one tank did penetrate later. And I was afraid that if we lost Galilee and Degania, it would be a terrible blow to our whole strategy. And I simply knew — maybe because I was born in Jerusalem, maybe because I knew Jerusalem topographically and I grew up in the Hagana of Jerusalem — that it would not be so easy for

the Legion to capture Jerusalem. And I wanted to bring the guns up against the Syrians, while Ben-Gurion insisted that they should go to Jerusalem. And I remember that we argued about this for hours. I couldn't convince him, and of course, he couldn't convince me. But he hadn't given me an order — yet.

"In any case, in the course of the argument over the guns, in the heat of the discussion, I must have hit the table — I talk with hands apparently — which was covered with glass, and I smashed the glass and my whole hand was cut and bleeding.

"In the end we compromised. He agreed that we should send two guns — if I remember correctly — to the North for only 24 hours, after which they would be promptly sent back to Jerusalem. And I personally think that the guns which were sent to Degania saved the day. They came in the nick of time, bombarded the shocked Syrians, who 'knew' that we had no guns. Those guns, by the way, were without sights, but the first shells to land in Lake Kinneret sent the Syrians stampeding wildly away.

"I have said that Ben-Gurion was not active in the Hagana in the crucial years before the State, except for the last two years. Maybe because of that he didn't know exactly what the Hagana was, and deep in his heart he didn't have faith in the ability of the Hagana officers who had not had training in regular armies. In a way — and I don't understand it to this day — I was an exception in this respect. I had never served in the British Army or

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any other foreign army. I was a typical product of the Hagana, in which we learned the way we learned, by trial and error and so on. In any case, except for me, at that time he had no confidence in the Hagana officers. And when in crucial moments he had to choose a commander who had served in the British Army but in my opinion was less capable as a leader, and also less knowledgeable in the tactics which we thought were more important for us — in guerrilla type of warfare — Ben-Gurion always inclined to choose a former British Army man.

"We clashed over this in connection with the Battle of Latrun, when I wanted to appoint Yigal Allon as Commander of the Central Front, and Ben-Gurion insisted on appointing a certain man who had been a major in the British Army. And I submitted my resignation. I told him that I believed that his choice was influenced by political considerations, with which I could not agree because I thought that at such a critical time the best officer should be given the assignment, irrespective of all other considerations. It so happened also that Yigal Allon belonged to the Palmah, and belonged to a rival political group — which I don't say influenced Ben-Gurion directly, but indirectly it certainly influenced him. I and the rest of the General Staff submitted our resignations. This was at the time of the first truce. This was when we were planning to capture Lydda, Ramle, Latrun and Ramallah — "Operation LaRLaR." I always believed that if we could reach Ramallah and outflank Jerusalem from the North, we would eventually relieve the pressure on Jerusalem. Of course, in the General Staff we prepared the plans; I had told my officers to go on with the planning. Then, just a few days before the truce was to expire, Ben-Gurion said to me: 'If you are resigning, then I am also resigning. You don't have to come telling me that you resign.' I saw that all this could result in catastrophe. So I went to him and I found him ill in bed. He hardly wanted to talk to me. I remember that he had almost his entire back to me as we spoke. I told him that I didn't matter at all; he could throw me out if he wished; but how would he answer for what happened? Then I suggested an *ad hoc* solution which resolved that crisis: Yigal Allon would not be appointed Commander of the Central Front, but only of Operation LaRLaR.

"It may be that because Ben-Gurion has served as a Corporal in the British Army (in the Jewish Legion in World War I), he subconsciously had such high regard for a 'real' major. And this is interesting, because, generally speaking, Ben-Gurion has always had complete faith in everything Jewish, everything Israeli.

"But despite all these clashes — and this has only added to my admiration of him — from the time I left the I.D.F. and till today, our personal relations have always been perfect. And he has always known and I know that I can write against him, or he can write against something I say, and — unlike other cases in this country, unfortunately, where the moment you have a disagreement with somebody on some point it becomes a personal matter for life — I know that I can come to him and talk to him as if all that didn't matter, and he also behaves in the same way towards me. Acrimonious as the exchanges were on a particular issue, I knew that it was not personal."

### The Altalena

THE Altalena affair was not a bone of contention between them. Quite the contrary.

"As Chief of Operations, I was not in the know about the negotiations which led to the Altalena affair. This had been handled by Eshkol, Galili and Ben-Gurion. But once the situation had developed, and the Altalena was in Kfar Vitkin, and there

was a Government decision, I was called to the Government meeting on the evening of June 20 — I think it was — and I was told that the Government had decided that everything should be done to prevent the landing of this boat with its arms and that it all had to be handed to the Government. I didn't have the slightest hesitation about complying with the orders of the Government and of Ben-Gurion. There was just one case in the operation — and this was one of the rare occasions as far as I remember in all my relations with Ben-Gurion — when I asked that a certain order be given to me in writing and not verbally, because I thought it was a very delicate and decisive one. But I complied. And I think that, historically speaking, Ben-Gurion's action on the Altalena — he may have made mistakes here and there — was one of his most courageous, definitely one of his most decisive, as far as the Jewish State was concerned — after his decision to declare the State. No, I have never had any problem about the basic decision.

### Yadin's resignation

This brought us to Prof. Yadin's final resignation which was accepted, in December 1952. He recalls:

"What may have given me the audacity to argue with Ben-Gurion was that I never thought that I was going to remain a professional military man. I always wanted to go back to archaeology. So I knew that my serving as Chief of Staff — which was of course the greatest responsibility and the greatest honour that could have been bestowed on me — was only a matter of time. The only question was whether I would leave after three or four or five years.

"You must bear in mind the situation in the country in 1952. It was the time of real depression, the time of the great immigration, of severe austerity, and there was a terrific general malaise against the Government. And, administratively speaking, the country was in chaos. The Government really wasn't functioning well. The only body which, outwardly in any case, operated smoothly, was the I.D.F., and I was the Chief of Staff.

"Some people from the parties used to come to Ben-Gurion and say: 'Look here, Ben-Gurion, all the malaise is against you as Prime Minister and your party, while Yadin gets all the credit for the efficient running of the Army.' Some tiny people used to go to him and say that! And of course the Army was more efficient because the Army received more means, because the Army can operate on command while Government cannot. But the general result was that the Army was the only island of efficiency, and this was dangerous. Some people were suggesting at the time that a military dictatorship ought to be instituted.

"It so happened at that time that, because of the terrible economic situation, Ben-Gurion came to the conclusion that the military budget had to be drastically cut. By the way — when I read in the newspapers about the discussions concerning the present defence budget, I feel like laughing. Because at that time we were talking about a reduction — if I'm not mistaken — of IL10m. But at that time it was decisive. And Ben-Gurion gave me an order to reduce the budget. After quarrelling with him, I said I would do it but would also come with suggestions on how much and in what way to reduce it. He did not accept my suggestion, but insisted also on deciding the breakdown of how we were going to save the IL10m.

"Well, it occurred to me for the first time, that maybe the only basis of cooperation which I had with Ben-Gurion as Chief of Staff and him as Prime Minister — namely, that he had complete confidence in me — was beginning to disintegrate. And I knew that without that I could not operate loyally — or efficiently, for that matter — for even a single day. So I wrote Ben-Gurion a long letter explaining why I thought the budget should be cut in one particular way and not another. And I said to him that if he disagreed with the way I suggested reorganizing the I.D.F. in the light of the cuts, it would serve me as an indication that he no longer had the confidence in me that he was entitled to have, and this would mean that I would have to go. And that's exactly what happened.

"Although when I tendered my resignation, Ben-Gurion — certainly outwardly, and I believe genuinely — was shocked and did everything he could to persuade me to remain. But the basic issue remained. And it was no longer a matter merely of compromising about budget. I came to the conclusion that I had finished my term. And there was another thing, although this was secondary. After five years of considerable activity in most difficult periods — although I was only 36 at the time — a thought that the time had come for a new man to take over, someone with more vigour, more energy, less tied to the past preoccupations and biases. As a matter of fact I'm glad that I left when I did with Ben-Gurion very friendly. In fact, when I left he gave a copy of Josephus' writings as a gift — one of his own sets, with his initials embossed on it, with the most fatherly-brotherly inscription that one could expect from such a man; and this gift is one of my most highly treasured possessions. And while Ben-Gurion was still Prime Minister, several times in the years following he asked me to join the Government or undertake certain other assignments. To this day we correspond quite often on certain personal things — about war memoirs, or when I challenge something he has written, or he challenges something I have written. But I wish that all relations between everybody in our country, political or otherwise, remained on the personal level as they remain between me and Ben-Gurion."



**DR. Ya'acov Herzog, Director-General of the Prime Minister's Office, was head of the Foreign Ministry's U.S. division when Mrs. Golda Meir, then Foreign Minister, had him attached to Ben-Gurion's staff as political liaison a day before the outbreak of the Sinai campaign, on October 28, 1956. He worked closely at Ben-Gurion's side for over four months — throughout operation Kadesh and the diplomatic battles that followed — until March 1957. He had however known the "Old Man" long before, and has remained in contact with him ever since. Below, in an interview with YA'ACOV REUEL, he talks about the Sinai Campaign of 1956 and the subsequent withdrawal.**

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Launching the campaign was obviously not a snap decision on Ben-Gurion's part. How early did he conceive of the idea?

"He has never given a precise date," replied Dr. Herzog. "However, right from the time the Czech-Egyptian arms deal was announced, in September 1955 — to our complete surprise, incidentally — I sensed in him a growing anxiety about Israel's isolation — and the threat to her very survival. Remember the time: fedayeen raids and border clashes a daily occurrence; the Suez Canal blockaded and Eilat sealed off; Nasser's bid for hegemony in the area moving to a peak; and East and West vying for Arab favours, and increasing Arab strength.

"I recall Ben-Gurion speaking to U.S. Ambassador Edward Lawson, in November 1955, about the danger to Israel's cities of a sudden Egyptian attack with newly acquired Soviet jet aircraft. He now expected the worst from Nasser, whom he had once welcomed as a possible harbinger of better relations with Israel. Now he was utterly disillusioned.

"In November 1955, Ben-Gurion in fact proposed immediate military action to break the Egyptian blockade in the Straits of Tiran. He did not succeed in getting Cabinet approval. But Ben-Gurion kept brooding over the need for action."

Was this the cause for his final break with the late Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett?

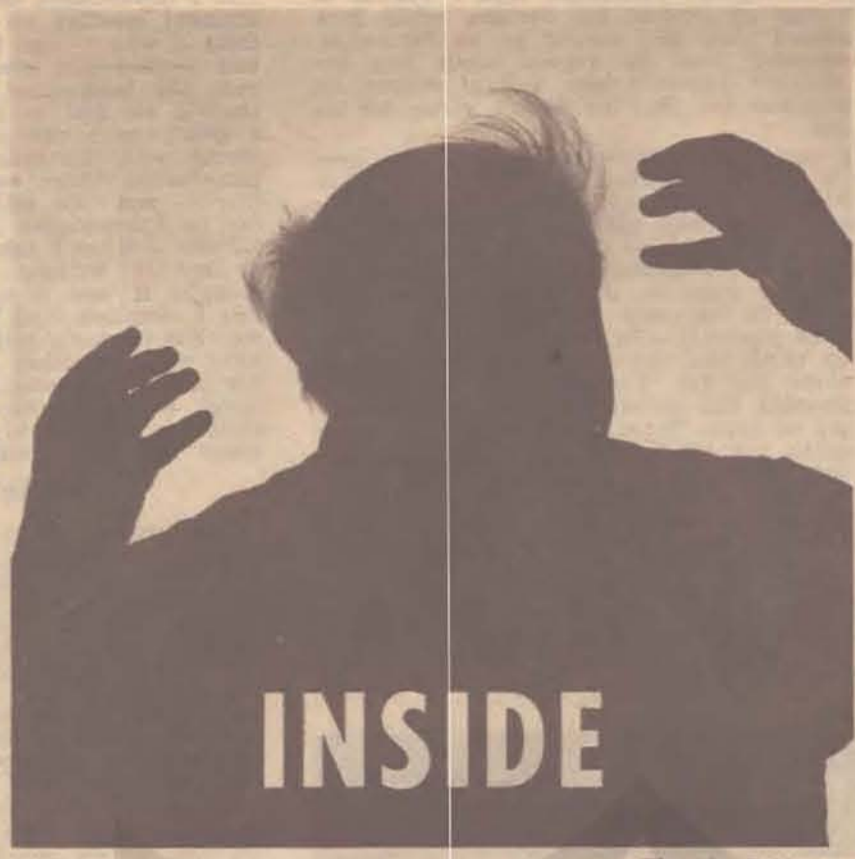
"In large measure, I think — yes," replied Dr. Herzog. "I remember, in May 1956, I asked him why he was forcing Sharett's resignation — I had the greatest respect for both men. After pondering the question for a few minutes, he said he could not tell me the reason. Later, in November, after the campaign, the late Randolph Churchill, who came visiting, asked the same question — in retrospect. And Ben-Gurion's answer was that Sharett was an outstanding Foreign Minister for peacetime, but not for wartime. He clearly meant that Sharett would not have gone along with his idea of a Sinai campaign — therefore Sharett had to go."

What determined his timing of the campaign?

"The last straw was the military alliances between Egypt, Syria and Jordan — against Israel — in September and early October 1956. Ben-Gurion viewed them as a most ominous development. But there were some favourable developments which presented themselves at the time, and which he was determined not to let pass. First, the weapons which Israel began to receive from France that summer. These helped rectify somewhat the military imbalance created by the Czech arms deal. And, secondly, Nasser's break with the western powers, particularly with Britain and France, over the nationalization of the Suez Canal. This seemed in some measure to correct the political imbalance."

Would the campaign have been launched at the time even without Ben-Gurion at the helm?

"I doubt that very much," replied Dr. Herzog, firmly. "Sooner or later, given the situation then existing, and Dayan's and Peres' pressure for action, I think a clash of arms was virtually in-



(Photo by Rubinger)

# SINAI 1956

evitable. But, if it were not for Ben-Gurion, the decision might well have been delayed until 1957, or even 1958, when Israel's position vis-à-vis Egypt would probably have been much weaker, and Nasser might have attacked in the meantime. Ben-Gurion alone had the authority and prestige in matters of defence — both in the Cabinet and among the people — and not merely because he was Prime Minister and Minister of Defence — as well as the unwavering determination to swing the decision in October of 1956."

Did he have a clearly defined conception of the war's aims?

"If there ever was a formal document setting out these aims, I am not aware of it. But I think he knew pretty well what he was after. As far as I can judge — and mind you, I only learned about the war plans at the last moment, when I joined his staff — he hoped to reopen the Gulf of Akaba to Israeli shipping, and safeguard it by an Israeli presence on the Gulf; to put an end to fedayeen incursions from the Gaza Strip, and in the process to break the back of the Egyptian army so completely as to remove a growing threat of attack on Israel. The Strip presented a bit of a problem: Ben-Gurion wanted to put an end to Egyptian control, and to replace it with Israeli control. But he was by no means eager for outright annexation, which would have meant an addition of several hundred thousand Arabs to Israel's population. His attitude on the Strip was rather ambivalent: he never visited it during the campaign or after."

But he did seem to change his mind somewhat after the occupation of Sinai, didn't he?

"In his address to the Knesset on November 7, his first public appearance to report on the successful campaign, he implicitly laid a historical claim to the island of Yotvata — better known as Tiran — and even quoted Procopius, the ancient chronicler, to prove the claim. From this statement, one could also draw the inference that he intended to retain control of the land approaches in Sinai to the Gulf of Akaba. The general tone of this euphoric speech was vague on Sinai generally. It aroused violent reaction across the world. It left a long shadow in Israel's memory. The following day (November 8)

under international pressures he retracted. But I don't think that even when speaking on November 7, he really meant more than control of Yotvata and the land approaches to the Gulf of Akaba with a view to safeguarding freedom of Israeli shipping to and from Eilat."

Did his sudden illness have any effect on the progress of the campaign?

"None whatever. It started, as I recall, Sunday night, October 28. The American Ambassador had brought him to his home in Tel Aviv President Eisenhower's urgent message expressing concern over Israel's mobilization. After the meeting, Ben-Gurion instructed me to draw up an immediate reply, and after clearing it with Foreign Minister Meir, who was then in Jerusalem, to bring it to him. He insisted only that it must not contain any undertaking not to start military action — he did not wish to mislead the President. Then he said he felt he had a temperature. Next morning, when I brought in the draft, my entry was blocked by Paula, the late Mrs. Ben-Gurion, who said Ben-Gurion was running a high fever, and that no visitors were being allowed, period. It was only through the 'good offices' of his attending physician, Prof. Zondek, that I was finally permitted to come in. Ben-Gurion read the draft, and approved it. He was in control of his faculties, but also visibly ill.

"By the same afternoon however — this was Monday, October 29, the day the campaign started — he was already well enough to hold a bedside war-council, attended by among others Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan. He had me read out the points for the Foreign Ministry's statement, prepared for issue as soon as the fighting started, instructing that particular stress be laid on the danger of the fedayeen. He did not come to his office for several days afterwards. He was, however, in constant touch with events, military and political, from the little room on the first floor of his home in Sderot Keren Kayemet, where he had been moved from his regular room on the second floor — in consideration of the possibility of air raids on Tel Aviv.

"That was where I saw him Tuesday night (October 30th) close to midnight, when I hurriedly brought in the text of the

Anglo-French ultimatum — to Israel and Egypt — to cease and desist from hostilities around the Canal — and a reply, drawn up by Mrs. Meir. I found him in an ebullient and meditative mood — there were no signs of temperature — surrounded by stacks of books, on Jewish and general subjects. The ultimatum was to expire in but a few hours — the deadline was 6 a.m. Wednesday morning — and I expected him to give his full attention to business of state. Instead, to my utter stupefaction, he embarked on a discussion of Maimonides' Code of Laws, I think on the chapter on slaves. I answered his questions as well I could, all the time trying impatiently to urge him to relate to the papers I had with me — but he simply ignored my imprecations. After some 10 minutes, a glint appeared in his eyes, he perked up abruptly, and snatched the papers from my shaking hands, making a few changes in the draft. As he was reading it, it struck me that what he had been attempting to do during those seemingly endless 10 minutes, was to assure himself that he was on top of the situation — and that he would be able to peruse the state papers in absolute calm and composure.

From Dr. Herzog's vantage point, how well did Ben-Gurion cope with the political crisis that developed in November, over Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territories?

"His address to the Knesset, on November 7, a series of variations on a note of triumph, was based on a gross mis-assessment of the international situation, which had grown extremely acute with the landing of British and French troops on Egyptian territory on November 5." Did Dr. Herzog so advise him at the time? "Well, in going over the text of the speech, the day before, I did raise the question of its impact abroad. But Ben-Gurion, however, was in no mood for discussion. He was, of course, fully aware of Israel's near-total isolation at the U.N., from the very start of the campaign, but then he did not take the U.N. very seriously — he made the point, quite rightly, that General Assembly resolutions were only recommendations. Although taken back, he did not seem to consider the threatening note of Soviet Prime Minister Bulganin on November 5 — with the British and French landings in Egypt — as requiring immediate action on our part.

"I suppose the root of his miscalculation," said Dr. Herzog, pondering, "lay in the erroneous assumption that with its Nato allies, Britain and France, engaged in combat with Egypt, the U.S. would flinch from taking too hard a line towards Israel. He was therefore entirely unprepared for the vehemence of President Eisenhower's backing of the General Assembly's call for immediate and unconditional Israeli withdrawal the morning after.

"What the U.S. did then was to remove Israel's — as well as Britain's, and France's — protective shield against possible Soviet retaliation, leaving them all exposed. How actually vulnerable this made Israel was something that could not be determined with certainty at the time. Perhaps it was over-estimated. But as a responsible national leader, Ben-Gurion could not afford to underestimate it. The fact was that a regional conflict between Israel and Egypt — and that is how Ben-Gurion still viewed it in addressing the Knesset — escalated overnight into a potential global war. The limited Sinai campaign was suddenly caught in the vortex of world tensions. Realizing this, Ben-Gurion still briefly hoped he could persuade Eisenhower — at a private meeting — to see things his way. When the Ambassador to Washington, Abba Eban, advised him by phone on November 8 that in the ugly atmosphere prevailing in the U.S. capital it was hopeless even to suggest the *tete-a-tete*, Ben-Gur-

ion courageously bowed to reality, and agreed to withdraw — without a peace agreement. He was greatly disappointed, of course."

The withdrawal was a fairly long-drawn-out affair, though. How did Ben-Gurion manage it?

"He was determined to pace the withdrawal so as to gain time for the crucial battle over Israel's right to free passage through the straits, and control of the Gaza Strip. The international mood was by then progressively relaxing. As soon as total withdrawal — of British and French troops — was completed by the end of December, and the paced pull-back of Israel was in progress, and UNEF began taking over in Sinai, war hysteria all over the world subsided. Public opinion in the U.S. was beginning to balk at any idea of sanctions on Israel — especially while the Soviets, the aggressors in Hungary, were being let off scot free.

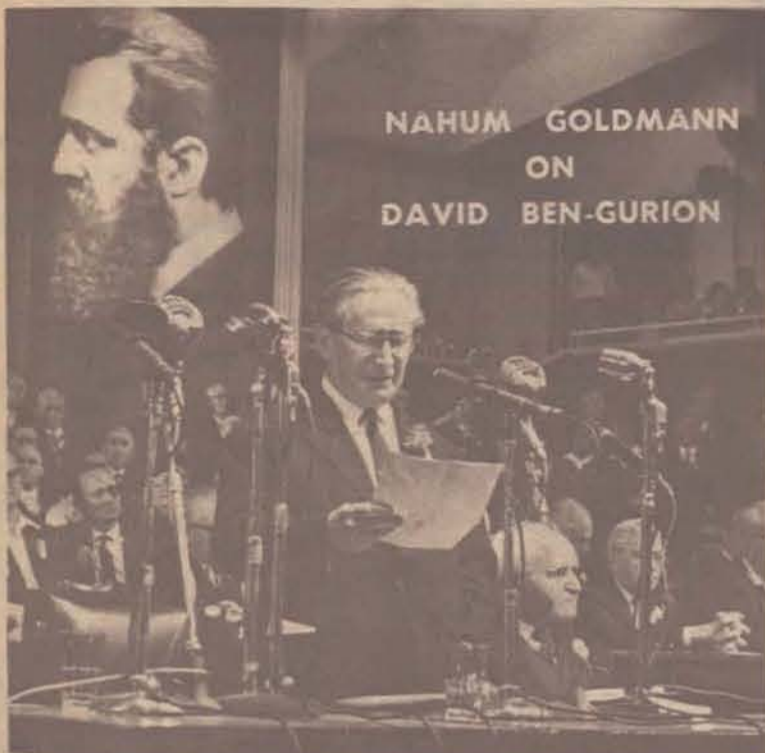
"True, on January 19, 1957, when the withdrawing Israeli forces reached the international frontier with Egypt, leaving only a salient leading down to Sharm-el-Sheikh, and the Gaza Strip, in Israel's hands, the 'heat' at the U.N. for total pullback was on again, and again with U.S. support. American-Israeli relations were deeply strained, and Ben-Gurion at one point considered Israeli resistance to world pressure — even in the face of sanctions. He called the then Finance Minister, Levi Eshkol, to find out how long the state could hold on with the available stocks of food and fuel, Eshkol, after half an hour's calculations, reported five months. Ben-Gurion was satisfied.

"As it turned out, sanctions were never voted. But the American pressure was tremendous. Late in February," recalled Dr. Herzog, "I took to Ben-Gurion the text of Eisenhower's last personal message — there were six in all during this period. It was past midnight, and I had to wake him up. He read it, and was greatly perturbed. He rose, and paced the room for a long while, pondering. He was bitterly disappointed at the President. He had fond personal memories of General "Ike," the Allied Commander in Europe, and his compassionate treatment of the Jewish survivors of the Nazi death camps after the War. He could not understand Eisenhower's failure to understand him. He said he understood that the Americans were operating on a global view of their interests — their consideration of possible Soviet involvement, and of Afro-Asian disaffection if the U.S. supported the "aggressors." But he could not stand — and he bitterly inveighed against — the smug moralizing. He had no doubt that Eisenhower and Secretary Dulles would have done exactly the same if they were in his place.

"However, when he became convinced towards the end of February 1957, that the best possible terms, under the circumstances, were Israeli final withdrawal in return for an American undertaking to support Israel's right of free navigation through the straits, and of self-defence in case of violation, and her liberty of action should Egypt attempt to reoccupy the Strip, he called the Cabinet in to ratify the deal with Washington. When I learned of his decision," said Dr. Herzog, "I said to him that he was courting a Cabinet crisis. He replied that he didn't care a hoot for the composition of the Cabinet — he only cared for the welfare of the Jewish people. He won, and Mrs. Meir then made her famous statement of March 1 to the General Assembly, in full agreement with Dulles."

This, however, still did not settle the matter. "On March 2, I was summoned to Ben-Gurion's home. He was violently agitated. U.S. Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge, in addressing the Assembly, departed from the agreement with Dulles on the lan-

(Continued on page 11)



NAHUM GOLDMANN  
ON  
DAVID BEN-GURION

## A FASCINATING MIXTURE

all the other problems which, at that moment, appear to him of minor significance — he can be understood and interpreted only by his deeds. During the many years of our close relationship, be it as opponents, be it defending the same ideas, I have had only very few real *tete-a-tetes* with him in which he revealed his innermost thought and feeling.

He was in my eyes a fascinating mixture of greatness, a daring and courageous revolutionary with tremendous endurance, and far from real greatness in many of his personal reactions. He was at the same time the Jew from Plonsk, embodying many of the qualities and faults of the Jew of the *Shtetl* and the Founder of the State of Israel, with all the characteristics required of the builder of a new state, very different from those of the Jew in the *Galut*.

It was never easy to work with him. I would not say that he did not tolerate opposition; at least as many of our talks were devoted to discussing differences of opinion as to finding methods of

cooperation in the defence of common ideas.

I even often felt, particularly in the times of Ben-Gurion's nearly unlimited power in Israel, that he respected people who dared to oppose him, but they never made any real impact on him even with the best arguments. Once he made up his mind, he never deviated from it, even if occasionally he may have felt that he was not fully right. The active man is always blind, said Goethe. And being a man of overpowering activity, he always possessed this blindness which refuses to admit doubts. I am not sure whether he was always absolutely convinced that he was right, but if he was not, he never allowed even close collaborators to guess it.

### Radiating greatness

To be in the atmosphere of a great man radiates some of his greatness on oneself. And thus, even though it was not easy to work with him, it was always a source of inspiration. I often disagreed with Ben-Gurion, sometimes violently. I had and have

still my great doubts if the way he created the new state and shaped not only the structure of the state, but of its people, was the best one. Even today, after more than 20 years of Israel's existence, history has not yet proved that the fundamental policy which he framed and which continues to be followed today is justified and will secure the future of the state.

There were times of political fights and ideological conflicts in which I was furious with him. But I never left him without the feeling, however, difficult it was to work with him or to oppose him, that it was a great inspiring experience.

My late father, who was a wise man, used to teach me that a man in public life should not only be careful in choosing his friends but also his opponents. In this respect, it was one of the most inspiring and enriching chapters of my life, to have been for many years the friend, the co-worker and the opponent of Ben-Gurion and to have been privileged with this unforgettable relationship.

PARIS. — AMONG the many personalities I knew who played a dominant role in the spheres in which they were active and who "made history" through their action, David Ben-Gurion must be considered, in my view, as one of the most impressive and, at the same

time, one of the most complex and difficult to understand.

He is not a man who opens himself, not even to friends or collaborators. Concentrated in an extraordinary measure on the problem with which he deals — possessing the gift of eliminating

### SINAI 1956

(Continued from page 8)

guage relating to the Gaza Strip. Ben-Gurion was prepared to go right on the radio to announce cancellation of the entire accord. I asked for time to study Lodge's actual statement. Ben-Gurion then bade me close my eyes, and when I was to reopen them, I realized he had pencilled out the offending passages in the text. It was the Sabbath, and he didn't want me to watch him writing. Then he proceeded to call the first emergency Cabinet session on the Sabbath. The rest is familiar history."

Did he have any regrets later on? Did he accuse himself, or others, of blundering? Did he look back in anger on the failure of his grand design?

"Absolutely not," replied Dr. Herzog, categorically. "At the time, he might have been enraged by the Americans, puzzled by the British, deeply worried by the Russians. Certainly mistakes had been made. But there was no attempt that I can recall at after-the-fact criticism, or for that matter rationalization. And I think he had good reason to feel proud of the success his strategy had scored. The campaign was by no means a failure. It helped remove the immediate Egyptian military threat to Israel, and assured freedom of shipping through the straits, and a more-or-less tranquil frontier with the Gaza Strip. In addition, it established Israel in world public opinion — for the first time since the War of Independence — as a permanent feature of the Middle East scenery. All this subsisted, it is true, for only 10 years — until Nasser moved in May 1967. Israel's right of self-defence against violation of freedom of naval passage was by then generally accepted — she was no longer branded an aggressor for acting to break a renewed stranglehold. With the U.S. no longer teaming up with the Soviets the principle of no withdrawal without a peace agreement — which Ben-Gurion hoped for back in 1956 — was written into international consensus, and the maintenance of the regional balance of arms became a fundamental principle of U.S. global strategy."

## ON ACTIVE SERVICE

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# THIS IS EGGED

# A SOCIALIST CRITIC OF B-G

Histadrut Secretary-General Yitzhak Ben-Aharon takes the first Histadrut chief to task in this interview with **MARK SEGAL.**

**H**ISTADRUT Secretary-General Yitzhak Ben-Aharon is not a person to gloss over his views out of politeness on a festive occasion. He does admire Ben-Gurion, but keeps to the fore the decades-old conflict of his old Ahdut Ha'avoda party with the former Mapai leader. In particular there still rankles the quarrel that led to the disbanding of the Palmach and the downgrading of Israel Galili of Kibbutz Hameuhad.

The Histadrut chief does not belittle the greatness of Ben-Gurion but holds that the first Histadrut Secretary-General has done more than anyone else to water

down the Socialist fire of Israeli Labour. Ben-Aharon worked closely with Ben-Gurion in the late 1930s, when he was successively Secretary of the Tel Aviv branch of Mapai, and then Mapai Secretary-General. Again, between 1959-62, while Minister of Transport, he was in contact with Ben-Gurion, who retired the year after Ben-Aharon resigned.

## Symbol of labour

In evaluating Ben-Gurion, Ben-Aharon looks to his early years, "when he was the symbol of a fighting class consciousness and the leader of organized labour,

who regarded the Histadrut as the central Zionist instrument. That was at my first meeting with him when I reached this country in 1928. He served as Histadrut Secretary-General from 1921 to 1935 and I worked closely with him for seven years then. I saw him as a fervent fighter for obtaining work for Jews and for using radical means to win hegemony over the Yishuv for the workers' parties. He laid the ground for the rise to power of the Labour parties in the World Zionist Organization, as part of his drive to establish a Jewish State. His fight for social justice

against the employers at home equalled his fighting nationalism against the foreign rulers. That was what made him the leader of our people, and thereby reach the focus of power in the Party and the Histadrut."

## 'Centralism'

Mr. Ben-Aharon went on to declare that "the elements of contention and conflict arose out of the same sources that brought Ben-Gurion power and appreciation." Ben-Gurion insisted on political centralism, on imposing the opinion of one man or a small group on the Labour Movement as a whole. While appreciating the value of the kibbutz and the pioneering youth movements as an instrument of Zionist fulfilment and in the political war against foreign rule, he never grasped the need of these movements for ideological liberty and political independence within the overall framework. He would not allow them to have their own political identity, and negated recognizing the existence of collective ideologies within the Movement (in an ironic aside)... He was willing to compromise with groups outside the Movement, as in his agreement with Jabotinsky, but the same did not hold for those inside. That was the first point of collision we had with him. We wished to have recognition for separate social and ideological divisions within the general framework of the Party and the Histadrut. These compounded the elements that brought about the collision.

## 'Young Turks'

"The next source of conflict followed his election to the Agency Executive in 1935. I was then very involved in matters as Mapai Secretary. We favoured his social radicalism and his political activism. We did our work getting him elected — we were then called the "Young Turks," who included Abba Khoushy, Zalman Aranne, Israel Galili, Berl Repetur, Yitzhak Bankover and Mordechai Namir. We arrived back home from the Zionist Congress ahead of him, and arranged a reception for him outside the old Vaad Hapoel building on Allenby Road. The boat was due in at 5 a.m. in Jaffa, and we urged workers to come at 6 a.m. to the Vaad Hapoel building to a welcome home demonstration. It was a big event, for Ben-Gurion on the Agency Executive was the symbol of the rise to power of the workers, in Zionism, and it was clear that soon he would also become Chairman. People were very excited and workers in overalls and work-clothes came in thousands and stood outside the building and in the roadway. I brought him straight from Jaffa harbour. He came out onto the verandah, and began to speak. Within two minutes, all of us hung our heads in embarrassment. His first sentences were: "From the moment of my election to the Jewish Agency Executive, I am no longer only the representative of the workers but of the entire Zionist Movement as a whole." As he proceeded in this vein, I saw how the assembled workers began to drift away in bitter disappointment. All the programmes that brought him to this post had vanished. This trend developed with the establishment of the State. His concept of a party which he imprinted on Mapai was what Tabenkin would call "a representative party" — namely all the authority is transferred to

the leader, with the Party asked to become a rubber-stamp."

Here I ventured a question on Ben-Gurion's collection of essays entitled "From Class to Nation," to which he replied forcefully: "That was written later on, he certainly did not entertain such concepts whilst Histadrut Secretary-General!"

Mr. Ben-Aharon proceeded to enumerate the third point of conflict leading to the split of Ahdut Ha'avoda away from Mapai back in 1944: "It concerned the scope of internal party democracy. The separate existence of Siach Bet (Faction B, that broke away to become Ahdut Ha'avoda) and of the Kibbutz Hameuhad as a distinct socio-political unit, just as in later years the question of the Palmach — they all drew from one common source, non-recognition of his sole leadership... it was curious how people who objected to his political line would so willingly submit themselves to his leadership..."

## Weizmann line

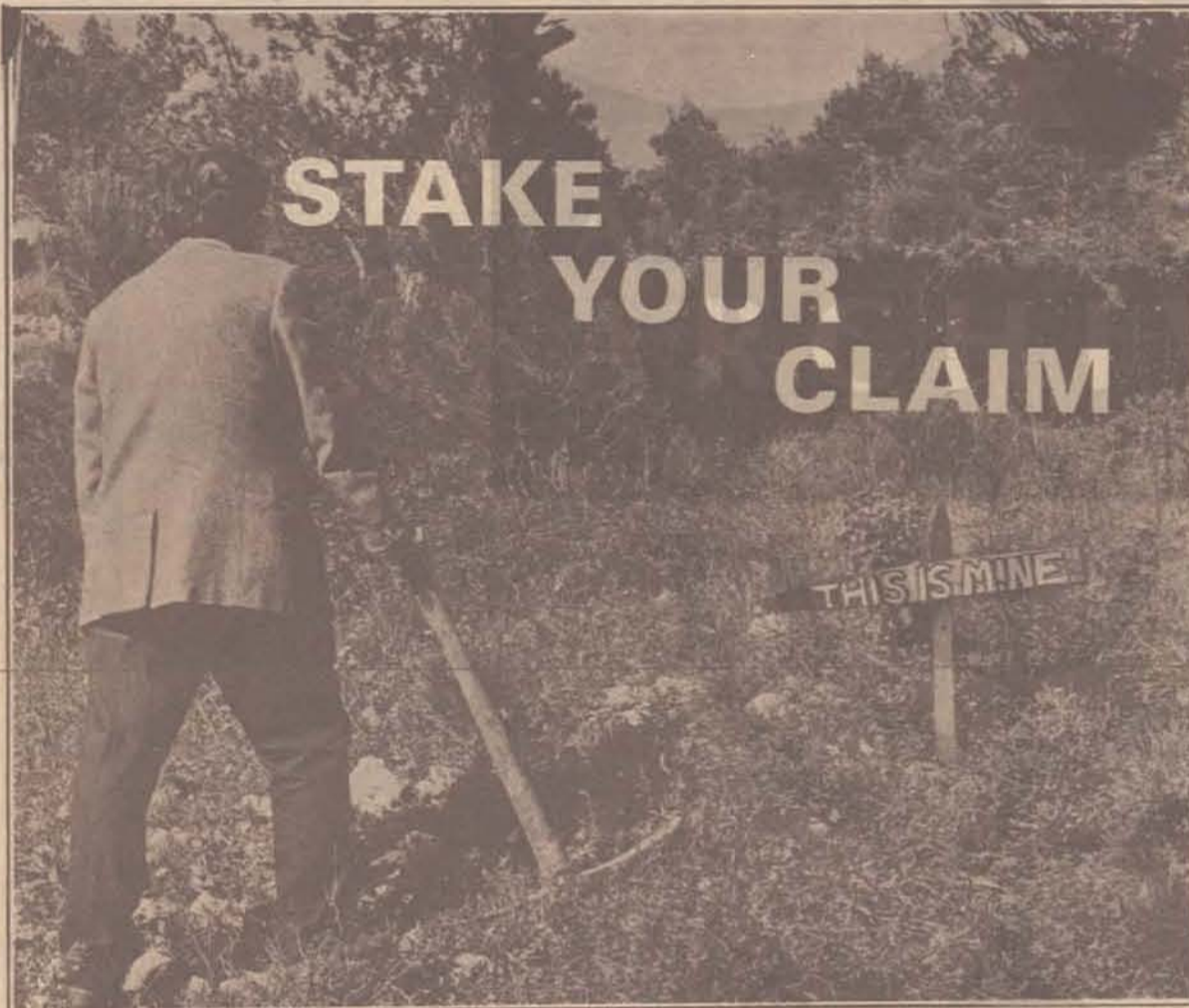
At this juncture, he spoke of the Kibbutz Hameuhad Leadership's attitude to the Weizmann-Ben-Gurion struggle in the W.Z.O.: "We were certainly not anti-Weizmann; we favoured a much more radical line than his in the fight against the British. But we wanted Weizmann as W.Z.O. President, because we appreciated his attitude that Zionist activities must be anchored in practical work in Eretz Israel, and he was also against such adventurers as the I.Z.L.... You know, Weizgal was right (in the excerpts of his autobiography now running in "Ma'ariv") when he wrote that Ben-Gurion, while fighting Weizmann, in fact carried out his policies. But Weizmann's mistake was to think he could achieve his politics by Weizmannite strategy. No one improved on Weizmann's policy, they only added here and there; I exclude Haim Arlosoroff who was the first to raise the idea of setting up a Jewish State by a confrontation of physical force with the British... However Weizgal could hardly grasp that in order to achieve Weizmann's political aims, one required a Ben-Gurionist strategy. Weizmann was too involved in the political world of London, and could not grasp that the colonial atmosphere was radically different. One could not use the same methods in Whitehall and Westminster, as in Jerusalem or New Delhi. This is what Ben-Gurion realized..."

## 'Monotheism'

Returning to Ben-Gurion's "political monotheism," Mr. Ben-Aharon declared: "That is the quality of great statesmen. They are great egoists and capable of focusing interest on limited targets..."

He recalled: "When I returned home from the PoW camp (in 1945), I sought to unify the party once more. My comrades and I who had been away during the War (when Mapai split asunder) made an all-out effort. I had long conversations with him and I saw that he wanted a monolithic party. For half a year, unlike my comrades in Kibbutz Hameuhad, I did not join Ahdut Ha'avoda... The split was not really linked to any trivial matters, but he set out with a clear mind to fashion a monolithic political instrument that

(Continued on next page)



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DAVID Ben-Gurion and Meir Ya'ari, founder of Hashomer Hatzair and Secretary-General of Mapam, are two surviving Founding Fathers of Labour Zionism and of Eretz-Israel Ha'Ovedet. Both were captains of parties and mentors of fighting philosophies, the difference being today that Ben-Gurion has retired from politics, while Ya'ari, in his early 70s, is still a very active political leader.

How did Ya'ari feel about the 85th birthday, he was asked.

"I feel myself a full partner in the celebrations. I was gratified at the Prime Minister's invitation to become a member of the Public Committee for Ben-Gurion's 85th birthday festivities."

As for his evaluation of Ben-Gurion at 85, Mr. Ya'ari declared:

"I have always valued and admired David Ben-Gurion in the fullest sense of his greatness even in those cases when I disagreed with his views and conduct. And they were not a few... However, none of those disagreements prevented me from appreciating the integrity of his personality with all its complexity... although I am not getting any younger, I can state quite clearly that, in a retrospective view of Ben-Gurion, none of our disputes prevented me from following his leadership with deep admiration. Now that he has reached his 85th year we all see him at the height of his spiritual and mental powers. It is not often that old age glorifies a man's youth, as in his case.

"I have known Ben-Gurion since the early 1920s, when the Histadrut was founded. He had returned to this country from travelling abroad. He had hardly got back into things, when one noticed how everyone was affected by his presence. It was as if a certain electricity was being generated among all around him. I was 24 at the time, quite alone and with no political movement behind me. On one occasion he asked me to look after the affairs of the Workers Fund (Kapal) together with him. I did not rise to the challenge and even almost suffered a tremendous failure. But Ben-Gurion did not hasten to remove the responsibility from my care. A short time elapsed, and Hashomer Hatzair had not yet quite recovered from the crisis which took place during the Third Aliya period. Then all of a sudden, tension rose between the Hagana people and those of Hashomer. A committee was appointed which enjoyed power of judgement. Alongside men of the calibre of the late Yosef Aharonowitz, Ben-Gurion saw to it that a youngster like myself was chosen to sit on this committee and resolve the complex and tragic conflict."

\* \* \*

MR. Yaari then entered into details of their early ideological argument. He recalls: "At the time, Hashomer Hatzair combined with the Gdud Ha'avoda to set up a joint list, which also included the Hapoel Hatzair party led by Haim Arlosoroff. Our group opposed the centralized concept of Hevrat Ovdim as evolved by Ben-Gurion. We proposed maximum decentralization, with control accruing to individual firms and kibbutzim, and the ensuing debate was accompanied with marked tension... Some time passed and in 1926-27 we found ourselves troubled by unemployment and just then a serious crisis overtook Solel Boneh (involving bad personal relations between its managers plus a slump in its activities). Once again Ben-Gurion asked me to serve on a committee of arbiters together with Aharonowitz and Beilinson, and we were commissioned to hand down our verdict in this very serious matter." (N.B.: They disbanded it.)

Mr. Ya'ari retains one memory with affection: "Once during the 1930s, Ben-Gurion really embarrassed me. There was some sort of festive assembly in the University Amphitheatre on Mount Scopus. I was sitting in the back row. Suddenly Ben-Gurion, who presided over the meeting, called on me to join him on the platform. He put me right next to Chief Rabbi Herzog" — that recollection brought chuckles from the old anti-religious fighter.

The next question concerned their relationship during and immediately after the establishment of the State. Mr. Ya'ari revealed, *inter alia*, that his party backed Ben-Gurion's decision to announce a Jewish State, even before the opposition inside Ben-Gurion's own Mapam had shifted its position. He says: "David Ben-Gurion was revealed in his greatness, and reached the peak of his leadership, when, overruling the hesitations of some of his own Mapam colleagues, he resolved to press ahead with the Declaration of Statehood even while the War of Independence was raging. I can say with due pride that Mapam — then comprising Hashomer Hatzair, Ahdut Ha'avoda, and Left Poalei-Zion — decided unanimously to endorse Ben-Gurion's decision a day before the matter was resolved in his own Party..."

\* \* \*

HERE, the Mapam leader mentioned one of Ben-Gurion's decisions he still thinks was a mistake: "After the elections to the First Knesset, our two Parties enjoyed a majority. But Ben-Gurion, for reasons of his own, did not wish for our partnership. He preferred the religious, and fashioned a sort of Concordat which has ensured the domination of the N.R.P.'s Rabbinate over the personal lives of all Jewish citizens in Israel, be they observant or not. He could have, at the time, set up a Workers' Government together with us, but he preferred to strengthen Mapam's hegemony over that of all the workers' parties, and so we moved into the Opposition."

Next comes the very bitter period in their relationship which ended amicably according to Mr. Ya'ari. He recalls: "By 1954-55 the conflict between Ben-Gurion and Mapam took on near-monstrous dimensions that were quite intolerable. He once said that the collective ideology of Hashomer Hatzair kibbutzim was comparable to Stalinist dictatorship. (At this point Mr. Ya'ari's face took on a look of utter shock). Someone suspiciously close to him named 'S.

# TRIBUTE FROM AN OPPONENT



Meir Ya'ari (centre) with David Ben-Gurion and the late Yitzhak Tabenkin (right).

Mapam leader Meir Ya'ari has been a life-long political opponent of Ben-Gurion, and both have engaged over the years in bitter polemics. However, the fiery ideologue was in a benign mood when interviewed by The Post this week, preferring to forgive if not to forget bitter disputes of yesteryear.

Shel Yariv' produced a polemic work against us and against me, wherein he dared charge that we were ready to open the gates of the country to the Red Army." (N.B.: Saba Shel Yariv' was Ben-Gurion's pseudonym when he wished to engage in political polemics while Prime Minister. His grandson being called Yariv, he took the name "Grandfather of Yariv.")

Here the Mapam leader spoke in pain and sorrow:

## BEN-AHARON

(Continued from previous page)

would follow him in implementing partition and the establishment of a Jewish State. In that design, Siah Bet and the Kibbutz Hameuhad got in his way. His other *haverim*, like Berl who opposed partition, accepted his will and trusted his political sense."

Here his voice took on a harsher note: "The bitter period, that he mentions so much of late, was the transition from Hagana to Zahal, and he deals with that period in a most distorted manner until this very day! He tried to associate the Palmach with the I.Z.L.! The Palmach was the most disciplined instrument we had. We even acted under orders against the I.Z.L. and L.H.Y... All these accusations that there was a design of maintaining an army controlled by a party, or the Histadrut, or the kibbutz, had no basis whatsoever. All we wanted was to maintain special units for settlement within Zahal, and indeed later on the Nahal was set up to fill the vacuum left by the Palmach... Then there was the argument over disbanding the Labour school trend. The other trends stayed intact, ours was disbanded... Or his agreements with the religious parties. Today he is ready to concede that civil marriage should be permitted and

that public transport should be made possible on Shabbat, but it was he who made these far-reaching concessions to the religious."

Despite their long-standing ideological and political antagonism, did Mr. Ben-Aharon not think that retrospectively many of Ben-Gurion's decisions were proven right by ensuing historical developments?

"I do not think that history does not justify some of his deeds and views. Two of the most outstanding ones were his opting for partition which led to the State, and his decision to withdraw from Sinai in 1957. But he made many mistakes on social and religious issues... He speaks of having been in a minority and failing to get Cabinet approval of his motion to take Hebron and Jerusalem, but I can remind him of his proposal to return Gaza to Egypt in 1957..."

His personal attitude towards Ben-Gurion? "My attitude to Ben-Gurion is that I regard him as our greatest statesman since the passing of Weizmann."

On a more personal, reminiscent note: "We have very few like him in our political life today. The politician who is also the man of action and of letters, philosopher and scholar. If some specialists should accuse him of amateurism, then I say they are honouring him thereby, for a statesman and a man of action cannot but be an amateur. Quite remarkable is his interest in philosophy, in biblical research and

"How could anyone attribute such treacherous inclinations to men of the Hagana, who saw no other way to save Jews than the Ingathering of the Exiles and their concentration in the Homeland, who led the struggle in the Warsaw Ghetto, who were in the vanguard of every one of the battles of Israel. That was indeed a dreadful accusation... Charges of this kind brought into being all sorts of affairs and scandals replete with mutual hostility that persisted for years... But for political affairs, one needs two, and even such attacks did not shake us out of our faith in the rightness of our way..."

Nonetheless: "I can say that I do know him. He is fully capable of being a quarrelsome and contentious person with others and even with himself. But he is equally capable of being sufficiently courageous to admit he was wrong. He never took notice of things like saving face or matters of prestige. What mattered for him was the issue under discussion. The concrete issue would bring him to overlook matters of personal consideration..."

An example of this trait: "Less than a year had passed since 'Saba Shel Yariv' had published his anti-Mapam tract and suddenly one day Ben-Gurion made a surprise appearance at Kibbutz Merhavia (Ya'ari's home). When he moved among the *haverim* who gathered around him, I think he was a bit hesitant at the kind of reception he would receive. If he thought it would be a bad one, he was quickly proved wrong. Our *haverim* did not yet know that he had come to offer me the formation of a coalition (after the 1955 elections) and that we would set up a party committee to draw up the basic policy lines for the proposed coalition. But they did sense that he came as a friend, so much so that when he departed, he left amid an atmosphere of unforgettable comradeship."

Mr. Ya'ari recalls that the ensuing coalition policy lines "served as a model for generosity, mutual consideration and true objectivity..." and when referring to the withdrawal after the Sinai Campaign, he remarked: "Ben-Gurion demonstrated the same courageousness and decisiveness when he gave the order to pull back, and in so doing avoided the Big Powers' diktat and ensured Israel's shipping rights through the Tiran Straits."

\* \* \*

HE dwelt on a more recent meeting. "It was under tragic circumstances, I was with him on the morning after Paula's death, just before the burial. There was a long list of mourners waiting to offer their condolences. But he was sunk in conversation. At times he spoke of Paula as if she was listening in to us... Since then Ben-Gurion has walked alone, with the nation watching him closely, amazed at his magnificent bearing. All the affairs, and all the years of contention and quarrels have been set aside. Today he is the bravest and most advanced in his readiness to make peace. He does not hold reservations towards those who now bear responsibility for steering the ship of statehood. He has revived his old friendship with Golda Meir and the camp she leads. His break with that camp continued until after the Six Day War, but that too now belongs to the past... One can say in all truth, that on his 85th birthday the eyes of millions of men, women and children look up to him with warmth and affection as the Father of the State of Israel and as an example for us all."

Finally: "In his old age he has achieved a measure of clarity and clear-mindedness that is remarkable. He has returned to his great days."

in ancient Greek culture. Such qualities are sorely lacking among the people engaged in politics in Israel today!

Generally speaking, Mr. Ben-Aharon considers that "Ben-Gurion was always much kinder and more appreciative of his antagonists than of his associates. One can say in all truth that he despised the sycophants around him."

He recalled the furore around the Ministerial Committee that investigated the Lavon Affair: "I was a member of the Committee of 7. At first we were only six. Ben-Gurion strongly opposed the inclusion of Barzilai (Mapam), so I created a crisis because I found it inconceivable that Mapam should be left out... The recommendations of the Committee were adopted unanimously. After all, Rosen and Shitrit, and of course Eshkol and Haim Moshe Shapiro, were among his most loyal supporters — yet none of us could put the blame on Lavon. That renewed the split and created the division and brought Ben-Gurion to resign from the Premiership..."

Finally, "I am one of the few persons who, since Ben-Gurion retired from public life, has not quarrelled with him, although I can say I was one of his sharpest critics when he was in office. But now we all have to help him extricate himself from political complications so as to buttress his image as a heritage of the nation and of the State."

By MISHA LOUVISH

## A MASTER OF THE WORD

It was just after midnight of Thursday, the 8th of November, 1956. Ben-Gurion was sitting in his office with Golda Meir, then Foreign Minister, and a few more Ministers and aides by his side. Little cups of sweet, black Turkish coffee were handed round and everyone sat back to listen to the Prime Minister's recorded broadcast to the nation coming over the small radio set standing on the desk.

Ben-Gurion was calm, relaxed, smiling. No one watching could have guessed that he had just completed a long, hard day's work, the climax to two momentous, tension-filled weeks, and that only a few hours before he had taken one of the most painful decisions of his career.

Three days previously, on the Monday, Israeli columns racing down the west and east coasts of the Sinai Peninsula had met at Sharm el-Sheikh, consummating the operation over which he had presided from his sick-bed in Tel Aviv. On the Tuesday he had prepared, and on the following day delivered, his great oration on the campaign and its significance.

On the Thursday morning he had started work at seven. At eleven o'clock the Cabinet met to consider the situation in the light of the United Nations Assembly's demand for Israeli withdrawal and the scarcely veiled threats of Soviet President Bulganin. During the lunch interval he received President Eisenhower's message, which, despite its friendly tone, also hinted at grave consequences if Sinai and the Gaza Strip were not evacuated.

At a second meeting the Cabinet agreed to his proposal to accept Eisenhower's demand in principle; in the evening he began to prepare his radio speech and I was summoned to translate it. As usual, every word was written out in his own

hand; to my knowledge, he never dictated a speech. Even the Bulganin and Eisenhower messages, and his own replies, were copied in full on the slips of paper, about seven inches by five, which he always used.



B-G in his study

The voice that came over the radio was, as always, vigorous, resolute — no doubts, no hesitations. One of his many talents was his mastery of the art of delivering a prepared speech so that it seemed utterly spontaneous and convincing. In his capacity to infect an entire nation with his own confidence and determination he had only one rival: Winston Churchill.

For David Ben-Gurion, the word — spoken or written — also had another vitally important function: to put his actions and attitudes on record for the sake of history. This was a primary purpose of his major speeches and the essays he published as introductions to the Gov-

ernment Year Books from 1951 onwards. As his translator (he called it *me'angel* — "anglifier" over eight years, I could follow the process better than most, for there is no better way of absorbing the full significance of a text than translation.

For him, too, writing was a means of thought as well as a medium of expression. When he wanted to put the question of the developing countries into perspective, for instance, he wrote a detailed, comprehensive essay on the subject, comprising a complete list of the African and Asian states, with their

populations, and an analysis of their significance to the world.

Sometimes, his viewpoint was developed and crystallized in a series of speeches and essays, as in his treatment of the relations between Israel and the Diaspora, or his Knesset addresses from his return to the premiership in November 1955 until his Sinai survey a year later.

Although his doctrines were spelled out in these statements with great clarity and force, it is surprising how often they were misunderstood. It seems that many people read into them their own

prejudices and misconceptions, instead of looking at what was there.

He was often accused, for instance, of denouncing Diaspora Jewry for failing to settle in Israel, when what he really said was that those who preferred to stay in the Diaspora should not call themselves Zionists and claim priority over other Jews.

Another example was his pre-Sinai speech of October 15, 1956, which was alleged to have misled the world by concentrating on the threatened introduction of Iraqi troops into Jordan, when he was really planning the attack on Egypt.

Actually, most of the speech was devoted to the Egyptian menace, but when he quoted the radio threats from Cairo and declared: "The murderers and those who sent them will not be allowed to escape without severe punishment," most people disregarded the words italicized as mere rhetoric. They were not; they were a sober declaration of intent, as Nasser found out a fortnight later.

Ben-Gurion's greatness rests primarily on his capacity for penetrating analysis, concentration on the essentials, and fearless decision, but his historic stature also owed much to his power to inspire the people and establish a national consensus on vital questions of defence by his writings and speeches.

Misha Louvish translated all B.G.'s speeches, many of his official letters, and most of his essays, between 1955 and 1963 — from Feb. 1956 as a member of the Govt. Press Office staff.

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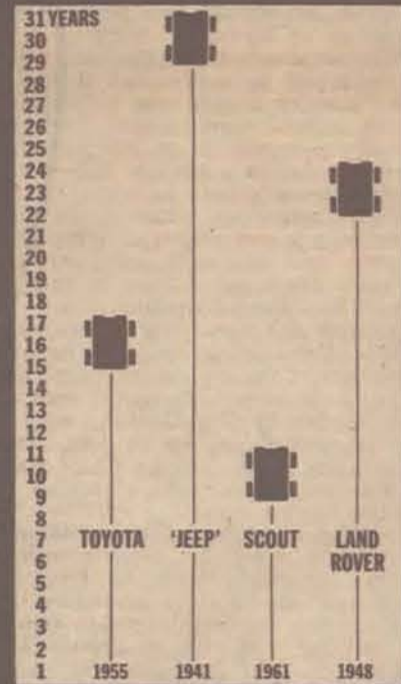
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# Ben-Gurion remembers

IN perusing such a voluminous book by such an important person in the history of the Jewish People in the last half-century, one is tempted, in reviewing it, to pick out his statements on the causes celebres of the period: for example, the Arlosoroff murder. Though Mr. Ben-Gurion was in Europe when Haim Arlosoroff, then Head of the Jewish Agency's Political Department was murdered, the event should today have drawn not only comment, but also new information from the pen of the man who was then leader of the biggest party in the Zionist movement. But this volume contains only a few lines on the matter! The events that followed the murder, to go by Mr. Ben-Gurion's memoirs, concerned mainly the Labour bloc's fight against the Mizrahi and, especially, the Revisionist Opposition in the elections to the Zionist Congress.

The book is made up of bits and pieces of documents, letters and newspaper cuttings which Mr. Ben-Gurion has been collecting for many years. From his very first letter from Jaffa to his family in Plonsk, the young David Gryn asks his father to save his letters. This was not then an uncommon passion among people who felt they were witnessing extraordinary ("historic" was the common term) events in the history of the Jewish People.

The stress in a memoir based wholly or partly on letters is often on side events and developments, if the memoirist's archives are richer in personalia than in eventful material. Memoirs, after all, are not history — although, in Mr. Ben-Gurion's case, personal life and public service become barely distinguishable. The day Mr. Ben-Gurion married he was a quarter of an hour late to the daily meeting of the Labour Zionist group in New York; otherwise his routine was not changed. Incidentally, the marriage was performed in the mayor's office, not by a rabbi. Mr. Ben-Gurion does not explain why.

## A didactic work

But this is not merely a book of memoirs. It is a didactic work. Mr. Ben-Gurion, always working according to a conception, attempts to show the principles which had made the return of the Jews to their homeland possible. This book is full of details and could have borne judicious editing, but Mr. Ben-Gurion's message is clear enough to the reader with an exegetic mind. In the beginning, Mr. Ben-Gurion might have said, there was the Will — the centuries' old will of the Jewish People to become a free and sovereign nation once more in its homeland, in Eretz Yisrael. Plonsk, Mr. Ben-Gurion's native town, is an example. The closely knit Jewish society in Plonsk was staunchly Zionist from the moment Theodor Herzl issued his call. Hebrew was already a living basis for Jewish culture. Mr. Ben-Gurion writes: "I was taught Hebrew by my grandfather when I was three years old." Socialism came in the wake of political upheavals at the beginning of this century; but for the renaissance Jewish nation the reasoning behind it had a different twinge: in the re-established Jewish State the working class, too, had to be Jewish, or the point of Jewish national sovereignty would be missed. However, the sons of petty merchants and intellectuals would become manual workers only if they believed it was honourable, necessary — and that it would not be exploited by an irresponsible capitalist employer.

When David Ben-Gurion came to Eretz Yisrael in the autumn of 1906, and began his fight for a united Jewish labour organization, he encountered opposition from the ranks of the 30-odd members of the "Rostov group." Though members of Poalei Zion in their native town in Southern Russia, the "Rostovites" spoke almost nothing but Russian, had no Hebrew

ZIKHRONOT זכרונות (Memoirs) by David Ben-Gurion. Tel Aviv, Am Oved. 766 pp.

Reviewed by  
Sraya Shapiro

culture, and drew their socialistic ideas from the Russian socialist writers. Their main objection was to calling the new organization a "Union of Jewish Workers" — they insisted on having a "general" organization. The Ben-Gurion side won. But the struggle between the deeply rooted nationalism of Ben-Gurion with the cosmopolitanism of Jewish adepts of "universalist" socialism persists to this very day.

Mr. Ben-Gurion was also adamant on another issue. He insisted that Hebrew was to be the sole recognized national language of the Jewish People in its homeland. He had several clashes on that with his comrades, including Itzhak Ben-Zvi, whose nostalgic love for Yiddish Mr. Ben-Gurion rejected as a matter of policy.

## To Salonika to study

After a spell of work in Petah Tikva and Sejera as a farm hand, he decided that he "must become a member of Parliament" in Istanbul in order to voice there the aspirations of the Jewish settlers in Eretz Yisrael. In order to qualify for election, he went to Salonika to study Turkish and enter law school. A born leader, David Ben-Gurion never spared any effort to persuade others to accept courses he believed necessary. And he never hesitated to change his course when conditions changed. When he passed through Egypt on his way to the U.S. on being expelled from Eretz Yisrael by the Turks at the beginning of World War I, he was adamantly opposed to Yosef Trumpeldor's idea to fight on the side of the Allies, "because it would have brought catastrophe on the Yishuv." But he changed his mind later when the Jewish Legion was being formed in North America — he joined. Once having taken a decision, nothing would stop him from going to the end — not even the tears of his young wife in disclosing that she was expecting a child. "But didn't you agree to my enlisting?" he reminded her.

## Economic problem

Bad as the political and security situation was in Eretz Yisrael immediately after the British conquest, the most difficult trial for the Yishuv was economic. The Zionist Commission, headed by a most charming person, Dr. Eder, proved incapable of providing the newcomers with work. People said it was the immigration which caused the unemployment — the sort of talk which today blames the "Black Panther" situation on the Russian and Western immigrants. The Ahdut Ha'avoda and Hapoel Hatzair organized their own relief organizations to provide work and food for their members. This function later passed to the Histadrut. Ben-Gurion, on becoming Secretary-General of the Histadrut, told the Histadrut Council in Winter of 1922 that "the workers of Eretz Yisrael should take over immigration."

More than a decade later he did not hesitate to "take over" the Jewish Agency saying:

"The Jewish Worker has taken over the legacy left unattended by the Bilu fathers... The Jewish landlord was unable to rise above his narrow class outlook, failed to understand the inevitable historical process which Zionism embodies... The Jewish worker has become the emissary and spokesman of Zionist action in Eretz Yisrael... The army of volunteers who had never been invited came to perform their duty to the nation. They organized and worked for Zionism, not on behalf of

Zionism. And official Zionism long ignored who was doing its work."

Ben-Gurion's contempt for "official Zionism" was born in a period when precious time was being squandered on absurd talk. With such an outlook, Ben-Gurion's preoccupation with parties seems preposterous, even weird. He does not explain it in these memoirs, but the reason emerges from the nature of social-democratic life since the beginning of this century, with freedom of thought and association its cardinal tenet. "One day people will learn how great a democrat Ben-Gurion is," his faithful aide-de-camp, the late Nehemia Argov once told me, when the then Prime Minister was being attacked for alleged high-handedness in conducting State affairs. Nobody knew better than Ben-Gurion that dictatorship would fail miserably with a nation of voluntary immigrants among a hostile population that would only be too glad if the newcomers turned back.

## Argued for merger

The will for action was a matter of conviction — and persuasion. Ben-Gurion's favourite story, which he records in "Zichronot," is how he argued with a friend all the way from Odessa to Jaffa about the aims of Hapoel Hatzair and Poalei Zion, and concluded that the two were identical and should unite. But the union came about years later, for economic rather than ideological reasons.

Parties in the Yishuv were modelled on the Prussian and East European revolutionary pattern, with elaborate platforms stating all the answers to all the questions a member could raise — from the attitude to God and Country, to Darwin's theory of evolution. One who became a member of a party subscribed to an ideology and committed himself to obey all the organization's rules and orders. When two groups wished to unite, after noting their similarity of aims, there was always a question of nuances and personalities, and "giving up" a point of ideology involved much soul searching and invariably was accompanied by a sense of treason to values and men.

Ben-Gurion was generally tolerant to all forms of Zionist creed, provided that the ideologues worked. He admitted to the Cabinet Yosef Sapir, who represented in the eyes of Jewish workers the "blackest of black" reactionaries of Petah Tikva, where Jewish workers had been openly discriminated against. Without Ben-Gurion *kashrut* would not have been made the rule in the Defence Forces as easily as it was even though, for some years, Mizrahi leaders were among his most rabid opponents. At one point he even recommended making a pact with the Revisionists, though their methods repulsed him. He was relentlessly opposed to only one party in the Yishuv — the Communists whom he considered traitors to the Jewish cause and active enemies of Zionism.

## To Moscow in 1923

Mr. Ben-Gurion's experience of Soviet Russia dates from 1923, when he went to Moscow with an exhibit the Histadrut sent to an international agricultural exhibition there. At the time, five years after the Revolution, Soviet Russia was still under the impact of the war, Lenin was ill, the New Economic Policy had produced a new class of billionaires, and the Yevsektzia (the Jews of the Russian Communist Party's "Hebrew Section") raged against Hebrew culture. A few Left-wing Zionist parties were still tolerated. Mr. Ben-Gurion met with the leaders of Poalei Zion — whom he describes as ineffective and shuddering at the very shadow of Yevsektzia; they opposed the hoisting of a Zionist flag over the Histadrut stand. But he praises Hashomer Hatzair for their love for Eretz Yisrael and readiness to work.

His Moscow entries include a vivid description of a Habimah per-



David Ben-Gurion reading the Proclamation of Independence, May 14, 1948

formance of the "Dybbuk."

In Eretz Yisrael itself, the impact of the Jewish Communists was disastrous. They almost wrecked the founding convention of the Histadrut. But when Communists organized a violent demonstration of Arabs in Ness Ziona against Jewish workers, Ben-Gurion lost his patience and secured the exclusion of the Communist faction from the Histadrut. Under his influence, too, Communists were kept out of the mainstream of society.

What makes Mr. Ben-Gurion outstanding among the Zionist leaders of our time is the clarity of his general principles. Having arrived, early in his life, at the conclusion that the Jewish People should con-

centrate in Eretz Yisrael, he shaped his acts accordingly.

If Ben-Gurion had chosen, he might have become a foremost writer. When he gives his pen freedom, he describes plastically what he sees. But he seldom slips into description for its own sake. Most of this book, as of most of his other books, consists of transcripts of political speeches, resolutions and internal debates. From the literary point of view, this is a pity.

The present volume ends in 1933. We look forward to the coming volumes, which will surely shed light on some of the controversies which made the next 15 years some of the most dramatic in Jewish history.

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# Letters to Paula

Windsor (Ontario, Canada)  
June 14, 1918

TODAY I received your letter of June 11. You think, my dearest, that if I loved you more I would not have volunteered for the Legion. I see you don't know very much about me! I don't know if there is in all the world a man who could love a woman more than I love you, now that you have taken upon yourself the heaviest burden a woman can accept for the sake of the man she loves. If great, deep love can bring happiness — then, dear Paula, you should be the happiest of women. I will redeem you from your present suffering. I cannot console you now in your sorrow and longing. I know what a price you are paying, with your youthful happiness, for the sake of my ideal. This price is high, terribly high, and I don't know whether I can repay you as you deserve. But this is the cruelty of a deep love. On the other hand, if I had stayed with you now, I would not be worthy of the child you will bear me, and all our life together would be ordinary, petty and pointless. This is not the kind of life I want to live with you: not as cheap, small and empty as this.

Look after your health and build up your body and spirit. For a great, glorious and happy future awaits you.

★ ★ ★

September 23, 1918  
The second day of Sukkot

MY dearest treasure,

I cannot tell you in words — at least not in written, dead words — what I have gone through since receiving your telegram (about the birth of their first child, Geula — Ed.). For many weeks I have waited impatiently and anxiously for this happy news. I waited for it before it came, and the delay worried and alarmed me and kept me awake during the long nights. Now at last it has come. On the day after Yom Kippur (September 17) they handed me a sealed telegram, and my heart shuddered with joy. A few short words: but what a powerful message it brought me, and how happy it has made me.

But this happiness is mingled with sadness. And my dearest wish at the moment is to leap over the distant oceans separating us and to be in the quiet room where the two of you are lying, the two most precious to me, and to bend over you quietly and embrace you both. But this is a vain dream. I am far away from you, and no matter how much my heart is torn I cannot change this. I know this must mar your joy and double your sorrow at this moment of pain and happiness. But, dear Paula, this is the way it had to be. Our suffering will not be in vain. Our first child comes into the world at a tragic and holy moment in time, and from this experience of ours a great future will grow and a bright light will shine over the life of this baby.

★ ★ ★

Jaffa  
February 14, 1919

I BELIEVE you when you say Geula is still too small for the journey. But if you only knew what I have gone through from the day I received your cable about the baby's birth, you would understand why in every letter I remind you to send me a photograph... At least a photograph!

Dear Paula, I know what you have to endure in your loneliness, and the heavy burden on you. But you are not entirely alone; you are together with the child — while I am quite alone, all on my own, far from the two people closest and dearest to me in the world. I live only in the hope that it will not be long before we are together again. Remember that I've never seen my daughter.

So please, Paula, send me a picture of her as quickly as you can. Soon Geula will be six months old, and I hope that you can take her to a photographer's studio. Have a good, large picture made, by the best photographer in New York, and don't worry about the cost. I want to have it soon.

For the last three weeks I've been in camp again. But I'll soon be given leave for a longer period. The Zionist Commission demanded that I should be freed for six weeks. I've spent all my time organizing the workers of Eretz Yisrael and trying to get them to unite. I've already written to you about my efforts to bring all the Jewish workers in Eretz Yisrael into a single Zionist socialist labour party. This task is almost completed, and in another week we'll hold a general conference of all the labour groups, as well as the Legionnaires from the U.S. and Argentine, with the aim of founding a united party. After the conference I'll be able to give you more details about my own personal future. The comrades here want me to travel to London and Paris for the Zionist and socialist congresses which will be held soon. But I can't leave here until I finish the work of creating a united organization. Perhaps in a week's time this work will be done.

★ ★ ★

July 20, 1931

WELL, the "fair" is over at last. The long, tense, nervous, stormy sessions of the Zionist Congress have ended. Also the short, peaceful and, in fact, boring meetings of the Jewish Agency Council. The

David Ben-Gurion is an outstanding example of a man who very early in life knew that he was going to shape history and how he was going to do so, and who devoted his whole being to this purpose. This transpires from the documented memoirs he has been publishing in recent years, but perhaps best of all from the letters he wrote to his wife and children during his many separations from them over the years. We bring here extracts of such letters written from the time he was a soldier in basic training in Canada with the Jewish Legion of World War I to his father's death 24 years later, published in "Letters to Paula" (translated from the Hebrew by Aubrey Hodes; London, Vallentine, Mitchell; 259 pp.; £2.30). The Hebrew edition, published by Am Oved, Tel Aviv, was reviewed in these columns on July 12, 1968.



The family circle in the early 1920s: Ben-Gurion with Paula, their three children and father, Avigdor Grin.

public has gone home, and only a few of our comrades are left here in Basle. Tomorrow morning I'm travelling to Bad Gastein in Austria to meet Dr. Weizmann. Berl Katzenelson, Haim Arlosoroff and Yosef Sprinzak are the other members of the delegation to Weizmann.

I've attended several Congresses already. But I've never been to one as difficult, nerve-racking and critical as this one. It had to face three great and serious problems. We lost on one of these, and won our fight on the other two.

The first question was: Weizmann. Apart from the Revisionists, there were many General Zionists who wanted to dismiss Weizmann at all costs. Several months ago I told our comrades that for the good of the party and the good of Weizmann himself he shouldn't stand for the Presidency at this Congress. Unfortunately my words weren't listened to, and the majority decided to insist on Weizmann's candidacy. This led many Zionists to oppose our party and its policies. Our comrades thought it was still possible to ensure a majority for Weizmann. On the heels of all this came a harmful interview given by Weizmann to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, in which he said it was not essential to have a Jewish majority in Eretz Yisrael. This ruled him out as President of the Zionist Organization.

But our Weizmannites were blind to all this and still hoped to succeed — and this was a grave error. Instead of Weizmann withdrawing of his own free will and in this way keeping the sympathy and love of most of the Zionist movement, their short-sighted and misguided policy led to Weizmann being voted out in an unfair manner.

The second question was: our policy — or that of the Revisionists. After an arduous and bitter struggle, which took a lot out of me personally, we won this battle and the Congress adopted our policy by a large majority.

The third issue was: the Executive. Would we control the governing body of Zionism, or the Revisionists? You know the result already. An Executive was formed with members from all the parties — excepting the Revisionists. Our party and other parties wanted me to serve on the Executive. I don't know what you thought of the proposal. But my work in the Histadrut and the situation in this body prevented this. I cannot leave the Histadrut now. Berl Katzenelson was also approached to join the Zionist Executive, but he too refused. Sprinzak and (Shlomo) Kaplansky were ready to join the new Executive. But many of our comrades opposed them, and we chose Locker and Arlosoroff instead. Arlosoroff will probably stay in Jerusalem, while Locker will be stationed in London.

On Saturday last I was invited to meet the Prime Minister (Ramsay MacDonald) at Chequers. Keep this to yourself, as it's top secret. I flew from Basle to London and spent four hours with MacDonald; and I think I obtained very important assurances from him. I'll give you the details when I return.

★ ★ ★

Prague  
September 2, 1933

BY the time you receive this letter the Zionist Congress will be over. But today we are just beginning our discussions. The main problem will be the composition of the new Executive. The Labour Faction is too big to be left out. But we need a coalition partner, and are dependent on the General Zionists for this. They are divided into two groups: A and B. A is closer to us. They want Weizmann as President, are progressive in thinking and would like to co-operate with us. But, on the other hand, they are weak-willed and do not know what they want. The other group, B, knows exactly what it wants, but in their heart of hearts they are hostile to us, although they try to hide this. The Mizrahi is also split: the minority is close to us, and we could work with them, but the majority is closer to the Revisionists, and conceal their animosity towards us under the cloak of religion. The Revisionist position is known, of course.

There is another small group of 14 delegates, led by Yitzhak Gruenbaum. They are our closest friends and allies. But we cannot rely only on them, as this will not give us a majority. So, two weeks before the end of the Congress, the situation is still unclear.

Within our own party the situation is almost as complicated. Difficulty is in filling Arlosoroff's place at the head of the Political Department (He had recently been murdered in Tel Aviv — Ed.) No man, as far as I know, can take his place. But this position must be filled. Shertok (Moshe Sharett) is excellent in this type of work, but he himself and several of our comrades doubt whether he will be able to accept this responsibility.

Locker must remain. This is what almost everyone thinks. Some want Kaplan and Berl Katzenelson to enter the Executive; others want Kaplansky, while some favour Sprinzak. One thing has been clear to me all the time — that I am staying at the Histadrut and will not serve on the Executive. I am convinced that I should not leave the Histadrut in its present state. Until now I would have thought this was the general view, and was sure that most of the Jewish workers would oppose my leaving the Histadrut. But there is increasing pressure on me to do this.

All the other Zionist parties want me in the Executive, to my great surprise. I appear to be the most vigorous opponent of all the other parties. Yet they demand that I move from the Histadrut to the Executive. And so do the comrades in my own party who formerly agreed with me that my place was in the Histadrut. Shertok, for example, makes my nomination for the Executive a condition for his own entry. I have it is a fateful question. My own awareness, of what I ought to do is out of step with what my party wants.

The committee we appointed to decide our representatives on the new Executive have proposed: me, Berl Locker, Kaplan, and Shertok (as Political Secretary). I don't know how the matter will end. The Congress is scheduled to close tomorrow or, at the very latest, the day afterwards. I shall have to stay on for another week, for talks on the party, and I hope to leave for Tel Aviv on the 14th.

★ ★ ★

London  
October 5, 1937

DEAR Amos,

I would like to make some comments on the conflict you say you feel between your logic and your emotions over the question of the State. There is no room in politics for sentimental considerations. The only thing we must weigh up is: what is desirable and good for us, what is the path that leads to the goal, what policy will strengthen us and what policy will weaken us.

I think I too have "feelings." Without these feelings I would not have been able to carry on our difficult work during all these years. My feelings are not hurt in the slightest by the idea of establishing a Jewish State, even a small State. Naturally, I don't like the partitioning of the country. But the country which is being partitioned is in effect not in our hands. It is the hands of the Arabs and the British. We control only a small percentage, less than we are being offered for a Jewish State. If partition is implemented we shall receive more than we hold at present: but less, far less, than what we are entitled to and what we want. True. But the question is: would we receive more if there were no partition? What we want is not that the country should be whole and unified, but that the whole and unified country should be Jewish. I would not be happy in a whole Eretz Yisrael if it were Arab.

For us the present situation is the kiss of death.

(Continued on next page)

## LETTERS TO PAULA

(Continued from previous page)

We want to change it. But how to bring about this change? How to have our own country?

And here the key question is: would the formation of a Jewish State help us turn the country into a Jewish one, or would it hamper this?

I am an enthusiastic advocate of the Jewish State, even if it involves partitioning Eretz Yisrael now, because I work on the assumption that a partial Jewish State will not be the end, but the beginning. When we acquire 1,000 or 10,000 dunams of land we are happy. Because this acquisition of land is important not only for its own sake, but because through it we are increasing our strength, and every increase in our strength helps us to acquire the whole country. The formation of a State, even if it is only a partial State, will be the greatest increase of strength we could have today, and it will constitute a powerful lever in our historic effort to redeem the country in its entirety.

We will bring into this State all the Jews we can possibly hold; we firmly believe we'll be able to bring in over two million. We will set up a varied Jewish economy, agricultural, industrial and maritime. We will organize a highly effective defence force, a first-class army — I have no doubt that our army will be one of the best in the world — and then I am certain we will be able to settle in all the other parts of the country, whether through agreement and mutual understanding with our Arab neighbours or in another way.

We must always remember the basic facts which bring us to settle in Eretz Yisrael. These are not the British Mandate or the Balfour Declaration. These are results of our settlement urge, not causes of it. Some of these facts might not have emerged if there had not been a world war, or if it had finished differently. But there are certain fundamental historical facts which will not change as long as Zionism is not implemented in full. These are:

1) The plight of the Jews in the Diaspora, which drives them to Eretz Yisrael with an iron determination;

2) The comparative emptiness of the country. This gives it a great potential for settlement, which the Arabs do not need and are not capable of exploiting (because they do not have to). There is no problem of Arab immigration, there is no Arab Diaspora, and the Arabs are not being persecuted. They have a homeland, and a large one too;

3) The Jews' creative ability (which is the fruit of Reason 1 above). We have the ability to make the desert bear fruit, to create industry, to build an economy, to develop a culture, to conquer the sea and the air with the aid of science and the pioneering impulse.

We will be able to penetrate deeper into the country if we have a State. We will be stronger vis-a-vis the Arabs. We will be able to build more quickly. And the more the Jewish strength grows in the country, the more the Arabs will realize that it is impossible to oppose us and not worthwhile doing so, and that, on the contrary, they will be able to derive considerable benefits from the Jews, not only material but also political.

I am not dreaming, and I don't like war. And I still believe, more today than before the possibility of the State emerged, that when we are numerous and strong the Arabs will realize that it would be best for them to work together, to enjoy our assistance, and to allow us to settle in all parts of the country, of their own free will. The Arabs have many countries which are under-populated, which are undeveloped and weak, and which cannot stand up to their external enemies. Syria could not survive for a day in the face of Turkey if it wasn't for France. The same applies to Iraq. And it will be true also of the new State. All of them need the protection of France or Britain. But this protection means enslavement and dependence. The Jews could be equal allies, true friends, and not conquerors and tyrants.

Let's assume that the Negev won't be allocated to



Paula and David Ben-Gurion at Sde Boker.

the Jewish State. Then it will simply remain arid. The Arabs are unable to develop it, and they don't need to. They have enough deserts of their own, and they haven't enough people, money and initiative. It's very possible that in return for our financial, military, organizational and scientific help they will agree that we develop and build up the Negev. But they might not agree. A nation does not always act in accordance with logic and common sense and practical advantage. So it's possible that the Arabs might act from sterile nationalist feelings and will say to us: "We don't want your honey or your sting. We would rather the Negev remained a desert than that it should be settled by Jews." And then we shall have to speak to them in another language. And we will have another language then — which we should not have without a State. Because we won't be able to tolerate large empty areas remaining uninhabited when they could take tens of thousands of Jews.

Of course if this happens we shall have to deal not only with the Arabs of Eretz Yisrael. It's quite possible that the Arabs of the neighbouring countries will come to their aid against us. But we shall be more powerful. Not only because we'll be better organized and equipped, but because behind us is a force which is greater in both quality and quantity. We have a reservoir of millions in the Diaspora. The entire younger generation of Jews in Poland, Rumania, America and other countries will flock to us in the case of a dispute with the Arabs, which I hope and pray won't take place. The Jewish State will not rely only on the Jews living in it, but on the Jewish People all over the world, on the many millions who want to settle in Eretz Yisrael and who must settle there. There are no millions of Arabs who want to or have to come to Eretz Yisrael in the same way.

This is why I think the formation of a Jewish navy and the construction of a Jewish port is so important. The sea is the bridge between the Jews in Eretz Yisrael and the Diaspora — the millions of Jews all over the world. And we must prepare things so that in any hour of need we will be able to bring to Eretz Yisrael, in our own ships, with our sailors, thousands of young people. And we must prepare these young people for



Paula in a typical gesture symbolic of her protection of Ben-Gurion: fending off reporters at Sde Boker in 1954.

all possible tasks in Eretz Yisrael, even if they remain in the Diaspora for the moment.

I am sure that setting up a Jewish State, even in part of the country, will make this possible. And so I do not have any conflict between my mind and my heart. Both of them tell me: Erect a Jewish State at once, even if it is not in the whole and. The rest will come in the course of time. It must come.

Show this letter to your mother and sisters.

★ ★ ★

London  
February 10, 1939

THE Colonial Secretary has spoken as if the debate is between the Arabs and the Jews. This is an erroneous approach. In our opinion, this is a debate between the Jewish People and the other nations of the world. If it were not a world problem the Jewish delegation would not be sitting here to discuss it with His Majesty's Government. This is not the British Government, but the holder of the Mandate given to it by 50 nations.

The Colonial Secretary asked us to put ourselves in the Arabs' shoes. This demand would be in place if the Arabs would do the same and put themselves in the Jews' shoes. But they are not ready to do this in any way. They don't even want to sit together with us.

The Colonial Secretary claimed that the people who drew up the Balfour Declaration didn't know what was happening in Eretz Yisrael, and thought it was an empty country. But the British Government and public opinion in Britain knew perhaps more about Eretz Yisrael than anyone else, because they explored the country extensively from the 19th century onwards.

The Jewish People's link with Eretz Yisrael didn't begin with the Balfour Declaration or the British Mandate. These merely recognized an existing historical fact — the historic link between the Jewish People and Eretz Yisrael. The Mandate accepted that we were in Eretz Yisrael by right and not by favour. Everyone who knows anything about the history of Eretz Yisrael and of the Jewish People knows that we were there many hundreds of years before the Arabs. Sixteen million Jews living today consider Eretz Yisrael their national home.

It is true that neither the Balfour Declaration nor the Mandate said expressly that a Jewish State would be established in Eretz Yisrael. They could not force the Jews to settle there. But this was their intention: that if the Jews wanted to, they would set up a state. In fact, the references in the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate to guarding the religious and civil rights of the non-Jewish communities in Eretz Yisrael prove that they know it was not an empty land, and it was obvious that a Jewish State would guard these rights.

The Colonial Secretary argued that the Arabs' agreement, or at least their acquiescence, is essential if the Declaration and the Mandate are to be implemented. But this condition of Arab agreement or acquiescence does not appear in either the Balfour Declaration or the Mandate. The nations of the world, through the League of Nations, recognized the prior rights of the Jewish People, as long as the religious and civil rights of the other inhabitants are preserved.

The Colonial Secretary also claimed that the Balfour Declaration implied that when Eretz Yisrael is ready for self-government the side which has a majority should rule the country. But wasn't there an Arab majority when the Balfour Declaration was granted? And doesn't the Colonial Secretary know that if there is not yet a Jewish majority in the country, this is the responsibility of the Mandatory Government, which has limited Jewish immigration artificially?

The basic assumption of the Balfour Declaration was that the existing Jewish community in Eretz Yisrael was only a small part of the community we would build up there, if the country was developed as we were able to develop it. This assumption was correct then, and it is still correct today. The most convincing proof of this assumption is the growth of the Arab and Jewish communities since then. It is not a question of the 900,000 Arabs or the 400,000 Jews who live in the country today, but of the size of the present Jewish community and the millions of Jews who could come there, and who want to come there. And the Jewish community is increasing not by displacing inhabitants, but by developing the latent potential of the country, as only the Jews can.

The Jewish People understands perhaps more than any other people what it is like to be without a country. But the Arab people are almost entirely concentrated in the Arab countries, and they rule themselves. Eretz Yisrael is one of the countries the Arabs conquered. But the historical inhabitants of the country are the Jews, and throughout the hundreds of years of their exile the Jews have always considered Eretz Yisrael their only homeland. The nations of the world thought the same way when they gave Britain the provisional Mandate over Eretz Yisrael until the Balfour Declaration could be implemented in full.

If the Arabs of Eretz Yisrael see themselves — and rightly so — as part of the Arab nation, they should realize that Arab aspirations are being fully met, even if Eretz Yisrael, which occupies less than one per cent of the Arab countries, becomes a Jewish State.

The terms of the British Mandate refer to "re-constituting" the Jewish People's National Home in Eretz Yisrael, and note the Mandatory Government's responsibility for doing this. It follows from this that the Mandatory Government's first and central function is to create the political, administrative and economic conditions which will ensure the founding of a Jewish State. Only afterwards would come the development of institutions of self-government, which would preserve the religious and civil rights of all the inhabitants of the country, whatever their race or religion.



# A world in a grain of sand

One of David Ben-Gurion's most cherished visions is of the development of the Sde Boker Midrasha — an institute combining a teachers' training seminary, a high school, an ulpan, a field study school, and, ultimately, according to the former Premier, a university. He himself has described his dream of the Midrasha as a "combination of Oxford and M.I.T." PHILIP GILLON paid a visit to the Midrasha in the desert this week.

DAVID Ben-Gurion once described his vision of the Midrasha: "What Israel needs is not only science and technology — each of high importance — but the pioneering spirit. The pioneering spirit is the moral treasure that springs from man's faith in his capacity to overcome obstacles — even obstacles that would seem at first glance to be too formidable for the ordinary mortal. The desert can be conquered by precisely such faith. Without this spirit it is not easy for people to live in the Negev. And yet, the very surroundings of the Negev generate this faith and this spirit. Just as the Negev contains hidden resources so does man; but it is in the Negev that man can become conscious of his hidden powers, arousing him to tap them and put them to

creative use. I want to see the pioneering spirit inspiring the people of Israel, its scientists and its teachers, above all its teachers, so that they become not simply technical transmitters of information, but men and women of idealism who educate the youth. This is the aim of the Sde Boker Midrasha — to create a centre of scientific research and study which will also be a source of moral inspiration, of pioneering, of idealism, of man's faith in his capacities and in the creative mission of Jewry."

## Brave words

Fine, brave words, worthy of our latter-day prophet: yet it must be admitted that anybody travelling from Beersheba to Sde Boker cannot help but feel some doubts as to the extent to which



The Library at the Sde Boker Midrasha, a proud building that sits on the lip of the canyon.

Ben-Gurion's call is being answered by the sons and daughters of Israel. Apart from the forlorn hamlet of Yeruham and the struggling kibbutz of Sde Boker, the desert seems to reign here almost unchallenged. A few camels, an occasional Beduin, a sparse bush, a very occasional triplex — man has made little impression on the Negev since B.G. first resigned office and went south 16 years ago, with his call, "Follow me!"

Then one comes to the Midrasha and hope is restored. Like so many of the new towns and settlements, the Midrasha has an unreal and impermanent air about it: none of the buildings look as if they have grown organically out of the earth, like the buildings of Jerusalem used to look. One feels at once that this is an institute put up by man where no institute should be, an artificial asseveration of faith on the lip of the canyon of the Wilderness of Zin. Wild and tormented gullies stretch down into the abyss below the library and Paula Ben-Gurion's grave: one understands why the Israelites of the Exodus revolted in this Wilderness against Moses. But it is also easy to see why people looking at the rugged grandeur of the canyon saw visions and felt that they were one with an awesome Creator.

\*\*\*  
MOST of the buildings consist of one-storey wooden hutments or two-storey concrete blocks, designed rather artistically with an external stairwell down the middle. This arrangement allows the cool prevailing wind of the summer to abate the fierceness of the sun — it also exposes the people in the Midrasha to the wild winter winds of the Negev highlands.

But, most important of all, according to Michael Levin, the director, it gives them a chance to develop their private gardens. "My private vanity," he says proudly, as he shows off his own garden, a wonderful collection of trees, shrubs, cacti and flowers springing from the yellow sands.

Everywhere around the buildings one sees children. "Our birth rate is very high," says Mr. Levin drily — but all one's remarks here tend to be somewhat dry. Despite a wide range of cultural activities, it is hardly surprising that the Midrasha birth rate is higher than that of the city, although Mr. Levin claims proudly that this is proof of stability. Altogether 50 families and some 20 bachelors live at the Midrasha — in most cases, both husbands and wives work.

## Youth village

The atmosphere is somewhat reminiscent of a kibbutz or Youth Aliya village. They eat their lunches in a common dining-room, lighter meals in their homes. The community is closely knit and has

the advantages and disadvantages of small communities everywhere. All are imbued with a passionate love for the desert — without this, and without a mighty dose of B.G.'s mysticism, nobody could last long in such surroundings.

Apart from the families in residence, some 80 other workers come every day from Yeruham and Mitzpe Rimon, and there can be no doubt that the Midrasha serves both as a practical help and a spiritual inspiration for these towns. It makes a great difference to them that they have so impressive an institution on their doorsteps.

The secondary school, which serves these two towns and the Negev moshavim, but not kibbutzim, has 300 students divided into 15 classes. At present these classes are accommodated in sprawling low buildings, but a big central school is under construction, and should be ready this academic year. In the high school they have humanities, vocational and biological trends already established, and a mathematics and physics trend is being started this year. The vocational trend includes electronics,

mechanics, and business administration. "We also hope to introduce a pedagogic trend, which will give pre-training for our teachers' seminary," says Mr. Levin. "We hope to achieve a synthesis between all our different projects, the one serving the other."

## Special classes

In the high school there are two special classes — grades 11 and 12 — in which the basic language of instruction is English. There are 30 students in the one class, and 24 in the other. Most of the students are American, but there are a few others, from Great Britain, South Africa, and the Philippines. The aim is for the students to move over from English to Hebrew as they advance in their studies, although the examinations are in English. Mr. Levin is very proud of the fact that last year's students sat for their matriculation examinations in June — he does not yet know how well they did.

He admits that at first they had trouble with drugs — some of the foreign students brought hashish into the Midrasha. The

(Continued on page 26)

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# A world in a grain of sand

(Continued from page 25)

worst offenders were expelled, and he thinks that the Midrasha is now on top of the evil. The Americans had no influence for bad on the Israelis in the Midrasha — the opposite was true, the Israeli example was of great help in eliminating drug-taking.

Also at the Midrasha is an ulpan for South African youths from the King David High School in Johannesburg and the Herzliya High School in Cape Town. There are 84 16-year-olds here for 115 days, having courses in, Mr. Levin says hesitantly, "What can I call it? Hebrew and an Israeli orientation is about the best definition." The South African youngsters appear most cheerful in close proximity to the Wilderness.

A smaller group of South Africans — 30 — is to come for a six-month period, to study the general curriculum, not only Hebrew and allied subjects.

\*\*\*

**THE Boyar-Rothberg Teachers Seminary** is a lovely, low, double-storey building, far more capacious than it seems at first sight, since it seems to go on and on, wandering across the face of the desert. Here there is accommodation for 150 pedagogical students, although this year only 70 are attending — "the seminaries everywhere are short of students," notes Mr. Levin. This is hardly surprising, since graduates qualify only as primary school teachers: after two years of study they can teach up to the sixth grade and after three years up to the ninth grade, which will cover junior high. Most would-be teachers aim higher: university education and high school teaching.

Students come from all over Israel, not only from the Negev, all attracted by the fierce charms

of the desert. "After they graduate, most of them remain in the Negev — of our 350 graduates till the end of last year, most are teaching in the Negev," says Mr. Levin.

Reverting to his theme of the synthesis, Mr. Levin points out that the school serves as a laboratory, with the pupils serving as teaching material for potential teachers, as he puts it. A new seminary course has just been started, with 12 students, to prepare them for the Technion competitive entrance exams.

\*\*\*

**A SOURCE** of great pride is the Field Study School, housed in oddly angled little buildings. Here the children of Israel are introduced to the lore of the Negev — its flora, fauna, rocks, ores, soils, history, archaeology. They study here the meteorology and climate of the desert, the physiology of man, animal and plant under these extreme conditions, and the habits of the Beduin. Last year, 4,500 students attended five-day courses amounting in all to 18,000 teaching days. There is also a small ethnological museum.

Another proud building is the library on the lip of the canyon, which can be seen from miles away, in fact from the other side of Elin Ovdar, from where it looks frail and imperilled as if it might be lifted by a sandstorm into the canyon at any moment. But close up it proves to be extremely solid and comfortable. Behind it is the grave of Paula Ben-Gurion.

### Ministry help welcomed

Mr. Levin, born in Russia and educated in Pinsk, was a member of Kibbutz Shaar Hagolan for years, served in the Palmah and the Army, where he reached the rank of Sgan Aluf and was after-

wards sent abroad by the Jewish Agency. In Buenos Aires he met B.-G. again, and shortly afterwards was asked to become the director of the Midrasha. He welcomes the new move, announced last week, whereby the Ministry of Education is assuming responsibility for the financing of the Institute.

Another source of great pride to Mr. Levin, and essential in the desert, is an attractively laid-out swimming-pool, complete with children's pool and green, green lawn. Like many kibbutz pools, this also serves as a reservoir.

The Midrasha, says Mr. Levin, lays great emphasis in its teaching on the scientific approach, on question and enquiry and experimentation, rather than on dogma and pedagogic monologues. There is an open biological laboratory where anybody can go at any hour by day or night to play around as they wish. "We think that this is one of the explanations — *post facto* — why we have done so well."

### Time for youngsters

Ben-Gurion is so busy these days with his history that he does not have much time for Midrasha business: on the other hand, says Mr. Levin, the Old Man always finds time for any youths who want to see him. He will spend hours talking to them.

Oxford? M.I.T.? Mr. Levin looks somewhat dubious: he does not see either of these institutions facing a formidable challenge from the Negev in the near future. But, ultimately, he hopes, there will be a university there or perhaps a wing of Beersheba's University of the Negev, with a strong emphasis on the natural sciences, and on the geology, history, biology, meteorology and other 'ologies pertaining to the desert.


# Happy Iranian Royal family



The Shah and his family as they prepare to celebrate 2,500 years of the Persian monarchy later this month. Seen with the Shah and his Empress Farah Diba are Princess Farahnaz, 8 (standing, left), Princess Leila, 18 months (sitting on her mother's knees), Crown Prince Reza, 11 (standing, above right), and Prince Ali Reza, 5 (right). Despite necessary formality surrounding the Peacock Throne, the royal family are more relaxed and accessible than their predecessors. They take their holidays abroad and are numbered among the international "jet set." (Photo by William Macquitty, Camera Press London)

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The United Jewish Appeal has the honor of tendering a dinner for him during the forthcoming annual National Study Conference. This dinner will be held at the Hilton Hotel in Tel Aviv on Friday evening, 22 October, at 8:00 p.m.

We are pleased to extend to you this invitation to join us on the occasion of that evening. We should be very happy if you could accept this invitation, for we feel it would make him happy also to see you there.

With all good wishes and looking forward to a joyous celebration, we are

Sincerely yours,

Edward Ginsberg  
General Chairman

Herbert A. Friedman  
Executive Vice-Chairman

Irving Bernstein  
Executive Vice-Chairman

RSVP

BEN GURION BIRTHDAY'S INVITEES

<u>NAME</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>
Amit, Gen.(Res.) and Mrs. Meir	Rh. Arlozoroff 55, Ramat Gan
<i>no</i> Arnon, Mr. and Mrs. Michael	2 Haportzim, Jerusalem
<i>no</i> Avriël, Mr. and Mrs. Ehud	Kibbutz Neot Mordechai, Do'ar Na Hagalil Ha'elion
Ben Eliezer, Mr.&Mrs. Geula&Emanuel	20 Assael St. , Tel Aviv
Ben Eliezer, Moshe and Orit	20 Assael St., Tel Aviv
Ben Eliezer, Mr. and Mrs. Yar iv	Yehuda Hanassi, B'nei Brak
<i>yes</i> Ben Guryon, Mary, Amos & children	53 Horev St., Haifa
Cohen, Mr. and Mrs. Yehoshua	Kibbutz Sde Boker
Dori, Gen.(Res) & Mrs. Yaacov	103 Hatishbi, Haifa
Dulzin, Mr. and Mrs. Aryeh	11 Rch. Mapu, Tel Aviv
Har'el, Mr. and Mrs. Issar	4 Hashoshanim, Zahala, Tel Aviv
Kollek, Mayor and Mrs. Teddy	Rashba 6, Jerusalem
<i>no</i> Laskov, Gen(Res) & Mrs. Chaim	75 Einstein, Ramat Aviv, Tel Aviv
Leshem, Dr. <del>xxxx</del> Mrs. Renana & David	18 Dubnov St., Tel Aviv
Navon, Mr. and Mrs. Y itzhak	Ramat Danya 11, Jerusalem
Peres, Minister & Mrs. Shimon	186 Arlozorov, Tel Aviv
<i>no</i> Pincus, Mr. nd Mrs. Louis A. <i>no</i>	12 Derech Haganim, Kfar Shmaryahu
<i>no</i> Tzur, Gen. and Mrs. Zvi	(Through Ellie Bar-Lev)
<i>no</i> Ya din, Prof. & Mrs. Yigael	47 Ramban, Jerusalem
<i>no</i> Yanai, Mr. and Mrs. Yaacov	POB 4118, Jerusalem
Yisraeli, Mr. and Mrs. Chaim	14 Oleh Hagardon, Tel Aviv
<i>no</i> Yoseph, Dr. and Mrs. Dov	22 Alharizi, Jerusalem
Zakai, Mr. and Mrs. David	189 Dizengoff, Tel Aviv

*yes* Salomon, Hara

Ben-Gurion Dinner List

Mr. and Mrs. Amos Ben Guryon and Children  
Mayor and Mrs. Teddy Kollek

**U J A**

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Gen. and Mrs. Tsur  
Mr. and Mrs. Leon Dulzin  
Mr. and Mrs. Louis Pincus  
Gen. (Res.) & Mrs. Chaim Laskov  
Mr. & Mrs. Yariv Ben Eliezer  
Prof. and Mrs. Yigael Yadin  
Mr. & Mrs. Yitzhak Nav-on  
Mr. & Mrs. Emanuel Ben Eliezer  
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Mr. & Mrs. Issar Harel  
Mr. & Mrs. David Zakai  
Minister & Mrs. Shimon Peres  
Dr. and Mrs. Dov Yoseph  
Mr. & Mrs. David Leshem  
Minister and Mrs. Moshe Dayan  
Mr. and Mrs. Michael Arnon  
Mr. and Mrs. Chaim Yisraeli  
Mr. and Mrs. Yaacov Yanai  
Mr. and Mrs. Yehoshua Cohen  
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(Address)

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Sincerely yours,

Edward Ginsberg  
General Chairman

Herbert A. Friedman  
Executive Vice-Chairman

Irving Bernstein  
Executive Vice-Chairman

RSVP

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02/60487

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Jerusalem  
02/66921

12 September 1971

Mr. Moshe Rivlin  
Jewish Agency  
Jerusalem

Dear Moshe:

Irving Bernstein suggests that "many of those who served with Ben Gurion should be invited to our dinner 22 October." "Understand that Rivlin has such a list available."

We are certainly willing and would have to be guided by you. Do you wish to suggest the names of such people?

Regards.

Sincerely,

HAF:SS

Herbert A. Friedman





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יוסף אלמוגי

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Dear Rabbi Friedman,  
Many thanks for  
the beautiful book



ירושלים



ראש המטה הכללי

31/12/71

Dear Herb,  
Thank you for remembering  
me.

Yours  
Loim Berles

## Tribute to Ben-Gurion

By GOLDA MEIR

**T**HERE are two categories of people, one type of person for whom no speeches, articles, nor endless words will be of help, and will not add one deed they have never performed to their lives. But there is a second category: men whose lives have been one unbroken chain of deeds. In the face of such deeds, what value is there to the words that come to describe them? I imagine that anyone coming in the next few weeks to say something about David Ben-Gurion will be faced by the same dilemma as I am.

Other *haverim*, and myself, were lucky to have had the opportunity of not only following Ben-Gurion's actions. Indeed many of those who watched his actions, know them, sense them, lived them. But I had a special privilege, together with others, to be close to Ben-Gurion for a very long period, to see him achieving many things that were both great and fundamental, and I was sufficiently close in order to learn a few things. I will not enumerate them all; but a few of them, it seems to me, have become the general heritage of our Movement and of the nation as a whole.

When Ben-Gurion, together with his few comrades, set out to achieve the impossible, they did not choose the easy way. It seems to me that it was a characteristic trait of Ben-Gurion not to adopt a decision to do something because it was easy, because it involved no hazards, but because nothing stood in his way.

It seems to me that this one of the things that he taught all of us, at least this is what I learned from him: for the Almighty's sake, no illusions!

**I**T was customary to speak superficially of Ben-Gurion that he regarded public opinion and foreigners with contempt. To my mind, that was not the case. I never heard from Ben-Gurion that we have no link with the outside world and nothing to learn from it. Ben-Gurion's doctrine for his Movement and for each of us who worked with him, was that the world exists and we have to do all in our power to win its understanding, its sympathy. For, in the final analysis, the attitude of people from the outside, of foreign countries and movements, will be influenced not only

by our words, not only by our explanations, our capacity and effort to explain the justice of our cause, but by the deeds we perform for the people of Israel that will be decisive in our midst.

One *Shabbat*, towards evening, at the end of 1947, perhaps early in 1948, Ben-Gurion called me on the telephone: "Come, I want to chat with you on something." Generally speaking, such telephone calls for a chat did not come so often. Naturally, I went to see him. I went to the second floor of his home on Sderot Keren Kayemet. The electric light had not yet been switched on. It was the hour between light and darkness. Ben-Gurion was walking up and down his big room saying: "What's going to happen? There is going to be a war. Now I know our defense strength, what we have, and much much more of what we don't have. All the Arab armies will face us—what will be?"

It was, perhaps, the first time I ever saw him so troubled by the burden of responsibility. And then he mentioned the name of a *haver* whom we all knew was afraid. Ben-Gurion told me two things: That *haver* does not yet know how much one needs to be afraid. And he said something else: You should know, one requires much courage to be afraid.

I also remember that when we were members of the Jewish Agency Executive he suddenly announced—and when Ben-Gurion makes an announcement, that's it!—that he was dropping all routine matters and intended to study right through to the end all about the Hagana, its strength, what it has, who are its people, what they do, how they are trained—everything. He knew what we were heading for.

**I** REMEMBER that in August 1946, after the Black Sabbath (when all the leaders of the *Yishuv* were arrested), Ben-Gurion remained in Europe. It was a miracle that he agreed to our plea: remain there; if you come here you will only enlarge the population at Latrun; stay out and you can do something. When he did return and we drove to the Agency Executive session, he said with such a surety and such clarity, almost specifying the date—there will be war. He had his say a year beforehand to a group of Jews in America. He told them in three years' time there will be war, and told them what we needed in order to be prepared for it. I saw him

From an address delivered at the session of the Labor Party Secretariat honoring Ben-Gurion on the occasion of his eighty-fifth birthday, at Beit Berl, Sept. 30, 1971.

on that *Shabbat*, and, perhaps for the first time, I understood that one must not regard with contempt those men who are afraid. Each of us, in certain situations, is a bit afraid. I want to say that I learned to respect men who admit that they have fear in their hearts, at any rate those men who have fear in their hearts and overcome it and despite that fear do what is necessary—in my eyes that is what makes them important people. Their value is of importance. On that evening when Ben-Gurion told me that one requires much courage to be afraid when there is what to be afraid of, it was the first time I heard it put that way.

Ben-Gurion told me more than once, the same night—or early morning—of the U.N. Assembly vote for partition, that he did not rejoice. He did not rejoice because he did not see it as the end of something. And that was correct. For I wish to say that Ben-Gurion was never a plasterer. That trade was not his. Perhaps a quarrier, a hewer of stone, but never one to plaster over things for decades of meetings by day and by night—large meetings and restricted forums. In all of these meetings there was never the element of “it does not matter.” This did not apply when we decided on *Aliya Bet*, nor when we resolved to break the White Paper policy, nor when we set out by night to establish outposts; nor when we engaged in our struggle against the British; nor when we decided on two things ostensibly contradictory—to go to war, to volunteer for the British Army in the war against Hitler; and, at the same time, to resolve to fight the British as if there was no war in Europe. For even in victory over Hitler our cause was not secure. In everything we did there was a risk. But our conclusion was unanimous—it had to be done.

I do not have to underline the measure of Ben-Gurion’s influence on the Movement: his concrete proposals and the way he would propose them.

I remember one discussion at my home. The late Peretz Naftali and the late Moshe Sharett were there with us. For some reason the conversation touched on the question: is there democracy in the Party or not? Ben-Gurion good-humoredly asked Naftali: “You are a parliamentarian, a man of democracy; tell us, do we have democracy?” Those of us who knew Naftali recall his good common sense. In jocular fashion he turned to Ben-Gurion and said: “I want to tell you: the Movement in the most democratic fashion always accepts what you propose.” I do think that was the precise truth. That was how the Movement behaved. We have nothing to regret. I also hope that in his heart



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Ben-Gurion has no regrets that he was in this camp.

I, TOO, do not wish to plaster over anything. But neither do I now wish to split any stones or raise up from the past any sorrow or pain at anything of what took place.

On the other hand, I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude, and one's heart overflows

at this occasion. It is natural; it is true.

Ben-Gurion, what I say is not by any democratic resolution but I have absolute confidence that it is the desire of all our *haverim*. I wish to tell you: you are sitting in our midst, perhaps no formal act is required, but all the same—return to your Party! Ben-Gurion, we deserve it. And, if you permit me—and don't be angry with me—you deserve it. Come, join us!

## What We Must Do

By DAVID BEN-GURION

SINCE the destruction of the temple and for two thousand years every day Jews have been praying to bring us back to our country—to rebuild the Kingdom of David and to build Jerusalem. But prayer alone did not help. In the nineteenth century there were Jews who understood that in order to rebuild the Jewish state, they must do something real. The most remarkable things were done by three French Jews—the most assimilated Jews that we had then—and they have done more than anybody else since for the rebuilding of the Jewish state. What was done in the last years is of course also of very great importance, but these three laid the foundation of the Jewish state.

I will only say a few words about these three men. One was born at the time of the French Revolution. His name was Cremieux. He was twice a member of the French Cabinet. As you know the French were the first to give Jews equal rights. But in his time, in 1814 when in Damascus, Syria, a Jesuit disappeared, and Cremieux found that his colleagues believed that the Jews had killed him, because Jews allegedly are obliged to drink Christian blood. This story was spread in Europe.

Then two great Jews, Montefiore from England and Cremieux from France, went to Egypt, because then Syria and Palestine were under the rule of an Egyptian leader. He was a Moslem and since the Moslems do not believe in the stories that Jews drink Christian blood, they were able to convince him that these were lies. He accepted their explanations and gave orders to free all the Jews. But many Jews had already been killed and many had everything taken away from them. Montefiore went back to England and there only very few Englishmen would believe the story that Jews drink Christian blood. Yet when Cre-

mieux returned to France, he was amazed. The entire French cabinet, with the Prime Minister at its head, had believed the story that Jews drink Christian blood.

So he said to himself: France was the first country to give Jews equal rights. What will happen in countries where Jews do not have equal rights? He came to the conclusion that he must rebuild the state of Israel. Accordingly he called in a friend who knew something about the land and told him to go to Israel and see what could be done there so that Jews could come and settle and rebuild their country. This man came to Israel and had a meeting with the Jews in Jerusalem. Most of the Jews in the country then lived in Jerusalem and there were not many of them at the time—about 16,000. He said that we must rebuild the Jewish state because otherwise we are in danger everywhere, in all countries of the world.

But most of the Jews then were against it. They said that we must wait until the Messiah comes and then everything will be in order. Only a small minority did agree. Accordingly his colleagues sent him to the Sultan of Turkey, because by then Turkey had managed to retrieve Palestine and Syria. The Sultan gave him a few thousand dunams of land without payment, in order to establish an agricultural school, because it seemed to him that the main objective called for was for Jews to go into agriculture. He then came back and built the school which is now called Mikveh Yisrael on the four thousand dunams of land near Jaffa that the Sultan had given to him.

This was the beginning of the Jewish state. Yet I must tell you that the kind of Jewish state which we need, does really not yet exist. There is a beginning but it is not yet the kind of Jewish state which we want.

First, I must point out that in this century a lot of new states have arisen—mostly in Africa

From an address given at the Founding Assembly of the Reconstituted Jewish Agency on June 23, 1971.

and in Asia. For hundreds of years they had been under the rule of great empires — England, France, Germany and others. Now they have become independent. But this is not what happened to the Jewish state. In all these states people had been living in the country before they became free, before the empires had freed them. They had been speaking the same language which they speak now. These are normal states. Take, for instance, India. India had been for a long time under British rule, but England gave India freedom almost at the same time as the Jewish state was proclaimed. No change was needed except there was no foreign government now but an Indian government. This is not what happened here, in what we call the Jewish State of Israel. There are three matters which, if we shall not have them, then the state will not flourish. First, we must have more Jews in Israel. I don't think that the Jews will come to Israel only when the Messiah will come. When the Jews who came to the country in the eighteen-eighties saw what was needed, they went back to work the land. All the Jews, for hundreds of years, had been far away from it. Now the Jews who said we must build a country, knew that to build that country they must go back and work the land. They got money from their fellow Jews, and they built an agricultural school. This was the beginning.

Eight years after the school was built (in 1870) thirty Jews built the first modern Jewish village. Four years later, Jews from Russia and Europe built three more villages; and when the state was proclaimed in 1948, there were already three hundred Jewish villages in Israel. This was the most important contribution to the building of the Jewish state.

Now we have a little more than two and a half million Jews in Israel but I do not know of any state in the world where the majority of its people do not live in their own country—I do not believe you can call this a completely Jewish state now, if only a small part of the Jewish people live in it. When the state was proclaimed, we were three percent of the Jews, and now we are less than seventeen percent. So that if we can truly call it a Jewish state we must have at least another six million Jews here.

I think we can do it because when the three French Jews worked for the beginning of the state, there were only 16,000 Jews in this country. When the state was proclaimed, we had only 650,000. Now we have a little more than two and a half million. But two and half million is only a small part of the Jewish people.

Unless we bring a great part of the Jewish

people to live in this country and to build this country, we cannot say that the state is fully built. But seeing what has been going on for the last century, and especially in the sixty-five years that I have been privileged to live here—we can be proud. Incidentally, in my first years in this country I would have been happy with only half a million Jews living in Israel, because during those five years nothing had been done; no new settlements had been established, and not many Jews were coming in. There were only 65,000 Jews when the British came after World War I.

THE QUESTION now is whether to give back any of the territories we gained after the Six-Day War. There are two parties: those who say the main issue is peace, and if peace means giving back everything, we ought to do that. The others say that all of this is Israel, on both banks of Jordan—this is our country and we cannot give back anything. I agree with both of them. We need peace so that every Jew who wants to can come to live here, while the Arabs who have been living here for hundreds of years are entitled to live here also. When the state was proclaimed and we made the laws, we declared complete equality and both Jews and Arabs have the same rights.

The second problem is—and I take the country as it was before the Six-Day War, I do not want to go into the territories problem—only less than twenty percent of that area was cultivated and eighty percent was a desert. It is not only the major part of the Negev which is desert—and the Negev alone occupies sixty percent of the area of Israel—but even as you travel from Tel Aviv to Haifa, and look on both sides, you see desert. Can a Jewish state exist, especially with so many enemies, if only twenty percent of its area is settled?

The third problem is—peace with our neighbors. I know there are different views about that, and I am not going to discuss them. I am out of politics and I do not belong to any party.

Since 1870, when the first agricultural settlement was built on the advice of French Jews, we have been attacked by the Arabs. They not only attacked us, but they attacked each other. There was a complete anarchy in the land and one village fell on the other; the Bedouin quarreled with the peasants, people in the towns quarreled with peasants and Bedouin, and they attacked Jews as they attacked each other. Nobody wrote about it, because these things happened in a country which no one knew. Yet now the whole world is occupied with the troubles of Israel, and the world press knows everything which is going on.

**WE** MUST have peace. But peace has two sides to it. Peace cannot be made by one side only. Peace can only be made by two sides.

In the last few weeks, U.S. Secretary of State William Rogers came to see me, although I am not a member of the government, and he told me that he had talked to President Sadat and that Sadat had told him that he wants to have peace. Yet I was not so certain about that and so I am not certain that we can have peace this year, and I doubt that we can have peace soon. But I have reason to believe that in the next eight to twelve years, we shall have peace. I shall give you the reason for my belief. There is now a large number of Egyptians, intelligent people, who have studied in universities in Egypt, as well as in England, France, America, Russia, and other countries. I cannot imagine that among the more than 120,000 persons in Egypt who graduated from universities there are not many who do not care for their own people.

In Egypt today people still live as they did in the Middle Ages in Europe; the majority are peasants. Today there is no other country in which the majority of people are peasants—not in Europe, and not in America. But in Egypt, the large majority are peasants, and the peasants are very poor. Every year they have more children than they had before, but they do not have more or better land. More than sixty percent of the peasants suffer from bad health and they have no education.

The great mistake President Nasser made in the last fifteen years was to concentrate on trying to destroy Israel. But last year he changed his mind. He began to realize that the position of the majority of the people in Egypt was very poor and he tried to raise their standards of living. I asked myself why he accepted the Rogers peace initiative, after so many years of saying that we must destroy Israel. I recently saw an American writer, who had been for about three months in Egypt and had had long talks with Nasser. When Nasser died, this American came to Israel, and he told me that Nasser had said to him: "Now I realize that for all my life I have been making a terrible mistake by not helping our peasants to a better education, to a better way of working the land, but instead saying all the time that I must destroy Israel. Now I must devote all my energy to helping the people."

I'm not certain that the present President feels the same way. Secretary Rogers told me that Sadat wanted to have peace. I doubted it, when he told me that and I doubt it now. Perhaps it is true, but even if it is not true, and Sadat will make war—and that is quite possible—I cannot imagine that the many intellectuals in Egypt and in other Arab countries will not understand that the main problem for Egypt is how to improve the conditions of the peasants. Once they do, then I believe we shall have peace.

So these are the things that we must do in order to ensure the existence of a living and progressing Jewish state: another six million Jews—it can be five or seven, and the more it will be, the more we shall rejoice and then the majority of our people will live in our own country. Secondly, the deserts which occupy more than eighty percent of our country as it was before the Six-Day War must be settled. I know it can be settled. I know that when the state was proclaimed some people said we must rebuild the desert; some said not: it has been a desert since creation and it cannot be changed. But there were people who were a little crazy—I was among them—and we established settlements and new cities in the desert and we found that the whole desert can be settled. In order that the Jewish state should exist, this desert must be settled.

Then I think the third event will come and this is a promise from the Psalmist. He promised, in the name of God, two things. This must be said in Hebrew, as it was written in Hebrew. At that time Jews did not yet speak English. He said, "*Adonai yeetain oz Pamo—adonai yevarech et amo b'shalom.*" In English, "God shall give strength to his people." This was done. The whole world knows that our army has strength. But the second part, "God shall bless his people with peace," has not yet come and peace is not just one-sided. Peace has two sides to it. The other side should also have peace. This has not yet been done by God, but I believe it will be done.

Only when the Jewish state will rest on these three things: having the majority of the Jewish people living in Israel; settling the majority of the country which is ours; then we will also have peace. Only then will the Jewish state be a fact which will exist, and then too I am sure our great prophecy will be fulfilled. There was one of our prophets who said when we shall bring back the Jews they will be "a light to the nations." The Jews are capable of being "a light to the nations" but only if the state will be there, the majority of the Jews will be there and we shall have peace. This is what our prophets wanted, and this can be.

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# Ben-Gurion: A Personal Memoir

By RIVKA GUBER

MY FIRST MEETING face to face with Ben-Gurion took place at our home in Kfar Warburg, on June 12, 1960. After reading the *Book of the Brothers*, which had just appeared, he wanted to become acquainted with the home from which the boys had sprung. He brought a questionnaire with him, in his own handwriting, with twenty-two questions about our origins in the Diaspora and our life in Israel. He went with us to the cemetery where our sons are buried among other soldiers from the village. Deeply moved by the vow the younger son, when he was not yet seventeen, had taken at his older brother's grave, Ben-Gurion repeated several times: "It's Homer! No, it's the Bible!"

When he came back to the house, he said that he very seldom read poetry, but that he had read Zvi's poems and had been greatly impressed by the strength of the sixteen-year-old boy's feelings. Later on, in the Prime Minister's office, under the glass of the desk I saw Zvi's words copied out by Ben-Gurion himself:

"O hear the voice that  
echoes from the rocks,  
From hill to hill, from  
sea to inland sea,  
From waterfall to  
waterfall: 'You are  
A nation now, a nation  
of the free!'"

Zvi, it seems, had written "nation" in large letters that corresponded to the emphasis in Ben-Gurion's voice when he read the word.

Before he left, he presented me with a check for £1,000 (a large sum in 1950!) requesting, for the Government of Israel, the honor and privilege of paying the cost of the book's publication.

When we saw off our eminent guest, I knew what I must now take upon myself. Standing at the gate, he asked a most unexpected question: "Where did you say good-by to the second son? I cannot forget that parting — it gives me no rest!"

Rivka Guber is the author of *Book of the Brothers*, a moving account of her two sons who fell in the War of Independence in 1948. This article, translated from the Hebrew, will appear in a forthcoming collection of sketches by Rivka Guber. She was recently awarded the Histadrut's Joseph Aharonovitz Prize for Literature.

I understood. This is the way it is described in the *Book of the Brothers*.

"... I wanted to give Zvi something, but the men were bound for a rugged, narrow, dangerous path to the Negev. They had to go several kilometers by foot and could not carry any extra bundles. Zvi stood at my side, head and shoulders above me, for I reached only to his chest. He was taking with him his life, that was so dear to me that there are no human terms in which to express it. He carried with him his life, as they all did, for that is all they had to give. And he was prepared to give it, as they all were, without hesitation. A great inner peace filled his whole being. I, on the contrary, was consumed by the desire to give him something, but in vain: there was nothing to give. They had no need of anything. They took nothing with them but their own flourishing young lives—and even those they gave for our sake. At the gate, I drew close to him for a moment and heard the beating of his heart. 'Don't cry, Mother,' he said, in a voice that sounded amazingly like the voice of his older brother.

"I strained all my thinking power to find a suitable word to accompany him on the road that he was taking, but in vain. In my feverish brain, I could find only the usual grandmother's blessing: 'May you weep at my grave.' The blessing was of no avail . . ."

I answered Ben-Gurion in embarrassment: "We parted exactly at this spot." He pressed my head to his breast for an instant and precisely the same feeling returned to me. I imagined I could hear his heart beating. With the sharpened sense of a person who has been treated cruelly by fate, I felt that here was a good son, second to none, the son of an unfortunate nation. His own lot had been bitter. As a little child, he had lost his mother and could never fulfill the commandment: "Honor thy mother!". Now, when the number of bereaved mothers had grown, his admiration for them and his love for their sons who had fallen, knew no bounds. To us he had brought all the feelings seething in his heart. I was only an address.

Of course, the thousand pounds were returned to him: we felt we had no right to cheapen the

value of his visit. He was evidently disappointed, for he wrote: "I'm sorry that you have returned the thousand pounds, because it was my wish that the Ministry of Security should have the privilege of publishing the second edition of *The Book of the Brothers* — one of the great books of our time, which will endure for years to come and light the way for future generations."

SOON AFTER Ben-Gurion's visit Mordecai and I allowed ourselves to be swept away by the great tide of mass immigration which poured over the land like blessed rain. Listening for the dying echoes of their footsteps, we followed our two sons in the direction that led away from the cemetery—the direction in which Ben-Gurion himself was headed.

During the years, 1952-1954, I worked for the Fund of the President's House, establishing libraries in the schools of the first immigrants' settlements scattered along the "Famine Road" and near Beersheba (the road was built during a severe drought by the Mandatory Government which thereby provided employment for Bedouins). Those two years taught me a great deal and this is what I wrote at the time:

"... This was during the period when Ben-Gurion was living in S'deh Boker, and for a while it was as though the country had shifted its balance. The Negev drew people to it like some powerful lodestone. The words of Ben-Gurion have not yet stopped ringing in my ears: 'The Negev is the cradle of our nation, the weak point of the State, and its great hope. When Abraham was commanded to leave his country and his kindred in Ur of the Chaldees for the Promised Land, he left and traveled to the Negev. After the famine forced him to go down into Egypt, he returned to the Negev. The prophets never accepted the desolation of the Negev, and Isaiah ben Amotz prophesized: 'The wilderness and the parched land shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.' If the nation does not vanquish the desert, the desert may vanquish the nation.'"

I did not know what was happening to me: what more could have been done that we had not done?

On the eve of the day on which Ben-Gurion and his wife, Paula, were to move to S'deh Boker, I visited Tel Aviv timidly. At the entrance to Ben-Gurion's house in Tel Aviv, I handed a little gift to the man on guard. I had signed the attached note, "A Village Woman."

And here is part of Ben-Gurion's answer: "Dear, nameless Village Woman, we have received your gift and the little note accompanying it. Although I understand your wish to remain nameless, I'm sorry that you came to my home and I did not have the privilege of seeing you. From now on, we shall be neighbors (though not very close, to be sure). I hope to see you at the meetings which I intend organizing in Be'er Sheva."

One of those meetings was held in Ashkelon, after Ben-Gurion had already settled at S'deh Boker. It was an assembly of Israeli youth from veteran settlements. With his eagle's eye, Ben-Gurion had identified the cause of the second generation's complex. From their childhood on these youngsters had been aware — sometimes they found it depressing — that their parents had been the first in everything. The first generation had created and established the patterns that shaped our lives: the Histadrut, the Labor settlements, the Haganah and all the machinery of the "State in Making." Their children had found everything ready-made — without lifting a finger. Now there was need of fresh new strength, and Ben-Gurion appealed to the youth above their parents' heads.

"It is not yet certain," he said, "whether those who establish a nucleus for settlement will reach the place selected; neither is it certain that those who may come will remain. I haven't the least doubt that they have the will and the ability, but those who do go must not be frightened if when the time comes they see that not everyone has joined nor should they be surprised later on to see that some leave them. Those who know our movement, know that in the beginning there was the vision. It brought those who were not born in the land to it, and those who live in the land — to work on the soil. Let us not be afraid of the vision."

The members of the audience were young enough to be my sons, almost my grandsons. Ben-Gurion's words were certainly not addressed to people of my age. From his pinnacle, he was looking out into the distance. His appeal to the youth haunted me.

I did not dare to pay my first visit to S'deh Boker until we ourselves, heading an army of pioneers who did not know they were pioneers, moved to the desolate, long-neglected Lachish region.

Ben-Gurion at S'deh Boker looked odd, almost as if he were wearing a costume. He was practically barefoot, his legs beneath the khaki shorts were not sunburnt. When we went out of his shack, he looked around him impatiently and said: "It *has* to be green here!". His words

went through me, like an electric current. Is not all progress the fruit of man's will, of his longing for what is right and beautiful?

WHEN the settlement of the Lachish region was five years old, the Prime Minister (Ben-Gurion had returned to office) arrived for a state visit. Nobody remembered the accusations against him, the stones which had, as it were, been hurled at him, only six years before. At that time, there were political parties and newspapers which had prophesied to the blaring of trumpets that the "delusion" called the "Lachish Settlement" would be a "complete failure." They urged "that the person who was mainly responsible for this fatal settlement pay the penalty."

Now nobody remembered this, least of all he, "who was mainly responsible." Ben-Gurion was overjoyed at the sight that met his eyes. He entered into conversation with an old Kurdish man, dressed in his traditional custom, and both faces expressed the greatest pleasure.

The Prime Minister was charmed, above all, by a wise Kurdish woman, who answered his questions clearly and intelligently.

"Where did you learn to speak Hebrew?" he asked.

"From my grandchildren!" was the answer.

"Hear, oh hear! By what paths the language reaches the people!"

I begged the members of Ben-Gurion's retinue, which included Levi Eshkol, Moshe Dayan and others, to come in for a moment to the Writer's Guest House we had established and named for Dvora Baron, so that the Prime Minister might sign the visitors' book. They refused determinedly, since they were behind their pre-arranged schedule. Fortunately, Ben-Gurion caught sight of me. He asked, "What do you want?" Hearing my answer, he said to his companions, "Nu, it's only to sign my name and she's the hostess." At the head of the group, he entered the small house — of the same type as all the settlers' houses. He wrote hurriedly at the little table, in a narrow room, overflowing with nervous people who knew they were expected elsewhere. Impatiently, they waited until he finished writing. This is the souvenir the Prime Minister left behind him:

"Even after fifty-four years of life in the land of wonders, my heart is moved to see the wonder of wonders—the merging of the Diasporas. This is nothing less than the living embodiment of Jewish being: this merging of Jews from India, Czechoslovakia, Babylonia and tens of other countries. And I am moved by another wonder, the blossoming of this wasteland, which I saw, only

six years ago in its desolation, orphaned and humiliated, and which is today sown with scores of flourishing villages.

"Indeed, nothing is too difficult for this remarkable nation named Israel. We shall still live to see, or others after us will live to see, the great miracle of the complete redemption of both the people and the land."

*D. Ben-Gurion*

During the great rift between Ben-Gurion's party and Ben-Gurion himself, who had been one of its chief founders and shapers, I, never before active in politics, found myself in the terribly difficult position of siding with Ben-Gurion while my husband Mordecai, to whom I owed the very fact of my "aliyah" to the country, was one of those who bitterly opposed the "heretics."

By chance, I happened to meet Ben-Gurion at a "Rafi" meeting, where he turned to me, saying: "I heard that you've been quarreling with Mordecai. Is it true?"

I replied: "Believe me, I couldn't quarrel with Mordecai about anything less important than our State!"

"All right. Tell him to come to me. Maybe, I'll be able to convince him!"

Mordecai came to visit him. With her characteristic excitement, Paula (Ben-Gurion's wife) told me that Mordecai had been alone with Ben-Gurion for over an hour and a half, but Mordecai had hardened his heart and had not given in.

Paula added that she herself had stopped Mordecai on his way out and tried to influence him: "I said to him: 'Why have you done this to her?' But he's evidently the one who makes the decisions outside the home. Ben-Gurion is like that, too."

An idyllic epilogue does not suit Ben-Gurion's turbulent and stormy life. I saw him at Paula's funeral and heard him express—surely for the first time—a negative criticism of her: "Paula has disappointed me terribly." He was convinced that it would have been only fair for the younger of the two to wait for her turn.

Another time I visited him, telling him of some oversight. He listened absent-mindedly and answered irrelevantly: "What does it matter now? The Negev is still unpopulated!"

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**BUY ISRAEL BONDS**

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