

Chronicle of Events

This table lists the principal events in the story of illegal immigration, against the political and military background of the period 1945-48.

1944

January 22: President Roosevelt appoints War Refugee Board.

January - May: Increase of "events" in Palestine.

July: Sir Harold MacMichael finishes his term as High Commissioner to Palestine and is replaced by Lord Gort.

During the year, the following Mossad immigrant ships sail from Romania and Bulgaria:

Maritza (A), Maritza (B), Morena, Mefkura, Milcah (A), Kazbek, Bulbul, Salaheddin, Tourus.

By special agreement with the Mandatory Government, these ships unload the passengers in Turkey, from where they are taken by train to Palestine. The *Mefkura* is sunk in the Bosphorus.

1945

The Black Sea, from whose ports the illegal immigrant ships sailed during World War Two, loses its status as the only sailing route. The Mossad emissaries who were based in Istanbul during the war are dispersed partly in Romania and Bulgaria; others return to Palestine and then go back to Europe on missions for the Mossad Le'Aliyah Beth.

The Bricha organisation, an arm of the Hagana, starts to operate in Europe with the help of the pioneering youth movements.

The Mossad sets up stations in Italy and France, with operating bases in their ports.

February 14-17: Roosevelt and Churchill meet with King Ibn Saud; the U.S. President promises the King that no steps will be taken that are inimical to the Arab people.

March: Dozens of additional Palmach and Palyam members are sent to Europe. Radio operators (Gideons) join the Mossad workers in Italy and France. Communications stations are set up in the ports and operating centres. The Mossad extends its activities; emissaries are sent to a number of countries, ships are purchased, money is raised and contacts made with leaders and Governments in the various countries of Europe.

March 10: Ibn Saud writes to Roosevelt about the historic right of the Arabs to Palestine and rejects the idea of establishing a Jewish national home.

March 22: In Cairo, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Transjordan, agree to establish the Arab League. Their agreement comes into force on May 10, after ratification by the member nations. Representatives of the Palestinian Arabs are granted membership of the League in December 1945.

April 5: Roosevelt writes to Ibn Saud promising that no decision on Palestine will be taken without full consultation with both the Arabs and the Jews, and that he personally will not take any step which might be hostile to the Arab people.

May 8: VE Day: World War Two ends in Europe. The Mossad Le'Aliyah Beth is reorganised and large-scale immigration is planned.

May 9: Churchill writes to Weizmann that the Palestine problem cannot be properly considered until the Allies sit round the table at the Peace Conference.

May 11: The Hagana suffers a serious blow in the death of Eliahu Golomb.

May 15: Weizmann replies to Churchill's letter of 9 May, saying that he found his remarks shocking, since they implied a continuation of the White Paper policy, closing the gates of Palestine to the survivors of the Holocaust and forcing the refugees to become nomads or die.

May 22: Weizmann writes to Churchill that his position and that of the Jews have become intolerable. "Now is the time to repeal the White Paper, open up Palestine to the Jews and establish a Jewish state."

May 26: David Ben-Gurion says at a New York press conference that if the British Government wants to implement the White Paper, it will have to use brutal and constant force to achieve its aims.

July: A Labour Government is elected in Great Britain, with

Clement Attlee as Prime Minister and Ernest Bevin as Foreign Secretary.

July 24: President Truman writes to Churchill but the letter is received by Attlee. In the letter, Truman refers to the extreme limitations on Jewish immigration to Palestine caused by the White Paper and which have angered the American public and expresses the hope that the British Government will be able to abolish these restrictions. A few days later, the U.S. President says in New York that he wants as many Jews as possible to go to Palestine but that he does not want to send half a million Americans to keep the peace there.

July 27: A British official writes that the Zionists have succeeded in selling the idea that even after the Allied victory, immigration to Palestine is the only hope of survival for many Jews.

August 22: Attlee sets up a ministerial committee under Herbert Morrison to consider the Palestine question.

August 28: Abdul-illa, Regent of Iraq, says that his country will not agree to increased Jewish immigration to Palestine.

The immigrant ship *Dalin* (*Sirius*) sails from Italy. The skipper, Enrico Levi, succeeds in unloading the passengers in secret at Caesarea.

August 31: Truman writes to Attlee in support of the proposal that Great Britain grant an additional 100,000 entry permits to ease the refugee problem.

September 4: 79 illegal immigrants land at Caesarea from the *Nettuno* (*Natan A*), which sailed from Italy.

September 9: The *Gabriela* brings 40 immigrants from Greece and lands them at Caesarea.

September 19: The *Pietro*, sailing from Italy, lands 168 immigrants off Shefayim. She returns to Italy with Mossad emissaries, radio operators and Palyam workers, as well as 50 representatives from the Jewish Agency and Histadrut, who are to work in the DP camps and Diaspora communities.

October 1: Immigrants from the *Nettuno B* (*Natan B*) land at Shefayim.

David Ben-Gurion cables instructions to Moshe Sneh regarding the opening of the campaign against the British authorities.

October 10: The Palmach frees 200 illegals from the Athlit detention camp in a surprise operation.

October 26: The *Pietro B*, sailing from Italy, lands 174 immigrants off Shefayim.

October 31: In combined operations by Jewish resistance organisations, the Palmach sinks three British vessels and sabotages the railways at 153 places: Irgun Zvai Leumi attacks the railway station at Lod and Lehi strikes at the oil refineries in Haifa.

November: The British reinforce coastal security in Palestine in the wake of the renewal of organised illegal immigration by sea. British destroyers and RAF spotter aircraft are sent out on patrol in the Mediterranean.

November 2: Ernest Bevin meets Chaim Weizmann and Moshe Sharett and reprimands them for the operations of the night of 31 October.

November 5: About 100 Jews are massacred in a pogrom in Tripoli, Libya.

November 8: Gen. Sir Alan Cunningham replaces Lord Gort as High Commissioner for Palestine.

November 13: Bevin speaks about the Palestine question with 70 British journalists.

Disturbances in Tel Aviv.

In reply to Truman's letter of 31 August, Attlee announces that Great Britain cannot issue 100,000 additional entry permits; instead he proposes the establishment of an Anglo-American commission of inquiry.

November 23: *Dimitrios* (*Berl Katznelson*), 180 tons, sails from Greece with 221 immigrants, mostly of Greek origin. The passengers are landed at Shefayim with the help of members of a Palmach naval course. Some 200 come ashore. Towards the end of the operation the British seize the ship together with the remaining immigrants and their Palmach escorts.

November 25: Two radar stations of the coast guard are blown up by the Hagana near Natanya. The attackers' tracks lead back to Moshav Hogla. Crowds of Jewish civilians come to defend the besieged settlements Hogla, Givat Chaim, Ein Hahoresh and others. Eight people are killed when the British open fire.

November 26: Bevin meets a delegation from the American League for a Free Palestine, which supports the Irgun.

November 28: Truman announces that, due to changes in the situation, he no longer supports the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine, although he favoured the idea when he was Vice-President.

December 4: Truman announces that he still supports the wide-scale immigration of European Jews to Palestine and the establishment of a truly democratic State there.

December 18: The U.S. Senate passes a resolution demanding that Jews be allowed free entry to Palestine, subject to the country's economic absorptive capacity.

December 17-19: The U.S. Congress passes a joint resolution of the Senate and House of Representatives, urging the removal of restrictions on Jewish immigration to Palestine, the encouragement of settlement and the development of the country as the Jewish National Home and the establishment, together with other elements of the population, of a democracy with equality for all, without regard for religion or race.

December 27: Irgun attacks two police stations and an army base. Nine British soldiers are killed and David Ben-Gurion blames the Mandatory Government for their deaths.

December 27: The *Andarta (Hannah Senesh)*, 250 tons, sails from Italy with 250 illegals. The ship reaches the coast off Nahariya and evades the blockade but runs aground on a sandbank. The passengers are brought ashore by the Palmach and local youth, with the help of a rope from the ship to the shore.

December 29: Moshe Sharett and David Ben-Gurion say that there is no point in co-operating with the Government in fighting terrorism: "Any request to Jewish citizens to obey the law will fall on deaf ears whilst the Government of Palestine itself is permanently in breach of the basic law of the country over which it rules by virtue of the Mandate."

December 30: The journalist Jon Kimche writes in *The Palestine Post* that there is a feeling among the Jews that the attacks of last Friday (27 December) have caused them indescribable harm, both in Palestine and abroad.

 1946

January: The Arab League declares a boycott on Jewish goods manufactured in Palestine. Bevin announces that Transjordan is to become an independent nation and a member of the UN. Sharett protests strongly about the dismemberment of Transjordan from the western part of Palestine.

The heads of the Mossad, meeting in Palestine, agree to the acquisition of large vessels.

January 9: The Iraqi parliament passes a resolution, calling sarcastically for an Arab national home in California. *The Palestine Post* calls this an insult to a people which had recently gone through the worst tragedy in its history.

January 18: The *Rondina (Enzo Sereni)*, 500 tons, sailing from Italy with 900 passengers, is intercepted by destroyers and taken to Haifa. The passengers are held in the detention camp at Atlit.

February 10: Jamal al Husaini returns to Palestine.

February 20: The Palmach attacks a RAF radar station in Haifa. The installation is destroyed and eight soldiers are wounded.

February 22: The Palmach attacks and damages four mobile British police stations.

February 24: 50,000 Jews, including leaders of the community, take part in the funeral of four young men killed on 21 February in a Hagana attack on the Sharona police station, near Tel Aviv.

February 25: Irgun sabotages RAF aircraft at three air bases.

March 25: Meir Wilner, Palestine Communist leader, says in Jerusalem that the partition plan is an imperialist programme aimed at prolonging British rule.

March 26: The *Moris (Wingate)*, sailing from Italy with 238 immigrants from various European countries, approaches Tel Aviv. As she enters territorial waters, the Hagana carries out a diversion to distract the attention of the military authorities from the disembarkation but the ship is intercepted while approaching the coast. During the diversionary action, Bracha Fuld, a member of the Palmach, is killed. The immigrants are taken to the detention camp in Atlit.

March 28: The *Asia (Tel Hai)* is intercepted and the passengers taken to Atlit detention camp. This was the first ship to sail from the

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French port of Sète after World War Two. The 736 passengers included 195 French immigrants and 548 members of a youth movement from Belgium.

April-May: The La Spezia incident. The immigrant ships *Fede* (Eliahu Golomb) and *Fenice* (Dov Hos), berthed in the Italian port of La Spezia, take aboard thousands of immigrants. This incident represents one of the peaks in the struggle for illegal immigration.

April 3: The Cairo newspaper *Al Qotla* quotes Ibn Saud as saying that if Jewish immigration and land-buying continue in Palestine, Great Britain and the Allied Powers will have to face the enmity of the whole Moslem world.

April 30: President Truman says that he is happy that his proposal to admit 100,000 Jews into Palestine immediately has been unanimously accepted by the Anglo-American Commission of Inquiry. The transfer of these wretched people should be carried out with maximum speed.

May 1: The British Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, says in the House of Commons that there would be serious difficulties in absorbing such a large number of people. In view of the existence of illegal military formations and the actions recently carried out by them, the Mandatory Government would not be able to permit the entry of such a large number of immigrants until these organisations were disbanded and their weapons handed in to the authorities.

May 2: The Arab Higher Committee writes to Attlee that the recommendations of the Anglo-American Commission endanger the national existence of the Arabs in Palestine, since they deny them the right of self-determination. The Council threatens that the Arabs will defend their country with all the means at their disposal.

May 5: Representatives of the seven member countries of the Arab League vote in Cairo to take action against the recommendations in the Commission's report.

May 9: Lt. General Sir Evelyn Barker replaces Lt. General John Darcey as commander of the British armed forces in Palestine.

May 10: Lt. General John Darcey, commander of British forces in Palestine from 1944, returns to England and makes an anti-Jewish report to the chiefs of staff. U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson tells the Arab ambassadors that the USA will consult with both the Arabs and Jews before evaluating the report of the commission.

May 13: The *Smyrna* (Max Nordau) is intercepted by the Royal

Navy 80 miles off the coast of Palestine. The ship had sailed from Romania following vigorous intercession by Mossad emissaries with the Soviet occupation authorities and the Romanian administration. These efforts were successful and made it possible for the immigrant ship to enter harbour at Constanza for refitting and embarkation. A committee of Russian and Romanian experts examined the ship and found her fit to sail. She left port on 7 May with 1,754 immigrants, including 240 children under 12 years old. The request of the British member of the Allied supervisory committee in Romania to stop the ship from sailing was rejected by Marshal Zhukov, of the Red Army, on the grounds that the passengers were in possession of valid visas to Mexico and Uruguay.

May 25: In reply to the Governments of Great Britain and the USA, who asked the Arab Higher Committee for its opinion of the Anglo-American report, the Arabs say that they utterly reject it. Instead, they produce three demands: cancellation of immigration and abolition of the Mandate, withdrawal of all foreign troops and the establishment of an Arab State in Palestine.

May 26-28: First meeting of Arab heads of state in Egypt. Kings, presidents and heads of government assemble to discuss the Palestine question. They categorically reject the Anglo-American Inquiry report.

June 8: The *Aghios Andreas* (*Haviva Reik*), a small wooden-hulled ship, leaves Greece with 462 immigrants. She is intercepted by the Royal Navy while trying to land her passengers near Kibbutz Nitzanim and the immigrants are taken to Athlit.

June 9: The former Mufti of Jerusalem, al-Hajj Amin al-Husaini, returns from Paris to Damascus.

June 12: At the Labour Party conference, Ernest Bevin says that a propaganda campaign is being carried out in the U.S., especially in New York, for the admission of 100,000 Jews to Palestine. He says that the Americans do not want too many Jews in New York, whereas these 100,000 are only a small part of the problem of refugees in Europe. He adds that in Palestine there are illegal armed forces, and if 100,000 more people were to arrive, the Government would have to station an extra division there, which it is not prepared to do.

The Arab League dissolves the Arab Higher Committee and appoints Haj Amin el-Husseini as head of its directorate.

June 17: The Hagana launches large-scale activity; the Palmach

blows up bridges and railways, cutting Palestine off from its neighbours, and Lehi attacks the railway workshops in Haifa.

June 18: Lehi attacks the Officers' Club in Tel Aviv and kidnaps five British officers; more officers are abducted from other locations. The abductions are carried out to provide hostages, in order to save the lives of Jews condemned to death for taking part in underground operations.

June 20: King Farouk permits al-Hajj Amin al-Husaini to live in Egypt.

June 27: The *Beauharnois* (*Josiah Wedgwood*) is caught and the 1,257 immigrants are sent to Athlit.

June 29: "Black Saturday" - Operation Agatha: the British Army occupies the offices of the Jewish Agency and arrests members of the Executive. It detains thousands of Palmach and Hagana members and conducts weapon searches, in an attempt to smash the Palmach and the Hagana. The splinter organisations begin a series of terrorist operations.

July: The *Akbel* (*Biria*) and *Balboa* (*Hagana*) incident. In Marseilles, the Mossad charts a small Turkish vessel, *Akbel*. In a dramatic operation, the Mossad attempts to save another of its ships, the *Hagana*, and the 999 immigrants aboard her from arrest by the Royal Navy. The passengers aboard the *Hagana* are transferred to the *Biria* at sea, to the west of Crete. The American journalist, I.F. Stone, accompanying the immigrants, describes the voyage as something out of hell. The overloaded ship, in danger of sinking, sends out an SOS signal but the destroyer which is sent to help her is slow in arriving. She limps into Haifa under her own steam on 2 July.

The *Hagana*, after transferring her passengers to the *Biria*, returns to Yugoslavia to embark passengers at Bakar, near Fiume. She carries 2,638 immigrants, some 800 more than planned, in conditions of serious overcrowding. The engines break down and an SOS message is sent out. Disaster is narrowly averted but the vessel is caught by the Royal Navy and taken to Palestine on 30 July 1946. The immigrants are arrested and sent to Athlit.

July 1: In a debate on the Palestine question in the House of Commons, the Prime Minister, Clement Attlee says that he has proof of a close link between the Jewish Agency and the Hagana, and of links between the Hagana and the Irgun.

At a rally in Palestine, the Vaad Leumi, the National Assembly of the Jewish community, decides on a policy of non-cooperation with the Mandatory Government.

July 4: The Soviet Government newspaper *Izvestia* attacks British policy in Palestine.

July 5: 36 Jews are massacred in a pogrom at Kielce in the "new" communist Poland.

July 8: The U.S. Congress debates the granting of a loan to Great Britain.

July 9: Rabbi Stephen Wise, the American Zionist leader, supports a U.S. proposal to give Great Britain a loan of \$3,750 million, despite the situation in Palestine.

July 13: The U.S. Congress approves the \$3,750 million loan to Great Britain. *The Times* calls it a crutch for a sick man.

July 14: Representatives of British Jewry criticise the British Government for its delay in issuing the 100,000 entry permits to Palestine.

July 22: Irgun blows up the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, housing offices of the Mandatory Government; 91 people are killed.

July 24: The British Government publishes a White Paper on violence in Palestine.

July 25: The British Government announces an Anglo-American agreement on autonomy for Palestine, known as the Morrison-Grady plan.

July 26: Rabbi Silver, the U.S. Zionist leader, calls the agreement a heartless betrayal.

July 27: Arab dignitaries in Jerusalem call on Arab representatives to refuse to participate with Jews on any committee whatever and to reject any partition proposals.

July 30: The Morrison-Grady plan is attacked in the U.S. Senate as a betrayal of the promise of a Jewish National Home.

Operation Shark: Tel Aviv is surrounded by British forces (6th Airborne Division) and house to house searches are carried out. The operation lasts four days.

July 31: The *Hochelage* (*HaHayal Ha'Ivri*), sailing from Antwerp with 510 immigrants, is caught off the coast of Palestine.

July: The Hebrew Revolt (agreement between Hagana and Etzel) collapses; acts of terrorism by splinter organisations increase.

August 5: The British Cabinet decides to stop detaining illegals in Palestine and to hold them in Cyprus.

August 12: The British Government declares its firm resolve to put an end to illegal immigration. The High Commissioner announces Operation Igloo, the deportations to Cyprus.

As soon as the deportation plan is announced, the Mossad sends three immigrant ships to Palestine. *Sagolem (Yagur)*, sailing from France with 754 passengers, reaches Haifa on August 11, *Henrietta Szold*, sailing from Greece with 543 passengers, berths in Haifa on August 12 and *Avanti (Katriel Yaffe)* brings 604 immigrants from Italy and arrives in Haifa on August 13.

On August 14, the day the deportations are to take place, a curfew is declared in Haifa. An infantry division is drafted in to maintain security and the Royal Navy presence is reinforced. The illegals who are transferred to the deportation ships put up fierce resistance. The Hagana defies the curfew; thousands of people take to the streets to demonstrate their solidarity with the immigrants fighting in the port. Three Hagana members and an immigrant are killed by British gunfire.

August 15: 790 illegals arrive from Italy aboard the *San Sissimo (Kaf Gimel Yordei Hasira)*.

A Palmach explosives expert sabotages the deportation vessel *Empire Heywood* and delays her for five days.

August 16: *Ile de la Rose (Amiram Shohet)*, sailing from Italy with 183 illegals, eludes the blockade and lands her passengers at Caesarea.

August 28: British forces surround two settlements in the south, Dorot and Ruhama, and carry out a six-day arms search.

September 2: *Fede II (Arba Hiruyiot)*, sailing from Italy with 1,024 immigrants, is intercepted and rammed by three destroyers. The immigrants fight for three hours and a British soldier is thrown into the sea. On the following day, the passengers are transferred to Cyprus.

September 9: The London Conference on Palestine opens, with the participation of British and Arab Governments. There are no delegates from Palestine, Jews or Arabs.

Sergeant T.G. Martin is shot and killed a few days after he identifies Yitzhak Shamir (Yzernitzki), one of the leaders of Lehi.

September 22: The *Adriana (Palmach)* sails from Italy with 611 immigrants, mostly members of youth movements; when caught, they

put up strong resistance. One immigrant is killed.

September 30: Delegates from Arab States submit proposals for a Palestine Constitution to the London Conference.

October 4: Arthur Creech Jones replaces George Hall as British Colonial Secretary. President Truman declares his support for massive Jewish immigration to Palestine.

October 6: In a secret operation at the end of Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), 11 new Jewish settlements are established in the Negev.

October 14: Kol Israel (Voice of Israel), the underground radio station, resumes its broadcasts.

October 15: King Ibn Saud writes to Truman that he is amazed by his recent declaration of support for the Jews in Palestine and his demand for immigration, which would completely alter the situation in the country.

October 22: *Fenice II (Bracha Fuld)* arrives from Italy with 806 immigrants. Due to the tense situation, and in order not to affect the imminent release of the communal leaders arrested on Black Saturday, no instructions were relayed to the passengers as to the degree of resistance they should show.

October 25: Truman replies to Ibn Saud, defending his declaration of October 4.

October 30: Attack on the Jerusalem railway station.

November 1: Sailings from France renewed. *San Demetrio (Latrun)* leaves from La Ciotat with 1,275 immigrants. The ship is intercepted and the passengers sent to Cyprus.

November: The *HaKedosha-Knesset Israel* incident. Some 600 immigrants, mainly from Hungary, board the *Aghia Anastasia (HaKedosha)* in Yugoslavia. On leaving harbour, the ship begins to sink in a bad storm.

The *Lochita (Knesset Israel)*, which was bound for Yugoslavia from Greece, is called to take the passengers from the sinking ship. She is already carrying 3,845 immigrants in conditions of great overcrowding. During the voyage, nine babies are born (two of whom die). The ship has to return to Split to take on supplies and prepare to resist the British when the time comes.

On November 24, the *Knesset Israel* is located by British patrols and

is intercepted on November 26 and towed to Haifa. The immigrants are transferred to a deportation vessel in a well planned operation by Lt. Col. Grieg. During the struggle, one immigrant and one are killed and 38 immigrants wounded. There is also a struggle during disembarkation in Cyprus.

November: Water pipes laid in the Negev.

November 26: *Athina (Rafiah)* sails from Bakar, Yugoslavia, with 785 immigrants from Romania and 30 from Bulgaria. She runs aground on a sandbank off an island in the Dodecanese. Eight passengers die and the others scramble ashore with the help of ropes. The Mossad is unable to send help and the Jewish Agency has to ask the Royal Navy to come to the scene. The immigrants are taken to Crete on two British vessels and transferred straight to Cyprus.

1947

January 15: Operation Polly: British troops forbidden to visit cinemas in Palestine; allowed out only in groups of at least four; soldiers' families sent home to Great Britain.

January: Increased Irgun activity.

February: Illegal immigration is stepped up.

Marica (Lanegev) sails from Sète with 643 illegals from Poland, including a large group of Betar members. The ship is intercepted by a destroyer 19 miles off Caesarea on February 9. Herbert Lazar, a 25-year-old immigrant from Vienna, is killed in the fighting. The immigrants are expelled to Cyprus.

San Miguel (HaMa'apil Ha'Almoni) is intercepted at sea on February 16.

Ulva (Chaim Arlosoroff) sails from Sweden with some 600 immigrants, mostly women. In Italy they are joined by 700 additional passengers (1,348 passengers altogether). After a month at sea, the ship is intercepted by the Royal Navy, and in the struggle to avoid arrest, she runs aground on a sandbank off Bat Galim, near Haifa. The immigrants are taken to Cyprus.

February 7: the Mandatory Government tells the Jewish Agency that they have to provide information on terrorists no later than 10 February.

January 8: *Izvestia* criticises the new British plan as an inflammatory attempt to justify remaining in Palestine.

February 12: Lt. Gen. G.H.A. MacMillan is appointed commander of British forces in Palestine. Bevin announces that Great Britain intends to return the Mandate to the UN, making that organisation responsible for finding a solution to the Palestine problem.

February 25: Following the failure of the London Conference, Bevin makes a major speech on Palestine in the House of Commons.

The *Susannah (Shabtai Lozinsky)* sails from Italy with 823 passengers and succeeds in evading the naval blockade. On February 12 she anchors off Kibbutz Nirzanim and 350 immigrants reach the shore. Next morning, a British patrol discovers what is happening and the army and navy are summoned. Immigrants caught on the beach are taken to detention camp at nearby Ashkelon. Thousands of Jewish citizens are called to the beach by the Hagana; they mingle with the immigrants to prevent them from being identified. When questioned, they all answer "I am a Jew from Eretz Israel". Those that are arrested are taken to Cyprus, including a number of the Palestinian citizens.

The *Abril (Ben Hecht)*, prepared by the American League for Free Immigration (associated with the Revisionist movement), sails from Port de Bouc with 626 immigrants from Poland, France and Tunisia. The ship is caught by warships off Tel Aviv on March 9. The passengers do not offer any resistance and are sent to Cyprus on the following day.

March 2: Martial law in the Tel Aviv area - Operation Elephant - lasting for 12 days.

March 16: Martial law called off.

April: Four ships sail from Italy - *San Filippo (Moledet)*, *Amilia (She'ar Yashuv)*, *Tradewinds (Hatikva)* and *Orietta (Mordei HaGeta'ot)*. The *Guardian (Theodor Herzl)* sails from France with 2,641 illegal immigrants, all of whom are deported to Cyprus.

April 2: Great Britain raises the Palestine question at the General Assembly of the UN.

April 13: Lord Hall, First Lord of the Admiralty, declares that the Government sincerely wants to find a final solution to the problem.

April 21: Meir Feinstein, a member of the Irgun, and Moshe Barazani, from Lehi, commit suicide in their prison cell with a hand

grenade, to avoid being hanged by the British.

April 26: A British police officer, A.A. Conquest, is shot an.

May: Resurgence of Zionist awareness among North African, Yoni Avidov, Mossad emissary, and Efraim Ben-Haim, emissary of HeHalutz, mobilise the community for immigration to Palestine. The *Annal (Yehuda Halevi)* sails from Algeria, carrying 460 passengers. She is intercepted off Haifa on May 31 and the immigrants are sent to detention camp in Cyprus.

May 14: Andre Gromyko, representative of the USSR at the UN, says at the General Assembly that the Jews and Arabs are united in demanding the end of the Mandate. In an emotional speech, he refers to the suffering of the Jews during the Nazi regime and claims that their desire to establish a country of their own stems from the fact that not one western European nation was able to protect their basic rights and rescue them from the Fascists. He emphasises his country's support for the partition of Palestine into two independent nations - one Jewish and one Arab - linked by a single economic system.

June 13: The General Assembly of the UN decides to appoint a special commission to draw up recommendations on the question of Palestine.

July-August: The *Exodus* Incident. The *President Warfield*, renamed *Exodus 1947*, sails from Sète on July 11 with 4,500 refugees from camps in Germany. The ship is intercepted on July 18 off Gaza and boarded by naval units after a struggle. The ship is towed into Haifa and the immigrants returned to France aboard three British vessels, which anchor in Port de Bouc. From there, the passengers are sent back to Germany.

July 8: Weizmann testifies before the UN Special Commission on Palestine (UNSCOP) and in the name of the Jewish Agency recommends the partition of the country.

July 16: The *Bruna (Yod Dalet Halalei Gesher Haziw)* leaves Italy with 685 immigrants. On 28 July, they are sent to detention camp in Cyprus.

The *Luciana (Shivat Zion)* sails from Algiers on July 15 with 411 illegal immigrants. She is shadowed by a British destroyer from the moment she leaves port, and on July 28 is boarded and the passengers sent to Cyprus.

21: Palmach units attack two radar installations on Mount Tel.

July 31: Irgun hangs two British sergeants. Five Jews are killed and 15 injured by British police in a reprisal action in Tel Aviv.

September: The *Ferida (Af-Al-Pi-Chen)* leaves Italy with 434 illegals. On interception, they resist; one passenger is killed and nine are wounded. On September 29 they are sent to Cyprus.

The Mossad co-ordinates sailings from the Balkans; two large immigrant ships, *Northland (Medinat HaYehudim)* and *Paducah (Geula)*, with 2,664 and 1,388 passengers respectively, sail from Burgas, Bulgaria, on 26 September. They are both seized by the Royal Navy on 2 October. Activists aboard *Medinat HaYehudim* fiercely resist their arrest and damage one of the destroyers. British troops fire tear gas shells. Immigrants from both the ships are deported to Cyprus over a period of three days.

September 16: Dr Chaim Weizmann speaks at the United Nations as the representative of the Jewish people.

November 5: *Rafaellucia (Kedma)* sails from Italy with 794 illegals; she is intercepted ten days later off Beirut and towed into Haifa. The passengers are shipped to Cyprus.

Two immigrant ships sail from France, *Alberta (Aliyah)*, with 182 illegals, and *W.V. Marie (HaPortzim)*, with 167. They break through the naval blockade and put their passengers ashore, the first at Nahariya, on November 16 and the second at Tel Aviv, on December 4. Some of the immigrants who land are former passengers from the *Exodus* who had been returned to Germany.

November 26: Gromyko tells the UN that although the Arabs claim that the partition of Palestine would be a crime, this is unjustified, because the Jewish people have had close links with Palestine for a very long time.

November 29: The UN General Assembly approves, by the necessary two thirds majority, a proposal to partition Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab State.

December: The first immigrant ship to sail after the partition resolution is the *Maria Cristina (Lo Tafhidunu)*. Sailing from Italy, she carries 850 immigrants from Poland, Romania and Hungary. There are also four foreign journalists aboard, Meyer Levin, Bertrand Hasse,

Thérèse Torres and Y. Michelovitz, who make a document about the voyage. She is intercepted on December 2. Immigrants are taken to Cyprus five days later. With 170 and 100 pregnant women aboard, the immigrants offer no resistance.

December 14: *Maria Giovanni (Kaf Tei BeNovember)* sails from Corsica with 680 immigrants, mostly from Romania and Hungary, and some from Poland and North Africa. After interception by the Royal Navy on December 28, they are all sent to detention camp in Cyprus.

December: The *Pans* Affair. At the end of December, two large immigrant ships, *Pan York (Kibbutz Galuyiot)* and *Pan Crescent (Atzma'ut)*, sail from Burgas. They carry 15,260 immigrants from Romania, with 500 youngsters from Bulgaria. Following an agreement between the Jewish Agency and the British authorities, the ships sail direct to Cyprus, arriving on January 1, 1948. The passengers are all interned.

December 11: The British Government informs the UN that the Mandate over Palestine will terminate on May 15, 1948.

1948

January 1: The *Archimedes (Ha'Umor HaMeuhadol - United Nations)*, sailing from Italy, succeeds in running the blockade and putting all 537 passengers ashore at Nahariya.

January 22: The British Government informs the UN that up to the expiry of the Mandate, it will not permit any increase in the immigration quota. The UN recommendation that Great Britain permit the opening of a free Jewish port in Haifa from February 1 is rejected.

January: The Mossad is asked to give priority to young immigrants, especially those who have undergone military training in the camps in Europe.

Immigrant ships are to be named after events in the War of Independence now being fought in Eretz Israel.

Ehud Avriel and Yehuda Arazi, members of the Mossad, sign an arms contract with the Czech firm Skoda.

The *Silvia Starita (Lamed Hei Giborei Kfar Etzion)*, sailing from Italy with 274 immigrants, reaches Haifa on February 1, the day on

which the free port in Haifa is supposed to be opened. The immigrants are sent to internment camps in Cyprus.

February 12: *Abruzziana (Yerushalayim Hanetzura - Jerusalem Besieged)* arrives in Haifa with 670 immigrants from Italy; they are sent to Cyprus.

February 22: *Setti Fratelli (Komemiut)* sails from France with 699 immigrants from Europe and North Africa, including 280 youths who have undergone Hagana training in the DP camps in Germany; they are all deported to Cyprus.

February 28: *Esmeralda (Yehiam)* sails from Italy with 256 immigrants; she picks up another 767 illegals at Monte Cristo, 250 of whom are from North Africa; the ship is intercepted and her passengers deported to Cyprus.

March: Shaul Avigur, head of the Mossad Le'Aliyah Beth, is appointed coordinator of arms and equipment acquisition. He moves to Switzerland; other workers including Yehuda Arazi and Ehud Avriel, utilise their contacts to facilitate the purchase of arms and ammunition in Italy, France and Yugoslavia and to smuggle them to the Hagana in Palestine.

March 28: *Vivara (Tirat Zvi)*, sailing from Italy with 798 illegals, is intercepted and the passengers deported to Cyprus.

April 3: *Noira*, carrying arms from Czechoslovakia, sails from Yugoslavia and secretly unloads her cargo in Palestine. It is taken by the Hagana to the front line. David Ben-Gurion cables Shaul Avigur: "The items came on time and saved Jerusalem. Congratulations to Avriel."

April 6: The Zionist Executive decides to set up a national administration and assembly, to operate until the departure of the British, and then become the provisional Government of the new State.

April 12: *San Michele (Mishmar Ha'Emek)* sails from France with 78 immigrants; the ship is intercepted and the passengers are sent to Cyprus.

April 21: The Hagana orders the Mossad to issue firearms to the passengers and crew of all immigrant ships to defend themselves.

April 24: *Tadorne (Nachshon)* sails from France with 533 illegals aboard. She is intercepted and the passengers are sent to Cyprus. These are the last illegal immigrants to be interned in Cyprus.

April 26: *Rondina 2 (Bonim ve'Lochamim)*, sailing from Bakar, Yugoslavia, succeeds in landing 1,002 passengers in Palestine. The ship was chartered by the Zionist organisation in Bulgaria and the immigrants, the pick of Bulgaria's pioneer youth movements, travelled by train to the port of departure.

May 14: *The State of Israel is born.*

May: Two immigrant ships, *Tuglia Cristina (Lanitzahon)* and *Orchidea (Medinat Israel)*, sail at the beginning of the month from Brindisi, Italy. On May 15, 1948, the first day of the independent State of Israel, the following cable is sent to the immigrants, while they are still at sea:

"You are the last of the illegal immigrants and first to arrive freely. We are waiting to welcome you ashore as free citizens of your homeland which is fighting for her independence."

The last immigrant ship of all, *Krav Emek Ayalon*, sails from Italy with 709 passengers and reaches the coast of the State of Israel on May 29.

Key to sources

AAC - Report of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry into the problems of European Jewry and Palestine, Cmd. 6808

AECH - Archive of the Executive Committee of the Histadrut

AHH - Archive of the History of the Hagana (the Mossad Le'Aliyah Beth Archive: Box 46)

AKAM - Archive of the Kibbutz HaMe'uchad

BGIA - Ben-Gurion Institute Archive:

- (1) Minutes of Mapai Central Office meetings;
- (2) Minutes of Mapai Secretariat meetings;
- (3) David Ben-Gurion's diaries

CZA - Central Zionist Archive

DST - Direction de la Sécurité du Territoire

Interview - interview with person specified in the text (recordings in author's collection)

JAE - Jewish Agency Executive

NA - National Archives, Washington DC, USA

PRO - Public Record Office, London
Documents classified as follows:
PRO/ADMI - Admiralty
PRO/CAB - Cabinet Office
PRO/CO - Colonial Office
PRO/FO - Foreign Office

By the same author
*Voyage to Freedom: An Episode in the
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(with Ze'ev Tsabor)

SECOND EXODUS

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Ze'ev Venia Hadari
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