

1973 Agranat Commission -Yom Kippur War

Translated by Roni Eshel, December 2010

On October 6, 1973 at 1:55 Pm, in the midst of the observance of Yom Kippur Israel was caught unprepared by coordinated all out war launched by both Egypt and Syria. The date that was chosen for that offensive was not accidental. Both enemies assessed that attacking Israel on the holiest day will hurt the moral of its people, catch them in a huge surprise and will require to mobilize instantaneously large forces including reserves to ward off the advances that were made by the enemies on two fronts in the immediate hours after the war broke out.

The Egyptians crossed the Suez Canal despite the deployment of a series of Israeli military outposts that were located in strategic locations and were able to penetrate into the Sinai and make considerable advances by inflicting heavy casualties on the Israeli forces.

The Syrians also faced Israeli military outposts and contingencies of armored forces they were advancing in the Israeli held Golan Heights with massive armored divisions while inflicting heavy casualties on Israeli armed forces and advancing towards the edge of the Heights – thus threatening to attack civilian centers in the Galilee.

Two to three weeks before the war broke out and more specifically on the 4th and the 5th of October 1973 Israel received intelligence and warnings from a variety of sources that an all out war was imminent. One of the sources about the Egyptians and the Syrians intentions was no other than King Hussein of Jordan who personally arrived secretly in Israel and met with the then Israeli Prime Minister, Golda Meir.

The Minister of defense, [ret.] General Moshe Dayan accepted the Military Intelligence assessment that there was no danger of war, but finally agreed to put the Israel Defense Forces [IDF] on high alert. No reservists were alerted and no significant reinforcements were advanced by Israel on both fronts. It was only on the day – October 6th – that the war broke out the Israeli political and military leaders were convinced about the actual intentions of Egypt and Syria to attack on that day.

Syria threw into the battle in the Golan Height huge military forces. It advanced a total of 1,400 tanks and 1,200 artillery guns. These forces were supported by ground-to-air missiles and hundreds of fighter planes. Facing them were only 177 Israeli tanks two infantry divisions that manned 17 outposts and 11 batteries of cannons. The Syrians were able to advance almost to the edge of the Heights overlooking the Sea of Galilee and a Syrian commando unit overtook the highest point of observation on Mount Hermon from Israeli hands.

The defending Israeli forces suffered great numbers of casualties in their fighting to ward off the attackers and only when the reserve soldiers came as reinforcement the IDF succeeded in blocking the Syrian advances and by October 10th they had to retreat from the entire Golan Heights. The battles though kept raging on. By October 13th the IDF contained the Syrian forces and advanced as close as 40 Kilometers from Damascus where it stayed until the end of the war. On October 21, the IDF was able to recapture the post on the top of Mount Hermon.

On the Egyptian front, on the day that the war broke out the IDF had a deployment of 268 tanks and division of reservists in the military outpost along the canal. The plan that called for pouring fuel into the canal and lighting it in order to prevent the invading Egyptian did not function, thus enabling the Egyptian to cross the canal and take over many of the Israeli post and advance into Sinai. The Egyptian deployed from the start hundreds of thousands of soldiers 400 fighter planes and 2,200 tanks. It also had 2,000 artilleries, 50 batteries of anti-aircraft missiles and large quantities of anti-tanks missiles. From the start the Egyptian did not aspire to re-conquer the Sinai Peninsula. While the IDF was attempting to reorganize and plan counter attacks the front line stabilized 10 kilometers from the canal. The setback that the IDF suffered in the initial battles led to many frictions among the field Generals that lasted much after the war was over. The first significant success for the IDF was on October 14th when it was able to ward off a massive Egyptian attack along the whole front.

Following that critical day the IDF went on the offensive and on the 17th it laid a bridge over the canal that enabled IDF forces to cross the canal into Egypt proper, encircle two Egyptian Corps, capture the Egyptian cities of Suez and Port Said and contain Corps two at the city of Ismailia. At the end of the battles in October 24th [by a ceasefire agreement] the IDF was able to advance 101 Kilometers from Cairo.

The Egyptian casualties in that war, were around 10,000 dead, about 30,000 wounded and 8,000 soldiers were taken prisoners of war. It lost 1,000 tanks and hundreds of a variety of armored vehicles and 283 warplanes and helicopters. The Syrian had 4,000 dead, 10,000 wounded and 386 were taken prisoners of war. They also lost 370 fighter planes, 2,200 tanks and 700 artilleries.

Israel lost in the Yom Kippur War 2,569 soldiers. 7,500 were wounded and 301 became prisoners of war. It lost 102 fighter planes, out of 1,063 damaged tanks 407 were totally ruined.

After the cease fire both the Israeli and the Egyptians arrived at an agreement in talks that were held at the 101 Kilometers from Cairo, of separation of forces on November 11th, 1973. Other agreements were followed and a final one was achieved with Syria on May 31st, 1974.

From a purely military stand point Israel came out as winner in that war. On the Syrian front the IDF warded off the enemy and carried the battles into its own territories. On the Egyptian front the IDF encircled the major forces of the Egyptian army and penetrated deep into its land. The battle finally subsided when Israel decisively had the upper hand.

But despite of these achievements Israel not only paid a high price in human losses, but its public became disillusioned with its leadership and many myths about Israel capability were shattered and led to great demoralization within the Israeli society. It became apparent that Israel is vulnerable, it cannot overtake its enemies easily and swiftly and that the aura of self-confidence was unjustified in the light of unpreparedness and the misguided assessment of crucial intelligence assessments. The Yom Kippur was even coined in Israel as “The Blunder”.

**The Agranat Commission
A National Commission of Inquiry
On the Events Leading to the Yom Kippur War**

[Established on November 21st, 1973]

On November 18, 1973 days after the separation of forces agreement between Israel and Egypt were signed, the Israeli Government under the Premiership of Golda Meir decided to establish a national inquiry Commission to examine:

1. The information that existed prior to the Yom Kippur War with regards to the enemy's actions and its intention to start a war and the assessments of both the authorized civilian and the military leaders of that information.
2. The deployment of the IDF to a war in general its alertness in the days prior to the war and the actions it has taken until it warded off the enemy.

The Commission was not asked to examine the later stages of the war after the IDF has turned the tide and went on the offensive.

The Commission commenced its work few days after the Government's decision. The Commission was headed by the Chief Justice of Israel's Supreme Court, Shimon Agranat and its members were Justice Moshe Landau, State Comptroller Yitzhak Nebenzahl and former IDF Chiefs of Staff, Yigael Yadin and Chaim Laskov.

During its work the Commission held 156 sessions and listen to 90 witnesses. It also received written testimonies from additional 188 military personnel.

The Commission presented an interim report on April 1, 1974. It dealt primarily with the circumstances that led to the surprise at the beginning of the war. It examined the functionality of the Prime Minister, the Defense Minister and

the Heads of the military. The Commission published a second report on July 10, 1974 and a final one – general in nature – that dealt among other things with matter of discipline the maintenance of emergency warehouses and the tactics of conducting a war of containment of enemy's advances.

The Commission reports were kept secret for the most part, and only parts of it were made public. Some of these crucial and highly revealing reports of the early stages of the war will be presented here as well.

The Commission had laid the main responsibility of the intelligence surprise and the lack of the IDF preparedness on the military commanders, while it exonerated the civilian/political leadership from such responsibility. This omission led to public outrage and large demonstration that eventually led the resignation of Prime Minister, Golda Meir and the Defense Minister, Moshe Dayan and the formation of a new Government under the premiership of Yitzhak Rabin.

The Commission's major conclusions:

One major factor underlined the Commission initial assessment. The major cause for the “blunder” as the Yom Kippur War causes were became publicly coined led the Commission to criticize the “conception” that became prevalent in the IDF Intelligence community. They were captives of this erroneous conception about the probability of war. This conception was based on preconceived notions that prevented the proper assessment of relevant intelligence pieces of information even if they came from a variety of sources and warned clearly and specifically about the imminence of a war.

The Commission asserted that the commanders of Military Intelligence stubbornly adhered to the conception that Egypt will not launch a war against Israel unless it could carry an aerial attack deep into Israel mainland. They also held the opinion that Syria will not attack Israel unless it will jointly do it with Egypt. The Commission claims that these factors were not properly re-examined before the war.

This conception also held the view that the Head of the Military Intelligence will be ready and equipped to give an advance warning of the enemy's intention to launch an all out war. Such warning will provide ample time to mobilize the UDF reserves. The Commission held the view that there was no basis for such reliance under the ruling conception on the Chief of the Military Intelligence.

The Commission also asserted that prior to the war the Military Intelligence had multitudes of information but it failed to evaluate those items once again because it was captive of the conception. The high ranking Intelligence personnel

were ready to find excuses for the enemy's deployment along the front lines, despite the magnitude of the amassed forces. Thus, this is how the enemy was able to mislead and surprise the IDF under the pretense of a large exercise.

The Commission also concluded that was a delay in the deployment of the reserve forces while a proper defense plan for the regular army to ward off an all out war by itself was not in place. The Commission noted that even after a warning was issued in the morning of Yom Kippur the armor divisions were not properly deployed along the Suez Canal.

As for the division of responsibility the Commission reported that there was no clear cut definition of whose authority – that of the Prime Minister, the Defense Minister, or the IDF Chief of Staff prevails on matters of national security.

Based on the functioning of the Government on issues of utmost importance on security issues in times of war it should be proper for the government to authorize the Prime Minister to establish a team that will be directly responsible to decide on urgent matters concerning the conduct of the war.

The Agranat Commission consciously refrained from discussing the ministerial responsibility of the political ranks. It put the total blame for the war's blunder on the shoulders of the military command.

The Commission commended the Prime Minister for her conduct in the early and decisive days before the war. With regards to the Minister of Defense the Commission concluded that he acted in accordance of what is required of him.

In the Commission view the IDF carried the sole responsibility for the "blunder" of the war and its conclusions affected not only its highest echelon but many of lesser ranks as well.

As for the IDF Chief of Staff, David ["Dado"] Elazar the Commission concluded the "he bears the responsibility to the situation in the eve of the war both in the assessment of the situation and the lack of the IDF readiness". Upon the conclusion of the Commission General Elazar submitted his resignation to the government on April 1974.

The Chief of the Military Intelligence, General Eli Ze'ira by far the main proponent of the arrogant and the erroneous "conception" the Commission concluded the he holds the main responsibility for the failure of the Intelligence: "The responsibility is that of the Chief of the Intelligence and his deputy who is charge of the Research Branch especially that this is the sole body in the country that deals with Intelligence Research. Both failed to give ample warning. Only at 4:30 AM on Yom Kippur Ze'ira announced, based on newly received information that the enemy plans of launching war. Such short notice prevented to proper recruitment and deployment of the reserves units. Hence the Commission

recommended that Ze'ira cannot continue to remain the chief of the Intelligence. This led to his resignation from military service.

As for the Officer in charge of the Southern Command, General Shmuel [Gorodish] Gonen the Commission concluded "that he did not stand up to his required task and he carries the major part for the dangerous predicament that our forces were caught in". He too resigned from the military service.

Many others of senior military ranks were forced to retire, including additional personnel from the Intelligence branch most notably the head of the Egyptian Desk and the Assistant to the Chief of Intelligence Research.

The conclusions of the Agranat Commission have led to significant changes in the intelligence and the security functions of the country. A special office was created for a special advisor to the Prime Minister on Intelligence affairs. A special unit was established in the Military Intelligence whose main task was to challenge and make opposite assessments to accepted premises. Some years later the Government established the "National Security Council" [1999]. In addition, based on the Commission recommendations the Knesset enacted a "Basic Law" – The Military [1976] that defined the areas of responsibilities between the military and political institutions.

**“Top Secret” minutes [in Hebrew]
of
Meetings held at the Prime Minister Office
On
October 6, 1973 at 08:05
October 7, 1973 at 09:10
October 7, 1973 at 13:40
October 7, 1973 at 14:50
October 7, 1973 at 23:50
October 8, 1973 at 23:50
October 8, 1973 at 19:50
October 9, 1973 at 07:30**

[Released by the Israel State Archives on October 4, 2010]

Full memorandums that were released to the public
were published in Hebrew in:

<http://www.haaretz.co.il/hasite/spages/1192231.html>

**Summary of the documents
and translations of selected excerpts**

Thirty seven years after the Yom Kippur War, the state's archives released eight protocols that chronicle the discussions that were held by the then Prime Minister, Golda Meir with her top advisors in the first four days of the war.

These documents provide an opportunity to witness the reactions and the comments of the leaders of the country in the critical hours before the war broke out and during the ensuing crucial first days of the of the war that Israel faced simultaneously on the Egyptian and the Syrian fronts.

Even in the morning hours of that Yom Kippur the Chief of the IDF Military Intelligence assessed that that the Egyptian President, Anwar Sadat will not launch a war against Israel. Against all the weight of the Defense Minister, Moshe Dayan's advise it was Golda Meir who decided to deploy 200,000 reserve soldiers just in case a war would break out. During the ensuing four days the country top echelon to press the United States to supply military assistance – including hundreds of tanks and 40 fighter planes.

Faced with the dire early stages of the war Golda Meir suggest that she is considering to make a “crazy” move and fly secretly to meet with President Richard Nixon and reveal to him the actual danger that Israel is facing and urge him to assist Israel in the face of this war.

Yom Kippur, October 6, 1973 8:05

Prime minister, Golda Meir calls for an emergency meeting with the heads of the security establishment of the country. Participants were Minister of Defense, Moshe Dayan the IDF Chief of Staff, General David Elazar, the Chief of the Military Intelligence, General Eli Ze'ira, assistant to the Minister of Defense, Former Chief of Staff, General Zvi Tzur, Minister Israel Galili and Yigal Alon. Dayan discusses the possibility of preemptive strike and the recruitment of reserves units. He expresses his objection to a preemptive strike and his objection to Elazar to recruit large forces of reservists. Elazar estimates that if the enemy will attack with the next 10 hours Israel will be ready with its regular forces [with no reserve units]. Elazar claims that by 12 noon of that day Israel is capable to annihilate all of the Syrian air force and if the Syrians plan to attack at 5 PM the Israeli air force will be able to act freely against the Syrian army. Ze'ira expresses his doubt whether Sadat will attack because the Egyptian President is not in a situation where he has to launch a war.

Translated excerpts: [\[The entire protocol can be read in Hebrew on PDF\]](#)

The Defense Minister: As for the United States they said that they do not see preparation for war. They do not know how to explain the departure of the Russian families [of Russian advisers to the Egyptian military]. We have to make an intelligence confrontation with the U.S...

The Prime Minister: asked to send a telegram to Shalev, that Simcha [Dinitz, Israel Ambassador to the U.S.] that arrangement should be made to reach officials at the White House at all times.

Minister of Defense: the point is that on the face of it there is a disagreement with the U.S. The departure of the Russian turned out to be a large issue. It is in the process of execution.

Thousands are leaving. It is essential to reach a common understanding with the Americans on intelligence matters. As for Jordan – all is known at the moment that there is an intensive exchange of coded telegrams between them and the Egyptians and the Syrians. Syria and Egypt will not leave Jordan behind. I suggest that for the time being we should not issue a warning to the King [Hussein]. As for us, if the Jordanians will start to activate their radars we should demolish them. The Egyptian will ask the Jordanians to provide this service and the front line radars are not activated yet but if they will, we will annihilate them.

The Prime Minister: Would we know if they do?

The Chief of the Military Intelligence: Yes.

The Defense Minister: if the Radars will be activated in two hours we will demolish them in two hours and five minutes.

The Minister of Defense: The King may be under great pressure by the Egyptians. They need him very much. Especially with regards to Ramat David [an Israeli air force base in the north of the country]. At the moment we should say nothing to the King.

Now there are two much more serious matters:

1. Preemptive strike
2. The recruitment of the reserves.

Essentially we cannot allow ourselves to execute a preemptive strike this time. If Egypt attacks we'll be able to hit the Syrians. Based on the information that we currently have we cannot do it. Even five minutes ahead of time, it cannot be done...principally; if Egypt will not open fire first we shall not do it as well.

As for calling upon the reserves, the Chief of Staff will later detail our forces. Currently we have 300 tanks in the Sinai and 180 on the [Golan] Heights. "Dado" wants to call upon larger forces. I have my reservations. I suggest recruiting all the reserve units of the Air Force. One armored Corps in Heights and one in the Sinai. This can mount up to about 50-60 thousands soldiers. Such act should be done by 6 PM. As far as the Jordanian front is concerned we should do nothing. If matters will worsen we will call upon all our reserve forces. Otherwise such act will be interpreted that we are starting a war. If I thought that there was no other choice I will call upon all forces. The ones that we shall recruit by 6 PM will be ready in the following morning. If we wish to call upon more reservists at night we could do it. The Chief of Staff is of different opinion on that matter.

The Chief of Staff: I read the telegram that the man [an Egyptian spy, Ashraf Marwan who was the son-in-law of the late Egyptian President, Nasser] sent to Zvi [the Head of the Mossad]. This is an authentic message, though it is a very short notice for us. If the attack in 10 hours we are fully deployed by our regular forces. The strength of the IDF is composed of 25% of regular army and 75% reservists. Consequently we should increase our forces immediately. We need 24 hours to call upon all of our reserve units. ..Those whom we will not recruit today will be able to operate only on Monday morning. It is a loss of one day. This is why I am for proposing large scale recruitment – namely 200,000 soldiers. They will be operative by tomorrow morning-noon. If we call upon less people we will be able to contain the enemy defensively and we'll be very limited...from an international-political impact I do not think that it makes any difference if we

call upon 70,000 or 2000,000. It might have an impact on the Arabs because they might realize that they have lost the element of surprise. On the other hand the recruitment will incriminate us. It will be said that we call our reserves in order to start a war. It is better that they will say so, as long as we win. They are going to it anyway. I'm for a large scale mobilization.

As for a preemptive strike it will give us a great advantage. It will save many lives. If we enter the war with the purpose of containing the enemy and then launch an offensive it will be a serious war.

From an operational stand point we are able today at 12 noon annihilate the entire Syrian air force. We will need additional 30 hours to destroy their missiles batteries...I'm very tempted to do it. We should not decide right now we still have four hours to communicate with the Americans [[the war began at 1:55 PM]...]...

The Prime Minister: What is our capability to independently know what is happening?

The Head of the Military Intelligence: We know what is happening. They are in a situation that they can launch an attack any moment. Their deployment fits both defense and offense.

There are signs now that it's on the offense...Technically and operatively they are ripe for war.

As far as we know everything is ready. But: Despite the fact that they are ready, it is my opinion that they know that they will lose. Sadat is not in situation today that he must make war. All is ready, but it does not have to happen. He knows that the balance of power has been improved [in his favor].

The Prime Minister: There were dates and talks. Is it different this time?

The Head of the Military Intelligence: This time it is different. He [Sadat] has not issued an order yet. It is possible that he may not do...

October 7, 1973 09:10

Participants are Golda Meir, Deputy Prime Minister, Yigal Alon, General Aharon Yariv, Yitzhak Rabin, Director General of the Foreign Office, A. Kidron, M. Gazit, General Y. Li'or.

The Prime Minister is concerned about a possible United Nations Resolution of cease fire that might hurt Israel. She is concerned about urging the Americans to send military equipment to Israel. Yariv proposes to send Rabin to the U.S. in order to present Henry Kissinger with the difficulties that Israel is facing.

Translated excerpts: [\[The entire protocol can be read in Hebrew on PDF\]](#)

The Prime Minister: I told "Dado" few days ago when we met in Jerusalem and listened to assessments – are there things that we want from the Americans? Let us concentrate on those 4-5 essential things and tell Kissinger: "Send them to us immediately". I reiterated this morning: are there things that we have not received that might help...instead I received another list with many items...

I don't object telling Kissinger that is a danger to our villages. It all depends if the Chief of Staff thinks that we can tell him that the current situation will change in 24 hours. I want to give him the real picture. I was not under the impression that all is lost. "Dado" thinks that if we activate the air force and more tanks will be deployed on the Heights the situation will change. We have to tell Kissinger in a convincing way. Last night was very bad. [With regards to the proposals to send Yitzhak Rabin to personally meet with Kissinger] there is no doubt that Yitzhak can explain

the military situation to Kissinger. But as far as political matters, there is no difference, Simcha established good relations with Kissinger...

Yitzhak Rabin: I just returned from the War Room and Gorodish sounded more optimistic. In the North there nothing new...The Syrians tanks are exerting pressure.

The Prime Minister: How do you evaluate the situation?

Rabin: they [the Egyptian] crossed [the Suez] Canal there are bridges. It is not clear why their tanks are not crossing as well. In reality we are not preventing them. Of two of our divisions we have only one third of the tanks. The whole line along the Canal is held by the Egyptians' infantry and plus their ant-tanks missiles. Our additional tanks will arrive much later. General "Bren"'s Corps will arrive first. 20 tanks had already arrived but they are not put yet into battle. The key today is the air force. I believe that until the evening 200 more tanks will arrive to the Southern Command. The recruitment is going well and more tanks are pushed forward. There are, though lack teams – "Bren" has 60 tanks with no soldiers to operate them.

The Prime Minister: if once again we'll have the same experience like that of last night, we should disregard the whole world and let the military get going. We all agreed unanimously yesterday not to launch a preemptive strike. Yesterday, it seems like it happened a month ago. "Dado" told me: "Give me the opportunity". The end result is that we are viewed positively only by the Americans. Still, Kissinger is unable to recruit two-three more countries to call for a cease-fire and have them "return to their positions".

October 7, 1973 13:40

Participants are Golda Meir, Zvi Tzur and General Y. Li'or.

Tzur related to a detailed list of military equipment that Israel needs including 40 Phantom war planes. He laments the fact that the IDF does not have enough tanks carriers [necessary to prevent the wearing out the wheels tracks] of the tanks because there was never a need to call upon 200,000 people in one day.

Translated excerpts: [\[The entire protocol can be read in Hebrew on PDF\]](#)

Assistant to the Defense Minister: We have asked for very long lists and there no response yet. The main difficulty is with the arrival of the Phantoms. We took off the Skyhawks [airplanes]. We asked for 40 Phantoms. The problem is that we don't have an anti-missile block for every plane. The Phantoms have one per two because they fly in pairs. The reason is money. "Mota" [Mordechai Gur, the IDF military attaché' in Washington D.C.] is already very active on that matter...I spoke with Benny Peled [Commander of the Air Force] and he is very busy. They even ready to compromise on airplanes of an older version, because they are not ready at the moment to deal with the more sophisticated version. These planes come without an equipment to ward-off the SAM – 6 anti aircraft missile. In a telegram that we sent today we once again asked for equipment against those missiles but it seems that they [the Americans] do not have it...We also do not have enough tank carriers and this is something that we are very sorry about. But this technique of mobilizing 200,000 people in one day left us with not enough means. We did not foresee a situation where-by we would have to move all tanks into the battle fields in half a day. If we only had three more units of tank carriers we would have been in a better predicament. The tanks are riding on their tracks and their being grinded...there is no indication that we lack military equipment in the battle field. If the war will be over in a week we will have no shortage. Problems will arise only afterwards.

October 7, 1973 14:50

Participants are Golda Meir, Yigal Alon, Israel Galili, Moshe Dayan, A. Kidron, M. Gazit, General Y. Raviv, General Y. Li'or, and Lt. Col. A. Braun. The IDF Chief of Staff joins the meeting at 6 PM.

Dayan reports on his impressions from visiting the battle fields both in the North and in the South. He emphasizes that his assessments are in congruence with that of the Chief of Staff.

He expresses his hope that on the Syrian front is possible to contain the advancements of Syrian fronts. He proposes not to get off the Golan Heights despite the setbacks. In the South he depicts a much dire situation and suggests leaving the wounded at the posts that cannot be reached and if they decide to surrender they should do so. He proposes to retreats and redeploy since the Egyptians were able to amass hundreds of tanks on the eastern side of the Canal. Dayan estimates that Jordan will not enter the war but the IDF should be prepared if it happens. Dayan sees two problems in the future: A. the Arabs will not stop the war at this stage. B. the IDF has equipment problems and it is necessary to appeal to the U.S. for assistance. At this stage, he continues, the IDF is not capable to launch a counter-attack. The participants then discuss whether a bombardment of Damascus will avert the situation. Meir is concerned with the loss of Israel deterrence factor and worried what would the "world say". Dayan replies: the will say that we are "paper tiger".

Translated excerpts: [\[The entire protocol can be read in Hebrew on PDF\]](#)

The Defense Minister: Currently we have no single tank in the northern area of the Bay of Suez. There are 40 tanks in Sharem-Al-Sheik. We should not disperse them...we have to accept the possibility that we will have to evacuate the frontline along the Bay. We should make a great effort to hold to Sharem. We have to start about the possibility of evacuating the Oil City [Ras Sudar].

I'm sure that Jordan will enter the war. We cannot afford not to be prepared. We need minimum preparations...it is possible that they may give free hand to the terrorists to act against us. Now to the ratio of the forces...I underestimated the enemy's force, the weight of his fighting capability, and I exaggerated in estimating our own forces and their capability to withstand the attacks. The Arabs are fighting much better than before. They have plenty of weapons and ammunition. They are hitting our tanks with personally carried anti-tanks missiles. As for the ground-to-air missiles our air force cannot destroy them yet...I don't know if a preemptive strike would have changed the situation drastically.

Here are the numbers of forces for now and for tomorrow morning: on the Egyptian Front: we have 800 tanks and the Egyptians have 2,000. The Syrians have 1,500 tanks and we have 500. We have 250 planes and the Egyptians have 600 and the Syrians 250. We have a difficult

problem in the ratio of forces. They [the enemies] fight well and are covered by an umbrella of missiles. What will be?

Avraham [“Bren”] Adan and Arik [Sharon] already arrived. If we don’t fight over every little enemy position with our 200 tanks and not faced with missiles we will be able to establish a permanent line and not a temporary one. Once they missiles we will attack by tanks. Even if they would deploy 1,500-2,000 tanks [in the Sinai] we will be able to hold the line. We should move in a battalion of paratroopers with bazookas [personally carried relatively short distance anti-armor missile equipment] to guard our essential locations [headquarters and communication centers] that’s our key. We’ll be able to guard Sharem with 40 tanks...at the moment one should not hope that we will carry a counter-attack. Once we can, we will do it. The prevailing situation is that we should guard our country. If they will attempt to take over the Oil City we will not be able to prevent them. All that we have, we distributed. We don’t have many tanks operators and not even many fighter pilots. Many soldiers will die. We have hundreds of casualties. There are many prisoners of war. Everything that we lost was in tough fighting to the bitter end. Every tank and every person that we lost was through fighting. Those who held the line [in the posts along the Canal] were asking Arik and they still do so to come and assist them, they are still fighting. In the Sinai and in the Heights the Egyptians and the Syrians are attacking our armor with personal missiles and they hit our tanks.

This is my honest view. This is how I see the situation. They have plenty of weapons and they are effective. Our moral advantage does not withstand opposite such massive numbers. These numbers are crucial...

The Prime Minister: What is situation with our casualties?

The Defense Minister: There are posts that we don’t have contact with.

The Prime Minister: If we analyze the situation, and in the light of very little support that we have, they may come to us and say: If such is case stay in a place where there are no wars. Let’s take the American as an example: they need the whole world and the Arab while we are not a power to be reckon with, especially that we could hold by our own. I have no illusions. What we tell our nation is one thing. But I am worried about the world would say. As long as the Arabs did not dare, we were perceived as powerful.

The Minister of Defense: They will say “you are a paper tiger”.

The Prime Minister: Between us, the world does not care about anything. They will say: “We gave you weapons and [in the past] you withstood the enemy. And now even the weapons make no difference. “

There is one thing that I do not understand: I thought that we began to hurt them once they crossed the Canal. What happened?

The Defense Minister: We lost tanks. They [the Egyptians] had an effective cover by artillery fire...our airplanes could not get close because of the missiles...It was a Soviet system and a Soviet planning. Three years of preparations...

The Prime Minister: What you suggest – to employ Kissinger in order to have the U.N. Security Council decide on a cease-fire at the positions that we are holding unto now?

The Defense Minister: I buy that...

The Prime Minister: All these years they were telling us, including the friend [the Egyptian spy] of Zvi that Sadat knows that he is bound to lose.

The Defense Minister: I had the feeling that we would get them during the crossing of the Canal. Our assessment was based on the previous war and it was erroneous. We and other as well had a wrong idea what would happen in an attempt to cross the Canal. Maybe tomorrow it

will be proven that I am too pessimistic. Arik wanted to break through and use their bridge to cross the Canal [into the Egyptian territory] Gorodish does not believe in the viability of such action.

Minister Yigal Alon: is there anything in the Nile Valley that can bring disaster upon them if we reach it by air? The Aswan Dam is well protected.

The Defense Minister: This would not cause a disaster. I know of no critical target that may be consequential. The Electric Power of Cairo is well guarded.

Minister Yigal Alon: I am concerned about the Golan than the Sinai because in the Golan we don't have enough [territorial] depth. If we are deployed well they will break through to the Hula Basin and the Galilee. There is no doubt about it.

The Defense Minister: "Dado" divided the air force to two parts: North and South. We may assist our forces in the Golan with half of the air force's maximum capability.

The Prime Minister: There is no reason why they should not continue now after they tested blood.

The Defense Minister: To conquer Israel, to annihilate the Jews...We should tell Kissinger everything, the whole truth. We have to line ourselves with the Americans.

The Prime Minister: "Dado" was at the Government meeting this morning. He was sad. He said that he hopes that tonight there will be a turning point.

The Defense Minister: until the next wave of the Iraqis, the Jordanians and the Syrians – if it was only possible to receive more tanks and fighter planes...we have to tell them the truth...

[The Chief of Staff, David "Dado" Elazar joins the meeting at 6PM]

General Elazar: We are facing a decisive decision. It is possible to make a mistake here. We have three options:

I intended to place our forces along the straights [in the Sinai Peninsula further away from the Canal] with the intention to try and stop the enemy and then launch a counter attack tomorrow or a day afterwards. But according to today's developments I'm not sure that we could hold that line with small forces and then be able to attack.

The second option is deploy by the Passages. Being along the straits is too dangerous we may lose Um Hashiba [a highly logistic and communication bunker] and Refidim [large air force base]. These are heavy prices.

The third option is with a risk of gambling. I consulted with the generals down there - "Bren", Arik and Gorodish. We are deployed with small forces...Arik and "Bren" proposed to attack the Canal, cross over on a bridge and move forward...this is a gamble. These two Corps are the only two forces that we have between the Suez Canal and Tel-Aviv. If we attack the Canal and cross but fail to achieve the mission the result will be broken Corps and then the Iraqis and the Algerians arrive and this means that in two-three days it is a war in Eretz Israel.

I want to go down to Um Hashiba. I am for the option of counter attack but not on the Canal, but rather on the forces that already crossed the Canal. It is possible that towards morning, with 200-300 tanks plus air support will try and break the forces that crossed the Canal and then re-stabilize our forces along the Canal. If this option is successful then we are in a good situation. If it does not succeed it's not fatal. We will still have enough forces to retreat to the Passages and deploy there. This is not a tactical problem. This is a major decision. I'll study it down there and we shall decide by tomorrow morning.

The situation in the Golan is somewhat better. The northern Syrian division was contained. And the Syrian forces were broken. The central division is failing to advance... We attack them with the air force... we lost five airplanes. We were able to annihilate 27 of their 36 missiles batteries...

October 7, 1973 23:50

Participants are Golda Meir, Yigal Alon, Israel Galili, Minister Pinchas Sapir, Yitzhak Rabin, the Head of the Mossad, Zvi Zamir, A. Kidron, M. Gazit, and Y. Li'or.

Rabin reports of his meetings with the commanders of all the three Corps that are deployed in the Sinai. He reports on many casualties and loss of many tanks and the situation on the [Golan] Heights is quite similar.

Rabin then reports that Israel has 80 dead and 400 soldiers wounded in the Southern Front and Gorodish estimates that before Israel takes the offensive there will additional 150-200 dead. When Rabin was asked about the Egyptian casualties he responded that at the moment he has no such information.

Translated excerpts: [\[The entire protocol can be read in Hebrew on PDF\]](#)

[The meeting is held upon the return of Yitzhak Rabin from his visit with the Chief of Staff in Southern Front.]

Yitzhak Rabin: We had a meeting with Gorodish and with commanders of the Corps – the northern under the command of “Bren”; the southern under the command of [General] Albert [Mendler, who was killed later in the battle field] and the central under the command of Arik. Albert’s Corps had many casualties – cannot be sure how many. Many tanks got stuck in the mud. We lost 150 tanks in the Golan and the number in the Sinai. The estimate is by morning we will have reinforcement and we’ll have a total of 650 tanks...

The picture: Egyptian infantry forces crossed the Canal. Most of losses in tanks derived not from enemy’s tanks but from infantrymen carrying anti-tanks missiles. We lost only few tanks in tanks’ battles. The Egyptians crossed with their armors in three in 2-3 locations. The estimate is that at least 350 tanks crossed but most likely close to 500... “Bren” is reporting that they send soldiers who are truly suicidal. In the northern area 40-50 Egyptian soldiers halted one of our divisions. They are fighting. Everyone notes that their commandos are very good. On the other side the soldiers of our Jerusalem division are fighting extraordinarily...

The thoughts: Arik wanted to attack today and rescue three posts along the Canal. “Dado” instructed that if they can do it so be it, but not to remain along the line of the posts.

The thinking is as follows: tomorrow it is necessary to launch a full scale Corps attack with 200 tanks each. “Dado” approved two plans, of “Bren”’s and of Arik’s.

The plan is that not all 400 tanks will be used for the attacks. These are the only tanks between the Canal and Tel-Aviv. We shall attack with one Corps while the other contains the enemy. Air support is essential. The plans of the attacks should be very diligent. They talked about crossing the Canal. “Dado” said: Wait...

Zvi Zamir: The Egyptians are anticipating such an attack by us. The question is where is the best place to execute it? ...

October 8, 1973 09:50

Participants are Golda Meir, Yigal Alon, Israel Galili, Moshe Dayan, David ["Dado"] Elazar, and Y. Li'or.

Prime Minister, Golda Meir grants a permission to Elazar to attack additional military targets of Egypt. Dayan and Alon also approved those targets.

The Chief of Staff suggests that he could propose more targets but they are within the confines of the cities' limits and it may inflict civilian casualties so he has not propose them

Translated excerpts: [\[The entire protocol can be read in Hebrew on PDF\]](#)

Chief of Staff: we are going to attack five missiles batteries in the Port Said region at 10:30AM. I wish to be able to act freely at the Canal area. If our attack succeeds I ask for a permission to attack four additional military targets in the vicinities of the cities of Port Said and Port Fuad.

1. A military/logistic center plus fuel reserves.
2. The sea port of the Navy Command.
3. Marine radar station.
4. Batteries with marine radar systems.

I could have proposed more targets but they are located inside the cities. I therefore propose only the military targets at the Shores. [Golda Meir, Moshe Dayan and Yigal Alon approve the plan]. These are good targets. Let them have some worries. We have to burden them. After all they also are only humans.

October 8, 1973 19:50

Participants are Golda Meir, Yigal Alon, Israel Galili, Former Chief of Staff, Chaim Bar-Lev, Zvi Zamir, M. Gazit, and Y. Li'or.

Both Bar-Lev and Alon are reporting after visiting in both fronts that Israel's situation is improving and enemy forces are beginning to get hurt. Bar-Lev explains that the success of the Syrian and the Egyptians emanated from the fact that they have been provided with the most advanced Soviet tanks that are equipped with Infra Red [for night vision]. Zamir warns that Hussein may enter the war because he is pressured by both Sadat and the Syrian [President] Assad.

Translated excerpts: [\[The entire protocol can be read in Hebrew on PDF\]](#)

General Bar-Lev: Our reserve force arrived to the northern front today. We have more or less pushed them [the Syrians] back to the [initial] lines, though in Rafid they penetrated about 5-6 Kilometers...The question what else do they have? The impression is that they have two more divisions with 200 tanks. They additional force of 150 tanks for the defense of Damascus...

The Prime Minister: what are the conditions of our people?

Bar-Lev: I was not in the field today. Last night I passed by our divisions. The feeling is good. They did a serious work. There are many [Syrian] burned tanks. “Rafal” [Division commander Rephael Eitan] annihilated 150 tanks and Division 7 annihilated additional 120 tanks. The Syrians are not running away. They do not as well as we do, but they have huge quantities so one factor balances the other...

Minister Yigal Alon: The truth is that “Haka” [nick name of Northern Command Commanding General, Yitzhak Hofi] and others estimate that the current forces that are deploying have used all their potential. The things that they have achieved today as compared to yesterday are huge. The Front was wide open yesterday and if the Syrian were more daring they could have gain more successes. They could have reached [kibbutz] Genosar [on the northern shores of the Lake of Galilee]. The air force was active yesterday in containing the Syrians, but it is limited with capabilities...despite his request Haka did not receive the reinforcement that he asking for...hopefully two more divisions may try to advance tonight and join the fighting tomorrow morning. A tough battle is expected. Our forces have also been worn out. Haka does not need artillery. There must be a way make the Syrians realize that every additional day of confrontation will cost them dearly and only in the Front. We shall hit them also in other places. According to estimates the Syrians have 1,000 more tanks...

Bar-Lev: What is happening in the Canal?

General Y. Li'or: At the moment “Bren” moved southward and attempts to contact the captured posts. Arik follows with his own attack. They changed his plans...but he eventually joined “Bren”. They were successful to annihilate an infantry division plus tanks and troop carriers. Corps Commander Albert [Mendler] used all his ammunition but during the night he received reinforcement of a fresh division he then attacked all day and reached the Canal. The Egyptians exerted great pressure on him and was he forced to retreat but early at night he stabilized the line together with Arik and “Bren”

Zvi Zamir: The Egyptians want an area of 10-12 Kilometers [from the Canal] under their control. That's about where they are currently situated. “Bren” is still far from the Canal...there is a need to be cautious of Hussein.

The Prime Minister: He announced twice today that he downed our airplanes. I think that he downs planes with “his talking”., he may not act, but Sadat and Assad are pressuring him...I want to know is our situation in the Canal improved or worsened since noon?

Zvi Zamir: my impression is that it did not improve...

Yigal Alon: We have to consider what I have proposed: Strategic bombing.

The Prime Minister: we said yesterday – strategic targets. This should not be decided by the quorum of the whole government...but if you suggest a certain Headquarter inside Damascus, then for the moment I say no...

October 9, 1973 07:30

Participants are Golda Meir, Yigal Alon, Israel Galili, Moshe Dayan, David Elazar, Eli Ze'ira, Aharon Yariv, M. Gazit, Y. Li'or, Lt. Col. Avner Shalev, A. Braun and Y. Raviv.

Dayan reports that there is a rampant order in the Golan Heights: No retreat in the Golan. Fighting will be until death and we shall not be moved.” Dayan then asked

for a permission to target inside Damascus in order to break the Syrians. We don't have many options on land because the tanks are worn out.

Golda asks why it will break the Syrians. If they were to bomb here it would break us? Elazar responds that there are few targets in Tel-Aviv that can cause much damage.

Golda then raises a "crazy thought" about the possibility of flying to meet face-to-face with President Nixon, who may only show sympathy but it may also bring out his self-pride in response to the success of the Soviets. He may then decide to provide Israel with military equipment to counter the Soviets' equipment. Golda insists on a total secrecy of such mission and says that if she goes, she will do it without her government knowledge.

Translated excerpts: [\[The entire protocol can be read in Hebrew on PDF\]](#)

The Defense Minister: First background. To the best of my estimation there is no good chance to succeed in crossing the Canal. And it would be advisable in the near future not only to not cross but not even get close there and try to throw away the Egyptians...all of our military posts along the Canal are surrounded, except for "Budapest". Our tanks cannot get to the posts. We will have more dead and ruin tanks..."Bren" attempted twice to approach the Canal and failed. He lost 50 tanks and its crews. We have to make a maximum effort to exclude Syria from the war...The forces in the Golan are fighting well. There is a standing order: We do not retreat in the Golan. We shall fight to death and not move. The most significant objective now is to annihilate the Syrian forces. We shall contain at all expense. This morning it went well. I suggest and asked for approval to bomb inside Damascus.

Golda Meir: inside the city?

The Defense Minister: inside the city and its vicinity, to break the Syrians. They fire missile at us for two days. We have to get out from this situation. "Dado" has not enough forces to reach Damascus...we now have as many tanks as we had in the Six Days War. They tanks are worn out. "Dado" does not have enough forces to advance by land to Damascus... We don't have even a single column for a deceptive tactical maneuver...

Chief of Staff, Elazar: The Canal. Our situation is difficult. We could be better off if it would only be tougher for the Syrians. They have reserves. We could not break them early. But Syria can break before the Egyptians. Our guys in the Golan are more optimistic now. At night they were under great pressure but they withstood it...There are 400-800 burned Syrian tanks...Syria is a bad predicament. It is essential to attack to attack Damascus in order to break them...we are 60 Kilometers from Damascus we have to inflict additional wound so that it will hurt [them]...Attacking Damascus is essential for breaking Syria.

The Prime Minister: Why is this should break them? Is bombing here will break us?

General Elazar: heavy bombing here [in Tel-Aviv] on the "Dug out" [the name commonly used for the Military War Room in Tel-Aviv], Ridding [electrical power plants] and Ramat-Aviv will cause great havoc...

Yigal Alon: is Damascus protected by anti-aircraft missiles?

Chief of Staff: They have missiles and anti-aircraft weapons. We may lose airplanes. There are Iraqi forces that are advancing...

General Ze'ira: With regards to Damascus the targets are divided into few groups:

Military Headquarters, Defense Ministry, Air Command - there are not many homes there but still it's inside the city...

The Prime Minister: what is there outside the city that's important?

General Ze'ira: Military Centers.

The Prime Minister: Yesterday the President [Nixon] decided to provide us with Phantoms. I don't want it to stop.

General Ze'ira: They fired missiles during the night. They hit Kibbutz Gevat but houses were empty and no one was hurt...

There are additional and essential targets outside Damascus: The Electrical Plant, The bunker of their air force and oil refineries. These might have an impact but not as much as targets within the city. The air force can do both...

The Prime Minister: let us hit the Defense Ministry and the Military Headquarters. The world views us as criminals anyway.

Minister Alon: I suggest sending an emissary to Simcha [Dinitz] to update him.

The Prime minister: I am for it. What do think, Galili?

Minister Galili: How many missiles were [the Syrians fired at civilian targets] there?

The Prime Minister: Why we do not alert the whole world? Here, look at the newspapers. See the headlines. Where is a mention of these missiles? We have to gather the foreign press...Someone should compose a telegram to Simcha who should report directly to Kissinger about the situation and the reason for decision [to hit military targets in Damascus].

The Defense Minister: We have to explain to Kissinger that we want a swift ending to the war.

The Prime Minister: Kissinger told Simcha: You must win. I want to assemble the Government at 10 AM. But I don't want them to hear that we have already bombed [Damascus]. Let's advance the meeting to 9AM and inform them that it is already in process.

The Defense Minister: I was once again in the Southern Command. The Egyptians' deployment there is such that any attempt to approach the canal will be very costly to us. They have many new tanks and artilleries. Their infantry is good and equipped with anti-tanks missiles. "Bren" charged twice and lost 8 tanks. We cannot get closer to the post along the Canal. Arik suggested that he should cross the Canal on a bridge of our own. We have to bring one. And it is very slow and heavy to transfer. I have doubts.

The Prime Minister: Where does he want to cross?

The Defense Minister: By Quantara [a city along the Eastern side of the Suez Canal, about 160 Kilometers north of Cairo]. Let assume that we allow him but then he will be there with few tanks and the situation will not change. He will have control only on a small area. Even Arik does not think that it will bring a decisive change. As the picture clears now based on information from the three Corps, they cannot conquer the Water front. They lose tanks and are forced to retreat. 200 soldiers lost their lives...The Corps commanders inquired if they can receive more tanks from the Golan. Their tanks are worn out and many tanks are ruined...With our current forces we cannot proceed...maybe after we defeat Syria...As for now we have two options: Create one front and prepare a second line of deployment. If our situation will improve we will attempt to launch an attack.

The Chief of Staff: we have just completed an aerial attack on two Egyptian air bases. Both were damaged and cannot be used any longer.

The Prime Minister: I have to comment on the fact the Soviet did not allow to discuss cease fire at the United Nations Security Council. We are fighting against Syrian and Egyptian soldiers but actually it is a war against Soviet intervention. All the weapons are made by the Soviets. They

prepared them for war. We discuss every single missile with the Americans and they have a legendary abundance...What will happen, Moshe [Dayan]? We will stabilize a front and they will proceed towards us all the time.

The Defense Minister: We have to recruit older ages for service. We have to purchase weapon. This war will not be short. I may even consider recruitment of Jews from overseas. We have to purchase anti-tanks missiles. We have to conduct brief courses for the armor divisions. I do not think that the Southern Front Commander can be in complete charge when Arik is under his command. We have problems. I do not accuse...

Many of our truths went array:

1. We assumed that Syria will be out of war in half a day by attacking them from the air.
2. The Intelligence assessments. Will they start a war or not? How well would they fight?
3. We assumed that if they built bridges we will beat them with our armors. Now we know where the bridges are located and we do nothing.

The Chief of Staff: [time now is 8:25 AM] we will attack Damascus only at 11:55AM.

The Defense Minister: We will have a Government meeting at 10:30 AM...

The Chief of Staff: Our attempt to beat the Egyptians did not succeed. We did not have the proper overall view of the situation. There are three things that can be done:

1. Port Said Region where we annihilated missiles yesterday...that an area plan that we can plow and maybe even conquer. I ordered the Southern Command to plan an offensive for tonight. I will check towards the evening whether it can be executed. I am for conquering [the city] Port Said tonight...it will exert pressure on the Egyptians. I'm looking for exerting pressures. If it will end up well in Damascus I'll ask for [permission to attack] Cairo.
2. The Corps of Albert and "Bren" will be on the defense...Moshe [Dayan] is right there were truth that unveiled as false...
3. One of Corps can attempt to establish a bridgehead. We have a fresh one today. This one just came out of the emergency storages. We entered this battle under an immense pressure with two Corps are getting organized I hope that they will not be subjected today to serious attacks. Arik's Corps is getting organized. There is an option to allow Arik to attack. The situation at the moment is not good.

The Prime Minister: What will happen when he gets there [the other side of the Canal], what will he do?

The Chief of Staff: When he will be on the other side, it is where the Egyptians have two armored divisions; I do not know what are their casualties..."Bren" was hit but he also was effective in hitting them as well, both by ruining tanks, troops carriers and infantry...overall the Egyptians are in no easy predicament, but they are in reasonable situation.

Minister Galili: where are their 650 tanks?

The Chief of Staff: they are in three locations. They already have more than we do [600 tanks]. Corps 252 and 162 will deploy for defense...If Arik can have 12 ours he will get organized. ..we may enter Arik inside tomorrow. Their forces are worn out. We will do to Cairo what we will do beforehand to Damascus.

The Prime Minister: When Arik is on the other side, is he in a trap?

The Chief of Staff: it depends on the circumstances. In today's situation it will not be good. We may have to consider it on Wednesday night. And then, maybe on Thursday or Friday...it also depends on the air force...

The Prime Minister: Tell me in vivid description: he passes, they have tanks etc. what will happen then.

The Chief of Staff: They will attack him. He will move in with his 200 tanks...they will not have air superiority.

The Prime Minister: How it would affect the Front?

The Chief of Staff: Once he is there the Egyptian front is reduced.

General Yariv: He will annihilate many of the missiles. They will divert large forces towards him. If it works, then it is very good.

The Prime Minister: I'm worried that if it fails, it will be a catastrophe. Passing over and remain in their hands.

The Chief of Staff: it is not real in today's conditions...

General Yariv: I spoke with Benny [Peled, the air force Commander]. There is huge damage in the two airfields in Egypt. The Egyptian and the Syrian air forces are not active. Syrian missile downed Syrian fighter plane. Benny says that the Syrian missiles are hardly noticeable...He also says the air force works very hard at the Canal... and blew up four bridges. He thinks that are no more bridges.

General Li'or: There is a report from Simcha Dinitz. He is going with Motta to have a very difficult meeting with Kissinger. He needs a substantial paper and clear cut decision with regards to equipment.

The Prime Minister: I want to raise a crazy thought: what would happen, if in complete secrecy, I together with an adequate military man fly to Washington [D.C.] for 24 hours. What do I mean by that? Introduce the severity of the situation to Nixon directly. [We will tell him] This is what the Russian did. We do not have more than what we have. It is the lives of people against the Soviet system. I will tell him: either you go with us and do for us, but only with equipment. If only we had the complete list in our hands. The most difficult undertaking is how we leave and how we come back. We will look for a way. It is possible that he would say/express only sympathy. Maybe it will instigate his self pride and resent what the Russians are doing to him. I do not promise myself to be successful. But I think that with the exception of military operation, I imagine so, without boasting, this is the main card that we can use with the Americans and it might succeed. There are American tanks in Europe, so what is he doing to us, why does not he give [them to] us?

Minister Galili: They do not perceive the situation. Based on yesterday's report they are not aware of the situation. They estimate that two-three days we finish it.

The Prime Minister: so a military man should clarify to him face-to-face and with no complications the real situation. There is no objective necessity to destroy us.

The Defense Minister: Golda, they will not destroy us.

The Prime Minister: To tell him: They will not destroy us. But it will be at a horrific cost.

The Defense Minister: Six years: the Russians filled them up with equipment and prepared them.

The Prime Minister: This is what I want to bring before him. I want to ask if this is totally crazy.

The Defense Minister: It is. But it needs to be done.

The Prime minister: If it is not entirely crazy I want Dinitz to bring it up before Kissinger and say: this is what I [Golda] want. In total incognito, secrecy. I will go and no one will know. A military man should accompany me. Our spirit has not been broken. And our fighting spirit is

intact. The soldiers are Egyptians, but the whole operation is Russian. Six years they prepared them. The Russian gave them anything that they could absorb.

The Defense Minister: This is the world's strongest missiles deployment. Even Moscow does not have one like it.

The Prime Minister: I will go even without the Government knowledge. Secrecy is essential. We will think I to do it.

Minister Galili: What do you want from him [Nixon]?

The Prime Minister: That he should give all that he has. We want Phantoms [fighter jets] – so he should give. He should regard the battlefield as his own and not allow us exhaust our souls before he provide us with one missile. What I want is not to depict to him a picture as if we are falling apart...here, like in 1948, as I told Ben-Gurion, I can do it. What would happen if we ask that General [Alexander, White House Chief of Staff] Haig will come here incognito. He should come for 48 hours, visit the North and the South, will get a description and decide.

Minister Alon: We should present these two alternatives and he will choose.

The Defense Minister: You should request to visit and Haig may come afterwards. A conversation between you and Nixon and Haig's visit cannot come one instead of the other.

The Prime Minister: I propose that at the 08:00 meeting between Simcha and Dinitz he should tell him privately that I arrived at the conclusion that it is essential to talk with Nixon. I have a feeling that he will understand. I have a need to meet with him because I have a friendly appreciation for him and I would not have done it with anybody else. I don't want to give him a way out by suggesting Haig's visit. He should not be presented with a choice. If I were Nixon I would have said let Haig go. I suggest that Simcha tries.

The Defense Minister: We have to be straight forward with our people.

The Prime Minister: Right.

The Defense Minister: I have an appearance on the television tonight. I can cancel it. I can conduct it by devising the proper phrasing. We have to align with the people. The newspapers present a distorted picture...

The Prime Minister: We need to consider – television or Knesset.

The Defense Minister: to assemble the Knesset is an act of dramatization which I'd rather not do. On television it can be done so it won't be super-dramatic.

The Prime Minister: With regards to the "crazy" idea, for heaven's sake, it stays here.

The Chief of Staff: I have no experience what we say in time of war. In military events you tell the truth. At war it is forbidden to divulge the whole truth. We attack, etc. we have to weigh the issue. Yesterday I was a little optimistic and expressed it in such fashion. I want people in the Southern Front to believe that things are going well in the Golan, and vice-versa.

Minister Alon: I am sorry. What happened yesterday in the Golan was a dramatic turn of events. I also proposed to bombard Damascus. The fact that we are not capable to throw the Egyptians away from the Canal does not mean that they are already in Be'er Sheva [major city in the Negev].

The Defense Minister: we have to coordinate and focus on three elements: Recruitment, containment and attack. We have to say that it is difficult.

The Prime Minister: We have to say that it is not a matter of 24 hours. We have to emphasize what we are faced with. What is standing in front of us so that there will not be an optic mistake...the main thing is that they will destroy us and we will have a comeback. The people should not think that we are beaten. They should not think that we die slowly...

Released Testimonies In October 7, 2008

35 years after the Yom Kippur War secret testimonies before the Agranat Commission were released for public knowledge. Of the 90 in-person testimonies that were given before the Commission, the Israel Defense Forces [IDF] Archives released to the public only 23 testimonies that included those of The then Defense Minister, Moshe Dayan, the then IDF Chief of Staff, General David Elazar, the then Commander of the reserve Corps 143, General Ariel Sharon, and the then Commander of the Southern Front, General Shmuel [Gorodish] Gonen. The testimony of the Prime Minister, Golda Meir was not released.

**The following [full testimonies published in Hebrew in:
<http://www.ynet.co.il/home/0,7340,L-6846,00.html>] are the highlights from the
above testimonies:**

Moshe Dayan: Dayan testified that on the eve of the war he did not think that it was necessary to mobilize the reserves. Dayan presented the Commission members with an intelligence report that was written five months prior to the war that stated that Israel feels secure enough to contain the enemy's initial attack. The report also stated that in this [Southern] Front it is not necessary to mobilize reserve forces. In this Front there will not be much change with the exception of additional artillery of the enemy. [The forces that are deployed] will be sufficient for stopping the enemy; these forces plus the Air Force. Dayan further quoted the report that stated that we rely on the existing forces and the Air force capability to contain an attack that might be launched from either of the two Fronts [the Southern and the Northern]. The Chief of Staff clarified that in the South we have ample forces not to launch a war by us but we feel that we don't need to mobilize reserves. Dayan said that he had based his own assessment based on the opinions of the Ariel Sharon and Chaim Bar-Lev [the first who previously served as the Commander of the Southern Command and the latter who was the IDF Chief of Staff before David Elazar]. Dayan added that he cannot say that his feelings were different on October 5, 1973 with regards to the Southern Command. I had this feeling since May [1973] and I live with it together with two of IDF Chiefs of Staff and the Commanders of the two Fronts. Dayan added that he made countless visits to the army posts along the Suez Canal, the Canal itself, the Air Force and the armor divisions with their 300 tanks. We assumed that if the enemy will attempt to cross the Canal we shall know about it in advance we'll have sufficient forces for containment. It is because by the time you bring in reserves...

Few days before the war broke out Dayan said that he asked the Chief of Staff to check out the Syrians military movements he was told that in the assessment it was written, that the IDF does not know for certain about the Syrians' intentions. Dayan added that there were no additional signs that could have pointed out that the Syrian military had any offensive intention in the short term. Dayan continued from that report that the emergency deployment of the Syrian is viewed as their cumulative apprehensions of Israel's intentions. The report emphasized that Syria assumed that it cannot risk an all out war with Israel without forming an alliance with Egypt. In his testimony Dayan told the Commission that during Yom Kippur it was assumed that the war will start in the evening hours. He said that "Dado" [David Elazar] suggested to send airplanes up to the sky in order to deter both the Syrians and the Egyptians. In the early afternoon, Dayan continued, Israel knew that the war was imminent. At 12 noon, he said, it was already...war is war and the question was whether to mobilize 100,000 or 150,000 reservists. Some said let us mobilize all." The political aspect was decided by the Prime Minister, Golda Meir. I knew that 100,000 are actually 150,000..." said Dayan.

Dayan then explained to the Commission's members that he left for the IDF to decide what actions to take in the battle field. He described that everybody was already on the roads, the war planes were flying and the forces were supposed to be deployed for war. Dayan added that he asked the Chief of Staff a single question and it was with regards to the bridges. Dayan asserted that which ones of the bridges [that the Egyptians will use to cross the Canal] were real and which were fictitious.

In his testimony it was evident that Dayan used the phrase "I do not remember" quite often. When Dayan was asked if there was a hope even on Yom Kippur that the war may not break out he answered that it was a possibility. But a message was received that a certain person [the Egyptian spy] said that the war will start at 6 PM on Yom Kippur. But he added that there was no indication in the field that something is happening...

David ["Dado"] Elazar:

After relating to some tactical issues concerning the deployment of forces and the extent of the responsibilities of Commanders of the Fronts on various operative maneuvers, The IDF Chief of Staff talks about the Government meeting on Tom Kippur at 8:05 AM. He speaks about the "casual" presentation of Dayan about the evacuation of children from the Golan while Golda emphasized the urgency of doing so immediately and not at the eve of the war. "Dado" then comments that it is already the eve of the war. "Dado" testified that since 4 AM of Yom Kippur he was wholly engulfed on the imminence of war and was not directly involved nor was a party to issues concerning cautionary measures. As for the children in the Golan I announced that should be evacuated as should the families in the air force bases in the Sinai. He mentions the discussion in that meeting about Jordan and radar deployment and the fact that he did not relate to that issue.

"Dado" mentions the two main issues that Dayan presented in that meeting. One was the preemptive strike and the other – the mobilization of the reserves. He says that Dayan expressed his objection to a preemptive strike. "Dado" testifies that Dayan argued that Israel cannot allow itself to take such action this time [as opposed to the Six Day War]. Dayan's argument was that based on the information that Israel currently has it will be unjustified to take such action even five minutes before the beginning of a war.

"Dado" described how his demand for a massive reserve mobilization was warded off by Dayan. And that finally a compromise was reached where by Dayan overruled "Dado": One reserve

Corps will be mobilized to the Golan and one to Sinai and all of the reserve fighter pilots. Dayan, according to “Dado” was of the opinion that at that morning all that could be decided was to mobilize the above until 6 PM and if war begins it will be necessary to make further decisions. Dayan’s held the opinion that if Israel will activate massive mobilization of reserves the country will be blamed for starting a war. “Dado” then explains how the regular army should be deployed in time of war. He tells the Commission that he spoke that morning with the Commanders of both Fronts about optimal deployment of the regular army [with no reserves]. He spoke with the Commander of the Northern Front who arrived with a map and showed him where Corps 188 and Division 7 are deployed. “Dado” says that he did not know for sure, based on the report of the Commander of the Southern Front where his forces were deployed. “Dado” says that he reassured the Government that he trusts that the Commander will do his best and will report to him soon. “Dado” met with that Commander at noon and was assured that the Southern Command will be deployed according to plans of “Operation Dovecote”. This operation called for deployment of two Corps along the Canal and a third one behind them. But it became clear that the plans were not executed as such. “Dado” clarifies to the Commission that it is natural to have an operational planning but in reality and in time of war, plans that are usually made in time of peace cannot be fully materialized.

Shmuel [Gorodish] Gonen: While the war was in its crucial moments, the Commander of the Southern Front was dismissed from his post and was replaced by the former IDF Chief of Staff, Chaim Bar-Lev. In his testimony before the Commission Gonen recounted that on the eve of the war his request for reinforcement was refused. He also testified that prior to the Yom Kippur holiday he wanted to cancel vacation leaves but it was rejected by the Head of Operation of the IDF. Gonen testified that officer that he told if he does not reverse his ruling he’d bring this issue directly to the IDF Chief of Staff. Only then did the officer relent.

He further testified that on that day he also demanded to provide equipment and ammunitions to the tanks in the Sinai but the response was yes to ammunition and no to essential equipment, though his request for an additional Division was approved. When he asked for more artillery it was denied and so was his request to have reinforcement to be sent to Nahal Yam in the Northern Sinai Peninsula.

Gonen further testified that he demanded that a contingency from the IDF Officers School be deployed along the straights in the Sinai and this too was not approved. Other requests, according to his testimony, that included infantry forces, bridges for crossing waterways and mobile radar equipment were not approved as well.

Less than 24 hours before the war broke out he held a meeting with his staff and an additional one at 1 AM. According to him the matters that were discussed were how to increase the alertness in the army posts along the [Suez] Canal and what measures would be necessary to contain an Egyptian attack.

Gonen further testified that at noon, on the day prior to the war he was not convinced that it would occur on the following day. Regardless, he gave an order to mobilize reserves that would be in charge of disseminating slogans and activate systems for the purpose of calling upon reserve units to report to duty in case of emergency. This request, according to him was not approved.

Gonen testified that on the eve of the war he demanded to make an experiment of using fuel for the purpose of burning the Canal if and when the enemy attempts to cross it. Such an act required a special authorization from the IDF high command but the response did not arrive on time. The

war already broke out. He said that early on the day of the war he was summoned to arrive immediately to a meeting with the IDF Chief of Staff. He said that the Chief of Staff said that he was going to a Government meeting and demand global mobilization of reserves and that he is going to propose a preemptive attack against Syria at 12:30 or 13:00 hours against its air force and the missiles bases.

When asked about the ground deployment in the Sinai and the non-activation of the “Dovecote Operation”, Gonen responded that he consulted with “Dado” and it was decided not to execute it because it might prematurely alert the Egyptians, who would then change their plans and use it against the deployment of the IDF forces. He added that he believed that the war would start at 18:00.

When Gonen was asked by the Commission members where he made a mistake he responded that the Egyptians planned this war for many years and each and every Egyptian soldier knew his task and executed it well. As for me, I could not even dream about a possibility that we will not be able to stop them along the water edge or 2-3 kilometers inland. Actually, in reality, he added we were not able to stop them at the water line, we have also tried to launch a counter attack with an entire Corps and we did not succeed. He said that he was actually removed from his post as the Commander of the Southern Front, after the appointment of Bar-Lev. Formally it was stated that I was replaced but in reality I was dismissed of my command. “I’m going to vindicate myself and restore the dignity of my reputation. I do not accept the grounds for dismissal.”

Ariel [Arik] Sharon: In response to the Chairman of the Commission as to what happened in his Corps on the 7th and the 8th [of October], Sharon who from the start of the war began a bitter feud with his colleagues and superiors about the conduct of the war replied that one single issue that causes the greatest damage was that the IDF high command was absent from the battle fields. Sharon told the Commission that in the morning hours of the 7th he contacted Gonen who was in the Commanding Post in Um Hashiba and tried to get a picture of what is happening and his impression was that no one really knew. I advised Gonen to order all the commanders to leave the War Rooms and take their officers to the field to witness in their own eyes what was going on. Sharon suggested it because the overall picture in the War Room was very dire also because of the increasing numbers of casualties. Sharon told the Commission that he communicated with Posts along the Canal and realized that they were under siege and he felt that in his mind the first priority was to evacuate the soldiers. He said that it took years to establish the doctrine in the IDF that the wounded are not left behind and out soldiers are not left to the mercy of the enemy. Sharon related to the 8th and protested that while the two Corps exerted their great efforts in containing the attacks, the Commander of the Southern Front, or his Deputy, was not there to coordinate between the fighting forces. Consequently, many problems resulted from it. In his testimony, Sharon referred to personal encounters and lack of communication. He said that when he tried to take issues on a certain action the response that he received were brief and the radio communications were abruptly disconnected and they shut up his mouth. Bar-Lev and Gonen were not in the field, you could not talk to someone with authority. He then added that he does not want to tarnish the reputation of “Dado” and Gorodish as distinguished warriors who are both very courageous. The problem was, argued Sharon that they did not understand what was happening in the battlefield. Sharon insisted that he was there every moment and though the war was hell-like he had to be by his troops at all times.

Sharon also criticized the decisions regarding the maneuverability of the forces and claimed that they were erroneous while he saw from early on an opportunity to hit the Egyptians. He claimed

that he was unjustifiably was accused of refusing, or ignoring orders of his superiors. He insisted that it was already established that such orders never reached him. One of the Commission members presented Sharon with a complaint that was made by Gonen to “Dado” that Sharon received an order to attack so that it would release the pressure off another Corps, but he refused to do so. Sharon responded that the complaint made by Gonen was baseless. Sharon insisted that Gonen actually did not issue an order to attack but rather the opposite: Not to attack.

Sharon described that there were instances that an order was issued to him being the Corps Chief Commander and then the Southern Command checked with commanders of his Divisions to find out whether the order was conveyed to them and what was its content? Sharon further claimed that there were instances that he reported about certain deployment and the Southern Command would call his subordinates to verify whether his report was true and accurate.

Sharon told the Commission that the opening moves of that war that impacted the morale of the IDF required that actions should be taken to overcome the enemy in every section of the Front and such action could not be executed by one Corps.

He said that in order to withstand the difficult effort the only way was to set a personal example. He also testifies that he had no say about appointments and promotions within his own forces. And there were instances where he saw a battalion commander who when asked told him that he was just have been posted as a new commander.

Sharon told the Commission that he complied with orders that he thought were incorrect though he later regretted it. He claimed that he has been depicted as a person who carries the banner of disobedience, though it was not based on reality. He said that his Corps had 500 dead and 200 wounded as a result of fierce battles and insisted that what is needed to be done after the war is to keep the military under iron hand.

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