

first two decades of Israel's existence, most of its retired career officers went back to their kibbutz or made second careers for themselves in private business, government corporations, the universities, and the diplomatic and civil service. And, of course, they displaced many civilians who had aspired to these jobs. But, following the 1967 Six Day War, more and more former generals — popular heroes, respected administrators, members of the most highly-respected profession in Israel — as a result of pressures put upon them by all political parties — discovered politics. They discovered it in the party hierarchies, the Parliament (*Knesset*), and in the Cabinet itself.

Not only that. The waiting time between leaving the active military and entering active politics became shorter and shorter. Yigal Allon, a very popular military hero of the 1948 War of Independence, waited years before achieving his present political prominence as Foreign Minister. Moshe Dayan didn't wait quite as long, but a respectable period elapsed between his leaving the Army and his becoming first the Minister of Agriculture and later Defence Minister. On the other hand, when Haim Bar-Lev left the Army a few years ago, he became the first Chief of Staff to shift almost immediately to a Cabinet post. And then there is the case of the current Prime Minister, Yitzchak Rabin. Before assuming the premiership, he was Labour Minister. Before that he was Ambassador to the United States, Israel's most important diplomatic assignment. And before that he was the Chief of Staff who planned and led the Six Day War.

This "parachuting into politics", as the Israelis phrase it, or this "habit of graduating generals to high political positions", as C. L. Sulzberger phrased it in the *New York Times*, is completely legal, proper and democratic — even if the shrouds of the parachutes sometimes cut off the hopes of civilian party workers for seats in the *Knesset* and the Cabinet. But during and after the October War something new occurred that made this practice, while still legal and democratic, perhaps a little less proper. The unexpected Yom Kippur War necessitated the call-up of experienced former generals who had entered or were about to enter the swirling waters of Israeli politics. Among them was Ariel, or Arik, Sharon. The Sharon case — the most famous but not the only one — raised the important question of the politicization of former military men who, after tasting politics and liking the taste, find themselves back in uniform again.

Sharon had left the army in July 1973 and formed the *Likud* to oppose the Government in the forthcoming elections. He was recalled into service for the Yom Kippur War and was severely critical of its conduct.

Professor Abel Jacob of the City University of New York addressed himself to this question rather soon after the War, in December 1973. As a solution, he proposed the promulgation of a law to keep retired officers out of politics for five years or so, in order to weaken their contacts with the professional military. The problem referred to by Professor Jacob and exemplified so prominently and persistently by General Sharon has slowly — and it would seem reluctantly — forced the Israeli Government to wrestle with what to do about military commands for prominent politicians, especially MKs, members of the *Knesset*, the Israeli Parliament. Convinced that another Arab-Israel war is inevitable if not imminent, Sharon, an MK, tried for most of 1974 to get a senior field command in the Army. The only way he could do it was to give up his seat in the national legislature, for the Government's way out of its dilemma was to bar *Knesset* members from holding senior appointments in the reserves.

For the time being, the immediate problem posed by the Sharon case has been solved. But there are other ex-generals in the Cabinet and the *Knesset*. It remains to be seen whether the solution of the Sharon case will have an effect on the longer-range problem of former military men in politics. While some Israelis worry about it, others do not. Dr. Mattityahu Peled, a retired major-general, has argued (in the paraphrased words of another observer) that "the mistaken notions about greater security (have) led to deterioration in the important system of checks and balances in the military-civilian relationship. (In regard to the Yom Kippur War) the civilian leadership abdicated its responsibility of control over military policy . . . (to) Moshe Dayan, . . ." — a former general himself.

But, on the other hand, a member of the Agranat Commission — who has asked not to be identified — is not very concerned. "If," he said, "the Americans after the Second World War could make General Marshall at one time Secretary of State and at another Secretary of Defence — and if General Eisenhower could later become Mr. President Eisenhower — without any damage to civilian control of the American military, I don't see any great danger if some of our ex-generals become prime ministers and politicians too."

*Problem
of military
commands
for prominent
politicians*