WAR IN PALESTINE 1948

Strategy and Diplomacy

DAVID TAL
Tel Aviv University

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To Dali, with all my love

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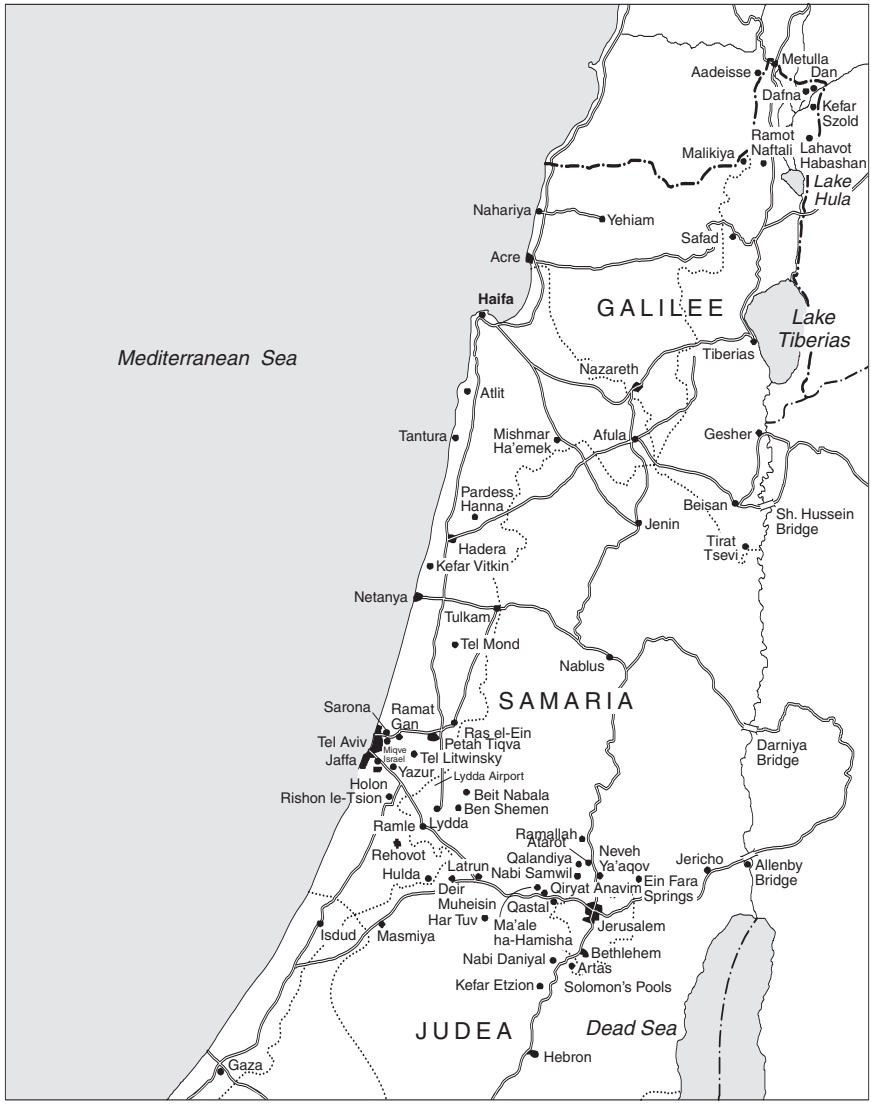
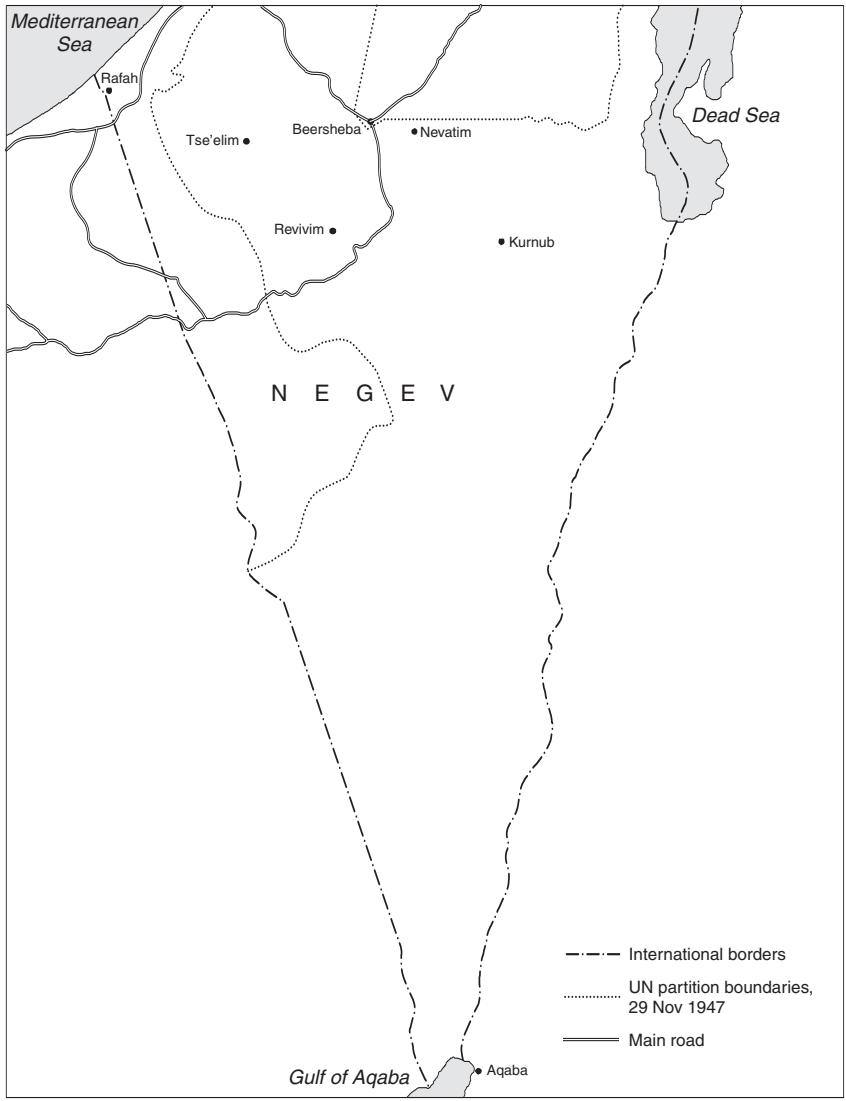
Abbreviations

AHC	Arab High Committee
ALA	Arab Liberation Army
AYO	Arab Youth Organization
BGA	Ben-Gurion Archives
BGD	Ben-Gurion Diaries
BGWD	Ben-Gurion War Diaries
BMEO	British Middle Eastern Office
CZA	Central Zionist Archive
DP	Displaced Person
FRUS	Foreign Relations of the United States
HA	Hagana Archives
IAF	Israeli Air Force
IDF	Israel Defense Forces
IDFA	Israel Defense Force Archives
IZL	Irgun Zvai Leumi (National Zionist Organisation)
JI	Jihad Islami
JSP	Jewish Settlements Police
LHI	Lohamei Herut Israel (Israel's Freedom Fighters/ the Stern Gang)
LPA	Labour Party Archives
MEJ	Middle East Journal
MELF	Middle East Land Forces
MES	Journal of Middle Eastern Studies
PGI	Provisional Government of Israel
PRO	Public Record Office
UNSCOP	United Nations Special Committee on Palestine
UNTSO	United Nations Treaty Supervision Organization



North Palestine



South Palestine

Introduction

In the past half-century, Israel and the Arabs have fought five wars, each of them—1948, 1956, 1967, 1973 and 1982—distinguished by an individual name. However, the historian of the future, with the benefit of hindsight, will probably see the wars fought by Israel and the Arabs as points on a sequence which will be called 'The Arab–Israeli War,' beginning with the 1948 conflict. Yet 1948, too, was but one event in a long history of confrontation dating from the latter part of the nineteenth century, when the Zionist movement penetrated Palestine. The research on these themes is far from exhausted. Not only has the Arab–Israeli conflict and the wars that have punctuated it not been examined from the broader perspectives of social, economic and cultural history, much remains to be done even as regards military–diplomatic history. This is perhaps most true of the 1948 war, even though it has recently been scrutinized in various academic and public forums within the context of the debate over the 'New Historians'.[1]

Although that controversy has had wide reverberations, the number of studies dealing with the 1948 war itself is extraordinarily meager; despite the war's centrality in the modern history of the Middle East, research into it is still in its infancy. Whatever the reasons for this lacuna, they are certainly not due to a lack of access to the relevant archives, although a brief comment should be made on this matter. There are three main places where documents essential to the military and diplomatic aspects of the war are available: in Israel, Britain and the United States. In Israel the state and military archives are open, allowing almost unlimited access to the diplomatic and military documents relevant to the war. Arab documents, captured by Israeli forces during the war, are also available in Israel's state and military archives. In Britain the documents that enable us to learn how the war appeared to, and was conducted by, the Arabs are held at the Public Record Office. The need to depend on the PRO and Israeli archives is due to Arab archives being inaccessible to researchers; this is especially true

regarding the documents relating to the 1948 war. No Arab archive allows access to documents relating to this war, as a result of which our ability to learn about the Arabs' conduct of the war is severely restricted. The decision-making process of the Arab leaders and their reasons for entering the war, the orders given by politicians to the army commanders who led the invasion of Palestine, and the management of the war at field level, all remain obscure. We cannot, therefore, know for sure the motivation behind the moves made by each of the Arab Armies, either on a political–strategic level or on the field of battle; analysis of the Arabs' actions is dependent on a chance collection of documents captured in the war, which by no stretch of the imagination can be considered a substitute for a solid archival base, such as is available to anyone wishing to investigate the Israeli side in the war. There is no choice but to turn to foreign archives, which are the only ones able to provide us with some understanding, albeit blurred and limited, of the various aspects of the Arab's conduct during the war.[2]

The upshot is that a study aiming to deal with a war between two sides inevitably places a greater emphasis on the side for which more documentary material is available and, consequently, the available documents might 'impose' themselves on the researcher.[3] The problem, though, is not just one of striking an even balance. The historian's inability to trace the decision-making process on the Arab side is liable to create the mistaken impression that a consensus existed between the states over the decision to go to war and about the war's management and the army's goals. This seemingly monolithic picture becomes even more pronounced when viewed against the mass of information we have about decision-making on the Israeli side, which includes the arguments, confrontations and disputes over political as well as military questions. Yet, even without knowledge of the details, one can safely assert that on the Arab side—as in Israel—disagreements were rife among political and military leaders. There is no doubt that, as in Israel, the war's conduct and its termination were contentious issues, at both political and military levels. The fact that historians are unable to describe this process should not create the false impression that it did not exist.[4]

As stated above, most of the existing literature on the 1948 war lacks analysis of the military and diplomatic history, and more specifically the military and diplomatic aspects of the conflict, not just of one or the other side, but of all those involved in the war. The 1948 war was a relatively primitive kind of war, in terms of the type and size of the armaments used. However, it was complex in a number of ways, which this

study intends to explore: it involved several armies and fronts whose activities were unrelated but still conducted under one framework; there was a link between the military and the diplomatic activities not examined in the existing literature; and the military moves were, in themselves, of a significance which deserves elaboration on several levels. The hitherto distorted history of the Arab–Jewish 1948 war has not served the discipline well. It is only from a detached viewpoint, wherefrom which both sides can be clearly seen, that the real nature of this military and diplomatic event can be understood. It has nothing to do with politics; it is a professional requirement that has not always been met.[5] Despite the difficulties and shortcomings described above, it is nevertheless possible—while retaining some skepticism—to produce a multilateral history of the 1948 Israeli–Arab war. Such a discussion is now possible owing to the diversification of sources and the distance of time, which permits a broader perspective and hence a more cogent analysis.

The first Arab–Israeli war was a throwback to earlier times from the point of view of the number of troops involved and the means at their disposal. Major General (Res.) Israel Tal says of the 1948 war:

> At the time the Middle East had not yet experienced the revolution in the art of war that began with World War I, reached a peak in the Second World War, and was expressed most succinctly by the fact that collective weapons replaced personal arms as the instrument of decision … The War of Independence was an infantry war, in which the decisive units on land were those of the infantry.[6]

In a war that involved five armies—Israeli, Egyptian, Jordanian, Syrian and Lebanese—no more than about 150,000 soldiers, nearly two-thirds of whom were Israelis, took part in the hostilities at their height. The soldiers' weapons and equipment were meager and often substandard. Both sides combined had only about 80 planes, most of them obsolescent and poorly maintained. Only a few dozen tanks took part in the fighting, and some of the Egyptian tanks lacked guns. The Israelis had fewer than a dozen tanks. From a military point of view it was as though the Second World War had never been fought and as though the tank had not become the main weapons system of modern armies.[7] In this connection it should be noted that only a small percentage of the officers in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) had undergone formal military training—while serving in the British Army, in the Second World War. Of about 2,250 IDF officers, just over 800 were veterans of the British Army or graduates of some other regular army abroad. When the war

broke out, the Chief of Staff, his deputy, and the Chief of Operations were graduates of the Hagana—the pre-1948 underground fighting force of the Yishuv (the Jewish community in Palestine)—and during the initial stage of the fighting ten IDF brigade commanders had served in the Hagana and four in the British Army. The Hagana would not acknowledge the professional superiority of the British Army veterans, who had to fight hard for their place and status in the IDF, particularly at senior command level.[8] Their rivals were commanders who lacked organized military training and had acquired whatever military expertise they possessed in the Hagana's schools. Moreover, training in the Hagana was only offered up to the level of platoon commander, even after larger units, such as battalions and even brigades, were established. The result was that in the War of Independence the only formal training for the IDF brigade commanders who had not served outside the Hagana was a platoon commanders' course. On the eve of the war, Haim Laskov, who had served in the British Army, and would later become Chief of Staff, had tried to set up a battalion commanders' course, but events overtook his initiative and the course did not start until February 1949.[9]

The situation was different in the Arab Armies. Although there is no proper study that deals with the training undergone by the commanders and soldiers of the Arab Armies, a British military mission, which operated in Egypt under a 1936 agreement, established and administered a network of military educational institutions: an officers' academy; a signals school; a gunners' academy; a school for sergeants, staff officers and flyers; and a special school offering advanced courses for senior officers. British instructors were also responsible for training the officers of the Iraqi and Jordanian Armies. However, with the exception of Jordan's Arab Legion, which was considered an efficient fighting force, the other Arab Armies displayed a low level of soldiership.[10]

Nevertheless, it was a difficult war, in which both sides made supreme efforts to achieve their goals. The present study attempts to understand what those goals were by means of a critical, in-depth examination of decision-making methods and the rationale for military and diplomatic activity, based on a rigorous scrutiny of documents and accounts written by those who took part. By drawing on these sources and by carrying out an integrative analysis of the war's military and diplomatic history—and of the interaction between the two—it becomes possible to understand the course of the war. An examination of the war's diplomatic–political aspects alone[11] is insufficient, since drawing a line between diplomatic imperative and military action is

necessarily simplistic and superficial. Once launched, a battle acquires its own logic, and both success and failure affect political and diplomatic considerations equally. As this study shows, a close connection existed between developments in the military campaign and diplomatic efforts. By itself, then, an understanding and analysis of diplomatic and/or political developments is not enough to understand a war in its broader context. Only by juxtaposing military and diplomatic–political events, and by exposing the reciprocal relations between them, is it possible to understand what happened in its totality.

NOTES

1. The major reference points for this subject are Ilan Pappé, 'The New History of the 1948 War', *Theory and Critique* (Hebrew) Vol. 3, Winter 1993, pp. 99–112; Benny Morris, 'Israel: The New Historiography', *Tikkun*, November–December 1988, pp. 19–23; Efraim Karsh, *Fabricating Israeli History* (London, 1997). The following volumes were dedicated to this subject: *History and Memory*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1995; *Theory and Critique*, (Hebrew) Vol. 8, Summer 1996.
2. A case in point is Thomas Mayer, 'Egypt's 1948 Invasion of Palestine', *MES*, Vol. 22, No. 1, January 1986, pp. 623–88. The documents cited in the article are from the PRO. The same is true of a substantial number of the sources cited by Ilan Pappé in his essay regarding the course of the fighting on the Egyptian–Israeli front (and on the other fronts as well), Pappé, 'The New History'.
3. See Trevor N. Dupuy, *Elusive Victory* (New York, 1978), pp. 3–128; Chaim Herzog, *The Arab–Israeli Wars* (New York, 1982); Martin van Creveld, *The Sword and the Olive* (New York, 1998). None of these studies is based on archival sources.
4. These questions are hinted at in Avraham Sela, 'The Palestine Question in the Inter-Arab System from the Establishment of the Arab League to the Arab Armies Invasion of Palestine, 1945–1948' (Hebrew) PhD Dissertation, Jerusalem 1986; Mayer, 'Egypt's 1948 Invasion'.
5. Elisabeth C. Hoffman introduced a most interesting example for such a process in her 'Diplomatic History and a Meaning of Life: Toward a Global American History', *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 21 (1997), pp. 499–518.
6. Israel Tal, *National Security* (Tel Aviv, 1996) (Hebrew), p. 125.
7. Forces from other armies—Saudis, Sudanese, and others—also took part in the war, but their contribution was minimal. On the size of the armed forces in the 1948 war, see Amitzur Ilan, *The Origin of the Arab–Israeli Arms Race* (London, 1996), p. 67.
8. Yoav Gelber, *The Nucleus of a Hebrew Army* (Jerusalem, 1986) (Hebrew), pp. 552–5.
9. Gelber, *The Nucleus of a Hebrew Army*, p. 184. Yigal Shefy, *Platoon Commander* (Tel Aviv, 1991) (Hebrew), deals with this matter.
10. Ilan, *The Origin of the Arab–Israeli Arms Race*, pp. 28–42; Agra, 'The Arab Military Forces', *Maarakhot*, Vol. 41, June 1947, pp. 34–5.
11. This is the method employed by Ilan Pappé in his study of the war: Ilan Pappé, *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1947–1951* (London, 1992), p. viii.

1

Towards Invasion

The 1948 war was a war over Palestine, to which two communities—the Jewish and the Arab—aspired, however, the Jewish–Palestinian conflict lost any bilateral nature it might have had during the 1936–39 Palestinian uprising against the British. The uprising came to an end through the active interference of the Arab states, and after the destruction of the Palestinian national leadership during these years the Arab States imposed their patronage over the Palestinians. Thus, it was under the Arab League's auspices that some form of Palestinian national leadership was formed, with the restructuring in 1945 of the Arab High Committee (AHC), whose members were Jamāl al-Husayni (acting chairman—officially Hajj Amin al-Husayni remained the head of the AHC), Husayn Khalidi (secretary), Ahmad Hilmi and Emile Khouri.[1] The intervention of Arab governments in the Palestine problem was the result of inflamed public opinion, which forced the Arab governments to take action; this served as a socially unifying force and even a distraction from their own problems. However, the Arab governments were not prepared to abandon their freedom of action, and acted in what they considered to be their own best interests, even where these did not accord with those of the Palestinians. Consequently—while publicly and in their joint meetings they expressed positions which were close to those of the Palestinians—the divisions amongst themselves and between them and the Palestinians were explored as the political process progressed in Palestine and as the end of the British Mandate drew closer. The Arab position on the Palestine problem had been shaped through events such as the Anglo-American Committee; the London Conference; the visit and recommendations of the United Nations Special Commission on Palestine (UNSCOP) to Palestine; and, finally, the United Nations Partition Resolution; all of which entailed Arab response and increased Arab involvement in the Palestine problem. The decision to go to war for the Palestinian cause had only been accepted at a late stage in this process. Some might even say that the Arab Armies never did go to war for the Palestinian cause.

Towards Partition

With Britain's transfer of responsibility for the Palestine issue to the United Nations and the publication of the Anglo-American Committee on Palestine's report in April 1946, which called for 100,000 Jewish Displaced Persons (DPs) to be allowed into the country, the Arabs began to orchestrate their policy on Palestine. The first move was the convention, in May 1946, by Egypt's King Faruk of a special meeting of Arab heads of state at his villa at Inshas, outside Cairo. Taking this initiative without first consulting the Egyptian government signaled Faruk's commitment to the Palestine cause, and was to produce a head-on clash with his government exactly two years later, in May 1948. Delegates at the Inshas conference declared that Palestine should remain Arab; and, to ensure this, they demanded the prevention of further Jewish immigration into Palestine; the prohibition of the sale of Arab land in Palestine to the Jews; and the establishment in Palestine of a unitary state. The Arab heads of state also made a concrete move in announcing that they would provide the Palestinians with financial support to enable them to conduct propaganda campaigns to keep Arab Palestinian lands in Arab hands and to strengthen the Arab nature of Palestine.[2] Nothing was said at that stage about military intervention. The Inshas resolutions provided the basis for the Arab League's official response, which was made at the Bludan meeting which took place in Syria in June 1946. The delegates decided to reject the recommendations of the Anglo-American Committee and to establish a standing Committee of the Arab League for Palestine. They reiterated their demands to ban Jewish immigration to Palestine and the sale of Arab lands to the Jews. A clandestine resolution was added to this public resolution, calling on the Arab States to be ready to encourage volunteers to come to the Palestinians' assistance and to provide them with money, arms and manpower. Letters were sent to the British and American governments, in which the League noted its total rejection of the Anglo-American Committee's decisions.[3]

However, the Arab states did not abandon diplomacy; they sent representatives to the London Conference (September 1946), who repeated the basic ideas decided upon by the Arab League earlier, including the call to establish a unitary independent state in Palestine. This was to be an Arab state, with the Jewish minority recognized as an autonomous religious faction, being granted no more than one-third of the representation on the legislative council. The AHC, which refused to take part at the conference, vehemently opposed this plan. The

Palestinians demanded that the Jewish share in the national institutions be set at one-sixth, accurately reflecting the proportion of the Jewish population in Palestine before 1918, with the implication that the post-1918 Jewish immigrants would not be recognized as citizens. Another AHC condition was a ban on additional Jewish immigration and a prohibition on the sale of land to Jews by Palestinians.[4] The Arab League did not accept the Palestinians' demands, which also included a demand to promote the military option. At the Bludan meeting of the Arab League, Jamal al-Husayni pressured the participants to provide military aid that would enable the Palestinians to thwart an imposed Anglo-American solution entailing the partition of Palestine. Al-Husayni claimed that all the Palestinians needed were arms and financial and political support from the Arab governments, as the AHC had already recruited 30,000 Palestinians. Al-Husayni was confident that this force, assisted by the Arab governments, would easily be able to overpower the Jews.[5] As will be seen in Chapter 2, there were no grounds for his optimism, as the Palestinians lacked even basic military formations.

The first reference to the Arab League's readiness to employ force as a means of solving the Palestine crisis came in response to the visit of UNSCOP to Palestine in June–July 1947. The Arabs boycotted the Commission, but outlined their position in a long memorandum put forward to the Commission in July. Their position was not accepted, and UNSCOP recommended establishing two states in Palestine, one Jewish and one Arab, with Jerusalem and its environs being internationalized. The reaction of the Arab public to these recommendations was harsh, and the Arab governments were forced to act on behalf of the Palestinians. The Arab League's political committee met at Sofar, Lebanon, in September 1947, and again in October in Alei, to formulate its reaction to the UNSCOP recommendations. Their decisions—which paved the way toward the growing involvement of the Arab League should violence erupt in Palestine—aimed to encourage the Palestinian Arabs to take active steps to prevent the implementation of the UNSCOP recommendation. The Arab League recommended that Arab governments warn the American and British governments of the possible repercussions of their support for the Zionist cause; and it called for an implementation of what had earlier been mentioned as a possibility: that is, the provision of money, arms and manpower to the Palestinians. The Arab League's Political Committee also decided to establish a permanent technical committee—which later became the Military Committee—consisting of representatives from all the Arab

League's States. It was appointed 'to decide the Palestinian needs to increase its defense; to coordinate and organize the material support provided by the Arab States; to supervise the expenditure of the money donated by the Arab countries'. Manning the committee took time, but by February–March 1948 its members were: General Isma'il Safwat from Iraq, who was appointed to head it; General Taha al-Hashimi; Colonel Shawkat Shukair; Colonel Mahmoud al-Hindi; and, later 'Abd al-Qādir Jundi from Syria.[6] From this committee originated the idea of dissociating the Palestinians from any responsibility for conducting the war. The Iraqi Premier, Sālih Jabr, went even further when he claimed that the Iraqi and Jordanian Armies should occupy the whole of Palestine following the British withdrawal; an endeavor that the other Arab States would accept as a *fait accompli*. To that end, Jabr tried to persuade the British to coordinate the 'mechanism of withdrawal' with Iraq and Jordan.[7]

The Political Committee of the Arab League asked General Emir Isma'il Safwat, the Assistant Chief of the Iraqi General Staff and a member of the Military Committee, to prepare an overview of the military aspects of the Palestine problem; this he did in two reports which he presented in October and November 1947 to the Arab League Council, in which he further substantiated the claim that the Palestinians were unable to conduct their war against Jews alone. In his reports, Safwat, who was shortly thereafter appointed commander of the Arab irregular forces, stated that the Palestinians and the irregulars were unable to defeat the well-trained and organized Jews. Only the regular Arab Armies, acting under a unified command along with the Palestinians and the irregular forces, could attain this goal. As to the Palestinians, Safwat recommended supplying them with at least 10,000 rifles and 'a sufficient quantity' of machine-guns and grenades, and that one million dinars be given to the Military Committee, to be spent on the Palestinian fighting forces.[8]

The resort to military preparation shifted the focus of the Arab League's activity. From Inshas through Bludan, the Arab League's goal was to involve Britain and the United States to prevent the progress of the ideas of partition and Jewish statehood. When UNSCOP recommended partition, the Arabs resorted, during the Sofar and Alei meetings, to advancing the idea of military resistance to partition.[9] However, at this stage the Arab League did not intend sending the Arab Armies to Palestine, it expected the Palestinians to fight for themselves. However, in response to Safwat's recommendation, the Arab League decided to amass military forces along the Arab States' borders with Palestine, in the hope that such a power build-up would prove to the

world in general, and to Britain in particular, that the Arabs were serious in their determination to prevent a solution that would not grant full independence to a unitary state in Palestine, and that it would deter the British from accepting any alternative.[10] Of all the Arab States, only Egypt and Syria responded to the Arab League's decision. Under the orders of Shukri al-Quwatly, the Syrian President, the Syrian First Brigade had conducted three days of military maneuvers along the Syrian–Palestine border in November 1947.[11] The Egyptian government sent a small force of 2,000 troops to al-Arish, which remained there until May 1948.[12] At about the same time, in November, volunteer recruitment centers were opened throughout Syria, with a volunteer training center in Qtane, Syria. The training camp was quickly filled, and during that month there were more than 1,000 volunteers, most of them from Palestine, undergoing military training. The Syrian and Lebanese governments provided 900 rifles for the trainees, but at least another 5,000 rifles were needed.[13]

It was no coincidence that the main volunteer camp was in Syria. Military considerations dictated that decision, the Syrians regarded it as a counter-balance to King Abdullah of Jordan's efforts in Palestine. It was also of internal significance as since, 29 November, public opinion in Syria and elsewhere in the Arab world had been aroused, and there were demands for action to frustrate the UN Resolution. Syrian newspapers fiercely attacked the UN Partition Resolution, and criticized the United States, the Soviet Union and Britain for the way they voted. In Damascus and Aleppo, demonstrators filled the streets, chanting anti-Zionist and anti-Western slogans and calling for the Syrian government to come to the Palestinians' assistance. The volunteers' training camp, and later the establishment of the Arab Liberation Army (ALA) in Syria, proved that the government was ready to respond in the appropriate manner.[14] Parliament took further steps in supporting the Palestinian cause when it introduced compulsory army service, and members of Parliament deducted one month's pay from their salary to aid Palestine. The government pledged to give two million Syrian pounds to the Arab League for the Palestinian Arabs.[15] The Syrian government's activity on behalf of the Palestinians, and the later formation of the ALA, based in Damascus, served another purpose. In late 1947 to early 1948, Syria's ability to take an active part in the fighting in Palestine had seemed improbable; internal problems—mainly the revolt of the Druze in Jabal Druze—threatened to paralyze the government's ability to spare troops for the war in Palestine. However, by endorsing and assisting volunteers and irregular activity, they could ensure that the Arab Legion would not be isolated in Palestine.[16]

The Jews in the Face of Partition

It would probably be correct to claim that the Jews were preparing for war at least from early 1947, but this would be to oversimplify a more complex situation. Jewish activity during the years following the loosening of the British hold over Palestine in 1946 followed two paths—political and military–which eventually led to the same place. While at the beginning of the process the political arena was more obvious, the two methods converged as the political process progressed. On the news that UNSCOP was to submit a recommendation to partition Palestine to the United Nations General Assembly, the Yishuv leaders launched a diplomatic campaign aiming to convince the members of the General Assembly to endorse the UNSCOP recommendations; they also took measures to ensure that the UNSCOP recommendations were implemented. The diplomatic campaign was highly successful, and the United Nations General Assembly approved resolution number 181. Ideological aspirations notwithstanding, the Jewish leadership made a clear and unequivocal political decision: to accept the idea of partition. When the Partition Resolution was adopted by the UN General Assembly, the Jewish leadership, Ben-Gurion included, welcomed it enthusiastically as a major success for the Zionists.[17] This is not to say that the Jewish leadership regarded the Partition Lines as the fulfillment of their historical aspirations—on the contrary. Moshe Shertok, the head of the Jewish Agency's Political Department, called the Zionists' acceptance of partition a major compromise,[18] and when the chance arose, the Jews did not hesitate to extend the borders set by the United Nations. However, that happened only after a major shift had occurred in the political and strategic situation, when the Arabs refused to accept the Partition Resolution and took military action against the nascent Jewish State. Still, the Jews' initial acceptance of the Partition Resolution was not mere rhetoric; it was the basis for the strategic planning of the war against the Palestinians.

The Jews were not bothered about the prospect of an Arab Palestinian state. Their main concern was their ability to establish a Jewish state, and to ensure that Palestinian resistance would not prevent this. The Jews were familiar with Abdullah's plans, but they had neither played any part in his decision nor approved it as a part of some kind of a deal.[19] In a meeting between Golda Meyerson (Meir), the director of the Jewish Agency's Political Department, and King Abdullah, in November 1947, ten days before the UN vote on partition, the King asked whether the Jewish forces would act to thwart a Jordanian military

incursion into Palestine. Meyerson 'said she was hoping for a [UN] resolution that would establish two states, one Jewish and one Arab, and that they wished to speak to the King only about an agreement based on such a resolution'. As to Abdullah's query about Jewish reaction to his seizure of the Arab part of Palestine, Meyerson said that the Jews:

> would view such an attempt in a favorable light, especially if he did not interfere with the establishment of their state and avoided a clash between his forces and theirs and, secondly, if he could declare that his sole purpose was to maintain law and order until the UN could establish a government in that area.[20]

In her last meeting with Abdullah, which took place on 11 May 1948, Meyerson reiterated Jewish adherence to the UN 29 November 1947 resolution.[21] Shertok expressed readiness to cooperate with a sister-Arab state, regardless of its ruler, whether it was the ex-Mufti, or Abdullah's proxy (who might possibly be Qawukji). It was possible, however, that Abdullah would assume direct control over the territory allocated to the Palestinians.[22] In any case, the real issue was the Jews' ability to establish their own state. Danin assumed that the majority of the Palestinians regarded partition as a *fait accompli*, and thought that, without external assistance, Palestinian resistance would fade away. Gad Mahnes, an expert on Arab affairs, agreed; he believed that if partition were enforced the Palestinian opposition (to al-Husayni) would accept it. He also thought that in such a situation an internal power struggle would take place between the al-Husaynis and the opposition.[23]

The main problem, from the Jewish point of view, was the assumption that neither the international community nor the United Nations would enforce the Partition. The Zionist movement was a political movement, which had achieved statehood through diplomacy with the assistance of Britain and, later, the international community. Thus, even when it was engaged in military activity as a means of making implementation of partition possible, the Jews remained sensitive to international opinion. As the situation was unclear, the Jewish agency official, Eliahu Sasson, made what appears to be a last-minute attempt to avoid having to resort to war. Expressing doubt as to whether the Yishuv was capable of winning an all-out war against the Arab countries, he suggested that a channel of communication should be opened between the Jews and the Arab leaders before war erupted. He was involved personally in such attempts, one example being a letter he sent in early December to the Arab League's secretary, 'Azzam Pashsa. In this letter he expressed the Jewish desire to avoid war, and asked the

Arab League to accept the Jews' right to statehood.[24] However, he received no reply. It seems that Azzam Pasha stuck to the position he had put forward in early September during his meeting in London with two representatives of the Jewish Agency, Abba Eban and David Hurewitz. At that meeting, the Jewish representatives suggested Jewish–Arab conciliation and cooperation, but Azzam rejected the offer, stating that the Jews were a foreign group in the region, and that their presence there was temporary. The Arabs would never accept a Jewish state in the Middle East; the only possible solution was Jewish abandonment of Zionism and statehood, and their acceptance of autonomous status within an Arab state.[25]

One month later, Sasson expressed the opinion that a direct channel between the Jewish Agency and the Arabs was no longer possible and that any such communication should be established through the mediatory services of a European state.[26] However, Sasson still thought that the unavoidable war should not completely close the Jewish channel of communication with the Arabs. In March 1948, he and the secretary of the Jewish Agency's Political Department introduced an 'outline of a policy toward the Arab States'. The proposal assumed that the Jews would inflict heavy damage on the Arabs, but that the Arabs should be allowed an honorable exit from the war. Afterwards, the Jews should establish links with the Arab States through liaison offices to be opened in Paris, Istanbul and New Delhi. Sasson's program also referred to the future of Jewish–Palestinian relations. He assumed that the two states would be established and that they would sign military, political and economic cooperation agreements, while declaring that they had no ambitions for territorial expansion.[27] Not everyone in the Jewish Agency's Political Department agreed with the modus operandi proposed by Sasson, and one of the senior Political Department experts on Arab affairs, Jacob Shimoni, claimed that the Arabs would not accept partition, and that it would be better to try to come to an agreement with the Jordanian King.[28]

Each party's response to the Partition Resolution naturally reflected its attitude toward it: the Jews cheered, while the Arabs—the Palestinians and the neighbouring Arab States—rejected it. The question was how to deal with the Resolution. Here again, there were divisions between Jewish and Arab camp, as well as within the Arab camp. The Jews took two routes: they acted in the diplomatic arena to ensure that the Partition Resolution would remain in force, while making the necessary military preparations to implement it, either in the face of internal Palestinian opposition, or against external attack by

Arab Armies. The Arab League, while defying the Partition Resolution, found it difficult to formulate a unified position on this matter, as its members disagreed over the steps to be taken. Syria and Iraq thought that military intervention was essential. Egypt was determined not to be involved militarily, but decided to provide the Palestinians—with Arab League help—with the means to fight. King Abdullah of Jordan had his own plans; Lebanon wavered; and Azzam Pasha, the Arab League Secretary General, sought a compromise that would not require military intervention.

The Arab Heads of States Meeting, Cairo (8–17 December 1947)

Arab reaction to the United Nations Partition Resolution of 29 November 1947 was one of rejection and defiance. The Palestinians claimed that the resolution discriminated against the majority in Palestine—the Arabs—and gave preferential treatment to the Jewish minority, and reiterated their demand to establish a single state in the territory of Palestine governed by a democratically elected government.[29] The Palestinians could find comfort in the public reaction to the United Nations Partition Resolution throughout the Arab world. In Beirut, Damascus, Amman, Baghdad and Cairo thousands stormed through the streets, chanting anti-Western slogans, and in several cases physically attacking British and American legations. In Syria, articles incited the population against the Jews and the government imposed restrictive measures upon the Jewish community. The British Damascus Legation were also the victims of mob anger, and the strong anti-British demonstrations in Damascus led the British government to make preparation for the evacuation of British citizens from Syria.[30] The Syrian President did not lag far behind his people. He was one of the most extreme Arab leaders in his hostility toward the Jews, asserting that war was the only way to solve the Palestine crisis.[31] The Syrian Prime Minister, and some of the others ministers, responded to demands from the demonstrators by stating 'that the government would comply with [the people's] demand and would be in the forefront of the liberation of Palestine'.[32] Still, it must be recalled that the decisions regarding Palestine had not been taken solely in response to public demand. Syria's attitude toward the Palestine problem was also influenced by its fear of Abdullah's vision of a 'Greater Syria'; while, on the other hand, the Egyptian government was inclined not to go to war, thus disregarding public sentiment.

The Arab heads of state discussed partition at a meeting in Cairo on 8–17 December 1947. In front of them was Safwat's report calling for the prevention of the implementation of the Partition Resolution by military means. The delegates were divided on this matter. They all agreed that as long as the British were in Palestine the struggle should be centered on the resistance of the Arab inhabitants of the Zionist State, supported by the Arabs in the rest of Palestine and by the volunteers. As to Arab military intervention, the Arab leaders were divided. Sālih Jabr, the Iraqi Prime Minister, and the Syrian Premier, Jamil Mardam, were in favor of military intervention. Jabr was the most extreme among the Arab leaders, calling for immediate action and for the takeover of all Palestine. He also called for oil sanctions, although he meant for these to be applied by Ibn Sa'ud, King of Saudi Arabia. Riad Sulh, the Lebanese Prime Minister, was more moderate than his colleagues; however, because of public reaction in Lebanon to the Partition Resolution, he found it difficult to show moderation. Samir Pasha of Jordan and Yusuf Yasin of Saudi Arabia warned that the climate in the Arab world was such that inaction by any Arab government would endanger the life of its leader, although the Jordanian's motives were different from those of his militant fellow Arabs. The Egyptian, Nokrashi Pasha, was the only one who openly stated his opposition to military intervention, declaring that the Egyptian Army would not be part of any such 'adventure'. He was hoping that the gesture of sending 2,000 soldiers to the al-'Arish garrison would be threatening enough to prevent implementation of the Partition.[33]

Despite his claim that an Arab response was unavoidable, the Jordanian Prime Minister, Samir Rifā'i, had a different vision of the nature of the Arab intervention; a vision that reflected his master's. Abdullah's attitude toward the Jewish–Arab conflict in general, and the prospect of Jewish and Palestinian Arab states in Palestine in particular, was influenced by his vision of a 'Greater Syria'. Since his forced expulsion from Syria and his accession to the throne of the Transjordan Emirate in 1922 (a kingdom since 1946), Abdullah had nurtured hopes of widening his tiny fiefdom to include Syria and Palestine. Of the two, the possibility of swallowing Palestine seemed more likely; and, with the advent of the political process in Palestine, Abdullah acted to make his dream come true. It is a matter of dispute among academics whether he was acting in cooperation with Britain; some even claim that he was acting with London's blessing.[34] The existing evidence indicates that this claim is far-fetched. Abdullah made no secret of his plans and intensions to the British Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin. He tried to justify

his actions by claiming that he was worried by the possible departure of Britain from Egypt and Palestine, and that he felt threatened by the possible resultant Soviet intrusion in the Middle East. Abdullah also argued that he had 'received [requests] from the different districts of Syria, asking for the realization of Syrian Unity'. Therefore, 'our position does not permit for Transjordan remaining in its present size and status', and a unified Syria was the answer.[35] There was a consensus within the Foreign Office that the King should not be allowed to occupy Syria, but some advocated no interference with Abdullah's intention to annex the Arab parts of Palestine. It was suggested that such an act should be accepted only if the Arab League agreed to Abdullah's occupation of the Arab part of Palestine, and if he refrained from sending the Legion into the areas allotted to the Jewish State; however, such a tacit agreement would not be stated to Abdullah.[36] When the British rejected Abdullah's exhortations, he limited his ambitions and plans to Palestine, or more accurately, to the Arab part of Palestine that bordered on his kingdom, which he was determined to take.

The members of the Arab League were divided over Abdullah's plans. The Iraqi government was in favor of Abdullah's taking over all of Palestine, including the part allocated to the Jews. The Lebanese Prime Minister held the same view, arguing that the Arab League would object strongly to Abdullah's occupation of only the Arab part of Palestine—hence implying that Abdullah's plans were understood for what they really were: an act of Jordanian aggrandizement. In any case, the Lebanese suspected that the occupation of Palestine, or part of it, was only the first step toward the implementation of Abdullah's 'Greater Syria' vision. Other members of the Arab League were prepared to let the King take action in Palestine, on the condition that he would not annex any Palestinian territory.[37] Similar views were heard in Egypt. The Egyptian government was ready to tolerate Abdullah's plans to a certain extent, but it was not prepared to give him a free rein, and for that reason Egypt's Prime Minister was ready to consider favorably the ex-Mufti's pretensions, and suggested that the ex-Mufti would be the future ruler of the Arab State of Palestine. This idea was rejected vehemently by the Iraqi Prime Minister, Sālih Jabr, and the ex-Mufti acquiesced reluctantly to a compromise suggestion that no government of Arab Palestine would yet be set up, and that Arab Palestine would be administered by a temporary body.[38] In accordance with this decision, the ex-Mufti had rejected calls from Palestine to declare that the AHC would assume full authority over all of Palestine after the termination of the British Mandate.[39] The Syrians, as we have seen, objected to any

independent action by Jordan in Palestine, even if Abdullah was prepared to act under the command of the Arab League. Fawz al-Din Qawukji and his ALA were the tools with which the Syrian government hoped to frustrate Abdullah's plans.[40]

The Jordanians were not insensitive to the mood among the League members: as matters could reach a point where Jordan's expulsion from the Arab League might be considered, Abdullah sought ways to legitimize his Palestine campaign. To that end, he sought support amongst the Palestinians to justify his control over the Palestinian territory, and he also sought the participation of other Arab states in the Palestine campaign, although not within a unified Arab League framework.[41] The real nature, however, of Abdullah's intentions was revealed in talks between Samir Pasha and Brigadier I. N. Clayton of the British Middle East Office, to whom he said: 'military action by regular forces would be required not necessarily for attack upon the Jewish area but to maintain order in the Arab area and to resist any Jewish counter-attack which might take place as a result of disorders'. In any case, he assumed that the other Arab governments would not send their armies to Palestine, and that they would expect Jordan alone to bear responsibility for the situation in Palestine.[42]

Consequently, the heads of states rejected Safwat's call to send their armies to Palestine, and preferred at that time to concentrate on helping the Palestinians in other ways. They decided to establish a volunteers force, which would be known as the ALA, and to contribute 10,000 rifles to the Palestinians in the following proportions: Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia—2,000 each; and Lebanon and Transjordan—1,000 each. It was also decided to provide two million pounds to be spent on assistance to the Palestinians and to encourage volunteers to come to the aid of Palestinians. The prime ministers, however, were not ready to charge the Palestinian Arabs with responsibility for the fighting in Palestine; a responsibility which was vested in the Iraqi officer, General Safwat, who had been appointed commander of the Palestinian and the volunteer forces. This choice seemed somewhat strange, as Isma'il Safwat, Assistant Chief of the Iraqi General Staff, had had no military duties for two years, and he was defined as a 'typically old-fashioned Turkish officer, extremely brave and unutterably stupid'. The ex-Mufti tried at least to put his protégé, 'Abd al-Qādir al-Husayni, in command of the ALA, but the Syrians demanded that the former Turkish officer, Fawz al-Din Qawukji, be in command. With Iraqi and Transjordan support, the Syrian demand was accepted. A compromise solution was worked out, according to which two other commanders

besides Qawukji would be elected by the Palestinians. Another setback to the Palestinians was the delegates' decision that no action be taken by the irregular troops or by the Arab States before the termination of the Mandate in May. This meant that the Palestinians would remain on their own during a critical phase of their fight against the Jews. The prime ministers also decided to run a campaign in the United States and Britain, presenting the Palestinian Arabs' cause.[43]

The Palestinians were consequently deprived of their war, and the ex-Mufti had therefore to fight not only against the Jews and the Partition Resolution, but also against the Arab League. It is rather ironical that, although the prime ministers had decided that the Palestinian Arabs should carry the main burden of the fighting, they handed the conduct of the war to a non-Palestinian commander. True, the AHC had a representative on the Military Committee, but he was one among five.[44] Even the rifles allotted by the prime ministers were to be distributed to the Palestinians not by the ex-Mufti or his disciples, but by the Arab League's appointed military committee. Defying the decision by the heads of governments, the ex-Mufti claimed political and military responsibility for the fighting in Palestine. These were empty words, as the Palestinians were dependent on the Arab States in almost every respect. However, the ex-Mufti conducted laborious negotiations with the Arab League's Political Committee, which resulted in an agreement, reached in Damascus in February 1948, to divide Palestine into zones, responsibility for which would be split between al-Husayni's loyalists, 'Abd al-Qādir al-Husayni, Hasan Salama and Qawukji (see Chapter 2).

The Arab League Military Committee

The most important decision of the Arab League regarding Palestine was made in September–October 1947: that is, to establish a military committee that would be responsible for the fighting in Palestine under the command of Isma'il Safwat. That meant that responsibility for the war in Palestine was not in the hands of the Palestinians. Safwat was in charge of a complex but loose-knit system, which comprised three major elements: the ALA, the volunteers' forces that acted indepedently in Palestine and those national committees that came under the control of the volunteers, mainly comprising Iraqi military officers.[45] The most significant power raised by the military committee was of no avail to the Palestinians. The ALA had been intended to be a force that would fight against any political solution that would not lead to the establishment of

a unitary state in Palestine. However, except in all but a few isolated cases, it took no part in the fighting during the most critical stage of the Jewish–Palestinian struggle. Based in Damascus, it consisted of three battalions: the 1st Yarmuk Battalion, commanded by Safa Isma'il; the 2nd Yarmuk Battalion, headed by Adib Shishakly; and the Hittin Battalion, whose commander was Madhul 'Abbas. These three battalions infiltrated Palestine between January and March, the 1st Yarmuk Battalion positioned in Samaria; the 2nd Yarmuk Battalion in western upper Galilee; and the Hittin Battalion between Nablus and Jerusalem—all within the territory allocated by the United Nations to the Arabs. The whole force numbered about 4,000 combatants, each battalion comprising 30-man platoons, commanded by a platoon commander and a sergeant. Their weaponry consisted of rifles and hand-grenades, and each platoon had one Bren machine-gun and two 60-mm mortars.[46] A fourth force was a Druze one, commanded by Shakib Wahāb. It consisted of 600 guerrillas who were spread throughout the central lower Galilee and the Druze villages in the Carmel Mountains. Wahāb's men were armed with light arms, although the Hagana had unconfirmed reports that the force also had field cannons. Being affiliated to the Arab League's Military Committee, Wahāb's authority over the villages around Shafa'amr and the Carmel was challenged by a force sent to that area by the ex-Mufti, led by Abu Mahnud Saffury, who arrived with 500 guerrillas. Controversy arose over command of the area, but it was resolved by Saffury accepting Wahāb's authority.[47]

The ALA's guerrillas were not the only ones to infiltrate Palestine, and others joined the various Palestinian fighting groups. The infiltration of Palestine had started at the end of December 1947. Separate Hagana and British intelligence reports indicated that from December 1947 to April 1948, 9,000 men had entered Palestine, 4,000 of whom were Qawukji's men. The infiltrators crossed the border from Lebanon, Jordan and Syria. They were of Palestinian, Syrian, Lebanese, Iraqi, Jordanian, Sudanese and Egyptian nationalities and they were positioned in various places around the country.[48] One hundred volunteers came from Yugoslavia, and were sent to Jaffa and Jerusalem. Some 200 combatants were stationed in Jaffa under the direct command of an Iraqi officer, 'Adel Najm al-Din. Others, including 500 Bosnian Moslems,[49] joined the forces of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Husayni and Hasan Salama forces.[50]

The ALA was divided between the ex-Mufti's and Qawukji's disciples. Most of the latter were Iraqi soldiers and officers, who were

recruited and sent to the ALA by the Iraqi Istiqlal Party, which was hostile to the Hashemite house and consequently supported the ex-Mufti. Hajj Amin al-Husayni also won Iraqi loyalty through the assistance he provided to those Iraqi soldiers and officers who had taken part in the Rashid 'Ali al-Kilany mutiny in 1941, and had been discharged from duty, and to the families of those killed during the suppression of the mutiny. As most of those who joined the ALA came from this circle, they supported the ex-Mufti. The Transjordan and Syrian volunteers, on the other hand, were loyal to Qawukji. The tension between the two camps came to a head with the departure in late March–early April 1948 of about 150 Iraqi volunteers from the ALA camps in Nablus who had returned to Baghdad.[51] There was, however, another reason for the Iraqis' desertion of Qawukji: his strengthening position in Palestine was a source of concern to Abdullah, who sought to combine the Iraqi Army with his own forces in his planned Palestinian campaign. This idea pleased the Iraqis, and as a first measure they encouraged the ALA's Iraqi volunteers to depart.[52]

The Iraqi reaction marked a change in Regent 'Abd al-Ilah's position toward the Palestine conflict. Up to that point the Regent had shown only slight interest in the Palestine question. However, unrest in Iraq had been growing since early 1948 as the economic and political situations worsened and people took to the streets to express their dissatisfaction. Seeing the Palestine campaign as a distraction from internal problems, the Regent increased his involvement in the discussions over Palestine, presenting a militant line on the question of military intervention. The Palestine conflict seemed to offer the Regent a solution to a situation that otherwise would have jeopardized the future of Hashemite rule in Iraq. Apparently, in the demonstrations that swept Baghdad during March–April, the crowd chanted slogans in support of Palestine alongside socialist and nationalist slogans, such as 'Bread and Palestine'.[53]

An interesting aspect of the ALA policy was its alliance with King Abdullah. It might seem strange that Qawukji, who acted under the auspices of Syria, would have dealings with Syria's antagonist; however, it appears that a convergence of interests created a triple link between Syria, Abdullah and Qawukji. Syria traded Abdullah's 'Greater Syria' dream for his control over those areas that were supposed to be part of the Palestinian Arab State. The 'trade' was probably crystallized by the mediation of Musa 'Alami who, from late January to early March, shuttled between Amman and Damascus, as well as Beirut and Baghdad. Winning Abdullah's consent to Qawukji activity in Palestine

would also strengthen the latter's position *vis-à-vis* the ex-Mufti's protégé, 'Abd al-Qādir al-Husayni. These were also the reasons for Qawukji's acceptance of what amounted to his sub-ordination to King Abdullah's ambitions. At this stage Abdullah had already given up his 'Greater Syria' dream, and the prospect of cooperation with Qawukji served his interests. It was apparent that Qawukji had established his authority in the regions under his control, and Samaria became one of the relatively quietest parts of an otherwise turbulent Palestine.[54]

One example of the Abdullah–Qawukji alliance bore practical results was the former's approval of the Yarmuk Regiment's passage to Palestine through Jordan on 20 January 1948. This raised the prospect of direct confrontation between the King and his friend, General Cunningham, the High Commissioner, who resolutely warned against any such action. However, Abdullah was ready to violate his pledge to Cunningham as he was being put under heavy pressure by occurrences in Palestine. With the Jewish–Palestinian war raging, Palestinian refugees fled into Jordan, and those in Palestine who were in favor of Abdullah's takeover of Palestine urged him to order the Arab Legion to stand by the Palestinians in their struggle against the Jews. Abdullah was unable to do that, as the Arab Legion units in Palestine were part of the British Mandatory security forces, and, in any case, Abdullah had promised the British that he would not act before the termination of the Mandate. The passive stance of Arab Legion and Abdullah, however, increased criticism, and decreased the King's popularity among the Palestinians. Being restricted in his ability to act, Abdullah was forced to look the other way when units from the ALA infiltrated Palestine, despite British demands that this should not be allowed. On one occasion in early February, the Legion's officers removed obstructions from the Shaykh Husayn and Damiya bridges placed there by the Palestine police, in order to enable the transfer of ALA units.[55] In early March, Abdullah even received Qawukji for lunch in his palace prior to the latter's departure to Palestine, and sent him away with a gift in the form of a jeep.[56] The result of all these actions was that after 15 May the 'Arab Legion brigades [had] established themselves at Ramallah and Nablus without incident'.[57]

However, Abdullah was not prepared to rely completely on Qawukji's goodwill. His hatred of the ex-Mufti, which he shared with Qawukji and the Syrians, could not overshadow Abdullah's concern that Qawukji would not fulfill his part of the deal, and that he would—either with or without Syria's consent—resist Abdullah's attempt to take over Samaria. To enable the small Arab Legion to deal

with such an eventuality, at a time when his forces would be caught up in fighting with the Jews, Abdullah called upon Iraq to join forces with the Arab Legion. The basis for his call was the Treaty of Brotherhood and Alliance, signed by the two States in March 1947. An Iraqi military mission visited Amman twice in January 1948 for talks on possible joint military operations in the future in connection with Palestine.[58]

The Syrian attitude toward the Arab Legion's invasion was mixed. On the one hand, they suspected that Abdullah had not really abandoned his 'Greater Syria' dream, and that the entry of the Arab Legion to Palestine alone could be the first step toward the fulfillment of this dream; on the other hand, they did not want to see the Arab Legion remain out of the fighting. The invasion of all the Arab Armies would make the action seem more valid in the face of the anticipated international response; the Arab Legion made an important contribution to the Arab war effort; and it secured the Syrian flank.[59]

Jewish Preparation for the Invasion

As we have seen, the Jews paved their way to the Partition mainly through diplomacy. Although two dissident groups—the Lohamei Herut Israel (LHI, Israel's Freedom Fighters) and the Irgun Zvai Leumi (IZL, National Zionist Organization)—had declared war against the British rule in Palestine, the main path taken was still the diplomatic one. Despite the bellicose nature of the Zionist–Palestinian conflict from its inception, for the Jews the major field of battle was—at least until the second half of the 1940s—political. British and international pledges of a 'National Home' for the Jews in Palestine, set forth in the Balfour Declaration and the Mandatory Charter, enabled the tiny Jewish community in Palestine (known as the Yishuv) to grow and flourish, despite the hostile attitude of the local Arab population. It was the British umbrella, and not the Jewish military forces, that secured the Yishuv's existence and growth. The Jews concentrated mainly on developing defensive capabilities against Palestinian harassment, cooperating as much as possible with the Mandatory government. On the Jewish–Palestinian front, the Yishuv leadership had to cope with day-to-day security problems, mainly random raids and attacks by Palestinians against Jews. But the existence of the Yishuv seemed secure as long as British forces remained in the country.[60] After the Second World War, the Yishuv was preoccupied with British policy, as the Jews were disappointed by the adherence of the newly elected Labour

government to the 1939 White Paper, contrary to promises given by Labour spokesmen before the July 1945 elections. The Mandate administration continued to restrict Jewish immigration to Palestine, and prohibited the sale of land to Jews. The Yishuv leadership launched a political and military campaign to induce the British to revise this policy. The Yishuv's struggle against Mandate government policy lasted until the end of 1947.[61]

The turning point in Hagana strategic thinking occurred in December 1946, when David Ben-Gurion, the head of the Jewish Agency, assumed the defense portfolio. This act was significant, as it showed the importance that Ben-Gurion now attached to security matters—a subject with which he had hardly bothered until then. In a speech delivered in December 1946 to the Political Committee of the 22nd Zionist Congress, Ben-Gurion outlined a new strategic direction for the Yishuv and the Hagana. The shift stemmed from the question: 'Who is the enemy?' Up to that moment, Hagana strategic thinking had assumed that there were two enemies: the local Palestinians and the British authorities. The former were considered more of a nuisance than a real threat to the Yishuv; as to the latter, the Hagana supported and facilitated the political campaign organized by the Jewish leadership, which sought to put pressure on the British to abandon their anti-Zionist policy as it was articulated in the 1939 White Paper.[62]

The nascent diplomatic process, in which Britain had referred the Palestine question to the United Nations, made the establishment of a Jewish state more likely than ever. There was still a lot of work to be done in the diplomatic arena, but the head of the Jewish Agency, Ben-Gurion, now maintained that the struggle against the British—in which the Hagana had been engaged since 1945—was over. Now, he claimed, the Arabs were the enemy, and it was they who posed the major challenge to Jewish national aspirations: 'We should expect' an invasion by the armed forces of the neighboring Arab States.[63]

The Ben-Gurion 'Seminar'

Ben-Gurion now devoted himself to his role as 'minister of defense', with the primary goal of transforming the Hagana into a fully-fledged army, capable of standing up to regular armies. The process started in March 1947 and continued until June, when Ben-Gurion concluded that, on the basis of the evidence and comments he had heard during these months, the Hagana was unfit to face regular armies in battle. The

Hagana had been established in 1922 to provide the Yishuv with an organized defense in the face of attacks and harassment by the neighboring Palestinian Arabs. By 1946 it had a General Headquarters, which included operation, instruction, intelligence and adjutancy branches; and it had under its command 25,000–30,000 members. These figures, however, are misleading, as the majority of members were only loosely connected to the Hagana. The Hagana was organized in three bodies: the Palmah (a Hebrew acronym of the Storm Platoons); the Field Force; and the Guard Force. The Palmah, the elite force of the Hagana, was established in 1941 with British assistance, in anticipation of the then expected Nazi invasion of the Middle East. It had about 2,000 members at the time of the Seminar, and it was the only non-territorial, fully mobilized force of the Hagana. It had its own HQ, a fact that tended to complicate relations between the Palmah and Hagana high command. The Field Force consisted of about 6,000 men, organized into 45 companies distributed throughout the country. It had no central command, and it was territorial; as was the third arm, the Guard Force, due to both forces developing from the settlements, villages and cities with which they were connected—the residents of a certain region or area who volunteered for either force were organized into a company, and they acted only in their local area. In many cases it was the local civil leadership that financed the force, buying its arms and providing supplies. Thus, the mayor of Tel Aviv had more control over the arms of the Hagana forces in his city than had the Hagana high command. The Field Force members were young—up to 35 years old—and physically fit for combatant missions. The Guard Force consisted of about 20,000 members, aged between 35 and 50, who belonged to neither the Palmah nor the Field Force. Neither forces' members were fully mobilized, and they were called upon from time to time to undergo military training or to report for special duty. The Field Force conducted the more complicated military missions; while the Guard Force members maintained positions and ran patrols in their neighborhood. Both forces were put under the command of a district commander, of which there were six: three in urban centers—Haifa, Tel Aviv and Jerusalem; and three in rural areas—north, center and south. Other forces in operation were the British-controlled Hebrew Police and the special British-commanded Auxiliary Force, whose members usually belonged to the Hagana.

There were several reasons that convinced Ben-Gurion that the Hagana was unfit for its major challenge, the defeat of Arab regular armies. One reason was the lack of professional qualifications among the

Hagana commanders. The Hagana commanders gained their training in the field, through minor skirmishes with small Arab groups; they had no experience of regular fighting. The Hagana also lacked training establishments in which to teach theory to supplement practice. The highest professional course undertaken by Hagana commanders was that which led to rank of platoon commander, and their instructors in this course gained their knowledge in the same way as their students.[64] Accordingly, members of the Hagana also received only partial training; which was enough to deal with local riots and clashes, but far from sufficient by regular army standards. The Field Force members received basic military training in their spare time, in the evenings and on Saturdays; usually 25–30 training hours every month.[65] For this reason, Ben-Gurion found it odd that the Hagana command was not ready to embrace the Jewish Brigade veterans, who had fought under the British banner in the Second World War. Some of these veterans were officers and NCOs, and although none of them had commanded a field unit in battle, they still had much more military education and experience than those who had remained in Palestine, working their way up the ranks in the Hagana.

Another problem was a structural one. Because of the territorial nature of the Field and Guard Forces, the Hagana High Command was unable to impose its authority over its units. The units' members were residents of the area where the unit was operating, and, as we have seen, it was supported and financed by the local authority. For that reason the Hagana command was unable to mobilize the units beyond their local area, even if reinforcement were necessary elsewhere. The weapons of the units were usually the property of the local authorities, who had bought them. So, although the Hagana had a stock of more than 10,000 rifles, 8,700 of them were beyond the reach of the high command, as they belonged to the settlements which had paid for them. The same was true regarding the 1,900 sub-machine-guns that were registered to the Hagana. Only 560 of them were in the possession of the high command, the rest were the property of the settlements.[66] This state of affairs was aggravated by the Hagana's lack of sufficient weaponry. The Hagana had small arms, usually bought by the settlements and municipalities, and it also had 186 heavy machine-guns—of which 31 belonged to the settlements—and 672 2-inch and 96 3-inch mortars, all in the possession of Hagana central command. However, there were no cannons or tanks, anti-aerial or anti-armored arms, or vehicles for forces transportation.[67] A no less serious source of concern for Ben-Gurion was the high level of political involvement in Hagana activity and

management. The Hagana was subject to the National Command, a political body in which the various Zionist political parties were represented. Ben-Gurion thought that this state of affairs had to be changed, and that the minister of defense—that is, Ben-Gurion himself—should be the only one to give orders to the army.[68] One way to view Ben-Gurion's decision is that he was trying to establish a clear and strict line of command, emanating in a hierarchical manner from the political to the military level, and also to exclude the military from politics. Another view, however, is to see Ben-Gurion's actions as an attempt to build a power-base for himself and to prevent anybody else from gaining influence over the military. These differences in opinion were the reason for the continuous controversy over the politicians' demand to take part in the conduct of army affairs. Ben-Gurion demanded that the army should be controlled by a professional committee—the Security Committee, which was established in June 1947, and which he headed—and not by a representative body manned by politicians, a reference to the National Command, as was the case at that time. This issue was not resolved, and the debate continued even as the war broke out and the invading armies entered Palestine.[69]

The most disturbing factor, however, was the lack of any practical or conceptual base for the Hagana when conducting a full-scale war against a regular army. As we have already discussed, up to that stage the Hagana had engaged mainly in skirmishes with small Palestinian Arab bands and in the conduct of protest actions against the British. The only existing plan prepared by the Hagana General HQ was 'Plan May' in 1946, which aimed to provide a solution for the renewed outbreak of clashes with the local Palestinian population, as had happened in the past.[70] In the coming days, Ben-Gurion repeated time and again that this time 'we are expecting neither *Meoraot* nor riots, but a true and real war. Simple as that. Arab representatives declared clearly in Lake Success, in the papers, in Arab parliaments, that they would fight the Jews. There is no reason to doubt their declarations.'[71]

Ben-Gurion did not have to rely on personal insight to reach these conclusions regarding the Hagana situation. All he did was to summarize what he heard from Hagana activists such as Israel Galili, who was to become the head of the Hagana National Command from 1947; Moshe Carmel, the head of the Northern sector, Zeev Feinshtein, the head of the Hagana National Command; Moshe Sneh, the retired head of the Hagana National Command; and Yigal Alon, the Palmah commander, to mention only some of those he interviewed during his seminar.[72] The conclusion was that the Hagana had to be rebuilt to meet

the new needs. However, Ben-Gurion emphasized that while a fundamental change was necessary, it was also still necessary to be aware of the delicate security situation and the dangers emanating from the local Palestinians. Reconstruction of the Hagana should be conducted along two parallel lines; the long-term mission of turning the Hagana into a regular army had to be conducted while the organization secured the security of the Yishuv against Palestinian actions.[73] These two kinds of potential danger, however, were different. While the threat of invasion was ominous, Ben-Gurion held that 'an attack by the Palestinian Arabs will not jeopardize the Yishuv'. He assumed, and Galili agreed, that riots were to be expected following the General Assembly session in the autumn, but that the riots would be acts of protest against the United Nations, if it reached a decision unfavorable to the Arabs. Galili thought that, in any case, a Jewish–Palestinian war had to be avoided.[74]

During the next months, Ben-Gurion and the Hagana commanders and activists suggested various ideas as to the best structure for the Hagana. Ben-Gurion conducted the discussions with two underlining assumptions: the Hagana, in its present condition, was unfit to face the regular Arab Armies; and, to make it competent, drastic structural and personnel changes were needed. To make the necessary changes workable, Ben-Gurion distinguished—in conceptual and structural terms—between the Jewish–Palestinian Front, which was active all this time, and the expected show-down with the Arab Armies. The main effort was to go into dealing with the latter, and in order to do that, the Hagana had to be relatively free from the need to deal with the less urgent and less threatening Palestinian activity. In practical terms, Ben-Gurion called for the establishment of a Guard force that would deal with the Palestinians and an army that would be ready to meet the Arab Armies.[75] An *ad hoc* committee—which consisted of Ben-Gurion, the Hagana former (and future) Chief of Staff, Ya'akov Dori and Galili—determined the future Hagana structure. Organizational and personnel questions were debated, and gradually decisions were made. One decision was the nomination of Moshe Dayan to head the force whose mission was to deal with current security measures. However, Ben-Gurion's intention to make a distinction between fighting against Palestinians and the imminent war with the Arab Armies was not realized. The Hagana remained deeply involved in fighting against the Palestinians, and its development was, therefore, slowed down.

The Build-Up of the Hagana

The months from November 1947 to May 1948 and after were divided between the conduct of the war against the Palestinians, and the mobilization of the Jewish national community's resources—financial, economic and personal—for the war effort. On the basis of this infrastructure, the Yishuv leadership were able to take the necessary steps to prepare for the expected war. These included the structural reorganization of the Hagana redrawing plans for war; procuring and manufacturing armaments; recruiting the necessary man-power to the Hagana; and establishing the financial basis to budget for the war. Local taxation—voluntary at this pre-statehood stages—and donations from world Jewry provided the basis for the financing of the war machinery that had been in action since late 1947. As the Ben-Gurion Diaries tell, these matters occupied Ben-Gurion on almost a daily basis.[76]

On Ben-Gurion's demand, the Hagana's high command submitted a budget proposal upon which the build-up of the Hagana would be based. The commanders submitted a budget of one million Palestine Lira (PL), which Ben-Gurion rejected on the grounds that it was too low. Ben-Gurion raised the defense budget to PL3.3 million, which did not include the needs for the Jewish–Palestinian war. A few days later, the Hagana commanders returned with a PL12 million budget for the months of January–October 1948. Ben-Gurion thought that that was beyond the Yishuv's capabilities. After a lengthy discussion, Ben-Gurion instructed the Hagana commanders, in early January, to prepare a budget based on 20,000 recruits and their needs. This was the size of the force that Ben-Gurion thought at that time would suffice in the eventuality of war.[77]

Steps were taken to ensure the ability of the Jewish economy to function during the war—both the inter-communal struggle and the one expected against the Arab Armies. To that end Ben-Gurion remained in direct and constant communication with the heads of the Jewish cities and villages, to make sure they would be well organized to meet civil needs when fighting broke out. The establishment of fuel reserves was a matter of civil and military concern,[78] as was the organization of the hospitals to meet the needs of war, with the bringing of the Jewish hospitals under the control of the Military Medical Service, which had just been established. The medical supplies necessary for a war situation were prepared, and hospitals trained their doctors, while the emergency medical services were prepared to treat war injuries both in the hospital and outside. All this activity was conducted under

national guidance and supervision—and intervention, where necessary.[79] Another issue settled—of an entirely different nature, though still significant—was the decision to pay compensation to the families of recruits killed in service.[80]

However, the most relevant consideration was, of course, the need to turn the semi-militia Hagana into a regular army. The change had to be both conceptual and organizational. Ben-Gurion had mentioned in a number of his past speeches that the strategic landscape had changed. Now he acted to make his ideas the basis for a workable strategy, to turn the Hagana into a body that could make diplomatic decisions into political reality. Although Galili warned that the Hagana had not been trained to be the decisive factor in determining the Jewish State's borders, Ben-Gurion gave it precisely that role.[81]

Ben-Gurion and his aides concluded that the Hagana's Field Force must be turned into a mobile force and disconnected from its territorial confines; also that its basic organizational form must be that of the brigade.[82] This was revolutionary, not only because the largest Hagana formation so far had been the company, but because the Hagana had no commanders with the necessary training or practical knowledge to fill officer positions. The changes that Ben-Gurion was instigating were laid down in the 'Order of National Structure', issued by the Hagana Command in November 1947; this set down the transformation of the Hagana's semi-mobilized force to fully mobilized brigades that could fulfil the task of confronting regular armed forces. The Order downplayed the danger of the local Arab threat, but, in any case, the process of reorganizing the Hagana and transforming it into a national army, composed of companies and brigades, based on compulsory mobilization of the Jewish population, was an arduous task, which was completed only after the end of the fighting with the Palestinians.[83]

The Hagana high command was also affected by the organizational changes that were underway during the second part of 1947. The structure that had emerged from the gradual shift since autumn 1947 was based on the Hagana command's basic structure, with necessary accommodations. It had a General Staff, which consisted of the following: a Chief of the General Staff (CGS), himself subordinated to the Head of the National Command, a semi-political organ. Under the CGS were: the General Staff Branch, established in July; the Adjutant General Branch; and the Financial Branch. The General Staff Branch was also responsible for Planning, Operations, Instruction and Field Intelligence. The Air Service, established in November 1947, and the National Guard, established in July 1947, were also subordinated to the

CGS. The Intelligence Branch—called at that time the Intelligence Service—was subordinated to the Head of the National Command and to the political department of the Jewish Agency. The General Staff (GS) commanded the brigades announced by the National Order and the Palmah HQ. The Palmah maintained its own HQ, and acted as an army within an army. To the six brigades which already existed in November 1947—Golani (no. 1), Carmeli (no. 2), Alexandroni (no. 3), Kiryati (no. 4), Givati (no. 5), and Etsioni (no. 6)—would be added, by May 1948, the 7th and 8th (Armored) Brigades. The Palmah companies and battalions would be arranged in three brigades: Harel (no. 10), Yitfah (no. 11), and Hanegev (no. 12).[84]

However, this was still more theory than practice. The Hagana had still to become a fully mobilized and disciplined force under the full control of its commanders, undergoing regular military training and ready to act whenever necessary. In order to achieve this, the full human resources of the nation had to be compulsorily mobilized. The first step in this direction was the establishment, by early December 1947, of a special committee for mobilization and the publication of the Mobilization Order.[85] Another problem to be tackled was the lack of commanders. In early March, while the reorganization process was taking place, an American-Jewish Colonel, David Marcus—who had volunteered to assist the Jews in their war—traveled at Ben-Gurion's request all over the country, reviewing the Hagana's situation. He reported to Ben-Gurion that the highest operational level existing was the platoon. No formation above that, be it a company or a battalion, not to mention a brigade, was fit to appear on the battlefield. The Hagana commanders were untrained and inexperienced in the operation of such formations, and the existing forms of back up, such as transportation and communication were unsuitable. The absence of staff officers capable of instilling order and methodology into the units' military planning and activity was particularly noticeable. The lack of order and discipline was evident in the lack of systematic daily, weekly and monthly training programs. Due to the lack of appropriate training and drills, the soldiers were physically unfit. The commanders did not establish a routine camp life, and the automatic exercise of orders was neither embedded in the commanders' nor in the soldiers' way of thinking and acting. Marcus found that while the Hagana men emphasized achievement, the Jewish veterans of the Second World War British Army preferred appearance. He preferred the former's attitude, but the lack of discipline on their part worked against them. It was a mixture of the two approaches that the Hagana most needed. He concluded that a school for battalion commanders and their

staff was urgently needed, and that two dozen officers, of at least the rank of battalion commanders and preferably staff officers, should be brought from the United States.[86] Ben-Gurion and his aides endorsed the first idea but thought that it was impractical, as it would be impossible to remove commanders from their units for a month. The commanders would have to gain their training in the battlefield rather than at a desk.[87] As to the second recommendation, Ben-Gurion sent a list of US officers given to him by Marcus to the Hagana representative in the United States, Arthur Lurie, asking him to approach them.[88]

With the formalization of the mobilization process, a gradual shift in the Hagana manning structure took place—and more clearly so in the Palmah—as the voluntary nature of the Hagana was replaced by compulsory and comprehensive recruitment. Indeed, at the first stage of the mobilization it was expected that the Hagana's registered members, who served on a part-time basis, would be the first to join the Hagana, but it did not take long before even those who had not been previously associated with the Hagana had to join. With the growing number of recruits, the somewhat elite and exclusive nature of the Hagana, in particular the Palmah, decreased and eventually disappeared. This process intensified when Jewish immigrants, who were recruited shortly after de-embarkation, also joined the new army. In Europe, special Hagana representatives organized young Jews and put them through basic military training that would allow them to be ready to join the Jewish military forces shortly after their arrival. The Hagana Command in Europe intended to send to Palestine about 9,000 Jews who would receive military training there. In detention camps in Cyprus about 10,000 men aged 18–35, who received military training from Hagana instructors, were waiting for the end of the Mandate, in order to immigrate to Palestine.[89]

The re-organization of the Hagana and the recruitment process proved to be laborious tasks. Three weeks after the beginning of the inter-communal strife, and a month and a half after the promulgation of the 'Order of National Structure', there were fewer than 5,000 recruits in the Hagana Field Force, including the Palmah units. To these one should add about 1,000 recruits belonging to the Guard Force, which had more the character of a Civil Guard.[90] By the end of December, this figure had risen to around 8,500: Field Forces—4,500, Palmah—2,400, Guard Force—1,200, British-sponsored Auxiliary Force—460.[91]

The Jewish leadership failed to think in terms of a modern, mobile war, and—along with the build-up of an army—money, time and energy were put into what, to some extent, seemed irrelevant to the

concept of modern war: the fortification of the settlements. The need to fortify the settlements resulted from several factors arising from the various threats to which the Jews thought that they were exposed. Ben-Gurion assumed that the Arab States were planning 'a war to wipe the Yishuv off the face of the earth', but he also recognized that the invasion had a limited—and political—goal: to prevent the implementation of the November 29 UN General Assembly Resolution. If the Arab Armies failed fully to achieve the political goal, Ben-Gurion anticipated that they would try 'to clip the territories of the Jewish State—in the Negev, the Galilee, and perhaps also in Haifa and other places'.[92] It was necessary then not only to be prepared for a general offensive, but also for any attempts to annex parts of the Jewish State. Consequently, it was necessary to safeguard every settlement regardless of the cost. There was another reason for securing every settlement—the clashes in the past between the Jews and the Arabs had evolved around the settlements; this had been the situation since December 1947. The idea that it was necessary to secure the settlements, and the role that they played in security matters, was deeply embedded in the conceptions underlying the Yishuv leaders' security plans. Thus, when the Hagana's senior commanders discussed the possibility of abandoning remote settlements whose defense was difficult, and of shortening the defense lines, Ben-Gurion was decisive: 'Even a unit of 40, if fortified, can pin down a large number of forces.'[93] This concept was anachronistic but, nevertheless, a great effort was still invested in the settlements' fortification, with priority being given to those in the more isolated areas, such as the upper Galilee and the Negev.[94]

Special attention had been given to the procurement and production of armaments. The Hagana had no heavy armaments, and the weaponry it possessed was inadequate for facing regular armies. Also, in many cases, the Hagana Brigades had weapons that belonged to the local municipalities which had bought them, and when the brigade was removed from its sector, it had to return its arms to their owners. The existence of a Jewish light metallurgy industry provided the infrastructure and the know-how for the establishment of a military industry, and it increased the pace of its production, aiming to manufacture various small arms–ranging from sub-machine-guns and personnel mines, to bullets, mortars and shells.[95] The main field of action, however, was the international market, where the products of heavy industry, such as tanks, cannons and planes, were available. However, the campaign to procure such items was hampered by the unofficial embargo imposed

by the United States on the Middle East on 5 December 1947. Britain followed the American move. Nevertheless, special Jewish representatives were assigned with a mission to buy wherever possible, and special budgets were allocated for this most expensive endeavor.[96] During the first months after 29 November, the Jewish missions were able to buy only small arms and weaponry, mainly in West Europe. Rifles, machine- guns and ammunition were bought in Italy, and F.N. rifles in Belgium.[97]

The Hagana also had a special representative in the United States, buying freight and commercial passenger planes.[98] Planes were also bought from the British in Palestine, in an auction conducted by the British Army of 21 dismantled Ouster planes. London made a last-minute attempt to call off the deal, but failed, and the planes were delivered to the Israelis.[99] Buying these planes, at the end of 1947 and beginning of 1948, constituted the first step toward the build-up of an air force and, more practically, an airline company. Although the Israeli Air Force played a very minor role during the 1948 war, its roots were to be found in these purchases made by the Hagana envoys in the United States and Europe.[100] In the United States, the Jewish emissaries also bought the necessary raw material for the local arms industry.[101]

A more significant channel, however, was the one established with the Czechoslovakian government. The first ties were created in mid-December 1947, resulting in the purchase, in January, of 4,500 rifles, 200 machine-guns and 5,000,000 bullets. The Czech government also sold the Israelis an additional 10,000 rifles, 500 machine-guns and 12 million bullets which originally had been ordered by the Syrian government. These arms had been allocated to the volunteers, following a decision by the Arab heads of states at a meeting in Cairo, in December 1947. The Syrians, however, did not meet the payment terms, and the whole delivery was offered to the Jews, who willingly accepted.[102] Czech arms sales to the Jews continued during the first half of 1948, with the Soviet government being informed about the Jewish purchase of arms from Czechoslovakia, and encouraging it.[103] The first shipment left Czechoslovakia by the end of March, and arrived on 1 April at the port in Tel Aviv, which was practically under full Jewish control. The British, who were still in the country, did not interfere with these activities, and the arms shipment could be unloaded in spite of the arms embargo.[104] The shipment arrived just in time to arm the forces that were about to launch Operation Nahshon.

NOTES

1. Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, *The Crystallization of the Arab State System, 1945–1954* (Syracuse, NY, 1993), p. 32; Joseph Nevo, 'The Arab of Palestine 1947–48: Military and Political Activity,' *MES*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (January 1987), pp. 3–4.
2. *Behind the Curtain: Iraqi Parliamentary Inquiry Committee into the Palestine War* (trans. to Hebrew by S. Seger) (Tel Aviv, 1954), pp. 38–9; 'The Activities of the Arab League', E13328 FO 371/68382, p. 3.
3. Maddy-Weitzman, *The Crystallization of the Arab State System*, pp. 33–5; *Behind the Curtain*, pp. 40–2, 44–5; 'The Activities of the Arab League', p. 3 (all FO sources are from the PRO, unless differently cited).
4. See a report of an interview with the ex-Mufti: British Middle East Office, Cairo to B. A. B. Burrows, Foreign Office, London, 2 October 1947, E9097, FO 371/61836. See also Avraham Sela, 'The Arab Palestinians in the 1948 War', in Moshe Maoz and B'Z Kedar, *The Palestinian National Movement: From Confrontation to Reconciliation?* (Tel Aviv, 1996) (Hebrew), pp. 132–3. See also Avraham Sela, 'The Arab Palestinians in the 1948 War', in Moshe Maoz and B'Z Kedar, *The Palestinian National Movement: From Confrontation to Reconciliation?* (Tel Aviv, 1996) (Hebrew), pp. 132–3. For more on the Palestinian position regarding the Partition idea see Chapter 2.
5. Sela, 'The Arab Palestinians in the 1948 War,' pp. 133–4.
6. British Legation, Damascus: 'Political Summary for February and March, 1948', E 5002, FO 371/68808; *Behind the Curtain*, pp. 51–2.
7. Telegram 729 from Beirut to Foreign Office, 10 October 1947, FO 371/61530.
8. *Behind the Curtain*, pp. 66–73.
9. Mr Evans, Beirut, to Foreign Office, 10 October 1947, FO 371/61530.
10. *Behind the Curtain*, p. 54.
11. The Syrian and Lebanese Armies at the 1948 Palestine War, IDFA, 922/75/611, pp. 52–3.
12. British Embassy, Cairo, to Secretariat, Jerusalem, 24 October 1947, FO 141/1182.
13. H. Beely's Minute, 23 December 1947, FO 371/61583; 'Political Summary for the Month of December, 1947', British Legation, Damascus, E830, FO 371/68808; 'The Syrian and Lebanese Armies at the 1948 Palestine War', IDFA, 922/75/611, p. 3.
14. 'Political Summary for the Month of December, 1947', British Legation, Damascus, E830, FO 371/68808; Haim Levenberg, *Military Preparation in Palestine, 1945–1948* (London, 1993), pp. 188–9.
15. 'Political Summary for the Month of December, 1947', British Legation, Damascus, E830, FO 371/68808.
16. Mr Evans, Beirut to Foreign Office, 12 October 1947, E9551, FO 371/61530.
17. Protocol of the Jewish Agency Executive meeting, 30 November 1947, CZA, S/100/53b; Ben-Gurion to the High Commissioner, David Ben-Gurion (Memoirs), Meir Avizohar (ed.) (Tel Aviv, 1993); this includes a number of Ben-Gurion's writings, including his diary from the pre-war period. *Chimes of Independence*, p. 13, entry for 1 December 1947; Ben-Gurion speech to the Histadrut Executive Committee, 3 December 1947, ibid., pp. 20–1; Ben-Gurion speech to the Mapai Center, 3 December 1947. LPA, 25/47. Protocol of Jewish Agency Executive meeting, 18 June 1947, CZA, S/100/52b. This decision reiterated resolutions: Protocols of Jewish Agency Executive meeting, 21 March, 26 May, and 8 June 1947, ibid. See also *The Jewish Plan for Palestine – Memoranda and Statements Presented by the Jewish Agency for Palestine to the UNSCOP* (Jerusalem, 1947), pp. 67–9, 331–2, 354–5; Ben-Gurion letter to Paula Ben-Gurion, 2 September 1947, *Chimes of Independence*, pp. 349–52; Meeting of the Zionist Executive Committee, Zurich, 2 September 1947; ibid., p. 352; *Chimes of Independence*, 18 September 1947; ibid., pp. 363–4.
18. Reply of the Government of Israel to the Proposals of the UN mediator, Count F.

Bernadotte, 5 July 1948, Israel State Archives, FO/2451/1. He repeated this theme in M. Shertok to the Under Secretary of State, 22 February 1948, *FRUS 1948* V, p. 646.

19. The reference here is to the Collusion Theory, which was first suggested by Israel Ber, *Israel's Security: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow* (Tel Aviv, 1966), pp. 125–6 (Hebrew); Eugene L. Rogan, 'Jordan and 1948: The Persistence of an Official History', Rogan and Shlaim, *The War for Palestine*, pp. 109–10; Avi Shlaim, *Collusion Across the Jordan* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 1–2; and Pappé, *The Making of the Arab–Israeli Conflict*, pp. 119–21. Efraim Karsh proved successfully that the Jewish–Jordanian Collusion Theory is baseless: Karsh, *Fabricating Israeli History* (London, 1997), pp. 69–107; see also Elhanan Oren, '*De Facto* Deal? Policy and Operations in Central Israel, Autumn 1948', *Maarakhot*, Vol. 311 (March 1988), pp. 43–4.
20. Meeting; translation as appeared in Shlaim, *Collusion*, p. 112.
21. Golda Meir in the meeting of the Provisional Government, 12 May 1948, Israel State Archives, Min'helet Ha'am (Provisional Government) (Jerusalem, 1978), pp. 40–3; The Ben-Gurion War Diaries (hereafter BGWD) (David Ben-Gurion, *War Diary* (Tel Aviv, 1982) (Hebrew), p. 409, entry for 11 May 1948.
22. E. Danin to E. Sasson, 4 January 1948, Israel State Archives, in Gedalya Yogev (ed.), *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 12/47– 4/48* (Jerusalem, 1979), pp. 126–7.
23. Protocol of a Meeting on Arab Affairs, 1–2 January 1948, HA, 80/50/21; E. Danin to E. Sasson, 4 January 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 12/47–4/48*, pp. 128–9.
24. E. Sasson to Azzam Pasha, 5 December 1947, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 12/47–4/48,* pp. 27–30.
25. David Hurewitz, *In a Mission of a Born State* (Tel Aviv, 1952) (Hebrew), pp. 256–8.
26. Protocol of a Meeting on Arab Affairs, 1–2 January 1948, HA, 80/50/21.
27. E. Sasson and H. Berman: 'Outlines of a Policy toward the Arab States, 13 March 1948', *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 12/47–4/48*, pp. 456–8.
28. Editorial Note, *Political and Diplomatic Documents*, *12/47–4/48,* pp. 458–9.
29. *Behind the Curtain*, pp. 38–9, 47–52, 54–6.
30. British Legation, Damascus to Foreign Office, 9 January 1948, E922, FO 371/68803; British Embassy, Ankara to British Legation, Damascus, 19 January 1948, E1218, ibid.; British Legation, Damascus to the Chancery, British Embassy, Ankara, 6 April 1948, E4851, ibid.; from Beirut to Foreign Office, 16 April 1948, E4799, ibid.
31. Dundas, Damascus to Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, 8 January 1948, FO 816/115.
32. Dundas, Damascus to Foreign Office, 1 December 1947, E1338, FO 371/62184.
33. Memo from Jerusalem, C.S. 449, 4 October 1947, FO 141/1182; Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman to Foreign Office, 21 December 1947, E12132, FO 371/61583; British Embassy, Cairo, to Secretariat, Jerusalem, 24 October 1947, FO 141/1182; I.N. Clayton: Note on the Meeting of the Arab Premiers in Cairo, 8–17 December, 1947, FO 816/115.
34. Shlaim, *Collusion*, pp. 138–9.
35. Abdullah Ibn Saud el-Hussein to E. Bevin, 30 August 1947, FO 371/62226; Brigadier Clayton, BMEO, Cairo to B.A.B. Burrows, Foreign Office, London, 27 September 1947, E9592, FO 371/65527.
36. From Beirut to Foreign Office, 21 September 1947, E8748, FO 371/61497; J.E. Cable Memo, 4 November 1947, E10711, FO 371/62226; L.F.L. Pyman Memo, 2 January 1948, ibid.
37. H. Beely, Minutes, 6 January 1948, E101/G, FO 371/68364.
38. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 5 November 1947, E47, FO 371/61836; Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman to Foreign Office, London, 21 December 1947, E12132, FO 371/61583.
39. Haj Muhammed Nimer al Hatib, 'In the Naqba Aftermath', pp. 9–10; H. Beely, Minutes, 6 January 1948, E101/G, FO 371/68364.
40. H. Beeley, memo, 23 December 1947, E12132/G, 371/61583; Broadmead, Damascus,

to Foreign Office, London, 24 December 1947, E12263, FO 371/62226.

41. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 6 October 1947, E9284, FO 371/61497; Mr Evans, Beirut to Foreign Office, 12 October 1947, E9551, FO 371/61530; Yosef Nevo, *Abdullah and the Arab Palestinians* (Tel Aviv, 1975) pp. 50–1.
42. Telegram No. 598 from the British Middle East Office, Cairo to Foreign Office, 11 December 1947, FO 371/62226; Note on the Proceedings of the Meeting of the Arab Premiers in Cairo, 8–17 December 1947, FO 816/115.
43. And see the ex-Mufti interview in *Al Hayat*, 17 October 1947, FO 371/61836; Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 20 December 1947, E12129, FO 371/61583; Sir A. A. Kirkbride, Amman to Foreign Office, London, 21 December 1947, E12132, FO 371/61583; G. J. Jenkins to R. W. Bailey: 'Conference of the Arab Prime Ministers, December 1947', 30 December 1947, FO 371/68365; Mr Rusk, Baghdad to Foreign Office, 31 December 1947, E40, FO 371/68364; *Behind the Curtain*, pp. 55-6.
44. From Amman to Foreign Office, 24 September1947, E8873, FO 371/61529; *Behind the Curtain*, pp. 51–2; Sela, 'The Arab Palestinians in the 1948 War', p. 140.
45. This process is dealt with in Chapter 2.
46. BGWD, p. 187, entry for 28 January 1948; General Sir A. Cunningham to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: Incursion into Palestine, 1 February 1948, E1377/11/65, FO 371/68366; Fawzi Qawukji, 'Memoire, 1948, Part I', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 4, pp. 27–8.
47. Intelligence Report from 'Hiram' to 'Tene', 20 April 1948, HA 105/104.
48. Intelligence Report: 'The Infiltration of Foreign Combatants into Palestine', 15 April 1948, IDFA, 661/69/36; Telegram no. 26 from Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman to Secretary of State, Foreign Office, 21 January 1948, FO 816/115; Telegram no. 29 from Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman to Secretary of State, Foreign Office, 21 January 1948, ibid.; General Sir A. Cunningham to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: Weekly Intelligence Appreciation, 24 January 1948, CO 537/3869 (all CO sources are from the PRO unless differently cited); from New York to Foreign Office, 9 February 1948, E1906, FO 371/68366.
49. General Sir A. Cunningham to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: Weekly Intelligence Appreciation, 13 March 1948, CO 537/3869.
50. 'Naim': Intelligence Report, 1 April 1948, H. A. 105/216/1.
51. 'Tene': Intelligence Report, 8 April 1948, H.A. 105/216/2.
52. Telegram no. 90 from Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to Secretary of State, Foreign Office, 14 February 1948, FO 816/116.
53. Michael Eppel, *The Palestine Conflict in the History of Modern Iraq* (London, 1994), pp. 181–2.
54. Levenberg, *Military Preparation in Palestine, 1945–1948*, pp. 195–7.
55. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, British Legation, Amman to E. Bevin, Foreign Office: 'Monthly Situation Report on Transjordan for the Month of January, 1948', 3 February 1948, E 2069, FO 371/68845; Telegram no. 317 from General Sir A. Cunningham to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 7 February 1948, FO 371/68366. See also Levenberg, *Military Preparation in Palestine, 1945-1948*, p. 196.
56. Telegram no. 747 from High Commissioner, Jerusalem, to H.M. Minister, Amman, 18 March 1948, FO 816/117; Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 20 March 1948, E3729/11, CO 537/3904.
57. Telegram no. 338 from Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman to Foreign Office, 16 May 1948, CO 537/5315; Levenberg, *Military Preparation in Palestine, 1945–1948*, p. 197.
58. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, British Legation, Amman to E. Bevin, Foreign Office: 'Annual Report on Transjordan for the Year 1947', January 1, 1948, E 2010, FO 371/68844; Mr Rusk, Baghdad to Foreign Office, 5 January 1948, E188, FO 371/68364; Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman to the Secretary of State, Foreign Office, 24 January 1948, FO

816/115; British Legation: Monthly Situation Report on Transjordan for the Month of January 1948, 3 February 1948, FO 371/68845; General Sir A. Cunningham to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: Weekly Intelligence Appreciation, 7 February 1948, FO 816/116.

59. Eventually it was the Iraqi forces that acted in coordination with the Syrian forces. Telegram no. 288 from Mr Broadmead, Damascus to Foreign Office, 18 May 1948, CO 537/5315.
60. David Ben-Gurion, *Zikhronot* (Memoirs), Vol. 3, pp. 42, 123, 128, 135, 167–8, 222–3.
61. Alan Bullock, *Ernest Bevin, Foreign Secretary, 1945–1951* (London, 1983), pp. 47–8, 164–8; on the Yishuv struggle against the British White Paper policy, see Ben Tsion Dinur *et al.*, *Sefer Toldot Ha'Hagana* (The History of the Hagana) (Tel Aviv, 1954–73), Vol. 3/3, annexes 32–6, pp. 1921–34.
62. David Ben-Gurion, *Ba'Ma'arakha* (In the Struggle) (Tel Aviv, 1951), Vol. 5, pp. 135–6; David Ben-Gurion, *Medinat Israel Ha'Mehudeshet* (The Restored State of Israel) (Tel Aviv, 1969), p. 68; *Sefer Ha'Hagana*, 3/3:1901–14, 1921–34. Yoav Gelber says that Ben-Gurion paid no attention to the day-to-day security problems with which the Hagana dealt, after he assumed the defense portfolio. However, Gelber does not elaborate on the significance of this neglect. Gelber, *The Nucleus of a Hebrew Army*, pp. 20–1.
63. 'Instructions to the Hagana Command', 18 June 1947, in David Ben-Gurion, *Be'Hilachon Israel* (When Israel Fought in Battle) (Tel Aviv, 1975), pp. 13–18. Ben-Gurion repeated his warning that a full-scale war was imminent in January 1948: Ben-Gurion in a meeting of the Mapai Political Committee, 8 January 1948, Labor Party Archives, Beit Berl, Israel (henceforth LPA), 25/48.
64. Entry for 26 March 1947, *Chimes of Independence*, p. 144.
65. Ibid., entry for 27 May, 1947, p. 192; Ben-Gurion, 'The Hagana Prepares to Battle', p. 508.
66. Ibid., entry for 2 April 1947, p. 146.
67. Ben-Gurion, 'The Hagana Prepares to Battle', ibid., p. 508.
68. Ibid., entry for 2 April 1947, pp. 147–8; BGWD, entry for 27 May, 1947, p. 192; *Chimes of Independence*, entry for 22 October 1947, p. 416.
69. The Security Committee Meeting, 22 October 1947, *Chimes of Independence*, pp. 417–23; The Security Committee Meeting, 28 October 1947, ibid., pp. 431–5.
70. Entry for 27 May, 1947, *Chimes of Independence*, p. 192; Ben-Gurion, 'The Hagana Prepares to Battle', p. 510.
71. Meeting of Mapai Central Committee, 8 January 1948, LPA, 25/48. He repeated this theme in a meeting of the Security Committee's members in the South, 15 January 1948 in Ben-Gurion, *When Israel Fought in Battle*, pp. 34–7; meeting of the Heads of Parties and Organizations, 21 January 1948, *When Israel Fought in Battle*, pp. 38–51; in Mapai Central Committee Meeting, 6 February 1948, LPA, 25/48; speech in Mapai council, 6 February 1948, *When Israel Fought in Battle*, pp. 62–74. *Meoraot* was the Hebrew word for riots. However, it has special connotation, as it implied the ruthless attacks by the Arabs upon the Jews.
72. Israel Galili interview, see Entry for 3 April 1947, *Chimes of Independence*, pp. 148–53; Carmel interview, entry for 7 April 1947, pp. 154–5 and on 17 April 1947, pp. 170–2; Feinshtein interview, see ibid., entry for 9 April 1947, p. 159; Sneh interview, see ibid., entry for 10 April 1947, pp. 159–67; Alon interview, see ibid., entry for 17 April 1947, pp. 172–5; a dialog with several Hagana activists and commanders, see ibid., entry for 2 May 1947, pp. 18–6.
73. Ben-Gurion in a Meeting of Mapai Secretariat, 29 May, 1947, *Chimes of Independence*, pp. 196–200.
74. Ben-Gurion speech in the Zionist Congress' political committee, 18 December 1946. *Ba'Maarkha*, pp. 135–6; see entry for 27 June 1947, *Chimes of Independence*, p. 308.

75. Ben-Gurion Speech in the Security Committee Meeting, 8 June 1947, *Chimes of Independence*, pp. 295—300; see entry for 27 June 1947, ibid., p. 308.
76. References are too many to be cited. On the finance of the Jewish war, see Itzhak Greenberg, 'Financing the War of Independence', *Hatziyonut*, Vol. 13 (1988), pp. 9–25.
77. BGWD, pp. 127–9, entry for 9 January 1948.
78. BGWD, pp. 38, 43, 50, 92 entries for 11, 13, 16 December 1947.
79. BGWD, p. 59, entry for 19 December 1947 and pp. 124–5, entry for 8 January 1948.
80. BGWD, p. 57, entry for 18 December 1947.
81. See the discussions in Mapai Secretariat, 11 October 1947, *Chimes of Independence*, pp. 396–7.
82. Entries for 19, 20 and 21 September1947, *Chimes of Independence*, pp. 370–3.
83. 'Order of National Structure', November 1947, H.A., 73/140; Meir Pa'il, *From the Hagana to the IDF* (Tel Aviv, 1979), pp. 161–74, 274–7, 282–91; Dov Tamari, 'Strategic Thinking in the Hagana, 1936–1947', Master's degree, Tel Aviv University, 1995, pp. 162–3.
84. Pa'il, *The Emergence of Zahal (IDF)*, p. 376 and model no. 6, 'The Hagana Structure in Autumn 1947'.
85. BGWD, p.28, entry for 9 December 1947; Gelber, *The Nucleus of a Hebrew Army*, pp. 132–4.
86. BGWD, pp. 273–4, entry for 2 March 1948.
87. BGWD, p. 274, entry for 2 March 1948 and p. 275, entry for 3 March 1948, and pp. 282–3, entry for 7 March 1948.
88. BGWD, p. 283, entry for 7 March 1948.
89. BGWD, p. 198, entry for 1 February 1948 and p. 297, entry for 14 March 1948 and p. 302, entry for 15 March 1948; Gelber, *The Nucleus of a Hebrew Army*, pp. 136–7. The process is best described in Ya'akov Markovitzky, *Fighting Ember* (Tel Aviv, 1995), (Hebrew), pp. 138–9.
90. BGWD, p. 62, entry for 20 December 1947.
91. BGWD, p. 82, entry for 29 December 1947.
92. Meeting of Mapai Central Committee, January 8, 1948, LPA, 25/48.
93. BGWD 2, p. 430.
94. BGWD, pp. 262–3, entry for 25 February 1948 and p. 267, entry for 29 February 1948.
95. Entries for 13 September and 3 October 1947, *Chimes of Independence*, pp. 360–1, 388, respectively; BGWD, pp. 36–7, 41, entries for 11, 12 December 1947, and pp. 122—3, entry for 8 January 1948, and p. 197, entry for 31 January 1948 and p. 318, entry for 22 March 1948 and p. 324, entry for 29 March 1948.
96. Entries for 3 and 6 October 1947, *Chimes of Independence*, pp. 388 and 390 respectively; BGWD, p. 46, entry for 15 December 1947.
97. BGWD, pp. 40, 50, 86, entries for 12, 16, 29 December 1947;
98. BGWD, pp. 41, 62, 86, entries for 12, 21–22, 30 December 1947.
99. BGWD, p. 180, entry for 23 January 1948.
100. BGWD, pp. 79–80, entry for 28 December 1947.
101. BGWD, p. 86, entry for 30 December 1947.
102. BGWD, pp. 58–9, entry for 19 December 1947 and p. 136, entry for 12 January 1948; and p. 183, entry for 25 January 1948.
103. M. Shertok to D. Ben-Gurion, 13 February 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 12/47–4/48*, pp. 338–9.
104. D. Ben-Gurion to M. Shertok, 18 February 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 12/47–4/48*, pp. 357–8; S. Meirov to M. Shertok, 27 March 1948, ibid., p. 525.

2

Communal War

Two Societies

The total defeat of the Palestinians in their war with the Jews was by no means an obvious outcome, as in many regards the Palestinians seemed to be in a better position. They outnumbered the Jews—there were some 1,200,000 Palestinians in the country, compared with 600,000 Jews.[1] The distribution of the Palestinian community in the country was wider than that of the Jews, and hundreds of Arab villages were spread all over the country, notably along many of its most strategic roads. They had a cadre of veteran guerrilla fighters and a few military leaders who had acquired experience during the 1936–39 Arab revolt; and they were surrounded by their Arab brethren—the Arab countries around Palestine, who pledged to come to the Palestinians' assistance.[2] However, all of this proved to be insufficient. The Jews were superior in the structure and organization of their society and economy, also in their political, diplomacy and military capabilities. There were very few economic links between the two communities. Jews were not employed in Arab undertakings, and vice versa. The exceptions to this rule were that Arabs worked as seasonal laborers in Jewish citrus groves; and members of the two communities worked together in the government service, the Potash Company and the Oil Refinery.[3] Agriculture played an important part in the economic life of both communities, but the differences in this area demonstrated yet again the differences between the two economies and their respective structures. Jewish agriculture was largely intensive and about 75 per cent of the produce was sold to the market. Only 20–25 per cent of Arab agricultural produce was marketed; the bulk was for personal consumption. This was a result of the different kinds of agriculture which each community practised. While the Arab methods were traditional, the Jewish were 'progressive, scientific and experimental'.[4] Jewish industry was also much more developed than Palestinian industry. The UNSCOP report summarized

its discussion on industry in Palestine in these words: 'By and large, Arab industry in Palestine is much less developed and less capitalized than Jewish industry.'[5]

Jewish political culture and institutions were based on the Western model. The common identity and affiliation of the Jewish population found its expression in the development of representative institutions, which they elected and obeyed: despite the voluntary nature of the Jewish institutions, the Jewish community usually accepted the authority of leaders whom they elected in open elections. Jewish society also had an efficient and capable bureaucracy that made possible the mobilization of national resources for the ultimate test; just as the industrial basis of Jewish society and economy made possible the mobilization of Jewish resources.[6]

None of these features existed within Palestinian society. Palestinians did not have a 'political life' as understood by the West: for a start, they had not agreed—far less elected—national leadership or national institutions. The ex-Mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj Amin al-Husayni, was exiled from the country; his entry into Palestine was forbidden by the British Mandatory government. Despite this, he would not allow any other Palestinian to assume a leadership role, to stand at the head of the Palestinian camp, or to lead the Palestinians in their time of need. The Palestinians were divided in almost every respect: between rural and urban dwellers; between city dwellers and villagers; and between families. These divisions were the result of the political crisis that the Palestinians experienced during the Great Revolt (1936–39). They also reflected and perpetuated the pre-industrial nature of Palestinian society, economy and institutions: there was no national economy or national resources. In addition to this, the Palestinians had no centralized military force. In fact, they had no military formation of any kind worthy of the name.[7]

Palestinian Preparations

As we have seen, the group that led the Palestinian struggle was firm in its opposition to any solution that would lead to the establishment of two states in Palestine. They rejected any political process that could lead in that direction, and therefore took no part in any of the discussions aimed at finding a solution to the Palestine problem. The last committee with which they refused to cooperate was UNSCOP, which summarized the Palestinian attitude toward the Palestine problem as a total rejection of

any political solution that would not lead to the establishment of a single state throughout Palestine. This claim was based on several arguments: the Palestinians formed the majority in the country, and their will should be decisive, not least because any other solution would be an infringement of their right to self-determination; they had natural rights to the land, as they had lived on it for generations—this right was also based on the fact that the Palestinians owned 85 per cent of the country's land, 'despite the strenuous efforts of Jews to acquire land in Palestine'; the Arabs had also 'acquired' contractual rights to the land, based on promises made to the Arabs officially in the course of the First World War, and especially the MacMahon–Husayn Correspon-dence of 1915–16 and the Anglo-French Declaration of 1918. On the other hand, the Arabs considered the Mandate on Palestine, which incorporated the Balfour Declaration, to be illegal, as it violated the Arab right to self-determination.[8]

This led the Palestinians to take any possible measure that would prevent the implementation of the Partition Resolution. They were, however, unable to conduct their struggle against the Resolution alone and depended overwhelmingly on the assistance of the Arab States. Moreover, the Arab governments refused to let the Palestinians fight their own war. The re-emergence of the ex-Mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj Amin al-Husayni, as an influential figure in the AHC—although he was not a member—made no dramatic change to its status. The Arab leaders, particularly in Syria, Jordan and Iraq, were unwilling to leave it to al-Husayni to lead the struggle for Palestine. The ex-Mufti was not invited to attend the official Arab League meetings dedicated to the Palestine crisis, and the Jordanian and Iraqi Prime Ministers led the opposition to the ex-Mufti's demand to establish a provisional Palestinian government.[9] The ex-Mufti had, therefore, to fight against the Arab League, which had in fact removed the conduct of the war from the Palestinians' control. He spent a lot of effort in an unsuccess-ful attempt to install his nephew, 'Abd al-Qādir al-Husayni, as commander of the forces fighting in Palestine, instead of the Arab League appointee, General Emir Isma'il Safwat. This created a divisive situation that hampered the Palestinian conduct of the war. The arms that the Arab States contributed to the Palestine war following the Arab League decision were given to Safwat, who was responsible for their distribution; and another source of conflict between Safwat and the ex-Mufti was the latter's attempts to establish his control within Palestine, and to nominate his protégés to command positions in Palestine, thus defying Safwat's claim that he was the only one in a

position to authorize such nominations. Also, through the Arab League's Military Committee, Safwat competed with the ex-Mufti for control on the Palestinian National Committees. Safwat complained that the ex-Mufti constantly undermined his appointed men's positions and that matters sometimes deteriorated into violence.[10] Thus, while in some places the ex-Mufti's trustees were in control of the locality's military affairs, in other places Safwat's Military Committee gained control by installing foreign commanders, who came with Arab League's sponsored volunteers.[11] The latter phenomenon became more and more frequent as time passed. The ex-Mufti, of course, could make similar accusations against Safwat and his men. He had to fight for his status inside Palestine, as only certain parts of Palestinian society accepted his authority. His tool of control was the AHC, which, despite its pretensions, did not reflect the changes that had taken place within Palestinian society and the emergence of new power bases; it remained the Husaynis' power-tool. Jama¯l al-Husayni was put at its head, and he acted fast to neutralize the non-Husayni elements within it. From there, al-Husayni went on to take over other Palestinian power bases—the financial institutions and the paramilitary arm. Acting also to strengthen the position of the Husaynis' affiliated party, the Palestine Arab Party, he established the Arab Treasury as a means to finance his organization's activity. In doing so he competed with the Istiqlal-dominated National Fund, administered by Ahmed Hilmi. The Istiqlal-party was a traditional foe of the Husaynis, and Jama¯l al-Husayni's success in taking over the National Fund, assimilating it into his Arab Treasury, was an important step toward Husayni's political hegemony.[12]

These struggles were only one aspect of the broad struggle within Palestinian society over hegemony and power, and also reflected the divisions that existed between the rural segment of Palestinian society and the city-dwellers. Al-Husayni's main power-base lay among the uneducated rural population, who accepted his leadership mainly for religious reasons. The educated urban middle class and the well-to-do rejected his leadership, fearing that they would have to bear the main financial burden of the war. They recalled al-Husayni's brutal attempts to impose himself upon the Palestinians during the events of 1936–39, and rejected his practices—mainly in the field of fund-raising—which they argued were based on 'American protection racket' methods. They also criticized the ex-Mufti for involving the Palestinians in a war which they felt was ill-timed and for which he had not made the necessary preparations. This line of criticism increased further with the growing

flood of Palestinian refugees, who blamed him for their misfortune. As a result, the ex-Mufti's opponents actively supported the refusal of Syria and the Arab League to allow him to conduct the war.[13]

Thus, the Palestinians entered the crucial stage in the struggle for Palestine internally divided and without influence in the inter-Arab and international arenas.[14] Opposition to the ex-Mufti led notables from Be'er Sheva, Hebron and Gaza to prefer seeing Palestine become part of Transjordan rather than come under the ex-Mufti's rule.[15] Another manifestation of this opposition to Hajj Amin al-Husayni was the turning of Palestinians to the Jews for assistance against the ex-Mufti. A Palestinian from Jenin asked for Jewish financial assistance to organize the local population who opposed al-Husayni leadership, and another dignitary from Hebron also asked in February 1948 for Jewish assistance in organizing his activities against the ex-Mufti. (He believed that he should hold a high rank in any Palestinian government, and the fact that the ex-Mufti made no offer to him might have led him to approach the Jews.) He claimed that his tribe included 1,500 men, and that he had influence in 20 villages, which could be organized as a militant opposition to the ex-Mufti. The reaction in both cases was lukewarm.[16]

The most striking aspect of this situation was the ex-Mufti's failure to recruit the Palestinian people to take part in the war against the Jews. Many villagers and city-dwellers refused to fight. Palestinian notables asked to negotiate cease-fire agreements with their Jewish neighbors on a local basis, and in some cases these negotiations resulted in signed peace agreements. This tendency grew with the setbacks that the Palestinians suffered during December 1947–January 1948 at the hands of the Jewish forces. Rapidly mounting financial losses also prompted Palestinians to try and reach a truce with the Jews—this was the case in Jaffa, Gaza and Haifa, to mention only a few places. It was reported that a similar situation existed in Jerusalem, where the local Arabs were ready to come to a *modus vivendi* which would secure them against Jewish reprisals; and similar talks were held between Jews and Arabs concerning the fighting in the Tel Aviv–Jaffa area.[17]

The Jewish leadership did not always respond positively to the Arab attempts at *rapprochement*. In February, the Tel Aviv and Jaffa citrus growers, who were suffering from the on-going clashes, negotiated a truce that would allow the work in the orchards and the marketing of the fruits to continue. The matter was discussed at the highest political level, between Ben-Gurion and his aides, and the opinions were diverse. Some, like Moshe Dayan and Israel Galili, spoke against the proposed agreement, claiming that it would serve only the Arab side.They also

argued that the Jews had the upper hand in this part of the country, and that militant Arab groups would use the pacified area as a safe place for reorganization and food supplies. At the same time, the end of fighting in the Tel Aviv–Jaffa area would relieve the ex-Mufti of the pressure placed on him by the local population, thus allowing him freedom to take action in other places. Reuven Shiloah, from the Jewish Agency, claimed that every non-belligerency agreement served Jewish interests, and others agreed. Ben-Gurion concluded that he was also not at all sure that cease-fire agreements, especially in places where the Jews had the upper hand, were really desirable. However, he said that negotiations should continue, and that the matter would be discussed again when a conclusive decision became necessary.[18]

A demonstration of similar ways of thinking among the Palestinians was the refusal of villagers to allow guerrillas to use their villages as bases from which to attack Jewish settlements or transportation. The residents of al-Masmiyya declined Hasan Salama's request to attack Jewish transportation near their village. On another occasion, Salama had to bring in foreign volunteers to carry out an attack he planned against Jewish transport going to Rishon Letzion, as residents of Bayt Dejan refused to provoke their Jewish neighbors.[19] Similar reactions by villagers were evident even in areas that were within 'Abd al-Qādir al-Husayni's influence. Thus residents of Colony, Abu Ghosh, Tsuba, al-Qastal and Sataf refused to allow guerrillas to settle in their villages, and the former had to return to their base in Bayt Surik.[20]

However, the opposition to the ex-Mufti and to his policy had no impact on the willingness and ability of the militant elements among the Palestinians. Those who were against the war had no scope to express their objections at a national level, while the forces that were determined to go to war were politically stronger and more influential, and could disregard the opposition.

As we have seen, one major accusation directed against the ex-Mufti was that he was leading Palestinians into a war for which they were unprepared; and the most obvious indication of this was the lack of military formations with which the Palestinians could conduct a war. The only formation that pretended to match the Jewish Hagana was the paramilitary al-Najjada, established in 1945 by Muhammad Nimr al- Harawi. However, despite the fact that in its heyday this organization had more than 8,000 members organized in some 20 branches, now the main activities of its members were scouting, parades and drills. The nature of the al-Najjada changed slightly in 1946 when ex-soldiers, some of them ex-officers, recently discharged from the British Army,

joined its ranks.[21] However, the Najjada did not fulfill the desire of its members to defy the divisions and factionalism in favor of national unity, and it fell victim to the power struggle between the ex-Mufti and his opponents, who dominated the organization. The struggle ended in victory for the ex-Mutfi, as under his pressure the al-Najjada and al-Futuwa were absorbed in June 1947 into the newly formed Arab Youth Organization (AYO). The Egyptian Mahmoud Labib was chosen to head it.[22] Labib intended to turn the AYO into a military formation that would fight for the Palestinian cause, and to that end he promised the conscripts a monthly salary, food and arms. A complementary measure was the decision reached by a conference organized in August 1947, by Labib, to establish National Committees under AHC control all over Palestine. The British saw in these activities an echo of the situation which had existed in Palestine on the eve of the 1936 Arab revolt, and they acted firmly to prevent what they thought would follow. They expelled Labib from Palestine but took no further action in face of seemingly ominous signs, such as the mutually lethal attacks perpetrated by Palestinians and Jews.[23] Labib was replaced by al-Hawari, the organization's founder, but internal fighting over the control of the AYO continued, and al-Hawari, who challenged Jamal al-Husayni's authority over the AYO, was dismissed in November 1947 by the ex-Mufti. The dissolution and then re-establishment of the National Committees brought an end to the AYO as a national organization, and the Committees became responsible for local security and took control of the local branches of the AYO for their own purposes.[24]

In spite of all this, the Palestinians, like the Hagana, had two sources of manpower with military experience: the Second World War veterans and the Arab members of the Auxiliary Force established by the British to assist them in security matters. Since 1945, an increasing number of Palestinians had been recruited to the Auxiliary Force and undergone basic military training that included the use of arms. Unlike the Jews, the Arab force members were allowed to retain their weapons when they relocated, and so could be used in various operational missions in the service of the Palestinian struggle.[25] However, the contribution of these experienced Palestinians to the national struggle was marginal, as they had neither formations to join, nor a national institution to recruit them. Thus, as Nevo accurately points out:

> … the fear of the Jews, the internal rivalries, the reluctance to assume responsibility and the recognition that the international

> status of the Arab states was far higher than their own—all intensified the tendency to let the neighboring countries run their political affairs.[26]

When turning to the Arab States for assistance, the Palestinians did get some help, even if not to the extent and of the nature they wished. A training camp was established in Syria, and volunteers from Palestine and the rest of the Arab world were encouraged to join. A smuggling channel had been created, along which arms and weapons were smuggled into Palestine. One active route was through the Western Desert into Palestine. Second World War remains left in the Desert were transferred to Palestine through Egypt, with the authorities turning a blind eye. The importance of these deliveries lay in the fact that they were given directly to the Palestinians, and not to the Arab League's Military Committee, as they should have been, according to the Arab League's ruling. The number of the arms that reached the Palestinians along this channel is unknown, but the Egyptians alone provided the ex-Mufti with 1,200 rifles and 700,000 rounds. Egypt's government was ready to hand the ex-Mufti an additional 500 rifles, but the Arab League's Military Committee demanded that the rifles be given to them.[27] The Military Committee handed over to the Palestinians 1,700 rifles, 500,000 rifle-bullets, and limited quantities of guns and hand-grenades.[28]

The other significant Arab force in the country was the ALA, but it did not contribute in any way to the Palestinian war effort. (As explained above, the Arab governments forbade the ALA to join the fighting in Palestine before 15 May.) Qawukji himself bowed to an unyielding British demand that he not act as long as the Mandate was in effect; the British Mandatory authorities were very insistent on this.[29] So, although the ALA forces took part in fighting here during the intercommunal wars, the fights were usually only local events and most of Qawukji's forces remained idle. (The most conspicuous exception was the ALA intervention in the fighting during April and May; but these cases will be placed in context in due course.) Consequently, the ALA only joined the fighting after May 1948, when the Jewish–Palestinian war was already over. Thus, a significant military force remained idle just when it was most needed. Moreover, the establishment of the ALA weakened the Arab League's decision to assist the Palestinians, as the arms and funds were transferred to the army rather than being given directly to the Palestinians.[30]

Communal War in Palestine

The war broke out on the day after the UN Resolution, although ominous signs for the future had been evident even before that. The years 1945 and 1946 were relatively quiet, but a change took place during 1947. Arab groups were involved in criminal actions against Jews in various parts of the country, though mainly in the south and the center. The Hagana was aware of the fact that these actions were criminal, but in the tense climate existing in the country, as the political process progressed, the distinction between criminal and politically related actions was unclear; so, when Arab robbers were active in the Petah Tikva area during May 1947, Hagana units stormed a house in a nearby Arab village, in order to kill them. The most conspicuous event—which, again, was basically a criminal act—was an attack by five Palestinian gunmen, on 8 August 1947, on a Jewish café on the outskirts of Tel Aviv, in what seemed to be an armed robbery. The (Arab) site guard shot at the gunmen, and they returned fire, killing four Jews and one Arab. Due to the tense Arab–Jewish relations at that time, this apparently criminal action was perceived in nationalistic terms, and riots lasting three days followed, during which Jews and Arabs from Tel Aviv and Jaffa were involved in stabbings, sniping and stoning. By the end of the riots, four Arabs and four Jews were dead, and 48 Arabs and 23 Jews injured. A few days later the Hagana stormed an Arab building near Petah Tikva, killing 11 Arabs. This act was directly attributed to the earlier assault on the café.[31] These events were exceptional in their extent and lethality when compared to those which occurred during earlier and later months.

Tension grew again in October with UNSCOP's recommendation of the Partition Plan. In his summary report, Lieutenant General Macmillan, commander of the British forces in Palestine, claimed that thereafter 'the local situation deteriorated rapidly'. Arabs attacked the consulates of the powers that had voted against them, and engaged in sporadic shooting against Jews in Haifa, Tel Aviv and Jaffa. Isolated attacks by Arabs on Jewish transportation were also 'not infrequent'.[32] The intensity of these events increased with the United Nations General Assembly's acceptance of the Partition Resolution, and the events that began on 2 December can be seen as the beginning of what later developed into a violent inter-community conflict. Naturally, there was no formal declaration of war, and that might be the reason for Ilan Pappé implying that—at least from the Palestinian's side—there was no intention to go to war.[33] However, a war it was. What distinguished the

events that took place before and after 29 November was both sides' intentions and the methods they used to carry out these intentions. The Palestinians used violence in an attempt to abort the UN Resolution, and the Jews acted in the same way to facilitate Partition. The AHC retained its defiant attitude toward the Partition Resolution, and the ex-Mufti rejected ideas for compromise put forward by Arab politicians, insisting that the only solution was the creation of a single Palestinian state with an Arab majority and a minority representation for the Jews within the national institutions. The only way to achieve this, the ex-Mufti maintained, was through a military confrontation, in which he was certain the Palestinians would gain the upper hand. The means available to the Palestinians dictated their tactics. They were unable to overpower the Jews, but—by using terror as their main tool—they aimed to show that Partition was impractical; and this was the main message that leaders like the ex-Mufti delivered to British and American diplomats.[34] The Hagana acted on the basis that Partition would be implemented, and consequently seized no territory. Its field forces neither initiated decisive campaigns, nor tried to break the backbone of the Palestinian military (or semi-military) power. Similarly, the Jewish leadership accepted the idea that Jewish settlements and settlers would come under Palestinian sovereignty.[35]

As Stockwell has noted, the beginning of inter-communal war in Palestine should be dated to October, following UNSCOP's announcement of its intention to present a report to the United Nations recommending Partition. The unrest increased further with the General Assembly's adoption of the Partition Resolution. The AHC declared a three-day strike on 30 November. On that day, Arabs attacked a Jewish bus near Lydda, killing some passengers and wounding others. This attack was followed by the setting on fire of the Jewish commercial center in west Jerusalem by an Arab mob from east Jerusalem. The riots continued, and in one week alone about 40 Jews were killed.[36] However, the ex-Mufti disapproved of the way the strike had turned into violent clashes. Like the Jews—or, at least, the 'official' Yishuv—he tried to practice restraint. Hajj Amin and his supporters wished to avoid violence at this stage, as they knew that the Palestinians were not properly organized.[37]

Those National Committees that were loyal to the ex-Mufti also called for restraint, but although they had some influence, the widespread assaults on Jews continued. The AHC still tried unsuccessfully to turn the clock back, possibly in part because at that time, out of all the AHC members, only Dr Husayn Fakhri al-Khālidi was in

Palestine.[38] The ex-Mufti's inability to dictate the nature and set the pace of Palestinian activity demonstrated his precarious position within Palestinian society. Actions against the Jews were also carried out by Palestinians who acted on their own initiative, not under the aegis of the recognized leadership. In the Jaffa–Lydda–Yehudia triangle, at least three local groups were active. In the Negev, Arab groups were organized along similar lines; but here the various groups not only attacked Jewish transportation, but also sabotaged the long water pipeline, which for many Jewish settlements in that area was their only source of water.[39] To add to this complexity, one should also take into consideration the volunteer guerrillas who had been infiltrating Palestine since January. Most of the volunteers belonged to the ALA and were quartered in its barracks. Others, however—including some of the army-trained guerrillas—joined the local Palestinians in the cities. This happened mainly in Haifa, Jaffa, al-Ramla and Lydda. In many cases, their presence caused tensions between their commanders and the local Palestinian leadership, as they introduced an alternative leadership to the one claimed by the ex-Mufti. The foreign commanders in the outlying areas—mainly those connected to the ALA—were more cautious and restrained than their counterparts in the cities. Consequently, the commanders in Lydda and its vicinity demanded that their guerrillas not expose themselves, the city and surrounding villages to Jewish counter-attacks, and that they refrain from attacking local Jewish transportation.[40] The reason for this relative restraint was probably that the commanders who were attached to the ALA and the Arab League's Military Committee preferred to go to war as a regular force, and they knew that the Arab Armies and the ALA would not interfere before the termination of the British Mandate. In the meantime, they preferred to concentrate on strengthening their forces. Although they were spread throughout the country and in areas and places where the ex-Mufti was influential, the volunteers maintained links with the Arab League's Military Committee. These links made possible the cooperation which was established during February–March between the various elements and groups acting in the country. However, this structure could hardly be depicted as an organization in which a clear and abiding line of hierarchy existed.

In the first stages of the war, the Palestinians had the initiative and their means and capabilities dictated the nature of their activities. Another determining factor was geography, which worked in the Palestinians' favor and, in a way, determined the nature of the fighting. Most of the Jewish population was concentrated along the coast in a

dense strip stretching from Rehovot–Rishon Letzion through Tel Aviv up to Haifa. Jewish settlements existed south and north of this strip, but they were scattered and isolated. Another smaller Jewish concentration existed along the valley ('the Izrael Valley') stretching east of Haifa and west of Tiberias—these two end-cities were of mixed population. Arab-populated areas were located in mid- and east Galilee and the mountainous area stretching from the Jenin area to the Hebron area to the south. This part of the country, with the exception of Jerusalem, which was located mid-way between these two Arab cities, remained out of the war. A few Jewish settlements existed inside the Arab-dominated area, mainly along the coast in west Galilee; and a few more isolated Jewish settlements were to be found north and south of Jerusalem. The Jewish-dominated area, mainly along the coast, was dotted with Arab villages, which in many cases controlled the roads leading from one Jewish city to another. This was the case along the Tel Aviv–Rehovot road and the Tel Aviv–Haifa road. Arab villages that lay across these routes could, if they wished, stop the traffic along the roads. Jerusalem was a conspicuous example of this. This city, which according to the 181 Partition Resolution was to be internationalized, contained 100,000 Jews, most of them in its western part, and 65,000 Arabs. The Jews defied the Partition Resolution, and were determined to include the city—at least its Jewish part—within the boundaries of the Jewish State. Arab villages, however, surrounded the city, and the only road connecting it with the Jewish coastal area was under the complete control of the Palestinians, who took full advantage of that situation.[41]

Most Palestinian activity in the cities consisted of small-scale terrorism: rioting, sniping, bomb-planting and so on. They did not engage in guerrilla warfare against their neighbors, nor did they storm the Jewish neighbourhoods or try to take them over. However, there were some exceptions to this general rule. On a few occasions, Hasan Salama and 'Abd al-Qādir al-Husayni had tried unsuccessfully to lead organized attacks against Jewish settlements and neighborhoods. The ALA was also involved in a few such attempts during the inter-communal conflict phase, but was also defeated. The first attempt by organized guerrillas to attack a Jewish neighborhood had been made by Hasan Salama, who led a futile attack on a Tel Aviv suburb on 8 December 1947. Hasan Salama mustered hundreds of Palestinians from al-Ramla, Lydda, and even from Nablus, and led them in an attack on a suburb of Tel Aviv. However, the Hagana had been informed of the attack, and was waiting. After a three-hour battle, the Palestinians had to withdraw; nearly 100 of Hasan Salama's men were killed, and the experience was not

repeated.[42] The next occasion, which ended in a similar way, was the attack on the Jewish settlements in Gush Etsion, south of Jerusalem, on 14 January 1948. The Gush was located in the middle of an Arab-populated area, on the Jerusalem–Hebron road, 18 km north of Hebron and 10 km south of Jerusalem. It consisted of four settlements, in which about 550 men and women lived; more than 300 of them were residents of the settlements and the rest were Hagana members sent to assist the Gush residents. Fearing an attack by al-Husayni, on 14 January the Gush settlers ambushed Arab transportation along the Hebron–Jerusalem road. A fight ensued with the local Palestinian forces, and the 300 men from al-Husayni forces who were in the training camp were in Bayt Surif and were joined by more than 300 local Palestinians who had been alerted, attacked the Gush. The attack was broken up when a small Palmah unit counter-attacked. The Palestinians retreated having suffered dozens of casualties, while among the Gush members there were three dead. The attack and, more clearly, the consequences, sharply demonstrated the Palestinian weaknesses and Jewish advantages at this stage of the inter-communal war. The Arabs were disorganized, even those from the training camp, and their attack lacked focus. The attack was sporadic and uncoordinated, with no central command or direction; local commanders led diverse and isolated groups and disregarded the other forces. The Jews, on the other hand, were well organized; their defense line was organized by a central command, which shifted and operated forces according to developments along the various fronts. The Jews suffered a painful blow though after the battle, when 35 Palmah combatants were sent to reinforce the Gush defenders: as they walked from the Jerusalem area to the Gush, they were caught and killed by local Palestinians.[43]

To these two experiences one should add the similarly futile attacks on Kfar Uriya (11 January 1948), Yehiam (20 January 1948) and Tirat Tzvi (16 February 1948)—the ALA forces perpetrated the last two attacks. The attack on Yehiam was carried out by a group of 200–300 men who infiltrated Palestine from Syria and established themselves in the Safad area. Its leader was a German officer, and the group was disciplined and equipped with rifles and mortars, hitherto unseen among the Arabs. They even brought supplies with them to avoid having to make unpopular demands on villagers. This force attacked Yehiam, using mortars and automatic weapons, but the defenders, who were later assisted by British troops, repelled the attack.[44] An ALA unit from Jenin carried out the attack on Tirat Tzvi. Due to early intelligence, the Hagana was ready to meet the assailants, and the attack was once again

repelled. The Jews sustained two injuries, one fatal and one wounded, while the Arabs suffered 44 dead and dozens of wounded. British forces arrived at the scene, but their intervention was unnecessary.[45] The attacks did not signify the decision of the ALA to join the fighting, as Qawukji pledged once more to avoid action as long as the British were in charge.[46]

These experiences taught the ex-Mufti and his local commanders that their forces were unfit to face the Jews, while the more able force—the ALA—was unavailable to them. One lesson learnt was not to repeat the attacks on Jewish settlements. A second important lesson was the need to improve the quality of their manpower and their capabilities. This was done and by March there was a marked change (see below). Another lesson was that the intensification of fighting in the cities and the continuation of fighting along the roads could be successful strategies. The Palestinians succeeded in disrupting Jewish transportation; during the first weeks of the riots, their attacks almost brought it to a halt; but their success was short-lived, as it was not long before the Jews found solutions to this problem. One important element was British assistance: Ben-Gurion urged the British High Commissioner to send in British forces in order to secure transportation in Arab-controlled areas, and he did so. In mid-December, the High Commissioner announced to the Jewish leadership that the British security forces had taken upon themselves responsibility for the Old City in Jerusalem, the Jaffa–Jerusalem road, the Jerusalem–Hebron road and the roads in south Palestine. In view of this, Cunningham demanded that the Jews stop their reprisal attacks and restrain the Jewish dissidents groups.[47] Despite the Jewish tendency to blame the British for not assisting them, or accusing them of taking the ex-Mufti's side,[48] British security forces came to the rescue of Jewish cars or convoys that were caught in Arab fire on many occasions, especially along the road to Jerusalem. British security forces patrolled the Jerusalem–Jaffa road and, at least until early March, in some cases, British Army forces rescued Jewish cars that ran into Arab ambushes.[49] The Jews also took steps of their own to meet the Palestinian challenge. It was suggested that Arab transportation should be so severely attacked that the attacks on Jewish transportation would stop;[50] and new roads were also built to bypass regions controlled by the Palestinians.[51] By the end of December, a new solution was worked out. Jewish transportation through sensitive areas proceeded in the convoys protected by armed members of Hagana, and the vehicles were armor-plated.[52] These solutions temporarily relieved the pressure on the Hagana, and even though Jewish–Palestinian hostilities contin-

ued, in January 1948, Ben-Gurion announced 'the current phase of the war' as a success.

The other battlefield was the cities. Although Jews and Arabs usually lived in separate areas, there were some cities where the populations were mixed. Tel Aviv and Jaffa were ethnically based—Jaffa was Arabic and Tel Aviv Jewish—but they were so close that the communities could be considered as mixed. In these cities, fighting raged until the Jewish final offensive and the Palestinian defeat, during April–May. The conduct of the fighting in the city highlighted Jewish communal and social strength in contrast to Palestinian weakness. It was not just that the Palestinians were less organized—with each city effectively fighting its own war, and in many cases internal frictions undermining their fighting ability—the way in which the respective city leaders dealt with one of the main phenomena of urban fighting, civilian casualities, also differed. The problem existed on both the Jewish and the Arab sides. The residents of the neighborhoods in which the fighting was taking place fled from their homes, usually to the city centers, becoming refugees within their communities. The way each community treated this problem was very indicative of the level of organization and discipline in each community, and here again, the Jews dealt more successfully with the issue. Another aspect of this issue was the influence that the internal refugees had on the combatants' spirit there seemed to be a direct correlation between the general attitude of the civil population in the Arab cities and the fighting spirit of the Palestinian combatants. On the Jewish side, the state of the refugees had only a minor impact on the combatants' spirit, as the Jewish combatants were organized into military formations whose function did not depend on the civilian situation.

By the end of December, there was a lull in the Palestinians' violent activity. Statistics presented by the High Commissioner showed that, up to early January, the number of attacks perpetrated by Jews against Palestinians amounted to nearly two-thirds of the number in which the Arabs were the aggressors. However, the number of casualties on both sides during the first month of the hostilities was similar: 204 Jews and 208 Palestinian had died; some 1,000 had been injured, about half on each side.[53] The violence did not stop completely, and in any case, the respite could be attributed to Palestinian exhaustion due to being insufficient prepared. The villages were unwilling to take part in the violence, and there was not enough money, ammunition and arms, food and planned targets. Palestinian local leaders sought a cease-fire with the Jews, and they did it either through directly approaching their Jewish neighbors, or by asking for outside intervention. In early January

Ahmad Hilmi and Dr Khālidi visited King Abdullah and asked him to use his influence with the British authorities 'to induce them to take more effective steps to keep the Jews and the Arabs from each other's throats'. King Abdullah told the British Minister in Amman, Kirkbride, that he had received further similar applications from Palestinians.[54] As seen from the British perspective, at that stage the Palestinians were assuming a defensive posture in the face of Hagana aggression.[55]

Three developments that took place during January were instrumental in the revitalization of the Palestinian's desire to fight: the entry of volunteers from the neighboring Arab countries, some of whom joined the Palestinian groups in the cities; the efforts made by the Palestinian leaders, 'Abd al-Qādir al-Husayni and Hasan Salama, to improve the quality of their fighters; and the return of Palestinians from training camps in Syria. The first two developments mainly affected the struggle in the cities. The third was felt gradually, its importance reaching its height in March; but almost upon their arrival the returned Palestinians became involved in attacks against Jews. British police forces who fought against them claimed that their discipline and tactics were 'far in advance of anything yet encountered'.[56] The appearance of these reinforcement forces; the successful liquidation, in mid-January 1948, of 35 Hagana members near Bayt Surif; and the successful dismantling, by the Palestinian National Guard, of a van loaded with explosives planted by Jews in an Arab neighborhood—all boosted Palestinian morale. The respite that the High Commissioner had noted earlier seemed by the end of January to be replaced by a revitalized Palestinian campaign.[57]

The Jews and the Communal War

The Jewish attitude toward Palestinian violence had been dictated by its determination to see the Partition implemented. For that reason, the Jewish leadership's initial response to Palestinian violence was to call for restraint on the part of the Hagana. In the days before and immediately after 29 November 1947, no one on the Yishuv Security Committee seriously considered the possibility that the confrontation with the local Arab community might become a full-scale intercommunal war.[58] Underlying Jewish assumptions about the nature of the expected Palestinian actions and the desired Jewish response were outlined in Plan C, or the May 1946 Plan. Plan C was prepared in May 1946, and at that time there were no political aims or context other than ensuring

Jewish security. The Plan was based on the assumption that, as happened during the 1936–39 riots, the Arab Palestinians would attack Jewish settlements but that this time they would be better equipped and organized, and would enjoy the assistance of the neighboring Arab countries. Yet the Plan also suggested that they would confine themselves to perpetrating localised terror acts against industrial and economic targets. It was also assumed that, unlike the 1936–39 events, this time the burden of defense would fall solely on the shoulder of the Hagana, as the British would not interfere. The Hagana's reaction, according to the Plan, should be to protect those targets and take measures to quell the terror campaign. The counter-measures would be restricted to retaliatory attacks against political leaders ('personal terror'), public sites, vital Arab economic and industrial facilities and so on.[59]

It was a defensive plan that set no offensive goals or missions for the Hagana. Nothing was said about the possibility of seizing territory held by the Arabs, for example, not to mention a full-scale assault against the Palestinian community or a takeover of the country. In the Yishuv leaderships' eyes, these principles supported the expectation that despite the violent Palestinian reaction following the Partition Resolution, it would still be possible to quell the resistance and to carry out the Partition. The Jews hoped to attain this goal through direct attacks on those elements that were suspected of committing terror attacks against Jews, and attacks against those leading violent Arab resistance to Partition. The head of the Hagana National Command, Israel Galili, explained that the Jewish aim was to prevent the spread or prolongation of the violence. Hence, an immediate reaction by the Hagana was essential, to bring a quick end to the turmoil. The reaction should be strong enough to quell local unrest, but restricted enough not to bring into the cycle of violence those Palestinians who remained out of it at this stage.[60] Hagana intelligence experts claimed that the majority of Palestinians had not joined in the fighting; hence nothing should be done to provoke them. This cautionary note was widely accepted by the Yishuv military and political leadership,[61] and the intention was that actions be carried out under strict orders as to where to act, and against whom, and that the selection of targets should be discriminating; and this was generally the case, despite a few exceptions. A few examples would clarify this point: in response to Palestinian attacks on the Jewish water pipeline in the south of Palestine and their attacks on Jewish transportation in that area, local Palmah units were instructed by the Hagana Central Command to organize ambushes against those responsible for these actions. The Palmah units were also instructed to attack

Arab transportation.[62] Other Palmah units were ordered to execute Palestinian leaders such as Rafiq Tamimi, Hasan Salama, 'Abd al-Qa¯dir al-Husayni, Shaykh Nimr al-Khatib, as well as other Palestinian military leaders.[63] The logic behind this mode of operation was the Jewish leadership's hope that the elimination of the Palestinian militant opposition to Partition would make it possible. In the case of Sheikh Nimr al-Khatib, the plan became reality. Al-Khatib, from Haifa, was the leader of a Palestinian faction in northern Palestine and one of the main instigators of the fighting against the Jews in that part of the country. In mid-February the Hagana ambushed his car and he was fatally injured.[64]

Fear of adverse international reaction also affected the nature of Hagana activity. Jewish representatives were told by foreign diplomats that the continued violence 'would cause many to have serious doubts whether either the Arabs or the Jews were sufficiently mature to govern themselves'.[65] Another consideration which decided the nature of the Hagana response was low estimation of the Palestinian's military capabilities. Ben-Gurion asserted, in January 1948, that, 'If we had to deal only with the Palestinian Arabs, I think we could already win the war'; and the Hagana experts agreed, repeating this opinion in March.[66]

The declared goal—of acting cautiously in order to diminish the scale of violence—could not be implemented everywhere and all the time. There were cases where actions by the Hagana provoked Arab violence, even in places that had until then remained out of the cycle of violence. In mid- December 1947, Hagana members killed a Palestinian, from Colony, near Jerusalem, having mistaken him for an ex-Mufti informer. In response, associates of the murdered Palestinians attacked a Jewish bus with a hand-grenade. The Hagana responded by attacking Lifta, whose residents had nothing to do with the attack on the bus.[67] Another example occurred on 30 December 1947, when Palestinians killed a Jewish member of the British-sponsored Auxiliary Force who was driving through the al-Hula area, in northern Palestine. The indications were that the village of Khisas was involved and the local Palmah commander demanded a response. The local Jewish settlers objected to a reprisal attack, fearing that it would lead to a cycle of bloodshed. The Palmah commander nevertheless pressed the Hagana National Command to approve his request, and received a positive answer. A Palmah company attacked the house of Amir Mahmoud al-Fawr, the head of the al-Fadl tribe and a prominent leader in the region, who was seen as the major inciter. The house was demolished, and its residents,

children included, died. A few days later (9 January 1948), Arabs from Syria—thought to be al-Fawr's men—attacked Kfar Szold, a Jewish settlement in that area, in what was considered to be an Arab response to the Hagana attack on Khisas.[68] On 11 February 1948, a Jewish convoy parking in the Latrun area searched a passing Arab truck and stole ten Palestinian Liras and a gun from the passengers, and then fired at a passing Arab car. In response, and under the advice of the al-Ramla National Committee, Arabs from the neighboring area fired at Jewish transportation. Another example was the decision of two Arab Palestinians to plant mines in a Jewish training area, in response to an attack they had suffered by a Palmah unit.[69] These are only a few examples of a wider phenomenon, which went against the Jewish desire to prevent the troubles spreading.[70]

If the Hagana practiced restraint, at least officially, matters were different with the Jewish dissident groups such as the IZL and the LHI. They did not put themselves under the Yishuv leadership and acted independently; they were also much more indiscriminate in their selection of targets than was the Hagana.They were responsible for some of the more brutal acts of terror during that phase and they carried out the more spectacular bomb attacks against the Arabs. Ben-Gurion even compared the Palestinians' bomb attacks to those perpetrated by the IZL and LHI members.[71] In his final report, Macmillan mentioned many cases of lethal IZL and LHI attacks on Palestinians. According to his note, between December 1947 and April 1948, the IZL had conducted 15 terror attacks against Arabs, during which nearly 50 people were killed. This list does not include the attack on Dayr Yasin, where according to Bir Zeit anthropologist, Sharif Kanane, 120 Palestinians were slaughtered.[72] An example of the impact of the dissidents' terrorist activities can be found in the tossing by IZL terrorists of several bombs toward Arabs waiting for a bus near the Haifa Oil Refinery. Six Arabs were killed and dozens wounded. In response, Arab workers at the refinery attacked their Jewish co-workers, killed nearly 40 and wounded 50. Only British intervention stopped the massacre; but this was not the end of it. The Hagana local command claimed that the assailants of the Jews in the Oil Refinery came from Balad-al-Shaykh, an Arab village near Haifa, and it was decided to launch a massive attack in retaliation. Six Hagana platoons—nearly 170 men—stormed the village, demolishing houses and shooting and killing 60 of the village residents, men, women and children.[73]

By mid-December 1947, it had become obvious that the Hagana counter-measures were not quelling Palestinian military resistance; and,

after a short respite, the violence increased further during January and thereafter. Militarily, it seemed that the Hagana was in control and was finding solutions to the Palestinian challenges;[74] but, as the war continued and the violence escalated, the Jewish leadership debated more effective means of action. There were two main schools of thought, one represented by the Jewish Agency official, Eliahu Sasson, and the other by Ben-Gurion's adviser on Arabic affairs, Ezra Danin. Sasson advocated a harsh and unrestricted reaction to Palestinian attacks. He claimed that the Jewish image in the Arab world—based on Jewish actions during their war with the Palestinians—was that the Jews practiced a hit-and-run strategy and that the Palestinians had the upper hand. It was therefore necessary to carry out harsh acts of deterrence to counteract this image of weakness. He rejected the discriminatory nature of the May 1946 Plan, and called for indiscriminate attacks on Arab transportation and Arab commercial targets.[75] Danin rejected Sasson's recommendation. He advocated a sharp, but well-chosen, response against suspected perpetrators of terrorist acts: suspects should be hit hard, in the hope that such harsh responses would put fear into the Arabs and discourage Palestinian villagers from joining the fighting. The villagers, claimed Danin, were unwilling to join the fighting, but were under heavy pressure to do so. Fear of brutal Hagana reprisals would strengthen their determination to stay out of the fighting. However, the Hagana had to retain the discriminatory nature of its actions, and to beware of extending the violence by drawing in the villagers: so far Arab villages, on the whole, had remained out of the war, and the Hagana should be careful not to take actions that would reverse this trend. Thus, the Hagana should refrain from attacking public transportation, and settle instead for freight transportation; it should hit known Palestinian terrorists, and avoid civilian casualties.[76]

Ben-Gurion and Galili agreed with Danin that the Hagana should escalate its response in the face of Palestinian activity, but that it should be carried out within the May 1946 Plan framework, and in a way that would not provoke those Palestinians who remained out of the fighting.[77] Other Hagana intelligence officers shared this view,[78] but Hagana commanders thought differently. They warned that a change in strategy was necessary, as the Palestinians had regained the initiative and were dictating the terms and pace of the fighting—and that had to be denied them. The Hagana High Command therefore proposed, in February 1948, to redefine the Jewish operational aims as the 'taking over [of territory] inside the [Jewish] State [and] defense along its borders'.[79] This was a whole different thing, and anyway, was easier said than done,

as in February the Hagana command still thought in terms of prevention and deterrence by attacking selected Palestinian targets, and the Hagana Chief of Operations still invoked the May 1946 Plan, with its limited aims.[80]

Ben-Gurion summarized the issue in the instructions he gave to Yadin and Galili—that the Hagana should be more aggressive toward those prone to violence. He called this change 'an aggressive defense'.[81] Whatever this term meant, it seemed that the Jewish leaders were losing their ability—or maybe their will—to enforce constraint on the Hagana rank and file. The Hagana operations, while still within the May 1946 Plan's framework, indeed became bolder and more ferocious, and during January and February it seemed that any operational and moral restrictions that the Hagana had practiced hitherto had been abandoned, as it indiscriminately hit anyone present during reprisal attacks.[82] One reason for the change was the growing influence on the Hagana command from below. In some cases, Hagana members acted without authorization, or carried out brutal and lethal attacks, contrary to the image that the Hagana leadership wished for its operations. Ben-Gurion recorded in his diary disturbing stories about atrocities committed by Hagana and Palmah members: the murder of Arab prisoners and of innocent passers-by; the stealing of money and property from Arabs (not even for 'the cause'); and even stealing from their fellow-soldiers. It was obvious that discipline was at a low ebb.[83] In an attempt to put an end to these kinds of action, the Palmah HQ sent a letter to combatants in which they were warned against 'killing Arabs in order to rob their cars', or to obtain property; even property necessary for the Palmah units. Such actions, warned the Palmah command, 'might corrupt our ranks, contradicts the purpose of our cause, and stains the Palmah'. Killing prisoners of war and looting were also prohibited.[84] Ben-Gurion also appointed Y. Riftin, a member of the Security Committee, to investigate the behavior of Hagana members. Riftin returned on 1 March with a report in which he called for an increase in educational activity among the Hagana members, and for improvements in law enforcement and the judicial systems, to enable them to deal with Hagana atrocities.[85] These actions most probably did not put an end to Jewish misdeeds, but they are indicative of the way that the Jews wanted to perceive themselves and their cause. The existing material does not suggest that the Palestinian leadership took similar measures in order to put an end to inept actions on their side.

Another noticeable change was the intensification of Hagana reprisals, whose main feature was the launching of some daring

operations deep into the Arab heartland. The operation, codenamed Lamed Hey—(Hebrew–35)—after the 35-man Palmah platoon killed on its way to Gush Etsion—had several goals. It aimed to demonstrate the Hagana's ability to carry out such incursions, and to interrupt the flow of the volunteers to Palestine through attacks on bridges and roads leading from Syria and Jordan to Palestine. Some of Ben-Gurion's aides opposed the operation. Eliahu Sasson thought that attacks on Arab villages that were outside the circle of fighting would be counter-productive; they would not deter those involved in the fighting against the Jews and would only provoke more Palestinians to join the fighting. The Hagana Chief of Staff, Ya'akov Dori, agreed with Sasson's arguments, and recommended concentrating on the bridges and acting against clearly hostile sites near the big cities. The remote villages should remain untouched.[86] The logic of these two arguments decided the nature of the operation, which was directed against the bridges and some hostile targets in the city areas, and involved one long-range incursion. Hagana units were sent to destroy six bridges leading to Palestine, among them the Sheikh Husayn Bridge, and some road culverts near Metulla. Similar attacks—also conducted under Operation Lamed Hey—unprecedented in their aim and scope, were carried out by the Hagana in Tel Aviv against targets in Arab neighborhoods. Hagana units raided and demolished buildings in two neighborhoods, but an attempt to temporarily take over Abu Kabir, and to cleanse it of the forces acting there, failed, as the neighborhood's defenders thwarted the offensive forces.[87] The Arabs chalked up another success two weeks later, when two Hagana units were instructed to destroy two buildings in Salama, on Tel Aviv's outskirts. The men were untrained, and performed poorly. An Arab group resisted them, and drove them back. The Hagana men fled in confusion, leaving behind them the dead bodies of their fellow-fighters. The survivors of the unit faced courts martial, and their commanders were relieved of their duties.[88] The other target of Operation Lamed Hey, proving the Palmah ability to act deep in the Arab hinterland, was crowned with success. A Palmah unit was sent to Sa'sa', on the Lebanese border, deep in the Arab-populated area, where it blew up a number of occupied houses and returned safely.[89]

The Jews related the revitalization of the Palestinian struggle to the increasing infiltration of Arab volunteers into Palestine. Ben-Gurion assumed that the main burden of the battle was no longer being shouldered by the local Palestinians, but by the volunteers. This meant a

major change in the nature of the war, as Ben-Gurion assumed that the volunteers were far better equipped and led by central command, and would operate in accordance with an articulated strategy.[90] Ben-Gurion's fears, however—at least those related to the shift in the nature of the war—were baseless. It was true that some of the volunteers did join the Palestinian groups; an addition that did affect the Palestinians' conduct of war (see below). But the majority of the volunteers belonged to the ALA, and this force did not join the war, remaining out of it until 15 May. It was true that the presence of a trained and expanding foreign force could became a dangerous threat, but Ben-Gurion's aide, Eliahu Sasson, thought that the Hagana should not engage the ALA. He argued that as long as they remained in their camps, money had to be spent on them, and that this expenditure restricted the expansion of the ALA. Also, their mere presence was a reassuring factor for the local population, who would therefore remain out of the fighting. Jewish attacks on the ALA would force the army's sponsors to abandon their economical attitude, which restricted the number of the army's combatants, and they would send more troops as reinforcements. Ben-Gurion remained unconvinced, but Sasson's advice was accepted.[91]

More of Ben-Gurion's experts on Arab affairs agreed with Sasson's recommendations, at least in spirit. They thought that the addition of the volunteers had not dramatically changed the nature of the intercommunal war. Many parts of the country remained calm—for example, in western Galilee, as in the south of Palestine, the local Arab population refrained from fighting. The volunteers were an important ingredient in the activities of Hasan Salama along the al-Ramla–Jaffa line, but the presence of the ALA in the Galilee and Samaria had no effect on the fighting there. The most important effect was the ability of the army's officers, who were in most cases professional soldiers, unlike their soldiers, to impose peace and order in the areas in which they were present. Ben-Gurion's conclusion, drawn from his aides' report on the situation in February, was that a fierce response was necessary against any attack, but that uninvolved people and villages should not be targetted.[92]

An attempt to remove the threat of ALA involvement in the war was made in early April 1948, during a meeting between Gad Mahnes and Josh Palmon, Ben-Gurion's advisers, and Fawzi Qawukji. In this meeting, which took place near Tulkarm, and was attended also by 'Ali al-Qāsim, Qawukji tried to persuade his guests that the Jews should avoid establishing a Jewish state. Mahnes's and Palmon's attempts to persuade the Arabs that a Jewish state would benefit them did not convince Qawukji, and the meeting adjourned with no results.[93]

The Fighting in the Cities

Jerusalem, Haifa, Tel Aviv and Jaffa were the main urban battlefields, where violence 'seems to have become endemic'.[94] The sides mainly exchanged fire and occasionally planted bombs among civilians—the latter practice being mainly evident in Jerusalem and Haifa. Usually neither side tried to seize territory. There were a few occasions when the Palestinians, either spontaneously or after careful planning, stormed a Jewish neighborhood, but these were the exceptions.

The National Committees that had been established at the outbreak of the hostilities directed the Palestinian struggle. They were responsible for the recruitment of personnel for the city defense, and for paying and organizing the guard missions, as well as for the supply of food, arms, ammunition and medical supplies to their cities.[95] However, some of the National Committees were unable to adequately support the military units in their cities, and these formations suffered from a severe lack of weapons and arms, and their members received no military training whatsoever.[96] As we have seen, the Palestinians had no military organization of any kind and the al-Najjada and its successor, the AYO, were not military organizations. The main fighting force in the cities was a mixture of local Palestinians organized either on a local basis or by the local National Committee. The extent of the National Committees' control over these forces was very limited, if it existed at all. Coordination between the various military groups was poor, and guidance was missing. The problems experienced in every city and village occurred on a national level, as there was no centralized command structure, and the members of the National Committees in the various cities and villages had to deal with the problems caused by the war alone. For example, the National Committee in Haifa made independent attempts to procure arms, but failed. They then turned to the Arab League's Military Committee, but the response was lacklustre; they received too few rifles and bullets, and attempts to contact the ex-Mufti on this matter led nowhere.[97] All over the country the National Committees found it difficult to overcome the shortage in food supplies, and Palestinian leaders were unable to convince the villagers to send supplies to the cities.[98]

Any slight control that the local leaders might have had over the local groups was lost almost completely with the arrival, during January–February, of foreign volunteers, sent by the Arab League's Military Committee. In some cases, along with the arrival of the volunteers, the Military Committee also appointed a foreign commander to the city, as

happened in Jaffa and Lydda. In Jaffa, two Iraqi commanders took charge of the city during January and February, the second bringing with him 100 Iraqi volunteers and 60 Moslems from Yugoslavia. This also happened in Lydda.[99] It was another demonstration of the expropriation by the Arab League of the fighting in Palestine from the Palestinians.

The arrival of the volunteers in the cities did not necessarily improve the situation, as they were also a source of friction and discontent, and community leaders in Haifa and Jaffa complained that they harassed the local Arab population. The volunteers also challenged the authority of the local leadership, and by the end of January the National Committee in Haifa issued an order forbidding the entry of foreign forces into the town. However, as the fighting against the Jews continued, and the Hagana inflicted heavy blows on the Palestinians, the local leadership had no choice but to integrate the volunteer forces into the city defense. In Jaffa, the situation was similar.[100]

The fighting in the cities involved a mixture of riots, occasional bombings and direct attacks. The last form of fighting was practiced mainly by the Hagana, rather than the Palestinians, although occasionally they also attacked Jewish neighborhoods. The first serious incident, which in a way signaled the beginning of the inter-communal war, was the storming by Palestinians of the Jewish commercial center in Jerusalem, on 2 December 1947. The raid came after the three-day strike announced by the AHC to protest against the United Nations Partition Resolution. The Jews and the Hagana were caught unprepared, and the Arab mob destroyed much Jewish property. The Jews sustained no casualties, but they eventually left the commercial center, which was located by the Jaffa Gate.[101] This was an exceptional event, as from now on the separation between the two communities was strictly adhered to. Thereafter, the two sides engaged more selected modes of operations in the cities.

One form of action commonly practiced by the Hagana was the blowing up of Palestinian buildings, which, in some cases, the Arabs were quick to imitate. In Jerusalem, in an attempt to reverse the tide of deteriorating Jewish morale and the flow of Jews leaving their houses along the fighting lines, the Hagana commander of the city decided to blow up the al-Najjada Headquarters in the Smiranis Hotel in Qatamon, Jerusalem. The Yishuv leadership did not approve the attack, which was nevertheless carried out on 5 January 1948. A Hagana unit planted a powerful device, which completely destroyed one wing of the building, killing 14 occupants, among them the Spanish consul.[102] On 12 January,

a Hagana unit demolished a flourmill in Bayt Ṣafafa; and at the end of the month the entire wing of a three-floor building, used by snipers targetting the nearby Jewish neighborhood, was razed to ground.[103] In Tel Aviv, after a heavy shoot-out that flared up between Jewish and Arab forces from Shukhum Hatikva and Salama, respectively, on 5 December, a Hagana unit blew up an occupied residential building in Salama; and this pattern was repeated many times.[104] The Arabs also adopted this method, and—again in Tel Aviv and Jaffa—foreign sappers, mainly Yugoslavs, showed considerable skill, causing a lot of damage to the Jews in Tel Aviv with their successful demolition of houses and buildings. The Hagana organized its own sapper unit, whose members also demolished buildings and Arab positions.[105]

Another tactic, used mainly by the Palestinians, was the planting of car bombs in populated areas. In Jerusalem, three devices went off at three sites in the Jewish part of Jerusalem within a month, from 2 February to 11 March; beginning on 2 February, when a lorry loaded with a large bomb exploded next to the Jewish Palestine Post Offices, wrecking the building and leaving many injured. On 22 February, another three lorries loaded with explosives were detonated in a main street the Jewish quarter. The lorries, accompanied by an armored car, had come from the Arab part of Jerusalem and had been permitted to pass through a roadblock as they were driven by British soldiers. The lorries' drivers climbed into the armored car and drove off, leaving behind them the lorries, which exploded shortly afterwards. Almost 50 Jews were killed. Members of the anti-British LHI and IZL responded by indiscriminate shooting at British soldiers; and the exchange of fire exacted more casualties among the Jews, while eight British soldiers were killed. The most spectacular blow, however, was the explosion of a huge device inside the yard of the building which housed the Jewish Agency offices. The device was smuggled into the offices' yard by the American consul's Palestinian driver, and the devastating explosion destroyed the building, killing 12 Jews.[106]

The fighting in the cities had a stronger impact on the Palestinian community than on the Jewish. In Haifa, two weeks after the beginning of the fighting, many local Arabs fled, and in one Arab neighborhood all the residents had left. Commercial life in the Arab part of Haifa shut down almost completely, many shops closed and Arab merchants offered their goods to their Jewish neighbors at bargain prices. The local Palestinian leadership sought a truce with the Jews, and a delegation, composed of the Arab city notables, went to Cairo, to demand that the ex-Mufti remove the foreigners from the city, and kept it out of the

fighting, as they could not withstand Hagana's attacks. They otherwise threatened to resign and expected the Arab residents of the city to abandon it. The ex-Mufti vetoed a truce with the Jews, but he had agreed that the Arabs there would stay to defend it, at least until the withdrawal of the British forces, in order to prevent Jewish reprisal attacks.[107] Commercial life also came to a standstill in Jaffa, and similar attempts to negotiate a truce with the Jews were made by the Palestinian leaders of Jaffa; here, again, it led to nothing.

The flight of the local population was caused by, and accelerated by, the Hagana's attacks on the Palestinian communities, and also by the poor conduct of the foreign volunteers toward the local population. The volunteers did not refrain from attacking local Palestinians and stealing from them, while at the same time inciting Hagana reprisals by their aggression towards the Jews. An attack by the Hagana on Rushmia in Haifa, on 13 February, was one of the most terrifying events the Arabs experienced, and after this attack the tendency to flee the neighborhood continued—it was calculated that by early March about 15,000 Palestinians had left the city.[108] The pace of flight reached such a crescendo that the Lebanese and Syrian Consulates in Haifa declined requests for visas to Palestinians aged 18–50.[109] Similarly, in Jaffa, as the volunteer reinforcements arrived, the tide of flight continued—until by February nearly one-third of the city residents had fled. In an attempt to stop the flight, the National Committee had decided in February to fine those leaving and to confiscate their property.[110]

The flight of the Palestinians was an important sign of the weakness of Palestinian society and the incoherence of its leadership. On the Jewish side—although flight was far less frequent, if only because the Jews had nowhere to go—there was also evident movement from the fighting zone along the border line between the two communities. However, by and large, these occurrences had no effect on Jewish fighting, as Jewish forces were separate from, and independent of, the civil body. While among the Palestinians, the combatants were civilians who were engaged in sporadic acts of war or terror, the Jewish military force constituted a separate corpus, and was therefore less sensitive and vulnerable to the suffering of the civil population.

Fighting in Outlying Areas

Fighting in outlying areas revolved mainly around the roads, with the Palestinians trying to disrupt Jewish transportation, and the Jews acting

to remove Palestinian disruptions. In the absence of national institutions, Palestinian activity was basically local, although regional commanders like Hasan Salama in the center, and ʻAbd al-Qādir al-Husayni in the Jerusalem area, organized Palestinian activity along the roads in their areas. Local Palestinian leaders also organized the fighting over the roads in the north. During January–February, the Arab League's Military Committee increased its involvement in the fighting. It provided arms to the Palestinians and sent officers to take command over the local forces, sometimes accompanied by trained volunteers.[111] The situation in the Jewish camp was different—here again, their organization was better than that of the Palestinians. The Hagana deployment in the outlying areas was based on three rural districts; the units were responsible for every settlement within their districts and for the areas between the settlements and villages. This structure reflected the territorial basis of the Hagana, as members of the Hagana came from the districts, and lived in the settlements within the districts. An important component of Hagana activity in the rural area was the British-supported Jewish Settlements Police (JSP). All members of the JSP, who were legally entitled to carry weapons, were from the Hagana. The Northern District included about 120 Jewish settlements and had under its command 9,200 Guard Force members and 2,000 Field Force men. The Central District had about 90 settlements, with 6,000 men in the Guard Force and 1,200 in the Field Force. The Southern District covered the settlements up to the Negev, which was established as a separate command and had 4,700 members. At that time the Field Force was not represented there.[112]

The need to defend the remote and isolated Jewish settlements posed a significant challenge for the Hagana; the problem being that dealing with the matter involved more than military implications. The very idea of the settlements was an important part of the Zionist ethos, and Jewish settlements were built during the period of the British Mandate in Palestine to serve a political rather than military purpose; they were not intended to be part of a military deployment in the face of possible Arab invasion.[113] Now, though, the military men were analyzing the need to defend isolated and remote settlements from their own perspective, and their conclusion was that it was essential to avoid the dispersion of power arising from the need to defend these settlements. The real problem was that while the May 1946 Plan justified dispersal, the changing conditions during March–April 1948—with the proclamation of Plan Dalet (this was the plan of offensive issued by the Haganah Command on 10 March, and will be discussed later) and the assumption

that a war with the Arab Armies was closer—the Hagana had to transform and concentrate its forces. This meant that it could only be done if the Hagana command had both full authority over all units (whose territorial affiliation was still strong), and if there were enough men to take the place of the brigades' soldiers. This was because the process of concentration had to take place at a time when the danger of attacks on local settlements still existed. One solution, which was vehemently rejected by Ben-Gurion, was the shortening of the defense lines through the abandonment of remote settlements. Senior commanders of the Hagana, Itzhak Sade and David Shaltiel among them, raised this idea on several occasions, but Ben-Gurion's response was that, 'Even a unit of 40, if fortified, can pin down a large number of forces', and he repeatedly rejected these suggestions.[114]

The Hagana's response to attacks on Jewish transportation and isolated settlements was to attack what they considered to be their assailants' bases; and a vicious pattern was established, as each side attacked the other. One example is the Hagana's raid, on 7 February 1948, on 'Ayn Māhil in the Galilee, as a group from that village, led by a former German soldier, was suspected of being responsible for harassing Jewish transportation and settlements. Forces drawn from the 1st Jewish Brigade attacked the village, demolished several houses and left ten dead.[115] The attack proved to be counterproductive as, in its aftermath, Arab harassment of Jewish transportation increased. Jewish vehicles moved only in convoys, accompanied by the British-sponsored Mobile Guard. However, this means of transportation protection was also ended by 24 February, when Arab guerrillas from Lubya ambushed a Jewish convoy. The Jews were saved by a British force from Tiberias that came to their rescue, but after this event, the main Afula–Tiberias road was closed to Jewish transportation, and the Jews had to travel along by-pass roads.[116] The Lubya ambush signaled not only the failure of the Jews to keep the roads open, but also the takeover of the fighting in the Galilee by the foreign volunteers. Many of them were based in Lubya, and it was due to their coordinated attack that the road was closed to the Jews. The impact of the volunteers was felt elsewhere in the Galilee; the most spectacular example being the attack on Mishmar Haemek, on 4 April, which will be described in the following pages.

The situation in the Negev was a little different as the Arabs there lacked even the most basic organization that existed elsewhere in the country. It was only in March 1948 that an Egyptian commander arrived in Gaza. However, he failed to incite the local population against the Jewish settlers and the only way he could act was with the assistance of

40 trained soldiers, who came from Egypt, as reinforcements.[118] This situation changed with the arrival of more Muslim Brothers' volunteers in March, who were being allowed to fight in Palestine by the Egyptian government despite British opposition, and despite the fact that this could have dragged Egypt into a war that it did not want—at least yet.[119] (Groups of Muslim Brothers had been infiltrating the country even before the Egyptians decided to send in their own expeditionary force; and their numbers eventually amounted to almost a battalion.) Although the British objected, they made no practical attempts to prevent the movement of troops across the border. The Muslim Brothers continued to maintain that their penetration into Palestine had been effected despite opposition by the Egyptian government. In reality, it would have been difficult for Cairo to prevent the movement of illegal troops, even if they had wanted to; besides which, such activity functioned as a kind of safety valve which released some of the pent-up pressure from the public who were outraged by the Partition Resolution. In fact, the Egyptian authorities justified this infiltration on the grounds that the Palestinian Arabs were unable to cope alone with the better-equipped Jewish forces.[120]

The Muslim Brothers launched their first substantial attack, on 10 April 1948, at Kfar Darom, which was located on the main road connecting the major communications centers of al-'Arish and Rafah with Palestine. The defenders of Kfar Darom repelled the Muslim Brothers, who then joined the efforts of the local Arabs in conducting small-scale hostilities against Jewish targets, sabotaging water pipelines and roads and striking at convoys bringing supplies to beleaguered settlements.[121] An intelligence report suggested that the Kfar Darom attack was a reprisal raid carried out at the request of the dignitaries in Khan Yunis, Gaza, where seven residents had been killed by Jewish forces.[122] After this attack but still before taking the formal decision to take part in the pan-Arab effort and invade Palestine, the Egyptian government agreed to actively assist in organizing the Muslim Brothers' volunteers into regular units. The commanders of the new force were officers from the Egyptian Army, and the Arab League provided funding. Three battalions were formed from the Muslim Brothers' volunteers, and the first of them was dispatched to Palestine on 25 April. This force attacked Kfar Darom again, beginning with an artillery shelling at dawn on 11 May, followed by the storming of the settlement. This effort was also repulsed but attacks in the area continued until the actual day of the invasion, though the besieged settlers of Kfar Darom managed to hold out.[123] The 2nd Battalion also fought in the south but was seconded at some point to the

Bethlehem–Hebron sector and then, apparently because of its high casualty rate, was attached to the 1st Battalion. The 3rd Battalion fought throughout as part of the Egyptian Army.[124]

The Palestinians Take the Upper Hand

During the first months of the war, the Palestinians failed to seriously disturb Jewish life. The Palestinians' poor performance and achievements were a source of concern for the ex-Mufti. Being concerned by the prospect that Jerusalem would fall to the Jews—or even worse, to Abdullah of Transjordan—the ex-Mufti planned to launch an all-out war against the Jews, with a special focus on the road to Jerusalem. Another motive for the ex-Mufti's decision to launch this campaign was the news that the United Nations' Advance Party, which comprised the administrative staff of the Implementation Committee, was coming to Palestine. The ex-Mutfi intended to sabotage the Advance Party's visit through this campaign and thus prevent any political settlement based on the Partition Resolution.[125]

The Palestinians also realized during January that they were losing the struggle in the cities. The outcry of notables like Dr Khālidi, the mass flight of the city dwellers, the pressure from the rich families whose family members sustained losses in the cities, the pressure from the merchants—all led to lengthy debate about the next phase of the war. The city dwellers sought a truce, and the ex-Mufti, while vetoing a truce, agreed that the Arabs should remain on the defensive until the British forces' departure. As a result, it was decided to transfer the focus of the violence from the cities to the roads and the rural areas. The Jews learnt of these developments by tapping telephone lines, also from British Police sources and an intelligence source with access to the Transjordan royal court. However, they were undecided as to their best response to this apparent change in tactics, and were unsure whether the implied pacification of the cities did, or did not, serve Jewish interests.[126]

To make the campaign possible and effective, the Palestinians needed to at least establish some form of central command, in which both the Palestinians and the volunteer guerrillas would take part. They also needed to improve significantly their combatants' military capabilities. To that end, Salame and al-Husayni set up training camps near Jerusalem, in January–February 1948, and in early February the ex-Mufti and his two senior commanders went together to Damascus, where they met the Syrian President. The meeting brought a tangible

change in the nature of the intercommunal war, as it planted seeds of cooperation between the ex-Mufti and the Arab League's Military Committee, and hence with Qawukji's ALA. At this meeting, the argument over the division of power in Palestine was settled as the delegates agreed to establish four command areas in Palestine: east, west, north and south. Each area commander was nominally subject to Safwat, who was the supreme commander of the irregular forces fighting in Palestine. The northern area commander would be Qawukji, who would infiltrate Palestine in early March, and whose area of control included the Galilee and Samaria. The eastern area commander was 'Abd al-Qādir al-Husayni, who acted in the Jerusalem area. The commander of the western sector was Hassan Salame, whose area included the district of Lydda and the part of the Gaza district which was located north of the Majdal–Faluja line. The southern part was earmarked for an unnamed Egyptian commander. This position had originally been filled in mid-March, by the Egyptian officer Sulayman 'Abd al-Wāhid.[130] One result of the agreement was that, while unorganized Palestinian attacks against Jews continued, more and more components of the Palestinian struggle came under some form of central command, even if loose and preliminary. The reorganization of the Palestinian camp and it reinforcement with trained Palestinians and volunteers, made possible the successes of the Palestinians' March campaign. Some credit for these changes should probably be given to about 40 German (former) officers and the ten officers who deserted from the British police; all of whom joined 'Abd al-Qādir al-Husayni's ranks.[128] The emerging agreement between the ex-Mufti and the Arab League's Military Committee, including Qawukji, should not overshadow the fundamental disagreement that still existed between the two. The inherent disharmony was further aggravated when both the ex-Mufti and Qawukji tried to increase their influence in each other's territory. (For example, the ex-Mufti increased the number of arms distributed to villagers, in order to increase his influence and to prevent Qawukji from gaining control.[129]) However, at this point the common cause overshadowed the inherent division, and some form of a coordinated Arab military administration was established. In some cases, this was achieved by the Arab League Military Committee appointing officers to military command positions in various cities in Palestine—such as Jaffa, Haifa, Lydda—and, to a lesser extent, to positions in the Galilee.[130]

It was also agreed in Damascus that the ex-Mufti would receive financial assistance which would allow him to pay the wages of local and

foreign 'volunteers', and 'Abd al-Qādir al-Husayni and Hasan Salame would, reportedly, each receive a monthly payment of 500 Palestine Liras.[131] Hajj Amin and his commanders thus returned at the head of groups of 'volunteers' who had undergone military training, which provided them with capabilities hitherto unrecognized among the Palestinians. Upon their arrival, the ex-Mufti instructed Salame and 'Abd al-Qādir to carry out the campaign.[132] In Jerusalem, Haifa and Jaffa the Arab League's Military Committee took it upon itself to arm about 2,000 men, whose role would be to carry out defensive missions and to launch counter-attacks if positions in their areas were taken by the Jews. The foreign volunteers would form the assault troops, which would attack Jewish settlements and transportation. They were explicitly instructed to avoid clashes with the British security forces.[133] According to Hagana intelligence reports, 'Abd al-Qādir al-Husayni mustered 200–300 trained fighters in a camp in Bir Zeit near Ramallah, where his headquarters were located; while several dozens of trained fighters, all recruited in Syria, were under Hasan Salame's command. In standard military terms, the training was superficial and poor; during the one or two months at the training camp in Syria, the trainees had undergone only 12–14 days training. The training usually included no more than the operation of rifles and hand-grenades. Very few were trained to use sub-machine-guns, and even fewer to use mortars.[134] This could hardly be counted as sufficient military training by modern standards, but it made a noticeable improvement to the Palestinians' military capability.[135] The reason for the relatively better quality of the new arrivals was the presence in the training camp in Qtane of professional military men who served as instructors, among them a small number of German prisoners of war who had escaped from their prison camps in Egypt, and Egyptian officers, arriving in Syria under the encouragement of the Egyptian Ministry of Defense which granted almost indefinite leave to all officers wishing to go to Syria to train volunteers. By January 1948, 50 officers were already in Qtane.[136]

To this force one should add the Palestinians who lived in villages alongside the roads who could be mustered whenever a convoy passed by. This was a formidable force, probably numbering some 3,000 partisans. Moreover, since February 1948, the Palestinians had been able to act freely, as the British had decided to avoid the problematic Tel Aviv–Jerusalem road and to use the Latrun–Ramallah route instead.[137] Geography also provided the Palestinian forces with an advantage, which they exploited well: the eastern part of the Tel Aviv–Jerusalem road ran through a mountainous, densely populated Arab area,

dominated by steep ridges. The Palestinians also showed some organizational capabilities, as they mustered supplies and forces for the expected campaign from areas beyond the immediate range of the planned theater of action. Armored cars and mortars possessed by Palestinians in the south of the country reinforced the forces planning to act in the Jerusalem area. Armed Palestinians from the south and the Negev also joined their brethren for the coming battle. All locksmith's workshops in al-Ramla, Lydda, Gaza and Majdal were recruited to fix broken armored cars captured from the Jews, or Arab vehicles that had been hit during the fighting.[138] In this connection, it is interesting to note the Palestinian system of mobilization, in case of an attack: reinforcements arrived at the scene of battle by bus and taxi. This happened, for example, during the fighting over Mishmar Haemek—which occurred in April, and which will be discussed later—when armed Palestinians arrived in buses and taxis; and, when the battle was over, they returned to their homes in the same way. This must have involved some kind of organization, but it has not yet been studied.[139]

Another demonstration of the Palestinians' ability to practice a certain amount of tactical discipline, despite the inherent difficulties, was manifested in their exertion of restraint in the northeastern part of Palestine. This area was one of the main routes for infiltration into Palestine from Syria, used for volunteers, ammunition and supplies. There was no point in agitating in this area, as this would undoubtedly result in a clampdown on the route, due to the increased Hagana forces that would be sent to pacify the area. As a result, the area was among the quietest in Palestine.[140]

It was during March that the tide of the fighting finally changed. In less than two weeks, in what seemed to be a coordinated Palestinian campaign on a national scale, Palestinians attacked and destroyed Jewish convoys in various places throughout the country. On 21 March, Palestinians took up positions along the Jerusalem–Latrun road, and fired at the convoy heading toward Jerusalem. It passed successfully; but three days later the Palestinians attacked the next convoy, consisting of 30 trucks, and only one escaped the shooting and continued on to Jerusalem. The rest of the trucks were trapped, and it was only with the assistance of the British Army that the truck drivers and 14 of the trucks were rescued. The convoy arrived in Jerusalem, only to get trapped again on their way back from the besieged Gush Etsion, to the south of Jerusalem. On this occasion, the truck drivers were rescued again by the British, but the trucks were lost.

The Jews suffered a similar setback in the north of Palestine, on 26

March. A large convoy made its way to bring as many supplies as possible to the isolated Jewish settlements in the north: it comprised ten armored cars and was escorted by a battalion armed with the best available weapons the Carmeli Brigade could get. The convoy broke through Palestinian roadblocks along the road and arrived successfully at the settlements. After unloading its cargo, the battalion made its way back; but this time the Arab forces in the area were expecting it. An ambush was set up near Kabri, under the command of Adib Shishakly, and the convoy was trapped. The Arab forces destroyed the convoy, killing 46 Jewish combatants.[141] As happened on the way to Jerusalem, Arab success in destroying what came to be known as the Yehiam Convoy resulted in the complete halt of Jewish transportation to the northwestern Galilee, and the settlements there had to receive supplies by air.[142]

The Hagana was surprised by the success of the Palestinians' 'War on the Roads' campaign, although it should not have been, as there were many indications that this was imminent. Reports about the planned campaign had appeared in the Arab papers,[143] and numerous intelligence reports had accumulated in the Hagana files about the intention of the Palestinians to intensify their struggle over the roads, and to mount a massive campaign, aiming to bring a halt to Jewish transportation, mainly to isolated locations, but foremost to Jerusalem.[144] Despite the unhindered flow of information from the Hagana intelligence branch to the field units, Hagana deployment did not change, and the convoys continued in the usual manner. Thus, in one week alone, more than 100 men from the Hagana were killed while escorting five convoys that were intercepted by the Palestinians: at Atarot (14), Har-Tuv (11), al-Nabi Daniyal (12), Yehiam (46) and Hulda (24). To these casualties one must add the loss of equipment, arms and vehicles.[145] Palestinian successes were the result of their ability to act in an orchestrated manner, making the most of their advantages *vis-à-vis* Jewish shortcomings. The reinforcement of the Palestinian camp by trained guerrillas, and the effective use of the Faz'a system, by which local villagers were mustered at a certain time ahead of the arrival of a convoy—and which also enabled the Palestinian leaders to gather hundreds of rifle-holders for several hours—all bore results.[146]

For the Jews, the most worrying aspect of the Palestinian campaign was its success in cutting off Jerusalem from the coastal plain. Up to this point, the continuous Palestinian attempts to disrupt Jewish transportation had failed, and the solutions that the Jews worked out proved effective. From December to the end of February, 236 convoys, consisting of 2,160 trucks, carrying almost 9,000 tons of supply, reached

Jerusalem. These convoys were subjected to nearly 70 attacks, in which 37 convoy escorts, passengers and drivers were killed. Eight cars were destroyed. In March, only 45 convoys, consisting of 560 trucks, made their way to the city: only 37 reached their destination. The last five convoys, among them the two biggest ever, did not make it. During this month, 36 members of the Hagana were killed on their way to Jerusalem and 23 trucks were destroyed.[147] The Jews made another attempt, after the 21 March setback, to bring a 26-truck convoy from Hulda to Jerusalem, but Palestinians from the region rushed to meet the convoy, stopping it shortly after departure. A Palmah unit, whose mission was to secure the passage of the convoy, was attacked by another Palestinian force, and it was not only unable to assist the attacked convoy, but it barely managed to fight its way out. The Jews suffered 22 killed and 16 wounded while the Palestinians sustained between 20 and 40 casualties.[148] The Palestinian siege on Jerusalem remained in force.

The Parallel Path: Diplomacy

The eruption of the hostilities in Palestine on the morning after 29 November pushed diplomacy aside. However, it was still practiced under the auspices of the international community in general and the United Nations in particular. The General Assembly's 181 Resolution stipulated the formation of a Commission that would take over the reigns of government from the retreating Mandatory government, and would hand it on later to the Arabs and Jews, respectively.[149] The British government refused to cooperate with the Commission and would not allow it to enter Palestine. Arthur Creech Jones, the Colonial Secretary, said that it would be 'undesirable for the Commission to arrive in Palestine until shortly before the termination of the Mandate'.[150] The British refusal generated vigorous diplomatic activity in the United Nations about the next steps to be taken, in which the members of the Security Council, and Jewish and Arab representatives, took part. The one party that was far less involved in the discussions was the Palestinian Arabs, at least those who cared to be heard. These were the most resolute in their determination to see only one kind of a solution: a unitary state in which only those Jews who had been in the country since 1918 would be citizens. 'Issa Nakhla, the AHC representative, claimed that the Partition Resolution did not 'represent the sentiments of the United Nations', and denounced the American and British 'political blackmail' which forced the Resolution.[151] Consequently, their diplomatic activity revolved around attempts to prevent anything

that would advance the prospect of Partition, and to bring about a change in the General Assembly Resolution.[152] As to the Committee visit, the Palestinians threatened to shoot its members if they ventured out of the Jewish area.[153]

The Jewish conduct of diplomatic activity was more complicated. They believed that they would achieve their goal—statehood—on the battlefield and not around the negotiating table; however, as a political process was underway, they would not remain out of it. They also sought to gain from it. The Jews hoped that diplomacy would lead to international recognition of the Jewish progress toward statehood, through the adoption of steps articulated in the Partition Resolution. By the same token, Jewish diplomacy aimed to frustrate any diplomatic move that might hamper Jewish movement toward statehood. For these reasons, the Jews wanted the visit of the United Nation's Palestine Committee; the mere fact of its appearance would make the Partition Resolution appear valid and relevant, and would allow making Jewish statehood a political reality, at least in the world of diplomacy. It would also prevent any last-minute British attempt to back-pedal.[154] The insistent refusal of the British to allow the Implementation Commission to come to Palestine, on the one hand, and the Anglo-American discussions over the situation in Palestine, on the other, increased Zionist anxiety that the two powers were plotting the extension of the British presence in Palestine.[155] Another reason for the Jewish desire to see the Implementation Committee arrive was the expectation that it would lead to the practical implementation of the Partition Resolution articles. According to the Resolution, the Committee would 'select and establish' a Provisional Council of Government in each state; each council would be allowed to establish an armed militia, thus making it legal, and hence easier, to complete the transformation of the Hagana into a regular army. Another important provision was the demand that Britain evacuate its forces from Jewish territory, including seaports, by 1 February. A seaport would allow the free access into Jewish territory of immigrants waiting in Cyprus and Europe.[156]

The on-going violence and the difficulties raised by the British led the UN Commission for Palestine to turn back to the Security Council, and to ask for the creation of an international force that would enforce Partition. In this spirit, the Commission sent to the Security Council, on 16 February 1948, a gloomy report about the prospect of implementing the UN Partition Resolution. The report mentioned the violent activity of the Arab Palestinians and mainly irregular, external Arab forces, against Partition. The Commission stated that the British

security forces were unable to establish security and maintain law and order in Palestine, as their main concern was secure and safe withdrawal from Palestine. The Partition Resolution would only be implemented if military forces were available to the Commission when it assumed power at the end of the British Mandate.[157]

These difficulties led the United Nations' General Secretary, Trygve Lie, to discuss with the five members of the Security Council the possibility of arranging an international force to Palestine that would assist the parties in implementing the Partition Resolution. The main obstacle to this idea was Lie's expectation that it would be composed of troops from the five permanent members of the Security Council. France was willing to agree, the Soviet Union was ready to send in its troops, and British troops were already in the country; however, the Truman administration, due to Defense Department opposition, would not send American soldiers to Palestine. The Chinese position on this question was not considered so important. James Forrestal also called to keep British forces in Palestine after August—the planned departure date of the last British soldier—as a precaution against the entry of Soviet forces into Palestine.[158] Secretary of State George Marshall supported Forrestal's position. Marshal expressed 'anxiety and disappointment' over the Hagana's inefficiency, as initially he was sure that the mere presence of the Jewish military force would suffice to prevent an Arab attack. Now it seemed that the Hagana was unable to deal with Arab attacks, but in any case he promised that the administration would neither change its policy regarding Palestine, nor would it send troops to Palestine to enforce partition.[159] The British government also opposed the idea of an international force. Foreign Office officials explained that the Arab States would respond to the sending of international forces to Palestine by sending in their armies too.[160]

Shertok spoke in favor of an international force, as he thought that partition would be possible only with the assistance of such a force. He assumed that the Jewish forces would be able to defend the Jewish people and settlements, but that they would be unable to repulse the assailing armies and to push them back over the border.[161] However, he thought that it would be a mistake to make the creation of the international force a pre-condition for the implementation of partition; as, if the force was not created, it might mean that partition would be impossible, and it would diminish international support for the idea of partition. Therefore, claimed Shertok, while the Jews had a strong interest in such a force, it must be presented only as an option. Therefore, that was the way in which the Jewish position was intro-

duced to the Americans, the Russians and the UN secretariat: they were told that an international force would be an important tool for protecting the Jewish State and to ensure the implementation of the United Nations Resolution. However, it was left to the participants in the discussion to decide the outcome.[162]

Ben-Gurion rejected Shertok's pessimistic observation. Based on what he called 'cold and clear consideration', he claimed that the Jewish ability to stand up to, and repulse, an attack by regular armies was dependent only on their ability to obtain enough arms.[163] The Ben-Gurion–Shertok exchange was about more than the question of the international force; it touched upon the attitude of the two men toward diplomacy. Shertok thought that diplomacy was still a vital tool in the Jewish route to statehood, either as a substitute for military activity, or as complementary to it. Ben-Gurion saw military activity as the only way to achieve the Jewish/Zionist aim; although he still thought that diplomacy was important, he did not believe that anyone other than the Jews themselves would take practical measures to enforce partition. Ben-Gurion was well aware of the central role that diplomacy played in the process that led to the United Nation's decision, which he thought was most important. However, he was dissatisfied by the idea that only an international force could make partition become a reality.

Ben-Gurion found support for his position as the military advisor of the advance party, Colonel Rocher Lund, who concluded that only the Jews could decide the outcome of their struggle. This group was sent to Palestine following the UN Secretary General's decision to send an advance guard from the Implementation Committee to Palestine, despite British opposition,[164] in response to insistent Jewish demand. It comprised the administrative staff of the Implementation Committee, headed by Pavlo De Azcarate, and arrived in Palestine on 1 March. The advance party's mission was 'to study, examine, discuss and consider … the immense amount of work required by the transfer of the present administration to the new regime at the end of the Mandate'.[165] One of Colonel Lund's first conclusions was that there was no hope of an international force arriving in Palestine before 15 May; only Jewish military preparedness or unpreparedness could decide the fate of the Jewish State.[166]

The recognition that partition would be implemented only by force of arms provided the State Department with an opportunity to try and take US policy off the partition track. The State Department was trying practically from the morning after 29 November to bring about a retreat from the Partition Resolution.[167] A way out from this predicament was

suggested by Samuel Kopper of the State Department, who reiterated that the Partition Resolution was only a recommendation and not 'a *decision* which *must* be carried out' [emphasis in original]. The United States could and should therefore seek 'other avenues for a peaceful settlement of the [Palestine] problem'.[168] The emerging solution presented by the State Department's Policy Planning Staff on 11 February, was 'an international trusteeship'.[169] It was expected that the Arabs would welcome the idea, while the expected Jewish opposition was not considered as too big an obstacle.[170] The main battlefield, though, was the White House, as President Truman was the main protagonist of the idea of partition. The year 1948 was an election year, and the President was courting the Jewish vote. The State Department and the Defense Department referred to the Palestine question in terms of the Cold War and strategic and economic interests, hoping that this perspective would convince the President to abandon his support for partition. The CIA claim that partition 'cannot be implemented' only added weight to the Departments' arguments.[171] George Marshall introduced to the President the State Department's alternative to partition, which was the idea of a trusteeship. Truman's initial response to Marshall's suggestion left the Secretary optimistic about his ability to convince the President to support the Department's line of action, although Truman made it clear that he was not yet ready for a clear and public reversal in his attitude toward partition.[172]

The State Department had launched its new policy on 24 February during the discussion in the UN Security Council Implementation Committee of the monthly report. The Committee chairman and representatives from Egypt, Lebanon, the Jewish Agency and the AHC were invited to attend the meeting. All those invited appeared, apart from the AHC representative.[173] The head of the Implementation Committee provided the Americans with an opportunity to introduce their new policy when he stressed the need for military force to make partition possible. The American representative, Warren Austin, responded that while the Security Council was authorized to order the use of force to remove a threat to the peace in Palestine, it had no authority to enforce a political settlement. In making this statement, Austin wanted the Security Council to review the whole issue of partition, as the first step toward abandoning of the Partition Resolution and resorting to the trusteeship idea. However, the delegates took a different route when they decided that the Security Council would appoint a subcommittee, consisting of the Council's permanent members, which would make suggestions as to the way in which the Partition Resolution could be implemented.[174]

The Jews were worried by what seemed to be an American change of heart toward partition. They tried to convince the State Department that abandoning partition meant succumbing to Arab extortion, a surrender that could only inflict a heavy blow on UN authority and prestige, and which would convey the message that violence paid.[175] The Security Council decision to appoint the Five-Permanent-Members Committee was also considered as ominous. Nahum Goldman, the head of the World Jewish Congress, was afraid that the Committee would seek a compromise solution, in which two states would be established, which would limit the number of Jewish immigrants permitted to come to the new Jewish State. Goldman was also afraid that the Committee would come up with new ideas about the two states' borders, and that they might even return to the Federation idea.[176]

Arab reaction to what seemed to be an American revision of the Partition Resolution was diverse. The Egyptian Foreign Minister, Kashashaba Bey, claimed that if the plan to establish a Jewish state was abandoned, and Jewish immigration to Palestine were limited in such a way that the Arab majority in the country was not threatened, then the Arabs would be ready to discuss alternative solutions, such as federalization or cantonization in Palestine.[177] The Palestinian Arabs' response was negative. They refused to attend the Security Council meetings, claiming that the discussions were conducted on the basis of the Partition Resolution. The Palestinians also rejected the trusteeship idea as another form of Mandate and as a structure that would serve only Zionist interests. The suggestion that, during trusteeship, Arabs and Jews should enjoy a wide degree of autonomy was construed as a way to effect the partition of Palestine under cover of international authority. Despite this answer, from Cairo, Hajj Amin al-Husayni instructed Nakhla to unofficially cooperate with the permanent members of the Security Council in their work, but not to attend the meetings.[178] The Jews rejected in unequivocal terms any idea that aimed to postpone or, worse, abandon the Partition Resolution, and Ben-Gurion flatly declared that a Jewish state would be declared on 16 May, upon the termination of the Mandatory Administration.[179]

Objection to the State Department's new line was apparent not only in the international arena, but also on the domestic front. The President's Special Counsel, Clark Clifford, called for Truman to adhere to his initial support of the Partition Resolution. The United States' vital interests, amongst them oil, would be best secured if there was peace in Palestine, and 'partition unquestionably offers the best

hope of a permanent solution of the Palestine problem that may avoid war'. Anyway, the Arabs needed the US markets more than the United States needed Arab oil. Allowing the UN resolution to become eroded would be a heavy blow to US and UN prestige and would cause 'a serious loss of US moral leadership all over the world'. For all of these reasons, summarized the Counsel, the United States must see partition implemented.[180]

While promoting the trusteeship option and acknowledging the State Department proposal to the Jewish Agency and to the AHC, the Arab States negotiated a cease-fire, as a short-term solution to the crisis in Palestine.[181] Yitshak Ben Zvi, a member of the Zionist Executive and the People's Assembly, called for the adoption of the cease-fire proposal without pre-conditions. The grave situation in Jerusalem made a cease-fire urgent, as this would be the only way to save the besieged city, which urgently needed food supplies, ammunition and more troops, without which it could not withstand another attack by the Arabs—especially after the evacuation of the British forces from the city.[182] However, the Jews made their agreement conditional on the irregular forces leaving the country, further incursion being prevented and the Partition Plan being implemented.[183] The Arabs were ready to agree to a military truce, provided partition was suspended.[184] Hearing the two sides' conditions, Alfonso Lopez, the Security Council President, concluded that a truce was impractical. The crux of the problem, in Lopez's eyes, was Jewish insistence on allowing the entry into Palestine of Jewish immigrants who were, in al-Husayni's eyes, illegal immigrants.[185]

The belligerents' discouraging responses did not stall the American initiative and, under Marshall's instructions, the State Department prepared a draft resolution for a truce to be presented to the Security Council. At the same time, Marshall took another step toward putting the trusteeship idea into effect when he initiated another presentation on the Palestine problem before the General Assembly.[186] Marshall was also encouraged when Azcarate, from the UN's advance party, put forward a plan for establishing a governing body for Palestine; this idea resembled the State department's trusteeship idea. Azcarate's underlying assumption was that the 29 November Resolution was dead, and hence a Governor-General should be appointed by the United Nations, assisted by an Advisory Council, whose members would be Palestinian Arabs and Jews, non-Palestinian Arabs representing the Arab League, and representatives of the permanent members of the Security Council.[187] The American proposals, calling for a truce and the convocation of a special session of the General Assembly to discuss the situation

in Palestine, were adopted by the Security Council on 1 April. The United States planned to introduce in that special session its plan for a temporary trusteeship for Palestine.[188]

Robert Lovett, the Acting Secretary of State, made an interesting attempt to overcome the obstacles put by both sides in the way of a truce, when he invited Judah Magnes, the president of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and a proponent of Jewish–Arab co-existence, and the Secretary of the Arab League, 'Azzam Pasha, to the United States. Lovett hoped that these two prominent men would be able to soften both Jewish and Arab attitudes and make truce and temporary trusteeship attainable.[189] 'Azzam Pasha declined the invitation, but Magnes accepted. He came to the United States but, apparently, US estimation of his influence went far beyond his actual power.[190]

The diplomatic activity towards a cease-fire had continued regardless of the above, and on 17 April the Security Council accepted a resolution calling the Palestinians and the Jews to accept a cease-fire. Jamal al-Husayni rejected the decision, claiming that as the cease-fire would be based on the Partition Resolution, and as the Jews continued their preparation toward the establishment of their own government, the Palestinians could not accept the Resolution. Shertok accepted the military terms of the Resolution, but rejected its political term, which implied a prohibition on the entry of Jewish immigrants to Palestine and the postponement of partition. However, the Jews were, naturally, satisfied with the clause banning the entry of armed irregulars to Palestine, namely, the volunteer forces coming from the neighboring Arab States to assist the Palestinians.[191]

However, neither side respected the truce. The Palestinians had announced already that they would not accept it, and the Jews, while negotiating the terms of the cease-fire in New York, launched their final and decisive campaign against the Palestinians. Shertok assumed that the Jews must comply with the truce, and that 'we do not shoot now if the other side does not'.[192] Ben-Gurion's reply to Shertok and Lopez was that 'if Arabs cease fire, we shall act likewise'. He restricted his agreement to the practical aspects of the cease-fire, and not to the conditions that accompanied the Security Council resolution, and in any case, Ben-Gurion claimed that the Arabs continued fighting. The Palestinians had to notify their acceptance through the High Commissioner, but no response arrived with the Jews, and the fighting continued.[193]

The President of the Security Council did not give up, and his efforts led to the establishment of a Truce Commission, whose members were

the Consuls in Palestine from Belgium (who was the commission's chairman), the United States and France.[194] The State Department opened up a parallel channel under the direction of Dean Rusk, the State Department's Director of United Nations Affairs, in an attempt to convince Jewish and Arab representatives to sign a cease-fire agreement.[195] State Department officials talked with Jewish and Palestinian representatives, and Secretary Marshall placed before the United Nations special session in Lake Success what he dubbed an 'emergency action': a call by the General Assembly for 'an immediate and unconditional cease-fire for ten days beginning on 5 May'. During this period, representatives from the Jewish Agency, the AHC and the Security Council Truce Committee would sit together in Palestine, to negotiate a truce. The General Assembly adopted the resolution on 4 May.[196]

It soon became clear that the rift between the Jews and the Palestinians was too wide. The Arab representatives were unanimous in their claim that a truce would be accepted only if the Jews gave up their political aspirations; that is, they rejected a restricted military agreement, and demanded the abrogation of the Partition Resolution.[197] Jamal al-Husayni claimed that the Jewish continuation with their preparations toward the establishment of their state was incompatible with the call for a cease-fire.[198] The Jews, on the other hand, rejected the political aspect of the truce proposal, as they resisted any delay in the proclamation of the Jewish State and the prolongation of the British Mandate over Palestine.[199] The Jews also had concrete conditions, which they presented to the consuls: the securing of free movement along the roads all over Palestine; the lifting of the siege from the Old City of Jerusalem; the withdrawal of the foreign forces from Palestine and the banning of further infiltration into Palestine; and the continuation of Jewish immigration to Palestine.[200]

Jewish refusal to cooperate in this last-minute attempt was the result of the situation in Palestine, where their forces were fighting to gain control over the territory allocated to the Jews by the United Nations, and over the road to Jerusalem. The fighting had reached a critical stage, and the Jews had no intention of losing the momentum. This point was apparent to Dean Rusk, and in fact the State Department was preparing for the next stage, which was the establishment of a Jewish state and maybe a Palestinian one.[201] Apparently, it became clear that the trusteeship idea had been abandoned, and Austin initiated deliberations over the United States' recognition of the new Jewish State.[202] At the same time, he suggested submitting a proposal to the General Assembly calling for the suspension of the Partition Resolution and supporting the

Security Council truce terms, but the White House instructed the United States delegation to the United Nations not to submit such a proposal.[203]

Unknown to the Americans, Shertok had had second thoughts about the truce. While explaining to the American officials why the Jews would not accept a call for an immediate truce, Shertok implored Ben-Gurion to consider a positive reply to the idea. Shertok assumed that after the Jewish achievements in the political and military fields—the rejection of the trusteeship, the Palestinian defeat and the ensuing Arab suffering—Jewish peace gestures would be viewed favorably. A truce would also be beneficial to the Jews, as it would allow a better preparation for the invasion. Shertok also mentioned that the US attempts to bring the sides to sign a cease-fire agreement were serious, and that Jewish rejection would affect future relations with the United States. Shertok emphasized that acceptance should not compromise the undisturbed functioning of Jewish authority.[204] Ben-Gurion's answer was not unequivocal. He did not reject Shertok's arguments, but expressed his concern that the acceptance of a ten-day truce would open a gate to the prolongation of the British Mandate: a possibility that Ben-Gurion was not prepared to consider.[205] However, this exchange was ill-timed considering the fact that at that very moment, the Hagana was launching the last phase of Plan Dalet, imposing Jewish authority over more and more villages and areas which had hitherto been under Arab control. As a result, Palestinian flight from their homes increased, and the debate over a cease-fire seemed somewhat academic.

Ben-Gurion did not know this when he was phrasing his answer to Shertok, but Bevin had rejected the US proposal for an immediate truce on the grounds that it would require the prolongation of the British Mandate: an eventuality Bevin was not prepared to take.[206] The British Cabinet had examined earlier a proposal presented by 'Azzam Pasha, the Arab League's Secretary, to extend the Mandate. 'Azzam Pasha suggested the cessation of hostilities under the condition that the British Mandate in Palestine would be extended, Jewish immigration would be halted, and that Britain would work for the establishment of an Arab state over all of Palestine. As to the truce, it was also possible, provided that Jewish immigration was stopped, and the Hagana disarmed and disbanded. These steps would be matched by an end to the infiltration of volunteers from the neighboring Arab countries into Palestine, the repatriation of those who were now in Palestine and the disarmament of the local Arabs.[207] However, the Cabinet had rejected 'Azzam's ideas on the extension of the Mandate as unrealistic.[208]

The consequences of the failure to establish a cease-fire or trusteeship in Palestine were clear to all parties concerned. Palestinian opinion was irrelevant, as they had already lost the war. The Jews and the Arab governments turned now to the next phase, which would begin on 14 May—the Arab–Israeli war. The ability—one might say readiness—of the Great Powers to act was restricted. Warren Austin, the US representative at the United Nations, asked British Foreign Office officials about the possibility of imposing sanctions on the Arabs if they invaded Palestine. The British rejected that possibility, claiming that sanctions would hurt the British more than it would hurt the Arabs, as they were economically dependent on Arab oil, and that any interference with the flow of oil to western Europe would 'wreck the Marshall Plan'. On the other hand, Harold Beely of the Foreign Office was skeptical of the United States' ability to impose sanctions on the Jews.[209]

Plan Dalet

Contemporaries and historians alike describe the events of late March as a real crisis. The High Commissioner, Sir Alec Cunningham, estimated that 'on the whole the military situation seems to be gradually moving in favor of the Arabs'.[210] As we have seen, the Palestinians' achievement was significant indeed. However, the convoys' crisis was not only a problem, it was also a symptom that signified for the Jews that the May 1946 Plan was no longer adequate, either in its underlying assumptions or in its resultant mode of operation. Up to that moment, the Hagana had been successfully meeting the Palestinians' challenge; but the improvement in Palestinian organization, structure, training and arms allowed the Palestinians to use their geographical dispersion to their best possible advantage and to gain advantage over the Jews in the 'War on the Roads'. The Jews, on the other hand, practiced a strategy that emphasized these Palestinian advantages. The defensive strategy stipulated by the May 1946 Plan led to the dispersion of Hagana forces throughout the country. This state of affairs was sufficient to prevent the fall of Jewish settlements, but it was not enough to cope with the vigorous Palestinian campaign against Jewish transportation, especially as it became obvious that, in the face of the Palestinian-orchestrated campaign, the convoy system was no longer adequate.[211]

Furthermore, the conceptual basis of the May 1946 Plan seemed to be no longer valid. By March, it was obvious that the Palestinians would not accept the Partition Resolution, and the attempts to quell the

Palestinian resistance through painful strikes failed. As this was the situation, the proximity of the end to the British Mandate—and hence the declaration of Jewish independence, which would most probably be followed by the Arab invasion—gave a whole new meaning to the Palestinian challenge. It was impossible not to link the hostile activities of the Palestinians, mainly those living inside the designated State of Israel, with the external threat to the Jewish State embedded in the invading Arab Armies. The result was Plan Dalet, put forward by the Hagana Command in March 1948. The signal for launching the plan was to be the beginning of the British evacuation of their bases in various parts of the country, after which the Jews acted to impose their authority over that part of the country that had been allocated to them by the Partition Resolution.

Historians have blamed this plan for the Palestinians' plight, interpreting it as a Jewish master-plan to seize control of the territories that would comprise the Israel of 1949, at the expense of the Palestinians, and to deport the Palestinians from those territories.[212] This interpretation is groundless; it is based on a combination of biased reading of the military documents and a retrospective reading of history, as though the final stage was the inevitable outcome of the earlier events. The plan did provide the conditions for the destruction of Palestinian villages and the deportation of their dwellers; this was not the reason for the plan's composition. A careful scrutiny shows that its conceptual framework was, again, based on the UN Partition Resolution and that its aim was to ensure full control over the territory assigned to the Jews by the Partition Resolution, thus placing the Hagana in the best possible strategic position to face an Arab invasion. As to Jewish enclaves in the designated Palestinian State, the plan stipulated their defense, not seizure. Plan Dalet's working assumption was that the Hagana should make it possible to establish a Jewish state according to the UN resolution—including Jerusalem and the route to the city—and to secure its existence against hostile forces, which included both the internal and external forces that sought the prevention of the Partition Resolution.

Because of the controversy surrounding it, and its importance to the understanding of Jewish activity during the crucial stages of the Jewish–Palestinian war and the initial stages of the Israeli–Arab war, it is worth elaborating on the Plan Dalet. It was divided into two parts. The first was a general introduction that included the underlying assumptions and goals of the plan, and orders that were general enough to be relevant to all the Hagana brigades. In the second part, specific missions were assigned to each brigade. The plan stipulated that after

the British departure the Hagana should be ready to encounter a combination of the local Palestinian forces, irregulars who were already in the country, and the regular Arab Armies which were expected soon to join the fighting—'all acting simultaneously, according to one common operative plan'. Plan Dalet's point of departure from the UN resolution was the assumption that the Arab operational goal would be 'cutting off, and if possible conquering, the Galilee and the Negev; a deep invasion into the heart of the country; isolation of the three major cities (Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Haifa), and cutting off supply lines and vital facilities such as water, electricity etc.' The Hagana's operational aims, therefore, would be to secure those areas where the invading forces would be met and repulsed; to ensure freedom of movement throughout the country by the conquest of vital strategic sites; and to disable the operational arm of the forces operating within the designated Jewish State, by capturing its bases. These goals dictated the following acts: blocking the main access roads into the Jewish state; taking over the main roads inside the country; placing potentially hostile Palestinian cities within the Palestinian State, near the border, under siege; seizing the forward positions of the 'enemy'; and launching counterattacks. To secure the Jews' control of their territory, and to maintain a defense line, the forces were instructed to seize all strategic points from which the British had withdrawn and to act against 'enemy settlements within or near our defense system, to prevent their turning into an active departure points for hostile forces'. In other words, this article stipulated the preventing of Palestinian villages from being used as bases for armed forces who were planning to act against the Jews. Such a village, regardless of the composition of its residents, would be subjected to one (or some) of the following measures: occupation; and, if the Jewish forces encountered resistance, the takeover would be followed by the annihilation of the resisting force; the deportation of the population; and the destruction of the village. If there were no resistance, a defensive force would remain in the village or nearby, to make it secure.[213]

This article—and references to the Palestinian community as the enemy, combatants and non-combatants alike—provided the basis for the mass deportation of the Palestinians. The decision on how to treat the Palestinians who came under the Hagana's control was left to the local Hagana, and later IDF, commander to decide. In most cases, the decision was made to expel the people and to destroy their houses. Years of Jewish–Palestinian hostility, culminating in the Palestinians' active resistance to the Partition Resolution, led, with their defeat, to what became the Palestinians' al-Nakba.

Operation Nahshon

Plan Dalet was issued in March, but it was only carried out during the second part of April. The reason for this was the British presence, as the plan was to be carried out after the British departed. The British, therefore, set the timetable for the Jewish adoption of an offensive strategy. However, the Palestinian success in late March, and the resulting convoys' crisis, called for immediate action, albeit restricted. Gloomy reports were coming in from Jerusalem about the difficult situation there, and it was clear that supplies must find their way to the city. The result was Operation Nahshon (5–10 April), the goal of which was to clear the Jerusalem–Hulda road, and to enable a free transfer of supplies to Jerusalem; this signified the abandonment of the defensive May 1946 Plan. However, it did not derive from Plan Dalet and, in fact, it was executed in contradiction to Plan Dalet's fundamental principle that is —the imposition of Jewish authority over the territory under its control. The takeover of villages stipulated by Operation Nahshon was not preordained to be permanent: the armed force used at Nahshon was established to conduct a time-limited operation; they were then to return to their units after the completion of their mission. Plan Dalet, on the other hand, called for the permanent holding of the Jerusalem–Jaffa road and the ridges above it; but no urgent thought had been paid to the need to permanently secure the Jerusalem–Hulda road—an oversight that would cost dearly later, during the bloody fighting over Latrun.

Operation Nahshon took place at a time when the diplomats in London, Washington and New York were seeking a solution to the crisis in Palestine; although the diplomatic activity continued in the background, it was the military situation that decided activity in Palestine and the Jewish resort to an offensive strategy. The link between the fighting in Palestine and the diplomatic activity also worked in the opposite direction: the fighting in Palestine was the major driving force behind international activity. The Jews would have launched their April campaign regardless of the developments in the diplomatic arena. It was the Palestinian campaign that demanded a response, and the April–May operations were the Jewish answer.[214]

While Yadin, the acting Chief of Staff, was planning to launch Plan Dalet, an endeavor that demanded all of the Hagana forces, Ben-Gurion—deeply concerned about Jerusalem's fate—instructed that highest priority be given to the opening of the road to Jerusalem, and at any cost.[215] According to the Partition Resolution, Jerusalem was to be

included neither in the Jewish nor in the Arab-Palestinian State. This fact had almost no impact on the Palestinians' war, as they had rejected the whole Partition Resolution in the first place. However, while accepting the Partition Resolution, the Jewish leadership did not accept the internationalization of Jerusalem, and was determined to keep Jerusalem—or, at least, the Jewish part of the city—within the Jewish State's boundaries.[216] The setbacks in al-Nabi Daniyal and along the Tel Aviv–Jerusalem road shook Ben-Gurion, as he realized how precarious was the situation there. His concern grew even more with the urgent letters he received from David Shaltiel, the military commander of Jerusalem, in which the latter described in detail the serious situation in the city. Shaltiel claimed that he had insufficient arms and manpower to defend Jerusalem and keep it secure. He was even skeptical about his ability to defend Jerusalem, even if it were his only mission. The 100,000 Jerusalem Jews suffered from shortages in supplies and food, and many of them blamed the Hagana for their plight. Matters were also dire among the Hagana rank and file, as members of the organization were on the verge of mutiny. Defeatism was spreading, mainly among those positioned in isolated areas; and shortages in clothing, supplies and payment affected their morale. Shaltiel threatened that if reinforcement did not arrive soon, and if remote settlements were not abandoned, he could not promise that Jerusalem would hold on any longer.[217] Ben-Gurion thought that the struggle over Jerusalem had reached a crucial stage: 'The fall of Jerusalem would be a death blow to the Yishuv', Ben-Gurion told Yadin, and instructed that everything possible be invested in the opening of the road to Jerusalem. Yadin was not happy with the operation, and wanted to allocate only 500 combatants to it, but Ben-Gurion demanded that many more men be assigned to the operation, and Yadin obeyed.[218]

The operation's importance lay in two things: it was the first step on the way to the final defeat of the Palestinians; and its scope was unprecedented. In spite of the November 1947 decision that the basic formation in the Hagana would be the brigade, up until April, the Hagana had acted in smaller formations: squadrons or platoons. Now, for the first time in its history, the semi-military Hagana made plans for a brigade-level operation, in which a 1,500-man force, organized in three battalions, would be deployed. The commander of the operation was Shimon Avidan, the 5th Brigade ('Givati') commander, and the three battalions were composed of companies mobilized from at least five different units. The eclectic nature of the troops was a source of many problems: soldiers did not recognize their commanders and occurrences

of ill-discipline were frequent. The troops also suffered from a lack of arms and ammunition. The mother-units sent their troops reluctantly, under orders from the Hagana High Command, and they did so without providing them with weapons, which were in short supply. The situation improved on the eve of the operation, with the arrival of airplanes and ships from Czechoslovakia carrying about 4,700 rifles, 250 submachine-guns, a few heavy machines and millions of bullets: more than were needed for the Nahshon forces.[219]

The strength of the Arab forces in the operational arena was unclear. One important consideration was the local Palestinians, who lived in villages overlooking the Jerusalem–Hulda road, or in villages not far off the road, and who assembled when the call went out on the arrival of a convoy. The armed and trained element of the Palestinian force there consisted of about 600 trained and paid combatants, who had undergone military training in Syria; half of whom were under the command of ʻAbd al-Qādir al-Husayni, as part of his al-Jihad al-Muqaddas guerrillas, and half of whom were under the command of Hasan Salame, the commander of the western sector. Another group in this area was a 400-strong unit of the ALA, most of them Iraqi volunteers under the command of ʻAbd al-Jābir. All in all, it was estimated that the total number of Arabs who might be involved in fighting was about 2,000.[220]

The operation, launched on 6 April, was preceded by two operations on the eastern and western edges of the operational arena; one initiated by the Palestinians and one by the Hagana. The Hagana forces in Jerusalem noticed, on 1 April, that the children and women were leaving the Arab village of al-Qastal. Anticipating the turning of the village into a military stronghold, a Palmah squad captured it from a dozen Palestinian guards. Fighting ensued, during which the Palestinians tried repeatedly, but unsuccessfully, to recapture the village. On the night of 7/8 April, the Palestinians launched a massive attack on the village, but the defenders repulsed them, and in the morning the Jews—and the Palestinians—found out that ʻAbd al-Qādir al-Husayni had been killed during the attack. This news provoked what was, so far, the largest Palestinian attack on al-Qastal in which 1,000 Palestinians stormed the village. Their object, however, was to extricate al-Husayni's corpse, and after their takeover of al-Qastal from the Jews only a few of the assailants remained in the village, the rest departing to participate in al-Husayni's funeral. The Palestinian counterattack demonstrated their potential, but the death of al-Husayni inflicted a severe blow on the Palestinians' fighting spirit; Palestinians never recovered from the death of their

leader.[221] On the following day, the Jews launched their own counter-attack: the village was reoccupied, and its houses were demolished, to prevent the return of its residents.[222]

A tragic by-product of the fighting over al-Qastal was the Deir Yassin massacre. The circumstances of these events are a matter of controversy, especially concerning the role of the Hagana and knowledge of the plan to attack the village. While the Hagana forces were acting along the Hulda–Kiryat Anavim road, and the struggle over al-Qastal was raging. A combined IZL and LHI unit, supported by Hagana mortar fire, attacked and conquered Deir Yassin, an Arab village on the outskirts of Jerusalem, not far from al-Qastal. During the takeover of the village, which up to that moment had remained out of the fighting, the Jewish forces massacred some 120 men, women and children, and the survivors were expelled to East Jerusalem.[223] Shaltiel objected to the operation, as the village was peaceful, and had not been involved in the fighting. On one occasion, Palestinian guerrillas had wanted to launch an attack from Deir Yassin on the neighboring Kfar Shaul, but the villagers had not allowed them to do so.[224] Shaltiel reported to the Hagana High Command that they should not attack Deir Yassin, as the village was peaceful, was not involved in the fighting, and—to the Hagana's knowledge—did not host any guerrillas. He also told them that occupation of the village held no military value, as it was not intended to be part of Jerusalem's defense. He preferred that instead the Hagana assist with the al-Qastal operation. However, the two dissident organizations ignored Shaltiel's request and launched the attack on Deir Yassin.[225] The official Jewish leadership strongly condemned the massacre; and the Jewish Agency sent a letter to King Abdullah in which it denounced the IZL for their deed. However, in his reply, King Abdullah placed the responsibility for the massacre squarely upon the Jewish Agency's shoulders.[226] This event, which took place amidst a series of defeats sustained by the Palestinian forces, was one of the most traumatic events of the intercommunal war, and the repercussions spread throughout the Arab world while inside Palestine it was one of the major causes for the Palestinian collapse.

The Palestinians took their revenge on 13 April, when they ambushed a Jewish hospital convoy passing through al-Shaykh Jarrāh on its way to Hadasa hospital in Mount Scopus. The massacre at Shaykh Jarrāh of the 76 medical staff members who were in the convoy caused demoralization in the city, where morale was not high anyway. Ultra-Orthodox Jews, among whom anti-Zionism was common, wanted to surrender; while the general trend in the city was to blame the Hagana

for the city's difficult situation. With the conquest of al-Shaykh Jarrāh by the Hagana, the Palestinian guerrillas fled. However, the Jewish hold over the neighborhood was shortlived, as in the afternoon British troops used heavy fire to drive them back.[227]

On the other side of the Hulda–Jerusalem road the Hagana launched a direct attack against Hasan Salame's HQ near al-Ramla, west of the Operation Nahshon theater of operations. The Givati Brigade had prepared for this attack even before Operation Nahshon was conceived. The attack originated from a Hagana intelligence report, dated 14 March, which stated that Hasan Salame and the Iraqi commander of al-Ramla had, together, established their command HQ in a four-storey building near al-Ramla. Apart from the two senior commanders, the building also housed more than 100 Arab guerrillas; which made it an ideal target for the Hagana. Salame's forces frequently harassed the surrounding area, which was the responsibility of the 5th Brigade and its command decided to link in their attack on Salame to Operation Nahshon and, in this way, secure Operation Nahshon's flank. Hence, when the date for the operation was set for 6 April, the raid on Salame's HQ was set for the 5th. That night, a Givati Brigade company infiltrated the site and demolished the building. About 25 Arabs were killed; while three of the raiders suffered minor injuries. Salama was not in the compound at the time and was criticized for his 'disgraceful' escape. Nevertheless, he returned to the demolished building, recovered equipment and set up his new headquarters in Yehudia.[228]

Operation Nahshon had started on the following day with the seizure of the Arab villages along the Hulda–Latrun line. The villagers offered little, if any, resistance, and fled; in some places even before the arrival of the Jewish forces, and in other places as a result of their arrival. With the rapid occupation of the villages, a 60-truck convoy carrying food, weaponry and armament arrived safely in Jerusalem.[229] Following this initial Jewish success, the Palestinians rearranged their ranks in an attempt to offer resistance. A delegation from Jerusalem asked for Qawukji's assistance, and he sent an artillery battery and armored cars to Jerusalem together with a company from his ALA.[230] The reinforcements did not stall the Hagana forces, and they continued the operation: Palestinian resistance along the Jerusalem–Bāb al-Wad road was subdued; the villages were taken, and the houses were destroyed. With the Jewish forces' complete domination of the Hulda–Jerusalem road, the ALA forces retreated and re-joined the forces fighting under Qawukji's command in the Mishmar Haemek area. In the meantime, the Jews managed to send a 200-truck convoy to Jerusalem, on 13 April.

With that, Operation Nahshon was ended. Avidan returned to the Givati Brigade, and responsibility over the Jerusalem—Hulda road was given to the Palmah, which prepared the next convoy-transfer operation, Operation Harel.[231]

Operation Nahshon clearly exposed both sides' advantages and disadvantages. The Palestinians' advantages were few. The combination of hundreds of partially trained and armed guerrillas with the ability to mobilize thousands of Palestinians from their villages, along with geographical advantage, proved to be successful. However, this success was not only the result of Palestinian abilities, but also of poor strategy on the part of the Hagana. When the Hagana assembled its much better-equipped and better-trained troops, and turned to a strategy that was based on the seizure of territory, the Palestinians proved to be no match. The real challenge, though, was the regular Arab Armies and the Hagana High Command knew that. Hence, the lessons of the operation had to be studied and corrected fast. The Hagana's organization was poor, and the commanders had no idea how to manage logistics properly. The transmission of reports from battalion commanders and high command was faulty; and the management of supplies and their delivery was poor and ineffective. Ben-Gurion's aide summarized the problem for him: the Hagana commanders 'see only the battle, but they did not realize that disorder, lack of food and supplies obstructed the war's conduct … The commanders had no administrative knowledge, and they don't know that success is the result of organization no less than of the actual fighting.'[232]

While fighting raged along the Jerusalem–Hulda road, a new front opened up for the Jews in the north of Palestine. The Palestinian success in the 'War on the Road'—at a time when the ALA refrained from taking part in the war against the Jews—disturbed the Arab League's Military Committee and its commander, Isma'il Safwat. Defying British warnings, he cabled Qawukji in early April that, 'the situation … requires the greatest possible efforts to strike at the Jews'. The Military Committee had also to show gains.[233] As a result, forces from the ALA attacked Mishmar Haemek on 4 April, in violation of the pledge that Qawukji had made to the High Commissioner that he would not act before 15 May.[234] Hagana intelligence reported that Qawukji chose to attack Mishmar Haemek to prepare the way for the invasion of the Arab Armies. The occupation of Mishmar Haemek would remove an obstacle to free Arab transportation between Jenin and Haifa, and would make it possible to send reinforcements to Haifa without hindrance. It would also open up access from the Plain Coast to the Izrael Valley and allow free movement for the Arab forces acting in that area.[235]

Qawukji's forces started their attack with the bombardment of the Jewish settlement with cannons—it was the first time that artillery was used in the war—but the assailants failed to occupy the settlement. The Hagana sent a two-battalion force to the area, but the British commander of the force stationed in nearby Nir David forced a cease-fire. The timing of the cease-fire well suited Qawukji's needs, as at that time he had been asked to assist the Palestinian forces on the Jerusalem–Hulda road. Identifying an opportunity to extend his influence into a region in which he had hitherto not been allowed to act, he responded in the affirmative. He asked the local British commander to prolong the cease-fire, and sent the requested reinforcements to the Jerusalem area. The Jewish forces, however, did not wait and stormed the positions around Mishmar Haemek. After a few days of fighting, Qawukji withdrew his forces and left the Mishmar Haemek area.[236] The Jewish victory had dire repercussions for the Arab residents in the area. For some days, the villages in the Mishmar Haemek area became a battlefield between the Jews and Qawukji's artillery, as the former occupied them in their attempts to encircle and destroy Qawukji's forces. After their victory—in a combination of revenge and fear (that the ALA's forces would once again use the Palestinian village as a base from which to attack the Jewish settlements and transportation in the region)—the Hagana instructed the villagers in the Mishmar Haemek area, and along the Jenin–Haifa road, to leave their homes. However, many Palestinians escaped even before they were instructed to, as the recent Jewish victories had terrified the villagers.[237] Jewish occupation also included the German-populated colonies, Waldheim and Galilee Bayt Lehem, in the west Izrael Valley.[238]

One repercussion of the fight was a change in Jewish–Druze relations. After years of contact between members of the two communities, the Druze reaction to the Partition Resolution was mixed. Some of the Druze, mainly those from 'Usfiya, Daliyat al-Karmal and Shafa'amr, thought that the Druze should remain on the Jewish side in the ensuing conflict; while others joined the Arab camp and the struggle against the implementation of the Partition Resolution and the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. The most emphatic demonstration of this attitude was the organization of a Druze battalion commanded by Shakib Wahāb, from Jabal Druze. Shakib Wahab had fought in the Druze revolt against the French in 1925, and had served as a captain in the Druze Brigade of the British Army during the Second World War. Wahab organized his battalion in response to Qawukji's request during his visit to Jabal Druze. The 500-man

battalion entered Palestine at the end of March 1948, and positioned itself in Shafa'amr. A few days after its arrival, it joined the ALA in its fighting in the Mishmar Haemek area. On 12 April, Wahāb led his men against Ramat Yohanan in an attempt to divert the Israeli forces that had attacked Qawukji's forces on the Mishmar Haemek front. The Druze Battalion did well, inflicting heavy blows on the Jewish forces; but, following the defeat of Qawukji, and fearing that the Jews would muster more forces against him, Wahāb retreated back to Shafa'amr. The Hagana forces captured the nearby villages of Husha and Kusayr, from which the Druze Battalion had launched its offensive, and an attempt by Wahab to regain the villages failed. The result of the battle inclined the battalion officers toward cooperation with the Jews. Without the knowledge of Wahāb Shakib, officers of the battalion met Israeli officers and suggested that the battalion could be absorbed into the Jewish 2nd Brigade. The idea was rejected, but a few days later, Wahāb Shakib met personally with a senior Hagana intelligence officer in an attempt to strike a deal. The negotiations failed and Wahāb and his men retreated to Shafa'amr, where they remained until 22 May. During that time the battalion had slowly disintegrated; most of his men defected and returned to Jabl Druze. The few that remained with Wahāb left Palestine for Lebanon in late May.[239] On another front, following the fall of Haifa and its neighborhood into Jewish hands, the Druze on Carmel Mountain expressed their intention of handing over their weapons to the Hagana and asking for a defensive force to be stationed among them.[240]

When news of the Jewish victory in Mishmar Haemek became public, the Palestinians panicked, and despair spread among them. Initially, reports appeared about the great victory the ALA was winning, but as the truth came out, despair and fear prevailed. The Palestinians claimed that 200 Arab guerrillas were killed in the fighting and during the Jewish takeover of the Arab villages near Mishmar Haemek. With this news, the trend of flight and escape escalated further.[241] One result of the Jewish victory were the tentative enquiries about peace made by the residents of the Bāqa al-Gharbiyya area, who hoped to save what remained of their field harvest so they could prepare for the planting season.[242]

In the Jerusalem area, the death of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Husayni and the ensuing defeats left the Palestinians confused and disoriented. An internal struggle had developed over the command of the Jerusalem forces. The Arab League sought an opportunity to increase the influence of the Arab League's Military Committee authority, and suggested appointing

Mahmoud al-Hindi as the Commander of the Jerusalem District. Al-Hindi, commander of one of the ALA's battalions, was one of those loyal to the ex-Mufti, but al-Husayni declined the idea, demanding that he be the one to make the appointment. He claimed that if he were not found a commander, he would take the position upon himself. Finding a substitute, however, was a difficult task. Hasan Salama declined Hajj Amin's offer of the job, stating that he could not take upon himself the command of two districts: the one he was leading now—Lydda and al-Ramla, and the Jerusalem District.[243] Al-Husayni's deputy, Kāmil 'Urayqat, had lost the confidence of his men and superiors, and was assigned to a side job as commander of the rural sector east of Jerusalem. Emil Khuri, a member of the AHC, put himself forward as the district commander, but his claim went unnoticed. Finally, the Iraqi Colonel, Fadel Rashid, who was the commander of the volunteers' forces in the city of Jerusalem, was appointed as the new commander of the Palestinian forces in the Jerusalem area, and he started reorganizing the Palestinian forces.[244] However, Abdullah of Jordan had other ideas, and by early April he appointed Qawukji as the commander of Jerusalem.[245] This new appointment had little effect on the Palestinians, who were struggling to reorganize their forces and resume their attempts to close the Jerusalem–Jaffa road once again.

The Hagana did not use the respite to transfer more supply convoys to Jerusalem or to complete the takeover of the ridges controlling the Jerusalem–Jaffa road.[246] To enable the reorganization and execution of Plan Dalet, the Nahshon Operation was halted, its HQ dissolved and the forces returned to their units. A debate ensued as to the next step on the Jerusalem front. A new Palmah brigade, the 10th Brigade, was formed, and it was assigned the mission of bringing more supply convoys to Jerusalem. However, the Palmah command suggested a different line of activity. Assuming that the gain of full control over the road it would make it possible for the supply convoys to reach Jerusalem without interference, it recommended concentrating first on the permanent occupation of the villages along the Jerusalem–Bab al-Wad road. It prepared an elaborate plan, the main point of which was the destruction of all the Arab villages along the road. However, the Hagana High Command, under political pressure, ordered the sending of more convoys even before the conquest of the whole area. Thus, the Harel operation was in fact the next stage of Operation Nahshon and aimed also to get as many convoys as possible to Jerusalem, as safely as possible, but without first securing full Jewish control of the road. The operation was carried out between 15 and 20 April, by a brigade that was

established for the occasion. Its commander was Yitzhak Rabin, and it comprised the 4th and the 5th Palmah Battalions that were already in that theater of operation. During the days of the operation, the brigade's battalions occupied most of the villages along the Latrun– Jerusalem road, and met with hardly any resistance. The only exceptions were Saris, which was occupied only after offering strong resistance, and the Arab Tsuba, which thwarted the Jewish attacks. The rest of the villages—Bayt Surik, Bidu, al-Qubāb, Bayt Jiz—were easily taken; their residents were expelled and the houses destroyed.[247] In the meantime, three major supply convoys, each consisting of about 250–300 trucks, made their way to Jerusalem, protected by the Harel Brigade forces and by the 3rd Battalion of the 5th Brigade, which was in charge of organizing the convoys and securing their journey.[248]

While the Harel operation was underway, David Shaltiel pressed for more forces to be brought to Jerusalem. Plan Dalet set missions for the Etsioni Brigade not only in the city of Jerusalem, but also on its outskirts. The 6th Brigade was instructed to take over the evacuated police stations outside the city, in the isolated Har-Tuv, Abu-Ghosh and Latrun, to the north of the Dead Sea, and in Sodom. The police stations in Maale Edomim and Bethlehem were to be destroyed.[249] Shaltiel claimed that he did not have the necessary forces to accomplish the missions assigned to him by the plan. He suggested cutting his lines of defense, and establishing a continuous territory that his forces could hold. To achieve this he suggested abandoning Atarot, Gush Etsion and the Dead Sea, as their defense put a heavy burden on his scant forces. The Hagana High Command rejected his suggestion.[250] Shaltiel further increased the pressure upon Ben-Gurion and the Hagana command through his repeated description of the city's poor situation. Shaltiel complained that there was no fuel in the city; and that while suffering from severe lack of goods, the people were also subjected to sniping in almost every part of the city. An attack by the Arab Legion on Neve Yaakov on 18 April further increased the pressure. The people of this isolated settlement demanded that they be evacuated, and the Etsioni Brigade's answer was that the Hagana High Command refused to allow that, and that it was preparing 'a large-scale operation' to relieve the situation. In the coming days, Shaltiel repeated his gloomy reports in an attempt to force the Hagana High Command to send more forces to the city.[251] Ben-Gurion witnessed the dire situation, the despair and defeatism spreading all over the city, during his visit to Jerusalem. The voices praising the Deir Yassin massacre were another source of concern for him.[252]

The real issue that emerged from Shaltiel's demands was a repeat of the debate that had already occupied the Hagana High Command:

where should the main effort be placed, either in the fighting over the road to Jerusalem, or the fighting in Jerusalem? The success of Operation Harel and the fact that Jewish Jerusalem now had enough supplies to enable the Jews to hold on for weeks without further deliveries led the Palmah command to once again urge the Hagana High Command to concentrate on the full occupation of the Jerusalem–Jaffa road. The Palmah command argued that it needed a few more days to complete the seizure of all of the villages controlling the Bab al-Wad–Jerusalem road. In any case, so went the argument, there was no point in fighting inside Jerusalem while the British were still in the city and holding the main key positions.[253]

The arguments of the Palmah seemed to be justified by the revival of Palestinian activity along the Jerusalem–Jaffa road. The Palestinians had gradually recovered from their recent defeats, and the arrival of 500 Iraqi volunteers into the area provided significant reinforcement. The Palestinians and the volunteers returned to the villages along the road. They were able to do so because the logic of Operation Harel was similar to that of Operation Nahshon: a temporary occupation of the villages, just for the time needed for the convoy's passage, and then evacuation. Consequently, after a few days of paralysis, the Palestinians resumed their attacks on the road. Their first target was a convoy that was making its way to Jerusalem on 19 April. Yadin had nevertheless succumbed to Shaltiel's pressure. He ordered the Harel Brigade to escort one last convoy to the city, and than to remain there. David Ben-Gurion was also in the convoy. The convoy's journey exposed the problematic nature of the decision to concentrate on the fighting inside Jerusalem without first securing Jewish control over the road to the city. Shortly after it crossed Latrun on the way to Bab al-Wad, the convoy met Palestinian guerrillas. It was almost impossible to uproot them, as they controlled all the strategic points along 2 km of the road. It was only when reinforcements arrived from the Jerusalem area that most of the convoy trucks were rescued.[254] However, as soon as the convoy had passed through, the road to Jerusalem was closed again, and more than 250 trucks that had managed to arrive in Jerusalem were unable to return. The only way that Jews could arrive in and depart from Jerusalem was by air.[255]

The Last Accords in the Jewish–Palestinian War

The difficulties along the Jerusalem–Latrun road did not reflect the true situation along the Jewish–Palestinian front across the country. The

hitherto somewhat static nature of the war, in which neither side had made any territorial gains at the other side's expense, is reflected in the number of casualties on both sides, which were quite similar. Up to early April 1948, Jewish casualties mounted to 875 dead and 1,875 wounded, as compared with 967 Palestinian dead and 1,911 wounded.[256] However, after the execution of Plan Dalet, the Hagana was on the offensive and was in control of the intercommunal conflict. An up-dated version of Plan Dalet had been published on 11 May, but by that time the Hagana was in the middle of operations all over the country, making the up-dated version a mere formality. Now, the Hagana had shifted from launching hit-and-run operations, carried out by small guerrilla-like units whose goal was to punish or threaten, to operations conducted by military formations whose goal was to seize territory and to impose Jewish authority. The execution of Plan Dalet entailed not only political–geographic, but also geographical–demographical repercussions, as the forces acted on an almost regular basis to destroy the villages they occupied and to deport their residents, all in accordance with what was outlined in Plan Dalet. However, Palestinian flight had started even before their forceful deportation. Thousands upon thousands of Palestinians had already chosen to escape from their houses, doing so not because they were forced to, but because they wanted to evade the hardship of war, and, as the war progressed, because of their fear of Jewish retaliation. Stories of Jewish atrocities toward civilians scared the Palestinians, even if they were unfounded. Dayr Yasin was the example that all the Palestinians thought of when they were deciding whether to remain or to escape in the face of the coming Jews. Some remained but many others escaped. The Plan Dalet-related deportations thus only continued a trend that already existed.

The first place where the Hagana took the initiative was Tiberias—an ethnically mixed city. Some 5,770 Arabs lived in the Arab part of the city, and about 5,000 Jews lived in the Jewish part; with around 1,000 Jews living in the Arab quarter. The city remained relatively calm during the first months of the communal struggle, as both the local Arab dignitaries and the Jews sought a peaceful co-existence.[257] A change took place with the growing stream of volunteers infiltrating into Palestine from Syria. Tiberias was on the main route, and bus-loads of Arab volunteers passed through the city. Some of the volunteers remained in the vicinity of the city, and a training camp for the volunteers had been opened in the nearby village of Lubya. By mid-March the number of the volunteers in the city had grown and, as a result, violent clashes erupted between Jews and Arabs; though many of these clashes took place along

the road leading to Tiberias where Jewish transportation was frequently attacked, particularly after the arrival of the volunteers.[258] On 8 April 1948, an exchange of gun-fire flared up in the city, and Hagana armored cars rescued the Jewish residents from the Arab sector of the city. The exchange of fire continued until British forces imposed a truce on the city; but it lasted only a few hours.[259] At that time, the Hagana command in the area was determined to occupy the city, even if it meant defying the British-imposed cease-fire. Hagana forces in the area first cut the city off from its Arab hinterland, preventing the arrival of reinforcements to assist the Arabs in Tiberias; while other Hagana forces started taking over Arab villages around Tiberias, further diminishing the foreign forces' ability to come to the city's rescue. Reinforcements were sent from neighboring Arab areas, but they were intercepted by the Hagana's forces. The Arab residents of the city were, effectively, put under siege; supplies did not arrive in the city, and the local merchants were unable to sell their goods. The shortage of food and goods led to a sharp rise in prices, and cases of theft became frequent. In fact, the local Arab leadership lost control, and Arab Tiberias found itself in a state of anarchy. The result was that most of the Arab residents of the city left it, despite the urging of the Arab leadership that they should stay. Local leaders traveled to Damascus in an unsuccessful attempt to arrange assistance for the city.[260]

The final act of war in the city came on 17 April with an amphibious landing of Hagana forces in the part held by the Arabs. The British were still present, but they avoided any involvement in the fighting in the city. Hagana forces stormed the main Palestinian stronghold in the city, destroyed it and killed the Palestinian fighters. Hagana intelligence reports claimed that during the fighting nearly 80 Palestinians were killed, 18 of whom were women.[261] In response, the British governor of the city announced that he was handing control over of city over to the Jews, but that first he would secure the safe departure of those Palestinians who wanted to leave. The British tried to suggest that the departure of the Arabs should be reciprocated by the departure of the Jews from Safad, but the Jews rejected this idea out of hand. The British authorities acted, therefore, to assist the Arabs in leaving the city, but—in an attempt to reduce the impression that they were acting on behalf of the Hagana—they allowed the Arabs to depart with their weapons, to the Hagana's dissatisfaction. On 18 April, the British Army imposed a curfew on the city, during which they evacuated the Arab population from the city.[262] With the defeat of Arabic Tiberias, the Hagana took control over more Arab villages in the area, and a massive evacuation of

the villagers followed, some of them leaving voluntarily and others forced to do so.[263]

The second major ethnically mixed city to fall into Jewish hands was Haifa. The critical stage in the fighting over Haifa was reached in mid-April, with the British decision to reduce their involvement in the raging hostilities to a minimum. The Jews and the Arabs had been fighting in the city from the very start of the intercommunal struggle. At first, the local Palestinian population had sought peace with the Jews; and, after obtaining the ex-Mufti's permission, in March 1948, had suggested a cease-fire throughout the Haifa region, to be effective until 15 May. The Hagana was uncertain whether it was worth accepting this proposal.[264] In mid-March, north of Haifa, the Jewish forces ambushed two trucks loaded with 12 tons of arms and ammunition which had been sent from Damascus to the Arabs in Haifa. Forty of its escorts were killed, among them was the city's military commander, al-Hariti.[265] His replacement was Amin Bey 'Izz al-Din, a former officer in the Transjordan Frontier Force. Another development was the arrival in the city of ALA forces, composed of Iraqis, Syrians and ex-soldiers from the Transjordan Frontier Force. The appearance of this force divided the city into two camps: the local population and leadership, which were assembled under Amin Bey 'Izz al-Din; and the foreigners, who were under the command of Yunis Nafa', a Lebanese. Under these circumstances the local Palestinian leadership tried again, at the end of March, to reach an agreement with the Jews. This time the city's civil Jewish leadership was ready to agree, but the Hagana command was still inclined to reject the proposal, as it was satisfied with the clear trend of Arabs fleeing from the city; a trend it expected to continue.[266]

The Jews gave no definite answer, but in any case the volunteers were more inclined to continue the hostilities. As more arms shipments had arrived in the city—this time by sea from Egypt—a renewed flare-up of hostilities began in early April, in which both sides were engaged in sniping and demolition. The British made several futile attempts to restore peace, and after they had failed once again, on 17 April, General Stockwell, the commander of the British military forces, acted to reduce his forces' friction with the belligerents as much as possible. On 20 April, he ordered his troops to pull out of the city: he made this decision following a meeting he had with Abba Khushi, the Jewish senior official in the city, who reported to the General that the Jews intended to bring an end to the hostilities by mounting a major offensive to ensure the security of the Jewish part of the city which was exposed to Arab harassment. Stockwell tried to deter Khushi from taking the offensive, but it

was clear to him that a major engagement was unavoidable. He decided to retain the existing British positions in eastern Galilee and to re-deploy his forces in Haifa so that he could secure those routes essential to him while safeguarding his troops as far as possible. He informed both community leaders of his decision on 21 April, thus paving the way to the decisive struggle over the city between the two communities.[267]

The British had, therefore, determined the timing but, on the Jewish part, Plan Dalet determined the nature and purpose of the fighting. Both sides tried to take over the parts evacuated by the British, but it soon became obvious that the Jews had the upper hand. At the start of the fighting, on 21 April, Ahmad Bey Khalil, the most prominent dignitary in the city, abandoned his community and fled. The city's two commanders, Bey 'Izz al-Din and Yunis Naffa', followed him shortly, leaving the Arabs of Haifa without civil or military leaders. Arab pleas to Damascus for assistance were ignored, and fear and despair spread among the Arabs in the city. The fighting continued at different levels of intensity through 22 April, when about 20 Jews were killed, compared to 100 Arab Palestinians. This obvious Palestinian defeat caused panic among the Palestinians in the city, and some of the dignitaries who had remained in the city asked General Stockwell to intervene. To make an arrangement possible, Stockwell ordered his forces to prevent the arrival in Haifa of some 300–400 Arab guerrillas from nearby Tira, who tried to come to the assistance of their brethren. Next, he met with the Jewish leaders, and worked out the terms of a truce with them. However, while sitting with the General in the presence of the Jewish representatives, the Arab dignitaries stated that they were not authorized to sign a truce, as they had no control over the military elements in the city. Instead, they expressed their wish to allow the Arab population to leave the city, and asked for British assistance and guarantee for their safe departure. During this time Palestinians rushed to the port, seeking escape from the city. Hagana forces tried to prevent them from departing, and British forces shot at the Jewish forces, killing several Jewish soldiers, including one Hagana senior officer. Two British officers were wounded. This incident further increased Arab panic, and Stockwell had to deal with the growing number of Arab refugees seeking a way out of the town. British ships were called on to help the Palestinians to flee through the port.[268] The Jewish forces took over the evacuated areas and, by 26 April, the British had provided trucks and protection for 6,000–7,000 Palestinians who fled in convoy to Lebanon. The Jewish authorities urged the Arabs to remain, but to no avail. At the beginning of the fighting, on 22 April, there had been about 30,000–35,000 Arabs

in Haifa; by the end of the month there remained around 6,000.[269] Those Arabs who chose to remain in the city surrendered to the Jewish forces and gradually life returned to normal, with Jewish authority extended over the entire town.[270]

Ben-Gurion was overwhelmed by the mass Arab flight:

> Why did tens of thousands leave in such panic—without reasonable reason—their town, houses and property? What caused this flight? Was it only an order from above? It is impossible that the richest people in the country would leave all their wealth just because some one told them to do so. Was it fear?

However, despite his astonishment, Ben-Gurion grasped an opportunity he did not intend to miss: 'It is not our role to seek the return of the Arabs.'[271] From here, a rule emerged—to prohibit the return of the Palestinian refugees to their homes.

To complete their hold in that part of the country, the Jews now moved eastward and northward. The Hagana command demanded that the inhabitants of Balad al-Shaykh turn in the foreign volunteers, along with all the weapons in the village; in return they could remain. The local dignitaries rejected the Hagana's conditions and preferred to send away the women and the children. The British provided the lorries to enable the departure of the women and the children, and the Jews regarded the departure and the continued stand of the local men and the armed volunteers as a declaration of war. They stormed the village, which eventually fell into Jewish hands.[272]

The next stage was Yadin's order to the Carmeli Brigade to take over the Haifa–Acre road, and to engage Acre, but not to occupy it, as it was beyond the Jewish State's Partition Lines.[273] Acre was a major stumbling block on the road of the Jewish convoys to the Jewish settlements in northeast Galilee. The city had relatively formidable forces, and its ability to defend itself improved with the arrival of ALA's reinforcements; but the Jewish attacks, which were thwarted by the guerrillas, scared the city residents, and a mass flight of citizens from Acre began. Out of 40,000 citizens, only 8,000 remained in the city by the end of April.[274] The city was further weakened by the departure of its military commander on 11 May. The commander claimed that after the fall of Safad he was instructed to leave the city, and other dignitaries and military commanders followed him. At that time the Hagana 2nd Brigade launched Operation Ben-Ami, whose goal was to take control of western Galilee and to open up the road to the captured villages. Bridge forces engaged the well-defended Acre in fighting, to prevent the forces

there from obstructing Operation Ben-Ami. Three reduced battalions, consisting of seven companies, launched the operation, during which the Jews seized al-Sumayriyya and al-Bassa, al-Zib and the nearby police station. The villages were destroyed and their residents fled. Supply convoys made their way to the Jewish settlements that were thus rescued from their isolation on the Palestine–Lebanon border, the children and the women were placed at the rear. On the morning of 15 May, the operation's headquarters reported to the Hagana High Command that the operation had been successfully carried out, and that the Carmeli Brigade had gained control over the whole of western Galilee.[275] Subsequently, when the Acre Arab dignitaries realized that they were under siege, they gave in, on 20 May, surrendering their arms and the foreign volunteers to the Jews. In return, they were allowed to remain in their homes. Total Arab casualties comprised about 70 fatalities, compared to three Jewish soldiers killed.[276]

On the other side of the Galilee, the occupation of Tiberias triggered the fighting over the Galilee Panhandle, stretching from Tiberias to Metullah. This was supposed to be part of the Jewish State; however, the Arabs dominated it, numerically and geographically. The main road leading to the Galilee, the Tiberias–Rosh Pinna road, was under the control of the Palestinians and the volunteers, who also dominated the roads leading to the Jewish settlements in the Galilee. There were about 30,000 Arabs as against some few thousand Jews living in isolated settlements in the midst of Arab surroundings, and that entire part of the country was isolated from the rest. The mission of imposing Jewish sovereignty over that part of the country was assigned to a specially assembled command, which was composed of the forces already in the Jewish settlements—the Palmah 3rd Battalion and a battalion which had been transferred from Haifa to reinforce the Galilee forces.[277]

As elsewhere, it was the British who gave the cue for the beginning of the fighting over the upper eastern Galilee. The British military and security forces held bases in several points in the Galilee, and they were due to start leaving the bases and return to Haifa on 14 May. The exact date of departure had been set by the 6th Airborne Division command in late March. The police stations in Metullah, al-Nabi Yusha', Jisr al-Majāmi', Baysan, Afula, Tiberias, Rosh Pinna, Safad and Nazareth were to be evacuated during 14 and 15 May. Only the stations in al-Khālisa and Samakh were to be evacuated by 1 May.[278] However, the deterioration of the security situation in Haifa and in the Galilee led to a change in the British schedule. Being concerned about the safety of its forces' evacuation route from the eastern upper Galilee to Haifa, the

British Northern Command decided to start the evacuation of the military and police garrison earlier than planned. The British departure from there started on 16 April 1948, with their evacuation of the al-Nabi Yusha' Garrison, and afterwards the police station in Khālisa and the military camp in al-Mālikiyya. These were handed over to the Arabs, who were in the majority in the area.[279] Because of its highly strategic importance, the commander of the Hagana forces instructed his men to takeover the al-Nabi Yusha' police garrison. The forces launched two consecutive, unsuccessful, attacks, but, in any case, British departure from that part of the country demanded a wider response than the attack on the al-Nabi Yusha' garrison.[280]

The British had also brought to an end their presence in Safad earlier than planned. There were 10,000 Arabs in Safad, compared to 1,500 Jews; and while this was the largest Jewish community in the upper Galilee, it was also the weakest. The Jews were concentrated in an area surrounded by Arab quarters; most of the Jews were Ultra-Orthodox and so did not take part in the defence of their quarter. To the isolation of the Jewish community, one should add the fact that—apart from three other isolated settlements in the Safad area—there was no other significant Jewish concentration in the vicinity. Jewish security was mainly in the hands of the British, who held several positions in the city.[281] The city of Safad remained quiet until March, and then the situation deteriorated with Arab attacks on Jewish transportation and on the Jewish quarter. ALA units clashed with Jewish units on both sides of Safad, to its east, along the Safad–Rosh Pinna road, and to the west, near the 'Ayn al-Zaytun–Biriyya–Safad area.[282] The Arab military organization in Safad was better than the Jewish. By April, there were four ALA companies in the city, each consisting of 135 men. This force also had a relatively large pool of arms, which the local leadership had been purchasing since mid-1947. The city was under the command of Adib Shishakly, the commander of the ALA's second Yarmuk Battalion, and Syria's future President (in the 1950s), who, following the British departure from the city in mid-April, sent a former Arab Legion officer, Sari Anfish, to take over command of the city. Anfish came with his men, but the local commander, Ahsan al-Maz, refused to accept Anfish's authority, and the tension between the two prevented the creation of a unified command in the city.[283]

With the increase in violence, the British Assistant District Commissioner proposed pulling the British forces out of the city, thereby repeating a similar proposal he had made in January, which had been rejected. Now he felt that the forces stationed in Safad were unfit

to deal with a situation where thousands of Arabs and Jewish militiamen were clashing, and he again asked General Stockwell to evacuate Safad. As if to underline the point, the forces of the ALA, on 15 April, launched a massive attack on the Jewish quarter. Under heavy British cannon-fire, the attack was repelled.[284] Seeking to bring an end to the fighting, the British tried to convince the Jewish authorities to evacuate the small Jewish community, and they repeated this idea during the negotiations over the evacuation of the Palestinians from Tiberias. Although the situation of the Jews in Safad was poor, and some of them left the city, the Yishuv leadership adhered to its non-evacuation policy. Failing to pacify the situation, the British decided not to become entangled in the intercommunal strife in the city, and left the police garrison in Mount Kenaan on 16 April, handing it over to the local Palestinians.[285] British departure from the city, and the handing over of the police bastion to the Arabs, left the Jewish quarter at the Arab's mercy, and the struggle over Safad started, marking the first stage of the war over the eastern Galilee.[286] A Palmah platoon reinforced the two battalions of the semi-militia Field Force in the Jewish quarter, while the Arab camp was composed of Adib Shishakly's 700-strong battalion, who made their plans to attack the besieged quarter. The fighting between the two forces lasted nearly two weeks, the Jewish defenders repeatedly thwarting the attacks.[287]

The difficult situation in Safad was a source of concern for the Hagana High Command, but it viewed the crisis in its wider context, and made the occupation of the city part of a larger move, which was intended to bring all of the eastern Galilee under Jewish control. This goal was to be achieved in Operation Yitfah, which aimed both to impose Jewish authority over the eastern Galilee area and to close the route that seemed to be open to invading forces from Syria and Lebanon. The Palmah commander, Yigal Alon, was appointed to command the operation, having under his command the two battalions that were already positioned there, and a third battalion—the Palmah 1st Battalion—which was on the move: 1,500 combatants in all.[288] In the first stage, Safad would be taken, and from there the forces would move to take over the al-Nabi Yusha'–al-Mālikiyya ridge, which controlled the junction leading from Lebanon to Palestine.[289]

As the Jews were planning this move, the British departure led to the Arab League's Military Committee also making plans to acquire the eastern Galilee. We have no details about these plans, and all we know about them is derived from the way they were implemented. However, considering the seemingly coordinated nature of the assaults, it would

probably be safe to say that there was a directing hand behind the campaign and that the Arab offensive had two foci: Safad and the upper eastern Galilee. The Arab campaign was launched at the same time as the Jewish offensive but, unlike the Jewish, the Arab offensive was conducted along a wide front. Both ALA and irregular forces attacked at the same time along the Tiberias–Rosh Pinna road—closing it, and isolating the northern Jewish settlements of Shamir, Kfar Szold, Dan and Dafna. Further forces moved toward Mālikiyya and al-Nabi Yusha'. The logic behind the campaign seemed to be an attempt to cut off the Galilee Panhandle and to prevent the arrival of Jewish reinforcements; while, in the northern sector, the Palmah intelligence assumed that the attacks on the eastern settlements—Shamir, Kfar Szold, Dan and Dafna—were diversions, and that the main targets were Mālikiyya and al-Nabi Yusha', from which the forces could advance toward Safad.[290]

The Jewish forces acted first in and around Safad. On 28 April Alon's forces took over the Rosh Pinna police garrison, after the British forces moved out of it, and a nearby military base and Operation Yitfah had begun.[291] A secondary operation was then launched, on 4 May,[291] against the Palestinians living along the Rosh-Pinna–Tiberias road: this was Operation Matateh, during which the Palmah 3rd Battalion expelled the Palestinian residents of the villages along the road and destroyed their houses. After three days, during which thousands of local and foreign Arabs were expelled into Syria, the road to Tiberias was open, while the route between the Arab forces in Safad and Syria was cut-off.[292] This success boosted Jewish spirits, while striking a psychological and practical blow against the Arabs. It also increased the importance of Safad to both sides: the place provided access to the Arab hinterland to the north and east, as it allowed access to the now Jewish-controlled area to the south. As a result, both sides invested great effort in seizing the town. A Palmah 3rd Battalion's platoon took over 'Ayn al-Zaytun and the Arab Biriyya, to the west, thus completing the encirclement of Safad, and troops were sent into the Jewish quarter. The Arab forces launched a direct offensive on the Jewish quarter of the city, thus beginning the fight over Safad.[293]

It was at this time that Qawukji's forces attacked the Jewish settlements in the far north, putting a heavy strain on the Operation Yitfah command. An ALA battalion, consisting of Syrian volunteers under the command of Salāh Shishakly, supported by an artillery battery, stormed Ramot Naftali, but the settlement's defenders repulsed the attack.[294] The attacked settlement called for help, but Alon decided that Operation Yitfah's success was dependent on his ability to keep his

forces together, using them in a concentrated manner. His first goal was the takeover of the road to Rosh-Pinna–Safad and the city, and only then would he move northward. Therefore, he instructed the attacked villages to hold on, and adhered to the operational aims of Operation Yitfah. Adib Shishakly realized that the next target of the Jewish forces would be Safad, and he made the necessary preparations for the expected attack, and at the same time acted to subdue the Jewish quarter.[295] By 6 May, the Jewish 3rd Battalion had launched its decisive attack against the Arab main bastion from the besieged Jewish quarter, and the ALA's forces repelled the attack. Inside the Jewish quarter, despair prevailed, as the Jews felt that they stood no chance in a fight against the Arab forces. However, being under siege, the Jewish community could do nothing. Alon rejected a suggestion to evacuate the women and children, fearing the demoralizing effect of such an act.[296] On the Arab side, Adib Shishakly reported that in Safad and its vicinity 'the majority of the [Arab] inhabitants have left their villages. Their morale has collapsed completely.'[297] Both sides increased the pressure. Qawukji transferred his artillery from Ramot Naftaly in the north, thus relieving the pressure from that Jewish settlement, and sent it to Mount Meron. From there, he bombed the Jewish forces. Two ALA companies were placed outside Safad, waiting for the order to attack, which was due to be given on 10 May. However, at the Jewish 3rd Battalion launched the final attack on Safad, and penetrated the ALA's line of defense. Consequently, the deputy commander of the Arab forces in the city gave the order to withdraw, and the ALA's forces left Safad.[298] The fall of Safad came as a surprise both to the Palestinian people of the Galilee and to the Syrian government. Various explanations were offered for the ALA failure, but the most crucial reason was the eclectic nature of the ALA; the fact that it consisted of various elements that were put together without forming a coherent unit.[299]

When the Hagana gained control of the whole city, the remaining Arab civilians expressed their willingness to leave Safad. The British Consul General in Haifa reported that Hagana forces provided escorts for the fleeing Palestinians to prevent the local Jews from taking revenge on them for the murderous attacks they had suffered from the Arabs in the past. However, rumors spread among the Palestinians about Jewish intentions to commit a massacre against the Safad Arabs; and, within a short period of time, the rumors had changed, and word spread that the Jews actually had committed the massacre.[300]

Now it was time to implement the second stage of Operation Yitfah: the takeover of all the northeastern Galilee. Yigal Alon wanted to

remove the danger that hostile Palestinian forces could ambush the Jewish forces from the rear while they were fighting the Syrian and Lebanese invading forces. Assuming that the Jewish victories in Safad and along the Rosh Pinna–Tiberias road would have a frightening effect, Alon asked the Jewish heads of villages and communities in the Galilee to spread the word among their Arab acquaintances that the Hagana intended to move in on them. This method proved to be effective; and as the word spread, the Palestinian residents of the al-Hula valley fled, leaving all of the eastern Galilee empty of Arabs.[303] Now, when the whole of the Galilee Panhandle was under Jewish control, Operation Yitfah's 1st Battalion was sent to seize the al-Mālikiyya junction as a means of curbing any attempt to invade Palestine.[302]

With the advance of the Hagana's forces along the Tiberias–upper Galilee line, the Hagana's forces in the lower Galilee completed the imposition of Jewish control over the area. The British forces had left the Baysan area by 28 April, and the Jews moved to tighten their grip over this area, which was located on one of the possible Arab invasion routes, and had 6,000 residents and an unknown number of foreign volunteers. In the midst of the battle, a glimpse of normality emerged, as the Jews and the Arabs from the area established an undeclared cease-fire. It was harvest time, and both sides downed weapons to allow work to go ahead in the fields, which were within firing range. In spite of this, fearing that reinforcements from Jenin would make the conquest of Baysan impossible at a later stage, the Hagana's forces decided to move on and, on 10 May, they took the first steps toward the capture of this large Arab village. First the area surrounding Baysan was captured and, on 11 May, Avraham Yoffe, the battalion commander, suggested to the local notables that they surrender, otherwise he would destroy the city by bombarding it. The fall of Tiberias and Safad a few days earlier was most probably instrumental in the notables' decision, and they accepted the offer. The Jewish forces entered on 13 May, to find that all the foreigner volunteers had managed to escape and that many of the village residents had followed suit. Only 700–1,500 of the village residents remained, and these were also expelled to Transjordan. The reason given was the fear that they would rise up behind the Jewish lines facing the expected invading Arab forces. With the deportation of the Baysan residents, Bedouin tribes located in the Valley also left for Jordan. With that, the Baysan Valley came under Jewish control and, more significantly, was cleared of any Arab presence.[303]

After gaining control over the line stretching north from Tiberias, the Jewish forces turned to removing obstacles to the west of the city

and to moving deep into what was the Arab hinterland. There were two 'natural' targets for the Hagana in that part of the Galilee: Lubya and al-Shajara; both large, rich villages dominating the area surrounding them. The available Hagana manpower dictated a restricted operation. The main effort was invested in Operation Yitfah, which was in progress at this time, and although the local Hagana command preferred to see both villages subjugated, it was clear that taking over Lubya, which controlled the road leading to Tiberias, was beyond Hagana power. Hence, it was decided to try and occupy al-Shajara, which was located near the Jewish al-Shajara, and to subject it to constant harassment. Taking over Sejera would also secure the area lying north of Afula, which was thinly populated by Jews. The way in which the village was occupied is illuminating as to the way that Jews and the Arabs fought. On 6 May, two platoons from the 1st Brigade stormed the village and occupied it; then Arabs from Tur'ān launched a successful counterattack and the Hagana forces were pushed back to the outskirts of al-Shajara. However, as night fell, the Arab fighters returned home; the Jewish forces returned to al-Shajara, and the occupation of the village was completed.[304]

Another target in this operation was the Arab tribe Arab al-Zabah, which lived on the slope of the Tabor. There was no clear operational reason for the attack, other than the desire to take revenge on a tribe that was known for its murderous activity against Jews during the events of 1936–39. The forces that were sent to raid the tribe were part-time, untrained Hagana recruits, who were recruited especially for this mission. The raiding force had no problem in taking over the tribe's area. As they did so, they started looting and pillaging the site, ignoring orders from the operational command to retreat. In this situation, the force was unprepared to meet the counterattack launched by what appeared to be ALA troops. The Hagana's forces in the field reported that the Arab force consisted of two companies, armed with machine-guns and mortars, which acted professionally and effectively. The Jewish forces escaped in disorder, sustaining heavy losses. It was only when more Hagana forces were sent to the place that the Arab forces stopped attacking the withdrawing troops from the rear.[305]

The last ethnically mixed city to be captured was Jaffa, which—according to the Partition Resolution—was supposed to be an Arab enclave within the Jewish State. Unlike other Arab or mixed cities, Jaffa was isolated from the rest of the Arab area. This fact influenced the nature of the fighting along the Jaffa–Tel Aviv front, which was different from the pattern evident in other cities. Here, for example, there

were no cases of car bombs, probably because of the Arabs' inability to build them. A restricting factor that affected the nature and extent of the fighting was, again, the British presence in Tel Aviv and Jaffa. The British military wished to avoid being involved in the fighting, and as Tel Aviv and Jaffa were irrelevant to the British plans for withdrawal or its route, they had gradually evacuated positions within the disputed area. Each evacuated base and position near the front line became ground over which the Jews and the Arabs fought.[306] However, even after their gradual evacuation of some of the bases, the British maintained a presence in the Tel Aviv–Jaffa area throughout the fighting, and both sides complained of the British soldiers' attitude; each, of course, regarded the British attitude as hostile to its own side.[307]

There were about 12,000 Hagana recruits in Tel Aviv, of whom some were volunteers and others paid; all served on defensive missions, and a few of them took part in offensive missions.[308] As part of this force, one should also take into account the 500 members of the Jewish Auxiliary Force in the Tel Aviv region, who served under British command. Not all of the Auxiliary Force members were Hagana members, but many were, and that allowed them to move about freely while armed, without being questioned by British soldiers. An additional British-controlled unit was the Mobile Guard, which was assigned to secure the Mikve Israel–Rishon Letzion road. Seven members of this unit were killed in an ambush set for them in Yazur, in January 1948.[309]

In Jaffa there were at this stage some 350–400 Yugoslavs and 200 Iraqis spread along the front-line. They outnumbered the local residents of Jaffa who were taking part in the defensive mission.[310] With the newcomers, the number of weapons in the city tripled and from mid-March the Arab forces launched attacks all along the Tel Aviv–Jaffa front. The Hagana acted also in the Arab neighborhoods, but Jewish defeats in the 'War on the Roads', especially along the Latrun–Jerusalem road, diverted the main Hagana focus away from Tel Aviv–Jaffa. The Jews and the Arabs continued to attack another for a while, but neither side made a decisive move. Jewish forces and arms from Tel Aviv reinforced Operation Nahshon; but the Arabs were incapable of making such a move.[311]

Palestinian successes all over the country did not calm spirits in Jaffa, which remained low. Relations between the foreign guerrillas and the local population were bad, and the local National Committee complained that they were an unbearable burden on the Committee's budget. Representatives of the National Committee were sent to Damascus to ask for financial assistance and for arms and heavy cannons

from the Arab League's Military Committee, but the delegation returned a month later empty-handed. More delegations were sent by the end of March to various Arab capitals, asking for assistance, but again achieved nothing.[312]

During this period, the Hagana command made plans for the take-over of Jaffa. A series of incursions launched by the Hagana during March and early April revealed that the Arab forces had built a strong and fortified defense line, and it was apparent that trying to break through this would exact a heavy toll. However, a direct attack was unnecessary, as the only danger Jaffa posed to the Jews was as a base from which to bombard Tel Aviv; this was no more than a nuisance, even if at times a lethal one. It would be more expedient to strangle Jaffa through the occupation of the surrounding Arab villages, which served as support bases to the Arab city. Doing so would also serve the goals of Plan Dalet: to impose Jewish control and authority over the territories allocated to the Jewish State. The Hagana's plans were influenced by the presence of the British Army, which evacuated its forces from the Tel Aviv area on 16 April, although about 30 military remained in Jaffa. The High Commissioner made it clear that he would not tolerate Jewish aggression against Jaffa or attempts to take over the city.[313] In any case, Plan Dalet did not call for the occupation of Jaffa, and the 4th Brigade, which was in charge of the military operations in the Tel Aviv area, was instructed to put Jaffa under siege.[314]

The Hagana's plans were also interrupted by an attack on Jaffa by the dissident group, IZL. The IZL guerrillas tried to occupy al-Manshiyya, the Jaffa quarter from which snipers constantly shot at the nearby Jewish residents. Indeed, about 170 Jews had been killed by snipers from Jaffa during December 1947–April 1948.[315] By occupying al-Manshiyya, the IZL sought an opportunity to regain its position as a fighting force. However, it was occupied mainly in the conduct of terrorist attacks against Arabs and British soldiers, the IZL lacked military formations and experience. After years of acting outside the Yishuv consensus, it signed an agreement with the Yishuv leadership in March, according to which, with the establishment of a Jewish government, the small militant group would accept its authority. In the meantime, with the Hagana taking the offensive, the IZL decided to show its capability, and in a place where the Hagana was unwilling to act. Their attack started on 25 April, and after four days of fierce fighting and stubborn Palestinian resistance, the IZL took over al-Manshiyya.[316] The Jaffa leadership called for help, and with the encouragement of the Arab League's Military Committee, a force of

nearly 300 men was sent under the command of Captain Michel 'Issa. However, while this force was on its way, the fighting in al-Manshiyya ended, when the British forced the IZL forces to retreat from there. The British forces emphasized their determination to see the IZL leave al-Manshiyya by the use of tanks and combat-planes against the Jewish guerrillas.[317] At the same time the Hagana launched Operation Hametz and Tel Arish, at the southeastern corner of Jaffa, came under Hagana attack. 'Issa was instructed to go to Tall al-'Arish's assistance. While his forces joined the Tall al-'Arish defenders and assisted the forces under attack with great effect, his artillery bombed Tel Aviv from positions in Yazur.[318]

'Issa's arrival in Jaffa ignited a conflict between himself and the city military commander, Lieutenant Colonel 'Adel Najm al-Din, as Isma'il Safwat, the Arab League's Military Committee commander, called upon Qawukji to appoint Michel 'Issa as the city commander, instead of Najm al-Din.[319] The latter gave in reluctantly, and left the city by sea along with his men on 2 May. 'Issa's men tried to prevent them from leaving, but failed.[320] These incidents, and the seizure by the Hagana of the villages surrounding Jaffa, made it clear to those who remained in the city that its fate was doomed. As if to add to their distress, the reinforcements maltreated the population, harassing and abusing them. Talking on the phone with Lydda's mayor, Dr Haykal (Jaffa's mayor) attributed Jaffa's escape from Jewish occupation to British intervention, while claiming that the reinforcements were ineffective and a burden. Life in Jaffa came to a standstill, as commerce had completely stopped, shops were empty and closed, and survival was only possible through donations from Lydda. Increasing numbers of the residents of the city left under British auspices and, consequently, the reinforcements also joined those leaving Jaffa. The city notables saw no alternative but to negotiate a surrender with the Jewish forces.[321]

The decisive act that led to the surrender of Jaffa was Operation Hametz, which commenced on 28 April. Although the Hagana's attempts to occupy Tall al-'Arish failed—as Michel 'Issa led a successful counterattack against the 5th Brigade forces that had captured the site—forces from the 3rd and the 5th Brigades captured Salama and Yazur, and Jaffa was cut off from the Arab hinterland. Thus, despite his success, 'Issa knew that Jaffa was doomed and, while encouraging the city's civil authorities to negotiate a truce, he left the city with his men on 5 May, under British protection. Tall al-'Arish was also abandoned.[322] The notables who still remained in Jaffa had established an Emergency Committee, and were trying to obtain the status of a free city which

would be run by an international committee. The Jews refused to negotiate on that possibility, and the Emergency Committee was forced to submit the city's surrender to the Hagana command on 13 May 1948.[323]

Fighting in Jerusalem

Geography and demography were on the Palestinians' side in Jerusalem. Although they were in the minority in Jerusalem—65,000 as against the 100,000 Jews living in the city—the real situation was more complicated. The respective ratios should be studied in three circles: in the Old City there were 20,000 Palestinians as against 3,200 Jews; in the city as a whole there were 65,000 Palestinians to 100,000 Jews; and in the Jerusalem area as a whole there were 165,000 Arabs compared with 102,000 Jews. The major Arab advantage, however, was the fact that while they were free to move in and out of Jerusalem, bringing supplies, weapons and reinforcements into the city without hindrance, while the Jews could not do that as Jerusalem was isolated, being cut off from the main Jewish body on the coastal plain by the Arab villages surrounding it.[324] The Palestinian military organization in Jerusalem was also relatively strong, as they enjoyed a form of organization that did not exist in other Palestinian communities. 'Abd al-Qādir al-Husayni had managed to organize his al-Jihad al-Muqaddas forces effectively, and his success in cutting off the Jerusalem–Jaffa road in March was one sign of that. His death dealt a severe blow to the Palestinian forces in Jerusalem, but they remained relatively well organized and effective. Their force consisted of local Palestinians and two companies of the ALA's Hittin Battalion; in all about 1,000 guerrillas. Another Arab force active in Jerusalem was one comprising about 400 former policemen, under the command of Munir Abu al-Fadl. All these forces were placed under the command of Fadl Abdullah Rashid, an Iraqi officer, who succeeded 'Abd al-Qādir al-Husayni after the latter's death in al-Qastal, in April.[325]

For the Jews, Jerusalem was their weak spot. Although Ben-Gurion spoke uncompromisingly on the need to have the city as part of the Jewish State, the problem was that the city geography, on the one hand, and its demography, on the other, made its defense a very difficult matter. The city Jewish population was heterogeneous, consisting of varied social and ethnic groups, and the general economic status of the Jewish population was low. They were also unable to be self-sufficient,

being dependent on the coastal plain for food, gasoline, general goods and all life's necessities. This social vulnerability and fragmentation made it difficult for the Jews to withstand hardship and siege conditions that became prevalent during, and even after, the intercommunal war period. Unlike other places, serving in the Hagana was not considered in Jerusalem to be a national duty. Twenty percent of the Jews in the city were Ultra-Orthodox anti-Zionists, and consequently opposed what they considered to be the Jewish war. Many others were unfit for military service and unprepared to take part in the city's defense. The result was that only a small proportion of the Jewish residents joined the Hagana and took part in the city's defense.[326]

To these factors should be added the complexity that arose from the entanglement of Jewish and Arab neighborhoods, which was more common here than in any other place in Palestine: the Jewish part of the city was dotted with several Arab enclaves. Another complication was the sensitive position of Jerusalem in world opinion; a consideration that had a restraining effect on the Hagana. The debate that existed within the Jewish camp about the best place to invest most of the Jewish effort—either in fighting inside the city and securing Jewish control over the western part of the city, even at the price of being temporarily under siege with the closure of the Jerusalem–Jaffa road; or acting first to ensure Jewish full control over the road to the city, and only then acting inside the city—further complicated matters. As the Jewish military leadership was unable to make a decision either way, the result was that neither front received full and undivided attention.

The 6th Brigade was in charge of the fighting in Jerusalem. Its 14th battalion (Moriah) was placed inside the city. The 15th Battalion (Machmash) covered the northern, eastern and southern sectors of the city; while the 16th Battalion (Beyt Horon) took up positions in the western sector. These forces were destined for combat missions, and patrol and defensive missions were assigned to the newly organized companies of guards.[327] However, the brigade's forces were distributed in positions and settlements around Jerusalem and beyond, leaving only a small part of the brigade in the city. More than 100 soldiers from the brigade could be found in the al-Qastal area on the eastern outskirts of the city; about 150 of its men were assigned to the defense of the isolated Atarot and Neve Yaakov areas, in the north of the city—they were, in fact, cut off from Jerusalem. In the Dead Sea area to the east there were 80 soldiers, 150 soldiers reinforced the besieged Gush Etsion, and more than 150 men were positioned in Motsa and Har-Tuv, both of which were cut off. A third battalion was put together, but some of its

manpower had already been assigned to settlements.[328] From Shaltiel's perspective, another problem was that the Palmah forces assigned to his sector did not accept his authority, responding only to orders arriving from the Palmah HQ in Tel Aviv.[329] Other active elements in the fighting in the city was the LHI and IZL. The IZL had about 180 men and the LHI, 50.[330] The Hagana tried in vain to impose its authority over the dissident groups; but it was in a difficult situation in Jerusalem, as the city was not supposed to be part of the Jewish State, and the Yishuv leadership had no legal grounds for demanding obedience.

Shortly after the arrival of the 10th Brigade in the city, it became evident that claims that the British were evacuating Jerusalem were premature. In spite of that, Yadin decided to launch Operation Yevusi, which applied Plan Dalet's principles to the two problems that the Jews were experiencing in Jerusalem: Arab control over the road to the city, and the partial Jewish domination of the western part of the city. Shaltiel rejected the possibility of dealing with both problems, and Operation Yevusi concentrated only the situation in the city. The operation aimed to achieve Jewish domination in the whole of the western part of the city; to create one Jewish-controlled area from the south of the city to its north by occupying the Arab neighborhoods that separated the Jewish quarters from each other; and to bring remote and isolated neighborhoods into this Jewish-held area. The latter included the Jewish-held Mount Scopus and the road to the isolated Neve Yaakov. Achievement of these goals would result in the creation of a secure perimeter around the city which would protect it against the Arab hinterland. The operation would be carried out in two directions: a northern–western route, which would be directed against Shu'fat and al-Nabi Samuel; and a northern–eastern route, toward al-Shaykh Jarrāh, Mount Scopus and A-Tur. This double movement would cut off Jerusalem from Ramallah and from Jericho, preventing the arrival of Arab reinforcements from Samaria and from Transjordan coming to the Palestinians' assistance. Another aspect of the operation was the planned attack on the southern neighborhood of Qatamon, which was the main Palestinian power-base in the western part of the city.[331]

Operation Yevusi was conducted by the 6th and the 10th Brigades, but the commander was Yitzhak Sadeh, the former Palmah commander, as the two brigades' commanders, Rabin and Shaltiel, were not prepared to operate one under the other's command. The main burden of the operation was put on the Palmah's 10th Brigade (Harel), leaving Shaltiel frustrated.[332] However, using the better-trained Palmah Battalion did not result in the operation's success. One arm was sent to al-Nabi

Samuel, Bayt Iksa, Shu'fat and Bayt Hanina—all important points on the routes to Neve Yaakov. One company was sent to Shu'fat on the night of 22/23 April, and accomplished its mission, although with great difficulty. Three companies were sent to occupy Bayt Iksa and al-Nabi Samuel, but failed. Bayt Iksa was occupied, but the Palestinians surprised the Jewish force that remained in the village in an 'untypically' organized counterattack, and drove them out. The attack on Bayt Iksa alarmed al-Nabi Samuel's defenders—it was assumed that there were no more than two squads armed with two machine-guns—and they met the coming forces with heavy fire that immediately killed most of the forces' commanders, thus destroying the attack. The rest of the force fell into disarray, and their retreat was a laborious operation, which involved more casualties. About 40 Palmah men were killed in the fighting. Another result of this failure was the retreat from Shu'fat, which had been captured earlier, as the operation's commander saw no point in holding the place when al-Nabi Samuel was not in his forces' hands. [333]

A more successful operation was the one conducted against al-Shaykh Jarrāh; although, by the end of the day, it also achieved nothing. The 10th Brigade's 5th Battalion moved in on the night of 24/25 April, and occupied the neighborhood. Forty Palestinians were killed during the fighting. The Jewish forces started destroying the quarter's houses, but General Macmillan, the commander of the British forces in Palestine, demanded that the Jewish forces retreat, as al-Shaykh Jarrāh controlled the main road that the British forces used on their way from Jerusalem to the north. Macmillan promised that he would not allow the return of the Palestinians after the Jewish withdrawal, and that he would notify the Jews before the British departed. Ben-Gurion and the Hagana command tried to resist the British demand, but when the British Army demonstrated its resolution by firing at the Palmah forces in al-Shaykh Jarrāh, the Jews withdrew.[334] The British, however, declared al-Shaykh Jarrāh a demilitarized zone, and forbade the presence of armed troops in that neighborhood.[335]

The next stage of Operation Yevusi was the conquest of Qatamon. Once again, it was British action that set the operation in motion, when, on 25 April, they evacuated the El-Almin camp, which controlled the Bethlehem road. Palestinian guerrillas took it over, and used it as a base from which to attack the nearby Jewish neighborhoods.[336] As a result, the Hagana command decided to attack Qatamon. The Palestinians, however, expected the attack, as the Hagana had already staged one diversionary attack on Qatamon to thin out Arab forces in the main theater of operations in the north, before acting to the north of

Jerusalem. The diversionary attack had succeeded, but now, as the Hagana returned to Katamon, they met with the reinforcements that had arrived in Katamon following the earlier attack. This was a solid Arab force comprising nearly 400 guerrillas—trained Palestinians, members of the Bayt al-Maqdas, Iraqi volunteers, Arab Legion soldiers and Arab Liberation Army guerrillas—led by Abu Dahiya, one of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Husayni's lieutenants.[337]

The Jewish 4th Battalion attacked Katamon on the night of 26/27 April, but met with strong resistance. The memory of the al-Nabi Samuel battle was still fresh, and the forces' commander retreated, resuming the attack two days later. The Palestinian forces fought tirelessly, but were unable to drive back the Jewish forces; however, it was only on 2 May that the Palmah finally won the battle and took over Katamon. The Jewish forces suffered ten killed and 80 wounded, compared to 80 killed and 150 wounded on the Arab side.[338] With the occupation of Katamon, the siege of the Jewish Makor Haim was lifted and the road to Talpiot was cleared. When the fighting ended, the Etsioni Brigade replaced the Palmah men, and both soldiers and civilians went on a spree of looting: they broke into the deserted Arab houses of Katamon, stealing everything they could lay their hands on. Pillage and looting are not unusual practices in war, especially in a civil war raging in an urban area, but they were particularly serious and widespread after the occupation of Katamon.

The last action of Operation Yevusi was the attempt to take over the Augusta Victoria building, which lay to the south of Mount Scopus and the southern A-Tur on the top of the Mount of Olives. Controlling these two points would secure Jerusalem's eastern entrances against invaders—it was assumed that the Arab Legion was on its way to Jerusalem. Earlier attempts made by the Harel Brigade's 5th Battalion to sabotage the Jerusalem–Jericho road had failed. On the night of 2/3 May, two companies of the Palmah 5th Battalion tried to break into the Augusta Victoria building, which was being held by a unit of the Arab Legion. The Jews had no information on the force inside the building, and the effective legionnaires' defense line easily thwarted the attack. The assailants retreated in a disorderly manner, sustaining five killed, three of whom were left on the battlefield. As the reasons for this failure occurred again at later stages, they are worth mentioning: the attackers were inferior to the defenders in terms of fire-power—their guns and cannons were far less effective, and improvised, in contrast to the standardized and effective arms of the Arab Legion; the legionnaires were also better trained and disciplined, and possessed the training

know-how and professional army qualities that the semi-militia Hagana and Palmah did not have.[340] The Harel Brigade was then reassigned to secure the road to Jerusalem.

Shaltiel, however, had other plans. The inner city was still divided by an Arab neighborhood that cut through the Jewish area, and Shaltiel pressed to be allowed to clear the line by capturing the Arab neighborhood. He tried to convince Ben-Gurion and his aides that a major offensive inside Jerusalem was possible and expedient, claiming that the Arab forces in the city had sustained heavy blows and were weak: there were 800 foreign volunteers in the city, but their ranks had disintegrated and their morale was at a low ebb, and the Jewish positions would also be improved as the British intended to transfer two strategic points to the Jews when they left the city. However, a cease-fire in the city seemed to be close, and Ben-Gurion was concerned that the Christian world might be upset by a major Jewish offensive. In any case, in Ben-Gurion's eyes, the taking over and opening up of the road to Jerusalem was much more important and urgent. Golda Meyerson agreed with him, and Yitzhak Sadeh also said that it was better for Jerusalem to remain quiet at this moment. Eliezer Kaplan, who was in charge of the Jewish Agency's financial affairs, also spoke in favor of a cease-fire, as it would enable the government to redirect manpower into areas that could revitalize the economy, which had come to a standstill.[341]

Shaltiel was right in his estimation of the Palestinian situation. Despite the remarkable performance of the Palestinian and the irregular forces, they had suffered serious blows from the Jewish forces. The Arab camp in Jerusalem was also suffering from an internal struggle over the position of the commander of the Arab forces in Jerusalem. The commander of the ALA force that was sent to Jerusalem by Qawukji, Lieutenant Colonel 'Abd al-Hamid al-Rawi, claimed command over the Arab forces in the city, but found a rival in Fadl Rashid, the commander of the forces in the city. The quarrel further contributed to the weakening of the Palestinian camp in Jerusalem, and necessitated the intervention of the Arab League's Military Committee, which decided to remove al-Rawi from his position. Al-Rawi's men remained in the city, but they were affected by the removal of their commander, and their morale was low. Qawukji also responded to the removal of his man from command by rejecting Fadl Rashid's calls for more reinforcements and ammunition, preferring to run his own show with his men along the Jerusalem–Bab al-Wad road.[342]

In the Jewish camp, the result of the deliberations over the next stage was indecisiveness. Ben-Gurion ordered—once again, it should be said—that priority should be given to the opening of the Bab al-Wad–

Jerusalem road, and Operation Makabee had already commenced. However, he did accept Shaltiel's arguments. The result was that at this critical hour, the Jewish offensive in the Jerusalem area lacked focus, wavering between the fighting over the road to the city, and fighting inside the city. Acting to achieve limited goals later placed the Hagana in a difficult position. These difficulties arose mainly from the fact that, unlike in the rest of the country, here the Palestinians did not succumb to the Jewish offensive, and for the first time since the inception of the intercommunal war, they enjoyed the assistance of the ALA. The internal struggle in Jerusalem weakened the links between the Palestinian command based there and Qawukji, but the latter increased his involvement in the fight along the road to the city. Following his failures in the Mishmar Haemek battles, he sent units equipped with field-cannons from the al-Lajjun and Tulkarem areas to the Jerusalem area.[343] The force's commander, Lieutenant Colonel Mahdi Sālih, was aware of the Jewish preparations for controlling the Bab al-Wad–Jerusalem road, and he organized some of his forces in defensive positions in Bayt Mahsir, Latrun, Yalu and Bayt Nuba, while leaving other forces, also equipped with artillery, as reserves for offensive missions. Local forces, many of them belonging to Hassan Salame's and 'Abd al-Qādir al-Husayni's trained forces, were positioned to the east and west of this area.[344]

The goal of Operation Makabee was to 'bring the convoy trapped in Jerusalem to the coastal plain, and to bring to Jerusalem several food and supply convoys'. The 10th Brigade and a Givati Brigade battalion were assigned to this mission. The former was responsible for the whole operation, while the latter's mission was to secure the western sector of the theater of operations.[345] In the first part of the operation, which was launched on 7 May, the two battalions of the 10th Brigade acted to take over the villages controlling the Jerusalem–Bab al-Wad road from the east to the west. The fighting was tough, as Qawukji's forces, including artillery, and the Palestinians' forces, put up stiff resistance against the Harel forces. It was only after three days of heavy fighting, firm resistance and counter-attacks that the two Harel Brigade battalions hit the Palestinian and Qawukji's forces in the villages, and mainly in Bayt Mahsir, which proved to be the main Arab stronghold.[346] In addition to their resolution and courage—shown during the four-day battle over Bayt Mahsir—the Arab commanders demonstrated remarkable organizational ability. The Arab commanders mustered forces from the whole area, and dozens of lorries brought Palestinians from Jerusalem, Hebron and the surrounding villages to the theater of operations, to reinforce the ALA forces in their fight against the Jews. However, the Palmah

units showed even more resolution and endurance, and managed to occupy Bayt Mahsir. The Jewish forces did not remain in the already vacant village, and before leaving they demolished it.[347] The Harel Brigade–ALA clashes continued over the next few days, ending on 13 May with the successful occupation of strategic positions along the Jerusalem–Bab al-Wad road by Jewish troops, which had earlier been captured by the Arabs. Radar Hill was one of these positions: a military camp previously occupied by the British, and handed over to Qawukji's men on 11 May, along with a nearby water-pumping station near Bayt Mahsir, when the British forces evacuated the sites.[348]

However, the western part, leading from Bab al-Wad to Latrun, remained on acute problem. The ALA forces, which were equipped with armored cars and field-cannons, thwarted the 5th Brigade's 51st Battalion in their attempt to break through to the Latrun area and capture it. Sixteen Jewish soldiers were killed and about 30 wounded.[349] The battalion, reinforced with another company, made another attempt on 13 May, and this time they captured a hill near the Latrun garrison. However, the 200 soldiers were exposed to Qawukji's artillery, and the forces barely escaped from what became a fire-trap, sustaining 11 killed and 25 wounded. The Qawukji forces, encouraged by their achievements, tried to recapture positions that had earlier been taken by the Harel Brigade; but this time the ALA's forces failed.[350]

At this stage, the 5th Brigade launched Operation Makabee 2, sending its 51st, 52nd and 53rd Battalions and a company from the 54th Battalion to the battlefield. The operation's goal remained as it was before—capturing the Latrun area—and, as the rest of the road was already in the hands of the Harel Brigade, to transfer supply convoys to Jerusalem. This massive accumulation of forces was due to lack of effective field intelligence, as—unknown to the Operation Makabee HQ—the Qawukji forces were no longer in place; they had retreated from the Latrun area on 15 May. The Jewish forces captured the villages around Latrun: Abu Shusha, Nana, al-Qubāb, all of which were deserted. With the accomplishment of this mission, the 51st and the 53rd Battalions left the operational area, moving back to the 5th Brigade area of responsibility in the south. On 15 May, the Egyptian invasion began. Before leaving, the Jewish soldiers demolished the villages' houses.[351] Unaware that the Latrun area was vacant of fighting forces, the Makabee 2 HQ planned a diversionary route for the convoy that would skip the Latrun–Bab al-Wad part of the road. Forces of the 52nd Battalion, on the night of 15/16 May, seized the villages of Latrun and Dayr Ayyub almost without fight. Difficulties in the arrangement of the

convoy—civilian drivers of the trucks who were supposed to be in the convoy sabotaged their cars, not wishing to join the convoy—were ended by the dispatch of a lone truck to Jerusalem. It was known as the 'Orphan Convoy'. The 52nd Battalion's forces then demolished the houses in the occupied villages and departed.[352]

Qawukji's forces withdrew from the Latrun area in accordance with an earlier arrangement he had made with King Abdullah. The two agreed that, with the Arab Legion's invasion of Palestine, Qawukji's forces would concentrate north of Ramallah 'for a week's recuperation'. After this week, the ALA would act in concert with the Arab Legion. Jewish intelligence services intercepted a message sent from the Legion HQ in Amman to Qawukji, in which the latter was instructed to pull his forces out of Palestine to Transjordan, following the Legion's invasion.[353] The Jordanian forces in Palestine were unaware of this order, and Qawukji's abandoning of the garrison came as a surprise to the Arab Legion commanders. It took the Legion three days to man this strategic place, a critical period which, fortunately for the Jordanians, went unnoticed by the Jews.[354] Qawukji's forces badly needed the intermission, as they suffered losses for which they were not compensated. Although the exact number of troops killed is unknown, they most probably sustained heavy losses during the week-long intensive fighting. They also ran out of ammunition. Qawukji reported to the Arab League's Military Committee, on 13 May, that his artillery had expended 1,100 75-mm shells and that it had only a few remaining. He asked for 2,000 75-mm rounds and 500 40-mm rounds, but received nothing.[355] Under these circumstances, there was no point in staying in the face of the continuous Jewish attacks, especially with the news of the commencement of the Arab military forces' invasion.

The questions, of course, are why the Jews did not notice that the police station was empty; and why they did not capture the fortress that within a few days would become a killing field for them. The reasons for these oversights were a combination of: intelligence miscalculations, the great tension among the Jewish leaders at that time, and battles for prestige between the Hagana commanders. In Plan Dalet, the mission to seize the Latrun police station was assigned to the 6th Brigade (Etsioni), but David Shaltiel, the brigade's commander, was prepared to commit himself to the plan's goals only if he received more forces and if his area of responsibility was narrowed. On the proclamation of the plan, Shaltiel demanded that he be relieved of responsibility for Atarot, Gush Etsion and the Dead Sea. His demand was refused and, as a result, Shaltiel restricted his brigade's missions to the city of Jerusalem, disre-

garding those missions assigned to his brigade by Plan Dalet which were beyond the city limits.[356] Neither of the forces acting in the Latrun battlefield were willing to take responsibility. Itzhak Rabin, the commander of the 10th Brigade, suggested leaving some of his forces in the Latrun area, along with the Givati 51st Battalion to secure the area; but his proposal was rejected, and the 51st Battalion returned to the 5th Brigade's area of responsibility.[357] To that one should add the debate described above: whether to concentrate first on the fighting in Jerusalem or on the route to Jerusalem. As we have seen, the tentative decision was to concentrate on fighting *in* Jerusalem, while convoys were arranged in what amounted to military operations, to make it possible for Jerusalem to hold out. In this spirit, it should be noted that Shaltiel called Rabin to Jerusalem with his forces, to take part in the fighting over the Old City.[358]

This situation was aggravated by the Ben-Gurion–Yadin debate over the war strategy. The debate, which ended for the time being in Yadin's favor, was conducted with no sense of urgency regarding Latrun, as no one really predicted the possibility that the Arab Legion forces would hasten to take over the Latrun garrison.[359] On 18 May, a 35-truck convoy made its way to Jerusalem, but this was to be the last one for a number of weeks, as the Arab Legion had just completed its deployment at the Latrun fortress. The legionnaires noticed the convoy and tried to intercept it, but the convoy managed to escape the Legion's fire and made its way to Jerusalem. The next Jewish activity in the area would be attempts to uproot the Arab Legion forces, in order to re-open the road to Jerusalem.[360]

Palestinian Defeat

The last stage of the fighting, starting in the first half of April, had another dimension apart from the direct military one. Public life in Palestine had undergone a sea change. The British Mandatory government stopped functioning; and the main concern of the High Commissioner and the heads of the British military forces was the safety of the British soldiers in the face of the coming evacuation. As the British administration in Palestine was dependent to a great extent on Jewish and Arab personnel, the fighting and the intercommunal hostility made it impossible for people of both communities to work together. In other cases, fighting prevented administration employees from reaching their offices. The basic instruments of life, such as the

telegraph and postal systems and telephone services, malfunctioned, where they functioned at all. By the end of April, civilian planes to and from Palestine came to a halt, as Lydda airport closed down.[361] Here, again, can be seen the difference between the Jewish and the Arab communities: the events had a lesser effect on life in the Jewish parts. In April the Jews had established those institutions necessary for the functioning of a sovereign state, such as provisional government and national assembly, and did their utmost to ensure life continued.[362] The Palestinians, on the other hand, were in complete disarray. Their local institutions and leaderships collapsed one after the other; their major cities were battlefields, and more and more Palestinians fled from them. Essential services ceased; and even in those major Palestinian-dominated areas that remained out of the war—such as the Nazareth area and Samaria—food and gasoline were in very short supply.[363]

During February, a *de facto* Arab central command was created, as the ex-Mufti and his followers acted in concert with the Arab League's Military Committee and the ALA. This loose-knit structure allowed the Palestinians, and the volunteers who assisted them, to achieve some significant gains during March; but its vulnerability was exposed when the Jews adapted their tactics to the new challenge. Then it became apparent that the inherent conflict between the various protagonists was unbridgeable. The Arab League's Military Committee competed with the ex-Mufti over influence and power, and vice versa; the conflicts between the various elements comprising the volunteer forces and the ALA surfaced in times of crisis, and local volunteer commanders acted as they wanted, regardless of the instructions they received: Qawukji's and the ex-Mufti's men clashed at critical moments.Thus, although coordinated action, loose as it was, made the Palestinian victories in March possible, the combination of inherent weaknesses and internal divisions in the Arab camp, on the one hand, and the Jewish adoption of a strategy that addressed the changes on the battlefield, on the other, paved the road to Jewish victory. In any case, it is quite safe to say that, even if the coordination and cooperation within the Arab camp had been better than it was, in the existing power structure the Jews would nevertheless have won the intercommunal war. Consequently, by 15 May the Jews had acquired full control of the ethnically mixed cities that were within the Partition Lines (Haifa and Tiberias among them); and, after that date, another round of operations brought more territories populated by Palestinian Arabs under Jewish control. Just when the Arab invasion was imminent, the defeat of the Palestinians was complete.[364]

The most obvious result of the Palestinian defeat was the conversion of hundreds of thousands of them into refugees. This had already happened during the early stages of the intercommunal struggle, but by April– May, as the Hagana implemented Plan Dalet, in addition to the continued flight of the Palestinians, deportation also became a means of ensuring Palestinian flight. Many of them still escaped of their own will—if escaping under fire and during war can be referred to as 'of their own will'—but, nevertheless, increasing numbers of Palestinians were forced to leave, even if they did not want to do so. As mentioned above, and as will be referred to below, Jewish soldiers systematically expelled the residents of the villages that they occupied. With the extension of the Jewish hold over Palestine, the number of Palestinians decreased.

The Palestinian plight was primarily the result of the weakness of their social and political institutions. The individual members of the Palestinian community stood alone against the organized and well-structured Jewish community and its tool, the Hagana. While claiming to lead the Palestinian struggle, four members of the AHC, the ex-Mufti included, remained outside of Palestine. The affluent, the notables and the rich all fled, leaving the Palestinian community with no leadership.[365] It was left to the local leadership to deal with the crisis, and they were unfit to meet the challenge. Palestinian leaders complained to each other and to the ex-Mufti about the grave state of their communities; about their inability to provide solutions to the growing casualties and shortages in vital supplies caused by the fighting; about the insufficient quantity of arms; and most of all, about the lack of a central power to which they and the people could turn.[366] One major cause, therefore, for the Palestinians' flight was the lack of responsible and organized leadership, and their consequent inability to resist Jewish attacks. This was most evident in the cities. By mid-December, the trend to flight became obvious as Palestinians from Jaffa and Haifa fled: many of them the richest and members of the upper class. By early January, 15,000–20,000 Palestinian Arabs from Haifa had left; their flight was only part of what was noted as a steady exodus of those who could afford to leave the country. One result of all of this was the sharp increase in the price of food in the Arab quarter.[367] Another reason for the sharp rise in the prices of food and housing was the arrival of the Palestinians fleeing to the cities and villages in Samaria.[368]

The Palestinian flight came as a surprise to the Jewish leadership; they could not understand why the Arabs were leaving their homes. Shertok described the Arab flight as 'the most spectacular event in the

history of Palestine, more spectacular in a sense than the creation of the Jewish State'.[369] The Yishuv experts on Arab affairs were sure that the Arab leaders had encouraged the Palestinians to flee, even though this was not the case. Eliahu Sasson was equally certain that the Palestinians' flight was part of a plot aimed at vilifying the Jews and depicting them as 'expellants [*sic*] who are driving Arabs from the territory of the Jewish State'. He also believed that by running away the Palestinians wished to compel the Arab States to send their armies to Palestine, to give the impression that such an invasion was an act of rescue rather than an act of defiance against the UN Resolution.[370]

However, with the eruption of Arab–Israeli fighting in May 1948, the Palestinians were no longer a factor. The Palestinian representative at the United Nations officially told the Security Council that, with the termination of the British Mandate, Palestine was an independent Arab state, in which the Jews were a 'rebellious minority'. The representative, 'Issa Nakhla, claimed that the Arab Armies had been invited into Palestine by the AHC, to restore the peace.[371] Those Palestinian forces that still maintained their fighting capabilities—which remained mainly in Jerusalem and its vicinity, the al-Ramla–Lydda area and central Galilee (which remained beyond Jewish hold) and in the Negev—subordinated themselves to the armies dominant in their region.[372] Any remnant of influence the AHC might have had disappeared completely in May and June with the appointment of military governors, in the areas under the control of their military forces, by the Jordanian and Egyptian governments.[373]

Jewish policy toward the refugee problem had crystallized during the fighting, when answers had to be given to concrete problems on the spot. One of the first corner stones in the shaping of a policy emerged with the identification of attempts by Palestinian refugees to return to their homes. Jewish Agency experts recommended that the Palestinians should not be encouraged to return, and that IDF commanders should receive orders to this effect. Shertok and Ben-Gurion agreed.[374] In this decision lay the foundation of future IDF practice of preventing by all means and at all costs the return of Palestinian refugees to their home. The IDF would also retain this policy after the war, in what was seen as a struggle against the infiltrators.[375] Joseph Weitz took this decision one step further with the introduction to Ben-Gurion, on 5 June, of his 'Post Factum Transfer' plan. He told Ben-Gurion that, to this date, about 123,000 Palestinians had left—or were forced to leave—155 villages within the Partition Lines; while 22,000 Palestinians had fled from 35 villages in territories which were beyond the Partition Lines, but

occupied by the IDF. In all, 77,000 Palestinians fled or were deported from five cities inside what constituted Israel in November 1947—Haifa, Baysan, Tiberias, Safad and Tsemakh—while 73,000 left the two cities that were supposed to be in the Arab States: Acre and Jaffa. In both these cities the Palestinians left of their own will. In Jerusalem, 40,000 Palestinians left or were expelled. Weitz suggested entering into negotiations with the Arab governments about the resettlement of the Palestinian refugees; an endeavor that at this time was premature and unrealistic. However, he suggested taking immediate steps to resettle the vacant villages and cities with Jewish residents, and to accomplish that by the end of the war. Ben-Gurion agreed, and suggested establishing a committee, whose role would be to 'cleanse' the villages and cities, and cultivate and settle them.[376] In the meantime, the Israelis had launched an extensive operation to destroy vacant Arab villages across the country.[377]

The political grounds for the destruction of these villages were provided by Moshe Shertok, the Israeli Foreign Minister, who declared on 15 June that, 'there can be no mass return of Palestinian Arabs to Israel until general political settlement and the end of the war'.[378] The next decision would be more sweeping and comprehensive, as the Israeli government would decide that the Palestinian refugees would not be allowed to return, even after the end of the war. The Jews justified the barring of the refugees from the Jewish State on security grounds, but for the Arabs it was another sign that Jewish claims that they were seeking peace were false, and that the 'real intention of the Jews is to dispossess refugee Arabs of property and enterprises in Israel in order to provide space and economic opportunities for Jewish immigrants'.[379]

NOTES

1. *Report to the General Assembly by the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine* (New York: Somerset Books, 1947), p. 35. (Henceforth: UNSCOP Report.)
2. Rashid Khalidi, 'The Palestinians and 1948: The Underlying Causes of Failure', in Eugene L. Rogan and Avi Shlaim (eds), *The War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 15–16.
3. UNSCOP Report, p. 40.
4. UNSCOP Report, pp. 40–1.
5. UNSCOP Report, pp. 50–1.
6. UNSCOP Report, pp. 68–70.
7. Khalidi, 'The Palestinians and 1948', pp. 17–32.
8. UNSCOP Report, pp. 108–112.
9. From Beirut to Foreign Office, 12 October 1947, E9951, PRO, FO 371/61530; Sela, 'The Arab Palestinians in the 1948 War', pp. 143–4.
10. *Behind the Curtain*, pp. 100–1.

11. Ibid., pp. 76, 82–5.
12. Nevo, 'The Arab of Palestine 1947–48', p. 4.
13. General Sir A. Cunningham to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 20 December 1947, E12317, FO 371/62226; record of conversation (between a British Officer of the Arab Legion and a visitor from the Hebron District), 28 January 1948, FO 816/116; 'Transjordan – A Possible Forecast of Events in Palestine', 30 January 1948, E3371/G, FO 371/68369; from Amman to Foreign Office, London, 18 March 1948, No. 304, FO 816/117; Sela, 'The Arab Palestinians in the 1948 War', pp. 146, 149–50.
14. Record of conversation (between a British Officer of the Arab Legion and a visitor from the Hebron District), 28 January 1948, FO 816/116; Sela, 'The Arab Palestinians in the 1948 War', pp. 130–5.
15. General Sir A. Cunningham to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 20 December 1947, E12317, FO 371/62226; record of conversation (between a British Officer of the Arab Legion and a visitor from the Hebron District), 28 January 1948, FO 816/116.
16. Entry for 13 October 1947, *Chimes of Independence*, pp. 403–4; BGWD, pp. 221–2, entry for 9 February 1948.
17. The following is a partial list of intelligence reports on agreements that were negotiated and concluded between Jews and Arabs: a *modus vivendi* understanding between the Jewish Ma'ale Ha'Hamisha and the Arab Katana, 23 December 1947; peace agreement signed between the Arab population of Emeq Hefer and their neighbors, 31 December 1947; negotiations on peace in Haifa, 18 January 1948; peace talks between the Jewish head of Ben Shemen and the mayor of the Arab Lydda, 7 January 1948; the Arab village of 'Āqir and the Jewish Eqron, 9 February 1948; ceasefire negotiated to stop the mutual shooting on Jewish and Arab transportation in Acre, 6 February 1948; truce signed between the Jewish Magdiel and the Arab Biyar 'Adas, 9 March 1948; the residents of the Arab Tantura decided to surrender to the Jews, but asked that this take place after an ostensible Jewish attack upon them, 3 May 1948, HA, 105/54/2. The file contains more reports of a similar character. General Sir A. Cunningham to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: Weekly Intelligence Appreciation, 1 February 1948, CO 537/3869.
18. BGWD, pp. 29–30, entry for, 9 December 1947 and p. 178, entry for 22 January 1948 and pp. 184–5, entry for 25 January 1948.
19. Intelligence Reports, 9 and 19 February 1948, HA 105/98.
20. Intelligence Reports, 5 March 1948, HA 105/98. See also Intelligence Reports, 16 March 1948, HA 105/98.
21. Levenberg, *Military Preparation in Palestine, 1945–1948*, pp. 126–30; Nevo, 'The Arab of Palestine 1947–48', p. 4.
22. Levenberg, *Military Preparation in Palestine, 1945–1948*, pp. 133, 147–9; Nevo, 'The Arab of Palestine 1947–48', pp. 4–5.
23. Levenberg, *Military Preparation in Palestine, 1945–1948*, pp. 149–51.
24. Ibid., pp. 152–5.
25. Joseph Olitski, *From Disturbances to War* (Tel Aviv, n.d.), p. 126.
26. Nevo, 'The Arab of Palestine 1947–48', pp. 5–6.
27. British Embassy, Cairo, to Secretariat, Jerusalem, 24 October 1947, FO 141/1182; *Behind the Curtain*, pp. 70, 92.
28. *Behind the Curtain*, p. 90.
29. General Sir A. Cunningham to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: Weekly Intelligence Appreciation, 24 January 1948, CO 537/3869; Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman to Foreign Office, 26 January 1948, E1165, FO 371/68365; General Sir A. Cunningham to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 9 March, 1948, No. 589, CO 537/3904; Intelligence Reports: 5, 11 February, 22 March 1948, HA, 105/98; Levenberg, *Military Preparation in Palestine 1945–1948*, pp. 195–6.
30. From Amman to Foreign Office, 21 December 1947, E12132, FO 371/61583.

31. Yehuda Slutzki, *History of the Hagana* (Tel Aviv, 1963); Levenberg, *Military Preparation in Palestine, 1945–1948*, pp. 150–1.
32. Macmillan, 'Narrative of Events', Stockwell Papers, 6/25/1, p. 10.
33. Pappe, *The Making of the Arab–Israeli Conflict, 1947–1951*, pp. 76–7.
34. Sela, 'The Arab Palestinians in the 1948 War', pp. 141–2.
35. BGWD, p. 151, entry for 15 January 1948; see also various speeches by Ben-Gurion, 15 and 21 January, 1, 6 and 7 February 1948, in *Be'Hilachon Israel*, pp. 34–74.
36. BGWD 1:16, entry for 2 December 1947; Slutzki, *History of the Hagana*, p. 1372; Zeev Sherf, *Three Days* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1959), p. 33.
37. Sir A. Cunningham to Secretary of State for Colonies: Weekly Intelligence Appreciation, 3 January 1948, CO 537/3869; General Sir A. Cunningham to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 15 December 1947, FO 371/61836; Levenberg, *The Military Preparation of the Arab Community in Palestine, 1945–1948*, pp. 179–80.
38. Nevo, 'The Arab of Palestine 1947–48', p. 5.
39. General Sir A. Cunningham to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: Weekly Intelligence Appreciation, 10 January 1948, CO 537/3869; 'Tene/Naim': Intelligence Report, 18 March 1948, IDFA 661/69/36; 'Tene/Yavne': Intelligence Report, 15 March 1948, ibid.; Levenberg, *The Military Preparation of the Arab Community in Palestine, 1945–1948*, pp. 180–2.
40. Intelligence Reports, 6 February 1948, HA 105/98; See also A. Kadish *et al.*, *The Occupation of Lydda, July 1948* (Tel Aviv, 2000), p. 20.
41. Itzhak Levi ('Levitse'), *Jerusalem in the War of Independence,* (Tel Aviv, 1986), p. 15.
42. Slutzki, *History of the Hagana*, pp. 1376–8; Olitski, *From Disturbances to War*, pp. 73–6.
43. General Sir A. Cunningham to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: Weekly Intelligence Appreciation, 17 January 1948, CO 537/3869; *History of the Hagana*, 3:2, pp. 1431–2; Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, pp. 85–8.
44. Slutzki, *History of the Hagana*; High Commissioner, Jerusalem to British Legation, Amman, 21 January 1948, FO 816/115; General Sir A. Cunningham to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: Weekly Intelligence Appreciation, 24 January 1948, CO 537/3869.
45. Ibid., 23 February 1948, FO 816/116.
46. Ibid., 24 January 1948, CO 537/3869.
47. D. Ben-Gurion to M. Shertok, 27 December 1947, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 12/47-4/48*, pp. 114–15.
48. General Sir A. Cunningham to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: Weekly Intelligence Appreciation, 10 January 1948, FO 816/115; General Sir A. Cunningham to the Secretary of State: Incident Report, 1 March 1948, FO 816/116.
49. GHQ/Operations branch: 'Summary of the Enemy Organization in Light of the Recent Events', 19 December 1947, IDFA 922/75/595; BGWD, p. 15, entry for 2 December 1947; pp. 37–8, entry for 11 December 1947.
50. GHQ/Operations branch: 'Summary of the Enemy Organization in Light of the Recent Events', 19 December 1947, IDFA 922/75/595; BGWD, p. 63, entry for 22 December 1947; pp. 71–2, entry for 25 December 1947; pp. 92, 94, entry for 31 December 1947.
51. GHQ/Operations branch: 'Summary of the Enemy Organization in Light of the Recent Events', December 19, 1947, IDFA 922/75/595; BGWD, pp. 77, 79, entry for 28 December 1947; p. 82, entry for 29 December 1947; p. 94, entry for 31 December 1947. On the convoys system see *Sefer Ha'Hagana* 3/2, pp. 1442–56; *Sefer Ha'Palmah* Vol. 2, pp. 91–105. Amiad Brezner, *Nitzaney Shirion* (Origins of the Israeli Armored Corps) (Tel Aviv, 1995), chap. 2.
52. 'On Defense and Security Problems', 21 (or 27) January 1948, in *Be'Hilachon Israel*, p. 43; BGWD, pp. 183–5, entry for 25 January 1948.
53. General Sir A. Cunningham to Secretary of State for the Colonies: Weekly

Intelligence Appreciation, 3 January 1948, CO 537/3869.

54. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 12 January 1948, E548, FO 371/68365; Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 13 January 1948, E598, FO 371/69395.
55. BGWD, p. 63, entry for 22 December 1947; General Sir A. Cunningham to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: Weekly Intelligence Appreciation, 10 January 1948, FO 816/115.
56. Ibid., 17 January 1948, CO 537/3869.
57. Ibid., 24 January 1948, CO 537/3869.
58. Ben-Gurion, *Medinat Israel Ha'Mehudeshet*, pp. 70–1; Ben-Gurion speech to the Security Committee, 8 June 1947, *Chimes of Independence*, pp. 295–8. See also diary entry, 27 June 1947, Chimes of Independence, and his analyses in Protocol of the Meeting of the Defense Committee, 19 October 1947, Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem, Israel (hereafter CZA).
59. Plan C explicitly assumed that 'following the policy conducted by the [Mandate] government, a [Jewish–Arab] war will not exceed the level of "small war". 'Plan B', September 1945, The Hagana Archives, Tel Aviv, Israel (hereafter HA), 73/100. 'The May 1946 Plan', HA, 73/140; BGWD 1:15, entry for 2 December 1947.
60. Meeting of the Security Committee, 13 November 1947 and 4 December 1947, CZA, S25/9343; BGWD 1:12, entry for 1 December 1947; The Consul General at Jerusalem to Secretary of State, 9 February 1948, *FRUS 1948* V, p. 608. Galili in meeting of the Yishuv Security Committee, November 13, 1947, CZA, S25/9343; Ben-Gurion in meeting of Mapai Political Committee, 9 December 1947 and on 8 January 1948, LPA, 25/47 and ibid., 25/48; Y. Ben Zvi in meeting of Mapai Political Committee 11 October 1947, in Meir Avizohar (ed.), *Akhshav o' Leolam Lo* (Now or Never) (Beyt Berl, 1989), p. 183. Ben-Gurion on equal rights for the Arab citizens of the Jewish State, speech to the Keren Ha'Yesod convention, 29 October 1947, in *Chimes of Independence*, p. 438; Moshe Carmel, *Maarakhot Hatsafon* (The Northern Campaign) (Tel Aviv, 1949), pp. 17–18.
61. Protocol of a Meeting on Arab Affairs, 1–2 January 1948, H.A., 80/50/21; Israel Galili in *Sefer Ha'Palmah*, January 1948, pp. xx–xxii, February 1948, pp. xxii–xxiv; Ben-Gurion letter to M. Shertok and G. Meyerson, 14 March 1948, Memoranda files, the Ben-Gurion Research Center, Sede Boker Campus, Israel (hereafter: BGA).
62. From 'Hilel' to 'Sasha', 5 January 1948, IDFA 922/75/1206.
63. Ibid.
64. General Sir A. Cunningham to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: Weekly Intelligence Appreciation, 23 February 1948, FO 816/116.
65. Memo of Conversation, 6 January 1948, *FRUS 1948*, V, p. 538.
66. 'Guidelines for Plans in Case of [British] Evacuation', unsigned document from late December 1947, IDFA 922/75/595; Ben-Gurion speech in Mapai Center, 8 January 1948, LPA, 25/48; see also Ezra Danin's estimation, Protocol of a Meeting on Arab Affairs, 1–2 January 1948, HA, 80/50/21; D. Ben-Gurion to M. Shertok and G. Meyerson, 14 March 1948, Memoranda files, BGA.
67. E. Sasson in Protocol of a Meeting on Arab Affairs, 1–2 January 1948, HA, 80/50/21.
68. Shutzki, *History of the Hagana*, pp. 1414–15; General Sir A. Cunningham to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: Weekly Intelligence Appreciation, 10 January 1948, FO 816/115; Telegram no. 29 from Broadmead, Damascus to Foreign Office, 16 January 1948, FO 371/68365; BGWD, p. 339, entry for 5 April 1948, note 1.
69. 'Tene/Yavne': Intelligence Report, 19 February 1948, IDFA, 661/69/36; 'Tene/Naim': Intelligence Report, 20 February 1948, ibid.; 'Tene/Naim': Intelligence Report, 22 February 1948, ibid.; 'Tene/Naim': Intelligence Report, 23 February 1948, ibid.
70. E. Sasson in Protocol of a Meeting on Arab Affairs, 1–2 January 1948, HA, 80/50/21.

71. BGWD, p. 261, entry for 23 February 1948.
72. Dani Rubenstein, 'The Question is not "How Many", but "Why"', *Ha'aretz*, 28 January 1998.
73. Slutzki, *History of the Hagana*, pp. 1382–3; Sadok Eshel, *The Hagana Campaigns in Haifa* (Tel Aviv, 1968), pp. 318–21; Leaflet no. 6 by the National Committee in Haifa, 27 December 1947, and Leaflet no. 7 by the National Committee in Haifa, 29 December 1947, in al-Khatib, 'In the Aftermath of the Naqba', pp. 62, 63.
74. 'On Defense and Security Problems', 21 (or 27) January 1948, in *Be'Hilachon Israel*, p. 43; BGWD, pp. 183–5, entry for 25 January 1948.
75. BGWD, pp. 65–7, 72, entry for 22 December 1947.
76. BGWD, pp. 3–8, entry for 11 December 1947; pp. 73–4, entry for 26 December 1947.
77. Ben-Gurion to Moshe Sharett, 25 December 1947, in BGWD, p. 97, note 3.
78. Meeting of the Security Committee, 11 December 1947 and 27 January 1948, CZA, S25/9344; BGWD, pp. 75–6, entry for 26 December 1947.
79. GHQ/Operations branch: 'Analysis of the Strategic Situation and Conclusions as to the Distribution of the Hagana Forces', February 1948, IDFA, 922/75/595; I. Galili notes, 29 February 1948, HA, 80/50/28; I. Galili report, 4 April 1948, HA, 80/50/18. The Hagana's intention to take the offensive was noted also by the High Commissioner: from High Commissioner for Palestine to Secretary of State for the Colonies: Weekly Intelligence Appreciation, 23 February 1948, FO 816/116.
80. Y. Yadin report, 26 February 1948, HA 80/50/21.
81. BGWD, p. 77, entry for 27 December 1947.
82. General Sir A. Cunningham to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: Weekly Intelligence Appreciation, 14 February 1948, CO 537/3869.
83. BGWD, pp. 195–6, entry for 31 January 1948.
84. The 'Council' to the Units, 22 February 1948, IDFA, 5879/49/1.
85. The letter and the report are in BGWD, p. 228, entry for 10 February 1948.
86. BGWD, p. 225, entry for 9 and 10 February 1948.
87. BGWD, p. 241, entry for 14 February 1948; Olitski, *From Disturbances to War*, pp. 224–7.
88. Slutzki, *History of the Hagana*, pp. 1379–80.
89. Ibid., pp. 1417–18; General Sir A. Cunningham to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: Weekly Intelligence Appreciation, 23 February 1948, CO 537/3869.
90. Ben-Gurion letter to G. Meyerson, 11 February 1948, in BGWD, p. 232, note 7.
91. BGWD, pp. 245–6, entry for 16 February 1948.
92. BGWD, pp. 253–5, entry for 19 February 1948.
93. A meeting with Fawzi al Qawukji, 1 April 1948, HA, 80/50/25. For an entirely different version see Qawukji, 'Memoir, 1948, Part 1', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (1998), p. 35.
94. General Sir A. Cunningham to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: Weekly Intelligence Appreciation, 17 January 1948, CO 537/3869.
95. 'Arab Command in Jerusalem District', May 1948, pp. 1–4, 5, HA 105/133.
96. Al-Hatib, 'In the Aftermath of the Naqba', pp. 30–1; Intelligence Reports, 8 February, 3 and 4 March 1948, HA 105/98.
97. Al-Hatib, 'In the Aftermath of the Naqba', pp. 11–12.
98. BGWD, pp. 111–14, entry for 4 January 1948; Hagana's Intelligence Tapping Reports, in BGWD, pp. 112–13, entry for 4 January 1948; Arenwald, 'The Military Struggle in Jerusalem During the 1948 War', p. 18.
99. Al-Hatib, 'In the Aftermath of the Naqba', pp. 30–1; Intelligence Reports, 8 February, 3 and 4 March 1948, HA 105/98.
100. 'Tene': 'Summary on the Movement and Stay of the Foreign Volunteers in Palestine, December 1947–April 1948', 19 April 1948, HA, 105/216/3; al-Hatib, 'In the Aftermath of the Naqba', pp. 32–3; Tamir Goren, 'The War Over the Mixed Cities in

North of Palestine', in Alon Kadish (ed.), *Israeli War of Independence* (forthcoming) (Hebrew).
101. BGWD, p. 19, entry for 2 December 1947; Slutzki, *History of the Hagana*, p. 1372.
102. BGWD, p. 120, entry for 6 January 1948 and p. 121, entry for 7 January 1948; Slutzki, *History of the Hagana*, pp. 1393–5.
103. Slutzki, *History of the Hagana*, p. 1395.
104. Olitski, *From Disturbances to War*, pp. 64–5, 217.
105. Ibid., pp. 169–73, 197–8, 217.
106. Slutzki, *History of the Hagana*, p. 1397; telegram from Sir A. Cunningham, High Commissioner, Jerusalem to British Legation, Amman, 3 February 1948, FO 816/115; General Sir A. Cunningham to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: Weekly Intelligence Appreciation, 28 February 1948, FO 816/116.
107. BGWD, pp. 36, 37, 114, entries for 10 and 11 December 1947 and 5 January 1948, and pp. 176–7, entry for 22 January 1948; General Sir A. Cunningham to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: Weekly Intelligence Appreciation, 24 January 1948, CO 537/3869; ibid., 1 February 1948, CO 537/3869.
108. Intelligence Reports, 18 February 1948, HA 105/98; BGWD, p. 290, entry for 10 March 1948.
109. Intelligence Reports, 5 April 1948, HA 105/98.
110. Intelligence Reports, 9 February 1948, HA 105/98.
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112. Slutzki, *History of the Hagana*, pp. 1291–3.
113. Elhanan Oren, *The Settlements in Years of Struggles* (Tel Aviv, 1978) (Hebrew), pp. 211–12.
114. BGWD, pp. 44–5, entry for 14 December 1947, p. 340, entry for 5 April 1948 and p. 430; David Shaltiel to Ben-Gurion, 28 March 1948, HA, 80/50/25.
115. Etzioni (ed.), *Ilan Vashelah*, pp. 78, 83–6.
116. Ibid., pp. 87–8.
117. Carmel, *Northern Campaigns*, pp. 60–1.
118. BGWD, p. 291, entry for 10 March 1948.
119. 'Invasion of Foreign Forces in Palestine', 16 April 1948, HA; FO Minute, 12 April 1948, 105/261/3, FO 141/1249; 'The Muslim Brothers in the Palestine War', pp. 76–8.
120. 'The Invasion of Foreign Fighters in the Land of Israel', 16 April 1948, HA 105/216/3; FO Minute, FO 141/1249; 'The Muslim Brothers in the Palestine War', pp. 76–8.
121. 'The Muslim Brothers in the Palestine War', pp. 76–8; *The Negev Brigade in War*, p. 49.
122. Intelligence Report, 12 May 1948, HA 105/124/1.
123. Conclusions from the interrogation of Muhammed Ahmed Hassan, Egyptian Artillery Officer taken into custody at Beir Asluj on 11 June 1948, HA 105/124/1; 'The Muslim Brothers in the Palestine War', pp. 78–81; *Hanegev Brigade in War*, p. 60.
124. 'The Muslim Brothers in the Palestine War', pp. 78–9.
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126. BGWD, p. 163, entry for 19 January 1948; General Sir A. Cunningham to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: Weekly Intelligence Appreciation, 1 February 1948, CO 537/3869; General Sir A. Cunningham to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: Weekly Intelligence Appreciation, 14 February 1948, ibid.; British Legation, Damascus: 'Political Summary for February and March 1948', E 5002, FO 371/68808; Intelligence Reports, 24 March 1948' HA 105/98; Sela, 'The Arab Palestinians in the 1948 War', pp. 154, 156 and 158.
127. General Sir A. Cunningham to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: Weekly Intelligence Appreciation, 1 February 1948, CO 537/3869; ibid., 14 February 1948;

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129. Intelligence Reports, 11 February and 3 March 1948, HA 105/98; General Sir A. Cunningham to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: Weekly Intelligence Appreciation, 8 March 1948, FO 816/117.
130. Intelligence Reports, 5 March 1948, HA 105/98.
131. Ibid., 4 March 1948, HA 105/98.
132. Cable to 'Sasha' (Y. Alon) from Y. Yadin, January 1948, IDFA, 661/69/36; cable from E. Denin to E. Shiloah, 13 January 1948, CZA, S/25/9007; General Sir A. Cunningham to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: Weekly Intelligence Appreciation, 16 January 1948, CO 537/3869; ibid., 24 January 1948, CO 537/3869; cable from 'Adina' to 'Hilel' (I. Galili), 3 February, 1948, IDFA 464/54/2; cable from 'Max', 4 February 1948, CZA, S/25/9007; General Sir A. Cunningham to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: Weekly Intelligence Appreciation, 7 February 1948, FO 816/116; from Amman to Foreign Office, 9 February 1948, E1889, FO 371/68366; 'The Army for the Salvation of Palestine' (unsigned paper), 13 February 1948, ibid., S25/3999; from the High Commissioner for Palestine to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: Weekly Intelligence Appreciation, 14 February 1948, CO 537/3869; Intelligence report ('Tene'), HA 105/216. On the training program the 'volunteers' had undergone see J. Palmon's report, 26 February 1948, HA 80/50/21; 'Tene/Yavne': 'The volunteers in Jerusalem', 3 March 1948, HA 105/216/1; 'Tene/Yavne': Intelligence Report, 15 March 1948, IDFA, 661/69/36; 'Tene/Yavne': 'The Arab force in Jerusalem', 16 March 1948, ibid.; *Behind the Curtain*, pp. 82–4; Levi, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, pp. 354–5.
133. Intelligence Report, 11 February 1948, HA 105/98.
134. Intelligence Report: 'The Army for the Salvation of Palestine', 15 March 1948, HA, 105/216/1.
135. General Sir A. Cunningham to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: Weekly Intelligence Appreciation, 17 January 1948, CO 537/3869.
136. 'Egyptian Aid to the "Liberation of Palestine"', 26 January 1948, FO 816/116.
137. 'Palestine: Withdrawal of British Administration', C.P. (48) 40, 4 February 1948, CAB/129; cable from the 'Moatsa' to the 'Knesset', 24 February 1948, IDFA 464/54/2; General Sir A. Cunningham to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: Weekly Intelligence Appreciation, 27 March, 1948, CO 537/3869; from HM Minister, Amman to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 21 April 1948, No. 237, FO 816/117; Slutzski, *History of the Hagana*, p. 1446.
138. 'Tene/Naim': Intelligence Report, 14 April 1948, IDFA, 661/69/36; Intelligence Reports, 18 April 1948, HA 105/98.
139. 'The Lajjun Battle', (unsigned and undated report), HA 105/92. Professor Alon Kadish drew my attention to this point.
140. BGWD, p. 187, entry for 28 January 1948.
141. Carmel, *Northern Campaigns*, pp. 122–6.
142. Ibid., pp. 128–30.
143. General Sir A. Cunningham to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: Weekly Intelligence Appreciation, 20 March 1948, CO 537/3869.
144. 'Tene/Naim': Intelligence Report, 3 March 1948, IDFA 661/69/36; Intelligence Report: 'Tene/Matspa', 5 March, 1948, ibid.; Intelligence Report: 'Tene/Sasha', 7 March 1948, ibid.; 'Tene/Yavne', 10 March 1948, ibid.; 'Tene/Yavne': Intelligence Report, 15 March 1948, ibid.; Intelligence Report: 'Tene/Avner', 25 March 1948,

IDFA 661/69/36; 'Tene/Naim': Intelligence Report, 6 April 1948, ibid.; 'Tene/Mitspa': Intelligence Report, 7 April 1948, ibid.

145. Daily Report, 1 Apr. 1948, IDFA, 464/54/2; Slutzki, *History of the Hagana*, pp. 1443–56.
146. And see a report on Palestinian preparation and destruction of the Yehiam convoy: Intelligence Reports, 1 April 1948, HA 105/98.
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362. BGWD I, p. 351, 15 Apri 1948, and p. 354, 17 April 1948.
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3

Invasion

Planning an Invasion

In the days that followed the meeting of the Arab heads of states, the Arab governments were engaged, on the one hand, in fulfilling their commitments to the Palestinians' struggle, and, on the other, to working out the possibility of military intervention. However, it was not until April 1948 that the Arab governments, besides Jordan, seriously discussed that latter possibility. The subject was raised again at the Arab League's Political Committee in Cairo in February 1948, and the only subject that all agreed upon was to rescind earlier decisions about the assistance that the Arab States should provide to the Palestinians. The Political Committee demanded that those Arab States which had not met the obligations set by the Arab League in December 1947, regarding military and financial aid to the Palestine Arabs and the volunteers, should do so. It also decided that the Chiefs of Staff of the Arab Armies would meet in March to discuss the military measures necessary to rescue Palestine.[1] The trend to deprive the Palestinians of their war continued. A Palestinian delegation, headed by the ex-Mufti, also participated in the meeting, making a series of demands that aimed to give the Palestinians and the AHC a leading role in the conduct of the war: the appointment of a Palestinian to be a member of the Military Committee, who would be in charge of the civil and political issues of the Palestinian Arabs; the establishment of a provisional Palestinian government, that would assume responsibility over Palestine with the termination of the British Mandate; and that the AHC should be supplied with funds to compensate the Palestinians who were injured in the war against the Jews. All these demands were overruled. The Political Committee rescinded its earlier decision that the arms and funds that the Arab governments were due to provide would be handed to the Arab League's appointed Military Committee, and that the Palestinian

volunteers and the ALA would be placed under Safwat command.[2] As to military intervention, 'Azzam Pasha, the Arab League's Secretary General, summarized, in February, the division among the League members on this matter. Syria was at the forefront in its call for the invasion of the Arab Armies after the termination of the Mandate, to take over all of Palestine—including the Jewish parts—and to present the United Nations with a *fait accompli*. The other camp, in which Egypt was dominant, feared international reaction to any blatant violation of UN policy, and preferred to leave it to the guerrillas infiltrating Palestine to fight against the Partition Resolution.[3] Hence the Egyptian government refused to allow the meeting of the Arab Armies' Chiefs of Staff before a political decision had been made on the extent of active Arab involvement in the fighting in Palestine.[4]

The events of April 1948 in Palestine made it impossible for the Arab politicians to avoid discussion of their involvement in the fighting in Palestine. Public opinion throughout the Arab world was stirred by the news coming from Palestine: the Dayr Yasin massacre; the Jewish takeover of Tiberias and Haifa; and the resulting mass flight of the Palestinians—the Arab leaders could not remain silent.[5] In Cairo, shortly after the UN Partition vote, groups such as the Muslim Brothers, Young Egypt, and the Society to Protect the Nile Valley organized huge demonstrations. In one such display of strength, 100,000 people gathered in the streets of Cairo to listen to fiery speeches calling for the liberation of Palestine by force. The waves of refugees who fled or were expelled from Palestine during the intercommunal war generated more protests and mounting calls for Egyptian intervention.[6] Public opinion was further stirred by the Egyptian Moslem religious leadership's (the '*Ulama*) ruling that:

> …the liberation of Palestine is a religious duty for all Moslems without exception… The Islamic and Arab governments should without delay take effective and radical measures, military and otherwise, and every Moslem and every Arab should help the governments to realize this liberation.'[7]

The call of the highest religious authority gave the Palestine campaign a religious flavor, which only increased popular enthusiasm and exposed the government to further pressure. In Damascus, student demonstrations closed the city for three days from 24 April, with the students demanding that the government should send the Syrian Army to assist the Palestinians.[8] 'Azzam Pasha told Brigadier Clayton that Arab leaders, 'including himself, would probably be assassinated if they did nothing'.[9] Similar sentiments were heard in Beirut and Baghdad.[10]

King Abdullah came under the heaviest pressure. His Arab Legion was positioned in Palestine but, being under the command of the British Mandatory government in Palestine, it did not intervene in the fighting between the Palestinians and the Jews. The High Commissioner was very strict on this matter, and even after the defeat of the Palestinians he did not allow the Arab Legion to come to their rescue. Usually the Arab Legion remained disciplined and did not intervene; any incidents to the contrary were the exception.[11] This exposed King Abdullah to criticism, which added to the difficulties Jordan already faced because of the events in Palestine. The events in April increased the flood of Palestinian refugees joining their brethren, who had already begun to fill the streets of Amman from the early stages of the war. As a result, the prices of living accommodation and food soared, increasing the tension in the already pressured city. Inside Palestine, voices were raised against the King for not ordering the Arab Legion to protect the Palestinians from the Jews—even though he was the one who had plans for Palestine. The growing pressure led Abdullah to ask for British agreement to the use of some of the Arab Legion's units in Palestine in defense of Arab villages from Jewish aggression. He claimed that the Palestinians were defenseless in the face of Hagana atrocities, and subjected to expulsion, while neither the British forces nor the Arab partisans in Palestine did anything to protect them.[12]

Simultaneously, he sent a telegraph to the Political Committee of the Arab League in Cairo, offering to undertake the rescue of Palestine with the Arab Legion. Opinions among the Political Committee of the Arab League's members were divided. 'Azzam Pasha endorsed the idea, but the Syrian Premier and Hajj Amin al-Husayni were against it. Their opposition was overcome by the Egyptian Premier, who accused them of 'being prepared to sacrifice Palestine to their personal jealousies'.[13] The reason for the Syrian and ex-Mufti's opposition needs no explanation. What do need explaining are the positions adopted by the Egyptian Premier and 'Azzam Pasha. For Nokrashi Pasha, who did not want to send his army to Palestine, Abdullah's intervention would have made the Egyptian's intervention unnecessary. 'Azzam's motives were more subtle. Azzam sent the League's positive reply in a letter, carried by Isma'il Safwat, in which he also asked the King 'to coordinate details with Safwat'. 'Azzam thus saw an opportunity to keep the Palestine campaign within the Arab League's control, and maybe to remove the danger that Abdullah's move to Palestine would lead him ('Azzam Pasha) into an undesirable position. 'Azzam's intentions were uncovered by Safwat, who revealed 'Azzam's wish that the Arab Legion would be

placed under his control. However, King Abdullah made it clear that he expected the ALA to be placed under *his* command.[14] It was the British who frustrated Abdullah's plans to involve the Arab Legion in the fighting in Palestine before the end of the Mandate. They rejected his request, and Abdullah was not prepared to jeopardize Jordan's relations with Great Britain for the Palestinian cause.[15]

Restricted by the British and facing objections from within the Arab League, but still having to deal with the growing crisis in Palestine, King Abdullah summoned a meeting in Amman on 24 April, to which he also invited the Iraqi Regent, Prince 'Abd al-Ilah, the Lebanese Prime Minister, Iraqi ministers and Ismail Safwat. Qawukji was also in Amman, but he was not invited. However, the delegates had in front of them a report on the Jewish forces, prepared by Qawukji in which it was mentioned that the Jews possessed fighter aircraft, tanks and other heavy equipment.[16] The report was baseless, as at that time the Jews possessed none of the above, but it conformed with Safwat's report from March, in which the latter claimed that the Jews 'have 150 armored cars and 100 tanks in Tel Aviv alone'. Qawukji also reported 'that the Jews have aircraft has been established beyond a doubt'.[17] The meeting ended on 29 April with a decision in favor of intervention, and the politicians instructed the military to make plans.[18]

Considering the Arab position toward his Palestine campaign, Abdullah was worried by the possibility that the Legion would go into Palestine alone. The Qawukji report worried him, as did the other delegates, and Nokrashi Pasha, who still tried to prevent the dispatch of Egyptian forces to Palestine. On the one hand, wishing to avoid standing alone against the Jews, and, on the other, seeking Arab agreement to his Palestine campaign, Abdullah wanted to be sure that Nokrashi Pasha's objection to the participation of the Egyptian Army in the Palestine war would be overruled. Ostensibly, the entry of Egyptian forces into Palestine was inconsistent with Abdullah's territorial ambitions, but the Egyptian Army was to operate south of the region that was of interest to Abdullah, and by doing so would prevent a massive concentration of Israeli forces against the Arab Legion. At the same time, Egypt, if it were to become involved, could also benefit from cooperation with Jordan: the assessment of the Egyptian High Command was that the Jordanians should protect the Egyptians' right flank.[19] Thus, Abdullah encouraged the Lebanese Premier and the Iraqi Regent to go to Cairo to seek the support of Egypt and the Arab League in the form of men, money and materiel. This support was also required as Abdullah had grounds to believe that the British would not support the

Arab Legion's move into Palestine.[20] Sending the Lebanese Premier on that mission was in line with the Lebanese concern over the outcome of the war. The Lebanese Foreign Minister expressed his concern that the prospects for Arab victory were dubious, and that defeat would deal a heavy blow to the Egyptian, Syrian and Iraqi regimes. The Foreign Minister claimed that the Arabs had underestimated the Jewish forces, and thought in terms of 'few hundred small arms and a few thousand rounds of ammunition'. Only after the fall of Haifa did the Arabs understand that the impending war would take a whole different form. Consequently, the Lebanese relied only on King Abdullah and the Arab Legion's capabilities, and they were happy to see Abdullah annex the whole of Palestine.[21]

The response from Cairo was encouraging. Egyptian politicians, probably from the court circles, assured the Regent that the Egyptian Army would also act in the south of Palestine if other Arab armies invaded. King Farouk secretly promised Abdullah to dispatch Egyptian forces to the Palestine front and thus alleviate the pressure from the Arab Legion. The Egyptian monarch pledged that he would keep his promise despite the objections of Prime Minister Nokrashi and others, and he repeated the promise again on 11 May, stating that the Egyptian Army would intervene after 15 May, and Egyptian officers came to Amman 'to concert [*sic*] the plan'.[22] Farouk's message was important to Abdullah, as he had experienced a moment of hesitation following the American diplomatic campaign in favor of a cease-fire. Fearing a clash with the Americans, he was unsure about his next steps, and his hesitation was a source of anxiety for the Political Committee of the Arab League. The Committee met in Damascus in early May, and this time the possibility of an intervention prior to the end of the Mandate was mentioned. The discussions were the culmination of rumors, which had been spreading since the meeting in Amman, that the Arab Armies would interfere in the fighting in Palestine even before 15 May under Abdullah's command.[23] The reports were accompanied in some cases by the movement of military forces, such as the Iraqis and the Egyptians, but soon enough the leaders involved made it clear to the British that they had no intention of acting before the end of the Mandate.[24] As to Abdullah's fears, 'Azzam Pasha's visit to Amman, and Farouk's message, reassured the King that he should stick to his original intention to interfere.[25]

To further ensure Arab commitment to the Palestine campaign, King Abdullah invited the commanders of five Arab Armies—Iraq, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan—to Amman in late April to discuss

the war plans. The military leaders concluded that defeating the Jewish Army required five divisions and six bomber and fighter squadrons. All these forces should come under a unified command which would be headed by General Nur al-Din Mahmud, the supreme commander of the Iraqi Army. The Arab politicians, who were still in Amman, rejected the military's recommendation regarding the required size of the forces. They preferred to leave the available military forces as they were, hoping that the threat of military action would suffice to lead the Great Powers to intervene and prevent the implementation of the Partition Resolution, or in other words, the Jewish declaration of independence.[26]

The military leaders, however, continued with their plans, and a few days later the Arab Chiefs of Staff or their representatives met again in Damascus, to assign each army its missions, according to a unified plan prepared by General Nur al-Din Mahmud. The focus of Mahmud's plan was to be northern and eastern Palestine, where the invading forces would try to sever the eastern Galilee—from the al-Hula Valley to Lake Kinneret (the Sea of Galilee)—from the territory of the Jewish State. That would be achieved through the advance of the Syrian and Lebanese forces from the Bint Jubayl area in Lebanon through al-Mālikiyya toward Safad–Tiberias and Nazareth; the Iraqi and Jordanian units would push westward toward Afula–Nazareth and await the next stage; and the Egyptian Army would move northward, to Yibna, which was inside the designated Arab State. Its aim would be 'pinning down and destroying Jewish forces and thereby aiding the success of the [northern] operations'. They were not to advance automatically into the territory of the Jewish State but, at least in the first stage, to create a diversion and lure Jewish forces into their sector, thus removing pressure from the north, where the Arabs would make their main push.[27]

There are a few points regarding this planning that need to be emphasized. The plan was very cautious. The prime object of the Arabs' Palestinian campaign was, it should be recalled, to prevent the establishment of an independent Jewish state in Palestine. However, the goal of the plan that has just been described was much more limited. The main effort would be invested in cutting off the northern part of the Jewish State. At this stage, the prospect of preventing the establishment of the new State was left to the future, and this was dependent upon the success of the initial limited move. The Egyptian movement was to take place only along the borders designated for the Arab State, and the Egyptian forces were not supposed to take part in the actual invasion of the Jewish State, at least at this early stage. Indeed, both the Arab mil-

itary leaders and the politicians, their declarations to the contrary notwithstanding, were aware that they could not possibly overrun all of Palestine including the area designated for the Jewish State. As the Arab governments understood perfectly well, their forces were simply too small to undertake a mission on that scale. The goal of the Arabs' opening parry was to prevent the Jewish Army from seizing the area designated for the Arab State; within that context, each Arab Army sought to score a local victory for its government while chopping away at the territory of the Jewish State.[28]

The information that was available to the Arab generals exaggerated the strength of the Jewish forces. Each army had its own intelligence sources and ways of evaluating information, but these were not always shared with the other general staff. The information that was made available to all the armies that were getting ready to intervene in Palestine was that one compiled by the Safwat and the above-mentioned Qawukji's report. Both reports vastly exaggerated the size and capability of the Jewish forces. According to the Arab League's Military Committee report, the Hagana could field ten brigades comprised of 'well-trained soldiers, including 30,000 who formerly served in the British Army, the American Army and other European armies. All are armed with modern weapons, including machine guns, mortars, and a number of light field artillery pieces.' The report indicated that the Jewish Army had a 'considerable number of aircraft'. The commander of the Arab Legion estimated the number of Jewish troops on 15 May at more than 65,000—a figure that bore little resemblance to reality. Both sources—the Palestine Committee and Glubb Pasha—placed considerable weight on the experience accumulated by Jewish soldiers who had served in foreign armies, particularly the British Army, during the Second World War.[29] Neither of these sources addressed the fact that in the course of building the Jewish Army, in a process that lasted from November 1947 until May 1948, the scale of recruitment had been greatly extended and its character changed. Conscription brought to the Hagana, and later to the IDF, people from diverse population groups, some of them were long-time residents of Palestine and others had just arrived, in some cases after the war had begun, and who received military training for the first time in their lives on the eve of going into battle.

The unified campaign idea did not materialize, as King Abdullah was not ready to put himself under Mahmud's command. Officially General Nur al-Din Mahmud became his deputy, but this was a mere gesture, as the Jordanian departure from Mahmud's plan emasculated it and made it meaningless. According to Abdullah's plan, the Arab Legion would

carry out operations in the central area of Arab Palestine. It would cross the River Jordan after 15 May, and would move to Be'er Sheva, Hebron, Ramallah, Nablus and Jenin with forward elements in Tulkarm and the area just south of Lydda. As the Legion had no intention of fighting the Jewish forces, it did not plan to move toward Gaza. The voices that came from the Gaza, Hebron and Ramallah areas, calling for Abdullah to takeover these places, could only serve to encourage him in his plans.[30] There is one place missing from this description of Transjordan's war aims, and that is Jerusalem. Judging from this, from al-Tall accusations, and Glubb's own implicit admission, it seems there was no intention of sending the Legion to Jerusalem. Another indication is Kirkbride's reports on Abdullah's great distress over the reports on the dire situation of the Palestinians in Jerusalem. It was only after receiving the reports, the phone calls and the delegations that Abdullah instructed his army to move into Jerusalem.[31]

Abdullah's refusal to act in accordance with Mahmud's plan forced the latter to introduce a new plan, which he did on 11 May. The new plan excluded the Arab Legion, calling for the entry of the Syrian forces not from the north, as the original plan stipulated, but from the northeast, in the Tsemakh area, to the right wing of the Iraqi Army. The latter's mission remained as originally stipulated.[32]

Even at this late stage, there seemed to be a slight chance of preventing the war. On 11 May, Abdullah met again with Golda Meyerson. The meeting this time was tainted by the April events: the Dayr Yasin massacre, the fall of the ethnically mixed cities in Palestine to Jewish hands and the ensuing massive flight of Palestinians, mainly to Jordan. All these developments hardened Abdullah's attitude, and Meyerson found him to be tougher than before. The discussion, he said, should proceed from the assumption that one state would be established in Palestine, with the Jews to be granted autonomy in the areas where they had a majority, and the country to be annexed to Transjordan after one year. Meyerson rejected this out of hand, to which the King retorted that 'he had been in favor of peace all along, but the only way to avert a war was to accept his proposal'.[33] The conversation was doomed from the beginning. In his position, Abdullah could make no meaningful gestures to the Jews, and at the same time he was well aware that the Jews would not accept his statement that 'the only solution to the Palestine problem was an Arab state which included areas over which the Jews exercised local autonomy'. In fact, he told Kirkbride that 'he did not expect the Jews to accept the proposal', and he knew that 'the Jews reacted sharply' to the public statement he had recently made to that effect.[34] However, he

wanted the meeting with Meyerson to occur as he wished 'to keep the door open for negotiations when both sides were in a more reasonable frame of mind'.[35] Moreover, considering the Arab Legion's limited goals, and its decision not to invade the Jewish State, war between the two armies was not unavoidable. This was the gist of the talk between representatives of the Hagana and a Jordanian delegation headed by Colonel Goldie, assistant to John Glubb, the Arab Legion commander. This meeting took place on 2 May, and Goldie claimed that the Arab Legion 'do not desire fighting' with the Jews. Referring to the recent Gesher incident—which took place on 27 April and during which the Legion and the Jews clashed over the Gesher police station, which the British forces had just evacuated—he explained that it was an 'unfortunate local misunderstanding'. However, Goldie mentioned the more sensitive issue of Jerusalem, over which the sides were unable to agree. The British Colonel wished to reach an arrangement 'which avoids clashes with [the Hagana] while not appearing as a betrayal [of] the Arab cause'.[36] Jerusalem was indeed the most controversial issue, and Abdullah and Meyerson also failed to reach an agreement over this subject. Jerusalem was to be almost the only place where fighting took place between the Arab Legion and the Jewish forces in the coming days.

After hearing Meyerson's account of the failed meeting on 11 May, Ben-Gurion ordered the Hagana High Command 'to plan a campaign against a general Arab invasion' and 'to issue an order to the brigades about an expected invasion by Trans-Jordan'. He consulted with his senior advisers on whether to attack the Jordanian forces the moment they crossed the Jordan river, or wait until they entered territory designated for the Jewish State.[37] As far as Israel was concerned, then, the Arab Legion was poised to join the invasion of the Jewish State. Shertok did indeed acknowledge Abdullah's intention to take over only the Arab parts of Palestine but, as Shertok told Marshall, 'we were by no means certain whether all these assurances could be taken at their face value'.[38] Israel's deployment in the country's central sectors reflected that assessment. Four brigades were stationed in May 1948 opposite what would be the Jordanian front: Etisioni in Jerusalem, Harel and the 8th Brigade along the Latrun–Jerusalem road. Two battalions of the Givati Brigade were also deployed. There were more Israeli troops in this sector than in any other, even though numerically the Arab Legion was smaller than the Egyptian contingent, for example.[39]

The British were also unsure about Abdullah's intentions. Although Bevin heard from al-Huda about the King's intentions regarding Palestine, he still asked Kirkbride in mid-April about this, and whether

'he still proposes to send the Arab Legion after 15 May?' Kirkbride's reply also shows that he was not completely sure of the position: 'As far as I am aware the intentions of the King are unchanged.'[40] In fact, despite his basic intention not to cross the borders of the Partition lines of Israel, Abdullah did not exclude that possibility. On the eve of 15 May, Kirkbride warned the Jordanian Prime Minister in no uncertain terms that Britain would react sharply if Jordan were to invade the designated Jewish State. This subject had already arisen, as will be recalled, in a meeting between al-Huda and Bevin in March, at which time the Jordanian had stated that his country had no intention of invading the Jewish State. The British reaction, which was delivered to al-Huda on 15 May, was unequivocal: 'if Trans-jordan went beyond the plan regarding the Arab areas of Palestine, His Majesty's Government would doubtless have to reconsider their position regarding the subsidy and the loan of British Officers'. Al-Huda responded by saying that Jordan meant to seize control of the area allotted to the Arab State. However, now that it appeared likely that other Arab states might also intervene, al-Huda qualified his statement: if other Arab Armies advanced toward Israel, Jordan would follow suit, he said. In that event, al-Huda promised, he would relieve the British officers serving in the Arab Legion of their posts. Two days later, Abdullah tried to find out whether Britain would agree in retrospect to his takeover of territory within the boundaries of the Jewish State.[41]

The last significant step the Arab Legion took toward invasion was its return from Palestine to Jordan. Once in Jordan, the Arab Legion would no longer be under British control, and so would be free to act. Units of the Legion started to return to Jordan as early as February, and redeployment was completed on 14 May. Once the Legion had made its way back home, it turned back and re-entered Palestine, this time to accomplish its sovereign's wish: to take over Hebron, Ramallah and Nablus, and afterwards the rest of the area designated for the Palestinian Arabs.[42]

The Establishment of the State of Israel

On their way to fulfilling the UN Resolution, the Jews had established their national institutions—the provisional government and parliament, called now the People's Directorate and the People's Council—in April. The first meeting of the People's Directorate took place on 18 April 1948, and in the next session a week later, portfolios were distributed

among the would-be ministers—representatives of the majority of the political parties active within the Yishuv. The official name of the would-be State was decided: Israel.[43] Now it remained to decide when and if to make the formal declaration about the establishment of the State of Israel. The 'when' was more easy to decide, as it was clear that the deciding date should be the date the British Mandate expired, and that would be 14 May. The 'if' was more difficult. The main obstacle was not necessarily the expected invasion, if only because no one knew if an invasion was going to take place. For months the Jewish leadership had been conducting its diplomatic and military policy on the premise that Arab Armies would try to prevent the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine, but neither Ben-Gurion nor the other leaders of the Yishuv were fully convinced that it would happen.[44] On the eve of the invasion, French sources in Beirut reported to the Jews that the Arab States had decided to launch a simultaneous attack on the Jewish State, even at the risk of failure. The sources even elaborated on the size of the invasion forces.[45] The information provided was basically correct, but the Jewish leadership remained unconvinced.

In spite of the uncertainty, Ben-Gurion acted as if invasion was certain, and he was confident that the Jewish military forces would be able to withstand it. The problem was the international reaction to the declaration of the establishment of the State of Israel. The Jewish Directorate discussed this matter on 12 May. The delegates heard two reports which they had to consider seriously, one from the head of the would-be Foreign Ministry, Moshe Shertok, and the other from the Hagana head of operations, Yigal Yadin. Shertok described the strong desire of Marshall to see the Cease-Fire Resolution, which had been issued by the Security Council on 17 April, implemented, and he quoted Marshall's implicit threat, in case of Jewish rejection: 'we would not let the Jews run a war that we are opposing, with our dollars'. Shertok also predicted that the administration would act as forcefully as possible to make the Security Council impose sanctions on the side that violated its Cease-Fire Resolution.[46] Shertok told the delegates that while until a few days ago he was ready to consider a positive reply to the Cease-Fire Proposal—among other reasons because he wanted to avoid a deep rift with the United States—now he had changed his mind, as he thought that the administration would not get very far with the proposal. He was ready to accept a ten-day cease-fire proposal, but without prejudicing the Jewish right to declare the establishment of their State on 15 May.[47] However, the decision on whether to accept the cease-fire—even if it meant postponing the declaration of the establishment of the State of

Israel—was not only a political question, more critically, it was more a military one, as it was clear that the alternative was an all-out Arab invasion. Yadin was summoned before the Directorate to report to the members on the military situation; he was uncommitted. He described the Arab deployment as being better than the Jewish one, and claimed that they had a superior number of arms—especially those which the Jewish forces lacked, such as airplanes. At the same time, the morale of the Jewish forces was low. His summary of the Jewish prospects in case of war was discouraging: 'If I wanted … to be cautious, I would say now that the chances are quite even. If I want to be frank I would say that their advantage was greater.'[48] Not only did Yadin not encourage the Directorate, he actually misled them, though probably unintentionally. Part of the Arab advantage, in his eyes, was the geography that forced the Jewish forces to split up to fight on various fronts. However, the Jews benefited from good lines of communication, which made deployment of forces from place to place easier. The would-be ministers did not hear Yadin's opinion on the cease-fire. In fact, when Ben-Gurion referred the question directly to him, Yadin was evasive: 'The answer to this question is too difficult.' However, he was ready to say that if rejection of the call for a cease-fire should hamper the chances of getting the military equipment the Jews needed, than his recommendation would be to accept a cease-fire.[49] Israel Galili was ready to make a clearer statement:

> Strictly from the military point of view, for a while cease-fire would be of major advantage to us, and would be to our benefit. However, … it is impossible to disconnect the military considerations from the political, and here it would be a blow to the gains we had already made.[50]

Ben-Gurion did not believe that the AHC would accept the cease-fire agreement at all, and in any case, he spoke in uncompromising terms against it. In doing so, he used arguments not all of which were based on solid ground. He argued that the resolution called for a cease-fire between the Jews and the Palestinians, but that this did not include the Arab Armies who could therefore continue building up their military strength with arms shipments coming from England—ignoring the fact that the British had imposed an arms embargo on their Arab allies. He also argued that Jewish immigration—the main means of overcoming Jewish quantitative inferiority—would be banned as well as the manufacture of necessary war products. The Arab governments, however, would be free from these restrictions and they, as independent

states, would be able to increase their war-making capabilities.[51] As to the prospects in the face of invasion, Ben-Gurion was optimistic: 'with our moral values, and the increase in the extent of the recruitment and increase in the quantity of equipment, we have all the chances, out of the expected losses and shock, to win decisively.'[52]

Ben-Gurion was unequivocal in his demand for the establishment of the State of Israel to be announced.[53] The reaction of his colleagues fluctuated from clear agreement with him to the raising of various legal arguments that could affect the nature of the announcement and its content. However, all of the Directorate members agreed that a Jewish state should be announced, and that there was no need even for a formal vote on this matter.[54] The only subject upon which a vote took place was the question of whether to mention the new State's boundaries in the declaration. Ben-Gurion thought that was undesirable, because if an invasion did occur it would provide the Jews with an opportunity to go beyond the Partition Lines, and also to take over the western Galilee and the road to Jerusalem and its environs. Thus Ben-Gurion paved the road to the extension of Israel's borders beyond those set by the United Nations Partition Resolution, and his position was accepted by five votes to four.[55]

The consequences of the failure to establish a cease-fire or trusteeship in Palestine were clear to all parties concerned. Palestinian opinion was irrelevant, as they had already lost the war. The Jews and the Arab governments turned now to the next phase, which would begin on 14 May—a war. The Great Powers were also aware of this; however, their ability—one might say readiness—to act was restricted. Warren Austin, the American representative at the United Nations, asked British Foreign Office officials about the possibility of applying sanctions against the Arabs, should they invade Palestine. The British rejected that possibility. They claimed that sanctions would hurt the British more than they would hurt the Arabs. The British were economically dependent on Arab oil, and any interference with the flow of oil into western Europe would 'wreck the Marshall Plan'. On the other hand, Harold Beely of the Foreign Office was also skeptical about the United States' ability to impose sanctions on the Jews.[56]

Deployment in the Face of Invasion

As soon as the British Mandate expired and David Ben-Gurion declared the establishment of Israel in a ceremony held in Tel Aviv, Arab Armies

crossed the international boundary into Palestine. One of the heated subjects of discussion concerning the 1948 war is the question of the power-balance between the Jewish and the Arab forces. One of the arguments of the New Historians is that the traditional Israeli historiography's claim that this war was the 'War of the Few against the Many' is incorrect, and in fact the balance of power at the beginning of the fighting was at least equal, if not tilted in favor of the Jews.[57] However, a true understanding of the Jewish frame of mind at the time, and as it was recorded by what will be called here 'pro-Zionist historians', can be achieved if a distinction is made between the written information available and the general feeling about the situation. As to the data, both contemporaries and pro-Zionist historians were familiar with the figures, and they knew that the numbers showed that the balance of power was even, with an advantage to the Arab Armies in terms of heavy weapons such as armed vehicles, light tanks, cannons, mortars, etc. In fact, the situation was much more complicated. Numbers alone do not provide an indication of military power, and there are many other factors involved in judging the military capabilities of a nation and an army.

Jewish deployment of their national resources have been described earlier in length, and here it need only be recalled that by May 1948 the Hagana was able to field 10 brigades: 12 (Hanegev) and 5 (Givati) in the south; 4 (Kiryati) and 3 (Alexandroni) in the center; 10 (Harel) and 6 (Etsioni) in the Jerusalem sector; and Yitfah, Carmeli, 1 (Golani), and later also 9 (Oded) in the north. The 7th and 8th Brigades were expanded in the first days of the fighting, after 15 May.[58] The total number of the Israeli military forces by mid-April comprised nearly 20,000 recruits and the Hagana command was planning to recruit 10,000 more.[59]

In Egypt, there was mandatory conscription, but a significant number evaded conscription; there was even a legal way to evade conscription, through the payment of a 'ransom'. The result was that the sons of the wealthy families remained out of service, and those who could not afford to pay either sought illegal ways to escape the military service, or went into the army. This state of affairs naturally had a negative effect on the conscripts, socio-economic structure, and accordingly on their military performance. The Egyptian Army consisted of about 50,000 officers and soldiers, organized into three infantry brigades and one armored brigade with light tanks. It was so financially strapped that some of the tanks had no cannons. All of the equipment was British-made, as was sanctioned by the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian agreement. The personal weapon of the Egyptian soldiers was the English rifle, and the

platoons' weapon was the Bren machine-gun. Egypt's artillery force consisted of 65 26-pound cannons and 3.7 Howizer cannons organized into three battalions, and one anti-tank battalion was armed with 6-pound anti-tank cannons. The mechanized battalion consisted of 100 armored cars, only 40 of them—light mechanized cars—operational. The total number of tanks the army had was 50, most of them Mark 6. The Egyptian Air Force consisted of some 200–250 planes, but out of this number, there were only 75 operative combat planes, most of them Spitfires, along with 12 transport planes.[60] Only part of this force was dispatched to Palestine: 5,500 soldiers, organized into two infantry brigades. Only light armored units were attached to the force, but not the armored brigade.[61]

The weakest aspect of the army was its manpower. As we have seen, the better-educated and affluent in the Egyptian society avoided conscription. By late 1947 *The Times*' military correspondent wrote that:

> The Egyptian Army suffers from lack of technicians, and its ability to operate modern equipment is poor. The soldiers are incapable of facing a long war. The young officers are usually vigorous, but many of the older officers are inefficient, and usually the officers are lacking significant combat experience.[62]

To this one should add the internal unrest among the young officers, partly because of the low salaries, and partly on political grounds. The IDF forces that met the Egyptian force claimed that the individual Egyptian soldier was completely dependent on his commanding officers and was incapable of initiating or improvising moves on his own. The Egyptians' attacks suffered from excessive schematization, and when the battle plan went awry their soldiers and officers were unable to adjust to the new situation and act accordingly. However, what they lacked in offensive capability, the Egyptian forces made up for in defense. The Egyptian defense was meticulously planned, with an emphasis on blanketing the entire defensive arena with close and long-range fire, with every point in the system being mutually protected. The Egyptians made intelligent and effective use of their artillery and protected their positions by means of fortifications and mines. Soldiers and officers had been drilled extensively in the defense plan and they carried it out diligently. As long as the Egyptian deployment was not disrupted it was difficult to breach. Yet, as will be seen, during the war the Egyptians had successes not only in their defense but also on the offensive, and in some cases were able to capture IDF positions. Their achievements are even more striking given the haphazard character of the invasion: the Egyptian High

Command did not prepare orderly plans and it lacked sufficient intelligence about what it faced.[63] Another weak point of the Egyptian Army was its transportation. The army had only a small number of cars, and many of them were broken. The shortage of means of transportation was felt at the time that the Egyptian expeditionary force made its way to Palestine. It had to use British trains and local rented cars in al-'Arish to bring the soldiers to their destination.

The Iraqi Army, which was founded in 1921, collapsed in 1941 and then reorganized; it consisted of about 20,000 soldiers, recruited in mandatory conscription for about three years. However, as in Egypt, it was possible to avoid conscription by paying a 'ransom', and the army's command suffered a major setback following the purges conducted after the 1941 Rashid 'Ali rebellion when most of the veteran and experienced officers had to leave the army. Some of them joined the Syrian Army and the Arab Liberation Army. In an attempt to overcome this shortage, 100 officers were sent every year to train in England in 3-, 6- or 9-month cycles. British officers prepared, in 1946, a five-year plan for the equipping and training of an Iraqi army which was supposed to consist of three infantry divisions, one armored brigade and five squadrons of modern planes, two of them combat planes. The British Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, approved the plan in the summer, and the plan was underway in 1947. The head of the British military delegation—the Inspector General of the Iraqi Army—drafted critical reports on the quality of the Iraqi officers and soldiers, but with the passing of time his appreciation of these trainees' capabilities improved. By the end of the year he estimated that the Iraqi Army was capable of taking an active and effective role in the defense of the region against the Soviet threat. The failure of the January 1948 Anglo-Iraqi treaty checked the activity of the British delegation, until its final departure in May. Thus, on the eve of the entry of Iraqi forces into Palestine, the head of the British delegation described the state of the Iraqi Army as good. To this one should add the fact that of all the Arab Armies, the Iraqi Army was the only one that had experienced a modern war, in the Second World War.[64]

The Chief of Staff of the Iraqi Army in 1948 was Lieutenant General Salāh, and his army consisted of two infantry divisions, which were under-equipped. However, the basic formation within the army was the brigade—infantry brigades enforced with artillery, engineer brigades and other units. There was also an armored brigade, but this was not a fighting formation or an independent unit, as the tanks were part of the infantry brigades. The armored corps consisted mainly of armored cars—there were about 120 of them in the Iraqi Army, 70 of them

equipped with 2- and 6-pound cannons. There were, however, also ten heavy tanks. The Iraqi artillery comprised 70–80 field cannons of various kinds. Most of the cannons were very old and over-used, but the professional conduct of the artillery commanders and soldiers was satisfactory, according to their British instructors' report. The Iraqi Air Force consisted of about 60 combat planes, of which only 15 or 30 were operative.[65]

The Arab Legion was considered the best Arab Army. The British had founded it, and it had attained its high quality thanks to the fact that its middle- and high-ranking officers were all British. In May 1948, 46 British officers served in the Legion; some of them had sworn allegiance to King Abdullah, and some were His Majesty's officers, 'borrowed' to serve in the Arab Legion. By 1947 6,000 soldiers served in the Arab Legion, organized into an infantry brigade. By 1948, it had undergone a reorganization, which resulted in its expansion. By May, the Legion consisted of four mechanized regiments, which were organized within a division and two brigades—the 1st and the 3rd, each consisting of two battalions. A further brigade (the 4th) was in the process of being established. Each battalion had 12–14 armored cars; the Arab Legion had 72 armored cars in all. It also had artillery—two batteries of 25 pounds. Out of the 6,000 Arab Legion's soldiers, 4,500 were available for the Palestine campaign. To these one should add 1,200 irregular Jordanians, most of them Bedouins, who were volunteers joining the Arab Legion in Palestine. The Arab Legion command in Amman equipped them just as it equipped its forces, putting them under retired Bedouin officers. They were sent to reinforce the regular forces in al-Ramla and Lydda, in Latrun and the Bab al-Wad area and in A-Tur in Jerusalem.[66]

There were nearly 13,500 soldiers in the Syrian Army, 300 of them officers, all professional soldiers, as there was no mandatory conscription. The composition of the force was heterogeneous, reflecting the diverse Syrian ethnic structure. The army was organized in three brigades: the first, the second and the third. However, the brigade was only a formal formation, the basic operative fighting unit was the battalion and there were six infantry battalions in the Syrian Army. There were also about 20 armored cars in the army, dispersed among the units, and one tank company which consisted of about 15 Renault R-35 tanks (World War Two veterans). There was no designated or operative armored command unit in the Syrian Army. There were, however, auxiliary forces such as the Desert Guard (950 soldiers organized in three battalions), a Druze unit of 500 soldiers and internal security forces numbering nearly 7,000 men. Every battalion consisted of three batter-

ies, and in every battery there were eight 75-mm guns. Most of the arms were French-made.[67] Syria had an air force, established in 1947, which consisted of about 45 planes of various kinds. The most widely used and significant plane was the Harvard, of which Syrians had 20. Despite public sentiment, the soldiers were unwilling to fight in Palestine. However, as the military correspondent of *The Times* had noted, and as the Israelis had learnt in the battlefield, the Syrian soldier was brave and stubborn. The army was founded by the French during their colonial rule, and in 1948 it consisted of two segments: the old force which consisted of gendarmerie and cavalry force, and the new one, which the Syrian government planned to develop into a three-brigade division. In May, only the 1st Brigade, under the command of Colonel Abd al-Wahāb Hakim was operative. The weaponry had been left by the French during their rule in Syria, and the Syrian government had since then been trying to buy new arms, but to no avail. The brigade consisted of two infantry battalions, a light-tank company (11 French light tanks, type Rhino), and a 75 and 105 mm field-artillery battalion. In a training exercise conducted in November 1947, the tanks got stuck going over rocky terrain and were unable to proceed. The other two brigades were inoperative. The Syrian Air Force was only just being built up, and it included 20 American training planes, which were converted into bomber and interception planes. The planes made a few sorties at the beginning of the war, but after two planes were intercepted by Israeli fire, the rest were grounded, and took no further part in the fighting.[68] The Lebanese Army, also founded by the French, consisted of 3,500 soldiers, 100 of them officers. The service was voluntary, and the selection process was strict. The studies in the military academy were thorough and, as most of the officers had gained military experience during the Second World War, the combination of experience and proper education made the Lebanese good soldiers. The commander of the army was a Christian, General Fu'ād Shihabi. The army was organized into four infantry battalions, one artillery battalion consisting of two batteries of 105-mm French cannons, one armored company that comprised 10–13 light French tanks and 25 armored cars, and auxiliary forces, two of which were sent to the Palestine battlefield.[69]

With the exception of Transjordan, the Arab governments did not send all of their armies to Palestine. One important reason was the need to maintain internal security, as in the case of the Egyptian and Syrian governments. The Iraqi government also experienced internal security problems, and the most disturbing—the tension along the Kurdish Mountains—occupied almost half of the Iraqi Army. This area was

troubled, and Iraqi troops were engaged there in security missions. However, the troops were especially suited to the special circumstances of the mountains: about half of the Iraqi Army consisted of mountain units on mules, which were of no use on the Palestine battlefield.[70] The total force that each Arab state sent was therefore: Egypt—5,500 soldiers organized into a two-brigade divisional force; Jordan—6,500 soldiers (almost all it had) organized into three brigades; Syria—6,000 soldiers; and Lebanon—2,000. Iraq sent three brigades comprising 4,500 soldiers; while in the irregular forces there were about 3,000 soldiers, mostly Arab Liberation Army. The total number of the Arab force was, therefore, fewer than 30,000. The IDF put 32,000 soldiers into the battlefield in May.[71] However, the number of the ALA forces should be reduced, as with the invasion, the Arab League Command withdrew the ALA from Palestine, and the units that had been posted in Samaria, the Jerusalem area and central Galilee left Palestine. The ALA was supposed to return to Syria for a month to rest and reorganize, and also for training and to replace those soldiers who had been killed or wounded. However, with the failure of the Syrian attacks in the first days of the war, the Syrian and the Lebanese governments concluded that ALA forces should reinforce the Syrian and the Lebanese forces. The ALA Lebanese Battalion and the Hittin Battalion, along with the Syrian 'Desert Force' Battalion, were sent by the end of May to the Lebanese front, while the 1st Yarmuk Battalion reinforced the Syrian forces in the Tsemakh area. Adib Shishakly remained with the rest of the ALA forces, now a reduced brigade-size force, at training centers in Syria.[72]

The Jews in the Face of Invasion

The invasion of Palestine by the Arab Armies started on 15 May, when the Iraqi, Syrian, Jordanian and Egyptian forces crossed the international border. While responding to this attack, the Jews also acted to gain international recognition for the new State. M. Shertok, the Foreign Minister of the new State, announced to the United Nations General Secretary, Trygve Lie, that the State of Israel had been established in accordance with the General Assembly Resolution of 29 November 1947. On that occasion, he also submitted Israel's request to be accepted as a member of the United Nations.[73] Eliahu Epstein, Israel's special representative at Washington, made a similar statement to the President of the Security Council, adding that the new State 'has been proclaimed as an independent republic within the frontiers

approved by the General Assembly in its Resolution of 29 November 1947.'[74] At the same time, Israeli representatives acted to gain international recognition of the State of Israel. Letters were sent to world capitals, in which Israeli diplomats announced the establishment of Israel, and asked for recognition.[75] Washington was quick to announce its recognition of the new state: it did so only a couple of hours after Ben-Gurion's announcement.[76]

As we have seen, the Jews had acted for almost two years on the basis that a proclamation of statehood would be followed by an Arab Army invasion of Palestine. Thus, it is surprising to note that the Jews did not prepare a line of defense to contain the incoming forces. Years later, the deputy Chief of Staff of the Hagana at the time of the invasion, Major General Zvi Ayalon, said bluntly: 'There were no plans. We decided that if an invasion did take place we would see what it would be and that we would act in accordance with developments.'[77] Ayalon's comment is not absolutely accurate, as he referred to the Hagana High Command position on the eve of 15 May. This was not what Ben-Gurion had in mind, and this was not what eventually happened. The most thorough discussion about the Jewish preparedness for the invasion took place as the news about the failure of the Meyerson–Abdullah meeting on 11 May reached Ben-Gurion. He then conferred with Yadin and Galili, and set the guidelines for the coming days: pushing forward with the campaign over the road to Jerusalem; completing the execution of Plan Dalet, emphasizing 'the destruction of the Arab islands in the Jewish [areas] … that constitute an immediate danger in the event of an invasion and are liable to force us to keep forces of ours pinned down'; and preparing a campaign to face a country-wide invasion. He was more emphatic on this matter three days later, when he pressed to send all available troops —and even those needed somewhere else—to occupy the area between Khulda and Bab al-Wad, along the Tel Aviv–Jerusalem road. (At that time, the Hagana was heavily involved in the second mission: the elimination of internal Arab military opposition.) As to the first and third missions, the military leaders disagreed with Ben-Gurion. Yadin conceived the principles of a strategic plan, according to which the Hagana brigades should deploy to convenient holding positions until the General Staff could identify where the main Arab effort lay. At that point the reserve forces, which the General Staff was busy building up in the first days of hostilities, would be sent in as supporting forces. To that end, Yadin thought that six battalions should be formed and put under the direct command of the High Command. However, these plans had to be set aside due to Ben-Gurion's objections.[78]

While these plans were being discussed, the Hagana brigades were

still engaged in the execution of Plan Dalet, which, as stated above, stipulated that the Hagana should seize the areas in their districts as well as territories adjacent to the border, which might facilitate the containment of invading forces; but the order said nothing about the procedure for a blocking operation.[79] Nevertheless, it would be misleading to say that the General Staff was completely unprepared for the invasion, as Plan Dalet did lay down the deployment guidelines to meet that contingency. The strategy called for the fortification and stabilization of a continuous Jewish-controlled line within the areas of the designated Jewish State and along its putative borders, and for harassment of, and interference with, the Arab forces as they moved in. The success of this strategy depended on three elements: 'cleansing' the area along the Jewish State's borders of an Arab presence; fortifying the Jewish settlements along the line of advance of the Arab column; and 'hit-and-run' raids against the Arab troops as they advanced. The way in which the Plan was carried out, and its contribution to the containment of the invasion, will be described in detail in the following chapters.

NOTES

1. *Behind the Curtain*, pp. 57–61, 79–80.
2. Ibid., pp. 59-60, 80-3; 'The Activities of the Arab League', p. 6.
3. BMEO, Cairo to BAB Burrows, Eastern Department, Foreign Office, London, 17 February1948, E2518, FO 371/68381.
4. *Behind the Curtain*, p. 144.
5. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 21 April 1948, E5013, FO 371/68852; Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 23 April 1948, E5162, ibid.; Mr Broadmead, Damascus to Foreign Office, 26 April 1948, E5210, FO 317/68803.
6. 'Egyptian Aid in the "Liberation of Palestine"', 26 January 1948, FO 816/116; Mayer, p. 28.
7. Sir R. Campbell, Cairo to Foreign Office, 1 May 1948, E5528, FO 371/68371.
8. Mr Broadmead, Damascus to Foreign Office, 26 April 1948, E5210, FO 317/68803.
9. Sir R. Campbell, Cairo to Foreign Office, 27 April 1948, E5290, FO 317/68370; from BMEO, Cairo to Foreign Office, 29 April 1948, E5474, FO 317/68371.
10. Mr H. Boswell, Beirut to Foreign Office, 28 April 1948, E5398, FO 371/68371; Sir H. Mack, Baghdad to Foreign Office, 29 April 1948, E5476, ibid.
11. On the Arab Legion involvement in the intercommunal fighting see Chapter 20.
12. General Sir A. Cunningham to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: Weekly Intelligence Appreciation, 10 Jan. 1948, FO 816/115; Sir A.A. Kirkbride, British Legation, Amman, to E. Bevin, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs: 'Monthly Situation Report on Transjordan for January 1948', 3 February 1948, E 2069, FO 371/68845; Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to BAB Burrows, Eastern Department, Foreign Office, 15 April 1948, E5087, FO 371/68852.
13. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 16 April 1948, E4783, FO

371/68852; ibid., 19 April 1948, E4868 ibid.

14. Abd al-'Rahman 'Azzam, Secretary General to the Arab League to His Majesty King Abdullah, 15 April 1948, FO 371/68852; Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 16 April 1948, E4783, FO 371/68852; Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 17 April 1948, E4867, ibid.
15. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to BAB Burrows, Eastern Department, Foreign Office, 15 April 1948, E5087, FO 371/68852; Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 21 April 1948, E5013, FO 371/68852. Rogan's description of this event is inaccurate, as are other parts of his paper. While avoiding existing reliable sources, most notably, the British Public Record Office, Rogan based his account to a great extent on Glubb' memoires. It would seem that this is the source from which Rogan had acquired his information of the whole Jordan's moves in the war. Eugene L. Rogan, 'Jordan and 1948', in Eugene L. Rogan and Avi Shlaim (eds), *The War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 111.
16. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 25 April 1948, E5159, FO 371/68370.
17. 'A Brief Report on the Situation in Palestine and Comparison Between the Forces and Potential of Both Sides," by General I. Safwat to Jamil Mardam Bey, Prime Minister of Syria and Chairman of the Palestine Committee of the Arab League, 23 March 1948, in *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (1998), pp. 63–6. The report is also in *Behind the Curtain*, pp. 95–6.
18. Telegram no. 261 from Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 29 April 1948, FO 816/118; British Legation, Amman: Monthly Situation Report on Transjordan for the Month of April 1948, 4 May 1948, E6211, FO 371/68845.
19. *Behind the Curtain*, pp. 149–50; Maddy-Weitzman, *Crystallization of the Arab State System*, pp. 64–5.
20. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 25 April 1948, E5159, FO 371/68370; British Legation, Amman: Monthly Situation Report on Transjordan for the Month of April, 1948, 4 May 1948, E6211, FO 371/68845.
21. Mr H. Boswell, Beirut to Foreign Office, 2 May 1948, E5614, FO 371/68371.
22. Telegram no. 261 from Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Secretary of State, Foreign Office, 29 April 1948, FO 816/118; memoranda, 6 May 1948, FO 141/1249; Sir A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 12 May 1948, E6177, FO 371/68372. Senior officers of the British Army were taken by surprise at this move. They had doubted that Egyptian forces would intervene. In any event, their assessment was that the Egyptian troops were not capable of holding out for long: JP (48) 33 (0) (T of R), 25 March 1948, DEFE/6/5.
23. General Sir A. Cunningham to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 27 April 1948, E5295, FO 371/68370; Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 28 April 1948, E5365, FO 371/68370; General Sir A. Cunningham to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 27 April 1948, E5295, ibid.; Mr H. Boswell, Beirut to Foreign Office, 28 April 1948, E5398, FO 371/68371; Sir H. Mack, Baghdad to Foreign Office, 29 April 1948, E5430, FO 371/68371.
24. Sir H. Mack, Baghdad to Foreign Office, 1 May 1948, E5549, FO 371/68371; Sir R. Campbell, Cairo to Foreign Office, 1 May 1948, E5618, ibid.; Mr Broadmead, Damascus to Foreign Office, 6 May 1948, E5903/G, FO 371/68372.
25. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 8 May 1948, E5998, FO 371/68372.
26. *Behind the Curtain*, pp. 85–7, 144–5, 148–9.
27. Ibid., pp. 123, 148–50; *In Enemy Eyes*, pp. 82, 89–90; and see the testimony of Gamāl 'Abd al-Nāsir quoted in Avraham Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion* (Hebrew) pp. 97, 105.

28. HM Minister, Amman to FO, London, 1 May 1948, FO 816/118.
29. *In Enemy Eyes*, pp. 80, 89, 96, 99–100; Glubb, pp. 91–3.
30. Record of Conversation Between Brigadier Glubb Pasha and DMI War Office, 30 January 1948, E 3371/G, FO 371/68369; Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 13 April 1948, E4687, FO 371/68852; *Behind the Curtain*, pp. 145–6, 149–50.
31. The whole matter is discussed in Chapter 5.
32. *Behind the Curtain*, pp. 149–50.
33. Golda Meyerson in a meeting of the People's Administration (Minhelet Ha'am), *Protocols 18 April –13 May 1948*, pp. 40–3.
34. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 24 April 1948, E5163, FO 371/68852.
35. Ibid., 23 April 1948, E5161 FO 371/68852.
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75. See letters to the Powers' capitals: The Agent of the Provisional Government of Israel (Epstein) to President Truman, 14 May 1948, *FRUS 1948*, V, p. 989; M. Shertok to V. Molotov (Moscow), 15 May 1948, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, 14 May–30 September 1948, pp. 8–9; M. Fischer to G. Bidault (Paris), 15 May 1948, ibid., p. 9; M. Shertok to E. Bevin (London), 16 May 1948, ibid., pp. 12–13. See also ibid., p. 13 n. 1.
76. The Secretary of State to Mr Epstein, *14 May 1948, FRUS 1948*, V, p. 992.
77. General (Res.) Zvi Ayalon, 'Issues in High Command Level', *Symposium held on 24 April 1991: Stopping the Invasion*, p. 16. The Givati Brigade's commander, Avidan, claimed that he received neither instructions from the General Staff about the brigade's deployment in the face of the imminent invasion, nor was he told about the general operative plan. Ibid., p. 20.
78. BGWD, p. 312, entry for 19 March 1948; and see Yadin's complaint during the people administration meeting, 12 May 1948, p. 62; changes in Plan Dalet, May 1948, IDFA 6127/49/93.
79. David Tal, 'Plan Dalet: A Master-plan or a Need of the Hour?', *Zemanim*, Vol. 61 (Winter 1997/8), p. 58–9 (Hebrew).

4

The Egyptian Invasion of Palestine: From Containment to the First Truce

Egypt's Vacillating Position

Until almost the last minute it was unclear whether Egypt would participate. Nokrashi Pasha maintained his opposition to the dispatch of troops to Palestine; and he had good reasons. The first had to do with Egypt's efforts to terminate the 1936 agreement that constituted the contractual basis for the British military presence on Egyptian soil. The Egyptians sought tirelessly to dislodge the British, who for their part were set on maintaining their presence—and the influence that went with it—in Egypt. Imperialist thinking aside, Britain considered their bases in Egypt to be of prime importance in the reality of the emerging Cold War. One of the reasons cited by Egypt for declining to send forces to Palestine was that they might be needed in the struggle against Britain. This argument was, needless to say, baseless as the Egyptian government would not use its army to fight the British Army. Nor did Cairo neglect the diplomatic sphere: in 1947 it asked the United Nations to order Britain to leave Egypt. Egypt's unwillingness to help scuttle the UN Partition Resolution thus stemmed both from its desire to concentrate its military efforts in one arena, and its reluctance to turn against the very institution whose support it had solicited.[1]

Another reason for Egypt's reluctance to get involved in the Palestine conflict was its belief that its army—poorly equipped and badly trained—would be no match for the Jewish forces.[2] Here, too, the root cause of the situation was Egypt's dispute with Britain over the validity of the 1936 Treaty. Under this Treaty, Britain had supplied and trained the Egyptian Army; however, as relations between the two governments deteriorated, the Egyptian government did not renew the mandate of the British military mission to Egypt, which expired on 31 December 1947 under the Anglo-Egyptian Accord. The mission commander reported that the Egyptian Army was at a low operational level because,

for the past two years, Egyptian officers had declined to cooperate with the British delegation due to the dispute between the two governments. In addition, the Egyptians had refused to purchase the arms that the delegation had recommended.[3] The arms embargo on the shipment of arms to the hostile sides in the Middle East, imposed by the Security Council, further weakened the Egyptian Army.[4]

King Farouk took a different view from his Prime Minister. He cited the pressure of public opinion as the reason for dispatching an Egyptian expeditionary force to Palestine—and, even though his true motives lay elsewhere, the fact is that various Egyptian organizations were agitating over the Palestine issue. Farouk, as noted, also had his own reasons for sending troops to Palestine, particularly his belief that Abdullah's plans threatened Egypt's dominant status in the Arab world. 'Azzam Pasha, the Secretary General of the Arab League, had also convinced Farouk that the battle to save Palestine would be the first stage in the League's campaign for the salvation of the entire Arab world. The next target, he declared, to the monarch's enthusiastic response, would be Libya, followed by all of North Africa. The campaign, he assured Farouk, would be led by the Arab League under Egyptian aegis. As for the current round, in Palestine, Azzam promised the King that it would be over within three weeks.[5] If Farouk needed further confirmation of Egypt's seniority in the Arab world, it came in the form of the Iraqi–Lebanese delegation that met with him at King Abdullah's request. As stated above, Farouk promised that the Egyptian Army would fight in Palestine, despite the objections of the government and the High Command.[6]

Egyptian Invasion

Cairo's decision to enter the war was made at the eleventh hour. The Prime Minister, Nokrashi Pasha, could not resist the King's determination to go to war: having opposed Egypt's entry into a war in Palestine, he now found himself in a delicate position and changed his tune. Nokrashi, who led a small party and enjoyed limited maneuverability, was able to hold his position as long as he had the King's support. Although he was warned by the army to keep Egypt out of the conflict, the pressure exerted by Farouk, aggressive political opposition, and surging public opinion which was outraged by the Palestinians' defeat, forced him to throw his weight behind the war initiative. His mute hope, however, was for rapid UN intervention that would prevent a serious

deterioration in the situation and end the hostilities as soon as possible. He told Egyptian senators who urged him to oppose the invasion that the Egyptian expeditionary force was being sent on a police mission in the Arab section of Palestine, where no sovereign power was in control. At the same time, the Arab League's Secretary General, 'Azzam Pasha, was engaged in a final effort to avert a war by means of a settlement that would preclude the establishment of a Jewish state. However, his efforts failed and Nokrashi had no choice but to spearhead the decision by the government and the senate for war. The government approved the dispatch of the force on 9 May and the senate followed suit following a tumultuous session on the night of 11/12 May. The parliament also enacted a law granting the government emergency powers for one year. Its purpose was to enable the government to take all the necessary measures to ensure that the army would be fully prepared to fight. Three days later, Prime Minister Nokrashi was declared General Military Governor. Egypt had effectively come under a military regime: Nokrashi, in his new capacity, published ordinances imposing press censorship and placed the country's main cities under newly appointed military governors. Three concentration camps were prepared for dissidents and opposition elements who might try to sabotage the war effort; or at least this was the explanation offered by the government for this measure. Nevertheless, the opposition was critical of the government's moves and questions were raised in the press about the government's ability to prosecute the war in Palestine successfully. However, the public response to the decision to dispatch the expeditionary force was overwhelmingly positive and encompassed the entire political spectrum.[7]

On 14 May, the President of Egypt's Council of Ministers issued a proclamation stating that 'the Egyptian military forces have received an order to enter Palestine in order to restore order and security and to put a stop to the slaughter that the Jewish forces are perpetrating against the Arabs'. An Egyptian division that was encamped at Rafah began moving across the international border when the Mandate ended and a Jewish state was declared.[8] The expeditionary force began to be assembled around al-'Arish after the order to establish it was given on 26 April. When completed, on 12 May, it was found to be too small for the mission. Defense Minister General Muhammad Haydar appointed as its commander General Ahmad 'Ali al-Mu'awi, the commander of the Egyptian forces in the Sinai, and as his deputy Colonel Muhammad Nagib—the leader of the Egyptian Free Officers Revolution (2 July 1952) and Muawi's deputy in his last command. However, it was still necessary to enlarge the expeditionary force, and this had not been

accomplished by 15 May. The problem was that the commanders had not been issued a clear order explaining their mission and goals, and this vagueness was reflected in the structure of the force that was assembled. It contained three regular infantry battalions (the 1st, 6th and 9th), four reserve battalions (the 2nd, 4th and 7th), and a scout battalion of 24 armored vehicles, in addition to a field artillery battalion, a medium-sized machine-gun battalion, and six fighter planes that were stationed at al-'Arish. Smaller units of artillery, anti-aircraft guns, and various auxiliary forces augmented the main force. However, the core of the expeditionary force was formed by the three regular battalions. Only after the Egyptian government and senate ordered the invasion of Palestine was a reinforcement effort undertaken. The reserve battalions were also sent in, but only after the invasion had been launched. The reinforcement push lasted from 22 May, when the 7th Reserve Battalion reached Gaza, until 3 June, when the 4th Reserve Battalion arrived. General Haydar reinforced some of the units by means of infantry forces that had been undergoing training or were engaged in other tasks.[9]

As noted, the mission of the Egyptian expeditionary force was to capture the southern part of the country. Although the available sources are vague about how deep a thrust the Egyptian High Command planned, the movement of the Egyptian forces in the first days of hostilities seemed to conform to the overall plan. Even if the Egyptians did not rule out the possibility of an eventual advance into the heart of the Jewish State, its initial moves were intended to achieve the more limited goal of seizing the nascent state's southern section.

Jewish Deployment

The Israeli forces that were deployed in the area of the Egyptian invasion were barely prepared to meet the advancing force. The Negev Brigade was responsible for the Jewish settlements south of the al-Majdal–al-Faluja line, consisting largely of kibbutzim; the Givati Brigade for the region north of that line, where the settlements were mainly cities and villages. At the time that the Egyptians crossed the international border, the Israeli 12th Brigade, which was responsible for the southern Negev, was a brigade in name only, as most of the brigade's 800 soldiers were dispersed among the 30 or so Negev settlements, which were scattered over a broad area: a platoon-size force in each settlement. The brigade commander had under his command only two companies that were not attached to settlements; hardly a force that

could meet the Egyptian expeditionary force; and, at any rate, on 15 May these forces were engaged in the implementation of the Plan Dalet missions. With the formation of the brigade in March 1948, it was decided that two new battalions would be added to the already existing 8th and 12th Battalions. The 7th Battalion was set up in April and formally declared on 14 May; its troops were new immigrants who had been taken to Palmah training camps after recently arriving from British detention camps in Cyprus. In other words, this battalion was formed while hostilities raged, a situation that affected its soldiers' combat ability—as well as the ability of the Negev Brigade to withstand the Egyptian push into its sector. The brigade's 9th Battalion was established in the midst of the Egyptian incursion, and had as its basis the raiding force which had been annexed to the Negev Brigade in mid-May. The 9th Battalion was of higher quality than the 7th, but even so it could only harass the Egyptian force, without preventing its advance northward and eastward. Both battalions, the 7th and the 9th, were poorly equipped; there were not even enough personal weapons to go around. It was only between March and May that shipments of light weapons and ammunition, which had been purchased from Czechoslovakia, arrived. By then the IDF had some 20,000 rifles, about 2,800 machine-guns, and 27 million bullets. It was now possible to arm every soldier with a rifle or a machine-gun.[10]

Further to the north in mid-May 1948, the Givati Brigade numbered more than 3,000 fighters, of whom 2,500 served in four infantry battalions. Their equipment was made up of rifles, sub-machine guns, 2- and 3-inch mortars, and a very small amount of anti-tank weaponry (the crude PIAT, that is, Projector Infantry Anti-Tank). When the invasion began, the Givati Brigade was not in place to meet the oncoming Egyptian column, as its forces were dispersed in operations on several fronts. On 15 May, the brigade's companies were engaged in executing Plan Dalet missions, some taking part in the battles at Latrun and on the road to Jerusalem, others completing the takeover of the Arab area within the brigade's sector of Gedera–Hatzor–Be'er Tuvia. Soldiers of the brigade helped evacuate children from Jewish settlements on the Egyptian invasion route, and the 54th Battalion assisted the underground LHI (Israel Freedom Fighters) organization in its ultimately unsuccessful attack on al-Ramla. Crucially, though, this activity went on until the last week in May, leaving the brigade no time to stabilize a defensive line in order to contain the Egyptian column.[11] However, settlements in the brigade's sector through which the advancing Egyptians might be able to break from the coast to interior roads on the plain were

fortified. In addition, a 'protective defense area' was established along a series of 'point', each of which functioned autonomously in its sector along the interior coastal plain. The General Staff allocated funds to mobilize manpower and build fortifications, and a cabled message authorized officers to call up civilians to help with the fortification works. Together with the civilians in the sector, about 2,000 residents and hundreds of vehicles were mobilized, and a concerted effort was launched to fortify the protected area, which concluded on 24 May.[12]

As noted, on the eve of the invasion both brigades, Givati and Negev, were engaged in completing the takeover of the Arab villages in their sectors. Their operations were not coordinated, as the Hagana brigades lacked a joint forward HQ. The brigade commanders communicated directly with the General Staff, which ran the entire war and as a result was unable to deal efficiently with the details of coordinating and deciding priorities among the various brigades.[13] This problem, in which the High Command was involved in matters which should have been discussed and decided at lower levels, did not escape Ben-Gurion's notice. He reflected on the need 'to view the country as three sections, north, center and south … over which commands possessing high authority should be established'.[14] That idea would not be actualized until August (see below). Until then, the commanders of the two brigades agreed to coordinate their activity, but this was an independent initiative: cooperation was limited and they did not work out a joint plan in the face of the Egyptian invasion. They worked out the line of the brigade sectors, which ran along the al-Majdal–al-Faluja road, and agreed to try to keep a corridor open between the southern and northern Negev, for which purpose they allocated troops to each other's brigades, as the need arose. However, there was no ongoing communication or coordination between the two brigades as the Egyptian invasion began.[15]

The Givati Brigade began its operations within the framework of Plan Dalet on 6 May and the Negev Brigade on the 10th. The Givati Brigade executed Operation Barak to consolidate Jewish control in the area around three key Arab locales—Yibna, Isdud and Majdal—and to force the Arabs out of the villages that were attacked.[16] Successfully executing this part of their missions, Givati conquered the villages of Bashshit, Bayt Darās, al-Batāni-al-Sharqi, al-Maghār, Zarnuqa and -al-Qubayba—some of which were outside the designated boundaries of the Jewish State—while forces of the Negev Brigade took Kawkaba, Hulayqat, Burayr, Najd and Simsim. The villagers fled in the face of the Jewish forces, and those who stayed were expelled.[17] In the course of Operation Barak, the Givati Brigade also blew up the Isdud bridge on

the coastal road, which a hostile force would probably have used to push north.[18] However, more pressing constraints prevented either brigade from fully completing its mission. On 12 May, the Givati Brigade was ordered to assist the 10th Brigade in the central sector, in the battle for the road to Jerusalem; while the 12th Brigade, which had extended the area under its control in the northern Negev and was moving to seize Be'er Sheva, was compelled instead to rush to the aid of beleaguered Kfar Darom and then to meet the Egyptian invasion. However, as noted, the brigade successfully overran the Arab settlements located in the territory allotted for the Jewish State in the southern section of the central bloc.[19]

Invasion

In order to facilitate the expeditionary force's journey to Palestine, its commander had to overcome some logistical problems. Normally, the Egyptian military forces received supplies from the British depots in Egypt. The British command in Egypt tried to minimize the logistical blow to the Egyptian Army even after the aggravation of the dispute between the two countries. At the same time, the Egyptian High Command's appraisal of the situation was that the war in Palestine would be brief and that Egypt would be able to go on drawing equipment and supplies from the depots as before. During April, as the Egyptian expeditionary force deployed in al-'Arish, supply bases were established there that were stocked by means of rail and sea shipments. When the war erupted, the entire ammunition supplies for the Egyptian Army, including unusable and faulty ammunition, were transferred from depots in the center of Egypt to the logistical center at al-'Arish. Left without ammunition reserves, on 20 May the Egyptian General Staff actually confiscated British supply ships that were carrying ammunition, artillery pieces and mortars for Jordan's Arab Legion. The expeditionary force commander also had a transport problem, as he lacked the means to bring his forces to the staging ground and then to the arena of combat. He asked the British for 40 railway cars in which to transport forces and equipment to Rafah, and the British Army agreed to supply the cars—even though it was obvious that they would be used in the invasion—but only as far as the international border. Only in the case of civilian equipment did the British permit the railway cars to proceed across the border into Gaza. Muhammad Nagib claimed afterward that he had hired the services of 21 local drivers and their vehicles to move

his troops from Rafah to Gaza.[20] Thus, with British and local assistance, the Egyptian division moved north, slowly and laboriously, on the coastal road from Rafah. It took ten days, beginning on 15 May, for the entire Egyptian force to enter Palestine.[21]

The military plans that were drawn up were consistent with what appeared to be the Arabs' operational goal. As already stated, the Arab League's military committee had assigned the Egyptian force the task of reaching Yibna, but in practice the Egyptians stopped in al-Majdal (today's Ashkelon) in the first stage; this was a far more convenient target for them. A thrust toward Yibna—30 km north of al-Majdal—would have left the flank of the Egyptian column exposed to attacks by the Jewish forces and susceptible to the danger of being cut in two, as the Egyptians advanced along one route, stretching their supply lines almost to the limit. General al-Mu'awi was well aware of the weakness of his supply system, and the lack of reserves of ammunition and stores.[22] He was also bothered by the presence of Jewish settlements near the route along which he was to advance, and to avert possible disruptions to his supply lines he attacked Jewish sites adjacent to the road. His attacks were only partially successful. At the same time, Egyptian planes struck at various targets, some of them well away from the Egyptian ground forces' line of advance. Egyptian bombers escorting the advancing troops even attacked Tel Aviv.[23] In the meantime, a force of unknown size landed from Egyptian boats near Majdal. The Egyptian vessels plied the Egypt–Gaza–Majdal route in the coming days as well, carrying supplies to the forces ashore.[24] The Egyptian offensive against settlements near their route of advance began the day after they crossed the border, when the 6th Battalion attacked Kibbutz Nirim, which posed a threat to Rafah, and the 1st Battalion tried to capture Kfar Darom. When both efforts failed, the two battalions evacuated the battle zone, joining the force which was still on its way to Gaza, and the Muslim Brothers forces replaced them. Jewish sites along or close to the invasion route came under artillery fire and air attacks.[25]

At that stage, the Egyptian force split into two: the regular army moving north and the irregulars pushing east. The reason for the split is unclear. According to one explanation, the Egyptian commander, a graduate of the Imperial Staff College, acted as Allenby did in his 1917 Palestine campaign: one army attacking up the coastal road, while the second went to Be'er Sheva and from thence onto Jerusalem.[26] The other explanation is that it was the result of the refusal of the Muslim Brothers' commander, 'Abd al-'Aziz, to accept al-Mu'awi's authority; and, in order to avert strife, they decided that the irregulars would press

on toward Be'er Sheva. Al-Mu'awi hoped that this move would bring in its wake a split within the Jewish forces as well, and that the presence of the irregulars on his east flank would act as a buffer against attacks by the Jewish forces from that side. As the irregulars moved east, they reinforced the Egyptian garrison that had received the police station at Iraq Suwaydan from the British, who turned it over to them on 12 May. The police station dominated the entire area, including Kibbutz Negba and the major junction that connected Majdal in the west with Bayt Jibrin in the east and the Negev in the south with the rest of the country to the north. Recognizing the importance of the site, al-Muawi dispatched a regular Egyptian Army unit to replace the Muslim Brothers in the fortress.[27] The rest of the irregulars reached Be'er Sheva on 17 May; part of this force turned south, toward 'Asluj and from there to 'Awja al-Hafir, while the remainder attacked the nearby community of Beyt Eshel, about 2 km south of Be'er Sheva, but were driven off.[28] The situation was again altered radically when 'Abd al-Aziz decided, contrary to orders, to advance toward Hebron and then make for Bethlehem. The Egyptian presence in Hebron caused friction with Jordan, as the city had been first occupied by the Arab Legion—the 12th Company was in place, and the Jordanian government had installed a military governor in the city. The Egyptian government did the same, and the city was divided between those obeying Transjordanian orders and those obeying Egyptian orders. After a few clashes, the two governments instructed their representatives to cooperate, and the tension gradually faded.[29]

The Northward Campaign of the Expeditionary Force

General al-Muawi set up his HQ in Gaza, where the Egyptian advance was held up until 19 May. The expeditionary force commander, who was waiting for reinforcements from Egypt, took advantage of the break to reorganize the reinforcement in the rear at Rafah and Gaza. In the meantime, his forces launched attacks on Jewish settlements in the region: Nirim, Sa'ad, Be'erot Yitzhak, Nir Am, Gvar Am, and Mekorot were only some of the settlements that came under constant air and artillery fire, beginning on 15 May.[30] Al-Muawi was ready to leave these villages as they were, only subjecting them to constant harassment and bombardment. He was more anxious to take over two settlements that, through their strategic locations, posed a significant threat to his line of supply: Yad Mordechai and Negba. The most urgent task was to occupy Yad Mordechai. Located on the main

road to the north, the kibbutz could become a means to cut off the advancing Egyptian forces from their rear. The other target was Negba, which could serve as a departure point for the Israeli forces to attack the strategic Iraqi Suwaydan garrison. Al-Muawi resumed moving his forces on 19 May and sent his forces to attack Yad Mordechai, and in the midst of the battle he dispatched a force from the 1st Battalion to Kibbutz Negba. The attack was repelled, but the Israeli settlers sustained casualties and property damage, and consequently the commander of the Givati Brigade, Shimon Avidan, warned the General Staff that the kibbutz members were in 'failing spirits'.[31] The threat that Negba posed to the Iraq Suwaydan facility induced the Egyptian command to try again, in the days that followed, to take over Negba. Between the Egyptian direct attacks, the settlement was subjected to continuous harassment by Egyptian fire. Local Arabs, who were encouraged by the Egyptians' operations, joined in the attacks against, and firing on, the kibbutz. As a result, the 53rd Battalion reinforced Negba.[32] Besides attempting direct attacks on Negba, Kfar Darom, and other places, the Egyptians systematically shelled and bombarded other Jewish settlements in the area. Kibbutz Nirim, for example, sustained artillery, air and infantry attacks, as did Sa'ad, Nir Am, Gvar Am and Mekorot. The hostilities went on from the start of the invasion until the first truce on 11 June 1948.[33]

Al-Muawi forces were more successful in Yad Mordechai, where a five-day period of fighting ended with the kibbutz members' decision to evacuate the site, contrary to the orders of the Negev Brigade. Egyptian forces entered the empty settlement the next day.[34] The Negev Brigade commander, Nahum Sarig, made plans to retake Yad Mordechai and asked the residents of the kibbutz to remain in the area in order to return home, but all they wanted was to be evacuated from the Negev. Sarig therefore decided to postpone the operation.[35]

Although the Egyptians did not encounter Israeli troops during their trek northward and even eastward, and all their military activity was taken at the initiative of the Egyptian command and was directed against civilian settlements, the expeditionary force sustained heavy losses. According to Israeli intelligence figures, more than 100 Egyptian soldiers were killed in the fighting at Nirim and Kfar Darom, while no fewer than 300 fell at Yad Mordechai. Far fewer Israelis were killed at this stage—no more than about 30.[36] The accuracy of the statistics on the Egyptian dead is open to question, as no Egyptian sources are available to corroborate them. In any event, even if the Israeli figures are exaggerated, they indicate the tremendous difficulty Egyptian soldiers had in mounting frontal assaults on fortified static positions.

In the Face of the Egyptian Forces

It was not only that the Israeli forces made no plans to meet and stop the invading Egyptian forces, and that in fact the 12th Brigade was unfit to confront a regular army, the Israeli commanders in the south were completely in the dark about the movements of the Egyptian Army. Reports about the Egyptian incursion reached the Negev Brigade from a source in the General Staff.[37] As to the preparations for the invasion, it has already been mentioned that Sadeh's suggestion to evacuate the southern settlements, and thus to shorten the Israeli defense lines, was rejected. Thus, the 12th Brigade deployment at this moment suited the situation which had prevailed before the invasion, during the intercommunal war, when the brigade's principal mission was to defend the Negev settlements against attacks and other forms of harassment by their Arab neighbors. This deployment, however, was unfit against an invading regular army. Consequently, most of the Negev Brigade troops, usually of platoon strength, were dispersed among the 30-odd settlements of the Negev, and only a few dozen soldiers remained who were mobile; this at a time when the Egyptian expedition force was making its way northward and eastward.[38] The Negev settlements played almost no role in the effort to hold back the Egyptians. Of the more than 30 settlements, only five or six were involved in the fighting against the Egyptians, and in each case it was the Egyptians who initiated the hostilities. The settlements themselves did not take the initiative in thwarting the Egyptians' advance, and those that lay close to the main road along which the invading forces were moving 'dug in and watched with gritted teeth and with faith as the enemy columns moved northward'.[39] In other words, they watched the Egyptians moving ahead, taking no action to stop them. The latter, therefore, encountered virtually no Israeli opposition as they moved north, and their advance came to a halt only when the commander of the expeditionary force decided to stop. At the same time, the Egyptians' attacks on Kfar Darom, Nirim, Negba and Yad Mordechai did slow their northward progress, giving the Israeli defenders a few more days to organize their, as yet unprepared, line of defense. As noted, the Egyptians also suffered a large number of casualties during these attacks.

The only active measure that the IDF forces took in the face of the advancing Egyptian forces was to launch harassment attacks against them. These raids were stipulated in Plan Dalet, which instructed the southern brigades to execute 'attacks on the enemy's bases and transportation routes across the country's borders, in the event of an

invasion'. The Negev Brigade thus viewed its mission as being 'to delay the enemy's rapid advance to the utmost and to disrupt its timetable'. However, this was easier said than done, because, as we have seen, most of the brigade's forces were assigned to guard the settlements. Following the brigade's request for reinforcements, the General Staff was bolstered on 17 May by the vanguard of a jeep-borne raiding unit that combined two companies which were operating against concentrations of Egyptian enemy and transportation.[40] However, the Negev Brigade command complained that the jeep unit was underequipped and undertrained, and that, in any event, they had turned up only after Yad Mordechai had fallen and the Egyptian column had encamped at Majdal. Until then, the two companies, both of which were seriously short of weapons and sabotage equipment, had done what they could to disrupt the Egyptians' advance. Beginning on 25 May, they and the reinforcements operated against the Egyptians and against local Arab forces within the framework of 'Operation Pharaoh'. Targets that were attacked included Egyptian artillery positions at Bayt Hanun, Arab villages whose residents had been expelled—including al-Muharraqa, Burayr and Simsim—a railway line linking Palestine with al-'Arish, the al-Dhahiriyya bridge on the Be'er Sheva–Hebron road, and Egyptian patrols and transport on the Rafah–Gaza road. Givati Brigade forces also attacked Egyptian targets around Majdal.[41] The General Staff did not expect these harassment tactics to do more than slow down the Egyptians and cause them losses, but even this was hardly accomplished, and the Egyptian column that began to move toward Majdal on 28 May encountered no serious interference. However, the fact that raids were carried out, even if they had little effect, was sufficient to make the Egyptian commander uneasy and concerned that he was vulnerable to attack by the Jewish forces.

The situation in the Negev did not alarm Ben-Gurion, who placed it low on his list of priorities; although he spoke a great deal about the importance of the Negev at this stage he did not back up his declarations with practical actions. The commander of the Negev Brigade, Nahum Sarig, warned insistently about the need to prepare for an invasion, and when it began he sent cables to Palmah headquarters outlining a possible containment strategy, but this necessitated mobile forces that he did not have.[42] It was not only that Ben-Gurion did not assign more forces to the south, he also thinned the forces already there when, on 27 May, he reassigned the Givati Brigade's 52nd Battalion to the central sector to reinforce the 7th Brigade, which was about to launch 'Operation Bin-Nun'—another unsuccessful attempt to capture the Latrun fortress.[43]

Ben-Gurion could feel that there was no reason to take drastic action after the report he received from Colonel David Marcus ('Mickey Stone'), who arrived, under Ben-Gurion's instruction, in the Negev on 20 May, together with the first group of the raiding force that would constitute the 12th Brigade's 9th Battalion. In his businesslike messages to the General Staff, Marcus stated that 'the situation is critical, but there is no cause for panic'. He recommended massive air activity against the Egyptian forces, singling out in particular the railway line from El-Arish into Palestine and the large logistical center in El-Arish itself for bombing. He also asked for various items to be sent to the Negev Brigade, notably mortars and anti-tank weapons.[44] Feeling free of any urgent need to take action in the south, Ben-Gurion asserted, on 24 May, that the major military effort would consist of 'the liberation of Jerusalem and the capture of its surrounding areas' and attacks against Lebanon, Transjordan and Syria. As for the Negev, he said only that 'we have to hold on' there.[45]

Another reason for the comparatively sanguine attitude of the Israeli leadership toward the Egyptians' incursion was the fact that the Jewish population in that sector was very meager, in sharp contrast to the situation in the center and even the north of the country; this consideration had a decisive effect on the deployment of the Israeli forces.[46] The initial underestimation of the Egyptians' operational capability also undoubtedly contributed to the view that the situation was not urgent. 'The [Egyptians] are poor fighters', was Sarig's impression after the second day of hostilities, and this impression was reinforced by intelligence appraisals that scorned the professional capabilities of the Egyptian officers and soldiers.[47] The comparative equanimity that Ben- Gurion displayed toward the southern front was also influenced by reports he received from British sources, according to which the Egyptians had set themselves a goal to draw the Israeli forces southward and thus reduce Israel's ability to commit large numbers of troops against the Jordanian Legion. An Israeli intelligence report stated that the Egyptians' move was part of a plan to detach the Negev from the Jewish State. The report added that 'according to advance reports, it was agreed that the Egyptians will advance as far as the Yibna–al-Masmiyya–Bayt Jibrin–Hebron–southern Dead Sea line'—a posture that would effectively split the north of the country from the south. In other words, Ben-Gurion's actions were based on the premise that the Egyptian Army did not intend to threaten the center of the country, and therefore posed no threat to Israel's existence.[48]

On 24 May, the Egyptian forces that were advancing up the coastal road from Yad Mordechai reached Majdal, at which point General al-Muawi, his supply lines stretched thin, decided to concentrate on widening his area of control to the east of his line of supply, thus removing any threat from that direction. The mission was assigned to the 9th Battalion, which was instructed to launch the attack on 29 May, but the Egyptian forces' plans incensed the Jordanians, who would thus be left to face the Israelis alone. Glubb requested that al-Muawi push ahead further north to ease the pressure on the Legion, but the Egyptian commander, fearing that he would encounter Israeli forces, refused.[49] Following the failed Israeli attack in Latrun on 25 May ('Operation Bin-Nun A'), the issue was taken to governmental level, with Amman asking the Egyptian government for assistance. As a result, al-Muawi was ordered to move north and relieve the pressure on the Jordanian forces at Latrun. Against his will, then, al-Muawi resumed his march north on 28 May, toward the Yibneh–Isdud area. The Egyptian force, which consisted (apparently) of three infantry battalions and an artillery battalion, were deployed at the ruins of the bridge on the main road leading into the heart of Israel.[50]

When the Egyptians stopped at the destroyed bridge next to Isdud, there were no Israeli forces to block their way or prevent them from continuing their advance. The Givati Brigade sent reports to the General Staff on the Egyptians' movements and the fact that they had stopped, but did not send troops to confront them. The destroyed bridge would not have prevented the Egyptian commander from advancing had he wished to do so, and the Givati command knew that very well.[51] The Egyptians apparently halted for strategic considerations; any further advance northward would have made the column's flank intolerably vulnerable to attack by the Israeli forces and also stretched the force's supply lines to breaking-point. Al-Muawi realized that his connection with the command in the rear ran along a route that was lined with tenacious Jewish settlements, and he was undoubtedly acquainted with the assessments that had been presented to the Palestine Committee concerning the strength of the Jewish forces. The report also stated that:

> It has already been proved that all the Jewish settlements, from the smallest to the largest, are well fortified … and all of them are fully equipped for defense. Reality has shown that it is impossible to overcome and capture these settlements solely with light weapons.

According to the report, the Jewish Army had a 'considerable number of aircraft' available, and the Israeli air attack of 29 May on the Egyptian force near Isdud must have impressed this on the Egyptians. Be that as

it may, the Egyptian advance came to a final halt near Yibna, in an area that was still outside the boundaries of the Jewish State under the November 1947 Partition Resolution.[52]

The reports of Egyptians' northward advance reached Givati Brigade headquarters on 29 May from observers who monitored the Egyptian forces and reported about 1,000 vehicles, a vastly exaggerated number, but one which induced the General Staff to send in the air force to attack the Egyptian column. Four Messerschmitt BF-109 planes, newly arrived from Czechoslovakia and quickly assembled, bombed the Egyptian column, now encamped opposite the destroyed bridge.[53] The attack was misguided: little damage was inflicted, but two Israeli planes were hit by ground fire and one pilot was killed.[54] In the meantime, the Givati Brigade prepared for the possibility that the Egyptians would try to continue their northward drive. On the night of 29–30 May, four of the brigade's battalions—the 51st, 52nd, 54th and 55th—established footholds at various points along the Egyptians' proposed route in the form of a ring, closing off possible thrusts toward the east or the north into the area of the Jewish State. Two of the battalions were ordered to raid the encamped force.[55]

At the same time, artillery, dispatched by the General Staff to assist the brigade, began shelling the Egyptian forces. The Egyptians responded by increasing the scope of their firing at settlements in the area, including Nitsanim, Be'er Tuvia, Bitsaron, and Gan Yibneh; many of their residents had already fled in the face of the advancing Egyptian column, and the heavy artillery pounding intensified the flight. Avidan felt it necessary to issue an order forbidding the men to leave the combat area, and the brigade's headquarters decided to punish whoever fled, using measures which included confiscating their property.[56] The artillery barrage, the fear of a thrust forward by the Egyptians, and the desire to boost the brigade's sagging morale prompted a decision by the 5th Brigade's senior staff to dispatch three battalions (the 53rd, 54th and 55th) on sabotage and raiding missions against the Egyptians on the night of 30/31 May. However, the Israeli raiders had no information as to the Egyptians' mode of deployment or their defensive capabilities. In the event, it emerged that the Egyptian forces were well fortified and that 'any attack in one of the enemy's sectors activates a volley of fire that is directed along set lines and at pre-sighted targets'. The Israeli forces entering the Egyptian camp were quickly discovered and were caught in crossfire that included mortars. Losses, though, were minor, and less than a dozen Israeli soldiers were killed in the unsuccessful raid.[57]

Following the initial anxiety at the reports of the Egyptian column's advance, matters calmed down a bit when the General Staff came into possession of more accurate information about the actual scope and makeup of the invading force. The Egyptians turned out to have 200 unarmored vehicles and were said to be 'crouching'. The General Staff's envoy in the south, Mundak Pasternak (Moshe Bar-Tikva), passed on this information to Ben-Gurion and recommended reinforcing the Givati Brigade with two new battalions, one made up of former fighters from the IZL underground and the other, new recruits from the 8th Brigade.[58] He also urged the tightening of the Israeli ring around the Egyptians and the capture of the Arab village of Yibna. The brigade mobilized two additional battalions of its own, in addition to the two just mentioned. The assignment to take Yibna was given to the IZL battalion, which was bolstered by companies from the 54th and 55th Battalions. Again, however, the attack was conducted without prior intelligence and without a close knowledge of the sector; the force returned at dawn, without accomplishing its mission.[59]

In the Wake of the Cease-Fire

By late May–early June, as cease-fire negotiations gained momentum, the Egyptians were in a strong position. Their forces had acquired substantial territory almost without a fight, and by late May it seemed that as the Jewish forces did not collapse in the face of the Arab Armies, it would not be possible to gain any more ground. The question now, was where to go from here? The Security Council had suggested a way out, and the Egyptians acted on the assumption that complying with the Security Council served their interests in more than one aspect. The problem was, how to accept the cease-fire without being seen as betraying the Arab cause?[60]

There was another problem—what should be done with Palestine? Egypt had no direct, apparent territorial claims in Palestine; but it did prefer that if an Arab government were established in Palestine, it should be friendly. Embracing the ex-Mufti could solve that problem: he was Abdullah's enemy, and therefore he would not allow Jordan to gain a foothold in an Arab Palestine; and, besides, the ex-Mufti's fear of Abdullah's aspirations would draw him closer to Egypt. Thus, preparing the road toward the post-war phase, the Egyptian government suggested that the Arabs should establish and recognize a unitary state over the whole of Palestine. This idea was probably prompted by the ex-

Mufti, who had arrived in Cairo from Syria, but Transjordan and Iraq opposed it. Hence it was decided to maintain the original Arab League decision that whatever part of Palestine was rescued should be placed under military rule until its inhabitants were in a position to choose their future status for themselves. The Egyptian suggestion exposed the potential friction that existed between themselves and Jordan, as Jordan's Prime Minister assumed that of all the states participating in the war, only Transjordan and Egypt would have serious ambitions to acquire areas of Palestine. Saudi Arabia and Iraq were remote. Syria was adjacent to a strongly held Jewish area and Lebanon did not want the addition of a big block with twice the Moslem population. However, friction was not unavoidable, as the Prime Minister saw no objection to Egypt acquiring the Negev provided that Transjordan obtained access to the sea in the Gaza area.[61] Another cause for friction was the appointment, in early June, of Major General Ahmad Salim Pasha as the Administrative Governor of those areas in Palestine that were occupied by the Egyptian forces.[62]

Diplomatic activity could not but influence events on the battlefield. As the cease-fire negotiations with the UN mediator, Folke Bernadotte, continued, the Israelis operated on the assumption that a truce might shortly come into effect. The immediate effect of this realization was an order by the General Staff to the Givati Brigade to launch an all-out attack on the Egyptian force at Isdud with the aim of destroying it. The usual explanation offered for the decision to strike was concern that the Egyptians would try to 'keep pushing northward toward Tel Aviv, which was only 32 kilometers away'.[63] However, no such consideration is discernible in the attack order, codenamed 'Pleshet'. It stated that the Egyptians' 'aim is not known … It must be assumed that this is a diversionary force that has the task of pinning down our forces in order to enable another [Egyptian] force to operate in the area.'[64] The identity of the 'other force' remains a mystery, but it is perfectly clear that no one on the General Staff seriously thought that the Egyptians were about to push north. The underlying reason for the decision to attack and annihilate the Egyptian column was, probably, the assessment that the success of the operation would free forces that could then be rushed to assist in the battle for the road to Jerusalem, which Ben-Gurion considered crucial. Both Ben-Gurion and the General Staff believed—on the basis of the low opinion in which they held the Egyptians' combat capability—that it was possible to achieve this ambitious plan. Afterward, if the truce failed to come into effect, it would be possible 'to plan the operation for the liberation of Jerusalem', Ben-Gurion maintained.[65]

The aim of 'Operation Pleshet' was to destroy the 'enemy force' by means of frontal attacks on the Egyptian concentration in the Isdud area and to occupy the territory held.[66] Again, however, the attacking forces did not know exactly what they were up against or exactly where the Egyptian forces were located. In the order, all the references to the Egyptian formation were couched in terms of 'unknown', 'as conjectured', or 'we have to assume'.[67] In fact, the Egyptians' deployment had undergone certain changes since the column had set out northward from Majdal. The 1st Battalion was now encamped on the Iraq Suwaydan–al-Faluja–Bayt Jibrin axis; the 2nd Battalion was deployed in the area between the Isdud train station and the village itself; while the 9th Battalion, considered the best of the Egyptian units, was based in the area between the Isdud Bridge and the train station. A company of medium-sized machine-guns took up positions between the 2nd and 9th Battalions, strengthening the Egyptian lines. The Egyptian defenses were further reinforced by the deployment of two armored platoons, a light tank platoon, and a battery of 25-pound and 3.7-inch guns. The 9th Battalion, which had been the target of the combat patrols on the night of 30/31 May, had been reinforced with additional medium-sized machine-guns. All told, the Egyptian fighting force was about 2,300-strong.[68]

The Israelis had exactly half that number of combat personnel. The Givati Brigade was reinforced by the Negev Brigade's 7th Battalion and by companies from its commando battalion. The soldiers of the 7th Battalion were new immigrants who had acquired their military training in battle. The attack was set for the night of 1/2 June, with two forces slated to launch the assault at two separate points. As the Israeli forces were making their way toward the Egyptian lines, they received an order calling off the operation in the wake of reports that the Egyptians had accepted the Security Council's call for a truce.[69] However, it soon turned out that the actual time that the truce was to come into effect had not yet been set.[70] The mistake became clear later, but in the meantime, the Egyptians were trying again to take Negba; they were driven back. However, the Israeli leadership was under the impression that the Egyptians were violating the truce. It did not take long before the Israelis realized their mistake about the truce, but Ben-Gurion and the General Staff had nevertheless decided to continue fighting and to implement the assault at Isdud.[71]

Operation Pleshet was launched on the night of 2 June 1948, but failed. The Egyptians repulsed the Israeli forces and in some cases pursued them as they retreated. More than 50 Israeli soldiers were killed or reported missing and about the same number were wounded.[72] A

decade later, Avidan regretted having carried out the attack, but there is no record of his objection to the plan at the time it was discussed.[73] In fact, failure was almost inevitable given the plan that was drawn up for the operation. The main problem, as the semi-official history of the Givati Brigade shows, was that those planning the operation did not address the fact that a defensive force enjoys an advantage over an attacking force, nor did they take into account the serious numerical inferiority of the Israeli force. The battle plan did not recognize, and consequently failed to take advantage of, the fact that the Egyptian lines, though dense, were spread over a fairly wide area. Instead of concentrating the effort at one point and trying to breach the lines or, alternatively, severing the Egyptians from their reinforcements by attacking the more southerly 2nd Battalion, the Israelis split their forces into small units, each of which was assigned a specific sector to breach. In every sector the attacking forces were numerically inferior and possessed less effective firepower. The artillery at their disposal was scant and, according to Avidan, was not used intelligently. It did not take a great effort for the dense Egyptian defensive alignment, based on concentrated machine-gun and artillery fire, to break the attack. Disparagement of the Egyptians' combat ability, defective intelligence, and a faulty battle plan were the major factors that led to the failure of this attempt to destroy and rout the Egyptian forces around Isdud.[74]

Nevertheless, Israeli historiography takes pride in the accomplishment of Operation Pleshet, viewing it, despite the failure, as 'a strategic victory of supreme and decisive importance'.[75] However, there is no reason to exaggerate the impact of the battle on the Egyptians' war plans. Certainly, if the Israeli forces had collapsed in the face of the Egyptian column, al-Muawi would have advanced northward, but there is no evidence that the Egyptian general considered this a realistic prospect. The Egyptians had limited operative objectives—their goal was, at most, to capture the Arab village of Yibneh—and this was also the assessment of Hagana intelligence.[76] As we saw, the Egyptian column came to a halt at the ruins of the Isdud Bridge not because Israeli forces contained it. Indeed, it should be recalled that al-Muawi reached Isdud with the aim of pinning down Israeli forces in the southern sector and thus taking some of the pressure off the Jordanians at Latrun only because he was ordered to. Ben-Gurion also wanted to attack the Egyptians so that he could free more troops to help at Latrun. From their point of view, the Egyptians accomplished their goal, as the invading force was able to repulse an attack

and thus compel the Israelis to continue committing troops to the south.

Even though he regarded his actions to that point as a success, it was clear to al-Muawi that even if the Israeli attack had failed, his forces' situation was shaky. The Egyptians' need to expand their foothold became still more acute after 3 June, when the Givati Brigade captured Yibna and the surrounding area. (After the previous attempt, on 30 May, had failed.) All the village residents had fled before the attack, and the village was taken without a fight.[77] The fact that the Israelis were now in control of the Yibna area reduced the Egyptians' maneuverability—already confined to a narrow strip along the coast—even further. It was therefore essential for al-Muawi to extend the area under his control and remove a possible threat from his flank. At the same time, the Israeli commanders were drawing up plans to achieve the opposite result: to tighten the noose around the Egyptian force and, ultimately, to dispose of it. The Egyptians prepared a plan to occupy Kibbutz Nitsanim with the 9th Riflemen's Battalion, and to remove the threat to their supply-lines,[78] and at the same time, the Givati command prepared a plan that would place the Egyptian force under siege by seizing dominant positions south of and around the Egyptian encampment.[79]

The Egyptians moved first, their goal Nitsanim, which was located on the Egyptian's supply route. Following a heavy artillery barrage, which started at midnight on 6/7 June and lasted until the early morning, an Egyptian battalion stormed the kibbutz, while a blocking force moved to seize a nearby strategic hill ('Hill 69') which overlooked the field of battle, in order to prevent Israeli forces from rushing to the aid of the kibbutz. Reinforced by four tanks, the Egyptian soldiers managed to penetrate the kibbutz's first line of defense and then progressed gradually to complete the capture of Nitsanim. The speed with which the Egyptians operated was astonishing, but equally astonishing was the fact that Givati Brigade headquarters remained completely in the dark about the dramatic events. A call for help finally reached the Givati Brigade in the afternoon, but by then it was too late.[80]

The fall of Nitsanim remained an unhealed wound in the history of the Givati Brigade. Following the battle, in which more than 100 kibbutz members and soldiers from the IDF reinforcements were taken captive, the brigade issued a 'combat page', which was prepared by its culture officer, the poet Abba Kovner. The 'page' was a fierce indictment of the kibbutz members; but they were not to blame for the débâcle. Contrary to the charges and allegations made against them, the 70 kibbutz members fought shoulder to shoulder with the 80 or so

soldiers from the Givati Brigade's 53rd Battalion that provided reinforcements, using all the weapons that were available to them. One company of the reinforcements had arrived in March and a second on 3 June, on the very eve of the battle; however, neither company was of high combat caliber, and to compound the situation they were new recruits who lacked experience. The kibbutz members were underequipped, as the parent settlement organization with which Nitsanim was connected had not acquired sufficient weapons to meet its needs, and the Givati Brigade had not acted to meet these deficiencies. The wireless radio on the kibbutz was not operating due to a technical fault, and the fortifications were inadequate. Even Nitsanim's topographical situation worked against it: it was possible to get very close to the site almost without hindrance.[81] This inadequate force faced a coordinated offensive by a regular battalion backed by tanks. If that was not enough, the residents of Nitsanim also had to contend with false rumors about the way they fought and surrendered. In fact, the battle lasted 15 hours from the time the Egyptians launched their softening-up barrage, and the actual ground assault went on for seven hours.[82]

The allegations of 'shell-shock' that were hurled at the kibbutz by the 5th Brigade should be seen in the broader context of the behavior of the civilian population in the Givati Brigade's sector and, indeed, throughout the Negev. Basically, the population in the south was divided into two groups: those who lived on kibbutzim and those who lived in rural or urban localities. There were 33 settlements in the sector covered by the Negev Brigade, nearly all of them kibbutzim,[83] whereas the Givati Brigade's sector contained mainly rural or urban settlements. The kibbutzim in the area covered by the Negev Brigade were linked to umbrella organizations, which during the months before May 1948 provided any necessary assistance to get them ready for the invasion. Indeed, the Negev Brigade can be said to have 'sprung' from these kibbutzim, and its troops were, as we have seen, dispersed throughout the settlements when the invasion began.[84] Many of these settlements sustained serious damage and normal life in them was completely disrupted. As soon as the invasion began, nearly all the noncombatants were evacuated: women (apart from those who contributed to the war effort), children and noncombatant men (unless they were married to women who took part in the fighting). The civilian system effectively collapsed; the Negev Committee, which had been established in December 1947 as a mark of the importance the Yishuv leadership attributed to the Negev, all but ceased to function, meeting only twice between 14 May and the first truce a month later. The cessation of civil-

ian activity in the Negev forced residents to stop working and the Jewish Agency assumed responsibility for subsidizing the settler-fighters.[85] In the first days, the general feeling among the settlers, based on the success in repelling the Egyptian attacks at Kfar Darom and Nirim, was that it was possible to ward off the invaders even with their existing means. However, the fall of Yad Mordechai, which showed that the Egyptians were capable of subduing a Jewish settlement, dealt a severe blow to morale.[86] Morale reached such a low ebb that Nahum Sarig, the 12th Brigade commander, was afraid that a direct Egyptian assault on settlements such as Gvar Am and Nir Am, which had already suffered heavy shelling, would result in additional Israeli capitulations.[87] The ability of the local residents to fight back was also seriously diminished due to their lack of weapons, some of which had been taken by the brigade commanders in an effort to deal with their arms shortages. Many of the speakers at a meeting called by the Defense Minister, David Ben-Gurion, argued that this had badly weakened the settlements.[88] This situation also badly affected their morale.

Conditions were even worse in the Givati Brigade's sector, which consisted mainly of rural or urban settlements whose residents were therefore not organized. Givati troops were stationed in only a few of localities, so no direct connection was formed between the civilian population and the military, in contrast to the Negev Brigade area. Most of the civilian localities in the Givati sector remained uninvolved in the fighting, but those that were attacked reacted strongly. An extreme example was the abandonment of Kfar Uriya by its residents on 25 May, and of Gan Yibneh by its inhabitants, as the Egyptian column advanced from Majdal to Isdud. As already mentioned, Shimon Avidan, the Givati Brigade commander, threatened to confiscate the property of those who fled.[89] The fact that the population in this sector was rural or urban in character, together with a feeling of estrangement between the residents and the brigade and the absence of any social or institutional support for the population, intensified the military commander's feeling that only a particularly fierce response would be able to prevent Nitsanim from becoming the start of a disastrous chain reaction.

Despite the débâcle at Nitsanim, the Givati Brigade went ahead with its plan to attack the Egyptian encampment around Isdud. It is illuminating to compare the order given for Operation Pleshet with that for the Isdud attack. Whereas in Operation Pleshet the Givati Brigade mission was to destroy the Egyptian force, this time the goal was worded far more cautiously: 'To deliver a blow to the heavy concentration of the Egyptian Army.' The assault was to be carried out in stages and to pro-

ceed only if the first steps—an attack on an external position of the Egyptians near the railway station and the capture of a 'limited area' of Isdud—were successful. In that case, the reserve forces would be sent into action, although their mission was not clearly defined. Another task to be carried out in parallel was the capture of a strategic position—'Hill 69'—which controlled the Majdal–Isdud road and Nitsanim. The aim of this was to facilitate the 'blocking of the enemy's retreat';[90] as the Givati Brigade's historian notes, the main purpose of the action was harassment. The missions themselves and the vagueness about the tasks of the reserve units shows that the brigade's command did not expect to deal the Egyptians a decisive blow, but only to discomfit them and force them to adopt a defensive posture—with the underlying aim of preventing them from pushing north toward Tel Aviv.[91]

The attack began on the night of 7/8 June, and was directed against three targets: the 52nd Battalion attacked the village of Isdud, and the 12th Brigade's 7th Battalion attacked the Egyptian formation at the Isdud railway station. The attack failed. Isdud was taken, but that was because the Egyptian forces that were positioned there had left to reinforce the Egyptian deployment which was under attack at the railway station, and these combined forces thwarted the Israeli attacking forces. In the wake of that failure, Givati headquarters ordered the 52nd Battalion to withdraw from the village and return to its base. The only success was registered by the 53rd Battalion, which occupied the deserted 'Hill 69'. The battalion dug in and for several days was not bothered by the Egyptians, despite the sensitive location of the hilltop from the point of view of Egyptian forces. The reason for this may have been that the battalion made no effort to disrupt the Egyptians' movements on the Majdal–Isdud road.[92]

The strategic outpost atop the hill served the Givati Brigade as a base from which to attempt to recapture Nitsanim. On 9 June, the General Staff ordered the brigade to prepare for the truce by executing several missions that would place its forces in a more convenient position—including the recapture of Nitsanim and the tightening of control around the area held by the Egyptians. The brigade was also ordered to assume responsibility for the Iraq Suwaydan site after its planned capture by the 12th Brigade.[93] The force that was assigned to the takeover of Nitsanim was one company from the 52nd Battalion, as it was believed that the Egyptians had left the kibbutz. The brigade's other battalions were to deploy in the area around and opposite the Egyptian force within the boundaries of the Givati Brigade's sector of control.[94] The entire move was an abysmal failure. Two companies made their way

to 'Hill 69', but only one company made it, the second company got lost on the way and only after hours of wandering about located the road to the kibbutz. The company that was assigned to the settlement's occupation encountered a well-fortified Egyptian line and came under heavy fire, including a coordinated artillery barrage by Egyptian gunners in Isdud. At dawn the unit retreated to 'Hill 69'.[95] Capitalizing on the rout of the Israeli forces, the Egyptians mounted an attack on 'Hill 69' that combined armored units, heavy machine-guns, and infantry, backed up by artillery. At about noon on 10 June the mission was accomplished and 'Hill 69' reverted to Egyptian hands. The Egyptians left the site that evening but ensured that it stayed empty by pounding it with artillery. Thus, as the truce began, the Egyptians remained in Nitsanim and the Israelis were not in control of 'Hill 69'.[96] As if to add to that day's setbacks, the Jordanian Legion captured Kibbutz Gezer, in the Latrun area, on the same day.[97]

The failed attack on Nitsanim had only a marginal impact on the general battle situation, but this episode has to be seen in a broader context, as it illustrates the approach of the Givati Brigade, which above all was characterized by a narrow outlook as it moved to take on the Egyptians. The speed with which Avidan acted, both at the beginning of June and then in trying to recapture Nitsanim, was undoubtedly influenced by his assessment that action was urgent in order to prevent a collapse in the civilian sector. Still, his behavior demonstrated his basic approach to military operations. Both in June, and later, in 'Operation Yoav' (October 1948), Avidan opted clearly for direct frontal attack with the aim of destroying enemy forces, rather than an approach that sought to find a solution to a military problem by means other than a head-on clash. In any event, the fiascoes of 10 June did not change Ben-Gurion's mind about the order of priorities for the continuation of the war. The southern front continued to be a low priority: 'In the south we will face mainly Egypt, and its turn will come after we break the force of the Legion and remove Lebanon from the game,' he wrote in his diary.[98]

Last Moves of War in the Face of the Truce

With the failure of Operation Pleshet, the Israeli General Staff still sought ways to offset the Egyptians' military achievements by launching operations before the cease-fire came into effect; this time along the main road to the southern Negev. A plan was drawn up for the Israeli forces that would simultaneously prevent the severance of the Negev

and cut the Egyptian lines along the al-Majal–al-Faluja road. Another planned move had the goal of strengthening the Israeli defenses in the Givati Brigade's sector, in what was in fact a morale-boosting operation. The brigade was called on to capture a number of Arab villages in its area of responsibility in what was basically a continuation of Plan Dalet, in which Israeli forces were to seize control of the border areas of the new state. Only local Arab civilians were in the villages that were captured, but the success of the operation had not only strategic but also morale implications. The brigade command was particularly anxious to boost morale in the 51st Battalion, following its stinging defeat on 'Hill 69' by dispatching it to execute a comparatively simple mission; the taking of the villages fitted the bill perfectly.[99]

The principal war effort, however, was put into an attempt to occupy the Iraq Suwaydan police fortress, which dominated the main north–south road leading to and from the southern Negev. Taking this facility would also effectively result in the achievement of the second goal, as it would cut off the Egyptian force on the east–west axis. Also planned was the capture of 'Asluj, on the 'Awja–Be'er Sheva road, thus severing a secondary Egyptian supply route. The Negev Brigade commander also wanted to cut off the main transport and supply route of the Egyptian expeditionary force by recapturing Yad Mordechai, but this idea was thwarted by the refusal of the kibbutz residents to return to the settlement after its fall.[100]

The Negev Brigade's 7th Battalion, which had been seconded to Givati for a week, now returned to its home base and was assigned the mission of taking Iraq Suwaydan. Units of the brigade's raiding force reinforced the battalion. The attack was carried out somewhat hastily, as the Israeli forces reached the area directly from the battleground at Isdud, shortly before sunrise. While the Israeli forces attacked, day broke, and the Egyptians intensified their fire, forcing the Israeli forces to retreat. Sarig claimed that the Egyptians holding the fortress had actually pulled back to the nearby village under the Israeli pressure but that the commanding officer had not been informed about this, with the result that the attacking force retreated instead of advancing.[101] The failure of the Israeli forces to seize the fortress and thus open the way south was further aggravated by the fact that, at dawn on 11 June, with the truce due to take effect at any moment, Egyptian forces captured a key point that overlooked the main junction near the fortress, thus blocking the road that had linked the Negev Brigade's sector with the Givati Brigade's sector and the north of the country. An attempt by a unit of the raiding force, which had taken part in the night-fighting at the

fortress, to remove the Egyptians from the junction failed, and the road to the Negev was cut off.[102]

Greater success, though it was the prelude to tragedy, was enjoyed by the forces operating in the other part of the Negev in the village of 'Asluj on the'Awja–Be'er Sheva road. The 8th Battalion, supported by raiding forces, successfully attacked the police station at that site, which was held by an Egyptian company and local armed Arabs. But a heavy price was paid for this victory. The Egyptians had booby-trapped the building and the Israeli forces that entered triggered the bomb. The building collapsed, killing 13 soldiers.[103] Still, the battalion could take pride in the fact that this was the first time an Israeli force had captured a site held by the Egyptians. However, the failure at Iraq Suwaydan and the decision not to try to recapture Yad Mordechai left the strategic value of the overall operation in considerable doubt, since the Egyptians' deployment had not been disrupted. Indeed, the Egyptians overcame the barrier that existed on their route from 'Awja northward by building a Burma Road that bypassed the site that had fallen; the connection between their forces on the 'Awja–Be'er Sheva–Hebron road was maintained intact.[104]

On 11 June, the General Staff ordered all forces to cease fire as the truce took effect.[105] The truce was also used to continue 'cleansing' the Arabs from Jewish-controlled areas: for example, the end of June, Givati forces were ordered 'to prevent the penetration of the enemy into the captured villages or those captured by us', and to achieve this they were authorized 'to utilize the most extreme methods; kill them if necessary'. The purpose of the operation was to prevent 'espionage and infiltration and to step up Jewish supervision of the area'.[106] Already, at this early stage, one finds indications of two elements of what would harden into the Israeli leadership's policy toward the Palestine Arabs and those among them who became refugees: the total prevention of infiltration into Israeli territory and the expulsion of Arabs from their homes in villages located close to the combat zones. These tendencies would be heightened as the Israeli forces moved deeper into Arab-populated areas and as attempts to cross into Israeli territory increased.

NOTES

1. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 21 December 1947, E12132, FO 371/61583; Mayer, 'Egypt's 1948 Invasion of Palestine', *MES* Vol. 22, No. 1, January 1986, p. 22; Michael J. Cohen, *Fighting World War Three from the Middle East* (London: Frank Cass, 1997) pp. 62–94.

2. Jon Kimche and David Kimche, *Both Sides of the Hill: Britain and the Palestine War* (London, 1960), p. 149; Mayer, 'Egypt's 1948 Invasion', p. 20; Naguib, *Egypt's Destination*, p. 17.
3. Conversation between Hassan Bey Yūsuf and Mr Dove on 17 December 1947, FO 141/1265; E.A. Chapman-Andrews to E. Bevin, 17 January 1948, ibid.; Nagib, *Egypt's Destination*, pp. 19, 20–1.
4. R.C.'s Minute, 19 May 1948, FO 141/1246.
5. Memorandum of conversation with Gallad Bay (unsigned), 7 July 1948, FO 371/69193.
6. For another perspective of the Lebanese–Iraqi visit see Maddy-Weitzman, *Crystallization*, pp. 38–9, 122–3; Walid Khalidi, 'The Arab Perspective', in Wm. Roger Louis and Robert W. Stookey (eds), *The End of the Palestine Mandate* (London, 1986), pp. 114–15.
7. Sir R. Campbell, Cairo to Foreign Office, 15 May 1948, E6307, FO 371/68372; Military Intelligence Review, June 1948, WO 208/4866; Mayer, 'Egypt's 1948 Invasion of Palestine', p. 28.
8. From Amman to Cairo, 1 May 1948, FO 141/1249; from HQ B.T.E. to Cairo, 15 May 1948, ibid.; the order of battle of the Egyptians' invading force can be found in Operations/Intelligence: 'The Egyptian Army in the Land of Israel, 26 July 1948', HA 105/138.
9. The order to establish the Egyptian expeditionary force can be found in Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 18–19 and see also pp. 24–8; Ilan, *The Origin of the Arab–Israeli Arms Race*, pp. 40–1; Kimche, *Both Sides of the Hill*, p. 149; Gamal 'Abd al-Nāsir, 'Memoirs of the First Palestine War', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (1972), p. 9.
10. Ilan, *The Origin of the Arab–Israeli Arms Race*, pp. 157–61; cable from Palmah HQ to General Staff/Operations Branch, 14 May 1948, IDF Archives, 661/69/36; *Ha'Palmah Book 2*, pp. 824, 828–9, 848–50; Gelber, *The Nucleus of a Hebrew Army*, pp. 235–6; Moshe Givati, *In the Desert and Fire Path* (Tel Aviv, 1994) (Hebrew), p. 67; Ya'akov Markovitzky, *Fighting Ember* (Tel Aviv, 1995) (Hebrew), pp. 138–9.
11. Plan Dalet, 10 March 1948, IDF Archives, 922/75/595; Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 33–4, 45–6; Givati cable to Yadin, 18 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175.
12. Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 46–9.
13. Zvi Ayalon, 'Additional Issues at the High Command Level', *Symposium held on April 24, 1991: Stopping the Invasion* (Yad Tabenkin, July 1992) (Hebrew), p. 17.
14. BGWD, p. 439, entry for 19 May 1948.
15. Givati, *In the Desert*, p. 49.
16. Givati Brigade/Operations: 'Operation Barak Order', 9 May 1948; Givati Brigade/Operations: 'Operation Barak Order Phase 2', quoted in *Maarakhot* 263–4, June 1978, pp. 49–50; Givati, ibid.
17. Cable from 'Sergei' to General Staff/Operations Branch, 14 May 1948, IDF Archives, 922/75/1175; Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, p. 14; *H'Palmah Book* 2, p. 849; Morris, *The Origins of the Palestinian Refugees Problem*, pp. 175–8.
18. Givati Brigade/Operations: 'Operation Barak Order Phase 2'; Givati cable to Operations Branch/Intelligence, 14 May 1948, IDF Archives, 922/75/1175; Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 81–2.
19. Morris, *The Origins of the Palestinian Refugee Problem*.
20. HQ B.T.E. to Cairo, 10 May 1948, FO 141/1249; Naguib, *Egypt's Destiny*, p. 21; Ilan, *The Origin of the Arab–Israeli Arms Race*, p. 41.
21. 'Abd al-Nāsir, 'Memoirs', p. 9.
22. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 24 May 1948, E6819, FO 371/68373.

23. *Hanegev Brigade in War*, pp. 66, 70–1; BGWD, p. 427, entry for 17 May 1948 and p. 432, entry for 17 May 1948, and p. 438, entry for 18 May 1948. On the fears of the Egyptian commander and his cautious planning of the campaign see Kimche, *Both Sides of the Hill*, pp. 149–50.
24. Cable from Palmah HQ to General Staff/Operations, 14 May 1948, IDFA 661/69/36.
25. 'Report of Events in the Negev Sector', 15 May 1948, HA 105/124/1; Sergei's cables to the Council, 15 May 1948 and 16 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175. Sergei was the code name of the 12th Brigade commander, Nahum Sarig. The Council was the code name of the Hagana's Palmah; Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, p. 39; BGWD, p. 449, entry for 22 May 1948; Kamal Ismail al-Sharif, 'The Muslim Brothers in the Palestine War', *In Enemy Eyes*, pp. 83–4.
26. Telegram no. 288 from Mr Broadmead, Damascus to Foreign Office, 18 May 1948, CO 537/5315.
27. BGWD, p. 449, entry for 22 May 1948.
28. 'Report of Events in the Negev Sector', No. 1, 15 August 1948, IDFA, 7011/49/5; Letter to the Deputy Chief of the HQ [Egyptian Invasion] Force to HQ Volunteers Forces, 3 June 1948, HA 105/124/1; Intelligence Report: 'Survey of the Situation in the Negev Ahead of the Ceasefire', 17 June 1948, HA 105/124/1; Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 20, 41; *Hanegev Brigade in War*, p. 60; *In Enemy Eyes*, pp. 85–6; Amiad Brezner, *The Struggle on the Negev, 1941–1948* (Tel Aviv, 1994) (Hebrew), p. 236.
29. Letter to the Deputy Chief of the HQ [Egyptian Invasion] Force to HQ Volunteers Forces, 3 June 1948, HA 105/124/1; Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 7 June 1948, E7639, FO 371/68510; Monthly Report on Transjordan for the month of June 1948, E9244, FO 371/68845; Intelligence Report: 'Survey of the Situation in the Negev Ahead of the Ceasefire', 17 June 1948, HA 105/124/1; al-Sharif, 'The Muslim Brothers in the Palestine War', pp. 85–6.
30. Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 39–40; 'Report of Events in the Negev Sector', No. 1, 15 August 1948, HA 7011/49/5; Sergei's cables to the Council and to Yadin, 15–31 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175.
31. Givati cables to Operations/Intelligence, 21 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; Sergei's cables to General Staff and Givati to Yadin, 22 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 5–63.
32. Givati cables to Yadin, 25 May 1948, and 2 June 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; Operations/Operation Branch: 'Inquiry of the War's Lessons [Negba]', 4 July 1949, IDFA 2539/50/6; Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 63–73.
33. *Hanegev Brigade in War*, pp. 50–3.
34. 12th Brigade HQ: 'Report on the Attack on Yad Mordechai', 10 March 1949, IDFA 2539/50/34; Sergei cable to Operations/General Staff, 19 May 1948, and Sergei cable to Council, 24 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; 'Inquiry of the War's Lessons: Yad Mordechai, its Defense and the Test of Battle', August 1949, IDFA 121/50/207 (hereafter: *Inquiry*, Yad Mordechai); Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 41–2; see also Margaret Larkin, *The Sun Did Not Stand Still* (Tel Aviv, 1993) (Hebrew).
35. Sergei telegram to the General Staff, 24 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175.
36. Intelligence Report, 17 June 1948, HA 105/124/1; Palmah Fatalities, IDFA 649/1972/19.
37. Sergei's telegram to the Council, 14 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; Oded Messer, 'Failures in the Preparations to the Stoppage of the Invasion', *Symposium held on April 24, 1991: Stopping the Invasion*, p. 28.
38. *Ha'Palmah Book* 2, p. 115; *Hanegev Brigade in War*, p. 65.
39. *Hanegev Brigade in War*, p. 65.

40. Plan Dalet, 10 March 1948, IDFA 922/75/595; BGWD, p. 433, entry for 17 May 1948; 'The Fighting in the South', IDFA 922/75/730; Sergei's cables to Yadin, 16 and 19 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; *Hanegev Brigade in War*, pp. 79–80.
41. Sergei's cables to Yadin, 21, 23, 26 and 29 May 1948 and Givati cable to Yadin, 25 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; The Negev Brigade Cable to the General Staff, July 6, 1948, IDFA 922/75/370; 'The Fighting in the South', ibid.; *Hanegev Brigade in War*, pp. 79–80. According to Egyptian reports, two Israeli soldiers were captured around the Gaza Strip and were found to be carrying test tubes containing typhus and diphtheria bacteria, with which they intended to pollute the water wells in Gaza: from the Embassy in Cairo to FO, London, 26 May 1948, FO 141/1246.
42. Nahum Sarig fired off cables to the General Staff and the Palmah command almost daily beginning 16 May, when he urged that his forces be strengthened and that the Egyptians be bombed from the air to block their advance, but to no avail. Sergei's cable to the Council, 16 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175. On that day, Sarig sent to the Palmah HQ two consecutive cables on this matter. Sergei's cables to Yadin and to the Council, 19 May 1948, ibid.
43. Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 84–5.
44. 'Report on the Situation in the Negev', No. 6, 20 August 1948, IDFA 7011/49/5; Stone cable to the General Staff, 21 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; BGWD, p. 444, entry for 21 May 1948 and pp. 447–8, entry for 22 May 1948; Karmi, *On the Warriors Path*, p. 301.
45. BGWD, p. 453, entry for 24 May 1948.
46. Protocol Defense Minister–IDF Commanders Meeting, 18 June 1948, IDFA 121/50/172.
47. Sergei's cable to the Yadin, 16 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; Zvi Ayalon, *Stopping the Invasion* (Yad Tabenkin, 1992), p. 21; Research Department Report: 'The Arab Armies', 26 June 1948, HA 105/139; Operations/Intelligence: 'The Egyptian Army in Palestine', 26 July 1948, HA 105/138.
48. Minutes of the Provisional Government meeting, 19 and 23 May 1948, ISA; Operations/Intelligence: Intelligence Summaries for 29 and 30 May 1948, IDFA 1041/49/28.
49. H.M. Minister, Amman, to Secretary of State, London, 23 May 1948, FO 816/121; see the testimony of a captured Egyptian artillery officer in Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, p. 105.
50. Operations/Intelligence: 'The Egyptian Army in Palestine', 26 July 1948, HA 105/138; Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 97–8, 105; al-Sharif, 'The Muslim Brothers in the Palestine War', pp. 89–90; *Behind the Curtain*, p. 157; Abd al-Nāsir, 'Memoirs', p. 14; an Egyptian artillery officer reported that the force heading northward was ordered to take positions north of Isdud, a report by an Egyptian Lieutenant Colonel to the Artillery HQ: 'Summary of the First Artillery Brigade in the Palestine Campaigns, 15 May–11 June', HA 105/138; Ben-Gurion suspected that the Egyptian advance was aimed to divert Israeli forces from the Jerusalem front, and to make it easier for the Jordanian Legion to capture the city, Minutes of the Provisional Government meeting, 30 May 1948, ISA.
51. Givati cable to Yadin, 29 and 31 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, p. 548.
52. al-Sharif, 'The Muslim Brothers in the Palestine War', pp. 80, 89, 96, 99–100; the Egyptian artillery officer made no reference to the destroyed bridge, report by an Egyptian Lieutenant Colonel to the Artillery HQ: 'Summary of the First Artillery Brigade in the Palestine Campaigns, May 15–June 11', HA 105/138.
53. BGWD, pp. 467–8, 29 May 1948; Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 100–2.
54. Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, p. 102.

55. Ibid., pp. 102–3.
56. Givati cable to Admoni, 25 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, p. 103.
57. Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 102–9; Casualties, IDFA 922/75/1189.
58. Mundik Letter to Yadin, 30 May 1948, in Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, p. 110.
59. Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 111–12.
60. The talks on cease-fire are described in Chapter 7.
61. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 30 May 1948, E7209, FO 371/68374.
62. Sir R. Campbell, Cairo, to Foreign Office, 4 June 1948, E22, FO 371/68641.
63. Lorch, *War of Independence*, p. 327; Editor's Preface, BGWD, p. 423; Michael Bar-Zohar, *David Ben-Gurion* Vol. 2 (Tel Aviv, 1977), pp. 756, 770–1.
64. Operations Branch cable to Givati (and others), 1 June 1948, in Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, p. 113; BGWD, p. 473, entry for 31 May 1948.
65. BGWD, p. 472, entry for 31 May 1948; report on the Egyptians' inferior warfare capabilities, see Palmah memorandum, 16 May 1948, IDFA 661/69/36.
66. Operations/Southern Section: Operation Pleshet Order, 1 June 1948, in Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 112–13.
67. Ibid.
68. Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 118–21.
69. BGWD, p. 477, entry for 2 June 1948; Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, p. 116; *Ha'Palmah Book 2*, p. 862.
70. A. Eban and G. Ruffer to M. Shertok, 31 May 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, p. 103; BGWD, p. 481, 2 June 1948; A. Eban to M. Shertok, 2 June 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, p. 113; Amitzur Ilan, *Bernadotte in Palestine, 1948* (Oxford, 1989), p. 88.
71. M. Shertok to A. Eban, 2 June 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, p. 112: BGWD, p. 478, 2 June 1948.
72. '[IDF] Fatal Casualties', IDFA 922/1975/1189; Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 119–42; *Ha'Palmah Book 2*, pp. 862–3.
73. Shimon Avidan said this in 1958, quoted in Shaul Dagan and Eliahu Yakir, *Shimon Avidan Givati* (Givat Haviva, 1995) (Hebrew), p. 240.
74. Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, p. 121; *Ha'Palmah Book 2*, p. 863. A full description of the battle is in Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 123–40.
75. Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, p. 142; Lorch, *War Of Independence*, p. 331; Bar Zohar, *Ben-Gurion*, Vol. 2, p. 771.
76. Intelligence Report: 'Survey of the Situation in the Negev Ahead of the Ceasefire', 17 June 1948, HA 105/124/1.
77. Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 143–7.
78. The 9th Rifles Battalion: 'Combat Order No. 1', 7 June 1948, in Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 154–6.
79. The order, dated 6 June 1948, is quoted in Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 166–7.
80. Givati cable to Konard, 7 June 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 156–63; 'The Fighting in the South', IDFA 922/75/370.
81. The Committee of Inquiry of the Nitsanim Affair, 15 April 1949, IDFA 922/75/1022; Givati cable to Yadin, 6 June 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 152–3.
82. The Committee of Inquiry of the Nitsanim Affair, 15 April 1949, IDFA 922/75/1022.

83. *Hanegev Brigade in War*, p. 22.
84. *Ha'Palmah Book 2*, p. 115.
85. Amiad Brezner, *The Struggle on the Negev, 1941–1948* (Tel Aviv, 1994) (Hebrew), pp. 132–3, 242–5; Yoseph Weitz, *My Diary* (Ramat Gan, 1965) (Hebrew), Vol. 2, pp. 30–1.
86. Brezner, *The Struggle on the Negev*, pp. 246–8; BGWD, p. 453, entry for 24 May 1948; Weitz, *My Diary* 2, pp. 300–1.
87. Sergei telegram to the General Staff, 27 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175.
88. Protocol Defense Minister–IDF Commanders Meeting, 18 June 1948, IDFA 121/50/172.
89. Givati cable to Admoni, 25 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, p. 103.
90. Ibid., pp. 166–7; Givati cable to Yadin, 8 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175.
91. Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, p. 166, footnote.
92. Ibid., pp. 168–77; Givati cable to Yadin, 8 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175.
93. General Staff/Operations: Operation Order, 9 June 1948, in Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 178–9.
94. See Givati Brigade Command's Order of Battle for 9 June 1948, in Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 179–80, 181.
95. Ibid., pp. 181–2.
96. Ibid., pp. 197–8; Givati cable to Yadin, 11 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175.
97. Gezer cable to the General Staff, 10 June 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; Givati cable to the General Staff, ibid.
98. BGWD, p. 505, 11 June 1948.
99. Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 207–8.
100. Intelligence Report: 'Survey of the Situation in the Negev Ahead of the Ceasefire', 17 June 1948, HA 105/124/1; 12th Brigade cable to the General Staff, 6 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/370.
101. Report of the Magen–Iraq–Suwaydan Operation, 11 June 1948, IDFA 5879/49/22; *Ha'Palmah Book 2*, pp. 864–5.
102. Sergei's cable to the General Staff, 11 June 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; Givati cable to the General Staff, 13 June 1948, ibid.; Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 209–10; *Ha'Palmah Book 2*, pp. 864–5.
103. Daily Summary, 11 June 1948, IDFA 7011/49/5; Sergei's cable to the General Staff, 11 June 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; 12th Brigade cable to the General Staff, 6 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/370; *Hanegev Brigade in War*, pp. 90–2.
104. Intelligence Report: 'Survey of the Situation in the Negev Ahead of the Ceasefire', 17 June 1948, HA 105/124/1; 'The War in the South', IDFA 922/75/370.
105. Givati Brigade Commander to the Brigade Battalions Commanders, 11 June 1948, IDFA 5848/49/4.
106. Givati Brigade Commander to the Brigade Battalions Commanders, 27 June 1948, IDFA 7011/49/5.

5

The Israeli–Jordanian Front, 15 May–10 June

The Israeli–Jordanian war was in many respects a war over Jerusalem. The two armies hardly fought elsewhere, and it was Jerusalem that preoccupied both sides and determined the nature of their fighting even beyond the city itself. For the Jews, fighting there influenced the strategy and conduct of war because of Ben-Gurion's insistence on preventing the fall of Jerusalem at almost any cost. Consequently, the main Jewish war effort was directed towards the front that was not necessarily the biggest threat to the very existence of the new Jewish State. It was Ben-Gurion's unequivocal conviction that there was no point in the establishment of the Jewish State if it did not include Jerusalem which gave this front its importance. Thus, while the Syrian, Lebanese, Iraqi and (foremost) Egyptian Armies were heading to Israel, Ben-Gurion's main attention was given to the one place where there was no threat of invasion to the Jewish State. It was only after he achieved his prime goal —ensuring that (western) Jerusalem would come under the State of Israel's control, and that the road to the city from the coastal road would be in Jewish hands—that Ben-Gurion was ready to turn his attention elsewhere.

It was not only the desire to get Jerusalem that led Ben-Gurion to invest huge efforts in the fighting against the Arab Legion. It was also his appreciation that the Legion was the greatest danger to the Jews. Ben-Gurion regarded the Legion as a British tool, serving British interests that had been damaged by their evacuation from Palestine. As it was led by British officers, equipped with British arms and highly trained and disciplined, Ben-Gurion thought that the Legion was qualified to serve these British interests, and that it imposed the most serious challenge to the Jewish forces. Speaking to the Provisional State Council, the Israeli parliament, Ben-Gurion depicted the Legion's operations in Jerusalem as a fight conducted by the 'Bevin government's Arab mercenaries'.[1] For that reason, Ben-Gurion thought that the Israeli's forces'

most urgent task was the removal of the Jordanian threat. The appearance of the Arab Legion in Latrun was not recognised for what it really was—a defensive act aimed at preventing the sending of Jewish reinforcements to Jerusalem; reinforcements that would be used not only against the Arab Legion in Jerusalem but also beyond that. Ben-Gurion saw the Legion's presence in Latrun as a potential threat to Tel Aviv, and this fear governed his actions and orders during the coming weeks.

Of all the Arab States, Transjordan's involvement in the Palestine conflict was the most expected. However, the Arab Legion position was delicate, as during the intercommunal war the Legion hardly interfered in the fighting; it remained aloof during the Palestinians' plight and did not respond to their call for help. The Arab Legion was involved in several clashes with the Jewish forces during the intercommunal war, but these clashes were local and had no effect on the Jewish–Palestinian fighting. The first incidents took place on 14 December 1947, when Legion soldiers shot at a Jewish convoy traveling from Bayt Nabāla to Ben Shemen, killing 12 Jews. The Legion commanders justified their act by claiming that the convoy shot first, and they had just returned fire.[2] In response to this act, the Jews demanded the withdrawal of the Legion from Palestine. King Abdullah welcomed Jewish demands. He did not want to see his forces fighting against the Jewish forces, and secretly encouraged the Jews to demand the withdrawal of the Legion to the Arab part of Palestine. This would serve both sides' aims.[3] Jewish demands were partially met, as in January the British military in Palestine set an evacuation schedule for the Arab Legion. Four companies were due to leave Palestine during February, and four more in March. By April, two mechanized regiments and seven infantry companies were set to leave.[4]

From the second half of April, the Arab Legion seemed to increase the pace of its activity in the war in Palestine. A unit of the Arab Legion attacked Neve Yaakov, a Jewish settlement north of Jerusalem, on 18 April; an attack related to the assistance that Arab Legion officers and soldiers were giving to Palestinian groups in Jerusalem. Jewish Intelligence reports claimed that the Arab Legion secured the movement of the groups and provided them with supplies and fuel.[5] The first direct military clash between the Legion and the Jews took place on 27 April, when the British forces evacuated the Gesher police station, and Haganah forces took it over. The Jordanians demanded that the Jews should retreat from the station, but after three days of exchanging fire the Jordanian forces were instructed by their HQ to leave the place and to return to their barracks.[6] On 4 May, Legion units fought alongside

Palestinians with armory and artillery against Jewish settlements in Gush Etsion.[7] However, the total involvement of the Arab Legion in the fighting was marginal, and even during the Palestinians' difficult hour it remained out of the fighting.

Gush Etsion

The first significant act of war by the Arab Legion was its attack, on 12 May 1948, on Gush (the Hebrew word for 'block') Etsion. The Gush was situated in the heart of a Palestinian area, about 15 km south of Jerusalem, on the Hebron–Jerusalem road—the main Arab Legion supply route. The Arab Legion received its supplies from the British bases in Egypt through Sinai and Rafah to the Hebron–Jerusalem road, and Gush Etsion's ability to disrupt this vital route was a source of concern for the Arab Legion, especially as the Jews disrupted the traffic along the road quite frequently. In March 1948, the Hagana General Command gave explicit orders to disrupt Arab transportation, and the Jewish forces in Gush Etsion were among those who received the order. Implementing the order exposed the Gush to retaliation attacks by the Palestinians surrounding it, and more significantly, to retalliation from the Legion, as it sought to take preventive measures against the Gush combatants, in light of their obstruction of the transportation along the important Jerusalem–Hebron road.[8]

As for the Jews, Gush Etsion posited a challenge to the Yishuv leadership's security conception from the beginning of the intercommunal war. The Partition Resolution placed it beyond the Jewish State's boundaries, and even though Ben-Gurion was determined to bring Hebrew Jerusalem within the territory of the Jewish State, the fate of Gush Etsion was unclear. Its value to Jerusalem's defense was insignificant, and its defense placed a heavy burden on the Hagana. Located in the midst of an Arab-populated area, the Palestinians constantly tried to cut off the Gush, and it was dependent for supplies on Hagana armored convoys, British-escorted convoys and the parachuting in of supplies by air. David Shaltiel, the military commander of Jerusalem, was also in charge of Gush Etsion; it was a burden he asked to be relieved of. As we have already seen, Shaltiel claimed repeatedly that he was unable to secure the safety of the Gush with his existing manpower, and he called for the place to be evacuated. When, in early March, the Gush became dependent on convoys for getting supplies, Shaltiel warned that the fall of a convoy would be a catastrophe, a warning which was to become

reality by the end of that month, when a convoy was caught on its way back from Gush Etsion to Jerusalem, and more than 41 trucks were lost.[9]

The situation in the Gush area remained relatively calm until late March, with the destruction of the al-Nabi Daniyal convoy on 27 March. The al-Nabi Daniyal convoy was the last to arrive at Gush Etsion; the Gush was then put under siege, supplies arriving by air-drop. Regardless of their difficult and sensitive situation, the Gush combatants responded during April by attacking Arab transportation along the Hebron–Jerusalem road. Gush harassment of the transportation continued throughout April, and it was both a means of reprisal and counter-reprisal, in the face of Arab harassment, and it was intended to cut off the Hebron–Jerusalem road. In late April, the Hagana acted to extend Jewish rule over some Arab neighborhoods in Jerusalem and the forces in Gush Etsion were instructed to prevent the passage of reinforcements to the city. The blocking of the road continued in the following days, and Arab Legion convoys had to use force to get through. Jewish harassment of the transportation along this route forced the Arab Legion's command to act to remove this stumbling block.[10]

Arab forces, most probably local and irregulars, attacked the Gush on 5 May, but the Gush defenders repelled them. This was not the end of it, and the attack was resumed on 12 May, but this time it was the Arab Legion that led the attack. The Legion's forces consisted of two platoons, the 12th from Hebron, and a second one, composed of various elements from the 5th Battalion, supported by 20 armored cars, six of them carrying canons, and by a battery of 3-inch mortars. An ALA company also took part in the attack. Under cover of the mortars, the Legion and the irregulars took over position after position from the Jewish forces, until they occupied Kfar Etsion: most of its defenders—about 130 men—were killed by the Arab Legion and the local Palestinians after their surrender. With the fall of Kfar Etsion, the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem organized the surrender of the settlers of the other settlements under the auspices of the International Red Cross, and 357 Jews became prisoners of war.[11] The Gush could not expect assistance from the Hagana, as when it became clear that Gush Etsion was doomed, Yadin decided that its military value did not justify sending troops to its rescue. By the same token, he rejected Ben-Gurion's proposal to attack the Arab Legion forces positioned there, and Yadin's view prevailed.[12]

The next Jewish–Jordanian clash took place in Gesher on 14 May, when the legionnaires took over the electricity plant in Naharaim. The Israelis working there left the place taking weapons with them, and

Jordanian officers announced that, unless the Jews in Gesher returned the arms, they would bomb the settlement. Golani units bombed the bridges across the River Jordan near Gesher.[13]

The Invasion of the Arab Legion

The Arab Legion went into the Palestine war with limited resources. It put all of its troops into the battlefield, which meant that they went to war leaving no reserves behind them. Its budget was heavily strained, as no additional money was allotted to it to cover the war expenses. The arms embargo imposed on the Arab Legion also severely restricted its operational abilities, even more than it did those of the other Arab Armies, as because of its close ties with the British Army, all the Legion's needs had been answered immediately from the British Army depots. Consequently, with the imposition of the arms-embargo, the Arab Legion had to rely on the ammunition it had at that time, as it held no ammunition reserve depots.[14]

The 'official' Jewish–Jordanian war had started only after the termination of the British Mandate and the announcement by David Ben-Gurion of the establishment of a Jewish state, on 14 May. On the night of 14 May, the Legion forces, some of which had just left Palestine, crossed the River Jordan on their way westward.[15] The Arab Legion made its way into Palestine across the Allenby Bridge on their way to Nablus and Ramallah, but instead of going west to Jerusalem, the troops turned north, and went to Nablus along a third-grade road, and from there to Ramallah. The reason for the diversion was Glubb's unwillingness to engage the Jewish forces in Jerusalem.[16] The Legion's aim was to control Samaria's and Judea's major cities and the Jordanian troops were moving and positioning themselves to achieve that. The Legion's Division HQ was established in Ramallah, as was that of the 3rd Battalion of the 1st Brigade. The brigade headquarters were set up in Bituniya, west of Ramallah, and its 1st Battalion was responsible for the Nablus area, with the fifth company being placed in Nablus. The 3rd Brigade was positioned in Yalu, and its second company assumed responsibility over the ridges controlling Bab al-Wad. The 4th Brigade's headquarters were also in Ramallah, and it was its 6th Battalion that fought in Jerusalem. The brigade was hastily formed, its commander was Colonel Ahmad Sidqi al-Jundi and, unlike the other two brigades, British officers did not serve in the 4th Brigade and its staff was almost entirely Arab. As with the other brigades, it also com-

prised two battalions: the 5th, commanded by Abd al-Halim al-Sākit, and the 6th, under the command of Abdullah al-Tall. Each battalion consisted of about 1,000 soldiers. The 5th Battalion was organized into four companies and a support unit that included four armored cars with 2-ounce cannons on them. It also had six anti-tank guns and four 3-inch mortars. The 6th Battalion was similarly equipped, with two additional 3.7-inch Howitzer cannons. The 4th Brigade came with five companies of irregulars, in all about 650 volunteers commanded by officers and NCOs of the Arab Legion and other Arab armies. In addition, these forces received artillery support from an artillery unit positioned in al-Nabi Samuel, consisting of four 25-ounce filed-cannons and four heavy 6-inch Howitzer cannons, brought from Iraq. The 6th Battalion was positioned along the eastern ridges of Samaria, from Jericho to Damiya. One artillery battery was put in Nebi Samuel, ready to support the 1st and 4th Brigades. Another artillery battery was placed in Bayt Nuba, ready to support the 3rd Brigade. Two independent companies, the 1st and the 8th, were sent to Jerusalem directly from Jericho, occupying the Mount of Olives on 17 May. One company—the 15th was placed in Lydda and al-Ramla, and the 13th in Jisr al-Majāmi—the Jewish Gesher. The 12th Company was in Hebron, having been positioned there before the end of the British Mandate. It did not succeed in leaving Palestine at the time, and hence remained in place after 14 May.[17] The Transjordanians' takeover of the parts west of the River Jordan, allocated to the Palestinians, had been sealed on 20 May, with the appointment of Ibrahim Pasha Hāshim, an ex-Prime Minister, as Military Governor of all parts of Palestine that were occupied by the Arab Legion. He appointed deputies who were seated in the main cities in the occupied territories.[18]

The Jewish Offensive in Jerusalem

Jerusalem stood at the heart of the Israeli–Jordanian fighting, but on 15 May it seemed that a cease-fire was in hand, and not war. More than in any other place in the country, discussions on cease-fire in Jerusalem seemed to be serious and conclusive. In Lake Success, the United Nations' Truce Committee presented a draft of a cease-fire agreement, on 28 April, to Shertok and to Jamal al-Husayni.[19] While al-Husayni claimed that the AHC would cease fire upon the signing of the agreement, Shertok, after consulting with Ben-Gurion, agreed on the

condition that free passage would be granted to and from the old city.[20] The High Commissioner put an end to the negotiations, on 8 May, when he made an official statement according to which the cease-fire would come into effect that day. The Jews expressed their disapproval of the statement but in fact fighting in the city had for the most part stopped.[21]

The unofficial cease-fire in Jerusalem came to end with the British departure on 14 May. While in the rest of the country the Jewish forces were already implementing Plan Dalet, in Jerusalem nothing had been done until that date. Now the 6th Brigade took action to carry out Plan Dalet. The brigade's way of putting Plan Dalet into effect was different from the way it was originally intended. The original plan assigned the brigade missions outside Jerusalem, but Shaltiel claimed that with the manpower under his control, he would be unable to act outside Jerusalem. Thus, a plan had been worked out by the end of April, code-named 'Kilshon' (Hebrew word for 'pitchfork'), which limited the brigade's activity to the city area. The plan called for the 'completion of the take over of the Jewish parts of Jerusalem and the transportation routes in it', aiming to bring under full Jewish control all the parts that were hitherto isolated or cut off by British positions and bases in the city, and by the Arab-populated enclaves in the south and the north of the western parts of the city. That meant seizing the Arab Quarters (Baq'aa), the German Colony, Mamila Street, al-Shaykh Jarrāh, the Police School, the Russian Field and Talbiyya. The plan would also straighten out the city's impossible defense line, which was entangled and very long, demanding more manpower to defend than the district had.[22] What was missing from the plan, and later from the operation that was conducted, was a reference to the Old City. Neither the Etsioni Brigade, nor the Jewish political leaders, said anything about the occupation of the Old City. The oversight is even more conspicuous when one recalls the significance that Ben-Gurion attached to the fighting over Jerusalem and ensuring that it would be brought under Jewish control.

Operation Kilshon was to be arranged in two prongs, southern and northern, and a special force was built for each sector. The southern consisted of 12 platoons—four from the Field Force, and the rest belonging to the less-qualified force of the Guard Force. This entire force numbered 460 men. The northern force consisted of seven platoons—six Guard Force—and only one from the Field Force, in all numbering 300. Half of this force was unarmed. There were two reasons for the uneven distribution of the forces: the first was the fact

that while the north was more homogeneous, the southern part was more heterogeneous, with Jewish and Arab quarters entangled one inside the other. Hence, more forces were needed to ensure a fully Jewish-controlled area in the south. The other reason was Shaltiel's assumption that the Arab Legion forces that attacked Gush Etsion would be directed toward Jerusalem.[23] This assumption proved to be wrong.

With the British departure from the city on 14 May, the Jews stormed the buildings and barracks that the British had left, violating the undeclared truce.[24] The Jews captured the Police School in Mount Scopus, the Italian Hospital building, the Russian Field, the Central Post Office building—to mention only the more conspicuous sites. al-Shaykh Jarrāh had been abandoned, and an IZL unit was put in there.[25] The Palestinians did not lag behind, and Fadl Abdullah Rashid, the Iraqi commander of the Jerusalem Arabs, led his men to take hold of the main railway station, the nearby Government Printing House and the Allenby camp.[26] The Palestinians also tried to remove the Jewish forces from the positions they captured, under the cover of the ALA and the Arab Legion artillery, which were shelling Jerusalem. The Jews not only held out, but also increased their acquisitions, and supported by their artillery attacked the Arab forces in the Allenby camp and occupied it. The Jews also occupied the German Colony; proceeding from there to Abu Tur, capturing it on 18 May. With that, a totally Jewish-controlled area was established in the southeastern part of the city. The northern arm of Operation Kilshon similarly succeeded in implementing its goal. It occupied al-Shaykh Jarrāh and the area north of the Old City, including the Notre Dame monastery, which overlooked the Nablus Gate and the Old City from the north, and its surroundings. The monastery became the site of a series of bloody clashes during which it changed hands between the Jewish and the Arab forces. The most ferocious one took place on 24 May, and by the end of day the Monastery remained in Jewish hands.[27] The pressure that resulted from the Jewish successful offensive led to the concentration inside the Old City's walls of more than 60,000 Palestinian refugees who had escaped from the areas occupied by the Jews.[28] Ben-Gurion was satisfied with the results of the operation. He even thought that if the 6th Brigade were to receive more armaments, it would be able to face the Arab Legion.[29] The situation, however, became more complex with the deterioration of the Jews' situation in the Jewish Quarter, and the arrival of the Arab Legion in Jerusalem.

Fighting in the Old City of Jerusalem

The international community showed considerable interest in the occurrences in Jerusalem in general, and in the Old City in particular, and the especially energetic pursuit by the Consul's Truce Committee of a truce in the Old City was one indication of this interest.[30] During the months following the Partition Resolution, talks were conducted under the auspices of the United Nations, the Red Cross and the British—each acting on its own—to find a solution to the Jerusalem problem. What was common to all was their efforts to conclude a cease-fire agreement. The Jews cooperated in these attempts, mainly because of their concern for the lives of the besieged Jews inside the Old City. Most of the 2,700 Jews who lived in the Old City were religious Jews who did not approve of the attempts of the Jewish military forces to defend the Quarter. These military forces consisted of Hagana and IZL men, and in mid-April, representatives of these two organizations had signed an agreement, according to which the forces would join together under a Hagana commander, with an IZL member as his second-in-command. By May, the total number of the Quarter's defenders was about 200 recruits, with about 130 belonging to the Hagana, brought to the Old City to reinforce it, 40 IZL men, and some other volunteers. Some local residents of the Quarter also took part in its defense, although most of them did not, even frequently demanding that the Hagana commanders avoid fighting with the Arabs.[31]

The Jews made no plans for the occupation of the Old City. Plan Dalet stipulated the capture of the Arab Quarters in the western part of Jerusalem which disrupted a Jewish south–north continuity and it also called for the capture of the David Tower, but said nothing about the Old City in general or the Jewish Quarter in particular.[32] Accordingly, Operation Kilshon did not stipulate the seizure of the Old City. When the British evacuated Jerusalem they also left the Old City, where they held positions. Such an eventuality was anticipated, and the Jews had prepared a plan called Operation Shfifon ('horned viper'). The plan involved three stages: first, the evacuated British positions in the Jewish Quarters and at its immediate area would be captured; secondly, positions linking the Quarter with the Jaffa Gate and the David Tower, and thus to the Jewish part of Jerusalem, would be captured; and thirdly, the forces were supposed to demolish and clear the whole area surrounding the Jewish Quarter. However, with the commencement of Operation Shfifon, Shaltiel restricted its goals, and the 6th Brigade command forestalled the second and third stages; a step that meant that the siege of the Jewish

Quarter would remain in force. Thus, with the British departure from their positions in the Old City the Jewish forces in the Jewish Quarter acted to seize the positions, but were denied the artillery assistance they requested from the Etsioni command. Operation Kilshon was to be launched at any minute, and the 6th Brigade command would not allow the fighting in the Jewish Quarter to hamper Operation Kilshon, as they attributed much more importance to the latter operation's success. To make sure that Operation Kilshon would not be hampered, the soldiers in the Quarter were given clear orders to hold their fire as much as possible, even in the face of Arab provocation.[33] Accordingly, the Jewish forces were strictly instructed to maintain the cease-fire and Hagana spokesmen tried to conclude a cease-fire in the Old City. The Arabs inside the walls were willing to agree, but continuous breaching of the virtually agreed cease-fire by the Jews prevented a positive conclusion.[34]

With the Jews taking over more and more parts of Jerusalem during 14–15 May, the Arab residents of the occupied neighborhoods fled to the Old City and to Ramallah and its environs. Others even went as far as Jordan and Syria, Lebanon and Egypt. By 16 May, 40,000 Palestinian refugees had joined the 20,000 original residents of the Old City. Here, local notables and the local military commanders, Sayyid Munir Abu Fadl and Khālid al-Husayni, tried to established some kind of order, acting to prevent the continuing Palestinian flight from the Old City, organizing the defense within the walls, and even initiating attacks on the Jewish Quarter. They had under their command about 700 irregulars, 300 from the ALA, 300 from al-Jihad al-Muqaddas and 100 former policemen. They enjoyed freedom of movement to and from the Old City, and combatants could be brought in and taken out as was required.[35]

Thus, despite—or perhaps because of—the population density in the Old City and the defeats all over Jerusalem, about 200 Arab combatants stormed the Jewish Quarter in a coordinated attack on 16 May. The Arab pressure was very heavy, and the Jewish residents of the Quarter demanded that the IDF commanders raise the white flag. However, the 6th Brigade command instructed the forces to carry on, promising to arrange a breakthrough operation. This promise was not fulfilled, and Arab pressure intensified. It was only on 18 May that an attempt to break through was made. The reason for the decision to go to the rescue of Jewish Quarter was not the Quarter's grave situation, but mainly the fact that by this point, Operation Kilshon had been completed. Shaltiel asked for the Harel Brigade forces to come to his aid, and the commanders of the two brigades met to discuss plans. The result was controversy and disagreement over which was the better plan.

Shaltiel presented his plan, which was based on his forces' breakthrough at the David Tower, but the Palmah men rejected his plan, claiming that the proposed operation meant fighting in a built-up area by forces that were untrained for that kind of warfare. They suggested adopting an indirect approach: instead of confronting the Arab forces head-on in the Old City, they suggested capturing the Old City's surroundings, and cutting them off from the Arab hinterland. This would have led to the collapse of the Arab forces inside the walls. Shaltiel did not accept the Palmah plan and stuck to his original plan; and Itzhak Rabin, the Harel Brigade commander, reluctantly accepted his demands, putting four platoons from his 4th Battalion under the latter's command. The first stage was crowned with success, as the Palmah force seized Mount Zion on 18 May. However, the main mission, the Etsioni's breakthrough at the Jaffa Gate, failed. The Palmah command decided to take advantage of the success at Mount Zion, and on the next night to break through into the Jewish Quarter.[36] Indeed, on the night of 18 May, a unit of the 4th Battalion reached the Jewish Quarter. However, the force that reached the Jewish Quarter after midnight received no reinforcements from the Etsioni Brigade. Eighty Guard Force soldiers followed the route opened by the Palmah men and joined the Jewish Quarter defenders, but they were newly recruited, untrained soldiers. After a few hours of waiting, the Palmah unit left the place and went back. At midday on 19 May, forces of the Arab Legion seized the Zion Gate that had been abandoned by the Palmah men, and the Jewish Quarter was once again under siege.[37]

Despite the military failure, the Jews had tried to make the best of the situation. Once a link had been established with the Jewish Quarter, the Hagana commanders advised the Jewish Political Department to renew cease-fire negotiations in the Old City, as no stronger military operation was expected to come to the rescue of the Jewish Quarter. A member of the Jewish Political Department sent a letter to Jean Nieuwenhuys, the Belgian Consul and the head of the Security Council Truce Committee, suggesting that following the successful Jewish attack on the Old City and the achievement of 'the object of their operation—the relief of the Jewish Quarter', the Jewish Agency 'renew' its offer of a cease-fire in the Old City. The only condition stipulated in the offer was that 'no attempt be made from the Arab side to interfere with the lines of communication that have been established between the New City and the Old'. This was clearly an attempt to profit politically from a dubious military success that had been rapidly erased by the Arab Legion. Accordingly, King Abdullah rejected the Israeli offer.[38]

The question of who was to blame for the Jewish failure will probably remain open, but one thing is clear: the Jews did not invest everything they had in occupying the Old City or the Jewish Quarter. It is difficult to single out the reason, but it is quite obvious that while Ben-Gurion was determined to see Jerusalem inside Jewish State boundaries and a safe road to Jerusalem secured, he was far less determined in his attitude toward the occupation of the Old City. Without actually saying as much, Ben-Gurion and the Jewish government gave up the Old City. The Palmah's success in taking the Jewish Quarter was an act of improvisation, for which the Etsioni Brigade was unprepared and not competent to deal with. It was made possible by the fact that the operation was a response to pressure from within the Jewish Quarter and not part of any previously planned activity.[39]

To make things worse, the Palmah's success was achieved at the last minute and could not be repeated, as in the meantime the Arab situation had undergone a sea change with the arrival of Arab Legion forces in the Old City. When he was making plans for the invasion, Glubb's attitude toward Jerusalem was mixed. On the one hand, he wanted to avoid fighting in Jerusalem: he was afraid that getting involved in urban warfare in Jerusalem against the Jews, his troops would suffer heavy casualties, as they had no experience of this kind of fighting, while the Jews were much more experienced. Defeat in Jerusalem, Glubb feared, could lead to the loss of the positions that the Arab Legion already held in Samaria, Judea and the Hebron area. On the other hand, if the Jews had complete control over Jerusalem it would allow them a free passage to Jericho, and consequently might expose the Arab Legion on the West Bank to the danger of being cut off from its bases in Jordan. As Glubb saw it, the best solution would be a cease-fire in Jerusalem, which would maintain the existing *status quo*; it would give advantage to neither side, and would not jeopardize the position of the Arab Legion.[40] The Iraqi military commander in Jerusalem, Fadl Bey, was inclined to accept the cease-fire, but he referred the matter to King Abdullah.[41] The Jews had decided the issue. With the arrival of 15 May, talks were conducted between Arab representatives on the one hand and the Security Council Truce Commission, the High Commissioner and the Chief Secretary for Palestine on the other, resulting in an agreement on cease-fire in Jerusalem. However, the agreement did not come into effect, as the Jews broke it the moment the Mandate was over, when they launched Operation Kilshon.[42]

The Jewish offensive in Jerusalem placed the Arabs of Jerusalem in a dire situation, and desperate calls for help—by telephone and through

delegations visiting the King's palace—arrived ceaselessly in Amman. Abdullah was unable to ignore the outcry. However, Glubb tried to postpone any decision on this matter, trying to avoid the fighting in Jerusalem. The Jordanian government was so disturbed by Glubb's delaying tactics that the Jordanian Prime Minister checked with Kirkbride whether the British government had ordered Glubb not to go to Jerusalem, or whether Glubb was behaving on his own initiative. When he realized it would be impossible to avoid fighting in Jerusalem, Glubb decided—in an attempt to avoid clashes with the Jews—to limit the extent of the Legion's operation to the occupation of the Old City and the Arab sector of Jerusalem, and not to try to occupy all of Jerusalem. That way, King Abdullah would become the savior of the Holy Place, without risking an all-out war with the Jews. The Jordanians also assumed that operating in Jerusalem would not be considered as violation of Abdullah's commitment not to intrude into the Jewish State, as Jerusalem and the route to it lay outside the boundaries of the State of Israel.[43] In any case, with the change in plans, the Arab Legion did not intend to do more than protect the Old City from further attacks, and any future aggression would be to serve one purpose: the defense of the Old City.[44]

The controversy over sending the Legion to Jerusalem ended with King Abdullah's personal order, on 17 May, to Major Abdullah al-Tall, the commander of the 6th Battalion, to send forces to the Old City's rescue. Al-Tall did so immediately, sending three of his battalion's companies, leaving the fourth company in Damiya. Upon his arrival in Jerusalem on 18 May, al-Tall took upon himself the command over the Arab forces in the city, coordinating the move with Sayyid Munir Abu Fadl and Khālid al-Husayni, the commanders of the local forces. In fact, with the arrival of the Jordanian force, the AHC-dominated National Committees stopped functioning and subordinated themselves to Jordanian rule. Al-Tall rearranged the Old City's defense, assigning two platoons to the Zion Gate and the Armenian Quarter, one company to the New Gate and Jaffa Gate, four reserve platoons were sent to A-Tur, and a support company took up positions on Mount Olive.[45]

The reinforcement doomed the Jewish Quarter. Al-Tall artillery in A-Tur shelled the Quarter, and its forces tightened the siege around the Quarter.[46] The Harel forces made further attempts to break through, but the Legion's defense was too strong. On the other hand, al-Tall forces increased daily their acquisitions in the Jewish Quarter, occupying more and more positions. To increase the pressure, the legionnaires called everyday through megaphones to the Quarter's residents to surrender.

By 27 May al-Tall delivered an ultimatum through the Red Cross representative demanding the Quarter's surrender. The ultimatum fell on receptive ears, as the Jewish forces in the Old City wanted to surrender. The failure of attempts to break through by land and to parachute in supplies increased the desperate mood among the Jews, and they announced their intention to surrender to the Etsioni Brigade command. Shaltiel asked them not to do so, but it was too late, and on the following day the Quarter surrendered.[47]

The fall of the Jewish Quarter was primarily the result of the combination of the composition of the Jewish population in the Quarter, and the Jewish military and political leadership's reluctance to invest in means to prevent that eventuality. The Quarter had no military value, only a symbolic one, and in the conditions prevailing in Jerusalem at that time, that was not enough. The Jewish forces preferred to send their troops to fight all over Jerusalem, and under these conditions, and considering the severe shortage of Jewish troops, the fate of the Jewish Quarter was a low priority. The main channel through which the Jews were hoping to save the Jewish Quarter was the attempts to impose a cease-fire. However, the Arab Legion, determined to take over the Old City, was unwilling to comply with the demands of the Truce Commission, and would not relax its pressure until the end.[48]

With the fall of the Jewish Quarter and the seizure by the Arab Legion of the eastern parts of Jerusalem, the fighting in the city in effect came to an end. Fighting continued mainly in isolated spots along the newly created line that separated the two sides; each side tried to improve its position, and these attempts sometimes led to violent clashes. These skirmishes and clashes were accompanied by continuous bombardment of the Jewish part of Jerusalem. When comparing the Legion's goals, as set by Glubb, with the extent of the bombardment, it seemed that this was al-Tall's way of protesting against Glubb's restricted goals and operations in Jerusalem.[49]

The Arab Meeting, Dar'a, 19 May

After five days of fighting, the Arab leaders met in Dar'a, Syria, just on the border with Jordan. The participants were King Abdullah, the Syrian President, Shukri al-Kuwatli, Bishara al-Khuri, the Lebanese Premier, 'Azzam Pasha, the Arab League's General Secretary, 'Abd al-Ilah, the Iraqi Regent, the Iraqi Chief of Staff, Salāh Sā'ib, the Syrian Chief of Staff, Taha al-Hashimi, Amir 'Alawi Sabbūr of the Egyptian

Army and 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jundi of the Arab Legion. The nature of the talks indicated that the meeting was initiated by the Syrians, who, along with the Lebanese, had achieved nothing in comparison to the success of the Egyptian and Jordanian Armies. Although the delegates tried to suggest that the purpose of the meeting was to 're-establish personal relations between these rivals'—the Syrian President al-Quwatli and King Abdullah—other reports indicated that the Syrians wanted the meeting for two reasons. The first was the attempt by the Syrian Chief of Staff, Taha al-Hāshimi, to convince Abdullah to enlarge the Arab Legion's war activities, and to extend them beyond the West Bank into the State of Israel. Under the current balance of power and due to the way the war developed, it was obvious that only if the Arab Legion extended its goals would it be possible to achieve the Arab League Political Committee's goal, and prevent the establishment of the State of Israel. Al-Hashimi accused Abdullah of using his army for his own political purposes at the expense of the Arab cause, to which Abdullah replied angrily that 'after the deplorable shows put on by the Syrian and Lebanese forces, they were in no position to criticize the Arab Legion'. As to the substance, Abdullah rejected al-Hashimi's call to attack the Jewish forces and the Jewish State, saying that such an act would be senseless, as the Jewish presence in Jerusalem threatened the Legion's main line of communication.[50] This strategic argument, one should recall, had earlier been suggested by Glubb.

The other reason for al-Kuwatli's calling the meeting was his hope that Abdullah would use his influence in London to persuade the British to supply the Syrian Army with equipment and ammunition, of which they had run short. The shortage was sufficiently critical to endanger the army's operational capabilities. Al-Kuwatli overestimated Abdullah's influence in London, and anyway, Abdullah was not the right channel for such a request. British adherence to the UN-imposed arms embargo was complete, and the Arab Legion was also to suffer from it. Abdullah, however, preferred to give al-Kuwatli other reasons for rejecting his request. He suggested that the Syrian President had spoken to the British Minister in Damascus on this matter, and remarked that 'the request came oddly from one who had organized opposition to British treaties with Iraq and Transjordan'.[51]

With Abdullah's refusal to join the Arab forces in the north, there was no point in continuing the fighting there in the same manner, and the military commanders agreed to redeploy the Arab forces in a way that would make the best of the existing situation. In light of the pressure the Arab Legion had been experiencing in Jerusalem, the Iraqi

troops withdrew from Jisr al-Majāmi' on 22 May and proceeded to Nablus. They thus relieved the Arab Legion's 1st Battalion from that district, and it was moved to Latrun, reinforcing the Jordanian force there. Forces of the ALA that were still in Palestine were assigned to the Jisr al-Majāmi'–Samakh area to check the Jewish counter-thrust which was expected there. The Syrian forces moved to the north, to help the Lebanese forces.[52]

The meeting exposed another feature of the war at that time: besides the Egyptian expeditionary force, no Arab Army intruded into the area allocated to the Jews by the United Nations. The Jews, on the other hand, took over parts of the territory that was supposed to be part of the Palestinian State, mainly the whole of the western Galilee, Jaffa and some territory along the Jaffa–Jerusalem road. The Egyptians' acquisitions were achieved in a territory that was assigned to the Jews—the Negev—which was sparsely populated. The other arm of the Egyptian expeditionary force, that was moving toward the heart of the Jewish State along the south–north axis, remained in the territory allocated to the Arabs, and did not cross the Jewish State border. These facts led British Foreign Office officials to suggest on 22 May 'freezing' the *status quo* which existed at that point: the Jewish State would include the territory that its military forces were holding, while the Negev, which was not in Jewish military hands, would be given to the Arabs.[53] Here were planted the seeds of what would be known as the Bernadotte Plan.

The Fight Over Jerusalem

The Israelis had no idea about the real intentions of the Arab Legion and its minimal planning. All they knew was what they saw, and from the Israeli side it seemed as if the Jordanians were conducting a concerted campaign aimed at capturing the whole of Jerusalem and cutting it off from the Jewish State. The events that were taking place in the Old City and north Jerusalem were certainly taken as proof of this, as were the events that took place in the south of Jerusalem, where Ramat Rachel was heavily attacked and defeated.[54] There was some substance in this assumption. While the attack on Ramat Rachel was not coordinated with the Legion command, it seized the opportunity when news of the attack reached the Legion headquarters. The main instigator of the attack was the Egyptian force that arrived in Bethlehem on 20 May. The Egyptian force was led by 'Abd al-'Aziz, commander of the Muslim Brothers' force, which had split from the main expeditionary force that

was heading northward. The Egyptian force arrived at Hebron, where the Legion's 12th company was placed, and continued its journey to Bethlehem. The Jordanian 6th Battalion was also responsible for the southern part of Jerusalem, but its commander, al-Tall, received no orders for action regarding this area. After establishing his headquarters in Bethlehem, al-Aziz organized a defense line against the Jewish southern positions, stretching from Talpiot to 'Ayn Kārim. To that end, and with al-Tall's agreement, he used the 12th Company, and two companies of Jordanian irregular volunteers who were sent by King Abdullah on 15 May, to assist the Palestinians in their struggle. This force, consisting of 200 fighters, was hardly trained and poorly armed. Another force integrated into al-Aziz's formation was the Palestinian al-Jihad al-Muqaddas guerrillas, which also joined the local forces that were active in the area. With this force, which included the Jordanian forces, al-Aziz launched an attack, on 22 May, on the Jewish kibbutz Ramat Rachel, which was located on a strategic high hill overlooking Bethlehem.[55] Three days of fighting ensued, during which the Kibbutz was occupied alternately first by one side and then by the other. At the end of day, however, it was the Jews who repelled the Arab forces, holding the place until the end of the war.[56] One reason for the Jewish success was the order of Norman Lecsh, the commander of the 1st Division to Ahmad Sidqi al-Jundi, the 4th Brigade commander, to cease cooperating with the Egyptian force and to bring back the Legion forces from Ramat Rachel. The irregulars also left the occupied kibbutz, after looting the place. The remaining force was unable to withstand the final Jewish counteroffensive.[57]

Ben-Gurion and his military aides were worried by these developments, and Ben-Gurion became even more convinced that it was most urgent to launch a forceful offensive against the Legion. However, to make such a campaign effective, it was first necessary to clear the Tel Aviv–Jerusalem road through the destruction of al-Ramla and Lydda and the capture of Latrun—he did not know that the Arab Legion had already taken the place—and after that he intended to send heavy reinforcements to Jerusalem. Until the accomplishment of these missions, the only way to relieve the pressure on Jerusalem would be through the implementation of a cease-fire there.[58] Yadin and the other senior military leaders agreed with Ben-Gurion that a cease-fire in Jerusalem was desirable, but their reasons differed from those of Ben-Gurion. Unlike Ben-Gurion, Yadin was against investing that much effort and that many forces in the struggle over the road to Jerusalem, and he did so only under heavy pressure from Ben-Gurion. The imposition of a

cease-fire in Jerusalem might have assuaged Ben-Gurion's fears, and he might have agreed to the different strategy proposed by Yadin.[59] However, a cease-fire was unattainable, as when the Arab Legion succeeded in gaining control over east and north Jerusalem, the Jordanians lost interest in a cease-fire, seeking instead to strengthen their hold over the Arab part of the city and on the Old City.[60]

One way or another, the Arab Legion's actions seemed to pose a serious challenge to the Jewish attempts to make west Jerusalem part of Israel, and to gain full control over the road leading to the city from the coastal plain. The problem, however, was that the Jewish forces were unprepared to meet the Arab Legion. As elsewhere in the country, Operation Kilshon consisted only of offensive elements that were directed against local, irregular forces, and it lacked the defense elements necessary to succeed against an invading army. The forces were so preoccupied with the implementation of Operation Kilshon that no time remained to proceed to the next stage, which was the preparation for the Arab Legion's invasion. Consequently, no effort had been made to seize strategic points like the northern entrance to Jerusalem along the Jerusalem–Ramallah road, or to the east, along the road coming from Jericho. The Jews had two days to make the necessary preparations to meet the Jordanian Army, but they did not do that. Of course, there was no assurance that even had the Jews been working toward that goal, they would have succeeded. But they did not try, and the actions they took were hampered by the failure of Shaltiel's and the Palmah's men to work together. However, another fundamental shortage was embedded in the Plan Dalet concept. The plan aimed to put the Jewish forces in the best possible position *vis-à-vis* the invading forces, but it did not stipulate how they should deployed to stop the invading forces on their invasion route. Thus, in Jerusalem, as in other places, and mainly in the south, the Jews more or less succeeded in taking over the territory they sought to dominate, but did not organize their troops to meet an invading regular army.

The Arab attack on Jerusalem had started with the ALA's attack on Neve Yaakov on 15 May. After leaving its positions in the Latrun area and on their way out of Palestine, the Qawukji forces attacked Neve Yaakov, the isolated settlement north of Jerusalem. In doing so, Qawukji hoped to make the Arab Legion, movement to Jerusalem easier, as Neve Yaakov was located on the main Jerusalem–Ramallah road. When claiming this in his memoires, Qawukji implied that he knew in advance that the Arab Legion was planning to move to Jerusalem from north to south. In any case, his forces, assisted by local Arabs, took over Neve

Yaakov and the nearby Qalandiya colony and airfield. The Jews of Neve Yaakov left the place in defiance of the orders that they had to remain.[61] Forces from the 5th Battalion of the Arab Legion followed the ALA's attack shortly afterward. Two companies remained in the two occupied settlements, while a third company was sent to occupy al-Shaykh Jarrāh. A squadron from the Moriah Battalion and a few IZL combatants manned the place, and so the challenge facing the Legion forces was not too great. The Jordanian force entered al-Shaykh Jarrāh on 19 May with the Jordanian artillery bombing their way through the neighborhood. The aim of the force was to fight its way through al-Shaykh Jarrāh to Musrara, and from there to join al-Tall's forces in the Old City. To make that task possible two companies joined the one already in the field, bringing the number of the Legion forces to 500, while 200 soldiers from these two companies held the Old City. As long as the legionnaires acted in the Arab area they were successful. However, when they tried to attack the Jewish neighborhood that separated al-Shaykh Jarrāh and the Old City, they failed; apparently, the Bedouin soldiers of the Arab Legion were unfit for urban warfare.[62] The attack on the Jewish neighborhood was intended to conquer the area surrounding the Old City, and both the Jewish commander of Jerusalem, David Shaltiel, and the future Arab commander of the Arab Quarter of the city, Abdullah al-Tall, agreed that the attack, launched by the 3rd Battalion, was sloppy and poorly prepared. The Jordanian soldiers lost their way in the urban environment and the Jewish forces ahead of them repelled their attack quite easily.[63] What the legionnaires did not do in that part of the city, they did on the northeastern flanks, successfully taking this area from the few Etsioni forces that held them.

The Latrun Battles (May 1948)

Once fighting was raging in Jerusalem between the Jewish and the Jordanian forces, Latrun became a crucial point for both sides. As we have seen, the Jordanians were the first to act, as they sent troops to capture Latrun on 17 May. The Jews had no idea that this had happened. While the Legion deployed its forces in Latrun, Ben-Gurion sought ways to launch the attack he considered vital to open the road to Jerusalem. He summoned the American Colonel, David Marcus, and asked for his advice on the means and forces necessary for the seizure of the road to Jerusalem and the villages controlling the road. Marcus claimed that to accomplish the mission, two battalions had to be located

in key positions all along the Bab al-Wad–Jerusalem road, to prevent the arrival of Arab combatants at the road. Convoys should move only at night, escorted by Palmah platoons: when attacked, the platoons' missions would be to counter-attack the assailants.[64] Marcus' plan called for the permanent assignment of two battalions to the ridges along the road, although these forces could not completely exclude the possibility that Arab forces would be able to re-close the road. Under the existing forces' structure, the IDF command was unable to spare sufficient forces for that purpose. The only way to make the plan workable was to assign the mission to the newly formed 7th Brigade. This was precisely what Ben-Gurion had in mind, and herein lies another reason for the lack of knowledge about Latrun during the two–three days it was vacant, as at this critical time Ben-Gurion was preoccupied with setting up the new brigade which he intended to send to the Latrun–Jerusalem road to accomplish Marcus' plan. The process of setting up the brigade was slow, and it was only on 25 May that it was ready.[65] By that time, however, Marcus' plan was irrelevant, as beside the need to hold the ridges controlling the Jerusalem–Latrun road, it was no less urgent to break the blockade in the Latrun area, created by the capture of the Latrun garrison by the Arab Legion's forces.

In fact, at this time the 10th Brigade already held the ridges controlling the Bab al-Wad–Jerusalem road, or at leas–during the first half of May–it had removed the local forces that were in control of the road. In these operations, the 10th Brigade occupied the Arab villages along the ridges, destroying them and deporting their residents from the area. By mid-May, most of the brigade forces came to the assistance of the 6th Brigade in Jerusalem, but some forces held positions along the road. The main problem, therefore, was to remove the Latrun obstacle. The rest of the road was open, at least for the time being.

It seems that the Arab Legion did not plan to go to Latrun. The 3rd Brigade arrived in Ramallah, and from there its 2nd Battalion went to seize positions in the area of Nebi Samuel, while the 4th Battalion based itself near Dayr Nazam–Hirbata along the Ramallah–Latrun road. While settling itself, the battalion's command noticed the ALA's units leaving the Latrun garrison. The move surprised the 4th Battalion command, which feared that the Jews would capture the vacant Latrun garrison. However, the battalion was not at first allowed to make any further moves.[66] The Arab Legion prepared its offensive against Jerusalem, and after the Jewish activities in the area on 15/16 May (Operation Makabee 2) and the launching of the Orphan Convoy instructions to capture Latrun had arrived on 17 May and the Jordanian Brigade

commander acted to prevent the Jews from bringing reinforcements to the city. Two platoons from the 4th Battalion's 3rd Company, accompanied by Palestinian guerrillas, one anti-tank cannon and two 3-inch mortars squads, were sent to the garrison. The rest of the company remained to the rear, ready to assist the force in the garrison if necessary, or to launch counterattacks.[67]

It did not take long before this force engaged the Jewish forces. After the wretched Orphan Convoy, another convoy, consisting of more than two dozen trucks carrying military equipment, made its way through, on 18 May.[68] At about this time, and probably unrelated to the convoy passage, the Arab Legion command reinforced the forces in Latrun, and the whole of the 4th Battalion was instructed to take over the Latrun area. One platoon based itself in positions over 'Imwas, alongside the battalion's support artillery company. Another company established positions near the Latrun monastery and a third company took positions in Kfar Yalu. The rest of the battalion—120 soldiers—was concentrated in the fortress. The force built its defense meticulously, building gunnery positions all over the fortress.[69]

The Jews were blind to these changes, but nevertheless made their plans on the assumption that hostile forces were holding Latrun, and hence, that going directly along the Latrun–Bab al-Wad–Jerusalem road would be a difficult task. Yitzhak Sadeh suggested instead going to Jerusalem along the Kula–Rantis–Ramallah road. This bypass road, built by the British, went through thinly populated area, and allowed a relatively secure passage. To accomplish the plan successfully, it was necessary to take al-Ramla and Lydda, which controlled the access gate to that road, and to establish a new heavily armed brigade that could implement the plan. The plan was discussed, but stalled somewhere along the way. Some say that the most serious problem that caused the plan's failure was Ben-Gurion's personal dislike of Sade.[70]

While the idea was still lingering, discussions continued over the preferred place to act, either on the way to Jerusalem or in the city itself. The subject re-emerged with the Palestinian attack on the Jewish Quarter in the Old City of Jerusalem. While sending a company to Jerusalem, to reinforce the Palmah force that was preparing to break through into the Old City, Rabin, the commander of the Harel Brigade, wondered where he should act–whether in Jerusalem, or on the way to the city? Ben-Gurion instructed Yadin to act in both places, and to send another company to back up the Harel Brigade, to enable it to occupy the road to Jerusalem.[71] However, it was obvious at this stage that his instructions were wishful thinking. The only way to make the occupation possible was

the formation of the new brigade—not yet accomplished—and indeed, Ben-Gurion urged Yadin to give the highest priority to completing the establishment of the new brigade. Shortly after 15 May, IDF General Staff had decided to build a second brigade, which was supposed to be armored, and its designated commander was Sadeh. Ben-Gurion's demand to give priority to the build-up of the first brigade was motivated not only by operational arguments, but also by his desire to see a veteran of the British Jewish Brigade—Shlomo Shamir—leading a brigade.[72] Ben-Gurion tried continually to integrate the British Army veterans into the IDF, to the dismay of the IDF High Command, he underestimated the professional military capabilities of the Hagana veterans, who had had no military training, and had high regard for the experience, knowledge and military education of the British Army veterans. These attempts were a source of friction between Ben-Gurion and the IDF senior commanders.[73]

Ben-Gurion had already decided on the assignment for the new brigade—the 7th was to launch a major offensive through Ramallah. In the meantime, Yadin suggested, and later instructed, that the Harel Brigade should leave some of its positions along the road to Jerusalem, and engage the Arab Legion forces north of Jerusalem, as a preparatory stage toward the Great Plan. Yadin thus acted in agreement with Ben-Gurion and at this stage accepted his general view that Jerusalem was the main priority.[74]

Preparations for the Ramallah Operation were conducted under the shadow of the Arab Legion's progress in north Jerusalem. The city was subjected to constant bombardment by the Arab Legion artillery, and the residents of the northern Jewish neighborhoods fled from their homes into the city. Food supplies became painfully short, and every resident received half a can of water for two days. Voices calling for surrender became louder and more frequent.[75] If that was not enough, the Arab Legion also occupied Ramat Rachel in the south of Jerusalem—losing it again a day later—and its units entered into some of the city's neighborhoods.[76] Ben-Gurion became worried about the city's ability to withstand the Jordanian attack, to the extent that he considered sending reinforcements to Jerusalem, even at the expense of the build-up of the 7th Brigade.[77] The fluctuation between concentrating on the fighting over the road to the city and fighting in the city continued. Yadin urged Ben-Gurion to adhere to their original plan, suggesting that the situation in Jerusalem was not that bad. It was true that the Arab Legion forces had entered al-Shaykh Jarrāh, while another column arrived from al-'Izariyya at the Mount of Olives, and a third column reached the

Nablus Gate, but the Jewish forces were in control of Zion Mountain and they had enough men and arms.[78] There was no real fear of the Arab Legion entering the Jewish part of the city, as that would drag the Legion into urban warfare and give the advantage to the Jewish forces, which the Legion command would most probably seek to avoid. Instead of rushing to Jerusalem, Yadin suggested sticking to his initial plan, of pulling the Harel Brigade forces from their positions along the Bab al-Wad–Jerusalem road and sending them against the Arab Legion in north Jerusalem. The Harel Brigade, which was the main fighting force in the city, had 700 soldiers organized into four companies. During this time—presumably 4–5 days—the 7th Brigade would be operational. It would then launch the Ramallah campaign, hammering the Legion's forces with the Harel forces serving as the anvil. Defeating the forces around Jerusalem in this way would permanently open the road to the city. Yadin predicted that, if his plan were adopted, supplies would be able to reach Jerusalem uninterrupted within a week.[79] Yadin started to execute his plans by instructing Shaltiel not to go for a defensive posture, but to take the offensive, and to drag the forces of the Arab Legion into urban warfare.[80] A few units of the Harel Brigade also prepared to attack the Arab Legion's forces in al-Shaykh Jarrāh.[81]

Ben-Gurion did not take Yadin's advice, and his timetable was much shorter. On 20 May, he set the date of the Ramallah Operation for the 24th. Yadin had to comply with Ben-Gurion's plan, but he expressed his reservation about the timing, which he thought was premature. He told Ben-Gurion that the 7th Brigade was still being built up, and it would not be ready to carry out the operation, as its soldiers were untrained and the commanders had no knowledge whatsoever of conditions in the theatre of operations; they had made no advance scouting forays into the area, and they had not had sufficient time to prepare their men. Hence Yadin demanded to postpone the operation for at least a week. However, his warning that a premature attack would be 'murder', and that the road to Jerusalem would remain closed for weeks, had no effect on Ben-Gurion. The latter insisted that everything should go ahead as was originally planned. All he was prepared to do was to allow a 24-hour postponement, and he left it to the 7th Brigade commander to decide whether his forces were able to carry out the operation. Shamir's reply was positive.[82] Yadin's claims did not go completely unnoticed, and in response to Yadin's observation about the untrained soldiers of the 7th Brigade, Ben-Gurion instructed that they should be replaced with trained soldiers from other brigades and that one more battalion should be added—the 32nd Battalion of the 3rd Brigade.[83]

This Yadin–Ben-Gurion controversy marked a change in the former's thinking on the war strategy and it seemed that he complied with the strategic priorities set by the Prime Minister. Either he now agreed with Ben-Gurion that it was urgent to send the reserve brigade to the Jerusalem front, or he did not want to continue the argument. In any case, Ben-Gurion also shifted the operation's focus slightly when he demanded that the brigade should seize Latrun and the surrounding area, and from there continue to Jerusalem along an as yet undecided route.[84] These instructions in fact marked the abandonment of Sade's Ramallah Operation concept, which aimed to avoid the clashes over Latrun and along the Bab al-Wad–Jerusalem road.

Ben-Gurion pressed for swift action, but preparations took more time than expected. The assembling of the forces went slower than expected, and hence, although the order for Operation Bin Nun had already been issued, Yadin asked Ben-Gurion to postpone the movement of 7th Brigade to more than 24 hours later, and again Ben-Gurion left it to Shamir to decide. The brigade commander accepted Yadin's request.[85] Another delaying factor was the Security Council Resolution, of 22 May, calling for a cease-fire in Palestine.[86] The Political Committee of the Arab League discussed the proposal at length, and on 26 May decided not to accept it.[87] Israel had announced to the Security Council that it accepted the Resolution, 'provided the other side acted likewise'.[88] However, Ben-Gurion did not want to wait and see if the 'other side acts likewise', or for the Political Committee of the Arab League's decision, and consulted Kaplan and Shertok on whether to carry on with the plans to move the 7th Brigade. The former was against it, but Shertok agreed that the brigade should go to Jerusalem, and so Ben-Gurion decided to carry on with the plan, although it is unclear whether he intended to carry out the attack on Latrun even if the cease-fire came into force. Reports coming out of Baghdad, according to which the Political Committee of the Arab League was rejecting the cease-fire proposal, made the decision easier.[89] The continued pressure from the Harel and Etsioni Brigades, urging the General Staff to hasten the dispatch of the 7th Brigade, certainly affected Ben-Gurion's decision.[90]

Operation Bin Nun's goal, which was defined in a very ambitious manner, was 'Relieving the city of Jerusalem and the road to the city from the pressure exerted by enemy forces from the north (Ramallah) and the south (Bethlehem and Bayt Jibrin), by crushing the enemy force.' This would be achieved by the occupation of the Latrun 'enemy concentration' and the permanent holding of the occupied territory. The operation order issued by the brigade's HQ referred to an unknown

force of the 'enemy' holding the villages of Latrun and 'Imwas. Other Arab units were deployed in Dayr Ayyub up to Bab al-Wad. The plan thus made no reference to the forces located at the Latrun garrison, and it no longer envisaged the advance of the brigade along the Kula–Ramallah road. The main goal of the brigade's activity in the Latrun area was to secure the passage of its forces to Jerusalem.[91] The fighting in Latrun was supposed to only be a stage on the brigade's route to Jerusalem, but as things turned out, it became the main thing to occupy the brigade in the coming days.

The Jewish forces had already started to implement the planned operation. The Harel command deployed its forces in the city, leaving only one company in positions in the mountains outide Jerusalem, while the units that went to the city had started to engage the Arab Legion in north Jerusalem. A request to air-bomb Arab Legion positions in al-Shaykh Jarrāh reached the IDF High Command too late, and so only received a partial response to.[92]

When the 7th Brigade went to the battlefield, it had no idea whom it was facing. There were various intelligence reports, some of them conflicting, but what was common to all of them was their mistaken estimation of the forces facing them, and also their downplaying of the real size of the Legion's force in Latrun and ignorance as to their location.[93] In reality there were nearly 700 Jordanian soldiers in Latrun and its surrounding area, and while the Jewish brigade was organizing, the Legion reinforced its deployment with the 3rd Brigade's 2nd Battalion.[94] Two battalions thus defended Latrun and its vicinity, placed in the right strategic locations and strongholds, in a way that afforded them the best possible control over the whole area. To that, one should add the artillery that was ready to support the defending forces while the Jewish commanders prepared to meet a few hundred irregulars. The forces that were sent on the night of 24/25 May against this well-entrenched and well-prepared force consisted of four companies from the 32nd and 72nd Battalions. They were not only inferior in numbers, but also completely unprepared for what awaited them. They were instructed to seize positions along the road from the irregular forces, on the assumption that they would need only a few hours to complete the mission. Instead they met a powerful, well-trained and fully prepared force. The result of this ignorance and unreadiness was a total collapse of the 32nd Battalion and heavy casualties to the rest of the forces. About 70 Israeli soldiers were killed and left behind, five were captured and about 70 wounded.[95] The Jewish forces set out on their missions later than planned and so were forced to fight in open daylight; but, on the

assumption that the challenge would be minor, the brigade command thought this would be non-problematic. Accordingly, the extent, ferocity and effectiveness of the Jordanian fire-power took the Jewish forces by complete surprise.[96] Another example can shed some light on the situation of the Jewish forces. One of the major problems from which the Jewish soldiers suffered was dehydration. Assuming that they were going on a short mission, many soldiers went into battle with only one water bottle, while others had none. The lack of water became crucial—and fatal—as the fighting continued, during a very hot May day. Consequently, besides the shooting injuries, many others suffered from dehydration, which made the soldiers apathetic and disoriented at a time when they needed all their wits about them to survive.[97]

While the 7th Brigade was attacking Latrun, the IDF 4th Brigade launched raids against al-Ramla and Lydda, in order to prevent any possibility that forces from these cities would either come to the legionnaires' assistance, or would seize the opportunity to launch attacks in the area. The Israeli Air Force shelled al-Ramla and Lydda, while the artillery bombed public targets in the two cities.[98] On the other wing of the front, Israeli forces attacked the Ras al-'Ayn camp and Majdal Yaba on 31 May. The forces of Hassan Salame defended these places, and as they tried to repel the Jewish attack Salame was fatally wounded, dying of his wounds on 2 June at the hospital in al-Ramla.[99]

The Israeli attack on Latrun alarmed the Arab Legion command, which assumed that the attack was coordinated with the Jewish activity in north Jerusalem. It was obvious that the Jews intended to remove the obstacle of Latrun, and to reinforce the troops fighting in Jerusalem. One possible path, along which the Jewish forces could go to Ramallah to confront the Legion there, went through Abu Ghosh and Radar Hill, and from there to Ramallah. Radar Hill had been a British base until 14 May, and after its evacuation, ALA forces took it over; the Harel Brigade's 5th Battalion occupied it shortly thereafter, handing it over to a platoon from the 6th Brigade's.[100] To prevent the Israeli forces passing through Radar Hill to the Latrun–Ramallah road, Glubb ordered the 1st Battalion to take over the Hill. An infantry company, supported by armored cars, artillery and mortars, attacked the Hill on 26 May, taking it over after a brief fight. The Jews tried to get the Hill back, and the fighting there continued in the coming days, but it remained in Jordanian hands until 1967.[101] Just as fears concerning Israeli offensive intentions led to Glubb ordering the occupation of Radar Hill, so the Jews were sure that the Legion perpetrated the attack as a first step toward the capture of the nearby Kiryat Anavim, from whence it would

advance to the Jerusalem–Bab al-Wad road. However, as stated above, this was not Glubb's intention and, as in Latrun, he put the Legion in a defensive position. The Jews continuously attacked his forces at Radar Hill, but at no point did the legionnaires step out of their positions, or take the offensive.[102]

While the 7th Brigade was fighting in Latrun, the General Staff prepared Operation Yahad ('Together'), which was directed against al-Ramla and Lydda. The forces in these cities were composed of forces under the command of Hassan Salame, strengthened with elements of the ALA's forces. They tried not to get involved in fighting, and their main concern at this stage was to ensure their ability to defend themselves against Jewish attacks. The Arab militias were engaged in organizing the defense of Lydda and al-Ramla and the escorting of villagers to their work in the fields.[103] However, as the Jews increased their attacks on al-Ramla during the second half of May, the local command appealed to the Arab countries for help. The Egyptians promised to assist, and their planes raided Jewish positions in the area.[104] A similar approach had been made to Jordan, and the calls became stronger after the 4th Brigade launched a series of raids on the city on 30 May. The Legion's response was to send several hundred Bedouin irregulars.[105]

The mission of the reinforcement was defensive, and their equipment—light arms—suited that purpose. However, once again, the Jews were unaware of the defensive nature of the force, and Operation Yahad's goal was to prevent an attack by the Arab forces in al-Ramla and Lydda by raiding and sabotaging Arab forces and installations in al-Ramla, and launching harassment and diversion raids against Lydda. At first, the operation was planned as a large one, in which forces from the 4th and 5th Brigades would take part. However, while the operation order was being circulated, the Egyptian column resting in Majdal moved ahead northward and, despite the high priority Ben-Gurion gave to the Jordanian front, the IDF High Command had to relieve the 5th Brigade from this mission. Thus the 4th Brigade, with the support of an artillery battery, carried out the operation alone, the scope of which was now limited.[106]

Ben-Gurion was not deterred by the defeat of the 7th Brigade, and he urged its commander to repeat the efforts to occupy Latrun. In the state of affairs prevailing in the country at that time, Ben-Gurion's insistence seems out of place. Syrian forces were engaging the Israeli forces at several points in the north of Palestine; their advance was checked, but the Israeli forces were still in the midst of fighting. The more serious threat seemed to be the unchecked advancing Egyptian expeditionary force. It

had just occupied Yad Mordehai, and seemed to be on its way northward; its left arm cut through the Negev, and its head was in Bethlehem. However, Ben-Gurion remained determined to implement his plans and priorities. During the third week of May, more and more armaments had arrived in Israel by air, including dismantled combat planes that were assembled and put into battle; this increased the ferocity and fire-power of the IDF. Ben-Gurion spoke about the possibilities that the new shipments provided for the Israeli forces—for example, to conduct a broad campaign to destroy the Lebanese, Syrian and Jordanian Armies—while in the south 'we must hang on'. Jerusalem and its vicinity would be occupied, if only 'to add more forces … mainly heavy artillery … The battle over Jerusalem is central from a moral-political point of view, as from the military point of view.'[107] However, Ben-Gurion's expectations were exaggerated, and the IDF would carry out his plans only at a later stage and, even then, with only partial success.

However, Ben-Gurion did ask that action be taken as forcibly as possible on the Jerusalem front, as the signs were ominous. The Legion's campaigns in north Jerusalem, the deteriorating situation in the Old City that accelerated with the arrival of the Legion, the Jordanian successes in Latrun and the Radar Hill battles—all convinced Ben-Gurion that the Legion was planning to occupy the whole of Jerusalem, and he was concerned about Jerusalem's ability to survive. According to the estimates made in May, there was no more fuel in the city, only enough bread, sugar and tea in the city for ten days, and water for three months.[108] The 7th Brigade had to open the road to Jerusalem and join the forces fighting in the city. It was particularly important as the brigade was supposed to bring with it to Jerusalem 400 new recruits who were on their way to reinforce the exhausted ranks of the 10th Brigade which had sustained heavy losses and had no reinforcements. In the meanwhile, as the 7th Brigade was delayed, Ben-Gurion instructed the 6th Brigade to place one of its battalions under the command of the 10th Brigade.[109]

Under pressure from Ben-Gurion, the 7th Brigade returned to Latrun. In the meantime, Israeli and Jordanian troops in the Latrun area were engaged in small-scale skirmishes and shootings, without either side being aware of the other's weaknesses and strengths. While the legionnaires were strengthening their defense line, the 7th Brigade resumed its preparations for the renewal of the offensive.[110] In order to secure its eastern flank, two companies of the 71st and 72nd Battalions entered and seized the empty villages of Bayt Susin and Bayt Jiz, which overlooked the Latrun battlefield.[111] This success—which was in fact

achieved without a fight, as the two villages were unoccupied—had far more dramatic repercussions than any of those who were involved in the operation envisaged. With the seizure of Bayt Susin, an off-the-road route was revealed, which bypassed the Latrun stronghold and then rejoined the road to Jerusalem at Bab al-Wad. This road, which was called the Burma Road and which was only put into full use in mid-June, was used on 29 May to move the 150 combatants who were to reinforce the 10th Brigade.[112]

Operation Bin Nun 2 was carried out within a new organizational framework, as Ben-Gurion appointed David Marcus as the commander of the Jerusalem front. The 7th, 10th and 6th Brigades came under his command in what was the first front to be established since the beginning of the war.[113] The structural changes had no effect on the 7th Brigade's lack of awareness as to the real deployment of the Jordanian forces in Latrun. In the Operation Order of Operation Bin Nun 2, it was announced that the forces in Latrun area 'consisted of the Arab Legion, Qawukji and others'; in all a total of 600 soldiers. Assuming that such a force, spread along a ridge that was four km wide and deep, would be unable to defend itself properly, Yadin instructed Shamir, the 7th Brigade commander, in a telegram sent 30 May, to attack that night 'with no delay … The enemy forces are relatively weak in Latrun.' Accordingly, Shamir sent his troops to attack the Latrun region in two waves in what it was thought would be an easy task.[114] The operation was due to start on the night of 29/30 May, but the 3rd Brigade's 32nd Battalion returned to its original front, and the 5th Brigade's 52nd Battalion took its place. However, this battalion arrived late, thus delaying the operation by 24 hours.[115] The assignment of the latter to the Latrun battle had been made at a time when the 5th Brigade was facing the advancing Egyptian forces. The decision to remove the battalion from the brigade order of forces is the strongest evidence as to Ben-Gurion's priorities at that time.[116]

Unlike the Jewish forces, the Jordanians were well prepared. They expected the Israeli attack, observed the preparations made for it and made the necessary steps to meet it.[117] The events of the previous battle repeated themselves, and the better placed, trained and prepared legionnaires repelled the attack, inflicting heavy casualties on the Jewish forces. While the former sustained less than a dozen soldiers killed, the latter suffered the death of 49 soldiers.[118] The total number of Arab Legion casualties up to May 29 were 90 killed and 200 wounded.[119]

The story of the two Latrun battles has become a source of vehement historiographical debate among Israelis. Efforts to try and provide answers that could explain the painful Jewish defeat have been made

ceaselessly, culminating with the most extensive study of the Latrun campaigns undertaken by Shlomo Shamir, who was the 7th Brigade commander at the time.[120] There have been many conclusions and explanations, but there is one thing that should be remembered: while the Jewish troops had no idea whom they were about to meet, the Jordanians were well prepared. They made effective use the time between their opponents' arrival and the first attack to place their forces in the better locations, they were well informed about the Jewish build-up and their intentions, they studied the conditions in the whole area meticulously, constantly sent out scouts and patrols, and built an effective defense line. They positioned just enough forces to hold a defense line and, above all, they were good soldiers, well trained and disciplined. The Israeli soldiers, on the other hand, went into the unknown, some of them were untrained, most of them were unfamiliar with the terrain, geography and conditions of the battlefield. They had no intelligence reports, their numbers were significantly short of what was needed for an offensive force moving against two well-entrenched battalions, and their operational plan and tactics were inadequate as they were based on false assumptions.[121]

While the Jordanian force was facing the attack, it received some assistance from the Iraqi and Egyptian Armies. Iraqi forces in the Nablus district staged diversionary attacks into the plains west of Tulkarm and north of Jenin in an attempt to relieve the pressure on the Arab Legion. Some assistance was also given to the Jordanians by the Egyptian expeditionary force. Complying with requests made by the Jordanians, the Egyptian government had instructed General al-Mu'awi, the commander of the expeditionary force, to move further north, to put pressure on the Israelis, and hence to relieve the pressure on the Jordanian forces in Latrun. Al-Mu'awi, unwilling to risk a direct clash with the Israeli forces inside the State of Israel, complied reluctantly. On 28 May, he moved northward toward Isdud. Although no special Israeli forces were sent toward the Egyptian column, the Israelis could not reduce their forces in that area to send more troops to the battle against the Arab Legion.[122]

While ground forces were attacking in Latrun, Israeli bombers attacked Amman on the night of 30/31 May. The planes hit some targets in the city, and there were a few casualties. They also hit an RAF base near Amman. The British military sent a strong protest and threat to the Israeli government, and the bombing was not resumed.[123] At that time the Political Committee of the Arab League had met in Amman to

discuss the Security Council's call for a cease-fire, and this attack might have been intended to send a message to the delegates.

In the midst of the fighting along the Jerusalem road, the Jordanians suffered a setback with the British decision to recall the British officers serving in the Legion. The Cabinet made the decision following the resolution made by Political Committee of the Arab League, on 28 May that in fact rejected the Security Council's call for a cease-fire. The British government, whose representatives were busy with achieving a cease-fire agreement in Palestine, could not allow British officers to take part in fighting that was taking place in defiance of the United Nations resolutions. This meant that during the heavy fighting expected by the Arab Legion, a major corpus of experienced officers would be taken from it. The possible solution, which was adopted with British consent, was that the King would directly employ the British officers, as was the case with some of the British officers serving in the Arab Legion.[124]

As far as Glubb was concerned, by the end of May the Arab Legion had completed all of its missions. Its main goal had been to gain control over the territory allotted by the United Nations to the Palestinians west of the River Jordan, and that goal had been successfully achieved. The complications in Jerusalem had added an unplanned mission, the acquisition of the Old City and its holy places, and that mission had also been accomplished, without dragging the Legion into a struggle with the Jews. Even the bitter clashes in Latrun remained local and contained, and did not lead to unwanted counterattacks by Glubb's forces against the Jews. The situation on 1 June was, therefore, as follows: the Arab Legion controlled a line across the city from al-Shaykh Jarrāh through the Old City, and the Arab neighborhoods on the east of the Old City, with Mount Scopus remaining a Jewish enclave in amidst an Arab-controlled area—the Mount of Olives, and to the south toward Bayt Jala–Bethlehem. Glubb also mentioned another important achievement: 'the Jewish drive to seize the whole of Jerusalem had been stopped short'.[125]

The Fighting In Jenin

By early June, the IDF had launched major offensives on almost all of the fronts: against the Jordanians in Latrun, against the Egyptians in Isdud, and against the Iraqis in Samaria. The reasons for the attack in Samaria, against the Iraqis in Jenin, are a matter of controversy between the operation's commanders. Moshe Carmel, the commander of the

Northern Command, claimed that the reason for the operation was the fear of a combined action in which the Iraqis would move from the north of Samaria with the ALA forces moving from their bases in the Nazareth area southward, and the two forces meeting half-way, thus cutting off from the rest of Israel the whole of the Afula–Tiberias area and the Jordan valley up to the Galilee panhandle. In Carmel's eyes, this was the only reason for the operation. He completely rejected the explanation provided by the operation commander, Mordechai Maklef, according to whom the operation was intended to have an effect on the fighting over Jerusalem.[126] Maklef claimed that a representative of the IDF came to see him, demanding to launch the attack on Jenin in order to assist the forces fighting on the road to Jerusalem. At that time, the IDF was engaging the Arab Legion forces in the Latrun area, and the Israelis hoped that attacking in Jenin would prevent the Iraqis from coming to the Legion's assistance while possibly forcing the Legion to come to the Iraqis' assistance, consequently reducing its deployment in Latrun.[127] Ben-Gurion provided a different explanation: in the face of the coming truce, he asked Yadin to conduct an operation against the Iraqi forces in the Jenin–Tulkarm area that would place the Jews in a better position with the advent of the truce.[128] There might be something in each of these explanations, but the attack appears to have been primarily instinctive, aimed at erasing the results of the invasion, just as the counterattack on the Egyptian deployment in Isdud was more than anything else an act of outrage; an attempt to reverse the situation, even if the odds were against the Israelis.

In the final days of May, the Jews already found themselves in a better position along the Afula–Jenin road area after the occupation by the 1st Brigade of the Arab villages in the northern part of the Gilboa (see Chapter 6). The occupation of al-Lajjun, at the northern entrance to Wadi 'Ara, at the same time, had a similar effect and significance. These achievements, unrelated to the planned operation, brought the Israeli forces closer to Jenin, and made access to Jenin less hazardous, or so the Israelis thought. The General Staff asked the commander of the northern front, Moshe Carmel, to launch the attack; and Carmel in return asked to extend the operation's scope. He thought that the 3rd Brigade should attack Tulkarm, so increasing the pressure on the Iraqi forces that also held the Tulkarm area. Yadin agreed, and the order for Operation Yitzhak was issued. The goal of this operation was phrased in a way that left several options open 'to create a deep bulge into the Triangle and to apply pressure from all sides on that central area'. The operation was planned to encompass a wide front, stretching from the

Jordan Valley, through northern Samaria and Jenin, to Tulkarm. Accordingly, the forces were assigned several types of missions: raiding selected targets in the Jordan Valley, occupying Jenin, conducting diversionary harassment operations against various targets in the Triangle, and conducting a major and sustained attack on Tulkarm, in order to draw forces there. The IZL was supposed to occupy Ras al-'Ayn. Artillery and bomber planes would support the ground forces, and a plan was made for the bombardment of Jenin and Tulkarem. Four battalions participated in the major part of the operation, the occupation of Jenin: two of the 2nd Brigade (the 21st and the 22nd), the 1st Brigade's 13th Battalion, and three companies that formed a battalion-size force (two companies from the 14th Battalion and another company from the 15th Battalion—all from the 1st Brigade).[129]

The Iraqi expeditionary force controlled the wider operational area, from the Baysan Valley to Nir Nazem, near Ras al-'Ayn; a 160-km line. The Iraqi deployment was arranged in three sectors. The northern sector stretched from the River Jordan to the area of Lajjun. This area was the responsibility of the 4th Brigade, which was supported by an artillery battery and an armored company. Two Palestinian battalions were also stationed in that sector. The western sector, from Bāqa al-Gharbiyya to Kufr Qāsim, was held by the 1st Brigade, an artillery battery and an armored company, a mechanized battalion and two Palestinian battalions. The southern sector spread from Kafar Qasim to Dayr Nazzāl, and was held by a battalion. The Iraqi command regarded that sector as being one under the Arab Legion's auspices. Israeli intelligence reports claimed that the total force placed in the Jenin–Nablus–Tulkarm triangle amounted to 5,000 soldiers.[130] Jenin itself was empty. Its residents had left on 1 June with the occupation of the villages to the north of the city; just 200–300 unorganized local armed men remained in the city. Forces of the Iraqi Army only arrived at the battle scene on 3 June, after the end of the operation's first stage and after the Israeli occupation of the positions controlling the city. Iraqi deployment at that time indicates that its command had not expected this attack. While there were nearly no Iraqi forces in the Jenin area, there were many more forces in the Tulkarm area. Moreover, the Iraqi High Command instructed the only force in the area, the 2nd Brigade's 5th Battalion, to withdraw their forces from the area. The Jewish success in the first stage should hence be attributed to this fact.[131]

The mission of the Israeli 2nd Brigade was 'to attack and occupy Jenin in order to kill and destroy the enemy and its weapons and to entrench in position in the city area'. The 13th Battalion was instructed

to occupy some villages on the Afula–Jenin axis; when that was accomplished, the 21st and the 22nd Battalions could pass through the area captured by the 13th Battalion. Each battalion would capture positions to the east and west of Jenin. This stage was to be concluded by dawn on 2 June, at which time an armored column would break through and occupy Jenin.[132] The 3rd Brigade was instructed to attack Tulkarm, and Yadin stressed to the brigade's command that the successful implementation of the attack was essential to the success of the attack on Jenin.[133] In retrospect, his plea was appropriate.

The attack started with an air raid on Jenin and Tulkarem on 1 June, and during the next two days the operation forces accomplished their mission: the 13th Battalion occupied 'Arana, Jalama and Muqaybala along the Jenin–Afula road, and on the night of 2 June the 21st Battalion had reached its destination, while the 22nd Battalion met fire on its way to its destination. During this time an Iraqi counterattack was thwarted. The more serious Iraqi attack was launched on 3 June. The attack was accurate and lethal; it started with shooting from positions inside the city and was supported by a heavy and very effective artillery barrage. Shortly after that, an Iraqi battalion with its artillery made its way from Nablus. The Iraqis attacked the 21st Battalion on the western side of the city, inflicting heavy blows on it. The 22nd Battalion was completely oblivious to these occurrences. The Israeli brigade command brought in reinforcements, but Carmel demanded that the 3rd Brigade immediately launch its attack on Tulkarm, as a condition for his forces holding their positions in Jenin in the face of the heavy Iraqi attack; he hoped that such an attack would force the Iraqi command to reduce their forces in the Jenin area and send some to Tulkarm. Yadin had already done so. On 2 June, he repeated the order to the 3rd Brigade commander to go to Tulkarm, but this order was not followed, the brigade commander claiming that his cannons were out of order, and he could not carry out the attack without artillery support. As this was the situation, Yadin had no choice but to tell Carmel 'if you can't hold Jenin, withdraw in an orderly manner'.[134] The Israeli forces withdrew, sustaining heavy casualties. Of the Israeli forces, 34 were killed and more than 100 wounded. The attempt to occupy Jenin failed.[135]

In spite of their success, the Iraqi forces retained their defensive position, and did not take the offensive until the end of the war. For the Jews, it was another demonstration that the professional difference between the educated and well-trained Iraqis and the semi-partisan Jewish forces could not be overcome by enthusiasm and the Jewish sense of just cause alone.

Operation Yoram

With the failures in Latrun and the impeding truce, plans were made for a third attack on Latrun. The anxiety over Jerusalem's fate was increased by the gloomy reports that continued to come from the city. Zalman Aran told Ben-Gurion, on 8 June, that the situation in the city was grave, and that the food stocks would suffice only until the 11th. There was almost no electricity and water was in short supply. The Arab Legion had significantly intensified its artillery barrage during the recent three days, and there were many more killed and wounded than usual. From 15 May, 300 people had been killed in the city and about 1,000 wounded. Ben-Gurion's military adviser, Fritz Eshet, claimed that the existing Jewish forces would not withstand an attack by the Arab Legion. The shortages and hardship led to corruption and stealing among the Jews.[136] Ben-Gurion's sense of urgency over Jerusalem's fate was further heightened by the Israeli forces' poor performance against the Jordanian Legion, which had increased the pressure on Jerusalem and its environs, and also by the deliberations on a truce at the United Nations.[137] With the pressure of the cease-fire, Ben-Gurion expected another attack by the 7th Brigade on Latrun, and he demanded that at least one battalion of the 11th Brigade be brought from the Galilee to attack al-Ramla and Lydda concurrently with the 7th Brigade attack on Latrun. Yadin objected to Ben-Gurion's proposed line of action. He thought that redeploying the 11th Brigade would expose the Galilee, and anyway, he told Ben-Gurion that it would be impossible to redeploy the forces at such short notice. Ben-Gurion insisted, and the General Staff issued a redeployment order for the 1st Battalion of the 11th Brigade and a forward order toward an operation whose aim was 'the completion of our lines and widening them eastward'. To achieve that, al-Ramla and Lydda would be taken by the 4th Brigade and the 1st Battalion of the 11th Brigade on the night of 1/2 June.[138] However, as Yadin warned, the battalion could not make it on time and it was not ready to act on the scheduled date.[139]

The arguments with Yadin frustrated Ben-Gurion as he attributed great importance to the seizure of al-Ramla and Lydda, as they could serve the Arab Legion as a departure point from which to attack Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, the areas around the two cities and the road to Jerusalem. Their conquest, on the other hand, would allow the relief of forces that were sent against them, would clear a larger area and would cut Arab communication lines.[140] Thus, a day after his meeting with Yadin, while by-passing the ordinary command channels, Ben-Gurion,

the Minister of Defense, summoned the commander of the Kiryati Brigade, Michael Ben-Gal, and asked him whether he would be able to take over al-Ramla and Lydda. The brigade commander's answer was positive, and he showed Ben-Gurion a detailed plan, which included an elaborate list of the man-power and arms needed to accomplish the mission successfully.[141] The plan did not materialize, but this was an example of Ben-Gurion's priorities and different attitude toward the war strategy. Apparently, Yadin did not share Ben-Gurion's deep concern about the Arab Legion, and consequently he had less appreciation of the need to act on the al-Ramla–Lydda front. Ben-Gurion suspected that Yadin paid little attention to the need to take Lydda and al-Ramla and to secure the Tel Aviv front, because the commander of the Tel Aviv brigade ('Kiryati') was not one of the hard-core Hagana corpus.[142] As it became clear that forces from the north would not arrive on time, Yadin suggested that the whole two-battalion 11th Brigade should replace the damaged 7th Brigade and launch another attack on Latrun. The 7th Brigade would then be sent off to reorganize and rest. Ben-Gurion agreed in principle, but as he still thought that it was necessary to attack al-Ramla and Lydda, he asked Yadin to arrange the occupation of al-Qubayba, which was located on the Latrun–al-Ramla road.[143]

IDF military planning and further activity had been continued along the lines laid down by Ben-Gurion. On the night of 1/2 June the 10th Brigade launched two operations to prepare the ground for the major offensive along the whole area between Latrun and Hulda, on the basis of Ben-Gurion's demand to incorporate the al-Qubayba region into the IDF war plans. A strategic hill, overlooking Bayt Nuba and Yalu and dominating the Latrun–Ramallah road, was seized without a fight. The second operation was far less successful. The target was—once again—Radar Hill. Three platoons from three different battalions were assigned to this mission, which the soldiers thought was doomed. They knew well that the fighting would be hard and would cost too many of them their lives; and knowing that the cease-fire was near, they hoped that it would be in place before the expected battle. To make matters worse, the aerial support that was intended to assist the Israeli attacking forces met with heavy and effective Jordanian anti-aircraft fire, and the Israeli planes returned to base without providing the expected support. The Jordanian forces at Radar Hill were well prepared and managed to thwart the attack, inflicting another setback on the Israeli forces. Twelve Israelis were killed and 37 wounded.[144] In the meantime, the 11th Brigade and its two battalions, the 1st and the 3rd, each comprising 450 men, had arrived at the central front on 5 June, a few days ahead of

schedule. The 1st Battalion took positions in the Gezer area, while the 3rd was placed in Bayt Susin three days later. The 7th Brigade was assigned to secure the new Burma Road.[145]

The failure at Radar Hill further weakened the 10th Brigade, which was already weakened by the removal of the 5th Brigade's 52nd Battalion from the Latrun theater of operations. As a result, the broader plan that the Israeli command was hoping to carry out was reduced in scope, to include only the Latrun sector.[146] The extent of the operation was also determined by the failure of the Israeli counterattacks, which were launched on the night of 2/3 June on the Egyptian column and the Iraqi forces in the Jenin area. Ben-Gurion was hoping that with the success of these attacks it would be possible to divert forces from the southern front and to use them to reinforce the forces operating against the Arab Legion.[147] With the failure of these attacks, the activity along the borders of the Latrun area had to remain restricted. The Prime Minister made it clear that in any case, al-Qubāb should be taken as the first step toward the battle on al-Ramla and Lydda.[148]

The result was Operation Yoram, which was to be carried out in three stages. Unlike the previous attacks that were launched from the flanks, this time the planners sought to break through the Jordanian formation in its central sector, and to widen the enclave outwards from the inside. In order to reduce and weaken the main Jordanian force that was deployed at the center of the planned theater of operations, other Israeli forces would launch diversionary attacks on the flanks in an attempt to draw forces from the center to the sides.[149] Special attention would also be given to al-Ramla and Lydda. Forces from the Arab Legion took up positions in these cities and their vicinities during the first week of June; the Jews were afraid that their attacking forces in the Latrun area would find themselves attacked from the rear. To prevent such an eventuality, the Kiryati Brigade command worked out a plan that stipulated that patrols targeted al-Ramla and Lydda, while the brigade artillery engaged the two cities.[150]

Glubb had anticipated this last-minute Israeli attack. He assumed that the Jews would try to change the situation to their favor due to the imminent cease-fire, and was afraid that Jewish success in Latrun would destabilize the Legion's entire position in the Jerusalem area, as well as their and the Iraqis' position in the Samaria area. Past experience had taught Glubb that the defense formation that the Arab Legion had built in Latrun, and at some strategic points along the Latrun–Ramallah route, was strong and formidable enough. What remained to be done there was to increase the state of alert, and the Jordanian forces along the

Latrun–Ramallah axis did just that.[151] Another possibility that disturbed Glubb was a Jewish attempt to take al-Ramla and Lydda, a measure that would allow the Jews to increase their pressure on the Jordanian forces in Latrun. Assuming that the Jewish forces were unable to break the Legion's positions in Latrun, he was sure that they would try to extend the Legion's lines by attacking these two cities. Glubb assumed that the Jews expected that, in such a case, the Arab Legion would send reinforcements to assist the attacked forces, and the Latrun position would be weakened. With that, the Jews would launch a major attack on the weakened positions, and from there advance into Ramallah and the Arab hinterland. Glubb had no intention of doing what he thought that the Jews expected him to do, and instead acted to create a 'belt' that would close the routes to Latrun and Ramallah to Jewish movement. The need in the 'belt' increased with the death, on 2 June, of Hassan Salame, the last active Palestinian commander, who was fatally injured in Ras al-'Ayn during fighting with Jewish forces. His death left his forces in al-Ramla and its vicinity without leadership, and Glubb decided, against his initial inclination, to extend the Legion's authority to the city and to establish a line that would run from al-Ramla via Lydda station to Ras al-'Ayn. The first forces that the Legion sent to al-Ramla were Bedouin irregulars, but by 5 June regular forces consisting of one armored and three infantry platoons supported by two 6-pounders and one 3″ mortar were sent to reinforce the Jordanian Bedouin irregulars that had been sent earlier.[152] Later on, an Arab Legion unit sought the surrender of the isolated Jewish settlement of Ben Shemen, located between Lydda and Latrun, which hence could serve as a springboard in both directions. Ben-Gurion instructed Yadin to keep the men in place, and his justification for leaving the settlers in their isolated and besieged place was one Glubb could understand: the occupation of Latrun would change the situation in regard to al-Ramla and Lydda. In such an event, the presence of the Jewish force in Ben Shemen would be extremely important.[153] Their next move was against Gezer. On 10 June an Arab Legion mechanized, detachment from al-Ramla attacked the Israeli settlement of Gezer, taking it from the rear. The force was led by a British officer, and consisted of soldiers of the Arab Legion, which had arrived in al-Ramla on 1 June, accompanied by irregulars. The Arab force had subdued the settlement in the afternoon, while the Jewish forces in the area stayed away. It was only by the evening that two platoons of the Yitfah's 1st Brigade launched a counterattack. The legionnaires departed, taking with them 36 prisoners, including 14 women, and leaving behind them the irregular forces. The Israeli force once more gained control over Gezer.[154] On

the last day of fighting, other Legion detachments launched simultaneous attacks on Sarafand, Safiriyya and Yehudia, all on the way to al-Ramla and Lydda. The attacks on the first two sites were repelled, but the Legion forces succeeded in occupying Yehudia, an Arab village which had been occupied by the Jews in May and held by IZL forces.[155]

The Israeli attack had started on the night of 5 June. On that night and the following, Yitfah's 1st Battalion launched a series of harassment and diversionary raids on the northwest side of the Latrun enclave, during which they also occupied al-Qubeib. The battalion forces also attacked most of the villages along this side of the Latrun front. At that time, the Kiryati forces engaged al-Ramla and Lydda. At the same time, the Israeli artillery bombarded the Legion's positions, forcing the forward HQ of the Legion's brigade to retreat to a safer place.[156] After two days of fighting around the main target, the Israeli command reassembled the forces that were due to take part in the main campaign. The attack was conducted by two battalions, the 10th Brigade's 5th and the Yitfah's 3rd. The two battalions' mission was to take over two hills overlooking the Latrun garrison from the south, which were held by considerable Jordanian forces from the Arab Legion's 4th Battalion. The fighting, which started on the night of the 7th, lasted several hours. Both sides sustained heavy losses, and the Israeli 5th Battalion succeeded in capturing one hill out of the two. However, the Jewish formation was in disarray, and the second Israeli battalion did not manage to exploit this success. In fact, the confusion and disorder in the Israeli camp was such that, in the face of persistent Jordanian resistance, the battalion completed the occupation of the hill only to secure its route of withdrawal. Yitzhak Levy, who fought as an officer on the Jerusalem front in 1948, is clear in his analysis on the reasons for the failure. The Jews had gained an initial advantage which they failed to bring to completion. The preceding diversionary raids did confuse the Jordanian command, and they did not expect the Jewish forces to arrive from the direction they did. In addition, the sector's borderline of the two Legion battalions that guarded the Latrun garrison passed along one of the two hills, and hence was less heavily guarded, from the Jordanian point of view. The main problem was that, despite the fact that three battalions took part in the operation, they did not act in concert using shared operational logic and moves. Each battalion acted to implement its own mission, regardless of the others' actions. The IDF commanders still lacked the ability to conduct complicated operational campaigns. Command and control in the Jewish camp malfunctioned, and the coordination among the units both on and off the battlefield was poor.[157]

The Jewish weakness contrasted with the Jordanian's effective conduct of their defense. The Jordanian command positioned its forces along a wide area, to meet the assaulting forces and to intercept them. They fought ceaselessly, and when they lost the hill they regrouped their forces and launched a strong counterattack. In this specific case, the outcome of the battle was decided by the Jewish decision to hold the hill only as a means of ensuring their safe withdrawal, but this decision was accepted as not only did the Jordanian force did not collapse, it also fought back strongly.[158] By the end of the day the Latrun garrison remained in Jordanian hands, and according to the testimony of the Arab Legion officer, Mahmoud al-Ghasin, a dozen legionnaires were killed during the fighting. The Israelis lost nearly 100 soldiers.[159] The Israelis could find some comfort in the fact that despite the failure, a supply route to Jerusalem was opened—the Burma Road. The recently announced truce prevented any possible Jordanian attempts to close the road, and supply convoys made their way to Jerusalem, thereby reducing not only the distress of the city's Jewish population, but also the political and military pressure on the Israeli leadership.

On the eve of the first truce, the situation of the Arab Legion seemed good. It had implemented all of its missions, and almost all of the territory that was allotted to the Arab State on the west bank of the Jordan river was under Jordanian control, just as Abdullah had planned. However, as had happened in the other Arab Armies, the fighting had exhausted the Arab Legion's ammunition supplies, and because of the arms embargo they could not get replacements. On 6 June, the Arab Legion had ammunition left for only seven days.[160] Alec Kirkbride, the British minister in Amman, thought that Britain should not allow the Legion to be defeated by the Jews because of British refusal to restock the Legion's empty arms depots. He portrayed a gloomy picture of the possible repercussions of an Arab Legion defeat to his superiors in London: it would 'doubtless start a panic among the remaining Arab population of Palestine and retreat would probably be hampered by crowds of refugees'.[161] He did not suggest defying the arms embargo and sending arms to the Arab Legion, but instead he suggested that the RAF in Amman could lend shells from its stock, if the Legion were under a real threat of defeat.[162] Bevin agreed in principle with Kirkbride's view, but recalled the UK commitment to the UN embargo, and explained that a change in British arms supply policy would be possible only if the Jordanians were obliged to withdraw from Palestine and if Transjordan was then invaded or threatened with invasion by Jewish forces from Palestine.[163]

This was the last accord of war—for the meantime.

NOTES

1. David Ben-Gurion in the Third Session of the Provisional State Council, 3 June 1948, in *When Israel Fights* (Tel Aviv, 1949), p. 117.
2. BGWD, pp. 45–6, entry for 14 December 1947; Slutzki, *History of the Hagana*, p. 1369.
3. D. Ben-Gurion to M. Shertok, 8 December 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 12/47–4/48,* p. 35; I.J. Linton and T. Smith, 15 December 1947, ibid., p. 70; BGWD, p. 66, entry for 23 December 1947.
4. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 8 January 1948, E363, FO 371/68827.
5. M. Shertok to A. Lopez, 19 April 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 12/47–4/48,* p. 656; BGWD, p. 358, entry for 20 April 1948; Gelber, *Jewish–Transjordan Relations,* pp. 268–9.
6. British Legation, Amman: 'Monthly Situation Report on Transjordan for the Month of April, 1948', 4 May 1948, FO 371/68845; Rossan, 'The Bab al-Wad Campaigns', pp. 138–43; Etzioni, *Ilan Vashelah*, pp. 125–33.
7. M. Shertok to A. Parodi, 5 May 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 12/47–4/48,* p. 740.
8. Glubb, *Soldier With the Arabs*, pp. 77–8.
9. BGWD, p. 286, entry for 8 March 1948.
10. Telegram no. 329 from Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 14 May 1948, CO 537/3904; Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, pp. 101–5; David Shaltiel, *Jerusalem 1948* (Tel Aviv, 1981), pp. 158–9.
11. Telegram from Hashmonai to Yadin, 15 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; telegram from Etsioni to Yadin, 16 May 1948, ibid.; Summary of the [Arab Legion] 1st Battalion's Fighting in Palestine, 9 December 1948, IDFA 922/75/693; Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, pp. 105–14; Shaltiel, *Jerusalem 1948*, pp. 159–62.
12. BGWD, p. 413, entry for 13 May 1948.
13. Telegram from the 1st Brigade to Yadin, 14 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175.
14. Glubb, *Soldier With the Arabs*, pp. 90–1.
15. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 15 May 1948, E6304, FO 371/68372; telegram no. 338 from Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman to Foreign Office, 16 May 1948, CO 537/5315.
16. Telegram from the 6th Brigade to Yadin, 14 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; Glubb, *Soldier With the Arabs*, pp. 82–3; Rossan, 'The Bab al-Wad Campaigns,', p. 147.
17. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 19 May 1948, E6564, FO 371/68506; telegram no. 358 from Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to Foreign Office, 21 May 1948, CO 537/5315; Glubb, *Soldier With the Arabs*, p. 105; al-Tall, p. 65; Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, p. 240; Rossan, 'The Bab al-Wad Campaigns', p. 147.
18. Telegram no. 357 from Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 20 May 1948, FO 816/120.
19. The United Nations Representative at the United Nations to the Secretary of State, 28 April 1948, *FRUS 1948*, V, pp. 872–73.
20. M. Shertok to D. Ben-Gurion, 28 April 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 12/47–4/48*, p. 693; D. Ben-Gurion to M. Shertok, 29 April 1948, ibid., p. 695; M. Shertok to D. Ben-Gurion, 29 April 1948, ibid., p. 695; D. Ben-Gurion to M. Shertok, 2 May 1948, ibid., p. 713.
21. M. Shertok to D. Ben-Gurion, 3 May 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 12/47–4/48*, p. 721; meeting: H. Berman–Consular Truce Committee, 9 May 1948, ibid., pp. 771–2; Mr J.C. Ross to the Secretary of State, 5 May 1948, *FRUS 1948*, V, p. 914.

22. Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, pp. 226–7; Shaltiel, *Jerusalem 1948*, p. 145.
23. Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, p. 228; Shaltiel, *Jerusalem 1948*, pp. 147–8.
24. British Legation Amman: Monthly Situation Report on Transjordan for the Month of May, 2 June 1948, E7814, FO 371/68845.
25. Telegram from the 6th Brigade to Yadin, 15 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175.
26. Ibid., 14 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; Mr Beaumont, Jerusalem to Foreign Office, 17 May 1948, E6346, FO 371/68505; report by C. N. Herzog, 21 May 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 12/47–4/48*, p. 43; Shaltiel, *Jerusalem 1948*, p. 163.
27. Mr Beaumont, Jerusalem to Foreign Office, 15 May 1948, E6319, FO 371/68505; ibid., 17 May 1948, E6346; Mr Beaumont, Jerusalem, to Foreign Office, 16 May 1948, E6299; ibid., 24 May 1948, E6808, FO 371/68507; Glubb, *Soldier With the Arabs*, pp. 124–6; Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, pp. 232–4, 250–3; Shaltiel, *Jerusalem 1948*, pp. 166–7, 171–7.
28. Abdullah al-Tall, *Abdullah al-Tall's Memories* (Tel Aviv, 1960) (Hebrew), p. 78.
29. BGWD, p. 430, entry for 16 May 1948.
30. A detailed survey of these attempts see Report by C.V. Herzog, 21 May 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 12/47–4/48,* pp. 42–52.
31. Moshe Ehrenvald, 'The Military Struggle in Jerusalem, 29 November 1947–3 April 1949', in Alon Kadish (ed.), *Israel War of Independence* (forthcoming) (Hebrew); Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, p. 41.
32. GHQ/Operations branch: Plan Dalet, 10 March 1948, IDFA, 922/75/595.
33. Ehrenvald, *The Jewish Quarter*, pp. 158–62; Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, pp. 40–1; Shaltiel, *Jerusalem 1948*, pp. 174–5.
34. Report by C.V. Herzog, 20 May 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 12/47–4/48*, pp. 44–5; Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, pp. 41–2.
35. Ibrahim Kandalaft, 'After the Mandate (1)', *al-Bilād* (Jordan), 9 November 1953, IDFA 922/75/693; Ehrenvald, 'The Military Campaign in Jerusalem', p. 14; Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, pp. 28, 57.
36. Telegram from Harel Brigade to Yadin, 19 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, pp. 45–51; Rabin, pp. 50–1; Shaltiel, *Jerusalem 1948*, pp. 171–3.
37. Telegram from Harel Brigade to Yadin, 19 May 1948, IDFA, 922/75/1175; Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, pp. 54–7; *Sefer Ha'Palmah* 2, pp. 477–81; Shaltiel, *Jerusalem 1948*, pp. 173–7.
38. Mr Beaumont, Jerusalem, to Foreign Office, 18 May 1948, E6403, FO 371/68505; L. Kohn to J. Nieuwenhuys, 19 May 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 12/47–4/48*, p. 35; Report by C.V. Herzog, 21 May 1948, ibid., p. 49; Mr Beaumont, Jerusalem to Foreign Office, 30 May 1948, E7835, FO 371/68510.
39. One of Shaltiel's lieutenants claims that the problem lay in his personality and shortages: Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, pp. 233–4, 361–8.
40. Glubb, *Soldier With the Arabs*, pp. 106–10, 113.
41. Report by C.V. Herzog, 21 May 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 12/47–4/48*, pp. 46–7.
42. Mr Beaumont, Jerusalem, to Foreign Office, 17 May 1948, E6346, FO 371/68505; British Legation Amman: Monthly Situation Report on Transjordan for the month of May, 2 June 1948, E7814, FO 371/68845.
43. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 17 May 1948, E6577, FO 371/68829; telegram no. 348 from Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 19 May 1948, FO 816/120; conversation with Major Abdullah al-Tall, 24 May 1948, FO 371/68641; Ibrahim Kandalfat, 'After the Mandate (7)', *Al Bilad* (Jordan), 4 January 1954, IDFA 922/75/693; al-Tall, *Memories*, pp. 75, 79; Glubb, *Soldier With the Arabs*, pp. 109–11.
44. Telegram no. 358 from Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to Foreign Office, 21 May 1948, CO 537/5315.

45. Telegram no. 343 from Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to Foreign Office, 18 May 1948, CO 537/5315; Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 19 May 1948, E6564, FO 371/68506; conversation with Major Adullah al-Tall, 24 May 1948, FO 371/68641; al-Tall, *Memories*, pp. 79–81; Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, p. 57.
46. Mr Beaumont, Jerusalem, to Foreign Office, 18 May 1948, E8568, FO 371/68505; telegram from Etzioni to Yadin, 26 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; al-Tall, *Memories*, pp. 83–4.
47. Telegram from Etzioni to Yadin, 27 and 29 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; Sir A. A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 29 May 1948, E7179, FO 371/68374; al-Tall, *Memories*, pp. 86–7, 88–90, 100–1, 103–7; Shaltiel, *Jerusalem 1948*, pp. 176–8. A detailed report on the situation in the Old City and the circumstances that led to its surrender is in Mr Beaumont, Jerusalem, to Foreign Office, 30 May 1948, E7835, FO 371/68510.
48. Report by C.V. Herzog, 21 May 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 12/47–4/48*, pp. 47–52.
49. Al-Tall, *Memories*, pp. 158–61.
50. Mr H. Boswell, Beirut, to Foreign Office, 21 May 1948, E6770, FO 371/68373; Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 22 May 1948, E6769, ibid.; al-Tall, *Memories*, pp. 154–5; Maddy-Weitzman, *The Crystallization*, pp. 71–2.
51. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 22 May 1948, E6769, FO 371/68373; Maddy-Weitzman, *The Crystallization*, pp. 71–2.
52. Telegram no. 358 from Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to Foreign Office, 21 May 1948, CO 537/5315; Foreign Office Minute, 22 May 1948, E6694, FO 371/68373; Summary of the [Arab Legion] 1st Battalion's Fighting in Palestine, 9 December 1948, IDFA 922/75/693; Glubb, *Soldier With the Arabs*, p. 130.
53. FO to New York, 22 May 1948, E6694, FO 371/63873; Foreign Office Minute, 22 May 1948, E6694, ibid.
54. Netanal Lorch, *History of the Independence War* (Tel Aviv, 1989), pp. 287–91.
55. Telegram from Etzioni to Yadin, 21 and 22 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; Telegram from the Legion HQ to the 12 Company, 21 May 1948, HA 105/129; Mr Beaumont, Jerusalem, to Foreign Office, 23 May 1948, E6785, FO 371/68507; telegram from the commander of the 12th Company to the commander of the 4th Battalion (Jordan), 23 May 1948, HA 105/129; al-Tall, *Memories*, pp. 129, 132–6; al-Sharif, 'The Muslim Brothers in the Palestine War', pp. 86–8; Shaltiel, *Jerusalem 1948*, pp. 183–4.
56. Telegram from Etzioni to Yadin, 23 May 1948, IDFA, 922/75/1175; Mr Beaumont, Jerusalem, to Foreign Office, 24 May 1948, E6808, FO 371/68507; Shaltiel, *Jerusalem 1948*, p. 184.
57. Al-Tall, *Memories*, pp. 136–8.
58. BGWD, p. 453, entry for 24 May 1948 and pp. 457 and 459–60, entry for 26 May 1948.
59. BGWD, p. 453, entry for 24 May 1948.
60. From C-in-C, MELF, to War Office, 25 May 1948, 371/68621.
61. Fawzi Qawukji to High Command, 15 May 1948 in Qawukji, *Memoir*, p. 26; telegram no. 338 from Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to Foreign Office, 16 May 1948, CO 537/5315; telegram from Etzioni Brigade to Yadin, 16 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; BGWD, p. 434, entry for 17 May 1948.
62. Al-Tall, *Memories*, pp. 113–24; telegram from Etzioni to Yadin, 19 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; Glubb, *Soldier With the Arabs*, pp. 114–15; Shaltiel, *Jerusalem 1948*, p. 179.
63. Al-Tall, *Memories*, pp. 115–21; Shaltiel, *Jerusalem 1948*, pp. 179–80.
64. BGWD, pp. 428, 431, entries for 15 and 16 May 1948.
65. Ibid., p. 450, entry for 22 May 1948.
66. Rossan, 'The Bab al-Wad Campaigns', pp. 148–9.

67. Glubb, *Soldier With the Arabs*, p. 110; Rossan, 'The Bab al-Wad Campaigns', p. 151.
68. BGWD, p. 436, entry for 18 May 1948; telegram from the Fifth Brigade to Yadin, 19 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175.
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70. BGWD, p. 433, entry for 17 May 1948; Retner, *My Life and Me*, p. 372.
71. BGWD, p. 434, entry for 17 May 1948.
72. Ibid.
73. Yoav Gelber, *Why was the Palmach Disbanded?* (Tel Aviv, 1986) (Hebrew), pp. 47–211.
74. BGWD, p. 437, entry for 18 May 1948; telegram from Yadin to Harel Brigade, 18 May 1948; Shamir, *'No Matter What' – To Jerusalem*, p. 27.
75. BGWD, p. 451, entry for 23 May 1948.
76. Telegrams from the 6th Brigade to Yadin, 22 and 23 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; BGWD, p. 449, entry for 22 May 1948 and p. 451, entry for 23 May 1948.
77. Ibid., pp. 440–1, entry for 19 May 1948.
78. Ibid., p. 441, entry for 20 May 1948.
79. Ibid., pp. 441–2, entry for 20 May 1948.
80. Telegram from the 6th Brigade to Yadin, 20 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175.
81. Telegrams from the Harel Brigade to Yadin, 21 and 22 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175.
82. Committee of Five, Session no. 2, 3 July 1948, pp. 110–11.
83. BGWD, p. 444, entry for 21 May 1948 and p. 450, entry for 22 May 1948; Shamir, *'No Matter What'*, p. 27.
84. BGWD, p. 450, entry for 22 May 1948.
85. Ibid., p. 452, entry for 24 May 1948; telegram from Yadin to Amitai [Ben-Gurion], 23 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; Shamir, *'No Matter What'*, pp. 155–8.
86. Resolution 49 (1948) adopted by the Security Council on May 22, 1948, in *FRUS 1948* V, p. 1029.
87. Telegram no. 395 from Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 25 May 1948, FO 816/121; telegram no. 399 from Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 26 May 1948, ibid.
88. M. Shertok to A. Eban, 24 May 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 12/47–4/48,* p. 68.
89. BGWD, p. 454, entry for 24 May 1948.
90. Telegram from the 10th Brigade to Yadin, 24 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; Shamir, *'No Matter What'*, p. 163.
91. Ibid., pp. 161–2.
92. BGWD, p. 444, entry for 21 May 1948 and p. 448, entry for 22 May 1948 and p. 453, entry for 24 May 1948.
93. Telegram from 6th Brigade to Yadin, 17 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; telegram from the Harel Brigade to Yadin, 19 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; BGWD, p. 441, entry for 20 May 1948; General Staff/Operation Branch: 'Summary of the Enemy Deployment Between al-Ramla and Jerusalem', 23 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1018.
94. Rossan, 'The Bab al-Wad Campaigns', pp. 168–9.
95. Ibid., pp. 173–5; Shamir, *'No Matter What'*, pp. 171–216.
96. Shamir, *'No Matter What'*, pp. 240–7.
97. Ibid., p. 265.
98. Kiryati/Operation Branch: Summary from 29 May to 31 May, 1 June 1948, IDFA 922/75/1018.
99. Arab Legion Radio Communication, 3 June 1948, HA 105/129.
100. *Sefer Ha'Palmah* 2, pp. 930–1.
101. Telegram from the 10th Brigade to Yadin, 26 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 29 May 1948, E7179, FO 371/68374; Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 2 June 1948, E7392, ibid.; Summary of the [Arab Legion] 1st Battalion's Fighting in Palestine, 9 December 1948, IDFA

922/75/693; Glubb, *Soldier With the Arabs*, pp. 130–1; al-Tall, *Memories*, pp. 143–4; *Sefer Ha'Palmah* 2, p. 931.
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103. Kiryati/Operation Branch: Summary from 29 May to 31 May, 1 June 1948, IDFA 922/75/1018.
104. Kadish, *The Occupation of Lydda, July 1948*, pp. 22—3.
105. Glubb, *Soldier With the Arabs*, p. 158.
106. General Staff/Operation Branch: Operation Yahad – Platform, 29 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1018.
107. BGWD, p. 453, entry for 24 May 1948. See also Minutes of the Provisional Government meeting, 26 May 1948, ISA.
108. BGWD, pp. 459–60, entry for 26 May 1948 and p. 462, entry for 27 May 1948.
109. Ibid., p. 458, entry for 26 May 1948.
110. Rossan, 'The Bab al-Wad Campaigns', pp. 178–9; Shamir, *'No Matter What'*, pp. 275–6.
111. Telegram from 7th Brigade to Yadin, 27 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; Shamir, *'No Matter What'*, pp. 276–9.
112. Telegram from the 10th Brigade to Yadin, 29 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; BGWD, p. 476, entry for 1 June 1948.
113. Ibid., p. 465, entry for 28 May 1948.
114. In Shamir, *'No Matter What'*, p. 286; Seventh Brigade HQ: Operation Order Bin Nun 2, 29 May 1948, in ibid. pp. 288–9.
115. Telegram from the 7th Brigade to Yadin, 30 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; Shamir, *'No Matter What'*, p. 301.
116. See Chapter 4.
117. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 29 May 1948, E7179, FO 371/68374; ibid., 31 May 1948, E7283, ibid.
118. Rossan, 'The Bab al-Wad Campaigns', p. 188; Shamir, *'No Matter What'*, p.346.
119. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 31 May 1948, E7283, FO 371/68374.
120. Shamir, *'No Matter What'*; for a debate and bibliography on this matter see Anita Shapira, 'Historiography and Memory: the Latrun Case, 1948', *Alpayim*, Vol. 10 (1994), pp. 9–41.
121. The most detailed story of the Arab Legion conduct is Rossan, 'The Bab al-Wad Campaigns', pp. 152–89. The Israeli side's story is told in detail in Shamir, *'No Matter What'*, pp. 149–404. See Committee of Five, Session no. 2, 3 July 1948, p. 112–13.
122. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 31 May 1948, E7283, FO 371/68374; *Behind the Curtain,* p. 157.
123. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 1 June 1948, E7368, FO 371/68374; Mr Marriot, Haifa to Foreign Office, 1 June 1948, E7371, ibid; BGWD, p. 478, entry for 2 June 1948.
124. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 28 May 1948, E7158, FO 371/68829; ibid., 31 May 1948, E7287, FO 371/68830; Glubb, *Soldier With the Arabs*, pp. 133–4.
125. Ibid., p. 126; al-Tall, *Memories*, pp. 158–9.
126. Moshe Carmel Summary [undated], IDFA 922/75/208.
127. Mordechai Maklef Summary [undated], IDFA 922/75/208.
128. BGWD, pp. 470–1, entry for 30 May 1948 and p. 472, entry for 31 May 1948.
129. Operation Itzhak Order, 1 June 1948, IDFA 922/1975/208; Eshel, *The Carmeli Brigade in the Independence War*, pp. 188–9.
130. *Behind the Curtain,* pp. 126–7; Operation Itzhak Order, 1 June 1948, in Eshel, *The*

Carmeli Brigade, p. 189.
131. 'The Battle Over Jenin', North Front HQ/Intelligence, June 1948, IDFA 922/1975/208; 'The Battle Over Jenin', July 1959, pp. 11, 12, ibid.
132. Telegram from Yadin to Yermiyahu, 31 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1182; Eshel, *The Carmeli Brigade*, pp. 190–2.
133. Telegram from Yadin to the 3rd Brigade, 31 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1182.
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136. BGWD, p. 496, entry for 8 June 1948.
137. Ibid., pp. 470–1, entry for 30 May 1948; Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, pp. 239–84.
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139. BGWD, p. 475, entry for 1 June 1948.
140. Ibid., pp. 468, 470, entry for 30 May 1948.
141. Ibid., p. 485, entry for 4 June 1948.
142. Ibid., p. 484, entry for 4 June 1984.
143. Ibid., p. 475, entry for 1 June 1948.
144. Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, p. 296; Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 2 June 1948, E7392, FO 371/68374; Summary of the [Arab Legion] First Battalion's Fighting in Palestine, 9 December 1948, IDFA 922/75/693.
145. Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, p. 295.
146. Ibid., p. 296.
147. BGWD, p. 481, entry for 2 June 1948.
148. Ibid., p. 484, entry for 4 June 1984.
149. Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, pp. 296–8.
150. Kiryati/Operations: Operation Order: 'Diversion', 5 June 1948, IDFA 922/75/1018.
151. Rossan, 'The Bab al Wad Campaigns,' pp. 191–2.
152. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 5 June 1948, E7566, FO 371/68510; ibid., 7 June 1948, E7639, ibid.; Glubb, *Soldier With the Arabs*, pp. 143, 157–9; Rossan, 'The Bab al-Wad Campaigns', pp. 190–1.
153. BGWD, p. 492, entry for 6 June 1948 and p. 494, entry for 7 June 1948.
154. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 11 June 1948, E7906, FO 371/68374; Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, pp. 302–3.
155. BGWD, p. 503, entry for 11 June 1948; Cohen, *By Light and in Darkness*, p. 144.
156. BGWD, p. 491, entry for 6 June 1948; Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, pp. 298–9.
157. Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, pp. 299–301.
158. Rossan, 'The Bab al-Wad Campaigns', pp. 194–9; Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 11 June 1948, E7906, FO 371/68374.
159. Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, p. 303; Rossan, 'The Bab al-Wad Campaigns', p. 199; Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 11 June 1948, E7906, FO 371/68374.
160. Telegram no. 461 from Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 6 June 1948, DEFE 6/6; telegram no. 81 from Cairo to the Foreign Office, 8 June 1948, ibid.
161. Telegram no. 461 from Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 6 June 1948, DEFE 6/6.
162. Telegram no. 470 from Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 9 June 1948, DEFE 6/6.
163. Foreign Office to General Hollis, 11 June 1948, E7851, DEFE 6/6.

6

The Palestine Northern Front, 15 May–10 June

Syria was one of the most aggressive states among the Arab League members in its attitude to the Palestine problem. It was the only one that not only filled the quota imposed by the Arab League's Military Committee of arms and weapons to be provided to the Palestinian war effort, but did even more than was required. Thus, while required to provide 500 volunteers and 2,000 rifles, it actually provided 2,987 volunteers and 2,640 rifles. In addition, the Syrian government had provided the ALA with several 75-mm field cannons, 8 mortars, 74 machine-guns and communication devices.[1] It also hosted the ALA on its territory, and it opened training camps for Palestinians and others who volunteered to fight in Palestine. The staff and the equipment were all Syrian.[2]

In 1948, there were 3.3 million people in Syria. Most of its population was Sunni, but there were relatively large ethnic and religious minorities, the biggest being 350,000 'Alawis, 300,000 Christians, 200,000 Kurds and 90,000 Druze. The country was agricultural in nature. Eighty per cent of its land was cultivated, owned by 10 per cent of the population. It had no heavy industry whatsoever, and its light industry provided for an internal market. Eighty per cent of the population was illiterate, while most of the rest of the population enjoyed only a low level of education.[3]

As the Arab League had decided in May to go to war in Palestine, most of the Syrian Army units were called to the training camp in Qtane, where they prepared for war. New recruits joined the army, and veterans were called back to duty. At that time the army was organized into two brigades, as the third had been disbanded. The defense budget was increased and on 15 May the Syrian parliament passed bills declaring martial law in Syria with the Prime Minister as Military Governor. Other measures enacted by the parliament included the imposition of censorship of press and printed matters, mail, telegrams and telephone communication.[4]

The 1st Brigade, whose units were the best the Syrian Army had, was assigned to the Palestine mission. Its commander, Colonel 'Abd al-Wahhāb Hakim, told the Syrian defense minister that his brigade was unready as it was short of arms and manpower. The Defense Minister rejected these claims and on 2 May Hakim was told that the invasion would commence on 15 May, and that his brigade mission was to move to Safad through Bint Jubayl and al-Mālikiyya. The force under his command comprised three infantry battalions and an armored battalion, which consisted of a tank company, an artillery battalion, and some logistic and auxiliary forces.[5] The Syrian General Staff supervised directly the army operations in Palestine. It had established a forward command in al-Qunaytira, and General Staff officers conducted the war from there. Logistics and supplies were also affected by the direct channel of command from the General Staff to the Brigade command, and the proximity of the former to the theater of operations, as the fighting forces enjoyed an unhindered supply of warm food, arms and ammunition.[6]

The 1st Brigade had started its move from Qtane to Bint Jubayl in Lebanon on 13 May, while one battalion of the 3rd Brigade was assigned to secure the Syrian border with Israel.[7] The 1st Brigade's journey to Bint Jubayl was in line with the original plan stipulated by Mahmud Nur al-Din, according to which the Syrian forces would enter Palestine through al-Mālikiyya, moving along the al-Mālikiyya–Safad route, and meeting the Iraqis and Jordanian forces in the Afula–Nazareth area. However, as King Abdullah rejected this plan; instead sending his forces to bring the adjacent Arab parts of Palestine west of the River Jordan under his control—the strategic logic of the Syrian move was lost. The absence of the Arab Legion from the northern theater of operations would leave a lull between the northern flank of the Iraqi forces and the Syrian troops coming southward. As a result, a-Din instructed the Syrian forces to abandon the al-Mālikiyya–Safad route, and to head for the valley along which the al-Yarmuk was streaming. Here, the Syrian forces were to act in concert with the Iraqi forces, which were operating in the south of the Tsemakh–Gesher sector. The goal of the Iraqi–Syrian moves at the first stage was Tiberias; capturing that city would be a first step toward severing the Upper Galilee and moving eastward. By operating in concert each force secured the other's flank.[8] The Syrian force would move through Tsemakh and Deganya just south of the Kinneret, not far away from Tiberias, while the Iraqi force would act further south, trying to climb to the ridges overlooking the Jordan Valley, and from there would move northward, approaching Tiberias from the west.

Receiving the new order, the Syrian commander ordered the 1st Brigade to re-embark on the same vehicles that brought them to Bint Jubayl, and after a day's journey, it took up positions along the Jordan valley, by Lake Kinneret. The Israeli forces followed the Syrian movements, misunderstanding their intentions.[9] The Lebanese government felt insecure in the face of the Syrian redeployment. Moslem politicians were firm in their decisions regarding the Palestine campaign, and they led a militant line in favor of an Arab invasion of Palestine with the participation of Lebanese forces. However, when the moment of truth came, the voice of the Christian politicians prevailed, and they urged the President not to involve the Lebanese Army in an adventure whose chances of success seemed slender. Kamil Sham'un, the Minister of the Interior, led the opposition to the invasion, and the army commanders supported him, as they saw the Lebanese Army goals as being solely defensive. The debate that followed Sham'un's criticism was resolved on 14 May, when the Lebanese government decided that the army would be deployed in defensive positions along the Palestine border. The parliament approved the resolution.[10] However, with the change of the invasion plan and the Syrian forces' movement away from Lebanon, and considering the Lebanese Army's weakness, the Lebanese government feared that the Israelis would break through into Lebanon, and asked for Arab League assistance. The ALA's 2nd al-Yarmuk Battalion was assigned to that mission. The battalion was assigned to that area at a time when the ALA forces were being called back from Palestine to Syria for reorganization. However, the Israelis were completely unaware of the Lebanese plans, and they were sure that the Lebanese Army would join the rest of the invading Arab Armies. For many years it was assumed in Israel that the Arab forces that acted along the al-Mālikiyya area belonged to the Lebanese Army. However, new studies, based on previously unused Arab sources and declassified Israeli documents, shed new light on the fighting in al-Mālikiyya and the surrounding area.[11]

At the time, the Israelis planned to attack the area, hoping to achieve two goals: blocking the possible route of the expected Lebanese invasion forces; and relieving the siege at Manara and Ramot Naftaly, which had been subjected to attacks during Operation Yitfah. Their destination was the military base near al-Mālikiyya and the village itself. The 2nd Yarmukh Battalion, under the command of Adib Shishakly, defended the sites, and a Lebanese volunteer company reinforced it. On the morning of 15 May, two forces of the Israeli 11th Brigade's 1st Battalion attacked and occupied al-Mālikiyya and a nearby military camp, along

with the adjacent village of al-Qadas. The ALA force was under the command of an Iraqi officer who replaced Shishakly, and his poor command led to the force's defeat. With the news of the defeat, Shishakly re-assumed command and led his men in a counterattack. This time he was backed up by a Transjordanian Bedouin company and a Lebanese armored platoon. The attack was successful, and the Israeli forces were pushed back. The Israeli forces suffered 120 casualties and, according to their reports, the attackers had 200 casualties. The al-Mālikiyya posts and the al-Nabi Yusha garrison were still in the hands of the ALA. However, because of the problematic location of the al-Nabi Yusha' garrison, the volunteers evacuated it, and the Jewish 3rd Battalion took it over without a fight.[12]

The next Jewish move was against al-Mālikiyya. With the final retreat of the Syrian forces from the Jordan Valley, after the failed campaign in the Tsemakh–Deganya area, the IDF northern command felt that it was possible to reattempt capturing the gate to northern Galilee and Lebanon—the al-Mālikiyya area. On 28 May, the 11th Brigade's 3rd Battalion launched a complex attack, with the participation of infantry, armored, artillery and aerial forces, on al-Mālikiyya and its surrounding area. The ALA forces did not expect the attack, and the surprise, combined with the superior Israeli fire-power, led the commander of the force in al-Mālikiyya to retreat without a fight. The Israelis felt that they had secured the Lebanese Army's possible invasion path to Palestine.[13] However, as will be seen later, this was not the end of it.

On the Israeli side, responsibility for the Syrian Front, which stretched from the upper Galilee to south of Lake Kinneret, was in the hands of the 11th and 1st Brigades; the former was in charge of the northern part of the front. As things developed, the task of blocking the Syrian invasion was in the hands of the 1st Brigade. The 1st Brigade command assumed that there were several possible invasion routes. One was from the Golan Heights to the Jordan valley, either north or south of Lake Kinneret. Another route along which the Jordanian and Iraqi forces might enter, was from Naharaim–Gesher into the Izrael Valley. These two routes could then be used in a wide pincer-movement, in which forces coming from the central Galilee and the Nazareth area might take part. The assumption that invading forces would come along one of these routes affected the planning and action of the Israeli forces in their activities along this front. However, in immediate terms, the operations carried out by the 1st Brigade before 15 May in the lower Galilee were directed not against the possible invading forces, but against the local population and irregular forces that might take part in this pincer-maneuver.[14]

The defense of the front ranging from north of Lake Kinneret to Tsemakh and Gesher was assigned to the 1st Brigade's Barak Battalion. The battalion command sought the assistance of the settlers, but as they were in the middle of the harvest, they were reluctant to cooperate. The battalion arranged the digging of anti-tank trenches but, due to the lack of cooperation on the part of the local settlers, the works were not completed by 15 May. One and a half platoons were positioned along the lower Galilee sector, and the rest were deployed along the Jordan river line. These forces were poorly equipped, at least as far as heavy arms were concerned; all that the battalion's forces had were three heavy machine-guns, three 3-inch mortars and four 20-mm cannons.[15]

Units of the Syrian Army, accompanied by eight armored cars with cannons, crossed the international border, south of Lake Kinneret, on the night of 14/15 May, making their way toward Tsemakh. As the troops marched along, Syrian artillery shelled the Jewish settlements of Gesher, Ashdot Ya'akov, Shaar Hagolan, Massada and Eyn Gev. Two Syrian infantry companies approached Tsemakh and the Israeli Guard forces that held positions near the settlements fled in panic, leaving the positions to the Syrians. Another Syrian company moved toward Massada and Shaar Hagolan, occupying on their way a water installation on the Yarmuk. The 1st Brigade command sent forces from Tiberias to Tsemakh, establishing a defense line between the Syrian forces and Tsemakh, and a 1st Brigade platoon reinforced Shaar Hagolan. The reinforcements and the kibbutz defenders repelled the Syrian attack.[16] On the next day, the Syrian forces in Tsemakh tried to break the defense line which had just been established by the 1st Brigade, but the Syrian infantry, accompanied by armored cars, lacked determination and gave up quickly in the face of Jewish resistance. During all this time, the Syrian Air Force bombed several Jewish settlements in the Galilee area and even at Natanya.

The Syrian failure was the result of confusion and deficiencies in equipment and organization, and resulted in heavy Syrian losses. The main reason for the painful defeat, however, was the Syrian High Command's low esteem of the Jewish ability to face the Arab Armies. They assumed that the Jewish irregular forces would be no match for the much better armed and trained regular Arab Armies, and consequently, second- and third-grade soldiers were sent to fight the Jews in Tsemakh.[17] It was only after the initial Syrian failures in Tsemakh that this view changed, and that better quality forces were sent to the battlefield. To increase the Syrian soldiers' resolve, the Syrian officers received permission to shoot any soldiers who refused to advance, or so prisoners of war told their captors.[18]

After the Syrian attack, the 1st Brigade command sent urgent telegrams to the General Staff, demanding manpower and arms reinforcements.[19] Yadin rejected the request, telling the Brigade's command that the General Staff was well aware of the brigade's difficult situation, but it nevertheless had to attack, and 'immediately': 'the goal is to hit the enemy'. The brigade had to launch offensive operations, carried out at night by small units, even at the expense of the settlements' defense. Not relying on the brigade command's ability to carry out their instructions, Yadin appointed Moshe Dayan to command the sector stretching from Eyn Gev to Baysan. Dayan brought with him a company of squad commanders, with whom he was ordered to conduct operations along the Syrian back lines. Yadin also instructed the 2nd Brigade to increase its activity in central Galilee, to prevent the appearance of Arab forces from the west which could advance on the 1st Brigade.[20] There were two elements in Yadin's orders. One was the abandonment of the concept that the settlements' defense was sacrosanct. As happened along the southern front, here too the Israeli forces were dispersed among the settlements, and were not organized as one fighting unit. The Brigade was therefore unable to use its forces in significant offensive missions, as its forces were dispersed and engaged in their original mission: the defense of the settlements. The change needed was not only organizational, but also conceptual, and for that reason it was apparently more difficult to implement. The appointment of Dayan was one step toward the conceptual change. It was also an act that implied a lack of trust in the ability of the 1st Brigade commander, Moshe Montag, to make the shift. The feelings of distrust concerning Montag's ability would later increase to an extent that would lead to his removal.

While these exchanges were taking place, the Syrian command were quick to learn the lessons of the 17 May failure, as was apparent during the next Syrian offensive on 18 May. The decisive attack started at dawn, after Tsemakh had been subjected to continuous artillery and aerial bombardment. The Syrian commanders noticed that the southern flank of the Tsemakh's defense line was exposed, and the armored forces and the artillery opened fire along a wide front, from Shaar Hagolan and Massada up to Tsemakh. Under cover of fire, the Syrians sent in their armored company—about ten Renault tanks—toward the unprotected southern sector. This time the Syrian commanders avoided a direct assault, a method which had previously failed, acting indirectly instead. The emergence of the tanks on the exposed flank completely destabilized the Tsemakh defense line, and the Israelis fled from the kibbutz in an unorderly manner, sustaining many fatalities in the process. The

Syrian forces kept up the momentum and stormed the nearby police station, where the remains of the 12th Battalion were trying to re-establish a defense line. The superior Syrian fire-power, better organization and control—especially in comparison with the shaken IDF soldiers, who lost most of their commanders in Tsemakh—led to the surrender of the police garrison to the Syrians.[21]

The Syrian success caused panic among the Israeli settlers in the Jordan Valley, and it was lucky for them and the IDF forces that the Syrians did not exploit their success to further their advance. It seemed that the Syrian command did not expect the success and did not make plans for such an eventuality. The Israeli forces—the IDF soldiers and the local settlers—were unprepared for the extent and ferocity of the Syrian attack, and they had no answer to what seemed, at that time, Syrian superiority in arms and fire-power. One indication of the settlers' unpreparedness was the fact that the civilian population had remained in place, including the children, and had to be evacuated under fire.[22] After the fall of Tsemakh, the residents of Shaar Hagolan and Massada decided to leave their homes. The sector commander instructed the residents not to do that, but they did nonetheless.[23]

The Syrian success caused anxiety within the General Staff. Yadin spoke as if the Jordan Valley was under a real danger of occupation. He instructed the 1st Brigade to build a defense line in Yavniel, above Tiberias, through which it was possible to penetrate the central lower Galilee, and from there to cut the north part of the country from its south, along the al-Lajjun–Haifa road. Fearing that the brigade would not hold out, Yadin instructed its commander to prepare a second line of defense along the Jenin–al-Lajjun–Afula perimeter, and urgently instructed the 11th Brigade to send a company to reinforce the 1st Brigade; he also ordered the Carmeli Brigade to send a company to Yavniel. Later that day he suggested sending a battalion of the 11th Brigade to reinforce the 1st Brigade.[24]

Ben-Gurion placed the blame for the failure directly on Moshe Montag, the 1st Brigade commander. He claimed that the brigade command misunderstood the situation and was unprepared to meet the Syrian forces. In a meeting between Ben-Gurion and Yadin, the former demanded that Montag be removed from his position, and that the opportunity to reshuffle be seized; this would put Mordechai Maklef, a Second World War British Army veteran, in command of the 1st Brigade. The final outcome of the reshuffle was decided after the intervention of the head of the National Command, Israel Galili. The 2nd Brigade commander, Moshe Carmel, would be appointed to command

the northern command and the command over the 1st Brigade was to be handed to Mishael Shaham. Ben-Gurion, who wanted to see Maklef in the latter position, did not impose his authority, but suggested giving Shaham the appointment only on a temporary basis.[25] The removal of Montag from his position should be well noted, as this actually meant dismissal from his command; an exceptional step to be taken during wartime. It was also another step in the transformation of the IDF, from a guerrilla group to a regular army, through trial and error.

Yadin's wish to see the Israeli forces along the Syrian Front taking the offensive changed with the failed counterattack against the Syrian forces that held the Tsemakh police station by the Palmah company, which had just arrived from the upper Galilee. The company attacked several Syrian armored cars, but failed to take over the police station.[26] This failure increased Yadin's anxiety, and he reversed his previous order, instructing now that the 1st Brigade should cling on to every settlement and not allow the abandonment of any village or community.[27]

The Syrians resumed their operations on 20 May. A Syrian force—probably consisting of two infantry battalions, a battalion of armored cars, a tank company and an artillery battalion—stormed Deganya, a vital point on the road to Tiberias. This time, however, the Syrian conduct of the offensive was poor, as the Syrian commanders did not take into account the geographical conditions on the way to Deganya. The offensive was based on the tanks' break-through capabilities, while the infantry, the weakest part in the force, moved behind the tanks. However, with the geographical conditions which prevailed in the area, the infantry force was more effective than the tanks, as the area was rich in flora that severely restricted the tanks' maneuverability. The tanks were therefore forced to move along one vital road, and hence were vulnerable, as it was possible for the defending forces to stop them only with Molotov cocktails. In fact, to break the whole attack, it sufficed to hit the first tank in the column, which was exactly what happened. The Syrian tanks succeeded in penetrating into the kibbutz, but there the first tanks were hit by anti-tank weapons and Molotov cocktails hurled by the kibbutz defenders, and the attack came to an end. In nearby Deganya B., two infantry companies led the attack, accompanied by the tanks. The infantry moved under the cover of tank-fire, and almost reached the kibbutz fence, but there met with heavy fire. The Syrian force repeated the attempt several times, with the same results on each occasion. Here, the tanks made no attempt to act independently, and did not try to break through the kibbutz positions. By noon it was clear that the Syrian offensive had been contained. Under heavy Israeli fire, which

came as a surprise to the Syrian forces, the latter retreated to Tsemakh in an orderly manner, and later that day they left Tsemakh, retreating back behind the international border.[28]

The Jordan Valley campaign had cost the Syrians dear. Two hundred of their soldiers were killed and many more were wounded; three tanks, one-quarter of the Syrian total number of tanks, fell into Israeli hands and many other armored cars were destroyed.[29] The Syrians did not resume their attacks in the Tsemakh–Gesher sector, although their combat planes, artillery and tanks continued to ceaselessly bomb the Israeli settlements in the valley. Sometime their forces even carried out attack maneuvers, but these were only feints.[30]

The Southern Sector: The Iraqi Force

The Iraqi forces established themselves in the southern part of the Tsemakh–Gesher sector, and went into action by 15 May. The launching platform for the Iraqi invasion was the electricity plant in Naharaim, which the Arab Legion had evacuated shortly before 15 May, handing it over to the Iraqis.[31] The Iraqi forces captured some strategic points near Kibbutz Gesher, but failed in their attempts to take over the kibbutz.[32] They also failed in their attempts to occupy Kawkab al-Hawa, an Arab village located on a high point in a mountainous ridge running from the Izrael Valley northward, overlooking the Jordan Valley. The village was located on the meeting point of the road leading south to the Izrael Valley, and north to the ridge overlooking Tiberias and the lower Galilee. By 15 May, the Israeli 1st Brigade had captured the village from the few residents who remained there. The rest of the area was vacant, as its Arab occupants had fled after the occupation of Baysan. Those few Arabs who remained in Kawkab al-Hawa and were driven off found shelter among the Iraqi forces down in the valley, and the latter directed artillery fire toward the Israeli forces above them. The 1st Brigade prepared to launch an attack from Kawkab al-Hawa against the Iraqi forces, but the Iraqis were the first to act, and on the dawn of 18 May an Iraqi company climbed along the ridge in an attempt to occupy the village. The Jewish forces already in place observed the Iraqi preparations, and surprised them by attacking first while the Iraqi forces were still organizing their ranks. The Iraqi attack was destroyed, and the forces retreated from the village. During the following days, the Iraqi artillery shelled the Jewish forces in Kawkab al-Hawa.[33]

In the Aftermath of the Jordan Valley Battles

It was generally felt in Israel that the Jordan Valley battles were problematic: for example, it was felt that the 1st Brigade dealt with the crisis incompetently, and that its response to the Syrian retreat was slow and hesitant. (It was only on 24 May that the 1st Brigade retook Tsemakh: an unexplained delay.[34]) Yohanan Ratner, military adviser to Ben-Gurion, delivered gloomy reports from the scen of the fighting which reflected these feelings. Ratner even suggested that special forces be allocated to the defense of Afula and that fortifications be built around the city. In response, Yadin ordered the northern brigades to give high priority to the fortification of Afula and the Jordan Valley.[35] The report led Ben-Gurion to wonder aloud about the necessary steps to be taken in the coming days. His ideas were unrealistic, but they reflected Ben-Gurion's mood. He still thought that the main theater of operation should be Jerusalem and the road to the city, but he also sought ways to rectify the situation in the Jordan valley. To that end, he toyed with the idea of establishing a new brigade which would occupy Jenin as a step toward securing the Jewish hold on the Jordan Valley. Ben-Gurion contemplated the idea of Yigal Alon leading an offensive aimed at destroying the Syrian forces in the Jordan Valley and to the north of the Galilee, while the Israeli Air Force (IAF) would destroy Amman. Ben-Gurion believed that these actions, along with the anticipated destruction of the Arab Legion—which he hoped to achieve during the Jerusalem campaign—would lead to the complete collapse of the Syrian Army, and probably to the withdrawal of Egypt from the war. If that did not happen, the IAF would bomb Port Said, Alexandria and Cairo. As for Lebanon, it was, in Ben-Gurion's eyes, the weakest member of the Arab coalition: the Muslim rule in that country was vulnerable, and it would be an easy task to destroy it. With the removal of the Muslim government, Israel would instigate the establishment of a Christian state whose southern border would be the Litani River, and Israel would sign an alliance with it. Ben-Gurion's final words in his diary on this matter were: 'this will be the way we will bring the war to an end, and we will pay back the Egyptians, Assyrite and Aram for what they did to our ancestors'.[36]

These were not practicable ideas. Ben-Gurion, the cool and calculating leader, knew well that at this time that the IDF was far from able to carry out this vision. Apparently, these ideas were not translated into operational orders, and the chain of events that took place in the coming days cannot be seen as being derived from these ideas. The

explanation for these wild ideas lies in the psychological sphere, as even a leader should be allowed the privilege of being human, and at what seemed to be a moment of crisis, Ben-Gurion exposed his human side. The realistic side of Ben-Gurion's thinking is revealed in the steps he took to deal with the crisis. He instructed Moshe Lerer, who was in charge of IDF personnel, to prepare an accurate list of the existing levels of manpower and ways to build new brigades and strengthen the existing ones. He demanded that the Operation Branch make plans for ways of distributing the cannons that had just arrived for the strengthening of the southern Jerusalem and Jordan Valley Fronts. In addition, he demanded the preparation of guidelines for a grand strategy that would serve the forces in the next stages. By that, Ben-Gurion meant that the IDF should take the initiative instead of responding to the Arab Armies' initiatives.[37]

On 22 May, it became clear to the Arab generals that their northern offensive had failed. They had not succeeded in breaking the Jewish lines in the north (in the al-Mālikiyya area), or in the east (at the Gesher– Tsemakh sector), and hence they would not be able to accomplish their plan to cut off the eastern upper Galilee. The IDF received several cannons—old 65-mm field-cannons, which they used to shell the Iraqi and Synrian forces down in the valley, from the Kawkab al-Hawa area—and Israeli infantry forces launched counterattacks against the Iraqi forces. It was clear to the Arab League's Military Committee that, without the assistance of the Arab Legion, it would be impossible to make any progress toward the implementation of the plan conceived by Muhammad al-Nur.[38] As a result, as we have seen, the Arab military chiefs agreed, on 19 May, in Dar'a that the Iraqi and Syrian forces should retreat from Palestine, the former into the Jordanian occupied territories and the latter to assist the Lebanese forces in the north.[39] With that, the IDF General Staff announced that the state of emergency in the Jordan Valley was over, and Dayan was instructed to leave the valley and to report at the IDF headquarters in Tel Aviv.[40]

The Battles Over the Lower Galilee

The fighting in the Jordan Valley and the consequent reshuffle in the Arab camp shifted the focus of fighting from the eastern gate of the Izrael Valley to its two southern gates: one leading from Jenin and the other from Wadi 'Ara, in the Lajjun area. These areas were also the responsibility of the 1st Brigade, and after the Jordan Valley battles, it

was decided to prevent the possibility of Arab intrusion from either direction. The points to which the brigade directed its attention were those which controlled the main roads: the Arab village of Zir'in, which was located on the Afula–Jenin road, the village of Meggido and the adjacent Lajjun police station. Forces from the ALA held Zir'in, which its residents had abandoned. Zir'in was a target for another reason: it was located on a high hill overlooking the Afula–Baysan road, along which Jewish transportation was moving, and forces based in the village harassed the Jewish transportation, bringing it almost to a halt. However, the 1st Brigade soldiers had no confidence in their ability to occupy the village, as Palmah forces had failed in their attempts to occupy it in March, and the 1st Brigade command did not believe that its soldiers would do any better than the able and trained Palmah men. It was the movement of the Iraqi forces from the Gesher area by late May to the north of Samaria, in accordance with the Arab commanders' decision, and the sending of some of their units forward toward the Gilboa ridges, that led the Israelis to decide nevertheless to attack. The fear of the two forces joining together and creating a bridgehead that could launch a major attack on Afula and both sides of the Izrael Valley convinced the 1st Brigade command that it was essential to capture Zir'in, which was in a dominant position across the possible invasion route from the south to the north. The brigade's 13th Battalion stormed Zir'in on 28 May, after a short barrage by the battalion's mortars to soften up the defenders. Against all expectations, the village was occupied almost without a fight. The village's houses were demolished, and a company remained in it to meet the inevitable counterattack that indeed arrived shortly afterwards. This was repelled after a brief fight. After this unexpected success the battalion forces moved on and occupied the Arab villages on the higher part of the Gilboa slopes, al-Mazār and Nuris. Their 'occupation' in fact only involved walking into empty villages. The word had spread after the occupation of Zir'in, and the Israeli achievement was underlined by the shelling of the villages with 65-mm cannons which the battalion had just received. As a result, the residents of the two villages fled, and the IDF forces gained control over a strategic observation point both for the Izrael Valley and toward Jenin and the road leading to it. The observation point was used as a position for mortars and machine-guns which were directed toward other villages to the south, 'Arbuna and Sandala. The Israeli forces shelled and shot at the villages in order to expel their residents, and that goal was achieved with the hasty departure of the villagers from their homes under IDF fire.[41]

Forces from the 12th and 14th Battalions of the 1st Brigade were fighting at that time further east, over Lajjun. In Plan Dalet, the 1st Brigade had been ordered to capture the Lajjun police station, but did not do so at the time: the ALA forces that retreated from the fighting around Mishmar Haemek captured the police station and, once again, the 1st Brigade's command had thought that capturing the police station would be beyond its ability. Then the arrival of the Syrian invading forces diverted the brigade's attention from the Lajjun police station, and it was only after the conclusion of the Jordan valley battles that the brigade returned to it. After the occupation of Zir'in, the brigade command decided to establish a line running across the Gilboa ridges up to Lajjun. According to the information the brigade had, Lajjun—both the village and the police station—were held by rural forces organized into platoons and Iraqi armored and infantry forces were stationed in Umm al-Fahm and Jenin, one hour away. However, to the best knowledge of the Israeli forces, the communication between the local irregulars and the Iraqi forces was poor. The attack plan called for a night raid on Meggido and positions to its west. With the successful accomplishment of that mission the battalion forces would then storm the Lajjun police station at dawn. The attack was launched on the night of 30 May, and it was carried out as planned; Meggido and the positions around it were seized, and after a brief fight the police station was also occupied. Iraqi armored cars rushed to the irregular forces' assistance, but were repelled. By the end of the day, the police station and the villages around were under Israeli control.[42]

Syrian Success

The Syrian defeat came as a shock to Syrian public opinion, and Quwatli's regime was seriously shaken. The scapegoats were the Minister of National Defense and the armed forces' commander, who were asked to resign. Prime Minister Jamil Mardam took the National Defense portfolio, while General Husni Za'im was appointed to command the army.[43] Za'im reorganized the army, aiming to increase the number of combat units that would be competent and able to join the fighting on the Palestine Front. To that end he abolished the 3rd Brigade, dispersing its battalions between the two remaining brigades. He also significantly decreased the size of the Guard units, directing many of their forces to the Israeli–Syrian Front. In this spirit he demanded that the ALA put two of its battalions under direct Syrian

command. This demand was met, and the 1st al-Yarmuk and the Hittin Battalions left their positions in the triangle area on 27 May, taking up their new positions by early June.[44]

Although the League had decided to accept the call for a cease-fire, the Syrian representative to the Arab League opposed the cease-fire, and his position was certainly influenced by the Syrian lack of achievements. The Syrians resumed their offensive in early June. The driving force behind the renewed Syrian effort was, undoubtedly, their desire to make some last-minute gains before the truce came into effect.

The main Syrian effort was directed against Mishmar Hayarden. Because of lack of documentation, we cannot tell what the Syrians' intentions were in their attack against Mishmar Hayarden but, apparently, it was intended to be the restricted operation that it was. Quwatli's government was convinced from the beginning of the war that only a unified Arab camp could succeed in the war against the Jews, and Abdullah's insistence on acting alone diminished, in Syrian eyes, the chances of success. After the failed Dar'a meeting (19 May), when it became clear that unity within the Arab camp was unattainable, the Syrian government lost any hope of achieving any strategic gains, and it acted to end the war with at least minor territorial gain. One possible goal, not too ambitious, was an attempt to cut off the Galilee pinnacle from the rest of the country. The distance from the international border and the Rosh Pinna junction on the main Tiberias–Metula road was about 6 km, and this distance was composed of a wide, open, flat plateau, where tanks could easily maneuver, and this led to the main south–north road and to the mountainous ridges to the east of the road. These troops could then merge with the forces advancing southward from Lebanon through al-Mālikiyya to Safad, down to Rosh Pinna, to join the Syrian force coming from the east. In fact, as will be described below, a day before the beginning of the fighting in the Mishmar Hayarden area, forces of the ALA, assisted by forces of the Syrian Army, attacked al-Mālikiyya and the area, and occupied it, thus opening the road to the Galilee to the Arab forces. The main goal of the operation, however, was not the invasion of the Lebanese Army, but to open a supply line for the ALA forces that were positioned in the Galilee; and they did just that.[45]

Syrian preparation for the Mishmar Hayarden campaign had started by the end of May–early June, before the removal of the Israeli 11th Brigade from the upper Galilee to the south (on 6 June).[46] While the Syrians were preparing to move on Mishmar Hayarden, they misled the IDF into believing that their next move would be directed against the

Buteiha Valley. However, the Israeli command was worried about the growing Syrian concentration of forces against Mishmar Hayarden, and a Palmah unit attacked the gathered forces, which numbered 250 soldiers, on the night of 19 May. The troops were taken unprepared, ten of their men were killed, one officer was taken prisoner, and the rest escaped. The Syrian response came on the next day with the 2nd Artillery Battalion shelling Mishmar Hayarden; the shelling continued over the next days.[48]

By 5 June, the Syrian forces had engaged the IDF and the border settlements along a wide front. Syrian forces attacked at the Banyas area, Lebanese and ALA forces acted in al-Mālikiyya, and Eyn Gev and Tsemakh were harassed. An infantry battalion supported by artillery carried out the attack on Mishmar Hayarden. The Syrian tanks had not yet crossed the River Jordan, and hence they did not take part in the attack. The forces against them were weak, as the Israeli Brigade that was in charge, the 11th, was already moving to the central front, and the defense of the area was in the hands of local guard forces, with about 20 settlers in guard positions in Mishmar Hayarden. Under cover of their artillery, the Syrian forces crossed the River Jordan and made their way to Mishmar Hayarden, only to be stopped by the Israeli settlers' fire. Without the shield of the tanks, the Syrian infantry did not try to storm the settlement, and set out instead to shoot at it from a distance. Israeli reinforcements then arrived at the kibbutz from the upper Galilee and nearby positions, and the Syrian forces withdrew.[49]

The Syrian command showed again that it could learn a lesson from a failure. On the next day, more forces were sent again to Mishmar Hayarden. An entire Syrian battalion, supported by heavy artillery, stormed the kibbutz from the south, while a blocking force was positioned on the Mishmar Hayarden–Mahanaim road, to prevent the arrival of reinforcements. However, the weakness of the Syrian infantry was exposed again with their inability to break through the kibbutz defense line, despite the heavy losses sustained by the Israeli forces from the heavy barrage. When IDF reinforcements arrived with 65-mm artillery, the Syrian forces withdrew in the face of Israeli shelling. A by-product of the unsuccessful Syrian attack was the diversion of Israeli forces to that front, at a time when they were needed in al-Mālikiyya, where a third round of attacks took place.[50]

This setback did not deter the Syrian command. It seemed that the Syrians were determined to enter into the truce with at least some tangible achievement. However, with the truce just about to come into effect, a significant territorial acquisition such as the Galilee panhandle

seemed out of the question. The most attainable achievement seemed to be the occupation of a Israeli settlement near the international border, and the Syrian Army invested almost everything it had in this last-ditch attempt. In three days, from 6 to 9 June, the 1st Brigade was deployed in the area between al-Qunaytira and the Custom House, reinforced by the 3rd Brigade's 5th Battalion and by two or three Caucasian companies. Two artillery battalions, two mechanized battalions and the tank company also supported it. The 2nd Brigade, with two battalions, was deployed in the al-Qunatira area, and was supposed to be a reserve force ready to act in case the 1st Brigade's success would allow further advance. Another indication of the importance attached by the Syrians to the operation was the presence of Husni Za'im, the Chief of Staff, in the front's command HQ, supervising the operation.[51]

While the Syrian formation was strengthened, the Jewish one was reduced. By 2 June, the IDF tried to take the offensive, and launched counterattacks against both the Egyptian column in Isdud and the Iraqi force in northern Samaria. The Carmeli Brigade carried out the latter attack, and it recalled the battalion it had lent earlier to the 1st Brigade. Two anti-aircraft guns were also taken from the Jordan Valley to other fronts. The remaining forces were two battalions of the 1st Brigade; one, positioned in the Gesher area, which had not yet recovered from the hits it sustained in Tsemakh; and a second, the 15th Battalion, which was positioned further to the north.[52] The responsibility for the Mishmar Hayarden area was in the hands of the 11th Brigade, but it left the area on 6 June, redeployed to the Latrun front. The forces remaining in the Mishmar Hayarden area on the eve of the Syrian attack were therefore only local forces. With the 6 June attack, the IDF command was concerned about the ability of the forces there to hold out, and the 23rd Battalion of the 2nd Brigade was sent to the Rosh Pinna–Mahaniam sector, while the northern front commander's HQ was positioned in Genosar, on the banks of Lake Kinneret.[53]

The Syrians' offensive started on 9 June, with the deployment of the 1st Brigade near Custom House under cover of constant shelling by the brigade's artillery in the Israeli settlement on the opposite side. An attempt by sappers of the Israeli 23rd Battalion to demolish the bridge across the River Jordan in order to hamper the Syrian brigade's ability to cross the river failed, and on that night the 1st Brigade forces crossed the river. By dawn, its forces were positioned just outside of the settlement fence. The Syrian forces took positions around the kibbutz, actually encircling it, and from there launched a well-coordinated attack, with the Syrian command responding fast to developments in the battlefield.[54]

The Israeli 9th Brigade command had been informed about the Syrian preparations, but was poorly prepared for them. It sent only small reinforcement forces to Mishmar Hayarden and to secure the Rosh Pinna–Mahaniam road, and two sets of two 65-mm cannons were placed east of Mahaniam to control Mishmar Hayarden and nearby Hulata. However, these batteries prevented neither the crossing of the river by the Syrian forces nor the attack on Mishmar Hayarden. Two reinforcement companies arrived at the area in the morning, but a Syrian officer who was captured by the Israelis described their conduct as follows: 'You attacked horrendously. I was looking at your men. They moved like drunks, disorderly and without anyone taking command. They were killed like flies.'[55] The two companies that eventually settled in two positions north and south of the main road indeed consisted of new and inexperienced recruits. Due to the hits they suffered, their commander lost control over them, and the soldiers demanded to withdraw. After being subjected to artillery and aerial bombardment, many of the soldiers in the northern positions fled, and the 9th Brigade command had no choice but to order the withdrawal of the remaining soldiers. The contribution of these events to the surrender of Mishmar Hayarden was minor, to say the least, as the defenders' will to resist was destroyed with the bombardment of the settlement by the Syrian Harvard squadron at noon. Some of the settlement's defenders managed to slip through the encircling Syrian line and made their way to the IDF base to the west. Thirty-five of the defenders were captured.[56] The poor reinforcements sent to Mishmar Hayarden were all the 9th Brigade could muster at that time. The Syrian attack was part of what seemed to be a coordinated offensive all over the northeast sector of Palestine. Syrian, ALA and Lebanese forces were attacking all along the Jordan Valley and at Eyn Gev, Ramot Naftaly and the settlements in the northern part of the country, in Rosh Hanikra, and in Sejera, at the center of the lower Galilee, north of Afula. Fighting also took place in the Gilboa and around Jenin, not to mention the fighting over the road to Jerusalem, where the Jewish forces sustained another defeat. The IDF northern command was over-stretched, and the General Staff had no forces to send to its assistance.

Syrian movement continued after their takeover of Mishmar Hayarden, but the goal did not seem to be to take advantage of the achievement, but rather to consolidate it and build a defense line that would withstand the expected Israeli counterattack. Syrian tanks took positions on the Rosh Pinna–Mishmar Hayarden midway, while Syrian combat planes bombed Mahanaim and Rosh Pinna. As night fell, the 1st

Brigade forces entrenched their positions. By the next day the Syrians made an effort to deepen their occupation area, sending a tank column forward toward Mahaniam and a mechanized force to the north, toward Ayelet Hashahar. The Israeli resistance slowed down the Syrian advance, and as the truce was already in effect and the fighting in the rest of Palestine had stopped, the Syrians also held their fire and stopped where they were, midway between the two sites, Mahaiam and Ayelet Hashahar.[57]

The Israeli–Syrian battles at this stage differed in many aspects from those conducted on the other fronts. The Syrian Army did not only enjoy a huge advantage in the size of its forces, compared to the Jewish forces facing it, but its forces were much better in quality. The Israeli 9th Brigade could put up fewer than three companies against the enhanced Syrian brigade. The Israeli forces were untrained and had no battle experience, and their commanders could hardly control them. The Syrian forces, on the other hand, were well balanced in the sense that the less capable forces—the infantry—received significant support from the tanks. The Syrian commanders also mustered their forces and organized them in such a way that the weakness of their soldiers was covered by the other troops, and by the organized execution of the battle. The fact that the Syrians could invest so many forces in a limited area, while the Jewish commanders were unable to reinforce their forces there because of fighting in other areas, should also be seen as part of the Syrians' intelligent conduct in battle.

The question, of course, is what was the point of investing all this effort against such a restricted target? The military value of the operation was insignificant. It is true that the establishment of a bridgehead on the western bank of the Jordan could have been used as a springboard to cut off the Galilee panhandle from the rest of Israel, but by 10 June, with the cease-fire just about to be enforced, that possibility seemed remote. The logic of the operation should therefore be sought not in the military sphere and contribution to the Arab war plans, but in internal reasons. It should be remembered that Za'im reached his position after the military débâcle the Syrian Army had experienced in its Jordan Valley battles. The new Chief of Staff did not want to undergo a similar experience, and so he invested everything he could in gaining an achievement with which he could return to Damascus. Apparently, the mood in Damascus reflected the sense of achievement. The general feeling was that 'the Arabs were on the point of attaining complete success and of smashing Jewish resistance in Palestine'. This sentiment led the Syrian leadership to toughen its position in the Political Committee of

the Arab League's discussion of Bernadotte's call for a cease-fire. The government had to accept the truce, as the committee voted in favor of it, but this acceptance caused resentment and disapproval among the Syrian public. The Jordan Valley defeats were forgotten, and even the Syrian losses up to the first truce—estimated as 600 dead or seriously wounded soldiers—could not overshadow the sense of elation in Damascus.[58] Under these circumstances, the fact that the Mishmar Hayarden success had a paralyzing effect on the Syrian Army was insignificant. The reason for the paralysis was that during the next stages of the war, fearing a forceful Israeli counterattack, the Syrian High Command restricted its best forces to the Mishmar Hayarden area until the end of the war, and the Syrian Army played no role in the next phases of the war.

On the margins of the area of the Syrian–Israeli clashes, another combat area had developed; one which brought together, once again, the Israeli forces and the ALA. The theater of operations evolved around al-Mālikiyya, and it seemed to be linked to the Syrian attack to the southeast. The attack on al-Mālikiyya was intended to support the main Syrian effort in the Mishmar Hayarden area. The attack, however, had its own logic, both defensive and offensive. On the offensive side, occupying al-Mālikiyya would open the road southward, and it would be possible to meet the Syrian forces, if they were successful in their offensive. As to the defensive aspect, the Lebanese and Syrian governments were worried by the Israeli occupation of the al-Mālikiyya posts and village on 28–29 May. With that, the Arab-controlled central Galilee was cut off, and remained undefended, as the ALA forces departed, leaving only local irregular forces there. Another result of the Israeli success was the fact that the road to Lebanon was open to the Israeli forces, and as neither side really knew the other side's intentions, the Lebanese and the Syrians were afraid that the Israelis intended to cross the border and invade Lebanon.[59] The result of all of these issues was a coordinated offensive from the north and the west directed against the Galilee pinnacle, with the participation of Syrian, Lebanese and ALA forces, which were put under the command of Fawzi Qawukji. His mission, as it was articulated by the Arab League, was to occupy the lost positions and to solidify the Arab holding in central Galilee. Acting to carry out his orders, Qawukji led a four-battalion force, consisting of Syrian, ALA and Lebanese troops, to attack the Israeli positions. The coordinated attack, in which airplanes also took part, succeeded, and the joint force drove back the Israeli forces, occupying al-Mālikiyya and the adjacent Qadis. The road south of the Galilee was open. Despite the success,

Qawukji did not seize the opportunity to move swiftly to join the Syrian forces in the Jordan Valley. Instead, he waited until 11 June, and then only sent his troops into the Galilee. This delay could be the reason for the failure of the Syrian attack on 5–6 June. With their entry into the Galilee, instead of moving to meet the Syrian forces in the Mishmar Hayarden area, Qawukji moved carefully into central Galilee, basing his forces there. The careful movement of the troops had been disrupted by the news that Lubya had come under Jewish attack. With the truce just about to come into effect, Qawukji hastened his men to Nazareth, from where he planned to come to Lubya's assistance. However, Jewish forces in Sejera interrupted his journey, and it was only with the coming into effect of the truce that Qawukji could complete his journey to Nazareth.[61]

NOTES

1. The Syrian and Lebanese Army in the 1948 War, IDFA 922/75/611, p. 2.
2. Ibid., p. 3.
3. Ibid., p. 2.
4. Mr Broadmead, Damascus, to Foreign Office, 15 May 1948, E6338, FO 68803; British Legation, Damascus: 'Political Summary for the Months of April and May 1948', E7808, FO 371/68808; The Syrian and Lebanese Army in the 1948 War, IDFA, 922/75/611, pp. 9–10.
5. Amin al-Nafuri, 'The Syrian Army in the 1948 War', *Maarakhot*, Vol. 279–80 (May 1981), p. 31; 'The Syrian and Lebanese Army in the 1948 War', IDFA 922/75/611, pp. 20.
6. Ibid., pp. 20–1.
7. Ibid., pp. 10–11, 14.
8. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 14 May 1948, E6268, FO 371/68372; telegram no. 288 from Mr Broadmead, Damascus, to Foreign Office, 18 May 1948, CO 537/5315; The Syrian and Lebanese Army in the 1948 War, IDFA 922/75/611, p. 14.
9. Telegram from the 11th Brigade to Yadin, 14 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; telegram from the 1st Brigade to Yadin, 15 May 1948, ibid.; 'The Syrian and Lebanese Army in the 1948 War', IDFA 922/75/611, p. 15.
10. Guy Ma'ayan, *Lebanon, the Arab World and the Zionist Yishuv/The State of Israel, 1945–1949* (MA Thesis, Jerusalem University, Israel: December 1997), pp. 72–4.
11. The new approach introduced by Erlich, *The Lebanon Tangle*, p. 195; Ma'ayan, *Lebanon, the Arab World and the Zionist Yishuv/The State of Israel, 1945–1949*, pp. 79–83; Sela, 'Arab Liberation Army in the Galilee at the 1948 War', pp. 20–4. On the historiographical debate around the matter, see Reuven Erlich, *The Lebanon Tangle* (Tel Aviv, 2000) (Hebrew), p. 195; and Ma'ayan, note 83, p. 74.
12. 10th Brigade Command to the Palmah HQ, 15 and 16 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; Cohen, *By Light and in Darkness*, pp. 132–3; Sela, 'Arab Liberation Army in the Galilee at the 1948 War', pp. 18–19.
13. Telegram of the 11th Brigade to the General Staff, 29 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; Cohen, *By Light and in Darkness*, pp. 138–41; Sela, 'Arab Liberation Army in the Galilee at the 1948 War', p. 20.

14. Etzioni, *Ilan Vashelah*, p. 162.
15. Ibid., pp. 163–4.
16. Telegrams from the 1st Brigade to Yadin, 15 and 16 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; British Legation, Damascus: 'Political Summary for the Months of April and May 1948', E7808, FO 371/68808; Etzioni, *Ilan Vashelah*, p. 165; The Syrian and Lebanese Armies at the 1948 War, IDFA, 922/75/611, pp. 25–6.
17. Telegram from the 1st Brigade to Yadin, 15 May 1948, IDFA, 922/75/1175; British Legation, Damascus: 'Political Summary for the Months of April and May 1948', E7808, FO 371/68808; Etzioni, *Ilan Vashelah*, p. 165-6.
18. General Staff/Operation Branch/Intelligence: 'The Syrian Army in Palestine', 9 August 1948, IDFA, 922/75/611; 'The Syrian and Lebanese Army in the 1948 War', IDFA 922/75/611, p. 29.
19. Telegram from the 1st Brigade to Yadin, 17 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175.
20. Telegrams from Yadin to the 1st Brigade, 17 and 18 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1182; BGWD, p. 437, entry for 18 May 1948.
21. Telegrams from Yadin to the Yitfah Brigade and to the Golani Brigade, 18 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1182; BGWD, p. 438, entry for 18 May 1948; Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 19 May 1948, E6564, FO 68506; Etzioni, *Ilan Vashelah*, pp. 166–8.
22. BGWD, p. 438, entry for 19 May 1948; Etzioni, *Ilan Vashelah*, p. 168.
23. Telegram from the 1st Brigade to Yadin, 20 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; Etzioni, *Ilan Vashelah*, p. 168.
24. Telegrams from Yadin to the 1st, to the 11th and to the Carmeli Brigades, 18 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1182.
25. BGWD, p. 435, entry for 17 May 1948 and pp. 439, 440, entry for 19 May 1948 and p. 442, entry for 20 May 1948, and p. 451, entry for 23 May 1948.
26. Telegram from the 1st Brigade to Yadin, 19 May 1948, IDFA, 922/75/1175.
27. Telegram from Yadin to the 1st Brigade, 19 May 1948, IDFA, 922/75/1182.
28. Telegrams from the 1st Brigade to Yadin, 20 and 21 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; BGWD, p. 445, entry for 21 May 1948; The Syrian and Lebanese Armies in the 1948 War, IDFA 922/75/611, pp. 35–40.
29. Ibid., p. 43.
30. Telegrams from the 1st Brigade to Yadin, 22, 24, 25, 26, 28 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; BGWD, p. 472, entry for 31 May 1948; 'The Syrian and Lebanese Armies in the 1948 War', IDFA 922/75/611, p. 51.
31. Telegram no. 340 from Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to Foreign Office, 17 May 1948, CO 537/5315; Rossan, 'The Bab al-Wad Campaigns', p. 143.
32. Etzioni, *Ilan Vashelah*, pp. 178–82.
33. Ibid., pp. 183–4; telegram no. 343 from Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to Foreign Office, 18 May 1948, CO 537/5315; C.-in-C. MELF, Cairo to War Office, London, 24 May 1948, CO 537/3926.
34. BGWD, pp. 452, 453, entries for 23 and 24 May 1948; telegram from the 1st Brigade to Yadin, 24 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175.
35. BGWD, pp. 453, entry for 24 May 1948; telegram from Yadin to the 1st and Carmeli Brigades, 24 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1182.
36. BGWD, pp. 453–4, entry for 24 May 1948.
37. Ibid., p. 454, entry for 24 May 1948.
38. Telegram no. 343 from Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to Foreign Office, 18 May 1948, CO 537/5315; telegram from the 1st Brigade to Yadin, 23 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175.
39. Foreign Office Minute, 22 May 1948, E6694, FO 371/68373.
40. Telegram from Yadin to 'Magi' (Dayan's code-name), 23 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1182.
41. Telegrams from the 1st Brigade to Yadin, 28 and 31 May 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175;

Etzioni (ed.), *Ilan Vashelah*, pp. 198–201.
42. Ibid., pp. 205–8; BGWD, p. 471, entry for 30 May 1948 and p. 472, entry for 31 May 1948.
43. The Syrian and Lebanese Armies in the 1948 War, IDFA 922/75/611, p. 45; British Legation, Damascus: 'Political Summary for the Months of April and May 1948', E7808, FO 371/68808.
44. The Syrian and Lebanese Armies in the 1948 War, IDFA 922/75/611, pp. 45–7.
45. Erlich, *The Lebanon Tangle*, pp. 198–9; Ma'ayan, *Lebanon, the Arab World and the Zionist Yishuv/The State of Israel, 1945–1949*, pp. 78–9.
46. 'The Syrian and Lebanese Armies in the 1948 War', IDFA 922/75/611, pp. 69–70.
47. BGWD, p. 476, entry for 1 June 1948.
48. 'The Syrian and Lebanese Armies in the 1948 War', IDFA 922/75/611, pp. 67–8.
49. BGWD, p. 491, entry for 6 June 1948; 'The Syrian and Lebanese Armies in the 1948 War', IDFA 922/75/611, pp. 73–4.
50. BGWD, p. 498, entry for 8 June 1948; 'The Syrian and Lebanese Armies in the 1948 War', IDFA 922/75/611, pp. 74–5.
51. Ibid., pp. 76–7.
52. BGWD, pp. 476–7, entry for 1 June 1948.
53. Ibid., p. 492, entry for 6 June 1948.
54. 'The Syrian and Lebanese Armies in the 1948 War', IDFA 922/75/611, pp. 78–81.
55. Quoted in ibid., p. 82.
56. Ibid., pp. 81–3.
57. Ibid., pp. 84–6.
58. Political Summary for the Month of June, 1948, E9905, FO 371/68808; General Staff/Operation Branch/Intelligence: 'The Syrian Army in Palestine', 9 August 1948, IDFA 922/75/611.
59. Ma'ayan, *Lebanon, the Arab World and the Zionist Yishuv/The State of Israel, 1945–1949*, p. 80; Sela, 'Arab Liberation Army in the Galilee at the 1948 War', pp. 20–1.
60. Ibid., pp. 22–3.

7

The First Truce

Discussing Truce

With the proclamation of the new State and the subsequent hostilities, the United States acted to apply the 23 April Security Council's call for a cease-fire—which was originally aimed at stopping the Jewish–Palestinian fighting—to the now developing Israeli–Arab front. The UN General Assembly adopted the American proposal, and called for the appointment of a mediator who would act to restore the peace in Palestine, and the Swedish Count, Folke Bernadotte, was appointed on 20 May.[1] The Arab leaders found it hard to make a decision, wavering between domestic considerations, anxiety over international reaction, fear of defeat and the ensuing repercussions, and possibly sincere concern over the fate of Palestine. The diversity of opinions and possibilities emerged during the 25 May Political Committee of the Arab League session, where the matter was discussed. The Regent of Iraq was against the cease-fire because he thought that accepting it would imply an admission of defeat. The Regent's position was also influenced by the opposition of the Iraqi generals to the cease-fire, as they had so far no achievements to show. The Egyptian delegation was also against accepting the cease-fire, arguing that only the Jews would gain from a cease-fire, as 'unless someone prevented arms and reinforcement from reaching the Jews (and there was no one to do so) the cease-fire would be to the detriment of the Arabs'. The Arab League's General Secretary agreed with the Egyptians.[2] Only the Jordanian Prime Minister was in favor of a cease-fire. He rejected the Egyptian arguments, claiming that in neither case would it be possible to prevent the Jews receiving arms and reinforcements as, at this time, it did not seem probable that the Arab forces would capture Tel Aviv, as the Egyptian Army refused to move beyond its current position and the Jews had contained the Lebanese and Syrian advances. Also, the only active force was the Arab

Legion, and therefore 'if things turned against the Arabs it was clear that Transjordan and its army would be the principal sufferer'.[3]

Apparently, at this stage Jordan was the party most interested in a truce, as the Arab Legion was completing almost all of its missions. It had gained control over most of the West Bank and its troops were establishing a solid line of defense along a north–south line that divided the Hebrew and Arab parts of Jerusalem. The Arab Legion controlled Jerusalem's Old City, waiting for the impending surrender of the Jewish Quarter, and its forces in Latrun were holding firm in the face of the IDF forces attacks. As Transjordan did not intend to invade the boundaries of the Jewish State, the government had every reason to seek a cease-fire. The problem was that the Jordanian government had to hide its desire for a cease-fire, as members of the Arab League suspected that King Abdullah had entered the war for his own selfish interests, and that he had never been committed to the Arab or Palestinian cause. From the outset, he had not intended to invade the Jewish State, so now that the Arab Legion completion of the takeover of the terrories on the west bank of the Jordan River, which were part of the designated Arab State, was complete the King was ready to call off the fighting. Aware of these (justified) suspicions, the Iraqi Regent and the Jordanian Prime Minister sought to promote the cease-fire, but in such a way that no one could accuse Jordan of seeking a truce.[4]

There were other Arab leaders who also sought a cease-fire, but were unwilling to say so out loud. They were worried that an agreement would benefit the Jews, but of no less importance was their fear of public opinion in their countries and the reaction of the more extreme governments. Accepting such an agreement, claimed the Lebanese Prime Minister and the Iraqi Director General for Foreign Affairs, would put the Arab leader who accepted it in fear of his life.[5] The result was conditional acceptance by the Political Committee of the Arab League, an acceptance which was phrased in such a way that there was very little chance of the Jews accepting it. It claimed that the cease-fire would be welcomed only if the belligerent parties would return to the pre-15 May situation, that is, abrogation of the declaration on the establishment of Israel, and 'the adoption of practical and just measures' that would ensure that 'the cease-fire should not merely act as a breathing space for a fiercer and more violent conflict later'. This meant preventing the strengthening of the Jews with arms and manpower.[6]

The League's tough terms provoked intense diplomatic activity, mainly on London's part. The British Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, tried to convince the Egyptians that a truce would work in their favor,

because if the fighting continued, the scales would be tipped toward the Jews. The advantages of a truce, Bevin told his Egyptian interlocutors, far outweighed the disadvantages.[7] Domestic considerations could also tilt the balance in favor of a truce. Despite the heavy press censorship and the blackout imposed on news from the front, reports began circulating in Egypt about the high number of casualties being suffered by the expeditionary force. Economically, too, the Egyptian government was under heavy pressure, as it was forced to take out costly war loans in order to pay for the campaign. The parliament approved a loan of 9 million Egyptian pounds at the outset of the war and increased it to 21 million within a few days. The result was that while the public still supported the war, voices began to be heard calling for its cessation.[8] Another good reason to change Cairo's position toward the truce was the improvement in Egypt's military situation by the end of May. At that time, the Egyptian forces had completed their split of the northern section of the Negev from the southern section, and even if they were not in full control of the southern Negev, they could consider themselves in a position to put forward claims of sovereignty on that large territory.

The effects of the arms embargo further convinced the Egyptian government that a truce was desirable, and in that they agreed with the Jordanians. King Abdullah thought that the arms embargo would affect only the Arabs, as the Jews would most probably find ways to overcome the ban and would find alternative sources of supply. The Arabs, on the other hand, had no such ability, and they were dependent on the British for supplies. Abdullah therefore urged the British not to follow the Americans, and to keep supplying arms and ammunition to Transjordan.[9] Indeed, the fighting had exhausted the Legion: Glubb sent a message to General Crocker, the British Commander-in-Chief of the Middle East Land Forces (MELF), to the effect that supplies of artillery ammunition were on the point of exhaustion and 'unless a cease-fire was proclaimed without delay the Arab Legion would be compelled to withdraw from Palestine altogether on about 14 June'.[10] The British General thought that the British government should not allow that to happen, as the Legion's withdrawal would lead to the defeat of the Iraqi and Egyptian Armies by the now unfettered Israeli Army. 'Complete Arab military collapse which in its turn would have unforeseeable but extremely serious political consequences adversely affecting British strategic outlook in the Middle East as a whole' should not be allowed, stated the General. Crocker suggested that the Foreign Office use the armament shortage as an argument to convince both the Egyptians and the Jordanians to accept the truce.[11]

The British tried to assuage their allies' complaints, claiming that they would be well advised to accept the continued British arms embargo, as this would ensure a similar American embargo on Israel. They noted also that

> … in resisting the lifting of an American embargo [the British] should be in much stronger position if it could be said that Egypt had willingly forgone her rights under the [1936] contract with Great Britain and that the importation of arms had ceased altogether.

Egypt's Foreign Minister, Kashashaba Peha's, initial response to the British arguments was positive, and he agreed with them.[12] However, Prime Minister Nokrashi said that if Britain acted quickly Egypt could resolve the Palestine problem before US arms could reach Israel. He argued that Israel would become the spearhead of communism in the Middle East, and that Britain should help Egypt combat that menace. Some of the weapons being sought by Nokrashi had already been ordered and paid for by Egypt—to the tune of 1.5 million Egyptian pounds—in September 1947. The British representative said he hoped his government would make the weapons available to Egypt under the treaty between the two States. However, Bevin refused to break the embargo on the shipment of arms to the Middle East.[13]

Thus, the Egyptian and the Jordanian governments acted in concert in their attempts to bring the Arab League, in its 1 June meeting, to accept the truce, with the Iraqis joining them. The Saudi, Syrian—and maybe the Lebanese—delegations stood on the opposite side, speaking in favor of the continuation of the fighting. As the Jordanian envoy put it, those three countries were ready to fight to the last drop of their allies' blood. The Arab League Secretary General, 'Azzam Pasha, sided with the opposition to the truce, putting himself in an exceptional position, as he stood against the Egyptian delegation. His stand influenced the League's final decision, which tilted toward the position of those who opposed the truce.[14]

The Arab League's rejection of the Security Council's call for a cease-fire, to come into effect on 24 May, upset Israel. The Israeli government met to discuss what the Prime Minister depicted as 'a new situation created by the Security Council decision to postpone the cease-fire in two days in accordance with Arab demand'. The Security Council's benign attitude toward the Arab defiant position, Ben-Gurion claimed, was motivated by the British hope that during this time Jerusalem would fall into Arab hands. Therefore, Israel should recon-

sider its position toward the cease-fire, and, in any case, it was a lesson that Israel's ability to survive and achieve statehood was dependent not on political decisions made in Lake Success, but on its ability to make use of its military force. As it now seemed that the fate of Jerusalem was dependent more than anything on the IDF's military achievements, Operation Bin Nun had to be carried out as soon as possible.[15]

Regardless of these reservations, the Israeli provisional government had been inclined to accept a cease-fire, provided of course that the Arabs did likewise.[16] The Israeli government agreed because of its commitment to accede to the request of the UN, but equally because of its cogent interest in bringing about a respite in the hostilities. One consideration in favor of a truce was the serious situation in Jerusalem. Another factor militating in favor of a truce was that the Israeli Army was in the midst of building up its force. Of Israel's 40,000 soldiers, half had been called up since the start of the war and had not yet completed basic training. 'The truce', Ben-Gurion explained, 'will give us the possibility to fortify ourselves and take delivery of more weapons; in the meantime airplanes will also arrive. In any event, our situation next week will be better than it is now.' Ten days after the eruption of hostilities, the Israeli commanders also agreed that a truce would benefit both Israel and its army. Weapons from abroad had already reached Israel by this time, but they were mainly light arms, while the heavier weapons were on the way. The Israeli procurement campaign in various places around the world bore fruit. By late May, heavy armaments had arrived in Israel: combat planes (Messerschmitts), heavy artillery and mortars. At that time, about 45 cannons had arrived and been distributed to the IDF brigades.[17] By 8 June, 13 Hochkes tanks had been unloaded from a ship arriving in Haifa and by 11 June, ten more tanks had arrived.[18] The Israeli arms factories also increased the pace and scope of their armament production, manufacturing anti-tank weapons with bombs, as well as 6-inch mortars. By early June there were enough light arms for the IDF soldiers, and the arms factories stopped the manufacture of small arms, turning to the manufacture of mortar shells, hand-grenades and machine-guns. It made the necessary preparations toward the build-up of 120-mm mortars and experimented with the manufacture of a heavy machine-gun.[19] Arms were distributed to the IDF brigades, increasing the fire-power of units that until that moment had had no heavy armaments whatsoever.[20] The Israeli Air Force also became operative. Previously, when the hostilities broke out, the Israelis had no combat planes, and in some cases light planes were used to drop bombs from the air. In other cases, supplies were dropped from these planes into areas in

distress. However, after independence, planes had arrived in pieces and been assembled in Israel, and these planes made their first combat sorties in early June. The planes assisted the IDF forces in their combat missions, and launched bombing missions on Arab capitals such as Amman and Cairo.

The activities of the Israeli procurement agents were spread virtually around the globe. They bought planes, tanks, bombers and ammunition in the United States, all over Europe, in Italy and even in Algeria, but most of all in Czechoslovakia.[21] The strengthening of the IDF through the successful procurement campaigns and the increase in their own weapons manufacture stood in contrast to the gradual Arab decrease in arms and armaments. Being subject to the embargo imposed by the Security Council, the three main armies that were significantly engaged in fighting—the Egyptian, Jordanian and Syrian—had suffered increasingly.

The discouraging response that came from Cairo, and consequently from Tel Aviv, did not free Bernadotte's hands. In New York, the mechanism of the cease-fire observation had been established with an increasing number of military observers being taken on by Truce Commission whose role would be to supervise observance of the Security Council Resolution of 29 May. Twenty-one Belgian, French and American officers, with the necessary staff and equipment, would be sent to assist the mediator on his observing mission.[22] As to the truce, Bernadotte assumed that, after all, both sides wanted a truce, but each side preferred to emphasize the benefits the other would reap. The main obstacle delaying the decision was, in his eyes, the question of the right of Jewish immigrants of draft age to enter Israel during the truce.[23]

But there was another problem. After the announcement by the Syrian, Faris al-Khury, that the Arab League would accept the council's call, Egyptian Prime Minister Nokrashi said that the Arabs' consent was dependent on whether ways could be found to ensure that Israel did not smuggle in weapons and manpower during the truce. Nokrashi tried to persuade Bernadotte to allow the Egyptian Navy to impose a maritime blockade on Israel to prevent possible truce violations, but the mediator asked whether Egypt would agree, in turn, to have Israel supervise Egyptian ports.[24] King Farouk complained to Bernadotte that Egyptian intelligence had got wind of negotiations between Israel and Russia on an arms shipment that would reach Palestine during the truce. Bernadotte assured the King that he would emphasize to the Israelis that under the terms of the truce no side could arm itself while it was in effect.[25] Farouk's information about an arms deal was correct but inaccurate—the deal was with Czechoslovakia, not with Russia —and his

fears were justified: large quantities of weapons reached Israel during the truce.

The Israeli leadership naturally objected to the demands that no Jews enter the country. After years of the British putting limits on the number of Jews allowed to enter Palestine—a policy declared in 1939 and since then the object of a constant struggle by the Yishuv—the newborn State of Israel could not accept new restrictions of this kind. In any case, it was not only the Zionist State's *raison d'être* that made restrictions on Jewish immigration unacceptable, it was also a military necessity. On disembarking, the newcomers joined the IDF, sometimes having been trained in the country from which they had departed, sometimes receiving basic training with their mobilization. The resolution adopted by the Security Council on 29 May tried to offer a solution. While calling for the parties to cease fire for four weeks, the resolution stipulated that on the one hand, the Arab Armies would not bring reinforcements to Palestine during the cease-fire period and, on the other hand, 'should men of military age be introduced into countries or territories under their control, to undertake not to mobilize or submit them to military training during the cease-fire'. It also called on the parties to refrain from 'importing or exporting war materials'.[26] This phrasing still worried both sides, and Bernadotte proposed that he should be given the right to determine whether the number of new immigrants who would arrive during the truce actually accorded Israel a military advantage. Should it turn out that they did, the immigrants would be placed in internment camps at Bernadotte's demand until the end of the truce. The Israeli government announced that it accepted the Security Council's call for a ceasefire on the day set by the mediator, but was unwilling to grant him authority to prevent the entry of Jews into the country. In the end, Bernadotte's sharply worded message to both sides—including his threat to refer the matter to the Security Council—and the interest of both sides, particularly the Israelis, in bringing about a respite from the fighting, were decisive. Egyptian Prime Minister Nokrashi informed Bernadotte on 8 June that the Arab States engaged in Palestine had agreed to the Security Council's demands. As the demand to halt Jewish immigration to Palestine during the truce had been dropped, the Israeli government soon announced its acceptance as well.[27]

Another achievement that the Jews could mention was the article stipulated in Bernadotte's interpretation of the Security Council Truce Resolution. Bernadotte determined that the Jews should be allowed to deliver supplies to Jerusalem under the supervision of the International

Red Cross.[28] This decision was important not only because it removed the danger of starvation from Jerusalem, but because it was used to justify the transfer of supplies to Jewish settlements in the Negev, which had been cut off from the north of Israel by a successful last-minute Egyptian operation.

The Genesis of the Bernadotte Plan

After the truce came into effect, Bernadotte was engaged in resolving various problems relating to preserving the truce, and also in establishing channels of communication that would be shared by both sides. He established his headquarters on the neutral island of Rhodes, and invited both sides to send representatives who would be at his disposal for information and advice when called upon. He made it clear that he had no intention of turning the place into a 'round table conference'. The Arab League sent a four-man delegation, which consisted of representatives from Egypt, Lebanon and Transjordan who were called 'consultants', while the Israelis sent a two-man delegation.[29] As both sides' delegates were relatively low-ranking officials, they were incapable of making any kind of abiding decisions. Indeed, Bernadotte sought their presence as a means to obtain initial, noncommittal responses to ideas he was pondering.[30]

The British set the spirit of the talks that Bernadotte was conducting, as they stipulated the seeds of a plan to bring an end to the war. The basic idea was to perpetuate the situation that had existed when the truce began, leaving Israel with the borders that it held on the morning of 11 June. Thus, under the British plan, the Arab areas of Jaffa, Acre and Western Galilee, which were supposed to be part of the Arab State but were now under Israeli control, would remain Israeli territory, while the Negev would pass to Arab control.[31] This way, one of the major deficiencies of Partition Lines would be rectified, which was Egypt being cut off from the Arab world. If the Israelis agreed to this arrangement, the British government would immediately announce its recognition of Israel and its rectified boundaries.[32] In an attempt to ascertain the Arab response to this idea, the British representative at the United Nations raised it with Naji Asil, his Iraqi counterpart, asking him whether, in the face of the danger of the renewal of the hostilities, it was not better to agree to the establishment of a Jewish state in any part of Palestine. Asil's response was negative. He claimed that 'whatever the risk', the Arabs would prefer to resume the war, as they objected to the establish-

ment of the State of Israel for ideological and security reasons. Instead, he suggested the establishment of a 'United States of Palestine', in which Jewish government would exist but would be subordinated to a Federal government.[33]

This British idea re-emerged in the months ahead in the plan worked out by Bernadotte which bears his name. According to the Bernadotte Plan, a Jewish–Arab economic union would be established within the bounds of the British Mandate, its borders to be decided in negotiations between the sides. The mediator presented his plan to both sides for the first time on 27 June, upon the conclusion of the first round of talks held at Rhodes between UN diplomats and Israeli and Arab delegations. He repeated the ideas that had been raised by the British about the redrawing of the Palestine map in a way that would reflect the existing military situation: the Negev would be included, in whole or in part, within one of the Arab states; Western Galilee, would be included, in whole or in part, within the Jewish State; Jerusalem would be under Arab rule with the Jews granted an autonomous status in the city; the status of Jaffa would be re-examined; and free ports would be established at Haifa (maritime) and Lydda (air).[34] Although the plan did not mention which country would get the Negev, Bernadotte left the Arabs with the feeling that it should be given to Jordan. The Saudi Arabian, Amir Faisal, and the Syrian Prime Minister, Mardam Bey, claimed that the Bernadotte idea 'denied everything Arabs sought and gave Jews everything they were seeking'. Of no lesser importance was the resulting aggrandizement of Abdullah, an eventuality both leaders were unready to accept.[35] Berandotte included in his plan a provision dealing with the Palestinian refugees. He offered to recognize 'the right of residents of Palestine, who because of conditions created by the conflict there have left their normal places of abode, to return to their homes without restriction and to regain possession of their property'. The latter provision was rejected out of hand by the Jewish government, which was very explicit about its refusal to allow the return of the refugees.[36]

Prolongation of the Truce?

At the same time as these ideas were germinating, attempts were made to persuade both sides to extend the truce beyond the 28 days that had originally been decided upon. The Arabs were divided on this matter. The general view within the Arab camp was that the military thrust had played itself out, but the position of every country was determined by

its actual achievement on the battlefield, as well as by the stability of the regime and its ability to contain local opposition forces who would most probably raise a protest if their government stopped the fighting. Jordan belonged to this group, while Syria and Iraq opposed the extension to the truce, and Egypt vacillated between them.

King Abdullah was more than willing to end the war. At this time Jordan had achieved its war goals, and the Legion's shortage of ammunition was another argument for agreeing to prolong the truce.[37] Thus, Abdullah's main goal now was to turn the military gains into a political reality, and the place to do that was no longer on the Arab–Israeli Front, but inside the corridors of the Arab League. Internally, Abdullah had no opposition that might obstruct his efforts to implement the policy he was pursuing, and his cabinet members cooperated with him. His immediate goal, therefore, was to eliminate any shred of influence the ex-Mufti might still have in Palestine, and to frustrate any move by the Arab League that would aim to give Hajj Amin any role in deciding the fate of Palestine. At the same time Abdullah worked to strengthen those elements in Palestinian society that were willing and ready to accept his leadership.[38] He also acted to gain indirect British recognition of his Palestinian territorial gains by making the renewed Anglo-Jordanian Treaty alliance viable in the relevant areas.[39]

The situation in Egypt was more complex. Egyptian public opinion, as we have seen, had played an important, if not central, role in King Farouk's decision to throw his weight behind the invasion of Palestine, and the Egyptian public continued to interest itself in the unfolding events there. Coming after the Egyptian Army's successes in the fighting, the news of the truce elicited a harsh reaction. Rioting broke out in Cairo and other cities, in which the mobs went on the rampage and attacked Westerners as well as their offices and property. The press kept up a barrage of criticism against Britain, the United States and the Security Council, which were blamed for having forced the truce on the Egyptian government. Some articles mentioned Western activity designed to undermine the independence of Muhammad 'Ali, who had tried to conduct an autonomous policy in Egypt in the first part of the nineteenth century but had been toppled by Britain.[40]

However, the Egyptians also had an interest in the termination of the fighting, as they believed the establishment of Israel was a *fait accompli*; but at the same time they wanted to end the war without having to recognize Israel, and also in a manner that would allow them to lay claim to the gains they made. Farouk proposed that the Great Powers should force the truce on all sides, while Egyptian spokesmen suggested that

the United Nations should declare the establishment of a Jewish state within the Partition boundaries, as despite Arab non-recognition, the world body could guarantee the new State's existence. At the same time, they proposed that the Jewish government should withdraw its forces from all the Arab territories it had captured and hand them over to the Arab Armies. The future of the Palestinians would be decided in due course by the Arabs themselves, perhaps by means of a referendum. Egyptian officials claimed that the best solution would be to divide the Arab territory among Egypt, Jordan and Syria.[41] These proposals were never placed on the UN agenda, but their spirit guided the continuation of the (mainly) Egyptian forces' operations in Palestine after the truce.

The similarities between the Jordanian and Egyptian positions on the matter of the cease-fire became evident during the meeting of the Political Committee of the Arab League, which took place on 12 June in Cairo. The Jordanian Prime Minister and Foreign Minister came to the meeting to work out an agreed plan for the termination of the war. They had no concrete plans, but they sought to avoid the resumption of the fighting.[42] In that they found an ally in the Egyptian delegation. In fact, this axis was not new, since the leaders of the two States were already united over issues concerning entry into the war, and they had retained an open channel of communication during the fighting. Now Egypt cooperated with Jordan over two issues of considerable importance for the latter: the fate of the truce and the removal of the ex-Mufti from the decision-making process over Palestine's fate. As to the truce, Jordan's position on this matter was similar to the Egyptian one, as it also had no interest in the resumption of the hostilities. During the discussions in the Arab League, Nokrashi Pasha supported Tawfiq Pasha on every line which the latter adopted, and he also supported Tawfiq's struggle to prevent the inclusion of the ex-Mufti in the talks on the fate of Palestine. King Abdullah had also stated on an earlier occasion that the AHC had ceased, in fact, to represent the Arabs of Palestine, and his Prime Minister acted accordingly at the meeting of the Political Committee of the Arab League. When the Arab League General Secretary, 'Azzam Pasha, suggested inviting the ex-Mufti to attend the Political Committee of the Arab League meeting, the Jordanian Prime Minister objected to the idea, claiming that the Committee was a forum of Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers, and that the ex-Mufti was neither. With Nokrashi's support the Jordanian view was accepted.[43] Tawfiq Pasha closed another door in Hajj Amin al-Husayni's face which Bernadotte had sought to open to him. The mediator remarked that he had not yet met any Palestinian representatives, and 'Azzam Pasha said

that the ex-Mufti and other members of the Arab Higher Committee were available for consultation. However, in the face of Tawfiq's objection, it was explained to Bernadotte that the ex-Mufti was excluded because Bernadotte had so far only discussed a cease-fire, which was only the concern of the regular Arab Armies operating in Palestine. However, Bernadotte was promised that a panel of Palestinian leaders would be nominated by the League to discuss possible solutions with him. (The Committee had nominated Bishop Hakim of Haifa, Jamal Husayni, Sulayman Toukan and Ahmad Hilmi Pasha, as representatives of the Palestinians. The ex-Mufti was not on the list.[44])

After the appointment of the representatives, the Arab League created, on 12 July, a temporary civil affairs administration in Palestine. The administration members included, among others, Ahmad Hilmi Pasha, who was appointed as President, Jamal al-Husayni, Dr. Husayn Fakhri al-Khālidi, Sulayman Bey 'Abd Razzāq Toukan, al-Sayyid Raja'i, and al-Sayyid Yusuf and others, who all held executive titles.[45] The body itself was insignificant, as it had no concrete practical role, but it affected Egyptian–Jordanian relations. Neither government would allow the new administration to play any role in administering the part of Palestine that was under their control. However, while the Jordanians sought to annex the part of Palestine that the Legion was holding, the Egyptian government sought ways to retain its influence in Palestine without having to keep their army there. Thus, Egyptian patronage of this body was a replacement for an actual military presence.[46]

All these differences were looming in the future. In the meatime, the Egyptian–Jordanian axis was further strengthened with King Abdullah's visit to Cairo, on 25 June, at King Farouk's invitation. It was mainly a courtesy visit, but there were also issues to clear up, and the two kings took the opportunity to smooth over points of tension, such as the dispute over the rule of Hebron.[47] This dispute was the result of the appointment in early June by Egyptian government of a Military Governor for the Hebron district. King Abdullah was worried by Egyptian intentions as well as by possible friction caused by the dual administration of the city. This issue was settled in the meeting between the two kings.[48]

The Israeli government addressed itself to both the plans being touted by Britain and the attempts in the United Nations to extend the truce. Reports reached Israel about a settlement that was under consideration by the British and American governments, according to which the territorial *status quo* of the truce would constitute the final settlement.[49] US spokesmen denied the report, which nevertheless had a basis

in fact, as has been noted, and the discussions held by the Israeli government in the middle of June and early July concerning the duration of the truce and future strategy took place in the shadow of the British plan. Ben-Gurion used these discussions to lay down the principles that would guide the government and the IDF during the months ahead. To begin with, Ben-Gurion declared that the Partition Resolution of 29 November 1947 was 'dead'.[50] Ben-Gurion's assertion would have a major impact on two crucial aspects of the war's outcome: the territorial and the demographic. Ben-Gurion stated that Israel would not withdraw from areas that its forces already had or would capture in the war, including areas that were outside the territory designated for the Jewish State by the United Nations; nor would Israel take any action to further the establishment of an Arab state alongside it. Israel would also abide by its refusal to allow the re-entry of the Arab refugees who had fled or been expelled. The second major assertion by Ben-Gurion was that the Palestine question would be decided by force. It is not clear whether Ben-Gurion meant by this to express his opinion about the state of affairs or lay down the strategy that would bring Israel successfully to the end of the hostilities. One way or the other, Ben-Gurion thought it almost inevitable that the war would be resumed and saw no prospect of a political-diplomatic solution.[51] The position articulated by Ben-Gurion in these discussions set the tone for the manner in which Israel later conducted the negotiations on the termination of the war.

Within the Cabinet, opinions were divided on the portentous issues at hand. Foreign Minister Moshe Shertok accepted the principle that in the light of the new circumstances it was no longer possible to regard the 29 November Resolution as valid. Shertok also accepted the implications of this change in the demographic and territorial situation. However, Shertok took issue with Ben-Gurion on one question: Israeli tenacity in the Negev. Unlike Ben-Gurion, Shertok thought that Israel should consider carefully the possibility of obtaining international approval for its hold over western Galilee—which had not been designated part of the Jewish State by the Partition Resolution—in return for ceding the southern Negev, which was supposed to be part of the Jewish State.[52] The Minister of Justice, Felix Rosenblueth (Pinhas Rosen), argued that this was a very desirable outcome, provided that the exchange of the southern Negev for western Galilee would put an immediate end to the war. Rosenblueth wondered whether the Israeli Army's strength would be sufficient to decide the war even if the truce lasted several more weeks — suggesting that he did not believe it would be. Other ministers who urged that the truce continue argued that 'in a continuation of the war additional

victories will not add much for us, while defeats are liable to turn into unlimited losses'. One minister maintained that Israel would not be able to achieve military gains of the type it had because 'England and the United States will not permit us to achieve a decisive, final victory'.[53]

Ben-Gurion, however, would not budge: he would maintain the truce only as a stage toward Israel's military aggrandizement, which would leave it in a better position for the continuation of the fighting. According to Ben-Gurion, within 'four to six weeks we can be ready for a campaign in which we will definitely be able to withstand all the Arab States and defeat them'. He rejected the approach of the Commerce and Industry Minister, Peretz Bernstein, who advocated the continuation of the truce due to Israel's strategic inferiority at that time. Ben-Gurion maintained that Israel should exercise its military might in order to deal a decisive blow to the Arab Armies and improve its territorial hold. It was in this spirit that the government decided, on 4 July, 'to agree to a continuation of the truce for a period of 4–6 weeks' and informed the United Nations accordingly.[54]

The introduction by Bernadotte of his plan, on 27 June, provided another incentive for Israel to seek renewal of the war. Bernadotte supposedly challenged Ben-Gurion's claim that the Partition Resolution was no longer abiding, as he suggested the redrawing of a map Ben-Gurion considered no longer to exist. The Israeli government's reaction to Berandotte's suggestions was 'utterly negative'.[55] Consequently, Israel was ready to prolong the truce for a further six weeks, but it rejected the proposed political settlement, even if it meant war. The Israeli response to Bernadotte was a sort of literal acrobatics. On the one hand, Shertok rebuked the mediator for his ignorance of the 'Resolution of the General Assembly of 29 November 1947, which remains the only internationally valid adjudication of the question of the future government of Palestine'. On the other hand, Shertok scolded Bernadotte for ignoring the fact that, while the Jews accepted the Partition Resolution, the Arabs tried to prevent its implementations. Consequently, 'the territorial provisions affecting the Jewish State now stand in need of improvement, in view both of the perils revealed by Arab aggression for the safety and integrity of Israel, and of the result achieved by Israel in repelling this aggression'.[56] Israel relied on the Partition Resolution and dissociated itself from it almost in the same breath.

The Arab decision, however, was different. The Arab heads of state discussed the Security Council's call to prolong the truce during the first week of July in Cairo. Syria and Saudi Arabia, joined by the Arab League Secretary General, trod a militant line, which was partly based

on their unwillingness to see Jordan emerge too strong. Internal reasons also played an important role; they even affected the Egyptian position. In Syria, the newspapers ran a campaign against prolonging the truce, and in Iraq, 'Ali Mumtaz, Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs, said that he was very worried about the possibility of internal disturbances due to unpopular decisions about Palestine.[57] The Syrians took active measures in their attempt to bring about the break-up of the truce and the renewal of the war when they allegedly encouraged forces of the ALA in the Galilee to launch attacks against Jewish positions. Bernadotte went to Damascus to protest to the Syrian government, and it was only then that Qawukji's attacks ceased.[58]

King Abdullah, who did not attend the meeting—he sent his Prime Minister—was worried by the tendency among members of the Arab League to resume the fighting. In a last-minute attempt to convince those who were in favor of resuming the war to change their minds, he instructed his Prime Minister in Cairo to remind the Arab leaders that the Arab Legion was almost out of ammunition and that Jordan would pay heavily if it acted against British wishes.[59] The King prepared to go even further in his attempts to prevent the resumption of the fighting, drafting a letter to the other Arab States to the effect that, unless Arab Armies could undertake an immediate victorious offensive, they would be defeated in a long, defensive war. He went on to say that unless the Transjordanian government could be assured of such an offensive they would with regret have to withdraw their troops from the fight. However, Kirkbride dissuaded him from this, arguing that such a message seemed to be premature and that, in view of the news he heard from London about the Jewish rejection of the mediator's proposals, it would be better to try and maneuver the Jews into being in the wrong.[60]

The Egyptian Prime Minister Nokrashi Pasha's change of heart regarding the truce weakened the Jordanian position. Responding to local public opinion, Nokrashi joined those who were in favor of resuming the war. Thus the militants carried the day and the Arab League decided, on 6 July, to renew the war, and a message announcing the League's decision was sent to Bernadotte. The League explained that 'the Jews … had taken the opportunity to bring in arms and men and to improve their position generally'.[61] Bernadotte accordingly informed UN Secretary General Trygve Lie and Israeli Foreign Minister Shertok that the Arabs had rejected his request to extend the truce.[62]

The Arab decision to resume fighting was accepted on purely political grounds, and had no military resonance. The Chiefs of Staff of the Arab Armies were in favor of prolonging the truce. They stated that

they had reached the limit of their power to advance, that they were short of ammunition and equipment and that they were not in a position to continue hostilities.[63] But public opinion across the Arab world and their suspicions of each other influenced the politicians' decision. All this became clear in the strategy adopted by the Arab Armies' resumption of the war. One might think that the decision to resume the fighting meant that the Arab Armies would launch an offensive campaign, aiming to complete what they had failed to do in the first round; that is, trying to invade the State of Israel. However, nothing of the kind happened, and the Arab Armies acted to achieve what the truce had actually provided for them: the maintenance of the *status quo*.

Another place where Arab declarations had no results on the ground was the issue of the joint military command. At this stage it was obvious that one important reason for the Jewish success in facing and containing the Arab Armies' invasion was the absence of a unified command, the lack of cooperation on the part of the Arabs and their conflicting goals and ambitions. However, the attempts to overcome these obstacles and to form a unified command failed again. With their decision to continue the fighting, some delegates to the Arab League meeting tried to establish military cooperation between the Arab forces in Palestine. As will be recalled, the Arabs' military committee, headed by the Iraqi General, Nur al-Din Mahmud, was unable to impose its authority on the Egyptian and Jordanian Armies, which fought independently of the other Arab forces and without operational coordination. At first, the Syrian and Lebanese Armies placed themselves under Mahmoud's authority, but during the first weeks of the fighting they, too, broke away from the committee and operated autonomously. Now an attempt was made to persuade the Egyptian government to assume overall command of the Arab forces, but Cairo declined.[64]

Preparing to Resume Fighting

In the shadow of the diplomatic activity, preparations were being made on both sides toward the resumption of war. Israel was more successful in this endeavor than its adversaries, not least because it found a loophole in the arms embargo that the United Nations had imposed on the combatants. In contrast to the Arab States, which received no weapons from their chief supplier, Britain, Israeli envoys were able to purchase arms in various countries, though mainly in Czechoslovakia. As already mentioned, during the truce, ships arrived in Israel carrying guns of dif-

ferent sizes, some ten tanks, machine-guns, mortars, explosives and large amounts of ammunition. This newly arrived material would enable the Israeli forces to improve considerably their combat capability. Israeli representatives also purchased a large number of items, mainly tanks and planes, in other countries—the United States, Finland, Switzerland and elsewhere—but they arrived only after the war.[65]

Jewish Plans

Jerusalem remained the prime goal for the next cycle of war. Summing up the first stage of the war, Ben-Gurion emphasized the success of the Israeli forces 'in standing up to the [Arabs'] regular armies'. Two tasks remained to be accomplished, he said: first, opening the road to Jerusalem and taking control of the city; and, second, gaining control of the Negev. The IDF would take the initiative in the south only after 'we break the force of the Legion and remove Lebanon from the game'. Operations would also be launched in the Galilee. The decision to make the fighting there a higher priority stemmed from Moshe Carmel, the commander of the northern front, who warned that his forces were unready to meet an ALA offensive, whose 4,000-man force was positioned in central Galilee. Carmel's forces were undermanned, as there were only about 300 soldiers in every battalion: almost half of its order of force. Carmel also mentioned that some of his battalions' commanders were unfit, and he demanded replacements. Ben-Gurion's concern for Jerusalem, and Carmel's disturbing reports set the direction of the IDF operation for the next fighting cycle. In a meeting with Yigal Yadin—the head of the General Staff's Operations Branch and the acting head of the General Staff—on the continuation of the war, it was decided to take the offensive on the Central Front and in central Galilee.[66] As to the Negev, it was still given low priority in the overall scheme of things, and the goal for the next stage would be 'to stabilize [the Front] as far as possible'.[67]

Arab Plans

In spite of the militant expressions of the Arab leaders during the Political Committee of the Arab League meeting in Cairo, which decided in favor of continuing the war, Arab plans for the next stage were defensive. The Jordanian Prime Minister, Fawzi Pasha, informed Brigadier Clayton of the League's decision, and claimed that the Arab forces would not start an offensive but would confine themselves to local

operations.[68] These were not empty words, but rather an accurate description of the Arab strategy for the coming phase. The conduct of each Arab Army will be discussed elsewhere, but it should be mentioned here that with the renewal of the fighting, none of the Arab Armies took the offensive. Of all the Arab forces acting in Palestine, only the Egyptian forces took the offensive, and even they did it only for defensive purposes: the Egyptian commander had no intention of carrying the campaign on into the State of Israel, rather he intended to improve the positions his forces already held. To make their moves possible and to increase the chance of success he replenished and reinforced his troops. A third brigade was added to the two that had fought until the truce. However, it did not represent a major improvement in terms of quality, as it was composed largely of irregulars and was formed in the wake of the arrival in Palestine, during the truce, of two infantry battalions that included volunteers of the Muslim Brotherhood, and local Arabs who volunteered to serve with the Egyptian forces. According to IDF Intelligent reports additional reinforcements came from Saudi Arabia, Libya and Tunisia, but in insignificant numbers. All told, the Egyptians fielded nine infantry battalions numbering about 8,600 troops including some 2,000 reservists, most of whom were volunteers. The Egyptians had three artillery batteries, two of them of 25-pounders mixed with a 3.7-inch howitzer, and one anti-aircraft battery. Each battalion had a squad of four anti-tank guns. The Egyptians also had a few tanks. All these forces were under the command of the 3rd Division, which apparently had its headquarters in Gaza, and of the three brigade commands, which were located in Gaza and al-Majdal. The al-Majdal command was responsible for the al-Majdal–Isdud axis and for the Faluja–Bayt Jibrin axis and as far as Har-Tuv, southwest of Jerusalem; the Gaza command post controlled the 'Awja–Be'er Sheva–Hebron road and the forces on the coastal road between al-'Arish and al-Majdal. In the final week and a half before the resumption of hostilities, the Egyptian forces were reinforced by another 2,000 to 3,000 troops and by a 'large number' of heavy guns.[69]

NOTES

1. Resolution 186 (S-2) Adopted by the General Assembly on 14 May 1948, *FRUS 1948* V, pp. 994–5; Ilan Amitzur, *Bernadotte in Palestine, 1948* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 55–61. Also see note 2.
2. Telegram no. 393 from Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 25 May 1948, FO 816/121; telegram no. 395 from Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 25 May 1948, ibid.; Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 29 May 1948, E7179, FO 371/68374.

3. Telegram no. 395 from Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 25 May 1948, FO 816/121.
4. Telegram no. 399 from Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 26 May 1948, FO 816/121.
5. Mr H. Boswell, Beirut, to Foreign Office, 28 May 1948, E7181, FO 371/68374.
6. Telegram no. 399 from Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 26 May 1948, FO 816/121.
7. Secretary of State to Cairo, 30 May 1948, FO 141/1246.
8. Military Intelligence Review, July 1948, WO 208/4867.
9. Telegram no. 52 from Sir. A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to Secretary of State, Foreign Office, 2 February 1948, FO 816/115.
10. Telegram no. 81 from Cairo to the Foreign Office, 8 June 1948, DEFE 6/6.
11. Ibid.
12. Telegram no. 139 from Campbell, Cairo, to Foreign Office, 2 February 1948, FO 141/1265; FO Minute, 2 February 1948, FO 141/1246; Secretary of State to Cairo, 21 May 1948, ibid.
13. R.C.'s Minute, 19 May 1948, FO, 141/1246.
14. From BMEO to Foreign Office, 1 June 1948, FO 141/1246; H.M. Minister, Amman, to Secretary of State, London, 2 June 1948, FO 816/122.
15. BGWD, p. 456, entry for 26 May 1948.
16. Minutes of the Provisional Government meeting, 23 May 1948, ISA; Resolution 50 (1948) adopted by the Security Council on 29 May 1948, *FRUS 1948*, V, pp. 1077–8; memorandum of telephone conversation, 1 June 1948, ibid., 1084–5.
17. BGWD, pp. 457–8, entry for 26 May 1948 and pp. 468–9, entry for 30 May 1948.
18. Ibid., p. 496, entry for 8 June 1948 and p. 505, entry for 11 June 1948.
19. Ibid., p. 460, entry for 26 May 1948 and pp. 478–9, entry for 2 June 1948 and pp. 480–1, 3 June 1948.
20. Ibid., pp. 463–4, entry for 28 May 1948 and pp. 468–9, entry for 30 May 1948.
21. Ibid., pp. 460–1, entry for 27 May 1948.
22. The Acting Secretary of State to the Consulate at Haifa, 31 May 1948, *FRUS 1948*, V, pp. 1079–80.
23. Bernadotte, *To Jerusalem*, p. 39.
24. Ibid., p. 47–8.
25. Ibid., p. 70.
26. Resolution 50 (1948) Adopted by the Security Council on 29 May 1948, *FRUS 1948*, V, pp. 1077–8.
27. Bernadotte, *To Jerusalem,* pp. 76–7, 78; Ben-Gurion, *The Restored State of Israel*, p. 158.
28. Count Bernadotte to M. Shertok, 8 June 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, p. 135.
29. Meetings: M. Shertok–Count Bernadotte and Assistants, 17 and 18 June 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, p. 182. On the conference see Amitzur, *Bernadotte in Palestine, 1948*, pp. 125–44.
30. And see L. Kohn to M. Shertok, 25 June 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, pp. 216–19 and R. Shiloah to M. Shertok, 25 June 1948, ibid., pp. 219–20.
31. Secretary of State to H. M. Minister, Amman, 13 June 1948, PRO, FO 816/123.
32. A. Eban to M. Shertok, York, 8 June 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, p. 140.
33. From New York to Foreign Office, 11 June 1948, E7920, FO 371/68641.
34. Count Bernadotte to M. Shertok, 27 June 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48-9/48*, pp. 230-4.
35. The Chargé d'Affaires in Egypt to the Secretary of State, 30 June 1948, *FRUS 1948*, V, p. 1159.
36. Shelly Frid, 'Precious Land: Israel's Policy for Abandoned Palestinian Property, 1947–1951', MA Thesis, Tel Aviv University, October 1998, (Hebrew), pp. 22–3.

37. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 7 July 1948, E9169, FO 371/68375.
38. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 21 June 1948, FO 816/124.
39. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 7 July 1948, E9168, FO 371/68375.
40. Sir R. Campbell, Cairo, to the Foreign Office, London, 23 July 1948, J5008, PRO, FO 371/69193; 'Re-Orientation of Egyptian Policy', 30 July 1948, ibid.
41. Cairo to the Foreign Office, 8 July 1948, FO 141/1247.
42. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 12 June 1948, E7932, FO 371/68641.
43. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 21 June 1948, FO 816/124.
44. Ibid.
45. Sir R. Campbell, Cairo, to the Foreign Office, 12 July 1948, E9552, FO 371/68641; telegram no. 114 from Sir R. Campbell, Cairo, to the Foreign Office, 12 July 1948, FO 816/126.
46. Telegram no. 114 from Sir R. Campbell, Cairo, to the Foreign Office, 12 July 1948, FO 816/126.
47. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 21 June 1948, FO 816/124.
48. Telegram no. 94 from Mr H. Boswell, Beirut to H.M. Minister, Amman, 26 June 1948, FO 816/124.
49. A. Eban to M. Shertok, 16 June 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, pp. 165–6; M. Shertok Report in the Provisional Government of Israel (PGI) Meeting, 16 June 1948, ISA.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
53. Minutes of Extraordinary PGI Meeting, 2 July 1948, ISA.
54. Ibid.; minutes of PGI Meeting, 4 July 1948, ISA; A. Eban to M. Shertok, 16 June 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, p. 276; M. Shertok to A. Eban, 7 July 1948, ibid., pp. 293–4.
55. M. Shertok to A. Eban, 1 July 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, p. 246.
56. M. Shertok to Count Bernadotte, 5 July 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, p. 263.
57. The Chargé d'Affaires in Egypt to the Secretary of State, 30 June 1948, *FRUS 1948* V, p. 1159; Political Summary for the Month of July 1948, issued by the British Legation, Damascus, FO 371/68808; Mr Broadmead, Damascus, to the Foreign Office, 7 July 1948, E9172/G, FO 371/86375; Sir H. Mack, Baghdad, to the Foreign Office, 7 July 1948, E9171/G, FO 371/68375.
58. Telegram no. 528 from Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 3 July 1948, FO 816/124.
59. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 21 June 1948, FO 816/124; Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 7 July 1948, E9168, FO 371/68375.
60. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 8 July 1948, E9250/G, FO 371/68375.
61. Telegram no. 63 from HM Ambassador, Cairo, to HM Minister, Amman, 8 July 1948, PRO, FO 816/125; telegram no. 170 from HM Ambassador, Cairo to HM Minister, Amman, 8 July 1948, ibid.; Sir R. Campbell, Cairo to the Foreign Office, 8 July 1948, E9215, FO 371/68375; Glubb, *Soldier With the Arabs*, pp. 150–2.
62. Minutes of PGI Meeting, July 8, 1948, ISA; Editorial Note, *FRUS 1948, V*, pp. 1201–2.
63. Glubb, *Soldier With the Arabs*, p. 151.
64. *Behind the Curtain*, p. 146.
65. BGWD, pp. 519–20, entry for 15 June 1948; Vaza, *Arms Purchase.*
66. Minutes of PGI Meeting, 16 June 1948, ISA; BGWD, p. 505, 11 June 1948 and p. 571, entry for 1 July 1948 and p. 575, 4 July 1948.
67. BGWD, p. 533, entry for 18 June 1948.

68. Sir R. Campbell, Cairo to the Foreign Office, 8 July 1948, E9215, FO 371/68375.
69. General Staff (GS)/Operations/Intelligence: 'Enemy Forces in the Southern Front', 27 June 1948, IDFA 6127/49/93; GS/Operations/Intelligence: 'The Egyptian Army in Palestine', 26 July 1948, HA 105/138; GS/Operations/Intelligence to Yadin, July [?], 1948, IDFA 5848/49/4; GS/Operations/Intelligence to the IDF Brigades, 21 July 1948, IDFA 7011/49/5.

8

Ten Days of Fighting: The Egyptian–Israeli Front

Making Plans

While the politicians were pondering the next stage, the Israeli and Egyptian military commanders were making preparations for the renewal of hostilities. Despite Ben-Gurion's decision to give low priority to the fighting in the Negev—planning to turn to it only after the successful conclusion of the operations on the Jordanian front—his generals drew up a plan of battle that was far more ambitious than Ben-Gurion had urged. The General Staff's aim was to launch 'a comprehensive offensive on the invading enemy forces [that is, the Egyptians] in order to push them outside the country's borders'.[1] The actual plan, 'Operation AnFar' (Anti-Farouk), which was worked out between the 5th Brigade and the General Staff, was far less ambitious. Shimon Avidan, Givati's commander, drew up his plans on the assumption that he would not get any more troops, following the decision by the leadership not to focus on the south at this stage. Avidan also had to take into account that he would have to commit some of his forces to defending settlements located outside the sector where his troops were to do battle; and that the Egyptians' deployment enabled them to attack from various points. He therefore prepared a plan with an emphasis on defense: points of possible penetration by the Egyptians were to be manned by defending forces, while the remainder of the brigade was given local offensive missions. Two of the Givati Brigade's battalions were to be deployed defensively around Jewish population centers in the brigade sector,[2] another battalion would cleanse the brigade's eastern sector of an Arab concentration in the al-Masmiyya-Tall al-Sāfi area, while a third battalion would assist the 12th Brigade in its mission to dislodge the Egyptians from Iraq Suwaydan and open the road to the Negev.[3]

The Negev Brigade also readied itself for the resumption of hostilities after the truce, starting from the same basic premise as Givati—that

it would receive no additional forces. The missions drawn up by Sarig for the brigade's four battalions were not vastly different from those of the original AnFar Operation: opening the road to the Negev and continuing to disrupt the movement of the Egyptian forces and their supply lines. In practice, this meant that the Negev Brigade's battalions would have to capture the Iraq Suwaydan police facility, take the city of Be'er Sheva, and harass and sabotage Egyptian transport and supply lines on the al-'Arish–al-Majdal and the Faluja–Bayt Jibrin axes. Sarig also ordered his units to prepare to retake Yad Mordechai, cleanse the area between Kibbutz Nir Am and Yad Mordechai, and carry out raiding operations against more distant targets deep inside the Egyptian alignment.[4]

Egypt's planning toward the resumption of war was influenced by the army's achievements in the first cycle of the war and by Bernadotte's plans. Until he spelled out his ideas for a settlement, Egypt and Jordan had cooperated quietly in various spheres, based on their mutual belief that their interests did not clash. However, a disagreement arose in the wake of Bernadotte's proposal to incorporate the designated Arab section of Palestine into an Arab country. Captured Egyptian documents also show that General al-Mu'awi expected an IDF attempt to slash through Egyptian lines and reopen the way to the Negev; his response was to reinforce his flanks and widen his territorial foothold. He sought to consolidate his forces' hold in the Negev, both to reduce their vulnerability to attack and to reinforce his government's claim to the area in the international arena. The upshot was that the Egyptians attacked first, their goal being to seize the central passage to the Negev and thus enable their politicians to establish a claim to control of the southern Negev. Al-Mu'awi also planned to consolidate his position through the capture of Jewish strategic positions east of the Egyptian column on the al-Majdal–Isdud road, in an attempt to reduce the threats to his flanks. The Egyptians therefore concentrated their effort in two blocs, one to the south and the other to the north of the Iraq Suwaydan junction.[5]

The Egyptian Surprise Attack

The Egyptian offensive began in the predawn hours of 8 July, a day before the official end of the truce. This was the opening round of ten days of intensive hostilities, the so-called 'Ten Day War', which ended with the truce being re-imposed by the Security Council. About halfway through the ten days in July the thrust of the war in the southern

theater shifted: if, until 14 July, the IDF was deployed in a distinctly defensive posture, after that date the Israelis moved to the offensive for the rest of the war. The Egyptians' 6th and 7th Battalions attacked Bayt Darās and Julis to the north of the Majdal–Faluja road, but these attacks failed. The reasons for the failures were mistakes on the ground, misguided considerations by the senior commanders of the expeditionary force, and the inability of the Egyptian officers to improvise and to act in a changing environment and not according to a predetermined plan. The logistical side of the fighting was poorly executed and the soldiers had to contend with constant shortages of ammunition and other supplies, which brought them, in some cases, to a complete halt.[6] The Egyptians were more successful in their attempts to take over positions south of the Iraq Suwaydan junction when they wrested the Kawkaba and Hulayqat positions from a Negev Brigade's 2nd Battalion small force.

Even if surprised by the timing of the Egyptian offensive, the Givati Brigade had anticipated its thrust, and fought its defensive battles in accordance with the AnFar plan. As a result, the General Staff was not deterred by the pre-emptive Egyptian attack and ordered the brigades to implement the operation as planned.[7] The Givati Brigade managed to withstand the Egyptian attacks—which was in no small measure due to the Egyptians' mistakes—and successfully moved to the offensive. The 54th Battalion took Bayt 'Affa and the Iraq Suwaydan village, near the police station, while a company of the 53rd seized the 'Ibdis outpost.[8] However, the road to the Negev remained impassable because of the Negev Brigade's failure to complete its missions; indeed, it lost key positions—the Kawkaba and Hulayq posts–to the Egyptians. This in itself was sufficient to neutralize the Givati Brigade's achievement, since control of these two outposts was the key to the Negev. This failure was compounded by the botched attempt of the Negev Brigade's 7th Battalion to capture the Iraq Suwaydan police station.[9] The Egyptians now held a solid line extending from Hill 113 north of the Iraq Suwaydan junction (the hill had been evacuated on the eve of the first truce by Givati and taken by the Egyptians) as far as Kawkaba and Hulayqat to its south. As a result, Givati forces pulled out of Iraq Suwaydan village on 9 July, while the Egyptians were able to recapture Bayt 'Affa.[10]

The Egyptian commander, buoyed by his successes, launched a concentrated effort over the next two days to take Negba, which was of considerable strategic importance and, if captured, would reinforce Egypt's claims to the Negev. Negba, however, held fast against the Egyptian

assault.[11] The attack on Negba was supposed to have been led by the commander of the Egyptian forces on the Faluja–al-Majdal axis, Colonel Muhammad Nagib (who in 1952 would lead the coup that would overthrow Farouk). Nagib later claimed that he had objected to the battle plan drawn up by al-Mu'awi and had refused to execute it. Al-Mu'awi thereupon removed Nagib from his command, but following the failure of the offensive he once again ordered Nagib to take charge of organizing the withdrawal of the battered Egyptian troops. The tension between the two officers did not abate with the end of this episode. The Egyptians suffered heavy casualties in trying to take Negba. As already noted, no figures are available concerning the Egyptian casualties at Negba (or in the war overall), but they were apparently so significant that Nagib found it difficult to continue maintaining the force under his command, and he demanded that his depleted forces be augmented. Al-Mu'awi rejected this request, and Nagib retorted that al-Mu'awi did not believe the casualty figures he had reported. However, the real problem was probably that the manpower and equipment of the expeditionary force were extremely limited to begin with. Al-Mu'awi simply did not have the troops to give Nagib.[12]

What the Egyptians did not know was that their attack left a strong impression on the Israeli leadership. It was unclear whether the 5th Brigade would be able to sustain the Egyptian offensive, and the uncertainty led Ben-Gurion and the General Staff to stall the execution of the second stage of the Israeli offensive against the Jordanian forces in the Latrun area. It was only on 14 July, when it became clear that the Israeli forces had brokem the Egyptian offensive and moved to the offensive themselves, that Operation Dani in the central front had been resumed, after three days' delay.[13]

The Israelis Take the Offensive

On 14 July, the Israelis began an offensive of their own, although this was restricted and local. Forces of the 54th Battalion stormed the villages of Bayt 'Affa, Hatta, and Karatiyya—all lying east of the Iraq Suwaydan junction and used as staging grounds by the Egyptians. The Israeli forces carried out the mission and then returned to their home bases[14]—a decision that the Givati Brigade commander, Avidan, had cause to regret a few days later, when his troops would again attack the villages as part of 'Operation Death to the Invaders', only to find the Egyptians better prepared this time (see below).

The 5th Brigade's units also acted in the brigade's eastern sector. Operational orders called for the Givati Brigade to annihilate the 'enemy forces' in this sector, but, in fact, most of these were local Arabs. Still, military arguments were used to justify the attack. The Arab village of Tal al-Sāfi was situated on the eastern approaches to the Bayt Jibrin–Qastina axis, and Givati scouts spotted Egyptian forces deploying there. The brigade command was afraid that the Egyptians would try to breakthrough to Tel Aviv from this area, and even when this assumption proved baseless, the troops' movements afforded an opportunity to cleanse the entire area of its Arab inhabitants under the trappings of military necessity.[15] The 51st Battalion occupied Tal al-Sā fi in what was a walk-over, as the village contained no fighting forces, only civilians who offered no resistance. Refugees who had found shelter in the area were expelled and, following the capture of the village, more than 10,000 Arabs from the villages in the area fled in panic and the entire region came under IDF control.[6] On 16 July, Givati forces operated to the same effect in the area north of Kfar Menahem, which was located at the eastern extremity of the brigade's sector. The residents of four Arab villages were expelled and their homes were torched or blown up. At the end of the operation, the brigade was able to report that 'the area is currently cleansed of Arabs'.[17] The Tal al-Sāfi takeover exacted a high price afterwards, since to reinforce the attacking force it was necessary to pull back the unit that had captured Hill 113—an important stronghold, which overlooked the Iraq Suwaydan–Negba junction. This ran contrary to the thrust of Operation AnFar, even in its limited form. The abandonment of the hill also removed a potential IDF threat to the movement of the Egyptian troops on the al-Majdal–Bayt Jibrin axis.[18]

Although these actions were executed as part of a military operation directed primarily against the invading Egyptian forces, they were not intended to serve a distinctively military objective. The real aim was to exploit the fighting in order to drive out the Arabs from areas of Jewish control. A message from the Deputy Chief of Staff, General Zvi Ayalon, to the IDF brigades during the first truce sheds light on the connection between the military actions and the hidden ambitions:

> Outside of actual combat, it is forbidden to destroy, burn and raze Arab towns and villages, to expel Arab inhabitants from the villages, neighborhoods and cities, or to uproot residents from their place without special permission or an explicit order from the Defense Minister in each and every case.[19]

Alon Kadish interprets this order as a change in the IDF policy toward the treatment of the civilian population. He claimed that up to that moment, based on Plan Dalet, local commanders had the right to decide on any measures taken against the local population. From here on a change took place, and only under authorization from the Defense Minister were harsh measures against the local population allowed.[20] However, the relevant article in Plan Dalet was quite similar. Ayalon's order was more of a reminder than a new policy. The new element in the order was that it established that—other than in an actual war situation—it was only the Defense Minister who could authorize taking hard measures against non-combatants. However, the order left room for local commanders' activities, and for the inclusion of the actions against the civilian population in the brigade's eastern sector within the framework of the larger military operation, provided 'legal' cover for what in practice was the cleansing of the region of its Arab inhabitants.

Nevertheless, the brigade's offensive efforts were no more than marginal to its defensive activity. The Egyptians still retained the initiative, and after making important gains on the longitudinal axis they constantly tried to extend their grip on the area. After their failures at Negba and its surroundings, the Egyptians mounted one final effort. On 14–15 July, Egyptian volunteer forces, along with local Arabs who had been mobilized for the Egyptian war effort, attacked Kibbutz Galon, on the al-Majdal–Bayt Jibrin road in the eastern sector. At the same time a regular Egyptian battalion attacked Kibbutz Be'erot Yitzhak, opposite Gaza. The first attack was probably only a diversionary attack, intended to divert Givati troops to the east and thus facilitate the Egyptian effort around Negba, while the assault on Be'erot Yitzhak was intended to expand the area of Egyptian control along their main transport and supply route. However, both attacks failed.[21]

They were also, almost, the last Egyptian war initiatives. At the same time, the Israeli General Staff began to prepare a counteroffensive designed to open a corridor to the Negev. In the fighting until then, the Egyptians had been able to retain their military gains and to expand their control around the Iraq Suwaydan junction area. Negba, a staging ground for Israeli attacks against both the junction and the police facility, had not been captured, although the entire line from Hill 113 north of the junction to the Kawkaba and Hulayqat outposts to its south, which had been in Israeli hands, was now held by the Egyptians. The Israeli High Command launched its almost final effort in this stage of the war to turn the tide on the southern front.

This decision was based on the likelihood that a second truce would

shortly be imposed on the belligerents. This was a potentially serious problem as it would leave the Egyptians in control of the passageway to the Negev. This had political rather than military implications, since the working assumption was that the fighting would not be resumed and the Israeli–Egyptian negotiations would be conducted on the basis of the situation on the ground as it would exist at the time of the next truce. That reality, together with Bernadotte's diplomatic activity, placed Israel's claim to sovereignty in the Negev in serious jeopardy. Ben-Gurion thus set the goals for the continuation of the war following the capture of Lydda and al-Ramla: the main effort would be concentrated on the Jordanian Front and in Jerusalem. However, wishing to secure the free passage between the southern Negev and the north, and to remove any possible Egyptian claim to the Negev, the Israeli forces would strike 'a blow to the Egyptians at the road junction' adjacent to Iraq Suwaydan. To make that possible, Ben-Gurion also wanted to strengthen the southern forces with two armored battalions.[22] With the successful conclusion of the first stage of Operation Dani the next day, Ben-Gurion and his lieutenants decided to send the platoon commanders' courses to their designated units in the south and also to reassign forces from the navy, the transportation corps, and elsewhere, to the southern Front. He also ordered the 89th Raiders Battalion, under the command of Moshe Dayan, to the south.[23]

Toward Truce

Beginning on 13 July, the Security Council held a special meeting on the Palestine question; on the table was a motion by the US delegate calling on all sides to accept an unconditional and indefinite cease-fire. This aim ran contrary to the Israeli diplomatic effort, which sought a condemnation of the Arab States for having refused to accept the UN call to extend the truce.[24]

In Jordan, Glubb exerted his influence in order to convince the government to accept the truce. He was afraid that the Arab response to the failures of their armies during this cycle of fighting would again lead the Arab governments to reject a truce, and trying to convince Tawfiq Pasha to accept the truce he told him that the Arab Legion was on the verge of collapse as it had run short of ammunition, and that it should fall back while it still had enough ammunition to extricate its units intact. The reaction within the Jordanian court to Glubb's assertion was one of distrust. The violent riots that erupted in Nablus, and other cities held by

the Legion, following the occupation of Lydda and al-Ramla by the IDF only fueled the suspicion and animosity felt by the Jordanian Cabinet ministers toward Glubb. King Abdullah, and other members of the Cabinet, were convinced that Glubb was concealing large quantities of ammunition in order to force the termination of the fighting. Every retreat of the Legion was therefore attributed to deliberate bad faith on the part of Glubb and the British officers under him. The King even told Glubb that if he wished to resign there was nothing to stop him. The ministers joined in, accusing Glubb of making up a claim about shortage of ammunition to serve the British wish to see an end to the fighting, and claiming that in fact 'the stores are full of ammunition'. Glubb made no comment and he just left the room.[25] Regardless of this response, Jordan's King Abdullah announced to the Arab League, on 15 July, that the Arab Legion had no more ammunition. This announcement forced the Egyptians, who were inclined to keep fighting, to lead the League in its acceptance of the Security Council Resolution.[26]

On 16 July, the Security Council set 19 July as the date for the second truce to begin. The announcement by the UN Secretary-General to that effect came in the midst of an Israeli Cabinet meeting, and the discussion shifted to the military moves that had to be undertaken before the start of the truce. Foreign Minister Shertok, perturbed by the Egyptians' successes and concerned that they might try to take Bayt Jibrin and thus tighten their grip on the road to the Negev, stated that Israel should concentrate 'all its activity in the Negev'. Shertok also feared that if the current situation persisted, or worsened, Bernadotte would not agree to allow Israeli supply convoys through to the beleaguered settlements, as he had during the first truce. Worse still was the possibility that if Israel were to base its claim to possession of the road to Jerusalem and to western Galilee on the argument that this was the military reality, the Egyptians could do the same to justify their claim to the Negev. Shertok therefore advocated a rapid thrust that would leave Israeli forces in control of a corridor to the southern Negev. Ben-Gurion explained that the little time remaining before the onset of the truce was insufficient for drastic moves: it would be impossible to dispatch troops in any significant numbers to the south, therefore the operations there would be dictated by the current troop disposition. At most, air force bombers could assist in the war effort in the south.[27]

This was the background to Operation Death to the Invaders, the last operation carried out by Israel's forces on the southern front before the start of the truce. The offensive was preceded by an air force bombing raid on Cairo, hitting targets near the royal palace at

'Abidin. More than 20 Egyptians died in the attack and a similar number were wounded.[28] The focal point of Operation Death to the Invaders would be an attempt to open a corridor to the Negev east of the Iraq al-Manshiyya junction, while at the same time, attempting to block the al-Majdal–Bayt Jibrin axis to the passage of Egyptian forces. Instead of trying to storm the seemingly impregnable police fortress at Iraq Suwaydan, an assault would be directed at Bayt 'Affa and Hatta, north of the al-Faluja–al-Majdal road, and also Karatiyya, which was situated on the road. These villages had already been the targets of Israeli attacks, and the Egyptians were well prepared to meet the Israeli forces.[29] The Negev Brigade operated south of the road with a similar goal. Its 7th Battalion was ordered to capture Iraq al-Manshiyya, al-Muharraqa and Kawkaba and the 8th Battalion was to protect the settlements and roads in the Negev while attacking Egyptian targets including camps, force concentrations, transport and command posts. The idea was to pin down as many Egyptian troops as possible and prevent the reinforcement of the sites being attacked by the 7th Battalion.[30]

The gains made by the IDF in these eve-of-truce operations were meager at best. The 7th Battalion failed to capture the targets it had been assigned.[31] The Givati Brigade had slightly more success, but it was tactical and did not change the situation in the Negev. The 89th Raiders captured Karatiyya but in defiance of its orders it transferred control of the village to a company of the 53rd Battalion. Dayan, the commander of the 89th Raiders, decided that his unit had completed its mission in the south and ordered his men back to their base in the center of the country, contrary to the order of Givati Brigade commander Avidan, to whom the unit had been seconded. At the end of the war, General Yadin ordered Dayan to be court-martialled for this breach of duty, but there are no records of such a trial. Be that as it may, the Givati troops repulsed Egyptian counterattacks on Karatiyya.[32] The 52nd Battalion conquered Hatta, but the 54th failed to take Bayt 'Affa. A company of the 52nd also failed to retake Hill 113.[33] Still, the most important mission—the capture of Karatiyya—had been accomplished, and for a brief moment it appeared that the al-Majdal–Bayt Jibrin road had been cut off, stranding the Egyptians in the east; but they soon overcame this obstacle. Their forces seized positions around Karatiyya to the south at a radius of a kilometer and a half from the village, and thus were able to bypass the blocked road.[34] The start of the truce concluded this chapter of the war.

The beginning of the second truce on 18 July found the Israeli and Egyptian forces interlocked, with one side's points of passage constituting barriers for the other. However, neither side had been able to cut off completely the other's vital roads, and in any event, both sides found alternative routes that bypassed the barriers. The battles of the 'Ten Day War' made little difference to the deployment of the Israeli and Egyptian forces. Such changes as did occur were minor, and favored the Egyptians. They were able to tighten their hold at the Iraq Suwaydan junction and to improve their situation on the access roads to the Negev by capturing two positions south of the junction: Hulayqat and Kawkaba.

Both sides were engaged in the same goal during the ten days of fighting between the truce periods: trying to gain control of the major routes of the Negev, both north–south and east–west. On the Israeli side, a major factor was the manpower situation in the two brigades that operated in the southern theater. Neither brigade was reinforced in any meaningful way, nor did they try to join forces to take point-targets. The two brigades did not commit their full potential to the battles, as most of their forces were assigned to defensive missions. Taken together, the failure of the brigades to launch a combined effort, and their heavy investment in defense, precluded significant gains. There is no doubt that if one supreme headquarters had been set up on the southern front, it could have used the troops that were available for offensive missions more effectively. Indeed, both Ben-Gurion and Yadin believed that regional commands should be set up to act as intermediaries between the General Staff and the brigades, but this was only done in the north. The process was not completed on the other fronts due to clashes between the IDF High Command and the Defense Minister concerning the posting of commanding officers which finally erupted into a full-blown crisis. Ben-Gurion had decided in mid-June that an intermediary was required between the General Staff and the brigades in order to coordinate the war effort in each sector. Ben-Gurion drew up a list of candidates to command each Front, but encountered fierce resistance in the General Staff to the appointment of Mordechai Maklef as the commander of the Central Front. Some General Staff officers, including Yigal Yadin, submitted their resignations over the issue. Israeli scholars have offered several explanations of this episode. Some focus on the 'factional' element, viewing Ben-Gurion's decision as a political act designed to neutralize certain figures in the left-wing Mapam party. Others, though, view the affair from a 'professional' perspective, maintaining that Ben-Gurion's aim was to staff the High Command with former British Army officers, whom Ben-Gurion believed

possessed professional skills lacking in the Hagana. If so, the opposition of the former Hagana personnel stemmed from narrow considerations of self-interest. The scholarly debate seems to have missed the point. Ben-Gurion cited the 'état' aspect when he put forward the list of candidates, but political considerations apparently also played some part.[35] In any case, the soldiers won, and Ben-Gurion was forced to withdraw his appointment list. Due to this, the establishment of fronts, and the appointment of thir commanders, was postponed.

NOTES

1. General Staff/GS/Operations, the Southern Front: Operation AnFar, June 1948, IDFA 6127/49/93.
2. 5th Brigade: Revisions to the AnFar Order, 8 July 1948, IDFA 7011/49/5; Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 227–8.
3. 5th Brigade: Revisions to the AnFar Order, 8 July 1948, IDFA 7011/49/5; Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 222–3, 226.
4. 12th Brigade Commanders' to the Brigade's Battalions Commanders, 16 June 1948, IDFA 5879/49/22.
5. 'Assessment of the possible trend after the Truce' (undated), IDFA 7011/49/5; Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 221–2, 223–4.
6. 'Abd al-Nāsir, 'Memoirs', pp. 22–7.
7. GS/Operations cable to 12th Brigade Commander, 8 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1182.
8. 5th Brigade cables to the General Staff, 9 and 10 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1176.
9. 12th Brigade Commander cable to the General Staff, 8 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1176; Daily Summary, 9 July 1948, IDFA 7011/49/5; Uzi Narkis, *Soldier of Jerusalem* (Tel Aviv, 1991) (Hebrew), p. 105. The 12th Brigade commander ignored his men's failures: *Ha'Palmah Book 2*, pp. 866–7.
10. 12th Brigade Commander cable to the General Staff, 9 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1176.
11. 5th Brigade cables to the General Staff, 9, 10 and 12 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1176; Battalion 54/005: Report of an Assault on Enemy Positions, 13 July 1948, IDFA 1041/49/3; Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 230, 247, 255, 278, 293–9; *Maarakhot*, Vol. 263–4, June 1978, p. 102; Abd al-Nāsir, 'Memoirs', pp. 28–9.
12. Nagib, *Egypt's Destiny* (New York, 1955), pp. 22–3.
13. The matter is discussed in Chapter 9.
14. BGWD, p. 589, 15 July 1948; Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 311–12.
15. 5th Brigade/51st Battalion: Operation Order 'David and Goliath', 29 June 1948, IDFA 7011/49/5.
16. Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 228, 252–4; 5th Brigade/51st Battalion/Intelligence to 5th Brigade/Intelligence, 4 July 1948, IDFA 1041/49/3.
17. 5th Brigade: Operation AnFar (Continuation), 16 July 1948, IDFA 1041/49/4; 5th Brigade cable to the General Staff, 16 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1176.
18. Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 222–3.
19. General Staff to Brigades' Commanders, 6 July 1948, IDFA 5848/49/4.
20. Kadish, *The Occupation of Lydda, July 1948*, p. 46.
21. Galon Regional Commander: 'Report on Galon Defense, 14 July 1948', IDFA

1041/49/3; 'Intelligence Report to 12th Brigade Commander: Report on the Attack of Be'erot Yitzhak, 15 July 1948', IDFA 2539/50/34.

22. BGWD, pp. 581–2, entry for 11 July 1948.
23. Minutes of PGI Meeting, 14 July 1948, ISA; BGWD, pp. 587–8, entry for 14 July 1948; Yadin's cable to 5th Brigade, 14 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1182. On the discussions about who to send to the south see Chapter 9.
24. Annex to A. Ebban Letter to G. Ross, 12 July 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, pp. 323–4; Editorial Note, ibid., p. 326; United States Resolution Draft from 13 July 1948 on cease-fire in Palestine, ibid., pp. 668–9.
25. Glubb, *Soldier With the Arabs*, pp. 165–6.
26. HM Ambassador, Cairo, to HM Minister, Amman, 20 July 1948, FO 816/126; HM Ambassador, Baghdad, to HM Minister, Amman, 21 July 1948, ibid.
27. Minutes of PGI Meeting, 16 July 1948, ISA. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 13 July 1948, E9646, FO 371/68375; Telegram no. 570 from HM Chargé d'Affaires to Secretary of State, Foreign Office, London, 14 July 1948, FO 816/126.
28. HM Ambassador, Cairo, to HM Minister, Amman, 17 July 1948, FO 816/126.
29. 5th Brigade: 'Alert Order: "Death to the Invader" Operation', 15 July 1948, IDFA 7011/49/5; 5th Brigade/Intelligence: 'Summary of Today's Egyptian Forces Deployment', 16 July 1948, IDFA 1041/49/4.
30. 12th Brigade cable to the 7th and 8th Battalions, 16 July 1948, IDFA 5879/49/22.
31. Daily Summary, 18 July 1948, IDFA 7011/49/5.
32. 5th Brigade cable to the General Staff, 18 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1176; 5th Brigade/Intelligence: Action Summary for 18 July 1948, IDFA 1041/49/4; Brezner, *Origins of the Armored Corps*, pp. 165–6; Gelber, *Nucleus*, p. 476.
33. 5th Brigade/Intelligence: Action Summary for 18 July 1948, IDFA 1041/49/4; Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, p. 324.
34. 5th Brigade cable to the General Staff, 19 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1176; Negba Regional Commander cable to the General Staff, 19 July 1948, ibid.
35. Oren, *The Road to the City* (Tel Aviv: Maarakhot, 1976), p. 58; Elhanan Zehara Ostfeld, *Army is Born* (Tel Aviv, 1994), pp. 600–22; Gelber, *Nucleus to Hebrew Army*, pp. 266–76; Anita Shapira, *The Army Controversy, 1948* (Tel Aviv, 1985) (Hebrew), pp. 37–44.

9

Ten Days of Fighting: The Israeli–Jordanian Front

While the Jews entered into the second cycle of fighting with vigor, the Jordanians were very unhappy about the Arab League's decision not to prolong the truce. In fact, they were so sure that the truce was the first step toward the end of the war, that the Jordanian Prime Minister declined Glubb's request for further enlistment to fill the place of the killed and wounded soldiers on the grounds that 'there won't be any more fighting'.[1] The decision to resume the fighting upset King Abdullah, and the Jordanian Prime Minister suggested to Kirkbride that the Security Council should impose sanctions against the Political Committee of the Arab League, Jordan included, as a form of pressure to draw the Arab States out of the war.[2]

The direction of the next cycle of war was decided hence by each side's attitude toward the continuation of the war. Ben-Gurion defined the securing of Jewish control over Jerusalem and the road to the city as the war's most important goal, while the Arab Legion sought to maintain its achievements; and so, with the resumption of the fighting, the Jews took the initiative while the Arab Legion was on the defensive.

Operation Dani–Lydda and al-Ramla: Occupation and Deportation

As he considered the fighting that had started on 9 July to be the crucial stage in the fight over Jerusalem, Ben-Gurion nearly forced the IDF High Command to accept his strategic priorities. He was involved in the detailed preparation of the campaign planning, and it was his determination that led to the occupation of Lydda and al-Ramla with the termination of the truce. He had sought the occupation of the two cities since April, and regretted the fact that with the first truce they were still under Arab control.[3] Ben-Gurion assumed that their occupation would

remove an active hostile garrison from the way to Latrun and would eliminate the threat of attack on the Jewish forces acting in Latrun from the rear. It would also free more troops that would be available to the Latrun–Jerusalem Front. Of no less importance was the fact that the occupation of the two cities would further increase the size of the Jewish-controlled area, while removing an active hostile Arab basis of operation.

The principles of the proposed operation were developed in stages until they were finalized as Plan Dani. The General Staff issued a platform for a plan entitled Operation Larlar—this name reflected its goals: Lydda, al-Ramla, Latrun, Ramallah, and it was to be carried out in two stages. The goal of the operation was 'to attack and destroy the enemy forces bases at the Lydda–al-Ramla–Latrun–Ramallah area, to occupy these bases and by that to relieve Jerusalem and the road leading to the city from enemy pressure'. At the heart of the first stage was the occupation of Lydda and al-Ramla. This would be achieved through the isolation of the northern outskirts of the two cities, namely, by the occupation of Ras al-'Ayn, Yehudia and Wilhelma, and then the attack on and conquest of Lydda, and the placing of al-Ramla under siege to force it to surrender. The General Staff planners assumed, correctly, that the occupation of the villages in the area, and, later the occupation of Lydda would leave no choice to the residents of al-Ramla but to surrender without a fight. During this time the Israeli artillery would engage the Latrun garrison. With the successful accomplishment of these goals the second stage would be launched; its apex would be the occupation of Ramallah. Setting Ramallah as the operational goal decided the nature of the Israeli approach toward Latrun. Even though Latrun still controlled the road to Jerusalem, the Burma Road made the acquisition of Latrun less urgent. However, the seizure of Ramallah would force the Legion to withdraw from its positions along the Ramallah–Latrun road, including the Latrun garrison. It would also force redeployment of the Jordanian forces in Jerusalem and might even lead to their withdrawal. Therefore, from the strict military point of view, the stubborn struggle over Latrun, which had cost the Jews so much in blood, seemed unnecessary. Operation Larlar therefore stipulated the encirclement of the Latrun area and the annihilation of the forces there, but made no mention of attacking it directly in order to occupy the area. The places to be taken were Bidu and Bayt Nuba; from there two forces would launch a two-headed attack on Ramallah.[4]

The planned operation marked a progress in IDF operational thinking and conduct in more ways than one. It was not the first time that the

Israeli Army had launched a divisional-size operation. Such was Operation Nahshon. However, Operation Dani was the first to have an operational logic and structure, and it was the first time that the IDF launched an operational campaign with the participation of several forces, assigned with separate missions, all in the service of a central operational goal, under the direction of a single command. The General Staff assigned to the operation forces, which were of unprecedented strength: two battalions of the Kiryati Brigade, one battalion of the 3rd Brigade, the Yitfah 11th Brigade, the Harel and 18th Armored Brigade —each consisting of two battalions. In addition, two Palmah Battalions would participate in the first phase of harassment and disturbance missions around the Jerusalem perimeter. The 8th and the 11th Brigades comprised the core of the operation forces, while the rest of the forces were to act in support or in coordination with the major body of the operation. The only IDF armored brigade at that time was the 8th Brigade, and its arsenal consisted of seven tanks—two new British medium Cromwell and five old French light Hotchekes tanks. Its two battalions also consisted of about 30 armored cars of various types. The forces that took part in the operation, directly or indirectly, comprised about 9,000 soldiers in total. This allocation of forces, which far exceeded those of the Arab Legion, was the clearest sign of the significance the Israelis, under Ben-Gurion's direction, attributed to this campaign.[5]

Against this force, the Arab Legion order of forces was as follows: the Arab Legion's 5th Battalion—which had left Latrun for training and reorganization—was during the truce, and after completing the rearrangement, redeployed in Bidu, al-Nabi Samuel and Radar Hill, replacing the 1st Battalion. The latter was assigned as a reserve force to meet attacks in the Lydda–al-Ramla area. However, on the eve of the termination of the truce, Glubb ordered the transfer of the 1st Battalion from its positions in the Bayt Nabala area to Tubas, near the Nablus area, leaving the former area without significant military forces. The 4th Battalion was widthdrawn from its positions in Latrun, and was sent to the Bab al-Wad area, to allow its soldiers some rest. It was replaced by the 2nd Battalion. Three battalions were thus placed in the area stretching from Latrun through Bab al-Wad to Bidu and Radar Hill along the way to Ramallah. As has already been mentioned, the Arab Legion's 5th company was deployed in al-Ramla and Lydda, along with about 500 lightly armed Jordanian Bedouins. Glubb and al-Tall offer different versions of the reason for Glubb sending the 1st Battalion to the north by Samaria, thus deciding by that the fate of Lydda and al-Ramla. Al-Tall claims that Glubb deliberately pulled the 1st Battalion, which was one

of the best Legion forces, from its positions in Bayt Nabala area on 9 July, as he wanted to allow the Jews to take over Lydda and al-Ramla. The truth, though, seems to be that the 1st Battalion was sent to the north because of IDF movements in the Baysan Valley on the eve of the resumption of fighting. Since 6 July, Israeli military forces had amassed in a military camp north of Baysan, preparing for Operation Brosh in northern Palestine. Glubb, of course, was unaware of the reason for the build-up of these forces, and he was afraid that the Israelis were planning an operation against the Arab Legion's transport and communication lines, and the 1st Brigade's mission was to prevent such an eventuality. Only when the direction of the Israeli forces became clearer, both in the north and in the center, was the 1st Brigade brought back to the Bayt Nabala area. The Jordanians had no tanks at all, but each of its battalions had 12–14 armored cars: a total number of 72. Indeed, on their journey the Israeli forces met only local armed forces, and the journey of both the Israeli Armies to Ben Shemen was relatively unhindered.[6]

Yigal Alon was appointed to command the operation on 7 July, and despite some tactical modification and adjustments, his Operation Dani plan was similar to the General Staff Larlar Order.[7] The change that Alon made was due to the nature of the attack against Lydda and al-Ramla. The General Staff plan did not go into detail about the method of occupying Lydda, and Alon wanted to see the two cities encircled from north and south before the actual breakthrough.[8] The isolation of al-Ramla and Lydda was intended to put pressure on them and to prevent the intervention of external forces during the breakthrough to Lydda. This would be achieved through a pincer-formation attack achieved by the 8th Brigade moving in along the north–east line, while the 11th Brigade approached along the west–south line. At the same time, the 4th Brigade would isolate the whole theater of operation from the area to the west, while the 10th Brigade would isolate the eastern sector. The 8th and the 11th brigades would then complete the encirclement in Ben Shemen, and from there they would launch the attack on Lydda.[9] Israeli Intelligence reported that a small segment of the Arab Legion was deployed in the operation's area, while most of the forces there were local Palestinians and ALA units.[10]

Operation Dani—To Lydda and al-Ramla

The operation began on 10 July with the termination of the truce. The 42nd Battalion of the Kiryati Brigade launched harassment attacks on al-Ramla, but their fire was inaccurate and rarely hit significant targets.

The Legion forces, which made up the backbone of the city's defense, and the city defenders' firm stand, impaired the effectiveness of the offensive.[11] At the same time the 8th Brigade had started its move toward Ben Shemen. The Brigade commander, Yitzhak Sadeh, split his forces into two; the 82nd Tank Battalion, accompanied by the 4th Brigade's 44th Infantry Battalion, was assigned to Lydda airport, Dayr Tarif and the military base in Bayt Nabala. The 89th Mechanized Battalion, along with the 3rd Brigade's 33rd Infantry, was sent to occupy Kuleh and Tira; and after the completion of this task the force was to move toward the village of Bayt Nabala. With the completion of the occupation of these targets, the forces would then move on Ben Shemen. This part of the operation was achieved after 24 hours of fighting. The airport and the villages were easily taken, but after their occupation, the Arab Legion's 1st Battalion, which had returned in the meanwhile from Samaria, launched counterattacks against the forces that occupied Bayt Nabala and Dayr Tarif. The 89th Raid Battalion was sent to assist the forces that were coming under attack in Dayr Tarif, and by the end of the day the Jordanian counterattacks were thwarted. After accomplishing this mission, Dayan took with him two companies from Bayt Nabala and Dayr Tarif to Ben Shemen, leaving only one company in place. He did so at a time when the fighting in the area was not yet over and without informing his commander, the 8th Brigade commander. The act was reckless, as leaving Dayr Tarif with reduced forces exposed the 8th Brigade's flank, and indeed, forces of the Legion's 1st Battalion observed the 89th Battalion's departure, and re-took Dayir Tarif from the smaller unit holding it, using it as a springboard for the raid they launched on Lydda on 13 July.[12]

The 11th Brigade's movement along the southern arm was easier. The 1st Battalion's mission was to capture the villages in this area, while the 3rd Battalion's mission was to occupy Lydda. The 1st Battalion's journey was smooth. It expected to meet some soldiers of the Legion, but met instead only local irregulars. The result was the rapid occupation of 'Innaba, Jimzu and Daniyal, and other nearby villages. The slight resistance offered by the villagers was quelled by a barrage followed by the storming of the villages. With the occupation of the villages, its occupants were expelled and the houses were demolished. In less than 24 hours the Yitfah soldiers were in Ben Shemen. The brigade's 3rd Battalion prepared for its next mission, the occupation of Lydda, while the 1st Battalion took positions toward the east, waiting for an expected Arab Legion counterattack.[13] Now the Operation Dani command waited for the 82nd Tank Battalion, whose mission was to support the advance

of the 3rd Battalion inside Lydda. However, the tanks were still fighting in the northern sector, and they later became inoperative because of poor maintenance. The Dani command decided to abandon the original plan, which stipulated that the tank battalion would support the infantry battalion's entry into the city. Wishing to launch the attack on Lydda without delay, Alon decided to send Yitfah's 3rd Battalion even without the tanks. Two companies of Yitfah's 3rd Battalion approached the city on 11 July, and engaged the city defenders. In the meantime, the 89th Battalion arrived at Ben Shemen, and Alon asked Dayan to join the fighting in the city. Dayan agreed, and while the 3rd Battalion was fighting on one side of Lydda, the 89th Battalion's armored vehicles outflanked the city from its other side. The activities of the two battalions were uncoordinated and unrelated, but their mission was supposed to be similar: to hold on in the city. However, Dayan did not intend to do that. He planned to launch a hit-and-run strike in order to destabilize Lydda's defenders, and to make it easier for the Israeli infantry soldiers to take over the city. He did not bother to solicit intelligence about the nature of the forces that he was about to meet. Dayan had with him two companies—150 soldiers—transported on eight Jeeps, six half-track vehicles and one armored car equipped with a two-pound cannon. He intended to break through into the city, but met roadblocks which prevented this; he therefore led his men around the roadblocks, along the Lydda–al-Ramla road. Only the armored car with the two-pound cannon entered the city; the rest of the troops moved around the city. Both forces fired indiscriminately as they progressed and force led by Dayan was met with strong fire, in which six of his men were killed and 21 wounded. Alon asked Dayan to hold on in the city and to assist the 3rd Battalion in its fighting, but Dayan refused, claiming that losses he had suffered made it impossible for him to remain in place. After being in the area less than an hour, he led the battalion out, leaving the 3rd Battalion to fight on alone.[14]

Dayan claimed that his battalion's raid did achieve its goal, that the defenders were scared and their fighting-will diminished; his claim was probably correct, at least in part. Approximately 100–150 Arabs were killed during the raid and the subsequent fighting. The defense line to the east of Lydda, which took the main brunt of the defense against Dayan's raiding forces and found itself trapped between the raiding force and the 3rd Battalion forces approaching from the rear, had collapsed. That made the rest of the fighting inside the city somewhat easier for the Israeli infantry force.[15] However, Dayan was a reckless and undisciplined commander: his departure from the 8th Brigade's opera-

tions area without informing his superiors or receiving permission; his intrusion Lydda on what was almost a private initiative—his direct commander had no idea about it—without bothering to collect intelligence about the nature of the forces he was about to meet; his hasty departure from the area—all were indications of an irresponsible soldier who was incapable of thinking in terms of army and organized military operations. Dayan revealed his irresponsible nature again when a few days later he left a combat area in the south of the country, in spite of the specific orders he received to remain in place.[16]

In the meantime, the 3rd Battalion managed to break the city's defense line and, during the evening, moved into the city. The breakthrough became possible when, following the Israeli attack, the Legion's 5th company, which was placed in al-Ramla and Lydda, left its positions around the two cities and assembled at the police station in the heart of Lydda. The departure of the Legion's forces from their positions had a strong effect on the local defenders of the city and their resistance weakened. In the evening, the Israeli battalion commander assembled the city notables and announced to them that the city was under IDF control; he also demanded that they ask the snipers who were still shooting at the Israeli troopers to put down their arms. Five notables, the city mayor among them, went to convey the IDF's demand to the Jordanian soldiers inside the police station, but the legionnaires shot at the delegation, killing the mayor and wounding others. The city was put under curfew for the night, and by the morning the Israeli soldiers patrolled the city, disarming the adults and placing them in isolation.[17]

Idris Sultan, the military governor of the two cities, sent urgent messages to Glubb, in which he described the difficult situation in which his forces were caught. The IDF tapping units intercepted messages being sent from al-Ramla and Lydda, in which the residents of the two cities demanded that they be allowed to surrender. The commander of the 4th Brigade in Ramallah promised to send help, but Glubb had no intention of sending any help.[18] He had no reserve forces, and sending a significant force to Lydda would weaken and endanger the ongoing Jordanian deployment, for reasons that will be seen below. The same argument led Glubb to instruct the trapped 5th company to escape from the city. The company that had found shelter at the police station sneaked out of the city on the night of 12/13 July, and on the following day the Jews were in full control of Lydda.[19]

By that time, al-Ramla was already under Israeli control: Alon's theory that it would be possible to subdue the city without a fight had proved to be correct. The aerial and ground barrage of Lydda and al-

Ramla, and the advance of the Israeli forces toward the cities, caused panic among the cities' residences, and a flight of civilians from the city had been noticed. The Operation Dani command sent a message with a prisoner to the al-Ramla leadership, calling for their surrender and promising to respect the population's rights in accordance with the Geneva Convention.[20] On the morning of 12 July, an answer arrived. The surrender agreement was signed by a four-man Arab delegation, and the Israeli troops gained control over al-Ramla.[21]

Why did Glubb not act to save al-Ramla and Lydda? Glubb claimed that his main concern was to build a defense line that would secure the Legion's acquisitions in the Samaria and the Jerusalem areas; he therefore arranged his forces to cover the 15-mile gap that existed between his forces in the Latrun area and the Iraqi Army's southern flank. The two Arab towns of Lydda and al-Ramla ostensibly filled this gap, but in fact it was impossible to count on them for this mission as they were located on the flat coastal plain some five miles west of Latrun. In Lydda there were an Arab Legion platoon and 500 Jordanian Bedouins and local irregulars, poorly armed. This force would not stand in the face of the Jewish attack which Glubb assumed to be imminent. The solution— sending reinforcements to the two cities—was impossible in Glubb's eyes, as if one of the two Latrun battalions were sent to the two towns the Israeli forces could close off the city, thus neutralizing that force while other Israeli forces could seize the opportunity to attack the weakened Jordanian formation in Latrun. The remaining battalion would be unable to stop the Israeli attack, and as the Legion had no reserve forces whatsoever, and the forces it had were already overstretched, Latrun would fall to the Jews. Such an eventuality would be disastrous, as it would mean the collapse of the whole Jordanian and Iraqi formation on the West Bank and the surrender of Jerusalem to the Jews.[22] Glubb's arguments sound logical, but his conduct was severely criticized by Abdullah al-Tall. This Jordanian officer, who wrote his memoirs in Cairo after his escape from Jordan, attacks the British throughout his book, claiming that they, through the good services provided to them by Glubb, acted to assist the Jews in their attempts to open a route to Jerusalem. According to al-Tall, Glubb abandoned al-Ramla and Lydda under British instructions, an action for which the latter had several reasons: to remove the threat to the biggest Jewish city of Tel Aviv; to expose the right wing of the Egyptian Army; as the British and the Jordanians saw Lydda and al-Ramla as garrisons of the ex-Mufti, it was in Jordanian interests to hand the cities to the Jews; and to teach the Arabs a lesson for their refusal to prolong the truce.[23] In any

case, there is no disagreement between the two that the Legion adhered to the defensive position it had held since his troops had arrived in Latrun and that nothing significant had been done to prevent the fall of al-Ramla and Lydda to the Jews.

One of the most dramatic events of Operation Dani took place on the 12 July. At noon, two armored cars of the Jordanian 1st Brigade surprised the Israeli soldiers when they raided Lydda, opening fire in all directions, and retreating shortly afterwards. This was a reconnaissance patrol which had started its journey from the Bayt Nabala area, and its appearance was followed by an eruption of local armed Palestinians who started shooting at the Israeli soldiers, thinking that the patrol was the vanguard of the promised help they were hoping was on its way. The firing put the Israeli soldiers in a precarious situation as there were only about 300–400 Israeli soldiers to hold a city of about 40,000–50,000 people. Under these circumstances, the reaction of the soldiers to the raid and the consequent local residents' firing was harsh. The soldiers shot at any suspected source of fire, regardless of who, or where, he was. By the end of the day the city was pacified at the cost of two Israeli soldiers dead and several dozens of Palestinians killed. Rumors later spread about a massacre committed by the Israeli soldiers against civilians who had found shelter in a mosque. However, as Alon Kadish's meticulous study shows, it seems that these rumors were baseless. Even Nimr al-Khatib relates the killing to the Jewish response to the Palestinians' earlier opening of fire against the Israeli soldiers, as does Spiro Munayyer by implication. The total number of the killed Palestinians during the whole fighting over Lydda was about 250—and probably less.[24]

Another result of the raid and resistance was the mass flight of the residents of Lydda and al-Ramla on 13 July. Benny Morris, who repeats uncritically the Palestinian version of the events, discusses this situation at length, as do Alon Kadish and others, in what is supposed to be a response to Morris's arguments.[25] Each of them—Morris and Kadish—provides evidence to support their positions. The claim that the occupying forces did not plan to deport the city's residents is enhanced by the telegram sent on 12 July by the Dani command to the IDF General Staff, asking for an administrator to be sent to Lydda to run the city affairs, as the mayor had been killed by the Legion soldiers who were positioned in the local police station building.[26] The General Staff's Operation Branch sent back a telegram with instructions about the way to treat the city population and the prisoners held by the Israeli troops. Anyone who wanted to leave the city should be allowed to do so, and those who preferred to stay should be warned that the

IDF was unable to protect them. Women, the sick, children and the elderly should not be forced to leave. Looting was forbidden.[27] It is quite clear from these instructions that the IDF command sought the departure of the Lydda residents—but of their own will. However, it was only after the violent resistance later that the fate of the city residents was discussed and decided. The decision was in line not only with the logic of Plan Dalet, but also with that of the order of Deputy Chief of Staff, General Zvi Ayalon, dating from 6 July, in which procedures for the treatment of the civilian population were set down. The situation was one of war, or at least so it seemed in the eyes of the Yitfah soldiers and Operation Dani command. Hence it was possible to apply the harsh measures that were allowed both by Plan Dalet and Ayalon's order. At the time of the Legionnaires' raid and the following shootout, Ben-Gurion conferred with several of the IDF high commanders, including Yadin, Alon and Rabin, who was the Operations Commander of Operation Dani. With the arrival of the news of occurrences in Lydda, Alon asked Ben-Gurion how he should react. According to Ben-Gurion's biographer, Ben-Gurion made a hand signal that could have been meant to signify an order of expulsion.[28] If Ben-Gurion's intervention and permission were necessary, it was not because of the principle of deportation, but because of its unusual extent, which was affecting the city residents, as many had already left the city.[29] In any case, Morris's summary seems apposite: The battle trauma, the unexpected occupation of their city by the Jews, their abandonment by the Arab Legion, the killing, the curfew with the house-to-house searches, the lack of food and medical supplies, the flight of their family relatives, the fear of the future all led to a convergence of Jewish and Arab interests: 'the IDF wanted to see to residents leaving the city, while the residents were willing, even eager, to move to the Arab-held area'.[30] For the local residents of Lydda and al-Ramla it made no difference, as they were determined not to remain under Israeli rule, and most of those who were still in town joined their brethren who had left earlier. Thus, about 40,000 Palestinians, of their own free will, made the choice to leave their homes and move to the territory controlled by the Arab Legion.[31] Of course, under the circumstances described above, it is hardly possible to say that the decision to leave Lydda and al-Ramla was taken of their own free will; it was really a question of deportation.

A no less disturbing aspect of the cities' occupation was the brutal behavior of soldiers toward the local population. As we have seen, the rumors about a massacre perpetrated by Israeli soldiers were probably

baseless, but Israeli soldiers did engage in raping and looting to such an extent that it came to Ben-Gurion's attention. As a result of the misdeeds of its soldiers, the Yitfah's 3rd Battalion was hastily transferred from the city—although it was known that soldiers from other units were also engaged in such activities—and forces of the Kiryati Brigade took over Lydda and al-Ramla.[32] The behavior of IDF soldiers toward the local Arab population prompted Ben-Gurion to call for the arrangement of the necessary military law, and to order the establishment of a military administration over the Occupied Territories. Ben-Gurion was advised to appoint General Avner Elimelech to this position; advice which he accepted. He was also advised to put under Elimelech's command special forces authorized to open fire against pillagers.[33] The order of appointment under which Elimelech took up his duties stated:

> 3. The department will organize the Military Government in all the [Arab] towns and villages and will establish an armed force to maintain security in the occupied territories, ensure law and order, protect property, prevent any harm to the status of the residents, and ensure that the necessary services are provided.[34]

Pondering the Possibilities

The Israeli offensive put considerable pressure on Glubb. The Legion suffered from severe shortages of arms and was in real danger of being unable to continue the fighting. As was mentioned earlier, Glubb had warned Abdullah and the Jordanian Cabinet about this state of affairs, and had been scolded for so doing. However, the Arab Legion had no real alternative but to fight, as it was the Israelis who had initiated the current cycle of fighting. The only way that the Legion could avoid fighting was if it was instructed to leave Palestine; an inconceivable eventuality. Syria, Iraq and Egypt promised to supply Jordan with what they needed to maintain the Legion as a fighting force, but no one in Jordan really believed that the promised supply would arrive.[35]

The response to Glubb's warning was a written order issued by the Transjordan government, demanding that he hold on at all costs. Glubb told Kirkbride that he had to choose between carrying out an order that might well lead to the destruction of the force under his command, or to resign. Kirkbride reassured Glubb, telling him that Bernadotte and the Security Council were acting to bring an end to the present cycle of

fighting. In the court, Glubb's warning did not go unnoticed. The Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs came to Kirkbride, requesting him to convey to the British government 'a last-minute plea for supplies'. Trying to convince Bevin to comply with the Jordanian request for arms despite the UN-imposed embargo, they pointed out that at no point had the Arab Legion departed from the policy which the Prime Minister had described to Bevin in London before the war had started, and that its activities had been limited to the Arab areas of Palestine, except in Jerusalem. The two officials claimed that Jordan had no desire to continue the fight but could not act independently of the rest of the Arab League, except to the extent of ordering the Arab Legion to stay on the defensive in case more ammunition was forthcoming. Repeating Glubb's warning, they claimed that without the arms, the Legion was facing the danger of annihilation; an eventuality that they 'felt' was 'inconceivable'. They were sure that Bevin would not 'allow the Arab Legion to be destroyed and so endanger the existence of the Arab State most closely bound to Great Britain'.[36] These pleadings were of no avail, as the British government would not violate the UN ban on arms sales to the Middle East.[37]

With the occupation of al-Ramla and Lydda, the first stage of Operation Dani was over, but fighting still continued. The shortages suffered by the Legion did not completely undermine its fighting ability, and the Legion launched counterattacks which were intended to seal the breaches in its lines caused by the Jewish offensive. However, the extent and nature of the attacks were evidence of the true situation of the Legion; they were local and restricted, confined to the Dayr Tarif–Bayt Nabala area. Forces of the 1st Battalion tried to take back these places but, after their initial success, they were thwarted, and Jewish control over this line was established.[38] This military activity was no more than a nuisance for the Jews. The real problem that engaged the Jews was the question: what next? It was time to move on to the second stage of Operation Dani, which would take the Israeli forces to Ramallah. However, the circumstances existing at this time were different from those which had existed when the Operation Dani plan was conceived. The first difference was the current political activity in the United Nations, which aimed at bringing to the fighting an end and the resumption of the truce. For the Israelis that meant that they had only a short time left for the next stage. The second point to reckon with was the intensive Egyptian offensive, which was at its height when the first stage of Operation Dani ended.

By 8 July, the Egyptians had launched an attack on the Israeli forces. The whole matter is discussed elsewhere, but it should be recalled here

that despite their taking the first initiative, the Egyptians' intention was defensive, as they intended only to strengthen the positions they were holding and to prevent a Jewish intrusion along their lines. The Jews were unaware of the Egyptians' intentions, and anyway, the 5th Brigade was put under heavy pressure, which could further affect their chances of regaining the Negev. Another disturbing development was the reports that an Egyptian company and heavy artillery force—the artillery unit was the one that took part in the occupation of Yad Mordechai—had joined the Egyptian and Jordanian forces positioned in 'Artuf. This joint force constituted a formidable company that, along with the 135 Jordanian soldiers from the 12th company in Hebron, could threaten the Israeli Burma Road, and could even try to join the Jordanian forces to the north of the Jerusalem–Bab al-Wad road, which were tightening the siege on Jerusalem.[39]

Thus, fearing, on the one hand, that the IDF's ability to act was restricted by limits on time, and worried, on the other hand, about the prospect of an Egyptian offensive, Ben-Gurion and his aides pondered whether to let the Operation Dani forces to proceed with the original plan, adjusted to meet the new time limit, or to send them to the south, where the 5th Brigade was asking for help. Yadin put forward three options. The first was adhering to the original plan and going to Ramallah and Jerusalem. The other two options signified a departure from the Operation Dani logic, shifting the focus to what seemed to be the grave situation in the south. The first option would involve sending forces to Bayt Jibrin, and from there breaking through the eastern arm of the Egyptian force to the south. The advantage of this move was that it would prevent an Egyptian advance northward, thus removing the danger of the Egyptian forces joining the Legion forces along the Bab al-Wad–Qastal line. At the same time, the Israeli progress through Bayt Jibrin would open a new path to the besieged Negev while inserting a wedge between the Egyptian forces in the Hebron–Bethlehem area and the main Egyptian body in the Negev. The other alternative was sending reinforcements to the major combat area which revolved around Negba and the Iraq Suwaydan junction.[40]

The first option was the most disturbing. Going directly to Ramallah meant bypassing Latrun and accomplishing the operational logic of the Operation Dani plan. However, it also meant disregarding the time factor. Yadin was probably ready to ignore the time factor, assuming that even if the truce did come into effect, it would be possible to proceed with their plans in the next cycle of fighting that would surely come. However, Ben-Gurion was much more sensitive to the time factor, and

he made his decision on the basis of the assumptions that only a few days of fighting remained, and it was not at all certain that it would be possible to resume the war. In spite of Ben-Gurion's image as a person who was ready to ignore international decisions that might compromise Israeli interests—an image that Ben-Gurion willingly encouraged— he was in fact very sensitive to world opinion. If the Security Council were to impose a truce, Israel would comply, even if it were not in its interests. In October, Israel broke the truce called by the Security Council, but it did that only after laborious preparatory work, and when it was sure that there would be no harsh world reaction.

There was also another problem which affected the decision regarding the next step, and that was Ben-Gurion's anticipation of Arab Legion counterattacks, which he was sure would come. In fact, he could not understand why the current counterattacks were so few: 'There is one question, where is the Arab Legion?'[41] Ben-Gurion's question is just further evidence of the lack of information on the Israeli part as to what was happening in the Arab camp. Apparently, the Israelis had no idea about the difficult situation of the Legion, or of Jordan's adoption of a defensive posture. Fearing the Legion's counterattack, but more significantly, being aware of the short time remaining, Ben-Gurion shifted the original operational focus of the second stage of Operation Dani from Ramallah to Latrun. He decided that the IDF would occupy Latrun and 'Imwas; while in Jerusalem an effort would be made to conquer the Old City and al-Shaykh Jarrāh, with the latter to be razed to the ground. In the south, the Israeli forces would strike at the Egyptian forces at the Iraq Suwaydan junction to secure a free passage between the southern Negev and the north, and to remove any possible Egyptian claim to the Negev. To make that possible, at least two armored battalions would need to be sent to the south, while some of the remaining forces would be directed against the Egyptian and the Jordanian forces around Jerusalem. If this plan could be carried out successfully, it would be considered as 'a significant improvement in our military situation, and a great political victory', although in Ben-Gurion's eyes it would be less than a total victory. A total victory would be achieved, so he believed, only if, in addition, Nablus was occupied, and a powerful aerial bombardment was carried out against Cairo, Alexandria, Damascus and Beirut.[42] In the Prime Minister's view, it was important to end the war in a situation where the other side had completely lost its will to fight—and this would be achieved only if the enemy were dealt a crippling blow, with victory to be achieved by means of annihilation. For Ben-Gurion, then, a decisive victory and the destruction of the enemy's

armed forces were not only a means to terminate the Arab presence in Israel, but also an essential instrument to avert the renewal of war at a later stage.[43] This was what Ben-Gurion meant when he made reference to 'total victory'.

Yigal Alon, the commander of Operation Dani, was against the transfer of a significant part of his forces to the south. He argued that his men were tired, and that while they continued to fight in their current positions, they would be unable to function in a new place. The more convincing argument, however, was the one heard from the commander of the armored brigade, who said that his tanks were broken down, and that fixing them would take at least a week. The alternative was to send the 11th Brigade, but in that case, the struggle to open the road to Jerusalem would be significantly impaired.[44] A decision had to be postponed until the situation in the south became clearer. By 13 July the Egyptian attack had reached its peak, and the 5th Brigade met the attack successfully.[45] With that Ben-Gurion met Yadin and the General Staff on the following day to discuss the next steps. Most of the IDF generals thought that priority should be given to the fighting along the Latrun–Jerusalem Front. Yigal Alon reiterated his conviction that Operation Dani should continue according to the original plan, even at the expense of the Southern Front. Another general, Fritz Eshet, agreed with him, suggesting that the forces in the south be assisted by reinforcing their fire-power with combat planes and artillery. Zvi Ayalon, the Chief of Staff's deputy, concurred. Moshe Sadok disagreed and recommended giving high priority to the Southern Front, even at Jerusalem's expense. Ben-Gurion accepted the majority opinion, claiming that although reinforcements must be sent to the south, it must not be at the expense of the fighting on the central front. He claimed that 'the occupation of Latrun and the liberation of Jerusalem should not be compromised', but at the same time, the Egyptians should not be allowed to cut off the Negev. Additional forces should be sent to the south, and his solution was to not send in forces that had participated in Operation Dani, but (as mentioned in Chapter 8) to send in troops from other units. The only exception was Dayan's 89th Raiders Battalion, which belonged to the 8th Brigade. It had taken part in Operation Dani but was now inoperative.[46]

The new developments led to the redeployment of the Operation Dani forces. The 8th Brigade retreated to its base for reorganization, allowing the 82nd Tank Battalion to repair the damages that had brought it to a halt. While staying at the camp, the battalion served as a strategic reserve for the second stage of Operation Dani. The 11th, 10th

and 4th Brigades remained under the direct command of Operation Dani HQ. The 3rd Brigade was relieved of its duties within the operation, as it held the front from which a Jordanian or Iraqi attack could be launched, and the redeployment strengthened its ability to withstand such an attack.[47]

Military Activity on the Periphery

While the main Israeli effort was centered around Lydda and al-Ramla, military activity took place at the same time on both sides of the main theater of operations. To some extent this activity was part of the main operation, but it was also independently pursued. The 3rd Brigade acted in the northern sector, while the 10th Brigade acted in the east–west section.

The Harel Brigade, which was engaged during the first truce in reorganizing its ranks, had only a marginal role in the first stage of Operation Dani. Its 4th Battalion was in charge of the Burma Road, the 6th Battalion and the Moriah Battalion, which the Etsioni Brigade had lent to the Harel Brigade, held posts along the Jerusalem–Bab al-Wad sector. One important task of the brigade was to prevent the movement of either Jordanian or Egyptian forces, during Operation Dani, from the east to the Lydda–al-Ramla area. Another goal was to widen as much as possible the Jerusalem–Bab al-Wad corridor along the southern part of the Bab al-Wad–Qastal line. It had also to prevent the northward movement of the Egyptian troops that were deployed in the 'Artuf area. The brigade had only one company which was free and mobile, and this company acted together with another company-size force, which has been formed by the brigade command, to extend the area of the Jerusalem corridor. During the week from 13 to 17 July, the specially established force took over villages on both sides of the main road to Jerusalem, mainly to its south, some of which were still occupied by civilians, and others by soldiers, regulars and irregulars. The occupants of the villages who still remained—'Islin, Ishwa', Sar'a, Sir Eban, Wadi Srar, Rafat and the village of 'Artuf—were deported and the houses were razed. By occupying these, a road to Jerusalem, not exposed directly to fire and harassment, could be constructed.[48] During this campaign, the police garrison of Artuf, which was held by Egyptian and Jordanian forces, was also captured. When Jewish forces became active in the area the Legion command recalled its soldiers, and the Egyptian

commander in the garrison followed suit, extracting his men from the garrison, allowing the Jews to take it over without a fight on 18 July. As a result of the 'Artuf police station's capture another part of the Tel Aviv –Jerusalem railway track was brought under Israeli domination.[49]

In the northern sector, the 3rd Brigade's activity was only partly linked to Operation Dani, as it was responsible for the whole front stretching from about Ras al-'Ayn to the south, north to the Carmel mountains' area. The major forces facing it were the Iraqis, who were usually inactive, although their artillery bombarded the Jewish settlements in front of them intensively. Despite the fact that the Israeli and the Jordanian forces were clashing just to the south of them, the Iraqi command had no intention of interfering, a fact that the Israeli Intelligence learnt through tapping the telephone line connecting the Iraqi base in Majdal Yaba to the Jordanian position in Bayt Nabala. This attitude of the Iraqi forces was in line with the general tendency of the Iraqi command to avoid taking an active part in the fighting. The Iraqi Chief of Staff claimed that the Iraqi forces were dispersed over too wide an area, each unit too small to act in offensive missions, and that, lacking reserve forces, they were unable to act beyond their sector. Indeed, one battalion from the 14th Brigade was responsible for the sector stretching from Kufr Qāsim to the Majdal Yaba area. They just sat at their positions, ready to thwart Jewish attacks.[50]

The Israeli 3rd Brigade had to deal mainly with the Jordanian forces that tried to regain the positions they had lost around the Bayt Nabala–Budrus area, while the Jews tried to consolidate their acquisitions and deepen their penetration into the Legion-held area.[51] Further to the north, the 3rd Brigade was instructed to occupy Majdal Yaba and Ras al-'Ayn, which were held by Iraqi forces. The two sites were situated at the southern end of the Iraqi-held territory, and the Iraqi command considered them the responsibility of the Arab Legion, and hence, their resistance to the Jewish attacking forces was virtually non-existent.[52] The Israeli force that attacked Majdal Yaba significantly outnumbered the Iraqi forces there—three companies attacked an Iraqi platoon, and indeed, the Iraqi commander withdrew his forces as soon as he learnt about the Jewish attack, leaving the local village residents to deal with the Israeli forces. More significantly, the Israeli forces also captured Ras al-'Ayn, which meant that the Israelis gained control over the source for the water pumping installation from which a pipeline brought water to Jerusalem. The site was taken without battle, although the Iraqi forces made several unsuccessful attempts to regain it, and both Majdal Yaba and Ras al-'Ayn remained in Jewish hands.[53]

Operation Dani to Latrun

In spite of the pressing time limit, the Israelis only came to a decision about their next movement on 14 July; and on the following day an order for the next stage was issued.[54] The plan was influenced by the two above-mentioned factors: the situation in the south that led to the reduction in the forces available for the next stage of Operation Dani, and the time limit, affecting the operational goal of the second stage of Operation Dani, and making Latrun, once again, the prime target instead of Ramallah. As we have seen, the 82nd Tank Battalion was inoperative and the 89th Battalion was sent to reinforce the southern 5th Brigade. The second stage order mentioned these two factors in explanation for the change in the operational goal. It was now the 'opening of the Tel Aviv–al-Ramla–Latrun–Jerusalem road', and no longer 'to attack and destroy the enemy forces bases at the Lydda–al-Ramla–Latrun–Ramallah area, to occupy these bases and by that to relieve Jerusalem and the road leading to the city from enemy pressure'.[55] Thus, the change was the decision to go to Latrun instead of Ramallah. The operational goal was to bring under Jewish control the area stretching from Kuleh in the north of the Latrun–Lydda sector through Bayt Sira, mid-way between Latrun–Ramallah and Latrun itself.[56] Control of this area would, on the one hand, secure the heart of Israel and Lydda and al-Ramla from Jordanian or Iraqi counterattacks and, on the other, allow free and undisturbed movement along the coastal plain–Jerusalem route.

But the relatively wide spread of the planned theater of operation was intended to serve another goal, and that was the acquisition of Jewish control over the Ras al-'Ayn–Jerusalem water pipeline. Jerusalem was dependent for its water supply on external sources. The water supply was also vital to the existence of Jerusalem's agricultural hinterland in the valleys along the mountainous corridor leading to the city. The main line bringing water to Jerusalem came from Ras al-'Ayn, stretching 60 km up to Jerusalem. Part of this line was under Arab control, including two vital pumping stations, in Ras al-'Ayn and at the Ayalon Valley. Operation Larlar thus served two needs: operational and political. It aimed to remove the threat of Jordanian incursion into the heart of Israel and it aimed to make Jerusalem an integral part of the Jewish State. With the opening of the Burma Road, the occupation of Latrun was no longer vital to the survival of Jerusalem. However, as the Latrun garrison was in control of the pumping station in the Ayalon Valley, political need overcame pure operational logic, which demanded a direct

advance on Ramallah. It was true that with the occupation of Ramallah the Legion would most probably leave Latrun, but under the tight timetable it was more important to act where success was more probable in a short time limit.[57] Since the pumping station in Ras al-'Ayn and the water facility in the al-Ramla–Lydda area were at this stage in Jewish hands, Operation Dani B was aimed to secure Jewish control over the pumping station in the Ayalon Valley.[58]

The Arab Legion anticipated a Jewish attack. Like the Israelis, it had no information about the other side's plans, but Glubb's assumptions about the Jewish plans were not completely misplaced. He had assumed that, bearing in mind their past failures in Latrun, the Jews would seek another way to drive the Legion from Latrun, and seizing Bayt Sira would serve that purpose. If they captured this place, the Jews would be in the position to cut off the road to Latrun and it would also open a path for them to Ramallah, giving them unhindered access to the Legion's positions, as well as those of the Iraqis. To meet such an eventuality, Glubb instructed the transfer of two companies of the 3rd Brigade's 2nd Regiment from Latrun as well as the 5th Independent Infantry Company, which had slipped out of Lydda on the night of 11/12 July, so that they could be position around Bayt Sira.[59]

The Israelis noticed the Arab Legion's forces' departure from Latrun, but they did not understand its meaning.[60] Alon attributed their departure to the pressure his forces were imposing on the Latrun garrison, assuming that it was a sign that the indirect approach was bearing fruit. He had thought that instead of launching a direct attack on the garrison, which had already proved to be unachievable, it would be better to put the garrison under siege. This would necessarily lead to the Legion's withdrawal, as Alon assumed that the Arab Legion was Abdullah's most precious asset, even more dear to him than the territory it held. So if this force came under serious danger of annihilation, Abdullah would prefer to save the Legion, even if it meant loss of territory, and Alon sought to work on what he thought was Abdullah's Achilles' heel.[61] The main flaw in Alon's plan was his misunderstanding of the meaning of the Legion's moves. The retreat of the Legion forces from Latrun, which his men observed on 14 July, was not in response to Israeli moves but a strategic redeployment aiming to strengthen the Legion's position. As to Latrun, as Elhanan Oren has shown, it was not weakened by the redeployment, as other forces replaced those that were sent to Bayt Sira, and the garrison's defense was put in the hands of the two remaining companies of the 2nd Battalion and the 4th Brigade. The Legion's formation in Latrun was only slightly weakened, and more

significantly, it was changed, a point that escaped Dani Operation Intelligence.[62] Hence the Legion's deployment along the whole front of the second stage of Operation Dani was as follows: two battalions minus the two companies were at the Latrun garrison; one company of the 5th Battalion held Radar Hill; two companies of the 2nd Battalion and the 5th Company (which was in Lydda) were holding the Bayt Sira area; and one company of the 1st Battalion took up positions to the north of Bayt Sira. The rest of the 1st Battalion was positioned at the Budrus–Bayt Nabala sector.[63]

The Israeli miscalculations resulted in another failure in their one additional attempt to take over Latrun. The forces remaining under Operation Dani's command for the second stage were the three infantry brigades—the 10th, 11th and 4th, and the tank battalion of the 8th Brigade—all in all eight battalions were assigned to various missions relating to the operation, four of which were given offensive missions. The offensive forces were divided into two, acting on two different fronts over two nights: on the night of 14/15 July forces of the Harel Brigade would launch a diversionary attack on Radar Hill, the Yitfah Brigade would occupy Barfiliya to the west of Bayt Sira, and the 4th Reserve Battalion would hold the Tira–Ben Shemen–Jimzu–Qubayb–Khulda line. On the following night forces of the Harel Brigade would attack the Latrun garrison from the east, while the Yitfah Brigade would occupy and entrench at the Bayt Sira junction. The Kiryati Brigade's battalion would continue holding the line it was holding, but would send a force to occupy Salbit, tightening the encirclement of Latrun.[64]

The 11th Brigade moved on the night of 14/15 July from the Lydda area to Barfiliya, and took it over, as was stipulated in the operation's order.[65] However, the brigade's next step was not in line with the operation's order. While, according to the original plan, it had to proceed on the next day to the Bayt Sira junction, and to capture and hold it, the brigade's battalions took a different course of action. On the night of 15/16 July, two companies from the two brigade's battalions captured the villages of al-Burj and Bir Ma'inan and positions in their vicinity. Neither force met Jordanian soldiers on their way, and the local villagers offered no resistance, fleeing as the Jews appeared.[66] This act emasculated the whole logic of the operation, as not capturing the junction on the night of 15/16 July frustrated Alon's hopes that creating an apparent threat of siege would lead to the flight of the Legion's forces from Latrun. The 11th Brigade's actions extended Jewish control over more territories through the occupation of more villages and the deportation of their occupants, but this was not the operation's goal.[67]

While the fighting around Bayt Sira was taking place, the Legion's 1st Brigade got into a fight on 16 July with the Israeli forces in Kuleh, to the north of Bayt Sira and Latrun. The Jordanian forces arrived there to make contact with the Iraqi forces in Majdal Yaba which had come under Israeli attack, but on their way they learnt of the Israeli 3rd Brigade's occupation of Kuleh during its 13–14 July campaign in the area. The force, which was termed a 'patrol', drove the Israeli forces from the village, thus raising the brigade command's concern over their ability to meet the Jordanian assailing forces. The 8th Brigade was called in, but the Jordanian soldiers did not intend to hold the place permanently. Twice the Legion forces took over the village, retreated and returned as the Jews returned to the empty Kuleh. It was only after the second occupation and retreat that the Jordanian 1st Battalion's soldiers left the area and returned to the Bayt Sira area, and Kuleh came again under Jewish control.[68]

Glubb disapproved of the whole thing, which caused the Israelis great anxiety, and he called it 'their private battle'. It had already been announced that the transfer of the Legion forces from Latrun, which the Jews observed and misinterpreted, was aimed to strengthen the Legion's hold in what was, in Glubb's eyes, one of the most important places at that time. Glubb had attributed to Bayt Sira the same importance Alon gave it. The two generals saw the site as the key to the Legion's ability to remain in its current positions, and Glubb had no intention of allowing the Israeli forces to break in through Bayt Sira, and to fatally endanger the Jordanian and Iraqi positions. Only three companies stood in the way of the IDF to Ramallah through the Bayt Sira crossroads, and the presence of the 1st Battalion in Bayt Sira was much more important than the possibility of driving the Jews from Kuleh.[69]

The other theater of operations was Latrun, and here the 10th Brigade tried—once again, it should be recalled—to drive off the Legion's forces. One step in this direction was the occupation of Salbit by the Kiryati Brigade's 43rd Battalion on 15/16 July. The occupation of the village was intended to serve two goals: one was the tightening of the siege on Latrun; the other was to bring the Israeli forces closer to the Jordanian positions. The village could also be used as a staging ground for a tank attack on Latrun, a possibility Alon was toying with.[70] On the other side of the Latrun front, in the east, the Harel Brigade was preparing to implement its role in the operation: the occupation of the Latrun garrison. Learning from past experience, Alon sought to occupy Latrun from the east, and not from the west, as the Israeli forces had done during May–June.

The attack began on the night of 15/16 July, and was preceded by a heavy bombardment of the Latrun area, directed mainly toward the villages of Dayr Ayyub and Yalu, intended to force the villagers to run away from their villages. Later that night, the 6th Battalion made its way to a strategic hill overlooking the Latrun garrison from the east, to find out that the Latrun area was not empty. The Jordanian 3rd Company of the 4th Battalion, reinforced with armored cars, surprised the leading Israeli company. The Israelis did not think that the armored cars could pass through the rocky terrain of the ridge upon which the clash took place, and the Jordanians forced back the Israelis. As the whole Israeli attack was dependent on the ability of the company—and the battalion—to hold the hill and to pave the way for the 4th Battalion, the attack virtually failed.[71]

The last effort to occupy Latrun made only a few hours before the second truce came into effect. On 16 July, the Security Council had decided that the second truce would come into effect on 19 July. Israel announced its acceptance, and Yadin ordered Alon to make every effort to occupy Latrun. If that was impossible, Alon should put the Legion's forces in Latrun under siege, to allow free movement on the Jerusalem–Tel Aviv road and to prevent the Legion from cutting off the Burma Road.[72] With that, all Alon's complicated ideas were abandoned. He resorted to a traditional, direct mode of operation, deciding to conduct a direct attack against Latrun from Salbit, to the west of Latrun. On 18 July, he sent an improvised force consisting of one company of the Yitfah Brigade and two tanks (driven by English soldiers who had defected from the British Army) of the 82nd Tank Battalion, in broad daylight, from Salbit to Latrun. Heavy artillery fire on the Legion's positions supported the company's and tanks' push. However, the Jordanian 2nd Battalion, which was defending the sector toward which the Jewish forces were advancing, was expecting the Jewish forces. The legionnaires met the advancing Jewish force with heavy artillery and machine-gun fire but this did not stop them. It was a shell that stuck in one of the tank's barrels which terminated the attack. The tank had to retreat and the second tank driver refused to carry on alone, withdrawing as well, leading back the rest of the force. The Jewish force returned to its base without casualties, but also without any gain.[73]

These were the last incidences of war on this Front. The Israeli–Jordanian and Iraqi Fronts remained active in the following days, but the clashes that took place were local and isolated. Israeli and Jordanian forces clashed in last-minute attempts to improve their positions, and the Iraqi forces made a futile attempt to regain Majdal Yaba and Ras

al-'Ayn. An Israeli company—from the Yitfah's 1st Battalion—sustained heavy losses when it tried to occupy Shilta, to the north of Bayt Sira. Being anxious to repel any threat to the junction, the Legion responded forcefully, and the 1st Battalion launched an attack on the Israeli company, inflicting heavy casualties on it. Another Israeli force on a nearby hill was similarly beaten.[74] For the Legion, the respite was much needed, as it was very close to running out of shells and mortars. The Legion was to be given a short breathing space, as a small consignment of shells was on its way from Egypt.[75]

On what eventually seemed to be one minute after the truce came into effect, the Harel forces captured positions within the Latrun garrison and the Yitfah's 1st Battalion took over positions east of Shilta. The Jordanians demanded the evacuation of these positions, arguing that they were captured at a time when the truce was in force. The Jordanian demand was accepted, and the Israelis had to withdraw from these positions. This was Operation Dani's last move. With the truce the responsibility for the operation's area was invested in the Kiryati and Harel Brigades, while Yitfah and the 8th Brigades were relieved. Units of the Guard Force were supposed to man the external line positions and to relieve the forces that were holding the post at this time.[76]

The Fighting in Jerusalem

The ten days of fighting in Jerusalem constituted the less significant part of the action along the Israeli–Jordanian Front. It seemed almost as if both sides were content with the *status quo*. As we have seen, Glubb objected to the Legion's campaign in Jerusalem from the outset, and now, when the only way to take Jerusalem was through urban warfare, he was even less inclined to do so.[77] The Jews, on the other hand, invested most of their means in the struggle over the road to Jerusalem. During the first cycle of fighting the Jews in the city obtained most of their goals. An almost continuous south–north line had been established, and the few sites that were still in the way were to be removed during the ten days' fighting. The IDF High Command also sought the occupation of al-Shaykh Jarrāh, the only link to the besieged Mount Scopus, which the Jews held. In the eyes of the General Staff and Ben-Gurion, that was a more important goal than the occupation of the Old City. However, the forces in Jerusalem were not about to launch any major offensive, although their organizational and structural situation was significantly improved during the first truce and supplies of food

and armaments flowed uninterrupted into the city. While the food supply to the city had arrived through Latrun under UN observers' supervision, the weapons flowed to the city along the unobserved Burma Road. The IDF forces in the city received all the personal arms they needed: rifles, sub-machine-guns and heavy machine-guns, all of uniform standard, making the operation and management of the arms more effective. Every battalion established a support company which was armed with heavy machine-guns and mortars, and on 15 June, a battery consisting of four heavy mortars reached the city, joined later by a 75-mm cannon. The Jews were now able to return effective artillery fire to the Legion's artillery. A change also took place in the organization of the city's forces. The brigade was reorganized and the Field and Guard Forces in the town were rearranged to create seven capable infantry battalions. The brigade command was also able to use ten IZL platoons and four LHI platoons, although they insisted on retaining their independence, and not joining the IDF. As the city was formally beyond the jurisdiction of the Israeli government, they were able to do so.[78]

The Arab Legion deployment had not been significantly changed during the truce. The 6th Battalion held the Old City, the 3rd Battalion was located in the Arab part of Jerusalem, beyond the walls, and the 5th Battalion held al-Shaykh Jarrāh and the nearby police school. Some redeployments that were made by Glubb slightly weakened the Legion's disposition in the city. Most of the 5th Battalion was removed from its positions in the city to Radar Hill to replace the 1st Battalion, which was moved to assist the forces that came under attack from the Israeli forces during Operation Dani. Only small segments of the 5th Battalion remained in position in town. The 12th Company, which held positions in the south of the city, strengthening the line that the Egyptian forces were holding, was moved into the Old City to replace the 8th Company, which was redeployed in the Ramallah area. In doing this, however, the defense line in the south was weakened. The Jordanian and Egyptian deployment of forces determined the nature of their activities during the ten days' fighting. The general inclination of both sides was defensive, if only because they felt that they were not strong enough to attack. When the Legion's forces attacked, it was in response to a Jewish attack.[79]

In spite of what was said earlier about the general quiet in the city, there were some exceptions, and the Jews did take some steps during the ten days' fighting to extend their control in the southwestern parts of the city. From 8 to 10 July they occupied Khirbat Hammae (today's Herzel Mountain), and by the 13th they had occupied al-Māliha, driving out its Arab residents. By the 17th, with the truce nearly in force, the

Legion launched an offensive in north Jerusalem (see below), and the General Staff ordered the 6th Brigade to seize the opportunity and to occupy ʻAyn Kārim, al-Māliha and Batir. Through the occupation of ʻAyn Kārim a line would be established to the Sataf–ʻAyn Kārim junction, occupied earlier by the Harel Brigade. Batir controlled the Jerusalem–Tel Aviv railway, and its occupation would remove another obstacle to the undisrupted operation of the railway. Most of the area was occupied except for the railway route, which was successfully guarded by Palestinian and foreign irregulars. Neither Jordanian nor Egyptian troops were involved in the fighting in this part of the city.[80]

In the central and northern parts of the city, the Israelis and Jordanians were engaged mainly in mutual shelling; the Jordanians shelling the Hebrew city and the Israelis the Old City and the Legion's positions. The Jews refrained from inflaming the northern part of the city, as the brigade command was making plans to occupy the Old City and did not want to alarm the Legion. It was the Legion who acted first, on 15 July. Clashes between the Jordanian and Israeli forces took place earlier, on 12 July, but it was unclear who started the firing, and for what reason.[81] The next move, however, was clearly initiated by Abdullah al-Tall, who sought to occupy the Mandelbaum area, which was a bulge into the Arab area dominating the Jerusalem–Ramallah road. Al-Tall was even hoping that a success could be followed by an attack on the neighboring Jewish area in order to occupy it. It seems that the assumption of the former intelligence officer of the 6th Brigade—that al-Tall sought to engage the Legion into a battle that Glubb did not want—is correct.[82] The Jewish forces contained the attack, and the clashes over the Mandelbaum area continued until 20 July, after the truce came into force. The mutual attacks and counterattacks exacted a high toll from both sides—both lost dozens of soldiers.[83]

While the fighting in the Musrara–Mea–Shearim area had continued, Shaltiel prepared a plan for the occupation of the Old City. The IDF General Staff had no knowledge of Shaltiel's plans, and in fact Yadin had other ideas for the 6th Brigade. On 16 July, when the truce in Jerusalem was close, Yadin sent a cable to Shaltiel ordering him to try to occupy al-Shaykh Jarrāh or to set a bridgehead into the Old City. However, in Yadin's eyes, it was more important to occupy al-Shaykh Jarrāh than the Old City. Fearing robberies and violation of the Holy places by the Israeli soldiers, Ben-Gurion accepted Yadin's choice. Indeed, he instructed Shaltiel that if he did occupy the Old City, he should prepare a special guard force that would prevent robbery and desecration of holy places by the Israeli soldiers. Ben-Gurion

instructed Shaltiel that he should prevent such acts by the use of force, if necessary. However, Yadin made it clear that the occupation of al-Shaykh Jarrāh was more important, and if it was impossible to implement the two missions, he would go to al-Shaykh Jarrāh.[84] Shaltiel overruled Yadin's order. He thought that it would be impossible to act both against the Old City and al-Shaykh Jarrāh and preferred to try and occupy the Old City. He argued that the attempt to occupy al-Shaykh Jarrāh was impractical as it would be impossible to hold the neighborhood in the face of the Legion's certain counterattack. On the other hand, over several days he prepared for the occupation of the Old City. The expected glory that the occupation would confer upon him was probably also a factor.[85] Thus, the attack on the Old City took place on the night of 16/17 July, with the participation of IZL, LHI and the (former) Hagana force, but the attempt failed. Shaltiel's choice, and his defiance of Yadin's order, and the eventual failure, brought a lot of criticism on him, and on 23 July he was relieved of his duty, being replaced by Moshe Dayan.[86]

The ten days of fighting came to an end on the morning of 19 July. The Legion sustained during that period 80 soldiers killed, while over the same period and Front the Israelis suffered some 180 killed.[87] In spite of these unequal figures, Alon's conclusion from the ten days' fighting was positive: 'We should not forget that the operation also bore fruits: all of the Uno Valley, al-Ramla–Lydda and its area, the liberation of Ben Shemen, and most important, the extensive widening of the Jerusalem corridor.'[88] However, Alon did not mention the fact that actually the Jews achieved none of these objectives from their fighting against the Legion; all the achievements he mentioned were gained in the activity against the local Palestinian population. The Arab Legion lost no position that it intended to retain, and for which it made the necessary defensive preparations. The Legion's area of control—stretching from Jerusalem through al-Nabi Samuel, Radar Hill, the Latrun garrison, Bayt Sira and the area controlling it—all remained in Legion hands. The Jews did increase their territory significantly, but not at the Jordanians' expense. The Iraqi Army held Ras al-'Ayn and Majdal Yaba, Lydda and al-Ramla remained outside the Legion's responsibility, and the large territorial gains that the Jews made in the Uno Valley and the Jerusalem corridor were all at the expense of the local population, who were driven from their homes.

A special trait of the Legion had been exposed in Jerusalem, and is worth mentioning. The mixture of British and Jordanian nationalist

officers produced a somewhat strange situation. The Legion's professionalism and skilled performance were undoubtedly the result of British training and command. However, nationalistic officers like Abdullah al-Tall found it difficult to trust the British officers, Glubb included. This complex situation led to peculiar situations, when local commanders acted on their own, while Glubb—or their division or brigade commander—were unable or unwilling to impose their authority upon them. Al-Tall recounts in detail how he acted independently in the Jerusalem sector, and Glubb himself described how the commander of the 1st Brigade which was on a patrol mission near Kuleh, launched an attack on the Jewish forces there in what Glubb called his 'private battle'.

The other army in the area, the Iraqi, remained inactive, and where activity was registered its area, it was mainly by irregulars. However, the Iraqis had their casualties, as they were subjected to Israeli bombardment and shelling. Israeli intelligence sources estimated that during the ten days' fighting, about 100 Iraqi soldiers were killed.

NOTES

1. Glubb, *Soldier With the Arabs*, p. 145.
2. Telegram no. 546 from Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 9 July 1948, FO 816/125.
3. BGWD, p. 349, entry for 14 April 1948; Committee of Five, Session no. 2, 3 July 1948, p. 131.
4. General Staff/Southern Front: Operation Larlar, 26 June 1948, IDFA 6127/49/93.
5. General Staff/Southern Front to Yigal Alon, 7 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1018; Elhanen Oren, *The Road to the City* (Tel Aviv, 1976) (Hebrew), p. 62–3, 77. The drivers of the two British tanks deserted with the tanks by the end of June, and joined the IDF.
6. Glubb, *Soldier With the Arabs*, p. 159; al-Tall, *Memories*, p. 184; Summary of the [Arab Legion] First Battalion's Fighting in Palestine, 9 December 1948, IDFA 922/75/693; Oren, *Operation Dani*, pp. 62–3, 84–5.
7. General Staff/Southern Front to Yigal Alon, 7 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1018.
8. General Staff/Southern Front: Operation Larlar, 26 June 1948, IDFA 6127/49/93; Dani HQ to the Operation Brigades, 8 July 1948, in Oren, *Operation Dani*, pp. 269–70; Yighal Alon, *Contriving Warfare* (Tel Aviv, 1990), pp. 37–9; Oren, *Operation Dani*, pp. 68–70.
9. BGWD, p. 577, entry for 5 July 1948; Dani HQ to the Operation Brigades, 8 July 1948, in Oren, *Operation Dani*, pp. 269–70; Alon, *Contriving Warfare*, pp. 38–9.
10. Premature information on entrenchment and enemy forces' deployment at the al-Ramla–Lydda–Yahudia Front, 19 June 1948, IDFA, 922/75/1018.
11. Operation Dani HQ/Intelligence: Activities Report no. 3 of Operation Dani, 13 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1018.
12. Operation Dani HQ/Intelligence: Activities Report no. 5 of Operation Dani, 14 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1018; Alon, *Contriving Warfare*, pp. 39–40; Cohen, *By Light and in Darkness*, pp. 148–51; Glubb, *Soldier With the Arabs*, pp. 162–3; Oren, *Operation Dani*, pp. 86–92; Summary of the [Arab Legion] First Battalion's Fighting in Palestine, 9 December 1948, IDFA 922/75/693. In his memoires, Dayan makes no mention of Sade

when he describes his battalion fighting, and explicitly claims that he made the decision to go from Dayr Tarif to Ben Shemen on his own: see Dayan, *Milestones* (Tel Aviv, 1996), pp. 64–5.
13. Operation Dani HQ/Intelligence: Activities Report no. 3 of Operation Dani, 13 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1018; al-Tall, *Memories*, pp. 196–7.
14. BGWD, p. 590, entry for 15 July 1948; Cohen, *By Light and in Darkness*, pp. 155–6; Dayan, *Milestones*, pp. 66–71; Kadish *et al.*, *The Occupation of Lydda, July 1948*, pp. 33–6. Dayan made no mention of his rejection of Alon's order to try and hold on in the city.
15. Kadish *et al.*, *The Occupation of Lydda, July 1948*, pp. 35–7.
16. See Chapter 8.
17. *Sefer Ha'Palmah* 2, pp. 569–70; Spiro Munayyer, 'The Fall of Lydda', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (Summer 1998), pp. 94–5.
18. Telegrams from the Dani HQ to Yadin, 11 and 12 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1176; Cohen, *By Light and in Darkness*, pp. 156–7; al-Tall, *Memories*, pp. 198–9.
19. Glubb, *Soldier With the Arabs*, pp. 161–3.
20. Operation Dani HQ/Intelligence: Activities Report no. 3 of Operation Dani, 13 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1018.
21. Telegram from the Dani HQ to Yadin, 12 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1176.
22. Glubb, *Soldier With the Arabs*, pp. 157–8.
23. Al-Tall, *Memories*, pp. 195–6.
24. Al-Hatib, 'In the Aftermath of the Naqba', p. 36; Kadish, *The Occupation of Lydda, July 1948*, pp. 43–8; Benny Morris, 'Operation Dani and the Palestinian Exodus from Lydda and al-Ramla in 1948', *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (1986), pp. 82–110; Munayyer, 'The Fall of Lydda', pp. 94–5.
25. Compare Morris, 'Operation Dani and the Palestinian Exodus from Lydda and al-Ramla in 1948', with Kadish, *The Occupation of Lydda, July 1948*.
26. Telegram from the Dani Command to Yadin, 12 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1176.
27. Telegram from Yadin to the Dani Command, 12 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1182.
28. Bar Zohar, *Ben-Gurion*, Vol. 2, p. 775; see also Itzhaki, *Latrun*, Vol. 2, p. 394.
29. Munayyer, 'The Fall of Lydda', p. 94; on the sources and application of Ayalon's order see Chapter 8.
30. Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem*, pp. 279–80.
31. Morris, 'Operation Dani and the Palestinian Exodus from Lydda and al-Ramla in 1948', pp. 94–7.
32. BGWD, p. 589, entry for 15 July 1948; and see the testimony of the Yitfah Brigade's commander in *Sefer Ha'Palmah* 2, p. 885.
33. BGWD, p. 589, entry for 15 July 1948.
34. Golda Meyerson at a meeting of the Mapai Central Committee, 11 May 1948; see *Now or Never*, p. 994; letter from Ben-Gurion to General Avner Elimelech, 16 August 1948, ibid., p. 936.
35. Telegram no. 571 from H.M. Chargé d'Affaires to Secretary of State, Foreign Office, London, 14 July 1948, FO 816/126.
36. Telegram no. 555 from Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 12 July 1948, FO 816/125.
37. Telegram no. 675 from Secretary of State, Foreign Office, London, to H.M. Minister, Amman, 14 July 1948, FO 816/126.
38. Summary of the [Arab Legion] First Battalion's Fighting in Palestine, 9 December 1948, IDFA 922/75/693; BGWD, p. 582, entry for 12 July 1948; Cohen, *By Light and in Darkness*, p. 158.
39. General Staff/Operation Branch/Intelligence to Yadin, 12 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1018; Oren, *Operation Dani*, p. 118; telegram from the Harel Brigade to Yadin, 12 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1176.

40. BGWD, p. 581, entry for 11 July 1948; Oren, *Operation Dani*, p. 119.
41. BGWD, p. 582, entry for 11 July 1948.
42. Ibid., pp. 581–2.
43. Ben-Gurion in Mapai Center Meeting, 23 July 1948, LPA 23/48.
44. BGWD, pp. 582–3, entry for 12 July 1948; Alon, *Contriving Warfare*, p. 43.
45. BGWD, p. 585, entry for 13 July 1948.
46. Minutes of PGI Meeting, 14 July 1948, ISA; BGWD, pp. 587–8, entry for 14 July 1948; Yadin's cable to 5th Brigade, 14 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1182.
47. General Staff/Southern Front to Operation Dani HQ, 14 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1018; Oren, *Operation Dani*, p. 138.
48. *Sefer Ha'Palmah* 2, pp. 568–9, 933–4.
49. Telegram from Yadin to the Operation Dani HQ, 12, 14 and 16 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1182; telegram from the Dani Command to Yadin, 13 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1176; al-Tall, *Memories,* p. 208; Oren, *Operation Dani*, pp. 132–5.
50. Al-Tal, *Memories*, p. 222; *Behind the Curtain,* pp. 113, 127; Oren, *Operation Dani*, pp. 129–30.
51. Oren, *Operation Dani*, pp. 127–9.
52. *Behind the Curtain,* p. 127.
53. Telegram from the 3rd Brigade to Yadin, 13 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1176; Sir A. A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 13 July 1948, E9464, FO 371/68375; Oren, *Operation Dani*, pp. 129–31.
54. Operation Dani HQ to the Operations' Brigades, 15 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1018.
55. Ibid. The earlier goal appeared in General Staff/Southern Front: Operation Larlar, 26 June 1948, IDFA 6127/49/93.
56. Operation Dani HQ to the Operations' Brigades, 15 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1018.
57. Oren, *Operation Dani*, pp. 50–3; Operation Dani HQ to the Operations' Brigades, 15 July 1948, IDFA, 922/75/1018.
58. Operation Dani HQ to the Operations' Brigades, 15 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1018; Kiryati Brigade HQ: Operation Order, 15 July 1948, ibid.
59. Glubb, *Soldier With the Arabs*, pp. 166–7; Rossan, 'The Bab al-Wad Campaigns',p. 210.
60. Telegram from the Operation Dani HQ to Yadin, 14 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1176.
61. Alon, *Contriving Warfare*, pp. 43–5; Operation Dani HQ to the Operation's Brigades, 15 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1018.
62. Glubb, *Soldier With the Arabs*, p. 169; Oren, *Operation Dani*, pp. 142–4; Rossan, 'The Bab al-Wad Campaigns', pp. 209–11.
63. Glubb, *Soldier With the Arabs*, p. 169.
64. Telegram from Operation Dani HQ to the Operation's Brigades, 15 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1018; Alon, *Contriving Warfare*, pp. 44–5; Oren, *Operation Dani*, pp. 145–8.
65. Telegram from the Operation Dani HQ to Yadin, 15 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1176.
66. Telegram from the Operation Dani HQ to Yadin, 16 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175; *Sefer Ha'Palmah* 2, p. 566.
67. See Oren's attempt to explain Yitfah's move: Oren, *Operation Dani*, pp. 157–8.
68. Telegram from the 3rd Brigade to Yadin, 16 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1176; Operation Dani HQ: Operation Report, 18 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1018; Summary of the [Arab Legion] 1st Battalion's Fighting in Palestine, 9 December 1948, IDFA 922/75/693; BGWD, p. 594, entry for 16 July 1948; Glubb, *Soldier With the Arabs*, p. 168.
69. Glubb, *Soldier With the Arabs*, pp. 168, 170.
70. Telegram from the Operation Dani HQ to Yadin, 16 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1176; Alon, *Contriving Warfare*, p. 45; BGWD, p. 594, entry for 16 July 1948.
71. Oren, *Operation Dani*, pp. 158–66; telegram from the Operation Dani HQ to Yadin, 16 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1176; H.M. Chargé d'Affaires, Amman, to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, London, 16 July 1948, FO 816/126; Rossan, 'The Bab al-Wad Campaigns', pp. 210–13.

72. Telegram from Yadin to the Operation Dani HQ, 17 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1182; telegram from Yadin to Etsioni Brigade, 17 July 1948, ibid.
73. Operation Dani/HQ/Intelligence: Daily Report for 18 July, 1948, IDFA 922/75/1018; Alon, *Contriving Warfare*, p. 45; Glubb, *Soldier With the Arabs*, pp. 170–1; Rossan, 'The Bab al-Wad Campaigns', pp. 216–17.
74. Oren, *Operation Dani*, pp. 195–203.
75. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 18 July 1948, E9715, FO 371/68375.
76. Operation Dani HQ to the Operation's Brigades, 20 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1018.
77. Glubb, *Soldier With the Arabs*, p. 168.
78. Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, pp. 305–6.
79. Al-Tall, *Memories*, pp. 209–10.
80. Telegram from Yadin to the 6th Brigade, 17 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1176; telegram from the 6th Brigade to Yadin, 18 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1176; Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, pp. 307–9.
81. See the conflicting versions of al-Tall, *Memories*, p. 210 and Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, p. 310.
82. Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, p. 311; al-Tall, *Memories*, p. 212.
83. Telegrams from the 6th Brigade to Yadin, 16, 18, 19 and 20 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1176; Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, pp. 311–13; al-Tall, *Memories*, pp.212–13.
84. Telegram from Yadin to the 6th Brigade, 16 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1182; BGWD, p. 596, entry for 16 July 1948.
85. Shaltiel, *Jerusalem 1948*, pp. 203–4.
86. BGWD, pp. 596–7, entry for 17 July 1948; Shaltiel, *Jerusalem 1948*, pp. 204–7; al-Tall, *Memories*, pp. 215-218.
87. Oren, *Operation Dani*, pp. 279-82.
88. Alon, *Contriving Warfare*, p. 46.

10

Ten Days of Fighting: The Northern Front

As on the Central and Southern Fronts, with the termination of the truce the Israelis also went on the offensive in the northern part of Palestine. The Israelis directed their operations in the Galilee against two targets; one against the Syrian bridgehead and the second against the forces of the ALA, which was based in the central Galilee area. The attack against the Syrians was intended to uproot the Syrian bridgehead in the area south of al-Hula, on the Israeli side of the international border. From the Israeli point of view, the goal of the operation was to thwart an invading force. The situation was different regarding the Jewish activity in the Central Galilee. Here, the Israelis were acting in an area that was beyond the territory allocated to them by the Partition Resolution. The decision to act in this part of the country was made during a discussion between Ben-Gurion and Yadin, on 4 July, when the two discussed Israel's moves after the termination of the truce. In that meeting it was agreed that the IDF would launch attacks on the three fronts; and as to the north, two options were considered: attacking the 'Small Triangle', the bulk of Arab villages to the south of Haifa that blocked the sea road from Tel Aviv to Haifa; or acting in the central upper Galilee. Yadin inclined to the second option, and one practical result of the discussion was the deployment of the 7th Brigade to the western Galilee.[1]

The decision to go to the western and upper Galilee was a practical demonstration of Israel's abandonment of the Partition Resolution. The question that could be raised here is why Ben-Gurion was ready to cross the Partition Lines in the Galilee and to bring under Israel's rule a territory which consisted of a large Arab population, again tilting the demographic ratio against the Jews. The question is more pressing when one recalls that Ben-Gurion did not initiate a similar act against the West Bank. One cannot even suggest that the demographic problem was intended to be solved through the mass deportation of the Arab

population wherever the Jewish forces arrived. With the launching of Operation Dekel, directed against the ALA, and thus against the Arab population in the western and central Galilee, Yadin cabled Moshe Carmel, on behalf of the Prime Minister, an explicit prohibition against expelling the Arabs. When Carmel wanted nevertheless to expel the Nazareth population after the occupation of the city, Ben-Gurion ordered him not to do so.[2] It is possible to suggest various solutions, but it seems that Ben-Gurion himself did not deeply study the meaning and implications of the decision. The presence of the ALA in an area where Jewish settlements existed, and the danger it presented to these and other Israeli settlements, seemed to be enough to justify the campaign.

The Western and Central Galilee

Operation Dekel (the Hebrew word for 'palm'), which was the code-name for the occupation of the central Galilee, was conducted during the second cycle of the fighting in the central Galilee and was to a large extent a continuation of the intercommunal war. The ALA was organized at this stage into three brigade-like formations, which were actually enhanced battalions. The 1st al-Yarmuk Brigade, commanded by Muhammad Safa, comprised the 1st al-Yarmuk Battalion, enhanced with a company and positioned in the al-Mālikiyya–Sa'Sa' area. The 2nd Yarmuk Brigade, under the command of Adib Shishakly, comprised eclectic forces assembled in the training camp of Qtane, and was placed in South Lebanon as the reserve ALA force. The 3rd al-Yarmuk Brigade, consisting of the Hittin Battalion, a reserve-soldiers battalion and local forces, commanded by Mahdi Salāh, was deployed all over the central Galilee, with its headquarters in Nazareth. Another battalion, a Syrian battalion, the 'Alawi, commanded by Hassan Jadid, consisting of two companies, was placed in the Safad–Jish area, and was under the direct command of the ALA in Syria. There were also artillery, tanks and engineering forces, and they acted independently of the forces in the Galilee, being under the direct command of the ALA in Syria. The ALA forces were ordered during the first truce to deepen their hold in the Galilee, but they received no means in terms of arms and logistics that would allow them to build a significant defense line.[3] The ALA forces in Galilee not only lacked the means to conduct any significant fighting, but their deployment also impaired their fighting ability. The forces were scattered over a wide- ranging area, and functioned more as a guard force than as a fighting unit. This structure was the reason for

the very few instances of resistance offered by ALA forces in the face of the advancing Israeli forces.

The Israeli forces moved across the Galilee, from the coastal plain to the center of the central Galilee, ending at the largest city of the whole region, Nazareth; all in an area populated almost entirely by Palestinian Arabs. There was no Jewish presence in that area. The region was nominally under the control of the ALA, but throughout their journey the advancing Jewish forces hardly met any of the army's forces. The Israelis passed through one Arab village after the other, either meeting villagers who tried to resist the approaching Jews with the rifles that they managed to muster, or entering into villages from which their residents had fled for fear of the approaching Israeli soldiers. The Jewish soldiers' impressions of what to expect differed. The most emphatic sentiment that emerges from the narratives and memories of the Israeli soldiers is their apprehension of ALA attacks. As in many other places, the Israelis' weak point was their field-intelligence, or rather the lack thereof. Thus the Israeli soldiers did not know what exactly was awaiting them, and they expected throughout their journey through the west and central Galilee to meet Qawukji forces. The narrator of the journey across the central Galilee, himself a former officer who took part in the campaign, described the feeling among the forces in this way: 'the Front command … had assumed that it was possible that a confrontation would take place with all of Qawukji forces all along the campaign. It also related to these forces aggressive intentions far exceeding their objective capabilities'.[4] This assumption and the resulting expectation determined the nature of the forces' activity throughout their advance. Expecting to meet strong resistance, the Jews had in many cases preceded their approach to the Arab villages with an artillery bombardment that was actually directed in many cases against a civilian population.[5] Consequently, Operation Dekel was conducted in a similar way to the campaigns conducted in May under Plan Dalet's framework. The goal of Plan Dalet was, it should be recalled, to impose the authority of the Israeli government on the territory assigned to the Jews by the United Nations and over the Arab villages inside the Israeli boundaries. Operation Dekel achieved a similar goal, with one major difference: it brought under Israeli control territory and a population that were beyond the boundaries of the State of Israel established on 29 November.

The forces of Operation Dekel consisted of the 7th Brigade's infantry battalion—the 71st and mechanized battalion—the 79th, and one battalion of the 2nd Brigade—the 21st. The goal of the operation

was derived from the poor intelligence the Jews had about the Lebanese and the ALA deployment and plans. The Israeli planners assumed that the Lebanese Army would go southward or that forces of the ALA would move westward, or worse, that the two simultaneously would happen. To prevent such an eventuality, they sought to establish Jewish control over the coastal route and the entrances to the mountainous area to the east. In the next stage they sought, through the occupation of the territory stretching from the west to the center of the Galilee, to cut the ALA's supply routes, to encircle them and finally destroy them. This very general and broad goal was carried out in cautious and gradual stages. In the first stage of the operation, the Dekel forces acted to establish Jewish control over the western Galilee and the access roads into central Galilee.[6]

The operation started in a minor way. Most of the forces were put in a defensive posture, in expectation of the Lebanese and ALA attacks. The 21st Battalion defended the sector stretching from Rosh Hanikra to the Acre–Safad road and the 71st Battalion was deployed around Acre. The armored 79th Battalion, reinforced with two mechanized companies, remained in the rear as the operation's reserve force. Only one company of the 21st Battalion was sent to attack Kuwaykat, a village overlooking the Kabri–Shafa'amr road. The company met slight resistance, but overcame it fast. The village residents fled and the village fell into Jewish hands. From there, the forces rapidly moved forward along the Acre–Safad road in order to create appropriate conditions for the more critical mission: the attack on Shafa'amr. On 10 July, the operation forces occupied Tall Kibr al-Baduya, Tall Kissan and 'Amqa, meeting virtually no resistance. Furthermore, other Arab villages in the area surrendered. However, the forces were still waiting for the ALA counterattack, and with the completion of these villages' occupation, the Israeli forces arranged to defend their acquisitions. Their expectations were met, and over the next three days they had to contend with counterattacks. However, the attacks were much smaller in scale than expected, as the attacking forces were local villagers who were afraid of the possibility of the Jewish advance toward Majd al-Kurum and the cutting of the Arab area into two.[7]

To Nazareth

The ALA's activity in the al-Shajara area decided the next moves of the Dekel forces. The main base and headquarters of the ALA was in

Nazareth, and from there it arranged the military activity for the whole region. One of the sensitive points from Qawukji's point of view was al-Shajara, located north of Afula on the road leading to Nazareth and the central upper Galilee. This was a purely Arab area and al-Shajara was a base for the IDF's 1st Brigade, whose forces launched from there attacks on Arab villages and positions in the area; hence the ALA command thought it vital to eliminate the settlement. Acting to achieve that goal, infantry forces, supported by artillery, attacked al-Shajara on 11 June, as the first truce came into effect. The attack continued for two days, and Qawukji's forces retreated.[8] The ALA forces resumed their attacks on al-Shajara on 10 July, but it seems that the attack this time should be viewed as a counterattack, as the 1st Brigade forces were the first to act. With the resumption of the fighting, forces of the 12th Battalion launched attacks on positions around al-Shajara that were held by local and irregular Arab forces. In response, the ALA command in Nazareth sent reinforcements that drove back the Israeli forces from the positions they had seized.[9] The Israeli forces responded by harassing the transportation along the Nazareth road, provoking another attack against al-Shajara. This time, it seemed that the ALA's command was determined to solve the al-Shajara problem, and it sent a large force to subdue the troublesome Jewish settlement. A joint force consisting of artillery, armed cars, forces of the ALA and local villagers, stormed al-Shajara, beginning on 12 July. The attack was heavy, and the al-Shajara defenders only just managed to thwart it, although after two days of repeated attacks, the Arab forces gave up and retreated.[10]

The only available forces that could come to the Israeli forces' help in al-Shajara were those of the 7th Brigade. This brigade was at the time engaged in fighting against villages further north along the Shafa'amr–Acre road. Seeking a way to relieve the pressure from al-Shajara, it was decided to occupy Shafa'amr and after that Nazareth. Shafa'amr was in the middle of central Galilee, and had served as a base for the ALA forces since their entry into that region, in March 1948. Until 20 May the commander of the ALA's Druze Battalion, Shakib Wahāb, had his headquarters in Shafa'amr, but at that time he was instructed to leave the place and to go to al-Mālikiyya. A month later, a 30-man platoon of the Hittin Battalion was sent to the village to arrange its defense, and this was the force that the Israelis met when they launched their attack on Shafa'amr on 14 July. The force that attacked Shafa'amr consisted of elements from the entire 7th Brigade: there were forces of the 21st, 71st and 79th Battalions. The attack became easier not only because of the striking disparity between the Jewish and Arab

forces, but also because the local Druze population surrendered after negotiations between their elders and the operation's commanders. The attack started with heavy bombardment of the village, but when the commander of the ALA's platoon learnt that half of the village residents would not fight, he withdrew along with his men.[11]

Operation Dekel's next target was Nazareth, which housed the ALA's central command in Palestine. The city's defense was in the hands of the ALA's Hittin Battalion. One hundred and twenty local policemen were in charge in the city, while 120 al-Jihād al-Islami (JI) combatants were positioned in the west of the city. A further 120 JI fighters, most of them from Tsipori, were positioned on the road coming to the city from Shafa'amr. Additional forces of the battalion were posted in the area: an infantry platoon in Shafa'amr, an infantry company reinforced with combatants from Lubya at the al-Shajara front and an infantry platoon in the village of Hittin.[12] Nazareth was chosen both as a means to secure Israeli control over the main Arab city of the central Galilee, as well as a means of relieving the pressure from al-Shajara. In order to deceive the forces in Nazareth about the route along which the Jewish forces would advance, Carmel initiated a diversionary attack on al-Mujaydil to create the impression that his forces were moving to Nazareth from the east. To increase this impression, forces of the 1st Brigade engaged the Arab village of Lubya, another central base for the irregular forces. At that time, the encirclement of Nazareth both from the south and the north was completed during 15 and 16 July with the occupation of the villages around the central city by forces of the 1st Brigade, who occupied villages to the south of Nazareth, and some villages to its north. The armored 79th Battalion with the infantry 21st Battalion occupied Tsipori to the north of Nazareth, opening wide the way to Nazareth.[13]

With that, the last stage of Operation Dekel was commenced. Ben-Gurion was worried about the occupation of Nazareth, the Christian holy city. Being well acquainted with the conduct of Israeli soldiers in occupied cities, Ben-Gurion sent special messages to the commander of the northern command, ordering him in an unequivocal manner to use all necessary means to prevent Israeli soldiers from causing any damage to the sacred sites in the city:

> Before occupying Nazareth, you must prepare a special force, very loyal and well disciplined, that would not allow any Israeli soldier who was not on duty to enter into Nazareth, and would prevent attempts of robberies and looting at any site sacred to the Moslems

> or to the Christians. The soldiers should use machine-guns to prevent any act of robbery.[14]

The occupation of the city was completed on the evening of 16 July almost without a fight. The rapid Jewish attack caught Qawukji—who was in the town—and his men by surprise, and while the Jewish forces waited for the counterattack, Qawukji and his men escaped from the city by night.[15] Once the city was occupied, Moshe Carmel wanted to expel the city population, but Ben-Gurion rejected this idea and forbade Carmel to deport the city residents.[16]

With the collapse of Nazareth, a feeling of demoralization spread throughout the Arab villages in the area. Lubya, which was one stronghold that the Jews had repeatedly failed in their attempt to occupy, surrendered after a short fight, and its residents fled, with IDF artillery encouragement. Many villagers in the area offered to surrender to the Jewish forces, while in other villages the residents, who were afraid of Jewish punitive measures, abandoned their houses. On the other hand, many others remained. By 18 July, the truce came into effect, and the fighting had stopped, with all of the Izrael Valley in Jewish hands. The 7th Brigade returned to its base in the western Galilee, and in the northern part of the Galilee, local Arab forces, assisted by foreign irregulars, launched counterattacks and re-took villages such as Sakhnin and Sha'ab. Abiding by the truce, the Jews did not respond to these acts.[17]

The Syrian Bridgehead

The Jews did not repeat their success in the central Galilee in their fighting against the Syrian bridgehead in the eastern Galilee. The different results of the operations were another indication of the gap that existed between the young, inexperienced and less well-trained Israeli officers and the more experienced and trained professional Arab officers.

The Israelis regarded the existence of the Syrian bridgehead on the western side of the Jordan as a threat to the Galilee panhandle, since a successful intrusion of Syrian forces into the main Tiberias–Baysan area could open for them a path to the north and to the west. The Israelis excluded the possibility of preventing such a threat by establishing a line of defense, on the grounds that such a line could not be made impenetrable, and in any case, 'attack is the best form of defense',[18] a proverb that became a cornerstone of the IDF doctrine over the years. The Israeli plan was formed to avoid a direct clash with the Syrian force;

instead it stipulated its encirclement and cutting the route to its rear base in Syria. This would be achieved by the 2nd Brigade's 23rd Battalion outflanking the Syrian force from the north and taking over positions in the force's rear at the Custom House on the slopes of the Golan Heights. Concurrently, the 24th Battalion would block the southern flank, and other forces of this battalion, with the 11th Battalion, would launch a diversionary attack on the Syrian positions. Artillery and mortar batteries would support the attack.[19]

As had happened in the past, poor intelligence was the prime cause of Jewish failure, both in understanding Syrian intentions and in field intelligence. Syrian intentions were most probably different from those the Israelis accorded to them. Husni Za'im appeared determined to hold on to what he could present as a Syrian achievement, the only possible one, and that was the bridgehead. Two infantry brigades were deployed in this small area. It is true that it was possible to use the bridgehead as a springboard for an intrusion into Israel, and accumulation of the Syrian forces could make that happen. However, there were no indications that the Syrian command had any intention other than to improve their holding in the area through the widening of the area under their control, and al-Nafuri's testimony supports this.[20] Nothing in the Syrians' conduct during the following days indicated that they had any wider intentions. This Syrian gain had no strategic significance as it was, but it was enough to satisfy internal political needs; needs that decided Syrian strategy, and were sufficiently important for the bridgehead to be reinforced in the way that Za'im did.

The Israelis were also wrong regarding the size and location of the Syrian forces. The plan for Operation Brosh was based on the assumption that the Syrian formation consisted of only one battalion comprised of three companies concentrated at the bridgehead area. However, the Syrians had assembled seven or eight battalions in that area, most of which were deployed in the rear, in the place where the Jewish flank intrusion was directed. The result was that while the Jews assumed that the power ratio would be 2:1 in their favor, the real ratio was 2:1 in the Syrians' favor; and at the rear, where the most important part of Operation Brosh was to take place, the ratio was 6:1 in the Syrians' favor.[21]

The attack got underway on 9 July, on the termination of the truce. Forces of the 23rd Battalion crossed the River Jordan to the north of the bridgehead, and the first reports from the operation command were optimistic.[22] However, it did not take long before an attempt by a battalion's company to storm the Syrian positions along the mountainous

slopes failed, and the battalion retreated. The diversion forces, however, achieved most of their goal. Their attack was intended to distract the Syrians' attention from what was happening at their rear, and the Israeli forces attacked forward Syrian positions in the bridgehead area. The Israeli 11th Battalion captured two main forward positions, pushing the Syrian forces back to Mishmar Hayarden, but the situation was reversed in the morning. The Syrian force that was pushed back from the forward positions represented only a small part of the Syrian power in the area. Most of the Syrian force was placed in Mishmar Hayarden, and in the morning the Syrians launched a major counterattack, with the participation of what seemed to be the best part of the Syrian Army. A six-plane squadron attacked the Israeli forces throughout that day, and artillery battered the Israeli soldiers, who were exposed to the heavy barrage as they had not entrenched themselves. Two infantry battalions, a commando company, an armored battalion and another tank company launched the counterattack. This force conducted a three-pronged attack on the Israeli forces, which were unprepared for the massive Syrian fire-power and force. The tanks had a dramatic effect on the Israeli soldiers who were entrenched in the positions they had occupied the night before. They were unable to resist the tanks ahead of them with the weapons they had and were astounded by the tanks' fire. After a day-long fight, the Syrians recovered the positions they had lost the day before, and even made some progress toward the Khuri orchard, on the way to Hulata and Yesod Hamala. However, the Israeli forces stopped the Syrian advance, and from the 10–12 July the Syrians resumed their attacks on Yarda, on the way to Mahaniam–Rosh Pinna from Mishmar Hayarden, and on Dardara, a settlement close to the al-Hula lake. Yarda exchanged hands several times between the 13 battalion forces and the Syrian troops, until the Israelis finally seized the place. In Dardara, the 2nd Brigade forces repelled the attacks.[23]

The IDF High Command was concerned about the inability of the 2nd Brigade to uproot the Syrian bridgehead. The Syrian presence on Israeli soil was minor and insignificant, but the Israelis did not want to see even that little. The IDF High Command was unable to provide the Operation Brosh forces with the much-needed aerial support, but as it seemed that the truce was close, Yadin had nevertheless instructed Carmel to try again to attack Mishmar Hayarden and push back the Syrian force. The second attempt was made on the night of 13/14 July, with one company blowing up the bridge across the River Jordan to cut off the Syrian bridgehead from its rear, while another company made a direct assault on the force in Mishmar Hayarden. These attempts also

failed, and at an early stage, as the Syrian fire-power was too strong and too effective.[24] The following days were characterized by mutual exchange of fire between the two armies, and the continuous firing and repeated Israeli attacks exposed the vulnerability of the Syrians' situation. While the Jewish forces enjoyed free access to their rear, the Syrian bridgehead was too narrow, it was exposed to the Jewish artillery and gunfire and was under a constant threat of isolation. This was probably the reason for the massive attack conducted by the Syrian force just as the second truce was about to come into effect. The attack was conducted in three heads: toward Yarda, the Khuri orchard and Kurd al-Ghanama, on the way to Ayelet Hashahar. The Syrians attacked repeatedly from 16 to 18 July, stopping only when the truce came into effect. In these two days, they failed in their attempts to open a path to Ayelet Hashahar, and to take over Yarda, but managed to occupy the Khuri orchard.[25]

On the evening of 18 July, the fighting died down. The Syrians had slightly improved their positions, as compared to their deployment at the beginning of this cycle of fighting. However, these achievements had no effect on the overall situation in the eastern Galilee. The Syrians invested most of their force in the preservation of the bridgehead, and in doing so gave up any chance of launching a strategic offensive elsewhere. As we have seen, it seemed that at this stage Husni Za'im had lost any hope of making a significant contribution to the pan-Arab war effort, and instead preferred to obtain a far less significant achievement which would be popular with Syrian public opinion. (It should be recalled that Za'im got his position after his predecessor failed to gain any achievements.)

Israeli historiography is aware of the fact that the Israeli forces actually failed in their fighting against the Syrians. However, Israeli historians have found it difficult to acknowledge an IDF defeat. As was the case with the 5th Brigade's failed attack on the Egyptian force in Isdud, here too Israeli historiography explained that Operation Brosh should be considered as a success, as it prevented the Syrians from launching the attack they had planned to in the Galilee.[26] Nothing in the existing evidence supports this claim, and it seems that the Syrians achieved just what they wanted: when they realized that the occupation of the north of Israel or part of the Galilee was improbable, they decided, mainly under Husni Za'im's direction, to get at least a foothold in the Israeli territory, which is what they did. This achievement, though, was costly to both sides. The Syrians put into that restricted and small area some of their best troops, and according to the Israeli intelligence, they lost more than 250 men. The Israelis lost nearly 100 soldiers.[27]

NOTES

1. BGWD, p. 575, entry for 4 July 1948 and p. 577 entry, for 5 July 1948.
2. Telegram from Yadin to Yermiyahu, 9 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1182; BGWD, p. 599, entry for 18 July 1948.
3. 'Operation Hiram', IDFA 1975/922/189, p. 10; Sela, 'Arab Liberation Army in the Galilee in the 1948 War', p. 25.
4. Eshel, *The Carmeli Brigade in the War of Independence*, p. 207. See also Ben Dunkelman, *Dual Allegiance* (Tel Aviv, 1977), pp. 159, 170–1; Carmel, *Northern Campaigns*, p. 200.
5. Benny Morris is completely ignorant of this aspect of the Israeli activity: Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949*.
6. Eshel, *The Carmeli Brigade in the War of Independence*, pp. 208–9.
7. Ibid., pp. 210–12.
8. Telegrams from Yermiyahu to Yadin, 11 and 12 June 1948, IDFA 922/75/1175.
9. Telegram from Yermiyahu to Yadin, 10 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1176; Etzioni (ed.), *Ilan Vashelah*, pp. 256–7.
10. Ibid., pp. 263–4.
11. Telegram from the Northern Command/Intelligence to Yadin, 14 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1176; al-Hatib, 'In the Aftermath of the Naqba', pp. 39–40; Carmel, *Northern Campaigns*, pp. 201–4; Etzioni (ed.), *Ilan Vashelah*, pp. 212–14.
12. Sela, 'Arab Liberation Army in the Galilee in the 1948 War', p. 24.
13. Telegram from Yermiyahu to Yadin, 16 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1176; BGWD, p. 594, entry for 16 July 1948; Carmel, *Northern Campaigns*, pp. 206–8; Etzioni (ed.), *Ilan Vashelah*, pp. 214–18.
14. Telegram from Ben-Gurion to Yadin and Yermiyahu, 15 July 1948. In BGWD, p. 591.
15. Carmel, *Northern Campaigns*, pp. 210–15.
16. BGWD, p. 599, entry for 18 July 1948.
17. Etzioni (ed.), *Ilan Vashelah*, p. 221.
18. Carmel, *Northern Campaigns*, p. 236.
19. 'The Syrian and Lebanese Army in the 1948 War', IDFA 922/75/611, p. 160; Carmel, *Northern Campaigns*, p. 236.
20. Al-Nafuri, 'The Syrian Army in the 1948 War', p. 32.
21. 'The Syrian and Lebanese Army in the 1948 War', IDFA 922/75/611, pp. 158, 160–1.
22. Telegram from Yermiyahu to Yadin, 10 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1176.
23. Telegram from Yermiyahu to Yadin, 10 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1176; 'The Syrian and Lebanese Army in the 1948 War', IDFA 922/75/611, pp. 165–70; Carmel, *Northern Campaigns*, pp. 238–44; Etzioni (ed.), *Ilan Vashelah*, pp. 228–42.
24. Telegram from Yadin to Yermiyahu, 12 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1182; Eshel, *The Carmeli Brigade in the War of Independence*, pp. 243–4.
25. Ibid., pp. 244–8.
26. Carmel, *Northern Campaigns*, pp. 247–8; Eshel, *The Carmeli Brigade in the War of Independence*, p. 248.
27. Ibid., p. 248.

11

The Second Truce: Days of Diplomacy and Military Preparation

The onset of the second truce was a milestone in the war, since the decisive stage of the war began in its wake. During this phase, which lasted until October, both sides acted out what seemed a reversal of roles: the Israelis sought the resumption of the war, while the Arabs, or at least some of them, pursued a diplomatic solution that would extract them from the war. The reason for the reversal is obvious: Jordan and Egypt felt that only diplomacy would enable them to preserve the achievements they had made in the battlefield. The Israelis were determined to bring about the departure of the Arab forces from Palestine, either peacefully or militarily, but they did not believe that they could achieve their objectives by diplomatic means.

The Arab League and the Truce

On 7 July, the Security Council had adopted Bernadotte's appeal for the prolongation of the truce.[1] However, the fighting resumed on the next day, and during the following days extensive diplomatic activity took place within the Security Council regarding attempts to resume the treaty. The Political Committee of the Arab League met in mid-July in 'Aley, Lebanon, to discuss the Security Council Resolution. King Abdullah was determined to see the war ended, as for him, there was no reason to continue the war, especially considering Glubb's reports about the Arab Legion's dangerous shortage in arms. However, Abdullah was unable to step out of the war without the Arab League's consent, and he directed his efforts to that end. In order to achieve that, Abdullah sent a cable with his Prime Minister to the Arab League's meeting, announcing that the Legion had no more ammunition, and therefore had to cease fighting. The Jordanian announcement was received with distrust, 'utter confusion and indignation', and 'Azzam asked Abdullah to keep

fighting at least until the passage of the Security Council Truce Resolution, and a last-minute shipment of shells and mortars from Egypt which would allow the Legion to continue fighting a few more days. To add more pressure, the Jordanian Prime Minister advised Kirkbride that the Security Council refer to the matter again at the meeting of the Political Committee of the Arab League.[2]

Despite the assistance that arrived for Jordan, the Arab leaders were influenced by the Jordanian announcement. Besides, the Arab politicians recognized that the Palestine campaign was over. The goal set by the Arab League for the Palestine campaign had not been achieved, and in July it seemed that the current achievements were the most that the Arabs could expect. The idea that it would be possible to reverse the tide and to return to the pre-State-of-Israel days was unrealistic, and the Arab politicians were well aware of that. It would be impossible to achieve more than had already been achieved, and the Arab politicians knew well that from this point, any change could only work against them. Israel contained the initial attack upon it, and, after recovering from the shock of invasion, fought back. It was true that during the two cycles of fighting the Israelis did not force any of the Arab Armies to withdraw and most of its counterattacks were thwarted, but the Jews did not collapse in the face of the invading forces. On the whole, it seemed that in some important areas the Arab Armies were losing ground, while the Israelis were only improving their position. The arms embargo affected only the Arabs, as while the British stuck to the embargo, the Israelis found a willing market that sold them almost all the arms its army needed. The size of the Israeli Army constantly increased, as the recruitment methods of the new State improved, and more and more troops entered the battlefield. The IDF's order of battle had vastly increased and now stood at 11 brigades, one armored and the rest infantry, and more than 63,500 soldiers. The Arabs could not launch a similar endeavor.[3]

All of these arguments led Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and, of course, Jordan to accept the Security Council Truce Resolution. The Iraqi politicians relied on this position of the Arab League when they expressed their public refusal to accept the truce. However, the Iraqi Prime Minister admitted to the British Chargé d'Affaires that it was merely paying lip-service: 'when [the Iraqi Prime Minister] realized that the majority [of the Arab League members] were in favor of acceptance he saw and seized an opportunity for increasing his political stature in Iraq, where public opinion was strongly in favor of continuing the fighting'.[4] Besides, the Iraqi generals had no illusions either about the

strength of the Iraqi forces or the overall ability of the Arab Armies.[5] The formal resolution of the Political Committee of the Arab League was a protest against the Resolution and its rejection, but the Arab governments in fact implemented the cease-fire on the date set by the Security Council for the truce—19 July.[6]

Egypt also had its reasons for wanting the truce. Its expeditionary force faced an acute shortage of ammunition, its artillery had almost run out of shells, and the shortages in the anti-aircraft corps were even worse.[7] Another factor that prompted the Egyptians to bring about the termination of the war was the Egyptian government's desire to get a seat on the UN Security Council. In the summer of 1948, Egyptian representatives began lobbying its allies, notably Britain, to that end. The Egyptians wanted to soften the blow sustained by what they perceived as a major failure of their diplomacy—namely, the decision to partition Palestine—by obtaining a Security Council seat.[8] Egypt's compliance with the Security Council Resolution was also an indication of a change in Farouk's national agenda. As stated earlier, 'Azzam convinced Farouk that by joining the Palestine campaign he would gain glory throughout the Arab world, and after the successful campaign he would lead the Arab League to secure the freedom of North Africa. 'Azzam had promised Farouk that the Palestinian campaign would last no more than three weeks, and as that did not happen, the Jews gained statehood, and, with the recently exposed division among the Arab League members over the continuation of the fighting in Palestine, Farouk felt a deep disappointment. He claimed that the Arab League was to all intents and purposes moribund because of the egoistic ambitions of certain Arab States. Farouk was especially irked at King Abdullah and accused him of betraying the Arab cause. The Egyptian monarch therefore decided to pursue a purely 'Egyptian' policy rather than conforming to a pan-Arab policy. One result of this shift of emphasis was his acknowledgment that a Jewish state did in fact exist. Another was his decision to turn from the Palestine issue to one in which he hoped to be more successful, and that was the crisis between Egypt and Britain, which he hoped to resolve. The successful conclusion of the crisis would, so hoped Farouk, make him a champion of the Arab cause, a position that the Palestine campaign had not brought him.[9]

The government had, however, to deal with the public reaction to the truce. Public reaction was furious and an angry mob attacked foreigners. The Egyptian press was filled with vicious attacks on Western countries and the Security Council for imposing the truce. In the view of British diplomats, the verbal and physical attacks on outsiders were in fact

instigated by the government, in order to divert possible criticism from the establishment for the failures in Palestine.[10]

Israel and the Truce

The arguments that could convince the Arab leaders to seek a way out of the war were exactly those that would strengthen Israeli determination to prefer the military option to the diplomatic one. Apparently, the Israelis needed the truce, but they considered it a temporary respite before the next cycle of fighting. An interim conclusion could show the Israelis that at the end of this phase, they had made some significant achievements; Jewish forces controlled more territory than they had at its outset. Operation Dani, although not achieving all its goals, significantly increased the area under Israeli control in the interior of the coastal plain and permanently opened the road to Jerusalem, and in the north, Israeli forces expanded their control in the western and central Galilee. Israeli intelligence figures showed that since May, the Hagana and the IDF had taken 17 Arab towns, while the Arab forces had captured 14 Israeli sites. The Israeli forces had seized 112 Arab villages outside the boundaries of the originally designated Jewish State, including 45 in the Jerusalem corridor and the south. The total area conquered by the Jewish forces was more than 1,000 square kilometers, as opposed to the Arabs' 85 square kilometers.[11]

Ben-Gurion did not want to see it end with that, but he was not sure that it would be possible to continue the fighting, and in a government meeting he suggested several reasons for this. One reason was the international activity to bring an end to the war. Another was the weakness and disunity among the Arabs, which the war exposed, and which might lead them to seek an agreement. The impact of the war on Israel, and especially on the civilians, was another reason to see the truce as a step toward the end of the war. However, Ben-Gurion and the government did not regard this possibility as 'good news' for two reasons. The first was the fact that Arab Armies were still present on the territory of Israel as defined by the 29 November Resolution, and the government would not agree to any settlement that acknowledged this presence: all the invading forces should retreat peacefully or be expelled. The way things looked, no one believed that the Arab Armies would leave of their own free will.[12] The reference to the 29 November Resolution as the basis for the demand for Arab withdrawal was in contradiction to Ben-Gurion's June renunciation of the Partition Resolution. What Ben-Gurion was

actually saying was that the Resolution was invalid in relation to the Israeli territorial acquisition, although it was valid regarding the Arab acquisition inside Israel's Partition Resolution lines.

The second reason for Ben-Gurion's hope that it would be possible to resume the fighting was that, in spite of the Israeli achievements, the IDF had not inflicted a decisive blow on any Arab army despite the IDF's achievements, the Arab Armies' fighting spirit had not been broken. The IDF had not won a decisive victory in any of the battles it had fought to date, and Ben-Gurion held that until the Israeli Army recorded such a victory the war would not end.[13] The continuation of the fighting was intended primarily to ensure that the Arabs would lose all taste for continuing or renewing the war. The fighting, then, would resume irrespective of developments on the diplomatic front. Ben-Gurion's list of tasks to be carried out during the truce therefore focused on strengthening the IDF and ensuring its ability to decide the war. The diplomatic campaign that was in the offing was secondary to what was supposed to be the main effort.[14]

The Diplomatic Path

Israel's belief that the only way to achieve its goals lay almost exclusively in the military option did not preclude the diplomatic path. In spite of deep distrust of Arab willingness to leave Palestine peacefully, Israel still pursued the diplomatic track. The Israeli initiative was pursued along two channels. In August, Foreign Minister Shertok conveyed messages through Bernadotte to the Prime Ministers of the neighboring States urging direct negotiations with Israel. These drew negative responses.[15] The second channel was clandestine and was conducted from Paris by Eliahu Sasson of the Jewish Agency's Political Department. On Shertok's instructions, Sasson was to make contact with Arab representatives in the French capital with the aim of bringing about an Israeli–Arab alliance, modeled on the structure of the Arab League, but such that Israel's sovereignty would not be infringed.[16] By early August, Sasson sent letters to Riad Bey Sulh, Lebanon's Prime Minister, Lutfi al-Hāfir, a prominent Syrian politician, and the Jordanian Minister in London—all politicians with whom Sasson was acquainted. In the letters he outlined Israel's aspirations for peace with its neighbors and denied that Israel harbored expansionist or hegemonic aims in the region. He told his addressees that after ten weeks of negotiations it was apparent that Bernadotte's efforts were leading nowhere, and he suggested resorting to direct negotiations instead.[17]

The Egyptian attitude at that time appeared discouraging. The Egyptians were unwilling to negotiate with Israel on a peace treaty, as Shertok proposed, although they were ready to acknowledge that 'Israel is here to stay' and that they could not prevent the establishment of a Jewish state.[18] The impression of the UN Mediator, Bernadotte, was that the Egyptians would not hold talks with Israel on concluding the war, but would 'accede' to a Security Council request calling on them to do just that.[19] In a conversation with the US Secretary of State, the Egyptian ambassador to the United States said he believed that it was necessary to find a solution to the Palestine question that would enable the Arab States to resume their normal routine. He explained that the Arab States had been forced to postpone a series of projects because of the war and that they now wished to implement them. However, the ambassador's conditions for ending the hostilities were such that Israel would not accept. He mentioned his government's demand that Israel permit the Palestinian refugees to return to their homes—just when Israel was formulating its absolute opposition to any such idea. The intertwining of the Palestinian issue with an Arab–Israeli settlement to terminate the war posed yet another obstacle to the many that already existed between the sides. The deeper problem that precluded the possibility of ending the war at this time, at least as far as Israel was concerned, was Cairo's insistence that it be terminated on the basis of the 'political realities'.[20] This meant, among other points, freezing the situation as it existed in the summer of 1948, with an Egyptian foothold in the Negev, something Israel would not tolerate.

This general mood influenced the answers Sasson received from an Egyptian emissary in September and early October. The emissary said nothing about the possibility of negotiating a peace with Israel, and he made reference only to the outstanding problems between the two States. He claimed that the Egyptian government was ready to withdraw its forces from the territories allocated to the Jewish State but not from those earmarked for the Arab State. The Egyptians also showed an interest in the possibility of obtaining access to Haifa Port as an exit point for the Palestine Arabs. The court emissary also expressed concern at Israel's ambitions for territorial and economic expansion.[21] Shertok construed this response as an Egyptian refusal to recognize Israel, and did not find in it any indication that Cairo would not raise the issue of the refugees' return. Ben-Gurion rejected Egypt's demand for control of the Gaza Strip because Egypt 'is the greatest kingdom in our area and its entry into the land endangers our entire existence'. At the same time, he did not con-

sider this a reason to break off contacts.[22] The talks were finally terminated by Israel's mid-October offensive in the south.

The Egyptian proposal in fact contained an interesting element, which has not received the attention it deserves: it demanded the right to retain the Gaza Strip and a small strip in the southern Negev, from Rafah to 'Awja al-Hafir, which was to be part of the Arab-Palestinian State, while Israel's right to the Negev was acknowledged by Egypt. Despite this, the Israeli leadership did not consider the Egyptian reply a meaningful basis for negotiations. Of course, it is difficult to know how matters would have developed had Israel been more resolute in relation to its contacts with Egypt. It is possible that Cairo would have backtracked, as, due to internal and inter-Arab reasons, they could not afford an agreement with Israel. Yet the fact is that the Israeli leadership made no attempt to examine how far Egypt was ready to proceed along the negotiating track. The basic Israeli assumption—that the war would be decided exclusively on the field of battle—seems to have overridden every other possibility.

The Bernadotte Plan and the (Inter-Arab) Struggle Over Palestine

The diplomatic option was also pursued in Palestine, and its bearer was Bernadotte. The principles of the plan that carried his name were introduced to the parties concerned on 27 June, and its final version, put forward on 16 September—his assassination shortly afterward made it final—repeated the principles introduced in the first version.[23] Contrary to common belief, it did not affect the Israelis as it did the inter-Arab, and mainly Egyptian–Jordanian, relations. The Israeli government totally rejected the plan, and Ben-Gurion maintained his belief that it would only be possible to bring about the departure of the Arab Armies from Israel's territory by war. The Egyptians, on the other hand, felt most threatened by the Bernadotte Plan, and they directed their diplomatic activity not only against Israel and its claims to sovereignty in the Negev, but also against the Plan, which recommended that the Negev be given to the Arabs. Bernadotte did not name a specific Arab country, and both Egypt and Jordan coveted the territory. Cairo was active both in the international arena and in Palestine itself, trying to prevent the possibility that Jordan would win the Negev. At the Security Council, Egyptian representatives fought to avert a resolution annexing the Arab areas of Palestine to Jordan, in the spirit of the Bernadotte Plan. Rather

than raise objections to this specific element of what was a larger plan, the Egyptians at first rejected the entire program, arguing that it contained principles that the Arabs could not readily accept. Among these were the annexation of the western Galilee to Israel, which would give the Israelis sovereignty over a large Arab population; the plan's vagueness over the Jerusalem question; and the free status that would be granted to the air and sea ports of Lydda and Jaffa. The Egyptian ambassador to Washington, Fawzi Bey, also reiterated the demand that the Arab refugees be permitted to return to their homes.[24] In fact, the real reason for the Egyptians' objections was, as noted, their concern that a resolution would pass the Negev to Jordan. Fawzi Bey therefore asked the United Nations to hold a preliminary discussion before considering the plan substantively. The Egyptian position was articulated more clearly after a representative of the British Foreign Office, F.K. Roberts, apprised Jallād Bey, a member of the Egyptian royal court, that Britain viewed positively the annexation of the western part of Palestine to Jordan. Jallād Bey thereupon implored the British diplomat to allow his country to retain southern Palestine, lest the Hashemite Kingdom expand to dimensions that would induce King Abdullah to revive his old dream of creating 'Greater Syria'.[25]

The Egyptians' second arena of activity in its struggle against Jordan was expressed in their support for the establishment of the All-Palestine Government. The decision to establish the government was accepted by the Political Committee of the Arab League, which discussed Bernadotte's ideas and the fate of Palestine in early September in Alexandria. The delegates were unable to reach an agreement about the next military measures in Palestine. Nothing had been agreed about Arab military co-operation in the event of Jewish attack, and it seemed that the Arab governments had given up any intention of resuming hostilities in Palestine unless the Jews attacked them. The only point upon which the delegates could agree was that Bernadotte should be told that the League made any agreement conditional on the return of the Arab refugees to their homes. The Syrian delegation and 'Azzam Pasha suggested setting up a Palestine Arab administration under the ex-Mufti and creating a Palestine Arab Army paid for by the League. Egypt, Iraq and Transjordan opposed these proposals, but it was decided that if the Palestinians agreed amongst themselves on the subject of creating an administration, the League should not oppose the scheme provided the head of the new Palestine government was acceptable to the Arab States. This clause was added in order to prevent the ex-Mufti from heading the government. The scheme for a Palestine Army was dropped but it was

agreed that each Arab Army operating in Palestine could organize volunteers' detachments which it would equip and control.[26]

The Arab League's decision to agree to the establishment of a Palestinian government was intended to serve several goals. One was to placate Arab public opinion. Another was to create a body that would claim sovereignty over the whole of Palestine, both as an alternative to international recognition of Israel and also to prevent any Arab government from recognizing the Jewish State in return for being allowed to take over Arab areas—an argument directed naturally against the Jordanians. But there was another dimension to the decision, and that was the desire to transfer the responsibility for the continuation of the war onto the shoulders of the Palestinians. The Arab States sought a way out of the war, and a Palestine government was expected to take upon itself the organization of the fighting from here on. The Arab League would provide assistance, but Arab Armies would withdraw from Palestine while protecting themselves against popular outcry.[27] Apparently, Egypt acted along some of the lines described above. Encouraged by the Arab League's decision, the Higher Arab Committee established the 'All-Palestine Government' on 20 September, shortly after Bernadotte submitted his recommendations to the United Nations. Egypt gave its support for the All-Palestine Government, an act that was perceived as a step toward the withdrawal of the Egyptian forces from Palestine, as it was believed that the Egyptian government sought to retain its influence in Palestine through the Palestinian government, without having to maintain military forces there.[28]

Understanding the real meaning of the Arab League's decision, the Jordanians also acted to establish control in the area in Palestine which they perceived as theirs. Transjordanian authorities issued official statements during early September making it clear that they objected strongly to the return of the ex-Mufti to Palestine. These statements were strengthened by the dispatch to Hebron of a company of the Arab Legion Infantry, while the local commander under Egypt's auspices, Munir Abu al-Fadl, left Hebron for Egypt shortly before the detachment arrived.[29] King Abdullah sent a letter to Ahmad Hilmi, the designated head of the All-Palestine Government, warning him that no Palestine Arab government would be permitted to function in that part of Palestine occupied by the Arab Legion, and relieving him of his functions as Military Governor of Jerusalem. Abdullah al-Tall replaced him.[30] King Abdullah went as far as to ask the British representative in Amman, Kirkbride, whether Jordan could expect military assistance

from Britain if it were attacked by another Arab state. He did not specify which state he had in mind, but his intention was plain enough: he feared an Egyptian assault on his country.[31]

Jordan's stand against the ex-Mufti-inspired government made it possible for those who opposed the move to present their objections loud and clear. While in late 1947 Hajj Amin al-Husayni had succeeded in overpowering his would-be rivals and dictating the national agenda and mode of action, now his opponents could express their views and sentiments freely. By early October, a 'Congress' of Palestinians was convened at Amman. The delegates made a statement in favor of union with Transjordan, denounced the Palestine Arab government and gave full authority to King Abdullah to act in the Palestinian name. It is true that the meeting sounded like one organized by the court, but Kirkbride insisted that the delegates organized the meeting of their own will. Another voice of opposition was a 10,000-strong Palestinian demonstration in Amman protesting against the establishment of the Palestine Arab government. Palestinian dignitaries also publicly announced their objections, among them Yusuf Haykal, former Mayor of Jaffa, Sulayman Tukan, Mayor of Nablus, who was offered and refused a ministerial post, Muhammad 'Ali Ja'bari, Mayor of Hebron, 'Issa Bandak, Mayor of Bethlehem, and Dr. Khālidi, a member of the AHC, who had refused the post of Minister of Health.[32] Indeed, so heated did the dispute between Cairo and Amman become over this issue that the Egyptians encouraged anti-Jordanian propaganda in the areas they controlled in southern Palestine, while Jordan's Arab Legion closed the road between East Jerusalem, which it held, and Bethlehem, where Egyptian forces held sway.[33]

One way or another, the Arab League paid no more than lip service to the idea of Palestinian government. It was not only that the idea was impractical as long as the Israelis were where they were, or because of Transjordan's uncompromising objection, but mainly because the Arab League did nothing to turn the idea of the government into something practical. The division among the Arabs remained and none of the armies fighting in Palestine would cooperate with each other. In fact, the word 'fighting' is an inaccurate way to describe their activities, as in autumn 1948 fighting was no longer an option. The Arab governments sought a political solution that would bring an end to the war, on the basis of the ongoing situation and accepting the fact of Israel's existence.

As to the Bernadotte Plan, 'Azzam pronounced the Arab League's complete rejection in unequivocal terms, truly reflecting the Arab attitude toward it. There was one exception to this, and that was the

Jordanian attitude. King Abdullah was unable to publicly accept the Plan, but he would abide by its ruling if it was adopted by the United Nations and imposed by resolution.[34] The Egyptians joined their fellow Arabs in their rejection, but with an additional argument: they believed that the Plan was inspired by the British, who sought to create a pro-British 'Greater Syria', which would result from the merger of Arab Palestine with Transjordan.[35] Israel's reaction was just as negative. The Israeli government did not accept the Plan's ideas regarding Jerusalem and the trading of the Negev for western Galilee.[36]

Bursts of Violence

With a few exceptions, the sides observed the cease-fire on 19 July, but peace did not prevail entirely. The prolongation of the truce accentuated a problem that would continue to bother the Israeli General Staff and the government even after the war. Beginning during the first truce, infiltrators had penetrated IDF-held areas for a variety of reasons: some attacked Israeli forces; refugees tried to return to the homes from which they had fled or been driven; others tried to recover their property or work their fields; and some came to rob and plunder. In addition to the security problem the infiltrators posed for the IDF, their efforts to enter the country flew in the face of the government's decision not to permit refugees to return to Israeli-controlled territory. The General Staff issued strict orders to the brigades to prevent infiltration into their sectors, even if some of the would-be returnees were civilians who bore no hostile intentions. Ambushes and search operations were carried out, and all the infiltrators were expelled again. The struggle against the infiltrators had immediate operational implications, as Israeli intelligence had received information that Palestinian leaders were trying to send in squads to operate against Jewish settlements and Israeli forces in the south. The infiltration phenomenon remained an ongoing issue for the entire duration of the war and after.[37]

Another problem that heightened the tension between the Israeli and the Egyptian Armies was the Egyptian refusal to allow the transfer of supply convoys to the southern Negev settlements. As was the case in the first truce, the real issue was not the transfer of supplies but the political ramifications of the Egyptian ability to control the line of communication between the two parts of the Negev. Israeli officers held meetings on the subject with their Egyptian counterparts in a neutral zone between the two, but the Egyptians were adamant in their refusal.[38]

At the end of July, the Israelis launched a major military operation (Operation Gayis), whose goal was to send a large supply convoy through the Egyptian lines by force, but the Egyptians forces thwarted the operation, and as on previous occasions, the Israeli forces were unable to breach well-organized Egyptian defenses.[39] This futile attempt led to the resumption of fighting between the sides over the next few days, albeit on a small scale and within a limited sector,[40] but by the end of the day the way to the Negev remained blocked, and that reality threw the already hard-pressed residents of the Negev into despair. In Beyt Eshel and Nevatim food ran out, and the inhabitants of Be'er Yitzhak demanded that they be evacuated from their devastated settlement. At Beyt Eshel, the residents launched a hunger strike to force the authorities to evacuate them; 'some people had nervous breakdowns', it was said, and 'the same situation exists at Nevatim'. As before, the air force partially solved the problem by dropping vital supplies to the beleaguered settlements,[41] but still, the government and the army were blamed for not making sufficient effort to gain control of the Negev,[42] and another attempt to break through the Egyptian lines and to send a convoy was made on 31 July (Operation Gayis 2). This time the effort was crowned with success. Israeli forces captured positions on both sides of the road where the convoy was to pass, and the convoy went through at dawn reaching its destination, Kibbutz Bror Hayil, without a shot being fired.[43]

Ben-Gurion and Yadin decided to carry on with the attempts to send convoys—informed by both a substantive and a political dimension—but with no great success.[44] In the second half of August, the Israelis tried to get a convoy of 30 trucks carrying civilian supplies to the Negev (Operation Way to the Negev), but failed, as the Egyptians set an ambush which the convoy drove straight into, suffering losses; only one of the 30 trucks reached its destination of Kibbutz Dorot.[45] This failure prompted an intensified effort to prepare a runway in the Negev where planes carrying supplies could land, and one such was erected in Kibbutz Dorot. The Israeli Air Force planes, some of which had arrived only days before from Czechoslovakia, began flying in supplies. The flights continued until October, when the Egyptian forces were defeated and the siege lifted.[46]

The Palestinian Refugees Problem—A Non-Return Policy

The increase in diplomatic activity to solve the Palestine problem made the Palestinian refugees problem one of the major sources of

controversy between Israel, the Arab States and the United Nations. The Arab position toward progress in the negotiations and settlement with Israel has already been mentioned, and it linked these issues with the repatriation of the Palestinian refugees. The AHC position on this matter was different. In a note it presented to the Arab League, the AHC 'categorically rejects proposals that Arab refugees be returned to Jewish-controlled areas'. Such an action would mean 'a recognition of the imaginary Jewish State', and would subject the returnees to political and economic exploitation by the Jews. It would be better to build refugee camps where the refugees were to stay, and to arm the Palestinians who were still in Palestine to allow them to continue their struggle.[47]

The Israelis' final position on the refugee problem was shaped gradually, although its principles emerged shortly after the phenomenon of the Palestinian flight was observed: the refugees would not be allowed to return, and steps were taken to make a return difficult, if not impossible. In a presentation to the United Nations on the subject of the Arab refugees, the Israeli government disclaimed any responsibility for the creation of the refugee problem, defining 'the charge' that the refugees were forcibly driven out by Israeli authorities as 'wholly false'. The Israeli government insisted that it had done 'everything possible … to prevent an exodus which was a direct result of the folly of the Arab States in organizing and launching a war of aggression against Israel'. It was an 'impulse' that led the Arab civilian population to migrate from war areas, in order to avoid being involved in the hostilities, and the Arab leaders 'deliberately fostered' this impulse for political reasons. Furthermore, the refugee problem could not be removed from the military context that led to its creation. Considering the existence of 'a state of war' between Israel and the surrounding Arab States, Israel's permission for the return of the Arab refugees 'would gravely prejudice the security and defense of Israel'. The whole issue would, therefore, have to be addressed 'as part of a permanent peace settlement with the Arab States'.[48]

To strengthen the validity of these declarations, the Israelis took various measures to ensure that the Palestinians would not return. One was described above, and that was the use of military force against infiltrators trying to cross the lines from the Arab side to the Jewish. Other methods used were the resettling of Jewish immigrants just arriving in Israel in the Palestinians' vacant homes. Where resettlement was not possible, the houses of the deported and escaped Palestinians were razed to the ground. The map of Palestine was visibly changed through this

practice, as dozens of Palestinian villages wholly disappeared. Another method, which was just as effective, was the re-naming of the Palestine landscape. The Arab names of streets, villages, rivers, streams, mountains and so on were replaced with Hebrew names.[49] During the war, starting from April, 32 new Israeli settlements were established, all of them on sites that had been Palestinian villages, and were transformed into Jewish settlements.[50]

Israel's Resort to War

The truce was received in Israel with mixed feelings. Ben-Gurion thought it would last at least four or five months, since the UN General Assembly would not deal with Bernadotte's proposals until September, at its annual meeting. The debate could well drag on into November, and throughout the entire period the IDF would have to remain mobilized, imposing a tremendous drain on the Israeli economy. On the other hand, an extended truce would enable the IDF to be built up quantitatively and qualitatively, in line with Ben-Gurion's belief that even if diplomacy now took over for the period ahead, Israel would be able to conduct effective negotiations only with the backing of proven military might. The guiding principle, then, for the months that followed, was that military activity would steer the diplomatic talks in the direction Israel desired.[51]

Ben-Gurion decided that the truce period would be used to relieve the general burden on the population as much as possible and to upgrade the IDF's capability. In effect, this meant discharging soldiers and downgrading the IDF's combat disposition, though ensuring a rapid mobilization if needed; and strengthening the army in terms of both the level of its fighters and the level of its weapons and ammunition. To accomplish this, every soldier would receive at least a month's training and as many as possible would be discharged during the truce period. Concurrently, an intensive program would be implemented to train commanding officers and professionals, including 'squad and platoon commanders, gunners, radio operators and other specialists'. As for arms, Ben-Gurion urged that Israel set up its own production lines and step up its weapons purchases, particularly of artillery pieces, tanks and aircraft.[52]

While securing the army's ability to carry on with the fighting, Ben-Gurion paved the way toward resumption of the war. On 19 July, he asked the Chief of Operations, Yadin, when the IDF would be ready to

resume fighting. Yadin replied that if the government approved the manpower boost and the General Staff completed its structural deployment, the army would be ready for action at the beginning of September. The two decided that the IDF would launch its operations following the completion of essential organizational moves and that the Southern Front would definitely be one of the theaters of operations.[53] From this point onward, IDF planning proceeded based on the premise that one arena in which it would definitely see action would be the Negev.

On 1 August, in a Cabinet meeting, Ben-Gurion began his campaign to convince the ministers that it was essential to resume the military operations. The continuation of the truce, he said, was fraught with military, economic and diplomatic dangers: 'If our army is forced to remain for an [indefinite] period in the conquered villages, in the trenches, in the filth, among flies and mosquitoes, without rest and the possibility of reorganization and training, [it] will fall apart.' Ben-Gurion added that it was doubtful whether the Israeli economy could function in the no-war, no-peace conditions imposed by the truce. There were also diplomatic problems: the UN inspectors had infringed Israeli sovereignty, Ben-Gurion said, and his fear was that their presence would become, in the eyes of the world, a fact that should be made permanent. Another concern was that the most important factor in Israel's battlefield successes so far—the Arabs' 'extraordinary' weakness—would prove transitory and the Arabs would receive aid to strengthen them. Therefore, he concluded, before the truce was made permanent, Israel must declare its intention to expel the invading forces from the country, unless the international community took steps to force them out. Ben-Gurion proposed offensives on two fronts: the Negev and the Jerusalem Corridor; the latter to be expanded. Military operations, he said, citing Yadin's assessment, could be resumed at the end of August or early in September, and 'we will be able to put an end to the war within a month or six weeks'.[54]

Shertok accepted Ben-Gurion's analysis but objected to the idea of expanding the theater of operations. The IDF, he said, had failed in its encounters with the Egyptians, and therefore the entire military effort should be concentrated in the Negev in order to ensure a favorable decision there. However, some ministers even objected to Shertok's proposals. Yitzhak Gruenbaum, the Interior Minister, although conceding that the current situation of 'a truce without end' was intolerable, opposed an Israeli initiative to expel the invading forces. The Minister of Immigration and Health, Moshe Shapira, thought that 'the danger of defeat looms large in the war and not in the truce'. He argued that 'even

when we reach the border of Egypt or the border of Syria the war will not end … The truce as it stands today is better for us than leaping into a new war.' The Finance Minister, Eliezer Kaplan, who was from Ben-Gurion's Mapai party, attacked the subject from his vantage point, noting that if Israel were to renew the war the threat of economic sanctions imposed by the international community would loom large. Other ministers, however—Bernstein (Commerce and Industry), Bentov (Labor and Construction), Fishman (Religious Affairs and Casualties), and Remez (Transport and Communications)—tended to accept Ben-Gurion's approach, and the Prime Minister reiterated his confidence that the IDF had the ability to win the war. Ben-Gurion, though, was sensitive to the objections that were voiced. He remained firm in his belief that his plan was the right one, but to avoid a clash with the naysayers he put forward an interim motion: the Cabinet would not decide 'now when to stop the truce', but would decide 'that it is not desirable for the truce to continue indefinitely' and that together with activity at the United Nations in this spirit 'we have to prepare our full strength in case the truce is ended'.[55]

However, Ben-Gurion did not leave it at that. In early September, he brought Yadin to speak to the Cabinet about the implications of the continuing truce for Israel's military situation. The Chief of Operations painted a gloomy picture, telling the ministers that the Arab forces were gaining strength as reinforcements kept coming. Yadin told the ministers that the IDF faced some 12,000 Egyptian regulars, about 1,500–2,000 Saudi soldiers, some 4,500 troops of Jordan's Arab Legion, another 2,000 Iraqis, and 6,000 'organized and semiregular locals'. Yadin added that he was also disturbed by the Arab intensive fortification works and the increase in their combat means, leading him to conclude that the Arabs were engaged in more than a defensive redeployment. To cope with this threat, Yadin asked the Cabinet to bring about the mobilization of as much manpower as possible to help strengthen and expand the fortifications in settlements around the country. In fact, he asked for 4,000–4,500 people to be called up for ten days of intensive work to strengthen fortifications throughout the country.[56] The Cabinet discussed Yadin's requests and heard a report from him on how the IDF had utilized the truce. Undoubtedly, though, Yadin's analysis of the situation left its imprint on the ministers and was at the back of their minds later when they were asked to decide about the continuation of the truce. Yadin, however, did not brief the ministers on the significance of the arms embargo which had been imposed on the combatants—but which in practice affected only the Arab Armies.

As the Cabinet considered the situation, the General Staff drew up its own position paper for the continuation of the war. The paper reiterated the principles agreed upon by Ben-Gurion and Yadin, and elaborated on them. The assessment of the Operations Branch planners was that the Egyptians' war aims at this stage were to consolidate positions along the coastal strip, cut off the Negev south of the al-Majdal–Bayt Jibrin line, deprive the Jews of as much territory as possible in the severed region and annihilate Israeli forces. In other words, the General Staff had assumed that the Egyptians intended to adhere to the *status quo* and to consolidate their hold on the territory that was under their control.[57]

The paper's working premise was that the IDF was strong enough to launch offensive action on two Fronts only. It was possible to engage in combat on three Fronts, but to do so would deprive the General Staff of reserve forces and would preclude the possibility of 'exploiting a tactical success on one of the Fronts' in order to achieve a 'decisive outcome' there. The conclusion of Operations Branch, then, was that offensive operations should be mounted on the Egyptian and Syrian Fronts, and elsewhere 'it will be necessary to make do with aggressive defense and local cleansing actions'. To accomplish this, the document's authors emphasized the need to create four Fronts—North, East, Center and South. A key recommendation came in the form of a call to the logistics branch to organize its ranks well and to establish 'regional supply and ammunition bases, in order to avoid a repeat of the phenomenon that was seen in recent operations already on the second day of action'—referring to a shortage of equipment and basic supplies in combat units. 'This is essential and urgent, and it must be accorded priority in all the preparations.' The manpower branch was urged 'to bring the battalions of the Guard Corps up to strength and to deal with the shortages in the brigades'. Otherwise, the structure of the battalions suffered because soldiers had to be transferred from one battalion to another to make up losses.[58]

At national level, the General Staff stepped up its organizational preparations with a view to the resumption of hostilities. The IDF's order of battle was set at 12 brigades, and discussions were held on how to disperse them among the various arenas of combat. The structure of the battalions and their manpower disposition was decided, and a thorough review was conducted concerning the state of the IDF's munitions. All the gaps that were indicated in the report were to be dealt with by the military industries.[59] The decision in August to create formal Fronts put an end to the 'Revolt of the Generals' (see Chapter 3), when

the General Staff issued an order entitled 'Organization of the Country in Fronts', naming Moshe Carmel (North), Dan Even (Interior), Zvi Ayalon (Central), and Yigal Alon (South) as the commanders.[60] At the same time as this structural redeployment, the battalions of the Guard Corps, which had previously operated within brigade frameworks, became an independent element answerable to each Front's headquarters. These battalions assumed guard duties that had earlier been carried out by the brigades, a situation which forced large numbers of troops to remain inactive at outposts or settlements and deprived the brigades of mobility. Under the reorganization, the brigades ceased to be regional forces attached to specific sectors.[61] As already stated, the IDF was in far better shape than it had been in the early stages of the war. From 15,200 troops in March, by August the Israeli Army had grown more than fourfold, to stand at 69,300 troops.[62] In late August, Yadin told the commanders of the Fronts that 'the date for our major offensive operations will not be before September 15. I will inform you of the exact date next week.' However, the Israeli envoy to the United Nations, Eban, proposed that the offensive be postponed until the end of September, when the United States would hold the rotating chairmanship of the Security Council and would thus be in a position to block anti-Israeli resolutions.[63] However, the discussions and the planning for the renewal of the hostilities continued even more intensively.[64]

Another step toward preparing international public opinion for Israel's renewal of the war was the frequent pointing out to Bernadotte, and to his successor, of the Egyptians' infringements of the truce, real or imaginary. The purpose of these complaints was to pave the way toward an Israeli declaration that the fighting had resumed because of the Egyptian violation of the truce.[65] With the same goal in mind, Israel pressed the Security Council to revise the terms of the truce and set a date for its termination. Until that date, the Israelis argued, the sides would have to reach a peace agreement and the foreign armies would have to evacuate Palestine. The Israeli delegation's rationale for its request was the heavy economic burden that the truce in its existing format was placing on Israel, together with the fact that because the entire Israeli economy was subordinate to the war effort, the young State could not built itself. If a date were to be set for the end of the truce, the Arab Armies would be compelled to withdraw, or Israel would be free to act as it chose. Although the Security Council rejected Israel's request, it had made perfectly clear its negative attitude toward the current state of affairs.[66]

Preparations for the war's renewal were also made in the domestic arena. Ben-Gurion sensed that the public perceived the ongoing truce

as a stage on the road to the conclusion of the war, hence it was problematic to mobilize it for the missions that still lay ahead. It was necessary 'to renew the public's readiness', Ben-Gurion maintained, which meant preparing public opinion for the possibility that the war would flare up again. With this in mind, he convened the editors of the daily papers 'to explain to them that the war was not yet over'. He found it disturbing that 'there is no anxiety over the situation, there is no austerity, there is no readiness to carry the burden', and through the editors he wanted to alert the public to the true situation.[67] It would not be long before hostilities broke out again, Ben-Gurion believed.

As we have seen, Israel's military preparations were accompanied by diplomatic activity, but the latter process did not affect the former. The decision to resume the war was not made contingent on responses that might come from Egypt, and the Israeli government did not wait to see how the diplomats fared in their endeavors. In fact, the developments on the diplomatic front were used to justify Israel's approach, but in any case, Israeli activity was based on the premise that negotiations would not induce the Arabs to evacuate their forces voluntarily. From Israel's perspective, the Bernadotte Plan was a factor that only increased the Egyptians' adamancy, though it was not the most difficult problem with which Israel had to cope. The prime reason for resuming the war was the situation in the south. Bernadotte's report concerned the Israelis because of posisble diplomatic repercussions, but it was the military situation that decided the sequence of events. In September members of a Jewish underground group, LHI, assassinated Count Bernadotte in Jerusalem. The UN General Assembly convened in Paris on 21 Septem-ber—four days after Bernadotte's assassination—to discuss his Plan, but Israel could more easily ignore it because Washington, in a reversal of its previous position, now rejected the report. (The State Department had originally adopted Bernadotte's ideas at the stage in which they were discussed between the mediator and the British government, and continued to support them afterwards.[68])

Immediately after Bernadotte's murder, Secretary of State George Marshall had declared that Bernadotte's proposals 'offer a generally fair basis for settlement of the Palestine question', and called on the sides to accept them 'in their entirety'.[69] The implication, of course, was that the US administration supported the demand that Israel forgo the Negev—a serious blow to the Israelis. In response, the Israeli delegation to the United Nations formulated a carefully worded statement, noting that the General Assembly had adopted the recommendation of the United Nations Special Commission on Palestine (UNSCOP) to include the

Negev within the bounds of the Jewish State and emphasizing the Negev's importance for Israel, not least because it comprised two-thirds of its territory.[70] The Israeli statement generated pressure from the American-Jewish community on President Truman to reject the Bernadotte Plan and to revert to the Partition Plan, which was the source of Israel's claim to sovereignty in the Negev. Truman ordered his aides to do exactly that, but at the behest of State Department officials the aides tried to convince the President to support the position of the US delegation to the United Nations, as expressed by Marshall.[71] Ultimately, though, Thomas Dewey, the Republican candidate for president in the November presidential elections, determined US policy. On 22 October, during his election campaign, Dewey denounced the Democrats' position on the Bernadotte Plan and asserted his party's commitment 'to full recognition of Israel with its boundaries as sanctioned by the UN Partition Plan with boundaries unchanged'.[72] This declaration, aimed straight at Jewish voters, left Truman with no choice, and on 24 October he declared the commitment of the United States to the Partition Plan, thus rejecting the Bernadotte Plan.[73] It is difficult to assess what Ben-Gurion would have done had Truman taken the advice of his aides and added his voice to the growing chorus of support for the mediator's recommendations. Be that as it may, it is clear that Truman's statement facilitated the Israeli leader's decision to launch the series of operations aimed at expelling the Egyptian forces from all parts of Palestine. Indeed, this is clear from the very fact that Ben-Gurion mentions Truman's statement in his memoirs.[74]

In the meantime, Ben-Gurion continued to encounter resistance at home. As we have seen, some of the views voiced by cabinet ministers in August made it plain to Ben-Gurion that the plan to resume hostilities would encounter rough waters. His concern increased when the Cabinet, on 26 September, rejected his proposal to attack at Latrun (see below). Among his opponents were members of his own party. Having learned from experience, Ben-Gurion began to prepare the ground for a decisive Cabinet meeting in which he would seek authorization to go on the offensive in the south. To that end he met with some of the senior figures in Mapai, including David Remez and Yosef Sprinzak, who remained against a renewal of the war even after the meeting, and Shaul Avigur, Levy Eshkol, Meir Graboski (Argov) and others, who said they would back him, 'some with less confidence and others with more'.[75]

Another crucial stage on the road to the renewal of the war was Ben-Gurion's meeting with the General Staff on 6 October. On the agenda were two topics: the probable military implications if fighting in the

south were renewed, and an attempt to reach a decision on where the second Front should be opened. Ben-Gurion wanted to bring about the resumption of the war in the south without Israels being accused of aggression. This would be accomplished by means of provocation in the form of a convoy. However, Ben-Gurion did not set a final goal for this operation, and he placed two limitations on it: hostilities would be confined exclusively to the south and, as far as this depended on Israel, would not be extended to another front; and, second, a strict time limit would be in effect, as it was almost certain that Israel would quickly come under pressure to accept a cease-fire. As for the first reservation, Ben-Gurion wanted hostilities to be directed only against Egypt, his premise being that a flare-up in the south would not bring about intervention by Jordan or Iraq. He also addressed the possibility of improving Israel's military disposition on other Fronts, but made it clear that he had in mind only the improvement of the passage to Mount Scopus and the Old City of Jerusalem, as well as the expansion of the southern approaches of the Jerusalem Corridor, which were controlled by Egyptian forces.[76]

In the discussion that ensued, Alon put forward his views on Ben-Gurion's questions and at the same time articulated his operational credo as to how the IDF should proceed against the Egyptians. The Egyptians' troop disposition, he said, was 'a very peculiar structure that does not work in its favor' because 'it is dependent on very remote supplies and has no depth'. Alon's forces, in contrast, were deployed 'on both sides of the line—both from the Negev and from the coastal plain—with respect to their northern line [the al-Majdal–Bayt Jibrin road]'. This Egyptian disposition, which could count on reserves stationed at al-Majdal and Gaza, as well as in Egypt and the Sinai desert, made it pointless to attempt a limited move, such as Operation Nahshon, in which IDF forces would create a small breach in the Egyptians' alignment and send convoys through it—a proposal that was part of an alternative plan put forward by General Avidan. If that were done, 'the reserve force they can send in could again close off the way south', Alon explained, as had effectively occurred at 'Asluj and Karatiyya. Alon's conclusion was that a sweeping military move should be launched in order to expel the Egyptians from the entire Negev. There was also another consideration. The Egyptians, like the IDF, had replaced the troops holding the front-line outposts with local forces and were holding their regulars in reserve; this afforded them the option of moving to the offensive, and the only effective way to defend against this 'is for us to move to the offensive … with far-reaching aims, in order to

eradicate the Egyptian force'. This goal could be accomplished if the distinctive conditions of the southern arena and the deployment of the two armies were exploited properly. Although the Egyptian force along the al-Majdal–Bayt Jibrin road was cutting off the Negev, it was itself caught in a vice, hemmed in by IDF forces from the north and the south. Alon therefore suggested that the IDF should 'encircle one center of the [Egyptian] main force from the north and the south, and annihilate it'. Simultaneously, other forces would engage the Egyptians across the entire region toward Gaza and even deep into Sinai, thus preventing the Egyptians from dispatching reserve forces to deal with the main effort on Front D. Once the central Egyptian force had been disposed of, Alon said, 'we will be able … to annihilate the second force or force it to retreat'. To ensure the success of this mission, Alon asked for large-scale reinforcements, which would double 'and more than double' the number of Israeli troops in the Negev. Most of all, it was essential to dispatch the 8th Armored Brigade to the Negev, Alon argued.[77]

Alon, however, looked beyond the Negev. Seizing on Ben-Gurion's remarks, he urged action on the Central Front in order to expand Israeli control of the area south of the Jerusalem Corridor. Alon claimed that there was no point in repeating a mode of operations that had led the IDF nowhere but to failures. Instead of attacking again through Latrun or from east to west through the Jerusalem Corridor, or through a push from the north, toward Ramallah and then on to Jerusalem, he argued that ridding the Negev of the Egyptian forces would enable a daring, albeit simpler, thrust toward Jerusalem from south to north. Instead of clashing with the Arab Legion, one IDF brigade could storm the southern approaches to Jerusalem, currently held by Egyptian regulars and irregulars, conquer Bayt Jala and Bethlehem, and from there drive northward and eastward, to Silwan and the Jerusalem–Jericho road or even to Mount Scopus. Having shown the way to take Mount Scopus, Alon could not refrain from stating what could then be the next objective: 'An attempt to expel the Arabs from the Old City.' Alon believed that an IDF presence on Mount Scopus would also enable a push to take French Hill and al-Shaykh Jarrāh.[78]

However, the Chief of Operations, Major General Yadin, took issue with Alon's assumptions and approach regarding the Central Front. According to Yadin, an Israeli move in Jerusalem proper would certainly bring about a collision with the Legion, which Ben-Gurion wanted to avoid. Yadin agreed with Alon that there was no sense in attacking Latrun, but argued that the Jerusalem Corridor should be expanded from its northern rather than southern side. However, the most serious

threat in the south if the war resumed, Yadin held, was that the other Arab forces would intervene. In that case, the Legion could threaten the Jerusalem Corridor with three battalions, which would be virtually unopposed: the Israeli forces in this sector were concentrated in the southeastern section of the Jerusalem Corridor, and in any event, were too few to contain a Jordanian thrust. But the Jordanian and Iraqi forces could implement a far more dangerous move by advancing westward. The upshot was that in the face of a comprehensive Israeli drive into the south and east, Jordanian and Iraqi forces could strike at the heart of the country. The effect would be to expand the battle-front while forgoing strategically crucial points which could and should be taken. The crucial consideration, Yadin maintained, was 'to determine where we can achieve something with small forces, but make do with defending against the enemy; where it is necessary to mount an offense in order to achieve defense; and which places we want to conquer'. Yadin's analysis led him to conclude that it was indeed time to launch a campaign against the Egyptians. Such a move would be diplomatically and politically sound, since Israel had a clear right to act, given that the areas controlled by the Egyptians were allocated to the Jewish State by the United Nations. It was also crucial to relieve the pressure on the settlements in the besieged area.

At the same time, to preclude a Jordanian–Iraqi attack, Yadin recommended a combined operation on the Central Front. This would involve a northward thrust in the Jerusalem Corridor, while the Alexandroni Brigade occupied the Jordanian forces around Qalqilya, thus preventing them from exploiting the situation in the south to execute a push toward Jerusalem or, jointly with the Iraqis, into the center of Israel. There was no need to reinforce the Southern Front, Yadin said, because the threat to Jerusalem was not from the Egyptians in the south, against whom Alon had asked for the extra armored brigade. 'Throughout history, Jerusalem has been conquered from only one side—from the north and the northwest; there is no other area from which it is convenient to take Jerusalem', Yadin asserted. Thus, the danger to Jerusalem lay in the north, with the Arab Legion, which might well move into action while hostilities raged in the south. The 8th Brigade should not be committed to any specific sector so that it would be available either for the Southern Front or for the Jordanian Front—wherever a decisive victory could be achieved. The forces at Alon's disposal were sufficient, Yadin said, but if within a few days it should become evident that the Egyptians were on the verge of collapse, while the other fronts were quiet, the 8th Brigade could then be dispatched to the south.

Ben-Gurion's final decision was to confine the fighting to the Egyptian Front alone. The IDF, he estimated, would have no more than four or five days—'seven days at most'—before the Security Council stepped in and ordered a cease-fire. His plan, therefore, was 'to strike in the south with the maximum possible force, so that we can accomplish something important in these few days, if we do not crush the entire Egyptian Army'. A second sector of activity, Ben-Gurion said, would be the southern Jerusalem Corridor, with the aim of bringing the entire Tel Aviv—Jerusalem railway line under Israeli control and 'cleansing southern Jerusalem of the enemy'. In another discussion the next day, Yadin disagreed with the Defense Minister's assessment that the short period of hostilities would preclude intervention by other Arab Armies, allowing Israel to divert greater forces to the south. Yadin was willing to commit a tank battalion to the southern front, but not the entire 8th Brigade. Similarly, the Harel Brigade should remain where it was, in case the Iraqis decided to intervene in the fighting.[79] Ben-Gurion accepted Yadin's view on force allocation, but decreed that three operations would be carried out: 'Yoav', the main thrust, which would be entrusted to the southern front command; and two secondary operations, 'Hahar' (Mountain) and 'Yekev' (Winery), on the central front.

Ben-Gurion proceeded directly from the General Staff meeting to a session of the Cabinet, where the only topic on the agenda was 'opening the road to the Negev'. As described above, before this meeting Ben-Gurion had met with senior figures in Mapai—ministers and others—in order to bring them around to his view on the need to renew the war in the south. Now he put the question to the entire Cabinet, which, with the reservations of two ministers, adopted a decision stating that if the Foreign Minister, who was then in Paris, did not object, then the Committee of Five—the informal war cabinet—would be authorized to decide on implementing the military moves.[80] A date was also set: 14 October 1948.[81]

After the Cabinet had effectively approved the plans to renew the war in the south, activity shifted to the international arena, where Israeli diplomats sought to prepare public opinion for the events to come. On 8 October, Israel's delegate to the United Nations, Abba Eban, sent a note to the president of the Security Council setting forth the truce violations by the Arab forces. On the Southern Front, he mentioned the Egyptians' refusal to allow IDF convoys to move south and the capture of outposts around Bayt Asluj by Egyptian forces in August.[82] The note was meant to supply Israel with diplomatic ammunition against the Arabs, as well as providing it with the formal pretext for military action against the Egyptians, for breaching the truce.

NOTES

1. The Secretary of State to the Embassy in Egypt, 7 July 1948, *FRUS 1948*, V, p. 1197.
2. Telegram no. 553 from Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 10 July 1948, FO 816/125; telegram no. 197 from HM Ambassador, Cairo, to HM Minister, Amman, 16 July 1948, FO 816/126; Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 18 July 1948, E9715, FO 371/68375.
3. BGWD, p. 614, entry for 21 July 1948; Report by the Central Intelligence Agency, 27 July 1948, *FRUS 1948*, V, p. 1244.
4. Telegram no. 138 from HM Chargé d'Affaires, Baghdad, to HM Chargé d'Affaires, Amman, 26 July 1948, FO 816/127. During the Political Committee of the Arab League session, the Iraqi Prime Minister told the British ambassador in Beirut that 'in our hearts we all want peace'. Telegram no. 103 from HM Minister, Beirut, to HM Minister, Amman, 11 July 1948, FO 816/125.
5. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to B.A.B. Burrows, Eastern Department, Foreign Office, s/1014/48, FO 816/127; Mr Wells Stabler to the Secretary of State, 25 July 1948, *FRUS 1948*, V, pp. 1237–8.
6. Resolution 54 (1948) adopted by the Security Council on 15 July 1948, *FRUS 1948*, V, p. 1224; telegram no. 1983 from the United Kingdom Delegation to the United Nations to Foreign Office, 20 July 1948, FO 816/126; telegram no. 133 from HM Ambassador, Baghdad, to HM Minister, Amman, 21 July 1948, ibid.; telegram no. 132 from H.M. Ambassador, Baghdad, to HM Minister, Amman, 22 July 1948, ibid.
7. The Israeli Intelligence gained information on this matter, BGWD, p. 646, entry for 12 August 1948.
8. Memorandum of conversation, 27 August 1948, *FRUS 1948*, V, pp. 1350–1; Foreign Office, London, to United Nations Delegation, General Assembly, Paris, 24 September 1948, FO 371/69194; F.K. Roberts minute, 6 October 1948, J6724, FO 371/69194.
9. Foreign Office memorandum, 24 July 1948, FO 371/69193; R. Campbell memorandum of conversation with Gallad Bay, 24 July 1948, FO 371/69198.
10. R. Campbell to Foreign Office, 23 July 1948, J5008, ibid.; S. Clutton: 'Re-orientation of Egyptian Policy', 30 July 1948, ibid.
11. GS/Operations/Intelligence: Preliminary Summary of Actions during 9–18 July 1948, IDFA 7011/49/5; M. Shertok to H. Weizman, 20 July 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48,* pp. 364–5; report by the Central Intelligence Agency, 27 July 1948, *FRUS 1948*, V, pp. 1244–5.
12. Ben-Gurion in Mapai Center Meeting, 23 July 1948, LPA, 23/48.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Mr O'Leary, Haifa, to Foreign Office, 1 November 1948, E14142, FO 371/68643.
16. E. Sasson to Y. Shimoni, 8 August1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48,* p. 499; Y. Shimoni to E. Sasson, 17 August 1948, ibid., p. 533.
17. Mr Dundas, Damascus to the Foreign Office, 25 August 1948, E11283, FO 371/68376; M. Shertok to E. Sasson, 26 August 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48,* pp. 557–8.
18. M. Shertok–Count Bernadotte meeting, 5 August 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, p. 492. Egypt's negative reply ibid., note 2. Egyptian *de-facto* recognition of Israel by Jalad Bey of the royal court: From Cairo to FO, 8 July 1948, FO 141/1247; from Beirut to Cairo, 20 September 1948, FO 141/1249. Fawzi Bey, Egypt's ambassador in Washington, conducted talks with State Department officials on the basis of an Egyptian recognition of Israel's existence: memorandum of conversation, 26 September 1948, *FRUS 1948*, V, pp. 1423–5.
19. M. Shertok–Count Bernadotte Meeting, 10 August 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48,* 1948, p. 501.

20. Memorandum of conversation, 27 August 1948, *FRUS 1948*, V, p. 1350.
21. M. Shertok to W. Eytan, 5 October 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, pp. 21–9.
22. D. Ben-Gurion to M. Shertok (Paris), 8 October 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, p. 44; BGWD, pp. 739–40, entry for 8 October 1948.
23. Progress report of the United Nations Mediator in Palestine, [16 September 1948], *FRUS 1948*, V, pp. 1401–6.
24. Memorandum of conversation, 26 September 1948, *FRUS 1948*, V, pp. 1424–5.
25. F.K. Roberts minute, 6 October 1948, J6724, FO 371/69194; the Ambassador in Egypt (Griffis) to the Acting Secretary of State, 13 October 1948, *FRUS 1948*, V, p. 1471.
26. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 15 September 1948, E12098, FO 371/68382; telegram no.133 from H.M. Chargé d'Affaires, Damascus, to HM Minister, Amman, 16 September 1948, FO 816/128.
27. Mr Evans, Beirut, to the Foreign Office, 21 September 1948, E12392, FO 371/68376. Maddy-Weitzman, *Crystallization*, p. 81.
28. British Middle East Office, Cairo, to the Foreign Office, 24 September 1948, E12527, FO 371/68441; British Legation, Amman, to B.A.B. Burrows, Foreign Office, 6 October 1948, E13240, FO 371/68642.
29. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 4 September 1948, E11590, FO 371/68376; telegram no. 735 from HM Minister, Amman, to Secretary of State, Foreign Office, London, 21 September 1948, FO 816/128.
30. Telegram no. 725 from H. M. Minister, Amman, to Secretary of State, Foreign Office, London, 18 September 1948, FO 816/128.
31. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, 2 October 1948, E12899, FO 371/68642.
32. Mr C. Andrews, Cairo, to Foreign Office, 2 October 1948, E12793, FO 371/68642; Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 4 October 1948, E13187, ibid. The decisions adopted by the Congress are introduced in the last letter.
33. Beaumont, Jerusalem, to the Foreign Office, 30 September 1948, E12738, PRO 371/68642; Maddy-Weitzman, *The Crystallization*, p. 80.
34. Mr W. Stabler to the Secretary of State, 24 September 1948, *FRUS 1948*, V, p. 1419; the ambassador in Egypt to the Acting Secretary of State, 25 September 1948, ibid., pp. 1422–3.
35. The ambassador in Egypt to the Acting Secretary of State, 13 October 1948, *FRUS 1948*, V, p. 1471.
36. The Special Representative of the United States in Israel, to the Secretary of State, 28 September 1948, *FRUS 1948*, V, pp. 1428–9.
37. GS/Operations cables to Fronts Commanders, 8 September 1948, IDFA 2539/50/5; Intelligence Service 1: A Weekly Intelligence Report, 16 September 1948, IDFA 1041/49/28; 5th Brigade cables to the Brigade Battalions, 19 September 1948, IDFA 7011/49/5; Tal, *The Origins and Conception of Israel's Current Security Conception, 1949–1956*, pp. 23–41.
38. Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 371–2.
39. Yitfah Brigade: Daily Report, 28 July 1948, Yitfah Brigade/Operations Diary, YTA, Section 45, 10/11; 5th Brigade cable to the General Staff, 28 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1176; Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 375–80. The operation's name, 'Gayis', was a Hebrew acronym meaning 'corps' and made up of the first letters of the participating brigades: Givati, Yitfah and 'Sergei', the nickname of Nahum Sarig, the commander of the Negev Brigade.
40. Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, p. 380; 5th Brigade cable to the General Staff, 28 July 1948, IDFA 922/74/1172; 12th Brigade Commander and 5th Brigade cable to the General Staff, 29 July 1948, ibid.; 5th Brigade and Air-Force/Surveillance cables to the General Staff, 30 July 1948, ibid.
41. Yadin cable to 12th Brigade Commander, 30 July 1948, IDFA 922/75/1182.

42. Weitz, *My Diary* 3, entries for 1 August, p. 323; 4 August 1948, p. 324; 11 August 1948, p. 327; 19–21 August 1948, pp. 331–3; *HaPalmah Book 2*, p. 867; the Commander of the Southern Negev Region to the Front/HQ, 9 September1948, IDFA 2539/50/8.
43. 5th Brigade/Gayis: Gayis 2 Operation Order, 30 July 1948, IDFA 7011/49/5; Yitfah Brigade: Daily Report, 30 July–1 August 1948, Yitfah Brigade/Operations Diary, YTA, Section 45, 10/11; 12th Brigade Commander and 5th Brigade cable to the General Staff, 1 August 1948, IDFA 922/75/1176.
44. BGWD, p. 631, entry for 3 August 1948.
45. Yadin cable to Yigal Alon, Southern Front, 9 August 1948, IDFA 922/75/1182; GS/Operations/Southern Command cables to 5th Brigade and 12th Brigade Commander, 16 August 1948, IDFA 5879/49/22; 5th Brigade: 'Way to the Negev' Operation Order, 16 August 1948, IDFA 7011/49/5; 5th Brigade/52nd Battalion cable to 5th Brigade/Intelligence, 28 August 1948, IDFA 1041/49/3.
46. GS/Operations cable to 12th Brigade Commander, 21 August 1948, IDFA 922/75/1182; Avi Cohen, *Aerial Bridge to Independence* (Tel Aviv, 1997) (Hebrew), pp. 870–1.
47. The Minister in Syria to the Secretary of State, 12 August 1948, *FRUS 1948*, V, pp. 1307–8.
48. The Acting United States Representative at the United Nations to the Secretary of State, 27 July 1948, *FRUS 1948*, V, pp. 1248–9.
49. See Walid Khalidi, *All That Remains* (Washington, DC, 1992).
50. BGWD, pp. 778–9, entry for 27 October 1948.
51. BGWD, p. 602, entry for 19 July 1948.
52. Ibid.
53. BGWD, p. 624, entry for 28 July 1948; ibid., p. 627, 1 August 1948. The two disagreed about the second theater of operation. Ben-Gurion wanted to act against the Iraqi forces, while Yadin thought that the IDF should attack the Syrian forces.
54. Minutes of PGI Meeting, 1 August 1948, ISA.
55. Ibid.
56. Minutes of PGI Meeting, 8 September 1948, ISA.
57. General Staff/Operations to Defense Minister, 1 August 1948, IDFA 6127/49/93.
58. Ibid.
59. BGWD, p. 629, entry for 2 August 1948 and p. 630, entry for 3 August 1948; Southern Front/Administration's Memorandum: 'General Comments on the Armament Stocks in the Southern Front Brigades', 6 September 1948, IDFA 979/51/17.
60. General Staff: 'Organizing the Country into Fronts', 6 August 1948 in *Maarakhot* Vol. 263–4, p. 109; BGWD, p. 637, entry for 6 August 1948.
61. Brezner, *The Struggle on the Negev, 1941–1948*, p. 257; General Staff/Operations to Southern Front/Commander and Center Front/Commander, 20 August 1948, IDFA 2539/50/69; Report of the Negev Committee Meeting, 25 August 1948, IDFA 2539/50/70.
62. BGWD, p. 661, entry for 22 August 1948.
63. BGWD, p. 664, entry for 26 August 1948; General Staff/Operations cable to Fronts Commanders, 28 August 1948, IDFA 922/75/1182.
64. General Staff/Operations: 'General Guidelines for an Alternative Program', 15 September 1948, IDFA 6127/49/93.
65. M. Shertok–Count Bernadotte Meeting, 5 Auust 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, 1948, pp. 465–6.
66. M. Shertok to A. Eban, 13 August 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, pp. 518–19; M. Shertok to A. Eban, 18 August 1948, ibid., p. 535; ibid., note 2.
67. BGWD, p. 673, entry for 6 September 1948 and p. 679, entry for 9 September 1948.
68. The Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Douglas) to the Secretary of State, 19 June 1948, *FRUS 1948*, V, pp. 1124–5; memorandum by Mr Robert M. McClintock, 23 June

1948, ibid., pp. 1134–7; the Secretary of State to the Embassy in the United Kingdom, 3 July 1948, ibid., pp. 1186–7.
69. The Acting Secretary of State to Certain Diplomatic and Consular Offices, 21 September 1948, *FRUS 1948*, V, p. 1415.
70. Announcement by the Israeli Delegation to the UN General Assembly Third Session, 22 September 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, p. 622.
71. Memorandum of telephone conversation, by the Acting Secretary of State, 29 September 1948, *FRUS 1948*, V, pp. 1430–1.
72. The Acting Secretary of State to the United States Delegation at Paris, 23 October 1948, *FRUS 1948*, V, pp. 1506–7.
73. The President's Special Council (Clifford) to President Truman, 23 October 1948, *FRUS 1948*, V, p. 1509; the Acting Secretary of State to the Secretary of State at Paris, 24 October 1948, ibid., pp. 1512–14.
74. Ben-Gurion, *The Restored State of Israel*, p. 296.
75. BGWD, p. 733, entry for 5 October 1948.
76. IDF General Staff Meeting, 6 October 1948, IDFA 121/50/172.
77. Ibid. For Avidan's plan see 5th Brigade: Operation Annihilation, 15 August 1948, IDFA 7011/49/5.
78. IDF General Staff Meeting, 6 October 1948, IDFA 121/50/172.
79. BGWD, pp. 737–8, entry for 7 October 1948.
80. Minutes of PGI Meeting, 6 October 1948, ISA.
81. BGWD, p. 736, entry for 6 October 1948.
82. A. Eban to the Security Council President, 8 October 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, pp. 39–42.

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The Egyptian–Israeli Front: The Decisive Campaigns, I

By mid-October, the Egyptian and the Israeli Armies were facing each other, with the former's government seeking a way out of the war, and the latter's acting to force a solution in accordance with the way they thought the war should be ended. The result was two major offensives launched by the IDF, which aimed to put an end to the Egyptian presence in Palestine. The Israelis worked along a wide front to make the campaign possible, and in mid-October it remained only to write down and distribute the orders.

Egyptian Deployment

The Egyptians were deployed in division strength on the Southern Front, directed by General al-Mu'awi from his field headquarters at al-Majdal. The divisions' three brigades (the 1st, 2nd and 4th) were made up of nine regular battalions, which were deployed along the entire front; a cavalry battalion; and three artillery battalions—one in Gaza, one at al-Majdal, and the third in al-'Arish and Rafah. The 2nd Brigade was stationed in the al-Majdal–Isdud area, two of its battalions deployed on the line and the third at Majdal itself. The 4th Brigade was deployed on the al-Majdal–Bayt Jibrin line, and of its three battalions, one was responsible for the positions at Hulayqat, Hill 113, Iraq Suwaydan, and Bayt 'Affa; a second was positioned at the Karatiyya and Faluja positions; and the third was assigned to defend Iraq al-Manshiyya and Bayt Jibrin and their environs. The 1st Brigade was stationed in and around Gaza, and consisted of at least two battalions. Israel's Southern Front intelligence could not say whether the brigade had a third battalion as well. In addition to these forces, the division were able to field eight battalions of irregulars, which were called reserve battalions: one was encamped near Be'er Sheva, four were

located around Bethlehem, there was another one in the Rafah–al-'Arish zone, and two covered the Gaza, al-Majdal and Bayt Jibrin areas. The Israelis had no information on the disposition of the last battalion. The irregulars consisted of volunteers from North Africa and from the Muslim Brothers movement, and they were joined by Palestinian Arabs who had undergone training abroad and at al-'Arish. The Egyptians were bolstered by three Saudi battalions, one of which was split among the Egyptian forces in the Bayt Tima–al-Majdal– Karatiya sector, while the other two did guard duty along the sea road on the Gaza–Khan Yunis–Rafah axis. In terms of weapons, the Egyptians had a small number of Bren machine-guns mounted on armored vehicles, between 17 and 30 cannons and more than 20 armored vehicles with turrets, mortars and machine-guns. In the course of the fighting to date, IDF troops had spotted about 50 tanks, but according to Amitzur Ilan, the Egyptians had 30 tanks, all without turrets. For the most part the Egyptians' deployment was static, based on tactical positions and outposts, some of them heavily fortified, such as the police stations at Iraq Suwaydan and Iraq al-Manshiyya. The tactical positions were also fortified, consisting of three or four bunkers, positions enclosed by barbed wire, and trenches.[1] As noted, Israeli intelligence believed that at this stage the Egyptians' aim was to cut off the Negev completely, by completing and reinforcing a fortified line between al-Majdal and Bayt Jibrin. The Egyptian coastal deployment was also strengthened by means of new fortifications and the addition of regular forces. There was some harassment of Israeli settlements and outposts throughout the Negev.[2]

The Egyptians also took advantage of the truce to fortify their positions in the Negev and recruit volunteers to bring battalions that had suffered losses back up to strength. A second reserve battalion was established to reinforce the reserve battalion that was stationed along the 'Awja–Be'er Sheva–Hebron–Bethlehem road. However, in sharp contrast to the original battalion, which consisted of soldiers fired with extreme Arab national consciousness who volunteered to save Palestine from the Zionists, the 2nd Battalion was composed of 400 Palestinian Arabs with low motivation. The regular Egyptian forces at Isdud, al-Majdal and Iraq al-Manshiyya continued to fortify their positions intensively, prepared emplacements for mortars and cannons, and mined their lines as well as the *wadis* (water channels) that Jewish forces might traverse. Guard positions, manned by Saudi and local forces, were erected along the Rafah–Gaza road, and forward defensive emplacements were built around the large base in Gaza. The general assessment

of Israeli intelligence was that the Egyptians were aiming 'to consolidate a strong line that will cut off the Negev from the [deep] south'.[3] This was indeed the Egyptians' objective. As already noted, the Egyptians wanted to establish their control of the Negev in order to lay claim to sovereignty there. In this they had the support of the British Foreign Office, which advised the Cairo government to consolidate its hold on the areas held by the Egyptian Army by tightening control in them and administering them as closely as possible. Thus, in due course it would be possible to claim that the area was under full Egyptian military and political control.[4] The Egyptians, however, found this to be a daunting task. They set up civilian administrations in Gaza, Hebron, Be'er Sheva and Bethlehem, as well as along the coastal strip where their forces were encamped. However, they were unable to ensure their control of the entire Negev; the Jewish settlements in the region maintained ongoing communication with one another and with the north. The Egyptians astounded the British by their refusal to attack and conquer the settlements, but they worked intensively to tighten the siege on the Negev and to prevent the passage of Israeli convoys from the north.[5]

However, the weakness of the Egyptian deployment lay in its distinctive structure. The Egyptian forces were deployed in three long, narrow strips that ran the length and breadth of the Negev. One such strip stretched from al-'Arish to Isdud and was divided into three sections. The section from al-'Arish to south of Yad Mordechai was subordinate to the 3rd Brigade and consisted of the 3rd Infantry Battalion, five battalions of volunteers, an armored company and a tank platoon. The section immediately to the north, running as far as Hamama, was under the command of the 4th Brigade; and the last section, from Hamama to Isdud, was under the responsibility of the 2nd Brigade, which included two regular battalions and parts of two additional battalions, one reserve battalion and armored elements. Responsibility for the second strip, stretching from 'Awja all the way to the southern outskirts of Jerusalem, was held by the 'Light Forces Command', which had been established in July. It consisted of a regular Egyptian company, a reserve battalion, stationed in Be'er Sheva, and volunteers. The third strip was the horizontal one, extending from Majdal to Bayt Jibrin, and it was dependent on the first two strips. The forces deployed along the third strip belonged to the 4th Brigade, and included the bulk of the Egyptians' regular units: four infantry battalions, a medium machine-gun (MMG) battalion, part of another MMG battalion (most of which was located around Isdud), two reserve battalions, a number of Sudanese and Saudi companies, a tank company, and an armored

vehicle company. Two more companies (tanks and armored vehicles) were stationed near al-Majdal and were directly subordinate to divisional headquarters.[6] Thus arrayed, the Egyptians cut off the Israeli forces in the Negev; but with effective planning, the Egyptian disposition could become an 'anvil' upon which the Israeli forces could deliver hammer-blows from the Egyptians' outer flank. This, indeed, turned out to be the case.

The Egyptians were also weakened by the fact that they could not expect assistance from the other Arab Armies. The Arab League's Political Committee, which met in Cairo during September, made no contingency plans for cooperation between the Arab Armies in the event that the IDF should renew the war—the Arabs, for their part, were not willing to renew the fighting.[7] The tension between Jordan and Egypt over the Bernadotte Plan and the establishment of the All-Palestine Government was certainly not conducive to cooperation between those two countries.

Preparing Operation Yoav

Operation Yoav was the first of two ambitious operations whose goal was the expulsion of the Egyptian forces from Palestine. The preliminary plan for the operation was drawn up in mid-August, and was further developed in September. The initial premise of the General Staff was that the Egyptians' goal was the complete severance of the Negev from the rest of the country, which they would accomplish by consolidating their positions along the Faluja–Bayt Jibrin road and seizing control of the 'Awja–Be'er Sheva–Hebron road. Another assumption was that the Egyptians would mass forces in order to effect a northward thrust from the al-Majdal–Bayt Jibrin area. The Israeli concept was ambitious: its goal was to destroy the Egyptian forces stationed in Palestine. This was to be achieved in stages. The arena would be divided into two sections: one designated for combat, the other for blocking and harassment activities. The idea was to cut off the Egyptian brigades one from the other, and in the area designated for combat—against the Egyptians' 4th Brigade along the al-Majdal–Bayt Jibrin road—the line along which the Egyptian Brigade was deployed would be cut, thus creating three isolated sectors. At this point, Israeli forces would move into the eastern sector ('Ajjur–Bayt Jibrin–al-Qubayba) and oust the volunteer forces, consisting of the Muslim Brothers and local Arabs, who held the area; forces along the central front would take 'Ajjur, while Bayt

Jibrin and al-Qubayba were assigned to the southern front. The result would be to ensure free passage between the southern and northern sections of the Negev, and to sever the Egyptian forces in the Mount Hebron area from those in the center of the Negev.[8]

Underlying the General Staff's plan was an attempt to exploit to the full the IDF's superiority in professionalism and maneuverability. Geography was also a factor in determining the strengths and weaknesses of both sides. The IDF had the advantage of short, internal supply lines, which enabled forces to be dispatched quickly to the arena of the main effort, based on a calculated thinning out of other sectors. The Egyptian alignment, in contrast, particularly along the al-Majdal–Faluja road, was dependent on supply lines that were stretched to breaking point, and the Egyptians lacked sufficient mobility to rush troops to critical sectors in time. The IDF therefore decided not to send troops into the Gaza Strip, where the Egyptians maintained a solid stronghold. In contrast, the line along which the Egyptians' 4th Brigade was deployed contained a number of points that could be breached in a manner that would split the Egyptian forces and place large numbers of them under siege. The Israelis' deployment also worked in their favor. As noted, although the Egyptian deployment cut off the south of the Negev from the north, Israeli forces were encamped on both sides of the line and deprived the Egyptians of maneuverability to the north or to the south. In short, the General Staff had identified the Egyptians' vulnerability to encirclement and planned to capitalize on it. The same approach dictated that the IDF should not try to capture the Iraq Suwaydan police garrison, which was heavily fortified, but the less well-defended station at Iraq al-Manshiyya.[9]

While the basis of the plan had been laid down by the IDF General Staff for an Operation code-named 'Eser',[10] Yigal Alon, the commander of the southern command, refined it, and it was renamed 'Yoav'. Alon had one important difference, and this was reflected in the section on the 'aim' of each. The aim of the General Staff's Eser Plan was destruction and conquest, whereas the Front D plan spoke of defeating the enemy. Alon decided to bring about the collapse of the Egyptian deployment by means of phased activity in which each stage would prepare the ground for the next. This distinction reflected the difference between the approach of the General Staff to the continuation of the war—with which the commander of the Givati Brigade concurred—and the approach espoused by Alon. General Avidan proposed an alternative operative plan whose centerpiece was a frontal attack on the Egyptians to breach their defenses on the al-Majdal–Bayt Jibrin road, followed by

the conquest of al-Majdal, which was the Egyptian forces' control center. The overall objective was to annihilate the Egyptian alignment. As in the early days of the war, Avidan again preferred a frontal attack in order to achieve a decisive victory by means of the enemy's destruction.[11] Alon, however, was an advocate of the 'indirect approach', through which he strove to eliminate the fighting capability of the Egyptian forces—to 'make them fold', as he put it—and not necessarily to liquidate the forces themselves (see below). Avidan and Alon represented two contrasting approaches of principles to warfare: one advocated a direct frontal assault aimed at eliminating the fighting force of the enemy by means of destruction, while the other sought to eliminate the enemy's combat capability by striking at his transportation and supply routes and splitting his defenses, then gradually dealing with the 'slices'. Both approaches naturally wanted to terminate the Egyptian presence in the country, but the first served an additional, deeper purpose, which Ben-Gurion also advocated, and which had been introduced earlier.[12] It is difficult to know how much of an impact Ben-Gurion's perception about the importance of total victory for Israel's future relations with its neighbors had on the formulation of the plans drawn up by Avidan and the General Staff, but be that as it may, it was Alon's approach that ultimately prevailed.

Alon's plan called for reducing the arena of combat, as compared with the proposal of the Givati Brigade and the General Staff's plan. He would not attack at al-Majdal nor would he lead an assault against the 'Ajjur–Bayt Jibrin area, although he did accept other key elements of the General Staff's conception. Overall, Front D aspired to achieve the same results as the General Staff's plan, but by a more modest route. The plan of the General Staff's Operations Branch called for the participation of nine battalions—four from the Givati Brigade, three from Yitfah, and two from the Negev Brigade—and additional auxiliary forces.[13] Alon, however, thought the General Staff's plan was too optimistic. The forces assigned to the operation were undermanned and exhausted, and lacked equipment, and some of them were dispersed in tactical positions along the Negev and needed to be reorganized.[14]

The time factor was also a limitation that Alon had to take into account. Ben-Gurion had already asserted that time would be of the essence in this operation, as he expected the Security Council to intervene and stop the fighting within four to seven days.[15] Consequently, Alon constructed his plan so that no matter when it had to be concluded, it would have produced a durable achievement. His idea, then, was to wage a series of battles, at the end of which the overall purpose

would have been attained: that is, the expulsion of the Egyptian forces from the Negev.[16] The tacit assumption that underlay Alon's perception of the campaign was that the time limitation was tactical, not strategic, in character, and that the fighting could be resumed whenever Israel saw fit. Alon persisted in working on the basis of this assumption until it finally backfired on him.

Operation Yoav

According to Alon's plan, on the first day of the fighting, forces of the 5th Brigade were supposed to drive a wedge through the Iraq al-Manshiyya–Bayt Jibrin sector by capturing Khirbat Arai and the surrounding positions. By taking this area, which was located between Faluja and Kawkaba, east of the Iraq al-Manshiyya police fortress, the Israeli forces would sever the connection between Egypt's 4th Brigade and the brigade of irregulars in the Bayt Jibrin–'Ajjur sector. The 11th Brigade was assigned the task of completing the severance of the Egyptian forces at al-Majdal, the site of the Egyptians' overall headquarters for the south. The plan here was to drive a wedge through the Bayt Hanun area and to cut off the Egyptian forces to the north from the Gaza Strip. This would simultaneously split the Egyptians' 1st Brigade and deprive the Egyptian force of its logistical and operational rear. The Negev Brigade's 9th Battalion was to carry out raiding and harassment missions along the Gaza–al-'Arish axis in order to sabotage and disrupt Egyptian movement there. With this stage successfully completed, the Givati Brigade would the next day go into operation in the middle section of the Egyptians' 4th Brigade and capture Hill 113 and the junction near the Iraq Suwaydan junction. With the Iraq Suwaydan police fortress cut off from al-Majdal, the Egyptian 4th Brigade's defensive alignment would be effectively chopped into pieces. In the west, Givati units were to seize an outpost on the hills overlooking the Isdud–al-Majdal road, slightly to the north of the al-Majdal–Faluja road and east of Hamama—thus isolating the Egyptian force at Isdud. A Givati battalion would occupy the tactical positions near Karatiyya and Hatta in order to ensure that the al-Majda–Faluja road was cut off and prevent an Egyptian force from seizing these sensitive locations. The 8th Armored Brigade—in practice only its 82nd Battalion, reinforced by the Negev Brigade's 7th Battalion, would then go into action, by stages, around Karatiyya and Iraq al-Manshiyya. On the first day of the operation the Israeli forces were to take the Egyptian positions that bypassed

the Karatiyya outposts (the 'Egyptian Burma Road') and encircle Faluja and Iraq al-Manshiyya—the two villages and the garrison. On the night between the first and the second day of the fighting this same force was to conquer the two villages.[17] If successful, this operation would trap all the Egyptian forces in a series of isolated pockets within an area that was entirely Israeli-controlled, following which the IDF would implement the second phase: attacking and eliminating each pocket in turn.[18]

Operation Yoav began on 15 October, 24 hours later than originally planned. As explained above, the Israeli government had decided to cite the UN decision that permitted Israel to send convoys to the Negev as the pretext for launching the IDF's offensive. The commander of the convoy was briefed on how to react to every conceivable scenario, including the unlikely possibility that the Egyptians would let the trucks through. Yet that is exactly what happened: on the afternoon of 15 October, the Egyptians let the convoy pass without firing a shot. Acting on his orders, the convoy commander eventually provoked the nearby Egyptian force into an exchange of fire and thus handed the IDF the pretext it needed to launch the operation.[19] Israeli Air Force planes attacked the Egyptian air bases at al-'Arish, Gaza and al-Majdal, crippling the planes on the ground and ensuring that the ground forces would not have to worry about interference from the skies. Israeli bombers also attacked targets on the al-Majdal–Gaza–al-'Arish axis. That same evening, the Yitfah Brigade's 3rd Battalion moved to drive a wedge in the Bayt Hanun area and to cut off the Egyptian forces to the north from the Gaza Strip. This would simultaneously split the Egyptians' 1st Brigade and deprive the Egyptian force of its logistical and operational rear. Although the wedge did not sever the al-Majdal–Isdud road, it seriously hampered Egyptian troop movements on the axis. Clearly the Egyptians would react to this situation, and in order to occupy the Egyptians at other sites and further disrupt their transportation ability, Yitfah forces operated against various targets on the Gaza–al-Majdal road, blowing up bridges and attacking vehicles. Other units raided targets on the al-'Arish–Gaza road, in the process blowing up the railway line between al-'Arish and Rafah. At the same time, Givati's 53rd Battalion attacked Khirbat Arai, driving a wedge between Faluja and Iraq al-Manshiyya and Bayt Jibrin, thus cutting off the Egyptians' 4th Brigade from the irregulars' brigade on the front's eastern flank.[20]

However, the operation did not go as planned. Alon wanted to apply the 'indirect approach' to every aspect of the operation, avoiding full frontal contact with the Egyptians' defense wherever possible. Thus, the

8th Brigade was ordered to capture the outposts around Karatiyya that overlooked the alternative road which the Egyptians had built to bypass the Israeli roadblock at Karatiyya, and to encircle Iraq al-Manshiyya and Faluja. Alon did not want to send his troops into a full frontal battle; instead, his idea was to vanquish the two villages in a phased operation, at first by encirclement and afterward by quiet night-time infiltration.[21] However, the commander of the 8th Brigade, Yitzhak Sadeh, had a different plan in mind. He proposed that instead of the gradual attack envisaged by Alon, the 82nd Armored Battalion, together with a mortar batallion and the 7th Battalion of the Negev Brigade, mount a daylight full frontal attack on the village and the hill at Iraq al-Manshiyya on 16 October, in the hope that his tanks would overwhelm the Egyptian forces there. Alon found it difficult to stand up to his former commander, and accepted Sadeh's plan. Apparently, the change was a mistake, as Sadeh had miscalculated the Egyptians' defensive capability: the Egyptian forces did not collapse at the sight of the approaching tanks. The attack was preceded by the 8th Brigade's Mortar Battalion's heavy shelling of the target, which quickly used up its entire store of ammunition; however, the artillery fire directed at Iraq al-Manshiyya was patchy and inaccurate. Following this largely ineffectual barrage, tanks, accompanied by the infantry of the Negev Brigade's 7th Battalion, stormed the village, but they encountered well-entrenched Egyptian defenders, whose effective fire knocked out tanks and forced the attackers to retreat.[22]

The failure of the 8th Brigade disrupted Alon's plan and undercut the logic of Operation Yoav. The attempt to split the Egyptian front and isolate enemy forces in pockets had been unsuccessful, making the success of the next stage of the plan—which had called for the annihilation of the stranded Egyptians—doubtful. Alon therefore decided to shift the operation's focus and to try for a breakthrough into the Negev. This idea triggered an argument between Alon and his staff and the headquarters of the 8th Brigade, led by Sadeh. Stung by the failure at Iraq al-Manshiyya, Sadeh and his aides argued against another full frontal assault against the Egyptians. Instead, they returned to one ingredient from Avidan's alternative plan, proposed in August for the war's continuation which had been rejected in favor of Yoav. They suggested a return to the Nahshon operation's model, that is, breaking through into the Negev on the Front's eastern flank, along the slopes of Mount Hebron, in an area held by the Egyptians' brigade of irregulars. The Egyptian defenses were weaker in that sector, it was claimed, and the IDF would be able to sweep them aside more easily. Alon rejected this

idea, as there were no transportation routes there, and an attempted breakthrough would entail the building of another Burma Road, thus pinning down troops on the edges of the sector. Alon wanted to take the bull by the horns and mount an effort to breach the Egyptian line at the crucial Iraq Suwaydan junction. Success there would smash the Egyptians' 4th Brigade and ensure full Israeli control over the main road into the Negev.[23] Yadin objected to Alon's plan. In his view, Iraq al-Manshiyya should be attacked again, if only to cling to the principle of 'tenacity of purpose'. However, Alon retorted that he had no interest in capturing any specific target, only in breaching the Egyptian lines and causing their collapse. Another assault on Iraq al-Manshiyya would end much as the first had, Alon maintained, because this time the Egyptians would be ready for the possibility of an attack. In his mind's eye, Alon told Yadin, he saw the case of Latrun, where wave upon wave of IDF attacks had been broken on the walls of the fortress. Yadin accepted Alon's view, respecting the right of the front commander to decide on the operative methods in his sector.[24]

In this sector, the 9th Battalion of the Egyptians' 4th Brigade held sway. Its units held positions on both sides of the junction, from Hill 113 to the north of the junction, through the junction itself at the Iraq Suwaydan police fortress, up to the Hulayqat area, south of the junction. The Egyptians' assessment on the eve of Operation Yoav was that the Israelis would renew the war, and to meet that contingency they had reinforced their defenses around the junction at the expense of weakening the sector to its south; their plan of defense was based on closing off possible points where Israeli forces might be able to effect a breach in the lines.[25]

Hostilities resumed on the southern front on the night of 16/17 October. The attack went as planned, but was hampered by the 54th Battalion's failure to take out the Egyptian artillery position at Nitsanim. To gain the element of surprise, it had been decided not to approach the Egyptian artillery site by land but to mount a sea-borne attack, with the raiding unit to land on the coast opposite Nitsanim. The raiding party consisted of about 20 soldiers from the 54th Battalion. However, due to faulty naval equipment, disruptions in the timetable, and the soldiers' sea-sickness, the mission was aborted.[26] The 51st Battalion, however, executed its mission successfully, completing the conquest of Hills 113 and 100 on 17 October; the junction's southern outpost was also taken in the course of the day, as was the northern outpost, where Givati troops fought off Egyptian counterattacks.[27]

The Egyptian command was deeply disturbed by the Israeli break-

through at the junction, which had the effect of cutting off the Egyptian troops east of the junction from the connecting axis to the expeditionary force's headquarters and to their sources of supply. The Egyptian commander had little scope for maneuver. A counterattack was problematic because his reserve force, the 1st Battalion, could not be moved from Faluja, where it was stationed, for fear of additional Israeli attacks in that area. Instead, forces from the 2nd Brigade, which was deployed near Isdud, were ordered to organize the counterattack. However, the brigade commander did not want to send one specific unit, as the removal of a complete battalion would have disrupted the Egyptians' meticulously constructed defensive alignment. To avert this outcome, a force was created from secondary units that were taken out of their home battalions. The result was a unit that lacked motivation; the troops did not know one another well and their performance in battle was shoddy. In any event, offensive battles were not the Egyptians' strong point, and the fundamental weakness of the newly organized force only compounded this problem. The idea was, apparently, to concentrate their efforts at Hill 113, while other Egyptian forces mounted a blocking operation toward Julis and pinned down the Israeli troops on Hill 100 to prevent them from intervening in the battle for Hill 113. The Egyptian attack was broken fairly easily and produced a bonus for the Israelis: the northern outpost, the only one of the four outposts at the junction not to have fallen to the IDF on the previous day (17 October), was seized by Givati after the Egyptian forces there withdrew when the counterattack failed.[28]

The Israeli General Staff now became more accommodating to the possibility of dispatching more troops to the Negev. As will be recalled, Yadin had been worried that other Arab Armies, particularly the Jordanians and the Iraqis, would re-enter the war if hostilities resumed. However, following the initial successes of Operation Yoav, and after the Israeli failure at Iraq al-Manshiyya, Ben-Gurion began to contemplate the idea of exploiting the fact that the Egyptians were sending constant distress signals in the wake of the IDF's successes. On 16 October Ben-Gurion believed that Israel had only two more days of combat left before a cease-fire was imposed and argued that Israel should not pass up the opportunity 'to deal a decisive blow' to the Egyptians. Yadin had accepted this assessment and ordered the 9th Brigade ('Oded') to move south. The brigade joined the forces in the Negev on 17 October.[29]

On the evening of 17 October, the Southern Front launched the final stage of the operation to open the road to the Negev around the Iraq Suwaydan junction. The target was Hulayqat and Kawkaba, on the

south. The order to launch the attack was duly given on the evening of the 17th, but by now another stage had been added. If the two tactical outposts fell, the main road to the Negev would be open. In that event, it would be possible to expel the Egyptian forces from the entire al-Majdal– Faluja road sector. The Front's troops were therefore ordered to crush isolated Egyptian concentrations and to harass the Egyptian outpost near Karatiyya—the Egyptians' Burma Road.[30] But first it was necessary to ensure that the road to the Negev was indeed open. Kawkaba was taken quickly on the night of 17/18 October—there were few Egyptian troops there—but the attempt to take Hulayqat failed. One company was dispatched to capture the site, but was unable to break through the Egyptian lines, which had been reinforced with troops who had fled from other Egyptian positions that had been taken by Givati.[31] The 9th Brigade went into action the following evening but withdrew in the face of effective Egyptian fire and failed to execute its mission.[32]

One side effect of the Israeli success in the eastern sector was felt in the Hebron–Bethlehem sector. The Egyptian forces there, numbering about 600 men, were in a state of confusion and many Egyptian officers abandoned their units, which were made up of Sudanese and Libyans.[33]

However, the failure at Hulayqat disrupted Alon's plans. The problem was not the failure itself—Hulayqat was taken the next night—but the fact that time was running out. The first indication of this was a demand by the head of the UN Observers, General Riley, that Israel and Egypt lay down their arms by 6 p.m. on 17 October. Ben-Gurion effectively rebuffed Riley's call,[34] but the following day the acting mediator, Ralph Bunche, informed Shertok that Egypt would agree to a cease-fire if the sides returned to the positions they had held before the latest round of fighting. Shertok replied that this was acceptable to Israel on condition that the Egyptians permit Israeli convoys to reach the Negev. Bunche found this scenario problematic because Israel had been sending supplies to the Negev by air without first making the shipments available for UN inspection, as required.[35] The discussions and exchanges of messages on a cease-fire between Israel and the UN envoys, and internally within the Foreign Ministry, went on as the fighting continued. Finally, on 19 October the Security Council called on the sides to observe a cease-fire. Abba Eban believed that Israel had no choice but to comply, and Shertok rushed off a cable to Ben-Gurion to that effect.[36] On 21 October, Israeli and UN representatives held talks on the exact timing of the cease-fire,[37] and it was obvious that little time remained to complete the operation.

On 18 October the General Staff and the Southern Front Command had to decide on the order of priorities for continuing the operation, based on the assumption that only two days of fighting remained, at least at this stage. At the time, the road to the Negev was still blocked and the two Egyptian brigades on the coastal axis and on the al-Majdal–Faluja road were cut off—one of them only partially—but were still capable of combat. A decision had to be made on where to direct the Israeli effort: opening the road to the Negev or continuing to oust the Egyptians by attacking their isolated outposts. The result was that the Front command decided on three operations: a renewed attack on Hulayqat to open the road to the south; tightening the encirclement of the 4th Brigade at what would become the 'Faluja pocket', as part of an attempt to take the Iraq Suwaydan police fortress; and the conquest of Be'er Sheva.[38]

The Hulayqat mission was assigned to the 52nd Battalion, reinforced by the 54th—a combination that proved to be more effective and successful than the one that had failed the previous night. The Egyptian formation in Hulayqat was well fortified as it was reinforced by the forces that had retreated from those outposts at the junction that the IDF captured the night before. After these outposts were taken, the Egyptians had ordered their forces at Kawkaba and nearby Bayt Tima to abandon their positions and withdraw to Hulayqat; thus, when Givati forces launched their attack against the post of Hulayqat, it was held by three companies, two of them from the Egyptians' 4th and 9th Battalions.[39] The Israelis launched a full-frontal attack, which was supported by an artillery barrage. Four companies simultaneously attacked Hulayqat, and took it. The road to the Negev was open.[40]

As the Hulayqat operation got underway, a relatively small force—consisting of an infantry company, a reinforced company of combat engineers, an auxiliary infantry company and all of the Givati's 51st and 52nd Battalions led by a platoon commander—attacked the Iraq Suwaydan fortress, which was defended by two companies from the Egyptians' 9th Battalion. The attack followed the patterns of earlier assaults on the site, and, like them, it also failed. The information available to the attacking force about the strength of the Egyptian defenders was inaccurate, and the Israelis attacked that part of the fortress which the Egyptians, having learnt from previous attacks, had substantially reinforced. The Egyptians' fire plan was highly effective, while the IDF force was too small to accomplish the mission and lacked reserves that could be sent in if needed.[41]

The third component of Alon's rectified Yoav plan, the decision to

conquer Be'er Sheva, signaled a turning point in the direction of the original Operation Yoav, which set as its goal the occupation of Gaza.[42] However, on 19 October, the Front command's appraisal of the situation was revised. A cease-fire was due to come into effect shortly, and a decision had to be made about where it would be possible to execute a quick operation in a short time. To assault the Egyptians' coastal road installations would be a difficult task, even if the Front command had time to spare. However, the command knew the Egyptians had a clear advantage in defense, a well-organized deployment along the coastal road. Alon therefore decided to take Be'er Sheva.[43]

Even now the General Staff had not despaired of conquering the Gaza Strip. Yadin hoped that after the fall of Be'er Sheva it would be possible to continue the momentum and take Gaza. Ben-Gurion, however, thought it was more critical to attack the Iraq Suwaydan fortress—it was the key to a major junction, and even though the Israeli forces encircled it, the forces there could still disrupt road traffic in the area. Ben-Gurion therefore urged another attempt to take the fortress in addition to the planned move against Be'er Sheva.[44] Both missions were executed against a dual backdrop: mounting Security Council pressure for a cease-fire and intelligence reports given to Ben-Gurion which indicated that the Egyptian defenses in the Negev were collapsing. Israeli intelligence intercepted wireless communications between the Egyptians' headquarters at Be'er Sheva and the High Command in Cairo indicating that the Egyptian commander wanted to pull back both the three battalions on the Iraq Suwaydan–Bayt Jibrin line to Be'er Sheva and the forces deployed on the coastal axis north of Gaza southward, into the Gaza Strip.[45] The conquest of Be'er Sheva would further aggravate the Egyptians' situation and tighten the siege on their 4th Brigade. However, on 20 October, while the operation was still in the planning stage, a cable arrived from Bunche demanding that Israel comply with the Security Council's call of the previous day for a cease-fire. Ben-Gurion replied that he intended to convene the Cabinet in order to decide on a response to the Security Council. When the Cabinet met the next day the ministers had before them a cable from Abba Eban stating that the cease-fire call had been initiated by the Soviet Union, but that neither the Soviets nor the Americans intended to pressure Israel to withdraw from the positions it had captured during Operation Yoav. With this in mind, and in order to give the IDF time to take Iraq Suwaydan, Ben-Gurion sought to delay for as long as possible the start of the truce being deliberated by the Security Council. The Cabinet decided to accede to the cease-fire call, and Ben-Gurion announced that

the IDF would cease operations 12 hours after a positive reply was received from the Egyptians.[46] However, under UN pressure the cease-fire timetable was set as requested by the mediator, for 3 p.m. on 22 October. Yadin and Reuven Shiloah pressed for more time, but Ben-Gurion ruled in favor of compliance with the UN's timetable. In addition to the political consideration—the desire to avoid such a flagrant violation of a Security Council resolution—Ben-Gurion's decision was also based on military logic. The Negev Brigade had just taken Be'er Sheva, and Ben-Gurion anticipated an Egyptian counterattack to recapture the town, the fall of which had been 'a major political debacle for them'. The onset of the truce immediately after the town's fall would avert an Egyptian attack.[47]

Alon assigned the 12th Brigade to assault Be'er Sheva, in spite of his and Mula Cohen's—the commander of the Yitfah Brigade—reservations about the competence of the 12th Brigade to accomplish the mission. The brigade recalled its forces from their various locations around the Negev and deployed them at Kibbutz Shoval, 20 km north of Be'er Sheva. On the evening of 21 October, the 7th and 9th Battalions, supported by 8th Brigade armor, stormed and took Be'er Sheva. The way was now open to the communities of Bayt Eshel and Nevatim, which had been cut off for months.[48]

The conquest of Be'er Sheva made it absolutely imperative to take Iraq Suwaydan and the outposts on the Egyptians' Burma Road. As noted, the Egyptians' 4th Brigade was almost completely encircled, and the only route on which the brigade commander could attempt to break through the IDF positions was the western axis. It was therefore necessary to capture both the fortress and the outposts, in order to complete the 4th Brigade's encirclement. Both missions were assigned to Givati.[49] The commander of the two Egyptian companies at the fortress anticipated the IDF's attack, which was executed by the 51st Battalion on the night of 21/22 October. One Israeli company was designated for the task, supported by a massive artillery barrage, which began during the afternoon and included the use of tear gas shells—which had no discernible effect on the Egyptians. The air force also bombed the site. However, whatever impact this severe pounding may have had was lost because the company was not prepared to launch an assault immediately upon its conclusion. The attack itself, when it finally came, was slipshod; one reason for this was that a platoon was ordered to storm the site, but the order 'was not carried out'. By now the dawn was breaking and the company commander decided to order a retreat. This was the sixth failed attack on Iraq Suwaydan.[50] The simultaneous attack by the

53rd Battalion, supported by the 'Samson's Foxes' unit, on the positions along the Burma Road south of Karatiyya, also ended in failure.[51] At midday on 22 October, the Front commander informed his forces that the government had 'acceded to the mediator's request to order a cease-fire today at 3 p.m.'.[52]

Cease-fire

The onset of the cease-fire marked the conclusion of Operation Yoav. The war was not yet over and hostilities would continue, but the operation, as a military event with specific objectives, was over. The General Staff could be satisfied with the results: Israeli control of the Negev was assured, even if Egyptian forces still remained in the region. General Alon had also improved a General Staff plan which had made effective use of the IDF's advantages while preventing the Egyptians from exploiting theirs. Alon's forces had split the Egyptian deployment on the al-Majdal– Bayt Jibrin road by penetrating its weak points, and had killed or besieged the enemy forces there—one way or the other, they were no longer a factor in the war. Egyptian forces were cut off mainly at two locations: from Gaza northward along the coastal road by means of a blocking deployment mounted by Yitfah around Bayt Hanun on the Gaza–al-Majdal–Isdud road and at Faluja (Kiryat Gat). In addition, three battalions were trapped in the area stretching approximately from the police fortress at Iraq Suwaydan to the fortress at Iraq al-Manshiyya. The Egyptian presence was maintained from Bir 'Asluj southward. The IDF seized Isdud and al-Majdal on the coastal road, but the Egyptian forces there had succeeded in retreating to the south on the very eve of the truce. Yitfah forces located and sealed the hole, but it emerged that most of the Egyptian troops north of the blockade had been able to slip through, rescuing themselves from the fate of the 4th Brigade, who came under siege in the Faluja enclave. At the beginning of November, the Egyptian forces north of the blockade and south of Majdal completed the paving of the sandy coast with a metal netting on which they moved a convoy of hundreds of vehicles, leaving the entire coastal strip north of Bayt Hanun in the hands of the IDF.[53]

There can be no doubt that the IDF's successes in this operation were made possible by the fact that the other Arab Armies did not intervene, contrary to the fears of the Israeli leadership. At no stage did the IDF confront a combined Arab deployment. In the middle of the Israeli offensive, the Egyptian government asked the Iraqi government to order

its army to launch a counterattack in the north, but the Iraqi command refused the request.[54] Arab disunity in general, and Egypt's isolation in particular, was exposed in the meeting of the Political Committee of the Arab League in Amman, held on 23–26 October. At the first meeting, Nokrashi Pasha took the wind out of everybody's sails by saying that the situation of the Egyptian Army was excellent and that it was moving forward to further victories. At the second meeting, which included the military commanders, the Egyptian Premier modified his attitude by tabling a complaint that no one had come to the assistance of the Egyptian forces when they were attacked and demanding that plans should be made to ensure that this unfortunate occurrence was not repeated. The Syrian Premier then produced an offer to recapture Nazareth and Safad if the Iraqis would move up to Afula. This offer left everyone speechless once more, but it did enable the Iraqis to decline on the grounds that they might have a role to play in the north in taking over the Latrun area from the Arab Legion, thus freeing Legion units to move to Hebron and Bethlehem and fill the gap there. No one mentioned to the Iraqis how they had rejected this very idea during the recent major Israeli offensive. The meeting ended without any decision being taken on any subject at all.[55] Similarly, later efforts by the Chiefs of Staff of the Arab forces fighting in Palestine to coordinate joint action and extricate the Egyptian Brigade trapped at Faluja also came to nothing.[56]

The discord within the Arab camp played into Israel's hands, allowing the IDF to operate almost freely and focus their main effort on one Front. This was, in fact, one of the aspects that Ben-Gurion singled out as one of the operation's achievements: as he saw it, the operation had exposed Arab disunity, a point that also held out strategic possibilities for the future. A second achievement was the conquest of Be'er Sheva, which he considered more of an accomplishment in political and morale terms than in military ones. In addition, the operation had bolstered Israel's case in the political struggle for the Negev. Yet another achievement of the operation, in Ben-Gurion's eyes, was that it had dealt a death-blow to the idea of the All Palestine Government which the Egyptians had intended to realize in the Gaza Strip.[57] The significance of this was entirely political, as the All Palestine Government constituted a challenge to the Israeli attempt to determine political issues by means of military activity on the Jewish–Palestinian Front. The collapse of the Palestinian government idea was thus consistent with the vigorous Israeli attempts since June/July to recast the demographic structure in the areas it controlled and to extend its control to areas originally designated for the Arab State.

With the operation's conclusion, the Israeli government and the IDF High Command assumed a waiting posture. Two major operations had been concluded with considerable success: in the north, Operation Hiram had taken Israeli forces across the international border with Lebanon, and in the south, an important step had been taken toward terminating the Egyptian presence in Mandatory Palestine. In addition, two operations carried out in the southern section of the Jerusalem Corridor had brought about the expansion of the corridor. The UN General Assembly was meeting in Paris, and the Israeli government decided to wait and see what international reaction would be before ordering the IDF to go on the offensive again.

Activity in the International Arena in the Wake of Operation Yoav

The IDF's activity in October was placed on the Security Council's agenda for 26 October. The Israeli leadership's impression was that a scheme was being concocted under the stewardship of the British delegation, aimed at enhancing British influence in Egypt in return for Cairo's acceptance of a Security Council Resolution that would call on Israel to withdraw from the territories it had captured in Operation Yoav. On 4 November, following two weeks of deliberations, the Council adopted Bunche's call to both sides, on 26 October, to pull back to the lines of 14 October. Israel, in other words, was told to withdraw from Be'er Sheva and from its recent conquests in the Negev. The resolution also called on both sides to conduct negotiations, through acting mediator Bunche, on the establishment of 'permanent armistice lines'.[58] The Council rejected Israel's argument that it had been entitled to react to Egypt's refusal to permit the passage of convoys to the Negev, and intended to enforce Israeli implementation of the resolution by appointing a special committee that would oversee the IDF's withdrawal. Israel's envoys said this was unacceptable and recalled the statement of the acting mediator, that the forces that were placed in the settlements in the Negev, and which were part of their defense system, should not be subjected to the withdrawal order. They added that the mobile forces in the field also had a role in the defense of the settlements. The Israeli mission therefore was able to neutralize the Council's initiative.[59] This diplomatic give-and-take was the constant backdrop to the military activity in the Negev, and Yadin was sent to Paris to explain the situation. Shertok questioned the logic of such activity at this time and

warned Ben-Gurion against it. But his cable reached the Prime Minister as the shelling of Iraq Suwaydan was at its height.[60]

Despite success at the United Nations, the Israeli leadership was still troubled by the Security Council Resolution. Another critical factor was an attempt by the Egyptians to enter into a dialogue with Israel over a settlement. Following the October fighting, Egyptian envoys made contact with their Israeli counterparts and asked them what Israel's terms were for signing an armistice agreement. The Egyptians proposed that such a settlement be based on the IDF's evacuation of territories it had conquered which had not been designated as part of the Jewish State in the Partition Resolution of 1947. In addition, the Egyptians sought to establish a presence in a strip of land extending from Isdud to Rafah.[61] The situation of the 4th Brigade undoubtedly influenced the Egyptians' decision to pursue a settlement. Sayyid Taha Bey, its commander, was tired of sending messages to his superior in Gaza in which he described the desperate condition of his men and of rejecting proposals to extricate them by military means. At the same time, he rebuffed the proposal/demand of the Southern Front Command that he surrender. His proposal to his commanding general was that either Egyptian forces should break through to his sector from Gaza, or that a political decision be reached with all speed that would put an end to the state of siege in which he found himself.[62]

On 4 November 1948, the Israeli Cabinet rejected the ideas put forward by the Egyptians and formulated principles for negotiating a settlement. In doing so, the Cabinet tried to take advantage of the latent potential in the military and political advantages that Israel enjoyed. Thus, every area that had been obtained by military means—or that Israel believed could be obtained militarily, even if outside the Partition boundaries—would be considered Israeli territory. It went without saying that the territories designated for the Jewish State in the Partition Resolution, but which had not yet been reached by the IDF, would similarly be considered Israeli territory. The Cabinet also asserted that Egypt would not obtain a foothold beyond the international boundary line, including the Gaza Strip, and that the southern Negev as far as 'the 'Aqaba coast' would revert to Israel on the basis of the Partition Resolution. As for the other territories outside the Partition Lines—which were held in part by Israel and in part by Egypt—they would be the subject of negotiations to be held between Israel and the representatives of the Palestinian Arab State. The implication of this last point was that the entire Negev, north and south, would be transferred to Israel's possession, since there was no Palestinian Arab state and, consequently,

there were no representatives. At the same time, the Cabinet agreed to grant Egypt the desert region that 'extends from [Rafah] to the south-east, and which was designated in the 29 November Resolution as part of the Arab State'.[63]

As for the Security Council Resolutions, Israel moved to reduce their potential damage. The premise was that Israel's military strength had induced the Egyptian attempts at diplomacy. Therefore, Israeli diplomatic activity was geared to getting the Security Council to appoint a large commission, of limited authority, to examine the situation in Palestine. Shertok expected that such a commission 'will not intervene in [our] affairs and will not come to a decision, but at most, in the absence of agreement, will bring its recommendations to the next [meeting of the] General Assembly'. By then, Shertok hoped, Israel would have achieved its goals.[64]

In the meantime, Israel set about imposing its sovereignty on the territories that the IDF had conquered in the south, while Israeli forces operated to eliminate Egyptian 'pockets' within Israeli-controlled territory. The Southern Front Command deployed its forces to focus on three objectives: preventing possible Egyptian military activity from the direction of Gaza, preventing the possibility of a breakout from Faluja toward Hebron, or in the opposite direction, and sealing the area for which the Front was responsible against forces trying to infiltrate it. The 12th, the 10th and the 5th Brigades were given missions that would be in line with the above-mentioned objectives.[65] The 8th Brigade's commando unit was transferred to the Southern Front, while the 9th Brigade was sent north to assist in repulsing the forces of Fawzi al-Qawukji's ALA, which had launched an offensive at Manara on the Lebanese border.[66]

In the eastern sector, the IDF tightened its grip after the truce in order to prevent Egyptian movement from the Faluja pocket to Hebron. The fact that the IDF's moves also extended Israel's area of control was a further incentive to act. 'In continuation' of Operation Yoav, the General Staff directed the Southern Front Command 'to seize additional tactical positions' to the south and north of Faluja in order to seal the pocket where the Egyptian 4th Brigade was trapped. At the same time, the General Staff cautioned the Southern Front not to bring about the resumption of hostilities and to seize only those positions 'that are not held by the enemy'.[67] The area between Bayt Jibrin and al-Dawayima was inhabited by Arabs and could be used by Egyptian forces stationed around Mount Hebron to link up with the encircled 4th Brigade, or by the 4th Brigade in an attempt to break through the Israeli

lines. The General Staff therefore ordered the forces in the south to occupy the tactical positions east of the Egyptians, on the slopes of Mount Hebron. It was after the 5th Brigade's 52nd Battalion failed twice in its attempts to occupy the Bayt Jibrin police station as part of the effort to close off the area between the Hebron hills and the Faluja pocket, that the 89th Battalion of the 8th Brigade captured it, on 27 October. The 89th also took Dawayima, while forces of the 54th Battalion cleansed the Bayt Jibrin–Har Tuv area and thus brought about Israeli territorial continuity between Front D and the Harel Brigade and the Central Front (C).[68]

The attack on Dawayima produced one of the war's most savage incidents. The 89th Battalion had been ordered to raid the village 'with the aim [of] forcing the inhabitants to flee and blowing up the major buildings in the village and mining it'.[69] However, the Israeli troops went well beyond the order and perpetrated a massacre in which dozens of Arab civilians were slaughtered.[70] This incident, although of unusual scope, was not the first of its kind. The commander of the 8th Brigade, Yitzhak Sadeh, was ordered to investigate, and a few days later Alon also had the incident probed by the Front's general prosecutor. 'If guilty parties are found, they must be tried immediately', Alon said in the order.[71] The existing archival material is silent on the results of the investigation and on how the episode ended.

As the fighting concluded, a special effort was made to eliminate the Faluja pocket, which the Southern Front and the General Staff thought might trigger an Egyptian offensive. Their assessments were backed up by reports and exchanges of messages between the encircled brigade and the headquarters of the Egyptians' expeditionary force in Gaza, in which the commander of the 4th Brigade bemoaned the condition of his men and expressed his hope or intention of slashing through the Israeli lines. Alternatively, he once more urged his superiors in Gaza to launch an assault that would break the siege.[72] From late in October, then, the IDF took steps to force the brigade to surrender, but without violating the truce. Alon thought the brigade could hold out for two weeks, and therefore ordered his forces to tighten the siege, to locate possible points where the Egyptians might effect a breakthrough and to prevent attempts to get supplies and equipment to the encircled troops by land or air.[73] The elimination of the Faluja pocket would also enable the IDF to free troops from the Southern Front for possible missions to expand Israeli control around Jerusalem and on the roads leading to the city.[74]

One stage on the road to eliminating the Faluja pocket— also an end in itself—was the conquest of the Iraq Suwaydan police fortress and

Iraq al-Manshiyya. The missions were assigned to the 5th and 8th Brigades.[75] Sobered by the experience of the six previous failed attacks, Sadeh took advantage of the fact that the IDF was not engaged in hostilities, amassed a large artillery force opposite the fortress and launched a massive barrage on the police fortress. After an artillery barrage that went on for hours, forces of the 8th Brigade's 89th and 82nd Battalions stormed the fortress and took it easily. The Egyptian forces in the western sector of the pocket withdrew eastward, into the heart of the pocket, evacuating Bayt 'Affa and the village of Iraq Suwaydan in the process.[76] Givati forces occupied the outposts abandoned by the Egyptians, thus further boxing in the 4th Brigade, which was now confined to the Faluja–Iraq al-Manshiyya area.[77] The IDF also seized control (without a battle) of the area between al-Majdal and the Gaza Strip, from which the Egyptian forces had withdrawn on 5 November.[78] At the same time, the Israeli land settlement authorities drew up plans to establish new Jewish communities in the Negev and began moving Jews into Be'er Sheva.[79]

In the meantime, Shertok's reports from the UN meeting in Paris noted rising anger at the Israeli actions, which had violated the spirit of the Security Council's Resolutions. Shertok's reports disturbed Ben-Gurion, not because of what the United Nations might do, which was of little account to him, but because of the possible reaction of Britain to the Israeli military activity in the Negev. If the United Nations imposed sanctions on Israel, Britain, Ben-Gurion believed, would take advantage of the opportunity: 'If the UN declares Israel an aggressor state that is in violation of the Security Council's Resolutions, that would smooth the way for England [to dispatch] a large aerial force … in order to alter the military situation.' As Ben-Gurion saw the situation, the entry of the Royal Air Force into the war 'is liable to change the campaign substantially'.[80]

Although the Israelis did not know it, the British Foreign Office had in fact considered the possibility of urging sanctions against Israel if it did not accede to the UN's call of 4 November. Foreign Office officials thought it unlikely that sanctions would in fact be imposed, but proposed that the British government press for the lifting of the Security Council embargo on arms shipments to the Middle East, following which Britain could resume arms supplies to its Arab allies. The result would be to tilt the arms balance in the Arabs' favor, a development that would serve British interests by reinforcing the Arab regimes and the regional defense alignment. Now it would be possible to portray control of arms shipments as a measure to protect Arab States against Jewish

aggression. In addition, the author of the Foreign Office document proposed economic and other measures against Israel, even a boycott, if it failed to comply with the UN's demand and to implement the Bernadotte recommendations.[81] However, the British government took no concrete steps in the wake of the Foreign Office proposals.

The struggle at the United Nations was not, basically, about Israeli activity after 22 October; the major theme that preoccupied the world body in Paris was Israel's conquests up to 22 October. On 14 November, the UN mediator sent a message to the Israeli government insisting that it fulfill the 4 November Resolution and withdraw to the lines held by the IDF on 14 October. Bunche also said that Be'er Sheva must be evacuated and become a demilitarized Arab city under an Egyptian governor. Ben-Gurion rejected Bunche's letter, claiming that the forces Bunche mentioned had only reinforced existing sites and had already withdrawn. In other words, Israel claimed that the IDF's operations in October had not changed the military *status quo* in the Negev. As to IDF presence in Be'er Sheva, the Israeli government stated that it was essential in order to protect the residents against 'acts of robbery by irregular forces, which will constitute a constant threat to the security of the area's inhabitants'.[82]

Effectively, then, the Israeli government rejected the call by the mediator and by the Security Council that it withdraw to the lines of 14 October. Ben-Gurion's fear of sanctions was dispelled by information that reached him, to the effect that President Truman had decided against imposing sanctions, even if Israel did not obey the 4 November Security Council Resolution.[83] Israel felt its position bolstered by the Security Council's Resolution of 16 November, which, although it reiterated the call for a withdrawal of forces, added a call to both sides to begin negotiations on an armistice agreement. Israeli statesmanship had a hand in bringing about this formulation, lobbying for it in an effort to deflect criticism from Israel for its refusal to return to the 14 October lines. Shertok, who was the head of the delegation, saw several advantages in armistice talks:

> First, this will require direct negotiations between the sides; second, it may produce more stable boundaries than those that will be decided at the concurrence of the two sides; third, tactically, this represents a positive way out of the distress into which the issue of the boundaries in the Negev has fallen due to the negative and regressive attitude of the Security Council; and, fourth, acceptance of the principle of mutual negotiations on an armistice

> may defer for the time being the discussion on Israel's borders and help get the hostilities in the Negev removed from the agenda.[84]

The cardinal reasons for Israel's aspiration to conduct talks on an armistice, and not to be satisfied with anything less than peace discussions, lay in the third and fourth reasons cited by Shertok. Underlying these was Israel's apprehension of having to hold talks on the basis of 'Bernadotte's testament', which entailed conceding the Negev. Israel preferred talks that would perpetuate the *status quo* and would not compel it to address the question of its borders on the basis of the Bernadotte Plan or even the Partition Resolution. On 11 December 1948, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution which referred to the mediator's recommendations and contained elements that were inconvenient for Israel, but which said nothing 'about tearing away the Negev from Israel and how to deal with the Arab territories of the western Land of Israel'.[85]

There was also a tactical aspect to Israel's desire to initiate a resolution calling for armistice talks. With Israel facing international criticism for its actions in the Negev, the country's leaders believed that a call to hold talks would assist Israel in rehabilitating its international status and turn the critical spotlight on the Arab States. Israel would respond quickly to the call, whereas the Arab States would reject it, Shertok believed, and so they would be subjected to the diplomatic pressure that had previously been exerted on Israel.[86] However, diplomatic activity outpaced military developments. Although the Security Council Resolution of 16 November called on both sides to enter into armistice negotiations, as requested by Israel, at this stage Israel was not yet ready to break off hostilities and discuss an armistice. The Egyptians still had forces across the international border, a situation Israel was unwilling to accept. Shertok, however, urged that Israel not take a defiant stand toward the resolution but play for time by proposing meaningless concessions on the coastal strip while continuing to deepen its hold in the central and eastern Negev.[87] Ben-Gurion found this approach compatible with his view of how Israel should proceed. The result was that Israel, in its reply to the UN Resolution of 16 November, declared its readiness to withdraw from a certain section on the coastal strip.[88] At the same time, Shertok led an Israeli campaign at the United Nations to avert a resolution on Israel's borders.[89]

NOTES

1. Annex to a Daily Report, 28 September 1948, IDFA 5879/49/22; South Front/Intelligence: Enemy Forces Deployment on 29 September 1948, IDFA 1041/49/29; South Front/Intelligence: Enemy Forces Deployment on 6 October 1948, ibid.; Ilan, *The Origin of the Arab–Israeli Arms Race*, p. 64.
2. South Front/Intelligence: Enemy Forces Deployment on 29 September 1948, IDFA 1041/49/29.
3. Intelligence Service 1: A Weekly Intelligence Report, 26 August 1948, and 9 September 1948, IDFA 1041/49/28.
4. Foreign Office to Cairo, 22 July 1948, FO 371/68641.
5. HM Consul General, Jerusalem, to Foreign Office, 5 August 1948, E10460, FO 371/68641.
6. Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, p. 417.
7. Dundas, Damascus, to Foreign Office, 16 September 1948, E12174, FO 371/68641.
8. General Staff/Operation to South Front/Commander, 16 August and 5 September 1948, IDFA 6127/49/93.
9. General Staff/Operation to South Front/Commander, 16 August and 5 September 1948, IDFA 6127/49/93.
10. Eser is 'Ten' in Hebrew—after the ten hits inflicted upon the ancient Egyptians following Pariah's refusal to set free the enslaved Jews.
11. 5th Brigade: Operation Annihilation, 15 August 1948, IDFA 7011/49/5.
12. See Chapter 7.
13. General Staff/Operations to South Front/Commander, 16 August and 5 September 1948, IDFA 6127/49/93.
14. BGWD, p. 739, 8 October 1948.
15. BGWD, p. 737, 7 October 1948.
16. Alon, *Contriving Warfare*, p. 51.
17. South Front/Commander to General Staff/Operations, 7 October 1948, IDFA 2539/50/69; South Front/Operations: Yoav Operation Order, 10 October 1948, IDFA 1749/50/25.
18. Yitzhak Rabin, *Service Notebook*, Vol. 1 (Tel Aviv, 1979) (Hebrew), p. 65.
19. Ibid.
20. South Front/Intelligence: Action Report No. 1, 16 October 1948, IDFA 1041/49/28; *Ha'Palmah Book 2*, p. 628.
21. Compare South Front/Operations: Yoav Operation Order, 10 October 1948, IDFA 1749/50/25 with Alon, *Contriving Warfare*, p. 81. Alon's version in his speech is problematic, as he did not mention the fact that it was his former commander who forced him to make changes in his original plans. See ibid., pp. 52–3, 81–2.
22. South Front/Intelligence: Action Report No. 1, 16 October 1948, IDFA 1041/49/28; Rabin, *Service Notebook*, Vol. 1, p. 66; Narkis, *Soldier of Jerusalem*, pp. 107–8; Brezner, *Origins of Armored Corps*, pp. 197–8.
23. Alon, *Contriving Warfare*, p. 82; Cohen, *By Light and in Darkness*, pp. 176–8; Rabin, *Service Notebook*, Vol. 1, p. 66.
24. Cohen, *By Light and in Darkness*, pp. 178–80.
25. Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 444–9.
26. Ibid., pp. 440–2.
27. Ibid., pp. 457–77.
28. Ibid., pp. 477–83.
29. BGWD, pp. 749–50, 16 October 1948.
30. South Front/Operations: Operation Order, 17 October 1948, IDFA 979/51/17; South Front/Operations: Operation Yoav Order, 17 October 1948, IDFA 1749/50/25; 5th

Brigade: Yoav Operation Activity Order for 17–18 October 1948, 17 October 1948, IDFA 7011/49/5.

31. South Front/Intelligence: Activity Report No. 4, 180600–190600, 19 October 1948, IDFA 879/49/22; memorandum: Givati Intelligence, 18 October 1948, IDFA 6127/49/93; memorandum: South Front, 18 October 1948, ibid.; Cohen, *By Light and in Darkness*, pp. 180–1; BGWD, p. 751, entry for 18 October 1948.
32. Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 489–90.
33. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 19 October 1948, E13501, FO 371/68689.
34. BGWD, pp. 748–9, entry for 16 October 1948.
35. M. Shertok to W. Eytan, 17 October 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, 2, pp. 64–5.
36. Editor's Note, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, 2, p. 72; A. Eban to W. Eytan, 17 October 1948, ibid., p. 73; M. Shertok to D. Ben-Gurion, 20 October 1948, ibid., p. 76.
37. P. Mohan to W. Eytan, 20 October 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, 2, p. 76; W. Eytan to P. Mohan, 21 October 1948, ibid., p. 77.
38. South Front/Operations to the Front Brigades/Commanders, 19 October 1948, IDFA 979/51/71.
39. South Front/Intelligence: Initial Interrogation of a Captured Egyptain Officer, 20 October 1948, IDFA 1041/49/3; Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 494–5.
40. Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 494–524.
41. Ibid., pp. 525–32.
42. Elhanan Oren, 'Be'er Sheva in the Negev Campaigns, 1939–1949,' in Yehuda Gardus *et al.* (eds), *Be'er Sheva Book* (Jerusalem, 1979) (Hebrew), p. 133.
43. Alon, *Contriving Warfare*, pp. 53–4; Cohen, *By Light and in Darkness*, p. 181; South Front/Operations to the Front Brigades, 19 October 1948, IDFA 979/51/71; BGWD, p. 755, entry for 20 October 1948.
44. Ibid.
45. BGWD, p. 756, entry for 21 October 1948.
46. Ben-Gurion, *The Restored State of Israel*, pp. 300–1.
47. BGWD, p. 760, entry for 22 October 1948.
48. Daily Summary, 21 October 1948, IDFA 7011/49/5; Alon, *Contriving Warfare*, pp. 53–4; ; Cohen, *By Light and in Darkness*, pp. 181–5; Narkis, *Soldier of Jerusalem*, pp. 111–12.
49. 5th Brigade to the Brigade's Battalions, 21 October 1948, IDFA 7011/49/5; Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, p. 536.
50. 51st Battalion/Intelligence: Report Iraq Suweidan Fortress Operation on the Night of 21–22 October 1948, IDFA 1041/49/3.
51. Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 546–8.
52. South Front/Operations to the Front Brigades, 22 October 1948, IDFA 2539/50/69.
53. BGWD, pp. 761–2, entry for 22 October 1948 and pp. 786–7, entry for 30 October 1948; ibid., pp. 785–6, 29 October 1948; South Front /HQ to 5th Brigade, 28 October 1948, IDFA 979/71/17; 5th Brigade to the Brigade's Battalions, 4 November 1948, IDFA 7011/49/5; telegram no. 871 from Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to Foreign Office, 10 November 1948, FO 371/68690.
54. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 19 October 1948, E13501, FO 371/68689.
55. Telegram no. 825 from HM Minister, Amman, to Secretary of State, Foreign Office London, 25 October 1948, FO 816/131. Here again, Rogan's reliance on secondary sources is the cause of his inaccurate description of the whole event: Rogan, 'Jordan and 1948', p. 115.
56. *Behind the Curtain*, pp. 167–71.

57. BGWD, p. 765, 23 October 1948; R. Shiloah to M. Shertok, 24 October 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, 2, p. 87.
58. P. Mohan to M. Shertok, 26 October 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, 2, pp. 97–9; A. Eban to A. Lourie, 31 October 1948, ibid., p. 117; the Security Council Resolution of 4 November 1948 is in ibid. 2, pp. 623–4; Ben-Gurion, *The Restored State of Israel*, p. 323.
59. Moshe Shertok, *At the Nation's Gate* (Tel Aviv, 1958) (Hebrew), p. 334.
60. Ben-Gurion, *The Restored State of Israel*, p. 325; BGWD, p. 807, 10 November 1948; M. Shertok to W. Eytan, 10 November 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, 2, p. 158.
61. E. Sasson to M. Shertok, 2 November 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, 2, p. 125; Ben-Gurion, *The Restored State of Israel*, p. 313.
62. The cables are printed in Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 589–92; Cohen, *By Light and in Darkness*, pp. 195–6, 203–4, 211; on Alon–Taha Bey talks see Cohen, ibid., pp. 207–11; South Front/HQ to 5th Brigade, 12 November 1948, IDFA 1749/50/25.
63. M. Shertok to A. Eban, 4 November 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, 2, p. 137; Ben-Gurion, *The Restored State of Israel*, pp. 312–16.
64. M. Shertok to G. Meyerson, 5 November 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, 2, p. 142.
65. South Front/Operations: HQ Meeting, 23 October 1948, IDFA 979/51/17.
66. General Staff/Operations to South Front, 24 October 1948, IDFA 6127/49/93; BGWD, pp. 769–70, 24 October 1948.
67. General Staff/Operations to South Front, 22 October 1948, IDFA 6127/49/93.
68. Ibid.; 5th Brigade to the Brigade's Battalions, 23 October 1948, IDFA 7011/49/5; BGWD, pp. 769–70, , 24 October 1948; 5th Brigade to the 53rd Battalion, 27 October 1948, IDFA 7011/49/5; Cohen, *By Light and in Darkness*, p. 185.
69. South Front/Operations to the 89th Battalion/8th Brigade, 25 October 1948, IDFA 979/51/17.
70. Daily Summary, 1 November 1948, IDFA 7011/49/5.
71. South Front/Commander to 8th Brigade/Commander, 31 October 1948, IDFA 2539/50/69; South Front/Commander to Front's General Attorney, 5 November 1948, ibid.
72. Daily Summary, 31 October 1948, IDFA 7011/49/5; BGWD, p. 795, entry for 3 November 1948.
73. BGWD, p. 786, entry for 30 October 1948 and p. 790, entry for 31 October 1948; 5th Brigade to the 52nd and 54th Battalions, 31 October 1948, IDFA 7011/49/5; 8th Brigade to the Brigade's Battalions, 1 November 1948, IDFA 1749/50/25.
74. BGWD, p. 786, entry for 30 October 1948 and p. 799, entry for 5 November 1948.
75. South Front/Operations to the 5th and 8th Brigades, 2 November 1948, IDFA 979/51/17.
76. See Yitzhak Sade, *The Conquest of the Fortress*; Merhavya, 1950, South Front/Operations to the 8th Brigade, 7 November 1948, IDFA 979/51/17; 8th Brigade to the Brigade's Battalions, 9 November 1948, IDFA 1749/50/25.
77. 5th Brigade to the Brigade's Battalions, 10 November 1948, IDFA 7011/49/5; South Front/Operations to the 5th Brigade, 12 November 1948, IDFA 1749/50/25.
78. Ben-Gurion, *The Restored State of Israel*, pp. 324–5.
79. BGWD, p. 799, entry for 6 November 1948.
80. Ben-Gurion speech at the Mapai Center Meeting, 30 November 1948, LPA 23/48; BGWD, p. 805, entry for 9 November 1948 and pp. 807–9, entry for 10 November 1948; *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, 2, p. 153, note 2.
81. Minute: 'Palestine, Possible Application of Sanctions', 10 November 1948, FO 371/68702.

82. P. Mohan to W. Eytan, 14 November 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, 2, pp. 175–6; W. Eytan to P. Mohan, 18 November 1948, ibid., pp. 198–201; Ben-Gurion, *The Restored State of Israel*, pp. 325–7.
83. BGWD, p. 831, entry for 18 November 1948; memorandum by M. Komay, 15 November 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, 2, pp. 181–2.
84. Ben-Gurion, *The Restored State of Israel*, pp. 329–30; Shertok, *Beshaar Haumot*, p. 334; A. Eban to P. Jessup, 11 November 1948, *Israel Documents* 2, pp. 158–60; M. Shertok to E. Eylat, November 1948, ibid., pp. 160–1; Security Council Resolution is in *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, 2, pp. 179–80.
85. Shertok, *At the Nation's Gate*, pp. 335–6.
86. Ibid., pp. 334-5
87. Meeting of the Israeli Delegation to the UN General Assembly Session, 17 November 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, 2, pp. 192–3.
88. W. Eytan to P. Mohan, 18 November 1984, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, 2, p. 200.
89. M. Shertok to E. Eylat, 19 November 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, 2, p. 204.

13

Jordan–Israel: A Permanent Cease-Fire Agreement

The fighting on the Israeli–Jordanian Front reached an end with the imposition of the second truce, on 19 July. Random clashes and exchanges of fire took place from time to time, but the overall climate prevailing was one of agreement. The most conspicuous sign of this was the Permanent Cease-Fire Agreement signed in November by the military commanders of the city, the Arab and the Jewish, Abdullah al-Tall and Moshe Dayan. The road to the agreement though was marred by random spasms of violence that threatened to ignite the Israeli–Jordanian front.

On the face of it, it seemed that when the second truce came into effect it would be easy to solve the outstanding problems between Israel and Transjordan, and to resume the friendly relations that existed before the war between the Jewish leadership and King Abdullah. The fighting over Jerusalem and the road to the city was decided in a way that removed any serious and immediate need on Israel's part to continue the fighting. The presence of the Arab Legion in the West Bank in return was not necessarily bad news for the Israelis, as they had no aspirations on that part of the country. Although Israel did not trade the West Bank for Abdullah preventing the establishment of a Husaynian Palestinian state, Ben-Gurion had no intention of occupying the West Bank, for reasons that have raised a historiographical debate. Nothing seemed to stand in the way of a Jewish–Jordanian agreement. That, however, did not happen, and the reasons are not difficult to explain. Abdullah was unable to sign a separate peace agreement with Israel. His conduct of the Palestine campaign had given rise to heavy criticism against him among members of the Arab League and in Arab public opinion, and a separate peace agreement with Israel would undoubtedly have led to the adoption of punitive measures against him by the Arab League. His ideas about the nature of the final arrangement were therefore either another obstacle—perhaps to an arrangement with Israel—

deliberate. Abdullah claimed that the Arab areas of Palestine should be attached to Transjordan and these should also include the Negev, Jaffa and parts of Western Galilee.[1] There was no chance that Israel would negotiate an agreement on the basis of these ideas, and King Abdullah must have known that. In any case, the Jordanian Prime Minister sent a letter to the British Foreign Minister, Bevin, in which he solemnly promised that 'Neither His Majesty nor myself … have any intention of resuming fighting.'[2] The fact that the promise was given in a letter requesting arms might have slightly diminished the validity of this pledge, but it was nevertheless in line with the Jordanian position as we know it.

However, the situation in Jerusalem and in Latrun seemed to bring both sides to the verge of resuming the fighting more than once. In Jerusalem, Dayan replaced Shaltiel and shortly afterwards changes were made in the military structure of the IDF forces in the city. The 6th Brigade, which consisted of seven infantry battalions and two Guard Force battalions, was divided into two: the 6th Brigade, the mobile fighting force, which consisted of three battalions (61st, 62nd, 64th) and the supporting units, whose commander was Dayan; and the 16th District Brigade which consisted of four battalions (63rd, 65th, 66th, and 67th) and the two Guard Force battalions. Dayan was the senior military authority in the city, and his and the 16th Brigades were put under the command of the newly created central command, whose commander was General Zvi Ayalon.[3]

One major problem that Dayan had to deal with was the mutual sniping that had become a daily occurrence, and to which the Jewish population responded by leaving the city. Of the 100,000 Jews living in the city in December 1947, less than 70,000 remained in November 1948. The problem was more acute, as those who left were the affluent, who could afford to leave, and consequently the economic life of the city was further weakened.[4] American diplomats put the blame for the new eruption of violence and shooting on the arrival to the city of the new 6th Brigade commander, Moshe Dayan—'the fighter'—who was replacing the 'administrator and politician' Shaltiel.[5] The commander of the District Brigade admitted that the Jews were the main instigators of the shooting, but he claimed that the Jordanians had started the clashes as, fearing a Jewish attack on the old city, they tried to improve their positions along the old city's walls. Their attempts were thwarted, but the Jews responded forcefully, and Dayan's influence was definitely a factor. The Jordanians were worried by the Jews' response, as they feared that the Jews were planning to escalate this episode into an all-out fight in

Jerusalem, in order to expel the Legion from the city. This possibility scared the Jordanians as, owing to a lack of artillery or mortar ammunition, the Legion was unable to thwart a major Jewish attack.[6]

Count Bernadotte acted to stop the firing, but the Israelis weakened the effectiveness of his mediation through their struggle against the internationalization of Jerusalem. The United Nations Partition Resolution stipulated that an international body would rule Jerusalem, and Bernadotte reiterated the internationalization idea in his Plan. While acting in Jerusalem to improve the Israeli hold in the city, Israel's political representative, Golda Meyerson, expressed its total rejection of the idea of internationalization. Meyerson claimed that Israel was ready to see the city divided: the New City to be part of Israel, and the Old City, to be considered as a museum and to be given some sort of international status under the UN. She also added that 'Israel must have all the Negev', and that immigration to Israel must be unrestricted.[7] What is interesting about this statement by Meyerson is Israel's admission that it had no claim to sovereignty over the Old City.

Another source of friction was Latrun. There were two problems: the road and the pumping station. Through mediation by UN observers, an agreement had been reached, according to which the Jews were allowed to use the Latrun–Bab al-Wad road; but when an Israeli car tried to cross the road on 29 July, the legionnaires would not allow him to pass. The IDF made plans for a military operation intended to establish undisturbed passage for Israeli convoys, but the plans were stalled when the negotiations, which were conducted under UN mediation, continued. Another issue that was raised was that of the pumping station in Latrun, which was part of the Ras al-'Ayn–Latrun–Jerusalem pipeline. The pumping station in Latrun remained in the Legion's hands, and the Israelis wanted to regain it. The negotiations on the two subjects were interwoven, and progress seemed to be made, but on 12 August Jordanian soldiers destroyed the pumping station, thus putting an end to the negotiations.[8] Both the road and the pumping station were not irreplaceable, as the traffic to Jerusalem effectively passed along the Burma Road and a new pipeline was installed along the new route so that Jerusalem was no longer dependent on the Latrun pumping station for its water supply. However, the principle was important, and the Jews acted to make both the road and the pumping station in Latrun functional.[9]

The tension in Jerusalem reached boiling point on 17 August. After a series of clashes in the city, which raised the level of the mutual violence, Dayan decided to launch a major attack that would serve as a warning. He ordered the 62nd Battalion to occupy a hill near

Government House in the southeast of Jerusalem. Dayan chose this area for the attack because the area was a no man's land between the Jordanian-controlled and the Egyptian-controlled areas and Arabs used to fire from there toward the Jewish neighborhood. However, the planning of the operation was poor, as the Hill was lower than the one held by the Egyptian forces, thus exposing the Israeli forces to Egyptian fire. The three Arab forces that were deployed in the area—the Jordanians to the north, the Palestinians to the east and the Egyptians to the south—cooperated in their attack against the Israeli force. The result was the retreat of the 62nd Battalion, with 14 of its soldiers killed and 24 wounded. Besides the poor planning of performance, Dayan had not been given permission to occupy the area in the first place and Yadin warned him not to do so again.[10]

The constant friction and tension between the Jewish and Jordanian forces was a source of concern for Abdullah and the Jordanian government. The King took seriously Glubb's reports about the poor situation of the Arab Legion and he acted on two fronts to find a solution. First, he tried to convince the British government to supply the Legion with arms, despite the embargo; and second, he attempted to establish a unified command for the Legion and the Iraqi Armies. The British Ministry of Defense sought American approval for the Jordanian request, but the response from Washington was unfavorable.[11] Abdullah's pursuit of the Iraqi option was just as futile. Abdullah had three objectives in mind when he initiated the approach to the Iraqi government, suggesting the unified command. The first was his desire to share the burden of blame over the Legion's failure to assist al-Ramla and Lydda; the second was his expectation of Iraqi financial assistance; and the third was his hope that through the unified command the Iraqi forces in Palestine would come to the Legion's assistance, if so required. The Iraqi government, realizing Abdullah's reasons for his suggestion, agreed to a unified command, but the structure they offered rendered the whole idea void.[12]

With the failure of these two options, from the summer of 1948, Abdullah attempted to reach some kind of settlement with Israel. One arena was Jerusalem: wishing to reduce the tension in Jerusalem, the King ordered Glubb to dismantle the pro-ex-Mufti Palestinian military forces, known as al-Jihād al-Muqaddas, under the command of Munir Abu al-Fadl. This force was based in northern Jerusalem. The activity unfolding around the All Palestine Government was one reason to act against it. Another more compelling reason was its responsibility for many attacks against the Jewish forces in Jerusalem, which provoked a

Jewish response against the Legion's forces. Fearing a comprehensive Jewish attack on the Legion, King Abdullah instructed that the force be disbanded, and the Legion's forces in Jerusalem carried out the order in early October.[13]

The Jordanians also sought to calm the situation in Jerusalem. An agreement for declaring Mount Scopus and Victoria Augusta Hospital neutral zones was signed on 7 July.[14] The more significant step was the protocol signed between the commanders of the Arab and Jewish forces in Jerusalem, Dayan and al-Tall, on 21 July, defining the lines of the Arab and Jewish positions. Dayan told the American Consul General at Jerusalem, James Macdonald, that he 'considered a Palestine war over' and that he 'now feels matters can be settled by peaceful negotiations'. Al-Tall expressed a similar sentiment.[15] One more step in this direction was the meeting summoned by Bernadotte following the attack on Government House, to discuss an arrangement regarding the area. The three military commanders of the area: Dayan, al-Tall and Ahmad 'Abd al-'Aziz, the commander of the Egyptian forces, attended the meeting, which resulted in an agreement signed on 3 September. The Egyptian commander, al-'Aziz, died in the meantime, after being accidentally shot by one of his soldiers. The agreement was local in nature, and settled the status of Government House as a neutral site, but it was another step toward the pacification of Jerusalem.[16]

On the Verge of Resuming the War

While the military commanders in Jerusalem were building mutual paths of communication and confidence, war nearly broke out again between the IDF and the Legion. The danger of war being resumed was provoked by an incident in which Arab Legion troops seized an IDF tactical position around Modi'in and inflicted about 25 casualties, with another 60 Israelis fled. In a counterattack, the IDF retook the position and the Jordanians withdrew with a considerable amount of booty. In his memoirs, Ben-Gurion says that the Cabinet had refused to approve his proposal, on 16 September, to take advantage of the incident in order to launch a major attack all along the Central Front. One of Ben-Gurion's biographers, Michael Bar-Zohar, calls this decision of the Cabinet an 'everlasting disgrace' in the chapter in which he describes the events surrounding Ben-Gurion's supposed attempts to launch a comprehensive sweep. As Ben-Gurion puts it in his memoirs—the IDF would storm 'Latrun, and from there push on to north of Ramallah and to

Jericho and the Jordan, in order to liberate the Hebron area and Bethlehem in the south and the whole area between Latrun and northern Ramallah as far as Jericho and the Dead Sea'.[17] Nothing of the sort appears in the diary he kept at the time or in the minutes of the Cabinet meeting from which he is ostensibly quoting. The existing records tell us that, following the incident, Ben-Gurion asked Yadin 'whether we have the capability to attack Latrun with a force that will guarantee its capture, and be ready for a general Arab reaction, should it come'. Yadin was doubtful. The IDF would not be able to execute this mission immediately, he said, and was backed up on this by others on the General Staff, who said that an operation along those lines would require forces that were not available in the Latrun arena, as the IDF was getting ready to operate around Jenin and in the Sharon region.[18] However, despite Yadin's reservations, Ben-Gurion once more raised the idea of conquering Latrun in the Cabinet. Ben-Gurion was in fact reacting to what he had been told by a delegation from Jerusalem, which included the city's Military Governor, Dov Joseph, and Mayor David Auster. They had come to present to the Cabinet their position on 'the political line that must be followed in the days ahead in connection with the future of the country and the future of Jerusalem'. Any notion of the internationalization of Jerusalem must be rejected, they told cabinet ministers: the stand adopted must be that Jerusalem is part of Israel. The Cabinet had no doubt that this was in fact Israeli policy and that there would be no concessions regarding Jerusalem, but the delegation's visit gave Ben-Gurion second thoughts about Jerusalem's situation, and prompted to him to add a new item to the Cabinet agenda. Like his colleagues, Ben-Gurion believed that Jerusalem must remain Jewish, but he also held that the existence of a Jewish Jerusalem would be ensured only if Latrun were conquered. 'True, we conquered a new route and we also laid a pipe', he explained, but 'without Latrun this is of no substance, because there is shelling from Latrun … [and] something else happened: on the day before yesterday they shelled the Burma Road. It is not a safe road, and Latrun means Jerusalem.' Ben-Gurion was aware that an IDF action at Latrun could bring about a renewal of hostilities—although, as we saw, this is what he had in mind to begin with. This, however, was as far as Ben-Gurion's plans went. As for the military implications of a move such as he was contemplating, he envisaged the possibility of pushing the Iraqis back at least as far as the Samaria hills and of expanding the Jerusalem Corridor 'in a manner that will place the Bayt Nabala–Ramallah line in our hands'. Ben-Gurion, however, had no intention of launching a comprehensive assault on the Legion, nor did

he mention the conquest of any territory held by the Legion, apart from Latrun. So the 'everlasting shame' view is unsubstantiated in both Ben-Gurion's diary and in the Cabinet protocol. At any event, his colleagues, rejected his proposal to conquer Latrun and perhaps also the Triangle.[19] The existing evidence shows that the Jordanians did not attribute any significance to the incident, and they made no record of it whatsoever, and neither Glubb nor al-Tall in their memoirs, nor Kirkbride in his reports, mentioned the incident.

The next round of the fighting, however, continued on the edge of the Jordanian Front. By mid-October, the Israeli forces launched Operation Yoav against the Egyptian expeditionary force. The operation was directed against the forces in the south of Palestine, but the forces in the Hebron–Bethlehem area were also affected by it. The operation against the Egyptian forces in the south of the Jerusalem Corridor was conducted in order to establish broader Jewish control over the road to Jerusalem. This was necessary not only because it would be safer to extend the Jewish control in that area, but also because a new road was being laid not far away from the area held by the Egyptian forces and they were attacking those working on the road. During September, 19 Israelis were killed and 67 wounded by gun-fire aimed at the road. The launching of Operation Yoav provided an opportunity to widen the area of dispute and to include in it the Bethlehem sector held by the Egyptian forces. Two operations were planned for the Israeli forces in Jerusalem and its area: Operation Hahar (Mountain) and Operation Yekev (Winery). Operation Hahar was intended to extend the Jerusalem Corridor to the south, and the Harel Brigade was to implement it. The goal of Operation Yekev was to take over the Jerusalem–Tel Aviv railway and the Egyptian stronghold in Bayt Jala, and the 6th Brigade was assigned to that operation. Both operations commenced on 19 October, and while the Harel forces achieved their goal, Operation Yekev failed. The Harel Brigade, which held positions in the Jerusalem Corridor, handed the positions over to forces of the 6th Brigade, and launched the operation with three battalions. The goal of the operation was to occupy the 'Artuf–Bayt Jibrin road to the south and to cut the Bethlehem–Jerusalem road. The brigade's battalions used their positions as launching bases, from which they attacked their targets during the day, returning to their bases in the evening. Moving from village to village, it took them three days to extend the Jewish-controlled area to the south. No serious resistance was offered to the Jewish forces, as they met on their way only a mixture of local combatants fighting alongside disoriented Egyptian forces. There were some 600 Egyptian soldiers in Hebron and

Bethlehem and they were isolated from the main Egyptian Army as a result of the Israelis' achievements during Operation Yoav, and many Egyptian officers had abandoned their units and soldiers. The Arab Legion dispatched a British soldier and one company in an attempt to reorganize the ranks of the abandoned units, and to turn them again into a fighting force that could offer resistance to the Jewish troops attacking them. The Jordanian attempts failed as it became impossible to pull together the Egyptian units that remained in Bethlehem. Small Arab Legion detachments held the roads between the plain and Hebron and Bethlehem, but these could do no more than check Jewish raiding parties.[20]

Dayan and his brigade continued to perform poorly, as Operation Yekev was far less successful. The whole of the 6th Brigade—three battalions—was assigned the mission of occupying a post overlooking Bayt Jala and the Jerusalem–Bethlehem road and nearby positions to the west; this occupation would bring the Jerusalem–Tel Aviv railway track under Jewish control. The attempts failed, as the Israeli forces either failed to overcome the Arab resistance or they were well behind schedule in launching the attack. Mainly irregular forces defended the villages, and they thwarted the Jewish attacks, which, by the end of the day, were directed only against the villages Batir and al-Walaja. These two villages were weakened by the Egyptian troops' disintegration, and on what turned out to be the last attack on the two villages, the Israeli forces found out that the villages had been abandoned.[21] The failure of the 6th Brigade coincided with the advent of the cease-fire ordered by the Security Council. Dayan asked Ben-Gurion to allow his forces, together with the Harel Brigade, to occupy the point controlling Bayt Jala. Dayan hoped that the occupation of this place would lead to the Arab residents fleeing Sharafat and Bayt Safafa, thus improving the Jewish situation to the south of the city. It would also allow full control over the railway. After asking for the opinion of the General Staff, Ben-Gurion decided against the proposed operation, giving several reasons for doing so: attacking after the truce had come into effect would make a bad impression internationally; and if the place were taken, Israel might have to evacuate it under pressure from the UN. It would not be worth sustaining casualties in occupying a place that might then have to be evacuated. Besides, such an evacuation would severely undermine the Israeli policy of not giving back territories it occupied during the war. Also, capturing the Christian villages of Bayt Jala and Bethlehem might offend the Christian world. Another reason was Ben-Gurion's reluctance to provoke Jordan and Iraq into joining the war alongside the

Egyptians, thus rescuing Egypt from its apparent isolation on the battlefield.[22]

Abdullah was most probably aware of the fact that the IDF did not attack the Legion. However, unsure about the next Israeli moves, and aware of the Israelis' improving abilities and achievements in the recent battles, the King acted on the one hand to convince Israel not to attack the Arab Legion and on the other hand to increase the Legion's ability to face an Israeli attack. As to the latter, the King asked the British Foreign Minister to draw his attention to the critical situation of the Arab Legion in Palestine following the recent developments in southern Palestine. He pointed out that although it was already overextended, the Arab Legion had been compelled to send detachments into the Hebron district to prevent a panic amongst the local population which would have resulted in a new wave of refugees; an eventuality that Transjordan was not in a position to cope with. He begged therefore once again that the decision to withhold supplies of arms and ammunition from the Arab Legion be reconsidered.[23]

The other channel King Abdullah pursued was the diplomatic one, aiming to persuade the Jews not to attack the Arab Legion. One channel had already been opened before the recent outbreak of fighting, involving Eliahu Sasson and the Jordanian Minister in London, who met in Paris. Sasson told the minister that Israel had no plans to go beyond the original Partition Plan and that the Israeli government had no objection to the Jordanians having the Arab parts of the country. To ensure that the Partition was carried out at a 'leisurely' pace, Sasson suggested that the Arab Legion should not attack the Jewish forces while they were concentrating on clearing Palestine of the Egyptian and Iraqi Armies. King Abdullah treated the proposal with suspicion, remarking that there was no guarantee that once the other Arab Armies were out of the field the Jews would not turn all their forces against the Arab Legion. Thus, his answer was that the return of the Palestinian refugees to their homes and the exclusion of Jerusalem from the Jewish State were necessary preliminaries to any settlement.[24] The whole dialogue was somewhat pointless. The Israeli government had already formulated its position on this subjec, and it went beyond Sasson's idea. The Israeli government had no intention of occupying the territory held by the Arab Legion, but it would not give up other parts of the country that were supposed to be part of the Palestinian State but were now under Israeli occupation. The Israelis would neither give up the western and central Galilee, nor Jaffa or Lydda and al-Ramla, even for an agreement with Jordan. Apparently, Sasson did not represent the Israeli

position when he put forward these ideas. Abdullah, too, showed his disinclination to carry on with the talks toward a comprehensive agreement, as the terms he set amounted to a rejection of any further talks; it was obvious that Israel would not accept these terms and would not negotiate on their basis. Shertok tried to re-establish the direct links that existed with Abdullah before the war, but the only result was Abdullah's reference to the Foreign Minister as 'my friend Shertok'. The discussions begun in Paris petered out.[25]

These exchanges took place in August, but by the end of October, after the Israeli offensive against the Egyptian force, and when he realized that the Israelis were not heading toward areas held by the Legion, King Abdullah asked the US minister in Amman to convey a message to the Jews, in what amounted almost to an apology. He claimed that he hoped that the Jews would appreciate 'his sincere desire to find a solution and would refrain from attacking the Arab Legion and areas occupied by them. Such attacks merely incite further animosity and delay settlement.' The King told the minister that he had given strict orders to the Arab Legion that it must respect the truce and must not attack unless attacked. He believed that his orders would be obeyed. The King explained that prior to 14 May he had favored Partition, and had informally undertaken with the Jews to occupy Arab areas of Palestine only, provided that the Jews remained in their areas. The Dayr Yasin massacre and other provocations had incited all Arabs, including himself, and he had entered the war with serious intent, which he still held. The Arab Legion alone among Arab Armies was still strong. However, he now desired to restore peace and understanding with the Jews, with whom he believed he could have close relations. He realized that Jews and Arabs could only live peacefully in separate areas with defined boundaries.[26]

Apparently, the Israelis did not intend to broaden the fighting area and to act against the Legion's forces. Exchange of fire was a daily occurrence, but it was only in Jerusalem that plans were made to strengthen Jewish positions, and the Israeli's main source of concern was their ability to hold the besieged Mount Scopus. Ben-Gurion checked with the city commanders what it would take to secure the road to the mountain, but gave no specific orders on that matter.[27] Of course, the Jordanians did not know this, and in the wake of Egyptian setbacks, Glubb reported to the cabinet that the Arab Legion would be unable to retain its positions if attacked by the Jewish forces. As a result, the Prime Minister asked Kirkbride to check whether, if the Legion was attacked by Israel in the areas allocated to the Palestinian State, the British would

come to Jordan's assistance under the Anglo-Jordanian Treaty of Alliance.[28] King Abdullah took a different direction when he sought to resume contact with the Jews. He created a link via middlemen from outside Jordan, as the members of his cabinet would not have approved of negotiating with the Jews. His Prime Minister might not resign if he knew about the negotiations, but he would not take part.[29]

While the situation along the Israeli–Jordanian Front seemed to fluctuate between steps being made towards ending the fighting and its renewal, Ben-Gurion initiated, in what seemed to be a kind of reflex action, a debate over the possibility of launching a major offensive against the Arab Legion. At the end of October, Ben-Gurion set his sights on the 'Triangle', where Iraqi troops held sway. With Yadin, he believed that by first taking Jenin and then advancing south, the IDF could conquer Nablus and Ramallah and move on Jerusalem from the north. The Arab Legion would be driven from the West Bank, which would fall like a ripe plum into Israel's hands. Ben-Gurion was eager to launch the offensive in the first week of November, but dissuaded by the diplomatic activity in the Security Council.[30] A week later, in a meeting with the General Staff, Ben-Gurion took up the same theme. Although the best way to drive the Arab Legion out of the West Bank and conquer all of Jerusalem was via an attack originating from the Jenin area—he told the generals—this option was no longer viable because of the direction the Security Council deliberations were taking and because of Britain's attitude, which now had US support as well. The alternative was to execute a rapid operation in the form of a pincer movement via Ramallah and Bethlehem. At least four or five brigades would be needed to carry out this plan, and if the forces in the south could eliminate the 'Faluja Pocket' the necessary troops would be made available.[31]

It was a fantastic plan but it is doubtful that Ben-Gurion seriously intended to implement it. There were absolutely no grounds for the assumption that the Legion's troops would turn tail in the face of the advancing IDF, though all of Ben-Gurion's scenarios were based on the presupposition that the Legion would in fact flee. The General Staff's estimate that four or five brigades would be needed showed that the High Command understood perfectly the implications of Ben-Gurion's idea, even if he himself ignored them. Diplomatically, the projected plan would throw Israel into a confrontation with Great Britain, Jordan's ally, over territory that Israel could not legitimately claim. The British factor hovered in the background throughout the war, and in this instance, too, Ben-Gurion expressed apprehensions about possible British intervention. He heard a similar appraisal from his colleagues on

the 'Committee of Five'–the War Cabinet. When raising with the committee the same ideas he had broached with the General Staff, he effectively ruled out the option of a move against Jordan, explaining that 'a war … against the Legion … is, from the English point of view, a hard and more dangerous blow'.[32] Underlying Ben-Gurion's preoccupation with Jordan was his deep concern about Jerusalem. Although the road to the city was now entirely in Israel's control, it passed through a relatively narrow corridor which Ben-Gurion wanted to expand. This was the logic behind his proposal in September to exploit the incident with the Legion at Modi'in, and the same aspiration now prompted him to re-examine the idea. However, Ben-Gurion was aware of the implications of a renewal of hostilities on the Jordanian Front, and so finally turned his attention to a more urgent sector where the possibilities for action were more realistic: the Egyptian forces on Israeli soil.

While the initial steps toward the creation of an Israeli—Jordanian communication channel were being taken, progress was made in Jerusalem, where the two military commanders of the city signed an agreement on 30 November. The two used to meet under UN auspices, but at a certain point Dayan suggested to al-Tall that they hold direct talks, without UN intervention. Al-Tall agreed, and the two established a direct telephone line that would bypass the UNTSO switchboard, and they used this direct line to solve problems that emerged between the two sides, mainly when exchanges of fire erupted. The two also managed to arrange an exchange of prisoners. The Israelis released fewer than a dozen Jordanian soldiers they took into captivity, while the Jordanians brought back 670 Israeli prisoners of war: half of them captured in Gush Etsion and half the residents of the Jewish Quarter in the Old City.[33]

However, the most significant result of the direct link that was established between the two commanders was the agreement on 'a complete and sincere cease-fire' cover all the Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Latrun areas. The only disturbing factor was the Jewish commander's demand that the Arab Legion was to be responsible for seeing that the truce was also observed by irregulars and Egyptian forces in the area concerned. Al-Tall accepted this condition. Later on, al-Tall and Dayan extended the cease-fire to cover the whole Arab Legion Front from Bethlehem to Latrun.[34] The cease-fire agreement proved to be effective, and it actually put an end to the clashes and shootings that had been a daily occurrence since the reinforcement of the truce on 19 July.[35] During the second meeting between al-Tall and Dayan, the latter asked that trains should be permitted to run to Jerusalem, and that Jewish convoys

should be allowed to pass through Latrun without inspection or limitations as to numbers. In return, Dayan said that the residents of Batir and al-Walaja would be allowed to return to their homes. Al-Tall was surprised by the Israeli gesture, and said that he would refer these two points to his government.[36] When al-Tall returned with more ideas about partial agreements regarding territorial exchanges in the Jerusalem and Latrun areas, Ben-Gurion claimed that he wanted to discuss a full and comprehensive settlement instead of the partial arrangements suggested by the King through al-Tall, as there were too many issues to resolve, and partial arrangements would only create new problems.[37]

Ben-Gurion's demand worried Abdullah, as the Jordanian King was not interested in entering into direct peace talks with Israel, feeling that the time was not ripe for that. However, at that time, Israel was in the midst of its final and decisive campaign against the Egyptian forces in southern Palestine, and this operation was a signal for the King that Israel was ready to use military force to achieve its goals. He was afraid that if he declined Ben-Gurion's demand, the IDF might well attack the Iraqi forces, thereby rendering Transjordan's position hopeless. Abdullah felt, therefore, that he had no choice but to comply with the Israeli demand, and by late December appointed al-Tall to represent him in the peace talks, leaving his Prime Minister uninformed on this matter.[38] Al-Tall told Dayan that the King said that he would introduce the draft agreement that al-Tall and Dayan formulated to his Cabinet, and if the Cabinet did not approve it, he would install a new Cabinet. He suggested that the talks should commence immediately. Ben-Gurion discussed the matter with some of his aides, and they decided that talks should be conducted, if only to be sure that Transjordan remained out of the fighting during the IDF operation against the Egyptians. As to the talks' agenda, it was decided that Israel would declare its uncommitted attitude toward the annexation of the West Bank to Jordan. Another issue was the borderline leading from Sodom to the Red Sea. Here, Israel demanded to cross along the international line, that had been in effect during the Mandate rule. The two would only discuss the possibility of Jordan's rights in the Gaza Strip, and its passage to it through Israel. As to the return of refugees, the answer should be a flat no, although the return of the Lydda residents would remain open for further discussions. The fate of the Negev also would not be up for discussion. Dayan and al-Tall met in early January, exchanging accreditation letters.[39] With the beginning of the talks, it became apparent that a deep gap existed between the two sides. Abdullah responded to the

crisis in a way that suited his real interests: the Dayan–al-Tall talks would continue, but as their main goal was to diffuse any aggressive Israeli intentions, they should be continued even if they led nowhere. At the same time, the more practical and possible channel would be the truce talks, which were begun under UN auspices in Rhodes. Abdullah felt it was safe to enter truce talks with Israel after receiving a message from the Egyptian Prime Minister who asked for Abdullah's opinion about commencing truce talks with the Israelis.[40] The Israelis also wanted to continue the peace talks regardless of the difficulties; at least as long as the fighting against the Egyptians continued.[41]

The peace talks continued after the signing of the General Armistice Agreement in April 1949, until their final termination in 1951. The reason for the failure has been discussed and analyzed at length by students of the Arab–Israeli conflict.[42] However, it should be remembered that King Abdullah felt that his entry into the peace talks was forced upon him, and that fact undoubtedly had an impact on the way the talks were conducted.

NOTES

1. Mr Wells Stabler to the Secretary of State, 25 July 1948, *FRUS 1948*, V, p. 1238.
2. Telegram no. 613 from H.M. Chargé d'Affaires, Amman, to Foreign Office, London, 27 July 1948, FO 816/127.
3. Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, p. 405.
4. Ibid., p. 407.
5. The Consul General at Jerusalem, to the Secretary of State, 31 July 1948, *FRUS 1948*, V, p. 1263.
6. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 6 August 1948, E10512, FO 371/68830; the Consul General at Jerusalem to the Secretary of State, 7 August 1948, *FRUS 1948*, V, pp. 1297–8; Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, pp. 406–11.
7. The Consul General at Jerusalem to the Secretary of State, 12 August 1948, *FRUS 1948*, V, p. 1307.
8. Oren, *The Road to the City*, pp. 217–*18*; al-Tall, *Memories*, pp. 242–3.
9. BGWD, p. 647, entry for 13 August 1948.
10. Telegram from Yadin to the 6th Brigade, 18 August 1948, IDFA 922/75/1182; BGWD, p. 655, entry for 18 August 1948; Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, pp. 408–9; al-Tall, *Memories*, pp. 249–52.
11. From the Ministry to CHQ MELF, 18 August 1948, FO 371/68830.
12. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 24 August 1948, E11238, FO 371/78376.
13. Glubb, *Soldier With the Arabs*, pp. 191–2; al-Tall, *Memories*, pp. 268–71.
14. The United Nations Mediator in Palestine to the Secretary of State, 20 July 1948, *FRUS 1948*, V, p. 1231; Editorial Note, *FRUS 1948*, V, p. 1195.
15. The Consul General at Jerusalem to the Secretary of State, 21 July 1948, *FRUS 1948*, V, p. 1234.

16. Al-Tall, *Memories*, pp. 254–6; the Consul General at Jerusalem to the Secretary of State, 6 September 1948, *FRUS 1948*, V, p. 1375.
17. Ben-Gurion, *The Restored State of Israel*, p. 288; Bar Zohar, *David Ben-Gurion*, Vol. 2, p. 823. Compare with BGWD 3, p. 712.
18. BGWD 3, p. 720, 24 September 1948.
19. BGWD 3, p. 722, 26 September 1948; minutes of PGI Meeting, 26 September 1948, ISA.
20. *Sefer Ha'Palmah* 2, pp. 934–6; Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 19 October 1948, E13501, FO 371/68689; telegram no. 818 from H.M. Minister, Amman, to Secretary of State, Foreign Office, London, 21 October 1948, FO 816/131; telegram no. 821 from H.M. Minister, Amman, to Secretary of State, Foreign Office, London, 22 October 1948, ibid.
21. BGWD, p. 761, entry for 22 October 1948; Acting Consul General, Jerusalem, to Foreign Office, 30 October 1948, E14041, FO 371/68690.
22. BGWD, p. 761, entry for 22 October 1948.
23. Telegram no. 836 from H.M. Minister, Amman, to Secretary of State, Foreign Office, London, 30 October 1948, FO 816/132.
24. Telegram no. 660 from Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 17 August 1948, FO 816/127.
25. M. Shertok to E. Sasson, 17 August 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, p. 533; M. Shertok to E. Sasson, 30 August 1948, ibid., p. 563; Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 28 December 1948, E16401, FO 371/68644.
26. Mr W. Stabler to the Acting Secretary of State, 21 October 1948, *FRUS 1948*, V, pp. 1501–2.
27. BGWD, p. 765, entry for 23 October 1948.
28. Telegram no. 853 from Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 3 November 1948, FO 816/132.
29. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 3 November 1948, E14183, FO 371/68643; telegram no. 854 from H.M. Minister, Amman, to Secretary of State, Foreign Office, London, 3 November 1948, FO 816/132; telegram no. 876 from H.M. Minister, Amman, to Secretary of State, Foreign Office, London, 11 November 1948, FO 816/132.
30. BGWD 3, p. 790, entry for 31 October 1948.
31. BGWD 3, p. 799, entry for 5 November 1948.
32. BGWD 3, pp. 818–19, entry for 11 November 1948.
33. Telegram no. 916 from H.M. Minister, Amman, to Secretary of State, Foreign Office, London, 29 November 1948, FO 816/134; Dayan, *Milestones*, pp. 80-81.
34. Telegram no. 916 from H.M. Minister, Amman, to Secretary of State, Foreign Office, London, 29 November 1948, FO 816/134; Mr Beaumont, Jerusalem, to Foreign Office, 30 November 1948, E15379, FO 371/68690.
35. Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, p. 424.
36. BGWD, pp. 854–5, entry for 29 November 1948; telegram no. 923 from H.M. Minister, Amman, to Secretary of State, Foreign Office, London, 2 December 1948, FO 816/134.
37. BGWD, pp. 884–5, entry for 18 December 1948; Dayan, *Milestones*, p. 82.
38. Mr W. Stabler to the Acting Secretary of State, 29 December 1948, *FRUS 1948*, V, pp. 1699–70; BGWD, p. 911, entry for 29 December 1948.
39. BGWD, p. 913, entry for 30 December 1948; Dayan, *Milestones*, p. 84.
40. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 10 December 1948, E15730, FO 371/68643.
41. BGWD, p. 913, entry for 30 December 1948.
42. Shlaim, *Collusion Across the Jordan*.

14

The Northern Campaign: The Decisive Stage

The final activity in the north of Palestine concentrated on the Israeli–Syrian front and the Israeli–ALA Front, while the Lebanese Army refrained from action until the end of the war. It was therefore ironic that by the end of the war Israeli forces were standing on the banks of the Litani river, a Lebanese territory. However, they arrived there as a result of their campaign against the presence of the ALA forces in Palestine, and not through their fight against the Lebanese Army. In fact, in August, Israeli and Lebanese representatives formed a cease-fire line which was based on the results of Operation Dekel. Two battalions of the Syrians' 3rd Brigade were deployed in September along the eastern sector of the Lebanese Front—the 8th in Marj 'Ayun and the 9th in al-Khiyam, but the border remained quiet, and both the Syrian and the Lebanese Armies adhered to the truce.[1] It was Qawukji who provided the Israelis with the formal excuse to launch the decisive attack against his forces and to drive them from the country.

The Israeli attitude toward the upper Galilee, which was not in its hands, was that the Bernadotte Plan assured its inclusion under Israel's sovereignty. The Israelis ignored the fact that Bernadotte meant to give Israel the upper central and western Galilee in return for its giving up the Negev, which according to his plan was to be given to either Egypt or Jordan. This state of affairs decided the order of priorities set by Ben-Gurion when, in summer of 1948, he pondered the next moves: first the Negev, and then the Galilee.[2] During the days of waiting in summer and autumn 1948, the Israeli 2nd Brigade acted to impose Israeli authority over all that part of the Galilee that was under its control. Forces of the brigade patrolled in Arab villages; in most cases expelling the residents and demolishing their houses. These operations seemed more like a continuation of Plan Dalet, and their main feature was the cleansing of the area under the brigade responsibility of its Arab occupants.[3] The brigade forces were also engaged during the truce in a clash with Syrian

forces. After the end of the ten days' fighting, the latter captured an advance post (Khirbat al-Manar) and the brigade was assigned the mission of expelling the Syrian force. A company of the 22nd Battalion tried to take the position over on the night of 24/25 September but failed, and the position remained in Syrian hands.[4]

The Arab Liberation Army's Battles

The Lebanese government regarded the Galilee as being its responsibility and accordingly it announced to Bernadotte in July that it was responsible for the ALA forces there. The ALA was dependent for everything on its link with Lebanon, which was its link to the outside world; its food and ammunition supplies came from Lebanon. The Lebanese provided for the forces of the ALA and the Galilee Arabs a variety of professional and administrative services, but the government did not want to see the Galilee becoming part of Lebanon. The addition of nearly 250,000 Palestinians, most of them Moslem, would tilt the delicate ethnic balance of Lebanon, turning the Moslem minority into the largest ethnic group. The country's Christian-dominated elite would not allow such an outcome.[5]

The actual forces responsible for defending the Arab-held part of the Galilee was the ALA. After its retreat from Nazareth and the central Galilee in July, the ALA forces placed themselves in central northern Galilee, where they were reinforced by the 2nd Reserve Battalion, under the command of Adib Shishakly. IDF units tried, when the second truce came into force, to seize key positions in the Tarshiha area in the northwestern Galilee, but a combination of ALA and local forces thwarted the Israelis' last-minute attempt. Fearing that the Israelis were planning to cut off the ALA forces in the Galilee from their support base in Lebanon, the 1st and 4th ALA Battalions were alerted and sent from their training bases in South Lebanon to the Galilee, while two Lebanese battalions were deployed along the borderline. Israeli forces tried to break through in the Sakhnin–Mi'ār area even after the second truce had come into effect, but the ALA forces met these attacks successfully, preventing the advance of the Jewish forces. These clashes determined the ALA's deployment line, which was established along critical lines of communication: Majd al-Kurum–Sakhnin, 'Aylabun–Mi'ār–al-Sammu'i. The inclusion of Sakhnin in the ALA sphere of influence cost the village residents dearly, as they surrendered to the IDF just a day after the second truce came into force. However, the IDF

forces did not remain in the village, assuming that the United Nations would enforce the village status as no man's land. However, that did not happen, and the ALA 4th Battalion took control of the village, punishing severely those who surrendered to the Jews, with the aim of frightening anyone else who considered doing the same.[6]

The ALA command rearranged its forces and its defense positions during the second truce. Its command was based in 'Aytarun, Lebanon, and its forces were reorganized into three brigades, the 1st, 2nd and 3rd al-Yarmuk—which in all consisted of about 2,000–3,000 soldiers. The 1st Brigade, consisting of 1,500 men, was positioned in the southern part of the ALA-controlled area, along the Safad–Acre road. Its three battalions were positioned along the borders of the brigade's area of responsibility, and it was considered as relatively well equipped, and its soldiers as trained and competent. Every squad was equipped with a heavy machine-gun, and every platoon with a 60-inch mortar. Every battalion had an 81-inch mortar platoon. The 2nd Brigade, with its two battalions and 700–800 men, was deployed in the northeastern sector, to the left of the 1st Brigade's rear. Israeli intelligence reports characterized the brigade as weak and suffering from low morale and from many disciplinary problems that included defections and selling ALA arms to locals. The brigade forces were deployed in the Sa'sa' sector. The 3rd Brigade, consisting of 850 men organized into two battalions, held defense positions in the northwestern sector facing the Jewish-controlled western Galilee area, and had its headquarters in Tarshiha. This force was also of a lower standard than the 1st Brigade. It had four 75-mm cannons, and two armored cars with two-pound guns. A Lebanese volunteer's battalion, consisting of an armored company and an artillery battery, reinforced these troops. The Hittin Battalion ended its military training in Syria, and was sent to Bint Jubayl in southern Lebanon as a reserve force. A new battalion was constructed out of what remained of an older battalion that had suffered heavy losses in the fighting against the Jews. The two Lebanese battalions that were sent to the Israeli–Lebanese border when the second truce had come into effect remained there, guarding the ALA rear from an Israeli outflanking maneuver. However, it was obvious that the Lebanese Army had no intention of taking an active part in the fighting, and it would respect the cease-fire that had been agreed between the Israelis and the Lebanese in August.[7]

Arab appreciation of the Qawukji forces' military performance was very low. An Iraqi officer reported that, by the end of July, the ALA could not be depended upon 'at all'; it was in a very bad state, and was

completely unable to perform on the battlefield. The quick collapse of the army forces during the ten days' battle was evidence of its inability to hold any area under attack, and it could only be useful as a guerrilla group launching hit-and-run raids to assist the regular armies. Besides, it was so severely short of ammunition that it could hardly be considered as a fighting force. The officer's conclusion was that 'their abolition would be better than their retention as at present'.[8]

While restructuring his forces, Qawukji also acted to deepen and enhance the ALA's relationship with the local population. The Jews were taking measures to bring over to their side the non-Moslem elements of the upper Galilee Arabs, the Druzes and the Circessians, and as a countermeasure, Qawukji acted to restore order and discipline—in an area that was under no formal sovereignty—through the establishment of local committees that were given judicial power. Tightening links with the local population was also necessary because the period from July to October, when fighting resumed, was a time of constant minor skirmishes and clashes with the Israeli forces, which were trying to improve their positions at the expense of the ALA. The ALA forces stood firm, in many cases with the assistance of the local population.[9]

At the same time, the relationship between Qawukji and the Arab League Military Command—and especially with Taha al-Hāshimi, the general inspector of the Arab volunteers—deteriorated. By the end of July the Arab League General Secretary, 'Azzam, announced to Qawukji that the ALA would be cut by half due to the severe lack of money. Qawukji claimed that this announcement contradicted an earlier pledge from 'Azzam to provide all of the ALA needs, and submitted a resignation letter in August. Qawukji, however, had to deal not only with the financial cuts, but also with the allegations made by al-Hāshimi about the ALA's poor performance. Qawukji put the blame on his officers, of whom, he charged, 75 per cent were unfit, being either corrupt or cowards and ignorant. The resignation letter proved to be effective, as Arab leaders, with the Lebanese and Syrian Prime Ministers being the most conspicuous among them, called on Qawukji to withdraw the letter, saying that his demands would be met. Qawukji conceded and reassumed his position later on in August. However, matters did not improve, especially because of al-Hāshimi's behavior toward Qawukji. It took another resignation letter and another campaign by the Arab leaders to convince Qawukji to return to his position. This time some of his demands for arms and manpower were met, but his relationship with the Arab League Military Command remained poor.[10]

It was Qawukji who decided the timing of the Israeli offensive in the

When the IDF launched Operation Yoav, the IDF forces in the north were supposed to sit and wait; however, Qawukji did not sit quietly, and by 22 October he had sent his troops to capture an Israeli-held position overlooking Kibbutz Manara. It is unclear what drove Qawukji to this act, but the Israeli offensive in the south was most probably an incentive. Twelve Israeli soldiers of the Guard Forces held the position, which was poorly maintained and by no means prepared to meet an attack. Indeed, the Qawukji forces, which were the size of at least a company, took full advantage of the poor state of the place, and captured it almost effortlessly. The Israeli soldiers fled, surrendering the position to the assailing force.[11]

General Riley of the UNTSO, wishing to defuse the crisis and to prevent the breakdown of the truce, asked the Lebanese government to interfere and to make the Qawukji forces depart. A government representative promised to do so, but there was no change in the field, and Qawukji's forces remained in place.[12] The Israelis could not tolerate the presence of the Qawukji forces there. The position was strategically located, overlooking the whole area, as well as the main Rosh Pinna–Metula road down the valley. It also placed Manara at immediate risk, as ALA forces surrounded Manara, putting it under siege. The commander of the Northern Front, Moshe Carmel, thought that the opportunity should be seized to launch a major campaign to drive the Qawukji forces from the Galilee, rather than settling for a local operation. With the accomplishment of that goal, the forces around Manara would either leave of their own will, or be driven off. He thought that Manara could hold on for several days under siege, as its occupants had enough arms, weapons and food supplies. Ben-Gurion's and Yadin's initial reaction was to act only in that location and not to launch the wider operation, as they thought that, considering Israel's international position, it would be better to wait before launching another large-scale operation, especially as it had just finished one.[13] It took two days for Ben-Gurion to change his mind. On 24 October, he thought that Qawukji forces not only threatened Manara, but that they were also in a position to cut the valley road to Metulla along with some other nearby Israeli villages. On the other hand, Operation Yoav was coming to a successful conclusion and as the extent of the Israeli achievements became clearer, Ben-Gurion assumed that it would be safe to launch the operation. Israel could not be blamed for the violation of the truce, as the representatives of UNTSO acknowledged that the ALA forces acted in violation of the truce, and hence Israel had every right to take military action against them.[14] In fact, with the completion of the plans for Operation Hiram,

the Jews hoped that the negotiations with the ALA over their evacuation of the positions around Manara would fail. As the UN observers were constantly in the area, and as the United Nations acknowledged that Qawukji had broken the truce by his action, Israel had an excuse to respond, and Operation Hiram was the result. To emphasize Israel's right to act, Israeli forces engaged, mainly at night, during Operation Hiram, the ALA forces around Manara, provoking them to react, thereby allowing Israel to carry on with the operation without the burden of international pressure.[15]

The Northern Front was established during the second truce and had under its command four brigades: the 2nd, the 1st, the 7th and the 9th. During that time, the brigades—apart from the 7th Brigade—held positions along the front lines, which consisted of the Lebanese, the Syrians, the ALA and the Iraqis. The Israeli forces left the static positions they were holding and regrouped in combat formation, and their positions were taken by Guard Forces. The 7th Brigade, which maintained its combat formation all along, was occupied during the second truce in small clashes with the ALA, each side trying to improve its positions along the front line. In fact, the brigade's casualties, which were caused by the clashes during the truce, were more than those sustained by the brigade during Operation Hiram. The brigade consisted of two infantry battalions, the 71st and the 72nd, and an armored brigade, the 73rd. The brigade was considered as fit and ready to fight. The 9th Brigade had arrived in the north at the beginning of the first truce, and since than it had been engaged mainly in guard missions. The performance of the brigade troops was considered poor. In mid-October, the brigade was hastened to the Southern Front, and two of its battalions took part in the fighting against the Egyptians as part of Operation Yoav. The very poor performance of the battalions in the battle only strengthened the brigade's image as unfit. The brigade was reassigned to the Northern Front, and it took up position there on 26 October, in the western Galilee. There it received its orders for Operation Hiram. The brigade therefore entered into the operation with units suffering from fatigue and carrying with them the memory of the blows they had suffered in their unsuccessful encounter with the Egyptians, which had cost them dearly. Suffering from shortages of arms, it was sent into a territory of which it had no knowledge at all.

The 1st Brigade consisted of three battalions—one armored raid battalion and two infantry. It was one of the most experienced and successful brigades in the IDF, and the morale of its troops was high. The 2nd Brigade was also experienced, but despite the many battles in which

it had taken part, the recent failure of the Brosh operation hung over it. The state of the brigade prompted the Operation Hiram command's decision to leave it on the flank of the operation, to hold the line facing the Syrian border. The brigade's involvement in the fighting against the ALA in the Manara area had put a heavy strain on it, when it was already strained almost beyond its capabilities.[16]

The goal of Operation Hiram was defined as 'Destroying the enemy forces at the central Galilee "pocket", to take over whole of the Galilee and to establish a defense line along the northern border of Palestine [the international border].' This goal would be achieved through a pincer maneuver, when one brigade, the 7th, would attack Sa'sa'—whoever held this junction would have effective control of the main eastern and central upper Galilee crossroads—from Safad; and from there it would continue to al-Mālikiyya. The 9th Brigade would occupy Tarshiha, and from there would move eastward to meet the 7th Brigade in Sa'sa'. The arrival of the 7th Brigade from Safad was supposed to surprise the Qawukji forces, as the Safad–Sa'sa' road was considered impassable, and it took laborious engineering work to ready the road for the passage of the brigade. The 9th Brigade attack on Tarshiha was intended to divert the attention of the Qawukji forces, and to lead them to believe that the attack against them would be launched from that direction. The 2nd Brigade would not take part in the operation; it would secure the eastern flank of the theater of operations, facing the Syrian formation. The 1st Brigade would cover the southern flank of the operation's area. Before the ground forces stepped in, the Israeli Air Force would bomb most of the villages in the area of the operation.[17] It was possible to assign such a relatively large force to the operation due to the truce coming into force, and the Israeli recognition that no major Arab counter-offensive in response to the Israeli attack on the Egyptians was expected.

The 7th Brigade took off on the night of 28/29 October to Jish–Safad, moving in three columns. Circessian and Druze companies, who fought alongside the three brigade's battalions (71st, 72nd and 79th), reinforced the brigade. The ALA forces offered strong resistance to the approaching Jewish forces on their way to Jish. In Mirun the Israelis had to fight almost all night, but in the end they overcame the resistance. The same scenario recurred in Jish on the following morning, but here again, the brigade fought effectively. With the news of the collapse of the Qawukji forces arriving to the Syrian command in Marj 'Ayun, the ALA hastened a battalion toward Jish, to stop the Jewish advance. The Syrian battalion was ill-prepared for its mission, and its encounter with the

Jewish forces degenerated into slaughter. The Syrian soldiers were too disoriented and unprepared to fight the organized Jewish force that was waiting for them. Nearly 200 Syrian soldiers were killed, and the survivors fled back toward the border. The Jewish achievement so far made the rest of the journey much easier, and Sa'sa' was found empty. Inspite of the insistent resistance of the Arab forces up to Sa'sa', the number of casualties among the 7th Brigade soldiers was amazingly low: as against hundreds of Arab Liberation Army and Syrian soldiers killed, the Israeli forces sustained less than half a dozen killed.[18]

The 9th Brigade's task was more difficult; the attempts to occupy Tarshiha met with strong resistance from the ALA forces, and a first attempt failed. It was only after heavy aerial bombardment of the village that its occupants raised the white flag. The brigade moved on toward Sa'sa', meeting on its way forces of the ALA that were on the run. They engaged these forces, destroying as many as possible of them. In the afternoon of 30 October, the brigade arrived at Sa'sa', meeting there the 7th Brigade.[19] At this point the ALA totally collapsed. The advancing Israeli forces enjoyed massive aerial support, with the Israeli Air Force systematically bombing the villages that were on the Israeli troops' route. The ALA's units left all of its positions in the upper Galilee, and the Israeli forces seized them. Al-Mālikiyya, which was a difficult battlefield for the Jews, was evacuated by the Lebanese unit that held it and captured by the Israeli troops.[20] The ratio between the number of Israeli and Arab casualties was: as against nearly 500 killed Arabs, the Israeli forces that took part in Operation Hiram sustained less than two dozen killed.[21]

By the end of October, the whole of the Galilee was in Jewish hands. The Northern Front Command had acted to create a 'security belt' along the border with Lebanon, and all the Arab villages along the border line were evacuated. A similar development was noticed on the other side of the border.[22] However, although the IDF felt the operation was a success, the outcome was equivocal. While it was obvious that one prime goal (the occupation of the Galilee) had been achieved, the other goal (the destruction of the ALA forces), was not. The operational instructions had given high priority to the physical destruction of the ALA troops, but the slow seizure of the Sa'sa' police station and junction by the operation's forces gave enough time for the ALA troops to escape.[23] Another point mentioned by the IDF as being disappointing was that, unlike in other parts of Palestine, here in the upper Galilee most of the Arab villagers remained in place and did not leave their houses. Moshe Carmel, the commander of the Northern Front Command, ordered his

troops to 'do your best to achieve swift and immediate cleansing of the occupied territories from all hostile elements. According to the orders that were given, you must assist those who are willing to leave the occupied territories.'[24] The IDF report of Operation Hiram mentions that the IDF soldiers did encourage the villagers to leave, 'frequently not through the adoption of legal or delicate means', but in vain. Most of the Arab population in the Galilee remained in their houses. There were a number of reasons for this Israeli 'failure': the ALA forbade villagers to leave their houses; the Lebanese government prevented Palestinians from entering its territory; Palestinians who considered leaving were surprised by the swift occupation of the area by the IDF; there were villages in remote and isolated places in the mountainous Galilee that had not even heard about the IDF occupation of their region; and due to a lack of initiative on the part of the IDF forces, many villagers who did leave their houses managed to return home, despite the prohibition set by the operation command. At the end of the operation, the 7th Brigade left the area in order to regroup, and the 2nd Brigade, which was deployed in the eastern sector against the Syrians, sent troops northward, where, from 30 to 31 October, they invaded Lebanese territory, occupying the Marj 'Ayun valley up to the Litani river. The Jewish forces met no resistance in their advance. The Lebanese Army withdrew their forces in the face of the advancing Jewish forces; while in some places army units remained in place, but stayed in their camps. The only exceptional event reported in the IDF study of the fighting on the Lebanese and Syrian Fronts was the massacre committed by Israeli troops on the residents on al-Hula, where 52 residents where murdered.[25] It is unclear why the Israeli troops crossed the border in the first place, as there was no military necessity for the operation. The occupation served Israeli interests during the negotiations on the Israeli–Syrian General Armistice Agreement conducted in 1949. The Israelis demanded a full withdrawal of the Syrian forces that held Israeli territory, and the Israeli demand was accepted in return for its withdrawal from south Lebanon. However, there is no evidence that the Marj 'Ayun valley had originally been captured for that purpose.

The Syrian Front

The Syrians arranged their ranks effectively during the second truce. They imposed, and practiced, a compulsory military service, and completed the drafting of all those who had served in the past in the army,

whether in Syria or in a foreign army. The additional recruits amounted to 6,500–7,000 soldiers, bringing the total number of soldiers in service to around 15,000. This reorganization allowed the filling of ranks that had become sparse during the last cycle of fighting. The army command also established two new brigades: the 3rd and the 4th Brigades. The 3rd Brigade was comprised of two battalions of the ALA that had been assimilated into the Syrian Army, and a new 3rd Battalion. It was reinforced with small armored and artillery forces. The 4th Brigade was formed in October, and it consisted of six battalions, three of which served as training centers. None of the new brigade's forces were sent to the Israeli Front.[26]

The main Syrian forces' concentration when the second truce was imposed was at the bridgehead and in the Banyas–Tall 'Azazyat sector. By September, two battalions of the newly formed 3rd Brigade were sent to Marj 'Ayun and al-Khiyam, probably to secure the Syrian flank against deep Israeli intrusion into Lebanon, which was outflanking the Syrian deployment from the west to the east.[27] Two battalions of the 2nd Brigade held the sector stretching from the Lebanese border to Tall 'Azazyat, and the 1st Brigade, whose commander was Aqid Suwayd, and his deputy was Adib Shishakly, held the bridgehead. The 1st Brigade's order of forces comprised five battalions that held the entire sector. The 3rd Cavalry Battalion held the area from the bridgehead to Lake Kinneret, and two less-experienced volunteers' battalions held the southern sector.[28] The Syrian forces kept the truce, and their main activity during the truce involved improving their positions and entrenchment. The Syrians also remained inactive when the Israelis launched Operation Yoav. The army command called off all leave and the Syrian Defense Minister announced that the army would take action against the Israeli forces. The Syrians were ready to resume the fighting, although their goal would be restricted, as any acquisitions would be used as a 'bargaining chip'. However, the Syrians had expected that the Iraqis would join them; when that did not happen, the Syrian Army did not change its deployment, and took no offensive action.[29]

NOTES

1. Erlich, *The Lebanon Tangle*, p. 204.
2. The commander of the 2nd Brigade, Mordechai Maklef, said that this was what he heard from Ben-Gurion when he asked to seize all of the Galilee. In Eshel, *The Carmeli Brigade in the Independence War*, p. 252.
3. Ibid., pp. 252–3.

4. Ibid., pp. 254–5.
5. 'The Syrian and Lebanese Army in the 1948 War', IDFA 922/75/611, pp. 221–2.
6. Sela, 'Arab Liberation Army in the Galilee in the 1948 War'; 'Operation Hiram', IDFA 922/75/189, pp. 25–32.
7. Sela, 'Arab Liberation Army in the Galilee in the 1948 War'; Carmeli, *Northern Campaigns*, pp. 253–5.
8. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to the Foreign Office, 10 August 1948, s/1014/48, FO 816/127.
9. Sela, 'Arab Liberation Army in the Galilee in the 1948 War'.
10. Ibid.
11. 'Operation Hiram', IDFA 922/75/189, p. 20–3; Eshel, *The Carmeli Brigade in the Independence War*, pp. 255–9; Carmeli, *Northern Campaigns*, pp. 256–8.
12. 'The Syrian and Lebanese Army in the 1948 War', IDFA 922/75/611, p. 226.
13. BGWD, p. 761, entry for 22 October 1948; telegram from Yadin to the 2nd Brigade, 23 October 1948, IDFA 922/75/1182; Carmeli, *Northern Campaigns*, pp. 260–2.
14. BGWD, pp. 769–70, entry for 24 October 1948; telegram from Yadin to the 2nd Brigade, 24 October 1948, IDFA 922/75/1182; Carmeli, *Northern Campaigns*, p. 262.
15. 'Operation Hiram', IDFA 922/75/189, p. 15; Carmeli, *Northern Campaigns*, pp. 260–2.
16. 'Operation Hiram', IDFA 922/75/189, pp. 36–42.
17. Front A: Operation Hiram Order, 26 October 1948, in *Maarakhot* 263/4, p. 121; Ben Dunkelman, *Dual Allegiance* (Tel Aviv, 1977), pp. 188–91.
18. 'Operation Hiram', IDFA 922/75/189, pp. 59–62, 66–8; Carmeli, *Northern Campaigns*, pp. 266–70; Dunkelman, *Dual Allegiance*, pp. 192–6; Eshel, *The Carmeli Brigade in the Independence War*, pp. 280–1, 282–3; BGWD, pp. 783, 785, entry for 29 October 1948.
19. 'Operation Hiram', IDFA 922/75/189, pp. 62–4, 68–70; Carmeli, *Northern Campaigns*, pp. 270–2; Eshel, *The Carmeli Brigade in the Independence War*, pp. 282–3; Mr Evans, Beirut, to Foreign Office, 29 October 1948, E13974, FO 371/68690.
20. Carmeli, *Northern Campaigns*, pp. 273–4; BGWD, pp. 786, 787, entry for 30 October 1948; Mr Evans, Beirut, to Foreign Office, 1 November 1948, E14103, FO 371/68690.
21. 'Operation Hiram', IDFA 922/75/189, pp. 73–6; BGWD, p. 788, entry for 31 October 1948.
22. Front A: Intelligence Report, 12 November 1948, IDFA 5942/1949/72.
23. 'Operation Hiram', IDFA 922/75/189, p. 97.
24. Telegram from Moshe Carmel to the Brigades and Districts Commanders, 31 October 1948, IDFA 715/49/3.
25. 'Operation Hiram', IDFA 922/75/189, pp. 76–7; telegram from Yadin to the 2nd Brigade, 31 October 1948, IDFA 922/75/1182; 'The Syrian and Lebanese Army in the 1948 War', IDFA 922/75/611, p. 236; Mr Evans, Beirut, to the Foreign Office, 2 November 1948, E14140, FO 371/68690; telegram no. 844 from HM Minister, Amman, to Secretary of State, Foreign Office, London, 2 November 1948, FO 816/132.
26. 'The Syrian and Lebanese Army in the 1948 War', IDFA 922/75/611, pp. 200–1, 203.
27. Ibid., pp. 209–11.
28. Ibid., pp. 212–15.
29. Mr Evans, Beirut, to the Foreign Office, 27 October 1948, E13898, FO 371/68689; 'The Syrian and Lebanese Army in the 1948 War', IDFA 922/75/611, pp. 220, 224.

15

The Egyptian–Israeli Front: The Decisive Campaigns, II

After it was forced to end its offensive against the Egyptians, Israel sought a way to resume fighting, as its leaders remained convinced that the only way to eject the Egyptians from Palestine was through war. From Israel's point of view, then, the truce that followed Operation Yoav would inevitably lead to another round of fighting as Egypt's reaction to the UN Resolution of 16 November showed Israel that diplomacy was not a viable option for achieving its aims. The Egyptian response was two-pronged. To begin with, Egypt's UN envoy, Mahmoud Fawzi, called for negotiations that would bring about Egypt's withdrawal from the war; but, in return, it would gain possession of the area south of the al-Majdal–Bayt Jibrin–Dead Sea line. Shertok rejected outright any territorial concession to Egypt in the Negev, explaining that Egypt had lost a war it had initiated and was hardly entitled to a territorial reward. However, as a gesture that would save face for Egypt, Israel would agree to minor border adjustments along the Sinai border.[1] Ben-Gurion also said the Egyptian proposal was totally unacceptable, although, tellingly, it showed that 'they want out of the war'. In any event, he viewed Fawzi's approach as an opening for dialogue which should be exploited to the full. Ben-Gurion therefore directed that Egypt's proposals be rejected, but not in a manner that would block the channel of dialogue.[2] Shortly thereafter, and in direct reaction to the Security Council Resolution, the Egyptian representative expressed readiness to begin armistice talks with Israel provided Israel lifted the siege on the trapped Egyptian Brigade at Faluja.[3] Israel agreed, but made the liberation of the Egyptian forces conditional on progress in the negotiations. However, the Egyptians demanded that at least half of the besieged troops be freed before the talks began.[4] Subsequently, the Egyptians further toughened their position and demanded, as a precondition for entering negotiations, that Israel fulfill the 4 November Security Council Resolution: that is, withdrawal to the 14 October lines and the evacuation of Be'er Sheva.

The Egyptians, indeed, wanted 'out of the war'. In early November, the Egyptian Military Attaché in Amman handed Abdullah a message from the Egyptian Defense Minister urging that the Jordanian monarch consult with Faruk on a settlement of the Palestine question. Abdullah, however, was suspicious of the Egyptians' motives; his assumption was that although they were genuinely interested in resolving the Palestine issue, they also wanted to deflect the public criticism this would entail. By turning to Abdullah, Cairo could create the impression that he bore responsibility for terminating the war and entering into talks. Abdullah therefore rejected the Egyptian overture, but he, too, like Ben-Gurion, now knew for certain that Egypt was looking for a way out of the war.[5]

A few days later, the Egyptian government received further confirmation—which it hardly needed—that the military situation made it imperative to end the war. On 11 November, the Chiefs of Staff of the invading Arab Armies met in Cairo to consider the situation in Palestine. Their conclusions, which they summed up in a written report, were gloomy: the Jewish Army enjoyed superiority in manpower, equipment and ammunition. The Arabs had an artillery advantage but could not exploit this because of an acute shortage of ammunition. At the start of the war the Arab Armies had enjoyed superiority in the air, the report said, but lost it as the Jews succeeded in acquiring planes and recruiting trained pilots. The arms embargo had brought about the depletion of the Arabs' ammunition stocks, while ammunition and other materiel continued to flow into Israel, enabling the IDF to continue fighting with no limitations in this sphere. Another serious problem raised by the Chiefs of Staff was the schism within the Arab forces. Taking all these factors into account, the Arab Chief of Staff concluded that if the present situation persisted the Arabs would lose the war.[6] However, not even this utterly pessimistic evaluation induced the Arab leaders to rethink their approach, and all the old divisions continued. Nor were they capable of taking action to alleviate the adverse conditions under which the Arab forces operated. Gradually, the entire Egyptian administration began to grasp that the army was facing defeat, and the government faced mounting acute criticism. In a parliamentary debate in late November, the Prime Minister and the Minister of War were severely castigated. They tried to explain the failure by citing the arms shortage caused by the embargo, but the criticism did not abate.[7] What was also revealed at the parliament meeting was that the number of Egyptian casualties amounted to 1.5 per cent of the expeditionary force. Nokrashi Pasha, the Prime Minister, refused to disclose whether this figure included killed, wounded and others, but it seemed that it

included only those killed. That meant that about 1,200–1,500 Egyptian soldiers in Palestine had so far been killed.[8] On the Israeli side, about 400 soldiers were killed between 15 May and the end of November in the fighting with the Egyptians.[9]

Another victim of the failure was the commander of the expeditionary force, General al-Mu'awi. A committee, headed by King Faruk's son-in-law, Ismā'il Shirrin, which was nominated to inquire into the October fiasco, put the blame on al-Mu'awi, and recommended his dismissal. General Muhammad Haydar, the War Minister, did so in November, and appointed Major General Ahmad Fu'ād Sādiq to the command of the Egyptian forces in Palestine,[10] while Nagib was appointed commander of the 10th Brigade.

Ben-Gurion, in any event, rejected Egypt's terms for ending the war and laid down the Israeli strategy: 'Either peace and [Egypt's] withdrawal from the country, or [their] expulsion by us.' The IDF pressed ahead with its preparations for military action.[11] On 8 December, Ben-Gurion ordered Chief of Operations Yigal Yadin to draw up the blueprints 'for the total liquidation of the Egyptians in the Bir 'Asluj–'Awja al-Hafir area'.[12] This was the first time Ben-Gurion had issued concrete orders for preparations to resume the fighting. He did so on his own, without consulting the Cabinet or soliciting its approval. The Cabinet, he maintained, had already given its approval in principle for what was, as he saw it, the continuation of the operation which had been formally approved on 6 October. The next round of hostilities was the inevitable outcome of that decision, Ben-Gurion maintained.

Operations Lot and Asaf

In the meantime, the IDF moved to consolidate Israeli control throughout the Negev. In the wake of a letter dated 4 November from the UN acting mediator, Ralph Bunche, calling on Israel to pull back to the ceasefire lines that existed before Operation Yoav, Ben-Gurion ordered Chief of Staff Ya'akov Dori to dispatch forces to Memsheet and Hatzeva. This mission was codenamed 'Operation Lot' (after the biblical figure in Genesis). The 12th Brigade was to seize control of the 'Sodom–Ein Hosov-Be'er Sheva region' by seizing the police stations at Kirov and Ein Hosov—according to intelligence reports the stations were empty. Brigade personnel who were manning outposts at Bir 'Asluj were replaced by soldiers from the Negev District so that they could take part in the operation and the Negev Brigade's 9th Battalion, under

Haim Bar Lev—who would become the IDF chief of staff—set forth on the two-day campaign. It achieved all its objectives, restoring the connection with Sodom, on the Dead Sea, which had been severed for several months.[13]

Southern Front Commander-in-Chief Yigal Alon maintained that the operation was unnecessary because the police stations were empty in any case. However, the critical point for Ben-Gurion was not only that the Negev should be free of any foreign presence, but also that the entire region be in Israel's possession. Hence also his reaction to the hostile Egyptian activity in the western Negev. The Egyptian forces in the Gaza Strip engaged in a 'creeping operation' eastward, mining roads, sabotaging Israeli facilities, harassing transportation on nearby roads, and subjecting settlements opposite Gaza to mortar attacks. Ben-Gurion demanded to know why the Front Command was not acting to put a stop to the Egyptians' activity and in particular why the Yitfah Brigade, which was responsible for the sector where the mining operations were taking place, was not taking preventive action. Ben-Gurion's complaint was more than justified. Southern Front HQ, which was aware of the Egyptians' advance eastward to the Be'eri–Tse'elim–Nirim line, had ordered Yitfah 'to block the Bayt Hanun–Nir Am-Be'eri line'.[14] However, when Yitfah failed to take effective action, the Front HQ ordered the Negev District to mount constant patrols in problematic areas in the southern Negev; a company from Yitfah was placed at the district's disposal for the purpose.[15] At the same time, the Front command, the General Staff, and Ben-Gurion himself concluded that it was urgent to refresh the forces in the south. Yadin believed that the reason for Yitfah's lax reaction was the sheer weariness of the troops, and he informed Ben-Gurion that he intended to replace Yitfah with the Golani 1st Brigade, which at the beginning of December took up positions in the south[16]—together with the Alexandroni 3rd Brigade, which replaced the Givati. With Golani's deployment, planning began for Operation Asaf, with the aim of removing the Egyptians from the high-ground outposts they had captured during the cease-fire, and from which they were harassing settlements in the western Negev. The operation was launched on 5 December and lasted two days, with the 13th Battalion of Golani and the 89th Battalion of the 8th Brigade taking the outposts and rebuffing Egyptian counterattacks.[17]

At the beginning of December, a few days before Operation Asaf, the Military Government in the al-Majdal area, pursuing the 'cleansing' policy against the local Arab population, drove the residents of the Arab villages around al-Majdal into Egyptian-controlled territory and demol-

ished their homes to prevent their return. In al-Majdal itself—now in Israeli hands—Arabs were found who were not local residents and they too were driven across the borders into the area held by Egypt.[18]

Toward Operation Horev

Although Ben-Gurion set in motion the machinery to renew the war at the beginning of December, it was not until the middle of the month that he apprised the Cabinet of his intentions. Ben-Gurion described the difficulties facing the IDF, which had exhausted its recruitment potential and had grown to a force numbering more than 100,000. Effectively, the war was over, Ben-Gurion told the Cabinet, apart from two sectors: the Sharon and the Negev. The Egyptian military presence deep in the central Negev and along the coast was untenable and must be terminated without delay, he said, not least because it compelled the IDF to remain on constant alert to prevent local harassment and to be ready for a possible wide Egyptian thrust that would threaten Israel's hold in the Negev. Yadin had informed him, he told the Cabinet, that the IDF had successfully blocked a series of Egyptian counterattacks over the past few days in the western Negev.[19] Ben-Gurion did not seek the Cabinet's approval to resume hostilities, making do with a formal announcement that 'in a few days' time we will try to eliminate our conflict with the Egyptians by expelling them from the Negev'.[20] No discussion followed this statement as Ben-Gurion considered the Cabinet's approval for Operation Yoav still valid. However, not all the ministers agreed with this interpretation. At a Cabinet meeting held four days later some of them expressed concern that Israel's military actions would place Israel on a collision course with the international community and particularly with Great Britain. Some were also skeptical that driving out the Egyptian forces would induce Cairo to enter into peace talks with Israel. But despite the demurrers, no one objected when Ben-Gurion summed up by stating that 'we are going ahead with the operation in the Negev … and holding talks with Abdullah'.[21]

The military preparations went ahead as the advance negotiations with the Egyptians, through mediators, over the terms of their entry into talks on an armistice agreement continued, but the gap between the sides was so great that the resumption of hostilities was almost inevitable. The Egyptians stated that their government accepted the UN Resolutions of 14 and 16 November. They insisted that before Egypt would agree to consider entering into armistice talks, Israel must

implement the UN Resolution which called on it to give up the territory it had taken in Operation Yoav. Egypt would not hold cease-fire talks as long as Israeli forces held territory south of Be'er Sheva, Cairo's representatives said.[22] This, of course, was completely unacceptable to the Israelis. After the head of the UN Observers, General Riley, informed Reuven Shiloah, from the Jewish Agency's Political Department, of the Egyptians' position, Ben-Gurion ordered the Foreign Ministry to reply to Riley in terms that amounted to a declaration of war. The letter, which was signed by the ministry's director-general, Walter Eytan, stated that Israel's readiness to lift the siege of the brigade at Faluja in return for Egypt's agreement to enter into armistice negotiations had not elicited an appropriate response. In addition, the letter reiterated Ben-Gurion's assertion that Egypt had violated the 16 November Security Council Resolution. Consequently, and in order to protect its territory and expedite the peace, 'Israel reserves [the right to] freedom of action'. Within hours, Israel showed how it intended to exploit that 'freedom of action'.

The Egyptian Deployment on the Eve of Operation Horev ('Ayin')

The Egyptians were deployed in three main sectors. The main force, including the headquarters of the expeditionary force, was stationed along the coast between Rafah and Gaza. The Egyptians had two reinforced brigades in this sector, consisting primarily of infantry, together with at least one armored battalion manning Locust tanks. IDF Southern Front intelligence believed that there was also a second armored battalion in the area, with Kreuzer tanks. A reinforced Egyptian battalion was deployed along an arc extending from al-'Arish to 'Awja, along the Palestine–Egypt international border; and the 1st Brigade, reinforced by forces of the 10th Brigade, under Brigadier Nagib's command (as most of its troops had moved to the Khan Yunis sector), was stationed at the eastern extremity of the sector, along the 'Awja–Bir 'Asluj road.[23] The brigade force consisted of units of the regular army and volunteers and was deployed sporadically along the Be'er Sheva–'Awja road. The battalion stationed at 'Asluj, about 20 kilometers south of Be'er Sheva, occupied the most northerly point held by the Egyptians in this area. Another two battalions were encamped south of 'Asluj, in the Khirbat Musharrafa–al-Tamila area, in a chain of outposts. These forces were not organized in battalion formation, but were scat-

tered in outposts which were not in communication with one another and hence could not achieve the coordination they needed to mount sector-wide defensive activity. Each outpost was supposed to defend itself with no expectation of reinforcements or other assistance if attacked. Additional forces, consisting of Egyptian soldiers and volunteers and a unit of the Muslim Brothers, were located in a sector stretching from Hebron to Sur Bahir on the outskirts of Jerusalem. All told, the Egyptians had between 10,000 and 13,000 men in the field in the arc extending from Rafah to Bir 'Asluj via 'Awja al-Hafir.[24] Egyptian troops were also present on the Rafah–al-'Arish road, though the IDF did not know in what strength. Israeli intelligence did know about the existence of four reserve battalions, 'but their combat fitness is not clear'. Another battalion was responsible for protecting the route between Egypt and the Front, and there were also artillery forces on this road, though again their strength and capability were unknown. The Egyptians detected the Israeli forces that were organizing (for Horev), and according to information that reached IDF intelligence, their assessment, in the wake of Operation Asaf, was that the Israelis would attack along the coastal strip. The Egyptians therefore moved two regular battalions from the 'Awja–Bir 'Asluj sector to the Rafah–Gaza area. The Egyptians' ability to shift forces from one sector to another had already been displayed in Operation Asaf and had won plaudits from Israeli intelligence.[25]

Meanwhile, the IDF High Command was disturbed by reports that Jordanian forces were moving southward, toward 'Aqaba. As perceived by the Israelis, this might be the onset of a joint Jordanian—Egyptian thrust in which the Egyptians would mount an assault against the IDF.[26] Ben-Gurion did not know about the failed attempt by the Arab Chiefs of Staff to work out a coordinated plan to lift the siege at Faluja. In any event, IDF planning took as its point of departure the existence of an Egyptian option to mount a military campaign in the south of the country. The main dangers, as seen by the IDF High Command, were a possible Egyptian attempt to take the area around Kibbutz Revivim, south of Be'er Sheva, or to conquer Be'er Sheva itself in a combined action with the forces at Mount Hebron to the north.[27]

General Staff *vs.* the Southern Front

The political foundation for Operation Horev was the government's decision of 4 November to assert that Israel would not agree to a continued Egyptian presence across the international boundary line.

Horev's goal, as set forth by the IDF in the first operational order, was: 'Eradication of the invading Egyptian force and its expulsion from [inside] the country's borders.'[28] This reflected the government's decision to go beyond the 29 November Partition Lines and seize the entire territory of Mandatory Palestine along the Israeli–Egyptian Front, as by now there were hardly any Egyptian forces 'inside the country's borders', apart from those trapped at Faluja and a small force deployed in isolated outposts along the Be'er Sheva–'Awja road. In other words, the 'country's borders' cited in the General Staff plan referred to the international border, not the Partition Lines.

The strategy formulated by General Staff/Operations was based on the assessment that the Egyptian forces were incapable of mounting a general offensive 'without the cooperation of the other Arab forces'; an improbable eventuality at this time. However, the General Staff planners believed that the Egyptians could still mobilize their forces on the Rafah–'Awja road and create a force possibly able to conduct local activity in the eastern and southern sectors.[29] The IDF thus seemed to face a dilemma: whether to launch a two-pronged move involving a simultaneous strike against the Egyptian forces on the Bir 'Asluj–'Awja road and in the Gaza Strip, or to concentrate the effort in one sector. Field conditions finally determined the operation's format. The Egyptians in Gaza would be dislodged at a later stage. The Egyptians were strongly dug in along the coastal strip and an attempt to breach their defenses would undoubtedly produce heavy casualties and use up precious time. The solution adopted was to execute one main effort that would involve most of the forces and achieve a decisive result. This could more easily be accomplished in the southern sector, where the Egyptians were dispersed across a wide area. The Southern Front could hurl a superior force against each individual Egyptian outpost and achieve victory. This would become a recurring pattern in the IDF's conduct of the campaign.[30] Ultimately, the plan combined offensive activity with strategic surprise. Following the elimination of the Egyptian forces on the Be'er Sheva–'Awja axis, the Israeli forces would move northeast on the 'Awja–Rafah road, flank the Egyptian forces in the coastal strip from the rear, and rout them.[31]

Equipped with the general order for the operation, Southern Front headquarters proceeded to draw up the specifics. Its plan was based on the principles laid down by the General Staff, apart from one matter. As devised by the General Staff, the operation was confined to the 'Awja–Rafah line, with a push to be mounted northward, after the fall of 'Awja, toward Rafah.[32] The order drawn up by Southern Front

Command/Operations stipulated the crossing of the international border into the Sinai, going through Abu Aqila to al-'Arish. The Southern Front planners believed that following this path would best serve the final objective of Operation Horev: the conquest of the Gaza Strip. The Egyptian force on the Gaza–Rafah axis was believed to be solidly entrenched, so a frontal assault would produce heavy losses. The idea that emerged was, therefore, to 'stretch' the Egyptian lines and make the Egyptians move forces away from the Gaza–Rafah sector and create breaches along the front line which would be exploited by the advancing Israelis. The thinking was that the presence of the IDF behind their lines would compel the Egyptians to rush troops southward from the dense defensive line on the coastal strip, thus thinning it out. This would facilitate the IDF's effort to breach the line, and with the Egyptians cut off from their rear at the end of Phase 2 of Operation Horev, the Israelis would be able to storm and defeat the divided force. The thrust toward Abu Aqila and al-'Arish would also block the arrival of reinforcements from inside Egypt. The Southern Front planners also thought it necessary to ensure 'the severance and split of the enemy forces from the bases in Egypt' by capturing the Egyptian base at Abu Aqila, which was at the junction of the roads leading from Sinai into Israel. With Abu Aqila eliminated, the only link the Egyptian forces would have with their home bases would be the coastal road. That road was the next target of Alon's plan. After taking Abu Aqila, the Israeli forces would execute a flanking movement toward the extremity of the Egyptian force concentration on the coastline and cut it off. Thus, according to the orders issued by Harel Brigade HQ, the 89th Battalion would overrun the 'Awja outposts, proceed to take Abu Aqila, and from there advance to conquer al-'Arish.[33]

The difference between the General Staff plan and Alon's lay primarily in its scope: while both wanted to outflank the Egyptian main body along the Rafah–Gaza axis, the General Staff intended to do this by means of an attack on Rafah, while Alon wanted to do it from al-'Arish. Alon believed that only such a deep outflanking would stretch the Egyptian line of defense to a sufficient extent to allow a successful penetration of the Egyptian defense line by the waiting front's forces opposite the Gaza strip. Alon's plan, however, entailed the crossing of the international border and the actual Israeli invasion of Egypt. That would be a whole different situation, and as events proved, it had a tangible influence on the development of diplomatic and military conditions.

Alon also decided to exploit Operation Horev for an additional purpose: to gain a foothold in the Hebron hills. After failing to convince

Yadin, during the planning of Operation Yoav, to take advantage of the operation's success and to push north through the Hebron hills and from there to Jerusalem, now, with Operation Horev imminent, Alon again urged its extension to include Mount Hebron, as a first step toward Jerusalem.[34] Yadin, for one, balked at this; on 16 December he sent Alon a cable reminding him that 'in order to avoid misunderstandings, I repeat that the section of seizing al-Dhahiriyya [on the way to Hebron] must be erased from the plan. That mission is not to be implemented without authorization.'[35]

Five brigades were placed at the Southern Front's disposal for Operation Horev: the 1st (Golani), the Eighth Armored Brigade, the 10th (Harel), the 12th (Negev) and the 3rd (Alexandroni).[36] In addition, a special staff, codenamed 'Yanshuf' (Owl), was set up to effect coordination with the navy and the air force, which were also involved in Horev.[37] The operation contained two elements of surprise: one strategic and one tactical. The strategic element, which has already been explained, consisted of a diversionary move with respect to the true arena. The tactical element involved the route of access to the Egyptian outposts on the 'Awja–Bir 'Asluj road. The operation's planners wanted to avoid a frontal assault on the Egyptian forces while the Israeli troops were moving along the main axis, the Be'er Sheva–'Awja road. As noted, this road was controlled by Egyptian forces beginning at Bir 'Asluj, about 20 kilometers south of Be'er Sheva, and movement on it would have generated a head-on collision with the Egyptians. Instead, a two-pronged move was ordered: two Israeli brigades would proceed to their missions along side roads in the desert. The 8th Brigade would proceed along the Halutza–Ruheiba–'Awja axis which followed the route of an ancient Roman road; simultaneously, the 12th Brigade would attack the outposts at Tamila and Musharrafa on the 'Awja–Bir 'Asluj axis.[38] At the same time, forces of the 10th Brigade were to block points on the 'Awja–Rafah road in order to thwart Egyptian attempts to reinforce their forces under attack in the south.[39]

One aspect that was not addressed by either the General Staff or Southern Front Command was the time element. The documentation for the operation contains no reference to time pressures. No mention of time was contained in Southern Front Command's order apart from the time for the start of the operation. Alon admitted afterward that he had completely ignored the time aspect in his planning. He assumed that if a truce were to be declared in the course of the fighting—something he was by now accustomed to—'the guys will rest, a couple of weeks will go by, we will foment a small provocation, they will begin to

attack us', and hostilities would resume until the IDF's goals were achieved.[40] If Alon's political and military superiors had a different view, it did not find expression in the orders they issued. Both Ben-Gurion's diary and the summation of the operation that he presented to the Defense Committee in January 1949 are silent on the time factor.[41]

Operation Horev: Military Moves in the Eastern Sector

As noted, the push in the eastern sector had two goals: to create the impression that this was the main arena—in order to enable the forces in the south to stage a surprise attack—and to prevent the Egyptians from reinforcing their forces in the south once they realized that it was the actual target. The attacks mounted by Golani together with the navy and the air force enhanced the effectiveness of the diversionary thrust, but IDF activity in the days preceding the operation also played a part. Following Operation Asaf (5–15 December), the Egyptians concluded that the IDF would continue to operate against their forces along the coastal strip and strengthened their defenses in that sector with troops from the 'Awja area, among others. The fact that the Egyptians focused their attention on the coastal strip and also thinned out their defenses at 'Awja handed the IDF an extra, probably unexpected, advantage.[42]

The operation was launched on the afternoon of 22 December with air strikes on Gaza City, Khan Yunis and Rafah. These bombing runs were intended less to soften up the Egyptian forces in those locales ahead of a ground attack than to heighten the impression that this would be the sector where the IDF would commit its main force. At the designated hour, the B-17 Flying Fortresses, Dakotas, Harvards and Piper Cubs launched their raids. Intelligence reports summed up the air force's activity on the first day of the fighting as follows:

> Gaza: fires broke out in the city. Because of a hit on [a refugee] camp the hospitals are completely filled … Khan Yunis: large fires broke out in the town. Two big explosions occurred … Rafah: A fire broke out and buildings were hit … al-'Arish: Two enemy planes were apparently damaged … The runway was also hit.[43]

Gaza City and Rafah were also shelled by navy boats.[44] The air force had wanted to confirm the sites it was ordered to strike by means of aerial photography, but its reconnaissance sorties were terminated at the start of the operation, leaving the IAF unable to corroborate information received from the IDF intelligence. In one case, for example, an

informant reported the existence of an ammunition dump in Khan Yunis. Harvards were dispatched to attack the site, but the site was actually an emergency food distribution depot where large numbers of refugees congregated, many of whom were killed amid the destruction of large quantities of food.[45] The air force soon realized that 'refugees and nonmilitary targets bore the brunt of our bombing runs. Apparently no damage was caused to the enemy's forces or their depots and installations. These results were achieved thanks to two factors: (1) The absence of accurate information; (2) The technical shortcomings of most of our aircraft,' which left the pilots unable to carry out accurate attacks. There was also another factor: effective anti-aircraft fire, which proved very troublesome to the Israeli crews.[46]

In the meantime, the Golani Brigade's 13th Battalion attacked two strategic positions overlooking the Gaza–Rafah road: Hill 86 and Hill 108. The first Hill was taken, but the Egyptians later counterattacked using artillery, tanks and infantry, and gained it back. The Israelis suffered 23 soldiers killed, but—as has been the situation all along—no information exists regarding the Egyptian casualties.[47] As that attack was proceeding, another 13th Battalion company assaulted and captured the nearby Hill 108.[48] The entire sector came under continuous IDF fire. Assault patrols struck at Egyptian outposts, executed depth raids, and mined roads behind the enemy's lines. The air force ran bombing missions and navy guns pounded the area from the sea. This activity persisted throughout Operation Horev in order to pin down the Egyptian forces and block any possible attempt by them to dispatch reinforcements to the south.[49]

As the Israelis had anticipated, the Egyptians thought the attack was the opening volley of a general offensive calculated to conquer the Gaza Strip and drive out the Egyptian Army. The Egyptian War Minister informed General Riley that his country was ready to enter into talks with Israel on the basis of the 4 November Security Council Resolution, which called on Israel to return to the pre-October campaign lines. He also told the British ambassador to Cairo that he expected the Security Council to act vigorously to bring about a cease-fire and an Israeli withdrawal. One of his suggestions was for the United States and Britain to send warships off the coast of Tel Aviv as a demonstration of strength.[50]

In the field the Egyptians returned fire, in some cases across the Partition Lines. Beginning on the evening of 25 December, they bombarded the road around Kibbutz Sa'ad, hampering the IDF's use of that important route. The relentless barrage finally forced the Israelis to close the road and the IDF had to resort to alternative, makeshift routes.[51]

Operation Horev: Military Moves in the Southern Sector

The activity in the southern sector, which was the heart of Operation Horev, took the form of an integrated thrust involving three brigades—8th, Harel and Negev—which executed interlocking moves based on the comprehensive approach of the Southern Front HQ. The Alexandroni Brigade was assigned to tighten the siege of the Faluja pocket and did not take part in Operation Horev. Ben-Gurion was anxious to obtain the surrender of the encircled Egyptian brigade and ordered that all available artillery of the Southern Front be placed at Alexandroni's disposal together with the guns of the Central Front, where the fighting was effectively over.[52]

Operation Horev was scheduled to begin 24 hours after the diversionary effort in the eastern sector, but heavy rain on the night of 23/24 December rendered the makeshift roads impassable. The three brigades were entirely dependent on the condition of the roads and, consequently, on the performance of the Engineering Corps.[53] Thanks to the engineers and to a break in the weather, the 12th Brigade was able to set out on its mission on the night of 25/26 December. Its goals were the Musharrafa–Tamila outposts, or more accurately the more southerly Musharrafa sites. The attack followed the pattern of the entire operation: the weak point of the Egyptians' defenses was identified and the Israelis burst through, slicing the enemy line into isolated fragments. By the morning of the 27th, the two Negev Brigade battalions had completed their mission.[54] It was then discovered, by chance, that the Egyptian battalion which had been trapped at Bir 'Asluj had been able to bypass the ambush set by Negev Brigade units and escape to the south. The result was that the Be'er Sheva–'Awja road was now completely open.[55]

Concurrent with the move by the Negev Brigade, the 8th Armored Brigade set out for 'Awja. In line with the principle of concentration of force, the brigade was dispatched in a force estimated to be three times the size of the Egyptian force. The 82nd Armored Battalion, a mechanized raiding battalion (the 89th), an infantry battalion seconded from Harel and the 88th Medium Mortar Brigade, reinforced the brigade. Artillery support was also available.[56] Like the Negev Brigade, the armored brigade did not proceed along the main highway (Bir 'Asluj–'Awja) but used an ancient Roman road which had been discovered earlier and would bring it near to 'Awja. The troops reached the road about seven kilometers east of 'Awja, and on the night of 25/26 December the 82nd Battalion attacked the Egyptian forces in the 'Awja

outposts—they had been set up inside the village of 'Awja—assisted by the 89th Raiders. The brigade's HQ had underestimated the Egyptians' defenses at the site and the raiding force had no intelligence about the composition of the Egyptian force or its deployment and fortifications; it had no idea what it was up against. The IDF halftracks hurtled into the village, a decision that proved to be a mistake: the force was caught in crossfire from hidden Egyptian troops who were dug in on both sides of the road. The battalion suffered six dead, including its commander. The next day, 27 December, the 82nd and 89th Battalions returned to attack the outpost at the junction and this time took it. In the meantime, the tank battalion flanked the 'Awja strongpoints and took up positions to their southwest.[57] The IDF's thrust in the south took the Egyptian headquarters in Gaza by surprise. They had been certain that Gaza was the objective,[58] and when news of the battles in the south reached them they dispatched reinforcements from the coastal strip along the 'Awja–Rafah road, as anticipated by the Israelis. IDF units were in position along the road, waiting for the reinforcements, and as they approached, the blocking force destroyed the Egyptian armored forces west of 'Awja.[59]

While the forces in the southern sector were enjoying successes, the attempt to force the surrender of the Egyptian brigade in the Faluja pocket ended in failure. The Southern Front Command systematically stepped up the pressure on the Egyptian brigade that was trapped in the Faluja pocket. The brigade got some relief when, under UN pressure, they began to receive food and other supplies toward the end of November,[60] but to prevent the infiltration of supply convoys, the IDF set ambushes and mined access roads to the pocket, and units from the 5th and 8th Brigades constantly patrolled the area. Planes from the Negev Squadron overflew the besieged brigade and reported on attempts to enter—or leave—the pocket. The Southern Front Command also tried to break the spirits of the Egyptian soldiers by various means, including assault patrols, artillery barrages and aerial bombing. The General Staff dispatched a mortar unit to the Southern Front, which operated equipment developed especially by the Science Corps, in order to dislodge the troops in the Faluja pocket. The IDF kept up its activity relentlessly for days at a time during November and December.[61]

At the beginning of November, the Egyptian Defense Minister asked King Abdullah and the Iraqi government to make forces available in order to mount an attack that would extricate the Egyptians and open an escape route to the east. The Iraqis refused, claiming they had no troops

to spare for such an operation.[62] By the end of November, another plan had been made to rescue the trapped Egyptian brigade—'Operation Damascus'. According to the information that reached the IDF, two Iraqi battalions and a Jordanian battalion would attack the Israeli forces in the Bayt Jibrin sector, and under cover of the fighting another force would link up with the trapped brigade and lead it into Jordanian territory. However, the commander of the Egyptian brigade at Faluja rejected this plan and urged Major General Ahmad Fu'ad Sādiq, the Gaza-based commander-in-chief of the Egyptian forces in Palestine, not to authorize it. The brigade commander did not trust Glubb Pasha, the Arab Legion's commander, and he was worried that his soldiers would be unable to undertake the lengthy trek required by the plan. Instead, the Egyptian commanders—at Faluja and at Gaza—decided to pin their hopes on a diplomatic solution, which they believed was imminent.[63] Israeli intelligence had up-to-date information about the details of Operation Damascus, and as a preemptive measure, the General Staff ordered the preparation of 'Operation Hisul' (Annihilation) to take Iraq al-Manshiyya, where about a third of the besieged Egyptian force was encamped.[64] When Sādiq's decision to abort the rescue campaign ended the activity to extricate the brigade, the IDF abandoned Operation Hisul.[65] At the same time, however, the Front Command ordered two brigades, Givati and the 8th, to tighten the siege at Faluja and to carry out raids on targets in the eastern part of the sector in order to head off the danger that the Arabs might mass a force in the area opposite the Faluja pocket.[66]

With the launching of Operation Horev, another attempt was made to eliminate the pocket. The Alexandroni Brigade artillery, supported by IAF bombing, bombarded the besieged brigade for two days, starting on 25 December. The barrage was followed by the brigade's 36th Battalion taking over of the village of Iraq al-Manshiyya, which lay on the edge of the Faluja pocket. However, units of the brigade that attempted to take a section of the Faluja–Iraq al-Manshiyya road encountered fierce resistance from the Egyptians at Faluja. The fighting in the village continued without slackening. Finally, the Egyptian forces began surrendering to forces of the 3rd Brigade, but when the Israelis started shooting POWs, their comrades decided to continue fighting instead. In the meantime, the Egyptians at Faluja dispatched armored and infantry forces to support the troops in the village and the 36th Battalion withdrew on 29 December, suffering heavy casualties: more than 70 Israeli soldiers were killed in the course of the fighting and the retreat.[67]

Crossing the International Frontier

With the entire 'Awja–Bir 'Asluj road now clear, the IDF launched the final part of Phase 1 of the plan devised by the Southern Front Command, which involved crossing the international boundary line and taking Abu Aqila or even al-'Arish, according to the plans of the 8th Brigade.[68] At the end of this stage, Israeli forces would flank the Egyptians along the coastal strip from the rear. As mentioned, the reaction of the General Staff showed that it was not aware of Alon's intentions. Throughout Alon's forces' movement through Abu Aqila to al-'Arish, Yadin repeatedly sent telegrams forbidding Alon to carry on, but Alon systematically ignored his superior's orders, and continued according to his plans.[69] Yadin's attempt to delay the southward push was apparently motivated by his desire to strike quickly in the western sector. With the occupation of 'Awja, Yadin wished to shift the main effort to the coastal strip. Although it appears that Ben-Gurion had not made up his mind whether he wanted to conquer Gaza and bring it under Israeli rule, there is no question that he wanted to eliminate the Egyptian presence in Gaza. This became a pressing necessity due to UN efforts to arrange a cease-fire (see below), and because of the connection that existed, in the Israelis' perception, between the continued existence of the Faluja pocket and the Egyptians' hold on the coastal strip and their future intentions. Ben-Gurion saw a direct connection between the tenacity of the trapped brigade and the Egyptians' grip on the area along the coast, and he maintained that the collapse of one would also eliminate the other. The attempt to dislodge the Egyptians at Faluja having failed, Ben-Gurion now hoped that the liquidation of the Egyptian presence on the coastal strip would achieve the desired result at Faluja.[70] As noted above, the assessment of IDF intelligence was that the Egyptian HQ in the coastal strip wanted to execute a move to liberate the brigade trapped at Faluja—a move which, if successful, would once again cut off the southern Negev.

Besides the fact that Alon was acting in defiance of the clear orders which he continued to receive from his commander, his maneuver—which was justified from a strictly military point of view—had several drawbacks because of the unauthorized way in which it was conducted. Operationally, the Southern Front's supply lines were stretched dangerously thin. This did not delay the troops' advance, but they were deprived of the air support they could have received had they moved along the 'Awja–Rafah axis. As a result, they were exposed to Egyptian air strikes without being able to call in air support.[71] The taut lines pre-

sented another problem as well: communications between the ground troops and IAF planes were garbled throughout the operation, so that cooperation and exchange of information between land and air units was extremely defective. The air force had not carried out reconnaissance flights to photograph the area and lacked independent information about the situation across the border. In this chaotic state of affairs, the air force was not updated about the IDF presence around al-'Arish, and in a strike against the airport at Bir Lahfan Israeli aircraft bombed units of the 12th Brigade, which had taken the facility.[72] About three dozen Israeli soldiers were killed during that strike.[73]

The second—and, as it turned out, critical—problem generated by the advance into Sinai was a diplomatic one, which had two aspects. The diplomatic clock had almost run out: Israel's actions were under intensive discussion at the United Nations, with the Security Council expected to issue a call demanding a cease-fire. Israel would certainly obey such a call, even if its current military move was still in progress—as, in fact, finally happened. The second aspect entailed the incursion into Sinai, which was effectively an Israeli invasion of Egypt, a move that was of great concern to the Great Powers and to Britain in particular. The strike at Abu Aqila was worrying enough, but in addition raiding parties of the Negev Brigade were dispatched even further westward. They sped past Jabal Libni and reached the airport at Bir al-Hama, some 60 kilometers west of Abu Aqila, on the road to Ismā'iliyya. The force, which was mounted on light vehicles, encountered fire from the airport and was forced to retreat. The purpose of the raid was to heighten the Egyptians' fear of IDF attacks and to mislead them concerning the true focus of the Front's efforts.[74] The first goal—scaring the Egyptians—seems to have been fully achieved, though probably not in the way intended by the IDF, since after the raid at the airport and the capture of the airfield of al-'Arish East, the British launched intensive activity at the United Nations in order to bring about the IDF's withdrawal from Sinai (see below). The result was that precious time, which could have been used to carry out the missions set by the General Staff, was wasted, even if the underlying operational logic was sound.

This chapter in the war's history is described in the memoirs of contemporaries as an unplanned move which was not coordinated on a political level or even with the General Staff. Rabin described the crossing of the international border as 'a deviation from the original plan', while Alon downplayed the significance of his independent initiative, justifying his crossing of the border not by strategic considerations, but as a reaction to his forces' plight due to Egyptian Air Force activity.[75]

These claims have no foundation. As noted above, the Southern Front headquarters originally intended to reach al-'Arish already in the planning stage for Horev. The order that was issued by the Front ahead of the mission stated that the 8th Brigade, 'combined with an infantry battalion from the 10th Brigade', would take 'Awja and Abu Aqila, while the orders of the 8th Brigade stated unequivocally that the final goal of Phase 1 was the conquest of al-'Arish.[76]

When the battle for 'Awja al-Hafir ended, Southern Front HQ made ready to continue. The 8th Brigade was exhausted after the tough struggle to take the 'Awja outposts, and Southern Front HQ reassigned its mission—the conquest of Abu Aqila—to the Negev Brigade, which had concluded the fighting in its sector on the previous day. The 12th Brigade was reinforced with the 82nd Battalion of the Armored Brigade, while the 8th Brigade, together with the 89th Battalion, remained at Bir 'Asluj to rest and reorganize. They were designated the Front's reserve force, to be rushed to any trouble spots that might develop.[77] Shortly after the conclusion of the fighting at 'Awja, the Negev Brigade was ordered to cross the border and advance to Abu Aqila. The force set out on 28 December, in the afternoon, reaching its destination late that night after a few hours' delay, during which it fought and took an Egyptian outpost at Umm-Katif, on the way to Abu Aqila.[78]

At the conclusion of the battle for 'Awja the Horev forces acted in both the southern and the western sectors. In the west, the 1st Brigade tried again on the night of 28/29 December to cut off the Gaza–Rafah road by taking the hilltop Outpost 84.[79] At the same time, the 12th Brigade continued its journey from Abu Aqila to al-'Arish, defying Yadin's order on 28 December not to do so.[80] The brigade, reinforced by the armored battalion, captured the eastern airfield of al-'Arish at Bir Lahfan in a rapid thrust and was ordered by the Southern Front HQ to undertake the storming of al-'Arish with the aim of its conquest and destruction'. The 1st Brigade was to observe the dispersal of the Egyptian forces in its sector and block the Gaza–Rafah road should the Egyptians move forces southward in reaction to the attack of the 12th Brigade.[81]

Yadin was stunned and infuriated when he learned of the operation. The strategic logic underlying an attack on al-'Arish was not explained to the General Staff and the move was not coordinated with it.[82] His initial information came from the intelligence service and the air force, which reported movement by Israeli units toward the Egyptian town. Yadin and Alon exchanged cables, in which the former ordered the

latter to 'stop all movement of your units without my prior authorization'; however, Alon continued to disobey and ordered his troops to proceed with the mission.[83]

What made Alon disobey the General Staff so flagrantly? Netanel Lorch, who displays considerable sympathy for Alon's deeds and ignores some of the cases in which he violated orders, quotes Rabin as saying that, 'In the War of Independence every headquarters tried to push things by creating facts for plans which it considered essential.'[84] Implicit in Alon's actions lay a deeper intention: he did not accept Yadin's authority and considered his own judgment to be at least equal to that of Yadin. Alon's moves made strategic sense, even if they were diplomatically shaky; and he apparently considered military logic—his logic—more important. In any event, at this stage he decided to stop flouting Yadin. Complying with Yadin's order to report to general headquarters on 30 December, Alon reported to Yadin—Ben-Gurion and Chief of Staff Dori were also present—that the Egyptian troops in Sinai had effectively ceased to be a fighting force, and that only along the coast between Gaza and al-'Arish were the Egyptians continuing to display any sort of tenacity and a meaningful presence. Now Alon also explained for the first time the logic behind his move, maintaining that his forces would not easily be able to breach the Egyptians' solid defenses if they adhered to the General Staff's original plan. In addition to fortifying their strongholds along the coast, he explained, the Egyptians had prepared reserve forces to cope with any instance in which an outpost fell to the Israelis. In Alon's assessment, the Egyptians' fortifications and their efficient dispersal of forces was the work of a new Egyptian commander in the sector.[85]

Alon's presentation was intended to persuade the forum that the Southern Front should be authorized to continue its push to conquer al-'Arish and thus cut off the Egyptian forces on the coast and force them to continue dispersing their troops (they would certainly dispatch some of the forces dug in along the coast to defend al-'Arish).[86] Ben-Gurion and the others vetoed Alon's plans and asked him to adhere to the original plan of Operation Ayin, which stipulated that after the Egyptians were dislodged from the Bir Asluj–'Awja line, the next move would be directed toward Rafah along the 'Awja–Rafah route. Alon was therefore told that the Southern Front should now focus its efforts on the 'Gaza–Rafah line'. At the same time, Ben-Gurion and Dori did not order Alon to withdraw from Abu Aqila, but instructed him to take advantage of the situation in order to take the village of al-Qusayma, on the 'Awja–'Aqaba road, and thus open the way to 'Aqaba. As for the

al-'Arish sector, the decision was that the forces at Abu Aqila would not conquer the town but only harass it. The consolidation of the Israeli presence at Abu Aqila was intended purely for tactical operational purposes. Ben-Gurion made it clear that if British forces intervened in Sinai, the IDF should back off and not engage them. There was one exception: if the British should also continue to operate around 'Awja, they were to be pushed back.[87] Nothing was said about Alon's disobedience.

In the wake of the meeting, Operations Branch issued an initial order for the second phase of Operation Ayin that reflected the changes imposed on Alon by Ben-Gurion and the IDF High Command. The new order defined the operational pattern for the coastal sector: raids on al-'Arish and on Rafah; sabotage of the railway line and the phone lines running between Egypt and Gaza via al-'Arish, and conquest of strategic outposts (84 and 86) in the center of the coastal sector.[88] The General Staff's order meant, in effect, that it accepted Alon's operational logic. True, Ben-Gurion and the General Staff forbade the conquest of al-'Arish, but Alon could live with that. He believed that he could achieve his goal—to induce the Egyptians to transfer forces from the Gaza–Rafah line to al-'Arish—merely by harassing the Egyptian garrison at al-'Arish without physically conquering the town. Losing no time, he ordered the IDF units around al-'Arish to engage the Egyptians in exchanges of fire, while to the south, al-Qusayma was taken. Gaza City was shelled by navy boats while 12 Egyptian officers and 500 soldiers were taken prisoner in a raid on the air field at Bir al-Husana, southwest of al-Qusayma.[89]

International Activity in the Wake of Israel's Incursion into Sinai

The IDF's push into Sinai had only a marginal impact on the Egyptian forces, but in the diplomatic arena it generated a turbulent reaction which finally scuttled it. The Security Council discussed the resumption of hostilities following a complaint by Egypt, and on 29 December it passed a resolution calling on Israel to cease its belligerent activity, to withdraw from territories it had occupied earlier, and to enter into armistice negotiations.[90] The fact that the draft resolution was formulated and presented by the British delegation seemed to confirm Israel's feeling that Britain was trying to thwart its attempt to gain control of the Negev and seize the region itself.[91] The British were certainly involved in the efforts to put a stop to Israeli activity in Sinai; after learning about

the IDF's incursion, Britain had informed the United States that if the IDF did not withdraw it would be compelled to act under the Anglo-Egyptian defense pact.[92] Thus, as Southern Front forces were deploying to go into action against the Egyptian forces in the coastal strip down to al-'Arish, the US representative in Israel, James Macdonald, was instructed by the State Department to convey to Ben-Gurion a sharply worded message concerning the IDF's activity in Sinai. The Administration expressed 'great concern' at what it regarded not as 'an accidental maneuver but a deliberately planned military operation'. From Macdonald, the Israelis learned that the British were threatening military action—implicit in their invocation of the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian treaty—if Israel did not pull back.[93] Shertok apprised Ben-Gurion of this development, on 31 December, in Tiberias. The Israeli Foreign Minister wanted to know whether to order the Israeli forces in Sinai to withdraw immediately, while Ben-Gurion wondered how an immediate pullback would affect the plan to take Gaza. Shertok, it turned out, had already looked into this and told Ben-Gurion that according to Chief of Staff Dori, the move against Gaza could proceed even if the Israeli forces in Sinai withdrew.[94] For all practical purposes, then, General Staff/Operations reverted to the spirit of the original Operation Ayin, in which the IDF was not supposed to cross the international border apart from where the 'Awja–Rafah road did so. The order finally issued by Ben-Gurion was for a withdrawal from Sinai, with the retreating troops sabotaging and destroying whatever military equipment they could, and for the operation to take the coastal strip and dislodge the Egyptians from the Faluja pocket to continue.[95]

Yadin thereupon cabled Alon to: '(1) Pull back all the forces of the Southern Front to 'Awja al-Hafir by noon the next day, 1 January 1949; (2) Sabotage bridges and air fields in the course of the retreat; (3) Continue to implement the second phase of Operation Ayin, meaning the activity in the Gaza–Rafah sector.' Having experience of Alon's reactions to orders of this kind, Yadin added a fourth clause: 'You must ensure that clause 1 is executed at any price by the time specified.'[96] Alon's response in fact showed that he was aware of the diplomatic importance of the order. Alon instructed his forces to prepare for withdrawal, but expressed his reservation about the act which, in his eyes, was militarily unjustified.[97]

Alon tried unsuccessfully to persuade Ben-Gurion to revoke the order to withdraw. He succeeded in convincing Shertok and Yadin to delay the withdrawal for 24 hours,[98] but as Alon was discussing his plan with Shertok and Yadin, Macdonald delivered the official text of the

State Department's note to Ben-Gurion. The Prime Minister denounced the 'tough tone', but nevertheless repeated his withdrawal order.[99] Alon would not yet give in. While he was still at GHQ he learned that Ben-Gurion had returned from Tiberias and asked to see him at once. Alon obtained Ben-Gurion's authorization for a 24-hour delay in the withdrawal and the two worked out the coming stage of the operation: a blocking action would be mounted south of Rafah and Israeli troops would continue to hold dominant positions that protected 'Awja al-Hafir in the west, even though they were on the Egyptian side of the border. Ben-Gurion also permitted Alon to move his troops along the 'Awja–Rafah road, most of which lay in Sinai.[100] Yadin updated the withdrawal order in the spirit of this summation:

> Pursuant to my cable … regarding the withdrawal of our forces, I reiterate: You must execute my orders in the cable unflinchingly. Confirm change in termination time. Instead of 011200 [January 1 at noon] final time set at 020500 January 2 at 5 a.m.].[101]

The Real Meaning of the British Ultimatum

Ben-Gurion thus acceded to the ultimatum presented by the Americans. Israeli historians are divided over the question whether or not the British message to the United States was an ultimatum.[102] In fact, the British cable was framed in threatening language, as the following passage shows:

> I [Bevin] trust that it may be possible for the United States Government to act on the Jews as to make any military action by us on Egyptian territory unnecessary under our treaty with Egypt. This can only be ensured if the Jews immediately withdraw from Egyptian territory … In view of the aggressive use to which the Jews had put arms obtained from Russian satellite countries we shall no longer be able to refuse to carry out British contracts to the Arab countries.[103]

Clearly, this was more than an implicit threat. The British drew a direct connection between the possibility of military action on their part and an IDF presence on Egyptian territory. They also threatened, more directly, that if the IDF did not withdraw they would resume arming Egypt and thus break the UN arms embargo. Nevertheless, Lorch is probably right in his conclusion—that what

the Israelis saw as a British ultimatum was actually not an ultimatum—though not for the right reasons. The British threat should be seen not only in the narrow context of the war, but also from the perspective of Anglo-Egyptian relations overall, which had become acrimonious over two issues. The first involved accusations levelled at Britain by the entire Arab world, including Egypt, for its part in bringing about the Partition Resolution and, as a result, Israel's establishment. Matters were made worse by Britain's strict observance of the UN arms embargo despite its contractual commitments to Egypt and despite the fact that the embargo was more harmful to Egypt, since Israel received weapons shipments from Czechoslovakia.[104] This by itself was enough to embarrass the British, but there was more. Britain and Egypt were engaged in a fierce dispute over the continued British military presence on Egyptian soil; Cairo demanded that the British remove their forces, while London wanted to change the terms of the 1936 treaty which formed the basis for the British presence. Talks between the two countries had broken down, and crisis loomed, following the failure of the Sidqi–Bevin agreement of 1946, which aimed to place the two States' relations on more equal terms, though allowing Britain to retain the Suez Base. The war in Palestine had only exacerbated the situation. The Foreign Office insisted that there was no connection between the renewal of the treaty and the Palestine war, but did not delude itself. As long as the fighting continued and the arms embargo was maintained, the British were unable to offer the Egyptians inducements, in the form of arms, to renew the treaty.[105] At the same time, London hoped that the Egyptians' military setbacks would prompt them to invoke the treaty to solicit its aid. The Egyptians, for their part, although well aware that they were entitled to enlist British aid against the Israeli invaders, confined themselves to requesting only technical aid, such as use of the British air base in the Suez Canal Zone and use of British fuel tanks so that their aircraft could reach the theater of battle. In no case did the Egyptians ask for direct military aid, under the terms of the 1936 Treaty, which they wanted to abrogate.[106] The British would probably not have attacked the Israelis, if only because Egypt would probably not have requested them to do so. In their message to the State Department, the British did refer to the possibility of activating the treaty, and in a cable to the member-states of the Commonwealth, Bevin explained clearly his country's intentions in this regard: 'If [the] Egyptian Government appeal to us for assistance under the terms of the

Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936, we should be under obligation to provide it.'[107] Both here and in the message to the Americans, the emphasis was on the need that might arise to supply arms to Egypt, but in any event aid, whether direct or in the form of arms sales, was made contingent upon an explicit Egyptian request. The British, as explained, would have welcomed such a request, but the Egyptians were not forthcoming, and the Foreign Office instructed its representatives in Cairo not to raise the question of military aid unless the Egyptian government formally asked to implement the 1936 Treaty.[108] Nor did the British attribute the Israeli withdrawal from Sinai to their demand; their assumption was that it was due to American pressure on Israel.[109]

Be that as it may, there is no doubt that Ben-Gurion took Macdonald's note as a British threat. This interpretation of the US envoy's words, which were in fact quite explicit, was consistent with the Israeli perception of Britain's intentions regarding Israel's moves and particularly its designs on the Negev. The Israeli leadership was convinced that Britain was conducting a diplomatic campaign that was geared to deprive Israel of the Negev and that it would not hesitate to use military means to achieve that goal should the opportunity arise. Now that opportunity seemed to present itself. Ben-Gurion had no intention of provoking a British assault on the IDF, which he was positive would ensue failing an IDF pullout from Sinai. Although the Israelis acceded to the US demand to evacuate Sinai, this did not mean the termination of the campaign against the Egyptians. In reaction to the Security Council Resolution of 29 December, Israel stated that it was 'committed to defend its territory and its residents against aggression … and would take all the lawful measures dictated by considerations of self-defense. It would not consider this mission complete until the Arab invasion forces withdrew.'[110] The IDF withdrew from Sinai by the appointed date, destroying military equipment and sabotaging main roads on the way, and immediately prepared to continue the drive against the Egyptians.[111]

The IDF's withdrawal from Sinai, and particularly from the airfields there, had a negative impact on the Israeli forces, since the Egyptians could now reactivate their air force in support of the ground troops that were under attack. During the second phase of Operation Horev the Southern Front forces came under repeated attacks from the air, although overall these had only a marginal effect on the course of the fighting.[112]

Operation Horev: Phase 2

Following his meeting with Ben-Gurion, Alon returned to the Southern Front headquarters, where an 'Order to Deploy for Phase 2 of Operation Horev' was drawn up. The forces in Sinai were ordered to withdraw 'from the territory of Sinai to the Palestine [Eretz Yisrael in the original] border by 2.1.49 [2 January 1949]', and to prepare for the next phase of Horev, which had the same goal as before: 'Eradication of the Egyptian Army in the Land of Israel.'[113] Southern Front HQ was going to launch its main effort in Rafah, in order to 'cut off the Egyptian Army in the Gaza–Rafah sector from its bases at al-'Arish and in Egypt by conquering Rafah'. Rafah was doubly important because it was also the Egyptians' logistic center; the site of its supply and equipment bases.[114] The plan's underlying strategy remained unchanged: there would be no frontal assaults on the Egyptians' defensive lines; instead, weak points would be identified and breached. The Egyptians' defenses were indeed solid and effectively mounted. The Egyptians had divided their troops so that outposts could assist one another with fire power, and their artillery emplacements covered the entire line of defense. The structured fire-plan they had prepared proved its effectiveness during the fighting. The Egyptian command could also call on reserve forces in a strength of two battalions as well as support by tanks and armored vehicles.[115] This was a decisive factor in the Israeli decision not to launch a direct assault on the Egyptian force on the coastal strip but to vanquish it by cutting it off from its rear bases. Because of the diplomatic implications of the operation, Alon did not have the time he needed to 'stretch' the Egyptians' lines as he had intended, forcing him instead to locate existing weak points rather than creating them, as he had hoped would be possible. The system of outposts at Rafah was thought to be the weakest point of the entire sector, and in any event, it was the most critical point for trapping the Egyptians on the coast—hence the choice of Rafah as the target for the next stage of Horev.[116]

The Egyptians sensed that the IDF had shifted the brunt of its activity to the eastern sector and began strengthening their forces there. As mentioned, from the outset a large Egyptian force had been massed along the coast, and the headquarters of the invasion force was also located there. As activity intensified in the east, the Egyptians transferred armor and infantry from the western to the eastern sector.[117] The Egyptian force in the Rafah sector had already been reinforced in the concluding stages of Phase 1 of Horev, as an armored force numbering one or two battalions from al-'Arish on its way to 'Awja was deployed with its occupation by the Israelis in Rafah.[118]

On the night before the scheduled start of the operation, the night of 1/2 January, the navy shelled Gaza City. The next night the city was bombed by the air force, and during the day Israeli aircraft attacked and disabled an Egyptian Army train west of al-'Arish. The town of al-'Arish—as well as Rafah, Khan Yunis and Faluja—was bombed.[119] The sea and air attacks inflicted a large number of casualties, particularly among the refugee population. The hospitals in the Gaza Strip were quickly filled to overflowing—indeed, at one stage the overcrowding was so bad that the hospitals could not treat wounded Egyptian soldiers, who continued to arrive constantly from the front. The Egyptians believed that the Israelis were deliberately attacking civilians in order to create panic among the refugees and thus increase the pressure on the Egyptian commanders.[120] The inference drawn by Egyptian HQ was that an Israeli assault was imminent, but its location remained a crucial unknown. Although Israel had declared that it would withdraw its troops from Sinai, the Egyptians were skeptical and their forces showed extreme caution as they made their way to the sites in Sinai which were supposed to be evacuated by the IDF, at Abu Aqila and near al-'Arish. The uncertainty led the Egyptian planners to strengthen their forces around al-'Arish, which was of supreme importance to them, in part with troops from the Rafah–Gaza strip. However, the transfer of forces occurred on a small scale and did not bring about a significant thinning out of the Egyptian forces on the Rafah–Gaza axis. Only a battalion-size force was moved, which was not enough to affect the fortified defenses in that sector.[121]

The ground action was launched as planned on the night of 3/4 January. The 1st Brigade took an Egyptian hilltop position (the 'graveyard strongpoint') that overlooked the Rafah junction area from the northeast, but failed to conquer an adjacent, more northerly, outpost, which was essential in order to enable the conquest of the Rafah outposts themselves, since according to the plan, tanks of the 8th Brigade were to hurtle through the breach that the Golani units were supposed to open for them on the way to seizing the Rafah junction. The front command ordered the brigade to persist in their efforts to dislodge the Egyptians from the outpost, but two attacks mounted by the Golani Brigade during the next day were repulsed.[122]

The 10th Brigade, reinforced by the 9th Battalion of the 12th Brigade, set out from 'Awja to Rafah with the mission of capturing the Egyptian outposts on the 'Awja–Rafah road. The brigade was ordered to seize the junction itself on 5 January. The first part of the mission was carried out, despite adverse sandy terrain and a total lack of information

about the forces they were up against; and the brigade engaged the Egyptians as soon as they were spotted, without advance warning of what to expect. Thus, despite all the difficulties, the brigade took all the Egyptian outposts on the Rafah–'Awja road and on 5 January was poised about one kilometer from the junction itself.[123] This single kilometer was to prove impregnable. The 10th Brigade was unable to crack the dense Egyptian defenses, and the 1st Brigade fared no better. However, the Israeli forces were able to consolidate their positions and repulse all Egyptian counterattacks. A force from the 10th Brigade scored a significant achievement by blowing up the al-'Arish–Rafah railway line as a train carried troop reinforcements north, killing more than 80 soldiers.[124]

The Egyptians, who put up an effective defense, were encouraged to persist in their resistance by their conviction that the end of the war was at hand and that Israel would obey the resolutions of the Security Council.[125] Nor was this a baseless assumption. On 4 January, the Egyptian government informed the United Nations—Israel was apprised of the message the following day—that it was ready to enter into negotiations on an armistice agreement with Israel. Ben-Gurion said that Israel would be ready to observe a cease-fire beginning on the 6th, provided Egypt affirmed its readiness to do the same and to begin talks.[126] Whether the Egyptian HQ in the field knew of these developments is unclear, though Israeli intelligence was convinced that they were aware of the diplomatic activity that was under way to terminate hostilities.

The continuation of the IDF's operations evoked a reaction from the Security Council. On 28 December, even before the onset of Phase 2 of Operation Horev, the Egyptians had complained to the Security Council about the IDF's activity in the south. The council met to discuss the complaint and the following day called on both sides to lay down their arms immediately and implement the council's 4 November resolution. The committee that was appointed as part of that resolution to supervise the cessation of hostilities and the return of the forces to the pre-October lines was requested to report, on 7 January, about the situation in southern Israel.[127] The British lobbied intensively at UN headquarters for the resolution's adoption and according to reports that reached the Israeli envoys the British intended, in the 7 January session, to urge sanctions against Israel if it was found in violation of the 29 December Council Resolution. The British then decided to reinforce their diplomatic activity with a show of strength to demonstrate that they were ready to intervene militarily if Israel continued its operations, and particularly if Israeli forces continued to operate across the international border. The Israeli envoys in Washington learned that the British

ambassador had warned the administration that Egypt might ask Britain for assistance under the terms of the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty.[128] The information was disturbing but, in fact, incomplete. Israel did not know that the Egyptians had no intention of invoking the treaty and even downplayed the implications of the Israeli military actions around Rafah in order not to provide the British with a pretext to 'assist' them.[129] In any event, Israel's military operations against the Egyptians were not influenced by the tacit British threat. The British, in the meantime, displayed passive involvement in the hostilities in the form of dispatching aircraft from their base in the Suez Canal Zone on photographic missions (see below).

The diplomatic activity had a concrete effect at a later stage of the war. Israel's delegation to the United Nations was directed to inform the Secretary General, on 7 January, that Israel agreed to a cease-fire parallel to Egypt's agreement.[130] At the same time, the Israeli envoys at the United Nations and in Washington sent urgent cables home urging compliance with the Security Council's request and that the hostilities be stopped as soon as possible. The diplomats noted the serious damage that Israel had already sustained in the United Nations, and within the administration, because of its military activity in the Negev, and pleaded with the senior officials of the Foreign Ministry to bring about its cessation.[131]

In the wake of this, Yadin informed Alon that 'we may have to stop today [6 January]. Make a maximum effort around Rafah', repeating the message again later.[132] Southern Front HQ thereupon ordered the 8th Brigade, which was still poised near the junction, to try to capture it. The attack, which took place in the afternoon, failed. In a last-minute effort aimed at cutting off the Egyptian forces on the coastal strip, the 4th Battalion of the 10th Brigade was dispatched on the night of 7 January to seize outposts on the al-'Arish–Rafah road, west of Rafah itself, which was held by three Egyptians companies. The battalion was successful, so that even though the crucial junction remained in Egyptian hands, the Egyptian forces along the coast were cut off from al-'Arish and from Egypt. The brigade sent in reinforcements and was able to seize a strip of the road that extended about five kilometers across the international border into Egyptian territory.[133]

Yeruham Cohen hints that Alon sought to exploit the blocking action not only to cut off the Egyptian forces on the Rafah–Gaza road, but also to create a pretext for the continuation of activity even after the cease-fire came into effect. He thought the Egyptian Army would make a last-minute attempt to break through the ring of the Israeli siege before the

cease-fire came into effect, and therefore issued appropriate orders to the forces operating in the area of the blocked road.[134] The Egyptians indeed refused to accept the situation and continued trying to throw back the blocking force even after the cease-fire came into effect at 2 p.m. Alon wanted to take advantage of the Egyptians' violation of the cease-fire agreement to capture a position that lay on the other side of the junction in relation to the area of the blocked road, in order to tighten the siege of the coastal strip. In other words, it was not located in the sector where the fighting was going on. Alon asked the Defense Minister for authorization to effect the move, but Ben-Gurion, facing international activity intended to force Israel to withdraw its troops back across the border, turned him down.[135]

The most dramatic event connected with the termination of hostilities took place in the air, when the IAF shot down British reconnaissance planes that were photographing the battle's arena. The British sorties had begun in late May when, after the British evacuation of Palestine, British military headquarters in the Middle East sought information about Israel's airfields and its air force. The fly-overs continued throughout the period and the British followed the growth of the IAF with great interest. The findings in the photographs were known to the RAF mission in the Middle East, the Foreign Office and the UN mediator. In fact, no ministerial authorization was ever given for these flights. During December 1948, the British Defence Ministry re-examined the question of whether to continue with the reconnaissance sorties (on 20 November 1948, the IAF shot down a British Mosquito aircraft that was on a photographic mission and in early December, a second British aircraft was downed while flying a reconnaissance mission with other planes over the center of the country). The British High Command wanted sorties flown once every ten days, not only for intelligence purposes, but also for operational planning, should the need arise to go into action to protect Jordan. The Defense Minister stated that sending planes over Palestine should not pose a problem, as technically, after the evacuation, the country was *res nullius*.[136] The photographic runs continued to the end of 1948 and enabled the British to follow the IDF's advance into the Sinai. On 7 January, the IAF twice sent planes into action to engage British aircraft over the area of the blocked Rafah–al-'Arish road. By the end of the day, five British planes had been downed. The event was not publicized at the time, despite various reactions it aroused.[137] However, this final event did not affect matters on the Southern Front, where hostilities had effectively ended.

The final events of Operation Horev took place after the cease-fire had been put into effect. For a few hours, the Egyptians tried to extricate themselves from the siege under which they found themselves following the IDF's capture of the outposts on the high ground above the Rafah–al-'Arish highway; but in the early evening hours they ceased their fire and quiet reigned in the sector. On the Israeli side, Southern Front HQ, at 10:30 a.m. on 7 January, informed the fighting forces that 'a cease-fire enters into effect today at 1400 hours'.[138] Two days later, the General Staff ordered the forces still in the Sinai to pull back across the international border into Israel. The Southern Front HQ obeyed, albeit with demonstrative reluctance: 'There is no place for an appeal and consequently for any delay in executing the order, although it is not easy,' Alon instructed his troops.[139] All the IDF units in Sinai, including the blocking forces on the Rafah–al-'Arish road, duly retreated. The Egyptian forces in the coastal strip were thus released from their siege and two days later, on 12 January, Israeli and Egyptian delegations were already at Rhodes to launch the talks on the armistice agreement.

Last Note of War

Although the fighting on the Southern Front concluded on 7 January, the sounds of war continued to be heard in the days to come in two interrelated arenas: the British–Israeli Front and the final Israeli thrust to the Gulf of 'Aqaba.

When fighting resumed in November, the British Cabinet feared a possible Israeli offensive against Jordan. In that event, Britain would be obliged to assist Jordan under the terms of its defense pact with that country. To prepare for this eventuality, the Cabinet authorized the immediate shipment to Jordan of military equipment, including anti-aircraft weapons, and the dispatch of British warships to the Gulf of Aqaba, in case the Israelis moved into that region. However, the British commitment did not extend to the territory occupied by Jordan west of the River Jordan. The available British forces, moreover, were insufficient to cope successfully with the Israeli Army, which had been considerably reinforced.[140] The British were even more perturbed by the Israeli activity in Sinai beginning at the end of December, and feared that it would spill over into Jordan. At the beginning of January, the Foreign Secretary, the Defense Minister and the chiefs of the armed forces discussed the implications of the Israeli action and its potential threat to Jordan. It was imperative, they decided, to prepare for the

possibility that hostilities would erupt on Jordanian soil as well. These apprehensions were heightened in the wake of the IAF's downing of the British reconnaissance planes, following which the British set tanks ashore in 'Aqaba.[141] British fears were not allayed by Israel's agreement to a cease-fire with the Egyptians; on the contrary, they thought they had identified a pattern whereby the Israelis held talks with one side and removed it from the arena of combat, while simultaneously attacking another side. This, they believed, was what the Israelis had done when they conducted talks with Jordan but at the same time struck at the Egyptians. Now the British were worried that, with a cease-fire prevailing in the south and Egypt and Israel about to begin armistice talks, Israel would take advantage of the fact that Egypt was no longer involved in the fighting and attack Jordan.[142] Just as the British did not understand Israel's intentions, the Israelis were at a loss to comprehend the British moves in connection with Jordan. Yadin, observing the British military build-up in Jordan, concluded that its purpose was to wrest the Negev from Israel. The British, he thought, had hoped that Egypt would invoke the 1936 Treaty and thus provide the pretext for them to move against Israel. That hope having been dashed, there was now an Anglo-Iraqi–Jordanian conspiracy afoot to seize the Negev. This theory was unfounded but Ben-Gurion, taking no risks, wanted to ensure that the Egyptians had no excuse to resume the fighting and therefore ordered the blocking action at Rafah to be terminated quickly.[143]

In the meantime, the General Staff drew up 'Operation Yefet', which was geared to prepare the IDF for the possibility of an Anglo-Iraqi–Jordanian offensive against Israel. The plan's supposition was that British forces would attack from 'Awja toward Be'er Sheva or from 'Aqaba toward Sodom. At the same time, the Arab Legion would advance from Hebron to Be'er Sheva and toward Bayt Jibrin in an attempt to link up with the Egyptian brigade in the Faluja pocket, while the Iraqi troops would attack across the entire Front they had seized in order to pin down Israeli forces and perhaps also to grab areas inside Israel. Additional British forces would attack targets throughout the country, with tactics including a seaborne landing, while enemy aircraft, particularly the RAF, would launch 'heavy bombing raids against our population centers'.[144] The Israeli plan was based on the IDF's deployment as set forth in the order of the Southern Front Command at the conclusion of the war; that is, the Front's forces did not go on special alert and the defensive plan was based on the routine deployment of its forces. Only the Central Front was called on to draw up a concrete plan

to cut off the Hebron–Bethlehem road, in order to disrupt the advance of the Jordanian forces should hostile movement be detected.[145]

Basically, then, the plan did not necessitate any unusual deployment, and the Israeli fears and the resulting operational vigilance faded as the armistice talks between Israel and its neighbors progressed. In February 1949, the armistice agreement with Egypt was signed, following which the brigade trapped in the Faluja pocket was liberated and the Egyptian forces in the West Bank pulled back to Gaza through Israeli territory.[146] The signing of the accord and the evacuation of the Egyptian pocket did away with the constant need to maintain a high-alert status in the face of a possible resumption of hostilities. With progress being made in the diplomatic process at Rhodes and talks continuing with the Jordanians on an armistice agreement, Alon urged the General Staff to impose an Israeli presence throughout the entire Negev, and particularly at its southernmost point, Umm Rashrash (today's Eilat). Following the pull-back of his forces from Sinai, Alon dispatched patrols to examine routes to the south and was informed that it was possible to reach a point about 20 kilometers north of the Umm Rashrash police station. Alon therefore requested authorization to formally take the Gulf of 'Aqaba region. Once an advance force had asserted the Israeli presence there, Alon added, he would improve the road south and see to building an airstrip at the gulf.[147]

Within a few days, a positive reply arrived from the General Staff. Alon dispatched another patrol south and then drew up the plans for 'Operation Uvda'. Its goal was to take control 'of the southern Negev as far as 'Aqaba' by means of a pincer movement to be executed by two brigades: the 1st and the 12th. The latter would send an advance force south from Be'er Sheva via the Ramon Crater toward the meeting point of the Jordanian–Egyptian borders, and set up a landing strip to which the rest of the brigade would be flown. Two days later, the 1st Brigade would move along the eastern axis, from Hatzeva via the Arava Plain, with three goals: to draw the attention of the Arab Legion and thus afford the advance force of the Negev Brigade freedom of action; to protect the flank of the advance force; and to reach the Gulf of 'Aqaba. The Alexandroni Brigade dispatched forces to the Ein Gedi area on the Dead Sea in order to ensure Israeli control of that area as well.[148] One severe restriction was placed on the Southern Front Command: there was to be no military collision with the Arab Legion. At the same time, following Alon's explicit request, the General Staff permitted the Israeli forces to defend themselves against possible enemy fire. That directive generated the solution. The Israeli forces began moving on 5 March and

encountered Jordanian units along the way. Faithful to the order of the High Command, they did not attack the Jordanians but went around them instead. The Jordanians then opened fire at the flanking force, which returned fire in self-defense. The method proved itself and the two columns reached their goal successfully on 10 March. However, the order stipulated that the forces of the Negev Brigade were to deploy outside the Gulf of 'Aqaba, while the Golani Brigade was to advance to the shore of the Red Sea. Nevertheless, the Negev Brigade sent a force to Umm Rashrash which arrived first, as Golani had been delayed on the way. Alon conducted a disciplinary hearing 'for an early clarification of accusations that have been voiced here and there concerning the entry of the 12th Brigade to Umm Rashrash before the 1st Brigade, which was not in accordance with the plan'.[149]

Operation Uvda somewhat unnerved the British forces in Jordan, who feared the Israelis intended to take 'Aqaba. The British Chiefs of Staff and the Foreign Office maintained that the IDF was intent on completing Israel's control of the Negev, but prepared for the possibility of an Israeli strike at 'Aqaba. The British forces in Jordan were ordered to monitor closely the advance of the Israeli troops, and should they in fact cross the international border and push toward 'Aqaba they were to be repulsed, with the use of fire if necessary. The Foreign Office formally notified the Israeli government of these orders.[150] This tension was also dissipated by the progress made in the talks on the armistice agreement between the Israeli and Jordanian delegations.

NOTES

1. Telegram from M. Shertok to W. Eytan, 30 November 1948: Yehoshua Freundlich, *Documents of Israel's Foreign Policy*, Vol. 2 (Jerusalem, 1984).
2. BGWD, p. 860, entry for 1 December 1948; telegram from R. Shiloah to M. Shertok, 2 December 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, pp. 225–54. Shertok claimed that Egypt was 'refusing to accede to the 16 November call of the Security Council', and therefore the Israeli government had resolved 'that its chief enemy must not be allowed to enjoy both worlds: both to hold territories that did not belong to it by right … and to refrain from finalizing its status by signing an armistice agreement'. Consequently, he said, Operation Horev had been launched. Shertok, *Beshaar Haumot*, p. 337.
3. P. Mohan to D. Ben-Gurion, 9 December 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, p. 278.
4. Telegram from W. Eytan to P. Mohen, 9 December 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, p. 280; telegram from R. Shiloah to A. Eban, 14 December 1948, ibid., p. 298.
5. Sir A.A. Kirkbride, Amman, to Foreign Office, 3 November 1948, E14208, FO 371/68643.

6. *Behind the Curtain*, pp. 173–4.
7. British Embassy, Cairo to E. Bevin, Foreign Office, 8 December 1948, J8051, FO 371/69195.
8. Ibid.
9. Fatalities, IDFA, 922/1975/1189; Palmah Fatalities, IDFA 649/1972/19.
10. Nagib, *Egypt's Destiny*, pp. 24–5.
11. BGWD, pp. 871–2, entry for 9 December 1948; ibid., p. 895, entry for 22 December 1948; Ben-Gurion's address to the Security Committee in *When Israel Fights*, p. 346.
12. BGWD, pp. 869, 872, entry for 9 December 1948.
13. BGWD, p. 824, entry for 15 November 1948, and p. 830, entry for 17 November 1948; South Front/Commander to General Staff/Operations, 19 November 1948, IDFA 2539/50/69; Daily Summary, 20 November 1948, IDFA; South Front/Operations to 12th Brigade: 'Operation Order Lot', 20 November 1948, IDFA, 979/51/17; Cohen, *By Light and in Darkness*, p. 192.
14. BGWD, pp. 843–4, entry for 24 November 1948; South Front/HQ to the Front's Brigades, 6 November 1948, IDFA 1749/50/25.
15. South Front/Operations to the Negev District, 23 November 1948, IDFA 1749/50/25; 10th Brigade/Operations to the Brigade's Battalions, 25 November 1948, ibid.
16. BGWD, pp. 839–40, entry for 22 November 1948 and p. 843, entry for 24 November 1948.
17. South Front/Commander to General Staff/Operations, 25 November 1948, IDFA 2539/50/69; 8th Brigade/Operations to the Brigade's Battalions: 'Operation Order: Assaf', 1 December 1948, IDFA 1749/50/25; Front South/Administration to the South Front's Brigades, 3 December 1948, IDFA 979/51/19; South Front/Operations to the 1st and 12th Brigades, 5 December 1948, ibid.; South Front/HQ: Battlefield Diary, 6 and 7 December 1948, IDFA 1749/50/25; South Front/Operations to the 1st Brigade, 7 December 1948, ibid.
18. The Majdal Company to the Base Officer, 3 December 1948, IDFA 2539/50/70.
19. BGWD, pp. 839–40, entry for 22 November 1948 and p. 843, entry for 24 November 1948 and pp. 865–6, entry for 6 December 1948; Ben-Gurion, *The Restored State of Israel*, p. 344.
20. Minutes of PGI Meeting, 15 December 1948, ISA.
21. Minutes of PGI Meeting, 19 December 1948, ISA; BGWD, pp. 886–7, entry for 19 December 1948 and p. 885, entry for 18 December 1948.
22. Sir R. Campbell, Cairo, to Foreign Office, 25 December 1948, E16240, FO 371/68692.
23. The 8th Brigade/Intelligence: 'Intelligence Annex', 20 December 1948, IDFA 561/922/75; Intelligence Report no. 1, 19 December 1948, IDFA 92/75/561; Nagib, *Egypt's Destiny*, p. 23.
24. Kamal Ismayil al-Sherif, 'The Muslim Brothers in the Palestine War', pp. 108-9; Intelligence Report no. 1, 19 December 1948, IDFA 92/75/561; South Command/HQ: 'Toward Action in the Negev' [undated], in *Maarakhot*, pp. 263–4, June 1978, p. 129.
25. Intelligence Report no. 1, 19 December 1948, IDFA 92/75/561.
26. BGWD, p. 832, entry for 18 November 1948.
27. General Staff/Operations: 'Platform for Operation Ayin', IDFA 652/56/214. The document appears in a fuller version in *Maarakhot*, pp. 263–4, June 1978, p. 126, and is dated November 1948. It is doubtful whether at that early stage the General Staff had already begun to deploy to implement the operation. As noted, it was only on 8 December that Ben-Gurion asked Yadin 'what is needed, and how much time, for the total eradication of the Egyptians in the Bir 'Asluj–'Awja–al-Hafir area'. This was the first time the possibility had been raised of mounting such an operation. In his article on Operation Horev, Elhanan Oren relies on the document found in the IDF Archives,

but in a footnote he directs the reader to the version in *Maarakhot*, describing it as a 'proposed draft from November'. E. Oren, 'Operation Horev and the Involvement of the Western Powers: December 1948 –January 1949', in G. Gvitzman, *et al.* (eds), *Sinai*, Part 2 (Tel Aviv, 1987) (Hebrew), p. 916, note 39. The version in *Maarakhot* also differs in other details from that in the IDF Archives. The present study is based on the latter document. As for the fear of an Egyptian operation against Be'er Sheva, the 12th Brigade was ordered to prepare to defend the city against that danger: 12th Brigade HQ, 'Order for General State of Alert for the Be'er Sheva Forces', 25 November 1948, IDFA 2385/50/137; 'Operational Order for Organizing the Forces for Defending Be'er Sheva', 28 November 1948, ibid.

28. General Staff/Operations: 'Platform for Opertion Ayin', IDFA 652/56/214.
29. Ibid.
30. Alon, *Contriving Warfare*, p. 64.
31. General Staff/Operations: 'Platform for Operation Ayin', 10 December 1948, IDFA 652/56/214; in the *Maarakhot* version of the order, the stated goal is 'eradication and destruction of the invading Egyptian enemy force and ensuring the State's central southern region'. See note 27 above.
32. Compare General Staff/Operations: 'Platform for Operation Ayin', 10 December 1948, IDFA 652/56/214 with Southern Command, Mordechai Gazit hints that Israel preferred to conduct the campaign to remove the Egyptians from Gaza at the diplomatic level. He does not state whether this was dictated by the events in the field or whether there was no intention from the outset to try to expel the Egyptians from Gaza by military means. M. Gazit, 'Fluctuations of Ben-Gurion's Proposal of 1949 to Include the Gaza Strip, with its Entire Population, within the State of Israel', *Hatzionut*, Collection 12, 1987 (Hebrew), p. 316.
33. 'Operation Order: Horev', 22 December 1948, IDFA 922/75/561; Rabin, *Service Notebook*, p. 72; Cohen, *By Light and in Darkness*, p. 224; Alon, *Contriving Warfare*, pp. 63, 68–9; 8th Brigade/Operations: 'Operation Order: Horev', 23 December 1948, IDFA 922/75/561.
34. 'Alert Order: Operation Horev', 15 December 1948, IDFA 1749/50/38; Alon, *Contriving Warfare*, p. 59.
35. Telegram from the General Staff/Operations to South Front, 16 December 1948, IDFA 922/75/1182.
36. South Front/Operations: 'Operation Order: Horev', 20 December 1948, ibid., 922/75/561.
37. *Maarakhot* 263–4, June 1978, p. 129.
38. 'Operation Order: Horev', IDFA 922/75/561.
39. Harel Brigade/Operations: 'Operation Order Horev', 23 December 1948, IDFA 922/75/561.
40. Alon, *Contriving Warfare*, pp. 103–4.
41. Ben-Gurion speech: 'The Negev Campaigns', in 7 January 1949 in *When Israel Fights*, pp. 346–50.
42. Intelligence Report, 19 December 1948, IDFA 922/75/561; al-Sharif, 'The Muslim Brothers in the Palestine War', pp. 102–4.
43. 'Air Force Annex to Operation Horev', 22 December 1948, IDFA 128/51/4; Intelligence Report no. 30, 24 December 1948, IDFA, 922/75/561.
44. Ibid.
45. South Front/Intelligence: 'Intelligence Summary no. 101', 31 December 1948, IDFA, 922/75/561; South Front/Intelligence: 'Intelligence Report for December 12th', 1 January 1949, ibid.; IAF/Intelligence: Intelligence Report [undated], IDFA 137/51/432 (6).
46. IAF/Intelligence: 'Bombardment Effectiveness in Operation Eyin' [undated], IDFA 137/51/432 (6).

47. South Front/Intelligence: Intelligence Summary no. 94 for 22 December, 23 December 1948, IDFA 922/75/561; telegram from South Front to General Staff/Operations, 23 December 1948, IDFA 922/75/1176; Fatalities, IDFA 922/1975/1189; Cohen, *By Light and in Darkness*, pp. 235–6; Ben-Gurion, *The Restored State of Israel*, p. 335; al-Sharif, 'The Muslim Brothers in the Palestine War', pp. 106–7.
48. South Front/Intelligence: Initial Summary, 23 December 1948, IDFA 922/75/561.
49. Intelligence Branch: Action Report no. 33, 26 December 1948, IDFA 922/75/561; South Front/Intelligence: Summary Report no. 99 for 27 December, 28 December 1948, ibid.; Intelligence Branch: Action Report no. 35, 28 December 1948, ibid.
50. Intelligence Branch: Action Report no. 33, 26 December 1948, IDFA 922/75/561; Intelligence Branch: Action Report no. 34, 27 December 1948, ibid.; from Cairo to FO, 24 December 1948, PRO, FO 371/68692; from Cairo to FO, 25 December 1948, ibid.
51. Intelligence Branch: Action Report no. 33, 26 December 1948, IDFA 922/75/561; Intelligence Branch: Action Report no. 34, 27 December 1948, ibid.
52. BGWD, p. 901, entry for 25 December 1948; General Staff/Operations: An Order, 25 December 1948, IDFA 652/56/214. This was the order to the 3rd Brigade to run the operation against the al-Faluja pocket.
53. 'Operation Order: Horev', IDFA, 922/75/561; Avrham Adan, *The Ink Flag* (Tel Aviv, 1984) (Hebrew), pp. 234 ff.
54. Intelligence Branch: Action Report no. 33, 26 December 1948, IDFA 922/75/561; Alon, *Contriving Warfare*, pp. 93–4; Adan, pp. 239–41; *Ha'Palmah Book 2*, p. 671; Rabin, *Service Notebook*, p. 71.
55. Adan, *The Ink Fag*, pp. 242–3.
56. Alon, *Contriving Warfare*, p. 66.
57. Intelligence Branch: Action Report no. 33, 26 December 1948, IDFA 922/75/561; 89th Battalion's Report of the Horev Operation, Stage 1 [undated], ibid.; 8th Brigade: 'Report: Operation Horev', 21 January 1949, ibid.; Rabin, *Service Notebook*, pp. 71–2.
58. From Cairo to FO, 24 December 1948, FO 371/68692.
59. Intelligence Branch: Action Report no. 33, 26 December 1948, IDFA 922/75/561; South Front/Operations: 'Order: Operation Horev', 20 December 1948, ibid.; Cohen, *By Light and in Darkness*, pp. 229–30.
60. Ben-Gurion, *The Restored State of Israel*, pp. 333–4.
61. Examples for operation orders related to the activity against the 'Faluja pocket' can be found in South Front/Operations to the 5th Brigade, 12 November 1948, IDFA 1749/50/25; South Front/Operations to the 5th Brigade, 13 November 1948, ibid.; 5th Brigade to the Brigade's Battalions, 13 November 1948, IDFA 7011/49/5; General Staff/Operations to Intelligence Branch and Southern Front, 15 November 1948, IDFA 6127/49/93.
62. From Amman to Foreign Office, 13 November 1948, E14661, FO 371/68690.
63. Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 601–3; *Behind the Curtain*, pp. 168–72; BGWD, pp. 839–40, entry for 22 November 1948. Abdullah al-Tall described the Damascus plan as Glubb's 'diabolic' plan, aimed to disarm the captured brigade of its arms, and hence to give it to the Jewish forces. Al-Tall, *Memories*, pp. 295–6. His version is not supported by the existing evidence.
64. South Front/Operations to 8th Brigade, 20 November 1948, IDFA 1749/50/25; 5th Brigade/Operations: 'Operation Order: Annihilation', 20 November 1948, ibid.; South Front/Operations to 5th Brigade, 21 November 1948, IDFA 979/51/7; South Front/Intelligence: 'A Weekly Report up to November 26', 27 November 1948, IDFA 1041/49/29; Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 606–7.
65. South Front/Operations to the 5th and 8th Brigades, 24 November 1948, IDFA 979/51/7; South Front/Intelligence: 'A Weekly Report up to November 26', 27

November 1948, IDFA 1041/49/29; Intelligence Report: Daily Report, 26 November 1948, ibid.

66. South Front/Operations to the 5th and 8th Brigades, 25 November 1948, IDFA 1749/50/25; Ayalon, *The Givati Brigade Facing the Egyptian Invasion*, pp. 608–20.
67. 3rd Brigade/Intelligence: 'A Full report of Operation Annihilation, the night of 27 December 1948', December 1948, IDFA, 922/75/561; Intelligence Branch: Action Report no. 35, 28 December 1948, ibid.; BGWD, p. 903, entry for 26 December 1948 and p. 906, entry for 28 December 1948 and p. 954, entry for 17 January 1949. The brigade reports did not provide the full story of the occurrences in the village. It was Ben-Gurion who gave a full account of what had happened in his diary.
68. 'Order: Operation Horev', IDFA 922/75/561.
69. Several of Yadin's telegrams are: telegram from Yadin to Commander of Southern Front, 28 December 1948, IDFA 922/75/1176;
70. BGWD, p. 906, entry for 28 December 1948.
71. Telegram from South Front to General Staff, 29 December 1948, IDFA 922/75/1176; *Ha'Palmah Book*, p. 425.
72. IAF/Intelligence: Intelligence Summary [undated], IDFA 137/51/432 (6).
73. Fatalities, IDFA 922/1975/1189.
74. *Ha'Palmah Book*, p. 674; Adan, p. 250. Yeruham Cohen maintains that the raiding forces, which were led by the deputy commander of the 9th Battalion, Uri Banari, captured the airport and 'could have gone on to the Suez Canal without any interference from the Egyptian Army'. Cohen, *By Light and in Darkness*, p. 238.
75. Rabin, *Service Handbook*, p. 92; Alon, *Contriving Warfare*, pp. 97–8. Avraham Adan, who was then a company commander in the Negev Brigade, notes in his memoirs that 'only recently did I discover ... to my surprise … [that] the General Staff documents spoke of the conquest of 'Awja, Rafah, and Gaza. Abu Aqila and al-'Arish were not mentioned. The planning of the Front elaborated only as regards the first stage of the campaign, as far as the conquest of 'Awja.' Adan, *The Ink Flag*, pp. 250–1. Adan's remark should cause no surprise. Besides the fact that as a company commander he was unaware of activity that involved the brigade command and Southern Front HQ, the brigade was never designated to proceed to Abu Aqila after taking the Musharaffa and Tamila outposts. The orders of Southern Front HQ for Horev earmarked that assignment for the 8th Brigade, but on 28 December a 'Change of Deployment Order' was issued in which the 12th Brigade was assigned the task of conquering Abu Aqila. South Front/Operations: 'Change of Deployment Order', 28 December 1948, IDFA 922/75/561.
76. 8th Brigade/Operations: Deployment Order, Operation Horev, 17 December 1948, IDFA 922/75/561; 8th Brigade/Operations, 'Operation Order: Horev', 23 December 1948, ibid.
77. South Front/Operation: 'Change of Deployment Order from December 27, 1948', 28 December 1948, IDFA 922/75/561.
78. *Hanegev Brigade in Battle*, p. 213; *In Enemy Eyes*, pp. 115–16.
79. South Front/Operation: 'Change of Deployment Order from December 27, 1948', 28 December 1948, IDFA, 922/75/561.
80. Telegram of South Front to General Staff/Operations, 29 December 1948, IDFA 922/75/1176.
81. Southern Front/Operations: Activity Order for 30 December 1948, 29 December 1948, IDFA 1749/50/38.
82. Telegrams from Southern Front to General Staff on 29 December 1948 at 1715 and 1800, IDFA 922/75/1178.
83. Telegram from Yadin to South Front/Commander, 29 December 1948, IDFA 922/75/1183; telegrams from Southern Front to General Staff, 29 December 1948, IDFA 922/75/1178. Lorch preferred to describe Alon's disobedience in the puzzling

sentence: 'Alon hence did not directly answered Yadin's order.' Netanel Lorch, *Israel in the Grip of Superpowers* (Tel Aviv, 1990) (Hebrew), p. 27.

84. Lorch, *Israel's War of Independence*, p. 610. Lorch ignores Yadin's telegrams prohibiting Alon from moving from Abu Aqila to al-'Arish, and from Alon's disobedience.
85. Telegram from Yadin to South Front/Commander, 29 December 1948, IDFA 922/75/1183; BGWD, pp. 912–13.
86. Alon, *Contriving Warfare*, p. 100; Cohen, *By Light and in Darkness*, p. 236.
87. BGWD, pp. 912–13, entry for 30 December 1948.
88. General Staff/Operations: 'Platform for Operation Ayin', Stage 2, 30 December 1948, IDFA 652/56/214.
89. Alon, *Contriving Warfare*, pp. 69–70; Intelligence Branch: Action Report no. 38, 31 December 1948, and Action Report no. 39, 1 January 1949, IDFA 922/75/561.
90. SCOR, Third Year, 394th–396th meeting, 28–29 December 1948.
91. Shertok, *At the Nation's Gates*, pp. 342–4.
92. Under Secretary of the Secretary of State to the United States Delegation to the United Nations, 29 December 1948, *FRUS 1948*, V, p. 1698; Under Secretary of the Secretary of State to the US Special Representative in Israel, 30 December 1948, ibid., pp. 1701–3.
93. The US Special Representative in Israel to the Under Secretary of the Secretary of State, 31 December 1948, *FRUS 1948*, V, pp. 1704–5. The Representative delivered the message to Shertok on the 31st: ibid., pp. 1705–6. See also G. Macdonald to M. Shertok, 31 December 1948, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, pp. 331–2.
94. BGWD, pp. 914–15, entry for 31 December 1948.
95. BGWD, p. 915, entry for 31 December 1948.
96. Telegram from Yadin to South Front/Commander, 31 December 1948, IDFA 922/75/1182.
97. Cited by Cohen, *By Light and in Darkness*, p. 239.
98. Ibid., p. 237. Cohen is wrong about the sequence of events. They are presented on the basis of the remarks in BGWD, p. 912, note 2 and p. 918, note 5.
99. BGWD, p. 918, entry for 31 December 1948.
100. Cohen, *By Light and in Darkness*, pp. 239–40; BGWD, p. 918, entry for 31 December 1948.
101. Telegram from Yadin to South Front/Commander, 1 January 1948, IDFA 922/75/1182.
102. British *aide-mémoire*, *FRUS 1948*, V, p. 1703; Mordechai Gazit, 'Operation Horev: A Classical British Ultimatum–Nay; A Threat to Use Force Against Israel–Yes', *Maarakhot* no. 297 (January 1985) (Hebrew), pp. 46–8; Lorch, *Israel in the Grip of Superpowers*, pp. 47–8, 68–9.
103. From Foreign Office to Washington, 30 December 1948, FO 371/68692.
104. From the British Embassy, Cairo, to the Egyptian Department, Foreign Office, 21 May 1948, FO 371/69193; memorandum of a conversation with Gallad, 24 and 26 July 1948, ibid.; 'Re-orientation of Egyptian Policy', 30 July 1948, PRO, ibid.; Ilan, *The Origin of the Arab–Israeli Arms Race*, pp. 72–180.
105. L. Clutton to E.A. Chapman-Andrews, Cairo, 17 December 1948, J7922/24/G, FO 371/69195.
106. From Cairo to Foreign Office, 29 December 1948, J22265, FO 371/69289; from BMA, Cairo to War Office, 30 December 1948, J8314, ibid.
107. Outward telegram from Commonwealth Relations Office, 31 December 1948, E45J, FO 371/75381.
108. From Foreign Office to Cairo, 31 December 1948, FO 371/68692.
109. D.O. (49) 1st meeting, 3 January 1949, PREM 8/1251(PTI).
110. A sharp attack on Britain's policy toward Israel is in M. Shertok to G. Macdonald, 3

January 1949, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, pp. 335–6.
111. BGWD, p. 921, entry for 2 January 1949; Cohen, *By Light and in Darkness*, p. 240.
112. Intelligence Branch: Action Report no. 42, 4 January 1949, IDFA 922/75/561.
113. South Front/Operations: 'Operation Order: Horev', Second Stage, 1 January 1949, IDFA, 922/75/561.
114. South Front/Operations: 'Operation Order: Horev', Second Stage, 1 January 1949, IDFA, 922/75/561; South Front/Operations: Addition to 'Operation Order: Horev', Second Stage, January 1949, ibid.; Etzioni, *Ilan Va'Shelah*, p. 365.
115. Intelligence Branch: Action Report no. 40, 3 January 1949, IDFA 922/75/561.
116. BGWD, p. 921, entry for 2 January 1949; Alon, *Contriving Warfare*, pp. 63–4.
117. BGWD, p. 919, entry for 2 January 1949; South Front/Intelligence: Intelligence Summary no. 104 for 2 and 3 January 1949, IDFA, 922/75/561.
118. Intelligence Branch: Action Report no. 34, 27 December 1948, IDFA 922/75/561.
119. Intelligence Branch: Action Report no. 40, 3 January 1949, IDFA 922/75/561; South Front/Intelligence: Intelligence Summary no. 104 for 2 and 3 January 1949, ibid.
120. South Front/Intelligence: Intelligence Summary no. 16 for 4 and 5 January 1949, IDFA 922/75/561.
121. Intelligence Branch: Action Report no. 40, 3 January 1949, IDFA 922/75/561.
122. South Front/Operations: Activity Order for 041200-051200, 4 January 1949, IDFA 922/75/561; South Front/Intelligence: Intelligence Summary no. 105 for 3 and 4 January 1949, ibid.; Intelligence Branch: Action Report no. 42, 4 January 1949, ibid.
123. South Front/Operations: Activity Order for 041200-051200, 4 January 1949, IDFA 922/75/561; South Front/Intelligence: Intelligence Summary no. 105 for 3 and 4 January 1949, ibid.; Intelligence Branch: Action Report no. 42, 4 January 1949, ibid.; Cohen, *By Light and in Darkness*, p. 243.
124. South Front/Intelligence: Intelligence Summary no. 16 for 4 January 1949, IDFA 922/75/561; Intelligence Branch: Action Report no. 43, 5 January 1949, ibid.
125. Ibid.
126. BGWD, pp. 930–1, entry for 6 January 1949.
127. SCOR, 394th–396th Meeting, 28–29 December 1948.
128. D. Ginsburg to M. Shertok, 3 January 1949, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, p. 339; E. Eylat and E. Ben-Arzi to D. Ben-Gurion and M. Shertok, 3 January 1949, ibid., p. 340.
129. Lorch, *Israel in the Grip of Superpowers*, pp. 105–6.
130. W. Eytan to A. Lourie, 6 January 1949, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, p. 345.
131. A. Lourie to M. Shertok, 6 January 1949, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, 5/48–9/48*, p. 346; E. Eylat to M. Shertok, 6 January 1949, ibid., p. 347.
132. Telegram from Yadin to South Front/Commander, 6 January 1949, IDFA 922/75/1182.
133. Telegram from Yadin to South Front/Commander, 6 January 1949, IDFA 922/75/1182; Harel Brigade/Intelligence: Intelligence Summary for 7 January 1949, IDFA 922/75/561; South Front/Intelligence: Intelligence Summary no. 108 for 6 and 7 January 1949, ibid.; BGWD, pp. 932–3, entry for 7 January 1949.
134. Cohen, *By Light and in Darkness*, p. 246.
135. South Front/Commander to General Staff, 7 January 1949, IDFA 922/75/1176; telegram from Yadin to South Front/Commander, 7 January 1949, ibid.; BGWD, pp. 935–6, entry for 8 January 1949.
136. From the Ministry Defence to the Prime Minister, 23 December 1948, PREM 8/1051.
137. South Front/Commander to General Staff, 7 January 1949, IDFA 922/75/1176; BGWD, p. 934, entry for 7 January 1949; Lorch, *Israel in the Grip of Superpowers*, pp. 103–9; Ezer Weizman, *The Sky is Yours, the Land is Yours* (Tel Aviv, 1975) (Hebrew), pp. 69–73.

138. South Front/Operations to the Front's Brigades, 7 January 1949, IDFA 922/75/561.
139. Telegram from Yadin to South Front/Commander, 9 January 1949, IDFA 922/75/1182; South Front/Operations to the Front's Brigades, 9 January 1949, IDFA, 922/75/561.
140. C.M. (48) 71, 12 November 1948, CAB 128/13.
141. D.O. (49), 1st meeting, 3 January 1949, PREM 8/1251/(PTI).
142. Outward telegram from Commonwealth Relations Office, 12 January 1949, E487, FO 371/75381.
143. BGWD, pp. 938–9, entry for 9 January 1949.
144. General Staff/Operations: Platform for Operation Yefet, 16 January 1949, IDFA 652/56/214; telegram from South Front/Operations to the Front's Brigades, 18 January 1949, IDFA 1749/50/38.
145. South Front/Operation: Setting Order, 11 January 1949, IDFA 652/56/214; General Staff/Operations: Platform for Operation Yefet, 16 January 1949, ibid.; Central Front/Operation: Alert Order no. 18/1/1 for Operation Kedma, 18 January 1949, ibid.
146. South Front/Operations to the 1st and 3rd Brigades, 24 February 1949, IDFA 979/51/17; South Front/Operations to the 12th and 3rd Brigades, 27 April 1949, ibid.
147. South Front/HQ to the Chief of Staff, 4 February 1949, IDFA 2539/50/69.
148. South Front/Operations: 'Operation Order: Ouvda', 2 March 1949, IDFA 979/51/24; Alon, *Contriving Warfare*, pp. 105–7; Cohen, *By Light and in Darkness*, pp. 258–60.
149. Telegram from South Front/Commander to the Chief of Staff, 6 March 1949, IDFA 2539/50/69; South Front/HQ to General Staff/Operations, 9 March 1949, ibid.; Alon, *Contriving Warfare*, pp. 107–9; Cohen, *By Light and in Darkness*, pp. 263–9; Adan, pp. 261–72.
150. D.O. (49) 19, 8 March 1949, PREM 8/1251 (PTI); From Foreign Office to Haifa, 9 March 1949, ibid.

Conclusion

What the rest of the world calls the first Arab–Israeli war, or the 1948 war, is, for the Jews, the War of Independence, and for the Palestinians, al Nakba (the Catastrophe). The variety of names is an indication, of course, of the different points of view regarding the war and its outcome, although all these names—and particularly the last two—imply homogeneity with the camps, it could be better described as Israel's war against the Palestinians, the Egyptians, Jordanians, the Syrians, the Lebanese, the Iraqis and the ALA. All the Arab parties involved had only one thing in common, and that was their refusal to accept the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. The Arab camp, however, was divided over the extent of its opposition to the idea, over the extent of the means to be invested in the effort to prevent the establishment of the Jewish State, and over the level of the inter-Arab cooperation on this matter. The matter becomes even more complicated when we recall that while some of the Arab Armies invaded Palestine in order to prevent the establishment of a Jewish state, Transjordan crossed the border to achieve goals that had little to do with that cause. Its behavior contributed decisively to the course of the fighting, and hence it would be much more accurate to speak of the 1948 Arab *wars* against Israel instead of the 1948 Arab–Israeli *war*.

One way or another, it is obvious that at the core of the Arab–Israeli wars stood the Jewish–Palestinian Arab conflict. Until November 1947, the lines of division between the two communities were more ideological than concrete: the Palestinian Arabs objected fiercely to what they saw as the Jewish takeover of the country, at the expense of the indigenous residents of the country. This struggle of one national community against the other became concrete with the recommendation, of UNSCOP in September 1947, to establish two states in Palestine. The real Jewish–Arab intercommunal war started on the day after the publication of the UNSCOP report. However, this war was conducted

between two uneven contenders. Arab Palestinian society became involved in a war for which it was unprepared by almost every criterion that is relevant when a nation goes to war. It had no national leadership that could lead the nation to war and no national resources that could be mobilized to sustain the war effort. Palestinians had no military formation worthy of the name; what they did have were local groups which were composed of several hundred guerrillas, acting under the command of local leaders, who had undergone, at best, basic military training and who possessed low-grade light arms. They had no national institutions that could organize the military formations, manufacture and procure arms and organize the mobilization of Palestinian society for the war effort in terms of manpower, industry, finance, health care, etc. Palestinian society was fragmented and factional, divided between middle-class city-dwellers and agrarian communities living in villages and maintaining the traditional social and communal form of life. There were inter-family feuds, and political parties, which had been at a low ebb since the late 1930s, were based on family loyalties and connections and not necessarily along class and social division lines.

The friction and division of Palestinian Arab society was most clearly exposed by the way Hajj Amin al-Husayni led the Palestinians into a war that many of them did not want. Some Palestinians expressed their disapproval of the war either through the pursuit of agreements with the Jews or by delivering messages to those who might offer an alternative: Transjordan's King Abdullah, for example. However, these opposition elements were unable to transform their objection into an effective and workable tool with which they could offer an alternative to the bellicose ex-Mufti. Lacking an active and pluralistic political life, the opponents of the ex-Mufti had no place to turn in an attempt to make their views prevail—or even heard.

Jewish society—the *Yishuv*—was almost the complete opposite; its political culture and institutions were based on the Western model. The common identity and affiliation of the bulk of Jewish population found its expression in the establishment of representative institutions, which they elected, responded to and obeyed. Despite the volunteer nature of Jewish communal institutions, the Jewish community usually accepted the authority of leaders whom they elected in free elections. The Jewish society had an efficient and capable bureaucracy that made possible the mobilization of national resources in the face of the ultimate test. The industrial basis of the Jewish society and economy made the mobilization of the Jewish material resources possible. It was against this background that the Jews built their primary military formation, the

Hagana, which became the main tool with which the Jews launched their journey toward statehood, following their most impressive political success, the United Nations adoption of the UNSCOP recommendation to establish Jewish and Arab states in Palestine.

In fact, their struggle to bring UNSCOP to formulate the Partition Resolution was the last significant diplomatic campaign on the Jewish way to statehood. From there on, they would resort to military means as the appropriate method to achieve their goal. That Jews would resort to force was not obvious at the outset. With the acceptance by the United Nations of the 181 Partition Resolution, the Jewish leadership hoped to see the Palestinians retreat from their unequivocal objection to the idea of partition, and act alongside the Jews to implement partition. Ideological aspirations notwithstanding, the Jewish leadership made a clear and unequivocal political decision: to accept the idea of partition. When the Partition Resolution was adopted by the UN General Assembly, the Jewish leadership, Ben-Gurion included, welcomed it enthusiastically as a major success for the Zionist movement. This is not to say that the Jewish leadership regarded the Partition Lines as the fulfillment of their aspirations—on the contrary—and the Jews did not hesitate to extend the borders set by the UN when they had the chance. However, that happened only after a major shift had occurred in the political and strategic situation, with the Arabs' refusal to accept the Partition Resolution and the military actions they took against the nascent Jewish State. Still, the Jews' initial acceptance of the Partition Resolution was not mere rhetoric; the strategic planning of the war against the Palestinians was based upon it.

The main Jewish concern, however, was the attitude of the Palestinians, who were to become citizens of the Jewish State and their acceptance of the idea of living in the Jewish State. They were less concerned about the fate of the Palestinian State. They had no aspirations toward the territories allocated to the Palestinian State, and they wished to see partition taking place, with one exception: the Jews did not accept the internationalization of Jerusalem as it was stipulated by the Partition Resolution. However, this rejection of the internationalization idea would not necessarily have led the Jews into a conflict with the Palestinians, as the Jews sought mainly the acquisition of the Jewish part of Jerusalem.

These Jewish concerns and hopes formed the basis for their military reaction to Palestinian military activity. Their main goal was to quell Palestinian objection to the idea of partition. It was for that reason that during December 1947—February 1948 the Hagana had adopted a

defensive strategy. It was only when the Jews realized that, on the one hand, the Palestinians would not accept partition, and on the other that, with the British evacuation of Palestine, Arab armies would invade Palestine to prevent an ensuing declaration on the establishment of the State of Israel, that the Jewish strategy changed. The change was formulated in Plan Dalet, which was in fact a program for the imposition of the Jewish rule over the territories allocated to the Jews by the Partition Resolution. With the Jews taking the offensive the Palestinians had no chance, and during April and May they lost garrison after garrison.

The Jewish–Palestinian war was decided in April and May. The Palestinian defeat was complete, and it was followed by the declaration of the State of Israel and the invasion of Arab armies into Palestine. to be sure, nearly all of them wanted to prevent the establishment of the State of Israel, but their deeds hardly served that goal. In the first place, one should remember that this was obviously not what the Jordanians had in mind. King Abdullah sent the Arab Legion to Palestine to attain a limited goal, which worked against the Mufti factions' interest, and that was the acquisition of the territories to the west of the River Jordan, which were supposed to be part of the Arab state. As for the other Arab states, their inability to unify their forces; their inability or unwillingness to invest everything they had in the Palestine campaign; the mutual suspicions—all prevented them from attaining their goal: the prevention of the establishment of the Jewish State. The fact that they were subjected to an arms embargo, while the Jews succeeded in buying all the arms they needed, was another reason for the failure.

However, that failure was not as complete as one might have assumed. It should be remembered that by the end of the day, the Jews' military achievements were mainly in their ability to prevent the Arab Armies intrusion into the State of Israel, and here again, the situation was more complex than is usually thought. Of all the Arab Armies, it was actually only the Syrian and the Egyptian which crossed into Israel's territory. The Iraqis made a minor effort but were thwarted, and did not repeat the experience. The Syrians failed in one attempt, but had established a bridgehead on the way to Rosh Pinna, and remained there until the end of the war, time and again repelling Jewish attempts to uproot the bridgehead. The Egyptian main body remained beyond the Partition Resolution's Israeli lines, and only a small contingent crossed along the Negev front, paving the way to an Egyptian claim to the Negev.

Israeli strategy with regards to the Arab invasion was based on two motives: gaining full control over the territory allocated to the Jewish State by the United Nations, and bringing Jerusalem under Israeli rule.

For Ben-Gurion, it was the latter that decided Israel's reaction to the invasion: holding fast on all fronts, while investing everything possible in the acquisition of Jerusalem and the road to the city. In the following days, the Israeli goal was defined in clearer terms: every part of the territories allocated by the United Nations to Israel should remain under Israeli control, and all territory beyond the Partition lines that came under Israeli control should also remain in its hands. The Arab residents of these territories who fled or were expelled from their homes should not be allowed to return. The Jewish ability to achieve that goal shed considerable light on the real nature of the Israeli victories and achievements. Apart from in the case of the Egyptian Army, the Israelis failed in all their attempts to push back the Arab Armies. They failed in their attempts to eliminate the Syrian bridgehead; in their attempt to occupy Jenin from the Iraqi forces; and Latrun and its surrounding area from the Arab Legion. Significant territorial acquisitions were gained only from the weak Palestinians and the irregular ALA.

The reason for that was mainly the fact that the Arab Armies, with all their shortages and problems, were in some respects better military formations than the newly founded IDF. Their military commanders were professional soldiers who were trained in military academies by professional militarymen: in the Iraqi, Jordanian and Egyptian cases by British officers; and in the Syrian case, by the French. The Iraqi officers had even seen military combat experience, as they had participated in the Second World War. The Israeli Army and officers were of a different breed. They had no military education whatsoever, besides their own experience as commanders of an underground guerrilla formation that was accustomed to clashing with even less organized and trained Palestinian groups. Officers with no military knowledge became battalion or brigade commanders, their only qualification for that role being their letter of appointment. It was no wonder that when the Arab commanders acted carefully, taking advantage of their strengths, which were mainly defensive, their soldiers performed better than the Israeli soldiers.

The Israeli achievements and failures in the war against the Egyptians is a good example. The failures were in line with the IDF experience on other fronts. The success was the exception that proves the rule. This exception was Yigal Alon, the most brilliant and talented of the Israeli commanders. Alon was the first IDF commander to adopt a systematic approach to the conduct of the war. He was able, simultaneously, to activate the various units and oversee the operations that were underway while commanding an overview of the entire area. The two big sweeps on the Southern Front were combined operations, the

actions of the forces in the different sectors geared toward a single purpose, namely the overall goal of the operation in each case. This was a clear departure from the approach taken by Alon's predecessors, such as Shimon Avidan, as became unmistakably clear in the planning of Operation Yoav. Alon proposed a plan consisting of a variety of components; all were interlocked and geared to achieve the final goal of the operation. Avidan, in contrast, proposed mounting a series of operations, each having its own objective or stemming from the preceding operation. By this means; the final goal would be achieved only when all the operations had been carried out. For Alon, the goal dictated the entire plan and method of the operation, while for Avidan, the goal was a focal point toward which the military activity was directed but within which, each individual operation was a self-contained goal.

Alon's approach, which was definitely more sophisticated, made maximum use of the available forces and gave expression to the qualities that gave the Israelis the advantage over the Egyptians. Yet Alon's conception was neither scientific nor based on theory: it was purely intuitive.[1] Alon had no formal military education: his school was the Palmah heritage and the field of battle. Yet, in implementing his ideas, however original, he disobeyed explicit orders and ignored considerations that were at least as crucial as those he considered important. Alon disregarded the diplomatic implications of crossing the international border, just as he ignored the time dimension. The military principle that was the springboard for his units' operations overrode in importance the war's political and diplomatic aspects, and as for the time element, he did not treat it as a constraining factor but as something to be brushed aside. In the final analysis, however, Alon achieved what was most critical in the eyes of the politicians: ensuring that the entire Negev, apart from the Gaza Strip, would be in Israeli hands. It is difficult to arrive at an unequivocal conclusion concerning the importance the Israeli leadership attached to the Gaza Strip. What probably mattered most to Ben-Gurion was not that Israel should hold the area but that it should be free of Egyptian Army forces. That goal was not achieved, but it was far from Israel's major aspiration.

Diplomacy was an integral part of the war, even if as a hidden undercurrent. The Jews rejected diplomacy as a means to end the war, as they did not believe that they would get what they were determined to achieve. Ben-Gurion was sure that Israel would achieve its war goals only by force, and basically he was right. This was exactly the reason for the readiness of (mainly) Egypt and Jordan to see an end, through diplomacy, to the war. In their eyes, prolongation of the war put their

achievements at risk, as they assumed that time was in favor of the Jews. The Egyptians learnt that they were right in this assumption.

The main diplomatic endeavor—the Bernadotte Plan—proved to be a failure, and was completely rejected by Israel and complicated, even corrupting the inter-Arab relations. The Bernadotte Plan had a greater impact on the Arabs' subsequent military moves than on the Israeli actions. Israel flatly and uncompromisingly rejected the Plan and was unwilling to consider a cessation of hostilities while Egyptian forces were still in the Negev. A different set of considerations prevailed on the Arab side. As noted, the plan did not specify which Arab country would receive the Negev, although informally Bernadotte was inclined to award the area to Jordan. The Egyptians, however, insisted that their conquests in the Negev validated their claim to the region, either directly or through a Palestinian protectorate. The rift that ensued between Jordan and Egypt, which ended even the limited military cooperation that had existed between them, was calamitous for the Egyptian Army. By this time, Jordan's Arab Legion was no longer an effective fighting force, enabling the IDF to commit more forces to the Southern Front and mount an all-out offensive against the Egyptians. Deprived of direct or indirect Jordanian and Iraqi support, the Egyptians were routed in the fighting of October–December 1948 by the more powerful Israeli forces.

The schism in the Arab camp, which intensified as the war progressed, was a major factor in the Israelis' success. The conflicts of interest and the internal wrangling among the Arab countries prevented the formation of a joint Arab command to coordinate the war effort. Each country had its own goals and this was reflected in the fragmented effort on the ground, where the individual expeditionary forces operated as though blinkered, oblivious to the needs of even their immediate neighbors. The war was fought on three fronts and at different levels of intensity, creating a situation in which the Israeli forces were not in a hopelessly inferior strategic position on any front. The divisions within the Arab camp also helped the Israelis exploit to the full one of their most pronounced advantages: the prosecution of the war within internal lines. That is, while the Arab forces, and the Egyptians in particular, operated far from their home bases and suffered from over-stretched communications and supply lines, the IDF operated at short distances and within internal lines that enabled the High Command to move forces about at will and reinforce sectors at short notice. The IDF exploited this factor fully in the fighting at Latrun in May and in the south beginning in October. Israeli forces moved to and from battles

rapidly and without interference. Even though the IDF's logistical infrastructure was not fully operational, even at the height of the fighting, the short distances involved compensated for this weakness.

The war ended with armistice agreements that Israel, in a way, forced on Egypt, Jordan and Syria—at least as regards the nature of the agreements. The armistice borders perpetuated unequivocally the triumph of the military way over the diplomatic way. The armistice lines were defined as provisional and not as recognized and agreed borders, but this was sufficient for Israel as it validated its three major achievements in the war: the first, and the most imporant, was the very ability of the Jews to survive the attempt by the Arabs to prevent the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine; the second achievement was the expansion of the State; and, thanks to its military victories the area of the Jewish State beyond the partition boundaries, and the third wsa the change in the demographic balance within the armistice boundaries was radically different from that of the Jewish State as demarcated in the Partition Resolution. On 29 November 1947, there were some 500,000 Jews and 350,000 Arabs in the territory allocated to Israel, whereas in 1949, the State of Israel within the armistice boundaries contained approximately 650,000 Jews and fewer than 100,000 Arabs. That territorial and demographic reality was determined on the field of battle. For the next 18 years, Israel devoted its political, diplomatic and efforts to preserving the map produced by the war, until it was dramatically revised in a new war.

NOTE

1. On the intellectual aspect of the operational theory, see Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence* (London, 1997).

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Abbreviations

BGA	Ben-Gurion Archives
BGD	Ben-Gurion Diaries
BGWD	Ben-Gurion War Diaries
CZA	Central Zionist Archive
FRUS	Foreign Relations of the United States
HA	Hagana Archives
IDFA	Israeli Defense Force Archives
LPA	Labour Party Archives
MEJ	Middle East Journal
MES	Journal of Middle Eastern Studies
PRO	Public Record Office

Archives

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