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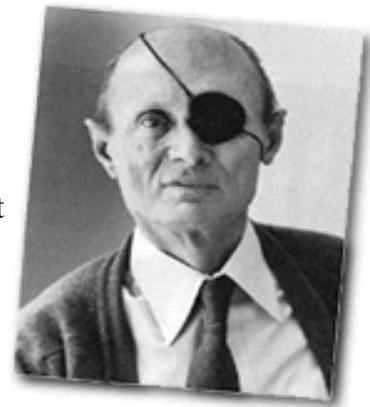
June 9, 1996

Editor's Choice: Fred Ritchin

## Evelyn Hofer's Portrait of Moshe Dayan

**A**s a picture editor the idea is not to illustrate stories, confirming what the text says. The idea is to have other opinions, other points of view on a situation, a person. The photographer selected should be strong enough to resist the formulaic sense of the media and take a risk to tell the reader something as he or she sees it and feels it. There is no single truth.

Of course this involves taking time to photograph. Talking to the person. A photographer cannot "know" someone in an hour or two, but it's even harder when it's only a few minutes. Photographers often work in shorter and shorter time periods, particularly with the more powerful and famous.



That is why one photograph published in the New York Times Magazine when I was picture editor sticks in my mind, and my heart. Moshe Dayan, the great warrior, ladies' man, diplomat, was dying. We would be able to photograph him in a New York hotel. It was far from where he lived, from the land he loved. A hotel room environment did not seem right for a final image.

I asked Evelyn Hofer, one of the great formal portraitists, to photograph him. A white wall would be sufficient background for her in the room we had rented in the same hotel. I would act as her assistant, posing as Dayan before he came so she could check her lighting.

When Dayan arrived, accompanied by a bodyguard, he was wearing a suit and tie. The collar seemed too big. He did not feel like Dayan, but like a man dressed up in a diplomat's uniform. Hofer was having a rough time trying to get him to relax,

conversing with him. He was answering tersely, impatient. She was getting a stiff, removed, self-concealed Dayan in her viewfinder.

Then she asked if he might change his clothes, perhaps put on a sweater. And after a bit he acceded, and his bodyguard called for one. Suddenly there was Dayan in a warm, soft sweater, one that a grandfather might wear with slippers. His face relaxed. His one good eye, bloodshot, began to hint at many things. And Hofer's intensity picked up. She had found Dayan, or part of him. And so, thanks to photography and a stubborn, intuitive photographer, one as stubborn as her subject, had we.

*Fred Ritchin was picture editor of The New York Times Magazine from 1978 to 1982.*

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