

One Year Later:



A Great Debate in Israel

Barry Rubin

The debate now going on in Israel over government policies, attitudes toward a political settlement, and the Palestinian question is bound to have an important effect on the future of Israel and on the Arab-Israeli conflict in general. It is politically important to understand that there has been a tendency within some Arab circles to mistake Israel's situation. The Arabs have understandably come to value unity very highly, although they have so often found it elusive, and they therefore view the deep splits in Israeli politics as a sign of weakness. After all, even in Beirut—the freest city for ideas in the Arab world—a newspaper editor was indicted on charges of attacking the King of Saudi Arabia and another kidnapped for displeasing a political faction. But Israelis view their disagreements in print and in parliament (the Knesset) as a sign of healthy democratic life and a welcome change from the stifling consensus of the Meir years.

Then too, while Israel was badly shaken by the October, 1973, war—its costs in casualties, economic problems, and diplomatic isolation were severe—stability has largely been regained, or, perhaps more accurately, the new situation is viewed as largely temporary. There is little evidence of the collapse from within that is so often played up in the Arab media. There is no massive emigration, no class warfare, and though belts have been tightened, the standard of living has not declined drastically.

The greatest urgency is felt by the many Israelis who see the postwar situation as offering an opportunity for long-term peace, an opportunity which must not be squandered as similar chances were, they believe, after the 1967 war. Other Israelis see the current situation as a threat, looking with fear on the concessions that would have to be made in

a negotiating process—and also perhaps, even if unwilling to admit it, with a certain fondness on the old days when no compromise or settlement was in sight.

There is, indeed, broad agreement among these two groups on a number of questions. The Israelis may not have won the war diplomatically, but they did, they will tell you, win it militarily. Leon Dycian, a member of the Knesset for the conservative Likud, points out that at the beginning of the war Israel's front lines were weak and unprepared. "Nevertheless," he adds, "Egypt could not come more than six miles east of the Canal. There they were stopped. You can imagine what would have happened if the proper amount of troops, tanks, and artillery had been on the front line." Arie Eliav, a leading "dove" and former Secretary-General of the Labor Party, agrees. "The October War was the greatest Israeli victory, because we were caught with our pants down, and after seven days we started routing [the Arabs]. But for Kissinger and Brezhnev we would have beaten them more badly, and the Arab leaders know it."

Nevertheless, the meaning of the war is in dispute. To the "dove" advocate of concessions leading to a political settlement the war was waged to regain the territories lost by the Arab countries in the 1967 war and not to destroy Israel. On the one hand the military victory of Israel should convince them that the latter object is impossible, but at the same time the good showing of the Arab armies removed the stain of their 1967 humiliation and was the necessary precondition to negotiation. They blame the Meir government for making the 1973 war inevitable by its inflexibility, but they also criticize the government for being unprepared when the war finally did come.

To the "hawk" the Arabs limited the October War only because their advance was stopped by the Israeli army. According to this view the war did not bring any important change in Arab goals, and if

BARRY RUBIN, a free-lance journalist specializing in the Middle East and Africa, has just returned from a five-week sojourn in the Middle East.

U.S. policy is changing, it is due either to American illusions or to a betrayal of Israel. One commentator argued during the October War that Israel's counter-attack "must be so effective, so crushing, so merciless and brutal, that it should cause a national trauma in the collective consciousness of the Arabs. . . . They must know that they did all they could to rout us and that for the attempt they will pay a terrible price." Only then, if even then, would the Arabs give up.

Thus, in an article in *Ha'aretz* on October 9 Dan Shiftan wrote that "Egypt and Syria started the war because they believed they could withstand the price Israel set. The objective of Israeli fighting should be to make the Arabs pay such a price they will not be able to withstand it, a price that will make it clearly obvious that their situation following the war is much worse than that preceding it."

Now this kind of thinking, so characteristic of the last twenty years, is facing a strong challenge. To the "dove" it is simply chauvinistic insanity. It was precisely Israel's overwhelming 1967 victory that intensified the conflict, particularly the occupation of the West Bank, the Sinai, the Gaza Strip, and the Golan by Israeli forces. Boaz Evron, a leading dovish writer, points this out. "For years," he explains, "we have been cautioning the public against the illusion that the Arabs understand only the language of force. It seems that our experience would teach us that force is the only language they do not understand." For, he continued, Israel has won four wars and gained neither peace nor security.

More and more Israelis are arguing that if the Arabs are operating under the illusion that the Israelis can be driven out, equally Israel must abandon any belief that the Arabs and the Palestinians are going to go away. Eliav, whose position is by no means pacifist ("An important lesson of the October War is that we should continue to be strong militarily. We are doves but we are fighting doves."), says: "Israel is now realizing, very slowly, that the only solution with the Arabs is compromise." The obvious next question is with whom will the Israelis compromise? Will this include the Palestinians? What—which territories, which concessions—will they compromise on?

The position of the Israeli right wing is that possession of more territory is the best means to survival and security. They see the October War as proof of their thesis. Since, they believe, the war was another attempt to destroy Israel, the Egyptian and Syrian offensives, had they started from the 1967 borders, would have carried deep into the national heartland. Consequently, they warn of excessive pullbacks which might be suicidal. "Our ability to withdraw from the Golan Heights is very limited, as the last war proved," said General Ariel Sharon, now a Knesset member from the conservative Likud. "The depth we have there is hardly sufficient as it is."

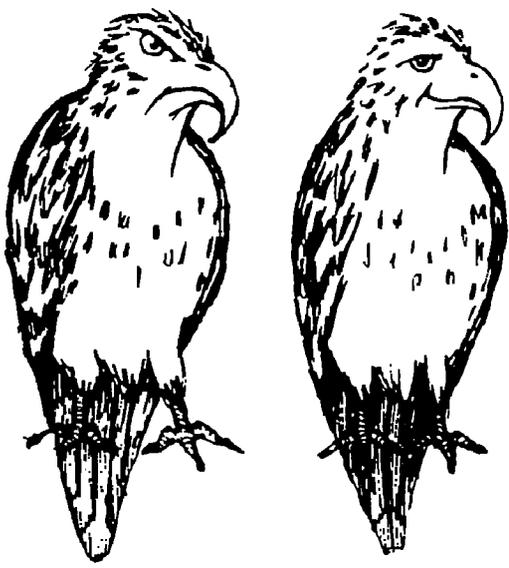
Mattityahu Peled, a reserve general and chairman of the Arab literature department of Tel Aviv University, responded from a dovish perspective. He considers the problem not geographical but political. The Syrians do not bombard Israeli settlements from the Heights because the favorable artillery targets are irresistible, but because the two countries live in a constant state of military confrontation. To end attacks on Israel it is necessary to stabilize relations.

Attacks—such as those at Karyat Shemonah, Maalot, Shamir, and Nahariya—have strengthened the rightist viewpoint. Whatever the intention of those who carried them out, they only succeeded in hardening the Israeli position on negotiations in general and on the possibility of talking with Palestinian representatives in particular. Hatred and mistrust on the part of Israelis toward Arabs, and especially among those Jews originating in Arab countries, were raised to record heights.

The strongest advocates of peace, while condemning the government's reprisal raids in Lebanon and the military's handling of Maalot, were among those who most firmly denounced the massacres. "The Maalot tragedy," wrote Simcha Flapan in *New Outlook* magazine, "is one more proof of the fact that the Palestinian strategy of terrorism, far from being able to endanger or to destroy the State of Israel, is capable of destroying the peace camp in Israel, and of pushing the Israeli society on the path of chauvinism and reaction that contains no hope for justice to the Palestinians." And Eliav added: "Arab terrorists must learn that terror will only bring counter-terror and the deaths of more children on both sides. It is not a military threat to anyone."

There are two other important points of consensus. Everyone, of whatever political position, agrees that U.S. influence and pressure are the decisive factors in deciding the position the government will take on negotiations. The U.S. change of policy is seen as being due to American strategic and economic interests in the region and not to the personal fate or feelings of any one man. Thus President Nixon's resignation is seen as significant mostly from the standpoint of U.S. credibility rather than as bringing about major changes in the country's role. Second, there is agreement that although the Rabin government has only a one-vote majority in the Knesset, it has a great deal of power. It seems unlikely that the Likud opposition would be able to form a government. Thus Rabin has the potential for more flexibility than might appear to an outsider.

Within Israeli politics today there are essentially four approaches to the questions of the post-October War period and to the definition of Israel's negotiating position. These positions might be labeled as "pessimistic hawks," "optimistic hawks," "optimistic doves," and "pessimistic doves," reading roughly from right to left on the political



Janice Stapleton

spectrum. Although these labels seem somewhat flip-pant, they describe the situation accurately.

The position of the hawks is that peace can best be attained through strategic rather than diplomatic means. They want to hold on to the occupied territories for this reason, but they are also conscious of the ideological motivations involved—the unity of the historical “Land of Israel”—and of economic opportunities—the Arab labor supply.

The “pessimistic hawks” are those members of the Likud and of the National Religious Party who think there is movement toward a settlement that would force Israel to give up these lands. They feel the U.S. is supporting such a solution because its interests do not coincide with those of Israel. In short, they fear they are being sold out. As Sharon put it in May: “The disengagement as it stands now has hardly left anything for the last phase of the negotiations. We should have given up much less than we have. We should have resisted American pressure much more strongly and taken a much stronger stand. So far we have been humoring the Americans because of their oil policy and international problems.”

The “pessimistic hawks” see the Rabin government as collaborating in this sell-out, and are doing everything possible to obstruct the process. Some are attempting illegal settlements on the West Bank, notably at Sabastiya in July, where settlers had to be removed by Israeli troops. They also fiercely attack any hint of concession and demand annexation of the territories. They are willing to give up more in the Sinai, but feel that too much has been surrendered in the Golan. These extreme rightists have never been dominant in Israel, and although they have an important effect on public opinion, they could not block any determined effort at a settlement.

If a proannexation, antinegotiation position is unlikely to become accepted, there is a much better chance of victory for those who could be called “optimistic hawks.” While sharing many premises with the “pessimistic hawks,” this group believes that either the United States is not serious about negotiations or the talks are bound to break down anyway, leaving Israel in possession of the territories they

want. They maintain, therefore, that Israel must pacify the United States by making concessions, but should keep them to an absolute minimum.

This perspective, held mostly by conservatives within the Labor Party, and especially by those of the Rafi faction, is close to the policy of Golda Meir’s governments in the period between the 1967 and 1973 wars. It is an empiricist, short-run view based on the belief that little has changed in the world and in the Middle East since last October, but it understands that appearances are important.

About a year before the Sabastiya settlers went out under Likud sponsorship they sought, and received, private support from Minister-Without-Portfolio Israel Galili (the closest friend of Meir’s remaining in Rabin’s cabinet), then Defense Minister Moshe Dayan, and current Defense Minister Shimon Peres—the latter two members of the Rafi faction. But in July, 1974, none of these men could endorse the creation of such roadblocks to negotiations. They must go along with Rabin and with the U.S.—although Dayan endorsed the right of Israeli settlement on the West Bank in the abstract—and hope it will turn out their way in the end.

It is important to understand that there are two different reasons for membership in the Israeli right wing. There are the traditional conservative classes, the relatively small group of private capitalists and the well-to-do professionals (doctors, lawyers, shopkeepers), mostly in the Liberal Party or the Likud. The other is the ideological right wing of traditional revisionist Zionism, embodied in the Herut Party section of the Likud, led by Menachem Begin, and in the “Young Guard” faction of the National Religious Party. The mass base of this latter group is composed of the ultrareligious and the Oriental Jews of the development towns.

Now an extremely significant split may be developing between the sections of the conservative alliance. Some members of the Liberal Party have been adopting more dovish positions, including such important politicians as Benyamin Halevi, a Knesset member, Yisrael Peled, mayor of Ramat Gan, and Shlomo Lahat, mayor of Tel Aviv. Such a realignment could strengthen Premier Yitzhak Rabin’s hand in any showdown over negotiating policy. Equally important is the fact that the Liberals have closer ties to U.S. political and economic thinking than do other sections of the Right and are strongly pro-American. Their shift may be a sign of U.S. desire for a settlement.

A key step in this shift was Liberal participation in the July manifesto sponsored by the dovish “Change” group and signed by twenty-one prominent political figures, including Lahat, Motte Ashkenazi, a leader of the post-October War veterans’ protest groups (whom Likud had been trying to court), and Labor Party leaders Yitzhak Ben-Aharon and Arie

Eliav. The position paper called on the government to take steps "realistically and speedily" to foster understanding between Israelis and Palestinians. "The Palestinian issue," the statement declared, "is the most urgent problem of Israel today. Israel and the Palestinian people must come to an understanding in order to achieve coexistence in peace. Delay in handling the issue only exacerbates it and contributes to our isolation in the world."

Such are the views of the "doves," which are having more and more influence in Israeli politics. They believe that the October War has brought both a challenge and an opportunity: Israel can face reality and make concessions to establish its position in the Middle East, or it can stubbornly refuse and face more years of tension and warfare. They know that the majority of Arabs will not in the foreseeable future accept Israel's existence, but they hope to gain acceptance in practice. Many of them recognize that the Palestinians have just demands and are willing to give up as much as possible, from their standpoint, to redress those grievances.

The "optimistic doves" can be found in every party, but are centered in the ruling Labor Party and in its smaller coalition partners: Mapam, the Independent Liberals, and the Citizens Rights Movement. They are "optimistic" because they believe that the United States and the Rabin government essentially share their perspective, although they believe it both necessary and possible to force Rabin even further in their direction. "We must develop our own positive position and not just be dragged by Kissinger and Nixon," Arie Eliav said, calling the second alternative "a cowardly position."

While the extreme ("pessimistic") hawks advocate annexation of the occupied territories and the moderate ("optimistic") hawks advocate a continuation of the status quo, the "optimistic doves" want the return of almost all of the Golan and the Sinai, and virtually all of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The only point on which they are adamant is that Israel should keep East Jerusalem.

As for a solution to the Palestinian question, they support the creation of a Palestinian state federated with Jordan. Eliav told us that "Jordan is just a name," since its population is mostly Palestinian. It is "better to have two viable states with water resources, natural resources, and outlets to the sea," he explained, "than to have an economically unviable and irredentist state" on the West Bank. Another advocate of this solution agreed, pointing out that what is now Jordan was traditionally part of Palestine and was only separated from it arbitrarily in 1922 by the British. It was King Hussein who was the foreigner—his Hashemite family coming from Western Arabia—installed by the British. If the Palestinians were to overthrow him and turn both Transjordan, the West Bank, and Gaza into a Palestinian state, it would be, several people told me, "a bless-

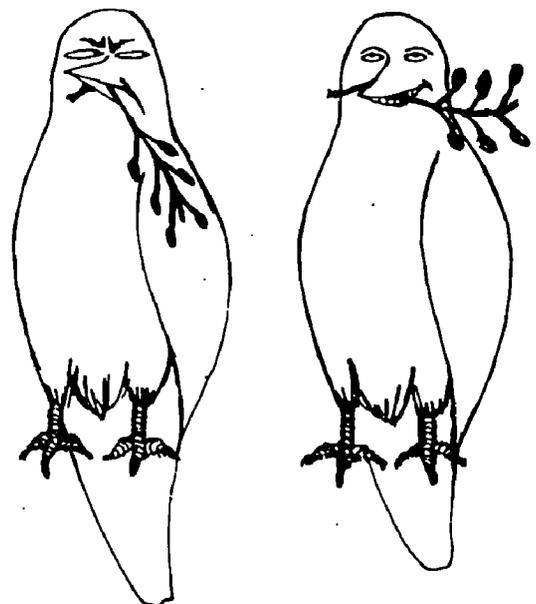
ing." They sincerely believe that the Arab side will accept this position in negotiations.

While the hawks put the emphasis on fear for Israel's survival, the doves stress their profound confidence. One told me: "At this time in history you can no longer destroy a viable state of three million people. There is now a military balance—as shown by the October War—which produces a stalemate. It is similar to the situation between the U.S. and the USSR, with each having enough missiles to destroy the other; but no matter how much either would like to destroy the other it can do so only at the expense of its own destruction. Thus the Arabs could destroy Haifa only at the cost of losing Damascus or could take Tel Aviv only by inviting the destruction of Cairo." The same situation applies to Israel, he continued.

In terms of analyzing Palestinian views, the doves feel that they will accept a state in part of the land, although this will be rejected by an increasingly isolated minority. Rhetorically the demand for the destruction of Israel will remain, but here they draw an analogy to other such situations in the world—the mutual nonrecognition of West Germany and East Germany, for example. A political settlement would be the precondition for the improvement of the status of Israeli Arabs, the payment of compensation by Israel to the Palestinians, and a discussion on the possible return of an agreed-on number of refugees at some future time.

As for Israel's political outlook, they believe that from the 1950's the concern for a superior military position has had priority over diplomatic, social, and economic questions. This outlook was necessary for survival then, they say, but has become dangerously outmoded today.

Those who can be called "pessimistic doves" are the least important of these four groups in terms of size and influence, but their analysis is insightful. Sharing most of the premises of "optimistic doves" in terms of what is desirable, they are much more skeptical of whether the Rabin government, the U.S., and the Israeli public understand these realities.



While U.S. pressure is important, they affirm, in affecting Rabin's policy, it shapes things in a particular way: The Israeli government becomes more concerned about "making peace with the United States than peace with the Arabs," as Uri Avnery, publisher of the influential *Haolom Hazeh*, puts it.

Rather than seeking a cohesive settlement, the government is making the minimum movement necessary to please the U.S. and obtain a continued flow of aid and military supplies. Meanwhile, the U.S. is gaining economic and political influence in the Middle East, using the occupied territories as bargaining chips. While the U.S. is making progress in the short run, neither Israel nor regional stability is being strengthened.

What is necessary, according to this leftist analysis, is not piecemeal trading but a bold new status quo in the Middle East that includes the existence and security of Israel. "This means," Avnery says, "the acceptance of Israel by the major factors in the Middle East, the two most important of these being the Palestinians and Egypt." The preconditions for acceptance by these forces is a complete return of the occupied territories, direct negotiations by Israel with the Palestinians, and Israel's support for an independent Palestinian state on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip.

The "optimistic doves," this argument goes, are only fooling themselves if they believe that anything else will suffice. "If the Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip wish to create a Palestinian state called Palestine with a Palestinian flag, Palestinian money, a Palestinian government, and a seat in the U.N.," Avnery said, this would be the best solution. To bring Jordanian administration back onto the West Bank would only lead to repression and more conflict. And if the Palestine Liberation Organization was then to overthrow Hussein, as some "optimistic doves" favor, it would be a disaster, since the Palestinians would no longer be bound in any way to the negotiated settlement.

Many doves put forth the formula of Israel's recognition of the right of the Palestinians to their state with recognition in turn by the Palestinians and Arabs of the right of Jews to their own state in Israel; in effect, it would be a partition.

The Rabin government itself is essentially a government of pragmatism, shaped by events and by external forces. The pressures on it come from committed hawks and doves, both groups having representatives within the cabinet, and from the United States, in many ways the most important factor of all. True, there has been an important break from many of the views and assumptions of the Golda Meir period and of preceding governments. Rabin is capable of conceiving a diplomatic effort and he is capable of concessions. He is more flexible than his predecessors. Rabin is also

closely tied to the United States, not only by the material situation of Israel today—its relative isolation and need for military supplies and economic aid—but also by personal experience and inclination.

Like any government, the Israeli government will seek the best possible terms for itself, and there is a point beyond which it will not go. Like the Arab governments, it does not have complete control over public opinion—a factor which could cut either way in negotiations. There are also important political differences in the government, only some of which have already been discussed.

The Rabin government would seem to face a basic choice: Either maintain a relatively hard-line position, aiming at maintaining the status quo, or show a willingness to make territorial concessions, aiming at a political settlement. No clear decision has been made either way, and the outcome will of course depend on what the Arabs offer and on what the U.S. demands, as well as on what the Rabin government decides. So far the Israeli government has been content to drift and has not prepared its people for either choice. When concessions are criticized by the Right, they can be blamed on U.S. pressure. When a hard line is taken and doves complain, it can be attributed to the gap between Israel and Arab positions. There is an element of truth in both excuses.

The Israelis often feel that there has been much more discussion and speculation over what they are going to give than over what they are going to get. As Rabin put it: "When I am asked what territory Israel is ready to relinquish, I inquire what steps toward peace the Arabs are proposing on their part. A territorial arrangement may be part of a peace settlement but not otherwise." This leads the government to the view that it must be prepared to wait, unless offered recognition or other benefits in exchange for territories. While waiting would continue to drain Israel (and its neighbors) economically and would probably lead to another war within three years, Rabin is not going to give something for nothing.

There are so many variables affecting the formulation of Israel's policy that it is possible only to list options. A maximalist position could involve a further Israeli withdrawal in the Sinai, turning over a portion of the West Bank to Jordan (a civil administration in the "populated areas"), and maintaining the current line in the Golan. This would signal an interim period until some new event, perhaps a war, would come along to change it. This is the position the government will most likely take if talks break down.

Another option would involve the return of almost all the Sinai to Egypt, except for small border modifications around Eilat and perhaps some sort of special arrangement for Sharm-el-Sheik; a return of the Golan (except the "rim" above Israeli border settlements) to Syria, with some demilitarization agreement, as in the Sinai. The West Bank and Gaza

Strip would be federated with Jordan, Israel holding onto most of East Jerusalem, and with some minor border modifications along Israel's road to Jerusalem. This may be the best deal the government can offer. Obviously there are many possible variations on these two options. If Kissinger can work out an Israeli-Jordanian disengagement as the next step in the negotiating process, it would be an important breakthrough and an indication of Rabin's intentions.

The harder-line interpretation is represented by Galili, the most important representative of the Meir "old guard" in the cabinet. He emphasizes the similarity between the government's current stand and the plank he wrote for the Labor Party's platform before the October War. That position envisioned "Israel with its capital Jerusalem, and an Arab Jordanian-Palestinian state east of Israel, with borders to be determined in negotiations between Israel and Jordan. In this state the independent identity of the Jordanians and the Palestinians will find expressions. . . . Israel opposes the establishment of a third state. . . ." The difference now is that such a program is much closer to realization; it might take place as part of a general agreement involving also Egypt, Syria, and possibly the Palestinians. Yet the cabinet remains united in opposing a Palestinian state, negotiations with the "terrorist organizations," and negotiation with Jordan on a straight disengagement involving an Israeli pullback from the Jordan River Valley. On the last point, it should be noted, compromise is possible.

When asked by a *Jerusalem Post* reporter why he opposed a separate Palestinian state, Galili responded: "It would be an irredentist force working against both Israel and Jordan; a provocative factor which, if allied to other negative forces in world affairs, would be a permanent danger to peace. Such a state would perpetuate the Israel-Arab conflict and would serve as a constant base and springboard for the intensification of that conflict." He added that another objection to its establishment would be the need for Israeli withdrawal to pre-1967 borders, thus leaving no room for negotiation of "secure borders."

Galili was then asked what his reaction would be if a federated Palestinian-Jordanian state were to be taken over by the PLO leadership. He said this would be "a tragedy for the hope of long-term peace and for the fate of that state itself. They would be sovereign to decide on the international socio-political consequences and, of course, the consequences of an aggressive policy if such were adopted by the regime."

In recent months, however, another line (more settlement-oriented than status quo-oriented) has emerged, typified by the statements of Information Minister Aharon Yariv. While within the cabinet consensus, Yariv made a new statement on Israel's attitude toward negotiating with the PLO. On July 12 he said Israel would negotiate with the PLO if it

recognized Israel and terminated hostile activity: "Should the PLO announce that the 1968 Covenant was no longer valid and . . . acknowledge the existence of a Jewish state of Israel, and should this organization announce the cessation of all hostile activities against Israel and indeed terminate these activities—then it should be possible to start negotiating."

While the Right sharply attacked this statement, and Rabin said he would not discuss a Palestinian entity—falling something short of a complete dissociation with Yariv's statement—Yariv did not back down. Rabin then reconciled the differences by saying that the idea that the PLO might "change completely" and abandon the aim of destroying Israel was "so implausible" that the question of whether Israel would negotiate with such a changed PLO was "completely hypothetical."

But what if the PLO position did change? Would there be an opening? The answer might well be "yes."

Again, a relatively small but important option was put forth in a minority resolution in the cabinet, sponsored by five of its members, seeking to negotiate with such Palestinian bodies "as would recognize Israel and its independence and be prepared to reach a lasting peace agreement with Israel based on secure and agreed borders." The resolution said that "efforts must be made to attain a solution to the problem of the Palestinians, if genuine peace negotiations with the Arabs are to ensue." But the resolution failed. Yariv himself abstained, and others who might have supported it wanted to prevent a split. This alternative was aimed at including Palestinians in negotiations leading to a federated state with Jordan. It is still some way from the PLO's position.

Clearly the gap between Israel and the Arab side is wide. First would come the difficulty faced by the Rabin government in giving up any lands on which settlements have been established. The Arab governments would find it equally difficult to recognize Israel or to make any concessions on their 1967 borders. Then there is Israel's refusal to negotiate with representatives of the Palestinians, especially the PLO. This springs from the belief that the PLO is composed of terrorist rather than mass political organizations—an analysis hardly discouraged, Israelis say, by the PLO's latest round of military operations. There is also the problem that recognition of the Palestinians is related to acknowledgment of Israel's debt to the Palestinian people. Finally, there is the Israeli belief that the PLO is not ready to recognize Israel or to stop trying to create a unified state under Palestinian rule. This last point also affects Israel's different attitudes toward neighboring Arab states: Egypt and Jordan are ready for coexistence; Syria is not, as Israel sees it.

Related to Israel's refusal to negotiate with the Palestinians is its preference for a solution to the Palestinian question through a federated Jordanian state. Any one of these differences could sink the Geneva talks. The Arab states cannot reach any final accord without PLO participation. They probably would not be able to agree to a Jordanian solution either, since the PLO opposes this.

Most Israelis are interested in the occupied territories as a means of gaining greater security. But the question of East Jerusalem is different. Jerusalem is wanted for itself, its historic and religious significance, its symbolism. Even nonreligious Israelis feel strongly about their exclusion from the most important Jewish religious site in the world—the Wailing Wall—when the Old City was under Jordanian rule. Although many schemes have been put forward for neutralization, joint rule, division of the city into sectors, and so on, it is difficult to conceive that any Israeli government could give up East Jerusalem. It seems equally difficult to conceive of the Arab governments allowing the city to remain under Israeli control.

Aside from the question of Jerusalem, on which there seems to be a remarkably broad consensus in Israeli society, the average Israeli would seem to harbor a mixture of hawkish and dovish premises and conclusions. In the first place they want peace. Peace is seen as the precondition for economic growth, for social reform, for greater democracy. It becomes possible to attribute magical qualities to such an unknown state of affairs. Many Israelis talk of peace—a long-term, stable settlement—in the same “golden age” terms in which Palestinians speak of the reestablishment of their country.

But the Israeli is also suspicious and skeptical. He is used to war and insecurity and does not confuse hopes with reality. There is no feeling of weakness or fear. People feel they have no choice but to go on. They are willing, though certainly not eager, to go through another war. Almost no Israeli Jew can conceive of supporting a “secular, democratic state.” At worst they believe the Arabs still wish to drive them into the sea; at best they see themselves in such a state as a tolerated minority under Arab rule, and a barely tolerated one at that. This is precisely what they have fought so hard against. Given the specter of Kiyat Shemonah, which deeply affected the country, they will undoubtedly fight all the harder.

All such generalizations are, of course, tenuous. What one can safely say is that the Israeli majority wants peace and will push for it if they see a chance of obtaining it. But they do not feel it is yet in sight. They have not yet thrown their weight on either side in the present debate.

The battle for public support is being waged by both hawks and doves, with the government itself refraining from efforts to influence the people strongly in either direction. This led one dove, Knesset member Marcia Friedman of the Citizens Rights Movement, to remark: “The government must represent the people, but it must also, if necessary, move the country against its will.” But what is the country's will? Clearly the October War has made a difference. The idyll of 1967-73 (Eliav calls it “a six-year LSD trip”) is over. The Six-Day War did not eliminate the conflict, and the belief that Israel could have both occupied territories and de facto peace is gone. More are active on the Right than on the Left, but the public opinion polls are most revealing. A poll conducted by *Ha'aretz* says that the number of Israelis willing to give up parts of the Golan increased from 35.7 per cent at the beginning of the year to 41.2 per cent at the time of the poll in May. Before the October War only 7 per cent took this position. Still, 45.6 per cent of those asked were opposed to any further withdrawal on that front.

At this time it seems that Israelis, like the Arabs after the 1967 war, will be willing to make more concessions as they feel more secure. They will not be frightened into retreat. The hawks see war as inevitable, and if their negotiating stand wins out they are correct in that assessment. Some doves say they would not be surprised if the U.S. were willing to have another war if that is necessary to get Israel to come to terms. But the feeling is that another war would not change very much. After another war both sides would still face the same options, the same conditions.

In Israeli public opinion polls between 15 and 30 per cent of those questioned support the establishment of a separate Palestinian state. The failure to organize this sentiment has been called “one of the great enigmas of Israeli politics.” In the end people tend to support the Labor Party government as the “lesser of two evils” in order to defeat the Right. Still, Israelis are conscious of the Palestinian situation, and many would like to see it improved as long as it would not undermine their own position.

Given the many factors involved and the lack of a clear choice by either the Israeli masses or by the Rabin government on the country's direction in the coming months, that direction will probably be determined primarily by external forces. Most important will be the decisions of the United States, without Nixon now, but more importantly still with Kissinger. Second in importance is the position adopted by Arabs and Palestinians at Geneva. Only by taking these factors into account, as well as their analysis of the situation, will the Rabin government and the Israeli people be able to define their positions in the months to come.