

The Aspiration for Peace

*by Prime Minister Rabin*

The aspiration for peace has guided, and will continue to guide, the policy of the government. Twenty-six years of war have not in any way altered our view of peace with our neighbors as a central goal of our policy. In the future we will continue to strive to reveal every hope and every spark of hope for the advancement of peace. Our policy is clear. We prefer peace to new military victories, a stable peace, a just peace, an honourable peace, but not peace at any price.

The Six-Day War gave the State of Israel the greatest military victory in Jewish history. However, even this victory did not bring in its wake the peace we hoped for. With that victory, Israel attained lines of defense among the best ever known by the Jewish State. But we were not intoxicated by victory. The Government of Israel was ready to attain a peace agreement with our neighbors, being prepared for territorial compromise. But this readiness met with no response. Under no circumstances will the Government of Israel agree that threats of war, international pressure and terrorist activity shall compel us to return to the situation and the conditions which existed before the Six-Day War. All our efforts - from the end of the Six-Day War to the Yom Kippur War - to advance towards peace came to nought.

Two obstacles were raised by the Arab States on the road to peace:

- (a) The demand for an Israeli commitment to total withdrawal to the lines of June 4, 1967 as a pre-condition for any dialogue;
- (b) Opposition to all direct negotiations between the parties, at every stage of negotiations.

The Yom Kippur War has brought about a change in this attitude of our neighbors, and only this change has made it possible to achieve the separation of forces agreements.

Israel will continue to strive for true peace. True peace is not merely a peace between diplomatic representatives, but peace between the peoples, a peace which finds expression daily, in open borders, across which contact can be established in all spheres of life.

The question arises whether such a peace can be achieved by a sudden transition from war to peace. I should like to hope and believe that this goal can be obtained. Israel will spare no effort to fulfil this aspiration. At the same time we must soberly view the harsh reality as it is. Therefore, we shall simultaneously seek a way to advance towards peace by stages, to advance towards peace by partial arrangements, which will ensure pacification on the battlefield by means of a cease-fire and thinning-out of forces, reducing the dangers of a flare-up or surprise attack. We must strive for arrangements which will create conditions under which we shall be able to test the intentions of each Arab state, whether it is really bound for peace or not.