

WASHINGTON LETTER

by Trude B. Feldman
ISRAELITE'S White House Correspondent

Major General Yitzhak Rabin -- as Israel's new Ambassador to the United States -- made his first public statement before the National Press Club here. He began his address by observing that nine months have passed since the Six-Day War, and that nine months is a considerable stretch of time, especially in the Middle East.

"Yet, it cannot be said that its aftermath stands in any relation to the clear and decisive military victory of last June," the Ambassador said. "The question is what has been achieved in the war, what has not been achieved and what are the main problems confronting Israel today and tomorrow."

Rabin noted that the primary and major achievement of the war was the removal of the immediate threat to the very existence of the State of Israel and its people.

"In the latter part of May and early June of last year, we witnessed a determined attempt on the part of the Arab States to destroy Israel," he stated. "We were faced with our most difficult political and military situation since

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1948. The Six-Day War removed this immediate threat, but it cannot yet be said for how long."

He added that this achievement would have been itself enough, but that Israel has achieved much more than that. Some achievements, he said, can now be seen with certainty; others will emerge in the future.

Gen. Rabin went on to list three obvious achievements:


1) The Arab Armies threatening Israel were beaten. The damage inflicted was, for the most part, on material such as aircraft, tanks, artillery, trucks, and military infrastructure; and to a more limited extent, on manpower. In round figures, about one thousand tanks were destroyed, 450 planes, fourteen artillery pieces of various kinds, and many thousands of vehicles. The Arab forces lost about \$1-1/2 billion dollars worth of equipment. This destruction was of major military significance during the war. The Arab armies ceased to be a factor capable of preventing further Israeli advance beyond the present cease-fire lines. However, today, nine months later, massive Soviet aid has almost entirely replenished the Arab losses, in some cases with equipment of superior quality.

2) The Arab Armies suffered a major blow to their morale and self-confidence in waging a successful war against Israel on their own. It's difficult to evaluate this kind of achievement since we have no way yet of quantifying


psychological factors. However, we learned -- only before the last war -- the difference between Arab logic and our own. Moreover, their own logic does not always dictate their actions. Emotional factors and mass hysteria characterized the events that led up to the Six Day War, despite any logic or rational interests of the Arabs themselves. The real recovery of the Arab forces and restoration of their confidence for another all-out war with us is not a matter of a few months.

3) The major improvement in Israel's lines of defense the current cease-fire lines. Israel holds territories greater in area than she did on June 4th, 1967. Despite that, our border lines today are a great deal shorter than they were then. They lie along natural and artificial obstacles. The fact that the West Bank is under our control has cut the length of our border line by nearly one third; and that border line runs along the natural barrier of the Jordan River. This and the reunion of Jerusalem have removed the danger of shelling of our population concentrations in the heart of Jerusalem and along the coastal region. In the Syrian Sector, too, the constant threat to our border settlements is removed, and we enjoy defense in depth of decisive topographic significance.

To be continued.








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