



MAHAL AND THE DISPOSSESSION OF THE PALESTINIANS

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The participation of thousands of overseas volunteers (the Mahal) in Zionist military operations conducted throughout the 1948 war has received insufficient critical attention. Mainly English-speaking World War II veterans recruited by the Zionist movement in the West for their expertise in such needed specializations as artillery, armored warfare, and aerial combat, the Mahal's importance to the military effort far exceeded their numbers. Situating their involvement within the broader historical context of Western support for the Zionist project, this article examines their role within the Haganah and Israel Defense Forces (particularly in aerial and armored units) in operations involving the violent depopulation of Palestinian communities.

In 1948, thousands of overseas volunteers traveled to Palestine to take part in Zionist military operations. While various accounts of their participation are available, the record of those Zionist combatants formally designated as Mahal (from the Hebrew *Mitnadvay Hutz La'aretz*, "volunteers from abroad") has been distorted in deference to conventional Zionist historiography. The Mahal recruits are generally depicted as "forgotten heroes," as historian David Bercuson describes them in *The Secret Army*.¹ Providing the foreword to a study published amidst Israel's jubilee celebrations in 1998, Binyamin Netanyahu praises the "contribution to the struggle for liberation" made by Mahal fighters.² "For them," the authors of the study explain, "justice lay entirely on the side of the Jews."³ The various memoirs written by volunteer combatants themselves likewise emphasize heroics in the service of a just cause.⁴ Yitzhak Rabin summarizes the standard narrative in his forward to one such volume: "The contribution of this small band of men and women is a glorious chapter in the story of Israel's struggle for freedom."⁵

Estimates vary regarding the number of Mahal personnel interspersed throughout the Zionist forces. An initial Israeli census produced an estimate of 2,400, a figure now roundly considered low.⁶ Bercuson asserts that there were "more than 5,000 foreign volunteers who served with the Israeli forces"; Benny Morris cites an estimate of "more than 4,000."⁷ A short study published by Israel's Ministry of Education in 2007 puts the figure at

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approximately 3,500.⁸ In any event, with total Israeli troop levels nearing 100,000 by the end of 1948, the significance of Mahal combatants did not lie in their numbers.⁹ “Mahal’s special contribution,” in the words of David Ben-Gurion, “was qualitative.”¹⁰ Mostly English-speaking veterans of World War II, Mahal recruits devoted specialized skills to the Zionist military effort. Their expertise in modern military organization, artillery, armored warfare, naval, and aerial combat crucially facilitated the development (and early application) of Israeli military power.

This “glorious chapter,” as Rabin calls it, has gradually been written into the “heroic version” of Israel’s establishment.¹¹ The role of foreign recruits in the political and demographic transformation of Palestine effected in 1948 merits a more critical recounting. What is recorded in the annals of Zionist historiography as Israel’s War of Independence was experienced by Palestinians, some 750,000 of whom were displaced from their homes in the process, as colonial conquest. Widespread ethnic cleansing was among its principal features—a painful reality made more so by the denials, disinformation, and even celebrations that have surrounded it since. The present article reexamines the record of Mahal recruits in this light.¹²

THE POLICY OF COERCION AND ITS INTERNATIONAL UNDERPINNINGS

From its establishment in 1897, the World Zionist Organization (WZO) pursued its ambitions concerning Palestine through organizational activity in Europe and North America and a strategic orientation toward the paramount imperial powers of the time. This approach succeeded in spectacular fashion during World War I when the Zionist movement secured British sponsorship for the creation of a Jewish “national home” in Palestine—a sponsorship given force by Britain’s occupation of Palestine during the war and incorporated into its subsequent rule over Palestine under a Mandate approved by the League of Nations. With the growth of the prestate Jewish settlement (the Yishuv) during the period of British Mandatory rule (1922–1948), the center of Zionist decision making gradually shifted from Europe to Palestine. The WZO presidency of Chaim Weizmann, anchored in London, was overtaken by the leadership of David Ben-Gurion, based primarily “in the field.”¹³ But militarily as otherwise, the strength of the Yishuv remained heavily dependent upon international support.

Funds from Western affiliates of the WZO—notably, the United Palestine Appeal (UPA), which channeled North American funds to Palestine through the Keren Hayesod (Foundation Fund)—were allocated according to the priorities of the Zionist Executive, including building military capacity.¹⁴ In matters of formal politics and diplomacy, the WZO operated in post-World War I Palestine as the Jewish Agency, which enjoyed formal juridical standing within the British Mandatory regime.¹⁵ Its military arm, the Haganah, though formally illegal, in practice also received important (albeit uneven) support from British authorities. This was most significant during the Palestinian

Arab rebellion of 1936–1939, when sections of the Haganah were equipped and trained by the British to help put down the uprising within the framework of “Special Night Squads” and the Supernumerary Police force.¹⁶ Their experience bolstered the Haganah’s capacities and contributed to shaping its military doctrine, particularly its preference for night-time assaults on Arab villages.¹⁷

By the late 1930s, as Nur Masalha has shown, leading Zionist decision makers were engaged in frank internal discussions regarding the prospect of forcibly expelling (or “transferring”) Palestinians to clear the way for a Jewish state.¹⁸ The fate of statist Zionism and its quest for a Jewish demographic majority would thus rest on coercive power. In a June 1938 discussion of transfer with the Jewish Agency Executive, Ben-Gurion emphasized that although the Zionist movement should seek Arab acquiescence, it “must enforce order and security and it will do this not by moralizing and preaching ‘sermons on the mount’ but by machine guns, which we will need.”¹⁹ “For Ben-Gurion,” writes biographer Shabtai Teveth, “the Yishuv’s relationship with the Arabs of Palestine was now a military and not a political question.”²⁰

Local military strength would derive from international political support. Planning a strategic break with Britain, Ben-Gurion launched an effort to establish an alternative support base in the United States, stating his ambition to “take control of American Jewry” for this purpose.²¹ His American campaign gained early support from key U.S. Zionist figures, including Henry Montor and Abba Hillel Silver, and met with considerable success. In the spring of 1942, American Zionists emerged from their landmark conference at New York’s Biltmore Hotel with the demand “that Palestine be established as a Jewish Commonwealth integrated in the structure of the new democratic world.”²² In earlier years, expressions such as “national home” had been used, as the demand for Jewish statehood “came to be regarded as quasi-immoral by many Zionists” in the United States.²³ But the meaning of “Palestine . . . as a Jewish Commonwealth” was clear. A U.S. base of support for expansive, statist Zionism had been secured.

The threat of an Axis advance on the Middle East soon dissipated. The Zionist military build-up, underwritten by Zionist donors in the West, intensified. The UPA-funded Jewish Agency programs grouped under the heading “National Organization and Security,” which amounted to slightly over \$3.8 million in 1945/46, grew to \$28 million for 1948, with \$25 million earmarked for “security needs.”²⁴ Such tax-exempt fundraising was, however, vulnerable to U.S. government oversight. Visiting the U.S. in the summer of 1945, Ben-Gurion thus initiated a parallel support system for the military struggle that would shape the future of Palestine.

Ben-Gurion enlisted Henry Montor, then executive director of the UPA, to call a meeting of trusted donors who could act with discretion. This network established itself as a covert body known as the “Sonneborn Institute” and helped the Jewish Agency expand Haganah activity throughout the West.²⁵ This quickly extended beyond fundraising to include procurement and

smuggling of military equipment from both North America and Europe (an effort which Ricky-Dale Calhoun outlines in the summer 2007 issue of this *Journal*).²⁶ In 1948, this support system would prove invaluable as a means of circumventing the international military embargo imposed on all parties to the Palestine conflict. It would also serve as a means of recruiting skilled military personnel for the Zionist war effort.

HAGANAH RESTRUCTURING AND THE ROLE OF THE MAHAL

Following the success of Ben-Gurion's American campaign at Biltmore, a British diplomat concluded that "the Zionist aim is nothing less than the forcible seizure of Palestine after the war, relying on American influence to keep us [the British] quiet."²⁷ This correctly anticipated the postwar trajectory of statist Zionism. In October 1946, President Harry Truman endorsed the demand for Jewish statehood over British objections, providing crucial leverage to the Yishuv leadership in its developing push to eject Britain from Palestine.²⁸ By February 1947, Britain announced its intention to abandon the Mandate and turned the Palestine question over to the United Nations. As diplomatic developments paved the way for British withdrawal, the Haganah prepared to establish itself as the dominant military force in Palestine.

In December 1946, Ben-Gurion, who by this time had led the Yishuv for more than a decade, assumed direct control of the defense portfolio.²⁹ By late 1947, a consolidated military command structure (with Ben-Gurion at its apex) had taken shape. The principal Haganah combat force, the Field Corps, was initially organized into six brigades—the Golani, Carmeli, Alexandroni, Kiryati, Giv'ati, and Etzioni. The Palmach, a force associated with center-left Labor Zionism, retained distinct headquarters while operating under overall Haganah command. The far-right Zionist militias, the Etzel (Irgun) and Lehi (Stern Gang), operated autonomously but in recurring coordination with the Haganah. In November, the Haganah also established an "Air Service," formally constituted as the Israeli Air Force (IAF) in May 1948; and a Seventh, Eighth (Armored) and Ninth Brigade were added to the Field Corps. It was in some of these latter units that Mahal recruits had the greatest impact.

To increase troop levels, the Haganah set up a Special Committee for Mobilization, issuing a mobilization order to the Yishuv in early December 1947.³⁰ For command and technical expertise, Ben-Gurion looked to veterans of World War II, both within the Yishuv and abroad.³¹ Although begun earlier, international recruitment became more structured in January 1948 when the Jewish Agency Executive decided to establish a Committee for Overseas Mobilization.³² In North America, the support system overseen by the Sonneborn Institute and the Jewish Agency's U.S. section (headed by Abba Hillel Silver) established Land and Labor for Palestine as its recruitment arm.³³ In South Africa, the League for the Haganah enlisted support openly,

attracting more volunteers from the Belgian Congo, Kenya, Rhodesia, and South Africa than the Haganah, interested only in skilled veterans, could usefully absorb.³⁴ By various means, recruitment extended from Western Europe to Latin America and beyond. Public advocacy and clandestine military support for the drive toward Zionist statehood (including foreign recruitment) were often interconnected. The Canadian World War II veteran Ben Dunkelman, for example, acted in turn as the Ontario public relations officer of the Zionist Organization of Canada (ZOC) and as head of the Haganah's Canadian steering committee before going to Palestine, where he became a brigade commander whose forces ethnically cleansed much of the Galilee in the summer and fall of 1948.³⁵

Mahal was not the only fighting force "recruited" from abroad. The Haganah also sought to bring in Jewish immigrants from the Displaced Persons (DP) camps of Europe, many of whom were intercepted and held in British detention camps in Cyprus through 1948. These refugees were designated as "Gahal," literally "recruits from abroad," and are distinguished from Mahal by historians, as they were by Israeli authorities in 1948, because their combat role "cannot accurately be considered as voluntary."³⁶ But while Mahal were indeed volunteers, they were actively recruited and were sometimes perceived as mercenaries. Disputes with Mahal over pay and terms of service (pertaining also to a loyalty oath that many Mahal recruits rejected) shook the IAF by the summer of 1948. Official salary arrangements were eventually put in place; meanwhile, "it was rumored that one fighter pilot earned \$2,000 (£500) per month and had been promised a \$500 (£125) bonus for every aircraft he shot down."³⁷

Until the Mandate expired, British authorities sought to prevent an influx of military recruits to Palestine. The United Nations subsequently sought to maintain barriers to the entry of prospective combatants.³⁸ Mahal recruits bypassed these restrictions by traveling under false pretexts or relying on air and sea routes that avoided interception.³⁹ Small groups were peppered throughout the Haganah from early spring 1948; greater numbers arrived after the Mandate ended.⁴⁰ They were most prominent in artillery, armored, naval, and aerial units, where specialized skills were required. Their presence would come to define certain units, such as the English company of the 82nd Tank Battalion and the 7th Brigade's (72nd Armored) "Anglo-Saxon" Battalion.⁴¹

One of the highest ranking foreign recruits, U.S. Colonel David "Mickey" Marcus, was recruited early on and became deeply involved in the structural overhaul of the Haganah.⁴² A West Point graduate, Marcus had served on General Dwight D. Eisenhower's staff at Allied Expeditionary Force headquarters in Europe.⁴³ Arriving in Palestine at the beginning of 1948, he acted as a close organizational and strategic aide to Ben-Gurion as the Haganah expanded its operations. (He would go on to serve as commander of the Jerusalem front in late May before falling to friendly fire in early June, and he was the first Haganah officer to attain the rank of general.)⁴⁴

Mahal recruits would play a particularly important role in the development and deployment of Israeli air power. South African Air Force veteran Boris Senior, for instance, was chosen to command the Haganah's first aerial squadron, established near Tel Aviv in late 1947.⁴⁵ (Senior first joined the Irgun but was redirected to the Haganah to put his expertise to use.⁴⁶) In the final count, an estimated 666 Mahal recruits served in the IAF by the end of 1948. They would comprise the leading component of its approximately 6,000-person staff, accounting for "almost 70% of the 525 IAF aircrew that served during the war, with a much larger percentage of pilots."⁴⁷ English was thus the principal language of the IAF deployed in 1948 Palestine.⁴⁸

The presence of specialized veterans became widespread in the second half of 1948. But from the outset, they helped the Haganah to operate aggressively within the political and military space opened by Britain's incremental withdrawal.

THE ONSET OF DIRECT MAHAL PARTICIPATION IN "TRANSFER": SPRING OFFENSIVES

Throughout 1947, Anglo-American divergence on the Palestine question, UN deliberations that had begun in April, and the growing certainty of British withdrawal formed the diplomatic backdrop to Haganah preparations. Developments came to a head late in the year. On 29 November, under intense U.S. pressure, the UN General Assembly passed Resolution 181, recommending the partition of Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state. The full implications of this decision are not explored here,⁴⁹ but perhaps its most tangible effect, absent an enforcement mechanism, was to help precipitate the end of the Mandate.

As British forces gradually relinquished control of Palestine in anticipation of their departure, set for 15 May 1948, the Haganah stepped up its activity. The initial policy framework for Haganah operations against Palestinians amidst creeping British withdrawal was Plan C, which mandated disproportionate punitive "counter-measures" against Palestinians aimed at keeping lines with Jewish settlements open and deterring any action against them.⁵⁰ Yet neither sporadic Palestinian violence nor the entry into Palestine of Arab Liberation Army (ALA) irregulars in early 1948 could rationalize the wholesale demographic transformation of Palestine. As Haganah operations reached the limits of ostensible retaliation, Plan C gave way to an operational policy of depopulating Palestinian communities within seized territories.

Ilan Pappé traces the decision-making process underlying this development to a small cluster of Arab affairs advisers and members of the Haganah High Command assembled by Ben-Gurion, and referred to in one of Ben-Gurion's journal entries as *Mesibat Mumbim* ("a party of experts").⁵¹ Pappé's thesis, which meshes with Nur Masalha's examination of the Zionist politics of transfer and with Walid Khalidi's assessment of the Israeli documentary

record,⁵² runs counter to standard Zionist assertions that purely military (rather than political-demographic) objectives guided the Haganah's expulsion policy. This article will not explore this controversy.⁵³ Suffice it here to emphasize that Haganah policy and Mahal involvement converged in 1948 in the expulsion of thousands of Palestinians from their homes.

Plan D, which spelled out the Haganah policy of offensive transfer, was finalized in early March. The plan set the framework for a broad assault, specifically mandating extensive expulsion of Palestinians: "In the event of resistance, the armed force must be wiped out and the population must be expelled outside the borders of the state"; and the razing of their villages: "Destruction of villages (setting fire to, blowing up, and planting mines in the debris), especially those population centers which are difficult to control continuously."⁵⁴ Orders were given and an assault force three times larger than any used in previous Haganah operations was assembled.⁵⁵ Thus poised, the Haganah initiated Plan D on 5 April with the launch of Operation Nachshon.

Official Israeli accounts generally describe Operation Nachshon as an effort to lift the siege on the Jewish section of Jerusalem (to free it from "the Arab noose choking the city," as Yigal Allon put it).⁵⁶ More to the point, it was an assault aimed at incorporating the Jerusalem area—which under UN General Assembly Resolution 181 was to be an internationalized zone—within the Jewish state, and at linking it with the coastal plains where Jewish settlement was concentrated. This meant occupying a wide swath of Palestinian villages.⁵⁷ Ethnic cleansing was the plan's obvious corollary. Thus launched on a wide scale, it continued with the additional dozen operations executed within the Plan D framework through May.

In this setting, groups of Mahal recruits began arriving in April. Their incorporation into fighting units took two main forms: the placement on an individual basis of veterans with specific expertise and the wholesale integration of groups into preexisting units. The two forms will be illustrated here with reference to early recruits from Canada.

Ben Dunkelman had fought with the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada during World War II and had received intensive officer's combat training in the use of mortars in Britain. He was recruited by the Haganah in 1947 and arrived in Palestine in early April 1948. Dunkelman participated ad hoc in a variety of operations before being assigned in May to the Planning Staff of the Palmach's Harel Brigade. In this capacity, he claims primary responsibility for the progress of Operation Maccabi.

Like Operation Nachshon, Maccabi was intended to establish a "Jerusalem Corridor" cleared of Palestinian villages and Arab irregulars. Its primary consequence was the capture of Bayt Mahsir, a village of approximately 2,000 people located in the hills south of the main road to Jerusalem. Bayt Mahsir was subjected to sustained artillery fire and aerial attacks before falling to Palmach troops on the morning of 11 May.⁵⁸ Dunkelman attributes defeat of the village, which had stood firm in the face of previous

attacks, to his insistence on a surprise predawn assault relying on “heavy covering fire from a Davidka mortar” (a Haganah artillery piece whose inaccurate, notoriously loud 40-kilo shells—filled with nails and other assorted shrapnel—had a crucial “morale-shattering” effect, in his words).⁵⁹ Hours after the village was taken, the Harel Brigade reported to Haganah Chief of Operations Yigal Yadin that “we are currently blowing up the houses. We have already blown up 60–70 houses.”⁶⁰ Eventually, the entire village was destroyed.

Dunkelman was a critical admirer of Haganah artillery, praising the Davidka as “one of the wonders of the 1948 war.”⁶¹ But he was eager to introduce more advanced equipment and techniques. To this end, he approached Ben-Gurion and came away from their meeting with “full and complete authority over all phases of the operation: production, distribution, and training of crews.”⁶² Ben-Gurion’s memoirs confirm that he authorized Dunkelman “to deal with the production of 6-inch mortars.”⁶³ The Canadian artillery expert was thus intimately involved in developing one of the main assault weapons used by Israeli forces to depopulate Palestinian communities over the next several months.

In contrast to Dunkelman’s individual deployment in specialized roles, twenty-seven Canadian volunteers arriving in Palestine around the same time were lodged together at a Haganah training camp before being assigned to the Giv’ati Brigade.⁶⁴ The Giv’ati Brigade, which had been the anchor of Operation Nachshon, continued to play a prominent part in Haganah offensives.⁶⁵ The recruits arrived at their post just as the Giv’ati Brigade attacked the village of `Aqir on 4 May.⁶⁶ They soon comprised around half of one of the two companies constituted as the 52nd Battalion. A few days later, the Giv’ati Brigade launched “Operation Barak,” aimed at extending its control of the coastal area west of Lydda and Ramla. The offensive, which pushed deep into the Gaza district, targeted such Palestinian centers as Isdud (now Ashdod), Majdal (now Ashkelon), and Yibna in what Giv’ati headquarters described as an effort “to force the Arab inhabitants ‘to move’.”⁶⁷ Yibna and many smaller villages in the area were conquered and depopulated in this operation. On 11 May, the 52nd Battalion with its “Canadian platoon” spearheaded the depopulation and destruction of Bashshit, a Palestinian village with more than 1,600 residents.⁶⁸

In sum, the onset of Mahal involvement in the Haganah was intertwined with the bolstering of its capacities, the expansion of its sphere of operations, and the turn toward widespread ethnic cleansing, which together framed its activity in early 1948. By the time the British Mandate ended, the forcible depopulation of Palestinian communities within territory seized by the Haganah had become a well established pattern—one that Mahal recruits had participated in setting.

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BUILD-UP OF THE ISRAELI AIR FORCE AND ARMORED CORPS

On 14 May 1948, Israel declared statehood. The next day—the formal end of the Mandate—the neighboring Arab countries deployed regular expeditionary forces to Palestine. The new Israeli government formalized the establishment of the IAF and moved to consolidate full authority over all Zionist military organizations through the creation of a unified Israel Defense Forces (IDF).⁶⁹

Expansion of the IAF addressed one area where the Haganah faced a potentially serious challenge following the entry of Arab state forces into the fighting. Until then, the aerial component of the fighting was one-sided. For months, and notwithstanding the constraints placed on Zionist activities by the British, the Haganah Air Service, its light aircraft equipped with machine guns and hand-thrown explosives, flew combat missions with impunity in loose conjunction with Haganah ground forces.⁷⁰ After 15 May, however, planes of the Royal Egyptian Air Force could down Israel's improvised bombers, and for a time IAF operations were forced into the night.⁷¹ Egypt was even able to deploy improvised bombers of its own: On 18 May, Tel Aviv's central bus station was hit, killing an estimated forty-two people.⁷²

Israeli aerial vulnerability was short-lived. Despite a UN-imposed military embargo on Palestine, weaponry and personnel from abroad continued to pour into the country through 1948, relying on stealth and the benign neglect (or purchased cooperation) of authorities in jurisdictions around the world. The principal transport hub for this circuitous procurement was a former Luftwaffe airfield at Zatec, Czechoslovakia, and within days of the end of the Mandate modified German "Messerschmitt" fighter planes procured by the Haganah via Zatec arrived and were soon deployed to deflect Egyptian raids. By the end of May, the IAF was in a position to bomb not only Palestinian villages (e.g., Isdud, Lydda, Ramla, and Ramallah) and Arab state forces in Palestine, but also the Jordanian capital of Amman; on 10–11 June two tons of explosives were dropped on Damascus.⁷³ From Zatec, where a largely American group of volunteers operated under the auspices of Czech authorities, an assortment of transport planes including several C-46 Commandos procured from the U.S. War Assets Administration formed an air bridge to Palestine.⁷⁴ Aerial arms shipments began on the eve of Operation Nachshon and continued through the summer (often with new recruits aboard).

After less than a month of regular military engagements that did little to slow the dispossession of the Palestinians, the first truce between Israel and the regular Arab forces went into effect on 11 June, lasting until 8 July. The truce provided the occasion for a new wave of Israeli military reorganization during which command was further centralized under Ben-Gurion. At the same time, new equipment and Mahal recruits were used to bolster Israeli air power and lay the foundation for an Israeli armored corps.

With the onset of the truce, the IAF prepared to establish definitive aerial dominance. Among the IAF's many acquisitions during the truce were three

B-17 “Flying Fortress” bombers, procured at the initiative of the American Mahal operative Al Schwimmer (who went on to found Israel Aircraft Industries) and prepared for combat under the command of Mahal recruit Ray Kurtz, commander of a B-17 squadron for the U.S. Air Force during World War II.⁷⁵ Veteran-flown aircraft, now including fighter planes and heavy bombers, would be deployed throughout Palestine to deadly effect.⁷⁶

Meanwhile, the IDF established an armored corps in which Mahal personnel factored prominently. It founded its first regular armored unit—the 8th Brigade—and reinforced the 7th Brigade with heavier equipment. The 8th Brigade consisted of one tank battalion and one commando battalion (the 82nd and 89th, respectively). The 82nd Tank Battalion was mostly staffed by recruits from Britain, South Africa, and Russia and was organized into two companies, one “English” and one “Russian.”⁷⁷ The reinforced 7th Brigade—which according to one Israeli lieutenant colonel “was to become the IDF’s foremost armored formation in later wars”—was placed under Dunkelmann’s command, and Mahal recruits were posted throughout its ranks.⁷⁸ Indeed, the 7th included perhaps the largest concentration of English-speaking Mahal of any unit outside the IAF: 170 during the summer and approximately 300 by the fall.⁷⁹

On 9 July, the first truce collapsed. Extended fighting raged for a week and a half before commencement of a second, still shakier interstate ceasefire. The period between the two ceasefires, defined by rapid Israeli advances in which Mahal personnel helped bring heavier equipment to bear in the conquest and depopulation of Palestinian communities, is known in Israeli historiography as “the Ten Days.”

FROM LYDDA TO SAFFURIYYA

The two main components of the Ten Days offensive (9–18 July) were “Operation Dani” in central Palestine and “Operation Dekel” in the north. Mahal-heavy armored and aerial units participated in both. Operation Dani aggressively hammered the emerging boundary of the West Bank inland from the coast in a series of large-scale attacks and harsh expulsions targeting the Palestinian towns Lydda and Ramla; Operation Dekel extended the Israeli-controlled coastal strip in the north into the central Galilee and occupied Nazareth. Both operations were executed well beyond the boundaries of the Jewish state mandated by Resolution 181.

Operation Dani had originally been named “Operation Mickey” in honor of U.S. Col. Marcus, killed the previous month, but the name was changed amidst concerns that it may have been leaked.⁸⁰ Its main objective was the conquest of Lydda and Ramla, which had thus far been successfully defended by their inhabitants (operating with limited support from regular Arab armies). A large composite force was assembled for the attack, including the 8th (Armored) Brigade (with its 82nd and 89th battalions), units from four others, and a range of aerial and artillery units, all operating under the

command of Yigal Allon. The 8th Brigade formed part of the northern arm of a pincer movement aimed at encircling the two communities, severing them from the West Bank and conquering this heavily populated swath of territory.

Lydda, whose population had more than doubled to 50,000 as a result of the influx of refugees from occupied villages nearby, had resiliently fended off previous attacks. Spiro Munayyer, a volunteer with the town militia, recounts: “The people were conscious of the gravity of the situation and, after what had happened in other cities, were well aware that this war would determine whether they would be able to remain in their city and homeland.”⁸¹ However, the only regular forces deployed in defense of Lydda (and Ramla) were the 125 soldiers of the Transjordanian Arab Legion’s Fifth Infantry Company—hardly a sufficient reinforcement for irregular defenders facing an assault force which Walid Khalidi estimates as 8,000 strong.⁸²

The attack began after nightfall on 9 July with the advance of ground forces and sustained aerial bombardment of Lydda and Ramla that continued, alongside artillery strikes, through 10 July.⁸³ Contrary to the initial plan, the 89th (Commando) Battalion made quicker progress than the tanks of the 82nd, punching through Lydda’s defenses with a column of jeeps and half-tracks in a devastating 11 July raid during which as many as 200 Palestinians were killed.⁸⁴ The Arab Legion company soon withdrew and the town was overrun and occupied. Early the next day, the IDF carried out another major massacre, killing some 250 Palestinians while losing only 3–4 soldiers to Palestinian resistance in the process.⁸⁵ Yigal Allon proudly notes: “The lesson was not lost on Ramle; on 12 July, Ramle surrendered to the IDF.”⁸⁶ The inhabitants of both towns were expelled eastward in massive waves of tens of thousands. Historian Aref al-Aref, who conducted interviews with refugees soon after the expulsions, estimates that 350 died from heat and thirst during the forced march into the West Bank.⁸⁷

While the 82nd Tank Battalion (with its “English company”) did not play as infamous a role as the 89th, it did participate in the occupation, depopulation, and destruction of villages in the area and in at least some of the documented abuses that followed.⁸⁸ Records based on participants’ accounts are unlikely to be complete in this regard, but there is little reason to presume that the Mahal present during the offensive’s killings and expulsions were mere witnesses.⁸⁹ Nor do 82nd Battalion veteran and Israeli journalist Amos Kenan’s reflections on the pervasiveness of rape in Dani’s aftermath— “At night, those of us who couldn’t restrain ourselves would go into the prison compounds to fuck Arab women”—suggest that his Mahal-heavy unit was detached from such crimes.⁹⁰

In the north, meanwhile, sustained bombing raids by Israeli aircraft targeted central Galilee villages in the Nazareth district (defended only by village militias and forces from the all-volunteer ALA) beginning the night of 8–9 July.⁹¹ The following night, 7th Brigade units supported by the Carmeli Brigade’s 21st Battalion initiated Operation Dekel, capturing an ALA position

at Tall Kiswan and occupying Kuwaykat, a village of over 1,000 people.⁹² One villager recalled: “We were awakened by the loudest noise we had ever heard, shells exploding and artillery fire . . . the whole village was in panic . . . women were screaming, children were crying . . . Most of the villagers began to flee with their pajamas on.”⁹³ Two people were killed and two wounded during the bombardment. “I don’t know whether the artillery softening up of the village caused casualties,” a company commander from the 21st Battalion later reflected, “but the psychological effect was achieved and the village’s non-combatants fled before we began the assault.”⁹⁴ Indeed, throughout this offensive, heavy mortar fire preceded the occupation of villages—hardly surprising given 7th Brigade commander Dunkelmann’s particular expertise.⁹⁵

On 13 July, the 7th Brigade launched the major offensive toward Nazareth, capturing Shafa `Amr on 14 July (in what may have been the most dramatic instance of Druze collaboration with Zionist forces in 1948).⁹⁶ After capturing a number of smaller villages in the vicinity, the 7th pushed southeast from Shafa `Amr to conquer Nazareth itself on 16 July.

Dunkelmann’s objection to the depopulation of Nazareth is well established. According to Ben-Gurion, Moshe Carmel, commander of the northern front, gave an order “to uproot all the inhabitants at Nazareth.”⁹⁷ Dunkelmann—mulling the fate of “one of the most sanctified shrines of the Christian world” and wary of the “severe international repercussions” of rash action⁹⁸—asked for higher authorization. His immediate superior thus asked the IDF General Staff for a ruling: “Tell me immediately, urgently, whether to expel the inhabitants from the city of Nazareth. In my view all, save for clerics, should be expelled.”⁹⁹ Ben-Gurion vetoed the expulsion, and the inhabitants remained.

Dunkelmann’s scruples in the case of Nazareth (apparently stemming from fears of diplomatic fallout over the expulsion of Christians) did not prevent him from participating in the depopulation of Palestinian communities elsewhere. Just prior to the attack on Nazareth, for example, Dunkelmann and his 7th Brigade had taken the lead in capturing the predominantly Muslim village of Saffuriyya, whose population of over 4,000 had been swollen by an additional 2,500 refugees from Shafa `Amr. Historian Nafez Nazzal quotes one of the villagers, the quartermaster of the Saffuriyya militia, describing the nighttime assault of 15–16 July:

Three Jewish planes flew over the village and dropped barrels filled with explosives, metal fragments, nails and glass. They were very loud and disrupting . . . They shook the whole village, broke windows, doors, killed or wounded some of the villagers and many of the village livestock. We expected a war but not an air and tank war.¹⁰⁰

The advancing ground forces also targeted the village with artillery, and most of its inhabitants fled under the pressure of these attacks. (Those who remained were also eventually expelled.)¹⁰¹

Indeed, far from being a model of restraint, Dunkelmann's 7th Brigade in due course positioned itself alongside the 89th Battalion as one of the crueller combat forces of the period. Ilan Pappé writes: "In many of the Palestinian oral histories that have now come to the fore, few brigade names appear. However, Brigade Seven is mentioned again and again, together with such adjectives as 'terrorist' and 'barbarous.'"¹⁰² While Operation Dekel had its devastating components, worse from the 7th Brigade was still to come.

AERIAL CLEANSING IN THE SOUTH, "MASS MURDER" IN THE NORTH

Prominent Mahal participation in various components of the emerging Israeli military system continued until the signing of the 1949 armistice agreements, which set Israel's de facto borders until June 1967. Two significant episodes from October–November 1948 will serve as examples: IAF participation in establishing the territorial and demographic reality that is the contemporary Gaza Strip; and 7th Brigade participation in the conquest of the Upper Galilee.

In the south, the summer ended with Egyptian forces still in control of a significant swath of territory along Palestine's coast up to Isdud and linked to the West Bank through a corridor to the Hebron area (to the southwest of which Israeli forces controlled

much of the Negev). This situation, combined with UN proposals that Israel forgo claims to the Negev in return for annexation of the Galilee, threatened to halt Israeli expansion in the south. Israel's response was to launch a major offensive in mid-October. Operation Yoav hammered away at the sizeable Gaza district, reducing it to the current dimensions of the Gaza Strip while tripling the Strip's population through the large-scale cleansing of adjacent areas.¹⁰³ Here the IAF—predominantly a Mahal force—was deployed on an unprecedented scale.

The aerial component of the campaign, at its height from 15 to 19 October, involved relentless attacks on Palestinian population centers and Egyptian forces alike. Israeli bombers dropped a total of 151 tons of explosives, including napalm.¹⁰⁴ Various communities that were ultimately conquered (e.g., Majdal) were in large part depopulated by aerial (alongside naval) attacks; communities within the contemporary Gaza Strip itself were no less ruthlessly bombarded.¹⁰⁵ The IAF then turned its attention to the north, where it helped complete the conquest of the Galilee with literally no aerial opposition.

By this time, most of northern Palestine was already under Israeli control. But a pocket of resistance remained in the Upper Galilee. This was the target of Operation Hiram. After a week of heavy aerial bombardment of villages in the remaining pocket (beginning 22 October), the main ground operation was launched by the 7th Brigade, which over the next three days carried out operations marked by widespread expulsions, massacres, and rape.

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The plan for Operation Hiram centered on Sa`sa`, a village located at a particularly strategic junction. "If you control these crossroads," a leading Haganah planner had earlier advised Dunkelmann, "you control the whole of Galilee!"¹⁰⁶ Beginning the night of 28–29 October, units from four brigades were deployed in the assault, with the three 7th Brigade battalions under Dunkelmann operating on the northeastern front of a pincer movement aimed at conquering Sa`sa` and enclosing the major part of the resisting "pocket" to its south. Pushing northwest from Safad, the 7th Brigade rapidly occupied the villages of Qaddita, Mirun, Safsaf, and Jish.¹⁰⁷ Nafez Nazzal relays a Palestinian woman's recollection of the aftermath of the overnight shelling and Safsaf's occupation on 29–30 October:

As we lined up, a few Jewish soldiers ordered four girls to accompany them to carry water for the soldiers. Instead, they took them to our empty houses and raped them. About 70 of our men were blindfolded and shot to death, one after the other, in front of us. The soldiers took their bodies and threw them on the cement covering of the village's spring and dumped sand on them.¹⁰⁸

Jish was also subjected to large-scale killing and looting.¹⁰⁹

After these initial conquests, the 7th Brigade split. The 71st Battalion occupied al-Ras al-Ahmar, Rihaniya, `Alma, and Dayshum, and the 72nd and 79th battalions moved west to occupy Sa`sa` itself (where they again committed "mass murder," according to Israel Galili, former head of Haganah National Staff).¹¹⁰ The 72nd and 79th then attacked a series of points along the border with Lebanon, conquering a string of Palestinian villages as far east as al-Malikiyya and making cross-border incursions as far into Lebanon as the Litani River. In Saliha, they committed another massacre; the diary of Jewish National Fund official Yosef Nahmani, writes Benny Morris, "refers to '60–70' men and women murdered after they 'had raised a white flag'."¹¹¹ More than 50,000 refugees are reported to have been pushed out of Palestine by Operation Hiram.¹¹²

In internal IDF discussions as the operation concluded, Dunkelmann expressed continued reservations about expelling Christians.¹¹³ Meanwhile, he and the hundreds of Mahal recruits under his command emerged with impunity from a campaign that subjected predominantly Muslim villages to mass killings and expulsion into Lebanon.

CONCLUSION

The record of Mahal recruits forms an important part of the history of cross-continental participation in the Zionist enterprise, extending from its inception to the present. This history cannot be separated from the processes of colonization and dispossession that have devastated Palestine. In recent decades, much progress has been made in challenging the "heroic" narrative

of the Zionist war effort of 1948. In light of the research that is now available, the expulsions and other atrocities that characterized many of the operations in which these recruits participated should be impossible to ignore.

Indeed, the persistence of coercive Israeli “demographic” policies and the renewed salience of transfer proposals within Israeli political discourse over the past decade necessitate serious examination of this history as more than a scholarly exercise.¹¹⁴ In 1948, Mahal involvement formed part of an international setting that proved conducive to the displacement and exclusion of Palestinians by the force of Israeli military power. This history may serve as a reminder of the need to develop an international climate more obstructive of such policies in the years ahead.

ENDNOTES

1. David Bercuson, *The Secret Army* (Toronto: Lester and Orpin Dennys, 1983), p. 233.

2. Craig Weiss and Jeffrey Weiss, *I Am My Brother's Keeper: American Volunteers in Israel's War of Independence, 1947-1949* (Atglen: Schiffer Publishing, 1998), p. 5.

3. Weiss and Weiss, *I Am My Brother's Keeper*, p. 21.

4. See for example Ben Dunkelman, *Dual Allegiance: An Autobiography* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1976); Harold Livingston, *No Trophy, No Sword: An American Volunteer in the Israeli Air Force During the 1948 War of Independence* (Chicago: Edition Q, Inc., 1994); Gordon Levett, *Flying Under Two Flags: An Ex-RAF Pilot in Israel's War of Independence* (London: Frank Cass, 1994); Boris Senior, *New Heavens: My Life as a Fighter Pilot and a Founder of the Israeli Air Force* (Washington: Potomac Books, 2005). See also A. Joseph Heckelman, *American Volunteers and Israel's War of Independence* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1974).

5. Dunkelman, *Dual Allegiance*, p. xii.

6. Netanel Lorch, *Israel's War of Independence, 1947-1949*, 2nd ed. (Hartford: Hartmore House, 1968), p. 388.

7. Bercuson, *The Secret Army*, p. xiii; Benny Morris, *1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), p. 85.

8. Yaacov Markovitzky, *Mahal: Overseas Volunteers in Israel's War*

of Independence, Internet Edition (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Education Israel Information Center, 2007), p. 7.

9. Avi Shlaim suggests “a peak of 96,441” by December 1948; “Israel and the Arab Coalition in 1948,” in Eugene L. Rogan and Avi Shlaim, eds., *The War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 81. Amitzur Ilan records an Israeli “Formal Order of Battle” in October 1948 of 88,000; see *The Origin of the Arab-Israeli Arms Race: Arms, Embargo, Military Power and Decision in the 1948 Palestine War* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), p. 67. This source is cited in David Tal, *War in Palestine 1948: Strategy and Diplomacy* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 5. For further figures, see Walid Khalidi, *From Haven to Conquest: Readings in Zionism and the Palestine Problem Until 1948* (Washington: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2005), pp. 861-66.

10. David Ben-Gurion, *Israel: A Personal History* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls/Sabra Books, 1971), p. 267.

11. Avi Shlaim's designation of the narrative nurtured by official Zionist historiography, “Israel and the Arab Coalition,” p. 79. Autobiographical Mahal accounts and focused studies such as those cited above have supplemented more fragmented treatment of the topic by Israeli military historians. See for example Lorch, *Israel's War of Independence, 1947-1949*; Ezer Weizman, *On Eagles' Wings: The Personal Story of the Leading Commander of the Israeli Air Force* (London: Weidenfeld and

Nicolson, 1976); David Eshel, *Chariots of the Desert: The Story of the Israeli Armored Corps* (London: Brassey's Defense Publishers, 1989); Uri Milstein, trans. Alan Sacks, *History of Israel's War of Independence* (New York: University Press of America, 1998).

12. This article relies on existing studies of the character and effect of Zionist military action against Palestinians, notably Nafez Nazzal, *The Palestinian Exodus from Galilee, 1948* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1978); Walid Khalidi, ed., *All that Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948* (Washington: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992); Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); and Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2006). This article extends in part from a piece published by ZNet. See "60 Years Later: Canada and the Origins of the Israel-Palestine Conflict," *ZNet*, 4 May 2008, accessed at www.zmag.org/znet/viewArticle/17552.

13. For an analysis of this process, see Khalidi, *From Haven to Conquest*, p. xlviii.

14. Ernest Stock, *Partners and Pursustrings: A History of the United Israel Appeal* (New York: University Press of America/Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 1987), pp. 35, 127.

15. For details, see Alysia Dortort and Daniel Elazar, *Understanding the Jewish Agency: A Handbook* (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 1985).

16. See for example David Ben-Gurion, "Britain's Contribution to Arming the Haganah," in Khalidi, *From Haven to Conquest*, pp. 371-74.

17. This preference was clearly manifest in 1948. See Yigal Allon, "Learning from Experience," in Yigal Allon, ed., *The Making of Israel's Army* (London: Vallentine, Mitchell & Co.), pp. 222-24.

18. Nur Masalha, *Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of "Transfer" in Zionist Political Thought, 1882-1948* (Washington: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992). Ben-Gurion's blunt statements favoring transfer are also recorded by his sympathetic biographer,

Shabtai Teveth, in *Ben-Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs: From Peace to War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); for example, "We must expel Arabs and take their places." (p. 189).

19. Masalha, *Expulsion of the Palestinians*, pp. 107-8.

20. Teveth, *Ben-Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs*, p. 193. See the discussion in Walid Khalidi, "Revisiting the UNGA Partition Resolution," in Ilan Pappé, ed., *The Israel/Palestine Question: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 99.

21. Allon Gal, *David Ben-Gurion and the American Alignment for a Jewish State* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1991), p. 40.

22. Gal, *David Ben-Gurion*, p. 201.

23. Gal, *David Ben-Gurion*, p. 154, based on a review of the U.S. Zionist press from 1930 to 1941.

24. Stock, *Partners*, p. 127.

25. The classic (if wholly uncritical) work on this subject is Leonard Slater, *The Pledge* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970).

26. Ricky-Dale Calhoun, "Arming David: The Haganah's Illegal Arms Procurement Network in the United States, 1945-1949," *JPS* 36, no. 4 (Summer 2007), pp. 22-32.

27. Gal, *David Ben-Gurion*, p. 202.

28. Amikam Nachmani, *Great Power Discord in Palestine: The Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry into the Problems of European Jewry and Palestine, 1945-1946* (London: Frank Cass, 1987), p. 256.

29. Tal, *War in Palestine 1948*, p. 24.

30. Tal, *War in Palestine 1948*, p. 31.

31. Thousands of Jews from Palestine had enlisted with the British army during World War II.

32. Bercuson, *The Secret Army*, pp. 53, 72. In April, the Committee's activities were subsumed under the authority of the Haganah's Manpower Department.

33. Bercuson, *The Secret Army*, p. 36.

34. Markovitzky, *Mahal*, p. 16;

Bercuson, *The Secret Army*, p. 53.

Bercuson suggests that South African recruitment initially fell outside the main international structure.

35. Dunkelman, *Dual Allegiance*, p. 151; Bercuson, *The Secret Army*, p. 61.

36. Hannah Torok-Yablonka, "The Recruitment of Holocaust Survivors

during the War of Independence," *Journal of Israeli History* 13, no. 1 (1992), p. 43.

37. Brian Cull, Shlomo Aloni and David Nicolle, *Spitfires over Israel: The First Authoritative Account of Air Conflict During the Israeli War of Independence, 1948-1949* (Boston, MA: Grub Street, 1994), pp. 287-88.

38. Lorch, *Israel's War of Independence, 1947-1949*, p. 285.

39. See for example Bercuson, *The Secret Army*, pp. 58-59, 99.

40. Certain recruits designated as Mahal arrived earlier, some joining the Haganah and Palmach on naval vessels challenging British immigration restrictions and others helping to develop the Haganah Air Service.

41. Eshel, *Chariots of the Desert*, p. 17; Bercuson, *The Secret Army*, p. 183; Lorch, *Israel's War of Independence, 1947-1949*, p. 390. Nazzal, *The Palestinian Exodus from Galilee, 1948*, refers (p. 22) to the 7th in its entirety as the "Anglo-Saxon Brigade."

42. Bercuson, *The Secret Army*, p. 52.

43. Lorch, *Israel's War of Independence, 1947-1949*, p. 222; Milstein, *History of Israel's War of Independence*, p. 219.

44. Weiss and Weiss, *I Am My Brother's Keeper*, p. 132.

45. Cull, Aloni and Nicolle, *Spitfires*, p. 71.

46. Weizman, *On Eagles' Wings*, p. 48; Senior, *New Heavens*, p. 103.

47. Bill Norton, *Air War on the Edge: A History of the Israel Air Force and its Aircraft Since 1947* (Leicestershire, UK: Midland Publishing, 2002) pp. 12-13.

48. See Lon Nordeen, *Fighters Over Israel* (New York: Orion Books, 1990), p. 14.

49. For details, see Khalidi, "Revisiting the UNGA Partition Resolution."

50. For the English text, see Walid Khalidi, "Plan Dalet: Master Plan for the Conquest of Palestine," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 18, no. 1 (Autumn 1988), pp. 20-23.

51. Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, p. 16).

52. Masalha, *Expulsion of the Palestinians*, especially pp. 181-99; Khalidi, "Plan Dalet."

53. "It might be asked," writes Gabriel Piterberg of this debate, "whether ethnic-cleansing-as-result . . . is not, empirically

and ethically, as important as cleansing-as-intention." *The Returns of Zionism: Myths, Politics and Scholarship in Israel* (London: Verso, 2008), p. 56.

54. Walid Khalidi, "Text of Plan Dalet (Plan D), 10 March 1948: General Section," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 18, no. 1 (Autumn 1988), p. 29.

55. Gunther E. Rothenberg, *The Anatomy of the Israeli Army* (London: BT Batsford), p. 48.

56. Yigal Allon, *Shield of David: The Story of Israel's Armed Forces* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970), p. 196.

57. See map in Khalidi, *All that Remains*, p. 264.

58. Senior, *New Heavens*, p. 154; Dunkelman, *Dual Allegiance*, pp. 213-14.

59. Dunkelman, *Dual Allegiance*, p. 213.

60. Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, p. 140.

61. Dunkelman, *Dual Allegiance*, p. 195.

62. Dunkelman, *Dual Allegiance* pp. 224-25.

63. Ben-Gurion, *Israel*, p. 116.

64. For details, see Bercuson, *The Secret Army*, pp. 99-101.

65. Giv'ati Brigade commander Shimon Avidan served as overall commander of Operation Nachshon; Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, p. 233.

66. The attack on `Aqir precipitated the exodus of approximately 3,000 Palestinians, according to a *New York Times* report cited in Khalidi, *All that Remains*, p. 360.

67. Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, p. 256.

68. Mahal accounts of this attack are detailed in Bercuson, *The Secret Army*, pp. 102-6.

69. The IDF was formally established on 28 May, and it absorbed the Revisionist militias. Many Mahal recruits sympathized with the Revisionists; notably, when Ben-Gurion moved against an Irgun naval arms shipment in June in order to establish full authority over the Zionist armed forces (in what is now known as the Altalena affair), it was partly the outright refusal of Mahal air-crew to obey orders to prepare for action against the Irgun vessel that forced

- Ben-Gurion to employ artillery from the shore. Cull, Aloni and Nicolle, *Spitfires*, p. 176. For more details on the Mahal and the Altalena affair—including foreign recruits on the Irgun side, for example the Altalena's American captain and Canadian gun captain—see Bercuson, *The Secret Army*, pp. 149–51; Weiss and Weiss, *I Am My Brother's Keeper*, pp. 143–52.
70. For examples, see Cull, Aloni and Nicolle, *Spitfires*, p. 100; Eliezer Cohen, *Israel's Best Defense: The First Full Story of the Israeli Air Force* (New York: Orion Books, 1993), pp. 12, 14.
71. Cull, Aloni and Nicolle, *Spitfires*, p. 148.
72. Lorch, *Israel's War of Independence, 1947–1949*, p. 264.
73. Cull, Aloni and Nicolle, *Spitfires*, pp. 154, 165.
74. Cull, Aloni and Nicolle, *Spitfires*, pp. 73, 149.
75. Cull, Aloni and Nicolle, *Spitfires*, p. 173; Bishara A. Bahbah, "Israel's Private Arms Network," *MERIP Middle East Report*, no. 144 (Jan.–Feb. 1987), p. 9.
76. On the basis of interviews with Palestinian refugees, Birzeit University's Saleh Abdel Jawad concludes that "aerial bombardment was one of the deadliest forms of killing since July 1948, especially in southern Palestine and the central Galilee." "Zionist Massacres: The Creation of the Palestinian Refugee Problem in the 1948 War," in Eyal Benvenisti et al., eds., *Israel and the Palestinian Refugees* (New York: Springer, 2007), p. 66.
77. Eshel, *Chariots of the Desert*, pp. 13–14, 17.
78. Eshel, *Chariots of the Desert*, p. 19.
79. Markovitzky, *Mahal*, p. 31.
80. Lorch, *Israel's War of Independence, 1947–1949*, p. 334.
81. Spiro Munayyer, with an introduction by Walid Khalidi, "The Fall of Lydda," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 27, no. 4 (Summer 1998), p. 88.
82. Munayyer with Khalidi, "The Fall of Lydda," p. 81.
83. Lorch, *Israel's War of Independence, 1947–1949*, p. 335.
84. Munayyer with Khalidi, "The Fall of Lydda," p. 92; Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* p. 426.
85. Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, p. 428.
86. Allon, *Sbield of David*, p. 217.
87. Munayyer with Khalidi, "The Fall of Lydda," p. 82.
88. The 82nd Brigade appears to have participated in the occupations of Dayr Tarif (where its advance was delayed early in Operation Dani) and Barfiliya, and in the destruction of al-Tira and 'Inabba. Khalidi, *All that Remains*, pp. 356, 361, 379. Following the expulsions, it was under orders from Yitzhak Rabin to respond to any returning villagers with live fire, and it was additionally accused by the local Israeli military governor of unauthorized looting. Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* pp. 442, 459 (n. 176), 454 (n. 86).
89. Some of their reactions as witnesses are recorded in Bercuson, *The Secret Army*, pp. 166–67.
90. Amos Kenan, "The Legacy of Lydda: Four Decades of Blood Vengeance," *The Nation*, February 6 1989, pp. 155–56. Discussed in Norman Finkelstein, "Rejoinder to Benny Morris," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 21, no. 2 (Winter 1992), pp. 70–71.
91. Cull, Aloni and Nicolle, *Spitfires*, p. 182.
92. Dunkelmann, *Dual Allegiance*, p. 244; Nazzal, *The Palestinian Exodus from Galilee, 1948*, p. 24.
93. Nazzal, *The Palestinian Exodus from Galilee, 1948*, pp. 72–73.
94. Khalidi, *All that Remains*, p. 22.
95. Khalidi, *All that Remains*, p. 19.
96. Referring in particular to the role of his subordinate Joe Weiner—"a former permanent force sergeant-major in the Canadian artillery who had been with me in the mortars"—Dunkelman describes his tactical reliance on this planned circumventing of village defenses: "Everything went according to plan. While the Moslem section was being shelled, the assault force—the 79th Armored Battalion under Joe Weiner, with two companies from Arele Yariv's 21st Battalion—approached the walls. They and the Druze defenders fired harmlessly over each other's heads. The attackers quietly passed through the Druze lines, entering the village and taking the Moslems from the rear. Within

a short time, the whole village was securely in our hands." *Dual Allegiance*, pp. 247, 261. See also Laila Parsons, *The Druze between Palestine and Israel, 1947-1949* (London: Macmillan Press, 2000), pp. 78-83.

97. Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, p. 419.

98. Dunkelman, *Dual Allegiance*, p. 266.

99. Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, p. 419.

100. Nazzal, *The Palestinian Exodus from Galilee, 1948*, quoting Salih Muhammed Nassir, p. 75.

101. Khalidi, *All that Remains*, p. 352.

102. Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, p. 158.

103. Strictly speaking, a further narrowing of the Strip occurred even after the armistice agreements of 1949. See Salman Abu-Sitta, *The Atlas of Palestine 1917-1966* (London: Palestine Land Society, 2010), p. 98. Concerning population increase, "tripling" is the calculation of Sara Roy, *The Gaza Strip: The Political Economy of De-development* (Washington: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1995), p. 15. Morris, in *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, suggests (pp. 472-473) an increase of 100,000 to 230,000.

104. Cull, Aloni and Nicolle, *Spitfires*, pp. 273, 263.

105. Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, p. 472; Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, p. 194. Intensive bombing of the area is chronicled in nearly all historical accounts which address the use of air power in 1948 Palestine.

106. Dunkelman, *Dual Allegiance*, p. 237. (The planner in question was Prof. Yohanan Ratner.) It is perhaps not coincidental that Sa' sa' was the target of one of the earliest Haganah atrocities in the area, committed the night of 14-15 February. Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, pp. 77-78.

107. Edgar O'Ballance, *The Arab-Israeli War, 1948* (London: Faber

and Faber, 1956), pp. 186-87; Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, p. 473.

108. Nazzal, *The Palestinian Exodus from Galilee, 1948*, quoting Umm Shahadah al-Salih, p. 95.

109. Morris cites Gershon Gil'ad, IDF intelligence officer for the northern front, who reported that "150-200" Arabs, 'including a number of civilians,' died in the battle for Jish." *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, p. 474. "Two days after the seizure of Jish," a member of the Knesset from the (Arabic) Nazareth Democratic List reported, "the army surrounded the village and carried out searches. In the course of the search soldiers robbed several of the houses and stole 605 pounds, jewelry and other valuables. When the people who were robbed insisted on being given receipts for their property, they were taken to a remote place and shot dead." Tom Segev, with Arlen Neal Weinstein, English ed., *1949: The First Israelis* (New York: The Free Press, 1986), p. 72.

110. Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, pp. 473-74; Khalidi, *All that Remains*, p. 497.

111. Another Israeli official refers to "94 in Saliha blown up in a house." Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, p. 500 (n. 118).

112. Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* p. 473.

113. Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, p. 477.

114. See Daryl Li, "The Gaza Strip as Laboratory: Notes in the Wake of Disengagement," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 35, no. 2 (Winter 2006), pp. 38-55; Jonathan Cook, *Blood and Religion: The Unmasking of the Jewish and Democratic State* (London: Pluto Press, 2006).