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The Arab Armies Converge

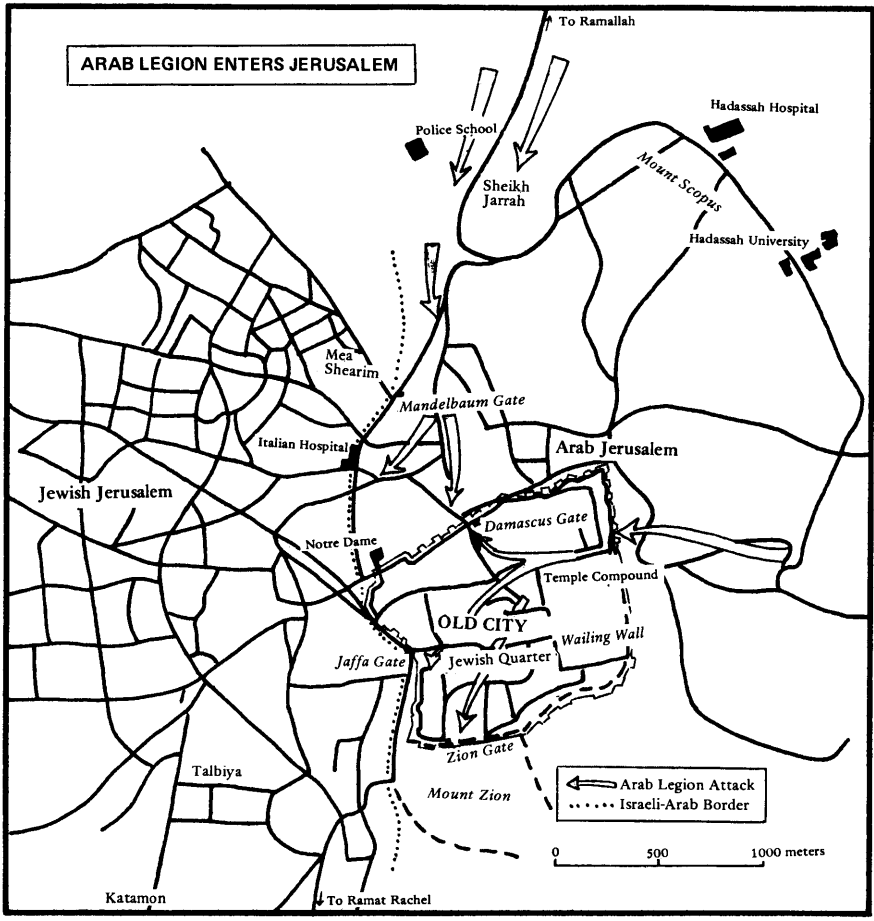
THE ARAB OBJECTIVES

On Friday, May 14, 1948, General Sir Alan Cunningham, the last British High Commissioner for Palestine, left the country. The British Mandate ended at midnight. The same afternoon, just before the Sabbath, the Jewish National Council, or General Zionist Council, at Tel Aviv proclaimed the independence of the State of Israel, effective at midnight, and appointed David Ben Gurion Prime Minister of the Provisional Government.

Actually, this meant no change—either in Tel Aviv or the areas of Palestine under Jewish control. Ben Gurion had for months been acting as prime minister of a *de facto* state, and on May 14 that state had in the field an army of nearly 40,000 mobilized full time troops, organized into twelve brigades. Arms, including aircraft, were arriving from overseas at a rapid rate. While there was no assurance of survival of the new state of Israel in the light of the threatening attitudes of the neighboring states, it was, at least for the time being, already viable and flourishing upon the date that it formally came into existence.

Within Palestine there were two threats to the survival of Israel. Neither was serious. The Arab Liberation Army under the command of Fawz el Kaukji had perhaps 10,000 men as its total strength, and nearly 6,000 actually in the Arab portion of Palestine. These consisted of about 2,500 Syrians, 2,500 Iraqis, 500 Lebanese and a handful of Yugoslav Moslems. There were in addition a number of bands of Arab irregulars of the Arab Army of Salvation scattered throughout the country. There were at least 50,000 armed Palestinian Arabs available for local defense, but the actual strength of AAS guerrilla contingents was between 5,000 and 10,000 men. However, the deaths of Mohammed el Huneiti and Abd el Kader el Husseini had ended any internal coherence or cohesion amongst the Palestinian fighting units.

By May 14 the military committee of the Arab League had failed to settle its internal disagreements in order to establish a united high command or a combined strategy. King Abdullah of Transjordan assumed the position of Commander in Chief of the United Arab Armies, but this was really a title without a role, since the military actions of each country



were governed by conflicting national policies rather than by any coordinated common plan of campaign.

However, there was a plan of sorts, really a kind of mutually-agreed staking out of claims by each of the invading nations.

The Lebanese contingent was to advance along the coast from Nakura to Nahariya. The Syrians, crossing the Jordan above the Sea of Galilee, would strike for Zemach. The Iraqi contingent would move from its concentration area west of Irbid in Transjordan to establish a bridgehead across the Jordan south of the Sea of Galilee, and then advance to Natania on the coast. The Jordanians had two objectives: One brigade of the Arab Legion would seize Nablus in central Samaria; a second brigade would advance to Ramle in the central coastal plain; the third brigade was to remain in reserve. The Egyptians, based on El Arish on the northern Sinai coast, also had two objectives: the main body would advance along the coastal road, with naval support if necessary, to seize Gaza and be prepared to advance further north toward Tel Aviv; the other contingent—Azziz's "Volunteers"—would strike northeastward across the upper Sinai through Auja and Beersheba to secure Hebron.

In accordance with this general agreement—it would be wrong to call it a plan—on May 15 five Arab armies crossed the borders of Palestine in a concerted, if not coordinated, invasion. The invasion was heralded by an Egyptian air attack on Tel Aviv. For the next 25 days the Haganah was engaged in a desperate effort to meet all five of these invasions, any one of which, if successful, could have destroyed the new state of Israel.

It is easy to discount the strength of the uncoordinated invaders, since with one exception they were weak, poorly trained, and badly organized. On the other hand, the concentric advance of the five contingents, combined with the assistance they were receiving from Kaukji's Arab Liberation Army and the local Arab levies, posed a truly serious threat. The Haganah, about as numerous as the combined strength of its foes, was severely outmatched in military hardware. All of the invaders had ample artillery and a variety of armored vehicles ranging from armored cars to modern tanks.

ISRAELI FORCES AND DEPLOYMENTS

There are no accurate statistics of the mobilized forces of the new state of Israel.¹ There seem to have been about 40,000 Jewish troops available for battle in nine operational brigades, with three more brigades in various stages of formation. The status of these units was as follows:

There were three Palmach brigades, about 2,000 men in each. The

¹ For an objective discussion of the inconsistencies among the sources, see Luttwak-Horowitz, p. 34, and footnote, and notes 71-73, pp. 404-405.

Yiftach Brigade was in eastern Galilee, facing Syria to the east, and Lebanon to the northwest. The Harel Brigade was in the Jerusalem Corridor. The smallest of these brigades, the Negev, or Hanegev Brigade, about 1500 strong, was responsible for the security of the semi-isolated Israeli Negev settlements, west and northwest of Beersheba.

Five HISH Brigades were also fully mobilized. The Golani Brigade, 2,238 men, was in southern Galilee, generally concentrated between Nazareth and Jenin. Further west, in the Haifa-Acre region, was the Carmeli Brigade of 4,095 men. Holding the thin strip of Jewish-controlled territory along the coast between Tel Aviv and Haifa were the 3,588 troops of the Alexandroni Brigade. The Kiryati Brigade, 2,504 strong, was north and northeast of Tel Aviv. The 3,229 troops of the Givati brigade were east and southeast of Tel Aviv, holding open the western approaches to the Jerusalem Corridor. In Jerusalem itself was the Etzioni Brigade, 3,166 men.²

Ben Gurion's diary lists the following additional forces available on May 15: Training Branch, 398; Air Force 675; Artillery 650; Engineers, 150; Military Police, 168; transport units, 1097; and new conscripts in training, 1,719.³

Presumably most of these new conscripts in training were members of the newly-established 7th Brigade, which was to be a mechanized unit. This brigade, commanded by Colonel Shlomo Shamir, had a cadre of veterans and was close to operational. It was already deployed west of the Jerusalem Corridor, and just south of the Givati Brigade. Also in the process of establishment in central Israel was the 8th Brigade, planned as an armored unit; commanded by Yitzhak Sadeh, consisted of an infantry battalion of former Lehi men, a tank battalion, with two tank companies of 13 mixed French, British and American tanks already at sea and en route to Israel, and a jeep commando battalion (soon to be commanded by Major Moshe Dayan). By May 15 this unit probably had close to 1500 men in training. Also assembling and training in the north was a new Oded Brigade, which also probably had about 1,500 men by this time.

Not included in Ben Gurion's figures are logistical or headquarters troops, which must have totalled at least 5,000 more active duty soldiers and officers. In addition to these 30,000-40,000 in the mobilized field forces, there were at least 10,000 additional registered HIM soldiers under partial mobilization, available for local security, and also capable of being employed in field operations in their home territory.

The sources are also conflicting in the lists of weapons available to

² These figures are contained in Ben Gurion's diary, *Medinat Israel*, quoted by Luttwak-Horowitz, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

³ *Ibid.*

these troops. However, not counting the heterogeneous collections of obsolescent small arms and mortars with which the HIM units were equipped, the weapons inventory of the field forces seems to have been approximately as follows:

There were approximately 33,000 infantry small arms, of which about 22,000 were rifles of several calibers, and 11,000 were submachine guns (mostly locally produced). There were 1,550 light and medium machine guns, and 877 mortars, almost all British, of which 195 were 3-inch caliber, the rest 2-inch. There were 86 hand-carried anti-tank weapons, mostly British PIAT (a crude British non-rocket version of the American "Bazooka"), the rest relatively ineffective antitank rifles. There were five old French 65mm howitzers, recently arrived in Israel, having eluded the British blockade; the vintage of these weapons is evident from the fact that fifty years earlier they had been displaced in the French Army by the famous "French 75," model 1897. In addition, as has been noted, 13 tanks were due soon to arrive by ship at Tel Aviv.⁴ There was also a handful of crudely constructed armored cars, mostly concentrated in the new 7th and 8th Brigades.

Balancing its assets and liabilities, the performance of the Haganah with these weapons in the next few weeks was to prove highly commendable, despite a number of "learning" mistakes.

THE LEBANESE FRONT

The Lebanese, wisely avoiding the possibility of isolation from the other Arab armies, and responding to "orders" from Abdullah of Transjordan, decided to make their initial move into Palestine by an advance against the western face of the finger of Galilee that extends northward up the Jordan and Huleh Valleys to Dan. This was the only instance in which Arab operations followed an overall plan, placing the Israelis under pressure simultaneously from two fronts, since the Syrians were crossing the Jordan into the eastern side of that finger, a few miles to the east and southeast.

This Lebanese invasion route lay through the Arab village of Malkiya. Having observed the concentration of the Lebanese contingent and anticipating its advance, during the night of May 14-15 a Palmach battalion from nearby Ramat Naftali attacked Malkiya and Kadesh, and had occupied both by morning. However, shortly after dawn, the Lebanese launched a counterattack eastward across the border on Malkiya with mortar support and forced the Israelis back with heavy casualties. Advancing in strength across the border, the Lebanese occupied the village,

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

and then began to maneuver to threaten nearby Kadesh. Recognizing the vulnerability of that position, the Palmach evacuated Kadesh the next day, and that town too was immediately taken by the Lebanese. Well satisfied with two successes in two days on Palestinian soil, the Lebanese army halted its advance and consolidated its position a few miles inside Palestine.

Not yet aware that the Lebanese advance had stopped, on the night of May 17-18 the Israelis finally took the police post at Nebi Yusha and began to organize this and nearby territory to block the road from Kadesh into the Huleh Valley.

Meanwhile, to the west and southwest the Israelis had been preparing against the possibility of a Lebanese advance down the coastal plain. The Arabs controlled the seaport town of Acre, across the bay from Haifa. The garrison of Acre not only posed a threat to Haifa but lay between it and Jewish-controlled Nahariya, first significant town on the potential invasion route. Accordingly, the Haganah High Command decided to capture Acre.

The ancient Crusader town, encircled by an old, heavy wall which had been rebuilt and modernized several times, is further protected by its position on a promontory sticking into the sea. The walls, which would be a negligible obstacle to a modern army with adequate artillery, were a major barrier to any attack by the Haganah. They were well manned by a garrison of Arab irregulars. To the north, on the coast just beyond the wall, was a fortified police post held by another Arab force.

On May 15, Colonel Moshe Carmel attacked Acre with his Carmeli Brigade. One contingent seized "Napoleon Hill," east of the city, while to the northwest another took the village of Samaria, north of Shavei Zion, and two villages north of Nahariya. The next day, the main body of the Carmeli Brigade, with mortar support from Napoleon Hill, assaulted and captured the police post north of the city. Mortars were quickly set up there and in combination with those on Napoleon Hill began to bombard the northern and eastern city walls. After a few hours of this bombardment, a messenger under a flag of truce was sent into Acre to demand the surrender of the garrison.

It was obvious to the Arabs in Acre that they were completely isolated since the Israelis had securely blocked any possibility of support from the north or east. Early on the 17th, the garrison surrendered, and Acre fell to the Israelis.

Back on the Malkiya front, after the Lebanese had remained motionless for a week, Colonel Shmuel Cohen, commander of the Yiftach Brigade, decided to take the offensive. His plan was to feign an attack on the towns of Nebi Yusha and Kadesh from the south, while attacking Malkiya from the rear through Lebanon. On the night of May 28-29, he sent a force of armored cars and infantry in trucks, moving without lights

across the frontier from Manara to reach a road running parallel to the border west of Malkiya. North of the town the column encountered a small unit of Lebanese, who were taken completely by surprise and easily driven back. The noise of this engagement alerted the Lebanese in Malkiya, but before they could properly organize themselves for defense against the surprise attack, they were struck by the Israelis to their rear. The town fell after a brief battle. Kadesh was also abandoned by the Lebanese, who withdrew completely behind their own frontier.

Following this success, the Yiftach Brigade was transferred to the central front, where reinforcements were desperately needed to deal with the threat of the Arab Legion to Jerusalem. The new Oded or 9th Brigade under Colonel Uri Joffe was to maintain the defense in the north.

When a combined Lebanese, ALA, and Syrian attack struck Malkiya on June 6, the Oded Brigade was caught by surprise. The attacking forces, about the equivalent of two brigades in strength, were seriously delayed by the minefields which the Yiftach and Oded troops had laid around Malkiya. The ALA and Syrian contingents were too discouraged by this obstacle to continue the attack, but the Lebanese persisted, and by evening of the 6th they had captured the town for the second time. Encouraged by this success, they pushed ahead and the next day captured Ramat Naftali and Kadesh. This opened the way to the Huleh Valley to the south. While the Lebanese organized their newly-won positions, the ALA pushed down into central Galilee. It was a significant Arab success.

SYRIAN FRONT

On Friday, May 14, the Syrian 1st Infantry Brigade, commanded by Colonel Abdullah Wahab el Hakim, was in southeastern Lebanon, poised to attack toward Malkiya. That day Colonel Hakim was ordered to return to Syria, move south across the Golan, and advance into Palestine south of Lake Tiberias, toward the abandoned Arab village of Semakh. As ordered, Hakim began his advance across the old frontier at 9:00 a.m. Saturday, even though he had only two of his battalions, and all of his men were exhausted. Since the Israelis had apparently expected the Syrian main effort to be made north of the lake, there were no mobile Haganah units in this area. However, there was a small fortified defensive position near Semakh; this immediately opened fire on the attacking Syrians, and pinned them down shortly after they had made their crossing.

Supporting his two attacking infantry battalions, Colonel Hakim had an armored car battalion, and a company of tanks, while an artillery regiment provided support from the Golan Heights. Hakim's force was more than adequate to overwhelm or merely bypass the small Israeli

force near Semakh, but the Syrian troops were inexperienced as well as tired, and they contented themselves with returning the Israeli fire. All day and through the night Syrian artillery fired sporadically at the Semakh position and also harassed Ein Gev, the only Jewish settlement on the eastern shore of Lake Tiberias.

On the morning of May 16, Semakh and other Jordan Valley settlements were subjected to Syrian aerial attacks, while the artillery bombardment continued. Two Syrian companies belatedly began an envelopment of the Israeli reserve units arriving from Tiberias. Another Syrian company, supported by armored cars, advanced toward the settlements of Massada and Shaar Hagolan. The settlers, however, were able to hold off these attacks; the Syrians dug in, while their air and artillery continued sporadic bombardment of Jewish positions and settlements.

Early in the morning of May 18, the Syrian 1st Brigade, now commanded by Brigadier General Husni el Zaim, renewed operations against the Israeli fortified camp near Semakh. Tanks and armored cars began to encircle the position, and, with their line of communication threatened, the defenders withdrew to the nearby Jewish settlement of Degania. At 8:00 a.m. the Syrians occupied the abandoned position.

The Israelis, assuming that this was to be the main Syrian thrust, had sent reinforcements from Lieutenant Colonel Moshe Mann's Yiftach Brigade, further north. These and local HIM reserves now concentrated near Degania. To coordinate the defensive effort, the Haganah High Command sent Major Moshe Dayan, from the High Command Staff, to Degania.

In fact, the Syrians had not intended any further operations south of the lake, planning to make their main effort further north, near the Bridge of Jacob's Daughters. However, on May 19, the Iraqis, about to thrust westward through Nablus toward Tulkarm, asked the Syrians to make a diversion in the Degania area, to protect their right flank. In compliance with this request, at 4:30 in the morning of May 20 the Syrian 1st Brigade began an assault on the twin settlements of Degania. Artillery and tank fire covered the assault. The principal Syrian objective was to seize the bridge across the Jordan River north of the village known as Degania A. This would block any Israeli attack from Tiberias against the Iraqi line of communications.

The Syrian attack, spearheaded by tanks and armored cars, soon pierced the settlement defense. However, the Syrian infantry was some distance behind the tanks, and the Israeli defenders were able to use Molotov cocktails and PIAT antitank missiles to destroy several of the attacking vehicles. Meanwhile, other defenders kept up small arms fire on the Syrian infantry, who halted in citrus groves several hundred meters from the settlement. The surviving tanks withdrew, and the attack failed.

The Syrians then turned their attention to the south to Degania B. Eight tanks, supported by mortar fire, approached to within 400 yards of the settlement defense, where they stopped to provide fire support for an infantry attack. However, the green Syrian troops were still unable to face Israeli small arms fire and after two abortive attempts gave up the effort. About noon two newly arrived field guns—obsolete French 65mm howitzers, the first Israeli artillery to be employed in the war—arrived from Tel Aviv. They were quickly emplaced and opened fire on the Syrians near Degania B. The Israelis attributed the subsequent Syrian withdrawal to surprise at the unexpected Israeli artillery fire.

Although the Israelis in the Semakh-Degania area did not realize it, there were two quite different reasons for the Syrian withdrawal. The first of these was a threat to their line of communications. A Palmach battalion from the Yiftach Brigade had been sent by boat during the previous night across Lake Tiberias to Ein Gev. During darkness they had climbed up the Golan Heights, and at dawn carried out a counter raid on Kaffir Harel on the Golan Heights, to threaten the line of communications of the exposed brigade.

Another reason for the Syrian withdrawal was the fact that they had run out of ammunition. General Zaim, having been promised replenishment, had begun his attack against the Deganias even though he was short of ammunition. In fact, however, the promised replenishment was being delivered to the 2d Brigade further north. When his troops ran out of ammunition, Zaim ordered a withdrawal.

Meanwhile, in the area north of the Sea of Galilee, and south of Lake Huleh, the Israelis had been awaiting another attack. On May 14, in apparent preparation for a major offensive, the Syrians established a fuel and ammunition base east of the customs house near the Bridge of Jacob's Daughters. As the Syrians had intended, this gave the Israelis the false impression that this was where they would make their first attack, and it diverted Israeli attention from the blow near Semakh. However, when the Syrians failed to do anything near the Bridge of Jacob's Daughters, the Israelis in the settlement of Mishmar Hayarden seized the initiative. On the night of May 17-18, simultaneously with an operation further west against the Lebanese near Malkiya, a company of the Yiftach Brigade crossed the river, routed the Syrian defenders of the supply base, and destroyed the collected supplies. They returned without having suffered any casualties. The loss of these supplies forced the Syrian 2d Infantry Brigade to postpone its attack, intended for May 22.

For two weeks the Syrian front was quiet, except for frequent shelling of Israeli positions in the valley from Syrian artillery on the Golan Heights. A new offensive was being planned by Major General Abdulla Alfe, the Syrian Army Chief of Staff, who was exercising overall command and direction of combat operations along the upper Jordan.

On the morning of June 6, the Syrian 2d Brigade, under Colonel Kawass, attempted a surprise assault across the river to seize Mishmar Hayarden. Its ultimate objective was to capture the nearby bridge, and then to join the Lebanese and the ALA near Malkiya. However, because of accurate Israeli machine gun and mortar fire on the river fords, the Syrian armor failed to get across the river, and the two battalions of infantry which had been harassing the settlement soon withdrew.

At the same time, further north, a reinforced battalion under Lieutenant Colonel Sami Hinawi advanced from Banias toward Dan, on the Israeli side of the frontier. After advancing a few hundred meters, Hinawi's troops were halted by Israeli small arms fire from Dan. The Syrians dug in where they were.

As the Syrian forces east of the river were reinforced, the Israeli Oded Brigade was alerted, and was largely concentrated in the vicinity of Mishmar Hayarden. On June 8 a Carmeli battalion also arrived to reinforce the defenders.

On June 10 the Syrians made their first truly effective, coordinated attack of the war. The 2d Infantry Brigade assaulted and seized all three of the fording points east of Mishmar Hayarden and this time continued to press forward despite Israeli small arms and mortar fire. Syrian armor successfully negotiated the river crossings. Working in close coordination with the infantry, the tanks overran the outer defenses of Mishmar Hayarden. A desperate battle took place, but the Syrians fought well, and their numbers were overwhelming. Shortly after noon, Mishmar Hayarden was in their hands.

That same day, as a diversion, the Syrian 1st Brigade mounted an attack against Ein Gev. Since the hills dominating Ein Gev, leading up to the Golan Heights, were occupied by Syrians, the only link from Ein Gev to the remainder of the Yishuv was by boat at night. However, Ein Gev was one of the most alert of all of the Israeli settlements, since it was the most exposed. The defenders were well dug in, and they were determined. Although most of the houses in the settlement were destroyed during this intensive attack, simultaneous assaults from both north and south were driven back. A small penetration from the east was soon contained, and the attackers were driven out by noon.

THE IRAQI FRONT

The Iraqi contingent of the Arab forces consisted of an infantry brigade and an armored battalion under the command of General Mahmud. This force had concentrated near Mafraq in Transjordan in April. Early in May the Iraqis had shifted west, between Irbid and the Jordan

River, and prepared to operate in their assigned sector: the north-central Jordan Valley and the northern Samaria "triangle" of Jenin-Tulkarm-Nablus.

Early on May 15, Iraqi troops forded the Jordan River near the oil pipeline south of Maad and occupied the high ground overlooking the settlement of Gesher.⁵ When the Iraqis attacked Gesher and a neighboring police post the next afternoon, they were repulsed with heavy casualties. Next day they tried again, with infantry advancing from the north, and armored cars from the south. Again the assaults, quite uncoordinated, were repulsed. Gesher was now completely blockaded, but the Iraqis did not attack again.

The route through Gesher being blocked, the Iraqis decided to cross the Jordan farther south, at the Damiya and Allenby Bridges, which had been occupied intact early on the morning of May 15 by the Transjordanian Arab Legion. They were able to move their entire contingent across the river to Nablus, where Kaukji had his ALA headquarters. There the Iraqis concentrated and awaited reinforcements from Iraq. These arrived during the last week of May, another infantry brigade and another tank battalion, giving the Iraqis two infantry brigades and an armored brigade.

On May 25 the Iraqis struck west from Nablus past the Arab city of Tulkarm. They captured one settlement, and their armored spearheads reached Kfar Jonah and Ein Vered, between Tulkarm and Natania, and were within 10 kilometers of Natania before being halted by the Alexandroni Brigade on May 30.

In anticipation of a major Iraqi offensive, the Israeli High Command had ordered two brigades—the Golani and Carmeli—to coordinate their operations with the Alexandroni Brigade, defending the narrow coastal plain of Sharon. Now, to seize the initiative from the Iraqis, the Israelis decided to assume the offensive in central Samaria. The first objective was to be Jenin.

On May 28 the Golani Brigade began its offensive against Arab irregulars holding the Mt. Bilboa Range northeast of Jenin, and captured Zaryin. Next day the Golanis drove the local Arabs and Iraqis from their position on the Gilboa Range. On May 30 and 31 they seized Megiddo and then Lajun.

The stage was set for a major effort against Jenin. It was to be made by the Carmeli Brigade, passing through the Golanis from the north, with one Golani battalion as reinforcement. Apparently the Alexandroni

⁵ The crossing was made much more difficult by a sudden and unexpected rise in the level of the river. The state of Arab cooperation may be realized by the fact that the Iraqis blamed the Transjordanians for having opened the dams on the Yarmouk River and its tributaries, which caused the sudden rise in the level of the river. In fact, however, Israeli raiders were responsible.

Brigade to the west was expected to carry out an attack through the Wadi Ara, shelling Tulkarm. The rapidly growing Israeli air force was to provide reconnaissance, and at least a pretense of air support.

The offensive against Jenin began at dusk on May 31, spearheaded by the Golani battalion, with the Carmeli battalions following behind. In the next 48 hours the Golanis occupied the villages of Sandala, Arrana, Jalma and Muqueibla, north of Jenin, opening the way for the Carmeli assault, which began on the night of June 2-3. The Carmeli objectives were two hills dominating the main road south of the city. As soon as these hills were secured, the Golani battalion was to continue south from Muqueibla, to occupy the city.

Against negligible resistance, the Carmeli battalions advanced southward slowly but steadily on June 3. They attacked during the night and seized the two hills before dawn.

However, for reasons that are not clear, there had been no diversionary action by the Alexandroni Brigade to attract Iraqi attention toward Tulkarm. Early on the 4th an Iraqi unit southwest of Jenin counterattacked the Carmeli position. The Israelis, who had been unable to dig effective foxholes or entrenchments in the rocky soil, took heavy casualties; nevertheless, they beat off the attack. Shortly after 9 a.m. the two hill positions were again secured, and the Golani battalion occupied Jenin.

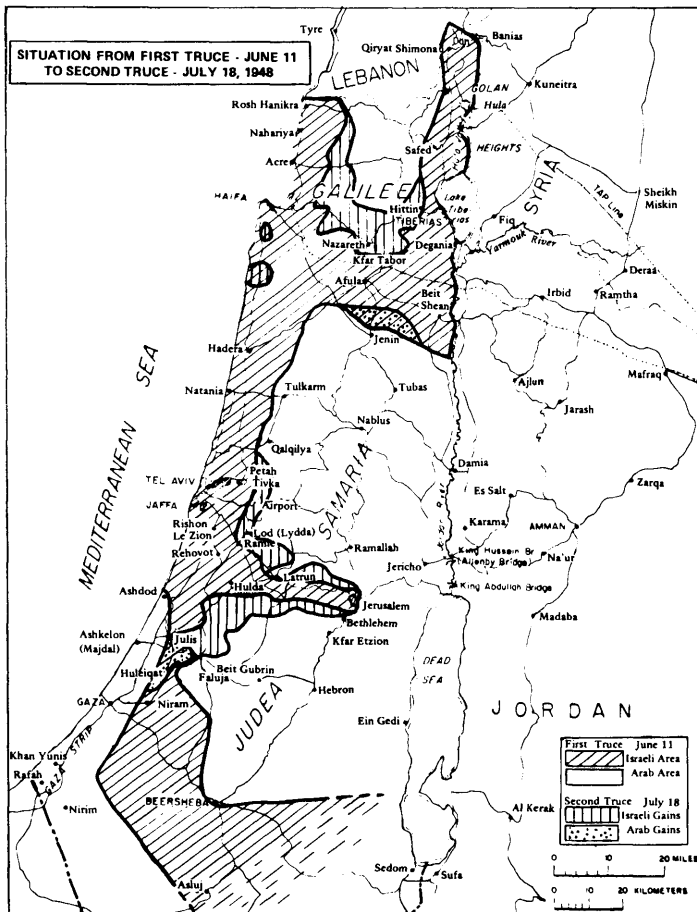
About noon, however, an additional Iraqi battalion arrived from Nablus and the reinforced Iraqis counterattacked, this time with air support. The Israelis lost some ground west of the city and the hill southwest of the city. Although they retained the other hill, Colonel Carmel decided the position was too exposed to further counterattacks, and during the night withdrew from Jenin. Both sides could claim success. The Israelis retained all the territories north of Jenin that they had taken between May 8 and June 2. However, the Iraqis had driven the Israelis out of their principal objective of Jenin, and they had outposts in striking distance of the Mediterranean coast between Natania and Tel Aviv. The new state of Israel was in danger of being cut in two.

THE JORDANIAN FRONT

On May 13 most of the Transjordan Arab Legion, under orders from the British Mandate's High Commissioner, completed its evacuation from Palestine. Early on the 14th the remainder—those that had been engaged at the Etzion Bloc—also withdrew west of the Jordan River. The following night, however, when the British Mandate expired, General Glubb sent his troops back across the river into Palestine by way of the Allenby Bridge. Their objective was to occupy positions within the agreed area of Jordanian operations, at the edge of the Arab sectors assigned under

During the 14th there had been considerable firing in and around Jerusalem, after the British departed. While the principal Haganah forces had focused their attention on the area southeast of Jerusalem in the King David Hotel and Railroad Station area, the newly-appointed, controversial Israeli commander of the Jerusalem area, Colonel David Shaltiel, had asked the Irgun contingent in Jerusalem to occupy Sheikh Jarrach, to reestablish communications with the Mt. Scopus settlements.

Early on May 15 the Arab Legion arrived east of Jerusalem, and began shelling Israeli-occupied New Jerusalem with 25-pounders and 6-inch mortars. The Legionnaires advanced from the Mount of Olives



toward Sheikh Jarrach and had little trouble ejecting the Irgun. Communications between Mt. Scopus and the New City were thus again cut. The Legion then mounted attacks on New Jerusalem, from both the northeast and the southeast, while shelling the area from their newly-occupied positions in Sheikh Jarrach. The Arabs ran into strong Israeli resistance north of the large Mandelbaum Building, however, and, after a few more probes, General Glubb called off the attacks against the New City. He did not want to get his troops bogged down in street fighting against the substantially more numerous Israeli troops in the area.

Meanwhile, further east, the Legion contingent that had taken Atarot attempted to seize Neve Yaakov. They were unsuccessful in this effort, but during the night the people of Atarot and Neve Yaakov withdrew to the Hadassah Hospital on Mt. Scopus.

While one brigade of the Arab Legion was thus occupied in the Jerusalem area, the other brigade carried out its assigned missions promptly and efficiently. By May 17 the Legion had established itself securely on the ridge overlooking the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem road between Latrun and Deir Ayub. Thus, Legion outposts were within 30 kilometers of Tel Aviv. At the same time other Legion units seized Bethlehem.

To the south, the Israeli potash plant at the northern end of the Dead Sea was isolated. As the Arab Legion closed in on the potash works and the nearby settlement of Beit Haarava, it became evident to the Jewish settlers that their position was hopeless. During the night of May 19-20, therefore, the settlers were evacuated by boat to Sodom on the south shore of the Dead Sea. To the west on May 19th the Legion units seized the water pumping station near Petah Tekva (first Zionist agricultural settlement in Israel) and next day repulsed an Israeli counterattack. This was a deadly threat to the heart of the new state of Israel.

THE SOUTHERN (EGYPTIAN) FRONT

Southern Palestine had been embattled long before the formal Arab invasion. Early in 1948 Sheikh Hassan El-Bana, leader of the Moslem Brotherhood, sent two small battalion-sized contingents of his "Volunteers" from Egypt. Based in the Gaza-Khan Yunis area, they were soon raiding into the Jewish Negev settlements to the east. Their leader, Tariq el Afriqi, kept close contact with Mufti Hussein. By late April or early May, however, Colonel Azziz arrived from Egypt, and assumed command of the Volunteer contingents. He seems to have brought with him at least one battery of Egyptian artillery, and a more focussed objective than the somewhat aimless raiding and killing which had occupied the Moslem Brotherhood prior to his arrival. He clearly intended to try to assure freedom of movement for regular Egyptian forces when

they arrived, while at the same time blocking communications between Tel Aviv and the Negev.

On May 10 Azziz and his Volunteers attacked the Jewish settlement of Kfar Darom, just east of the main road between Khan Yunis and Gaza. After suffering heavy casualties—as much from their own misdirected artillery as from the Jewish defenders—the Volunteers were repulsed. This setback was soon followed by another. On May 12 elements of the Givati and Negev Brigades, approaching from north and south, captured the Arab villages of Brier, Huleiqat, and Kaukaba, thus securing an inland dirt road from the north into the western Negev.

Two days later, on October 14, however, Azziz and his Volunteers bloodlessly achieved an offsetting success. The British had held the powerful police fortress at Iraq Suwaydan, to secure their route of withdrawal from central Palestine to Rafah and thence to the Canal Zone. On the 14th, however, as the last British units marched to the southwest, they abandoned Iraq Suwaydan, which Azziz promptly occupied. This not only gave him control of the principal east-west road from Majdal to Hebron, it also bisected the Jewish supply road to the Negev through Brier and Huleiqat. With the arrival of more Egyptian forces, Azziz was in a position to isolate the Negev.

By this time the Egyptian invasion force was concentrating in the northeastern Sinai at Abu Ageila⁶ and El Arish. The commander was Major General Ahmed Ali el Mawawi, his second in command was Brigadier Mohammed Naguib. The force comprised approximately 7,000 men, in five infantry battalions, an armored contingent of British Mark VI and Matilda tanks, a medium machine gun battalion, a field regiment of sixteen 25-pounder guns, a battery of eight 6-pounder (57mm) guns, an antiaircraft company, and miscellaneous supply and other supporting units. Available as air support were 15 fighter aircraft, five converted bombers as transports, and a few miscellaneous reconnaissance aircraft. The force was divided in two brigade groups of unequal size. The larger group, approximately 5,000 men accompanied by General Mawawi, and commanded directly by Naguib, moved from El Arish to Rafah on the 14th. The main element of the smaller force—less than 2,000 men—was two battalions of regular infantry, plus another contingent of Moslem Brotherhood Volunteers. Also on the 14th this contingent advanced from Abu Ageila to El Auja, four kilometers inside the frontier of Palestine.

The Jewish forces facing the invasion consisted of the armed settlers in each settlement, plus initially the Negev Brigade under Colonel Nahum Sarig. Shortly after the beginning of the invasion the Givati Brigade under Colonel Shimeon Avidan also joined the defenders of southern

⁶ There are many spellings of this name, an obscure police post and crossroad in the northeast Sinai Peninsula; its strategic location has caused it to figure prominently in three Arab-Israeli wars.

Palestine. But the Arab hold on Iraq Suwaydan and the east-west road prevented an actual junction of the two brigades. There was little co-ordination between these units until August, when one commander was appointed for the entire front.

Because of the sparseness of the settlements in the area from which it was recruited, the Negev Brigade, with three battalions, was one of the smaller brigades of the Haganah, with only about 1,500 men. The Givati, on the other hand, was one of the largest, consisting of five battalions, totalling some 3,200 men. On May 14, with invasion imminent, two battalions of the Negev Brigade, consisting of about 800 men, were deployed to observe the southwestern frontier. In addition to their small arms, these troops were equipped with light mortars, two 20mm guns, and two "Davidka" heavy mortars. Shortly after the invasion began, the third battalion was moved to the front, along with a battery of 65mm guns, and two companies of jeep-mounted infantry, giving Sarig a front line strength of more than 1,500 men.

The Egyptian invasion plan provided for two divergent simultaneous thrusts northward into Palestine. The larger column was to follow the coastal road and railway toward Tel Aviv, to link up with a small contingent landed by sea at Majdal late on the 14th. The inland column was to advance by way of Beersheba and Hebron to meet with the Arab Legion in the vicinity of Jerusalem.

Early on May 15, both columns crossed the frontier, the larger brigade at Rafah, the smaller at El Auja. The larger force moved toward Khan Yunis, which was held by Arab irregulars of the Moslem Brotherhood and armed local Arabs. Just off the road, some six kilometers beyond Rafah, was the tiny Jewish settlement of Nirim, held by approximately 40 settlers. General Mawawi sent a detachment of infantry and artillery to deal with this fortified settlement, while with the main body he moved on to Khan Yunis, where he quickly occupied the airfield and prepared to continue the advance to the north.

An Egyptian bombardment of Nirim began at 7:00 a.m. Shortly after this an Egyptian column of armored vehicles⁷ and a company of truck-mounted infantry approached to within 400 meters of the settlement under cover of artillery fire. At noon the infantry, covered by intense artillery and machine gun fire, assaulted the settlement, but they were stopped 150 meters from its security fence by Israeli small arms fire. The Egyptian infantry withdrew, leaving some 30 dead behind them.

There was no further effort to attack that day, but on the 16th the Egyptians again attempted to seize the settlement. This time air support was available, but the infantry failed to press its attack. On the 17th,

⁷ There is dispute as to the amount of armor in this force; the defenders of Nirim say that there were four tanks and several armored cars; the Egyptians say there were only a few Bren gun carriers.

Haganah reinforcements arrived with arms and ammunition, and the Egyptians made no further effort to attack.

General Mawawi's main body, meanwhile, had continued its advance northward from Khan Yunis toward Gaza. In the late afternoon, some five miles south of Gaza, the Egyptians passed another Jewish settlement, Kfar Darom, which had been under siege by local Arabs for months. (The thirty armed members of the settlement's defense unit had most recently repelled an assault of the Moslem Brotherhood on the night of May 10-11.) Again Mawawi left a detachment to deal with this potential threat to his line of communications, and continued his advance to Gaza, which he entered in the early evening.

The commander of the Egyptian detachment left to deal with Kfar Darom planned an assault for the following dawn. An intensive artillery barrage was followed by an artillery and mortar smoke screen to cover the infantry assault. The screen was not completely effective, however, and as the Arabs approached the barbed wire fence around the settlement, the defending Jews opened fire with devastating effect. After several unsuccessful attempts to push through the defense—attempts marred by poorly directed artillery support—the Arabs finally withdrew. Their losses were 70 dead and 50 wounded.

In subsequent weeks Kfar Darom was to be subjected to a number of similar attacks, but none of these had been successful when the town was evacuated in July.

General Mawawi's column did not tarry to learn the results of the attacks on Nirim or Kfar Darom. Early on the morning of the 16th the Egyptians advanced from Gaza to reach Yad Mordechai, one of the oldest settlements of the Negev. This position was too strong for Mawawi to risk bypassing it. Since his supplies had not moved as fast as the main body, and having learned of the tenacity of the Israeli defense from the experiences at Nirim and Kfar Darom, General Mawawi took two days to prepare for an attack on Yad Mordechai. On May 19 the attack was begun, but after three hours of desperate fighting the Egyptians had succeeded only in seizing one small outpost and had failed in all attempts to penetrate into the settlement itself.

The attack was renewed on May 20, but four assaults were driven back by the Israelis with the help of reinforcements from Gvar Am. The Egyptians did not renew the assault until the afternoon of May 23. This was a major, coordinated infantry-armor assault. By evening the Egyptians had succeeded in taking part of the settlement, which was in a desperate situation. That night the Negev Brigade's small commando battalion, in armored cars, reached Yad Mordechai. The commander made a quick estimate of the situation and decided that the settlement must be evacuated. Just before dawn on May 24, the entire garrison at Yad Mordechai withdrew to Nirim.

Meanwhile, the inland column had been moving rapidly. Unopposed in this desolate Arab territory, the motorized advance guard of the column reached Beersheba on May 17. The main body arrived there on the 20th. That same day the advance party linked up with the Arab Legion at Bethlehem, and assumed responsibility for the control of that city the next day, on May 21. At about this time this force was joined by Colonel Azziz and the contingents he had been commanding north-east of Gaza, and Azziz assumed command of the combined force.

On the seacoast on that day, General Mawawi, having decided to leave part of his command to continue the assault on Yad Mordechai, continued on to Majdal (Ascalon) with his main body. There he met a small contingent earlier landed by ship. General Mawawi now sent a small column eastward through Iraq Suwaydan, Faluja and Beit Gubrin to establish lateral communications with Colonel Azziz and the Jordanians in the Bethlehem-Hebron area. On the 28th, Mawawi tried to secure this line of communications by an attack on Negba, supported by 25-pounders and aircraft. However, the attack was repulsed.

Moving more slowly and more cautiously, the remaining Egyptians renewed the advance northward, still without serious opposition, to enter Ashdod on May 29. Continuing to the Ashdod Bridge, three kilometers north of the city, they were only 32 kilometers from Tel Aviv, which was under frequent air bombardment by Egyptian planes.

Here, however, the Egyptians encountered Israelis in considerable force. Troops of the Givati Brigade, coming from Rehovoth, had blown up the bridge, and had taken up defensive positions just north of Ashdod in the area of Gedera-Boshit. An advance Israeli position was established in the vicinity of Kfar Warburg, southeast of Ashdod, thus threatening the line of Egyptian communications. Patrols on both sides were soon in active encounters in an arc around Ashdod. Suddenly the Egyptians found themselves attacked by four Israeli Messerschmitt fighter planes, recently arrived from Europe. (One was shot down by Egyptian anti-aircraft fire.) Soon another Israeli weapon, not previously encountered by the Egyptians, was in action: 65mm howitzers in newly-established Israeli artillery units. General Mawawi decided to dig in, correctly estimating that he was outnumbered and that further advance would be impossible without reinforcements.

The Israeli High Command determined to make a major effort to destroy the seriously depleted Egyptians at Ashdod, about 2,500 men commanded by Brigadier Naguib. The Israeli plan called for an attack by two battalions of the Givati Brigade, an Irgun battalion, and two companies of jeep infantry from the Negev Brigade. Originally planned for the night of June 1-2, the attack was postponed for 24 hours because of confusion in communications.

The Israeli attack on Ashdod began after midnight on June 2-3. The

main effort, attempting a wide envelopment south of Ashdod, ran into intense fire from the Egyptians. Through lack of coordination, the other Israeli units failed to provide adequate support, and the attackers were forced to withdraw, having lost about 400 dead and wounded, considerably more than Arab losses.⁸ Surprisingly, the Israelis made only one feeble attempt against the exposed Egyptian lateral line of communications through Iraq Suwaydan and Faluja. They withdrew after being easily repulsed from Iraq Suwaydan.

Satisfied that Naguib could hold Ashdod, General Mawawi turned his attention to the settlement of Nitzanin, about midway between Ashdod and Negba, which he had bypassed on the original advance to Ashdod. Nitzanin, located in a deep valley, was garrisoned by a force of 150 men. Although it was a more formidable obstacle than any of the other small settlements which the Egyptians had encountered, they had learned from these failures, and from their success at Yad Mordechai. The assault was carefully planned, and involved the cooperation of an Egyptian infantry battalion, a platoon of tanks, a company of armored cars, and most of the 25-pounder regiment. In addition, a squadron of aircraft was assigned to support the operation.

An artillery bombardment on Nitzanin began at midnight on June 6-7, and the ground assault began at 6:00 a.m. After an initial repulse, the Egyptians called in the air force, and under the cover of the air strafing the armor succeeded in penetrating into the town's defenses, closely followed by the infantry. Realizing that they could no longer hold the settlement, the defenders attempted to withdraw, only to find themselves hemmed in by surrounding Egyptians. At 4 p.m., after several unsuccessful attempts to break out, Nitzanin surrendered with 33 dead.

Egyptian morale was bolstered by two Egyptian combat successes in quick succession: Ashdod and Nitzanin. However, frequent and persistent raids against their lines of communication by the Negev Brigade allowed them little time to celebrate these successes.

⁸ Mohammed Naguib, *Egypt's Destiny* (New York, 1955), p. 22.

6

The Battles for Jerusalem

On May 15 the Israeli High Command decided that the Givati Brigade battalion in the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv Corridor should be sent south to reinforce the rest of the brigade blocking the Egyptian advance along the coast toward Tel Aviv. First, however, it was decided to send one more convoy through to Jerusalem before Colonel Avidan's troops left the area. On the night of May 15-16 one company of the Givati Brigade seized Latrun, while the Harel Brigade was occupying Deir Ayub. On May 18, as the Givati troops were leaving, a Jewish convoy began to drive from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Then, to meet the Arab Legion's threat to New Jerusalem, the Harel Brigade was shifted eastward, closer to Jerusalem.

The Israeli High Command had taken a calculated risk, moving these two regular Haganah brigades from the Jerusalem Corridor. They apparently hoped that the Arabs would be too occupied elsewhere to move major forces to block the road. The gamble was almost successful.

When Kaukji learned of the coordinated Arab invasions of May 15, he assumed that his army had completed its mission. He withdrew to Lebanon from Galilee and ordered his units that had been operating north of the Jerusalem Corridor to concentrate in the Samarian "triangle," to await further instructions from the Arab League. At the same time the Arab Legion, assuming that Kaukji's troops were still in the Corridor, had not allocated any units to that sector. General Glubb, however, realized the situation when on May 18 he learned of the arrival in New Jerusalem of Jewish trucks from Tel Aviv. He promptly sent his 4th Regiment¹ to occupy Latrun, which it did without opposition on May 19. Jewish Jerusalem was again isolated; the route of the supply convoy that had started the previous day was blocked.

Meanwhile, just east of the New City, between May 16 and 22 the Arab Legion occupied itself with consolidating its positions at Sheikh Jarrach and in and around the Old City of Jerusalem. During much of this time the Transjordanians were dealing with a troublesome problem in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City.

The Jewish Quarter of Old Jerusalem was bordered on the east by

¹ A battalion in strength.

the Mosque of Omar, on the west by the Armenian Quarter, on the north by the large Moslem Quarter, and on the south by the Old City wall. During the last days of the Mandate, detachments of the Haganah and an Irgun unit had infiltrated into the Jewish Quarter to stiffen the resistance of the inhabitants, and to boost their morale. By the time the British left, on the evening of May 13, the garrison consisted of about 200 Haganah troops and some 100 from the Irgun.

As the British pulled out, the garrison occupied a number of nearby posts which covered the approaches to the Jewish Quarter. They also seized a Greek church in the Armenian Quarter, because they feared that otherwise its tower, which dominated the Jewish Quarter, might become an Arab observation post and strongpoint. At the request of the Patriarch, however, they evacuated the church, on the understanding that Arab troops would not be permitted to take possession of the tower. In spite of the Patriarch's assurances, no sooner had the Israelis withdrawn late on the 14th than Arab irregulars seized the church and its tower and began firing on the Israeli defenders, supporting a number of small-scale Arab counterattacks. At the same time, Arab assaults forced the Israelis from positions which they held near the Zion Gate, the only link between the Jewish Quarter and the New City.

With the Arab Legion coming up on the east, it was obvious to the Israeli commander, Colonel Shaltiel, that the defenders and inhabitants of the Jewish Quarter were in a desperate situation. He therefore prepared a plan to reopen communications with the Jewish Quarter, which could then be reinforced or, if the situation got worse, could be evacuated. Units from the Harel Brigade were to capture Mt. Zion and to enter the Armenian Quarter from the south through the Zion Gate. Meanwhile, part of the Etzioni Brigade would penetrate from the west by way of the Jaffa Gate. The operation was to take place on the evening of May 17th.

However, communications between the brigades were poor and coordination practically non-existent. Due either to an administrative failure, or to inadequate planning on the part of the Etzioni staff, it became necessary to delay the attack for 24 hours. Meanwhile, the preparations had become evident to the Arabs, and, when the four Etzioni platoons detailed to this operation did mount their attack on the evening of May 18th, the local Arab irregulars were waiting for them. All of the engineers with the attacking force were killed. Its armored cars were dispersed, and instead of pressing on with their attack the troops spent the remainder of the night evacuating their wounded.

The much better trained Harel Brigade, however, carried out its part of the operation efficiently. While some units attacked Mt. Zion, a detachment of engineers blew a breach in the Zion Gate at 3:25 a.m. on the 19th. The waiting Harel units rushed in and quickly made contact

with the defenders of the Jewish Quarter. A reinforcement unit of 80 men and substantial quantities of ammunition were moved in. During the day, and into the night, there were a number of minor Arab counterattacks, striking mainly at the communication line between the Zion Gate and the Jewish Quarter. Early on the 20th, even though apparently under no great pressure, the Harel units withdrew to Mt. Zion, allowing the Arabs to regain control of the Zion Gate.

Meanwhile the Arab Legion had completed its consolidation of the rest of the Old City and was prepared to devote itself to eradicating the Jewish enclave. Although reluctant to commit his troops to city fighting, General Glubb felt it was essential to secure all of the Old City before making any further attempts against the New City.

Accordingly, a battalion of the Arab Legion concentrated its attention on the northwest corner of the Jewish Quarter. Under cover of heavy mortar fire, and with artillery support from the Mount of Olives, the Transjordanian infantry advanced from building to building. Gradually the Israelis in the Old City were forced back into two large buildings, one of them the Ben Zakkai Synagogue. There were about 1,500 Jews concentrated in this small area; of these perhaps 250 were soldiers still fit for combat. Hammered by artillery and mortar fire, however, with the Arab Legion evidently preparing itself for a final assault, the defenders of the Jewish Quarter surrendered at 2:00 in the afternoon on May 28th. The remaining Jewish soldiers, including wounded, were taken to Amman as prisoners of war. The old people and children also were kept briefly as prisoners, contrary to the capitulation agreement. But they were soon released and allowed to return to Israeli territory in the New City.

Meanwhile, by May 23 it had become obvious to General Glubb that it would be merely a question of time before the resistance in the Jewish Quarter would be overcome. Therefore, he turned his attention back toward the New City. He set as his first objective the seizure of Notre Dame, just west of the Jaffa Gate and dominating the eastern portion of New Jerusalem. The thick-walled monastery had been made into a fortress by the Israeli soldiers, and it was obvious that a major effort would be needed to drive them out.

On May 23 a coordinated infantry and armored car assault was launched against Notre Dame. An Arab Legion column advanced from the Damascus Gate toward the monastery, covered by heavy fire from infantry units on the Old City wall. It was planned that the armored vehicles, in turn, would provide support for a direct infantry assault against the monastery. However, several of the armored cars were knocked out by Molotov cocktails, blocking the advance of the column, and preventing the planned deployment of the armored vehicles. Glubb was forced to call off the attack.

After one more abortive effort at a surprise assault on the monastery, in which casualties were heavy, Glubb ordered all further attacks against the monastery to cease. He did not believe that seizure of the position warranted the casualties that would be incurred. He and his commander in chief, King Abdullah, were satisfied that by gaining control of the Old City and of most of the remaining territory around the Jewish New City, they had achieved their prime objective. Furthermore, by this time other Arab Legion troops had cut the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem road, and Glubb decided that he would wait until either the Jews were starved out of the New City or boundary lines were established by a peace settlement. Arab Legion guns continued to bombard the monastery and other Israeli positions on the perimeter of the New City defenses, but no further ground attacks were attempted.

On May 20, Egyptian forces—mostly Azziz's Volunteers—advancing through Hebron reached Bethlehem in force, to link up with Arab Legion troops there. The next day the Arab Legion, coordinating its advance with an Egyptian movement north from Bethlehem, moved south from the Old City against the village of Ramat Rachel. Early on the 21st, a coordinated infantry attack drove the Israelis—including an Irgun unit—out of the village, and by afternoon the Egyptian Volunteers had occupied the settlement. By midafternoon, however, the defenders had been reinforced by an Etzioni Brigade company from Jerusalem. That evening the Israelis counterattacked, ousting the Egyptians. By May 25 the Israelis had beaten off further Arab Legion and Egyptian counterattacks, and—after the arrival of a reinforcing Harel unit—had also seized the nearby Mar Elias Monastery. The southern flank of New Jerusalem was now secure. Except for the mopping up in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City, the battle for Jerusalem had ended. The Israelis held all of the New City of Jerusalem, the nearby settlement of Ramat Rachel, and the two isolated settlements on Mt. Scopus. Otherwise, the region was dominated by the Arabs.

The fate of Jewish New Jerusalem by this time clearly depended on the outcome of operations to the west. The 4th Regiment of the Arab Legion, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Habis al Majali, had by May 20 established firm control over a three mile section of the road in the vicinity of Latrun, Deir Ayub, and Bab el Wad. Further east units of the Legion's 2nd Regiment also blocked the road at Biddu. Thus Jerusalem was again isolated from Tel Aviv and this time by a well disciplined force of regular soldiers, instead of the unreliable irregulars who had only sporadically interfered with road traffic in previous months.

The Haganah High Command now decided to undertake a major operation to seize Latrun and break the Arab stranglehold on the highway. The operation, called "Bin-Nun," after Joshua Bin-Nun, the biblical

conqueror of Jericho, was to be a coordinated attack from east and west by two brigades. The main effort would be made from the west by the newly organized 7th Brigade, commanded by Colonel Shlomo Shamir. This brigade included a hastily-assembled armored battalion, equipped with newly-arrived half tracks, and thus became the first armored unit of the Israeli Army. Its other battalion was composed of recently-arrived immigrants from Europe. Also assigned to the 7th Brigade was a veteran battalion of the Alexandroni Brigade.

In a secondary attack, from the east, elements of the Harel Brigade would pin down as many as possible of Colonel al Majali's troops, to keep them away from the main effort. Once Shamir's brigade had achieved its initial objective of occupying the Latrun crest, the Harel troops would occupy the Latrun-Bab el Wad section of the road, then move north to secure the rugged hills between Biddin and Biddu and Ramallah.

The 7th Brigade's assault on Latrun and the nearby crest was to be executed by two battalions—an Alexandroni Brigade battalion, led by Major Zvi Germann, and a battalion of new immigrants from Europe, commanded by Major Haim Laskov. Some of the immigrants were veterans of World War II who had served in the armies of their countries of origin, but they had had only a brief training period together and with their Haganah cadre before this operation. The assault was planned for shortly after midnight on May 25th, but it was delayed by the late arrival of the Alexandroni battalion, which was not ready to begin its movement until 4:00 a.m. By this time a premature bombardment from the Israelis' handful of 65mm howitzers had alerted the Arabs. When the assault came al Majali's troops were ready. Both of the Israeli battalions suffered very heavy casualties, particularly the Alexandroni battalion. The First Battle of Latrun ended as a devastating defeat for the Israelis.

Early the following morning, before dawn on May 26, an Arab Legion company assaulted an Israeli position on Radar Hill, overlooking the road between Abu Ghosh and Biddu. This attack was successful; the Harel company on the hill, caught by surprise, was driven off. The Arab Legion immediately consolidated the position, thus securing the approaches to Latrun from the east. Despite numerous counterattacks, the Israelis were never able to recover this key position.

On May 28 Colonel David ("Mickey") Marcus, an American volunteer and a graduate of West Point,² was appointed commander over all the

² There has been speculation that Colonel Marcus, recently resigned from the US Army, was sent to Israel by the Pentagon in response to pressure from the White House, itself under pressure from US Jews to support the new state of Israel. It has not been possible to establish the facts.

Israeli forces operating in Jerusalem and in the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv corridor. He immediately directed another effort against Latrun.

On May 30 a second assault was mounted against the Legion defenders of Latrun. Again, two battalions were to take part in the main effort. One of these was Laskov's battalion of the 7th Brigade and the other a Givati battalion under Major Yaakov Peri, replacing the Alexandroni battalion.

The Givati battalion took Deir Ayub without opposition, but as the troops advanced toward Latrun they met intense fire and were driven back. Meanwhile, Laskov's battalion, which included an armored car company, was approaching Latrun from the other direction. Unaware of the withdrawal of the Givati battalion, Laskov attempted a combined infantry-armored assault on the village, which failed in part through poor coordination. The primary cause of failure, however, was the accuracy and intensity of the Arab Legion fire. After suffering extremely severe casualties, Laskov and his men were also forced to fall back.

This second failure to take Latrun was a severe blow to the Israelis, particularly in view of the critical supply situation in Jerusalem. To provide some of the most urgently needed supplies, Marcus organized an emergency supply operation over some mountain trails in the corridor, with supplies carried on mules, and in some cases on the backs of soldiers. The first unit to get through to Jerusalem with supplies was a company of the Givati Brigade.

On June 1 the Haganah High Command approved Colonel Marcus's recommendation that an alternate route be constructed south of the main road from Beir Muheisin to Bab el Wad. To prevent the Arabs from learning about this operation and possibly interfering with it, most of the construction was carried out at night. Also, the nearby Arab villages of Beit Jiz and Beit Susin were occupied and cleared of their inhabitants, to preserve security. All available soldiers and engineers were assembled to work on the project, and all of the bulldozers that could be collected in the Israeli-held portions of Palestine were gathered together. By June 6, with working parties approaching each other from Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, most of the road track had been cleared, except for one particularly rugged section. On that day the first supplies moved over the road, although they had to be hand carried for the short distance where the road was incomplete. The route, which was known as the "Burma Road" was traversable—although far from completed—on June 10, when the first convoy drove straight through from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

In spite of construction of the "Burma Road," the Haganah High Command decided to attempt one more assault on Latrun, by this time held by two Arab Legion regiments, the 2nd and the 4th. The Yiftach Brigade was moved into the corridor and placed under the command of

Colonel Marcus. The Israeli plan, code-named Operation "Yoram," provided for a large-scale pincer movement against Latrun. Two Palmach battalions, one from the Harel Brigade and one from the Yiftach Brigade, would attack Latrun from the east. Another Yiftach battalion was to assault Biddu, and thereby isolate a portion of the Legion in the eastern section of the corridor.

The operation began at midnight of June 8-9, and elements of all three battalions reached at least portions of their objectives. They could not hold their positions, however, against the intense fire and aggressive local counterattacks of the Legion. The next night the operation was tried again, but one battalion became lost, while another was forced to withdraw under intense Transjordanian fire.

On June 10 the Legion counterattacked, and captured the settlement of Gezer. Later in the evening, however, Gezer was retaken by elements of the Yiftach Brigade. While this counterattack was taking place, at 3:50 a.m. on the morning of June 11, Colonel Marcus was killed when he failed to respond to the challenge of an Israeli sentinel. The challenge was in Hebrew, a language which Colonel Marcus had not yet learned. The young sentinel tried to kill himself when he realized whom he had shot.

In its immediate consequences, the third Israeli defeat at Latrun was not so serious as the two previous disasters, nor were the losses so heavy. However, in less than two weeks in an important position of command, Colonel Marcus had demonstrated a combination of energy and ability which marked him as one of the outstanding leaders of the Haganah. His death was a disaster.

7

The First Truce

BERNADOTTE AND THE UN OBSERVERS

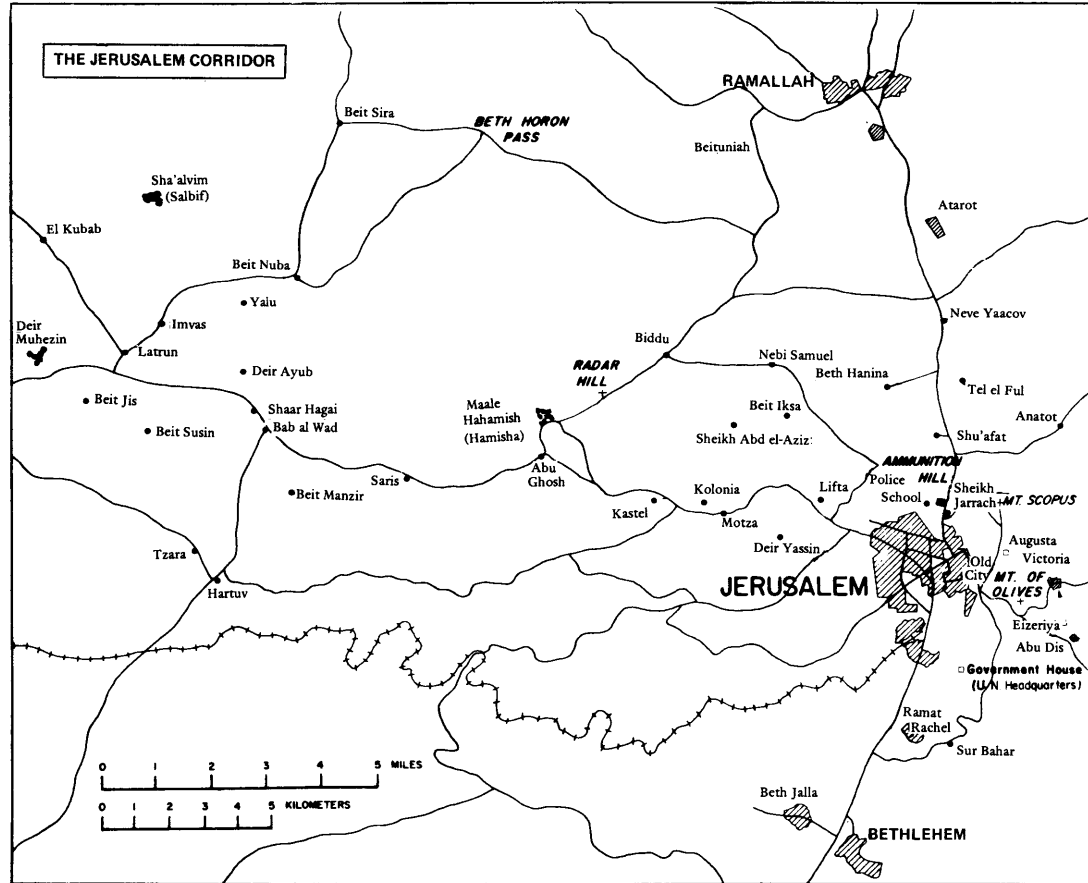
During the weeks following the Arab invasion of Palestine, the United Nations tried vainly to bring about a ceasefire. On May 20 the Security Council appointed Swedish Count Folke Bernadotte af Wisborg as United Nations mediator between the Arabs and the Israelis. He was assisted by a team of United Nations observers, made up of army officers from Belgium, France, Sweden, and the United States, designated as the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization, or UNTSO. After intensive efforts Bernadotte was able to persuade each side that the other was desperate for a truce, and thus by adroit diplomacy saved both from asking for the truce, which, in fact, they did desperately need.

The Arabs, although they seemed to believe that they could profit more from a short truce than could the Israelis, nevertheless, would not agree to a truce period of more than four weeks, from June 11 to July 9. The Israelis would have preferred a longer truce, but were willing to accept four weeks.

In addition to an in-place ceasefire, the principal conditions of the truce terms were that neither side would attempt to improve its military position; there was to be no movement of troops or materiel; no new fighting forces were to be introduced by either side; no immigrants of military age were to be allowed into Palestine, except with the specific approval of the UN mediator; finally, Jerusalem was to be supplied by convoy under the supervision of the International Red Cross. Actually, only the last of these additional conditions was fully adhered to, although both sides generally obeyed the ceasefire for the entire period of four weeks.

ISRAELI REORGANIZATION

Israel made excellent use of those weeks. Priority was put upon the reorganization and training of the armed forces, and the absorption of war material which was arriving from Europe, particularly from Czechoslovakia, in a steady stream. At the same time this respite provided an



opportunity to reorganize civil administration throughout the newly established nation, and to assert central authority over the scattered settlements and the territory occupied by its armed forces.

A major element of the military reorganization was to put into effect the provisions of the Provisional Government's enactment which had formally created a national army. This was Order No. 4, promulgated on May 28, which authorized the government to institute conscription in time of emergency, and which provided for the establishment of a national army, effective on June 1, 1948. This was to be known as the *Zvah Haganah Le Israel*, or Israel Defense Forces, soon popularly known as *Zahal*, or in English, *IDF*.

In accordance with previously prepared plans, the new *Zahal's* High Command established four regional, or area "commands." This led to severe disputes between the *IDF* General Staff and Ben Gurion over the question of who should be appointed to these major command positions. Ben Gurion, although a socialist himself, seems to have had some doubts about the reliability of some of the socialist-oriented Haganah officers. There was no question about their loyalty to the state, but many were members of the pro-Soviet, left-wing Mapam Party, and less than enthusiastic supporters of Ben Gurion, leader of the rival Mapai Party. He felt that some of the more conservative officers who had served during World War II with the British Army were not only more experienced military professionals, but also were likely to be more sympathetic to the Mapai Party, and would be more stable and disciplined in their positions of responsibility. Important among the officers Ben Gurion favored were Colonels Shlomo Shamir and Mordechai Makleff.

Yigal Yadin, General Dori's deputy, was for all practical purposes the Chief of the General Staff during Dori's illness. He strenuously opposed Ben Gurion's proposed appointments. He felt it was important for the morale of the army, as well as for assurance of mutual understanding between commanders and subordinates, that these key positions be held by experienced Haganah officers, most of whom had seen active duty with the Palmach. While they respected them, most of the old Haganah and Palmach looked upon the British-trained officers as outsiders.

When he found that Ben Gurion was adamant in appointing the former British officers to the regional command positions, Yadin submitted his resignation. This in turn aroused concern and considerable opposition among members of the Ben Gurion's own Mapai party; so Ben Gurion also submitted his resignation. The impasse was resolved by postponing appointments to any of the commands except the crucial Central Command, where the next series of major operations was anticipated. That important position was to be given to the youthful Palmach commander, Yigal Allon. The appointment was partially a recognition of Allon's exceptional ability, but it was also an effort by Ben Gurion to

appease the Palmach leaders, who were upset at having their units—once the elite of the Haganah—merged into the other units in the new Zahal. It was at about this time that the title of Aluf, or brigadier general—which up to this time had been granted only to Dori and Yadin—was given to their principal department heads; Allon also was promoted to Aluf.

The fourth clause of Order No. 4 was an explicit provision against the maintenance of any armed forces other than those of the IDF itself within the territory of the state; this provision quite obviously was directed against the Irgun and Lehi.

Under the provisions of the agreement of April 26 between the Haganah and the Irgun, the Irgun had been permitted to constitute a unique force under its own officers within the framework of the Haganah. After the proclamation of independence, both the Irgun and the Lehi remained intact as formations, and, while they acknowledged the superiority of the Haganah High Command, their subordination to this authority was only nominal. Now, however, Prime Minister Ben Gurion made it clear that he had every intention of putting into effect the provisions of the fourth clause of Order No. 4.

On June 2 representatives of the Irgun signed an agreement with representatives of the IDF that all members of the Irgun in territory under the authority of the Provisional Government would join the IDF and take the oath of allegiance; all Irgun arms and equipment would be turned over to the IDF; the Irgun would cease to exist as a separate and independent organization within the state of Israel; all separate arms purchases would cease and all supply contracts would be transferred to the IDF. It was explicitly understood, however, that this agreement did not apply to forces in areas cut off from the remainder of Israel—meaning, of course, those in the Jerusalem area.

THE ALTALENA INCIDENT

In the months before independence, the Irgun had collected a huge quantity of arms abroad, and its leaders now informed the Israeli government that these, together with some 900 recruits for the Irgun, would be arriving on a ship called the *Altalena*, which the Irgun had obtained in France. The Irgun representatives made it clear that they expected that these recruits and this equipment would be for the exclusive use of the former Irgun units.

Ben Gurion saw this incident as an opportunity to have a showdown on the authority of the Provisional Government. He informed the Irgun that under the terms of Order No. 4 and the agreement of June 2, the IDF would be responsible for the allocation of the equipment and the assignment of the recruits. This was unacceptable to the Irgun, and efforts at a compromise failed. Ben Gurion then simply ordered that all

arms and ammunition be handed over to the IDF, which would assume responsibility for the arriving recruits.

On June 20 the *Altalena* arrived off the coast of Israel and anchored opposite Kfar Vitkin. The Alexandroni Brigade (to which a jeep company from Major Moshe Dayan's new "mechanized assault" battalion was attached) was instructed to prevent waiting Irgun units from unloading and distributing the arms. After 48 hours of tension, in which there was sporadic firing between the Irgun and Alexandroni units, the Irgun force surrendered.

Then, suddenly, at midnight on June 2, in open defiance of the government, the Irgun brought the *Altalena* into the roadstead off Tel Aviv. Ben Gurion again ordered Haganah troops to prevent the unloading of arms from the ship, and units from the Negev and Yiftach Brigades were rushed to Tel Aviv to reinforce the small city garrison in enforcement of that directive. Once again fighting broke out between the IDF and the Irgun, and 15 men were killed. To make certain that the Irgun would not obtain the equipment, the *Altalena* was sunk by 65mm gunfire during this struggle.

On June 28 the oath of allegiance was taken by the entire army and the Irgun ceased to exist as a separate force. Except for the battalion in Jerusalem, which retained its identity and some autonomy, Irgun units were broken up and the men transferred to Haganah units.

CONTINUING ARAB DISUNITY

One of the things the Arabs had hoped to achieve during the truce was to resolve their differences and to devise a unified plan of action. Despite intensive but uncoordinated efforts by Husseini and King Abdullah of Transjordan, this proved to be impossible. However, most of the Arab armies took advantage of the truce to rest, regroup, and rearm their forces.

FRICTION IN THE SOUTH

The observation of the truce was not so complete in the southern sector as in other areas of the country, primarily because of the intersection of two important lines of communication of the opposing forces. The east-west road from Majdal through Beit Gubrin to Hebron was the lateral axis connecting the two principal Egyptian forces in southern Palestine. The Egyptians considered possession of this road to be essential to their security, and they also recognized that it comprised a corridor isolating Israeli forces in the Negev from those in north and central Palestine. For the Israelis, the survival of the settlements and forces in the Negev was dependent upon a supply route from the north, which

intersected the Majdal-Hebron road near Huleiqat. Thus, any action by either side to keep open its supply and communications route was automatically considered a violation of the truce by the other side.

The United Nations observers had attempted to arrange a compromise solution which allowed the Egyptians to use the east-west road during part of the day while the Israelis utilized the north-south road during other hours. However, on June 25 the Egyptians stopped an Israeli supply convoy en route to the Negev during the hours reserved for Israeli operations. As a result, the IDF (with the apparent acquiescence of UN headquarters) resumed operations in the area. By June 29, however, the UN Mediator was able to achieve another compromise, with the Egyptians promising to allow the passage of Israeli convoys. There were, nonetheless, many complaints of violations by both sides during the remainder of the truce.

THE BERNADOTTE PLAN

During the truce period, Count Bernadotte anxiously sought a formula for peace in hopes that the truce would become an armistice, and lead eventually to a peace treaty. Early in July he presented a plan which he hoped would be satisfactory to both sides. It proved totally unacceptable to either.

Since the Israelis had conquered most of western Galilee, which had been set aside for the Arabs in the original UN partition plan, and since the Negev was worthless desert, Bernadotte proposed that the original partition plan be modified to award all of Galilee to the Israelis, and most of the Negev to the Arabs. Jerusalem would be under the authority of the United Nations, but the Israelis would be allowed to keep their corridor so that they would have direct access to the internationalized Holy City without having to go through Arab territory, as would have been the case under the UN partition plan. He proposed that all of the Arab portion of Palestine be placed under Transjordan for administration.

On paper this seemed a very logical plan. It meant that both the Israelis and the Arabs would have fairly solid continuous territories instead of the peculiar and unrealistic jumble of enclaves which had been created by the United Nations. The amount of territory would still be about the same for both sides. Although the Arabs would have a little additional area, all of this gain would be useless desert.

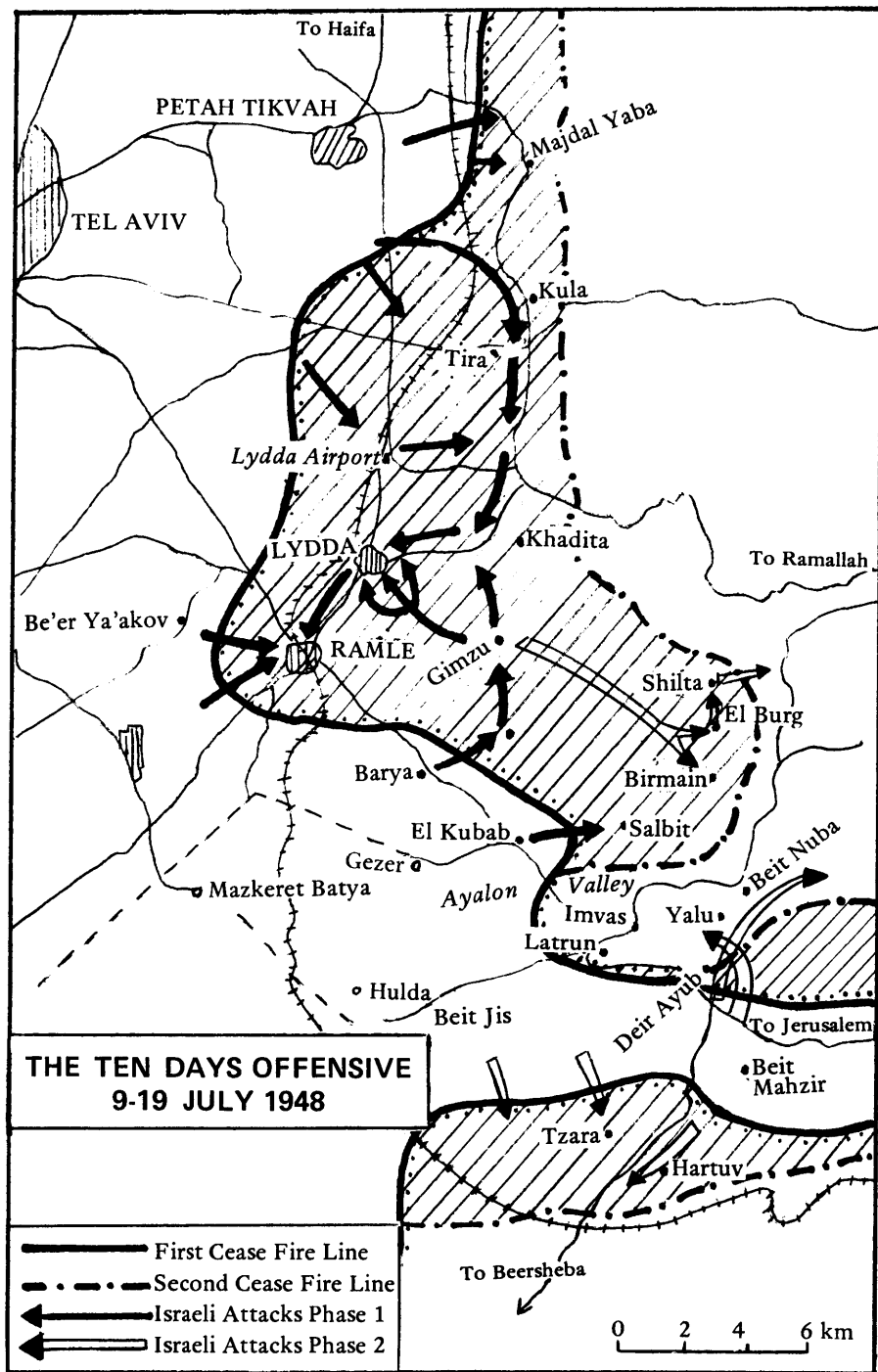
To the Arabs, most of whom misinterpreted the results of the first phase of the fighting in May and June, it was unthinkable that they should abandon so much of their territory to the Jews. In fact, since the very concept of an independent Israeli state was unacceptable under any circumstances, it seemed to the Arabs to be adding insult to injury to compensate them for the loss of the farm and pasture lands of Galilee

with the inhospitable Negev Desert. The Bernadotte Plan confirmed the Arabs in their resolution to carry the war to a successful conclusion as soon as the four weeks of truce expired on July 8.

To the Israelis, Bernadotte's proposals confirmed their suspicions that he was a tool of the British. They had evaluated the results of the first four weeks of combat much more accurately than had the Arabs. They were now confident that the state of Israel was secure and that the areas that they occupied at the time of the truce could be held against any possible Arab offensive. In fact, they saw no reason why, with weapons and equipment pouring in to Israel from abroad, particularly from the east European states, they could not take the offensive after the expiration of the truce, and establish firm control over the regions which had been awarded them under the UN partition plan, and which were still in dispute. Principal among these regions was the southern Negev.

Ben Gurion, in particular, was convinced it was of the utmost economic significance to the Israeli state that it have an outlet to the Red Sea through the Gulf of Aqaba. Thus he was determined to keep the southern Negev at least within the boundaries set by the UN partition plan. He was also convinced that the Negev had resources that would be important to Israel and might even become valuable agricultural land if water could be diverted from the Jordan, or possibly from the Dead Sea or the nearby open seas through some form of desalinization scheme.

While the Israelis would have preferred more time for military reorganization and buildup, and to await the arrival of more aircraft and heavy weapons, they were fearful that the United Nations might adopt the Bernadotte Plan and attempt to impose it upon them. They decided that they could best thwart the plan by making it unrealistic. Accordingly, they prepared to launch an offensive as soon as the truce expired. Since the Arabs had already decided on a similar course of action, there was no possibility of an extension of the truce.



8

The Israeli Ten Days' Offensive

Stimulated by their desire to wreck the Bernadotte Plan, the IDF formulated a new strategy, designed to accomplish their most important objectives as rapidly as possible. Their first priority was to secure New Jerusalem and their control over the access routes as firmly as possible. Once Jerusalem was protected, their second objective was to open secure access routes to the Negev. Elsewhere they planned to maintain a strategic defensive, but by local tactical offensives they intended to inflict as much damage as possible on Kaukji's ALA, while nibbling away at all Palestinian areas still under Arab control, and preventing the Arabs from expanding any of their current holdings.

How much time they would have to carry out their new strategy neither side knew, but the Israelis were prepared to launch attacks in all areas almost the moment the truce expired. As it turned out, they had ten days before a second truce again brought operations to a halt.

CENTRAL FRONT

When the first truce expired, the Jerusalem Corridor became the main focus of the Israeli Defense Force's activity. The Arab Legion and the ALA held Lydda, Ramle and the Lydda Airport, providing them with a base for potential attacks on Tel Aviv, barely 10 kilometers away. Two Arab Legion infantry battalions, with armor and artillery support, were concentrated in the area north and east of Latrun. Between Latrun and Ramle, the IDF held the villages of El-Baria and El-Kubab, while approximately 2 kilometers east of Latrun was the isolated fortified Jewish village of Ben Shemen. General Glubb had wanted to take Ben Shemen at the time his troops occupied Latrun in mid-May, but local Arab leaders protested that they had always been on good terms with the people of Ben Shemen; furthermore, they feared that such an attack would bring the entire Israeli Army down on them.¹

¹ Sir John Bagot Glubb, *A Soldier With the Arabs* (New York, 1957), p. 142.

Lydda and Ramle were both held by local and irregular forces, all nominally under Kaukji's ALA. Both of these towns were well fortified, and both had small Legion contingents in support of the guerrillas.

During the truce, the IDF High Command had prepared plans for an operation called "Dani," designed to eliminate Arab pressure on Jerusalem and on the corridor by attacking the Arabs in the Lydda-Ramle-Latrun-Ramallah area generally northwest of Jerusalem. An important secondary objective of seizing this territory would be to eliminate the direct Arab threat to Tel Aviv. A substantial additional benefit would be the occupation of Lydda Airport, the only major airport in all of Palestine, although not then in operation.

During the final weeks of the truce, General Allon devoted himself to plans for the execution of Operation Dani. By July 9, when the truce expired, the plan was ready. The operation was to be conducted in two phases. First the Arab towns of Lydda and Ramle were to be seized, to secure the coastal plain and gain control of Lydda Airport. Next the corridor to Jerusalem was to be widened by the seizure of Latrun and then Ramallah.

Three brigades were assigned the principal roles for the first phase. The Harel Brigade under Colonel Joseph Tabenkin and the Yiftach Brigade under Colonel Shmuel Cohen were hardened and battle-proven. Operating with them was the newly organized 8th Armored Brigade, commanded by Yitzhak Sadeh, with its tank battalion—a number of homemade armored cars and ten French H-35 light tanks, two British Cromwell tanks, and one American Sherman M-4—a jeep and half-track commando battalion, and two infantry battalions, one assigned from the Alexandroni Brigade, and another from the Kiryati Brigade. Support was to be provided by some newly organized artillery units, equipped with 75mm and 65mm guns that had recently arrived from Europe, and also by aircraft of the rapidly growing IDF Air Force.

There were some interesting command relations here. Yigal Allon, as the commander, was giving orders to his old teacher and former commander, Yitzhak Sadeh, who still had the rank of colonel. And in Sadeh's brigade, commanding the jeep and half-track commando, or armored-infantry, battalion was Allon's former associate in the Palmach, Moshe Dayan, still a major.

The plan for the first phase of Operation Dani provided for a thrust by Sadeh's armored brigade from the west, first to seize the airport, and then to drive into the hill country north of Latrun to relieve Ben Shemen. Simultaneously, the Yiftach Brigade—near Gezer in the Jerusalem corridor south of Latrun—would advance northward through the hills northeast of Latrun to meet Sadeh at Ben Shemen. Once these two forces met, Lydda, Ramle, and Latrun would all be isolated, and could

then be taken one at a time; Lydda first, Ramle next, and Latrun (the toughest nut of all) last. The Harel Brigade was assigned the responsibility of protecting the Jerusalem road and widening the southern portion of the corridor as well as providing a reserve for the other two brigades.

The Israeli offensive started at nightfall on July 9, with the expiration of the truce. During the night and the following morning, the Yiftach Brigade advanced rapidly north from the corridor, easily seizing three Arab villages in its path. The Israeli Air Force began bombing Lydda and Ramle, and a battalion from the Kiryati Brigade undertook a diversion north of the airport and east of Tel Aviv. By nightfall of July 10, the Yiftach Brigade had reached Ben Shemen, and Sadeh's Brigade had captured Lydda airport. Sadeh's troops had failed, however, in their efforts to capture Deir Tarif against fierce Arab Legion resistance. But Moshe Dayan's 89th Mechanized Assault Battalion had bypassed Deir Tarif and had reached Ben Shemen. Although communications to the west were tenuous, the pincers had closed.

Without pausing to rest or wait for artillery support, Dayan and his troops pressed on to Lydda. The mechanized battalion dashed into the town, breaking through the surprised Arabs in the outer defenses. The Israeli half-tracks and jeeps—plus one captured armored car—drove through the town, shooting at all suspected centers of resistance, then again surprised the confused defenders by turning around and driving back through Lydda again. While the Arabs were trying to reorganize themselves, the Yiftach Brigade arrived, and during the night the Israelis overwhelmed feeble and scattered resistance. This exploit attracted to Dayan the favorable attention of Prime Minister Ben Gurion.

Lydda surrendered to the Yiftach Brigade next morning. However, when an armored patrol from the Arab Legion entered the town a short time later, the Arab irregulars poured out of the houses and attacked the Yiftach units. After desperate hand-to-hand, house-to-house fighting, the city was secured by the Israelis, and most of the Arab residents left during the following night.

The next day—July 12—the Kiryati Brigade closed in on Ramle, which surrendered without a fight. Again a mass evacuation of the Arab population followed the fall of the city.

The first phase of Operation Dani had been completed successfully by the Israelis.

The loss of Lydda and Ramle, while disappointing to the Arab Legion, was not unexpected. General Glubb had not had sufficient troops to put large garrisons in those two towns and had been forced to rely upon the local inhabitants and a motley group of ALA detachments from Syria and Jordan. Calmly the Legion girded itself for another defense of Latrun. By this time there were—in addition to the battalion in Latrun—

two other battalions deployed to the north and east of the embattled town.

The Israeli plan for the second phase of Operation Dani called for one battalion of the Harel Brigade to make a diversionary attack on Radar Hill, overlooking the road west of Jerusalem, during the night of July 14-15. Under cover of that diversion, the Yiftach Brigade and one battalion of Sadeh's armored brigade were to converge on Latrun, the Yiftach Brigade from the west and the armored battalion from the south. (The remainder of Sadeh's brigade was further north, holding the Lydda airport and Ben Shemen.)

At 2:45 on the morning of July 15, the Harel Brigade attacked the ridge to the north and rear of Latrun. Here, however, the opposition was very difficult. The Israelis were unable to make any progress against the two battalions of disciplined Arab Legionnaires holding Latrun, and, after suffering many casualties, they withdrew. Simultaneously the Yiftach Brigade captured the villages of Brafalia and Saldit, but failed in its effort to take the village of Budnef.

For the next two days the fighting was intense, as the Israeli brigades continued their attacks. By dusk on July 17, the two brigades were only three kilometers apart, and during the night both renewed their efforts. However, by this time the Israeli troops were exhausted. Not only were they stopped without gain, but they were forced to yield some of the ground they had taken to spirited Arab Legion counterattacks.

A new truce was imminent, and General Allon decided to try a direct assault on Latrun by part of the Yiftach Brigade, with tank support from the 8th Brigade. But time was limited, and the poorly coordinated attack mounted shortly after midnight failed to accomplish anything. At dawn on July 18 the truce came into effect, and firing ceased.

On balance, Operation Dani was a significant Israeli success. The capture of the airport was a major achievement in itself, and the occupation of the cities of Lydda and Ramle assured almost complete Israeli control of the coastal plain in the vicinity of Tel Aviv.

On the other hand, the Arab Legion was not seriously disappointed by the results of the operation. Glubb had not had enough troops to garrison Lydda and Ramle without dangerously weakening the forces in Latrun, Ramallah and Jerusalem. He had hoped that the local Arab levies, with the assistance of irregular units from Jordan and Syria, could hold the towns.² But when they were lost, the Legion concentrated on the defense of Latrun and there it was completely successful.

Although the Israelis failed to take Latrun, the Harel Brigade did widen the Jerusalem Corridor to the south, and this permitted the construction of another road to Jerusalem.

² Glubb, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

Meanwhile, a series of secondary Israeli offensives was taking place in and around Jerusalem. These Israeli attacks had three principal goals: the capture of the villages of Malha and Ein Kerem, to the south of the Old City; the reestablishment of control over at least part of the Old City of Jerusalem; and the capture of Sheikh Jarrach. The accomplishment of the first of these objectives would strengthen Israeli control of the northern end of the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv road, and thus contribute to the major action (Operation "Dani") taking place to the west. Occupation of the Old City of Jerusalem was an important goal, in the light of the Bernadotte Plan. The achievement of the third objective—seizure of Sheikh Jarrach—would block Arab approaches to the New City of Jerusalem from the east and the north, would link up the principal Israeli positions in New Jerusalem with the outposts on Mt. Scopus, and would outflank the Old City, thus contributing to the achievement of the second objective.

On the night of July 9-10, a Gadna "youth" company (composed of soldiers aged 16 and 17 years) of the Etzioni Brigade moved south to clear the slopes of Mount Herzl, dominating the village of Ein Kerem. At the same time, a Lehi company attacked the ridge overlooking the road connecting the villages of Malha and Ein Kerem. Although the Lehi company completely failed to achieve its objective, and was forced to withdraw with heavy losses, the "youth" company was successful, and captured the villages of Hirbet el-Namame and Bet Masil. Once the Israelis were established on Mount Herzl, the Arabs began to withdraw from Ein Kerem.

On July 11 New Jerusalem suffered its first air attack. Egyptian bombers dropped a number of 100 kg. bombs on the city, but did not cause any significant damage.

On the night of July 13-14 the village of Malha was attacked by an Irgun battalion, which succeeded in gaining part of the town. On the 15th, however, the Arab Legion counterattacked and forced the Irgun troops to withdraw with heavy casualties. That night the Irgun unit was reinforced and was able to retake most of the village.

Before the second truce became effective, the Israeli High Command decided to press operations in the Jerusalem area. However, General Glubb had decided to do the same thing. On July 16 his Arab Legion forces began to shell the northern and northeastern sections of the New City, and probing attacks penetrated several sections of the Jewish defenses. Fighting was particularly severe around the Mandelbaum Building, which the Israelis succeeded in retaining, but a number of the houses near the Damascus Gate were seized by the Legion.

The IDF High Command now activated an additional battalion of the HISH forces in Jerusalem. They were to cooperate with the Irgun

battalion in an operation codenamed "Kedem," which was designed to seize all or part of the Old City before the truce.

For several hours, Arab positions in and around the Old City were hit by Israeli artillery fire, but Arab Legion gunners returned the fire effectively. Finally, the Israeli attack was mounted. The new Jerusalem battalion attacked the Zion Gate in the south in coordination with the Irgun attack against the New Gate in the north. The Irgun unit was actually able to penetrate a short way past the New Gate, but was soon halted. The new battalion never succeeded in breaking through the defenses near the Zion Gate. At dawn on July 17, as the truce took effect in Jerusalem (24 hours earlier than elsewhere) both Israeli units withdrew to their former positions.

SOUTHERN FRONT

In the southern sector, two battalions of the Givati Brigade held a ring of settlements north and east of Ashdod, extending from Yavne to Galon. The other two Givati Battalions were in reserve just behind them. The Negev Brigade was assigned to the defense of the Negev settlements and was therefore widely scattered. One battalion guarded settlements south of the Gaza-Beersheba road, while the other was responsible for the security of those north of it. The third battalion, a small commando force, was involved primarily in assuring supply and communications to settlements and units.

The Egyptian forces in this region had been augmented during June and early July, and totalled four brigades when the first truce expired. One of these, with headquarters at Gaza, occupied the coastal strip from the border to Majdal; another—the 2nd Brigade, under Brigadier Mahmoud Fahmy Nematallah, with headquarters at Majdal—was responsible for the security of the Ashdod area; a third—the 4th Brigade, now commanded by Brigadier Naguib, with headquarters at Faluja—occupied the axis from Majdal through Beit Gubrin to Hebron; the fourth brigade—consisting mostly of Azziz's Volunteers—held Beersheba and the area north to Hebron and Bethlehem.

Both sides had plans for launching an offensive immediately upon the cessation of the truce during the night of July 9-10. The Egyptians' plan was to widen their east-west corridor; this would make their communications more secure, would effectively cut communications between the two Israeli brigades in the southern region, and would prevent further resupply of the Israeli settlement in the Negev.

The Israeli offensive was given the code name "An-Far" (for anti-Farouk). Colonel Shimon Avidan, commander of the Givati Brigade, was appointed the overall operation commander. The Givati and Negev Brigades, operating in coordination, were to clear a route to the Negev,

cut Egyptian supply routes, and drive the Egyptians out of Ashdod. During the first night, July 9-10, Givati forces would distract the attention of the Arabs in the Ashdod-Gubrin area, while Colonel Nahum Sarig's Negev Brigade raided in the vicinity of Kfar Darom. The second night the Negev Brigade was to capture the Iraq Suwaydan police post at the road intersection, while the Givati Brigade continued to keep the Egyptians and their local Arab supporters occupied to the north.

Having observed the Israeli preparations, the Egyptians decided to seek surprise by attacking first. Claiming an Israeli violation of the truce (a claim which may or may not have had some foundation), at 6:00 a.m. on July 8, 36 hours before the end of the truce, the Egyptians launched their own offensive. The first surprise attack, made by Brigadier Naguib's reinforced brigade south of the road, resulted in the capture of the outpost of Kaukaba from the Negev Brigade. The Israelis withdrew to Huleiqat, but were soon forced out by pursuing Egyptian armor. At the same time the Egyptians seized Hill 113, an eminence dominating the Negev road junction, and attacked the village of Beit Daras. Although Beit Daras was able to repel four attacks by Sudanese units, the Egyptians fortified Hill 113, then attacked nearby Kibbutz Negba.

The Israeli response to the Egyptian offensive was to move the timing for Operation An-Far ahead by 24 hours. Just after dark on July 8, Negev and Givati units began to move toward their assigned objectives. Although the Givati Brigade was able to capture the villages of Beit Affa and Ibdis, and temporarily held part of the village of Iraq Suwaydan, the latter village had to be abandoned when the Negev Brigade was repulsed from the nearby police post.

Late on July 9 the Egyptians counterattacked, planning to encircle and then overwhelm the Israeli settlement of Negba. However, they made little progress in the face of stubborn Israeli resistance. After a night and a day of continuous fighting both sides rested during the night of July 10-11 and reorganized on July 11. General Mawawi and Brigadier Naguib disagreed about plans; Naguib refused to carry out Mawawi's plan, and so the general relieved him.

Three Egyptian infantry battalions, an armored battalion and an artillery regiment, with various support weapons and aircraft, took part in a renewed attack which Mawawi ordered against Negba on July 12. At dawn they began an intense artillery and aerial barrage to soften up the settlement, while diversionary attacks were mounted against Ibdis and Julis. But Negba had been reinforced by units from the Negev Brigade, and—as Naguib had predicted—the Egyptian main effort was thrown back with heavy losses. Having suffered more than 200 casualties, the Egyptians gave up the attempt. The Israelis reported 21 casualties.

The Egyptians next turned their attention to the Jewish settlement of Berot Yitzhak, near Gaza. Somewhat belatedly they were clearing up a

threat to their line of communication which they had allowed to remain for two months. Berot Yitzhak was garrisoned by approximately 70 armed settlers, reinforced by a Negev Brigade platoon of approximately the same strength.

After preliminary air and artillery barrages, the Egyptians began an infantry assault on three sides of the settlement, and by noon all of these had made some penetration. At that time the Egyptians stopped the assault to reorganize and bring up reinforcements. However, Israeli reinforcements, in the form of the Negev commando battalion and an artillery battery, were also approaching. Although the Egyptian Air Force attacked this column, results were negligible. The Israeli artillery succeeded in taking up positions within range of the Egyptian forces, while the commando battalion reinforced the defenses. By 6:45 p.m. the Egyptians had abandoned their attack, after suffering another 200 casualties. Israeli losses were reported as 33.

The double failures at Negba and Berot Yitzhak, combined with the well-publicized dispute between the two senior officers of the expeditionary force, had a profound effect upon Egyptian morale. Thenceforward the Egyptians were always on the defensive; the Israelis had established a significant moral ascendancy.

Meanwhile, the Givati Brigade—reinforced by a naval amphibious company acting as infantry—had renewed its efforts to break open the road junction and reestablish communications with the Negev. This time, however, the Israelis made their assault further to the east, with the intention of establishing territorial continuity through the capture of the towns of Hatta and Karatya. The operation had the code name “Death to the Invader.”

The Negev Brigade at the same time was to recapture several strongholds south of the road junction, while the Harel Brigade—in the Jerusalem Corridor—was to face south and to press the Egyptian forces in that area. In order to secure the vital element of surprise, several diversions were executed. One of the most successful of these, by the Givati Brigade, surprised the Egyptian battalion at Beit Affa, during the night of July 14-15.

The main operation began on the night of July 17-18, just before the second truce went into effect. The Negev Brigade seized an important position just south of Faluja, but the attackers were repulsed from Huleiqat and Kaukaba. The Givati also failed in their efforts to take Beit Affa, whose defenders were well alerted. Particularly heavy losses were suffered by the company of naval infantry attached to the Givati.

In contrast to these failures, however, the Israeli attacks in the east against Hatta and Karatya went quite smoothly. Hatta was captured after a brief but intense battle. Major Dayan’s armored-commando battalion, reinforced, moved on to Karatya, which fell before dawn on July

18. Although the Egyptians counterattacked several times, using infantry as well as armor, the Israelis repulsed these assaults until the second truce came into effect at 7:00 p.m. on the evening of July 18. Thus, although their hold was more tenuous than they had hoped for, the Israelis had succeeded in opening a new corridor to the Negev and in blocking the east-west communications between Majdal and Hebron.

NORTHERN FRONT

One objective of Israeli forces in northern Palestine was to destroy Kaukji's ALA or at least severely reduce its effectiveness. Although this was a slight diversion from the major objective on the central front, the Israelis felt that it could be achieved with a relatively small application of force, since Kaukji's was the weakest of all the opposing armies. Simultaneously their main effort was to drive the Syrians from their positions at Mishmar Hayarden in east central Galilee.

The Syrian bridgehead at Mishmar Hayarden was held by one infantry brigade supported by tanks and artillery. A second Syrian brigade was on the heights overlooking the east bank of the Jordan River. The Lebanese Army held a line from Rosh Hanikra, on the coast, to the vicinity of Malkiya. The Israelis rightly suspected that the Lebanese would seek to avoid involvement in any operations to the east or south.

At this time the ALA in northern Palestine consisted of some 2,200 troops, including 600 men in a regular Syrian battalion. These troops were mainly concentrated in the hilly region north of the valleys of Esdraelon and Jezreel. The Iraqis, two brigades with some armored support, were concentrated in the Samarian triangle, Jenin-Tulkarm-Nablus. The Israelis in north-central Palestine included the armed guards of the several settlements, plus the Alexandroni, Golani, Carmeli, 7th, and Oded Brigades. Overall commander was Brigadier General Moshe Carmel.

The first phase of the planned Israeli offensive was code-named Operation "Brosh," and had for its objective the encirclement and destruction of the Syrians in the bridgehead around Mishmar Hayarden. The main effort in the operation was to be carried out by the Carmeli Brigade, now under the command of Colonel Mordechai Makleff. Some units of the Oded Brigade were put under Makleff's command for the operation. While the Oded units conducted a holding attack against the Syrian bridgehead from the west, the main force of the Carmeli Brigade would envelop Mishmar Hayarden from the north. An essential feature of the operation was for two of the Carmeli battalions to ford the Jordan River east of Hulata, in order to encircle the Syrians in Mishmar Hayarden, to cut their lines of communication, and to attack them from the east.

Operation Brosh was launched immediately after nightfall on July 9.

One of the two enveloping battalions was able to get across the Jordan River as planned. The other was delayed by unexpected difficulties, soon compounded by effective Syrian artillery fire from both east and west. Then when word was received of an apparent Syrian threat to Rosh Pina (seven kilometers northeast of Safad), the encirclement was called off, and the units were pulled back to their starting point, giving up several Syrian positions which had been captured. It is hard to understand why the Israelis allowed themselves to be so easily diverted from their objective as a result of a Syrian threat which should have made the Israeli task all the easier. It is not clear whether the responsibility for this failure lay with Brigadier General Carmel, the overall commander, or with Colonel Makleff, the operation commander.

At dawn the Syrians counterattacked, receiving excellent support from their air force. The rocky ground around Mishmar Hayarden had impaired the Israelis' ability to dig in, and they suffered many casualties from Syrian artillery and aircraft. By noon the Syrians had regained all of their earlier possessions west of the river and the Israelis had withdrawn to cover the approaches to Rosh Pina and Machanayim.

Meanwhile, the Syrian brigade on the heights attacked the Israeli units that had established themselves on the east bank of the Jordan River. This attack forced a complete withdrawal of Israeli troops to the west bank.

After three days of reorganization, the Israeli effort to encircle Mishmar Hayarden was repeated, but the Syrians were alert and stopped it before it got fully started. Operation Brosh had failed completely; a stalemate settled around the Syrian bridgehead and Mishmar Hayarden.

At the time of the first truce the northern units of Kaukji's ALA held most of west central Galilee from Nazareth north to the Lebanese border. However, he was hemmed in on the west by the Carmeli Brigade's control of the coastal road from Acre north to Rosh Hanikra, and in the south and east by the Golani Brigade's control of the road through Afula to Tiberias. For reasons that are not clear, Kaukji seems to have planned two simultaneous offensives at the end of the first truce, in divergent directions. With part of his force he planned to attack northward toward Sejera (Ilaniyya) presumably with the objective of retaking Tiberias and perhaps reestablishing a link with the Syrians. In the other direction—to the west—his objective was apparently to capture either Acre or Nahariya, or possibly both, to give himself a base on the seacoast. Since it must have been evident to Kaukji that his forces were inadequate for even one independent offensive, it is probable that his projected move to the west was a diversion, to help him join up with the Syrians to the east.

In any event, Kaukji's strategy of divergent offensives actually played into the hands of the Israelis, one of whose post-truce objectives was to

destroy, or vitally damage, the ALA. Lieutenant Colonel Haim Laskov, with three battalions from the 7th Brigade (one of which was armored) and one battalion from the Carmeli Brigade, had the mission of securing control of the coastal road and plain of western Galilee north of Haifa, and then driving south toward Kaukji's base at Nazareth. This operation was code-named "Dekel." In support of Operation Dekel the Golani Brigade—stretched along the Afula Corridor from the coast to eastern Galilee—had the mission of keeping the ALA busy, and distracting it from the main effort to the west. This mission, of course, was facilitated by Kaukji's attack towards Sejera.

On July 9, at the expiration of the truce, Kaukji began his offensive from Nazareth toward Sejera, but he made no progress. The Arab attack was repeated each of the three following days, but failed to make any dent in the Golani Brigade's defenses covering the crossroads in the valley south of Sejera. On the 12th, the defenders of the village were subjected to a sophisticated high-burst artillery concentration carried out by the Syrian artillery attached to the ALA, but this too failed to dislodge the defenders. On the 14th, having arranged for air support from the Syrian Air Force, Kaukji tried once more. This final attack, pushed aggressively with armored cars and air support, also failed. Next day, while the Arabs were reorganizing, Golani units, reinforced from Tiberias, began a limited counteroffensive.

Meanwhile, to the west, the Israeli Operation Dekel had gone according to plan. On the evening of July 9 Laskov's troops, advancing eastward from the vicinity of Acre, had reached the inland road at the base of the foothills. On the 10th and 11th the Israelis pushed north and south and, in cooperation with Druze villagers in the vicinity, established themselves also in the hills to the east.

On July 11 the ALA units east of Acre somewhat belatedly began the offensive—or diversion—toward the coast which Kaukji had ordered in coordination with his drive on Sejera. By this time, however, the Israelis were so well established on the hills that the Arabs were easily driven back.

Laskov held his positions for another day, waiting to see if the Lebanese were going to enter the fight in support of the ALA. When it became evident that there would be no Lebanese activity, Laskov turned his full attention to the southeast, and moved towards Shefar'an on the road from Acre to Nazareth. Shefar'an was taken on the morning of July 14 and Laskov began to prepare for a drive toward Nazareth.

On July 15, as the Golani troops in Sejera were seizing the initiative from the ALA, another Golani unit further south, in the vicinity of Afula, began to probe north toward Kfar Hahoresht, further threatening Kaukji's base at Nazareth. Late that day, Laskov began his drive from Shefar'an toward Nazareth with his armored battalion in the lead.

Threatened from three directions, Kaukji withdrew from the vicinity of Sejera to Nazareth, and tried to block the Israeli thrusts from Shefar'an and Afula. However, by dawn on July 16 Laskov's advance units had reached Zipori, barely six kilometers from Nazareth. Word of this Israeli advance reached the city of Nazareth before noon, and the civilian population began to evacuate the town. By 4:30 p.m. the Israeli infantry had reached the high ground overlooking Nazareth from the northwest and from these positions easily repelled a counterattack by Arab armored cars; most of Kaukji's armored cars were destroyed. The Israeli advance then was renewed, and shortly before 6 p.m. the leading elements of the Israeli units entered Nazareth. At 6:15 the city surrendered, and Operation Dekel had come to a successful conclusion. Kaukji and the remnants of his troops were in flight to the northeast, no longer capable of any effective opposition.

AIR OPERATIONS

The Israeli Air Force was active throughout these ten days of intensive ground combat. The new fighter planes were generally successful in discouraging Arab air attacks against Israeli towns and installations, and became increasingly effective in providing close support to the ground troops. They also moved out on the offensive with a number of militarily insignificant, but symbolically important, attacks against Arab cities, in retaliation for the attacks on Tel Aviv and New Jerusalem. On July 14 three newly purchased World War II Flying Fortresses arrived from Europe to augment the IAF further. En route these planes dropped bombs on Cairo, Rafah, and El Arish. (There was quite a fuss about this in the American newspapers.) Soon after this Damascus was also bombed.

ASSESSMENT

Acceding to the strongly expressed demand of the United Nations, the Israeli 10-day offensive ended at 7:00 p.m. on July 18, and the second truce went into effect.

The first period of combat between May 5 and June 11 had been a standoff; the Israelis had been able to hold most of the areas which had been assigned to them under the UN Partition Plan, but they had been hard pressed, and the situation in Jerusalem had been particularly precarious.

The results of this 10-day campaign, however, were very different. Although not uniformly successful, the Israelis had made impressive gains on most fronts. They had secured the communications between the coastal plain and Jerusalem; they had maintained a tenuous link with

the almost isolated settlements in the Negev, and they had conquered northern Galilee while virtually destroying the effectiveness of the Arab Liberation Army. They had failed, however, in repeated efforts to eject the Arab Legion from its coastal plain outpost at Latrun; they had also failed miserably in their efforts to eject the Syrians from northeastern Galilee. In the south they had retained communications with the Negev, and by taking the initiative from the Egyptians after the Battle of Neba they had set the stage for further offensive action.

During these ten days the Israelis lost 838 soldiers killed, an unknown and unreported number of wounded (estimated at perhaps 3,000), and about 300 civilians had also been killed. Arab losses are unknown but were probably at least double those of the Israelis, and most of them had been suffered by Kaukji's ALA.

9

The Second Truce

GROWTH AND REORGANIZATION OF ZAHAL

The second truce—which was ordered rather than called for by the United Nations Security Council—came into effect at 7:00 p.m. on July 18. Unlike the first truce, it was not limited in duration, and both sides were threatened with sanctions under the United Nations charter in the event of violations. Yet the truce was very quickly violated by both sides, and sanctions were never imposed. The truce was, in fact, merely an insecure ceasefire; the combatants remained on the alert in their positions, ready to resume hostilities instantly, and they often did.

There were numerous breaches in the Jerusalem area, each side blaming the other for violations or incitement. But despite many exchanges of small arms, machine gun, mortar, and artillery fire, neither side attempted to seize hostile positions. The most serious action on this part of the front was the Arab Legion's destruction of the Latrun pumping station on the water pipeline to Jerusalem. It is perhaps surprising that this had not been done before, and the Israelis were ready for it. They quickly laid a pipeline along their "Burma Road," and New Jerusalem was soon adequately supplied with water.

Violations were particularly common along the southern front, where vital lines of communications of both sides were threatened. Under the terms of the truce, both sides were again authorized to use the main north-south and east-west intersection near Huleiqat. In mid-July, however, the Egyptians accused the Israelis of attempting to widen their corridor north of the intersection near Karatya. They attacked and seized several Israeli outposts near Karatya and blocked the new Israeli road to the Negev. In response, at the end of July the IDF initiated Operation "Gis" to reopen the Karatya corridor.

The Yiftach Brigade attacked Faluja, and the Givati Brigade attempted to seize Iraq el Manshiyya, to the east. Both attacks failed. Nevertheless, on July 31 a big Israeli convoy was pushed through to the Negev, and for a few weeks things quieted down on the southern front.

On August 18 there was a flare-up just south of Jerusalem, with a skirmish between Israeli units and Col. Azziz's Volunteers. Two nights

later Azziz was killed by mistake by an Egyptian sentry. His death was a serious blow to the Arab cause.

At the beginning of the uneasy second truce, full-time IDF forces numbered approximately 59,000. (There had been 49,000 at the beginning of the first truce.) Mobilization of able-bodied men continued under the conscription provisions of Order No. 4 of May 28. Men were called up to service as rapidly as the arrival of equipment and the training process would permit. By mid-October this intensive mobilization effort had produced an Israeli armed force of over 90,000 men, equipped and in uniform.

To handle this large army, organized decentralization had become essential. The plans for four major commands—which had been initiated but never completed during the first truce—were now put into effect. Ben Gurion, apparently satisfied by the manner in which Yigal Allon had handled the main effort in the Ten Days' Offensive, no longer attempted to impose his political desires upon General Yadin. In the north, Colonel Moshe Carmel, who had in fact actually been functioning as a front commander, was confirmed in that position and formally promoted to brigadier general. Brigadier General Dan Even was appointed to command the Central Region. Jerusalem and the corridor were put under the command of Brigadier General Zvi Ayalon. Yigal Allon was shifted down to command the Southern Region, which had now obviously become the principal front.

The reorganization of the Haganah into the modern and efficient framework of Zahal—the Israel Defense Forces—which had been initiated during the first truce, was continued. This involved processing and allocation of manpower, unit organization, and the creation of an effective military supply service. A regular order of military rank, which had up until this time been rather haphazard, was established. Aircraft, guns, ammunition, and all kinds of military equipment and supplies were pouring into Israel, and the training and equipping of the army went on at a furious pace.

CONFUSION AMONG THE ARABS

Confusion and lack of coordination still characterized the Arab efforts. There were recriminations among the Arab nations regarding their lack of concentrated effort during the period of the Israeli Ten Days' Offensive, but no concrete corrective measures were taken. The Syrians were bitterly resentful that they had received no assistance from either the Lebanese or the Iraqis during the fighting around Mishmar Hayarden.

Relations between Amman and Cairo became particularly cool when the Egyptians accused the Legion of having abandoned Lydda and Ramle without serious resistance, and of allowing the Israelis to operate against

the over-extended Egyptian line across southern Palestine without even diversionary attacks to the north and east. The Transjordanians were just as critical of the other Arab contingents, particularly that of Iraq, for their failure to provide diversionary actions during the time that the Israeli main effort was focused against them in the Jerusalem corridor and particularly at Latrun. As a result of this lack of coordination and cooperation, King Abdullah seems to have ordered General Glubb, some time between July 14 and July 18, to cease all offensive operations and merely to hold the areas now occupied.

Abdullah was satisfied with Count Bernadotte's proposals that the truce should be extended into a peace, with the Arab areas of Palestine being placed under the jurisdiction of Transjordan. This arrangement, quite naturally, was not satisfactory to the Egyptians, who did not believe that their military efforts in southern Palestine should merely accrue to the advantage of King Abdullah of Transjordan. As a consequence, on September 25 the Egyptians sponsored the establishment of an independent Palestinian government in Gaza. Abdullah was furious.

THE REVISED BERNADOTTE PLAN

This action of the Egyptians was nominally a response to Count Bernadotte's revised peace plan, which on September 16 he presented in more detail to the United Nations. It was similar to his first plan, but with some minor modifications. Its principal new, non-territorial provision was to establish a "union" of the entire former British Mandate with two component states: Israel and Transjordan, the latter being enlarged to include Arab regions west of the Jordan River. In addition, all Arab refugees would either be allowed to return to their homes or be compensated for the loss of their property.

The territorial provisions of the new plan were as follows: The Negev south of a line from Majdal to Faluja was to go to the Arabs. Lydda and Ramle were also to be returned to the Arabs, and their populations allowed to return. This would give the Arabs access to Lydda airport, which would then become a free airport under the United Nations' supervision. The Israelis were to have all of Galilee; this somewhat controversial provision of Bernadotte's original peace plan had been for all practical purposes confirmed by Israel's successful July offensive in central Galilee. Jerusalem, as before, would be under the control of the United Nations, and Haifa would be a free port within a United Nations' controlled enclave.

THE ASSASSINATION OF BERNADOTTE

From the beginning of his role as United Nations mediator, Bernadotte had been mistrusted by the Arabs, who considered him pro-Israeli. On

the other hand, the Israelis were perhaps even more vehement in accusing him of pro-Arab and pro-British sympathies, and he was strongly denounced in the Israeli press. On September 17, the day after his plan had been presented to the United Nations, Bernadotte was assassinated by three men while he was driving to his headquarters in the demilitarized zone of Jerusalem. There is no doubt that the assassins were Israelis and that they were members of the Lehi, Stern Group. After an intensive 24-hour investigation by the Israeli government, Ben Gurion ordered the dissolution of the Irgun¹ and Lehi, and directed that Lehi members be rounded up by Israeli military and police authorities. Over 200 were arrested, including the leader, Nathan Friedmann-Yellin. The murderers, however, were never identified, and those arrested were eventually released without trial. The Arabs accused the Israeli Provisional Government of covering up and protecting the assassins. Until or unless the crime is solved, Israel cannot prove that this is an unjustified accusation. On the other hand, Israel did accept the UN finding that Israelis were responsible, and paid an indemnity in response to this finding of culpability.

Bernadotte was succeeded in the position of United Nations Mediator by his American deputy, Dr. Ralph Bunche.

INTENSIFICATION OF EGYPTIAN WAR EFFORT

Soon after this the Egyptians agreed, in a conference with United Nations representatives in Cairo in late July, not to interfere with Israeli resupply of their southern settlements. However, in late August or early September the Egyptian Government seems to have taken a firm decision to oppose the efforts of King Abdullah to extend Transjordan's control over Arab Palestine. The Egyptians appear to have decided at least to retain control over southern Palestine, which was to be established as an independent Palestinian republic, under Egyptian domination. This meant that the Egyptian war effort would have to be intensified.

During September and early October the Egyptian forces were substantially increased. The total strength of forces deployed in Palestine rose to about 18,000 men, not only the largest, but the best supplied Arab force in Palestine. It was organized into nine infantry battalions, which in turn were combined in three brigades, all under the control of a division headquarters at Rafah. In addition, and also under the direction of the Rafah headquarters, there was a brigade of three battalions of Volunteers or Moslem Brothers, into which were incorporated a few regular Egyptian units.

By early October the Egyptian expeditionary force was deployed as follows: one brigade group was in the Ashdod-Majdal area, with head-

¹ Official dissolution came in January 1949.

quarters at Majdal; another brigade group was deployed on the Majdal-Beit Gubrin corridor, with headquarters at Faluja; the third brigade group, consisting of only two battalions, and with headquarters at Gaza, was deployed in the Rafah area. To the east a battalion of about 1,000 Egyptians and Volunteers held the area between Beit Gubrin and Bethlehem. A similar battalion was in the Hebron-Beersheba-el Auja corridor. By this time the Egyptian expeditionary force had a total of 106 antitank guns, 48 antiaircraft guns, 90 field guns (mostly 25-pounders), 139 Bren gun carriers, 132 light and medium tanks, and three heavy tanks.

General Mawawi, from his headquarters in Rafah, recognized that this considerable force was in fact totally inadequate to defend the extended area where it was deployed. He knew that he was opposed by Israeli forces which were almost twice as strong in numbers of troops, and that Israeli reinforcements were available further north. He submitted recommendations to Cairo that he should be permitted to consolidate, concentrating his forces primarily in the coastal corridor, and in the Beersheba-el Auja area. This was disapproved in Cairo, however, as it would mean the abandonment of most of southwestern Palestine to the Israelis. Since negotiations for a final armistice were being conducted by the U.N., with indications that the resulting boundaries would be negotiated on the basis of territory held, the Egyptian Government was reluctant to make such a major withdrawal.

For comparable reasons, the Israelis had decided by late August that they would have to undertake an offensive in the southern sector. On August 25 a Southern Command was established, under Brigadier General Allon. His mission was to reestablish undisputed control over the semi-isolated settlements in the Negev, in order to avoid a final settlement along the lines of the Bernadotte Peace Plan. During September he devoted himself to preparation for the offensive. Thus the second cease-fire, which was never formally terminated, was obviously about to end.

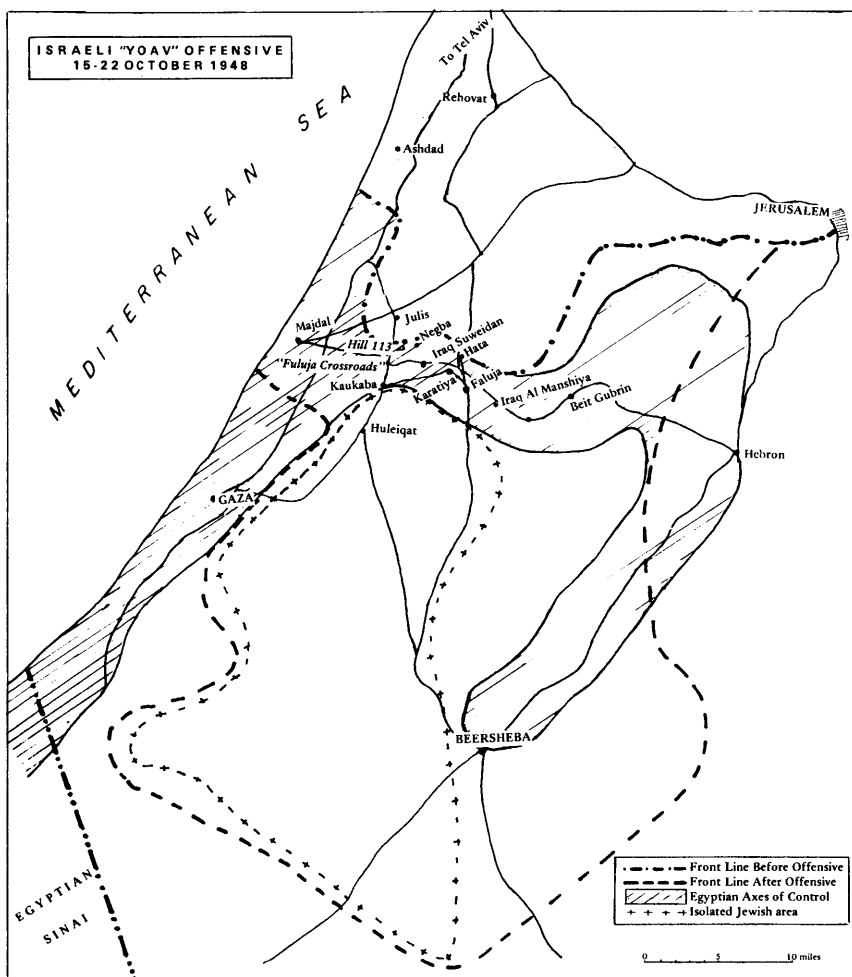
10

The Israeli October Offensives

It was obvious to the Israelis from the manner in which the different Arab forces had responded—or had failed to respond—to their Ten Days' Offensive, that none of the other Arab contingents would support the Egyptians in opposition to their proposed offensive in southern Palestine. Furthermore, with an army that was now probably twice as large numerically as the combined Arab armies in the field, the Israelis knew that they could not only concentrate overwhelming strength against the Egyptians in the south, but could maintain adequate security elsewhere along the scattered fronts. They could, in fact, even mount simultaneous offensives in other areas where Arab forces retained territorial footholds in regions which the Israelis felt they must have. Partly because of respect for the fighting qualities of the Arab Legion, and partly in hopes of reaching a political settlement with Abdullah, no further action was anticipated in the Jerusalem Corridor, except to the south and east where the opponents would be Egyptian.

SOUTHERN FRONT

The IDF General Staff's plan for a major offensive in the south against the Egyptians was codenamed "Yoav." Concentrated under General Allon in the Southern Command were three infantry brigades—the Givati, the Negev, and the Yiftach—plus the Palmach armored-commando battalion of Colonel Sadeh's 8th Armored Brigade. The Oded Brigade also was alerted for movement to the Southern Front. In support of these units were a number of contingents of the newly established Israeli artillery: four batteries of 75mm guns and four of 65mm howitzers, plus several companies of 6-pounder and 7-pounder antitank and infantry guns, as well as a number of heavy mortars. The major objectives of Operation Yoav were to defeat the Egyptian army and to end the isolation of the Negev. The first step would be to cut the Egyptian corridor between Majdal and Beit Gubrin; then operations would begin against the Egyptian LOCs through Beersheba and Gaza.



In preparation for this offensive, in September the Israelis occupied a number of small hills along the east-west road east of Faluja. On September 29 they drove Egyptian outposts from vital heights overlooking the main Faluja positions from the east. Despite several counterattacks the Egyptians were unable to dislodge the Israelis.

Then in early October the Israelis began an airlift into the Negev, shifting materiel and men of the Yiftach Brigade into the Negev, and flying out most of the exhausted troops of the Negev Brigade. This brigade was to recuperate and regroup in the north, where it would receive 1,000 replacements to bring it up to standard strength. It would then become the reserve of the Southern Front. One battalion of the Negev Brigade, however, was left in the southern region.

Allon's objective was to cut the two main Egyptian LOCs and their east-west corridor, then to defeat the isolated Egyptian forces in detail, driving them out of Palestine. He planned to begin the offensive by opening a new corridor to the south in the foothills region east of Faluja near Iraq el Manshiyya. This would be done by an armored battalion attacking from the north, while the remaining infantry battalion of the Negev Brigade attacked from the south. In preparation for this assault, the Givati Brigade was to capture a number of strongpoints on both sides of the Majdal-Beit Gubrin road. At the same time the Yiftach Brigade, in the south, was to drive a wedge between Gaza and Majdal and Beit Hanun to isolate Egyptian forces to the north from their bases in Gaza and Rafah.

At noon on October 15, the Israelis sent a convoy along the main road to their Negev settlements, in accordance with the terms which had been agreed upon under the supervision of the United Nations. Since the Egyptians regularly fired at Israeli movement on the convoy route, not unexpectedly it was attacked en route, and forced to withdraw after several vehicles were destroyed. This incident provided the spark for Operation Yoav. It had been intended to do so.

Late in the afternoon of October 15, the Israeli Air Force attacked the Egyptian airfield at El Arish and struck also at the Egyptian bases at Gaza, Majdal and Beit Hanun. The objective of these attacks was to establish complete air supremacy, and to neutralize the Egyptian Air Force in the Palestine area. Although this was accomplished, temporarily, the Egyptian Air Force was not completely knocked out, and after a delay of a few days was again able to operate, although in a limited fashion.

Just after nightfall on the 15th, a commando battalion of the Yiftach Brigade blew up the railroad line between Rafah and El Arish, and mined the road between Rafah and Khan Yunis. The commandos at the same time carried out harassing operations against the Egyptian installations and camps in this rear area. While this was going on, the remainder of the Yiftach Brigade occupied positions east and northeast of Beit Hanun, while the Palmach commando battalion and the Givati Brigade attacked southward to break through the east-west Egyptian corridor and block the road between Iraq el Manshiyya and Beit Gubrin.

Just after dawn, the Palmach battalion mounted a full-scale assault against Iraq el Manshiyya. Under the cover of an artillery and mortar barrage, an infantry battalion with armored support drove into the fortified village. Egyptian resistance was tenacious. Contributing to the determined fighting of the dug-in Egyptian infantrymen was accurate and well-controlled artillery fire, which knocked out several of the Israeli tanks and prevented effective maneuvering and adequate reinforcement of the assault elements. By mid-morning the Israeli infantry

had been driven out and the Egyptians had reestablished their position. Israeli losses were heavy, and evacuation of the wounded went on until evening.

It was now obvious to General Allon that his plan to open a new route in the Iraq el Manshiyya area could be accomplished only at the price of heavy losses. He decided, therefore, that the best place to break through to the Negev would be near the main road intersection near Huleiqat. Although heavily defended, the flat terrain denied the Egyptians the commanding observation which had made their artillery so devastating in the foothills to the east. Once a breakthrough was made in this area, the Egyptians would be unable to plug the gap.

The Egyptian defenses around the road junction were based on three fortified areas, occupied by a reinforced battalion. To the north were two hills (designated 100 and 113 from their map elevations),¹ occupied by a company. To the west, at the junction itself a company was entrenched in two mutually supporting positions. To the south another company held the strongly fortified hilltop villages of Huleiqat and Kaukaba. Farther east, and also on high ground dominating the road junction, another company was based on the fortified police post at Iraq Suwaydan. General Allon decided to focus his efforts against the northern and western positions first, while the Yiftach Brigade made a holding attack against Huleiqat and Kaukaba. A battalion of the Givati Brigade was to make a frontal attack on the two hills north of the junction, while simultaneously enveloping strongpoints near the road junction.

The attack began shortly before midnight on October 17. In less than an hour, both Hills 100 and 113 had been overrun. Egyptian resistance was more determined and protracted at the two strongpoints near the road junction, but by dawn both of them also were in Israeli hands. The Yiftach Brigade now intensified its operations against Huleiqat but by dawn it was forced to withdraw. Thus Huleiqat remained the only position blocking the establishment of a corridor from the central coastal plain to the Negev.

Meanwhile to the west the main body of the Yiftach Brigade had been successful in cutting the main north-south coastal road near Beit Hanun. With their line of communications thus cut, and under the threat of complete encirclement, the Egyptians began to evacuate the Ashdod-Majdal area. It was a difficult and costly withdrawal, under constant fire from Israeli troops on high ground dominating the road from the east. To minimize their losses from this fire, the Egyptians hastily established an alternate route farther west along the sandy beaches and were able

¹ A common military designation of unnamed hill features is by the altitude, in feet or meters (in this case meters), as shown in standard military maps.

to get most of their brigade out of the Ashdod-Majdal area without further serious losses.

This withdrawal of the main Egyptian force from Majdal, combined with the Israeli breakthrough at the Huleiqat crossroads, left an Egyptian force of about 4,000 men, including about 1,000 in Iraq el Manshiyya, approximately a brigade, exposed and partially isolated in the vicinity of Faluja. So long, however, as the fortified post at Iraq Suwaydan remained in Egyptian hands, this "Faluja pocket" could not be completely encircled and isolated except with a far larger force than was available to General Allon. In command of this isolated contingent was able Colonel Sayid Taha, a Sudanese.

Since by this time it was obvious that the Israelis did not have to fear the intervention of the other Arab armies in the north, they decided to transfer the Oded Brigade to the southern front. This unit arrived on October 18, and was immediately committed by Allon to the vicinity of Karatya, to attempt to make a breakthrough by advancing southeastward through the hills to bypass the formidable Egyptian defenses at Iraq el Manshiyya, and to isolate further the garrison of Faluja. The operation was hastily planned, however, and the Oded units, despite the availability of guides and liaison officers from the Givati Brigade, were unfamiliar with the terrain. The Egyptian positions in the vicinity of Karatya held, and the Oded attack was driven back.

As a result of the renewed outbreak of full-scale war in Palestine, on October 19 the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution for still another ceasefire in Palestine. Fearing that this would soon force him to halt his offensive operation, Allon decided to make one more effort to force open the Huleiqat barrier. He decided to use the Givati Brigade despite its exhaustion and losses in the earlier fighting. He seems not to have had much confidence in the newly arrived Oded Brigade.

The Egyptian force in Huleiqat was approximately a battalion in strength, consisting of one Egyptian and one Saudi Arabian infantry company with a heavy weapons company in support. These units held six mutually supporting strongpoints in and around Huleiqat.

One reinforced Givati battalion initiated the assault of October 19-20, supported by all of the artillery and heavy mortars that Allon could assemble. The attack was successful, despite the fierceness of Egyptian resistance, and by midmorning on October 20 the Huleiqat position had been overwhelmed.

Simultaneous attacks by other Givati and Yiftach units against the Iraq Suwaydan fortress, however, were repulsed. A renewed assault the following night, October 20-21, was also repelled. Israeli losses were heavy in both of these unsuccessful attacks. Nevertheless, despite this

failure at the police post, the Israelis had succeeded in opening a secure corridor to the Negev. Although some harassment by long-range fire from the Iraq Suwaydan post could be expected, no other real Egyptian interference was now possible.

Anticipating the capture of Huleiqat, the IDF High Command was prepared to exploit this success by seizure of the town of Beersheba. Once this place was under Israeli control, the Egyptians remaining in the Hebron Mountains and in the area south of Jerusalem would be cut off from Egypt. The isolation of the Faluja pocket—which had retained tenuous and sporadic communications with Beersheba—would be complete. To carry out this plan Allon had organized a special task force consisting of most of the 8th Brigade, plus the infantry and commando battalions of the Negev Brigade, brought south from reserve. The advance on Beersheba began shortly after dark on the night of October 20.

Beersheba was garrisoned by a force of about 500 Egyptians. The town was surrounded by an antitank ditch, with barbed wire fences southeast and northwest. On October 19 and 20, air raids on Beersheba had been mounted to soften up the defenses.

Shortly before dawn on October 21, the Israeli main body approached the town from the west. At the same time, a diversionary attack was mounted from the north. The Egyptian garrison, taken completely by surprise, fought stubbornly, but after being split into small groups surrendered at 9:15 in the morning.

As a result of the operations between October 17 and 21, the Egyptian field forces were now divided into four almost completely isolated forces. The line of communication of the brigades withdrawing from Ashdod and Majdal was still tenuously open, secured by an Egyptian strong-point tenaciously holding the position at Beit Hanun. Less than a brigade was with the division headquarters in the Rafah-Gaza area. A brigade was isolated in and around Faluja. Approximately two battalions, mostly Azziz's Volunteers, were isolated in the Hebron-Jerusalem area.

Alarmed by this development, in late October General Glubb sent a combined arms force—about a battalion in strength—down to Hebron, with the apparent intention of driving westward to relieve the Egyptians in the Faluja pocket. This proposed operation was code-named "Damascus." When the Israeli strength in the area became evident, however, Damascus was called off. Furthermore, Abdullah in the meantime had made it clear to Glubb that he had no desire to help the Egyptians.

To the west, on October 22 the Israelis endeavored to complete the isolation of the forces withdrawing from Ashdod and Majdal. They took the village of Beit Hanun, cutting the railway and extending their hold on the road. However, they were unable to dislodge the defenders from the high ground between the road and the coast, and the Egyptians were still able to use their makeshift road along the beach to maintain

communication between Majdal and Gaza. This was obviously an untenable situation, and on October 27 the Egyptians evacuated Ashdod, pulling their troops back as rapidly as possible along the threatened beach road. On November 5, Majdal also was abandoned, giving the Israelis full control of the coast as far south as Beit Hanun. This withdrawal also relieved the besieged Israeli settlements of Yad Mordechai and Nitzanin.

As a result of these disasters General Mawawi was relieved of command of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force and was replaced by Major General Ahmad Fuad Sadek. On November 19 Sadek placed Brigadier Naguib in command of the 10th Infantry Brigade Group, and a few days later placed the 4th Infantry Brigade also under his command. But the task facing Sadek and Naguib was not an easy one.

THE CENTRAL FRONT

While these operations in the Negev were in progress, an Israeli task force made up of units primarily from the Harel Brigade, with one Givati battalion attached, advanced eastward and southward in two columns from Hartuv in the Jerusalem Corridor, in a clearing operation called "Hahar." Its objective was to widen the Jerusalem Corridor, to complete the isolation of the Egyptians in Bethlehem to the east, and then to move southeast on Hebron.

The two columns joined at Beit Gubrin and turned eastward toward the Jerusalem-Hebron road. Seven kilometers east of Beit Gubrin the Israelis encountered the Arab Legion column which General Glubb had sent southward to the Hebron area. A short battle took place, in which the Arab Legion held its ground. The Israelis withdrew to Beit Gubrin, and the Transjordanians made no further move against them.

Despite this isolated setback, the Israelis managed to occupy most of the southern and southwestern Judean hills and substantially widen their area of control south of the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem corridor. This permitted them to improve their alternate route from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, officially called "The Road of Valor." This road, which ran from the coast to Jerusalem south of the Burma Road, was officially opened in December 1948.

Late in October or early November, General Allon recommended to the IDF High Command that he be authorized to move eastward to occupy Hebron and the surrounding mountains and to reach Jerusalem from the south. However, this recommendation was disapproved, essentially for political reasons. The recent encounter with the Arab Legion near Beit Gubrin had once more demonstrated the substantial superiority of the Transjordanian Army over the other Arab forces. The Israelis did not fear the Legion, but it was clear that Allon's recommendation could be

accomplished only at severe cost in casualties. Politically, furthermore, it seemed likely that if the Transjordanians were left alone they would be willing to live with the status quo in and around Jerusalem and in central Palestine. Ben Gurion hoped that this might even lead to some sort of negotiations with King Abdullah to bring about Arab recognition of the state of Israel and a permanent peace.

In November, Colonel Moshe Dayan, now in command of the Etzioni Brigade in New Jerusalem, had several truce discussions with Colonel Abdullah El-Tel, commanding the Arab Legion forces in and around old Jerusalem. As a result of these talks, on November 30 the two commanders agreed to a "sincere" cease fire, which went into effect on December 1st. A major provision of this agreement was to allow the Israelis to send regular supply convoys to their two isolated positions on Mt. Scopus.

That same day, December 1, King Abdullah was proclaimed king of Arab Palestine and on December 13 the Transjordanian Parliament approved a union of the two states, with the combined territories to be known as the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

NORTHERN FRONT

After his disastrous defeat at Nazareth in July, Fawz el Kaukji had regrouped his shattered forces in Lebanon, and in the small strip of Palestine occupied by Lebanese forces. The strength of his revived army was about 3,100 men, with ten artillery pieces and about ten armored cars.

When the Israelis began their major offensive in the south against the Egyptians, and particularly after the Oded Brigade was moved south from Galilee, Kaukji was apparently the only Arab leader in northern Palestine who recognized—or at least who was willing to do something about—the opportunity which this Israeli offensive seemed to give to the other Arab forces. However, his freedom of action was limited because, since he was operating in an area administered by Lebanon, his plans had to be approved by the Lebanese regional commander, Colonel Shukeir.

On October 22, with Lebanese approval, Kaukji began a new offensive—really a raid—south into Galilee. His first objective was the settlement of Manara in the Huleh Valley, just east of the frontier.

In order to capture Manara, it was first necessary to capture the nearby strongpoint of Sheikh Abed, which dominated the settlement. This was quickly accomplished, and the surprised Israelis were driven out back to Manara. Kaukji then moved down into the valley and blocked the road between Manara and Malkiya. A small force of Israeli armored

cars attempted to drive the Arabs back, but was easily repulsed. The strong defenses of Manara discouraged the Arabs, but the town was completely isolated.

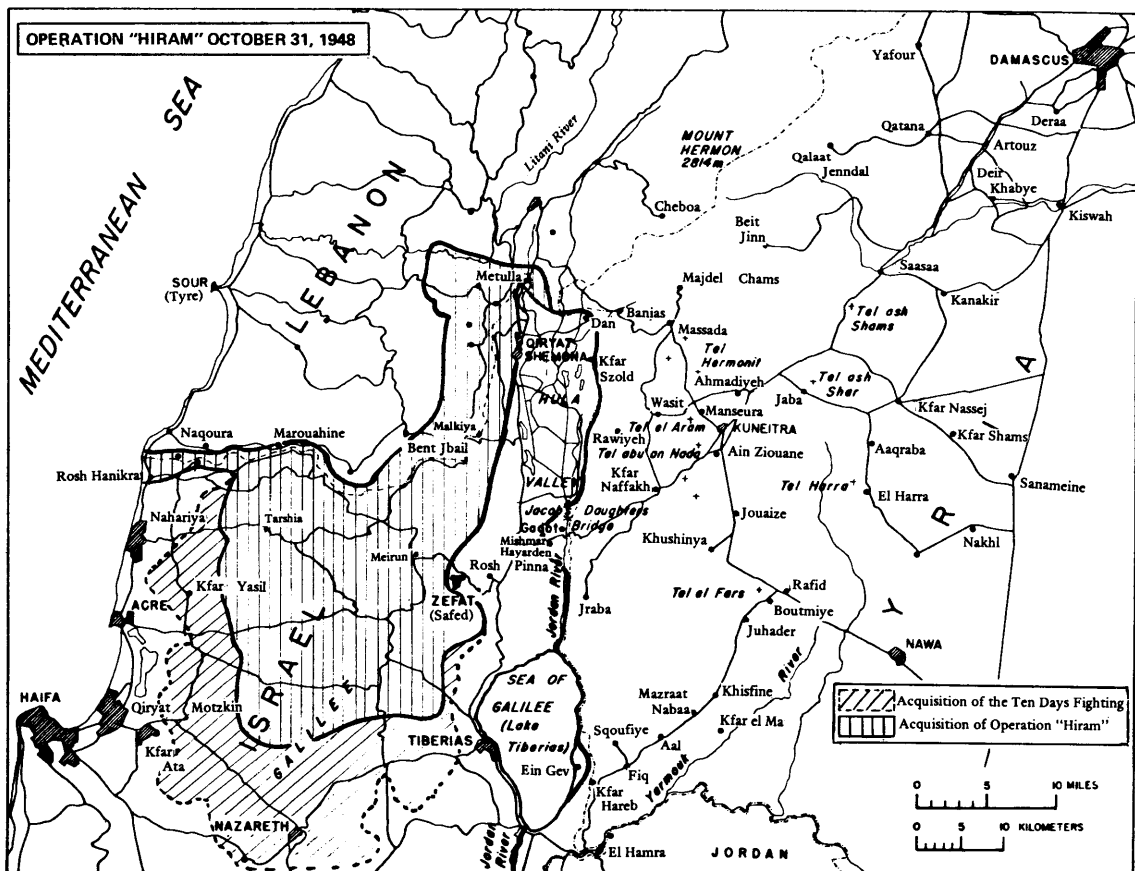
Kaukji's tiny army consisted of four "brigades," each really the equivalent of about a battalion. The brigade under his personal direction had just isolated Manara. The 2nd Yarmuk Brigade was located a few miles west in the vicinity of Sasa and Gish. The 3rd Yarmuk Brigade was in the vicinity of Tarshia. The 1st Yarmuk Brigade was isolated from the others, and was operating in the hills south of the Acre-Safad road.

The Israeli High Command, which had hoped that the defeat in July had so discouraged the Arabs as to eliminate the effectiveness of the ALA, now decided to finish the job which apparently had been only half done at the time. The IDF High Command accordingly prepared plans for Operation "Hiram," which had three objectives: to knock Lebanon out of the war, to destroy the ALA, and to conquer all of upper Galilee to stabilize a defensive line across the border. Speed was of the essence in this operation, since it would be necessary to destroy the ALA before the Lebanese and Syrians could come to its assistance. Brigadier General Moshe Carmel, Chief of the Northern Command, was responsible for carrying out the operation.

Operation Hiram was to be executed in two phases. In the first place, the 7th Brigade and the Oded Brigade (brought back north from the southern front) were to encircle and isolate the separated Arab forces in the north. The 7th Brigade would advance from Safad to Sasa from the east, while to the west the Oded Brigade would carry out a diversion, moving from Nahariya through Tarshia toward Sasa, where a road junction controlled the entire road system of Upper Galilee. To the south the Golani Brigade would carry out a number of holding attacks, while guarding against possible Iraqi interference from the south or from east of the Jordan. Similarly, in the northeast, the Carmeli Brigade was to keep the Syrians off balance. Supporting these four brigades were four artillery batteries, two of 75mm guns, two of 65mm howitzers.

Once the two columns had met at Sasa, the second phase of the operation would begin. The Arabs, trapped in the pockets created in this pincer movement, could be eliminated one at a time. General Carmel then planned a general advance northward to the Huleh Valley, clearing the countryside as he advanced. The Israeli Air Force was to be available to support this attack and to deal with any interference by the Syrian Air Force.

Operation Hiram was launched at dusk on October 28. During the afternoon the Israeli Air Force had carried out heavy bombing raids on several objectives in the Arab-held territories. The Golanis' diversionary attacks in the south and southwest had attracted the Arab attention, but



had failed to contain the Arabs adequately. As the Oded Brigade advanced from the west, Kaukji was able to withdraw his southern brigade northward over the Acre-Safad road. The Oded column advancing from Kabiri to Tarshia failed in its first effort to storm the defenses of that village. This brigade, which had yet to gain any major success, had just recently been rushed rapidly northward from the Negev, and had again been given a difficult task with insufficient time to study the terrain and make adequate plans. The result was still another failure by the Oded Brigade. Despite an intensive air bombardment of Tarshia, the column withdrew to Kabiri.

Meanwhile, a Druze company attached to the Oded Brigade had been given the task of occupying the village of Yanuh, south of Tarshia, which was occupied by pro-Arab Druzes. At first the residents of Yanuh welcomed the combined Israeli-Druze force, but news of the defeat at Tarshia, combined with reports that the ALA was marching southward toward their village, led the villagers to turn against the Israelis and the Israeli-Druze detachment. There was a local Druze and Arab militia force, and its members were secretly assembled. A surprise attack drove the Israelis and their Druze unit out of the village.

Meanwhile to the east General Carmel, accompanying the 7th Brigade column, advanced northward on the road from Safad to Meirun. The road was blocked by many obstacles and minefields, and the 7th Brigade did not reach Meirun until dawn. An assault on the Meirun defenses, however, was quickly successful, and the village was in Israeli hands by 8:00 a.m. Continuing north the column overwhelmed the ALA defenders of Safsaf, which fell shortly after noon. After a brief rest, during which he regrouped and reorganized his troops, Carmel continued his advance northward to the important road junction of Gish.

By this time, Kaukji recognized that his forces were about to be split by the 7th Brigade's advance, and he appealed for help to the Syrians to the east. In response a Syrian battalion moved to his support. But it was ambushed by the Carmelis and thrown back after losing more than 200 dead. Gish was then easily occupied. General Carmel then turned west and advanced toward Sasa. The village was on high ground overlooking the crossroads and was very well fortified.

After dark on October 29 the Israelis opened a heavy artillery barrage on the village, and under cover of this fire the 7th Brigade assaulted up the hill. The Arabs, not expecting such an attack to be mounted so quickly, were surprised. By midnight the village and the crossroads were in the hands of the Israelis. Kaukji and his brigade fled northward. As soon as the word of the fall of Gish had reached Tarshia, that village also was evacuated. On October 30, following a really unnecessary air bombardment, the Oded Brigade advanced again from Kabiri and took Tarshia without opposition.

The Oded column then continued eastward to join General Carmel, encountering a large convoy of withdrawing Arabs in the vicinity of Hurfeish. Although the Israelis captured or destroyed a number of vehicles, the Arabs were able to retreat northward across the Lebanese border with some of their supplies. But most of the heavy equipment was abandoned. Having achieved its first significant success of the war, the Oded Brigade reached Sasa and joined Carmel's force, thus ending the first phase of Operation Hiram.

Carmel next turned his attention to clearing the Huleh Valley. He decided that he would do this with the 7th Brigade, sending the Oded column back westward to clear the region between Nahariya and Sasa, and to gain control of all of the countryside south of the Lebanese frontier west of Sasa.

Carmel himself, with his 7th Brigade column, moved northeastward from Sasa, capturing first the village of Saliha and then Malkiya, which had been the scene of some of the earliest fighting of the war. Simultaneously, the Carmeli Brigade advanced northward from Safad through Rosh Pina toward the Syrian bridgehead at Mishmar Hayarden. With the 7th Brigade approaching from the west, and the Carmeli Brigade from the south, the Syrians pulled back from their outposts, but continued to hold their position in Mishmar Hayarden itself. This strongly-fortified position was closely contained by the Israelis but not attacked.

Carmel then advanced northward up the Huleh Valley with the 7th Brigade. Arab resistance faded. The positions around Manara fell without a struggle, and the Israelis crossed the Lebanese border to occupy a strip of that country from the Litani River south to Malkiya.

Thus at about dawn on the 31st, Operation Hiram drew to a close. The ALA had been totally defeated and its remnants either captured or driven out of Galilee. At the same time, the Lebanese had lost their few small footholds in Galilee, while the Syrians retained only their tiny bridgehead just west of the Jordan at Mishmar Hayarden. Both sides accepted a local ceasefire that day. For all practical purposes the war in the north was ended.