

ISRAEL TESTS PATIENCE

JERUSALEM (WNS) -- "Time is pressing, time is running short," a senior Israeli official warned. He noted that the Cabinet ministers, who devoted their discussion to the conflict in Lebanon, "are keenly aware that the present situation cannot go on indefinitely" and that Israel, moreover, "will not tolerate a war of attrition" developing in and around Beirut.

According to the official, the general Cabinet feeling was that the negotiations dealing with the evacuation of Palestine Liberation Or-

ganization forces from west Beirut "are not progressing as they should, they are not moving ahead as had been hoped." This tone seemed more somber than at any time since the present negotiations in Beirut began in June under the pressure of Israel's siege around the western part of the city.

Speaking against a backdrop of escalating artillery duels in Beirut between the Israeli Defense Force and the PLO, the senior official warned that Israel would not countenance a "war of attrition." He stress-

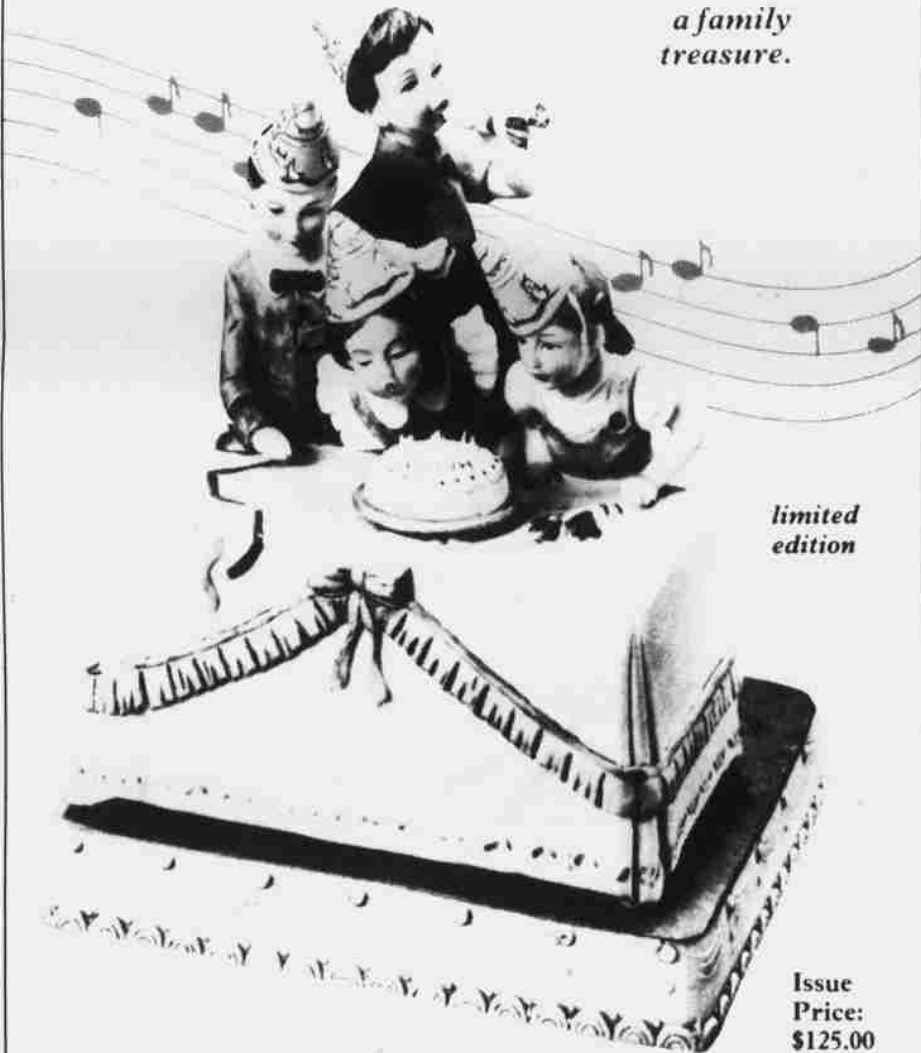
ed that for the past several days it was invariably the PLO that initiated the artillery exchanges. Israel, he added, was reacting with restraint: It was not utilizing the force or firepower at its disposal.

Nevertheless, the implication of the Cabinet meeting appeared to be that while Israel is losing its patience at the diplomatic efforts of special U.S. negotiator Philip Habib, it would continue to give diplomacy more time before resorting to other means to flush out the PLO from west Beirut.

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