

Ezel Movement

Archives 1936-1948 on microfiche

Jabotinsky Institute, Tel Aviv

Documents of the Irgun Zvai Leumi ("Ezel")

IDC offers a microfiche edition of the original documents and publications relating to the Irgun Zvai Leumi (Ezel), the Jewish underground organization in Mandatory Palestine, that existed until the establishment of the State of Israel. The original collection is housed in the Jabotinsky Institute, Tel-Aviv. The publishers are grateful to Mr. Pessah Gany for his cooperation and to the Institute director, Mr. Yehuda Benari who granted us permission to make this historic documentation available to the scholarly public.

In addition to the periodicals published by the Revisionist Zionist movement and its military arm, Ezel, the publishers have also included the periodicals of other underground organizations, i.e. Hagana and Lehi, in order to complete the historical picture.

A guide to the sources

Archives, in the usual sense, do not exist for Ezel. The distinctly clandestine character of the organization and the continual harassment to which it was subjected obliged Ezel to destroy every written scrap of paper since the contents could have divulged information about its plans, members and activities. From the early period only one official file remains, dated July-November, 1944. It includes: 13 protocols of Ezel headquarter meetings, 2 protocols of headquarter meetings with staff officers, protocol of the meeting between regional commanders and headquarter officers, protocol of the meeting between Ezel, Jewish Agency and Hagana representatives, and a copy of Menahem Begin's letter to Yizhaq Yezernitzki (Shamir), one of Lehi's leaders, dated Sept. 3, 1944. There are also some files dealing with the last Ezel operations in Jaffa, Jerusalem and other places.

However, there is a relatively large collection of documents concerning Ezel's history and activities housed at the Historical Archives of the Jabotinsky Institute, Tel-Aviv. This collection originated with documents that were either received or acquired from people who kept or found them. It includes surveys, memoranda, guides, pamphlets and notices, publicity, periodicals and ideological brochures, information and press cuttings on operations, and statements of witnesses obtained after the establishment of the State. Altogether, the collection contains 334 files of which 121 were chosen for microcopying because of their research value. Though most of the material is in Hebrew, there is a sprinkling of other languages - predominantly English. The files chosen for copying have been given a serial number which appears at the head of each microfiche and it is under this serial number that the original files can be found in the Index.

It must be realized that Ezel was also the offspring of a vast political, organizational and educational system which included institutions and structures with branches in Erez-Israel and the Diaspora. The historian certainly will be interested in the archives of these organizations, e.g. Union of Revisionist Zionists (Ha-Zohar), New Zionist Organization, Youth Movement (Betar), Union of Zohar and Betar Employees, National Workers Organization, "Brit ha-Biryonim", etc.; and also those of the organizations established in the USA, including the Committee for a Jewish Army, Committee to save European Jewry, Committee for National Liberation, and the American League for a Free Palestine.

Pessah Gany, Jabotinsky Institute, Tel Aviv

Categories of documents in the Ezel Archives

1. General
2. Internal information, commands, instructions
3. Actions and operations during 1937 - 1943
4. Actions and operations from day of declaration of the revolt to the time of establishment of the Hebrew Rebellion Movement (February 1944 - October 1945)
5. Actions and operations during the Hebrew Rebellion Movement (Tenuat Hameri Haivrit) period (November 1945 - August 1946)
6. Actions and operations from 1st September 1946 to 29th November 1947
7. Actions and operations after 29th November 1947
8. Conquest of Jaffa
9. Ezel - Jerusalem district, 1948
10. Conquest of Deir-Yasin village
11. Operations and actions - classified chronological lists, reviews, evidence etc.
12. Pamphlets & publications in Hebrew
13. Posters, announcements and radio broadcasts printed in Hebrew
14. Periodicals in Hebrew
15. Pamphlets and publications in English
16. Military training
17. Relations between the Hagana and the Ezel
18. Case of the Altalena ship

General information

Number of fiche	191
Size of fiche	105 x 148 mm
Film type	Positive silver halide
Reduction ratio	Varies according to the size of the original
Internal finding aids	Eye-legible headers on each fiche
External finding aids	A printed index (6 pp.) with historical introduction by Dr. Yaagob Shavit, Tel Aviv University
Storage	The microfiche come in a sturdy plastic binder with dust cover
Order number	J-28-193/1