

PALESTINE  
**PLAN OF PARTITION**  
 WITH ECONOMIC UNION  
 PROPOSED BY THE AD HOC COMMITTEE  
 ON THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION  
**PLAN DE PARTAGE**  
 AVEC UNION ECONOMIQUE  
 PROPOSE PAR LA COMMISSION AD HOC  
 CHARGEE DE LA QUESTION PALESTINIENNE

Arab State      Etat arabe  
 Jewish State    Etat juif  
 City of Jerusalem    Ville de Jérusalem



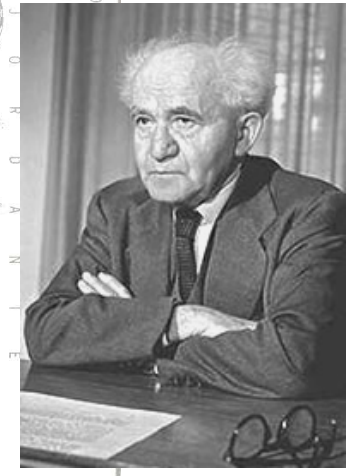
# Friendship Reanimated

## The Israeli-Transjordanian Armistice Negotiations

1948-1949

**Jørgen Jensehaugen**

MA Thesis in History  
 Department of Archaeology, Conservation, and History  
 (IAKH)  
 University of Oslo (UiO)  
 and  
 International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO)  
 Spring 2008



International Boundaries	Frontières Internationales	—+—+—+—+—+—+—
District Boundaries	Limites de districts	— · — · — · — · — · — · —
Sub-District Boundaries	Limites de sous-districts	— · — · — · — · — · — · —
Roads	Routes	— — — — —
Railways	Voies Ferrées	—+—+—+—+—+—+—
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Front Cover Pictures.

UN Partition Plan: Foreign Office Archives

King Abdullah: <http://www.britannica.com/eb/art-70022/King-Abdullah-I-of-Jordan-with-his-younger-son-Naif> (23.04.08)

David Ben-Gurion: <http://www.isracast.com/images/NewsImages/271106Bengurion.jpg> (23.04.08)

Ralph Bunche and Count Folke Bernadotte:

[http://nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/articles/bunche/index.html](http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/articles/bunche/index.html) (23.04.08)

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## Preface

When I started this project in 2006 I was not aware that it would be finished on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Israel's Declaration of Independence, almost to the day. Now, after two and a half years of work, it seems that it could not be otherwise. It is as if the events are inescapably tied. Much in the same way as the history of 1948 is tied with the present situation in the Middle East. In Israel this is a year of celebration, in the Palestinian camps around the region it is yet another year of mourning. The past carries on into the present. The history of 1948 is more than the history of 1948, it is part of the explanation of why the present is the way it is. History is the story of dead men, but it is also the story of living events.

Many people have helped me reach this conclusion, just like many people have inspired me to endeavour to comprehend the Israel-Palestine conflict. I cannot list them all, but some cannot go unaccounted for. I owe gratitude to Jack Ullman – the first of many great history teachers I have had over the past years. His classes were more inspiratory than I could have imagined at the time. Likewise, my advisor, Hilde Henriksen Waage, has been a great source of inspiration. I am grateful to her for all the time and energy she has invested in my project. I could have expected nothing more from an advisor. Her research assistant, Marte Heian Carlsen, has been helpful throughout, providing comments that have helped improve my thesis immensely. Gratitude must also be given to the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO) for all the support this fantastic institution has given me. I am especially thankful for the faith PRIO put in my project by allowing me to receive the student scholarship and for letting me participate in The Missing Peace SIP. It is hard to calculate the value of being invited, as a young master student, to discuss the Middle East with some of Norway's best scholars on the field. I would also like to thank the Nobel Institute's head librarian Anne C. Kjelling, who, together with the PRIO librarian Odvar Leine, have provided service that borders on the unimaginable.

Ellen Fadnes and Mariá Hernández Carretero deserve special mention for having shared office with me for almost a year, bearing with me. I wish you best of luck with your theses.

Beyond the academic I would like to thank my friends, too many to mention, for all their support and patience. I cannot even begin to postulate how many hours of your time has been dedicated to listening me blabber on about a conflict that, I have

come to realize, is not the centre of gravity for most people. Tore Holberg and Johannes Due Enstad stand out in particular. Gratitude also goes to my parents, and brother, who share my passion and have nurtured it throughout.

Lastly I would like to thank my Palestinian friends in exile who have made me understand how imbued their past is in their present. I hope you one day will have a state. For Palestinians and Israelis alike there is a future where both people live in peace.

## 1. Introduction

20 July 1951 an enraged Palestinian nationalist named Dr. Musa al-Husayni shot and instantly killed the Hashemite King of Jordan, Abdullah ibn Hussein, as he was attending the Friday prayer at the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. The reason given for the murder was that he “was a traitor who served the interests of the British; and the peace that he was on the point of making with Israel would have removed any chance of realizing the aspirations of the Palestinians.”<sup>1</sup> The Israeli reaction to this fatal shooting was, in the words of Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion: “We did have one man about whom we knew that he wanted peace with Israel, but the British interfered, until a bullet came and put an end to the business. With the removal of the Abdullah factor, the whole matter was finished.”<sup>2</sup>

Two years prior to the shooting, 3 April 1949, Israel and Jordan had signed an armistice. This armistice was negotiated both under the scrutiny of the UN at Rhodes and in secret between the two countries without external interference at King Abdullah’s palace in Shuneh. The armistice ended the 1948 War and was followed up by negotiations for a peace settlement. The peace talks were initiated, but never concluded. Officially Israel and Jordan remained at war until King Abdullah’s grandson King Hussein signed a peace treaty with Israel 26 October 1994.

The bullet that removed the “Abdullah factor” can be seen as decisive, but that would be to overly simplify a complex political situation that deserves a thorough investigation. Peace between Israel and Jordan remained elusive for another 45 years. The aspirations of the Palestinian people remain unfulfilled to this day.

The signing of the Israeli-Jordanian armistice was an historical event in its own right, bar the fact that it did not lead to peace. It was the culmination of the Arab-Israeli war of 1948. A war that within the short time span of one year changed the geopolitical makeup of the Middle East drastically. In early May 1948 there was a Palestinian Mandate, administered by Great Britain, bordered by Transjordan, Egypt, Syria and Lebanon. By April 1949 Transjordan had become Jordan, the Palestinian Mandate had ceased to exist, replaced by the fledgling state of Israel (77%); the West

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<sup>1</sup> Shlaim, Avi: *Collusion Across the Jordan*. Oxford 1988, pp. 607-608.

<sup>2</sup> Shlaim 1988, overleaf backside.

Bank (22%), annexed by Jordan; and Gaza (1%), occupied by Egypt.<sup>3</sup> The Holy City of Jerusalem had been divided in two. Of the 900,000 Palestinians who had inhabited the part of Palestine that became Israel, approximately 750,000 became refugees. To this geographical and demographical makeover was added the failure of the UN to solve one of the first big crisis the young organization was asked to handle. Likewise, the war illustrated that Britain had lost most of its influence in the Middle East. The Arab states failure in protecting the Palestinians was made worse by the very same states' inability to present their populace with anything but propaganda regarding the success of the war in which so much political capital had been invested. This unfortunate combination had far reaching repercussions which, within a few years, led to revolutions, assassinations and *coup d'états* throughout the Arab world.<sup>4</sup>

The war that took place in the period between November 1947 and March 1949 was pivotal in the history of the modern Middle East. The war also created conflicting discourses.<sup>5</sup>

For Israelis the war is known as the War of Independence. In this version of events the young Jewish state was outflanked and outnumbered by war-mongering, anti-Semitic Arab states that sought to strangle the Jewish state as it was being born. Thus the Israeli victory over these hell-bent enemies was one of legendary heroism – a battle fought between the Israeli David and the Arab Goliath. In this version the Palestinians fled because the Arab states had asked them to, so that the land could be cleansed of Jews without the risk of Arab fatalities.<sup>6</sup> Israel then sought peace, but found no partner.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas, Baylis: *How Israel Was Won*. Lanham/Oxford 1999, p. 89; Roy, Sara: *The Gaza Strip: The Political Economy of De-Development*, Washington DC 2001, p. 65.

<sup>4</sup> Rogan, Eugene L. and Shlaim, Avi (eds.): *The War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948*. Cambridge 2001, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> A more thorough discussion of historiography will follow later in this chapter.

<sup>6</sup> This call was supposedly made over radio, but as has been shown by research done mainly by Israeli "New Historians", no evidence of any such broadcasts exists. In fact more evidence shows that rather than encourage the departing Palestinians, broadcasts were made urging them to stay. Morris, Benny: *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*. Cambridge 2004, p. 180; Hitchens, Christopher: "Broadcasts" in Said, Edward W. and Hitchens, Christopher (ed.): *Blaming the Victims*. London/New York 2001, pp. 73-83; Lockman, Zachary: "Review: Original Sin" in *Middle East Report*, No. 152, The Uprising, May-June 1988, p. 59; Finkelstein, Norman G.: *Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict*. London/New York 2003, pp. 56-60; Khalidi, Walid: "Why did the Palestinian Leave, Revisited" in *Journal of Palestinian Studies* Vol. 34, no. 2, Winter 2005, pp. 42-54; Morris, Benny: *1948 and After*. Oxford 1990, pp. 17-18.

<sup>7</sup> For a critical look at the Zionist version see: Shlaim, Avi: *The Iron Wall*. London. 2001, p. 34; Flapan, Simha: *The Birth of Israel*. London/Sydney 1987; Shlaim, Avi: "The debate about 1948" in *International Journal of Palestinian Studies* 27, no. 3, Aug. 1995; Pappé, Ilan: *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*. Oxford 2007, p. xiv; Morris 1990, pp. 1-34.

The Palestinian narrative is radically different. The Israeli War of Independence is the Palestinian Catastrophe, or *al-Nakbah*.<sup>8</sup> In this version the Palestinians were never asked to leave. Rather they were driven out by an Israeli army that wanted to ethnically cleanse the former British Mandate so that a purely Jewish state could be established. In this version the Palestinian cause was betrayed by all parties: the UN, Great Britain and the US. But most of all the Palestinians thought themselves betrayed by the surrounding Arab states who had promised to liberate Palestine. Rhetoric did not match up with action and the Arab states sent only symbolic forces, well knowing that these would be inadequate for anything more than holding onto small pieces of land – areas that would be incorporated into the relevant Arab countries, rather than becoming an independent Palestinian state.<sup>9</sup>

There are elements of truth in both the Israeli and the Palestinian versions. One of the most interesting aspects that is uncovered when comparing the two versions is the Transjordanian paradox. Transjordan sacrificed the Palestinian cause on the altar of self interest *and* fought bloody battles against the Israeli army. Transjordan broke ranks with the other Arab armies *and* led those same armies into battle, taking responsibility for the brunt of the war's important actions. Transjordan adhered to its pre-war agreement with Israel *and* openly broke it. Transjordan acted as the insurance plan for the UN and the British Government in ensuring the success of the Partition Plan *and* went behind the backs of both, negotiating directly with Israel. Transjordan was the main protector of the Palestinian people *and* responsible for the death of the short-lived All Palestine Government.<sup>10</sup> It is necessary to investigate these paradoxes if one is to understand Transjordan's role in the 1948 War. Perhaps the most vital question is – if there was an amicable atmosphere between Transjordan and Israel after the war, why did the armistice not become a peace treaty? Or alternatively, the flip-sided version of the same question – if Israel and Transjordan were sworn enemies, why did they choose to hold negotiations primarily on a bilateral basis rather than through the third party apparatus that was made available by the UN? Negotiations through the UN was, after all how Israel negotiated with its other Arab neighbours; Egypt, Syria and Lebanon.

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<sup>8</sup> Shlaim 1988. As for the expression al-Nakba, and most other Arab phrases, there is a wide variety of methods for transcribing from Arabic. I have not followed a particular school of transcribing, but rather the rule of consistency, unless forced to break this through the use of quotes.

<sup>9</sup> Shlaim 1995.

<sup>10</sup> These paradoxes are all complicated matters and will be discussed further in the following chapters.

There has also been a long held understanding that the appearance of the armistices was due, almost single-handedly, to the genius of the UN Acting Mediator Ralph Bunche. Despite the bitter enmity between the parties, he managed, by virtue of his diplomatic talent, to bridge the gap and settle, albeit not solve, the conflict.<sup>11</sup> In the case of the Israeli-Transjordanian armistice, however, Ralph Bunche received credit for the armistice, yet he had not attended the most important negotiations – the secret bilateral talks that took place at King Abdullah’s palace in Shuneh, as well as in Jerusalem. In fact Bunche’s role, in the Transjordanian-Israeli context, was to give international legitimacy to a treaty mainly negotiated elsewhere.<sup>12</sup> This version of events can hardly be blamed for crediting Ralph Bunche. Bunche was undoubtedly a gifted negotiator and what we can term the “negotiations of substance” in Shuneh was an unknown fact for a long time. The significance of these substantial negotiations has to this day not been adequately researched.<sup>13</sup> These negotiations are the major focus of this thesis.

## **Sources**

In order to rectify these different versions of history, and investigate the negotiations, it is necessary to understand the historical background, as well as the regional and international context in which the developments of 1947-1949 took place. In order to closely analyse the armistice negotiations it is necessary to examine a series of sources. The primary sources, that is the first hand, unedited material, and the secondary sources, that is the edited material produced by the participants. In the first category we find the British archives, the UN archives, the Israeli archives, the US

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<sup>11</sup> Næser, Ingrid: *Right Versus Might*. Unpublished Master Thesis, University of Oslo 2005, pp. 7-8; Touval, Saadia: *The Peace Brokers*. Princeton/New Jersey 1982, p. 54. Interestingly this interpretation of Bunche’s success inspired Gunnar Jarring, the UN Middle East mediator between 1967 and 1971, to attempt to copy the mediation techniques of Ralph Bunche. Mørk, Hulda Kjeang: *The Jarring Mission*. Unpublished Master Thesis, University of Oslo 2007, pp. 46-47.

<sup>12</sup> See Chapter 5, 6 and 7.

<sup>13</sup> Although several books have been written on the Israeli-Transjordanian relationship, the double nature of the armistice negotiations has not been fully researched. The connection between Ralph Bunche and the Shuneh talks have not been adequately studied. Næser 2005, p. 111; Shlaim 1988, p. 425; Urquhart, Brian: *Ralph Bunche: An American Life*. New York/London 1993, p. 216. My extended investigation is largely based on the excerpts from the Ralph Bunche diary found in Brian Urquhart’s private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA). It is unclear whether the excerpts of the diary that are found in Urquhart’s private collection are the complete diary notes or whether Urquhart made a selection to be kept in the archives. I did not personally gather these diary excerpts and I am greatly indebted Ingrid Næser who kindly gave me access to the photocopies she took of these when writing her master thesis on the Israeli-Egyptian armistice.

archives and the Ralph Bunche diary.<sup>14</sup> Among the latter we have a series of biographies and memoirs.

### *Primary Sources:*

The Jordanian archives are a great unknown. It is unclear whether they exist, and if they exist, they are not available. This applies to all the Arab archives. As far as the other archives are concerned, I have mainly accessed the British archives as well as some of the UN archives, along with the available sections of the Ralph Bunche diary. Together, these compose the main bulk of my research material. The Israeli archives are fully available, but they are composed of documents of which some are in English and some are in Hebrew. This posed a large problem. However, some of this material has been published in the series *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*.<sup>15</sup> This was a highly valuable source of information despite its somewhat fragmentary nature.

The British archives are highly relevant because Great Britain was highly involved in Transjordanian affairs, and so in effect the British Government, and its representatives, functioned both as actors and observers. The British Minister to Amman, Alec Kirkbride, was a close friend of King Abdullah and was considered his *confidant*.<sup>16</sup> This is also true for John Bagot Glubb, also known as Glubb Pasha. He was both the leader of the Arab Legion, the Transjordanian army, and a retired British officer who retained strong contact with the Government that all but officially employed him. As with Kirkbride he was a *confidant* of King Abdullah.<sup>17</sup> However, they both had a strong loyalty to the British Government. They reported everything that happened directly back to the British Foreign Office (FO).<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, the Transjordanian Government was so highly dependent on British aid and military

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<sup>14</sup> Public Records Office, British National Archives (PRO). Documents here belong to two categories: Foreign Office (FO) and Colonial Office (CO); UN Archives and Record Management Section, Collection 0618 (UNA); UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA); *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*, 1949 Vol. VI. Washington 1977; Freundlich, Yehoshua (Ed.): *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel, Volume 2: October 1948-April 1949*. Jerusalem 1984; Freundlich, Yehoshua (Ed.): *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel, Volume 3: December 1948-July 1949*. Jerusalem 1983.

<sup>15</sup> Freundlich (Ed.) 1984; Freundlich, (Ed.) 1983.

<sup>16</sup> Wilson, Mary C.: *King Abdullah, Britain and the making of Jordan*. Cambridge/New York/Melbourne 1999, p. 149; Robins, Philip: *A History of Jordan*. Cambridge 2004, p. 57; Nevo, Joseph: *King Abdallah and Palestine*. Ipswich 1996, p. 54.

<sup>17</sup> Morris, Benny: *The Road to Jerusalem*. London/New York 2003, p. 207; Rogan, Eugene L.: "Jordan and 1948: the persistence of an official history" in Rogan and Shlaim (eds.) 2001, p. 106.

<sup>18</sup> For Glubb Pasha see Morris 2003 p. 5. In Kirkbride's case this is more obvious as he was the Minister to Amman and reporting to the Foreign Office was his duty.

assistance that the British Government had a great say in Transjordanian affairs. It has been pointed out that King Abdullah at times kept secrets from the British representatives.<sup>19</sup> In many of these cases one can assume that the large network of contacts established by the British Minister made the information available despite King Abdullah's attempts at the opposite.<sup>20</sup> One can assume, however, that some information did not reach the British channels. This is a weakness regarding the Foreign Office archives that one must be acutely aware of. In order to rectify this weakness, literature based on the Israeli archives is used throughout. Most valuable amongst these are Avi Shlaim's *Collusion Across the Jordan* and Uri Bar-Joseph's *Best of Enemies*.<sup>21</sup> The use of the document collections *Foreign Relations of the United States* and *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel* has helped bridge this gap.<sup>22</sup>

As far as the UN and Ralph Bunche documents are concerned, these are highly valuable in one sense, but problematic in another. On the one hand these cover all the official negotiations at Rhodes, but they do not cover the secret Shuneh talks.<sup>23</sup> As for the US archives it is worth noting that the US representatives had good access to information on the ground. However, compared to the British, the US Government was to a lesser extent an active actor in the negotiations, and thus the US sources have functioned as complementary to the British archives.<sup>24</sup>

### *Secondary Sources*

Considering the relatively limited amount of actors in the armistice negotiations there exists a surprisingly large *oeuvre* of memoirs: King Abdullah's *My Memoirs Completed*; David Ben-Gurion's *Israel: A Personal History and My Talks with Arab Leaders*; Moshe Dayan's *Story of My Life*; Abba Eban's *An Autobiography*; Walter Eytan's *The First Ten Years*; John Bagot Glubb's *A Soldier with the Arabs and Peace*

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<sup>19</sup> Pundik, Ron: *The Struggle for Sovereignty*. Oxford/Cambridge (US) 1994, pp. 67, 114.

<sup>20</sup> Pundik 1994, pp. 171-172.

<sup>21</sup> Bar-Joseph, Uri: *The Best of Enemies: Israel and Transjordan in the War of 1948*. London 1987; Shlaim 1988.

<sup>22</sup> *FRUS*, 1949 Vol. VI. Washington 1977; Freundlich (Ed.) 1984; Freundlich, (Ed.) 1983.

<sup>23</sup> Ralph Bunche mentions the Shuneh talks, but he does not cover them. <sup>23</sup> Brian Urquhart's private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary, UCLA 364/8-7.

<sup>24</sup> *FRUS*, 1949 Vol. VI. Washington 1977. Lundestad comments on intelligence cooperation between the two states: "In the intelligence field American-British cooperation was far more extensive than



in the Holy Land; Sir Alec Kirkbride's *From the Wings* and *A Crackle of Thorns*; and Golda Meir's *My Life*.<sup>25</sup> These memoirs have some things in common. Since they are all edited in one way or another, it is symptomatic that they all contain reflections which were made possible at a later point. This raises the problem of proximity to truth. Since most of these actors had an interest in creating a good reputation for themselves, many of the memoirs are charged with intent to save face.<sup>26</sup> These must therefore always be investigated with a critical eye, and the statements must as far as possible be compared to what is found in the archival material. The secondary sources have a hidden advantage in that they all, to some extent, show how their authors thought it was important to portray the story. They represent an ideal in a sense, and though they cannot always be counted on to show exactly what happened, they do illustrate what the actors wanted their audience to believe had happened. Most of these autobiographies can be supplemented by biographies and other historical works written on the subject/person in question.<sup>27</sup>

## **Literature**

As with all research done on the history of the state of Israel, the 1980s represented a watershed. In 1978 the Israeli archives were opened, shortly followed by the British archives. History was opened for reinvestigation. What was discovered was that, as with most national histories, the national myths were not as truthful as suggested. The historians reinvestigating the national Israeli history referred to themselves as the "New Historians" or "Revisionist Historians".<sup>28</sup> The results of this historical reinvestigation gave at times shocking results. Their main scholarly objective was to

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between any other major powers." Lundestad, Geir: *The United States and Western Europe Since 1945*. New York 2003, p. 98.

<sup>25</sup> Abdallah, King of Jordan: *My Memoirs Completed: "Al-Takmilah"*. London/New York 1978; Ben-Gurion, David: *Israel: A Personal History*. Tel Aviv/New York 1972; Ben-Gurion, David: *My Talks with Arab Leaders*. Jerusalem 1972; Dayan, Moshe: *The Story of My Life*. New York 1976; Eban, Abba: *An Autobiography*. New York 1977; Eytan, Walter: *The First Ten Years*. London 1958; Glubb, John Bagot: *A Soldier with the Arabs*. London 1957; Glubb, John Bagot: *Peace in the Holy Land*. London/Sydney/Auckland/Toronto 1971; Kirkbride, Sir Alec Seath: *A Crackle of Thorns*. London 1956; Kirkbride, Sir Alec: *From the Wings*. London 1976; Meir, Golda: *My Life*. New York 1975.

<sup>26</sup> This seems to be particularly true for Ben-Gurion's accounts. Morris, Benny: "Falsifying the Record: A Fresh Look at Zionist Documentation of 1948" in *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 3, Spring 1995.

<sup>27</sup> Morris 2003; Shalom, Zaki: *David Ben-Gurion, the State of Israel, and the Arab World, 1949-1956*. Brighton/Portland 2002; Urquhart 1998; Wilson 1999, et al.

demythologize the national history, and reinvestigate it through a non-ideological lens.<sup>29</sup> In this process they ended up with the “slaughtering of sacred cows.”<sup>30</sup> The book that opened the debate that has been running ever since was Simha Flapan’s *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities*, printed in 1987.<sup>31</sup>

As far as the relationship between Israel and Transjordan goes, the research done by the British-Israeli historian Avi Shlaim and the Israeli historian Uri Bar-Joseph are by far the most important. Avi Shlaim’s grandiose historical study *Collusion Across the Jordan* is the most thoroughly investigated study of the relationship between Israel and Transjordan in its whole (ca. 1920-1951), whilst Uri Bar-Joseph’s work *Best of Enemies* is the most detailed in its account of the relevant period (November 1947-April 1949). These works rely on large amounts of archival research as well as interviews.<sup>32</sup>

Despite the depth of analysis in these books, they have left some stones unturned. The intent of this study is to look in great detail at the relationship between the unofficial Shuneh and the official Rhodes negotiations. In terms of contributing to the scholarly work of these two individuals, my greatest asset has been the fact that I have accessed the available fragments of the Ralph Bunche diary. These were not available when the two books were written. By investigating these I have been able to add insight to previous in-depth analyses.

Although Avi Shlaim and most of his fellow “New Historians” have not been refuted as such, their findings created a debate that still continues. Amongst those who have positioned themselves strongest against them, Professor Efraim Karsh stands out. In his book *Fabricating Israeli History* he claims that the findings of all the “New Historians” border on fabrication. His polemic is so strong, however, introducing chapters by quoting George Orwell’s *1984*, that it is hard to take his criticism seriously.<sup>33</sup> For a dismissive criticism of Karsh it is worth quoting Benny Morris: “Karsh resembles nothing so much as those Holocaust-denying historians

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<sup>28</sup> Ilan Pappé also uses the term “Post-Zionists”. Pappé, Ilan: “Post-Zionist Critique on Israel and the Palestinians: Part I: The Academic Debate” in *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 2 Winter 1997.

<sup>29</sup> Rogan and Shlaim (eds.) 2001, p. 2.

<sup>30</sup> Shlaim 1988, p. viii.

<sup>31</sup> Flapan 1987; Pappé, Ilan: “Fifty Years Through the Eyes of “New Historians” in Israel” in *Middle East Report*, No. 207, Summer 1998.

<sup>32</sup> Bar-Joseph 1987; Shlaim 1988.

<sup>33</sup> Karsh, Efraim: *Fabricating Israeli History: The ‘New Historians’*. London/ Portland, OR 1997, p. 1.

who ignore all evidence and common sense in order to press an ideological point.”<sup>34</sup> Karsh may be an extreme example, but illustrative of the proportions that these debates reached is the fact that Avi Shlaim felt forced to change the name of his work to *The Politics of Partition*, a change he later regretted.<sup>35</sup>

Along with Avi Shlaim and Uri Bar-Joseph there are a series of other historians, mainly Israeli, who refute the national myths that lasted up until the late 1980s. All the works that are based on archival research are of great value. These include, amongst other, the works by Benny Morris, Joseph Nevo, Ilan Pappé, Ron Pundik, Itamar Rabinovich, Eugene Rogan, David Tal, Mary C. Wilson as well as Jordan specialists such as Philip Robins.<sup>36</sup> New research on the Rhodes negotiations done by Ingrid Næser, in her Master Thesis at the University of Oslo, is clearly of importance as it, to my knowledge, is the first historical paper that focuses exclusively on one of the armistice negotiations. Although her focus is on the Egyptian negotiations the setting has many of the same characteristics as the Israeli-Transjordanian armistice negotiations and is therefore of great relevance in terms of contextualizing the negotiations.<sup>37</sup>

### ***Theoretical Approach***

As with most cases of diplomatic and geopolitical history there must here be a focus on actors in both a broad and a narrow sense. By this it should be understood that nations, international and regional organizations etc., are considered actors in the broad sense, whilst persons, such as heads of state, UN mediators, diplomats etc. are termed actors in the narrow sense. As with most conflicts the historical period that is investigated is dominated by strong personalities. On the Transjordanian side we find, amongst others, King Abdullah; Prime Minister Abul Huda; field commander and negotiator Abdullah al-Tel; and General Glubb Pasha (also a British actor). On the

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<sup>34</sup> Morris, Benny: “Review: Refabricating 1948” in *Journal of Palestinian Studies* Vol. 27, no.2, Winter 1998, p. 93.

<sup>35</sup> Shlaim 1995, pp. 298-299.

<sup>36</sup> Bar-Joseph 1987; Morris, Benny: *Righteous Victims*. New York 2001; Morris 2003; Nevo, Joseph and Pappé, Ilan (eds.): *Jordan in the Middle East*. Essex 1994; Nevo 1996; Pappé, Ilan: *The making of the Arab-Israeli conflict*. London 1992; Pappé, Ilan: *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two Peoples*. Cambridge 2004; Pappé 2007; Pundik 1994; Rabinovich, Itamar: *The Road Not Taken*. New York/Oxford 1991; Robins 2004; Rogan and Shlaim (eds.) 2001; Shlaim 1988; Shlaim, Avi: *The Politics of Partition*. Oxford 1990 (a); Shlaim, 2001; Tal, David: *War in Palestine 1948*. New York 2004 (b); Wilson 1999.

<sup>37</sup> Næser 2005.

Israeli side we find Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, negotiators Walter Eytan, Moshe Dayan, Elias Sasson, Reuven Shiloah. On the UN side we find Ralph Bunche, and on the British side we find Minister in Amman Alec Kirkbride, Foreign Minister Ernst Bevin and Glubb Pasha.

These actors, in the narrow sense, however strong they were as individuals, could not override the international structures as put down by the interaction of the actors in the broad sense. King Abdullah had to balance his personal interests between what the Arab League permitted, what the military positions on the ground dictated, the interests of his government, popular sentiment, the “rules” of the UN, and the demands of the British, which to a certain extent could be enforced through the threat of subsidy withdrawal. Likewise, the UN Acting Mediator Ralph Bunche might have liked to put pressure on the negotiating parties, but without strong support from the US, with Britain losing its colonial hold, and with Transjordan and Israel participating in secret bilateral negotiations no such support was to be found. Further, although the special relationship between Britain and the US was good, the Middle East was the greatest area of contention.<sup>38</sup> This created a situation that can be described as a power vacuum. There was a clear lack of international pressure towards the involved parties. The result of this was that the power on the ground dictated. This must be investigated in light of the regional imbalance of power between Israel and Transjordan.

The specific historical literature has been complemented with literature on negotiating theory, analysis of the significance of power balance and on the larger geopolitical structure/situation. Negotiation theory combined with power structure analysis has been a highly useful tool. The asymmetry of power theory, used in other studies of Middle East negotiations, has also been highly applicable.<sup>39</sup>

Some attention has been paid to the legalistic differences between truce and ceasefire. However, it seems that by 1949 there was still no clear border separating these. The UN apparatus had not at this time a clearly developed terminology and there is some confusion both in the literature and in the source material.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Lundestad 2003, pp. 96-97; Hathaway, Robert M.: *Ambiguous Relationship* New York 1981, pp. 276-294; Cohen, Michael J.: *Truman and Israel*. Berkeley/Los Angeles/Oxford 1990, p. 221; FO 12 Jan. 1949, FO371/75381, Commonwealth Relations Office to High Commissioners in Commonwealth Countries, Cypher No. 15.

<sup>39</sup> For use of asymmetrical power analysis in writing on the Israel-Palestine conflict see e.g. Waage, Hilde Henriksen: *Peacemaking Is a Risky Business*. PRIO Report 1/2004, Oslo 2004.

<sup>40</sup> Bailey, Sydney D.: “Cease-Fires, Truces, and Armistices in the Practices of the UN Security Council” in *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 71, No. 3, July 1977.

## ***Value of Research in a Broader Perspective***

Why is there no peace in the Middle East? The answer is as elusive as the peace itself. Before the outbreak of the 1948 War Britain, the UN and the US all had proposals for how the division of Palestine could be implemented. After the 1948 War the armistice negotiations were completed and some moves towards a lasting peace were made. The war itself was riddled with truces and ceasefires. In more modern times we have had the Camp David agreement, the Madrid conference, the Oslo-accords, the Camp David II accords, the Roadmap, the Madrid+15, the Arab Peace Initiative and a whole series of UN Resolutions – the list is long, yet there is no peace. In order to understand this discrepancy, between the large series of peace efforts and the lack of peace, it is vital that each and every attempt at reaching a peaceful solution is thoroughly investigated. This thesis is part of such a Herculean task. Through such a systematic approach, requiring the ardent work of many participants, it should be possible to reach some conclusion as to the reasons behind this endemic history of failure. This specific case study has been part of the Strategic Institute Project at the Peace Research Institute of Oslo (PRIO) – *The Missing Peace: Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding in the Middle East*. This project has set out to answer the question: What lessons do we have from the past concerning international mediation in the Middle East conflict? What follows is an attempt to investigate one of these mediation efforts: The Israeli-Transjordanian armistice negotiations of 1949

## **2. Partitioning Palestine and the Abdullah-Zionist Collusion**

*1915 – October 1948*

The circumstances that surrounded the 1948 War and the negotiations between Israel and Transjordan had roots going back to the second decade of the twentieth century. The special relationship between King Abdullah and the Zionists was created long before the outbreak of the 1948 War. In order to fully comprehend the diplomacy between the two states, as it developed in the late 1940s, it is vital that one understands how inerasably tied the partition of Palestine was with the Abdullah-Zionist relationship. Both these phenomenon were equally connected to British policies in the Middle East. Contextually one must therefore look at the premises that created the intertwining of British policies, Zionist aspirations, King Abdullah's untraditional diplomacy and the partition of Palestine.

### ***Many Promises, Little Land***

When the First World War broke out in 1914 the Ottoman Empire was in political turmoil, heavily affected by local strands of nationalism, burdened by foreign debt and had suffered a series of coups and semi-revolutions within a short time span.<sup>1</sup> Great Britain was intent on defeating the Ottoman army, destroying its empire and dividing it into slices that were to be harvested once the war was over. In order to ensure the success of this plan, a series of conflicting promises and treaties were made. Between late 1915 and early 1916 a correspondence was kept between Sharif Husayn of Mecca, the Hashemite notable who was the father of the later King Abdullah of Transjordan and King Faisal of Iraq, and Sir Henry McMahon, the British High Commissioner to Egypt. The Hashemite family claimed decadency from the prophet Mohammed, and had a prominent political position in the Middle East. The British wanted to put this position to use. In return for instigating an Arab uprising against the Turks, the Hashemite family was to be given a leading role in the shaping of the Middle East once the war was over.<sup>2</sup> The Hashemites were granted Iraq, led by Faisal, and Transjordan, ruled by his brother Abdullah. As the Hashemite family saw it, however, this was less than had been promised them. This was especially true in

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<sup>1</sup> Yapp, M. E.: *The Making of the Modern Near East*. Essex 1987.

<sup>2</sup> Pappé 2004, p. 65.

the case of Abdullah and Transjordan as Transjordan was an economically non-viable state that was completely dependent on British assistance.<sup>3</sup>

The ink had hardly dried on the last letter in the Husayn-McMahon correspondence when Great Britain decided to divide the coming spoils with its European ally – France. In a clear breach with the promises given by McMahon, the infamous Sykes-Picot Agreement was negotiated and signed by Sir Mark Sykes of the British Foreign Office and George Picot from the French Foreign Ministry in May 1916. By this agreement the Middle East was to be divided between the two colonial powers.<sup>4</sup> As if two conflicting promises were not enough, the British Government also approached a third actor – the international Zionist movement. The Zionist movement had, since its foundation, sought the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. That the Zionist Movement had such a goal was no surprise. That the British Government decided to support it, on the other hand, was.

As with most empires, the British' was not one dominated by sentiment. Support for a Jewish homeland was British *Realpolitik*. As the British Foreign Office saw it, Jews could play a vital role in influencing Britain's allies. In Russia several Jews, especially among the Bolsheviks, were thought to have important positions and a high degree of influence. According to the British analysis these Jews were Zionists and would therefore urge Russia to support Britain in order to obtain a homeland. In hindsight this analysis turned out to be wrong. The assumptions of the Foreign Office was based on two fundamental flaws, that is the extent of Jewish influence on national politics and the influence of Zionism on the relevant Jews. The Jewish influence on the Tsar, for one, was completely overestimated. Furthermore the Foreign Office had also failed to realize that most of the relevant Jews amongst the Bolsheviks were internationalist rather than nationalist in their political outlook. A similar error was made when analyzing the policymaking institutions in the US. Here the influence of American Jewry on the decision making bodies was highly overestimated.<sup>5</sup> Given the British misunderstanding of the political importance of Jews in these two countries, the Balfour declaration was a logical political decision. The Balfour declaration was issued in November 1917, stating that "His Majesty's Government view with favour

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<sup>3</sup> Robins 2004, pp. 16-58.

<sup>4</sup> Pappe 2004, pp. 65-66.

<sup>5</sup> Pappe 2004, pp. 67-68.

the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object”.<sup>6</sup>

With all the promises given during the war it was evident that at least one of those promises had to be held. Reality was quickly catching up with politics. One crucial question remained however: Who was going to get Palestine? The Hashemites – as stipulated by the Husayn-McMahon correspondence? The Yishuv (the Jewish society in Palestine) – as put forth in the Balfour Declaration? The local Palestinian population – based on Wilsonian principles of self determination? Or was Britain to hold it against the will of all the three interested parties? Initially it seemed that self-interest won out. When the war ended, Great Britain created the Mandate of Palestine as stipulated by the Sykes-Picot Agreement.

However, Britain was not alone in shaping the future of Palestine. The interested parties started making political moves that contributed in shaping the future of Palestine. In March 1921, in a meeting with British colonial secretary Winston Churchill, King Abdullah of Transjordan suggested that Transjordan should annex Palestine. He did not receive any positive response, however, and this was therefore not a realistic option at that point in time.<sup>7</sup> 1921 also saw the dawning of Palestinian diplomacy. A delegation elected by the Fourth Palestinian National Congress was sent to London to express their fear for the consequences of a British pro-Zionist policy. 24 October 1921 the delegation sent a letter to Winston Churchill stating clearly that: “The Palestinian people will never admit the right of any outside organization to dispossess them of their country, and to threaten their very existence as a people economically and politically.” This first visit to London by the Palestinian delegation was followed by three others in the period 1921-1930, but as with the solution put forth by King Abdullah, they were not heeded.<sup>8</sup>

Despite being turned down by Winston Churchill, King Abdullah nurtured his relations with the Zionists. By the 1930s he had developed a good personal, diplomatic and economic relationship with several important members of the Jewish community in Palestine, the Yishuv, allying with them against their common enemy – the Mufti of Jerusalem.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Louis, William Roger: *The British Empire in the Middle East 1945-1951*. New York 2006 (a), p. 39.

<sup>7</sup> Robins 2004, p. 48; Nevo 1996, pp. 10-11.

<sup>8</sup> Khalidi, Walid: *Before their Diaspora*. Washington D.C. 1991, p. 97.

<sup>9</sup> Shlaim 1990 (a), pp. 39-53; Robins 2004, p. 49; Nevo 1996, pp. 13, 16-29, 40-43.



The Mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj Amin al-Husayni, had long been one of King Abdullah's enemies. The Mufti was a radical nationalist Palestinian leader who represented one of the most influential Palestinian families and led the largest Palestinian party – the Arab Party. He was also the chairman of the Arab Higher Committee. His popular reputation and leadership skills made him a political threat to Abdullah. The Mufti became one of the leaders of the Arab Revolt in 1936 and was therefore cast into exile. This strengthened his reputation, but equally weakened his real power.<sup>10</sup> The long term result of this was that the Palestinians lacked political leadership by the outbreak of the 1948 War.<sup>11</sup>

### ***Navigating Troubled Waters***

In April 1936 the Arab Revolt broke out in reaction to Zionist policies, the influx of European Jewish refugees and the British mismanagement of the Palestinian Mandate.<sup>12</sup> This event represented a watershed in the political outlook of all the involved states. For the first time Ben-Gurion became aware of “the national character of the Arab opposition to Zionism.”<sup>13</sup> Transjordan on the other hand had repeatedly reported to Britain about the ensuing dangers of a possible revolt. The British Government had not heeded his warning, and when the revolt broke out Abdullah was given the mission of quelling the disturbances and uniting the Arab nations. Abdullah worked towards this end with the hope of gaining support for his territorial ambitions, that is Greater Syria, or if that turned out to be impossible, Palestine.<sup>14</sup> Britain, despite the Transjordanian help, was unable to stop the revolt which continued until 1939.

In August 1937, in response to the Arab Revolt, the British Government appointed a Royal Commission. This commission, led by Earl Peel, was to investigate the roots of the uprising in Palestine, and use his findings to come up with a viable solution to the problem.<sup>15</sup> The investigation was concluded and released its findings in July 1937. The proposal laid forth was a Partition Plan dividing the British Mandate of Palestine into three parts. One section was to become a Jewish state; a second,

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<sup>10</sup> Wilson 1999, pp. 103-139; Shlaim 2001, pp. 10, 39-40; Morris 2001, pp. 35, 130-135.

<sup>11</sup> His political reputation was internationally destroyed after he supported the Nazi's during WWII. Neff, Donald: *Fallen Pillars: U.S. Policy towards Palestine and Israel since 1945*. Washington D.C. 2002, p. 110; Shlaim 1988, p. 71.

<sup>12</sup> Shlaim 1988, pp. 4-5.

<sup>13</sup> Shlaim 2001, p. 18; Masalha, Nur: *Expulsion of the Palestinians*. Washington D. C. 2001, pp. 18-19.

<sup>14</sup> Shlaim 1988, pp. 54-55; Nevo 1996, pp. 31-34.

<sup>15</sup> Shlaim 1988, p. 57.

including Jerusalem, was to remain a mandated zone; while the third, the larger part of Palestine, was to befall Transjordan.<sup>16</sup>

The findings of the Peel Commission unsurprisingly created further tension in Palestine. King Abdullah was delighted, but out of tact attempted to conceal this reaction. The Zionists rejected the plan, yet were open for negotiations with the British. The Arab Higher Committee rejected it completely.<sup>17</sup> Britain was completely unable to appease all three interested parties.

Although Britain was no longer the superpower it once was, it was still capable of assisting Transjordan militarily and economically. As a reward for the wartime effort, Transjordan was granted independence in March 1946 and was officially named “The Hashemite Kingdom of Transjordan.” Though independence was granted, it was clear who was the retainer.<sup>18</sup> Since 1921 Britain had paid for, trained and maintained the Transjordanian army – the Arab Legion. This was the best trained military force in the Arab world, but it was heavily controlled and used by Great Britain.<sup>19</sup> With independence came a new Treaty of Alliance. In this Britain was to defend Transjordan if the kingdom was attacked. The treaty only applied if Transjordan’s borders were breached.<sup>20</sup> The treaty was slightly altered in March 1948, but the alterations were purely cosmetic in nature, designed to make Transjordan look less dependent on Great Britain while retaining the same amount of support. The updated Treaty included an article stating that if either country was engaged in war, the other would come to its aid. This created quite a bit of confusion, especially for Israel who assumed that the British army could on this basis intervene in Palestine during the 1948 War. However, the British signatories interpreted this article only as a defensive one, which was only valid if Transjordan proper was invaded or if Britain needed assistance.<sup>21</sup>

While the British were on amicable terms with the ruler on the east side of the river Jordan, their position within the Palestinian Mandate deteriorated rapidly. The active Zionist animosity against the British administration had taken a break during the Second World War, but it had returned with a vengeance once the war ended. During World War II Ben-Gurion had stated: “We will fight with the British against

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<sup>16</sup> Shlaim 1988, p. 62; Nevo 1996, pp. 34-35.

<sup>17</sup> Shlaim 1988, pp. 62-64.

<sup>18</sup> Shlaim 1988, pp. 72-73; Nevo 1996, p. 58.

<sup>19</sup> Pundik 1994, pp. 89-102.

<sup>20</sup> A copy of the Treaty of Alliance can be found in FO371/75287.

Hitler as if there were no white paper; we will fight the white paper as if there was no war.”<sup>22</sup> From late 1945 the official force of the Jewish Agency – the Haganah, as well as Jewish terrorist organizations such as Irgun and the Stern Gang, led a campaign against the British Mandate. This bore with it high costs for both sides.<sup>23</sup>

Israeli independence however, could not be won with arms alone. The good relationship the Yishuv had had with King Abdullah in the 1930s was pursued. 12 August 1946 the Jewish-Arabist Elias

met Abdullah in the King’s summer palace at Shuneh, just across the border, on the Transjordanian side of the river Jordan. King Abdullah laid forth his support for partition, on the condition that the Arab part of Palestine would befall Transjordan. He explained that he personally thought it would be better for all parties if a federation with the Jewish area of Palestine was created as an autonomous region within Greater Transjordan. He expressed that if this was impossible, however, he would go along with the partition as put forth in the report of the Peel Commission.<sup>24</sup>

In terms of Abdullah-Zionist relations the period that followed this meeting was one of further secret meetings, bribery and pragmatism. Several of the Zionist leaders were realizing the importance of working together with King Abdullah. Ben-Gurion’s description of the two planned states as “Judea and Abdallia” aptly summed up the basis for the talks.<sup>25</sup> However, the situation in which the talks took place was radically changed when Britain threw in the towel and gave up responsibility for the Mandate, handing this over to the UN. This decision was made final by Foreign Secretary Ernst Bevin 18 February 1947.<sup>26</sup> The British Government had had enough. It could no longer politically and economically defend the validity of having 80-100,000 troops stationed in Palestine. If things got worse, which the British assumed they would, the cost would put further pressure on an already collapsing British economy.<sup>27</sup> Bevin put much of the blame for the increasingly difficult situation on US President Truman, who kept undermining the British efforts by supporting large scale Jewish immigration and partition.<sup>28</sup> It was also clear that one of the reasons for giving

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<sup>21</sup> Pundik 1994, pp. 77-82, 148-150, 170; Pappé 1992, p. 185.

<sup>22</sup> Quoted in Shlaim 2001, p. 23.

<sup>23</sup> Shlaim 2001, pp. 23-24; Morris 2001, pp. 174-176.

<sup>24</sup> Shlaim 1988, pp. 76-77; Nevo 1996, pp. 60-61.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted in Shlaim 1988, p. 79; Nevo 1996, p. 60.

<sup>26</sup> Shlaim 1988, pp. 84-88.

<sup>27</sup> Pundik 1994, pp. 53-54; Louis, William Roger: *Ends of British Imperialism*. New York 2006 (b), p. 439.

<sup>28</sup> Neff 2002, pp. 41-45.

up on the Mandate was the success of Zionist terrorism. The main symbol of this campaign was Irgun's terrorist attack on the King David Hotel in Jerusalem in 1946. The explosion killed a total of one hundred Britons, Jews and Arabs.<sup>29</sup>

When the British gave up, the responsibility for the Palestine Mandate befell the UN. The newly founded organization was thus handed a problem which rather quickly developed into a major headache. During the internal British debate prior to the handover of responsibility, several possible alternatives for the Palestinian Mandate were discussed. One of those included giving the Arab parts of Palestine to Transjordan. However, no official stance was taken. The result was that the UN received the problematic issue with no recommendations from the state that had had the most experience with the problem.<sup>30</sup> If the British Government could offer no advice, what hope was there for the UN to find a reasonable solution before the British troops were to pull out a year later?

With the problem in the hands of the United Nations all the parties faced a new reality. How was the UN going to treat the Mandate? No matter the outfall of these changing realities, King Abdullah had to make new considerations.<sup>31</sup> First of all, he had to make sure his policies were well co-ordinated with Great Britain. Further, he had to conceal his true intentions from the other Arab states and the Palestinians, creating a political situation where his outwardly mouthed intentions contradicted his real plans. This had to be made clear to the Zionists. King Abdullah was in other words performing a balancing act on a political razorblade. To make matters worse, Transjordan was not a member of the UN, and the dependency on Great Britain was thus, rather ironically, enhanced by the British handover of Palestine.<sup>32</sup>

The inter-Arab political situation in the late 1940s was a major complicating factor. All the Arab politicians, bar King Abdullah, were united in their opposition towards the idea of a Jewish state. However, the Arab League was also split into a pro-Hashemite group and an anti-Hashemite group. Transjordan was supported by Iraq, a country run by another Hashemite, whilst the anti-Hashemite group was led by

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<sup>29</sup> Louis 2006 (b), p. 429; Massad, Joseph A.: *The Persistence of the Palestinian Question*. New York 2006, pp. 18-19.

<sup>30</sup> Pundik 1994, pp. 54-55, Ben-Dror, Elad: "The Arab struggle against partition" in *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 2, March 2007, p. 259.

<sup>31</sup> It has been argued that King Abdullah had been expecting this decision since 1946, but even if this is true there can be no doubt as to the fact that the handover created an immediate need for political reconsiderations. Nevo 1996, pp. 63-64.

<sup>32</sup> Shlaim 1988, p. 89.

Egypt and Saudi Arabia.<sup>33</sup> Transjordan was thus placed in an awkward situation. The country's alliance with Britain placed it in a vulnerable position, paving the way for accusations from the other Arab states, as well as from the Zionists, who often uttered suspicion towards what they characterized as a British conspiracy. Transjordan was perceived by all parties as pro-British in a period when Zionists thought the British Government was anti-Zionist and the Arab States thought the British Government was pro-Zionist.<sup>34</sup>

### ***Which Partition?***

Once the British had set a date for their withdrawal from Palestine, the UN was given the impossible task of quickly finding a viable solution.<sup>35</sup> Working against both a tight schedule and past experience, the task was one which the newly founded UN apparatus was inadequately prepared for. Meanwhile, the situation on the ground had developed into a fledgling civil war.<sup>36</sup> In April-May 1947 the UN General Assembly established the UN Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP). Based on a series of meetings with representatives of the two communities during the summer of 1947, UNSCOP issued two reports. These were known as the majority report and the minority report, named after the amount of representatives in the UNSCOP-team that supported each. These were the Partition Plan and the Federal Plan, respectively. Both plans demanded that the parties worked together.<sup>37</sup> This was a highly optimistic prerequisite and one that failed.<sup>38</sup> The geographic structure of the two states, as drawn up in the Partition Plan, earned it such dubious names as "Two Fighting Serpents" or "Picture by Picasso".<sup>39</sup> In the Partition Plan the Jewish state was to be composed of the Negev, a coastal strip stretching from just south of Jaffa to just north of Haifa, and the eastern Galilee. The Arab state was to be composed the Gaza district, the bulk of central Palestine and the western Galilee including the coastal line by Acre. The area

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<sup>33</sup> Shlaim, Avi: "Israel and the Arab coalition in 1948" in Rogan and Shlaim (red.) *The War for Palestine*. Cambridge 2001, p. 82.

<sup>34</sup> Shlaim, Avi: "Britain and the Arab-Israeli War of 1948" in *Journal of Palestinian Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 4 Summer 1987, p. 51.

<sup>35</sup> The British date for withdrawal varied. Originally set for August 1948 it was gradually moved forward in time until it became 15 May 1948. Louis 2006 (a), p. 495.

<sup>36</sup> Morris 2001, pp. 180-184; Pappé 2007, pp. 31-37.

<sup>37</sup> The UNSCOP members split in following fashion: Seven for partition, three for federation and one abstained. Ben-Dror 2007, p. 259.

<sup>38</sup> Shlaim 2001, p. 25.

<sup>39</sup> Louis 2006 (a), p. 494.

around Jerusalem and Bethlehem area was to become an International Zone.<sup>40</sup> The fact that the majority report supported partition was to a large extent the result of the combination of successful Zionist lobbying and the Arab Higher Committee's boycott of the UNSCOP hearings. The plight of the Jewish refugees had also had a profound emotional effect on the committee.<sup>41</sup>

Once UNSCOP had issued the two reports the problem was handed over to the UN General Assembly. Both the US Government and the USSR supported the Partition Plan, but a two-thirds majority was needed in the General Assembly and many of the smaller nations were not swayed. Due to last minute lobbying, blackmailing and outright threats, as exercised by the Zionists and the US Government, enough support was gathered for the Partition Plan.<sup>42</sup> The UN Partition Plan, known as Resolution 181, was passed 29 November 1947. Britain abstained from voting.<sup>43</sup> The passing of this Partition Plan had dire consequences. In the words of Avi Shlaim, it "provided not just international legitimacy for creating Jewish and Arab states, but unintentionally the signal for a savage war between the two communities in Palestine."<sup>44</sup>

During the second week of December 1948 the Arab League convened in Cairo.<sup>45</sup> For them the creation of a Jewish state was anathema and had to be stopped. This was at least their outward stance. The inner politics were far more complicated, and the solidification of the Arab states in their fight to strangle the Jewish state at birth is one of the great Zionist myths in the history of the establishment of Israel. The "New Historians" have tried to look into, demystify and to reveal these inner workings amongst the Arab states.<sup>46</sup> Their findings are revealing. King Abdullah, for instance, had originally planned to support partition and declare that Transjordan would take over the Arab-designated areas. He was talked away from this by the British Minister in Transjordan, Alec Kirkbride, as such a stance would have completely isolated Transjordan.<sup>47</sup> The outward stance of absolute non-acceptance won the day as the unreconciling rhetoric was as enticing as it was unrealistic. None

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<sup>40</sup> Louis 2006 (a), p. 494. See Appendix 1: Map: 1: UN Partition Plan.

<sup>41</sup> Morris 2001, pp. 180-184; Ben-Dror 2007.

<sup>42</sup> Neff 2002, pp. 45-51; Morris 2001, pp. 184-186; Louis 2006 (a), pp. 485-487.

<sup>43</sup> Shlaim 2001, p. 25; Morris 2001, p. 186.

<sup>44</sup> Shlaim 1988, p. 122.

<sup>45</sup> Shlaim 1990 (a), p. 107.

<sup>46</sup> For a series of essays on this theme, see Rogan and Shlaim (eds.) 2001; Flapan 1987.

<sup>47</sup> Pundik 1994, pp. 60-61.

of the Arab states were adequately militarily prepared, nor were they willing to cooperate with each other, yet one country after another added fuel to the fire with every speech. It was as if they were outbidding each other in high pitched impotence.<sup>48</sup> Originally the Arab League seemed only willing to send in small arms and officers that were to train the Arab resistance. This took the form of the Arab Liberation Army (ALA) – an army as powerless as its name was powerful.<sup>49</sup> This discrepancy between representation and reality was a reoccurring symptom of Arab politics in the late 1940s.<sup>50</sup>

### ***War in Palestine***

The outbreak of the war between the Arabs and the Jewish forces is usually dated to 15 May 1948, the date of the Arab invasion. There had been an ongoing civil war in Palestine for at least half a year prior to this.<sup>51</sup> Some historians therefore divide the war into two phases. The first phase lasted from November 1947 to 14 May 1948, and the second phase lasted from 15 May 1948 to the end of hostilities in 1949.<sup>52</sup> The first round of fighting was one in which the Jewish armed forces (Haganah, Irgun and the Stern Gang) fought against Arab volunteers, Palestinian resistance fighters and conducted an ethnic cleansing of areas with Palestinian inhabitants within the areas envisaged to be the Jewish state.<sup>53</sup> The civil war ended with the establishment of Israel. The war then became one between states.<sup>54</sup> In general the civil war did not affect the covert diplomacy between Transjordan and the Zionist leadership which continued until May 1948. The violence in Palestine made such diplomacy more difficult, but it did not end it.

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<sup>48</sup> Morris 2001, pp. 218-223.

<sup>49</sup> Kirkbride 1956, pp. 153-159. Another such “army” was the “Holy War Army” (defeated 9 April 1948). Pappé 2007, p. 122.

<sup>50</sup> Morris 2001, pp. 186-188.

<sup>51</sup> Khalidi, Rashidi: “The Palestinians and 1948: the underlying causes of failure” in Rogan and Shlaim (eds.) 2001, pp. 12-13; Caplan, Neil: *Futile Diplomacy Volume Three*. London/Portland, OR 1997, p. 17.

<sup>52</sup> Thomas 1999, p. 61; Shlaim 2001, p. 28; Luttwak, Edward N. and Horowitz, Daniel: *The Israeli Army 1948-1973*. Cambridge, MA 1983, p. 27. Shlaim dates the end of hostilities to 7 January 1949. As we will see in chapter 6 this is only partially true as Operation Uvda took place around the 10 March 1949.

<sup>53</sup> Pappé 2007, pp. 50-126; Shlaim 2001, pp. 30-33; Morris 2001, pp. 191-214. The terms “Area envisaged to be the Jewish State” and the “Areas allocated to the Jews by the Partition Plan” are in this case *not* interchangeable.

<sup>54</sup> Thomas 1999, p. 61. This division is not perfect either, as the war between the Israeli forces and the Palestinian population in the areas allocated to the Jews by the Partition Plan continued after 15 May 1948.

One event of the civil war, however, demands particular attention, namely the Deir Yassin massacre. The event had major political implications. The massacre stands above all other events in the civil war, in the sense that it radically increased the political pressure on King Abdullah because it sent a jolt of fear through the Palestinian population.<sup>55</sup> Deir Yassin was a small village close to Jerusalem. Its elders had made an agreement with the Haganah, who had promised to spare the village. 9 April 1948 this promise was broken by a small force composed of Irgun, the Stern Gang and Haganah troops. When the Palestinians resisted, all restraint vanished from the Jewish ranks. The exact number of murdered civilians is hard to estimate, and the numbers vary from 93 to 254.<sup>56</sup> Whatever the real figure, the massacre at Deir Yassin became the symbol of the *Nakbah* due to its brutality.<sup>57</sup> This was far from the only such massacre committed against the Palestinian population, but it has retained a symbolic status as *the* massacre. The Deir Yassin massacre is important for us due to its double significance. First and foremost the massacre, and the fear it spread throughout Palestine, radically increased the pressure on King Abdullah. This pressure was brought on him both through the Arab League and through the lobbying of Palestinian notables who demanded that Transjordan send its Legion to the defence of the Palestinian villages.<sup>58</sup> Secondly the massacre, rather surprisingly, serves to illustrate the importance held by the Jewish Agency towards the special relationship with King Abdullah as the Jewish Agency acted with urgency in an attempt to calm King Abdullah. Such a move was not made towards the other Arab governments. Shortly after the massacre took place the Jewish Agency sent a letter to King Abdullah condemning the “incident”.<sup>59</sup> The response from Abdullah was filled with bile and contained a clear threat of “terrible consequences” if such a massacre was to re-occur.<sup>60</sup> In a statement to the press he added that: “Instead of awaiting till the 15 of May next the Jews have seized the opportunity of attacking peaceful Arabs at Deir Yassin, Tiberias, Haifa and other places which fact alone is sufficient reason to

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<sup>55</sup> Thomas 1999, pp. 67-71.

<sup>56</sup> Morris 2004, p. 238, estimates 100-120; Palumbo, Michael: *The Palestinian Catastrophe*. London 1987, p. 57, estimates 116-250; Pappé 2007, p. 91, states that the official estimate has dropped from 170 to 93; Thomas 1999, p. 67, states that 254 were killed; Neff 2002, p. 62 also puts the number at 254; Slyomovics, Susan: “The Rape of Qula, a Destroyed Palestinian Village” in Sa’di, Ahmad H. and Abu-Lughod, Lila (ed.): *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory*. New York 2007, p. 35, uses the estimate of 105 killed.

<sup>57</sup> Palumbo 1987, pp. 47-57.

<sup>58</sup> Nevo 1996, pp. 127, 129; Thomas 1999, p. 95.

<sup>59</sup> Nevo 1996, p. 113.



compel Arab states to send their troops to Palestine.”<sup>61</sup> In his report to the Foreign Office, Kirkbride described King Abdullah as close to having a nervous breakdown. “I wish he would stop making these statements to the press but some outlet for his fury seems to be essential.”<sup>62</sup> The political pressure hanging over King Abdullah was clearly enormous.

### ***Collusion and Confusion***

The special relationship between Transjordan and Israel, or more correctly between King Abdullah and the higher echelons of the Jewish Agency, was one that had been fostered since as early as 1922.<sup>63</sup> This *relationship*, however, didn’t develop into *collusion* until 1947.<sup>64</sup> Between those dates the various overtures came in jolts. At times the relationship was kept warm by a continuous series of meetings, while at other times there were lulls lasting several years.<sup>65</sup> A detailed account of these various overtures with their ups and downs would serve no purpose here, suffice to say that this relationship had a long tradition and was not something that appeared out of nowhere as the Mandate approached its endgame. When these talks evolved into a serious form of diplomacy around 1946 one man came to the fore – Elias Sasson. Sasson was the leading Arabist in the Jewish Agency and became vital in engineering the collusion. One of his contemporaries described his role thus:

Until Sasson went into talks with Abdullah, there was only stammering from our side. Sasson knew how to talk to Abdullah [...] The way in which Sasson worked with Abdullah was diplomatic activity of the first order. It led to the fact that we did not have to fight the Arab Legion. [...] He was the architect and he was the builder.<sup>66</sup>

With the entrance of Sasson the talks between King Abdullah and the Zionists picked up pace. 17 November 1947, less than two weeks prior to the passing of the UN Partition Plan, King Abdullah met with Golda Meir – acting head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency. In this meeting it was agreed, though not

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<sup>60</sup> Morris 2003, pp. 127-129.

<sup>61</sup> FO 29 April 1948, FO 371/68372, Kirkbride to Burrows, S/1014/48.

<sup>62</sup> FO 29 April 1948, FO 371/68372, Kirkbride to Burrows, S/1014/48.

<sup>63</sup> Shlaim 1988, pp. 44-45.

<sup>64</sup> The term *collusion* was one for which Avi Shlaim received a lot of criticism. Due to much pressure he changed the title of his book to *Politics of Partition*, yet stated later that this was an alteration he regretted. Shlaim 1995, pp. 298-299.

<sup>65</sup> Shlaim 1988, pp. 41-159.

<sup>66</sup> Quoted in Shlaim 1988, pp. 75-76.

formalized, that the Arab Legion would capture the Arab part of the Mandate, something the Zionists would accept, and in return King Abdullah would not oppose the declaration of the Jewish state.<sup>67</sup> Elias Sasson was one of the two Jewish Agency Arabists that accompanied Golda Meir. His role was that of a translator, but his presence in the meeting should nonetheless be seen as important.<sup>68</sup> Kirkbride, who knew King Abdullah intimately, pointed out that the Jewish Agency made a grave error in sending a woman – he was concerned about King Abdullah’s conservative views. Furthermore, he was worried by the fact that Golda Meir knew no Arabic and had little experience in dealing with Arabs.<sup>69</sup> Despite this, the agreement was reached. The largest problem was not what the agreement contained, but what it left out, namely Jerusalem. Jerusalem was to be a *corpus separatum* according to the Partition Plan. Although both the Jewish Agency and King Abdullah agreed that Jerusalem could not be internationalised, they failed to discuss how the city was to be treated.<sup>70</sup>

Although King Abdullah had received support from the Jewish Agency for his plan to take over Arab Palestine, such an action was still highly controversial as it went against the UN Partition Plan which envisaged a Jewish State and a Palestinian State. It was therefore of great importance for King Abdullah that he obtained some form of clearance from the British Foreign Office. 7 February 1948 Prime Minister Abul Huda and the British commander of the Arab Legion, John Bagot Glubb, who acted as translator, met with British Foreign Secretary Ernst Bevin in London where they discussed the idea of a Transjordanian takeover of Arab Palestine once British forces retreated. Bevin’s response could hardly have been clearer: “It seems the obvious thing to do, but do not go and invade the areas allotted to the Jews.”<sup>71</sup> This decision was kept secret from the US Government, and as late as 10 May 1948 Bevin was vague regarding Abdullah’s intentions in the upcoming war.<sup>72</sup>

In the highly volatile situation that was building up in the weeks before the end of the Mandate Golda Meir sent several messages to King Abdullah asking for an assurance that he was going to keep his promise. To one of these letters Abdullah responded that Meir must “remember three things: that he was a Bedouin and

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<sup>67</sup> Shlaim 2001, p. 30; Shlaim 1988, pp. 110-121.

<sup>68</sup> Sasson’s significance became evident when in the second Abdullah-Meir meeting he wasn’t present. This will be elaborated towards the end of the chapter.

<sup>69</sup> Kirkbride 1976, pp. 4-5.

<sup>70</sup> Morris 2001, pp. 225-226. More on the results of this in chapter 3.

<sup>71</sup> Glubb 1957, pp. 62-66; Shlaim 1988, pp. 135-137; Nevo 1996, pp. 88-89.

<sup>72</sup> Pundik 1994, p. 116.

therefore a man of honor; that he was a king and therefore doubly an honourable man; and finally, that he would never break a promise made to a woman.”<sup>73</sup> This did not quell the Jewish Agency’s doubts. A last meeting was arranged between King Abdullah and Golda Meir. Golda was again sent across the river Jordan to make sure that Abdullah would stay the course. She was, in this final and most vital meeting, not accompanied by Elias Sasson. The reasons for him not joining her are unclear as it seems he simply failed to show up in Haifa where they were supposed to meet prior to departure.<sup>74</sup> The meeting, which took place 10 May 1948, has been the focus of much historical discussion, yet its contents remain elusive.<sup>75</sup>

Golda Meir reported that the meeting had been a complete failure, that Abdullah had changed his mind, and that he had viewed war as the only remaining option. The previous deal had been forged in a situation where Transjordan stood free from the other Arab states. In May 1948 this was no longer the case. King Abdullah told Golda Meir that he could not stand against the tide: “When I made that promise, I thought I was in control of my own destiny and could do what I thought right, but since then I have learned otherwise [...] I am now one of five.”<sup>76</sup> Taken literally this implied that the Israeli and Transjordanian representatives parted as enemies. However Meir’s literal understanding of the meeting was perhaps part of the problem.<sup>77</sup> Abdullah made it clear that the war could not be avoided if the Jewish state was proclaimed – a proclamation he hoped could be delayed for the sake of finding a solution. He was perhaps not as precise in his reiteration of the Arab Legion’s plan to restrict itself to the areas allocated by the UN Partition Plan to the Arabs, and that it would refrain from engaging in battles with the Jewish army, but as his actions in the war would show, King Abdullah remained true to his word. “Part of the problem was that ‘Abdullah had to pretend to be going along with the other members of the Arab

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<sup>73</sup> Meir 1975, p. 216.

<sup>74</sup> Shlaim 1988, p. 206.

<sup>75</sup> Shlaim 1988, pp. 205-214; Morris 2001, p. 221.

<sup>76</sup> Quoted in Meir 1975, p. 218.

<sup>77</sup> Golda Meir was far from alone in her literal interpretation. Within the Jewish Agency, however, some argued that King Abdullah should not be taken face value, and that he would most probably stick to the previous deal. As far as placing the blame on Golda Meir there has been quite a debate. Avi Shlaim accuses her of holding a rigid, non-nuanced view, whilst Joseph Nevo points out that differences between the parties were too great for nuances to be able to bridge them. Although Shlaim perhaps goes too far in blaming Meir, King Abdullah’s actions in the war go some way in showing that the difference between the parties were not too great. Nevo 1996, pp. 118-120; Shlaim 1988, pp. 205-214.

League [...] Their plan was to prevent partition; his plan was to effect partition.”<sup>78</sup> The point was that the Israeli-Transjordanian Partition Plan had not changed nature, it was merely necessary for Abdullah to make cosmetic changes in light of the new realities. As the meeting ended King Abdullah and Danin, the Arabist who had replaced Sasson, had a short conversation that was rather surprising if Abdullah really had changed course completely. ““I hope we will stay in touch even after the war starts,” Danin said. “Of course,” Abdullah answered. “You must come see me.” “But how will I be able to get to you?” asked Danin. “Oh, I trust you to find a way,” Abdullah said with a smile.”<sup>79</sup> It was clear that King Abdullah did not view their differences as insurmountable.

The Zionists paid no heed to Abdullah’s advice of postponing the Declaration of Independence, and 15 May 1948 the State of Israel was proclaimed. Exactly as had been forewarned by King Abdullah, the Declaration of Independence was followed by a declaration of war.

### ***Recognition of Israel***

The United States Government recognized Israel just eleven minutes after the Declaration of Independence was issued by Ben-Gurion.<sup>80</sup> The speed with which this recognition was issued came as a shock to most of the involved parties.<sup>81</sup> Due to the fact that this was one of President Truman’s pre-planned personal secrets, it even came as a political shock to the US State Department and the British Foreign Office.<sup>82</sup> This prompted the following joke throughout the Arab world: “[A] new aeroplane had been invented which would go so fast that it equalled the speed with which the United States of America recognized the State of Israel.”<sup>83</sup> In comparison, the US recognition of Transjordan had the speed of a donkey. Transjordan received *de jure* recognition by the United States 1 February 1949, three years after Transjordan had become an independent state.<sup>84</sup> USSR also extended recognition of Israel on 18 May 1948, yet

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<sup>78</sup> Shlaim, Avi: “Israel and the Arab coalition in 1948” in Rogan and Shlaim (eds.) 2001, pp. 88-89.

<sup>79</sup> Meir 1975, p. 219.

<sup>80</sup> Neff 2002, p. 64.

<sup>81</sup> Cohen 1990, pp. 220-221.

<sup>82</sup> Louis 2006 (a), pp. 514-515; Cohen 1990, p. 221; Benson, Michael T.: *Harry S. Truman and the Founding of Israel*. Westport 1997, p. 168.

<sup>83</sup> FO 4 Sept. 1948, FO371-68641, Enclosure in Jedda un-numbered letter.

<sup>84</sup> FO 2 March 1949, FO371/75273, Amman: Monthly Situation Report on Transjordan for the Month of February, 1949.

did not recognize Jordan until 1955 as it considered Transjordan to be a British puppet. That Transjordan was not recognized as a state by the two superpowers clearly placed the country at a diplomatic disadvantage as it was denied UN membership.<sup>85</sup> Another effect of this was that a significant form of pressure was removed from Israel. The superpowers could no longer make such suggestions as – we will recognize you if ..., or we won't recognize you unless .... This form of pressure was still available against Transjordan.

### ***War in Palestine – Round 1: 15 May – 11 June 1948***

15 May, as had been promised, the last British soldiers withdrew from the Mandate and the Arab armies invaded.<sup>86</sup> The first thing to be noted is that the Arab armies acted differently than their original war plans suggested, while at the same time they were unable, or unwilling, to coordinate the new developments amongst each other. Transjordan changed its stated war plan into one that fitted well with its “promise” to Israel – a takeover of what is now known as the West Bank.<sup>87</sup> Egypt saw this as a Transjordanian land-grab and responded by changing its war plan into one where it would lead a two-pronged attack of which one moved up through Beersheba and north towards Jerusalem. The rationale was that by grabbing parts of the West Bank Egypt could limit Transjordan's gains. The war was thus more of a classical example of inter-Arab strife along the traditional Hashemite/anti-Hashemite lines, rather than one of Israeli strangulation.<sup>88</sup>

The Arab Legion entered Palestine and quickly moved forward into the West Bank with the aim of taking control of and holding the Arab areas. Jerusalem was to be by-passed, but the Haganah had, in the period 13-18 May taken over all British compounds in the city, and as a result King Abdullah was forced to act. 17 May he ordered John Bagot Glubb to occupy and protect the Old City.<sup>89</sup> The battle for the Old

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<sup>85</sup> Wilson 1999, p. 186.

<sup>86</sup> The best short-hand accounts of the 1948 War are found in Morris 2001 and Shlaim 2001. The following account is based on those.

<sup>87</sup> The use of the geographical term “West Bank” is anachronistic as it was not given this name until the area was annexed by Transjordan, which then became Jordan, in 1950. However the term “West Bank” serves the given purpose well, since the geographical area corresponds well with the later use of the name.

<sup>88</sup> Morris 2001, pp. 220-221; Thomas 1999, pp. 80-82.

<sup>89</sup> Morris 2001, p. 224.

City started 19 May and lasted until 28 May when the Jewish Quarter fell to the Legion.<sup>90</sup>

Meanwhile the Egyptian army moved northward, occupied the Gaza strip and moved as far north as Isdud, some twenty miles south of Tel Aviv, and north-eastward to Beersheba, through Hebron and Bethlehem. By 23 May the Egyptians had reached just south of Jerusalem. On all fronts the Egyptian army dug in.<sup>91</sup>

The Iraqi army launched a farcical first round offensive, attempting to break through to Haifa, but was repelled as it was unable to successfully besiege Kibbutz Gesher just across the river Jordan. 22 May saw the Iraqi army withdraw across the river, only to receive reinforcements and return to a position of defence by holding the Arab-held “triangle” – Nablus-Tulkarem-Jenin – the northern section of the West Bank.<sup>92</sup> Here the Iraqis dug in and remained mostly inactive for the duration of the war, despite the fact that the Iraqi contingent was the numerically largest Arab force in Palestine, numbering a total of 18,000 troops.<sup>93</sup> Their presence here, however, developed into a major problem by the early months of 1949 as the Iraqi Government refused both withdrawal and negotiation.

The Syrian offensive was perhaps the least successful. Entering Palestine a day later than planned, the Syrian army initially only occupied a former British fort as well as some abandoned settlements. With one exception the Syrian army was repelled in all its attacks. The small areas in which the Syrian army had success were just enough to give the Syrians a tiny foothold in Palestine, which thus offered them a bargaining chip, however modest.<sup>94</sup> The Lebanese army hardly joined the war at all.<sup>95</sup>

The alleged Arab unity had proven itself to be a farce, as had the stated plan to wipe out the infant Jewish state with a strike “which will be spoken of like the Mongolian massacres and the Crusades.”<sup>96</sup> The complete failure of the Arab armies cannot disclose the fact that in this first phase of war the Haganah was in a dire situation. The Israeli army was better trained and coordinated than the Arab armies, and the soldiers had a morale that was equal to none. However, the army lacked heavy

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<sup>90</sup> Rogan, Eugene L.: “Jordan and 1948: the persistence of an official history” in Rogan and Shlaim (eds.) 2001, pp. 112-113.

<sup>91</sup> Morris 2001, pp. 227-229.

<sup>92</sup> Morris 2001, pp. 230-231; Nevo 1996, p. 142.

<sup>93</sup> Tripp, Charles: *A History of Iraq*. Cambridge 2002, p.123.

<sup>94</sup> Morris 2001, pp. 232-233.

<sup>95</sup> Morris 2001, pp. 233-234

<sup>96</sup> Stated by Arab League Secretary General Azzam Pasha just prior to the invasion. Quoted in Morris 2001, p. 219.

armaments and it was fighting on small strips of land often without the advantage of height. Despite this, the first four weeks of the war was mostly an Israeli victory.<sup>97</sup> The first truce, which came 11 June 1948, only tipped the military balance further to Israel's advantage.

### ***The First Truce: 11 June – 8 July 1948***

The UN Security Council had, only five days after the outbreak of the war, appointed Count Folke Bernadotte as “special mediator” for Palestine. He had a dual mandate: To end the fighting and to find a comprehensive solution acceptable to both sides. His effort at finding a quick end to the fighting was crowned with momentary success when a truce covering all fronts was agreed 11 June. The second half of his mandate was somewhat of a mission impossible. The truce, rather ironically, made the war a walkover for the Israelis. The Arab states were heavily affected by the international arms embargo that was set to work. Egypt, Iraq and Transjordan had all tied their armies to Britain, which ardently upheld the arms embargo.<sup>98</sup> Beyond that the Arab states were increasingly incapable of coordinating their war effort.

In stark contrast, the Israeli Defence Force (IDF), as the Haganah was named 31 May, used the truce to massively strengthen their fighting capabilities. In terms of arms, Israel was able to acquire large amounts from Czechoslovakia in blatant breach of the arms embargo. In terms of manpower, the IDF combined large-scale training camps with the influx of Jewish immigrants, enabling an increase of forces from ca. 35,000 to ca. 65,000 in the period 15 May – 9 July. In terms of organization, the IDF became more streamlined as both the Stern Gang and Irgun were mostly disbanded and integrated into the IDF.<sup>99</sup>

Bernadotte issued his first proposal for a solution to the conflict 27 June 1948, stipulating a division of Palestine into two sections – one Jewish state and one Arab state united with Transjordan.<sup>100</sup> This proposal was rejected by both sides. In an act of folly the Arab states refused to extend the truce and warfare was resumed 8 July.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Morris 2001, pp. 215-218.

<sup>98</sup> Shlaim, Avi: “Israel and the Arab coalition in 1948” in Rogan and Shlaim (eds.) 2001, p. 94.

<sup>99</sup> Morris 2001, pp. 235-237; Tal 2004 (b), p. 346.

<sup>100</sup> The fact that the proposal included annexation by Transjordan made most Israeli's conclude that Bernadotte colluded with Britain. Cohen 1990, p. 233. This has later been disproved. Gazit, Mordechai: “American and British Diplomacy and the Bernadotte Mission” in *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 29, No. 3. Sept. 1986.

<sup>101</sup> Morris 2001, p. 237; Caplan 1997, pp. 18-20.

## ***War in Palestine – Round 2: 8 – 18 July 1948***

The second round of the war broke out 8 July and lasted until 18 July the same year. The fighting was initiated when the Egyptians launched a strike against the IDF in the south at dawn the 8 July.

On the southern Egyptian front the ten days were indecisive, though it can be said that the IDF suffered the fewest losses and dealt the heaviest blows. On the Syrian front in the north the IDF suffered heavy losses without achieving decisive victory, but the Syrian force was cut in half and the back was broken of the northern Arab Liberation Army (ALA) strongholds. On the Central Transjordanian front Israel took Lydda and Ramle after Glubb Pasha ordered the Legion troops to withdraw in order to be able to defend the rest of the West Bank, especially the area around Latrun.<sup>102</sup> The IDF secured the road connecting Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.<sup>103</sup>

## ***Second Truce: 19 July – 15 October 1948***

A second truce was initiated 19 July and lasted until 15 October 1948. As with the first truce the Arab states were unable to benefit from the respite in the fighting, whilst the IDF added further military might to the scales. Meanwhile Bernadotte's mission impossible continued. He had finished his final report, known as the Bernadotte Plan, and had handed it over to the UN when on the 17 September 1948 he was murdered by the Israeli terrorist group known as the Stern Gang.<sup>104</sup> The Swedish Count left a lasting testimony and a looming shadow that his successor Ralph Bunche had to try to fill.<sup>105</sup> The Bernadotte Plan envisaged an UN administered Jerusalem and the creation of the Palestine Conciliation Commission (PCC).<sup>106</sup> Lastly, the Bernadotte Plan included a tit-for-tat alteration to the Partition Plan whereby Israel would get the Galilee and in return the Arabs would get the whole Negev.<sup>107</sup> This was rejected by Israel who insisted on both tit *and* tat. Bernadotte also ardently insisted on the repatriation of the Palestinian refugees.<sup>108</sup> Also this demand was rejected by

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<sup>102</sup> Tal 2004 (b), pp. 310-311.

<sup>103</sup> Morris 2001, pp. 237-241.

<sup>104</sup> Shlaim 2001, p. 37.

<sup>105</sup> One of the assassins later admitted that their real goal was to liquidate Ralph Bunche, as he was seen as the mind behind the Bernadotte-proposals. Tveit, Odd Karsten: *Alt for Israel*. Oslo 1996, p. 158.

<sup>106</sup> Caplan 1997, pp. 30, 35.

<sup>107</sup> Gazit 1986, pp. 693-695.

<sup>108</sup> Cohen 1990, p. 236.



Israel.<sup>109</sup> The plan as a whole was rejected by Egypt, and the Arab League made it clear that unless the refugees were allowed to return there could be no negotiations.<sup>110</sup>

Once again King Abdullah stood out as the exception. He made public statements against the Bernadotte Plan, yet made it clear that he would abide by it if it was accepted by the UN.<sup>111</sup> In retrospect the Israeli ambassador to the US and the UN, Abba Eban, used the Arab stance towards the original Partition Plan to argue in support of the Israeli rejection of the Bernadotte Plan: “We would meet the Arab invaders on their chosen ground. Since they had decided to reject the 1947 delimitation in favor of a verdict by arms – so be it.”<sup>112</sup> The legitimacy of this logic can be questioned, but it was cleverly used in a way that allowed Israel both to have the moral high ground while at the same time conquering territory.

### ***Towards the Best Animosity***

It was during this second truce, while acting mediator Ralph Bunche took over for Bernadotte, that the special relationship between Israel and Transjordan started re-emerging.<sup>113</sup> It took a while from re-emergence to full fledged dedication, and Israel spent much of the second truce planning an attack on the Arab Legion and the Iraqi troops in order to take over the West Bank.<sup>114</sup> The special relationship won out in the end, and it was Egypt who received the brunt of the Israeli attack in the third round of the war. This was done with Transjordanian consent. This choice of strategy represented “the elimination, at least temporarily, of the option of a political settlement with Egypt, in favour of a settlement with Transjordan.”<sup>115</sup> In the short term this was a clear advantage to Transjordan. The risk was of course that Israel would turn on Transjordan once Egypt had been defeated. In October 1948, this was a risk Transjordan was willing to take.

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<sup>109</sup> Morris 2004, p. 322.

<sup>110</sup> Tal 2004 (b), pp. 351-352.

<sup>111</sup> Tal 2004 (b), pp. 354-355; Pappé 1992, p. 164.

<sup>112</sup> Eban 1977, p. 124.

<sup>113</sup> Ralph Bunche took the title “Acting Mediator” rather than “Mediator” as had been Bernadotte’s title. This was done out of respect for his murdered colleague. Næser 2005, p. 30.

<sup>114</sup> Shlaim 2001, pp. 38-39.

<sup>115</sup> Bar-Joseph 1987, p. 130.

### **3. Israeli – Transjordanian Contact Regained**

*August – November 1948*

By November 1948 any observer would have considered it highly improbable that Israeli and Transjordanian diplomats were holding bilateral talks behind the scenes. The two countries had, only months previously, fought over Jerusalem and other areas in central Palestine. Officially King Abdullah was still the commander of the invading

Arab armies. The previous bilateral talks between the two states were well guarded secrets. Even those few who had known of the secret talks between Israeli and Transjordanian representatives in 1947, and the early months of 1948, would have had no reason to expect the two warring parties to re-approach each other. Despite this apparent implausibility, that is exactly what they did. In fact the diplomatic relationship between the two states had re-developed over a longer period of time.

Before we delve into the detailed accounts of how this special relationship reappeared on the diplomatic horizon it is necessary to take a step back and consider how a diplomatic approach was possible at such a point in time. The greatest hindrance for such talks was, rather obviously, the ongoing war. For Transjordan's part this was made more problematic by the atmosphere in the Arab world – one filled with unrealistic war rhetoric and propaganda; internal political turmoil fuelled by the Palestinian refugees and an Arab unity that both shunned all deviation and was split into a pro-Hashemite and an anti-Hashemite camp.<sup>1</sup> In this atmosphere it could have been considered political suicide to open talks with the Israelis.<sup>2</sup> There were other factors at play however; factors that helped explain why Transjordan chose to break with the unwritten protocols of Arab unity.

One of the main factors was the long dawning realization that although the Arab Legion had obtained and fortified significant territorial acquisitions, this strength was highly temporal. The longer the war would have lasted, the more unable the Legion would have been to hold the areas it controlled. Its lines were extended beyond breaking point and the supplies were becoming desperately low.<sup>3</sup> The international arms embargo had adversely affected the military balance in Israel's favour. Transjordan, economically controlled by Britain, was completely sealed off, whilst Israel was able to acquire arms and ammunition in a clandestine manner from other sources, mainly Czechoslovakia.<sup>4</sup> This dire situation was made worse by the fact that one of the last shipments of ammunition from Britain that was to come through to

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<sup>1</sup> Rabinovich 1991, pp. 14-17; Wilson 1999, pp. 177-178; El- Edroos, Brigadier S.A.: *The Hashemite Arab Army 1908-1979*. Amman 1980, pp. 259, 275; Shlaim, Avi: "Israel and the Arab coalition in 1948" in Rogan and Shlaim (eds.) 2001, s. 82; Palumbo 1987, p. 78.

<sup>2</sup> On a tragic note: The metaphor of political suicide turned out to not merely be a metaphor as King Abdullah was murdered based on the very accusation that he had collaborated with the Israelis.

<sup>3</sup> Glubb 1957, pp. 210-211.

<sup>4</sup> FO 11 Jan. 1949, FO141/1329, FO to Cairo, telegram no. 98; Glubb 1957, p. 149; Shlaim, Avi: "Israel and the Arab coalition in 1948" in Rogan and Shlaim (eds.) 2001, p. 94; For a list of some of these armaments see: El- Edroos 1980, p. 259.

Transjordan was “hijacked” by Egypt as the cargo passed through the Suez.<sup>5</sup> The Anglo-Jordanian Treaty of Alliance only applied to Transjordan proper, and hence there could be no British guarantees against Israeli aggression.<sup>6</sup> This was a fact that caused much embarrassment to those British citizens embedded in the Transjordanian Government – especially the British Minister Alec Kirkbride and John Bagot Glubb.<sup>7</sup> The British Ministry of Defence did take the step of discussing the issue with the US administration, but the case was not pushed further after the US had responded to the negative.<sup>8</sup>

A final factor pushing King Abdullah into opening diplomatic talks with Israel was perhaps the reappearance of Elias Sasson, the leading Israeli Arabist who had been one of the masterminds behind the Golda Meir-King Abdullah talks. In June-July 1948 he was given the responsibility of attempting to open diplomatic channels with Arab leaders, particularly King Abdullah.<sup>9</sup> One would be gravely underestimating King Abdullah if one put too much weight on this argument, but it cannot go unaccounted for. During the Abdullah-Meir talks Sasson had played a vital role, and there had developed a great sense of trust between the two men. When, on the brink of war, 10 May 1948, Sasson had not shown up for the last meeting, the friendly atmosphere that had existed broke down.<sup>10</sup> It would be a massive exaggeration to state that this was the only reason, but it seemed to have weighed heavily for King Abdullah.<sup>11</sup> During one of the December meetings, which will be discussed later, King Abdullah’s physician and close confidant Dr. Sati commented: “Golda Meir was dry during her interview with His Majesty before the troubles. If your excellency [Sasson] had visited yourself, it would have been possible to arrive at

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<sup>5</sup> Morris 2003, p. 171; Rogan, Eugene L.: “Jordan and 1948: the persistence of an official history” in Rogan and Shlaim (eds.): 2001, p. 112; Pundik 1994, p. 101.

<sup>6</sup> A copy of the Treaty of Alliance is to be found in FO371/75287. This folder also contains some legal discussions on whether it could apply to the West Bank. The conclusion is that it would apply to the West Bank only when this was annexed by Jordan and this annexation was recognized by the British Government. Pappé 1992, p. 185; Tal 2004 (b), p. 458.

<sup>7</sup> Both Kirkbride and Glubb kept appealing for the release of arms and ammunition, to no avail. There are many examples of such appeals in the Foreign Office archives, only some are listed: FO 19 Aug. 1948, FO371/68822, Note by Glubb Pasha; FO 6 Dec. 1948, FO816/134, Amman to FO, telegram 931; FO 29 Dec. 1948, FO816/142, Amman to FO, Cypher no. 982; FO 12 March 1949, FO800/477, Amman to FO, telegram 149. Kirkbride warned: “I have a growing feeling [...] that if disaster overtakes Transjordan whilst we are withholding supplies and ammunition, we might as well abandon the present policy of building defensive alliances in the Middle East.” Quoted in Shlaim 1987, p. 61.

<sup>8</sup> Tal 2004 (b), p. 404.

<sup>9</sup> Rabinovich 1991, p. 40; Bar-Joseph 1987, pp. 101-145; Tal 2004 (b), p. 349.

<sup>10</sup> Shlaim 1990 (a), pp. 92-171; Bar-Joseph 1987, pp. 156-157.

<sup>11</sup> Nevo 1996, p. 186.

a better understanding.”<sup>12</sup> Sasson’s role in rejuvenating the amicable atmosphere between King Abdullah and the Israeli representatives might have added that last necessary pro that tipped the balance.

From the Israeli viewpoint several other arguments appear. Although the war was going well, the young state could not sustain the cost of war perpetually. The West Bank was a tempting prize, but the cost would have been high. The southern parts of Palestine were far easier to conquer. To ensure such a conquest, which involved an all out attack on the Egyptian army, it was vital to pacify Transjordan and the Arab Legion, especially on the Jerusalem front. The interests of Israel and Transjordan coincided as Egypt posed one of the gravest threats to Transjordanian interests.

For Israel to attempt to conquer both central and southern Palestine simultaneously would have been costly and a large military risk. Furthermore, an outright attack on areas not allotted to Israel in the UN Partition Plan would have implied risking a conflict with the great powers. This was a possibility that especially worried Foreign Minister Shertok.<sup>13</sup> Confrontation with the British was a great worry for the Israeli Government, especially given that Ben-Gurion was unaware of the fact that the Treaty of Alliance between Britain and Transjordan only applied if Transjordan’s official borders were breached, and that the treaty therefore did not apply for the West Bank.<sup>14</sup> Thus, ironically, the Treaty of Alliance was a reason for a peaceful approach for both parties, but for completely different reasons. For Transjordan due to lack of protection, for Israel due to lack of information.

The choice to leave central Palestine for later was not an easy one.<sup>15</sup> In a sense the Israeli Government had to fight the Israeli sentiment at the time, so aptly described by Ben-Gurion: “Our public is drunk with victory – out of ignorance, just as a year ago it was frightened of the Arab armies, out of ignorance.”<sup>16</sup>

A last factor in explaining the renewed contact between Transjordan and Israel is the importance of the pre-war “deal” between the Zionist leadership and King Abdullah. On face value the deal was null and void. Upon closer examination,

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<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Rogan, Eugene L.: “Jordan and 1948: the persistence of an official history” in Rogan, and Shlaim (eds.) 2001, p. 117.

<sup>13</sup> Bar-Joseph 1987, pp. 124-125.

<sup>14</sup> Pappé 1992, p. 185; Pundik 1994, pp. 148-150, 170.

<sup>15</sup> According to Uri Bar-Joseph the choice was never “if”, but rather “when”. The “when” in this case was June 1967. Bar-Joseph 1987, p. 125.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in Bar-Joseph 1987, p. 122.

however, “Abdullah remained remarkably loyal to his original understanding with Golda Meir.”<sup>17</sup> Although the Arab Legion was the Arab army that conquered the largest parts of Palestine, fought some of the bloodiest single battles against the Israeli army and ended up possessing half of the war’s greatest prize, Jerusalem, the pre-war understanding was “breached” only four times. In all of these cases there was a clear sense of either necessity or accident. Put differently, none of the four cases were fully planned acts of aggression. The four cases were Gush Etzion, Jerusalem, Latrun and Lydda/Ramleh. With the exception of Jerusalem, which was outside the understanding, all of the remaining points of conflict were within the Arab sector, as defined by the Partition Plan.<sup>18</sup>

Gush Etzion was a small settlement bloc near Jerusalem, but located within the sector of Palestine allotted to the Arabs in the Partition Plan.<sup>19</sup> The story of the fall of Gush Etzion is a tragic one as it resulted in a massacre of the Jewish settlers, but the battle was not one initiated from above. Rather the attack was launched as a spontaneous action from the young and ambitious field commander, Abdullah al-Tel.<sup>20</sup> After Gush Etzion, but not because of it, al-Tel was quickly promoted and became a leading figure in both the fighting in Jerusalem and the Jerusalem negotiations that took place in November 1948.<sup>21</sup>

The battle for Jerusalem was heavy, with many casualties on both sides. The city became one of the greatest sticking points for the negotiations, but within the context of the relevant argument, Jerusalem was never mentioned in the Abdullah-Meir agreement. The battle for the Holy City was one that could not be avoided if one army made a move. The status and symbolic importance of Jerusalem for both sides was such that it was a definite either-or. Either both sides had to leave it to be internationalized or both sides had to engage in street fighting. Once the Israeli troops had entered the city, the die had been cast.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Shlaim 2001, p. 39.

<sup>18</sup> Bar-Joseph 1987, pp. 59-87; Nevo 1996, p. 138.

<sup>19</sup> Gush Etzion was destroyed in 1948, but was rebuilt after the 1967 war and is now one of the largest Jewish settlements on the occupied West Bank. Pappe 2007, p. 101.

<sup>20</sup> Joseph Nevo here disagrees with Bar-Joseph in terms of the nature of the attack. According to Nevo the attack was pre-planned in Amman. In any case, the argument put forth by Bar-Joseph – that the battle for Gush Etzion was not a breach of the pre-war understanding as it was within the Arab areas of Palestine – is still valid. Nevo 1996, p. 131; Bar-Joseph 1987, pp. 59-64.

<sup>21</sup> Bar-Joseph 1987, p. 164.

<sup>22</sup> Morris 2001, p. 224; Nevo 1996, pp. 135-136.

In the case of Latrun the Haganah launched a series of attacks despite the fact that Latrun was both held by the Legion and was within the boundaries of Arab Palestine. The reason for this was the logic of war itself, as the Legion had occupied Latrun to block the road connecting Tel Aviv with Jerusalem. The Legion managed to hold onto Latrun despite repeated Israeli attacks.<sup>23</sup>

Lastly, the case of Lydda and Ramleh was one of Transjordanian withdrawal and to a very little extent an actual battle.<sup>24</sup>

As Jerusalem was unmentioned in the pre-war agreement and the remaining three battles were all fought in Arab areas there was no actual territorial breach of the understanding by the Arab Legion. All territorial breaches of the pre-war understanding were done by the Israeli army.<sup>25</sup> King Abdullah made it clear to the Israeli leadership that he had entered the war because of the Deir Yassin massacre and the Israeli breach of the Jerusalem ceasefire.<sup>26</sup> The point here being that, with the exception of Gush Etzion, all the battles fought between Israel and Transjordan were initiated by Israel. King Abdullah's adherence to the pre-war understanding was surprisingly strict, indicating that he had never perceived it as broken.

As one can see, there were a whole series of reasons for King Abdullah to reinstate talks with Israel. Militarily Transjordan was extremely weak and needed to end the war. This would explain the need for talks, but not the need for secret bilateral talks. In terms of explaining this it is far more relevant that the pre-war understanding was still perceived as valid by King Abdullah, despite the few breaches mentioned above. King Abdullah regarded personal relations higher than other forms of diplomacy.<sup>27</sup> This preference was strengthened by the fact that Transjordan was not a member of the UN as the country had been recognized neither by the US nor the USSR.<sup>28</sup> Both parties also disliked the inefficient nature of UN negotiations.<sup>29</sup>

Added together the above-mentioned factors would, for the most part, explain the interest Transjordan had in negotiating with Israel, and vice versa, but they do not adequately explain why Transjordan was willing to take the political risk of negotiating with Israel. The explanation for that can only be found in the political

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<sup>23</sup> Morris 2001, pp. 226-227; Morris 2003, pp. 168-170.

<sup>24</sup> Bar-Joseph 1987, pp. 59-97.

<sup>25</sup> Morris 1998, p. 89.

<sup>26</sup> Thomas 1999, p. 95.

<sup>27</sup> Shlaim 1988, p. 74.

<sup>28</sup> Stabler to Sec. of State, 7 Feb. 1949 in *FRUS* 1949, Vol. VI, pp. 732-734.

<sup>29</sup> See Chapter 4, 5 and 6. Eban to Eytan, 1 Nov. 1948, doc. 85 in Freundlich (Ed.) 1984, p. 118.

developments within the Arab world. It was, after all, the political atmosphere and tensions within the Arab world that made negotiations such a political gamble for Transjordan.

### ***Claiming the Palestinian Cause: Egypt and the All Palestine Government***

By the end of the summer months of 1948, the alleged Arab unity was increasingly showing itself to be a series of empty words. Transjordan was becoming the scapegoat for the Arab states failure to “liberate Palestine”.<sup>30</sup> This development could seemingly not be avoided. If worst came to worst, King Abdullah could have been blamed for losing all of Palestine, and if King Abdullah got his way and annexed the West Bank, then he would be blamed for having personal interests in the war rather than rallying for the Palestinian cause.<sup>31</sup> In a personal (and secret) telegram to Head of the Foreign Office’s Eastern Department, Bernard Burrows, J.B. Glubb worded this inter-Arab animosity expressed rather bluntly:

The internecine struggles of the Arabs are more in the minds of Arab politicians than the struggle against the Jews. Azzam Pasha [General Secretary of the Arab League], the Mufti and the Syrian Government would sooner see the Jews get the whole of Palestine than that King Abdulla[h] should benefit.<sup>32</sup>

In this context the All Palestine Government (APG) was a serious threat to King Abdullah’s Palestinian ambition. The All Palestine Government was created 22 September 1948 and, although it was seated in Gaza, proclaimed itself as the only rightful government for the Palestinian people and cause. The All Palestine Government was an Egyptian invention that received support from the Arab League.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Shlaim, Avi: “The Rise and Fall of the All-Palestine Government in Gaza” in *Journal of Palestine Studies* Vol. 20, no. 1. Autumn 1990 (b), p. 45.

<sup>31</sup> When King Abdullah annexed the West Bank two years later, this was the accusation. Shlaim 1990 (a), pp. 392-394.

<sup>32</sup> FO 22 Sept. 1948, FO371/68861, Secret and Personal J.B. Glubb to Burrows.

<sup>33</sup> The Arab League support for the All Palestine Government must be nuanced. Transjordan, obviously enough, did not support it, but Transjordan stood less alone than officially appeared to be the case. Through several meetings with Arab representatives the British Foreign Office learnt that Lebanon was against the All Palestine Government, but couldn’t stand alone and that a similar stance more or less applied for Iraq. The Iraqi Premier stated that he only supported the All Palestine Government as a symbolic act to give the Palestinian people hope and that sooner or later the Arab world would have to admit defeat and concede the areas of Palestine that remained under Arab control to Transjordan. FO 2



The Egyptian intentions were twofold: By supporting such a government Egypt sought to protect itself from the accusation that it was acting against the interests of the Palestinian people. Furthermore, the mere existence of such a government put spokes in the Transjordanian wheels.<sup>34</sup> This combination would also make it easier for the Egyptian army to withdraw from the Palestine quagmire without losing too much face.<sup>35</sup>

As long as the ad-hoc government in Gaza existed, it was impossible for King Abdullah to promote himself as the sole representative of the Palestinian cause. The old conflict between the Grand Mufti and King Abdullah had once again come to the fore. Neither Egypt nor any of the other Arab states wanted to put the Mufti back in a powerful position, but after the release of the Bernadotte Plan, which ceded the Arab areas of Palestine to Transjordan, the Arab League's anti-Hashemite bloc felt that even an unattractive solution was better than letting King Abdullah get all of Arab Palestine.<sup>36</sup> In terms of obtaining Arab Palestine, King Abdullah's main enemy was, rather ironically, not Israel, but the Grand Mufti-Egyptian alliance.<sup>37</sup>

The establishment of the All Palestine Government was more than a mere symbolic matter, or a so-called war of hearts and minds. The Egyptian army actually sought to arm Palestinian anti-Hashemite elements, especially in the Bethlehem area.<sup>38</sup> The logical extension of this would be that Egyptian defeat was in the interest of Transjordan. Both in terms of weakening an enemy, but more importantly in terms of increased political manoeuvrability. The US Minister in Israel noted as much when the IDF was about to launch its campaign against Egypt in October 1948. The Israeli campaign would destroy the fledgling government in Gaza, and remove the Egyptian power in the Bethlehem-Hebron area, thus enabling Transjordan to negotiate and make gains with greater ease.<sup>39</sup> To quote Glubb Pasha: "[I]f the Jews are going to have a private war with the Egyptians and the Gaza government, we do not want to get involved. The gypsies and the Gaza government are almost as hostile to us as the

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Oct. 1948, FO371/68861, Beirut to FO, telegram 726; FO 6 Oct. 1948, FO371/68642, Cairo to FO, telegram 1393; FO 14 Oct. 1948, FO371/68643, Bagdad to FO, telegram 1023.

<sup>34</sup> Shlaim 1990 (a), pp. 218-222; Shlaim 1990 (b), p. 40; Salibi, Kamal: *The Modern History of Jordan*. London/New York 2006, p.163. For J.B. Glubb's analysis at the time: FO 5 Oct. 1948, FO371/68642, Situation report Trans-Jordan and Palestine; FO 22 Sept. 1948, FO371/68861, Secret and Personal J.B. Glubb to Burrows.

<sup>35</sup> Shlaim 1990 (b), p.40; Tal 2004 (b), p. 353.

<sup>36</sup> Shlaim 1990 (b).

<sup>37</sup> Bar-Joseph 1987, p. 131.

<sup>38</sup> Shlaim 1990 (b), p. 42; Nevo 1996, p. 143.

Jews!”<sup>40</sup> Glubb Pasha was not so naïve as not to realize the obvious danger of such a game. In the same note he claimed: “The Jewish offensive [...] may finally knock out the Gaza government [...] it will make the Jews even more arrogant, and if they knock out the Egyptians they may turn on us.”<sup>41</sup> The inter-Arab animosity was not improving, and as a result King Abdullah had become increasingly politically outflanked. In view of this, and the obvious impossibility for the Arab Legion to engage in open conflict with the All Palestine Government, the rationale behind holding the talks secret is more evident. King Abdullah had become increasingly isolated in the Arab world and the Egyptian stance had pushed things so far that direct talks with Israel could not create a wound that was not already there – it could only infect it.

### ***Operation Yoav: 15 October – November 1948***

The Israeli army launched Operation Yoav, or the Ten Plagues, on 15 October 1948. This operation, which was masterminded by Yigal Allon, struck at the Egyptian forces at several locations, splitting up their troops and forcing withdrawal. Most of the Egyptian troops either retreated to the Gaza strip or held on in what was to be known as the “Faluja pocket”. In an attempt to save the Bernadotte Plan, and to make sure the Negev was retained by Transjordan, Great Britain tried to pass a UN Resolution threatening sanctions unless Israel withdraw to the lines of 15 October. Such a resolution was stopped by US President Harry S. Truman because the president feared the consequences of positioning himself too strongly against Israel during a presidential election.<sup>42</sup> Although the British and US Government shared an understanding of the conflict, the two governments were at loggerheads over how to handle the situation.<sup>43</sup> The British Government was willing, but unable to pressure Israel, whilst the US Government was able, but not willing.

While the Israeli forces attacked Egypt in Operation Yoav the Arab Legion stood idle. Once the operation was completed however, Legion troops filled the military vacuum that had been created by the Egyptian withdrawal from areas such as

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<sup>39</sup> Bar-Joseph 1987, pp. 132-133.

<sup>40</sup> Quoted in Shlaim 1990 (b), p. 48.

<sup>41</sup> Quoted in Shlaim 1990 (a), p. 235.

<sup>42</sup> Cohen 1990, pp. 254-256.

<sup>43</sup> Cohen 1990, p. 273.

those surrounding Hebron and Bethlehem.<sup>44</sup> Operation Yoav was highly illustrative in many ways. Firstly it proved, if there had ever been any doubt, that the alleged Arab unity was baseless. Secondly, it was a clear manifestation of the Israeli Defence Force's military superiority at that point in the war. Thirdly, it made it evident that the All Palestine Government was nothing more than an empty shell. Once the Egyptian sphere of influence had been removed, so too was the influence of the All Palestine Government.<sup>45</sup> The result was more dramatic than could have been expected, as by the termination of Operation Yoav, the whole All Palestine Government had fled Gaza, leaving not a single representative on Palestinian soil.<sup>46</sup>

### ***Claiming the Palestinian Cause: Transjordan and the Jericho Conference***

To make sure that the political benefits gained by the fall of the All Palestine Government was not squandered, and in order to create legitimacy for himself as a true warrior of the Palestinian cause, King Abdullah began rallying vocal Palestinian support. As early as 1 October 1948 the Transjordanian regent had arranged a meeting in Amman where he gathered Palestinian notables in what was dubbed the "First Palestinian Congress".<sup>47</sup> This first attempt took place as a clear competitor to the All Palestine Government, but as it was badly prepared and had a low level of attendance, the "Congress" had little impact.<sup>48</sup> The attempt at competing with the All Palestine Government was evident to all as Abdullah's Congress was held only a day after the All Palestine Government had first convened the "Palestinian National Council" in Gaza.<sup>49</sup> Also this meeting was marred with low attendance – a fact that could mostly be blamed on the Arab Legion who, in cooperation with the Iraqi forces, had hindered many of the invited notables from going to Gaza.<sup>50</sup> The First Palestinian Congress issued the following statement: "The Conference places responsibility for any disasters or calamities which befall Palestine from now on, on the shoulders of those

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<sup>44</sup> Morris 2003, pp.243-244; Tal, David: "Between Intuition and Professionalism: Israeli Military Leadership during the 1948 Palestine War" in *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 68, No. 3. July 2004 (a).

<sup>45</sup> Shiloah to Sharett, 24 Oct. 1948, doc. 53 in Freundlich (Ed.) 1984, p. 87.

<sup>46</sup> Shlaim 1990 (b), p. 48; Nevo 1996, pp. 165-166.

<sup>47</sup> FO 4 Oct. 1948, FO371/68642, Kirkbride to Bevin, Despatch 70. Note: Shlaim dates this meeting to 30 September. Shlaim 1990 (b), p. 44.

<sup>48</sup> Bar-Joseph 1987, p. 138.

<sup>49</sup> Robins 2004, p. 71.

<sup>50</sup> Shlaim 1990 (b), pp. 42-43.

Arab Governments who support the Government of Gaza.”<sup>51</sup> The venom in the inter-Arab relationship could not have been clearer.

The second Abdullah-supported Palestine Conference was held after the fall of the All Palestine Government, 1 December 1948 in Jericho. On this occasion the King had a much greater success. Once the All Palestine Government had been destroyed, the stage was set for King Abdullah to win the war of hearts and minds. In reality the odds were against him and history was to prove the project a failure, but at the time the Transjordanian option had been reduced to the only option available to the Palestinian populace. The Jericho Conference was dubbed the “2<sup>nd</sup> Arab Palestinian Conference”. It was attended by ca. 3000 Palestinians, including several important Palestinian notables. Although the purpose of the Conference was to give the impression of a Palestinian grassroots support for King Abdullah, it was obvious for many that this was not quite so. The Conference was called for by the regent himself, and for the most part the attendants didn’t show up on their own initiative. They were recruited and sometimes even bribed or threatened. Many of those that did attend on their own accord were long time supporters of King Abdullah.<sup>52</sup> The very fact that the Conference was held in Jericho carried with it a certain symbolism – Jericho is within the borders of Mandate Palestine, but also a mere 10 km from Transjordan.<sup>53</sup>

The Conference issued a declaration that stated: “[T]he Conference decides that Palestine and the Hashemite Kingdom of Transjordan should be incorporated into one Kingdom and acknowledges His Majesty King Abdulla[h] ibn Hussein as the Constitutional King of Palestine.”<sup>54</sup> The advertisements for the meeting, as well as this final declaration was aired by Radio Ramallah which was a radio station controlled by King Abdullah.<sup>55</sup>

Despite this clear vocal support for the King, things took a slightly different twist than he had planned. Due to an odd combination of King Abdullah’s personal

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<sup>51</sup> FO 4 Oct. 1948, FO371/68642, Kirkbride to Bevin, Despatch no. 70.

<sup>52</sup> Wilson 1999, pp. 182-184 This stark picture painted by Mary C. Wilson is not entirely correct. In the Foreign Office archives there are many examples of letters from Palestinian and reports from Kirkbride and others where one gets the impression that there was a growing support for Abdullah in the grassroots. However, more often than not, this support was based on a sense of necessity rather than sincere support. FO 2 Nov. 1948, FO371/68643, Amman to FO, No. 4 Saving; FO 2 Oct. 1948, FO371/68642, Cairo to FO, telegram 1374; FO 14 Oct. 1948, FO371/68643, Beirut to Eastern Department, 7/178/48; FO 30 Oct. 1948, FO371/68643, Jerusalem to FO, telegram 578; FO 3 Nov. 1948, FO371/68643, Eastern Department to Beirut, E 13479/375/31; Shlaim 1988, p. 340.

<sup>53</sup> Nevo 1996, p. 167.

<sup>54</sup> The official declaration can be found in FO816/142.

ambition and the stalwart anti-Hashemite attitude of the Arab League, as led by Egypt, the Jericho Conference turned out to be both a bigger success and a greater failure than King Abdullah had expected. Because of the opposition the Arab world mustered against the planned annexation of the West Bank, doubled up by British advice of postponement, the King gave in to the massive pressure.<sup>56</sup> Prime Minister Abul Huda issued the following statement at a press conference: “[H]is government has decided not to implement its decision and that of the parliament to adopt the resolutions of the Jericho Conference for the present, although these resolutions are in complete agreement with the policy of the Jordanian government.”<sup>57</sup> The annexation was postponed indefinitely – until April 1950 as it turned out. In exchange for the delay of the annexation, the other Arab states withdrew their support for the All Palestine Government.<sup>58</sup> In others words the Jericho Conference actually allowed King Abdullah a limited *coup* of the Palestinian cause. He was awarded the title of legitimate representative for the Palestinian people, but was not allowed to annex the very area his title had given him. His political manoeuvrability was increased without him having to face off neither Egypt nor the Mufti. The latter was somewhat discredited by chance, when rumour emerged in late November 1948 that the Mufti had negotiated with Britain in support of the Bernadotte Plan and hence in support of partition. The rumour was false, but the Mufti, for reasons unknown, didn’t publicly deny it.<sup>59</sup>

The fact that King Abdullah was pressured into not immediately annexing the West Bank could have been said to have pushed him into the hands of the Israeli negotiators. King Abdullah’s ambition was not to be hindered this time, as it had been before. If the Arab countries weren’t willing to give him Arab Palestine, the King would acquire it by talking to the Israelis.

### ***Secret Channels: Paris and Jerusalem***

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<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, the Arab Legion provided transport for the attendants. Nevo 1996, p. 167; Wilson, C. 1999, p. 182.

<sup>56</sup> Robins 2004, p. 72; Pundik 1994, pp. 178-179; Dearden, Ann: *Jordan*. London 1958, p. 79.

<sup>57</sup> Al- Shuaibi, Issa: “The Development of Palestinian Entity-Consciousness: Part I” in *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 9, No.1, Autumn 1979, p. 74.

<sup>58</sup> Al- Shuaibi 1979, pp. 73-74.

<sup>59</sup> FO 25 Nov. 1948, FO371/68643, Beirut to FO, telegram 875; FO 26 Nov. 1948, FO371/68643, Beirut to FO, telegram 874; FO Nov 30 1948, FO371/68643, Jerusalem to FO, telegram 654.

It was only in November 1948 that secret talks between Israel and Transjordan picked up pace, but as early as June-July 1948 Elias Sasson had been sent to Paris in order to find and groom possible Arab contacts.<sup>60</sup> By then he had become head of the Middle East Department at the Israeli Foreign Ministry. During July and August he sent out diplomatic overtures to representatives of Arab countries. By early August the bait was swallowed by Transjordan. Contacts were established between Sasson and the Transjordanian Minister to London, Abdul Majid Haydar.<sup>61</sup> Their first meeting was held on 3 August 1948 marking the establishment of the so-called Paris-channel.<sup>62</sup> A parallel channel was created in Jerusalem with Belgian diplomat Jean Neiuwenhuys as the courier. One of the reasons for the creation of this Jerusalem-channel was King Abdullah's desire to keep political developments as close to himself as possible.<sup>63</sup> There were few concrete developments in either Paris or Jerusalem, but the mere opening of these two channels marked the beginning of a new phase in the diplomatic relations between the two states.

In late August the media got hold of reports stating that Israel and Transjordan were conducting talks in a European capital. The leak seems to have been an Israeli slip, but it nonetheless frightened the Transjordanian regent who demanded total secrecy. The result was that King Abdullah temporarily closed down the Paris-channel and increased the focus on the Jerusalem-channel.<sup>64</sup>

On the 21 October an American UN Truce Commission representative was asked by King Abdullah if he could "request his government to inform the Jewish authorities that Transjordan had been forced by circumstances to take part in the hostilities in Palestine and would, when conditions permitted, be ready to come to some reasonable settlement in regard to Palestine."<sup>65</sup> On the morning of 3 November 1948 the British Foreign Office received a report from Amman that King Abdullah was communicating with Israeli representatives with the Belgian Consul-General in Jerusalem Jean Neiuwenhuys as a go-between. The brief telegram stated dryly that "Nothing positive has emerged", adding also that the Prime Minister of Transjordan

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<sup>60</sup> Rabinovich 1991, p. 40; Bar-Joseph 1987, pp. 101-145; Tal 2004 (b), p. 349.

<sup>61</sup> Rabinovich 1991, p. 48; Bar-Joseph 1987, p. 104.

<sup>62</sup> Bar-Joseph 1987, pp. 106-111.

<sup>63</sup> Bar-Joseph 1987, pp. 106-111.

<sup>64</sup> Bar-Joseph 1987, pp. 126-127; Pundik 1994, p. 171.

<sup>65</sup> FO 23 Oct. 1948, FO371/68643, Amman to FO, telegram 823; Eban to Sharett, 26 Oct. 1948, doc. 65 in Freundlich, (Ed.) 1984, p. 102.

was unaware of these talks.<sup>66</sup> Despite the British attitude, it was evident that what was emerging was far more serious than the original Paris-channel. For instance, in what was a goodwill token, Abdullah promised Israel free passage on the Latrun road if this was requested.<sup>67</sup> Israel never made the request for such a passage because Ben-Gurion wanted all of Latrun.<sup>68</sup>

By 5 November Transjordanian Prime Minister Tewfik Abul Huda had gained knowledge of the secret talks and gave these an approval of sorts. He made it clear that only some weeks earlier he would have demanded that such talks be put to an end, he now “felt that they might be useful.”<sup>69</sup>

Two weeks later the Prime Minister of Transjordan was shocked to discover the actual depth of the covert talks. Via a Palestinian named Abdel Ghani el Carmi, who was the personal envoy of King Abdullah, the Transjordanian Minister in London received a message from the Israelis. The message was a blueprint for what was on the table: “[T]he Jews will make no concessions over the Negeb but are prepared to let Transjordan have the Hebron Ramallah and Nablus districts and to add the strip of Palestine territory east of the Jordan and Lake Tiberias and north of the Yarmuk.”<sup>70</sup> When this message reached the Transjordanian Prime Minister he reacted much as was expected of a Prime Minister who had been kept in the dark on such a serious issue. He made it clear to King Abdullah that he had not authorized negotiations and demanded that the King’s emissary (Abdel Ghani el Carmi) be recalled.<sup>71</sup> King Abdullah also played the part that was expected of him. He seemingly obeyed his Prime Minister yet, secretly, followed his own agenda of continued talks.<sup>72</sup>

Just days after King Abdullah had agreed to put the talks on hold, the Transjordanian Minister to London had a meeting with officials in the Foreign Office where he informed them of his orders to maintain contacts with the Israeli delegates. The orders had been given from King Abdullah himself. The officials at the Foreign Office made it clear that “there would be no harm in and possible advantage in his trying to discover from the Jews what they have in mind without committing himself

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<sup>66</sup> FO 3 Nov. 1948, FO371/68643, Amman to FO, telegram 849.

<sup>67</sup> Sharett to Eytan, 9 Nov. 1948, doc. 118 in Freundlich (Ed.) 1984, p. 155.

<sup>68</sup> Shiloah to Sharett, 20 Nov. 1948, doc. 168 in Freundlich (Ed.) 1984, p. 209.

<sup>69</sup> FO 8 Nov. 1948, FO371/68822, Amman to FO, telegram 864.

<sup>70</sup> FO 17 Nov. 1948, FO816/133, Amman to FO, telegram 892 Negeb is a common spelling of Negev in many of the British sources.

<sup>71</sup> FO 17 Nov. 1948, FO816/133, Amman to FO, telegram 892.

<sup>72</sup> FO 17 Nov. 1948, FO371/68822, FO to Amman, telegram 1071.

in any way or entering into negotiations.”<sup>73</sup> He was also warned of all the dangers posed by serious talks. For the British Government anything beyond testing the waters was going too far. Britain supported the Bernadotte Plan and wanted to buy time so that this plan could be given a chance in the UN. The US Government, however, was already faltering in its stance, and as a result, so was the British’.<sup>74</sup> The British support for a UN plan that had lost most of its support, and the resulting inability to discuss the UN situation with Transjordanian representatives, must have further weakened King Abdullah’s trust in the organization.

Abdullah’s distrust for the UN was also further strengthened by his ardent anti-communist sentiment.<sup>75</sup> He clearly feared that too heavy UN involvement would mean that the USSR, due to its permanent membership in the Security Council, would get too much of a say in the Middle East.<sup>76</sup>

### ***Abdullah Goes it Alone***

By mid November 1948 an intriguing dynamic had developed. Within Transjordan there were three approaches to negotiations. One group of politicians would never accept talks taking place, whilst others accepted limited talks, but not all out negotiations. The most important representative for this second group was Prime Minister Abul Huda. The last approach was mainly represented by King Abdullah who supported these talks to the full despite the will, and at times behind the back of his Prime Minister, and against the advice of the British Foreign Office.<sup>77</sup> The fact that King Abdullah made political decisions contrary to the expressed will of his government was nothing new. That he simultaneously decided to go against the advice of the British Foreign Office was much more unusual considering Transjordan’s dependency on British economic and military assistance.<sup>78</sup>

The reasons for British opposition to these talks were based on the twin arguments that such talks would undermine the UN and that secret bilateral talks would dangerously isolate Transjordan in the Arab world.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> FO 17 Nov. 1948, FO371/68822, FO to Amman, telegram 1071.

<sup>74</sup> FO 17 Nov. 1948, FO371/68822, FO to Amman, telegram 1071; Caplan 1997, p. 30.

<sup>75</sup> Abdallah 1978, pp. 62-64.

<sup>76</sup> Bar-Joseph 1987, p. 191; Stabler to Sec. of State, 7 Feb. 1949 in *FRUS* 1949, Vol. VI, pp. 732-734.

<sup>77</sup> Pundik 1994, p. 174.

<sup>78</sup> Pundik 1994, pp. 169-170.

<sup>79</sup> FO 17 Nov. 1948, FO371/68822, FO to Amman, telegram 1071; FO 31 Aug. 1948, FO371/68822, Amman to FO, telegram 693; Morris 2003, p. 197.



A further argument put forth by the British against the bilateral talks was the internal dynamics of the Transjordanian Government, especially with respect to the Prime Minister who personally preferred the UN line as he hoped the Bernadotte Plan would win through. Much of his opposition towards direct talks was therefore based on the argument that one should wait for a UN decision rather than rush things.<sup>80</sup> In one of the telegrams from Kirkbride, dated 8 November, the British Minister made it clear that King Abdullah had lost faith in the UN and he looked “directly to His Majesty’s Government for help.”<sup>81</sup> This would imply that King Abdullah wanted the best of both worlds and was seemingly convinced that he could obtain it. On the one hand he wanted British guarantees and on the other he wanted to by-pass the perceived inefficiency of the UN, which, despite its limitations, was one of the few arenas where the British Government could exercise the kind of power that Transjordan needed.

Just as King Abdullah started losing his faith in the UN and the secret channel became more serious, the UN Security Council passed the two Resolutions that were supposed to form the guidelines for ending the conflict. The resolutions, passed on 4 and 16 November, respectively, called for the withdrawal of forces to the lines of 14 October, those prior to Operation Yoav, and for the parties to engage in armistice negotiations under the supervision of the acting mediator.<sup>82</sup> Despite the clarity of these resolutions they did not alter King Abdullah’s distrust of the UN. After all, the question remained – who was going to enforce these resolutions?

### ***The Jerusalem Truce***

Although the Transjordanian Prime Minister Abul Huda from the outset was rather sceptical towards the direct talks, he quickly became personally involved. By November 1948 he was exchanging telegrams with Elias in Paris.<sup>83</sup> Sasson was tired of King Abdullah’s staling tactics. In previous exchanges Abul Huda had been held in

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<sup>80</sup> FO 18 Nov. 1948, FO371/68862, Amman to FO, telegram 894; FO 19 Nov. 1948, FO371/68862, FO to Amman, telegram 1076.

<sup>81</sup> FO 8 Nov. 1948, FO371/68822, Amman to FO, telegram 864.

<sup>82</sup> UN Security Council Resolution 4 November 1948:

<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/047/86/IMG/NR004786.pdf?OpenElement> (14.12.07); UN Security Council Resolution 16 November 1948:

<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/047/87/IMG/NR004787.pdf?OpenElement> (14.12.07)

the dark. Thus, every time things were revealed to him, there was a pause in the talks as King Abdullah and Abul Huda had a facedown. By contacting Abul Huda directly this delay could be avoided.<sup>84</sup>

By late November serious negotiations were developing in Jerusalem. Two of the prominent military leaders from the war, Abdullah al-Tel and Moshe Dayan, had started having meetings discussing a Jerusalem truce.<sup>85</sup> Dayan, much like al-Tel, was a military leader whose political position was out of proportion to his rank. Dayan was Ben-Gurion's man.<sup>86</sup>

By the 28 November 1948 a truce covering the Jerusalem area had been agreed upon. The truce was valid from 7 a.m. 29 November, with both parties seemingly optimistic.<sup>87</sup> One of the greatest worries was a clause whereby Transjordan was to take responsibility for the actions of both local Arab militias and Egyptian forces. The danger was obviously "that certain irregular or Egyptian elements might break the truce deliberately in order to embarrass Transjordan."<sup>88</sup> This threat had obviously been greatly reduced by the Israeli success in Operation Yoav, a success which also cleared King Abdullah's back politically, making the outcry in the Arab world much less vocal when he engaged in these ceasefire talks.<sup>89</sup>

30 November 1948 a further meeting was held between commanders from the Arab Legion and the IDF. The result was an extension of the truce so that it covered the "whole Arab Legion front from Bethlehem to Latrun."<sup>90</sup> The truce, and its extension, seemed to have appeared out of nowhere, but it was the result of almost two weeks of secret negotiations under the scrutiny of a small UN team.<sup>91</sup>

If Moshe Dayan's own account of the Jerusalem truce talks is accurate, the developments in the talks were surprising to all those involved:

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<sup>83</sup> FO 13 Nov. 1948, FO816/133, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 884; FO 23 Nov. 1948, FO371/68690, Amman to FO, telegram 905.

<sup>84</sup> Bar-Joseph 1987, pp. 133-134.

<sup>85</sup> There is some judicial-linguistic confusion in some of the sources using truce and cease-fire interchangeably. See e.g. FO30 Nov. 1948, FO371/68690, Jerusalem to FO, telegram 658 where the term used is extension of ceasefire. The correct term is most probably truce, but it has been pointed out that at this early stage in UN history the borders between these definitions were unclear. Bailey 1977.

<sup>86</sup> Bar-Joseph 1987, p. 159.

<sup>87</sup> The exact time for the initiation of the truce is unclear. The telegram from Jerusalem states that it will start at 8 a.m. whilst the telegram from Amman states 7 a.m. FO 29 Nov. 1948, FO 371/68690, Jerusalem to FO, telegram 652; FO 29 Nov 1948, FO371/68690, Amman to FO, telegram 916.

<sup>88</sup> FO 29 Nov. 1948, FO371/68690, Amman to FO, telegram 916.

<sup>89</sup> FO 6 Dec. 1948, FO816/134, Amman to FO, telegram 931.

<sup>90</sup> FO30 Nov. 1948, FO371/68690, Jerusalem to FO, telegram 658.

During the negotiations which preceded the “sincere” cease-fire agreement, I got fed up with the “mediation” of the U.N. representative [...] At one of the meetings [...] I turned to Abdulla[h] el-Tel and suggested that the two of us adjourn to another room. He agreed, [...] we upped and left. At our private consultation, the two of us settled our differences very quickly. We returned to the meeting and reported our agreement, which was read into the protocol. [...] el-Tel had agreed to my proposal that we establish a direct telephone line between us without having to go through the U.N. exchange.<sup>92</sup>

The friendly tone, as recalled by Dayan, is confirmed by Kirkbride who commented in a telegram that “Arab Legion representative reports his opposite number was unexpectedly friendly and forthcoming”.<sup>93</sup> The experiences from the Jerusalem meetings could be seen as vital in understanding the later choice of bilateral talks rather than following the UN line.

It is difficult to pinpoint how, when and to what extent the UN was by-passed in these early Jerusalem negotiations. According to Moshe Dayan’s memoirs the by-passing started almost by chance in one of the meetings, whilst other sources indicate that by-passing was the Israeli intention all along.<sup>94</sup> This last theory, of the intended by-pass, seems to lose some credibility in that certain sources pinpoint the starting point of these talks to a personal initiative by UN staff in Jerusalem.<sup>95</sup> However, there is not necessarily a contradiction here. The fact that one can find evidence of an Israeli desire to by-pass the UN does not necessarily reflect the order of events. It would have been difficult for Israel to take a clear initiative on “serious ceasefire” talks covering Jerusalem, but once the local UN staff took the initiative to such meetings, the ice was broken and the opportunity to by-pass arrived. It would have been difficult to deny the opportunity and then approach Transjordan directly, but one could attend these UN hosted meetings and then break away into direct talks as a protest to the supposed inefficiency of the UN. Whether the UN really was inefficient or not is not the point here. The point is that both Dayan and al-Tel viewed it as such and this suited Israel well as it provided an adequate excuse that both parties could accept. That al-Tel and Dayan found such a good tone probably came as a pleasant surprise to both parties – a surprise both parties also sought to benefit from.

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<sup>91</sup> FO 27 Nov. 1948, FO371/68690, Jerusalem to FO, telegram 647.

<sup>92</sup> Dayan 1976, pp. 158-159.

<sup>93</sup> FO 29 Nov. 1948, FO371/68690, Amman to FO, telegram 916.

<sup>94</sup> Dayan 1976, pp. 158-159; Tal 2004 (b), p. 412. For the intentional by-pass theory see Bar-Joseph 1987, pp. 134-135; Shiloah to Sharett, 30 Nov. 1948, doc. 209 in Freundlich (Ed.) 1984, p. 250.

<sup>95</sup> FO 27 Nov. 1948, FO371/68690, Jerusalem to FO, telegram 647.

The success of the Jerusalem truce talks can be said to have undermined the argument for UN mediation, and it created the kind of personal relationship that King Abdullah so highly valued. By opening the direct phone line Dayan and al-Tel had created the logistical bridge that was necessary to intensify the bilateral talks. This was perhaps the greatest manifestation of the growing tendency to skip the UN apparatus.<sup>96</sup> The direct phone line was used repeatedly, and was especially used to solve smaller problems, such as those caused by smaller gun battles in the city. Dayan and al-Tel also managed to agree on a sizable prisoner exchange. Transjordan released 670 Israeli POWs in return for a release of less than a dozen Transjordanian POWs.<sup>97</sup> The success of these bilateral talks between al-Tel and Dayan bolstered King Abdullah's belief that personal ties could serve his needs far better than the UN.<sup>98</sup>

Although the talks, to a lesser or greater extent, had continuously been taking place since August 1948, the Israeli Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, had been seemingly undecided as to whether negotiations was the correct choice. The strategic thinking behind Israeli diplomatic and military actions was dominated by two schools. On the one hand there were those who propagated a take-all solution, urging a complete military victory over all the Arab states and extending the Israeli borders to the Jordan River. On the other hand there were the more pragmatic thinkers, urging a combination of military and diplomatic tracks and hence allowing Transjordan to retain most of the West Bank.<sup>99</sup> Representatives of this second school should not be taken as doves however, but rather as more pragmatic realists who realized that facing down the whole Arab world was more risky than a divide and conquer tactic.<sup>100</sup> The Israeli Government, dominated by David Ben-Gurion, continuously shifted between these two options. By late December 1948, however, he "leaned towards the option of attaining minimal objectives through negotiations rather than far more expansive ones through war. The concrete expression of this tendency was to be found in the secret negotiations he entered into with King Abdullah."<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Bar-Joseph 1987, pp. 134-135; Pundik 1994, pp. 180-181; Shiloah to Sharett, 30 Nov. 1948, doc. 209 in Freundlich (Ed.) 1984, p. 250.

<sup>97</sup> Tal 2004 (b), p. 412. More on the POW issue in Chapter 5.

<sup>98</sup> Shlaim 1988, p. 74.

<sup>99</sup> Within both of these schools there were of course further nuances. Bar-Joseph 1987, pp. 112-133.

<sup>100</sup> Bar-Joseph 1987, pp. 154-162.

<sup>101</sup> Bar-Joseph 1987, p. 125.

## ***By-Passing the UN – Sidelining the British***

In his preference of diplomacy based on personal relations King Abdullah failed to realize that he was, in effect, making it increasingly more difficult for the British Government to provide him with support. As the UN was by-passed, the British Government's ability to exert pressure on Israel waned. This was especially true in terms of Britain's capability of exerting influence and pressure within the UN arena. The arms embargo, which was strictly adhered to by the British Government, as well as the limitations posed by the fact that the Treaty of Alliance only covered Transjordan proper, rendered British military support within Palestine impossible. They could only offer advice. Given that King Abdullah often refused to listen to that advice, the British Government was made powerless almost by default. The might of the British Empire in the Middle East was reduced to a *fata morgana*. This powerlessness further tilted the balance of power in Israel's favour. This was one of the foundations for the further developments in the talks between Israel and Transjordan.<sup>102</sup>

## **4. Crushing the Ringleader: Removing Egypt and Isolating Transjordan**

December 1948 – January 1949

By December 1948 the Arab forces in Palestine had been all but decimated. The Egyptians controlled pockets of resistance, as well as a small belt on the border between Egypt and Palestine. The West Bank was divided between the Arab Legion and the Iraqi army. Both were under-manned and lacked ammunition. The supply lines were overstretched and neither of them could afford another round of fighting. The Syrian contingents, as well as the Arab Liberation Army had been routed. It had become evident that sooner or later the involved parties would have to negotiate. Transjordan, as we know, had been negotiating with Israel for some time, and King Abdullah was anxious to get these negotiations underway lest the balance of power

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<sup>102</sup> Pundik 1994, p. 164.

shift further to his disadvantage as time passed. There were, however, certain problems that stood in his way. These problems can be divided into two categories. The first were those posed by the inter-Arab rivalry and the others were those posed by Israel.

In terms of the inter-Arab policies, Transjordan, unlike Egypt, did not have the adequate amount of moral weight that was required in order for it to be the first Arab country to break ranks. Furthermore, the Iraqi forces which occupied the northern section of the West Bank had, both for themselves and Transjordan, created a complicated situation. Iraq was in a much weaker position than Transjordan, but had a less pragmatic outlook. The result was that the Iraqi army would neither fight, negotiate nor withdraw. This Iraqi intransigence developed into one of the largest problems for Transjordan in the forthcoming negotiations as it befell Transjordan to negotiate on behalf of Iraq.<sup>1</sup>

Israel had, as a result of having had such success in the war, become a more demanding “partner”. Sure enough Israel had driven Egypt out of the West Bank, and this had coincided with Transjordan’s interests, but this had simultaneously left Transjordan in a vulnerable position.

### ***Talks Upgraded Under Pressure***

In December 1948, despite the changing situation, King Abdullah intended to continue talking with the Israeli delegates in the same manner as he had in November. By use of his trusted envoy, Abdullah al-Tel, the regent intended to continue talks with Israel on singular issues, making partial arrangements, as had been the chosen method of negotiating following the ceasefire signed with Israel in November 1948.<sup>2</sup> This “bit by bit” way of handling things, however, was not in tune with Israeli intentions.<sup>3</sup> Elias Sasson sent a letter to Transjordanian Prime Minister Abul Huda expressing his “hope that this first step [Jerusalem truce] would pave the way to general peace.”<sup>4</sup> The same message was conveyed, albeit in a different tone, by Ben-

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 6.

<sup>2</sup> FO 2 Dec. 1948, FO371/68691, Amman to FO, telegram no. 923. For instance, in a meeting held between al-Tel and Dayan 5 December the discussion was centered almost solely around the Latrun issue. Shiloah to Sharett, 5 Dec. 1948, doc. 227 in Freundlich (Ed.) 1984, p. 266.

<sup>3</sup> Dayan 1976, p. 163.

<sup>4</sup> FO 6 Dec. 1948, FO816/134, Amman to FO, telegram 931.

Gurion who made it clear that he wanted a full-fledged settlement, as partial arrangements would only create more problems.<sup>5</sup> This was not only a disagreement in terms of procedure; it was a clear signal from the Israelis. King Abdullah understood the implication of Ben-Gurion's message – upgrade the negotiations, or face the consequences. It was an ultimatum of either peace or war.<sup>6</sup>

From Amman the logic was that although the destruction of the Egyptian forces had been good riddance, the lesson was that unless Transjordan complied with the Israeli demands, they could well be the next victims. The Israeli army could easily strike at the Iraqi forces and then Transjordan would be completely isolated, left at the mercy of Israel. The Israeli demand of upgrading the negotiations was granted, and King Abdullah gave Abdullah al-Tel a much greater mandate, that of being his personal representative. The regent knew that the premier would be against such intensified talks, and as a result Prime Minister Abul Huda was left in the dark. The Prime Minister none the less intercepted the information. He was clearly distraught and unsure as to whether he should have another bout with the King.<sup>7</sup> This development started in early December, at which point the Israeli willingness to show strength had not yet reached its zenith. If Operation Yoav, that is the Israeli destruction of the Egyptian forces stationed around Bethlehem in October 1948, had been perceived as a dangerous double edged sword, which indeed it was, much worse was to come.

### ***Inter-Arab Developments***

Prior to the final Israeli military *coup de grace* against the Egyptian forces, there was a political shift in Egypt. The new Egyptian Prime Minister, whose predecessor had been one of the most ardent advocates of shunning talks with Israel, sent a letter to his Transjordanian colleague in the second week of December asking for his opinions on signing an armistice (and possibly even a final settlement) treaty with Israel.<sup>8</sup> Abul Huda replied that Transjordan was already committed to negotiating an armistice with Israel. The conclusion drawn by Abul Huda was “that Egypt was no less anxious than

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<sup>5</sup> Tal 2004 (b), p. 413. Uri Bar-Joseph has noted how Ben-Gurion played a classical good cop / bad cop routine in relations with King Abdullah whereby Dayan acted as the bad cop and Sasson the good cop. Bar-Joseph 1987, pp. 158-161.

<sup>6</sup> Bar-Joseph 1987, pp. 142-145.

<sup>7</sup> FO 9 Dec. 1948, FO816/134, Amman to FO, telegram no. 942; Tal 2004 (b), p. 413.

<sup>8</sup> Næser 2005, p. 35; FO 10 Dec. 1948, FO371/68643, Amman to FO, Cypher no. 941.

Transjordan to find a way out of the present difficult position.”<sup>9</sup> What this also meant was that the political animosity between the two Arab states seemed to be fading, and that there now was an opportunity for diplomatic cooperation. If this was obtainable, it could strengthen both countries’ hands in upcoming negotiations. The idea that the gap was narrowing, as we will see, was overrated. The problems of inter-Arab relations were still a complication, and although the old enemies were reconciling, Transjordan’s ally, Iraq, was becoming more of a nuisance.

In Iraq the suspicion that Iraqi forces had become mere tools for King Abdullah’s expansionist policies had been long brewing. Combined with a volatile political situation in Iraq, it was difficult for the Iraqi Government to make concessions in Palestine that were bound to infuriate the Iraqi public.<sup>10</sup> Acting Mediator Ralph Bunche commented that he “had never been able to come to an understanding with the Iraqis and [...] doubted if anybody else would be able to do so.”<sup>11</sup> Iraq was not only unwilling to reach an understanding, but seemed also to be somewhat out of touch with reality. For instance the Iraqi Government sent a message to Abul Huda in mid-December in which he was asked about “particulars of the permanent armistice which Transjordan had concluded with the Jews”.<sup>12</sup> The issue of how the parties were going to handle the stubborn Iraqi position developed into one of the greatest sticking points in the armistice negotiations. It was assumed, from an early point, that Transjordan was responsible for the Iraqi forces. However, as we will see, Iraq refused to allow King Abdullah to negotiate on its behalf, just as the Iraqi forces refused to withdraw, and the Iraqi Government refused to negotiate.<sup>13</sup>

While the differences in the approach to Palestine between Egypt and Transjordan seemed to get smaller, and the differences between Iraq and Transjordan grew, so too did the difference in opinion between the Transjordanian regent and premier. Abul Huda was clearly interested in an UN administered armistice whilst King Abdullah came to rely more and more on personal relationships.<sup>14</sup> The premier, on occasion, even threatened to resign, but was always talked out of it.<sup>15</sup> The rift

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<sup>9</sup> FO 10 Dec. 1948, FO371/68643, Amman to FO, Cypher no. 941.

<sup>10</sup> Tripp 2002, pp. 123-124.

<sup>11</sup> FO 10 Dec. 1948, FO816/134, Amman to Burrows, S/1014/48.

<sup>12</sup> FO 15 Dec. 1948, FO816/142, Amman to Burrows, S/766/43.

<sup>13</sup> See chapter 5 and 6.

<sup>14</sup> For Abul Huda’s preference of the UN see: FO 10 Dec. 1948, FO816/134, Amman to Burrows, S/1014/48.

<sup>15</sup> FO 20 Dec. 1948, FO816/142, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 963.



between regent and premier was not properly healed until February 1949, when the premier gave in under much pressure from the King.<sup>16</sup>

The regent's preference of bilateral negotiations was also Israel's, and attempts were made to get the Prime Minister on board. Elias Sasson made his way to Jerusalem. 11 December 1948 he contacted Abdullah al-Tel and informed him that he would like to meet Abul Huda. This was a meeting the Transjordanian premier was not ready for, and he insisted that the talks remained of a purely military nature.<sup>17</sup> After Sasson's attempt failed, the same overture was made when, the next day, the military leaders of the two parties met in Jerusalem in a continuation of the truce talks.<sup>18</sup> The Israeli negotiation team suggested that the talks be upgraded to that of a general armistice. Al-Tel found that this was outside his mandate. The Transjordanian team turned down the offer and insisted that from that point on the talks "must be held in secret and without press representation".<sup>19</sup> The official reason that was given for this need of secrecy was that they wanted to avoid slandering in the Israeli press for having refused to negotiate towards a solution, but it is equally likely that the demand for such a closure was to protect King Abdullah from the Arab audience.<sup>20</sup> Over the next few days the pressure increased as both Dayan and Sasson met with al-Tel, making it clear that "unless Transjordan was prepared to talk business there was no purpose in continuing the contacts and that the Israeli Government would in fact insist on their ceasing."<sup>21</sup> Dayan also made a series of phone calls, on the direct line between al-Tel and himself that had been established in mid-November, pressing al-Tel to answer as quickly as possible.<sup>22</sup>

The British Foreign Office followed these developments closely. Britain had clear interests in the region and it was seen as vital that Transjordan came out of the war in as good a position as possible. The Foreign Office was getting worried at the pace and nature of the talks – deeming them too fast and too bilateral. The advice given to Transjordan was therefore that al-Tel should ask for a draft version of an armistice suggestion from Dayan. This drafting process would enable Transjordan to

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<sup>16</sup> See Chapter 5; FO 2 March 1949, FO371/75273, Amman: Monthly Situation Report on Transjordan for the Month of February, 1949.

<sup>17</sup> FO 13 Dec. 1948, FO816/134, Amman to FO, Cypher no. 949.

<sup>18</sup> These meetings were, by this point, talking place on a bi-weekly basis: FO 16 Dec. 1948, FO371/68691, Jerusalem to FO, Cypher no. 682.

<sup>19</sup> FO 13 Dec. 1948, FO371/6869, Jerusalem to FO, Cypher no. 673.

<sup>20</sup> FO 13 Dec. 1948, FO371/6869, Jerusalem to FO, Cypher no. 673; Bar-Joseph 1987, p. 172.

<sup>21</sup> FO 14 Dec. 1948, FO816/134, Amman to FO, Cypher no. 953.

<sup>22</sup> FO 14 Dec. 1948, FO816/134, Amman to FO, Cypher no. 953.

gain valuable time while still preserving ties with Israel. Prime Minister Abul Huda agreed to this procedure.<sup>23</sup>

From a British standpoint negotiations through the UN was still the desired way to go, but there was no harm in Transjordan engaging in confidence building measures and investigating where Israel stood.<sup>24</sup> The president of Lebanon urged Britain to press this point on Transjordan as he felt that any personal negotiations, not led by the UN, would only bolster extremist elements in the region.<sup>25</sup> This was also the argument put forth from the British High Commission in Cairo, where the understanding was that both Transjordan and Egypt would have a stronger hand in negotiations if they worked together, a cooperation that could only be made possible if talks took place under the UN.<sup>26</sup> The goal was to bring Egypt and Transjordan together as one negotiating partner with Israel. The advantages of such an approach were twofold. On the one hand it would even out the balance of power vis-à-vis Israel. On the other hand Egypt and Transjordan would lend each other much needed moral legitimacy. The process of bringing the two countries together started in late December when it had become evident that Transjordan was willing to negotiate an armistice with Israel, and it was simultaneously understood that this lone effort posed a grave danger both to Transjordan and, by association, to Great Britain. The reason for this was obvious at the time: “Since unilateral action by Transjordan would be universally condemned by the others [Arab states] as treachery His Majesty’s Government [UK] would be tarred with the same brush.”<sup>27</sup> The conclusion, drawn in the same telegram, was posed as a rhetorical question: “Would it not be better for us to do all we can to discourage unilateral action by Transjordan and work for joint peaceful action between Transjordan and Egypt.”<sup>28</sup> Egypt, after all, still held a leading role in the Arab world and it would have been much harder for the other Arab countries to condemn Egypt *and* Transjordan than it would have been for the Arab world (including Egypt) to condemn Transjordan. The idea of a unified negotiating

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<sup>23</sup> FO 15 Dec. 1948, FO816/142, Amman to Burrows, S/766/43; FO 17 Dec. 1948, FO816/142, FO to Amman, Cypher no. 1153; FO 21 Dec. 1948, FO371/68644, Cairo to FO, Cypher no. 1758.

<sup>24</sup> FO 17 Dec. 1948, FO816/142, FO to Amman, Cypher no. 1153.

<sup>25</sup> FO 18 Dec. 1948, FO 371/68644, Beirut to FO, Cypher no. 966.

<sup>26</sup> FO 19 Dec. 1948, FO816/142, Cairo to Amman, Cypher no. 345; FO 21 Dec. 1948, FO371/68644, Cairo to FO, Cypher no. 1758.

<sup>27</sup> FO 21 Dec. 1948, FO371/68644, Cairo to FO, Cypher No. 1758; The fear for the “traitor brand” re-occurs in the British archives, see e.g.: FO 31 Dec. 1948, Beirut to Amman, Cypher No. 231.

<sup>28</sup> FO 21 Dec. 1948, FO371/68644, Cairo to FO, Cypher No. 1758.

team was therefore debated in various forms and the possibilities explored.<sup>29</sup> In the end, however, nothing came of it as an understanding emerged that the armistice had to be made by all the Arab countries on an individual basis, but that once these were completed the Arabs could have a unified negotiation team at the Palestine Conciliation Commission.<sup>30</sup>

King Abdullah supported the Foreign Office's argument of using the UN as an apparatus to fend off Arab criticism, but he was unsure about the prospects of negotiating together with Egypt. He made some attempts at bringing the Arab states together, but when these failed he left it at that.<sup>31</sup>

King Abdullah's acceptance of the advice from the Foreign Office regarding UN negotiations is not to say that he agreed with the British viewpoint that such UN negotiations were the preferred route. Rather, as later developments would show, he understood the value of allowing official negotiations to be facilitated by the UN, while keeping the more substantial negotiations secret and bilateral.<sup>32</sup> The official statements made by Transjordan were well in line with this understanding. When, in a press conference in Cairo 21 December, the Transjordanian spokesman was asked about the UN talks he confirmed these, but when asked about direct talks he simply brushed these off, stating that "no permanent truce had been arranged between them [Transjordan and Israel]" and that the only thing that had been discussed was "certain points of local interest".<sup>33</sup> As we know from the analysis of the talks in Jerusalem in November the real progress had been made when the UN was excluded, and further, many of the themes discussed went far beyond "certain points of local interest".<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> FO 21 Dec. 1948, FO371/68644, Cairo to FO, Cypher No. 1758; FO 22 Dec. 1948, FO816/142, SofS FO to Amman, Cypher No. 1168; FO 22 Dec. 1948, FO816/142, SofS FO to Amman, Cypher No. 1166; FO 22 Dec. 1948, FO816/142, SofS FO to Amman, Cypher No. 1169; FO 22 Dec. 1948, FO816/142, Amman to SofS FO, Cypher No. 973; FO 24 Dec. 1948, FO816/142, Beirut to Amman, Cypher No. 228; FO 31 Dec. 1948, FO371/75330, B.M.E.O. (Cairo) to FO, Telegram no. 45; FO 31 Dec. 1948, FO816/142, FO to Amman, Cypher No. 1199; FO 4 Jan. 1949, FO371/75381, Commonwealth Relations Office to Canada, Cypher No. 1; FO 21 Jan. 1949, FO371/75330, FO to Amman, Cypher No. 21.

<sup>30</sup> FO 15 Jan. 1949, FO371/75330, Cairo to FO, Cypher No. 81; FO 27 Jan. 1949, FO371/75331, Cairo to FO, Cypher No. 134.

<sup>31</sup> FO 20 Dec. 1948, FO816/142, Amman to FO, Cypher no. 963; FO 25 Jan. 1949, FO371/75330, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 54. By February 1949 King Abdullah insisted that he had done everything in his power to obtain cooperation with Egypt, but that this had turned out to be impossible. FO 5 Feb. 1949, FO371/75347, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 73.

<sup>32</sup> See Chapter 5 and 6.

<sup>33</sup> FO 23 Dec. 1948, FO371/68644, Cairo to FO, Cypher No. 1768.

<sup>34</sup> See Chapter 3.

From a purely diplomatic viewpoint, ignoring the political context, the idea of a unified Arab negotiation team under UN scrutiny was highly rational. There was, however, a political context that rendered the British plan unattainable. From the Arab perspective the gap was too wide to bridge, despite certain overtures.<sup>35</sup> Egypt and Transjordan were still nemeses in the Arab world despite the changes in Egypt. Reconciliation between the two would have demanded an amount of time that none of the actors had on their hands. From an Israeli perspective the attempt to bring Egypt and Transjordan together as a single negotiating partner would have been a non-starter. The chosen Israeli method was to pick off one enemy at a time, be it through war or negotiations.<sup>36</sup> It was clearly advantageous for Israel to face several weak opponents rather than one unified Arab alliance. Israel, therefore, skilfully used the inter-Arab discontent to its advantage.<sup>37</sup>

### ***Operation Horev: 22 December 1948 - 12 January 1949***

For Egypt the first three weeks of December 1948 could be described as a lull before the storm. The Egyptian forces had previously been expelled from the area surrounding Beersheba and forced out of most areas of Palestine. The remaining Egyptian forces were entrenched in the so-called “Faluja pocket” and Gaza, as well as a belt of the western Negev.<sup>38</sup> Although the military threat posed by the Egyptian forces was minor, the Israeli Cabinet saw it as vital that Egypt was driven out.<sup>39</sup> The “Faluja pocket” was an odd “island” of resistance inside the expanded Israeli borders. Furthermore, the Negev was seen as a vital asset for the Zionist project.<sup>40</sup> The area had been allocated to the Jews in the 1947 Partition Plan, but had been “taken away” by the Bernadotte Plan. The Gaza strip was of minor importance for Israel, but the destruction of the Egyptian army was seen as necessary in order to force Egypt to the

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<sup>35</sup> FO 10 Dec. 1948, FO371/68643, Amman to FO, Cypher no. 941; FO 27 Jan. 1949, FO371/75331, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 58.

<sup>36</sup> Shlaim 2001, p. 39; Urquhart 1998, p. 212; Tal 2004 (b), p. 433; Rabinovich 1991, p. 55; Bar-Joseph 1987, pp. 181,189; Dayan 1976, p. 164; FO 12 Feb. 1949, FO371/75347, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 83.

<sup>37</sup> Shlaim 2001, p. 39.

<sup>38</sup> Morris 2001, p. 245.

<sup>39</sup> Tal 2004 (a), p. 905.

<sup>40</sup> Eban 1977, p. 131.

negotiating table. Once Egypt, often seen as the Arab ringleader, had agreed to an armistice, the other Arab states would follow.<sup>41</sup>

Ben-Gurion made this connection clear when he stated: “[W]e are going ahead with the operation in the Negev ... and holding talks with Abdullah”.<sup>42</sup> The complete destruction of the Egyptian forces had been the goal of the previous operation, Yoav, but the task had not been completed.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, by 19 December, the Israeli Cabinet had made up its mind, and the decision to strike hard at the remaining Egyptian forces was taken. The attack, which was lead by Yigal Allon, was initiated on the night of 22 December.

In military terms the attack was an astounding success for the Israeli Defence Force. A diversion was first launched with an attack on Gaza, followed by a major fully mechanized attack in the Negev against which the Egyptian forces were inadequately prepared and defeat was inevitable. Followed by this initial success, in which the IDF had defeated all the Egyptian forces inside Palestine, except for those in the Gaza strip and the completely isolated “Faluja Pocket”, the Israeli army crossed the Egyptian border on 28 December in what was characterized as “an accident” by Israeli President Chaim Weizmann; a “hot pursuit” by Minister of Foreign Affairs Moshe Shertok; and as a “maneuver” by Prime Minister Ben-Gurion.<sup>44</sup> Ben-Gurion claimed on 29 December that the forces had been ordered to withdraw. It was even claimed, 3 January, that all the troops that had entered Egyptian territory had withdrawn.<sup>45</sup> All these claims by the Israeli leadership were blatant lies.<sup>46</sup> A thorough analysis of the planning behind the operation leaves no doubt as to the pre-meditated nature of crossing the international borders.<sup>47</sup> This Israeli military action made it clearer than ever that the balance of power was to Israel’s advantage. The ease with which Israel decimated the Egyptian army and invaded Egyptian territory was an eye-opener.

Once the Egyptian border had been crossed a new set of rules immediately applied. The British Government was bound by its defence treaty of 1936 with Egypt

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<sup>41</sup> Eytan 1958, p. 28; Dayan 1976, p. 167; Kirkbride 1976, p. 90; Morris 2001, pp. 245-246.

<sup>42</sup> Quoted in Tal 2004 (b), p. 433.

<sup>43</sup> Tal 2004 (a), p. 904.

<sup>44</sup> FO 6 Jan. 1949, FO371/75381, Washington to FO, G2/34/49; Sharett to McDonald, 3 Jan. 1949, doc. 286 in Freundlich (Ed.) 1984, pp. 335-337; Morris 2001, pp. 246-247.

<sup>45</sup> Sharett to McDonald, 3 Jan. 1949, doc. 286 in Freundlich (Ed.) 1984, pp. 335-337; Morris 2001, pp. 246-247.

<sup>46</sup> Morris 2001, pp. 246-247.

<sup>47</sup> Tal 2004 (b), pp. 433-461; Luttwak and Horowitz 1983, p. 50; Cohen 1990, p. 264.

and the possibility of a military confrontation between Britain and Israel loomed as a possibility.<sup>48</sup> Such a confrontation, however, was dependent on Egypt invoking the treaty. This was problematic as the Egyptian Government seemed unwilling to undertake “the shame of appealing to us [the British Government] for help under a Treaty which they vilified in public”.<sup>49</sup> Despite this it was quite clear that the requisition for lifting the arms embargo was a screaming demand.<sup>50</sup>

In what was a vocal outcry from both the US State Department and President Harry S. Truman, a clear cut message was conveyed to the Israeli Government:

Reports indicate that this is not an accidental maneuver but a deliberately planned military operation. [...] British Government has officially notified this [US] Government that it regards situation with grave concern that unless Israeli forces withdraw from Egyptian territory the British Government will be bound to take steps to fulfill their obligations under Treaty of 1936 with Egypt. [...] ill advised action PGI [Provisional Government of Israel] may not only jeopardize peace of Middle East but would also cause reconsideration of its application for membership in UN and of necessity a reconsideration by this [US] Government of its relations with Israel. [...] Immediate withdrawal of Israeli forces from Egyptian territory appears to be minimum requirements.<sup>51</sup>

The unified stance here shown by the US and British Government was unusually clear, but cross-border incursions was obviously a red line. The UN Security Council passed a resolution 29 December demanding that Israel withdraw from Egypt and called for the initiation of armistice talks.<sup>52</sup> According to the British Middle East Office the UN Resolution contained no sanctions that could “be expected to deter the Israeli authorities in their present mood and strength.”<sup>53</sup> The effect such a lack of pressure had on Israeli behaviour was made evident when Israeli forces remained on Egyptian soil until after the ceasefire was declared 7 January 1949.<sup>54</sup> By that time Egypt had, for fear of military annihilation and due to pressure from London,

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<sup>48</sup> FO 30 Dec. 1948, FO371/75380, State Department (US) to Tel Aviv (copy to London) (doc 19-20); FO 31 Dec. 1948, FO371/75381, Commonwealth Relations Office to High Commissioners in Commonwealth Countries, telegram no. 147; FO 29 Dec. 1948, FO141/1321, Cairo to FO, telegram 158; Morris 2001, p. 246; Karp, Candice: *Missed Opportunities*. Claremont 2004, p. 24.

<sup>49</sup> FO 8 Jan. 1949, FO141/1329, Cairo to FO, telegram no. 42.

<sup>50</sup> FO 31 Dec. 1948, FO371/75381, Commonwealth Relations Office to High Commissioners in Commonwealth Countries, telegram no. 147; FO 8 Jan. 1949, FO141/1329, Cairo to FO, telegram no. 42; FO15 Jan. 1949, FO371/75330, Cairo to FO, Cypher No. 81.

<sup>51</sup> FO 30 Dec. 1948, FO371/75380, State Department (US) to Tel Aviv (copy to London).

<sup>52</sup> Tal 2004 (b), p. 448; UN Security Council Resolution 29 December 1948:

<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/047/91/IMG/NR004791.pdf?OpenElement> (14.12.07).

<sup>53</sup> FO 31 Dec. 1948, FO141/1246, BMEO to FO, Cypher no. 534; FO 4 Jan. 1949, FO371/75381, FO to Canada, Cypher No. 1.

<sup>54</sup> Shlaim 1990 (a), p. 266.

complied with the agreement that the two countries would engage in armistice talks if Israel halted its attack.<sup>55</sup> In a last British show of force, which will be more closely analyzed shortly, reinforcements landed in the Transjordanian port city of Aqaba to enforce the already existing British garrison there and bolster the defence of Transjordan.<sup>56</sup>

The regional actors could draw several lessons from Operation Horev. Firstly it was made clear exactly how far Israel could go – border crossing was a red line agreed upon by both the British and the US Government. Despite this fact, the incident also showed that neither the British nor the US were quick to react, and harsh rhetoric was not matched by actions. The arms embargo on Egypt was not lifted and the invading troops were never fired upon by the British troops who stood in Egypt. A second lesson was that the Arab armies no longer worked together at all. The Arab Legion had sat idly on the sideline and watched the spectacle. A third lesson was that the British Government had become almost impotent in its Middle East policies. For although Israel was clearly in the wrong and London was obliged to aid Egypt, London applied pressure on Egypt to enter into armistice negotiations in return for an Israeli halt in military actions.<sup>57</sup> In other words, Israel, who was the aggressor, was aided in achieving one of the main goals of the offensive (armistice talks) by the very country (Great Britain) that had an obligation to protect Egypt. A fourth lesson was the inability of the UN to react in such instances.<sup>58</sup> The US Government had threatened to cease supporting Israel in the UN, but there had been no lifting of the arms embargo and the Security Council Resolution did not impose sanctions on Israel, thus allowing the belligerent to hold its position for over a week after the resolution was passed.

Operation Horev must have strengthened King Abdullah's understanding of the political situation and that going it alone was the only feasibility. He already perceived the UN as a hopelessly slow apparatus. The organization's inefficiency in halting Israel during Operation Horev must have made him even more convinced of

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<sup>55</sup> FO 7 Jan. 1949, FO371/75380, Cairo to FO, Cypher No. 32; Morris 2001, pp. 246-247.

<sup>56</sup> Morris 2001, pp. 247-248, 459; FO 3 Jan. 1949, FO371/75293, Ministry of Defence to G.H.Q, M.E.L.F., COS(ME) 309.

<sup>57</sup> Morris 2003, p. 196.

<sup>58</sup> Iraq's reaction is illustrative. The Iraqi Premier told the representatives of the Acting Mediator that: "Egypt's acceptance of the armistice had not prevented the Jews from launching their latest attacks. When the Security Council was in a position to prevent Jewish aggression he would be willing to listen to the Mediator's staff." FO 30 Dec. 1948, FO371/68644, Bagdad to FO, Cypher No. 1210.

the need to by-pass the UN.<sup>59</sup> That the British Government was unable to provide real assistance even as Egypt's borders were breached, must have frightened the regent into realizing that outside help was not going to materialize and that he had to depend on keeping a good diplomatic relationship with Israel.<sup>60</sup>

### ***Britain Shows Muscle: Defensive Troops to Aqaba***

The British Government knew there that one more failed standoff would lead to a complete loss of political credibility in the region. If the defensive treaties with Britain could not be trusted, then was it worth being allies? This question was on most lips in the Arab World. It was also a question the British Foreign Office feared.<sup>61</sup> True, Egypt never invoked the defensive treaty, but they had asked for arms, and the British Government had been unable to comply.<sup>62</sup> Transjordan, however, was admittedly much more willing to ask for direct aid by British troops.<sup>63</sup>

The British Minister in Amman, Alec Kirkbride, observed this development close hand, and was clear in his perturbed warning to the British Foreign Office:

Every delay so far has ended in advantage to the Jews. They were ready to negotiate before the first Egyptian defeat and again after it but now they are in a position to dictate. [...] the Arab Legion should be replenished immediately [...] King Abdullah should be allowed to make the best terms he can with the Jews without further restrictions on our part.<sup>64</sup>

The assessment by a British representative in Beirut was even starker:

I share [...] doubts as to whether the supply of arms which is so essential, may any longer be enough. In their present arrogant mood it [...] looks as if nothing will hold the Jews except British intervention for the enforcement of the Security Council resolution of November 4<sup>th</sup> and for assistance to Transjordan and the Iraqi forces if attacked in the areas allocated to the Arabs.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> British diplomats understood this well: "Perhaps the main weakness in the United Nations policy for Palestine and in our own [...] has been that invariably by the time decisions are reached they are already hopelessly out of date." FO 5 Jan. 1949, FO371/75346, Jerusalem to FO, Cypher No. 10.

<sup>60</sup> Bar-Joseph 1987, pp. 136-145.

<sup>61</sup> FO 29 Dec. 1948, FO141/1321, Cairo to FO, telegram 158; FO 31 Dec. 1948, FO141/1246, BMEO to FO, Cypher no. 534; FO 4 Jan. 1949, FO371/75381, FO to Canada, Cypher No. 1; Tal 2004 (b), p. 451.

<sup>62</sup> FO 11 Jan. 1949, FO141/1329, FO to Cairo, Cypher No. 98.

<sup>63</sup> FO 6 Dec. 1948, FO816/134, Amman to FO, telegram 931.

<sup>64</sup> FO 29 Dec. 1948, FO816/142, Amman to FO, Cypher no. 982.

<sup>65</sup> FO 31 Dec. 1948, FO816/142, Beirut to Amman, Cypher no. 231.



The Foreign Office did not agree with what in their view was a drastic conclusion.<sup>66</sup> The furthest the Foreign Office was willing to go was to move arms and ammunition to the British bases in Transjordan, and to prepare for a movement of troops to Aqaba. The ammunition could only be released to the Arab Legion if the international border was crossed by Israeli forces and the Anglo-Transjordanian Treaty was invoked.<sup>67</sup> This did not even approach what Kirkbride had asked for. The immediate threat, as everyone knew, was on the West Bank and in Jerusalem, and not in Transjordan proper. The fact that the Foreign Office made a point of the willingness to uphold its treaty with Transjordan was a clear symptom of the faltering British might.

2 January 1949 Transjordan invoked the Anglo-Transjordan treaty in a call for aid.<sup>68</sup> No particular reason was given for invoking it at the exact moment, but it had been expected as Transjordan felt increasingly threatened by the Israeli strength and its isolated position in the Arab world. The British decision to heed the call was made immediately, and the order to move troops to Aqaba was given as early as the following day.<sup>69</sup> The troops were to have a purely defensive purpose and were on no accounts to cross the international border unless this “became tactically necessary in the event of a Jewish attack.”<sup>70</sup> The troop movement was to be a secret and was not to be publicly announced until after the troops were in place.<sup>71</sup> The United States was not to be informed of the troop movements until just prior to official statements. The official reason for this secrecy was that one feared a leak, but leak is exactly what the information did and the US Government discovered the secret almost immediately.<sup>72</sup> The troops arrived 8 January and this was announced publicly at midnight the same day.<sup>73</sup> The British Foreign Office knew that this movement of troops was going to be

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<sup>66</sup> FO 30 Dec. 1948, FO816/142, FO to Amman, Cypher no. 1187; FO 31 Dec. 1948, FO816/142, FO to Amman, Cypher no. 1199.

<sup>67</sup> FO 30 Dec. 1948, FO816/142, FO to Amman, Cypher no. 1187.

<sup>68</sup> FO 2 Jan. 1949, FO371/75293, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 4.; Shlaim 1990 (a), p. 266.

<sup>69</sup> Originally troops were also supposed to be sent to Mafraq, but it was decided two days later that all the troops were to be sent to Aqaba. FO 3 Jan. 1949, FO371/75293, Ministry of Defence to G.H.Q, M.E.L.F., COS(ME) 309; FO 3 Jan. 1949, FO371/75293, FO to Amman, Cypher No. 9; FO 5 Jan. 1949, FO371/75293, FO to Amman, Cypher No. 26.

<sup>70</sup> FO 3 Jan. 1949, FO371/75293, Ministry of Defence to G.H.Q, M.E.L.F., COS(ME) 309.

<sup>71</sup> FO 3 Jan. 1949, FO371/75293, FO to Amman, Cypher No. 9.

<sup>72</sup> FO 3 Jan. 1949, FO371/75293, FO to Washington, Cypher No. 81; FO 5 Jan. 1949, FO371/75293, FO to Amman, Cypher No. 27. As Kirkbride pointed out to his defence, the well informed US representatives (especially Stabler) in the region would have found out anyway and such exchange of information was necessary in order that Kirkbride could get further information from the US representatives. FO 6 Jan. 1949, FO371/75293, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 12; FO 8 Jan. 1949, FO371/75293, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 16.

<sup>73</sup> FO 6 Jan. 1949, FO371/75293, MoD to Burrows (FO), E458.

a contentious issue and sent out a pre-emptive telegram to all relevant embassies in which all arguments defending the British action was put forth. The telegram was also a staunch attack on Israel, firing back rhetorically claiming that “[s]ince October the Jews have launched three military operations in violation of the truce [...] They have so far failed to comply with Security Council Resolutions of November 4<sup>th</sup> and December 29 which have been accepted by the Arabs.”<sup>74</sup> The telegram was issued not a day too soon, as complaints were posted both to Ralph Bunche and the President of the Security Council the very same day.<sup>75</sup> The arguments in the complaint shed light on the Israeli understanding of the conflict at the time: “[T]he presence of British troops at Aqaba can have no purpose but to threaten Israel’s territory in the southern part of the Negev.”<sup>76</sup> The Israeli claim over the Negev was a clear example of the Israeli method of changing argument to their advantage according to what the situation demanded. Israel did not control the southernmost section of the Negev (an area patrolled by the Arab Legion), but claimed it by reference to the UN Partition Plan. However, when the negotiations concerned the areas not included in the Jewish state in the same Partition Plan, Israel posted the argument that negotiations had to be based only on standing force and not on any of the UN plans.<sup>77</sup> Israel played this game of contradictory arguments well.

The Israeli complaints concerning the movement of British troops to Aqaba initially had the intended affect, and the issue was supposed to be discussed in a Security Council meeting 13 January. The meeting, however, was cancelled.<sup>78</sup>

### ***Egypt to Rhodes***

12 January 1949 the Egyptian and Israeli delegates started meeting at Rhodes under the scrutiny of Acting Mediator Ralph Bunche. The Israeli tactic of forcing the Arab ringleader to the negotiating table had worked.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> FO 11 Jan. 1949, FO371/75293, FO to New York, Cypher No. 172.

<sup>75</sup> FO 11 Jan. 1949, FO371/75293, Haifa to FO, En clair No. 61; FO 11 Jan. 1949, FO371/75398, New York to FO, En clair No. 79; Eban to President of the Security Council, 11 Jan. 1949, doc. 308 in Freundlich (Ed.) 1984, pp. 355-358.

<sup>76</sup> FO 11 Jan. 1949, FO371/75293, Haifa to FO, En clair No. 61.

<sup>77</sup> See chapter 5 for demands during talks with al-Tel 1 and 5 January 1949. See also Jan 24 1949, FO371/75367, Internal note in Eastern Department, E129.

<sup>78</sup> FO 12 Jan. 1949, FO371/75398, New York to FO, Cypher No. 88.

<sup>79</sup> Dayan 1976, p. 167; Tal 2004 (b), p. 458; Shlaim 1990 (a), p. 266; Touval 1982, p. 73.

The classical understanding of the relevance of removing Egypt from the fold is that this broke the ice and opened up for armistice negotiations between Israel and the remaining Arab states. Such a reading of events concludes that it was of a clear advantage to Transjordan that Egypt was defeated because it allowed Transjordan to negotiate with Israel without being the first Arab state to give in – thus neutralizing Arab criticism which had to target Egypt instead.<sup>80</sup>

This common understanding must be reviewed, as the removal of Egypt from the fold was clearly a double edged sword. It is true that once the ice was broken, as Egypt agreed to go to the negotiating table with Israel, Transjordan was given the “moral high ground” over Egypt, and was thus free to engage in talks with Israel.<sup>81</sup> However, in that same sweep, Transjordan was left more isolated than ever, and the possibility of a total Israeli takeover of Palestine was a looming possibility. Once Egypt had given in, King Abdullah was less politically threatened by the other Arab states. However, he became more prone to Israeli aggression. In other words the cost of gaining an increased inter-Arab manoeuvrability was that the power balance between Israel and Transjordan was radically upset in Israel’s favour. As the Foreign Office saw it: “Jews have now agreed to negotiations with Egypt for an armistice; and we have every reason to fear that, if and when this is achieved, they will attack Jerusalem or Transjordan or both”.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Dayan 1976, p. 167; Tal 2004 (b), p. 458; Shlaim 1990 (a), p. 266; Touval 1982, p. 73.

<sup>81</sup> Rogan, Eugene L.: “Jordan and 1948: the persistence of an official history” in Rogan and Shlaim (eds.) 2001, p. 118. See also critique of Egypt by King Ibn Saud. FO 19 Jan. 1949, FO371/75331, Jeddah to Burrows (FO), No. 85/23/49. Egypt seems also to have attempted to lure Transjordan into the same trap in November 1948 when a message was sent from the Egyptian Minister of Defence asking King Abdullah to “suggest to King Farouk that the time has come to negotiate a settlement of the Palestine problem.” This was widely understood, both in Transjordan and by Alec Kirkbride, to be a trap set up in order to give Egypt the moral high ground. FO 3 Nov. 1948, FO371/68643, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 851.

<sup>82</sup> FO 12 Jan. 1949, FO371/75381, Commonwealth Relations Office to High Commissioners in Commonwealth Countries, Cypher No. 15.

## **5. The Road to the King's Palace**

*January – March 1949*

In early January, while Israel was dealing the deathblow to the Egyptian forces in Palestine through Operation Horev, the diplomatic contact between Israel and Transjordan increased. This was a continuation of a process that had been going on since November 1948, and the Israelis had gradually becoming more demanding. King Abdullah had been somewhat indisposed to the Israeli approach which was far more ambitious than his step by step approach to the talks. By January 1949 Israel was more intent on such full scale talks, and King Abdullah saw no other way out. The tension between Transjordan's King and Prime Minister continued to grow over the nature of these negotiations. As a result, King Abdullah increasingly sidelined Abul Huda, keeping him uninformed of the latest diplomatic developments. In a manoeuvre of personalizing the negotiations the regent completely closed down the Paris-channel which had existed since early August 1948, and moved everything to Jerusalem where two of his most trusted men, Abdullah al-Tel and Dr. Showkat es Sati, were set to lead the talks.<sup>1</sup> Abdullah al-Tel was already playing a major role in the Jerusalem talks, but the King's personal physician, Dr. es-Sati, was a new inclusion in the negotiations.

## ***Stalling: Waiting for the PCC***

The most significant development since the onset of Operation Horev was a strengthened Israeli self-confidence. The Israeli team of diplomats (Elias Sasson and Moshe Dayan were the most prominent) threatened King Abdullah and refused to talk with Transjordan's representatives if UN observers were present.<sup>2</sup> Through al-Tel, the King was given an unequivocal message from the Israelis: "Transjordan's game was to gain time but they [Israel] were not prepared to play any longer. Transjordan would have to realize that it was not on the winning side in this particular war and must now choose between peace or war."<sup>3</sup> Israel also practically demanded of Transjordan that Britain be kept uninvolved and uninformed of the talks.<sup>4</sup> Israel clearly felt that Britain stood in the way of an armistice with Transjordan. This was both because Britain had political influence in Transjordan, and because Britain could, in theory, give Transjordan military aid which would have made Transjordan less willing to give in to Israeli pressure.<sup>5</sup> Transjordan, however, had no intention of keeping Britain uninformed. The fact that Israel could put forth such a demand was in itself indicative of how the special relationship between Israel and Transjordan had developed into personal relationship at gunpoint. Gone was the amicable atmosphere that had existed between Israel and Transjordan in November 1948.<sup>6</sup>

The Foreign Office recommended that King Abdullah attempt to stall the negotiations. This approach had two goals. The first was to make sure that no negotiations were concluded before the PCC arrived, and the second was to find out what the Israeli negotiation positions were. It was thought that it would be difficult for Israel to make demands towards Transjordan if the PCC was present. For the British Foreign Office it was therefore seen as pertinent to simultaneously work for a speedy arrival of the PCC.<sup>7</sup> The PCC's arrival, however, could not be hastened. On the

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<sup>1</sup> FO 28 Dec. 1948, FO816/142, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 978.

<sup>2</sup> FO 29 Dec. 1948, FO816/142, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 982.

<sup>3</sup> FO 29 Dec. 1948, FO816/142, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 982. Two weeks later, according to Moshe Dayan's account, Moshe Dayan repeated almost the exact same words to al-Tel on the direct phone line: "if there were no change in Jordan's approach, they would bring about war, not peace." Dayan 1976, p. 166.

<sup>4</sup> FO 29 Dec. 1948, FO816/142, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 982; FO 2 Jan. 1949, FO371/75330, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 3; FO 10 Jan. 1949, FO371/75376, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 19.

<sup>5</sup> Bar-Joseph 1987, pp. 171-193.

<sup>6</sup> See Chapter 3.

<sup>7</sup> FO 5 Jan. 1949, FO371/75346, Jerusalem to FO, Cypher No. 10.

contrary, it was continuously delayed.<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, the UN observers, who were present in Palestine under the authority of Acting Mediator Ralph Bunche, were quickly losing their significance as they were barred from the areas of combat in the Negev.<sup>9</sup> The combined delay of the PCC and the waning of UN influence on the ground ensured that the British tactics of stalling the talks became pointless. Slow winded talks could only succeed in finding out what the Israeli intentions were.

Ironically Ben-Gurion also sought to delay the talks as he presumed that the Israeli elections would give him a majority government, and hence greater political manoeuvrability. Ben-Gurion's analysis of the balance of power was much in tune with that of the British Minister in Amman, Alec Kirkbride, who strongly advised against the Foreign Office's tactics of stalling. Ben-Gurion knew, as did Kirkbride, that time was on Israel's side and that Israel's military power increased at a much faster rate than did Transjordan's.<sup>10</sup>

Al-Tel's meeting with and Shiloah 1 January 1949 gives several interesting insights into the negotiation's developments.<sup>11</sup> The Israeli representatives clearly set the agenda, stating that the armistice talks should not be based on either the Partition Plan or the Bernadotte Plan, but rather on the existing military position: "Their attitude [...] was that they intended to keep what they had conquered."<sup>12</sup> This was a radical stance as the Israeli forces had occupied large areas that went far beyond the territory given to Israel by any of the UN plans. The Israeli delegates also made it clear that negotiations with Transjordan could only deal with the areas held by the Arab Legion, which at that point were the central and southern section of the West Bank as well as the southern corner of the Negev. The areas held by the Iraqi army in the northern West Bank were thus not to be under discussion.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore a list of specific requirements/points on which the negotiations were to be based was exchanged. Al-Tel handed over three demands to the Israeli delegates, while the

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<sup>8</sup> FO 5 Jan. 1949, FO371/75346, Jerusalem to FO, Cypher No. 10. The PCC held its first meeting in Geneva 17 Jan. 1949. FO 18 Jan. 1949, FO371/75346, New York to FO, En Clair No. 131.

<sup>9</sup> FO 4 Jan. 1949, FO371/75380, FO to Washington, En Clair No. 91; FO 8 Jan. 1949, FO371/75380, Cairo to FO, Cypher No. 46.

<sup>10</sup> Bar-Joseph 1987, p. 181; FO 29 Dec. 1948, FO816/142, Amman to FO, Cypher no. 982. See Chapter 4 for more on Kirkbride's view. Kirkbride's analysis was one he kept reiterating to FO. See e.g. FO 19 Feb. 1949, FO371/75331, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 94.

<sup>11</sup> FO 2 Jan. 1949, FO371/75330, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 3. According to the US archives the meeting took place 30 Dec. 1948. McDonald to the Sec. of State, 2 Jan. 1949 in *FRUS* 1949, Vol. VI, pp. 598-599. According to Bar-Joseph, 30 Dec. is correct. Bar-Joseph 1987, p. 172.

<sup>12</sup> FO 2 Jan. 1949, FO371/75330, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 3.

<sup>13</sup> FO 2 Jan. 1949, FO371/75330, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 3.

Israeli delegates handed over no less than eleven points to al-Tel. From the Israeli side the most important of these were: Solution for Jerusalem (division); discussion of position at Latrun; exchange of prisoners of war; discussion of future political and economic relations; removal of Egyptian troops from the Bethlehem area; and extension of ceasefire lines.<sup>14</sup> From the Transjordanian side the demands were: Inclusion of Lydda and Ramleh to the Arab area; return of Jaffa with corridor to Ramleh; and a discussion of Galilee and its future.<sup>15</sup> This list of first draft demands is important to keep in mind when evaluating the relative success of the armistice talks for each side. The issue of Jerusalem was one matter on which the two parties seemed to agree, albeit on a purely pragmatic basis. After all both parties realized that the cost of attempting to capture the whole city would be insurmountable. Since both Transjordan and Israel agreed on partition, in principle if not in detail, the UN was perceived by both as the wrong medium through which to negotiate over the future of the city.<sup>16</sup> The UN still supported internationalization of Jerusalem, as did the PCC and the US Government.<sup>17</sup>

A further argument for avoiding UN mediation was what appeared to be an inter-UN power struggle of sorts. The UN mediation apparatus for Palestine was divided between Ralph Bunche and his negotiation team and the PCC. These two sectors of the apparatus seemed unable to agree on each others mandate and at times they perceived each other to be diplomatic opponents infringing on the other's turf.<sup>18</sup> This kind of squabble probably increased both Israel's and Transjordan's distaste for the UN, especially in terms of the perception of the UN as an inefficient organization. Despite disliking the UN, however, King Abdullah realized that it was a useful tool in order to increase his own political manoeuvrability in the Arab world. Talks under the PCC or with the Acting Mediator functioned as *de facto* public statements of defeat by the Arab leaders, and hence an acceptance of the need for negotiations. As we have seen, the Arab states were militarily defeated and practically forced to the negotiation

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<sup>14</sup> FO 2 Jan. 1949, FO371/75330, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 3.

<sup>15</sup> FO 2 Jan. 1949, FO371/75330, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 3.

<sup>16</sup> FO 6 Feb. 1949, FO371/75347, Jerusalem to FO, Cypher No. 91.

<sup>17</sup> FO 29 Jan. 1949, FO371/75347, Jerusalem to FO, Cypher No. 65; FO 4 Feb. 1949, FO371/75347, Jerusalem to FO, Cypher No. 85; FO 6 Feb. 1949, FO371/75347, Jerusalem to FO, Cypher No. 91; FO 12 Feb. 1949, FO371/75347, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 83; FO 1 March 1949, FO371/75348, Washington to FO, Cypher No. 1198; FO 18 March 1949, FO371/75349, Angora to FO, Cypher No. 165; Bar-Joseph 1987, p. 166.

<sup>18</sup> FO 18 Jan. 1949, FO371/75346, NY to FO, En Clair No. 131; FO 18 Jan. 1949, NY to FO, Cypher No. 134; FO 16 Feb. 1949, FO371/75347, Cairo to FO, En Clair No. 36.

table. Once they had made that move, and hence the implied statement of defeat, King Abdullah's negotiations with Israel became much more politically legitimate.<sup>19</sup>

5 January 1949 a new meeting was held in Jerusalem between Israel and Transjordan.<sup>20</sup> In this meeting the Israeli delegates seemed to have a slightly more pragmatic approach towards Jerusalem and discussed the building of a joint Israeli-Transjordanian port on the Red Sea.<sup>21</sup> The main lines, based on the exchange of the lists of demands from 1 January, however, remained the same. The negotiations were to be based on the military situation on the ground, and not on any of the UN Resolutions. Furthermore, the Israeli delegates made it absolutely clear that Israel needed a Red Sea port.<sup>22</sup> The Israeli team was given instructions by Ben-Gurion on how to treat the Transjordanian requirement issued at the previous meeting: No to the return of Ramleh and Jaffa; leave the issue of Lydda open; and avoid discussions on the Negev.<sup>23</sup> Despite these instructions the main issue discussed at the meeting was the Negev, due to King Abdullah's insistence. He had expressed that the Negev was an important area for several reasons. It was stated that the Negev was important because a line of communication was needed to Gaza and that the Negev bore a large Bedouin population. It was also clear that King Abdullah was both receiving support and pressure from the British Foreign Office on this point as they viewed the strip of land in the southern Negev as the most vital strategic asset in the Middle East. The refugee issue was once again brought up, but remained unsolved. Jerusalem was also discussed in great detail and suggestions for a practical division were laid forth.<sup>24</sup>

The point concerning the Red Sea port must have been highly alarming for al-Tel, since at that point in time the southernmost area of the Negev was patrolled by the Arab Legion. If the UN Partition Plan, in which the Negev was given to Israel, was not to be the basis for negotiations, but rather the presence of armed forces, then technically the southern tip of the Negev would befall Transjordan. The Israeli demand for a Red Sea port could therefore be interpreted as a threat towards the Transjordanian troops stationed in the southern Negev. Although the Israeli army had

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<sup>19</sup> FO 22 Feb. 1949, FO371/75348, Amman to Burrows, S.1/49; Touval 1982, p. 69.

<sup>20</sup> FO 2 Jan. 1949, FO371/75330, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 3; FO 6 Jan. 1949, FO371/75376, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 13; Moshe 1976, pp. 164-165.

<sup>21</sup> FO 10 Jan. 1949, FO371/75376, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 19.

<sup>22</sup> FO 10 Jan. 1949, FO371/75376, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 19.

<sup>23</sup> Bar-Joseph 1987, p. 173; Dayan 1976, p. 164.

<sup>24</sup> Bar-Joseph 1987, pp. 173-175.



been stopped in Egypt, their position in the Negev was somewhat unclear.<sup>25</sup> There were also clear indications that President Truman was not willing to make the Negev an issue of contention between Israel and the US.<sup>26</sup> This unwillingness came despite the fact that Truman had originally supported the inclusion of the Negev to Transjordan.<sup>27</sup> This was an area of discord between Great Britain and the US, as Arab control over the southern tip of the Negev was one of the greatest British interest in the conflict.<sup>28</sup>

The US Government was afraid of pressuring Israel for fear of pushing the country into the Soviet camp. This view was put forth to British representatives asking that British pressure on Israel was minimized. Such a view caused great anger in the Middle East Office in Cairo where the British representative argued “that it is futile to believe that we shall turn Israeli into a peace-loving Western-looking nation by paying Danegeld at Arab expense.”<sup>29</sup> The British Government attempted to use a similar argument against the US by claiming that unless they could fulfil their treaty obligations with the threatened Arab states, these might easily succumb to internal turmoil and drift towards Soviet sympathies.<sup>30</sup> The difference between the British and the US Government became evident. The US Government was theoretically able to apply pressure on Israel, but was not willing.<sup>31</sup> The British Government, on the other hand, was willing to apply pressure, but unable to do so: “There seems to be only two ways in which we could help to weigh the scales more evenly. One is a warning that further Jewish aggression in Palestine would be resisted by our forces. This seems to be ruled out. Second is by releasing some arms to the Arabs.”<sup>32</sup> The last option was ruled out time and again.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> FO 4 Jan. 1949, FO371/75380, FO to Washington, En Clair No. 91; FO 12 Jan. 1949, FO371/75398, FO to Canada, Cypher No. 2. Israel claimed that Egypt had started the fighting in the Negev. FO 12 Jan. 1949, FO371/75381, Commonwealth Relations Office to Canada, Cypher No. 42. Israeli military historian David Tal shows that this was not the case. Tal 2004 (b), p. 380.

<sup>26</sup> FO 9 Jan. 1949, FO371/75380, Cairo to FO, Cypher No. 48; Louis 2006 (b), pp. 566-567.

<sup>27</sup> Cohen 1990, p. 236.

<sup>28</sup> Bar-Joseph 1987, pp. 166-168. See e.g. FO 1 April 1949, FO371/75349, FO to Jerusalem, Cypher No. 321; Acting Sec. of State to Emb. In UK, 13 Jan. 1949 in *FRUS* 1949, Vol. VI, pp. 658-661.

<sup>29</sup> FO 8 Jan. 1949, FO371/75367, BMEO to FO, Cypher No. 11.

<sup>30</sup> FO 12 Jan. 1949, FO371/75381, Commonwealth Relations Office to High Commissioner in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, Cypher No. 2; FO 12 Jan. 1949, FO371/75381, Commonwealth Relations Office to High Commissioners in Commonwealth Countries, Cypher No. 15.

<sup>31</sup> For more on wasted possibilities of pressure see Chapter 6.

<sup>32</sup> FO 22 Jan. 1949, FO371/75330, B.M.E.O (Cairo) to FO, Cypher No. 44.

<sup>33</sup> FO 22 Jan. 1949, FO371/75330, FO to Cairo, Cypher No. 167; FO 10 March 1949, FO371/75294, FO to Amman, Cypher No. 202.

## ***Development of Talks***

After the meeting 5 January 1949 King Abdullah had asked that the next meeting between Transjordan and Israel should be held two weeks later. He explained that he needed to think the suggestions over. Transjordan took advantage of this respite to bring both the British and US Government up-to-date on the ongoing talks. King Abdullah obviously hoped that this could strengthen his hand.<sup>34</sup> From the Israeli delegates' standpoint the 5 January talks had led them to believe that these talks with Transjordanian representatives were pointless and they asked Ben-Gurion for permission to cut the ties. According to Dayan, Ben-Gurion disagreed, saying that "we must probe all possibilities for peace".<sup>35</sup> One should naturally be critical towards using Moshe Dayan as a source here as he would want to portray Ben-Gurion in a positive light. The differences between the two, however, serves to illustrate that it was not given that Israel should pursue talks with Transjordan.

The next meeting was held 14 January between Abdullah al-Tal and Moshe Dayan, in which military issues, such as a Prisoner of War (POW) exchange, were discussed. The POW issue was rather particular in this case as Transjordan held several Israeli POWs, whilst Israel held none from Transjordan. The prisoner swap was therefore one which included a release of Egyptian POWs held by Israel. This prisoner exchange deal can be interpreted in several ways. Firstly, it could be seen as a snub against Egypt for its miserable war effort. Secondly, such a deal would increase the inter-Arab manoeuvrability of Transjordan by tying its gains to those of Egypt. Thirdly, this prisoner exchange would have increased the "moral high ground" Transjordan held over Egypt. The final details of the POW exchange were slightly postponed.

16 January 1949 a meeting was held at King Abdullah's palace at Shuneh. The meeting was attended by King Abdullah, Dr. Showkat es-Sati, Abdullah al-Tel, Elias Sasson and Moshe Dayan.<sup>36</sup> Sasson and Dayan had evidently crossed the border

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<sup>34</sup> Bar-Joseph 1987, p. 176.

<sup>35</sup> Dayan 1976, p. 165.

<sup>36</sup> Bar-Joseph 1987, pp. 165, 180-183. I was unable to find reference to this meeting in the British archives, but this seems to have been my error and not because the British were uninformed. In the US archives it is stated that Burrows informed the US State Department. Chargé UK to Sec. of State, 19 Jan. 1949 in *FRUS* 1949, Vol. VI, pp. 684-685. Due to this error most of the information on these talks is therefore gathered from literature based on Israeli archives, Moshe Dayan's account and the US archives. Dayan 1976; *FRUS* 1949, Vol. VI.

dressed as UN observers.<sup>37</sup> The atmosphere of the meeting was soured even before the delegates had congregated. Moshe Dayan presented harsh demands to al-Tel in the car on the way to Shuneh, asking for the whole Negev. Al-Tel rejected this and suggested instead that Israel and Transjordan could “share” the port at Aqaba. The atmosphere did not improve upon arrival at the palace. King Abdullah expressed indignation at the fact that the pre-war arrangement was treated as nullified by the Israelis. He made a point of this when greeting Sasson: “Thus, my brother? By God I was never accustomed to such rough behaviour on your part.”<sup>38</sup> After this unfriendly opening some points were discussed that were intended to drive the process forward. King Abdullah begged that Israel stay away from Aqaba in order for the Anglo-Israeli tension to quiet down. Furthermore, King Abdullah promised that he would have prepared a peace plan within two weeks, and he asked that Israel completely drive Egypt from Palestine. To this last request Israel responded that Egypt would probably get Gaza upon the signing of the armistice.<sup>39</sup> It was as a response to this that King Abdullah made his infamous statement concerning Gaza: “[T]ake it yourselves, give it to the devil, but don’t let Egypt have it!”<sup>40</sup> The only real development was on the POW issue. This was practically finalized, in the sense that it was agreed that it was simply a technical matter that could be solved between al-Tel and Dayan.<sup>41</sup>

Despite the fact that it was agreed that the POW issue was purely a technical matter it was solved, but not finalized during the next meeting between the two military leaders 19 January. The issue was then delayed further by King Abdullah, who had intervened at the last moment and insisted that the released POWs should first be handed over to Transjordan, and then handed over from Transjordan to Egypt. This merely delayed the POW issue and did not stall the rest of the talks, but it was symptomatic of the diplomatic relationship between the two states.<sup>42</sup> This last minute action by King Abdullah corresponds well with the explanation that this particular prisoner exchange had political purposes relating more to the inter-Arab strife than it related to Israeli-Transjordanian relations.

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<sup>37</sup> Chargé UK to Sec. of State, 19 Jan. 1949 in *FRUS* 1949, Vol. VI, pp. 684-685.

<sup>38</sup> Bar-Joseph 1987, p. 183.

<sup>39</sup> Bar-Joseph 1987, pp.184-185. It is worth noting that Ben-Gurion had originally wanted Gaza to befall Transjordan. See Shiloah to Sharett, 20 Nov. 1948, doc. 168 in Freundlich (Ed 1984, p. 209.

<sup>40</sup> Dayan 1976, p. 168; Sharett to Elath, 18 Jan. 1949, doc. 185 in Freundlich (Ed.) 1983, p. 343. The same view, bar the “take it yourselves”, was echoed later in Egypt. FO 16 Feb. 1949, Cairo to FO, Confidential Bag No. 37; FO 20 Feb. 1949, FO371/75347, Cairo to FO, Cypher No. 280.

<sup>41</sup> Bar-Joseph 1987, p. 186.

<sup>42</sup> Bar-Joseph 1987, pp. 186-187.

The next major meeting between the parties was held at Shuneh 30 January 1949. The delegates discussed the big sticking points. As usual Israel brought up the problem of how the parties were to handle the Iraqi forces stationed on the northern West Bank, to which King Abdullah responded that he was working on the problem and that he would discuss it with the Iraqi regent. Relating to the Negev, Israel demanded freedom of movement as far south as the Red Sea, claiming that this was Israeli territory. The future of Gaza was brought up by King Abdullah who considered it vital that Gaza should not befall Egypt. He argued that Transjordan needed a port on the Mediterranean, and further that an Egyptian held Gaza strip would allow for the re-emergence of the All Palestine Government and the Mufti. King Abdullah therefore wanted an assurance from Israel that Gaza would not befall Egypt.<sup>43</sup>

Transjordan lost ground on all these major issues in the ensuing phases of negotiations. The one demand where King Abdullah won out was his desire for direct and personal negotiations rather than talks hosted by the UN at Rhodes. The Israeli reasons for agreeing to such an approach were obvious enough. Israel's military gains had been far greater than what had been stipulated in any of the UN Resolutions, Partition Plans and Bernadotte proposals. Negotiations based on any of these would therefore imply large Israeli concessions. King Abdullah, however, was clearly far too optimistic as to what such personal talks could obtain. His distrust of the UN combined with his trust in negotiations based on personal relations had to a certain extent made him blind towards the harsh realities on the ground. As he saw it Dayan and al-Tel should finalize an agreement that they should then merely present and sign at Rhodes.<sup>44</sup> He originally stated that such formal talks would only be a "public confirmation of agreement."<sup>45</sup> This public confirmation would be legitimized by the UN and King Abdullah would be cleared of Arab criticism. What Transjordan faced in the final phases of the armistice talks, however, dramatically disproved his optimism.

### ***The Iraq Problem: Neither Negotiation, nor Withdrawal***

The Iraqi forces occupied the northern West Bank, which was an area that Transjordan was planning to annex after the war. From an Israeli perspective these

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<sup>43</sup> Bar-Joseph 1987, pp. 187-188.

<sup>44</sup> Bar-Joseph 1987, p. 189.

Iraqi forces remained the greatest logjam hindering Transjordan from engaging in fruitful armistice talks.<sup>46</sup> By mid-January 1949 the Iraqi position had increasingly become a problem for King Abdullah. The Iraqi Government refused to recognize that as a warring party it also had to be a negotiating partner. The Iraqi premier stated unequivocally:

It was for countries whose frontiers marched with Palestine namely Egypt, Transjordan, Syria and Lebanon to agree to the terms of a settlement in the first instance. Iraq would not object to any settlement approved by these four, but it was not for Iraq to enter into negotiations now.<sup>47</sup>

This was obviously a problem for King Abdullah because this meant that Transjordan would have to negotiate on behalf of Iraq in order to legitimize the occupation of the northern West Bank. If King Abdullah was to negotiate on Iraq's behalf, however, he was dependent on a right of attorney from Iraq. This was easier said than done.

The reasons for the Iraqi obstinacy can only be found if one investigates the complexities of the political situation in Iraq. Iraq had long been in political turmoil and the political leadership was pressed from several sides. Prior to the war in Palestine the leadership in Baghdad had been faced with a strong pan-Arab opposition and massive anti-British popular protests. Further there was a growing suspicion towards King Abdullah because he was the senior Hashemite. His younger cousin, Abd al-Ilah, sat on the throne in Baghdad and Hashemite family affairs were not always dominated by trust.

These sentiments had been brewing for some time, but the war in Palestine had created a respite. The Iraqi leadership therefore invested large amounts of political capital in the war effort, contributing with the largest single Arab contingent. The propaganda that was fed to the Iraqi masses was one of military victories. As we know the realities on the ground were radically different. When the ceasefires had been signed in June and July 1948, therefore, many Iraqi's were shocked and angered. The defeats in Palestine had brought down the Iraqi Government in January 1949, and there was an increasing suspicion that the Iraqi army was being used as a tool for King Abdullah so that he could enlarge his territory by annexing Palestine.<sup>48</sup> These

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<sup>45</sup> Stabler to Sec. of State, 7 Feb. 1949 in *FRUS* 1949, Vol. VI, pp. 732-734.

<sup>46</sup> FO 24 Feb. 1949, FO371/75331, Jerusalem to FO, Cypher No. 149.

<sup>47</sup> FO 15 Jan. 1949, FO371/75330, Bagdad to FO, Cypher No. 52.

<sup>48</sup> Tripp 2002, pp. 119-123.

things considered, it is no wonder that the Iraqi leadership hesitated to withdraw from Palestine.

The Iraqi Premier, Nuri al-Sa'id laid forth certain conditions which were to be pre-conditions for Arab negotiations with Israel. If these were met the Arab states could participate in talks under the PCC. The demands of the Iraqi Premier illustrated how removed the Iraqi leadership was from the political and military reality at the time. The demands contained four points: A unified Jerusalem under Arab control; Total disarmament of the Jews, except for a police force for internal security and a UN force to guarantee Israel's borders; The return of all Palestinian refugees; and Haifa had to be placed under international control. This last point was made because one of the major Iraqi oil pipelines terminated in Haifa, and the Iraqi regime had no intention of allowing Israel to handle this transaction. In addition to the four demands the Iraqi Premier also stated that the PCC first should negotiate with Israel, and then, if all the Arab conditions were met, the PCC "should get in touch with the Arabs."<sup>49</sup> It was seen as extremely improbable that these four points could be accepted by the UN, and, in the unlikelihood of this occurring, Israel would never allow them to be implemented.<sup>50</sup> These four points worried King Abdullah. It was clear that Iraq did not understand the gravity of the situation: "[T]hey were conditions which might be imposed by victors but did not fit in with existing conditions."<sup>51</sup>

In early February 1949 King Abdullah looked to be making some headway with the Iraqis. In the first week of February 1949, King Abdullah visited Iraq and claimed to have obtained support from both the regent and Prime Minister. The agreement was one in which Iraq gave him permission to install a civil administration in the Iraqi controlled areas on the West Bank, and that he then be allowed to negotiate with Israel as if that area was under Legion control.<sup>52</sup> By mid-February, however, it became clear that Iraq had never given any such authority.<sup>53</sup>

Confusion also circulated concerning the chronological order of things. Were the Iraqi forces going to evacuate before, after or during the negotiations? The British analysis was that a premature Iraqi withdrawal would be extremely dangerous for

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<sup>49</sup> FO 19 Jan. 1949, FO371/75330, Note by Sir H. Mack, E96.

<sup>50</sup> FO 25 Jan. 1949, FO371/75330, FO to Bagdad, Cypher No. 113.

<sup>51</sup> FO 31 Jan. 1949, FO371/75331, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 64.

<sup>52</sup> FO 4 Feb. 1949, FO371/75331, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 72; FO 4 Feb. 1949, FO371/75331, Bagdad to FO, Cypher No. 110; FO 12 Feb. 1949, FO371/75347, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 83.

<sup>53</sup> FO 17 Feb. 1949, FO371/75331, Bagdad to FO, Cypher No. 154; FO 28 Feb. 1949, FO371/75349, Amman to Burrows, S.93/49.

King Abdullah as this would leave him completely isolated.<sup>54</sup> The Arab Legion had no capacity to fill the power vacuum that would be left after an Iraqi withdrawal. Such a move would therefore have left King Abdullah at the mercy of Israel.<sup>55</sup>

Iraq greatly feared an Israeli attack against their forces in Palestine and sought assurance against this.<sup>56</sup> The British Foreign Office found itself unable to give any such guarantees.<sup>57</sup> The Foreign Office realized that the only efficient way of doing so would have been US pressure. Such pressure, however, was not forthcoming and the Foreign Office was unwilling to keep nagging on the US, as this would most probably have been counterproductive.<sup>58</sup>

### ***With Iraq Undecided***

As the Iraq issue kept fluctuating the Israeli-Transjordanian talks continued along its bumpy road. Differences in procedure and opinion kept surfacing. In relation to Jerusalem, for instance, the Israeli stance was that the delineation of the city was an issue in itself, separate from the rest of the negotiation issues. The Transjordanian stance was that the issue of Jerusalem had to be linked with the rest of the issues on the table.<sup>59</sup> This difference in approach was, rather ironically, a reversal of the difference in stance taken in early December 1948 when Transjordan had wanted to discuss singular issues, whilst Israel wanted a full comprehensive package. The reasons for this reversal is unclear.

By the second week of February 1949 Transjordanian Prime Minister Abul Huda was finally rallied in support of the negotiations.<sup>60</sup> This happened after the King had exerted a great deal of pressure on his Premier.<sup>61</sup> This inclusion was vital for the King because it gave him greater national legitimacy and it allowed him to counter the

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<sup>54</sup> FO 24 Feb. 1949, FO371/75331, Jerusalem to FO, Cypher No. 149.

<sup>55</sup> FO 27 Feb. 1949, FO371/75348, FO to Amman, Cypher No. 162; FO 28 Feb. 1949, FO371/75348, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 108; FO 1 March 1949, FO371/75348, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 113.

<sup>56</sup> FO 23 Feb. 1949, FO371/75348, Bagdad to FO, Cypher No. 170. This attempt at getting assurances was given up by early March. FO 3 March 1949, FO371/75348, Bagdad to FO, Cypher No. 193.

<sup>57</sup> FO 1 March 1949, FO371/75348, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 113.

<sup>58</sup> FO 26 Feb. 1949, FO371/75331, FO to Bagdad, Cypher No. 197; FO 27 Feb. 1949, FO371/75348, FO to Amman, Cypher No. 162.

<sup>59</sup> FO 7 Feb. 1949, FO371/75347, Jerusalem to FO, Cypher No. 94.

<sup>60</sup> FO 2 March 1949, FO371/75273, Amman: Monthly Situation Report on Transjordan for the Month of February, 1949.

<sup>61</sup> FO 12 Feb. 1949, FO371/75347, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 83; FO 14 Feb. 1949, FO371/75348, Amman to Burrows, S.1/49; Bar-Joseph 1987, p. 188.

Israeli claim that the negotiations with Transjordan were not governmental.<sup>62</sup> In practice, however, not much changed in terms of how Transjordan operated in the negotiations: King Abdullah wrote the negotiation drafts and al-Tel presented them to Dayan.<sup>63</sup>

One such draft was handed to Dayan 14 February 1949, two weeks after the previous serious meeting. The main points in this draft were: Ceasefire lines with return of Lydda and Ramleh to Arabs; Divided Jerusalem; and Eilat and Haifa to be international ports with dual access.<sup>64</sup> The Transjordanian armistice plan had, on the issues of Lydda, Ramleh and Jerusalem, not been altered since the proposition in early January. On the other issues it was clear that the developments on the ground had rendered some of the earlier claims impossible. The return of Jaffa had become completely unrealistic, and Eilat was clearly in danger of being taken over by the IDF. Hence the original claim for Jaffa was transformed into a proposal for shared control over both Haifa and Eilat. This would, if such a solution was agreed upon, have given Israel access to the Red Sea and Transjordan access to the Mediterranean. As the later negotiations were to show, Israel got both Haifa and Eilat and Transjordan got neither.

Dayan replied to this draft by making two demands that had to be followed were negotiations to continue: “a. an exact notation of the front line in the southern Negev. b. power-of-attorney from the government of Iraq to speak in its name.”<sup>65</sup> These two demands posed major problems for King Abdullah. As far as the Negev went, the situation was rather unclear and it would have been hard to draw exact lines. Of greater concern, however, was the Israeli demand that Transjordan obtain power-of-attorney from Iraq. King Abdullah had been trying to obtain such a green light from Iraq since January, but had been unable to do so. In fact he was unable to obtain permission to negotiate on behalf of Iraq until as late as 20 March.<sup>66</sup>

### ***Egyptian Armistice***

24 February 1949 Egypt signed its armistice with Israel after a month and a half of negotiations at Rhodes, under the scrutiny of UN Acting Mediator Ralph Bunche. The length of time it had taken to conclude these negotiations had surprised Bunche. His

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<sup>62</sup> Bar-Joseph 1987, p. 189.

<sup>63</sup> Bar-Joseph 1987, p. 190.

<sup>64</sup> Bar-Joseph 1987, p. 190.

<sup>65</sup> Bar-Joseph 1987, p. 191.



initial estimate was that the Egyptian-Israeli negotiation would be finished “within a matter of days.”<sup>67</sup> The talks had sapped Bunche’s energy. His initial optimism was therefore lacking when he went into the Israeli-Transjordanian talks.

Since Egypt had become the first Arab country to sign an armistice with Israel, Transjordan had finally obtained the moral high ground over Egypt, but the cost had been high.<sup>68</sup> Egypt had obtained Gaza, and hence the Transjordanian dream of getting an outlet to the Mediterranean was all but dead.<sup>69</sup> Further, the Arab Legion had become militarily isolated in Palestine. The Iraqi forces retained control over the northern West Bank, but these forces did not have the strength needed to offer any resistance if Israel launched an attack. The Israeli army could easily isolate Transjordan completely.

Another consequence for Transjordan was an increase in the influx of Palestinian refugees. In early March the Palestinians in the “Faluja pocket”, which with the signing of the armistice had been evacuated of Egyptian forces, were expelled and sent to areas controlled by Transjordan.<sup>70</sup>

### ***Slow Show at Rhodes***

When Transjordan was invited to take part in armistice talks at Rhodes, King Abdullah made it clear that he only accepted this invitation because all the other Arab states had accepted theirs, but that he personally preferred direct bilateral negotiations.<sup>71</sup> 28 February 1949 Transjordan sent its delegation to Rhodes after a failed attempt by King Abdullah to host a preparatory meeting between the two delegations at his palace at Shuneh. The Transjordanian delegation at Rhodes was led by Colonel al-Jundi and composed of four Arab Legion officers, as well as a secretary and two representatives from the Transjordanian Foreign Office.<sup>72</sup> The Israeli delegation, led by Reuven Shiloah, and with Moshe Dayan as his deputy, arrived the

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<sup>66</sup> See Chapter 6.

<sup>67</sup> FO 18 Jan. 1949, FO371/75346, New York to FO, En Clair No. 131.

<sup>68</sup> FO 25 Feb. 1949, FO371/75331, Cairo (B.M.E.O.) to FO, Cypher No. 124.

<sup>69</sup> Næser 2005, pp. 75-104.

<sup>70</sup> Morris 2004, pp. 521-525; Næser 2005, p. 105; FO 3 March 1949, FO371/75381, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 115; FO 5 March 1949, FO371/75381, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 123.

<sup>71</sup> McDonald to the Sec. of State, 3 Jan. 1949 in *FRUS* 1949, Vol. VI, pp. 721-722.

<sup>72</sup> Bar-Joseph 1987, pp. 192, 197.

next day.<sup>73</sup> It was clear that the two countries viewed the Rhodes negotiations differently. Israel sent senior diplomats who had taken part in both prior negotiations with Transjordan, and the armistice negotiations with Egypt.<sup>74</sup> Transjordan, on the other hand, sent representatives who had no prior experience in negotiating with the Israelis.

The Rhodes talks started off in an almost farcical manner. Ralph Bunche described the Transjordanian delegation as “unimpressive, timid, and not very bright [...] obviously on a string with rigid written instructions.”<sup>75</sup> Elias Sasson was also dismayed at the lack of seniority amongst the Transjordanian delegation at Rhodes. Prime Minister Abul Huda replied that it was unheard of that one party nominate the delegation of the other.<sup>76</sup> It is, however, unclear why King Abdullah sent a negotiation team of such junior rank to Rhodes. That he preferred personal negotiations and that he sought to move the talks away from Rhodes is obvious enough, but this does not adequately explain his choice of envoys. By sending high level expertise to Rhodes, Israel was thus much better at presenting its case than was Transjordan.<sup>77</sup>

The combined lack of seniority and political manoeuvrability given to the Transjordanian delegation delayed the negotiations continuously. Every move had to be confirmed with Amman.<sup>78</sup> When Bunche finally managed to call a joint meeting 4 March the delegations entered the room, but the Transjordanian delegates refused to shake hands with the Israeli delegates. The atmosphere became tense and Bunche, as well as the Israeli delegates, was enraged by this misbehaviour. Bunche called the leaders of each of the delegations to his room later the same evening and it turned out that the whole thing was based on a misunderstanding.<sup>79</sup> Despite this clarification the “handshake incident” gave the Rhodes negotiations an almost childish tint, illustrating Ralph Bunche’s aforementioned remark concerning the Transjordanian delegation.

Adding trouble to the debacle over the authority of the delegations was the fact that King Abdullah still hadn’t obtained the right to negotiate on behalf of the Iraqi

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<sup>73</sup> FO 2 March 1949, FO371/75273, Amman: Monthly Situation Report on Transjordan for the Month of February, 1949; Bar-Joseph 1987, p. 197.

<sup>74</sup> Næser 2005, pp. 65-66.

<sup>75</sup> Brian Urquhart’s private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary 28 Feb. 1949, UCLA 364/8-7.

<sup>76</sup> FO 9 March 1949, FO 371/75381, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 135.

<sup>77</sup> Urquhart 1998, p. 213-215.

<sup>78</sup> Brian Urquhart’s private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary 1, 2, 5, 6 March 1949, UCLA 364/8-7.

forces. 3 March 1949 Transjordanian representatives told Ralph Bunche that “they are representing Iraq also.”<sup>80</sup> Bunche then wired the Iraqi regent in an attempt to confirm this, but the Iraqi regent remained silent.<sup>81</sup> In a meeting on Rhodes, four days later, the issue was still not clarified.<sup>82</sup> As with all previous instances where Iraq allegedly had given Transjordan the right to negotiate on its behalf, King Abdullah had moved ahead of things. In early March there were no actual indications from Iraq that an agreement had been reached. The Iraqi Premier toyed with different options, however, none of these included allowing Transjordan to negotiate a dual armistice.<sup>83</sup>

The negotiations at Rhodes proved to be a slow affair. The Acting Mediator expressed that “conclusion of an armistice necessitated discussion of three points: (a) The definition of armistice zones. (b) Withdrawal of both armies and, (c) Reduction of forces.”<sup>84</sup> According to a British source the Israelis refused to discuss any of the three points. Transjordan was not much more yielding. Transjordan was principally willing to reduce forces, but believed that “both sides should stand fast in their present positions.”<sup>85</sup>

Ralph Bunche only managed to get the parties to agree on starting armistice talks based on the existing lines 7 March, a full week after the two delegations had arrived.<sup>86</sup> Then after agreeing to hold such a joint meeting, it was not held until the evening 9 March. According to Bunche the meeting went better than expected, and the Transjordanian delegation leader expressed willingness to sign a ceasefire for all fronts the next day.<sup>87</sup> 10 March, however, was marred by an Israeli military move towards Aqaba, known as Operation Uvda (*Fait Accompli*), whereby the Israeli forces occupied the remaining section of the Negev, and hence changed the premises for the

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<sup>79</sup> Brian Urquhart’s private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary 4 March 1949, UCLA 364/8-7.

<sup>80</sup> Brian Urquhart’s private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary 3 March 1949, UCLA 364/8-7.

<sup>81</sup> FO 5 March 1949, FO371/75348, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 125.

<sup>82</sup> Brian Urquhart’s private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary 7 March 1949, UCLA 364/8-7. The final official green light from Iraq arrived as late as 20 March. Bunche Diary 20 March 1949, UCLA 364/8-7.

<sup>83</sup> FO 3 March 1949, FO371/75348, Bagdad to FO, Cypher No. 193.

<sup>84</sup> FO 5 March 1949, FO371/75381, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 123.

<sup>85</sup> FO 5 March 1949, FO371/75381, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 123.

<sup>86</sup> Brian Urquhart’s private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary 7 March 1949, UCLA 364/8-7.

<sup>87</sup> Brian Urquhart’s private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary 9 March 1949, UCLA 364/8-7. According to the British version hardly anything new emerged from this meeting as all the issues that were discussed were issues that had previously been discussed at length in the al-Tel – Dayan talks in Jerusalem. Stabler to Sec. of State, 9 March. 1949 in *FRUS* 1949, Vol. VI, p. 808.

negotiations. This operation was a clear breach of the truce. Despite this, the two sides managed to sign a ceasefire covering the Transjordanian lines 11 March, but not including the Iraqi lines of the northern West Bank. The Transjordanian tried to insist that the ceasefire had to cover that area as well, but the Israelis refused. Ralph Bunche managed to formulate a practical solution, Bunche's trademark, on which both parties could agree. The ceasefire, according to Bunche's suggestion, only applied to the Transjordanian front. Once Iraq had withdrawn, however, he "would call upon both parties to extend the agreement to any new Arab front occupied by Arab Legion".<sup>88</sup>

Next on the agenda were the Jerusalem lines, which was another slow process. This stood as quite a contrast to the surprising ease with which Moshe Dayan and Abdullah al-Tel had negotiated the Jerusalem truce in late November the previous year. The UN had then been excluded and the two negotiators had solved the issue with relative ease and a friendly tone.<sup>89</sup> At Rhodes, however, the parties seemed completely unable to move forward and both delegations asked Bunche to draw a proposal for Jerusalem that they could have as a starting point.<sup>90</sup> This was easier said than done, and the experienced mediator considered the job to be "the toughest assignment possible."<sup>91</sup> After several days Ralph Bunche presented his Jerusalem proposal to the parties in a meeting on the evening 15 March 1949.<sup>92</sup> The draft was then discussed with the two parties the following day. Transjordan agreed with the proposal on almost all points. The Israeli delegates initially rejected them, then accepted the main lines, and only ten minutes later launched a protest on certain of the lines concerning the Latrun sector, which is west of Jerusalem and on the vital Tel Aviv-Jerusalem highway. Despite the protest, however, the issue of Jerusalem was solved temporarily.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Brian Urquhart's private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary 11 March 1949, UCLA 364/8-7; See Chapter 6.

<sup>89</sup> See Chapter 3.

<sup>90</sup> Brian Urquhart's private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary 12 March 1949, UCLA 364/8-7; Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Joint Informal Meetings of the Israeli-Transjordan Armistice Negotiations at Rhodes, 12 and 13 March 1949, doc. 216, 217 and 220 in Freundlich, (Ed.) 1983, pp. 385-404, 406-412.

<sup>91</sup> Brian Urquhart's private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary 14 March 1949, UCLA 364/8-7.

<sup>92</sup> Brian Urquhart's private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary 13, 14 and 15 March 1949, UCLA 364/8-7; The proposal can be found in FO816/144, 20 March 1949.

<sup>93</sup> Brian Urquhart's private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary 16 March 1949, UCLA 364/8-7.

King Abdullah's use of an unprofessional Transjordanian negotiation team that had been given little, or no, political manoeuvrability made it increasingly clear that King Abdullah wanted personal control over the talks. His intentions were to shift the weight of the negotiations to his palace at Shuneh where he could participate personally. The Israeli negotiation team seemed more than willing to keep playing both these two games simultaneously. This allowed them to use the UN when previous UN Resolutions stood to their benefit, while at the same time by-pass the UN when it was beneficial to base the negotiations on facts on the ground rather than on the UN Resolutions.

### ***Off to Shuneh***

As the negotiations at Rhodes developed, the atmosphere became tenser and some of the more contentious issues were discussed at King Abdullah's palace at Shuneh rather than at Rhodes. Towards the end of March 1949 three secret bilateral meetings were held at Shuneh. It was there that the final details of the Israeli-Transjordanian armistice were finalized. King Abdullah was personally present in these meeting and the long winded procedures that marred the Rhodes talks were therefore avoided, but the cost of this efficiency, particularly for Transjordan, was high.

The Israeli demands at Shuneh were more severe and direct than those put forth at Rhodes, and they often took the form of outright threats to which Transjordan mostly yielded. These specific cases need to be investigated in greater detail in order to fully grasp the effect the regional and international power relations had on the negotiations. Two issues stand out. The first such issue was the handling of the southern Negev, which Israel captured in the midst of the negotiations and then presented the new lines as facts on the ground. The second such issue was the handling of the Iraqi withdrawal. Since Iraq was unwilling to negotiate with Israel, Iraq unilaterally withdrew and handed the areas it had occupied to Transjordan. Rather than treating this as a step forward in the negotiations, Israel argued that this was a breach of the truce but that this could be ignored if Transjordan was willing to give up a sizeable portion of the West Bank.<sup>94</sup> Both these cases are vivid examples of coercive diplomacy and, in a sense, represent the trends of the negotiations as a whole.

## **6. Coercion on Two Fronts**

*March – April 1949*

After Egypt was out of the game, having signed the armistice with Israel 24 February 1949, the Israeli Government had become cocksure, and with good reason. The day before Egypt signed its armistice with Israel, the US ambassador in Saudi Arabia commented:

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<sup>94</sup> See Chapter 6.

[T]he crux of the problem in the future was whether or not the United States of America were or were not prepared to use sanctions to coerce the Jews, if they refused to obey the directions of the United Nations [...] if the United States Government were not prepared for that, they might just as well throw the United Nations out of the window.<sup>1</sup>

Israel had clearly become the dominant power on the ground. The balance of power had completely tipped in Israel's favour, and the only way of reasserting some form of balance would have been through outside pressure. By March 1949 sanctions against Israel were miles off, as were most other forms of pressure. Such pressure had previously been available, but most such means had been squandered. The possibility that the US could threaten to block Israeli membership in the UN until concessions were made, for instance, was laid to waste when the US supported Israeli membership to the UN on 3 March 1949.<sup>2</sup> Having thrown away these sticks, the only real option left in terms of applying pressure on Israel was by military means. However, this alternative was never really on the table. Considering the American public's call of "bring our boys home" and the era of the Cold War dawning, with Europe being the main playing field, this option was out of the Truman administration's grasp. There was some discussion whether one could contribute to a smaller police force ensuring the internationalisation of Jerusalem, but it was concluded that this would increase the danger of making the Middle East an arena for the Cold War. Included in this calculation was the fact that the setting up of an international police force in Jerusalem would imply the possibility of Soviet participation. This could be ill afforded.<sup>3</sup> The approaching Cold War, and the fear thereof, made the US limit British pressure as well. This was based on an assumption that too much Western pressure could push Israel into the Soviet camp.

The US Government was not alone in squandering its available means of pressure. The British Government, since the war began, had wasted several chances of pressuring Israel. By March very few such options were left. Some of the available options were closed off as a result of the ongoing NATO negotiations.<sup>4</sup> This was particular true in terms of the southern Negev. The British Government viewed the

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<sup>1</sup> FO 23 Feb. 1949, FO371/75348, Jeddah to Bevin, No. 41.

<sup>2</sup> Karp 2004, p. 70. The Security Council vote for Israeli membership was conducted 4 March 1949. The result was 9 to 1. Egypt voted against and Britain abstained from voting. UN Security Council Resolution 4 March 1949: <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/055/06/IMG/NR005506.pdf?OpenElement> (10.01.2008).

<sup>3</sup> Karp 2004, pp. 97-114.

southern Negev as one of its most vital assets in the Middle East both because the area connected Asia with Africa, but also because the access to the Suez was secured by holding this land belt. Despite this deep rooted interest in the southern Negev, Europe was Britain's main concern as the Cold War was dawning. Hence finalizing the NATO agreement overrode all other international political decisions. If the US Government was not willing to apply pressure in the Negev, neither was Britain.<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, the Anglo-US relationship in terms of applying pressure (willing, but unable vs. able, but unwilling) was reflected in the relationship between the Foreign Office and the British representatives on the ground. Those on the ground were at times furious at the Foreign Office for what they perceived as breaking with the obligations Britain had with the Arab countries.<sup>6</sup>

The UN apparatus had also slowly been eroded on this point. As has been shown in recent research done on the Israeli-Egyptian armistice, the UN apparatus had favoured Israel over Egypt, and most of the concessions made in that armistice were Egyptian.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the UN Observers were at times barred from the areas of fighting, and when they were present their reports rarely resulted in anything more concrete than that Ralph Bunche received the reports and handed these on to the involved parties.<sup>8</sup>

The lack of foreign intervention was combined with the fact that the other Arab countries had either signed or were busy negotiating armistices with Israel. This left Transjordan isolated with Iraq as the last remaining Arab ally in Palestine. Iraq was more of a nuisance for Transjordan than it was an aid, however. In other words, a situation had been created in which Israel mastered the situation on the ground and could feel safe from outside pressure as long as certain lines were not crossed. As a result of this Israel was able to negotiate rather aggressively, using threats and by applying contradicting legalistic claims modelled to serve each case.<sup>9</sup> The negotiations at Rhodes had almost reached a standstill and it had become clear that

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<sup>4</sup> FO 10 March 1949, FO371/75294, FO to Amman, Cypher No. 202.

<sup>5</sup> Pundik 1994, p. 159; Louis 2006 (a), pp. 566-568.

<sup>6</sup> See e.g. FO 29 Dec. 1948, FO816/142, Amman to SoS, Cypher No. 982; FO 31 Dec. 1948, FO816/142, Beirut to Amman, Cypher No. 231; FO 10 March 1949, FO371/75294, FO to Amman, Cypher No. 202; FO 11 March 1949, FO371/75381, Amman to FO, Cypher 146.

<sup>7</sup> Næser 2005.

<sup>8</sup> Brian Urquhart's private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary 4, 23 and 24 March 1949, UCLA 364/8-7; FO 11 March 1949, FO371/75381, FO to New York, Cypher No. 921.

<sup>9</sup> Jerusalem to Sec. of State, 10 March 1949 in *FRUS* 1949, Vol. VI, pp. 814-815.



King Abdullah wanted to return to the personalized negotiation style he had been using with a certain amount of success previously. Such a personalization of negotiations was perhaps perceived as advantageous because it could expedite matters, as the slow procedures and bureaucracy that was part of the UN apparatus could be skipped. On the other hand there was a real risk involved. Although the experience from the Israeli-Egyptian armistice was not the best example for an Arab statesman, such an UN administered negotiation could facilitate a certain amount of pressure that secret personal talks could not. Either way, at some point King Abdullah made the conscious decision that personal talks had the greatest advantages.

### ***Facts on the Ground in the Southern Negev***

The issue of Aqaba and Operation Uvda (*Fait Accompli*) had major implications for the armistice negotiations between Israel and Transjordan, and it was highly illustrative of how Israel completely dominated the military, political and diplomatic situation. Operation Uvda took place in the second week of March 1949, but Israel had been building up towards it for a long time by making sure that it could be completed without British or US intervention.

Ever since British forces had landed at Aqaba in January 1949 the British military presence there had been an issue that kept coming to the fore in Anglo-Israeli-Transjordanian relations. It was obvious that Israel perceived the British troops at Aqaba as a major problem. Israel had since then been sending various complaints directly to Britain, as well as to the US Government and the UN.<sup>10</sup> The British Government, on its side, spent lots of time and energy defending its decision to send troops – a decision that from the outset was made in accordance with the Treaty of Alliance with Transjordan.<sup>11</sup>

The official reason behind the Israeli Government's perception of the British troops in Aqaba as a threat, was that the presence of this force was a breach of the truce, and that it therefore was a symbol of distrust and aggression.<sup>12</sup> This does not

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<sup>10</sup> To the UN e.g.: FO 11 Jan. 1949, FO371/75293, Haifa to FO, En clair No. 61; FO 7 Feb. 1949, FO371/75293, UK Delegation NY to FO, Cypher No. 281. To the US e.g.: FO 28 Feb. 1949, FO371/75293, UK Delegation NY to FO, 17/76/49.

<sup>11</sup> See e.g. juridical analysis (14 Feb.) of Eban's UN complaint (18 Jan.) in FO 28 Feb. 1949, FO371/75293, UK Delegation NY to FO, 17/76/49.

<sup>12</sup> FO 11 Jan. 1949, FO371/75293, Haifa to FO, En clair No. 61; FO 11 Jan. 1949, FO371/75398, New York to FO, En clair No. 79; Eban to President of the Security Council, 11 Jan. 1949, doc. 308 in

really clarify the issue. One possibility was that the Israeli Government really feared the British forces as had been the case in the summer of 1948 when fear of British military intervention was one of the reasons for not invading the West Bank.<sup>13</sup> Another possibility is that Israel wanted not only to reach the Gulf of Aqaba, but to attack Aqaba itself, and hence cut Transjordan off from the sea. There was, within the British ranks, some that feared that such an Israeli move might be made and preparations were made to defend Transjordan if this were to occur.<sup>14</sup> The British Government had made it clear that the force at Aqaba had no offensive purpose, but was placed there strictly in order to adhere to the Treaty of Alliance.<sup>15</sup> To some extent Israel seemed unaware that the Treaty defined its obligations as confined within Transjordan's borders.<sup>16</sup> An Israeli representative even admitted: "If we had been sure that you would not fight us we would certainly have gone further towards Akaba".<sup>17</sup>

Israel kept postponing the signing of a complete ceasefire agreement with the argument that "no lines are defined in the southern sector."<sup>18</sup> In early March, as negotiations were going on at Rhodes, IDF troops started exploring areas of the Negev patrolled by the Arab Legion. The Israeli forces were originally driven back and complaints were handed to Ralph Bunche.<sup>19</sup> The Transjordanian delegation at Rhodes had started arguing for Transjordan's claim to the southern tip of the Negev based on the argument, applied on all other fronts by Israel, that negotiations were to be based on lines of defence, and not on UN plans.<sup>20</sup> The British Ministry of Defence became alerted by these Israeli moves and reiterated its instructions to the commander at Aqaba. He was to return fire only if the Israeli army fired first, or crossed the border into Transjordan and disregarded the warnings that would be sent once the

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Freundlich (Ed.) 1984, pp. 355-358; FO 7 Feb. 1949, FO371/75293, UK Delegation NY to FO, Cypher No. 281.

<sup>13</sup> See Chapter 3.

<sup>14</sup> See e.g. FO 9 March 1949, FO371/75381, FO to Washington, Cypher No. 2740; FO 11 March 1949, FO371/75294, MEDME to Air Ministry London, Cypher KX. 11478.

<sup>15</sup> FO 10 Feb. 1949, FO371/75293, FO to NY, Cypher No. 509

<sup>16</sup> See Chapter 3.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in FO 24 Feb. 1949, FO371/75331, Jerusalem to FO, Cypher No. 149.

<sup>18</sup> Brian Urquhart's private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary 10 March 1949, UCLA 364/8-7.

<sup>19</sup> Brian Urquhart's private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary 1 and 9 March 1949, UCLA 364/8-7; FO 3 March 1949, FO371/75381, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 115.

<sup>20</sup> Brian Urquhart's private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary 8 March 1949, UCLA 364/8-7.

border was crossed.<sup>21</sup> This was of course within the obligations of the Treaty of Alliance, but it meant that as long as the IDF did not cross the red line, Transjordan could not lean on any form of British military pressure.

Then, in the middle of negotiations Israel initiated Operation Uvda (*Fait Accompli*). The operation was officially launched 10 March 1949 although parts of the operation occurred earlier.<sup>22</sup> An Israeli column marched down the Negev, gambling that the Arab Legion would offer no resistance and retreat.<sup>23</sup> The operation was a complete walkover.<sup>24</sup> IDF troops reached the gulf of Aqaba in the morning on the same day as the operation was launched.<sup>25</sup>

In response to the Israeli operation, the British Foreign Office issued a message concerning the Israeli movement of troops to Ralph Bunche and the US Government. The main content of this message was that the instructions that had previously been given to the British Commander at Aqaba were made clear to the Israeli Government, the Acting Mediator and the US Government.<sup>26</sup> Although releasing these military instructions was meant as an ultimatum to Israel, the effect must have been the opposite. Israel could finally confirm that Britain had no intention of engaging the IDF in Palestine. The US Government also issued a warning to Israel “of the dangerous consequences which may ensue from any aggression against Transjordan.”<sup>27</sup> As with the British “threat” it was clear that the US had no intention

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<sup>21</sup> FO 4 March 1949, FO371/75294, CoS Committee Instructions to British Commander at Aqaba, C.O.S. (49)82.

<sup>22</sup> FO 9 March 1949, FO371/75381, FO to Haifa, Cypher No. 239; FO 9 March 1949, FO371/75381, GHQ, MELF to MoD, Cypher No. 314/CCL; FO 9 March 1949, FO371/75381, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 135.

<sup>23</sup> Luttwak and Horowitz 1983, p. 52; Brian Urquhart’s private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary 11 March 1949, UCLA 364/8-7.

<sup>24</sup> Transjordan initially reported that there had been military clashes and that the border between the two countries had been crossed. Israel denied this and in the report issued by Ralph Bunche two weeks later no proof of any such clashes or of a border crossing could be verified. FO 9 March 1949, FO371/75381, FO to Haifa, Cypher No. 239; FO 9 March 1949, FO371/75294, Burrows to Secretary of State, E3246; FO 10 March 1949, FO371/75382, Haifa to FO, Cypher No. 416; FO 15 March 1949, FO371/75381, New York to FO, En Clair No. 584; FO 24 March 1949, FO371/75382, New York to FO, En Clair No. 656; Brian Urquhart’s private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary 11 March 1949, UCLA 364/8-7.

<sup>25</sup> FO 10 March 1949, FO371/75381, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 142; FO 11 March 1949, FO371/75381, FO to Cairo, Cypher No. 474; Brian Urquhart’s private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary 16 March 1949, UCLA 364/8-7.

<sup>26</sup> FO 9 March 1949, FO371/75381, FO to Haifa, Cypher No. 239; FO 9 March 1949, FO371/75381, FO to Washington, Cypher No. 2740; FO 10 March 1949, FO371/75381, Washington to FO, Cypher No. 1402; FO 11 March 1949, FO 371/75381, Washington to FO, Cypher No. 1441.

<sup>27</sup> FO 11 March 1949, FO 371/75382, FO note by Burrows, E3591; Sec. of State to President, 10 March 1949 in *FRUS* 1949, Vol. VI, pp. 810-811.

of intervening unless the international border was crossed. The IDF, in effect, had been able to test the British stance, found out exactly what they had hoped, and could therefore occupy the southern Negev without fear of British or US intervention as long as they did not cross the international frontier with Transjordan.<sup>28</sup>

The British army clearly feared that there was a looming possibility of the IDF launching an attack on Aqaba, and as a precautionary measure sent reinforcements shortly after Operation Uvda had been initiated.<sup>29</sup> These reinforcements once again brought up the controversy surrounding the British troops in Aqaba.<sup>30</sup> The issue had legalistic implications, and it was argued by Israel that they constituted a breach of the truce. Although Britain seemed to have certain sound arguments defending this troop movement, it was not a clear cut case.<sup>31</sup> In a press statement Ralph Bunche declared that Transjordan, Israel and Great Britain had all violated the truce by their movement of troops in the Aqaba region.<sup>32</sup> Although this did not clear Great Britain of the Israeli accusation, it did mean that it was harder for Israel to press the allegation further.<sup>33</sup>

When the issue of reduction of forces was brought up at Rhodes, the Israeli delegation argued that the British troops in Aqaba had to be included in the Transjordanian total.<sup>34</sup> The argument was rejected by both Transjordan and Britain on the basis that these troops were in Aqaba for purely defensive reasons. Bunche also favoured this last interpretation, adding to the argument the fact that an armistice only included parties involved in Palestine, thus excluding the British troops.<sup>35</sup> Towards the end of March 1949, however, the British Chiefs of Staff decided that the forces at

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<sup>28</sup> FO 22 March 1949, FO371/75386, Jerusalem to FO, Cypher No. 224.

<sup>29</sup> FO 10 March 1949, FO371/75294, Note from Burrows, E3373; FO 10 March 1949, FO371/75294, GHQ, MELF to MoD, Cypher 315/CCL; FO 11 March 1949, FO371/75381, FO to Amman, Cypher No. 209; FO 11 March 1949, FO371/75294, War Office to MELF, Flash No. 25528.

<sup>30</sup> For the first Aqaba controversy see Chapter 4; FO 15 March, FO371/75381, New York to FO, Cypher No. 585; FO 21 March 1949, FO371/75382, Note from Israeli rep. at the UN to UK delegation to the UN.

<sup>31</sup> FO 23 March 1949, FO371/75382, UK Del. New York to FO, Cypher No. 645; FO 23 March 1949, FO371/75382, New York to FO, Cypher No. 646; FO 23 March 1949, FO371/75382, New York to FO, Cypher No. 651.

<sup>32</sup> FO 23 March 1949, FO371/75382, New York to FO, Cypher No. 651; FO 24 March 1949, FO371/75382, New York to FO, En Clair No. 656.

<sup>33</sup> FO 28 March 1949, FO371/75383, FO to New York, Cypher No. 1114.

<sup>34</sup> Brian Urquhart's private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary 18 March 1949, UCLA 364/8-7.

<sup>35</sup> Brian Urquhart's private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary 17 March 1949, UCLA 364/8-7; Eleventh Joint Informal Meeting of the Israeli-Transjordan Armistice Negotiations, 17 March, doc. 233 in Freundlich (Ed.) 1983, pp. 443-453.

Aqaba could be reduced once the armistice was signed on the conditions that Israel made a similar reduction and that Transjordan accepted this reduction.<sup>36</sup> Presence of UN observers was also added as a precondition.<sup>37</sup> Since Transjordan never made the demand for British withdrawal, and since a reciprocal withdrawal of Israeli forces was not included in the Rhodes armistice, the British troops stationed at Aqaba were not reduced.<sup>38</sup>

The launching of Operation Uvda had larger consequences for the negotiation than that of being a launch pad for a renewed debate over the British troops stationed in Aqaba. The Israeli military move had, after all, been launched as negotiations were in progress, and the success of the Israeli military move changed the premises for the negotiations. The southern Negev was instantly transformed from being a Transjordanian asset to being an Israeli “fact on the ground”.

Ralph Bunche reacted to the Operation Uvda with sarcastic disgust: “smack in the midst of armistice negotiations with Transjordan. Good faith!”, and later “nice work while armistice negotiations are in progress. [...] am thinking of resigning.”<sup>39</sup> Bunche turned on Moshe Dayan making it clear that he considered Operation Uvda to be a breach of the truce, and that if the matter came up to the Security Council the Israeli forces would have to withdraw or Bunche would resign.<sup>40</sup> Resigning was, in other words, a threat that Bunche seriously contemplated. Such a termination of his mission would have landed the blame for the failure of the armistice on the Israelis. The threat of resignation was therefore a grave one. In negotiation theory it has been pointed out that one of the strongest hands a mediator controls is “to raise the cost of an uncompromising stand”.<sup>41</sup> The threat of resignation was exactly that. In this case, however, Israel did not give in. The complaint concerning the breach of the truce never reached the Security Council, and yet Bunche did not resign. Ralph Bunche had perhaps not intended his threat to be a bluff, and I have found no sources that could

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<sup>36</sup> FO 28 March 1949, FO371/75294, Minutes of CoS Committee Meeting, C.O.S. (49) 47<sup>th</sup> Meeting. Since Transjordan had called for the British forces under the Treaty of Alliance the reduction of forces had to be accepted by Transjordan. FO 30 March 1949, FO371/75383, FO to New York, Cypher No. 1130; FO 29 March 1949, FO371/75294, MoD to GHQ, ME Land Forces, COS(ME) 338.

<sup>37</sup> FO 29 March 1949, FO371/75294, MoD to GHQ, ME Land Forces, COS(ME) 338.

<sup>38</sup> FO 1 April, FO371/75294, GHQ, MELF to MoD, 320/CCL; FO 2 April, FO371/75383, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 205; FO 3 April 1949, FO371/75383, FO to Amman, Cypher No. 278; FO 5 April 1949, FO371/75383, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 208.

<sup>39</sup> Brian Urquhart’s private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary 11 and 12 March 1949, UCLA 364/8-7.

<sup>40</sup> Urquhart 1998, p. 215.

<sup>41</sup> Touval 1982, p. 6.

point in either direction here. The Israelis, however, treated Bunche's threat as if it was a bluff. They gambled and pushed forward with their stance despite Bunche's threat of resignation. Bunche did not resign. In a sense this confirmed the Israeli interpretation of the threat as an empty one. It should be noted that Ralph Bunche was not the only person who threatened to resign. Colonel Jundi, who was head of the Transjordanian delegation at Rhodes, threatened to break off the negotiations, but he was talked out of it by Ralph Bunche.<sup>42</sup>

The importance of Operation Uvda and the effect it had on the armistice negotiations is grossly under-discussed in the existing literature covering the 1948 War and its aftermath. Even Avi Shlaim, who has written the most comprehensive study of the Israeli-Transjordanian relationship,<sup>43</sup> concludes that hostilities ended 7 January 1949 – two months prior to Operation Uvda.<sup>44</sup> There is little doubt that Operation Uvda was not a military clash in a classical sense, but, neither was it a mere movement of troops into unoccupied land, nor was it a redistribution of Israeli forces within Israel. It was clearly a hostile action and it resulted in an Israeli land grab that had to be dealt with in the negotiations as “facts on the ground”. Moshe Dayan claimed that “there had been no Israeli advance but, rather, a deployment of forces which replaced the previous Israeli control of the territory by reconnaissance, and that there had been no military clash with the Arab Legion.”<sup>45</sup> The same stance was taken by Walter Eytan who argued that the whole move was in line with the Partition Plan.<sup>46</sup> Israeli representatives also argued that the Arab Legion should not have been in the Negev and that such a presence was, in itself, an offensive action.<sup>47</sup> However, internally the operation is referred to as the “occupation southern Negev, diplomatic

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<sup>42</sup> Brian Urquhart's private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary 23 March 1949, UCLA 364/8-7.

<sup>43</sup> Shlaim 1988.

<sup>44</sup> Shlaim 2001, p. 28. To his defence he later states that “the armistice agreement with Jordan represented a major victory for Israeli diplomacy. “Coercive diplomacy” might be a more appropriate term, since the negotiations were accompanied by the threat, and actual use of, military force. This combination of diplomacy and force secured for Israel significant territorial and strategic gains in the Negev and in the Wadi Ara area.” Shlaim 2001, pp. 44-45.

<sup>45</sup> Urquhart 1998, p. 215.

<sup>46</sup> FO 11 March 1949, FO371/75383, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs to British Consulate General, Haifa, FA/212/49.

<sup>47</sup> FO 11 March 1949, FO371/75381, FO to Amman, Cypher No. 198; FO 12 March 1949, FO371/75381, New York to FO, En clair no. 571; Elath to Sharett, 10 March. 1949, doc. 426 in Freundlich (Ed.) 1984, pp. 483-484.

warfare with Transjordan [and] United Kingdom.”<sup>48</sup> King Abdullah and Prime Minister Abul Huda

were shocked by the Israeli stance and likened the Israeli attitude concerning the move to “Hitler after a successful coup.”<sup>49</sup>

This Israeli argument that Operation Uvda had been a simple movement of troops within Israeli territory was not considered legitimate by Ralph Bunche who pointed out – even if there were no clashes, such an action was still a breach of the truce.<sup>50</sup> Despite the gravity of the issue it seemed to ebb out as Transjordan did not make further formal complaints. Bunche was nothing less than astounded by this silence.<sup>51</sup> Transjordan had, after all, in one day, lost what was perhaps their best bargaining chip in the talks.<sup>52</sup> The silence was most probably due to the fact that King Abdullah was more worried about the situation on the so-called Iraqi front on the northern West Bank.<sup>53</sup> He feared that complaints made through the UN would provoke Israel into attacking the Arab Legion on the West Bank. His analysis was that the best way of avoiding an Israeli offensive was by approaching them directly.<sup>54</sup> 11 March, the day after Operation Uvda, the General Ceasefire was signed and the armistice negotiations continued.<sup>55</sup>

Here one should recall the demands made by the parties in the negotiations in January and mid-February 1949, where Israeli access to the Red Sea was one of the most formidable demands made towards Transjordan. In return for Israeli access to the Red Sea, Transjordan had first demanded Jaffa and then later suggested shared access to both Haifa and Eilat.<sup>56</sup> With the successful completion of Operation Uvda there was nothing left to negotiate in terms of Israeli access to the Red Sea. Israel had

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<sup>48</sup> Sharett to Elath, 12 March 1949, doc. 434 in Freundlich (Ed.) 1984, p. 494.

<sup>49</sup> FO 12 March 1949, FO371/75381, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 152. This was not the last time the Hitler metaphor was used in these negotiations. It was used several times in relation to the Iraqi-lines blackmail (see later discussion): e.g. FO 23 March 1949, FO816/144, Handwritten note from Glubb Pasha to Pirie Gordon, British Legation Amman; FO 24 March 1949, FO371/75386, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 185. It was also used when discussing the withdrawal of the Aqaba force. FO 2 April, FO371/75383, BMEC Cairo to FO, Cypher No. 220.

<sup>50</sup> Urquhart 1998, p. 215.

<sup>51</sup> Brian Urquhart’s private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary 14 March 1949, UCLA 364/8-7.

<sup>52</sup> Stabler to Sec. of State, 9 March. 1949 in *FRUS* 1949, Vol. VI, p. 808.

<sup>53</sup> Brian Urquhart’s private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary 16 March 1949, UCLA 364/8-7.

<sup>54</sup> Urquhart 1998, p. 216.

<sup>55</sup> Transcript of ceasefire found in Acting Mediator to Sec. Gen., 11 March. 1949 in *FRUS* 1949, Vol. VI, pp. 816-817.

<sup>56</sup> See Chapter 5.

obtained a major goal and Transjordan had lost a bartering position of great magnitude. Since neither the US nor the British Government reacted, and since there had been no battles, this alteration of the facts on the ground had been cost free for Israel.

### ***Blackmail on the Iraqi Front***

In early March the involved parties were still unable to come to an understanding as to how Iraq was to be represented at the talks, and how the Iraqi troops were going to withdraw from the northern section of the West Bank. These issues had, as we have seen, long been a thorn in the side for King Abdullah.<sup>57</sup> A week into the Rhodes talks King Abdullah finally started making meaningful progress with the Iraqis. 7 March the solution on the table was that the Iraqi forces stationed at the front were going to withdraw to the areas surrounding Nablus and Jericho, giving control of the front to Transjordan.<sup>58</sup>

At the second Joint Formal Meeting of the Israeli-Transjordan Armistice Negotiations, held at Rhodes 11 March, a ceasefire covering all fronts between Transjordan and Israel was signed. Ralph Bunche added, without protest from either of the delegations, a point stating:

If and when Transjordan forces should take over any sectors of any Arab fronts not occupied by Transjordan forces at the time of the signing of this cease-fire agreement, I shall call upon both parties immediately to extend this cease-fire agreement in its present form to such new sectors or fronts, and I will expect each Delegation in these negotiations to act favourably on such call.<sup>59</sup>

Walter Eytan sent a protest regarding the Transjordanian proposal for taking over the Iraqi lines as early as the 14 March, only three days after Bunche's formula for the extension of the ceasefire lines had been agreed upon. Eytan's argument was nothing but absurd: "The carrying out of such redeployment confers serious advantage on the other side".<sup>60</sup> It was obvious that Transjordan had no military advantage in such a takeover as its lines were already overstretched. Ralph Bunche was fully aware of the

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<sup>57</sup> See Chapter 4 and 5.

<sup>58</sup> FO 7 March 1949, FO371/75348, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 127; FO 8 March 1949, FO371/75349, Bagdad to FO, Cypher No. 209.

<sup>59</sup> UN 11 March 1949, UN S-0618-0010, Second Joint Formal Meeting of the Israeli-Transjordan Armistice Negotiations, Summary.

<sup>60</sup> Eytan to Mohn, 13 March 1949, doc. 223 in Freundlich (Ed.) 1983, p. 415.



absurdity, and his reply, a day later, seems to have been astute: “[I]nforming him [Eytan] I do not accept his interpretations or conclusions.”<sup>61</sup>

Adding to the legalistic complaint that Eytan had sent to Ralph Bunche, the Israeli delegation at Rhodes sent a complaint directly to the Transjordanian delegation arguing that raids into Israel had taken place from the Iraqi held areas of the West Bank. This complaint was formulated as a “last ultimatum”, a formulation that convinced Glubb Pasha that an Israeli attack on the West Bank was imminent.<sup>62</sup> Glubb’s fears were well founded. Internal Israeli documents reveal that an attack on the West Bank was contemplated to a great extent. It was analysed in terms of what excuse was needed for such an operation, what the diplomatic cost would be, what the British reaction would be, etc. The discussion concluded that the risk was far higher than in the case of Aqaba and that there was no guarantee that Britain would not intervene.<sup>63</sup>

Transjordan pointed out that the cross border raids by Arab irregulars was an Iraqi responsibility. Transjordan stated that these raids would cease when a takeover was completed, but that they needed guarantees to the effect that no Israeli attack would be launched once the Arab Legion had taken over the Iraqi front. Iraq also asked for the US Government to guarantee a safety period of 10-15 days during which the takeover was to take place. No such guarantees were forthcoming.<sup>64</sup>

The British Foreign Office also clearly feared an attack on the weakened Arab Legion lines, and therefore urged Iraq to join the armistice negotiations rather than withdraw, as this withdrawal would place the Arab Legion in a precarious situation.<sup>65</sup> Besides urging the Iraqi forces to hold their positions, the Foreign Office urged the US Government to apply pressure on the Israelis in order that such an attack should not take place.<sup>66</sup> It was also discussed whether one could threaten Israel by stating that any move on the West Bank would “seriously prejudice her prospect of election to the

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<sup>61</sup> Brian Urquhart’s private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary 15 March 1949, UCLA 364/8-7.

<sup>62</sup> FO 14 March 1949, FO371/75386, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 154.

<sup>63</sup> See e.g. Eytan to Aban, 14 March 1949, doc. 436; Eban to Eytan, 14 March 1949, doc. 437 and Eban to Eytan, 15 March 1949, doc. 441 in Freundlich, (Ed.) 1984, pp. 497-501.

<sup>64</sup> FO 15 March 1949, FO816/144, HQ Arab Legion Amman to British Legation Amman, ALC/31(B); FO 18 March 1949, FO371/75386, Bagdad to FO, Cypher No. 247.

<sup>65</sup> FO 14 March 1949, FO371/75386, FO to Bagdad, Cypher No. 240.

<sup>66</sup> FO 14 March 1949, FO371/75386, FO to Washington, Cypher No. 2934; FO 14 March 1949, FO371/75382, Brief for Sec. of State for conversation with Kirkbride.

United Nations.”<sup>67</sup> Such a threat was never followed up on as both the US and British Government had in effect lent support to Israeli UN membership by granting it recognition.<sup>68</sup> The final vote was held in the General Assembly May 1949, with both the US and UK supporting Israeli membership.<sup>69</sup>

The US State Department shared the Foreign Office’s worries regarding the West Bank.<sup>70</sup> However, apart from informing the Israeli Government of their stance on such an attack, which was negative, they apprised the British Government that they had very little influence over Israel, and had few means of applying pressure unless the case was as clear cut as it had been in the Egyptian case when Israel had breached an international frontier.<sup>71</sup> The furthest the US Government seemed willing to go towards pressuring the Israeli Government was to “discourage [...] firmly from taking any forceful action on Iraqi or any other front in Palestine.”<sup>72</sup> The Foreign Office did not pursue the case further. There was an air of resignation within the Foreign Office when, in mid-March, the only aid they seemed able to give was to urge the Transjordanian and Iraqi Governments to publicize all Israeli threats.<sup>73</sup>

It was on the issue of the Iraqi forces and their withdrawal from the northern West Bank that the first secret meeting at Shuneh took place. Head of the Israeli delegation Reuven Shiloah informed Bunche that there was going to be a conference on the issue at Shuneh, but said little else.<sup>74</sup> The Iraqi issue had, as predicted, become one of the biggest deadlocks in the Rhodes negotiations.<sup>75</sup> In fact, it was only as late as 20 March that Bunche received confirmation from Iraq that Transjordan could negotiate on behalf of Iraq and that the Arab Legion would take over the Iraqi lines.<sup>76</sup> In view of previous Israeli complaints and threats, Iraq sought to ensure that no provocations were created in this withdrawal, and invited the UN to increase the number of observers present in the areas from which Iraq withdrew in the northern

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<sup>67</sup> FO 15 March 1949, FO371/75386, Jerusalem to FO, Cypher No. 210.

<sup>68</sup> Britain granted *de facto* recognition of Israel 29 January 1949. Louis 2006 (a), p. 756.

<sup>69</sup> Waage, Hilde Henriksen: *Da staten Israel ble til*. Oslo 1989, pp. 255-256.

<sup>70</sup> Stabler to the Sec. of State, 12 March. 1949 in *FRUS* 1949, Vol. VI, pp. 824-825.

<sup>71</sup> FO 15 March 1949, FO371/75386, Washington to FO, Cypher No. 1506; See Chapter 4.

<sup>72</sup> FO 17 March 1949, FO371/75386, Bagdad to FO, Cypher No. 245.

<sup>73</sup> FO 15 March 1949, FO371/75386, FO to Amman, Cypher No. 222.

<sup>74</sup> Brian Urquhart’s private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary 16 and 18 March 1949, UCLA 364/8-7.

<sup>75</sup> FO 17 March 1949, FO371/75386, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 162.

<sup>76</sup> Brian Urquhart’s private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary 20 March 1949, UCLA 364/8-7. The US Embassy in Bagdad had received such a confirmation at least two days earlier. FO 18 March 1949, FO371/75386, FO to Bagdad, Cypher No. 261.

West Bank.<sup>77</sup> Just when the Iraq issue seemed to be solved, however, the Iraqi Government once again pulled the plug, stating in a cable to Ralph Bunche that the withdrawal was only a move to “rear positions” and that they were unwilling to be bound by an armistice signed by Transjordan.<sup>78</sup> This infuriated Ralph Bunche. The Transjordanian delegation, however, thought that he was overreacting and that it was more rhetoric than it was a change of heart.<sup>79</sup> This last view was also shared by the British representative in Baghdad.<sup>80</sup>

This new, albeit pending, agreement with Iraq, was clearly perceived as a step forward for the involved parties, but along with the signing of the Israeli-Lebanese armistice on 23 March, Transjordan became increasingly isolated and hence more prone to Israeli pressure. In a sense all progress Transjordan made within an inter-Arab context was simultaneously a setback in terms of the Transjordanian-Israeli power balance.

Israel had accepted the declaration Bunche had added to the ceasefire stating that once Transjordan had taken over the front from the Iraqi troops the parties would extend the ceasefire to include the strip of land previously held by the Iraqi forces.<sup>81</sup> When Iraqi was about to withdraw, however, Israel clearly broke with this common understanding by declaring, 18 March 1949, that the upcoming Iraqi withdrawal was a breach of the truce.<sup>82</sup> Legalistically Israel had a point, since troop movement on the front could be considered a breach of the truce. The Iraqi withdrawal, however, was beneficial for Israel as it enabled a hostile army to be replaced with a force that was interested in negotiating. Despite this, Israel attempted to further benefit from the situation by claiming that the truce was breached. It was in relation to this complaint that the greatest Israeli threat took place. In a secret meeting between Abdullah al-Tel and Moshe Dayan in Jerusalem 18 March, Dayan informed al-Tel that Israel could be willing to ignore the fact that Transjordan had broken the truce if, in return,

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<sup>77</sup> FO18 March 1949, FO371/75386, Bagdad to FO, Cypher No. 248; FO 21 March 1949, FO371/75386, Bagdad to FO, Cypher No. 260.

<sup>78</sup> Brian Urquhart’s private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary 22 March 1949, UCLA 364/8-7.

<sup>79</sup> Brian Urquhart’s private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary 22 and 23 March 1949, UCLA 364/8-7.

<sup>80</sup> FO 22 March 1949, FO371/75386, Bagdad to FO, Cypher No. 267.

<sup>81</sup> UN 11 March 1949, UN S-0618-0010, Second Joint Formal Meeting of the Israeli-Transjordan Armistice Negotiations, Summary.

<sup>82</sup> FO 18 March 1949, FO816/144, Message from King Abdullah to British Chargé d’Affaires Amman, S.1/49.

Transjordan was willing to concede territory to Israel.<sup>83</sup> This was clearly coercive diplomacy.

The British representative in Amman commented on the issue: “Another meeting is arranged for this evening when the exact amount of this particular instance of blackmail is to be named.”<sup>84</sup> When King Abdullah met Dayan at Shuneh the barter was not much more specific. Dayan only made it clear that Transjordan would have to concede “certain unspecified “high points””.<sup>85</sup> On the 22 March, in a meeting in Jerusalem, the term “high points” was defined as “a general withdrawal of the Arab Legion for 15 kilometres along the front opposite the coastal plain.”<sup>86</sup> Transjordan was given 24 hours in which to agree “or Israel would withdraw its agreement to Arab Legion taking over from Iraqis.” Dayan was even reported to have said “that if rectification not made by agreement, Israel would make them anyway.”<sup>87</sup> With this last statement it became clear that the Israeli demand was nothing less than blackmail. Transjordan could either concede territory voluntarily or Israel would launch an attack and take that land anyway. The British Foreign Office was shocked by this threat, but was incapable of doing anything about it apart from urging the US State Department to exert pressure on Israel. The State Department urged Israel to stop issuing such demands, but little real pressure was applied.<sup>88</sup>

23 March 1949, during a long and hard round of negotiations at Shuneh, the size of the demanded area was slightly reduced.<sup>89</sup> It was to be a “belt about 5 kilometres deep stretching from just east of Lydda to the north of Jenin along a front of 60 kilometres.” Glubb Pasha estimated that this area included “about 15 [Palestinian] villages and approximately 12,000 inhabitants.”<sup>90</sup> The land in question was also

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<sup>83</sup> FO 19 March 1949, FO371/75386, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 172; FO 22 March 1949, FO371/75386, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 179; FO 23 March 1949, FO371/75386, FO to Washington, Cypher No. 3847; Bar-Joseph 1987, pp. 215-216.

<sup>84</sup> FO 19 March 1949, FO371/75386, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 172. The FO was not alone in calling it blackmail, see e.g. Stabler to Sec. of State, 23 March. 1949 in *FRUS* 1949, Vol. VI, pp. 861-862.

<sup>85</sup> FO 21 March 1949, FO371/75386, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 177.

<sup>86</sup> FO 23 March 1949, FO371/75386, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 180.

<sup>87</sup> Stabler to the Sec. of State, 23 March. 1949 in *FRUS* 1949, Vol. VI, pp. 859-861.

<sup>88</sup> FO 23 March 1949, FO371/75386, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 180; FO 23 March 1949, FO371/75386, FO to Washington, Cypher No. 3847; FO 23 March 1949, FO371/75386, Washington to FO, Cypher No. 1673.

<sup>89</sup> It was assumed that this reduction was due largely to the slight interference of the US State Department. FO 23 March 1949, FO371/75386, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 182.

<sup>90</sup> FO 23 March 1949, FO371/75386, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 182; FO 24 March 1949, FO371/75387, Washington to FO, Cypher No. 1680. The Iraqi estimate of Palestinians living in this area was 50-80,000, but Glubb Pasha's number seems more reliable. FO 29 March 1949, FO371/75387, Bagdad to FO, Cypher No. 295.

described as “some of the best agricultural land now remaining in Arab hands”.<sup>91</sup> If there was any doubt as to whether there was a threat involved, the Israeli negotiators, Walter Eytan and Yigal Yadin, “demanded acceptance by 1900 hours this evening [...] in the event of refusal Transjordan “would soon see” what would happen.”<sup>92</sup> These two, Eytan and Yadin, later expressed moral qualms as to the demands:

We were, after all, discussing the future of villages which were wholly Arab in population and situated in territory under Arab control. [...] In spite of all guarantees and fine phrases, it was as clear to the Transjordanians as to us that the people of these villages were likely to become refugees as soon as the Iraqis withdrew, and possibly even before.<sup>93</sup>

Professional negotiators as they were, neither Eytan nor Yadin let these moral qualms get to them, however, and the demand was held forth.

King Abdullah was convinced that a refusal would result in an all-out Israeli attack and he arranged for a meeting the same evening.<sup>94</sup> Glubb Pasha, however, was convinced that it would be possible to slightly postpone the agreement in an attempt to obtain some form of US pressure.<sup>95</sup> There was some optimism in terms of getting such US pressure, and it was believed that the reduction in the size of the strip of land demanded by Israeli was the result of some degree of US involvement.<sup>96</sup> I have been unable to find any evidence supporting this.

Convinced by Glubb Pasha’s argument of the availability of US pressure, King Abdullah managed to postpone the signing of the Shuneh agreement by a full week. He used the argument that the Prime Minister personally had to sign it.

He was in Lebanon at the time, and Israel gave him a week in which to return and sign the agreement which was then to be incorporated in the Rhodes agreement.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> FO 25 March 1949, FO371/75387, Strand to Prime Minister, P.M./W.S./49/42.

<sup>92</sup> FO 23 March 1949, FO371/75386, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 182.

<sup>93</sup> Eytan to Sharett, 3 April 1949, doc. 267 in Freundlich (Ed.) 1983, pp. 499-500.

<sup>94</sup> FO 23 March 1949, FO371/75386, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 182. There are several indications of an Israeli takeover in the Hebron area in the same time period as the issuing of the Iraqi blackmail. From the various sources, however, it is hard to accurately evaluate the size and nature of this takeover. Brian Urquhart’s private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary 23 and 24 March 1949, UCLA 364/8-7; FO 26 March 1949, FO371/75387, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 187; FO 4 April 1949, FO371/75273, Monthly Situation Report on Transjordan March 1949.

<sup>95</sup> FO 23 March 1949, FO371/75386, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 182; FO 23 March 1949, FO371/75386, FO to Washington, Cypher No. 3847; FO 24 March 1949, FO371/75386, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 185.

<sup>96</sup> FO 24 March 1949, FO371/75387, Ernst Bevin to Prime Minister Attlee, P.M./49/40.

<sup>97</sup> FO 24 March 1949, FO371/75386, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 185. The full text for the “Agreement between the Hashemite Jordan Kingdom and the State of Israel” (concerning “the taking over by the

Prime Minister Abul Huda, not surprisingly, was uncomfortable with this solution and was highly pessimistic. In his view it was unlikely that US pressure of any significance was going to be forthcoming, and he was convinced that Israel was going to take over the rest of Palestine if the agreement was not signed.<sup>98</sup> By this point Abul Huda, who had previously been pro-UN, had, in light of the developments of the negotiations, become convinced that Ralph Bunche was biased in a pro-Israeli direction, stating that “no trust should be put either in the Acting Mediator or in the [PCC] or in the Security Council.” He clearly perceived Bunche to be partially responsible for the fact that Israel was able to make harsh demands from Transjordan without facing any international pressure of significance.<sup>99</sup>

The armistice text, which was finalized, but not signed, at Shuneh 23 March, included a clause stating that “Israel [...] has made similar changes for the benefit of the Hashemite Jordan Kingdom in other areas.” This clause did not match well with reality, as there were no “similar changes”. It was inserted purely for the sake of helping Transjordan save face in case the concessions leaked.<sup>100</sup> Israel had no intentions of bartering land apart from a minute, purely symbolic modification. It was first suggested that Transjordan be compensated in the Tulkarem region, but the minuscule change was finally made in the Hebron area and in the northeast.<sup>101</sup> The strip of land handed over to Israel in this agreement is geographically small. In relative terms it is around 1% of historical Palestine and roughly the same size as the Gaza strip.<sup>102</sup>

The week King Abdullah had managed to buy himself was spent in a last ditch attempt at obtaining US pressure against Israel. King Abdullah personally sent a letter

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Arab Legion of the Iraqi front.”) is found in FO 371/75387. Summary with some comments: FO 24 March 1949, FO371/75386, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 186.

<sup>98</sup> FO 28 March 1949, FO371/75387, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 190.

<sup>99</sup> FO 26 March 1949, FO371/75387, Beirut to FO, Cypher No. 174. For Abul Huda’s previous pro-UN views see Chapter 4.

<sup>100</sup> FO 27 March 1949, FO371/75387, Amman to Eastern Department FO, S.1/49; Stabler to Sec. of State, 24 March. 1949 in *FRUS* 1949, Vol. VI, p. 867; Eytan to Sharett, 23 March 1949, doc. 248 in Freundlich (Ed.) 1983, p. 471.

<sup>101</sup> FO 24 March 1949, FO371/75386, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 186; FO 24 March 1949, FO371/75387, Washington to FO, Cypher No. 1680; FO 25 March 1949, FO371/75387, Washington to FO, Cypher No. 1712; “Agreement between the Hashemite Jordan Kingdom and the State of Israel” (concerning amendment to “the taking over by the Arab Legion of the Iraqi front.”) signed 30 March, found in FO 371/75387; FO 31 March 1949, FO371/75387, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 202; Eytan, Walter: “Three Nights at Shuneh.” in *Midstream*, Nov. 1980, p. 54; Stabler to Sec. of State, 31 March. 1949 in *FRUS* 1949, Vol. VI, pp. 886-887; Urquhart 1998, p. 217. See Appendix: Map: 5: Armistice Lines.

<sup>102</sup> The strip on the West Bank is 300sq km whilst the Gaza strip is 360sq km.

to President Truman urging him to apply pressure on Israel so that an armistice could successfully be signed without loss of further land and hence with reduced risk of renewed fighting.<sup>103</sup> In line with this the British representatives in Amman were instructed to increase the flow of information to their US counterparts so that the extent of the blackmail could become fully apparent to the US.<sup>104</sup> Two days before the deadline ran out the Israeli delegates at Rhodes tried to persuade Ralph Bunche to threaten Transjordan into expediting matters regarding the Shuneh agreement concerning the Iraqi front on the northern West Bank.<sup>105</sup> Whether the reason for Israel's sudden demand for haste was due to fear of possible US pressure is uncertain. I have not been able to find any conclusive evidence.

Israel, however, had nothing to fear. As far as the US State Department was concerned, the concessions demanded of Transjordan were small (5x60km) and not permanent as it was an armistice that was being negotiated and not a peace agreement.<sup>106</sup> Truman responded personally to King Abdullah's letter stating, in a "very non-committal" manner that "the Jews should eventually give compensation for all territory they get in excess of the 1947 partition."<sup>107</sup> "Eventually" was understood as "an ultimate political settlement between the Parties", i.e. a final peace treaty.<sup>108</sup> This meant that the American stance – that King Abdullah must accept the concessions – was the standing politic. This was shocking news to the British Foreign Office. The feeling of hopelessness created by US passivity was, by the representative in Jerusalem, set into the context of cooperation in Europe: "[This] seems to augur very ill for prospects of effective co-operation between us and the United States in Europe, where we shall be face with opposition far more powerful and determined than the Israeli Government can put up."<sup>109</sup> This made the Foreign Office realize that no pressure was going to materialize and found itself forced to advise King Abdullah to sign while there was still time.<sup>110</sup> King Abdullah reacted to the letter in a similar

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<sup>103</sup> FO 25 March 1949 (letter states 1948, but this must be an error), FO816/145, Abdullah Ibn El-Hussein to Truman.

<sup>104</sup> FO 25 March 1949, FO371/75386, FO to Amman, Cypher No. 251; FO 26 March 1949, FO371/75386, FO to Amman, Cypher No. 254.

<sup>105</sup> Brian Urquhart's private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary 28 March 1949, UCLA 364/8-7.

<sup>106</sup> FO 25 March 1949, FO371/75387, Washington to FO, Cypher No. 1711.

<sup>107</sup> FO 30 March 1949, FO371/75387, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 199.

<sup>108</sup> FO 4 April 1949, FO371/75387, Amman to Ernest Bevin (FO), Despatch No. 23.

<sup>109</sup> FO 28 March 1949, FO371/75387, Jerusalem to FO, Cypher No. 247.

<sup>110</sup> FO 29 March 1949, FO371/75383, FO to Amman, Cypher No. 263.

fashion, stating “now no other course of action left open but to accept Israel’s demands”.<sup>111</sup>

What was striking in relation to the Israeli blackmail was not only the nature of the threat in itself, but also the fact that the Israeli delegates at Rhodes informed Ralph Bunche that no such demands were going to take place.<sup>112</sup> King Abdullah felt that Transjordan had a clear interest in making sure that such concessions were made in utmost secrecy. The handover of the demanded area was planned as a gradual event taking place over four months so as to reduce unwanted publicity.<sup>113</sup> Surrendering such a large area of land that was under Arab Legion control, and that had been given to the Arabs by the Partition Plan, was a highly controversial issue. Given the extent of such a controversy, it had to be discussed in utmost secrecy. Talks at Shuneh could offer this, whereas Rhodes talks could not.<sup>114</sup> Prime Minister Abul Huda was of a different opinion and wanted the agreement to be included openly in the armistice that was to be signed at Rhodes.<sup>115</sup> This was a view also held by the Foreign Office.<sup>116</sup>

The Shuneh agreement was signed at the last moment, 30 March, after a long winded last meeting lasting until 5 a.m. at the King’s palace. The stance of Prime Minister Abul Huda won out, and the clause stating that the deal was to be kept secret was removed. The parties agreed that the Shuneh agreement was to be included in the armistice at Rhodes.<sup>117</sup> After the signing of the Shuneh agreement both delegations arrived at Rhodes with the same instructions. Ralph Bunche was clearly satisfied that the case could be closed, but he was aggrieved at the details: “Another deal and as usual the Palestine Arabs lose.”<sup>118</sup>

### ***The Signing at Rhodes***

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<sup>111</sup> Quoted in Bar-Joseph 1987, p. 231.

<sup>112</sup> Brian Urquhart’s private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary 24 March 1949, UCLA 364/8-7.

<sup>113</sup> FO 23 March 1949, FO371/75386, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 182.

<sup>114</sup> FO 22 March 1949, FO371/75386, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 179; FO 23 March 1949, FO371/75386, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 182.

<sup>115</sup> FO 28 March 1949, FO371/75387, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 190.

<sup>116</sup> FO 29 March 1949, FO371/75383, FO to Amman, Cypher No. 263.

<sup>117</sup> FO 31 March 1949, FO371/75387, Amman to FO, Cypher No. 202; “Agreement between the Hashemite Jordan Kingdom and the State of Israel” (concerning amendment to “the taking over by the Arab Legion of the Iraqi front.”) signed 30 March, found in FO 371/75387.

<sup>118</sup> Brian Urquhart’s private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary 1 April 1949, UCLA 364/8-7.



The two cases of coercive diplomacy, in the southern Negev and on the Iraqi front, were ones in which the Israelis won through with surprising ease. In the first, Israel launched a successful land grab that had to be treated as facts on the ground. In the second, Israel threatened to launch a large scale attack unless Transjordan willingly surrendered a strip of land.

Once Prime Minister Abul Huda signed the Shuneh agreement with amendments 30 March 1949 these were forwarded to Rhodes where they formed the basis for the Rhodes armistice. This was signed 3 April 1949 by Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the new name given to Transjordan as its borders now encompassed land on both sides of the Jordan River. The issues of the temporary division of Jerusalem, the temporary armistice lines and the release of POWs were all adequately addressed, but the main issues were postponed. These issues were: The Palestinian refugees, which were to be granted their right of return; The final borders, which were to be based on the Partition Plan with equal land swaps; and The final status for Jerusalem, which was, according to the UN, to be internationalized. The postponed issues were all those that really mattered to the Palestinians. The real victims of the war were therefore, in a sense, negated from the armistice negotiations. With the armistice treaty finalized Jordan could start the annexation of the West Bank. King Abdullah had laid the political groundwork for this with the First Palestinian Congress (October 1948) and the Jericho Conference (December 1948). When these had been held, however, King Abdullah's claim was based almost exclusively on the military presence the Arab Legion had in the West Bank. With the armistice this presence was granted international legitimacy. King Abdullah knew that such an annexation was a controversial matter and decided to postpone the issue. The West Bank was formally annexed to Jordan in April 1950, a full year after the armistice was signed.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Shlaim 2001, p. 66.

## **7. Rhodes vs. Shuneh: Analyzing the Diplomatic Preference**

In order to fully comprehend the relationship between the Shuneh and the Rhodes negotiations there are three perspectives that have to be investigated. The perspectives of King Abdullah, the Israeli Government and Acting Mediator Ralph Bunche. What view did these three hold on the use of Shuneh as the location for the negotiations?

### ***The Israeli Perspective***

Given the political, military and diplomatic balance of power, the Israeli perspective is rather self evident. Israel was in a position to make harsher demands in direct secret talks than they would have been able to make in official UN monitored talks. As we have seen the Israeli demands relating to the southern Negev and the northern section of the West Bank were met with little resistance. Israel's tactic had long been that of isolating the Arab states, taking them on one by one. In a sense the Shuneh talks were the culmination of such a policy. Not only was Israel able to completely isolate Transjordan from the rest of the Arab world, but by negotiating through a secret bilateral channel Israel also managed to isolate Transjordan from almost all other forms of outside interference.

### ***King Abdullah's Perspective***

The most logical choice for Transjordan would have been to negotiate at Rhodes through the mediation of Acting Mediator Ralph Bunche. At Rhodes it would presumably have been harder for Israel to make the harsh demands and outright threats that were made in Shuneh. Under the scrutiny of the UN such coercive diplomacy would have been more difficult. It would also have been far easier for Britain to put weight behind Transjordan if talks were official, and the US position on the Partition Plan could possibly also have been made more visible. Talks under the UN would have made the Arab world's position towards Transjordan less hostile. These arguments, however, rest on the luxury of hindsight. What we must seek to understand is not whether King Abdullah made the right choice, but rather why he made that choice.

We have already investigated King Abdullah's distrust of the UN. This was based on several assessments. King Abdullah was vehemently anti-communist and feared Soviet involvement if the UN apparatus was used. Further he disliked the slow bureaucratic nature of the organization. He also disagreed with the UN position on Jerusalem, which was that of internationalization. The Old City had been Transjordan's greatest gain in the 1948 War, and it had been a hard fought battle. Israel and Transjordan had a shared view on Jerusalem (division), and this was contrary to the UN stance. Last, but not least, King Abdullah's dislike of the UN must have been heavily influenced by the fact Transjordan was not officially recognized as an independent country by the UN.

King Abdullah had had good experiences with personal diplomacy in the past. These experiences bore merits. He had established a close relationship with the Israeli Arabist Elias Sasson and had obtained the controversial pre-war agreement between himself and the Zionists. Beyond that, the Jerusalem truce that had been negotiated on a personal basis in November 1948, without UN interference, was perceived as a great success. The establishment of a direct phone line between Dayan and al-Tel had served both parties well. The successful exchange of POWs had also been completed through personal negotiations that had excluded the UN.

From King Abdullah's standpoint, the advantage of negotiating under the UN because of available outside pressure was an invalid argument. It had become clear that such outside pressure was not forthcoming.. Britain could not even supply the Arab Legion with ammunition and the US was almost shockingly uninvolved. Such outside pressure, it was clear, would only manifest itself if the international border was crossed. Even then, as was evident when Egypt proper was attacked in December 1948, the US and British reaction was limited and slow. Elias Sasson, towards the end of March 1949, seemed close on target when he made the comment that "the King is anxious to conclude an armistice with us at any cost and that the British are not giving him much backing."<sup>1</sup> Beyond that, the other Arab states that had functioned as limiting force on King Abdullah were all but outmanoeuvred. Most of them had already made concessions to Israel and their ability to exert pressure on the Hashemite regent was depleted. The implication of

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<sup>1</sup> Sasson to Eytan, 22 March 1949, doc. 246 in Freundlich, (Ed.) 1983, p. 465.

this was that King Abdullah no longer was under any pressure to negotiate under UN scrutiny.

A last factor, and one not explored previously, was the fact that King Abdullah, unlike the other Arab leaders, was authentically interested in negotiating peace with Israel.<sup>2</sup> His choice of personal negotiations must also be considered in light of this. If his long term goal was to further his diplomatic relationship with Israel, then fostering their personal relationship was perhaps of equal importance as minimizing the concessions made in the armistice.

### ***Ralph Bunche's Perspective***

Some of the studies that have focused on the armistice negotiations have investigated the power vested in Ralph Bunche in his role as mediator.<sup>3</sup> This is a highly valuable approach when looking at the Israeli-Egyptian armistice talks, but at best such an analysis is complementary when investigating the Israeli-Transjordanian armistice.<sup>4</sup> The reason for this is that few of the major decisions were made at Rhodes, and even Bunche's perception of the relationship between the two negotiation forums, Rhodes and Shuneh, is somewhat unclear.

There has been some debate as to whether Ralph Bunche had any knowledge of the Shuneh negotiations. Although most researchers who have investigated the armistice negotiations discuss the Shuneh negotiations in one way or another, there has mainly been three works that have seriously delved into the question of whether Ralph Bunche knew or not. These three are Brian Urquhart's *Ralph Bunche: An American Life*; Avi Shlaim's *Collusion Across the Jordan* and Saadia Touval's *The Peace Brokers*.<sup>5</sup> Both Shlaim and Urquhart conclude that Ralph Bunche knew about the Shuneh negotiations,<sup>6</sup> whilst Touval comments: "Much of the negotiations between Jordan and Israel were conducted in direct talks without Bunche's presence – perhaps without his knowledge."<sup>7</sup>

A series of other authors who also touch in on this theme to a greater or lesser extent

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<sup>2</sup> Shlaim 1990 (a), pp. 355-389.

<sup>3</sup> Næser 2005, pp. 37-48; Touval 1982, pp. 54-75.

<sup>4</sup> Touval 1982, p. 65.

<sup>5</sup> Shlaim 1988; Urquhart 1998; Touval 1982.

<sup>6</sup> Shlaim 1988, p.425; Urquhart 1998, p. 216.

seem to disagree on this question.<sup>8</sup> The issue is further confused since the Israeli negotiator Walter Eytan, who participated in both these negotiations, states in his autobiography that the Shuneh negotiations were the “real negotiations [and] should be conducted in secret [...] Only the King’s closest confidants were to know; the rest of the world was to go on watching the show at Rhodes.”<sup>9</sup> In another article he notes that “[King Abdullah] insisted on absolute secrecy [...] even vis-à-vis his own delegates at Rhodes.”<sup>10</sup> Both British and US sources from as late as 25 March 1949 seem sure that Bunche did not know.<sup>11</sup> The decision to inform him of the Shuneh talks was made as late as 26 March.<sup>12</sup>

Upon reviewing the only source that in truth can confirm or disprove the existing theories – Ralph Bunche’s diary from the period of negotiations<sup>13</sup> – one can close the discussion around the simple question: Did he know about the Shuneh talks? The answer in all simplicity is yes. Given a series of comments in his diary it becomes evident that he was well aware of the secret Shuneh talks. His first comment about these talks was made as early as 16 March. However, it is not completely clear what importance Bunche placed in the Shuneh discussions.<sup>14</sup> One viable theory would be that he viewed these as complementary to the “real” negotiations at Rhodes. More precisely, he perceived the Shuneh talks as a forum where problems that arose at Rhodes were straightened out in direct consultations with King Abdullah. A series of comments from the diaries would support this theory.<sup>15</sup> A close look at Bunche’s comment from 24 March is revealing:

Jundi [Head of the Transjordanian delegation], who had earlier said he was unprepared to discuss the supposedly highly controversial issue of armistice lines in sector south of Dead Sea (Aqaba), stated that he was prepared to accept Shiloah’s proposal that armistice line follow international frontier in this area! Thus a big hurdle was taken. Later this evening,

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<sup>7</sup> Touval 1982, p. 65.

<sup>8</sup> Robins 2004, p. 70; Pappé 1992, p. 188; Morris 2001, p. 250-251.

<sup>9</sup> Eytan 1958, p. 38.

<sup>10</sup> Eytan 1980, p. 53.

<sup>11</sup> FO 25 March 1949, FO371/75387, Washington to FO, Cypher No. 1711; Memorandum of Telephone Conversation by Mr. Robert M. McClintock, 25 March. 1949 in *FRUS* 1949, Vol. VI, pp. 868-869.

<sup>12</sup> Bar-Joseph 1987, pp. 228-229.

<sup>13</sup> Brian Urquhart’s private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary. UCLA 364/8-7.

<sup>14</sup> Brian Urquhart’s private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary 16, 25, 28 March, 1 and 2 April 1949, UCLA 364/8-7.

<sup>15</sup> Brian Urquhart’s private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary 25, 28 March and 1 April 1949, UCLA 364/8-7.

in chat with Shiloah, he told me Israeli's were now prepared to take up question of extending agreement to Iraqi front and would ask for little or no modification in the lines there. If this proves true we are about out of the woods on the Transjordan agreement.<sup>16</sup>

At this point Bunche was well aware of the Shuneh talks.<sup>17</sup> Bunche seems to have been elevated rather than disturbed since both the Israeli and Transjordanian delegates agreed on continuing negotiations on these points at Rhodes. In another instance he commented: "Iraqis are supposed to move out. I hope they will. It looks as though we will have agreement quickly, but one can never be sure. I'm sick of this business. Both Delegations are now supposed to have similar instructions."<sup>18</sup>

He seems to have felt that these "consultations" had the simple function of taking a burden off his back. He allowed this undermining of his mandate to continue because he had reached a breaking point where the only thing that mattered was expediting his mission. Bunche wanted to finish the whole business and go home. He was exhausted. He had first spent a month and a half negotiating an armistice between Israel and Egypt. When that was finished, he initiated the new round of negotiations, which was wrought by political bickering, lack of professionalism in the Transjordanian delegation, late nights, early mornings and bouts of disease.<sup>19</sup> Illustrative of the effect this had on him is the fact that he was unwilling to attend the Syrian armistice talks, preferring to send his envoys Henri Vigier, who had previously mediated the Lebanon armistice on behalf of Bunche, and General William Riley, chief of staff of the Truce Supervision Organization.<sup>20</sup>

Perhaps the clearest indication of Ralph Bunche's state of mind is found in a letter he sent to his wife Ruth:

You can't imagine what it takes to hold these monkeys together long enough to squeeze agreement out of them. And such trickery, deceit and downright dishonesty you have never

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<sup>16</sup> Brian Urquhart's private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary 24 March 1949, UCLA 364/8-7.

<sup>17</sup> Brian Urquhart's private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary 16 and 18 March 1949, UCLA 364/8-7.

<sup>18</sup> Brian Urquhart's private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary 1 April 1949, UCLA 364/8-7.

<sup>19</sup> Brian Urquhart's private collection in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections, Collection 364 (UCLA), Excerpts from Bunche Diary 28 Feb. – 4 April 1949, UCLA 364/8-7.

<sup>20</sup> Urquhart 1998, pp. 214, 218-219.

seen. I swear by all that's Holy, I will never come anywhere near the Palestine problem once I liberate myself from this trap<sup>21</sup>

The Shuneh talks allowed him to get out of that trap with greater haste and less work than would have been possible if the talks only took place at Rhodes. Bunche may not have agreed with the outcome, but at least an agreement had been squeezed out of the parties.

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<sup>21</sup> Quoted in Urquhart 1998, p. 217.

## 8. Armistice – From Temporary Solution to Permanent Non-Solution

The negotiations that led to the finalized Rhodes armistice between Israel and Transjordan were held on two fronts. Officially all the negotiations took place at Rhodes under the auspices of Acting Mediator Ralph Bunche. Unofficially, however, most of the talks of substance took place in secret at King Abdullah's palace at Shuneh or in no-man's land in Jerusalem. The final armistice was signed at Rhodes 3 April 1949 and all the issues that were agreed upon in the unofficial negotiations at Shuneh were integrated into the document. For the first time in an official international document the signatory was the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, as Transjordan was henceforth known. The unofficial negotiations were known to Ralph Bunche, and although these negotiations were classical cases of coercive diplomacy that undermined his authority as a negotiator, he allowed these to take place. He was disappointed in the outcome of the Shuneh talks, but was mentally and physically exhausted. Ralph Bunche had reached the conclusion that any solution was better than one that could only be reached after further longwinded negotiations. King Abdullah too accepted the coercions because he had no other choice. The reality was that no matter where or how King Abdullah chose to negotiate, Transjordan was practically unarmed and isolated. The British Government was unable to provide aid, and the US Government was uninterested.<sup>1</sup>

The Israeli-Transjordan armistice was the second to last armistice to be signed between Israel and its Arab neighbours. The Syrian negotiations were long-winded, and the armistice between Israel and Syria was not signed until 20 July 1949, after almost four months of negotiating. With that the war was over and peace negotiations began.<sup>2</sup> As with armistice talks, the peace negotiations between Israel and Jordan was a two-track affair. Together with the other Arab states Jordan participated in the Lausanne Peace Conference hosted by the PCC. Additionally, Jordan held secret negotiations with Israel up until King Abdullah's death in 1951.<sup>3</sup> In the end both these tracks collapsed, and the armistice became official policy.

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<sup>1</sup> Bar-Joseph 1987, pp. 228-230.

<sup>2</sup> Shlaim 2001, pp. 45-47.

<sup>3</sup> Shlaim 1990 (a), pp. 355-421.



## ***Evaluating the Armistice***

The British Minister in Amman, Alec Kirkbride, was furious at both the Israeli behaviour and the British lack of (re)action. In a starchy warning to the Foreign Office in early March 1949 he made clear his views. They were ominous: “[T]he Israeli forces can go where they want, pretty well when they want to and unless some greater degree of diplomatic support is given to the Arabs the use of the term “negotiations” in connexion with a settlement is a mistake.”<sup>4</sup>

There has long been a common misunderstanding that the truce lines are equitable with the armistice lines.<sup>5</sup> This was not the case. Territory was gained by Israel on several fronts *after* the truce and *during* negotiations. The most manifest instances of such gains were Operation Uvda, whereby the southern tip of the Negev was taken in the midst of the negotiations, and the blackmail on the Iraqi front, whereby Israel demanded (and acquired) a strip of land as the price Transjordan had to pay in order to avoid an outright attack.

An evaluation of the armistice must take into consideration the following two questions: Who were the interested parties? And to what extent did these interested parties obtain their demands? The answer to the first question is: Israel, Jordan and the Palestinians. The answer to the second question is more complex as each party must be analysed separately.

It takes two to tango. No more, no less. Both Transjordan and Israel were unwilling to let the Palestinian in on the dance. Despite the fact that the war was in Palestine and that the main victims of the war was the Palestinian people, there was an enormous disparity in the relationship victim – representation. Israel for one, had taken care to rid its annexed area of the Palestinians.<sup>6</sup> Transjordan, for its part, was key in strangling the All Palestine Government at birth, taking all necessary steps to ensure that Transjordan, and not the Palestinians, would negotiate over the land held by the Arab

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<sup>4</sup> FO 11 March 1949, FO371/75381, Amman to FO, Cypher 146.

<sup>5</sup> It has been standard reference in historical maps to have the same lines for “areas captured by Israel by January 1949” and “armistice lines”. See e.g. Gilbert, Martin: *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: Its History in Maps*. London 1985, p. 46. Interestingly even Avi Shlaim seems to confuse these terms. See e.g. Shlaim 2001, pp. 56-57.

<sup>6</sup> Morris 2004; Palumbo 1987; Pappé 2007.

Legion. The Hashemite Kingdom also sought, and to a certain extent managed to gain, legitimacy from sectors of the Palestinian society to represent the Palestinians.<sup>7</sup> From a Palestinian perspective the armistice negotiations was therefore a double defeat. By postponing the refugee issue the armistice cemented the Palestinian exodus. Further, since the Palestinians were not represented as a party, the armistice negated the Palestinians as a political and national entity. In both the armistices and the Lausanne Peace Conference, no Palestinian delegation was present. In a sense, colonialism had gone full circle. The Arab states' attitude towards the Palestinians was much in tune with Marx' view of the colonized: "They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented."<sup>8</sup>

From a Jordanian perspective the armistice was a mixed success. From a purely geopolitical standpoint, Jordan was a highly successful participant in the war. Jordan, after all, managed to acquire 22% of mandatory Palestine including East Jerusalem. These areas were even annexed by Jordan and remained integral parts of the Kingdom from 1950 until the 1967 war. However, if one evaluates the armistice in terms of the initial Transjordanian demands as well as the areas of land actually held by Transjordan at the outset of the negotiations, we get a very different picture. Seen in such a light Transjordan lost the southern section of the Negev as well as 300 square kilometres of the northern West Bank. Further, the suggested barter that Transjordan and Israel could share Eilat and Haifa was abandoned as a result of Transjordan having lost Eilat due to Operation Uvda.

From an Israeli perspective the armistice was a great success. Based purely on a comparison with the UN Partition Plan, Israel was able to increase its size from 56% to 77% of the whole.<sup>9</sup> Although most of these gains were made during the war and not during the armistices, the armistice functioned as a legitimization of those gains. Beyond acquiring land, Israel was able to postpone vital issues such as the Palestinian refugee issue. By international law the refugees had the right to return. Likewise, by UN standards, Israel should have either handed back areas that were occupied in excess of the Partition Plan, or traded these for areas of equal size. Since both the refugee issue and such territorial trade offs were postponed to negotiations for a final peace settlement, an awkward situation was created whereby the armistices gave Israel enormous gains of

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<sup>7</sup> See Chapter 3.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Said, Edward W.: *Orientalism*. London 2003, p. xxvii.

which almost all would be lost in a peace treaty. The incentives this gave Israel to work towards a peace settlement were low at best. Despite this, the Israeli Government faced harsh opposition in the Knesset for the armistice with Jordan. Especially the maximalist Herut party was furious because Israel had given away large areas of Jewish land. For them the West Bank and East Jerusalem were integral parts of the historical Jewish homeland and could not be given away. Despite two calls for non-confidence, however, the more moderate Ben-Gurion line managed to win through.<sup>10</sup>

### ***The Lausanne Peace Conference and the Abdullah Channel***

It has not been the aim of this study to investigate the negotiations that took place after the signing of the armistice. However, some notes on these developments are in order. It is, after all, due to the collapse of these that the armistice became the standing situation. If the peace talks had been able to create any solution these would have taken precedent over the armistices. Since no such solution materialized the armistice stood.

The Palestine Conciliation Commission convened the Lausanne Peace Conference in April 1949. Here all the involved Arab states and Israel held a series of meetings until the debacle closed inconclusively in September the same year. The Conference was attended on radically different premises by the two parties. In terms of procedure Israel preferred to face off the Arab states one at a time by negotiating bilaterally. The Arab states, on the other hand, agreed with the PCC's approach. From an Arab perspective it was seen as vital that they face off Israel as a collective bloc, thus enhancing their strength. In terms of contents the parties were also at loggerheads. The Arab League rallied around the UN Partition Plan, yet added two changes. The first was that Israel could make territorial swaps if they wanted to keep areas of land they had occupied. The second was that if Israel was unwilling to settle the refugees in the areas they originally came from, Israel would have to relinquish areas of a size that could accommodate the refugees. Israel for its part claimed that the refugees were not their responsibility and that

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<sup>9</sup> Thomas 1999, p. 89.

<sup>10</sup> Shlaim 2001, pp. 54-55.

negotiations had to be held on the basis of the armistice lines and not on the Partition Plan.<sup>11</sup>

Both the UN and the US Government seemed to agree with the Arab approach, and for Israel the whole conference was therefore an exercise in constructive nay-saying. It would have been a heavy burden for Israel if it was perceived as responsible for the collapse of Lausanne. Israel therefore put forth solutions that were unacceptable to the Arabs, but that still could be argued as considerable concessions. The most infamous of these was the offer to accept 100,000 Palestinian refugees. The offer was presented as a large one, but it was well known that no Arab state could accept such an offer.<sup>12</sup> What, after all, would have been the fate of the remaining 650,000 refugees?

United by their stance on Jerusalem, which was that of partition rather than internationalisation, Jordan and Israel once again found each other. Secret meetings took place at Shuneh in the period from November 1949 until King Abdullah's assassination in July 1951. The secret talks had its breakthroughs, but every one of these was met with an equally large disagreement. King Abdullah needed Israeli concessions if he was to be able to present peace to the Arab world. If Ben-Gurion understood this, he seemed not to appreciate it. Israel did, at times, suggest certain concessions, but these were never in the vicinity of the size that would be needed by King Abdullah. Avi Shlaim concludes that these talks collapsed "because Israel was too strong and inflexible while Abdullah was too weak and isolated." The negotiations ended abruptly when King Abdullah was murdered and an era of Middle Eastern diplomacy followed him to the grave.<sup>13</sup>

### ***Setting the Stage for the Future***

When the armistice was signed between Israel and Jordan 3 April 1949 the war was terminated, but the final borders were not set. It was commonly understood that these could only be made official upon the signing of a final peace treaty. Such a final peace treaty was never signed and until 1967 the temporary borders were seemingly permanent. With Israel's astounding victory in the 1967 war, the 1949 borders suddenly turned into

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<sup>11</sup> Shlaim 2001, pp. 57-58.

<sup>12</sup> Shlaim 2001, pp. 58-59.

<sup>13</sup> Shlaim 2001, pp. 62-67.

the 1967 borders and the western half of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan became the Occupied Territories. In July 1988 Jordan relinquished its claim over the West Bank, and in November the same year PLO relinquished its claim for all of historical Palestine, making it clear that a Palestinian State would be founded on the Occupied Territories – the West Bank and Gaza.<sup>14</sup> The historical irony here is that the 1949 borders were completely unacceptable as a final solution for any of the Arab states in 1949. This view was shared by the international community and Israel was well aware that if the country wanted peace treaties with the Arab states, large areas of land had to be given back and hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees would have had to be allowed to return. Although a peace treaty would have been beneficial in terms of security, the Israeli view was that the balance sheet showed that the price for peace was too high. The hard fought gains of the 1948 War and the armistice talks would have to be relinquished. International law was perhaps on the side of the Arabs, but the balance of power was on Israel's. Who was going to pressure Israel to make concessions? As time passed and no concessions were made, the armistice lines gradually became what was on the table. These armistice lines had enlarged the Israeli holdings in Palestine from 56% to 77% of the whole.<sup>15</sup> The US Government had made it clear that in a final peace treaty there would have to be territorial trades whereby all land grabbed in excess of the Partition Plan had to be compensated elsewhere.<sup>16</sup> Over time this demand waned. By the time Resolution 242 was written in 1967, it had become clear that the term *Occupied Territories* did not include those areas that Israel had occupied beyond the Partition Plan in 1948-1949. The temporary borders of 1949 had become the permanent borders of 1967. Seen in this light the armistices were extremely beneficial for Israel. The *fait accomplis* presented at the negotiation table, with time, became forgotten occupation, and without peace negotiation this developed into accepted annexation.

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<sup>14</sup> Robins 2004, pp. 163-164; Shlaim 2001, p. 466.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas 1999, p. 89. The exact numerical breakdown here is somewhat disputed. Another common calculation is Israel 78% - West Bank and Gaza 22%.

<sup>16</sup> Karp 2004, p. 32.

## ***Lessons Learned***

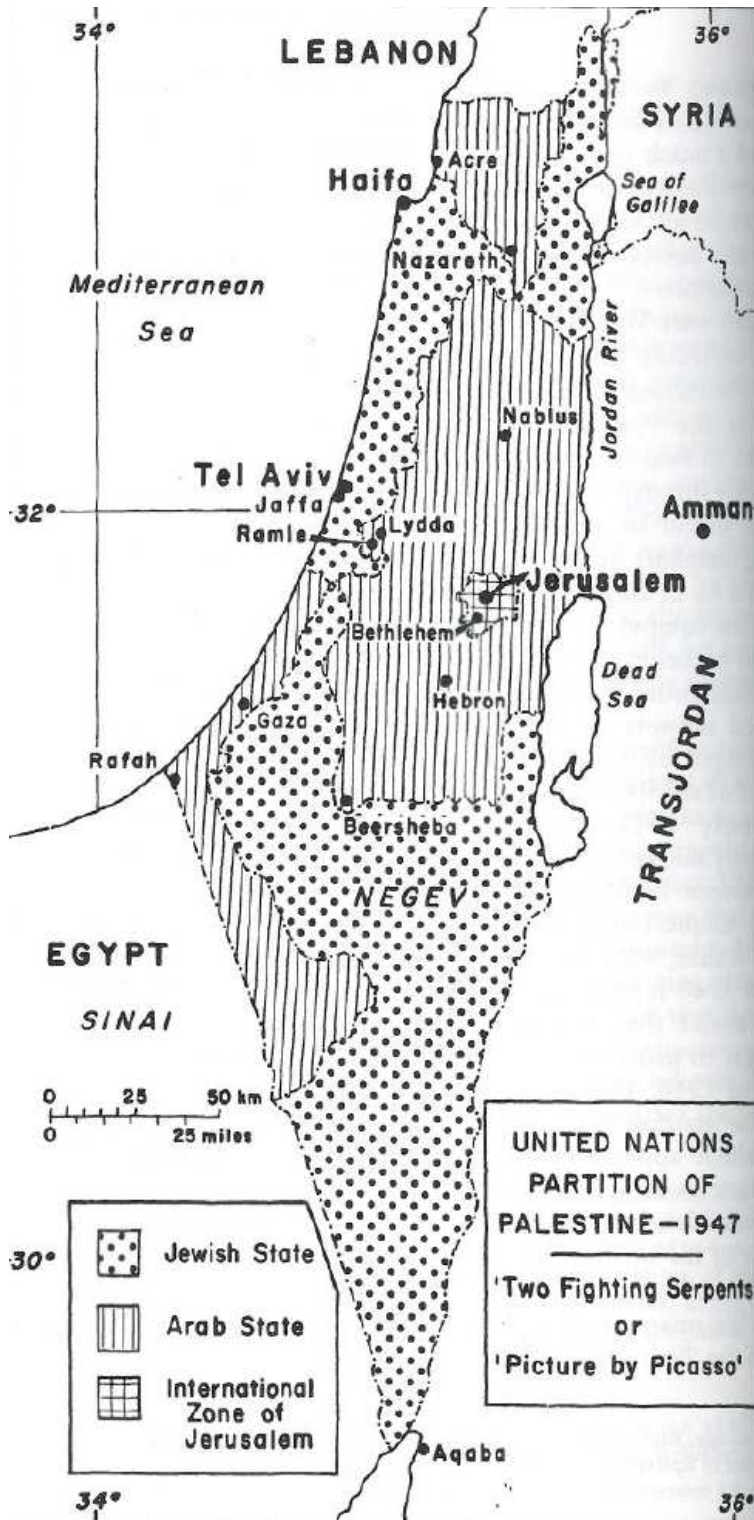
From the outset one of the questions this thesis attempted to answer was – Why did the armistice talks not lead to a peace treaty? It is rather evident that Israel managed to obtain most of its goals in the armistices – Israel acquired large areas of land and obtained and retained a Jewish minority. These gains would most probably have been lost in peace negotiations. Land would have to be given back to the Arabs and large numbers of Palestinians would have to be granted the right of return. These were unwelcome concessions and hence Israel did not have the greatest incentives to complete such negotiations. A lack of outside pressure was prevalent and Israel's position as victor was secured. From this it would seem obvious that to create a successful setting for negotiations the mediator should strive to obtain a certain balance of power. In cases, such as in the Israel-Arab context, where one part is militarily more powerful and simultaneously holds most of the cards, outside pressure must be applied towards the strong part to even out the playing field.

Further this particular case illustrates that there is a certain danger in working towards temporary solutions that are too beneficial for one part. If the temporary solution is perceived as more beneficial than a permanent solution, there is a certain risk that the process stagnates in its first phase as the beneficiary part will have a real interest in halting progress towards a solution.

Perhaps the gravest error made during these early negotiations was the belief that one could have a peace process that excluded one of the parties. This endemic failure to include the Palestinians in the negotiations was carried on into further negotiation rounds. It is a paradox that the Palestinians were the greatest victims of the conflict, while these same victims were excluded from the peace process. Such a paradox is not a recipe for a lasting peace.

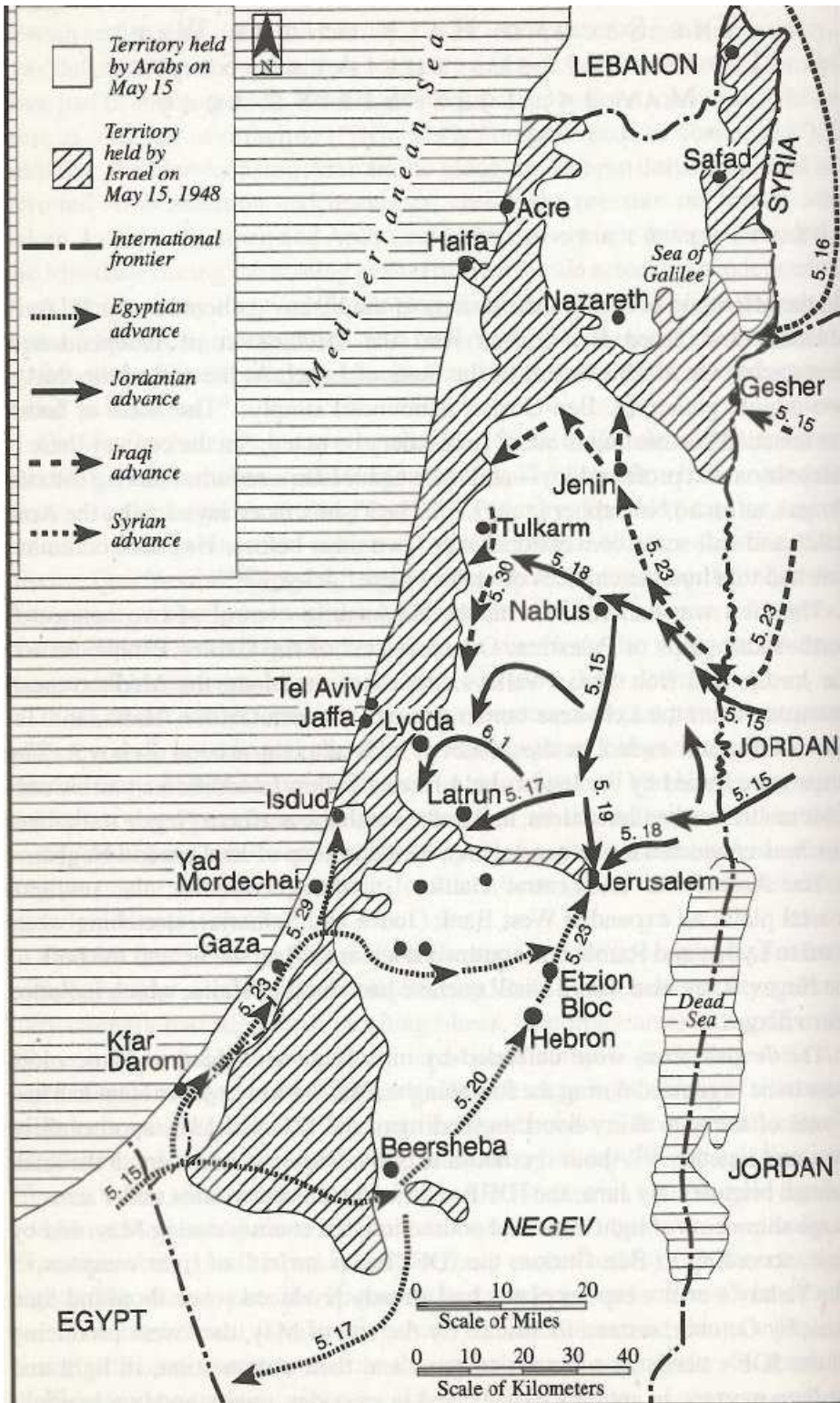
# Appendix 1: Maps

## 1: UN Partition Plan<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Louis 2006 (a), p. 494.

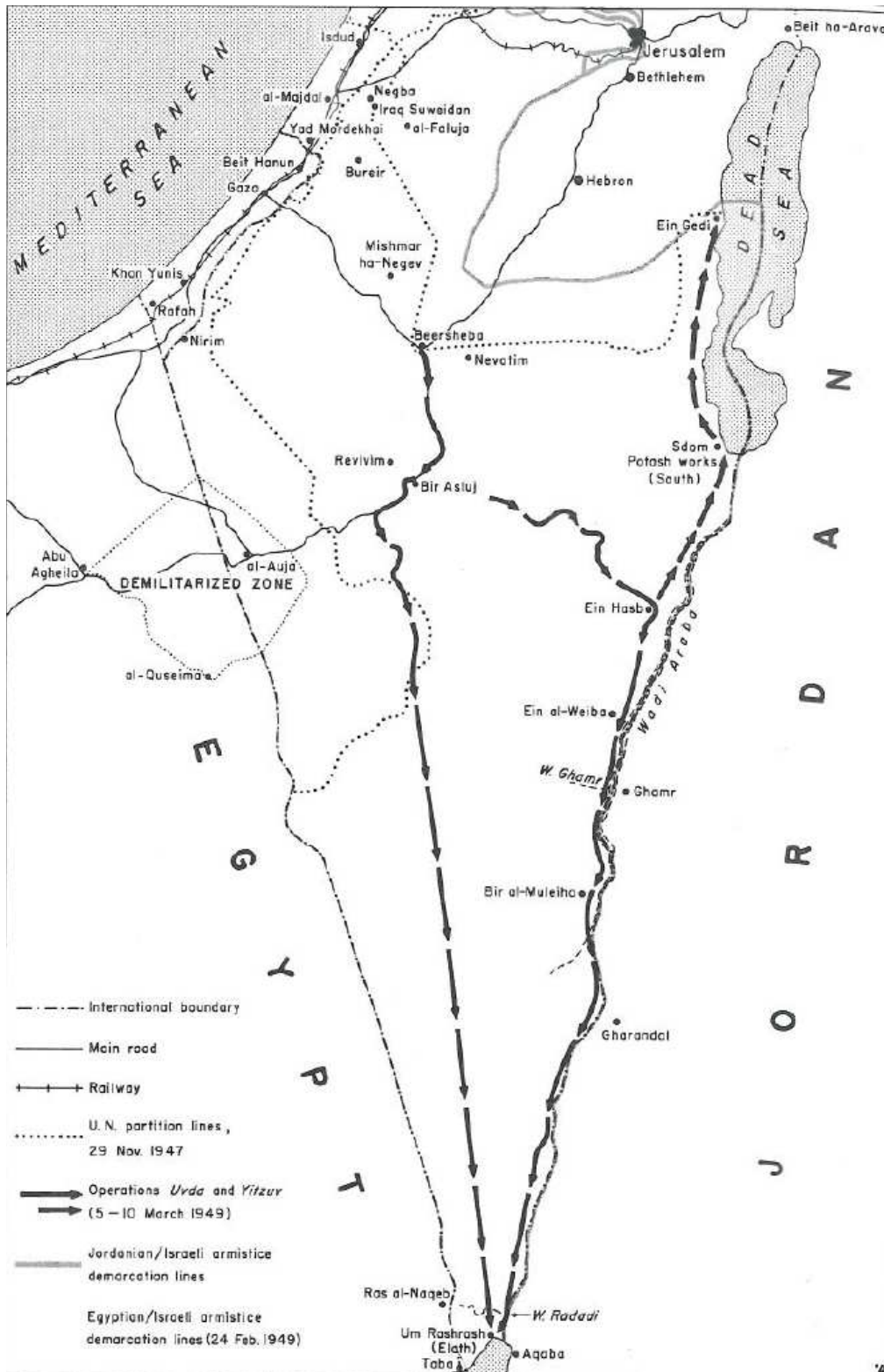
## 2: Arab Invasion<sup>2</sup>



<sup>2</sup> Morris 2001, p. 216. Note: Dates on picture are based on US system. 5.15 for instance is 5 May.

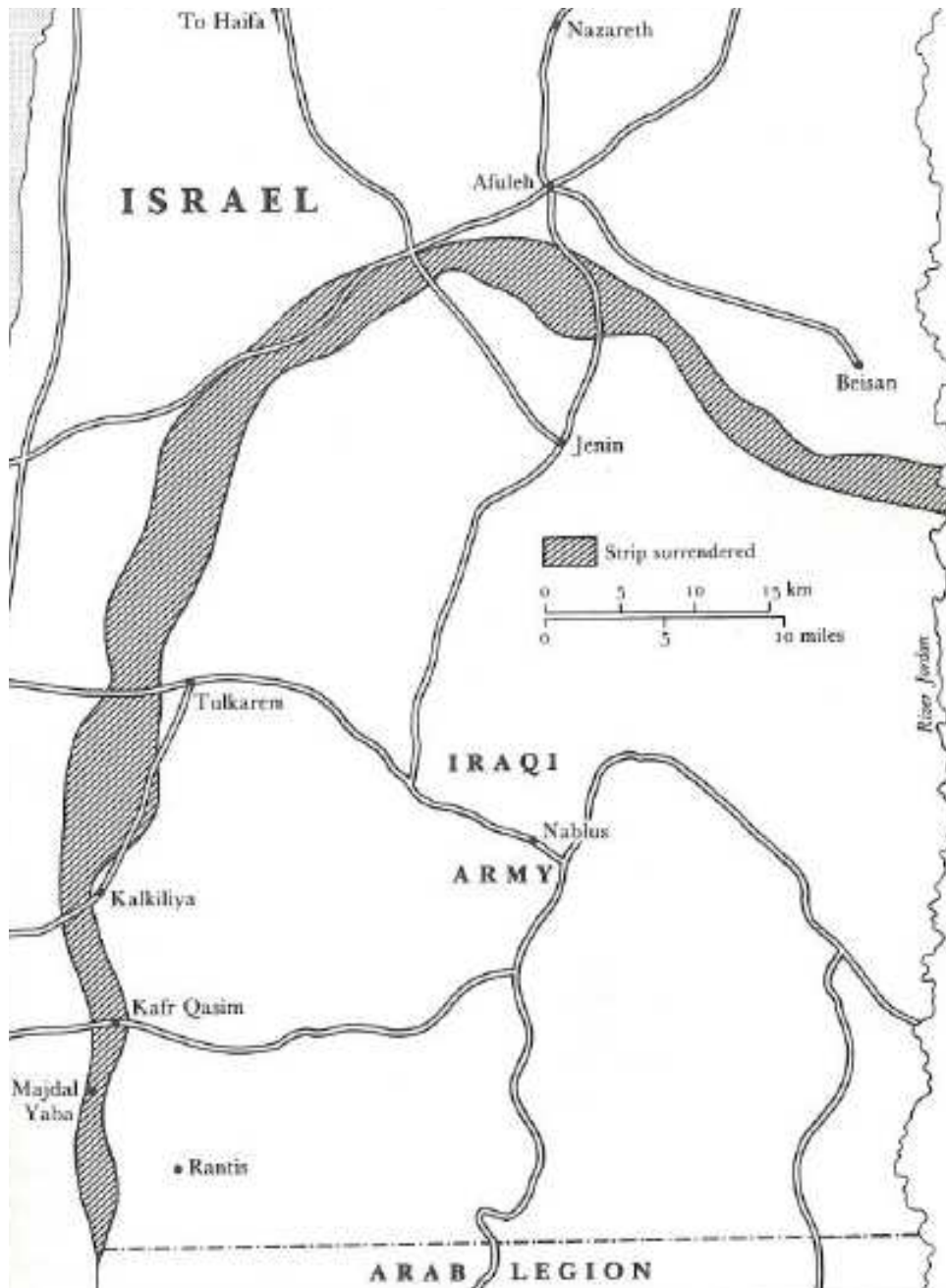


### 3: Operation Uvda<sup>3</sup>



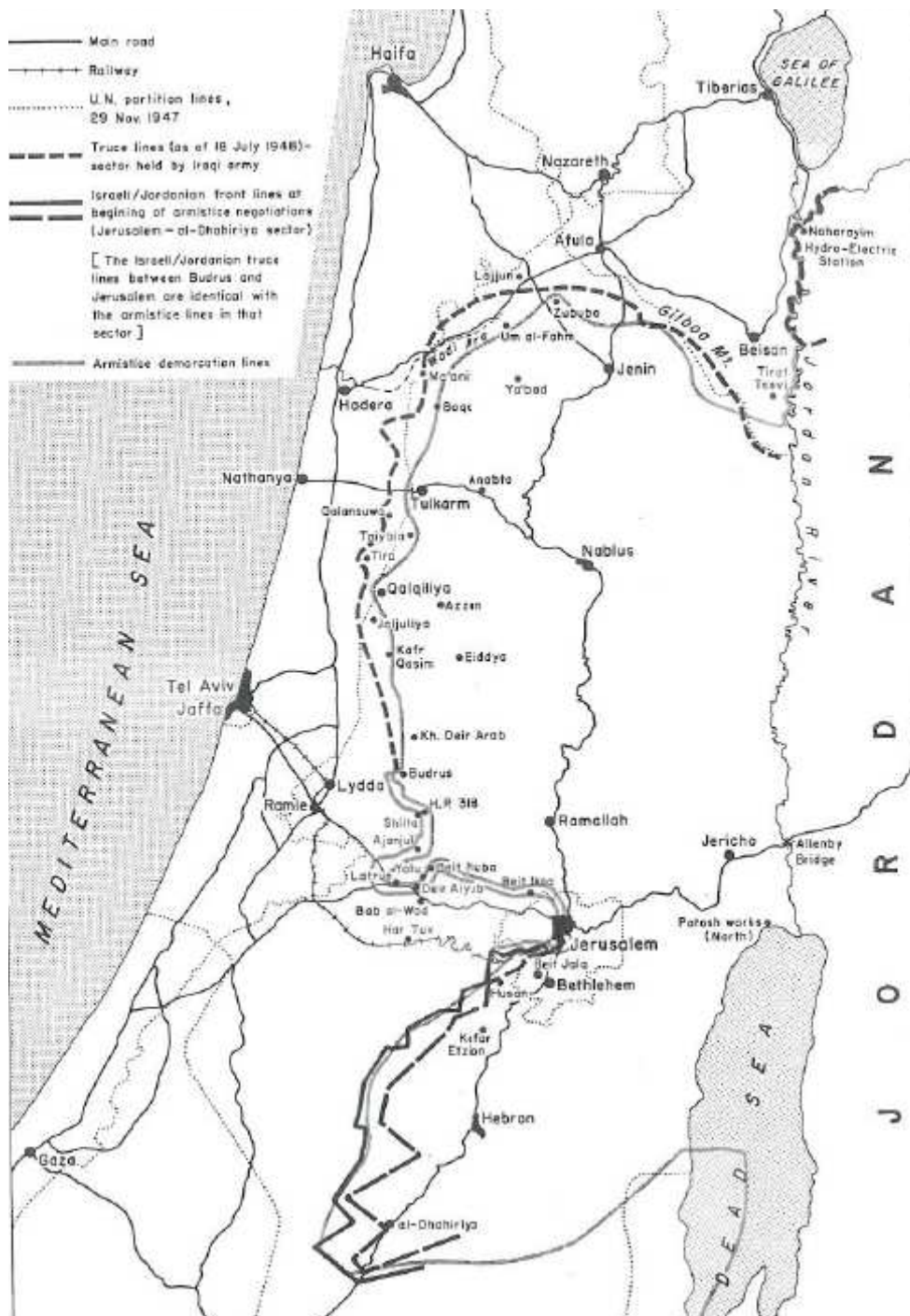
<sup>3</sup> Freundlich, (Ed.) 1983.

#### 4. Strip of land given to Israel on Northern West Bank<sup>4</sup>



<sup>4</sup> Shlaim 1988, p. 413.

## 5. Armistice lines<sup>5</sup>



<sup>5</sup> Freundlich (Ed.) 1983.

## Appendix 2:

### ***Israel-Jordan Armistice Agreement, 3 April 1949***

#### **Preamble**

The Parties to the present Agreement,

Responding to the Security Council resolution of 16 November 1948, calling upon them, as a further provisional measure under Article 40 of the Charter of the United Nations and in order to facilitate the transition from the present truce to permanent peace in Palestine, to negotiate an armistice;

Having decided to enter into negotiations under United Nations chairmanship concerning the implementation of the Security Council resolution of 16 November 1948; and having appointed representatives empowered to negotiate and conclude an Armistice Agreement;

The undersigned representatives of their respective Governments, having exchanged their full powers found to be in good and proper form, have agreed upon the following provisions:

#### **Article I**

With a view to promoting the return of permanent peace in Palestine and in recognition of the importance in this regard of mutual assurances concerning the future military operations of the Parties, the following principles, which shall be fully observed by both Parties during the armistice, are hereby affirmed:

1. The injunction of the Security Council against resort to military force in the settlement of the Palestine question shall henceforth be scrupulously respected by both Parties;
2. No aggressive action by the armed forces - land, sea, or air - of either Party shall be undertaken, planned, or threatened against the people or the armed forces of the other; it being understood that the use of the term *planned* in this context has no bearing on normal staff planning as generally practised in military organisations;
3. The right of each Party to its security and freedom from fear of attack by the armed forces of the other shall be fully respected;

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<sup>6</sup> The Israel-Jordan Armistice Agreement of 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1949:  
<http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign+Relations/Israels+Foreign+Relations+since+1947/1947-1974/Israel-Jordan+Armistice+Agreement.htm> (12.09.07).

4. The establishment of an armistice between the armed forces of the two Parties is accepted as an indispensable step toward the liquidation of armed conflict and the restoration of peace in Palestine.

## **Article II**

With a specific view to the implementation of the resolution of the Security Council of 16 November 1948, the following principles and purposes are affirmed:

1. The principle that no military or political advantage should be gained under the truce ordered by the Security Council is recognised;
2. It is also recognised that no provision of this Agreement shall in any way prejudice the rights, claims and positions of either Party hereto in the ultimate peaceful settlement of the Palestine question, the provisions of this Agreement being dictated exclusively by military considerations.

## **Article III**

1. In pursuance of the foregoing principles and of the resolution of the Security Council of 16 November 1948, a general armistice between the armed forces of the two Parties - land, sea and air - is hereby established.
2. No element of the land, sea or air military or para-military forces of either Party, including non-regular forces, shall commit any warlike or hostile act against the military or para-military forces of the other Party, or against civilians in territory under the control of that Party; or shall advance beyond or pass over for any purpose whatsoever the Armistice Demarcation Lines set forth in articles V and VI of this Agreement; or enter into or pass through the air space of the other Party.
3. No warlike act or act of hostility shall be conducted from territory controlled by one of the Parties to this Agreement against the other Party.

## **Article IV**

1. The lines described in articles V and VI of this Agreement shall be designated as the Armistice Demarcation Lines and are delineated in pursuance of the purpose and intent of the resolution of the Security Council of 16 November 1948.
2. The basic purpose of the Armistice Demarcation Lines is to delineate the lines beyond which the armed forces of the respective Parties shall not move.
3. Rules and regulations of the armed forces of the Parties, which prohibit civilians from crossing the fighting lines or entering the area between the lines,

shall remain in effect after the signing of this Agreement with application to the Armistice Demarcation Lines defined in articles V and VI.

## **Article V**

1. The Armistice Demarcation Lines for all sectors other than the sector now held by Iraqi forces shall be as delineated on the maps in annex I to this Agreement, and shall be defined as follows:

(a) In the sector Kh Deir Arab (MR 1510-1574) to the northern terminus of the lines defined in the 30 November 1948 Cease-Fire Agreement for the Jerusalem area, the Armistice Demarcation Lines shall follow the truce lines as certified by the United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation;

(b) In the Jerusalem sector, the Armistice Demarcation Lines shall correspond to the lines defined in the 30 November 1948 Cease-Fire Agreement for the Jerusalem area;

(c) In the Hebron-Dead Sea sector, the Armistice Demarcation Line shall be as delineated on map 1 and marked B in annex I to this Agreement;

(d) In the sector from a point on the Dead Sea (MR 1925-0958) to the southernmost tip of Palestine, the Armistice Demarcation Line shall be determined by existing military positions as surveyed in March 1949 by United Nations observers, and shall run from north to south as delineated on map 1 in annex I to this Agreement.

## **Article VI**

1. It is agreed that the forces of the Hashemite Jordan Kingdom shall replace the forces of Iraq in the sector now held by the latter forces, the intention of the Government of Iraq in this regard having been communicated to the Acting Mediator in the message of 20 March from the Foreign Minister of Iraq authorising the delegation of the Hashemite Jordan Kingdom to negotiate for the Iraqi forces and stating that those forces would be withdrawn.

2. The Armistice Demarcation Line for the sector now held by Iraqi forces shall be as delineated on map 1 in annex I to this Agreement and marked A.

3. The Armistice Demarcation Line provided for in paragraph 2 of this article shall be established in stages as follows, pending which the existing military lines may be maintained:

(a) In the area west of the road from Baqa to Jaljulia, and thence to the east of Kafr Qasim: within five weeks of the date on which this Armistice Agreement is signed;

(b) In the area of Wadi Ara north of the line from Baqa to Zubeiba: within seven weeks of the date on which this Armistice Agreement is signed;

(c) In all other areas of the Iraqi sector: within fifteen weeks of the date on which this Armistice Agreement is signed.

4. The Armistice Demarcation Line in the Hebron-Dead Sea sector, referred to in paragraph (c) of article V of this Agreement and marked B on map 1 in annex I, which involves substantial deviation from the existing military lines in favour of the forces of the Hashemite Jordan Kingdom, is designated to offset the modifications of the existing military lines in the Iraqi sector set forth in paragraph 3 of this article.

5. In compensation for the road acquired between Tulkarem and Qalqiliya, the Government of Israel agrees to pay to the Government of the Hashemite Jordan Kingdom the cost of constructing twenty kilometres of first-class new road.

6. Wherever villages may be affected by the establishment of the Armistice Demarcation Line provided for in paragraph 2 of this article, the inhabitants of such villages shall be entitled to maintain, and shall be protected in, their full rights -of residence, property and freedom. In the event any of the inhabitants should decide to leave their villages, they shall be entitled to take with them their livestock and other movable property, and to receive without delay full compensation for the land which they have left. It shall be prohibited for Israeli forces to enter or to be stationed in such villages, in which locally recruited Arab police shall be organised and stationed for internal security purposes.

7. The Hashemite Jordan Kingdom accepts responsibility for all Iraqi forces in Palestine.

8. The provisions of this article shall not be interpreted as prejudicing, in any sense, an ultimate political settlement between the Parties to this Agreement.

9. The Armistice Demarcation Lines defined in articles V and VI of this Agreement are agreed upon by the Parties without prejudice to future territorial settlements or boundary lines or to claims of either Party relating thereto.

10. Except where otherwise provided, the Armistice Demarcation Lines shall be established, including such withdrawal of forces as may be necessary for this purpose, within ten days from the date on which this Agreement is signed.

11. The Armistice Demarcation Lines defined in this article and in article V shall be subject to such rectification as may be agreed upon by the Parties to this Agreement, and all such rectifications shall have the same force and effect as if they had been incorporated in full in this General Armistice Agreement.

## **Article VII**



1. The military forces of the Parties to this Agreement shall be limited to defensive forces only in the areas extending ten kilometres from each side of the Armistice Demarcation Lines, except where geographical considerations make this impractical, as at the southernmost tip of Palestine and the coastal strip. Defensive forces permissible in each sector shall be as defined in annex II to this Agreement. In the sector now held by Iraqi forces, calculations on the reduction of forces shall include the number of Iraqi forces in this sector.

2. Reduction of forces to defensive strength in accordance with the preceding paragraph shall be completed within ten days of the establishment of the Armistice Demarcation Lines defined in this Agreement. In the same way the removal of mines from mined roads and areas evacuated by either Party, and the transmission of plans showing the location of such minefields to the other Party, shall be completed within the same period.

3. The strength of the forces which may be maintained by the Parties on each side of the Armistice Demarcation Lines shall be subject to periodical review with a view toward further reduction of such forces by mutual agreement of the Parties.

#### **Article VIII**

1. A Special Committee, composed of two representatives of each Party designated by the respective Governments, shall be established for the purpose of formulating agreed plans and arrangements designed to enlarge the scope of this Agreement and to effect improvements in its application.

2. The Special Committee shall be organised immediately following the coming into effect of this Agreement and shall direct its attention to the formulation of agreed plans and arrangements for such matters as either Party may submit to it, which, in any case, shall include the following, on which agreement in principle already exists: free movement of traffic on vital roads, including the Bethlehem and Latrun-Jerusalem roads; resumption of the normal functioning of the cultural and humanitarian institutions on Mount Scopus and free access thereto; free access to the Holy Places and cultural institutions and use of the cemetery on the Mount of Olives; resumption of operation of the Latrun pumping station; provision of electricity for the Old City; and resumption of operation of the railroad to Jerusalem.

3. The Special Committee shall have exclusive competence over such matters as may be referred to it. Agreed plans and arrangements formulated by it may provide for the exercise of supervisory functions by the Mixed Armistice Commission established in article XI.

#### **Article IX**



Agreements reached between the Parties subsequent to the signing of this Armistice Agreement relating to such matters as further reduction of forces as contemplated in paragraph 3 of article VII, future adjustments of the Armistice Demarcation Lines, and plans and arrangements formulated by the Special Committee established in article VIII, shall have the same force and effect as the provisions of this Agreement and shall be equally binding upon the Parties.

#### **Article X**

An exchange of prisoners of war having been effected by special arrangement between the Parties prior to the signing of this Agreement, no further arrangements on this matter are required except that the Mixed Armistice Commission shall undertake to re-examine whether there may be any prisoners of war belonging to either Party which were not included in the previous exchange. In the event that prisoners of war shall be found to exist, the Mixed Armistice Commission shall arrange for all early exchange of such prisoners. The Parties to this Agreement undertake to afford full co-operation to the Mixed Armistice Commission in its discharge of this responsibility.

#### **Article XI**

1. The execution of the provisions of this Agreement, with the exception of such matters as fall within the exclusive competence of the Special Committee established in article VIII, shall be supervised by a Mixed Armistice Commission composed of five members, of whom each Party to this Agreement shall designate two, and whose Chairman shall be the United Nations Chief of Staff of the Truce Supervision Organisation or a senior officer from the observer personnel of that organisation designated by him following consultation with both Parties to this Agreement.
2. The Mixed Armistice Commission shall maintain its headquarters at Jerusalem and shall hold its meetings at such places and at such times as it may deem necessary for the effective conduct of its work.
3. The Mixed Armistice Commission shall be convened in its first meeting by the United Nations Chief of Staff of the Truce Supervision Organisation not later than one week following the signing of this Agreement.
4. Decisions of the Mixed Armistice Commission, to the extent possible, shall be based on the principle of unanimity. In the absence of unanimity, decisions shall be taken by a majority vote of the members of the Commission present and voting.
5. The Mixed Armistice Commission shall formulate its own rules of procedure. Meetings shall be held only after due notice to the members by the Chairman. The quorum for its meetings shall be a majority of its members.

6. The Commission shall be empowered to employ observers, who may be from among the military organisations of the Parties or from the military personnel of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation, or from both, in such numbers as may be considered essential to the performance of its functions. In the event United Nations observers should be so employed, they shall remain under the command of the United Nations Chief of Staff of the Truce Supervision Organisation. Assignments of a general or special nature given to United Nations observers attached to the Mixed Armistice Commission shall be subject to approval by the United Nations Chief of Staff or his designated representative on the Commission, whichever is serving as Chairman.

7. Claims or complaints presented by either Party relating to the application of this Agreement shall be referred immediately to the Mixed Armistice Commission through its Chairman. The Commission shall take such action on all such claims or complaints by means of its observation and investigation machinery as it may deem appropriate, with a view to equitable and mutually satisfactory settlement.

8. Where interpretation of the meaning of a particular provision of this Agreement, other than the preamble and articles I and II, is at issue, the Commission's interpretation shall prevail. The Commission, in its discretion and as the need arises, may from time to time recommend to the Parties modifications in the provisions of this Agreement.

9. The Mixed Armistice Commission shall submit to both Parties reports on its activities as frequently as it may consider necessary. A copy of each such report shall be presented to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for transmission to the appropriate organ or agency of the United Nations.

10. Members of the Commission and its observers shall be accorded such freedom of movement and access in the area covered by this Agreement as the Commission may determine to be necessary, provided that when such decisions of the Commission are reached by a majority vote United Nations observers only shall be employed.

11. The expenses of the Commission, other than those relating to United Nations observers, shall be apportioned in equal shares between the two Parties to this Agreement.

## **Article XII**

1. The present Agreement is not subject to ratification and shall come into force immediately upon being signed.

2. This Agreement, having been negotiated and concluded in pursuance of the resolution of the Security Council of 16 November 1948 calling for the establishment of an armistice in order to eliminate the threat to the peace in Palestine and to facilitate the transition from the present truce to permanent

peace in Palestine, shall remain in force until a peaceful settlement between the Parties is achieved, except as provided in paragraph 3 of this article.

3. The Parties to this Agreement may, by mutual consent, revise this Agreement or any of its provisions, or may suspend its application, other than articles I and III, at any time. In the absence of mutual agreement and after this Agreement has been in effect for one year from the date of its signing, either of the Parties may call upon the Secretary-General of the United Nations to convoke a conference of representatives of the two Parties for the purpose of reviewing, revising, or suspending any of the provisions of this Agreement other than articles I and III. Participation in such conference shall be obligatory upon the Parties.

4. If the conference provided for in paragraph 3 of this article does not result in an agreed solution of a point in dispute, either Party may bring the matter before the Security Council of the United Nations for the relief sought on the grounds that this Agreement has been concluded in pursuance of Security Council action toward the end of achieving peace in Palestine.

5. This Agreement is signed in quintuplicate, of which one copy shall be retained by each Party, two copies communicated to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for transmission to the Security Council and to the United Nations Conciliation Commission on Palestine, and one copy to the United Nations Acting Mediator on Palestine.

Done at Rhodes, Island of Rhodes, Greece, on the third of April one thousand nine hundred and forty-nine in the presence of the United Nations Acting Mediator on Palestine and the United Nations Chief of Staff of the Truce Supervision Organisation.

For and on behalf of the Government of the Hashemite Jordan Kingdom

Signed:

Colonel Ahmed Sudki El-Jundi

Lieutenant-Colonel Mohamed Maayte

For and on behalf of the Government of Israel

Signed:

Reuven Shiloah

Lieutenant-Colonel Moshe Dayan

## **Annex I**

*Maps Delineating Armistice Demarcation Lines*

*[These maps follow annex II, and are explained in the note by the Secretariat to article V of the Agreement]*

## **Annex II**

### *Definition of Defensive Forces*

1. For the purposes of this Agreement *defensive forces* shall be defined as follows:

#### 1. Land forces

(a) A standard battalion to consist of not more than 800 officers and other ranks, and to be composed of not more than:

(i) Four rifle companies with ordinary infantry equipment; rifles, LMG's, SMG's, light mortars, anti-tank rifles and PIAT.

The light mortars shall not be heavier than 2 inch.

The following number of weapons per battalion shall not be exceeded: 48 LMG's, 16 mortars 2 inch, 8 PIAT's;

(ii) One support company with not more than six MMG's, six mortars not heavier than 3 inch, four anti-tank guns not heavier than six-pounders;

(iii) One headquarters company;

(b) The artillery and anti-aircraft artillery to be allotted to the defensive forces shall consist of the following type of weapons: field guns not heavier than twenty-five pounders, the anti-aircraft guns not heavier than forty millimetres.

2. The following are excluded from the term "defensive forces":

(a) Armour, such as tanks of all types, armoured cars, Bren gun carriers, halftracks, armoured vehicles or load carriers, or any other armoured vehicles;

(b) All support arms and units other than those specified in paragraphs I (a) i and ii, and I (b) above;

(c) Service units to be agreed upon.

#### 3. Air forces

In the areas where defensive forces only are permitted airfields, airstrips, landing fields and other installations, and military aircraft shall be employed for defensive and normal supply purposes only.

11. The defensive forces which may be maintained by each Party in the areas extending ten kilometres from each side of the Armistice Demarcation Lines, as

provided in paragraph I of article VI, shall be as follows for the sectors described in article V, paragraph 1:

1. Sector Kh Deir Arab (MR 1510-1574) to the northern terminus of the lines defined in the 30 November 1948 Cease-Fire Agreement for the Jerusalem area: one battalion each.
2. Jerusalem sector: two battalions each.
3. Hebron-Dead Sea sector: one battalion each.
4. Sector Engeddi to Eilat: three battalions each. In addition, each side will be allowed one squadron of light armoured cars consisting of not more than 13 light armoured cars or half tracks. The weapons permissible on these vehicles will be determined by the Mixed Armistice Commission.
5. Sector now held by Iraqi forces: five battalions each, and one squadron of armoured cars each.

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