

# THE ISRAEL YEARBOOK

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U.N.O. AND PALESTINE  
THE UNITED NATIONS  
AND THE PALESTINE QUESTION  
(pp. 35-76)

SUMMARY OF ISRAEL'S INDEPENDENCE WAR AND INITIAL LAWS AND REGULATIONS

It is not clear just what the Mandatory Power had in mind when it referred the Palestine issue to the United Nations at the beginning of 1947. What was clear was that British policy in Palestine had reached a dead end. The continuation of the White Paper restrictions by a Labor Government had led to a bitter struggle on the spot and a wave of criticism abroad. An attempt to get American backing, through the Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry and the Morrison-Grady plan, had failed, and another abortive St. James Conference had served only to demonstrate that there was no formula which could reconcile Jewish needs, Arab claims and British interests. It was at this point that Britain decided to turn to the United Nations, but public statements by Mr. Bevin, the Foreign Secretary, and Mr. Creech-Jones, the Colonial Secretary, indicated that she was not surrendering the Mandate, merely asking for advice. The inference generally drawn was that the Government hoped for an invitation to continue British rule on British terms: a new Mandate shorn of the Balfour Declaration. If such an expectation existed, it was doomed to disappointment.

This independence of outlook, particularly among the smaller member-states with no direct interest in the matter, began to emerge at the Special Session which was convened at Lake Success in April, 1947, and adopted an Australian resolution to set up a commission of eleven smaller "neutrals": two Western European, two Eastern European, three Latin American, two Asiatic, and two British Dominions. The smallness of the vote (13 for, 11 against) showed how reluctant most delegations still were to commit their governments in any way on so explosive a subject.

The British appeared somewhat disconcerted at the way the first round had gone, and on May 29, Mr. Bevin told the Labor Party Conference at Margate that Britain was not bound to accept the U.N. findings if she did not approve of them.

## UNSCOP

The United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) consisted of the following members:

Australia:	Mr. John D.L. Hood, Senior Counselor of External Affairs Department.
Canada:	Mr. Justice Ivan C. Rand, Supreme Court Judge.
Czechoslovakia:	Dr. Karel Lisicky, Minister Plenipotentiary.
Guatemala:	Dr. Jorge Garcia Granados, Chief of Guatemala Delegation to U.N.
India:	Sir Abdur Rahman, High Court Judge, Lahore.
Iran:	Mr. Nasrollah Entezam, former Foreign Minister.
Netherlands:	Dr. Nikolaas S. Blom, former Acting Lieutenant-Governor General of Dutch East Indies.
Peru:	Dr. Arturo Garcia Salazar, Ambassador to the Vatican.
Sweden:	Mr. Justice Emil Sanstrom, International Court of Arbitration (Chairman of Committee).
Uruguay:	Professor Enreque Rodrigues Fabregat, former Minister of Education.
Yugoslavia:	M. Vladimir Simic, President of the Senate.
Staff:	Dr. Victor Hoo, Personal Representative of Mr. Tygve Lie; Dr. Alfonso Garcia Robles, Principal Secretary; Dr. Ralph Bunche, Aid to Dr. Hoo

## THE PARTITION SCHEME

ON THE 29<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 1947, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS  
PASSED THE FOLLOW RECOMMENDATION:

Palestine to be partitioned into an Arab State, a Jewish State and the international City of Jerusalem: the latter being under the United Nations' trusteeship. 33 States members voted for the motion and 13 against it: 10 members abstained and one was absent. A Commission of 5 States members (Bolivia, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Panama and the Philippines) was appointed to implement the recommendation.

The Committee arrived in June, and was at once confronted with the facts of life in Palestine. The Arab Higher Committee greeted it with a country-wide protest strike, and refused to testify before it. Three members of the Irgun Zvai Leumi were sentenced to death, two British sergeants were kidnapped as hostages, the Army imposed martial law and curfew, and when members of the Committee expressed its concern, the Chief Secretary curtly reminded them that it was none of their business. The refugee ship *Exodus 1947* was dramatically seized out at sea, and the Committee's Chairman watched its passengers being transshipped in Haifa Port. In Jerusalem, the Administration had shut itself up in barbed wire security zones. For the Committee, the moral was plain enough: the regime had become unworkable.

In the formal sessions, Zionist leaders and experts built up the detailed case for a Jewish State, and Dr. Weizmann publicly advocated partition.

The Arab Governments had decided that as members of the United Nations they could hardly boycott a U.N. organ, and (except for Trans-Jordan) agreed to meet UNSCOP at Sofar in the Lebanon. Here they put forward a formal demand that all Palestine should become an Arab State.

After a sub-committee, with John Hood as chairman, had visited some of the D.P. camps, the Committee settled down to compile its Report, in Geneva.

Eight of the eleven members reached the logical conclusion of partition into two sovereign states, linked by an economic union. The coastal plain, the Negev, the Emek Jezreel and Eastern Galilee would go to the Jews, while the central hill areas, Western Galilee, Jaffa and the Gaza coastal strip would go to the Arabs, with the separate bits of each state connected up at two intersection points. There would be a two-year transition period during which Britain would continue to administer the country under U.N. supervision, and during this period 150,000 Jews would be admitted into the Jewish area. Jerusalem would be an international enclave.

The minority report, signed by the representatives of Yugoslavia, India and Iran, recommended a federal plan which would include a Jewish and an Arab state with wide autonomy.

## THE U.N. ASSEMBLY DEBATE

At the second regular session of the General Assembly, which opened in September, 1947, the UNSCOP report was referred to an Ad Hoc Committee of all the member-states, under the Chairmanship of Dr. Herbert Evatt, the Australian Foreign Minister. The general debate soon revealed where the main parties stood. The Jewish Agency announced acceptance of the basic principles of the majority report, reserving the right to press for changes particularly in respect of Western Galilee and Jerusalem. The Arab

spokesmen angrily rejected both schemes, and threatened bloodshed. Britain agreed to end the Mandate, (on May 15, 1948) but stated that sooner than approve any plan which did not have Jewish-Arab agreement, she would walk out of Palestine. Both the United States and the U.S.S.R., came out in favor of partition, the U.S. delegate adding a warning to the Arab State that "We assume there will be Charter observance."

With the scheme drafted in its final form by sub-committees, a struggle ensued to have it adopted by a two-thirds majority. The issue swayed dramatically in the balance to the very end, several delegations changing their positions during the last 48 hours. The Assembly vote was taken on November 29, and the resolution was adopted by 33 votes to 13, with 11 abstentions and one absentee, Siam. After nearly two thousand years, Jewish statehood had been endorsed by the world.

## THE RETREAT FROM PARTITION

It soon became clear that the misgivings felt at Lake Success about the attitude of the Mandatory Government had been only too well founded. The five members of the Implementation Commission, appointed by the General Assembly, were refused permission to enter the country. The functions of government were not transferred to any successor authority, but were dismantled or allowed to collapse. No free port as stipulated by the General Assembly was opened by February 1, 1948, and the immigration restrictions were rigidly maintained instead. Palestine was expelled from the Sterling bloc and its Sterling balances in London frozen. Disorder spread through the country, but while Jewish self-defense continued to be illegal, no obstacle was offered to the entry of the Arab League's "Army of Liberation," on the plea that it was not feasible to close the border. What is more, Mr. Bevin announced that Britain would continue to supply arms to certain Arab states under her treaties with them. In short, a policy was followed which was calculated to prove that the United Nations decision was unworkable.

At the Security Council, the British Colonial Secretary affirmed bluntly that Britain would not endorse the November 29 resolution, nor cooperate in the U.N. plan. The Palestine Commission, disheartened by the difficulties put before it, complained to the Council about Britain and the Arabs, and reported that it could not carry out its task without an international force. The United States then led the retreat. On February 24, Senator Warren Austin declared that the Council could not enforce a political decision, and on March 19 stated that since the plan could not be implemented by peaceful means, a trusteeship should be considered. On April 1, a resolution was adopted calling for another Special Session of the General Assembly "to consider further the question of the future government of Palestine."

On April 20, an American "working paper" was submitted to the Special Session. It outlined a plan whereby the Trusteeship Council would administer Palestine through a governor-General, who could if necessary call upon certain governments to assist him in maintaining law and order. He would determine immigration quotas in accordance with absorptive capacity. The trusteeship would continue until an alternative regime was agreed upon by both Jews and Arabs.

It became apparent, however, that the debate at Lake Success was lagging far behind the actual events in Palestine. British rule was already in an advanced state of disintegration, and a spontaneous partition was taking place whereby the Jews and the Arabs were filling the vacuum in authority, in their respective areas. Jewish plans for the setting up of an independent state were taking shape, and were reinforced by a startling series of military successes during April, whereby Kaukji's irregular army was

defeated at Mishmar Ha-Emek, and a number of towns, notably Haifa and Jaffa, came under Jewish control. Against this background, the discussions on trusteeship lapsed into futility.

As the end of the Mandate approached, heavy pressure was put upon the Jewish Agency by the State Department to postpone independence and to accept some form of stop-gap U.N. authority, until the next regular session of the Assembly in September. However, the course of history could not be arrested in this fashion. On May 14, the Jewish Provisional Council of Government proclaimed a Jewish State. Eleven minutes after the British regime ended, the United States Government recognized the new state, and this lead was followed by other countries. The next day, the Arab States announced that their armies had crossed the borders. Meanwhile, the Assembly had appointed Count Folke Bernadotte as Mediator, "to seek a peaceful adjustment of the situation," and the delegates had gone home again, leaving the Security Council to cope with the war as best it could.

## WAR ON THE INSTALMENT PLAN

The attempt by a group of member-states to settle an international dispute by direct military action was the most open challenge yet to the U.N. Charter. Had the Security Council acted swiftly and effectively, much bloodshed might have been avoided. The U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R., joined forces in treating the matter as an "act of aggression," but their resolutions were defeated by a British-led opposition group. In the result, a state of war was to continue until the following year, with uneasy truces punctuated by bursts of fighting, and the Council acting like a referee frantically blowing his whistle to stop the game.

The first installment of the fighting lasted four weeks, by which time it was obvious that the initial "blitz" had failed. On May 29, appeals for a cease-fire having failed, the Council ordered a four-weeks truce, to be supervised by the Mediator and the Truce Commission, composed of the Consular representatives in Jerusalem of the U.S.A., France and Belgium. A general embargo was imposed on the introduction of arms and fighting personnel. The truce did not come into effect till June 11 after supervision machinery had been set up, using a number of military observers from the three "truce countries," under Swedish senior officers.

In July, the Israel Government agreed to the Mediator's request for a prolongation of the truce, but the Arab Governments refused, and renewed hostilities. In the ten days of fighting which followed, further Jewish successes were gained, particularly by the capture of Lydda and Ramle. On July 15, after Count Bernadotte had appeared personally before the Security Council, another truce resolution was adopted, this time for an indefinite period. The Mediator returned to Palestine, expanded the truce machinery, and dealt with a number of specific issues, such as the demilitarization of Jerusalem, and the Arab refugees, the case of five Britons arrested in Jerusalem on suspicion of espionage, and the blowing up of the Latrun pumping station by Arabs, either Legion soldiers or irregulars. In the latter part of August the Mediator retired to the Island of Rhodes to draft his report for the General Assembly. On his return he was murdered on September 17<sup>th</sup> by unknown assailants in the New City of Jerusalem.

## THE BERNADOTTE REPORT

At the end of June, the Mediator had produced a set of political proposals as a basis for discussion: a federal union between Israel and an enlarged Trans-Jordan; an exchange between the Negev and the Galilee; inclusion of Jerusalem in Arab territory; review of immigration policy after two years; and “free ports” at Haifa and Lydda. The Israel Government had rejected these suggestions, refusing to restrict its sovereign status and expressing deep resentment at the Jerusalem proposal.

In his Progress Report to the Assembly, Count Bernadotte abandoned most of the earlier ideas. In fact, he went out of his way to emphasize the independence of Israel as a “living reality,” and called for the replacement of a dangerously prolonged truce by more stable armistice and peace arrangements. But the Report was damned in Jewish eyes by its territorial proposals, the main feature of which was the exclusion of the whole Negev, below the Majdal-Faluja line, in exchange for Western Galilee. The second major objection was the renewed suggestion of an international regime for Jerusalem.

Regarded as the “political testament” of the murdered Mediator, and with the general support behind it of the American and British Governments, the Bernadotte Report was expected to obtain the required majority at the Assembly meeting in Paris. But the failure to get it discussed at the beginning of the Session proved fatal. By the time the debate opened on the report, in the middle of November, much had happened to undermine it. The Israel Army had smashed the Majdal-Faluja line in October, thus putting the territorial proposals completely out of line with the situation on the spot. American policy had veered away, especially after Mr. Truman’s re-election, and the American delegation had come to favor a settlement by Jewish-Arab negotiation. Even the Arab representatives would have none of it, despite British advice that this was the best deal they could get.

A British resolution, based upon the Bernadotte plan, was caught in a deadly cross-fire between the pro-partitionists and the anti-partitionists and was badly mauled. In the draft finally adopted on December 11, by 35 votes to 15, not a single reference to the Bernadotte report was left. The resolution set up a Conciliation Commission, consisting of the United States, France and Turkey, and called for a final peace settlement by Jewish-Arab negotiations, either directly or through the Commission. The Commission was asked to recommend an international regime for the Jerusalem area, with maximum local autonomy; and international supervision of Holy Places. It was also to concern itself with the repatriation and resettlement of Palestinian refugees, for whom a relief fund of 29 million dollars had been voted by the Assembly.

The Israel delegation, while expressing general willingness to cooperate with the Commission, made clear (a) that an international regime could only be considered for the Old City of Jerusalem, the New City having in effect become integrated into Israel, and (b) that the refugee problem could only be considered within the context of a general peace settlement.

## THE NEGEV CRISIS

The Negev feature of the Bernadotte plan had given obvious satisfaction to the British Government, which had a strategic interest in it, and it showed equally obvious vexation when the October battle greatly strengthened Israel’s military hold on the area. In the Security Council, also meeting in Paris, the British delegation launched a sanctions offensive to compel an Israeli retreat. A resolution ordering the status quo to be restored was frustrated at the last moment by fresh instructions from Washington, but adopted in a modified form on November 4. On November 13, a sub-committee of seven members approved a

withdrawal scheme proposed by Dr. Bunche, who had been appointed Acting Mediator after Cont Bernadotte's assassination. This scheme would have demilitarized most of the area, under the control of an army of U.N. observers.

A few days later, on November 16, another resolution was adopted calling for the negotiation of armistice agreements. In the debate on this, Dr. Bunche roundly declared that "whatever the objectives of the Arabs last spring, they have not been achieved. The State of Israel is a strongly entrenched fact today, and opposition to it ceases to have any practical purpose."

On November 18, the Israel Government issued a statement welcoming the armistice resolution, and stating that, as far as the November 4 resolution was concerned, the forces which had been brought into the Negev after October 14 had already been withdrawn.

Although the relationship between these two resolutions remained the subject of controversy in the so-called "Negev Committee" of the Council, the sanctions move waned for lack of American support, and interest shifted to armistice prospects. On December 22, however, fighting again broke out in the Negev, after the Egyptian Government had withdrawn its consent to negotiate. Gaza was threatened, and Israeli columns crossed the Sinai border at Auja and thrust northward towards El Arish. Britain threatened military intervention, and when five RAF planes were shot down over the battle area on January 7, extreme tension developed in Anglo-Israeli relations. But a Security Council cease-fire order had come into operation the same day, and two days previously the Egyptian Government, under pressure of fresh defeat, had agreed to enter negotiations at Rhodes, under the chairmanship of Dr. Bunch.

## FROM RHODES TO LAUSANNE

On February 22 an armistice agreement was signed at Rhodes by the representatives of the Egyptian and Israel Governments. This marked an important step towards the liquidation of the Palestine war, and to a large extent clarified the confused Negev situation. Except for the Gaza-Rafa strip, which has remained under Egyptian control, the agreement confirmed Israeli occupation of the whole of the western Negev. The ghost of the November 4 resolution was finally laid to rest by the polite formula that "the basic purposes and spirit of the armistice would not be served by the restoration of previously held military positions." On March 1 a second armistice agreement was signed with the Lebanon, fixing the international frontier as the demarcation line. On April 3 a third agreement was signed with Trans-Jordan, confirming the de facto military situation with certain adjustments, and setting up a special committee to deal with a number of unsettled problems, particularly those concerning Jerusalem. An important feature of this agreement was that it accepted Israeli occupation of the eastern half of the Negev.

In January the Palestine Conciliation Commission arrived in the country and established itself in Jerusalem. It consisted of Mr. Mark Ethridge (U.S.A.), M. Claude de Boissanger (France), and Dr. Huseyn Yalchin (Turkey), with Dr. Pablo Azcarate as Chief Secretary. Having toured Middle East capitals, the Commission promoted a conference of Arab representatives at Beirut in March. As a result, the Arab states, with the exception of Iraq, agreed to informal peace talks with Israeli representatives at a neutral place. After the Israel Government had given its assent, the venue was fixed at Lausanne, the talks to begin on April 26.



## ISRAEL'S U.N. MEMBERSHIP

On December 2, Israel's application for membership of the United Nations came before the Security Council, and was referred to its Committee on Membership. The occasion was marked by a striking speech by Professor Philip Jessup, the American representative. Israel, he affirmed, had a homogeneous people under a stable administration, and met every test for membership under the Charter. Many nations, including the United States, had begun their history with undetermined boundaries. Sir Alexander Cadogan, for the United Kingdom, urged, however, that the application was premature and should be postponed. When a vote was taken on December 17, only the United States, the U.S.S.R., the Ukraine, Argentina and Columbia voted affirmatively. Except for Syria, the other members express no objection in principle, but wanted the vote deferred. When the application was resubmitted on March 4, 1949 it was endorsed by nine out of the eleven votes, with Egypt voting against and the United Kingdom abstaining. In April the application came before the General Assembly, but was referred to the Political Committee for further discussion. Finally on May 12, 1949, Israel was accepted as a member of the United Nations Organization.

## WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

(First Phase)

29<sup>th</sup> November 1947 - 14<sup>th</sup> May 1948

On 14<sup>th</sup> May, 1948, the Jews of Palestine proclaimed the existence of the State of Israel. By friends of Jews throughout the world it was hailed as an act of statesmanship. By the Jews of Israel it was accepted as a solemn act of faith, crowning five and a half months of grim and bitter struggle for survival that were probably the most critical in the entire history of Jewish development in Palestine. Details of that period show how near the Jews came to disaster. They show, too, what solid victories were registered with the intangible weapons of courage, imagination, ingenuity, improvisation, and resourcefulness. These

victories prepared the ground for the second phase enabling Israel to ward off attacks by the regular armies of the neighboring Arab States.

On 29<sup>th</sup> November 1947, the General Assembly of the United Nations passed a resolution whose principal purpose was the setting up of two states in Palestine after the termination of the British Mandate on 15<sup>th</sup> May. The Jews were prepared to accept it. The Arabs rejected it. The resolution was carried by a two-thirds majority of the United Nations Assembly. At no subsequent point did that supreme international body take any practical step to implement their historic decision.

Palestine at the time was governed by a British Mandatory Administration. The head of this Administration, the High Commissioner General Sir Alan Cunningham, had at his disposal a vast military force to maintain order. This British force was equipped with the latest type of weapon, including tanks, armored cars, and artillery, was able to call on a fast and powerful air-force and mobilize the help of the Navy.

A day after the passage of the United Nations resolution, eight Jews were killed by Arabs. By the end of the week 36 Jews had fallen victim and a large number were wounded in Arab attacks in Jerusalem, Jaffa, Haifa, Safed, Ramle, on the Tel-Aviv-Jerusalem road, on the Haifa-Tel-Aviv highway, on Jewish settlements in Galilee, the Hebron area, the Sharon and the Negev, in the Jewish quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem and on the Jaffa fringe of Tel-Aviv. Within a month, insecurity was general throughout the country. Jewish life and property were nowhere safe. Every highway route was a deathtrap, every track a danger spot, every settlement and outpost a target for Arab assault.

Jewish defense had to be set up in the following context:

Every Jewish center, whether in towns like Tel-Aviv, Haifa, Safad, Tiberias or Jerusalem, in settlement belts like the Emek or the Sharon, or in isolated areas like Northern Galilee, the Hebron hills or the Negev, was virtually on the doorstep of some Arab position. Communication between them had to pass either through or very close to Arab centers. The possession of arms was illegal, and British penalties for the contravention of this order were heavily weighted in favor of the Arabs. The British Administration claimed responsibility for the Maintenance of order. But they took no steps to secure order.

This was the picture facing Haganah, the illegal underground Jewish defense force. There were not limitless. A heavy blockade of the Palestine coast by the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force made excessively difficult the entry not only of immigrants but also of arms. Money for the purchase of weapons in any country prepared to sell was also limited. Some weapons were bought and smuggled in. But the blockade restricted the nature of the weapons. One could not introduce heavy artillery pieces or tanks. The Arabs suffered no such limitations. The neighboring states received normal supplies openly from Britain, and these could be brought across the frontier without hindrance.

From the north came thousands of irregular Arab soldiers to operate under Fauzi el Kaukji as the Arab Army of Liberation, destroy the Jews and live comfortably on the loot. Inside Palestine, local Arabs were whipped into action by the Mufti's Arab Higher Committee. Their purpose was to show that the United Nations' decision had thrown the country into disorder. Their purpose, too, was to incite Jewish counterattacks which would bring down the British upon them and serve, also, to stimulate the Arab States into a fully fledged intervention in accordance with the Bludan resolutions<sup>\*</sup>). The Arabs were encouraged

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\* The "secret" resolutions to fight the Jewish State taken by the Arab League at the Lebanese resort of Bludan in June 1946.

by British indifference. At best it meant the British were on their side. At the worst it gave them the green light.

Haganah started planning for survival in this curious situation in which their body was exposed to assault and their hands were tied behind their back by the British. Mindful of the old Haganah watchword of no indiscriminate retaliation, wary of the trap into which both Arabs and British hoped they would fall, the Haganah confined themselves to static defense, taking small offensive action only against certain centers of Arab assault.

Arab attacks began to mount in number and strength. A training camp for Palestine volunteers was set up at the Qatana barracks in Damascus where a force of some 29,000 gradually assembled, consisting of recruits from Palestine, deserters from the Palestine Police, Syrians, Lebanese Moslems, members of "Young Egypt," and Iraqis who had taken part in Rashid Ali's pro-Nazi revolt of 1941.

The Arab states decided that there was no need for the intervention of their regular forces at the moment, but that they would review the situation when the British left. Meanwhile they would man the borders of Palestine.

On January 1, 1948, Mr. Ben Gurion made an appeal to the Jews in the country, calling for an unflinching effort in the coming months of trial and for a spirit of sacrifice. Both were needed. Jewish traffic along the main highways began to move in convoy with perhaps a single Haganah member, a boy or a girl, armed with a sten gun, for protection. Few got through without some loss of life. Yet the convoys kept rolling. Local workshops began turning out improvised armored cabins which gave some protection at least for the drivers, though most trucks in all convoys were always soft-skinned. Yet they continued to brave Arab ambushes.

Throughout January, February and March, settlements were subjected to murderous attacks by Arab bands, and the pressure on the Jewish quarters of urban centers mounted in ferocity. Personal heroism and tenacity alone prevented large-scale destruction. The few patrols sent out by Haganah and the small units of Palmach who could be used in a mobile role were poorly equipped and had always to face a heavy superiority of numbers and fire-power. In the middle of January a Haganah platoon of 35, mostly University students, rushing to the defense of Kfar Etzion, were ambushed by hundreds of Arabs and fought to the last man. The commander kept in touch with Jerusalem headquarters through a walkie-talkie until only he and six comrades were left. The 35 mutilated bodies were recovered a few days later. The Arabs took no prisoners.

February's highlights were the blowing up of the "Palestine Post" building in Jerusalem by British police and soldiers, and the wrecking of residential buildings in Ben Yehuda Street with heavy Jewish casualties, also by British "irregulars." In the Beisan area, Tirat Zvi made history by repelling a powerful Arab attack even though it was completely encircled by a vastly superior enemy force. On the Jerusalem-Bethlehem road Jews staged a successful counter-attack, inflicting very heavy casualties on the Arabs, and in the Tel-Aviv area, an Arab onslaught from Jaffa was smashed. On the last day of the month, the British disarmed a Haganah post on the Tel Aviv-Jaffa border; shortly afterwards the Arabs killed nine of those disarmed Jews.

By March, anyone without faith could find ample justification for believing that the end was near, despite numerous acts of courage throughout the country which brought temporary relief. The road to Jerusalem was closed. Defiles were so numerous with Arabs occupying the commanding heights almost for the entire length of the road that movement was impossible. The wrecks of burnt-out vehicles along the

roadside bore testimony to the courage of drivers and passengers who were determined that Jerusalem would not be cut off. But to continue meant mass suicide without preparatory military action to clear the commanding heights. And for that Haganah was not yet ready—it had not the men and it had not the weapons. Further north Kaukji's forces began a determined attack on Magdiel and Kfar Saba which lasted for ten days and which was finally repulsed. On the 11<sup>th</sup> of the month, there was an explosion at the Jewish Agency Headquarters causing 11 deaths. At Hartuv a very heavy Arab attack was launched and repelled. Near Nitzanim in the Negev there was a pitched battle, with four Jews and twenty Arabs killed. An Arab arms convoy from Syria was intercepted and destroyed north of Haifa. North of Jerusalem 14 Jews were killed in the Ataroth convoy.

Jewish fortunes touched their depth in the last week of March. Three incidents following hard on each other's heels made the faint-hearted feel that the Jews might yet be destroyed. The first was the convoy disaster of Nebi Daniel. Despite the massacre of the 35 who had rushed to the defense of the Kfar Etzion bloc of settlements in mid-January, convoys from Jerusalem to Etzion on the Bethlehem Road continued. On March 27, Arab concentrations under the command of Abdul Kader el Husseini launched a fierce attack on a returning Jewish convoy near Nebi Daniel. With most of the trucks destroyed, the convoy commander positioned his remaining armored vehicles to form three sides of a square with a wall of a ruin forming the fourth side. He grouped his men and women inside this improvised laager with their backs literally to the wall, and decided to fight it out to the last man and the last round.

They fought, a handful against hundreds. All they had were a few rifles and stens and some hand grenades. The fighting lasted all day, with the British, who were still responsible for the maintenance of security, idly wondering whether to intervene or not. Finally they decided to negotiate, offering to secure the safe transfer of the Jewish survivors in return for their weapons and vehicles. The few Jews handed over their arms perforce to the British and were escorted in British trucks to Jerusalem. The British then handed the Jewish weapons to the Arab attackers.

135 Arabs had been killed in the engagement and 12 Jews lost their lives. Nevertheless this was a serious Jewish reverse in the battle of the roads. It involved the loss of almost the entire strength of Jewish armored vehicles in the Jerusalem area.

This was the last convoy to get through. From then on the Etzion bloc was cut off from Jerusalem, isolated, with weapons enough for only half the number of troops, with little food and meager ammunition supplies. With the route of this convoy the country had a premonition of what was to take place later, though none could know that the brave defenders of Etzion would fight so nobly, with such courage and daring and such complete disregard for self, and so help to retard the main assault on Jerusalem.

The second incident in the last week in March was the loss of the Yehiam convoy with the massacre of 46 Jews. The convoy had left Nahariya, north of Acre, on its way to relieve the isolated settlement of Yehiam, when it ran into a heavy Arab ambush. Every man and woman on the convoy was killed, and the entire convoy destroyed.

The third was the false start in the battle of the road for Jerusalem. All arrangements had been made for the departure of a convoy from Hulda. But some of the trucks got stuck in the mud near Hulda and it took hours to get them out. In these few hours the Arabs in the surrounding area had time to organize for the attack. A stiff battle was fought but some of the trucks had to be abandoned and the entire convoy called off. The Arabs considered that this would finish any plan to reopen contact with Jerusalem.

This last week in march was the black week which preceded the brightest dawn in the period between the United Nations' resolution and the proclamation of the State of Israel. For the opening of April saw two operations which completely turned the scales and laid the basis for victory in Israel's war of independence. These two operations were Nahshon and the Battle of Mishmar Haemek.

After the false start of Hulda, "Operation Nahshon" went into effect on April 3. On any showing, Nahshon was not only a military operation but a daring act of faith, as its name suggests. Nahshon Ben Aminadav was the Biblical personage who, when Moses ordered the Jews across the Red Sea, was the first to jump into the water. Nahshon was the operation which enabled three great convoys to reach Jerusalem in April with enough stocks of food and ammunition and weapons to enable the city to hold out during the siege. David Ben Gurion, at that time chairman of the Jewish Agency in Palestine, used all his powers to order the mobilization of every man and vehicle and weapon available for this one attempt—to open the road to Jerusalem. Operating from their advanced headquarters in Hulda, Haganah secured the road from Hulda to Latrun, capturing the heights dominating the road and mining the approaches. At the same time beyond Bab el Wad, Palmach units stormed the fortified mountain village of Castel. West of Latrun the operation went without serious incident. At Castel fighting was stiff, Haganah being sadly under strength. After a night of surprise action, Castel and the surrounding heights were taken. But with daylight, the positions were found to be untenable against heavily superior enemy forces. Moreover, the danger was ever present that the British would force them to withdraw, as they did when Haganah captured Sheikh Jarrah some weeks later. Haganah accordingly retired from Castel. However, during the fighting the Arab commander, Abdul Kader el Husseini, was killed. This served to demoralize the Arabs and create confusion. Next night the height was again stormed by the Jews and taken. This time it was held long enough for the first convoy from Hulda to pass through to Jerusalem. This was April 5<sup>th</sup>. The convoy reached the Holy City, off-loaded its vast stores, and returned, covered by Haganah troops on the heights. When this was over, Haganah forces retired from Castel until the next convoy was ready.

This success gave a tremendous lift to Jewish morale not only in Jerusalem, but throughout the country. For it not only reopened contact with Jerusalem and gave food and ammunition to the starving Jews, but it constituted an act of faith which brought the entire population to the realization that no odds were too great. It was known that far grimmer battles lay ahead. But if the Jerusalem road could be opened against such tough opposition, if Jewish trucks could be pushed along a thin ribbon of road flanked by tens of thousands of Arabs with murder in their hearts, then nothing was impossible. This operation also had the effect of strengthening the trust of the people in their leaders who had clearly shown high imagination, boldness and courage.

With Operation Nahshon at its height, came the great battle of Mishmar Haemek. This was the battle which broke the back of the "Arab Army of Liberation." It opened on the 15<sup>th</sup> April.

Mishmar Haemek is the large settlement commanding the road to Haifa from the Emek. With Mishmar Haemek in Arab hands, the Emek could be sealed and the southern approaches of Haifa exposed. Moreover, the enemy could thrust across to Wadi Milik and so cut the north from the south, completely closing the coastal road. Fawzi el Kaukji, commander of the Arab Liberation Army—a force of Palestinian Arabs stiffened by thousands of irregular mercenaries from Syria, the Lebanon and Iraq, decided to mass his army for an assault upon this settlement.

He used for this operation his "Yarmuk" Army numbering some 2,000. All his men were well armed. They were stiffened by three French 75 mm guns and a large quantity of French mortars, which were disposed in the Arab villages on heights dominating Mishmar Haemek. While Operation Nahshon

was going on in the south, Kaukji's artillery pieces poured shells into the Jewish settlement. His men took up positions north, east and south.

By a happy chance the area around Mishmar Haemek was Haganah's "Salisbury Plain," the standard region for tactical maneuvers for many years. Hardly a single member of Haganah but had at some time or other taken part in tactical exercises here. Every hill and every wadi in the district was known to every fighting Jew. It was, therefore, not difficult to plan an operation, even though against superior numbers and superior firepower.

By careful fire directed at the heights east and west of Mishmar Haemek the enemy was forced to use a single road. His communications were then hammered along this road, while Haganah built up their forces for a decisive fighting. But by morning of the 17<sup>th</sup> the villages immediately east of Mishmar Haemek had been captured. The villagers had fled and Kaukji's force had begun to retire.

Pressing their advantage, Haganah pushed eastwards. They kept up this pressure and by the following day the entire Yarmuk army had turned tail and fled south-east towards Jenin. Haganah men in pursuit, lacking reserves, were stopped by weariness alone from penetrating in to the very heart of the Arab Triangle. They took Almonsi, raided Lajun and there rested. Haganah had defeated the Arab army, broken the back of Palestinian Arab resistance, extended the Jewish area east and south-east of Mishmar Haemek, made the Emek safe, secured the southern approaches of Haifa and smashed the threat to the coastal road. Jewish spirits throughout the country rose, with two major actions, in which large forces of the enemy had been disposed, going in favor of Haganah.

April was the turning point. From then on, militarily, the Jews never looked back. Tiberias fell on the 18<sup>th</sup> April. On the 21<sup>st</sup>, Haganah took measures to secure control of Haifa and on the next day the battle ended with the rout of the Arabs. Within the following week, the Haganah forces occupied the police posts at Samakh, Gesher and Rosh Pina. In Jerusalem they captured the Katamon quarter.

On 10<sup>th</sup> May, Safad fell after more than a week of skirmishes. On the following day, Haifa Port was placed under the control of the Jewish authorities. Two days later, following a concentrated attack initiated by IZL\* forces, Jaffa signed surrender terms. These solid victories achieved in April and early May enabled the Jewish leaders to proceed in good heart with their preparations for proclaiming the independent State of Israel with the close of the British Mandate.

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\* IZL: common abbreviation for Irgun Avai Leumi, the para-military organization headed by Menahem Beigin.

## PROCLAMATION OF INDEPENDENCE AND THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

When the United Nations took their historic decision on November 29<sup>th</sup>, 1947, the first preparatory steps had already been made towards the establishment of the Jewish State and its organs of government. A few weeks previously the Jewish Agency and the Vaad Leumi, representing both the world Jewry and the Yishuv, had set up a Joint Emergency Committee, whose primary task was to draw up the blue-prints for the State-to-be.

The Committee consisted of Messrs. K. Ben Gurion, P. Bernstein, I. Gruenbaum, E. Kaplan, M. Shapiro, and Mrs. G. Mayerso, all of the Jewish Agency Executive; Messrs. M. Grabowsky, Z. Luria, G. Landauer, D. Pinkas, D. Remez and M. Shattner of the Baad Leumi; and Dr. A. Granosvsky, of the Jewish National Fund.

During the four months of its existence, the Emergency Committee carried out measures designed to neutralize the Mandatory Government's "planned chaos" and to ensure vital supplies of food, fuel, etc. The Committee also began to mobilize for military service men and women between the ages of 17 to 25; established the nucleus of a Police Force, hospital facilities, and a broadcasting system; and began to arrange for offices for the future Government. It was in January 1948, that the decision was taken to house the Government in the former German Templar village of Sarona, on the outskirts of Tel-Aviv, which had been evacuated shortly before by the British Police Authorities. The Emergency Committee was disbanded in March 1948, and following a decision by the Zionist General Council, its place was taken by a 37-man National Council. The Council in its turn elected a National Administration, which became the "Shadow Cabinet" of the Jewish State.

On May 14<sup>th</sup>, when the British Authorities relinquished their Mandate over Palestine, it was this National Council which issued the now historic Proclamation establishing the State of Israel. The proclamation declared that the National Council was to become the Provisional Council of State, with its executive organ becoming the Provisional Government.

The Proclamation of Independence also laid down the principles upon which the State of Israel was to be based. These included free Jewish immigration; the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; full social equality of all its citizens; full freedom of conscience, worship, language, education and culture; the safeguarding of all shrines and Holy Places; and observance of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The text of the Proclamation and an English translation are given on pages 48, 50 and 51.

The Provisional State Council continues to function from May 14<sup>th</sup> until the 14<sup>th</sup> February, 1949, when it was replaced by the first "Knesset" or duly elected Constituent Assembly, for which elections were held on January 25<sup>th</sup>, 1949. The record of the Provisional Government's activities as the supreme legislature of Israel is contained in the chapter on "the Legal System."

# PROCLAMATION

The Land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and national identity was formed. Here they achieved independence and created a culture of national and universal significance. Here they wrote and gave the Bible to the world.

Exiled from the Land of Israel, the Jewish people remained faithful to it in all the countries of their dispersion, never ceasing to pray and hope for their return and the restoration of their national freedom.

Impelled by this historic association Jews strove throughout the centuries to go back to the land of their fathers and regain their statehood. In recent decades they returned in their masses. They reclaimed the wilderness, revived their language, built cities and villages, and established a vigorous and ever-growing community, with its own economic and cultural life. They sought peace yet were prepared to defend themselves. They brought the blessings of progress to all inhabitants of the country and looked forward to sovereign independence.

In the year 1897 the First Zionist Congress, inspired by Theodor Herzl's vision of the Jewish State, proclaimed the right of the Jewish people to national revival in their own country.

This right was acknowledged by the Balfour Declaration of November 2, 1917, and re-affirmed by the Mandate of the League of Nations, which gave explicit international recognition to the historic connection of the Jewish people with Palestine and their right to reconstitute their National Home.

The recent holocaust, which engulfed millions of Jews in Europe, proved anew the need to solve the problem of the homelessness and lack of independence of the Jewish people by means of the re-establishment of the Jewish State, which would open the gates to all Jews and endow the Jewish people with equality of status among the family of nations.

The survivors of the disastrous slaughter in Europe, and also Jews from other lands, have not desisted from their efforts to reach Eretz-Israel, in face of difficulties, obstacles and perils; and have not ceased to urge their right to a life of dignity, freedom and honest toil in their ancestral land.

In the Second World War the Jewish people in Palestine made their full contribution to the struggle of the freedom-loving nations against the Nazi evil. The sacrifices of their soldiers and their war efforts gained them the right to rank with the nations which founded the United Nations.

On November 29, 1947, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a Resolution requiring the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine. The General Assembly called upon the inhabitants of the country to take all the necessary steps on their part to put the plan into effect. This recognition by the United Nations of the right of the Jewish people to establish their independent State is unassailable.

It is the natural right of the Jewish people to lead, as do all other nations, an independent existence in its sovereign State.

ACCORDINGLY WE, the members of the National Council, representing the Jewish people in Palestine, and the World Zionist Movement, are met together in solemn assembly today, the day of



termination of the British Mandate for Palestine; and by virtue of the natural and historic right of the Jewish people and of the Resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

WE HEREBY PROCLAIM the establishment of the Jewish State in Palestine, to be called “Medinat Israel” (The State of Israel).

WE HEREBY DECLARE that, as from the termination of the Mandate at midnight, the 14th-15<sup>th</sup> May, 1948, and pending the setting up of duly elected bodies of the State in accordance with a Constitution, to be drawn up by the Constituent Assembly not later than the 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1948, the National Council shall act as the Provisional State Council, and that the National Administration shall constitute the Provisional Government of the Jewish State, which shall be known as Israel.

THE STATE OF ISRAEL will be open to the immigration of Jews from all countries of their dispersion; will promote the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; will be based on the principles of liberty, justice and peace as conceived by the Prophets of Israel; will uphold the full social and political equality of all its citizens, without distinction of religion, race or sex; will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, education and culture; will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions; and will loyally uphold the principles of the United Nations Charter.

THE STATE OF ISRAEL will be ready to cooperate with the organs and representatives of the United Nations in the implementation of the Resolution of the Assembly of November 28, 1947, and will take steps to bring about the Economic Union over the whole of Palestine.

We appeal to the United Nations to assist the Jewish people in the building of its State and to admit Israel into the family of Nations.

In the midst of wanton aggression, we yet call upon the Arab inhabitants of the State of Israel to preserve the ways of peace and play their part in the development of the State, on the basis of full and equal citizenship and due representation in all its bodies and institutions, provisional and permanent.

We extend our hand in peace and neighborliness to all the neighboring states and their peoples, and invite them to cooperate with the independent Jewish nation for the common good of all. The State of Israel is prepared to make its contribution to the progress of the Middle East as a whole.

Our call goes out to the Jewish people all over the world to rally to our side in the task of immigration and development and to stand by us in the great struggle for the fulfillment of the dream of generations for the redemption of Israel.

With trust in Almighty God, we set our hand to this Declaration, at this Session of the Provisional State Council, on the soil of the Homeland, in the city of Tel Aviv, on this Sabbath eve, the fifth of Iyar, 5708, the fourteenth day of May, 1948.

# WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

Second Phase: May 15<sup>th</sup>, 1948 - July 20<sup>th</sup>, 1949

On the 14<sup>th</sup> May, 1948, the State of Israel was proclaimed. In the early hours of the following morning, Mr. David Ben Gurion, Prime Minister of the provisional Government, broadcast to the world. He spoke from an improvised studio in Tel Aviv. As he talked bombs fell on the city. That was how the second phase of the War of Independence opened.

Later the same day, from the north, the east and from the south came the invading armies of the Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Trans-Jordan and Egypt, with a Saudi-Arabian formation fighting under Egyptian command. For the next four weeks the Jews of Israel, with no State apparatus, having at their command only an underground force, a meager supply of weapons, only the bare beginnings of an army staff and a skeleton navy and air force, fought for their lives- and fought successfully.

There were many moments during these four weeks when the fate of Israel hung by a thread. Jerusalem had been sealed from contact with the coast. The Arabs were entrenched in the Old City. Arab Legion forces to the north, east, south and at points on the road west of Jerusalem maintained a stranglehold upon the New City. The situation of the beleaguered Jews had been rendered less desperate by the supplies brought in on the three mammoth convoys under "Operation Nahshon," and their defenses had been enhanced by the skilful occupation by Haganah forces of the former British security zones on the day the British departed. But none could know how long the Arab siege would last, nor how long the Jews could hold out against superior numbers and the heavy artillery which was now brought into play from the surrounding hills.

In the south, the Egyptians crossed the frontier, moved up to Gaza and Majdal and prepared themselves for an attack on the southern approaches to Tel Aviv. Other units established a base at Beersheba and pressed north-east to Hebron and Bethlehem, taking up positions south of Jerusalem.

In the north the Lebanese and Syrians made efforts to penetrate into hill Galilee. In the northeast, from the Syrian border to the Jordan Valley, the Syrians and Iraqis found weak points into which they could make deep penetrations.

In the center were concentrated the toughest fighting elements of Palestinian Arabs, stiffened by the surviving Syrian, Lebanese and Iraqi irregulars who had fought under Kaukji. These were based on the Arab "triangle"—Jenin, Nablus and Tulkarm—providing a perpetual threat to the narrow Israeli coastal strip of the Sharon, with Tulkarm the point of a Powerful dagger thrusting at Nathanya.

In the air, Arab planes flew almost at will, bombing without being engaged. That four of their aircraft were shot down during that month is a tribute to the courage and skill of Israeli anti-aircraft gunners. These raids were confined almost entirely to civilian targets from which they extracted a heavy toll.

Facing Israel were the regular armies of the neighboring States, fully equipped with the standard weapons of a regular army: tanks, armored cars, weapon-carriers, vehicles in adequate numbers, artillery, machine guns, mortars, rifles, ammunition without shortage, oil and petrol in the quantities required, and war-planes. As regular armies of sovereign states, they had no difficulty in securing modern equipment through normal state channels.

Israel was not so fortunate. Israel had to depend on Haganah the underground defense force of Palestinian Jewry, a well-trained body but lacking experience in the kind of task demanded of a regular army. Its equipment, too, had considerable gaps. It did not include war-planes, guns, armored fighting vehicles; nor did it include limitless supplies of machine-guns, rifles, and ammunition. Yet despite this, Haganah had now to go into action as a regular army. In the week following 14<sup>th</sup> May, the Jews could do little to check the Arab invasion or prevent their consolidation of bases from which they sought to launch their main attacks on Jewish centers. But after the first week, arms, ammunition and aircraft began to flow into Israel, and they were quickly rushed into action.

By the beginning of June, Israel defenses south of Tel Aviv were sufficiently stiffened to enable Yibna to be occupied, and an Egyptian column based on Isdud to be surrounded and checked. The Egyptian southern column, in fact, never reached further north than the suburbs of Isdud, 35 Kilometers south of Tel Aviv. But the Egyptians did succeed in cutting off the Negev settlements from the north. It can now be disclosed that these settlements were supplied by a daring airlift that kept them stocked with food, weapons, and ammunition, enabling them to hold out against the formidable attacks that followed in the successive months.

Some of the most impressive chapters in the story of Israel heroism were written by the settlers of these Negev outposts. Negba, Mirim, Be Eshel, Revivim and Beerot Yetzhak will live for generations as shining beacons in the story of Jewry's struggle for independence. These settlements were remote from any areas of help, they were oases in a vast desert of Egyptian aggressions. They were subjected to frequent attack by infantry, armor, artillery and aircraft. Yet all held out. Three settlements alone, lying astride the main Egyptian north-south line of communication, were over-run, Nizanim, Yad, Mordechai and Kfar Darom. They had held out for weeks against incredible odds. At Yad Mordicai, the heaviest weapon in the settlement armory was a 3 mortar which was moved from one post to another to give the impression of all-round fire. Yet even in reverse there was heroism. Settlers and garrison troops of Yad Mordicai effected a daring midnight evacuation, through the Egyptian lines, taking their wounded with them so that none surrendered to the enemy. The only comrades left behind were those who had been killed in action.

On the central front the Arab Legion and the Iraqi army sought to narrow down the coastal strip of Israel to a thin line, the line of the coast.

Israel's defense plan was based on an alert vigilance in the Sharon settlements, a careful defense system to cover Hedera, Nathanya, Herzilia, Petah Tikva and Tel Aviv, coupled with minor offensive prodding raids to bewilder the enemy and confuse him as to the strength of Israeli forces.

In the north, Israel defenses had been considerably strengthened by the brilliant capture of Haifa, Tiberias and Safad in the weeks before May 14<sup>th</sup>. In Western Galilee, four days after the creation of the State, by judicious use of psychological warfare and camouflage, which suggested to the Arabs a far more powerful Jewish force than the Jews in fact possessed, aided by the skilful disposition of the few forces at the disposal of Haganah, Acre surrendered. (The attack had included an amphibious operation.) Pressing their advantage, Jewish forces drove up the coast to the Lebanese frontier and captured Ras en Naqura.

In the northeast, the day after the new State was proclaimed, every settlement from the Jordan Valley right up to the Lebanese frontier was exposed to attack by the invading forces. A key position was Nebi Yusha, the fortress height commanding the Rosh Pina-Metulla highway. Pushing westward from the road across the mountains and skirting the fortress from the south, the entire mobile force of Haganah

pressed towards the Lebanese frontier to take Malikieh by storm. They then swung north-eastwards to take Qadas. On the following night, 17<sup>th</sup> May, they successfully attacked Nebi Yusha from the west.

This success coupled with the possession of Safad, enabled the Jews to command the highway from Rosh Pina northwards to Metullah and so secure the communications of the northern Jewish settlements.

On the same day, the 17<sup>th</sup>, Haganah had captured Tel el Kadi. This covered the northern Galilee settlements east of the Rosh Pina-Metullah road and served to check an onslaught on the Huleh area.

Western and Eastern Galilee were thus secured.

The dangerous moment in the northern campaign came on the 30<sup>th</sup> May with a heavy armored assault by the Syrians on the Jordan Valley settlement at the southern tip of the Sea of Galilee. Every man, woman and youth in the area was mobilized for defense. Wave after wave of Syrian troops was flung back. At one stage two enemy tanks broke through the perimeter of Dagania, the oldest communal settlement in the country, and the symbol of Jewish pioneering. The fact that one was destroyed by a Molotov cocktail shows how close was the fighting. The settlers held firm and the enemy was flung out. But fighting continued for four days before the invader was finally driven out of the area and the settlements' freedom secured. Some weeks later these Syrian forces, defeated in the Jordan Valley, turned their full attention to the lone Jewish settlement of Ein Gev on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. Despite their heavy superiority of men and weapons, they were flung back, serving only to provide the settlers of Ein Gev with a proud record of heroism which Israel will long remember.

At one point only in the north was any inroad made into Israel territory. Attack and counter-attack towards the end of the 4 weeks of fighting in the region of Mishmar Hayarden resulted in the Syrian possession of a bridgehead to which they clung. They gradually extended their occupation to include the waters of the Northern Jordan.

Meanwhile starving Jerusalem, waterless and fuel-less, withstood 25 days and nights of continuous shelling, having no contact whatever with the outside world except by radio. The battle for the approaches to Jerusalem was grim, tough and costly. The Arab Legion foresaw that a solid occupation of Latrun would effectively throttle communications between the Holy City and the coast. After stiffening the northern ring around Jerusalem, Legion troops moved down to Latrun occupying the Ramallah-Latrun line and fortifying themselves in the Latrun police post. West of the Ramallah-Beit Nuba road, they consolidated themselves in the village covering the eastern approach to Lydda and Ramleh.

In the beginning of June Israel forces began to concentrate west of Latrun. At the same time they groped their way through the Judean hills to cut what eventually became known as the "Burma" Road through to beleaguered Jerusalem, giving the Jews an alternative road to the Holy City, and making them independent of the Arab Legion and the U.N. Their attacks on the Legion bastion of Latrun were heavy. Twice Haganah forces broke into the police fortress but were thrown out by Legion armor and guns. They were about to make their final thrust when, on the 11<sup>th</sup> June, the first truce began and fighting ceased.

For four weeks the Arab armies ringing Israel had sought to crush the new State, destroy its inhabitants and loot its property. For four weeks the Jews had battled as their forebears had battled in the days of the Maccabees. Truce began with the invading armies heavily concentrated in large parts of territory assigned to Israel under the United Nations' resolution. But no major Israeli position had surrendered. Truce came upon Israel when its forces had just reached the top of their form. Truce came upon Israel when the new air force had just signaled its creation by the bombing of Damascus and Amman.

It is characteristic of the spirit which dominated the new State that within two weeks of its creation 5,000 immigrants were received and absorbed into the life of the country. It is equally characteristic that within a few days, six new settlements were established in various parts of the country, in the Beisan Valley, in the Emek, in the Negev, and in Galilee.

Perhaps as important as victory on the field of battle—certainly a vital contribution to that victory—was the successful introduction into Israel during the four weeks fighting of a considerable quantity of guns, planes, armored cars, half-track vehicles, machine guns, rifles, ammunition, petrol stocks, food, a few tanks, and machinery and materials of Israel's war industries.

Israel was still without its regular army. Haganah had been rapidly transformed into a rough and ready field force. But it was only with the truce that the refashioning and reorganization could be effected to give regular shape and form to the armed services of the new State. On the 28<sup>th</sup> June the sailors and air-men pledged allegiance to the State of Israel, as members of *Ava Haganah Le'Israel*, the defense Army of Israel.

The truce had gone into effect for four weeks. Count Bernadotte had been appointed Mediator and head of the truce observation team. Two days before the truce was due to end, he proposed an extension. The Arabs rejected it. On the 9<sup>th</sup> July, hostilities were resumed.

The fighting lasted for ten days. It opened characteristically with air attacks on Tel Aviv. It closed with Arab defeat.

The most spectacular battlefield was east and southeast of Tel Aviv. Israel forces took Kfar Ana, Yahudiya, Wilhelma, Qula and Tira. A small force pushed southeastwards to capture Safiriya and continue eastwards to Lydda airport, which is some distance from the city. Within a day and a half, Lydda airport and some eight key villages had fallen to Israel's forces in the first engagement in which Israel units had used armor.

On the third day of the fighting, Israel units made a surprise dash to Lydda and Ramleh, capturing both cities in the most daring and spectacular action which this country had seen up to then. In Lydda the enemy was taken by surprise as a patrol of open jeeps swept up the main road, spattering the buildings on either side with fire from machine guns. By the time the Arab defenses could recover from the shock it was too late. Other Israel units which had been operating south and southeast of these towns, isolating them from Arab help from the east, moved up to complete the capture and mopping up of Lydda and Ramle. On the same day Bet Naballa was captured and Ben Shemen relieved, while Ras el Ain, source of water for Jerusalem through the main pipe line, was captured from the Iraqis. The entire area west of the Ras el Ain-Lydda road was secured from the enemy.

The Arabs, too, made history on that day. They bombed Jerusalem from the air—the Holy City's first aerial bombardment—and followed it up with three air attacks on Tel Aviv.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> July, the sixth day of the fighting, Shafa Amr, east of Haifa, was captured.

This was the opening of the spectacular campaign in the north which resulted in the clearance of the entire belt from Haifa Bay to the Sea of Galilee. From Shafa Amr the main northern force of the Israeli army pressed southeast towards Nazareth. On the next day they captured Safiriya, source of water for Nazareth. From the northeast of Nazareth, Israeli troops at Sejra, who had routed Kaukji forces in an

impressively gallant battle, made a simultaneous move southwestwards to capture Ein Mhil. On the 16<sup>th</sup> July the two forces converged on Nazareth. The city surrendered.

In the south, the Egyptians had taken advantage of the truce to bolster their Majdal-Beit Jibrin line, blocking the north from contact with the Negev. Eight days after the campaign opened, part of the armored unit that had been most active in the assault on Lydda was rushed south to join the Southern Command, occupy Hatta and put in a joint attack on Kharatiya, which was captured in a bold night action. Possession of these two villages astride the Majdal-Faluja highway broke the Egyptian line, and gave Israel a direct land connection with the south.

Around Jerusalem, Maliha and Ein Karem were captured. This widened the mouth of the corridor from Jerusalem to the coast. Further west, along the approaches to Jerusalem, Hartuv was retaken. North of Latrun, Israel forces pressed eastwards from Lydda and Ramle to capture Shilta, Barfiliya, Burj, Beir Main and Salbit. This brought them to positions in which they dominated the Ramallah-Beit Nuba-Latrun road, though both Latrun and Beit Nuba remained in Legion hands.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> July a general cease-fire came into effect after ten of the most shattering days the Arabs had suffered. During these ten days the Israel air force showed that it had punch. Cairo was bombed; Damascus was bombed; and Egyptian bases at Rafa and El Arish—particularly the main Egyptian advanced airfield—felt the weight of Israel air attacks. The Israel navy also went into action, shelling the Lebanese port of Tyre.

Breaches of the truce began almost from the first day. In the Jerusalem area the Arab Legion intensified its bombardments of the New City and kept them up with clockwork regularity. During the remainder of July, August, September and October, Jerusalem was shelled almost every night by 25 pounders. The Legion was also responsible for another grave breach of the truce in its refusal to supply water to Jerusalem, despite repeated U.N. injunctions. This reached its flagrant climax on 12<sup>th</sup> August with the Legion's destruction of the Latrun pumping station, even though it was under United Nations control.

That Jerusalem was not brought low by thirst is no credit either to the Arabs or to the United Nations. For the Jews, skeptical of U.N. ability or willingness to compel Arab respect for obligations, laid their own "Burma" pipeline which made them to a certain extent independent of Latrun.

On 30<sup>th</sup> November, with the signature of a "real truce," the Jews of Jerusalem slept for the first time for months in the stillness and tranquility of a night unshattered by rifle or gun-fire.

In the south, the Egyptians proceeded to improve their positions and deny to Israel the use of the Hatta-Kharatiya corridor. Jewish convoys to supply the Negev settlements were repeatedly refused passage by the Egyptians, in defiance of the truce. The Jews were dissuaded from taking appropriate action by repeated U.N. promises to enforce Egyptian compliance.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> October, the Egyptians attacked Israel heights near Tel el Kuneitra and Khirbet Mukhaz, south of Faluja. Three days later they launched attacks at several points further south. The attacks were repulsed.

On 15<sup>th</sup> October the Israel Army decided to send a convoy through the Hatta-Kharatiya gap in an effort to supply the Negev settlements, as they were entitled to do under the terms of the truce. It was heavily attacked from positions, incidentally, which the Egyptians had secured after the truce. A few hours later six Egyptian Spitfires attacked inter-settlement supply convoys between Dorot and Ruhama.

That night the Israel army and air force went into action. After a brisk seven days campaign the road to the Negev was opened and the northern Negev cleared of Egyptian troops.

The Air Force opened with the bombing of Egyptian bases from which assaults on Jewish convoys had been launched. They attacked Majdal Faluja, Gaza, El Arish and Rafa. Their most successful strikes were registered on advanced airfields which kept most of the Egyptian front line fighters out of the skies for the duration of the campaign. Throughout the seven days of fighting the Israel Air Force operated without let-up. It completely dominated the skies. Patrol vessels of the Israel Navy also took part in the southern engagements, bombarding enemy coastal installations and preventing supplies from reaching Gaza by sea.

On the ground Israel troops, engaged in bitter fighting, scored spectacular success. Striking against the Faluja-Majdal line, they fought their key battle at Hill 113, which dominates the crossroads midway between Majdal and Faluja. They captured this height after a stiff hand to hand engagement, and then pressed southwards to take Kaukaba, Beit Tima and Huleiqat. Bureir, south of Huleiqat, was already in Jewish hands so that the main highway from Julis to the south was not secure and open to Jewish traffic.

From the crossroad near Hill 113, Israeli units pressed westwards towards, Majdal, and eastwards towards Iraq Suweidan and Faluja. But in the Faluja area the Egyptians held firm. They also beat off an Israel attack on Iraq el Manshiya, which the Jews entered and later abandoned. This was the sole Egyptian success—or rather Jewish failure—in the entire campaign.

In the area north of Beit Jibrin, other Israel units were active breaking the Egyptian Bethlehem B Beit Jibrin line and widening the approaches to Jerusalem.

With the successful clearance of the Julis-Bureir road an Israeli column drove southwards through the settlements of Dorot and Ruhama to reach the Gaza-Beersheba road. Other units, which had been based on Revivim, near Bir Asluj, for months, moved northeastwards towards Beersheba. On the night of 29<sup>th</sup> October, the two forces joined in a combined assault on Beersheba, which fell the following morning after a fierce battle. The nearby Jewish settlements of Beit Eshel and Neatim, under siege for months, began to breathe once again.

At the beginning of the operations, an Israel column had struck southwestwards at Beit Hanun. This had the effect of cutting the Majdal-Gaza highway and railway line.

The Israel Navy operated throughout this campaign with the dash and skill normally associated with the senior services of old established countries. They patrolled the waters off the Gaza strip with an offensive spirit that prevented supplies from reaching the enemy. They bombarded coastal installations. In one engagement at fairly close range they secured hits on a large Egyptian vessel that sank with heavy casualties. Only three days later was it learned from a U.N. statement that Egyptian sources had revealed that this was the King Farouk flagship and pride of the Egyptian Navy. This was an impressive laurel for the Israel fleet in its first serious engagement with the enemy.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> October a hurriedly rushed-through Security Council cease-fire order came into effect.

The fighting, known as “Operation Ten Plagues,” had lasted for seven days. The road to the Negev was opened. Inter-settlement communications were secured. Beersheba, the key Egyptian Negev base, was in Israel hands. The Egyptian army had been cleared from the northern Negev, with the exception of the Gaza strip and the Faluja pocket. In the northeast sector, Egyptian forces in the Hebron Bethlehem area

were completely cut off from their bases, and within a few days were forced to submit to Arab Legion command. A vast quantity of war booty was captured by the Israel army and used to great effect in later campaigns.

On the day the Negev cease-fire came into effect Fawzi el Kaukji, still commanding the "Arab Liberation Army," which had by now moved into central Galilee, launched a strong attack on the Israel settlement of Manara, south of Tel Hai. Manara lies on a height west of the Metulla-Rosh Pina highway and is approached by hill track from Nebi-Yusha. Israel protested immediately to the United Nations, but the following day the Arabs occupied Sheikh Abbad nearby. Jewish traffic on the Metulla-Rosh Pina road came under sniping from these newly captured heights. On the third day the Israel army issued a strong warning to the Arabs that unless these attacks ceased Israel would feel free to take appropriate action. The warning went unheeded.

On 29<sup>th</sup> October the Israel Army went into action.

Instead of hitting the enemy at his point of attack. Israel troops followed a plan which caught the enemy by surprise and forced his withdrawal from the entire Galilee. One unit proceeding from a base east of Naharia in Western Galilee pressed towards Tarshiha. Other units operating from the Safad area in Eastern Galilee too Zeitun, Meirun, and pressed northward to take Jish. They then turned westwards to take the key crossroad at Sasa. With the vital "squeeze" points of Tarshiha and Sasa in Israel hands, Kaukji's forces immediately recognized the trap and promptly began evacuating the central pocket northwards across the Lebanese frontier. Israeli troops then pressed northeastwards along the Lebanese frontier from Sasa to storm and take Malakiya (once again) after a brisk action. From there they moved on to capture Arab Blida, coming upon the forces pressing on Manara in the rear, and compelling them to flee. Within 50 hours the whole of Galilee was cleared of the enemy. Lebanese irregulars and Kaukji's men took to their heels across the frontier. The entire operation cost the Israel Army nine lives, lost in the short, sharp clashes which had occurred at Tarshiha, Sasa, Jish and Malakiya. The cease-fire in the north came into operation on 31 October.

These two brisk campaigns, carried out in nine fighting days, which cleared the entire Galilee and liberated the major part of the Negev, showed something of the new strength and skill of Israel's Defense Army. The three services, Army, Air Force and Navy, showed ingenuity in planning and toughness in execution. And the men showed the benefits of training. Among the Arab States, and even in more distant lands, a new attitude was discernible towards the military power of Israel.

A new note began to creep into the United Nations' proceedings. Gone was the contempt with which Israel had been treated by her detractors. And in place of the blustering confidence of the Arab representatives in the early weeks of their aggression, there was now a panic cry of outraged justice. There were even attempts to force Israel to surrender to its enemies what its enemies had been unable to wrest in aggressive action. These attempts were in the main defeated, largely because Israel's political representatives were as vigilant and skilful in the diplomatic field as her soldiers were on the battlefield.

On 16<sup>th</sup> November, the Security Council ordered Israel and the Arab States to enter into Armistice talks forthwith. Israel promptly accepted. None of the Arab States responded.

On 21<sup>st</sup> November Egyptian forces operating southeast of Gaza suddenly captured the important heights of Tel el Fara, Tel el Jamma and Khirbet Kutchan, which lie between Nirim and Imara. On 6<sup>th</sup> December they launched a heavy tank attack near the settlement of Nirim. The Israeli suffered slight casualties but managed to knock out five of the Egyptian tanks.



These attacks showed no Egyptian disposition for peace. It was clear, as Count Bernadotte had underlined, that truce could not last forever, or even for very long. Truce was a phase of war. Truce had to give way to peace, via armistice, or to renewed war. The Egyptians continued to delay, and under cover of these delaying tactics, to improve their military position and launch attacks. The continuation of the truce enabled them to remain on the soil of Israel, and to maintain their positions, won by encroachment, far beyond their own frontier.

In the middle of the month, the Acting Mediator returned from a tour of the Middle East to advise Israel that the Egyptians would be prepared to enter into armistice talks. But on 22<sup>nd</sup> December, the U.N. Chief of Staff informed Israel that the Egyptians had retracted and requested Israel's reaction. Israel's reply was the reservation of her freedom of action to defend her territory and hasten the conclusion of peace.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> December operations were begun in order to drive the Egyptians from the soil of Israel.

The Israel Army opened by attacking positions occupied by the Egyptians a month earlier and prodding enemy bases between Gaza and Rafa to divert attention from the main objective. The main objective was the south.

The principal Israel force was concentrated southwest of Beersheba, with its task to capture Bir Asluj and Auja el Hafir, and clear the southern Negev of Egyptian troops. The operation hinged on the surprise exploitation of a track running through Wadi Abbiyad which had not been used for centuries. Plans concerted by G. H.Q. Operations branch and Southern Front Command aided by the ingenuity and zeal of the Engineers gave the troops a better than fifty per cent chance of getting through.

Zero hour was the night of the 24<sup>th</sup> December when Israel units, using this surprise road, suddenly appeared astride the Bir Asluj-Auja el Hafir highway. The going had been incredibly tough. But they had made it. Jeeps, command cars, half tracks, armored vehicles, guns and supply lorries- they had got through with few losses. One force branched southeastwards to invest Bir Asluj, the other pushed on southwestwards towards Auja. A little north of the road, the Auja force split, one branch turning southeastwards to engage the Egyptian garrison at El Mushrafa. The Egyptians were taken by surprise. Mushrafa, midway between Asluj and Auja, was the center of an interlocking system of defense in which the three positions were linked with Mushrafa taken, the pins were knocked out from under the Egyptian defense plan. For it isolated Auja from Asluj, exposed both to attacks from the rear, and denied to each help from the other. The Egyptian command was thrown completely off balance, as Israel units launched simultaneous attacks on Auja and Bir Asluj and with the seizure of Mushrafa. Though the local garrisons fought well, within 24 hours they had been routed.

Israeli forward units then pressed westwards into Egyptian territory in pursuit of the fleeing enemy. They quickly reached Abu Aweigilla, the Egyptian frontier base commanding the principal Ismailia-Gaza highway, where they consolidated. Reconnaissance and raiding forces then sped westwards towards El Arish, and some armored vehicles actually penetrated the suburbs of this town. The remainder swarmed around destroying installations on the airfields. They also succeeded in capturing one Spitfire intact. Other patrols moved southwards from the Abu Aweigila-El Arish road into the desert. An armored column pushed northwestwards from the Abu Aweigila up the road towards Rafa.

At this point very heavy diplomatic pressure was applied to compel Israel to withdraw its forces from Egypt. After inflicting damage on Egyptian forces and installations and raiding the bases from which

their aggression against Israel had been launched, Israel troops withdrew from Egyptian soil and returned to their own side of the frontier.

Meanwhile, the prodding of Egyptian positions south of Gaza continued and heavy attacks developed in the vicinity of Rafa. At 1400 hours on 7<sup>th</sup> January orders went into effect to cease fire by all land, sea and air forces. Fighting actually lasted until 1700 hours, since the Egyptians who opened a counter-attack in the vicinity of Rafa in the morning, kept up their action in the hope of dislodging Israel forces from the crossroads south of Rafa and the cemetery southeast of the city.

During this campaign, with things going badly for the Egyptians, Britain took the most strenuous steps to secure the intervention of the United Nations and the United States to clip Israel's wings. Nor did she stop at political efforts. Under cover of insinuations of Israel's territorial ambitions Britain sought to intervene militarily, alerting British troops in the Canal Zone and speeding forces to Akaba.

On the morning the 7<sup>th</sup> January, the day the cease-fire was to come into effect, Royal Air Force Spitfires on armed photographic reconnaissance flew over the Israel battle positions, zooming over at 500 feet. Israel ground troops, who had already suffered air strafing, and who had no knowledge that the planes were not Egyptian, opened fire, and Israel Air Force machines went up to intercept. Four British planes were shot down. (They were identified as British only later). In the afternoon- one hour after the cease-fire more squadrons of fighters appeared and one was shot down. This was later also found to be British. One British pilot was killed when his plane crashed near the Jewish settlement of Nirim, fifteen kilometers from the Egyptian frontier, and two pilots were captured. This grave act of open intervention came as a great shock not only to the United Nations but to most of the people in Britain. It was gravely censured by many speakers in the House of Commons, from Mr. Churchill down. None, except British Government spokesmen, blamed Israel for the unfortunate action that had followed such unfortunate orders to the R.A.F. squadrons involved.

The Israel Air Force had suffered no casualties, either in this action or in the many actions throughout the campaign in which it had done great service, pounding every enemy base, softening positions before attacks, keeping enemy planes out of the sky.

The Israel Navy, too, saw more action than in any previous campaign. The waters off the Egyptian coastal strip were kept clear of enemy supply vessels and enemy coastal installations were shelled regularly by Israel warships. Israel naval saboteurs also performed highly valuable, though highly hazardous, sabotage operations, sneaking in at night and cutting the road and rail track north and south of Gaza. There were also several combined naval and army operations, small in scale though great in utility, which kept the Egyptians in the coastal strip remote from comfort. The Egyptian Navy, no doubt still smarting under the loss of their flagship in October, sought to retaliate. Two of their corvettes sailed up the coast and at 2 o'clock on the morning of New Year's Day fired a number of salvos into what they thought was the heart of Tel Aviv. At the time, the Israel official spokesman was not prepared to act as spotter to the Egyptian Navy by offering information as to where the enemy shells had dropped. It can now be stated that these shells dropped in the water, many kilometers from the coast.

After this campaign the Egyptian will to peace became stronger and on January 12<sup>th</sup>, Egyptian-Israeli armistice negotiations opened Rhodes. On 24<sup>th</sup> February, agreement was reached and an armistice signed.

One of the clauses of this agreement covered the reduction of forces in the South. By its terms, the Israeli Army was permitted to maintain only defensive troops in the western Negev, but whatever forces they deemed necessary in the eastern half of the Negev.

In March British reinforcements were rushed to Akaba, and from Amman and London a campaign was launched proclaiming aggressive Israel intentions towards Transjordan from the Negev. This was highly suspicious. Even more suspicious were reports of Israeli-Transjordan clashes in the frontier between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Akaba, clashes of which Israel troops were quite unaware.

Up to then Israel's control of the Negev had been maintained by standing patrols. No permanent force had been stationed in the southern tip of the Negev, even though this was part of Israel territory. There had been reports that Transjordan patrols had crossed the frontier near the gulf, and that the British had made occasional use of the track between Akaba and Ras el Naqib to maintain land communication between Akaba and their Middle East Headquarters at Fayid.

With the regrouping of forces following the Israel-Egyptian armistice agreement, and with the serious threat of Joint British and Arab Legion action in Israel, the Israel Army decided to change the control of its territory in this region by fixed positions rather than occasional patrols. On March 11th the Israel flag was hoisted on the police post at Um Rashrash on the coast of Elath.

Conclusion of an armistice agreement with the most powerful of the Arab League states, Egypt, was quickly followed by negotiations with Israel's remaining enemies. Back to Rhodes went the Israel delegation, this time to talk to the representatives of Transjordan. These talks opened on March 1, 1949. Simultaneously, talks started with the Lebanon, whereby Israel agreed to evacuate the Lebanese villages it had occupied during the fighting, and retire to the international frontier.

The Transjordan-Israel armistice agreement was signed in Rhodes on April 3<sup>rd</sup>. By its terms, considerable slices of territory which were in Arab occupation were to be given to Israel. The Arab evacuation was to be completed in three stages: in the first, to be completed by May 10, Israel was to receive a stretch of territory running from Baqa southwards to east of Kfar Qasim, thereby sidening the coastal corridor; the second stage involved the Arab evacuation by May 24<sup>th</sup> of territory running from Baqa northeastwards to Zubiba, which freed the Hedera-Afula road through Wadi Ara; the third stage, July 19<sup>th</sup> involved the evacuation of Arab forces from the area north of a line from Zubiba round to the Jordan, thereby broadening the Emek belt in Israel territory. By this agreement, therefore a considerable area of vitally important territory was restored to the Jews without fighting. It also restored to Israel almost the whole of the Haifa-TelAviv railway. The Iraqi troops, who had occupied positions in the Arab Triangle, retired from Palestine to bases across the frontier. Their positions were taken by the Arab Legion.

The armistice negotiations with the Syrians took some months before an agreement was signed. The Syrians were in occupation of the bridgehead of Mishmar Hayarden and in occupation of the head waters of the Jordan. After protracted negotiations, agreement was reached on July 20, 1949. By its terms the Syrians retired behind the international frontier, and the northern lakes and Jordan waters remained in Israel. The Syrians also destroyed their fortified positions on the western side of the frontier, and evacuated the territory in three stages: (a) within the first three weeks, they retired to the eastern side of the frontier at the section running from the northernmost point to Ad Darbishiya; (b) after the sixth week the Syrian forces evacuated the southernmost sector running from the Transjordan frontier northwards to El Hama; (c) the sector between El Hama and Ad Darbishiya was evacuated during the following six weeks.

By this date, then, Israel was in armistice agreement with each of its neighboring states. On this date it could be said that Israel was sovereign over every inch of this territory. And for the first time since May 14, 1948, the people of Israel could begin to breathe and look forward to the peaceful development of their country.

## THE BATTLE OF JERUSALEM

The defense of Jerusalem deserves a special chapter in the story of Israel's war of independence. Jerusalem's troubles began soon after 29<sup>th</sup> November 1947. Arabs immediately sought to cut Jerusalem from the coast. Sniping of traffic became a daily occurrence already in December, and the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv highway was the target of mounting Arab attacks of extreme ferocity throughout the first half of 1948.

By January these operations had exacted a heavy toll of Jewish life, even though Jewish traffic traveled in convoy. By February homemade armored cabins were added to trucks to give some protection to the driver. Buses were given an armored coating to give a feeling of security to passengers. Hagahah girls and boys, armed with a sten gun, traveled with these convoys as fighting guards. But there was rarely a convoy that got through without casualty. By March the wooded hillsides along the defile from Babel Wad to Jerusalem were so thick with Arab ambush that movement became suicidal. The verges on both sides of this stretch of road were littered with the burnt-out husks of Jewish vehicles. The road was closed.

In April came Operation Nahshon which opened it again, long enough to permit three convoys to reach the Holy City with supplies of food, weapons and ammunition. This enabled Jerusalem barely to hold out during the subsequent siege. During "Nahshon," prior to the dispatch of a convoy, Haganah units would go forward at night, capture the heights dominating the dangerous stretch of road, keep it clear for the convoy to pass, and they retire, before the British could arrive to order them out.

With the third convoy through by the third week in April, the Arabs had come to realize the high value of the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv artery. They concentrated all their resources in order to cut it, and they achieved their object. From then until the beginning of the first truce in June, Jerusalem was under siege. The only traffic to get through were a few jeeps that cut across country under cover of darkness with troop reinforcements, a few weapons and some ammunition. Skeleton contact was also maintained through the hazardous daily flights of an Auster plane that flipped from Tel Aviv to a scratch landing field in Jerusalem.

With the outbreak of fighting on May 15, with Haganah Jerusalem forces cut off from the main coastal base by the Arab occupation of the Latrun-Bab el Wad stretch of road, Israeli sappers aided by Jerusalemites above military age began to hew a rough track out of the Judean hills south of Latrun, to link the coast with Jerusalem. It was completed under enemy fire within three and a half weeks. By the time the first truce opened the Israel Army was independent of Arab Legion patronage and U.N. benevolence it had its own road to Jerusalem.

During that month Jerusalem suffered grimly. The one hundred thousand Jews in the city were subjected to daily shelling from Arab Legion 25 pounders and Egyptian artillery. From positions close to the Israeli lines—and some Arab positions were as close as ten yards—hand grenades and mortar shells were flung into Jewish houses and streets. The Jews had no artillery pieces. Their heaviest weapon was a locally manufactured 6 mortar, known as the Davidka, which was used with devastating effect to shatter enemy houses and morale. It served to induce in the enemy the belief that Jerusalem was powerfully armed. It served also to raise Jewish morale.

The Jews in Jerusalem did their utmost to live as usual. Water was the great problem. The Arab Legion was in control of the main pumping station at Latrun and had cut off supplies. Thanks to the foresight and disciplinary strength of the Jerusalem Emergency Committee, all private water tanks in the

city had been inventoried, filled and sealed months before, and taken over by the committee. Water henceforth like all other necessities was vigorously rationed to just enough to stave off thirst and remove dirt. There was none for sanitation. The water was distributed by daily water carriers who provided one of the bravest sights in the city, as they appeared in the streets with clockwork regularity whether there was shelling or not. The women who lined up near the water points were among the hardest hit, for not a day went by without high casualties among them. Yet none flinched, though death stalked the streets every moment. And despite all the destruction flung into the city, the Arabs were not allowed to advance an inch.

The weak spot was the Old City. The Jews here were surrounded by Arabs and Arab Legion forces. Yet they held out for weeks. They were mostly old folk and families, stiffened by a small number of Haganah, who had fought their way through the Old City to join the Jewish civilians and help in their resistance. Theirs is a glorious story. Out numbered fifty to one, with almost no weapons beyond a few hand grenades, 2 mortars, a couple of machine guns, a few rifles and revolvers, they were systematically driven back from house to house by the crushing weight of all that the Arabs could muster. Twenty-seven Jewish synagogues in this crowded Jewish quarter were destroyed- Holy Places which excited no world concern. On May 28, with no food left in the larder and no ammunition the Jews of the Old City surrendered.

Throughout the first truce, throughout the ten days of fighting in July, throughout the second truce, and right up to November 30<sup>th</sup>, Jewish Jerusalem was shelled and machine-gunned every night. But the Jews of Jerusalem shrugged this off as merely a slight nuisance, for it was still paradise compared to the grim days of the siege, when there was no water for washing or sanitation and only a little to drink, when there was no bread, when belts were tight and cheeks sallow, and when they were cut off from the rest of the country. For with the opening of the "Burma" Road, Jerusalem became part of Israel and there was never any moment thereafter when contact was cut.

## THE FIRST KNESSET

As soon as the fighting was over, Israel proceeded to establish its State Institutions. The main task was the election of a legislative body to replace the Provisional Council of State which owing to circumstances prevailing at that time, had not been elected but was a representative body containing members of all parties and groups, according to their strength at the 21<sup>st</sup> Zionist Congress. A few groups not represented at the Congress were allotted one seat each.

The elections were by secret ballot. Women had the right to vote. The people's response was beyond all expectations. Participation was almost 100%. The elections passed in an orderly manner without any incidents. They proved the political maturity of the people of Israel.

The results of the elections for the Constituent Assembly, held on 25<sup>th</sup> January, 1949, were as follows:

**MAPAI:** The Israel Labor Party, whose program is roughly comparable to that of the British Labor Party: 46 seats.

**MAPAM:** United Workers' Party, a combination of the former left-wing group Hashomer Hatzair with a group which had seceded from Mapai and a third group known as the Left Poalei Zion. The Mapam policy is more extreme-socialist than Mapai's in domestic affairs, while in external policy the party seeks a closer alliance with the Soviet Bloc: 19 seats.

**HAHAZITH HADATITH:** The United Religious Party; a combination of the Mizrahi (Zionist Orthodox Party), and the Agudath Israel (non-Zionist Orthodox Party). Both these parties have labor wings, so that they represent a coalition of 4 parties: 16 seats.

**HERUT:** Freedom Party, formed by members of the now dissolved Irgun Zvai Leumi and elected on a maximalist policy in external affairs combined with an economic program of freedom for private enterprise: 14 seats.

**ZIONIM KLALIIM:** General Zionists, right wing group of the former center party: 7 seats.

**PROGRESSIVIM:** Progressives, a group which had seceded from the General Zionist Party and which supports the Government though not subscribing to all its Socialist policies: 5 seats.

**SEPHARDIM:** Representing the oriental communities of Israel, but in general supporting the Government though maintaining that the separate interests of oriental Jews must be catered for: 4 seats.

**COMMUNISTS:** One member of this group afterwards seceded and set up a party of Israel Communists, but later entered Mapam: 4 seats.

**LOHAMIM:** Fighters, led by Friedman Yellin, former leader of the Stern Group, now dissolved: 1 seat.

**WIZO:** (Women's International Zionist Organization) elected on a program demanding greater participation of women in the Government, and protection of women's rights: 1 seat.

**TEYMANIM:** Yemenites, representing the group of Jews who have emigrated from Southern Arabia: 1 seat.

The Assembly was opened in Jerusalem on 12<sup>th</sup> February, 1949, by Dr. Chaim Weizmann in his capacity of President of the State Council.

Although the settings in Jerusalem were regarded as formal, the Assembly very soon settled down to the working job of a Parliament. After the President's inaugural address, a Transitional Period Law was adopted which laid down the authority of the President of the State, the method of his election (by secret

ballot), his ceremonial duties and his functions in relation to the appointment of the Government. At the same time it was decided that the Constituent Assembly should be known as the Knesset.\*

Mr. Joseph Sprinzak, of the Mapai party, a veteran labor leader and Secretary-General of the Histadrut, was elected Speaker and Mr. N. Mir of Mapam and Dr. J. Burg of the United Religious Party became his two deputies.

Dr. Chaim Weizmann was elected first President of the State of Israel, his term of office being laid down as the duration of the First Knesset and the first three months of the following Assembly.

The Transitional Period Law provides that among these other functions the President must consult representatives of the various Parliamentary parties and then call upon one of the members of the Knesset to form a Government. Mr. David Ben Gurion, acting Prime Minister and leader of the largest party (Mapai), formed the Government as follows:\*\*

**Prime Minister and Minister of Defence**

David Ben Gurion                      Mapai

**Foreign Affairs**

Moshe Sharett                         Mapai

**Finance**

Eliezer Kaplan                         Mapai

**Communications**

David Remez                            Mapai

**Labor and Social Insurance**

Golda Myerson                         Mapai

**Education**

Zalman Shazar                         Mapai

**Supply and Rationing**

Dr. Dov Joseph                         Mapai

**Justice**

Dr. P. Rosenblueth                    Progressive

**Religions**

Rabbi J.L. Fishman                    United Religious Party

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\* Knesset. Hebrew for assembly, community, congregation. The Hebrew name of the Great Assembly, Ecclesia or Synagoga Magna, a supreme authority established under Ezra and Nehemiah.

\*\* On 1<sup>st</sup> November, 1950, Mr. P. Lubianiker entered the Government as Minister of Agriculture, and Mr. I. Geri was appointed Minister of Trade and Industry. Mr. Z. Shazar resigned, Mr. D. Remez became Minister of Education and Dr. D. Joseph became Minister of Transport. The Ministry of Supply and Rationing was abolished.



**Social Welfare**

Rebbi I.M. Levin                      United Religious Party

**Interior and Immigration**

Moshe Shapiro                      United Religious Party

**Police**

Bechor Shitreet                      Sephardim

The vote of confidence in the Government showed the line-up of the parties in the Knesset.

**For the Government:**

Mapai	46
United Religious	16
Progressives	5
Sephardim	4
Wizo	1
Yemenites	1
Nazareth Democrats (Arab list associated with Mapai)	2
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	75

**Opposition:**

Mapam	19
Herut	14
General Zionists	7
Communists	4
Fighters	1
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	45

The Knesset has a permanent staff of over sixty. There is a special corps of uniformed ushers and the premises are guarded by a detachment of police. The recording of the debates represents a special achievement, since Hebrew stenography is a comparative innovation, and the Knesset's team of stenographers were specially trained for the task. The debates are reported verbatim and published weekly in a volume known as "Divrei Haknesset."

Nine permanent committees were formed

**COMMITTEE OF THE KNESSET:**

Standing orders for the Assembly. Regulations of the Assembly. Constitution of Committees, permanent and special. Reference of matters to appropriate committees. Defining salary rights of members. Conduct of member, etc.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE:**

Budget. Taxation. Customs. Loans. Currency. Excise. Income and Expenditure of the State. State property and trusteeship.

**ECONOMIC COMMITTEE:**

Trade and Industry. Supply. Agriculture. Transport. Cooperative Societies. Economic Program.

**HOME AFFAIRS:**

Local Government and Police. Immigration. Press and Information. Citizenship, etc.

**FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECURITY:**

Functions not defined.

**EDUCATION AND CULTURE:**

Education, Culture. Science, Art. Radio. Cinema. Physical Culture.

**CONSTITUTION, LAW AND JUSTICE:**

Laws of the State. Fundamental Laws. Laws and the administration of the law.

**PUBLIC SERVICES:**

Health. Social Services, War victims.

**LABOR:**

Labor matters. Public Works. Housing. Rehabilitation of Soldiers (\*including soldiers, families and war disabled). Social Security.

The Knesset, young as it is, has already come up against the conflict which remains unresolved in older and more experienced democracies, namely the division between the functions of the Executive and the Legislature. At the moment the Knesset is conducted on the basis of Standing Orders adopted hurriedly for the conduct of the Provisional State Council. At the last meeting of the Provisional State Council a short act was adopted which laid down that "the Constituent Assembly shall be conducted according to the procedure of the State Council with the necessary changes according to the matter under discussion, so long as it is not decided to conduct it in any other way."

The members of the Knesset have rapidly accustomed themselves to Parliamentary life. The debates have reached a high standard and the respect for the Chair is commendable. The Parliament, however, suffers from the fact that its procedure was designed for a much smaller gathering, garnered from the experience of Congresses and other debating assemblies rather than from enacting bodies.

**TWO YEARS OF THE KNESSET B 1949/1950**

The Provisional Council of State which preceded the Knesset Harishona had envisaged the latter as a Constituent Assembly whose main task was to be the promulgation of a Constitution. The Parliament, however, has sovereign rights with regard to all its decisions and did not take into consideration the wishes of its predecessor. After prolonged negotiations by the Committee concerned, and following a long debate in plenary session, the Knesset decide, on June 13<sup>th</sup>, 1950, not to accept a rigid Constitution but instead to approve a number of fundamental laws which, in the course of time, could be forged into a Constitution. Only half of the Members present voted in favor of their proposal, but the vote obtained was sufficient, for 12% of the Members abstained from voting and only 38% voted against the proposal.

The procedure of the Knesset has been made as simple as possible. Generally the Minister within whose province the matter falls has to draft an introduce Bills in the Knesset. During the first reading the bill is debated and then referred to the competent Committee. The chairman of the Committee submits the Bill for a second reading to the Plenum. Each separate vote which obtains a minority at the Committee is again put to the vote in the Plenum. After all the clauses of the Bills in its revised form have been thoroughly discussed and put to the vote in the course of the second reading, the third reading follows,

usually immediately, and the complete Bill with its corrections is then put to the final vote. The law is then published in the Official Gazette (“Reshumoth”), coming into force upon publication.

It is in the Committees that all the practical work is done. The Plenary Sessions of the Knesset take up an average of twenty hours per week as compared, for example, to the British Parliament which meets for an average of 30 hours per week. The work done by the Committees, on the other hand, takes up considerably more time than is the case with their British counterparts.

Laws are passed by a simple majority of votes, and only members actually present have the right to vote. A quorum exists irrespective of the number of Members present. The agenda of the Knesset is fixed by its presidium, the Speaker and his two deputies. In this respect, both the Government and the Knesset Committee have the right to make proposals. The fact that every Member of the Knesset is also a member of two committees guarantees a certain unity of work. Members of the Finance Committee, for example, also serve on other committees which deal with economic matters.

Every Member has the right to put forward proposals as regards the agenda and to table questions. These are read by the competent Minister, who gives his reply to the question at the same time.

Apart from passing laws the Knesset is also the forum of public opinion. Full use of this is made not only by the Opposition but also by the Government and the parties of the Coalitions.

## ORGANIC LAWS

A number of organic laws which may eventually be incorporated in the Constitution were passed during the first two years.

**The law for Compulsory Education** applies to all children, boys and girls, Jews and non-Jews. It was passed on November 12<sup>th</sup>, 1949, after a long and very difficult debate. The law provides for education free of charge but is only gradually being put into practice. During the school term of 1949/1950, compulsory education applied only to children aged 6-11 years, in 1950/1951 it will include all children from the age of 5-12, and in 1951/1952 it will be extended to include all those aged 5-13. The practical realization of this law was held up by the shortage of schools and teachers. During the first year alone the number of children attending school rose from 86,000 to 110,000, and accommodation had to be created an additional difficulty was the necessity of adapting the schools to the different ideological trends. There are different schools for religious, socialist and general education, all of which have to be kept up in accordance with the decision of the Knesset, which was reached only after a long and bitter fight.

**The Conscription Law** lays down that the entire youth of the country, male and female alike, must undergo two years of compulsory military service and training. When introducing this law Mr. Ben Gurion, in his capacity as Defense Minister, spoke of the important part played by the Armed Forces, especially in a State which is surrounded by potential enemies, and whose population consists mainly of new immigrants. The Armed Forces are organized on a purely non-political basis and thus serve to unite the population. They can be called the “melting pot of the nation.”

The youth of the country not only receives military training in the Armed Forces but is also given agricultural training. Those wishing to settle on the land after completion of their military service can do so by forming an ex-soldiers’ group. Originally girls had to undergo only 12 months of military training.

ON February 8<sup>th</sup>, 1940, however, i.e. 5 months after the original law had been passed, the Knesset decided to extend the military service of girls as well to 2 years, after the Defense Minister had introduced a proposal to the effect. Marriage releases a woman from military service; in the case of a man it secures only a postponement of one year.

**The Law of the Return**, which was passed in June 1950, gives every Jew the right to immigrate into Israel and to settle there permanently. The only exception made is in the case of an immigrant who might become a danger to the population because of the state of his health or because of his criminality. Together with this law the question of a Citizenship Law was considered, which would grant citizenship to every resident of the State as well as to new immigrants. Such a law was introduced but had not yet been passed at the end of the second Knesset session.

**The Abolition of Capital Punishment.** This bill has so far passed its first reading and will apply to all crimes except treason and genocide.

**The Ratification of the UN Genocide Charter and the penal law in respect of the prosecution of genocide** is also one of the fundamental laws of the State of Israel.

**Labor Legislation** was introduced towards the end of the Second Session, but will be passed only in the course of the Third Session. It provides for a working week of 47 hours and makes the observance of a day of rest obligatory, i.e. the Sabbath for Jews, Friday for Moslems and Sunday for Christians.

## VOTES OF CONFIDENCE

The Government relies in the Knesset chiefly on the parties of the Coalition, i.e. Mapai, Religious Front, Sephardim, and Progressives. In the case of a vote of confidence, however, the Government often had the support of other parties as well, depending on the matter for which a vote of confidence or non-confidence is sought. The Following issues which were put to a vote of confidence will serve to illustrate this:

**Economic Questions:** When the Hundred Million Dollar Loan of the American Import and Export Bank was put to vote, the Government obtained 85 votes in its favor with only the three Communist Members voting against it. Mapam and the "Fighters" abstained, with 19 votes.

The Labor Plan submitted by the Minister of Labor, Mrs. Golda Meyerson, was passed on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 1949, by 40 votes, the opposition vote not being counted.

The proposal to extend rationing to textiles and shoes was passed on August 8<sup>th</sup>, 1950, by 57 against 36 votes.

**Voting on matters of Foreign Policy** has also shown that the Government can count on a sufficient majority in the Knesset.

On January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1950, the Foreign Minister and the Prime Minister outlined the Foreign Policy of the government. These statements were approved by the Knesset by 63 against 28 votes.

**The Jerusalem Declaration** of January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1950, received 60 votes, only the two Communist Members voting against it.

The statement of the Foreign Minister with regard to the recognition of the existing frontiers (except for the Old City of Jerusalem) was accepted with 53 votes, whilst the two counter-proposals registered only 16 and 2 votes respectively.

At the beginning of July 1950, the Foreign Minister submitted a statement outlining the attitude of the Government to the war in Korea. This statement was accepted by 68 to 20 votes.

The strength of the Coalition as against the Opposition can best be tested through matters relating to the Budget. In every Parliament, Party discipline is strictly imposed whenever the Budget is put to vote. The first Ordinary Budget was approved on September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1949, by 60 to 25 votes. The three months Interim Budget was passed on March 28<sup>th</sup>, 1950, by 47 to 27 votes, and the second Ordinary Budget was approved on June 29<sup>th</sup>, 1950 by 44 to 25 votes.

### THREE BUDGETS

The Finance Minister introduces the first proposal in the Plenum. In his introductory speech, the Finance Minister reviews the economic situation of the State and outlines the fiscal and taxation policy. A very extensive General Debate usually follows. The proposal is then referred to the Finance Committee where it is prepared for the Second Reading.

The budget consists of three parts, which are entirely independent of each other. The Ordinary Budget covers the regular State expenditures out of current revenues. The task of the Development Budget is to develop the country and its economy and to place the mass of immigrants on a productive footing. This Budget should actually be used solely for productive projects from which high returns can be expected. Unfortunately, however, it was found necessary to use some of the funds for relief work. The revenue of this Budget is derived from Loans and additional Bank Credits, which are covered by land bonds. The issue of additional banknotes covered by land bonds was legalized on June 13<sup>th</sup>, 1949. To justify this action, the Finance Minister explained that unless the continuous increase of the population is accompanied by an increase **pari passu** in the circulation of banknotes, deflation and throttling of the economy would be unavoidable. As against an increase of 30% in the population the circulation of banknotes had risen only by 21%. Provided the increase in the circulation of banknotes goes hand in hand with an increased production, the danger of inflation is non-existent. The Development Budget was voted upon a separate Budget.

The third part of the State Budget is the Defense Budget. This is dealt with the decided on by the Finance Committee in secret session. Part of the Defense Budget is covered by the Ordinary Budget, as far as the means are available. The fact that the contribution from the Ordinary Budget was higher during the second year than it had been during the preceding one, reflects well on the fiscal stability as a whole. The larger part of the Defense Budget, however, is covered by long-term loans and an increased circulation of banknotes. This must naturally create a certain tendency towards inflation.

So far it has not been possible to get the Budgets prepared and passed in time for beginning of the Fiscal Year. It was therefore necessary to introduce provisional Budgets, causing additional work of the Knesset and affecting the routine work of the government offices. Thus, a three months interim budget was passed on April 25<sup>th</sup>, 1949, another such Budget covering one month was passed on June 27<sup>th</sup>, 1949, and on July 27<sup>th</sup>, 1949, a partial Budget was introduced and passed to cover the month of August. Only on August

30<sup>th</sup>, 1949, was the first Budget, April 1949-March 1950 passed, amounting to IL40,178,000. This situation was improved during the second year, when only one Interim Budget had to be introduced and was passed on March 28<sup>th</sup>, 1950. The second Ordinary Budget, which provided IL59,465,000 for the year April 1950 to March 1951, was passed on June 29<sup>th</sup>, 1950. The Development Budget for the current fiscal year, amounting to IL65,000,000 was passed on August 9, 1950.

## ECONOMIC LAWS

A planned economy aiming at control of all vital goods imposes a heavy task on the State and its legislative bodies. The limited resources of foreign currency have to be carefully husbanded. Besides, laws for the encouragement of production and capital investment, and laws regulating the Supply and Control System are dealt with.

On April 26<sup>th</sup>, 1949, the Minister of Supply and Rationing submitted to the Knesset a comprehensive rationing plan. This called for the creation of reserves of essential goods, for the control of imports and prices of goods and services, and for the introduction of rationing. It was approved by the Knesset after a twelve-hour debate.

In June 1949, a law was passed which made the declaration of all foreign currency accounts obligatory.

A law approved on July 27<sup>th</sup>, 1949, legalized the loans granted to citrus planters. One loan was given at the rate of IL40 per dunam for 12 years, and the second one at a rate of IL 20 dunam for 5 years.

The law for the **Encouragement of Capital Investments** was passed for reading on December 26<sup>th</sup>, 1949, after considerable and thorough preparation on the part of the Committees. It is hoped that this law will help to attract foreign capital and encourage its investment in productive enterprises. Prior to the final approval of this law, an Investment Center was established as provided in the law. It is the task of this Center to decide which productive enterprises should be proclaimed as "approved enterprises," and then to assist them in all preparations connected with their foundation and expansion. During the same month it was also decided to create a Development Center, which was given far-reaching powers for placing all undeveloped areas on a productive footing.

In January 1950, the Minister for Supply and Rationing introduced the law for the creation of a subsidies fund. Part of the deductions from the Cost of Living allowances paid to workers and employees is paid into this fund. Such deductions are made when the C.o.l. index goes down, as happened in much of 1949 and part of 1950.

This C.o.l. index was sharply criticized in the Knesset Debate, and doubts were expressed as to its correctness. The Knesset decided, therefore, to appoint a special Committee whose task it is to check the living expenses of 500 families during one year. In this way it is hoped that a new and more exact Index will be established. Each point in the present Index equals just over 100 Pruta. On the basis of the lower C.o.l. Index, all wages and salaries were twice reduced at intervals of 3 months.

Whenever questions relating to Supply and Rationing were raised strong criticism was expressed, and not only by Members of the Opposition. This criticism reached its climax in March and July 1950. The first occasion was the debate on the so-called "Frigidare Raids," when searches for Black Market goods were made in private houses. The criticism was directed in particular against the sweeping powers granted to

control inspectors. The second occasion arose when Rationing was extended to cover textiles and leather goods.

Other items of economic legislation discussed were: the administration of German-owned property in the country, which is being used in partial compensation of the claims of Israeli citizens against Germany; the grant of credits to farmers whose crops had been damaged by frost; loans to Municipalities; the concession granted to the Palestine Potash Co. for the exploitation of the natural resources of the Dead Sea; the granting of import licenses in respect of imports of essential goods without payment, this having previously been suspended.

The Knesset authorized the Government to guarantee loans obtained by Municipalities and Local Authorities as well as by Public and private companies, provided these guarantees did not exceed 10% of the Ordinary Budget. Guarantees in respect of larger loans require the special approval of the Parliamentary Finance Commission.

On August 10<sup>th</sup>, 1950, the Knesset decided to authorize the issue of a IL12,000,000 National Loan.

## **TAXATION LAWS**

The fundamental principles which had to be clarified required long and repeated discussions, since even recognized principles have to give way to compromises because of small deviations. Differences of opinion also existed with regard to the practical implementation of the fundamental laws.

The problems which were debated at length both in the Plenum and in the Committees were:

- (a) The practical application of equal taxation of husband and wife who are both earners.
- (b) How to draw the limit on Income Tax and at the same time to satisfy the Exchequer whose aim it is to derive much of its revenues from incomes and direct taxation.

The Income Tax law and the law on the taxation of companies' profits were approved in May 1949. A month later additional taxation of Municipal property was enacted and the upper limit of the Business Tax was raised from IL120 to IL 250. ON August 25th, 1949, it was decided to raise the Companies Tax from 40% to 50% and the Entertainment Tax was graduated up to a maximum of 100% in the case of tickets costing more than IL 1.-. The tax on Real Estate Transfers was fixed at 5%. IN addition to this, a Betterment Tax was introduced in respect of real estate sales. This tax amounts 50-40% of the profit, i.e., on the difference between purchase and sales price. A new form of taxation was introduced by the levying of Death Duties which range from 4-70%. The highest rate applies to estates exceeding IL 250,000, whose beneficiaries are not direct relations of the deceased. The Absorption Tax, which is being collected together with the Income Tax was extended for an additional year.

On February 21st, 1950, a Capital Levy of 12% was introduced on all real estate property. A compulsory mutual insurance ("Arnona") was authorized on the first reading by 85 to 13 votes. This insurance is intended to cover War Damages. The War Tax was increased from 10 to 25%.

## GOVERNMENT STATEMENTS

**Internal Policy** was reflected not so much in the laws passed by the Knesset as in the statements made by the Government through the respective Ministers, and the debates which usually followed such statements. This applies even more in the case of foreign policy, which manifested itself not in laws but in statements, debates and votes.

The general policy of the Government was outlined by the Prime Minister whenever occasion called for it. The crucial points of his Statement on April 20<sup>th</sup>, 1949, were: security, mass immigration and the maintenance of the living standard of the population. Opening the Second Session of the Knesset on November 7<sup>th</sup>, 1949, Mr. Ben Gurion stressed the following three points: Mass immigration the necessity of attracting foreign capital and afforestation. On May 31<sup>st</sup>, 1950, the Prime Minister made a statement welcoming the readiness of the Western Powers to supply arms to Israel.

On June 15<sup>th</sup>, 1949, the Foreign Minister, Mr. Moshe Sharett reported on the admission of Israel to the UN, the negotiations at the Lausanne Conference regarding the refugee problem and the problem of Jerusalem. He stated inter alia: "We want peace but not at any price." In the speech with which he concluded the debate, the Foreign Minister stressed one unconditional demand of Israel's Foreign Policy, namely the right of Jews in all countries, who wish to immigrate to Israel, to leave their present domicile even if it is in one of the Eastern European countries.

On August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1949, the Foreign Minister outlined that attitude of the Government in connection with the Arab refugee problem as follows: The refugees must be settled in Arab countries, and Israel is prepared to contribute to the solution of this problem, but no more. 25,000 refugees have already returned to Israel. On December 28<sup>th</sup>, 1949, Mr. Sharett reported on negotiations with King Abdullah of Jordan, which seemed promising at the time. On January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1950, he made a statement relating to the problem of Jerusalem in the light of the negotiations at Lake Success. He declared that Israel herself has determined the fate of its Capital. Following a Reuter report to the effect that Israel had concluded a non-aggression Pact with Transjordan, Mr. Sharett made a statement on March 14<sup>th</sup>, 1950, in which he strongly denied the existence of any such agreement. On May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1950, the Foreign Minister made a statement on the annexation by Transjordan of the Samaria Triangle. In concluding the ensuing debate, the Foreign Minister made it very clear that Israel continues to recognize the frontiers determined by the Armistice, except for the Jewish Quarter in the Old City of Jerusalem. To this Israel cannot give up its claim, if for no other reason than the fact that the Wailing Wall is situated in that part of Jerusalem.

On May 24<sup>th</sup>, 1949, the Minister of the Interior, Mr. Shapiro, reported on the state of health in the country. He was able to say that there had been no epidemics in Israel and that a further 1,125 hospital beds had been added to those previously available. In reply to a question tabled on June 27, 1949, he gave a further report on the development of hospital organization.

On July 11<sup>th</sup>, 1949, the Minister of Supply and Rationing, Mr. Dov Joseph, gave the Knesset a report on the lowering of prices on the basis of the reduction of the C.o.I. Index. ON June 29<sup>th</sup>, 1950, he announced a new Rationing Law in respect of textiles and leather goods; and on that occasion he reviewed the whole question of supply.

The Minister of Labor, Mrs. Goda Meyerson, reported on May 24<sup>th</sup>, 1949, regarding the plan of the Government to relieve unemployment. Her building program provided for 30,000 housing units and it was estimated that 8,000 - 14,000 new immigrants would find employment by its implementation.



On August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1949, Mrs. Golda Meyerson introduced a new plan which would provide 2 million working days and bring further relief to unemployment. At that time, approximately 10,000 people were entirely unemployed and 20,000 had only temporary employment.

A report on the development of the Transport and Postal Services was given by the Minister of Transport, Mr. David Remez, on December 6<sup>th</sup>, 1949.

## INTERNAL POLICY

Among the many problems of internal policy raised in the Knesset by debates, Minister's statements or resolutions, the following were of special importance: Justification of actions taken by the Police against marauders and the expulsion of illegal Arab infiltrators as well as the whole problem of the Arab population; the strike of the hospital nurses who demanded better working conditions; the regulation on dental practitioners and the admission of additional dentists; matters connected with the Black Market, Sabbath Observance and Abolishment of Corporal Punishment.

Other matters raised frequently were those connected with municipal administration such as the approaching Municipal elections, the incorporation of Jaffa into the Municipality of Tel-Aviv, creating one town known as Tel-Aviv-Jaffa.

The Knesset also dealt with the entire police and prison system, the conduct of the Police towards demonstrators, etc.

Among **Social Laws** passed, special mention must be made of the law prohibiting marriage of girls under the age of seventeen. This law was passed on June 13<sup>th</sup>, 1950.

**Criminal Law:** The Bill to abolish Capital Punishment (except in cases of treason or genocide) has passed its first Reading. Another law authorized the prosecution of Nazi criminals. Traffic laws have been intensified so as to prevent road accidents.

With regard to **Government Administration**, the following matters had to be dealt with:

The transfer of Civil Servants of the Mandatory into the service of the State of Israel was regulated by a law passed on April 13<sup>th</sup>, 1949. As early as March 1949, negotiations had begun with a view to creating a State Comptroller's Office which was, however, established only at a much later date. This office was given far-reaching powers to examine the activities of all government offices and to suggest means by which incompetence would be eradicated.

The law regarding Municipal elections was passed on July 27<sup>th</sup>, 1949 and regulated the whole question of voting. All citizens from the age of 18 have the right to vote, and from the age of 20 onwards they are also eligible for election provided they have lived in the respective town for a minimum of 6 months. On January 17<sup>th</sup>, 1950, it was also decided that country-wide Municipal elections should be held before the end of the year, on the same day throughout the country.

The **Firearms Ordinance**, passed on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1949, gives the State the exclusive right to import and export arms. The manufacture of arms requires a special license by the government. Firearms for hunting, however, may be manufactured by private enterprise and may be freely sold on the Home Market as well as abroad, subject to an official license.

On March 8<sup>th</sup>, 1950, it was decided to appoint a commission to administer Enemy Property in place of the previous Custodian.

On May 11<sup>th</sup>, 1950, the Prime Minister, David Ben Gurion, announced the appointment of a Coordination Committee which would put the work of the Government and the Jewish Agency on a footing of mutual cooperation. A seat on this committee, which meets regularly every week, was also given to the Jewish National Fund.

On May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1950, the Knesset discussed the clashes which had occurred between unorganized workers from the immigrant camp in Rosh Haayin and pickets of the Petah Tikva Labor Exchange. During the ensuing debate the whole problem of the absorption of immigrants was reviewed.

On May 29<sup>th</sup>, 1950, the Rents Restriction Law was given its first reading.

## **SOLDIERS' REHABILITATION LAWS**

A number of laws were passed with the aim of easing the lot of active and demobilized soldiers, as regards both their economic rehabilitation and the care of their families. Thus on April 1949, the Knesset decided to grant ex-soldiers priority in connection with reinstatement in their previous places of employment. It also granted them special Labor protection, invalid care and help as regards places of accommodation. In the course of the negotiations held prior to the passing of this law, Menachem Beigin, Nathan Yellin-Mor and Dr. Serach Wahrhaftig submitted proposals on April 13<sup>th</sup>, 1949, whereby members of the Underground Movements Irgun Zvai Leumi and Lohmei Herut Israel (both groups having been dissolved since the creation of the State) should enjoy the same privileges as ex-soldiers of the regular Army. These proposals were, however, defeated at the time.

Other laws passed during the two years in respect of soldiers were: The Soldiers' Rents Restriction Ordinance, laws relating to Military Jurisdiction and the welfare of surviving dependents, as well as the care of soldiers' cemeteries.

A Security Law, passed on November 29<sup>th</sup>, 1949, made the upkeep of Air Raid Shelters in private dwelling houses obligatory.

## **EMERGENCY REGULATIONS**

It was not always possible to draft permanent laws in respect of security matters. In many instances, therefore, the validity of existing Emergency Regulations was extended. This applied not only to matters of military importance but also to civil and economic problems. Thus the following items were covered by Emergency Regulations only: Military Jurisdiction, Municipal Taxes, the legal prosecution of soldiers who had broken any of the traffic regulations, the confiscation of flats, real estate and vehicles, security zones at the frontiers, administration of ownerless properties, prosecution in respect of profiteering, etc.

One point in connection with these Emergency Regulations was particularly debated, and that was the length of their validity and the date on which they should be replaced by permanent laws.

## THE KNESSET ITSELF

Among the "House" regulations which were passed in respect of the Knesset itself, the following deserve special mention: the Recess law fixing the 1949 Summer Recess as from September 13<sup>th</sup> to November 1<sup>st</sup>, the Passover Recess from March 29<sup>th</sup> to May 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 1950 Summer Recess from August 10<sup>th</sup> to October 16<sup>th</sup>.

The Powers and Constitution to be granted to Permanent Parliamentary Commissions were determined in March 1949.

Problems relating to Knesset status were tabled on many occasions. Some of these problems were: the procedure of determining the agenda; the way in which agenda proposals and interpellations should be dealt with, etc.

The Boundary Law was passed on November 30<sup>th</sup>, 1949. On the other hand, no proper law yet exists in respect of the immunity of Knesset Members. The question of the military Service of Knesset Members was put on the agenda but has not been finally settled so far. On May 30<sup>th</sup>, 1949, the Knesset decided that neither the publications of the Protocol nor speeches delivered by Members in the House are subject to military censorship. The Knesset Presidium will itself decide whether certain passages of speeches should be eliminated from the published protocol.

The question of the salaries to be paid to Knesset Members was settled on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1949. The basic salary is IL75 per month, to which are added representation expenses, travel expenses and family allowances.

As part of the struggle for the International Status of Jerusalem the Knesset decided, in December 1949, to move its seat to Jerusalem. Up to that time the Knesset had met in Tel-Aviv except for the first few meetings.

On December 5<sup>th</sup>, 1949, Ben Gurion delivered a solemn declaration of alliance with Jerusalem, and the Knesset decided to move to the Capital. The session on December 26<sup>th</sup>, following was held in Jerusalem in the building of the National Institutions, where the main meeting hall as well as adjacent rooms had been placed at its disposal. It took three months before a suitable building could be found for the Knesset. Since March 1950, the Israeli Parliament meets in the "Froumine" House, which will remain its meeting place until the erection of a more fitting building.

On November 28<sup>th</sup>, 1949, the Minister of Justice was appointed the Keeper of the Seal. Justices of the Supreme Court are appointed with the approval of the Knesset.

Special solemn sessions of the Knesset were held on: the 5<sup>th</sup> Iyyar (Independence Day), on the occasion of the transfer of Dr. Theodore Herzl's remains from Vienna to Jerusalem and on February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1950, the first anniversary of the Knesset.

On July 25<sup>th</sup>, 1950, the Knesset gave an official reception in honor of Israeli Ambassadors abroad, who had been called to Israel for a special conference on Foreign Policy matters.

The Speaker, Mr. Joseph Sprinzak, was three times appointed Acting President when the President, Dr. Chaim Weizmann, went abroad. These appointments were approved each time by special laws, which were passed on April 6<sup>th</sup>, 1949, on July 18<sup>th</sup>, 1949, and in Summer 1950. The close relationship between

World Jewry and the Knesset was best proved during the visit of the Speaker, Mr. Sprinzak, to South America. Mr. Sprinzak visited Argentine and Uruguay, and was received with the greatest honors by the local Jewish communities as well as by the State Authorities.

Attendance at the two inter-parliamentary Congresses which assembled in Stockholm in 1949, and Dublin in 1950, established close ties with the parliamentary world. In July 1950, a Delegation of the Knesset visited London at the invitation of the British Government.

In order to make the workings of the Knesset better known, Mr. Asher Zidon has published a book of 240 pages entitled "The Knesset," describing in a popular fashion the history, the working and the achievements of this institution.

A full record of the proceedings in the Knesset is published weekly and sold in bookstores. During one year, these proceedings filled two volumes comprising more than 1700 pages.

Country	1936	1938	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949
Europe												
Austria	592	2,526	--	--	--	--	--	8	238	123	446	1,620
Belgium	224	50	120	1	8	7	92	404	91	98	162	465
Bulgaria	177	21	40	265	59	117	1,482	465	550	37	15,676	20,008
Czechoslovakia	652	424	493	12	53	76	458	873	1,622	2,064	2,558	15,689
Danzig	66	108	13	2	5	--	9	268	a	---	--	--
Denmark	22	5	2	--	--	--	--	2	4	b	b	b
Estonia	20	10	4	1	--	--	--	1	1	c	c	c
Finland	4	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	B	B	--
France	621	120	51	7	6	17	401	457	183	56	678	1,654
Germany	8,265	4,309	792	91	129	91	455	2,026	727	510	1,585	5,333
Great Britain	751	1,388	560	225	164	558	889	925	2,130	18	505	758
Greece	407	46	17	58	15	14	760	248	884	122	191	1,364
Hungary	170	72	107	557	30	254	374	644	1,523	2,389	4,266	6,844
Italy	319	243	175	--	5	3	45	602	130	110	671	501
Latvia	507	130	70	6	6	7	9	23	47	39c	71c	91
Lithuania	785	160	209	707	10	6	2	57	252	293	521	567
Netherlands	330	71	115	4	6	1	249	96	248	47	203	367
Norway	1	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	3	B	B	B
Poland	11,602	3,279	889	357	378	1,991	757	2,288	6,041	7,652	32,245	47,343
Portugal	9	--	1	1	1		67	4	1	--	--	--
Romania	1,455	526	945	783	78	168	3,874	1,302	4,342	4,727	24,780	13,596
Russia	600	71	11	19	9	6	24	26	88	103	766	2,528
Spain	47	7	1	1	--	--	299	28	29	--	--	--
Sweden	5	6	5	76	--	--	--	1	4	10b	54b	120
Switzerland	167	43	48	8	7	2	--	107	14	12	26	123
Yugoslavia	128	49	61	376	3	19	223	334	82	60	4,136	2,470
Others	--	9	2	2	--	--	11	16	13	19	57	290
Asia												
Afganistan	102	53	--	--	14	--	3	14	10	29	25	446
China	40	6	3	--	--	--	1	1	4	--	--	--
Hejaz	9	--	--	--	2	--	1	1	11	--	--	--
India	16	10	14	1	8	10	23	15	20	--	--	--
Iran	334	39	8	9	20	46	404	142	9	1	68	1,778
Iraq	282	84	46	92	584	368	366	55	84	--	15	1,709
Syria /Lebanon	505	419	301	151	425	860	584	555	1,101	--	5	1,570
Transjordan	3	26	120	63	87	120	117	104	218	--	--	--
Turkey	317	39	41	135	296	2,160	1,332	314	123	26	4,388	26,295
Yemen &Aden	754	334	75	42	232	2,421	1,825	1,039	127	50	298	37,795
Others	12	2	--	--	4	7	10	11	5	1	33	1,678
Africa												
Abyssinia	--	--	11	--	--	1	1	--	16	--	4	--
Egypt	501	254	190	190	353	302	248	354	579	29	129	7,149
Morocco	8	5	--	--	--	1	30	138	24	288d	7,074d	17,924

Sudan	24	3	3	2	1	2	--	6	4	--	--	--
Tripoli	52	11	--	1	10	2	88	7	--	--	--	14,066
Tunis	2	1	--	--	--	--	3	52	11	d	d	d
South Africa	44	23	2	2	13	6	37	57	24	1	180	217
Others	12	--	8	8	11	87	230	121	110	14	1,068	90
America												
Argentina	59	7	1	--	--	--	1	--	5	--	--	711
Brazil	23	11	1	--	--	--	--	2	14	13	138	g
Canada	30	8	6	1	1	--	--	1	15	--	37	64
Mexico	13	3	--	--	--	--	--	1	--	--	--	g
U.S.A.	395	121	17	5	4	1	11	74	153	28	305	538
Others	165	70	5	--	--	--	--	1	17	--	--	--
Australia & New Zealand	20	8	--	3	--	18	1	1	9	1	12	452
Other Parts of the Br. Empire	--	28	17	5	--	--	2	--	89	546	35	-
Undefined	73	12	11	1	15	5	2	103	151	197	8,018	5,339
Total	31,671	15,263	5,611	4,270	3,052	9,754	15,800	14,384	22,181	10,702	111,429	239,141

- a. Included in Germany.
- b. Included in Sweden.
- c. Included in Latvia.
- d. Included in Morocco.
- e. Evel. 1,840 Immigrants for whom details are not available.
- f. Evel. 7,564 Immigrants for whom details are not available.
- g. Included in Argentina.



Abyssinia	--	--	11	--	--	1	1	--	16	--	4	--
Egypt	501	254	190	190	353	302	248	354	579	29	129	7,149
Morocco	8	5	--	--	--	1	30	138	24	288d	7,074d	17,924
Sudan	24	3	3	2	1	2	--	6	4	--	--	--
Tripoli	52	11	--	1	10	2	88	7	--	--	--	14,066
Tunis	2	1	--	--	--	--	3	52	11	d	d	d
South Africa	44	23	2	2	13	6	37	57	24	1	180	217
Others	12	--	8	8	11	87	230	121	110	14	1,068	90
America												
Argentina	59	7	1	--	--	--	1	--	5	--	--	711
Brazil	23	11	1	--	--	--	--	2	14	13	138	g
Canada	30	8	6	1	1	--	--	1	15	--	37	64
Mexico	13	3	--	--	--	--	--	1	--	--	--	g
U.S.A.	395	121	17	5	4	1	11	74	153	28	305	538
Others	165	70	5	--	--	--	--	1	17	--	--	--
Australia & New Zealand	20	8	--	3	--	18	1	1	9	1	12	452
Other Parts of the Br. Empire	--	28	17	5	--	--	2	--	89	546	35	-
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