

General Service Medal with 'Palestine 1945-48' Clasp 27th September 1945 – 30th June 1948

Qualifying Period – One or more days on the strength of a unit between the above dates.

Jewish Insurgency in Palestine

Jewish insurgency in Palestine refers to violent campaigns carried out by Jewish underground groups against the British forces and officials in Mandatory Palestine between 1939 and 1948. The tensions between Jewish militant underground organizations and the British mandatory authorities rose from 1938 and intensified with the publication of the MacDonald White Paper of 1939, which proposed restrictions on Jewish immigration and independence for Palestine with an Arab majority within ten years. Though World War II brought relative calm, the tensions again escalated into an armed struggle towards the end of the war, when it became clear that the Axis Powers were close to defeat. The conflict lasted until the termination of the Palestine mandate and the establishment of the State of Israel in May 1948.

The armed conflict escalated during the final phase of the World War II, when Irgun declared a revolt in February 1944, ending the hiatus in operations it had begun in 1940. Starting from the assassination of Lord Moyne in 1944, the Haganah actively opposed the Irgun and Lehi, in a period of inter-Jewish fighting known as The Hunting Season. However, in autumn 1945, after the end of the war the Haganah began a period of co-operation with the two other underground organizations, forming the Jewish Resistance Movement. The Haganah refrained from direct confrontation with British forces, and concentrated its efforts on attacking British immigration control, while Irgun and Lehi attacked military and police targets. The Resistance Movement dissolved in recriminations in July 1946 following the King David Hotel bombing, with Irgun and Lehi going their own way, while the main underground militia Haganah acted mainly in supporting Jewish immigration to Mandatory Palestine. After the UN partition plan resolution was passed on 29 November 1947, the civil war between Palestinian Jews and Arabs started to eclipse the previous tensions of both with the British.

Within Britain there were deep divisions over Palestine policy. Dozens of British soldiers, Jewish militants and civilians died during the campaigns of insurgency. The conflict led to heightened antisemitism in the UK and, in August 1947, after the hanging of two abducted British sergeants, to widespread anti-Jewish rioting across the UK. The conflict caused tensions in Britain's relationship with the United States.

Background Between the World Wars

Although both the 1917 Balfour Declaration and the terms of the League of Nations British Mandate of Palestine called for a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine, the British did not accept any linkage between Palestine and the situation of European Jews. After the Nuremberg Laws of 1935 many German Jews sought refuge abroad, and by the end of 1939 some 80,000 had been given refuge in Great Britain itself.

Peel Commission Partition Plan, July 1937

In 1936–37, soon after the start of the Arab uprising in Palestine, Earl Peel led a commission to consider a solution. The Peel Commission proposed a partition of Palestine that involved the compulsory resettlement of some Arab and Jewish inhabitants. It was not acceptable either to the Arab or to the Jewish leaders, though David Ben-Gurion remarked in 1937, "The compulsory transfer of the Arabs from the valleys of the proposed Jewish state could give us something which we have never had, even when we stood on our own during the days of the First and Second Temples." The twentieth Zionist Congress resolved in August 1937 that: "the partition plan proposed by the Peel Commission is not to be accepted"; but it wished "... to carry on negotiations in order to clarify the exact substance of the British government's proposal for the foundation of a Jewish state in Palestine".

A further attempt was made in the Woodhead Commission, also known as the "Palestine Partition Commission", whose report was published in late 1938. A government statement (Cmnd 5843) followed on 11 November 1938.^[7] It concluded that: "His Majesty's Government, after careful study of the Partition Commission's report, have reached the conclusion that this further examination has shown that the political, administrative and financial difficulties involved in the proposal to create independent Arab and Jewish States inside Palestine are so great that this solution of the problem is impracticable." The brief St. James Conference followed in early 1939.

Britain also attended the international Évian Conference in 1938 on the issue of providing for refugees from Germany. Palestine was not discussed as a refuge because it might worsen the ongoing Arab revolt; Zionists naturally hoped that Palestine would be the principal destination for all such refugees.

British Immigration Restrictions and the 1939 White Paper

In the 1920s, the British imposed restrictions on Jewish immigration to Palestine and the ability of Jews to buy land, claiming that these decisions were taken due to concerns over the economic absorptive capacity of the country. In the 1930s, British authorities set a quota for immigration certificates, and authorized the Jewish Agency to hand them out at its discretion. Shortly before the outbreak of World War II, the British introduced the White Paper of 1939. The White Paper rejected the concept of partition of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states, and announced that the country would be turned into an independent binational state with an Arab majority. It severely curtailed Jewish immigration, allowing for only 75,000 Jews to migrate to Palestine from 1940 to 1944, consisting of a yearly quota of 10,000 per year and a supplementary quota for 25,000 to cover refugee emergencies spread out over the same period. Afterwards, further Jewish immigration would depend on consent of the Arab majority. Sales of Arab land to Jews were to be restricted.

In reaction to British restrictions, illegal immigration to Palestine began. Initially, Jews entered Palestine by land, mainly by slipping across the northern border, where they were aided by the border settlements. In the early 1930s, when crossing the northern border became more difficult, other routes were found. Thousands of Jews came to Palestine on student or tourist visas, and never returned to their countries of origin. Jewish women often entered into fictitious marriages with residents of Palestine to be granted entry for family reunification purposes. In 1934, the first seaborne attempt to bring Jews to Palestine happened when some 350 Jews of the HeHalutz movement in Poland who were unwilling to wait for certificates sailed to Palestine on the *Vallos*, a chartered ship. Two more ships carrying illegal immigrants arrived in 1937, and several more arrived in 1938 and 1939. These voyages were mainly organized by the Revisionist Zionist Organization and the Irgun. Until 1938, the Jewish Agency opposed illegal immigration, fearing that it would impact the number of immigration certificates issued.^[8]

Overall, between 1929 and 1940, a period of mass Jewish immigration known as the Fifth Aliyah occurred despite British restrictions. Nearly 250,000 Jews (of whom 20,000 later left) immigrated to Palestine, many of them illegally.

During World War II (1939-1944)

World War II erupted when Mandatory authorities of Palestine were at the final stages of subduing the armed Arab revolt of 1936-1939. All Jewish organizations, including the Zionists in Europe also played a major role in the Jewish resistance to the Nazis in Europe, automatically allied with the Allied forces, including the British. The Yishuv temporarily put aside its differences with the British regarding the White Paper, deciding that defeating the Nazis was a more urgent goal. The leader of Palestine's Jews, David Ben-Gurion, issued a call for Jews to "support the British as if there is no White Paper and oppose the White Paper as if there is no war". During the war, Palestinian Jews volunteered in large numbers to serve in the British Army, serving mainly in North Africa. Of the 470,000 Jews in Palestine at the time, some 30,000 served in the British Army during the war. There was a Jewish battalion attached to the British Army's East Kent Regiment stationed in Palestine.

Among the Palestinian Arabs, the Nashashibi clan supported the British, while another Arab Palestinian faction, led by Amin al-Huseini, was on the other hand supporting the Axis powers. The Palestine Regiment was formed in 1942, combining three Jewish and one Arab battalions, reaching altogether 3,800 volunteers. It was involved in activities at the Mediterranean scene of the war, sustaining casualties during the North African campaign. The Special Interrogation Group was also formed in 1942 as a commando unit composed of German-speaking Palestinian Jews. It performed commando and sabotage operations during the Western Desert Campaign.

The Jewish underground group Irgun ceased all anti-British activities by 1940, and supported the British. An Irgun unit was sent to assist British forces fighting in the Middle East. In 1941, Irgun's David Raziel, was killed while fighting in Iraq with the British against that country's pro-Axis regime. Irgun also provided the British with intelligence from Eastern Europe and North Africa, and allowed members to enlist in the British Army. However, in August 1940, Irgun member Avraham Stern formed Lehi, a breakaway group which favored armed struggle against the British to force them out of Palestine and immediately establish a Jewish state. Stern was unaware of the Nazis' intent to exterminate the Jews, and believed that Hitler wanted to make Germany *judenrein* through emigration. Stern proposed an alliance with Nazi Germany, offering the Germans help in conquering the Middle East and driving out the British in exchange for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, which would then take in European Jewry. This proposal, which never received a reply, cost Lehi and Stern much support. Stern became a pariah among the Jews in Palestine, and was himself killed by British police in 1942. In September 1944, the Jewish Brigade was formed, based on the Palestine Regiment core. The brigade consisted of nearly 5,000 volunteers, including three former Palestine Regiment battalions, the 200th Royal Artillery Field regiment and several supporting units. The brigade was dispatched to participate in the Italian campaign in late 1944 and later took part in the Spring 1945 offensive in Italy against the German forces. During the war, a special paratrooper unit in the British Army composed of Jewish men and women from Palestine was active. The unit's members were sent into occupied Europe, mainly by airdrop, to help organize and participate in local resistance activities on the ground. Some 250 men and women volunteered, of whom 110 underwent training and 37 were infiltrated.

In December 1942, when the mass murder of European Jewry became known to the Allies, the British continued to refuse to change their policy of limited immigration, or to admit Jews from Nazi controlled Europe in numbers outside the quota imposed by the White paper, and the Royal Navy prevented ships with Jewish refugees from reaching Palestine. Some ships carrying Jewish refugees were turned back towards Europe, although in one instance, about 2,000 Jews who were fleeing Europe by sea were detained in a camp in Mauritius, and were given the option of immigrating to Palestine after the war. The British also stopped all attempts by Palestinian Jews to bribe the Nazis into freeing European Jews. At the time that the Holocaust became known to the Allies, there were 34,000 Jewish immigration certificates for Palestine remaining. In 1943, about half the remaining certificates were distributed, and by the end of the war, 3,000 certificates remained.

British restrictions on Jewish Immigration

During the 1945 British election, Labour pledged that if they returned to power, they would revoke the White Paper of 1939, permit free Jewish immigration to Palestine and even the transfer of Arabs, and turn Palestine into a Jewish national home that would gradually evolve into an independent state. However, the new Labour Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, decided to maintain heavy restrictions on Jewish immigration. Before the war, Bevin had been the head of Britain's largest trade-union, the TGWU and in this capacity had led a campaign to prevent German Jews being allowed to migrate to Britain. Bevin favored the White Paper's policy of turning Palestine into an Arab state with a Jewish minority that would have political and economic rights, and feared that the creation of a Jewish state would inflame Arab opinion and jeopardize Britain's position as the dominant power in the Middle East. Bevin also believed that displaced Holocaust survivors should be resettled in Europe instead of Palestine.

Due to the British immigration restrictions, the Jewish Agency Executive turned to illegal immigration. Over the next few years tens of thousands of Jews sailed towards Palestine in overcrowded vessels in a program known as Aliyah Bet, despite the almost certain knowledge that it would lead to incarceration in a British prison camp (most ships were intercepted). The overwhelming majority were European Jews, including many Holocaust survivors, although some North African Jews were also involved.

In Europe former Jewish partisans led by Abba Kovner began to organize escape routes taking Jews from Eastern Europe down to the Mediterranean where the Jewish Agency organized ships to illegally carry them to Palestine. British officials in the occupied German zones tried to halt Jewish immigration by refusing to recognize the Jews as a national group and demanding that they return to their places of origin. The British government put diplomatic pressure on Poland, the source of a large number of the Jewish refugees, to clamp down on Jewish emigration, as Poland freely permitted Jews to leave without visas or exit permits, but their efforts proved futile. In 1947, British Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) launched Operation Embarrass, a clandestine operation to blow up ships in Italian ports that were preparing to take Jewish refugees to Palestine, by having operatives attach limpet mines to the hulls of vessels. From summer 1947 to early 1948, five such attacks were carried out, destroying one ship and damaging two others. Two other British mines were discovered before they detonated.

In the early stages of illegal immigration, small coastal craft were used to bring in Jewish refugees, but large vessels were soon used. In total, some 60 ships were employed, including 10 ships acquired as war surplus from US boneyards. Among the crews were Jewish American and Canadian volunteers. In order to prevent Jewish illegal migrants reaching Palestine a naval blockade was established to stop boats carrying illegal migrants, and there was extensive intelligence gathering and diplomatic pressure on countries through which the migrants were passing or from whose ports the ships were coming. When an illegal immigrant ship was spotted, it would be approached by warships, and would often maneuver violently to avoid being boarded. British boarding parties consisting of Royal Marines and Paratroopers would then be sent to take control of the ship. On 27 ships, they were met with some level of resistance, including 13 cases of violent resistance, during which boarding parties were opposed by passengers armed with weapons such as clubs, iron bars, axes, firebombs, scalding steam hoses, and pistols. Royal Navy ships would ram transports, and boarding parties forced their way onto the ships and engaged in close-quarters hand-to-hand fighting to gain control. In five instances, firearms were used. During these encounters, two Royal Navy warships were damaged in collisions with immigrant ships. Seven British soldiers were killed during battles to take control of immigrant ships - most of whom drowned after being pushed overboard by passengers. Six passengers were also killed. From 1945 to 1948, some 80,000 illegal immigrants attempted to enter Palestine. About 49 illegal immigrant ships were captured and 66,000 people were detained. Some 1,600 others drowned at sea.

In 1945, the Atlit detainee camp was reopened. The camp had been built in the 1930s to hold illegal Jewish immigrants fleeing Europe, and during World War II it had been used to hold Jewish refugees fleeing the Holocaust, who were often held for an extended period of time before being released. As more and more illegals began arriving in Palestine, the camp was reopened. In October 1945, a raid by the Palmach freed 208 inmates. One week after the King David hotel bombing in July 1946, four ships carrying 6,000 illegal immigrants arrived in Haifa, completely overflowing the Atlit camp. The British government, which had known for some time that it would be unable to contain Jewish immigration, established internment camps on the island of Cyprus to detain all illegal immigrants. About 53,000 Jews, mostly Holocaust survivors, passed through these holding facilities.

British officials in the liberated zones tried to halt Jewish immigration, and did not recognize the Jews as a national group, demanding that they return to their places of origin. Jewish concentration camp survivors (displaced persons or DPs) were forced to share accommodation with non-Jewish DPs some of whom were former Nazi collaborators, now seeking asylum. In some cases former Nazis

were given positions of authority in the camps, which they used to abuse the Jewish survivors. Food supplies to Jewish concentration camp survivors in the British zone were cut to prevent them from assisting Jews fleeing Eastern Europe. In the British zone they were refused support on the grounds that they were not displaced by the war.

Troops in the U.S. zone were also not helping survivors but in 1945, U.S. President Harry S. Truman sent a personal representative, Earl G. Harrison, to investigate the situation of the Jewish survivors in Europe. Harrison reported,

Substantial unofficial and unauthorized movements of people must be expected, and these will require considerable force to prevent, for the patience of many of the persons involved is, and in my opinion with justification, nearing the breaking point. It cannot be overemphasized that many of these people are now desperate, that they have become accustomed under German rule to employ every possible means to reach their end, and that the fear of death does not restrain them.

The Harrison report changed U.S. policy in the occupied zones, and U.S. policy increasingly focused on helping Jews escape Eastern Europe. Jews escaping post-war anti-Semitic attacks in Eastern Europe learned to avoid the British zone and generally moved through American zones.

In April 1946, the Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry reported that given a chance, half a million Jews would immigrate to Palestine:

In Poland, Hungary and Rumania, the chief desire is to get out... The vast majority of the Jewish displaced persons and migrants, however, believe that the only place which offers a prospect is Palestine."

The Anglo-American Committee recommended that 100,000 Jews be immediately admitted into Palestine. U.S. President Truman pressured the British to accede to this demand. Despite British government promises to abide by the committee's decision, the British decided to persist with restrictions on Jewish migration. Foreign Secretary Bevin remarked that the American pressure to admit 100,000 Jews into Palestine was because "they do not want too many of them in New York". Prime Minister Clement Attlee announced that 100,000 Jews would not be permitted into Palestine long as the "illegal armies" of Palestine (meaning the Jewish militias) were not disbanded.

In October 1946, in fulfillment of the recommendation of the Anglo-American Committee, Britain decided to allow a further 96,000 Jews into Palestine at a rate of 1,500 a month. Half this monthly quota was allocated to Jews in the prisons on Cyprus, due to fears that if the number of Jewish prisoners in the Cyprus camps kept growing, it would eventually lead to an uprising there.

On July 18, 1947, the Royal Navy intercepted the Exodus-1947 a ship laden with 4,515 refugees en route to Palestine. The passengers resisted violently, and the boarding ended with two passengers and one crewman dead. Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin decided that rather than being sent to Cyprus, the immigrants on board the Exodus would be returned to the ship's port of origin in France. Bevin believed that sending illegal immigrants to Cyprus, where they then qualified for inclusion into legal immigration quotas to Palestine, only encouraged more illegal immigration. By forcing them to return to their port of origin, Bevin hoped to deter future illegal immigrants. However, the French government announced that it would not permit the disembarkation of passengers unless it was voluntary on their part. The passengers refused to disembark, spending weeks in difficult conditions. The ship was then taken to Germany, where the passengers were forcibly removed at Hamburg and returned to DP camps. The event became a major media event, influencing UN deliberations, damaging Britain's international image and prestige, and exacerbating the already poor relationship between Britain and the Jews.

There is a general agreement among historians that the Jewish underground in Palestine refrained from an opened struggle against Britain, as long as the joint enemy of Germany was still at large. This approach changed towards the beginning of 1944, with withdrawal of Axis forces from the Mediterranean and the advances of the Red Army in Eastern Front. With the general feeling that the Axis forces in Europe were nearing their defeat, the Irgun decided to shift its policy from cease-fire to an active campaign of violence, as long as it would not be hurting the war effort against the Nazi Germany.

In the autumn of 1943, the Irgun approached Lehi and proposed jointly carrying out an insurrection. In February 1944, the Irgun now led by Menachem Begin, ended the wartime truce and declared an uprising. Begin believed that the only way to save European Jewry was to compel the British to leave Palestine as fast as possible and open the country to unrestricted Jewish immigration. Irgun and Lehi began a bombing campaign against British intelligence, immigration, and tax collection offices, and police stations. However, they avoided attacks against British soldiers and military targets until the war was over, as they did not want to hurt the war effort against Germany in any way.

In November 1944, the Lehi (Stern Gang) assassinated Lord Moyne, the British minister in Cairo. The Jewish Agency Executive condemned terror attacks and after Ben-Gurion made a Histadrut address condemning 'murder, robbery, blackmail and theft' and insisting there be no compromises with terrorists within the ranks, a campaign known as The Hunting Season was conducted by the Haganah with British assistance from November 1944 to February 1945, often helped by the British, rounded up Irgun members.

Jewish Agency and Lehi leaders met in secret before the start of the Season. While the exact contents of the meeting were disputed by both sides, it is known that Lehi suspended its activities for six months, and the Season was not extended to Lehi.^{[40][41]} Some 1,000 Irgun members were arrested, 250 of whom were interned in camps in Africa. They were released in July 1948, two months after Israeli independence.

The Jewish Resistance Movement and after, 1945-1947

After the end of World War II, Lehi, Haganah and other groups joined in the anti-British Jewish Resistance Movement in 1945–46. In October 1945, the Haganah entered into an alliance with the Irgun and ceased cooperation with the British. In November 1945, units from the Palmach, the Haganah's elite fighting force, as well as Lehi, carried out the Night of the Trains, sabotaging railway networks across Palestine, and blowing up British guard boats in Jaffa and Haifa. The operation symbolized the founding of the Jewish Resistance Movement. In December 1945, Irgun carried out attacks against the British Intelligence Offices and raided a British Army camp.

In 1946, attacks against the British intensified, and now included military targets. On June 16, 1946, Haganah forces carried out attacks against bridges linking Palestine to the neighboring Arab countries, hoping to stop the transfer of weapons to the Palestinian Arabs. This operation, known as the Night of the Bridges, as well as other attacks around this time, prompted the British to launch Operation Agatha, also known as the *Black Sabbath*. British military and police forces imposed curfews around the country and conducted searches for arms caches and militants in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa, and in several dozen Jewish settlements. The British raided the Jewish Agency headquarters in Jerusalem, confiscating large amounts of paperwork, and arrested Jews suspected of being involved with "terrorism", including leading members of the Jewish Agency, holding them without trial.^[43] The British hoped to deter the Haganah, as well as the more extreme Jewish underground groups Irgun and Lehi, from carrying out further attacks. The Haganah stopped carrying out anti-British operations, officially withdrawing from the Jewish Resistance Movement on July 1, 1946. From then on, the Haganah would focus mainly on organizing illegal Jewish immigration to Palestine through its Mossad LeAliyah Bet branch. However, Irgun and Lehi reacted by intensifying their attacks. As a response to Operation Agatha, Irgun carried out the King David Hotel bombing, an attack on the building where the central branches of the civil and military administration of Palestine

were based, killing 91 people.^[44] Although the Haganah had initially approved the attack, this had been withdrawn, a fact which the Haganah's contact with the Irgun failed to make clear. The approval had also been based on the attack being carried out in the evening, whereas it was carried out at the height of the working day when the hotel was most busy. The Irgun blamed the British for not, despite a warning sent by telephone, evacuating the hotel. The British government stated that no warning had been received by anyone in a position to act on it. Rather than contacting the British authorities, the warning had been sent to the hotel's own switchboard, where it was ignored, perhaps because hoax warnings being rife at the time. Due to the Irgun not understanding how temperature affected the fuses, the bomb exploded early. Pedestrians outside the hotel were killed as well as people inside it.

The commander of the British forces in Palestine, General Sir Evelyn Barker, who was having an affair with the wife of the late George Antonius (a leading Arab Nationalist), responded to the King David Hotel bombing by ordering British personnel to boycott all:

"Jewish establishments, restaurants, shop, and private dwellings. No British soldier is to have social intercourse with any Jew.... I appreciate that these measures will inflict some hardship on the troops, yet I am certain that if my reasons are fully explained to them they will understand their propriety and will be punishing the Jews in a way the race dislikes as much as any, by striking at their pockets and showing our contempt of them"^[45]

Barker, whose forces participated in the capture of the Bergen Belsen concentration camp, made many antisemitic comments in his letters to Antonius' wife and was relieved of his post a few weeks after issuing the statement. A few months after his return to England, Barker was sent a letter bomb by the Irgun, but detected it before it exploded.

The Jewish Agency was issuing constant complaints to the British administration about antisemitic remarks by British soldiers:

"they frequently said "Bloody Jew" or "pigs", sometimes shouted "Heil Hitler", and promised they would finish off what Hitler had begun. Churchill wrote that most British military officers in Palestine were strongly pro-Arab."^[47]

A major insurgency erupted, and the Jewish underground was engaged in constant attacks against British military and police forces. The Jewish Agency Executive, led by David Ben-Gurion, the leading authority of the Jews in Palestine, stayed out of the campaign, but mostly refused to cooperate with the British authorities. The Jewish civilian population, which was hostile to the British, was also largely uncooperative. The main perpetrators of these attacks were the militant groups Lehi (also known as the Stern Gang) and Irgun. The two groups, which financed their campaigns through bank robberies, extortion from Jewish businesses, and private donations, attacked British military and police installations, government offices, and ships being used to deport illegal migrants, often with bombs. In at least one case, a police station was attacked with a large truck bomb. They also sabotaged infrastructure such as railroads, bridges, and oil installations. Some 90 economic targets were attacked, among them 20 trains which were damaged or derailed and five train stations which were attacked, and about dozen attacks against the oil industry were carried out, including a March 1947 Lehi raid on the Shell Oil refinery in Haifa which destroyed some 16,000 tons of petroleum. Jewish insurgents regularly staged killings of British soldiers and police officers throughout Palestine, employing booby traps, ambushes, snipers, vehicle bombings, and shooting attacks. British armored vehicles faced attacks by remotely detonated IEDs disguised as milestones which blew vehicles off the road and killed or injured occupants. They were seen by the insurgents as their most cost-effective weapon. The Jewish civilian population of Palestine, encouraged by Zionist groups, engaged in riots, strikes, and demonstrations against the British authorities. The British Army, which eventually had one soldier for every five Jews in Palestine, responded with extensive search operations and raids to arrest militants and uncover illegal arms caches. They regularly imposed

curfews, cordons, and collective punishments, and enacted a series of draconian emergency regulations which allowed for arbitrary arrests, to the point that some observers called Palestine a police state. They supplemented their large operations with smaller ones that had the advantage of surprise, including surprise searches of houses and apartments, random identity and baggage checks on public transportation, mobile checkpoints established quickly following attacks, night patrols, and small-scale raids mounted immediately on new intelligence. The British even deployed special forces in the conflict. Although these operations never managed to quell the insurgency, they did succeed in keeping the insurgents off-balance. In 1947, the British withdrew their personnel into barbed-wire enclosures known as "Bevingrads" for their own security. Even then, Irgun managed to penetrate one such security zone in March 1947 and stage a bombing attack on the British Officers' Club in Jerusalem, causing heavy casualties. Despite extensive efforts, the British were never able to stop the insurgency.^[49] British security forces found it extremely difficult to detect and counter activities by Irgun and Lehi due to the structure of these groups; they were divided into individual cells, whose members were unknown to those in other cells. Furthermore, the extreme loyalty of the operatives of these groups made it almost impossible for British intelligence to infiltrate them, and made it difficult for British interrogators to extract information from captured members.

In addition to the militant campaign in Palestine, Irgun and Lehi attacked British targets in Europe and launched bombing attacks Britain itself. In late 1946 and early 1947, Irgun carried out a series of sabotage attacks on British Army transportation routes in occupied Germany. At around the same time, an attempt was made by Lehi to drop a bomb on the House of Commons from a chartered plane flown from France; this attempt was stopped just before it was to be carried out, when French police discovered Lehi members preparing to cross the English Channel in a plane that was found to be carrying a large bomb. In October 1946, Lehi bombed the British Embassy in Rome, injuring three people. A number of bombs exploded in London, including one at London's Colonial Club, an establishment catering to soldiers and students from British colonies in Africa and the West Indies. The bombing caused no fatalities but injured some servicemen. An attempt was also made to destroy the Colonial Office in London with a large bomb, which malfunctioned after its timer broke. According to a senior police official, it would have caused a death rate similar to that of the King David Hotel bombing had it gone off. Some 21 letter bombs were addressed to senior British political figures, including Prime Minister Clement Attlee and Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin. Many were intercepted, while others reached their targets but were discovered before they could go off. An Irgun explosives factory was also discovered in London.

The British arrested thousands during their counterinsurgency campaign, often imposing severe prison terms, including for weapons-related offenses. They also began using flogging as a judicial punishment. However, in late December 1946, after an Irgun member was flogged, the group abducted and flogged several British soldiers in return, an event that became known as the Night of the Beatings. While this caused the British to end the use of flogging, they then began to apply the death penalty against convicted insurgents. Within months, four imprisoned Jewish fighters, including three Irgun men that had been arrested during the Night of the Beatings, were hanged. In some instances, Irgun abducted British soldiers and police officers, and in one instance a judge, and threatened to kill them if executions took place. This tactic succeeded in stopping a few executions. In May 1947, a large prison break was staged when Irgun fighters, in a coordinated attack, blasted a large hole the prison wall, and Jewish prisoners blasted their way out through the doors with smuggled explosives. Some 28 Jewish prisoners and 182 Arab prisoners escaped. During the operation, nine fighters and escapees were killed, most of them when a getaway truck ran into a British roadblock, and five Irgun fighters and eight escapees were captured. Three out of the five fighters captured were sentenced to death in June; Irgun responded by kidnapping two British sergeants from the Intelligence Corps and threatening to kill them should the sentences be carried out. The British Army carried out extensive search operations. The Haganah cooperated with the British search effort.^[54] Efforts to locate the hostages proved fruitless. The British authorities decided to carry out the executions despite the danger to the hostages. On July 29, 1947, the three were executed, and the next day the two British sergeants were killed in response. Their bodies were then

hanged from trees in an orange grove near Netanya, and were booby-trapped with a bomb, which later injured a British officer attempting to cut one of the bodies down. Following this incident, British soldiers and police officers attacked civilians in Tel Aviv, killing five people, and a wave of anti-Semitic rioting swept Britain over the course of several days; the rioting began in Liverpool and spread to other major British cities, including London, Manchester, Cardiff, Derby and Glasgow, causing widespread damage to Jewish property. Following this incident, the British government ordered an end to the use of the death penalty in Palestine.

Propaganda Campaign

The insurgency was coupled with a local and international propaganda campaign to gain sympathy abroad. The Yishuv authorities publicized the plight of Holocaust survivors and British attempts to stop them from migrating to Palestine, hoping to generate negative publicity against Britain around the world. Ben-Gurion publicly stated that the Jewish insurgency was "nourished by despair", that Britain had "proclaimed war against Zionism", and that British policy was "to liquidate the Jews as a people." Of particular significance was the British interceptions of the blockade runners carrying Jewish immigrants. The SS Exodus incident, which became a major media event. Propaganda against the British over their treatment of the refugees passengers was disseminated around the world, including claims that the *Exodus* was a "floating Auschwitz". In one incident, after a baby died at sea aboard an Aliyah Bet ship, the body was publicly displayed to the press after the ship docked in Haifa for transfer of the passengers to Cyprus, and journalists were told that "the dirty Nazi-British assassins suffocated this innocent victim with gas."

Through a well-organized international propaganda campaign, Irgun and Lehi reached out to potential international supporters, particularly in the United States and especially among American Jews, who became increasingly sympathetic to the Zionist cause and hostile to Britain. Their propaganda claimed that: Britain's restrictions on Jewish immigration were a violation of international law, as it violated the terms of the mandate; British rule in Palestine was oppressive and had turned the country into a police state; British policies were Nazi-like and anti-Semitic; the insurgency was Jewish self-defence; and the insurgents were winning and British withdrawal from Palestine was inevitable. This propaganda, coupled with statements and actions interpreted as anti-Semitic by British officials and members of the security forces, gained the insurgents international credibility and served to further tarnish Britain's image. Britain was at this time negotiating a loan from the United States vital to its economic survival. Its treatment of Jewish survivors generated bad publicity, and encouraged the U.S. Congress to stiffen its terms. Many American Jews were initially politically active in pressing Congress for a suspension of the loan guarantees, but Jewish groups and politicians later retracted their support and came out in favor of the loan, fearing accusations of disloyalty to the United States.^[56] U.S. President Harry S. Truman put extensive pressure on the British government over its handling of the Palestine situation. The post-war conflict in Palestine caused more damage to Anglo-American relations than any other issue.

The British decide to leave Palestine

From October 1946, opposition leader, Winston Churchill, began calling for Palestine to be given to the United Nations. During the insurgency, the British government organized a conference in London between Zionist and Arab representatives, and attempted to mediate a solution. However, these talks proved fruitless. The Arabs were unwilling to accept any solution except a unified Palestine under Arab rule, and while the Zionists adamantly refused this proposal, instead suggesting partition. After realizing that the Arabs and the Jews were both unwilling to compromise, Bevin began considering turning the Palestine question over to the United Nations.

Britain increasingly began to see its attempts to suppress the Jewish insurgency as a costly and futile exercise, and its resolve began to weaken. British security forces, which were constantly taking casualties, were unable to suppress the insurgents due to their hit-and-run tactics, poor intelligence, and a non-cooperative civilian population. The insurgents were also making the country ungovernable; the King David hotel bombing resulted in the deaths of a large number of civil servants

and the loss of many documents, devastating the mandatory administration, while IED attacks on British vehicles began to limit the British Army's freedom of movement throughout the country. The Acre Prison break and the floggings and hangings of British soldiers by the Irgun humiliated the British authorities and further demonstrated their failure to control the situation. At the same time, attacks carried out on economic targets cost Britain almost £2 million in economic damage; meanwhile, Britain was paying about £40 million a year to keep its troops in Palestine, while at the same time the country was going through a deep economic crisis as a result of World War II, with widespread power cuts and strict rationing, and was heavily dependent on American economic aid. There were also indications, such as several successful bombings in London and the letter-bombing campaign against British politicians, that the insurgents were beginning to take the war home to Britain. In addition, British treatment of Holocaust survivors and tactics in Palestine were earning Britain bad publicity around the world, particularly in the United States, and earned the British government constant diplomatic harassment from the Truman administration.

In January 1947, all non-essential British civilians were evacuated from Palestine. On February 14, 1947, British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin informed the House of Commons that the Palestine question would be referred to the United Nations.^[58] Meanwhile, depending on perspective, a low-level guerrilla war, or campaigns of terrorism, continued through 1947 and 1948. Eventually, Jewish insurgency against the British was overshadowed by the Jewish-Arab fighting of the 1947–48 Civil War in Mandatory Palestine, which started following the UN vote in favor of the United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine.

In 1947, the United States chapter of the United Jewish Appeal raised \$150 million in its annual appeal – at that time the largest sum of money ever raised by a charity dependent on private contributions. Half was earmarked for Palestine. *The Times* reported that Palestine brought more dollars into the sterling zone than any other country, save Britain.

In April 1947 the issue was formally referred to the UN. By this time over 100,000 British soldiers were stationed in Palestine. Referral to the UN led to a period of uncertainty over Palestine's future. A United Nations committee, the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) was sent to investigate the problem. On August 31, 1947, UNSCOP recommended that Palestine be partitioned into Jewish and Arab states. On September 20, 1947, the British cabinet voted to evacuate Palestine.

Although the insurgency played a major role in persuading the British to quit Palestine, other factors also influenced British policy. Britain, facing a deep economic crisis and heavily dependent on the United States, was facing a massive financial burden over its many colonies, military bases, and commitments abroad. At the same time, Britain had also lost the centerpiece of the rationale of its Middle East policy after the end of the British Raj in Colonial India. Britain's Middle East policy had been centered around protecting the flanks of its sea lines of communication to India. After the British Raj ended, Britain no longer needed Palestine. Finally, Britain still had alternative locations such as Egypt, Libya, and Kenya to base its troops.

Partition and Civil War

The United Nations Special Committee on Palestine recommended partition, and on 29 November 1947 the United Nations General Assembly voted to partition Palestine into two states - an Arab and a Jewish one. The partition resolution (181) intended administration of Palestine to be in the hands of five UN representatives and assumed free Jewish immigration into the Jewish area even before the creation of a Jewish state:

The mandatory power shall use its best endeavours to ensure that an area situated in the territory of the Jewish state, including a seaport and hinterland adequate to provide facilities for a substantial immigration, shall be evacuated at the earliest possible date and in any event not later than 1 February 1948.

Britain refused to comply with these conditions on the grounds that the decision was unacceptable to the Arabs. It neither allowed Jewish immigration outside the monthly quota, nor granted control to the UN representatives (who became known as the "five lonely pilgrims"). A statement issued by the British Ambassador to the UN stated that the inmates on Cyprus would be released with the termination of the mandate.^[64] The British also refused to cooperate with the UN commission that was sent to monitor the transition; when the commission's six members arrived in Palestine in January 1948, British High Commissioner Alan Cunningham allotted them an unventilated Jerusalem basement from which to work out of. They were gradually reduced to foraging for food and drink, and prevented from carrying out their duties.

Over the remaining period of British rule, British policy was to ensure that the Arabs did not resist Britain or blame it for partition. Convinced that partition was unworkable, the British refused to assist the UN in any way that might require British forces to remain on Palestinian soil (to implement it) or turn their army into a target for Arab forces. On the other side, "The Yishuv perceived the peril of an Arab invasion as threatening its very existence. Having no real knowledge of the Arabs' true military capabilities, the Jews took Arab propaganda literally, preparing for the worst and reacting accordingly."

As the British withdrew during the closing months of the mandate, civil war erupted in Palestine between the Jews and Arabs. During this period, the British continued to act in favor the Arabs. As well as restricting Jewish immigration, they handed over strategic military and police positions to the Arabs as they abandoned them, and froze Jewish Agency assets in London banks. However, the British generally stayed out of the fighting and only intervened occasionally. Even so, they were still sometimes caught in the crossfire or deliberately attacked for their weapons. There is little evidence that Bevin, despite his hostility to Zionism, wanted to strangle the incipient Jewish state at birth. Instead, his main concern seems to have been to ensure that Egypt retained control of the parts of the Negev they were occupying, so that Britain had a land link between Egypt and Jordan.

On 22 February 1948, as part of the civil war, Arab militants detonated a truck laden with explosives in Ben Yehuda Street in Jerusalem, killing about 60 people. Two British deserters assisted in this attack; Eddie Brown, a police captain who claimed that his brother had been killed by the Irgun, and Peter Madison, an army corporal. They had been recruited by Holy War Army commander Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni.^[66] In response, Lehi mined two trains. The first such attack, which took place on 29 February, hit the military coaches of a passenger train north of Rehovot, killing 28 British soldiers and wounding 35. Another attack on 31 March killed 40 people and injured 60. Although there were soldiers on board that train, all of the casualties were civilians.

In April 1948, the Security Council called upon all governments to prevent fighting personnel or arms from entering Palestine. Five and a half months of civil war in Palestine saw a decisive Jewish victory. Jewish forces, led by the Haganah, consolidated their hold on a strip of territory on the coastal plain of Palestine and the Jezreel and Jordan Valleys, and crushed the Palestinian Arab militias. Palestinian society collapsed.

Aftermath: British policy during the 1948 War

As all the League of Nations mandates were to be taken over by the new United Nations, Britain had declared that it would leave Palestine by 1 August 1948, later setting the date for the termination of the mandate as 15 May; on 14 May 1948 the Zionist leadership announced the Israeli Declaration of Independence. Several hours later, at midnight on 15 May 1948, the British Mandate of Palestine officially expired and the State of Israel came into being.

Hours after the end of the Mandate, contingents of the armies of four surrounding Arab states entered Palestine, setting off the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. As the war progressed, the Israeli forces gained an advantage due to a growing stream of arms and military equipment from Europe that had

been clandestinely smuggled or were supplied by Czechoslovakia. In the following months, Israel began to expand the territory under its control.

Throughout the 1948 war, 40 British officers served with the Jordanian Army (then known as the Arab Legion), and the Arab Legion's commander was a British General, John Bagot Glubb.

On 28 May 1948, the United Nations Security Council debated Palestine. The British proposed that the entry of arms and men of military age into Palestine should be restricted. At the request of the United States, the ban was extended to the whole region. A French amendment allowed immigration so long as soldiers were not recruited from immigrants.

The British had by this time released almost all inmates of the Cyprus internment camps, but continued to hold about 11,000 detainees, mainly military-age males, in the camps. Authorities in the British, as well as American occupation zones in Germany and Austria imposed restrictions on the emigration of Jews of military age attempting to emigrate during the war.

In October 1948, Israel began a campaign to capture the Negev. In December 1948, Israeli troops made a twenty-mile incursion into Egyptian territory. Under the terms of the Anglo-Egyptian treaty the Egyptians could appeal for British help in the event of an Israeli invasion, however the Egyptians were concerned to avoid any such eventuality. During this period, the Royal Air Force began mounting almost daily reconnaissance missions over Israel and the Sinai, with RAF planes taking off from Egyptian airbases and sometimes flying alongside Egyptian warplanes. On 20 November 1948, the Israeli Air Force shot down a British reconnaissance plane over Israel, killing two airmen.

On 7 January 1949, Israeli forces shot down five British fighter planes after a flight of RAF planes overflew an Israeli convoy in the Sinai and were mistaken for Egyptian aircraft. Two pilots were killed and one was captured by Israeli troops and briefly detained in Israel. The UK Defence Committee responded to this incident and a Jordanian request by sending two destroyers carrying men and arms to Transjordan. Israel complained to the UN that these troops were in violation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 50. Britain denied this, claiming the resolution did not apply to Britain and that the troops were not new to the region as they had been transferred from Egypt. The British also managed to prevent shipments of aviation spirit and other essential fuels from reaching Israel in retaliation.

As the IDF drove into the Negev, the British government launched a diplomatic campaign to prevent Israel from capturing the entire area. Britain viewed the Negev as a strategic land bridge between Egypt and Transjordan that was vital to both British and Western interests in the Middle East, and were anxious to keep it from falling into Israeli hands. On 19 October 1948, Sir Alexander Cadogan, the British representative to the United Nations, pressed for sanctions against Israel. The British believed that it would be in their and the West's strategic interest if they maintained *de facto* control of a land bridge from Egypt to Transjordan, and Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin tried to persuade the US government to support his position and force Israel to withdraw. In particular, Bevin hoped to restrict Israel's southern border to the Gaza-Jericho-Beersheba road. The British ambassador in Cairo, Sir Ronald Campbell, advocated military intervention against Israel to stop the IDF's drive into the Negev in a January 1949 cable to Bevin. However, the British diplomatic campaign failed to persuade the US government to take action against Israel, with US President Harry S. Truman referring to the Negev as "a small area not worth differing over". Mounting international and domestic criticism forced an end to Britain's attempts to intervene in the war, and Bevin ordered British forces to stay clear of the Israelis in the Negev.

The British cabinet ultimately decided that action could be taken to defend Transjordan, but that under no circumstances would British troops enter Palestine. On 17 January 1949 the Chief of Staff briefed the cabinet on events in the Middle East. Minister of Health, Aneurin Bevan, protested at the decision to send arms to Transjordan, taken by the Defence Committee without cabinet approval. He

complained that British policy in Palestine was inconsistent with the spirit and tradition of Labour Party policy and was supported by the Deputy Prime Minister, Herbert Morrison and Chancellor of the Exchequer, Stafford Cripps.

In January 1949, the British cabinet voted to continue supporting the Arab states, but also voted to recognize Israel and release the last Jewish detainees on Cyprus.^[80] The last detainees began leaving Cyprus in January, and shortly afterward, Britain formally recognized Israel.

Effect upon Mutual British–Arab interests

Anglo-Arab relations were of vital importance to British strategic concerns both during the war and after, notably for their access to oil and to India via the Suez Canal. Britain governed or protected Oman, Sudan, Kuwait, the Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Yemen, had treaties of alliance with Iraq (the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty (1930) and the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty (1948)) and Egypt (Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936). Transjordan was granted independence in 1946 and the Anglo-Jordanian Treaty of 1948 allowed Britain to station troops in Jordan and promised mutual assistance in the event of war.

Effects upon Independence Movements Worldwide

According to the BBC documentary *The Age of Terror: In the Name of Liberation*, the successful Jewish struggle for independence in Palestine inspired numerous violent campaigns for independence in other countries of the world at the time, such as by the Malayan Communist Party in the Malayan Emergency and in Algeria.