

I spent an hour, ate a sandwich, had an espresso at the press building on Kaplan Street in Tel Aviv. A khamsin, that blistering wind from the southeast, was sweeping the country; everyone looked a little haggard, even the new war correspondents, freshly arrived in Abercrombie foreign-correspondent shirts with the beige epaulets of the active-verb man. Israeli officers and couriers dashed in and out of the building with its snakes of television cables in front; the canteen was crowded with hands reaching for food and drink; a crowd of Olivetti

"Briefing, gentlemen, in five minutes!" a colonel announced through cupped hands. A few stirred. One, who

Moshe Dor, poet. He looked like an exhausted owl behind his glasses. "Tragical situation it is," he said. "Yes, we won this time the battle again—at all the cost. But they intended to destroy us. Now either we remain strong and fight these wars every six or seven years until they bleed us to death or ruin our Jewish spirit. Or we give up to international pressure, squeezed and chewed up and spit out—and bleed to death just now. It is tragical situation for three million people who only wish to live on this sandy bar of land, yet here we are."

Geishon Shaked, professor of drama and literature at Hebrew University: "Seventy thousand men and tanks overwhelmed four hundred boys at the Suez Canal—a great victory! They should be proud! And we held them, and three days later we were beating them again! But now, if they say they have a great demonstration of pride, will they talk to us and make a peace? Oh, a pleasure, let them declare a victory. Only let them now talk and make a peace."

Night and solitude. The babies must miss their daddies. Battles are the busiest human activity, just as the garrison waiting I recall from my Army days is the most glacially slow. Howling jets overhead, heading to the Sinai and back. Death's isolation, its solitude, here a few miles from the battle. Pumping explosions, dull kettles pounded together. Men who feel lonely are bombing bridges, missile sites, the canal; men who feel lonely are sending Russian SAM-6s up to knock down these young men.

Sleepless. Tanks cranking by. Jets. Trucks. Julie Munshin used to tell me, "The important thing is to lose desire." He's dead now; he's lost it.

What he meant was deeper, more terrible: to lose caring, to stop caring. It's the way out, all the way out.

Millicent, a fat, heavy-featured, lumbering girl of 23, worked in a hospital with a ward of skin-seared tankers. A hit tank explodes, the gas burning, blackening, shriveling. They sent her away when they saw what was happening to her. She tried to tell me about it, but her eyes filled with tears.

"It's rather difficult to explain," she said, her voice very British and controlled as the face flushed and darkened.

Again last night I watched the war on

