

## 11: A Public Presence

With the exception of the years he spent as a student in Belgium, Yaakov had been an emissary for his entire adult life. He had fulfilled the national duties he was assigned, first in the Jewish Legion, then in the Hagana, the IDF, and the Technion, at increasing levels of responsibility: from division commander to assistant city controller of Haifa, city commander, head of the education division, the Hagana's first Chief of Staff and then the IDF's first Chief of Staff, and finally, director and then President of the Technion.

Until his tenure at the IDF ended, it seemed that he didn't have a spare moment. But after he entered civilian life, the invitations to participate in a variety of committees - on topics both familiar and new to him - came pouring in. He was also much sought after for interviews. He was known as a precise thinker, whose experience in organizational and military leadership enabled him to analyze classified or scientifically complex material with ease; he also had a reputation as a somewhat politically neutral man, though his closeness with Ben-Gurion was no secret. Few people knew that he was a member - though not even an active one - of Mapai.<sup>1</sup>

From 1950 on, Ben-Gurion enlisted Yaakov to participate in a variety of committees, both public and secret in nature. For example, in early 1952, when Yaakov was still a relatively fresh director at the Technion, Defense Minister Ben-Gurion appointed him to a public committee that would determine the eligibility of certain men and women, who had been working in the area of national security for many years, to wear special insignia known as the "ALEH". The other members of this committee were Ada Golomb (Eliyahu Golomb's widow), Israel Galili, Yosef Jacobson, and Nahum Shadmi.<sup>2</sup>

About 6 months later, Yaakov was asked to serve on a committee whose work was kept extremely secret: Israel's Atomic Energy Commission. Ben-Gurion made it clear that this committee would

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<sup>1</sup>After Ben-Gurion resigned from his role as Prime Minister, bringing Israel to early elections for the Fifth Knesset, Yaakov sent him a letter expressing his sorrow "as a citizen of this country and a member of the labor movement in Israel". Dori to Ben-Gurion, 2/2/1961, Ben-Gurion Archives, Document #2203.

<sup>2</sup> Ben-Gurion to Golomb, Galili, Dori, Jacobson, and Shermi, 1/2/1952, Zionist Archives, #2315A.

report directly to the Prime Minister (him). In Hebrew alphabetical order (Ben-Gurion's preferred method of listing participants), the members of that committee were:

Dr. A.D. Bergman, head of the Division of Research and Planning in the Ministry of Defense (chair);

Dr. Israel Dostrovsky, Weizmann Institute (Yaakov's nephew);

General Yaakov Dori, head of the Science Division in the Prime Minister's Offices (interesting that Ben-Gurion did not refer to Yaakov by his primary role as Technion Director);

Dr. S.Cohen, Hebrew University;

Professor Shmuel Samborski, Security Council;

Professor Joel Rekach, Hebrew University;

Zeev Schind, General Manager of the Ministry of Defense.<sup>3</sup>

Yaakov served on several other committees, mainly ones whose missions concerned higher education in Israel. They are mentioned in Chapter 9 of this book.

One of these committees was a markedly unpleasant experience for Yaakov. It was a committee established in 1954, after a literary-historical program had gone awry: a young lieutenant named Nathaniel Laurach, who was serving as head of the General Staff's history department, was tasked with writing the official history of the 1948 war. In 1953, the leaders of Mapai's publishing house decided to publish a series of books summarizing the young state's first five years of independence. David Ben-Gurion - freshly departed from the Knesset and on sabbatical in Sdeh Boker - was appointed as the series' editor in chief. Laurach was to edit the volume devoted to the Israel Defense Forces. In a political compromise, that particular volume was to be published by *Ma'arakhot* - the IDF's official printing press.<sup>4</sup>

Once the manuscript was finished, it was sent to a few of the men who had served as officers during the 1948 war, including Yaakov, the IDF's Chief of Staff. Of all the feedback the manuscript received, Yaakov's was the most critical; Yaakov took issue with several of Laurach's conclusions. He also objected to the fact that a single army officer, armed with a graduate degree in history, took it upon

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<sup>3</sup> Ben-Gurion's letter of appointment to these 7 men, 6/13/1952, BGA, Document 8245/602/2/5617.

<sup>4</sup> For the entire affair see Mordechai Bar-On's "The Struggle over Wartime Memoirs", in *The War of Independence, 1948-49 - a Fresh Look*, edited by Allon Kadish, Tel Aviv 2014, pp992-994 (Allon).

himself to write the entire history of the 1948 war with no oversight or input from an editorial committee or a team of subject matter experts.

Yaakov brought the matter up in a conversation with General Moshe Dayan, the IDF's current Chief of Staff. The two men decided to establish a committee, which would guide the rest of the work on this book. Committee members were: Elazar Galili, the head of *Ma'arakhot*; Saul Avigur, who was editing a book on the origins of the Hagana; Israel Bar; and Yaakov, the committee's chairman.<sup>5</sup> This decision antagonized Laurach, who bitterly said, "It's impossible for the fox to guard the henhouse. It just can't be that the people, whose image will be affected by what I write, will be the ones who decide what is and isn't published."<sup>6</sup>

Yehuda Erez, editor-in-chief of *Ayanot* publishing, tried to soften the blow by requesting that Yaakov's committee be responsible for corrections only. He suggested that the committee ought not to have the power to censor any content, or prevent any particular stories from publication. Yaakov disagreed. He claimed that Laurach did not have the authority of a historian, and that only a team of experts could write a book of this nature. Yaakov and Laurach met several times, but they never managed to reconcile their vastly different approaches to the publication.<sup>7</sup> According to Laurach, committee members continued to go far beyond correcting factual inaccuracies; they often offered feedback along the lines of "Why would you ever talk about ..." or "Shouldn't you keep that to yourself?" They even requested that Israel Bar add a coda to each chapter, offering his own perspective on the chapter's events.<sup>8</sup>

Ben-Gurion was told more than once about the challenges of writing and editing this book. In November of 1954, Laurach came to visit Ben-Gurion in Sdeh Boker and told him, "writing this book is a one-man job." Ben-Gurion suggested that he make do with two men: Elazar Galili from *Ma'arakhot* and Yaakov: "The first of these men is well-versed, and the second is honest and direct

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<sup>5</sup> Eitan Haber, "Ladies and Gentlemen, History Repeats Itself", *Yedi'ot Aharonot*, 6/5/1973.

<sup>6</sup> Laurach, "The Historiographical Challenge of the War of Independence", *Catedra* of Israel's establishment, Vol.1, September 1976, p.73. (Laurach, *Historiography*)

<sup>7</sup> Yehuda Erez to Dori, 6/23/1954; Dori to Erez, 6/27/1954; BGA, File #304.

<sup>8</sup> Bar-on, pp993-994.

and knows the events that preceded the 1948 invasion.”<sup>9</sup> Laurach probably struggled to heed this advice.

The committee met several times, and finally disbanded. Laurach joined the foreign service. Several years later, the IDF’s history division published Laurach’s manuscript, with only a few revisions and edits.<sup>10</sup> Laurach himself had recently published another, very similar, book of his own.<sup>11</sup> Yaakov was left frustrated by the entire affair. He probably agreed with his mentor, Ben-Gurion, who told Laurach that the war of independence was unlike any other war in history - both because of its very short duration, and because of the dearth of historical documentation. Ben-Gurion believed that the best sources of documentation were the soldiers and officers who fought in the war: “There is no more trustworthy source than the men who did the actual work ... I do not believe in the validity of history that is supported solely by documents.” Laurach, who came from the “documentary”, academic, historiographical tradition, did not find Ben-Gurion to be a useful ally.<sup>12</sup>

## 2

In late 1954 and early 1955, it became clear that Laurach’s book would be delayed indefinitely. By that time Yaakov was engaged in daily conversations with an old friend from the days of the Jewish Legion, who had risen in status to become the second President of Israel’s Supreme Court - Yitzhak Olshan. Dori and Olshan had been tasked by Prime Minister Moshe Sharett to secretly investigate one of the more ugly and embarrassing chapters in Israel’s history, known euphemistically as “The Unfortunate Affair”.

In short: a group of young Jewish soldiers in Egypt had been recruited by Israel’s military intelligence to plant bombs in American- and British-owned civilian targets in Cairo and Alexandria. The goal was to ruin Egypt’s reputation in the western world, in order to prevent or delay Great Britain’s exit from the Suez Canal zone.

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<sup>9</sup> Ben-Gurion’s Journal (BGJ), 11/26/1954.

<sup>10</sup> Annals of the War of Independence: the Story of the Battle, Tel Aviv 1959.

<sup>11</sup> Laurach, Nataniel, Chronicle of the War of Independence, Ramat Gan 1958.

<sup>12</sup> Ben-Gurion to Laurach, 11/26/1954; in Laurach, Historiography pp73-74.

This plan was amateurish, and it failed. The young soldiers were arrested, and their trial caused great publicity in Egypt and tremendous embarrassment in Israel. A question arose: who had authorized these irresponsible actions, which led to the execution of two of the Jewish youths and the suicide of a third? More than one source blamed Pinchas Lavon, who had recently replaced David Ben-Gurion as Minister of Defense. Lavon demanded an investigation, authorized by Prime Minister Moshe Sharett, in order to clear his name.

Prime Minister Sharett asked Yaakov if he would be willing to join Justice Olshan on a two-man committee, whose purpose would be to determine: who gave the order for this operation in Egypt? Was it Minister of Defense Lavon, or was it Binyamin Gibli, the head of Israel's military intelligence directorate? Yaakov agreed, and the two men - Dori and Olshan - appeared in the Prime Minister's offices to receive their official charge on January 2, 1955. The charge called for an investigation into:

- A. Whether the actions that led to the arrests were in response to orders received from Israel;
- B. Whether similar actions were taken in Egypt, and whether those actions were taken in response to Israeli orders;
- C. Who gave these orders, who approved them, and for what purpose.

The two men were also tasked with informing Prime Minister Sharett of any serious breaches in the IDF's command structure, and of any areas of weakness in the state's oversight of the IDF. Prime Minister Sharett made it clear that Olshan and Dori's findings would be presented to him alone, and that the entire investigation was to be conducted with the utmost secrecy.

According to the charge, Olshan and Dori were to meet with Defense Minister Pinchas Lavon first. They were also to interview IDF Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan, Binyamin Gibli, and other officers as needed. Sharett announced that he was available to the committee at any moment, for any reason. He appointed his private secretary, Shamai Cahana, as the official secretary of the Olshan-Dori committee.

Sharett promised that throughout the investigation, Cahana would be exempt from his other responsibilities so that he could dedicate himself to the committee's work.<sup>13</sup>



The Olshan-Dori  
Committee:  
President of the  
Supreme Court  
Yitzhak Olshan and  
General Yaakov  
Dori

The two men were given a room in the Foreign Ministry in Tel Aviv's *Kiriya*. They went right to work. Later on Olshan would state that this felt less like a routine committee and more "like a detective story, in which we ourselves had to hunt for evidence in order to discover the facts". On the other hand, Olshan kept himself and Dori bound by the strictest legal standards. For example, "the two men met only during official committee hours, and made sure to stay in separate hotels during any overnight committee trips."<sup>14</sup>

Olshan and Dori were undoubtedly aware of the toxic climate of the Defense Department and the IDF's upper echelons at the time. On one side was Defense Minister Lavon, and on the other stood Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan. Dayan's corner also held the General Manager of the Ministry of Defense, Shimon Peres. Lavon's stance was also weakened by his declining influence in his political party, Mapai. Sharett was none too discreet in discussing Lavon's diminishing power with other ministers and party operatives. On the Olshan-Dori committee's second day of investigations - which took place not long before general elections for Israel's third Congress (Knesset) - Sharett was visited

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<sup>13</sup> The charge arrived in the form of a letter from the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Moshe Sharett, to Olshan and Dori on January 2, 1955. In Sharett's personal journal, Vol.3, pp620-621.

<sup>14</sup> Olshan dedicated a chapter of his memoirs to this committee. See: Olshan, Debate - Memoirs, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, 1978. This quote is published on p264. Henceforth Debate.

by Arie Bahir, a Mapai operative. He wrote in his journal, “a conversation arose about Lavon, and the cancerous role he played in creating a climate of distrust, immorality, and lies in our army.”<sup>15</sup>

Olshan and Dori spent ten nonstop days meeting with Lavon, Dayan, Peres, Gibli, and others, in an attempt to find out the truth about what happened in Egypt. Because of censorship, the affair was initially nicknamed “The Unfortunate Affair”; it later became known as “The Affair”, and ultimately, “The Lavon Affair.”

Prime Minister Sharett was kept abreast of the committee’s proceedings in a manner that would seem unthinkable today: each evening, secretary Cahana told him every detail of the day’s investigations. On January 4, Sharett wrote in his journal: “Shamai called from Tel Aviv. Reported on investigation. Olshan is astounded by the scope and severity of the situation. The testimony against Lavon is shocking.”<sup>16</sup>

The deeper Olshan and Dori delved into the investigation, the more “cancer” (Sharett’s word) they discovered in Israel’s security apparatus. According to Cahana, the two men sank into a state of “astonishment and depression.”<sup>17</sup> Sharett himself was just as crestfallen by the whole affair. He confessed to his journal: “I’ve been spending these days in a trance, completely at a loss, as though I were sleepwalking. Firing Lavon now would be a death blow to his career. Not firing him would be disastrous for the entire Ministry of Defense and for the IDF’s senior command.”<sup>18</sup>

Lavon appeared several times before Olshan and Dori. On January 10 of 1955, Cahana described his testimony as “a crumbling house of cards.” Lavon gave his version of what had transpired in Egypt, explaining that he had no part in those events. As Olshan and Dori interrogated him, “their main questions went unanswered, and the balance tipped against him.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Sharett, personal journal, p623.

<sup>16</sup> *Idem* p627.

<sup>17</sup> *Idem* p629.

<sup>18</sup> *Idem* p639.

<sup>19</sup> *Idem* p640-641.

Lavon did not leave with that impression. His biography describes his testimony that day as “fluent and convincing.”<sup>20</sup> A website dedicated to Lavon also describes his first appearance in front of the Olshan-Dori committee: “He detailed his version of events so convincingly, that committee members saw the case as all but closed.”<sup>21</sup> Olshan himself wrote a less enthusiastic description of his impressions in his own book, although he too noted that at first, Lavon came across as the accuser and Gibli as the accused.

On Wednesday, January 12 of 1955, Olshan and Dori quietly deliberated at Prime Minister Sharett’s Jerusalem house. They spent that entire day locked in a small room in that house, working on their final report with secretary Cahana. That evening, Cahana met Sharett as he returned to his house, and asked if he would be willing to meet with “the two investigators”. Yaakov and Olshan spent 90 minutes presenting their conclusions to the Prime Minister. Unfortunately, they said, they had been unable to determine conclusively who was at fault and who was innocent in the affair. They wrote, “We cannot conclude beyond a reasonable doubt that the head of our military intelligence directorate (Gibli) did *not* receive orders from the Minister of Defense; and yet, we are not thoroughly convinced that the Minister of Defense *did* give such orders.”<sup>22</sup> Sharett asked the two men if Lavon was not responsible for the “malignant climate that spawned such insane operations”. They replied that the climate was indeed of Lavon’s doing, but that this did not solve the question of direct responsibility for the failed operation in Egypt.<sup>23</sup>

The committee’s final report was over 6,000 words long. It was presented to Sharett on January 13, 1955. Justice Olshan was responsible for most of the phrasing, which he dictated to Shamai Cahana. Yaakov offered several suggestions and revisions, which were incorporated into the report and documented in its final paragraph.<sup>24</sup>

The investigation thus ended without a clear conclusion. Lavon was deeply hurt by the entire affair, and resigned a few weeks later. His resignation paved the way for David Ben-Gurion’s return to the

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<sup>20</sup> Eyal Cafcaffi, *Lavon - the Anti-Messiah*, Tel Aviv 1998, p260.

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.pinhas-lavon.com/site>

<sup>22</sup> *Debate* p273

<sup>23</sup> Sharett, personal journal, Vol.3, pp645-648

<sup>24</sup> The entire report is published in Sharett’s personal journal, Vol.3, pp658-665.



government as Minister of Defense. Years later, it became clear that several of the committee's sources had coordinated their testimony, not only lying but also falsifying documents in an effort to get rid of Lavon. Still, Olshan maintained that no single bit of testimony determined the committee's conclusions; those were mostly based on "Lavon's behavior and his responses, from the start of the Unfortunate Affair to the beginning of our investigation. In our opinion, Lavon was unable to sufficiently explain and justify his own decisions and responses."<sup>25</sup>

Olshan expressed these opinions about the Lavon affair after he ended his service as President of Israel's Supreme Court in 1965. Dori, on the other hand, never spoke or published his thoughts on the matter. He went on to serve the Technion and the country, always faithful to his own code of silence.

### 3

In February of 1965, Ben-Gurion returned to government service. The year he spent in Sdeh Boker seemed to have given him a heightened sense of clarity about the country's future; he returned to Jerusalem with a commitment to reform the way the nation was governed. Since its birth as a state, Israel used a system of nationwide proportional representation, which allowed even the smallest political parties to gain seats in the Knesset and weaken the grip of large political blocs. Ben-Gurion proposed replacing that system with the more Anglo-Saxon method of district-based voting, in which the 120 Members of Knesset would be elected in 120 districts; this would considerably shrink the number of political parties in Knesset. Ben-Gurion made no bones about his belief that two political parties were all Israel needed: one in power, and the other in the opposition.

Ben-Gurion took every opportunity to speak and write to the public about changing the country's governance. For instance, in the twelve days between May 7 and May 19 of 1955, he published two articles and gave a speech on the subject in Haifa.<sup>26</sup> He soon assembled a group of devoted supporters, called the Multi-Party Group for Election Reform in Israel. Yaakov was one of its leading members. On June 15, 1955, Yaakov delivered the opening remarks at a Multi-Party Group for Election Reform gathering at the ZOA House in Tel Aviv. He noted that "In these days, every citizen of Israel must

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<sup>25</sup> *Debate* 277-278

<sup>26</sup> *Davar*, May 8, 13, and 20 1955.

express his desires and opinions, and bear in the tremendous responsibility that is granted to him to determine the nation's course." He presented Ben-Gurion as "the esteemed architect of the State of Israel." Ben-Gurion spoke for over an hour, mainly on urgent questions of security and the threats that loomed before Israel. Towards the end of his speech he discussed election reform, which would "let us become a more healthy and honest nation" with a government worthy of its name.<sup>27</sup>

Several months later, Ben-Gurion asked Yaakov to take on a more significant role "for the good of our nation". A grass-roots movement had begun in Israel, focused on raising funds in order to purchase more weapons. Tensions were rising at the country's borders, and an arms deal had just been signed between Egypt and the Soviet Union; Israel was feeling the need to amass enough weapons to keep up. Israeli citizens donated money, jewelry, labor, and expenses from parties and events they canceled to Operation Defensive Fund. The fund was initially administered by Prime Minister Moshe Sharett; but when a new government was established in November of 1955, with Ben-Gurion reprising his dual role as Prime Minister and Minister of Defense, Operation Defensive Fund came under the auspices of the Ministry of Defense. A public committee was established to steward the money; Yigael Yadin and Yaakov Dori - the IDF's first two Chiefs of Staff - were to head that committee. On November 5, 1955, the two Generals held a press conference in Tel Aviv to note that the Operation had already raised over 8 million Israeli Lire. He emphasized that the stewardship committee was donating all of its time and labor, and he set a goal of raising 25 million Israeli Lire by the end of 1955.<sup>28</sup>

Yaakov spent the next few months going to businesses and institutions throughout Israel, preaching and lecturing to raise more funds. He cast a wide net, attending labor union meetings and conferences of industrial tycoons alike. He frequently met with Ben-Gurion, and the two men appeared together at a ceremony honoring the "first responders in Operation Defensive Fund". He also encouraged the press to publish the names of those who chose not to participate in the fundraising effort; this move created a bit of controversy, and he justified it by saying that just as the press published the names of those who donated, it ought to publish the names of those who refused to do so.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ben-Gurion's complete speech, as well as Yaakov's preface, are in the meeting notes from 6/15/1955. BGA Doc.#31056. Also "D. Ben-Gurion: Our Security Relies on our Might as a Nation", *Davar*, 6/16/1955.

<sup>28</sup> *Idem* 11/6/1955

<sup>29</sup> *Idem* 3/14/1956



“Defensive Fund” - a fundraising event in Petach Tikvah, with a special appearance by Yaakov

At first Yaakov collaborated with Yigael Yadin on this project, but after a few weeks Yadin’s name no longer appeared in press releases.

In January of 1956, Ben-Gurion tripled the Operation’s goals from 25 million to 75 million Israeli Lire; even Yaakov was not fully on board with this level of ambition. Ben-Gurion wrote to Yaakov in mid-January, “As I mentioned to you when we met last week, I am about to propose a massive fundraising convention intended to bring in 50 million IL to Operation Defensive Fund. My assumption is that our smallest donors will give 10 days of work, and our largest donors will pitch in 10% of their annual gains. I know that Minister of Finance Eshkol disagrees with me, but we will let the government decide. To me, this goal seems both attainable and essential. Our national income these days is 1.75 billion IL. A mere 5% of that is 87.5 million IL. Clearly we won’t be able to get money from every single citizen, but even so, 50 million IL is not an outlandish sum - so long as a team of loyal and honest people continues to exert pressure on each and every social and professional circle in the land.”

The total amount of money that Ben-Gurion felt was needed in case of war was 200 million IL; this could not be raised solely by raising taxes, especially since higher tax rates simply led to more tax evasion. Ben-Gurion felt that he could not demand that level of assistance from Jewish communities worldwide. Moreover, he felt that Israel's citizens were not pitching in enough. To him, Operation Defensive Fund was of vital importance to the Israel's safety in the event of war. He ended his letter with the sentence, "The government will determine our fate on this matter."<sup>30</sup>

The following day, Ben-Gurion sent a disappointed note to Yaakov: "In yesterday's meeting, the government agreed with the Minister of Finance that our defensive fund will be capped at 25 million IL, with the rest to be levied via taxation." His next sentence was a rebuke to both Eshkol and Yaakov - "So, you got what you wanted, in spite of my opinion." He closed with a few words of appreciation: "I hope you are able to quickly and thoroughly wrap up this operation, to which you have given so much of your time and dedication."<sup>31</sup>

Yaakov continued to coordinate Operation Defensive Fund until March of 1956; he then returned to full-time work at the Technion. He was still called to national service on occasion - for instance, when Minister of Finance Levi Eshkol asked him to serve on a three-person commission, intended to ensure compliance with an agreement between Israel's government and a coalition of academic faculty. The other two members of this commission were Professor M. Rachmilevitz and Professor L. Halperin of the Hebrew University.<sup>32</sup>

Yaakov continued his various forms of public service throughout 1956 and 1957. For example, in the fall of 1956 he participated in a panel discussion hosted by the biweekly publication *BaMa'aleh* - Israel's Labor Youth magazine. The topic was: how do Israel's young men and women in 1956 compare to the youth of 1948?

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<sup>30</sup> Ben-Gurion to Dori, 1/15/1956, BGA Doc.#1476 007.

<sup>31</sup> Ben-Gurion to Dori, 1/16/1956, BGA Doc.#1476 014.

<sup>32</sup> *Davar*, 2/21/1956.

Yaakov was in good company on this panel. His fellow participants were Ben-Gurion, Abraham Shapira, Yigal Allon, Moshe Carmel, Aharon Remez, and senior IDF commanders in 1948 Mullah Cohen and Moshe Netzer.

Yaakov responded that most of his knowledge about young people in the 1950s came from his children and “faithful friends”, since he himself had only limited contact with young people who were not Technion students at the time. As far as he knew, he said, the youth of the 1950s “does not fall short in any way when compared to the young people we knew during our war of national independence.”

When asked about the main missions facing Israel’s youth at the time, Yaakov replied that the climate of the time demanded “the extraordinary - we need first-rate farmers and agronomists, first-rate factory workers, and first-rate scientists and technologists. I repeat the words ‘first-rate’ because only our finest work in every single area will bring us the success we need.” It seems that Yaakov was emphasizing the same type of excellence he strove for in the Technion.

The third question had to do with the IDF. These were tense times, full of clashes along borders, infiltrations by saboteurs, and small skirmishes with the armed forces of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. Was the IDF prepared to return fire in order to defend the nation’s borders?

Yaakov answered this question with a resounding “yes”. He had no doubt that, just as in the war of 1948, Israel would win; in his own words, “our moral and philosophical forces, and our technical assets, will not be smaller than they were. On the contrary - I am sure that we have made spectacular progress on the technical front, and if that progress is met with the spiritual power that resides in our young people today, then I have no doubt that the IDF will be more than capable of withstanding any threat our enemies have in store.”<sup>33</sup>

Eight days after this panel, the Sinai War of 1956 broke out. Within a week, the IDF had captured the Gaza Strip and the entire Sinai Peninsula. In retrospect, Yaakov’s words to the panel of young interviewers seem prophetic.

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<sup>33</sup> “Then And Now - Our Soldiers Are Ready!” *BaMa’aleh*, 10/21/1956.

Israel lost the ground it gained during the Sinai War because of pressure from the United Nations and the world's superpowers. Still, the nation and the IDF gained 10 years of near-total peace on the southern border. The freedom to sail to and from the Port of Eilat was guaranteed, life in Israel returned to normal, and Yaakov found himself immersed in a new string of public roles.

In April of 1957, he began two new positions. He served for the first time on the Hebrew University Board of Governors, following a request from Board chairman George S. Wise.<sup>34</sup> Several days after that, Prime Minister and Minister of Defense David Ben-Gurion invited Yaakov to lead a new panel of judges, who would award the annual "Israel's Security Prize". The other two members of that panel were Professor Benjamin Mazar from the Hebrew University and General Aharon Remez, former commander of Israel's air force and now a senior economist.<sup>35</sup>

Yaakov had shied away from direct political activity, but he also accepted a role that he mistakenly believed to be apolitical - mediating an ongoing conflict in the Atta factory. The conflict had devolved into a dispute within Mapai, the ruling party, especially between Labor Secretary Pinchas Lavon and Haifa union leader Yosef Almogi. Almogi, known in Haifa as "the Iron Man", did not want to accept Lavon's directions. With the support of Haifa's mayor, Abba Hushi, Almogi actively blocked every move that Lavon made in order to resolve the Atta factory conflict. As the conflict worsened, Ben-Gurion himself came to Haifa to try and understand the situation. He refused to meet with Almogi. Yaakov tried to reconcile the two; as Ben-Gurion wrote in his journal, Almogi had "a modicum of respect for Dori from back in the Hagana days". Almogi told Dori that if Ben-Gurion were to invite him to Tel-Aviv or to Jerusalem, he would go. Ben-Gurion replied, "I came to Haifa and saw no need to invite Almogi to anything. If he wants to see me, he knows where I live."<sup>36</sup>

Yaakov stepped aside and did not intervene further in this conflict. However, after the workers' strike ended and some of the issues were resolved, the question of layoffs remained. This problem was

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<sup>34</sup> "University's Growth Surveyed at Governors' Meeting", *Davar*, 4/3/1957. The article mentioned Yaakov as one of the two new members of the Board of Governors.

<sup>35</sup> Ben-Gurion's charge to the three, 4/9/1957. BGA, Doc.#1303.

<sup>36</sup> Ben-Gurion's Journal, 7/22/1957.

thorny enough that an outside mediator was required. Minister of Trade and Industry Pinhas Sapir asked Yaakov to take on that role. Yaakov hesitated, agreed, and immediately regretted his decision. He spent several months listening to both sides - workers and management - until, in August of 1958, he resigned: "I believed that the two sides were fully capable of resolving their own differences, and only a few lone controversies would make their way to me for resolution," he told *Davar* reporters in Haifa. In actuality, most of the "differences" were not resolved in the least, but Yaakov did not have the time to devote himself fully to the matter.<sup>37</sup>

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It's not surprising that Yaakov did not have the capacity to focus on layoffs at the Atta factory. In the summer of 1958 he was preoccupied with a far greater question - establishing the Israeli Academy of Sciences. He had, in fact, been working on that front for years.

The question of an Academy of Sciences had been up for debate since 1955, both in the Knesset and in the administrative halls of government. At the time, the prevailing notion was to found two sister institutions: an Academy of Arts and Letters, and an Academy of Sciences. The initiative stalled several times, and Yaakov played a central role in pushing this project to completion before the end of Israel's first decade.<sup>38</sup>

In the summer of 1957, Yaakov convened a small team in his home. He, Professor Benjamin Mazar from the Hebrew University, and Professor Aharon Kaczalski (Katzir) from the Weizmann Institute agreed to "establish the Academy of Sciences and the Academy of Humanities in Jerusalem", as they wrote in their meeting notes.

Professor Kaczalski told his two colleagues that he had done extensive preparatory work for this project, even meeting abroad with two eminent scientists: Professor Niels Bohr of Denmark, Nobel Prize for Physics winner in 192, and Professor Robert Robertson, who had served as President of the

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<sup>37</sup> "Dori Resigns from Role as Atta Investigator", *Davar*, 8/3/1958.

<sup>38</sup> Information about planning for the Academy can be found at <http://www.academy.ac.il>.

Royal British Academy of Sciences. Both scientists agreed that Israel was ripe for the founding of Academies, and opined, according to Kaczalski, that “such Academies would have a positive influence on scientific endeavors and perhaps also fortify the nation.”

Professor Mazar applauded the idea of establishing two Academies, and told the group that he was planning a meeting on the subject with David Ben-Gurion. Yaakov agreed with his colleagues that the time was right, but he did caution his colleagues that the nature of these Academies should be more “philosophical” than operational. Perhaps with time, as the Academies gained power and momentum of their own, they would be able to expand their scope to include practical projects as well. Professors Kaczalski and Mazar ultimately agreed with Yaakov on this point.

As to the question of whom to invite to meet with Prime Minister Ben-Gurion, the group agreed that the meeting should include one representative from each of Israel’s leading academic institutions - the Hebrew University, the Technion, and the Weizmann Institute. The Prime Minister would probably invite the current and former Ministers of Culture and Education and a few others.<sup>39</sup>

Such preliminary conversations lasted over a year. In May of 1958 Ben-Gurion noted in his journal that he was visited by Professor Aharon Katzir (Kaczalski) and Zeev Saraf, the government secretary. Katzir suggested asking Dori, Mazar, and Professor Pakris of the Weizmann Institute to add 16-20 names of Academy nominees.<sup>40</sup> Several weeks later, Ben-Gurion wrote a letter to Yaakov, Professor Mazar, and Dr. Bloch (head of the Weizmann Institute), saying that he intended to raise the prospect of an Academy in the upcoming government meeting. He proposed that the President of Israel nominate the first few members of the sister institutes; after that, the existing members would vote on future colleagues. He requested a list of 8-10 of the “greatest scholars of humanities” and 8-10 of the “greatest natural scientists” in Israel. Ben-Gurion suggested that each group should include a mix of younger, more active scholars and older scholars who had already made significant contributions to their fields.

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<sup>39</sup> “Meeting Notes from Thurs. 8/15/1957, at Gen. Yaakov Dori’s Home on Mt. Carmel”, BGA, Doc.#2220 071.

<sup>40</sup> Ben-Gurion’s Journal, 5/27/1958.



Ben-Gurion also noted that the Von Lier family had donated a substantial amount of money in order to erect the Academies in Jerusalem. He added that Professor Katzir would also be included in establishing these institutions, but that the logistics of building them would be overseen by Secretary Zeev Saraf. In conclusion, Ben-Gurion hoped that the proposed Academies would be a lodestone for Israel's greatest academic minds, and would draw the world's finest thinkers to Israel (and perhaps even entice the Jews among them to move to Israel for good).<sup>41</sup>

Two months later, in mid-August of 1958, Ben-Gurion noted tersely in his journal: "Mazar and Dori brought candidates for the Academies."<sup>42</sup>

The matter moved forward in 1961, when the Knesset ruled on "The Israeli Academy of Sciences". Yaakov was deeply involved in the life of the Academy for all of those years, and for many more to come.

7

Yaakov's day-to-day preoccupations were not always so lofty. Sometimes they were surprisingly ordinary - for example, his work alongside his mentor, Dr. Arthur Biram, to support the Scouts.

Yaakov had always seen youth movements as an important part of the fabric of Israel's society. At some point in the 1950s he and Dr. Biram were asked to serve as honorary Presidents of the Scout Societies of Israel; the two men accepted. In 1958 they were asked to exert their influence on Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, since the Ministry of Education was considering cutting funding for the Scouts. The Scouts ("Tzofim") were the only youth groups that was sponsored by the state government, and other groups - and the political movements behind them - were demanding equivalent consideration. At the very least, these other youth groups demanded equal access to schools' registration lists for the purpose of recruitment.

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<sup>41</sup> Ben-Gurion to the three men, 6/17/1958, BGA Doc.#1136.

<sup>42</sup> Ben-Gurion's journal, 8/16/1958.

Yaakov and Dr. Biram wrote to Ben-Gurion, emphasizing that while they belonged to different political camps, they were appealing to him as one “out of our concern for the fate of the movement”. They asked to meet with Ben-Gurion together so that they could explain the importance of the Scout movement in Israel’s schools.<sup>43</sup>

Yaakov’s growing workload within the Technion, as well as his year of sabbatical recovery, led him to narrow the scope of his public involvement throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s. But by his return to full-time work at the Technion in late 1962, it seems that he was ready to jump into public life once again; by 1963, he was deeply involved in no fewer than three public arenas.

8

On February 15 of 1963, *Ma’ariv* - the nation’s most widely circulated newspaper - celebrated its 15th birthday. As part of a special anniversary edition, the first five IDF Chiefs of Staff gathered for a roundtable discussion. The report of their conversation stretched out over no fewer than 5 pages<sup>44</sup>; each one of the five Generals - Yaakov Dori, Yigael Yadin, Mordechai Maklef, Moshe Dayan, and Haim Laskov - answered a number of central questions and opined about a variety of other subjects.

Yaakov, as the first Chief of Staff, had the honor of responding first, and did so at great length. For the first part of his statement he addressed the state of security in Israel at the time, and the headline given to his words reveals their tone: “The Threats to our Nation are Alive and Well.” Even though all had been quiet on the southern front for several years, only a handful isolated incidents on the border with Jordan, total peace on the border with Lebanon, and only occasional skirmishes on the border with Syria, Yaakov was still convinced that Israel would be attacked in the coming years. To him, “We are in a state of ever-increasing danger. Disaster could strike at any moment.” He even expressed his fear that Israel - unless it took the immediate and necessary precautions - “may be destroyed”.

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<sup>43</sup> Dr. A Biram and General Dori to PM Ben-Gurion, 5/22/1958, BGA Doc.#1135.

<sup>44</sup> “*Ma’ariv* Asks - 5 Former Chiefs of Staff Reply”, *Ma’ariv*, 2/15/1963, pp19-23.

This was an exceptionally somber forecast. And yet, anyone who knows the history of the State of Israel a mere 4 years after that event would be astounded at the similarity between Yaakov's prediction and the eventual reality, which many at the time likened to "the destruction of the Temple" and "a new Holocaust".

For now, let us return to Yaakov's contributions to the *Ma'ariv* roundtable. He went on to sharply attack every one of the nation's political parties, stating that the polarization between and within them prevents any possibility of an "emergency state". "The awful schisms in our government, the terrible cliquishness within us, make it so that in this severe state of danger we are unable to form the required emergency coalition."

From here, Yaakov went on to a subject he had explored in the past: reforming Israel's system of elections in order to create larger, more unified political blocs. In the current system, he believed that even the most positive elements of the various parties "busy themselves with trifles and forget what is most important".

Every participant at the roundtable had the microphone on three or four separate times. During Yaakov's second speech, he again attacked the political systems of the day, declaring: "Our political life is based on a degeneration of democracy itself". When asked why he did not enter into the political fray himself in order to make it better, he replied that he "has no aptitude for political wheelings and dealings" - but that that was not the main reason. "It is possible that if our political life were more sound, was not based on degenerating democracy, then perhaps I would at some point have been drawn towards more political activity", he said.

In his mind, good people were staying away from the political arena because they were simply disgusted with the current state of politics. Of course, he declared, the party system in general was the basis of any democracy, and he was sure that none of the other Generals believed differently either. It was just that the reality of the moment was "one entirely based on mutual extortion, on I-won't-tell-if-you-won't, on narrow and egotistical interests that are supposedly for the greater good but in reality are barely scratching the surface." Once again he called Israel's democracy "atrophied".

Only a change in the voting system, and a limit of 2-4 political parties in government, would reduce the corruption and heal Israel's democracy.

Yaakov's opinion was seconded, to varying degrees, by three of the other Generals: Yigael Yadin, Mordechai Maklef, and Moshe Dayan. Only Haim Laskov expressed a more moderate opinion about the political fate of the country.

Yaakov probably surprised his fellow Generals with his stances on education. Several of the Generals expounded on the need to increase scientific and technological education in Israel, but Yaakov - President of the Technion - saw an even greater need to focus on the humanities. "It is true that we live in a technological age, and that we need scientists and engineers; but let us not forget that the most important foundation is a general, humanistic education, no matter where the young man or woman turns next." Yaakov sharply criticized the educational trend of offering high school students a wide range of concentrations - economics, sociology, biology, and mathematics. According to him, this was an unnecessary waste of time. "I would suggest a broader curriculum, that would develop the youths' humanistic abilities during this formative time in their lives," he opined. "Pursuing scientific education and ever-increasing specialization at younger and younger ages is a mistake."

He refused to discuss the state of higher education. To him, most of the problems that the world of higher education faced would be solved if only high schools would take the correct approach.

Towards the end of the conversation, Yaakov expressed another surprising viewpoint on a seemingly trivial subject: educational television in Israel. He endorsed television-assisted learning, especially in high schools, where teachers could receive professional development and students who lived in remote areas could still benefit from expert instruction. And why was there no educational television programme in Israel? Because most political party leaders were afraid that such a programme would be dominated by the ruling political party, Mapai. Yaakov told his colleagues that he had tried to convince party leaders to take advantage of this new educational technology, but was rebuffed: "I saw that for them, rejecting educational television programming was all about delivering a blow to the majority party."

A report on the roundtable discussion was published on Friday, February 15, 1963. The political consequences began the following Sunday. Nearly everyone was upset at the degree to which most of the Generals found fault with the current political system, proposing sweeping changes to recover from political corruption and instability.

Pinhas Lavon, former Minister of Defense and Secretary General of the Labor Federation, as well as a sworn enemy of David Ben-Gurion on account of “the unfortunate affair” of two years ago, wrote a stinging dissent, in which he called the Generals’ stance “ideological collectivism”. He wondered why they used such similar language in their critiques of the present system, and in their desire to see a “cleaner” system with fewer parties. “Could this be an attempt to form a junta of former military leaders, who believe they could steer our country more efficiently than its current civilian leadership?” he asked. To him, the opinions of the former Chiefs of Staff were worrisome, and led him to fear a “new and inglorious chapter” in Israel’s political history. He issued a call to Israel’s citizens and leaders alike, to view the statements from the former Chiefs of Staff as the real threat to Israeli democracy.<sup>45</sup>

An equally sharp rebuke came from renowned journalist and publicist Dr. Shlomo Gross, in the newspaper *HaAretz*. Gross listed each one of the faults that the former Chiefs of Staff found in Israel’s current system of government, and countered each one with his own critiques. He criticized the way that the Generals appeared to see the nation’s resources as fodder for the military; he also sounded the alarm about their desire for a “strong leader” who could take “drastic action”. He fundamentally disagreed with their admiration of military precision and organization, and their disdain for Israeli political life as “soft” and “atrophied”. Even their willingness to someday, maybe, join the political realm - but only if the entire system changed to suit their wishes - seemed false to Gross; he saw it as a prelude to a military dictatorship, which - in light of the world’s recent experiences - was either “more efficient or simply content with large and showy displays”. To Gross, “military discipline is not some sort of magic wand that will solve the thorny problems that face an industrial society.” Gross also raised a concern that the military training of the IDF’s officers was not preparing them for civilian life in the least. Their habits of functioning in a strictly hierarchical system of discipline brought them no success in civilian life. “The inherent difference between the two spheres - civilian and military -

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<sup>45</sup> Pinchas Lavon, “Ideological Collectivism of Former Chiefs of Staff”, *Min HaYesod*, 2/28/1963.

causes problems for almost every officer, whether or not he served as Chief of Staff, from the moment he removes his uniform for good”.

Gross concluded that military training and even strategic skill are “insufficient training for the Office of the Prime Minister.”<sup>46</sup> In 1963, he could not have predicted that in future years not one but three high-ranking military officers - Rabin, Barak, and Ariel Sharon - would inhabit that office.

Yaakov believed that Gross’s words were unwarranted. Mostly, he objected to the negative light in which Gross saw the IDF officers. He sent a long response to Gershom Shoken, the editor of *HaAretz*, requesting that it be published.<sup>47</sup> Excerpts of his letter were indeed published,<sup>48</sup> their essence being:

Yaakov did not deny Gross’s right to criticize, since “it is a right of every person in a democracy to disagree with his fellows on one subject or another”. More relevantly, however, he repeated his claim that the current state of proportional elections in Israel was “a national disaster”. His main disagreement was with Gross’s characterization of the IDF officers as civically and politically lacking. If Gross viewed the IDF’s officers as lacking a commitment to democracy, Yaakov said, then he was dead wrong. The IDF’s officers were more committed to democracy and to the greater good than the officers of any other standing army in the world. This had been true since the days of the Hagana - “The IDF’s military discipline and hierarchical structure are not merely technique to ease the lives of IDF officers, as Gross seems to claim; quite the opposite - every IDF officer sees his role as national service. It is exactly that feeling of devoted national service that our officers want to bring into civilian life as well.” Unfortunately, Yaakov went on, when motivated young officers are discharged from the military, they see “the torturous blocks and bruises in our political lives, and begin to doubt whether our present political systems are truly the way a healthy democracy should work.” Yaakov ended with the hope that *HaAretz*’s readers would not doubt the IDF’s dedication to democratic values in Israel. Moreover, he wished that they would see former IDF officers as “a lively, fertile, and promising addition to a sound democratic life in our country.”

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<sup>46</sup> “The Chiefs of Staff’s Prescription for Political Life”, *Ha’Aretz*, 2/22/1963.

<sup>47</sup> Dori to the editor of *Ha’Aretz*, 2/28/1963. Dori Family Collection.

<sup>48</sup> In “Letters to the Editor”, *Ha’Aretz*, 3/7/1963.

A few weeks after the “Generals’ Roundtable” tempest died down, Yaakov found himself at the center of attention again. He was actually in the United States on a Technion junket at the time, but near the end of April 1963, a friend telephoned him from Israel to tell him that the media was busily speculating that he might become Israel’s next President. Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, who had been President when Yaakov left for the United States, had passed away on April 23, 1963, and the “talking heads” were in a frenzy of speculation about who might take his place.

*Yedi’ot Ahronot* published a list of the most likely candidates: Knesset chairman Kadish Luz, Minister of Legal Affairs Pinchas Rosen, former Prime Minister Moshe Sharett, and Minister of Police Behor Shitreet. Three more names were mentioned as well: Zionist leader Zalman Shazar, Supreme Court President Yitzhak Olshan, and Technion President Yaakov Dori. The article noted that Dori and Shazar seemed to be Ben-Gurion’s favorites for the role. Yaakov was described as having “retired from political activity in recent years, given his role as President of the Technion.” The article ended with the words, “Shazar and Dori could certainly create some unity in our Knesset.”<sup>49</sup>

Speculation continued, and the list of names lengthened. Yaakov’s name came up again and again, with additions like Ben-Gurion’s childhood friend Shlomo Lavi of Kibbutz Ein Harod. Ben-Gurion, for his part, remained silent on the matter for the moment. “Waiting on word from Ben-Gurion”, wrote *HaAretz* reporters.<sup>50</sup>

On April 26, *Ma’ariv* published an eye-catching headline: “General Y. Dori - A Leading Candidate for the Nation’s Presidency”. The article itself went on to say that “The candidacy of Technion President General Dori is gaining momentum... Mapai leaders are predicting that Yaakov will have wide support in the Knesset, the body responsible for electing the next President. His support is presumed to extend even beyond the coalition that is anchored by Mapai.”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Ben-Porat, Y. “After the Shiva, Discussions about the Presidency will Begin”, *Yedi’ot Aharonot*, 4/24/1963.

<sup>50</sup> “Uncertainty Surrounds the Election of a New President”, *Ha’Aretz*, 4/25/1963.

<sup>51</sup> *Ma’ariv*, 4/26/1963.

The *Jerusalem Post* was even more confident on the subject: “Conventional wisdom has it that Prime Minister Ben-Gurion is rooting for Yaakov Dori, President of the Technion.”<sup>52</sup>

A foreign correspondent for *Ma'ariv* called Yaakov for a response. Yaakov told him that he had recently heard about all of this attention, but that he was not about to change his current plans: meetings with Friends of the Technion in America, fundraising, sit-downs with scientists and donors, and lectures. Yaakov made it clear that Israel should not expect him back until May 10.<sup>53</sup>

Towards the end of that April, Shazar's candidacy seemed to gain momentum. Ben-Gurion continued his silence, but by April 30, Mapai leaders - with Ben-Gurion's blessing - determined that Zalman Shazar would be Israel's third President.<sup>54</sup>

Yaakov did not appear disappointed at all to hear the news.<sup>55</sup> His son Zvi, who was then a student in the United States, recalls that his father had not been particularly thrilled at the thought of becoming President; he had said that he would accept the role only out of deep appreciation for Ben-Gurion. The President, according to him, had only one important function in Israel: meeting with representatives from each party to determine who is most likely to command a majority in the Knesset. When Yaakov learned that Shazar had been chosen, he said only three words: “That suits him.”<sup>56</sup>

## 10

An entirely different drama unfolded shortly after Yaakov's return to Israel. This time, it took place in an unfamiliar arena - the world of sports. Of course, it demanded Yaakov's time and attention on top of the usual challenges of running the Technion.

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<sup>52</sup> “Ben-Gurion Supports Dori”, *Jerusalem Post*, 4/26/1963.

<sup>53</sup> Philip Ben, “Gen. Dori: ‘I Will Continue U.S. Trip’”, *Ma'ariv*, 4/28/1963.

<sup>54</sup> *Davar*, 5/2/1963.

<sup>55</sup> Family recollections.

<sup>56</sup> Prof. Zvi Dori, 2/17/2010.



Minister of Culture and Education, Abba Eban, asked Yaakov to lead a committee that would investigate the reasons for Israeli sports teams' perpetual state of bankruptcy. The committee was also asked to grapple with one of the biggest problems of the Israeli sports world - the "fifty fifty system". This was a political arrangement that had been ongoing since the first years of statehood, in which all governing athletic bodies would be composed of equal representation from two leagues: HaPo'el and Maccabi. Other leagues or associations would not be represented. This naturally led to feelings of resentment and exclusion on the part of Beitar soccer clubs, which were affiliated with the right wing political parties. On more than one occasion, both players and trainers were drafted onto teams based on their political affiliations; research on Israeli sports culture tells us, "The complete overlap between sports and politics, and the struggle for control over Israeli sports, have caused innumerable problems. Drafting sports teams and sending delegations to international games often happened more for political reasons than for professional ones ... in the realm of soccer, teams would even lose games on purpose against weaker teams from the same political party, so that those weaker teams would not need to compete against a rival political league."<sup>57</sup>

The immediate reason for the crisis had to do with HaPo'el's demand to abolish the "fifty-fifty arrangement", and replace it with general elections. HaPo'el was joined by representatives from the religious Elizur team and the ASA - the Academic Sports Association. The Maccabi clubs, of course, objected, along with the right-leaning Beitar league.

Unlike today, sports columns were published only on Sundays and Fridays. However, the "Dori Commission" raised enough public interest that newspapers ran articles about it in the middle of a week. *Davar* announced: "General Dori Chairs the Committee to Solve the Sports Crisis."<sup>58</sup> The article itself mentioned that the committee "must find a way to continue the work of federated sports", which were effectively paralyzed by the competing political pressures from opposing leagues. Yaakov would be joined in this committee by a senior representative from HaPo'el and another senior representative from Maccabi. Abba Eban, Minister of Culture and Education, asked both leagues to submit candidates for the committee as soon as possible.

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<sup>57</sup> Haim Kauffman, "The 50-50 Days Are Over", <http://lib.cet.ac.il>.

<sup>58</sup> *Davar*, 5/22/1963. Other dailies ran similar stories.

**ספורט הארץ**  
בעריכת יהואל ארזי

**מן היציע**

**רמטכ"ל הספורט**

מינויו של רב אלוף יעקב דורי לתפקיד יו"ר ועדת הברררות שתקבע את מבנה ההתאחדות לספורט בישראל ואת צורת גיוולה, מעיד על מגמתו העקבית והבלתי פשרנית של שר החינוך והתרבות להפקיד שטח ממוקש זה בידים נאמנות.

<p>כאיש "הגנה" ותיק, כרמטכ"ל הראשון של צה"ל וכיום נשיא. ה"טכניון העברי בחיפה, עומד מאחורי רב אלוף דורי נסיון של שנים רבות בפעילות ציבורית, ואין כל סיבה שלא יצליח גם בתפקיד החדש. משום כך היתה זו, לכל ה"דעות, בחירה מוצלחת. שנתקבלה בסיפוק כללי גם בחוגי הספורט, מתוך אמונה כי הפעם יימצא סוף סוף פתרון של קבע לבעיה כאובה ומעיקה מאד.</p>	<p>מבחינה זו מוטל על רב אלוף יעקב דורי לא רק תפקיד של מתווך ומפשר, אלא גם עול כבד במציאת שכייל הזהב ממפלגות בעיות סבוכות שקשה מאד להתירן במסגרת הקיימת.</p> <p>הנסיון של אחד הצדדים (הפרעל) לשנות עובדות באורח חד צדדי לא עלה יסוה. מפני שהצד שכנגד (מכבי</p>
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*Ha'aretz, May 26, 1963*

This was one of the reasons that the "Dori Committee" did not begin its work immediately after being formed. A second reason had to do with Yaakov. He let Minister Eban know that he would be free to do committee work only at the end of July, once the academic year had ended. Abba Eban was forced to accept this condition.

*HaAretz* summarized Dori's role with the headline "The Chief of Staff of Sports".<sup>59</sup> The newspaper article hoped that despite the difficulties, Yaakov would be able to dislodge Israel's metaphorical wagon from the deep mud in which it was stuck: "As an experienced Hagana man, as the first IDF Chief of Staff, and as the current President of the Hebrew Technion in Haifa, General Dori brings with him many years of successful public activity. There is no reason he wouldn't succeed in this new role as well. For this reason, his appointment to the committee was a smart choice that was well-received in sports circles. We have faith that this time, we may finally find a lasting solution to a hurtful problem."

<sup>59</sup> Y.Arzi, "From the Bleachers - the Chief of Staff of Sports", *Ha'aretz*, 5/26/1963.

*Yedi'ot Aharonot* found another reason that Dori was a smart choice to head the committee: a similar situation had recently taken place in the United States, when college athletic leagues were butting heads with amateur leagues. President John F. Kennedy had appointed an American military legend to head a committee to investigate the matter - General Douglas MacArthur; MacArthur managed to strongarm the two leagues into collaboration. The writers and editors at *Yedi'ot Aharonot* hoped that just like in the United States, a powerful military figure would be able to forge a path through the interminable bickering between the two large sports federations, Maccabi and HaPo'el. "We have no doubt that this is the right man, at the right time, and that just like his famous American counterpart, he will find the 'magic formula' that will allow uninterrupted sports, growth and progress in both leagues, and peace between the businessmen who lead them."<sup>60</sup>

The Dori Committee met for the first time towards the end of July, 1963. HaPo'el sent Knesset representative Baruch Azanya, from Kibbutz Giv'at Haim - Ichud; Maccabi was represented by the lawyer Abraham Weinschell. Minister Eban had given the committee three months to come up with a recommendation, and Yaakov kicked off a packed schedule of hearings in order to meet that deadline. Nearly every single day, delegates of the various sports clubs, teams, and leagues in Israel came to the committee to present their grievances and suggestions.

In the meantime, Abba Eban was replaced by Zalman Aran, who announced that he supported the Dori Committee's efforts to resolve the managerial, organizational, and supervisory problems facing organized sports in Israel. At the first committee meeting, on July 29, 1963, Yaakov told Aran that he and his colleagues would make every effort to get recommendations to him by the end of October.

Over the coming months, print and radio media reported on the Dori Committee's every meeting and hearing. The hope, as sports columnists put it, was that the committee would thoroughly disrupt Israel's sports culture and reject any type of short-term or cosmetic fix. That particular phrasing came from renowned sports writer and broadcaster Nehemia Ben-Avraham, who publicly pleaded with the committee to find a thorough, all-encompassing solution.<sup>61</sup> The committee sought input in writing

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<sup>60</sup> Noah Kluger, "Israel and the U.S. Share the Same Problems", *Yedi'ot Aharonot*, 5/27/1963.

<sup>61</sup> Nehemiah Ben-Avraham. "The Dori Committee - a Second Chance", *Ma'ariv*, 8/5/1963.

from the various leagues. Yaakov was in constant contact with the new Minister of Education and Culture, who had asked to be briefed on the committee's every step.

The Dori Committee ended its deliberations a few weeks late. Most of its conclusions, which were accepted unanimously by Yaakov and the two opposing sides, were emphatic: the "fifty-fifty" arrangement must be ended; a new sports leadership council would be chosen, such that each league would be proportionately represented - five delegates for HaPo'el, three for Maccabi, and one for each of the three smaller leagues: Beitar, ASA, and Elizur. Any other governing bodies would be democratically established, and would have more agency than sports authorities had heretofore enjoyed. Maccabi and HaPo'el's representatives did have a few objections on the subject of the new sports leadership council, but they were content to append them to the committee's main conclusions. Yaakov, who signed off on all of the committee's recommendations, also proposed a two-year transition period, during which the sports leadership council would create new, democratic bylaws for Israel's sports leagues.

The public was almost unanimous in its embrace of the Dori Committee's recommendations, especially abolishing the "fifty-fifty" arrangement. The establishment of a sports leadership council was quite popular too.<sup>62</sup> Minister of Culture and Education Zalman Aran adopted each one of the Dori Committee's recommendations<sup>63</sup>, and Yaakov - who had by now become an expert on Israeli sports - was free to return to the Technion. Of course, only a few months would go by before he would be embroiled in yet another public drama.

Unlike all the others, this drama touched a nerve: Yaakov's relationship with David Ben-Gurion. The saga began after Ben-Gurion, who had been away from the Prime Minister's seat for nine months already, held an interview with the liberal daily *HaBoker* in March of 1964. Ben-Gurion discussed a variety of topics, but the paper went with a front-page headline that said, "It's a Shame I Didn't Know

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<sup>62</sup> "Dori Commission Unanimously Kills 50-50 System", *Davar*, 11/24/1963.

<sup>63</sup> All newspapers, 12/8/1963.

M. Dayan at the Start of the War of Sovereignty.” Ben-Gurion, in discussion the management of that war (which he insisted on calling “the war of sovereignty”, rather than “the war of independence”), made a statement that provoked Yaakov’s anger and astonishment: “Had Moshe Dayan been the IDF’s

Chief of Staff when the War of Sovereignty broke out, it’s quite possible that our nation’s borders would be different today and that we would have made greater military gains.” Ben-Gurion also said that there was a concerted effort during the war to keep Moshe Dayan away from him, that “we could have conquered the entirety of the land were it not for army instructions”, and that “Moshe Dayan is, in my opinion, the finest Chief of Staff that the IDF has had to date.”<sup>64</sup>

The interview was published on a Friday, and the publicity maelstrom began that afternoon. It intensified during the first half of the following week, even arriving at the Knesset itself. The Herut movement demanded a parliamentary investigation into why certain territories were not conquered during the war of 1948, and what Ben-Gurion’s role was in that decision. On Sunday, March 8, *Herut* and *LaMerchav* published op-eds attacking Ben-Gurion for his statements; that same day, two military heroes of 1948 - Yigael Yadin and Yigal Allon - expressed their own anger and surprise at Ben-Gurion’s words. Ben-Gurion himself was spending a few days at the Galei Kinneret hotel in Tiberias, and refused to make any comment to the press whatsoever. Still, *Yedi’ot Aharonot* managed to leak details of a letter that Ben-Gurion had sent the editors of *HaBoker*, stating that he had never said anything about Israel’s borders during the 1948, nor did the newspaper quote him correctly with regards to the Chiefs of Staff.<sup>65</sup>

Journalists tried in vain to get a spoken response from Yaakov. Yaakov, it turned out, spent three days writing a detailed retort to Ben-Gurion’s interview. This retort was published in full in *Davar*, and excerpts from it appeared in other papers as well.<sup>66</sup>

Yaakov rejected out of hand Ben-Gurion’s statement about instructions that prevented him from expanding Israel’s borders after 1948. His response is worth quoting in full:

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<sup>64</sup> *HaBoker*, 3/6/1964.

<sup>65</sup> *Yedi’ot Aharonot*, 3/9/1964.

<sup>66</sup> *Davar* and other dailies, March 10 and 11, 1964.

“I was chagrined to read the harsh words that were published in MK Ben-Gurion’s name in *HaBoker* on March 6, 1964, under the headline “It’s a Shame I Didn’t Know M. Dayan at the Start of the War of Sovereignty.” The fault in MK D. Ben-Gurion’s words is that he will never be able to **prove** his **hindsights** [emphasis original] about potential military achievements under Moshe Dayan as the IDF’s Chief of Staff in the War of Sovereignty. This is no more than a highly dubious supposition, utterly disconnected from the real facts and events of that time.

I do not agree with those of my colleagues who claim that it would have been possible to conquer more of the territory under dispute, given our limited forces and the special political circumstances (both internal and external) of the time. Yes, we suffered serious setbacks that have caused us pain for generations: the loss of Old Jerusalem, and the Latrun Pass, for instance. Perhaps we could have prevented those losses had our senior command team - political and military alike - been more united, and had the discipline within all ranks of the army been stronger. But we must let the historians, who are not directly responsible for the successes and failures of the war, investigate and have their say.

I am especially surprised by MK Ben-Gurion’s statements about the supposed attempts to keep him and Moshe Dayan apart during the war of sovereignty. As Chief of Staff of both the Hagana and the IDF during that war, I attest that I never directly interfered in any relationship between the then Minister of Defense and military leaders, and I never opposed such contacts even though they would be unusual in a traditional military hierarchy.

I agree with all of the praise that MK Ben-Gurion bestowed upon Moshe Dayan. Even before the war of sovereignty, I saw Dayan as one of my colleagues and friends. I was delighted when future years bore out my predictions. I am truly confused about why MK Ben-Gurion, in praising Dayan, must put others down?

I deeply apologize for having been forced to respond publicly to the words of a man I admire greatly, and see as the leader of a nation.”

For Yaakov this was an especially stinging letter. We can presume that he debated each and every sentence, each bit of criticism he leveled against the mentor he admired. Ben-Gurion never responded to Yaakov, and as it often happens in our part of the world, new dramas soon replaced the old. The relationship between the two men continued unabated, as we will soon see.

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As Technion President and a public presence, Yaakov was often asked for his opinion by a variety of journalists. Sometimes he received unusual letters as well; one of these letters came from Haim Nachmani from Kfar Saba, who reminded Yaakov in 1964 that 18 years earlier Yaakov had been the godfather of Nachmani's youngest son, Yachin, in Casablanca. This happened while Yaakov spent an extended period of time in Casablanca, waiting for a flight to the United States so that he could embark on a weapons purchasing tour on behalf of the Hagana. Now, in January 1964, the infant Yachin was already a young man who was about to enlist in the IDF. The letter told that the entire family had immigrated to Israel, all of its sons had served in the IDF, and the oldest even "served while your honor was serving as the IDF's Chief of Staff." Haim Nachmani hoped that Yaakov would be glad to hear that Yachin is the seventh member of the Nachmani family to serve in the IDF; he attached a copy of an emotional letter he had sent his son just before his enlistment.

Yaakov was indeed quite glad to hear all of this. He sent both letters to the IDF's brand-new Chief of Staff, Yitzhak Rabin, who had taken on this role on January 1st of that year. A few days later he received Rabin's reply: "Dear Yaakov, thank you so much for sending me Mr. Haim Nachmani's letters. I read them with great interest and great emotion alike. Please pass my gratitude and appreciation along to Mr. Nachmani."<sup>67</sup>

Ilana Leni, the Technion's Executive Secretary, passed Rabin's response to the Nachmani family. According to David Nachmani (that family's oldest son), Haim Nachmani's delight knew no bounds.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> The letter to Yaakov, along with his reply, are in the collection of David Nahmani of Herzliyah.

<sup>68</sup> *Idem*.

Yaakov was a known “Ben-Gurionist”. In early 1965, internal schisms within Mapai were worsening, and the Ben-Gurion / Eshkol rift consumed both Mapai and the public. In anticipation of the Mapai party convention of February 1965, which ultimately split that party in two, Yaakov - then still President of the Technion - declared himself to be on Ben-Gurion’s side. He even wrote an article for a pamphlet, published by Ben-Gurion’s acolytes within the party (under the name “the Mapai faithful”), in which he took it upon himself to represent thousands of IDF troops, who could not express their thoughts in public on account of their military roles, “but who know that Ben-Gurion is correct in his struggle, and who identify with him on a personal level as well.” Yaakov specifically rebuked a group of professors who had criticized Ben-Gurion, writing that they had “injected poison into the souls of the students.”<sup>69</sup>

While Yaakov was in Switzerland in May of 1965, he was briefed on the ongoing struggle between former Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion and current acting Prime Minister Levi Eshkol. The most contentious part of that struggle was “the affair”, or “the Lavon affair”, following “the unfortunate affair” in Egypt in 1954. Yaakov, of course, had played a large role in the investigation of that affair as part of the Olshan - Dori Committee.

This is not the place to describe the tempest that shook the highest echelons of Mapai. Suffice it to say that its direct result was the splitting of that party, with Ben-Gurion and his loyalists starting a new political party known as Reshimat Po’alei Israel (“Rafi”). Yaakov, though he had not been an active member of Mapai, felt a closeness to Rafi for two reasons: his personal loyalty to Ben-Gurion, in spite of their occasional squabbles - and Ben-Gurion’s stated opposition to the corrupt system of bribes and protectionism that had overtaken Mapai.

In a letter to his friend Yosef Almogi, Yaakov described Mapai as a deteriorating shell of a political party. He also criticized Eshkol as a poor substitute for Ben-Gurion. In his opinion, Mapai’s

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<sup>69</sup> “General Dori Supports B-G.”, *Ha’Aretz*, 2/15/1965.



“minority” - Ben-Gurion, Peres, Dayan, Almogi, and their friends, ought to secede and form a new party (Yaakov’s letter preceded the establishment of Rafi by only a few days). Yaakov knew that secession was a very serious affair, but it seemed utterly unacceptable to him to agree with the current state of affairs - in which Eshkol was surrounded by sycophants and lobbyists seeking to preserve their own status, even at the expense of the nation’s well-being. “We must dare to do this [create a new party] even though the dangers are great,” Yaakov wrote. He went on to explain that “to me, there is but one real goal: to save the State of Israel. Levi Eshkol’s behavior is only causing our nation to deteriorate.”<sup>70</sup>

Sometime during Rafi’s first days, Yaakov was asked if he would agree to run for mayor of Haifa against the incumbent Abba Hushi. He gave a mixed answer, writing, “Even if there were any chance of me winning the role of mayor, I would refuse. I am not interested in this role, and I was not made for it. Should I be nominated as city councilmember, I would certainly decline that as well ... my interests lie entirely elsewhere, in areas where I can be of real use.

And yet, I have signed an agreement [to run for mayor] out of the thought that perhaps there may be no better candidate than me in Haifa at the moment. But wouldn’t I be cheating the public if I present myself as a candidate now, and later refuse to fulfill my obligations to them? I will need to consider this at length, in light of my comments above, and I am willing to accept whatever decision is made.”<sup>71</sup>

In early September of 1965, Yaakov and Badana Dori returned to Haifa. Yaakov registered as a Rafi candidate for both Knesset and the Haifa mayor’s race. He appeared in public meetings and came to house parties, hoping that throngs of voters would be swept up in the wake of the many luminaries who had already joined Rafi in support of Ben-Gurion. Some of these notable Rafi members were: Shimon Peres, Yitzhak Navon, Yosef Almogi, poet Natan Alterman, writer and Member of Knesset S. Yizhar (Yizhar Smilansky), and three of the IDF’s former Chiefs of Staff - Yaakov Dori, Moshe Dayan, and Zvi Zur. Shimon Peres declared: “If we get to assemble the next government - Ben-Gurion will be its leader.”<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Dori, Geneva to Yosef Almogi, Haifa, 6/26/1965. In Haifa Municipal Archives, File #00018/2.

<sup>71</sup> Dori, Copenhagen to Almogi, Haifa, 8/20/1965. Idem.

<sup>72</sup> *Davar*, 9/16/1965.

The elections of November 1, 1965, were a great disappointment. HaMa'arakh - a coalition formed between the Mapai (sans Ben-Gurion and Rafi) and United Labor / Po'alei Zion parties - received 45 mandates, with Rafi garnering only 10. Rafi members were also disappointed by their poor showing in Haifa's city elections: HaMa'arakh, under Abba Hushi's leadership, received 10 council members, with Rafi getting only 2. The Ma'arakh's majority on the 21-member city council was almost absolute; it was easy for Abba Hushi to cobble together a coalition of 14 city council members, thus shutting Rafi and the Gachal party out entirely.

It soon became clear that under Yaakov's leadership, Rafi would be a "soft" and non-threatening opposition. Yaakov cared more about civic engagement and examining each issue on its own merits, than he cared about blocking Abba Hushi. In a subsequent election for the mayor's seat, the entire Rafi contingent abstained; Yaakov stated, "our contingent's view of Hushi as mayor will be determined solely by the ways in which he operates the council and city alike, with the full cooperation of each and every voice."<sup>73</sup>

Rafi was in the opposition in Haifa for over a year and a half. Sometimes Yaakov criticized the mayor, and at other times he supported him. In June of 1966, during a discussion about evacuating the slums of Haifa, Yaakov criticized the slow pace of this operation and demanded that it be both expanded and sped up. In his opinion, City Hall was investing its money in the wrong places. For example, he cited two council decisions he saw as wrong-headed: erecting an enormous campus for the University of Haifa, with designs drawn up by renowned Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer; and restyling the Bat-Galim beach as an urban riviera.<sup>74</sup>

Presumably, Yaakov's opposition to the Niemeyer plans was related to another idea he disliked - establishing a University of Haifa in the first place. Yaakov believed that Haifa did not need two academic institutions, and that the Technion was enough. He repeated his opposition to the University of Haifa many times, both during and after his tenure as Technion President; he continued to oppose it even after it became clear that the University of Haifa, having gained the support of Hebrew

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<sup>73</sup> Idem, 11/24/1965.

<sup>74</sup> "Gen. Dori to Haifa City Council: Prioritize Slum Cleanup", *Ha'Aretz*, 6/13/1966.

University, was going to become a reality whether he wanted it to or not. This was just one of the vital subjects on which Yaakov and Abba Hushi disagreed.

The relationship between the two men was often strained, dating as far back as Yaakov's service in the Haifa Hagana; Hushi had been the powerful Secretary of the labor union in that town. As described in Chapter 4, Yaakov did not want to include labor unions as their own units in the Hagana; he preferred to draft each and every union member individually. Hushi insisted; Yaakov dug in his heels, instructing his followers not to give in to Hushi's demands.

During the years of Yaakov's service as Technion President, the two men treated each other with cordial professionalism. Their relationship soured once again when Yaakov objected to the establishment of the University of Haifa, which was among Hushi's most beloved pet projects. In November of 1965, when Yaakov joined the city council, their relationship took yet another turn for the worse.

Shortly before the vote on the Niemeyer plan (an enormous 28-story building, along with smaller auxiliary buildings, at the very top of the Carmel), Yaakov delivered an impassioned speech to the city council: "If our only option were to build a university in Hadar HaCarmel on two dozen or so acres, then the architect would have no choice but to build a skyscraper. But here we are talking about almost 250 acres, an area that would allow each academic unit its own space along with full enjoyment of the wonderful views and climate, with the freedom to continue developing as needed over time without disrupting anyone's work. Why should we create such artificially crowded conditions? Is it just to satisfy an architect's desire to erect another monument to himself? I am convinced that the Niemeyer plan is a disaster to the University because of the rigidity and the crowded conditions it entails ... it will be an obstacle to the growth of the academic departments, which will be trapped under one roof for many years ... it is incumbent upon us to reject this plan."<sup>75</sup> Along with this plea, Yaakov published a long article in *Davar*. He claimed that "the Niemeyer plan is flawed", defining it as "a bombastic plan that was only meant to impress other architects; it goes against the tradition of modest humility that guided Haifa's University Institute."<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Tzadok Eshel, *Abba Hushi: Haifa Man*, Tel Aviv 2002, pp286-287.

<sup>76</sup> *Davar* 2/6/1967.

On February 5, 1967, the Niemeyer plan received its final approval in the city council. 12 council members voted to adopt it and 6 abstained. Yaakov did not even attend that meeting.<sup>77</sup>

In the summer of 1967 talks were held between Rafi and Mapai in Haifa. Yaakov, an opposition member for nearly 2 years, joined a city coalition led by Abba Hushi. He was even “promoted” to Assistant Mayor, a position without pay. Those who wonder about the dramatic change in Rafi’s stance should remember that the six-day war, which had just taken place that June, had thoroughly shaken the country and every one of its citizen. Yaakov, even ahead of others, felt that it was essential to set aside the internecine squabbles and to join forces on both the national and municipal levels. From August 1967 until the end of his term in November 1969, he served as Haifa’s Assistant Mayor.

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Rafi existed for about two and a half years: from late June of 1965 to early 1968, when it joined a three-part coalition under the auspices of Mapai: United Labor - Po’alei Zion - Rafi. At that time Yaakov was very active in party business, and wrote many editorials for the movement’s bulletin, *Mabat Hadash* (“A New Look”).

Most of his articles were published in 1966. They dealt with a wide range of topics, both public affairs and historical analyses of the country’s defenses before 1948. For instance, in the spring of 1966 he told the public all about the liberation of Haifa in 1948. At the end of that article Yaakov called for continued alertness and willingness to sacrifice, even 18 years later, since the dangers have not passed, and the public does not seem to grasp the magnitude of its responsibility. Because of the ever-present danger, Yaakov claimed it was imperative to “sound the alarm, sound the cry for enlistment, for every one of us and all of us together to be defenders and fighters for our nation.”<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Idem, idem.

<sup>78</sup> Yaakov Dori, “In Those Days - At This Time”, *A New Look*, 4/20/1966.

Near Independence Day of 1966, Yaakov revealed heretofore well-kept secrets about his weapons purchasing activities in the United States. At the start of the article he debated whether it was the right time to disclose his methods; he finally determined to “tell a brief story” about the tremendous operation he headed in those days. After telling the tale, which we have told in Chapter 6 of this book, Yaakov went on to discuss other Hagana acquisitions in the first few months of Israel’s statehood.<sup>79</sup>

At times he was called to respond in writing to public concern about civic and economic affairs. That was the case in late May of 1966, when he wrote about the need to help Israel’s police forces, which were sometimes underequipped in their efforts to preserve safety and order.<sup>80</sup> Six weeks or so later, he wrote a stinging piece about irregularities and suspected forgeries in the shipping company Zim, which at the time was a federally-owned enterprise. “This is a scarlet letter for the Ministries of Finance and Economy; as for us, the citizens of this nation, we are all disgraced.”<sup>81</sup>

In the summer of 1966, Yaakov intervened in a conflict between the Technion’s administration and most of the faculty in the architecture department. In a particularly lengthy article, he took the side of the administration despite rather sharp media responses.<sup>82</sup> In general, he was preoccupied with questions of science, in particular applied science, and he frequently editorialized about those as well. In early 1967 he criticized the “captains of our economy” for failing to understand the value of the industrial research taking place in Israel: “Our government’s budget for research and development is meager”, he wrote.<sup>83</sup>

The editorial team at *Mabat Hadash* knew how to capitalize on Yaakov’s wide range of knowledge and experience, as well as his senior ranking in the military and his prestige as a citizen. In October of 1966, they published four chapters of “The Secret Diary of the IDF’s First Chief of Staff, General Yaakov Dori”,<sup>84</sup> in which Yaakov gave previously untold details about internal struggles at the

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<sup>79</sup> “First Revelations by Yaakov Dori: Secret Hagana Mission in U.S.A”, Idem, 5/5/1966.

<sup>80</sup> Dori, “What Do We Want from Israel’s Police?”, Idem, 5/26/1966.

<sup>81</sup> Dori, “Zim’s Pandora’s Box”, Idem, 7/6/1966.

<sup>82</sup> Dori, “About That ‘Squabble’ at the Technion’s Architecture Department”, Idem, 8/17/1966; a response to this article was penned by architect Michael Coen on 10/12/1966.

<sup>83</sup> Dori, “On the Evolution of the Center for Industrial Research in Israel”, Idem, 1/4/1967.

<sup>84</sup> Idem, issues from 3, 10, 17, and 24 October, 1966.

Hagana, resistance against British forces, the early days of Israel's air force, and the efforts to increase Jewish immigration to Israel before 1948.

During the second half of 1967, Yaakov helped Rafi reunite with Mapai. When the party needed a format for presenting a pro / con debate on the subject of reunification, Yaakov represented the "pro" side. The "con" side was represented by Alexander Ravikovicz.<sup>85</sup>

Yaakov's published writing, though usually factual, often included some editorializing. When it came to the IDF, for example, Yaakov defended it as though it were his only child: under no circumstances would he allow anyone to criticize it - even if, as in the spring of 1966, the critic was David Ben-Gurion and the criticism was indirect. In this case, Israel's government (under Levi Eshkol's leadership) decided for the third time in a row to cancel the annual IDF parade in divided Jerusalem; under Ben-Gurion, the IDF had held this parade in three cities at once: Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Haifa. But the Israel-Jordanian truce, which was in effect in the spring of 1966, specified that no armored vehicles or airplanes were to enter Jerusalem - not even for parades. Due to pressure from the United Nations, the government under Eshkol had decided to move the parade to Haifa only.

But Ben-Gurion, in Yaakov's opinion, took things one step too far. On April 20, 1966, he published a "letter to the ministers of the government of Israel", in which he announced that he would not be attending the Haifa parade, because he could not support "the manner in which Prime Minister and Defense Minister Mr. Levi Eshkol is snubbing Jerusalem, for reasons that are entirely unknown."

So far, so good. Yaakov agreed that the government should have been more insistent about holding the parade in Jerusalem. But Ben-Gurion included a back-handed compliment in his letter as well: he praised the IDF's soldiers and officers for following "directions from the elected government", as they must do "even if those orders are distasteful." He also sharply criticized Levi Eshkol, who - in his opinion - was leading a "reign of cowardice and fear".<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> "Towards a Decision on Reunification", Yaakov Dori and Alexander Ravikovicz, Idem, 12/8/1967.

<sup>86</sup> The letter was published in all daily newspapers from April 21, 1966.

These words deeply bothered Yaakov and others. Another Ben-Gurion loyalist, Shimon Peres, declared: “I would not have written a letter in Ben-Gurion’s style.”<sup>87</sup> Yaakov devoted his column in the *Rafi* magazine to analyzing Ben-Gurion’s words; uncharacteristically, he did not withhold any criticism, though he was not pleased at the number of people who found fault with Ben-Gurion’s words. Yaakov wrote:

Some of his words upset me, because something that happens for Ben-Gurion, is that his main point gets lost in a swirl of details. The details then become the main topic, while the main topic - which is right and true - becomes so diluted and overshadowed that it is barely recognizable. And then, it is only natural that Ben-Gurion’s opponents seize on this tactical weakness of his, exploiting the details and causing his main points to become utterly lost... How could Ben-Gurion not have seen, that by saying what he did about the IDF [that it would follow orders even if they were distasteful], he was severely insulting the very foundations of the IDF...<sup>88</sup>

Yaakov’s words were picked up and recirculated by the press. *Yedi’ot Aharonot* wrote: “General Dori: Neither the Government Nor Ben-Gurion in the Right”. That article raised Yaakov’s main complaints about the government’s missteps with respect to the parade in Jerusalem, along with his criticism of Ben-Gurion, who “was severely insulting the very foundations of the IDF.”<sup>89</sup>

Yaakov’s opinion about holding the parade in Haifa, rather than in Jerusalem, was not nearly as extreme as Ben-Gurion’s. While Ben-Gurion returned his tickets to the parade and refused to attend, Yaakov and Badana found their seats and watched the entire event. Yaakov wore his crisp uniform and senior officer’s hat, as he did at every formal IDF event until the end of his life.

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<sup>87</sup> *Davar*, 4/29/1966.

<sup>88</sup> Dori, “The IDF Parade Did Not Go Through the Capital...” *A New Look*, 4/28/1966.

<sup>89</sup> *Yedi’ot Aharonot*, 4/28/1966.



Yaakov and Badana Dori at the IDF Parade in Haifa on Independence Day, 1966. To Yaakov's left - State Comptroller Dr. Y.A. Nebenzahl.

A short while later, Yaakov had to defend another one of his “darlings” - the Hagana. A recent roundtable discussion, which *Ma'ariv* described under the headline “Heads of the Hagana, Etzel, and Lehi Sit Down at the Same Table.”<sup>90</sup> Yaakov refused to participate in the conversation, since the Hagana's delegates, Moshe Sneh and Eliezer Livne, “represented an image that I, along with thousands of other Hagana members, detest.”<sup>91</sup> Yaakov was also surprised by Shimon Peres's participation, as Peres - who was leading Rafi along with Yaakov - played no part in the life of the Hagana.

In a lengthy response to Ge'ula Cohen, the discussion's moderator, Yaakov emphasized that he had long suspected - and the discussion itself bore this out - that the newspaper, its editors, and the moderator herself had been planning all along to elevate the work of Etzel and Lehi, and to minimize the accomplishments of the Hagana. Sneh, in Yaakov's opinion, should not be allowed to bear witness in any way to the Hagana's efforts, because he betrayed the Hagana and became “a stranger” (a

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<sup>90</sup> *Ma'ariv*, from April 4, 15, 24, and 29, 1966. The roundtable discussion was moderated by Geula Cohen. The Hagana was represented by Moshe Sneh, Eliezer Livne, and Yaakov Rittin; Etzel by Menachem Begin, Haim Landau, and Shmuel Katz; and Lehi by Natan Yellin-Mor. Shimon Peres, former Minister of Defense, joined the participants as well.

<sup>91</sup> Dori, “No Better Way to Diminish the Hagana's Standing than to Let it be Represented by Sneh and Livne”, *Ma'ariv*, 5/20/1966.



reference to Sneh's joining the Communist party). The Hagana had, and still has, more appropriate spokespeople, and the event's organizers should never have accepted "poor substitutes."<sup>92</sup>

Yaakov was a very involved and active Rafi member. For him, Rafi was not just a political party but rather a worldview: honor, justice, and a centralized concern for the entire nation - just like things were in "the good old days", before politics ruined everything. One of his letters to *Yedi'on*, Rafi's party journal, makes this clear.

*Yedi'on* had previously published an op-ed piece criticizing the management of Haifa's municipal theatre. The writer, apparently a Rafi member, brought to light some details about wasteful spending and other financial inappropriateness at that institution. Yaakov came out against him, stating, "Under no circumstances should any member of Rafi, or anyone speaking on Rafi's behalf, stray from the factual truth - even when he is warning the public about wrongdoing in a certain public or social institution." After criticizing some of that writer's words, which took issue with the personal behavior of theatre staff, Yaakov returned to the party connection: "It is especially unacceptable to use personal faults ... any Rafi member must refrain from this behavior."<sup>93</sup>

Around that time, two interviewers from the Jerusalem-based student newspaper *Nitzotz* ("Spark") asked Yaakov: "Why did you join Rafi? Isn't it a bit odd that Rafi is where a number of former IDF Chiefs of Staff have ended up? One could get ideas..."

Yaakov immediately grasped where they were going: "A military dictatorship in Israel?!" He allayed the interviewers' concerns, explaining that former Generals were humans too, citizens with equal rights and responsibilities, "and it's no wonder that these men have chosen Rafi. They have spent their careers in positions of great responsibility for national affairs, and their instincts for other issues have been sharpened through years of concern for national security. That's why people like that, myself

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<sup>92</sup> Idem, idem.

<sup>93</sup> Dori, "More On Thea(ter) and Sympathy", *Rafi Journal*, Vol.10, Haifa, 4/28/1966.

included, cannot sit idly by and watch leadership that cannot lead - all of our innate potential wasted on trivialities. That's why I joined Rafi." He added that before the 1965 elections, he felt compelled to act. "I got up and joined a movement led by Ben-Gurion. I believe that when it comes to the most fundamental issues, Ben-Gurion still stands for the same principles that others have long left behind."<sup>94</sup>

Yaakov was more than just an eloquent spokesperson for Rafi. He frequently put his shoulder to the wheel, even when the tasks were menial. In the summer of 1966, at the height of a recession, Rafi was in dire financial straits. Party leaders, at Moshe Dayan's suggestion, determined that they would need 1,000 wealthy party members to donate 600 Israeli Lira a year to the party, on top of the regular party membership dues. 600 IL was quite a sum - equal to an average Israeli's salary at the time. Yaakov, along with the party's Secretary General, Shimon Peres, wrote personal solicitations to the wealthiest Rafi members: "We are sure you'll gladly join this effort... We ourselves will do what we are demanding of others. We will show generosity within our own ranks, rather than asking for help and support from outside." The letter noted that this fundraising effort would be spearheaded by Yaakov Dori and Rina Barkai; it was signed by Shimon Peres, Secretary General, and Yaakov Dori, General.<sup>95</sup>

In the elections to the sixth Knesset, held in the fall of 1965, Yaakov refused to appear near the top of the party listings. He insisted on appearing last on the list - a place of honor, albeit not the "face of the party". So, the ballot ended with poet Nathan Alterman in the 119th slot, and General Yaakov Dori in the 120th.

The six-day war moved Yaakov tremendously, perhaps even more than others. He saw himself as one of the responsible parties for the outcome of the 1948 war; as such, he was forever pained by the IDF's failure in the three battles around Latrun, and the inability to capture the Old City of Jerusalem. He frequently said that had he been in full health during May and June of 1948, the battles around Latrun

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<sup>94</sup> Daniela and Shmuel Shacham, "Why I Am A Ben-Gurionist", *Nitzotz*, 5/11/1966.

<sup>95</sup> A flier from 7/17/1966, BGA, Doc.#1086.

might have gone differently.<sup>96</sup> In 1972, a few months before he died, Yaakov was asked about the battles around Latrun; he replied, “I objected to using recent immigrants in the Latrun attacks, but it seemed that there was no other way. Perhaps, had I been healthier at the time, I might have persuaded Ben-Gurion to defer the attack for lack of trained soldiers. But I was bedridden.”<sup>97</sup>

After the great triumph of the six-day war, especially capturing Old Jerusalem and the entire West Bank, including Latrun (which had been in Jordanian hands since 1948), he simply said, “A great weight has been lifted off my heart”.<sup>98</sup>



Four of the first six IDF Chiefs of Staff in one picture. From left to right: Yaakov Dori, Mordechai Maklef, Haim Laskov, Zvi Tzur.

In the summer of 1967, Yaakov participated in several tours of Jerusalem and the West Bank. These tours were organized by former Chief of Staff Yitzhak Rabin and the commander of Pikud HaMerkaz, General Uzi Narkiss, and they were for former senior IDF leaders only. General Ezer Weizmann

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<sup>96</sup> In conversations with family and on tape, 9/12/1972.

<sup>97</sup> Idem, idem.

<sup>98</sup> Idem.

invited Yaakov to an aerial tour over the newly captured areas, and Yaakov joined enthusiastically. These tours filled him with joy. He returned from them full of satisfaction, expressing his feelings aloud and in writing; the epilogue of this book, his acceptance speech when receiving an honorary Doctorate from the Technion, is an example of the gratitude he felt at the time.

During the second half of 1967, no one could have been happier than Yaakov. Still, he was never completely at ease. Israel might have regained some of its rightful assets, but its struggles were far from over.

## **An Opportune Moment for Reunification**

*A faithful Rafi member, Yaakov found himself in a bind immediately after the great victory of the six-day war: his colleagues, led by Ben-Gurion, were unwilling to forgive Prime Minister Levi Eshkol for his past behavior towards Ben-Gurion, in particular the way that Eshkol pushed Ben-Gurion away from Mapai leadership. Still, this dramatic moment called for reconciliation. There were several members of Rafi who believed that it was time to close the party ranks.*

*Ten days after the battles ended, Yaakov published a long article in Davar<sup>99</sup>, calling for reunification with Mapai. The main motive for this was the danger the nation was in, in spite of - and actually, because of - its victory in the most recent war. This article sparked a series of publications and contacts, which culminated several months later with the birth of the Labor party. It is fairly certain that Yaakov had much to do with this process.*

The IDF's great triumph in this war achieved two major military goals: a near-total destruction of the military capabilities of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria - and the conquest of the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank with Old Jerusalem at its heart, and the Golan Heights. Not only did we thwart our enemies' plans to destroy the people and the nation of Israel; we also created a historic opportunity the likes of which has never been seen before - the chance to trade a military victory for a lasting peace. Peace between Israel and its neighbors will guarantee that Israel will remain safe, independent, and sovereign, enjoying good neighborly relations with the other nations in the region and around the world.

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<sup>99</sup> Dori, "An Opportune Moment for Reunification", *Davar*, 5/20/1967.

We have this chance only because of the surpassing valor of our great warriors, who sacrificed their lives for our security, independence, and sovereignty. Their sacrifice created possibilities that were unthinkable before the war, and we are now in a state of incredible potential - for better and for worse. Even as we mourn our dead, we know that we have exposed ourselves to grave danger: the Arab nations have gained the support of some of the world's superpowers in their quest to avenge their losses in this war. They want to return us to the same constant existential threat, to wipe out the gains we have paid for with the blood of our darling children. It may seem that we have pushed back the horrors of war, but the truth is that we are once again in a state of national emergency that is no less severe than the dread we felt in the days before the war.

Now, as then, we shoulder tremendous responsibility. History commands us to unify in the face of this burden. We must close our ranks with renewed vigor and determination, because the coming political battles will be every bit as cruel and dangerous as the military ones we have recently, gloriously, ended.

Out of a deep concern for the fate of our nation and our people, we must turn our energy towards reuniting our nation. That is how we will maximize our great potential, so that we can trade our phenomenal military victory for a lasting peace. We are called at this time to lend our whole selves to the realization of this goal.

As one correct and vital step towards our goal, Rafi is joining the great workers' party of Israel, Mapai. It portends a reunification of our various labor factions into one great party which will bring

forth our finest leaders, our bravest warriors, our wisest statesmen for the coming political battles.

Beyond party unity, we remain committed to the goal of national unity - the same kind of unity we created just before the war broke out, and to which we contributed along with every other party. We, the members of Rafi, believe that joining Mapai will bolster the national unity government that was established just before the war, and whose strength and vitality today is still essential to our success.

The reunification of Mapai and Rafi is a forward-facing gesture, since at this fateful hour we must make the most of anything that unites our nation. We are not talking merely about the labor party, but about the entire nation, a true national unity, the kind of unity we saw on the battlefield, forged from the bravery and the sacrifices of our soldiers, our sons. May the unity of our warriors guide and inspire us as we continue our struggle.

We are confident that we have a chance to establish a healthy, effective, and responsible democracy at this point, one that will be able to withstand the same kind of stresses that our military withstood. We hope that our impulse to rejoin Mapai, the party which so many of us have helped to construct and lead in the past, is accepted and honored. We are confident that the other political parties that make up our government will see this as the first step in an auspicious unification that will bring us to a perfect democracy in our country.

We face a future, whose light is beginning to break through the darkness that has surrounded us since our 19th Independence Day, when Egyptian ground forces crossed the Suez Canal. But let us not

be blinded by the glory of military victory, because the battles we face now are critical. Until the darkness has lifted completely, we will remain embroiled in a vicious battle; let our victories in the struggles of 1967 bring success and closure to our battles of 1948.

We are ready to invest our whole selves in the effort to win this next political battle. Let us all live in this deep sense of possibility that has been given to us; let us be worthy of the opportunities attained by our magnificent army.