

# WAR IN PALESTINE 1948

Strategy and Diplomacy

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## 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’.<sup>1</sup>

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.<sup>2</sup>

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.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup>

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.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup>

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.<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup>

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.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> 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.

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## 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 Khourī.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup>

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.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup>

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.<sup>8</sup>

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.<sup>9</sup> 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.<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup> The Egyptian government sent a small force of 2,000 troops to al-Arish, which remained there until May 1948.<sup>12</sup> At about the same time, in November, volunteer recruitment centers were opened throughout Syria, with a volunteer training center in Qatane, 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.<sup>13</sup>

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.<sup>14</sup> 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.<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup>

## 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.<sup>17</sup> 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,<sup>18</sup> 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.<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>20</sup>

In her last meeting with Abdullah, which took place on 11 May 1948, Meyerson reiterated Jewish adherence to the UN 29 November 1947 resolution.<sup>21</sup> 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.<sup>22</sup> 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.<sup>23</sup>

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 Pasha. In this letter he expressed the Jewish desire to avoid war, and asked the

Arab League to accept the Jews' right to statehood.<sup>24</sup> 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.<sup>25</sup>

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.<sup>26</sup> 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.<sup>27</sup> 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.<sup>28</sup>

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.<sup>29</sup> 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.<sup>30</sup> 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.<sup>31</sup> 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’.<sup>32</sup> 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. Sālīh 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, Nokrashī 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.<sup>33</sup>

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.<sup>34</sup> The existing evidence indicates that this claim is far-fetched. Abdullah made no secret of his plans and intentions 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.<sup>35</sup> 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.<sup>36</sup> 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.<sup>37</sup> 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.<sup>38</sup> 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.<sup>39</sup> 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.<sup>40</sup>

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.<sup>41</sup> 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.<sup>42</sup>

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.<sup>43</sup>

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.<sup>44</sup> 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 independently in Palestine and those national committees that came under the control of the volunteers, mainly comprising Iraqi military officers.<sup>45</sup> 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.<sup>46</sup> 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.<sup>47</sup>

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.<sup>48</sup> 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,<sup>49</sup> joined the forces of ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Husayni and Hasan Salama forces.<sup>50</sup>

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-Kilani 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.<sup>51</sup> 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.<sup>52</sup>

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'.<sup>53</sup>

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.<sup>54</sup>

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.<sup>55</sup> 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.<sup>56</sup> The result of all these actions was that after 15 May the 'Arab Legion brigades [had] established themselves at Ramallah and Nablus without incident'.<sup>57</sup>

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.<sup>58</sup>

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.<sup>59</sup>

### **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.<sup>60</sup> 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.<sup>61</sup>

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.<sup>62</sup>

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.<sup>63</sup>

### **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.<sup>64</sup> 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.<sup>65</sup> 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.<sup>66</sup> 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.<sup>67</sup> 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.<sup>68</sup> 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.<sup>69</sup>

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.<sup>70</sup> 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.'<sup>71</sup>

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.<sup>72</sup> 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.<sup>73</sup> 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.<sup>74</sup>

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.<sup>75</sup> 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.<sup>76</sup>

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.<sup>77</sup>

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,<sup>78</sup> 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.<sup>79</sup> 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.<sup>80</sup>

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.<sup>81</sup>

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.<sup>82</sup> 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.<sup>83</sup>

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).<sup>84</sup>

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.<sup>85</sup> 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.<sup>86</sup> 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.<sup>87</sup> 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.<sup>88</sup>

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.<sup>89</sup>

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.<sup>90</sup> 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.<sup>91</sup>

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'.<sup>92</sup> 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.'<sup>93</sup> 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.<sup>94</sup>

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.<sup>95</sup> 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.<sup>96</sup> 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.<sup>97</sup>

The Hagana also had a special representative in the United States, buying freight and commercial passenger planes.<sup>98</sup> 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.<sup>99</sup> 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.<sup>100</sup> In the United States, the Jewish emissaries also bought the necessary raw material for the local arms industry.<sup>101</sup>

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.<sup>102</sup> 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.<sup>103</sup> 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.<sup>104</sup> 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-Husseini 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 September 1947, 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 September 1947, *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.