

**Document A: “History of the Haganah”, Shaul Avigur
(1963)**

The Haganah organization saw its primary duty in securing each position until the police arrived. The defense of the country as a whole, guarding of the fields, the forests and the roads were not part of the “state of alert” of the Haganah. Nor, needless to say, did it envisage all-out war against attacking gangs. This exaggerated faith in the British administration weakened the alertness of the Yishuv. The heritage of the Hashomer organization, and of the Third Aliya, of fighting back, the spirit of independence in defense, had been weakened. With the advent of the new Arab tactics the defenders were out of their depth.

Source: As Quoted in: Lone Wolf: A Biography of Vladimir “Ze’ev” Jabotinsky Vol. 2, Shmuel Katz, Barricade Books, New York, 1996, p. 1487.

Document B: “Ben-Gurion The Burning Ground 1886-1948,” Shabtai Teveth (1987)

The funeral in Tel Aviv of one of the Jewish victims, at which mourners injured Arab passersby, provided [Ben-Gurion] with a national audience on whom to impress his method of extracting gain from disaster, which he soon termed “the weapon of self-restraint” – avoidance of Jewish reprisal for Arab attacks. The Jews would limit themselves to self-defense and, as much as possible, to punishing the terrorists; under no circumstance would they harm innocents.

At a Jerusalem gathering on April 19 [1936] he had stated “I understand and empathize with all the bitterness voiced here ... but owing to the very gravity of the situation we must maintain clarity of thought as well as the moral and political principles which guide Zionism and the Yishuv. ... If attacked we must not exceed the bounds of self-defense. ... We must monitor ourselves so that we do not become the cause of a flare-up.” He made it clear that the point of “self-restraint” was to avoid provocation and escalation. “I fear that those who today murdered our people in an ambush not only plotted to murder some Jews, but intended to provoke us, to push us into acting as they have, and turning the country red with blood. The Arabs stand to gain from such a development. They want the country to be in a state of perpetual pogrom.” ...

Four weeks later, on May 15, Ben-Gurion had appealed to the JAE [Jewish Agency Executive] to guide the Yishuv in general and the Haganah in particular in keeping to this line of response, which formulated an official and obligatory stance. “We must do all that is necessary so that the public will know to restrain itself in the future as well and not exceed the boundaries of self-restraint, else we suffer a catastrophe.” At the same meeting he coined an axiom of sorts. “Any additional bloodshed [caused by Jews] will only bring the Arabs political benefit and hurt us.”

The support of his JAE colleagues was not enough, and it was no easy task to convince the public and his own party to stop at self-defense when spilled blood cried for vengeance. Ben-Gurion had to call on his best powers of persuasion. He explained, with cool logic, that the Arabs could achieve their goals “only through revolt and rebellion,” while for the Jews, the opposite was true. Revolt and terror would not encourage Britain “to assist in bringing the Jewish people to Palestine and turning it into a Jewish

country.” Jewish counterterrorism would only feed the flames that would destroy the Zionist enterprise. “What we wish to achieve requires the help of the British; what the Arabs wish to achieve requires war on Great Britain.” The conclusion: different ends dictate different means. “Our instruments of war differ,” he said at a public meeting in Tel Aviv, describing self-restraint alongside striving for dialogue and negotiations with the Arabs as “front-line weaponry.”

But no less important to Ben-Gurion than the political benefits was the image of the Yishuv’s moral integrity, which soon came to be described by the phrase “purity of arms.” ... At a plenary session of the National Council he said that a double standard was at work. “We are not Arabs, and others measure us by a different standard, which doesn’t allow so much as a hairsbreadth of deviation. ... Our strength is in defense ... and this strength will give us a political victory if England and the world know that we are defending ourselves rather than attacking.”

If this line met with resistance, the name he gave it – self-restraint – drew such violent criticism that Ben-Gurion was afraid the policy itself would be rejected. In 1938, when Arab terror was renewed with redoubled force and the controversy reached its peak, he conceded to the Haganah, the Yishuv, and the entire Zionist movement that self-restraint was “a stupid name” and instead proposed self-defense, for “we only defend ourselves and do not take revenge.” But this had no effect, and in fact the label self-restraint stuck. His opponents’ claim that the Arabs would interpret the policy as weakness and be encouraged to escalate the terror fell on receptive ears, as did their argument that a generation of valiant fighters could not be brought up on self-restraint or self-defense. Even those who accepted the moral imperative of not harming innocents feared that Britain would yield to the more aggressive side in the conflict and felt that the Haganah should emulate the Arabs.

Source: Ben-Gurion The Burning Ground 1886-1948, Shabtai Teveth, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston 1987, p. 548-550.

Document C: “A History of Israel”, Howard Sachar (1976)

Arriving in 1936 as an intelligence officer in the Fifth Division, Wingate was a cousin of the governor-general of the Sudan and was seconded to Palestine because of his fluency in Arabic and his presumed rapport with the Arab community. The authorities had not been aware of Wingate’s deeply rooted Protestant millennialism. Within weeks of his arrival in the country, however, it was this biblical mysticism that transformed the young captain into a passionate adherent of the Zionist cause. ...

In studying Arab tactics, Wingate noted the manner in which the guerrillas would strike and escape from heavily armed government columns. He was determined to retaliate by developing fast patrols and placing emphasis on night operations. ... Throughout 1938, during their scores of forays and ambushes, the Jewish Special Night Squads inflicted heavy casualties on the Mufti’s rebels and kept them off balance and increasingly ineffective.

Despite these not unimpressive achievements, the Special Night Squads were sharply reduced early in 1939 and gradually assigned a minor role. Political factors by then militated against British cooperation with the Jewish defense units. Wingate himself was considered expendable; his pro-Zionist views were becoming an embarrassment to the government. Eventually, in the spring of 1939, he was sent back to England. His superiors wrote in his file: “A good soldier but a poor security risk. Not to be trusted. The interests of the Jews are more important to him than those of his own country. He must not be allowed to return to Palestine.”

Source: A History of Israel From The Rise of Zionism to Our Time, Howard Sachar, Alfred A. Knopf, 3rd ed., New York, 2007 (originally published 1976), p. 215-216.

Document D: “A History of Israel”, Howard Sachar (1976)

Once the military situation turned against Britain, however, following the blitzkrieg of 1940, the government tentatively eased its policy toward the Haganah. Indeed, with France out of the war and Syria in Vichy hands, a method had to be devised to block possible avenues of German invasion into the Middle East. Senior Haganah officers thereupon were invited to collaborate with the British in preparing lists of bridges and tunnels that were vulnerable to sabotage in Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, and Iran. ...The need soon became evident for a permanently mobilized Jewish task force. Such a unit accordingly was established by the Haganah in May 1941, and classified as the Palmach (Plugot Machaz – Strike Companies). ...

Once the danger to Palestine ebbed in the autumn of 1942, therefore, the British closed the various Palmach training bases ... and even demanded lists containing names and addresses of Palmach members. The alliance finally ended in bad blood when the British army appropriated the weapons it had distributed earlier to the Palmach. Whereupon Palmach units broke into a government arsenal several days later and reclaimed the guns. The British in turn relegated the Haganah to its former illegal status.

Source: A History of Israel From The Rise of Zionism to Our Time, Howard Sachar, Alfred A. Knopf, 3rd ed., New York, 2007 (originally published 1976), p. 233-235.

Document E: “*Terror Out of Zion*” J. Bowyer Bell (1977)

On August 25 [1945] the Colonial Office informed [Chaim] Weizmann that the immigrant quota of 1,500 would not be increased. Weizmann’s Anglo-centric policy was devastated. In Palestine the hopes had been so high that this disappointment, which most accepted as a foretaste of worse, embittered all but the most unswerving Anglophiles.

The Jewish Agency had to reconsider future prospects. [Foreign Minister] Bevin seemed immune to persuasion. Increasingly, the militants within the Haganah urged a policy of pressure, a demonstration to Bevin and the British that they could not continue to ignore Zionist demands. More distressing, there began to be leakage from the Haganah. *Herut* noted that twenty-five Palmach men had resigned to come over to the Irgun. August saw the intensification of Begin’s revolt and the renewed plea by leftist newspapers to purge the dissidents. Purges and a renewed Season simply were not in the cards, rather the reverse. A truce with the Irgun was arranged, and Agency spokesmen suggested an amalgamation with the Haganah and a campaign to pressure the British into concessions. Such an agreement for the Jewish Agency would, at one stroke remove a potential political rival, absorb a dissident military force, and end any further independent underground operations. The Irgun was not necessarily adverse to the closest possible cooperation with the Agency. Begin had already offered in 1944 to operate under Ben-Gurion. Grave doubts remained, however, about the timidity of Ben-Gurion’s colleagues. Once absorbed and dispersed, the Irgun would be in no position to renew the revolt if the Jewish Agency and the Haganah lost their nerve or revised their strategy. There would in fact be no Irgun. The Irgun suggested instead a single strategic command of a united resistance that would in effect give the Agency a veto through the Haganah representative over all operations except arms raids. LEHI, somewhat more sympathetic to amalgamation, also accepted the idea of a united command. The result was Tenuat Hameri, the united resistance movement.

Source: *Terror Out of Zion*, J. Bowyer Bell, St. Martin’s Press, New York, 1977, p. 142.

Document F: “*Anonymous Soldiers*,” Bruce Hoffman (2015)

[On June 29, 1946] Starting at about 3:45 a.m., teams of Sixth Airborne signals officers and their men, escorted by detachments of the Glider Pilot Regiment, began to fan out across the country to take control of the main telephone exchanges. Less than ninety minutes later Palestine was completely without telephone service, the lines manned by British troops with their civilian operators kept under close guard. Search parties now converged simultaneously on the Jewish Agency headquarters in Jerusalem and its offices in Tel Aviv as well as those of the Histadrut, the Loan and Savings Bank, the WIZO (Women’s International Zionist Organization), and the command centers of the Haganah and the Palmach. Twenty rural settlements were also raided, and curfews were declared in the country’s three major cities and in four additional districts as well.

Meanwhile, an assortment of Zionist leaders found themselves abruptly awakened by loud pounding on their front doors. Awaiting them were soldiers and police who placed the bleary-eyed leaders under arrest and removed them to specially prepared detention facilities at the Latrun and Athlit camps. The dragnet indiscriminately swept up hard-liners and moderates. Some detainees cooperated and went quietly, while others had to be forcibly subdued. One officer, for instance, reported being offered a brandy and soda while waiting for the leader he was assigned to apprehend to dress and pack a bag. Soldiers had to resort to fisticuffs, however, to manhandle the seventy-year-old rabbi Yehuda Fishman into the car waiting to transport him to Latrun after his offer to walk to a nearby police station rather than violate the Sabbath by riding in a vehicle was rejected by the officer in charge of his arrest detail.

By the time the operation concluded on July 1, some seventeen thousand troops and police had taken 2,718 Jews into custody, including 56 women. Among them were 4 members of the Jewish Agency Executive, 7 Haganah officers, and nearly half of the Palmach’s fighters. The search teams carted away an estimated nine tons of documents from the various Jewish institutions that had been raided. Over the three preceding days, a total of twenty-seven settlements had also been searched, from which more than three hundred rifles, 425,000 rounds of ammunition, eight thousand hand grenades, fifty-two hundred mortar bombs, and a panoply of explosives were seized.

The army hailed the operation as a success. "Palestine is a wasps nest. We dug it up on Saturday and captured a good many wasps," Dempsey told Montgomery. "The remainder are now buzzing about angry and bewildered." ... That Agatha achieved its objective of surprise was indisputable. Despite the leaked planning document, the Haganah's otherwise highly efficient intelligence service and its effective penetration of the British government and military establishment in Palestine, and even the Jewish Agency's own anticipation of just such an operation at least six months earlier, the sheer scope and broad sweep of Agatha caught the Yishuv off guard. The loss of the vast quantity of weaponry discovered at Kibbutz Yagur alone, one of the Haganah's three central arms dumps, dealt the Yishuv a major setback in its efforts to prepare militarily for independence. Such a series of blows, Cunningham had hoped, would bring the community to its senses. "I call upon all those who have the true interests of Palestine at heart to co-operate with the Government," the high commissioner pleaded in his public announcement of the operation. "The door of negotiation and discussion is not shut."

But it was. And Agatha, as even the army recognized, had slammed it closed. ...

...the harm done to Anglo-Zionist relations was irreparable. "This is the first time that the public cannot escape the feeling that the bridges between us and Britain have been blown up and that the action taken by the Government affected not only this or that political scheme but the very foundation of the idea of the National Home," *Ha'aretz* opined. Even the Sixth Airborne's after-action report of the operation had to concede this point. Struggling to put the best face on the Yishuv's unrestrained opprobrium, it noted, "The operation has temporarily lost us what friends amongst the Jews we still had." Such hopes, however, were little more than wishful thinking. That much was already clear to Colin Mitchell, a young subaltern serving in a Scottish regiment attached to the Sixth Airborne. "So far as we could see," he commented, "Operation 'Agatha' achieved little more than further inflaming Jewish opinion against the British."

Source: Anonymous Soldiers: The Struggle for Israel, 1917-1947, Bruce Hoffman, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2015, p. 280-283.