**Chapter 2**

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

The War of Independence, which began on November 30, 1947, and ended on July 20, 1949, was the longest and hardest of Israel’s wars. Throughout, Moshe Dayan continued to develop both as military leader and as statesman. Like his comrades of the Palmach generation, he led several operations, in which he proved himself to be brave, original, and daring. Having been forced to take a break of several years from operational activities because of the wound to his eye, his self-confidence had returned, and his unique style of command and leadership began taking shape. Dayan gained experience in tactical warfare against the main armies of conflict – the Syrian, Jordanian, and Egyptian – and encountered many forms of fighting: defense actions, raids, and joint attacks. Finally, Dayan gained experience in force building when he founded the 89th Battalion. 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 compared to some of his well-known colleagues in the Palmach and the IDF – Yigal Allon, Yitzhak Rabin, and other frontline and brigade commanders –was unimpressive. 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, the Jordanian commander of Jerusalem, then in direct talks with King Abdullah, and later in the Armistice Talks in Rhodes during the first half of 1949. Dayan proved his ability in this sphere as well, where he achieved significant results (more below). The political experience, coupled with the relationship of 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.

**Commanding a Battle of Containment: 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 as soon as independence was declared 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 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. 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 take receipt of armored vehicles purchased in Europe, and he offered Dayan the opportunity to establish a commando unit within the brigade specializing in raids. In his diary, Dayan wrote, “When Yitzhak Sadeh offered me the 89th [Battalion], it was a gift from heaven.”[[2]](#footnote-2) Yadin, the head of the Operations Directorate and the de facto Chief of Staff (because of Dori’s illness), 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 in the vicinity of 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 37-mm cannons and armored vehicles with smaller cannons. The brigade also had between four to six batteries of 75-mm and 1005-mm artillery. The 2nd Brigade was far less battle-ready, and the Syrian air force, consisting of 20 training planes that had been retrofitted as combat planes with ill-trained pilots, was no readier.[[3]](#footnote-3)

The Syrians had no clear idea of their targets. 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 meant to meet the Iraqi invasion force and then advancing jointly on to Haifa. On May 15, the Syrians attacked Kibbutz Ein Gev, an action meant to divert attention from the main effort aimed at the Jordan Valley settlements.

The Barak Battalion of the Golani Brigade and local Haganah fighters were deployed in the Jordan Valley. Over the next few days, a Palmach company of the Yiftach Brigade and other fighters from the region came to reinforce them. The Syrians attacked the kibbutzim in the area as well as the town of Tsemah (Samah). On May 18, the Syrians, after several attacks, conquered Tsemah, causing severe losses among the defenders. A company from the ??? Brigade tried to retake the town from the Syrians but was repelled. The conquest of Tsemah was a serious blow to the morale of the Hebrew defending force. In his diary, Ben-Gurion wrote, “There is a kind of panic in the Jordan Valley.”[[4]](#footnote-4) On the night of May 19, Masada and Shaar Hagolan were abandoned by their Jewish residents and looted by the region’s Arabs.

This was the state of affairs on the day of Dayan’s arrival. For some unknown reason, Dayan’s precise authority remained unclear. He functioned as sector commander, but had no sector units under his direct command. Consequently, Dayan informed the commander of the Barak Battalion of the Golani Brigade, Moshe Montag, that he – Dayan – was sector commander and that from this point, Montag would be his deputy, which was not exactly the case.[[5]](#footnote-5) Soon after his arrival, Dayan toured the area and ordered the men to improve the trenches and defenses. He also decided to take up positions in Bet Yerah so that Deganiya’s defenders would be placed directly across from a division of the Syrian attack. This meant thinning out the defending line, but Dayan thought this option was preferable.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Because of the serious situation in the Jordan Valley, the decision was made to send four 65-mm cannons (nicknamed Napoleonchiks), meant for the defense of Jerusalem, to this sector instead.[[7]](#footnote-7) In retrospect, it turned out that these cannons played a decisive role in the campaign. The attack began on May 20 at dawn. Although fearful, Dayan projected confidence to those around him. The years of not participating in operational missions had eroded his self-confidence, and he wasn’t confident he would be able to lead the battle. Haim Levkov (1916–1998), a Palmach commander who had arrived with some men Dayan respected, recalled that on the day of battle, with the fighters thirsty after their water had run out, Dayan told them, “Listen up. 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 recalled another moment when a worried mortarman asked Dayan for instructions, because he had only eight mortar bombs left. 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. The infantry battalions moved first, followed by the tanks and armored vehicles, moving down the 600 meters separating the Tsemah police station and the defenders’ fortifications. The defenders quickly stopped the infantry, but the armored vehicles and tanks proved tougher and succeeded in penetrating the fences. Around 8:00 a.m. the defenders’ finally stopped the Syrian attack using Molotov cocktails and PIATs (Projector Infantry Anti-Tank Mk I) that Dayan had brought to the Jordan Valley.[[9]](#footnote-9) At this point, the battle turned into a static fight of attrition between the two positions. The turning point came at around 1:30 in the afternoon, when the Napoleonchiks were unloaded near Alumot, located on the ridge controlling both Deganiya Alef and Deganya Bet. In the morning, Dayan and the gunnery commander had argued about when to operate the cannons stationed on the ridge west of the Jordan River. Dayan, contrary to the brigade commander and gunnery commander, thought the defenders should wait and use the cannons only the next day at a critical junction when it would be possible to crush the enemy’s spirit. However, after receiving a report that the defenders’ situation was desperate, he realized that immediate action was needed. The Napoleonchiks began bombing the Syrian headquarters in Tsemah, which apparently had not been prepared for such an eventuality. The artillery barrage did the trick – mostly because of the noise and the surprise – and the Syrian forces started to retreat helter-skelter in a panic. Deganiya was saved and the battle became part of the war’s ethos.

After the Syrian retreat and while Deganiya’s residents were clearing up, 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 did as told, but the incident might have harmed their relationship in later years.

Dayan decided to inspect the Tsemah police station, which had been briefly occupied by the Syrians, who had used it as their battle headquarters. 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. The nighttime outing to Tsemah, where I saw they’d left everything behind and fled, enormously impressed me. How, after three or four shellings, they got up and fled, in total chaos, unable to tell left from right. By our fourth shelling, the entire Syrian assault was over. 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. This incident would affect his perception of how to fight the Arabs, especially his assessment of the tendency of Arab military units to break under pressure. He would later learn that his conclusion wasn’t always accurate; 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 not been as severe. The sight of dead bodies abandoned in the fields of Tsemah 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 Yitzhak 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, Sayeret Matkal )officially, the General Staff Reconnaissance Unit 269,262) commanded by Avraham Arnan, Navy Commando Unit 13 under Yohai Bin-Nun, and the special reconnaissance unit Sayeret Rimon, commanded by Meir Dagan. All of these units were established under special circumstances, and some were disbanded only to be reestablished later. The original model was, of course, the Palmach – its spirit, relationships, style of leadership, and culture – in a post-Palmach era, after Palmach forces had already been integrated into three brigades and merged with the IDF.

The inspiration for the 89th Battalion came from the British raiding units and their commanders, which were the subject of legend, such as the Long Range Desert Group (LRDG) under Maj. Ralph Bagnold’s command, established in 1940, and Popski’s Private Army (PPA), commanded by Maj. Valdimir “Popski” Peniakoff, established in 1942.[[12]](#footnote-12) These units, equipped with desert terrain vehicles, carried out raids deep into the enemy rear and destroyed important logistical installations, such as fuel depots and air fields. There units were also psychologically important because they upset the equilibrium of the German enemy, which couldn’t feel safe even on the home front.

Sadeh came up with the idea of the battalion; it was Dayan’s job to make it a reality. In fact, he set up the unit out of thin air. Recruitment was selective, using the “bring-a-friend” method. Its atmosphere was unique, a little wild, challenging the hierarchy, discipline, and rigid rules of a military organization. A unit of this kind was also prone to taking outsized risks at times and operating unconventionally. To a large extent, the culture and spirit of such units reflected the charismatic nature of the unit founders and commanders, and took their inspiration directly from them.

This is how 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, and it was part of Yitzhak Sadeh’s armored brigade. The brigade, at least 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, going deep into the desert, 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. At first, I was told that the entire battalion would maneuver by jeep and be smaller and lighter, without assisting weapons or armor. Its function would be to penetrate deep into enemy territory and operate behind the lines. But later, when the position was defined, it was decided the battalion would include an assisting company and the primary vehicle would be the half-track. The truth is that, although these elements were important and would ultimately determine the battalion’s fighting prowess, they were of no great concern to me. 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… Many of those who joined the battalion came from other units and they had to get their commanders’ permission to make the transfer. This wasn’t always the case, though. They came with and without permission… The weapons and people arrived at the base 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.[[13]](#footnote-13)

Dayan returned from Tsemah, receiving some of the credit for having stopped the Syrian army. His self-confidence, which had earlier taken a blow because of his injury, was now restored. “What I saw in Tsemah that night remade the warrior in me,” he wrote.[[14]](#footnote-14) He described the battles to Sadeh and claimed it was possible to challenge the Arab army with relative ease. He added that now he understood why such mechanized battalions – “a mechanized cavalry” – would be so effective.

The first step in creating a special or elite unit is to select the men with care. Not everyone can be accepted. 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), 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-15) Yohanan Peltz,[[16]](#footnote-16) Dayan’s deputy, hand-picked by Sadeh and known as a particularly audacious fighter, assumed he would command the unit, but Sadeh convinced him otherwise, explaining, “If the battalion commander is the person I’m considering, it’ll be to your advantage to be his deputy rather than the commander of an independent battalion, because he is important and has quite a future in store.”[[17]](#footnote-17)

Peltz and Dayan got to know one another in Tel Aviv and there was mutual admiration there, 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 specifically designed to carry out raids behind enemy lines. He thus initiated a pattern that would repeat itself even when he was the Chief of Staff: leaving his trusted deputy to handle organizational and logistical details. He made this choice aware of the importance of the minutiae as well as the limits of his own personality in dealing with them. Only twice did Peltz ask Dayan to support him before the General Staff to obtain equipment necessary to operate mortar bombs and machine guns, and Dayan complied with the request.[[18]](#footnote-18)

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

Nonetheless, the battalion-to-be still lacked soldiers. Saar approached Tsvi Tsur, the commander of the (5th) Givati Brigade, for help. Tsur had no people to spare, but was willing to part with the men sitting in the brigade lockup, which, at that point, held 18 men accused of, among other things, petty theft, looting, and being AWOL. Saar promised them he would call off their trials and any potential punishment in return for joining the new battalion. Everyone accepted the deal, and Saar returned to the battalion with 18 additional fighters.

The rumor that Dayan was making off with other commanders’ soldiers led many brigade commanders to ban men from the 89th from entering their bases. Still, many fighters, having heard of the commando unit and the jeeps, showed up. Dayan also surrounded himself with a group of fiercely loyal Jezreel Valley men who had known him since childhood.[[20]](#footnote-20)

The 89th Battalion soon established a reputation for being wild, undisciplined, and eccentric (it is hard not to think of the similarity with the reputation of the notorious Unit 101, whose commander was Ariel Sharon and its patron Dayan himself). When Dayan was told the unit was short of jeeps, his answer was, “So go get some.”[[21]](#footnote-21) Men who only recently had been in the brig because of petty theft didn’t need any stronger hint, and soon enough, civilian jeeps were “lifted” and brought to the unit. The practice, called “check-listing equipment,” whereby minor thefts from neighboring units are ignored by the commanders, persists in the IDF to this day. Above all, the battalion was infused with Dayan’s own spirit, projecting a strong feeling of camaraderie, which encourage initiative –and practical jokes. For example, Dayan, who would enter the base via the main gate, would speed past the MP, and stop only 30 m past the inspection point, forcing the guard to come to him. One day, one of the MPs refused to walk over to Dayan, and threatened to shoot him if he didn’t reverse the jeep to the inspection point. Dayan accelerated and fled.[[22]](#footnote-22)

The soldiers of this nascent unit accepted this type of prankishness, which was natural for Dayan. Ten years later, when he was Chief of Staff, he spoke of it at a gathering of the 89th Battalion fighters. His men thought more highly of him as a result and it gave them a sense of being unique and battle-ready.[[23]](#footnote-23) The 89th Battalion enjoyed an atmosphere of freedom and behaved like other commando groups. As Dayan described: “Discipline in our battalion…is unlike that in other battalions. We do not have military police and men are free to come and go as they please. But no one leaves, because they didn’t end up here by chance.”[[24]](#footnote-24)

The men recruited to the 89th Battalion 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. Beyond the vague answers he received from Dayan and Sadeh – the battalion would operate deep behind enemy lines (“depth” being defined as 10 or so kilometers, unlike the British raiding units that operated hundreds of kilometers in) and confuse and confound the enemy to undermine its confidence – Peltz got no clear answer. He wasn’t so easily put off, however, insisting that the battalion couldn’t possibly sustain itself logistically behind enemy lines. In the end, the 89th Battalion operated like a mechanized raiding force. In this, it was not unique – the 9th Battalion of the Negev Brigade operated in similar fashion – but because of Dayan, it became the best known of its type.

**Fighting the Irgun**

The first mission that the 89th Battalion was entrusted with was aimed not against the Arabs but against the Irgun. The fact that Dayan was close with the loyalists around him allowed him to meet the difficult challenge Ben-Gurion had set him: to arrest the members of the Irgun in the *Altalena* affair. Dayan summed the affair up as follows: “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 struggle and this was not the enemy.”[[25]](#footnote-25)

The *Altalena* affair began in early 1947, when the Irgun decided to sail Revisionist fighters and their weapons to Israel. In June of that year, the Irgun purchased the U.S. Navy surplus ship *LST-138*, registered it as the *Altalena*, Zeev Jabotinsky’s penname, and staffed it with a Jewish crew. After a number of delays, the ship finally arrived in Israel in June 1948 during the first truce of the War of Independence. Aboard the ship were 940 passengers, including 120 women, and many weapons. The government and the Irgun agreed that the ship would be unloaded on the shore of Kfar Vitkin. However, serious disagreements arose between the sides. The government demanded that all the weapons be turned over to the IDF, whereas the Irgun demanded that its units, which had been incorporated into the IDF, would be given preference, qualitatively and quantitatively, in the distribution of the weapons.

The dispute brought the unloading of the ship to a halt. The Alexandroni Brigade was ordered to surround Kfar Vitkin and seize the ship and everything aboard it. Menachem Begin, who was on the ship, received an ultimatum to cede the unloaded weapons. Begin didn’t respond, the deadline passed, and the sides started firing on one another, resulting in the deaths of six Irgun members and two IDF soldiers. The ship fled south to Tel Aviv, as Begin hoped that the many Irgun supporters there would force the government to compromise. But a large IDF force massed in Tel Aviv, and on the night of June 22, another battle erupted between them and Irgun fighters. At this point, Ben-Gurion ordered IDF forces to shell the *Altalena*, causing the munitions still on board to explode. The ship was abandoned and ran aground. On shore, the battle continued, and one IDF soldier and 10 Irgun members died. Some of the weapons eventually ended up with the IDF; but a total of 16 Etzel members and three IDF soldiers had been killed While this event represented the nadir in the relationship between the Irgun and what had essentially been the Haganah, conventional wisdom views it as the end of the transition to the new era of one state and one army.

While the *Altalena* was anchored off Kfar Vitkin, the Alexandroni Brigade was ordered to prevent its unloading lest the arms reach the Irgun. But because many of the members of Dayan’s brigade were themselves former Irgun members, some suspected it had been wrong to entrust the brigade with the task. The army staff looked for a unit that could reach the site in time and was considered loyal to the authorities. The 8th Brigade, located near Kfar Vitkin, was deemed suitable. Dayan could have shirked the mission but he opted to execute the order Sadeh had given him. More importantly, he proved his loyalty to Ben-Gurion.

Dayan essential led the companies he felt he could depend on, men who had grown up in the Jezreel Valley whom he knew well and those who served under Akiva Sa’ar, in a civil war against the Irgun. Many fighters in Company 3 (in practice, Company A) had been members of the Irgun or Lehi, and it was far from certain what they would do in this difficult situation. Furthermore, the oath to the State of Israel would be sworn only later, on June 28; they had yet to pledge allegiance to the state and its laws. Dayan decided not to put them to the test. On the pretext of a spot weapons inspection, he also collected their rifles and removed the firing pins, after which he and the two other companies and another company from the 82nd Armored Battalion began to make their way to Kfar Vitkin.[[26]](#footnote-26)

Dayan ordered his men to avoid clashes with the Irgun but to return fire if fired on. He was debriefed by Israel Galili, the head of the Haganah’s National Staff, who was coordinating the handling of the affair together with sector commander Maj. Gen. Dan Even. His mission was to surround the ship, prevent its men from breaking through with the weapons they had unloaded, and stop any external force trying to join them. As the brigade surrounded Kfar Vitkin, Dayan, using jeeps and half-tracks, broke through the Irgun’s defensive line, crowding them onto a narrow strip of beach.

Negotiations continued after the Irgun fighters were surrounded. After exchanges of fire, each side blamed on the other. Dayan claimed that his men opened effective fire only after one of his men had been killed and several others injured.[[27]](#footnote-27)

At a certain point, Dayan handed off command of the action to Nahalal native Uri Bar-On (1925–1985). He told Bar-On that he had been instructed to accompany the coffin of U.S. Army Col. David (Mickey) Marcus to the United States, and left the area. On June 22, Bar-On, representing the 89th Battalion, participated in a meeting between Yaakov Meridor of the Irgun and Maj. Gen. Dan Even, in which Even dictated the Irgun’s terms of surrender. When Meridor signed the *Altalena* agreement, the ship was already anchored off Tel Aviv, the tragic end of the affair close at hand.

Several questions remained unanswered regarding 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 the mission even though he could have refused it. And, according to eyewitness testimony, his behavior was tenacious and described as “vigorous, aggressive, and propulsive.”[[28]](#footnote-28) At no point did he reveal his inner conflict. Teveth suggests several possible explanations:

It may be that he’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. Yitzhak Rabin, who played a key role in the ship’s surrender off the coast of Tel Aviv was forever hounded by many who never forgave him for his part in the affair.[[29]](#footnote-29)

Whatever the reason, on June 21, at the height of the crisis, bullets still whizzing, Dayan left the area for home to say goodbye to 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. At that time, few Jewish officers, and certainly not the Israelis who had fought with Western militaries, held a rank higher than major. Marcus served the IDF well by providing advice and training, and wrote reports requested by Ben-Gurion, including recommendations on improving military capabilities. 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. By the time of his return, a different sentry, who didn’t know Marcus, was on duty (the shift had started earlier than usual). The sentry asked Marcus to identify himself and Marcus answered in English. The sentry, unable to understand Marcus’ answer, shot and killed him.

Marcus’ body was flown from Israel to be interred at the cemetery at his alma mater West Point (class of 1924). It was decided that Dayan and Yosef Harel (1918–2008; he had commanded Aliyah Bet ships, including the *Exodus*, and was a senior member of the Israeli intelligence community) would constitute the honor guard and fly the coffin home. Dayan, who was then a major, was given a temporary promotion to lieutenant colonel. A special dress uniform had to be made for him, as the IDF did not yet have any. 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 meeting – apparently accidentally – with Abraham J. Baum, then a U.S. Army captain and World War II veteran. Baum was in contact with Teddy Kollek,[[30]](#footnote-30) who had traveled to the United States with a special Haganah mission to buy arms and ship them back to Israel. Baum, who ran his family-owned garment workshop making women’s blouses in New York City, was charged with interviewing and selecting Americans volunteering for the Haganah and, later on, the IDF. Dayan met Baum over cocktails at the bar of Hotel 14, where the members of the Haganah mission were staying. Kollek and Harel were also there. Dayan’s impression of Baum was very 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.’”[[31]](#footnote-31) Baum became famous because of a mission (described below) he led into German territory in which he displayed outstanding courage and leadership.

Baum, a pattern maker in a garment workshop, enlisted in the U.S. Army immediately after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and served as an operations officer in an armored infantry battalion under the command of Lt. Col. Creighton W. Abrams.[[32]](#footnote-32) In March 1945, Gen. George S. Patton issued a secret order to liberate the Hammelburg POW camp, on the Franconian Saale, a tributary of the Main, some 90 km. inside Germany territory, behind two German army divisions. Baum, already considered a battle-hardened veteran who had fought and been wounded in the Normandy landing the previous year, was ordered to lead the men (later known as the Baum Task Force) and break into the camp to free the POWs.

The men were all soldiers in the 4th Armored Division. Battalion commander Abrams allocated 10 Sherman tanks, 6 light M3 Stuart tanks, 27 half-tracks (to carry the POWs), 3 light wheeled cannons, a medical vehicle, and 7 jeeps. The total force consisted of 11 officers, 303 soldiers, 16 tanks, 28 half-tracks, and 13 vehicles of various types. The Baum Task Force embarked on its mission on March 26, 1945, after heavy U.S. shelling of the German positions. At 9 pm, the force crossed the Main and tried to break through the German lines, but encountered enemy concentrations that U.S. military intelligence had known nothing about. The force lost several tanks and men, and Baum himself was wounded. Despite his condition, Baum continued to lead the force and resolutely surged ahead to the POW camp. En route, Baum’s men liberated some 1,200 Red Army soldiers, but a German patrol plane spotted the convoy, allowing German ground troops to ambush the tanks close to the the Baum Task Force’s destination. In the ensuing battle, Baum lost additional tanks and vehicles, and by the time he arrived in Hammelburg, he had lost 30 percent of his force. Furthermore, upon liberating the camp, Baum discovered there were far more than the 300 he had been told to expect. He offered the POWs two options: to flee on foot or to stay in the camp until liberation. After some preparations, he left the camp, taking with him as many POWs as he could accommodate.

During its return, the Baum Task Force was followed and then surrounded by German troops. After a short but intense battle, the Baum Task Force was wiped out, with 26 men killed and the others scattered in all directions. The surviving fighters, including Baum, were taken captive, and the task force’s 57 vehicles were either destroyed or captured by the Germans.[[33]](#footnote-33)

Considering the great risk of the mission, many claimed that the only reason for it had been the release of Col. John Waters, son-in-law of the renowned Gen. Patton. When the press made this discovery, Patton was derided by the public and reprimanded by his superior, Gen. Dwight Eisenhower. To his dying day, Patton insisted he had not acted out of personal considerations for his son-in-law, but had been guided by the merits of the case. He said that he decided on the mission because he feared the POWs would be executed by the withdrawing Germans and felt duty-bound to help them. He admitted that the mission had been ill conceived, but only in sending a force that was too small for a mission where there large German concentrations remained. Baum was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his role in the mission.[[34]](#footnote-34) The POW camp was liberated 10 days later as U.S. troops advanced across German soil.

Despite the flawed mission, Baum’s execution was considered one of 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 it had no place in modern warfare. Dayan had no actual concept of how such a unit should fight and realize its mission as a raiding force. It was therefore no surprise that he hung on Baum’s every word. Baum explained to Dayan 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.[[35]](#footnote-35)

In his memoirs, Dayan added notes, the most important of which was the need to move quickly in battle. He noted that the features characterizing the war in which Baum had fought – the German theater of operations in World War II – differed from those of the wars fought in Israel, yet there were some enlightening similarities. The most important was that the commander must be at the point of contact with the enemy on the front; he must be in constant motion, study the situation with his own eyes, and direct the action accordingly.[[36]](#footnote-36)

One point is missing from both Dayan’s memoir and Teveth’s book, although one can assume that it occurred to Dayan: there was a difference between the Wehrmacht’s capacity for warfare 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, better known as the Second Iraq War, to end the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein. On April 5, the 3rd Infantry Division and Marines reached the outskirts of Baghdad. Their concern was that Baghdad was well-fortified and that its defenders intend to turn the fight for the city into a kind of Battle of Stalingrad.[[37]](#footnote-37) The initial U.S. plans called for a gradual conquest of the city in careful, deliberate stages. But Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld demanded quick results. Unlike the senior generals and commanders in the field who had experience in fighting the Iraqis, Rumsfeld felt that the enemy lacked resolve.[[38]](#footnote-38) The commander of the 2nd Brigade decided to test the strength of the defense and execute a “thunder run,” i.e., an armored raid.[[39]](#footnote-39) On April 5, Task Force 1-64 of the brigade, with Abrams tanks and Bradley half-tracks equivalent to a brigade/battalion-level combat team, 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 on the way it wreaked havoc and destruction. It crossed the city, reached the international airport, and left. The success proved that the assumptions of the commanders on the ground were correct.

Two days later, on April 7, the 2nd Brigade carried out a second “thunder run.” This time, the Iraqis waited for the Americans along the route, causing the U.S. troops to change their path at the last second. The U.S. objective was to seize control of the airport and weaken the the security of the Iraqi defenders. 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.[[40]](#footnote-40)

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.[[41]](#footnote-41) The importance of the 89th Battalion raid lay it being an electrifying operation that fired the imagination of many. As if taken from 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 the myth of Dayan, then already under construction.

Dayan returned from the United States after the first truce. By now, the IDF, better equipped and organized, was on the offensive. At this point, priority was given to the central front and 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 Lod-Ramla region, an excellent position from which to cut the nascent state in half and isolate Jerusalem. To handle this threat, the IDF gathered four brigades commanded by Dayan’s comrades from the Haganah and Palmach. Yigal Allon, who had been the charismatic leader of the Palmach and had proven his battlefield skills in previous successful fights in the Upper Galilee, was in charge of the overall operation. Dayan himself was just a battalion commander, one of at least a dozen, subordinate to the brigade commanders. The operation’s purpose was to liberate Jerusalem and the road leading to the city from the Jordanian stranglehold by destroying the enemy forces in the bases of Lod, Ramla, Latroun, and Ramallah. The conquest of these areas was meant to lift the threat against Tel Aviv and provide the IDF with an easily-defended line in the Jerusalem foothills and control of the railway junctions and international airport in Lod.[[42]](#footnote-42)

The army estimated that there were some 1,500 Arab Legionnaires in Lod and Ramla combined who intended to use the region as a staging area for attacking Tel Aviv. In reality, the number of Legionnaires did not exceed 150. In addition to these two battalions, there were some hundreds of irregular forces reinforcing them. On July 10, the Arab Legion sent in another battalion with 40 armored cars, which greatly contributed to 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.[[43]](#footnote-43) 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 Israeli side 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 Glubb Pasha (Sir John Bagot Glubb), the Legion’s commander, not to overstretch his forces, and instead try to preserve the gains Jordan had made to date, i.e., the conquest of the West Bank.[[44]](#footnote-44) Consequently, there was only a relatively small force stationed in Lod and Ramla; defense of the city relied primarily on the 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. According to the plan, 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, would seize the Lod airport, link up with the moshav Ben Shemen, which was 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.[[45]](#footnote-45)

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 the nation’s prime minister and defense minister – to attend an urgent meeting. Typically, Dayan ignored the request and instead rushed to meet up with his battalion, which was preparing for the operation in Kiryat Aryeh. In Dayan’s absence, his deputy, Peltz, had taken temporary command, participating in brigade-level command groups and preparing the battalion’s own battle plan. Teveth wrote that, based on testimony by members of the battalion, 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,”[[46]](#footnote-46) recalled Teddy Eytan (the Hebrew name of Thadée Diffre), a Catholic volunteer who had previously served in the French Legion and in Gen. Leclerc’s army, and who published his memoir of serving with the 89th Battalion in an advisory capacity. According to Eytan, spirits were very high thanks to the leadership of Dayan, whom he described 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.”[[47]](#footnote-47) By contrast, he described Peltz as someone who had stepped directly out of a British officers club. It isn’t difficult to guess how the popularity Dayan enjoyed and the closeness his men felt with him compared to their feelings for Peltz’s British-style distance and stiffness.[[48]](#footnote-48)

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 that 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 the main principles of Baum’s doctrine:

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, because I think the American is right. With the firepower we have, with the engine power we have, we have to move as far ahead as possible.[[49]](#footnote-49)

Dayan galvanized his men’s enthusiasm with the confidence and optimism he projected, promising them they would reach Jerusalem. Akiva Sa’ar recalled that Dayan’s appearance on the eve of the battle instilled a renewed fighting spirit in the men. He added, “People treated him like sunlight. He possessed a kind of magical power that is difficult to describe. We were enchanted with him.”[[50]](#footnote-50) Dayan scrapped Peltz’s detailed battle plan, which reflected his 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, which was, Dayan said, fine for fighting a regular army, “but we aren’t fighting the Germans, but Arabs.”[[51]](#footnote-51) Dayan’s hope was that the enemy would scatter before an extended battle developed, as had happened at Tsemah, and was sure that Peltz’s plan required discipline and coordination better suited to a more experienced, professional unit than the 89th Battalion, whose men had been plucked from every walk of life. Peltz, feeling frustrated and deceived, retorted that Dayan’s plan was evidence of his lack of professional experience. He argued that Dayan’s knowledge was merely that of a platoon commander, an assessment that was probably accurate. However, as many in the battalion noted, 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. However, Dayan was also blessed with natural talent to read battle conditions, and this knack, 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. But, contrary to Dayan’s expectation that the Arabs would scatter the way they had in Tsemah, the defenders of Qula fought back. The IDF’s official history reads, “A difficult battle raged in Qula.”[[52]](#footnote-52)

And thus, on a Sabbath 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. However, 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 campaign 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 the conquest of Qula. It came at the cost of only a few wounded. The Arabs, their resistance broken, fled in retreat.[[53]](#footnote-53) The battalion set up camp in Tira, some 5 km north of Ben Shemen, and waited for new orders.

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

Dayan had ignored the original telegram he had received in New York summoning him to meet with Ben-Gurion, choosing instead to head straight for his battalion. But he could no longer avoid a meeting. He arrived in Tel Aviv to learn that the topic of the discussion was Jerusalem. The prime minister was worried the city might fall, which, from his perspective, would spell the end of the dream of a Zionist state. Dayan’s success in Deganiya and the fact that he was, officially at least, apolitical, made him the most suitable candidate for the task of defending the city– in Ben-Gurion’s view. He offered Dayan the job of commander of Jerusalem, replacing Maj. Gen. David Shaltiel. Dayan demurred. He wanted to stay with his battalion. Ben-Gurion agreed to a brief postponement of the appointment.[[54]](#footnote-54)

On July 11, the 89th Battalion – without Dayan – entered the fighting in the Dir Tarif region, replacing the 82nd Tank Battalion, which had retreated. The battalion was deployed between Dir Tarif, Tira, and Qula. Peltz conducted the nighttime battle, where the jeep-borne company stopped an armored Jordanian unit consisting of the British Marmon-Herrington 6.5-ton vehicle that moved on wheels and was equipped with a 40-mm cannon. Peltz returned from Dir Tarif to the battalion’s staff quarters in Tira some 4 or 5 km away, and promised his men that he would return with a reinforcing company at dawn. After asking to be awakened at 4:30 a.m., he fell asleep under a tree an hour after midnight. But at 3:30, Dayan shook him awake, demanding an update. Peltz, exhausted by the immense effort and responsibility of the last few days, asked Dayan to let him sleep for another hour. Dayan said, “Fine.” When Peltz woke up, 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.”[[55]](#footnote-55) This was the nadir in the relationship between the guerrilla fighter and the professional officer. Years later, Peltz would write scathing criticism of Dayan – about his military ignorance, his irresponsibility, and his savage, capricious nature. Peltz’s criticism was not unfounded, but in the end, it was Dayan, not Peltz, who captivated his men thanks to his charisma and courage.[[56]](#footnote-56)

Dayan would later write that upon seeing the battalion scattered among the villages – some fighting, some resting – he grew livid. He couldn’t make sense of Peltz’s jumbled explanation about why the 82nd Battalion had retreated or why the battalion’s jeeps had been sent to stop the Jordanian armored vehicles. Dayan thought 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.[[57]](#footnote-57)

Dayan left Tira at dawn and headed for Dir Tarif. As usual, he scanned the battlefield. A Jordanian armored vehicle lay in a ditch across from the company’s position. Upon examination, the vehicle was found to be in good repair. The force, under Jordanian fire, which was still dominating the other side of the hill, extricated the vehicle, dubbed it the “Terrible Tiger,” and scribbled “Nahalal-Amman Express” on its side. 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, it was decided that Dayan’s force would enter Lod and Ramla, with differing versions as to how this decision was made. All agree that Lod was not included in the mission plans of the 89th Battalion. The city was supposed to have been taken by the Yiftach Brigade assisted by the 82nd Battalion. Teveth’s biography and Dayan’s autobiography described the sequence of events as follows: Dayan was looking for his battalion’s next mission. From his elevated position, 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.[[58]](#footnote-58) Dayan gathered all the company commanders and announced that the battalion was leaving for Lod.[[59]](#footnote-59) 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.”[[60]](#footnote-60) Besides, after the baptism by fire in Qula, the battalion’s confidence and feeling it could operate with coordinated units had gotten a boost.[[61]](#footnote-61)

At the same time that he was mulling the idea in his mind, Dayan was speaking with Mula Cohen, the commander of the Yiftach Brigade, who was trying to locate 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 82nd’s commander to request help. When Cohen realized he was speaking with a different battalion commander over the communications device, Dayan showed up. Learning of Cohen’s problem, Dayan volunteered for the mission.

The official history books of the war relate the events somewhat differently, saying that Cohen decided to change the battle plan and make use of the 89th Commando Battalion instead of the 82nd Armored Battalion. This description ignores the circumstances under which the 89th commando battalion came to this place to begin with. It also fails to explain how Yigal Allon, who had overall command of the operation, saw the situation.[[62]](#footnote-62) According to historian Martin van Creveld, Dayan called Allon and asked him to approve the change,[[63]](#footnote-63) so that the initiative was Dayan’s; still, 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) [i.e., Mula Cohen of the Yiftach Brigade].”[[64]](#footnote-64) According to Anita Shapira’s book, 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. Thus, Shapira’s description conflicts with Dayan’s.[[65]](#footnote-65) Cohen, in his own memoirs, does not support Dayan but also does not contradict him. He merely notes, drily, that contact with the tank company had broken down and instead, “they succeeded in contacting Dayan’s jeep battalion.”[[66]](#footnote-66) Yeruham Cohen, an intelligence officer with the 8th Brigade who was a close associate of Yigal Allon, wrote that Mula Cohen was very surprised by the arrival of Dayan’s battalion, and his assessment corresponds with Dayan’s.[[67]](#footnote-67)

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.[[68]](#footnote-68) 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.”[[69]](#footnote-69) 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.[[70]](#footnote-70)

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 Yitzhak Sadeh, his commander. Sadeh expressed his dissatisfaction,[[71]](#footnote-71) but en route to the target, Dayan briefed his men according to the principles he’d learned from Baum in New York:

You don’t stop just because you encounter an obstacle – fire or the devil knows what. The scouting 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.[[72]](#footnote-72)

Dayan’s plan involved driving fast across the first line of positions and then splitting the battalion into two axes, a good tactical move, as it would increase the enemy’s confusion.[[73]](#footnote-73) One axis would move north and the other south. The plan then called for the companies to reconnect at the junction, the overall goal being to “cause total bedlam, followed by surrender.”[[74]](#footnote-74) The battalion force, minus the company left behind in Dir Tarif, consisted of 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, ending at 7:07 p.m. 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, which met up with the Terrible Tiger only when it had completed its turn, crossed the city on its way back until it reached 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. As a result, the open jeeps burned and their men were 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. The battalion stopped 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.

Because the Jordanian had identified the force and was firing artillery, Dayan decided to drive back to Ben Shemen, taking another swing through the city. This time, the defenders were ready. The battalion stopped to collect the wounded hiding next to the abandoned burning jeep near the police station. A halftrack pushed Dayan’s command car with its three flat tires. They limped along under fire 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 it reached 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.

A contemporary study of the conquest of Lod conducted by Prof. Alon Kadish, the former head of the History Department at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, analyzes the sequence of events of the sortie and how they differed from Dayan’s original plan:

Dayan’s plan of action was to move westward from the junction after the bridge into the city. [Dayan’s order was:] “Once the city is entered, we split up, shooting left and right, causing total bedlam and surrender.” It seems that he intended the 89th Battalion to break through the external defensive line and hold the city in a way that would cause it to surrender as, behind it, companies of the 3rd Battalion of the Yiftach Brigade would advance and complete the seizure of Lod. Instead, in the absence of the ability to cross the canal [a wide ditch the defenders had earlier dug to impede enemy vehicles], the column of the 89th, going from north to south, bypassed the old city on its east, taking fire from the Lod police station where the Legion’s force had barricaded itself. At the city’s southern junction, the armored vehicle in the lead turned north.[[75]](#footnote-75)

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 Kadish, the column was forced to flank the city, and this unplanned move confused the defenders. Some of them 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 rather traveled down a road running 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-76)

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 on the Raid**

In the IDF’s official history, the raid is described 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-77)

Historian 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… Nothing succeeds like success. Dayan was called to Ben-Gurion to report on his trip to the United States, and got an earful on the myth of Lod. The battle of Lod marks the beginning of Dayan’s return to Yigal’s military playground.”[[78]](#footnote-78)

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, *Davar*, the General Labor Federation’s popular newspaper, published an article by Bracha Habas about the 89th Battalion and its derring-do. And at the heart of the article was battalion commander Moshe Dayan.[[79]](#footnote-79)

The raid on Lod was the first controversial affair of Dayan’s long career, offering a mere foretaste of some of Dayan’s traits that would later manifest themselves in other controversial events. On the one hand, Dayan possessed charismatic leadership coupled with rare courage and daring; on the other hand, he was dismissive – some would say contemptuous – of the normal chain of command, of coherent military doctrines. If, at a given moment, an action seemed to him the right thing to do, 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 Yohanan Peltz, his deputy. Peltz did not adjust to Dayan’s style of command; to him, Dayan constantly seemed to be making amateurish, spur-of-the-moment moves.[[80]](#footnote-80) Yiftach commander Mula Cohen, too, and 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-81) Even Yitzhak Sadeh, the revered teacher and commander of the 8th Brigade (to which Dayan’s battalion belonged), was distressed because Dayan failed to come to him to update him on his moves, which in Sadeh’s view could have affected the entire brigade.

In the War of Independence, without a doubt the longest and most difficult of Israel’s wars, 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 who advanced slowly and fought 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-82)

Largely speaking, Dayan’s modus operandi in Lod reflected the Prusso-German *Auftragstaktik* tradition – a command method consisting 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-83) 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, as it allows commanders to quickly exploit sudden opportunities and reduce the long waiting times typical of military hierarchies in which one must ask for and receive approval. Generations of German generals were trained in this, particularly tank commanders (of the Pantzergrenadier, German armored formations) Erwin Rommel and Heinz Wilhelm Guderian. In the U.S. Army, Gen. George Patton belonged to this school of thought. Furthermore, the fact that Dayan personally led his battalion was also a rarity in the War of Independence. Such leadership was of a piece with the command approach called “command from the saddle” and “forward command,” concepts that were to become firmly-rooted norms in the IDF when Dayan became Chief of Staff.[[84]](#footnote-84)

But at this stage of the war, the incident proved extraordinary, and other IDF commanders realized that the raid reflected a different and innovative way of operating. Elhanan Oren, the war’s official historian, wrote, “Operation Dani witnessed the birth of the mechanized formation.”[[85]](#footnote-85) 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-86) According to Haim Laskov, another future Chief of Staff, the raid tipped the scales of the war.[[87]](#footnote-87) 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-88) In his autobiography, Rabin added that the Yiftach Brigade exploited the shock and captured the city with relentless fighting.[[89]](#footnote-89)

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 meeting held with Dayan on July 10, Ben-Gurion told him, “This is not how you conduct a war,”[[90]](#footnote-90) noting that this action was nothing but a “shtick”: an assault must be launched “like a steamroller operating in a planned, systematic manner, step by step.”[[91]](#footnote-91) Convinced that his point of view was the right one, Dayan left the meeting feeling they would just have to agree to disagree, and wrote something that accurately reflected his approach to the study of strategy and military leadership in general: “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-92)

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-93)

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-94) The essay is more literary than a military technical analysis, but in notes entitled “At the Margins of the Raid,” he distilled the action’s military lessons:

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, which was more than half of all the unit’s vehicles, gave it characteristics typical of the cavalry: mobility, on the one hand, and inability to act without a vehicle… on the other… There was also the powerful addition of massive firepower, which can be maintained 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 (albeit in coordination with the nearby infantry brigade), a mission that had not been included in the initial plan…

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

In response to the criticism aimed at him, Dayan responded: “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, and at this point seemed to take a similar line to that of 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: although there was a classical action of this type of unit… in practice, under its conditions, 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…

Undoubtedly, the commando raid on Lod was possible thanks to the unit’s fighting spirit.[[96]](#footnote-96)

With these words, written from the perspective of two years, Dayan agreed with the tenor of Allon’s report and, to an extent, also agreed with Ben-Gurion in admitting that the action was unusual. Nonetheless, he still maintained, and rightly so, that the raid led to the city’s rapid surrender. The unit’s spirit, which the essay emphasized, 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 there is no doubt that the raid on Lod was the most prominent example demonstrating what a fearless unit can accomplish.

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,[[97]](#footnote-97) published an essay in the same periodical devoted to the conquest of Lod and its effect on the IDF.[[98]](#footnote-98) The core of the essay consists of the debate over the 89th Battalion’s raid. Zalmanovitch criticizes the fact that the history books rely on Dayan’s own description. The report Dayan wrote immediately after the battle attributing most of the credit for the fall of Lod to the raid was, he says, needed mostly for future historiography. Zalmanovitch links the debate over building armored forces and using armored troops with Dayan’s experience in this battle and the distorted lessons learned from it.[[99]](#footnote-99) The battle, which would have remained a relatively marginal military episode had the force been headed by an unknown commander rather than Dayan, became a battle that influenced the development of the IDF’s forces for many years to come, simply because of the commander’s identity. According to Zalmanovitch, Dayan did display leadership on the front and personal courage, but he ignored his commanders. At the same time, Zalmanovitch admits that some of Mula Cohen’s criticism of Dayan, written soon after the event, was less bitter than what he would write years later. More importantly, Zalmanovitch claims that the IDF’s common wisdom for several decades placing the “armored shock” approach was essentially superficial and not rooted in principle of any doctrine, becoming popular only because it had succeeded in practice.[[100]](#footnote-100) In this chapter, I do not wish to prove that the direct line Zalmanovitch draws from the raid on Lod to the failure of the armored corps in the first stage of the Yom Kippur War is problematic.[[101]](#footnote-101) There is no doubt that the raid inspired the IDF and demonstrated the shock and awe that a speedy mechanized raid can cause the enemy. There is also no doubt that the battle taught Dayan certain lessons and reflected his style of command and, to an extent, his relationship with his subordinates and the way he believed a commander ought to lead his men into battle. But from this to the principles of building the ground forces in the IDF over the next 25 years – the distance is great.

In any event, enemy testimony would seem to bolster the claim attributing the success of the operation to the raid. In 1952, Dayan participated in a senior command course in Great Britain, where he met Maj. Adib al-Qassam from the Arab-Jordanian Legion. During a conversation between them about the battle of 1948, 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 he and his men escaped to Latrun. Al-Qassam, who expressed his amazement at the brave assault, had no idea he was speaking with the commander of the raid.[[102]](#footnote-102)

The raid on Lod highlighted much of what contributed to creating the great myth of Dayan, but it also planted the seeds of some dark feelings on the part of colleagues that would emerge later – anger, frustration, jealousy – leading to fierce criticism. It is interesting, for example, to compare Dayan in Lod with Dayan in the Six-Day War: in both cases, his mere presence instilled high spirits and confidence in the troops. This was the case when he returned to his battalion from the United States and when he was appointed defense minister on the eve of the war. 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 fruits of glory. The Yiftach Brigade had been fighting Lod before the 89th Battalion showed up and continued to fight after the 89th Battalion left the scene. Mula Cohen wrote:

Yigal Allon and Yitzhak Rabin awaited him [in Ben Shemen]. They tried to persuade him to camp there with his battalion, 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 to Ben-Gurion, not to his brigade commander… No, directly to Ben-Gurion.”[[103]](#footnote-103)

According to Cohen, Dayan did what he did despite Allon’s order. Cohen, of course, ignored the fact that Ben-Gurion had expressly summoned Dayan to Tel Aviv while was still en route from the United States. It is surprising that immediately after writing this criticism, Cohen conceded 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.”[[104]](#footnote-104)

These words were written out of a sense that the Yiftach Brigade had completed the seizure and occupation, yet Dayan still got all the glory, so it is easy to understand the frustration. It would not be surprising that a battalion commander for whom the door to the nation’s leader was open might arouse frustration and jealousy.

In assessing the action, it seems clear that, had Lod had been manned by larger forces equipped with heavier weapons, Dayan’s convoy might have faced a fate similar to that of the convoy Abe Baum commanded in Hammelburg in 1945. Dayan gambled boldly and took a risk, believing that the action would succeed. And it did. One must remember that the Yiftach Brigade tried to storm the city and was stopped. No one denies that Dayan paved the way, and, correspondingly, no one denies that without the Yiftach Brigade’s subsequent action, the city would not have been taken.

One can also imagine the extent of frustration of Yigal Allon’s many Palmach admirers with the preferential treatment the maverick Dayan received 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. Allon was the diametric opposite.[[105]](#footnote-105) Dayan had proven his political loyalty to Ben-Gurion both during the Saison (see Ch. 1) and in the *Altalena* affair, while Allon was loyal to the party’s ideology and path. Therefore, despite Dayan’s unpredictable behavior on the battlefield, Ben-Gurion, feeling he could trust Dayan, ordered him to take command of Jerusalem. On July 15, Dayan met with Ben-Gurion again, and provided him with the details of the battle in Lod, again arousing his critics’ anger. Ben-Gurion, impressed by the audacity if not by the method, repeated his request that Dayan take command of the Jerusalem front. Dayan again asked for a postponement, but Ben-Gurion was determined and ended the meeting by declaring that, in the next truce, Dayan would take command of Jerusalem.[[106]](#footnote-106)

**Operation Death to the Invader**

The so-called “Ten Day” Battles during Operation Dani started when the first truce ended on July 8 and ended on July 18 when the second truce began. Because of the battalion’s shaky condition, Dayan wanted time for it to regain its strength. But Yigael Yadin, the head of the Operations Division on the General Staff and the de facto Chief of Staff because of the illness of Yaakov Dori, the official Chief of Staff, decided, after some hesitation, that the battalion must take part in the fighting in the south.

Operation Death to the Invader was commander by Lt. Col. Shimon Avidan, the commander of the Givati Brigade.[[107]](#footnote-107) The plan called for capturing two Egyptian army bases north of what is today called Plugot (then known as 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. To allow the force to hold the ground, a Givati infantry company joined the battalion.

On July 15, the battalion went south, where Dayan found himself in relatively unfamiliar terrain. He wrote, “I did not know the Negev. I’d made a few trips there, but it always remained alien to me.”[[108]](#footnote-108) The battalion consisted of 220 men, 130 of them fighters. New shells had been found for the Terrible Tiger, which still served as the battalion spearhead.

Zero-hour was set for 10 p.m. In the afternoon, Dayan gathered his men for a pre-action debriefing in which he also summarized the action in Lod, which he hadn’t had a chance to do earlier. The current plan was based on rapid movement while laying down fire, and the idea was to reach the Fallujah airfield held by the Egyptians, cross the nearby road from the southwest, reach Wadi Mufarar, and cross it using a path marked on the map, thus reaching Tel Karatiyya from an unexpected direction and beginning the assault. The method was to rapidly drive through the Egyptian lines to confuse the enemy about the Israeli force’s final destination and mission. The route was 5 or 6 km long through barely passable ground.

Like other leaders, Dayan affected the formation of the IDF’s unique organizational culture, which generally reflects leaders’ personalities and preferences. The audacious, risk-taking Dayan found a reverse mirror image in Shimon Avidan, who was described as “grim-looking” and “rigid” and was known to be risk averse, generally seen as a personification of Montgomery’s attitude that one doesn’t make any progress without first having assurances. For him, the security of the corps was paramount to the point where it was difficult to prod him into an offensive.[[109]](#footnote-109)

Dayan had two reservations. The first was with the culture in Haganah and Palmach units, which to him was pretentious and self-righteous, reflecting the collective spirit of the Red Army, so greatly admired by Palmach commanders.[[110]](#footnote-110) He felt that that spirit was an affectation, an imitation from a different world, from a different and distant war. Dayan’s second reservation was with the battalion commanders’ habit of conducting the battle from the rear while emphasizing campaign management and troop control. From Dayan’s perspective, the emphasis should be on leadership from the front. Control was less important than the drive of the corps to advance and reach the targets. Later on, this approach would characterize Dayan’s leadership style even in his most senior positions. 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.”[[111]](#footnote-111)

Indeed, when the battalion started moving in the previously agreed-upon formation toward the Fallujah airfield, Dayan was in the convoy’s third vehicle, preceded only by the Terrible Tiger and another halftrack. En route, the convoy took heavy fire and the Terrible Tiger cannoneer was killed. When the force reached the *wadi*, it was unable to find the path out and up toward Karatiyya. Finding themselves stuck, the soldiers started to clear a path for the convoy, and in the tumult, Dayan, who felt faint, stepped aside and napped for a while. At 4 a.m., the battalion started its climb of of the *wadi* and stormed the village with the vehicles in front followed by a Givati Brigade infantry unit. They encountered little resistance. It turned out that the force in Karatiyya was much smaller and weaker than Israeli intelligence had indicated.

By 6 a.m. on July 18, the battalion had completed its mission, losing one man and more than half of its vehicles. Despite the success of the 89th Battalion, however, the operation did not achieve its objectives. Intelligence was poor and, despite previous reports, the force in Karatiyya was small and thus easily defeated.

By contrast, the Givati Brigade suffered defeat in Beit Afa because the Egyptians had many forces stationed there. After the battle, at around 8:30 a.m., the Egyptians started to bombard Karatiyya with mortars and cannons, but the 89th Battalion had already left. Givati was left to hold the ground during the Egyptian counteroffensive and fought heroically until the truce. The unit was praised and one of its men awarded the Hero of Israel military decoration.[[112]](#footnote-112) The fact that the 89th Battalion left the battlefield was considered by Givati Brigade commander Shimon Avidan to be a breach of order (an opinion shared by Mula Cohen) and he proceeded to complain about it to Yigael Yadin, who ordered that Dayan be court-martialed. In a further clarification with Dayan, the latter successfully argued that he had excellent reason not to stay because he felt that a raiding battalion with its non-armored vehicles was not meant to seize and maintain control of an area. Thus, controversy continued to follow Dayan even after the assertions about Dayan’s establishment of the 9th Battalion and his command of the raid on Lod. The result was that more than a few commanders disliked Dayan’s style, which led to opposition to his appointment as commander of Jerusalem.

After the battle, Dayan visited the men from his unit who had been wounded, 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.”[[113]](#footnote-113) This would be the last battle in which Dayan led men in an offense, even though in all future positions he would continue to try to be on the front lines.

The second truce went into effect on July 19, and in keeping with Ben-Gurion’s order, 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, after the fighting had ended, conducting the negotiations with the enemy and playing the role of officer-diplomat.[[114]](#footnote-114)

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 maximal 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, which in modern wars involves a combination of training and experience. When Dayan arrived in Jerusalem, he lacked both these skills, and this was reflected in the level of execution of the military operations in the city. Until this point, Dayan’s conduct had been a combination of audacity, leadership, and luck (as Napoleon famously is reported to have quipped, “I’d rather have lucky generals than good ones”), but in Jerusalem he had to command a large system, something for which he had no training. Worse still, luck was eluding 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 success in Deganiya and as commander of the 89th Battalion, Dayan had more than a few detractors in the IDF’s elite command structure, in particular among his rivals and competitors from the Palmach. 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 his last fights. But as an officer-diplomat, Dayan’s unique political gifts came to the fore.[[115]](#footnote-115) Furthermore, it was actually after he had become an object of criticism and jealousy among Palmach commanders that Ben-Gurion forged closer relations with him, as he felt Dayan would be a loyal ally, someone he could trust. Thus, was Dayan’s future path paved.

Beneath the appointment lay a bitter struggle between Ben-Gurion, on the one hand, and Yigael Yadin, head of the Operations Directorate, and the rest of the General Staff, on the other. In rethinking the military effort, specifically the four reorganized fronts and the appointments of their commanders, Yadin had proposed that Eliyahu Ben-Hur (Cohen) replace David Shaltiel as the Jerusalem front commander; it was widely acknowledged that the latter had to be relieved of his command. Ben-Gurion, however suggested Dayan, whose candidacy was greatly opposed on the General Staff, which considered him uncontrollable. Chief of Staff Dori, from his sickbed, urged Ben-Gurion to appoint Ben-Hur. Another clash related to the appointment of Dori’s own replacement. Mordechai Maklef was Ben-Gurion’s candidate, whereas the General Staff supported Yigal Allon. The clash climaxed with letters of resignation from General Staff members submitted to Ben-Gurion on July 1 followed by a letter of resignation submitted by Ben-Gurion himself. Ben-Gurion won this particular round of “chicken.”[[116]](#footnote-116) After reaching a compromise whereby Yigal Allon was appointed commander of the southern front and Moshe Dayan commander of the Jerusalem front,[[117]](#footnote-117) everyone withdrew their resignation letters. Before concluding the appointments, Ben-Gurion had to clear one final hurdle: a delegation of 89th Battalion fighters headed by Yaakov Granek, formerly a Lehi member,[[118]](#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 to them that the security of Jerusalem took precedence over their battalion.[[119]](#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.[[120]](#footnote-120) When he arrived in the city, he found it cut in half, besieged, and under heavy shelling. City residents were reduced to drinking rainwater and making food from plants growing wild 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.

Other than the low level of fighting fitness, which limited the ability to act, there was another, no less significant restriction, namely the political constraint. 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 him to act. He managed to get approval for two operations, but both failed. Their aim had not been to effect any dramatic change to the situation, but merely to improve the Israeli position before permanent agreements went into effect.

The first action was meant to drive a wedge between the Jordanian Legion, which had established positions east of Armon Hanatsiv (Governor’s Palace, named for the headquarters of the British High Commissioner located on the hilltop), and the Egyptian army, which was deployed on the city’s southern edges. The action, approved during 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 it was strictly forbidden to enter the building, which was manned by U.N. personnel. A preliminary tour of the region carried out by the 62nd Battalion (the Beit Horon Battalion) commander Meir Zorea (Zarro) and the Etzioni Brigade’s operations officer Hillel Fefferman – both experienced officers and alumni of the Jewish Brigade – convinced both men that the hill could not be taken without seizing control of the top, i.e., the Governor’s Palace itself. Zorea explained to Dayan that it would be impossible to hold the hill without capturing the building, considered a vital territory[[121]](#footnote-121) but Zorea’s impression was that Dayan was unfamiliar with the concept professionally. He therefore tried to speak of alternatives, including taking the rooftop and the mountain ridge. But Dayan refused to breach the political restriction: his duty to Ben-Gurion on this was clear. In Dayan’s defense, it should be said that he had demonstrated great sensitivity to the political aspect of military action already as a relatively junior officer, something that would characterize his military leadership in the future as well. Another feature of Dayan’s conduct, this, unfortunately, negative, was his tendency to draw strict analogies between past and future actions. He tended to underestimate the enemy based on past experience; he therefore he authorized the Armon Hanatsiv action accepting all its limitations and 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 exposed to fire on the hillside. Zorea, situated in the stronghold in Talpiyot, tried to get the brigade’s approval to take the Governor’s Palace, but Fefferman could not make contact with Dayan, who was at home. A foot courier had to be dispatched to find Dayan. But by the time Dayan finally arrived at brigade headquarters, Fefferman had already been forced to instruct Zorea to withdraw for fear that the force be destroyed if still in place at daybreak. The force suffered a decisive defeat. The casualties were high: nine dead, five POWs, and 21 wounded.

The next day, Dayan gathered the men of the Beit Horon Battalion for a dressing down. The battalion commanders, who had fought heroically and under serious constraints, found his words unacceptable. The brigade summation report reflected a stormy debate between Dayan and Zorea, the battalion commander, about the location of the latter. Dayan, as usual, demanded that the battalion commander lead from the front, whereas Zorea asserted that in a nighttime action of this type, it was better to lead from a command stronghold in the rear where he would have better control of the forces. (Today, despite impressive technological advances in command and control, the IDF’s current method remains closer to that of Dayan.[[122]](#footnote-122)) Dayan respected Zorea’s professional opinion and was aware he lacked the other man’s knowledge. On the eve of the next mission, Operation Yekev, Dayan asked Zorea where he should station himself. The answer he received was, “With the point men. You’ll conduct the battle well from there at night.” Dayan ignored the sarcasm, repeated his question, and, based on Zorea’s advice, placed himself in the brigade command center, which was located higher up than the battlefield, where he could use his communications device to control the movements of the battalions.[[123]](#footnote-123)

Fefferman’s sharply criticized Dayan, arguing that the action in Armon Hanatsiv had been unprofessionally planned and that Dayan should be removed from his position. But, instead, it was Fefferman who was removed from his position and made battalion commander of the armored force in the brigade, a step that soured the atmosphere in the brigade.[[124]](#footnote-124) Over the next two months, Dayan devoted himself to rebuilding the brigade, and his efforts were acknowledged by his two his critics – Fefferman and Zorea. Dayan continued to demand missions, earning himself a reputation as an aggressive officer looking for action. But the more the political process advanced, the chances that Ben-Gurion would approve an operation fell. Two months later, on October 15, as Operation Yoav was starting on the southern front, the opportunity arrived and Dayan finally got what he wanted. At the same time, Operation To the Mountain began on the central front, of which Operation Yekev was a part; because of political considerations, it, too, was limited to a 24-hour period and to the dark during the night between October 21 and 22. The operation’s purpose was to pin down the Egyptian army located in the south Hebron Hills to keep it from intervening in the Negev Desert battles, and to expand the Jerusalem corridor southwards.[[125]](#footnote-125) On the last night of Operation To the Mountain, Dayan was ordered to deploy his brigade in Operation Yekev, designed to enter Bethlehem indirectly and from an unexpected place: through a high hill on top of which stands the town of Beit Jala. Topographically, this was a natural barrier and therefore defended by very few Egyptian troops. The logic of the Israeli plan was that if the force could overcome the topographical challenges, it would then be able to easily overpower the enemy. The brigade would thereby succeed in cutting the Egyptian forces off from the Jordanian troops on the Jerusalem-Bethlehem axis. If possible, Bethlehem itself would also be taken.[[126]](#footnote-126) Fefferman, now commanding the battalion’s armored unit, again expressed his opposition, an opinion shared by Tsvi Ayalon, commander of the central front, who wanted to concentrate the effort closer to the Harel Brigade.

The main effort was led by the Moriah Battalion of the Etzioni Brigade, commanded by Zalman Mart, who had been with Dayan for a long time. The other two battalions secured the main force. In the briefing, Dayan repeated his theory that “banging the tin can once” would send all the enemy forces into flight. Perhaps he believed it to be true, or perhaps he wanted to inspire his men.

After the force set out, it became clear that it was harder to climb the cliffs than had been anticipated. During the climb down into the *wadi* and the climb up to Beit Jala, the battalion ran into serious trouble, lost time, and got pinned down by enemy machineguns. One man was killed. The point unit was stopped in its tracks, and Mart concluded that even if the men could somehow overcome the machineguns, there wasn’t time left to complete the mission by morning. Moreover, were daylight to expose the force on the slope, the men would be sitting ducks. Mart asked Dayan’s permission to withdraw. Dayan, true to his principles of command, told Mart – not unlike the answer he received from Yigal Allon in Lod – that he was the commander in situ and only he could decide what to do. Mart decided to withdraw.[[127]](#footnote-127) The only achievement of the operation was the conquest of the village of al-Walaja, west of Jerusalem, which would become the Green Line in this area according to the Armistice Agreements.

These failures damaged Dayan’s reputation and added fuel to the fire of those who saw him as an irresponsible military adventurer. He overestimated the capabilities of a fighting force that was less trained and had a lower morale than that of the 89th Battalion he was used to commanding, and he underestimated the Egyptian soldiers’ willingness to stick to their positions and fight doggedly rather than break under attack from the Etzioni Brigade. Luck did not favor him. But for Dayan, all these experiences, including failures, were important and instructive. And, as he was wont, he learned from them, as evidenced by the question he asked Zorea about the commander’s best location.

Dayan’s attitude to failure is interesting. In his memoirs, Dayan admitted the failure of the action in Operation Yekev, and made no attempt to whitewash it. Dayan felt the reason for the failure lay in the failure to capture the Governor’s Palace and its environs, exactly as the operations officer and battalion commander had noted. Moreover, Dayan used the phrase “vital territory,” writing, “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 territory in the battlefield.”[[128]](#footnote-128) In a general summary of the two failed actions, Dayan spoke of poor preparation, low battle fitness, and bad morale, factors he had not be able to change in any significant way in the period of his command of the brigade, mostly because there had been no offensive action during this time, and because the condition of the front remained static. In Jerusalem, Dayan met an army of “lazy bulls” rather than one of “knights’ horses,” as he famously recalled after the Sinai Campaign. He constantly faced this problem as a senior IDF commander, and during his term as Chief of Staff, he generated a real revolution in the field.

The principle that commanders should lead from the front was one of the most important that Dayan had learned from Orde Wingate. After the battle of the Kastel, a legend arose around a command issued by Shimon Alfasi, who was in charge: “Privates – fall back; commanders – stay and cover!” Israeli writer Yoram Kaniuk, who participated in the fighting, wrote that, “Alfasi’s command was to become a foundation stone for deciding that the place of commanders was in the forefront. This command was the underpinning of the call, ‘Follow me!’”[[129]](#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, just as Zorea did and Dayan himself did in Givati Brigade. When the 89th Battalion delegation had approached Ben-Gurion to request that Dayan be allowed to remain with them, Ben-Gurion wanted to know what was so special about him. They replied that he led the battalion’s charge and was blunt and forthright with the soldiers.[[130]](#footnote-130) Years later, when Dayan was appointed Chief of Staff, leading from the front would become an IDF hallmark of commanders.

As a result of the assassination of Count Folke Bernadotte on September 17, 1948 by Lehi members,[[131]](#footnote-131) Dayan dismantled independent activity on the part of Lehi and the Irgun still taking place in Jerusalem, saying that the pre-statehood era was over and it was necessary to unite the military under the state’s authority.[[132]](#footnote-132) For Ben-Gurion, this was further evidence that Dayan shared his view that the state came first.

Dayan’s days of fighting in the War of Independence had now ended, and he became active in the armistice talks. At the same time, he was officially named commander of the Jerusalem front. This meant he was no longer subordinate to the major general commanding the central command, Tsvi Ayalon, and, instead enjoyed an independent status. Nonetheless, the division of authority between the Jerusalem commander and the commander of central command remained unclear, and Dayan did not hesitate to challenge Ayalon. The latter would later become Dayan’s subordinate when he was appointed head of the Operations Directorate where he observed, “It is far easier being under Dayan’s command than to try to command him.”[[133]](#footnote-133)

The move to Jerusalem also meant an improvement to Dayan and his family’s standard of living. They were housed in a large home (for that time) in the exclusive neighborhood of Rehaviya. Eliezer Kaplan, then minister of finance, lived upstairs and students occupied several rooms. Led by Ruth, Dayan’s wife, the home became a lively center for military personnel, diplomats, U.N. officials, and journalists, who all got to converse with Dayan both 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.[[134]](#footnote-134) He kept on driving in a jeep, armed with a machinegun, which gave him a martial look at all times. But despite these habits, Dayan’s way of life changed in this new position. While he continued touring the front, he also had to engage in diplomatic work. Of this time, he wrote, “There were many meetings, arguments over wordings, 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.”[[135]](#footnote-135)

During this time, Dayan developed a relationship with the press, which was no longer a stranger to him. Indeed, other than Chief of Staff Yaakov Dori and Yigael Yadin, Dayan was the only individual Ben-Gurion permitted to speak with the press. This made him a more familiar public figure than people senior to him in rank, including Yigal Allon. Dayan’s personal charm worked on journalists too, and they 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.[[136]](#footnote-136) 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, the previous Jerusalem front commander, who opened the talks with Jordan. He met with Abdullah al-Tall, the Jordanian commander of the Jerusalem front, on July 21 after the second truce.[[137]](#footnote-137) Dayan was appointed to his position two days later, but his political activity started only after the Governor’s Palace defeat, on August 17, 1948. The U.N. was eager to prevent the renewal of the battle around the Governor’s Palace and to finalize the sides’ positions out of fear that the parties would try to improve them. Thus began the first meeting in which Dayan participated began. On September 3, Dayan met for the first time with al-Tall and agreed to withdraw the IDF from the agricultural school it had seized in an action in the village of Jabel Mukhabar. Ahmad al-Aziz, the Egyptian army representative, was also at the meeting. Despite mutual accusations of truce violations, the three promised to try to refrain from shouting.[[138]](#footnote-138)

At the second meeting, which took place on September 5, Dayan had a novel idea: he proposed to his counterpart Abdullah al-Tall that they leave the table filled with the U.N. observers and speak privately. Dayan, who had developed a great deal of respect for al-Tall, described the moment as follows: “He stood head and shoulders above all the Arabs I met with during that time…and he had great personal courage.”[[139]](#footnote-139) Dayan felt he could achieve more in a personal meeting at which the two warriors would find a common denominator than he could in a multi-participant meeting with foreign mediators. Shortly thereafter, the two informed Gen. William Riley, the chief of staff of the U.N. observers, and his stunned team members that they would arrange for the installation of a direct telephone line between them and bypass the U.N. headquarters. On November 28, Dayan and al-Tall again met, this time with U.N. mediation, and two days later the men signed a memorandum of understanding that Dayan sought to describe (a little naively, as veteran foreign ministry officials pointed out to him) as “a complete and sincere ceasefire” that included an agreement on the armistice lines that would go into effect on December 1. On December 5, Dayan had another meeting with al-Tall next to the demilitarized Notre Dame convent in Jerusalem, and on December 7, the direct phone line between the two commanders was laid. The good relationship between Dayan and al-Tall was responsible for the calm and made it possible to resolve several local issues, such as a POW exchange, allowing people to go to work inside the Mount Scopus enclave, pilgrimages, and demilitarization.[[140]](#footnote-140)

On December 12, the two men held another meeting, this time in the presence of U.N. observer Carlson, French Consul René Neville, U.S. consular representative Biardet, and U.S. military attaché Maj. Nicholas Andronowitz. 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, such as an occasional POW exchange, which we can arrange between ourselves directly, or opening the road to Bethlehem for Christmas, with is a one-time event rather than a permanent arrangement.” Dayan thus became a military commander authorized by the government to negotiate peace with the political leader of an enemy nation.[[141]](#footnote-141)

Al-Tall was a complex character. In his memoirs, he accused the king of Jordan of conspiring with Israel to divide the Land of Israel and Jerusalem at the expense of the Palestinians and Egyptians.[[142]](#footnote-142) He presented himself as a nationalistic zealot safeguarding Arab interests. But there are many indications that he projected a nationalistic image only in order to establish his status as such after the war. When the IDF carried out Operations Yoav and Horev against Egypt, al-Tall – behind closed doors – expressed his support for the Israeli army to his Israeli counterparts.[[143]](#footnote-143) He also had no trouble speaking with Israeli journalists and became popular among them, mostly because he spoke of a possible peace. Worried that he would be identified as overly friendly with Jews, he asked Dayan to speak with the editors of *The Palestine Post*, the English-language daily and a private Zionist enterprise, to publish a piece in which he would be described as a radical nationalist attacking Israel.[[144]](#footnote-144)

The meetings between Dayan and al-Tall were part of the ongoing contacts between the leadership of the Yishuv and King Abdullah of Jordan even before the end of the war, in the hope of reaching some sort of settlement without a fight. Abdullah was the only Arab leader who was in direct touch with Israel. The dialogue with him provided a glimmer of hope that it would be possible to reach an arrangement. The Jews hoped Abdullah would accept the U.N. Partition Plan. However, he would only go so far as to agree to the Jews establishing what he called a republic, a type of autonomous region, under his own reign.[[145]](#footnote-145) Eliyahu Sasson, a veteran diplomat and Arabist, had been involved in these contacts since 1946 in an attempt to reach understandings with the king to prevent the Jordanians from entering the war.

The meetings between Dayan and al-Tall resolved some issues, such as ceasefire violations and the needs of the population, including prayer services at the holy sites. Gradually, the men came to trust one another, which made it possible to expand the truce signed on November 30 to include southern Jerusalem at first, and, later, the area north of the city. The emerging agreement was of great strategic significance, making possible the concentration of Israelis force on the southern front for a decisive move on the eve of Operation Yoav, which began on October 15 and was designed to break the siege of the Negev Desert.

Al-Tall had King Abdullah’s confidence and he operated independently of his British commanders. Therefore, the Israeli side viewed him as an independent and reliable partner with whom it would be possible to make local arrangements in the present and political agreements in the future. From the beginning of their relationship, Dayan and al-Tall respected one another and their personal military accomplishments. They even praised one another in their respective memoirs. The trust between them resulted in a ceasefire agreement that included all of Jerusalem.[[146]](#footnote-146) This agreement was of strategic value, as expressed in the staff log of the Jerusalem sector. On December 1, it read, “Absolute peace and quiet as a result of the truce agreement.”[[147]](#footnote-147) 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 the month of December, during which Dayan and al-Tall discussed territorial arrangements included in the ceasefire agreement and the subsequent peace agreement: the future of the Negev and its eastern border between Israel and Jordan, the renewal of mining at the southern end of the Dead Sea, the fate of the property of the potash company at the northern end of the Dead Sea and of Kibbutz Beit Ha’arava, the division of Jerusalem, train passage from the coastal plain to Jerusalem, freedom of travel to Mount Scopus, the fate of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the fates of Lod, Ramla, and Jaffa. The commanders presented the opening gambits of their states on the issues under discussion. In practice, their meetings shaped the Armistice Agreements that would be publicly signed in Rhodes in July 1949. Moreover, the public Armistice Agreements reflected the secret arrangement that had already been pieced together on the ground even as the Israeli army was conducting its decisive battle against the Egyptian military in Operation Horev. The Jordanian commander, who was also the liaison officer with the Egyptian army stationed in southern Jerusalem, gave his clandestine imprimatur to the IDF to concentrate its effort to push the Egyptian army’s main force out of the Negev.[[148]](#footnote-148)

In addition to the dialogue between Dayan and al-Tall, Israel was in contact with the Jordanians via European representatives as well: Sasson met in Paris with the Jordanian ambassador to Great Britain, Abed al-Majid Hader; and Dayan and Reuven Shilo’ah from the Foreign Ministry met at Jaffa Gate on December 25 with Abdullah’s private physician, who also served at his envoy. At this point of Jerusalem agreements, 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. Here, too, Dayan was a major player.

Unlike the situation before the war when Israel had been weak and Abdullah had been the one to make demands during the talks, by the end of the war, the balance of power had shifted out of Jordan’s favor. Abdullah’s immediate motivation for holding the talks was his fear of an all-out Israeli attack now that the latter was stronger and held the upper hand. Abdullah made demands Israeli could not possibly agree to, including withdrawing from Lod, Ramla, and Jerusalem’s Arab neighborhoods. He also demanded the 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. For its part, Israel wanted full peace with Jordan with minimal concessions on these issues.[[149]](#footnote-149)

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 Reuven Shilo’ah. The three met on January 3 at the Mandelbaum Gate in Jerusalem (one of the Israeli-Jordanian crossings) for a general talk. King Abdullah was demanding the Negev and an access road to the Gaza Strip. At that point, the monarch held 679 Israeli POWs from the Etzion Bloc and the Old City of Jerusalem, both of which had fallen to the Jordanian Legion, and the talks involved that issue as well. Because the negotiations were not making any real progress, King Abdullah decided to intervene personally, and 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. The Israeli letter of authorization, written in Hebrew, Arabic, and English, and was signed by Ben-Gurion, read as follows:

The government of Israel hereby grants power of attorney and full authority to Mr. Reuven Shilo’ah and Lt. Col. Moshe Dayan to negotiate and reach an agreement with his Highness the King of [Hashemite] Transjordan for the sake of ending hostilities and establishing peaceful relations between the State of Israel and the Transjordanian kingdom.[[150]](#footnote-150)

On January 16, 1949, Dayan met with King Abdullah in his palace. Al-Tall was included in the meeting. While the king hosted them with all due pomp and circumstance, Dayan quickly grew impatient with the circuitous ceremonies and drawn-out pleasantries. Sasson, used to this by now, was also eager to get to the heart of things. But among other things, 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.[[151]](#footnote-151) Abdullah spoke of signing a peace treaty, but made this contingent on the other Arab nations signing armistice agreements in the talks in Rhodes, which had just gotten under way. This meeting ended without any resolution, and when another one was suggested, the practical Dayan was not keen to participate. But, under pressure from both the Israeli government and al-Tall, he arrived for the second meeting on January 30. This time, the objective was to secure the release of the Israeli POWs. This meeting, too, was mainly a social occasion that bore 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 that allows anyone holding the king’s sash to make a request of him – and asked that the POWs be released. The king granted the wish, and arrangements for the release of the 679 captives were made that very night.[[152]](#footnote-152) In his memoirs, Dayan noted that, in the end, “the talks produced no result, practically speaking,” although both sides declared their desire for peace, adding that the king made an impression on him as “a clever [ruler] who can be decisive.”[[153]](#footnote-153) But there was one clear achievement: between February 3 and March 3, Israel and Jordan exchanged their POWs, with Jordan getting all its people back.

In February 1949, the American Ralph Bunche was appointed as mediator by the U.N. The Arab states and Israel agreed to hold talks with his mediation on the Greek island of Rhodes. The Israeli delegation was led by Shilo’ah, and Dayan was his deputy. Bunche’s diary reveals that he took a liking to Dayan and Shilo’ah, with whom he spent a great deal of time in March. “Dayan and Shilo’ah are a much nicer team than Eitan [Walter Eitan of the Foreign Ministry] and Yadin.”[[154]](#footnote-154) 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 decisions. Dayan enjoyed his trips around the island and the Jordanians’ friendly attitude and was highly impressed by Bunche whom he described as “a broad-shouldered Negro with soft eyes…who speaks little and listens with utmost attention to his interlocutors… 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.”[[155]](#footnote-155)

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). During the five days of the operation, the Negev Desert was captured all the way to Eilat, and the mission fulfilled the vision of its name: setting facts on the ground. A day after the end of the operation, it transpired that the Iraqis had retreated from the Triangle where its army had been encamped since it joined the war and the end of the battles. Through messages it conveyed, Israel threatened Jordan that it would view the entry of the Jordanian Legion into this area in the harshest of terms. 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, Yigael Yadin and Walter Eitan, who had met King Abdullah for the initial talks, were told to handle the talks. Dayan, finding no point in remaining in Rhodes, returned to Israel.[[156]](#footnote-156) He was summoned to Jerusalem to continue the talks, and on March 18 he met with al-Tall and gave him a message concerning the demands of the Israeli government. On March 10, Dayan again met with the king in his palace in the city of Shuna. Dayan was accompanied at this meeting by Maj. Yehoshafat Harkavi,[[157]](#footnote-157) with no civilians present. Dayan demanded the strategic area of Wadi Ara, connecting the coastal plain with the Jezreel Valley 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.[[158]](#footnote-158) In exchange, he offered concessions in the Mount Hebron region.

Abdullah, fearing another confrontation with the Israeli army, which already enjoyed clear superiority over the Legion, agreed to the terms. His concern was justified, because on March 15, 1949, Ben-Gurion started talking about military action against Jordan in order to make changes in the territorial status of places where he felt that the situation represented a security risk. Some officers, led by Yigal Allon, wanted to exploit the opportunity to conquer the West Bank, but Ben-Gurion preferred to end the war and focus on other national tasks.[[159]](#footnote-159) From Jordan’s point of view, the agreement lifted the threat of further Israeli conquests. The most important point was that 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.[[160]](#footnote-160)

After reaching the major agreement, several issues were left unresolved, and so, on March 23, 1949, the sides met again at the royal palace in Shuna to make arrangements about the Israeli enclaves in Jerusalem and Jews’ access to the Western Wall.

The Jordanians signed the maps Dayan had brought. When the king complained about the many concessions he was making, Dayan could no longer contain himself. He informed Abdullah that he and the two military men with him, Yadin and Harkabi, had all lost younger brothers in the war, a war none of them had wanted, a war that would not have broken out if the Arab nations, Jordan included, had not started it. Now, Dayan said, the Arab nations would have to live with the outcome of that war.[[161]](#footnote-161)

At the end of February 1949, the sides had appointed the delegations to the official negotiations in Rhodes over the official armistice agreement. Dayan went as deputy to the head of the delegation, Reuven Shiloah, but al-Tall remained in Jordan. Shortly thereafter, on April 3, the Armistice Agreements were formally signed. Dayan signed on behalf of the Israeli side. Historian Avi Shlaim wrote the following about the event: “The agreement was a huge diplomatic victory for Israel…providing Israel with significant territorial gains in the Negev and Wadi Ara.”[[162]](#footnote-162)

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. Ben-Gurion continued to follow developments and issue instructions about the many subjects being discussed in Rhodes, preferring Dayan’s advice to that of Moshe Sharett, his foreign minister, testimony to Dayan’s growing influence.[[163]](#footnote-163) Indeed, of all the officers, with the exception of Chief of Staff Yigal Allon, Dayan had the freest and most direct access to the prime minister. For example, after the Jordanians violated the Jerusalem agreements, Dayan was in favor of military pressure while Ben-Gurion was opposed. To discuss the issue, Dayan joined Ben-Gurion on August 28 for the long ride from Shfaram to Tel Aviv, during which the two could talk uninterruptedly and without outside pressure.[[164]](#footnote-164)

**From Holding Tactical Command to Conducting Political Negotiations**

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, the 89th Battalion, and 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 to study geostrategic and geopolitical issues. According to him, he was blessed with having the very best teacher in these fields – David Ben-Gurion himself.

Dayan’s contribution to the talks with Jordan was, without a doubt, considerable:[[165]](#footnote-165) from creating trust with Abdullah al-Tall, the Jordanian commander of the Jerusalem front and Dayan’s own direct enemy, reaching agreements with him on local issues, and to conducting talks with Jordan over the arrangement overall. Yehoshafat 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.”[[166]](#footnote-166) 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.”[[167]](#footnote-167) By contrast, Yadin was less kind about Dayan and maintained that Dayan’s role “was very small, almost non-existent.”[[168]](#footnote-168) 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 competence 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.[[169]](#footnote-169)

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.[[170]](#footnote-170) Before the war, Ben-Gurion had appreciated Dayan as an officer with competence in many fields, although not as a battle commander. During the war, he learned to respect him as an effective and courageous battle officer.

It was Ben-Gurion who asked Sasson to include Dayan in the meetings. 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.[[171]](#footnote-171) 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.[[172]](#footnote-172)

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 was born in Deganiya in 1910, and now returned to defend his home. Deganiya was the first group to institute the kibbutz settlement model. [↑](#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 (official name “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 a 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. Dayan, 1976, p. 61. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Teveth, 1971, p. 265. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Bar-On, 2014, p. 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Yohanan Peltz immigrated to Mandatory Palestine in 1935 and joined the British Army on behalf of the Haganah and fought in World War II in the Jewish Brigade. After the war, he was a member of The Avengers, a group of Jews who tracked down and assassinated Nazi war criminals. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Teveth, 1971, 266. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Ibid, p. 268. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Ibid, p. 269. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. A loyal group of this kind provides a commander with peace of mind and clarity. One disadvantage is that it might be more prone to groupthink than a more heterogeneous composition. [MY ADDITION] [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Ibid, p. 270. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Ibid, p. 271. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Naor, 2016, p. 163. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Dayan, 1976, p. 62. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Teveth, 1971, p. 274. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Teveth, 1971, p. 275. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Ibid, p. 276. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Teddy Kollek, Jerusalem’s long-time mayor (1965 to 1993). In his youth, he was active in the Zionist movement Hehalutz. He served in several key Haganah positions (especially its intelligence division) and in the political department of the Jewish Agency. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Teveth, 1971, p. 278. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. He was later promoted to the rank of general who commanded 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. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. There are several books and essays about the Baum Task Force and its mission. The description herein is based on <http://taskforcebaum.de/index1.html>. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. 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 – an investigation in which Patton was not interested – the Distinguished Service Cross was the highest honor possible under the circumstances. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Teveth, 1971, pp. 279–280. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Dayan, 1976, p. 63. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. The Battle of Stalingrad, which began in July 1942 and lasted through February 1943, was the bloodiest and one of the most decisive battles that 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-37)
38. Private email from U.S. Army Col. Douglas Macgregor dated August 2, 2018. After his retirement from the military, Macgregor served as an adviser to the U.S. Department of Defense and was one of the architects of the U.S. 2003 invasion into Iraq. [ACCORDING TO WIKIPEDIA, HE RETIRED FROM THE ARMY ONLY IN JUNE 2004, SO HOW COULD HE HAVE FILLED A CIVILIAN POSITION A YEAR EARLIER?] [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. The concept and practice of a “thunder run” – a rapid surge towards enemy lines with continuous fire – existed already in Vietnam and even World War II, as in the case of Task Force Baum. Several “thunder runs” were executed in the Second Gulf War, but their important and scope were lesser than in Baghdad. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Globalsecurity.org:“On Point: The United States Army in Operation Iraqi Freedom,” *C*hapter 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-40)
41. Towards the end of the British Mandate of Palestine, the city of Lod numbered 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 numbered about 18,000 residents. In total, the population of the two cities and the adjacent villages was about 40,000. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Netanel Lorch, *Korot milhemet ha’atsma’ut* (Hebrew) (*The Events of the War of Independence*), Masada, Ramat Gan, 1966, p. 323. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Yoav Gelber, *Komemiyot venakba: Israel, hafalestini, umedinot arav* (Hebrew) (*Sovereignty and Naqba: Israel, the Palestinians, and the Arab Nations 1948* [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. 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-44)
45. 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-45)
46. Teveth, 1971, *Moshe Dayan*, p. 280. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Ibid, p. 272; Teddy Eytan, *Negev: Volontaire français à la tête des commandos de la Haganha*,La Baconnière, Geneva, 1950. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Teveth, 1971, p. 281. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. IDF, 1970, p. 254. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Teveth, 1971, p. 283. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Ibid, p. 284. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Martin van Creveld*,**Moshe Dayan*, Weidenefeld & Nicolson, London, 2004, p. 62 [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Dayan, 1976, p. 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Teveth, 1971, p. 287. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Dayan, 1976, p. 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Teveth, 1971, p. 288. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Dayan, 1976, p. 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. 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-62)
63. Van Creveld, p. 63. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Moshe Dayan, “The Commando Battalion Ascends Lod” (Hebrew), *Maarakhot*, 62–63 (July 1950), p. 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Anita Shapira, *Yigal Allon: Aviv holdo, biogreafia* (Hebrew) (*Yigal Allon: Native Son, a Biography*), United Kibbutz, Bnei Brak, 2004, p. 368. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. 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-66)
67. Yeruham Cohen, 1969, p. 153. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Teveth, 1971, p. 289. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Yeruham Cohen, 1969, p. 156. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Teveth, 1971, p. 290. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Yeruham Cohen, 1969, p. 158. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Teveth, 1976, p. 288. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. The U.S. Army was criticized for traveling in a single convoy in the 2003 raid on Baghdad, but at the end of the day it is difficult to argue with success. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Teveth, 1971, p. 290. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Alon Kadish, Avraham Sela, and Arnon Golan, *Kibush Lod, juli 1948* (Hebrew) (*The Conquest of Lod, July 1948*), Defense Ministry Publishing, Tel Aviv, 2000, p.34. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Author’s phone interview with Prof. Kadish, May 15, 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. IDF, 1970, p. 258. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Shapira, 2004, pp. 369–370. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
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-79)
80. Years later, Peltz wrote his memoirs in which he settled his account with Dayan. See: van Creveld, 2004, p. 62. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Once it seemed that the city had been conquered, a difficult battle ensued because of the entry of several Jordanian armored vehicles. The city’s final surrender occurred only after that battle was over. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Eitan Shamir, *Pikud mesima* (Hebrew) (*Mission Command*), Modan and *Maarakhot*, Ben Shemen, 2014, p. 99. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Ibid, pp. 19–20. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Ibid, p. 100. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
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-85)
86. Teveth, 1971, p. 289. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Ibid, p. 294. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Oren, 1976, p. 107. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Yitzhak Rabin, *Pinkas sherut* (Hebrew) (published in English as *The Rabin Memoirs*), Maariv, Tel Aviv, 1979, vol. 1, p. 60. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Teveth, 1971, p. 296. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
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-91)
92. Ibid, p. 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Teveth, 1971, p. 295. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. Moshe Dayan, “The Commando Battalion Ascends Lod” (Hebrew), *Maarakhot*, vol. 62–63 (July 1950), pp. 34–40, <http://maarachot.idf.il/PDF/FILES/8/105488.pdf> [THIS ALREADY APPEARS ABOVE – SEE NOTE 64] [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Ibid, p. 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Ibid, p. 36. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Later on, Zalmanovitch was appointed the head of the IDF’s Doctrine and Training Division. After leaving the army, he worked as a researcher for the IDF’s History Department(???). [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Boaz Zalmanovith, “The Conquest of Lod and Its Effect on the IDF” (Hebrew), *Maarakhot* 383 (May 2002), pp. 92–97. The essay is based on a term paper written for a program at the IDF Command and Staff College in which he participated. <http://maarachot.idf.il/PDF/FILES/2/110342.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Ibid, p. 94. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Ibid, p. 96. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. For the sake of accuracy, 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-101)
102. Naphtali, Lau Lavie, *Moshe Dayan: a Biography***,** Hartmore House, Hartford,1969, p. 66**.** [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Mula Cohen, 2000, pp. 140–141. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. Ibid, p. 141. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Teveth, 1971, p. 340. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Ibid, p. 296. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. 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 some of the operations to open the road to Jerusalem. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. Dayan, 1976, p. 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Shapira, 2004, p. 387. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. 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-110)
111. Dayan, 1976, p. 73. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Teveth, 1971, p. 301. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. Dayan, 1976, p. 75. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. Officers who also engage in diplomacy is a common historical phenomenon. Despite the long-standing division between the political and military echelons to allow for supervision of the army, many officers are active in negotiations 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 Dwight Eisenhower and Douglas MacArthur in World War II. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Teveth, 1971, p. 302. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. THE HEBREW FOOTNOTE EXPLAINS WHAT “CHICKEN” MEANS. I DON’T THINK IT’S NECESSARY IN ENGLISH. DO YOU? [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. Teveth, 1971, pp. 303–304. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. Yaakov Granek, known by his underground nickname “Blond Dov,” had been a Lehi commander and was commander of 89th Battalion under Moshe Dayan’s command in the War of Independence. In his youth, he joined the Beitar movement and came to Mandatory Palestine in 1940. During his service in Lehi, he planned and participated in many actions against the British rule. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. Teveth, 1971. p. 304. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. Inter alia Zalman Mart, Nahman Betser, Alex Broyde, Israel Gefen, Uri Bar-On, and Akiva Saar. Teveth, 1971, p. 304. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. “Vital territory” is a technical military term. The IDF defines it as “A territory 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. The territorial imperative is a defensive mission of the said echelon or an inseparable part of its mission. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. 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. Of course, the question of location differs in the context of a brigade commander. The directive for that context is that the brigade commander should place himself where he thinks he has the most ability to affect the battle, as Zorea argued. Nonetheless, most brigade commanders tend to be in front of the troops, evidence for the victory of Dayan’s school of thought. Email exchange with Lt. Col. (res.) Boaz Zalmanovitz, previously head of the Doctrine and Instructions Division, Operations Directorate. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. Teveth, 1971, p. 314. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. Ibid, p. 310. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. 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)
126. Morris, 2010, p. 358. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. Teveth, 1971, p. 316. Teveth notes that even though Dayan was deeply disappointed by the failure of the action, he did not hound Mart the way 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)
128. Dayan, 1976, p. 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. 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)
130. Dayan, 1976, p. 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. Count Folke Bernadotte was a diplomat and a member of the Swedish royal family. He was the U.N. mediator between Israel and the Arab states during the War of Independence. He was assassinated in Jerusalem by the Lehi because his partition plan was said to be pro-Arab. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. Dayan, 1976, p. 78. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. Teveth, 1971, p. 319. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. Dayan, 1976, p. 79. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. Ibid, p. 79. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. “The New Israel,” *Life Magazine*, 18 July, 1949. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. Ronen Yitzhak,*Abdullah Al-Tall: Arab Legion Officer*, Sussex Academic Press, 2012, p. 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. Ibid, p. 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. Dayan, 1976, p. 80. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. Yitzhak, 2012, p. 62. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. 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-141)
142. Abdullah al-Tall, *Zikhronot* (Hebrew) (*Memoirs*), *Maarakhot*, Tel Aviv, 1969. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. Yitzhak, 2012, p. 63. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. Ibid, 144. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. See: Shimon Shamir, *Aliyatoo veshki’ato shel hashalom haham im yarden: Hamedina’ut hayisra’elit bi’ymei Hussein* (Hebrew) (*The Rise and Fall of the Warm Peace with Jordan*), United Kibbutz, Tel Aviv, 2012, p. 22. In this context, the most famous example is Golda Meir’s meeting with the king of Jordan on November 17, 1947, and a second meeting on May 11, 1948 (to which she arrived dressed in traditional Bedouin robes), in a last-ditch effort to dissuade him from joining the invasion. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. Cohen Shani, 2020, p. 107. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. Ibid, p. 108. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. Ibid, p. 115. [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. Ibid, p. 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. Ibid, p. 117. [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. For more on the atmosphere of the talks, see: Teveth, 1971, pp. 326–327. [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. Yitzhak, 2012, p. 67; Dayan, 1976, p. 85. [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. Dayan, 1976, p. 85. [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. 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-154)
155. Dayan, 1976, p. 86. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. Naor (ed.), 2016, p. 174. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. 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 and 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. Afterwards, he served as a professor of international relations at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He was awarded the Israel Prize for political science in 1992. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. Teveth, 1971, p. 336; Yitzhak, 2012, p. 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
159. Yitzhak, 2012, p. 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
160. Shamir, 2012, p. 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
161. Dayan, 1976, p. 88. [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
162. 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-162)
163. Ben-Dror, 2012, p. 198. [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
164. Dayan, 1976, p. 92. [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
165. Yitzhak, 2012, p. 73. [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
166. Teveth, 1971, p. 337. [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
167. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
168. Ibid, p. 335. [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
169. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
170. Ben-Gurion’s letter of parting to the outgoing chief of staff in: Dayan, 1976, p. 374. [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
171. Teveth, 1971, p. 331. [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
172. Ibid, p. 334. [↑](#footnote-ref-172)