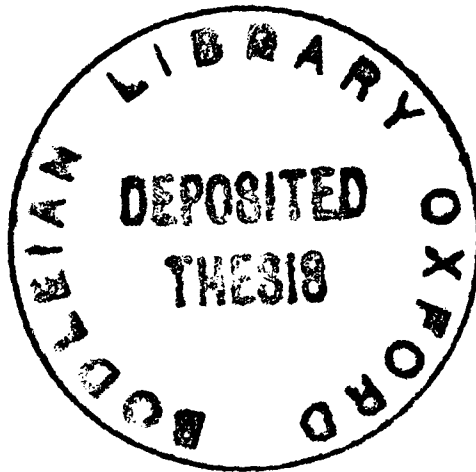


JEWISH TERRORIST ACTIVITIES AND THE BRITISH
GOVERNMENT IN PALESTINE, 1939-1947

by

B. R. HOFFMAN



Thesis submitted to the Sub-Faculty of Politics,
Faculty of Social Studies for the Degree
of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the
University of Oxford
Trinity Term, 1985

October, 1985

St. Antony's College,
Oxford

ABSTRACT

Title: JEWISH TERRORIST ACTIVITIES AND THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT IN PALESTINE, 1939 To 1947

Name and College: B. R. Hoffman, St. Antony's College

Degree: Doctor of Philosophy

Term of Submission: Trinity Term, 1985

From 1939 to 1947 two Jewish terrorist organizations, the *Irgun Zvai Leumi* and the *Lohamei Herut Israel* (known to Jews by its Hebrew acronym, *Lehi*, and to the British as "The Stern Gang") challenged Britain's rule over Palestine. Those eight years began with the publication of the White Paper in May 1939 and ended in September 1947 with the decision taken by the British Government to surrender its League of Nations Mandate and withdraw from Palestine. This thesis examines the influence that Jewish terrorist activities had on Britain's policy for Palestine and seeks to ascertain the role played by terrorism in that decision.

Through an examination of British policy and the strategies employed by the British Army to defeat the terrorists, this study demonstrates why the British failed to reach either a military or a political settlement in Palestine. This failure can be attributed both to the irreconcilable nature of Arab and Jewish claims to the country and the lack of a clear and consistent policy for Palestine on Britain's part. The situation was further aggravated by the weaknesses of the Palestine Police Force, the futile efforts of the Palestine Government to obtain the cooperation of the Jewish public against the terrorists and the debilitating effect of Jewish terrorist activities on the morale of the British soldier in Palestine. The search for a solution to the Palestine problem after World War II took place amid increasing terrorist violence in the country. As British authority in Palestine deteriorated, Britain's will to remain there dissolved.

This thesis concludes that no single factor itself can be considered responsible for the decision to surrender the mandate and leave Palestine. At the same time, however, Jewish terrorist activities played an important--and even a decisive--role in the events that led to the termination of British rule over Palestine and the establishment of the State of Israel.

PREFACE

From 1939 to 1947 two Jewish terrorist organizations, the *Irgun Zvai Leumi* and the *Lohamei Herut Israel* (known to Jews by its Hebrew acronym, *Lehi*, and to the British as "The Stern Gang") challenged Britain's rule over Palestine. Those eight years began with the publication of the White Paper in May 1939 and ended in September 1947 with the decision taken by the British Government to surrender its League of Nations Mandate and withdraw from Palestine. This thesis examines the influence that Jewish terrorist activities had on Britain's policy for Palestine and seeks to ascertain the role played by terrorism in that decision.

The first chapter outlines the origins of the conflict between the Jewish community in Palestine and Britain and discusses the historical background of the Jewish terrorist organizations. Chapter II analyses the strategy employed by the British Army in Palestine between 1939 and 1947 to defeat the terrorists and explains why it failed. The third chapter discusses why the army and not the police assumed the main burden of maintaining public security. Accordingly, it examines the weaknesses in the Palestine Police Force and how governmental neglect undermined the Force's performance and ultimately compromised its efforts to combat the terrorists.

Chapter IV details the futile efforts made by the Palestine Government to obtain the cooperation of the Jewish public against the terrorist organizations. Although the administration succeeded in forcing the Zionist leadership to mount a counter-terrorist campaign,

the effort eventually collapsed. The fundamental, if not intractable, political differences that separated the Jews and Britain accounted for this failure and set the stage for further confrontation at the end of World War II. Chapter V relates the events surrounding the ultimate breakdown of relations.

Chapter VI examines how terrorism affected the attitudes of the British soldier in Palestine towards the Jews. In particular, it analyzes the specific strategy pursued by the *Irgun* to undermine the morale of the army and thus weaken the government's determination to remain in Palestine. Britain's attempts to resolve the Palestine problem are discussed in Chapter VII. It outlines the severe economic difficulties that beset Britain at the end of the war and the burden placed on the economy by the large military establishment required in Palestine to maintain order. The search for a settlement took place amid continued violence in Palestine and international and domestic criticism of the Labour Government's handling of the situation. By the end of the summer of 1947, these factors--along with the recommendation made by the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine for the immediate termination of the mandate--converged to compel the government to announce its intention to relinquish Britain's responsibility for Palestine and withdraw from the country. Over each one the activities of the Jewish terrorist organizations cast a dark shadow.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would be remiss not to acknowledge herein the assistance-- material, practical and spiritual--that I have received these past seven years from both institutions and individuals. I am especially grateful to the Warden and Fellows of both New College and St. Antony's College who allowed me the opportunity to study at Oxford. I should also like to thank the following institutions and organisations whose generous financial assistance made this thesis possible: the Government of Israel, the Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies, the Oxford University Faculties of Social Studies and History, the Middle East Centre of St. Antony's College, the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture, the National Foundation for Jewish Culture and the Behavioural Science Department at The Rand Corporation (and, in particular, its director, Barbara Williams). I should also like to thank the director of The Rand Corporation's Security and Subnational Conflict Research Program, Brian Jenkins, for allowing me to take time from my responsibilities to complete my thesis.

Among the people who have assisted me, I am especially indebted to my supervisor, Professor Michael Howard. His encouragement and patience--during a time when my responsibilities at The Rand Corporation prevented the rapid completion of my thesis--enabled me to see it through. Dr. Bernard Wasserstein (formerly of the University of Sheffield; now Professor of History at Brandeis University) deserves special thanks for assisting Professor Howard in my supervision and for the considerable time and effort he devoted to my thesis.

Various friends and colleagues on both sides of the Atlantic were of great help. In particular, Donna Kim, Bonnie Cordes and Dr. Murney Gerlach were there when I needed them; helping to smooth the variegated rough edges inherent in this project. I should like to thank my typist, Jean Thomas, who literally performed 'above and beyond the call of duty' and whose skills and knowledge of computer word processing were an incalculable asset.

Finally, my greatest debt is to my parents and brother: who knew that I would finish.

CONTENTS

PREFACE	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
FIGURES	xi
ABBREVIATIONS	xiii
MAP OF PALESTINE	xv

Section

I. THE ORIGINS OF THE CONFLICT	1
The British Conquest of Palestine	2
The 1920 Riots and the Birth of the Haganah	4
The Mandatory Administration	10
Britain's Mandate for Palestine	12
The 1929 Riots	13
Revisionist Zionism and the Formation of the Haganah-Bet ..	15
The Arab Rebellion	19
The Birth of the Irgun Zvai Leumi	20
Irgun Counter-Terrorism	26
Schlomo Ben-Yosef and the Escalation of Irgun Reprisal Attacks	30
The Reformulation of British Policy for Palestine	33
The Reaction in Palestine	38
The Irgun's Revolt	41
The Outbreak of the Second World War	44
Conclusion	46
II. THE WAR AGAINST THE TERRORISTS	48
Phase I: 1939-1945	50
Phase II: September 1945-November 1946	65
Phase III: November 1946-March 1947	74
Phase IV: March-September 1947	80
Conclusion	89
III. MAINTAINING ORDER IN PALESTINE: THE POLICE OR THE MILITARY?	92
Organization and Recruitment	94
The 'Militarisation' of the PPF	110

The Special Squads	116
The CID	132
The Effect of the Wickham-Moffat Report on the PPF	137
Conclusion	140
IV. THE YISHUV AND THE GOVERNMENT: COOPERATION OR CONFRONTATION?	145
The Renewal of Jewish Terrorism and the Issue of Cooperation: January-October 1944	145
The Saison	165
The Government's Reaction	178
The End of the Saison	186
Conclusion	193
V. THE YISHUV IN REVOLT	195
The Mood in Post-War Palestine	195
The Formation of the Tenuat Hameri	199
Operation Agatha	211
The Release of the Agatha Detainees	220
The Drift Towards Martial Law	223
Martial Law	234
The Breakdown of Security	239
The Abrogation of the Mandate	243
Conclusion	247
VI. THE BRITISH SOLDIER IN PALESTINE	251
The War Years	254
Terrorism in Palestine	259
The Formation of the Tenuat Hameri	261
The Bombing of the King David Hotel	269
The Flogging Incidents	274
Martial Law	286
The Hanging of the Two Sergeants	290
Conclusion	297
VII. PALESTINE AT WAR: THE SEARCH FOR A SOLUTION	303
Policymaking Influenced by Terrorism	303
The Revival of Partition and the Assassination of Lord Moyné	303
Strategic Priorities and Financial Constraints: Britain, the Post-War Era, and the New Labour Government	311
The Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry	315
The Search for a Solution	326
The Sands of Time	331
The Beginning of the End: Palestine Is Referred to the United Nations	336

Bearing the Burden	347
The Hanging of the Two Sergeants: The Reaction in Britain .	353
UNSCOP and the Decision To Evacuate Palestine	360
Conclusion	365
VIII. CONCLUSION	372
BIBLIOGRAPHY	383
A. MANUSCRIPT SOURCES	383
B. PRINTED SOURCES: PRIMARY	386
C. PRINTED SOURCES: SECONDARY	387

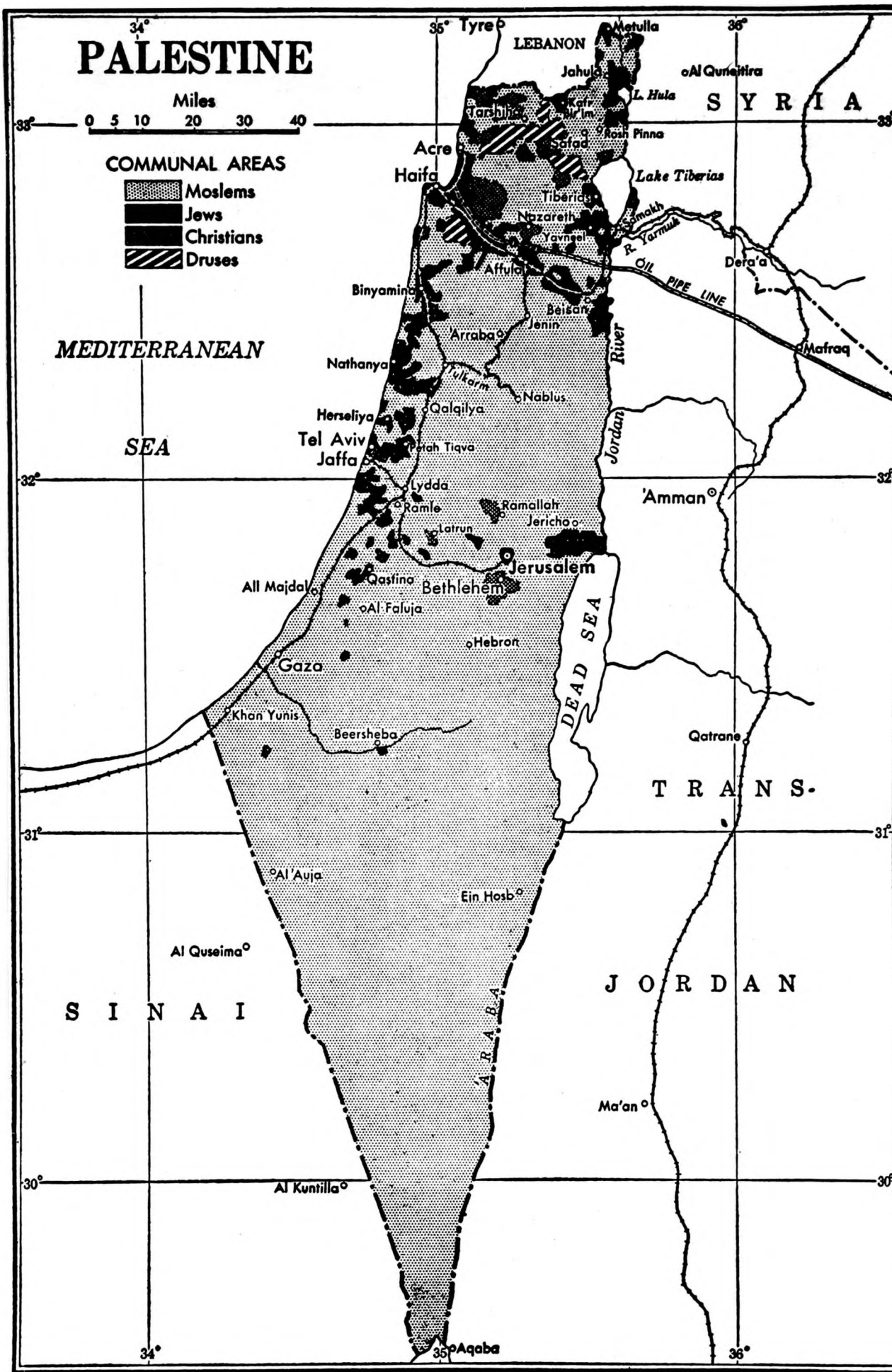
FIGURES

1.	Jewish Terrorist Activities Between October 1940 and February 1946	95
2.	Terrorist Activities Between October 1945 and March 1948 ...	96
3.	Organization of the CID	134

ABBREVIATIONS

AAC	--	Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry.
AIR	--	Air Ministry.
CAB	--	Cabinet.
C.-in-C.	--	Commander-in-Chief.
CID	--	Criminal Investigation Department.
CIGS	--	Chief of the Imperial General Staff.
CO	--	Colonial Office.
COS	--	Chiefs of Staff.
CS	--	Chief Secretary.
CZA	--	Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem.
DSO	--	Defence Security Office.
FO	--	Foreign Office.
FRUS	--	<i>Foreign Relations of the United States.</i>
GHQ	--	General Headquarters, Middle East.
GOC	--	General Officer Commanding.
GSI	--	General Staff Intelligence.
HMG	--	His Majesty's Government.
HQ	--	Headquarters.
ISA	--	Israel State Archives, Jerusalem.
IWM	--	Imperial War Museum, London.
IZL	--	<i>Irgun Zvai Leumi.</i>
JI	--	Jabotinsky Institute, Tel Aviv.
JICAME	--	Joint Intelligence Collection Agency, Middle East.
JP	--	Joint Planning Staff of the Chiefs of Staff.
MEC	--	Middle East Centre, St. Antony's College, Oxford.
MEF	--	Middle East Forces.
MELF	--	Middle East Land Forces.
MP	--	Member of Parliament.
NARS	--	National Archives and Record Service, Washington, D.C.
OAG	--	Officer Administering Government.
OETA	--	Occupied Enemy Territory Administration.
OSS	--	Office of Strategic Services.

PICME -- Political Intelligence, Middle East.
PMF -- Police Mobile Force.
PPF -- Palestine Police Force.
PREM -- Premier (Prime Minister's Office).
PRO -- Public Record Office, London.
RAF -- Royal Air Force.
RG -- Record Group.
RH -- Rhodes House, Oxford.
RIIA -- Royal Institute of International Affairs.
SAS -- Special Air Service.
SIME -- Security Intelligence, Middle East.
SOE -- Special Operations Executive.
UNSCOP -- United Nations Special Committee on Palestine.
USAFIME -- United States Army Forces In Middle East.
VCIGS -- Vice Chief of the Imperial General Staff.
WO -- War Office.
WA -- Weizmann Archives, Rehovot, Israel.
WZO -- World Zionist Organisation.



Map of Palestine

I. THE ORIGINS OF THE CONFLICT

During and after World War II the British authorities in Palestine and the various Jewish underground organizations came into conflict over a wide range of issues. They clashed over the right of Jews to immigrate into Palestine; over the acquisition, import and storage of arms by Jews; over the clandestine training of Jewish military forces and--most fundamentally--over the political future of Palestine. Moreover, and as a result, conflict between them spread to a number of arenas. Clashes, many of which involved the use of force, took place at sea as well as on land and within Europe as well as the Middle East.

It is not the purpose of this thesis to discuss the entire spectrum of that struggle. It aims rather to concentrate on one of its manifestations: the struggle waged by the Jewish terrorist organizations against Britain's rule over Palestine between 1939 and 1947. The terrorists constituted a minority element of some 4,000 persons organized within the *Irgun Zvai Leumi* (Hebrew: "National Military Organization") and approximately 500 persons in the *Lohemi Herut Yisrael*, (Hebrew: "Freedom Fighters for Israel") known to Jews by its acronym, *Lehi*, and to the British as the "Stern Gang". They did not enjoy the support of the vast majority of the *Yishuv* (Hebrew: "Jewish community in Palestine") and were, for much of the period, fiercely opposed by the *Haganah* (Hebrew: "Defence"), the third and largest (with an estimated strength of 86,000 persons) of the Jewish underground

movements.¹ The *Haganah* was not itself a terrorist organization, but a clandestine militia that eventually became Israel's army.

The history of both the *Irgun* and *Lehi* is rooted in the early years of British rule in Palestine. During the 1920s the political differences between the country's Arab and Jewish inhabitants first erupted in inter-communal violence and charges were levelled by the Jews against the British for failing to protect adequately the *Yishuv*. As a result of this grievance the first Jewish self-defence forces were created from which the terrorist organizations later emerged.

THE BRITISH CONQUEST OF PALESTINE

Until the First World War, Palestine had been part of the Turkish Ottoman Empire. On 9 December 1917 British and Allied forces commanded by General Sir Edmund Allenby captured Jerusalem. The conquest of the southern region of the country, and capture of its most important city, effectively ended four centuries of Ottoman suzerainty. British rule was formally declared on 11 December and a military government, called the Occupied Enemy Territory Administration (OETA), was established in April 1918 to administer Palestine pending its ultimate disposition.² The *Yishuv* enthusiastically welcomed the British as liberators: especially in light of the Balfour Declaration which had been issued only a few weeks before. That statement of British policy was in fact a note sent on 2 November 1917 by the Foreign Secretary, Arthur Balfour,

¹IWM Palestine: Narrative of Events from February 1947 until Withdrawal of All British Troops, by Lieutenant-General G.H.A. MacMillan, 3 July 1948; Appendix 'D': Appreciation by General Officer Commanding on 5 August 1947.

²Bernard Wasserstein, *The British In Palestine* (London, 1978), pp. 1 and 18.

on behalf of the British Government to Lord Rothschild, a prominent British Zionist. It stated:

"His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country".¹

But the British officials who worked in OETA were not entirely sympathetic to Zionism. Their ardent, and often unconcealed, sympathy towards the claims of Palestine's Arab inhabitants, who formed the vast majority of the population, indelibly coloured OETA's relationship with the *Yishuv*.² The Arabs' claim centred on the promise of independence given by Britain in return for Arab assistance in World War I made by Sir A. Henry McMahon, the High Commissioner of Egypt, to Sharif Hussein of Mecca in 1915.³ The British government, however, maintained that the McMahon-Hussein agreement was not meant to apply to Palestine.⁴ Thus the Arabs feared that not only would they be cheated out of Britain's promises of self-determination but also of their homeland as well. Not surprisingly relations between the Jews and the Arabs and the Jews and the British quickly deteriorated.

¹Leonard Stein, *The Balfour Declaration* (New York, 1961), frontispiece.

²Wasserstein, *The British In Palestine*, pp. 24 and 26-27.

³For a detailed analysis of the letters that constituted this agreement, see George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening* (New York, 1971), and Elie Kedourie, *Inside the Anglo-Arab Labyrinth* (Cambridge, 1976).

⁴J. C. Hurewitz, *The Struggle For Palestine* (New York, 1976), pp. 19-20.

THE 1920 RIOTS AND THE BIRTH OF THE HAGANAH

Throughout 1919 Arab political discontent in Palestine contributed to an increase of attacks on rural Jewish agricultural settlements.¹ These isolated communities had long been prey to Arab brigands and terrorists. The problem had become so serious before the war that, in 1907, the members of some Jewish neighbouring settlements banded together and founded a secret "watchman's guild"--since Ottoman law forbade such organizations--that they named *Bar Giora* (after an ancient Hebrew warrior who fought against the Romans).² The group's motto, adopted over thirty years later by the *Irgun*, was 'By blood and fire Judea fell and by blood and fire Judea shall rise'. *Bar Giora* so successfully defended the handful of settlements under its aegis that two years later it was reorganized into a countrywide security force and renamed *Ha-Shomer* (Hebrew: 'The Watchman'). During the war, however, the Turks redoubled their efforts to suppress the Jewish underground groups and many of *Ha-Shomer's* members were forcibly conscripted into the Turkish Army. The group, consequently, disintegrated.³

Given OETA's unsympathetic attitudes, fears now arose in the *Yishuv* that the British would prove as unreliable as the Turks had been in protecting isolated Jewish settlements. One of the first persons to

¹Amos Perlmutter, *Military and Politics In Israel* (London, 1969), p. 7.

²J. Borisov, *Palestine Underground: The Story of the Jewish Resistance* (Philadelphia, 1947), p. 9.

³*Ibid.* See also Zeev Schiff, *A History of the Israeli Army* (San Francisco, 1974), pp. 2-4; Edward Luttwak and Dan Horowitz, *The Israeli Army* (London, 1975), p. 6; NARS RG 226 097.3 21092 Office of Strategic Services (OSS) Research and Analysis Branch (R&A) Report No. 1014, 30 September 1943; and Ben-Zion Dinur, *Sefer Toldot Ha-Haganah (History of the Haganah)* (Tel Aviv, 1954-1972), i, 113-312.

express publicly this concern was Vladimir Jabotinsky, the co-founder of the Zion Mule Corps and Jewish Legion, two Jewish units that had fought in the British Army during World War I. Jabotinsky argued that a properly armed and organized, *official* Jewish self-defence was required to replace the more informal and, in his view, anachronistic, *Ha-Shomer*. Further, Jabotinsky believed that this new force should not be a clandestine body, but an above-ground paramilitary force having the full recognition, and enjoying the cooperation, of the British.¹

The first steps towards the establishment of this force were taken by Jabotinsky at a conference he convened among Palestine's Zionist leaders in January 1919. Although all of the participants agreed on the need for a self-defence force, they differed on whether it ought to be a clandestine, entirely Jewish-run organization as *Ha-Shomer* had been, or one operating in the open with British approval, as Jabotinsky preferred. For the time being this issue remained unresolved. In the meantime, a group of demobilized Jewish Legionnaires and some members of various youth-sports groups became impatient and formed their own secret paramilitary unit that they called the *Haganah*. Jabotinsky was asked to serve as their commander. He agreed provided that the group allow him to obtain permission from the authorities for its establishment. Both Allenby and other senior OETA officials, however, feared that such an organization would further incite the already restless Arab population and therefore rejected Jabotinsky's request.² The effect of this decision was to create a secret Jewish paramilitary force wholly

¹Joseph Schechtman and Yehuda Benari, *History of the Revisionist Movement: 1925-1930* (Tel Aviv, 1970), i, 287 and 289.

²Dinur, *Sefer Toldot Ha-Haganah*, i, 517-520.

independent and unaccountable to the British. Britain thus lost an opportunity to check what henceforth evolved into a well-organized, highly-disciplined Jewish fighting force that eventually would be directed against Palestine's British rulers.

Arab rioting broke out in Jerusalem in April 1920 during the Muslim *Nebi Musa* festival. A year before, rumours had swept Palestine that the Arabs planned to use the 1919 holiday celebrations as a pretext to attack Jewish targets in Jerusalem. Some members of the *Yishuv* 'were convinced that the ordinary police force was not sufficient protection in case of such an attack. The British Government felt that no extra provision of protection was necessary'.¹ The holiday in fact passed without incident; but after a year of escalating anti-Jewish violence in the countryside, many Jews became convinced that such attacks would eventually be directed against Palestine's urban centres.² Hence shortly before the 1920 festival began, a delegation led by Jabotinsky requested permission from OETA to arm and deploy themselves in defence of the Jewish community in Jerusalem. The request was rejected and the delegation promised that the city's Jewish population would be sufficiently looked after. This assurance did little to allay the *Yishuv's* anxieties since a majority of the police force was composed of Arab constables who the Jews considered unreliable. Jabotinsky and his followers therefore decided to go ahead with their plans regardless of British objections.³

¹NARS RG 65 867N.20/211, Report by Military Intelligence Division, War Department, 6 September 1943.

²*Ibid.*

³Wasserstein, *The British In Palestine*, p. 65.

When the government learned of this, Jabotinsky was summoned to a meeting by Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen, the Chief Political Officer. Meinertzhagen's recollection of their conversation suggests that the *Yishuv's* worries were not unfounded:

[I] told [Jabotinsky] he was acting illegally in raising a private army and that if he persisted, he would be arrested. He explained that the administration's arrangements for the protection of Jews was utterly inadequate and he feared a massacre. I found this difficult to answer as I knew he was right.¹

On 4 April the *Nebi Musa* celebrations degenerated into a full-scale riot. The Arab police mutinied and joined the attacks on Jewish persons and property. Before order was restored four days later, five Jews had been murdered and 211 injured (Arab casualties were four killed and 33 injured). Jabotinsky and his followers mounted a 'desperate and rudimentary' defence.² If not for their efforts, the Jewish casualties probably would have been greater.³

OETA was denounced by the Zionists for both its failure to anticipate the violence and its dilatory response once the disturbances began. OETA's response was to blame the violence on the Jews themselves, whose activities in Palestine, the British argued, had alarmed the Arabs and provoked their wrath.⁴ Anglo-Zionist relations were further strained by the arrests of Jabotinsky and 19 other Jews.

¹Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen, *Middle East Diary* (London, 1959), p. 178.

²Wasserstein, *The British In Palestine*, pp. 64-65

³NARS RG 226 097.3 21092 OSS R&A Report No. 1014, 30 September 1943.

⁴Wasserstein, *The British In Palestine*, pp. 65-68.

Although they had acted in self-defence, their actions nevertheless were illegal. They were tried and sentenced to prison terms of three years each with Jabotinsky receiving a 15 year sentence.¹ The *Yishuv* was appalled: the more so, because the two Arab leaders who in fact had instigated the riot, Haj Amin al-Husayni and 'Aref al-Aref, had received only ten year prison sentences.²

The most important effect of the riots on the *Yishuv* was to marshal support behind the establishment of a proper Jewish self-defence force. The arguments that had been expressed the year before by Jabotinsky's opponents for a completely independent, if necessarily clandestine, paramilitary unit gained further credence given OETA's unqualified opposition to any form of Jewish self-defence. Indeed, the arrests of Jabotinsky and his followers confirmed this fact. With Jabotinsky now in prison, the only formidable obstacle within the community to the creation of an independent Jewish armed force had been removed. On 12 June 1920 another meeting was called and the *Haganah* was formally established.³

The creation of an independent, underground paramilitary unit represented the beliefs of its founders that only by relying on themselves would the Jewish population of Palestine ever be secure.⁴ The volatile character of Arab discontent, the unreliability of the

¹Joseph Schechtman, *Rebel and Statesman: The Vladimir Jabotinsky Story--The Early Years* (New York, 1956), p. 338.

²Wasserstein, *The British In Palestine*, pp. 68-69.

³Yehuda Bauer, 'From Cooperation to Resistance: The Haganah, 1938-1946', *Middle Eastern Studies*, ii (1966), 182.

⁴See the speech by Eliahu Golomb, the "father" of the *Haganah* and its first commander, who guided its transformation from an underground fighting force into a full-fledged army, quoted by Dinur in *Sefer Toldot Ha-Haganah*, i, 154.

police, and the marked hostility of the British authorities to unilateral Jewish defensive measures had compelled the *Yishuv* to respond in this manner. More importantly, the new defence force was conceived by its creators as the nucleus of a future Jewish Army in a future Jewish state. Apart from their belief that this conception necessitated that it be independent from any foreign control, its founders concluded that like any army in a democracy, it should be under elected civilian control.¹ At the time no such representative Zionist entity existed in Palestine. The establishment in December 1920 of the *Histadrut* (Hebrew: referring to the "General Federation of Jewish Workers") redressed this situation, and it was agreed that the *Haganah* would be supervised by the the *Histadrut's* elected executive board. This decision, however, only deepened the cleavage separating Jabotinsky from the founders of the *Haganah*. The *Histadrut's* ideology was socialist; Jabotinsky strongly opposed labour-socialism. Thus any prospect of obtaining his support for an underground Jewish paramilitary force vanished with the new group's association with the Zionist labour faction.²

The *Nebi Musa* disturbances also had a profound effect on British policy towards Palestine. Reaction in London was strongly critical of OETA's actions regarding the riots. Complaints of its performance were expressed in the *Times* on 27 April 1920 and by the Foreign Office. Meinertzhagen was especially critical of the military government and its Chief Administrator, Major-General Sir Louis Bols. In a sharply worded memorandum, Meinertzhagen assailed Bols and other senior officials for their pronounced hostility to Zionism in general and specifically for

¹*Ibid.*

²Schechtman and Benari, *History of the Revisionist Movement*, i, *passim*.

their failure to anticipate the riots and contain the violence after it had started. A copy of his report was sent to David Lloyd George, the Prime Minister, in San Remo, Italy, where the Inter-Allied Conference to formulate the terms of the peace treaty with Turkey was just starting. Despite the fact that no formal treaty had yet been adopted, both Lloyd George and Balfour (who was now Lord President of the Council) agreed that the provisional military regime should be disbanded and replaced with a civilian administration. Herbert Samuel, a prominent British-Zionist and former member of the Cabinet, was selected to head the new government and ordered to leave for Palestine as soon as he could.¹

THE MANDATORY ADMINISTRATION

Samuel arrived in Palestine on 30 June 1920 and formally assumed office the following day. Since Palestine was designated a 'mandated territory' and not a 'crown colony' it was decided that Samuel's title should be that of 'High Commissioner' and not 'Governor'. Palestine otherwise was organized exactly on crown colony lines. The Colonial Office thus assumed direct responsibility for its administration from the Foreign Office at the end of 1920. A Civil (later, Chief) Secretary was appointed, as were a Commandant (later, Inspector General) of Police and Prisons and the heads of the various other public service departments: health, education and agriculture. A new legal system, which incorporated many of the Ottoman statutes, was implemented under the direction of a Legal Secretary (later, Attorney General). Palestine

¹Wasserstein, *The British In Palestine*, pp. 71-72. In 1914 Samuel, who held the office of President of the Local Government, introduced the idea to the Cabinet that Britain should commit itself to the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine. See Stein, *The Balfour Declaration*, p. 103.

was divided geographically into ten administrative districts (which later were consolidated and reduced to three), each supervised by a district commissioner and assistant district commissioner. All district commissioners and heads of department were British; their staffs, however, were composed of Britons, Jews and Arabs.¹

One of Samuel's first official acts was to pardon Jabotinsky, his imprisoned comrades and al-Husayni and al-Aref. In this manner he hoped both to demonstrate his impartiality and also to mend relations between Britain and the Jewish and Arab communities.² In September the first Immigration Ordinance was promulgated by the government, establishing a 12-month quota of 16,500 certificates for each Jewish head of family.³ The arrival of new immigrants during the next several months, however, greatly exacerbated Arab fears that they would become a minority in their own country and alienated the goodwill that Samuel had hoped to acquire. On 1 May 1921 anti-Jewish riots broke out in Jaffa.⁴ The disturbances spread rapidly to the surrounding countryside. When order was finally established six days later, 47 Jews had been killed and 146 wounded (Arab casualties were 14 dead and 49 wounded).⁵

In the wake of the unrest, the Palestine Government pursued a dual-track strategy designed, on the one hand, to mollify Arab discontent while, on the other, to strengthen its powers to suppress lawlessness and deal more firmly with troublemakers. On 3 June Samuel announced

¹Hurewitz, *The Struggle For Palestine*, pp. 23-24.

²Wasserstein, *The British In Palestine*, p. 92.

³Royal Institute of International Affairs (RIIA), *Great Britain and Palestine, 1915-1945* (Westport, Connecticut, 1976), p. 39.

⁴Norman Bentwich, *England In Palestine* (London, 1932), p. 69.

⁵Wasserstein, *The British In Palestine*, p. 102.

that henceforth the number of Jewish immigrants allowed into Palestine would be determined on the basis of their 'economic absorptive capacity': that is, the contribution they would make to the country's economy. The following month the Ordinance for the Prevention of Crime was promulgated. It empowered the High Commissioner to impose collective fines, or decree some other form of collective punishment, on persons or entire villages adjudged guilty of participating in, or abetting, civil disorder.¹ The intent of the immigration provision was neither to punish the *Yishuv* nor give the impression that government policy could be influenced by violence. Instead, Samuel hoped that Arab anxieties might be allayed and an explosive situation defused without seriously harming Jewish immigration.² Its effect, however, was quite different from its intent: the *Yishuv* interpreted the decree as the beginning of a British retreat from the Balfour Declaration; while the Arabs inadvertently were led to believe that the government could be pressured by violence into granting further concessions.³

BRITAIN'S MANDATE FOR PALESTINE

The League of Nations formally awarded the Mandate for Palestine to Britain on 22 July 1922. The Arabs protested against the mandate on the grounds that it not only violated the pledges of independence that they had received from Britain in the 1915 McMahon-Hussein Correspondence but also Article 22 of the League of Nations Covenant which promised self-determination to 'certain communities formerly belonging to the Turkish

¹Y. Porath, *The Birth of The Palestinian Arab Nationalist Movement, 1918-1929* (London, 1974), p. 129.

²Bentwich, *England In Palestine*, p. 71.

³Porath, *Birth of the Palestinian Arab Nationalist Movement*, pp. 131-132.

Empire'.¹ The Arabs particularly objected to the terms of the mandate committing Britain, in Article 2, to 'placing the country under such political, administrative and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of the Jewish national home' and Article 6 which stipulated that Britain 'shall facilitate Jewish immigration under suitable conditions and shall encourage...close settlement by Jews on the land'.²

For the next eight years, however, violent Arab protest ceased. The Crime Prevention Ordinance coupled with the harsh police crackdown that followed its promulgation accounted, at least in part, for this development. More important, however, was the traditional Arab elite's reassertion of its authority over the inchoate Palestinian nationalist movement.³ In the aftermath of the government's suppression of Arab lawbreakers after the 1921 riots, the elder leadership's counsels of patience temporarily prevailed. But when diplomatic measures failed to obtain the reversal of Britain's support of Zionism, the nationalist movement was radicalized.⁴

THE 1929 RIOTS

On 23 August 1929 Arab rioting erupted in Jerusalem. Mobs set upon Jewish passersby while the Arab police, as they had done nine years earlier, again joined the rioting. Their unarmed and outnumbered British superiors were unable to quell the disorders.⁵ On the following

¹For full text of Article 22 see John Norton Moore (ed.), *The Arab-Israeli Conflict, Volume III: Documents* (Princeton, 1974), pp. 71-73.

²For full text of the Mandate see RIIA, *Great Britain and Palestine*, pp. 151-155.

³Ann Mosley Lesch, *Arab Politics in Palestine, 1917-1939* (Ithaca, New York, 1979), *passim*.

⁴Porath, *The Birth of the Palestinian Arab Nationalist Movement*, p. 134.

⁵Bentwich, *England In Palestine*, p. 185, and Wasserstein, *The British In Palestine*, p. 232.

day the violence spread to other parts of the country. The Arabs' targets were not the well-defended settlements of recent immigrants, but the centuries-old Jewish religious communities in Hebron and Safad, where their defenceless inhabitants were brutally massacred.¹ By the time order was restored six days later, 133 Jews lay dead and 389 wounded (116 Arabs had been killed and 232 wounded).²

The 1929 riots were a watershed in Jewish self-defence efforts. As soon as the rioting erupted, the *Haganah* had requested permission from Sir Harry Luke, the Chief Secretary, to arm 500 of its fighters and deploy them in defensive positions throughout the country. Luke refused, citing the government's view that any Jewish action was likely to provoke further Arab violence.³ The *Haganah* ignored Luke's prohibition and did whatever it could to defend the *Yishuv*. Although it had again prevented still more bloodshed, the group's shortcomings nevertheless were evident in the large number of Jewish casualties.⁴ The group clearly possessed insufficient quantities of arms and ammunition. Training was similarly rudimentary and informally organized, supervised by a small group of devoted volunteers who arranged meetings and training exercises under the guise of youth-sports and recreational programmes.⁵

A meeting of the *Histadrut* was convened in September 1929 to assess the *Haganah's* performance during the riots and to consider means of improving its capabilities. David Ben-Gurion,⁶ the *Histadrut's*

¹See Report of R. Cafferata, 'The Events in Hebron on 24 August 1929', quoted in Wasserstein, *The British In Palestine*, p. 234.

²*Ibid.*, p. 233.

³Wasserstein, *The British In Palestine*, p. 233.

⁴Dinur, *Sefer Toldot Ha-Haganah*, ii, 299-404.

⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 255 and 292.

⁶Ben-Gurion was subsequently elected Chairman of the Jewish Agency and Zionist Executive in 1935. In 1948 he was elected as Israel's first Prime Minister, holding office until 1953. Between 1955 and 1963 he

director, pressed for the allocation of additional funds to the *Haganah*, arguing that, 'The self-defense forces saved the *Yishuv* from destruction. The first lesson of the riots to the *Yishuv* and Zionism is the consolidation and strengthening of the *Haganah*'.¹ It was decided to reorganize and centralize the *Haganah* command, increase funding of the group, and improve recruitment procedures and training. Civilian control of the self-defence force, however, was surrendered by the *Histadrut* (who could no longer afford to underwrite the costs of maintaining the *Haganah*) to the Jewish Agency, the new Zionist political institution established in 1929 to oversee Jewish immigration, land purchase and settlement in Palestine.²

REVISIONIST ZIONISM AND THE FORMATION OF THE HAGANAH-BET

Jewish self-defence nevertheless remained the highly partisan and politically divisive issue it had become after the *Haganah's* association with the *Histadrut* in 1921. The Jewish Agency and its parent-body, the World Zionist Organization (WZO), also were dominated by labour-socialists, whose policies were anathema to non-socialists like Jabotinsky. In 1925 Jabotinsky's opposition to the WZO had led to his founding of the Revisionist Party (later known as the New Zionist Organization). The new party attacked the WZO for its moderate, so-called "minimalist" approach to Zionism and relations with the British Government. The Revisionists emphasized the need to 'liquidate the Diaspora' (the Jewish community outside of Palestine) and to

again served as Prime Minister and retired from public life in 1970 after having been a member of the *Knesset* (Israel's parliament) for 22 years.

¹Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 416.

²*Ibid.*

encourage Jewish immigration to Palestine on a larger and more intensive scale than they believed the WZO/Jewish Agency did. With regard to Anglo-Zionist relations, the new party lobbied for the reincorporation of Transjordan into the mandated territory of Palestine and also for the abandonment of the 'economic absorptive capacity' principle decreed by Samuel following the 1921 riots and codified in the 1922 White Paper (which formally separated the east bank of the Jordan River from Palestine and created the Emirate of Transjordan).¹ Revisionism thus embraced a "maximalist" interpretation of Zionism, maintaining that Britain must be obliged faithfully and completely to discharge its pledges to the Jews. Foremost was the establishment of a Jewish state that encompassed the territory on both sides of the Jordan River.² Jabotinsky's faith in the compatibility of British strategic interests in the eastern Mediterranean with Zionist aims in Palestine justified his pursuit of this aggressive policy: 'Hence he saw no danger in asking awkward questions in London and pressing the British to fulfil their obligations under the Mandate'.³

Similar sources of disenchantment with mainstream labour-socialist Zionism had led in 1923 to the formation of *Brit Trumpeldor (Betar)* in Riga, Latvia. This right-wing Zionist youth group was named after Joseph Trumpeldor, the one-armed Jewish war hero of the Russo-Japanese War and co-founder (with Jabotinsky) of the Jewish Legion. Trumpeldor

¹Schechtman and Benari, *History of the Revisionist Movement*, i, *passim*.

²The *Irgun* advocated the same territorial dimensions for the Jewish state. The group's logo, in fact, was a hand clenching a rifle against a background of a map of Palestine and Transjordan, with the words "Only Thus" (that is, only through force of arms would Zionist aims be achieved) printed below.

³Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism* (New York, 1976), p. 345.

had lost his life during an Arab attack on a Jewish settlement in 1920.¹ Jabotinsky became the group's spiritual leader and commander. *Betar* thus was formally associated with the Revisionist Party as its youth group. Soon *Betar* affiliates were organized in Poland and other eastern European countries.²

In 1928 a *Betar* training school was opened in Tel Aviv. It offered instruction in accordance with the group's strict programme of military preparedness, political awareness and personal appearance.³ Many *Betarim* (as members were called) also belonged to the *Haganah* and defended the *Yishuv* in that capacity as well as in independent *Betar* units during the 1929 disturbances.⁴

The anomalous existence of two separate defence forces discharging the same function was addressed by the formation in 1929 of a five-man command-joint council for all Jewish defence matters. The council, which remained under the auspices of the Jewish Agency, was composed of two *Histadrut* representatives, two non-socialist members and a neutral chairman.⁵ But the ideological chasm separating the socialist from the Revisionist Zionists proved unbreachable. In 1931 a dispute arose between the *Haganah* central command and the commander of its Jerusalem detachment, Abraham Tehomei. Tehomei's membership in the Revisionist

¹Wasserstein, *The British In Palestine*, p. 239. Its acronym, *Betar*, had further significance connoting the site of Bar Kochba's legendary battle against the Romans in 135 A.D.

²Schechtman and Benari, *History of the Revisionist Movement*, i, pp. 333-351.

³David Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun Ha-Zvai Ha-Leumi (Battle For Freedom: The Irgun Zvai Leumi)* (Tel Aviv, 1975), i, 127.

⁴Schechtman and Benari, *History of the Revisionist Movement*, i, 289.

⁵Luttwak and Horowitz, *The Israeli Army*, p. 9.

Party, stubborn independence and aggressive interpretation of *Haganah* defence policy had brought him into conflict with his superiors. Their disagreements exploded in April. Accusing the *Haganah* of discrimination towards its non-socialist members, Tehomei left the group, seized its armoury in Jerusalem, and along with a majority of the men under his command, founded a new self-defence force which they named *Haganah-Bet* (*Bet* being the second letter in the Hebrew alphabet).¹ The *Haganah* unit in Tel Aviv also mutinied and, together with the *Betar* school there, joined the new group. They were soon followed by other similarly disgruntled *Haganah* detachments in Safed and Haifa.²

Although the *Haganah-Bet* did not officially align itself with the Revisionist Party, Jabotinsky became the group's spiritual leader and indeed the great majority of its members either were Revisionists or *Betarim*. The new group was commanded by Tehomei and 'organized on a purely military basis'.³ Recruits were drawn from youth-sport clubs and students at Hebrew University. Training was similar to that provided by the *Haganah*: consisting of marching drills, field exercises, physical fitness conditioning and instruction in the use and care of small arms. The similarities between the *Haganah-Bet* and *Haganah*, however, went no further than a common approach to training and preparedness. Unlike its rival, the *Haganah-Bet* offered instruction in sabotage and offensive attack. The new group, however, had little money and few weapons: both of which greatly constrained *Haganah-Bet* activities.⁴

¹Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, i, 163-164, and Dinur, *Sefer Toldot Ha-Haganah*, ii, 429-430.

²Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, i, 163.

³Joseph Schechtman, *Fighter and Prophet: The Vladimir Jabotinsky Story--The Last Years* (New York, 1961), p. 444.

⁴Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, i, 164.

THE ARAB REBELLION

Jewish immigration to Palestine increased significantly during the 1930s. In 1933 Adolf Hitler was elected Chancellor of Germany and with the ascendance to power of the Nazis, many German Jews feared that they would be subjected to discrimination and persecution. Suddenly, thousands of immigrants began to arrive in Palestine. In 1933 alone 30,000 immigrants entered the country: a figure greater than the total of the previous six years combined. The number of refugees settling in Palestine increased to 42,000 during 1934 and to 62,000 in 1935. The Jewish population of Palestine, accordingly, nearly doubled between 1932 and 1936.¹

The Arabs watched the influx of new immigrants with increasing apprehension. Since the mid-1920s control of the Palestinian nationalist movement had drifted further away from the traditional leadership's grasp. Having concluded that no change in British policy could be attained through negotiation, the radicals pressed for an end to the British mandate and the granting of independence to Palestine. Thus by the 1930s the Palestinian Arab nationalist movement had become as anti-colonialist as it was anti-Zionist.²

The Arab Rebellion began on 15 April 1936 when an Arab band attacked a bus traveling near Nablus and murdered two Jewish passengers. The attack set in motion a chain of events that culminated in the declaration by the Arab leadership of a national general strike and

¹See D. Gurevich *et al.* (eds.), *Statistical Handbook of Jewish Palestine* (Jerusalem, 1947), *passim*.

²Y. Porath, *From Riots to Rebellion: The Birth of the Palestinian Arab Nationalist Movement, 1929-1939* (London, 1977), *passim*.

later, a country-wide revolt. On 19 April Arab mobs rioted in Jaffa. The violence, as in 1921 and 1929, rapidly spread from the city throughout the surrounding countryside. The Palestine Government, in contrast to its previous reactions to Arab unrest, swiftly attempted to contain the uprising by imposing a curfew and declaring a state of emergency over Palestine.¹

Order was reestablished in Jaffa; but the suppression of the revolt there merely fanned its flames elsewhere. The locus of the violence shifted to the countryside where Jewish settlements, road and rail lines, telephone poles, the Iraq Petroleum Company pipeline (which traversed Palestine from Kirkuk, Iraq to the port of Haifa) and outlying police and military posts came under Arab attack.² Meanwhile, the rebels' targets broadened to include their fellow Arabs as well as Jewish settlers and members of the security forces. Old scores now were settled and long-standing vendettas avenged. In just a month, the rebellion had transformed itself from an urban riot and general strike to a country-wide, rural guerrilla war.³

THE BIRTH OF THE IRGUN ZVAI LEUMI

The resumption of Arab violence, this time on a much larger scale than in the past, caused the *Yishuv* to reassess its traditional military policy of *havlaga* (Hebrew: "self-restraint") and the situation where two autonomous self-defence groups fulfilling the same role operated beside one another. Intrinsically related to *havlaga* was the accompanying

¹Porath, *From Riots to Rebellion*, p. 163.

²Michael J. Cohen, *Palestine: Retreat from the Mandate* (London, 1978), p. 10.

³Tom Bowden, 'The Politics of the Arab Rebellion in Palestine, 1936-39', *Middle Eastern Studies*, xi (1975), 147.

principle of *tohar haneshek* (Hebrew: "purity of arms"). This held that the *Yishuv* should use force only in self-defence and ruled out any form of retaliation. In this manner, the Jews sought to place their use of violence on a higher moral plane than that of the Arabs and by so doing favourably impress the British.¹

The *Haganah-Bet* was especially opposed to the *Haganah's* continued reliance on *havlaga*. They argued that a policy prohibiting reprisal attacks and restricting the *Yishuv's* fighters to a completely passive defence was dangerously out of date given the new, and more serious, threat, presented by the Arab Rebellion. Accordingly, members of the *Haganah-Bet* clamoured for permission to stage retaliatory operations against Arab targets. Both Jabotinsky and Tehomei opposed any deviation from *havlaga*.² Jabotinsky argued that the Arab Rebellion would finally force Britain to accept the existence of a bona fide, above-ground Jewish paramilitary force. Hence, he feared that any retaliatory action would compromise his efforts.³ Those *Haganah-Bet* members who defied Jabotinsky and Tehomei's orders and undertook reprisals were consequently brought before a special military court and disciplined.⁴

But Tehomei's support of *havlaga* was considerably deeper than Jabotinsky's. He believed that, in the state of emergency caused by the Arab Rebellion, only a united Jewish defence force could ensure the

¹Luttwak and Horowitz, *The Israeli Army*, p. 12.

²Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, ii, 209.

³To a certain extent, Jabotinsky's analysis of this situation did in fact prove to be correct. As the British were continually frustrated by their inability to suppress the Arab revolt, they increasingly turned to the *Yishuv* for military and intelligence assistance. See Michael J. Cohen, 'British Strategy and The Palestine Question, 1936-1939', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vii (1972), 181.

⁴Moshe Pearlman and David Ben-Gurion, *Ben-Gurion Looks Back* (New York, 1965), p. 77, and Schechtman, *Fighter and Prophet*, p. 447.

protection of the *Yishuv*.¹ Since both *Haganah* groups accepted *havlagah* as the overriding military concern, Tehomei regarded their continued estrangement as not only illogical, but as an unnecessary duplication of effort. Accordingly, he approached the *Haganah* and Jewish Agency and suggested merging the two groups under a single command. On 6 August 1936 an agreement was concluded. It called for the amalgamation of the *Haganah-Bet* into the *Haganah* and the *Haganah-Bet's* 'unconditional acceptance' of the authority of the Jewish Agency and that of the overall commander appointed by the Agency. A final stipulation stated that those members of the *Haganah-Bet* who fail to abide by these terms would 'be classified as criminals' and dealt with accordingly.²

Although Jabotinsky appreciated the benefits that the merger would bring to the *Yishuv*, he was less sanguine about its possible effect on Revisionist political activity. He feared that the Jewish Agency's control of the Revisionist's paramilitary force might be extended over its political rivals in the party itself. Jabotinsky qualified his acceptance of the unification plan with the condition that the Agency and its representative assembly, the *Vaad Leumi* (Hebrew: "National Council"), become pluralistic bodies and not ones entirely dominated by labour-socialists. When the Jewish Agency refused, the merger collapsed.³ Tehomei accepted Jabotinsky's de facto veto of the merger and on 5 December 1936 both men concluded an agreement that defined more precisely Jabotinsky's role in *Haganah-Bet* activities and his influence over the group's commander. Essentially, while Tehomei would be

¹Samuel Katz, *Days of Fire* (Jerusalem and London, 1968), p. 15.

²For text of agreement see Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, i, 286-287.

³Katz, *Days of Fire*, p. 6.

regarded as the *Haganah-Bet*'s only commander, he was pledged to 'conduct [its affairs] in the spirit' of Jabotinsky's instructions.¹

Jewish Agency pressure for reconsideration of the merger scheme increased during 1937 because of the study of Britain's future policy for Palestine undertaken by the Royal Commission chaired by Lord Peel. Before the Commission had completed its investigations, rumours emerged that its report would recommend the partition of Palestine into separate Arab and Jewish states. A conference was organized early in 1937, with representatives from all of the *Yishuv*'s political parties attending, to discuss the practical implications of partition--particularly those regarding military issues. The proposed Jewish state would need a Jewish army. Accordingly new cries for unification were heard both from the Jewish Agency and *Haganah* as well as from some elements within the *Haganah-Bet*. Tehomei's concerns were not with the merger's possible effect on the Revisionist Party, but with the military preparedness of the *Yishuv*. He unilaterally decided to merge the forces under his command with those of the *Haganah*. A majority of the members of the *Haganah-Bet*, however, objected and refused to accede to Tehomei's decision.²

The unification issue was not as simple as the mere reconciliation of two different paramilitary units performing identical functions. The political and ideological disagreements separating the two *Haganah* forces were more formidable than one might otherwise infer. Their differences reflected the "minimalist" and "maximalist" policies of their respective political masters. The Jewish state that the Royal

¹Quoted in Schechtman, *Fighter and Prophet*, p. 444.

²*Ibid.*, pp. 444-446.

Commission was likely to propose comprised a smaller portion of Palestine than even most Zionists would accept. The WZO, and the various groups under its aegis (the Jewish Agency, *Vaad Leumi*, *Haganah*, etc.), agreed after much debate to accept the Commission's offer as a basis for further negotiation. The Revisionists (and the organizations under its umbrella--the *Haganah-Bet* and *Betar*) rejected the plan and unequivocally demanded a Jewish state encompassing the land on both sides of the Jordan River, i.e. not only *all* of Palestine, but Transjordan as well. Jabotinsky feared that the renewed merger overtures from the Jewish Agency represented a Machiavellian plot to stifle dissent within the *Yishuv* and thus facilitate the acceptance of the Royal Commission scheme. Accordingly, he countermanded Tehomei's order.¹

Confronted by Jabotinsky's adamant opposition to the merger, Tehomei and his supporters reconsidered the matter. But Ben-Gurion, the head of the Jewish Agency Executive, now issued an ultimatum to the members of the *Haganah-Bet*: either submit to the authority of the Jewish Agency or be ostracized by the *Yishuv*.² Tehomei and approximately 1200 others heeded Ben-Gurion's threat and joined the *Haganah*. Some 1800 remaining *Haganah-Bet* soldiers, however, refused to follow. This hardcore gathered around two junior officers, Abraham Stern and David Raziell, and on 23 April 1937 announced the formation of a new Jewish paramilitary organization, called the *Irgun Zvai Leumi*.³

¹*Ibid.*

²Michael Bar-Zohar, *The Armed Prophet: A Biography of Ben-Gurion* (London, 1966), pp. 71-72.

³Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, i, 298-299.

Soon after, Robert Bitker was elected commander of the *Irgun*. Stern was appointed secretary, Moshe Rosenberg the chief of staff and Raziel commander of the Jerusalem detachment.¹ Jabotinsky was regarded as the *Irgun's* supreme commander, possessing 'supreme moral authority in all major *Irgun* matters'. In practical terms, this meant that

his orders were to be obeyed in questions of major policy; the *Irgun's* commander in Palestine was to be appointed by him; on the other hand, residing outside of Palestine, he was not to interfere in any matters of the *Irgun's* daily activities and in the appointment or promotion of officers.²

Despite Jabotinsky's intimate relationship with the *Irgun*, no formal ties existed between the new group and the Revisionist Party.³ In this manner, Jabotinsky was free to pursue the party's political aims without publicly associating himself with the illegal *Irgun*. The Jewish Agency similarly concealed its relationship with the *Haganah*. But whereas the *Haganah* in fact was directly responsible to the elected civilian leadership of the Jewish Agency and, as such, to public opinion in the *Yishuv*; the *Irgun* was accountable neither to the Revisionist Party nor to any publicly elected civilian leadership and, indeed, to no one outside of the organization except Jabotinsky.⁴

¹*Ibid.*

²Schechtman, *Fighter and Prophet*, p. 448.

³PRO WO 169/8311, PICME Paper No. 2, 30 August 1943. PICME, Political Intelligence Centre, Middle East, and SIME, Security Intelligence, Middle East, were the two principal British intelligence units for the region. For detailed descriptions of PICME's and SIME's functions see PRO WO 201/2148 Note by A. T. Cornwall-Jones, 3 February 1943, and WO 201/2765 Draft Directive (undated).

⁴Yehuda Bauer, *From Diplomacy to Resistance: A History of Jewish Palestine, 1939-1945* (New York, 1973), pp. 14-15.

IRGUN COUNTER-TERRORISM

The Royal Commission's report was published in July 1937 and, as expected, it recommended the partition of Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states.¹ The report was denounced by Jew and Arab alike. The proposed Jewish state, comprising just 20 percent of the country, was even smaller than the diminutive one that the Zionists had anticipated. Although it was geographically unacceptable, Hitler's rise to power, the first hints of renewed Jewish persecution both in Germany and elsewhere in Europe, the likely recrudescence of the Arab Rebellion (which had been temporarily suspended in October 1936) and fears of continued British vacillation regarding its commitment to Zionism, compelled the Jewish leadership to accept the Commission's offer. Nevertheless, final recognition of the Royal Commission Plan was made conditional upon future negotiations to increase the size of the proposed Jewish state.²

The Arabs, in contrast, categorically rejected the Royal Commission's plan. Instead they demanded the immediate cessation of all Jewish immigration and land purchase, Britain's abrogation of the Balfour Declaration, the termination of the mandate and full independence for Palestine. In September 1937 the Arab revolt was resumed.³ The *Irgun* had already prepared for any renewal of Arab violence. During the summer of 1937 a new strategy had been formulated by the group should widespread anti-Jewish violence recur. It was agreed that *havlaga* by itself could no longer ensure the safety of the

¹See Cmd. 5479, *Palestine Royal Commission Report*, July 1937.

²Hurewitz, *Struggle For Palestine*, pp. 77-78.

³Porath, *From Riots to Rebellion*, pp. 228-232.

Yishuv. The *Haganah-Bet* had been prohibited from mounting offensive operations primarily by Tehomei. While Jabotinsky also opposed blind reprisals, he was less certain of the ultimate effectiveness of *havlaga* than Tehomei. The real dilemma, Jabotinsky believed, was whether the *Yishuv* would actively participate in the defeat of an uprising that directly threatened it or 'be content with the role of cowards...suffer[ing] the consequences'.¹

Implicit in Jabotinsky's Revisionist ideology was his belief that only by asserting themselves forcefully and decisively could the Jews gain the respect of both the British and the Arabs. The commanding of respect, Jabotinsky reasoned, was essential if the Jews were ever to receive recognition of their right to a national homeland.² The sustained character of the Arabs' violence provided the 'bitter political justification for retaliation, [but Jabotinsky nevertheless] had grave doubts as to the moral aspect of such a course'.³ In July 1937 a meeting between the *Irgun* high command and Jabotinsky was held in Cairo. Jabotinsky reportedly argued that, 'I can't see much heroism and public good in shooting from the rear an Arab peasant on a donkey, carrying vegetables for sale in Tel Aviv'.⁴ But, at the same time, he was reluctant to impose any limits on *Irgun* operations when it was *Irgun* members who were risking their lives to protect the *Yishuv*, while he remained safely outside Palestine. An arrangement therefore was devised that broadened the previous understanding reached between Jabotinsky and

¹Quoted in Schechtman, *Fighter and Prophet*, p. 447.

²Edward Hyams, *Terrorists and Terrorism* (New York, 1974), p. 144.

³Schechtman, *Fighter and Prophet*, p. 447, and Pearlman and Ben-Gurion, *Ben-Gurion Looks Back*, p. 72.

⁴Quoted in Schechtman, *Fighter and Prophet*, pp. 449-450.

Tehomei. Jabotinsky was now not to be told *anything at all* about day-to-day *Irgun* activities and would have no actual status over the group.¹ Changes were also made in the *Irgun* leadership: Bitker was replaced as commander by Rosenberg, the chief of staff, with Raziel assuming that post (but retaining command of the Jerusalem detachment).²

Irgun retaliatory operations commenced immediately after the renewal of Arab violence in September 1937. During the next three months *Irgun* gunmen killed twelve Arabs in reprisal for Arab attacks on Jews.³ The majority of these casualties occurred on one day: 14 November--a date referred to afterwards as "Black Sunday" because of the four separate *Irgun* operations launched against Arab targets in Jerusalem.⁴ The *Yishuv* was stunned by this breach of *havlaga*. The *Irgun* was denounced in the press and by Jewish Agency officials and accused of 'marring the moral record of Palestine Jewry, hampering the political struggle and undermining security'.⁵

This outcry, however, did not deter the *Irgun* from continuing to exact reprisals on the Arabs. In fact, it only estranged the *Irgun* from the *Yishuv*. Outlawed by the British and condemned by their fellow Jews, the *Irgun* burrowed deeper underground. Discipline was tightened and stringent security measures were adopted to prevent detection and

¹*Ibid.*, p. 451.

²The command shake-up was the result of a combination of factors: tactical differences, personality conflicts, and a general malaise within the *Irgun* over Bitker's leadership. All these factors merged to force Bitker's removal. See *Ibid.*, pp. 448-449, and Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, ii, 17-18.

³MEC Tegart Papers, I/3, 'Terrorism, 1936-1937', (undated).

⁴Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, ii, 29-30.

⁵Quoted in Borisov, *Palestine Underground*, p. 11.

infiltration.¹ The *Irgun's* recruiting practices illustrate the secrecy in which the group functioned. Potential recruits could be recommended only by standing members of the organization. A thorough background check was then done on the candidate's political views, associates and character. If he passed this screening, the recruit was told to present himself at a secret meeting place. He would be admitted after giving the correct password and then was brought into a pitch-black room where a flashlight was shone directly into his eyes. A board of examiners would question him on his reasons for wanting to join the *Irgun* and warn him of the dangers that membership entailed. Finally, he was interrogated about his attitudes towards Jewish self-defence and the reasons he believed distinguished the *Irgun* from the *Haganah*. If the candidate's answers and explanations satisfied the examiners, one of his hands was placed on a Bible and the other on a pistol. He then was ordered to repeat the following oath:

Through full cognizance, without any outside pressure, I hereby swear to be a faithful soldier of the *Irgun Zvai Leumi* in the Land of Israel guarding its property, soul and national pride and helping to revitalize the entire nation on the land of its forefathers.

I hereby take upon myself complete obedience, without refusal, complete silence regarding everything that I know dealing with the *Irgun*.

I hereby swear to obey my superiors and to fulfil their conditions at any time.

May the Guardian of Israel grant me this forever.²

¹ Katz, *Days of Fire*, p. 31.

²Quoted in Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, i, 223-224.

SCHLOMO BEN-YOSEF AND THE ESCALATION OF IRGUN REPRISAL ATTACKS

Throughout the first half of 1938 the road between Acre and Safed was repeatedly attacked by Arab guerrillas. On a number of occasions Jewish travelers were murdered and their bodies horribly mutilated. The security forces were unable either to protect the traffic along the road or catch the persons responsible for the raids. After one particularly gruesome episode, three teenage members of *Betar* from a nearby settlement decided to avenge the Arab attacks by ambushing an Arab bus.¹ The attack failed: a hand grenade hurled at the bus did not explode and the few shots fired from an antiquated revolver went wide of the target.²

The three youths were arrested and tried by a British military tribunal. On 3 June 1938 a guilty verdict was passed by the court. Shalom Zurabin, who had pleaded insanity, was ordered confined to a mental institution; Abraham Shein and Schlomo Ben-Yosef were sentenced to death. Appeals were filed on behalf of both the condemned: Shein's sentence was commuted to life imprisonment on the grounds that he was under 18 years of age, while Ben-Yosef's was upheld.³ Zionist officials in Palestine and Britain unsuccessfully pleaded for clemency. On 29 June Ben-Yosef was hanged.⁴

¹For descriptions of this incident and the attacks that preceded it see *Ibid.*, ii, 61-62; Schechtman, *Fighter and Prophet*, p. 468; and John Marlowe, *Rebellion In Palestine* (London, 1946), p. 198.

²Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, ii, pp. 62-64; Katz, *Days of Fire*, p. 35; and Schechtman, *Fighter and Prophet*, p. 468.

³*Ibid.*

⁴Itzhak Gurion, *Triumph on the Gallows* (New York, 1950), p. 35.

The effect of the hanging on the *Irgun* was to drive it to escalate operations. At a memorial service for Ben-Yosef, Jabotinsky declared

Those in high quarters [in the British government] are weighing in their minds whether the Jewish youth are dirt....I say to the Englishman: beware! The Jews are beginning to ask themselves whether Ben Yosef's way is not the best one. We know from history that martyrs become prophets and bombs become altars.¹

On 4 July the *Irgun* struck: four separate attacks were staged in Jerusalem during which five Arabs were killed and 20 others wounded. The coordinated operations had been orchestrated by Raziel who, in yet another shake-up of the *Irgun* high command, had replaced Rosenberg as commander. Raziel's more militant views and his abiding faith in counter-terrorism as a deterrent to Arab violence, reflected the prevailing opinion within the *Irgun* better than Rosenberg's conservative outlook and cautious strategy.² Two days later the *Irgun* bombed the Arab market in Haifa. Twenty-three persons died and 70 were injured in several simultaneous explosions. This operation marked a significant departure from previous *Irgun* operations. For the first time random bombing of crowded public areas was employed.³ Thereafter a wave of indiscriminate bombings rocked Palestine. On 15 July an *Irgun* bomb exploded in the Arab market in Jerusalem's Old City: 10 persons were killed and 45 wounded. Ten days later the Haifa market was again bombed: 53 persons were slain and 45 others injured.⁴

¹Quoted in Schechtman, *Fighter and Prophet*, p. 472.

²David Levine, 'David Raziel, The Man and His Times' (Yeshiva University Ph.D. thesis, 1969), p. 220.

³Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, ii, 77.

⁴Marlowe, *Rebellion In Palestine*, p. 220.

These acts in fact only triggered a brutal escalation of inter-communal violence.¹ The *Irgun's* attacks, rather than deterring Arab violence appeared only to incite it. The Jewish reprisals were equally as counterproductive in that they generated support for the rebels within the Arab community from hitherto moderate or apathetic citizens: 'a fact from which the leaders of the Arab terror derived much satisfaction'.² Accordingly, the *Irgun's* counter-terrorist strategy was a serious miscalculation that endangered, rather than protected, the *Yishuv*.³

The *Yishuv* was horrified by the *Irgun's* irresponsibility. Newspaper editorials censured the *Irgun* citing its 'criminal gamble with the fate of the Jewish community' and 'shameful and calamitous' behaviour.⁴ Jewish Agency officials denounced the *Irgun*⁵ and warned of the possibility of civil war if the group did not cease its wanton assaults on Arabs. In July Eliahu Golomb, the commander of the *Haganah*, personally transmitted this warning to Jabotinsky who was then in London. Jabotinsky threatened that any *Haganah* action taken against the *Irgun* would have serious repercussions throughout the Diaspora: implying that a fratricidal war would not be restricted to Palestine alone.⁶

¹*Ibid.*, and Martin Gilbert, *Exile and Return* (London, 1978), p. 204.

²Porath, *From Riots to Rebellion*, p. 238.

³Bauer, *From Diplomacy to Resistance*, p. 14, and Pearlman and Ben-Gurion, *Ben-Gurion Looks Back*, p. 78.

⁴*Davar* and *Ha'aretz* quoted in Gilbert, *Exile and Return*, p. 204.

⁵Hurewitz, *The Struggle for Palestine*, p. 92.

⁶Schechtman, *Fighter and Prophet*, pp. 461-462.

Two months later negotiations were held in the hope of averting a Jewish civil war. On 19 September 1938 an agreement was reached. Unlike the previous attempt at unification in 1936, it was decided that this time the *Irgun* would retain its independence. The *Irgun*, however, would agree to participate on a joint committee that would determine all matters concerning the *Yishuv's* defence and to abide by its decisions.¹ Final ratification of the pact was made dependent on the consent of the Jewish Agency.² Ben-Gurion, however, vehemently opposed the agreement and threatened to resign if it was approved. 'The only condition on which [the *Irgun*] can be brought into our ranks', he insisted, 'is for it to be willing to accept the political discipline of the Zionist Executive'.³ Jabotinsky refused to accede to any agreement other than the one concluded between the *Irgun* and the *Haganah* on 19 September. Thus the attempted rapprochement collapsed.⁴ Although the civil war did not materialize, from this time forward the *Irgun* and the *Haganah* went their separate ways.

THE REFORMULATION OF BRITISH POLICY FOR PALESTINE

Meanwhile, throughout 1938 British statesmen and strategists had been preoccupied with preventing another European war and, when war with Germany became inevitable, with preparing for it. In the event of war, Britain would have to rely on the Suez Canal to transfer reinforcements from India for home defence or to Europe. Should Italy join the war and

¹For complete text of agreement see Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, ii, 112-113.

²Schechtman, *Fighter and Prophet*, p. 463.

³Bar-Zohar, *The Armed Prophet*, p. 72.

⁴Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, ii, 117-120.

block British access to the Canal, reinforcements from India would have to be transported across the Middle East and through Palestine to reopen the Canal. Although by 1939 the Arab Rebellion in Palestine had been *militarily* defeated, its fundamental political causes still remained. Continued fighting in Palestine would impede the rapid passage of British forces to Egypt or the continent. Moreover, the British forces involved in suppressing the revolt in Palestine would be more urgently required elsewhere.¹ The pacification of Palestine was thus of paramount importance. This conclusion led to a reassessment of Britain's policy for Palestine and the decision to construct a new policy that would placate the Arabs and thereby assure Britain's strategic interests.

This reevaluation of policy necessarily focused on the partition scheme recommended by the Royal Commission in 1937. The Foreign Office was particularly opposed to partition. Officials there argued that any attempt by Britain to impose partition by force would, on the one hand, necessitate a military commitment beyond Britain's means to fulfil and, on the other, incur the enmity of the entire Arab world and quite possibly of Britain's Muslim subjects in India as well. The depth of Arab hostility to partition, the Foreign Office maintained, ensured that military means alone could not end the Rebellion and that prolonged fighting between British troops and the Arab rebels would unavoidably harm Anglo-Arab relations throughout the entire region.²

¹Michael J. Cohen, 'Appeasement in the Middle East: The British White Paper on Palestine May 1939', *The Historical Journal*, xvi (1973), 572.

²Porath, *From Riots to Rebellion*, p. 278, and Gilbert, *Exile and Return*, p. 201.

Officials in the Colonial Office did not share the Foreign Office's hostility to partition. Although both departments agreed that a new policy was needed, the Colonial Office regarded the Royal Commission's proposal as the best solution to the Palestine problem.¹ Despite the fact that the Colonial Office was the ministry directly responsible for Palestine, the Foreign Office's view tended to carry more weight because of its responsibility for determining British foreign policy for the entire Middle East. Further, the Foreign Office in general was the more powerful department and the Foreign Secretary was often a more senior and powerful minister whose voice carried greater weight in the Cabinet. The debate over partition was ultimately decided on the basis of the negative effect that its implementation would have on Anglo-Arab relations, not only in Palestine, but indeed throughout the Arab world. The appointment of another commission, chaired by Sir John Woodhead, accorded the partition plan's opponents an opportunity quietly to abandon the Royal Commission's scheme.²

The publication of the Woodhead Commission's Report in October 1938³ laid the foundation of the government's official rejection of partition. It was useful to the government in fact only insofar as it provided an escape from partition. Indeed, in the rush to bury the Royal Commission's objectionable scheme, the Woodhead Report's conclusions were completely ignored.⁴ A White Paper issued simultaneously with the Woodhead Report declared that 'the political, administrative and financial difficulties involved in the proposal to

¹Cohen, *Retreat from the Mandate*, p. 39.

²Porath, *From Riots to Rebellion*, p. 278.

³Cmd. 5854, *Palestine Partition Commission: Report*, October 1938.

⁴Porath, *From Riots to Rebellion*, p. 280.

create independent Arab and Jewish States inside Palestine are so great that this solution of the problem is impractical'. Given this conclusion, the government proposed to hold a conference to which representatives from both Palestine's Arab and Jewish communities and the surrounding Arab states would be invited to consider Palestine's future. This announcement, however, carried one important caveat: should 'the London discussions...not produce agreement within a reasonable period of time' the government would regard itself free to decide unilaterally 'the policy which they propose to pursue' in Palestine.¹

The London Conference began on 7 February 1939.² Britain was determined to assuage Arab discontent and ensure peace in Palestine at a time when Britain's limited military resources were strained by the exigencies of home, continental, and imperial defence.³ Thus Britain's preoccupation with ensuring British strategic interests in the Middle East, coupled with, what is described by one historian, as the government's 'matter-of-fact inclination to view the Arab cause as more logical and correct' than the Zionists' cause, presented the Jewish delegation with a *fait accompli* that seriously weakened its negotiating position throughout the Conference.⁴ Moreover the risk of a Jewish uprising in Palestine was far less serious a threat than that posed by

¹Cmd. 5893, *Palestine: Statement By His Majesty's Government*, October 1938.

²For detailed accounts of its proceedings see Bauer, *From Diplomacy to Resistance*, pp. 16-40; Cohen, *Palestine: Retreat from the Mandate*, pp. 72-87 and 94-102; Porath, *From Riots to Rebellion*, pp. 281-294; and RIIA, *Great Britain and Palestine*, pp. 119-126.

³See Cohen, 'British Strategy and The Palestine Question', 169, and Michael Howard, *The Continental Commitment* (London, 1972), p. 96.

⁴Bauer, *From Diplomacy to Resistance*, pp. 27-28.

continued Arab unrest and its effect on Arab opinion throughout the Middle East.¹

From the start of the Conference, however, it was apparent that no mutually acceptable policy for Palestine would be found because of the conflicting viewpoints of the parties.² The Arab delegation, for instance, refused to be seated at the same conference table with the Zionists. Accordingly, discussion was conducted in what amounted to 'two parallel conferences': with the British meeting separately with the Arab and Jewish delegations.³ Neither side was prepared to accept the compromise solution laid before them by the British, that was eventually embodied in the White Paper published on 17 May 1939. After more than a month of fruitless negotiation, on 15 March 1939 the government warned that if no agreement was reached, it would declare the conference closed and impose a solution of its own. The Conference ended in failure two days later.⁴

The new policy was promulgated in the White Paper issued two months later. The White Paper decreed that Palestine would be granted its independence at the end of 10 years, although it would continue to be linked to Britain through treaty relations. After a five-year transition period, a national assembly would be formed 'representative of the people of Palestine and of His Majesty's Government' to determine the new state's constitution. In the meantime, an 'Executive Council' composed of the Palestinian heads of various governmental departments would be established to advise the High Commissioner. Jewish

¹*Ibid.*, p. 20.

²Cohen, *Palestine: Retreat from the Mandate*, p. 76.

³RIIA, *Great Britain and Palestine*, p. 123.

⁴Hurewitz, *The Struggle For Palestine*, p. 100.

immigration was to be strictly regulated at a maximum rate of 10,000 persons per annum over the next five years and thereafter made dependent upon Arab consent. This stipulation was qualified somewhat by Britain's willingness, in view of the 'Jewish refugee problem' in Europe, to admit an additional 25,000 immigrants 'as soon as the High Commissioner is satisfied that adequate provision for their maintenance is ensured'. Thus the total number of Jews that would be permitted to enter Palestine was limited to 75,000 persons.¹ Restrictions were also imposed on Jewish land purchase; although these were not officially promulgated until the publication of the Land Transfer Regulations in February 1940.²

THE REACTION IN PALESTINE

The government had no illusions that the White Paper would be acceptable to either the Arabs or Jews in Palestine. Although the White Paper implicitly recognized Arab over Jewish claims to the country and provided for the maintenance of the Arab-Jewish ratio of 2:1, it nevertheless protected Zionist interests and accorded the Jews a role in Palestine's government. Arab hostility to Zionism was so intense that *any* recognition of Jewish claims to Palestine was unacceptable. Since the Arabs' basic demands--for a complete halt to all Jewish immigration and land purchase, the immediate termination of the mandate and establishment of an independent state--had not been met by the White Paper, their rejection was inevitable.³

¹Cmd. 6019, *British White Paper: Statement of Policy*, May 1939.

²See Cmd. 6180, *British White Paper: Summary of Land Transfer Regulations*, February 1940.

³Arab objections to the White Paper were detailed in the statement issued by the Higher Arab Committee from Beirut on 30 May 1939. See Hurewitz, *The Struggle For Palestine*, p. 103.

The Jewish reaction, though no less vehement, was more violent. On 18 May, the day after the White Paper's publication, anti-British rioting erupted in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Jewish demonstrators in Tel Aviv ransacked government offices, setting fire to the Migration Department and Land Registry Office. The Migration Department's office in Jerusalem was also attacked and gutted by fire.¹ The following night rioting in Jerusalem resulted in the death of a British policeman and injuries to at least 200 protestors.² This outburst, with Jews battling British soliders and police, was without precedent in Palestine. Lieutenant-General Sir Robert Haining, the General Officer Commanding British Forces in Palestine (GOC), was appalled by the disturbances. Summoning Ben-Gurion to his office, Haining angrily told him 'that there would be "no mincing matters" if rioting occurred again, and that if blood were shed, it would be on the heads of the Jews'. Ben-Gurion countered that, 'The Jewish demonstrations of yesterday marked the beginning of Jewish resistance to the disastrous policy now proposed by His Majesty's government'.³

The Jewish Agency formally responded to the White Paper on 31 May. In a letter of protest sent to the High Commissioner, it declared that it is

in the darkest hour of Jewish history that the British government proposes to deprive the Jews of their last hope and to close the road back to their Homeland. It is a cruel blow,

¹Daphne Trevor, *Under the White Paper* (Jerusalem, 1948), pp. 37-38.

²Esco Foundation for Palestine, Inc., *Palestine: A Study of Jewish, Arab and British Policies*, ii (New Haven, 1947), 909-910.

³Quoted in *Ibid.*

doubly cruel because it comes from the government of a great nation which has extended a helping hand to the Jews, and whose position must rest on foundations of moral authority and international good faith....The Jews will never accept the closing to them of the gates of Palestine nor let their national home be converted into a ghetto.¹

The Agency's plans of resistance to the new policy in fact had already been formulated. Immediately after the collapse of the London Conference, Ben-Gurion had presented the Jewish Agency Executive with a blue-print of this campaign. His strategy was based on the *Yishuv*'s uncompromising opposition to the White Paper. It called for an acceleration and strengthening of Jewish self-defence efforts and the abandonment of *havlaga*. In particular, it proposed an active programme of civil disobedience and non-cooperation. No Jew would participate in 'governmental institutions intended to implement the White Paper'. Illegal immigration efforts would be accelerated and any laws proscribing the expansion and consolidation of the National Home ignored. Jewish fortifications throughout Palestine would be buttressed, their armouries stocked, and an indigenous, clandestine arms-manufacturing capability developed. Lastly, any attempt by the government to disarm the *Yishuv* would be forcibly resisted and a country-wide 'administrative organisation [would be established] with the aim of taking power in Palestine by force "if the government does not in the course of time desist from the new policy"'. By April the Agency had adopted Ben-Gurion's plan.²

¹Statement by the Jewish Agency of Palestine (1939). Text in Walter Laqueur, *The Israel-Arab Reader* (New York, 1969), pp. 76-77.

²Bauer, *From Diplomacy to Resistance*, pp. 47-48.

THE IRGUN'S REVOLT

The White Paper had similarly compelled the *Irgun* to reconsider its strategy. Plans were made for a new campaign of terrorism that would not only be directed against the Arabs, but also against the British as well. But before the group had time to act, Raziel, its commander, was arrested. He was replaced by Hanoach Kalay, who lost no time in implementing his imprisoned leader's battle plan.¹ On 2 June the first anti-government operations were launched by the group with the bombing of 21 telephone booths in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. Six days later the telephone exchange in Tel Aviv was bombed and on 8 June an explosion tore through the Central Post Office in Jerusalem.² Meanwhile, the group continued its attacks on Arab targets. Twenty-one operations were carried out by the *Irgun* between 2 June and 5 July. Targets included Arab markets, coffee houses, public transportation facilities, and villages. Four of the operations involved the indiscriminate bombing of crowded public places, while the remainder were simple hit-and-run actions involving small teams of *Irgun* men armed with sub-machine guns.³ In a little more than a month, 40 Arabs had been killed and more than 98 wounded.⁴

Irgun propaganda explained the rationale behind its revolt in terms of the success of the Arab Rebellion in influencing British policy towards Palestine. 'Arabs use terror as a means in their political

¹Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, ii, 233-235.

²*Ibid.*, 241-244.

³NARS RG 165 Palestine 3810-4000 Box 3031, Joint Intelligence Collection Agency Middle East (JICAME) Report, 4 March 1944; and *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1939* (FRUS) (Washington, D.C., 1955), containing 867N.4016/89 Report by George Wadsworth (Consul-General, Jerusalem) to Secretary of State, Washington, D.C., 28 June 1939, ii, 780.

⁴See Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, ii, 238-244.

fight--and they are winning', the *Irgun* stated. 'Meanwhile the leaders of the Jewish Agency do nothing but talking and analysing and going back and forth in their own steps. A hitting fist must be answered by two hitting fists--a bomb explosion has to be replied with two bomb explosions'.¹ The group justified its revolt in terms of the 'Jewish tragedy' created by the rise of Hitler and the closing of Palestine to Jewish refugees from Europe. The Palestine Government, the publication declared, is 'outspokenly anti-Zionist and anti-Jewish; Arab violence [is] being instigated, favoured and allowed to proceed by this Administration as a means to "justify" the whittling down of the Balfour Declaration and Mandate, a process which culminated in [Colonial Secretary Malcolm] MacDonald's White Paper of May, 1939'. It goes on to argue that, 'The world is cruel--action only is able to impress it. We shall have our own country if we are willing to sacrifice our blood and life for it....The Irgun starts the armed battle for the Jewish State, for a difficult but free life in our country....Freedom or Death!'.²

The *Irgun* claimed to have modeled itself on the Irish Republican Army 'and similar national revolutionary organisations who fought for the liberty of their nations'. The *Irgun*, in a communique issued by the group in June 1939 continues, 'was founded in the conviction that the solution of the Jewish problem through the creation of a Jewish Sovereign State within the historical boundaries of Palestine cannot be achieved without relying on a Jewish Military Force'. Through armed

¹Jl 4/15 K-4 *Irgun Press*, No. 1/5, August 1939.

²*Irgunpress: Bulletin of the Irgun Zvai [sic] Leumi*, August 1939, in PRO CO 733/415.

force the group hoped to 'prove to the world that our right to a Jewish State is not only an historical and human right but that we are ready and prepared to back it with military force, rather than relying on British bayonets'. The 'defeatists' of the Jewish Agency were rebuked for both the *Yishuv's* physical vulnerability to Arab attack and its political weakness in failing to prevent the reversal of British policy that culminated in the White Paper. The *Irgun's* principal activities were described as military, e.g. 'Fighting Arab terror by defense [sic] and retaliation measures'; illegal immigration, e.g. ensuring the Jews' 'God-given right...to return to Palestine as free men to their fatherland' regardless of Arab objection or British interference; 'to enroll, train and equip Jewish youths to fight for and defend their homeland'; and 'to inform the world of the plight of European Jewry'.¹

On 26 August the *Irgun's* staged its first act of terrorism against a British official. Ralph Cairns, the head of the police force's Criminal Investigation Department (CID), was lured into a booby-trapped house in Jerusalem, where a trap-mine killed him and a colleague.² The police, however, had their revenge five days later when a massive raid on an *Irgun* safe-house in Tel Aviv resulted in the arrest of the group's entire high command, including Kalay, Abraham Stern and three other senior officers.³ The loss of these five men completely shattered the

¹'The *Irgun Zevai [sic] Leumi in Eretz Israel (I.Z.L.)*', I.Z.L. Headquarters, Jerusalem (June 1939), in Eli Tavin and Yonah Alexander (eds.), *Psychological Warfare and Propaganda: Irgun Documentation* (Wilmington, Delaware, 1982), pp. 89-93.

²The *Irgun* had accused Cairns of torturing imprisoned members of the group and had warned that his acts would be avenged. Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, ii, 275-276.

³*Ibid.*, 281-282.

Irgun. Though this setback to the organization was significant, it was completely overshadowed by the cataclysmic events in Europe. On 1 September, Germany invaded Poland; two days later Britain declared war on Germany and the Second World War had begun.

THE OUTBREAK OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

British officials had indeed taken into account the prospect of a *Jewish* revolt in Palestine when they conceived the White Paper. In the end, however, they concluded that the threat of a Jewish uprising was, on the one hand, unlikely given the certainty of an Anglo-German war and, on the other, would still be preferable to the continuation of the Arab Rebellion.¹ On 31 January 1939, for example, C. W. Baxter (Head of the Eastern Office, FO) expressed a view prevalent among British policymakers and senior military officers during this period:

we cannot be influenced by the danger of violent action from Jewish extremists in Palestine, nor is that danger to be compared with the danger of antagonising the whole of the Arab world and Egypt. Personally, I do not believe that the Jews in Palestine will quarrel seriously at this moment with His Majesty's government, who are almost their only friends.²

The war did indeed lead to a reappraisal within the *Yishuv* of its attitude towards Britain. Although the menace to Jewry inherent in a German victory greatly mitigated the *Yishuv*'s hostility towards Britain, it did not dampen the Jews' opposition to the White Paper. The Jewish community in Palestine was placed in a quandary. Any programme of active resistance to the White Paper and, indeed, to British rule over Palestine along the lines approved by the Jewish Agency in April would

¹Porath, *From Riots to Rebellion*, p. 277.

²PRO FO 371/23221 E770/6/31, Minute by Baxter, 31 January 1939.

certainly hamper Britain's prosecution of the war against the Jews' most diabolical enemy, Nazi Germany. At the same time, Britain's enforcement of the White Paper closed one of the few remaining avenues of salvation still open to European Jewry. The *Yishuv* decided to steer a middle course between these two alternatives: offering its undivided support for the British war effort while continuing to labour for the repeal of the White Paper. Ben-Gurion succinctly defined this contradictory policy when he declared that, 'We shall fight with Great Britain in this war as if there was no White Paper, and we shall fight the White Paper as if there was no war'.¹

On 4 September, the day after war had been declared by Britain, Jabotinsky, in his capacity as President of the Revisionist Party, wrote to the Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, to affirm the loyalty of both himself and his party to Britain.² On 10 September the *Irgun* similarly proclaimed its support for Britain and announced the suspension of all anti-government activities for the duration of the war.³

These developments, of course, had been anticipated by British officials. Indeed, Jewish support of the British war effort had been taken for granted by the government when Britain had devised the White Paper. British officials were also fully aware of the *Yishuv*'s ulterior motive in offering its cooperation. The Zionists quite obviously hoped

¹Quoted in Christopher Sykes, *Cross Roads to Israel* (London, 1965), p. 246.

²Schechtman, *Fighter and Prophet*, p. 245. See also PRO FO 371/23240 E6852/6/31, 9 October 1939, Letter from New Zionist Organisation to Sir Harold MacMichael (High Commissioner, Palestine), 5 September 1939.

³*Palestine Post*, 11 September 1939.

that their loyalty and support would be rewarded at the end of the war at least by the rescinding of the White Paper and perhaps even by the establishment of their own state in Palestine. Chamberlain's careful reply to a letter from Weizmann assuring the government of the *Yishuv*'s allegiance to Britain illustrates this point. The Prime Minister's noncommittal response stated, 'You will not expect me to say more at this stage than that your public-spirited assurances are welcome and will be kept in mind'.¹ The assumption implicit in Chamberlain's reply was alluded to more clearly in a minute written on 11 October by H. M. Eyres (Consul in the Foreign Office's Eastern Department). 'They all [the Jews] seem to think that the defeat of Germany will necessarily entail the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine', he observed, which 'is unfortunate'.²

CONCLUSION

The reformulation of Britain's policy in 1939 substituted the enmity of one community for that of the other. From the time of Allenby's conquest 22 years before in 1917 to the outbreak of the war in Europe, Britain's rule in Palestine was immensely complicated by the country's violently contentious Arab and Jewish communities. The Hussein-McMahon agreement and the Balfour Declaration placed Britain in the difficult position of having to mediate between both communities' claims to Palestine. This problem was exacerbated further by the vast increase in Jewish immigration to Palestine after 1933 and by the Arab Rebellion which erupted in 1936; in part because of the increased

¹Quoted in Hurewitz, *The Struggle For Palestine*, p. 124. See also Sykes, *Cross Roads to Israel*, p. 247.

²PRO FO 371/23240 E6852/6/31, Minute by Eyres, 11 October 1939.

immigration. Arab unrest in Palestine threatened the security not only of British interests in that country, but throughout the Middle East as well.

To a great extent then, the British themselves were responsible for the conditions in which the *Irgun* was born and matured. Britain's failure to protect adequately the *Yishuv*, or more precisely, to protect the Jewish community in Palestine in a manner that the Jews deemed essential, accounts for the creation and development of the clandestine Jewish paramilitary forces that emerged during the 1920s and continued to grow in strength throughout the following decade. It is therefore not surprising that when Britain qualified its support of Zionism with the 1939 White Paper, the *Irgun* turned against Britain and challenged Britain's rule of Palestine. Although the *Irgun's* revolt was suspended at the start of World War II, future confrontation with the British had become inevitable.

II. THE WAR AGAINST THE TERRORISTS

From 1944 to 1947, the British Army fought a war against the Jewish terrorists in Palestine. The latter, it must be stressed, constituted a minority element within the *Yishuv* of some 4,500 persons, organised within the *Irgun* and *Lehi*.¹ The members of the *Irgun* and *Lehi* were outnumbered by British troops by a proportion of approximately 14 to one.² By one account there was 'one armed soldier to each male adult Jew in Palestine'.³ It is, however, precisely that aspect of the case which lends it its interest. Despite the British Army's overwhelming numerical superiority, it was unable to destroy the *Irgun* and *Lehi* and maintain order in Palestine.

At the time, the army attributed its failure to extraneous hindrances, most notably the policy of military restraint dictated by London between 1939 and 1945 and the restrictions on military activities imposed by British civil authorities in Palestine between 1945 and 1947. In light of the evidence now available, that view is untenable. While it is true that during World War II London did limit army operations in Palestine, there is no support for the contention that army actions were similarly inhibited by the Palestine administration after the war. Rather, the army's failure in this sphere of operations must be

¹IWM Palestine: Narrative of Events by MacMillan, 3 July 1948; Appendix 'D': Appreciation by General Officer Commanding on 5 August 1947.

²British military strength in Palestine at the beginning of 1947 was given as 64,063 men, according to ISA RG 65/3588 untitled 'military layout in Palestine and Transjordan', HQ, Palestine, 1 February 1947. The figure most commonly cited in parliamentary debates, however, is 100,000 men.

³Debates, House of Commons, vol. 441, col. 2342 (Oliver Stanley), 12 August 1947.

attributed to its own decisions to pursue military strategies which were inappropriate to the true needs of the case.

British internal military policy in Palestine can be divided into four thematic phases. The first ran from 1939 to 1945 and was characterized by London's insistence that events in the country not affect Britain's efforts in other theatres of the war. Accordingly, and in order to avoid the danger of inciting a rebellion by the Jews, a *laissez-faire* policy regarding the *Yishuv's* illegal possession of arms was imposed on the army. The second phase began at the end of World War II, when Jewish terrorism became the army's major problem with Palestine, and lasted until the fall of 1946. Released from the previous war-time restrictions, the army implemented a counter-terrorist strategy modeled on its experiences during the Arab Rebellion in Palestine of 1936-1939. But the military authorities failed to recognize that the strategy then pursued was not suited to fighting the urban terrorism of the *Irgun* and *Lehi*.

Instead, during the third phase, from November 1946 to March 1947, the army argued that it was restrictions placed on it by the Palestine Government which were preventing the defeat of the terrorists. The fourth, and final, phase ran from March to September 1947. The army was then allowed to undertake the severe measures that it believed would finally eliminate terrorism and restore Palestine to order. But even such massive operations such as the imposition of martial law on Tel Aviv and the Jewish sections of Jerusalem had little effect. By the fall of 1947 the situation in Palestine was clearly out of control. Not only had the British authorities failed to deter repeated (and sometimes desperate) Jewish attempts to sail to Palestine from Europe; they had

also failed to keep order within the country itself. The situation, coupled with American pressure, the recommendation of the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine, the humanitarian dimension of the displaced persons issue, and Britain's own beleaguered economy compelled the government to announce in September 1947 its intention to surrender the mandate and withdraw from Palestine.

PHASE I: 1939-1945

British internal military policy in Palestine during this period was determined by two incidents. The first occurred on 5 October 1939, when a detachment of the Trans-Jordanian Frontier Force surprised some members of the *Haganah* training in the lower Galilee. The entire group was arrested for the illegal possession of fire-arms and sentenced to ten years' imprisonment each with the commander receiving a life term. The *Yishuv* was outraged. During the Arab Rebellion the *Haganah* had been trained and armed by the British in order that it might assist in the suppression of that uprising and become capable of defending isolated Jewish settlements.¹ Even though the Arab Rebellion had ended, the *Yishuv* maintained that the constant threat posed by Arab brigands to rural Jewish settlements justified the *Haganah's* continued retention of arms. The British disagreed. With the publication of the 1939 White Paper these special military arrangements were abruptly discontinued. Given the British Government's determination to placate Palestine's Arabs, continued cooperation with the *Haganah* constituted a liability which the government was not prepared to carry.² As the Colonial

¹Cohen, 'British Strategy and The Palestine Question, 1936-1939', 181.

²PRO FO 371/23251 E7479/7479/31 Memorandum by H. Downie (Colonial Office), 14 November 1939.

Secretary, Malcolm MacDonald, explained to the Cabinet on 14 December 1939:

Whatever may have been the case at some periods in the past, the implication that the inadequacy of the defence forces provided by the Government has compelled the Jews to arm themselves for the defence of their colonies against Arab attacks cannot *now* be sustained....Moreover, it would be quite unjustifiable, in my opinion, to adopt in the case of the Jewish organisation a more lenient attitude than we have shown in dealing with armed conspiracy by the Arab population; any suspicion of such discrimination would arouse strong Arab feeling in Palestine with *grave* consequences to our relations with the Middle Eastern countries and with Moslem countries further afield.¹

But it was one thing to unilaterally terminate cooperation with the *Haganah* and quite another to disarm the Jews. Since the *Haganah* refused to surrender its weapons voluntarily, police and military action would be required to discover and seize the weapons. Such operations, however, might provoke armed resistance, the suppression of which would require the use of British forces who were more urgently needed in Europe. Thus confronted by the possibility of harm to its overall war effort, the Cabinet decided that 'no systematic or wholesale search of towns and villages' should be undertaken. Even if 'reliable information regarding hidden arms' was received, the search should be carried out with particular care to avoid any 'untoward incident'.²

Despite the army's objections this policy remained in force as long as there existed a common British and Jewish need to repel the Axis forces from the Middle East.³ But on 16 November 1943 the 'untoward

¹PRO FO 371/23251 E7965/7479/31 Draft Memorandum by MacDonald, 14 December 1939.

²PRO WO 208/1702 Letter, MacDonald to MacMichael, 24 February 1940.

³See PRO FO 921/59 Telegram, Major-General D. F. McConnell (GOC, Palestine) to General Sir H. Maitland Wilson (C.-in-C., British Middle East Land Forces, 10 June 1943, and FO 921/60 Draft Letter, General Wilson to Sir R. G. Casey (Minister of State in the Middle East), 4 November 1943.

incident' feared by the Cabinet occurred. In this episode, the second to determine British military policy between 1939 and 1945, 200 police and approximately 360 soldiers raided the Jewish settlement at Ramat Ha-Kovesh ostensibly in search of army deserters. The settlers vigorously attacked the search party.¹ In his report of the raid, the commander of the British force noted that:

The search was strenuously and continuously resisted by the settlers who doubtlessly had formerly received precise instructions as to how to act in such circumstances....I would like to place on record that I have had considerable experience of internal security work in IRELAND and INDIA but I have never before witnessed a more violent or fanatical reaction to those engaged in the search.²

This incident forced the British to reconsider their policy of searching Jewish settlements, perhaps also because the Jewish Agency declared that further searches would continue to be met with strong resistance.³ Since Britain's war-time commitments precluded the allocation of more troops to Palestine, the High Commissioner for Palestine, Sir Harold MacMichael, and the Commander-in-Chief (C.-in-C.) of British Land Forces in the Middle East (MELF), General Sir H. Maitland Wilson, decided that uncovering illegal arms and arresting deserters was not worth the risk of a Jewish rebellion and suspended all searches of Jewish settlements.⁴ The GOC for British Forces in Palestine

¹NARS RG 165 Palestine 2710 Box 2025 OSS Report, 10 December 1943.

²PRO WO 208/1702 Report by Brigadier I. C. Cameron, November 1943.

³PRO WO 208/1702 MI-2 Report/BM/1668, 13 December 1943. See also PRO FO 921/61 Note of Conversation between Moshe Shertok (Jewish Agency Executive) and Casey, 13 December 1943, and Report by CID, Palestine Police Force in Letter, Robert Scott (Chief Secretary's Office, Jerusalem) to J. A. deC. Hamilton (Office of Minister of State in Middle East, Cairo) 17 December 1943, and Letter, John Gutch (Assistant Secretary, CO) to J. S. Bennett (Office of Minister of State in Middle East, Cairo), 23 December 1943.

⁴PRO WO 208/1702 MI-2 Report/BM/1668, 13 December 1943, and PRO CO 733/456/75156/151 Part I Minute by W. W. Clark (Colonial Office), 9 November 1945.

and Transjordan, Major-General D. F. McConnel, did not, however, like this policy, believing that it undermined Britain's control of Palestine by tolerating illegal arms possession.¹

This *laissez-faire* policy worked only as long as the *Irgun* remained inactive and continued to respect the self-imposed moratorium on all anti-British operations which it had announced in 1939. Admittedly, a small group of extremists within the *Irgun* had refused to accept this policy. Led by Abraham Stern, they had broken from the *Irgun* and in July 1940 formed themselves into an independent terrorist organization, *Lehi*.² The reason behind the split is explained by Geula Cohen, a member of *Lehi*:

A majority of those in [the *Irgun*] had seen the enemy in Hitler....The British who were fighting the Germans were our temporary allies. Yair [Stern's code-name, Hebrew: "Illuminator"] and a few others dissented. Never mind that war, they said, the only way to save the Jews of the Diaspora was to create an independent homeland; to deprive the English of their power. Between master and slave there could be no cease-fire. There could only be war.³

Both Britain and Germany, Stern argued, were the enemies of the Jewish people: there was no difference between the British who closed the gates of Palestine to the Jew and the German who persecuted him.⁴ Stern saw Britain's involvement in World War II as an ideal opportunity

¹PRO WO 169/15849 Situation In Palestine by McConnel, 11 January 1944.

²J1 G12/Z The Fighters For The Freedom of Israel (pamphlet published by the American Friends of FFI), (undated); Y. S. Brenner, 'The "Stern Gang", 1940-1948', *Middle Eastern Studies*, ii (1965), 16-17; Gerold Frank, *The Deed* (New York, 1963), p. 91; and Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, ii, 43-52.

³Geula Cohen, *Woman of Violence: Memoirs of a Young Terrorist* (New York, 1966), p. 61.

⁴J1 G12/Z4 The Fighters For The Freedom of Israel (undated).

for the Jews to seize control of their own destiny and, with *Lehi* at the vanguard, forcibly establish a Jewish state in Palestine.¹ As Nathan Yalin-Mor, who later led the group, recalls

We neither hid behind bright formulas nor did we accept the truce proclaimed by the Irgun...on the outbreak of the war. Over this issue Stern left the Irgun and founded [*Lehi*]-for a liberation movement, he argued, never lays down arms against its enemy....Otherwise we would lose the historic opportunity, and would be confronted at war's end with the elimination of the hopes for independence. Therefore, unceasing military activities against the enemy, until he is driven from our land. Land or slavery--there is no third way.²

But since *Lehi* lacked both men and weapons, its attacks were infrequent and posed no serious threat to the government.³ Therefore British security concerns within Palestine were largely concerned with uncovering caches of illegal arms and catching suspected army deserters.

Meanwhile, in May 1942, a young corporal attached to General Anders's Polish Army-in-exile had arrived in Palestine. Menachem Begin's journey had been a circuitous one. Begin was born in 1913 in Brest Litovsk, Poland. As a teenager he became involved in Zionist politics and joined *Betar*. By the time he received his law degree from Warsaw University in 1935, Begin had become head of the group's Organisation Department for Poland. Three years later he was appointed national commander of *Betar* in that country. One of his responsibilities was to organize Jewish immigration--legal or otherwise--

¹NARS RG 226 OSS R&A Report No. 2717, 1 December 1944.

²Nathan Yalin-Mor, 'The British Called Us The Stern Gang', *Israel Magazine*, v (1973), 77.

³British intelligence estimates placed the size of *Lehi* at no more than 200 persons in 1944. See PRO WO 169/15703 PICME Paper No. 2 (Revised), 8 November 1944.

to Palestine. In 1937, in fact, Begin was arrested for leading a protest over British immigration policy in front of the British Legation in Warsaw.¹

When Germany invaded Poland in September 1939, Begin fled to Lithuania. In September 1940 he was arrested by Russian secret police (on the ironical charge of being 'an agent of British imperialism'). After spending nine months in a local gaol, in April 1941 Begin was sentenced to eight years of 'correctional labour'. Two months later he was on a Russian ship carrying political prisoners to a Stalinist labour camp in Siberia when Germany invaded Russia.² A reprieve came with the option of joining the Polish Army or continuing his journey. Begin chose the former and found himself in a unit ordered to Palestine.³ Shortly after his arrival, Begin established contact with the *Irgun* high command.⁴

Since the suspension of its short-lived revolt at the outbreak of war, the *Irgun* had fallen into disarray. The deaths of Jabotinsky in August 1940 and Raziel nine months later had deprived the group of leadership and direction at a time when its self-imposed dormancy required someone with the vision and organizational skills necessary to hold it together. Although Yaacov Meridor had assumed command of the *Irgun*, he regarded his role as that of only a caretaker.⁵ Throughout

¹NARS RG 226 OSS Report XL18461, 11 September 1945, and Harry Hurwitz, *Menachem Begin* (Jerusalem, 1977), pp. 12-13.

²Menachem Begin, *The Revolt: Story of the Irgun* (Jerusalem, 1952), p. 25.

³Menachem Begin, *White Nights: The Story of a Prisoner in Russia* (Jerusalem, 1977), *passim*.

⁴Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, iii, 274.

⁵J. Bowyer Bell, *Terror Out of Zion* (New York, 1977), p. 56.

1943 Begin met with Meridor and his aides to discuss the *Irgun's* future.¹ With the war in Europe moving decisively in the Allies' favour, they agreed that the reasoning behind the truce declared four years before--to avoid helping Germany by harming Britain--was no longer tenable. Moreover, when considered alongside the fate of occupied Europe's Jewish population, the need for action acquired new urgency. 'Two predominating facts', Begin wrote,

determined the condition of the Jewish people at the height of the Second World War. Hitler was exterminating millions of Jews in Europe, and--in spite of this--Britain continued to keep the gates of the Jewish "National Homeland" tightly shut against the Jews.²

On 1 December Begin replaced Meridor as commander and plans for the resumption of the *Irgun's* revolt were concluded.³ 'The world does not pity the slaughtered', Begin later explained. 'It only respects those who fight'.⁴ Two months later, the campaign began.

The reasoning behind the renewal of the *Irgun's* revolt was based on a number of inter-related developments that had merged in late-1943/early-1944 to convince the group's leadership of the need for immediate action. First, and foremost, was the news of the terrible fate which had befallen European Jewry under Nazi domination. Second, Britain's rigid enforcement of the immigration restrictions decreed by the 1939 White Paper had closed one of the few avenues of escape left open to Europe's Jews. Moreover, the impending expiration in March 1944 of the White Paper's five-year immigration quota would completely choke

¹Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, iii, 276-277.

²Begin, *The Revolt*, p. 26.

³Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, iii, 277. The *Irgun* was thought to have a membership of some 4,000 in 1944. See PRO WO 169/15703 PICME Paper No. 2 (Revised), 8 November 1944.

⁴Begin, *The Revolt*, p. 36.

off this only remaining route of salvation. Finally, the course of the Second World War itself, which, the *Irgun's* strategists concluded, had now turned decisively in favour of Britain and the Allies, impelled the *Irgun* to forsake its self-imposed truce.¹ This was explained in the proclamation of revolt issued by the *Irgun* on 1 February 1944. 'We are now entering the final stage of the war', it declared.

Our people's destiny shall be determined at this historic juncture. The British regime has violated the armistice agreement which was declared at the outset of the war....Instead they continue to work toward their goal--the eradication of Zionist efforts to achieve statehood....

Let us fearlessly draw the proper conclusions. There can be no longer an armistice between the Jewish Nation and its youth and a British administration in the Land of Israel which has been delivering our brethren to Hitler. Our nation is at war with this regime and it is a fight to the finish.²

Eleven days later the *Irgun* initiated its battle plan and, in the first attacks on British targets since 1939, bombed the Immigration Department offices in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa. The simultaneous attacks were calculated to publicize the group's struggle against Britain by striking at a symbol of the White Paper's restrictive immigration policy. Equally as important was the *Irgun's* intention to demonstrate its ability to mount coordinated attacks throughout the country. Further proof was provided less than a fortnight later when the tax offices in each of those cities were bombed and again on 23 March when the police force's CID district headquarters in Jaffa and Haifa and the central headquarters in Jerusalem were attacked.³

¹*Ibid.*, *passim* and NARS RG 226 OSS R&A Report No. 2612, 13 October 1944.

²Tavin and Alexander (eds.), *Psychological Warfare and Propaganda*, pp. 259-262.

³Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, iv, 19-20. See also PRO WO 169/15851 Monthly Summary No. 28, Defence Security Office (DSO), HQ Palestine, 1st-29th February 1944.

The planning, coordination and success of these operations greatly impressed the British. The report of the Haifa assault warned of the danger of 'sudden attack by fanatical assassins, who can vanish back into the obscurity of a crowded city' and of the difficulties in fighting 'this type of urban guerrilla warfare'.¹ Another report dealt with the *Irgun's* belief that it possessed a 'Divine decree' to drive the British out of Palestine, but cautioned that 'This does not mean that they are careless in their methods, for they combine skill and cunning with reckless courage'.² This upsurge in urban violence was evidently regarded by British authorities as entirely a police matter. Army units stationed in Palestine were either training or reorganizing before being sent to Europe. Thus as long as the police appeared able to control the disorders, the army did not assume an active role in the maintenance of internal security.³

The *Irgun's* sudden return to prominence eclipsed *Lehi's* petty bank-robbing and sporadic murder of policemen. In fact, *Lehi's* activities had been limited in time and scope to a four-week period between December 1941 and January 1942 that comprised two bank robberies, one attempted robbery (that had left two Jewish tellers dead), and the assassination of two Jewish detectives.⁴ Then, on 12 February 1942, Stern was killed by police. In the weeks that followed, the police effectively neutralized the group, rounding up almost all of the members still at large.⁵ Thereafter *Lehi* had been able to stage just two

¹PRO WO 169/15911 Intelligence Notes No. 2, 25 March 1944.

²PRO WO 169/15699 PICME Fortnightly Summary No. 2, 18 April 1944.

³PRO CO 733/466/75998/6 Report of Chiefs of Staff (COS) Committee (44) 997 (0), 28 November 1944.

⁴PRO WO 169/4334 General Staff Intelligence (GSI) Monthly Intelligence Summary No. 3, 1-31 January 1942.

⁵NARS RG 226 OSS R&A Report No. 2717, 1 December 1944.

operations: an unsuccessful attack in May 1943 on Geoffrey Morton, the CID officer responsible for Stern's death, and the murder of a Jewish informer sixteen months later.¹ The group's fortunes, however, changed with the escape of 23 key members from prison during November and December 1943.² From this nucleus the group reconstituted itself and prepared to recommence operations.³ To mark its return, *Lehi* formulated an ambitious plan to kill the highest echelon of the British administration in Palestine by bombing St. George's Cathedral in Jerusalem as the High Commissioner and other senior government, police and military officials attended Sunday services. The plot was foiled, however, when an Arab taxi driver stumbled upon two members of the group planting the explosives and alerted the police. A shoot-out ensued as police converged on the scene, causing the terrorists to flee after killing one constable.⁴

Chastened by this failure and driven by the *Irgun's* own reemergence, *Lehi* lowered its sights and returned to its earlier practice of murdering policemen. Citing the 'execut[ion] without trial' of Stern, they unleashed a campaign of 'revenge against the Jewish as well as the British members of the security services who had been responsible for "interference" with [*Lehi*] activities and for the death or capture of key [*Lehi*] men'.⁵ On 14 February, just two days after the

¹PRO WO 275/57 Intelligence Review Of Palestine, 3rd Infantry Division, August 1946.

²NARS RG 165 Palestine 3700 Box 3028 JICAME Report, March 1944. Among the escapees were Itzhak Yitznerksy (who later changed his name to Shamir), Prime Minister of Israel (1983-1984) and Foreign Minister (1984 to the present), and Nathan Friedman-Yellin (who later changed his name to Yalin-Mor), who, with Israel Schieb (who also later changed his name, to Eldad) formed the triumvirate that thereafter commanded *Lehi*.

³PRO WO 169/15703 PICME Paper No. 2 (Revised), 8 November 1944.

⁴PRO WO 169/15851 Monthly Intelligence Summary No. 28, DSO, HQ Palestine, 1-29 February 1944.

⁵NARS RG 226 OSS R&A Report No. 2717, 1 December 1944.

Irgun's simultaneous bombings of the immigration offices, another attempt to kill Morton failed but nevertheless caused the deaths of two policemen. Ten days later remote control detonated mines wrecked three police cars and injured four policemen (a fourth mine was uncovered and dismantled). Over the next six weeks, four more policemen were murdered and four others wounded. In addition, a British district government official was assassinated and an unsuccessful attack on a police superintendent in Tel Aviv was mounted.¹

However, in order to attract attention to themselves, the *Lehi* high command found a more important target for their gunmen.² A motorcade carrying the High Commissioner was ambushed on 8 August 1944, although MacMichael miraculously escaped injury.³ Shortly afterwards he returned to England, his term in office coincidentally having expired. *Lehi's* interest now focused on an even more appealing target: Lord Moyne, the British Minister of State in the Middle East.⁴

On 6 November 1944, two members of *Lehi* assassinated Lord Moyne in Cairo. When it was discovered that his two assassins were Palestinian Jews, pressure grew for some 'drastic action' that would affirm Britain's rule of Palestine, teach the *Yishuv* a lesson and, most important of all, uphold Britain's prestige throughout the Middle East. The Colonial Secretary, Oliver Stanley, impressed upon Lord Gort, the new High Commissioner, the need for appropriate retaliatory measures. Stanley argued that, 'We have to consider the effect [of Moyne's

¹*Ibid.*

²Frank, *The Deed*, pp. 155-157.

³Bell, *Terror Out of Zion*, p. 91.

⁴Cohen, *Woman of Violence*, p. 61, and Yalin-Mor, 'The British Called Us The Stern Gang', 82.

assassination] not merely upon Palestine but upon the Middle East and the whole world in general'. He suggested a full-scale search for illegal arms and the suspension of Jewish immigration to Palestine. In his view, the renewal of terrorism provided 'ample justification' for these measures. Stanley also expressed the hope that a harsh response would prod the Jewish Agency to assist the authorities in fighting the terrorists.¹

Although Lord Gort shared his superior's concern, he was less certain of what reaction would be best. The logic of an arms search was obvious: it would demonstrate resolve and eliminate a long-standing threat. But it ignored the consequences of failure. Gort feared that should such an operation be less than an unqualified success, the damage to Britain's prestige would be that much greater. And with military forces in Palestine well below strength success was far from assured. The operation would require at least another infantry division which could not be spared from British forces in Europe. Accordingly, Gort advocated a return to the search policy in force before Ramat Ha-Kovesh; endorsing limited operations against specific locations instead of massive, country-wide searches. In addition, Gort added to this recommendation the proviso that these searches would only be allowed when evidence guaranteed their success.²

Elsewhere the question of response and reprisal was debated with increasing fervour. From Cairo, Brigadier Sir Iltud Clayton, Moyne's adviser on Arab affairs, and Lord Killearn, the British Ambassador to Egypt, lobbied for an aggressive reaction similar to that proposed by

¹PRO WO 208/1706 Telegram, Stanley to Gort, 8 November 1944.

²PRO CO 733/466/75998/6 Telegram, Gort to Stanley, 10 November 1944.

Stanley.¹ Their view was supported by the members of the Middle Eastern Defence Committee,² who believed that the situation was serious enough to warrant diverting men and materiel from Europe to Palestine.³

Gort now changed his mind. On 21 November he told Stanley that searches were necessary to maintain the morale of Palestine's security forces.⁴ Meanwhile Killearn continued to stress the need for action in Palestine as the only way of upholding Britain's stature in the Middle East. In a telegram to the Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, he declared, 'Please forgive me if I speak strongly, but we are playing with fire: on that let there be no illusion. It has taken the murder of one of our most distinguished public men to arouse us to our responsibilities and to indicate the direct results of our over-patience'.⁵

But these arguments failed to persuade either the Prime Minister or the military command in London. Winston Churchill opposed a major arms search not only because it would strike at the section of the *Yishuv* which comprised neither the terrorists nor their accomplices, but also because it would eliminate the possibility of receiving the cooperation

¹See PRO FO 141/1001 1546/12/44G Memorandum by Clayton, 14 November 1944, and 1546/19/44G Telegram, Killearn to Eden, 18 November 1944.

²The Middle East Defence Committee formed part of the Middle East Council, which had the Minister of State as its chairman and consisted of 'HM Ambassador in Cairo, the Commanders-in-Chief, and the Intendent-General. Other Ambassadors and Governors attended when possible. Various sub-committees dealt with particular types of activity so that the whole system, with a small secretariat serving the Minister, had a family resemblance to the War Cabinet Office in London'. See Public Record Office Handbooks No. 51, *The Second World War: A Guide To Documents In The Public Record Office* (London, 1972), pp. 9-19.

³PRO FO 141/1001 1546/19/44G Telegram, Killearn to Eden, 19 November 1944.

⁴PRO PREM 4/52/5 Telegram, Gort to Stanley, 21 November 1944.

⁵PRO WO 208/1706 Telegram, Killearn to Eden, 23 November 1944.

of the Jewish public and would drive them into the arms of the extremists.¹ Moreover, the Joint Planning Staff of the Chiefs of Staff estimated that in fact two more divisions would be needed for this operation. Yet even this addition could not guarantee success and might make matters worse by stirring the *Haganah* to rebellion.² The Chiefs of Staff (COS) were similarly apprehensive. In their view, the incident at Ramat Ha-Kovesh demonstrated the difficulties and risks involved in searches. They concluded that, given the harm to the Allied war effort that the transfer of soldiers to Palestine would cause, as well as uncertainty of success, an arms search was definitely not the best policy.³

At the end of November, the Cabinet met to consider this matter. Their conclusions reflected those of the Prime Minister and the COS: the wholesale disarming of the Jews was not approved. 'Searches', the Cabinet concluded, 'were rarely productive; secrecy as to the action contemplated was difficult to maintain; mistakes were made by the troops and bad feeling engendered'. Such tasks were best left to the police. Thus it was recommended that the soldiers already in Palestine should be reorganized so as to provide mobile columns of 200 men in order to better support the police. Jewish immigration should not be suspended, nor should military reinforcements be transferred to Palestine.⁴ The directive sent to Gort stated that: 'No systematic searches for arms

¹PRO CAB 127/270 Note by Stanley for Churchill, 17 November 1944.

²PRO CO 733/466/75998/6 War Cabinet Planning Staff J.P. (44) 286, 15 November 1944.

³PRO FO 371/40138 E7503/15/31 Cabinet W.P. (44) 678, 23 November 1944.

⁴PRO CAB 65/48 W.M. (44) 155, Minute 1, 24 November 1944.

should...at this stage be undertaken....You are at liberty to carry out local searches for arms'.¹

The recrudescence of terrorism and the assassination of Lord Moyne thus had little effect on military policy in Palestine. The situation remained as unsatisfactory as McConnel had regarded it to be immediately after Ramat Ha-Kovesh. Countering urban terrorism remained a police matter and, although arms searches were delegated to the army, such activities were greatly restricted by political considerations and war-time priorities. Even the plan to reorganize the army into mobile columns was never implemented. Palestine was a military staging-area to which troops were sent either for training purposes or to rest and re-group before returning to Europe. Thus any plan of reorganization would have disrupted those processes and harmed the general war effort.²

For a time this policy of restraint seemed to work well, but its success was deceptive. Shortly after Moyne's murder, the Jewish Agency gave in to British pressure and ordered the *Haganah* to hunt down and capture members of the *Irgun* and hand them over to the police.³ Thus although there indeed was a sudden slackening of terrorism in the first half of 1945, neither the army nor the police played any role in that development. Moreover, the *Haganah* operation failed to destroy the *Irgun* and was discontinued in the spring.⁴

¹PRO FO 921/154 Telegram, Stanley to Gort, 27 November 1944.

²PRO CO 733/466/75998/6 Report of COS Committee (44) 997 (0), 28 November 1944.

³Yehuda Bauer, *From Diplomacy to Resistance*, p. 329.

⁴Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, iv, p. 117. See also Begin, *The Revolt*, p. 152.

PHASE II: SEPTEMBER 1945-NOVEMBER 1946

The victory of the Labour Party in Britain's July 1945 election was enthusiastically welcomed by the *Yishuv*. At its conference in Blackpool in December 1944 the Labour Party had promised to abolish the invidious restrictions on Jewish immigration to Palestine proclaimed by the 1939 White Paper and faithfully to support the establishment of the Jewish national home there.¹ Once in office, however, the Labour Government found themselves inundated with post-war domestic and international problems.² Its policy was therefore characterized by delay, silence and postponement rather than by prompt action.³ Meanwhile, the *Yishuv*'s patience waned; disappointment was transposed into bitterness. In September 1945, this period of hopeful waiting ended. Temporarily joined in a United Resistance Movement--or, as it was known in Hebrew, the *Tenuat Hameri*--the *Irgun*, *Lehi* and *Haganah* attempted to force a government decision on Palestine.⁴ And with this escalation of anti-British violence, the second phase of Britain's military policy began.

At the end of the Second World War, the First Infantry Division was the only unit of the British Army stationed in Palestine. Exhausted by the long campaign to liberate Italy, the First Division had been sent to Palestine to rest and re-group. In the early fall of 1945, the Sixth Airborne Division--veterans of the parachute assaults on Normandy and Arnhem--was ordered to Palestine. Its mission was to serve as a

¹J. C. Hurewitz, *The Struggle For Palestine*, p. 215.

²Cohen, *Palestine: Retreat from the Mandate*, p. 184. See also Ritchie Owendale, 'The Palestine Policy of the British Labour Party, 1945-46', *International Affairs*, 55 (1979), 409-431.

³Hurewitz, *The Struggle For Palestine*, p. 229.

⁴Brenner, 'The "Stern Gang", 1940-1948', 16-17.

'strategic reserve' to other British forces in the Middle East.¹ But the Palestine Police Force was 50 percent below strength and with the rise of the *Tenuat Hameri*, the army had to assume a greater role in maintaining internal security than ever before.² Notwithstanding their extensive combat experience in Europe, these soldiers were totally unprepared for the radically different type of warfare that confronted them in Palestine.

The strategy adopted by the army in this unfamiliar situation was an inheritance from their successful experiences in suppressing the 1936-1939 Arab Rebellion. The Arab Rebellion, however, was very different from the present Jewish conflict for it had been both a guerrilla war and a popular uprising with almost all of the fighting occurring in the countryside where rebel bands moved and fought in large, discernible formations. Moreover, the Arab guerrillas had been almost unanimously supported by the rural Arab populace. Accordingly, the methods which the army employed in order to defeat the rebels were straightforward. The enemy had been easily sighted and engaged in pitched battle in open country. Then he had been bombed by the RAF or shelled by artillery. Villages guilty of assisting the rebels had been punished without difficulty; a collective fine had been levied or the houses of specific persons implicated in revolutionary activities had been destroyed or, in extreme cases, entire villages had been bombed.³

¹The Third Infantry Division also served in Palestine, but only for brief periods as a relief force for the First Infantry Division.

²Montgomery of Alamein, Bernard Law Montgomery, First Viscount, *Memoirs* (Cleveland and New York, 1958), p. 378.

³For the Colonial Office's own comparison, see PRO CO 733/477/75156/151 A/47 Letter, Creech-Jones to N. Ollerenshaw, 10 April 1947, and PRO FO 371/61938 E 5862/5862/31 Memorandum on the Comparative Treatment of the Arabs During the Disturbances of 1936-39 and of the Jews During the Disturbances of 1945 and Subsequent Years, 19 June 1947.

The army assumed that this strategy would be similarly successful against the Jews as well. But there were two essential differences between the Arab Rebellion and Jewish terrorism that made the Arab strategy inappropriate to the Jewish case. First, unlike the Arab Rebellion, this war was an urban one. It was fought in the setting that best provided the terrorist with means of concealment and escape. Second, the Jewish terrorist buried himself within the surrounding community. Undistinguishable from the ordinary, law-abiding citizen, he remained anonymous and beyond the reach of the army and the police. Furthermore, only a small portion of the *Yishuv* actually belonged to, or actively supported the *Irgun* or *Lehi*. This meant that punishing the Jews by fine or bombardment was extremely difficult. Only once was a Jewish settlement or neighbourhood fined and none was ever bombed. Givat Shaul was fined £500 after *Lehi*'s attempted assassination of MacMichael, because it was believed that his attackers had staged the assault from, and then fled to, that settlement. In 1945 the army had requested--and received--permission to bomb so-called 'terrorist enclaves'.¹ It was impossible, however, to discover where these 'enclaves' were. And had they been found, it would have been out of the question to bomb congested urban areas filled with innocent people. The army, however, failed to recognize the inherent differences of the two conflicts, and adopted a strategy that was inappropriate to the conditions in Palestine between 1945 and 1947.

¹PRO PREM 8/83 Minute General Ismay to Clement Attlee, 29 November 1945, and PRO AIR 20/4959 J.P. (45) 30 War Cabinet Joint Planning Staff, 15 February 1945.

On the night of 31 October the *Tenuat Hameri* sank three police launches in Haifa, cut the Palestine rail line in 51 places and damaged the goods yard and train station at Lydda.¹ On 14 November anti-British riots broke out in Tel Aviv. With the police unable to quell the disorders, the army had to occupy the city for six days before order was restored.² These incidents forced the army to recast its policy for dealing with Jewish unrest. In consultation, General Sir Bernard Paget, the C.-in-C. of British Forces in the Middle East, Lieutenant-General John D'Arcy, the GOC for Palestine and General Sir Alan Cunningham, the High Commissioner, decided that searches of rural settlements for arms would not serve to curb Jewish violence unless they were accompanied by some sterner measure. They determined that although

Sooner or later it will be necessary to disarm the Arabs and Jew [sic] population in Palestine the degree of success attained would be problematical....Plan most likely to achieve greatest success is to combine search for arms with seizure of leaders of Haganah and Palmach. In any case it is considered that seizure of leaders in order to break up illegal organisations is of primary importance and seizure of arms is secondary to this.³

Cunningham, however, did not think that this recommendation went far enough. He felt that while the Jewish Agency condemned violence with one breath, they encouraged it in another. Accordingly he proposed that the leaders of the Jewish Agency be arrested along with their

¹PRO PREM 8/627 Part I Cabinet Defence Committee D.O. (45) 12, 5 November 1945.

²Major R. D. Wilson, *Cordon and Search with the Sixth Airborne Division in Palestine, 1945-1948* (Aldershot, 1949), p. 252.

³MEC Cunningham Papers I/4 Telegram, Mideast to Cabinet Offices, 22 December 1945.

subordinates in the *Haganah*.¹ This issue came before the Cabinet on 1 January 1946. For the moment, however, it was shelved lest the action upset the work of the recently formed Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry.²

A new terrorist offensive began on 25 February. Simultaneous attacks were staged by the *Irgun* against the RAF bases at Lydda and Qastina and by *Lehi* against the aerodrome at Kfar Sarkin. Seven planes were destroyed and eight others damaged.³ A week later *Irgun* struck again, raiding the armoury at the Sarafand Army camp. Other terrorist operations disrupted rail service during March, and on 23 April a party of *Irgun* men, disguised as policemen with their Arab prisoners, overpowered the Ramat Gan police station.⁴ Then, on the night of 26 April, *Lehi* attacked an encampment of the Sixth Airborne Division in Tel Aviv. Six paratroopers were killed as they slept in their tents, and four others wounded. The wrath of the survivors was uncontrollable. A curfew was thrown over Tel Aviv, but the soldiers demanded more severe punishment. The restraints imposed on the army in January, however, prevented anything more from being done. Unable to contain their anger, some troops took it upon themselves to discipline the *Yishuv*. Invading the Jewish settlement at Beer Tuvya and the city of Netanya, soldiers ransacked houses and beat their occupants.⁵ Although those responsible for this breach in military conduct were discovered and disciplined,

¹PRO PREM 8/627 Telegram, Cunningham to Hall, 30 December 1945.

²CAB 128/5 C.M. (46) 1, 1 January 1946.

³Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, iv, 232-237.

⁴Wilson, *Cordon and Search*, pp. 252-254.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 48.

they had succeeded in striking a sympathetic chord throughout the army's ranks. In his memoirs, Major Roy Farran recalls that

The first bitter, one-sided blow was when the Stern Gang murdered six parachutists. The troops were all the more incensed that they were not allowed to retaliate. In the Arab Rebellion there had been no deep emotions. But here was the beginning of something very different.¹

D'Arcy was summoned to London to report to the COS. The minutes of the meeting held on 15 May record his statement:

Our forces were under extreme tension. They were veterans of battles in Europe in the last war. They had been taught to kill and were now placed under irritating restrictions. The recent murder of some members of the 6th Airborne Division had been followed by a slight outbreak which was quickly brought under control.

In itself, the incident had been of no great importance, but this war is beginning. If similar Jewish attacks occurred, he did not believe that it would be possible to restrain our troops as they had now reached the breaking point.²

On the following day, D'Arcy briefed the Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, and the Colonial Secretary, George Hall. D'Arcy stated that, 'British troops were always on the defensive, a role to which they were unaccustomed, and almost guaranteed that a certain success would be achieved' by the terrorists. He pointed out how this adversely affected morale, which in any case was at a low ebb because of the restraints under which the army believed itself to be placed under.³ But these restrictions were in fact illusory. The army had been prevented by the

¹Roy Farran, *Winged Dagger: Adventures on Special Service* (London, 1948), pp. 345-346. Farran served in Palestine with the 3rd, The King's Own Hussars, 1945-1946.

²PRO FO 371/52525 E 4773/4/g. 31, COS (46) 77, 15 May 1946.

³*Ibid.*, COS Conference held at 10 Downing Street on 16 May 1946.

Cabinet in January from arresting the leaders of the *Haganah*, the *Palmach* (the *Haganah*'s "shock troops"), and the Jewish Agency. But it had not been bound from striking back at the terrorists of *Irgun* and *Lehi*. Thus D'Arcy's complaints about restrictions avoided the army's real problem: simply that its searches of rural settlements for illegal arms were having no effect on *Irgun* and *Lehi* activities in the cities.

In June 1946 the situation in Palestine worsened. On the 16th the *Haganah* destroyed ten of the 11 bridges connecting Palestine to its neighbours; on the 17th *Lehi* destroyed the rail-way workshops in Haifa; and on the 18th the *Irgun* kidnapped four army and five RAF officers as hostages for two terrorists sentenced to death by the British.¹ The Cabinet had debated the advantage of military action against the risk of losing American support in solving the Palestine problem for a month after D'Arcy's presentation.² On 20 June a decision was finally reached: 'Discussion showed that there was general agreement that the situation called for firm action. We could no longer tolerate a position in which the authority of Government was set at nought'. Approval was given to the plan, code-named "Operation Agatha", to arrest the leaders of the Jewish Agency and its military arm.³ The operation called for the occupation of the Jewish Agency offices in Jerusalem and the *Haganah* headquarters in Tel Aviv 'for a period necessary to search for incriminating documents' (which would be undertaken by special teams of CID personnel) and the arrest of all prominent leaders of the Agency.

¹See MEC Cunningham Papers I/1 Telegram, Hall to Cunningham, 16 June 1946.

²PRO CAB 129/10 C.P. (46) 238 Memorandum by Hall, 19 June 1946.

³PRO CAB 128/5 C.M. (46) 60, 20 June 1946.

In addition, 'as many members of the PALMACH'--both officers and enlisted men--were to be taken into custody in accordance with a 'priority list' that had been previously drawn up. Arms searches, it was pointed out, 'will be incidental and only when it can be done without interfering with the main objects of the operation'.¹

At dawn on Saturday, 29 June, "Operation Agatha" began. A curfew was declared throughout Palestine and the offices of the Jewish Agency and *Haganah* were occupied by the army, its files seized, and its leaders arrested. Initially the operation was reasonably successful: 2,718 persons were taken into custody and a hidden arms cache at Mesheq Yagur was discovered.² Moreover, the army found evidence in the Jewish Agency's files conclusively linking that body to the activities of the *Tenuat Hameri*.³ Most importantly, "Operation Agatha" forced the Jewish Agency to pull the *Haganah* out of the *Tenuat Hameri*.⁴

But the success of "Operation Agatha" was deceptive. It had little, if any, effect on either the *Irgun* or *Lehi*. On 22 July a team of *Irgun* saboteurs blew up the Headquarters of the Government Secretariat and Army Command in the southern wing of Jerusalem's King David Hotel. Ninety-one persons were killed and 45 injured. The majority of the casualties were civilian: men and women, Briton, Jew and Arab alike.⁵

¹PRO WO 275/29 Operation Instruction No. 68, June 1946.

²Gregory Blaxland, *The Regiments Depart: A History of the British Army* (London, 1971), p. 38.

³Cmd. 6873, *Palestine: Statment of Information Relating To Acts Of Violence*, July 1946.

⁴Brenner, 'The "Stern Gang"', 20.

⁵Begin, *The Revolt*, p. 123.

The Cabinet condemned the King David outrage. Sir John Shaw, the Chief Secretary of the Palestine Government, was present during the deliberations. Shaw believed that a political settlement of the Palestine issue was the only means to end the violence.¹ The escalating spiral of terrorism and military action, he argued, 'can only make a bad situation worse and final success...problematical'.² Field Marshal Viscount Montgomery, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS), agreed with Shaw that a political solution was needed, but he thought that the King David bombing demanded an immediate military response. He angrily wrote to his Middle Eastern commander, General Sir Miles Dempsey, that

It is difficult to reconcile the recommendation of the Chief Secretary with the fact that during the past six months some 20...outrages have been committed by the Jews with practically no action by us....Are we to remain on the defensive waiting for the next blow and be dictated to by the terrorists. [?] I agree that a political settlement is what we want but it must take time to get it and meanwhile we are doing nothing.³

Montgomery pressed for the disarming of the Jews through searches of their rural settlements. In view of the situation in Palestine, the Cabinet had no choice but to accede to his demand.⁴ However, military intelligence reports indicated that the terrorists who bombed the King David had come from Tel Aviv. For the first time the army decided to attack the terrorists in their urban hide-outs.⁵ On 30 July, 15,000

¹PRO WO 216/194 Telegram, Montgomery to Dempsey, 23 July 1946.

²MEC Cunningham Papers I/1 Telegram, Shaw to Hall, 22 July 1946.

³PRO WO 216/194 Telegram, Montgomery to Dempsey, 23 July 1946.

⁴PRO WO 275/29 Military Action To Be Taken To Enforce Law and Order in Palestine by Lieutenant-General Sir Evelyn Barker, 22 June 1946.

⁵PRO CAB 128/6 C.M. (65) 73, 25 July 1946.

troops cordoned off Tel Aviv.¹ 'Street by street, officer parties made entrance into each house, assembled the occupants in one room, checked their identity cards, and then searched every part of the house'.²

"Operation Shark" lasted four days; 102,000 persons were screened of whom 787 were arrested. Four Jews were killed, while the army suffered not one casualty. The operation was judged a success.³

The victory, however, was ephemeral. At the end of the month, the army again turned its attention to the countryside. Searches of the *kibbutzim* (Hebrew: "communal agricultural settlements") at Dorot and Ruham provoked fierce resistance of a kind similar to the incident at Ramat Ha-Kovesh three years before.⁴ Meanwhile, the terrorist attacks continued.⁵ Montgomery could not understand why the army was still unable to defeat the terrorists.

PHASE III: NOVEMBER 1946-MARCH 1947

Throughout the fall, conditions in Palestine worsened. On 16 November Dempsey complained to Montgomery that, 'There are murders and acts of sabotage each day and not a terrorist is caught....All trains have stopped running at night and there are no passenger trains at all between Lydda and Jerusalem'. Dempsey claimed that the trouble was the civil administration's 'policy of appeasement' towards the *Yishuv*. He stated that, 'We soldiers had the initiative in Palestine in July and

¹PRO WO 275/31 "Operation Shark", 29 July 1946, and WO 275/58 Intelligence Summary No. 4, 9 August 1946.

²Blaxland, *Regiments Depart*, p. 40.

³PRO WO 275/58 Intelligence Summary No. 4, 9 August 1946.

⁴PRO CO 537/1789 Telegram, Cunningham to to Hall, 22 September 1946.

⁵See Wilson, *Cordon and Search*, pp. 257-258.

August and things were satisfactory. Then we stopped and handed over to the Civil Government. We are getting mighty near now to the time when the soldier takes over again'.¹

Here was the answer Montgomery was searching for: the army's inability to defeat the terrorists was caused by restraints placed on military action by the Palestine administration. On 20 November, he presented Dempsey's views to the Cabinet Defence Committee. Since 1 October, Montgomery stated, 76 soldiers and 23 policemen had either been killed or wounded in terrorist attacks. The army had clearly lost the initiative in Palestine. 'The only means of stamping out this type of warfare', he declared is 'to allow the Army to take the offensive against it'. This, Montgomery alleged, the army was prevented from doing by the Palestine Government.² On the following day, this issue was taken up by the Cabinet. Attlee told Montgomery that after "Operation Agatha" the army had assured the Cabinet that the illegal Jewish organizations had been 'seriously crippled'. This, obviously, was not now the case. Attlee demanded to know what had happened since then to change this situation. Montgomery requested that he be allowed to find this out from Dempsey.³

Dempsey's reply detailed the restrictions that the civil administration and, particularly, Cunningham, placed on the army. 'No major operation', he stated,

can be undertaken without the consent of the High Commissioner. We are not therefore at present completely at liberty to search at will because

¹PRO WO 216/194 Telegram, Dempsey to Montgomery, 16 November 1946.

²PRO WO 32/10260 Extract from Cabinet Defence Committee D.O. 33 (46), 20 November 1946.

³PRO WO 216/194 Telegram, Montgomery to Dempsey, 20 November 1946.

(A) Only when we are one hundred percent sure that there is a direct connection between the locality and an outrage can such operations be undertaken.

(B) No action which would in any way be described as retaliatory or punitive would be agreed to by the High Commissioner.¹

Dempsey's charges stemmed from Cunningham's refusal to allow the army punitively to fine or search communities where terrorist outrages had occurred. Cunningham believed that this policy would punish the innocent, eliminate any prospect of obtaining their cooperation and worse still, would drive otherwise unsympathetic persons into the extremists' ranks. He had explained to Dempsey that, 'It is my immediate policy...to encourage to the greatest extent possible the growing tendency among the Jews to deal with the matter themselves'.² But Dempsey scoffed at this idea, writing to Montgomery that while Cunningham 'wait[ed] for the Jewish Agency to take action against terrorism...our casualties continue to mount'.³

Both Montgomery and Dempsey were intent on using Cunningham and the civil administration as scapegoats for the army's failure to maintain order in Palestine.⁴ Had Dempsey, for instance, paused to listen to the views of Lieutenant-General Sir Evelyn Barker, the GOC for British Forces in Palestine, he might have reconsidered his accusations. On 21

¹*Ibid.*, Telegram, Dempsey to Montgomery, 21 November 1946.

²*Ibid.*

³*Ibid.*

⁴Cunningham had been Montgomery's least successful predecessor in command of the British Eighth Army in Egypt during the North Africa campaign. Cunningham was relieved of command after only three months in November 1941 for what his superior, General Sir Claude Auchinleck, regarded as Cunningham's 'defensive' mentality. According to Montgomery's biographer, Nigel Hamilton, Montgomery not only agreed with Auchinleck's assessment at the time but felt the same way about Cunningham's performance as High Commissioner. See Nigel Hamilton, *Monty: The Making Of A General 1887-1947* (London, 1981), pp. 512-513.

November Barker had written to Dempsey that, 'I have yet to be prevented from carrying out such actions when in any direct relation to an outrage'. Operations of a punitive or retaliatory nature were, indeed, prohibited by Cunningham. But this ban was justified, Barker continued, because of the difficulty of hitting that section of the community responsible for terrorism. Since Britain was not really at war with the Jews, he said, the army's hands were 'very much tied for fear of antagonizing the innocent...we cannot therefore exploit our full military potential'. The answer to the problem, Barker explained, was not to be found in military action but in a political settlement of the Palestine problem. The only reason that he had advocated intensified searches and the levying of fines was because 'We cannot sit back forever and allow British police and soldiers to be murdered and do nothing about it, otherwise we cannot expect their morale to be retained at a high level'.¹ It is significant that these operations were designed less to harm the terrorists than to fortify morale. But Montgomery, as well as Dempsey, ignored Barker's observations.² It was easier for them to blame Cunningham than to realize that the army's strategy for fighting the terrorists was wrong.

Cunningham was infuriated by these allegations and demanded a letter of apology from Montgomery.³ On 29 November Cunningham, Montgomery and Dempsey met in Jerusalem. To Montgomery's allegation that the army was unnecessarily shackled because of Cunningham's fear of

¹MEC Cunningham Papers I/3, Telegram, Barker to Dempsey, 21 November 1946.

²See Montgomery, *Memoirs*, pp. 418-421.

³MEC Cunningham Papers I/3, Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 23 November 1946.

antagonizing the *Yishuv*, the High Commissioner replied that even if the army was granted the freedom of action that Montgomery sought, its actions 'would still be ineffective against the type of terrorism that we are experiencing'. Little was accomplished at the conference. The chasm separating the military from the civil administration widened and despite Montgomery's apology to Cunningham the matter was not resolved.¹

Discussion now shifted to London, where officials in the War and Colonial Offices squared off. The military rallied around Montgomery; while Colonial Office officials supported Cunningham. In a brief prepared by the General Staff for the Cabinet Defence Committee it was argued that,

The only means of combatting terrorism is a policy of constant harrying which will keep the terrorists on the move and thus disrupt their plans. It is inevitable that in the course of such action certain law-abiding Jewish citizens may be molested, but it may serve to bring home to them the fact that terrorism does not pay and that the community itself should give practical effect to their denunciation of the terrorists.²

But the Colonial Secretary, Arthur Creech-Jones, was resolute in his opinion that the security problem in Palestine had to be viewed from the political, as well as from the military, perspective. On the following day he stated that, 'the adoption of aggressive tactics now would upset the political balance and make the task of achieving a settlement in Palestine more difficult'.³ Finally, in an effort to resolve this impasse Cunningham was recalled to London.

¹*Ibid.*, 3 December 1946, and Cunningham Papers IV/2 Note by General Cunningham (undated).

²PRO WO 32/10260 Army Council Secretariat A.C.S./B/2287, Cabinet Defence Committee D.O. (46) 145, 31 December 1946.

³*Ibid.*, Extract of Cabinet Defence Committee D.O. 1 (47), 1 January 1947.

On 3 January 1947 Cunningham was again confronted by Montgomery. The High Commissioner refuted Montgomery's arguments, stating that he 'could not see that it was worthwhile turning upside down areas where there was no indication of the presence of terrorists'. Montgomery disagreed.¹ On 15 January the Cabinet considered this matter. They endorsed a directive drafted by Montgomery (with the assistance of Cunningham) governing army operations in Palestine. The directive stated 'that all possible steps will be taken at once to establish and maintain law and order in Palestine'. The army was now given the power that Montgomery believed would bring about the defeat of the terrorists. There was, however, one qualification, doubtless inserted by Cunningham: 'There can of course be no question of taking reprisals which merely bear hardly [sic] on innocent people'.²

Throughout 1946 the army remained unsuccessful in its war against the *Irgun* and *Lehi*. "Operation Agatha" was supposed to have provided the army with the power necessary to crush the terrorists. But by the fall of 1946 it was obvious that these efforts were having little or no effect on the frequency and scope of terrorist operations.³ Montgomery and Dempsey could not understand how this was possible. Casting around

¹PRO WO 216/194 Telegram, Montgomery to Dempsey, 15 January 1947.

²PRO FO 371/61762 E 316/46/31 Telegram, Creech-Jones to Cunningham, 20 January 1947.

³For example, significant Jewish terrorist operations during this period (September 1946 to March 1947) included: 8 September, attacks on railways throughout Palestine and the assassination of Area Security Officer in Jaffa; 13 September, robbery of Ottoman Banks in Tel Aviv; 20 September, attack on railway work-shops in Haifa; 17 October, assassination of a CID inspector in Jerusalem; 17-20 October, widespread road minings; 30 October, attack on Central Railway Station in Jerusalem and ambush of military convoy on Mt. Scopus; 1-13 November, nine trains mined; 17-25 November, six trains mined; 5 December, Army Headquarters in Sarafand bombed; and 29 December, three army officers kidnapped and flogged in retaliation for British flogging of *Irgun* prisoners.

for a reason their attention fastened on Cunningham. They claimed that the civil government restricted army action and thus was responsible for the army's poor performance. But this excuse was quashed by Barker, the officer in command in Palestine, who wrote to Dempsey that these allegations were simply not true. Cunningham, he declared, did not interfere with or inhibit military action. Moreover, Barker pointed to the bankruptcy of the army's strategy in Palestine, stating that operations were designed more to bolster morale than to fight the terrorists. But Montgomery continued blindly to insist that if only the army were permitted to act without first obtaining civilian consent, the situation in Palestine would surely improve. The Cabinet had now granted Montgomery his request.

PHASE IV: MARCH-SEPTEMBER 1947

On 1 March a series of attacks by the *Irgun* resulted in the deaths of 18 soldiers and injuries to 25 others.¹ On 2 March martial law was declared over Tel Aviv and the Jewish quarters of Jerusalem. The severity of this measure was without precedent in Palestine; encompassing as it did every aspect of civilian life in the communities where it was imposed. All commerce stopped; bus, train, taxi and lorry services were suspended; the operation of private cars was prohibited; postal, tax collecting and other government services closed down; food was distributed by the army; no one was allowed to enter or exit the cordoned off areas; and each city was divided into grid-sections and thoroughly searched for arms and terrorist suspects.² The advantages

¹PRO CO 537/2299 Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 2 March 1947.

²MEC LeRay Papers, First Infantry Division Report on "Operation Elephant", April 1947.

that martial law would give to the army were outlined in a report by the Joint Planning Staff:

(a) Isolat[e the] nerve centres of terrorist activity from their gangs.

(b) Interrupt...communications which are essential to the planning and committing of outrages.

Such measures by striking at the liberty and pockets of the private citizens may induce them to co-operate by laying information against and refusing to shelter the terrorists.¹

The language used in this last part of the report is vital to understanding why martial law was employed and why such great hopes were placed in it as the ultimate solution to the terrorist problem. The *Yishuv*, Cunningham informed London on 13 February, were 'paranoiac' with fear that this measure would be used against them. 'In martial law', he wrote, 'the Jewish community see economic disaster as well as widespread hardship'.² The army considered money to be the Achilles heel of the *Yishuv*.³ One intelligence appreciation observed that, 'The making of money is almost a second religion with the Jewish race' and then went on to describe how the discomfort of martial law would induce the cooperation that other methods had failed to obtain.⁴ Another intelligence analysis predicted that the Jewish community would be forced to 'go on a manhunt to save themselves and their pockets'.⁵ The *Yishuv*, however, angered by the inconvenience it had to endure, assailed the British for blaming them for the terrorists' misdeeds.⁶

¹PRO CO 537/2299 Report, from Director of Plans to Director of Joint Planning, 21 March 1947.

²*Ibid.*, Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 13 February 1947.

³See PRO WO 216/194 Telegram, Dempsey to Montgomery of Order issued by General Sir Evelyn Barker, 23 July 1946.

⁴PRO WO 275/58 Sixth Airborne Division Intelligence Summary No. 33, March 1947.

⁵*Ibid.*, Intelligence Summary No. 34, 14 March 1947.

⁶PRO CO 537/2299 Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 3 March 1947.

Intelligence reports now indicated that martial law was not in fact having any appreciable effect on terrorist activities. It seemed that while the soldiers searched the cities, the terrorists attacked in the countryside.¹ The Sixth Airborne's intelligence officer noted how, 'In spite of all the restrictions, acts of sabotage and murder continue on an increasing scale....The Illegal Forces are going all out to "thumb their noses" at the authorities and their fellow countrymen'.² After 13 days of martial law only 24 terrorists had been captured; none of whom had been caught inside the affected areas.³ In addition, it was becoming increasingly difficult to maintain martial law. Major-General R. N. Gale, the commander of the Tel Aviv zone, recommended its withdrawal lest it incite rioting and similar disorders. Gale was convinced that should 'the shoe pinch too hard for too long' the British would lose any hope of acquiring the *Yishuv's* cooperation.⁴ Cunningham agreed and on 17 March he announced the suspension of martial law.⁵

Cunningham was criticized in London for this decision.⁶ One of the Cabinet's conclusions after their meeting on 20 March was that, 'The withdrawal of martial law after so short a period had given an impression of weakness and must have encouraged the Jewish community and the terrorists to think that they had successfully resisted it'.⁷

¹See Wilson, *Cordon and Search*, p. 262.

²PRO WO 275/58 Sixth Airborne Division Intelligence Summary No. 34, 14 March 1947.

³MEC Cunningham Papers IV/1 Security Conference, 14 March 1947.

⁴PRO CO 537/2299 Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 14 March 1947.

⁵*Ibid.*, 15 March 1947.

⁶PRO FO 371/61770 E2382/46/31 Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 16 March 1947.

⁷PRO CAB 128/9 C.M. (47) 30, 20 March 1947.

Pressure grew for its re-imposition: this time throughout Palestine.¹ Cunningham angrily defended himself, pointing out that the recommendation to withdraw martial law had come from the army and not his office. Moreover, he believed that country-wide martial law would be ineffective and inappropriate even if feasible. First, the army did not have sufficient troops to impose martial law over the whole of Palestine. Second, there was the continued misapprehension that Palestine's terrorist problem was a rural, rather than an urban, phenomenon. Since only one fifth of Palestine's Jewish population lived outside of the cities, the extension of martial law was pointless, and worse, it would harm Palestine's entire Arab population.² Cunningham stated that, 'There are various ways in which our present anti-terrorist methods can and will be improved, but renewed imposition of Martial Law on the present model is the only practical proposition'.³

This was not encouraging news. On balance it appeared that the benefits of martial law were limited. There were those in the War Office⁴ who hailed it for having given the army greater flexibility and freedom and also for the salutary effect that they presumed it had on the *Yishuv*'s willingness to cooperate. It was also true that martial law had 'paralysed' the Jewish community's economy; but upon sober reflection, this had proven to be equally harmful to the British, for

¹PRO FO 371/61770 E2382/46/31 Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 16 March 1947.

²*Ibid.*

³MEC Cunningham Papers IV/1 Security Conference, 14 March 1947.

⁴The Secretary of State for War, F. G. Bellenger, and the Vice Chief of the Imperial General Staff (VCIGS), F.E.W. Simpson.

the Palestine Government had lost thousands of pounds in tax revenue-- at a time when increasing expenditures on security were already draining its limited budget. In addition, for all the army's effort a total of only 60 terrorists had been arrested.¹ Martial law even failed to obtain the cooperation of the *Yishuv* in fighting the terrorists. Instead of conciliating the Jewish population, the army's use of martial law only succeeded in intimidating and alienating the Jews: thus ending any prospect of the army receiving their assistance.² On 20 March the Cabinet met to consider the effect that martial law had had on the situation in Palestine. Their conclusions were sombre:

It was the general view of the Cabinet that the results achieved by martial law were disappointing. Some arrests had been made, but terrorism had not been brought to an end. Serious outrages had continued, both during the period of martial law and afterwards.

However, like Cunningham, the Cabinet could come up with no better alternative to the limited application of martial law over selected areas.³ For all its drawbacks, martial law seemed to be the only weapon left to Britain with which to maintain order in Palestine.

The situation continued to deteriorate throughout the summer. On 11 July two sergeants attached to Army Intelligence were kidnapped by the *Irgun* in Netanya as hostages for three *Irgun* men awaiting execution for terrorist acts. On 29 July the three *Irgun* men were executed; two days later the bodies of the two sergeants were found hanging in an

¹PRO CAB 128/9 C.M. (47) 30, 20 March 1947.

²J. Bowyer Bell, *On Revolt: Strategies of National Liberation* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1976), p. 68.

³PRO CAB 128/9 C.M. (47) 30, 20 March 1947.

orange grove, just one and a half miles from where they had been abducted. The bodies were booby-trapped and an officer was seriously injured while cutting them down.¹ Unable to contain their rage, British policemen rioted in Tel Aviv. Before the violence was quelled five Jews had been murdered, 16 injured and 25 Jewish-owned shops destroyed.²

Cunningham feared that this lawlessness would spread to the army should the troops not be permitted to respond.³ This was a major departure from his previously held view that the army had to be restrained from purely punitive or retaliatory actions. But the situation was extremely dangerous. On 1 August he reported to Creech-Jones that, 'Feeling [among the troops]...is running high' and that action was required if further acts of lawlessness were to be prevented. The prospect of repeated breaches in discipline and further vigilante attacks necessitated that martial law be re-imposed. 'The advantages of such a course', he wrote, 'are more psychological than actual for the soldiers already have practically all the powers they want'.⁴

But Cunningham's options were far more limited than he was aware. That same day the GOC, Lieutenant-General G.H.A. MacMillan, informed him that despite a ratio of one British soldier for every six Jews in Palestine, there were perhaps only enough troops to impose martial law

¹Wilson, *Cordon and Search*, p. 132.

²PRO FO 371/61932 E 7141/5017/31 Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 1 August 1947.

³*FRUS, 1947* (Washington, D.C., 1971), v, 1134-1135, 867N.00/8-147 Telegram, Macatee (Consul-General, Jerusalem) to Secretary of State, 1 August 1947, and MEC Cunningham Papers IV/1 Minutes of Security Conference, 1 August 1947.

⁴MEC Cunningham Papers II/2 Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 1 August 1947.

on Tel Aviv and that any commitment beyond just that city would undermine security in the rest of the country.¹ There appeared little other response available to the British. On 30 July Cunningham had given the army the power to demolish buildings from which terrorist acts were committed or where suspected terrorists or their families lived.² Although this tactic had been effective during the Arab Rebellion, Cunningham advised Creech-Jones that he doubted it would curb terrorism in present circumstances. 'I have discussed exhaustively with [the] GOC and Executive Council', Cunningham explained,

what further measures could be taken. The services have already made use of all measures under the Defence Regulations with the exception of blowing up houses....They cannot suggest to me any other action which they wish to take under these regulations or any new regulations which would come under the heading of extraordinary and though the search for novel action is continuous I cannot myself suggest to them any different procedures than what have been followed up to now.³

As a last resort, Creech-Jones enquired whether the air force might be used to bomb suspected terrorist enclaves. This tactic had also been used successfully during the Arab Rebellion. But, although the army had been granted permission by the Cabinet to use the air force in 1945, this measure had yet to be tried. Cunningham, however, replied that 'The security problem does not at present lend itself to the use of the Air Force unless it is intended purely punitively against the whole Jewish population'. It was pointless, he continued, to deploy the RAF

¹PRO CO 733/477/75156/151 A Letter, Jerusalem to Chancery, Washington, D.C., 18 September 1947.

²*Times*, 1 August 1947.

³PRO CO 537/2299 Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 4 August 1947.

because the Jewish terrorists, unlike their Arab predecessors, did not congregate in any ascertainable rural 'strongholds', but were dispersed throughout the country's urban centres. 'The true underground nature of the [Jewish] movement', Cunningham reminded Creech-Jones, 'requires stressing...it would not result in an early eradication of terrorism. It must be remembered that even Nazi ruthlessness did not suppress underground movements'.¹

Accordingly, Cunningham wrote to General Sir John Crocker, the C.-in-C. of British Forces in the Middle East, to impress upon him the seriousness of the situation:

I must make it clear that under present conditions the possibility of placing TEL AVIV under military control for an extended period is an essential trump card which we hold in military action and if we are not able even to do this the authority of Government would be seriously weakened.²

But the decision to send more troops to Palestine was not Crocker's alone. The Cabinet was strongly opposed to any increase because of the disruption it would cause to the demobilization schedule.³ This timetable was already 15 months behind as of the previous March. Since servicemen who had been drafted before 1 January 1944 were still in uniform, the government was determined that nothing would prevent their release.⁴

¹*Ibid.*, 31 August 1947.

²MEC Cunningham Papers II/2 Telegram, MacMillan to Crocker, 1 August 1947.

³PRO CO 537/2299 Telegram, Creech-Jones to Cunningham, 5 August 1947.

⁴*Daily Telegraph*, 6 March 1947.

Meanwhile Cunningham pressed for martial law. 'This measure', he declared, 'now seems the only shot left in our locker'.¹ But London remained unresponsive. Montgomery replied that, 'It must be clearly understood that we have not sufficient military force to impose martial law and assume the consequent administrative responsibility'.² Crocker meanwhile argued that the implementation of martial law--in any form--would be premature and must be avoided if at all possible. Not only would it 'be expensive in Military Manpower', but it would be beyond the capacity of the troops now in Palestine to do more than impose it in one place and certainly not over the entire country. Even such a geographically restricted application of martial law was most undesirable, he pointed out, since it would divert the army from its main priority, this being the defence of military installations and government offices and the guarding of railway-lines and convoys.³ Thus martial law, heralded as the only viable means to restore Palestine to order in March, was dismissed as an impractical, if not impossible, course in August. At the end of the month, the report of the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine was published. It recommended the termination of Britain's Mandate for Palestine and the partition of the country into separate Arab and Jewish states. On 26 September Britain announced that all military and civilian personnel would be withdrawn from Palestine.

¹MEC Cunningham Papers II/2 Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 7 August 1947.

²PRO CO 537/2299 Quoted in Minute by Trafford Smith (Colonial Office), 12 August 1947.

³PRO WO 216/221 Telegram, Crocker to VCIGS (Archibald Nye), 3 August 1947.

CONCLUSION

British military policy in Palestine was incorrectly based on strategies applied during the Arab Rebellion. The army believed that Jewish terrorism (which it failed to recognize as primarily an urban phenomenon) could be eliminated by concerted searches for illegally held arms in the countryside. This was the military's response after the assassination of Lord Moyne and remained in force until "Operation Agatha" in June 1946 and "Operation Shark" in July 1946. Even then the army directed their strategy against the wrong target. Although the army claimed that these two operations were great successes, this was not in fact the case. As Cunningham correctly observed, although "Operation Agatha" had struck at the Jewish Agency and had forced the *Haganah* to withdraw from the *Tenuat Hameri*, it had very little actual effect on either *Irgun* or *Lehi*.¹ Similarly, despite the large number of arrests during "Operation Shark", little damage had been done to the terrorists. In the long term, "Shark" was counter-productive. Instead of convincing the *Yishuv* to cooperate with the security forces against the terrorists, it alienated the Jewish community because of the inconvenience and disruption to commerce and daily life that the operation caused. Thus Montgomery's failure to understand why the army was still unsuccessful in defeating the *Irgun* and *Lehi* is a result of his, and other commanders', failure to realize the inapplicability of their strategy to the Jewish conflict.

¹MEC Cunningham Papers I/3 Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 23 November 1946.

The strategy of collective punishment, employed by the army during the Arab Rebellion failed when it was applied to the Jewish community in Palestine a decade later. Since almost all rural Arabs supported and indeed assisted the rebels during the Arab Rebellion, the army had no hesitation in collectively punishing entire communities. Conditions in Palestine during the period of Jewish terrorism, however, were very different. First, the *Irgun* and *Lehi* did not enjoy the widespread sympathy, much less the active support, of the Jewish community in Palestine. Terrorist activities were disavowed by the *Haganah* (except, of course, during the nine months that the *Tenuat Hameri* existed) and disparaged by the official Jewish institutions, which exhorted the *Yishuv* to isolate and ignore the extremists. This, coupled with the second major difference--that this conflict was an urban, rather than a rural, war--made it unacceptable for the army to collectively punish an entire city without hurting innocent people.

It is not for the historian to conjecture what the army could otherwise have done to obtain the *Yishuv's* cooperation against the terrorists. And, indeed, given the fundamental political differences that existed between Britain and the Jews over the mandate's future it is questionable that the army could ever have acquired the community's assistance. Nevertheless, it is clear that the strategy pursued by the army was counterproductive. By failing to consider the need to woo the *Yishuv* in order to gain its support, the army failed to anticipate that the hardship and inconvenience caused by martial law and other countermeasures would so alienate the Jewish populace that all prospects of obtaining their help would be lost.¹ Accordingly, the senior command

¹Bell, *On Revolt*, p. 68.

pursued a bankrupt strategy that neglected conciliation and appeasement while still trying to win "the hearts and minds" of the people through coercion and repression. The results were not only negative but played right into the hands of the terrorists. The *Irgun* and *Lehi's* terrorist campaigns were meant not only to garner attention to themselves and their cause, but to provoke the government into mounting costly and repressive countermeasures that would alienate the community and create new sympathy and support for the terrorists.

It should be stressed that the army was facing a situation in Palestine of having to fight a type of warfare that it had never confronted before. It was forced to assume responsibilities that would otherwise have been belonged to the police. But with the police force severely understrength, the army had to assume the dominant role in maintaining internal security in Palestine. Untrained and unprepared for the urban terrorist warfare that confronted it, the army's clumsy handling of the population failed to gain the crucial support needed to defeat the terrorists.

III. MAINTAINING ORDER IN PALESTINE: THE POLICE OR THE MILITARY?

During the final years of the mandate, the British Army had assumed the dominant role in fighting the Jewish terrorist organizations and maintaining public security in Palestine. The army, as the preceding chapter argued, was neither suited nor prepared to undertake this task. The basic tenet of British doctrine concerning public security has long been that the police, and not the military, should play the predominant role in upholding the law and maintaining order.¹ This, however, was not the case in Palestine between 1945 and 1947.

When Montgomery visited Palestine in June 1946 he was struck by the fact that, 'at a time when the situation was clearly about to boil over', the Palestine Police Force (PPF) was nearly 50 percent below strength and considered to be 'no more than 25 percent effective'.² The army, accordingly, was compelled to undertake what were primarily police, and not military, responsibilities. This was explained by the GOC, Barker to his command that same month: 'In normal peace times the police would carry out their duties without assistance from the military. As it is, the situation in the country is not normal and furthermore the Police Force is much below establishment. As a result the police, more often than not, will require help from the military'.³ In his case study of three British colonial police forces, Clark

¹F.E.C. Gregory, 'The British Police and Terrorism', in Paul Wilkinson (ed.), *British Perspectives on Terrorism* (London, 1981), pp. 107-123.

²Montgomery, *Memoirs*, pp. 378-379.

³PRO WO 275/13 Op. Instruction No. 67, HQ, Palestine, 17 June 1946.

observes that, 'The arrival of the army to support the police has tended to attract more attention than the less spectacular, but no less essential police role. The arrival of the army seemed to indicate that the police had failed'.¹

The situation that developed in Palestine after World War II, and led to the army's massive intervention in support of the police, was caused by a number of different but interrelated factors that converged to undermine, and ultimately neutralize, the efforts of the PPF to defeat the Jewish terrorist organizations and maintain order in Palestine. First, the PPF was chronically short of manpower at a time when Jewish terrorism was rapidly escalating. Second, the police attempted to compensate for this shortage with hastily and, as a consequence, poorly trained recruits who lacked the knowledge and experience necessary for the prosecution of a successful counter-terrorist campaign. Third, the PPF was progressively 'militarised' so that it became eventually neither a police force nor an army--but a problematical mixture of the two. Fourth, was the police force's brief and, in the final result, bungled, deployment of special, elite counter-terrorist units. Fifth, was the PPF's serious problems in obtaining accurate and up-to-date intelligence.² Finally, the lack of any clear political directive from the government inevitably complicated the exacting task that confronted the police force in combatting the Jewish terrorists during the final years of the mandate.

¹David John Clark, 'The Colonial Police And Anti-Terrorism: Bengal 1930-1936, Palestine 1937-1947, And Cyprus 1955-1959' (Oxford University D.Phil. thesis, 1978), p. 3.

²One of the reasons for the police force's intelligence failure was the poor relations that existed between the PPF and the *Yishuv*. This issue is discussed in detail in Chapters IV and V.

ORGANIZATION AND RECRUITMENT

The most serious problem afflicting the PPF between 1945-1947 was the fact that it was severely below establishment at precisely the moment when Jewish terrorist activity in Palestine had become a commonplace, if not daily, occurrence. The accompanying charts illustrate the levels of terrorism between 1940 and 1947. Figure 1 depicts acts of violence perpetrated by the three Jewish underground organizations from January 1944 to February 1946 in comparison with those of 1940-1943. Figure 2 charts the levels of terrorist activity between October 1945 and March 1948 in only those areas of the country where the Sixth Airborne Division was stationed. Although Figure 2 does not encompass all of Palestine (as Figure 1 does), it nevertheless provides an accurate indication of the dimensions of Jewish terrorism in the country after the period covered by Figure 1.

As a result of Allenby's conquest of Palestine in 1917 and 1918, the British inherited from the Turks a decentralized and entirely locally oriented police force of approximately 350 men.¹ In accordance with the decree issued by OETA on 1 August 1918, recruitment of Palestinians to the force was regulated in proportion to the country's Muslim, Christian and Jewish populations.² It was decided, however, that until these recruits acquired the requisite knowledge and expertise to assume positions of command, the PPF's senior ranks should be staffed

¹Edward Horne, *A Job Well Done: A History Of The Palestine Police Force 1920-1948* (Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, 1982), p. 15. This study, commissioned by the Palestine Police Old Comrades' Association and written by a member of the Force between 1941-1946, is the PPF's official history.

²Wasserstein, *The British In Palestine*, p. 168.

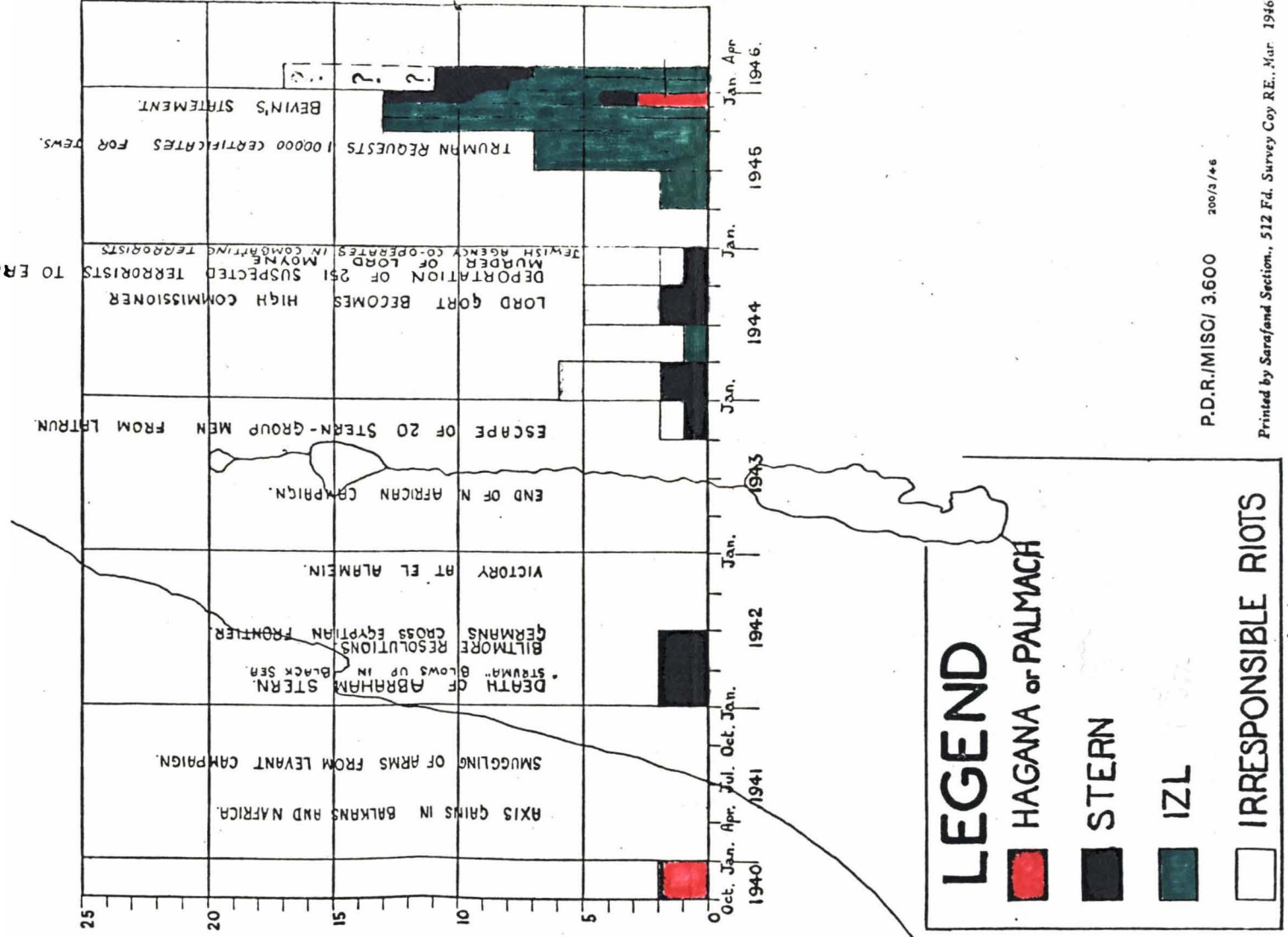
**CHART . SHOWING NO. OF
INCIDENTS & RESPONSIBILITY
FOR THEM FROM :-
1. OCT. 1940 TO 21. FEB. 1946**

Fig. 1 -- Jewish Terrorist Activities Between October 1940 and February 1946

Source: PRO WO 169/23021 Fortnightly Intelligence Newsletter
No. 9, DSO HQ Palestine, 17 February-2 March 1946.

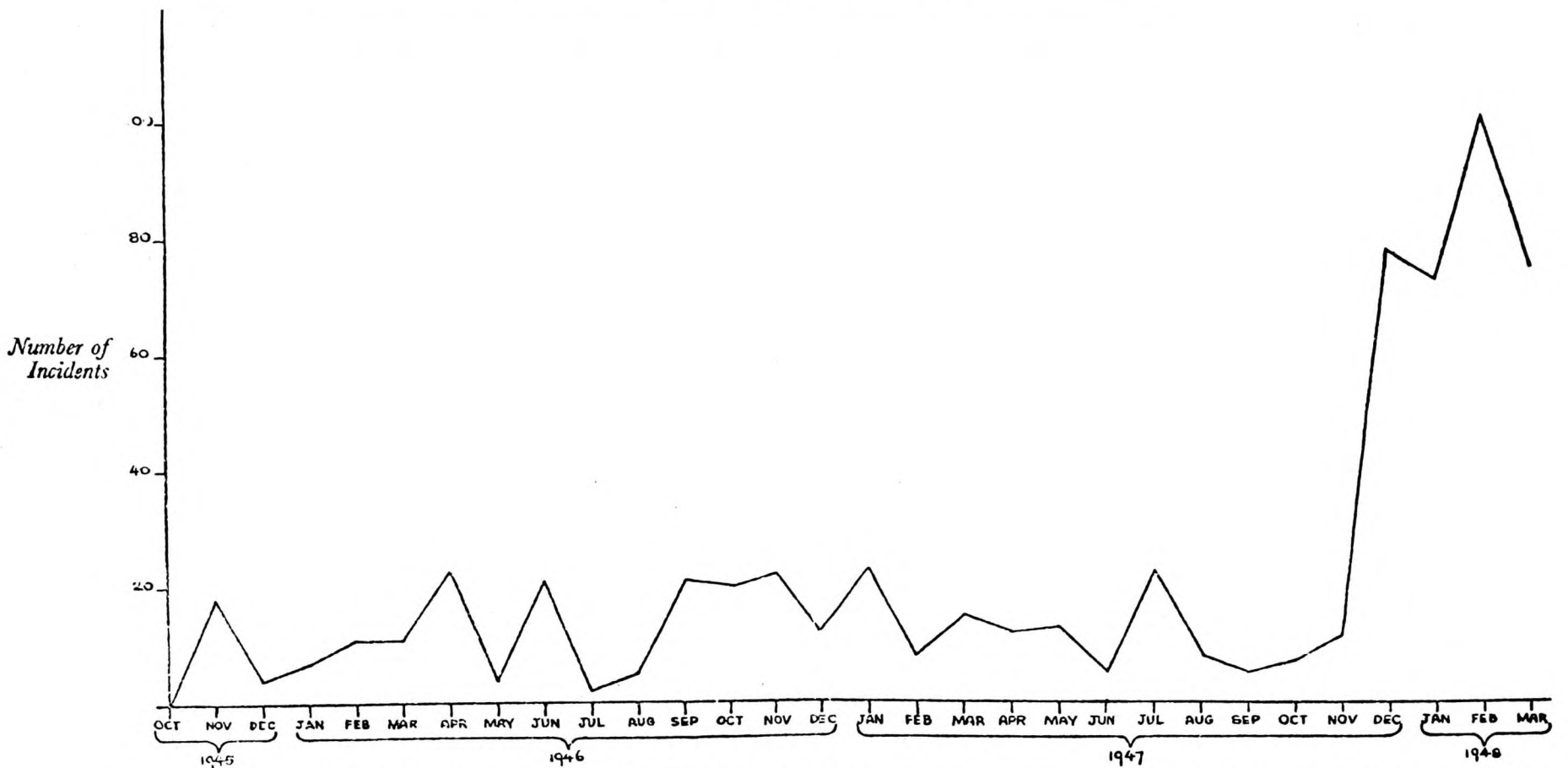
CHART SHOWING NO. OF INCIDENTS & RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEM FROM 1 OCT. 1940 TO 21 FEB. 1946

I. OCT. 1940 TO 21 FEB. 1946



P.D.R./MISC/ 3.600 200/3/46

NUMBER OF RECORDED INCIDENTS INVOLVING SECURITY FORCES AND DISSIDENT GROUPS IN
6TH AIRBORNE DIVISIONAL AREA, NOVEMBER, 1945—MARCH, 1948.



N.B.—Some licence has been assumed in assessing degree of importance of certain major events which were accompanied by a number of subsidiary incidents.

Fig. 2 -- Terrorist Activities Between October 1945 and March 1948

Source: Wilson, Cordon and Search, p. 274.

only by experienced British police officers.¹ Following the Arab disturbances that erupted in Jaffa in 1921 and quickly spread to the surrounding countryside, a rural gendarmerie was established to augment the regular police. But the financial problems that plagued the Palestine Government during the first decade of the mandate inevitably affected the police. Consequently, its growth was uneven and subject to policy reversals and repeated re-organizations as a result of frequent budgetary cuts.²

Between 1922 and 1928 the situation in Palestine remained relatively quiescent. The financial austerity imposed on the police appeared to be inconsequential. But this was a dangerous assumption, particularly in a country like Palestine, where inter-communal tensions were easily excited and an isolated incident could quickly explode into widespread violence. Yet, throughout the decade, the PPF's strength was steadily reduced to a point where it was reckoned to be 25 percent below establishment on the eve of the 1929 riots.³

The damage done to the police by the government's parsimony was revealed during the long week of violence that convulsed Palestine in August 1929. The police force's failure either to prevent or contain the riots was the product of three factors: its overall manpower deficiency, the unreliability of its Arab contingent, and inadequate intelligence. The first was easily redressed when permission was obtained from the Government to recruit an additional 15 British and 13

¹Horne, *A Job Well Done*, p. 35.

²*Ibid.*, p. 60.

³*Ibid.*, p. 116.

Palestinian officers and 508 British and 208 Palestinian policemen. Thus in 1930 the PPF had grown in size to comprise 46 British and 82 Palestinian officers and 650 British and 1,442 Palestinian subordinate ranks.¹ The other two problems, however, were less easily dealt with since their amelioration required changes in the policy, organization and structure of the police force.

The riots had clearly revealed the unreliability of at least some of the Palestinians in the PPF. As had been the case during the 1920 disturbances, a significant portion of the Arab police not only made no effort to stop the violence, but had in fact joined their rampaging co-religionists in attacking the *Yishuv*. Their defection denuded the police of what little manpower it possessed and made the restoration of order that much more difficult. The disgraceful behaviour of the Arab police was partially mitigated by the gallant performance of the force's relatively new British Section.² The exemplary conduct of the British police, in contrast to that of their Arab colleagues, resulted in what then was only a tacit change of police policy. Hitherto, no distinction had been made in assigning either British or Palestinian policemen to public security duties. Although for the time being there was no formal reversal of policy, it nevertheless became clear that in the future the British Section would be primarily responsible for public security. This is evinced by the fact that more than twice as many British as Palestinian recruits (523 versus 221) entered the force following the riots.³

¹PRO CO 537/2269 Note On The Palestine Police Force, December 1946.

²Horne, *A Job Well Done*, pp. 137-154.

³PRO CO 537/2269 Note On The Palestine Police Force, December 1946.

Much of the blame for the police force's failure either to appreciate the depth of Arab discontent or to anticipate the violence that it ignited was laid on the Criminal Investigation Department (CID). As the department specifically charged with the acquisition, analysis and dissemination of political intelligence, the CID was clearly at fault in failing to furnish the PPF with the information that should have warned of the disturbances.¹

Between 1930 and 1936 the police force was completely overhauled. Even so, at the start of the Arab Rebellion in April 1936, the police were under-strength and under-financed. The Rebellion's rapid escalation from an urban, general strike to a popular, country-wide guerrilla war proved to be beyond the PPF's ability to control. A concerted effort was therefore undertaken to strengthen the force. Police expenditures were expanded by 312 percent between 1936 and 1939.² Thus by the end of the decade, the PPF's ranks had increased by 152 percent, as 3,098 new men entered the force. The vast majority of these recruits were Britons (2,483 against 615 Palestinians).³ This was in accordance with the official change of policy enunciated in 1939, 'to rely henceforth on the British section for public security work and to increase the British sections to 50 percent of the whole force'.⁴

¹Horne, *A Job Well Done*, pp. 161-163.

²Clark, 'The Colonial Police And Anti-Terrorism', p. 153.

³PRO CO 537/2269 Note On The Palestine Police Force, December 1946.

⁴Clark, 'The Colonial Police And Anti-Terrorism', p. 150.

The Arab Rebellion had again raised doubts concerning the reliability of the Arab members of the PPF.¹ Furthermore, the escalation of illegal Jewish para-military activity that the Rebellion had provoked led to similar worries about the Jewish police, many of whom belonged simultaneously to both the police and the *Haganah*.² Accordingly, in 1939, the British police had grown to comprise 49 percent of the PPF (though it was still thought to be 147 men below establishment), while in 1935 they had accounted for just 26 percent of its total strength.³ Despite these budgetary and manpower increases, the magnitude of the Arab Rebellion was such that the army was increasingly called upon to provide assistance to the beleaguered police.⁴ Moreover the army's intervention was so massive and pervasive that in September 1938 the PPF was formally placed under military command until the Rebellion was defeated.⁵

The Second World War created new problems for the PPF. Since almost half of the British Section was composed of regular army soldiers who had been temporarily seconded to the police, many of them would have return to their old units. Although the Arab Rebellion had largely exhausted itself by the start of the war, the prospect that it might begin anew at a time when the police could no longer depend on the army for assistance could not be discounted. Consequently, having finally

¹*Ibid.*

²Efraim Dekel, *Shai: The Exploits of Hagana [sic] Intelligence* (London and New York, 1959), *passim*.

³Clark, 'The Colonial Police And Anti-Terrorism', pp. 152-153.

⁴Horne, *A Job Well Done*, pp. 205-242.

⁵Clark, 'The Colonial Police And Anti-Terrorism', p. 158.

brought its establishment nearly up to strength, the PPF's senior commanders were loath to release men for military service.

In Parliament, legislation was passed to prevent the return of personnel from police forces throughout the Empire to the military without specific governmental approval. This amendment to the Defence Act further empowered all colonial and mandatory governments to amalgamate their respective police forces into the military should the need arise.¹ In July 1940 the Palestine Government invoked the Act and again placed the PPF under military command. This enabled the police to be deployed as a military unit;² but, more importantly, it ensured that those policemen whose three year contracts had expired or would soon do so remained in the force.³ These powers were broadened on 27 May 1942, when the High Commissioner, MacMichael, issued a proclamation 'making the Palestine Police Force, other than Special Constables, a military force and plac[ing it] under the Army Act of 1881...[as] a de facto branch of the armed forces of the crown'.⁴ In practice, this meant that the PPF 'was created a military force, subject to military law and liable for employment in a military role'.⁵ In addition, the police were also given ranks equivalent to those of the army.⁶

¹Horne, *A Job Well Done*, pp. 243-245.

²Clark, 'The Colonial Police And Anti-Terrorism', p. 158.

³Horne, *A Job Well Done*, p. 245.

⁴Palestine Police Old Comrades' Association, *Newsletter*, 128 (1982), 51.

⁵ISA CS (Chief Secretary) D/119/44, 23 October 1944, containing Short Handbook On Palestine, by GSI, HQ Palestine, April 1944.

⁶NARS RG 165 Palestine 6000-6700 Box 3036 OSS Report, 2 March 1944.

Despite these measures the strength of the British Section declined considerably between 1939 and 1942. In 1942 the GOC, McConnel, reported that the British police were now 800 men below establishment. Although 400 new policemen had been recruited in Britain, there was no means of transporting them to Palestine. This situation, McConnel continued, had adversely affected the morale of the remaining members of the British Section. 'There are many British personnel now with the Palestine Police', he warned, 'who are kept on against their will on contracts which terminate at the end of the War. These men will not stay on, or if compelled to do so will not be fully effective. Others will want leave which the War has forced them to forgo'.¹ In retrospect, it appears the decision to incorporate the police into the army did more harm than good, since it failed to stop the exodus of men from the British Section and caused resentment and morale problems among those men who stayed on.

Although this deficit was reduced somewhat over the next two years, the British Section was still some 500 men below establishment in 1944.² Disconcerting as this was, in 1944 the implications of such a large shortage were far more serious than they would have been in the immediate past. In February the *Irgun* had recommenced its revolt and thereafter Jewish terrorist activity accelerated at an alarming pace.

¹PRO WO 169/4333 Internal Security Report by Major-General D. F. McConnel, 18 December 1942.

²This meant that the British Section had shrunk since 1939 by some 332 men and thus can be estimated to have been composed of approximately 500 men. This figure is deduced by subtracting the 1944 ranks (2,847) from the 1939 establishment (3,179) with the addition of the 147 men the PPF was short in 1939. NARS RG 165 Palestine 6000-6700 Box 3036 OSS Report, 2 March 1944.

The police were thus severely under-staffed at precisely the moment when its meagre resources were strained by this resumption of anti-British violence. Inevitably, the PPF was again forced to turn to the army for help. McConnel, however, was ill-disposed to have his troops--who had been sent to Palestine to rest and regroup before returning to Europe--involved in internal security duties. Despite efforts to reinforce the British Section with replacements enticed from the military, they were too few in number to have any appreciable effect on the force's severe manpower shortage. Thus, the police remained unable to function effectively without the support of the army.¹

The war also imposed severe limitations on recruitment to the PPF. The vast majority of men eligible for military service preferred to join one of the branches of the armed forces rather than enlist in the police force. Moreover, the general shortage of manpower coupled with the exigencies of the war itself made the military reluctant 'to release good men before the issue had finally been settled'. In January 1945 the British Section was 1,460 men under strength. By March this number had climbed to 1,813. The end of the war in Europe two months later brought some relief, so that in June for the first time in years the number of British recruits entering the PPF exceeded the number of those leaving it.² Nevertheless, this improvement proved to be ephemeral. At the end of the year the British Section lost 2,900 men as a result of the expiration of the contracts of many personnel who had been compelled to remain in the force for the duration of the war. On 26 November Shaw

¹PRO WO 169/15849 Situation in Palestine by McConnel, 11 January 1944.

²PRO WO 169/22881 Middle East Forces Review by General Sir Bernard Paget, C.-in-C., MEF, 1945.

apprised the Colonial Office of this development, describing it as one which 'give[s] cause for very grave anxiety'. It was of '*vital necessity*', Shaw emphasized, that replacements be quickly recruited for the force and dispatched from England without delay. He concluded by warning that, 'Although the tale of disturbances in Palestine tends to be dulled with repetition, the fact remains that we are threatened with the prospects of very serious troubles in which the absence of one or two British constables in the right place at the right moment may make a great difference'.¹

At Shaw's urging, the Colonial Office organized a new recruitment drive for the PPF. In the hope of attracting candidates, the terms of enlistment were improved and the salary of starting constables was raised. But even these inducements failed to have any significant effect and the number of volunteers for the force remained dismally low.² This created additional problems for the British Section in terms of morale and effectiveness. In less vexatious circumstances, its incompetent or troublesome members would have been purged from the force. But this dearth of prospective recruits compelled the police to hold on to what few men it had.³

Throughout 1946 the situation in Palestine continued to deteriorate. Anti-British operations were now coordinated under the aegis of the alliance formed by the *Irgun*, *Lehi* and *Haganah*, in September 1945, known as the *Tenuat Hameri*. Furthermore, this intensification of Jewish terrorist activity was accompanied by a

¹PRO CO 733/451/75015/55B Letter, Shaw to C. G. Eastwood (Principal Assistant Secretary, CO), 26 November 1945.

²PRO WO 169/2281 Middle East Forces Review by Paget, 1945.

³Clark, 'The Colonial Police And Anti-Terrorism', p. 244.

dramatic resurgence of illegal immigration to Palestine. Since the PPF was reckoned to be 50 percent under-strength, the army was increasingly called upon to undertake tasks that would otherwise have been performed by the police.¹ The COS were particularly distressed by the fact that 'through this deficiency in police strength troops were being used in a police role, which added to their already heavy burden. It was extremely urgent', they concluded, 'that the police should be brought up to their full establishment at once'. The minutes of their meeting of 15 May 1946 also noted the COS's view that the condition of the British Section

was now catastrophic as on a whole manpower establishment of nearly 5,500 police, the effective deficiency was 2800 a fact sufficient to make the force almost non-operational. This meant that the Army had to carry a considerable measure of the police burden in Palestine. This was utterly wrong as if the police were full up to to establishment, their use with the aid of mobile columns was to be the first on the scene of trouble with the troops in the background for use if needed.²

In order to facilitate police recruitment, young men in Britain who were called into the military to fulfil their National Service obligation, henceforth were given the option of enlisting in the PPF.³ Although this change produced 13,500 enquiries, for one reason or another many of the prospective candidates were found unsuitable for service in the PPF.⁴ Moreover, this inducement was a mixed blessing for the police: while it increased the number of possible recruits, it also meant that they would be younger, less mature, and considerably less

¹PRO FO 371/52526 E 4914/4/G. 31 COS (46) 149, Note by War Office, 23 May 1946.

²PRO CO 537/1697 COS (46) 77, 15 May 1946.

³Horne, *A Job Well Done*, p. 335.

⁴PRO CO 537/1697 Telegram, Hall to Cunningham, 26 July 1946.

experienced than the type of men who had joined the force in the past.¹ This problem was compounded by the fact that, owing to the manpower shortages, the period of training and instruction had been reduced from six months to just one month. The Assistant Inspector-General of Training during this period, Bernard Fergusson, later recalled that, 'most of the new policemen...had far less training than the average private soldier'.² Nevertheless, the urgency of replenishing the depleted British Section evidently overrode this consideration.

In June 1946 the army was accorded permission to undertake the drastic measures that its commanders had assured the Cabinet would cripple the Jewish terrorist organizations. "Operation Agatha" was launched on 29 June and afterward an uneasy peace settled over Palestine. For several weeks, the situation remained deceptively quiet; prompting hopes that the disorders which had wracked the country since 1944 were over or, at least, reduced to manageable proportions. The *Irgun's* bombing of the King David Hotel on 22 July shattered this illusion. This latest terrorist outrage demonstrated that the initially encouraging results of "Operation Agatha" were evanescent and, worse, that the operation itself had been misdirected. Although it had forced the *Haganah* to withdraw from the *Tenuat Hameri* it clearly had no effect on the *Irgun* or *Lehi*.

Perhaps no one was more appalled by the bombing than the High Commissioner, Cunningham. In its aftermath he searched for a reason why the British had so little success against the terrorists. Justifiably

¹Horne, *A Job Well Done*, p. 335.

²Bernard Fergusson, *Trumpet in the Hall 1930-1958* (London, 1970), pp. 201-202.

or not, Cunningham's attention fastened on the police and, more specifically, on its intelligence apparatus, the CID. 'Ever since I have been here', Cunningham told Hall, 'I have been most...[disturbed] at lack of information available regarding the terrorist organisations and individuals, and the small success we seem to have in tracking them down'. Although he attributed most of the blame to the 'complete non-cooperation' of the *Yishuv*, Cunningham nevertheless felt that, despite its manpower problems, the PPF's performance was not satisfactory. He went on to explain that, 'I am anxious to be assured that our police methods are the best that can be devised and I would welcome a visit from some expert'.¹ Since Sir Charles Wickham, the former Inspector-General of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and 'one of the Empire's most experienced policemen'² was in Greece as head of the British Police Mission there, Cunningham requested his services in Palestine.³

Wickham arrived in Palestine on 16 November. He was preceded by an assistant, Moffat, who was a County Inspector with the Royal Ulster Constabulary and an expert on matters germane to criminal investigation departments.⁴ The strength of the British Section now stood at 2,993 men and was regarded as being 2,460 men below establishment.⁵ Their visit could not have come at a more opportune time. November had been a

¹MEC Cunningham Papers I/2 Telegram, Cunningham to Hall, 1 August 1946.

²Horne, *A Job Well Done*, pp. 561-562 and 569-570.

³MEC Cunningham Papers I/2 Telegram, Cunningham to Hall, 1 August 1946.

⁴*Ibid.* See also Horne, *A Job Well Done*, pp. 561-562 and 569-570.

⁵The situation improved somewhat after 19 December 1946 with the arrival in Palestine of 266 new recruits. PRO CO 537/2269 Note On The Palestine Police Force, December 1946.

particularly trying month for both the police and the army. The *Irgun* had launched a concerted campaign of railway sabotage that had brought all rail traffic in the country to a standstill. In order to re-open the damaged lines and defend against further attack, army units otherwise engaged in public security operations were diverted to static guard duties along Palestine's railways. This new development further taxed the under-strength police, now temporarily deprived of the customary support from the army. Moreover, 'the strain imposed on the Police' had led to a breakdown of discipline that precipitated a series of violent reprisals against the *Yishuv*.¹ On 17 November three British policemen and an RAF sergeant were killed when their truck struck a mine planted on the Tel Aviv-Sarona road. By itself, this incident was no more significant than the countless other terrorist outrages that had occurred in the past. But this particular attack came at the end of a week during which eleven other policemen had lost their lives. The accumulated months of frustration and harassment now exploded into uncontrolled vengeance. For three successive nights, some members of the British Section ran wild in Tel Aviv. Jewish shops and homes were vandalized and their owners and inhabitants, or unfortunate passersby, assaulted. Before order was restored on 20 November, 45 Jews had been injured, many of whom required hospitalization, and an uncalculated amount of property had been damaged or destroyed.²

Wickham submitted his report on 2 December. It painted a bleak picture of the PPF's condition and performance. In fairness to the police, however, Wickham outlined the immense difficulties inherent in

¹PRO CAB 127/280 Cabinet Defence Committee D.O. (46) 33, 20 November 1946.

²Trevor, *Under The White Paper*, p. 280.

the prosecution of an effective counter-terrorist campaign. He went so far as to argue that 'it is impossible completely to suppress [terrorism]...unless perhaps 100 percent of [the terrorists']...demands [are] conceded'. The best that could be expected was 'to keep it in reasonable subjection'. Wickham stated that fighting terrorism was first, and foremost, 'a police responsibility' that could be efficiently executed only by 'an intensification of their normal procedure and operation which includes the assistance of the armed forces'. But the British Section's acute shortage of manpower had severely compromised the force's effectiveness. Between January and October 1946, he noted, 496 Britons were discharged from the PPF upon the expiration of their contracts, while another 518 men resigned of their own accord. This had gravely undermined the entire police establishment: 'If wastage continues at this rate', Wickham stated,

and for the past six months it has exceeded intake, it will require years to build up an experienced force especially as according to estimates at Jenin [one of the PPF's training depots] only about 25 percent of the recruits of conscription age now being enlisted in the Force are likely to renew their two year contract. However urgent it may be to get bodies to fill the ranks the fact remains that this is a police force requiring not boys but responsible men who are prepared to give a reasonable period of service to the Force.¹

The dearth of experienced policemen created two additional problems. One was the unavailability of knowledgeable, seasoned instructors which resulted in the poor training Wickham thought was given to recruits. Instruction was so cursory, he reported, that even relatively junior members of the force who had completed their training

¹PRO CO 537/2269 Report By Wickham, 2 December 1946.

courses within 'the past year or more' required further instruction. The other problem was that once these recruits completed their training course, there were too few veteran police in the ranks to guide and advise their younger, inexperienced colleagues. All of these factors, Wickham stressed, inevitably affected morale: 'No force can be really efficient no matter how organized and operated unless its members are contented. It is a matter of common knowledge that there is discontent in the Force which the abnormal rate of resignation seems to confirm'.¹ Wickham's prescription for redressing all these problems involved reversing what he termed the 'militarisation' of the PPF.

THE 'MILITARISATION' OF THE PPF

Wickham was especially critical of the Police Mobile Force (PMF), which to his eyes epitomized the 'militarisation' of the police force. The PMF had been formed in 1944 in order 'to provide mobile concentrations at strategic points and also to act as a reserve strength for the regular police, the ranks of which were expected to be depleted by expiry of contracts at the end of the war'.² Its creation had been prompted by the violence that occurred at Ramat Ha-Kovesh on 13 November 1943. A search of that settlement by police, supported by the army, had exploded into a full-scale riot, which neither force was suitably equipped or adequately prepared to deal with.³ During the Cabinet's meeting three days later attention had been drawn to the fact that

¹*Ibid.*

²Sir Charles Jeffries, *Colonial Police* (London, 1952), p. 157.

³Horne, *A Job Well Done*, p. 596.

All the British authorities on the spot were agreed that, even if the situation were held meanwhile, disorder was likely to break out in Palestine immediately after the end of the war with Germany; and at that critical period nearly two thirds of the members of the existing British Police force were due to leave Palestine.¹

Even so, final government approval for the scheme was not obtained until June 1944. The Cabinet authorized the PPF to spend £2,000,000 to build the new unit.² Moreover, the police were given priority 'in shipping and in provision of arms, equipment and vehicles...from Army sources', in accordance with the suggestion previously made by the GOC, McConnel.³

The PMF itself was to have an authorized strength of some 2000 men.⁴ Its recruits were to be drawn from officers and enlisted men in the regular army who were offered the opportunity to volunteer for the PMF.⁵ These volunteers were reputed to be 'among the toughest' men that the PMF's senior ranks could find.⁶ They were subsequently provided with additional, 'special training...in military tactics and in the handling of heavier weapons than the rifles and pistols' carried by the regular police.⁷ Thus the PMF's members, having received commando instruction, would be 'capable of coping with any situation that might arise'.⁸

¹PRO CAB 65/36 W.M. 158 (43), 19 November 1943.

²Horne, *A Job Well Done*, p. 516.

³PRO WO 169/15849 Situation In Palestine by McConnel, 11 January 1944.

⁴PRO CO 733/451/750515/55B/44 Memorandum by the Colonial Office, 15 September 1944.

⁵Horne, *A Job Well Done*, p. 516.

⁶NARS RG 165 Palestine 2710 Box 3025 JICAME Report, 23 March 1944.

⁷NARS RG 165 Palestine 5940-5990 Box 3035 United States Army Forces In Middle East (USAFIME) Report, 4 January 1944.

⁸NARS RG 165 Palestine 2700 Box 3025 JICAME Report, 10 May 1944. See also *Ibid.*, Palestine 2710, 29 March 1944, and NARS RG 226 OSS Report 67284 'Palestine Police Force', 17 April 1944.

The *raison d'etre* of the PMF was that it would 'concentrate on the task of maintaining internal security as opposed to normal police work...[and] form the initial means of nipping disturbances in the bud'.¹ The PMF therefore was conceived as a means to eradicate the under-strength PPF's dependence on the army and thus pass the initiative back to the police. The debacle at Ramat Ha-Kovesh had clearly demonstrated the need for an elite, mobile police unit, specifically trained and oriented to intervention in crises, that would be able to function without army assistance. This was in keeping with the aforementioned basic tenet of British public security doctrine that the police and *not* the army should play the predominant role in upholding the law and maintaining order.

This point had formed the basis of Sir Charles Tegart's criticism of the PPF six years earlier. Tegart, a former Commissioner of Police in Calcutta, was another expert on the colonial police service who had been brought to Palestine in 1938 to appraise the PPF.² Tegart expressed concern over the army's ascendancy over the police in public security matters. This was an undesirable development, he contended, since the

Military, acting in aid of the civil power, will not meet the needs of the situation. Whatever may be the strength of the garrison in Palestine the military commander will probably hold that such duties are essentially a police and not a military commitment and that the British soldier is not suited for the performance of such duties.³

¹PRO WO 169/15849 Situation In Palestine by McConnel, 11 January 1944.

²Horne, *A Job Well Done*, pp. 236-237.

³MEC Tegart Papers II/2, Note, 24 January 1938.

The army was in complete agreement with Tegart's views. For example, when instructions were re-issued governing arms searches in 1943 the Palestine military command emphasized the primacy of the police, rather than the army, in such operations. But despite Tegart's admonition and the army's own reluctance to undertake these responsibilities, the PPF's shortage of manpower had resulted in its renewed dependence on the military. The Prime Minister was similarly concerned about this development. In his memorandum to the Cabinet of 29 November 1944, Churchill stated that, 'the situation in Palestine was one which ought to be tackled as a police problem rather than by military forces in conventional formations'.¹

The PMF, it was hoped, would reverse the PPF's reliance on the army. But it had little practical effect on the deteriorating situation in Palestine after 1945. Like the British Section, the PMF was also below strength. Rather than the 2000-man force originally envisaged, its establishment never had more than 800 men.² Thus the army once again found itself deployed on public security duties.³ Since the PMF had clearly failed to arrest, much less prevent, this development, its value to the police force as a whole was questioned by Wickham.

In the course of his enquiries, Wickham came to believe that the tasks allocated to the PMF--'mainly on guard over their station, escort, armoured car patrols and snap checks on vehicles on the road'--could be better performed by the regular police. 'As the army is immediately available', he contended,

¹PRO CAB 127/270 Memorandum by Churchill, 29 November 1944.

²Horne, *A Job Well Done*, p. 520.

³Wilson, *Cordon and Search*, pp. 16-17.

the mobile force is not playing a part in the maintenance of law and order and the suppression of terrorism commensurate with its numbers and high overhead charges. The personnel would make a better contribution to the common cause if employed as police proper in stations when at least each man would perform daily some active and useful police function.¹

Wickham specifically objected to the paucity of policemen assigned to foot-patrol in cities. 'Present police methods', he observed, 'are confined in most places to armoured car patrols and a reserve of mobile companies on military lines'. In Jerusalem, for instance, 'the only police on duty are the traffic pointsmen and four armoured car patrols'. This, he thought, was clearly wrong. It undermined the police force's effectiveness by removing the average constable from the street, isolating him from direct contact with the population with the effect of alienating both the police and citizenry from one another because of this absence of normal, casual intercourse. 'Motorised fighting police', Wickham stated, 'alienate the public. They resemble too clearly the Gestapo and are too inclined to forget the first lesson of a policeman [sic]--civility to the public'.²

The root of the PPF's problems, Wickham believed, was the fact that it had evolved into a quasi-military rather than a bona fide police force. The PMF, he stated, was primarily responsible for this development. All recruits were trained by PMF and not by regular police personnel. Upon graduation, the new men were assigned to PMF units and therefore not given any genuine police responsibilities.³ Moreover, there was a misplaced preoccupation with 'military parade smartness, set

¹PRO CO 537/2269 Report By Wickham, 2 December 1946.

²*Ibid.*

³Horne, *A Job Well Done*, p. 521.

kit inspections, etc.' that accomplished little except to undermine morale. Accordingly, it was necessary to revamp completely the PPF's training programme:

not only must the new recruits learn their police duties but also the majority of those who have joined during the past year or more. This must be organised and given by experienced police officers and other ranks because it is only those with experience who can impart the police atmosphere and police approach which is and always will be different from the army. This applies particularly to the training of potential officers because they are to be officers of a police force and not of the army.¹

In sum, the remedial measures urged by Wickham 'amount[ed] to a reversal of the role of the force from a military to a police conception'. This could be accomplished 'comparatively easily and quickly' by simply abolishing the PMF and transferring its members to the regular police. Indeed, given the poor condition of police recruitment, this was the only option open to the PPF if it was to compensate for the acute shortage of manpower in the British Section. The restructured police establishment, Wickham argued, should then eschew any further dependence on a large reserve force:

Police are specialists and consequently highly paid. The objective must be to have the maximum number employed daily on strict police duty and to avoid the formation of fixed permanent reserves service...which is always unpopular and invariably means that the greater part of the men's time is spent on no useful police duty.

If this were done, each police district, and even the stations within them, would be transformed into entirely 'self contained' units capable of effectively discharging a variety of functions and hence no longer

¹PRO CO 537/2269 Report By Wickham, 2 December 1946.

having to rely on reserve forces. In conclusion, Wickham affirmed that 'If it is agreed that the police should do the policing and the army the fighting then the role of the police is clear'.¹ Pursuant to Wickham's recommendations, the PMF was gradually disbanded and its members transferred to regular police duties. The 'target date' for the completion of this process was set for 1 February 1947.²

THE SPECIAL SQUADS

In retrospect, however, it seems that the PMF's days were numbered well before the Wickham report precipitated its disbandment. The creation of the mobile force had largely been due to the efforts of the Inspector-General, Captain John Rymer-Jones. The PMF embodied his concept of the type of policeman/soldier combination that he had been convinced was required to defeat the terrorists. But early in 1946 Rymer-Jones's leave of absence from the Metropolitan Police was almost over and a search was begun for a successor. The Palestine Government had indicated its preference of having another experienced policeman at the helm of the PPF, as had traditionally been the case. Officials at the Colonial Office, however, were less certain of the desirability of this course. The situation in Palestine, they maintained, was unique so far as police work was concerned. On the one hand, the military had come to assume the dominant role in maintaining security in Palestine because of the depleted police force; on the other hand, most of the previous Inspectors-General, though experienced policemen, had no

¹*Ibid.*

²ISA RG 65/3588 untitled 'picture of the military layout in Palestine & Transjordan', HQ, Palestine, 1 February 1947.

background in combatting the urban-centred terrorism fought by the *Irgun* and *Lehi*. The Colonial Office therefore thought that so long as the appointee's senior lieutenants were policemen, a person with military, rather than police, experience would be better suited to command and coordinate counter-terrorist operations in Palestine.¹ The man selected for this task was Lt. Col. William Nicol Gray, a distinguished veteran of the Royal Marines and an expert in training methods, whose appointment was announced on 18 March 1946.²

The most pressing problem confronting Gray was the PPF's acute manpower shortage. He discovered that his command was literally 'melting away'. Almost every member of the British Section was entitled to at least three months home leave and many others to upwards of six months' leave.³ Furthermore, it was reckoned that half of these men had no interest in remaining in the PPF once they had fulfilled their contractual obligations. Accordingly, it appears that, regardless of Wickham, the PMF's disbanding was inevitable 'so as to leave the regular police in a state of reasonable efficiency, and even then it...[was] chronically short of men'. But the abolition of the PMF presented Gray with yet another dilemma, since it deprived him of one of the two police units (the other was the CID) specifically oriented to counter-terrorist operations.⁴

¹David A. Charters, 'Special Operations in Counter-Insurgency: The Farran Case, Palestine 1947', *Journal of The Royal United Services Institute For Defence Studies*, 124 (1979), 57.

²*Ibid.*, and Horne, *A Job Well Done*, pp. 556-557.

³Each man was allotted one month's paid leave per year of service. Hence, those policemen who had accumulated six months leave had been on uninterrupted active service in Palestine for six years.

⁴Horne, *A Job Well Done*, pp. 523-524 and 558.

It so happened that one of Britain's leading military experts in commando tactics and 'hit-and-run' warfare, Brigadier Bernard Fergusson, was then a member of the PPF.¹ Fergusson, a former officer in the Black Watch and veteran of Orde Wingate's "Chindit" special operations unit in Burma, had arrived in Palestine in December 1946 to command the PMF. After the PMF was disbanded, he was made Assistant Inspector-General for Operations and Training.² In fact, however, Fergusson was responsible for 'all anti-terrorist' police operations. The problem, as he saw it, was that, unlike the Arab Rebellion, the Jewish uprising was an urban and not a rural phenomenon. To this end, the army, as well as the PMF, was clearly unsuited to the complicated task of discovering the terrorists' urban lairs and forcing them from hiding.³

Fergusson's views dovetailed with Gray's impressions of what was wrong with the police force's counter-terrorist strategy. Like Fergusson, Gray believed that, 'the terrorists must be flushed from their cellars in Tel Aviv and elsewhere; then...harassed, pursued and given no rest until arrested or shot in action against the security forces'.⁴ But, as Fergusson recalled in his memoirs,

I seemed and my colleagues seemed to lack, the sort of initiative thinking that was inspiring our opponents. I tried to translate into the urban and suburban areas of Jerusalem, Haifa and Tel Aviv the kind of ideas that my subordinates had dreamed up for me in the jungles of Burma; but all I got was the sort of echo you might expect in an empty squash-court.

¹*Ibid.*, p. 564.

²Charters, 'Special Operations', 57.

³Fergusson, *Trumpet in the Hall*, pp. 200-201.

⁴Horne, *A Job Well Done*, p. 558.

Normal police tactics, he concluded, had not succeeded in containing, much less eliminating, terrorism. Something new was required to meet the unique circumstances of Palestine. 'It seemed to me', Fergusson explained,

baffled as I was, that we needed people with experience of terrorism or something closely allied to it: people who would foresee the sort of plan that might occur to the imagination of terrorists: people, in short, who had been something like terrorists themselves: not to terrorise [sic] or to repay in kind, but to anticipate and to give would-be raiders a bloody nose as they came in to raid.¹

At Gray's behest, Fergusson drew up plans to organize the type of 'special operations' squads that both men believed would enable the police to regain the initiative against the terrorists. Fergusson sought permission from the Colonial Office and the War Office to obtain the services of three regular Army officers for secondment to the new unit.² In his memorandum to the Colonial Office of 12 February 1947 Fergusson wrote, 'There is in the Army a small number of officers who have both technical and psychological knowledge of terrorism, having themselves been engaged in similar operations on what may be termed the terrorist side in countries occupied by the enemy in the late war'.³ The men he had in mind were former officers in MI6 or the Special Operations Executive (SOE).⁴ In addition, Fergusson was determined to get the men he specifically requested. They were, he stated,

¹Fergusson, *Trumpet in the Hall*, pp. 209-210.

²PRO CO 537/2270 Minute by W. W. Clark, 12 February 1947.

³*Ibid.*, Memorandum by Fergusson, 12 February 1947.

⁴Nicholas Bethell, *The Palestine Triangle: The Struggle Between The British, The Jews and The Arabs 1935-48* (London, 1979), p. 302.

'exceptionally qualified; and rather than accept officers with inferior qualifications, I will accept none. In this event, the project will fall to the ground, since it will be of no value unless the standard of training and operation is really high'.¹

Both the Colonial Office and the War Office enthusiastically approved the plan.² Fergusson was able to obtain the services of two of the three men he requested.³ They were Alistair MacGregor, an MI6 veteran, and Roy Farran, a much decorated, former member of both the Special Air Service (SAS) and SOE and someone with first-hand experience of conditions in Palestine as a result of his tour of duty there during 1945 and 1946.⁴ They arrived in Palestine in March 1947, and began canvassing the British Section and the army for potential recruits to the special squads they would lead.⁵ Two weeks later, both men had selected ten men each for their respective units.⁶ They were given just two weeks training before being deployed in early April.⁷ So cursory a period of instruction was clearly a mistake and would have unfortunate consequences later on.

¹PRO CO 537/2270 Memorandum by Fergusson, 12 February 1947.

²*Ibid.*, Minute by J. M. Martin (Deputy Under-Secretary, CO), 13 February 1947; Note, Martin to Sir T. Lloyd (Permanent Under-Secretary, CO), 13 February 1947; Letter, Lloyd to Sir Eric Speed (Permanent Under-Secretary, WO), 13 February 1947; Letter, Speed to Lloyd, 6 March 1947.

³PRO CO 537/2270 Letter, Lloyd to Speed, 11 March 1947.

⁴Bethell, *The Palestine Triangle*, p. 302. For details of Farran's first tour of duty in Palestine, see Farran, *Winged Dagger*, pp. 345-347.

⁵Lt. Col. Colin Mitchell, *Having Been A Soldier* (London, 1969), p. 61, and Charters, 'Special Operations', 58.

⁶Fergusson, *Trumpet in the Hall*, p. 226.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 58.

Major-General Frank Kitson, an expert on counter-insurgency warfare, has written of the importance of extensive training if special operations units are to function effectively. He cites the necessity of 'attuning men's minds to cope with the environment of this sort of war'. Specifically, Kitson argues, 'It involves explaining the fundamental nature of subversion and insurgency with particular reference to the way in which force can be employed to achieve political ends, and the way in which political considerations affect the use of force'.¹ Although Farran made certain that all of his men could 'put six rounds into a playing card at fifteen yards',² they were not, as Charters points out, 'trained under urban conditions, despite the fact that the major cities were to be their theatre of operations'. This was a serious oversight, the more so since the squads were mostly composed of former soldiers who had no experience in police work whatsoever.³

Another problem which compromised the special squads' effectiveness was the absence of any clearly defined tactical objective. The squads were basically meant to function along the lines of the PPF's "Q patrols". These units had been formed during the Arab Rebellion and had been specifically designated for counter-terrorist operations. Their mission was to force the Arab rebels into the open where they would be more easily engaged in battle and killed or arrested. Fergusson's men

¹Frank Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations: Subversion, Insurgency, Peace-keeping* (London, 1971), p. 165.

²Farran, *Winged Dagger*, p. 348.

³Charters, 'Special Operations', 58. Fergusson had indeed considered the fact that these men did not have any police experience, but he did not regard this as posing any threat to the special squads' effectiveness. See PRO CO 537/2270 Memorandum by Fergusson, 12 February 1947.

were to perform a similar task: 'disappear[ing] into Jewish areas, as previous squads had disappeared into Arab areas a decade earlier'.¹ Years later, Fergusson explained the squads' mission: 'We planned to be unorthodox, but not illegal. The idea was to provoke contact, to look for confrontation, but not to fire the first shot. It's wrong to say that we were assassination squads. If we'd seen Begin, we'd have held him up, hoped he'd shoot first and then anticipated him'.² Farran similarly recalls that,

In Jerusalem Police HQ the brief was explained to us. We could each have full power to operate as we pleased within our specific areas. We were to advise on defence against the terrorists and to take an active part in hunting the dissidents....It was to all intents and purposes a *carte blanche*.³

The theory behind the use of such special squads is a sound one. Lt. Col. Sir Julian Paget, another expert in counter-insurgency warfare, has argued that 'Insurgency cannot be defeated by conventional warfare techniques, and a completely fresh approach is required. The most difficult task in counter-insurgency warfare is to make contact with the insurgents and kill them in battle...'. In particular, he contends that 'The task of the insurgents is made far easier if they are allowed to retain the initiative and to attack on their own terms. The Security Forces must therefore make every effort to move from the defensive...and to gain the initiative for themselves'.⁴ In Palestine,

¹Horne, *A Job Well Done*, pp. 564-565.

²Quoted in Bethell, *The Palestine Triangle*, p. 302.

³Farran, *Winged Dagger*, p. 139.

⁴Julian Paget, *Counter-Insurgency Campaigning* (London, 1967), pp. 167 and 174.

however, the application of the theory was flawed. The special squads' organization and purpose, Charters argues, should have enabled them to perform two different, but interrelated, tasks. One was to act as an 'intelligence-gathering' unit; the other, as a commando strike force.¹

In terms of intelligence collection, the squads' utility was severely restricted since none of its members spoke Hebrew.² Though Farran maintains that his squad so closely resembled 'any party of Jewish youths from a kibbutz' that when they drove through Arab villages they were 'hissed'; their unfamiliarity with Hebrew ensured that their charade could not go very far.³ In addition, despite their expertise in underground warfare, the men in the special squads had no training or experience in the subtler techniques of political intelligence-gathering or similar CID-type work. This problem was aggravated by the fact that the squads were entirely outside the normal police channels of command and communication. Hence, the squads operated independently and, except on an informal and consequently limited basis, they were not generally able to benefit from the intelligence, advice or assistance of the CID. Fergusson recognized this limitation and, accordingly, emphasized the squads' counter-terrorist function. But, even so, this still ignored the squads' main weakness: that of obtaining the intelligence necessary for them to carry out their mission.⁴ Nevertheless, another authority on terrorism and counter-insurgency warfare, Major General Richard

¹Charters, 'Special Operations', 58.

²Fergusson, *Trumpet in the Hall*, p. 227. This was by no means uncommon in the rest of the police force as well. Charters cites the Palestine Police, *Annual Administrative Report 1946*, as stating that only 3.49 percent of the British police spoke Hebrew. See 'Special Operations', 60 (ff. 18).

³Farran, *Winged Dagger*, p. 348.

⁴Charters, 'Special Operations', 58.

Clutterbuck, who was himself in Palestine during this time, maintains that in six weeks Farran and his team had accomplished more than an entire Army battalion employed in more traditional cordon and search-type operations.¹

The existence of Fergusson's 'special operations' squads was short-lived. Indeed, the six-week period referred to by Clutterbuck proved to be the duration of the squads' operational life. The precise details of the scandal which caused their downfall remain obscure. The incident in question began on the evening of 6 May 1947 when Farran and two or three of his men allegedly apprehended a seventeen-year-old member of *Lehi*, Alexander Rubowitz, in Jerusalem.² Apparently, Rubowitz had been caught distributing *Lehi* pamphlets; he was not, however, brought to any police station for interrogation.³ In a letter sent to Cunningham by Goldie Meyerson,⁴ head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency, it was alleged that Rubowitz

¹R. L. Clutterbuck, 'Bertrand Stewart Prize Essay, 1960', *Army Quarterly and Defence Journal*, 81, October 1960, p. 167, cited in *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59 and 60 (ff. 26).

²CZA S 25/6200 Letter, Goldie Meyerson to Cunningham, 23 June 1947; *Ibid.*, The Alexander Rubowitz Case (Internal Memorandum by the Political Department, Jewish Agency) (undated); *Ibid.*, Internal Memorandum 14662/47, 17 October 1947; and MEC Cunningham Papers II/2 Telegram, Gurney to Creech-Jones, 25 June 1947. See also 'Avner', *Memoirs of An Assassin* (London, 1959), p. 21; Charters, 'Special Operations', 56 and 59; Farran, *Winged Dagger*, pp. 10, 356-376; Fergusson, *Trumpet in the Hall*, p. 225-238; Arthur Koestler, *Promise And Fulfilment: Palestine 1917-1949* (London, 1949), pp. 148-149; Lt. Col. Colin Mitchell, *Having Been A Soldier*, pp. 61-62; and Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, v, pp. 148-150.

³CZA S 25/6200 Rubowitz Case (undated); MEC Cunningham Papers II/2 Telegram, Gurney to Creech-Jones, 25 June 1947; and 'Avner', *Memoirs*, p. 21.

⁴Meyerson later Hebracized her name to Meir. She was elected to the Israeli Parliament (*Knesset*) in 1949 and later served as Labour Minister (1949-56), Foreign Minister (1956-66), and Prime Minister (1969-70).

was taken down the deserted Jericho Road, "grilled" and tortured for about an hour. Finally Rubowitz succumbed to the torture and died on the spot. The policemen tried to get rid of the body, and finally handed it to some Bedouin in the neighbourhood and asked them to dispose of it. The men returned to their duties in Jerusalem.¹

Farran had been singled out as the policeman responsible for Rubowitz's disappearance, according to the Jewish Agency, on the grounds that, 'Near the scene a police beret was found on which the letters F R A N were legible'.²

Farran claims that he was 'framed' in connection with the Rubowitz incident and, moreover, was the subject of a 'smear campaign' orchestrated by the *Palestine Post*, (the country's Jewish-owned, English-language daily) that was subsequently taken up by the press in the United States. The *Post*, he maintains, 'began to publish frequent articles relating to the abducted youth and drawing attention to a hat found on the scene of the incident' in which 'there was supposed to be a name something like mine'. Farran insists that, during the time when the incident was alleged to have taken place, he 'was disguised as an Arab having dinner with Arabs in another part of Jerusalem'.³

It is impossible to assess the validity of Farran's alibi, since the transcript of his trial, if it still exists, is closed to public inspection.⁴ Nevertheless, it does seem odd that a 'police beret', allegedly bearing Farran's name, should have been found near the scene

¹CZA S 25/6200 Letter, 23 June 1947, and *Ibid.*, Letter, 'X' to Mrs. Rubovitz [sic], 23 May 1947.

²*Ibid.*

³Farran, *Winged Dagger*, p. 351.

⁴The relevant files are at the Public Record Office, London in CO 537/2270.

of the purported abduction, since the special squads operated only in mufti. Why should anyone have wanted to 'frame' Farran? One possible answer, proffered by Lt. Col. Colin Mitchell, then stationed in Palestine, lies in the success against the terrorists attributed to Farran and his squad by Clutterbuck. In his memoirs, Mitchell argues that,

Roy Farran's actions terrified the terrorists. But eventually they began to understand what was happening, identified Roy and were determined to put an end to his activities. To do this by force would have been difficult if not impossible, because the Farran team were as tough and experienced as any Jewish terrorists. They therefore snatched eagerly at what seemed like a scrap of evidence [e.g., the hat with Farran's name allegedly in it].¹

This mystery is further clouded by Farran's actions after the alleged kidnap/murder took place. According to an unnamed, but 'reliable source', the Jewish Agency contended that a week after Rubowitz's disappearance Farran reportedly informed Fergusson of the incident. The latter was said to have advised Farran 'to "skip" away'.² Neither Farran nor Fergusson, however, mention such a conversation in their respective memoirs. What is certain is that Farran, along with three of his men, did indeed flee Palestine on 3 June 1947.³ It was further alleged that Fergusson waited 'about five days' before telling Gray about Farran's disappearance.⁴ The Agency ascribed Fergusson's motive in informing Gray of Farran's flight as 'to ensure continued

¹Mitchell, *Having Been A Soldier*, p. 61.

²CZA S 25/6200 Letter, 23 June 1947, and *Ibid.*, Rubowitz Case (undated).

³*Ibid.*; Charters, 'Special Operations', 59; Farran, *Winged Dagger*, pp. 366-369; and Fergusson, *Trumpet in the Hall*, pp. 227-230.

⁴CZA S 25/6200 Letter, 'X' to Rubovitz, 23 June 1947.

cover-up by higher authority for the people who had disappeared'. Gray reportedly also did nothing 'for a few days' before telling Arthur Giles, the Deputy Inspector-General in charge of the CID, 'who, presumably had got agitated about the disappearance of the four men'. Giles, the memorandum noted, 'has apparently more regard for regularity', since he subsequently brought the matter to the attention of Gurney and Cunningham. 'It was [then] decided that all efforts must be made to get Farran and the others back'.¹ Giles, accordingly, was sent to track them down. After traveling to Transjordan, where it had first been believed the fugitives were hiding, Giles found them in Syria.² A formal extradition request was presented to the Syrian Government and the men were returned to Palestine on 17 June.³

Upon his return, Farran underwent an 'identification parade' and was selected from the line-up by three witnesses who claimed that they had seen him abduct Rubowitz on 6 May (two other witnesses, however, failed to identify him). He was subsequently charged with Rubowitz's murder. Farran insisted on assuming complete responsibility for the incident; thus no indictments were handed down to his three subordinates.⁴ Farran was persuaded to resign from the police force so that, by reverting to his military rank, he could be tried by a court-martial and not by a civil court.⁵

¹Although these specific allegations were alluded to in the letter sent to Cunningham by Meyerson, they were not explicitly stated (but appear in the Agency's internal memorandum on the incident). See *Ibid.*, and *Ibid.*, Rubowitz Case (undated).

²*Ibid.*

³*Ibid.*, and MEC Cunningham Papers II/2 Telegram, Gurney to Creech-Jones, 25 June 1947.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵CZA S 25/6200 Letter, Y. Ben-Zvi (President, *Vaad Leumi*) to Gurney, 22 July 1947. See also *Ibid.*, Rubowitz Case (undated).

On 19 June, however, Farran escaped from custody and again fled . Palestine. At this point the rumours that had been circulating in Palestine about Farran and his part in Rubowitz's disappearance exploded into a full-fledged scandal. The Jewish Agency alleged that Farran's 'escape was assisted, if not actually engineered, by members of his own particular police unit'. In the aforementioned letter of protest sent on behalf of the Jewish Agency to Cunningham, Meyerson cautioned the High Commissioner that, 'this case has given rise to deep anxiety in the Yishuv, not only because of the details, as far as they are known, are shocking in themselves, but because of the apparent existence of a most distressing state of affairs within the Palestine Police Force'.¹ A similarly astringent communication was sent to Cunningham by Creech-Jones, who stated that,

I cannot regard it as satisfactory nor am I sure that there should have been such a long delay on the part of the Police in reporting to you an incident of this character which had been under investigation for some three weeks. It was also important that no report was made to London until June 13th. Nor is it clear why FARRAN was not placed under arrest earlier pending further investigation....

Creech-Jones concluded by admonishing the High Commissioner that, 'The good name of British administration is bound to be attacked over this incident...'.²

In response to the scandal, Cunningham ordered Fergusson to disband the special operations squads and dismiss their members from the police force.³ A public denial, addressing the Jewish Agency's charges of

¹*Ibid.*, Letter, 'X' to Rubovitz, 23 June 1947.

²MEC Cunningham Papers II/2 Telegram, Creech-Jones to Cunningham, 19 June 1947.

³*Ibid.*, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 20 June 1947. See also Fergusson, *Trumpet in the Hall*, p. 228.

police complicity in Farran's escape and of the existence of any special police counter-terrorist units was subsequently issued by the Palestine Government.¹ On 20 June a warrant was sworn for Farran's arrest.² He voluntarily gave himself up nine days later, after learning that *Lehi* had begun to take reprisals against British soldiers and policemen on account of his alleged part in Rubowitz's disappearance.³ Farran was tried by a court-martial on 1 October; he was acquitted the following day on grounds of insufficient evidence. Farran's diary, which had been found in his tent after his first escape, was declared inadmissible evidence since it formed part of his defence. In addition, when Fergusson was called upon to testify, he refused to do so on the grounds that he might incriminate himself. Lastly, the prosecution's case collapsed because no one was able to produce Rubowitz's body (which to this day has never been found).⁴ The repercussions of the Rubowitz case, however, did not end with Farran's acquittal. Shortly afterward, *Lehi* issued a declaration which promised that 'Farran's time will come. We shall go after him to the end of the world'.⁵ On 3 May 1948, a letter-bomb addressed to Farran in England, was inadvertently opened by his younger brother Rex, who was killed by the explosion.⁶

¹*Ibid.*, Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 25 June 1947. See also *Times*, 26 June 1947.

²Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, v, 149.

³Farran, *Winged Dagger*, pp. 368-369, and Fergusson, *Trumpet in the Hall*, p. 237.

⁴Bethell, *The Palestine Triangle*, pp. 347-348; Charters, 'Special Operations', 60 (ff. 33); and Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, v, 150.

⁵Quoted in 'Avner', *Memoirs of An Assassin*, pp. 21-22.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 22.

Although Farran was acquitted and the special squads were disbanded, Blaxland argues that 'the mere fact of the court martial suggested that the army [or more accurately, the police] was turning to desperate methods in the attempt to counter the gangs, and this was not good'.¹ As Creech-Jones had feared, the British were vilified by both the Jewish press in Palestine and, more importantly, by the American press as well.² Thus whatever success the special squads may have had against the terrorists, their accomplishments were overshadowed by the ignominy of the scandal caused by Rubowitz's alleged abduction and murder, Farran's dubious behaviour afterwards, and the damage done to the prestige of the Palestine Government and to Britain as well.

Although the theory behind the use of these elite units was sound, its application in Palestine was grievously mishandled. In 1978 Farran still maintained that 'Fergusson was right in the basic principle that an underground war can only be fought by counter-terrorist forces who are prepared to mix with the enemy in its own environment. Small groups can [only] counter other small groups'.³ But in the haste to implement Fergusson's scheme, a number of problems inherent in the squads' organization and mission were perhaps either overlooked or not considered to be serious enough to warrant concern.

The underlying weakness of the squads was simply that its members were not policemen, but soldiers. Their experience was derived from fighting an entirely different type of underground warfare in an

¹Blaxland, *The Regiments Depart*, p. 47.

²Charters, 'Special Operations', 59 (ff. 31 and 32); Farran, *Winged Dagger*, pp. 367-368; and Fergusson, *Trumpet in the Hall*, p. 239.

³Quoted in Bethell, *The Palestine Triangle*, p. 303.

entirely different setting from that of Palestine. In occupied Europe these veterans of special units like the SAS and SOE fought against an unpopular, traditionally deployed army that was regarded by the local population as a repressive army of occupation. In Palestine, however, the situation was reversed. The special squads, since they were an adjunct of the Palestine Government's security forces, were themselves regarded by most of the *Yishuv* as an unpopular occupation force. In addition, they were arrayed against an amorphous body of underground terrorists not against a traditionally-organized and deployed army. Although the indigenous population did not actively support the terrorists, the community nevertheless refused to cooperate with the authorities. The fact that the squads were self-contained and therefore self-sufficient units outside normal police lines of communication accentuated these problems by depriving them of intelligence and tactical support from the CID. But most important was the PPF's failure to grasp the implications of 'special operations' that go awry. As Charters cogently argues,

The legitimacy of government rests upon rule of law, and the intention to restore and maintain law and order is the core of a proper counter-insurgency programme. The security forces, for their part are bound to uphold the law. But special operations by their very nature are conducted in a legal and moral twilight zone; if control or discipline fails, they become merely a guise for counter-terror which reduces the government and the security forces to the status of criminals. Secret police methods make bad propaganda--if the cover is "blown", and tactical victories may be squandered by a strategic defeat.¹

¹Charters, 'Special Operations', 57.

This was indeed clearly demonstrated by the Rubowitz incident and the scandal that it caused.

THE CID

Kitson has written that, 'If it is accepted that the problem of defeating the enemy consists very largely of finding him, it is easy to recognize the paramount importance of good information'.¹ The CID was the branch of the PPF specifically responsible for the acquisition, analysis and dissemination of intelligence. As such, the ability of the police force either to anticipate inter-communal violence or to wage a successful counter-terrorist programme rested with the CID. More often than not, however, the CID 'let the force down by not having a proper intelligence system'.² This had occurred prior to the 1929 riots, again before the 1936 general strike that led to the Arab Rebellion and, finally, during the 'Jewish Troubles' between 1944-1947.³

This was, in fact, the opinion of both Wickham and his assistant, Moffat. Nearly half of Wickham's report on the PPF was devoted to the CID. Although this section was written by Moffat, Wickham stated that he was 'in full agreement' with his subordinate's views.⁴ Moffat's criticism of the CID was similar to Wickham's of the police force as a whole. Indeed, many of the problems were identical to those of the regular police: especially the acute shortage of manpower, the unproductive allocation of its limited resources, the poor training

¹Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations*, p. 95.

²Horne, *A Job Well Done*, p. 206.

³*Ibid.*, pp. 161-163 and 206.

⁴PRO CO 537/2269 Report By Wickham, 2 December 1946.

given to its recruits, and the heavy burden shouldered by its British personnel. Moffat's argument centred on the point that, 'To combat terrorism, reliance must be placed chiefly on the C.I.D. The matter is mainly one of obtaining information and only an adequate staff of well-trained and experienced detectives can procure it'.¹

Like British metropolitan CID forces, the PPF's detective branch was responsible for the investigation of serious crimes and the maintenance of criminal and fingerprint records. But in addition to these basic tasks, the CID in Palestine was called upon to discharge a variety of other functions: including intelligence gathering on political movements, suppression of seditious activities, press censorship and the prevention of smuggling and illegal immigration.² It was organized into a number of subordinate sections: Administration, Clerical, Registry and Correspondence, Criminal Records and Fingerprints, Political, Migration, Naturalisation and Deportation, a Dogs Section, and the Port and Marine Section.³ Figure 3 illustrates this division of responsibilities.

The most serious problem affecting the CID was the manpower shortage. Although Moffat observed that, 'the proportion of C.I.D. to uniform men is far higher than any police force of which I have experience...[it] is not, in my opinion, large enough to deal effectively with the situation with which it is faced, and some general all-over increase is necessary'. As with the regular police, the CID

¹*Ibid.*, Criminal Investigation Department by Mr. Moffat, 2 December 1946.

²NARS RG 165 Palestine 2710 Box 3025 USAFIME Report, 1 March 1942.

³Horne, *A Job Well Done*, pp. 469-470.

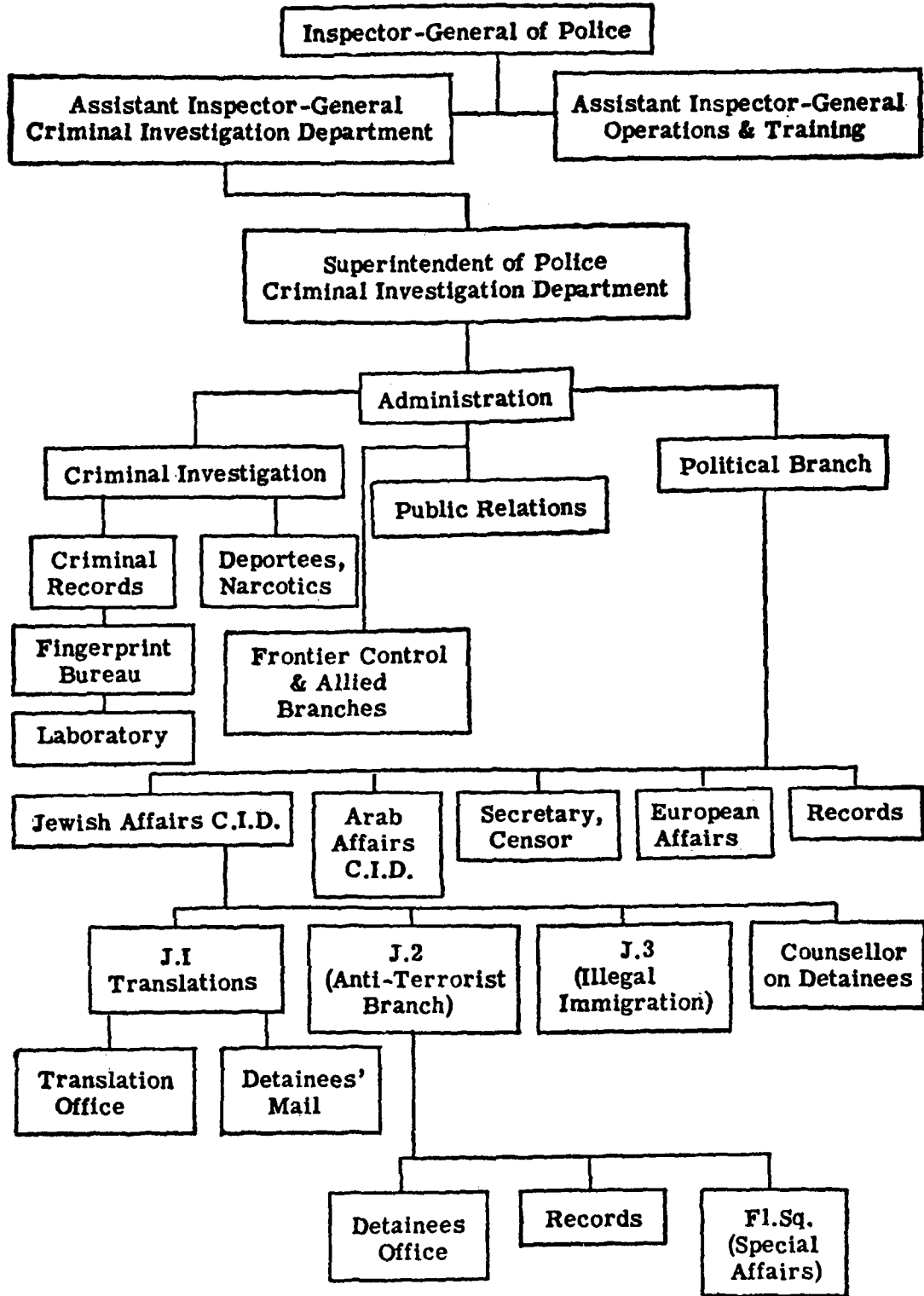


Fig. 3 -- Organization of the CID

Source: Dekel, Shai, p. 360.

also had attempted to redress its shortage of manpower by accepting unqualified officers into its ranks. But this only created additional problems since the majority of the new men were considered by Moffat to be 'little more than recruits whose knowledge of police work is consequently very limited'. Accordingly, he recommended that only those candidates from the regular police with at least three years experience on the force should be accepted by the CID; and that until the training these recruits received in Palestine was improved, they should instead be sent back to England and trained by Scotland Yard.¹ 'In London, at any rate', Moffat argued, 'there would also be opportunities for acquiring a knowledge of Hebrew and Arabic': which, he complained, many of the British CID officers lacked.²

These three factors--the CID's manpower shortage, its consequent dependence on inexperienced officers, and the dearth of Hebrew and Arabic speakers amongst its British personnel--led Moffat to conclude that greater reliance should be placed on the department's Palestinian personnel. 'It seems self-evident', he stated, 'that no Britisher, however expert in the local languages and competent in other respects, can hope to acquire to the same extent as the Palestinian the degree of confidence from the community which is necessary ensure to full success'.³ This recommendation, however, was anathema to the Jewish Affairs specialists in the CID. Since the loyalty of many of the Jews serving in the PPF was regarded as suspect, it was the CID's policy to

¹PRO CO 537/2269 Criminal Investigation Department by Moffat, 2 December 1946. No action was taken with regard to this particular recommendation.

²*Ibid.*

³*Ibid.*

prohibit Jewish officers from serving in the Political Branch's Jewish Affairs section.¹ These suspicions were in fact valid as many of the Jewish members of the PPF did indeed secretly belong to the *Haganah* (and to a lesser extent the *Irgun* and *Lehi*). Ephriam Dekel, the head of the *Haganah*'s intelligence service during this period, has stated that, 'The greatest contribution to the Haganah security-intelligence forces were made by Jewish policemen and government employees who were also members of [the] Haganah'.² Accordingly, 'the British relied on the least experienced section of the regular force, rather than the vastly more experienced, but politically unreliable Palestinian for public security work'.³ Moffat thought that this was wrong: 'I do not think the answer sometimes given--that no Palestinian can be trusted, especially in political matters--is adequate'. Moreover, in the course of his inquiries, Moffat discovered that most of the British officers with whom he spoke had praised the work of their Jewish counterparts to such an extent that Moffat reported, 'I have yet to meet one who thinks that their co-operation can be dispensed with'.⁴

By themselves these changes would not significantly improve the CID's intelligence capability, Moffat believed, unless they were accompanied by a drastic re-ordering of the department's priorities. He thought that too few men were allocated to the unit's Political Branch,

¹Horne, *A Job Well Done*, p. 475, and Clark, 'Colonial Police And Anti-Terrorism', p. 150.

²Dekel, *Shai*, p. 15 and *passim*. See also PRO WO 208/1702 Letter, Rymer-Jones to J. S. MacPherson (Chief Secretary), 21 December 1943, which presents Rymer-Jones' view that many Jewish policemen 'clearly do not consider that they owe allegiance to the Palestine Police Force or to the Government of Palestine'.

³Clark, 'The Colonial Police And Anti-Terrorism', p. 245.

⁴PRO CO 537/2269 Criminal Investigation Division by Moffat, 2 December 1946.

the arm of the CID specifically responsible for gathering, analysing and disseminating intelligence pertaining to the terrorist organizations. Although this particular branch contained the largest number of subsidiary sub-sections--sixteen, or double the number of all other CID sub-sections--it was disproportionately under-staffed by just over a quarter of total CID personnel. Moffat pointed out that of the 330 men at CID Headquarters, only 80 were engaged in political intelligence-related work. The situation was even worse with regard to the individual police districts where no CID personnel at all were specifically allocated for intelligence collection and analysis. 'This seems to be putting the emphasis in the wrong place', he stated, since

It is common experience that C.I.D. members who are not employed exclusively as political specialists tend to ignore this aspect of criminal investigation and to concentrate on non-political crime, if not to leave political work completely to the section directly responsible for it. In areas where there is no separate political section, it usually happens that political investigation receives little attention....

There must, therefore, be a change of emphasis from the non-political to the political side.¹

THE EFFECT OF THE WICKHAM-MOFFAT REPORT ON THE PPF

Wickham and Moffat's respective critiques of the PPF and the CID encapsulate the problems compromising the police force's effectiveness and undermining its ability to defeat the terrorists. Lack of sufficient manpower, the poor quality of recruits entering the force and the inadequate training they received, the enforced extension of police contracts and the uninterrupted periods of service without leave that harmed morale, the 'militarisation' of the police cited by Wickham, the inefficient allocation of police resources and the CID's intelligence

¹*Ibid.*

failure accounted for the PPF's unsatisfactory performance. But as trenchant and valuable as their conclusions were, they came, in the words of John Briance, a senior officer in the CID, 'too late in the day' to have any appreciable effect on the PPF.¹

Just two months after Wickham submitted his and Moffat's reports, Britain announced its decision to refer the question of the mandate and, indeed, of Palestine's political future, to the United Nations (UN). Although the Government reserved for itself the right to accept or reject the UN's conclusions on the matter, it nevertheless became evident that the end of Britain's rule over Palestine was nearing. The effect of this development on the police was profound. Horne recounts that, 'Throughout 1946 and 1947, the initiative swung with depressing regularity from the government to the terrorists and then back to the government according to the inexorable law of the pendulum'. Once the decision to refer the Palestine problem to the UN was announced, Horne argues,

British resolve to defeat the terrorists noticeably softened. The angry determination of 1946 turned to a hopeless quest to abandon ship by early 1947 and this was in spite of adopting tactics to counter terrorist action. It had at last become clear in Whitehall as it had long been clear in Jerusalem, that there was not the slightest chance of getting the Balfour Declaration to work, and that the spirit of the Balfour Declaration was officially a dead duck.²

The PPF's mission thus gradually shifted from aggressive counter-terrorism to seeking to maintain order in the country while the British Government and UN wrestled with the ultimate disposition of the Mandate.

¹Letter, John Briance to the author, 12 December 1981.

²Horne, *A Job Well Done*, p. 571.

Briance recalls that, '1946/47 was the beginning of the end of the British in Palestine and all the harassed police could do was to keep the two sides apart [e.g., the Jews and Arabs] try to curb the worst excesses of terrorism and protect themselves and the Administration'.¹ The grim mood pervading the debilitated PPF ate away at its resolve and efforts to implement the reforms advocated by Wickham and Moffat were abandoned.² Indeed, Moffat himself recognized that this was the case. In a letter to Briance of 28 April 1947, Moffat expressed his belief that,

I cant [sic] see the Palestine Police getting anywhere now....In short it seems to me that you have reached the position which the Royal Irish Constabulary had reached some 25 years ago when it was a question of adopting strong measures or getting out. Knowing British Governments--Tory and Labour--for what they are, there isn't the slightest prospect of the Colonial Office getting tough, and there is only the alternative....

I wonder if it's any use sticking to a sinking ship, practically sunken. If there was the slightest prospect of refloating the damned thing then of course it would be impossible to leave while the process was going on. But if the Captain is determined to scuttle, that's a different matter....

I hope our recommendations get you somewhere, but I cannot help feeling that it is too late now to hope to get the Palestine Police on its feet again.³

Yet Wickham and Moffat's labours were not entirely wasted. As Sir John Gutch (Assistant Secretary for the Middle East Department, CO) observed, 'Sir Charles Wickham's visit and report were invaluable in confirming the layman's impression that the police force was becoming

¹Letter, Briance to the author, 12 December 1981.

²*Ibid.*; Horne, *A Job Well Done*, pp. 567-569 and 571-573; and MEC Cunningham Papers V/4 'Draft Memorandum Handed' to Cunningham by Gray, December 1947.

³Extract from letters to J. A. Briance from Moffat, 28 April 1947, furnished to the author.

over-militarised and over-mechanised'.¹ Wickham's report did lead to the abolition of the PMF and the consequent reorientation of the PPF to more traditional police duties.² In addition, by June 1947, 1200 recruits had been brought into the British Section, which, as W. W. Clark, a junior official in the Colonial Office, minuted, was 'a very decided improvement since' Wickham's visit seven months earlier. 'But', Clark concluded, 'the whole situation as regards police duties has changed to some extent since Sir Charles W[ickham] was in Palestine...[and] has no doubt, to a very large extent, prevented the police from carrying out their duties in accordance with the recommendations of...Wickham'.³

CONCLUSION

At the root of the PPF's problems was its acute shortage of manpower. The repercussions of this shortage permeated almost every aspect of the police force. Morale was harmed and the police were compelled to maintain its establishment with otherwise unacceptable personnel. Training given to the new men was inadequate. The efficiency of the CID was reduced. All this led to the damaging 'militarisation' of the force cited by Wickham and thus sapped the PPF of its strength at a time when Britain's rule over Palestine was seriously threatened by the Jewish terrorist organizations. It also drove the police to embrace 'desperate methods', such as Fergusson's special squads, in the hope of overcoming its manpower deficiency and gaining the initiative against the terrorists.

¹PRO CO 537/2269 Minute by Gutch, 1 July 1947.

²*Ibid.*, Minute by W. W. Clark, 26 June 1947.

³*Ibid.*

In the final analysis, however, the PPF's failure was inextricably linked to the CID's failure to furnish the force with the information required to prosecute an effective and successful counter-terrorist campaign. As Field Marshal Lord Carver (Chief of the General Staff, 1971-1973) has argued, 'The necessity for the intimate integration of intelligence and operations is the most important lesson' in fighting insurgency and terrorism.¹ Various experts on this subject, like Kitson and Paget, have similarly stressed 'the paramount importance' of this factor to any successful counter-insurgency/counter-terrorist programme.² Paget contends that, 'Good intelligence is undoubtedly one of the greatest battle-winning factors in counter-insurgency warfare' He goes on to list the six principles on which the acquisition of intelligence must be based:

(a) Money and effort spent on the gaining of intelligence and the preparation of an effective [intelligence-gathering] organisation *before* the insurgency begins....

(b) Every effort must be made to "terrorize the Enemy" as thoroughly as possible before the insurgency [actually] starts.

(c) The best results are achieved from a fully integrated intelligence organisation, under one Chief of Intelligence.

(d) Intelligence must be worked for and not waited for, and the acquisition of it must be made a top priority for the Security Forces....

(e) The cooperation of the populace is not essential to the gaining of intelligence, but it is a tremendous asset, and every effort must be made to win this support.

¹[Then] General Sir Michael Carver, 'Forward' to Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations*, p. xi.

²Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations*, p. 95.

(f) The best intelligence comes from penetrating the insurgent organisations.¹

If these dicta are used as a yardstick to assess the performance of the CID, it appears that it failed in almost every category. During the initial eruption of anti-British terrorist activity, staged by the *Irgun* in 1939, the Jewish Affairs section of the CID's Political Branch was completely unprepared. Understandable though this was because of the CID's preoccupation with the Arab Rebellion, it was not until 1945--a year after the recrudescence of anti-government violence by the *Irgun*--that, according to Horne, the Jewish Affairs section had developed an effective intelligence programme.² Thus Paget's first principle of having 'an effective organisation' in place 'before the insurgency begins' was not fulfilled. This, in turn, prevented the police from discharging Paget's second principle of 'terroriz[ing] the Enemy...before the insurgency starts'.

Moffat's criticism of the CID reflected the department's failure to fulfil the remainder of Paget's criteria. With regard to a 'fully integrated intelligence organisation, under one Chief of Intelligence', Moffat was critical of the CID's leadership. He argued

that the officer in charge of the C.I.D. as a whole should himself be one with a long experience of detective work in both its political and non-political aspects. Only such an officer can appreciate fully the difficulties with which the Political Branch has to contend and the importance of giving the officer in charge of it as free a hand as possible.³

¹Paget, *Counter-Insurgency Campaigning*, pp. 163-164.

²Horne, *A Job Well Done*, p. 473.

³PRO CO 537/2269 Criminal Investigation Division by Moffat, 2 December 1946.

He also thought that the CID was not aggressive enough in going out into the field to obtain the intelligence. Moffat was particularly disturbed by the department's poor handling of informants and urged that more money should be allocated to this crucial aspect of intelligence acquisition.¹ Given these problems, it is not surprising that the police had so little success in ever penetrating the terrorist organizations. This, however, was in part the result of the bad relations that existed between the police and the *Yishuv*.

Finally, Paget contends that, 'The first essential in any counter-insurgency campaign is that both the political and military aims should be agreed upon by all concerned from the very start and should be clearly stated in a directive'.² Similarly Lieutenant-General D. B. Lang writes that, 'the soldier [and, indeed, in these circumstances, the policeman as well] expects to be given and is entitled to demand, a clear political directive, which must include, and in fact be built around, the object which the Civil Government wishes to be attained'.³ During the final years of the mandate, the police and the army were not provided with such a directive.

The Labour Government never really had a consistent policy regarding the country's political future until it announced, in September 1947, Britain's intention to surrender the Mandate and withdraw from Palestine. Thus during the period of time between the Labour Party's ascendance to power in 1945 and the decision to terminate

¹*Ibid.*

²Paget, *Counter-Insurgency Campaigning*, p. 156.

³Lieutenant-General D. B. Lang, 'Forward' to *Ibid.*, p. 8.

British rule two years later, the Palestine Government and its security forces functioned in a state of limbo. Indeed, on 21 November 1946, Barker had written to Dempsey that the 'answer to [the] terrorist problem lies largely in [the] political sphere. No action can be taken by the military alone to stop terrorism. It must be in support of some political policy which is not existent at present'.¹ In the last resort, therefore, it was absence of any clear and consistently pursued governmental policy for Palestine that prevented the police from defeating the terrorists.

¹MEC Cunningham Papers I/3 Telegram, Barker to Dempsey, 21 November 1946.

IV. THE YISHUV AND THE GOVERNMENT: COOPERATION OR CONFRONTATION?

THE RENEWAL OF JEWISH TERRORISM AND THE ISSUE OF COOPERATION: JANUARY-OCTOBER 1944

Within weeks of the *Irgun's* declaration of revolt, a second proclamation was issued calling upon the *Yishuv* to join in the war against British rule in Palestine. 'The struggle for the opening of the gates of the country', it declared, 'has begun.'

In spite of all the obligations taken by Great Britain...[it] has locked the gates of the Land of Israel for the Jewish Nation. As a result of this criminal behaviour--millions of Jews fell into the merciless hands of Hitler and were annihilated. This British breach of faith [has] caused the death of millions....

Some other millions of Jews are now standing at the abyss, but the rulers of this land are still continuing their criminal policy of closed gates, which is a straight participation in the murdering of our Nation....

We call to the citizens and to the youth to unite around the banner of the holy struggle.¹

In response, the *Irgun* was denounced in the Jewish press and condemned by the Jewish Agency. *Davar* decried the terrorist campaign as 'a stab in the back' of the *Yishuv* while *Ha-aretz* predicted that the violence would 'not bring any good either for the country or for the Jews'.² Vehement as these declarations were, British officials in Palestine questioned their sincerity. Although the 'Jewish press and official bodies generally have strongly condemned [the] outrages', MacMichael reported, 'both official bodies and public have made no

¹NARS RG 226 OSS Report 65202, 6 March 1944.

²Quoted in PRO WO 169/15851 Monthly Summary No. 28, DSO, HQ Palestine, 1-29 February 1944.

effort to help in bringing the guilty to justice'.¹ Similarly, British Army intelligence analysts noted that the Agency would 'probably hesitate to take action until the Irgun...or the [*Lehi*] commit some act which is liable seriously to interfere with Agency policy. There is no doubt whatever that the Agency could if they so wished take effective action in the prevention of these outbreaks'.²

The *Yishuv's* reluctance to assist the Palestine Government in countering the terrorists indelibly coloured Anglo-Zionist relations throughout the final years of the mandate. Virtually all British civilian, military, and police officials in Palestine were convinced that if the Jewish Agency was disposed to cooperate with government and instructed the *Yishuv* to furnish the authorities with the information necessary to wage an effective counter-terrorist campaign, it would then be possible to defeat the terrorist organizations. Similar views had been expressed during the *Irgun's* short-lived revolt in 1939. 'Among British officials', George Wadsworth, the United States Consul-General in Jerusalem, had written, 'it is accepted as axiomatic that no Jew can be brought to lay information against a co-religionist. So long as this is true and Jewish public opinion or leadership is unable to restrain the extremists, they hold, there can be no peace in Palestine'.³

The reasons for the *Yishuv's* uncooperative attitude toward the British reached back to the early years of the mandate, when Anglo-Zionist disputes over the issue of the establishment of an openly organized Jewish self-defence force first surfaced. The Arab rioting

¹PRO CO 733/456/75156/143/43 Telegram, MacMichael to Stanley, 25 February 1944.

²PRO WO 169/15851 Monthly Summary No. 28, 1-29 February 1944.

³NARS RG 165 Palestine 3800 Box 3028 Letter, Wadsworth to Secretary of State, Washington, D.C., 29 June 1939.

that occurred in 1920, 1921 and 1929, coupled with the more serious rebellion that engulfed Palestine between 1936 and 1939, did little to mitigate the Jewish community's hostility toward the government over this issue. The promulgation of 1939 White Paper policy only heightened the *Yishuv's* animosity: prompting Wadsworth to observe that although 'individually very few Jews could be brought to perpetrate or would condone [terrorist] acts, there are many who understand and cannot but sympathize with the feelings of those who are led to commit them'.¹

Although these sentiments were tempered somewhat by the advent of World War II, the paradoxical dictum defining the *Yishuv's* policy toward Britain issued by Ben-Gurion ensured a deliberately ambivalent attitude on the part of the community toward the government. On 16 October 1941, for instance, MacMichael informed the Colonial Secretary, Lord Moyne, that, 'No help could be expected from the Jewish community in an attempt to destroy the Irgun, both because the community in general is not out of sympathy with much of the policy for which the Irgun stands, but also because of the Irgun's known ability to deal drastically with those who threaten its interests'.² Two months later, an army intelligence analysis cited 'the extreme difficulty of obtaining information on the many secret Jewish organisations'.³ While another intelligence report issued in 1942 lamented that 'active help is still awaited from the General Public'.⁴ Indeed, the *Yishuv's* non-cooperative attitude caused

¹*Ibid.*

²RH Papers of Sir Richard Catling, Mss. Medit. S.20 (210) Palestine Police Force Secret Report 59/1809/3/G.S., containing Telegram, MacMichael to Moyne, 16 October 1941.

³PRO WO 208/1560 SIME Summary No. 2, 5 December 1941.

⁴PRO WO 169/4334 Weekly Intelligence Review No. 10, DSO, HQ Palestine, 28 January 1942.

J. S. Bennett, an official in the office of the Minister Resident for the Middle East, to comment that, 'Gratitude was never a Zionist characteristic'.¹

British attempts to obtain information on the terrorists were also thwarted by the organization of the terrorist groups themselves. Terrorism is an inherently clandestine endeavour. Accordingly, terrorist groups are generally organized into small, individual cells whose members know, or are in contact with, only the leader and persons in their particular cell and not with the organization's senior command or the rest of the organization as well. This was the case with the *Irgun* and *Lehi*: a factor which placed the army and police at a distinct disadvantage. In a memorandum to British military headquarters in Cairo, the GOC, McConnel, discussed the difficulty of obtaining intelligence on the terrorists. 'It is virtually impossible', he wrote, 'to find a Jew prepared to divulge anything concerning' them, and even if that were possible, McConnel concluded, the organisation of the groups ensured that 'the amount of information that an informer could give is extremely small'.²

Nevertheless, it still remained essential that the police obtain at least *some* information if any headway was to be made toward eliminating the terrorists. This issue was the subject of a discussion held between Bernard Joseph, a member of the Jewish Agency Executive, and Shaw, the Chief Secretary, on 28 February 1944. When pressed by Shaw, Joseph replied that the Agency was aware 'that it was not an easy matter for [the] Government to deal with the recent acts of terrorism'. Joseph

¹PRO FO 921/6 6/42/5 Minute by Bennett, 9 July 1942.

²PRO FO 371/35034 E2856/87/G.31 Memorandum by McConnel, 3 February 1943.

stated that the Agency 'had condemned these acts unequivocally...[and] were very anxious that these acts should stop, because they were definitely harmful to our aspirations in Palestine and might serve only to estrange some of our friends'. Shaw replied that while 'he had no doubt that we had every reason to condemn these outrages' and that they 'were sincerely meant...lip service was not enough'. What the police required, he continued, was information: specifically the names of the members of the underground organizations, which Shaw believed, the Jewish Agency knew. Joseph countered that, 'the Jewish Agency could not be expected to fill the role of a common informer. It was the job of the Police who were at the disposal of the Administration to discover who the perpetrators of the outrages were'. In addition, he warned that any attempt to coerce the *Yishuv*, such as the mass arrests and questioning of law-abiding Jewish citizens that had taken place some days before, would destroy any hope of obtaining the cooperation of the community.¹

A similar conversation was held on 3 March between Captain John Rymer-Jones, the Inspector-General of Police, and Harry Beilin, another Jewish Agency official. Beilin had called on the Inspector-General to protest the arrests and interrogations referred to by Joseph. Rymer-Jones, however, was in no mood to listen to Beilin's objections, replying that, 'the only time you people come to see me is when you have complaints to make'. The Agency's expressions of regret over the bombings were not enough. 'I have been sent here to do a job, to maintain law and order', Rymer-Jones stated. 'I have got to have the cooperation of the public. I have got to have information. I shall get

¹CZA S 25/28 Minute of Interview, 28 February 1944.

this information no matter what happens, but if I have to get it in my own way, without the assistance of the public, it might cause unnecessary bloodshed'.¹

The acrimonious tenor of this discussion, coupled with Rymer-Jones's admonition regarding the consequences of continued non-cooperation, prompted Joseph to confer with him again six days later. The substance of their exchange differed little from the previous discussion. Joseph pointed out that,

the Administration had in the past few years behaved in such a manner towards the Jewish community as to convince them that it was most unfriendly and unjust to their cause. This naturally created a certain attitude of unfriendliness on the part of the community to the Administration and it was therefore not surprising that the public should show reluctance to cooperate with the Administration.

Rymer-Jones replied that he was responsible not for determining policy but for maintaining law and order in the country: all that concerned him was the *Yishuv's* refusal to assist the police. 'If you don't want to give us the names of the people or help us directly', the Inspector-General suggested, 'why don't the Haganah stamp out these acts? If you agree that this [terrorism] is a bad thing why don't you stamp it out yourselves?' Joseph demurred, pointing out that

this was not a matter of the Jewish Agency but for the community as a whole...we had the power, but the question was whether [the community] expected us to use that power and whether we should take upon ourselves the functions of the Police. He would realise what it would mean: fratricidal strife. This was not a situation which could be contemplated lightly.²

¹CZA S 25/6202 Minute of Interview, 3 March 1944.

²*Ibid.*, Minute of Interview, 9 March 1944.

Although Rymer-Jones may have doubted Joseph's sincerity, the latter's enigmatic assurance that the Agency would 'deal' with the *Irgun* 'in its "own way"' was not disingenuous. Unknown to the Inspector-General, the Jewish Agency had already begun to consider measures to stop the terrorists. On 29 February intelligence analysts attached to the United States Office of Strategic Services (OSS) reported that two members of the *Histadrut* Executive Committee, Goldie Meyerson and David Remez, 'are pressing for immediate action by the *Histadrut* to crush the terrorists by the creation of a corps of "vigilantes" who would either take direct action against them or alternatively denounce them to the Government'. Eliahu Golomb, the commander of the *Haganah*, however, had vehemently objected to any form of cooperation with the authorities on the ground that the British had continually refused to recognize the *Yishuv's* right to possess arms for its self-defence. In addition, he argued that 'public opinion would react violently against such a scheme', rendering its execution 'impossible'. Although Golomb's opposition to the scheme had curtailed further discussion of the proposal, the OSS analysis concluded that Meyerson's and Remez's arguments, that continued terrorism would 'imperil all that has been gained in the Jewish political struggle', ensured that the last word on this matter had not been heard.¹

In March 1944 the five-year immigration period laid down by the 1939 White Paper was due to expire. Since the war had inhibited the emigration of Jews from Europe to Palestine, the Jewish Agency was pressing the Government for an extension. While the *Yishuv* anxiously awaited the Government's decision, British authorities in Palestine

¹NARS RG 165 Palestine 5940-5990 Box 3035, JICAME Report, 29 February 1944.

braced themselves for a new onslaught of terrorism. The first three weeks of the month, however, were deceptively quiet. The lull was broken on 23 March, when *Lehi* murdered three British policemen and seriously wounded another and the *Irgun* attacked the headquarters of the CID in Jerusalem and its district offices in Haifa and Jaffa.¹

The British responded by reinstating the 1937 Defence Emergency Regulations, imposing the death penalty for persons convicted of 'discharging...fire-arms at persons, the throwing or depositing of bombs, explosives and incendiary substances with intention to cause death or injury or damage to property; the carrying of fire-arms, ammunition or bombs; interference with or damaging of transport services, or the water, electric or telephone services'. In addition, a daily twelve-hour curfew was declared in Tel Aviv and the Jewish sections of Jerusalem and Haifa.²

The *Yishuv's* reaction was confined to renewed condemnations of the terrorists. Nearly all of the Hebrew-language newspapers (including *Davar*, *Ha-aretz*, *Hatzofeh*, *Haboker*, and *Mishmar*) along with the Jewish Agency, the Tel Aviv municipality, the *Histadrut*, the *Vaad Leumi*, and the Jewish Community Council deplored the attacks. The statement issued by the *Vaad Leumi*, however, went further than previous condemnations of this sort. For the first time the *Yishuv* was beseeched by an official Jewish institution to 'do all in [its] power to isolate the evildoers and those responsible for the insane acts so that they cease, once and for all': thus preparing the community for the implementation of an active *Jewish* anti-terrorist campaign.³

¹*Ibid.*, Palestine 2710 Box 2025, JICAME Report, 12 April 1944.

²*Ibid.*

³*Ibid.*

The government's imposition of the curfews had a particularly profound affect on the *Yishuv*. Although they prompted a new wave of protests from the Agency, the curfews did in fact push the *Yishuv* further toward cooperating with the authorities. *Davar*, for example, opined that,

Only now do we realize the extent of the madmen's cries on Thursday [e.g., the attacks on the police] to have been greater than thought first. Greater still is the misfortune caused to the Jewish Community. The *Yishuv* is under curfew regulations--imposed for a crime they have not committed. They have been blamed for deeds perpetrated by the saboteurs of the Jewish national effort and struggle.

Similarly worded editorials appeared in *Haboker* and *Hatzofeh*.¹ When Joseph met with Shaw on 27 March the Chief Secretary did not conceal the fact that the curfews had indeed been meant to compel the community to assist the police. Shaw admonished Joseph that if assistance was not forthcoming, the administration 'would have to find other ways' to obtain it: 'as a result of which the public might possibly suffer'. Joseph answered that the Agency was aware of this fact and therefore 'desired to do every thing we could in our own way to stop their recurrences'.² Despite the fact that no definite commitment of cooperation had been obtained, the curfews were lifted on 2 April. Although sixty terrorist suspects had been arrested, the administration decided that the advantage of apprehending more suspects was outweighed by the harm that the prolongation of the curfews might have on the *Yishuv's* growing inclination to assist the authorities.³

¹NARS RG 59 867N.00/671 Letter, L. C. Pinkerton (Consul-General, Jerusalem) to Secretary of State, Washington, D.C., 31 March 1944.

²CZA S 25/28 Minute of Interview, 27 March 1944.

³NARS RG 165 Palestine 2710 Box 3025, JICAME Report, 12 April 1944.

The recrudescence of terrorism placed the *Yishuv* in an acute dilemma. As one U.S. Army intelligence analysis explained, 'the majority of the Jewish community are responsible' for the climate in which the terrorists organizations have emerged. 'Their leaders teach disrespect for the law (White Paper) and have organized illegal activities reaching deep into communal life'. Hence, the 'Irgun and Stern gangsters are at one with them in their goals and *some* of their methods. The terrorists know they will find assistance and cover in the Jewish community--which lack the will to betray them to the common "enemy", the Government'. The analysis went on to observe that,

The official Jewish attitude cannot condone such [terrorist] acts. It would put them at war with the Government and involve them in possible reaction against Zionism abroad. The leaders apologize, regret and appear horrified at such deeds, but they do nothing to stop it....These Jewish leaders are playing a dangerous game with the hope that greater internal unity may grow out of such extreme acts, yet fearing that they might plunge the community into a hopeless condition of anarchy and loss of respect abroad.¹

This was an accurate reflection of MacMichael's opinion of the Jewish Agency's attitude towards the terrorists. He regarded the resurgence of violence as a product of 'the intense Nationalist drive conducted by the Agency for years past through the education of the young, and platform propaganda' which has encouraged a lawless attitude within the *Yishuv*. The terrorists, the High Commissioner continued, 'regard themselves as the chosen instruments whose task it is simultaneously to intimidate H.M.G. into further measures of appeasement and to stimulate their official leaders into decisive action'. On the

¹NARS RG 213 66681, JICAME Report, 4 March 1944.

one hand, the Agency is genuinely 'horrified at the murders committed, and [are] greatly afraid' of its adverse repercussions on public opinion in both the United States and Britain, but on the other, 'they cannot resist the idea that publicity for these crimes tends also to bring into the limelight the claims of Jewry, and the urgency of solving the problem of Palestine'. The Agency, he was certain 'could, if they wished, stamp out the terrorists'.¹ MacMichael's assessment of the Agency's manipulation of terrorism was borne out by public statements like the one made by Rabbi Yehuda Lieb Fishman, a member of the Jewish Agency Executive, who declared that although, 'We deplore the acts of terror in Palestine and we know that this is criminal...at the same time it should be said frankly that the British Administration in Palestine brought about such despair among those who resort to violence that they do not know what they are doing'.²

In spite of such statements the Agency was in fact moving closer toward approving an active counter-terrorist campaign. This reversal was partly the result of a conversation held between Moshe Shertok, the Head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency, and Professor Lewis Namier, (a political adviser to the Jewish Agency) with Colonel Oliver Stanley, the Colonial Secretary, in London on 30 March.³ They were told by Stanley that the Prime Minister 'who had always been a sincere friend of the Jews had been horrified at these [terrorist]

¹PRO FO 371/40125 E1958/17/31 Telegram, MacMichael to Stanley, 24 March 1944.

²Quoted in PRO CO 733/456/75156/151 A, Extract of Meeting at Colonial Office, 30 March 1944.

³Shertok later Hebracized his name to Sharett. He served as Israel's Foreign Minister (1948-56), Prime Minister (1953-55), and as a member of Israel's Parliament until his death in 1965.

outrages, which in his view could do nothing but harm to the Jewish cause'.¹ This was a serious admonition indeed since the Cabinet was then considering a proposal submitted by a Cabinet sub-committee appointed by Churchill to partition Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states.

The warning did have a decisive effect on the Agency. Three days later it approved a programme 'of broad enlightenment' designed to wean the *Yishuv* away from cooperating with, or providing any assistance to, the terrorists. The programme, however, fell short of sanctioning active cooperation with the authorities. Instead it enunciated a set of guidelines for the public that sought to ostracize the terrorists from the community and, by establishing a special, internal police unit, end the terrorists' extortion of money from Jewish merchants and curtail terrorist activity.²

The new programme was unveiled at a press conference given by Golomb on 6 April. He was reported to have said 'that while everyone was anxious to avoid a fratricidal war, none the less [sic], if the mad career of the terrorists continued, despite the Yishuv's efforts to stop them by moral force, "We would be obliged to punish the culprits because they are a vital danger to ourselves"'. Golomb, however, also laid responsibility for the Agency's failure to bring an end to terrorism on the British, maintaining that,

¹*Ibid.*

²Bauer, *From Diplomacy to Resistance*, pp. 321-322, and Michael J. Cohen, 'The Moyne Assassination, November 1944: A Political Analysis', *Middle Eastern Studies*, xv, (1979), 359.

the efforts of the Jewish Agency and the Yishuv in this direction have been handicapped and inhibited by two causes:

1) The general inefficiency of the police in making effective use of the information supplied, and in guarding suspects in custody...[and]

2) The fact that the Palestine Government has throughout maintained official relations with the Revisionist Organisation, and that some officials of the C.I.D. appear to have developed relations of intimacy with militant Revisionists.¹

The claim regarding the inefficiency of the police had been heard before. In 1942 and in 1943, the Jewish Agency had used this line of reasoning to excuse its reluctance to cooperate with the government against the dissidents. In January 1942, after an intensification of *Lehi* operations, the Agency was reported by British army intelligence to have published a pamphlet 'which among other things stated that..."the authorities who do not execute their duty and put an end to this terror either from fear or from a desire to divide the Jewish population are accountable for the innocent blood being shed"'.² Fourteen months later, another intelligence analysis noted that,

Though the Agency and other responsible Jewish institutions have issued official pronouncements condemning such outbursts of hooliganism in the strongest terms, there has, nevertheless, in all these pronouncements been an undercurrent of suggestion that the ultimate responsibility lay with the British. Incredible as it may seem, otherwise intelligent Jews are convinced that the Government connived at the escape of the STERN Group internees from Latrun [prison] in order that they might conduct a campaign of terror and thereby bring discredit on the Jews in Palestine.³

¹CZA Z 4/15297 Note on Stern Group/Revisionists, 11 April 1944.

²PRO WO 169/4334 Weekly Intelligence Review No. 10, DSO, HQ Palestine, 28 January 1942.

³PRO WO 169/15851 Fortnightly Intelligence Summary No. 75, DSO, HQ Palestine, 29 March 1943.

Although there was apparently some substance to these accusations,¹ they were also calculated to exculpate the Jewish Agency for its previous inaction and to shift the blame for it onto the government. For example, on 12 April 1944, Weizmann wrote to J. M. Martin (the Principal Private Secretary to the Prime Minister), claiming that

It is simply not true that we are not--or have not been--co-operating. We have done so all the time, though in many cases the inefficiency of the Police has stultified our efforts. It is grossly unfair that these charges should be levelled against the Jewish community in Palestine, which is doing its utmost to combat the present outbreak of terrorism.²

An Agency memorandum appended to the letter cited examples of information given to the police by the *Yishuv* that had led to a number of arrests. Mention was also made of police inefficiency for allowing 23 members of *Lehi* to escape from prison in 1943 alongside of more recent evidence of alleged police incompetence.³

There was also some truth to Golomb's allegations of British cooperation with the *Irgun*. In May 1941 Raziell, the commander of the *Irgun*, and three subordinates (accompanied by a British Army major and an aide) had secretly traveled to Iraq--at the behest of the British Army--to assist in the attempt to topple the pro-Axis Rashid Ali regime. Their specific mission was to destroy certain key oil fields, but the *Irgun* team had an ulterior motive of their own: the kidnapping of Haj

¹Similar allegations of police incompetence had been detailed to U.S. Army Intelligence. See NARS RG 165 Palestine 2710 Box 3025, JICAME Report, 12 April 1944.

²PRO PREM 4/52/3 Letter, Weizmann to Martin, 12 April 1944.

³*Ibid.*, and CZA Z 4/15297 Note on Stern Group/Revisionists, 11 April 1944. See also PRO WO 169/15851 Summary No. 76, 12 April 1944, for details of these particular instances of Agency cooperation.

Amin al-Husayni, the exiled leader of Palestine's Arab community. Before either of their objectives could be accomplished, the car in which Raziel and the two Britons were traveling was bombed by a German plane and Raziel was killed.¹ Raziel's death plunged the *Irgun* into disarray and its contacts with the British consequently were terminated.² The Agency memorandum, however, did not concern itself with these details, implying simply that, 'some C.I.D. officials were known at the time to have cultivated intimate contacts with official revisionists [sic] and members of the Irgun.... The contacts of the police with the Revisionists are widely known and create confusion in the public mind'.³

In any event, serious negotiations between the Jewish Agency and the Palestine Government commenced in May 1944. On 9 May Golomb met with Shaw and Rymer-Jones to discuss the exact terms of the proposed arrangement.⁴ The Agency laid down the following conditions:

One. 25 to 50 men picked by the Agency to be issued with firearms permits. Permits to be given in blank so as not to disclose names to the police.

Two. These men would endeavour to apprehend those whom Jewish Agency considered responsible for terrorist outrages.

Three. Those suspects apprehended to be detained by Jewish Agency in various settlements.

Four. The Jewish Agency would inform this office [British military headquarters, Jerusalem] of the names of persons so detained but not (repeat not) disclose place of detention.

¹Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, iii, 73-75, and Levine, 'David Raziel, The Man And His Times', p. 312.

²Bauer, *From Diplomacy to Resistance*, pp. 312-315, and Brenner, 'The "Stern Gang"', 116.

³CZA Z 4/15297 Note on Stern Group/Revisionists, 11 April 1944, and PRO PREM 4/52/3 Letter, 12 April 1944.

⁴PRO CO 733/456/75156/151 A Part I Telegram, C.-in-C., Middle East to War Office, 9 May 1944.

Five. The Jewish Agency demanded assurances that (A) No punishment should be imposed on any settlement found harbouring a wanted person. (B) Should Police obtain information of whereabouts of fugitive [terrorists] they would not (repeat not) at the same time search [said settlement] for arms.

Six. The Jewish Agency insisted that these negotiations should be conducted direct with police.¹

Golomb also stipulated that should the police or army arrest any person suspected of terrorist activity--apart from those apprehended by the Agency's special unit--'no action would be taken against him'.²

Not surprisingly, the proposal was rejected out of hand.³ Its terms amounted to the Agency being given a "blank cheque" to deal with the terrorists in its own way, without any government supervision or involvement. The restrictions which would be imposed on the police and army, at least with regard to searching any settlement for illegal arms, also meant that the administration would be compelled to condone one form of illegal behaviour in return for the Agency's cooperation in stamping out another. The proposed arrangement thus was less one of cooperation than a delegation of government authority to a private body. The Agency, of course, interpreted the matter differently. During discussions between Agency and U.S. State Department officials in Washington the following November the British were blamed by the Agency for the collapse of the May negotiations. 'The authorities', it was argued, 'had deliberately played down the role of the Jewish community in combatting terrorism' and thereby eliminated any prospect of cooperation.⁴

¹*Ibid.*, Telegram, McConnel to War Office, 8 May 1944.

²*Ibid.*, Telegram, 9 May 1944.

³*Ibid.*, Telegram, 8 May 1944.

⁴NARS RG 59 867N.001/11-2442 Memorandum of Conversation Between Dr. Nahum Goldmann, Dr. Bernard Joseph, and Messrs. Murray, Merriam, and Wilson, 24 November 1944.

With the break-down of the negotiations, a perceptible change occurred in the community's attitude toward the terrorists and in the Agency's relations with the government. This is illustrated by a blatantly seditious speech made by Shertok on 9 June, when he declared that, 'in the near future' the community would 'have to place our political fate in the hands of the Haganah. We shall not allow our work of construction to be destroyed by the Arabs and the "Brits"'.¹ The trial of Mattiyahu Smulevitz, a member of *Lehi*, later that month further underscored this change of mood. Smulevitz was convicted of shooting at a police officer and being found in possession of a handgun, ammunition and a bomb, and was sentenced to death. He thus became the first person to receive the death penalty since the re-imposition of the 1937 Defence Emergency Regulations three months before. Reaction in the *Yishuv*, British army intelligence reported, was characterized by the fact that although 'both press and institutions formerly denounced the terrorists in the strongest terms...there has of late been noticeable both in the press and among the public a strong tendency to condemn the death sentence as harsh and unjustified'. Moreover, it was evident that the *Yishuv* regarded Smulevitz 'as a misguided youth' rather than as a 'criminal, whose actions can be understood when viewed in light of the present tragic circumstances of world Jewry'.² Nor was such sympathy

¹Quoted in PRO FO 921/6 Letter, Robert Scott (Chief Secretary's Office, Jerusalem) to Bennett, 6 July 1944.

²PRO WO 169/15851 Monthly Intelligence Summary No. 32, DSO, HQ Palestine, 1-30 June 1944. See also NARS RG 226 OSS Report L 39462, 30 July 1944. An 'L' or 'XL' prefix to OSS documents indicates that the distribution of such material was restricted to only the U.S. government or military.

limited to Smulevitz's particular case. After the *Irgun's* attack on a district police station and district land registry office in Jerusalem on 14 July, for example, the *Palestine Post* was reported to have justified the attack on the grounds that the terrorists were impelled to commit these outrages "'by the suffering of their people", and the indifference of the Government to those sufferings'.¹

The administration was further angered by the *Yishuv's* tepid response to the attempt on MacMichael's life staged by *Lehi* on 8 August. Renewed pleas for cooperation were met with indifference and inaction.² In a letter to Weizmann, Stanley expressed his concern over the deterioration of relations between the Agency and Palestine Government. 'I am sure you and the other leaders', he added, 'will make it your business to see this co-operation is forthcoming'.³ But these efforts proved fruitless. Once again, British intelligence analysts observed that,

Jewish reaction to the attempt on the High Commissioner showed once more that though the official bodies dislike this type of thing, *they are not* prepared...to co-operate actively with the authorities in the eradication of terrorism....As *usual* vehement condemnations were published in the press, but were coupled with attacks on the inefficiency of the authorities and in particular of the police.⁴

¹PRO FO 921/147 Telegram, MacMichael to Stanley, 27 July 1944.

²On 9 August a communique was issued by the Palestine Government reminding the Jewish public of 'their clear responsibility and duty as citizens to give the Government and the Police every assistance in their power...especially by giving information to the security forces'. PRO WO 201/189, 12 August 1944.

³PRO CO 733/457/75156/151 C Telegram, Stanley to MacMichael, 18 August 1944.

⁴PRO WO 169/15851 Monthly Summary No. 34, DSO, HQ Palestine, 1-31 August 1944.

The attempted assassination of MacMichael occurred shortly before he was to relinquish his post as High Commissioner. Since his successor, Field Marshal Lord Gort, was not due to arrive in Palestine until 31 October, the government was administered in the interim by the Chief Secretary, Shaw. Confronted by the *Yishuv's* continued unwillingness to assist the authorities, he approved the army's plan to cordon off a Jewish population centre and search for terrorists and illegal arms. On 5 September, in what was to be the first of many future "cordon and search" operations, army and police units descended on Petah Tiqva. All entry and exit was prevented and, having already been schematically divided into grid squares, every house on every street was then methodically searched. Suspects apprehended by the army units were brought before teams of police specialists and subjected to rigorous identity checks during an identification parade.¹

Unlike the March/April curfews this more severe measure did not have the same effect on the *Yishuv*. As one intelligence report noted, 'Despite the arrests at Petah Tiqva...further outbreaks of terrorism can be expected. The Jewish population are still prone to regard the terrorists as heroes, although their form of heroism is condemned....The danger of this condonation is obvious'.² To Shaw, the problem lay in, what he described to Stanley, as 'the growth in the numbers of Jewish young men and women who are becoming infected with the gangster virus...[who] are providing recruits for the terrorist organisations'. Seditious attitudes, he argued, had been implanted in the minds of young

¹Bell, *Terror Out of Zion*, p. 120.

²PRO WO 169/15703 PICME Fortnightly Intelligence Summary No. 13, 19 September 1944.

Jews by the 'teaching in Jewish schools, the Youth Movement (unpleasantly reminiscent of Hitler Youth), and the totalitarian organisation and regimentation of Yishuv' imposed by the Jewish Agency. Accordingly, along with 'active recruits, passive sympathisers with the terrorists' aims, even while they doubt the wisdom of their methods, are multiplying'. One possible means to counteract these seditious attitudes, Shaw thought, would be to have the Palestine Government and British military headquarters for the Middle East issue a joint proclamation 'which would roundly condemn terrorism as being sabotage of the general effort of the United Nations and their life-and-death struggle against the worst enemy that Jewry has ever known'.¹

Stanley endorsed the proposal and on 10 October the joint communique was issued. It appealed to the *Yishuv* to cooperate with the authorities pointing out

that Palestine had been saved from the ravages of war by the efforts of the Allied forces, but that now the terrorists were impeding the war effort through their attacks on the security services. The Jewish community were called upon to eradicate this evil from their midst. Verbal condemnation of the outrages was insufficient; actual collaboration with the forces of law and order was required, especially the giving of information leading to the apprehension of the assassins and their accomplices.²

The communique succeeded where previous overtures had failed. Alarmed by the deterioration of Anglo-Zionist relations and its implications on the Cabinet's consideration of partition, Weizmann threw his full weight behind a programme of active cooperation. He summoned Golomb to London, where he explained the disastrous effect that the

¹PRO WO 208/1705 Telegram, Shaw to Stanley, 2 October 1944.

²PRO WO 169/15703 PICME Fortnightly Summary No. 15, 17 October 1944.

Agency's continued refusal to cooperate with the authorities might have on the Cabinet's decision. A chastened Golomb returned to Palestine. Abandoning his earlier objections to cooperation, the *Haganah* commander addressed the *Yishuv* on 18 October. He briefly outlined the nature of his discussion with Weizmann and then declared

through the conviction of my responsibility for the security of the *Yishuv* and the fate of the People, I hereby demand from you:

Go out and fight those demolishers and destroyers, that irresponsible handful of lunatic boys, who play with our fate, and disobey our orders. *Be ready even for bloody sacrifices in this holy war....*

We must immediately liquidate them, and maintain in our country the great peace which has so far given us all our achievements and all our victories.... The English have already become angry, and they might become more angry.

Failure to do so, Golomb continued, would have catastrophic consequences not only for the *Yishuv*, but for European Jewry as well. Immigration to Palestine would be prohibited; those refugees presently interned by Britain in other parts of the Empire would be barred from entering Palestine; while Jews trapped in Europe would have their last hope of salvation closed. Further, a new White Paper would be issued reaffirming the 1939 policy statement and thereby ending consideration of partition. The result would be the establishment of a unitary state in Palestine with a fixed Arab majority/Jewish minority.¹

THE SAISON

Preparations for the implementation of the Agency's counter-terrorist programme, code-named the *Saison* ("Season", as in 'Open Season' of hunting parlance), began almost immediately. On 20 October

¹PRO WO 169/15851 PICME Fortnightly Summary No. 16, 5 November 1944.

170 men selected from the *Palmach*, *Shai* (the *Haganah's* Intelligence Service) and regular *Haganah* units assembled to be briefed on their new assignment and participate in a special training course.¹ Their mission was to apprehend, detain and interrogate suspected terrorists in special *Haganah* detention facilities.² In addition, they would serve as bodyguards for Agency and *Haganah* officials (who might be targeted by the terrorists in retaliation) and for ordinary Jewish businessmen who had been victims of terrorist extortion.³

For tactical reasons, the *Saison's* operations were to be directed only against the *Irgun*. It was feared that if the campaign was simultaneously mounted against the *Irgun* and *Lehi* both groups would be driven into an alliance against the Agency and *Haganah*. Hence, although the *Lehi* attack on MacMichael was the catalyst behind the *Saison* campaign, logic dictated that the full force of its operations should be directed against the numerically superior, better armed and financed *Irgun*. Nevertheless, unrelated political considerations also played a role in this decision.⁴ Accordingly, it was the long-standing political rivalry between the World Zionist Organization (and its administrative arm in Palestine, the Jewish Agency, and the Agency's para-military force, the *Haganah*), on the one hand, and the New Zionist Organization (or, Revisionist Party, and its para-military force, the *Irgun*), on the other, that largely accounted for the *Saison's* sole preoccupation with the *Irgun*.

¹Bauer, *From Diplomacy to Resistance*, p. 324; Borisov, *Palestine Underground*, p. 34; Cohen, 'The Moyne Assassination', 359; and Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, iv, 97-99.

²NARS RG 226 OSS Report 100219, 15 October 1944.

³Bauer, *From Diplomacy to Resistance*, p. 325.

⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 323-324.

Two days later, the Jewish Agency Executive formally approved the *Saison* campaign. Shertok, who had also recently returned from consultations with British and Zionist officials in London, was its most ardent proponent.¹ He argued that the propaganda programme instituted in April had no appreciable effect on the terrorists: not only had their lawless activity continued, but it had escalated to a point where the British might implement the drastic measures earlier alluded to by Golomb. Accordingly, Shertok proposed that,

All organisations and parties under [the Agency's] control should order their members to collect all available information on terrorists and their whereabouts and pass it on to the Agency's Intelligence Department. The main burden would be on the shoulders of the *Haganah*, but the Agency Executive would decide upon the degree of cooperation with the British.²

He was supported by Golomb, who declared that, 'We must endeavour to finish this business without victims, but if it is necessary we will finish it even if it means victims'.³

Not all the members of the Agency Executive were persuaded by these arguments.⁴ Three, in particular, Rabbi Fishman, Itzhak Gruenbaum and Emil Schmorak,⁵ objected to the proposed campaign on the grounds that responsibility for fighting the terrorists rested with the police and not the *Yishuv*. Emphasis, they thought, should instead be given to the Agency's propaganda and educational programmes.⁶ Fishman argued that

¹PRO WO 169/5703 PICME Fortnightly Summary No. 17, 14 November 1944.

²Cohen, 'The Moyne Assassination', 366.

³Quoted in PRO WO 169/5703 PICME No. 17, 14 November 1944.

⁴NARS RG 226 OSS Report 100219, 15 October 1944.

⁵*Ibid*, OSS R&A Report No. 86, 13 November 1944.

⁶PRO WO 169/15703 PICME No. 17, 14 November 1944.

'We shall have voluntarily moved ourselves into the position of slanderers of our own people who, whether they are mad or merely foolish, are nevertheless our brothers...as long as the White Paper exists', he declared, 'those who execute it are our enemies'.¹ A compromise, however, was devised by Ben-Gurion. No information collected by the *Saison* operatives would be given to the police without the express and unanimous consent of the Agency Executive.² On 23 October the *Vaad Leumi* approved the new programme, as did the Inner Zionist Council the following day.³

These developments, however, were superseded by the assassination of Lord Moyne by two members of *Lehi* on 6 November. Ironically, that same day Weizmann had been told by Stanley, 'that unless the Jews could rid themselves of this murderous tail, people like...[the Prime Minister] who had done so much for them in the past would feel relieved of any responsibility in the future'. Weizmann assured him that there would 'no longer be any reservation or hanging back but complete cooperation with the Government in crushing' the terrorists.⁴ Upon learning of the assassination he reiterated this to Churchill personally. Carefully choosing his words, Weizmann wrote

Political crimes of this kind are an especial abomination in that they make it possible to implicate whole communities in the guilt of a few. I can assure you that Palestine Jewry will, as its representative bodies have declared, go to the utmost limit of its power to cut out, root and branch, this evil from its midst.⁵

¹NARS RG 226 OSS Report L 48831, 8 November 1944.

²Cohen, 'The Moyne Assassination', 366.

³PRO WO 169/15703 PICME Report No. 17, 14 November 1944. For the complete text of the statement, see WO 169/15851 Monthly Summary No. 36, DSO, HQ Palestine, 1-31 October 1944.

⁴PRO PREM 4 51/11 Note, Stanley to Churchill, 6 November 1944.

⁵CZA Z 4/14484 Letter, Weizmann to Churchill, 7 November 1944.

The Jewish Agency was also fearful that the *Yishuv* would be punished for the assassination. Within hours of the assassination, an emergency joint session of the Agency and *Vaad Leumi* Executives was held. Ben-Gurion opened the meeting, declaring that, 'The situation is getting worse and we are facing the future in which our name will be execrated'. Shertok criticized his colleagues for failing to take the necessary steps to stop the terrorists sooner. Dismissing their fears of civil war, he argued that such a war 'would be worth while, if it could save our future and salvage our chances, which are now clearly discernible on the political horizon'.¹

Gruenbaum, however, thought that the *Yishuv's* cooperation should be made conditional on the government's complete abrogation of the White Paper. Golomb replied that the danger confronting the *Yishuv* was far too serious to attempt to extract concessions from the British. Continued inaction, he said, would only cause the government to conclude 'that we have not yet earned the right to independence and that it cannot rely on us in this particular corner of the Middle East'. Although Fishman and Schmorak were prepared to countenance independent action by the Agency against the terrorists, they were opposed to any form of cooperation with the government. After much debate, the matter was put to a vote: ten members supported full cooperation; five the Fishman/Schmorak course; with only Gruenbaum voting for his own option.² The joint statement that emerged from the meeting stated:

¹PRO CO 733/457/75156 PPF, CID Report, 14 November 1944.

²*Ibid.*

Terrorism in Palestine is calculated to wreck the chances of our political struggle and destroy our internal peace. The Yishuv is called upon to cast out the members of this destructive band, to deprive them of all refuge and shelter, to resist their threats and to render all necessary assistance to the authorities in the prevention of terrorist acts, and in the eradication of the terrorist organisation. Our very existence is here at stake.¹

British officials in Palestine, however, refused to believe that the Agency would actually implement the anti-terrorist campaign. According to Christian Steger, the American Consul-General in Jerusalem, they cited the fact that, however much the *Yishuv* abhors the terrorists' 'methods', a majority nevertheless 'sympathize with the [terrorists'] aims'. Consequently, 'although they would not willingly assist or abet them in terrorist acts, they would...not be willing to betray them to the authorities'. The Jewish Agency, the British contended, would therefore retreat from ordering the *Yishuv* to assist the authorities for fear that this 'might well alienate many Jews. This would not only threaten the authority of the leaders, but might easily go so far as to result in civil strife, with violence, among the Jews themselves'.²

Meanwhile, pressure was building for the enactment of some punitive measure against the *Yishuv* in the wake of Moyne's assassination. On 8 November Stanley told Gort, 'Now that it has been determined that the assailants are Jews from Palestine, it is clear that His Majesty's Government will be faced with a strong public demand to take drastic action to assert their authority'. He urged Gort to investigate the possibilities of punishing the *Yishuv* by suspending Jewish immigration

¹CZA Z 4/14484 Statement of the Executives of the Jewish Agency and Vaad Leumi, 7 November 1944.

²NARS RG 59 867N.00/11-944 Letter, Steger to Secretary of State, Washington, D.C., 9 November 1944.

to Palestine and mounting searches for illegal arms.¹ Although Gort agreed with the logic of Stanley's suggestions, he did not think that arms searches were a practical option. He pointed to the diversion of troops from the war in Europe to Palestine that the searches would entail and uncertainty of success. Instead, he proposed that the government should publicly declare that if cooperation from the *Yishuv* was not forthcoming, the British would have no choice but to carry out the searches.²

The Cabinet agreed with Gort's assessment, but nevertheless thought that something more forceful was required. Although it was agreed that some punitive measure should be taken, there was less agreement on either the form this punishment should take or against whom it should be directed. Ideally, any reprisal should be exacted upon the persons who were actually responsible for Moyne's murder: but the clandestine nature of terrorism made it impossible for the government to single out just the guilty for retribution without punishing the entire *Yishuv*. In addition, the Jewish Agency had re-affirmed its determination to assist the police in fighting the terrorists. For this reason, Churchill opposed suspending immigration, arguing that to do so would 'play into the hands of the extremists, and reduce the efforts being made by the Jews themselves to suppress the terrorists'. The Cabinet therefore decided that Gort should be instructed to include in his statement 'a warning that, failing an improvement in the situation, it might be necessary for us to consider the suspension of Jewish immigration'.³

¹PRO CO 733/466/75998/6 Telegram, Gort to Stanley, 10 November 1944.

²*Ibid.*, Gort to Stanley, 10 November 1944.

³PRO FO 371/40128 E7068/17/31 Cabinet W.M. 149 (44), 13 November 1944.

As far as British officials in Cairo were concerned, the issuance of threats was inadequate. They were convinced that harsh punitive action against the *Yishuv* was the only way both to put an end to Jewish terrorism and, equally importantly, assuage Arab opinion and maintain Britain's prestige throughout the Middle East. Brigadier Clayton, Moyne's adviser on Arab affairs, was adamant. He maintained that

Each success is bound to encourage the terrorist organisations and to strengthen their hold on the imagination and support of Jewish youth in Palestine. They see that the British authorities in the Middle East stop short of drastic measures to prevent and punish such outrages, to break up the organisations behind them, and to silence those responsible for encouraging extreme Jewish nationalist claims.

Accordingly, Clayton pressed for the adoption by the government of a programme to obtain the unqualified cooperation of the *Yishuv*. His idea was based on the suspension of Jewish immigration to Palestine and rejection of Zionist claims to statehood until evidence of the *Yishuv*'s commitment to provide such assistance was provided along with a massive public relations campaign in Britain and the United States to inform the public of the lawless situation in Palestine. 'Without such decisions from London', he concluded, 'the hands of the British authorities in the Middle East will be tied. There is every probability in those circumstances that the Jewish campaign of assassination will continue'.¹

Clayton's proposal was seconded by Sir Walter Smart, Counsellor to the British Embassy in Cairo, who similarly contended that only such severe measures would produce the desired results.² Their meeting with Weizmann on 16 November failed to persuade either official to modify his

¹PRO FO 141/1001 1546/12/44G Memorandum by Clayton, 14 November 1944.

²*Ibid.*, Minute by Smart, 16 November 1944.

opinion. Clayton commented that Weizmann 'was obviously earnest over the need for action against the terrorists, but gave no indication as to whether such action would be *in support* of the authorities, or, as previously suggested by the Jewish Agency, independent action by themselves'; while Smart caustically observed that Weizmann 'has always posed as a moderate, having great difficulties in controlling Jewish extremists. By this attitude he has managed to get a great deal across the British Government. If the Jewish Agency really wished to do so, they could squash the terrorist movement in co-operation with us'.¹

Nevertheless, Churchill remained opposed to including in his statement to Parliament concerning the assassination the threat to suspend immigration. He explained his decision to Stanley, pointing out, 'Will not suspension of immigration or a threat of suspension play into the hands of the Extremists?'. This might prove counter-productive since 'the Jews generally seem to have been shocked by Lord Moyne's death into a mood in which they are more likely to listen to Dr. Weizmann's counsels of moderation'. Accordingly, the Prime Minister believed that any threats regarding immigration

would come as a shock of a different kind and, so far from increasing their penitence may well provoke a not unwelcome diversion and excite bitter outcry against the Government....Thus those responsible for the murder will be themselves the gainers. It may well unite the whole forces of Zionism and even Jewry throughout the world against us instead of against the terrorist bands.

Instead, Churchill favoured the adoption of some 'signal action' that would 'be more clearly directed against that section of the community

¹*Ibid.*, 27/4/44G Minutes by Smart and Clayton, 16 November 1944.

with whom the responsibility lies': namely stricter enforcement of the 'more drastic penalties' already in force against lawbreakers.¹

On 17 November, the Prime Minister addressed the House of Commons. He stated that the 'shameful' assassination of Lord Moyne

has affected none more strongly than those, like myself, who, in the past, have been consistent friends of the Jews and constant architects of their future.

If our dreams for Zionism are to end in the smoke of assassins' pistols and our labours for its future to produce only a new set of gangsters worthy of Nazi Germany, many like myself will have to reconsider the position we have maintained so consistently and so long in the past.

If there is to be any hope of a peaceful and successful future for Zionism, these wicked activities must cease, and those responsible for them must be destroyed root and branch.

In conclusion, Churchill demanded 'the wholehearted cooperation of the entire Jewish community' and, quoting from a portion of the joint statement issued by the Jewish Agency Executive and *Vaad Leumi* on 7 November, he declared, 'These are strong words, but we must wait for these words to be translated into deeds. We must wait to see that, not only the leaders, but every man, woman and child of the Jewish community does his or her best to bring this terrorism to a speedy end'.²

The Prime Minister's concerns were not unjustified.³ Although the Agency leadership had approved the anti-terrorist programme, the rank-and-file membership had yet to confirm it. Further, the same cleavages which had emerged during the two executive bodies' vote a week earlier

¹PRO CAB 127/270 Note, Churchill to Stanley, 17 November 1944.

²Debates, House of Commons, vol. 404, col. 2242, 17 November 1944.

³Churchill in fact was quite correct regarding this matter. Already editorials had appeared in the Jewish press in Palestine lobbying against any suspension of immigration on the ground that it would punish the entire *Yishuv* for the misdeeds of a small minority within its ranks. See PRO FO 921/154 6(9)/44/128 Minutes by Bennett and M. I. Hamilton, 22 November 1944.

permeated the lower echelon as well. The dispute came to a head during the opening session of the Sixth Plenary Conference of the *Histadrut* on 20 November. Shertok, it was reported, 'made a forceful plea for all-out measures against terrorism', advocating cooperation with the Government, reasoning, since 'the Jewish community lacked essential means for the struggle it should turn to those possessing them'.¹

Ben-Gurion urged approval as well:

It would be stupid and suicidal if, because of our just grievances in other spheres against the country's existing regime, we should refrain from accepting its help and from helping it in fields where we have, to the extent that we have, a common interest....Without helping the authorities and without being helped by them we shall not succeed in destroying this plague'.²

Essentially, cooperation boiled down to a practical proposition: it was the only means, so the Agency leadership believed, to prevent the seizure of the *Haganah's* own arms caches by the British should the government decide to mount the feared searches.³ Moreover, senior Agency and *Haganah* officials had also concluded that the *Yishuv* quite simply lacked the detention facilities required to intern the hundreds of terrorists that were to be apprehended.⁴

During the following day's session Ben-Gurion enunciated the four central points of the Agency's counter-terrorist programme:

- a) To eject all terrorist elements from offices, workshops, schools and homes.

¹NARS RG 226 OSS Report 107581, 8 December 1944.

²Quoted in Brenner, 'The "Stern Gang"', 14.

³Cohen, 'The Moyne Assassination', 370.

⁴Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, iv, 96-97.

- b) To refuse sanctuary and shelter to terrorists and drive them from their hide-outs.
- c) To resist threats and attempts at extortion.
- d) To assist the authorities by information in detecting terrorists and disbanding their organizations.¹

'We cannot fight terrorism by condemnation alone', he declared. 'For people whose only argument is dynamite, persuasion is useless. We need drastic action to wipe out terrorism'.² The plan sparked a heated debate between the factions supporting and opposing cooperation.³ Ben-Gurion countered that, 'To England terrorist acts like the murder of Lord Moyne are similar to a fly stinging a lion, but to Jewry it is a dagger plunged at the heart'.⁴ On 22 November, the conference approved the plan.⁵

The new anti-terrorist programme was inaugurated four days later when posters, calling on the *Yishuv* to shun the *Irgun* and deny its members all forms of support and sanctuary, were distributed throughout Palestine. By 27 November 58 terrorists had already been arrested by the *Saison* teams.⁶ It is interesting to note that the operations were directed solely against the *Irgun* and *not* against *Lehi* who, by

¹NARS RG 226 OSS Report 107581, 8 December 1944.

²*Ibid.*

³*Ibid.*, OSS 097.3 Z1092 R&A Report No. 1090.86, 13 [sic] November 1944, and *Ibid.*, OSS Report L 49680, 21 November 1944.

⁴PRO PREM 4 51/11 containing 'Active Measures Against Terrorists: Mr. Ben-Gurion's programme' in *Zionist Review*, 24 November 1944.

⁵NARS RG 226 OSS Report 107581, 8 December 1944. British intelligence had predicted this occurrence nine months earlier when they had forecast 'that the culmination of the outrages may take [the] form either of an attempt on the life of a person of importance in the Administration or of some kind [of] demonstration of force. This would not suit the book [of] the Jewish Agency in any way'. See PRO WO 169/15851 Monthly Summary No. 28, 1-29 February 1944.

⁶*Ibid.*, OSS Report 107581, 8 December 1944.

assassinating Moyne, had cemented the Agency's decision to declare an all-out war on terrorism in cooperation with the authorities.

Ostensibly, the reason for this was the understanding reached between the *Haganah* and *Lehi* shortly after Moyne's assassination.

Friedmann-Yellin, one of the members of the *Lehi* high command, had promised Golomb that the group would suspend operations 'until sentence was passed on Lord Moyne's assassins so as not to prejudice their chance of a pardon'.¹ From the *Haganah's* and Agency's point of view, however, tactical considerations alone do not explain the reason for *Lehi's* exclusion from the new anti-terrorist campaign: rather, it was the intractable political rivalry of the Revisionist and socialist Zionists and their respective military formations.

The *Irgun* was aware of the Agency's motives. Although its members wanted to retaliate against the *Haganah* and the Agency, Begin refused to listen to their cries for vengeance. He later recalled that, 'Not logic, but instinct said imperatively: "No; not civil war. Not that at any price"'. In his memoirs, Begin explains

We decided not to suspend, nor promise to suspend, our struggle against British rule; yet at the same time we declined to retaliate for the kidnappings, the denunciations and the handing-over of our men. Neither as individuals nor as an organization....

[We] were moved by faith, a profound faith that believed the day was not far distant when all the armed camps in Israel would stand and fight shoulder to shoulder against the oppressor. In that hope and with that faith, we said, it was worthwhile enduring grievous suffering.²

¹Brenner, 'The "Stern Gang"', 14-15. See also Bauer, *From Diplomacy to Resistance*, pp. 329-330; Begin, *The Revolt*, pp. 150-151; Frank, *The Deed*, pp. 152-153; and Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, iv, 96-98.

²Begin, *The Revolt*, p. 152.

On 18 November, Begin issued the following order to the group:

We are passing through a difficult time now....At a time when we are fighting desperately against the external enemy, the "forces of defeat" try to involve us in another struggle, an internal fight. But we will not allow them to drag us into this struggle....

Remember the forces of defeatism are making efforts to suppress us in a short time. If we will come through this period we will again take up our assault against our external enemy with more strength.¹

THE GOVERNMENT'S REACTION

The British, however, remained sceptical of the Agency's determination to persevere with the *Saison*. On 20 November Gort pessimistically noted,

During the short period I have been here, I have formed the impression that the Jewish Agency is always attempting to escape from its obligations and duties by attempting to pin the blame for terrorist activities on to Irgun Zvai Leumi, the Stern Group, &c [sic]....The issue for Zionism today is clear cut, it is whether the Jewish Agency can regain control it has lost or whether the smoke of the assassins' pistols will win the day.²

Three days later Stanley submitted a memorandum to the Cabinet detailing the views of the Middle East Committee Defence, the High Commissioner and the Chiefs of Staff. 'There is a widespread feeling in the Middle East', he explained, 'that this shocking crime should not be allowed to pass without some striking reaction on the part of His Majesty's Government which may serve not only to prevent further outrages in the future, but also to maintain British prestige throughout that part of the world'.³

¹Appeal to National Military Organization Soldiers of 18 November 1944, quoted in NARS RG 226 OSS Report 121721, 22 March 1945.

²PRO FO 921/154 Telegram, Gort to Stanley, 20 November 1944.

³PRO FO 371/40138 E7503/95/31 Cabinet W.P. (44) 678, 23 November 1944.

Stanley, however, expressed his own view that 'there are signs that, although there may not be one hundred percent support for the Government, there is now an increasing desire on the part of the responsible leaders to take effective action'. Accordingly, he was loath to endorse the harsh measures advocated by Middle Eastern Defence Committee for fear that they might alienate the *Yishuv* and counter-act its willingness to cooperate with the authorities. With regard to suspending immigration, Stanley thought that the best course was to 'impress...on Palestine Jewry that, if further outrages occur, His Majesty's Government will be forced to take drastic action and even divert elsewhere immigrants destined for Palestine until more settled conditions can be re-established there'. As far as searches for illegal arms were concerned, he agreed with the COS's objections to such action because of the necessity of re-deploying troops from Europe and the uncertain prospects of its success.¹ Hence, Stanley thought that the alternative mooted by Gort 'that adequate forces should be moved into Palestine as soon as practicable, but that they should not be used for wholesale arms searches there unless further outrages occur', was the best option to adopt under the circumstances.²

During the Cabinet's meeting on 22 November Churchill had articulated his view of the situation: 'It was for the Zionists to satisfy us that they proposed to take effective steps. If that were not the case, we might, however reluctantly, be driven to consider the

¹See PRO CO 733/466/75998/6 Minutes of Joint Planning Staff J.P. (44) 86, 15 November 1944.

²PRO FO 371/40138 E7503/95/31 Cabinet W.P. (44) 678, 23 November 1944.

suspension of immigration despite the arguments against this course'.¹ When the Cabinet met two days later the point was raised that, 'a warning that we had it in mind to suspend immigration if outrages did not stop, might play into the hands of Extremist elements which were anxious to force the issue'. Moreover, the fact that, 'There seemed to be substantial support and sympathy for our position not only from the soberer Jewish elements in Palestine but from world Jewry', supported the Prime Minister's position against such a warning. 'Was it wise to risk forfeiting that, and possibly giving rise to an active campaign of misrepresentation in the U.S.A., by taking any action until it was clear that no effective collaboration could be looked for from the Jewish Agency?'. The Cabinet thought not and decided that no *public* warning regarding the suspension of immigration should be issued. Gort, however, was directed to speak privately with Weizmann and inform him that, 'A continuance of terrorist activities would clearly lead to a position in which immigration would have to be suspended; he knew that this matter had been under consideration by H.M. Government and such a course might well have to be adopted if the outrages continued'. The Cabinet also concluded that, 'No systematic searches for arms should, however, at this stage be undertaken'.²

On 28 November Gort complained to Stanley that there was still no sign that the Agency was acting to fulfil its promises to deal firmly with the terrorists. 'Since the murder of Lord Moyne', he stated, 'there has been no cause to complain of the overt attitude of the Agency and Vaad Leumi leaders, but no real proof has yet been displayed of the will

¹PRO CAB 65/44 W.M. (44) 153, 22 November 1944.

²PRO CAB 65/48 W.M. (44) 155, 24 November 1944.

and ability to regain control'.¹ Later that same day, he explained that, although 'Jewish opinion is belatedly aroused against terrorists...even now certain representative leaders have reservations. Main emphasis is upon possible disastrous consequences of terrorism to Zionism, rather than moral or civic duty'.² Two days later Gort again cited the reluctance of the Jewish leaders to carry out their pledge. In the three weeks since Moyne's assassination, he reported,

it is already evident that they believe the tension is easing....After a short period of acute alarm, there are signs that they are beginning to believe that they have "gotten away with it", and that they will be able to preserve...their internal unity and armed strength intact against the day when the use of force to achieve their major aims is deemed appropriate.³

His anxieties were echoed in both British and American military intelligence analyses of the situation in Palestine. British intelligence officers related that, 'Anti-terrorist propaganda from Zionist sources continues to be issued...but it is clear that in the near future the Agency must reinforce their words with some form of action'.⁴ American analysts observed that, although

There are indications that the Agency and many other leading Jews are at least aware that something more than expressions of horror and regret must be done...all attempts to implement action have led to a dilemma[:]

- a. If the Jews cooperate with the British they feel they are betraying fellow Jews.

¹PRO CO 733/456/75156/143/43 Telegram, Gort to Stanley, 28 November 1944.

²PRO FO 921/147 Telegram, Gort to Stanley, 28 November 1944.

³PRO AIR 20/4962 Telegram, Gort to Stanley, 1 December 1944.

⁴PRO WO 169/15851 Fortnightly Summary No. 93 DSO, HQ Palestine, 3 December 1944.

b. If they use their own illegal Haganah to effect arrests and concealment of terrorists, they destroy internal solidarity and threaten to unmask the Haganah organization.

The position of the Jewish Agency is somewhat unenviable. It is faced with the necessity of acting decisively, yet finds itself weakened by dissension within the ranks and by fear of reprisals [from the terrorists].¹

Similarly, OSS officers noted that, while the *Yishuv* readily 'condemns the actions of the Irgun it is still...not ready to assist the government'.²

In accordance with the Cabinet's directive, Gort met with Weizmann on 7 December and transmitted to him the warning that the Agency's failure to take effective action against the terrorists might lead to a suspension of immigration. Weizmann was 'shocked' by this threat: assuring Gort 'that they were doing everything, so far as it lay in their power, to eradicate the terrorists'.³ Weizmann was so disturbed by the conversation that he wrote to Churchill the following day to elaborate the steps taken by the Agency against the terrorists. He stated that, '500 names of suspects have already been supplied to the police as a result of which over 250 have been arrested'. Although, 'It is of course impossible to venture any forecasts in dealing with secret organisations, it is confidently believed that severe blows have already been dealt to them and there is every determination to persevere with the campaign until decisive results are achieved'. He took this opportunity to caution the Prime Minister once again that,

¹NARS RG 226 OSS Report 106212, 1 December 1944.

²*Ibid.*, OSS Report 107581, 8 December 1944.

³PRO PREM 4 52/3 Telegram, Gort to Stanley, 7 December 1944.

The imposition of sanctions by the Government on the Jewish community as a whole[,] especially in the matter of immigration, and at a time when reports pour in daily of continued slaughter of Jews in enemy occupied Europe and acute suffering in its liberated parts, would have a disastrous effect on Jewish feeling, might render more difficult the anti-terrorist campaign, and generally cause irreparable harm.¹

The first indication that the *Haganah* had actively commenced operations against the terrorists appeared in a British Army intelligence report of 17 December.² Even so doubts remained among government and police officials of the Agency's sincerity to press ahead with the campaign. On 22 December Shaw wrote to Sir Arthur Dawe, the Assistant Under-Secretary in the Colonial Office. He stated that since September the Agency had given the police the names of 561 suspected terrorists. The police were able to locate and arrest 284 of them: 37 suspects, however, had been freed because of insufficient evidence; 28 others were 'released under police supervision'; hence, only 219 suspects had in fact been detained. Moreover, the information given to the police 'did not include particulars of any *leading* terrorists; rather, the names seem to have been taken from old records and relate to unimportant members of the illegal organisations'. When the Agency's liaison officer was confronted with this fact, he 'pleaded ignorance of the identity of most of the really important terrorists who are wanted'. Accordingly, the officer 'was supplied with a list (including a number of photographs) of some 56 men whom the C.I.D. consider to be the "cream" of the *Irgun* and *Lehi*. Three weeks have elapsed since then,

¹*Ibid.*, Telegram, Gort to Stanley, 8 December 1944.

²PRO WO 169/15851 Fortnightly Intelligence Summary No. 94, 17 December 1944.

Shaw dismally related, and 'only one of the 56 men have been arrested as a result of Agency information'.¹

The situation, Shaw admitted, had begun to improve with 'the arrest of several known terrorists and within [the] last few days the second-in-command of the Irgun was arrested,² following information given by the Agency'. But, despite these new developments 'the fact remains that the terrorist leaders are for the most part still untouched'. In addition, the police 'are convinced that the Agency knows the whereabouts of many of these leaders and could give more frank information if they wished...and that the C.I.D. is being rationed only with what the Agency considers (after careful sorting out) should be passed on'. In conclusion, the Chief Secretary explained that,

This letter is an attempt to give you a fair and objective view of the situation in respect of "co-operation" because much song and dance will be made about it if and when it suits the Jewish Agency to pipe up the band on that score...it is not 100% sincere: it is controlled by a careful policy of ca'canny and it is political in motive.³

Even so, at least one official in the Colonial Office was less inclined to criticize the Agency's performance. C. G. Eastwood, for example, thought that Shaw 'is a bit hard on the Agency':

¹PRO CO 733/457/75156/151 J Letter, Shaw to Dawe, 22 December 1944.

²This was Eliahu Lankin, the commander of the *Irgun* detachment in Jerusalem and the member of the group's high command 'in charge of administration and organization'. He was captured on 14 December 1944. See NARS RG 226 OSS Report 121721, 22 March 1945, and Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, iv, 108-109.

³PRO CO 733/457/75156/151 J, Letter, Shaw to Dawe, 22 December 1944. Identical opinions were expressed by Gort and British intelligence officers. See *Ibid.*, Gort to Stanley, 30 December 1944, and PRO WO 169/19592 Monthly Record of Political Situation In The Middle East, 1 January 1945.

You can't create overnight the habit of co-operation with someone whom you have long regarded as not far short of an enemy. And no doubt...the Agency would greatly prefer that information should come through them and not be given directly by members of the public to Government. While anxious to do down the terrorists and for that purpose to co-operate with Government, they are not anxious to surrender any part of their imperium in imperio which they have established over Palestine Jewry.¹

A similar assessment was rendered a week later by OSS analysts.

'Small groups of terrorists', they commented, 'would be delivered over to the authorities...if such action were possible, but there are apparently few Jewish people in Palestine who really know who the terrorists are'. Complaints by the Agency of the *government's* uncooperative attitude towards the *Yishuv's* anti-terrorist measures were also cited by the OSS. Jewish officials contended that the administration 'does not seem willing to allow members of the Jewish Agency or their representatives to track down the terrorists with the necessary methods and weapons'.² British intelligence officers also called attention to these allegations, noting

a marked tendency for ostensibly anti-terrorist pamphlets to become increasingly anti-Government. The administration is blamed not only for this alleged failure to cooperate with the Jewish institution in the eradication of terrorism, but for the encouragement of terrorist acts by its policy, both unintentionally and deliberately.³

¹PRO CO 733/457/75156/151 J, Minute by Eastwood, 9 January 1945.

²NARS RG 226 OSS Report 11496, 13 January 1945.

³PRO WO 169/19758 Fortnightly Summary No. 96, DSO, HQ Palestine, 14 January 1945. See also *Ibid.*, No. 97, 28 January 1945.

At the same time the alleged success of the *Saison* campaign was trumpeted both in the Jewish press and by the Agency as well. On 10 January, for example, an editorial in the *Palestine Post* declared that,

The leaders of Palestine Jewry have more than once denounced the terrorist outrages as the very denial of the spirit which informs their activities and institutions in the country. Their vehement denunciation have since been made good by deeds. If, as appearances would seem to indicate, the back of the terrorist organisation has been broken, this is in no small measure due to the active opposition and the moral isolation which these groups have met in their communities.¹

The Agency attempted to back up such claims, maintaining that '95% of the arrests of terrorists in Palestine have resulted from information given by the Jewish Agency'.² However, American intelligence analysts thought this figure was greatly exaggerated.³ Even so, their British counterparts were forced to admit that, since the *Saison* began, there had in fact been no new terrorist outrages.⁴

THE END OF THE SAISON

At the end of the month, however, a new dispute arose between the Palestine Government and the Jewish Agency regarding the anti-terrorist campaign. Hitherto, the Agency had been criticized by British officials for its alleged half-hearted prosecution of the *Saison*. Ironically, this criticism was now supplanted by genuine concern over the methods

¹Quoted in NARS RG 226 OSS Report L 52732, 27 January 1945.

²*Ibid.*

³*Ibid.*, OSS Report 113511, 16 January 1945; *Ibid.*, OSS Report 114279, 1 February 1945; and *Ibid.*, OSS Report 122540, 21 March 1945.

⁴PRO WO 169/19758 Fortnightly Summary No. 97, DSO, HQ Palestine, 28 January 1945.

employed by the Agency to combat the terrorists and by a belated, but nonetheless disturbing, awareness of the campaign's ulterior motive. On 31 January Gort reported that, 'a disturbing outbreak of kidnapping which bears the stamp of Jewish institutions conducting their own anti-terrorist campaign...[namely] that some inter-faction vendettas are being worked off at the same time. This is a sinister development'.¹

The High Commissioner's dismay was repeated in American and British intelligence reports. Four days earlier OSS officers had stated that, of the seven persons recently arrested by *Saison* operatives, none were believed to have any connection with the *Irgun*.² Not long afterwards PICME analysts concluded 'that this anti-terrorist activity is being used to cloak the execution of some inter-faction vendettas'.³ The police, in fact, had already become so disturbed by the abductions that, on 30 January, the Agency was ordered to cease all kidnapping of terrorists and suspected terrorists and to surrender to the authorities all persons seized by the *Saison* units.⁴ On 1 March these demands were repeated by the Palestine Government. Both Gort and Shaw respectively apprised Weizmann and Shertok of the government's 'disapprobation of these methods and...[of its] determination to put a stop to them'.⁵

¹PRO CO 733/456/75156/143/43 Telegram, Gort to Stanley, 31 January 1945.

²NARS RG 226 OSS Report XL 5863, 27 January 1945.

³PRO WO 169/19592 PICME Fortnightly Summary No. 23, 6 February 1945.

⁴PRO WO 169/19758 Monthly Summary No. 40. DSO, HQ Palestine, 1-28 February 1945.

⁵PRO CO 733/457/75156/151 J Telegram, Gort to Hall, 1 March 1945.

That same day Gort detailed to Stanley the results of the Agency's anti-terrorist drive. 'Since review given in Shaw's letter to Dawe of 22nd December 1944', he stated, 'Agency collaboration has continued and in some respects has improved in quality'. During the past six months, the Agency had provided the authorities with the names of 830 suspected terrorists: the police, however, had been able to locate, and arrest, only 357 of them. Although 341 had been detained, the High Commissioner pointed out that the lists of suspects furnished by the Agency 'include many persons unconnected with terrorism but politically objectionable to Agency'. This made it difficult for the police to 'separat[e the] sheep from [the] goats'. In addition, the Agency remained 'reluctant to produce detailed information, e.g. actual Irgun records from which [the Agency] claim that their lists of suspects are made up...[and which therefore] deprives police of potentially useful information'.¹

The majority of Gort's summation, however, was devoted to a reiteration of his disapproval of the *Saison's* abduction tactics. The 'most deplorable feature of Agency "collaboration"', he emphasized, 'has been [the] wave of kidnappings....Agency have admitted responsibility unofficially but claim that their methods of interrogation are superior to those of police and that the latter receive benefit of results'. When informed of the administration's objections to these tactics, Jewish leaders

¹*Ibid.* Even the arrest of Yaacov Meridor, the second-in-command of the *Irgun*, on 13 February, as a result of information provided to the police by the Agency, failed to mitigate British objections to the *Saison*. See Yaacov Meridor, *Long Is The Road To Freedom* (Johannesburg, 1955), p. 3; NARS RG 226 OSS Report 11706, 17 February 1945; and PRO WO 169/19758 Monthly Summary No. 40, DSO, HQ Palestine, 1-28 February 1945.

have maintained an attitude of slightly embarrassed deprecation towards kidnappings. Shertok when taxed in conversation about Haganah's responsibility for abductions did not contest facts but hinted that such unbecoming methods had to be tolerated in the interests of the Yishuv's security.... In the event, it appears that he was wrong, seeing that the kidnappings have in fact ceased.

The High Commissioner stated that the Agency 'have now declared that the kidnappings are at an end'. Consequently, all of the persons 'abducted' by the *Saison* units had been 'safely' released--although they were 'more or less the worse for wear'. In conclusion, Gort lamented that, 'Relations between police and Agency "security" officials are still far from basis of mutual confidence'.¹

Dissension within the *Yishuv* itself over the kidnappings had also influenced the Agency's decision to suspend this practice.² As early as January, only a month after the *Saison* began, British Army Intelligence had noted that

Those members of the public who are not fanatical supporters of the Jewish Agency are reported to be alarmed at the number of abductions carried out by the Haganah. Although many are satisfied with this proof that the Yishuv does not need the assistance of Government in enforcing discipline, the question is being asked whether the Haganah's methods will not be abused in the future, and the precedent is viewed with some misgiving. It is already alleged in some quarters that a number of the kidnapped persons are purely political opponents of the Agency, without any terrorist connections.

In addition, the absence of any new terrorist outrages since Moyne's assassination, 'has caused the first enthusiasm not only of the general public but, it is reported, of a number of Agency personnel, to wane'.³

¹*Ibid.*

²PRO WO 169/19592 PICME Fortnightly Summary No. 23, 6 February 1945.

³PRO WO 169/19758 Fortnightly Summary No. 97, DSO, HQ Palestine, 28 January 1945.

This conclusion was substantiated by the dramatic change of opinion in the Jewish press. Toward the end of January, the OSS observed, editorials had appeared which not only condemned the abductions, but reproached the Agency for its alleged maintenance of 'illegal prison[s] with torture chambers' and use of so-called 'Gestapo methods'.¹ One elected, non-Agency, official, Israel Rokach, the mayor of Tel Aviv, had reportedly gone so far as to call for 'the formation of counter-counter terrorist squads to protect the civic rights of Jewish citizens'.²

Accordingly, by April, the *Saison* was beginning to lose momentum. A number of factors, apart from diminishing public support for the campaign and government objections to the abductions, combined to dampen the Agency's ardour to carry on the struggle against the terrorists. Foremost was the simple fact that while the *Irgun* had been seriously damaged by the *Saison*, it had clearly not been destroyed.³ In addition, members of the *Haganah* had begun to express their distaste at being cast in the role of police informers.⁴ A 'high-ranking intelligence officer of the Haganah', for example, told OSS officers that 'the rank and file of Haganah members do not approve of acting as informants for the police'.⁵ Finally, as the end of the war in Europe neared, and tragedy that had befallen European Jewry was driven home by the seemingly endless litany of horror stories emerging from the newly liberated

¹NARS RG 226 OSS Report XL 5863, 27 January 1945.

²PRO WO 169/19758 Monthly Summary No. 40, DSO, HQ Palestine, 1-28 February 1945.

³Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, iv, 116-117, and Yehuda Bauer, 'From Cooperation to Resistance', 203-204.

⁴CZA S 25/6202 Interview between Assistant Inspector-General of Police, Arthur Giles and Teddy Kollek, 18 June 1945, and PRO WO 169/19592 PICME Fortnightly Summary No. 28, 17 April 1945.

⁵NARS RG 84 Political Affairs, Palestine 800, Box 150, 8 June 1945, containing OSS R&D Branch Field Memorandum 253, Cairo, April 1945.

death-camps, the *Yishuv* was preoccupied less by the need to eliminate the terrorists than with 'the absence of any measures to transfer the Jews of Europe to Palestine'.¹

In May the *Irgun* recommenced operations against the British. On 12 May several remote-controlled mortars aimed at the government offices and military headquarters in the King David Hotel and at the Government Printing Office in Jerusalem, as well as against a police station in Sarona, were discovered and dismantled by the police. The following week, however, automatic explosive charges affixed by the group to telegraph poles throughout the country were successfully detonated along with an identical battery of mortars directed against the same police station at Sarona and a sister post in Jaffa. An attempt to dynamite the Kirkuk (Iraq)-Haifa oil pipeline was subsequently foiled when the explosive devices were detected and defused by a *Haganah* unit that had stumbled upon them.² Then, on 14 May, an ominous warning was issued by the *Irgun* in English, Arabic and Hebrew. It stated:

1. The Government of Oppression should WITHOUT ANY DELAY evacuate children, women, civilian persons and officials from all its offices, buildings, dwelling places etc. throughout the country.

2. The civilian population, Hebrews, Arabs, and others are asked, for their own sake, to abstain from now until the warning is recalled, from visiting or nearing Government offices, etc.

YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED!³

¹PRO CO 537/1828 Memorandum By The Government of Palestine: Running Diary of Political Developments in Palestine From 1 January-31 December 1945, 24 April 1946.

²Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, iv, 162-164.

³*Ibid.*, 163, and PRO WO 169/19744 Intelligence Summary No. 1, HQ Palestine, 19 May 1945.

death-camps, the *Yishuv* was preoccupied less by the need to eliminate the terrorists than with 'the absence of any measures to transfer the Jews of Europe to Palestine'.¹

In May the *Irgun* recommenced operations against the British. On 12 May several remote-controlled mortars aimed at the government offices and military headquarters in the King David Hotel and at the Government Printing Office in Jerusalem, as well as against a police station in Sarona, were discovered and dismantled by the police. The following week, however, automatic explosive charges affixed by the group to telegraph poles throughout the country were successfully detonated along with an identical battery of mortars directed against the same police station at Sarona and a sister post in Jaffa. An attempt to dynamite the Kirkuk (Iraq)-Haifa oil pipeline was subsequently foiled when the explosive devices were detected and defused by a *Haganah* unit that had stumbled upon them.² Then, on 14 May, an ominous warning was issued by the *Irgun* in English, Arabic and Hebrew. It stated:

1. The Government of Oppression should WITHOUT ANY DELAY evacuate children, women, civilian persons and officials from all its offices, buildings, dwelling places etc. throughout the country.

2. The civilian population, Hebrews, Arabs, and others are asked, for their own sake, to abstain from now until the warning is recalled, from visiting or nearing Government offices, etc.

YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED!³

¹PRO CO 537/1828 Memorandum By The Government of Palestine: Running Diary of Political Developments in Palestine From 1 January-31 December 1945, 24 April 1946.

²Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, iv, 162-164.

³*Ibid.*, 163, and PRO WO 169/19744 Intelligence Summary No. 1, HQ Palestine, 19 May 1945.

The British were understandably alarmed by these developments. On 16 May, Shertok was summoned to a meeting by Robert Scott, the Acting Chief Secretary. He was bluntly informed that

In the event of [any] new outbreak [of violence], public opinion in Great Britain from Prime Minister downwards would not differentiate between the activities of [the *Irgun*] or Haganah or Yishuv in general[; that the] High Commissioner was prepared to resort to very dramatic measures if faced with [a] new wave of terrorism[; and that he] was therefore looking forward to [the Agency] doing everything possible to prevent [this calamitous] course.

Two days earlier Shertok had written to Shaw, 'renewing [the Agency's] offer made in [the] past[,] and rejected[,] to enrol special squads which would be at the disposal of the Inspector-General of Police for guarding targets of terrorist activity and otherwise assist in anti-terrorist campaign'. Calling Scott's attention to this offer, Shertok asserted that the Agency 'had assisted and were determined to continue to assist in stamping out terrorism to [the] utmost of [its] ability'. 'Unorthodox methods' had indeed been resorted to, he admitted, but they had 'proved most effective in yielding results', and were only suspended as a result of government complaints. This, Shertok continued, had consequently 'placed limitations on [the] effectiveness of our people which they could not help'. He concluded by admonishing Scott of the injustice of holding the entire community responsible for the dissidents. Moreover, 'any attempt to resort to wholesale anti-Jewish reprisals by way of curfew, mass arrest or other punitive action going beyond measures specifically directed against terrorists', Shertok concluded, 'would have disastrous effects generally and, as far as

terrorism was concerned, would do infinitely more harm than good'.¹ In any event, a month later the *Saison* ended.²

CONCLUSION

The failure of the *Saison* had far-reaching consequences for British rule in Palestine. If the British were to defeat the terrorists it was essential that the government have the cooperation of the *Yishuv*. In retrospect, however, the failure of the *Saison* operation to destroy the *Irgun* also eliminated any prospects for future joint Anglo-Zionist ventures against the terrorists.

The Jewish Agency undertook the anti-terrorist campaign in an effort to head off government reprisals in the wake of Lord Moyne's assassination. In addition, the decision to move against the *Irgun* presented the Agency with an opportunity to eliminate a threat to its own power. Instead, the *Saison* created a moral dilemma for the *Yishuv* and a backlash against the Agency. Although a majority of the community opposed the terrorists' tactics, many nonetheless sympathized with the terrorists' aims. Consequently, it was difficult for many Jews to tolerate the *Saison* much less actually betray individual terrorists to the authorities. Moreover, the *Irgun* emerged from the *Saison* campaign in a stronger position than before. By refusing to retaliate for the harm inflicted upon it and thus be party to a Zionist civil war, the group won a degree of community respect and sympathy it might not have otherwise obtained.

¹CZA Z 4 15/252 Letter, Shertok to Weizmann, 22 May 1945, containing Memorandum of Interview With Acting-Chief Secretary Scott.

²NARS RG 226 OSS Report 136238 Letter, Office of Military Attache, Cairo to American Consulate General, Jerusalem, 23 June 1945.

Although the Agency did prevent the imposition of punitive measures on the *Yishuv*, it did not succeed either in crushing the *Irgun* or in obtaining any political concessions from the British. Indeed, the Palestine administration came to regard the tactics directed against the terrorists--the kidnappings, interrogations and detentions--with considerable distaste. Thus the cooperation that had ephemerally existed between the Agency and the British would never again be renewed. The *Irgun's* heightened respectability and the collapse of the Agency's *modus vivendi* with the government eventually drove the moderates into an alliance with the terrorists less than six months later. Ironically (so far as the government was concerned) the end of the *Saison* was succeeded by an alliance between the *Irgun*, *Lehi*, and *Haganah* that further polarized Anglo-Zionist relations.

V. THE YISHUV IN REVOLT

Anglo-Zionist relations after World War II were characterized by the confrontation between British delay regarding Palestine's future and Jewish impatience. With the end of the war the Zionists pressed for the abrogation of the White Paper and the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. Unable to overcome the political chasm separating them from the Jews, the British applied coercive measures against the *Yishuv* in the form of curfews, cordon and search operations and the imposition of martial law. These succeeded only in polarizing the community still further and undermined the government's efforts to obtain the *Yishuv's* cooperation and defeat the terrorists.

THE MOOD IN POST-WAR PALESTINE

On 9 May 1945 Germany surrendered and the war in Europe ended. The Allies' victory was especially welcomed by the *Yishuv*. Not only had the Nazis been vanquished but, now that the hostilities were finally over, efforts could begin in earnest to alleviate the suffering of the survivors of Hitler's "Final Solution". However, all but 1,000 of the 75,000 immigration certificates allotted to the *Yishuv* remained unused at the end of the war and, as Trevor notes, 'there had been no official indication of what the Government intended to do when the White Paper quota was exhausted'.¹ Within weeks of Germany's surrender, Weizmann had approached Churchill on this matter. He explained that the Jews 'have never accepted and never can accept the moral or legal validity of the White Paper'. Throughout the war the *Yishuv* had unstintingly stood

¹Trevor, *Under The White Paper*, p. 143.

beside Britain, relegating the needs of their persecuted brethren in Europe to the prosecution of the war. They had done so, Weizmann continued, despite the fact that 'very large numbers of Jewish lives [were] cruelly sacrificed [when] many more of which might have been saved had immigration to Palestine' been permitted on a larger scale than that prescribed by the White Paper. As a result of the Allies' triumph, he declared, the Jews 'can no longer tolerate the continuance of the White Paper'. Weizmann requested an 'immediate decision' from the government: proclaiming its intention to remove all restrictions on Jewish immigration to Palestine and permitting the establishment of a Jewish state in the country.¹ Churchill's reply 8 June was non-committal, stating only that there could be 'no possibility of the question being effectively considered until the victorious Allies are definitely seated at the Peace Table'. In response, Weizmann bitterly observed that he

had always understood from our various conversations that our problem would be considered as soon as the German war was over; but the phrase "until the victorious Allies are definitely seated at the Peace table" substitutes some indefinite date in the future. I am sure that it cannot have been your intention to postpone the matter indefinitely, because I believe you realise that this would involve very grave hardship to thousands of people at present still lingering in the camps of Buchenwald, Belsen-Bergen etc., who cannot find any place to go if the White Paper is to continue for an unspecified period.²

Initially, the Jewish Agency was undaunted by Churchill's rebuff. On 18 June Shertok asked Gort to issue an additional 100,000 immigration certificates 'in order to meet the most urgent claims' of the Jewish

¹Quoted in Hurewitz, *The Struggle For Palestine*, p. 225.

²Quoted in Gilbert, *Exile and Return*, p. 272.

survivors in Europe. Shertok's request was rejected. Consequently, the Agency resolved to bring Jewish immigrants to Palestine regardless of the restrictions imposed by the White Paper.¹ Six days later Ben-Gurion publicly announced the Agency's decision, declaring that, 'If the British Government really intends now to maintain and enforce the White Paper, it will have to use constant and brutal force to do so'.² But this test of will was temporarily postponed as a result of Weizmann's intervention because of the general election scheduled to be held in Britain early the following month. Accordingly, the Agency decided to wait until the outcome of the vote was known.³

On 5 July the British electorate went to the polls and, for the first time in sixteen years, elected a Labour Government. Clement Attlee, the Deputy Prime Minister in the coalition War Cabinet, was the new Prime Minister. While in opposition Labour had proclaimed, both at its annual conference at Blackpool in 1944 and again two months before the election, its intention to abrogate the White Paper as well as its support of unlimited Jewish immigration to Palestine.⁴ The new government, however, was quickly overwhelmed by a myriad of domestic and international problems that took priority over Palestine.⁵ Meanwhile, the situation in Palestine grew tense as the *Yishuv* looked towards

¹NARS RG 226 OSS Report XL 14438 Letter, Pinkerton to Secretary of State, Washington, D.C., 20 July 1945, and PRO CO 537/1828 Memorandum By The Government of Palestine, 24 April 1946. See also Yehuda Bauer, *Flight and Rescue: Bricha* (New York, 1970) for details of the *Haganah's* activities in this regard.

²Quoted in PRO CO 733/456 75156/75 Letter, Shaw to Hall, 24 August 1945.

³Quoted in Gilbert, *Exile and Return*, p. 272.

⁴Hurewitz, *The Struggle For Palestine*, p. 227.

⁵Cohen, *Palestine: Retreat from the Mandate*, and Owendale, 'The Palestine Policy of the British Labour Party', 410.

London for some signal of the government's intentions. The mood in the country was further agitated by continued terrorist outrages perpetrated by the *Irgun*.¹

These developments were watched with increasing disquiet by Shaw. On 24 August he wrote to Hall, regretting 'that, thus early in your tenure of office, I should feel it incumbent to submit to you a picture of conditions in Palestine which is not only gloomy as to the present but depressing as to the future'. Shaw pointed to a relentless stream of tendentious public statements issued by various Zionist officials as proof 'that the Yishuv is being psychologically prepared for what will be in effect an armed rebellion'. Moreover, the 'material preparations' for the coming struggle 'do not seem to lag behind' as the *Haganah* 'now considers itself equal to any task to which its leaders may assign it...[with] the Jewish leaders here, in their approach to the question of illegal arming, openly challeng[ing] the authority of Government and the validity of law'. The intensification of terrorist activity during July and August was in actuality 'an openly proclaimed period of preparation for a final trial of strength'. This was accompanied by the complete cessation of any Jewish counter-terrorist efforts, causing Shaw to conclude that this development 'can only imply that the Jewish Agency envisages a time when existence of [the *Irgun* and *Lehi*] may be useful to Zionist policy and when they may be required to act as allies of the *Haganah* in a common campaign against the Government'.²

¹PRO CO 537/1828 Memorandum By The Government of Palestine, 24 April 1946. For an account of these terrorist outrages, see CO 733/456 75156/75 Letter, Shaw to Hall, 24 August 1945.

²PRO CO 733/456 75156/75 Letter, Shaw to Hall, 24 August 1945.

THE FORMATION OF THE TENUAT HAMERI

On 8 September the Ministerial Committee on Palestine, appointed by Attlee two weeks before, submitted its recommendations for the policy that the government should adopt until 'a new long-term policy can be promulgated'. Essentially, it proposed that the immigration provisions of the White Paper should remain in force until a final decision on Palestine's future was formulated. In order to allay the *Yishuv's* anxiety, the Committee suggested that the government affirm that it 'has every sympathy with the plight of the Jews in Europe and every desire to further the success of the National Home in Palestine and, in framing a new long-term policy, it will have these objects prominently before it.'¹

This caveat did little to assuage the *Yishuv*. On 21 September Weizmann wrote to Attlee, expressing 'the alarm with which my colleagues and I view the consequences' of the government's decision. He reminded the Prime Minister of Labour's pre-election support of Zionism and the acute disappointment amongst the *Yishuv* that its policy in office had thus far engendered. Furthermore, Weizmann warned that 'If what we hear is true, it would mean that nothing short of a tragedy faces the Jewish people, and very serious conflict might ensue, which we would all deplore'.² Attlee's reply of 28 September, however, contained nothing

¹PRO CAB 129/2 C.P. (45) 156 Palestine Committee: Report by the Lord President of the Council, 8 September 1946. The Committee's members included Ernest Bevin (Foreign Secretary), George Hall (Colonial Secretary), Herbert Morrison (The Lord President of the Council and the Committee's Chairman), Hugh Dalton (Chancellor of the Exchequer), Lord Pethwick-Lawrence (Secretary of State for India and Burma), Ernest Shinwell (Secretary of State for War), and Viscount Stangate (Secretary of State for Air).

²PRO PREM 8/88 Letter, Weizmann to Attlee, 21 September 1945.

the stage for a new and far more disastrous Anglo-Zionist confrontation.¹

Weizmann's prediction of 'serious conflict' was borne out by the formation of an alliance that month between the *Irgun*, the *Haganah* and *Lehi* known as the *Tenuat Hameri* (Hebrew: "United Resistance Movement"). In his memoirs, Begin recalls the bitterness which gripped the *Yishuv* during the weeks following Labour's election victory:

That Midsummer Night's Dream vanished. No Labour promise, no Blackpool resolution, no friendship....

With this disillusionment ended the most difficult phase in the period of the anti-British revolt. The Agency leaders realised that they could no longer collaborate with such "authorities"....And the first feelers were sent out to us for the establishment of a united front.²

The *Irgun*, like the rest of the *Yishuv*, had hoped that the Labour victory would herald a change in Britain's Palestine policy favourable to Zionism. Shortly after the election the group declared a truce and suspended its operations in expectation that the new government would abrogate the White Paper and accede to the aforementioned demands enunciated by Weizmann.³ But when no immediate indication of the new government's intentions was forthcoming, the *Irgun's* patience, like that of the *Yishuv's*, expired.

On 6 September the *Irgun* and *Lehi* concluded an alliance.⁴ Later in the month, the first discussions were held between the *Irgun*, *Lehi*, and the *Haganah*, at the latter's initiative, regarding the formation of a

¹*Ibid.*, Letter, Attlee to Weizmann, 28 September 1945.

²Begin, *The Revolt*, p. 181.

³JI K-4 3/15 Fighting Judea Bulletin, October 1945.

⁴Cohen, *Woman of Violence*, p. 75, and Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, iv, 176. For text of agreement see PRO WO 169/19758 Weekly Summary No. 113, DSO, HQ Palestine, 9 September 1945.

tripartite alliance. On 23 September, Begin and Friedmann-Yellin met with Sneh (who had succeeded Golomb as commander of the *Haganah*) and Israel Galili (the leader of the *Palmach*). Sneh and Galili proposed that all three underground organizations join forces in a common struggle against Britain.¹ Although Begin and Friedmann-Yellin were amenable to the proposal, they objected to the insistence of Sneh and Galili's that the alliance should entail a formal merger of all three groups.²

A second meeting was held on 29 September during which an agreement was reached and the *Tenuat Hameri* was formally established. Although the *Irgun* and *Lehi* would retain their 'organisational independence', they would not carry out any operations without first informing, and obtaining the consent of, the *Haganah*. The *Haganah* high command, however, retained the right to order either group to undertake whatever specific operations that were deemed necessary. Regular consultations would be held by representatives from the three groups to discuss, plan, and approve operations.³

Meanwhile, the *Haganah* had already decided to 'cause one serious incident...[and] then publish a declaration to the effect that it is only a warning and an indication of much more serious incidents that would threaten the safety of all British interests in the country,

¹CZA G/27.943 Background of The Struggle for the Liberation of Eretz Israel: Facts on the Relations between the Irgun Zvai Leumi and the Haganah, published by the Diaspora Headquarters of the Irgun Zvai Leumi (undated).

²Begin, *The Revolt*, p. 184.

³CZA G/27.943 Background of The Struggle for the Liberation of Eretz Israel (undated). Text of the agreement in Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, iv, 181.

should the Government decide against us'.¹ The 'incident' would be a raid on the detention camp at Atlit in order to free illegal immigrants interned there. On 1 October Ben-Gurion approved the plan.² At dawn on 10 October 50 members of the *Palmach* attacked the camp and freed 208 detainees (40 of whom were scheduled to be deported from Palestine the next day). The Jewish Agency made no secret of the fact that the operation had been implemented with its knowledge and approval.³

Gort was greatly disturbed by this development. On 13 October he met with a deputation from the Jewish Agency to express his concern over the 'sad deterioration' of Anglo-Zionist relations. He blamed this on the 'tendentious' agitation of the Jewish press and the seditious attitude encouraged by the Jewish leaders. In addition, Gort 'warned them solemnly and with emphasis that continuation of the present disorders cannot be tolerated'.⁴ The Agency officials (the names of the representatives were not given) replied that they would 'promise...not to use force again, if the High Commissioner would give his pledge that there would be no deportations. He refused to give this promise'.⁵ The Agency's response was contained in an article written by Sneh that appeared in *Ha'aretz* two weeks later:

To this day every political activity of the Zionist movement has relied on two forces--the distressing plight of Jewry in the Diaspora...and the creative genius of Jewish pioneering in this country....However, these two factors have

¹Cmd. 6873, *Palestine: Statement of Information Relating to Acts of Violence*, July 1946, p. 4.

²Bar-Zohar, *The Armed Prophet*, p. 87.

³NARS RG 226 OSS Report XL 2145 R&A Branch Report, 18 October 1945.

⁴PRO AIR 20/4962 Telegram, Gort to Hall, 13 October 1945.

⁵NARS RG 226 OSS Report XL 21545, 18 October 1945.

not been strong enough to achieve in 1945 the materialisation of the Zionist solution by international agreement....In these circumstances, we cannot afford not to resort to the third force hidden in Palestine Jewry--its power of resistance....Let the cost of sticking to the White Paper policy exceed that of scrapping it.¹

Five days later the first joint *Tenuat Hameri* operations were launched. On the night of 31 October simultaneous attacks were staged by *Irgun* units, who cut the railway lines traversing Palestine in more than 250 places--stopping all rail traffic 'from the Syrian frontier to Gaza, from Haifa to Samakh, [and] from Lydda to Jerusalem'--and assaulted the train station and goods yards at Lydda; by members of *Lehi*, who damaged the oil refinery at Haifa; and by *Haganah* forces, who sank three police launches which had been used for illegal immigration patrols.² On 2 November Hall addressed the House of Commons, and in words reminiscent of Churchill's admonition following Moyne's assassination, declared that 'it is a matter of profound regret that there should be this wanton resort to force. Unless it is stopped and suppressed, then progress in relation to Palestine will be impossible and the further steps we had in mind in endeavour to settle this difficult problem will be brought to nought'.³

Hall's statement, however, had no effect on the Jewish underground's intention of forcing the government to accede to Zionist demands through the use of violence. That same day, *Kol Yisrael* ("Voice

¹Quoted in Trevor, *Under the White Paper*, p. 157.

²Cmd. 6873, *Palestine: Statement of Information Relating to Acts of Violence*, July 1946, p. 5.

³Debates, House of Commons, vol. 415, cols. 785-786, 2 November 1945.

of Israel"), the *Haganah's* clandestine radio station, defiantly proclaimed:

The nights of heroism since Athlit are an expression of our strength and decision. We lament the British, Arab and Jewish victims who fell in the attacks on the railways and ports of Palestine. They are all victims of the White Paper.¹

The *Yishuv's* commitment to this course of action was evinced during the days of army and police searches of Jewish settlements which followed.² Attempts to search the settlement at Ramat Ha-Kovesh, for example, the site of a similar search in November 1943, and another near Tel Aviv, were vigorously resisted by their inhabitants. Moreover, anti-British rioting erupted in Tel Aviv on 3 November.³

In London, meanwhile, Weizmann and Shertok met with Bevin on 2 November to discuss the deterioration of the situation in Palestine. The Foreign Secretary opened the discussion by inquiring 'whether the outrages committed were to be taken as an indication that the Jews intend to settle the question by force, and whether we were to regard the effort that we have been making for conciliation as at an end'? Weizmann replied that the Jewish Agency had already issued a statement 'repudiating [this] recourse to violence', but 'found "its capacity to impose restraint severely tried by the maintenance of a policy which Jews regard as fatal to their future"'. Bevin argued that Weizmann's reply amounted to 'a condonation of violence'. It was now

¹Quoted in Cmd. 6873, *Palestine: Statement of Information Relating to Acts of Violence*, July 1946, p. 6.

²Blaxland, *The Regiments Depart*, p. 31.

³NARS RG 226 OSS Report XL 26254, 8 November 1945.

clear that the Jewish Agency can no longer be regarded as an innocent party in relation to these outbreaks in Palestine. Not only are they largely responsible for creating the state of mind to which Dr. Weizmann refers, but there is also no doubt that machinery under their control was directly implicated in the latest outrages.¹

On 13 November Bevin announced the formation of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry. The Committee was denounced by the Jewish Agency 'as a cynical and treacherous device to postpone [a] decision on mass immigration until displaced Jews in Europe in despair accept rehabilitation in [the] Diaspora'.² Rioting broke out in Tel Aviv that day. The offices of the District Administrator, the Control of Light Industries, and the Income Tax Bureau were sacked and set on fire. An assault on the post office was rebuffed only after troops were dispatched to reinforce the beleaguered police.³ By nightfall two Jews lay dead and eighteen others wounded, while police and military casualties stood at 16 injured.⁴ Despite the imposition of a curfew the disturbances continued. Order was finally restored later in the day; nevertheless, the curfew remained in force until the end of the month. By that time, six Jews had been killed and 60 injured; British casualties had risen to 42 men wounded.⁵

¹PRO PREM 8/627 Part I Telegram, Bevin to Inverchapel, 6 November 1945.

²MEC Cunningham Papers I/1 Telegram, Cunningham to Hall, 1 December 1945.

³*Ibid.*, Telegram, Scott to Hall, 16 November 1945; *Ibid.*, 17 November 1945; and *Debates, House of Commons, vol. 415, cols. 2522-2523 (Hall), 16 November 1945.*

⁴Wilson, *Cordon and Search*, pp. 27-29.

⁵Trevor, *Under the White Paper*, p. 162.

On 27 November Cunningham arrived in Palestine to replace the terminally ill Lord Gort as High Commissioner.¹ In his first report to Hall, Cunningham bemoaned the fact that the 'local Jewish leaders are intransigent and intractable and both they and the press are carrying on an intensive propaganda campaign vilifying as barbaric the use of force by the Mandatory while directly or indirectly praising and encouraging resort to violence by the Jews themselves'.² His efforts to establish some rapport with the Agency foundered on its duplicitous attitude regarding the violence and disavowals of any connection with the *Tenuat Hameri*. For example, although the *Haganah* had claimed responsibility for the radar installations' attack, and the Agency itself had admitted its role in the operation, Ben-Gurion told Cunningham that the Agency 'were no more associated with these acts than was the Government...[and] that they regarded it as a tragedy for this country and their people'. If this were so, the High Commissioner countered, then why wasn't the Agency 'prepared to cooperate with the Government in tracking down those responsible for the outrages'? Ben-Gurion replied that anti-British feeling within the *Yishuv* was now so intense that, 'If they told the people to keep the law they would laugh at them, for they did not recognise the policy of His Majesty's Government [as] constituting law' Shertok interjected that the *Yishuv's* 'patience...had been exhausted, [that] it had been taxed to the utmost, but the strain had been greater

¹Gort left Palestine on 5 November 1945. See J. R. Colville, *Man of Valour: The Life of Field-Marshal Lord Gort* (London, 1972), p. 266.

²PRO FO 371/45388 E9642/15/31 Telegram, Cunningham to Hall, Colonies, 4 December 1945.

than could be borne': hence there could be no possibility of procuring the *Yishuv's* assistance in combatting the lawlessness.¹

The Agency's motives in denying any part in the attacks are not difficult to discern. By professing their innocence, the Zionist leadership sought to deprive the British of an excuse to break off negotiations on Palestine's future. As such, the Agency was able to use the *Tenuat Hameri* as a lever against the government, while ostensibly portraying itself as a powerless bystander eager for a political solution to the Palestine problem. At the same time, this policy was also calculated to stave off government reprisals against the *Yishuv*. For example, following the coordinated attacks staged by the *Irgun* and *Lehi* on 27 December, the Agency vociferously condemned the terrorists: despite the fact that the *Haganah* had specifically ordered its two allies to carry them out.² The Agency's prevarications, however, did not succeed in sparing the *Yishuv* from government reprisals. Curfews were imposed over Tel Aviv, Ramat Gan, and the Jewish quarters of Jerusalem, during which 'large-scale' searches and identification checks were carried out.³

The curfews were ostensibly employed to apprehend the persons responsible for the attacks. But they were also meant to serve notice on the community that until their cooperation in ending the violence was forthcoming, they would suffer the inconvenience of government countermeasures. In any event, the latest round of curfews and searches had no appreciable effect on either the *Yishuv* or the terrorists.

¹MEC Cunningham Papers V/1 Note of Interview, 28 December 1945.

²CZA G/27.943 Background of the Struggle for the Liberation of Eretz Israel, (undated).

³PRO WO 169/22882 GHQ MEF Review No. 41, 4 January 1946.

Within days of their suspension, the *Irgun* struck again bombing the Central Prison and the Palestine Broadcasting Service in Jerusalem on 19 January 1946. The government responded by enacting new provisions to the Defence (Emergency) Regulations on 28 January.¹

It is perhaps worthwhile to pause and review the legislation used by the Palestine Government to combat terrorism. The Defence (Emergency) Regulations had first been enacted in 1936 during the Arab Rebellion and were subsequently strengthened in 1937. Accordingly, persons convicted of carrying, discharging, or found in the possession of fire-arms and explosives could be sentenced either to life imprisonment or death. With the end of the Arab Rebellion, however, life imprisonment was adopted as the highest penalty that could be imposed on a person found guilty of these crimes. The GOC was empowered to arrest and detain for an unlimited period of time those involved in, or suspected of, offences under the Regulations. Similarly, searches could be undertaken without warrant and curfews could be imposed at the GOC's discretion (this also applied to closure of businesses, residential premises, roads, and entire communities or rural areas as well). The GOC was also permitted to institute collective penalties (including fines) on communities suspected of harbouring terrorists and/or abetting their crimes. To this end, he could also order the destruction or forfeiture, without compensation, of property from which there was reasonable suspicion that firearms were discharged or explosives thrown.²

¹NARS RG 226 OSS Report XL 45057, 8 February 1946.

²Trevor, *Under The White Paper*, pp. 182-186, and Horne, *A Job Well Done*, pp. 213 and 243.

Military Tribunals were established to hear cases arising from violation of the Regulations, but at the end of the Arab Rebellion these were also suspended, and jurisdiction returned to civil courts. The High Commissioner was accorded the power to deport persons whose seditious activities were judged a threat to British rule. He could also impose press and postal censorship, order the publication of official announcements in the country's newspapers, require pre-publication submission of material slated for publication (enjoining the publisher to make no public mention of the censored material) and forbid the publication, posting or distribution of any written matter with political content without prior approval from the District Commissioner.¹

In 1944 the Regulations were amended so that the death penalty could again be imposed on persons convicted of carrying, discharging, or found in the possession of fire-arms or explosives. Under the 1946 amendments, individual policemen and soldiers were empowered to arrest any person without warrant and were not required to justify such an action before a court of law. Trial by Military Tribunals was reinstated. The Tribunals gave summary judgement: that is, no pre-trial enquiry was required nor did evidence of the prosecution's case have to be furnished to the accused. The Tribunal's members need not have training as judges or attorneys, although rules of evidence were based on English law. Appeal against sentence was solely vested in the GOC, who could either confirm, pardon, or over-turn sentence, at his discretion. Life imprisonment was mandated for persons convicted of

¹*Ibid.*

wearing uniforms (or parts of uniforms) of either the police or military and five years' imprisonment was mandated for harbouring or abetting any person suspected of violating the Regulations.¹

The revised Regulations, however, failed to have any impact on the *Tenuat Hameri*. The day after they were gazetted the *Irgun* launched the first of four operations to procure arms.² On 20 February the *Palmach* blew up an RAF radar station in Haifa and two days later attacked three police posts. On 25 February simultaneous assaults were staged by the *Irgun* and *Lehi* against three RAF bases. The attacks did little to improve relations between the Palestine administration and the *Yishuv*. The British continued to press the Agency to cooperate with the authorities;³ while the Agency continued to complain about restrictions on Jewish immigration and the inconvenience caused to the community by security measures that had now become a daily disruption to normal life in Palestine.⁴ 'The situation vis-a-vis the Agency', Cunningham reported to Hall on 19 February 'grows more intolerable'. This stemmed from the belief common amongst Jews as well as Arabs 'that [the] British Government always gives in to force...and I have no doubt', he concluded, 'that both in the Jewish Agency and the Jewish community generally, there is therefore a large measure of sympathy if not condonation of the terrorist acts'.⁵

¹Trevor, *Under the White Paper*, pp. 182-186.

²Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, iv, 229.

³MEC Cunningham Papers I/1 Telegram, Cunningham to Hall, 1 February 1946, and CZA S 25/28 Minute of Interview between Shaw and Joseph, 19 February 1946.

⁴MEC Cunningham Papers I/1 Telegram, Cunningham to Hall, 19 February 1946.

⁵*Ibid.*

OPERATION AGATHA

By the spring of 1946 the situation in Palestine was worse than it had been at any time since the Arab Rebellion. Hardly a day went by without some new terrorist outrage being committed.¹ Every attempt by the Palestine Government to persuade the Agency to exercise its influence over the *Yishuv* to bring an end to the violence or, at least, to assist the army and police to suppress it, had come to nought. Moreover, British civilian and military officials in Palestine agreed that the Agency, despite its repeated denials to the contrary, had 'pre-knowledge of most of the incidents which have taken place'.² Accordingly, these officials began to consider more drastic measures to end the violence. Their attention focused on a proposal to arrest the leaders of the Jewish Agency.

This idea had been briefly considered by the government in the wake of the assassination of Lord Moyne. But it had been rejected because of expected civil disturbances that would necessitate redeployment of troops from Europe.³ A somewhat modified version resurfaced a year later in a joint memorandum written by Paget, D'Arcy and Cunningham. The logic behind striking at the *Haganah* and *Palmach* leaders was based on the fact that, unlike the commanders of the *Irgun* and *Lehi*, they had not gone underground and thus could more easily be taken into custody. Nevertheless, Cunningham thought that since the operation 'would

¹For a daily account of these operations, see Wilson, *Cordon and Search*, pp. 253-255.

²PRO CO 537/1708 Telegram, Cunningham to Hall, 19 February 1946.

³PRO WO 32/10260 Army Council Secretariat A.C.S./B./118, 24 November 1944.

probably precipitate widespread disorder' it should be postponed until the Anglo-American Committee had completed its enquiries.¹

The following day, however, he changed his mind. On 30 December Cunningham reported that the Agency had issued a statement declaring 'unequivocally that His Majesty's Government are no longer entitled to rule the country'. Accordingly, he now recommended that the Cabinet approve the arrests not only of the leaders of the *Haganah* and *Palmach*, but of the Agency as well. 'I am fully sensible of the world repercussions', Cunningham wrote, 'and the fact that action as above may preclude the [Anglo-American C]ommittee from carrying out its task in Palestine but [I] am of opinion that this defiant attitude of the Agency cannot be ignored'.²

The Cabinet considered the proposal on 1 January 1946. The Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, Arthur Creech-Jones, argued against its adoption, maintaining that 'the disadvantages of taking such a course still outweighed the advantages. It would throw power into the hands of the extremists, would produce a strong reaction in the United States and, above all, would make it impossible for the Anglo-American Committee to carry out its work in Palestine'. The Cabinet agreed: deciding that 'the moment was not opportune to take [the] active measures against the Jewish Agency on the lines suggested by the High Commissioner'.³

¹*Ibid.*, I/1 Telegram, Cunningham to Hall, 29 December 1945.

²*Ibid.*, 30 December 1945.

³PRO CAB 128/5 C.M. 1 (46), 1 January 1946.

The Committee's Report was published on 30 April. The next day Attlee qualified the government's acceptance on the condition that all illegal organizations in Palestine first surrender their arms and disband.¹ The *Yishuv* was gravely disappointed by this stipulation. Under orders from Shertok, on 12 May *Kol Yisrael* broadcast the following statement: '*From the Zionist point of view, the tepid conclusions of the Commission bear no relation to the political claims of the Jewish people*'. It concluded with a warning that the government should expect renewed attacks.²

A month later the operations began. Between 10-17 June widespread attacks were carried out by the *Irgun*, *Lehi* and the *Haganah*. Cunningham wrote to Hall on 19 June, requesting permission to implement the plan to arrest the Agency leaders. Their arrest, he stated, was justified by the fact that,

at least...[part] of the outrages were carried out by the Haganah whom we know are definitely controlled by the Agency. We can therefore expect future incidents possibly increasing in intensity unless drastic action is taken. Moreover any hesitancy in action as the result of the kidnapping and shooting at officers will have a serious effect on the morale of the troops who have already been tried very highly.³

The following day Cunningham repeated his plea for permission to execute the plan. He stated that the new GOC, Barker, 'is now extremely doubtful' of the efficacy of arms searches alone on the deteriorating

¹PRO FO 371/52520 E3983/4/31 Prime Minister's Statement in House of Commons on the report of the Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry, 3 May 1946.

²Text in Cmd. 6873, *Palestine: Statement of Information Relating to Acts of Violence*, pp. 8-9.

³MEC Cunningham Papers I/1 Telegram, Cunningham to Hall, Colonies, 19 June 1946.

situation in the country. Hence, arresting the leaders was the only remaining option.¹ Cunningham was supported by the COS, who impressed upon officials at the Colonial Office and Foreign Office 'the serious consequences of the continued imposition of the present restrictions...[which] hamstring the military authorities in such a way that full military action to prevent these outrages cannot be taken and, secondly, limits the action which could be taken to punish the perpetrators'. These factors, the Chiefs concluded, were detrimentally affecting morale. Accordingly, 'the time has now come for the High Commissioner and Commanders-in-Chief, Middle East, to be given the full power to deal with any situation that may arise'.²

The Cabinet agreed, and on 20 June, Cunningham was authorized to implement the arrest plan.³ The directive to the High Commissioner emphasized that it should be made clear to the *Yishuv* that, 'while discussions are proceeding about the future of Palestine, H.M.G. are determined to maintain law and order in the territory and will not tolerate maintenance or creation of private armies...by either community' and that the operation was not meant 'as retribution for recent outrages by Jews, but as a first step towards restoring those conditions of order without which no progress can be made towards solution of [the] long-range problem'.⁴

¹*Ibid.*, 20 June 1946.

²PRO FO 371/52530 E5738/4/G.31 COS (46) 75, 19 June 1946.

³PRO CAB 128/5 C.M. (46) 60, 20 June 1946, and CAB 129/10 C.P. (46) 238, 19 June 1946.

⁴MEC Cunningham Papers I/1 Telegram, Hall to Cunningham, 20 June 1946.

"Operation Agatha" was carried out on 29 June: a day referred to by the *Yishuv* as "Black Saturday".¹ The operation was judged a success by the government as some 2700 persons were apprehended.² Among the Agency officials seized were Shertok, Joseph, Gruenbaum and Fishman; Sneh, Meyerson and Ben Gurion (who was in Paris) avoided arrest.³ Although over half the members of the *Palmach* were taken into custody the *Haganah's* high command escaped capture.⁴ The searches of various Jewish settlements for persons on 'priority lists' provoked renewed clashes between the settlers and soldiers. In all, twenty-seven settlements were searched: three Jews were killed and 80 others injured.⁵

Those Agency officials who had not been arrested issued a statement on the afternoon of the 29th, decrying the operation and describing it as a 'declar[ation] of war on the Jews'.⁶ On 3 July they met with Cunningham. The High Commissioner stated that it was not the government who had declared war on the *Yishuv*, but the *Yishuv* who, as a result of the 'recent acts of violence and sabotage have...declar[ed]...war on the British administration'. He pointed out that the arrests could have been prevented had the Agency agreed to cooperate with the authorities in ending the violence. Hence, Cunningham again asked for the Agency's cooperation, warning that if it were not forthcoming, 'further black

¹Text of communique in PRO FO 371/52534 E6105/4/31, 3 July 1946.

²Michael J. Cohen, *Palestine And The Great Powers, 1945-1948* (Princeton, 1982), p. 85.

³*Ibid.*

⁴Begin, *The Revolt*, p. 204, and Dekel, *Shai*, pp. 145-146.

⁵Trevor, *Under the White Paper*, pp. 216-224.

⁶MEC Cunningham Papers I/1 Telegram, Cunningham to Hall, 29 June 1946.

Saturday[s]...may occur'. The officials, however, were unable to make that commitment.¹

A dark cloud hung over Anglo-Zionist relations. On 8 July *Ha'aretz* reflected that, 'This is the first time that the public cannot escape the feeling that the bridges between us and Britain have been blown up and that the action taken by the Government affected not only this or that political scheme but the very foundation of idea of the National Home'.² Despite this climate of distrust and vituperation, Weizmann attempted to re-build Anglo-Zionist relations. His first step was to order an aide to deliver a demand to Sneh that should the *Haganah* or *Palmach* attempt to retaliate for the arrests or launch any new operations against the government, he would resign as president of the WZO and issue a public statement detailing the reasons for his resignation. Weizmann's demand was transmitted to the so-called "X Committee", the special group that oversaw the *Haganah's* participation in the *Tenuat Hameri*, who voted to accede to his demand.³

Weizmann's next step was to go before the Agency Executive and demand that it withdraw the *Haganah* and *Palmach* from the *Tenuat Hameri*. He told the Executive that, 'In every country in the world it is customary that the President is also the Commander in Chief of the military forces. I have never before needed to use this authority and have never interfered. But now, for the first and only time, I must

¹CZA Z 4/15.226 Confidential Notes of Interview Between Cunningham and Messrs. Ben-Zvi, Grabowsky and Berligue, and Rabbi Hameiry, 3 July 1946.

²Quoted in PRO WO 275/108 Palestine Press Review, No. 152, 8 July 1946.

³Cohen, *Palestine And The Great Powers*, p. 87.

demand this right and demand that you cease all military activities'. The Executive consented and authorized him to seek the release of their interned colleagues by offering to surrender all Jewish-held arms not required for defence against possible Arab attacks in exchange.¹

On 8 July Weizmann met with Shaw to discuss the release of the "Agatha" internees. Weizmann argued that he had obtained from the Agency its pledge to terminate all military activities directed against the government. Shaw, however, 'made it clear that the basis of any negotiation with the Government must be a guarantee by the Jewish Agency that the illegal activities of the Haganah and the Palmach would cease, the disbandment of the Palmach and the bringing of the Haganah under Government supervision and control'. But this concession was one which Weizmann could not give.²

On 20 July Cunningham met with Hall in London to discuss the results of "Operation Agatha". He confidently stated that 'both the Jews and Arabs now realise that they must behave themselves. In the case of the Jews there had been a considerable change of outlook....A big proportion of the Jews did not want the same thing to happen again' However, there was no escaping the fact that not everyone in the *Yishuv* had as yet lost faith in the efficacy of violence. Indeed, should any new terrorist attacks occur, short of suspending immigration, Cunningham thought there was little more the government could do now that the arrest card had been played. Hall replied 'that this was not a very satisfactory sanction, as it would mainly damage those who had no sort

¹Quoted in Thurston Clarke, *By Blood and Fire* (New York, 1981), p. 96.

²PRO CAB 128/6 C.M. 67 (46), 11 July 1946.

of responsibility for the crime'. Cunningham said that he recognized this, but 'found it difficult to suggest alternative action appropriate to the situation'.¹

Cunningham's optimism that the *Yishuv* might again be persuaded to cooperate with the government was not entirely unrealistic. "Operation Agatha" had been conceived not only to remove the *Haganah* from the *Tenuat Hameri* and thereby compel the Agency to abandon its reliance on violence, but also to undercut the *Yishuv's* support of this policy.² The widespread condemnation of the terrorists that appeared in the Jewish press following the bombing of the King David Hotel by the *Irgun* in July at least suggested that the *Yishuv* might be moving in this direction.³ Further, the public outrage generated by the attack--especially over the 17 Jews killed in the blast--had resulted in a temporary suspension of *Irgun* operations.⁴ When, on 9 September, the group resumed operations, carrying out widespread attacks on railway-lines and roads around the country,⁵ the new wave of violence again was widely condemned by the Jewish press.⁶ Cunningham was further heartened by reports that senior members of the *Haganah* were reported to be 'increasingly' perturbed by the renewed terrorist attacks.⁷ Even so, expressions of condemnation and rumours of *Haganah* discontent did not

¹PRO CO 537/1822 Note of Interview, 20 July 1946.

²See Debates, House of Commons, vol. 426, col. 958 (Morrison), 31 July 1946.

³See PRO WO 275/108 Palestine Press Review, No. 165, 23 July 1946.

⁴Clark, *By Blood and Fire*, p. 254.

⁵CZA 10.684 *Palestine Pamphlet: Terrorist Methods With Mines And Booby Traps*, HQ, Chief Engineer, Palestine and Transjordan, December 1946.

⁶See PRO WO 275/108 Palestine Press Review No. 15, September 1946.

⁷PRO CAB 127/280 Telegram, Cunningham to Hall, 20 September 1946.

necessarily translate into action. On 3 October Cunningham advised Hall that 'the Jews...are still somewhat apprehensive lest co-operation by [the] Haganah should lead to civil war'.¹

Meanwhile, efforts were underway in London both to obtain this cooperation and persuade the Jewish Agency to participate in the forthcoming London Conference. On 1 October Bevin met with Weizmann. Bevin called attention to the *Yishuv's* continued refusal to cooperate with the authorities. Weizmann rebuffed the Foreign Secretary's entreaties, explaining that as long as the government adhered to the White Paper there could be no question of the British obtaining the *Yishuv's* assistance. The community, he stated, was 'bitter[ly] disappoint[ed]' by the procrastination over the immigration issue and had been alienated both by the continued imprisonment of its leaders and by the fact that they 'find...themselves living under a military dictatorship of the worst kind'. Weizmann also maintained that the 'deliberate indoctrination of British soldiers with sentiments of lawlessness and anti-Semitism which manifested themselves during searches and arrests' counteracted any willingness on the *Yishuv's* part to cooperate with the authorities. Bevin replied that

The British Government had not taken the initiative in blowing people up....Britain had been the best friend of the Jewish people and now seemed to be almost their last friend. He had never known latent anti-Semitism so strong in this country as it was now....The destruction of the King David Hotel had burned deeply into the heart of the British people....The treatment we received in return was very poor recognition for all we had done for the Jews.

¹PRO CO 537/2287 Telegram, Cunningham to Hall, 3 October 1946.

In conclusion, he warned Weizmann that the government 'could not allow its young soldiers in Palestine to be slaughtered' and that if the community's help in ending the violence was not forthcoming, the harsh security measures that were objected to would continue.¹

THE RELEASE OF THE AGATHA DETAINEES

Inevitably, the release of the "Agatha" detainees was sought by the Agency in exchange for its attendance at the London Conference. At the end of September, 143 of the 2,718 persons arrested on 29 June were still in custody: seven of them were senior Agency officials, while the remaining 136 were members of either the *Haganah* or *Palmach*.²

Cunningham, however, vehemently opposed their release. The 'least that could be asked for' in return, he told Hall on 27 September, 'would be reduction of armed forces, control of those that are left, co-operation against terrorists and stoppage of illegal immigration, none of which is likely to be acceded to in present circumstances'.³

But by the end of October the pressure on Britain to release the the imprisoned officials in return for Jewish attendance at the Conference overrode these considerations.⁴ Another reason, as the new Colonial Secretary, Creech-Jones, explained to Cunningham, was the simple fact that the prolonged 'detention of these leaders without trial cannot continue indefinitely and would be quite unacceptable to large sections of public opinion both in...[Britain] and elsewhere'. The

¹*Ibid.*, Note of Meeting, 1 October 1946.

²PRO CO 537/2287 Telegram, Cunningham to Hall, 27 September 1946.

³*Ibid.*, 27 September 1946.

⁴PRO FO 371/52650 E10556/9358/G.31, Telegram, Creech-Jones to Cunningham, 21 October 1946.

attacks killed two British soldiers and wounded thirteen others.¹ The next day brought still more disquieting news. On 31 October the *Irgun's* long-threatened 'second front' materialized with the bombing of the British Embassy in Rome.² This development greatly alarmed government officials who were now seriously concerned about the possibility of further *Irgun* attacks not only in Europe but in Britain itself.³

Even so, Creech-Jones thought that the government had no choice but to release the detainees. On 31 October he informed Attlee that, although

I cannot pretend that the terms of the Resolution are as satisfactory as could have been wished....In present circumstances I feel that this is as much as we can hope for....We cannot continue indefinitely to detain these persons without trial and the Resolution...[therefore] provides an opportunity for their logical release which is unlikely to recur in the future.

At the very least, Creech-Jones concluded, 'Their release now will contribute to relieving tension in Palestine and will also ease our own difficulties with regard to representatives of the Jews at the resumed Palestine Conference'.⁴ On 4 November the Cabinet authorized the release of the detainees who were freed the next day.⁵

¹*Ibid.*

²Jl K-4 3/15 Voice of Fighting Zion, The Signal From Rome (undated); PRO CO 537/2295 Telegram, Sir Noel Charles (British Ambassador, Rome) to Bevin, 28 December 1946; and *Ibid.*, 29 December 1946.

³MEC Cunningham Papers VI/4 Letter, Rymer-Jones to Cunningham, 13 December 1946; PRO CO 537/2295 Telegram, Charles to Bevin, 14 January 1947; *Ibid.*, Minute by E. M. Fitzgerald (Eastern Department, FO), 11 February 1947; and Meinertzhagen, *Middle East Diary*, pp. 215-216.

⁴PRO PREM 8/300 Minute, Creech-Jones to Attlee, 31 October 1946. See also PRO CAB 129/14 C.P. (46) 414, 1 November 1946.

⁵PRO CAB 128/6 C.M. (46) 84, 4 November 1946.

THE DRIFT TOWARDS MARTIAL LAW

Events in Palestine during November corroborated Cunningham's dour assessment. The *Irgun* mounted a relentless campaign of rail and road sabotage which succeeded in 'virtually paralysing all rail transport' in Palestine.¹ British military intelligence analysts now joined in the general disparagement of the effect that the resolutions and release of the detainees might have been expected to have on 'relieving tension' in Palestine. 'As to...the "measures" that may be taken to "uproot the evil"', one report observed, 'the Jews have expressly declared that they cannot be expected to work with or assist the Palestine Police, and that they will not use armed force against their terrorists'.² On 19 November Cunningham reported to Creech-Jones that 'Ominous emphasis has been laid on the overwhelming difficulty of effective action without some gesture from H.M.G. on the crucial issue of immigration'. Once again, he lamented, the Agency refused to cooperate with the authorities against the terrorists on the grounds that this would inevitably spark a Zionist civil war.³

Senior British military officials, however, were becoming increasingly frustrated by the resurgence of terrorist activity and the inability of the army to suppress it. 'The main reason why we catch no Terrorist', Dempsey complained to Montgomery on 16 November, 'is that the people of this country take no action either directly or in giving

¹MEC Cunningham Papers I/3 Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 26 November 1946.

²PRO WO 275/58 Sixth Airborne Intelligence Summary No. 17, 8 November 1946.

³PRO CO 537/1728 Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 19 November 1946.

evidence. Somehow we must make them do so'. Dempsey pointed out that arms searches had been suspended and the "Agatha" detainees released 'without a guarantee that Terrorism would be fought'. The only way to obtain the community's cooperation was 'by bringing physical pressure to bear[:] that is by resuming searches for weapons and so on'.¹

Immediately after 'an outrage occurs', he stated, 'we should thoroughly search the area for arms and explosives and impose a fine on the locality. We know that terrorism is tacitly accepted by all and sundry. Were this not so, these murderers would soon be apprehended. The people, therefore, must take the consequences'.²

Montgomery presented Dempsey's views to the Cabinet Defence Committee on 20 November. He argued that, 'It had been thought that the recent release of Jewish detainees might have a moderating influence on Jewish activity, but since the date of the release, the general incidence of terrorist activity had increased'. The only hope of improving the situation, Montgomery maintained, was to allow the army to go on the 'offensive': undertaking large-scale cordon and search operations against the *Yishuv*. Although Creech-Jones 'agreed with the description of conditions in Palestine', and realized that 'the release of Jewish leaders had not immediately improved the situation', he countered that 'there were still signs that there was a rally of moderate opinion behind the Jewish Agency, and a real desire to stamp out terrorism'.³

¹PRO WO 216/194 Telegram, Dempsey to Montgomery, 16 November 1946.

²PRO CAB 127/280 Extract from C.-in-C., MELF's Telegram No. 1961 in Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 23 November 1946.

³PRO CAB 127/280 Extract from Cabinet Defence Committee D.O. (46) 33, 20 November 1946.

Cunningham was even more emphatically opposed to the course of action urged by Montgomery. In three separate telegrams to Creech-Jones he argued with increasing fervour against the cordon and search plans put forth by the CIGS. In the first communication, Cunningham transmitted the text of his reply to Dempsey's telegram to Montgomery of 16 November. He had assured Dempsey that, 'I am, of course, at one with you as to our objective, which is the prevention of casualties and therefore would examine your proposals from point of view of whether they would have the desired effect'. He did not, however, think they would. On the one hand, Cunningham was convinced that searches and the imposition of collective fines on communities 'in the vicinity of incidents even though there is no indication that the perpetrators either came from or retreated to that area' would destroy any hopes of securing the *Yishuv's* cooperation. On the other, he believed that these tactics would serve only to undermine 'the cleavage between [the] Haganah...and the terrorists' brought about by "Operation Agatha" and thus negate the salutary effects of that operation.¹

In his second telegram, Cunningham reiterated his belief that the 'results of such action would only serve to alienate if not to send over to [the] terrorists those elements of the population who are now showing signs, if not of co-operating, yet of taking action themselves....I do not believe it would have the slightest effect in reducing terrorism and might well increase it'.² In his final communication of the day, the High Commissioner repeated his

¹*Ibid.*, Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 23 November 1946

²*Ibid.*

strong...objection in principle to reprisals or punishments carried out against the people, numbers of whom are opposed to terrorism, unless some connection with an incident can be shown and feel in fact that by alienating further the populace we would break our only feasible weapon for controlling the terrorists.

The GOC, Barker, he continued, agrees 'that such action will not end terrorism'. Accordingly, Cunningham concluded, 'It is my immediate policy, therefore, to encourage to the greatest possible extent the growing tendency amongst the Jews to deal with the matter themselves'.¹

By December, however, it was becoming clear that, apart from the standard mechanical expressions of reproach, the *Yishuv* was unwilling to undertake any active measures against the terrorists. Cunningham's patience had yet to produce any results. Indeed, on 5 December, he reported to Creech-Jones that the Agency's repeated denunciations of terrorism 'had no immediate effect on the dissident groups, except perhaps to goad them to further excesses out of defiance'. Still, the High Commissioner remained optimistic that, since the majority of Agency leaders 'are gravely concerned at the political consequences of the continuation of terrorism', it is 'increasingly probable' that the Jews will eventually 'resort to measures more...effective than re-education and ostracism'.² Despite the demonstrably counter-productive effects of previous condemnations, he nevertheless cited the joint statement issued that day by the Agency and *Vaad Leumi* denouncing the terrorists as evidence that more active measures would soon be undertaken.³ Even more

¹*Ibid.*

²MEC Cunningham Papers I/3 Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 5 December 1946.

³Text in *Ibid.*

encouraging was the fact that after Cunningham had informed Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, the President of the *Vaad Leumi*, that the failure of the *Yishuv* to cooperate with the authorities was making it 'increasingly difficult for me to debar the Army from taking some action', there had been a significant decline of terrorist activity.¹

But encouraged as Cunningham was by these developments, Dempsey regarded them in a less favourable light. On 17 December he told Montgomery that the decrease in terrorism was less a sign that the Agency was prepared to take action against the terrorists than an 'indicat[ion] that [the] Jewish Agency have the power to stop terrorism if they wish to do so'.² Montgomery saw a more Machiavellian intent in the Agency's actions. 'It is of my opinion', he averred, 'that the Jewish Agency have in terrorism a useful weapon with which to flog the Government at suitable moments....The Agency would not like to be without this weapon up its sleeve'.³ Officials in the Foreign Office were similarly doubtful of the Agency's sincerity. On 30 December Harold Beeley, the adviser to the Foreign Secretary, minuted his disagreement with Cunningham's view 'that stronger action...would "further alienate the populace". On the contrary, I think there is no hope that the Jewish population, or any part of it, will actively cooperate with the Administration against terrorism until they are convinced that the Administration itself means business'.⁴

¹PRO CAB 127/281 Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 3 December 1946.

²PRO WO 26/194 Telegram, Dempsey to Montgomery, 17 December 1946.

³*Ibid.*, Montgomery to Dempsey, 18 December 1946.

⁴PRO FO 371/52571 E12520/4/G.31 Minute by Beeley, 31 December 1946.

On 3 January 1947 Cunningham and Creech-Jones met with Montgomery at the Colonial Office to resolve their differences. Cunningham opened the discussion by restating his position that the 'best weapon' to defeat the terrorists was to obtain 'the assistance of the civil population' which 'he hoped would be forthcoming in an increasing degree'. Montgomery, however, brushed aside this argument, stating simply 'that present restrictions on the Army were such that they could not do anything'. What was needed was action. Accordingly, the CIGS

advocated thorough searches throughout the country, "turning the place upside down", without waiting for evidence' of a direct relationship between the terrorist outrages and the localities concerned. Although he conceded that operations of this nature could not 'avoid upsetting the life of the people...no real harm would be done to the population and...in time they would tire of being upset and would co-operate in putting an end to terrorism.'¹

Cunningham could see no logic in Montgomery's argument. First, terrorist activity in Palestine, he pointed out, was concentrated in the country's urban centres, not in the rural settlements which the CIGS wanted to 'turn upside down'. Second, most of the settlers were themselves 'opposed to terrorism'. Hence, 'general searches of settlements would merely disturb innocent people...and would mean a general conflagration...[which] would destroy the hope of a political settlement'. Creech-Jones agreed with the High Commissioner, stating 'that he could not see that it was worth while turning upside down areas where there was no indication of the presence of terrorists'.²

¹MEC Cunningham Papers V/4 Note of Conference, 3 January 1947.

²PRO FO 371/61762 E318/46/31 Record of Meeting, 4 January 1947.

On 15 January the Cabinet intervened to settle the dispute. Creech-Jones outlined to his colleagues the major points of contention between the CIGS and the High Commissioner. 'It was now proposed', he stated,

to broaden the terms of the directive to the High Commissioner as to the circumstances in which the military might be used. Thus, it should be possible for them to institute searches at any time in any part of the country, whether or not they had definite evidence and they should be free to maintain and increase the number of patrols in dangerous areas.

Although the Cabinet agreed with Montgomery 'that more vigorous action should be taken against the terrorists', they recognized that Cunningham's position was also valid. Accordingly, a compromise was fashioned in the form of a directive, written by Montgomery with Cunningham's assistance. This granted the army the power to undertake wide-ranging searches, but reserved for the High Commissioner the right to review individual operations and approve or reject them.¹

In Palestine meanwhile, the new Chief Secretary, Sir Henry Gurney, continued to apply pressure on the Agency. On 3 January he warned Ben-Zvi and Rabbi Fishman 'that the Palestine Government could no longer tolerate the repeated acts of terrorism and that, unless the Jews themselves co-operated in bringing them to an end, "drastic measures" would have to be taken'.² Four days later Gurney reported that 'the Jewish leaders are probably doing everything in their power to check...[terrorism but] their power is limited'.³ The following day he

¹PRO CAB 128/9 C.M. (47) 6, 15 January 1947. Text of the directive in PRO CO 537/3870 Telegram, Creech-Jones to Cunningham, 20 January 1947.

²*Times*, 4 January 1947.

³PRO CO 537/2294 Telegram, Gurney to Creech-Jones, 7 January 1947.

informed Cunningham (who was still in London) that Meyerson and Remez had offered the Agency's cooperation in return for the cessation of the deportation of illegal immigrants to Cyprus. Cunningham rejected the proposal out of hand, replying that 'we must make clear to them that they cannot in one breath condemn terrorism and in the next produce it as a threat to gain further concessions'. It 'is time they realised', he concluded, 'that we are not in a mood to accept such underhanded tactics'.¹

On 13 January Ben-Gurion told Gurney that although the Agency was quite willing to furnish the police with information regarding the terrorists it simply did not have much to offer. As the terrorist organizations were so small, having perhaps only 200-300 active members and another 2,000-3,000 collaborators, 'it was almost impossible to find out who belonged to these groups'. Notwithstanding this difficulty, he continued, the Agency was unwilling to risk unleashing the *Haganah* against the dissidents as it had in 1944-45 for fear that the terrorists would now retaliate by assassinating Agency leaders. Ben-Gurion, Gurney recorded, 'appeared to be genuinely worried at the prospect of continued terrorism and the inability of Jews themselves to stop it. This is an admission', the Chief Secretary concluded, 'that should be noted'.²

Cunningham's patience, however, was wearing thin. Upon returning to Palestine he bluntly told Ben-Gurion that 'the Government was in no mood to listen to' excuses as to why the *Yishuv* was unable to assist the police. He further warned that if the Jews 'did not succeed in

¹MEC Cunningham Papers I/4, Telegrams, Gurney to Cunningham and Cunningham to Gurney, 8 January 1947.

²*Ibid.*, 13 January 1947.

suppressing terrorism themselves it would entail large scale military action which would result in chaos in the country, the destruction of all [the *Yishuv*] had built up, and would involve many innocent people'.¹ Three days later, on 20 January, the *Vaad Leumi* announced that it would no longer tolerate 'the shedding of innocent blood as a means of political resistance' and that if the terrorists did not heed this warning, active measures would be taken to enforce their compliance.²

The resolution, like the one issued by the Inner Zionist Council the previous October, was less than satisfactory from the government's point of view. Cunningham felt that, while the Zionists had once again gone through the motions of condemning terrorism, 'There have been no visible developments in the...counter-terrorist drive'. The absence of such a campaign, he again complained, was explained by the Agency as a result of the inadequacy of 'their own intelligence regarding' the terrorist groups.³

The resolution did indeed have no impact on the level of anti-government violence. If anything, it encouraged the terrorists to press ahead with and, in at least in one instance, to escalate their operations. Following the confirmation of the death sentence handed down to Dov Gruner, the commander of the *Irgun* assault team which had raided the Ramat Gan police station in April 1946, the group kidnapped two Britons as hostage. On 26 January a retired British army major, H.A.I. Collins, was seized at his home in Jerusalem; less than twenty-

¹MEC Cunningham Papers V/1 Interview, 17 January 1947.

²*Ibid.*, I/4 Text in Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 21 January 1947.

³PRO CO 537/2294 Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 21 January 1947.

four hours later, Judge Ralph Windham was brazenly abducted as he presided over a case in a crowded Tel Aviv courtroom.¹ The *Irgun* threatened to execute the two men, along with seven other Britons chosen at random, if Gruner's death sentence was not commuted.² A curfew was immediately thrown over Tel Aviv, Haifa and the Jewish sections in Jerusalem.³ In addition, Cunningham threatened to institute martial law over Tel Aviv, Petah Tiqva and Ramat Gan if the two men were not freed unharmed within forty-eight hours.⁴ A legal technicality subsequently emerged which defused the crisis. Consequently, on 28 January, both Windham and Collins were released unharmed.⁵

Although Windham and Collins emerged from their ordeal unscathed, their abduction nevertheless proved to be a watershed in Britain's policy towards its wayward mandate. The kidnappings prompted a major reassessment by Creech-Jones and Cunningham of the moderate course they hitherto had pursued in attempting to obtain the *Yishuv's* cooperation by persuasion rather than force. By this reassessment, the path was cleared for the army to mount the aggressive operations advocated by Montgomery and Dempsey.

The change of attitude in the Colonial Office was enunciated by Creech-Jones in his dispatch to Cunningham of 29 January. 'I feel that I should tell you', he wrote,

¹PRO CO 537/3870 Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 27 January 1947.

²PRO WO 275/63 Fortnightly Intelligence Newsletter No. 34, DSO, HQ Palestine, January 1947.

³Bell, *Terror Out of Zion*, p. 188.

⁴PRO CO 537/3870 Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 27 January 1947.

⁵Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, v, 92 and 95.

how strong is the feeling in the Government and in Parliament regarding the recent outrages which are felt to be utterly humiliating and damaging to British prestige and authority abroad....There is a fierce stiffening in the feeling here that order must be maintained and that without any ambiguity we must demonstrate that we mean to do it.¹

Cunningham agreed that strong action was required. But before any remedial measures could be enacted, he believed that all non-essential British personnel--principally wives and children--must be evacuated from the country.²

On this point at least, Cunningham and Montgomery were in complete agreement. On 30 January Montgomery told Dempsey, 'I agree entirely that you should get the wives and families away. But if this is done then you must set about the illegal organisations properly and go into battle with a bang'.³ Hence the evacuation was regarded in military circles as the removal of the final obstacle preventing it from going on the offensive against the terrorists and throwing the full weight of its coercive powers at the uncooperative *Yishuv*. On 4 February the evacuation scheme, code-named "Operation Polly", was approved in London.⁴ It was successfully carried out between 4-8 February, during which 1700 persons were transported by rail to Egypt.⁵

¹PRO CO 537/2298 Telegram, Creech-Jones to Cunningham, 29 January 1947.

²PRO CO 537/3870 Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 27 January 1947.

³PRO WO 216/194 Telegram, Montgomery to Dempsey, 30 January 1947.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵PRO WO 261/171 Quarterly Historical Report of HQ Palestine For Quarter Ending 31 March 1947.

MARTIAL LAW

The day the evacuation began, Cunningham dejectedly apprised Creech-Jones of the Agency's 'obstinate refusal to call upon the community to co-operate wholeheartedly with the authorities'.¹ Creech-Jones in turn advised the Prime Minister of his consent to the army's plan to impose martial law on selected Jewish population centres in Palestine in the event of any new terrorist outrage.² Accordingly, Cunningham was instructed to draw up plans for its imposition. On 5 February he met with Barker. They decided that, 'Since economic pressure' was 'the crux of the matter', the implementation of martial law over Tel Aviv, as the centre of Jewish commercial life in Palestine, was the key to the operation's success.³

Thus it appears that, while the ostensible purpose of imposing martial law was to break the back of the terrorist organizations, its primary objective was rather different. To this end, martial law was a punitive action designed to upset the daily life of the *Yishuv* to such an extent that the Jews would be compelled to tender the assistance sought by the government.⁴

Cunningham, however, persisted in his efforts to obtain a *modus vivendi* with the Agency and avert the implementation of martial law. Once again his entreaties were spurned and the same stale charges of governmental inaction over the issue of Jewish statehood and its

¹MEC Cunningham Papers I/4 Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 4 February 1947.

²PRO CO 537/2298 Note, Creech-Jones to Attlee, 4 February 1947.

³MEC Cunningham Papers IV/2 Security Meeting, 5 February 1947.

⁴See General Sir Richard Gale, *Call To Arms: An Autobiography*, (London, 1968), p. 172.

unyielding policy on immigration were cited as the cause of both the violence and the community's unwillingness to cooperate with the authorities. Cunningham was particularly incensed by the Agency's reply to a letter sent by Gurney requesting its help and warning of the consequences failure to heed this request would bring. In response, the Agency had cited

the despair and bitterness engendered by the White Paper policy which the Government is steadily pursuing. The Yishuv utterly condemns [the violence], and will resist terrorist activities with the means at its disposal [: it] cannot however be called upon to place itself at the disposal of that Government for fighting the evil consequences of a policy which the Yishuv regards as a menace to its existence....

Further, the Agency's reply warned that threats to implement measures such as martial law as

collective punishments against an entire community for acts committed by a small minority...will not punish or deter the guilty, but only cause unwarranted suffering to masses of innocent people and further exacerbate feelings against the Government, with consequences that may well be incalculable.¹

Bevin's announcement on 18 February, that Britain had decided to submit the Palestine problem to the United Nations for advice, precipitated a new round of terrorist attacks. That night the *Irgun* attacked an air base while *Lehi* planted a number of mines on railway lines and roads around the country. The Agency's attitude, Cunningham reported, remained unchanged. Moreover, there were 'clear signs' that its 'influence [was] rapidly declining. Having passed resolutions denouncing terrorism, the Agency now see these openly defied and can

¹Quoted in PRO CAB 104/272 Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 10 February 1947.

itself seek popular support only in opposition to the Government'. Even so, he expressed hope that martial law could still be avoided.¹

On 1 March, however, a new series of terrorist outrages rocked the country. In response, martial law was declared the next day in Tel Aviv, Ramat Gan, Bene Brak, Petah Tiqva, and in the Jewish quarters of Jerusalem. The communique issued by the government explained that, 'The severe measures now necessary are the result of the lack of cooperation against bloodshed and terrorism which [the official Jewish] Institutions have themselves condemned'. The localities which had been placed under military rule, the communique continued, had been singled out as a result of 'direct evidence link[ing]' the terrorists to those places.² In reality, the operation's geographical dimensions were determined by the number of available troops who were insufficient to implement martial law over a larger area.³

That same day the Agency and *Vaad Leumi* issued a joint statement deploring the imposition of martial law and the 'retaliation against the Yishuv as a whole for the crimes of a few desperate young men'. It was again stressed that the government's policy on statehood and immigration had made the community ill-disposed to cooperate. Nevertheless, the statement promised that 'the disciplined force of the Yishuv will intensify their action against terrorism so as to bring to an end all murder and bloodshed in this country'.⁴ Eight days later, Cunningham

¹PRO CO 537/2294 Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 24 February 1947.

²PRO CO 537/2299 Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 2 March 1947.

³IWM Palestine: Narrative of Events by MacMillan, 3 July 1948.

⁴Quoted in PRO CO 537/2294 Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 3 March 1947.

reported that martial law had achieved one of its objectives. Many Jews, he wrote, were now 'giving information to the Army and the Police in a manner which leaves no doubt of their opposition to dissidents and their inclination to help in combatting them'.¹

But the operation's success was illusory. For one, it had absolutely no effect on the terrorists. During the fifteen days that martial law was in force there were 68 separate terrorist outrages.² Although martial law had induced some of the community to come forward with information, this was on a limited and ad hoc basis. The organized response sought by the government, that is in compelling the Agency to unleash the *Haganah* against the terrorists, had not materialized. In addition, the inconvenience caused by the operation had further antagonized the *Yishuv*. As Ben-Gurion complained to Attlee, martial law had not

affected [the] terrorists nor stopped their outrages but instead have increased resentment of [a] hard-hit population, created fertile soil for terrorist propaganda, frustrating [the] community's attempts to combat terrorism by itself. Martial law [is] absolutely futile and senseless unless [it was] really meant to punish [the] whole community, ruin its economy and destroy the foundations of the Jewish National Home.³

Accordingly, on 17 March, martial law was withdrawn. Its removal, after just fifteen days, was explained by the administration as the result of the *Yishuv's* 'willingness to assist in the eradication of'

¹*Ibid.*, 11 March 1947.

²Trevor, *Under the White Paper*, p. 234.

³PRO FO 371/61900 E2567/1498/31 Telegram, Ben-Gurion to Attlee, 18 March 1947.

terrorism.¹ But the real reasons for its removal were the strain imposed on the army in carrying out the operation, the loss of tax revenue caused by the disruption to commerce and its failure 'to induce any representative body openly to advocate co-operation with the Government in the eradication of terrorism'.²

Cunningham continued to apply pressure on the Agency regarding the use of the *Haganah* against the terrorists. On 8 April he informed Creech-Jones that 'the general impression is that the extensive use of force against the dissidents will not be attempted (if at all) until [the] "re-education" [programme is completed] upon which, it is understood, the Jewish Agency is shortly to embark'.³ Despite indications that the *Haganah* might be moving towards mounting a counter-terrorist campaign, as suggested by the death of a member of the group who attempted to defuse a bomb planted by the *Irgun* in Haifa, Cunningham stated that Agency

officials have continued to stress that the absence of a conciliatory gesture [regarding immigration] by the Government makes it extremely difficult to bring the Haganah to the point of engaging in active hostilities with fellow Jews on the grounds of their activities against the Mandatory Administration.⁴

¹PRO CO 537/2299 Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 15 March 1947.

²*Ibid.*, Telegram, O.A.G. [Officer Administering Government] to Creech-Jones, 24 March 1947.

³PRO CO 537/2294 Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 8 April 1947.

⁴*Ibid.*, 29 April 1947. This was also the view held by American diplomatic officials in Jerusalem. See NARS RG 59 Box 8, Telegram, Jerusalem (Macatee) to Secretary of State, Washington, D.C., 8 April 1947.

THE BREAKDOWN OF SECURITY

Throughout the spring of 1947 both the *Irgun* and *Lehi* 'intensified their attacks on British persons and...interests'.¹ There were the all-too-familiar road minings and 'hit-and-run' attacks, but one incident in particular stands out as the most significant: the *Irgun's* attack on the prison in Acre on 4 May. The prison was the government's maximum security detention facility for convicted terrorists. It contained a total of 613 male prisoners--163 Jewish terrorists, 58 mentally deranged common criminals and 450 Arab convicts. The facility itself was housed in the medieval Crusader fortress constructed in 1104 that was thought to be impregnable.²

The assault had been coordinated in advance with the individual commanders of the *Irgun* and *Lehi* prisoners. Thirty-four members of the *Irgun*, disguised as British Army officers and troops and driving four stolen military lorries, pulled up alongside the Crusader fortress. Meanwhile, another *Irgun* team, disguised as Arabs, positioned themselves as a covering force atop nearby rooftops. One of the lorries was packed with explosives which, when detonated, opened a massive breach in the fortress walls. Explosives and incendiary devices had previously been smuggled into the prison so that internal gates could be blown open and diversionary fires set.³ Twenty-one imprisoned *Irgun* and eight *Lehi*

¹IWM Palestine: Narrative of Events by MacMillan, 3 July 1948.

²For a detailed description of the prison's imposing physical characteristics, see Bell, *Terror Out of Zion*, pp. 204-206.

³See Jan Gitlin, *The Conquest of Acre Fortress* (Tel Aviv, 1974), pp. 124-160; PRO WO 275/44 Report on the Attack on Acre Gaol by Captain J. K. Linklater, 5 May 1947; and MEC Cunningham Papers II/1 Telegrams, Fox-Strangways to Creech-Jones, 5 and 6 May 1947.

terrorists were freed. Three of the Jewish prisoners were killed in the escape, four wounded and two re-captured; casualties to the raiding party were just six killed--though four others were captured.¹

'The operation, admired across the world as a daring escape from an impregnable fortress', Cohen argues, 'was a greater psychological and propaganda than a military success'.² As Begin himself later reflected, 'Politically, every attack was an achievement. And there were military attacks which had a specially disintegrating effect on the government's prestige. Foremost among these was the storming of the Acre Prison'.³ The attack dramatically illustrated the decline of both the government's ability to maintain order in Palestine, much less protect its central prison facility. So far as Cunningham was concerned, it had once again highlighted the uncooperative, if not hostile, attitude of the community towards the Palestine Administration. This is evinced by the dismally worded dispatch he sent to Creech-Jones following the escape. 'The first and most important element in the situation', he wrote,

is that, because of political differences with the mandatory administration on account of the inability of [HMG] to accede to Jewish [political] demands, the Jewish community...have declined and still decline to give any assistance to the police and military forces....It is a situation in which a policeman is shot and lies wounded in the street beside a bus queue, no member of which will lift a hand to help him.⁴

¹MEC Cunningham Papers II/1 Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 6 May 1947.

²Cohen, *Palestine And The Great Powers*, p. 242.

³Begin, *The Revolt*, p. 52.

⁴Quoted in IWM Palestine: Narrative of Events by MacMillan, 3 July 1948.

A week after the Acre prison break, however, the Agency finally succumbed to British pressure and ordered the *Haganah* to commence operations against the terrorists.¹ The new campaign, referred to by the *Irgun* as "The Little Saison", was spear-headed by a special 200-man *Haganah* unit. This had to be created from regular *Haganah* forces because, unlike in the original *Saison*, the *Palmach* refused to participate in the new operations.² On 18 June the *Haganah* scored its first triumph against the terrorists by foiling an attempt by the *Irgun* to blow up "Citrus House", the building housing the British military command in Tel Aviv.³

The *Irgun* now threatened to retaliate for the *Haganah's* interference.⁴ But the *Haganah* refused to be intimidated. On 30 June the group wrecked an *Irgun* scheme to assassinate the GOC, MacMillan, and 18 days later thwarted an attack by the *Irgun* against a military base. But these were "The Little Saison's" only accomplishments. Thereafter it 'degenerated into an endless round of mutual kidnappings and beatings'.⁵ These developments, however, were quickly over-shadowed by the death sentences handed down to three members of the *Irgun* raiding party who were captured after the assault at Acre and the *Irgun's* threat to execute two British sergeants it had abducted in reprisal.

¹For details see Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, v, 163-175.

²CZA G/27.943 Background to the Struggle for the Liberation of Eretz Israel, (undated).

³Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, v, 168-170.

⁴CZA G/27.943 Background to the Struggle for the Liberation of Eretz Israel, (undated).

⁵Cohen, *Palestine And The Great Powers*, p. 243.

On 12 July the *Irgun* seized the two sergeants, Cliff Martin and Mervyn Paice, in Netanya. Cunningham responded, under the terms of a plan formulated in March by the COS and approved by the Cabinet, declaring the city a 'controlled area'. On 14 July the military assumed complete control of Netanya and commenced cordon-and-search operations (code-named "Operation Tiger") in the hope of rescuing Paice and Martin.¹ The mayor of Netanya, Oved Ben-Ami, strenuously objected to this course of action. He beseeched the High Commissioner to call off the operation, arguing that it will 'antagonise the whole community' and undercut whatever help might otherwise be secured from the city's residents.²

In any event, "Operation Tiger" did indeed fail to discover the two sergeants. After two weeks of fruitless searches, it was suspended on 28 July. The following day the three condemned *Irgun* men were executed. The *Irgun*, in turn, duly carried out its threat and executed the sergeants. In his report of the operation, its commander, Major-General R. N. Gale, bitterly attributed its failure to the *Yishuv's* uncooperative attitude. 'It must be appreciated', he wrote,

that the whole Jewish society in PALESTINE is riddled with underground and illegal organisations....Now that certain of the underground societies have gone beyond the pale, Jewish society is unable to cope with the situation....This is a people dogged by fear of their own underground organisations and worse, because in some cases the fear results from their own fingers being too dirty to enable them to come out in the open.³

¹PRO CAB 129/20 C.P. (47) 208, 19 July 1947.

²PRO CO 537/2290 PALCOR News Agency, 16 July 1947.

³IWM Palestine: Narrative of Events by MacMillan, 3 July 1948, Appendix 'C': Report on "Operation Tiger", 2 August 1947.

The reaction in London was equally condemnatory of the *Yishuv*.

Addressing the House of Commons on 31 July Creech-Jones declared:

In the long history of violence in Palestine there has scarcely been a more dastardly act than the cold-blooded and calculated murder of these innocent young men....I can only express what I know to be the deep feelings of revulsion shared by all of us here at this barbarous crime....

Such an outrage against men discharging a service in fulfilment of international obligations is not only abhorrent in the eyes of all civilised persons everywhere, but must surely mean the final condemnation of the terrorists in the eyes of all their own people. We can only hope that this latest act will stir the Jewish community in Palestine to root out this evil from their midst.¹

THE ABROGATION OF THE MANDATE

By August 1947 a threshold had been crossed which would have a decisive effect on Britain's three decade-long involvement with Palestine. The hangings of the two sergeants illustrated once more the breakdown of security in Palestine and the administration's inability either to defeat the terrorists or to maintain order in the country. Further, Cunningham had finally come to the conclusion that, not only could little help be expected from the Agency, but even if such assistance were forthcoming, he now doubted whether it could make much difference. The only alternative appeared to be in the realm of drastic military action: such as the imposition of martial law over the entire country. But this was an illusory option since the army commanders maintained that there were not enough troops in Palestine to accomplish this task.

¹Debates, House of Commons, vol. 441, col. 636, 31 July 1947.

During the tense weeks during which Paice and Martin were captive, the Agency and the *Haganah* had endeavoured to secure their release through persuasion and by mounting searches of their own. Though grateful for this assistance, the failure of their efforts had served to convince Cunningham--however belatedly--that the time had passed for the Agency to have any effect on the deteriorating situation in Palestine.

'This last atrocity of the dissidents', he apprised Creech-Jones,

had undoubtedly awakened Jewish leaders to the dangers with which the Yishuv is threatened by the continuation of ruthless terrorism. But it is by no means certain that the Jewish Agency, even if it now has the will, is any longer in a position to take effective counter-terrorist action. The two terrorist groups have grown perceptibly in actual strength during recent months, but more significant perhaps is the growing sympathy with which they have come to be regarded...by large elements of the Yishuv.¹

Cunningham's pessimism was based on the Agency's tepid reaction to the hangings. Although the Jewish leadership was now 'apprehensive and frightened', he reported, they still show no inclination either to deploy the *Haganah* against the terrorists or to order the *Yishuv* to cooperate with the authorities.² Their reluctance to order the *Haganah* to engage the terrorists was influenced by the internal dissension now engulfing the group. Opinion was divided amongst three conflicting factions. At one extreme were those who had completely lost faith in the efficacy of the Agency's efforts to obtain British recognition of

¹MEC Cunningham Papers II/2 Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, August 1947.

²PRO CO 537/2300 Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 31 July 1947. This was also the view held by American diplomatic officials in Jerusalem. See *FRUS*, 1947, v, 1134-1135, 867N.00/8-147 Letter, Macatee to Secretary of State, Washington, D.C., 1 August 1947.

Zionist claims to Palestine by negotiation and therefore clamoured for the resurrection of armed struggle against the government alongside of the terrorists. At the other extreme, were those who were resolutely opposed to any form of cooperation with the authorities for fear that this would spark an internecine Zionist conflict. Finally, a middle faction pressed for the resumption of a determined counter-terrorist campaign along the lines of the original *Saison*.¹ The Agency sought to steer a middle course between the government's demands and the *Haganah's* conflicting pressures. Consequently, on 4 August, a declaration was issued terming 'The cessation of terrorism as an inexorable national necessity' and went on to call upon the *Yishuv* 'to intensify its efforts' against the terrorists; requesting that its 'full support' be given 'to the security forces of the Yishuv'--and, specifically, not to those of the Government.²

Meanwhile, Cunningham's attention focused on the question of the action to be taken by the government in response to the hangings. The problem was that there were insufficient troops in Palestine to do anything more than cordon off Tel Aviv. In addition, this deficiency had raised anew concerns for the safety of British civilians and government and military personnel lest they too be seized by terrorists. The army, its commanders informed Cunningham, did not have enough men to ensure such protection from terrorist reprisal. Accordingly, he told Creech-Jones that,

¹MEC Cunningham Papers II/2 Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, August 1947.

²FRUS, 1947, v, 1137, Airgram 159, Macatee to Secretary of State, Washington, D.C., 4 August 1947.

short of a withdrawal of branches of the Administration, or a reduction of Military and Police activities which would of themselves endanger the security position generally, I do not see how the safety of British subjects could be enhanced under present conditions. Indeed, the imposition of martial law throughout the country would not necessarily bring about any improvement in this respect.¹

Cunningham was able to offer no other course of action except to state that, 'I am satisfied that the Jewish Agency are most anxious to do what they can to deal with terrorism even though one may be sceptical of getting the full results it seems as well to see what they can do'.² Thus, despite the previous disappointment and chagrin over the Agency's unsatisfactory record in this regard, Cunningham nevertheless saw no alternative--futile though this hope was--but again to look towards the Agency for assistance.

In the absence of any other measure, Cunningham had previously proposed, and now received authorization for, 'picking-up certain [R]evisionists with known IZL sympathies and one or two Mayors...who are known to be able to contact the terrorists' as well as outlawing the Revisionist Party's newspaper and the party's youth movement, *Betar*.³ This was carried out on 5 August when Israel Rokach and Oved Ben-Ami, the mayors of Tel Aviv and Netanya respectively, along with thirty-three other Revisionist Party members were arrested. The tense atmosphere in Palestine was agitated further that same day, when the *Irgun* bombed the Labour Department offices in Jerusalem.⁴ Two days

¹PRO CO 733/477/75156/151 A Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 4 August 1947.

²PRO CO 537/2299 Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, Colonies, 4 August 1947.

³*Ibid.*

⁴*Times*, 6 August 1947.

later Cunningham sombrely informed Creech-Jones that, 'I cannot guarantee that the situation will not deteriorate to such a degree that Civil Government will break down and as you know it is by no means clear how much longer I can keep the Civil Service working under conditions such as exist at present'.¹

On 10 August Cunningham told Creech-Jones that the situation in the country had now deteriorated 'very near the stage at which' martial law had become a 'necessity'. But this measure was fraught with new difficulties since, Cunningham explained, 'if I were to hand over my legislative powers to the G.O.C., my personal position would be untenable'.² But what amounted to the final word on martial law was sounded by Trafford Smith, an official in the Colonial Office, who minuted on 12 August:

The imposition of "martial law proper" would be tantamount to throwing in our administrative hand in Palestine just at the moment when the United Nations were about to take a decision. Our prestige would suffer, and in particular, that administrative machine, which is now still running, with whatever difficulties and dangers, would probably suffer irremediable damage.³

CONCLUSION

Britain's inability to maintain order in Palestine, much less defeat the Jewish terrorist organizations, was largely the result of the failure to obtain the cooperation of the *Yishuv*. In his summary of events during the final 18 months of British rule in Palestine MacMillan observed that 'The attitude of the Arabs throughout the country was

¹MEC Cunningham Papers II/2 Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 7 August 1947.

²PRO CO 537/2299 Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 10 August 1947.

³*Ibid.*, Minute by Trafford Smith, 12 August 1947.

friendly to the British, but the attitude of the Jewish community varied between veiled hostility and actual violence'.¹ This was true not only of the last 18 months of Britain's rule in Palestine but throughout the final three years of the mandate as well.

The deterioration of Anglo-Zionist relations was primarily the result of the government's inability to accede to Jewish demands for unrestricted immigration and statehood. Throughout the war the *Yishuv* felt that it had remained faithful to Britain, subordinating its nationalist desires to the greater urgency of defeating Germany. The community's support had been based as much on its desire to defeat the Nazis as on the aim of assuring Britain's favourable consideration of Zionist claims to statehood. Foremost among these concerns was whether the White Paper would remain in force. This policy had a particularly tragic ring to it given the desire of many of the Jewish survivors of Hitler's death camps to emigrate to Palestine. The British, however, failed to appreciate the dimensions of this issue and the Jews' nationalist aspirations.

The disappointment initially caused by Churchill's rebuff to Weizmann in May 1945 was overshadowed by that caused by the new Labour Government's inaction regarding these issues after its ascent to power two months later. Frustrated by the government's procrastination, the Jewish Agency decided that violence should now be employed to force the government's hand. Thus the Agency pinned its faith and hopes on the fulfilment of its dreams through armed struggle. The Agency--as Montgomery appreciated--regarded the violence as a lever to use against the British to extract concessions. Even after the collapse of the

¹IWM Palestine: Narrative of Events by MacMillan, 3 July 1948.

Tenuat Hameri the Agency attempted to manipulate its cooperation against the terrorists for political concessions.

The Palestine administration and military differed over how this cooperation could be obtained. Cunningham always held out the hope that the Agency would eventually be persuaded either through British insistence or by pressure from the terrorists' increasing strength to resume the anti-terrorist campaign abandoned in 1945. Montgomery and Dempsey were convinced that only by throwing the full weight of the army against the *Yishuv* would the inconvenience and disruption caused to daily life compel the *Yishuv* to cooperate. Indeed, by provoking the British to employ coercive tactics the *Irgun* sought to galvanize moderate opinion within the community against Britain and in the group's favour. Thus as the violence escalated and conventional military means failed to have any appreciable effect on the situation, measures such as the arrest of the Jewish leaders during "Operation Agatha" and the imposition of martial law over select Jewish communities in March 1947 were implemented. In the final analysis, such tactics were counterproductive. Although "Operation Agatha" undermined the will of the Jewish Agency to prosecute the joint struggle against British rule and led to the collapse of the *Tenuat Hameri*, it had little, if any, impact on the *Irgun* or *Lehi*. Martial law, moreover, not only had the same negligible effect on the terrorists, but also further alienated the Jewish population and thereby eliminated any prospect--however forlorn--of securing its cooperation.

In sum, in the absence of the government's recognition of Zionist demands for unlimited immigration and statehood, there could be no prospect of enlisting the critically important, if not essential,

cooperation of the *Yishuv* in combatting the terrorists. Hence, the terrorists were able to feed off the political disappointment and frustration felt by the *Yishuv*, along with the community's increasing animosity towards the government engendered by martial law and other less severe measures, to wear away at Britain's resolve to remain in Palestine.

VI. THE BRITISH SOLDIER IN PALESTINE

For the British soldier in Palestine, the end of the Second World War brought no end to the hardship of military life or to the possibility of death and injury. Indeed, at the moment when hostilities in Europe and Asia were drawing to a close, a new, and rather different, conflict was beginning in Palestine. When Germany surrendered in May 1945 the *Irgun* declared that 'V-E Day for Europe will be D-Day for us'.¹ Hitherto, the group's policy had been to avoid inflicting casualties on British soldiers since they belonged to an army at war against Jewry's most heinous enemy, Nazi Germany. But now that the war was over such restraints were discarded as the *Irgun* intensified its attacks on the British. Moreover, shortly after Japan surrendered in September, the *Irgun*, *Lehi*, and *Haganah* united in a coordinated struggle against Britain's rule of Palestine.

Exhausted by the long years of war, the British soldier was nevertheless compelled to carry on fighting. But instead of waging the traditional type of warfare he knew how to fight, in Palestine he was confronted by unconventional, urban guerrilla warfare, a mode of conflict for which he was untrained and ill-prepared for. Not the least perplexing to him was the attitude of the Jewish community in Palestine towards Britain. Many soldiers regarded the war as having been fought in part to save the Jews from Hitler. But in place of the gratitude that he expected, he was instead hated.

¹PRO FO 371/45327 E3273/15/31 Telegram, Gort to Stanley, 19 May 1945.

The difficulties encountered by the British Army in Palestine during this time are evident in the accounts written by British officers who served there. Recalling the experience of the Sixth Airborne Division, Major R. D. Wilson describes how, 'In an atmosphere of hate and violence, the Division was faced with a responsibility in many respects more unpleasant and difficult than any it had to fulfil in war'.¹ Similarly, General R. N. Gale, the commander of the First Infantry recalls, 'I was not a Jew and never a Zionist [but]....The Jews were in Palestine and they were there under our mandate. Likes or dislikes must not blur judgement; but this was not always as easy as it sounds, for the acts of the terrorists were such that feeling was bound to run high'.² Apart from the political complexities of the Palestine issue, the war fought against the Jewish terrorists did not facilitate clear-cut distinctions between front lines and rear areas, times of alert and relaxation, and combatants and non-combatants. As Brigadier R. N. Anderson of the Royal Engineers wrote:

unlike the war, when one had one's period of rest (normally amongst liberated peoples who were friendly), the soldier [in Palestine] is always on duty and alert to the fact that, at any time, he may expect a murderous attack. In conditions where the moderate Jew will not cooperate with the Security Forces it is impossible to know who is friend or who is enemy.³

But what perplexed the British soldier most was the difficulty of dealing with a people who, in Wilson's words, 'were misguided enough to regard the British army as their oppressors'.⁴ A search of a Jewish

¹Wilson, *Cordon and Search*, p. xiii.

²Gale, *Call To Arms*, p. 164.

³Brigadier R. N. Anderson, 'Search Operations In Palestine: The Problem of the Soldier', *Army Quarterly*, 55 (1947-1948), 201.

⁴Wilson, *Cordon and Search*, p. xiii.

settlement, for example, was typically resisted by Jews wielding clubs and throwing stones and accompanied by taunts comparing the British to the 'Gestapo'.¹ Major Roy Farran was particularly angered at being called a 'fascist' and an 'anti-Semite'; with the Jews 'forgetting the long years of battle against the Germans when we stirred ourselves up to hatred with the belief that we were fighting a crusade on behalf of persecuted Jewry'.² Summing up his feelings, Farran notes how 'I thought about the displaced personnel we had seen in Europe, humble in their gratitude to us, their saviours, but I could not identify them with these ungrateful, well-fed whiners' in post-war Palestine.³ Thus the experience of the British soldier in Palestine was characterized by 'a life of tedium and hardship haunted by a sense of bewilderment at the cold hatred displayed by so many Jews, a thing quite outside the experience of British soldiers'.⁴

Creating and continually aggravating this climate of strain and bewilderment was, in fact, precisely the terrorists' goal. Through hit-and-run attacks, sudden assassinations, and random bombings, the terrorists sought to undermine the morale of the British soldier and his superiors in Palestine, to weaken in turn the government's prestige by demonstrating its inability to maintain law and order and, finally, to wear down Britain's resolve to remain in Palestine. 'History and our observation', Begin wrote, 'persuaded us that if we could succeed in destroying the government's prestige in Eretz Israel, the removal of its

¹*Ibid.*, p. 60, and Farran, *Winged Dagger*, p. 345.

²Farran, *Winged Dagger*, p. 10.

³*Ibid.*, pp. 372-373.

⁴Blaxland, *The Regiments Depart*, pp. 42-43.

rule would follow automatically'.¹ At the foundation of this strategy was Begin's belief that the British, unlike the Germans who during the war had carried out whole-sale reprisals against civilians, were incapable of such barbarity.² Accordingly, Palestine was to be transformed into a 'glass house' by the *Irgun* which 'the world was looking into...with increasing interest and could see most of what was happening inside. Arms were our weapons of attack', Begin wrote, 'the transparency of the "glass" was our shield'.³

However, in order to assess the impact of this strategy, and of Jewish terrorism in general, on the British soldier and his military and civilian leaders, reference must first be made to British attitudes towards the *Yishuv* prior to 1945.

THE WAR YEARS

During the months preceding the outbreak of World War II, Britain fundamentally changed its policy towards Palestine. Anxiety over the deteriorating situation in Europe coupled with Britain's strategic interests in the Middle East prompted this change. Although the Arab Rebellion had largely exhausted itself, fears that a new uprising might occur led to the promulgation of the White Paper in 1939. At this time the Jews were considered a less important factor in Britain's Middle East policy than the Arabs. This depreciation of the political importance of the Jews influenced the views of some senior British officials towards the Jews as a people.

¹Begin, *The Revolt*, p. 52.

²*Ibid.*, pp. 53-54.

³*Ibid.*, p. 57.

Addressing the House of Commons during a debate on the White Paper, Colonel Josiah Wedgwood ascribed British prejudices against the Jews to

the attitude, which we all share, of liking people who stand up and fight for their rights....The Arabs stand up and fight and massacre...on the other hand, the Jews are always complaining and begging for justice....The attitude of supplication, of being on your knees, has a very bad effect upon the respect of all nations for the Jews.¹

This attitude is revealed in the correspondence of General R. H. Haining, the GOC for Palestine and Transjordan between 1938 and 1939. On 6 July 1939, for example, he described the Jews to Sir Charles Tegart as 'an hysterical race', too interested in 'their own affairs to bother much about politics'.² A month later he used similar language in a letter to Sir John Shuckburgh (Deputy Under-Secretary, CO) averring that, 'The mass of Jews in Palestine want to be left alone: they are hysterical, and not, by nature, very brave or determined once they are up against a firm policy'.³

Identical views are evident in police and military intelligence reports as well. A secret PPF analysis written in 1941 noted that the Jews possess a 'tendency to mass masochism, the hysterical readiness to be plundered, raped and massacred'.⁴ Questions concerning the *Yishuv's* loyalty to Britain were also raised. Following the sinking of the *Struma*, a ship illegally transporting Jewish refugees to Palestine, and the death of all but one of its 769 passengers, posters appeared throughout Palestine blaming the tragedy on the British Government.

¹Debates, House of Commons, vol. 347, col. 1997, 22 May 1939.

²MEC Tegart Papers, IV/4 Letter, Haining to Tegart, 6 July 1939.

³PRO CO 733/395 Letter, Haining to Shuckburgh, 13 August 1939.

⁴RH Papers of Sir Richard Catling, Mss. Medit. S.20 (3) Secret Note On Jewish Illegal Organisations, Their Activities And Finances, 59/1809/3/G.5, 16 October 1941.

MacMichael was specifically accused of 'murder' for his role in enforcing the White Paper's restrictive immigration provisions. A military intelligence report commented that 'Jewish psychology is different to the English mind, but it is somewhat extraordinary that notwithstanding the magnitude of this war and what it means to the Jews that they can still acquiesce in, and even approve such acts of treason'.¹ These opinions were shared by British and Commonwealth troops serving in Palestine and are reflected in military censorship reports of their letters from Palestine. One letter stated that,

Back in Australia, I always disliked people who never had a good word for the Jews but since I've been here and seen them en masse and seen what they are really like words couldn't express the dislike and contempt I feel for them.... They seem to think that just because they are members of the Jewish race and because alot of them have been ill-treated they are entitled to sit down and have the rest of the world drop its own worries and devote its money and energy to molly-coddling them.²

Another related how

The Jews had a day of prayer and mourning last week, and there were thousands in the streets wailing and yelling what should be done to Hitler. The day after there was a recruiting campaign...net result--54 joined...and you wonder perhaps why we hate the sight of the Jews.... All the boys are sore about it.³

While the impression fostered among the troops was of the Jews as selfish, ungrateful wards of the British Empire, this was reinforced by the perception that the Jews were reluctant to join the fight against

¹PRO WO 169/4334 Weekly Intelligence Review No. 17, HQ Palestine, 18 March 1942.

²PRO WO 169/3814 Middle East Censorship Fortnightly Summary No. LII, 20 December 1942.

³PRO WO 169/3814 Middle East Military Censorship, Fortnightly Summary No. LIII, 3 January 1943.

Hitler. This misconception arose from the confusion surrounding the Jewish enlistment quota for Palestine. Even before war had broken out, Weizmann had written to Chamberlain expressing the *Yishuv*'s willingness to participate in the coming struggle. On the day war was declared, the Jewish Agency repeated this offer. But, as Cohen explains, 'From the outset, Zionist offers of military assistance were linked to political expectations, and treated by the British Government accordingly'.

Jewish requests to establish a force of their own within the British Army were continually rebuffed because of fears of antagonizing the Arabs with a British-sponsored Jewish army and of creating a precedent that could later be used by the Jews. Accordingly, a "parity system" was instituted where one Jew was permitted to enlist for every Arab who joined.¹

The use of the system deprived the British of exploiting a sizeable pool of potential recruits, since it was estimated that some 65,000 Jews were eligible for military service.² Thus by March 1940, for example, only 1,709 Jews were serving in H. M. Forces. Nonetheless a disparity of Arab to Jewish enlistees existed.³ By September 1943, 23,965 Jews had enlisted as opposed to 5,458 Arabs: a ratio of nearly five to one.⁴ This important distinction was often lost on both the British soldier

¹Cohen, *Palestine: Retreat from the Mandate*, pp. 98-99.

²NARS RG 319 Palestine Regional File 932 350.05 Report from Chaim Weizmann, 6 May 1942.

³Debates, House of Commons, vol. 358, col. 1960 (MacDonald), 20 March 1940. The four-to-one ratio (392 Arabs had joined) is explained by a loophole in the recruitment provisions that discounted persons joining 'auxiliary services like the Pioneer Corps, Signal Corps, RAF ground crews, etc.'. See Emanuel Newman and Dr. Chaim Weizmann, 'The Zionist Case: The Right of Self-Defense', *PM Magazine*, in NARS RG 165 Palestine 3810-4000 Box 3031, 10 June 1941.

⁴NARS RG 165 Palestine 6000-6770 Box 3036 JICAME Report, 15 September 1943.

and government official, and an unfortunate misconception was perpetuated. In May 1941, for example, J. S. Bennett (of the Office of the Minister of State in the Middle East), minuted that, 'The lack of Jewish recruitment for *combatant* service is significant. It shows that they are singularly lacking in real anxiety to join up and fight; and what they really want is an "Army" of their own for political purposes'.¹

As the participation of Jews in the war effort became more visible, questions about their loyalty persisted. One intelligence report discussed the feeling prevalent among British soldiers that the Jews 'place the rescuing of their brethren in Europe above the defeat of Germany'.² While another concluded that Jewish soldiers swore allegiance to the Jewish Agency first, and to His Majesty second, and serve in the military solely 'for their own purposes, and not ours'.³ Similar views were expressed by senior police officials. In a letter to J. S. MacPherson, the Chief Secretary, Rymer-Jones wrote that the Jewish policemen under his command 'clearly do not consider that they owe allegiance to the Palestine Police Force or to the Government of Palestine'.⁴ Thus even before Jewish terrorism began in earnest in 1944, British soldiers appear to have been ill-disposed towards the *Yishuv*.⁵

¹PRO CO 968/40/1 Minute by Bennett, 17 May 1941.

²PRO WO 169/9029 Weekly Intelligence Review No. 54, HQ Palestine, 12 May 1943.

³PRO WO 208/1705 Minute by MI-2, Lt. Col. G. Owen, 1 July 1943.

⁴PRO WO 208/1702 Letter, Rymer-Jones to MacPherson, 21 December 1943.

⁵See, for example, PRO CAB 95/14 W.P.(43) 5 Memorandum by Victor Cazalet, Member of Parliament, 2 August 1943.

TERRORISM IN PALESTINE

The resumption of the *Irgun's* revolt completely unsettled the tenuous peace that had existed in Palestine since the end of the Arab Rebellion and the suspension of the group's short-lived revolt at the start of World War II. Although neither the *Lehi* nor the *Irgun* operations at this time were directed against the army, they nevertheless effected the army's mission in Palestine. Hitherto, the police had been able to cope with the largely isolated and infrequent attacks by the numerically small *Lehi*. On occasion army units assigned to Palestine for training or recuperation had been pressed into service when large-scale searches of Jewish settlements required additional manpower. But the coordinated operations carried out by the larger, better armed *Irgun*--coupled with the harassing *Lehi* attacks--were beyond the resources of the police force.¹ Thus while the police retained primary responsibility for internal security, the army was increasingly called upon to undertake curfew, search and spot-check duties.² But this created problems for soliders who were unaccustomed to such tasks. As Colin Mitchell, a young officer in the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, later recalled of his service in Palestine between 1945 and 1948, 'A year before, when I had returned to England from Italy as a young subaltern newly blooded in battle, this sort of campaigning was the last thing I had expected'.³

¹PRO WO 169/15911 Intelligence Notes No. 2, DSO, HQ Palestine, 25 March 1944.

²Mitchell, *Having Been A Soldier*, pp. 55 and 58.

³*Ibid.*, p. 52.

Soldiers are taught to fight and to do so against a discernible enemy under rules of engagement where an army's might can be fully exercised. Conditions in Palestine, however, did not permit the army to function in this manner.¹ The battlefield in Palestine was not some neatly defined territory where opposing armies clashed, but cities populated by civilians among whom the terrorists concealed themselves.¹ Apart from the restraints on force that operations in populated areas imposed, there were constraints of a strategic and political nature that prevented offensive operations.

The frustration felt by the soldiers can be traced from the escalation of terrorism that began with the *Irgun* and *Lehi* attacks in February 1944. That month intelligence officers monitoring morale noted the troops' 'violent verbal reaction to the outrages'.² By the end of August--after *Lehi* had attempted to assassinate MacMichael--verbal condemnation had been superseded by demands of an 'urgent need for strong action'.³ But concern over harming the war effort in Europe and hindering efforts to secure the assistance of the *Yishuv* against the terrorists prevented implementation of the 'strong action' sought by the soldiers. In November--after *Lehi's* assassination of Lord Moyne again resulted in no significantly forceful British reaction--American OSS

¹The difficulties of fighting this type of warfare were widely recognized by British and American intelligence analysts and British officials. See PRO WO 169/15911 Intelligence Notes No. 2, 25 March 1944; NARS RG 165 Palestine 2710 Box 3025 JICAME Report, 23 March 1944; and PRO CO 733/456/75156/151 A Part I Telegram, MacMichael to Stanley, 9 April 1944.

²PRO WO 169/15851 Monthly Intelligence Summary No. 28, DSO, HQ Palestine, 1-29 February 1944.

³*Ibid.*, Monthly Summary No. 34, 1-31 August 1944.

analysts observed that, 'quite lately there seems to be a sort of "fed up" feeling among the British here, and a desire to return home'.¹

THE FORMATION OF THE TENUAT HAMERI

An uneasy quiet settled over Palestine following Lord Moyne's murder. For six months no terrorist attacks occurred, as the *Haganah* hunted down *Irgun* members and turned them over to the police. But the *Saison* failed to achieve its objective. Although the *Irgun* was forced to suspend operations and burrow still deeper underground, it withstood the threat and survived to reemerge a third time to challenge British rule in Palestine. By March 1945 the *Saison* was abandoned. Two months later, the war in Europe ended and the *Irgun* resumed its attacks, expanding the scope of its operations to include British military as well as government and police targets. The conflict further escalated after the formation of the *Tenuat Hameri* in September.²

The advent of the *Tenuat Hameri* accelerated the transformation of the army's mission in Palestine that had been caused by the terrorist campaigns 18 months before. With the police force now approximately 30 percent below strength,³ actual responsibility for maintaining order passed to the army. By the fall of 1945 the performance of unaccustomed duties in an unfamiliar conflict by soldiers untrained in the vagaries of urban guerrilla warfare had become more acute. Whereas the army had previously been affected only *indirectly* by terrorism, it now was

¹RG 226 OSS Report L 49459, 17 November 1944.

²PRO CO 537/1828 Memorandum By The Government of Palestine: Running Diary of Political Developments in Palestine From 1 January-31 December 1945, 24 April 1946.

³In March 1945 the PPF was short 1813 men of its 5000 man establishment. See PRO WO 169/22881 Middle East Forces Review by Paget, 1945.

directly swept into the maelstrom. The new onslaught directed against the army further aggravated the difficulties inherent in counter-terrorist warfare and the inevitable malaise among soldiers who, having survived one war, found themselves fighting another.¹

The first *Tenuat Hameri* attacks on 31 October quickly rekindled the frustrations of the past. Complaints over the absence of any military response prompted First Infantry Division headquarters to issue an explanatory directive. 'Higher policy', it stated,

still demands restraint. It is highly distasteful, after the murder of one's troops, not to begin immediately counter-measures.... We must, however, in fairness to those carrying out top-level international negotiations, remember that their task is one of the most extreme difficulty.²

The average soldier found it difficult to accept this reasoning and, prevented from striking back at the terrorists, he channeled his resentment towards the only readily visible source of his predicament: the *Yishuv*.³

A letter sent to the Foreign Office by an anonymous officer, whom officials noted was 'not a Jew', boldly illustrates this point. 'Among the British in Palestine', he wrote, 'suspicion and hatred of the Jew is being widely voiced with the bitterest venom'. The officer reported that anti-Semitism was common throughout the ranks. A major was related

¹See MEC D'Arcy Hanging File, Letter, D'Arcy to Gort, 13 August 1945, and CZA S 25/6910 A Year As An Intelligence Officer In Palestine by Lt. Col. Martin Charteris, September 1946. Charteris was the senior British intelligence officer in Palestine between September 1945 and September 1946.

²PRO WO 169/19656 Directive No. 9, First Division, 7 November 1945. At this time Britain was negotiating with the United States concerning the formation of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry.

³See CZA S 25/6910 A Year As An Intelligence Officer by Charteris, September 1946.

to have stated, 'I'm not for the Jews or against them...but I can't help feeling that Hitler was on the right lines'. Others agreed that 'Hitler could hardly [be] blame[d]' and argued that the Nazi persecution and extermination of Jews had been invented by Zionist leaders and propagandists to win sympathy and support for a Jewish state in Palestine. Even more disturbing, he continued, was that these sentiments often surfaced during operations when officers as well as enlisted men took 'vindictive relish' in using excessive force against Jewish civilians.¹

Although the opinions expressed in this letter are those of one person, they appear to be substantiated by the language used in an order issued by Army *Headquarters* in Palestine just a month later. Under the sub-heading, 'Commercial Considerations' it is stated that, 'Jews all over the world interest themselves in "business". Those in PALESTINE are no exception'. Accordingly, it was opined that they would be particularly sensitive to disruptions of commerce that curfews and searches cause. 'Although possessed of great agility of mind', the section of the order entitled 'The Jewish Character' observed,

they lack genuine wisdom. They have a strong material side, a love of business, and a love of preserving their property, on the other hand they have within them a very strong and unpredictable strain of emotionalism. They are often mystics. They still think of the prophets and their deeds as great things.²

¹PRO FO 371/45387 E9361/15/31 Letter (anonymous) to Foreign Office, 3 December 1945.

²PRO WO 169/19745 Appreciation of The Likely Reaction of the Jews to BROADSIDE, HQ Palestine, 15 November 1945.

Additional evidence of the pervasive dimension of the military's antipathy for the *Yishuv* can be found in a report of the Chaplaincy Services, Middle East Forces, written in February 1946. In it the Deputy Chaplain General expressed concern over the poor quality of soldier arriving in Palestine and the lack of discipline or education that he had. Such a person, the report warned, was easily influenced by facile racist and religious generalizations and prone to intemperate opinions, if not outright bigotry.¹

Admittedly, the growing hostility of the *Yishuv* towards Britain did little to improve the situation and may well have encouraged such deprecatory attitudes among the soldiers. The Jewish Agency's decision to unite the *Haganah* with the *Irgun* and *Lehi* in a joint struggle to end British rule had laid the ground for the civil disturbances that occurred in Tel Aviv in November. Encouraged by the attacks on 31 October, the *Yishuv* vented its disappointment and anger on the soldiers. Four days later, for example, a traffic accident in Tel Aviv involving a Jewish pedestrian and an army vehicle incited an attack on the driver and his comrades by Jewish passersby.² But this was only a prelude to the rioting that erupted in the city on 14 November, the day after the formation of the Anglo-American Committee was announced. Units of the Sixth Airborne sent to assist the police were pelted with stones and assaulted by the rampaging mob.³

¹PRO WO 169/22932 Letter, Reverend V. J. Pike to Chaplain General, London in MEF Monthly Report No. 34, GHQ, MEF, Cairo, 12 February 1946. These impressions were also expressed by Charteris. See CZA S 25/6910 A Year As An Intelligence Officer, September 1946.

²PRO WO 275/38 Sixth Airborne Division Field Security Report, 7 November 1945.

³PRO 537/1828 Memorandum by Palestine Government, 24 April 1946.

Five months later six members of the Sixth Airborne sitting in a cafe in Tel Aviv were set upon by a crowd of Jews for no apparent reason other than the fact that they were British soldiers. The paratroops, it was reported, were 'quickly outnumbered and savagely chased by the Jews who kicked and injured them when they were exhausted. Passersby attempted to trip them, shopkeepers denied them refuge, and far from attempting to rescue the injured men[,] the local populace did what it could to prevent them from reaching safety'.¹

On 26 April a far more serious incident irreversibly poisoned relations between the army and the *Yishuv* when *Lehi* launched a particularly brutal attack on an encampment of the Sixth Airborne in Tel Aviv. Despite statements by the Jewish Agency, *Vaad Leumi*, the Jewish Federation of Labour, the Chief Rabbinate, and Dr. Weizmann condemning the attack, the Division's commander, General A.J.H. Cassells, imposed a curfew on the entire city.² Cassells informed the mayor of Tel Aviv that he had decided this measure was necessary

both in order to maintain public security and because I hold the entire community to blame. There is no doubt whatsoever in my mind that many members either knew of this project or could have given some warning before it happened. Further, I am quite certain that if you, as representative of the community of Tel Aviv, chose to do so you could produce sufficient information to lead to the arrest of the criminals.³

¹PRO WO 169/22882 Weekly Intelligence Review No. 57, GHQ, MELF, 26 April 1946.

²Trevor, *Under the White Paper*, pp. 201-202.

³Quoted in Wilson, *Cordon and Search*, p. 47.

On 12 May the curfew was lifted, although no terrorists had been arrested and little assistance had been provided by the *Yishuv*. Moreover, it had proven to be counter-productive. The resentment of the community was heightened by being blamed for the terrorist attack while the disappointing results of the curfew further exacerbated the troops' frustration and feeling of powerlessness. Recalling the attack, Wilson wrote, 'No man, whatever his rank, who was serving with the division on this day will ever forget the feeling of revulsion and frustration which he expressed as a result of this despicable act'.¹ Not surprisingly, it drove some members of the Division to take matters into their own hands. A few men, unable to suppress their anger, assaulted Jews and vandalized Jewish-owned property in Netanya and Beer Tuvia. Although vigilante behaviour was rare, it demonstrated the acute strain placed on the British soldier in these difficult circumstances. As a member of another unit, stationed in a different part of Palestine, complained to his representative in Parliament:

Surely the only way to avenge these atrocities is by "force" only, not merely cordoning off a town for a few hours and then completely forgetting about the whole matter. Until such times as we do use force these terrorists will strike again and again. I am convinced that the people of cities such as Tel Aviv are working hand-in-hand with these so-called terrorists.

Unless steps are taken to bring these people to justice discontent will breed between our troops and the people out there.²

¹*Ibid.*, p. 45.

²PRO CO 733/456/75156/151 A Part I, Letter, J. Abbot, Rifleman, First Battalion, The Royal Ulster Rifles to Barbara Castle, M.P., 28 April 1946.

It now became evident that a dramatic show of force was required to prevent matters from getting completely out of hand. On 15 May D'Arcy, the GOC, returned to London to impress this fact on his military and civilian superiors. D'Arcy briefed the COS, who shared his view that 'restrictions were tying the hands of the military...in dealing adequately with the present outrages' and were harming morale. The COS also were concerned 'that similar incidents to the recent Tel Aviv outrage might produce a strong reaction in the behaviour of our forces which might not be possible to prevent'.¹ D'Arcy met next with Attlee and Hall. The nature of terrorist warfare, he explained, placed the army at a serious disadvantage that was adversely affecting morale because initiative was always with the terrorists. Accordingly, D'Arcy sought permission to launch a major operation that would strike at the terrorists as well as compel the *Yishuv* to cooperate with the army and police. His plan was to occupy the offices of the Jewish Agency, seize its files, and arrest its leaders. Although it was not rejected by the Cabinet outright, the fact that the Anglo-American Committee had not yet completed its inquiries, alongside of concern over 'upsetting negotiations' with the United States, blocked its immediate implementation.² Nevertheless, the point regarding morale had been driven home and, as Bevin subsequently minuted, the Cabinet was made aware that 'the present situation is dangerous'.³

¹PRO FO 371/52530 E5738/4/G.31 COS Committee (46) 95, 19 June 1946.

²*Ibid.*

³PRO FO 371/52525 E4623/4/G.31 Minute by Bevin, 22 May 1946.

The widespread attacks staged by the *Tenuat Hameri* between 16-18 June, however, were serious enough to persuade the Cabinet to reconsider the planned operation against the Jewish Agency. On 19 June the COS emphasized to both the Colonial Office and Foreign Office that while they

are very mindful of the international repercussions...[we] feel bound to point out again the serious consequences of the continued imposition of the present restrictions. The present directions that local action only should be taken hamstrings the military authorities in such a way that full military action to prevent these outrages cannot be taken and, secondly, limits the action which could be taken to punish the perpetrators. Thirdly, the restrictions impose hesitancy of action which has a serious effect on the morale of our forces who are already working under extreme tension.¹

That same day Cunningham used almost identical language in describing to Hall the need for the strong action.²

On 20 June Hall presented Cunningham's views to the Cabinet. 'There was no doubt', he stated, 'that the situation was becoming more serious. The patience of the Administration and the military was being seriously tried and there was grave risk of the troops taking matters into their own hands'. Montgomery, and the Secretary of State for War, J. J. Lawson, agreed with Hall's interpretation of the situation and completely supported his recommendation that 'very firm action' should be taken. The Cabinet was persuaded by these arguments and approved the operation against the Jewish Agency code-named "Agatha".³

¹*Ibid.*, Annex II COS 729/6 Letter, Secretary, COS to Sir Orme Sargent (Permanent Under-Secretary, FO) and Sir George Gater (Permanent Under-Secretary, CO), 19 June 1946.

²PRO CAB 129/10 C.P. (46) 238 19 June 1946 containing Telegram, Cunningham to Hall, 19 June 1946.

³PRO CAB 128/5 C.M. (46) 60, 20 June 1946.

On 29 June, "Operation Agatha" began. A week earlier, the new GOC, Barker (who had replaced D'Arcy in May), had written to Weizmann in an attempt to avoid the implementation of this measure by securing the *Yishuv's* cooperation. Barker argued that Britain's defeat of Turkey in World War I had made Jewish settlement of Palestine a 'reality'. Britain had subsequently fought Germany, 'making it possible for the settlement of Jews to continue'. Hence, it was time for the *Yishuv* 'to balance up that debt' by assisting in the suppression of the terrorists. In conclusion, Barker stated,

This senseless violence and animosity only makes it more difficult for our peoples, and with many of us who have deep sympathy for your people, merely makes one lose that sympathy.

Having had the unpleasant task of visiting Belsen after my troops had liberated it, I am fully aware of what the Jewish people have suffered.¹

THE BOMBING OF THE KING DAVID HOTEL

On 22 July 1946 the *Irgun* blew up the King David Hotel. The wave of horror and indignation that swept Palestine was unprecedented. The shock was all the greater because of the Jews killed in the attack and the lengths that the terrorists now appeared willing to take in their war against Britain. In a letter Barker later wrote to Katie Antonius, his intimate friend and the widow of the Arab nationalist, George Antonius, he expressed this shock. 'We have seen what happened in the King David', he remarked, 'where [the terrorists] were prepared to blow up men *and* women--Jewish women too'.²

¹CZA S 25/6908 Letter, Barker to Weizmann, 18 June 1946.

²ISA Barker-Antonius Correspondence, 26 April 1947. See also Wilson, *Cordon and Search*, p. 63.

Echoing Cassell's words following the Tel Aviv attack, Barker issued an internal order which stated that, 'Without the support, active or passive, of the general Jewish public, terrorist gangs who actually carry out these criminal acts would soon be unearthed'. Accordingly, he imposed a ban on all social contact and commerce between the army and the *Yishuv*. Then in harsh language, which contrasts sharply to the sympathetic tone of his letter to Weizmann, Barker declared

I am determined that they [the Jews] shall suffer punishment and be made aware of the contempt and loathing with which we regard their conduct....I appreciate that these orders will inflict a measure of hardship upon the troops but I am confident that if my reasons are fully explained to them they will understand their propriety and that they will be punishing the Jews in a way the race dislikes as much as any, namely by striking them at their pockets and showing our contempt for them.¹

Although the order was not intended for public announcement, it was leaked to the press and on 29 July was printed in London newspapers.² Amidst calls for Barker's dismissal the House of Commons met on 31 July to debate the matter. Morrison presented the government's position, arguing that the order was 'justified in the present state of the country...making allowances for the provocation to which our forces are exposed, and recognising that [it] was written shortly after the

¹MEC Cunningham Papers V/4 Order of the Day by Barker, 25 July 1946.

²Abba Eban, a Member of Israel's Parliament and former Foreign Minister, recounts how, as an officer in the British Army stationed in Palestine at the time, he came upon the order posted on a notice board. 'It was a vulgar, anti-Semitic tract...[and] It seemed to me that the public interest demanded that the style as well as the contents of the document become widely known'. Eban memorized the order and told Jon Kimche, an Anglo-Jewish journalist, who in turn transmitted it to London. See Abba Eban, *Abba Eban: An Autobiography* (New York, 1977), pp. 62-63.

outrage'. Although the government felt it necessary to 'dissociate themselves from the actual terms in which the [order] was couched', it was not deemed necessary to terminate Barker's command. The House was instead assured that the CIGS would handle the matter.¹ Labour back-bencher Richard Crossman, a member of the Anglo-American Committee, challenged Morrison's justifications, declaring

When one's troops are doing a military operation against the Jewish people the danger of anti-Semitism is extremely high. The natural instinct is to dislike the race or people one is fighting. There is an inclination rather to have it out with the Jewish community rather than to limit one's hatred to terrorism.

This is a natural inclination, and it is all-important that the men at the top should give no sign of countenance, by word or praise, to support anti-Semitism. They should not officially give those under their command the feeling that it will not be ruthlessly penalized.²

It appears, however, that the time had since passed when the tide of anti-Semitism welling within the army in Palestine could be turned back. Intemperate as Barker's words were, similarly derisory language was routinely used in orders and reports emanating from less senior officers as well. The analysis of 'The Jewish Character' cited in the instructions for "Operation Broadside" provides one example of this tendency to incorporate anti-Semitic statements into orders issued at the highest level of the Palestine command. Further evidence may be seen in an intelligence report of the arms searches of rural Jewish settlements that occurred during "Operation Agatha". The intense resistance to them encountered by the troops was ascribed to the fact 'that the Jews are quite unbalanced, dangerously emotional and

¹Debates, House of Commons, vol. 426, cols. 959-962, 31 July 1946.

²*Ibid.*, cols. 1013-1014, 31 July 1946.

psychologically insecure. This may be the result of Centuries of persecution [sic]'.¹ Such attitudes gave reign to the use of excessive force by troops engaged in search operations.

After two Jewish settlements were searched by the Sixth Airborne Division on 28 August, accusations appeared in the Jewish press of widespread looting, vandalism and brutality. Division officers maintained that these claims were part of 'a deliberate campaign of propaganda' directed by 'Jewish sources'.² Upon investigation, Cunningham determined that, while the claims were found to be exaggerated, 'Unfortunately...a certain amount of unnecessary and wilful damage' had occurred. This, he averred, was 'attributable...to the fact that the troops were provoked by shouts of "Gestapo" etc'.³

The searches and settlers' resistance to them created a 'wicked and vicious circle' that only 'increase[d] friction on both sides'. As Charteris noted, 'the soldier becomes irritated and angry with the civilians, and remember it is not always easy for him to separate the terrorists from the others...and the civilian becomes even more irritated with the soldier'.⁴ Wilson as well argues that, 'It was certainly not in the interest of the soldiers deliberately to stir up hatred....But expressions such as "Gestapo" and "English bastards" spat out with such venom could hardly be ignored indefinitely, and without doubt were sometimes answered in kind'.⁵ After listening to a Jewish

¹PRO WO 275/63 Fortnightly Intelligence Newsletter No. 18, HQ Palestine, 24 June-7 July 1946.

²PRO WO 275/72 Report on Jewish Propaganda concerning Relations between Airborne Troops and Civilians, August 1946.

³MEC Cunningham Papers I/2 Telegram, Cunningham to Hall, 22 September 1946.

⁴CZA S 25/6910 A Year As An Intelligence Officer by Charteris, September 1946.

⁵Wilson, *Cordon and Search*, p. 60.

Agency official complain about the tension created by 'barbed wire and soldiers', Cunningham asked him to consider 'soldiers who have had to undergo criticism and vituperation, seeing their fellow soldiers shot in the back and murdered. The soldiers were also in a state of tension and the situation was putting on the men an intolerable strain, restrained, he was glad to say, by the officers'.¹ It is clear that part of the blame for this lamentable state of affairs rested with the *Yishuv*. But this was something the Jews would not, or could not, accept.

The officers, however, were also responsible for the antagonism. It is difficult to reconcile Cunningham's confidence in their ability to restrain their men with the offensive--and inflammatory--language used by Barker and other officers. Crossman had drawn attention to the dangerous influence that such tactlessly worded directives could have on the troops. Although it was indeed 'all-important that the men at the top should give no sign of countenance...to anti-Semitism', it was as difficult for the generally better-educated officers as it was for their men to maintain self-control and objectivity in these circumstances. As Dempsey had warned Montgomery following the attack on the King David, 'There is no necessity for me to tell you what the soldiers feel about this business. They will accept being murdered in cold blood up to a point. I repeat up to a point. They will want to use their strength and weapons and so will I'.² The feeling of exasperation felt by commanders whose men were being killed and maimed by an enigmatic adversary they seemed powerless to engage in actual combat, much less

¹MEC Cunningham Papers V/1 Interview Between The High Commissioner and Eliezer Kaplan, 23 October 1946.

²PRO WO 216/194 Telegram, Dempsey to Montgomery, 24 July 1946.

defeat, accounts for much of the hostility expressed by the officers towards the *Yishuv*. An incident involving the commander of a battalion of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders and a group of press correspondents the day after Cunningham had reproached the Jewish Agency official illustrates this point.

On 24 October the *Irgun* detonated remote-control bombs at four check-points in Jerusalem manned by the Argylls. Eleven men were wounded; one of whom later died from his injuries. Enraged by the attacks, their commander, Lt.-Col. Richard Webb, summoned five reporters who had arrived on the scene to his office. To one, Webb exclaimed that 'the Jews are a despicable race....These bloody Jews--we saved their skins in Alamein and other places and then they do this to us'. To another, he stated that 'his boys are pretty hot-tempered' and, by way of explanation, admitted that they 'sometimes use the butts of their rifles and do a spot of looting'.¹

THE FLOGGING INCIDENTS

The publicity given to Webb's remarks, like that surrounding Barker's order three months before, demonstrates that the *Irgun's* strategy of transforming Palestine into a 'glass house', where any misstep by the British would be broadcast to the world, was beginning to succeed. In December the group was afforded yet another opportunity to embarrass the army and undercut morale. After being convicted of illegal possession of arms while attempting to rob a bank, two members

¹CZA S 25/6910 Interview with Lt. Col. Richard Webb, 24 October 1946. See also Mitchell, *Having Been A Soldier*, p. 59. Webb was subsequently removed from his command for publicly expressing 'unauthorized and unofficial' opinions. See PRO CO 733/456/75156/151 A Part II Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 29 October 1946.

of the *Irgun* were sentenced to 18 years' imprisonment with the additional punishment of 18 lashes. The *Irgun* high command regarded 'this degrading addendum to an already severe sentence as a very serious matter with far-reaching moral and political implications. 'These lashes', Begin wrote, 'would wound the soul of Eretz Israel....Was an oppressor now to whip us in our own country?'.¹ The *Irgun* warned: 'If [the sentence] is put into effect--every officer of the British occupation army in Eretz-Israel will be liable to be punished in the same way: *to get 18 whips*'.²

Refusing to give in to this blackmail, Barker, as GOC, confirmed the sentences and on 27 December one of the convicted terrorists was duly flogged. That night the *Irgun* repeated its warning:

For centuries you have been whipping "natives" in your colonies--with impunity. In your foolish pride you dared to consider the Sons of Israel in Eretz-Israel as "natives", too. You are mistaken. Zion is not Exile. The Hebrews are not Zulus. You will not whip Hebrews in their Homeland. And if you do--then "His Majesty's Officers" will be whipped in full public view.³

The following day the group seized a major and three sergeants who were given 18 lashes each before being released.⁴ Afterwards another warning was issued by the *Irgun*: 'If the oppressors dare in the future, to abuse the bodies and the human and national honour of Jewish youths, we shall

¹Begin, *The Revolt*, p. 231. The *Yishuv* also regarded the sentence as an affront to Jewish dignity. Appeals were made for its revocation by the *Vaad Leumi*, the Rabbinate, and the Jewish Bar Association less out of sympathy for the terrorists than of concern over the sympathy for the terrorists' cause that the whippings might create in the community. See Trevor, *Under The White Paper*, pp. 294-295.

²Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, v, 72-73.

³JI K-4 7/15 The Voice of Fighting Zion, The Broadcast Station of the IZL, broadcast of poster issued on 27 December 1946.

⁴Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, v, 76-77.

no longer reply with the whip. *We shall reply with fire*'.¹ The result was a face-saving revocation of the whipping sentence on the other *Irgun* member (on grounds of his alleged poor health) imposed on the army by the civil administration.²

But this tactical retreat was seen by the troops for what it really was: a capitulation to the terrorists' will. Especially galling was the fact that it had come at the expense of the army who, on top of having to endure the humiliation of four of its members being flogged, was forced to give in to government pressure and remit the second sentence. Angered by this affront to the army's honour, Montgomery angrily told Dempsey, 'I am particularly anxious to know if the Army is to be forced to accept this insult or if it is to be allowed to take the offensive against such terrorist acts'.³ Even before the *Irgun* had carried out its threat, the group's second warning on 27 December had been followed by assaults on Jewish passersby by soldiers.⁴ Wilson recalls, 'To say that feeling was high among the British Forces is almost an understatement. All ranks were immediately confined to barracks to prevent any further incidents and to guard against the possibility of retaliatory action by the troops'.⁵

In hopes of defusing the situation, the army was authorized to undertake widespread searches in four predominantly Jewish areas on 30 December.⁶ The searches, however, had little, if any, effect on the terrorists. On 2 January 1947 terrorist attacks were staged in

¹Begin, *The Revolt*, p. 234.

²ISA CS (Chief Secretary) SF/685/39/397, 9 January 1947.

³PRO WO 216/194 Telegram, 29 December 1946.

⁴ISA CS (Chief Secretary) D/160/40 Letter, Ben-Zvi to Gurney, 27 December 1946.

⁵Wilson, *Cordon and Search*, p. 87.

⁶*Times*, 8 January 1947.

Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa, and Hadera. The troops once again took out their anger on the *Yishuv*.¹ During a screening operation in Tel Aviv, approximately 70 Jews were made to run a gauntlet by members of the Sixth Airborne who tripped and beat them with fists and rifle-butts.²

When Dempsey assumed command of British forces in the Middle East the previous June, Montgomery had instructed him to

ensure that every officer and man in any way connected with this struggle realises to the full the fanatical and cunning nature of his enemy, [and] the un-English methods that this enemy will use....

Finally it must be clearly realised by all ranks that, now that the Jews have flung the gauntlet in our face, they must be utterly and completely defeated and their illegal organisation smashed forever.³

By the winter of 1946, however, Montgomery's orders had not been fulfilled. Hardly a day went by when a base was not attacked or a soldier killed or wounded. On 19 November Dempsey complained to Montgomery that 'The time has now come when we must take action.... We must make the people of the country realise that their tacit acceptance of terrorism does not pay'. Dempsey went on to describe how some policemen had ransacked a Jewish cafe and beaten up Jewish passersby in Tel Aviv after learning that a terrorist mine had claimed the lives of four of their comrades. 'There are no signs of the soldiers doing this yet', he concluded, but 'murder without action cannot go on'.⁴

¹Trevor, *Under The White Paper*, pp. 299-300.

²PRO FO 371/61763 E433/46/31 Telegrams, Creech-Jones to O.A.G., 9 January 1947, and O.A.G. to Creech-Jones, 11 January 1947. See also PRO WO 216/194 Telegram, Dempsey to Montgomery, 15 January 1947, in which Dempsey expressed concern that the Division was 'overstepping the mark in their searches'.

³PRO WO 216/194 Personal Directive, Montgomery to Dempsey, 27 June 1946.

⁴*Ibid.*, Telegram, Dempsey to Montgomery, 19 November 1946.

Because it was impossible to distinguish the terrorists from the people, the only solution, Dempsey believed, was to undertake wide-scale searches of Jewish communities. Aggressive action like this would both drive the terrorists into the open as well as pressure the *Yishuv* to furnish the information required to unearth the terrorists. Such operations, however, were prohibited by the High Commissioner unless evidence directly linking the area to be searched with a terrorist attack could be provided and only if a search was in no way 'retaliatory or punitive'. Accordingly, Dempsey argued that, for the army to regain the initiative, these restraints had to be lifted.¹

On 1 January 1947 the Cabinet Defence Committee met to resolve the dispute between the Colonial and War Offices over military policy in Palestine. Creech-Jones presented the Colonial Office position, arguing that the importance of ensuring Jewish participation at the conference to be held in February by the government to resolve the Palestine issue must take precedence over the army's demands for greater freedom in its handling of the terrorist problem. The Secretary of State for War, F. J. Bellenger, 'reminded the Committee of the cruelty and indignities to which members of the the Armed Forces [in Palestine] were being subjected' and cautioned that continued restraint of the army 'might well lead to a situation in which members of the Armed Forces would take things into their own hands'. Accordingly, the War Office and Colonial Office were instructed to draw up a mutually acceptable directive re-defining the army's role in Palestine.²

¹*Ibid.*, 21 November 1946.

²PRO WO 32/10260 Extract of Minutes of Cabinet Defence Committee D.O. 1 (47), 1 January 1947.

Having secured for the army the power to operate in Palestine without interference from the civil administration, Montgomery now maneuvered to consolidate its ascendant position.¹ During the Cabinet's meeting on 15 January, he steered discussion to the fact that no Jewish terrorist who had been brought to justice and condemned to death had yet to be executed. Recognizing that the balance of opinion in the Cabinet had been tipped firmly in the army's favour, Montgomery played the morale card to advantage again. He attacked the administration's reversal of the flogging sentence on the second terrorist, arguing 'that by taking this line, we were playing into the hands of the terrorists who merely say "You do not dare". It is a weak and thoroughly bad policy which can only make things more difficult in the end for the Government and armed forces'. The Cabinet rose to the bait. Attlee, Montgomery reported to Dempsey, 'was emphatic' that 'leniency towards terrorists was...an unsound policy'--a view supported by the Cabinet. Accordingly, Dempsey was directed to bring this fact to Cunningham's attention and ensure that 'sentences should be carried out in all cases of terrorists condemned to death unless there is some technical illegality'.²

On 2 January a military court had sentenced to death Dov Gruner, an *Irgun* terrorist convicted of attacking a police armoury in Ramat Gan the previous April.³ Eight days later Barker confirmed the sentence. These developments were roundly applauded by the troops.⁴ During 1946, 49

¹See Montgomery, *Memoirs*, p. 421.

²PRO WO 216/194 Telegram, Montgomery to Dempsey, 16 January 1947.

³IWM Palestine: Narrative of Events by MacMillan, 3 July 1948.

⁴Wilson, *Cordon and Search*, p. 89.

soldiers had been killed and 122 wounded; police casualties were 28 dead and 34 wounded (terrorist losses were considerably lower: 25 killed and 46 wounded).¹ Yet to date, none of the 22 death sentences handed down to Jewish terrorists had been carried out. By comparison, 108 of the 182 Arabs sentenced to death during the Arab Rebellion had been executed.² The leniency shown towards Jewish terrorists was a major source of complaint among the soldiers.³

Flushed from its triumph in reversing the flogging sentence, the *Irgun* issued a new warning: 'Execution of prisoners of war is premeditated murder. We warn the British regime of blood against the commission of this crime'.⁴ On 26 January the *Irgun* kidnapped Judge Windham and Collins, threatening to execute them along with seven other Britons chosen at random if Gruner hanged. The following day Cunningham informed Creech-Jones that, 'In view of this, there has been no alternative but to respite the death sentence on Dov Gruner' and that Barker 'is signing the respite order'. The kidnappings, he continued, have prompted him to reconsider 'the whole question of evacuation of women and children, and concentration of British civil personnel' in special security zones to deprive the terrorists of future hostages.⁵ Nevertheless, the government and military were spared the humiliation of again having to cave in to terrorist blackmail when Gruner was granted

¹*Ibid.*

²Debates, House of Commons, vol. 436, col. 46 (Creech-Jones), 17 April 1947. Apart from Lord Moyne's assassins, who were hanged in Cairo in 1945, the only Jew sentenced to death in Palestine who had in fact been executed was Schlomo Ben-Yosef.

³Wilson, *Cordon and Search*, p. 102.

⁴Quoted in Begin, *The Revolt*, p. 255.

⁵PRO CO 537/3870 Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 27 January 1947.

an automatic stay of execution while his sentence was appealed to the Privy Council. Windham and Collins were freed unharmed.¹

The safe return of the two hostages, however, did not mitigate the sense of alarm pervading Palestine. On 29 January Cunningham impressed upon Creech-Jones the seriousness of the situation in light of the abductions. The terrorists, he wrote, 'have now proved that they will not stop short of reprisals on British civil community in Palestine. The Police and Army have informed me that they are unable to protect civilians under conditions of normal civil life which obtain at present'. Hence, Cunningham deemed it 'imperative to evacuate women and children and non-essential British personnel so that the decks are clear and the Government and Army are in a position to enforce the law'.²

Cunningham's recommendation was supported by Dempsey and Barker.³ On 30 January Montgomery expressed similar frustration over conditions in Palestine in a telegram to Dempsey that was copied to the Colonial Secretary and, ultimately, reached the Prime Minister. 'I am absolutely horrified at what is being allowed to go on in Palestine', he stated,

and have given my views to the Colonial Secretary in no uncertain terms. It is quite monstrous to negotiate with illegal organisations and to say that unless they do this then we will do that....

I agree entirely that you should get the wives and families away. But if this is done then you must set about the illegal armed organisations properly and go into battle with a bang. I am all in favour of "a firm policy" but have never seen one yet in Palestine since I have been CIGS. We

¹See ISA Barker-Antonius Correspondence, 31 January 1947.

²PRO CO 537/3870 Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 29 January 1947.

³PRO WO 216/194 Telegram, Dempsey to Montgomery, 29 January 1947. See also ISA Barker-Antonius Correspondence, 31 January 1947.

have been led into the present situation by a policy of weakness and of weak will power.... What we want is a stronger will power to stamp out this lawlessness and a firm determination that we will NOT repeat NOT tolerate insults to the British rule from a lot of gangsters.¹

Montgomery's criticism of both the Palestine administration and the British Government, however, led to a summons to the Prime Minister's office where he was reprimanded and 'obliged' to withdraw his comments.²

On 4 February British policy in Palestine crossed a new threshold. Almost overnight, the nature of British life in the country was fundamentally altered by three simultaneous operations code-named "Polly", "Cantonment", and "Fantail". "Polly" was the evacuation of British wives, children and non-essential personnel from Palestine; while "Cantonment" and "Fantail" involved the construction of restricted, barbed-wire encircled security zones in the country's principal urban areas and military-essential outlying areas where all remaining personnel--civilian and military--were relocated. The latter two operations required the requisition of all dwellings within the designated zones and the transfer of their inhabitants elsewhere.³ The army's response to complaints from citizens about such relocations was unsympathetic. The operational instructions for "Fantail" directed officers to answer Jewish protests by explaining that 'responsibility...for this, lies neither with the Government nor with the military authorities but with the terrorists who have made these measures necessary'.⁴

¹*Ibid.*, Telegram, Montgomery to Dempsey, 30 January 1947.

²*Ibid.*, 31 January 1947, and Montgomery, *Memoirs*, p. 422.

³PRO WO 275/23 Operational Instruction No. 26, 1 February 1947.

⁴PRO WO 261/140 HQ Palestine "Fantail", 5 February 1947.

Thus life in Palestine by February 1947 presented a bleak and melancholy picture. One civil servant who remained was John Fletcher-Cooke (Under-Secretary for Finance in the Palestine Government) who described how,

My life and work in Jerusalem, like those of every other Government officer, was severely circumscribed. Armed guards accompanied me to my Jewish dentist for treatment; armed guards patrolled the main shopping area for an hour or two on certain days, which were the only times we could visit the shops and the banks; and travelling outside Jerusalem was only permitted with armed escorts...except in a few predominantly Arab areas where there was little risk of encountering Jewish terrorists.

Morale, which 'had dropped very considerably' after the King David bombing, he continues, 'received a further blow with the departure of wives and families'.¹

Daily life was perhaps even worse for the soldiers.² All Jewish areas were declared out of bounds.³ Following the flogging episode they were restricted to base and, when outside, 'were ordered to carry arms at all times and to walk at least in pairs'.⁴ As a result of the kidnappings of Windham and Collins a month later, troops were instructed 'to walk off duty in fours'.⁵ 'The soldier has no social life outside

¹MEC Fletcher-Cooke Papers, 'The Compulsive "Cuppa"' (unpublished mss.), 1971. See also R. M. Graves, *Experiment In Anarchy* (London, 1949), pp. 55 and 57. Graves was Chairman of Municipal Commission, Jerusalem at this time.

²Debates, House of Commons, vol. 432, cols. 1301-1302 (Stanley), 31 January 1947.

³RH Papers of R. Fraser containing Don Burke, '"We're Just Targets": British Police Are Victims of The Latest Episode in Palestine's Long Serial of Violence', *Life Magazine*, 1947.

⁴*Times*, 4 January 1947.

⁵Wilson, *Cordon and Search*, p. 121.

of camp', Anderson noted.¹ Thus as Blaxland writes, the troops 'spent endless days on guard or stand-by duties, forever surrounded by coils and coils of wire, and there were very few home comforts in their camps, no modern aids against the heat of summer and the winter winds and rains'.²

In his farewell order issued just days after 'Operation Polly', Barker acknowledged these hardships and expressed his appreciation to the troops.³ 'Since my arrival in May 1946', he stated,

we have been through difficult times....Throughout this period the troops have been unceasingly on their guard and have been living under austere conditions with few amenities. The Army has had the unenviable task of...maintaining law and order. It has seen a number of its officers and other ranks murdered, wounded, kidnapped and even flogged; it has received considerable odium and abuse from sections of the Jewish community....

In spite of this provocation and the general conditions of living in this Country, the Army in Palestine has maintained a high standard of discipline and morale in keeping with the best tradition of the British Army; it has shown restraint which, under the circumstances, I doubt would have been shown by any other Army.

I should like to take this opportunity to convey my sympathy to those officers and men who once again find themselves separated from their families. It has been a severe blow to many and a great disappointment to me.... [But] If we are to safeguard the lives of British subjects and be unembarrassed by possible kidnappings and other attacks by Jewish terrorists, there is...no alternative.⁴

¹Anderson, 'Search Operations In Palestine', 201. See also MEC Cunningham Papers IV/5 Major-General H. C. Stockwell, 'Morale in Palestine', *British Army Journal* (undated), 15-18.

²Blaxland, *The Regiments Depart*, p. 42.

³In January Barker was appointed GOC of the Eastern Command in England. His reassignment, Cohen argues, was related to the 'non-fraternization' order issued after the King David Hotel bombing. 'When Anglo-Zionist conciliation talks began in October 1946', he states, 'the removal of Barker was at the head of the Zionists' demands'. Cohen, *Palestine And The Great Powers*, p. 94. Barker was succeeded as GOC, Palestine by Lt.-General Sir G.H.A. MacMillan.

⁴PRO WO 275/4 Special Order of the Day by Barker, 12 February 1947.

The repercussions from the floggings and kidnappings manifested themselves in other, less overt, ways as well. At the end of February, orders were issued that henceforth the term 'terrorist' would not be used to describe 'members of the Stern [*Lehi*] and Irgun and other Jews involved in outrages and sabotage...[since] This invests the individuals concerned with a certain amount of glamour, and raises them on a pedestal all by themselves, thus drawing publicity to them'. Further, use of this term enables the Jews to 'dissociate' themselves from the terrorists the same way Germans 'dissociate themselves' from the Nazis. 'Everything was blamed against the Nazis, yet no one professed to be a Nazi or to hold Nazi views'. In Palestine, 'everyone blames the terrorists as if they were a race apart' and refuses to cooperate with the authorities. 'The so-called terrorists', the order explained, 'are in fact members of the Jewish community in Palestine'. Accordingly, the 'word "terrorist" will therefore not be used; when referring to such persons terms such as armed Jews, Jews, thugs, murderers will be used'.¹ There was an ulterior purpose to this change of nomenclature that was linked to improving the troops' morale. As Wilson argues, use of the word 'terrorist...implies that those who were engaged with them had cause to be terrified by them. This, of course, could not have been farther from the truth--the perpetual regret of all ranks was that there were so few opportunities of getting to grips with them'.²

¹PRO WO 275/86 Letter, J. R. Cochrane, General Staff, to 283 Wing RAF, 21 February 1947.

²Wilson, *Cordon and Search*, p. 13.

MARTIAL LAW

Now that the women and children were gone and remaining British personnel safely behind the barbed wire and checkpoints encircling the security zones, the army waited for an opportunity to bring its full weight down upon the terrorists.¹ This came on 1 March, when renewed terrorist attacks were staged throughout Palestine. In simultaneous operations the *Irgun* struck at the heart of the new security complexes in Jerusalem and Haifa.² Whatever confidence the British may have had in the ability of the zones to thwart such attacks was shattered by the terrorists' assault on the officers' club at Goldschmidt House in the centre of the Jerusalem complex.³ The Palestine administration and military command reacted with uncharacteristic unanimity and alacrity. The following day, martial law was imposed over the Jewish quarters of Jerusalem, all of Tel Aviv, and the surrounding communities of Ramat Gan, Bene Brak, and Petah Tiqva. Although the attacks in Jerusalem and Haifa were cited in the official communique announcing martial law, the latter was excluded for three reasons. Foremost was the 'distinct evidence...link[ing] the planning of the attacks with the Tel Aviv area, from which it is well known that operations by dissident groups are conducted'.⁴ In addition, it was determined that 'The imposition of

¹As early as January, 'the skeleton orders together with marked maps of the areas on which statutory martial law in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Haifa might be imposed were in existence'. IWM Palestine: Narrative of Events by MacMillan, 3 July 1948.

²Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, v, 102-104.

³Known as "Bevingrad" in reference to both the British Foreign Minister, Ernest Bevin, and the Soviet defences that had ringed Stalingrad during the German offensive against that city in 1943.

⁴PRO CO 537/2299 Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 2 March 1947.

such drastic measures on Haifa would have dislocated the working of the Port and the railways all over Palestine, thus injuring [the government] materially'. But most significantly perhaps--and a consideration that would have far-reaching consequences for British rule in Palestine five months later--was that there simply were insufficient troops available to enforce martial law beyond a portion of Jerusalem and the Tel Aviv area.¹

In any case, martial law was regarded by the army as a panacea to its problems. As events would show, it proved to be as unsuccessful as all previous, less-extensive, cordon and search operations had been in stopping the terrorists. On 11 March, for example, it was reported that, 'Terrorist activity has continued on an intensive scale'.² It was also becoming increasingly difficult for the army to maintain the restrictions on the population 'without having to make concessions to cover hardships'. Because of this, Cunningham explained to Creech-Jones, 'there was a danger of [the operation] becoming a benevolent military administration rather than a severe military imposition'.³ Consequently, on 17 March, martial law was withdrawn. 'The period for which the blockade was to last was indefinite', Gale recalled. 'But at the end of a fortnight I recommended its cessation on grounds that it had failed to produce the men who were wanted and any further extension of the period was unlikely to achieve that object'.⁴

¹IWM Palestine: Narrative of Events by MacMillan, 3 July 1948.

²MEC Cunningham Papers I/4 Telegram, Fox-Strangways to Creech-Jones, 11 March 1947.

³PRO FO 371/61770 E2382/46/31 Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 16 March 1947.

⁴Gale, *Call To Arms*, p. 173. See also MEC Leray Papers First Infantry Division Report on "Operation Elephant", April 1947.

But apart from failing to achieve this objective, the operation worked against the army's own interests as well. Rather than compelling the community to cooperate with the authorities, martial law in fact had the opposite effect. Given the strained relationship and mutual antagonism that already existed, it is surprising that the army could have believed that the severity of this measure would produce any other result. Yet blindly, the army entertained expectations that coercion would succeed where persuasion had failed. The effect, accordingly, was almost entirely counter-productive. Not only had the community proved even more reluctant to cooperate, but its image of the army as an oppressive occupation force was, if anything, reconfirmed, while the troops felt only greater disdain for the Jews.

It is perhaps not entirely coincidental that in April there were new reports of assaults on Jews by soldiers. Moreover, the reply to an enquiry on this matter from Gurney suggests that this was not an altogether uncommon occurrence. Writing on behalf of the GOC, Lt. Col. H. Edinew stated that 'Action is continually being taken by this Headquarters to prevent acts of indiscipline by troops. Such incidents', Edinew attempted to explain, 'are, however, always frequent during festival periods on account of the fact that some troops are inclined to drink too much during such periods'.¹ But it appears that these incidents were neither confined solely to 'festival periods' nor the result of drunken misbehaviour. Less than two weeks later, Golda Meyerson complained to a brigade commander in Jerusalem of an unpleasant encounter between her chauffeur and some soldiers under his command.

¹ISA CS (Chief Secretary) D/160/40 Letter, Edinew to Gurney, 4 April 1947.

The chauffeur, Meyerson wrote, had been stopped by a patrol and, after his car was searched, was asked 'whether he was a Jew'. Upon answering that he was, the chauffeur 'was repeatedly hit in the face and then told to proceed'.¹

A letter to the editor of *The Palestine Post* written on 9 April by an anonymous British soldier provides some insight into the deep-felt emotions that incited such unprovoked assaults on ordinary Jews. Responding to an editorial concerning 'anti-semitism amongst British soldiers in Palestine', the writer declared that this was in fact a visceral reaction of 'just plain hate, brought on by you[,] the people. When I first came to Palestine a year ago', he explained,

I had no bad feelings...towards the Jewish people's [sic], but in the past year[,] with its slaughter of soldiers and civilians...[and] obvious dislike for us, I now have little love for a people who should be grateful, for what has been done for them...now when I marry, I shall teach my children to loathe and despise everything Jewish.²

At the end of the month, new orders were issued reemphasizing the need of restraint by the troops in the conduct of searches.³

On the other side of the coin, it should again be noted that the *Yishuv* itself continued to bear some responsibility for the soldiers' antipathy. As a result of measures like martial law and the general frequency of searches, road-blocks and identity checks, the community had come to regard the army as a repressive, occupying force. Imbued with such an attitude, the *Yishuv* could be as callous towards the

¹CZA S 25/6910 Letter, Meyerson to Commander, Eighth Infantry Brigade, 17 April 1947.

²*Ibid.*, 9 April 1947.

³PRO WO 275/23 Sixth Airborne Division Operation Instruction No. 30, 26 April 1947.

soldiers as the soldiers were towards the Jews. In June, for example, an officer attached to Palestine Headquarters brought to the attention of a Jewish Agency official the events surrounding a traffic accident involving an army vehicle and a group of Jews who had witnessed the collision. 'I don't much like sending you the enclosed report', the officer wrote, 'because I know that there are plenty of Jews in Palestine who do not regard the Army as the successors of the Nazis, but it does explain the occasional anti-semitic attitude of some of our troops'. Apparently, a soldier had been killed and seriously mutilated. It was alleged that the Jewish bystanders had 'acted as if they were pleased such a thing had happened to a British soldier' and had 'laughed', the report continued, 'when they saw us getting the odd pieces of the soldier's body' from the wreckage.¹

THE HANGING OF THE TWO SERGEANTS

Meanwhile, although the issue of carrying out death sentences on terrorists had been resolved, it had yet to be implemented. With the failure of martial law to achieve any of its objectives, attention was now focused on ensuring the execution of condemned terrorists not only as a means to deter terrorism but as a palliative for morale. Despite the fact that Gruner had been condemned to death in January, by the end of March he had avoided execution through successive appeals to the Privy Council.² Accordingly, the army appealed to the Cabinet to modify the procedures of appeal that enabled terrorists to delay and postpone the implementation of the death penalty. Support for such a change had

¹CZA S 25/6908 Letter, Lt. Col. C.R.W. Norman to Major E. Sacharov, 27 June 1947, enclosing Military Police Report, 28 May 1947.

²IWM Palestine: Narrative of Events by MacMillan, 3 July 1948.

already surfaced in January, when the House of Commons had debated the respite of Gruner's execution. The government's bland acceptance of legal gerrymandering was likened to its humiliating retreat over the flogging incident. Stanley stated that he did

not believe that, on these lines, it is possible to carry out Government in Palestine. No authority can stand up against such blows. No troops, no police can carry out their duties in circumstances such as these. We cannot have a situation where the administration of justice and the punishment of offenders are being dictated by the criminals themselves.¹

Churchill similarly warned that, 'This is the road to abject defeat, and though I hate this quarrel with the Jews, and I hate their methods of outrage, if you are engaged in the matter, at least bear yourselves like men'.²

On 20 March the army secured from the Cabinet approval of a directive governing the 'Execution Of Condemned Terrorists'. It stated:

It is most important that the death sentences should be carried out irrespective of the possible repercussions from the Jews. Failure to carry out the death sentences would only serve to:

- (a) encourage terrorism
- (b) affect the morale of the troops adversely
- (c) alienate Arab opinion.³

Furthermore, on 26 March the Cabinet broadened the power of army tribunals to impose the death penalty by approving the establishment of summary military courts to try terrorists and thereby 'prevent the possibility of legal delays in the execution of the sentence'.⁴

¹Debates, House of Commons, vol. 432, col. 1306, 31 January 1947.

²*Ibid.*, col. 1345, 31 January 1947.

³PRO WO 32/10260 Army Council Secretariat ACS/B/2322, 20 March 1947.

⁴PRO CAB 129/18 C.P. (47) 107, 26 March 1947.

That same day the Privy Council rejected the appeal made on behalf of Gruner by his uncle. A new petition, submitted to the Palestine High Court by the Mayor of Tel Aviv and Jewish Community Council, was turned down on 3 April. Eleven days later, yet another appeal was lodged with the Privy Council.¹ Despite this latest attempt to save Gruner's life, he was hanged--along with three *Irgun* men convicted in February--on 17 April.² The following day, the Palestine Government announced the enactment of new provisions of the Defence (Emergency) Regulations that had taken effect at noon of 16 April, eliminating the right of appeal of sentences passed by military courts. These amendments superseded all previous ones and thus were to be retroactive.³

Prior to Gruner's execution, the *Irgun* had threatened that 'if the British continue to disregard the elementary rights of prisoners of war, if they arrogate to themselves the rights which in recent wars only Hitler and the Jap arrogated to themselves--if they "hit below the belt" and call it fair play, we shall have to consider adopting the same "rules"'.⁴ Two days after two Jewish terrorists committed suicide in prison while awaiting execution,⁵ the group declared that 'henceforth--as we warned repeatedly--we shall no longer be bound by the rules of

¹Trevor, *Under The White Paper*, pp. 334-335.

²The three--Avi Drezner, Eliezer Kashani, and Mordechi Alkochi--were part of the *Irgun* team that had flogged the four British soldiers. They were convicted of illegal possession of firearms on 10 February 1947 and, in one of his last duties before leaving Palestine, their sentences were confirmed by Barker three days later. Begin, *The Revolt*, p. 265.

³*Times*, 17 April 1947.

⁴JI K-4 3/15 'We Demand P-O-W Status', (undated).

⁵Meir Feinstein of the *Irgun* was convicted for attacking the Jerusalem railway station in December 1946, while Moshe Barazani of *Lehi* had been arrested with a hand-grenade in his possession. On the eve of their execution they had committed suicide in their cell by detonating a hand-grenade that had been smuggled in to them. See Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, v, 121-122 and 128-131.

war, which we imposed on ourselves as the liberation army of a civilised people. The law of retribution', the radio broadcast continued,

of reprisals which is also the law of war, will be applied at every opportunity.

Every battle unit of ours will be accompanied by a field court-martial, which will try every Briton who is part of the Occupation Army or the Occupation regime....

There will be no appeal from the sentences passed. They will be executed on the spot, either by shooting or by hanging.

Tremble, you murderers of prisoners.¹

This warning set in motion the chain of events that Begin describes as 'The grim act of retaliation...[which] not only saved scores of Jewish young men from the gallows but broke the back of British rule'.²

Precautions were immediately undertaken to prevent the seizure of new hostages by the group. All ranks were confined to base or security zones 'except for really essential duties'; patrols were to be composed of 'NOT less than one platoon in strength'; 'essential vehicles' were to be 'properly escorted at all times...[and] NEVER move in less than pairs or men on foot in less than fours'.³ These measures were successful and, despite *Irgun* efforts, the group was unable to carry out its threat.⁴

Whatever solace the British might have taken was short-lived. On 16 June three *Irgun* members were found guilty of illegal possession and discharge of fire-arms during the attack on the Acre gaol the previous

¹Jl K-4 7/15 Voice of Fighting Zion, 23 April 1947.

²Begin, *The Revolt*, p. 290.

³PRO WO 261/180 HQ First Infantry Instruction No. 5, 14 April 1947, and WO 275/23 3rd Parachute Brigade Order No. 37, 18 April 1947.

⁴The *Irgun* did in fact kidnap one person, a British businessman who was released after it was discovered that he was Jewish. Wilson, *Cordon and Search*, p. 122, and Bell, *Terror Out of Zion*, pp. 200-202.

month and were sentenced to death.¹ Their sentences were confirmed by MacMillan on 8 July. Once again, the *Irgun's* search for hostages began. Four days later, two Field Security sergeants were abducted in Netanya.² On 16 July the *Irgun's* clandestine radio station issued the expected warning. '*Caeterum Censeamus* [again we sing]: If the criminal hand is raised against our captive comrades, we shall make our arrows drunk with the hangman's blood'.³

On 14 July Netanya was sealed off from the outside and the First Infantry deployed on yet another cordon and search operation, code-named "Tiger".⁴ For two weeks the troops combed Netanya, searching its dwellings and screening its residents. When no trace of the sergeants was found, on 28 July the operation was suspended. With all hope of their rescue lost, Wilson recounts, 'the British authorities, unable to bow to the blackmail of the [*Irgun*] even though British lives were at stake, had no alternative but to allow the sentence of death on the three Jews to take its course'.⁵ On 29 July the three terrorists were executed. Two days later, the bodies of the two sergeants were found hanging in an orange grove just a mile and a half from where they had been abducted.⁶ The area around the bodies had been mined and an officer was seriously injured while cutting them down. Wilson captures the reaction of the soldiers: 'The feeling of revulsion which affected every member of the Government and Security Forces in Palestine cannot

¹Yaacov Weiss, Meir Nakar, and Avshalom Haviv were sentenced to death, while Amnon Mikali and Naham Zitterbaum, because they were under 18 years of age, received 15-year sentences. See Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, v, 154-157.

²*Ibid.*, 161.

³JI K-4 7/15 Voice of Fighting Zion, 16 July 1947.

⁴PRO CAB 129/20 C.P. (47) 208, 19 July 1947.

⁵Wilson, *Cordon and Search*, p. 132.

⁶Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, v, 278.

be adequately described. To some extent it was also felt in Britain and throughout the world, but it is only natural that those on the spot were most deeply affected'.¹ Indeed, the 'whole affair', another officer wrote, 'produced a cold fury among the British in Palestine'.²

These emotions exploded in violence against the *Yishuv* in Tel Aviv that night. Three separate incidents occurred when one or more armoured cars fired on a Jewish taxi, two buses, and a cafe. By midnight, five Jews lay dead, 16 others wounded and some 25 shops had been damaged.³ Although initial reports indicated that soldiers as well as policemen were responsible, this was later discounted after a court of enquiry convened by the Inspector-General of Police concluded that seven policemen had in fact committed the attacks. But efforts to bring criminal charges against the men ran up against a wall of collegial silence. As one of the investigating officers noted, 'The required evidence of identification is in the possession of certain British police personnel only, and these decline to divulge it'. Consequently, only 'disciplinary action' could be taken against the suspected murderers: two policemen were dismissed from the PPF, four discharged, and a sergeant reduced in rank to a constable.⁴

Both the shootings and the support given to the seven policemen by their comrades provides stark evidence--if any more were needed--of the depth of the frustration felt by soldiers and police alike over the situation in Palestine. As Cunningham explained to Creech-Jones,

¹Wilson, *Cordon and Search*, p. 132.

²PRO WO 275/64 Fortnightly Intelligence Newsletter No. 47, 19 July-1 August 1947.

³PRO CO 733/477/75156/151 A Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 1 August 1947.

⁴*Ibid.*, Letter, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 15 November 1947.

Such conduct on the part of a disciplined force cannot be excused. It is only right to remember, not in condonation, but as some extenuation of the behaviour of those involved, the circumstances under which the security forces have for a long time been operating. Most of them are young, without the benefits of long service; they have had to work in an atmosphere of constant danger and increasing tension, fraught with insult, vilification and treachery; and it can be understood that the culminating horror of the murder of their comrades, sergeants Martin and Paice, in every circumstance of planned brutality should have excited them to a pitch of blind fury which momentarily blinded them to the dictates of discipline, reason and humanity alike.¹

But, more important, the government's inability to prosecute the policemen involved for murder underscored the erosion of its authority in Palestine--not only over the *Yishuv*, but over members of its own security forces as well--which was exactly the premise of the *Irgun's* strategy of 'destroying the government's prestige'. This did not go unnoticed by the *Irgun*, who mocked the British declaring in a broadcast by its clandestine radio station:

You did not expect it--dirty oppressors?
But we warned you. We warned you day in and day out, that just as we smashed your whips so would we uproot your gallows--or, if we did not succeed in uprooting them, we would set up next to your gallows, gallows *for* you....
And we have not yet settled our hanging accounts with you, Nazo-British enslavers.²

Perhaps the most distinguishing aspect of the hangings was the dramatic absence of any British response. None of the massive search operations that had followed previous--and arguably less provocative--terrorist outrages were mounted. Indeed, this was a reflection of the fact that Palestine had become for Britain a lost cause.

¹*Ibid.*

²JI K-4 7/15 Voice of Fighting Zion, 3 August 1947.

CONCLUSION

In one of the many testimonials offered to the British soldier embroiled in this thankless and, by the summer of 1947, militarily insoluble struggle, Stockwell wrote that, 'In Palestine, the soldier gained a pronounced moral ascendancy over both his enemies and the communities with which his duties led him into contact'.¹ The *Irgun* banked on the supposition that, unlike the Nazis, the British would not resort to wholesale, violently repressive reprisals against civilians in order to uproot and crush the rebellious underground. This assessment was indeed validated by events throughout the three and a half years of the *Irgun's* terrorist campaign. Despite the immense pressures imposed on the army by this campaign, the troops largely conducted themselves with a degree of restraint and forbearance that few other armies could have managed under such strain. Crossman, for example, who in the past had not hesitated to rebuke the army when such criticism was merited, praised the conduct of the troops in Palestine. After complaints about the soldiers' behaviour were brought to his attention, he explained to the House of Commons,

I took them up with the Colonial Secretary, who had them investigated and in a few cases there was evidence of atrocities and looting but, by and large--and I believe Palestine Jewry would say the same thing--the incredible thing is how little has happened...under the provocation to which our troops have been subjected. A Palestine Jew said to me only the other day, "Thank heavens it was not 20 American G.I.'s who were blown up in the King David building for then there would have been a pogrom". In that perspective it is

¹MEC Cunningham Papers IV/5 Stockwell, 'Morale in Palestine' (undated), 16.

incredible how little men have done under almost intolerable conditions. Atrocities have, undoubtedly, occurred, but they have been minute compared with what would have been done by the troops of any other country.¹

But the price of the 'moral ascendancy' gained by the army over the terrorists was the loss of its war against them.

The *Irgun's* goal was to render Britain's rule of Palestine untenable. An integral part of this strategy was to undermine the morale of the army with harassing and debilitating hit-and-run attacks, to provoke the military to mount repressive operations against the *Yishuv* that would alienate the people and thereby create sympathy and support for the group's struggle, and, in making Palestine ungovernable, to weaken the government's resolve and ability to remain in the country. By 1947 the *Irgun* had in fact achieved this objective. Reporting on the situation in Palestine at the end of May, the American Consul-General in Jerusalem observed that,

with [British] officials attempting to administrate from behind masses of barbed wire, in heavily defended buildings, and with the same officials (minus wives and children evacuated some time ago) living in pathetic seclusion in "security zones", one cannot escape the conclusion that the Government of Palestine is a hunted organization with little hope of ever being able to cope with conditions in this country as they exist today.²

¹Debates, House of Commons, vol. 432, col. 1323, 31 January 1947. Similar comparisons of the likely behaviour of American troops in such circumstances were also made by American journalists. See CZA S 25/6910 A Year As An Intelligence Officer by Charteris, September 1946, and PRO FO 371/61763 E433/46/31 Telegram, Inverchapel to Cunningham, 11 January 1947.

²NARS Palestine 5/2247 501 BB. Box 2181 Telegram, Macatee (Consul-General, Jerusalem) to Secretary of State, Washington, D.C., 22 May 1947, quoted in Cohen, *Palestine And The Great Powers*, p. 250.

The failure of British rule weighed most heavily on the army as a result of its inability to defeat the terrorists. By the summer of 1947 the army had exhausted the various counter-measures at its disposal. Searches, identity checks, road-blocks and check-points followed by cordon and search operations, personnel evacuation and finally the imposition of martial law had all been to no avail.

Meanwhile, the government had decided in February to refer the Palestine question to the United Nations, a move which--as events would subsequently demonstrate--presaged Britain's relinquishment of the mandate and withdrawal from Palestine. Thus the army was forced to carry on with a war that it could not win and which the government was no longer interested in winning. As Abba Eban reported to the Jewish Agency after an address to officers at the Imperial Defence College in March 1947, 'Several military officers emphasized the insoluble morale problem facing soldiers in Palestine. "What vision could be set before them [a brigadier opined] as a worthy object of their sacrifice and hardship?"'¹

Despite the fact that reports on morale in individual units during 1947 unanimously maintain that morale was 'high',² the evidence presented throughout this chapter illustrates that, even if these reports were in fact accurate, senior military commanders and civilian

¹CZA S 25/6908 A. S. Eban to the Executive of the Jewish Agency, Address To The Imperial War College on the 10th March 1947.

²PRO WO 261/170 North Palestine District, Element of HQ, Sixth Airborne, 31 March 1947; WO 261/169 HQ Gaza Sub-District, 1 April 1947; WO 261/180 Quarterly Historical Record of HQ, First Infantry, 30 June 1947; WO 261/130 Quarterly Historical Report of OC Troops, Sarafand, 30 July 1947; WO 261/181 Quarterly Historical Record of HQ First Infantry, 10 September 1947; WO 261/179 HQ Palestine 'A' First Armoured Division, 18 October 1947; and WO 261/182 Quarterly Historical Record, HQ First Infantry, 7 December 1947.

officials alike were always deeply concerned about the troops' morale. Indeed, this issue figured prominently--and decisively--in Montgomery's and Dempsey's efforts to secure the Cabinet's approval of martial law in January 1947.

However laudable the soldiers' morale may have been, the same cannot be said about their attitude towards the *Yishuv*. Well before the *Irgun's* terrorist campaign commenced in 1944 a certain degree of hostility for the Jews existed. Quite naturally, such sentiments became more pronounced once the terrorist attacks began and then increased. Subjected to surprise hit-and-run attacks by an invisible enemy, the troops took out their frustrations on the enigmatic terrorists' more visible co-religionists. Commenting on the strain imposed on the soldiers, Charteris observed that the individual soldier's attitude was conditioned by a number of elements:

He wants to go home, to live a normal life with his wife and family instead of seeing them every other year, or he wants to go home and marry the girl who is beginning to wonder how much longer she can wait; he is full of unexpended energy and boundless youth. His life is made wretched by guards, fatigues, alarms and excursions. Some of his friends get bumped off, and, being as I say unthinking, he inevitably allocates the blame in his own mind on a broader basis than is really justified by the facts. It is not altogether surprising that sometimes things happen that everyone regrets.¹

The frustration over the *Yishuv's* refusal to cooperate with the authorities fed on the failure of successively more severe countermeasures to defeat the terrorists. It seemed that no matter what the army did, the terrorists' operational capacity remained unaffected.

¹CZA S 25/6910 A Year As An Intelligence Officer by Charteris, September 1946.

If the army searched the countryside, the terrorists struck in the cities; when the army was deployed en masse in the cities, the terrorists merely shifted operations to the countryside. Consequently, 'the British soldier', Wilson writes, 'started at...a disadvantage'. The terrorists' intelligence, for example,

was invariably accurate, and to this end they made a painstaking study of the habits of our troops. If it could not be done in the role of a bystander, there were ways and means of gaining admittance into camps and defended areas in the guise of a technician, tradesman or labourer. If for obvious reasons access to a chosen objective was closed to all Jews, they frequently had Arabs at their disposal who for a consideration would undertake the reconnaissance for them. Thus they were never at a loss for accurate information--possibly the most vital prerequisite for success in this type of operation.¹

In addition, the nature of terrorist warfare meant that the troops were always on alert and mostly on a defensive, rather than an offensive, posture.² These developments played right into the hands of the *Irgun*. Its strategy--of exacerbating and exploiting the troops' frustrations in order to undermine morale-- was accomplished with psychological warfare as well. Within days of the suspension of martial law in March 1947, for example, the group attempted to demoralize the soldiers further with propaganda messages. In one poster, entitled 'To Every British Soldier: It's Worth Thinking About', the *Irgun* explained how doing one's duty and obediently following orders was 'the best way for you to stay in this country forever. No doubt you enjoy life in tents, in a friendly camp atmosphere', the poster continued, so 'keep

¹*Ibid.*, p. 77.

²*Ibid.*, p. 115.

the struggle on to make camp life last....Risk your life every day so that the Government may have ten more years to make up its mind: to clear out of Palestine'. However, the poster advised, 'the best way to shorten your conscription period, to force the Government to a decision and to avoid risks' was to disobey orders, go on 'sick parade every morning' and, 'if you must go on patrol: go slow....Only your reluctance to be killed for their faults will teach the Government that it is up to them to clear the position'.¹

In sum, the British soldier did indeed show remarkable restraint in the trying conditions that existed in Palestine between 1944 and 1947. But, at the same time, the terrorists achieved their objective. They forced the government and military to react with repressive countermeasures against the *Yishuv* that not only thwarted efforts to obtain the *Yishuv's* cooperation but also generated sympathy and support for the terrorists' cause. By locking the army into a debilitating contest the terrorists demonstrated that Britain could not prevail in this struggle: with the only alternative being to leave Palestine.

¹PRO WO 275/58 Appendix B to Sixth Airborne Intelligence Summary 35, 21 March 1947.

VII. PALESTINE AT WAR: THE SEARCH FOR A SOLUTION

POLICYMAKING INFLUENCED BY TERRORISM

This chapter examines the effect that terrorism had on the formulation of British policy for Palestine and specifically on the Cabinet's deliberations and decisions regarding the future of the mandate. Four factors emerged as the most important: the absence of a firm policy for Palestine, the irreconcilable differences among the British, Jews and Arabs over Palestine's political future, the drain on Britain's limited finances imposed by its heavy military commitment in Palestine, and the impact of domestic and American public opinion on British policy towards Palestine.

THE REVIVAL OF PARTITION AND THE ASSASSINATION OF LORD MOYNE

Throughout the history of the mandate Britain never had a clear policy towards Palestine. The conflicting promises made to the Arabs and Jews during World War I created an anomalous situation for Britain that forced it into the position of being able to satisfy neither community while incurring the enmity of both. Thus British policy drifted on a sea of vacillation, buffeted by intercommunal fighting and violence that often was directed against the British themselves. The only precise definition of policy was the 1939 White Paper. But the White Paper was a political and strategic expedient, embraced in anticipation of the coming war in Europe and need for a peaceful Middle East. However, once the German threat to the region ended in 1942, pressure was applied to Britain by the Jews to rescind the White Paper.

In May 1942 an extraordinary session of the Zionist Congress met in New York and adopted the "Biltmore Program". For the first time the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine was demanded along with unrestricted immigration and the re-settlement of Jewish refugees from Europe in Palestine.¹

In April 1943 Weizmann complained to Churchill about a statement made by Lord Cranborne, the Lord Privy Seal, that the White Paper was 'the firmly established policy' of the government.² Churchill was an old friend of Zionism who, at nearly every critical juncture since the Balfour Declaration, had stood by his commitment to Jewish nationhood.³ Indeed, his hostility to the 1939 White Paper was a matter of record.⁴ Prompted by Weizmann's letter, on 28 April Churchill submitted to the Cabinet a memorandum reaffirming his commitment to the concept of the Jewish National Home and declaring his opposition to 'an absolute cessation of immigration into Palestine at the discretion of the Arab majority' as conceded by the 1939 White Paper. He went on to argue that,

I do not feel that the fact that we make no new declaration in any way compromises or commits those who have opposed the White Paper of 1939. Faced with the emergencies

¹Text in Laqueur, *The Israel-Arab Reader*, pp. 77-79.

²Quoted in Cohen, *Palestine: Retreat from the Mandate*, p. 162.

³See Sir Isaiah Berlin, 'Zionist Politics In Wartime Washington: A Fragment of Personal Reminiscence', The Yaacov Herzog Memorial Lecture, delivered at (and printed by) the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel, 2 October 1972. Berlin, the renowned Oxford University philosopher, was attached to the Ministry of Information during the Second World War and was posted to the British Embassy in Washington, D.C. between 1942 and 1945.

⁴See Debates, House of Commons, vol. 347, cols. 2168-2169, 23 May 1939.

of war, we have left the question where it stood. We are free as a new Government, to review the entire field at the end of the war.¹

But before a new long-term policy could be considered, it was imperative that the government decide what should be done after the White Paper's immigration provisions expired in March 1944.² On 4 May 1943 Stanley reported to the Cabinet that the growing 'restlessness' and a 'hardening' of opinion within the Jewish and Arab communities in Palestine necessitated this decision. The exigencies of the war coupled with the danger of satisfying one community's wishes while incurring the enmity of the other suggested, however, that any final decision on immigration policy be postponed for as long as possible. As an interim step, Stanley recommended the formation of a special study group to consider the matter.³

The Cabinet approved Stanley's proposal on 2 July. A special Cabinet sub-committee was appointed 'to consider and report to the War Cabinet on the long-term policy for Palestine'.⁴ At the same time the Cabinet decided that immigration should be permitted beyond the five-year deadline until the 75,000 certificates allocated by the White Paper were filled. In addition, Churchill inserted into the minutes his view

¹PRO CAB 66/36 W.P. (43) 178, 28 April 1943.

²Only 45,000 of the 75,000 immigrants permitted under the White Paper quota had in fact entered Palestine. See Bernard Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe* (Oxford and London, 1979), p. 399.

³PRO CAB 66/36 W.P. (43) 192, 4 May 1943.

⁴The members included Herbert Morrison (Home Secretary), as chairman; Leopold Amery (Secretary of State for India); Sir Archibald Sinclair (Secretary of State for Air); R. K. Law (Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs); and Oliver Stanley (Colonial Secretary).

that the government should not be wedded to the White Paper and should remain committed to the concept of the Jewish National Home as set forth in the Balfour Declaration.¹

The consensus which emerged from the sub-committee's first meeting on 4 August was in favour of partition.² Although this course of action was accepted as the only viable solution to the conflicting claims of Palestine's Arab and Jewish communities, further discussion centred on the importance of Palestine to Britain's strategic interests. During its meeting on 25 August the sub-committee concluded that, 'from the strategic standpoint, it is not possible to consider the Palestine Area in isolation' from British strategic interests in the Middle East. Palestine was valued as both a sea and air link connecting Britain with India, Australia, New Zealand, and the Far Eastern colonies. It also figured prominently in the security of Britain's oil supplies. Apart from tanker traffic on the seaward route through the Suez Canal, the Kirkuk-Haifa pipeline and the refinery and storage facilities at Haifa made Palestine an essential 'link in the chain'. 'The attitude adopted by the Arab states generally towards whatever regime is established in Palestine', they noted, 'must have an important indirect affect' on Britain's relations with other Arab countries. Hence, 'a peaceful Palestine is and must remain of the utmost importance to the British Empire and Commonwealth in achieving their strategic needs in the Middle East'.³

¹PRO CAB 65/39 W.M. 92 (143), 2 July 1943.

²PRO CAB 95/14 P.M. (43) 1, 4 August 1943.

³*Ibid.*, P.H.P. (43) 6, 25 August 1943.

This argument accurately reflected the positions of the Foreign Office and the COS. 'The main anxiety of the Foreign Office', a memorandum prepared by that department stated, 'is that whatever solution may finally be found should be capable of fitting into the framework of our general Middle East policy'. Accordingly, any 'suggestion that the Palestine question should be determined solely on the basis of world sympathy with the sufferings of the Jews...is to be deprecated'. Maintaining friendly relations with the Arab world was cited as an essential prerequisite if British strategic interests in the region were to be protected. Since the Arabs would oppose any solution that either brought Palestinian Arabs 'under the political domination of the Jews', provided for unlimited Jewish immigration or resulted in the arrogation of 'Arab territory into Jewish hands' no scheme of partition was deemed practicable.¹ The COS opposed partition on precisely the same grounds: emphasizing that 'Strategically, a peaceful Palestine is a vital interest; and no policy which involves an Arab conflagration is acceptable'.²

Despite these objections, the sub-committee approved a partition plan on 10 December;³ which was endorsed by the Cabinet Committee on the Middle East the following month.⁴ Nevertheless, Churchill believed that

¹*Ibid.*, P.M. (43) 16, 1 November 1943.

²PRO WO 32/10260 Army Council Secretariat A.C.S./460/B.M., 20 November 1943.

³For details of the sub-committee's consideration of the geographical dimensions of various partition schemes and the debate they aroused, see Cohen, *Palestine: Retreat from the Mandate*, pp. 167-173.

⁴PRO CAB 95/14 P. (M). (44) 6, 22 January 1944, and CAB 65/45 W.M. 18 (44), 25 January 1944.

no final decision should be made by the full Cabinet before the 4 November 1944 presidential elections in the United States.¹ On 3 November the Secretary to the Cabinet, Sir Edward Bridges, placed discussion of the sub-committee's report on the Cabinet's agenda.²

The following day Churchill met with Weizmann. Weizmann began the discussion by enquiring whether the rumours concerning the government's consideration of a new partition plan were true? Churchill replied 'that a scheme existed and...had been investigated by a Cabinet committee'. Although he 'had not studied the proposals in detail, and was not committed in any way', Churchill stated that 'he was in favour of partition'.³ Implementation of the plan, however, would not be possible until after the war and perhaps not until the general election was held in 1945. Nevertheless, Churchill told Weizmann 'that there would be no harm in making known what he had said about waiting till the end of the German war'.⁴ Weizmann was greatly encouraged by the meeting, expressing to Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver, the Jewish Agency representative in Washington, his confidence 'that in the next six months we can so prepare the ground as to ensure our success'.⁵

Then, on 6 November, Lord Moyne was assassinated. At the Cabinet meeting that day, Churchill broke the news to his colleagues. The initial reaction was to approve the Prime Minister's suggestion that

¹PRO PREM 4/52/5 Note, Churchill to Attlee and Eden, 12 January 1944.

²PRO PREM 4/52/1 Note by Sir Edward Bridges, 3 November 1944.

³PRO PREM 4/52/3 Letter, Martin to Gater, 4 November 1944.

⁴*Ibid.*, and WA The Whole of Palestine (short Minutes of Meeting held on 4 November 1944 between P.M. W. S. Churchill and Dr. Weizmann).

⁵WA Letter, Weizmann to Rabbi Silver, 7 November 1944.

Stanley speak with Weizmann before he returned to Palestine and impress upon Weizmann that 'it was incumbent on the Jewish Agency to do all in their power to suppress these terrorist activities'.¹ Thereafter the Cabinet considered two punitive measures against the *Yishuv*: the suspension of Jewish immigration and searches for illegal arms. Although neither was undertaken, the *Yishuv* suffered a far greater penalty because of the assassination: the loss of what was likely to be an immediate government decision in favour of partition.²

The immediate and lasting effects of the murder appear to have been in changing Churchill's determination to press ahead with securing a final decision on partition.³ Although it would be exaggerating to suggest that the shooting reversed Churchill's long-standing commitment to Zionism, the death of Moyne--a personal friend and, ironically, one of his allies in the struggle for partition--abruptly halted his efforts on the Zionists' behalf.⁴ As Berlin has noted, 'Churchill seemed personally alienated by Moyne's assassination, declined to see Weizmann, and averted his gaze from the entire issue....With Churchill antagonized by the assassination...the British Cabinet Committee's partition scheme was shelved till the end of the war'.⁵ Indeed, when Churchill addressed the House of Commons on 17 November, he made no attempt to conceal his disillusionment. 'If our dreams for Zionism are to end in the smoke of

¹PRO CAB 65/44 W.M. (145) 44, 6 November 1944.

²Bernard Wasserstein, 'The Assassination of Lord Moyne', *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, xxvii (1982), 81-82.

³See MEC Monroe Papers Interview with R.H.S. Crossman, 19 October 1958: 'Weizmann told Crossman that up to [Moyne's assassination] things had been going well, but that Churchill would do no more after tha[t]'.⁴

⁴See WA The Whole Of Palestine, 4 November 1944.

⁵Berlin, 'Zionist Politics In Wartime Washington', pp. 57 and 62.

assassins' pistols', he declared, 'and our labours for its future to produce only a new set of gangsters worthy of Nazi Germany, many like myself will have to reconsider the position we have maintained so consistently and so long in the past'.¹ The import of these words is most clearly evinced by the fact that further discussion of the Cabinet Committee's partition was suspended despite its placement on the Cabinet's agenda just days before the assassination.²

It is impossible to assess the extent to which Churchill's endeavours would in fact have succeeded. Given the formidable opposition from the Foreign Office, the COS and members of Churchill's own party,³ there can be no certainty that partition would have been approved. But at the same time it is clear that on the eve of Moyne's assassination the Cabinet at least was prepared to resolve the partition issue. Berlin has described the murder as 'a critical turning point' in the Jews' journey to statehood.⁴ The effects of the assassination thus appear to have been in thwarting an immediate resolution of the partition issue. As Weizmann himself observed in his autobiography five years later,

the harm done our cause by the assassination of Lord Moyne, and by the whole terror--this apart from the profound moral deterioration involved--was not in changing the intentions of the British Government, but rather in providing our enemies with a convenient excuse, and in helping to justify their course before the bar of public opinion.⁵

¹Debates, House of Commons, vol. 404, col. 2242, 17 November 1944.

²See PRO WO32/10260 Army Council Secretariat ACS/B/1398, 11 April 1945.

³WA Whole of Palestine, 4 November 1944.

⁴Berlin, 'Zionist Politics In Wartime Washington', p. 58.

⁵Chaim Weizmann, *Trial and Error: The Autobiography of Chaim Weizmann* (Philadelphia, 1949), ii, 438.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS: BRITAIN, THE POST-WAR ERA, AND THE NEW LABOUR GOVERNMENT

Churchill's refusal to continue discussion of partition until terrorist activities in Palestine stopped,¹ effectively halted the government's progress towards adopting partition. Indeed, before the Cabinet had time to consider the matter again, the war in Europe ended and the government was dissolved. With the departure of the Labour and Liberal members from the coalition government, Churchill announced the dissolution of Parliament and the formation of a 'caretaker' government pending the general election to be held on 5 July 1945.

During this interregnum Moyne's successor, Sir Edward Grigg, along with Britain's ambassadors in the Middle East and the COS, maneuvered to bury partition once and for all. On 2 July, Grigg, with the backing of the Middle East Defence Committee, submitted a memorandum to the Cabinet. The thrust of Grigg's thesis was that the Middle East is 'a region of life-and-death consequences for Britain and the British Empire'. The Palestine issue, he emphasized, was inextricably linked to this strategic and political imperative. 'I cannot indeed see', Grigg wrote, 'how any conceivable system of British security in the Middle East can be reconciled with the partition of Palestine'. Partition not only risked the 'alienation of the whole Arab world', but would also disrupt the imperial lines of communication, deprive Britain of strategic ports and airfields in the region and eliminate British control of the Kirkuk-Haifa oil pipeline. Palestine, he concluded, is 'the core of our Middle East security' and therefore 'must be

¹See PRO PREM 4/51/2 Note, Morrison to Churchill, 26 February 1945, and PRO FO 371/45379 E6622/15/G.31 Memorandum by Douglas Harris (Reconstruction Commissioner, Palestine), August 1945.

administered as an undivided whole'.¹ This analysis was in complete accord with the position taken by the COS who, in similarly strident tones, declared, 'As a result of the position that Palestine holds in the Middle East, the political and commercial influence of the country which controls Palestine is widespread throughout the area'.²

These arguments were not accepted by the Colonial Office. It regarded the risks involved in partition as no worse than those of any other alternative.³ 'From the Colonial Office point of view', Stanley informed Churchill,

it is hard to see what advantage has ever accrued to Great Britain from the Palestine Mandate which has proved a continual drain on resources of material and manpower. I realise, however, that the effects both upon the Arab world and upon our strategic position in the Middle East might be serious, but these matters are more for the Foreign Office and the Chiefs of Staff.⁴

Thus the Labour government which took power at the end of July inherited an ambiguous policy towards Palestine that was contested, on the one hand, by the Foreign Office and COS, who viewed the matter in its wider regional implications and, on the other, by the Colonial Office, who saw no better solution to the problem than partition.

Palestine, however, was but one of many problems confronting the new government. The war had wrought great changes both to the international order that the world had known prior to 1939 and to Britain's predominant position in that order. The old balance of power,

¹PRO PREM 3 296/10 C.P. (45) 55, 2 July 1945.

²PRO CO 733/463/75872/131 J.P. (45) 167, 10 July 1945. See also PRO PREM 3 296/9 COS (45) 63 (O), 23 January 1945.

³Cohen, *Palestine: Retreat from the Mandate*, p. 178.

⁴PRO CO 733/463/75872/131 Minute, Stanley to Churchill, 13 July 1945.

centred in Europe and dominated by Britain and Germany, had been fundamentally altered by Germany's defeat and the emergence of two non-European powers--the United States and the Soviet Union. This occurrence was as much the result of American and Soviet strength as it was the eclipse of German and British power. But, where defeat accounted for Germany's demise, victory paradoxically accounted for Britain's decline.

In a speech to a foreign policy gathering in New York in 1946 Bevin stated, 'We knew that at the end of the war the world would be very different from the world with which we had been familiar in the past....The guiding principle of the Labour Party has been to assist in the shaping of a new world'.¹ But the role that the Labour government could play in the 'shaping' of that 'new world' was greatly circumscribed by the financial problems that beset post-war Britain. In addition, British control over the lines of communication to the Empire, as well as parts of the Empire itself, was threatened by both external and internal forces. Britain's traditional domination of regions like the eastern Mediterranean and Middle East was challenged by growing American influence in these areas coupled with concern over Soviet expansion. In addition, indigenous nationalist movements and anti-colonial agitation in India and Egypt along with the emerging civil war in Greece posed an internal challenge to British influence in these countries.²

¹Archives of the Council On Foreign Relations (New York), Record of Meetings, xii, Talk on 'British Foreign Policy', 21 November 1946.

²RH Creech-Jones Papers Box 32/6 Letter, Creech-Jones to Elizabeth Munro [sic] (Monroe), 23 October 1961, and Elizabeth Monroe, 'Mr. Bevin's "Arab Policy"' in Albert Hourani (ed.), *St. Antony's Papers No. 11, Middle Eastern Affairs No. 2* (London, 1961), p. 11.

The expense of prosecuting the war for six long years had severely undermined Britain's finances and balance of payments. Her indebtedness to other countries had increased almost ten-fold during the war: from £476 million in August 1939 to £3355 million in June 1945.¹ Her balance of payments were grievously lopsided. In 1945 Britain was spending approximately £2000 million abroad, while overseas income was a paltry £800 million. Accordingly Britain's sterling reserves amounted to only one-sixth of the country's foreign debt.²

The extent of Britain's financial enfeeblement was underscored on 21 August when President Truman unilaterally abrogated the lend-lease agreement. Britain, according to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Hugh Dalton, was in 'an almost desperate plight'.³ Lord Keynes, who even before news of the cancellation had warned of the country's severe economic problems and proposed the negotiation of a new loan from the U.S.,⁴ declared that Britain now faced a 'financial Dunkirk'.⁵ Without an American loan of at least £1500 million, Britain simply could not afford to feed its citizens (let alone the war-ravaged people living in lands occupied by its army), repatriate its troops from abroad, get its industries back on a peace-time footing, or meet its manifold domestic and international financial obligations.⁶ An essential element of Britain's economic recovery was the need for an adequate work force to

¹Alan Bullock, *Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary, 1945-1951* (London, 1983), p. 50.

²C. J. Bartlett, *The Long Retreat: A Short History of British Defence Policy, 1945-1970* (London, 1972), p. 9.

³Kenneth Harris, *Attlee* (London, 1982), pp. 270-271.

⁴Cohen, *Palestine And The Great Powers*, p. 29.

⁵Quoted in Bartlett, *The Long Retreat*, p. 11.

⁶*Ibid.*; Bullock, *Ernest Bevin*, p. 50; Cohen, *Palestine And The Great Powers*, p. 29; Harris, *Attlee*, p. 271; and Elizabeth Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the Middle East, 1914-1971* (London, 1981), p. 152.

get the country's industries back on its feet. This would entail a massive demobilization of the three million men in Britain's armed forces along with an over-all reduction of Britain's overseas military commitments.¹

THE ANGLO-AMERICAN COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY

It was against this backdrop of great power rivalry and the emerging cold war, financial cutback and strategic retrenchment, that the Labour government began to consider its policy for Palestine. On 8 September the Cabinet Committee on Palestine appointed by Attlee the previous month submitted its report. Despite the concomitant needs of demobilization and reducing Britain's overseas military commitments, the Committee accepted as axiomatic that Britain should continue to rule Palestine. Partition was not even considered. Instead, discussion again focused on the unused immigration certificates remaining in the the White Paper quota. The government had two options: it could either adhere to the White Paper policy until 'a new long-term policy' for Palestine was decided--permitting immigration until the quota was filled, but prohibiting further immigration without Arab consent--or allow immigration to continue indefinitely regardless of Arab opposition.²

The Committee strongly opposed any deviation from the White Paper policy. In making this recommendation, it recognized that Britain ran the risk of provoking Jewish unrest in Palestine alongside of increased

¹Bartlett, *The Long Retreat*, p. 11; Michael Dewar, *Brush Fire Wars* (London and New York, 1984), p. 14; Harris, *Attlee*, pp. 275-276; and Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the Middle East*, p. 152.

²PRO CAB 129/2 C.P. (45) 156, 8 September 1945.

terrorist activity and illegal immigration. But this was regarded as a less serious threat--and one requiring a less substantial military commitment--than the disturbances that would erupt throughout the Muslim world if the White Paper was abandoned. 'Unfortunately', the Committee noted 'the future of Palestine bulks large in all Arab eyes'. Thus the government had a choice

between the possibility of localised trouble with the Jews in Palestine and the virtual certainty of widespread disturbance among the Arabs throughout the Middle East and possibly among the Muslims in India. In terms of force the latter represents a military commitment twice or three times as great as does the former. If we adhere to the White Paper we *may* escape without adverse repercussions; there is no hope of doing so under the alternative course.

Lastly, the Committee took note of a report from Lord Halifax, Britain's Ambassador in Washington, warning that whatever course Britain decided to pursue in Palestine, it would be criticized in the U.S.¹

On 11 September the Cabinet approved the Committee's recommendation. The Cabinet's decision was regarded as a short-term expedient until such time as a long-term policy for Palestine could be promulgated. Further, it was understood that should this long-term policy involve placing Palestine under a new international trusteeship agreement, the consent of the United Nations (U.N.) General Assembly would be required.² The Cabinet accepted that 'the Jews would almost inevitably resort to violence either immediately or as a consequence of attempts to stop illicit immigration, with the danger of [adverse]

¹*Ibid.*

²PRO CAB 128/3 C.P. (45) 7, 11 September 1945.

repercussions in the United States'.¹ But while the problem of Jewish unrest could be dealt with by the transfer of additional troops to Palestine (which the COS stated could be accomplished by the end of the year); the problem regarding the American reaction presented a more thorny dilemma.²

Since the summer, pressure on Britain to admit 100,000 Jewish refugees to Palestine had been building in the U.S. During the Potsdam Conference in July, President Truman had pressed Churchill to lift the restrictions on Jewish immigration. In August Truman publicly restated his request and at the end of the month followed it up in a letter to Attlee.³ His overtures were poorly received. The U.S. was seen as attempting to dictate policy while offering no assistance in its implementation.⁴ Attlee in fact warned Truman that such pressure 'could not fail to do grievous harm to relations between our two countries'.⁵ But as Creech-Jones later reflected, like it or not, 'No considerable diplomatic or practical changes in Palestine and the Arab countries could be made without American financial and strategic support'.⁶ If the government should arrive at a new policy and submit it to the U.N., American support would be essential. Thus Britain clearly could ill-afford to alienate the U.S.--particularly when negotiations for an American loan were then underway in Washington.⁷ Out of this conclusion

¹PRO CAB 129/3 C.P. (45) 156, 8 September 1945.

²PRO CAB 128/3 C.P. (45) 7, 11 September 1945.

³See Cohen, *Palestine And The Great Powers*, pp. 55-58.

⁴Ovendale, 'The Palestine Policy of the British Labour Party', 411.

⁵PRO PREM 8/89 Telegram, Attlee to Truman, 14 September 1945.

⁶RH Creech-Jones Papers Box 32/6 Letter, Creech-Jones to Elizabeth Munro [sic], 23 October 1961.

⁷Anglo-American talks had begun on 13 September.

the idea was born to draw the U.S. directly into the Palestine problem by inviting it to participate in a joint committee of inquiry.

On 11 October Bevin proposed to the Cabinet the formation of an Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry (AAC) to examine both the condition of Jewish Displaced Persons (D.P.s) in Europe as well as Palestine's capacity to receive them. The need to involve the U.S., he explained, arose from 'the agitation in the U.S.A. [which] was poisoning our relations with the U.S. Government in other fields'.¹ At the very least, American participation, according to an analysis offered by Halifax, 'would get us to some extent away from the uncomfortable position in which the Americans criticise us without sharing responsibility'.² The Cabinet unanimously accepted the proposal.³ After considerable haggling, the U.S. agreed to participate and on 13 November the formation of the AAC was officially announced.⁴

The AAC met between January and March 1946 and submitted its report on 20 April.⁵ In broad terms, the report unanimously recommended the immediate admission of 100,000 Jewish D.P.s to Palestine and the termination of all restrictions on land purchases and transfers in Palestine. It rejected partition on the grounds that

¹PRO CAB 128/1 C.M. (45) 40, 11 October 1945.

²PRO FO 371/45380 E7599/15/G.31 Telegram, Halifax to Bevin, 4 October 1945.

³PRO CAB 128/1 C.M. (5) 40, 11 October 1945.

⁴Cohen, *Palestine And The Great Powers*, p. 64.

⁵For details of its investigations and deliberations, see Richard Crossman, *Palestine Mission* (New York and London, 1947), and Bartley C. Crum, *Behind the Silken Curtain* (New York, 1947), and James McDonald, *My Mission In Israel* (New York, 1951), for the respective views of one of the British and two of the American members of the Committee. See also Amikam Nachmani, 'British Policy In Palestine After World War II: The Anglo-American Committee Of Inquiry Into The Problems Of European Jewry And Palestine, 1945-1946' (Oxford University D.Phil. thesis, 1980).

any attempt to establish either an independent Palestinian State or independent Palestinian States would result in civil strife such as might threaten the peace of the world...until this hostility disappears, the Government of Palestine [would] be continued as at present under mandate, pending the execution of a Trusteeship agreement under the United Nations.

Palestine was described as an 'armed camp' where a 'sinister aspect of recent years is the development of large illegal armed forces'.

Accordingly, the AAC 'recommended that, if this Report is adopted, it should be made clear beyond all doubt to both Jews and Arabs that any attempt from either side, by threats of violence, by terrorism, or by the organisation or use of illegal armies...will be resolutely suppressed'.¹

The Report was first considered at a meeting of the Defence Committee on 24 April. Except for his concern over Arab reaction to the immigration and land transfers provisions, Bevin expressed satisfaction with the AAC's conclusions. 'He felt that it would be difficult to avoid acceptance of the broad outline of the report' since its recommendations had been agreed to by all of the Committee's members. Further, the 'augury of co-operation' with the U.S. overrode fears of possible trouble from the Arabs. Bevin did, however, argue that before HMG could agree to admit 100,000 immigrants to Palestine, all illegal arms in the country must be surrendered and the illegal armies broken up. 'Until this was done', he stated, 'we could hardly agree to accept new immigrants who might swell the ranks of the illegal organisations'. To this end, Bevin proposed that the U.S. should be asked 'to supply troops to assist' in the enforcement of this provision. Attlee, however, 'took

¹PRO FO 371 E4132/4/G.31 Report of Anglo-American Committee, 22 April 1946.

a less rosy view of the report'. Apart from his doubts about obtaining American assistance, the Prime Minister could not see how the Report offered a satisfactory solution from the British point of view: 'On the contrary, the report proposed a policy which would set both the Arabs and Jews against us and that we should have to go it alone....The burden of Palestine was a heavy one. It was time that others helped to share it with us'.¹

Attlee, however, was not the only member of the Cabinet to take a sceptical line on both the Report's content and the likelihood of obtaining American support for its implementation. Dalton advised that the cost of settling and providing for 100,000 Jewish immigrants coupled with the expenditures for Arab economic development recommended by the AAC would initially require £100 million with recurrent expenses of between £5-10 million annually. Given Britain's own financial problems, it was unthinkable to impose this additional burden on the Treasury. In addition, the military was strongly opposed to the adoption of the AAC Report. The CIGS, Viscount Alanbrooke, pointed out that, while there were sufficient troops in Palestine to handle any disturbances that might occur as a result of the Report's publication, its implementation would require considerable reinforcements and thereby delay demobilization. The COS warned that any attempt to disarm the Jews and break up the terrorist organizations would precipitate widespread disorder in Palestine. Moreover, this would 'be only the beginning of our military difficulties...[since] adoption of the Anglo-American Committee's report would only provoke a general Arab rising in Palestine, which would be supported materially and financially by the

¹PRO WO 32/10260 Cabinet Defence Committee D.O. (46) 14, 24 April 1946.

Arab states...[which, in addition, might have] unfortunate repercussions in India'.¹

On 29 April the Cabinet considered the AAC's Report. Bevin clung to the position that the Report's proposals were not unreasonable and with American assistance could be carried out. 'The essence of our policy', he argued, 'should be to retain the interest and participation of the U.S. Government'. A majority of the Cabinet were less sanguine. There 'was general agreement that the report was likely to create a most difficult situation for us. It would accentuate all the existing difficulties and create much trouble with both Jews and Arabs'. The Cabinet therefore decided that, on political, financial and military grounds, Britain should decline to accept the AAC's Report unless a definite commitment of financial and military aid was secured from the U.S. The surrender of all illegal arms and the dissolution of all 'illegal organisations' in Palestine was declared as another essential prerequisite to the Report's adoption. With regard to this second condition, the attack on a Sixth Airborne encampment in Tel Aviv by *Lehi* three days before figured prominently in the Cabinet's decision. 'Action to this end', the minutes record, 'had been delayed while the enquiry of the Anglo-American Committee was proceeding, but incidents such as [this]...were trying the patience of British troops, who might be provoked into taking the law into their own hands'.²

Bevin's hopes of reaching an early agreement with the U.S. were dealt a serious blow the following day when Truman issued a public statement endorsing only those aspects of the Report favourable to the

¹PRO CAB 129/9 C.P. (46) 173, 27 April 1946.

²PRO CAB 128/5 C.M. (46) 38, 29 April 1946.

Jews. Although he was prepared to accept the recommendations calling for the immediate admission of the 100,000 immigrants and removal of the land transfers restrictions, Truman opined that a decision on the remaining provisions--including that pertaining to illegal arms and organizations--needed further study.¹ The President's unilateral action, obvious bias towards the Zionist case, and disregard of Britain's difficult position that his statement showed cast new doubts on Bevin's hope that the U.S. and Britain could achieve a resolution of the Palestine problem based on the AAC Report. But it was the Jewish terrorist organizations that emerged as the hook on which British acceptance of the Report hung. In a message to the U.S. Secretary of State, James Byrnes, Bevin wrote:

I must remind you that in Palestine British soldiers have been foully murdered by the armed forces of the Jews.... This is a position which the British people will not be prepared to tolerate any longer.... If the United States do not accept the implications regarding the need for disarming illegal armies before immigration, a situation which will endanger the security of the Middle East is likely to arise.²

Meanwhile, the Palestine command had advised the Cabinet that it was essential to arrest the leaders of the illegal organizations 'as a first step' towards the organizations' disarming and dissolution.³

In June the Cabinet's hand was forced by a new series of terrorist attacks which rocked Palestine. Cunningham was pressing for the suspension of discussions with the U.S. and the immediate arrest of the Jewish leaders. During the Cabinet's meeting on 20 June concern was

¹Ovendale, 'The Palestine Policy of the British Labour Party', 419.

²PRO FO 371/52519 E3967/4/G.31 Letter, Bevin to Brynes, 1 May 1946.

³PRO PREM 8/627 Cabinet C.M. (46) 39, 29 April 1946.

expressed that, if action against the illegal organizations were not forthcoming, the troops might take 'matters into their own hands'. The Cabinet concluded that, 'despite the importance of securing the continued co-operation' of the U.S., 'firm action' against the illegal organizations could no longer be delayed. The arrest of the leaders of the *Haganah* and the Jewish Agency would indeed be the 'first step', with the 'wholesale disarming of the Jews and Arabs' to follow later. Cunningham's proposal to suspend talks with the U.S., however, was not adopted.¹ On 29 June "Operation Agatha" was implemented.

The decision to act against the Jewish Agency in fact presaged Britain's rejection of the AAC Report. By mid-July opinion had swung decisively against the Report as a practicable solution to the Palestine problem. On 10 July the COS reported to the Cabinet on the military implications of adoption of the Report. They foresaw not only continued Jewish terrorism, but the likelihood of an Arab uprising in Palestine that would be 'more serious and more widespread than in 1936 and 1938/39'. The Arab revolt would 'be supported with volunteers and arms from neighbouring Arab States' and result in a 'long period' of regional unrest: 'the military implications of which are formidable' In this regard, the demobilization schedule would be upset to the point that men who had already been discharged would have to be called back into service and an additional £38 million (excluding operational expenditures) would be needed above the annual cost of £96 million for maintaining the armed forces required in the Middle East. Britain's continued access to the region's oil supplies, the use of its ports and other strategic bases would be undermined and the region opened to

¹PRO CAB 128/5 C.M. (46) 60, 20 June 1946.

Soviet expansion. Another point cited was the 'Difficulty in sustaining the morale of British troops called upon to take action against Arabs in support of Jews, whose terrorist activities have already inflicted upon them irritations, insults, hardships and casualties'.¹

In making this assessment, the Chiefs held that the 'only alternative' was to seek American military assistance, which, they recognized, was unlikely given the U.S.'s own overseas commitments and domestic pressure for rapid demobilization.² In fact, their American counterparts--with Truman's backing--had already ruled out the use of U.S. troops to implement the Report.³ When the Cabinet met on 11 July it endorsed the COS's assessment, concluding that 'the recommendations in the Anglo-American Committee report offered no practical prospect of progress towards a solution to the constitutional problem in Palestine.'. Instead, attention shifted to an alternative plan, proposed by Hall, that called for semi-autonomous Jewish and Arab provinces under a central trusteeship as an interim solution until either partition or federation was agreed upon by all concerned parties.⁴

From all available indications Bevin saw in the AAC a key opportunity 'as a means of causing the United States to stop preaching and become committed to supporting a policy, [and] even helping with it' as well as achieving a reasonable settlement of the Palestine issue.⁵

¹PRO PREM 8/627 COS (46) 188, 10 July 1946.

²*Ibid.*

³Cohen, *Palestine: Retreat from the Mandate*, p. 122.

⁴PRO CAB 128/6 C.M. (46) 67. For details of this scheme see Cohen, *Palestine And The Great Powers*, pp. 123-124, and Ovendale, 'The Palestine Policy of the British Labour Party', 422-424.

⁵MEC Monroe Papers Interview with Creech-Jones, 29 October 1958. See also Archives of the Council of Foreign Relations, Talk on 'British Foreign Policy', 21 November 1946.

According to Creech-Jones, Bevin was sincere in his professed commitment to 'execute a unanimous report, but...with United States help, not alone'. This factor, then, was the crucial one in Britain's rejection of the AAC's recommendations. As Creech-Jones rhetorically enquired more than a decade later: 'How could we have sent enough troops to Palestine[?] Why, at the time there weren't even enough to be spared for a small riot in Aden'.¹

Thus Bevin's attempts to win British acceptance of the Report foundered mainly on America's unwillingness to provide the military forces necessary to implement it. There were other factors: the prospect of continued Jewish unrest accompanied by an Arab revolt in Palestine and the certain alienation of the Arab world. But it was the activities of the Jewish underground that galvanized the British to take action against the illegal organizations in advance of a final decision on the Report. A key element in both this decision and the wider rejection of the Report was, what Monroe has described as, 'British over-confidence in British powers' and what Nachmani cites as 'the opposition of several of [Bevin's] Cabinet colleagues (including the Prime Minister) and the most powerful officials in the Administration, who thought they could manage this process without American assistance...'.²

In this respect, the Cabinet may have been emboldened by the assurances of the new CIGS, Montgomery, that "Operation Agatha" would have a decisive effect on the Jewish underground's determination and ability to prosecute their revolt. If this had indeed proven to be the

¹MEC Monroe Papers, Interview with Creech-Jones, 29 October 1958.

²Monroe, 'Mr. Bevin's "Arab Policy"', p. 29, and Nachmani, 'British Policy In Palestine After World War II', p. 412.

case, Britain would perhaps have been able to impose its own solution in Palestine without U.S. assistance and possibly escape the consequences of Arab as well as Jewish unrest. But as events would subsequently prove, this was a forlorn, if not self-deluding, hope. The bombing of the King David Hotel less than a month after "Operation Agatha" underscored the fact that the Jewish resistance movement had not been broken.

THE SEARCH FOR A SOLUTION

British efforts to obtain an accommodation with the U.S., however, did not end with the rejection of the AAC Report. Hall's provincial autonomy scheme was now pursued in its place as a means to resolve the Palestine problem and thus avoid having to hand the issue over to the U.N. The rationale behind this maneuver was to keep the policy initiative in British hands and prevent outside interference--primarily from the Soviet Union--that referral to the General Assembly would entail.¹ As such, the idea mooted by Hall during the Cabinet's meeting on 11 July--to reach agreement on the new plan with the U.S. and convene a jointly sponsored conference in London at which representatives from the Jewish and Arab communities in Palestine along with the Arab states could meet to iron out its exact details--was embraced by the Cabinet.²

But this alternative was no less problematical than that of the AAC scheme. It relied on the hope of winning Arab and Jewish consent by portraying the provincial autonomy plan to the former 'as a first step to an independent unitary state' and to the latter 'as a transition

¹Cohen, *Palestine And The Great Powers*, p. 127.

²PRO CAB 128/6 C.M. (46) 64, 11 July 1946.

stage to partition'.¹ The likelihood of obtaining this outcome, however, had been dismissed as early as 9 July by Cunningham, who argued for partition as a solution that would at least be acceptable to the Jews.² The Cabinet was not persuaded and, moreover, was probably further encouraged by the tentative agreement on the plan reached between the American and British 'committee of experts' studying it on 19 July.³ Thus on the eve of yet another potential policy breakthrough, another dramatic terrorist outrage occurred to complicate matters.

The bombing of the King David Hotel has already been cited as a milestone in the attitude of British military officials in Palestine towards the situation in the country. A similar mood of despondency is evident in the British press as well as among Palestine's senior civilian officials. Editorials in Britain focused on the ineffectual results of military measures against the terrorists and the worsening situation in Palestine. The *Daily Telegraph and Morning Post* lamented that the 'Hopes that the teeth of terrorism in Palestine had been drawn by recent arrests and discoveries of hidden arms dumps have been disappointed....In these circumstances the only possible course is to decide on a policy and to stick to it'.⁴ The *Manchester Guardian* likewise observed that the bombing 'will be a shock to those who imagined that the Government's firmness had put a stop to Jewish terrorism and had brought about an easier situation in Palestine. In

¹Cohen, *Palestine And The Great Powers*, p. 127.

²PRO CAB 538/2280 Telegram, Cunningham to Hall, 9 July 1946. The same view was reiterated by Shaw during the Cabinet's meeting on 30 July. See PRO CAB 128/6 C.M. (46) 75.

³Cohen, *Palestine And The Great Powers*, p. 125.

⁴*Daily Telegraph and Morning Post*, 23 July 1946.

fact, the opposite is the truth....Yesterday was their answer and it would be foolish to hope that it will be the last'. Partition, the editorial concluded, 'more than ever seems to be the best answer, and it is to be hoped that the British and American representatives will not reject it without far more careful consideration than the Anglo-American Committee gave to it'.¹

An identical conclusion had been arrived at by the Palestine administration. According to Cunningham and Shaw, military measures alone, such as searches for arms would 'lead to conditions tantamount to a state of war' and make a political settlement that much more difficult to implement. They believed that, 'In view of the latest outrage, further negotiations with the Jews seemed impossible; and the best course would be for His Majesty's Government to impose their own solution of the political problem'.²

The Cabinet was not persuaded by these arguments. Attlee agreed that military measures were undesirable--but for different reasons. He continued to put his faith in the outcome of the discussions with the U.S. and therefore feared that any precipitous action in Palestine--much less 'a sudden decision' on Palestine's future--before the negotiations were completed would be a 'mistake'. Discussions with the U.S. delegation, Bevin reported, 'were going very well, with the Americans hopeful of obtaining Truman's approval of the scheme by the end of the week'. Thus the Cabinet decided to press ahead with the negotiations on the autonomy scheme.³

¹*Manchester Guardian*, 23 July 1946.

²PRO CAB 128/6 C.M. (46) 72, 23 July 1946.

³*Ibid.*

The Cabinet's optimism was initially rewarded two days later when, on 25 July, the American delegation accepted the scheme (now christened the Morrison-Grady Plan in reference to the respective heads of the British and American delegations).¹ But once again British hopes for an agreement with the U.S. were dashed. On 29 July Truman caved in to pressure from the Zionist lobby in the U.S. and the following day announced that, because the plan did not allow for the immediate immigration of the 100,000 Jewish D.P.s to Palestine but instead made their admission dependent on Jewish and Arab acceptance of the plan first, he could not endorse it.²

But even so major a setback as this did not derail the Cabinet's efforts to resolve the Palestine issue on the basis of the provincial autonomy scheme. With or without American support or participation, the Cabinet decided to go ahead with its plans for a conference with representatives from Palestine's Jewish and Arab communities and the Arab states to discuss the plan. Events had gone too far--with the King David bombing adding to the pressure on the government--to turn back now. In any event, Britain had already painted itself into a corner by having invited the Arab states to participate in the conference.³

The conference began on 9 September. It was boycotted by both the Jews and Palestinian Arabs who rejected the provincial autonomy plan out of hand. The Jewish position was rooted to the demand for a Jewish

¹*Ibid.*, (46) 73, 25 July 1946.

²Bullock, *Ernest Bevin*, p. 298, and Cohen, *Palestine And The Great Powers*, p. 127.

³PRO CAB 128/6 C.M. (46) 74, 29 July 1946.

state in Palestine; while the Arab position centred on the establishment of an independent, unitary state (with a fixed Jewish minority) and the immediate termination of Jewish immigration.¹ No common ground could be found with the representatives of the three Arab states (Egypt, Syria and Iraq) who supported the hard-line position of their Palestinian brethren.² On 2 October the conference adjourned; its resumption postponed until after the U.N. General Assembly sessions in December.³

However disappointing the lack of progress during this first phase of the conference may have been to the government, it paled in comparison with the new statement of the American position issued by Truman two days later. In anticipation of the mid-term congressional elections in November, Truman again bowed to pressure from American Zionists and, in one bold stroke, decisively erased any lingering hope of an Anglo-American concordant on Palestine. Truman's declaration embodied--for the first time--a firm, public commitment to the Zionists' hard-line demands for partition and the *immediate* admission of the 100,000 Jewish D.P.s to Palestine.⁴ In doing so, the President rejected British endeavours to obtain an agreement based on the autonomy scheme, stating that the only solution that 'would command the support of public opinion in the United States' was one that recognized the Jewish Agency's partition proposal.⁵

¹Ovendale, 'The Palestine Policy of the British Labour Party', 427.

²Bullock, *Ernest Bevin*, p. 303.

³Ovendale, 'The Palestine Policy of the British Labour Party', 427.

⁴Bullock, *Ernest Bevin*, pp. 304-305.

⁵Text of speech in PRO FO 371/52560 E10160/4/G.31, 4 October 1946.

But British illusions that a settlement could be reached by a conference were slow to fade. If anything, Truman's statement only emphasized the need to bring the Jews to the conference table. Efforts now commenced to placate the Zionists and surmount the hurdles that prevented their attendance. On 4 October Creech-Jones was appointed Colonial Secretary in place of Hall. In all likelihood the change was made in the hope that Creech-Jones's long-standing support and admiration of Zionism would smooth relations between the government and the Jewish Agency.¹ In addition, at the end of month Bevin and Creech-Jones arrived at a face-saving means to release the "Agatha" detainees and clear away the last obstacle to Jewish participation in the conference when it reconvened.

THE SANDS OF TIME

In June 1946 Cunningham had written to Hall that 'the sands are running out. I am definitely of the opinion that the only hope of getting a peaceful solution of the Palestine problem is to introduce a plan of partition'.² By the fall of 1946 the need for Britain to resolve the Palestine problem was fast becoming acute. A year of negotiations with the Americans over this issue had come to nought. The situation in Palestine was worsening. The lull in terrorist activity that had followed the King David bombing ended in September with a new series of attacks. At the end of October fears were aroused that the *Irgun* was poised to carry out widespread operations against British targets in

¹Cohen, *Palestine And The Great Powers*, p. 159. For evidence of Creech-Jones's self-professed Zionist sympathies, see MEC Monroe Papers, Interview with Creech-Jones, 29 October 1958.

²MEC Cunningham Papers IV/2, Note by Cunningham (undated).

Europe and in Britain itself in the wake of the bombing of the British embassy in Rome. Lastly, the cost of maintaining a large military garrison in Palestine was contributing to the strain on Britain's economy; hindering recovery and retarding industrial growth because of delays in demobilization.

Anglo-American relations over Palestine had sunk to an almost unprecedented nadir. When Bevin arrived in New York in November he was greeted by anti-British demonstrations and pelted with eggs.¹ Advertisements, paid for by pro-*Irgun* American political action groups like the Hebrew Committee of National Liberation and the American League for a Free Palestine, appeared in American newspapers soliciting donations for the 'heroic Hebrew fighters in Palestine'.² Theatrical productions staged by Ben Hecht of the American League for A Free Palestine 'attracted supporters from the world of show business and, playing upon the American fascination with massed pageantry...were drawing huge crowds'.³ One play, 'We Will Never Die', was claimed to have raised more than \$1 million,⁴ while another, 'A Flag Is Born' (which starred Marlon Brando) was a smash hit.⁵ As Hall had observed to Cunningham three months before, 'the extreme American Zionist groups

¹Harris, *Attlee*, p. 396, and Kenneth O. Morgan, *Labour In Power 1945-1951* (Oxford, 1984), p. 396.

²MEC Cunningham Papers I/2 Telegram, Hall to Cunningham, 2 October 1946. For a detailed account of the activities of these two groups, see Isaac Zaar, *Rescue and Liberation: America's Part in the Birth of Israel* (New York, 1954), *passim*.

³Leonard Slater, *The Pledge* (New York, 1970), p. 96. See also Zaar, *Rescue and Liberation*, p. 200.

⁴Slater, *The Pledge*, p. 96.

⁵Zaar, *Rescue and Liberation*, pp. 202-203, and Harris, *Attlee*, p. 396.

bear heavy responsibility for the increasing tendency of the Jews in Palestine to resort to terrorism. At the very least they have helped to create an atmosphere of sympathy for terrorism, both in Palestine and in the United States'.¹

Overshadowing all these developments was Britain's severe economic problems. In less than a year, the rise of world commodity prices had eroded the purchasing power of the \$3.75 billion loan granted by the U.S. in December 1945.² The Treasury, accordingly, was hard pressed to cover the cost of feeding the hungry in the British occupation zone in Germany apart from the burden of providing food-stuffs to India as well. The world-wide grain shortage in the spring of 1946 had forced the government--for the first time in British history--to institute bread rationing under the terms of an agreement that provided for U.S. assistance in feeding Germany and India.³ Worse still, at the end of the year, the British people were confronted by new shortages of 'food, fuel, clothes and other necessaries'.⁴

To a great extent, Britain's hopes of economic recovery rested in righting its balance of payments deficit. This in turn was increasingly linked to reducing defence expenditure. In 1946 Britain was spending £1,736 million on defence, or one fifth of the gross national product. The net cost in terms of maintaining British forces overseas amounted to a loss of some £225 million in foreign exchange.⁵ Given the fact that

¹PRO CO 537/1737 E5797/1156/31 Telegram, Hall to Cunningham, 4 July 1946.

²Cohen, *Palestine And The Great Powers*, p. 30.

³Monroe, 'Mr. Bevin's "Arab Policy"', p. 28, and Harris, *Attlee*, p. 327.

⁴Harris, *Attlee*, p. 321.

⁵Bartlett, *The Long Retreat*, pp. 13 and 23.

the country's balance of payments was £298 million in arrears, the exorbitant cost of Britain's overseas military commitments (and particularly that of Palestine) was placing an almost intolerable strain on the Treasury.¹ On 24 October the Cabinet accepted that cuts in the defence budget would be necessary. The ultimate target was to reduce military spending by some 40 percent within the next two years to £700-750 million. Dalton, however, thought that even this reduction was not enough. He argued that the goal must be to shrink defence expenditures to five percent of the country's gross national product, which would entail a budget of no more than £500 million.²

The cost of maintaining British forces in Palestine alone amounted to approximately £35.5 million in 1946, or nearly one-fifth the defence budget.³ This excessive consumption of military resources was a direct result of the increase of Jewish terrorist activity that had begun at the end of World War II and had continued throughout the succeeding year. Thus the price of British rule in Palestine consumed a disproportionately large share of the defence budget. As far back as 1939 a senior Treasury official had prophesied, 'I anticipate a time when the British taxpayer will not be prepared or able to make large grants in reimbursement of the cost' of internal security in Palestine.⁴ By late 1946 that time was fast approaching.⁵

¹Morgan, *Labour In Power*, p. 511.

²PRO CAB 128/6 C.M. 90 (46), 24 October 1946.

³Debates, House of Commons, vol. 434, col. 1871 (Dalton), 23 July 1946, and *Ibid.*, vol. 435, col. 35 (Churchill), 3 March 1947.

⁴MEC Tegart Papers II/1 Note by the Treasurer (W. J. Johnson), 6 March 1939.

⁵Monroe, 'Mr. Bevin's "Arab Policy"', p. 28.

Not only was there the financial cost of Palestine to be considered, but also that of the lives of British soldiers fighting the Jewish terrorists. On the eve of his departure from office Hall alluded to the malaise creeping over the British public concerning Palestine in a message to Cunningham. 'Public opinion in Great Britain', he wrote, 'was affected by Jewish terrorism and must be considered.... Cross-roads have been reached in British-Jewish relations. Problem of Palestine must be solved or surrendered unsolved to United Nations Organisation'.¹ The same view was later expressed by Hall's successor, Creech-Jones, who in 1961 remarked, 'The British public wanted no more war [and]...were eager to see stability and peace established, the soldiers home and no continuing conflict'.² Indeed, by the end of the year the Colonial Secretary and various M.P.s had begun to receive letters from their constituents complaining of the country's continued involvement in Palestine.³ Typical of these was one that enquired, 'What right have our Sons who went bravely to fight for their country, having been taken from their studies, their homes, and everything that was dear to them...[to] be murdered now in such a cause[?]'.⁴

On 25 October Bevin outlined the three choices that he and Creech-Jones had determined were available to the government regarding Palestine. They were put forth, however, only as a signpost in advance

¹MEC Cunningham Papers I/2 Telegram, Hall to Cunningham, 2 October 1946.

²RH Creech-Jones Papers Box 32/6 Letter, Creech-Jones to Munro [sic], 23 October 1961.

³PRO CO 733/456/75156/151 A Part II Letters of 12 and 30 December 1946.

⁴*Ibid.*, Letter, M. Acton to Creech-Jones, 1 December 1946.

of a final decision that, the Foreign Secretary believed, would be possible when the conference (which had been further postponed until after the Zionist Congress met in Basle in December) reconvened early next year. The first, was to impose a political solution acceptable to one or the other of the two communities in Palestine: recognizing the COS's position that a solution opposed by both would be impossible to enforce. The second, was simply to surrender the mandate and withdraw from Palestine: a solution which threatened British strategic interests and its prestige in the Middle East. The third, was to partition Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states with the possibility of merging the Arab state with Transjordan. This solution, however, would be opposed by Palestinian Arabs as well as their brethren in the surrounding countries.¹

THE BEGINNING OF THE END: PALESTINE IS REFERRED TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Conditions in Britain at the beginning of the new year were even worse than they had been throughout the previous year of economic decline and financial travail. The country lay prostrate under the harshest winter in nearly twenty years with food stocks and fuel supplies dangerously low, widespread labour strikes, frequent cuts in electrical power and reduced factory levels.² It was amidst this disconsolate atmosphere that the Cabinet was again forced to consider reductions in defence spending. Essential to improving the country's economy were the concomitant needs to reorient British industry from

¹PRO CAB 128/6 C.M. 91 (46), 25 October 1946.

²Bullock, *Ernest Bevin*, p. 361, and Harris, *Attlee*, pp. 332-335.

armaments production to the manufacture of commercial goods (which could more easily be exported and thereby alleviate the balance of payments deficit) and to release more men from the armed services in order to provide an adequate work force for the factories.¹ In addition, an accelerated demobilization programme would facilitate further reductions of defence expenditures. To this end, the Cabinet nearly a year before had determined that the number of military personnel must be cut to 1.1 million persons by December 1946.²

At the Defence Committee's meeting on 14 January 1947, however, Dalton called into question the country's ability to support a military establishment of a million men.³ When the full Cabinet met three days later, Dalton's proposal for a 10 percent reduction of the defence budget was resisted by his colleagues.⁴ An agreement was reached that called for a five percent cut in defence spending which amounted to a reduction of £40 million and a military budget of £899 million for 1947.⁵

This cut-back inevitably led to a re-examination of Britain's overseas commitments.⁶ As Morgan points out, 'A retrenchment in British overseas commitments was vital to preserve foreign exchange and the stability of the pound'.⁷ Consequently by the end of February a sweeping revision of Britain's foreign responsibilities had been

¹Harris, *Attlee*, pp. 321 and 332.

²PRO 128/6 C.M. 16 (46), 18 February 1946.

³Bullock, *Ernest Bevin*, p. 354.

⁴PRO CAB 128/9 C.M. 9 (47), 17 January 1947.

⁵*Ibid.*, C.M. 13 (47), 27 January 1947.

⁶Michael R. Gordon, *Conflict and Consensus In Labour's Foreign Policy* (Stanford, California, 1969), p. 132.

⁷Morgan, *Labour In Power*, p. 213.

executed. Within a week the government announced that Britain could no longer provide military assistance to Greece and Turkey and that the Palestine question would be referred to the U.N. for resolution.¹

Although the government was able to distance itself somewhat gracefully from its commitments to Greece and Turkey (as a result of America's willingness to fill the vacuum created by Britain's withdrawal contained in the Truman Doctrine a month later), Palestine was a less-easily resolved problem.

On economic grounds alone, the cost of maintaining the large number of troops required in Palestine demanded a political solution that would end the violence and thereby ease the strain on the defence budget. But there were also compelling strategic reasons for such a decision. Under the terms of a new treaty being negotiated with Egypt, Britain would lose the right to station military forces in that country.² Palestine, consequently, was regarded as the logical substitute for Britain's principal Middle Eastern base. In this respect, 'stable conditions in Palestine', the COS stressed, 'are essential if we are to make full use...of the oil pipelines and terminals in that country'. The COS thus noted that they had 'no strong opposition' to a solution based on partition provided that such a settlement enabled British to retain 'full military rights in Palestine'.³

¹Bullock, *Ernest Bevin*, p. 362.

²Negotiations between Britain and Egypt over the latter's demand for the revision of the 1936 treaty--which provided for the stationing of British forces in Egypt until 1956--had begun in January 1946. Exactly one year later they were broken off, with Egypt electing to submit the matter to the U.N. for resolution. See Cohen, *Palestine And The Great Powers*, pp. 34-36, and Monroe, 'Mr. Bevin's "Arab Policy"', pp. 11-13.

³PRO FO 31/61763 E463/46/G COS (47) 4 J.P. (47) 1, 6 January 1947.

Lastly, there was growing pressure at home pushing the government towards a final decision on Palestine's future. Hitherto, the British public had accepted the burden of British rule of its troublesome mandate with equanimity. But by January the daily toll of death and destruction wrought by the terrorists, the opprobrium inflicted on British troops in Palestine, and the economic hardships that had to be endured as an indirect result of Britain's military commitment there, provoked renewed criticism of the government's failure to resolve this issue. Headlines announced 'Full Scale Terror' in Palestine and 'Irgun Attacks With All Resources'; with articles describing how in 'any other country in Palestine, which is acclimatised to conditions of lawlessness, it would be considered as a full-scale rebellion'.¹

Indeed, within a four week period beginning on 2 January, no fewer than three editorials appeared in the *Times* and two in the *Daily Telegraph and Morning Post* criticizing the government for its continued failure to arrive at a solution.² 'Whatever immediate measures are taken to deal with the terrorists', the *Daily Telegraph and Morning Post* complained on 6 January, 'they are not in themselves a policy for the future; and it is a policy that is required from the British Government'. The only solution, the editorial concluded, was partition: 'To continue longer the present state of uncertainty is merely to weaken our moral position in the eyes of the world and to give further rein to the forces that make for anarchy'. On 1 February the *Times* attacked the government for 'persisting in their attempt' to divine a consensual

¹*Daily Telegraph and Morning Post*, 3 January 1947. See also *Times*, 8 January 1947.

²See *Times*, 8 and 27 January and 1 February 1947, and *Daily Telegraph and Morning Post*, 2 and 6 January 1947.

resolution with the Jews and Arabs 'long after failure had been obvious to all but themselves...thus expos[ing] British troops and police to a wholly unjustifiable burden'.

The criticism levelled against the government was the product of its laudatory, but futile, search for an accommodation with the Arabs and Jews over Palestine. For more than a year the government had laboured to resolve the mandate's future in the face of repeated setbacks that, despite its good intentions, could not be overcome. Its patient attempts to win American support had brought only disappointment and estrangement. Its negotiations with both the Arabs and Jews had run aground over the two communities' uncompromising demands. By 1947, moreover, Britain's own grave economic difficulties had imposed an austere regimen at home attended by a retrenchment of the country's commitments abroad. 'The British Empire', Bullock observes, 'appeared to be in the process of dissolution, and the British lacking either the resources or the will to prevent it'.¹

At the centre of the Cabinet's concerns was the point, raised by Bevin, that whatever course of action it decided, Britain would be legally beholden or, at the very least, bound by political expediency to obtain the consent of the U.N. For this reason he was opposed to partition, arguing that such a solution 'would not command' the two-thirds majority vote of the General Assembly required for approval. Instead, Bevin argued that the unitary state-provincial autonomy scheme was the only practical alternative. Creech-Jones strongly disagreed. Foremost in his mind was the deteriorating situation in Palestine.

¹Bullock, *Ernest Bevin*, p. 363.

According to reports from Cunningham, conditions in Palestine had reached a critical stage. Emphasis was given to the High Commissioner's view 'that the Government should realise the urgency of finding a solution; the administration and the military forces in Palestine were working under great strain and early action to relieve this was...essential'. Accordingly, Creech-Jones, like Cunningham, had come to the conclusion that partition was the only answer. Although he recognized the uncertainty of winning U.N. support, the Colonial Secretary thought that if this solution was rejected, 'the responsibility would then be on the Assembly to find a better solution'.¹

Dalton similarly pointed to 'the urgency of finding some early solution which would terminate the existing conditions of disorder in Palestine'; concluding as well that partition was 'the best solution'. Aneurin Bevan, the Minister of Health, endorsed this position, stating that the consequences of 'continuing disorder in Palestine, which we should be called upon to repress by force, and a general outbreak of anti-Semitism' in Britain was 'a situation which this Government could not contemplate'. No decision, however, was taken by the Cabinet at this time owing to the resumption of the London Conference scheduled for 27 January.²

The second phase of the conference lasted only a fortnight.³ The Arabs remained wedded to the demands set forth during the first session in October of a unitary state with no further Jewish immigration.

¹PRO CAB 128/11 C.M. (47) 6, 15 January 1947.

²*Ibid.*

³For details of its proceedings, see Cohen, *Palestine And The Great Powers*, pp. 213-217.

Informal talks with the Zionists showed them to be equally intractable on the immigration issue. Accordingly, Bevin and Creech-Jones concluded 'that it is impossible to arrive at a peaceful settlement in Palestine' and that the matter should now be referred to the U.N. for resolution.¹

But even this course of action was not without defects. Principally, the next annual session of the General Assembly was not scheduled until September. Thus Britain would have to 'continue to shoulder [its] present responsibilities' in Palestine for another seven months. The Palestine administration, Bevin and Creech-Jones pointed out,

will therefore be compelled to maintain its present emergency arrangements. Under these the civil Administration of Palestine is virtually a besieged garrison, the members of which have little freedom of movement, are deprived of their families and are living under an abnormal and continuing strain. The plight of the military forces is little better, and we have repeatedly been warned of the danger of indiscipline among the troops if provocation by Jewish terrorists continues....The possibility must be faced that the High Commissioner may be compelled long before September to hand over control of the country to a Military Administration.

However, it was hoped that the government's decision to refer the matter to the U.N. would 'have a restraining influence on both peoples' in Palestine and thus might possibly stabilize the deteriorating situation.²

The Cabinet approved the Foreign and Colonial Secretaries' recommendation on 14 February. It should be emphasized that the decision to submit the Palestine problem to the U.N. involved neither an outright surrender of the mandate nor an irrevocable step. In the first

¹PRO CAB 129/17 C.P. (47) 59, 13 February 1947.

²*Ibid.*

instance, the Cabinet established that Britain 'would not be under an obligation...to enforce whatever solution the United Nations might approve'. If that solution was not acceptable to the government, action could then in fact be taken to surrender the mandate 'and leave the United Nations to make other arrangements for the future administration of Palestine'. In the second, this decision did not preclude continued efforts by the government to obtain an agreement on its own between the Jews and Arabs. Bevin averred that neither community seemed inclined to have the U.N. decide Palestine's future. The referral decision might therefore bring both parties 'to a more reasonable frame of mind'. If such a breakthrough did arise, Britain would be free to withdraw the matter from consideration by the U.N. and proceed with implementing any new solution.¹

The Cabinet's decision, it should also be emphasized, was less a change of policy than the pursuance of a new tactic for resolving the Palestine problem. Hitherto, British efforts towards this end had in fact been oriented towards *avoiding* U.N. involvement. Indeed, it was precisely this premise that had motivated Britain to solicit American assistance through the formation of the Anglo-American Committee and that subsequently had continued to breathe life into the government's moribund attempts to obtain an agreement with the Arabs and Jews on its own. Accordingly, by referring the matter to the U.N. the Cabinet sought to achieve three *immediate* goals rather than the long-term solution that this move implied. The first was to apply pressure to both the Arabs and Jews to settle the matter with Britain alone. The

¹PRO CAB 128/9 C.M. (47) 22, 14 February 1947.

second was the desire to dampen domestic as well as international criticism (particularly from the U.S.) over Britain's handling of the problem and the government's failure to arrive at a solution after more than a year of negotiation.¹ While the third represented a bid to buy time and 'breathing space' so that further discussions could be held with the Arabs and Jews and new alternatives pursued.

The vague shape of Britain's intent is perhaps best demonstrated by Creech-Jones's explanation of the Cabinet's decision to the House of Commons on 25 February: 'We are not going to the United Nations to surrender the Mandate. We are going to the United Nations setting out the problem and asking for their advice as to how the Mandate can be administered. If the Mandate cannot be administered in its present form we are asking how it can be amended'.² In Churchill's eyes, however, the referral decision fell far short of the definite statement of policy on Palestine's future that was needed. 'Are we to understand', he enquired

that we are to go on bearing the whole of this burden, with no solution to offer, no guidance to give--the whole burden of maintaining law and order in Palestine, and carrying out the administration, not only until September, which is a long way from February, not only until then, when the United Nations are to have it laid before them, but until the United Nations have solved the problem, to which the right honourable gentleman has declared himself, after 18 months of protracted delay, incapable of offering any solution? How long does he justify keeping 100,000 British soldiers in Palestine...and spending £30 million to £40 million a year from our diminishing resources upon this vast apparatus of protraction and delay?³

¹See Debates, House of Commons, vol. 433, cols. 2006-2007 (Creech-Jones), 25 February 1947.

²*Ibid.*

³*Ibid.*, col. 989, 18 February 1947.

However, rather than exerting the 'restraining influence' that had been hoped, the referral decision produced only the opposite effect. The *Irgun*, according to Samuel Katz, the group's senior political officer, saw the decision as a ploy by Bevin to buy 'sufficient time to demonstrate that Britain was indeed in effective and undisputed control of [Palestine]....His statement in the House of Commons was couched in suitably vague terms: he did not reveal precisely what the United Nations was to be asked to do. What was clear was that he was in no hurry'.¹ Begin similarly notes, 'Everybody understood that Bevin wanted to gain time....But on Saturday, the 1st of March the Irgun...tore Bevin's calculations to shreds'.²

On that day, the *Irgun* struck in the supposedly impregnable security zone established by the British in downtown Jerusalem; assaulting the officers' club at Goldschmidt House. Further attacks occurred that evening and the next day against military targets scattered throughout Palestine.³ On Sunday martial law was declared in Tel Aviv and the Jewish quarters in Jerusalem. Begin has since described the events of that weekend as 'a fateful turning point', a 'crossroads', in the history of the Jewish struggle for independence. 'We deprived the enemy of time for secret preparations', he wrote, 'we speeded up events by a full year' and thereby hastened the end of British rule in Palestine.⁴

¹Katz, *Days of Fire*, p. 124.

²Begin, *The Revolt*, p. 319.

³Niv, *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun*, v, 101-106.

⁴Begin, *The Revolt*, pp. 325-326.

Although Begin's claim is staked out in melodramatic prose, his point cannot be dismissed as mere hyperbole. The intent of the *Irgun* operations appears to have been three-fold: to demonstrate the group's ability to strike wherever and whenever it pleased; to underscore the fact that there would be no peace for the British in Palestine until they withdrew; and, to deprive Britain of the time or 'breathing space' it had sought to purchase with the referral decision. Judging from the reaction in Britain, it would appear that the group achieved the first two aims and, at the very least, laid the foundation for the third.

In a banner headline, the *Sunday Express* bluntly advised the government to 'Govern Or Get Out'.¹ An editorial in the *Manchester Guardian* declared that, 'The renewed outbreak of terrorism in Palestine is a reminder that the Government's decision to submit the case to the United Nations has in itself changed nothing'. Summing up the dilemma confronting Britain in Palestine, the editorial concluded,

The wanton savagery of the terrorists, the inability of the Jewish majority to stop them, the inevitable but futile reprisals, the general atmosphere of hate and fear which is making life intolerable for soldiers and civilians: all these things continue and will continue until a settlement is reached.²

Once again, Churchill rose in the House of Commons to criticize the government for failing to define a specific policy for Palestine. He asked Creech-Jones to explain first why martial law should prove any more effective than past attempts to restore order in Palestine? He then demanded to know, 'How long does the Secretary of State for the

¹*Sunday Express*, 2 March 1947.

²*Manchester Guardian*, 4 March 1947.

Colonies expect that this state of squalid warfare with all its bloodshed will go on...before some decision is reached'? Creech-Jones could only reply that the government was 'fully alive' to the seriousness of the situation and that 'every step will be taken to bring so tragic a situation to an end as rapidly as possible'.¹

BEARING THE BURDEN

The referral decision weighed most heavily on the shoulders of the beleaguered Palestine Government. Out of a budget for 1947 of £25 million, £8 million had been earmarked for security. Apart from the fact that the administration's security expenditures consumed nearly a third of its financial resources, this figure was more than the entire pre-war budget for the country² and represented an almost 100 percent increase of the sum spent on security in 1945 (£4.5 million).³ Further, the cost of providing for Jewish illegal immigrants interned on Cyprus since the previous summer--which amounted to £1.9 million--had also been imposed on the financially hard pressed Palestine Government.⁴

Despite the Palestine administration's serious fiscal problems, on 18 February Dalton proposed to Creech-Jones that the Palestine Government should assume 'an appropriate share' of the cost of maintaining the military forces stationed in Palestine.⁵ It is likely that Dalton's suggestion was prompted by the referral decision and the

¹Debates, House of Commons, vol. 434, cols. 34-35, 3 March 1947.

²PRO CO 537/2300 75156/178/47 Draft Minute for Attlee by Creech-Jones, May 1947.

³*Times*, 18 April 1947.

⁴PRO CO 537/2279 Minute by John Higham (Middle East Department, CO), 21 February 1947.

⁵Quoted in PRO CO 537/2300 75156/75/47 Minute by John Gutch (Assistant Secretary, Middle East Department, CO), April 1947. See also Draft Letter, approved by Creech-Jones to Dalton, 8 March 1947.

continuation of the political status quo in Palestine that it engendered. At a time when the Treasury was seeking to stabilize Britain's balance of payments by reducing expenditure on overseas commitments, the delay in resolving Palestine's future was an impediment, rather than a contribution, toward this end. As such, Dalton's approach to Creech-Jones was an attempt to mitigate the financial implications of remaining in Palestine.

However appealing this course seemed to Dalton as a means to alleviate the pressure on British finances, it was anathema to Colonial Office officials in both London and Jerusalem. John Higham was quick to point out that the 'Arabs have already protested to the High Commissioner about the cost of security expenditures, and have threatened to refuse to pay taxes'. Hence, any increase of taxation on the grounds of security might well prompt the Arabs to carry out this threat and only add to the Palestine Government's problems.¹ Cunningham was similarly opposed to Dalton's suggestion. 'Additional taxation', he stated, 'can not be justified at a time when it is difficult to keep the Civil Government in being at all'.² In place of a tax increase Cunningham proposed instead that a 'Compensation Fund' not to exceed £5 million should be established 'from which expenditure incurred by Government in connection with acts of lawlessness' could be offset by sequestering public Jewish assets. The High Commissioner argued that it was unfair to raise taxes for the *Yishuv* since such increases 'would

¹PRO CO 537/2279 Minute by Higham, 21 February 1947. See also PRO CO 537/2300 Draft Brief prepared by Middle East Department, April 1947, and Minutes by W.A.C. Mathieson, 3 May 1947, and Trafford Smith, 8 May 1947.

²PRO CO 537/1822 Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 24 April 1947.

fall on many people entirely innocent of any connection with terrorism' who, if it were not for the influence of their leaders, would be inclined to cooperate with the authorities against the terrorists. Rather than risk further alienating the community, Cunningham thought that the money 'which has been collected by their leaders largely from foreign sources' and has been mostly used to fund patently 'unlawful' activities should be appropriated.¹

Cunningham was insistent that prompt consideration should be given to his scheme by the Cabinet. 'If terrorist outrages continue and get worse as they may well do', he told Creech-Jones,

I may require to enact Compensation Fund Bill any day from now onwards. It is not a realistic view that the present situation in Palestine can be dealt with by ordinary remedy of taxation applicable to normal conditions and it was only after careful consideration of all possible alternatives that I put forward the admittedly drastic measure now proposed.²

At the Colonial Office, however, opinion was as opposed to Cunningham's compensation scheme as it had been to Dalton's proposal for increased taxation.

Trafford Smith was particularly vehement in his criticism of the scheme. In his view, it illustrated a debasement of British law and principles of civil liberty, the sense of despair that permeated the Palestine Government and that compelled the administration to pursue remedies of dubious legality, and, in the final analysis, the failure of British rule in Palestine. 'Under the present defence regulation regime', he minuted,

¹*Ibid.*, Letter, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 11 April 1947.

²*Ibid.*, 24 April 1947.

under which any person may be imprisoned without trial more or less indefinitely on suspicion only, the liberty of the subject has been almost completely withdrawn in Palestine. It is now proposed to complete this odious process by taking power to seize the assets of any individual or organisation--again on suspicion only--in a purely arbitrary manner. All this is quite wrong in principle, and is a measure of the extent we have sunk in Palestine in adopting the pernicious doctrine that the end justifies the means, the justification being, of course, that since the terrorists have adopted these methods, the only way the Government can counter them is in kind.¹

Although less strident in their expressions of disapproval, Smith's superiors--Sir Thomas Lloyd (Permanent Under-Secretary, CO) and Creech-Jones shared his misgivings.² However, given the arduous conditions under which the Palestine Government laboured, Creech-Jones felt obliged to present Cunningham's proposal to the Cabinet.³

In his brief to the Cabinet, Creech-Jones outlined the 'heavy financial burdens' that had fallen on the Palestine Government as a result of Jewish terrorism and illegal immigration. He pointed out that the 'direct cost to public funds in Palestine of terrorist activities over the last two years is well over £5,000,000, while the cost of security measures, including the evacuation of non-essential civilians from Palestine during "Operation Polly" and the loss resulting from the reduced effectiveness of the departmental services is even higher'. Out of a budget of £25 million, £8 million had been appropriated for security. But even this huge sum, he continued, did not cover the related expenses arising from the transfer and internment of illegal

¹PRO CO 537/2300 Minute by Trafford Smith, 25 April 1947.

²*Ibid.* See Minutes by Lloyd, 25 April 1947, and Creech-Jones, 26 April 1947.

³PRO CO 537/2301 75156/179/47 Telegram, Creech-Jones to Cunningham, 23 May 1947.

immigrants on Cyprus, the evacuation of non-essential civilians, and the payment of 'pensions and gratuities to dependents of officials killed in terrorist outrages and security measures such as the requisitioning of property'. During the present fiscal year, moreover, a £1 million budget deficit was anticipated. Further, if it was found necessary to re-impose martial law 'the effect on general revenues would be serious'.¹

Despite these formidable problems, the Colonial Secretary regarded the compensation scheme as 'so drastic and far reaching' that he was unable to recommend it without further study.² The Cabinet, however, was more concerned with avoiding having to allocate any more funds for security in Palestine. Dalton was emphatic that, 'The British taxpayer could not be expected to assume further burdens in respect to Palestine'; suggesting instead that 'the local Government should lose no time in imposing additional taxation'. Without further discussion the Cabinet endorsed Dalton's position; concluding that the Palestine Government 'should not look for further assistance from His Majesty's Government at the present time, and should take immediate steps to ensure a balanced budget by imposing additional measures of general taxation'.³

Within weeks, yet another fiscal crisis had surfaced to complicate Britain's economic recovery. Under the terms of the loan negotiated with the U.S. in 1945, Britain had agreed to remove war-time restrictions on foreign exchange and make sterling freely convertible by

¹PRO CAB 129/19 C.P. (47) 161, 18 May 1947.

²*Ibid.*

³PRO CAB 128/9 C.M. 48 (47), 20 May 1947.

July 1947. Britain's fulfillment of its obligation that month placed an additional--and, as events quickly demonstrated, an intolerable--strain on the economy. The drain on British dollar and gold reserves was enormous.¹ Bullock recounts that, 'In five days, 10-15 August, Britain suffered a drain on her dollar resources to the amount of \$176 million; the Treasury thought it might rise to \$300 million a week, a rate which would exhaust the remaining \$700 million of the American loan in little more than two weeks'.² Britain was consequently forced to ask the U.S. to be freed of its obligation and, after a new agreement was reached, convertibility was suspended on 20 August.³

Even so, Britain was still in a desperate financial plight, finding it difficult to support British forces in the occupied zone in Germany--let alone those in Palestine.⁴ Moreover, with three-quarters of Britain's dollar credits already expended, new economies were necessary.⁵ Attention again focused on making further reductions of Britain's overseas military commitments.⁶ On 6 August Attlee announced that the number of British forces stationed abroad would be cut by 133,000 men by 31 December 1947 and by 200,000 by 31 March 1948.⁷ A headline in the *Daily Telegraph and Morning Post* declared, 'Palestine

¹Bartlett, *The Long Retreat*, p. 23, and Monroe, 'Mr. Bevin's "Arab Policy"', pp. 33, 152 and 166.

²Bullock, *Ernest Bevin*, p. 452.

³Monroe, 'Mr. Bevin's "Arab Policy"', pp. 33 and 166.

⁴Bullock, *Ernest Bevin*, p. 466.

⁵Bartlett, *The Long Retreat*, p. 23.

⁶*Times*, 2 August 1947.

⁷*Daily Telegraph and Morning Post*, 7 August 1947.

Key To Forces Saving'; noting that 'Palestine remains the great question mark. It is here, above all, that economies are desirable'.¹

No further consideration had, in fact, been given by the Cabinet to the compensation scheme. Throughout the summer Cunningham continued to resist Dalton's entreaties for a taxation increase and to press for adoption of the compensation fund.² Thus by September 1947 the matter of how the Palestine Government would redress its budget deficit and cope with the drain on its budget imposed by its heavy expenditure on security, remained unresolved.³

THE HANGING OF THE TWO SERGEANTS: THE REACTION IN BRITAIN

On 31 July the bodies of two British sergeants, who had been kidnapped by the *Irgun* in retaliation for the death sentences handed down by a British military tribunal to three of the group's members, were found hanging in an orange grove near Netanya. Literally overnight public opinion was galvanized as it had been by no other terrorist act.⁴ Until this moment, Monroe argues, 'The British public had taken Palestine in stride...and had looked upon "disturbances" and "violence" there much as it viewed "the trouble" in Ireland--as an unpleasant experience that was part of the white man's burden'.⁵ This changed,

¹*Ibid.*

²See PRO CO 537/1822 Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 24 July 1947; CO 537/2300 Minutes by J.M.M. Martin and Trafford Smith, 2 August 1947, and Telegram, Creech-Jones to Cunningham, 9 August 1947; and CO 537/2279 Letter, Creech-Jones to Dalton, 14 August 1947.

³See PRO CO 537/2279 Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 1 October 1947.

⁴MEC Cunningham Papers II/2 Telegram, Creech-Jones to Cunningham, 1 August 1947.

⁵Monroe, 'Mr. Bevin's "Arab Policy"', p. 34.

however, with the cold-blooded murder of the two sergeants. Photographs of the grim death scene--depicting the two corpses suspended just inches above the ground, the sergeants' hooded faces and bloodied shirts--were emblazoned across the front pages of British newspapers under headlines decrying their execution as an act of 'medieval barbarity'.¹ The feelings of shock and horror was heightened by news that the orange grove had been mined and that a British officer had been injured. 'Not in the black annals of Nazi wickedness', the *Daily Express* commented, 'is there a tale of outrage more vile'.² An editorial in the *Times* stated that the two sergeants 'were kidnapped unarmed and defenceless; they were murdered for no offence. As a last indignity their bodies were employed to lure into a minefield the comrades who sought to give them a Christian burial. The bestialities practised by the Nazis themselves could go no further'.³

Anti-Jewish rioting erupted in Liverpool during the evening of 1 August; just hours after the Sunday morning papers containing photographs and details of the hangings hit the newsstands. The windows of Jewish-owned shops and a synagogue were smashed and slogans painted in red declaring 'death to all Jews' were smeared onto walls. The disturbances continued into the night, temporarily subsiding in the morning only to begin anew on the evening of 3 August; when a building in the Jewish section of that city was set on fire. That same night the disorders spread to London and Manchester: in both places windows were smashed and Jewish property vandalized. On 4 August the first day-time outbreaks of anti-Jewish demonstrations occurred: 20 persons were

¹*Daily Express*, 1 August 1947.

²*Ibid.*

³*Times*, 1 August 1947.

arrested in Liverpool after a Jewish-owned factory was burnt, while vandals roamed through Salford, Newcastle, Holyhead and Manchester, breaking windows and creating mischief.¹

As inured to the almost daily reports of the death and deprivation suffered by the army in Palestine as the British public was, the brutal execution of the two sergeants made a deep impression on the national psyche. 'All home comment on that deed', Monroe writes, was 'different in tone from that on earlier terrorist acts, many of which caused greater loss of life--for instance, the blowing up of the officers' club or of the King David Hotel'.² This was precisely the point that Gurney (who was in London) sought to impress on Creech-Jones. 'I have tried to get it across to the Secretary of State', he wrote to Cunningham, 'that the two hangings, though more spectacular, are really no worse than the murders that go on every day' in Palestine.³ But this was not how either the British public or press regarded the slayings. For both, the murders seemed to demonstrate the futility of the situation in Palestine and the pointlessness of remaining there any longer than was absolutely necessary.⁴ During the debate in the House of Commons prompted by the hangings on 12 August, M.P.s cited the 'very wide and deep resentment' of the situation in Palestine expressed by their constituents in the letters that they had received.⁵ A similar outcry arose from the country's newspapers as well.

¹*Times*, 2, 4 and 5 August 1947.

²Monroe, 'Mr. Bevin's "Arab Policy"', p. 34.

³MEC Cunningham Papers VI/1 Letter, 4 August 1947.

⁴See RH Creech-Jones Papers Box 32/6 Letter, Creech-Jones to Munro [sic], 23 October 1961.

⁵Debates, House of Commons, vol. 441, cols. 2306-2388, 12 August 1947.

An editorial in the *Manchester Guardian* argued that, 'It is time the Government made up its mind to leave Palestine, not only because we have utterly failed to find a solution but because we cannot afford to stay there. Palestine is already a Jewish tragedy', it concluded, 'it must not become also a British disaster'.¹ The *Daily Telegraph and Morning Post* declared that, 'there must be an end of drift in policy towards Palestine.... These latest murders are too much. Both assassination and atrocity must be stopped in Palestine, and stopped quickly'. Referring to the anti-Semitic outbursts caused by the hangings, a subsequent editorial observed 'Inexcusable as are anti-Jewish riots in Britain, they indicate how dangerous are the emotions which the vile conduct of a few men may release against a whole people'.²

The debate in the House of Commons on 12 August revealed widespread bi-partisan support for surrendering the mandate. Creech-Jones attempted to damp down the furore surrounding the hangings by pointing out that, when Britain had acted in February to solicit the U.N.'s assistance, 'we were all conscious...that a very difficult period lay ahead of us before we could expect a decision or recommendation from the United Nations'. Nevertheless, he was forced to concede that, 'Among the British public there is [now] fierce questioning as to the burden and cost to Britain, and the tragedy involved by Britain continuing to shoulder this international liability'.³ Speaking for the Opposition,

¹*Manchester Guardian*, 1 August 1947.

²*Daily Telegraph and Morning Post*, 1 and 6 August 1947.

³Debates, House of Commons, vol. 441, cols. 2314-2315, 12 August 1947.

Stanley stated, 'I cannot help feeling myself that the Government do not feel, as I do, that within the last few months there has been a complete and irrevocable change in the whole situation in Palestine'. In his view the only solution to the Palestine problem had long been partition. Since this had been consistently ruled out by the government, the only alternative was now evacuation. 'I do not believe', Stanley argued, 'that this country can continue to carry alone a burden in blood, in treasure, in work and labour in Palestine, on anything like the same lines as for the last 20 years'.¹

Labour back-benchers joined in the criticism of the government's handling of Palestine. N.H. Lever spoke of the 'two years of planless, gutless and witless behaviour which has not only cost us treasure in terms of money but unaccountable treasure in manpower and loss of life....There is nothing left for this country in Palestine', he declared, 'except grief and suffering. There is no reward but only prospects of further bloodshed for a bad cause'.² Michael Foot characterized the debate as 'a melancholy and tragic' proceeding 'not only because of the diabolical crimes which have to be discussed...but even more because no glimpse has been given to us of the end of the miserable situation in Palestine....I do not believe', he continued,

that we have a right to keep British soldiers in Palestine doing the job they are now doing. I think it is wasteful, but it is also inhumane...and I urge on His Majesty's Government to make an act of policy for the first time in two years, and declare now that whatever decision is arrived at by U.N.O. we are going out of Palestine, that we shall play our part on an agreed U.N.O. basis so long as others make their contribution,

¹*Ibid.*, cols. 2323 and 2328-2329, 12 August 1947.

²*Ibid.*, cols. 2340 and 2347, 12 August 1947.

but under no conditions will our troops remain in Palestine six months, or, even better, three months, after U.N.O. has reported.¹

The strong reaction to the hangings that emanated from both the British public and Parliament made a deep impression on officials in the Colonial Office and Foreign Office. It was now obvious that the pressure on the government to end Britain's involvement in Palestine regardless of what the U.N. decided would be difficult, if not impossible, to resist.² The Colonial Office was anxious to extricate itself from its responsibilities in Palestine before conditions became worse. On 7 August Cunningham had warned Creech-Jones, 'I cannot guarantee that the situation will not deteriorate to such a degree that Civil Government will break down and as you know it is by no means clear how much longer I can keep the Civil Service working under conditions such as exist at present'.³ In any event, officials in the Colonial Office were convinced that, even if the situation in Palestine stabilized, the Government would not be able to overcome opposition at home to remaining there.⁴

The Foreign Office was cognizant of these considerations as well. A position paper written by Michael Wright (Under-Secretary, FO) analysing the situation from that department's perspective put forth the important conclusion that withdrawal would have a salutary effect on Britain's relations with the Arab world. By washing its hands of

¹*Ibid.*, cols. 2359 and 2362-2363, 12 August 1947.

²PRO FO 371/61948 E7622/7622/31 Minute by Beeley, 17 August 1947, and FO 371/61786 E7806/46/G.31 Telegram, Mathieson to Donald MacGillivray (Under-Secretary, CO and Liaison Officer, UNSCOP), 22 August 1947.

³MEC Cunningham Papers II/2, Telegram, 7 August 1947.

⁴PRO FO 371/61786 Telegram, Mathieson to MacGillivray, 22 August 1947.

Palestine, Britain could avoid the prospect of further alienating the Arabs should Britain be forced to accept a solution that involved any measure of Jewish autonomy such as the U.N. was likely to recommend. Although there were British strategic interests in Palestine, Wright pointed out that, 'the political advantages of withdrawal outweigh the strategic advantages' of retaining the use of military facilities in that country. 'The Mandate', he concluded, 'has proved unworkable. It has caused antagonism towards H.M.G. on the part of the Arab states, the Jews and the United States. British withdrawal from Palestine would remove this particular cause for antagonism'.¹

Opinion within the Cabinet was also coalescing around the idea that the government had no alternative but to announce its intention to withdraw from Palestine. On 11 August Dalton informed Attlee that,

I am quite sure that the time has almost come when we must bring our troops out of Palestine altogether. The present state of affairs is not only costly to us in manpower and money but is, as you and I agree, of no real value from the strategic point of view--you cannot in any case have a secure base on top of a wasps' nest--and it is exposing our young men, for no good purpose to most abominable experiences, and is breeding anti-Semites at a most shocking speed.²

A few days later Creech-Jones advised the British delegation who would attend the U.N. General Assembly meeting in September that, 'Account should be taken of the strong feeling now apparent in the country and the House of Commons in favour of British withdrawal from Palestine'.³

¹PRO FO 371/61948 E8126/7622/31 Draft Paper by Wright, 21 August 1947. See also *Ibid.*, Minutes by Sir Gladwyn Jebb (Assistant Under-Secretary and U.N. Adviser, FO) and Sir Orme Sargent (Permanent Under-Secretary, FO) of 21 and 22 August 1947 endorsing Wright's analysis.

²PRO PREM 8/623 Note, 11 August 1947.

³PRO FO 371/61948 E7622/7622/31 quoted in Minute by Beeley, 19 August 1947.

UNSCOP AND THE DECISION TO EVACUATE PALESTINE

As the Government was pushed inexorably toward a final decision on Palestine that would end 20 years of British rule in that country, the Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) appointed by the U.N. General Assembly was completing its investigations.¹ The Committee, composed of representatives of 11 countries (chosen on a regional basis) had been afforded the 'widest powers to ascertain and record facts, and to investigate all questions and issues relevant to the problem of Palestine'.² It was instructed to submit its recommendations to the U.N. by 1 September in advance of the next regular session of the General Assembly later that month. After spending five weeks in Palestine during June and July and visiting Lebanon and Transjordan, the Committee retired to Geneva to write its report.

The report was issued on 31 August.³ The Committee unanimously concluded that the British Mandate should be terminated and that Palestine should be granted its independence as soon as was practicable. A majority of the Committee's members (representing Canada, Czechoslovakia, Guatemala, the Netherlands, Peru, Sweden, and Uruguay) recommended that Palestine should be partitioned into separate Arab and Jewish states with Jerusalem set aside as an international enclave under U.N. administration. A two year transitional period (beginning on 1

¹For details of UNSCOP's visit and deliberations, see Jorge Garcia-Granados, *The Birth of Israel: The Drama As I Saw It* (New York, 1948). Garcia-Granados was the Guatemalan representative on the Committee.

²Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 8.

³See 'Summary of the Report of U.N.S.C.O.P.' in Laqueur, *The Israel-Arab Reader*, pp. 108-112.

September 1947) was proposed during which Palestine would be governed by Britain under U.N. supervision. Independence would be awarded at the end of that period provided that the constitutions adopted by the proposed Arab and Jewish states satisfied the U.N. and a treaty of economic union between the two states was concluded. A minority report was submitted by three of the Committee's members (India, Iran and Yugoslavia).¹ It recommended the establishment of an independent, bi-national federal state after a three year transitional period during which Palestine would be administered by an authority to be decided by the U.N. Little attention, however, was paid to the minority report.²

Apart from the recommendation pertaining to the termination of the mandate, the British Government viewed the majority report with grave misgivings. If, as it appeared likely, the General Assembly approved partition, Britain would be saddled with the responsibility of enforcing that solution during the two year transitional period. As Creech-Jones later reflected, 'Whatever solution was propounded for the problem, it called for the use of force which the British Government did not have and a use which the British public felt to be intolerable'.³

The military's position was set forth by A.V. Alexander, the Minister of Defence, in a memorandum submitted to the Cabinet on 18 September. Alexander warned that adoption of the majority recommendations by the U.N. would precipitate an Arab uprising in

¹The Australian representative abstained from voting on either plan on the ground that a unanimous report had not been produced. Garcia-Granados, *The Birth of Israel*, ff. 2, p. 242.

²See Bullock, *Ernest Bevin*, p. 476.

³RH Creech-Jones Papers Box 32/6 Letter, Creech-Jones to Munro [sic], 23 October 1961.

Palestine that would be abetted by 'irregulars and volunteers' from surrounding states and lead to anti-British disorders throughout the Middle East. This development would necessitate British reinforcements to the extent that 'a drastic revision of our defence policy would be required'. Even if the U.N. accepted the minority report, it was unlikely to receive the approval of both communities in Palestine which was a prerequisite to the plan's implementation. Although the present strength of the Palestine garrison was sufficient to deal with any Jewish unrest, it would not be able to cope with 'appreciable Arab resistance' as well. 'Our forces are, however, planned to run-down in the near future', Alexander explained, 'to a point where [they] will be insufficient to deal even with Jewish opposition, which is likely to continue indefinitely'. The cardinal principle of British policy, he concluded, must be the 'retention of Arab goodwill'.¹

In a memorandum submitted to the Cabinet the same day, Bevin declared that the 'majority proposal is so manifestly unjust to the Arabs that it is difficult to see how...we could reconcile it with our conscience'. The Foreign Secretary also spoke of the likelihood of Arab disturbances in Palestine that would be supported by the Muslim world. 'The present situation in Palestine', he continued,

is intolerable and cannot be allowed to continue. His Majesty's Government have themselves failed to devise any settlement which would enable them to transfer their authority to a Government representing the inhabitants of the country. If the Assembly should fail, or if it were to propose a settlement for which His Majesty's Government could not accept responsibility, the only remaining course would be to withdraw from Palestine, in the last resort, unconditionally.

¹PRO CAB 129/21 C.P. (47) 262 Memorandum by Alexander, 18 September 1947.

Although this course might open Britain to criticism from both Jews and Arabs for failing to fulfil its obligations under the mandate, Bevin argued that, 'We cannot permit ourselves to be kept in Palestine indefinitely by fear of this accusation'. In any case, the advantages of withdrawal--primarily the preservation of good relations with the Arab world and of British strategic interests in the Middle East along with an end to the bloodshed and hardship endured by British forces in Palestine--obviated the disadvantages of remaining in Palestine. 'British lives', he wrote, 'would not be lost, nor British forces expended, in suppressing one Palestinian community to the advantage of the other, and we should not be pursuing a policy destructive of our own interests in the Middle East'.¹

The Cabinet met on 20 September to discuss the government's options in view of the UNSCOP Report and the forthcoming General Assembly session. Bevin emphasized that Britain should decline 'to enforce a settlement which was unacceptable' to either the Jews or Arabs. Creech-Jones supported Bevin's assessment; as did the rest of the Cabinet. Emanuel Shinwell, the Minister of Fuel and Power, stressed the importance of an 'orderly' withdrawal so that Britain's relinquishing of its responsibilities in Palestine would not be regarded by the Arab world as a sign of British weakness. Dalton expressed the view that, since 'an agreed settlement could not be reached in Palestine, [since] that country was of no strategic value to His Majesty's Government and the maintenance of British forces in it merely led to a heavy drain on

¹*Ibid.*, C.P. (47) 259 Memorandum by Bevin, 18 September 1947.

our financial resources and to the creation of a dangerous spirit of anti-Semitism' there was no alternative but to surrender the mandate. Accordingly, he urged 'that a date for the withdrawal of the British administration and British forces should be announced as soon as possible'.¹

Attlee agreed that the time had come for Britain to disencumber itself of the responsibility for Palestine. He pointed to the 'close parallel between the position in Palestine and the recent situation in India' as an example of where Britain had stated its intention to withdraw, had fixed a definite time limit for the cessation of British rule and had left the two rival communities there to resolve their differences on their own.² 'He did not think', the minutes of the meeting recorded,

it reasonable to ask the British administration in Palestine to continue in present conditions and he hoped that salutary results would be produced by a clear announcement that His Majesty's Government intended to relinquish the Mandate and failing a peaceful settlement, to withdraw the British administration and British forces.

The Cabinet, accordingly, agreed to inform the UN that Britain

would not be able to give effect to any scheme unacceptable to both the Arabs and the Jews and that in any other event, the United Nations Organisation would have to find another implementing authority. The prime responsibility for the implementation would in any event be transferred to the United Nations Organisation.³

¹PRO CAB 128/10 C.M. (47) 76, 20 September 1947.

²Independence had been proclaimed in India on 15 August.

³*Ibid.*

CONCLUSION

On 26 September Creech-Jones communicated the government's decision to the U.N. 'In order that there may be no misunderstanding of the attitude and policy of Britain', he stated, 'I have been instructed by His Majesty's Government to announce with all solemnity that they have consequently decided that in the absence of a settlement they must plan for an early withdrawal of British forces and of the British administration from Palestine'.¹ Creech-Jones's statement to the U.N. stands in marked contrast to the one he had made to the House of Commons in February when Britain's intention to refer the Palestine question to the U.N. was first announced. At that time, it had been emphasized that the referral decision did not imply that Britain was 'going to the United Nations to surrender the Mandate'. Yet this was precisely the course of action taken by the government only six months later.

A decade and a half after the event, the former Colonial Secretary cited four pivotal considerations that determined the government's decision. These were the unresolvable differences of Palestine's Arab and Jewish communities, the drain on Britain's shrinking financial resources imposed by the country's heavy military commitment in Palestine, the force of international, American and Parliamentary opinion and, in particular, the public outcry in Britain that followed the hanging of the two sergeants. 'Jews and Arabs', Creech-Jones explained, 'had rejected every possible solution and each was so inflexible in their views as to make them irreconcilable. The terrorism on both sides could not be abated and the drain on our limited resources

¹RH Creech-Jones Papers Box 31/3 Speech to Ad Hoc Committee on the Palestine Question, 26 September 1947.

was felt to be unbearable'. Additional pressure came from mounting international and domestic criticism of the government's prolonged inability to resolve the question of Palestine's future. 'World, American and Parliamentary opinion was intensely antagonistic', he continued, 'and whatever considerations of strategy and bases might be, the issues of immigration, security and stateless persons in Europe were becoming irresistible so far as Britain was concerned'. Lastly, Creech-Jones called attention to the 'deadly blow against British patience and pride' caused by the execution of the two sergeants. Hence with 'accelerating speed the Cabinet was pushed to the conclusion that they could [no] longer support the Mandate'.¹

By the fall of 1947 officials in the Colonial, Foreign, and War Offices--the three departments directly concerned with Palestine--had come to the conclusion that the political problem there was insoluble. This was the first time that all three were in agreement on this issue. For years officials in the Colonial Office had maintained that a political settlement--preferably partition--that freed Britain of the responsibility of governing Palestine and compelled the Arabs and Jews to work out their differences on their own was the only solution.² In this respect, the Colonial Office sought 'to salve some of its handiwork from the wreckage' of the increasingly ungovernable and strife-torn British mandate.³

¹RH Creech-Jones Papers Box 32/6 Letter, Creech-Jones to Munro [sic], 23 October 1961.

²See, for example, MEC Cunningham Papers VI/1 Letter, MacMichael to Stanley, 17 July 1944; *Ibid.*, IV/2 Note by General Sir Alan Cunningham (undated); and RH Creech-Jones Papers Box 32/3 Letter, Creech-Jones to James Callaghan (MP), 30 November 1961.

³Monroe, 'Mr. Bevin's "Arab Policy"', p. 38.

At the same time, abandonment of the mandate had long been resisted by the Foreign Office and War Office on political and strategic grounds. Both departments, given their wider concerns of the effect of events inside Palestine on the rest of the Middle East, were ill-disposed to any solution that recognized Zionist claims in Palestine and would therefore alienate the Arab world. The War Office in particular wanted to retain the rights to British bases and airfields in Palestine along with the Haifa port and oil facilities in that city. In addition, there was the fear that a political settlement in Palestine opposed by the Arabs would have adverse repercussions on British strategic interests throughout the Middle East.

The prospect of continued violence from the Jews coupled with the outbreak of an Arab revolt in Palestine supported by the surrounding Arab states implicit in British acceptance of the UNSCOP Report, however, superseded the advantages of retaining Palestine as a strategic base.¹ Moreover, such a course would entail the undermining of British influence throughout the region, an eventuality that earlier arguments for remaining in Palestine had been meant to avoid. Accordingly, in the fall of 1947 the War Office simply 'wanted to extricate its men and materiel [from Palestine] intact'.² It had had enough of the violence directed against British troops by the Jewish terrorists and, following the repeated failure of various military measures (including martial

¹In any case, Palestine's strategic importance for Britain had diminished somewhat as a result of India's independence and the U.N.'s rejection a fortnight later of Egypt's petition to have the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty nullified. See Cohen, *Palestine And The Great Powers*, p. 275.

²Monroe, 'Mr. Bevin's "Arab Policy"', p. 38.

law) to restore order in the country, had come to the realization that the lawless situation in Palestine could not be surmounted by force of arms alone. The Foreign Office similarly concluded that British interests in the Middle East were better served by leaving Palestine than by remaining there. Its main concern was 'to keep up the British position in the rest of the Arab World': which was now seen to entail an end to Britain's involvement in Palestine.¹

The financial costs of continued British rule in Palestine also figured prominently in the decision to surrender the mandate. At a time when Britain itself was confronted by financial crisis after financial crisis, this high rate of expenditure greatly exacerbated Britain's already serious economic difficulties. These costs were the direct result of the campaign of violence waged by the Jewish terrorist organizations against the British in Palestine. The drain on Britain's limited financial resources imposed by the need to garrison Palestine to counter the terrorists and maintain order was considerable. Annual expenditures on British forces stationed in Palestine consumed nearly a quarter of the total defence budget. Indeed, between 1 July 1945 and 30 November 1947 Britain had spent an estimated £100 million on British forces in Palestine.² As Gurney observed during a conversation with a Jewish Agency official in May 1947, 'our sterling balances are being reduced by terror. That is the core of the whole matter that we have a tremendous expenditure owing to terror'.³

¹*Ibid.*

²Debates, House of Commons, vol. 446, col. 33 (Sir Stafford Cripps), 20 January 1948.

³CZA S 25/28 Minutes of Conversation Between Gurney and D. Horowitz, 27 May 1947.

By the summer of 1947 the pressure on Britain to reduce spending abroad had become impossible to withstand. At the end of August new austerity measures were imposed by the government resulting in further reductions of the meat ration, a ban on the use of gasoline for personal reasons and the suspension of holiday travel abroad.¹ Palestine, accordingly, was a prime target for the Treasury in its push to reduce overseas commitments and cut military spending. In addition, the large number of men still in the armed services two years after the war had ended was not only costing Britain a small fortune to maintain but was depriving British industry of the manpower needed to fuel the country's economic recovery. Thus withdrawal from Palestine was seen as a key means to ease the burden on the British economy.

Criticism from the U.S. was also increasing during that fateful summer. The vituperative publicity campaign against Britain spearheaded by Hecht and other American *Irgun* sympathizers had continued without respite.² An advertisement that appeared in the New York *Herald Tribune* on 15 May, for example, displayed a 'Letter to the Terrorists of Palestine' from Hecht. 'Every time you blow up a British arsenal, or wreck a British train', he wrote, 'or send a British railroad train sky high, or rob a British bank or let go with your guns and bombs at the British betrayers and invaders of your homeland, the Jews of America make a little holiday in their hearts'.³ Hecht's letter, in fact, was

¹Cohen, *Palestine And The Great Powers*, p. 269.

²See PRO CAB 104/272 Telegram, Inverchapel to Bevin, 4 January 1947; PRO FO 371/61772 E2994/46/31 Letter, H.M.G. Embassy, Washington, D.C. to Eastern Department, FO, 18 March 1947; and FO 371/61807 E4105/48/31 Minute by M. S. Beith, 16 May 1947, and Report by Sir Orme Sargent, 20 May 1947, for details of these activities and British complaints to the U.S. Government.

³Quoted in Zaar, *Rescue and Liberation*, pp. 240-241.

part of a \$7.5 million appeal that had been launched by the American League for a Free Palestine to raise money for illegal immigration activities and medical and legal aid for 'underground fighters'.¹

More important, perhaps, were the inroads made by pro-*Irgun*/anti-British lobbyists in the U.S. Congress. By the fall of 1947 these pressure groups had succeeded in having a number of resolutions introduced in both the House of Representatives and the Senate condemning British 'oppression' of 'the Hebrew population' of Palestine and recognizing the right of the 'Hebrew Nation' to a country of their own in Palestine.² The impact of this campaign on the British Government is evinced by the remark made by Bevin to Lewis Douglas, the American Ambassador to Britain, that 'The Palestine situation was poisoning relations between the United States and Britain'.³

Against this backdrop of political, strategic, economic and international pressures on Britain to end its costly and debilitating involvement in Palestine were the repercussions of a singularly dramatic act of terrorism that decisively undermined whatever resolve still existed to remain in Palestine: the hangings of the two sergeants. The human dimension of this tragedy, heightened by the photographs of the two young men suspended by the hangman's noose displayed on the front pages of British newspapers, affected the British public as no other

¹PRO FO 371/61756 E5489/22/31 Jewish Affairs In The United States, Memorandum by Bromley, 16 June 1947.

²See texts of 80th Congress, House Joint Resolution 196, introduced by Andrew Somers on 15 May 1947, and Senate Resolution 149, introduced by Warren Magnusson et al. on 17 July 1947, in Zaar, *Rescue and Liberation*, pp. 230 and 243, and House Joint Resolution 237 introduced by Somers on 11 July 1947, in PRO CO 537/2313.

³PRO FO 371/61821 E7167/48G.31 Note of Conversation, 4 August 1947.

terrorist outrage had. Describing the confluence of events that compelled the government to surrender the mandate, Creech-Jones cited the fact that terrorist outrages had become 'common in Palestine. Terrorism was at its worst', he continued, 'and the British public seemed unable to stand much more'.¹ Indeed, the decision to leave Palestine was roundly approved by the British public.² As Creech-Jones concluded,

For my part, I could only work within the confines of the Labour Government's Middle East policy and try to get order into Palestine and any acceptable interpretation of the Mandate...this was an impossibility and I knew it. Bevin was thoroughly co-operative but the situation was hopeless and intolerable. The Cabinet determined that the Mandate could not be worked and felt the only possible alternative was to leave it to the responsible International Authority in the world...and ask them to find a solution. That we did.³

Indeed, less than two months after the Cabinet had decided to surrender the mandate, it approved the evacuation time table proposed by the COS. 'In order to dispel any remaining uncertainty of Britain's intention to withdraw', the British delegation at the U.N. was directed to announce that all British forces and administrative services would be withdrawn from Palestine by 1 August 1948.⁴ Subsequently, this date was moved forward to 15 May and, on that day, British rule in Palestine ceased.

¹RH Creech-Jones Papers Box 32/3 Letter, 30 November 1961.

²*Daily Telegraph and Morning Post* and the *Times*, 27 September 1947. See also MEC MacMichael Papers, Letter, W. J. Fitzgerald (Chief Justice, Palestine) to MacMichael, 8 November 1947, in which the former comments that, 'The decision undoubtedly has the concurrence of 99% of the British people'.

³RH Creech-Jones Papers Box 32/3 Letter, Creech-Jones to Munro [sic], 30 November 1961.

⁴PRO CAB 128/10 CM 86 (47), 11 November 1947.

VIII. CONCLUSION

There can be no longer any doubt in the eyes of the world as to the true nature of the problem. A bitter contest between the Jews and Arabs, each fearing domination by the other, in which the Mandatory Power, standing between, has been continually denounced, first by one community and then by the other, as showing favour to the other side.

Address at Chatham House,
22 July 1948.¹

With these words, General Sir Alan Cunningham, Britain's last High Commissioner for Palestine, neatly summarized the intractable problem that had beset Britain in governing Palestine. Two irreconcilable commitments had formed the basis of British rule: the promise to facilitate the establishment of a Jewish national homeland in Palestine and the concomitant pledge to safeguard the rights of the country's Arab population. These mutually exclusive responsibilities locked Britain into inevitable conflict with both communities. 'To the Arab', Cunningham explained, 'every Jew who entered Palestine caused an infringement of our undertakings....To the Jew, the withholding of the right of entry from a single Jew equally constituted an infringement' of those undertakings.² Thus Britain could only satisfy the wishes of one community while incurring the enmity of the other. This situation compromised Britain's rule over Palestine and ultimately rendered the mandate untenable.

¹Sir Alan Cunningham, 'Palestine--The Last Years Of The Mandate', *International Affairs*, xxiv (1948), 490.

²*Ibid.*, 481.

The absence of a firm policy for Palestine further exacerbated the problems inherent for Britain in the mandate. The government, accordingly, was susceptible to the violent pressures brought to bear on it by both the Arabs and Jews. As Shaw observed in 1946 of Britain's many attempts to divine a solution to the Palestine problem,

There have been commissions and commissions and they have recommended this and that and there have debates in all the Parliaments of the world and everything else, and it has never been clear where we really are heading...the result is that both sides have always been encouraged to feel that by agitation, by terrorism and by propaganda...they can always swing the pendulum over to their side.¹

The Arab rioting that swept through Palestine in 1921 resulted in the re-definition of the Jewish immigration based on the principle of Palestine's 'economic absorptive capacity'. The more serious disturbances that engulfed the country 15 years later in the Arab Rebellion led to the promulgation of the 1939 White Paper.

The Jewish terrorists who formed the *Irgun* drew their own conclusions from the Arab Revolt and the dramatic reversal of British policy that the uprising had prompted. 'Arabs use terror as a means in their political fight--and they are winning', the group had declared at the start of their brief revolt against British rule in 1939.² Although the advent of World War II resulted in the suspension of the *Irgun's* struggle, the seeds of conflict had been sown and it was only a matter of time before the *Irgun* would rise again to challenge Britain's rule over Palestine. Admittedly, a small group within the *Irgun* had refused

¹Letter, Shaw to AAC, 22 March 1946 in NARS RG 43 Box 11, quoted in Nachmani, 'British Policy In Palestine After World War II', p. 1.

²Jl K-4 4/15 *Irgun Press*, No. 1/5, August 1939.

to accept this decision and had formed their own terrorist organization. But lacking men, arms and finances, *Lehi* was never able to pose a serious threat to Britain.

In 1944, as news of the terrible fate which had befallen European Jewry became known and the tide of battle turned in Britain's favour, the *Irgun* emerged from hibernation and renewed its struggle. The *raison d'etre* of the terrorist campaign waged by the group (and by *Lehi* as well) was to exploit an already volatile issue--the restrictions on Jewish immigration--and thereby polarize the *Yishuv* against the British. Through violence, the terrorists thus sought to place themselves and their organizations in the vanguard of the active realization of the Jews' political and nationalist aspirations.

By the end of 1945, the terrorists had achieved this aim. The humanitarian pressure created by the plight of the Jewish survivors of Hitler's 'Final Solution' engendered a new set of priorities for Zionism and a new set of demands on Britain. Although the Balfour Declaration had never been conceived as a promise to allow the settlement of an unlimited number of Jews in Palestine, at the end of the war that is in essence what the Jews demanded. Frustrated by Britain's inability to accede to Zionist demands, the official Jewish leadership sought to duplicate the Arabs' success six years before and use violence to force a change of Britain's policy towards Palestine.

In the absence of a firm policy for Palestine, British decision-making drifted on a sea of vacillation. For nearly a decade the Colonial Office had argued for partition as the only viable solution to the Palestine problem. Its arguments for this course in 1938 had been

rebuffed by the Foreign Office and War Office because of the adverse repercussions it would have on Britain's relations with the Arab world on the eve of war. But the White Paper, embraced in 1939 in place of the partition plan proposed by the Royal (Peel) Commission two years before, was a political and strategic expedient when continued Arab unrest in Palestine threatened British interests throughout the Middle East. In 1943 and 1944 the government had again attempted to fashion a new policy for Palestine. A scheme of partition was put forth and, if Lord Moyne had not been assassinated, might have been adopted. Instead, the Labour Government that took power in 1945 inherited an ambiguous policy for Palestine, based on the White Paper but rooted to the conclusion that it had outlived its relevance.

The new government, inundated with pressing domestic and international problems, was confronted by the necessity to evolve a new policy for Palestine with few concrete--and many conflicting--signposts to guide it. The same cleavage of opinion that had existed before the war between the three departments directly concerned with Palestine resurfaced at the war's end. The Colonial Office clung to partition as the only way for Britain to extricate itself from the Palestine morass. Cunningham and Shaw, the two key men-on-the-spot in Palestine, argued in vain for partition during the weeks following the publication of the AAC's Report in the spring of 1946. Although it would be acceptable to only one community (the Jews), they argued, it would at least endow Britain with a firm, decisive policy. But the Foreign Office and the War Office continued to resist this course. They again cited the damage that a policy which was unacceptable to the Arabs would have on British

strategic interests throughout the Middle East and on Britain's relations with the Arab world. In respect of these wider, regional considerations, the Labour Government embarked on a determined, but fruitless search to divine a consensual settlement of the Palestine problem.

'During the whole of this period when the political future of Palestine was being debated outside of the country itself', Cunningham later recalled, 'sabotage and terrorism by the Jews was increasing and, so far as the dissident groups were concerned, in ever more violent and brutal forms'.¹ In June 1946 he had warned London that, 'The sands are running out and I am now definitely of the opinion that the only hope of getting a peaceful solution of the Palestine problem is to introduce a plan for partition'.²

Without any direction from London, the Palestine Government could only endeavour to try 'to keep the country quiet'. This was an impossible task, Cunningham emphasized in July 1946, when both the Jews and Arabs are 'saying force pays and...interpreting lack of action [by Britain] as weakness....[But] I can do little--[without a] policy'.³ The same view was expressed by Barker four months later, who argued that the 'answer to [the] terrorist problem lies largely in [the] political sphere. No action can be taken by the military alone to stop terrorism. It must be in support of some political policy which is not existent at present'.⁴

¹Cunningham, 'Palestine--The Last Days Of The Mandate', 485.

²MEC Cunningham Papers IV/2 Note by Cunningham (undated).

³MEC Cunningham Papers IV/4 Notes For Talk To Secretary of State on 20th July 1946.

⁴MEC Cunningham Papers I/3 Telegram, Barker to Dempsey, 21 November 1946.

The vacuum created by British vacillation and indecision breathed life into the terrorists' efforts to marshal support within the *Yishuv* for their struggle. Playing on the fundamental political differences separating the Jews and Britain, the *Irgun* laboured to bring Palestine to its knees by chaos and bloodshed. Through terrorist violence, the group fomented a climate of fear in Palestine by demonstrating the government's inability to maintain order and thus underscoring its weakness. Innovative and spectacular acts of violence such as the bombings of the King David Hotel and the British embassy in Rome, the attack on the officers' club in the Jerusalem special security zone, the prison break at Acre, and the hangings of the two sergeants were meant to demoralize the British and undermine the government's resolve to remain in Palestine.

In these circumstances the Palestine Government could respond only by imposing on the country a harsh regimen of security measures encompassing a daily routine of curfews, road-blocks, snap checks, cordon and search operations and, for a time, martial law. The terrorists banked on the fact that the disruption to daily life and commerce caused by these measures would alienate the community from the government, thwart efforts to obtain the *Yishuv's* cooperation against the terrorists, and create an impression in the minds of the Jews of the army and police as oppressors rather than protectors. Further, the more pervasive the government's activities became and the more conspicuous the security forces seemed, the stronger the terrorists appeared to be.

At the foundation of this strategy was Begin's belief that the British, unlike the Germans who during the war had carried out whole-sale reprisals against civilians, were incapable of such

barbarity.¹ 'History and our observation', Begin wrote, 'persuaded us that if we could succeed in destroying the government's prestige in Eretz Israel, the removal of its rule would follow automatically'.² By pushing a liberal democracy like Britain to mount increasingly repressive measures against the public, the terrorists sought to push Britain to the limit of endurance. The inherent clandestine nature of terrorist warfare was used by the *Irgun* to force the government to treat the Jewish community not as law-abiding citizens, but as potential enemies.

The army and police strove gallantly to turn back the tide of violence submerging Palestine. Opinion amongst almost all British officials--both civilian, police and military alike--was that the urban terrorist campaign waged by the *Irgun* and *Lehi* was a police, and not a military, responsibility and that if the government were to defeat the terrorists, the cooperation of the community was essential. 'These were true underground movements', Cunningham wrote.

Their murderous attacks were of the tip and run variety carried out after much reconnaissance and preparation; after them, the perpetrators sank back into the population under whose cover they were dispersed. Here was no formation for the soldiers to attack, but furtive individuals probably widely separated and unknown to each other. It seemed to me therefore, except that soldiers when attacked should inflict the maximum of casualties on the attackers, that it was a police rather than a military affair to deal with these movements; moreover, that the only sure method of stamping out this evil was in co-operation with the local population....It has to be recorded, however, that neither from the Jewish Agency nor the Jewish people did we get the co-operation we required.³

¹Begin, *The Revolt*, pp. 53-54.

²*Ibid.*, p. 52.

³Cunningham, 'Palestine--The Last Days Of The Mandate', 485-486.

But with the police force critically below strength and with acts of terrorism succeeding one another with greater frequency, the army had to assume the main burden of fighting the terrorists. This was a role that the army was neither prepared nor trained for. The basic tenet of British doctrine concerning public security is that the police, and not the military, should play the predominant role in upholding the law and maintaining order. The devolution of this responsibility to the army in Palestine--though unavoidable in these circumstances--seriously compromised the government's ability to defeat the terrorists.

Policemen are trained to deal with the public; soldiers are not. It bears repeating that soldiers are taught how to fight and to do so against a discernible enemy under rules of engagement where an army's might can be fully exercised. Conditions in Palestine did not permit the army to function in this manner. The battlefield in Palestine was not some neatly defined territory where opposing armies clashed, but cities populated by civilians amongst whom the terrorists concealed themselves. In this unfamiliar situation, the army fell back on a strategy of collective punishment that had proven successful in the Arab Rebellion. Senior military commanders like Montgomery and Dempsey maintained that, once the political restraints they believed had been imposed on the army were removed and the full weight of the military was brought to bear on the *Yishuv*, the community's cooperation would follow. But they failed to anticipate that the hardship and inconvenience caused by martial law and less severe countermeasures would so alienate the Jewish populace that all prospects of obtaining the community's help would be lost.

Given the nature of the *Yishuv's* fundamental political grievances and Britain's inability to accede to them, it is doubtful that the government could ever have obtained the complete cooperation of the community against the terrorists. Moreover, in this situation it appears that once the terrorist campaign began there was no way that the British could have won. The British were simply not as determined as the terrorists and--at the same time--were more vulnerable. Time was on the terrorists' side, not Britain's, particularly in view of Britain's severe post-war economic problems. The terrorists did not have to defeat the British militarily, they only had to avoid losing. British successes did nothing to change the balance of forces or to bring them any closer to victory.

This was not a war of 'numbers': winning was not measured in terms of casualties inflicted, but by psychological impact. Indeed, between August 1945 and August 1947 only 141 British soldiers and 40 terrorists were killed (including seven terrorists who were executed and two who committed suicide while awaiting execution).¹ 'Successes' like "Operation Agatha", "Operation Shark" and martial law were often counter-productive: ephemeral victories bought at the cost of further estranging the community. Britain's commitment in Palestine thus not only exceeded its financial resources but, most importantly, its will to meet that commitment. Moreover, without a firm policy it was impossible for Britain to define precisely what its interests in Palestine were. The

¹PRO CO 733/477/75156/151 A Telegram, Jerusalem to Chancery, Washington, D.C., 18 September 1947.

absence of this policy also violated one of the basic principles of war: that of having a clear political objective.

The crowning agony for Britain came during the summer of 1947. Between July and September a series of events converged that culminated in the decision to surrender the mandate and leave Palestine: the new financial crisis brought on by sterling becoming convertible exacerbated the strain on the economy caused by the large number of British troops required in Palestine to maintain order, mounting international criticism--particularly from the United States--of British policy in Palestine that was accompanied by growing criticism at home after the hanging of the two sergeants had become impossible to resist, and the unanimous conclusion of the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine calling for the immediate termination of the mandate finally forced the government's hand. Over each one the activities of the Jewish terrorists cast a dark shadow.

On 15 May 1948 Britain's rule over Palestine formally ended and the establishment of the State of Israel was proclaimed. In a communique issued by the *Irgun* that same day, Begin declared:

After many years of underground warfare, years of persecution and suffering...[the] Hebrew revolt of 1944-48 has been crowned with success....The rule of enslavement of Britain in our country has been beaten, uprooted, has crumbled and been dispersed....The State of Israel has arisen. And it has arisen "Only Thus": through blood, fire, a strong hand and a mighty arm, with suffering and sacrifices.¹

¹Speech of the Commander-in-Chief of the *Irgun Zvai Le'umi*, 15 May 1948, in Tavin and Alexander (eds.), *Psychological Warfare and Propaganda*, pp. 240-241.

No single factor by itself can be considered responsible for the decision taken by the British Government to leave Palestine. At the same time, however, strong evidence has been presented throughout this thesis that Jewish terrorist activities played an important--and even a decisive--role in the events that led to the termination of Britain's rule over Palestine and the establishment of Israel. The key to understanding the terrorists' role lies in Begin's contention that the *Irgun* 'speeded up events' in Palestine and thus forced Britain to recognize the futility of the mandate and the inevitability of its collapse.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. MANUSCRIPT SOURCES

NATIONAL AND OFFICIAL ARCHIVES

Archives of the Council On Foreign Relations, New York

Record of Meetings, 1946.

Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem

S 25. Departments of the Executives of the Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency.

Z 4. Records of the Zionist Organization and Jewish Agency.

Israel State Archives, Jerusalem

CS. Records of the Office of the Chief Secretary, Palestine Government.

RG 65. Mandate Records.

Jabotinsky Institute, Tel Aviv

G-12. Records of the *Lohamei Herut Yisrael*.

K-4. Records of the *Irgun Zvai Leumi*.

National Archives and Record Service, Washington, D.C.

RG 59. Post Files, Jerusalem.

RG 84. Post Files, Cairo.

RG 165. Records of the War Department, General and Special Staffs (Intelligence).

RG 213. Records of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff.

RG 226. Records of the Office of Strategic Services.

RG 319. Records of United States Army Staff (Intelligence).

Public Record Office, London

AIR MINISTRY

AIR 20. Unregistered Papers from Air Ministry branches.

CABINET

CAB 65. War Cabinet Minutes.

CAB 66. Memoranda -- W.P. and C.P. Series.

CAB 95. War Cabinet Committees on the Middle East and Africa.

CAB 104. Supplementary Registered Files.

- CAB 127. Cabinet Defence Committee.
- CAB 128. Cabinet Minutes.
- CAB 129. Cabinet Memoranda.

COLONIAL OFFICE

- CO 537. Palestine Supplementary Correspondence.
- CO 733. Palestine Original Correspondence.

FOREIGN OFFICE

- FO 141. Embassy and Consular Archives Egypt Correspondence.
- FO 371. General Correspondence of the Political Departments.
- FO 921. Files of the Office of the Minister of State Resident in Cairo.

PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (PREMIER)

- PREM 3. Operational Papers.
- PREM 4. Confidential Papers.
- PREM 8. Correspondence and Papers.

WAR OFFICE

- WO 32. Registered Papers, General Series.
- WO 106. Directorate of Military Operations and Intelligence.
- WO 169. War Diaries, Middle East Forces.
- WO 201. War of 1939 to 1945, Military Papers, Middle East Forces.
- WO 208. War of 1939 to 1945, Military Headquarters Papers, Middle East Forces.
- WO 216. Papers of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff.
- WO 208. Directorate of Military Intelligence.
- WO 275. Sixth Airborne Division.

Weizmann Archives, Rehovot, Israel

Papers and Correspondence of Dr. Chaim Weizmann (in chronological order).

PERSONAL PAPERS

Barker-Antonius Correspondence, Letters written by Lieutenant-General Evelyn Barker, GOC, Palestine, 1946-1947, to Mrs. Katie Antonius; Israel State Archives, Jerusalem.

Briance, J. A., Palestine Police Force, 1936-1948; (made available by courtesy of Mr. Briance).

Catling, Sir Richard, Palestine Police Force, 1935-1948; Rhodes House, Oxford.

Creech-Jones, Arthur, Under-Secretary, Colonial Office, 1945-1946 and Colonial Secretary, 1946-1950; Rhodes House, Oxford.

Cunningham, General Sir Alan, High Commissioner, Palestine, 1945-1948; Middle East Centre, St. Antony's College, Oxford.

D'Arcy, General John, GOC, Palestine, 1944-1946; Middle East Centre, St. Antony's College, Oxford.

Fletcher-Cooke, John, Under-Secretary, Palestine, 1946-1948; Middle East Centre, St. Antony's College, Oxford.

Fraser, Ronald, Palestine Police, 1943-1948; Rhodes House, Oxford.

LeRay, Hugh, Assistant Director of Surveys, Palestine, 1940-1948; Middle East Centre, St. Antony's College, Oxford.

MacMichael, Sir Harold, High Commissioner, Palestine, 1938-1944; Middle East Centre, St. Antony's College, Oxford.

MacMillan, General Sir G.H.A., GOC, Palestine, 1947-1948; Imperial War Museum, London.

Monroe, Elizabeth, Journalist and Scholar; Middle East Centre, St. Antony's College, Oxford.

Tegart, Sir Charles, Adviser on Police, Palestine, 1937; Middle East Centre, St. Antony's College, Oxford.

LETTERS

Briance, John, to the author, 12 December 1981.

Horne, E. P., to the author, 4 and 9 January 1982.

UNPUBLISHED DOCTORAL DISSERTATIONS

Clark, David John. 'The Colonial Police And Anti-Terrorism: Bengal 1930-1936, Palestine 1937-1947, And Cyprus 1955-1959'. Oxford University D.Phil. thesis, 1978.

Levine, David. 'David Raziell, The Man and His Times'. Yeshiva University Ph.D. thesis, 1969.

Nachmani, Amikam. 'British Policy In Palestine After World War II: The Anglo-American Committee Of Inquiry Into The Problems Of European Jewry And Palestine, 1945-1946'. Oxford University D.Phil. thesis, 1980.

B. PRINTED SOURCES: PRIMARY

BRITISH COMMAND PAPERS

- Cmd. 5479. *Palestine Royal Commission Report*. London, July 1937.
- Cmd. 5854. *Palestine Partition Commission: Report*. London, October 1938.
- Cmd. 5893. *Palestine: Statement By His Majesty's Government*. London, October 1938.
- Cmd. 6019. *British White Paper: Statement of Policy*. London, May 1939.
- Cmd. 6180. *British White Paper: Summary of Land Transfer Regulations*. London, February 1940.
- Cmd. 6808. *Report of the Anglo-American Committee on Palestine*. London, April 1946.
- Cmd. 6873. *Palestine: Statement of Information Relating to Acts of Violence*. London, July 1946.

FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES

- Foreign Relations of the United States, 1939*, vol. ii. Washington, D.C., 1955.
- Foreign Relations of the United States, 1947*, vol. v. Washington, D.C., 1971.

HANSARD

Hansard, 5th Series, Parliamentary Debates, Commons.

NEWSPAPERS

- Daily Telegraph and Morning Post* (London).
- Manchester Guardian* (Manchester).
- Palestine Post* (Jerusalem).
- Sunday Express* (London).
- Times* (London).

C. PRINTED SOURCES: SECONDARY

- Anderson, Brigadier R. N. 'Search Operations In Palestine: The Problem of the Soldier', *Army Quarterly*, 55 (1947-1948), 201-208.
- Antonius, George. *The Arab Awakening*. New York, 1971.
- 'Avner'. *Memoirs of An Assassin*. London, 1959.
- Bartlett, C. J. *The Long Retreat: A Short History of British Defence Policy, 1945-1970*. London, 1972.
- Bar-Zohar, Michael. *The Armed Prophet: A Biography of Ben-Gurion*. London, 1966.
- Bauer, Yehuda. *Flight and Rescue: Bricha*. New York, 1970.
- _____. 'From Cooperation to Resistance: The Haganah 1938-1946', *Middle Eastern Studies*, ii (1966), 182-210.
- _____. *From Diplomacy to Resistance: A History of Jewish Palestine, 1939-1945*. New York, 1973.
- Begin, Menachem. *The Revolt: Story of the Irgun*. Jerusalem, 1952.
- _____. *White Nights: The Story of a Prisoner in Russia*. Jerusalem, 1977.
- Bell, J. Bowyer. *On Revolt: Strategies of National Liberation*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1976.
- _____. *Terror Out of Zion*. New York, 1977.
- Bentwich, Norman. *England In Palestine*. London, 1932.
- Berlin, Sir Isaiah. 'Zionist Politics In Wartime Washington: A Fragment of Personal Reminiscence', The Yaacov Herzog Memorial Lecture, delivered at (and printed by) the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel, 2 October 1972.
- Bethell, Nicholas. *The Palestine Triangle: The Struggle Between The British, The Jews and The Arabs 1935-48*. London, 1979.
- Blaxland, Gregory. *The Regiments Depart: A History of the British Army*. London, 1971.
- Borisov, J. *Palestine Underground: The Story of the Jewish Resistance*. Philadelphia, 1947.
- Bowden, Tom. 'The Politics of the Arab Rebellion in Palestine, 1936-39', *Middle Eastern Studies*, xi (1975), 147-174.

- Brenner, Y. S. 'The "Stern Gang", 1940-1948', *Middle Eastern Studies*, ii (1965), 2-30.
- Bullock, Alan. *Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary, 1945-1951*. London, 1983.
- Charters, David A. 'Special Operations in Counter-Insurgency: The Farran Case, Palestine 1947', *Journal of The Royal United Services Institute For Defence Studies*, 124 (1979), 56-61.
- Clarke, Thurston. *By Blood and Fire*. New York, 1981.
- Cohen, Geula. *Woman of Violence: Memoirs of a Young Terrorist*. New York, 1966.
- Cohen, Michael J. 'Appeasement in the Middle East: The British White Paper on Palestine May 1939', *The Historical Journal*, xvi (1973), 571-596.
- _____. 'British Strategy and The Palestine Question, 1936-39', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vii (1972), 157-183.
- _____. 'The Moyne Assassination, November 1944: A Political Analysis', *Middle East Studies*, xv (1979), 358-373.
- _____. *Palestine: Retreat from the Mandate*. London, 1978.
- _____. *Palestine And The Great Powers, 1945-1948*. Princeton, 1982.
- Colville, J. R. *Man of Valour: The Life of Field-Marshal Lord Gort*. London, 1972.
- Crossman, Richard. *Palestine Mission*. New York and London, 1947.
- Crum, Bartley C. *Behind the Silken Curtain*. New York, 1947.
- Cunningham, Sir Alan. 'Palestine--The Last Years Of The Mandate', *International Affairs*, xxiv (1948), 481-490.
- Dekel, Efraim. *Shai: The Exploits of Hagana Intelligence*. London and New York, 1959.
- Dewar, Michael. *Brush Fire Wars*. London and New York, 1984.
- Dinur, Ben-Zion. *Sefer Toldot Ha-Haganah (History of the Haganah)*, 3 vols. bound as 8. Tel Aviv, 1954-1972.
- Eban, Abba. *Abba Eban: An Autobiography*. New York, 1977.
- Esco Foundation For Palestine, Inc. *Palestine: A Study of Jewish, Arab and British Policies*, vol. ii. New Haven, 1947.

- Farran, Roy. *Winged Dagger: Adventures on Special Service*. London, 1948.
- Fergusson, Bernard. *Trumpet in the Hall 1930-1958*. London, 1970.
- Frank, Gerold. *The Deed*. New York, 1963.
- Gale, General Sir Richard. *Call To Arms: An Autobiography*. London, 1968.
- Garcia-Granados, Jorge. *The Birth of Israel: The Drama As I Saw It*. New York, 1948.
- Gilbert, Martin. *Exile and Return*. London, 1978.
- Gitlin, Jan. *The Conquest of Acre Fortress*. Tel Aviv, 1974.
- Gordon, Michael R. *Conflict and Consensus In Labour's Foreign Policy*. Stanford, California, 1969.
- Graves, R. M. *Experiment In Anarchy*. London, 1949.
- Gregory, F.E.C. 'The British Police and Terrorism', in Paul Wilkinson (ed.), *British Perspectives on Terrorism*. London, 1981.
- Gurevich, D. et al. (eds.). *Statistical Handbook of Jewish Palestine*. Jerusalem, 1947.
- Gurion, Itzhak. *Triumph on the Gallows*. New York, 1950.
- Hamilton, Nigel. *Monty: The Making Of A General 1887-1947*. London, 1981.
- Harris, Kenneth. *Attlee*. London, 1982.
- Horne, Edward. *A Job Well Done: A History Of The Palestine Police Force 1920-1948*. Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, 1982.
- Howard, Michael. *The Continental Commitment*. London, 1972.
- Hurewitz, J. C. *The Struggle For Palestine*. New York, 1976.
- Hurwitz, Harry. *Menachem Begin*. Jerusalem, 1977.
- Hyams, Edward. *Terrorists and Terrorism*. New York, 1974.
- Jeffries, Sir Charles. *Colonial Police*. London, 1952.
- Jones, Philip (ed.). *Britain And Palestine 1914-1948: Archival Sources for the History of the British Mandate*. Oxford, 1979.
- Katz, Samuel. *Days of Fire*. Jerusalem and London, 1968.
- Kedourie, Elie. *Inside the Anglo-Arab Labyrinth*. Cambridge, 1976.

- Kitson, Frank. *Low Intensity Operations: Subversion, Insurgency, Peace-keeping*. London, 1971.
- Koestler, Arthur. *Promise And Fulfilment: Palestine 1917-1949*. London, 1949.
- Laqueur, Walter. *A History of Zionism*. New York, 1976.
- _____. *The Israel-Arab Reader*. New York, 1969.
- Lesch, Ann Mosley. *Arab Politics in Palestine, 1917-1939*. Ithaca, New York, 1979.
- Luttwak, Edward, and Horowitz, Dan. *The Israeli Army*. London, 1975.
- Marlowe, John. *Rebellion In Palestine*. London, 1946.
- McDonald, James. *My Mission In Israel*. New York, 1951.
- Meinertzhagen, Colonel Richard. *Middle East Diary*. London, 1959.
- Meridor, Yaacov. *Long Is The Road To Freedom*. Johannesburg, 1955.
- Mitchell, Lt. Col. Colin. *Having Been A Soldier*. London, 1969.
- Monroe, Elizabeth. *Britain's Moment in the Middle East, 1914-71*. London, 1981.
- _____. 'Mr. Bevin's "Arab Policy"', in Albert Hourani (ed.), *St. Antony's Papers No. 11, Middle Eastern Affairs No. 2*. London, 1961.
- Montgomery of Alamein, Bernard Law Montgomery, First Viscount. *Memoirs*. Cleveland and New York, 1958.
- Moore, John Norton (ed.). *The Arab-Israeli Conflict, Volume III: Documents*. Princeton, 1974.
- Morgan, Kenneth O. *Labour In Power 1945-1951*. Oxford, 1984.
- Niv, David. *Ma'archot Ha-Irgun Ha-Zvai Ha-Leumi (Battle for Freedom: The Irgun Zvai Leumi)*, 5 vols. Tel Aviv, 1975.
- Ovendale, Ritchie. 'The Palestine Policy of the British Labour Party, 1945-46', *International Affairs*, 55 (1979), 409-431.
- Paget, Julian. *Counter-Insurgency Campaigning*. London, 1967.
- Palestine Police Old Comrades' Association. *Newsletter*, 128 (1982).
- Pearlman, Moshe, and Ben-Gurion, David. *Ben-Gurion Looks Back*. New York, 1965.
- Perlmutter, Amos. *Military and Politics In Israel*. London, 1969.

Porath, Y. *The Birth of The Palestinian Arab Nationalist Movement, 1918-1929*. London, 1974.

_____. *From Riots to Rebellion: The Birth of the Palestinian Arab Nationalist Movement, 1929-1939*. London, 1977.

Public Record Office Handbooks No. 51. *The Second World War: A Guide To Documents In The Public Record Office*. London, 1972.

Royal Institute of International Affairs (RIIA). *Great Britain and Palestine, 1915-1945*. Westport, Connecticut, 1976.

Schechtman, Joseph. *Fighter and Prophet: The Vladimir Jabotinsky Story--The Last Years*. New York, 1961.

_____. *Rebel and Statesman: The Vladimir Jabotinsky Story--The Early Years*. New York, 1956.

_____, and Benari, Yehuda. *History of the Revisionist Movement: 1925-1930*, vol. i. Tel Aviv, 1970.

Schiff, Zeev. *A History of the Israeli Army*. San Francisco, 1974.

Slater, Leonard. *The Pledge*. New York, 1970.

Stein, Leonard. *The Balfour Declaration*. New York, 1961.

Sykes, Christopher. *Cross Roads to Israel*. London, 1965.

Tavin, Eli, and Alexander, Yonah (eds.). *Psychological Warfare and Propaganda: Irgun Documentation*. Wilmington, Delaware, 1982.

Trevor, Daphne. *Under the White Paper*. Jerusalem, 1948.

Wasserstein, Bernard. 'The Assassination of Lord Moyne', *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, xxvii (1982), 72-83.

_____. *Britain and the Jews of Europe*. Oxford and London, 1979.

_____. *The British In Palestine*. London, 1978.

Weizmann, Chaim. *Trial and Error: The Autobiography of Chaim Weizmann*, vol. ii. Philadelphia, 1949.

Wilson, Major R. D. *Cordon and Search with the Sixth Airborne Division in Palestine, 1945-1948*. Aldershot, 1949.

Yalin-Mor, Nathan. 'The British Called Us The Stern Gang', *Israel Magazine*, v (1973), 76-84.

Zaar, Isaac. *Rescue and Liberation: America's Part in the Birth of Israel*. New York, 1954.

