**Chapter 2**

**From Tactical Command to Political Negotiator: The War of Independence**

The War of Independence broke out on November 30, 1947 and ended on July 20, 1949. It was Israel’s longest and most grueling war. Throughout it, Moshe Dayan continued to evolve as a military leader and as a statesman. Like his comrades of the Palmach generation, he led several operations, demonstrating bravery, originality and daring. After his years away from operational activities because of the wound to his eye, his self-confidence returned, and his unique style of command and leadership began taking shape. Dayan gained experience in tactical warfare against the main armies of conflict – Syrian, Jordanian, and Egyptian – and encountered many forms of fighting: defensive battles, raids, and mobile offensive operations. In founding the 89th Battalion, he also gained experience in force building. While Dayan’s actions were not always successful, he nonetheless acquired a reputation as a commander with a unique style, attracting both admirers and detractors.

Despite his renown as a commander, his operational record was unimpressive compared to some of his well-known Palmach colleagues (now officers in the IDF, Palmach forces having already been integrated into the IDF) – Yigal Allon, Yitzhak Rabin, and other frontline and brigade commanders. However, it was Ben-Gurion who held the keys to Dayan’s advancement, and following Dayan’s whole-hearted commitment and aggressive conduct during the *Altalena* affair, Ben-Gurion came to view Dayan as someone he could count on. Towards the end of the war, Dayan underwent his first real political test, becoming involved in political negotiations with Jordan, first with Abdullah al-Tall, Jordan’s Jerusalem commander, then in direct talks with King Abdullah, and later in the Armistice Talks during the first half of 1949. Dayan proved his ability in the diplomatic-political sphere as well, achieving significant results. The political experience, coupled with the trust forged with Ben-Gurion, greatly contributed to Dayan’s career in public life, far more than any operational experience his Palmach counterparts had earned, no matter how extensive.

**On the Defense: Deganiya Alef and Deganiya Bet[[1]](#footnote-1)**

By April 1948, at the end of the period considered the first stage of the War of Independence, the Jewish side had bested the Arabs in the fight over the Land of Israel. The second stage of the war began immediately upon Israel’s declaration of independence on May 15, 1948, when the regular armies of several Arab nations invaded the territory of the Hebrew state, intending to obliterate it. With these armies boasting organized forces with a structured chain of command and modern means of warfare, including tanks, planes, and artillery, this stage of the war became a campaign of high intensity regular warfare between the sides.

Dayan was initially frustrated at being sidelined while his Palmach contemporaries Moshe Carmel, Yigal Allon, and Yitzhak Rabin became respected brigade commanders in the war’s early days. However, he was soon called into action by Yitzhak Sadeh, Dayan’s mentor and friend who greatly respected Dayan’s capabilities. Sadeh had established a unit to receive armored vehicles purchased in Europe, and he offered Dayan the opportunity to establish a commando unit, Battalion 89, specializing in raids, within the new brigade. Dayan wrote in his diary: “When Yitzhak Sadeh offered me the 89th [Battalion], it was a gift from heaven.”[[2]](#footnote-2) Yigal Yadin, head of the Operations Directorate and the de facto Chief of Staff (Dori having fallen ill), also felt that Dayan, who had led a complex raid in 1941, was best suited to command such a unit. But while Dayan was gearing up to organize the unit, the situation changed yet again, as the Arab armies invaded Israel on May 15. On May 17 and 18, due to the escalation on the northern front, mostly around Deganiya Alef and Deganiya Bet, Dayan was sent to reinforce the defenders and stop the Syrian army, now on the verge of conquering the Jewish settlements.

On paper, the Syrian army had 10,000 men, but the effective force included only one brigade (the 1st Brigade) of 2,000, divided into infantry battalions and an armored battalion equipped with light (11-ton) French tanks – Renault models 35 and 39 – with 37mm cannons and armored vehicles with smaller cannons. The brigade also had between four to six batteries of 75mm and 1005mm artillery. Syria’s 2nd Brigade was far less battle-ready, and the Syrian air force, with 20 training planes retrofitted as combat planes and ill-trained pilots, was no readier.[[3]](#footnote-3)

The Syrians campaign objectives were not clear. Their forces advanced on Israel through the Golan Heights and the southern banks of the Sea of Galilee, apparently heading for Afula, where they were to meet the Iraqi invasion force and then advance together on to Haifa. On May 15, the Syrians attacked Kibbutz Ein Gev in the Jordan Valley to divert attention from the main effort aimed at the Jordan Valley settlements.

The Golani Brigade’s Barak Battalion and local Haganah fighters deployed in the Jordan Valley, received reinforcements in the days after the attack. On May 18, the Syrians attacked the kibbutzim near Ein Gev and the town of Tsemah, which it conquered after several assaultss, causing severe losses among the defenders. An Yiftach Brigade company tried to retake the town but was repelled. Tsemah’s conquest was a serious blow to the Hebrew defending forces’ morale. In his diary, Ben-Gurion wrote, “There is a kind of panic in the Jordan Valley.”[[4]](#footnote-4) On May 19, nearby Masada and Shaar Hagolan were abandoned by their Jewish residents and looted by the region’s Arabs.

This was the state of affairs when Dayan arrived. While Dayan’s precise authority remained unclear, he soon took charge.[[5]](#footnote-5) Dayan almost immediately toured the area and ordered the men to improve the trenches and defenses. He also decided to take up positions in Bet Yerah directly against the Syrian division flank to defend Deganiya, even though that meant thinning out the defending line.[[6]](#footnote-6)

With the situation in the Jordan Valley serious, four 65mm cannons (nicknamed Napoleonchiks), meant for the defense of Jerusalem, were diverted to this sector,[[7]](#footnote-7) ultimately playing a decisive role in the campaign. The attack began on May 20 at dawn. Although fearful, his confidence about being able to lead the battle having eroded after the years of not participating in operational missions, Dayan projected confidence to those around him. Haim Levkov (1916–1998), a Palmach commander who had arrived with some men Dayan respected, recalled that on the day of battle, the fighters thirsty after their water had run out, Dayan encouraged them, “You’re here, in the trenches, under the trees, in the shade. If you’re thirsty, just image how thirsty the Syrians, running around across you in the field and under the sun, must be!” Levkov also recalled that when a worried mortarman with only eight mortars left asked Dayan for instructions, Dayan retorted, “Shoot the first, then the second, the third, and so on. When you’ve shot off the eighth, come back and we’ll see what else you can do.”[[8]](#footnote-8)

The Syrian infantry attack was preceded by an artillery barrage. By 8 a.m., the defenders succeeded in stopping the Syrian tanks using Molotov cocktails and PIATs (Projector Infantry Anti-Tank Mk I) that Dayan had brought,[[9]](#footnote-9) and the battle became a static fight of attrition until around 1:30 p.m., when the Napoleonchiks were repositioned to defend Deganiya. That morning, Dayan and the gunnery and brigade commanders had argued about when to operate the cannons, Dayan wanting to wait and use them only the next day when it would be possible to crush the enemy’s spirit. However, after learning that the defenders’ situation was desperate, Dayan realized that immediate action was needed. The Napoleonchiks began bombing the Syrian headquarters in Tsemah. The artillery barrage did the trick – mostly because of the noise and the surprise – and the Syrian forces retreated helter-skelter in a panic. Deganiya was saved and the battle became part of the war’s ethos.

While Deganiya’s residents were reorganizing after the Syrian retreat, Dayan took aside Levi Eshkol, then the defense minister’s aide and a member of Deganiya Bet, and rebuked him that the trenches had not been prepared properly by Deganiya Bet’s residents. Dayan demanded that the trenches be improved immediately. Eshkol complied, but the incident might have undermined their relationship in later years.

Dayan decided to inspect the Tsemah police station, which had been briefly occupied by the Syrians. Upon entering Tsemah and finding it empty, Dayan realized that the Syrian force had simply left, apparently immediately after the cannon bombardment. From this, he drew sweeping conclusions about the Arab enemy:

This left an indelible impression on me. …[A]fter three or four shellings, they got up and fled, in total chaos…Their flight without attack – after all, no one had approached Tsemah – and by night, they were gone. It occurred to me then that if you bang once on a can, they all flee, like birds.[[10]](#footnote-10)

This was Dayan’s first combat encounter with regular units of an Arab army and would affect his perception of how to fight the Arabs, especially his assessment that Arab military units tended to break under pressure. He would later learn that this wasn’t always the case; a lesson that came at a heavy cost.

The harsh sights of war had a strong impact on Dayan; his previous experiences with fighting and killing had been less gruesome. The sight of dead bodies abandoned in Tsemah’s fields and the many unevacuated wounded affected him deeply. He wrote, “A difficult, tragic, and depressing battle. A lot of young blood was spilled here. Not the blood of battle-tested soldiers. The blood of youngsters meeting death with their eyes wide open. The wounded, groaning, abandoned by the side of the road.”[[11]](#footnote-11)

The battle for Deganiya over, Dayan was summoned to Tel Aviv, where Sadeh charged him with commanding the 89th Battalion.

**Establishing the 89th Raiding Battalion**

The features of the 89th Motorized Raiding Battalion, the commando unit specializing in raids, were very similar to those that would later characterize small, special IDF units, such as Unit 101 under Ariel Sharon and Sayeret Matkal the General Staff Reconnaissance Unit) commanded by Avraham Arnan. The original model was the Palmach – its spirit, relationships, style of leadership, and culture – in a post-Palmach era.

Sadeh’s inspiration for the 89th Battalion came from the WWII British and Soviet raiding units and their commanders, all the subject of legend.”[[12]](#footnote-12) These units, equipped with desert terrain vehicles, carried out raids deep into the German rear, destroying important logistical installations, such as fuel depots and air fields and upsetting German’s psychologically, who could no longer feel safe even on the home front.

It was Dayan’s job to transform Sadeh’s idea a reality. Dayan, his self-confidence restored after receiving some of the credit for having stopped the Syrian army in Tsemah, wrote: “What I saw in Tsemah that night remade the warrior in me,” he wrote.[[13]](#footnote-13) He told Sadeh the Arab army could be challenged with relative ease, and that understood now how such “mechanized cavalry” would be particularly effective.

In fact, he set up the unit out of thin air. Recruitment was selective, using the “bring-a-friend” method. Its atmosphere was unique, somewhat wild, challenging the hierarchy, discipline, and rigid rules of a military organization. Such units tend to take outsized risks at times and operate unconventionally, their culture and spirit of such units to a large extent inspired by and reflecting the charismatic nature of their founders and commanders.

Dayan described the battalion’s establishment:

When I returned from the Jordan Valley, I started work on the Motorized Raiding Battalion. The number I was given was 89, …part of Yitzhak Sadeh’s armored brigade. The brigade, …. in my time, never functioned as a single unit, and the battalion’s operations were independent. I was very happy with this job – it was exactly what I’d wanted. Yitzhak explained to me that the battalion was to resemble to the raiding units the British had operated in World War II, …and Popski’s Private Army. Obviously, on a small, local scope, without the means and expanses of the world powers in their war, but with the same spirit of audacity and originality. …Its function would be to penetrate deep into enemy territory and operate behind the lines…My deputy, Yohanan Peltz, a veteran officer of the Jewish Brigade, took care of the organizational side of things and made sure it conformed to standards, whereas I focused on recruiting and selecting the people… The weapons and people arrived by dribs and drabs, but the most important requirements were there from day one: the battle spirit, the desire see action and strike at the enemy, and the belief in ourselves and our might.[[14]](#footnote-14)

The first step in creating a special or elite unit is to select the men with care. Dayan recruited his candidates from four sources: his friends from Nahalal and the other Jezreel Valley settlements; veterans of the disbanded Lehi paramilitary organization, (known pejoratively as the Stern Gang, considered extreme radicals and terrorists by the British and many Jews), evidence of Dayan’s openness and lack of enmity toward previous rivals, unlike the resentment harbored by many of his Palmach friends; veterans of the Haganah’s special operations unit from Tel Aviv who had participated in the battles over Jaffa; and Jewish volunteers from abroad.[[15]](#footnote-16) Yohanan Peltz,[[16]](#footnote-17) Dayan’s deputy, hand-picked by Sadeh and known as a particularly audacious fighter, assumed he would command the unit, but Sadeh explained, “If the battalion commander is the person I’m considering, it’ll be to your advantage to be his deputy, because he is important and has quite a future in store.”[[17]](#footnote-18)

Peltz and Dayan enjoined mutual admiration, even though one looked and behaved like a rigid British officer and the other like a guerrilla fighter; later, this contrast would lead to tension between the men. Dayan asked Peltz to help him organize a battalion to carry out raids behind enemy lines, thus initiating a pattern that continued, even when he was the Chief of Staff: leaving his trusted deputy to handle organizational and logistical details, understanding the importance of the minutiae as well as the limits of his own personality in dealing with them.[[18]](#footnote-19)

Peltz and Dayan faced two critical problems: manpower and means. Most of the good fighters were already serving elsewhere, thereby forcing them to tap an unused resource – former Lehi members. Most Haganah commanders wanted nothing to do with ex-Lehi fighters, but Peltz’s impression was that Dayan wasn’t keen on Palmach veterans because he needed to prove that he was better than they were. Peltz explained to Dayan that because the commando forces were volunteers, the army had to allow those interested to leave their units and transfer to the 89th Battalion. Peltz even persuaded the members of his own previous company the Kiryati Brigade’s 43rd Battalion, to join the new battalion. Upon learning that Dayan had poached his entire company, the commander, Amos Ben-Gurion, the prime minister’s son complained to his father, “What kind of an army are you building here, where commanders steal people from one another?”[[19]](#footnote-20) The “defectors” returned to the Kiryati Brigade, where they were jailed. Dayan, however, continued to put pressure on the prime minister, and, ultimately, reached a compromise, with both sides pretending there had simply been a misunderstanding,– and some of the men allowed to join Dayan’s new battalion.

Nonetheless, the battalion-to-be still lacked soldiers. Saar approached Tsvi Tsur, the commander of a battalion in the (5th) Givati Brigade, for help. Tsur had no people to spare, but was willing to part with the 18 men sitting in the brigade lockup, accused of, among other things, petty theft, looting, and being AWOL. Saar promised them he would cancel their trials and any punishment if they joined the new battalion. Saar returned to the battalion with 18 additional fighters.

Although many brigade commanders banned recruiters from the 89th from entering their bases, many fighters, showed up. A group of fiercely loyal Jezreel Valley men who had known Dayan since childhood also joined the battalion.[[20]](#footnote-21)

The 89th Battalion soon established a reputation for being wild, undisciplined, and eccentric When Dayan was told the unit was short of jeeps, his answer was, “So go get some.”[[21]](#footnote-22) Men fresh from the brig because of petty theft needed no stronger hint, and soon enough, civilian jeeps were “lifted” and brought to the unit. Most importantly, the battalion was infused with Dayan’s own spirit, projecting a strong feeling of camaraderie, which encouraged initiative –and practical jokes. Dayan, for example, would speed past the MP at the base’s main gate upon entering, stopping 30 meters past the inspection point, forcing the guard to come to him. One day, an MP refused to walk over to Dayan, and threatened to shoot Dayan unless he reversed the jeep to the inspection point. Dayan accelerated and fled.[[22]](#footnote-23)

The soldiers of this nascent unit accepted this type of prankishness, which was natural for Dayan. It gave his men a sense of being unique and battle-ready, and they admired him more as a result.[[23]](#footnote-24) Like other commando groups, the 89th Battalion enjoyed an atmosphere of freedom. As Dayan described: “Discipline in our battalion…is unlike that in other battalions. …[M]en are free to come and go as they please. But no one leaves, because they didn’t end up here by chance.”[[24]](#footnote-25)

The 89th Battalion recruits underwent expedited weapons training. Within a month, all preparations were complete. In the meantime, a fourth company had been formed that included volunteers from abroad. The question of commando operations arose when Peltz asked how and for what missions the battalion should be trained. Receiving only vague answers from Dayan and Sadeh, Peltz insisted that the battalion couldn’t possibly sustain itself logistically behind enemy lines. In the end, the 89th Battalion operated like a mechanized raiding force, as did the 9th Battalion of the Negev Brigade operated in similar fashion, but because of Dayan, the 89th became the best known.

**Fighting the Irgun**

The 89th’s first mission was aimed not against the Arabs but against the Irgun and its leader Menachem Begin.[[25]](#footnote-26) Being surrounded by close loyalists enabled Dayan to meet the difficult challenge from Ben-Gurion: arresting Irgun members from the *Altalena* affair. Dayan explained: “The conflict between the government and the Irgun was political. Its military echo – at least the clash on the beach of Kfar Vitkin – lacked the ring of truth: …this was not the enemy.”[[26]](#footnote-27)

The *Altalena* affair began in early 1947, when the Irgun sailed its own loyal fighters and their weapons to Israel on the *Altalena*. The ship arrived in Israel in June 1948 during the first truce of the War of Independence, with 940 passengers, including 120 women, and many weapons. The government and the Irgun agreed that the ship would unload on at Kfar Vitkin. However, serious disagreements arose between the sides over the weapons, the government demanding them all for the IDF and the Irgun wanting to maintain some control.

Menachem Begin, who was on the ship, received an ultimatum to cede the unloaded weapons but didn’t respond. The deadline passed, and the sides started firing, killing six Irgun members and two IDF soldiers. The ship fled south to Tel Aviv, with Begin hoping to reach a compromise with the government. But a large IDF force massed in Tel Aviv, and on the night of June 22, another battle erupted between them and Irgun fighters. Ben-Gurion ordered the IDF forces to shell the *Altalena*, causing the munitions still on board to explode. The ship was abandoned and ran aground, the battle continuing on shore; one IDF soldier and 10 Irgun members died. The IDF ultimately received some of the weapons, but 16 Irgun members and three IDF soldiers had been killed. This event, the nadir in the relationship between the Irgun and what had essentially been the Haganah, is also considered the end of the transition to one state and one army.

Originally, the Alexandroni Brigade had been ordered to prevent the Altalena unloading off Kfar Vitkin, but Dayan’s 89th Brigade, located near Kfar Vitkin, was deemed more suitable. Dayan could have refused, but he opted to execute Sadeh’s directive, enabling him to prove his loyalty to Ben-Gurion. Dayan chose the men he felt he could trust, those closest to him and Sa’ar. Some members of the battalion’s Company A had been Irgun or Lehi members. Dayan could not be certain of their behavior in this situation. On the pretext of a spot weapons inspection, Dayan collected their rifles and removed the firing pins before proceeding to Kfar Vitkin with the two other companies and another company from the 82nd Armored Battalion.[[27]](#footnote-28)

His mission was to surround the ship, prevent its men from breaking through with the weapons they had unloaded, and stop any outside forces from joining them. The brigade surrounded Kfar Vitkin and used jeeps and half-tracks to break through the Irgun’s defensive line, pinning them into a narrow strip of beach. The sides exchanged fire; Dayan claimed that his men opened direct fire only after one of his men had been killed and several others injured.[[28]](#footnote-29) At a certain point, Dayan left the area, handing command to Uri Bar-On (1925–1985), telling Bar-On that he had been instructed to accompany the coffin of U.S. Army Col. David (Mickey) Marcus to the United States. Bar-On represented the 89th Battalion at the June 22 meeting in which the Irgun agreed to terms of surrender, the tragic affair close to an end.

Several questions remain about Dayan’s absence from the scene. Perhaps he was trying to avoid an uncomfortable situation, a coping mechanism typical of him throughout his career. Nonetheless, Dayan had accepted this mission that he could have turned down. Eyewitnesses described his behavior throughout as tenacious and “vigorous, aggressive, and propulsive.”[[29]](#footnote-30) Teveth suggests the possibility that:

[H]e’d brought the mission to the point where he could pass the baton to someone he trusted, making it possible for him to leave; this too was very much in character. When he considered an issue resolved, he felt free to hand off the finishing touches to a deputy. It may also be that he did not want to be overly drawn into the affair, which he knew was problematic and would, politically, haunt everyone involved.[[30]](#footnote-31)

Whatever the reason, on June 21, bullets still whizzing, Dayan left the area to wish see his wife and children before traveling to the United States.

**Capt. Abraham (Abe) Baum**

U.S. Army Col. David Daniel (Mickey) Marcus was an American Jewish officer who had fought in World War II and who volunteered to help the inexperienced IDF, which was in dire need of officers from Western armies with senior command knowledge and experience. Marcus served the IDF well by providing advice and training, writing reports requested for Ben-Gurion. On May 28, 1948, Marcus was given the command of the Jerusalem front and the three sector brigades – Harel, Etzioni, and the 7th. Marcus’ end was tragic. On June 11, 1948, at 3:40 a.m., Marcus left camp, announcing his exit to the sentry. When he returned, a different sentry, who didn’t know Marcus, was on duty. The sentry asked Marcus to identify himself and Marcus answered in English. Unable to understand Marcus, the sentry shot and killed him.

Marcus’ body was flown from Israel to be interred at the cemetery at his alma mater West Point. It was decided that Dayan and Yosef Harel (1918–2008; he had commanded Aliyah Bet ships, including the *Exodus*, and was a senior Israeli intelligence leader) would constitute the honor guard and fly the coffin home. Dayan, then a major, was given a temporary promotion to lieutenant colonel. After the interment ceremony, which took place on June 30, Dayan remained in New York for another week.

The most significant event of Dayan’s U.S. visit was his apparently accidental meeting with Abraham J. Baum, then a U.S. Army captain and World War II veteran, who was in contact with Teddy Kollek,[[31]](#footnote-32) who had traveled to the United States with a special Haganah mission. Baum, who ran his family-owned garment workshop in New York City, was charged with interviewing and selecting Americans volunteering for the Haganah and, later, the IDF. Dayan met Baum over cocktails at the bar of New York City’s “Hotel 14” where Kollek and Harel were staying along with other Haganah mission members. Dayan’s impression of Baum was quite positive: “Abe Baum was one of the most daring, decorated, and scarred fighters of the U.S. Army in World War II. The commander of the 4th Armored Division, Gen. John S. Wood, called him ‘the bravest soldier of the Second World War.’”[[32]](#footnote-33)

Baum was famous for a mission he led into German territory in which he displayed outstanding courage and leadership. Baum had enlisted in the U.S. Army immediately after the Japanese Pearl Harbor attack on December 7, 1941. Having climbed the ranks during the war[[33]](#footnote-34), he was ordered to lead a motorized unit to carry out Gen. George S. Patton’s secret order to liberate the Hammelburg POW camp inside Germany territory, behind two German army divisions. Baum and his forces embarked on the mission on March 26, 1945. Despite strong enemy resistance and heavy casualties, they surged forward and managed to free some 1,200 Red Army soldiers, before pushing forward to the camp, despite suffering even more losses. Leaving the camp with as many prisoners as he could, Baum and his forces were trapped by the Germans, with Baum and the few other survivors captured.[[34]](#footnote-35) Baum was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his role in the mission.[[35]](#footnote-36)

Despite the mission’s flaws, Baum’s execution of it was considered among the most valiant of the U.S. Army and stirred the imagination of many. Dayan, who had been appointed commander of a motorized raiding unit, completely lacked experience in this type of fighting. In fact, Dayan was familiar only with infantry warfare – defensive, offensive, or in raids. Cavalry charges might have been suited to fighting Bedouin tribes near Nahalal or have played a role in adolescent fantasies, but they had no place in modern warfare. Dayan lacked any concept of how such a unit should fight and achieve its mission as a raiding force. It was no surprise, then, that he hung on Baum’s every word as Baum explained the major principles of the motorized armored raiding doctrine:

1. Exploit every opportunity.
2. Use a large force to attack a target that can be taken by a smaller force. Make every effort to create the impression that the force is much larger than it really it.
3. Charge in narrow formations, preferably in a single column.
4. Use firepower as a psychological factor more than a lethal weapon. The only thing better than a dead enemy is a scared enemy.
5. If you have only a tiny force, you must constantly be on the move. The moment you stop moving, you’ve lost your advantage as an armored force.
6. Do not keep reserve units. Use them so that the enemy will think you have more.
7. Use infantry to occupy a target.
8. Reserve armored troops for counterattacks.[[36]](#footnote-37)

In his memoirs, Dayan added notes, the most important – the need to move quickly in battle. He noted that the features characterizing the German theater of operations in World War II in which Baum had fought –– differed from those of the wars fought in Israel, yet there were some enlightening similarities. The most important were that the commander must be at the point of contact with the enemy on the front, remain in constant motion, study the situation with his own eyes, and direct the action accordingly.[[37]](#footnote-38)

One point missing from Dayan’s memoir, which Dayan presumably realized: there was a difference between the Wehrmacht’s warfighting skill and that of the Arab enemy the IDF was facing. While the Wehrmacht quickly recovered from the shock of Baum’s raid and reorganized effectively, Dayan’s experience in Tsemah led him to conclude that rapid raids with movement and fire would destabilize the Arab force and cause it to withdraw.

**The 89th Battalion: The Raid on Lod-Ramla**

On March 20, 2003, U.S. forces invaded Iraq in Operation Iraqi Freedom – the Second Iraq War – to end Saddam Hussein’s dictatorship of. On April 5, the 3rd Infantry Division and Marines reached the outskirts of Baghdad. Concerned that Baghdad was well-fortified and that its defenders intended to turn the fight for the city into a kind of Battle of Stalingrad,[[38]](#footnote-39) the initial U.S. plans called for a gradual conquest. But Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld demanded quick results. Unlike the senior generals, Rumsfeld felt that the enemy lacked resolve.[[39]](#footnote-40) The commander of the 2nd Brigade decided to execute a “thunder run,” i.e., an armored raid.[[40]](#footnote-41) On April 5, a Brigade task force, with Abrams tanks and Bradley half-tracks, sped through the streets of Baghdad, a city of some 8 million, spewing fire in every direction. The force lost one tank and suffered a few light injuries, but it wreaked havoc and destruction as it crossed the city, reaching the international airport before leaving.

Two days later, on April 7, the 2nd Brigade carried out a second “thunder run” to seize control of the airport and weaken the Iraqi defenders, who this time, were waiting for the Americans along the route, causing the U.S. troops to change their path at the last second. By combat’s end, U.S. forces controlled an area of Baghdad, later referred to as “the green zone,” which led to the city falling much earlier and with far fewer casualties than initially predicted.[[41]](#footnote-42)

Over half a century earlier, in July 1948, Dayan had led a similar raid on Lod, albeit with a small battalion force on a much smaller city.[[42]](#footnote-43) The 89th Battalion’s raid was an electrifying operation that fired the imagination of many. As in a Hollywood Western, the battle scene featured a band of wild cavalrymen speeding across the city while shooting every which way. The only difference was that the men rode jeeps, not horses, and fired machine guns, not rifles. The leader was a commander with one eye covered by a prominent black patch, a detail that undoubtedly added a heroic layer to Dayan’s myth, then already under construction.

Dayan returned from the United States after the first truce of the war had ended. Now, the IDF, better equipped and organized, was on the offensive, with priority given to the central front. The IDF carried out Operation Dani (named for Dani Mass, the commander of the convoy of 35 Haganah fighters killed while resupplying the besieged Gush Etzion). The Jordanian Legion was deployed in the central Lod-Ramla region, an excellent position from which to cut the nascent state in half and isolate Jerusalem. To meet this threat, the IDF gathered four brigades commanded by Dayan’s Haganah and Palmach comrades. Yigal Allon, formerly the charismatic leader of the Palmach who had proven his battlefield skills in previous successful fights in the Upper Galilee, led the overall operation. Dayan was just a battalion commander, one of at least a dozen, subordinate to the brigade commanders. Operation Dani’s purpose was to liberate Jerusalem and the road leading to the city from the Jordanian stranglehold by conquering the enemy forces in the bases of Lod, Ramla, Latroun, and Ramallah. The conquest would lift the threat against Tel Aviv and provide the IDF with an easily defended line in the Jerusalem foothills and with control of the railway junctions and international airport in Lod.[[43]](#footnote-44)

The army estimated that there were some 1,500 Arab (Jordanian) Legionnaires in Lod and Ramla combined who intended to use the region as a staging area for attacking Tel Aviv. In reality, there were no more than 150 Legionnaires. These two battalions were reinforced by some hundreds of irregular forces. On July 10, the Arab Legion sent in another battalion with 40 armored cars, significantly boosting the Legion’s ability to fight Dayan’s battalion. The Legion’s function was essentially defensive, its main objective to deny the IDF any successes in these areas.[[44]](#footnote-45) The IDF’s concern that the Legion could use Lod and Ramla as starting points for conquering the land and cutting it in half was reasonable, but the Israelis had no idea of the Legion’s manpower problem and munitions scarcity (resulting from the British embargo) or of Abdullah’s decision, made in consultations with the Legion’s commander Glubb Pasha (Sir John Bagot Glubb), not to overstretch his forces, and instead to try to preserve the gains Jordan had made to date, i.e., the conquest of the West Bank.[[45]](#footnote-46) Consequently, there was only a relatively small force stationed in Lod and Ramla; the city’s defense relied primarily on local militias.

The IDF’s battle plan included a pincer attack with northern and southern arms. Yitzhak Sadeh’s 8th Brigade, to which Dayan’s 89th Battalion belonged, constituted part of the northern arm. The northern arm, including the Yiftach and Harel Brigades, two battalions from the Alexandroni and Kiryati Brigades, and some other auxiliary units, including engineering and observation, were to seize the Lod airport, link up with the moshav Ben Shemen, then under siege, and conquer the villages north of Lod. At the same time, the plan called for the southern arm to flank Ramla and Lod, go through territory held by the enemy to retaliate and cut them off. The two arms were meant to join in Ben Shemen.[[46]](#footnote-47)

The operation began on the night between July 9 and 10. By then, Dayan was on his way back to Israel. While still in New York, he had been summoned by Ben-Gurion – now Israel’s prime minister and defense minister – to attend an urgent meeting. Dayan, typically, ignored the request, instead rushing to meet up with his battalion, now preparing for the operation in Kiryat Aryeh (east of Tel Aviv). In Dayan’s absence, his deputy, Peltz, had taken temporary command, preparing the battalion’s battle plan. Teveth wrote that, according to battalion members, the men heaved a sigh of relief when they saw Dayan emerge from the vehicle, still in his dress uniform. “We felt ever so much better,”[[47]](#footnote-48) recalled Teddy Eytan (the Hebrew name of Thadée Diffre), a Catholic volunteer. Eytan recalled that spirits were very high thanks to Dayan’s leadership, describing him as “very affable… courageous, and level-headed. Humane, with psychological insight, interested in the fate and comfort of his men, able to win their affection and admiration and arouse in them awe and obedience without ever raising his voice.”[[48]](#footnote-49) In contrast, he described Peltz as someone who had stepped directly out of a British officers club. It isn’t difficult to imagine the popularity Dayan enjoyed and the closeness his men felt with him, unlike their reaction to Peltz’s British-style distance and stiffness.[[49]](#footnote-50)

The battalion’s first objective was to conquer the village of Qula. In Dayan’s absence, Peltz had trained and equipped the battalion and prepared a detailed plan to take the village. Peltz showed the plan to Dayan upon his return, who, at that point, did not express any criticism or reservations. Peltz asked Dayan to resume the command, but Dayan was hesitant, saying he wasn’t familiar with the plan and there was no time to make changes. Peltz then announced he was going to sleep and asked to be awakened at 3 a.m. before the operation. At this point, Dayan, having gone to change clothes, concluded that it was time to implement what Baum had taught him. He returned to the battalion, summoned the company commanders – although not Peltz, who was sleeping – and shared with them Baum’s main principles:

You know that I don’t know a thing about mechanized warfare, so I asked. And that American commander told me that when it comes to armored forces there are no hard and fast rules except for one: travel on fire and wheels and never stop moving. If advancing – great. If not – retreat. But never, ever stop. Either forwards or back. I want you to do just that…. [W]e have to move as far ahead as possible.[[50]](#footnote-51)

Dayan galvanized his men’s enthusiasm with the confidence and optimism he projected, promising them they would reach Jerusalem. Sa’ar recalled how Dayan’s appearance on the eve of the battle instilled a renewed fighting spirit in the men: “People treated him like sunlight. He possessed a kind of magical power that is difficult to describe. We were enchanted with him.”[[51]](#footnote-52) Dayan scrapped Peltz’s detailed battle plan that reflected Peltz’s cautious British character: slow advance with both covering fire and an artillery barrage before surging ahead. Instead, Dayan decided that the force would move forward in single file and then spread out for a quick and brutal surge, similar to a cavalry surge.

Peltz was awakened at 2 a.m., about an hour before embarking on the operation, and was asked to come to a commanders’ meeting. When he arrived, he saw that the commanders had already received new orders. Dayan told Peltz he had scrapped his plan, saying that it was fine for fighting a regular army, “but we aren’t fighting the Germans, but Arabs.”[[52]](#footnote-53) Dayan hoped that the enemy would scatter before an extended battle developed, as had happened at Tsemah, and was certain that Peltz’s plan required discipline and coordination better suited to a more experienced, professional unit than the 89th Battalion. Peltz, feeling frustrated and deceived, criticized Dayan’s plan, claiming it reflected Dayan’s lack of professional experience, an assessment that was probably accurate. However, the leadership and confidence that Dayan projected compensated for his gaps in professional knowledge. At times, such a gap between a leader’s professional knowledge and his ability to sweep his subordinates along in his wake can lead to a disaster on the battlefield. But Dayan’s natural talent to read battle conditions, combined with his quite astounding courage, meant that many of the operations he commanded were successful.

The 89th Battalion, with Dayan in the lead, stormed Qula after easily conquering some smaller villages around it. However, contrary to Dayan’s expectation that the Arabs would scatter the way they had in Tsemah, the defenders of Qula fought back, the IDF official history reading, “A difficult battle raged in Qula.”[[53]](#footnote-54)

And thus, on a Saturday – Shabbath – at dawn, with the men moving in single file, Dayan in the lead and Peltz and a mortar bomb platoon on two armored vehicles bringing up the rear, the 89th Battalion began its attack on Qula. Unfortunately, the July 10 battle did not unfold as Dayan had anticipated. It was no longer sufficient to “bang on a tin can” to set the Arabs fleeing. Dayan needed Peltz, who had been right in assuming that the mortar bombs would be necessary, to set up and operate the mortars to allow Company B, commanded by Akiva Sa’ar, to surge toward the village under covering fire. Peltz did this under fire and difficult physical conditions and did it well.

The main file, led by Dayan, was pinned down by the barrage fired from the village. Dayan exited his vehicle and walked the length of the file issuing orders. During the fight, he changed his original plan and ordered his men to seize targets that had not initially been included, to allow conquest from the flank. At this point, he left the battlefield – before the end of the battle but apparently after the outcome was already clear. He had again been called to report to Ben-Gurion in Tel Aviv. Dayan handed off command to Peltz, who continued the volley of mortar bombs, which was followed by Company B’s final surge to conclude Qula’s conquest, with only a few wounded. The Arabs, their resistance broken, fled in retreat.[[54]](#footnote-55) The battalion set up camp in Tira, some 5 km north of Ben Shemen, and waited for new orders.

Overall, Dayan succeeded, and events proceeded more or less the way he had anticipated, despite fierce Arab resistance. But Peltz’s assessment that the village needed to be weakened by artillery before being stormed also proved correct. Dayan demonstrated his ability to admit mistakes and change the battle plan during the fighting based on the situation on the ground, an attribute that would manifest itself over and over again.

Dayan, having ignored the original telegram he had received in New York summoning him to meet with Ben-Gurion in order to meet his battalion, could no longer avoid a meeting. Arriving in Tel Aviv, he learned that the subject for discussion was Jerusalem. Ben-Gurion was worried the city might fall, which he believed would spell the end of the dream of a Zionist state. Dayan’s success in Deganiya and his having gained Ben-Gurion’s personal trust made him the most suitable candidate for the task of defending the city – in Ben-Gurion’s view. He offered Dayan the position of commander of Jerusalem, replacing Maj. Gen. David Shaltiel. Dayan demurred, preferring to stay with his battalion. Ben-Gurion agreed to a brief postponement of the appointment.[[55]](#footnote-56)

On July 11, the 89th Battalion – without Dayan – entered the fighting in the Dir Tarif region, its forces deployed around Dir Tarif, Tira, and Qula. Peltz conducted the nighttime battle, his jeep-borne company stopping an armored Jordanian unit. Before returning to the battalion’s staff quarters in nearby Tira from Dir Tarif, Peltz promised his men that he would return with reinforcements at dawn. After asking to be awakened at 4:30 a.m., he fell asleep under a tree around 1:00 a.m. But at 3:30 Dayan shook him awake, demanding an update. Peltz, exhausted by the last days’ immense effort and responsibility, asked to sleep another hour. Dayan said, “Fine.” When Peltz awakened, it was already 7 o’clock and the battalion was nowhere to be seen. According to one version, Dayan told the fighters, “Let him sleep.”[[56]](#footnote-57) This was the nadir in the relationship between the guerrilla fighter and the professional officer. Years later, Peltz wrote scathing criticism of Dayan – about his military ignorance, his irresponsibility, and his savage, capricious nature. Peltz’s criticism was not unfounded, but ultimately, it was Dayan, not Peltz, who captivated the men thanks to his charisma and courage.[[57]](#footnote-58)

Dayan would later write that upon seeing the battalion scattered among the villages – some men fighting, some resting – he grew livid. He couldn’t make sense of Peltz’s complicated explanations and remained convinced that the battalion’s force must be used only as one armored fist and that scattering the men would impede their ability to execute the mission. On the spot, he decided to concentrate the entire battalion in Dir Tarif.[[58]](#footnote-59)

Dayan left Tira at dawn and headed for Dir Tarif. As usual, he scanned the battlefield and saw a Jordanian armored vehicle, apparently in good repair, lying in a ditch across from the company’s position. The force, under Jordanian fire, still dominating the other side of the hill, extricated the vehicle, dubbing it the “Terrible Tiger.” The captured cannon-bearing Marmon-Herrington armored car added mechanized firepower and real protection, something the battalion – equipped only with halftracks and jeeps – desperately needed.

At this point, there are differing versions as to how it was decided that Dayan’s force would enter Lod and Ramla. Teveth’s biography and Dayan’s autobiography agree that Dayan was looking for his battalion’s next mission. From his elevated observation point, he could see Lod in his unit’s eastern sector, and realized the city was sparsely defended. There were no defensive units stationed in the region, which constituted a corridor connecting the Legion forces deployed through the Lod-Beit Naballah-Ramallah line.[[59]](#footnote-60) Dayan gathered all the company commanders and announced that the battalion was leaving for Lod.[[60]](#footnote-61) His declaration must have been met with astonishment, but the intensity of the admiration for Dayan and the authority he projected inspired the sense that the battalion could reach the ends of the earth if only the commander gave the order. About the battalion’s reaction, Teveth wrote, “Merriment spread through the unit. For now, the exhaustion faded and enthusiastic eyes focused on the valley, on Lod.”[[61]](#footnote-62) Besides, after the baptism by fire in Qula, the battalion’s confidence and feeling it could operate with coordinated units had gotten a boost.[[62]](#footnote-63)

While he was pondering the idea, Dayan was speaking with Mula Cohen, the commander of the Yiftach Brigade, possibly originally designated to take Lod with the help of the 82nd Armored Battalion. The Yiftach Brigade had started to operate on the outskirts of Lod, but had run into trouble and halted operations, and Cohen had been trying to reach the commander of the 82nd Armored Battalion, which was to have helped the Brigade, seeking assistance. Dayan showed up, learned that Cohen couldn’t reach the right commander, and Dayan volunteered for the mission.

The war’s official history books relate the events somewhat differently, saying that Cohen decided to change the battle plan and e use Dayan’s 89th Commando Battalion instead of the 82nd Armored Battalion. This version ignores how the 89th came to this place to begin with and fails to explain how Allon, who had overall command of the operation, saw the situation.[[63]](#footnote-64) According to historian Martin van Creveld, Dayan asked Allon to approve the change,[[64]](#footnote-65) so that the initiative was Dayan’s, and Allon agreed. In his memoirs, however, Dayan presented the decision as his alone. In an essay published in the periodical *Maarakhot*, Dayan wrote, “Indeed, the decision for the attack on Lod originated with the commander of the commando unit (albeit in coordination with the commander of the nearby infantry brigade) [Mula Cohen of the Yiftach Brigade].”[[65]](#footnote-66) Historian Anita Shapira’s version conflicts with that of Dayan, reporting that Allon came to the captured village of Daniel, where he found the raiding battalion instead of the 82nd Battalion after Cohen and Dayan had already formulated their plan. There was nothing for Allon to do but approve it.[[66]](#footnote-67) Cohen, in his own memoirs, neither supports nor contradicts Dayan. He merely notes, drily, that contact with the tank company had broken down and instead, “they succeeded in contacting Dayan’s jeep battalion.”[[67]](#footnote-68) Yeruham Cohen, an intelligence officer with the 8th Brigade and close associate of Allon, wrote that Mula Cohen was very surprised by the arrival of Dayan’s battalion, and his assessment corresponds with Dayan’s.[[68]](#footnote-69)

Another central issue was determining the battalion’s mission. According to Allon, it was to seize a key location in the city, such as the police station, and wait for the Yiftach Brigade’s infantry to join forces. It was also decided that in case the resistance proved too strong, the battalion would retreat from the city, but the confusion of the defenders would be exploited by Yiftach’s forces to execute a raid.[[69]](#footnote-70) In fact, it was the second scenario that unfolded. After the operation, some criticized the battalion for not holding on to the city, although there was no doubt that resistance was fierce and that the high number of casualties justified the retreat. Teveth implicitly criticizes Dayan for omitting from his memoir the fact that the order had been to hold on to the city. Perhaps Dayan dismissed that option right from the start. Yeruham Cohen corroborated that Allon had instructed Dayan to seize a key position until the arrival of Yiftach’s fighters, but Dayan had explained that in light of the erosion of his force (in particular vehicles), he had been forced to retreat. According to Cohen, Allon accepted his decision, saying, “If a commander like Dayan seeks to retreat, apparently there is no other option.”[[70]](#footnote-71) In any event, Dayan probably thought that a mechanized battalion was not built to hold territory; that was a mission best carried out by the infantry.

Dayan’s pre-mission briefing reflected his original intentions:

What was clear from the outset was that our job was not to exit the vehicles and not to hold positions outside the vehicles. We would drive back and forth while shooting; the Arabs would flee; and we’d be left with a fire free corridor of passage for Yiftach’s men, who were holding the outskirts of the city but could not penetrate it.[[71]](#footnote-72)

Dayan had left one company behind in Qula and gone to Lod without informing the brigade, exposing the flank in this region to counterattacks by the Arab Legion and angering Sadeh, his commander.[[72]](#footnote-73) Nonetheless, en route to the target, Dayan briefed his men according to the principles he had learned from Baum in New York:

You don’t stop just because you encounter an obstacle…The leading jeeps scatter aside and the [previously Jordanian] armored vehicle and the halftracks surge ahead. If one of our vehicles is hit, one doesn’t stop to fix it and one doesn’t allow it slow down the rest of the line. One passes it and continues onward. No one except for me is allowed to delay the convoy. We progress no matter what. We shoot, we trample, and we move forward.[[73]](#footnote-74)

Dayan’s plan involved driving fast across the first line of positions and then splitting the battalion into two axes, a good tactical move that would increase the enemy’s confusion.[[74]](#footnote-75) One axis would move north and the other south. The plan then called for the companies to reconnect at the junction, to “cause total bedlam, followed by surrender.”[[75]](#footnote-76) The battalion force, missing those still in Dir Tarif, numbered only 271 soldiers and officers, among whom 150 participated in the actual surge. The battalion had all of eight halftracks, nine light armored vehicles, the one Jordanian cannon-bearing armored vehicle renamed the Terrible Tiger that they had to learn to operate, and 20 jeeps mounted with machine guns.

On the morning of July 11, Yiftach Brigade units engaged in battle on Lod’s southeastern outskirts. At 6:20 p.m., the 89th Battalion started a raid that lasted 47 minutes, The battalion was arranged in single file and headed by Dayan. After heavy fire was aimed at the force, the Terrible Tiger took the lead and fired its cannon, clearing the way for the line to move ahead. Dayan issued commands, having the force spread out. At a certain point, he exited his vehicle, ran among the jeeps, and issued orders face-to-face. Throughout his years of military service, it was important to Dayan, especially at critical junctures, to be physically present among his subordinates and for them to hear the orders in his actual voice. The battalion advanced in its new, spread-out formation, while spraying blazing fire in every direction and increasing its speed. The entire drive to the city was done under heavy fire, which grew more intense as the battalion neared the police building in the city center. But then the plan went awry. The Terrible Tiger made a right turn, but instead of following it, the rest of the vehicles – the halftracks and jeeps – went left, because, according to Dayan’s instructions, they were supposed to deploy in the courtyards of the buildings and take cover behind the stone walls. The Terrible Tiger continued on its own until it reached a city center plaza, where it turned around and exchanged fired with soldiers inside the police building.

The rest of the battalion crossed the city on its way back until reaching Tegart Fort, located between Lod and Ramla. The first halftracks surprised the Legionnaires, but they rallied and directed heavy fire at them and the jeeps that followed. The open jeeps burned, their men killed or wounded. At this point, contact with Dayan was cut off for some technical reason, and he lost the ability to command and control his force. Finally, the second company managed to catch up with the first, whereupon it became clear that the brakes of the first halftrack had broken down, causing it to tear ahead, the rest following at the same breakneck speed until stopping at the Ramla train station. With four fighters killed, the situation was not good. All the vehicles were peppered with bullet holes and steam billowed from the radiators.

The Jordanians having identified the force and firing artillery, Dayan decided to drive back to Ben Shemen, taking another swing through the city. This time, the defenders were ready. They limped along under fire, picking up the wounded, towing Dayan’s command car with three flat tires, until reconnecting with the Terrible Tiger. Other than the Tiger and a couple of halftracks, all of the remaining 35 vehicles were either towing other vehicles or being towed themselves. The battalion stopped only once upon reaching the exit point in Ben Shemen, where it became clear that the losses had been greater than first thought: nine dead and 17 wounded. On the Arab side, there were dozens of casualties.

Dayan’s original plan went wrong. The line of vehicles did not enter the city where he had wanted it to and it also didn’t split up. According to Prof. Alon Kadish, , the column was forced to flank the city, and this unplanned move confused the defenders. Some left their position to engage with the Yiftach fighters and rushed to the other side of the city to confront the attackers there. The column itself, contrary to the common narrative, did not enter the city proper, but traveled down a road along the city’s outskirts. It took most of the fire and casualties both times it passed close to the police station where the enemy had a relatively large force stationed.[[76]](#footnote-78)

Still, despite the mishaps, Dayan continued to lead the assault, demonstrating initiative and determination in battle. In the end, the action achieved its aim: the conquest of the city. At 8 p.m., Yigal Allon wrote a summary of the action. In it, he noted that while the forces defending the city were temporarily stunned by the daring raid, tenacious fighting was still necessary to defeat it. That night, the Legion’s soldiers left the city. Early on Monday, July 12, Lod and Ramla surrendered.

**The Debate about the Raid**

The IDF’s official history describes the raid as follows:

The raid on Lod, one of the most daring actions of the War of Independence, is typical of the inherent achievements of which light armored units are capable. No outpost was captured; no target of military value was destroyed. But the psychological impact – the shock, surprise, uncertainty about the enemy’s whereabouts in the present and its plans for the future – was decisive.[[77]](#footnote-79)

Anita Shapira summarized the battle and its effects on the central heroes of the affair:

The story of Dayan and the raiding battalion is the story of the glory and romance of the conquest of Lod. The bold, charismatic but disobedient battalion commander gathered desperate, adventurous men around him… and went to storm Lod… Dayan’s audacity captured the imagination and the headlines… However, the ones who conquered Lod were the men of Yiftach who fought with caution and advanced step-by-step, without the glory of the brave act that caught people’s imagination…”[[78]](#footnote-80)

As always, Dayan managed to leverage this into maximum public relations and notoriety. On September 24, 1948, about two and a half months after the battles for Lod and its environs, the popular newspaper *Davar* published an article about the 89th Battalion and its derring-do. And at the heart of the article was battalion commander Moshe Dayan.[[79]](#footnote-81)

The raid on Lod was the first of many controversial affairs of Dayan’s long career, offering a mere foretaste of some of Dayan’s traits that would later manifest themselves in other contentious events. Dayan possessed charismatic leadership coupled with rare courage and daring, but he was also dismissive – some would say contemptuous – of the normal chain of command and of coherent military doctrines. If, at a given moment, an action seemed the right thing to do to him, he was willing to go all the way.

Dayan’s lack of caution, seen by many as irresponsible or even disrespectful, angered some colleagues, especially his superiors and fellow commanders. Among them was his deputy Peltz. Peltz never adjusted to Dayan’s style of command; to him, Dayan constantly seemed to be making amateurish, spur-of-the-moment moves.[[80]](#footnote-82) Yiftach commander Mula Cohen, too, and the Dani Operation commander Yigal Allon found it difficult to swallow that Dayan got most of the credit for subduing Ramla and Lod even though the Palmach units did most of the fighting.[[81]](#footnote-83) Even Yitzhak Sadeh, the revered teacher and commander of the 8th Brigade (to which Dayan’s battalion belonged), was distressed because Dayan failed to update him on his moves, which in Sadeh’s view could have affected the entire brigade.

In the War of Independence, undoubtedly Israel’s longest and most difficult war, the army was based on the infantry, and much of its first stage was characterized by static defensive battles. In the second stage of the war, too, most IDF offensives were carried out by infantrymen advancing slowly and fighting long, exhausting battles over every inch. Given this, one can understand the great enthusiasm that the mechanized blitz charge aroused. Some even considered it the harbinger of the IDF’s later shift to tank-based warfare, which some historians dubbed the “Israeli blitzkrieg.”[[82]](#footnote-84)

Largely speaking, Dayan’s approach in Lod reflected the Prusso-German *Auftragstaktik* tradition – a command method of issuing general orders, or, to use the IDF’s official name, “mission command.” Dayan intuitively picked up this principle from Orde Wingate, one of his instructors in the Haganah’s platoon commanders’ course.[[83]](#footnote-85) This form of command favors the independence of junior commanders and encourages considerations of changing conditions. It is especially well-suited to mechanized warfare and maneuvering, enabling commanders to quickly exploit sudden opportunities and reduce the long waiting times for receiving approval typical of military hierarchies. Generations of German generals were trained in this, notably tank commanders Erwin Rommel and Heinz Wilhelm Guderian, and in the U.S. Army, Gen. George Patton. Furthermore, Dayan’s personally leading his battalion was also a rarity in the War of Independence. Such leadership was of a piece with the “command from the saddle” and “forward command,” command approach, concepts that were to become firmly rooted norms in the IDF when Dayan became Chief of Staff.[[84]](#footnote-86)

But at this stage of the war, the incident was extraordinary, and other IDF commanders realized that the raid reflected a different, innovative way of operating. Elhanan Oren, the war’s official historian, wrote, “Operation Danny witnessed the birth of the mechanized formation.”[[85]](#footnote-87) Maj. Gen. Israel Tal, considered the father of Israel’s armored corps and the architect of the Merkava tank, declared that, “The raid on Lod became part of the myth of the IDF’s armored troops and made the story of the battle part of the Corps’ battle heritage.”[[86]](#footnote-88) According to Haim Laskov, another future Chief of Staff, the raid tipped the scales of the war.[[87]](#footnote-89) Taking a more balanced approach, Yitzhak Rabin wrote that the raid did not topple Lod, “but it shook the [Arabs’] willingness to resist,”[[88]](#footnote-90) and added that the Yiftach Brigade exploited the shock and captured the city with relentless fighting.[[89]](#footnote-91)

Ironically, the response of Ben-Gurion, Dayan’s patron, was cooler, perhaps because he wanted the IDF to be an orderly institution like the British Army. He was not enthusiastic about Dayan’s rash methods, although he was undoubtedly impressed by his courage. In the July 10 meeting with Dayan, Ben-Gurion remonstrated, “This is not how you conduct a war,”[[90]](#footnote-92) insisting that this action was nothing but a “trick”: an assault must be launched “like a steamroller operating in a planned, systematic manner, step by step.”[[91]](#footnote-93) Dayan, unconvinced, left the meeting feeling they would just have to agree to disagree, and wrote something “In his opinion, I’m a brave commander but a maverick, and in my opinion, he’s a wise and inspired political leader who has learned and heard much about Arabs and warfare, but we don’t know one another well. He may know *about* a thing but doesn’t know the thing itself [emphasis added]”[[92]](#footnote-94) – a good reflection of Dayan’s general approach to strategy and military leadership. Despite his criticism of the charge on Lod, Ben-Gurion did not change his mind about Dayan being the right choice for commander of Jerusalem, perhaps that period’s most sensitive appointment.

Immediately after the operation, Dayan and Allon wrote their summarizing reports. While Dayan stressed that the “shock and awe” were the primary factor in Lod’s surrender, Allon submitted a more balanced description of the significance of the action in the overall scheme of things, noting that the fall of the city was a consequence of the sum of actions of the Yiftach Brigade and the 89th Battalion.[[93]](#footnote-95) The description of the raid in the literature of the war is based on an essay Dayan wrote and published in 1950 in *Maarakhot*,[[94]](#footnote-96) the military lessons distilled as follows:

The charge of the commando units to Lod was an action typical of fast-moving forces: a unit carrying light weapons – even if armored – is only good against light weapons.

The number of jeeps in the commando unit, … more than half the unit’s vehicles, gave it characteristics typical of the cavalry: mobility… and inability to act without a vehicle … There was also the powerful addition of massive firepower, maintainable while attacking on the move…

Such a unit must seize the initiative and exploit opportunities as they emerge during the rapidly-developing action. Indeed, the decision to attack Lod came from a commando unit commander, …a mission not been included in the initial plan…

Speed is typical not only of the planning but also of the action: …The speed of motion…shocks the enemy, destroys its formation, prevents it from reorganizing later on, and breaks its spirit.[[95]](#footnote-97)

Dayan responded to criticism, insisting: “Such a unit cannot take time out to seize enemy positions.” He also referred to the controversy over the credit for the fall of Lod, apparently agreeing with Allon’s battle summary:

The unit’s charge at the enemy’s center – once it succeeds, it shocks and awes the enemy for a time. This is when the infantry can enter and do what it pleases… Had the infantry unit not come to Lod to execute the actual conquest of the city and dig into it, had there been no one to pluck the fruit of the assault and exploit the enemy’s panic, the city of Lod and its fighters might have stirred themselves into action and regrouped before long…

Another note is necessary: in practice, … this action was unusual. In this war, many units excelled in their men’s courage, self-sacrifice, and audacity. What set this action apart was its daytime execution and the dynamism and speed of the chain of events at the hands of a unit after almost 36 hours of nonstop fighting.[[96]](#footnote-98)

Dayan, thus, two years after the battle, agreed with Allon and, to an extent, with Ben-Gurion, that the action was unusual. Nonetheless, he maintained, and rightly so, that the raid led to the city’s rapid surrender. The unit’s spirit became Dayan’s greatest contribution to the transformation of the IDF in his term as Chief of Staff. The extent to which the *esprit de corps* in a campaign is a force multiplier is something Dayan learned on different occasions, but undoubtedly the raid on Lod was the most prominent example demonstrating what a fearless unit can accomplish.

Still, debates about the raid continued for decades. Despite what Dayan wrote in *Maarakhot*, the argument over the raid did not end there. In 2002, Lt. Col. Boaz Zalmanovitch, who served as deputy commander of the Givati Brigade, wrote an essay on the conquest of Lod and its effect on the IDF,[[97]](#footnote-99) arguing that the IDF learned the wrong lessons from the battle, which came to so influence the IDF for years, only because of Dayan’s notoriety. Zalmaovitch argued that the “armored shock” approach was essentially superficial and became popular only because it had succeeded in peculiar circumstances,[[98]](#footnote-101) and he linked it to the failure of the armored corps in the first stage of the Yom Kippur War.[[99]](#footnote-102) While the raid, which reflected Dayan’s style of command, clearly inspired the IDF and demonstrated how a speedy mechanized raid can shock an enemy, it is hard to conclude that it directly affected the principles of building the ground forces in the IDF over the next 25 years.

Enemy testimony also appears to bolster the claim attributing the operation’s success to the raid. In 1952, Dayan met Maj. Adib al-Qassam from the Arab-Jordanian Legion in a senior command course in Great Britain. Discussing1948, al-Qassam told Dayan of the adventures of a certain Israeli commando unit that had raided Lod and Ramla. The Legionnaires, he said, tried to stop the raiders but failed, and escaped to Latrun. Al-Qassam, expressing his amazement at the brave assault, had no idea he was speaking with the commander of the raid.[[100]](#footnote-103)

The raid on Lod highlighted much of what contributed to creating the great myth of Dayan, but it also planted the seeds of resentments from colleagues that would emerge later – anger, frustration, jealousy – leading to fierce criticism. It is interesting to compare Dayan in Lod with Dayan in the Six-Day War: in both cases – returning to his battalion from the United States and being appointed defense minister – his mere presence instilled high spirits and confidence in the troops. Both times, the critics claimed, Dayan showed up at the last minute, long after others had already worked hard on the preparation, only to pluck most of the glory.

The Yiftach Brigade had been stuck fighting in Lod before the 89th Battalion appeared, continued fighting after the 89th left. Mula Cohen wrote that Allon and Rabin both tried to persuade Dayan to camp with his battalion in Ben Shemen, but Dayan declared: “I’m going to see Ben-Gurion in Tel Aviv to tell him I conquered Lod.” And that was the story in a nutshell – “I conquered Lod” – when Lod had not been conquered in any way… He took off and went to report … not to his brigade commander… No, directly to Ben-Gurion.”[[101]](#footnote-104)

Cohen did concede that, “After the barrage of fire, the Arabs of Lod were struck by terrible panic. It would therefore be wrong to say that what the 89th Battalion made no difference. It made a tremendous difference.”[[102]](#footnote-105)Given the assessment that the Yiftach Brigade had completed the seizure and occupation, while Dayan got the glory and an open door to Ben-Gurion, the frustration and jealousy Dayan aroused is easy to understand.

With Lod, Dayan clearly gambled boldly, took a risk and succeeded. No doubt, Dayan both saved the day after the Yiftach’s brigade was stopped, and paved the way for brigade’s ultimate capture of the city.

Yigal Allon’s many Palmach admirers likely had reason for resenting the maverick Dayan’s preferential treatment from Ben-Gurion compared to the prime minister’s unforgiving attitude to Allon. Perhaps Ben-Gurion had already found that while Dayan was disobedient militarily, he was obedient politically, as proven during the Saison and the *Altalena* affair, while Allon had more ideological loyalties.[[103]](#footnote-106) Therefore, Ben-Gurion, feeling he could trust Dayan, had asked him to take command of Jerusalem despite his unpredictability in battle. After learning from Dayan on July 15, Ben-Gurion, impressed by the audacity if not by the method, again offered Dayan the Jerusalem command, which Dayan ultimately accepted.[[104]](#footnote-107)

**Operation Death to the Invader**

The so-called “Ten Day” Battles during Operation Danny started when the first truce ended on July 8 and ended on July 18 when the second truce began. Dayan wanted time for the battalion to regain its strength, but Yadin decided, after some hesitation, that the battalion must take part in the fighting in the south.

Operation Death to the Invader, led by the Givtai Brigade’s Lt. Col. Shimon Avidan[[105]](#footnote-108) called for capturing two Egyptian army bases north of Plugot (then Majdal-Fallujah) and join up with the forces besieged in the Negev. The Negev Brigade was supposed to arrive from the south and capture Kawkaba, while the 89th Battalion was meant to take the more distant Tel Karatiyya, behind the Egyptian lines, in a nighttime action. A Givati infantry company joined the battalion.

On July 15, the battalion of 220 men, 130 of them combat soldiers, and its spearhead, the rearmed Terrible Tiger, moved south, terrain relatively unfamiliar terrain to Dayan. He wrote, “I did not know the Negev. I’d made a few trips there, but it always remained alien to me.”[[106]](#footnote-109)

Zero-hour was set for 10 p.m. In the afternoon, Dayan gathered his men to debrief them on the plan, based on rapid movement while laying down fire. They were to reach the Egyptian-held Fallujah airfield, cross the nearby road from the southwest, reach and cross Wadi Mufarar, thus reaching Tel Karatiyya from an unexpected direction and beginning the assault. To confuse the enemy, they were to drive through the Egyptian lines along a barely passable 5–6 km route.

The Givati commander Avidan, described as “grim-looking” and “rigid” and known to be risk averse, was Dayan’s mirror image, which affected the men accordingly. For Avidan, the security of the corps was paramount, making it difficult to prod him into an offensive.[[107]](#footnote-110)

Dayan had two reservations. First, he found the culture in Haganah and Palmach units a pretentious and self-righteous affection, imitating the Palmach’s greatly admired, but to Dayan, irrelevant Red Army.[[108]](#footnote-111) Dayan, also disagreed with battalion commanders conducting the battle from the rear with remote management and troop control. Dayan preferred emphasizing leadership from the front, with control less important than helping drive the troops forward to reach their goals. He noted, “Via the wireless, you can get news and transmit instructions, but taking the battalion into battle can only be done by fighting together, not by remote control… with the battalion commander ensconced in safety while he commands his men to surge ahead.”[[109]](#footnote-112) This approach would continue to characterize Dayan’s leadership style even in his most senior positions.

Indeed, when the battalion started moving toward the Fallujah airfield, Dayan was in the third vehicle En route, the convoy took heavy fire that killed the Terrible Tiger’s cannoneer. When the force reached the *wadi* (a water bed usually dry in the non-rainy season), the soldiers got stuck and started to clear a path for the convoy. Despite the tumult, Dayan, feeling faint, stepped aside for a short nap. At 4 a.m., the battalion started climbing the *wadi* and stormed the village with the vehicles in front followed by a Givati Brigade infantry unit, encountering little resistance. By 6 a.m., the battalion had completed its mission, losing one man and more than half of its vehicles. But, with intelligence about Karatiyya’s size and strength poor, the operation, ostensibly successful, did not achieve its ultimate objectives of breaking the Egyptians.

A few hours after the battled had ended, the 89th Battalion already gone, the Egyptians started bombarding Karatiyya with mortars and cannons. Givati was left to hold the ground during the Egyptian counteroffensive, fighting heroically until the truce.[[110]](#footnote-113) Avidan, believing the 89th Battalion had breached orders by leaving the battlefield, complained to Yadin, who ordered Dayan’s court-martial. Dayan successfully justified his departure, arguing that a raiding battalion with non-armored vehicles was not meant to seize and maintain control of an area. The continuing controversies surrounding Dayan and many commanders’ disapproval of his style led to opposition to his appointment as commander of Jerusalem.

After the battle, Dayan visited the wounded men from his unit, some in the face and eyes. To encourage them, he, with his typical cynicism said, “Guys, there’s nothing to see in this shitty world. You’ll see well enough with one eye, too.”[[111]](#footnote-114) This would be the last battle in which Dayan led men in an offense, although in all future positions he continued to try to be on the front lines.

The second truce went into effect on July 19, and Dayan was appointed commander of the Jerusalem front on July 23.

**Commander of the Jerusalem Sector**

Dayan’s time in Jerusalem can be divided into two periods: the first, assuming combat command of the brigade during the fighting, and the second, conducting the negotiations with the enemy and playing the role of officer-diplomat after the fighting had ended.[[112]](#footnote-115)

In Jerusalem, Dayan was appointed brigade commander, a rank that entails command and control of forces through intermediaries – battalion and company commanders – who, ideally, would have the same freedom of action Dayan had enjoyed as battalion commander – as well as a staff to formulate situation assessments, make decisions, and oversee all activity. This required a high degree of skill, especially training, and experience. When Dayan arrived in Jerusalem, he lacked both these skills, and this was reflected how the military operations in the city were executed. Until this point, Dayan’s conduct had combined audacity, leadership – and luck (Napoleon is reported to have quipped, “I’d rather have lucky generals than good ones,” echoed by General Dwight D. Eisenhower: “I would rather have a lucky general than a smart general…They win battles…”). But in Jerusalem, he had to command a large system, something for which he had no training. Worse still, luck eluded him. While there were some extenuating circumstances, they alone cannot explain the absence of military successes in Jerusalem.

Dayan’s position as officer-diplomat in the talks with Jordan was very important in terms of his future professional path. Despite his successes in Deganiya and as commander of the 89th Battalion, Dayan had more than a few detractors in the IDF’s elite command structure. Therefore, had he not led the talks with Jordan, he would have become just another commander in a long list of War of Independence commanders. His critics are prone to recall his failures in the last battles he led. But as an officer-diplomat, Dayan’s unique traits came to the fore.[[113]](#footnote-116) Furthermore, it was actually after he had become an object of criticism and jealousy among former Palmach commanders that Ben-Gurion forged closer relations with him, as he felt Dayan, lacking supporters elsewhere, would be a loyal ally, someone he could trust. Thus, was Dayan’s future path paved.

Behind the appointment lay a bitter struggle between Ben-Gurion and Yadin along with the rest of the General Staff. In considering the reorganization and command of the four fronts, Yadin had proposed Eliyahu Ben-Hur (Cohen) to replace David Shaltiel as the Jerusalem command. Ben-Gurion, however, suggested Dayan, whose candidacy was strongly opposed by the General Staff, which considered him uncontrollable. The conflicts peaked with letters of resignation from General Staff members submitted to Ben-Gurion on July 1 followed by a letter of resignation from Ben-Gurion himself. Ben-Gurion won this particular round of “chicken.” After reaching a compromise giving Allon command of the southern front and Dayan command of the Jerusalem front,[[114]](#footnote-117) everyone withdrew their resignations. Before concluding the appointments, Ben-Gurion had to face a delegation of 89th Battalion fighters headed by Yaakov Granek [[115]](#footnote-118) came to Ben-Gurion to urge him to leave Dayan in his current position as their commander. The battalion even threatened to strike. Ben-Gurion explained that the security of Jerusalem took precedence over their battalion.[[116]](#footnote-119)

Dayan was appointed on July 23 and, surrounded by 89th Battalion and Nahalal stalwarts, assumed his new position in Jerusalem on August 1.[[117]](#footnote-120) He arrived in a city cut in half, besieged, and under heavy shelling. City residents were reduced to drinking rainwater and making food from wild plants in their neighborhoods. The fighting forces Dayan commanded were members of the Etzioni Brigade whose training was poor and morale low. The only sort of fighting they knew was positional warfare from fixed positions, aimed at eroding and exhausting the enemy, much like the trench warfare of World War I. The brigade’s only achievement lay in maintaining its position and not surrendering. Dayan toured the units, trying to raise the men’s morale and urge their commanders to action, but it seemed to be too little too late.

Beyond the low level of fighting fitness, which limited Dayan’s sphere of action, there was another, no less significant constraint – the political one. At this stage, the question of Jerusalem was being discussed at the U.N. General Assembly and the Security Council, and international observers in the city prevented any kind of unilateral offensive initiative. Nonetheless, Dayan pushed Ben-Gurion and the General Staff to order action. He managed to get approval for two operations, but both, aimed at simply improving Israel’s position before permanent agreements took effect, failed.

The first action was meant to drive a wedge between the Jordanian Legion, positioned positions east of Armon Hanatsiv (the Governor’s Palace, named for the British High Commissioner’s headquarters located on the hilltop), and the Egyptian army, deployed on the city’s southern edges. The action, approved for the night between August 17 and 18, was to be carried out with some unequivocal politically-dictated caveats: it had to be completed within 24 hours and the building, manned by U.N. personnel, could not be entered. After touring the area, the 62nd Battalion commander Meir Zorea and the Etzioni Brigade’s operations officer Hillel Fefferman – both experienced officers – concluded that they had to seize of the top – the Governor’s Palace – in order to take the hill. Zorea explained this to Dayan, noting that the building was a vital ground for control[[118]](#footnote-121) but Dayan seemed unfamiliar with the professional concept and was unwilling to breach the political restriction or defy Ben-Gurion. Even as a relatively junior officer, Dayan had shown sensitivity to the political aspect of military action, something that would characterize his military leadership in the future as well. Unfortunately, Dayan also tended to draw too heavily on the past and to underestimate the enemy based on past experience. Consequently, he authorized a limited Armon Hanatsiv action against the advice of his two officers.

The action ran into exactly the sort of trouble Zorea and Fefferman had anticipated. The forces found themselves stuck, exposed to fire on the hillside, and eventually had to withdraw to avoid exposure at daybreak. The force suffered a decisive defeat and casualties were high: nine dead, five POWs, and 21 wounded.

The next day, Dayan gathered the men of the battalion for a dressing down. A stormy debate ensured, especially over the battalion commanders’ having stayed behind to command, Zorea claiming that in a nighttime action of this type, it was better to lead from a command stronghold in the rear to retain better control of the forces. (Today, despite impressive technological advances in command and control, the IDF’s method remains closer to that of Dayan.[[119]](#footnote-122)) Nonetheless, for the next mission, Dayan deferred to Zorea’s knowledge, and placed himself in the brigade command center, located higher up than the battlefield, where he could use his communications device to control the movements of the battalions.[[120]](#footnote-123)

Fefferman also sharply criticized Dayan for acting unprofessionally and urged Dayan’s removal. Instead, Fefferman was made battalion commander of the brigade’s armored force, a step that soured the atmosphere in the brigade.[[121]](#footnote-124) Over the next two months, Dayan devoted himself to rebuilding the brigade, his efforts even acknowledged by his two critics – Fefferman and Zorea. Dayan continued to demand missions, earning himself a reputation as an aggressive officer looking for action. But as the political process advanced, Ben-Gurion was increasingly unlikely to approve an operation.

Two months later, Dayan finally got what he wanted. With Operation Yoav starting on the southern front, Operation To the Mountain began on the central front to pin down the Egyptian army in the south Hebron Hills and keep it from intervening in the southern battles, and to expand the Jerusalem corridor southwards.[[122]](#footnote-125) On the last night of Operation To the Mountain, October 15, Dayan was ordered to deploy his brigade in Operation Yekev, designed to enter Bethlehem indirectly and from an unexpected place: a high hill only lightly defended by the Egyptians. The idea was that if Israeli forces could overcome the topographical challenges, they could then easily overpower the enemy, thereby cutting the Egyptian forces off from the Jordanian troops on the Jerusalem-Bethlehem axis and possibly even taking Bethlehem.[[123]](#footnote-126) Fefferman and the central front commander, Tsvi Ayalon opposed the plan.

The main force was led by the Etzioni Brigade’s Moriah Battalion, commanded by Zalman Mart, a long-time Dayan loyalist. Dayan, either believing it to be true or hoping to inspire the men, repeated his theory that “banging the tin can once” would send all the enemy forces into flight.

The force found climbing the cliffs more difficult than anticipated and became pinned down by enemy machineguns. One man was killed. Mart, concluding that there wasn’t time left to complete the mission by morning, when the men would be sitting ducks, asked Dayan’s permission to withdraw. Dayan, true to his principles of command, told Mart that as the commander in situ, only Mart could decide what to do. Mart decided to withdraw.[[124]](#footnote-127)

These failures damaged Dayan’s reputation and bolstered those who considered him an irresponsible military adventurer. Basing himself on past experiences, he had overestimated the capabilities of the undertrained, demoralized Israeli forces, and underestimated the Egyptian soldiers’ willingness to continue fighting when attacked. Luck did not favor him. But for Dayan, all these experiences, including failures, were important and instructive.

In his memoirs, Dayan admitted made no attempt to whitewash the failure of Operation Yekev. Dayan conceded they should have captured the Governor’s Palace and its environs, as his officers had wanted, even referring to “vital ground”: “Obviously, the directive forbidding the capture of the Governor’s Palace and the immediate area around it from the outset precluded any possible use of the vital ground in the battlefield.”[[125]](#footnote-128) Summarizing the two failed actions, Dayan spoke of poor preparation, low battle fitness, and bad morale, factors he had not been able to change in any significant way during his command, citing the lack of any offensive action during this time and the front’s static condition. In Jerusalem, Dayan met an army of “lazy bulls” rather than one of “noble stallions,” as he famously recalled after the Sinai Campaign. He constantly faced this problem as a senior IDF commander, and while Chief of Staff, he generated a revolution in in this respect.

The principle that commanders should lead from the front was one of the most important that Dayan had learned from Wingate. After the battle of the Kastel (a strategic site near Jerusalem), a legend arose around a command issued by Shimon Alfasi,: “Privates – fall back; commanders – stay and cover!” Israeli writer Yoram Kaniuk, who participated in the fighting, wrote: “Alfasi’s command was to become a cornerstone for deciding that the place of commanders was in the forefront…underpinning the call, ‘Follow me!’”[[126]](#footnote-129) But the reality during the War of Independence was that battalion and even company commanders did not lead their forces from the front, preferring to conduct the battle from their positions in the rear and rely on wireless communication to control the troops. Dayan was different. When the 89th Battalion delegation had approached Ben-Gurion to request that Dayan be allowed to remain with them, Ben-Gurion asked what was so special about him. They replied that he led the battalion’s charge and was blunt and forthright with the soldiers.[[127]](#footnote-130) Years later, when Dayan was appointed Chief of Staff, leading from the front would become an IDF hallmark of commanders.

Dayan’s days of fighting in the War of Independence had over, he became active in the armistice talks and was officially named commander of the Jerusalem front. The move to Jerusalem also led to an improved standard of living for Dayan and his family, who were housed in a large home (for that time) in the exclusive neighborhood of Rehaviya. Dayan’s wife Ruth made the home a lively center for military personnel, diplomats, U.N. officials, and journalists, who all could converse with Dayan about professional issues and social matters. Dayan, who loved the open air of the outdoors, continued to tour the front lines, and would return home to these gatherings dusty, his uniform caked in mud. He saw nothing wrong with this.[[128]](#footnote-133) He kept on driving in a jeep, armed with a machinegun, which gave him a martial look at all times. Still, Dayan’s way of life changed in his diplomatic position. Describing this time, he wrote, “There were many meetings,…dinners, and cocktail parties. I gained weight and my name often appeared in newspaper headlines. In a few months, not only did my way of life change but also my way of thinking.”[[129]](#footnote-134)

During this period, Dayan developed a close relationship with the press. Indeed, Dayan was the only individual in uniform Ben-Gurion permitted to speak with the press, other than Chief of Staff Dori and Yadin. This made him a more familiar public figure than those senior to him in rank, including Allon. Dayan’s personal charm also worked on journalists, who published his pronouncements in the domestic and international press. In addition, an officer at his headquarters, Alex Broida, who actually functioned as a press officer, marketed Dayan as an important future leader. Not surprising, then, that on July 18, 1949, *Life* magazine published an essay on Israel after the war, in which the caption of Dayan’s photo referred to him as the heroic commander of Jerusalem and possible future prime minister.[[130]](#footnote-135) Thus, the figure of Dayan was slowly but surely being fixed in the public mind, both in Israel and abroad, as a leader destined for greatness.

It was actually David Shaltiel who opened the talks with Jordan, meeting with Abdullah al-Tall, the Jordanian commander of the Jerusalem front, on July 21 after the second truce.[[131]](#footnote-136) Dayan was appointed to his position two days later, but his diplomatic activity started only after the Governor’s Palace defeat, on August 17, 1948, with the U.N. eager to prevent the any renewal of the battle around the Governor’s Palace and to finalize the sides’ positions. On September 3, Dayan met for the first time with al-Tall. Despite mutual accusations of truce violations, the three promised to try to refrain from shouting, and Dayan conceded a small withdrawal.[[132]](#footnote-137)

At the second meeting on September 5, Dayan suggested to al-Tall that they leave the table filled with the U.N. observers and speak privately. Dayan, had developed a great deal of respect for al-Tall: “He stood head and shoulders above all the Arabs I met with during that time…and he had great personal courage.”[[133]](#footnote-138) Dayan felt he could achieve more in a personal meeting at which the two warriors would find a common denominator than he could with numerous foreign mediators. The two soon notified the U.N. team that they were installing a direct telephone line between them and bypassing the U.N. headquarters. On November 28, the two met again, this time with U.N. mediation, and two days later, they signed a memorandum of understanding that Dayan described (somewhat naively, as veteran foreign ministry officials pointed out to him) as “a complete and sincere ceasefire” that included an agreement on the armistice lines to go into effect on December 1. Dayan and al-Tall met again before their direct phone line was installed on December 7. Their good relationship created calm and made it possible to resolve several local issues, such as a POW exchange, work permits for people to enter the Mount Scopus enclave, pilgrimages, and demilitarization.[[134]](#footnote-139)

On December 12, the two men met again with U.N. observer Carlson, French Consul René Neville, U.S. consular representative Biardet, and U.S. military attaché Maj. Nicholas Andronowitz present. Dayan made the following surprising declaration: “My government instructed me to say that we are prepared to discuss an armistice and peace with the government of Transjordan, but we are not interested in continuing any talks on the basis of a truce. Of course, this does not apply to smaller issues… which we can arrange between ourselves directly…[[135]](#footnote-140)

Dayan and al-Tall’s meetings following the ceasefire resolved some issues, such as ceasefire violations and the needs of the population Gradually, the men came to trust one another, making it possible to expand the November 30 truce to include southern Jerusalem at first, and, later, the area north of the city.

Al-Tall was a complex character. He presented himself as a nationalistic zealot safeguarding Arab interests. But there are many indications that this is the image he wanted to project publicly after the war, while privately expressing to his Israeli counterparts his support for the Israeli army’s Jerusalem operations.[[136]](#footnote-142) He also became popular among Israeli journalists mostly because he spoke of a possible peace, although he asked Dayan to try to arrange for *The Palestine Post*, to publish a piece portraying him as a radical anti-Israel nationalist.[[137]](#footnote-143)

From the beginning of their relationship, Dayan and al-Tall respected one another and their personal military accomplishments, even praising praised one another in their respective memoirs. The trust between them resulted the strategically important agreement that included all of Jerusalem,[[138]](#footnote-145) resulting in “Absolute peace and quiet as a result of the truce agreement.”[[139]](#footnote-146) The central front was taken out of the cycle of fighting thanks to understandings and agreements between military commanders.

The commanders’ secret channel of communication continued to operate throughout of December, covering territorial arrangements included in the ceasefire agreement and the various elements of the subsequent peace agreement, including the division of Jerusalem and of the Dead Sea and mining arrangements there, train passage to Jersualem, travel to Mount Scopus, and the fates of the Negev, the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and mixed Jewish-Arab cities. In practice, their meetings shaped the Armistice Agreements that would be publicly signed in Rhodes in July 1949, which reflected the secret arrangement that had already been pieced together on the ground while the Israeli army battling the Egyptian military in Operation Horev, to which the Jordanian commander had given his clandestine imprimatur.[[140]](#footnote-147)

Israel was also in contact with the Jordanians via European representatives: Sasson met in Paris with the Jordanian ambassador to Great Britain and Dayan and Reuven Shiloah from the Foreign Ministry met at Jaffa Gate on December 25 with Abdullah’s envoy, his private physician. At this point, the local channel of talks over Jerusalem started to merge with the general political one at the center of which was a comprehensive agreement with Jordan, where Dayan played a major role.

By the end of the war, the balance of power now favored Israel, not Jordan. While Abdullah’s fear of an all-out Israeli attack now that the latter was stronger and held the upper hand brought him to the talks, he made demands Israeli could not possibly agree to, including withdrawing from Lod, Ramla, and Jerusalem’s Arab neighborhoods and annexation of the Negev or at least the creation of a corridor under his control connecting the West Bank with the Gaza Strip and Israel’s agreement that Jordan absorb the West Bank. Israel wanted full peace with Jordan with minimal concessions on these issues.[[141]](#footnote-148)

On January 1, 1949, King Abdullah appointed al-Tall as his representative to the negotiations; the next day, Dayan was appointed the Israeli representative to the talks with Jordan, together with Shiloah. The three met on January 3 at the Mandelbaum Gate in Jerusalem (an Israeli-Jordanian crossing). King Abdullah was demanding the Negev and an access road to the Gaza Strip and Israel raised the 679 Israeli POWs Jordan held. With the negotiations not making any real progress, King Abdullah instructed al-Tall to invite Dayan to a secret meeting at the royal palace.

On January 5, 1949, the two nations exchanged secret letters of authorization granting the military commanders the authority to discuss peace. Dayan and Sasson then met with King Abdullah in his palace on January 16, 1949, with Al-Tall included in the meeting. While the king hosted them with all due pomp and circumstance, Dayan and Sasson quickly grew impatient. But Abdullah insisted on first playing chess with them, and Sasson had to instruct Dayan not only to lose his game, but also to express amazement with the king’s surprising moves.[[142]](#footnote-150) Abdullah spoke of signing a peace treaty, but only if the other Arab nations signed armistice agreements in Rhodes, where talks had just gotten under way. This meeting ended without any resolution, and under pressure from the Israeli government and al-Tall, Dayan and Sasson arrived for the second meeting on January 30, hoping to secure the release of the Israeli POWs. This meeting, too, was mainly a social occasion with no visible results. Sasson instructed the impatient Dayan not to raise the issue of the POWs at any point. Before leaving the palace, it was, oddly, Sasson himself who broached the topic. He grabbed the king’s sash – a nod to the ancient Bedouin practice allowing anyone holding the king’s sash to make a request of him – and asked for the POWs’ release. The king agreed, and arrangements for the captives’ release were made that very night.[[143]](#footnote-151) In his memoirs, Dayan noted that, in the end, “the talks produced no result, practically speaking,” adding that the king made an impression on him as “a clever [ruler] who can be decisive.”[[144]](#footnote-152) The one clear achievement was the exchange of their POWs.

In February 1949, U.N appointed the American Ralph Bunche to mediate talks between the Arab states and Israel on the Greek island of Rhodes. Dayan was deputy to Reuven Shiloah the head of Israel’s delegation, but al-Tall remained in Jordan. Bunche took a liking to Dayan and Shiloah, with whom he spent a great deal of time in March. “Dayan and Shiloah are a much nicer team than Eitan [Walter Eitan of the Foreign Ministry] and Yadin.”[[145]](#footnote-153) The negotiations began on March 4 and ended on April 3 with the signing of an agreement, and Jordan became the second nation after Egypt to sign an armistice agreement with Israel. In practice, the talks with the Jordanians in Rhodes were mostly pointless, because the Jordanian delegation was not authorized to make any far-reaching decisions. Dayan enjoyed his trips around the island and the Jordanians’ friendly attitude and was highly impressed by Bunche: “He inspired an atmosphere and trust and comfort… He was one of those people whose wisdom you can enjoy not just when you agree with them, but also when you disagree with them and they’ve gotten the better of you.”[[146]](#footnote-154)

One stumbling block in the talks with the Jordanians was their demand to control the Negev. Israel decided to establish facts on the ground and, on March 5, embarked on Operation Uvda (Hebrew for “fact” but also a reference to Aavdat/Abdah, a Nabatean city in the Negev Desert), taking five days to capture the entire Negev to Eilat. It was now clear that the power relations had reversed, and it was the strong Israel that was threatening a weaker Jordan and exerting pressure on it.

At this point, Yadin and Eitan were told to handle the talks and Dayan returned to Israel,[[147]](#footnote-155) continuing the talks with al-Tall and King Abdullah in late March. At a March 23 meeting with the King, Dayan, accompanied by Maj. Yehoshafat Harkavi,[[148]](#footnote-156) demanded the strategic area of Wadi Ara that crosses the Triangle and issued a threat: unless these demands were met, Israel would act against the Iraqi army encamped there. In short – war. In addition, Dayan demanded that the area of the old train tracks to Jerusalem be included as part of Israel.[[149]](#footnote-157) In exchange, he offered concessions in the Mount Hebron region.

Abdullah, fearing another confrontation with the Israeli army, agreed to the terms. From Jordan’s point of view, the agreement lifted the threat of further Israeli conquests. Most importantly, both sides saw the agreement as a preface to a future peace treaty and the feeling was that such a peace was just around the corner.[[150]](#footnote-159)

The Jordanians signed the maps Dayan had brought. When the king complained about the many concessions he was making, Dayan exclaimed that he and the two military men with him, Yadin and Harkabi, had all lost younger brothers in the war that the Arab nations, Jordan included, had started. Now, Dayan said, the Arab nations would have to live with the outcome of that war.[[151]](#footnote-160)

Shortly thereafter, on April 3, the Armistice Agreements were formally signed, Dayan signing on behalf of Israel. According to historian Avi Shlaim: “The agreement was a huge diplomatic victory for Israel…providing Israel with significant territorial gains in the Negev and Wadi Ara.”[[152]](#footnote-161)

On June 9, 1949, Dayan received an important appointment, taking charge of the armistice issues. He coordinated four committees – on Jordan, Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon – consisting of Israeli officers and U.N. mediators. Behind the scenes, Ben-Gurion preferred Dayan’s advice to that of Moshe Sharett, his foreign minister, testimony to Dayan’s growing influence.[[153]](#footnote-162) Indeed, of all the officers, with the exception of Chief of Staff Allon, Dayan had the freest and most direct access to the prime minister. For example, after the Jordanians violated the Jerusalem agreements, Dayan and Ben-Gurion disagreed about applying military pressure. To discuss the issue, Dayan joined Ben-Gurion on August 28 for the long ride from the village of Shfaram in the north to Tel Aviv, during which the two could talk uninterruptedly and without outside pressure.[[154]](#footnote-163)

**From Tactical Commander to Political Negotiator**

Dayan’s advance can be described as no less than meteoric, a path that prepared him for senior command and leadership positions he would hold in the future. His experiences in Deganiya, with the 89th Battalion, and in Jerusalem certainly helped him. But, as he said himself, the moment he became involved in the negotiations with the Jordanians, his thinking started to change and he began studying geostrategic and geopolitical issues. He acknowledged being blessed with the very best teacher– David Ben-Gurion himself.

Dayan’s contribution to the talks with Jordan was undoubtedly considerable:[[155]](#footnote-164) from creating trust with Abdullah al-Tall, the Jordanian commander of the Jerusalem front and Dayan’s direct enemy, reaching agreements with him on local issues, to conducting talks with Jordan over the arrangement overall. Harkabi, who was by Dayan’s side at the tail end of the talks, noted that “Dayan was outstanding in conversation with the king; he floated a clever formula.”[[156]](#footnote-165) Teveth wrote that Dayan “…proved diplomatic kill and tenacity,” and that in bargaining with al-Tall he showed that “he was a brilliant, sophisticated bargainer for whom every foot of land mattered.”[[157]](#footnote-166) By contrast, Yadin was less kind about Dayan and maintained that Dayan’s role “was very small, almost non-existent.”[[158]](#footnote-167) It may be that Yadin’s assessment was a result of the jealousy he felt for the abilities Dayan displayed that overshadowed Yadin’s role in Jordanian negotiations, which he had led before Dayan came aboard. Yadin felt that the talks with Jordan went well not because of Dayan’s abilities but because they had been conducted by professional diplomats, including Sasson, and because the two nations had shared interests. Still, Yadin admitted that Dayan had a special knack for conducting negotiations with Arabs.[[159]](#footnote-168)

In the end, only the opinion of one man mattered – that of Ben-Gurion. Only his reaction to Dayan counted and Ben-Gurion was hugely impressed by Dayan’s political and diplomatic finesse, leading him to attribute Israel’s achievements in the talks with Jordan to Dayan. He felt that it was due to Dayan that Israel received the train area in Jerusalem and Wadi Ara.[[160]](#footnote-169) Ben-Gurion learned to respect Dayan as an effective and courageous officer who could get the job done.

It was Ben-Gurion who asked Sasson to include Dayan in the meetings with the Jordanians. Dayan participated in the meetings with the Jordanians more than any other Israeli representative. He carried out Ben-Gurion’s instructions, steered the talks, reported to the prime minister, and advised him. Dayan was deeply impressed by Ben-Gurion and realized he had much to learn from such a towering politician and statesman. For example, Ben-Gurion taught Dayan always to ask about the ultimate goal – the “end state” in contemporary military terms – based on which one must define the central effort and from which one derives the methods of action.[[161]](#footnote-170) On the other hand, Dayan was one of the few people in Ben-Gurion’s surroundings who dared disagree and argue with him. In many cases, their divergence was the result of Dayan’s preference for the concrete versus Ben-Gurion’s penchant for abstraction, the breadth of history, and the conclusions drawn from the theories and theses in which he believed. Dayan, by Ben-Gurion’s abstract approach, once told him:

I look through the window and see the sun is setting. For me, this means that evening is starting. But you? The fact that the sun is setting now is unimportant, because you’re seeing all the stars moving and the cosmos turning… You’re incapable of seeing a detail in isolation, as an episode.[[162]](#footnote-171)

The trust and alliance between the two men greatly determined not only the personal fortunes of both but also the course that the developing state of Israel would take in the years to come.

1. Dayan, born in Deganiya in 1910, now returned to defend his home. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Teveth, 1971, p. 256. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Morris, 2010, p. 277. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid, p. 281. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Teveth, 1971, p. 259. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ibid, p. 260. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The Napoleonchik (“Canon de 65 Montagne modele 1906”) was a French-made mountain gun dating to the early 20th century. Its main function was to fire at infantry forces. Smuggled into Israel one day before the British Mandate ended, the first cannons were barely functional and were missing sights. The Haganah fighters nicknamed them Napoleonchiks because they were small, old-looking, and French. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Teveth, 1971, p. 60. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Bar-On, 2014, p. 63. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Teveth, 1971, p. 264. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Dayan, 1976, p. 61. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Vladimir Peniakoff, *Tsva’o hapratee shel Popski* (Hebrew translation of *Popski’s Private Army*), Maarkhot, Tel Aviv, 1985. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Teveth, 1971, p. 265. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Dayan, 1976, p. 61. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Bar-On, 2014, p. 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. Yohanan Peltz immigrated to Mandatory Palestine in 1935 and joined the British Army on behalf of the Haganah, fighting in the Jewish Brigade. After WW II, he was a member of The Avengers, a group of Jews who tracked down and assassinated Nazi war criminals. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. Teveth, 1971, 266. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. Ibid, p. 268. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. Ibid, p. 269. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. Such a loyal group gives a commander peace of mind and clarity, but might be more prone to groupthink than a more heterogeneous one. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. Ibid, p. 270. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. Ibid, p. 271. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
24. Naor, 2016, p. 163. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
25. The Irgun was a right-wing Zionist paramilitary organization that broke off from the Haganah in 1931 for ideological reasons. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
26. Dayan, 1976, p. 62. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
27. Teveth, 1971, p. 274. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
28. Teveth, 1971, p. 275. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
29. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
30. Ibid, p. 276. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
31. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
32. Teddy Kollek, Jerusalem’s long-time mayor (1965– to 1993). In his youth, he was active in the Zionist movement Hehalutz in his youth. He served in several key Haganah positions (especially its intelligence division) and in the Jewish Agency’s political department of the Jewish Agency. Teveth, 1971, p. 278. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
33. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
34. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
35. He was later promoted to the rank of general, commanding U.S. military operations in Vietnam from 1968 to 1972 and served as Chief of Staff from 1972 until his death in 1974. The U.S. Army’s main battle tank, the M1 Abrams, is named for him. There are several books and essays about the Baum Task Force. The description here is based on <http://taskforcebaum.de/index1.html>. Patton wanted to award Baum the Medal of Honor, the most prestigious military decoration, but because that would have required an investigation into the events, which Patton wanted to avoid, the Distinguished Service Cross was the highest honor possible under the circumstances. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
36. Teveth, 1971, pp. 279–280. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
37. Dayan, 1976, p. 63. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
38. The Battle of Stalingrad, lasting from July, 1942 through February, 1943, was the bloodiest and among the most decisive battles the USSR fought against Nazi Germany in World War II. Lasting more than six months, both sides together suffered some 2 million dead, wounded, MIAs, and POWs. The battle ended with the Red Army’s decisive victory. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
39. Private email from U.S. Army Col. Douglas Macgregor dated August 2, 2018. Macgregor was one of the architects of the U.S. 2003 invasion into Iraq. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
40. The concept and practice of a “thunder run” – a rapid surge towards enemy lines with continuous fire – existed already in World War II and Vietnam. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
41. Globalsecurity.org:“On Point: The United States Army in Operation Iraqi Freedom,” Chapter 6:Regime Collapse, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/2004/onpoint/ch-6.htm#thunder5>;

    David Zucchino, *Thunder Run: Three Days in the Battle for Baghdad*, Atlantic Books, New York, 2005. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
42. Towards the end of the British Mandate of Palestine, the city of Lod had about 19,000 residents. See: Allon Kadish, Avraham Sela, and Arnon Golan, *Kibush Lod, juli 1948* (Hebrew) (*The Conquest of Lod, July 1948*), Defense Ministry Publishers, Tel Aviv, 2000, p. 15. Ramla had about 18,000 residents. The total population of the two cities and adjacent villages was about 40,000. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
43. Netanel Lorch, *Korot milhemet ha’atsma’ut* (Hebrew) (*The Events of the War of Independence*), Masada, Ramat Gan, 1966, p. 323. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
44. Yoav Gelber, *Komemiyot venakba: Israel, hafalestini, umedinot arav* (Hebrew) (*Sovereignty and Naqba: Israel, the Palestinians, and the Arab Nations 1948* [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
45. Benny Morris, *Haderekh li’yerushalayim, Glubb Pasha, erets yisrael veha’yehudim* (Hebrew) (*The Road to Jerusalem, Glubb Pasha, the Land of Israel, and the Jews*), a.m.Oved, Tel Aviv, 2006, pp. 182–183; Morris, 2010, pp. 314–315. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
46. IDF, *Toldot milhemet hakomemiyut – sipur hama’arakha* (Hebrew) (*The History of the War of Rebirth: The Story of the Campaign*), Ma’arakhot, Tel Aviv, 1970 (first printing 1958), p. 255. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
47. Teveth, 1971, *Moshe Dayan*, p. 280. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
48. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
49. Ibid, p. 272; Teddy Eytan, *Negev: Volontaire français à la tête des commandos de la Haganha*,La Baconnière, Geneva, 1950. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
50. Teveth, 1971, p. 281. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
51. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
52. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
53. IDF, 1970, p. 254. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
54. Teveth, 1971, p. 283. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
55. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
56. Ibid, p. 284. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
57. Martin van Creveld*,**Moshe Dayan*, Weidenefeld & Nicolson, London, 2004, p. 62 [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
58. Dayan, 1976, p. 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
59. Teveth, 1971, p. 287. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
60. Dayan, 1976, p. 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
61. Teveth, 1971, p. 288. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
62. Dayan, 1976, p. 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
63. Teveth, 1971, p. 289. Lau-Lavie, too, wrote (Lau-Lavie, 1968, p.65) that Dayan made the decision unilaterally and his book predates Teveth’s (1968 and 1971 respectively). [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
64. Van Creveld, p. 63. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
65. Moshe Dayan, “The Commando Battalion Ascends Lod” (Hebrew), *Maarakhot*, 62–63 (July 1950), p. 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
66. Anita Shapira, *Yigal Allon: Aviv holdo, biogreafia* (Hebrew) (*Yigal Allon: Native Son, a Biography*), United Kibbutz, Bnei Brak, 2004, p. 368. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
67. Mula Cohen, *Latet ulekabel: Pirkei zikhronot ishi’im* (Hebrew) (*To Give and to Receive: Chapters of Personal Recollections*), United Kibbutz, Bnei Brak, 2000, p. 140. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
68. Yeruham Cohen, 1969, p. 153. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
69. Teveth, 1971, p. 289. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
70. Yeruham Cohen, 1969, p. 156. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
71. Teveth, 1971, p. 290. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
72. Yeruham Cohen, 1969, p. 158. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
73. Teveth, 1976, p. 288. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
74. The U.S. Army was criticized for traveling in a single convoy in the 2003 raid on Baghdad, but they succeeded. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
75. Teveth, 1971, p. 290. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
76. Author’s phone interview with Prof. Kadish, May 15, 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
77. IDF, 1970, p. 258. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
78. Shapira, 2004, pp. 369–370. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
79. Article cited by Mordechai Naor (ed.), 2016, pp. 161–166. It can be read on the Israel National Library website at <http://jpress.org.il/Olive/APA/NLI_heb/sharedpages/SharedView.Page.aspx?sk=5C76C274&href=DAV/1948/09/24&page=3> [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
80. Years later, Peltz wrote his memoirs in which he settled his account with Dayan. See: van Creveld, 2004, p. 62. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
81. Once it seemed that the city had been conquered, a difficult battle ensued because several Jordanian armored vehicles entered. The city’s final surrender occurred only after that battle was over. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
82. Eitan Shamir, *Pikud mesima* (Hebrew) (*Mission Command*), Modan and *Maarakhot*, Ben Shemen, 2014, p. 99. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
83. Ibid, pp. 19–20. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
84. Ibid, p. 100. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
85. Elhanan Oren, *Baderekh el ha’ir: Mivtsa dani, juli 1948* (Hebrew) (*On the Way to the City: Operation Dani, July 1948*), *Maarakhot*, Tel Aviv, 1976, p. 107. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
86. Teveth, 1971, p. 289. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
87. Ibid, p. 294. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
88. Oren, 1976, p. 107. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
89. Yitzhak Rabin, *Pinkas sherut* (Hebrew) (published in English as *The Rabin Memoirs*), Maariv, Tel Aviv, 1979, vol. 1, p. 60. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
90. Teveth, 1971, p. 296. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
91. Dayan, 1976, p. 72. To a large extent, this was the operational method of Bernard Montgomery, the British general and hero of World War II, whom Ben-Gurion greatly admired. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
92. Ibid, p. 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
93. Teveth, 1971, p. 295. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
94. Dayan, “The Commando Battalion.” [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
95. Ibid, p. 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
96. Ibid, p. 36. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
97. Boaz Zalmanovith, “The Conquest of Lod and Its Effect on the IDF” (Hebrew), *Maarakhot* 383 (May 2002), pp. 92–97. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
98. Ibid, p. 96. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
99. It should be noted that Zalmanovitch himself hedged his statement, stating that his claims were hypotheses only and needed proof obtainable only by more research. See: Zalmanovitch, 2002, p. 96. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
100. Naphtali Lau Lavie, *Moshe Dayan: a Biography***,** Hartmore House, Hartford,1969, p. 66**.** [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
101. Mula Cohen, 2000, pp. 140–141. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
102. Ibid, p. 141. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
103. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
104. Teveth, 1971, p. 340. Ibid, p. 296. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
105. Shimon Avidan, the commander of the Givati Brigade during the War of Independence. After independence was declared, the national staff of the Haganah ordered Avidan to set up a brigade of field units. “Givati” had been Avidan’s pre-statehood alias. In the War of Independence, the brigade defended Tel Aviv and participated in opening the road to Jerusalem. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
106. Dayan, 1976, p. 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
107. Shapira, 2004, p. 387. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
108. Interestingly, at that time, the most widely read book by Palmach commanders was Alexandr Bek’s novel (written in Russian and published in 1944) in its Hebrew translation, *Anshei panapilov* (official English title, *Volokolamsk Highway*), United Kibbutz Publications, 1946, which tells the story of a Soviet battalion fighting the battle of Moscow in 1941 in World War II. See: Yuval Shahal, “Isaac Babel: A War Correspondent,” in *Kesher - Journal of Media and Communications History in Israel and the Jewish World*, No. 35 (Winter 2007), p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
109. Dayan, 1976, p. 73. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
110. Teveth, 1971, p. 301. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
111. Dayan, 1976, p. 75. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
112. Military officers engaging in diplomacy is a common historical phenomenon. Despite the long-standing division between the political and military echelons, many officers are active in negotiating with the enemy. Examples can be found among officers from the colonial powers, including France and the United States, and among famous generals, such as Eisenhower and Douglas MacArthur in World War II. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
113. Teveth, 1971, p. 302. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
114. Teveth, 1971, pp. 303–304. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
115. Yaakov Granek, known by his underground nickname “Blond Dov,” had been a Lehi commander and led 89th Battalion under Moshe Dayan’s command in the War of Independence. During his service in Lehi, he planned and participated in many actions against the British. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
116. Teveth, 1971. p. 304. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
117. Inter alia Zalman Mart, Nahman Betser, Alex Broyde, Israel Gefen, Uri Bar-On, and Akiva Saar. Teveth, 1971, p. 304. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
118. “Vital ground” is a professional military term. The IDF defines it as “An area in the sphere of responsibility of our troop that is, based on the assessment and decision of the commander in charge, necessary to hold throughout all stages of an operation.” [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
119. According to IDF doctrine, in an offensive action, the battalion commander should be situated with the main attacking force and lead the second company, with the first company heading up the battalion. The doctrine differs regarding the location of a brigade commander, who is expected commander to place himself where he thinks he has the most ability to affect the battle. Nonetheless, most brigade commanders tend to be in front of the troops, evidence of the victory of Dayan’s school of thought. Email exchange with Lt. Col. (res.) Boaz Zalmanovitz, previously head of the Doctrine Department in the IDF Operations Directorate. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
120. Teveth, 1971, p. 314. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
121. Ibid, p. 310. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
122. History Division, General Staff, *Toldot milhemet hakomemiyut* (*The History of the War of Rebirth*), *Maarakhot*, Tel Aviv, 1970, first edition pub. 1959, p. 311. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
123. Morris, 2010, p. 358. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
124. Teveth, 1971, p. 316. Teveth notes that even though Dayan was deeply disappointed by the failure of the action, he did not hound Mart as he had hounded Zorea and accepted his explanation for abandoning the mission. Although Dayan remained Mart’s loyal friend, Dayan realized Mart’s limitations as a commander and did not promote him through the ranks. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
125. Dayan, 1976, p. 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
126. From testimonies appearing on the Palmach website: <http://info.palmach.org.il/show_item.asp?levelId=3503&itemId=6337&itemType=0&HI=19096&nofelId=3392> [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
127. Dayan, 1976, p. 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
128. Dayan, 1976, p. 79. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
129. Ibid, p. 79. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
130. “The New Israel,” *Life Magazine*, 18 July, 1949. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
131. Ronen Yitzhak,*Abdullah Al-Tall: Arab Legion Officer*, Sussex Academic Press, 2012, p. 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
132. Ibid, p. 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
133. Dayan, 1976, p. 80. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
134. Yitzhak, 2012, p. 62. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
135. Shmuel Cohen Shani, “Between Beret and Top Hat: The Birth of ‘Uniform Diplomacy’ in the War of Independence” (Hebrew), *Bein haktavim* (*Between the Poles*), The Dado Center for Interdisciplinary Military Studies, Vol. 24–25 (March 2020), p. 115. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
136. Yitzhak, 2012, p. 63. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
137. Ibid, 144. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
138. Cohen Shani, 2020, p. 107. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
139. Ibid, p. 108. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
140. Ibid, p. 115. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
141. Ibid, p. 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
142. For more on the atmosphere of the talks, see: Teveth, 1971, pp. 326–327. [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
143. Yitzhak, 2012, p. 67; Dayan, 1976, p. 85. [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
144. Dayan, 1976, p. 85. [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
145. Elad Ben-Dror, *Hametavekh: Ralph Bunche vehasikh’sukh ha’aravi-yisraeli* (Hebrew), (*The Mediator: Ralph Bunche and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*), The Ben-Gurion Research Institute for the Study of Israel and Zionism—Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Kiryat Sdeh Boker, 2012, p. 227. [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
146. Dayan, 1976, p. 86. [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
147. Naor (ed.), 2016, p. 174. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
148. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
149. Yehoshafat Harkavi enlisted in the British Army in 1943 and fought in World War II. In the War of Independence, he fought in the Jerusalem sector as a company commander in the Etzioni Brigade. He was a member of the Israeli delegation to Rhodes for the armistice agreement talks. He served as head of Military Intelligence from 1955 until 1959. Later, he was a professor of international relations at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He was awarded the Israel Prize for political science in 1992. Teveth, 1971, p. 336; Yitzhak, 2012, p. 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
150. Shamir, 2012, p. 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
151. Dayan, 1976, p. 88. [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
152. Avi Shlaim, *Kir habarzel: Israel veha’olam ha’aravi* (Hebrew) (*The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World*, published in English by Penguin, London, 2014), Books in the Attic Ltd., Tel Aviv, 2005, p. 63. [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
153. Ben-Dror, 2012, p. 198. [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
154. Dayan, 1976, p. 92. [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
155. Yitzhak, 2012, p. 73. [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
156. Teveth, 1971, p. 337. [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
157. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
158. Ibid, p. 335. [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
159. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
160. Ben-Gurion’s letter of parting to the outgoing chief of staff in: Dayan, 1976, p. 374. [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
161. Teveth, 1971, p. 331. [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
162. Ibid, p. 334. [↑](#footnote-ref-171)