



Anonymous Soldiers: The Struggle for Israel, 1917-1947

Bruce Hoffman

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A landmark history, based on newly available documents, of the battles between Jews, Arabs, and the British that led to the creation of Israel

Anonymous Soldiers brilliantly re-creates the crucial period in the establishment of Israel, chronicling the three decades of growing anticolonial unrest that culminated in the end of British rule and the UN resolution to create two separate states. This groundbreaking book tells in riveting, previously unknown detail the story of how Britain, in the twilight of empire, struggled and ultimately failed to reconcile competing Arab and Jewish demands and uprisings. Bruce Hoffman, America's leading expert on terrorism, shines new light on the bombing of the King David Hotel, the assassination of Lord Moyne in Cairo, the leadership of Menachem Begin, the life and death of Abraham Stern, and much else. Above all, Hoffman shows exactly how the underdog "anonymous soldiers" of Irgun and Lehi defeated the British and set in motion the chain of events that resulted in the creation of the formidable nation-state of Israel.

This is a towering accomplishment of research and narrative, and a book that is essential to anyone wishing to understand not just the origins of modern-day Israel or the current situation in the Middle East, but also the methodology of terrorism. Drawing on previously untapped archival resources in London, Washington, D.C., and Jerusalem, Bruce Hoffman has written one of the most detailed and sustained accounts of a terrorist and counterterrorist campaign that may ever have been seen, and in doing so has cast light on one of the most decisive world events in recent history. This will be the definitive account of the struggle for Israel for years to come.

Anonymous Soldiers: The Struggle for Israel, 1917-1947 Details

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From Reader Review Anonymous Soldiers: The Struggle for Israel, 1917-1947 for online ebook

Eastbelt says

This is an outstanding book. It is essential reading for anyone trying to make sense of the contemporary Israel-Palestine-Arab turmoil as well as the rise of terrorist groups like Isis. Hoffman's scholarly but supple and readable account provides a remarkably clear explanation and analysis of several convoluted and contentious issues.

First, he explains the origins of the Palestine / Israel question arising from the World War One territorial arrangements made by Britain and France for disputed area of the Ottoman empire. The second strand of "Anonymous Soldiers" examines the and consequences of the postwar British mandated rule over Palestine and its catastrophic impact on Arab-Jewish relations. Finally, and perhaps most crucially for me, Hoffman examines the nature of modern terrorism as revealed by Arab and Jewish terrorism in the conflict over mandated Palestine and its future. His conclusions are disturbing: terrorist tactics are very effective in achieving political aims and very difficult to overcome. Massive application of force by outsider groups is counter-productive and only increases the status and menacing potential of the terrorists themselves. In fact, as Hoffman explains, the British experience in Palestine strongly suggests that military forces are ineffective. Instead, the relatively undramatic and low-key tactic of civilian policing units moving among the local population assisted by good intelligence units are the best hope for combatting modern terrorism.

The Palestine / Israel issue, and its historical causes, is of course a bitterly controversial subject.

Yet Hoffman's approach is remarkably even-handed. His conclusions are supported by a great range of evidence. He has scoured hitherto secret documents, found obscure but vital official papers and records, examined intelligence accounts, used oral histories, sampled public opinion analyses, read partisan pamphlets and journals. Read his account of the bombing of the King David Hotel for a master class in how to write a clear, succinct, exciting and honest account of an event previously mired in claim, counter-claim, outright lies and bias.

Very few heroic, honourable figures or groups emerge from "Anonymous Soldiers": Chaim Weizmann (struggling frantically to keep the peace between Jewish factions and tone down their rhetoric or violence), the British Secretary of State Lord Moyne, the much-maligned High Commissioner Alan Cunningham. (to my surprise Lawrence of Arabia and Winston Churchill also come out quite well). But there are many people whose actions, whether stupid, unwise or malicious, contributed to the bloody mess that Palestine became. They include the Palestinian Arab leader Haj Amin al-Husseini, the vacillating and vague British Prime Minister Clement Attlee, his astonishingly ineffective and unreflective Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin who had a fatal knack for choosing the worst possible option at the worst possible time, Britain's World War 2 'hero' Bernard Montgomery (revealed as pompous, vindictive, anti-Semitic fool), various British military underlings such as Bernard Fergusson who come across as narrow-minded, anti-Semitic and profoundly ignorant. Various Jewish groups such as Irgun, the Stern Gang, Hagannah, Lehi, are shown to be at various times more interested in fighting (literally) between themselves, deceiving each other and settling old scores. Hoffman's evidence reveals their leaders to be frequently dishonest, unscrupulous, sadistic, callous and unreliable. Irgun's leader Menachem Begin in particular comes across as an almost Shakespearean figure: ambitious, bold, devious, ruthless, scheming, untrustworthy. Equally Shakespearean on another level is Golda Meir (Meyerson). shrewdly, carefully, subtly tiptoeing around the rivalries, lies and carnage, aware that being overlooked and underestimated because of her gender gave her inestimable advantages in the struggle for power that would emerge after independence.

However, as "Anonymous Soldiers" makes clear, these groups were ultimately triumphant in their application of terrorism to achieve a Jewish state. During the 1920s and early 1930s it was the Arabs who used terrorist tactics against Jews in Palestine. But they were soon surpassed by the skill, ferocity,

ruthlessness and dedication of groups like the Irgun. Ironically, it's some of these qualities that we find in their Arab successors today.

Marwan Shalaby says

An incredibly detailed account, listing and reiterating the utter failures of the British Mandate as well as the artful political manoeuvres made by the Israeli terrorist organisations and the Jewish lobbies to further advance the Zionist agenda. Despite the thoroughgoing research by Hoffman, backed by recently declassified memoranda, letters and British government documents, the book reached halfway through a plateau of repetitiveness and unnecessary descriptions of the operations made by the outlawed terrorist organisations to prove the exact same point. However, such details would be beneficial to those who are interested in studying terrorism and counterinsurgency, for Palestine (1917-1947) constitutes an important example where terrorism was a successful tool in achieving momentous political objectives.

Zachary Bellis says

Hoffman is a leading expert and academic researcher on the causes and strategic logic of terrorism. In this book, he argues that the campaign of Jewish terrorism against the British Mandate in Palestine is one of the most successful of modern times. The Irgun and Lehi terrorist organizations, led by future Israeli Prime Ministers Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir, effectively forced the British out of Palestine with a campaign of bombings and assassinations that made the country essentially ungovernable. Hoffman contrasts the effective organization of the Irgun and Lehi with that of the Palestinian Arabs during the revolt of 1936-1939 to explain why British authorities could successfully crush the Arab uprising, but not Jewish terrorism. The British police in Palestine were often incompetent and disengaged, if not apathetic to the civilian populations. Furthermore, there was a failure of political leadership to form a firm, substantive Palestine policy. The counterterrorism methods employed by the British alienated the civilian population and encouraged even more terrorist violence, until maintaining the Mandate became unsustainable.

The Jewish Book Council says

Review by Seth J. Frantzman for the Jewish Book Council.

Joseph says

Many others have already given excellent, clear reviews of this excellent though sometimes too detailed history. I would add/reinforce that Hoffman has created an important and impartial overview of the conflicting claims on the Palestine section of the Levant after the fall of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I.

Hoffman clearly explained these claims from the unique and different perspectives of the four dominant players whose interests intersect there: the British who were given the Mandate to govern Palestine by the

League of Nations, the Arabs who refused to recognize the Balfour Declaration's promise of a Jewish national homeland, the Zionists/Jewish Agency who were realists and saw two states as a practical solution and the conservative Revisionists Zionists (later the Irgun) who envisioned a broader Jewish state encompassing the area of Israel, West Bank and Jordan.

The story dwells on Britain's attempt to satisfy all parties in an attempt to hold on to their empire (India, Arabia, Egypt) by limiting Jewish immigration and dealing with first Arab terrorists and then Jewish terrorists.

The one criticism is that the book provides exhaustive (too much, repetitive) detail about the inadequacy of British troops, the terror events and all the individuals (officials and terrorists) involved on all sides, many of whom appear only fleetingly. All in all, I now have context and a much better understanding that the "two-state solution" long predated Jimmy Carter/Sadat/Begin (although he places an important role in this book) and what the issues today are.

Jason Cecil says

Extremely detailed look at the British Mandate period of Palestine leading up to the founding of Israel. The politics of it were interesting and tied up in British oil interests. British rulers of Palestine held more regard for the Arabs than the Jews but when Arabs revolted before WWII, they were crushed mercilessly while the rise of Jewish terrorism was met with a bit of handwringing. Reading the news today of Palestinian uprising, it's hard not to see that the Jews used the same methods of urban terrorism to drive the British out of Palestine. The politics of post-WWII are also interesting, and the question of British insolvency after the war along with strong public support for the Jews in the United States were very important.

Aaron says

My 3 star rating relies primarily on the readability of the book. I hate to place an average rating on this book because the academic prowess of the book is exceptional. However, I do want to draw attention to the difficult nature of reading the book. Bruce Hoffman does a phenomenal job of researching and detailing the rise of the Israeli state and the role terrorism had in it. You can tell he exhaustively researched the topic, and he put forth the facts in a generally unbiased manner. However, the deep nature of his research in part lends to the issue I had with the book. It read like an extended essay. The tone throughout the book was very academic and straight-to-the-fact. It is not written in the tone of say a Hampton Sides or Erik Larson nonfiction book where they intertwine a narrative aspect to the history, but rather Hoffman took a brute force approach to retelling the history of Israel's rise. This leads to a book packed with information, which makes each page dense and a slow process to get through. Each page is filled with information and as a reader it takes much to digest all of the information and keep it straight. This is especially an issue in the first half of the book which spans roughly the first 20 years of the 1917-1947 period Hoffman covers. In that first half of the book, you are constantly introduced to new players in the game, and it is a struggle to keep names and implications straight. I will admit the second half of the book, which covers only about 7 years and thus moves at a more leisurely pace is much more readable for that fact. I became familiar with the prominent figures and appreciated their personalities and how it affected the events. Thus, I was able to read the second half much quicker than the first half.

In regard to the academic essay feel of the book, it draws upon a complaint I have with Jon Meacham's books. He adheres to proper paper writing form of introduction and concluding sentences of every paragraph and presenting very prominent connections and lead-ins between paragraphs. Of course this is very good writing form, but as a reader I find it to become wearisome and tedious when I encounter it time after time through a full-length book. Meacham has a tendency to do this, and Hoffman follows the same style throughout *Anonymous Soldiers*.

Now so I have argued that my 3-star rating comes from the book being too dense and straight up fact presenting. An odd complaint for a history book! And I agree. *Anonymous Soldiers* is a phenomenal piece of research that should be referenced and trusted by individuals truly interested in the topic. But with this review, I wanted to bring attention to its tough readability for the lay-reader's sake. *Anonymous Soldiers* is worth a read, but be aware that you will be in for the long haul with this book. You will learn a lot, but it will be a slow read and require your full concentration and dedication to what you are reading.

Now for a note on the actual content of the book:

I knew basically nothing on the topic of this book prior to reading it. It is a fascinating thing to learn about. Bruce Hoffman's overall thesis of the book is to show that terrorism did indeed achieve its goal and worked successfully in favor of those employing the terrorism. After World War 1, Britain was granted control of Palestine, the region containing Israel. There was constant tension between Arabs, Jews, and the British. Both the Arabs and the Jews consistently felt the British government was favoring the other and thus were constantly complaining to the British government and demanding fair treatment. Interestingly, during the period from roughly 1917-1939, the Arabs were the prominent ones practicing terrorism in the Palestine region. However, their attacks were primarily against the Jews, whom they wanted out of Palestine. The Arabs did not feel as much pressure by British rule because at that time it favored Arabs a bit more than Jews, so the Arabs wanted to have a majority presence in Palestine, and thus focused on terrorizing the Jews.

However, with World War 2 and persecution of Jews across Europe, the tide in Palestine began to change. The British consistently restrained the immigration of Jewish refugees to settle in Palestine, a side-effect of a White Paper document which restricted Jewish immigration (much applauded by the Arabs). Thus, incited by the refusal of the government to aid their suffering brethren and fed up with being bullied by the Arabs, the Jews, or at least multiple underground sects of Jews, began to seriously focus on the means of terrorism as a way to achieve their goal. Their end goal being a Palestine state, namely Israel, led by a Jewish government. However, a big part in this goal was to have a government that freely allowed Jewish immigrants and treated Jews over Arabs. Thus, organizations such as the Haganah, Lehi, Stern Group, and Irgun arose. Groups that on the surface started under the excuse of being the people's underground defense groups, but really evolved into organizations to facilitate terrorism.

We see terrorism as such a major facet in the Middle East today, and it may seem to be a modern problem, but *Anonymous Soldiers* shows it has been an issue in that region for decades and decades. These Jewish terrorist organizations struck out not against Arabs, but directly against British rule. They bombed British government buildings and police stations. They assassinated and targeted prominent British government members and sought to disrupt the economic and infrastructural presence of Britain in Palestine. All in an effort to force Britain to rescind their claim to Palestine and leave it in the hands of the Jews (and in partial defense of these terrorism means, they specifically targeted British government, not civilians; they were pointed in their attacks and had a reason behind them. However, there were still civilian casualties). And shockingly, these terrorism ploys succeeded. In a way, it seems quite embarrassing on the British rule's part that they could not suppress the Jewish terrorism threat. And it is not from lack of trying. Britain had 100,000 soldiers in Palestine, that is compared to approximately 5,000 members of the Jewish organizations who they were seeking to stop. Thus, British outnumbered the troublesome Jews 20 to 1 but could stop their

acts of terrorism. Further, the government was consistently implementing curfews and even martial law in an attempt to combat the terrorism, but with very limited success. Thus, the Jewish organizations employment of terrorism as a means to their end succeeded. Britain did not know what to do with the trouble in Palestine, and in 1948 they threw in the towel. They basically just withdrew their presence from Palestine and told the United Nations to figure out a solution to the problem. And the Jews achieved their goal of gaining control of an Israeli state.

The book ends a little abruptly at this point. Right when Israel is founded, the book ends. I am curious to see how the Jews succeeded in pacifying the Arabs still in Israel, at least to an extent. Because I cannot imagine the Arabs were happy living in a state controlled by Jews when they had fought so strongly against any favoritism to Jews while under British control. And it is no surprise that there is still such tension between Jews and Arabs today in the Palestine area. The issue between was never fundamentally dealt with by either the British or United Nations.

One last thing, the epilogue of the book was really was done! It wasn't an epilogue that continued the story and wrapped up a few last details. Instead, and in line with the academic essay nature of the book, it was a condensed summary of the entire book. I enjoyed this refresher and SparkNotes-esque reproduction of what the book had covered. It reinforced what I thought I knew.

Overall, I do recommend this book. You will learn an incredible amount, just prepared to dedicate yourself to the book and take time with it.

Craig Budner says

Fascinating

Well written and interesting perspective on the creation of the State of Israel and the lasting impact its tactics head on generations that followed.

Barry Sierer says

Bruce Hoffman writes a comprehensive, but sometimes tedious, account of the interplay between British policy during the Palestine Mandate and the guerilla/terrorist campaign waged by largely by the Irgun.

This is definitely recommended for those seeking a more in depth understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian struggle and is something of a primer for the tactics used in recent years.

K C says

Academic and dense but fascinating review of pre-State Israeli history written from the perspective of a case study of terrorism and counter-terrorism tactics; how the British dealt with both Arab terrorism and Jewish terrorism and why/how the Jewish terrorism contributed to the British surrender of Palestine.

Pablo says

A tour de force of the conflict between the British mandate authorities that governed Palestine and the two insurgent groups that rose to fight it: the IZL/Irgun/Etsel and Lehi. Particular emphasis is on the first of these groups and on the British themselves. There is, however, an enormous and rich amount of content on the Jewish Agency, the Haganah, figures like Chaim Weizmann often appearing to be caught in the middle of various contradictory demands, and near the end a step-by-step explanation of Britain's sudden decision to abandon Palestine and the consequent internationalization of the Palestine issue through the UN.

There is considerable detail here about the various operational aspects of the conflict, on both sides: guerrilla operations and terrorist acts are recounted clearly, with all the names, dates, places, and actions delineated. Overall, a highly recommended book for anyone interested in learning the dynamics of the Palestine conflict all the way to the present day. Things like the usage/success of terrorist tactics; the ideology of the Revisionist/Likud wing of Zionism; the odd Palestinian custom of rising up in intifada spasms only to later lie dormant for years; the bewilderment of more-or-less neutral international entities like the British themselves at how to tackle the conflict, and plenty more: all are explained here.

Cm says

<http://www.economist.com/news/books-a...>

Steven Z. says

This past week's news cycle has been dominated by the Iran nuclear talks and the reelection of Benjamin Netanyahu as Israeli Prime Minister, two stories that are interrelated due to the politics of the Middle East. Both situations have been parlayed by politicians to reinforce their own ideological agendas. The results have been extremely negative with Republicans in Congress grand standing about a deal that has not been concluded, and PM Netanyahu's somewhat racist comments about Arab voting, and his diplomatic dance surrounding his support or non-support of a two state solution in negotiations with the Palestinians. The relationship between President Obama and Netanyahu have never been strong, and now have become even more dysfunctional. The consequences of these events for the region are extremely important since the Arab-Israeli Conflict has produced four major wars, and a series of lesser wars since 1948. It would be useful to revisit the history of the pre-1948 War and try to understand the background of the conflict that may never be settled. All one has to do is think about the situation in Gaza last summer as Israel and Hamas exchanged missile strikes resulting in the destruction of a major part of the infrastructure of the Gaza Strip. In addition, the Palestinian community is split between the Palestinian Authority on the West Bank and Hamas that governs the Gaza Strip. Currently, the diplomatic game is at a standstill so Bruce Hoffman's *THE STRUGGLE FOR ISRAEL, 1917-1947* is both timely and important.

Mr. Hoffman, the Director of Security Studies at Georgetown University and a senior fellow at the United States Military Academy's Combating Center raises the important question, "does terrorism work?" According to Hoffman "campaigns of terrorism depend on rational choice." It results from a group's decision to oppose a government and is seen "as a logical means to advance desired ends."(x) Today in the

Middle East there are a number of groups whose choice of terror fits this description; Hamas, Hezbollah, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, ISIS, and al-Qaeda's many derivations. Hoffman has chosen to concentrate on three groups that have been credited with convincing the British government to relinquish its League of Nations mandate over Palestine in 1947 that led to the creation of the state of Israel. The book explores these three groups; the Haganah, Irgun, and Lehi and determines that it was the Irgun that should be given most of the credit for forcing the British withdrawal. If this is an accurate assumption, then according to Hoffman, terror, in this particular instance worked.

The title of the book is derived from a poem written by Abraham Stern, a messianic Zionist who implored Jews to fight for the creation of their own state; "We are the anonymous soldiers without uniform, Surrounded by fear and the shadow of death. We have all been conscripted for life; from these ranks, only death will free us." (96) The strategy embodied in the concept of anonymous soldiers was extended by the Irgun leader following World War II, and future Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin. Begin believed that Israeli freedom fighters (as opposed to terrorists) could blend into the general population and hide in its battle against the British. He believed that all Jews who lived in the Yishuv were fighters for the creation of the Jewish state, a concept that the British accepted and as explained by the author based their counter-terrorism policy arguing that since the Jewish terrorists hid among and were assisted by the general population, they were just as culpable for terrorist attacks as the actual perpetrators.

Hoffman's premise, whether terrorism works, is an important one, but at times it becomes lost in the minutiae of each terrorist attack that he presents. The book is a comprehensive recounting of the role of terror played in Palestine from World War I through the declaration of Israeli statehood on May 15, 1948. It encompasses major decision making by the British as they tried to carry out their mandate over Palestine, the reactions of the Arab community, particularly before World War II, and the Jewish responses throughout the period. All the major and lesser personalities involved are examined, including Winston Churchill, Ernest Bevin, Clement Atlee, General Bernard Montgomery and High Commissioner Alan Cunningham on the British side to, David Ben-Gurion, Menachem Begin, and Abraham Stern representing the Jews, and Hajj Amin-al Husseini, and Izz al-Din Abd al-Qadir al Qassam, who embodied the Arab cause. Along with the personalities involved the author described in detail what seems to be every important terror attack that took place within the scope of his topic. The book appears to be broken down into three parts. The first major delineation occurs in 1929 as Arab riots against Jewish immigration and land purchases led to British quotas regulating Jewish immigration to Palestine. As the riots led to a pogrom in Hebron, the Yishuv leadership realized it could not rely on the British for protection. The reorganization and centralization of the underground Jewish army, the Haganah resulted, and Jewish revisionists like Vladimir Jabotinsky set up their own autonomous group that would fight Arab terror with Jewish terror. The next turning point would be the Arab rebellion that lasted from 1936 to 1939 that eventually would produce the 1939 British White Paper that limited Jewish immigration to Palestine to 1500 per month for five years and declined to partition Palestine into a Jewish and Arab state. Issued as Jews were trying to escape Nazi Germany it would have a profound impact on the plight of the Jews and British policy that did not want to aggravate its relations with the Arabs as the war approached. Obviously the end of the war is another watershed as Jewish terror increased against the British evolving into a situation of all-out war that only ended with British withdrawal from Palestine.

The most important part of the book is Hoffman's description and analysis of what appears to be each terrorist attack that took place particularly after World War II. It seems that the author did not find an attack that he didn't feel the need to describe in minute detail. For the student of the period it is valuable, but the general reader will become bogged down in what seems at times to be a daily description of the terrorist and counter-terrorist activity that takes place. The author reports on all major attacks, describing their explosive power, and casualties from what seems to be every angle. The reader learns the details of the bombing of the

King David Hotel that housed Britain's governmental agencies for Palestine by the Irgun, assassinations of major figures, i.e.; Lord Moyne, kidnappings, hangings, as well as the overall terrorist dance that the Irgun and its allies engaged in with the British military and the Palestine Police Force (PPF). What is most interesting is Hoffman's analysis of Britain's counter-terrorism strategy. His observation that the British applied tactics that worked between 1936 and 1939 dealing with a rural insurrection, to an urban terrorist strategy employed by the Irgun between 1945 and 1948 reinforced the objectives sought by Begin and his cohorts in Lehi. Further, once the British decided to employ 100,000 troops in Palestine after the PPF was not able to bring the terrorist threat under control, Palestine became a garrison state. The actions of the police and military became confused and this segmented the police away from any source of actionable intelligence, the people themselves. The British intelligence structure in Palestine was severely criticized as the political leadership in London could not make up its mind, and to make matters worse the intelligence agency (CID) in Palestine was poorly trained, under manned, and underfunded. The result was that American intelligence (OSS) was much more reliable than that of the British and in many cases the British played right into the hands of Ben-Gurion and Begin. The Irgun leader's strategy was designed to counter British tactics. His goal was to undermine the British government's prestige and control of Palestine by striking at symbols of British rule. The Irgun and its junior partner, Lehi targeted immigration, land registry, tax and finance offices, and made the price the British would have to pay to remain in Palestine much too high in light of England's overall economic condition during the winter of 1947.

Apart from events Hoffman does a superb job explaining the ideological development of the major characters and the strategies they hoped to employ. Though long winded at times the reader will emerge with a firm understanding of the beliefs of Begin, Ben-Gurion, al-Husseini, Qassam and many others. The political machinations and battles that contributed to Britain's inability to accomplish their goals is always present. A discussion of the hatred between English Generals Bernard Montgomery and Evelyn Barker, and Montgomery and High Commissioner Alan Cunningham disrupted British decision-making repeatedly as did disagreement within the English cabinet in London. The growing rift between the Atlee government and the Truman administration over a solution to the Palestine problem is present for all to see. The divisive conflict within the Jewish leadership is detailed and is extremely important as Ben-Gurion and Begin did not enjoy the best relationship as they agreed and disagreed over the use of terror throughout their war against the British. What was shocking to me was the degree of overt anti-Semitism that was evident on the part of many of the major British players. As more and more British soldiers and civilians were victims of the violence perpetrated by the Irgun and Lehi, British frustration and anger manifested itself with a virulent type of anti-Jewish behavior. One must ask, did British anti-Semitism inhibit their ability to solve the Palestinian problem?

Hoffman is a very skillful writer, and though he is somewhat repetitious, his integration of so much detail at times is very engrossing, but at other times it can be overwhelming. He raises the issue that one person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter and the partisan debate over such issues will find supportive evidence for each position throughout the book. In addition, some might argue that there is no difference between the Irgun approach to statehood and that of Hamas and others today. Hoffman argues that the Irgun and Lehi focused on British military and governmental targets. Civilians were killed, but not targeted. For Hoffman, Palestinian terrorists have often been indiscriminate and at times targeted civilians directly. No matter the reader's point of view, there is a great deal of history presented that could be debated, in addition to contemporary strategies that can be argued. Overall, Hoffman has written a very important book that provides many insights as to why the problem remains so intractable.

Eli says

Great and eye opening review of British reaction to the Irgun and Lehi in pre-state Israel. But so narrow in its viewpoint that it is hard to judge the overall importance of the story it tells.

Robin Friedman says

Bruce Hoffman's book, "Anonymous Soldiers: The Struggle for Israel, 1917 -- 1947" (2015) examines the role of terrorism during the British Mandate for Palestine and explores how terrorism contributed to Britain's decision to abandon the mandate and to the subsequent formation of the State of Israel. The book's title derives from a song composed by the terrorist Abraham Stern which became the anthem of Jewish terrorist groups in Palestine. Here is the refrain of the song:

"In the red days of riots and blood,
In the dark nights of despair,
In the cities and villages our flag we will raise,
And on it: defense and conquest!

We are not conscripted by the whip like multitudes of slaves,
In order to spill our blood in foreign lands.
Our desire: to be forever free men!
Our dream: to die for our nation."

Hoffman is the director of the Center for Security Studies and director of the Security Studies Program at Georgetown University, and he works with the United States military in advising how to combat terrorism. "Anonymous Soldiers" examines the circumstances in which terrorism is effective in achieving its goals and in influencing the policy of a larger state. There are wide-ranging views on this complex question. The focus of Hoffman's book is on Jewish terrorist activities primarily during the latter part of Britain's Mandate following WW II and on how these activities played a role in convincing Britain to leave Palestine. Hoffman concludes that terrorism has frequently proved to be an effective instrument. His book is a study of history and, perhaps, includes some lessons for decision makers on how terrorism may be most effectively fought in specific instances.

Hoffman's book relies in part on many documents from Britain, Israel, and elsewhere that have only recently been made public. The book begins with the Balfour Declaration, Britain's 1918 conquest of Palestine, and the mandate the League of Nation gave to Britain in 1922. The book explores a complex multi-faceted history while focusing on terrorism. As Hoffman summarizes his study, the early chapters of the book cover the years 1917 through the early years of WW II. It discusses the fighting almost from the outset between Jews and Arabs, early Arab terrorist outbreaks such as the Arab Rebellion of the late 1930s, and the beginning of Jewish terrorist organizations.

The second part of the book discusses the WW II years. During this time, one of the two primary Jewish terrorist organizations suspended its activities in order to support Britain while the other group continued its efforts at isolated terrorist acts, often directed at individual figures. Hoffman discusses the split between these two groups and the reaction of the mainstream Jewish governing authority in Palestine.

The third and most detailed part of the book examines Jewish terrorist activities post WW II as the press to end Britain's mandate intensified. The ultimate result of the terrorism during this period was to make the continuation of the mandate untenable. The book discusses the terrorists and their techniques at length. Many incidents large and small are discussed closely. The book discusses the assassination of British Lord Moyne, the Minister of State for the Middle East, the bombing of the King David Hotel and many other incidents. The book concludes with an excellent extensive epilogue which summarizes the results of the lengthy study and places the discussion of terrorism in a broader perspective.

Much of the book studies Britain's response to terrorism and the reasons why its varied responses failed. Hoffman points to factors such as the lack of an effective police force, the tendency to rely too heavily on military as opposed to political solutions, conflict between the police, the military, and the British Government over the administration of the mandate and the proper response to terrorism, inflexibility and misunderstanding the situation on the ground, the support rendered by the United States, Britain's increasingly perilous financial situation following WW II and more. Hoffman sensibly identifies the primary problems with Britain's response: its lack of a sense of what it was to do in Palestine and why and its inability to address the seemingly intractable conflict between Arabs and Jews that still persists and shows little signs of abating.

The book is well-written, thoroughly researched and thoughtful. It tends to get bogged down in detail in places. Hoffman carefully points out that his book is not a broad history of Palestine under the British Mandate but focuses instead on the specific subject of terrorism. Thus the book should not be read as a full history of the British mandate, or of the Arab-Jewish conflict in the years predating the establishment of Israel. The book has much to say about its limited subject even for readers without a strong background in the Arab-Jewish-British conflict as long as the specific issue the book addresses is kept in mind. Within its subject, Hoffman's book focuses much more on Jewish terrorism rather than on the earlier Arab terrorism, presumably because it played a large role in the abandonment of the mandate and, hence, was more successful in achieving its aims. Besides the study of terrorism, I learned a great deal from this book. I had never focused entirely on the broad conflict between Arabs and Jews from the outset -- beginning no later than 1922. It made it harder to take a strong, moralizing stance in this matter for one side or the other. The conflict has long historical roots and, unfortunately, remains to be resolved. This book allows the reader to get one aspect of the conflict through its focus on terrorism during the years of the British mandate.

Robin Friedman
