

ONCE MORE A REBEL

In January 1970 Begin's deputy and confidant in Herut, Arie Ben Eliezer, died of cancer. Ben Eliezer was Begin's close friend; he was the man who had had him discharged from the Anders Army, was responsible for Begin's appointment as Etzel commander, and was also the one who convinced Begin to return to the political arena after his retirement following the results of the second elections. After Ben Eliezer's death, Begin had no more old allies. Before the latest election, Begin's former Etzel deputy, Yaakov Meridor, chose to abandon politics and focus on his shipping company. Begin's relationship with Bader was at a low ebb after he did not appoint him as a Herut minister, and his relations with Weizmann were strained.

Begin engaged in many political fights in his life—these often filled him with energy—but always with the support of his party, his metaphoric family. When he realized that his own house, Herut, had stopped supporting him, he chose to retire, first when he was criticized in-house over the party's losses at the second legislative elections and then at Herut's eighth conference, when Tamir and Paglin voiced opposition. Now his loneliness at the top influenced his surprising decision to again retire. His essential justification was the Rogers Initiative, designed to bring about a cease-fire between Egypt and Israel in Sinai. Newly elected U.S. president Richard Nixon supported the initiative, together with Secretary of State William Rogers (after whom the initiative was named).

The Rogers Initiative was a new version of a proposal by U.N. mediator Gunnar Jarring, a Swedish diplomat who had been authorized by