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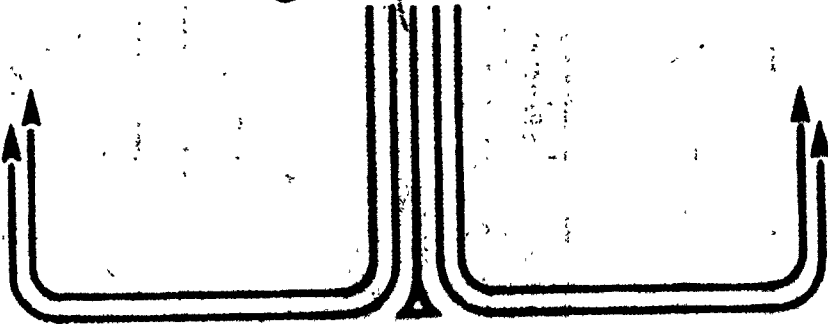
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## STUDENT REPORT

IRGUN ZVAI LEUMI: THE JEWISH  
TERRORIST ELEMENT OF THE  
ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT  
MAJOR JAMES LARRY FIELDS 85-0810  
*"insights into tomorrow"*

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**TITLE** IRGUN ZVAI LEUMI: THE JEWISH TERRORIST ELEMENT OF THE  
ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

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Submitted to the faculty in partial fulfillment of  
requirements for graduation.

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## PREFACE

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This project developed from a personal interest I have in guerrilla tactics and particularly terrorism. In recent years, terrorist activities have captured the attention of the news media causing policymakers to focus their efforts on developing contingency plans to prevent and suppress terrorism. Although terrorism can be defined as: "an act of violence directed for a sociological, psychological or political effect," (16:5-78) there is no agreed upon view of what constitutes terrorism. The recipient of a terrorist attack may regard an act to be unprovoked violence: to the initiator the act is usually justified as eliminating an obstacle to freedom. A historical example serves to illustrate this point: the Boston Tea Party initiated by the colonists in 1773 was considered by the British to be an act of terrorism. However, from the perspective of the colonists, the act was viewed as an expression of freedom. (14:92,551)

There is a broad variety of literature that examines the moral, psychological and sociological aspects of terrorism. (7:--; 10:--; 13:--; 16:--; 17:--; 18:--; 19:--) Current terrorist organizations from all over the world tend to adopt the tactics and techniques of past successful terrorist organizations. One such organization was the IRGUN ZVAI LEUMI, the Jewish terrorist element of the pre-1949 Zionist movement.

This paper will provide an historical assessment (1895-1948) of the development and effectiveness of the Irgun during the struggle for an independent Jewish state. This information will provide the reader with an understanding of the success of the Irgun in terms of its methodology and the likelihood of it serving as a model for future terrorist organizations. To understand the successful techniques of past terrorist organizations is to be forewarned and forearmed for future terrorist acts. Terrorist acts are important because they serve as multipliers of combat power by causing the opposition to commit extra resources to counter them. (13:3-5)

I would like to express my appreciation to LTCs Chris Girard and Dale Franz for their encouragement, guidance and editorial assistance. I am also grateful for the advice of several fellow course officers who took the time to carefully review this paper. Finally I am grateful for the forbearance of my family while undertaking this project. They continue to inspire me in all my work.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Major James Larry Fields [REDACTED] [REDACTED] to James R. and Faye Fields. Upon graduation from high school in 1962, he enlisted in the United States Air Force as an Air Force electronics technician. He was assigned duty with the Aerospace Defense Command (1963-65) in Florida, the Air Force Communications Systems (1965-66) in Istanbul, and the Strategic Air Command (1966-70) in Missouri, Kentucky, Louisiana, Texas, and Binh Thuy and Pleiku Air Bases in South Vietnam. He was honorably discharged from the US Air Force in January, 1970, at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio. He attended Eastern Kentucky University, graduating in 1973 with a bachelor of Science Degree in Law Enforcement, and was Commissioned into the US Army. After completing the Infantry Officers' Basic Course and a one-year assignment with the Infantry, 2Lt Fields, was assigned to the Military Intelligence Branch and attended schools at Fort Devens, Massachusetts, and Fort Huachuca, Arizona. Major Fields has been a Platoon Leader, Commander, Director of Intelligence Production, Security officer, Provost Marshall, and a Professor of Military Science. He has attended various Air Force schools, Army and Air Force Electronic Warfare/Cryptologic courses and DOD and civilian counter- and anti-terrorism courses. He is currently a resident course officer at Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell AFB, Alabama. He is married to the former Beth Kemp of Paris, Tennessee and they have three children. Major Fields will complete additional schooling at Bolling AFB after graduation from ACSC and be assigned to Human Intelligence Directorate, J2, US Pacific Command, Camp Smith, Hawaii.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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**REPORT NUMBER** 85-0810

**AUTHOR(S)** MAJOR JAMES L. FIELDS, USA

**TITLE** IRGUN ZVAI LEUMI: The Jewish Terrorist Element of the Arab-Israeli Conflict

I. Purpose: To provide an analysis of the origin, ideology and tactics of the IRGUN ZVAI LEUMI.

II. Problem: A world-wide epidemic of terrorism is in progress today. Daily, terrorists' acts are affecting the lives and security of thousands of individuals around the world. In this paper the writer will illustrate how the IRGUN ZVAI LEUMI evolved and eventually became a part of the legitimate political system of Israel. He will also argue that it has served as a model for the present day nemesis of Israel: the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Ironically, the PLO professes to represent exactly what the Irgun stood for during Israel's rise to statehood. The Irgun stood for Zionist determination to provide a means for protection, retaliation and armed opposition to all who opposed establishing an Israeli state. Finally, this paper illustrates how the PLO adopted the Irgun's tactics (as employed against the Arabs and specifically the Palestinians) during the Zionist movement's quest for establishment of the State of Israel.



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III. Analysis and Discussion: As a result of the League of Nations Mandate following World War I, the land called Palestine was placed under British Mandate. This section of land (present day Israel) became the basis of conflict for many groups competing for the right of occupation and control. Within the Zionist movement (Zionists were advocates of the establishment of a Jewish homeland) there were fundamental differences among factions as to the preferred means to insure Jewish independence. The basic disagreement among these groups was whether to achieve their aims peacefully or to resort to violence. To complicate matters, Arabs who lived in this area (Palestine) were unwilling to relinquish what they regarded as their legitimate homeland. As the British position in Palestine deteriorated, the power of the various militant Zionist factions shifted. The largest and most important of these factions was the IRGUN ZVAI LEUMI--the National Military Organization.

This paper addresses the Irgun's origin, leadership, ideology, tactics and its relationship with other militant groups operating at the time. Secondly, it illustrates how the Irgun's leadership had a significant influence on the political system of Israel. Finally, it shows how the Irgun has had an impact on the historical conflict between the Arabs and Israelis and has served as an organizational and ideological model for the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

IV. Findings: The terrorist activities of the IRGUN ZVAI LEUMI have served as a model for subsequent terrorist movements around the world. These terrorist movements in areas as far apart as Vietnam, Ulster, Uruguay, and French Canada have emulated the Irgun and have adopted many of its tactics. In particular, the main faction of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)--AL-FATAH--has adopted the Irgun's symbol. Even today the Irgun's reprisal tactics are utilized by both Arabs and Jews in their on-going conflict.

## IRGUN ZVAI LEUMI

### BACKGROUND

During the early years of the Zionist movement in Israel (1915-20) there was a philosophical disagreement over how the aims of Zionism could best be achieved among ardent proponents of Zionism. On one side were relatively conservative individuals, such as David Ben-Gurion, who felt that political negotiation and settlement with the British and Arabs best served the interest of guaranteeing independence for Israel. At the other extreme were those, such as Vladimir Jabotinsky, who believed that the only way to secure a Jewish homeland was to use force and to defend it militarily if necessary. (12:67-94) After Turkey's defeat in 1917, Britain gained control of Palestine. Eventually, in 1923, Britain was formally designated by the League of Nations as the legitimate administrator of Palestine. (12:67) When Britain's position later began to deteriorate in Palestine, the relative power of the militant Zionist factions increased. (12:231-235) This increased militancy was also stimulated by Britain's retreat from pressing for a Zionist state, and the resurgence of Arab nationalism in the area. (12:221-235) Among the largest and most important of the militant groups was the IRGUN ZVAI LEUMI--the National Military Organization. The basic philosophy under which the Irgun operated against the British and Arabs was embodied in the biblical verse Exodus XXI:23-25. Those tenets of LIFE FOR LIFE, EYE FOR EYE, TOOTH FOR TOOTH, HAND FOR HAND, FOOT FOR FOOT, BURN FOR BURN, WOUND FOR WOUND, STRIKE FOR STRIKE were the guidelines for Irgun actions. (8:23-41, 108-109, 293-295)

The purpose of this paper is to describe the Irgun's origin, leadership, ideology, tactics and its relationship with other militant Zionist groups operating at the time. Secondly, it illustrates how the Irgun's leadership had a significant influence on the political system of Israel. Finally, it shows how the Irgun has had an impact on the historical conflict between the Arabs and Israelis and has served as a model of terrorism for the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO).

The terrorist activities of the IRGUN ZVAI LEUMI have provided a successful model for subsequent terrorist movements around the world. Study of this organization is particularly important because many contemporary terrorist organizations (e.g., the PLO)

have modeled themselves on the Irgun model. Understanding the elements that contributed to the Irgun's success will allow intelligence analysts to better deal with threats to international security.

## Chapter One

### IRGUN--ORIGINS, LEADERSHIP, IDEOLOGY, TACTICS

#### ORIGINS

Ahdut Ha'avodah, an organization of early Zionists in Palestine, was established in 1920 to provide for defense of Jewish settlements in Palestine against Arab attack. This organization, along with other factions with similar views about the defense and establishment of the State of Israel, began from a convention and evolved into a national defense movement under the leadership of the party. This organization became known as the "Haganah" (the Hebrew term for "defense"). (8:293; 12:169) In its infancy, the Haganah under Vladimir Jabotinsky's leadership was to be a militia defense force recognized and armed by the British Mandate authorities. (12:171) The British had gained control of Palestine in 1917 during World War I and eventually, in 1923, received a formal mandate by the League of Nations to administer Palestine. However, in the early 1920's, it became clear that the British would not support the arming of the Haganah. The British press and authorities, as well as some Jewish citizens and Arabs, were skeptical and fearful of the Haganah's motives. (12:172) A fundamental disagreement occurred between the Haganah, the World Zionist Movement and other leading Jewish elements. The substance of the disagreement was the dispute over whether the Haganah should continue to strive for legal status from the British Mandate Authorities or pursue an immediate but "clandestine self-defense movement." (12:171-172,174)

Throughout the 1920's, the Haganah received praise and condemnation at different times from British authorities and various Jewish leaders depending on the political atmosphere at any particular time. The Haganah's status increased in 1929 when it prevented an Arab massacre of Jews until British Forces could quell the outbreak of Arab violence. (12:173-174) Because of an internal dispute within the Haganah over labor issues, in 1931 the Jerusalem commander of the Haganah, Avraham Tehomi, and about a hundred followers broke away from the Haganah and formed a new defense unit. (2:23-24) The new defense unit was known as "Haganah B." Haganah B was comprised of militant non-labor, non-socialist, middle class intellectuals. Leaders of the Haganah B

for the most part were Haganah veterans operating under the civilian-political leadership of Vladimir Jabotinsky and Irael Rokach (mayor of Tel Aviv). (8:14-15) Jabotinsky saw in the new Haganah B and its associated youth organization "Betar" the means to propagandize and sustain a viable defense force against Arab attackers. (2:19-24; 3:72) He also saw its potential as an opposing force to Elizar Wiezmann and David Ben-Gurion's predominantly Socialist Jewish Agency and World Zionist Movement. (2:19-27)

The early 1930's was a period of constant turmoil between the British, the Jews and the Arabs in Palestine. During these years, Jabotinsky became more closely associated with Haganah B because of its approval of the idea of swift retaliation against Arab terrorist acts. (8:14-15) Finally in 1935, Jabotinsky and the New Zionist Organization further split from the World Zionist Organization and formed the Revisionist Party because of an internal difference of opinion regarding the acceptable means to attain Jewish statehood. (5:42,250; 2:26-28) Simultaneously, Haganah B was involved in a movement to reunite with the parent Haganah. Ultimately in 1936, after a passion-filled vote, Haganah B split again. Half of its three thousand members returned to the original Haganah, the other half (the more ideological revisionist half) became known as the IRGUN. (5:42; 12:177) The IRGUN ZVAI LEUMI is described under various names within Jewish history: "Irgun," "National Military Organization" and "Etzel." (15:187)

#### LEADERSHIP

Most literature describing the establishment of a Jewish homeland, the growth of Zionism, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the evolution of Israel as a nation, gives major credit for Jewish success in Palestine to Elizar Wiezmann, David Ben-Gurion and the Jewish Agency. (2:--; 6:--; 8:--; 15:--) Vladimir Jabotinsky, Revisionist Zionist leader, is given credit only in very general associative terms. It was Jabotinsky who had long held the belief that the Jewish community would have to provide for its own defense against Arab violence under the 1923 British Mandate. (3:109-111) This was the initial issue over which Jabotinsky and the weak vacillating Ben-Gurion, Chairman of the Jewish Agency, clashed. (2:127-128; 8:298) Later during the 1920s and 1930s, Jabotinsky sought to counter the Socialist trend which was dominant among the Jewish leadership. When Haganah B divided into two factions in 1936 (forming the Irgun) Jabotinsky and the new Irgun leader, David Raziel, found common ground for action--retaliatory operations against Arab terrorism. (2:39)

Raziel was an ardent nationalist and militant activist. During Raziel's college years he ardently studied philosophy and

mathematics, and in his spare time composed manuals on weapons, tactics and training. (3:101-102) He used the results of his military research to train Irgun recruits from the Betar youth organization. (3:101-105) Raziel initially focused Irgun efforts on smuggling illegal Jewish refugees into Palestine. However, in 1939, he led Irgun terrorist raids on Arabs who had increasingly attacked Jewish communities. (1:771-772) Raziel set the normal trend of Irgun terrorist activity: discrete and calculated destruction of Arab installations and equipment with as little loss of human life as possible. However, these self-imposed limits did not prevent the Irgun from retaliating when its members were murdered or tortured, either by the Arabs or the British. One instance occurred when a British police inspector tortured captured Irgun members. Raziel, in retaliation, had him murdered. (1:771-772)

In 1940 Raziel called a halt to operations against the British, who were engaged in fighting Hitler. (12:212) He even went so far as to aid British efforts in the Middle East against the Germans. In 1941, while Raziel was working for the British during the pro-German revolt in Iraq, he was killed and for the next two years the Irgun was substantially inactive. (1:772; 8:54; 15:266)

In 1943, Menachem Begin, a Polish Jew, arrived in Palestine, having defected from the Polish Army. Begin immediately joined the Irgun, and through exceptional physical and moral courage advanced to command the Irgun in a very short period of time. (1:772; 15:266) Begin had been a member of the Polish underground revolution against the Germans and had spent two years in a Soviet prison in Siberia as a result of his Zionist activities in Soviet Lithuania. (15:266) Begin, a deeply religious individual, brought a new sense of commitment to the Irgun and an iron will to establish the Jewish homeland. Begin's analysis of the British geographic position in Palestine led him to believe that a Jewish homeland was not possible under British mandate or control. Therefore, in 1944 he led the Irgun on a campaign against the British as well as the Arabs. (8:294; 9:58)

Contemporary opinion on the value of Begin's leadership is divided. Samuel Katz, who served in the Irgun with Begin, described him as "incontestably a brilliant underground political strategist." (8:82) On the other hand Noah Lucas describes Begin's judgments as "simply lucid, and profoundly ignorant." (12:217)

The Irgun, throughout its existence, was reflective of the politico-military ideology of its two main leaders: David Raziel and Menachem Begin. Raziel and Begin believed that favorable political results could be achieved if supported by an armed force, terrorist or otherwise. Under their tutelage the Irgun

consistently employed armed force against the enemies of Zionism in support of political goals, the principal goal being to secure an independent Jewish Homeland. (1:771-772)

### IDEOLOGY

There were three basic tenets of Irgun ideology as reflected in the teachings of Vladimir Jabotinsky: (1) All Jews had a right to enter Palestine; (2) Only active retaliation would deter the Arabs; (3) Only Jewish armed force would ensure the Jewish State. (15:265-266) Paul Wilkinson, in his work on Political Terrorism, describes the Irgun as an Irish Republican Army (IRA) type guerrilla-terrorist organization. (19:89-92) By employing the gun and bomb of the IRA model, the Irgun sought to ensure that Jabotinsky's tenets were carried out.

Essentially the Irgun had three phases of development, each characterized by the nature, drive and fervent beliefs of its predecessor organizations and subsequent leaders (Jabotinsky, Raziell and Begin). It was the ideas of Jabotinsky, Raziell and Begin that guided and drove the operation of Irgun. Thus, in the early days of 1936-1939, the Irgun under Raziell's leadership was basically a defense force against Arab violence and occasionally a deterrent or retributive force against British control. It wasn't until Menachem Begin took control that the Irgun actively campaigned for an independent Jewish State in direct opposition to the British Mandate. (8:229)

When the Irgun first formed from Haganah B, one of its secondary leaders was Avraham Stern. (1:772-773; 8:55) Stern did not subscribe to wartime limitations against attacking the British. During World War II, after much debate within the organization, Stern and some three hundred followers formed the LOCHAMEI HERUT ISRAEL, "LEHI" (Freedom Fighters of Israel), which became known as the "Stern Gang." In very short time the Stern Gang was regarded as a group of murderers by virtually all other groups--the Jewish Agency, Haganah and the World Zionist Organization. The Stern Gang's terrorist activities (bombings, etc.) caused the British to react against all Jewish groups, particularly the Irgun. (1:773; 5:44)

Ideologically the Stern Gang and the Irgun were in the same camp in believing in the establishment of a Jewish state, using force if necessary. However, the methods they chose to enforce their common beliefs were quite different throughout most of the 1940-1948 period in which they existed. The Sternist's methods of individual terrorist assassinations of British officials and security men contrasted with Irgun resort to confiscation raids on British government and military installations for symbolic purposes. The Stern Gang killed people at every opportunity as

opposed to the Irgun's use of controlled killings. (19:89-92) On the other hand, the Haganah, and to some degree the Palmach (Plugot Machaz-Strike Companies) which had been formed in 1941 to help the British fight the Germans in Palestine, were similar to the Irgun in their aim to defend and support the Jewish community. But as the military arms of the Jewish Agency, the Haganah and the Palmach were reduced to ineffectiveness. (8:85,285; 12:205-206) On several occasions, despite the disparity in ideology as well as methodology, the Jewish Agency, the Haganah, and the Palmach collaborated with the British against the Irgun. Most characteristic of this collaboration was "The Season," the period so called in 1944 in which Ben-Gurion (Jewish Agency executive) joined with the British to crush the Irgun because he felt its terrorist activities would bring world opinion against the general idea of Zionism. (8:85; 12:214-221) Menachem Begin's comments are especially instructive for characterizing the rationale for Irgun terrorism:

. . . the very existence of an underground, which oppression, hangings, tortures and deportations, fail to crush or to weaken must, in the end, undermine the prestige of a colonial regime that lives by the legend of its omnipotence. Every attack which it fails to prevent is a blow to its standing. . . . We never believed that our struggle would cause the total destruction of our people. We knew that Eretz Israel, in consequence of the revolt, resembled a glass house. The world was looking into it with ever increasing interest and could see most of what was happening inside. . . . Arms were our weapons of attack; the transparency of the "glass" was our shield of defense. Served by these two instruments we continued to strike our blows at the structure of the Mandate's prestige. (1:773-774)

This observation illustrates Irgun determination to achieve its ultimate objective--the establishment of a State of Israel--using whatever means necessary. It also illustrates the concern of the organization with world opinion in its quest for Jewish independence.

#### TACTICS

The tactics employed by the Irgun, exemplified by target selectivity and self-imposed limitations, were mostly terrorist in nature. For example, one Irgun policy was that one should not carry arms unless on an operation. (8:89) This was altogether different from the Stern Gang's policy of carrying arms at all times and was largely responsible for many Irgun members avoiding capture upon being searched by the British. Irgun activity encompassed more than destruction of Arab and British



installations, such as the British headquarters in Jerusalem at the King David Hotel. (19:91) Broad efforts of illegal immigration of Jews to Palestine were sponsored by the Irgun. The Irgun also sponsored a strident propaganda campaign against both British and Arabs in a weekly newspaper, published in Poland and distributed throughout Eastern Europe. (8:44) These newspaper articles not only applauded the Irgun's armed tactics, but blatantly argued the case for an independent Jewish state in Palestine instead of remaining a partitioned lackey of British Middle East policy. (8:43-48,71,145-147)

In spite of the repression of the Irgun in the 1944 "season" mentioned earlier (2:129-134; 12:220), the Irgun and Haganah joined together in 1945 for a united resistance to the British. (3:533; 8:294) For the next three years the bond between the two organizations, especially the bond between Begin and Ben-Gurion, was fragile at best. Throughout the "season," Begin had forbidden any type of retribution against the Jewish Agency or Haganah to avoid a civil war among the Jewish factions. (2:134; 8:86) But later, in 1946, when the Haganah again turned on the Irgun, Begin unleashed the forces of the Irgun on the Haganah officers and men responsible for armed actions against Irgun members. (8:163)

As the British government became more determined to withdraw totally from Palestine, the Arabs became increasingly violent and dedicated to preventing the establishment of a recognized Jewish Homeland. (2:240-243; 8:187) (See appendix for a more complete chronology and highlights of the period.) The destruction of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem in July 1946 by the Irgun, causing more than two hundred casualties (wounded or dead), again led to the Jewish Agency's collaboration with the British against the Irgun and later to the imposition of martial law on March 1, 1947. (2:167-173,189-191; 8:109-110; 12:227-228; 15:267) Throughout 1946 and 1947 the Irgun and the Haganah resolved their differences over the means of securing a Jewish state in recognition of the Arab threat. However, the consistent terror campaign waged by the Irgun, its need for arms, and a defiant sense of independence from central authority led to the "Altalena" incident in June 1948.

The Altalena, a ship used to transport men and arms, was sunk by the Haganah on June 20, 1948 at Tel Aviv. Sixteen members of the Irgun were killed and forty wounded during the incident, as were two Haganah soldiers killed and several wounded. (3:485-487; 5:258; 8:232-250) Civil war between the Jewish elements was again narrowly averted by (1) Begin's opposition to a civil war, (2) an impending resumption of the war with the Arabs, and (3) the foresight that cohesion would be necessary for the security and survival of a Jewish state. (8:250) In September, 1948, the Irgun disbanded and joined with Haganah and Palmach forces forming ZAHAL--the Israeli National Defense Forces. (2:340-344; 3:467-468; 12:254-255)

Begin's belief in creating tension, provocation and destruction was the basis for the particular tactics used by Irgun throughout its existence. (15:266-267) Much of the Irgun effort was directed against the British for the purpose of achieving an independent Jewish State. The rest of it was directed against the Arabs in retribution for attacks they had made earlier. (8:22-40) After the British had begun withdrawal from Palestine in 1948, the position of the Irgun with regard to the Arabs changed substantially. The Irgun and the Stern Gang were accused on a number of occasions of instigating the Arab-Palestinian exodus. For example, on April 1, 1948 an Irgun unit totally destroyed the Arab village of DIR YASSEN killing two-hundred and fifty people. (12:251) This act contributed heavily to the state of fear against Jewish attacks among the Palestinian Arabs. Although there is some debate whether the unit involved in the attack was of Irgun origin, the fact remains that terrorist acts such as those perpetrated at DIR YASSEN are partly responsible for the present Palestinian refugee situation. Terrorist acts of such nature drive people to leave their homes to seek safe refuge wherever it may be found.

With the state of Israel secured, and the inclusion of the Irgun into the ZAHAL, there was no longer a need for the tactics of terrorism which had served the Irgun, and seemingly the Jewish people, so well. However, the ideology of the men involved in the leadership of Irgun was perpetuated by the establishment of a political party, the HERUT (12:260) which was based on the same zeal and ideals upon which the Irgun had thrived. (2:105) The new State of Israel would respect those ideals through incorporation of Irgun leadership in the new legitimate state.

## Chapter Two

### IRGUN'S INFLUENCE ON ISRAEL'S POLITICAL SYSTEM

The Irgun's influence on Israel's political system evolved over the years under Menachem Begin's leadership. The official end of the Irgun and evolution of a viable political party under Begin's leadership was brought about by the realization of Israeli statehood.

The World Zionist Organization (mandated representative of the Jewish people) was almost continuously under the leadership of Doctor Chaim Weizman, a famed chemist, from 1921 to 1946. He was the chief Zionist negotiator for the Balfour Declaration by the British Government in 1917 and prime proponent for giving control of Palestine to Britain. The World Zionist Organization, also known as the Jewish Agency for Palestine (or the Jewish Agency), was the body recognized as the representative of the Jewish people in the Mandate for Palestine. The Jewish Agency was to cooperate with Britain, as Mandatory Power, in establishing the Jewish National Home. The dominant element in the Jewish Agency was the Mapai, the Palestine Labor Party. The Mapai's leader was David Ben-Gurion, also Chairman of the Jewish Agency. The Mapai and Ben-Gurion played dominant roles in achieving Israeli statehood, often opposed by the party headed by Menachem Begin. (8:293-299)

The organization of the Irgun, in 1948, under an agreement worked out between Begin and Yitshak Gruenbaun (Minister of Interior in the provisional government headed by Ben-Gurion) was to be disposed of in the following fashion:

1. Irgun would be disbanded and its members enter the Israel Defense Army.
2. Irgun units would remain intact within the army, and their integrity would not be disturbed.
3. Irgun units would not be sent out of Jerusalem.
4. The oath of loyalty taken by each soldier would bind him to serve in Jerusalem and not elsewhere.

5. These terms would be valid as long as there was actual Jewish rule in Jerusalem. (8:274)

Additionally, at meetings between Begin and other Irgun leaders including Samuel Katz, it was agreed that if the new provisional government did not proclaim the city of Jerusalem as part of the state of Israel, the Irgun would hold on there as long as possible. This reflected Irgun determination to place Jerusalem under Jewish sovereignty. They agreed to establish in Jerusalem a branch of the new political party, Tenuat HaHerut (Herut). (8:272; 12:260) The Herut was formed from Irgunists to carry on its opposition in the conventional political manner. (12:260) This branch of Herut immediately circulated a petition gathering signatures demanding that the Israel government include Jerusalem in the State. It became increasingly clear that Ben-Gurion did not intend to sign the agreement that had been worked out by Begin and Gruenbaun but instead sought to eliminate the Irgun and its members. This became clear in an ultimatum delivered to Samuel Katz in Jerusalem on September 20, 1948. (8:278) The ultimatum ignored the previous draft and proposed new conditions for Irgun actions to be accepted by the provisional government headed by Ben-Gurion. This ultimatum included armed actions against the Irgun if they did not comply. This act and a similar action by Ben-Gurion against the Irgun in 1939 further exacerbated the bitterness between him and Begin. (8:274-280) The Irgun leadership decided that rather than risk a civil war, it would accept the terms of Ben-Gurion's proposal and establish political viability in the Knesset. (3:278-280)

The Herut party was supported by the majority of revisionist followers living in Israel in its nationalist rhetoric and vehement antipathy to the Histadrut. The Histadrut was the Jewish Labor Federation in Palestine that played a dominant role in the Zionist Establishment. The Herut succeeded in attracting into its ranks new immigrants, especially those from Middle East countries who were dissatisfied with their inclusion into the new Zionist State--Israel. (8:296; 12:282-284)

The new State of Israel, operating under a provisional government headed by David Ben-Gurion, held its first general election on January 25, 1949. Eighty-seven percent of the five-hundred-thousand eligible voters participated in the election. The Mapai Party, headed by Ben-Gurion was awarded forty-six of the one-hundred-twenty seats available in the assembly. The Mapam Party, finishing second, was awarded nineteen seats. Next came the United Religious Front, an electoral alliance of four religious groups, receiving sixteen seats. Finishing in fourth place was the Herut Party, led by Menachem Begin, with fourteen seats. The fifth (General-Zionists) and sixth (Progressive) place finishers received seven and five seats respectively. The remaining thirteen seats were distributed among six minor parties.

Since none of the major parties called for new elections, their satisfaction with the election results was expressed to the people of Israel. (12:283)

In February, the Constituent Assembly passed the Transition Law that formally established the legislative function which operates to this day in Israel--the Knesset. The Transition Law provided for the election of a president by a majority vote of the Knesset and established his mostly ceremonial and symbolic powers. The first Knesset immediately elected Chaim Weizman to be President. The provisional government at this point tendered its resignation to the new president, but continued to act as a caretaker government. The president was expected, although not required, to consult all major leaders and to call upon the leader of the largest party to form a new government. Not unexpectedly, Weizman called upon the Mapai Party headed by Ben-Gurion to form the new government. At this point Ben-Gurion negotiated a coalition agreement between the Mapai Party, the religious parties and the Progressives, giving his party control of sixty-seven of the possible one-hundred-twenty votes in the Knesset. On March 8, 1949, Ben-Gurion presented his cabinet to the Knesset, and with a majority coalition, received the necessary vote of confidence on March 10, 1949. It is noted at this point that Ben-Gurion still did not attempt to bring Begin and his party into the coalition. The elections of 1949, 1951, and 1955 saw the Mapai lose six seats in the Knesset while the Herut under Begin showed a net gain of one seat. (12:281-323) By the 1961 elections the Mapai party had a net loss of four seats, down to forty-two, whereas, the Herut had a net gain of three seats, up to seventeen. (12:466) It was during this time that the young leaders of the Mapai, Ben-Gurion proteges such as Moshe Dayan, Shimon Peres and Giora Josephthal, began to rise. Peres is still active today in Israeli politics. (12:329-393)

Menachem Begin, with Haim Landau, a faithful aide and past chief of staff of the Irgun, has for a generation controlled the direction of Herut. Herut eventually expanded to become the center of a new coalition, Gahal, and then again to become Likud --today the major opposition group in Israel. Herut's growth, although slow initially, was regarded as a potential alternative government due to the recruitment of such dynamic figures as Arik Sharon, the hero of the Yom Kippur War. The Herut's rise to power frightened the remainder of the Israeli political parties because of its right-wing ideals and leadership. It was not until the government crisis before the June 1967 War that Begin received the respect of the aforementioned parties. Begin became an acceptable alternative because his association with Moshe Dayan reassured the citizens of Israel that the country was not going to be dismantled by President Nasser of Egypt. The mandate for coalition seemed to ease the strain between Ben-Gurion and Begin and insured Israel's continued existence. (2:347-353)

Begin joined the new government of Ben-Gurion in 1968 as a minister without portfolio (office of a minister of state). However a year later, when the government appeared to soften its position on occupied territories, Begin resigned as a matter of principle. To Begin, the thought of giving away pieces of blood-earned territory was not acceptable. He returned to the government opposition, attacking publicly and negotiating privately. Begin and his disciples, most with long underground involvement, entered the first Knesset as representatives. (2:347)

Some of the Herut members of the Knesset retired from politics. Notably Tavin and Levani entered the academic community; Meridor, Katz and Lankin became authors; Tehomi started a jewelry finishing business in Jerusalem. Meridor, an occupational worker when originally elected to the Knesset, is today one of the world's greatest shipping tycoons. (2:347-378) Shamir, after working for Israeli intelligence, returned to politics as a Knesset member for Likud--the major opposition party in Israel. There he remains reserved and influential. Tavin, a Ph.D. and successful businessman, has remained in the movement and serves as a traveling ambassador for the Likud Party. Ezer Weizmann, past commander of the Israeli Air Force, upon not being named Chief of Staff, resigned and pursued a political career in the Likud.

Historical observers of the Irgun are unable to arrive at a consensus that Irgun members were all either heroes or criminals. To Begin, the members were heroes and martyrs. Most Israelis view Irgunists as complicating the struggle to establish Israel and tarnishing its moral posture. From the Arab perspective, they were terrorists, brutal and ruthless, representing the real essence of Zionism. (2:346-354)

Begin, even today, is regarded by British and Arabs as a terrorist not deserving the respect due a statesman. Begin remains an influence on the Likud Party and a person to be reckoned with from both inside and outside the Knesset.

The foundation and security of the State of Israel were guaranteed in part by the unavoidable terror of the underground. It is unlikely that either the British or Arabs would have voluntarily surrendered their control over what today is called Israel. History has shown that nations are created and sustained through armed action. The bold and aggressive actions of the Irgun serve as an effective historical example for organizations that aspire to achieve independence. The Irgun has served as the role model for the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the Palestine Liberation Organization headed by Yassir Arafat. (2:315-354)

## Chapter Three

### IRGUN'S IMPACT ON THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

As the Jewish immigrants returned to Palestine hoping to establish a Jewish homeland, the Arab population became uneasy. The immigrants, because of persecutions in a number of countries, namely Russia and Poland, sought a common government and homeland. Because of religious ties to the area of Palestine, a large Jewish population in Palestine, and promotion of a return to the Jewish origins by Jewish intellectuals, Palestine was identified by Zionists as the future Jewish State. It is estimated that about 300,000 Arabs were residing in Palestine in 1882. This represented a ratio of 13 Arabs to each Jew. The British-originated Balfour Declaration of November, 1917 established the precedent that led to the founding of the Jewish homeland in Palestine. (16:3-93) As the immigration of Jews from mostly Eastern Europe and Russia continued throughout the period of 1882 to 1929, the Arab population began to become more uneasy. Initially the Arabs thought the Jews were only coming for religious purposes. Later, they realized that the Jewish immigrants wanted land and work in addition to religious facilities and this led to increased tension. In August, 1929, a Jewish child was killed by an unidentified Arab when the child ran into an Arab tomato garden to retrieve a ball. The riots that resulted from this incident led to the deaths of 133 Jews and 116 Arabs. The Jews viewed the events to be symbolic of British inability or unwillingness to protect them. They also viewed the traditional Zionist policy of havlaga--self defense--ineffective for protecting the new Jews migrating to Palestine to establish a new nation. From these events, priorities among the Jews were shifted from self-defense to retaliation. This shift from defensive to offensive tactics led to the rise of a new underground organization, Irgun Zvai Leumi. (2:1-7)

Throughout its existence, the Irgun, as previously stated, meted out punishment in response to Arab violence against Jewish immigrants. The Irgun--representative of the more aggressive Jews in Palestine during the 1930s and 1940s--consisted of a group of able and cruel anti-Arab and anti-British terrorists. The Irgun, formed as the military arm of the dissident and radical Zionist Revisionist Party, continually battled the Arabs of Palestine. The Irgun's methods of plot and combat under Begin were extremely bold and innovative. They were also informative

for a wide range of terrorists worldwide who have since adopted many of the same tactics. For example, Al Fatah (or the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as it is more commonly called) also observed and heeded the successes and failures of the Irgun. (14:449-468)

"Palestinian terrorism" is a term that actually encompasses a wide variety of organizations and personalities. Al Fatah, Yassir Arafat, Black September, Saiqa, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine are all examples of Palestinian terrorism. Fatah is the Arabic word for "conquest." It is literally an acronym in reverse of the first letters of Harakat at-Tahir al-Filistini (Palestine Liberation Movement). Members of Al Fatah intend to conquer the State of Israel and restore all Israeli-occupied land to the Palestinian Arabs. (14:449-450) The terrorists of Al Fatah are called "fedayeen." The fedayeen are prepared to sacrifice themselves for the cause as the Arabic derivative of the word implies. The fedayeen derived much of their trade expertise from the Moslem Brotherhood which had fought the British earlier. The guerrilla fedayeen launched terroristic raids against the Israelis in the mid-1940s. They fought and lost to neighboring Arab states in the 1948-49 war in Palestine. Al Fatah was formed by Yassir Arafat and others in 1956 into a fedayeen group. The purpose of this group was to conduct repeated raids against Israel. Al Fatah eventually gained prestige and power among the Arab liberation organizations due primarily to its cohesive leadership. Al Fatah's rise to recognition was aided by its simple and fervent nationalism. This was an ideal that all Arabs could embrace and understand. (14:451)

Al Fatah did not establish itself as a legitimate organization until January, 1964. It was organized at the Cairo Summit and the founding congress of the PLO took place in Jerusalem in July 1964. It was founded and initially led by Ahmed Shuqairi who coined the official PLO slogan: "Drive Israel into the Sea." (14:452) Shuqairi's losses during the Six Day War of June 1967 caused him to lose power within the organization. In spite of the defeat, Al Fatah grew in numbers throughout 1968 as a result of the Arab defeat in the Six Day War. This happened because of the nationalism of the Arab youth and the belief that a more militant approach was required. A meeting of militant Palestinians was held in Cairo in February, 1969. At this meeting, Al Fatah assumed control of the Palestine Liberation Organization and elected Yassir Arafat chairman of the executive committee. He became the group's most notable leader. Arafat's position, as stated in Article 19 of the PLO's Covenant, is that "the establishment of Israel is fundamentally null and void" and he strives for the return of today's Israel to the Palestinian people. (14:449-454) The Palestine Liberation Organization serves as a parent or umbrella organization for Al Fatah, Saiqa, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. The total manpower of the PLO



is estimated to be from 10,000 - 14,000, depending upon the specific intelligence source cited. (14:456)

Ironically, throughout its existence, the PLO and its splinter organizations have resorted to the same terroristic practices employed by the Irgun under Menachem Begin and others. Just as the Irgun employed the bomb at the King David Hotel against the British, the PLO has employed the bomb against the Israelis and all who aid them. Most notable examples of PLO terrorism were the May and September 1972 massacres at the Lydda airport in Israel and the Olympic Games in Munich respectively. (14:67)

Zionist Organizations, particularly the Irgun Zvai Leumi, realized the need for world support for their cause. This caused the leaders of the various elements to seek media coverage, largely press and radio, in their drive to statehood. Some of the Zionists elements considered the actions of the Irgun contrary to promotion of the Jewish cause. Zionists organizations in general differed in their political orientations and acceptable means of reaching their common goal--an independent Israel. Ben-Gurion's Jewish Agency was basically a conservative group that believed in Arab-Israeli coexistence. The Irgun, headed by Menachem Begin, was a less moderate group that believed in both violence and negotiation to achieve statehood. An extreme revolutionary position was that of Stern's LEHI which advocated violence and the deaths of British and Arabs in order to achieve Israeli statehood. (16:--; 20:7) Whereas the Irgun used radio and newspapers to gain attention for their cause, the PLO is able to capitalize on the advanced technology of television. Advanced television exposure has its advantages and disadvantages. One advantage is the potential for immediate world-wide coverage drawing attention to the cause. On the other hand, political achievement and public sympathy can be harmed by unexpected actions (e.g., the unexpected or uncontrolled killing of a child, woman, etc.) that can appear on the television screen.

The PLO and its leader Arafat, have gained international prestige and recognition from a variety of supporting Arab powers and international forums. The most notable forum to grant Arafat legitimacy and respect was the United Nations General Assembly in 1974. Additionally, the United Nations' Security Council invited the PLO to participate in the debate on the Middle East situation. These actions granted the PLO terrorists (or liberators depending on one's view) the rights of a sovereign recognized nation. Analogous to the Balfour Declaration of 1917 establishing the legitimacy of Israeli statehood, the United Nations' recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organization during the 1974-76 period supported legitimacy of Palestinian aspirations for statehood. (16:223; 14:449) The PLO today is therefore no different from the Irgun of the past. During the rise to Jewish statehood,

infighting within the Jewish community, such as that between Ben-Gurion and Begin, hindered the achievement of statehood. Today the PLO is also beset with the same problem. Daily there appear threats to Arafat's leadership. The PLO and Arafat have suffered humiliating defeats as, for example, their expulsion from Lebanon in 1982.

Arafat's critics claim that he is too soft and should be more hardline. (24:33) If history is any guide, the Israeli drive into Lebanon to eradicate the PLO will surely spur increased PLO terrorist activities to regain Arab support for the PLO. Arafat, after all, is the moderate among the various Palestinian groups. He is very similar in his position with respect to the Palestinian cause as Menachem Begin was to the Zionists. Arafat seeks to employ both the bomb and diplomacy simultaneously to achieve a Palestinian state. His precarious walk on the fine line between criminality and legality, necessitated by Arab factions and world opinion, is necessary for the attainment of statehood and stability in the world, particularly in the Middle East. The Irgun's tactics and methodology of employing the gun, bomb and negotiation proved effective during the drive for Jewish statehood. Today the PLO's use of those same tactics and methodology are proving equally as effective. As Menachem Begin was a moderate among Jewish leaders so is Yassir Arafat a moderate among Arabs, particularly Palestinians. The position of the leaders and the tactics of both organizations are identical---they have only "changed sides of the fence."

## Chapter Four

### CONCLUSION

The original purpose of this study was to conduct an analysis of the Irgun Zvai Leumi in terms of origins, leadership, ideology and tactics. The Irgun traces its roots to groups of individuals intent upon achieving Israeli statehood by whatever means available. The Irgun's leaders, especially Menachem Begin, have represented a continuous force in Israel's political history. Upon the dissolution of the Irgun organization, Begin and his cohorts entered the legitimate Israeli political system and rose to power within the Knesset. Even though Begin formally withdrew from politics in 1983 he remains today an influential force within the major opposition party in Israel--the Likud. Finally, this study illustrated the impact of the Irgun upon current Arab-Israeli relations. Ironically, the arch enemy of Israel, the PLO, has copied many of the tactics employed by the Irgun in their struggle for independence.

Many authorities on the subject of terrorism and Israeli history have demonstrated that the activities of the Irgun Zvai Leumi served as a model for other subsequent terrorist movements with similar purposes. (4:--; 11:--; 21:--; 23:--) One noted author, Albert Parry, shows how a seemingly diverse array of contemporary terrorist movements trace their roots to the Irgun model. (14:451) Ironically, the chief adversary of Israel, the Palestine Liberation Organization, could be included among those terrorist organizations that were heavily influenced by the Irgun model. (22:--; 25:--) Today, a form of "Arab Zionism" has emerged within the ranks of the PLO stimulated in part by the loss of Palestinian land to Israel. (6:219)

Amos Elon, in his work describing the historical roots of Israel, states:

. . . the PLO is almost as prolific in its literary output as the Jewish Zionism of three or four decades ago. Aside from their recurrent calls for vengeance and bloodshed, the tracts of the Palestinian organizations are reminiscent of Zionist pamphlets in the early 1920s. The emblem of the Arab terrorist organization el Fatah (two fists, holding two submachine guns crossed over a map of pre-1948 Palestine) is almost a direct copy of

the old emblem of the Jewish terrorist organization, Irgun Zvai Leumi, which fought the British before 1948 (one fist, one rifle, superimposed upon the same old map). (6:219)

The Palestinians, especially the PLO, have in fact adopted the Irgun's symbol, methodology and tactics. These tactics and methods were proven effective during the Zionist's quest for statehood. It is intriguing that the Palestinians, driven by fervent nationalism, have reversed roles with the Israelis. Specifically, the PLO is to present day Palestinians what the Irgun was to the pre-independent Zionists.

The United States military as part of its counter-terrorist intelligence training, should also study the Irgun Zvai Leumi's history, methodology and tactics. Studying the Irgun and other successful terrorist/freedom-fighter organizations will provide us with a better understanding of future terrorist organizations and thus give us an improved capability to deal with them. To be forewarned is to be forearmed.

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## APPENDIX

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### CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

- 1915 Zionist [sic] moves to help Britain in Great War with a view to restitution of Palestine to Jews under British control. Weizmann opens diplomatic negotiations with British statesman. Jabotinsky launches campaign for Jewish legion to fight in Palestine. Aaron Aaronson forms pro-British espionage group--NILI--behind the Turkish lines.
- 1918 Jewish regiments under Col. J. H. Patterson take part in liberation of eastern Palestine (Transjordan).
- 1920 Arab attack on Jews in Jerusalem. Jabotinsky organizes defense (Haganah) and is sentenced to 15 years imprisonment by British military court. Sentence later quashed.
- 1929 Arab riots, mainly in Jerusalem and Hebron.
- 1930 Passfield White Paper imposes severe restrictions on Jewish immigration and land purchase. Split in Haganah, Haganah B formed later known as IRGUN ZVAI LEUMI.
- 1936 Country-wide attacks organized by Arab leaders against Jews in Palestine with help of mercenaries from neighboring countries; the Arab "Revolt." Jabotinsky calls for the evacuation of Eastern Europe by Jews and for urgent policy of pressure on Britain to open gates of Palestine.
- 1937 IRGUN ZVAI LEUMI emerges as militant organization, defies "self-restraint" (HAVLAGAH) policy of Jewish Agency, carrying out reprisals for Arab attacks. British Royal Commission recommends partition of Palestine, including partly autonomous Arab and Jewish zones. Plan later dropped.
- 1939 Nazis occupy Czechoslovakia. British White Paper announces 75,000 immigrants in 5 years as the end of permitted Zionist development. Sporadic acts of anti-British violence in Palestine. Germans invade Poland. World War II breaks out. All Zionist groups announce solidarity with Britain against Germany. IRGUN declares truce.

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- 1940 Death of Jabotinsky. Split in IRGUN. Stern Group (LEHI) rejects truce with Britain.
- 1941 David Raziel, Commander of IRGUN, killed on mission for British in Iraq.
- 1942 Avraham Stern captured by British and killed in Tel Aviv. Nazis launch program for "Final Solution" of Jewish problem by exterminating all the Jews.
- 1944 IRGUN under Menachem Begin launches revolt against British rule, calls for Jewish government. Fierce official Zionist reactions culminate in collaboration between Haganah and British against IRGUN. Jewish Brigade Group formed, takes part in Italian campaign.
- 1945 End of World War II. Bare remnant of European Jews found alive. Labour government elected in Britain (July). Foreign Minister Bevin manifests hostile policy to Zionism and indifference to fate of death camp survivors (November). Haganah joins with IRGUN and LEHI in United Resistance Movement. Widespread campaign of violence against the British.
- 1946 June--Jewish Agency Leaders arrested.
- July--IRGUN blows up British Government and Army HQ--King David Hotel.
- August--British deport "illegal" immigrants, brought by Haganah, to Cyprus.
- October--Arrested Jewish Agency leaders released in return for undertaking to cooperate in crushing IRGUN and LEHI. IRGUN opens campaign abroad. British Embassy in Rome blown up.
- December--IRGUN flogs British Officers in retaliation for flogging of IRGUN captives.

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- 1947 January--Jewish Agency negotiates "unofficially" with British Government.
- February--Bevin announces approach to United Nations on "how to carry out Mandate."
- March 1--IRGUN, by coordinated country-wide attacks on British, provokes martial law.
- March 17--Martial law called off.
- April--British hang four IRGUN captives. UN appoints special committee to investigate Palestine situation.
- May--IRGUN blows up Acre Fortress.
- July--"Illegal" immigrants on EXODUS 1947 turned back first to France, later to Germany. Three IRGUN soldiers hanged. IRGUN hangs two British sergeants.
- August--UN Special Committee recommends end of British rule and partition of Palestine between Jews and Arabs.
- September--British Government announces intention to give up Mandate.
- November--UN assembly adopts resolution for partition of Palestine. Jewish Agency agrees to partition as measure for peace. Britain announces refusal to cooperate in implementing UN resolution. Arab rioting begins.
- December--U.S. Government imposes embargo on arms to Palestine. Bevin refuses to cancel arms shipments to Arab countries.
- 1948 April--IRGUN captures Jaffo. (Outside of UN partition lines.)
- May 14--State of Israel proclaimed, provisional government headed by Ben-Gurion set up. Arab states invade Palestine.

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June 11--Month's truce proposed by UN, accepted by both sides.

June 20--IRGUN arms ship ALTELENA blown up in Tel Aviv.

September 21--End of IRGUN ZVAI LEUMI.

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Extracted from Samuel Katz, Days of Fire, pp. 293-295.