Tel Aviv: The Israeli Strategy
By JAMES RESTON
New York Times (1857-Current file); Jun 9, 1967; ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851 - 2002)
pg. 44

Tel Aviv: The Israeli Strategy

By JAMES RESTON

TEL AVIV, June 8—The Israeli strategy is now very simple. It is not to take prisoners but to smash the Arab war machine and then to hold on to territory and bargain for peace.

Its minimum demands, judging by conversations with high officials here, are fairly clear. Israel is too realistic to expect "peace" from the Arabs—that would require a biological mutation—but it wants an end to the formal state of belligerency imposed on it for almost twenty years.

Israeli Demands

That means certain specific things: First, the right enjoyed by all other sovereign states to use the Suez Canal. Second, recognition by the Arabs of Israel's right of sea passage through the Strait of Tiran and the Gulf of Aqaba. Egypt is going to have to make a choice on this one: The Israeli ships and all other ships bound for Israel are either going to be assured passage through the gulf or the Israeli troops are going to remain to guard that waterway themselves.

There is obviously a split within the Israeli Government, however, over holding on to some other key areas. Premier Eshkol said before the fighting started that his Government had no territorial ambitions. But Gen. Moshe Dayan, the new Defense Minister, who is the hero of the war among the people here today, said yesterday at the Holy City: "We have returned to this most sacred of shrines, never to part with Jerusalem again."

Obviously there is going to be a holy row about this both here and in the religious communities of the world that regard Jerusalem as something above the sovereignty of any nation. Premier Eshkol and Foreign Minister Abba Eban understand this, but General Dayan and some of his military colleagues are likely to oppose negotiations on Jerusalem for as long as they can and that may be a very long time indeed.

The Influentials

Even before this spectacular victory, the armed services of Israel had extraordinary influence in this country, and one of the mysteries of the past twenty years is how a nation living under such constant pressure from abroad avoided being taken over by some popular military leader.

No army, navy or air force leaders of any democratic country today have such close association with the people or so many opportunities to influence public opinion as Dayan and his associates. It is not only that all able-bodied men and women are conscripted into the armed services of Israel for over two years, but men remain in the military reserves up to the age of 49, and report for training for one whole month every year plus one day each week of the year.

The defense of the country has become a way of life. The armed services are part of the educational structure of the nation. They have a great deal to do with the organization of the country's agriculture through the communal farming and defense communities. They have their youth organizations and women's organizations, and on the Jerusalem issue they undoubtedly have a great deal of popular support.

Also, the political map of Israel has changed in this crisis. Premier Eshkol felt obliged to remake his Cabinet before the fighting started and put Dayan into the Defense Ministry against the bitter opposition of several of his oldest and most trusted colleagues, and nobody here is sure Eshkol himself could hold the Government together if Dayan made holding Jerusalem a major political issue.

It is of course too early to be sure about this. This city is still in a mood of emotion about Jerusalem and much will depend later on on what kind of support Israel gets elsewhere on the larger issue of security. Eshkol does not want to go on constantly spending 10 per cent of Israel's gross national product on defense or keep the military leaders of the country in so influential a position as they now enjoy.

In fact, Israel's main diplomatic objective is a U.S. political and military guarantee of the security and integrity of the nation.

U.S. Guarantees

"We realize," one official here said rather bitterly, "that you do not give fool-proof guarantees except to nations where you are obliged to put your own men and do most of the fighting, but even so, with such a guarantee from the United States, all questions would be negotiable."

Nobody here is very interested in anybody else's guarantees with the possible exception of the Soviet Union. References to United Nations and its recent efforts to bring about a settlement of the war are greeted here, even in press conferences, with roars of derisive laughter, and talk of vague American promises is highly unpopular. "I hope we don't give it all away this time." That is the main feeling in Tel Aviv.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.