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History of Israel's War of Independence: The First Month

by Uri Milstein

Trans. by Alan Sacks. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1997. 377 pp. \$57.50

Reviewed by Justin C. Danilewitz

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Milstein's second volume in his monumental history of Israel's War of Independence stands out for the author's reluctance to taint the evidence with political opinion, his desire to let the facts speak for themselves, and a sound translation. His exceedingly well-documented, if somewhat patchy, reconstruction of events gives the reader a dry but often exciting summation of the most significant events from the November 29, 1947, partition vote at the United Nations to Israel's miraculous triumph of Gush Etzion on January 14, 1948. Milstein's *chef d'oeuvre* deals with but the initial stages of an unceasing struggle for Israeli independence that very much continues today, connecting his study to contemporary issues.

The evidence provided suggests an ongoing Israeli morality debate at all levels of leadership, particularly vis-à-vis the difficult effort to establish a policy of reprisal actions; when errors in judgment were made, the nascent Israeli society showed conscience and remorse. In this, Milstein implicitly repudiates the "new historians" who challenge Israeli scruples. A discussion of Rabbi Akiva Yosef Schlesinger's "settlement strategy" serves as a welcome reminder of the pivotal position of frontline settlements for Israeli national security. Similarly, Shlomo Gur's "stockade and tower" plan for isolated kibbutzim under siege to defend themselves against far stronger forces stands as a testament to the progress the Israel Defense Forces have made in the span of fifty years.

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These included Israel's War of Independence and the Palestinian Nakbah, the Suez Crisis, the Six-Day War, the Yom Kippur War, and two wars in Lebanon. Our editors will review what you've submitted and determine whether to revise the article. Join Britannica's Publishing Partner Program and our community of experts to gain a global audience for your work! External Websites. Jewish Virtual Library - Israel's Wars and Operations: War of Independence. Britannica Websites. Articles from Britannica Encyclopedias for elementary and high school students. Israeli tanks advancing on the Golan Heights during the Six-Day War between Arab and Israeli forces, June 10, 1967. Assaf Kutin/© The State of Israel Government Press Office. Arab-Israeli wars events. keyboard_arrow_left. In May 1948, Israel became an independent state after Israel was recognised by the United Nations as a country in its own right within the Middle East. If relations in pre-war Palestine had been fraught with difficulties, these difficulties paled into insignificance after Israel became a state in its own right. If Israel had faltered at this first hurdle, she would have ceased to exist as a state regardless of what the United Nations had decreed. Egypt signed a peace settlement in February 1949, and over the next few months Lebanon, Jordan and Syria did the same culminating in peace in July 1949. The 1948 war, which the Israelis referred to as the "War of Independence", claimed 6,000 Israeli lives – but this was only 1% of the nation's population.