**Chapter 9**

**The Turning Point**

**A Dead End**

On the morning of October 12, Israel faced a predicament. On the one hand, the existential danger had passed, Israel having stabilized the line in Sinai and repelled the Syrian forces on the Golan Heights. On the other hand, in the north, the IDF’s forward movement had been halted by other Arab nations, while in the south, Egyptian troops still occupied a strip on the Israeli side of the canal. Ending the war this way would be considered a defeat for Israel. Moreover, there was no certainty of a ceasefire: given Egypt and Syria’s superior manpower and their Soviet backing and arms, they could long continue a war of attrition that would eventually weaken Israel’s position. Israel’s leaders sought a ruse or move to force one of them to lay down their arms, allowing the IDF to concentrate on a single enemy. Dayan hoped that the threat of artillery aimed at Damascus would make Syria seek a ceasefire. It did not. The Egyptian option, crossing the canal to reach Egypt’s rear was too risky, as the Egyptians could encircle and destroy the Israeli force.

Dayan and Elazar had fundamental disagreements about the next move. Elazar, insistent on achieving a ceasefire by October 14, fearing attrition in men and material, wanted to consider crossing the Suez if the political echelon agreed. Dayan supported such a move only if it was absolutely necessary militarily, but did not want to link it with a ceasefire, about which only the government could decide. He was clearly marking the boundaries of Elazar’s authority: you’ll see to the military’s successes and we’ll see to the political decisions.

While not certain that crossing the canal would lead to a ceasefire by October 14, Elazar felt this was the only available option, and presented it at a meeting of Meir’s Kitchen Cabinet.[[1]](#footnote-1) Elazar and other officers briefed Dayan on the situation. Dayan, concluding that action should be taken quickly, and that Israel should not end the war at the current lines, agreed to bring the plan before the full cabinet.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Discussing the risks inherent in crossing, Dayan expressed doubts about its strategic benefits, given the risks involved. Conceding that he had not fully studied the move, he repeated that it wasn’t clear how it could improve Israel’s situation. For him, Israel’s most pressing challenge was conserving strength for the future, along with the months it would take to integrate and train on the U.S. weapons being delivered. After reconsidering, Dayan decided against the crossing. Elazar, not certain, wanted to consider how the decision would affect Israel three months later. Dayan responded that they needed to look not three months but many years ahead.

Dayan concluded the debate saying he had to study the subject:

I want to go there [the southern front] to learn… If Dado and Bar-Lev [the military] say it will provide a radical solution, I’ll vote in favor of it. [But] it’s not certain it will be the case, politically speaking. As a military man, I have to study it; as a minister, I trust the army, but I’m not sure it will be possible to translate the military success into a political one.[[3]](#footnote-3)

At that point, Dayan felt a crossing might help relieve the military situation operationally, but would not change the war’s political outcome or. If operational benefit was possible, it ought to be done, but not on the assumption it would lead to a ceasefire; paradoxically, it might even extend the fighting with Egypt.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Thus, for Dayan, the situation at the Suez Canal remained unchanged for now.[[5]](#footnote-5)

**The Decision to Cross the Canal**

The government was still relying on October 11 and 12 reports of significant IDF progress on the Syrian front and preparations for a counterattack on the Egyptian front. It hoped to delay the ceasefire the U.N. Security Council was now discussing. The United States had announced that diplomatic moves would begin when the Security Council met on the night of October 13–14, Israel time.[[6]](#footnote-6) Israel’s major concern was U.S. assistance, specifically, the delivery by U.S. pilots of Phantom airplanes.

The Kitchen Cabinet met on October 12 at 2:30 p.m due to Peled’s warning that the IAF was approaching the red line of 210 aircraft. The main question: Should the IDF wait for the Egyptians to move first or take the initiative? Elazar stressed that a ceasefire should be reached by October 14 and crossing the canal could be vital in achieving that. Repeating his considerations for and against crossing, Elazar asked for the political echelon’s input. Meir reported that the Security Council would discuss this on October 14, but there was no certainty about it leading to a ceasefire, given the uncertainty about the Soviets’ influence on Syria and the Arabs’ ambitions.

Bar-Lev presented the IDF’s alternatives: withdraw to the passes deep in Sinai; hold the current position; or cross the canal. To Bar-Lev’s argument that crossing the canal could cut off the two Egyptian armies east of the canal and destabilize their equilibrium, Peled replied that crossing would cause massive damage to the missile batteries on the Egyptian side. Deputy Chief of Staff Israel Tal objected, finding the crossing too risky.

Amid the discussion, two game-changing pieces of news arrived from the Mossad. The first was that the IDF was within firing range of Damascus.[[7]](#footnote-7) The other, even more dramatic, albeit anticipated news,[[8]](#footnote-8) was that the Egyptians were preparing a large-scale offensive aimed at the Sinai mountain passes. The two swords hovering over Israel – a possible Security Council ceasefire and the IAF approaching its red line now, both on Oct. 14, now posed less immediate danger.

Meir explained: “I understand that Tsvika [Mossad Director Tsvi Zamir] has ended this discussion.”[[9]](#footnote-9) Everyone realized that they needed to wait for the Egyptian armored divisions to show up, destroy them, and cross the canal. Dayan suggested telling Kissinger that Israel would oppose a ceasefire as a ruse, assuming that the United States would oppose a proposed ceasefire before the Security Council discussion. Thus, Dayan agreed not to the substance, but to the process, which would take time that would to Israel’s advantage and which would make Israel not look like the intransigent side.[[10]](#footnote-10) Dayan was now optimistic about the IDF’s ability to overcome the Egyptian forces crossing onto Israeli-held ground. The government agreed with Dayan that it was best now to declare that Israel would not oppose a ceasefire, and earn much-needed diplomatic points.[[11]](#footnote-11)

The announcement alarmed Kissinger, who mistakenly believed Israeli wanted a ceasefire because it was in deep trouble. But neither he nor Israel’s U.S. Ambassador, Simcha Dinitz, nor Foreign Minister Abba Eban, knew that in reality, Israel, anticipating a reversal, had expressed its willingness for a ceasefire knowing the other side would refuse.[[12]](#footnote-12)

That same day, October 12, Dayan traveled to the Southern Command headquarters in the evening to assess the situation, telling the senior commanders that since they were there on the ground, he trusted their judgements and would present their recommendations to the government.[[13]](#footnote-13) Dayan emphasized that there was nothing sacred about any one place: “… The desert is yours. Wage war the way you think is right.”[[14]](#footnote-14)

Later that night, Dayan reported to the Kitchen Cabinet that he had told the commanders in the south that if they supported the crossing, the government would too. Allon had reservations, so Dayan suggested that Elazar focus his attention on studying a crossing’s operational aspects.[[15]](#footnote-15)

On October 13, Israel learned that that President Nixon had instructed Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger to cover Israel’s shortages. Schlesinger announced that by midnight, Israel would have ten new Phantoms and that dozens of transport planes would arrive in the country within a few days. The U.S. decision was part of Operation Nickel Grass, a U.S. weapons airlift to Israel, which began late on the night of October 13. Nixon had agreed to it, realizing that arming Israel was the only way to apply pressure on Egypt to agree to a ceasefire,[[16]](#footnote-16) although it would strain U.S.-U.S.S.R. relations. Kissinger warned the Soviets against intervening; the Soviets told him to warn Israel not to capture Damascus.[[17]](#footnote-17)

On October 13 at 5 p.m., Dayan met to discuss IAF policy and raids into Egyptian territory. Stating that, “We are hemorrhaging,” he wanted to focus only on actions supporting the main campaign objectives and forgo those of just tactical value.[[18]](#footnote-18) He thus made an important distinction between high-risk actions of limited tactical value, and actions affecting the campaign as a whole. Dayan traveled to the north to study the possibility of coming within artillery range of Damascus itself, and found the Israeli troops on the Syrian front exhausted. On October 13, news that Egypt had rejected the ceasefire arrived, confirming Dayan’s hunch.[[19]](#footnote-19) On the night of the 14th, the Egyptians’ armored divisions attacked.[[20]](#footnote-20)

During the morning, positive reports began arriving about the battle on the southern front following the Egyptian divisions crossing the canal ‒ as the Mossad had anticipated. The cabinet that morning discussed the IDF’s successes against the Egyptians crossing the canal and into the mountain passes; they also received good news that the U.S. airlift had started, with 14 to 16 Phantoms fighter jets were expected to arrive the next day. Israel overestimated that some 1,000 Egyptians tanks had already crossed the canal, of which 250 had been destroyed although probably no more than 200 crossed, with some 700 remaining on the eastern side. Still, this was the scenario Israel had wanted, as with the major Egyptian force moving to the Israeli bank, the IDF could cross to the relatively sparsely-defended Egyptian side.

Dayan missed the cabinet meeting to visit the Southern Command, where Bar-Lev told him, “The Egyptians are coming back to themselves and we’re coming back to ourselves.”[[21]](#footnote-21) At noon, Dayan and Tal went to Sharon’s command room, where Sharon, reporting that a large part of the enemy’s force had been destroyed, felt it now time for a canal crossing. While Tal wanted to wait for the Egyptian army to be drawn deeper into the Sinai Peninsula, Israel decided to start the crossing between October 15 and 16.[[22]](#footnote-22) True to form, Dayan gave the commanders a political overview, explaining that with the Arabs not interested in a ceasefire, there was no choice but to engage in a two-front assault.[[23]](#footnote-23)

From Sharon’s 143rd Division, Dayan continued to the 252nd[[24]](#footnote-24) before returning to the Southern Command for updates. In the face of disagreements with his officers over whether the attack on the 14th would be the anticipated large assault Israel or merely a preliminary strike, Dayan declared: “But none of this really matters. What does matter is that all the commanders are united in thinking that if developments tomorrow are like the developments of today, then the crossing should take place the next night.”[[25]](#footnote-25)

Returning to Tel Aviv, Dayan told Elazar at 5 p.m. that regardless of whether the IDF’s northern troops were “tired or not,” there was no justification for not taking the offense.[[26]](#footnote-26) He told Elazar that, in contrast, the Southern Command was full of fighting spirit and that he was “wholeheartedly in favor of letting the Jews cross.”[[27]](#footnote-27) It seemed that a change for the better was finally happening.

That evening at 9:00, the cabinet voting on crossing the canal. Dayan said that after the IDF seized Egyptian territory, the western bank of the canal could be left in Israel’s hands as a bargaining chip in the future political talks. Clearly, Dayan was distinguishing between occupying land for operational ends and holding it for political needs. Dayan stressed the need for an immediate ceasefire with Egypt, especially as Syria had refused. The cabinet voted to authorize the crossing.[[28]](#footnote-28)

**Crossing the Canal and Encircling the Third Army**

The IDF operation to cross the Suez Canal, Abirey Halev (Knights of the Heart), began in the evening of October 15. Earlier, the 87th Reconnaissance Battalion had identified an open space between the Egyptian Second and Third Armies along the eastern shores of the Great Bitter Lake, providing a pathway to the canal without engaging in a breakthrough battle.

Dayan and Elazar arrived at the Southern Command shortly before the scheduled 5:45 p.m. crossing to monitor the situation, which was problematic from the start, especially in terms of transporting the necessary materiel. Dayan spoke with Sharon several times, asking him for updates.[[29]](#footnote-29) Sharon’s division, along with the Southern Command’s engineering forces, were to assist the paratroopers and tanks from the 421st Brigade to cross north of the Great Bitter Lake. On October 16 at 1:30 a.m., the paratroopers reported they were in control of the southern bank. The tanks started crossing the canal on the rafts and ATCs at 6:30 in the morning.

Meanwhile, in the north that day, the IDF had successfully confronted a joint Jordanian-Iraqi-Syrian force, destroying 60 tanks, 25 of them Jordanian. Dayan asked that the Jordanian participation in the battle not be publicized, assuming, correctly as it turned out, that this would be Jordan’s sole contribution to the war effort.[[30]](#footnote-30) In hindsight, his assumption proved correct.

Dayan left the front that night to get an update from Elazar. Dayan distinguished among three issues: opening a corridor to the canal, noting the difficult topography and suggesting that the IAF and not the paratroopers engage there; stopping enemy attacks on the corridor where a fierce, uncertain, battle was still raging; and securing the bridgehead on the canal’s western bank, which Dayan thought possible if a route was secured.[[31]](#footnote-31) The Dayan was angry that Meir’s earlier Knesset announcement of the IDF having crossed the canal and were on the Egyptian side exposed these troops to danger. He was worried that the situation was still precarious and that they would now need to stop the crossing.[[32]](#footnote-32)

Once alone, Elazar asked Dayan what to do about Sharon, the subject of bitter complaints from Bar-Lev and Gonen “Right now, nothing,” Dayan answered and then noted media rumors that Elazar wasn’t functioning well. Dayan, experienced in media management, suggested that Elazar speak with reporters from the front.[[33]](#footnote-33) Over the next few hours, reports arrived that the 35th Paratrooper Brigade and armored troops had fought a bloody battle at night near the so-called Chinese Farm, while the 162nd Division had continued crossing the canal.

By October 17, the situation looked less grim when Elazar arrived at Sharon’s 162d’s command center in the morning. The commanders discussed securing bridges and forces, the size of the forces, and supplies. Dayan and Sharon wanted to move as many tank troops as possible.[[34]](#footnote-34) Dayan crossed the canal on a Gillois ATC to visit the troops at 3 p.m.,[[35]](#footnote-35) and reported upon his return at 5:30 p.m. that as of 4 p.m., a bridge was ready for tanks, exhorting them: “Every unused moment is a loss.”[[36]](#footnote-36) The 162nd Division was to cross first. Dayan saw that an opportunity to break the Egyptian forces had presented itself, as the Israeli forces could advance rapidly in terrain south of the canal. This in addition to his having learned that the Egyptian high command was in mayhem and that Sadat had taken control and had ordered troops to launch an assault east of the canal to prevent the Israelis from crossing. The IDF’s assessment was that the Egyptian situation would not allow them to carry out such a full-scale attack.[[37]](#footnote-37)

Meeting with Meir at 9:15 p.m., Dayan told her, “I feel that the next two days will be decisive in the war with Egypt and in the war in general.”[[38]](#footnote-38) Thus, nine days after the Syrian and Egyptian armies shocked Israel unawares, Israel shifted the war onto Egyptian soil. Now the IDF concentrated its offensive efforts on the southern front to destroy the enemy forces in that region and take out the anti-aircraft missile batteries.

Meanwhile, the United States and the Soviets tried to renew their ceasefire efforts. On the 17th, it was confirmed that Soviet Prime Minister Alexei Kosygin had arrived in Cairo with a proposal, with the Soviets hoping for a ceasefire that left troops where they were on the basis of Resolution 242, the 1967 border. Shortly after midnight between the 17th and 18th, Dinitz reported that he had told Kissinger that Dayan, back from a visit to the Suez Canal, wanted Kissinger to know that Israel’s situation there was good.[[39]](#footnote-39) On October 18, Dayan received word that more Israeli forces had advanced across and along the canal’s western bank. In the morning, he returned to the Southern Command and instructed the commanders to feign an advance on Cairo so that the Egyptians would pull forces back to defend their capital. Rather than moving the 252nd Division, the only division still on the Israeli side of the canal, and weakening the position, he suggested shifting troops from Ras Sudar to the western side, believing there was no threat of an Egyptian assault in that region. He also suggested speaking about the issue with Elazar.[[40]](#footnote-40) At that point, Israel already had 250 or so IDF tanks on the Egyptian side of the canal, the plan being to move another 150, leaving about 250 on the Israeli side.[[41]](#footnote-41) Now, they needed to decide how far the Israeli troops should penetrate and prepare for the coming ceasefire. Before returning to Tel Aviv, Dayan asked, “Now what? We’re at the point where we have to ask ourselves how we end this thing.”[[42]](#footnote-42)

At 10 a.m., Dayan and Sharon crossed the canal and met with the paratroopers, and Dayan then traveled to the 162nd Division’s command headquarters. Dayan later accompanied Sharon to the Chinese Farm, where he met with Amnon Reshef, the commanding officer of the 14th Brigade, which had fought continuously from the first day of the war. Reshef told Dayan about the fierce battles his brigade had fought in the last several days to ensure access to the bridgehead. Dayan instructed Reshef and the division commander: “You have the mandate to speed ahead. Blow them away! And don’t ask anyone, because you have the mandate to push north.”[[43]](#footnote-43) Then, Dayan returned to the Southern Command, where he issued further instructions. Still worried about attrition rates, he asked the commanders to do everything to prevent attrition. Speaking about the ramps the Egyptian had built, he said it was possible to seize them to help the northward advance. Dayan added that he had issued similar instructions to the division commanders.

When the government met at 9 p.m., Elazar reported on significant enemy losses, but noted that the Egyptian army had not reached its breaking point and there was no sign that Egypt wanted a ceasefire. Dayan stressed the IDF’s attrition rate and the unknown duration of the fighting. The reports on the political front remained unclear.[[44]](#footnote-44) Kissinger reported expecting talks would resume about the Soviet ceasefire proposal once Kosygin returned from Cairo, and promised that he would stall to gain time.

In the morning of October 19, IDF troops on the Egyptian bank of the canal renewed their momentum. Dayan was pleased that the commands to the 143rd Division to move north accorded with his proposal.[[45]](#footnote-45) Dayan gave Elazar suggestions for reducing losses, especially losses resulting from shelling on the Israeli canal bridges over the canal. These included preparing several locations for the arrival of supplies in order to decentralize the now concentrated forces and push the enemy’s artillery back to reduce its accuracy.[[46]](#footnote-46) He also suggested that the IAF should avoid missile-protected areas at this stage, not assist ground troops west of the canal.[[47]](#footnote-47)

Dayan posed the army’s current dilemma: Where next? The options were attacking along the canal or deeper into Egypt towards Cairo. Dayan thought that the current northward advance along the canal, threatening Cairo, encircling the Third Army, and controlling the Suez-Cairo road met Israel’s needs.[[48]](#footnote-48)

**Towards a Ceasfire**

Dayan then met with Meir at 10 a.m. She told him of the first signs of political pressure to accept a ceasefire reflecting Israel’s improved military position.[[49]](#footnote-49) They deliberated on the optimal lines for the army to be on, for both a ceasefire and a possible resumption of hostilities. Dayan preferred the canal line, assessing that going into a country of 37 million inhabitants was like “sitting on top of an open fire.”[[50]](#footnote-50) He added that the IDF command had accepted his approach of moving the 162nd Division south towards the Suez-Cairo axis, seizing control of the Egyptian bank, and creating a line that could be optimal for a ceasefire when the fighting stopped.[[51]](#footnote-51) Dayan still could not understand why the Bar-Lev line had failed in the first days or why the 300 tanks were not in position when war broke out.[[52]](#footnote-52) At 2:55 p.m., Dayan instructed the Southern Command that the primary goal was controlling the entire length of the canal’s western side.[[53]](#footnote-53)

That night of October 18–19, the Soviets submitted a draft ceasefire proposal leaving the troops where they were, immediately demanding that Israel retreat to the 242 line. Kissinger informed Israel he would not agree and would stall for time.[[54]](#footnote-54)

On October 20, Kissinger announced he was traveling to Moscow, giving Israel a 48-hour extension.[[55]](#footnote-55) Dayan had again gone to the Southern Command and updated the commanders about the political developments, predicting the war’s end by October 23 (which turned out to be fairly accurate). He now wanted them achieve the already established goal of seizing control of the full length of the Egyptian side of the Suez Canal within two days.[[56]](#footnote-56)

In the afternoon, after touring three divisions, Dayan reported to Bar-Lev and Gonen that Adan’s division was optimistic and had already destroyed 14 missile batteries. Dayan instructed the 162nd Division to focus on destroying missiles, judging that the division could send an advance unit to the canal that day “to pound down shells for Cairo to know that a force was at the canal.” He felt that such a move would be “important for everyone – the Jews, Kissinger, everyone.”[[57]](#footnote-57)

In the evening, Dayan authorized the conquest of Mt. Hermon[[58]](#footnote-58) and attended a cabinet meeting discussing progress in the south where the IDF, following Dayan’s instructions, had seized control of a 60-kilometer-long enclave 20 to 30 kilometers in Egyptian territory There were signs of considerable weakening among the Egyptian troops. The government started working on Israel’s ceasefire conditions and announced its willingness to discuss its ceasefire terms. Dayan suggested making the ceasefire contingent on Egypt lifting the naval blockade on the Bab al-Mandab Straits controlling Israel’s port at Eilat and the entrance to the Red Sea.

Meanwhile, Kissinger reported on a breakthrough in his talks with the Soviets. On October 21, Dayan returned to the south and learned the water supply to the Third Army had been cut off and that it would soon also be cut off to Port Said.[[59]](#footnote-59)

Dayan returned to Tel Aviv at 7 p.m. and reported this news to Meir along with updates on battles along the crossing zone and other places. The IDF stood poised to attack Mt. Hermon. That night, after learning that the Security Council would be meeting soon, Meir then called for an urgent midnight Kitchen Cabinet meeting. Here Dayan related the political developments and their military implications. Later, Kissinger wrote that Israel should accept the draft of the compromise he had reached with the Soviets, which did not require an Israeli retreat after the ceasefire’s end. The Arabs’ reaction remained uncertain.

In the Kitchen Cabinet, Dayan supported the agreement but insisted on certain terms, including a cessation of terrorist activities, a freeze on the military situation, and an interpretation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 favoring Israel.[[60]](#footnote-60) Elazar opposed a break in the fighting now, when Israel had offensive momentum, arguing that a ceasefire would only serve the enemy’s interests.[[61]](#footnote-61) The Kitchen Cabinet decided to accept the draft proposal subject to certain terms. Half an hour later, Egypt announced that it, too, was accepting the ceasefire.

Kissinger arrived in Israel on October 22 and met with Meir and senior cabinet members. Elazar then briefed Kissinger, reporting that the IDF had not completed encircling the Third Army, but had effectively wiped out Egypt’s entire aerial defense system. Kissinger left, amazed with Israel’s great achievements militarily and politically, given that the Arabs were now agreeing to direct talks.[[62]](#footnote-62) After Kissinger left, Dayan emphasized that the ceasefire was contingent on the release of Israel’s POWs.

At 5 p.m., after Kissinger met with Meir, Dayan and the military high command, Dayan told Elazar and Peled not to take Port Said, explaining that Meir objected. In fact, Sadat had threatened to fire missiles on Israeli civilian targets if civilian targets in Egypt were attacked. Believing Egypt was capable of carrying out such reprisals, Dayan opposed the conquest of Port Said and the bombing of strategic Egyptian targets.[[63]](#footnote-63)

The ceasefire was declared on October 22 at 6:52 p.m. With the tacit U.S. agreement, the IDF continued improving its positions after that time, while Egypt continued to fire on the IDF. Dayan informed Meir that the IDF would exploit the opportunity to advance to the canal south of the Great Lake to complete the encirclement of the Third Army, hoping that this would not reignite.[[64]](#footnote-65)

In October 23Kitchen Cabinet meeting in the morning. Dayan, keenly aware of the sensitivities of Israel’s U.S. ally, reported that he had instructed that the IDF provide security for U.S. ships, to reduce the burden on the Americans and that if Egypt continued to direct fire, the IDF would counterattack, although Israel had to inform the United States in that event.[[65]](#footnote-66) Later that morning, he met with Elazar and others in the military command to discuss the political situation. Dayan believe that because both superpowers were interested in the ceasefire, it would lead to a peace treaty between Israel and Egypt. He ordered the continued encirclement of the Third Egyptian Army, estimating that an agreement between the superpowers would be finalized in about 48 hours. He observed that had Israel fired the first shot in this war, the United States would not have supported it. Finally, he warned that if the POW issue was not settled within 72 hours from the beginning of the ceasefire, he would support renewed fighting.[[66]](#footnote-67)

In the afternoon, Dayan again visited the divisions in the south,[[67]](#footnote-68) Discussing moves to complete the Third Army’s encirclement.[[68]](#footnote-69) He also met with Elazar and briefed him on the upcoming Security Council session, assuring Elazar that this did not worry him, as he believed that until the Security Council reached a resolution, Israel could make further gains, [[69]](#footnote-70) especially since he had received a report that Egypt’s situation was very bad. In the evening, Elazar informed Dayan that IDF forces were still advancing on the Egyptian bank of the canal; he hoped the noose would tighten overnight.[[70]](#footnote-71)

That night, the United States heavily pressured Israel to return to the October 22 lines. Dayan angrily refused any retreat, demanding that Meir remind Kissinger that the Arabs had started the war and only after their situation deteriorated did they seek a ceasefire, which they were violating. Dayan repeated the need to include the POW exchange in the ceasefire agreement.[[71]](#footnote-72) Later, Dayan and Elazar decided to cut off supplies, including water, to the Third Army. Meeting with Meir at 3:30 a.m., Dayan asked if Kissinger knew that the Third Army was encircled. Meir said he did, adding, “He’s very happy about it.”[[72]](#footnote-73)

At 5:45 a.m., October 24, Egypt agreed to a ceasefire at 7 a.m. that day. Having flown to the south to see the besieged Third Army, Dayan suggested letting the Egyptians leave unarmed However, during the day, exchanges of fire continued throughout the front and the Third Army reportedly tried to break through the siege.[[73]](#footnote-74)

That afternoon, under increasing U.S. pressure to retreat to the October 22 lines, Meir suggested revealing intercepted communications in which Egypt ordered the Third Army commander to continue fighting. Dayan assured her that the IDF was not attacking or advancing and that U.N. observers were already present. Dayan called Kissinger to update him and invited the U.S. military attaché to the front to see for himself.[[74]](#footnote-75) Later, Israel heard that Sadat had requested that U.S. troops protect them and serve as a buffer between Egypt and Israel. In the afternoon, Dayan refused IAF intervention to help an Israeli force battling in the city of Suez, due to U.S. pressure and Israel’s commitment to the ceasefire.[[75]](#footnote-76)

The Israeli leadership believed that the Egyptians viewed the Third Army’s surrender or destruction as a defeat, leading them to do everything possible to prevent this and break the siege.[[76]](#footnote-77) Trying to do just that, Egypt lost 15 planes that day alone. The trapped Third Army, now numbering about 30,000 men, was trapped in a 50-kilometer long and 12-kilometer wide enclave east of the Suez Canal, accessible to Egypt only by water – a route the IDF also controlled.

In a 9:30 p.m. cabinet meeting that evening, Dayan discussed Israel’s immediate concerns: U.N. observers’ deployment; the POW exchange; lifting Egypt’s Bab al-Mandab blockade; and stabilizing the military lines. He felt that Israel should encourage Egypt’s Third Army to evacuate westwards to Egypt.[[77]](#footnote-78) The government therefore ordered the IDF to maintain the calm. On the night of October 24–25, after Egypt pleased for defense against “Israel’s aggression, the Soviets to intercede against Israel unless the United States supported the Soviet resolution in the Security Council vote. The notion that both Israel and Egypt retreat was raised along with demilitarizing the region adjacent to the canal.[[78]](#footnote-79)

Dayan felt that Israel was in an untenable position. Egypt and Syria could start a war with consequences, while Israel was prevented from delivering the coup de grace. Elazar agreed.[[79]](#footnote-80) The United States asked for Israel’s military options, including its timeline for destroying the Third Army. The U.S. assessment was that if the Soviets airlifted 4,500 soldiers to Cairo, another four or five days would be needed before they could approach the Third Army, time Israel would have to complete the Third Army’s destruction.[[80]](#footnote-81) The United States announced a state of high alert, moving ships and readying airborne divisions.[[81]](#footnote-82) This marked the peak of tension between the superpowers.

Dayan revisited division headquarters of the 162nd and 252nd Divisions and the 460th Brigade early October 25. Concurrently, Kissinger sought to buy time to break the Third while also urging Israel to make concessions. For now, Dayan rejected the idea of both armies retreating from the canal, claiming the time was not right.[[82]](#footnote-83) By the next morning, October 26, Egypt resumed hostilities. Israel sent the IAF in response and received approval to bomb the 4th Division’s headquarters.[[83]](#footnote-84)

The arrangement that was being worked out included a U.N. buffer between the hostile parties. In the course of October 26, consultations continued about the POWs, the Third Army’s fate, and lifting the Bab al-Mandab Straits naval blockade, with Israel, with Dayan taking a hardline, adhered to its positions. Dayan suggested potential concessions for a real settlement, such as establishing a demilitarized strip and allowing a Third Army retreat with its weapons.[[84]](#footnote-85) However, he also insisted on tightening the siege without allowing in supplies.[[85]](#footnote-86) Israel still suspected that Egypt was planning to break through the Third Army’s encirclement. Sadat pressured the Americans to help the Third Army in return for lifting the blockade and releasing the POWs.[[86]](#footnote-87) Israel rejected this, demanding a comprehensive arrangement. Kissinger pressured Israel not to destroy the encircled army. Eventually, Israel agreed to resolve the Third Army situation, provided the talks were direct. The U.S. then issued an ultimatum: If Israel did not allow supplies to reach the Third Army, it would vote against Israel in the Security Council.[[87]](#footnote-88) Israel agreed to allow supplies and, in return, Egypt agreed to direct talks at the 101st kilometer. Israel proposed discussing a demilitarized zone on both sides of the Suez Canal with an international force.

This marked the official end of the Yom Kippur War. It was followed by a period in which the separation of forces agreements was hammered out, with continued exchanges of fire.

**Separation of Forces on the Southern Front: The Sinai 1 Agreements**

Already towards war’s end, Dayan sought an arrangement with Egypt based on his outline for an interim arrangement in 1970.[[88]](#footnote-89) The arrangement and negotiations were complex, aiming to translate military achievement into political gains, complicated even more for Israel by the superpowers’ interests, no less important than battlefield reality. To what extent could Israel insist on its interests given the increasing pressure and realize the dividends of winning the war, in effect? These and other questions preoccupied Dayan even before the war ended. Dayan, who had initially opposed conquering the Suez Canal in 1967, and had sought an interim agreement in 1971, was now ending with a post-war agreement, coming full circle. Dayan wrote, “I returned to my old plan – the interim agreement. Ever since the Six-Day War, I’d tried to realize it but failed.”[[89]](#footnote-90) Dayan advocated a 30-kilometer Israeli retreat, as he had in 1970, in opposition to Elazar and Bar-Lev, who supported a retreat of 10 kilometers from the canal,[[90]](#footnote-91) and Meir, who initially opposed any withdrawal. She complained to Kissinger that “How is it fair, that having started the war, they’re now being rewarded? They start a war but we have to withdraw from their territory?!”[[91]](#footnote-92) Ultimately, Dayan prevailed.

Like Sadat, Dayan was thinking more comprehensively and for the long term, and wanted the United States to play a central role in the negotiations and edge out the Soviet Union from the Middle East. In exchange for Israeli concessions at the canal, which he believed in Israel’s best interest, Dayan was trying secure U.S. financial and military post-war support.[[92]](#footnote-93)

Syria still refused any ceasefire agreement and the fighting in the north continued until May 1974. Talks with Egypt, both direct between Israeli and Egyptian offices and indirect with U.S. mediation, began on October 28. The Six-Point Agreement on November 12 covered supplies to the Third Army and the POW exchange, made four days later. But a wide divide remained about the separation of forces.

With efforts also underway to convene a peace conference in Geneva, Kissinger began his shuttle diplomacy with nonstop trips. On December 6, Dayan traveled to Washington for talks about the agreements and U.S. security assistance. A conference in Geneva, convened on December 21 with the United States, Soviet Union, Egypt, Jordan, and Israel (Syria was conspicuously absent), concluded on January 9, 1974, without significant results. The serious differences between the two sides were resolved by Kissinger, who shuttled between the leaders, leading to a bilateral arrangement between Israel and Egypt, rather than a regional one.

On January 18, 1974, Israel and Egypt signed a separation of forces agreement at the 101st kilometer entailing an Israeli withdrawal of 20 kilometers from the canal and demilitarizing the evacuated zone. Following the agreement, the Suez Canal reopened to shipping in June 1975, after it was cleared of war material, although exchanges of fire between the armies continued. Despite ongoing artillery warfare in the north, a separation of forces agreement, still in effect today, was signed in the Golan Heights on June 5, 1974, soon after the Rabin government took office following Meir’s April resignation.[[93]](#footnote-94)

In the two months between the war’s end and the Geneva peace conference, Egypt and Syria replenished their armies with Soviet supplies, resulting in a tense situation on the fronts. Israel’s leadership had to anticipate either a potential peace or another round of warfare, with Egypt trying. to break the siege of the Third Army and sever the Israeli bridgehead. Dayan wanted to prepare for peace and war simultaneously.

 During the talks, Dayan took a hardline approach toward any Egyptian violations of the agreement, believing Egypt would exploit any weakness to demand excessive concessions. Dayan’s subordinates, especially Israel Tal and Aharon Yariv, found his dual approach confusing, suggesting that that Dayan’s authority never fully recovered its pre-war status.

On October 29, a day after the signing, Dayan held a meeting to prepare for Meir’s upcoming U.S. visit. He emphasized that the priority was the POWs’ release. He was open to letting supplies in to the Third Army if Israel would not have to retreat to the October 22 lines. Dayan also raised the possibility of renewed warfare, but felt that Israel was well-positioned on the west side of the canal and needn’t fear such threats. Responding to Tal, still the Deputy Chief of Staff, who opposed any situation leading to renewed fighting, Dayan explained that it was necessary “to get out of their heads the notion that you can make gains by waging war.”[[94]](#footnote-95) Dayan insisted on obtaining something concrete from Egypt in exchange for any Israeli concession. On October 31, Dayan traveled to the south. As usual, he started out with an open discussion, telling the commanders he wanted “an exchange of unofficial thoughts.” Dayan added that the talks had hit a dead end and that hostilities could soon resume.[[95]](#footnote-96)

Tal was appointed commander of the Southern Command on November 1 and met with Egyptian Chief of Staff Mohamed Gamasy, who assured Tal that Egypt now accepted Israel’s existence and wanted only to recover its territories. Gamasy proposed an Israeli withdrawal to 30 kilometers from the canal, leaving U.N. force as a buffer.[[96]](#footnote-97) Tal informed Dayan about Egypt’s willingness to sign a separate agreement. Dayan decided to announce the transfer of humanitarian aid to the besieged city of Suez at the next meeting, but he also spoke with the southern commanders about on November 3, the prospect of attacking the Third Army due to the prospect of renewed warfare.[[97]](#footnote-98)

On November 4, Elazar told Dayan that most General Staff officers supported more fighting to improve the IDF’s position. Dayan disagreed, fearing severe diplomatic repercussions and a Security Council resolution that the United States would not veto.[[98]](#footnote-99) At midnight of November 6–7, Dayan informed the General Staff that Assistant Secretary of State Joseph Sisco’s arrival with agreement terms from Egypt. Egypt proposed a peace conference in Geneva, but Dayan was adamant about the POWs’ return, refusing to send supplies to Suez before receiving complete POW lists and the lifting of the Bab al-Mandab blockade,[[99]](#footnote-100) which had long troubled Dayan.[[100]](#footnote-101) On November 8, Egypt agreed to submit the POW lists. Dayan explained to the General Staff that providing supplies to the Third Army, unpopular domestically, was necessary due to Israel’s dependence on the United States. This dependence led Meir to reject the General Staff’s recommendation to resume the fighting.[[101]](#footnote-102) On November 14, Dayan rejected Egypt’s demands that the IDF withdraw from the canal’s western bank of the canal.[[102]](#footnote-103)

During November, Israeli and Egyptian representatives met several times. Dayan prepared the Israeli delegation, highlighting the disagreement over the separation of forces. Israel wanted reciprocity, whereas Egypt, seeking a return to its own soil, was demanding stationing three divisions on the canal’s eastern side.[[103]](#footnote-104) Meeting with the Finnish commander of the U.N. observer mission to the Middle East, Dayan explained that there was a distinction between a technical separation of forces, a topic that officers could handle, and a comprehensive agreement, requiring discussion in Geneva.[[104]](#footnote-105)

On November 19, the General Staff met with Meir. Elazar predicted potential renewed warfare if the talks failed, while. Tal argued against any attack on the Third Army.[[105]](#footnote-106) Dayan was able, as usual, to weigh two possible and contradicting scenarios – resuming and conducting hostilities and advancing the talks – at the same time.[[106]](#footnote-107) In the November 19 cabinet meeting, Dayan a long-term interim agreement with concessions to avoid warfare.[[107]](#footnote-108) Nonetheless, Dayan instructed the General Staff to prepare a plan to destroy the Third Army.

Early in December, Dayan visited the United States to discuss Egypt’s imbalanced proposals with Kissinger. He proposed that in exchange for withdrawing from the canal, Israel should get an agreement ensuring the end of hostilities that would be linked to opening the canal and reconstructing Egyptian cities. Dayan insisted that the United States continue playing an active role, particularly in ensuring freedom of shipping through Bab al-Mandab.[[108]](#footnote-109) Thus, Dayan worked towards an interim agreement while insisting on Israeli compensation.

Dayan now promoting the agreement-in-formation to the IDF command and laying its groundwork, acknowledging the difficulty of accepting Israeli withdrawal from the Egyptian bank of the canal and a further retreat from territories in Sinai. Speaking on December 4 with Southern Command officers about Israel’s low post-war morale and its strong dependence on the United States, Dayan granted, “I understand that we had an earthquake…. But the key to this thing is, to a great extent, in the hands of this elite group [IDF commanders].”[[109]](#footnote-110)

In his next meeting with the Southern Command on December 12. Dayan reported he had gained significant insights from the visit. He stressed the importance of the agreement’s first stage, when Egypt would reopen the canal following Israel’s withdrawal, in return for which Israel should get a peace treaty or a nonaggression pact.[[110]](#footnote-111) He also highlighted a problem unique to Israel, of maintaining the military reserves, a burden on the country’s economy and morale.

In late December, Dayan held discussions about Israel’s ideal conditions, assuming that a separation of forces agreement was near. He noted that Egypt’s stance had eased somewhat since before the war, suggesting that U.S. assurances about future Israeli territorial concessions explained Egypt’s willingness to negotiate now without an Israeli commitment to full withdrawal and its apparent readiness for a partial settlement. He asked the military what was the furthest line to which the IDF could withdraw, what arrangements were needed with the Egyptian forces, and freedom of shipping in Bab al-Mandab.[[111]](#footnote-112) For Dayan, the critical parameters included Israeli troops being beyond Egypt’s artillery range and withdrawal timetables.

On December 31, Meir established a new government following delayed elections for the eighth Knesset. On January 1, the new government approved the separation of forces agreement based Dayan’s and Elazar’s proposed outline.[[112]](#footnote-113) On January 4, 1974, Dayan met with Kissinger and explained Israel’s proposed arrangement. Kissinger thought Egypt might accept it, although he was sceptical about Egypt agreeing to commit itself to nonaggression.[[113]](#footnote-114) The problematic issues of 1971 were resurfacing.

Following another Kissinger visit, the government agreed to the various separation of forces parameters. On January 17, 1974, Dayan explained the details of the agreement to the General Staff, reading important sections and explaining that it would be signed by the Israeli and Egyptian Chiefs of Staff. He conceded that it was less favorable than Israel had hoped, because it was a ceasefire and not an end-of-warfare agreement. The Egyptians, planning to demand more Israeli withdrawals, had included a clause that the agreement was just a stage before a final settlement. Addressing Egypt’s shift to relying on the United States even at the expense of Soviet cooperation, Dayan added: “It isn’t clear what the United States has promised Egypt, but Israel can depend on the United States.” About Kissinger, Dayan said, “If he gets all of this done, then he’s an international genius, that Jew. To see him at work, by the way, is a real pleasure.”[[114]](#footnote-115)

The separation of forces ceremony was held on January 18, 1974. The next day, Dayan expressed his satisfaction with the agreement, reminding everyone that he had been willing to accept a similar arrangement before the war. Dayan thought the agreement a good one because it served both sides’ interests and allowed for the reopening of the Suez Canal, the resumption of life in the cities along it, and freedom of shipping through Bab al-Mandab as well as increased U.S. involvement in the region.[[115]](#footnote-116)

**Continuation of the Fighting at the Canal and a Crisis with Maj. Gen. Tal**

With exchanges of fire continuing during the ceasefire talks, senior political and senior military leaders feared that Egypt intended to resume the fighting.[[116]](#footnote-117) Gamasy admitted after the war that Egypt was behind most of the ceasefire violations.[[117]](#footnote-118) Elazar and Tal had serious differences about the Israeli response. Elazar, rejecting Tal’s stance that Israel should contain Egypt’s provocations, issued open-fire instructions on November 22, 1973. While the IDF was not to initiate fire, it was to respond aggressively to every Egyptian challenge.[[118]](#footnote-119)

After Tal assumed command of the Southern Command, he clashed with Dayan and Elazar. In the General Staff meeting on January 19, Dayan and Elazar insisted that the difficult conditions on the front required Israel to act decisively and respond aggressively to every Egyptian aggression. Tal disagreed, arguing that this could drag Israel into a fruitless war.[[119]](#footnote-120) The core disagreement was whether Israel should deter Egyptian aggression, which Dayan and Elazar supported, believing Egypt was trying to test Israel’s resolve. Tal, concerned about igniting another war, even hinted Dayan and Elazar were more concerned with rehabilitating their reputations following the debacle of the war’s opening days especially Dayan.[[120]](#footnote-121) Tal accused Dayan of using his many speeches to manipulate the narrative of the war so he could present his conduct before and during the war in a positive light to the commission of inquiry.[[121]](#footnote-122) Dayan responded sharply that Israel would not start a war.[[122]](#footnote-123) Tensions escalated less than a month after Tal’s appointment, when Dayan learned that Tal had shared his differences with Dayan and Elazar with President Katzir, claiming that Tal supported total restraint, and Dayan and Elazar favored initiating provocations. Dayan reprimanded Tal, limiting him to discussing such matters only with the General Staff, defense minister, and prime minister in closed discussions.[[123]](#footnote-124)

In early December 1973, prior to the Geneva conference, Elazar anticipated a possible Egyptian attack,[[124]](#footnote-125) leading to an IDF policy change about responding to Egyptian ceasefire violations on December 8. Returning from the United States on December 11, Dayan learned that the Egyptians were firing on IDF forces. Dayan, like Elazar, and backed by Meir, favored shelling Egyptian artillery concentrations and threatening to cut off supplies to the Third Army. Dayan nonetheless cautioned against any deterioration; the IDF needed to react aggressively but without escalating to war.[[125]](#footnote-126)

On December 12, Dayan instructed the Southern Command to respond forcefully to Egyptian fire to prevent a war of attrition (escalation for the sake of de-escalation) and to cut off supplies to the Third Army if firing continued. Tal demanded these instructions in writing. Dayan jested: “Talik, nobody has ever mistaken me for an organized Jew,”[[126]](#footnote-127) Tal tendered his resignation on December 25, but Dayan refused to accept it.[[127]](#footnote-129)

On December 29, Elazar, dissatisfied with Tal, suggested replacing him. Two days later, Elazar told Dayan that Tal had softened his position on the open-fire policy “as if he had heard us talking.” Dayan maintained that the Geneva talks could be undermined if Egypt thought Israel feared escalation.[[128]](#footnote-130) Further disagreements surfaced on January 11, 1974. Dayan, having learned of continued Egyptian fighting, confronted Tal for not cutting supplies to the Third Army. Tal’s insistence on a written order infuriated Dayan: “I, Moshe Dayan, Minister of Defense, am telling you, Talik, Commander of the Southern Command! What do I have to do [to get your cooperation]? [Get you] a wax seal?!”[[129]](#footnote-131) This may have been the proverbial straw that broke the camel’s back.

On January 16, 1974, Elazar replaced Tal with Maj. Gen. Adan, considered one of the IDF’s most honest and well-respected officers, and a critic of Tal’s policy of restraint. Adan harshly criticized Tal, writing that, “it is my assessment that our military activity dropped to its lowest nadir under his command.”[[130]](#footnote-132) Disagreeing with Tal’s defensive posture and insistence on an early ceasefire,[[131]](#footnote-133) Adan also blamed Tal for the poor execution of Operation Dovecote and for continuously opposing Elazar’s decisions, which deeply disturbed Elazar.[[132]](#footnote-134)

**Ceasefire with Syria**

Throughout this time, Israel was fighting a war of attrition with Syria. Dayan’s position was cautious, barring assaults across the lines, convinced that no potential achievement was worth the risk to human life.[[133]](#footnote-135) He believed that Syrians fleeing the border shelling and becoming internal refugees would sufficiently pressure the Syrians.[[134]](#footnote-136) Syrians insistence on an IDF retreat from all of the Golan Heights gradually moderated. With Syria having greater artillery power, using the IAF would have escalated the conflict. Finally wanting escalation on April 15, Dayan ordered the IAF “to f--k the Syrians but good.”[[135]](#footnote-137)

Politically, the stalemate with Syria broke on February 27, with Syria finally disclosing the list of Israeli POWs and agreeing to discuss a separation of forces. Dayan, dispatched to Washington on March 17,[[136]](#footnote-138) believed that an agreement with Syria would help the negotiations with Egypt. Moreover, Kissinger was pushing Israel to reach a settlement on the north, threatening that failure to do so would damage Israeli-U.S. relations. Before leaving Israel, wanted to know to what extent was Kissinger’s pressure real and how far could Israel withdraw.[[137]](#footnote-139)

The eventual arrangement involved some minor adjustments to the Six-Day War lines, reduced Israeli forces in the Golan, civilian resettlement, and the first signed agreement in Israeli-Syrian history. As with the Egyptian agreement, Dayan had to convince senior officers about the Syrian agreement. At a General Staff forum meeting on April 22, Dayan told those complaining about perceived U.S. control that their concerns were justified: Israel depended on the United States for money to buy weapons and for political support and that Israel so desperately needed. Kissinger’s mediation also mattered. Israel, said Dayan argued that territorial concessions to Syria would prevent Egyptian intervention, reducing the threat of a two-front war.

Dayan’s last Joint Chiefs of Staff meeting as Minister of Defense was on May 30, following Meir’s April 11 resignation and the installation of Rabin’s new government. Dayan reviewed the challenging talks with Syria, which had already lasted 30 days. While not anticipating an ideal outcome for Israel, he thought it was the best possible, noting that Egypt’s and Syria’s willingness to negotiate indicated their shift from warfare to diplomacy. However, Dayan incorrectly predicted that the Syrian agreement wouldn’t last more than a year due to Syria’s interest in the Golan Heights, which remain under Israeli rule to this day.

The Israel-Syria agreement was signed in Geneva on May 31, 1974, marking the real end of the Yom Kippur War. Following to Meir’s resignation, Yitzhak Rabin became prime minister and Shimon Peres defense minister

**Dayan in the Yom Kippur War: Myths, Failures, and Contributions**

The Yom Kippur War was the nadir of Dayan’s career. The Agranat Commission, a National Commission of Inquiry set up immediately after the war to investigate the failings that resulted in Israel being caught off guard by its enemies (and therefore dealt only with the prelude to the far and its first days), found Dayan had operated acceptably in the role of defense minister. However, the commission decided not to evaluate his more comprehensive political responsibility for the security establishment and with setting its policies,[[138]](#footnote-141) a decision that caused considerable public outrage.

Harsh criticism of Dayan persisted for years, with his wartime functioning closely scrutinized and critiqued. [[139]](#footnote-142) Some claims were correct, but others were either exaggerated or simply wrong. The following examines some of the central issues regarding Dayan’s functioning in the Yom Kippur War.

**The Pre-War Call-up**

Dayan’s position at the end of September 1973 ‒ that the worries of the Northern Commander leader, Yitzhak Hofi, about the situation on the Syrian border were impossible to ignore ‒ directly led to sending reinforcements to the Golan Heights. While General Staff members were complacent about the north, Dayan’s sending reinforcements proved pivotal in preventing a Syrian conquest of the Golan Heights and in limiting their success. While Dayan did not expect a comprehensive war, he anticipated Syrian retaliation after their planes were downed on September 12. Arguably, the Syrians would have seized the Golan Heights had the 7th Brigade not been deployed. Although the brigade alone could not prevent Syrian gains, it stalled them until the reservists arrived. Admittedly, if Dayan had sent another full brigade north, the course of the war may have been radically different, allowing reserves to move south instead and the IAF to complete its mission to destroy the Syrian anti-aircraft missiles (Operation Tagar). Dayan had to balance between placing the 7th Brigade in the north and not providing additional reinforcements to the south, which might have changed the face of the campaign.

Dayan’s reluctance to send more troops to the Golan was due to his increasing reliance on AMAN Director Zeira, whose earlier assessments that there would be no war time had proven accurate – until war broke out. On October 6, despite Elazar’s conviction that war was imminent, Dayan had to consider other factors, such as a U.S. reactions, the economic and psychological impact of a reservist call-up, and the possibility that while a general call-up could deter the other side, it could also be misconstrued as a sign that Israel was embarking on a preemptive strike, triggering an Arab attack.

Consequently, Dayan ruled out a preemptive Israeli strike on the morning of October 6 and agreed to a partial call-up, as a defensive measure that Elazar insisted would stop the enemy at the current lines. Believing in Israel’s deterrent power, Dayan and Meir sought to prevent war by transmitting deterrent messages to the other side via the United States while simultaneously deploying troops to the borders. Their conclusions were reasonable but their assumptions flawed: they were overconfident in the regular army’s ability to stop the enemy and they underestimate the enemy capabilities, leading to excessive self-confidence at all echelons.[[140]](#footnote-143)

The economic, social, morale, political, and international costs of a full call-up led to overly cautious decision-making. This inevitably leads to the next question: Had Dayan been certain that war would break out on October 6, would he have made different decisions? With regard to the reservists, the answer is that he would probably have supported Elazar’s request for full reserve call-up.

However, launching a preemptive strike was more complex, as the U.S. response was pivotal. And, ultimately, there was no certainty about an Egyptian attack.

**The Third Kingdom Is at Risk”: Did Dayan Collapse on October 7?**

The Yom Kippur was the low point of Dayan’s career, with October 7 the worst day of the war, possibly of Dayan’s entire professional life. Evaluating his performance requires distinguishing between Dayan’s leadership and his decision-making. According to military doctrine, command comprise three major components: generalship; leadership; and management. “Generalship” is defined as “knowing and understanding the art of war and military doctrine… and knowing… the proper ways of applying them, ” and leadership “is seen in the desire to be victorious in battle and it provides the purpose, the direction, and the motivation.”[[141]](#footnote-145)

Dayan’s leadership may have faltered during the war’s first days, but his situation assessments and decisions were realistic and precise, based on the situation assessments he received from the commanders in the field and what he saw for himself. Dayan, understood before anyone else that this would be a very different and more difficult war than the Six-Day War.[[142]](#footnote-146)

It should be born in mind that in the first two days of fighting were volatile, with assessments changing almost hourly The fog of war was thick. The picture was unclear and dynamic. In the evening of October 6, the General Staff remained relatively positive: the troops were holding the lines. But the situation changed radically overnight. Dayan, feeling that the war room – The Pit in the Kirya general headquarters from which the war was directed– was too noisy and “didn’t allow for measured thinking,”[[143]](#footnote-147) traveled to the fronts to hear from the commanders on the ground at both the northern and the southern fronts. At this most difficult point in the war, the commanders were pessimistic and exhausted after a day of difficult fighting. They anticipated a morale boost from Dayan – the man turned legend, who had lifted the spirits of the nation and of IDF commanders on the eve of the Six-Day War and restored self-confidence and the belief in victory, the “god of war.”[[144]](#footnote-148) Instead, they met a Dayan whose confidence was shaken, who realized the extent of the military disaster and the repercussions of the mistaken assessment he and his fellow leaders had made. Robert Slater, Dayan’s English-language biographer, interviewed two deputy commanders from the southern and northern fronts who gave comparable reports about the strong impact of Dayan’s feelings of responsibility and guilt and his recognition of the grave situation. left a deep imprint on everyone who saw him. Aharon Yariv in Tel Aviv also testified that instead of raising morale, Dayan hurt it.[[145]](#footnote-149) His subordinates expected him to fill them with strength and courage, as Churchill had done after the defeat in France.

Leadership is a subjective matter. People’s negative response to Dayan’s leadership is what matters. However, Yigael Yadin, noted archeologist and a former Chief of Staff, recalled that: “Dayan never collapsed. Dayan was much more optimistic than I was. Dayan stood with both feet on the ground. But I have one complaint about Dayan: a leader should give off a spirit of hope. To say that we are winning. Dayan never said that.”[[146]](#footnote-150)

After the war, many analysts and influential writers, including Haim Herzog, Hanoch Bartov, and Zeev Schiff, criticized Dayan’s decisions, accusing him of panic and hysteria and unable to reach well-considered decision. Critics claimed he took reckless actions and, proposed irresponsible withdrawals and bombings. However, contemporaneous meeting notes indicate that Dayan usually agreed with field commanders’ assessment. When Dayan suggested mobilizing a reserve division in the north, Elazar informed him he’d already done so. That these two leaders independently reached the same decisions about one of the most critical situations of the war demonstrates not only that Dayan reached not an ill-considered decision, but a reasonable, perhaps obvious one.

Dayan intervened substantially only once on the northern front, requesting IAF support against the Syrians on October 7. Unable to contact Elazar, Dayan called Benny Peled to warn him, adding, “Benny, the Third Kingdom is in danger”[[147]](#footnote-151) to convince him to send planes. Despite numerous claims of Dayan uttering this phrase on numerous occasions, documentary evidence indicates Dayan used it only with Peled on October 7 and in the meeting with the Editors’ Committee, consisting of Israeli journalism’s leaders of that time, on October 10. Any other occasions remain merely rumor. However, because of the many people claiming to have heard Dayan used that precise expression, the phrase became a catchphrase, accurately reflecting the sense of historic danger felt by Israel’s leaders and many members of the public.

Regarding Dayan’s decision-making, claims that Dayan’s pressure for IAF intervention against the Syrian armored advance indirectly undermined Peled’s resolve to complete Operation Tagar in the South are speculative at best.[[148]](#footnote-153) Peled never confirmed this, and it was Elazar who cancelled the operation Furthermore, Moti Hod, IAF Commander during the Six-

Day War, supported Dayan’s request for IAF assistance, proves that Dayan was not acting on the basis of hysteria, as other senior figures shared his assessment.

Dayan was faulted for seeming to hastily retreat on the southern front. Actually, he was granting the Southern Command latitude to establish a line where he saw fit – the most sensible instruction possible, even if it meant a retreat to the passes where it would be possible to establish a virtually impassable line. Dayan was giving the commander freedom of decision and independence, backing him up, freeing him to be free of the “not a single inch of land” mantra of the IDF command echelon. Dayan, unaware of Gonen’s new assessment, presented a very gloomy picture to the stunned ministers at Elazar’s bureau and a later Kitchen Cabinet meeting.

Later that day, Dayan’s gloomy assessments were validated by events, including the failure of a premature counterattack and the IDF’s failure to return to the Suez Canal line. Dayan’s anticipation of a protracted war of attrition led to unrealistic proposals, such as calling up and training adolescents, or bringing volunteers from abroad. But Dayan, thinking ahead and envisioned a situation with the IDF stuck on defensive lines, unable to end the fighting in days or even weeks, and becoming worn down because of the enemy’s manpower and material advantage. That extreme scenario did not materialize but Dayan felt that his job at that crucial moment was to consider extreme scenarios and devise unconventional solutions. After the October 8 debacle, and given the developments of October 9 through 12, Elazar and others in the high command began speaking of attrition as the central problem and seeking a ceasefire. At this point, however, the situation reversed itself, and a newly collected Dayan urged Elazar to find a way for Israel to gain the upper hand.

While some claim that Dayan first opposed crossing the canal, it is noteworthy that Dayan promised Elazar his support for this move. On October 12, after a “golden piece of intelligence” arrived from the Mossad about Egypt’s intention to launch an attack, Dayan was the one who raised the idea of the ploy of not opposing the Security Council working towards a ceasefire so that Israel would not stand accused of being the intransigent party.

**Issues Involving Dayan’s “Ministerial Advice”**

Dayan’s ministerial advice came under criticism for his frequent travels to the front, which many claimed brought despair rather than hope to the commanders, whom he gave many instructions that he defined as “ministerial advice.” Critics accused Dayan of avoiding responsibility for his own ideas, and hiding behind the phrase “ministerial advice.”[[149]](#footnote-154) They considered his visits and his advice equally meaningless.

Reality, however, was somewhat more complicated. While clearly pessimistic on October 7, he later recovered and displayed more confidence during his visits. Maj. Gen. Adan, whose division crossed the Suez Canal, described his meetings with Dayan:

In the Yom Kippur War, I did not experience him as despairing and beaten. He was with me almost every single day on the halftracks… During the war, he tended to look ahead…. I don’t think he lost his head and I certainly don’t think he functioned badly.[[150]](#footnote-155)

Dayan himself explained why he called his instructions “advice, ” pointing to the sensitivity of a defense minister – a former, highly experienced Chief of Staff – going into the field and finding problems to be addressed, but having to be extremely careful not to disrupt the military chain of command. Therefore, throughout the war, he very mindful of Elazar’s dignity and status and made sure that the operational advice he was offering became directives only after being approved by Elazar and the regional commands.[[151]](#footnote-156) He recalled: “When I come somewhere, I don’t issue instructions…. [but] I see myself as authorized to ask the commander why he isn’t acting [on it].”[[152]](#footnote-157)

After October 7, Dayan’s authority diminished, as he lost the special status he had enjoyed in the Six-Day War and War of Attrition. In contrast, Elazar projected a great deal of personal strength and stability. Yet Dayan’s opinions continued to be very valuable and influence many decisions, including crossing the canal, Bar-Lev’s appointment, the Suez and northern fronts advances, and the ceasefire’s timing.[[153]](#footnote-158) In fact, Dayan’s opinion still mattered and was often the determinative one in most of the strategic decisions.[[154]](#footnote-159) As defense minister, he also dealt with other signficant aspects of the war, such as ensuring U.S. aid. While less dominant than in the past, Dayan did not leave the stage, but continued to be an influential leader during most of the time of the war, especially in formulating the ceasefire and separation of forces agreements.

**Visits to the Fronts**

Dayan’s visits to the front were closely connected to the issue of his “ministerial advice.” Since the Sinai campaign, being close to the fronts and unfolding events was vital for Dayan, an essential part of his generalship and leadership. As in Israel’s other wars, he visited the front almost every day to get a first-hand impression, study events in an unmediated fashion, and learn what the commanders in the field were feeling.[[155]](#footnote-160) Dayan usually went to the various divisionary command centers and, after the Suez was crossed, he traveled westward with the troops to the actual frontline. He undoubtedly placed himself in danger. Adan related that at least once, a napalm bomb fell near Dayan, who miraculously escaped injury.[[156]](#footnote-161) Yaakov Amidror, then a young officer, provided other testimony about fire near Dayan: “The helicopters were firing just feet away from us… He didn’t move a muscle.”[[157]](#footnote-162)

Dayan explained:

I visited a front practically every day… It seemed to me crucial given my role in the war. I could not have known – certainly not understood – what was happening on the fronts, what was possible and what was impossible, only by hearing the Chief of Staff’s reports and explanations… There is no substitute for seeing things from an observation post, looking through binoculars, and touring the frontlines. No command center, no map, no aerial photography can illustrate the situation as well as a direct impression.[[158]](#footnote-163)

Dayan would also complain about the noise in the command centers, which wouldn’t let him think, and criticized the military method whereby “a commander is surrounded by staff officers and doesn’t have a single moment for quiet contemplation… I preferred going from one commander to another to meet them face-to-face at the front.”[[159]](#footnote-164)

Historian Martin Van Creveld describes a general’s need to see the battlefield in person, which enables him to develop insights and absorb information about the terrain and the enemy at any given moment in a way unattainable from reports from the chain of command. Van Creveld calls this ability the “directed binocular,”[[160]](#footnote-165) and describes the Prussian army’s General Staff officers as men who served as “directed telescopes,” because they were stationed in field units and transmitted reports directly to the Chief of Staff, bypassing the long chain of command.[[161]](#footnote-166)

His visits to the fronts gave Dayan insights into what was happening on the fronts and enabled him to better brief the cabinet about events he had personally witnessed The visits also gave him opportunities to emphasize important points to commanders. Adan described how, on October 16, the “war council” – Sharon, Adan, Bar-Lev, Elazar, and Dayan – crouched in the desert over a map to plan the next move.[[162]](#footnote-167) The next day, October 17, the canal crossing was delayed and Dayan turned to Elazar and Bar-Lev insisting that they had to speed things up: “The option you wanted from the government is now in your hands. With every hour that passes, the Egyptians are getting better organized!”[[163]](#footnote-168) Sharon, too, described Dayan, on the spot, spurring on Elazar and Bar-Lev,[[164]](#footnote-169) and recalled that only Dayan, not the Southern commander, came to see the situation for himself.[[165]](#footnote-170) Dayan also helped make important military decisions on October 18, seeing that the army could advance north rather than west. Dayan’s presence, then, was felt and made a difference.

Through his presence, Dayan also kept commanders abreast of political and other military developments. Dayan, true to the mission command approach that commanders make better decisions if they understand the overall state of affairs, always made sure to directly inform commanders of general developments. Adan summarized it well:

Since October 16, Dayan started visiting our division headquarters each and every day. We welcomed him gladly. We would make coffee for the guest who had made a point of getting to know every person in the command center. Dayan would give me the latest update on the other sectors, express his opinion on the direction I should aim at, but make sure to say these were ministerial opinions and not an attempt to interfere with the commands working their way through the channels of command… When leaving, he’d say “Tomorrow – same time, different place.”

**Dayan’s Pessimism at Editors’ Committee and Media Appearances**

During a period of strict censorship and centralized media, Dayan, unlike Meir and Elazar, believed in truthfully informing the public. Dayan insisted on leading authentically, and sought transparency with his colleagues and the public. On October 10, he briefed the Editors’ Committee. While now more optimistic, he painted a grim picture of the first days’ failures, which contrasted with the committee members’ prior understandings. Consequently, the editors urged Meir to prohibit Dayan from saying such things on television, fearing the public would not be able to bear it. Over time, events from October 7 and 10 merged, causing confusion and leading the public to believe that Dayan had somehow lost his bearings.

This highlights a case of two contradictory communication approaches: Dayan’s honesty versus Elazar’s preference for creating public optimism. Which approach is preferable is debatable, similar to the medical dilemma of whether to tell a terminally ill patient the truth. Each approach has clear pluses and minuses; neither one is clearly better. Ultimately, the decision depends on the decision-maker’s worldview and values.[[166]](#footnote-171)

**The Fall of the First-line Strongpoints and the POW Question**

Dayan received intense criticism over his instructions at the war’s outset to halt the efforts to reach the Bar-Lev line’s first-line strongpoints, asking soldiers to evacuate on their own, a violation of a core IDF principle to never abandon any man and of the contract between the ordinary soldiers – the “cannon fodder” – and the commanders. Every IDF soldier going into battle understood that their commanders would their utmost not to leave them behind. At the war’s start, there were some 450 soldiers on the Suez Canal line. Most were killed or captured, with only a few managing to return to the IDF line. The desperate calls coming from the surrounded strongpoints became a symbol, which became indelibly imprinted in the public mind, along with photos of the humiliated POWs and the fall of the Bar-Lev line. Motti Ashkenazi, the commanding officer at the Budapest strongpoint who later led the post-war anti-government protest, said that while surrounded by the Egyptians, he tried to reassure his men by saying, “Look at Moshe Dayan. He won’t abandon us.” To Dayan, he said later, “To us, you were God.”[[167]](#footnote-172)

Dayan’s difficult decision stemmed from a realistic situation assessment. IDF forces had suffered tremendous losses desperately trying to reach the strongpoints to evacuate the men. Dayan, identifying exhaustion as the main problem, had to give the this difficult order to prevent a more losses that could weaken the new defense line. Leaders sometimes must make difficult, even cruel decisions, and there is no doubt that this particular decision haunted Dayan. After the war, when an unknown woman who had lost a loved one yelled “murderer” at him, he wrote that he felt as if he’d been stabbed in the heart.[[168]](#footnote-173) His first demand in the ceasefire negotiations was for a list of POWs, followed by their safe return as a precondition for further progress. The ceasefire talks with the Syrians also began only after they agreed to give Kissinger the list of the POWs in captivity.

Post-war public foment and pressure resulted in the establishment of a National Commission of Inquiry immediately after the fighting ended. Chaired by Shimon Agranat, President of the Supreme Court, it included Justice Moshe Landau, State Comptroller Yitzchak Nebenzahl, and former Chiefs of Staff Yigael Yadin and Haim Laskov. Beginning its work on November 25, 1973, the Agranat Commission examined the war’s prelude and conduct until October 8, but decided it lacked authority to decide on the members of the political echelon future public service, limiting personal decisions to military personnel alone.

Dayan, with previous experience testifying before the National Commission of Inquiry into the Lavon Affair, came thoroughly prepared with documentation and accompanied by legal consultant Elyakim Rubinstein. The public criticized Dayan for preparing in advance, unlike others appearing before the committee, and for exercising influence over the choice of commission members in his efforts not to be held responsible for the debacle.

As noted, former commander Motti Ashkenazi, spearheaded the public protest. Dayan hosted Ashkenazi at his home to hear his criticism, but the two failed to agree on anything. Dayan found Ashkenazi’s assertions “confused and childish,” and claimed that Ashkenazi had come mostly to spout off rather than to listen.”[[169]](#footnote-174)

The Agranat Commission held the military echelon, in particular Elazar, Zeira, and Gonen, responsible for the catastrophe, a decision which escalated anti-government protests and calls for Day’s and Meir’s resignations. Despite the pressure, Dayan continued in his post until Meir’s resignation the day after the Agranat Commission report was published on April 10, 1974. Her resignation led to the entire government’s resignation. Dayan remained in his post for another two months or so until the establishment of a new government to complete the separation of forces agreement with Syria.

As the war progressed, the Dayan’s omnipotent hero image cracked and finally shattered, mirroring the public’s perception of the IDF leadership. His reputation in Israel (although not elsewhere in the world) never recovered and his name – more than that of any other Israeli leader of his era – is associated with the war’s failures. His past superstar status confidence, which to a large extent nurtured and reflected the Israeli public’s sense of superiority, were also the reasons for his attracting the most anger. He had become a public symbol of Israel’s arrogant blindness that had led to national disaster. The war took a heavy toll, with more than 2,500 killed (out of a population of only 3.3 million) and 7,000 injured. Israelis, now accustomed to rapid victories with minimal losses, now viewed humiliated POWs and enemy flags flying over captured IDF strongpoints on their televisions.

The Israeli public, which had believed in the absolute superiority of its army, was looking for scapegoats to cleanse the national conscience. The Agranat Commission, which avoided any public censure of political figures and Dayan’s post-war refusal to resign or apologize, as his own words, “never explain, never complain”[[170]](#footnote-175) expressed – infuriated the public and made him a despised figure: the essence of everything Israel used to be but no longer was.

And, of course, Dayan had his political rivals. Close associated of Allon, Elazar, Meir, and Galili, and others awaited his downfall, exaggerating stories, spreading rumors about Dayan’s “hysteria” and “losing his head,” and misinterpreting events.

It is interesting to compare Elazar’s and Dayan’s post-war public image. Elazar, harshly criticized by the Agranat Commission, eventually became a positive figure in the public perception due to his premature death while fighting to clear his name, and his portrayal by Hanoch Bartov, a renown Israeli author. [[171]](#footnote-176) He was described as a lone hero bearing the war’s burdens, and his untimely passing in 1976 was perceived as the result of unfair treatment and a broken heart. Over time, Elazar became a national hero, practically free of any lasting criticism.

Now, after many decades, a more balanced evaluation is possible. Now it seems obvious that a desert clash combined with one on the Golan Heights between tens of thousands of soldiers, thousands of tanks, fighter jets, and artillery barrels, would inevitably lead to very heavy losses on both sides (the Arab side suffered some 20,000 dead and 35,000 wounded, close to 9,000 POWs, and 35,000 besieged soldiers on the verge of surrender had it not been for U.S. intervention[[172]](#footnote-177)). Military history shows that victories like that of the Six-Day War are rare. The Yom Kippur War, which started with Israel the weakest it had ever been, ended with Israeli battlefield victories, an astounding achievement considering the situation at the war’s outset. Despite Israel’s security doctrine that it must neutralize any immediate military threat, it does not have the ability to defeat the enemy nations to the point of forcing its enemies into an unconditional surrender. The Yom Kippur War was further proof of the limits of Israel’s power in this sense. Still, it became clear to the Arabs that they could not defeat Israel in a regular war, leading Egypt turned towards peace and the Syrian border becoming Israel’s quietest until the 2011civil war began. Israel’s enemies now chose to fight through proxies, the Yom Kippur War thus marking the end – at least for the time being – of the era of large regular wars during which Israel, fighting in five wars in 25 years, was under continuous threat of military invasion. For many military experts around the world, Dayan was part of the failure but also part of the success in turning the tides of the war. However, the Israeli public and leadership turned their collective backs on him. He once said, “Other nations would have made this war into an unsurpassed victory. Look what happens to the British at Dunkirk and in Singapore, to the Russians with Barbarossa, and the Americans at Pearl Harbor. At the early stages of war, nations take hits.”[[173]](#footnote-178)

Perhaps Dayan’s biggest mistake lay in the area in which he had previously a master – communications: he should have helped the Israeli public, army, and political leadership understand and acknowledge that Israel’s strategic reality after the Six-Day War and War of Attrition was poor, and could potentially lead to a war tougher than any since 1948. Instead, he allowed himself and the nation to succumb to an illusion of superiority that began with the Six-Day War.

1. Golan, 2013, p. 766. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Recordings from the Chief of Staff’s office, in: Golan, 2013, p. 775. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Golan, 2013, p. 778. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Recordings from the Chief of Staff’s office, in: Golan, 2013, p. 781. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. A note Dayan passed to the Chief of Staff during the debate, in: Golan, 2013, p. 780. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Telegram from Dinitz to Gazit, October 12, 1973, in: Golan, 2013, p. 783. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Military-political consultation, Tel Aviv, October 12, 1973, 2:30 p.m., in: Golan, 2013, pp. 785‒797. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Bar-Yosef, 2011, p. 270. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Military-political consultation, in: Golan, 2013, p. 792. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Ibid, p. 802. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Ibid, p. 899. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. From an interview Henry Kissinger granted historians Uri Bar-Yosef and Ronen Bergman on February 9, 2019, it seems that to this day he is not aware that the Israeli request he received about not delaying a Security Council resolution was nothing but a ruse on Dayan’s part. Kissinger is still convinced that Israel said what it said because it was in trouble. See: interview by the Yom Kippur War Center, <https://bit.ly/3v6v4Cp>. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Notes by the Defense Minister’s adjutant, meeting with the Southern Command staff in the situation room, October 12, 1973, 9 p.m., in: Golan, 2013, p. 812. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Ibid, in: Golan, 2013, pp. 812‒813. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Notes by the Defense Minister’s adjutant, October 12, 1973, 11:45 p.m., in: Golan, 2013, p. 817. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Golan, 2013, p. 840, footnote 199. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. #  Telegram from Shalev to Gazit, October 12, 9:20 p.m., in: Golan, 2013, p. 815; Henry Kissinger, *Crisis: The Anatomy of Two Major Foreign Policy Crises* [in Hebrew translation, Jerusalem: Shalem Center, 2014, p. 162].

 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Discussion about IAF actions, Defense Minister’s bureau, the Kirya, October 13, 1973, in: Golan, 2013, p. 845. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Golan, 2013, p. 871. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Recordings from Chief of Staff’s office; diary of the bureau chief of the Southern Command commander, Maj. Gen. Gonen, in: Golan, 2013, p. 860. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Diary of defense minister’s adjutant; notes of the History Department director, in: Golan, 2013, p. 867. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Golan, 2013, p. 871. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Ibid, in: Golan, 2013, p. 872. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Diary of defense minister’s adjutant, in: Golan, 2013, p. 873. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Diary of defense minister’s adjutant; diary of the bureau chief of the Southern Command commander; notes of the History Department director, in: Golan, 2013, p. 876. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Recordings from Chief of Staff’s office, in: Golan, 2013, p. 879. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Recordings from Chief of Staff’s office, in: Golan, 2013, pp. 879‒880. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Cabinet meeting, October 14, 1973, 9 p.m., Prime Minister’s bureau in Tel Aviv, in: Golan, 2013, pp. 891‒898. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Notes by Lt. Col. Zohar; diary of defense minister’s adjutant, in: Golan, 2013, p. 932. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Diary of defense minister’s adjutant, in: Golan, 2013, p. 940. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Recordings from Chief of Staff’s office, in: Golan, 2013, pp. 958. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Recordings from Chief of Staff’s office, in: Golan, 2013, pp. 960. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Ibid., pp. 961. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Notes by defense minister’s adjutant, in: Golan, 2013, p. 982‒983. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Golan, 2013, p. 984. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Diary of defense minister’s adjutant, in: Golan, 2013, p. 986. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Diary of the bureau chief of the Southern Command’s commander, in: Golan, 2013, p. 988. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Meeting with Prime Minister, October 17, 1973, defense minister’s bureau, in: Golan, 2013, p. 990. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Telegram from Dinitz to Gazit, October 17, 1973, 6:45 p.m., in: Golan, 2013, p. 1,028. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Diary of Defense Minister’s adjutant, in: Golan, 2013, p. 1,006. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Debate of heads of directorates, situation assessment, October 18, 1973, in: Golan, 2013, p. 1,012. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Golan, 2013, p. 1,015. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Diary of Defense Minister’s adjutant, in: Golan, 2013, p. 1,021. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Cabinet meeting, October 18, 1973, 9 p.m., in: Golan, 2013, pp. 1,032‒1,034. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Golan, 2013, p. 1,041. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Operational discussion, Defense Minister’s bureau, the Kirya, October 19, 1973; diary of Chief of Staff’s bureau director, in: Golan, 2013, p. 1,042. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Ibid, p. 1,044. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Ibid, p. 1,045. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Meeting between Defense Minister and Prime Minister October 19, 1973, 10 a.m., in: Golan, 2013, p. 1,050. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Meeting between Defense Minister and Prime Minister, October 19, 1973, 10 a.m., in: Golan, 2013, p. 1,050. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Ibid, in: Golan, 2013, p. 1,051. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Ibid, p. 1,052. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Telephone conversation between the Defense Minister and Chief of Staff from the IAF Pit to the Southern Command Center, October 19, 1973, 4:55 p.m.; notes by Gabi Cohen; diary of Defense Minister’s adjutant, in: Golan, 2013, p. 1,056. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Telegram from Dinitz to Gazit, October 19, 1973, 5:45 a.m., in: Golan, 2013, p. 1,064. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Telegram from Dinitz to Gazit, October 19, 1973, 7:30 a.m., in: Golan, 2013, p. 1,078. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Diary of Defense Minister’s adjutant, in: Golan, 2013, p. 1,082. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Diary of the Chief of Staff’s bureau chief; diary of Defense Minister’s adjutant; notes of Gabi Cohen, in: Golan, 2013, p. 1,084. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Diary of the Deputy Chief of Staff’s bureau chief, in: Golan, 2013, p. 1,091. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Telephone conversation between Defense Minister and Deputy Chief of Staff Israel Tal (Talik), October 21, 1973, 10:35 a.m., Defense Minister’s bureau, in: Golan, 2013, p. 1,106. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Ibid, p. 1,129. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Diary of Chief of Staff’s bureau chief, in: ibid, p. 1,130. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Golan, 2013, p. 1,146. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. For more on the effect of the threat to fire missiles at Israeli population centers on the Israeli decision-making process and Dayan’s change in decision on the conquest of Port Said, see: Shimon Golan, “The Scud that Deterred Israel” (Hebrew), *Maarakhot* 457 (October 2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Cabinet meeting, October 22, 1973, 10:40 p.m., in: Golan, 2013, p. 1,157. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
65. Telephone conversation with Prime Minister, October 23, 1973, 9 a.m., Defense Minister’s bureau, in: Golan, 2013, p. 1,165. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
66. Operational discussion, defense minister’s bureau, the Kirya, October 22, 1973; diary of Chief of Staff’s bureau chief, in: Golan, 2013, p. 1,169. See also Kissinger’s comment on the importance of Israel not having fired the first shot, in: Braun, 1993, p. 236; and Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, Little, Brown & Company, Boston, 1982, p. 477: “It is true that in years past I had expressed my personal view to Ambassador Simcha Dinitz and his predecessor, Yitzhak Rabin, that America’s ability to help Israel in any war would be impaired if Israel struck first. But as this crisis approached, the subject of preemption had not been discussed. How could it have been, since Israel had repeatedly told us that there was no danger of war? The morning the war started, Golda had volunteered to Keating that Israel would not preempt. The decision had been her own, without benefit of recent American advice: it confirmed what she had – entirely on her own – asked us to transmit to the Arabs the day before. I remain sure she was right. Had Israel struck first, it would have greatly complicated the prospects of American support. As it was, the majority at the first, early-morning WSAG thought Israel had struck first. Moreover, at that late hour it is doubtful whether preemptive strike would have made much military difference. Moshe Dayan wrote afterwards that the only proposal for preemption before the Cabinet was Chief of Staff David Elazar’s scheme to attack the surface-to-air missiles deep inside Syria – a measure that could not have blunted the ground attack that was about to surprise Israel.” [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
67. Diary of Defense Minister’s adjutant, in: Golan, 2013, pp. 1,175‒1,176. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
68. Diary of Defense Minister’s adjutant, in: Golan, 2013, p. 1,177. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
69. Diary of Defense Minister’s adjutant, in: Golan, 2013, p. 1,181. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
70. Diary of Defense Minister’s adjutant; recordings from the Chief of Staff’s bureau, in: Golan, 2013, p. 1,190. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
71. Defense Minister’s adjutant, October 24, 1973, 3 a.m., in: Golan, 2013, p. 1,194. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
72. Political-military consultation, Tel Aviv, October 24, 3:30 a.m.; diary of the Chief of Staff’s bureau director, in: Golan, 2013, p. 1,195. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
73. Visit to Bren’s command center, Defense Minister’s bureau, October 24, 9:57 a.m., in: Golan, 2013, p. 1,202. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
74. Political-military consultation, Tel Aviv, October 24, 4 p.m., in: Golan, 2013, p. 1,210. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
75. Defense Minister’s conversation with Haim Bar-Lev, October 24, 1973, 5:50 p.m., Defense Minister’s bureau, in: Golan, 2013, p. 1,213. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
76. General Staff expanded discussion group, October 24, 1973, 8 p.m., in: Golan, 2013, p. 1,216‒1,217. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
77. Cabinet meeting, October 24, 1973, 9:30 p.m., Prime Minister’s Tel Aviv bureau, in: Golan, 2013, p. 1,222. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
78. Conversation between Chief of Staff and Prime Minister in the presence of Dinitz, diary of Chief of Staff’s bureau chief, in: Golan, 2013, p. 1,225‒1,226. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
79. Cabinet meeting, October 25, 1973, 6 a.m., Prime Minister’s Tel Aviv bureau, in: Golan, 2013, p. 1,226–1227. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
80. Conversation between Prime Minister and Ambassador Dinitz, October 25, 1973, 9:30 a.m., in: Golan, 2013, p. 1,232. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
81. Ibid, p. 1,233. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
82. Telegram from Dinitz to Gazit, October 25, 1973, 5 p.m., in: Golan, 2013, p. 1,241. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
83. Notes of the History Department Director, in: Golan, 2013, p. 1,244. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
84. Diary of Chief of Staff’s bureau chief, in Golan, 2013, p. 1,251. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
85. Ibid, p. 1,252. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
86. Telegrams from Dinitz to Gazit, October 26, 1973, 6:15 and 6:50 p.m., in: Golan, 2013, p. 1,254. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
87. Telephone conversation of Dinitz with Israel, October 27, 1973, 5:30 a.m., in: Golan, 2013, p. 1,258. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
88. Maj. Guy Aviad, *Rav aluf Moshe Dayan: Rosh hamateh haclali harevi’i shel tsahal* (Hebrew) [*Lt. Gen. Moshe Dayan: The IDF’s Fourth Chief of Staff*], booklet published by the IDF Operations Directorate, Doctrine and Training, April 2018, p. 72; Braun, 1993, p. 300. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
89. Dayan, 1976, p. 698. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
90. Tal, 2019, p. 748. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
91. Stein, 2003, p. 143. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
92. Ibid, p. 146. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
93. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
94. Golan, 2019, pp. 11‒12. Ibid, pp. 20‒21. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
95. Arik Command Center, October 31, 1973, IDF Archive; operational discussion, the Kirya, October 31, 1973, defense minister’s bureau, in: Golan, 2019, pp. 22‒23. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
96. The highlights of the conversation between the Chief of Staff and Gamasy from the database of the IDF History Department, in: Golan, 2019, p. 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
97. Golan, 2019, p. 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
98. Meeting between the Defense Minister and Chief of Staff, November 4, 1973, IDF Archive, in: Golan, 2019, pp. 27‒28. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
99. Golan, 2019, pp. 29‒30. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
100. See chapter about the Six-Day War and Dayan’s demand of the Israel Navy to be capable of operating in these straits. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
101. General Staff discussion, November 11, 1973, in: Golan, 2019, p. 36. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
102. Meeting between Maj. Gen. Aharon Yariv and the Defense Minister, November 14, 1973, IDF Archive; report by Maj. Gen. Aharon Yariv, November 16, 1973, IDF Archive, in: Golan, 2019, pp. 47, 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
103. Golan, 2019, p. 59. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
104. Defense Minister’s meeting with Gen. Ensio Siilvasvuo, December 3, 1973, IDF Archive, in: Golan, 2019, p. 62. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
105. General Staff discussion, November 19, 1973, High Command Secretariat, in: Golan, 2019, p. 63. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
106. Golan, 2019, pp. 66‒85. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
107. Military-political consultation, Tel Aviv, October 19, 1973, History Department database, in: Golan, 2019, p. 66. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
108. Golan, 2019, p. 79. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
109. Defense Minister’s meeting with Southern Command division commanders, December 4, 1973, Maj. Gen. Tal’s document, Maj. Gen. Tal’s bureau in Refidim, in: Golan, 2019. P. 86. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
110. Defense Minister’s conversation with division commanders, December 12, 1973, Maj. Gen. Tal’s document, Maj. Gen. Tal’s bureau in Refidim, in: Golan, 2019. P. 86. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
111. Consultation on withdrawal line, the Kirya, December 29, 1973, defense minister’s bureau, IDF Archive, in: Golan: 2019, pp. 98-99. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
112. Golan, 2019, p. 104. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
113. Telegram from Dinitz to Gazit, summary of conversation between the Defense Minister and Kissinger, January 4, 1974, IDF Archive, in: Golan, 2019, p. 105. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
114. General Staff discussion, January 17, 1974, IDF Archive, in: Golan, 2019, p. 115. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
115. Defense Minister’s statements to division officers, January 19, 1974, IDF Archive, in: Golan, 2019, pp. 117‒118. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
116. Golan, 2019, p. 131. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
117. Stein, 2003, p. 135. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
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128. Telephone conversation between the Defense Minister and Chief of Staff, December 31, 1973, 9 a.m., IDF Archive, in: Golan, 2019, p. 138. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
129. Telephone conversation between Defense Minister and General Tal, January 1, 1974, 8:30 a.m., IDF Archive, in: Golan, 2019, p. 139. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
130. Avraham Adan (Bren), *Al shtei g’deot hasuez* (Hebrew) (*On Both Banks of the Suez*), Yedioth Ahronoth, Tel Aviv, 1979, p. 318. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
131. Ibid, p. 319. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
132. Ibid, 1979, p. 320. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
133. Discussion about Mt. Hermon, the Kirya, April 16, 1974, Defense Minister’s Bureau, IDF Archive, in: Golan, 2019, p. 148. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
134. Lunch meeting between Defense Minister and Motta Gur, January 28, 1974, IDF Archive, in: Golan, 2019, p. 142. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
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137. Political-military meeting, Jerusalem, March 17, 1974, IDF Archive, in: Golan, 2019, p. 156. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
138. See Agranat Commission Report (Hebrew), IDF Archive and the security establishment, <http://www.archives.mod.gov.il/docs/agranat/Pages/default.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
139. Arguments about Dayan’s collapse and loss of judgment appears in a number of works on the war, see: Chaim Herzog, The War of Atonement, (Jerusalem: Edanim Publishers Yediot Aharonot, 1975),60, 124, 248–249. [Hebrew] and a similar view in Zeev Schiff, Earthquake in October: The Yom- Kippur War (Tel Aviv, Israel: Zmora Bitan, Modan Publishers, 1974), 111. (Hebrew), Hanoch Bartov, *Daddo: 48 Years and 20 More Days*, Vol. 2, Israel: Dvir 2002, first edition 1978, p. 425, 508, {Hebrew] also in Bar-Joseph, Uri, and Amr Yossef. ‘The Hidden Factors that Turned the Tide: Strategic Decision-Making and Operational Intelligence in the 1973 War’. *Journal of Strategic Studies* 37, no. 4 (2014): 584–608, 592. Following this crisis and throughout the rest of the war Meir tended to accept the course of action suggested by the Chief of Staff rather than Dayan. A similar description of Dayan is seen in Carmit Guy, *Bar Lev – Biography*, (Israel: Am Oved, 2002), 238–239, 246. [Hebrew] [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
140. See Dayan’s statements to Erez and Kfir, 1981, pp. 107‒108. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
141. Basic General Staff Doctrine, *Pikud ushlita* (Hebrew) [*Basic General Staff Doctrine: Command and Control*], Ekked, November 2006, pp. 11‒12. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
142. Van Creveld, 2004, p. 1968. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
143. Dayan, 1976, p. 594. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
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149. Einat Fishbein, “The Legend and the Man” (Hebrew), *Yedioth Ahronoth*, October 8, 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
150. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
151. Dayan spoke extensively about his authority in: Erez and Kfir, 1981, pp. 74-75, 81-84. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
152. Diary of Defense Minister’s adjutant, in: Golan, 2013, p. 1,116. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
153. See interview with Shimon Golan, August 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
154. See chart in: Golan, 2013, p. 1,314. [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
155. See chart detailing the locations and times of Dayan’s and Elazar’s field trips, in: Golan, 2013, p. 1,318‒1,320. [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
156. Adan, 1979, p. 235. [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
157. Yaakov Amidror, “Moshe Dayan: Between Strategist and Statesman” (Hebrew), *Iyunim bebitahon leumi* Vol. 5 (November 2003), p. 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
158. Dayan, 1976, p. 621. [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
159. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
160. Martin Van Creveld, *Command in War*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1985, p. 75. [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
161. Van Creveld, 1985, p. 142. [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
162. Adan, p. 218. [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
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164. Sharon with Chanoff, 1989, p. 328. [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
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166. For more on the difference between Dayan and Elazar in their media approaches, see: Golan, 2013, p. 562. [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
167. Motti Ashkenazi, *Ha’erev beshesh tifrots milhama* (Hebrew) [*Tonight at Six War Will Break Out*], United Kibbutz, Tel Aviv, 2003, p. 173. [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
168. Dayan, 1976, p. 726. [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
169. Dayan, 1976, p. 728. [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
170. Quoted by: Dan Margalit, *Ra’iti otam* (Hebrew) [*I Saw Them*], Zmora-Bitan, Tel Aviv, 1997, p. 120. [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
171. Hanoch Bartov, *Dado: 48 shana ve’od 20 yom* (Hebrew) [*Dado: 48 Years and 20 Days*], Vol. 1, Dvir, first edition 1978, expanded edition 2002. [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
172. Need citations [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
173. Erez and Kfir, 1981, p. 108. [↑](#footnote-ref-178)