

ABSTRACT

Policing Palestine:
British Security Strategy in Palestine, 1917-1947

Robert B. DeBoard, M.A.

Mentor: George W. Gawrych, Ph.D.

Throughout the British Mandate for Palestine, the British Government attempted to establish a policy that reconciled the dueling aspirations of Palestine's Arab and Jewish communities. This thesis examines British security operations to suppress the Arab Revolt of 1936, Jewish terrorism during World War II, and the post-war United Resistance Movement. This study contends that the British adopted a colonial policing model that stressed the security forces' reliance on native support in order to suppress active threats to peace. Second, it demonstrates that shifting British policy led to the alienation of the Jewish community, which had provided important support in suppressing the Arab Revolt. As Jewish intelligence sources dried up, the British were increasingly unable to counter violence coming from the Jewish Underground. This thesis adds to the historiography of the Mandate by demonstrating the complex relationship between British colonial policy, security strategy, and Arab and Jewish national interests.

Policing Palestine: British Security Strategy in Palestine, 1917-1948

by

Robert B. DeBoard, B.B.A.

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Jeffrey S. Hamilton, Ph.D., Chairperson

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Approved by the Thesis Committee

George W. Gawrych, Ph.D., Chairperson

Sergiy Kudelia, Ph.D.

Joseph C. Stubenrauch, Ph.D.

Accepted by the Graduate School

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J. Larry Lyon, Ph.D., Dean

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For my grandfather

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

In February of 1946, a British constable from the Palestine Police Force sat in a café in the city of Rishon, twelve miles south of Tel Aviv. He was relaxed, observing the patrons of the establishment, when a group of men walked in and began distributing pamphlets. They were members of the *Irgun Zvai Leumi*, the second largest militia in the Jewish underground and part of the Jewish insurgency against the British administration of Palestine. The Irgun had a reputation as one of the more dangerous organizations within the underground. Dedicated to the cause of Zionism, and willing to take drastic measures to achieve its goals, the Irgun had been waging an insurgent campaign against the British since 1944. While the Irgun's first efforts had achieved limited success, the group had gained notoriety for several high profile attacks on British installations throughout 1944. By 1946, the Irgun's continued attacks were proving a major problem for British security forces to control.

The British constable sitting in the café knew that distributing pamphlets encouraging revolt against the British was an illegal act. The Irgun members were flouting the law before his very eyes. Yet they showed no sign that his presence made them nervous nor that they feared arrest. After distributing their literature, the party left the café, only to return a few minutes later, bearing two copies of their pamphlet written in Hebrew, which they placed in the constable's hands. They left again and returned a third time—now with an English translation of their pamphlet, which they promptly gave

the constable. In a final insulting touch, the insurgents ordered the constable a brandy.¹ It was a bold, calculated, and wryly humorous move. It also displayed the utter lack of fear that the Jewish resistance movements felt for the British police force in Palestine by 1946. After twenty-six years of policing Palestine, the British were beginning to lose their hold on this politically, ethnically, and religiously fractured country.

Historical Background

The decline of the security situation within Palestine did not begin in 1946. In fact, the British security forces in the country contended with numerous disturbances throughout the thirty years of the Mandate. The British Mandate for Palestine was a crucial period in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict, as what had once been a relatively insignificant Ottoman province became a bitterly contested country in which both Jewish and Arab populations sought to gain control. Throughout the Mandatory period, the British civilian administration oversaw a complete transformation of Palestinian society, as an influx of Jewish immigrants began to threaten the position of Palestine's Arab-majority population. It was this transformation that served as a catalyst for a series of disturbances which would eventually force the British to reexamine their policies in Palestine.

While the 1920s were relatively peaceful, by the end of the decade, many Palestinian Arabs had grown fearful over the growth of the Jewish community, also known as the *Yishuv*, within Palestine. In 1929, these fears exploded into riots across Palestine, requiring the intervention of the British army to restore order. During the 1930s, Arab fears increased as more Jews began to arrive from Europe, driven by the rise

¹Haganah Archives, 115-99, "Report of 252 F.S. Section for the Period Ending 12 Feb 46," 12 February, 1946, 2.

of Adolf Hitler in Germany. In 1936, the Arab community rose in a revolt, attacking Jewish settlements and ambushing British convoys in Palestine. The Arab Revolt lasted for three years and proved to be a major problem for the British Government, which was focused on the expected war with Germany. In a bid to shore up Arab support for the coming war effort, the British Government issued a new policy in the White Paper of 1939, which stated that Jewish immigration into Palestine would be severely restricted and Palestine would be granted independence in five years. The White Paper of 1939 failed to gain Arab support for the war, and the *Yishuv* was incensed. After the publication of the White Paper, two Jewish militias, the *Irgun Zvai Leumi* and the Stern Gang, began separate insurrections with the purpose of throwing the British out of Palestine. When at the end of the war the British failed to reverse the immigration restrictions, the Haganah, the third major organization within the Jewish underground, joined the Irgun and Stern Gang in an insurgency that left Palestine in chaos.

Historiography

There is a significant amount of published scholarship on the Mandate. However, the majority of existing research examines the Mandate through the wider context of the Arab-Israeli conflict, particularly in the Mandate's relevance to the formation of the State of Israel, the 1948 War of Independence, and the flight of the Palestinian population in the midst of that war.² Scholarship has also emerged on the British Government's policies

² There are a number of works by Israeli and Arab scholars that examine the Mandatory period in this light. See, for example, Simha Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1979); Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006); Walid Khalidi, *From Haven to Conquest: Readings in Zionism and the Palestine Problem Until 1948* (Washington D.C.: The Institute for Palestine Studies, 1987); Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-2001* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001); M. Mossek, *Palestine Immigration Policy Under Sir Herbert Samuel: British, Zionist and Arab Attitudes* (London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1978); Ilan Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land*,

for Palestine, with scholars coming to the consensus that Britain never fully established what to do with Palestine, instead vacillating between supporting the Zionist and Arab interests depending on the circumstances at the time.³ Despite this wealth of literature on the Mandate, one topic which scholars have not addressed in depth is the perspective of the British personnel serving on the ground within Palestine. Historian Nicholas Roberts acknowledged this gap in a 2011 article, when he wrote:

There has been much less scholarly attention paid to the British regime over the past couple of decades than there was in the past . . . But, the dearth of recent accounts on the British administration has meant that British rule has not undergone the same sort of reappraisal that the history of Zionist settlement and Palestinian nationalism has gone through.⁴

Despite Roberts' appraisal of the situation, some attempts have been made to rectify this gap, with scholars considering the British experience in Palestine as part of a wider narrative of the Mandatory period. The most notable of these works is *One Palestine, Complete*, by Israeli journalist Tom Segev, who argues that during the Mandate the British actively supported the creation of a Jewish state.⁵ While Segev's work is the most prominent, two other authors offer a contrasting analysis of the

Two Peoples (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Ilan Pappé, *The Rise and Fall of a Palestinian Dynasty: The Husaynis, 1700-1948* (London: Saqi Books, 2010).

³ There is a tremendous amount of scholarship available on British policy for Palestine. What follows is only a brief list to give the reader a scope of the material available. Nicholas Bethell, *The Palestine Triangle: The Struggle for the Holy Land, 1935-1948* (New York, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1979); Albert M. Hyamson, *Palestine Under the Mandate: 1920-1948* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1976); Abigail Jacobson, *From Empire to Empire: Jerusalem Between Ottoman and British Rule* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2011); Martin Kolinsky, *Britain's War in the Middle East: Strategy and Diplomacy, 1936-1942* (New York: Palgrave, 1999); Ronald Sanders, *The High Walls of Jerusalem: A History of the Balfour Declaration and the Birth of the British Mandate for Palestine* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1983); Jonathan Schneer, *The Balfour Declaration: The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (New York: Random House, 2010).

⁴Nicholas E. Roberts, "Re-Remembering the Mandate: Historiographical Debates and Revisionist History in the Study of British Palestine," *History Compass* 9, no. 3 (March 2011): 223.

⁵Tom Segev, *One Palestine, Complete: Jews and Arabs Under the Mandate* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2000), 5.

situation. In *Mandate Days: British Lives in Palestine, 1918-1948*, A. J. Sherman paints a picture of British personnel caught between the divergent political aims of the Arab and Jewish communities.⁶ In the midst of this conflict, British personnel grew increasingly frustrated with government policy, which was seen as shifting and counter-productive.⁷ In Sherman's view, the ultimate failure of the British was that they could not decide between supporting the Arabs or Jews in their competing campaigns for an independent state.⁸ Naomi Shepherd's *Ploughing Sand: British Rule in Palestine 1917-1948* offers a similar argument. Shepherd contends that the British originally conceived Palestine as an autonomous possession that would serve as a link to British colonial possessions in the East.⁹ In Shepherd's view, this dream was never realized because the British failed to fully understand the problems in Palestine. Instead, they believed they were capable of bridging the differences between Jews and Arabs by creating a modern state in Palestine.¹⁰

One topic that has received scant coverage in all three of these works is the issue of Britain's security efforts in Palestine. The British security forces in Palestine have been largely ignored by scholars, who have been more interested in the perspectives of Arab or Jewish insurgents during the Mandate era.¹¹ The first major examination of

⁶A. J. Sherman, *Mandate Days: British Lives in Palestine, 1918-1948* (New York, N.Y.: Thames and Hudson, 1998), 13.

⁷*Ibid.*, 30.

⁸*Ibid.*, 244.

⁹Naomi Shepherd, *Ploughing Sand: British Rule in Palestine, 1917-1948* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 19.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 54.

¹¹ There are several important works that discuss the formation and actions of the Irgun and the Stern Gang. For example, see J. Bowyer Bell, *Terror Out of Zion: The Fight for Israeli Independence* (New

Britain's security forces serving in Palestine was David Charters' 1989 work *The British Army and Jewish Insurgency in Palestine: 1945-1947*. Charters provides a thorough analysis of the British army's efforts to defeat the Jewish insurgency at the end of the Second World War. His work focuses on the efforts of the British army, arguing that the "British army—with few exceptions—did not adapt effectively to the operational situation in Palestine."¹² While Charters' work can be viewed as the definitive study on British security in the late 1940s, there are several notable omissions. The scope of the study is limited to the period between 1945 and 1947 and offers no discussion of the British response to the earlier Arab Revolt of 1936 or Jewish terrorism during the Second World War. Secondly, Charters himself acknowledges that he had no access to British intelligence files from the time, relying instead on memoirs and army situational reports to provide the primary source material that addresses British actions against Jewish resistance. Because of this paucity of source material, he could not address what the British knew of their opponents in the Jewish underground.¹³ Finally, Charters' focus on the actions of the British Army means that the Palestine Police Force, a crucial component in the Palestinian security forces, is all but ignored in this counterinsurgency study.

There are two later works which seek to fill the gap left by Charters. The first is Edward Horne's *A Job Well Done: Being a History of the Palestine Police Force, 1920-*

Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2009); Saul Zadka, *Blood in Zion: How the Jewish Guerillas Drove the British Out of Palestine* (Washington D.C.: Brassey's, 1995); For the Arab Revolt see, Yehoshua Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement, Volume 2: From Riots to Rebellion, 1929-1939* (London: Frank Cass

¹²David A Charters, *The British Army and Jewish insurgency in Palestine, 1945-47* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 170.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 91.

1948. Horne's work was the first history of the Palestine Police Force and provided significant information on the development of the force. While the book is thorough, Horne's biases naturally creep in, and the reader is left with a glowing assessment of the Palestine Police Force's activities during the Mandate, with little critical analysis of the force.¹⁴ Eldad Harouvi's forthcoming book, *Palestine Investigated: The Story of the Palestine C.I.D., 1920-1948*, offers a more critical assessment of the Criminal Investigations Department (CID), which served as the intelligence gathering apparatus of the Palestinian police. Harouvi argues that despite having relatively few sources within the Arab and Jewish communities, the CID developed an effective intelligence network in Palestine. Despite this fact, the civilian administration only realized the importance of the CID in 1947, too late to have any noticeable impact on the situation in Palestine.¹⁵ While Harouvi's research is an important contribution to the discussion of security in Palestine, it is currently available only in Hebrew. Additionally, Harouvi's research is more accurately viewed as a history of CID and does little to examine the cooperation between the Palestine Police Force and the British Army.

Early Developments in British Security Doctrine

This thesis argues that British security policy in Palestine was based on a framework which stressed that the Palestine Police Force would play the primary role in suppressing disturbances. This strategy emphasized that resources be directed to neutralizing active threats, and, as a consequence, little attention was paid to emerging

¹⁴ Edward Horne, *A Job Well Done: Being a History of the Palestine Police Force, 1920-1948* (Sussex, UK: The Book Guild, Ltd., 2003), 580.

¹⁵ Eldad Harouvi, *Palestine Investigated: The Story of the Palestine C.I.D., 1920-1948* (Jerusalem: Keterpress Enterprises, forthcoming), 12.

threats. This study will demonstrate that this strategy was reactive in nature rather than proactive and could easily fail if a threat emerged which exceeded the capabilities of the police to control. However, before examining this claim, it is necessary to establish a theoretical framework with which to measure the success or failure of British security efforts in Palestine.

There is a consensus among scholars of British counterinsurgency that, before 1947, the British army did not possess any official counterinsurgency doctrine except for a reliance on overwhelming force in order to suppress any colonial disturbances. Nevertheless, after the First World War, there was an effort by some British soldiers and policemen to develop an unofficial doctrine for suppressing rebellions in Britain's colonial holdings based on earlier experiences in colonial counterinsurgency operations.¹⁶ While these efforts were in their infancy when the British took control of Palestine, a basic framework for colonial security forces did exist by 1920.

The central point in British colonial security strategy was that the ultimate responsibility for maintaining law and order fell to the local colonial police force. This practice had developed out of the British experience in Ireland, where the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) had proven effective in countering the Irish underground. Unlike conventional police forces, the constables of the RIC had received military training and operated under similar conditions as conventional forces, housed in barracks and running contact patrols throughout the country. While the primary focus of the RIC was to suppress any political disturbances, by the twentieth century, the members of the force

¹⁶ David French, *The British Way in Counter-Insurgency, 1945-1967* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 2; Victoria Nolan, *Military Leadership and Counterinsurgency: The British Army and Small War Strategy since World War II* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 60; Tim Jones, *Postwar Counterinsurgency and the SAS, 1945-1952: A Special Type of Warfare* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 5.

had begun to take on traditional police duties in addition to their role as a security force.¹⁷ The success of the RIC in Ireland led many colonial planners to view the concept of a militarized colonial police force as sound, and the RIC became the model for British colonial police forces throughout the world, including in Palestine.¹⁸ With colonial holdings across the globe by the 1920s, Great Britain did not possess the economic resources to maintain a military presence in all of her colonies. Instead, the responsibility for security was left to the colonial police, now reorganized along the lines of the RIC. It was believed that this arrangement would prove adequate for most contingencies, removing the need for a large number of army garrisons.

That the colonial police were to take the primary responsibility for suppressing any local disturbances is made evident in several key pamphlets and manuals from the time. The 1907 *Manual of Military Law* stressed that it was the civil authorities rather than the army that would hold the power to decide on the appropriate response to any disturbances that arose. “The primary duty of preserving public order rests with the civil power. An officer, therefore, in all cases where it is practicable, should place himself under the orders of a magistrate.”¹⁹ Additionally, it is stated that soldiers involved in the suppression of a disturbance, “in no respect differ, in the view of the law, from armed citizens.”²⁰ This statement was particularly important in that it implied that the local police force was the only organization with the legal authority to respond to any

¹⁷ Tom Bowden, *The Breakdown of Public Security: The Case of Ireland, 1916-1921, and Palestine, 1936-1939* (Beverly Hills: SAGE Publications, 1977), 26-28; Charles Townshend, “In Aid of the Civil Power: Britain, Ireland and Palestine 1916-1948,” in *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare*, edited by Daniel Marston and Carter Malkasian (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2008), 22-23.

¹⁸ Charles Jeffries, *The Colonial Police* (London: Max Parrish, 1952), 30-32.

¹⁹ War Office, *Manual of Military Law* (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1907), 219.

²⁰ Ibid.

disturbances. Writing in 1934, Sir Charles Gwynn supported this interpretation in his book *Imperial Policing*. Gwynn stressed that the role of the army in a colonial setting was to act in support of local police forces in all security matters, including intelligence. “In all internal trouble the basis of the intelligence system must depend on police information.”²¹ While he allowed for the army taking over security responsibilities in the event martial law was declared, until that occurred, it was the duty of the police and civilian authorities to determine the appropriate response to any local disturbance.²²

Having established the centrality of the colonial police in any security operations, it is necessary to examine the goal of security operations. The security literature at the time was quite clear about this. Security operations were to be conducted in response to an outbreak of violence, and force was to be employed to bring an end to that violence.

The 1907 *Manual of Military Law* addressed this, reading in part:

The law which commands the suppression of unlawful assemblies, riots, and insurrections necessarily justifies the civil power in using the necessary degree of force for their suppression . . . The existence of an armed insurrection would justify the use of any degree of force necessary effectually to meet and cope with the insurrection.²³

This issue was also discussed in a War Office pamphlet, *Duties in Aid of the Civil Power*, first issued in 1912, but updated in 1923. “His aim is not the annihilation of the enemy, but merely the suppression of a temporary disorder, and therefore the degree of force to be employed must be sufficient, but not more than sufficient, to restore order.”²⁴ Gwynn also addressed the goal of security operations, writing, “Stern measures may be required

²¹Charles Gwynn, *Imperial Policing* (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1934), 21.

²²*Ibid.*, 16-17.

²³War Office, *Manual of Military Law* (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1907), 218-219.

²⁴War Office, *Duties in Aid of the Civil Power* (1929); quoted in Nolan, *Military Leadership and Counterinsurgency*, 62.

to restore order and protect life and property, but as a rule violence is due to a small minority and the mere display of adequate force and discipline will bring the more law-abiding elements, who are merely excited, to their senses.”²⁵

As all three of the aforementioned manuals illustrate, colonial forces in the 1920s and 1930s were given a limited mandate, the suppression of violence. This concept is particularly important because of its focus on a short-term solution to disturbances. While this focus often led to the immediate end of violence, as a consequence, there was little emphasis on the anticipation of new potential sources for unrest. In *Imperial Policing*, Gwynn went so far as to write, “Non-violent revolutionary movements which aim, by other methods, at making the machinery of Government unworkable concern the Army little so long as they retain their non-violent character.”²⁶ As Gwynn’s statement shows, security forces were not to spend resources anticipating future disturbances, but rather to focus their efforts on the immediate sources of unrest. This focus on the active threats to peace became common practice throughout colonial security forces, in part due to the fact that both *Imperial Policing* and *Duties in Aid of the Civil Power* were widely read by British soldiers and policemen serving throughout the Empire, including in Palestine.²⁷

A final point that must be examined in this framework for security was the importance of the native population in providing support to colonial security forces. Britain relied on a policy of indirect rule for controlling her colonies, in which the local population was encouraged to participate in the civilian administration, including in the

²⁵Gwynn, *Imperial Policing*, 13.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

²⁷ Charters, *The British Army and Jewish Insurgency in Palestine*, 136; Dare Wilson, *With 6th Airborne Division in Palestine, 1945-1948* (South Yorkshire, UK: Pen and Sword, 2008), 39.

local police forces. Sir Frederick Lugard, the former Governor of both Hong Kong and Nigeria, explained this strategy in his 1922 book, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, writing, “The essential feature of this system . . . is that the native chiefs are constituted ‘as an integral part of the machinery of the administration.’”²⁸ Lugard’s dual mandate approach to governing colonies had wide support within the British colonial system, and throughout British holdings in India, Africa, and the Middle East, there was a heavy reliance on native policemen to fill the complement of local police forces.²⁹ In addition to relying on native policemen, the local population was seen as a critical source of intelligence. Charles Gwynn stressed this in *Imperial Policing*, writing, “The extent to which the intelligence service can obtain information depends greatly on the attitude adopted towards the loyal and neutral population.”³⁰ As this evidence shows, cooperation with the local population was a key element in Britain’s colonial security policy.

In examining the early developments in colonial security doctrine for the British Empire, a framework for colonial security forces emerges in which the colonial police forces were to be the premiere security forces throughout the British Empire. While certain situations might arise which would compel the intervention of the British army, this was only a temporary solution, and responsibility for security would return to the hands of the colonial police when the situation allowed. In this strategy, the support of the native population was of utmost importance, as they would provide the bulk of the police force, as well as prove a critical ally in the event of a major disturbance.

²⁸Frederick Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1922), 203.

²⁹William Roger Louis and Robert W Stookey, *The End of the Palestine Mandate* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 45, 976-977; Jeffries, *The Colonial Police*, 33.

³⁰Gwynn, *Imperial Policing*, 23.

Thesis

With this theoretical model for British colonial security forces in mind, this study will examine how it was applied to Palestine during the British Mandate, specifically between the years 1920 and 1947. This thesis will demonstrate that the Palestine Police Force (PPF) was originally created to follow this model for colonial security, but political developments—in particular the growth of the *Yishuv* within Palestine and, as a consequence, the growth of conflict between the *Yishuv* and the Arab population—led to several major disturbances that exceeded the capability of the PPF to control.

This thesis contends that British security strategy for Palestine possessed two key weaknesses that rendered the security forces unable to effectively counter the growing turmoil in Palestine. The first of these weaknesses was an emphasis on countering the most immediate threat to stability, which brought short-term success but ultimately left the British unprepared for suppressing a growing insurgency. The second weakness to Britain's counterinsurgency efforts was an overreliance on the Arab and Jewish populations to provide intelligence. This proved to be a severe hindrance to security operations in the late 1940s when British policy alienated a key ally, the Haganah, and British security forces were left to their own devices to counter a united Jewish underground.

The first chapter of this study will focus on the creation of the Palestine Police Force, as well as the early development of the force up to 1939 and the end of the Arab Revolt. This chapter argues that throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the growth of the *Yishuv* far exceeded the expectations of the British administration in Palestine as set forth in the Balfour Declaration. This development led to major outbreaks of violence among

the Arab community that tested the capabilities of the PPF. Additionally, this chapter argues that the 1930s in particular was a decade of critical importance, in which the intelligence apparatus of the CID was developed into an effective force and the importance of Jewish cooperation in suppressing violence was established.

Jewish terrorism during the Second World War is the focus of the second and third body chapters. The White Paper of 1939 was viewed by many in the *Yishuv* as a betrayal of earlier British promises, and, as a consequence, both the Stern Gang and the Irgun began separate terrorist campaigns to force the British to change their policy or withdraw from Palestine. The second chapter will demonstrate that the development of CID's intelligence-gathering capabilities allowed the PPF to quickly realign in order to counter the emerging threat of Jewish terrorism, which led to the neutralization of the Stern Gang in 1942. The third chapter will examine the Irgun's "Revolt," led by Menachem Begin, as well as the intervention of the Haganah to counter the Irgun in a period known as the "Saison." This chapter will argue that the intervention of the Haganah revealed several key weaknesses within the PPF that ultimately proved decisive at the end of the Mandate.

The final body chapter will examine the last two years of the Mandate, when the Jewish underground united into one movement and began a new insurgency to drive the British from Palestine. This chapter argues that British policy reversals had now alienated the Jewish Agency and the Haganah, which had played a crucial role in quelling earlier disturbances. With no ally within the general population, the British lost their sources of intelligence, and consequently were unable to develop an effective response to continued Jewish violence, despite deploying two divisions of the British Army to Palestine. The

period of 1945 to 1947 is extremely important in that it illustrates the breakdown of security within Palestine. As key pillars of British security strategy failed, the situation spun further out of control until the security forces were proven to be ineffective in suppressing the Jewish underground.

Finally, the conclusion will accomplish three goals. First, it will review the significant discoveries from each chapter, placing them into the context of the later history of Palestine and the end of the British Empire. Second, the impact of the Palestine experience on later colonial security operations will be discussed. Palestine marked a turning point in the development of British counterinsurgency, and the lessons learned in Palestine were applied to later conflicts, such as the British counterinsurgency campaign in Malaya. Third, the conclusion will address the implications of this research and areas in which this research can be expanded upon in a later project. While it is beyond the scope of this study to examine the illegal immigration operations of the Haganah after 1945 or the interaction between the security forces and the civilian administration in Palestine, these are two avenues of research that would prove especially relevant to this project and could fill further gaps in the existing literature.

CHAPTER TWO

Learning to Police: The Development of the Palestine Police Force, 1920-1939

On December 11, 1917, General Sir Edmund Allenby, commander of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, entered the Old City of Jerusalem on foot, accompanied by his staff.¹ Upon arriving at the Citadel, Allenby read a proclamation declaring Jerusalem under martial law “so long as military considerations make necessary.”² Allenby went on to state that the British would maintain the status quo with regard to the holy sites in Jerusalem, saying, “that every sacred building, monument, holy spot, shrine, traditional site, endowment, pious bequest, or customary place of prayer of whatsoever form of the three religions will be maintained and protected according to the existing customs and beliefs of those to whose faith they are sacred.”³ With this act, the city of Jerusalem, and later all of Palestine, came under the control of Great Britain. Despite Allenby’s assurances, the status quo would not remain long in Palestine. Britain’s declared support of the creation of a Jewish national home within Palestine brought with it the implication that the Jewish population would gradually overtake the Arab population. It was this change in the demographics, economy, and even the structure of Palestinian society itself that was at the root of the disturbances that would arise in the late 1930s and throughout the 1940s, as first the Arab community and then the Jewish

¹ David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East* (New York: H. Holt, 2001), 312; Ronald Sanders, *The High Walls of Jerusalem: A History of the Balfour Declaration and the Birth of the British Mandate for Palestine* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1984), 625.

² *Source Records of the Great War* (New York: National Alumni, 1923), 417.

³ *Ibid.*

community (*Yishuv*) waged separate insurgencies aimed at changing British policy or removing the British from Palestine. It was left to the British security forces serving in Palestine, in particular the Palestine Police Force, to put down any disturbances that arose.

The first two decades of the British Mandate for Palestine set the clock ticking on the time bomb that the British had inadvertently created with the Balfour Declaration. During this time, the British security forces developed the tactics that would become security doctrine for Palestine—the preeminence of police in maintaining security and the reliance on members of the Arab and Jewish communities to support the suppression of any disturbances that arose. It was the experience of the Palestine Police Force in countering the 1929 Riots and the Arab Revolt of 1936-1939 that led to the creation of a Palestinian strategy for security, and this same model would be relied on in countering later Jewish disturbances in the 1940s, disturbances that would prove a more serious challenge to British authority.

The Balfour Declaration

On November 2, 1917, a letter was sent from Lord Arthur Balfour to Lord Walter Rothschild, a prominent Jewish supporter of Zionism.⁴ Balfour's letter, which was published in the British press a week later, established British policy regarding Palestine, declaring, "His Majesty's Government views with favour the establishment of a national homeland for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities within

⁴ Jonathan Schneer, *The Balfour Declaration: The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (New York: Random House, 2010), 342.

Palestine . . .”⁵ The Balfour Declaration marked the culmination of the efforts of leading European Zionists, most notably Chaim Weizmann and Vladimir “Ze’ev” Jabotinsky, in lobbying the British Government to support a Jewish home in Palestine in exchange for support for the British war effort.⁶ With the Balfour Declaration, the British Government committed to the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. This was the interpretation of Sir Winston Churchill, who declared in a speech in the House of Commons that the promise of the Balfour Declarations “was the position, and such were our obligations when the War came to an end.”⁷ Going forward, the Balfour Declaration would be a significant factor in any British decision related to Palestine.

While the Balfour Declaration did not specify what would constitute a Jewish homeland within Palestine, it was clear that both the Zionist leaders and the British officials responsible for Palestine viewed the implementation of the policy as requiring a substantial influx of Jewish immigrants into the country. In a letter to C.P. Scott, editor of the Manchester *Guardian*, Weizmann advocated significant immigration, writing, “Should Britain encourage Jewish settlement [in Palestine], as a British dependency, we could have in twenty to thirty years a million Jews out there.”⁸ British politicians were not as explicit in their interpretations of the Balfour Declaration; nevertheless, their sympathies were with the establishment of a Jewish home in Palestine. Sir Herbert Samuel, the first ever Jewish member of the British cabinet and later the first High

⁵ Walter Laqueur and Barry M Rubin, *The Israel-Arab Reader : A Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008), 16.

⁶ Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace*, 92.

⁷ Winston Churchill and Robert Rhodes James, *Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches, 1897-1963.*, vol. 3 (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1974), 3095.

⁸ Chaim Weizmann, *Trial and Error; the Autobiography of Chaim Weizmann*. (New York: Harper, 1949), 149.

Commissioner for Palestine, wrote a memorandum on the subject in 1915. In it, Samuel proposed that, “Jewish immigration, carefully regulated, would be given preference, so that in the course of time the Jewish inhabitants, grown into a majority and settled in the land, may be conceded such degree of self-government as the conditions of that day might justify.”⁹ Samuel was a strong supporter of Zionism and had been a chief advocate for the Zionist cause throughout the war.¹⁰ Samuel’s views on Jewish immigration are particularly relevant, as he was specifically selected by British Prime Minister Herbert Asquith to serve as the first High Commissioner for Palestine. In Asquith’s words, “It is essential to have someone who is interested in making the policy a success.”¹¹

Britain’s support for a Jewish home in Palestine brought with it a serious implication— specifically, a major demographic change within Palestine. In 1918, the population of Palestine was predominantly Arab. Of the 800,000 people living in Palestine, there were 650,000 Muslim Arabs, with another 80,000 Christian Arabs.¹² The Jewish population of Palestine was around 60,000 people, a little over seven percent of the population.¹³ In spite of these numbers, British politicians did not fully consider the ramifications of supporting a major change in the demographics of Palestine that would accompany Jewish immigration. Throughout the discussion over the Balfour Declaration, the leading politicians assumed that the Arabs would come to accept a Jewish state within

⁹ M. Mossek, *Palestine Immigration Policy Under Sir Herbert Samuel: British, Zionist and Arab Attitudes* (London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1978), 2.

¹⁰ Herbert Louis Samuel, *Memoirs* (London: Cresset Press, 1945), 142.

¹¹ Mossek, *Palestine Immigration Policy Under Sir Herbert Samuel*, 3.

¹² Ilan Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine : One Land, Two Peoples* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 73.

¹³ J. C Hurewitz, *The Struggle for Palestine* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1950), 27.

Palestine. In a February, 1917 conference on the Balfour Declaration, Sir Mark Sykes, Chief Secretary for the War Cabinet, said that he thought the Arabs would eventually accept Zionism, “particularly if they received Jewish support in other matters.”¹⁴ At this same meeting, Sykes acknowledged the growth of a nationalist movement within the Arab world, but suggested it would be “a generation” before this movement would coalesce. This assumption was critical in that it would inform how the British set about implementing the Balfour Declaration in Palestine.

The Dual Mandate

The practical implementation of the Balfour Declaration began on July 1, 1920, when Herbert Samuel took charge of the civilian administration of Palestine. In keeping with British imperial policy at the time, the British left the management of Arab and Jewish affairs to the respective communities, while the British maintained control of the central government. Sir Frederick Lugard, the former Governor of both Hong Kong and Nigeria, explained this strategy in his 1922 book, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, writing, “The essential feature of this system . . . is that the native chiefs are constituted ‘as an integral part of the machinery of the administration.’”¹⁵ The policy of indirect rule was maintained in India in the 1930s, as well as throughout British held Egypt and Iraq. This policy was also enacted within Palestine, although the commitment to the Balfour Declaration limited the role of Arab and Jewish leadership in legislative matters. Nevertheless, local Arabs and Jews would make up almost ninety percent of the

¹⁴ Weizmann, *Trial and Error; The Autobiography of Chaim Weizmann.*, 189.

¹⁵ Frederick Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1922), 203.

administration's workforce.¹⁶ The impact of this policy was most apparent in the security forces serving in Palestine.

Early Police Organization

Throughout the British Mandate for Palestine, the Palestine Police Force (PPF) was ultimately responsible for security. Created in July 1920, the PPF was formed from the police force set up under Occupied Enemy Territories Administration (OETA), the military government that had administered Palestine from 1917 until 1920. In keeping with the policy of relying on the local population to provide the majority of the bureaucracy, the force consisted primarily of Palestinian natives under British supervision. Eighteen British and fifty-five Palestinian officers were responsible for the 1,144 Arab and Jewish constables of the force.¹⁷ The original duties of the force were similar to those of a regular police force, including traffic control, criminal investigations, and supporting administration officials in their duties.¹⁸ Jurisdictionally, Palestine was divided into three districts. The first was the Jerusalem Police District. Central police headquarters was located in Jerusalem, near the civilian administrative buildings. For the remaining two districts, a border was drawn running from Tel Aviv to the Jordan River, which split the country into Northern and Southern Districts. The police force was deployed across Palestine, stationed at twenty-four separate police stations located in major cities and towns, and sixty-five smaller police posts, located in more rural villages.

¹⁶ Tom Segev, *One Palestine, Complete : Jews and Arabs Under the Mandate* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2000), 166; William Roger Louis and Robert W Stookey, *The End of the Palestine Mandate* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 976–977.

¹⁷ E. Porter Horne, *A Job Well Done: Being a history of the Palestine Police Force 1920-1948* (Lewes, East Sussex: Book Guild, 2003), 35.

¹⁸ Harry Luke and Edward Keith-Roach, *The Handbook of Palestine*, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1922); quoted in Horne, *A job well done*, 37.

The smaller police posts allowed the maintenance of a limited police presence and were staffed by a non-commissioned officer and four to six constables.¹⁹

While the majority of the Palestine Police Force personnel were regular constables, responsible for day to day police work, there were other sections of the police with more specialized roles. From the beginning of the force, approximately one-third of the Palestinian constables were organized into the Mounted Section. The Mounted Section was responsible for maintaining patrols in the more rural areas of Palestine while also patrolling the frontiers to interdict drug smugglers, who were a major problem throughout the 1920s. Additionally, the entire police force was supported by two gendarmeries, one made up entirely of native Palestinians and the other consisting of British volunteers.

The impetus for the creation of the gendarmerie forces was the outbreak of riots in 1920 and 1921. In April of 1920, during the Nebi Musa (Prophet Moses) Festival in Jerusalem, violence continued for three days after an Arab mob attacked shops in the Jewish Quarter in the Old City. The British Army was finally able to restore order after martial law was declared throughout the city. Five Jews and four Arabs were killed, with another 216 Jews and twenty-three Arabs wounded. In May, 1921 another round of fierce rioting broke out, this time in Jaffa. The riots in Jaffa began as a disturbance between two rival Jewish socialist groups, *Ahdut ha-Avodah* (Unity of Labor) and *Mifletet Poalim Sozialistit* (Socialist Workers Party, or M.P.S.).²⁰ During the rival demonstrations, violence broke out and the police deployed to restore order. In the midst of this

¹⁹ Horne, *A Job Well Done*, 37-38.

²⁰ Musa Budeiri, *The Palestine Communist Party, 1919-1948: Arab & Jew in the Struggle for Internationalism* (London: Ithaca Press, 1979), 4.

disturbance, a mob of Arabs began to attack Jewish buildings in the Manshiya district, killing a number of Jews in the process.²¹ At the same time, an Arab mob, including several Arab policemen, attacked the Jaffa Immigrants' Hostel, killing thirteen and leaving twenty-six people wounded.²² After a week of further violence across Palestine, the situation was finally brought under control after two British destroyers, some 300 British soldiers, and aircraft from the RAF were deployed to quell the rioting.²³ In total, forty-seven Jews and forty-eight Arabs were killed, with another 146 Jews and seventy-three Arabs wounded.²⁴

The inability of the British security forces to quell the violence without the assistance of the British army revealed the relative weakness of the Palestine Police Force. The Haycraft Commission, set up to investigate the violence in Jaffa, determined that the underlying cause of the rioting was growing Arab resentment towards Zionism, although it was the “Bolshevik” disturbance which had provided the initial spark. In a summary of the report's findings, the commission wrote, “The fundamental cause of the Jaffa riots and the subsequent acts of violence was a feeling among the Arabs of discontent with, and hostility to, the Jews, due to political and economic causes, and connected with Jewish immigration, and with their conception of Zionist policy as

²¹ Segev, *One Palestine, Complete*, 176; Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-1999* (New York: Knopf, 1999), 101; Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace*, 515.

²² Yehoshua Porath, *In Search of Arab Unity, 1930-1945* (London, England; Totowa, N.J.: Cass, 1986), 60.

²³ *Palestine. Disturbances in May 1921: Reports of the Commission of Inquiry with Correspondence Relating Thereto*. Cmnd. 1540 (London: HMSO, 1921), 28-35; Segev, *One Palestine, Complete*, 183.

²⁴ Christopher Sykes, *Crossroads to Israel*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), 70.

derived from Jewish exponents.’²⁵ Furthermore, the commission noted that the police who responded to the mobs were woefully unprepared to handle such a situation, with almost no training or experience in riot control. Additionally, it was revealed that many policemen, both Arab and Jewish, did not remain impartial during the riots, choosing to side with their countrymen.²⁶ While the problem of a policeman’s loyalty to his community would continue to plague the police throughout the Mandatory period, the decision was made, at the behest of Winston Churchill, to strengthen the regular police by the addition of two gendarmeries to the PPF.²⁷ The first, the Palestinian Gendarmerie, was comprised of 500 native Palestinians. In addition to approximately 375 Arab gendarmes, the force included some sixty-two Jews, and another sixty Circassians, and Druze.²⁸ The Palestinian Gendarmerie included two mounted sections and two infantry companies, and was assigned to bolster the frontier defenses, freeing constables for regular policing duties.

In order to support the policemen working in the urban areas, a second gendarmerie was created in 1922, consisting solely of British volunteers. Following the partition of Ireland and the creation of the Irish Free State in 1920, many former members of the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC), including some 150 former members of the Black and Tans, were recruited to form the core of this new British Gendarmerie.²⁹ One of these

²⁵ *Palestine. Disturbances in May 1921*, 59.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 49; Horne, *A Job Well Done*, 45.

²⁷ Horne, *A Job Well Done*, 65-67.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 69.

²⁹ David Cesarani, *Major Farran’s Hat : The Untold Story of the Struggle to Establish the Jewish State* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2009), 180; Charles Joseph Jeffries, *The Colonial Police*. (London: M. Parrish, 1952), 153; Edward Keith-Roach, *Pasha of Jerusalem : Memoirs of a District Commissioner*

men who went on to serve in Palestine was Douglas Valder Duff, who arrived in Palestine in April of 1922 with a contingent of 650 British gendarmes. A veteran of the RIC and the First World War, Duff noted that the majority of his comrades in Palestine had similar backgrounds to his own, writing, “Ninety-five percent of our rankers had held His Majesty’s Commission in the First War (which ended only three and a half years earlier) and nearly all had served in the different formations of the Royal Irish Constabulary.”³⁰ The British Gendarmerie was divided into six companies and based in four Arab majority cities, Jerusalem, Nablus, Nazareth, and Sarafand.³¹ By the end of 1922, security in Palestine fell to four organizations: the Arab-majority PPF, two gendarmeries, one British and the other Palestinian, and the 5,000-strong British garrison that remained in Palestine awaiting redeployment home.³²

The addition of a militarized gendarmerie to a regular police force offers a revelation into the British understanding of imperial policing, as well as the security strategy for Palestine. In the early 1920s, there was no established British doctrine for imperial policing or counter-insurgency. What little informal doctrine existed stressed that any and all security duties in the Empire would fall to the local colonial police forces. The colonial police forces at the time were modeled after earlier forces that had proven effective, and by the 1920s had developed a militarized component.³³ As a 1923

Under the British Mandate (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994), 88; Eldad Harouvi, *Palestine Investigate: The Story of the Palestine CID* (N.A., n.d.), 2–6.

³⁰ Douglas V Duff, *Bailing with a Teaspoon*. (London: J. Long, 1953), 19.

³¹ Horne, *A Job Well Done*, 85.

³² Martin Kolinsky, *Law, Order, and Riots in Mandatory Palestine, 1928-35* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993), 24.

³³ Charles Jeffries, *The Colonial Police* (London: Max Parrish, 1952), 32.

War Office pamphlet, *Duties in Aid of a Civil Power*, reveals, the goal of a security force in times of disturbance was “merely the suppression of a temporary disorder.”³⁴ This emphasis on suppressing disorder would become the focus for security operations in Palestine whenever disturbances arose. It is important to note that in this security model, there was little attention paid to the impact of colonial policy on the security situation. Rather, security forces were more concerned with maintaining law and order rather than implementing policy.

As the structure of the police force developed, any changes made in disposition were made in relation to the most immediate threat, in this case rioting. The two gendarmeries were added to the police force for expressly this purpose. The Palestinian Gendarmerie, stationed on the frontier, allowed the regular mounted units to begin regular patrols between cities and towns. Made up entirely of army veterans and former Irish gendarmes, the British Gendarmerie was a direct response to the riots of the previous year, and provided the Palestine Police Force with a militarized force that could be called out in case of riots. Furthermore, the experience of the men meant that the British Gendarmerie offered the police the same riot control capabilities of the army garrison units that had been relied on in the past. The riots of the early 1920s had taught the British that regular police units were not enough in the face of serious disturbances. Relying on native forces, primarily Arab, and a contingent of British officers and policemen, the PPF continued to develop capabilities in order to take sole responsibility for security operations within Palestine. This first reorganization of the PPF marked a

³⁴ Victoria Nolan, *Military Leadership and Counterinsurgency: The British Army and Small War Strategy since World War II* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 62.

major milestone in the evolution of security strategy for Palestine, as it solidified the principle that the police would take the lead in any security operations.

The Tranquility of the 1920s

After the early riots within Palestine, tensions between the Arab community and the *Yishuv* eased, and an apparent calm set in which continued until 1928. In the aftermath of the Haycraft Commission's report, several changes were made to improve the situation within Palestine.³⁵ In 1922, Winston Churchill issued a policy paper, known as the White Paper, which clarified that British support for the Balfour Declaration would not come at the expense of Arab interests, but Jewish immigration would continue to increase according to the economic capacity of Palestine to support the new arrivals.³⁶ Additionally, Herbert Samuel instituted the policy of halting immigration in the event of a major disturbance, although these pauses were just that.³⁷ By 1923, the British position in Palestine was officially sanctioned by the League of Nations. Palestine was to be administered under a British-run, civilian government under the authority of the British Mandate for Palestine. Under the terms of the Mandate, Britain maintained control of Palestine for the purpose of setting up an independent state in the former Ottoman territory. The Mandate also stipulated that the British would follow the policy set forth in the Balfour Declaration of establishing a Jewish homeland in Palestine. As the decade wore on, and peace settled over Palestine, the focus of the Mandatory Government began

³⁵ Segev, *One Palestine, Complete*, 187.

³⁶ David A Charters, *The British Army and Jewish Insurgency in Palestine, 1945-47* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 15; Laqueur and Rubin, *The Israel-Arab Reader*, 28.

³⁷ Naomi Shepherd, *Ploughing Sand: British rule in Palestine, 1917-1948* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 60.

to shift away from security concerns to the general administration of the country and the managed implementation of the Balfour Declaration as sanctioned by the Mandate.

At first glance, the absence of major disturbances after 1921 seems puzzling as the Zionist program, which had been the root cause of the 1921 riots, continued in earnest. In the first four years of British rule, 25,000 Jews had immigrated to Palestine.³⁸ After a brief stoppage following the riots, immigration resumed, reaching a peak of 33,801 Jewish immigrants in 1925.³⁹ Furthermore, the Zionist leadership had begun building the political and economic infrastructure needed to support a growing *Yishuv*. The most significant achievement in this time was the development of the city of Tel Aviv, which had been declared independent from Jaffa by Herbert Samuel in 1921.⁴⁰ The city's population had skyrocketed from 3,604 in 1920 to 15,185 by 1922, and eventually grew into the largest Jewish city within Palestine. Additionally, housing within the city had increased some 226 percent.⁴¹ By 1921, the Jews had developed their own political administration, known as the Palestine Zionist Executive (PZE) a precursor to the Jewish Agency. The PZE began to purchase tracts of land for settlement by the new immigrants, although in the first years of the Mandate these efforts were limited due to a lack of funds.⁴² Elsewhere, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem was opened on Mount Scopus in East Jerusalem after a seven-year development. High Commissioner Samuel, Field Marshall Allenby, and Lord Balfour were all present for the opening ceremony on April

³⁸ Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 107.

³⁹ Great Britain. Naval Intelligence Division, *Palestine and Transjordan*. (Oxford, 1943), 181–183.

⁴⁰ Segev, *One Palestine, Complete*, 183.

⁴¹ Abraham Revusky, *Jews in Palestine*, (New York: Vanguard Press, 1945), 95–96.

⁴² Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 107.

1, 1925.⁴³ In the early years of the British Mandate the *Yishuv* was beginning to establish a significant presence within Palestine.

There are two primary reasons for the apparent tranquility of the 1920s. First, while the Zionist movement had sparked a growth in the political activity of the *Yishuv*, there was no similar nationalist movement within the Palestinian Arab community. In the previous two decades, Arab nationalism had begun to emerge in the former Ottoman territories; however, this movement was still in its infancy, and focused more on a Pan-Arab Nationalist vision that emphasized Syria as the center of Arab power.⁴⁴ It was only in the mid-1920s that Arab Nationalism would begin to take a more localized form, as problems in Syria, Iraq, and Palestine came to the fore. However, barring a few political elites, there was still little support for a nationalist movement among the Palestinian Arabs.⁴⁵ It would not be until 1928, that the first stirrings of a Palestinian Nationalist Movement would be felt, and in the early days, this movement was focused more on Zionist encroachment than any real Palestinian Arab identity.⁴⁶ For the time being, the Arab political situation was divided as two families, the Husaynis and Nashashibis were locked in a power struggle for influence among the Palestinian Arabs.⁴⁷ These internal

⁴³ Segev, *One Palestine, Complete*, 218–219.

⁴⁴ Youssef M Choueiri, *Arab Nationalism- A History : Nation and State in the Arab World* (Oxford; Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Pub., 2000), 83; Muhammad Y Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 213.

⁴⁵ Yehoshua Porath, *The Emergence of the Palestinian-Arab National Movement, 1918-1929* (London: Cass, 1974), 306; Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, 214–215; Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage : the Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), 18–19.

⁴⁶ Choueiri, *Arab Nationalism-- a History*, 83.

⁴⁷ Edwin Samuel, *A Lifetime in Jerusalem: The Memoirs of the Second Viscount Samuel*. (London: Vallentine, Mitchell, 1970), 57.

squabbles proved a distraction to the Arab political elites, who were unable to present a unified and effective opposition as the Zionists built their political infrastructure.⁴⁸

A second important factor that led to the calm of the 1920s was a sudden drop in Jewish immigration. After a peak in 1925, an economic downturn would cause many Jews to rethink immigration. In 1926, immigration dropped by fifty percent to 13,081 immigrants, with a further drop in 1927 to 2,713. The next year saw a further decrease when only 2,178 immigrants arrived. Immigration was in such decline that in 1927 more Jews left Palestine (5,071) than arrived.⁴⁹ With immigration stagnant in the latter half of the decade, Arab concerns over the Zionist threat, which had been expressed violently in 1921, were significantly decreased, and many Palestinian Arabs began to hope that the Jewish movement was losing steam.⁵⁰ With little Arab political activity after 1921, many in the British Government hoped that the Arabs would gradually come to accept the Balfour Declaration. Winston Churchill expressed such hopes in his history of the First World War. “In Palestine the interests of the Arab population and the Zionist immigrants appeared to be capable of reconciliation and everything pointed to an early Mandate for Great Britain with the consent of both.”⁵¹

⁴⁸ Porath, *The Emergence of the Palestinian-Arab National Movement, 1918-1929*, 306.

⁴⁹ Great Britain. Naval Intelligence Division, *Palestine and Transjordan.*, 181–183.

⁵⁰ A. J. Sherman, *Mandate Days : British Lives in Palestine, 1918-1948* (New York, N.Y.: Thames and Hudson, 1998), 77; Norman Bentwich, *My 77 Years; an Account of My Life and Times, 1883-1960*. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1961), 83.

⁵¹ Winston Churchill, *The Great War.*, vol. 3 (London: G. Newnes limited, 1933), 1539.

The Threat of Bolshevism

Despite the lack of noticeable tensions between the *Yishuv* and the Palestinian Arab community, the Palestine Police Force was still active throughout the 1920s against what was perceived to be the greatest threat to security within Palestine, Bolshevism. With the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, Great Britain feared a wave of communist uprisings would spread to regions under her control. In a 1919 speech in the House of Commons, Winston Churchill had said, “The British nation is the foe of tyranny in every form . . . Of all tyrannies in history the Bolshevik tyranny is the worst, the most destructive, and the most degrading.”⁵² In Palestine, officials were particularly wary of communist sympathizers amongst both the Jewish and Arab populations, seeing them as a potential threat to law and order. This was especially true after the May Day riots in Jaffa, which had started as a skirmish between rival communist groups.

In its report on the rioting, the Haycraft Commission had made special mention of the potential threat of Bolshevik sympathizers to the peace of Palestine. The report included a four-page summary of the Jewish labour movement, in particular the two groups involved in the May disturbances, *Ahdut ha-Avoda* and M.P.S. *Ahdut ha-Avoda* was described as the largest labour party within the *Yishuv*. More importantly, the commission noted that it was not socialism that was the driving force of the party, but Jewish nationalism. “It is patriotically Jewish, in contrast to the group of extremists known as the M.P.S., who place the pursuit of class warfare above the claims of race or nationality.”⁵³ Haycraft’s distinction between the *Ahdut ha-Avoda*’s nationalism and the class-warfare rhetoric of M.P.S. is crucial in that it reveals a willingness of the British to

⁵² Churchill and James, *Winston S. Churchill*, 3:2771.

⁵³ *Palestine. Disturbances in May, 1921*, 19.

tolerate socialist groups in the *Yishuv* who were driven more by Zionism rather than Marxist philosophy.

M.P.S. itself was given particular prominence in the commission's report as the initial instigator of the trouble. The report stressed that despite the party's minimal following amongst the *Yishuv*, it was capable of fomenting serious disturbances.

We feel that there may have been a tendency to underrate, perhaps on account of their small numbers and the fact that these numbers decreased after November, 1920, the danger to be apprehended from the Bolshevik Jews in Palestine . . . The Bolshevik element in the country produced an effect out of proportion with its numbers . . . It was a circumstance which conferred upon this handful of agitators an importance that cannot be measured by their exiguous intrinsic numbers, or by their failure to capture the Jewish Labour movement in the country.⁵⁴

The Haycraft Commission's focus on the threat of Jewish Bolshevism as a potential flashpoint for further violence is particularly important in that it helped determine the focus of early British intelligence efforts within Palestine. With British security policy focused on maintaining order within Palestine, the fear of Bolshevik disturbances became the primary focus of the fledgling the Criminal Investigations Department.

Criminal Investigations Department

The Criminal Investigations Department (CID) was a staple of colonial police forces throughout the Empire. The department was originally conceived on the model of the CID of the Metropolitan Police, which served as the forensic investigation unit in the modern British police system.⁵⁵ In the colonial model for CID, the department included a Political Activities Section, which was tasked with monitoring political activity in order

⁵⁴ Ibid., 53-54.

⁵⁵ Georgina Sinclair, "Hard-headed, hard-bitten, hard-hitting and courageous men of innate detective ability ..." From *Criminal Investigation to Political and Security Policing at End of Empire*, in *Political Detectives in History, 1750-1950*, edited by Clive Emsley and Haia Shpayer-Makov (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006), 198; Harouvi, *Palestine Investigated*, 1:9-10.

to prevent political disturbances. It was this Political Affairs Section that would develop into the intelligence branch of the Palestine Police Force.

In its early years, the CID was a small, often ignored department of the Palestine Police Force. Throughout the 1920s, CID was under the control of Joseph Broadhurst, a detective from London CID who had served briefly as a commander of Military Police for Allenby's forces during the war.⁵⁶ Broadhurst arrived in Palestine in 1922 to take command of CID and immediately set about organizing his department, adding a fingerprint section, political affairs section, and criminal records archive.⁵⁷ Broadhurst's task was not easy, as, for the first decade of its existence, CID had little influence over security policy within Palestine. This was in part due to the tranquility that had settled over Palestine, and in part due to the minimal importance of CID sections within colonial police forces at the time. As Edward Horne, a former Palestine policeman, wrote, "The Criminal Investigation Departments of Cyprus, Kenya, Malaya, Singapore and Aden all later to be troublesome 'Hell Spots' were equally small and virtually insignificant departments at that time."⁵⁸ This matter was compounded by the fact that there was no direct link between the head of CID and the commander of the police force, and little effort to pass along sensitive information in a timely manner.⁵⁹ Furthermore, until the early 1930s, the CID was based solely in Jerusalem with never more than thirty detectives in the department at one time.⁶⁰ Despite these deficiencies, the Palestinian and

⁵⁶ Horne, *A Job Well Done*, 466; Harouvi, *Palestine Investigated*, 2:1.

⁵⁷ Harouvi, *Palestine Investigated*, 2:7.

⁵⁸ Horne, *A Job Well Done*, 466.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 465.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 469-470.

British detectives of the Political Affairs Section began to monitor the activities of suspected Bolsheviks within Palestine.

CID took seriously the Haycraft's concerns of a Bolshevik threat to peace within Palestine. In a CID report to the Deputy Inspector General, dated November 5, 1923, detective John Albert Kingsley-Heath wrote, "I consider there is, without doubt, an undercurrent of Bolshevism in Palestine."⁶¹ The report goes on to give the details of a raid on the house of one David Fish, who was suspected of being a member of the Palestine Communist Party (P.K.P.) Another report, dated 5 October, 1923, seems to indicate that CID had informants within the communist organizations, as the report goes into specifics of the meeting's agenda, including the names of different speakers and a summary of their speeches.⁶² CID personnel themselves were sometimes sent to monitor meetings, in one case with an inspector apparently listening with an ear to the wall as a meeting of the FRACTZIA group was carried on inside. The summary of the meeting indicated as much, with the officer writing, "This meeting was carried on in undertones so that it was impossible to hear from the outside what was going on."⁶³ The meeting was eventually raided, with the identities of all the participants documented by the officers. Other reports from this period indicate that CID was monitoring the pamphlets and newspapers distributed by communist groups in Palestine.⁶⁴

The CID records from the 1920s confirm that the primary security concern throughout the 1920s was of a Bolshevik disturbance that could upset the peace that had

⁶¹ HA 47-467, "A/AIG to DIG," 5 November, 1923.

⁶² HA 47-466, "Extract from Jerusalem D.I.S. No. 250 of 5.10.23," 5 October, 1923.

⁶³ HA 47-466, "The Closing of the Fractzia Club" 11 August, 1924.

⁶⁴ HA 47-466, "Daily Intelligence Summary, No. 282, 8 October, 1923.

settled over Palestine. It must also be noted that, in contrast to later developments, the CID's only political section was dedicated to Bolshevism and Communism. With fewer than thirty detectives within the entire CID, the political affairs section was consistently undermanned. Furthermore, there were no resources dedicated to monitoring developments within the Arab or Jewish communities within Palestine. In fact, an Arab Affairs section was not created until 1930, and a Jewish bureau would not follow for another nine years after that. CID's focus on Bolshevism also serves as an example of the police taking action in response to the most immediate threat in Palestine. This focus on the most immediate threat would come to dominate British security planning throughout the Mandatory period.

Security on the Cheap

Amidst the lull of the mid-1920s, Herbert Samuels was replaced as High Commissioner by Field Marshall Lord Herbert Plumer, who took office August 25, 1925. A former military man, Plumer took charge of Palestine at a time when security concerns were at a minimum. Since 1921, there had been no further rioting among the Arab population. CID was actively monitoring the Bolshevik groups within Palestine and did not expect any major disturbances from that sector. Additionally, the Palestine Police Force was proving itself up to the task of regular policing duties. As one author would later write, "Palestine was never so peaceful as the three year period 1926-1929."⁶⁵ With no active opposition to the Balfour Declaration in the country, Britain saw an opportunity to scale back her security presence within Palestine, which would lessen the financial burden on a British economy under severe strain at home.

⁶⁵ Horne, *A Job Well Done*, 2003, 117.

British colonial planners had begun to see air power as an important asset in preventing uprisings. As early as 1920, Winston Churchill had advocated the use of air power in maintaining British control in Iraq.⁶⁶ After the Iraq model proved successful in the face of a Kurdish rebellion, the doctrine of air power as an instrument of colonial security was adjusted to fit other colonial ventures such as Palestine. Critics of this new policy feared that airplanes would be useless in Palestine, being a smaller country than Iraq, and one with far more urban areas. Nevertheless, the policy was instituted in the belief that the menace of an airplane, something relatively rare in the Middle East, would be enough to project British power within Palestine.⁶⁷ Furthermore, the doctrine of air control was viewed as an economical way to maintain a British presence strong enough to maintain order. In the case of Palestine, with a 3 million pound garrison budget in 1921, air power was believed to be strong enough to support the Palestine Police and gendarmeries in any renewed outbreaks of violence.⁶⁸ By 1927, the RAF had become a critical component in the Palestinian security apparatus.

Further cost cutting came at the expense of the Palestine Police Force. The Palestine Police and gendarmerie had undergone significant changes in the 1920s. Budget cutbacks reduced the Palestine Police from 114 officers and 1,334 policemen to a force just over 1,000 strong.⁶⁹ With no major riots following the 1921 disturbances, the British and Palestinian Gendarmeries were viewed as superfluous to current security concerns

⁶⁶ Churchill and James, *Winston S. Churchill*, 3:2998.

⁶⁷ Priya Satia, *Spies in Arabia: The Great War and the Cultural Foundations of Britain's Covert Empire in the Middle East* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 245.

⁶⁸ Sebastian Ritchie, "The RAF, Small Wars and Insurgencies in the Middle East. 1919-1939" (Center for Air Power Studies, 2011), 51.

⁶⁹ "Police Organization in Palestine," *Advocate of Peace Through Justice* 87, no. 8 (August 1, 1925): 463.

and disbanded in 1925.⁷⁰ The cuts in security went so deep that, by 1928, the military presence in Palestine was at the bare minimum, consisting of “a squadron of R.A.F., stationed in Ramleh, near Jaffa, with a few obsolescent armored-cars, and a minimum amount of ground personnel to support this detachment.⁷¹ Security was fully in the hands of the now weakened Palestine Police, supported by the small RAF contingent. As there had been no major disturbances since 1921, the British were confident that this level of forces was enough to maintain the status quo in regard to security.

The Calm is Shattered

These hopes would prove misguided in August of 1929 as the British were caught unprepared when violence broke out in Jerusalem. The tension had begun the year before, during the Yom Kippur celebrations at the Western Wall, the holiest site in Judaism. British police, Douglas Duff among them, removed a screen the Jews had set up at the wall to divide the male worshippers from the females. Since the Ottoman period, the Western Wall had been under the supervision of the Supreme Muslim Council (SMC), the Islamic religious authority in Jerusalem, who forbade any attempt by the Jews to set up a screen to segregate the Wall by gender. This practice was maintained by the British authorities during the Mandate as part of the Status Quo, which Allenby had declared was inviolate.⁷² After the screen’s removal, Edward Keith-Roach, the governor

⁷⁰ Duff, *Bailing with a Teaspoon.*, 109; Horne, *A Job Well Done*, 2003, 96.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 88; Sherman, *Mandate Days*, 77.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 170; Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 113.

of Jerusalem, commented, “Justice had been done. The status quo had been preserved with as little force as possible.”⁷³

While this incident would pass with relatively little violence, the aftermath would see both the Arab and Jewish communities ratchet up the tensions. The Arab population, having hoped that the Zionist movement was losing steam, saw the incident with the screen as an attempt to assert Jewish claims to over the Muslim-controlled Western Wall. Over the next year, Islamic leaders, such as Hajj Amin al-Husayni, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and head of the SMC, stressed that it was not just the Western Wall that was under threat of a Jewish take-over, but all Islamic holy places in Palestine.⁷⁴ The situation reached a breaking point in August of 1929, when a group of Jewish demonstrators at the Wall attempted to raise a Zionist flag, shouting, “The Wall is ours.” Demonstrations were held the next week as both Jews and Arabs protested in the Old City. Finally, following a particularly fiery Friday sermon in al-Aqsa Mosque, violence broke out on 23 August as a mob of Arab congregants stormed out of the service and attacked Jews in the Old City. The riot quickly spread across Palestine, as Arabs in Hebron killed sixty Jews and a Safad mob killed another forty-five.

The Riots of 1929 revealed the weakness of Britain’s security arrangements in Palestine. As the rioting took place in heavily urban areas, the RAF was useless in halting the violence, and the deterrence factor of airpower could not be brought to bear. The police, vastly outnumbered by the mobs and with little warning of the coming violence, were powerless to stop the violence. The local authorities were forced to request army reinforcements from the British garrison in Egypt, but until they arrived the situation was

⁷³ Keith-Roach, *Pasha of Jerusalem*, 119.

⁷⁴ Porath, *The Emergence of the Palestinian-Arab National Movement*, 262-263.

desperate. There were fewer than 200 British policemen in all of Palestine, and these men had to work overtime, as the Arab and Jewish officers were not trusted by the authorities to restore order while their countrymen fought so violently.⁷⁵ Keith-Roach was at the epicenter in Jerusalem, and later wrote, “The few British police were exhausted. Each man had been doing ten men’s work for two days when the first troops arrived by air. I had gathered everyone I could into a volunteer police force; among those helping us were a number of theological students, led by their tutor.”⁷⁶ It was only after a week of violence in which 133 Jews and 115 Arabs were killed, were the British forces from Egypt finally able to end the riots.⁷⁷

Recovery from 1929

The 1929 Riots in Palestine proved to be a decisive turning point in the history of the British Mandate, as the calm of the 1920s gave way to increased political activity in the Arab community against Zionism. For the Palestine Police Force, the riots had proven to be a colossal disaster. Unable to rely on the Arab or Jewish constables, it had fallen to the British section of the force to quell the violence, and numbering only 142 officers and constables, this was obviously outside of their capabilities. Furthermore, the CID, still focused on Bolshevism, had no resources to monitor the Arab or Jewish political sectors. As a consequence, there was no warning of impending violence after nearly a year of increased political agitation over the safety of Muslim claims to religious sites.

⁷⁵ Sherman, *Mandate Days*, 79.

⁷⁶ Keith-Roach, *Pasha of Jerusalem*, 124.

⁷⁷ Sherman, *Mandate Days*, 80; Martin Thomas, *Empires of Intelligence : Security Services and Colonial Disorder After 1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 236.

The setback of 1929 led the British to reconsider their position in Palestine. The British Government sent Sir John Hope Simpson to Palestine “in order to examine on the spot questions of immigration, land settlement, and development.”⁷⁸ Noting a negative impact on Arab employment and strong Arab opposition to Britain’s current policy, Hope Simpson recommended a limit to Jewish immigration into Palestine. These recommendations were endorsed by Colonial Secretary Sydney Webb, Lord Passfield, in a policy statement which said immigration into Palestine would be limited according to economic capacity.⁷⁹ After a large outcry from the Zionist leadership, British Prime Minister Ramsay Macdonald wrote a letter to Chaim Weizmann, implying that the Passfield White Paper should be read in light of Great Britain’s continuing support for the Zionist enterprise.⁸⁰ Great Britain remained committed to the implementation of the Balfour Declaration. However, as this episode reveals, the British Government now found itself trying to bridge the divide between the Arab and Jewish communities in Palestine.

The performance of the security forces in Palestine was also examined. In January of 1930, Sir Herbert Dowbiggin, Inspector General of Police for British Ceylon, arrived in Palestine to conduct a review of the Palestine Police Force. Dowbiggin had served in the Ceylon Police Force since 1901, and his tenure as Inspector General had begun in 1913. Already an experienced hand in colonial police matters, Dowbiggin travelled

⁷⁸ John Hope Simpson, “Palestine: Report on Immigration, Land Settlement and Development,” October 1, 1930.

⁷⁹ Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-1999* (New York: Knopf, 1999), 117; “Palestine: Statement of Policy by His Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom,” October 1, 1930.

⁸⁰ Morris, *Righteous victims*, 117.

across Palestine conducting his review, which was released in May of 1930.⁸¹

Dowbiggin's report was highly critical and made a number of recommendations to improve security within Palestine. Dowbiggin stressed the primacy of the police force in security matters. He recommended that the British section be disbanded and its members be distributed to work alongside the Arab and Jewish constables within the force in the hope that the native constables would prove more reliable after working more closely with their British counterparts.

The hammer fell the hardest on CID. Dowbiggin placed the blame for the surprise of the riots squarely on the CID. In his report, Dowbiggin noted that the increased Arab political activity should have indicated a potential flashpoint, but, as CID's political section had focused exclusively on Bolshevism, there were no resources to monitor Arab political affairs.⁸² Given the increased political activity of the Palestinian Arabs, Dowbiggin recommended that CID be expanded both in size and in its responsibilities. CID detectives were to be deployed across Palestine, in each of the major districts, to allow for better coordination between the regular police and the central CID headquarters in Jerusalem. Furthermore, the political affairs section was to be expanded, with intelligence gathering being the primary duty of this department. An Arab Affairs section would be added to CID, tasked with monitoring the activities of Hajj Amin al-Husayni and the Arab leadership in Palestine.⁸³ This expansion also included the creation of a CID archive, which was to be British-controlled and kept separate from the criminal records archive.

⁸¹ Horne, *A Job Well Done*, 159-161; Harouvi, *Palestine Investigated*, 4:5-7.

⁸² Horne, *A Job Well Done*, 467-468; Harouvi, *Palestine Investigated*, 4:13-14.

⁸³ Harouvi, *Palestine Investigated*, 3: 12-15.

Following the release of Dowbiggin’s review, the Palestine Police Force began to implement the changes Dowbiggin suggested under a new commandant, Roy Godfrey Bullen Spicer. Spicer was a veteran of the Ceylon Police Force having served under Dowbiggin there from 1909 to 1915. After a brief stint in the British Army, Spicer was named Commissioner for the Kenyan Police Force, where he had instituted badly needed reforms. Spicer took control of the PPF in 1932, and the police reforms began in earnest. The British section was dissolved in favor of closer cooperation between British and Palestinian constables. After 1932, British constables now accompanied Arab and Jewish policemen on their daily patrols.⁸⁴ Geoffrey Morton, who had joined the force in 1929, described the impact of Dowbiggin’s report and Spicer’s arrival as “the rebirth of the force.”⁸⁵ A new mindset of professionalism was instilled in constables and officers, who now took a more thorough and disciplined approach to their duties. Spicer introduced new procedures for riot control, which included the calculated use of firearms.⁸⁶ Arabic language instruction, which in the 1920s had been largely ignored by the British members of the police force, was also emphasized.⁸⁷ In 1932, E.R. Stafford, Assistant Superintendent of Police, published the *Manual of Colloquial Arabic*, and Arabic-language training and testing program was developed.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Morton, *Just the Job; Some Experiences of a Colonial Policeman.*, 27.

⁸⁵ Geoffrey J Morton, *Just the job; Some Experiences of a Colonial Policeman.* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1957), 27.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 48–49.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁸⁸ E.R. Stafford, “Manual of Colloquial Arabic,” n.d.; Morton, *Just the Job; Some Experiences of a Colonial Policeman.*, 28.

CID also underwent significant changes. Harry Patrick Rice, a veteran of the South African and Kenyan Police Forces, was named as the new Assistant Inspector General, in charge of the CID. Under Rice, the CID increased from thirty detectives to one hundred and two detectives, with fifty-two serving at central headquarters and the remainder deployed in the various districts within Palestine. Furthermore, on his own initiative, Rice began to liaise with both the civilian and military authorities within Palestine. Rice also created additional sections within the CID to monitor immigration, deportation, ports, and an Arab Affairs section to monitor developments within the Arab community.⁸⁹

In examining the transformation of the Palestine Police Force from 1930 to 1932, it is clear that the foremost concern was the renewed outbreak of rioting. The reorganization of the force prompted by Dowbiggin resolved many of the riot control problems that had been apparent in 1929. These methods were tested in October 1933, when demonstrations against Jewish immigration were held in Jerusalem and Jaffa. On October 13, in Jerusalem, coordinated action by mounted police and police on foot broke up the demonstrations after violence broke out.⁹⁰ Two weeks later, on the twenty-seventh, demonstrations in Jaffa turned violent, and the police were forced to fire three volleys into the crowds, killing twenty-six Arab demonstrators, but preventing the spread of violence.⁹¹ In both of these instances, the police had proven themselves now capable of handling the outbreak of rioting. However, it is important to note that the changes implemented by Dowbiggin and Spicer focused solely on the PPF's performance in 1929.

⁸⁹ Horne, *A Job Well Done*, 468-471.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2003, 190.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 196-197.

One issue that was not addressed by either Dowbiggin or Spicer was the impact of increased Arab opposition to the Balfour Declaration on the disposition of the security forces in Palestine. As the police reforms of the 1930s revealed, there was little coordination between the security forces operating in Palestine, and the British policy-makers in London.

Acceleration to Violence

After the initial violence of 1929, Arab frustrations with the growth of the *Yishuv* continued into the 1930s, and circumstances outside of Palestine only exacerbated the situation. In 1933, Adolf Hitler was named Chancellor of Germany. Once in power, Hitler and his supporters began targeting Germany's Jewish population for persecution.⁹² Thousands of German Jews fled to Palestine, and the number of Jewish immigrants jumped from 9,000 in 1932 to 30,000 in 1933. Another 42,000 Jews arrived in 1934, followed by 62,000 in 1935.⁹³ The influx of immigrants throughout the 1930s led to a period of economic flourishing for the *Yishuv*, as many of the German Jews brought with them resources and capital that allowed the *Yishuv* to gain a more sound economic footing.⁹⁴ Consequently, expanded immigration became a major problem for the British authorities as the Arab populace increasingly voiced alarm, afraid that they would lose even more land to the new immigrants.

Over the previous decade, Arab leadership had failed to gain any concessions from the British authorities, and in the 1930s a younger group of Arab politicians began

⁹² Richard J Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004), 439.

⁹³ Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 122.

⁹⁴ Shepherd, *Ploughing Sand*, 97.

to advocate a rejection of the Mandate system entirely. At the same time, the wider Arab populace grew increasingly frustrated by the lack of progress. These frustrations reached a boiling point in 1936, when the Arab leadership called for a general strike in protest of Britain's continued allowance of Jewish immigration into Palestine. The immediate catalyst for the strike was an incident in which members of the Irgun, a Jewish militia that advocated reprisal for Arab violence, killed two Arab men outside Petah Tikvah. This attack was a reprisal for an earlier Arab attack, in which two Jews were killed. The news of the Petah Tikvah killings enraged the Arab population and led to demonstrations and violence across Palestine. Amidst this turmoil, Arab leaders in several towns, most notably Jaffa and Nablus, formed National Committees and began discussing the possibility of a general strike. This strike began 21 April and quickly spread across Palestine. By 25 April, the newly formed Arab Higher Committee, under Hajj Amin al-Husayni, the Mufti of Jerusalem, declared that the strike would continue until the British banned Jewish immigration into Palestine. Concurrent with the strike, Arab violence against Jewish persons and property began.⁹⁵ By May, armed bands of Arabs began roaming rural Palestine, attacking Jewish settlements and setting up roadblocks.⁹⁶ Within weeks, Palestine was in chaos.

The Beginning of the Arab Revolt

The Arab revolt, which began in 1936 and lasted until 1939, presented an entirely new challenge for the Palestine Police Force, which had spent the 1930s building its riot

⁹⁵ Yehoshua Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement : from Riots to Rebellion* (London; Totowa, N.J.: F. Cass, 1977), 178.

⁹⁶ Ted Swedenburg, *Memories of Revolt : the 1936-1939 Rebellion and the Palestinian National Past* (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), xx.

control capabilities. Instead, the police now found themselves facing a popular uprising. While there was initially fighting in urban areas such as the Jaffa-Tel Aviv border areas, the rebels' military weaknesses forced them to Palestine's more rural areas, where they could fight in a manner more suited to their situation—namely, a guerilla warfare strategy. Throughout the summer of 1936, Arab insurgents attacked a number of Jewish installations. On April 20, a Jewish threshing floor was destroyed. Soon after, a number of Jewish owned businesses were burned down. At the same time, attacks were made on rural Jewish settlements. These attacks most often consisted of nightly sniping attacks, however, by August, Jews were being ambushed and murdered outside of the settlements. In total, some 80 Jews were killed, with another 400 wounded.⁹⁷

The initial British response to the violence was limited; however, efforts were made to restore order. Throughout the summer, reinforcements poured in from Egypt, and by September, 1936, 20,000 British soldiers had arrived in Palestine.⁹⁸ The first priority was containing the violence in the urban areas, in particular the border region between the Arab city of Jaffa and the Jewish city of Tel Aviv. In this region, soldiers were attached to police patrols to bolster the presence of the security forces. “Scotties with machine guns in the streets, coppers with machine guns, bags of rifles, both on roofs as well. When a shot came from a house or a bomb was thrown every rifle and gun in sight opened up on the spot.”⁹⁹ In an effort to deny the insurgents hiding places in the city, High Commissioner Wauchope ordered the destruction of over 200 Arab houses in

⁹⁷ Porath, *Riots to Rebellion*, 178.

⁹⁸ Khalidi, *The Iron Cage*, 109.

⁹⁹ Tom Eddison and Penelope Wilkins, *Letters Home : from Leslie Herbert (Tom) Eddison D.F.C. to His Family at Yamba, Cotter Road, Federal Capital Territory, Australia : Palestine Police 1934-1936, Royal Air Force 1936-1941* (Campbell, A.C.T.: P. Wilkins, 2001), 62.

Jaffa.¹⁰⁰ These efforts quickly proved successful, and the insurgents, outgunned, were forced to withdraw to the more rural areas of Palestine, where they continued sniping attacks and ambushes.

In rural Palestine, the PPF was kept in a defensive posture, protecting rural towns and Jewish settlements from Arab attacks. Leslie Herbert Eddison was one such constable sent on these excursions. In a letter to his brother, Eddison described the security arrangements. “As soon as trouble broke out two Mounted blokes were sent to protect the two Jewish colonies on our northern boundary consisting mostly of German Jews. They have to use their own discretion and organize the defence. They have two *wogs* each from nearby outposts. Every night a special car patrol of six (three B/P [British policemen] and three P/P [Palestinian policemen]), with 50 rounds of ammo each, visits them.”¹⁰¹ Later, Eddison himself helped organize the defenses of Jewish settlements in Gaza, relying on assistance from Jewish veterans of the Royal Fusiliers.¹⁰²

While Eddison’s experiences with Jewish settlements were rather tame, other police constables found themselves facing daily attacks in the settlements. One such constable was Roger Courtney, who had joined the police during the summer of 1936. Courtney and two other colleagues were sent to organize the defenses of six Jewish settlements. Faced with nightly sniping attacks from Arab guerillas, Courtney was allowed to develop his own methods to respond. “It was suggested that since ordinary police methods of dealing with the Arabs’ night-sniping into the settlements were not

¹⁰⁰ Segev, *One Palestine, Complete*, 399; M. Hughes, “The Banality of Brutality: British Armed Forces and the Repression of the Arab Revolt in Palestine, 1936-39,” *The English Historical Review* CXXIV, no. 507 (April 1, 2009): 323, doi:10.1093/ehr/cep002.

¹⁰¹ Eddison and Wilkins, *Letters Home*, 55.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 60.

proving very successful, maybe I would—er—like to try out some of the ideas I had gained as a big-game hunter in Africa.”¹⁰³ Donning a civilian hunting suit and a shotgun with buckshot cartridges, Courtney began to stalk the areas surrounding the settlements in search of Arab snipers. Courtney eventually trained two more British policemen and several members of the Jewish Settlement police, who continued these unofficial counter-sniping tactics.¹⁰⁴

Cooperation between British and Jewish forces became a significant part of the British strategy to contain and later end the Arab revolt. Throughout the Mandatory Period, Jews had served in the Palestine Police Force. By 1936, the Arab members of the force were viewed as unreliable by the British, who instead turned to the *Yishuv* to provide additional manpower. The Jewish Settlement Police was created to help maintain a police presence among the Jewish settlements that had begun to grow across Palestine. Initially, 750 Jewish volunteers were recruited to the Settlement police, working alongside the PPF, and another 750 were recruited to serve as settlement guards. The majority of these volunteers came from the Jewish underground Army, *HaHaganah* (The Defense) a Jewish defense force created in 1921 to provide settlement defenses. Moshe Dayan, later the Defense Minister for the State of Israel, was one of these early settlement police, and he described his activities with the police in his memoirs. He wrote, “With six *ghaffirs* under my command and a light truck as our vehicle, we were very active, going on daylight patrols along dirt paths and setting ambushes at night on the roads leading

¹⁰³ Roger Courtney, *Palestine Policeman : an Account of Eighteen Dramatic Months in the Palestine Police Force During the Great Jew-Arab Troubles* (London: H. Jenkins, 1939), 31.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 57.

from the Arab areas to Jewish settlements.”¹⁰⁵ As Dayan recalls, most of these early patrols were defensive in nature, and centered on protecting the approaches to Jewish settlements.

In addition to providing settlement security, the Palestine Police mounted combat patrols, either on horseback, or in jury-rigged armored cars and pick-up trucks with machineguns welded to the back. Leslie Herbert Eddison went on numerous patrols with the Mounted Division of the Palestine Police, several of these lasting a week or more.¹⁰⁶ Regular policemen were also sent on patrols, often in unarmored touring cars. As Roger Courtney later recalled, “The specific object of the patrol was to see that the road was clear for a convoyed procession of buses, cars, lorries and all manner of traffic.”¹⁰⁷ Courtney took part in several of these patrols, in which policemen were sent out to uncover ambushes, only calling in the army if the situation spun further out of control.¹⁰⁸ The policemen, driving in vehicles with little protection without the firepower of regular army units, took to calling these missions “Suicide Patrols,” because of the dangers to the constables.¹⁰⁹

The early efforts of the Palestine Police in response to the outbreak of the Arab Revolt reveal the unpreparedness of the force to handle this new threat. While the police had improved their riot control techniques, the revolt of 1936 posed new problems that the police did not have an answer for. It was only with the assistance of the British army

¹⁰⁵ Moshe Dayan, *Moshe Dayan : Story of My Life* (New York: Morrow, 1976), 42.

¹⁰⁶ Eddison and Wilkins, *Letters Home*, 68.

¹⁰⁷ Courtney, *Palestine Policeman*, 24.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 96.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

that the police were able to end the violence around Jaffa and Tel Aviv. Outside of the urban areas, the police were totally unprepared. Roger Courtney's experiences are particularly telling. Without any previous training in counter-sniping, Courtney was chosen simply because of his big game hunting experience. Additionally, the police did not have the proper equipment for counterinsurgency operations. The PPF lacked armored cars, and instead patrols were carried out in unarmored touring cars and light trucks. The reality is, despite their best effort, the PPF was unprepared for counterinsurgency operations, having never needed the capabilities previously.

The situation continued to deteriorate into the fall of 1936. In part, this was due to a lack of workable intelligence from CID. While the department had been building an Arab Affairs section, this was still very much in the initial stages. Serving as an inspector in Haifa at the time, Geoffrey Morton summed up the intelligence deficiencies. "We none of us knew much about Arab politics, organizations and personalities, and even less of their Jewish equivalents. And, of course, the time to build up a Special Branch and an efficient intelligence network is when things are peaceful—it is too late when the balloon has gone up."¹¹⁰ At the start of the Arab Revolt CID was staffed by sixty-five detectives, with only twenty serving in the intelligence branch.¹¹¹ As one CID member later said, "There was no one to read the tea leaves properly."¹¹² The intelligence problem was compounded when Arab sources began to dry up as Arabs supportive of the revolt stopped sharing intelligence and others were cowed to silence for fear of being

¹¹⁰ Morton, *Just the Job; Some Experiences of a Colonial Policeman.*, 56.

¹¹¹ Harouvi, *Palestine Investigated*, 5:16.

¹¹² Horne, *A Job Well Done*, 2003, 209.

assassinated as collaborators.¹¹³ Additionally, the Arab insurgents began targeting Arab detectives for assassination, which further hurt CID's intelligence gathering abilities.

The Peel Commission

In the fall of 1936, the eye of the storm passed over Palestine after Arab support for the strike began to wane. After a severe drop in the Arab economy, the General Strike was ended in October, a small victory for the administration. The violence also stopped shortly thereafter. The lull would prove to be short-lived. While the strike had ended, tensions remained high. To make matters worse, the civilian authorities allowed the insurgent bands to flee from Palestine with their arms, much to the dismay of the leading army commanders, who feared a resumption of hostilities.¹¹⁴

Amidst this tense peace, the Royal Commission for Palestine, also known as the Peel Commission arrived to reexamine British policy in Palestine. The report of the Peel Commission was released in July of 1937. After almost twenty years of support for the Balfour Declaration, Great Britain was finding the turmoil in Palestine too difficult to control, and, for the first time, seriously considered the impact of the Mandate on the Arab world, both for the Palestinian Arabs and the surrounding countries.¹¹⁵ Finding the Mandate to be unworkable in its present form, the Peel Commission recommended the Mandate for Palestine be terminated, with the country to be partitioned into two states,

¹¹³ Thomas, *Empires of Intelligence*, 246.

¹¹⁴ Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement*, 215.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 300.

one Jewish and the other Arab. The commission also recommended the transfer of several thousand Arabs from the new Jewish state to the Arab state.¹¹⁶

The report of the Peel Commission was a significant development in the history of the Mandate. Previously, the British had sought to reconcile their support of the Balfour Declaration to the interests of the Arab population of Palestine. The partition proposal of the Peel Commission was the first British recognition that this aim was unachievable. Despite this admission, the British were still left without a solution to the Palestine problem. While the *Yishuv* hesitantly accepted partition as recommended by the Peel Commission, the Palestinian Arabs rejected the proposal.¹¹⁷ The proposed loss of Galilee and the northern coastal regions of Palestine were unacceptable to the Arab leadership, as was the proposed forced transfer of over 225,000 Arabs from the proposed Jewish state to the new Arab one.¹¹⁸ Instead, in September of 1937, the revolt entered a second, deadlier stage when L.Y. Andrews, District Commissioner for Galilee was assassinated.

Charles Tegart and the Restructuring of the PPF

Andrews' death was a significant factor in pushing the British to take a harder line, as the assassination of a senior government official demanded a firm reply. Almost immediately, orders were given to arrest Hajj Amin al-Husayni, and the Arab Higher Committee was declared illegal.¹¹⁹ That al-Husayni escaped arrest and fled to Syria is a

¹¹⁶ Segev, *One Palestine, Complete*, 402–403.

¹¹⁷ Porath, *The Palestinian-Arab National Movement, 1929-1939*, 229-230; Kolinsky, *Law, Order, and Riots in Mandatory Palestine*, 227.

¹¹⁸ Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 139.

¹¹⁹ Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement*, 235.

testament to the serious intelligence leaks that plagued the British security system.¹²⁰

However, before the British could begin a counterinsurgency campaign to end the rebellion, it was necessary to again reorganize the security forces. The Peel Commission cited several major problems with the current security arrangements, most notably the limited role of the British army in the early stages of the revolt. Furthermore, the report noted the poor performance of the CID in intelligence gathering, which had been crippled by the loss of Arab detectives.

The majority of Palestinian officers in the Criminal Investigation Department are thoroughly devoted and loyal, but the junior ranks, like the majority of the District police, though useful in times of peace, are unreliable in time of trouble. It would be highly dangerous to expose the Arab police of Palestine to another strain of the same kind as that which they endured last summer.¹²¹

In response to the Peel Commission's Report, in October of 1937, Sir Charles Tegart was called in to consult on the security arrangements in Palestine.

Throughout the fall of 1937, Tegart travelled across Palestine compiling information for his report, which was released in January of 1938. Tegart had served with the Calcutta Police Force in British India since 1901 and had extensive experience in fighting local insurgencies. He was viewed as a leading authority on counterinsurgency at the time, and his recommendations were quickly implemented in Palestine. Tegart's report made several key recommendations. He stressed the intelligence-gathering role of CID as the department's primary function, and as a consequence seventy detectives were added to the political section, which had already grown to fifty detectives in the previous

¹²⁰ Morton, *Just the Job; Some Experiences of a Colonial Policeman.*, 56.

¹²¹ League of Nations, *Report of the Palestine Royal Commission*, CMND. 5479 (London: HMSO, 1937)

year.¹²² To increase the police presence across the country, Tegart oversaw the construction of fifty police fortresses, which later came to be known as “Tegart forts.”¹²³ Finally, the British section of the police force was increased to 3,000 men out of a total complement of 5,400.¹²⁴ From 1938 on, British personnel would provide the bulk of the manpower for the police force.

Just as Dowbiggin’s report had inspired reforms within the Palestine Police Force to meet the challenge of the day, Tegart’s recommendations improved the capabilities of the PPF to respond to the insurgency of the late 1930s. Whereas the police had been forced to rely on patrols in order to find the insurgents, the improvements to the CID allowed for better tracking of guerillas. The reliance on British policemen for the bulk of the force minimized the risk of security leaks from Arab policemen to their countrymen. Finally, the creation of police forts across Palestine allowed the police to maintain a constant presence among the Arab and Jewish villages and restricted the ability of the insurgent groups to move through Palestine. Unfortunately, these changes did not happen overnight, and it was some months before policemen could be recruited and the Tegart forts could be built. In the interim, the police and army were still fighting a losing battle with the insurgents.

It was not just delays in implementing Tegart’s recommendations that allowed the revolt to continue, but now political considerations that played a factor. Adolf Hitler had begun an aggressive expansion of German territory and war loomed on the horizon. In March of 1938, German troops had occupied Austria, and now a crisis threatened as Hitler

¹²² Harouvi, *Palestine Investigated*, 5:22.

¹²³ Keith-Roach, *Pasha of Jerusalem*, 191.

¹²⁴ Harouvi, *Palestine Investigated*, 5:39.

threatened Czechoslovakia.¹²⁵ War was a real possibility, and in the face of this new threat, the British were loath to commit to a counter-insurgency campaign in Palestine. The 20,000 soldiers already deployed to Palestine represented a tenth of the total British strength under arms, and these soldiers might very well be needed on the continent if war began.¹²⁶ Any operations against the insurgents would have to wait for a resolution to the crisis in Europe.

With the signing of the Munich Agreement in the fall of 1938, the British now had the opportunity to settle the violence in Palestine before hostilities broke out in Europe. While the government in London attempted to sort out a policy that would secure Britain's strategic interests in the Middle East for the coming war, the military was given a free hand to put down the insurgency, which had grown out of the control of the police force. Throughout the summer of 1938, attacks across Palestine increased. By August, Arab guerillas had destroyed all of the rail stations between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv and were setting up ambushes on the major roads within Palestine. In Nablus, the insurgents were openly carrying arms throughout the city. The rebels were so brazen that on 15 October, they occupied the Old City of Jerusalem for several days, destroying a nearby police station.¹²⁷ In total, there were over 2,000 separate attacks carried out in 1938, in which seventy-seven British personnel and over 250 Jews were killed.¹²⁸ In the words of

¹²⁵ William L Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich; a History of Nazi Germany*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), 356–357.

¹²⁶ John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World System, 1830-1970* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 472.

¹²⁷ Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement*, 237-240.

¹²⁸ Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 150-151.

one British commander, “the situation was such that civil administration of the country was, to all practical purposes, non-existent.”¹²⁹

Counterinsurgency Operations

According to Tegart’s security strategy, the Palestine Police Force would continue to be responsible for security within Palestine; however, with the force still in transition, it was left to the army to regain control of the country in the interim. The counterinsurgency operations began on October 18, 1938, when British soldiers retook the Old City of Jerusalem. The soldiers marched in behind a wall of Arabs being used as human shields and drove the insurgents to the Temple Mount.¹³⁰ After the operations in Jerusalem were completed five days later, the army began a wider campaign against the rebellion.

The counterinsurgency operations in the fall of 1938 were carried out with the express purpose of separating the insurgents from the rural Arab villages that served as forward operating bases. Tactically, the army began to wage reprisal operations against villages suspected of supporting the guerillas. Reprisal operations most often involved the destruction of houses in the suspect villages. Leslie Herbert Eddison described a reprisal operation in a letter to his mother.

The tank officer used to ask which village I would like straightened up. “Oh, just give so and so a bending will you?” Away they would fly round the village flat out pushing corners off here and there, playing ‘tib you last’ sort of thing, then maybe a few skids turns on the threshing floors and clean up a few fences. Then they’d warn the *Mukhtar* that if there were any more shots something worse would happen; that being just a joke. It was very effective.¹³¹

¹²⁹ Khalidi, *The Iron Cage*, 107.

¹³⁰ Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement*, 240.

¹³¹ Eddison and Wilkins, *Letters Home*, 61.

British policemen, trained in Arabic, often served as guides and interpreters for the Army in these operations, which quite often resulted in the destruction of village property.

Leslie Herbert Eddison wrote of one such search. “Once an attack started on an isolated house but after a few shots had been exchanged the Arabs hopped off. Next night we went to the village I suspected they came from and we had half an hour’s fun. They did not repeat their joke.”¹³²

In addition to the military campaign, financial pressure was placed on the Arab community. The British began requiring travel permits for anyone who wished to leave their village, as well as licensing all sales of produce and foodstuffs in the belief that the Arab villagers, who viewed the rebels as heroes, would not find the same heroics in opposing legal restrictions. Alec Kirkbride, the Governor of Galilee, later explained that the goal was to instill in the villager’s minds that, “There was no glory to be had in resisting such regulations and yet they made life very difficult.”¹³³ Additionally, local authorities would go to the villages situated near the site of a recent attack and collect any taxes that were in arrears:

On taking charge I discovered that the arrears of taxation due amounted to over three hundred thousand pounds, so, whenever an act of sabotage was committed, I sent for the elders of the village to which the land belonged and informed them that they would have to pay a certain sum of arrears of taxation within a given period, otherwise, troops would be sent to collect the money. . . Luckily, the rebellion collapsed before all arrears were paid up.¹³⁴

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Alec Kirkbride, *A Crackle of Thorns; Experiences in the Middle East*. (London: J. Murray, 1956), 106.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 107.

Kirkbride noted that these efforts by the civilian administration were extremely important in the overall counterinsurgency campaign. He later wrote, “The measures which ultimately extinguished the trouble had nothing to do with battle and death, they merely made everyday life difficult and, eventually, convinced the Arabs that it was not worth while persisting in their policy of violence.”¹³⁵

In addition to collective punishment, the British relied on support from native Palestinians, both from the *Yishuv* and the Arab community. A major advocate of this policy was Colonel Orde Wingate, a devout Christian and fervent supporter of Zionism. Wingate recruited a number of Jewish Settlement policemen, many of whom were also members of the Haganah, to serve under his command in a special-forces unit that would guard the pipelines of the Iraq Petroleum Company. Wingate’s teams were comprised of both British and Jewish personnel, and included future commanders of the Israeli Defense Forces including Moshe Dayan and Yigal Allon. Known as the Special Night Squads, Wingate’s units aggressively pursued the Arab guerillas, setting up ambushes and raiding Arab villages that served as bases for the insurgency.¹³⁶

The British also turned to disaffected Arabs for support. The political divisions that existed between the leading Arab families persisted throughout the revolt, and not everyone supported the General Strike and later violence. The Nashashibi family, leading the Arab Opposition parties, advocated for a return to negotiation with the British authorities, and had even expressed support for the partition plan advocated by the Peel

¹³⁵ Ibid., 106.

¹³⁶ Christopher Sykes, *Orde Wingate: a Biography* (Cleveland, Ohio: World Pub. Co., 1959), 151.

Commission.¹³⁷ As a consequence, the more radical elements began a campaign against the perceived collaborators within the Nashashibi family. A civil war was growing in the Arab community.¹³⁸ In response, the Nashashibis began to work more closely with the British administration. Members of the Opposition began providing intelligence to the CID, which had been restructured and enlarged during the Revolt.¹³⁹ More significantly, the Nashashibis created their own small militia to counter the guerillas, appealing to the Jewish Agency for financial support.¹⁴⁰ By the spring of 1939, elements of the Palestinian Opposition factions were fighting alongside the British and Jewish forces.

The counterinsurgency efforts, which had begun in late 1938, ultimately proved decisive. Additionally, the improvements to the Palestine Police Force were beginning to bring results. By 1939, the intelligence section of the CID had expanded to 120 British detectives, and CID's Arab Affairs section was considered the best in the Middle East.¹⁴¹ The Arab Affairs section was reporting regularly on the Arab political situation within Palestine. More importantly, CID was running a network of informants that extended into Lebanon and Syria.¹⁴² CID was able to track the actions of Hajj Amin al-Husayni and his supporters in exile in Lebanon and Syria. While these leaders encouraged further attacks, intelligence reports indicated that al-Husayni's influence in Palestine had diminished

¹³⁷ Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement*, 250.

¹³⁸ Ilan Pappé and Yael Lotan, *The Rise and Fall of a Palestinian Dynasty: the Husaynis, 1700-1948* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2010), 295.

¹³⁹ Harouvi, *Palestine Investigate: The Story of the Palestine CID*, 5–15; Khalidi, *The Iron Cage*, 112.

¹⁴⁰ Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement*, 251.

¹⁴¹ Horne, *A Job Well Done*, 475-476; Harouvi, *Palestine Investigated*, 5:22.

¹⁴² HA 47-80, Intelligence Summary No: 28/39, 30 March 1939; HA 47-83, Intelligence Summary No: 36/39, 20 May, 1939.

somewhat in exile. In an intelligence summary dated August 18, 1939, CID reported that al-Husayni met with a number of supporters in Beirut. “Great concern was expressed at the precarious position of the rebel movement, and various proposals were discussed with the object of regaining the support lost during the last six months.”¹⁴³ The report indicated that a chief concern for al-Husayni was propaganda from the Opposition Party, led by the Nashashibi family, which was actively recruiting local leaders to support a return to negotiations with the British.¹⁴⁴ While the Nashashibi faction continued to be a minority party, the revolt had run out of steam in Palestine.¹⁴⁵ In a report dated February 1, 1940, Arthur Giles, who had replaced Rice as Inspector General in 1938, wrote, “There is little political activity in Palestine at present, the majority of the Arab population being primarily concerned with matters affecting their individual livelihood.”¹⁴⁶ The situation continued to improve throughout 1940, and by October of that year, CID was reporting that many Palestinian Arabs were beginning to see the economic benefits of a Palestine without violence.¹⁴⁷

Conclusion

By the end of the Arab Revolt, the now 5,400 strong Palestine Police Force had evolved into a completely different organization than the one that existed before the revolt. Throughout the first two decades of the British Mandate for Palestine, the

¹⁴³ HA 47-97, Intelligence Summary August 18, 1939.

¹⁴⁴ HA 47-84, Intelligence Summary, 31 May, 1939.

¹⁴⁵ A.J. Sherman, *Mandate Days: British Lives in Palestine, 1918-1948* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1998), 131.

¹⁴⁶ HA 47-106, Intelligence Summary 1 February, 1940.

¹⁴⁷ HA 47-114, Intelligence Summary, 14 October, 1940.

Palestine Police Force was constantly reorganizing itself in response to meet the security challenges that arose. This constant evolution was driven by the circumstances within Palestine, specifically the growth of the *Yishuv* and the changes, demographic, economic, and political, that were gradually transforming Palestinian society. The catalyst for these changes within Palestine was British policy decided in London. However, as the evidence reveals, throughout the first two decades of Mandatory rule, there was little coordination between policy makers in London, and security personnel on the ground in Palestine. Instead, security forces operating at the tactical level found themselves constantly having to adjust their methods to combat new threats that emerged from strategic changes. What dominated these tactical changes was the need to keep the peace within Palestine.

As Arab discontent with this transformation of Palestine grew, the PPF was confronted with first riots and then open rebellion, which constantly forced the police to adopt new tactics in order to keep the peace. This focus on keeping the peace came to dominate British security strategy for Palestine. Changes made to the Palestine Police Force, such as those instituted by Herbert Dowbiggin and Charles Tegart, were in direct response to earlier shortcomings. More importantly, these changes focused on the immediate threats, meaning that any new challenge would require another adjustment to the organization and capabilities of the police force.

The experiences of the 1920s and 1930s reveal some of the key points of British security doctrine for Palestine. Throughout this period, it was the police that were directly responsible for security within Palestine, while the British army was called in to restore order only when things truly got out of hand. In some ways, the intervention of the army

can be viewed as a rubric to measure the success of the Palestine Police Force's efforts.¹⁴⁸ Additionally, Britain's reliance on native support in her colonial ventures was carried over into security policy as well. Until 1937, the Palestine Police Force was predominantly Arab, and when Arab constables began to be seen as unreliable, the British turned to the *Yishuv* for assistance. The Jewish Settlement Police provided another native contingent in the security setup for Palestine, and the Special Night Squads and Arab militias that served at the end of the Arab Revolt also fit this model. Perhaps the most significant development in this time was the evolution of the CID, which went from being a small, insignificant department within the Police to the most well respected intelligence unit in the Middle East. Each of these developments grew out of the experiences of the previous twenty years, and as the 1940s revealed a new threat, this time coming from the *Yishuv*, the British would return to this model in their efforts to restore order.

¹⁴⁸ Thomas, *Empires of Intelligence*, 231.

CHAPTER THREE

Chasing Stern: British Counterterrorism Operations, 1939-1942

Despite the successful suppression of Arab insurgents, tranquility in Palestine remained elusive, as British policy changes for Palestine introduced a new dynamic into the security situation in Palestine, Jewish terrorism. Within the *Yishuv*, the White Paper was seen as a betrayal of earlier British promises, and anti-British sentiment began to grow. These sentiments soon turned to action, when members of the *Irgun Zvai Leumi* began attacking British installations in protest of the new policy. While the Irgun suspended anti-British operations when the Second World War began in September of 1939, another threat emerged from the *Yishuv*. In 1940, Avraham Stern, a former member of the Irgun high command, formed a new group in the hopes of sparking an anti-British uprising. Known as the Stern Gang, the group began a two-year terrorist campaign that drew the attention of the Palestine Police Force.

This first iteration of Jewish terrorism brought with it a new challenge to be overcome. Whereas the Arab revolt had been largely rural in nature, most Irgun and Stern Gang operations would take place in urban areas. Furthermore, while the Arab Revolt was a loosely organized guerilla campaign aimed at targets of opportunity, the IZL and Stern Gang attempted, to varying degrees of success, attacks on targets that furthered their operational and strategic objectives. In response, the Palestine Police Force, in particular CID, was forced to realign its security dispositions in order to counter this emerging threat. That this transition was successful is a testament to the significant improvements made to the PPF over the preceding twenty years. From 1939 until 1942,

the Palestine Police Force took the lead in counterterror operations against both the Irgun and the Stern Gang, relying on the growing intelligence capabilities of CID to suppress the emerging threat of Jewish terrorism.

The White Paper of 1939

In 1939, war loomed large over Palestine. The Arab Revolt was in its last throes, and the British had begun preparations for war with Hitler's Germany. During the final stage of the Arab Revolt, the British Government in London again considered its policy for Palestine. The Report of the Peel Commission of 1937 had declared the British Mandate for Palestine unworkable in its current form, but the early partition proposal had been rejected vehemently by Palestine's Arab community, as well as leaders in the surrounding Arab countries, most notably Ibn Saud, king of Saudi Arabia, and Hikmat Sulayman, Prime Minister of British-controlled Iraq.¹ The situation in Iraq was particularly dire, as Sulayman's government had collapsed later in 1937, and anti-British sentiment was growing in the country.² Faced with the prospect of a long war with Germany, the British were loathe to commence hostilities without solidifying Arab support for the war effort.

In a bid to shore up Arab support for the coming war, on May 17, the British Government announced a new policy for Palestine. Known as the MacDonald White Paper, the document declared that conditions for a Jewish national home had been met and Britain would create a bi-national state in Palestine within ten years. The White

¹ Yehoshua Porath, *The Palestinian-Arab National Movement, 1929-1939: From Riots to Rebellion* (London: Frank Cass, 1977), 230-231; Basheer M. Nafi, *Arabism, Islamism and the Palestine Question, 1908-1941: A Political History* (Reading, UK: Ithaca Press, 1998), 270-275).

² Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 94-98.

Paper explicitly stated that the British assumption of Arab acceptance of Zionism had been incorrect, reading:

In the view of the Royal Commission the association of the policy of the Balfour Declaration with the Mandate system implied the belief that Arab hostility to the former would sooner or later be overcome. It has been the hope of British Governments ever since the Balfour Declaration was issued that in time the Arab population, recognizing the advantages to be derived from Jewish settlement and development in Palestine, would become reconciled to the further growth of the Jewish National Home. This hope has not been fulfilled.³

Having failed to gain Arab acceptance for the Balfour Declaration, the British Government had decided to reverse course. After an initial allowance of 25,000 Jewish refugees from Europe, Jewish immigration would be limited to 75,000 over the next five years. Furthermore, the White Paper declared, “there is now in certain areas no room for further transfers of Arab land, whilst in some other areas such transfers of land must be restricted if Arab cultivators are to maintain their existing standard of life and a considerable landless Arab population is not soon to be created.”⁴ As a consequence, land transfers from Arab landowners to Jewish purchasers were to be severely restricted and regulated at the discretion of the High Commissioner.

Within the *Yishuv*, the White Paper was seen as a betrayal of earlier British promises, and anti-British sentiment began to grow. In the years since Hitler’s rise to power, Palestine’s Jewish population had jumped from 209,207 in 1933 to 427,812 in 1939 as thousands of German Jews fled Nazi persecution.⁵ By 1939, Jews now made up 29 percent of the total Palestinian population. Immigration was seen as critical to the success of Zionism, and the fears of continued Nazi persecution in Europe made

³ Palestine, *Statement of Policy*, Cmnd. 6019 (London: HMSO, 1939).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Great Britain. Naval Intelligence Division, *Palestine and Transjordan*. (Oxford, 1943), 172.

immigration all the more important. With fears that the White Paper had closed off an escape route for European Jews fleeing Hitler, anti-British sentiments began to grow in the *Yishuv*. These sentiments soon turned to action, when members of the *Irgun Zvai Leumi* began attacking British installations in protest of the new policy. By May of 1939, the security forces in Palestine found themselves operating against a new opponent in a vastly different political environment.

Security Posture in 1939

As the Arab Revolt ran out of steam throughout the spring and summer of 1939, the British began to withdraw the army units that had been sent to Palestine for counter-insurgency operations, and security responsibilities for Palestine again reverted to the Palestine Police Force. By the summer of 1939, the force numbered 5,400 men, 3,000 of whom were British. After the Arab contingent of the force had proven unreliable during the Revolt, it was decided that British officers and policemen would constitute the majority of the uniformed police force in case sectarian disturbances arose in the future.⁶ British war planners also viewed Palestine as an important base to support operations in North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean. Given the massive amount of logistics required to support operations in Syria and North Africa, a number of military installations were set up in Palestine, including hospitals, air fields, arms depots, and barracks. The Palestine Police Force took on the added duties of providing security for military installations. To provide the police with the additional manpower needed, a

⁶ Harouvi, *Palestine Investigated*, Ch. 5, 38-39.

recruitment drive enlisted over 4000 primarily Jewish Palestinians to serve as auxiliary police.⁷

By 1939, the CID had also improved its security dispositions. The CID now numbered 473 total detectives, 237 of whom were British.⁸ The organization's political section, responsible for intelligence activities, had also grown with the addition of seventy British detectives. By 1939, the intelligence section of the CID had at least 120 British detectives, and CID's Arab Affairs section was considered the best in the Middle East.⁹ Despite the improvements to police intelligence, CID possessed one glaring weakness in 1939: the lack of a Jewish Affairs section. This omission was a result of intense collaboration between the British administration and the *Yishuv* in the years of the Arab Revolt, as both the British and the Jews had been united in the common purpose of ending the violence. Throughout the Arab Revolt, the British and Jewish intelligence services had collaborated heavily, with many Haganah intelligence reports translated into English and shared with British intelligence.¹⁰ Additionally, Jewish police officers and auxiliary police provided additional manpower during the Revolt. The British had even trained some units of the Haganah to serve alongside the security forces in combat roles. While this cooperation had allowed the British to focus their efforts on defeating the Arab insurgency, as a consequence, British intelligence on Jewish affairs was minimal. This gap in the intelligence became critical in early 1939, as rumors began to circulate amongst Zionist leaders that the British government planned to reverse its support of the

⁷ Horne, *A Job Well Done*, 254; Morris, *The Road to Jerusalem*, 58; Harouvi, *Palestine Investigated*, 38.

⁸ Harouvi, *Palestine Investigated*, ch. 5, 25.

⁹ Horne, *A Job Well Done*, 475-476; Harouvi, *Palestine Investigated*, 5:22.

¹⁰ Wagner, *Britain and the Jewish Underground*, 26; Cohen, *Army of Shadows*, 155-156.

Balfour Declaration. As tensions with the *Yishuv* began to grow, CID began reporting on Jewish Affairs in February of 1939.¹¹ After the publication of the White Paper in May of 1939, these CID intelligence reports on the *Yishuv* increased dramatically.

The Shifting Tide

The publication of the MacDonald White Paper in 1939 introduced a new dynamic in Palestine. After working closely with the British during the Arab Revolt, the Zionist leadership had hoped to gain political concessions from the British Government. Instead, Zionist leaders from both the left and right were angered when the British instead unveiled a policy highly favorable to Arab interests. The limitations on Jewish immigration into Palestine and the end of land transfers were a direct threat to the continued growth of the *Yishuv* within Palestine, and, to many Zionist leaders, a British reversal from the earlier promises made in the Balfour Declaration. Jewish leaders across the political spectrum fervently denounced the White Paper as a betrayal by the British and the end of the Balfour Declaration. Even before the document's publication in May, there had been increased political activity within the *Yishuv* in protest of the expected policy change. In March, CID reported that, "Jews of every shade of political thought are united in emphatically repudiating the contemplated British proposals involving the abrogation of the Mandate and the Balfour Declaration."¹² The report also included a call for a change in Britain's intelligence posture in Palestine. "It is essential to try to gauge the extent to which the Jews may be expected to resist by overt actions the imposition of

¹¹ Harouvi, *Palestine Investigated*, 5:30.

¹² HA 47-78, Intelligence Summary No: 19/39, 17 March, 1939.

a policy frustrating their ambitions.”¹³ While Arab affairs continued to be monitored, the changing political situation necessitated a shift in Britain’s intelligence posture towards a focus to Jewish affairs.

CID’s realignment was given more urgency after members of the Jewish underground began attacking British installations after the publication of the White Paper in May of 1939. The attacks were carried out by the *Irgun Zvai Leumi* (National Defense Movement, IZL or the Irgun), a Jewish underground militia that had broken away from the Haganah in 1932. The Irgun’s split with Haganah had come about because of the Haganah’s policy of *havlaga*, or self-restraint, in the face of Arab disturbances throughout the 1930s, which the Irgunists viewed as misguided in the face of the increasing violence of the 1930s.¹⁴ Since 1937, the Irgun had carried out a series of bombings within Arab population centers in retaliation for attacks on Jews during the Arab Revolt. The largest attack took place on July 25, 1938, when thirty-nine Arabs were killed by two Irgun bombs hidden in the Haifa market.¹⁵ By 1939, the Palestine Police Force were conducting operations against the Irgun, making several arrests. The most significant breakthrough came on May 9, when David Raziel, commander of the Irgun, was arrested by CID at Lydda Airfield. CID had circulated Raziel’s passport photograph in an effort to arrest the IZL commander deemed responsible for the early violence.¹⁶

¹³ HA 47-78, Intelligence Summary No: 19/39, 17 March, 1939.

¹⁴ Shmuel Katz, *Days of Fire* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1968), 14-15; Anita Shapira, *Land and Power: The Zionists Resort to Force, 1881-1948* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 242.

¹⁵ Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 147; J. Bowyer Bell, *Terror Out of Zion: The Fight for Israeli Independence* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1996), 42.

¹⁶ Ben-Ami, *Years of Wrath, Days of Glory*, 229; Joseph Heller, *The Stern Gang: Ideology, Politics, and Terror, 1940-1949* (London: Frank Cass, 1995), 59.

However, Raziel's arrest had little impact on the Irgun's ability to carry out major attacks after the publication of the MacDonald White Paper in 1939.

The Irgun campaign against the British began in six days after the House of Commons voted to approve the White Paper. On May 29, members of the Irgun attacked the Rex Cinema in Jerusalem, killing five people and wounding eighteen.¹⁷ The theater, which was a popular venue for British and Arab patrons, was chosen due to its proximity to important British administrative buildings in Jerusalem, such as the police and CID headquarters.¹⁸ Other attacks soon followed. In May, a Jewish policeman, Arie Polonski, was assassinated by the Irgun.¹⁹ On June 12, the Central Post Office in Jerusalem was blown up.²⁰ Throughout the summer, Irgun continued attacks in protest of the White Paper. As Irgun member Yitshaq Ben-Ami later wrote, "The *Irgun* reacted with armed attacks throughout the country, attempting to show the British that the pressures the Mufti and Kaukji used could be brought into play even more resoundingly by the Jews."²¹

Meeting a New Challenge

In light of the new disturbances in the Jewish community, the CID quickly adapted its intelligence apparatus to monitor the new security threat. Recently reassigned as commander of the CID for the Lydda District (Jaffa/Tel Aviv), Geoffrey Morton found

¹⁷ Ya'akov Eliav and Mordecai Schreiber, *Wanted* (New York: Shengold Publishers, 1984), 73.

¹⁸ Eliav, *Wanted*, 67.

¹⁹ Nahman Ben-Yehuda, *Political Assassinations by Jews: A Rhetorical Device for Justice* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 152-153.

²⁰ Bell, *Terror Out of Zion*, 48.

²¹ Yitshaq Ben-Ami, *Years of Wrath, Days of Glory: Memoirs from the Irgun* (New York: R. Speller, 1982), 229

his own intelligence section's records deficient, particularly in regards to intelligence on Jewish political groups. "I went to some pains to build up the criminal and political records in my formation; every bit of information or gossip and every name which came to our notice for any reason was carefully sifted, assessed and indexed for future reference. This work was done solely by British police."²² The Palestine Police Force had learned a crucial lesson from previous disturbances: native policemen were too much of an intelligence risk when policing their own communities. While Jewish and Arab detectives continued serve in CID, political intelligence was to be processed by British detectives in order to prevent intelligence leaks.²³

During the tactical realignment, CID monitored the activities of both the leftist Jewish Agency and the right-wing Revisionist Party. An intelligence summary from May 29 reported that the Jewish Agency was planning violent demonstrations to protest the White Paper. The report made special mention of the Haganah's changing attitude towards military restraint. "The policy of Havlaga (self-restraint) which has been rigidly obeyed by adherents of the Jewish Agency during the period of the disturbances, has now been abandoned, and, it is reported, the Hagana have reverted to the policy of 'an eye for an eye.'"²⁴ In a follow up report, dated June 7, CID reported that the leaders of the Jewish Agency had scuttled the planned demonstration, but was unsure of this was for reasons of politics or a reluctance to engage in violence. The report also made note of Ze'ev Jabotinsky's attempts capitalize on *Yishuv* frustrations with the Jewish Agency's failure

²² Geoffrey J. Morton, *Just the Job: Some Experiences of a Colonial Policeman* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1957), 118.

²³ Horne, *A Job Well Done*, 475; Morton, *Just the Job*, 119.

²⁴ HA 47-84, Intelligence Summary, May 29, 1939.

to prevent the publication of the White Paper in a bid to gain support for the Revisionist Party. Furthermore, the report correctly stated that Jabotinsky was opposed to the IZL attacking British targets in the hopes of finding a political solution to the problem.²⁵ One critical issue that was unresolved at the time of the report was the connection between the IZL and Jabotinsky. The report clearly shows that CID was unsure of the size of the Irgun, nor had they determined what links existed between the group and Jabotinsky's Revisionist movement. The IZL attacks of May were described as actions taken by extremists within the Revisionist movement, which were not supported by more moderate Revisionists. The assassination of Arie Polonski was described as an act by extremists "to wipe off 'an old score'."²⁶

The early reports on Jewish affairs offer insights into what the police knew about the *Yishuv* in 1939. CID had access to informants in the *Yishuv's* two major political entities, the Jewish Agency and the Revisionist Party. Within a month of the publication of the White Paper, the British had determined that the attacks of May and June were the work of a small number of Zionists, while the political leadership of both the Left and the Right preferred a more moderate approach. In fact, as early as April, a month before the Irgun attacks began, CID was reporting that both the Jewish Agency and Revisionist Party leadership preferred a political solution, and that the majority of the *Yishuv* would follow this policy:

It is reported from a well-informed source that the form of protest which will be adopted by the majority of Jews in answer to the imposition of a British policy unfavourable to Jewry will be entirely of a passive nature . . . The anti-Semitic policy pursued by the majority of European countries has resulted in the supersuasion of the ideal of Zionism by the urgent need for territory where Jews

²⁵ Ben-Ami, *Years of Wrath, Days of Glory*, 206; Shapira, *Land and Power*, 246.

²⁶ HA 47-84, Intelligence Summary, 7 June, 1939.

may live unpersecuted, and as such territory can only become available by the goodwill and assistance of the British Government, the Jews will accept the policy of the British Government without active demur.²⁷

That CID was able to quickly build up a Jewish Affairs section after spending most of the previous decade focused on Arab affairs is a testament to the professionalism of the organization. Many of the officers had gained valuable experience during the disturbances of the late 1930s. Geoffrey Morton cited his earlier service in the Arab city of Jenin as crucial in allowing him to develop the Lydda CID's political section. More importantly, Morton's posting to the Lydda district brought him into contact with CID's only Jewish Affairs experts, Tom Wilkin, who was fluent in Hebrew and had become one of the most important people involved in the realignment of CID. "He knew more about Jewish politics and organisations than the rest of the Palestine Police put together."²⁸ By the summer of 1939, CID's Jewish Affairs section was set in place, giving up-to-date reports on the Jewish political situation and developing a knowledge base on the Jewish Underground.

Despite the improvements to the CID, the Irgun continued to make attacks throughout the summer of 1939. In June, the group blew up telecommunications installations in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, targeting the telephone lines that served Arab and British sections.²⁹ On June 6, 115 Irgun members set bombs at twenty-three separate locations in Jerusalem.³⁰ The attacks revealed the capabilities of the Irgun, who were able to undertake major operations that required coordination, technical expertise, and good

²⁷ HA 47-80 Intelligence Summary No: 25/39, 13 April, 1939.

²⁸ Morton, *Just the Job*, 118;

²⁹ Eliav, *Wanted*, 74; Heller, *The Stern Gang*, 50; Ben-Ami, *Years of Wrath, Days of Glory*, 230.

³⁰ Eliav, *Wanted*, 75.

intelligence to create such a major disturbance. In several attacks, members of the Palestine Police Force were killed or wounded. One CID bomb disposal expert was killed while attempting to disarm unexploded ordinance after an attack on the Central Police Station in Jerusalem.³¹

In response to the violence, the police began to conduct searches of Jewish neighborhoods following the same procedures they had used in the Arab Revolt. A neighborhood in question would be cordoned off by policemen, and detectives then conducted a house-to-house search for suspects.³² Informants were also used to gather information, although these were often hard to find, given the anger throughout the *Yishuv* towards British policy and fears of retaliation by the Irgun.³³ Despite the difficulties in gaining informants, the Palestine Police Force's search effort and patrols began to put the members of the Irgun under pressure. As Ya'akov Eliav later recalled, "An Irgun member always had to use caution, but now he had to redouble his watchfulness, go into a deeper underground."³⁴

In response to the increased pressure, the Irgun began targeting CID personnel. In August, CID detective Ralph Cairns was assassinated by the Irgun, who claimed he tortured imprisoned members of the group.³⁵ After surveillance on Cairns for several days, the IZL placed an improvised explosive device on his regular route to work. On

³¹ Eliav, *Wanted*, 78; Bell, *Terror Out of Zion*, 48.

³² Eliav, *Wanted*, 78

³³ Victor Henry Douglas Cannings, Interview by John Knight, February 27, 2006, Palestine Police Force Project, Middle East Centre, St. Antony's College, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK; Morton; *Just the Job*, 119.

³⁴ Eliav, *Wanted*, 79.

³⁵ HA 47-92, Intelligence Summary No: 57/39, 1 September, 1939.

August 26, Cairns and another detective, Ronald Barker, were killed in the blast.³⁶ In response, the police conducted more raids on suspected IZL hideouts. On August 31, 1939, Tom Wilkin led a CID raid on a meeting of the Irgun high command, arresting Avraham “Yair” Stern and three other senior IZL leaders, along with several other members of the group.³⁷ By the beginning of the war, CID had apprehended the bulk of Irgun’s leadership, dealing a major blow to the operational effectiveness of the IZL.

CID’s first venture into the Jewish political scene is revealing. After years of having very few resources dedicated to monitoring Jewish politics, CID was able to quickly develop an effective intelligence apparatus that gave them timely and reliable information on the mindset of Jewish political leadership. CID’s response to the attacks of the Irgun also shows the improvements made to security. The threat of the Irgun was serious. Members of the group displayed a serious understanding of military discipline and technical expertise in areas such as surveillance and the use of explosives. Moreover, the attacks were often coordinated to create a major disturbance. The early reports on the Irgun, reveal that the group’s campaign had initially caught the PPF off guard. CID had little information related to the IZL, assuming it was simply a wing of the Revisionist Party.³⁸ This dearth of intelligence was due to the secretive nature of the Irgun and the lack of willing informants. However, as the capture of the IZL high command shows, the CID was able to gain enough information on the group to begin making arrests.

Throughout the summer, CID’s knowledge base on the IZL grew, and the police were

³⁶ Eliav, *Wanted*, 97-100; Heller, *The Stern Gang*, 54; Ami Pedahzur and Arie Perliger, *Jewish Terrorism in Israel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 14-15.

³⁷ Katz, *Days of Fire*, 44; Bell, *Terror Out of Zion*, 48-49; Ben-Ami, *Years of Wrath, Days of Glory*, 235; Eliav, *Wanted*, 103; Harouvi, *Palestine Investigated*, 5:40.

³⁸ HA- 47-84, Intelligence Summary, 7 June, 1939.

able to put the Irgun under increasing pressure. A series of arrests in the summer of 1939 decapitated the Irgun's leadership, and by August, the majority of the Irgun's high command was in prison. Unlike the security response to previous disturbances, in 1939, the CID was able to quickly counter a new and unknown threat.

A Wartime Truce

The outbreak of the Second World War significantly altered the political situation within Palestine. With Hitler's invasion of Poland in September, the *Yishuv* found itself torn between opposing British policy as stated in the White Paper of 1939 and supporting the British war effort against Nazi Germany, the most direct threat to the Jewish people as a whole. Immediately, the leadership of both the Jewish Agency and the Revisionist Party declared their support for the British war effort. Ze'ev Jabotinsky called for the formation of a Jewish brigade to serve as part of the British Army. The Jewish Agency presented the Mandatory authorities with a list of over 130,000 Jews who were willing to serve within the British Army.³⁹ During the war, some 60,000 Palestinian Jews volunteered to serve in the British war effort, and over 30,000 did serve in some capacity.⁴⁰ The intelligence division of Haganah, known as SHAY, shared intelligence with the British army throughout the war.⁴¹ Haganah members such as Moshe Dayan and Yigal Allon, who would both later achieve fame as commanders in the Israeli Defense

³⁹ Tom Segev, *One Palestine, Complete: Jews and Arabs Under the British Mandate* (New York: Henry Holt & Company, LLC., 2000), 450.

⁴⁰ Martin Sugarman, *Fighting Back: British Jewry's Military Contribution in the Second World War* (Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2010), xiv.

⁴¹ Wagner, *Britain and the Jewish Underground*, 27-29;

Forces, served during the British invasion of Syria in 1941.⁴² Throughout the *Yishuv*, many Jews rallied to support the fight against Nazi Germany.

CID's political section followed these developments with great interest. On September 14, 1939, a report was circulated that detailed the early Jewish support for the war effort. "As a result of War developments the minds of the Jewish community are naturally centered on the part they will take in the International struggle and the ways and means by which World Jewry can obtain the maximum benefit from the conflict."⁴³ One noteworthy development mentioned in the report was the Irgun's declaration that it would "suspend all terrorist activities to ensure that no obstacle is placed in the path of the British engaged in fighting 'Jewry's arch-enemy, Hitlerism'."⁴⁴ While CID was initially skeptical of this development, the information was indeed correct. After a meeting with British authorities, including the CID commander, Arthur Giles, David Raziel pledged that the IZL would cease attacks on British installations. In October, Raziel and a number of other imprisoned Irgun members were released.⁴⁵ A number of Irgun members enlisted in the British Army, while others served in less official capacities. Raziel himself was killed in Iraq while on a mission for the British Army in 1941.⁴⁶ For the time being, tensions with the *Yishuv* had cooled, and the Palestine Police Force was freed up for the war effort.

⁴² Anita Shapira, *Yigal Allon, Native Son: A Biography* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 111-112.

⁴³ HA 47-93, Intelligence Summary No: 59/39, 14 September, 1939.

⁴⁴ HA 47-93, Intelligence Summary No: 59/39, 14 September, 1939.

⁴⁵ Ben-Ami, *Years of Wrath, Days of Glory*, 236-237; Pedahzur, *Jewish Terrorism in Israel*, 15.

⁴⁶ Saul Zadka, *Blood in Zion: How the Jewish Guerillas Drove the British Out of Palestine* (Washington: Brassey's, 1995), 17; Ben-Ami, *Years of Wrath, Days of Glory*, 246; Bell, *Terror Out of Zion*, 55.

Throughout the Second World War, the Palestine Police Force fielded additional duties to assist the military. In addition to providing security at military installations, policemen were used as drivers in the transportation service to help with logistics. The CID was also recruited for the war, assisting in counter-espionage operations to ferret out any Axis agents operating in Palestine.⁴⁷ Throughout the war, British intelligence resources were marshaled to prevent the rise of any fifth-column agents who would assist the Axis forces.⁴⁸ This was a particularly important concern in Palestine. With Vichy-controlled Lebanon and Syria to the north, and Rommel driving east through North Africa, the threat of invasion loomed large over Palestine.⁴⁹ It was CID's focus on potential enemy agents that led it to discover a new terrorist organization coming from the *Yishuv*: the Stern Gang.

A New Sicarii

Despite the Irgun's decision to suspend its anti-British operations, not everyone in the organization agreed with the decision. Avraham "Yair" Stern, a member of the High Command and one of the more extremist members of the militia, was one of those who disagreed. In Stern's view, the British were the primary enemy of the Jewish people, not Hitler's Nazi Party.⁵⁰ As one biographer later wrote, "Stern argued that the Germans fit the Hebrew definition of a *tsorer* (hateful foes of the Jews in the tradition of Haman, the would-be destroyer of Persia's Jews), but he insisted the British were the *oyev* (enemy)

⁴⁷ Horne, *A Job Well Done*, 251-255.

⁴⁸ Christopher Andrew, *Defend the Realm: The Authorized History of MI5* (New York: Random House, Inc., 2009), 223-224.

⁴⁹ Segev, *One Palestine, Complete*, 452.

⁵⁰ Shapira, *Land and Power*, 346.

which, as long as it forcibly occupied the Jewish country, needed to be fought.”⁵¹ In August 1940, after being passed over for command of the IZL in favor of Raziel’s reinstatement, Stern left the Irgun and formed a new movement, which he called *Irgun Tzvai Leumi b’Israel* (The National Defense Movement in Israel), and which the British referred to as the Stern Gang, or the Stern Group.⁵²

In its early days, the Stern Gang was extremely limited, both in size and resources available. Fifty members of the IZL joined Stern in his new organization. Ya’akov Eliav was one such recruit. Eliav had been a member of the Irgun since 1935. He had received extensive military training with the Irgun, and had even participated in an Irgun training camp set up in Poland, where he received instruction on explosives, sabotage, and combat training from members of the Polish Army.⁵³ In 1939, Eliav had been instrumental in Irgun’s attacks on British installations, serving as commander of the Jerusalem division of the IZL.⁵⁴ Stern also recruited several members of the Irgun high command, including Hanoch Kalay, who had served as acting commander when Raziel was arrested, and Binyamin Zeroni, who, after the arrest of the High Command in August, had been the only IZL commander not in prison.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Zev Golan, *Stern: The Man and His Gang* (Tel Aviv: Yair Publishing, 2011), 30.

⁵² Ibid., 32; Emmanuel Katz, *LECHI: Fighters for the Freedom of Israel (FFI)* (Tel Aviv: Yair Publishers, 1987), 6; Eliav, *Wanted*, 122; Stern’s new offshoot from the Irgun was originally called *Irgun Tzvai Leumi b’Israel*, before adopting the name *Lohamei Herut Israel* (Fighters for the Freedom of Israel, or LEHI) in 1942, after Stern’s death. In intelligence summaries and other media, the British referred to the group as the Stern Group or later the Stern Gang. For clarity, the group organization will be referred to as the Stern Gang or the Stern Group throughout the discussion of the organization until Stern’s death

⁵³ Eliav, *Wanted*, 62-63.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 67.

⁵⁵ Heller, *The Stern Gang*, 77; Eliav, *Wanted*, 67; Ben-Ami, *Years of Wrath, Days of Glory*, 234; Bell, *Terror Out of Zion*, 51.

From its inception, the Stern Gang was built around a core of former Irgun members who had experience in planning and executing major attacks. These men had all received extensive military training and had risen through the ranks of Irgun. Despite the small size of the group, the Stern Gang possessed a number of men who had been fighting in Palestine for the previous four years. Another, more serious problem for Stern in these early days was a lack of resources. After the split, Raziel and the Irgun high command took control of the weapons caches and treasury, which Stern had hoped to gain.⁵⁶ With no money and few weapons, Stern and his followers had few resources to support their fledgling revolution. The decision was made to turn to bank robbery and extortion of prominent Jewish families in order to gain the money to buy arms for a wider struggle. Early on, the group attempted several small holdups, robbing local businessmen on their way to make deposits.⁵⁷ By late 1940, the Stern Gang had begun to make its presence known to the British authorities.

Despite the early robberies and attacks, it was Stern's contact with the Axis powers of Italy and Germany that drew the most attention from the British administration. Stern's ideology taught that the British were the most significant enemy of the Jewish people, and he was willing to work with anyone to achieve their defeat. Even before he left the IZL in August of 1940, Stern had reached out to the Italian Consul in Jerusalem in the hopes of establishing a working relationship.⁵⁸ Stern tried again in the fall of 1940, sending Naftali Lubentchik to Beirut, Lebanon, where he met with a German foreign service officer, Werner von Hentig, who passed Stern's offer of assistance on to

⁵⁶ Bell, *Terror Out of Zion*, 65-66; Katz, *LECHI*, 12; Eliav, *Wanted*, 129.

⁵⁷ Morton, *Just the Job*, 112.

⁵⁸ Heller, *The Stern Gang*, 78;

Berlin.⁵⁹ While the Germans ultimately ignored the offer, CID was unaware of this development. Stern's entreaties to the Axis powers made his followers a potential fifth column.

CID's First Break

The Stern Gang first came to the attention of CID at the end of August 1940. In a report dated August 28, CID noted that certain elements of the Jewish right were rumored to be pro-Italian. The report also stated that members of the Revisionist Party's leadership were taking steps to control these more extreme elements.⁶⁰ Without a clear understanding of the new group's origins, CID was content to take the Revisionist leaders at their word, and Arthur Giles, recommended allowing the Revisionists to handle the matter internally.⁶¹ Giles went so far as to meet with leaders of both the Revisionist party and the Irgun to enlist their help in monitoring Stern's attempts to contact the Italians.⁶² However, in the aftermath of the Anglo-Palestine Bank robbery, CID began to take a more active interest in the activities of the Stern Gang.

On September 16, 1940, members of the Stern Gang under Ya'akov Eliav robbed the Anglo-Palestine Bank in Tel Aviv, making off with 5,000 pounds. One member of the group, Shmuel Kaplan, was arrested.⁶³ The proceeds from this robbery were soon used to fund the Stern Gang's first major attack on the British, when the group bombed the

⁵⁹ Golan, *Stern*, 36; Eliav, *Wanted*, 145-146; Bell, *Terror Out of Zion*, 64-65.

⁶⁰ HA 47-113, Intelligence Summary No: 33/40, 28 August 1940.

⁶¹ HA 47-46, *The Irgun Tzvai Leumi and the Stern Group*, 10 October, 1940.

⁶² Harouvi, *Palestine Investigated*, 8:15.

⁶³ Eliav, *Wanted*, 130-134; Harouvi, *Palestine Investigated*, 6:4; Golan, *Stern*, 33; Bell, *Terror Out of Zion*, 65;

offices of the Immigration Department in Haifa.⁶⁴ The investigation into the Anglo-Palestine Bank robbery marked a turning point in the CID's monitoring of the Stern Group. The investigation was completed under the authority of a Jewish detective named Shlomo Sofer, and focused on regular police work, including the interrogation of Shmuel Kaplan.⁶⁵ While Kaplan refused to identify any of his co-conspirators, Sofer was able to track down Kaplan's apartment, which had been used as an IZL safe-house in the past. Detectives canvassed the neighborhood with photographs of suspects and identified several of Kaplan's associates. Kaplan's earlier connections with David Raziel and the IZL led CID to believe that the robbery was the work of Avraham Stern's new group. These suspicions were confirmed after Sofer received a letter threatening him if he did not drop the case.⁶⁶ Soon after, CID was able to make a more clear connection between Kaplan and the Stern Gang.

While Sofer completed his investigation, other intelligence was received about the new group. In October, a reliable source indicated that Avraham Stern and his followers were actively pursuing contacts with the Italian government, however Giles' report on the subject indicated that so far there was no evidence to support this claim.⁶⁷ A Jewish informant connected to the group provided CID with a list of the high command of the Stern Gang and a breakdown of the group's structure, which included a list of the separate district commands. The information also clearly linked the culprits of the Anglo-

⁶⁴ Eliav, *Wanted*, 140; Harouvi, *Palestine Investigated*, 6:8; Bell, *Terror Out of Zion*, 66.

⁶⁵ Harouvi, *Palestine Investigated*, 6:4.

⁶⁶ HA 47-46, *Robbery at the Anglo-Palestine Bank, Tel Aviv*, N.A.

⁶⁷ HA 47-46, *The Irgun Tzvai Leumi and the Stern Group*, 10 October, 1940.

Palestine Bank robbery with Stern's second-in-command, Binyamin Zeroni.⁶⁸ In another report, Haifa CID included a list of known Stern Gang associates, warning that the group was seeking to align itself with the Italian government. In one section, the author of the report wrote, "Should an agreement be reached with the Italian mission in Beirut (which is quite possible) there is no doubt that they will provide the Italians with excellent information and may even go so far as to carry out acts of sabotage."⁶⁹ By the end of October, CID viewed Stern's links to the Italian Government as a serious threat.

Soon the police were preparing to move against the Stern Gang. Informants within the *Yishuv* were giving CID information on the group and urged the police to arrest Stern and his followers. In a memorandum, Arthur Giles noted that a number of Jewish informants were providing intelligence that confirmed Stern's appeals to the Italian government. "Persons with whom the C.I.D. are in touch, who have strongly urged that the followers of Stern should be interned include members of the Jewish Agency, a leader of the Maccabi and a responsible Revisionist leader."⁷⁰ This quote is particularly significant in that it reveals that members of the *Yishuv* were willing to cooperate with the British security forces despite the White Paper of 1939. That this cooperation came at the expense of fellow Jews speaks volumes about the depth of the *Yishuv's* antipathy towards the Stern Gang, as well as the willingness of the *Yishuv* to support efforts against supposed Axis agents.

On the evening of November 5, the police were ready to move against Stern. In a coordinated raid, detectives in both Haifa and Tel Aviv were ordered to raid suspected

⁶⁸ HA 47-46, No Heading, 11 October 1940

⁶⁹ HA 47-46, *The Irgun Zvai Leumi*

⁷⁰ HA 47-1, *The Stern Group*, 8 November, 1940.

safe houses of the group. Roadblocks were set up with orders to pay particular attention that Stern and the leadership did not escape.⁷¹ A hand-written letter reporting on the raids stated that the operation was carried on until 4:38 a.m. and a total of fourteen men were arrested in the sweep.⁷² Within two months of the Anglo-Palestine Bank robbery, the Palestine Police Force had conducted a major operation against the Stern Gang, relying on criminal investigation and intelligence gathered from informants. More importantly, the CID had begun to compile files on the members of the Stern Group with accurate information on the group's structure, membership, and activities.

CID's actions in the fall of 1940 offer a revelation into how the police understood the nature of the emerging threat. The Stern Gang was correctly identified as an offshoot of the Jewish right who had hopes of uniting with the Italians against the British. The information received from a Jewish informant was critical in achieving a major haul of Stern Gang militants, but Shlomo Sofer's investigation of the Anglo-Palestine Bank robbery revealed the importance of solid detective work in these early operations against Stern. One thing that was lacking in CID's early analysis was the Stern group's ideology. In their summaries on the Stern Gang, the British detectives focused on Stern's links with Axis agents and did not heavily discuss Stern's ultimate goal of a Jewish state. Stern was an ardent Zionist, and his ideology focused on the rebirth of the State of Israel, which he often described as "the Third Temple."⁷³ Stern's nom-de-guerre, Yair, is further evidence for his nationalist convictions. The name was a reference to Eliezer ben-Yair, commander

⁷¹ HA 47-1, *Musgrove to Eattell*, 5 November, 1940.

⁷² HA 47-1, No Heading, Handwritten letter including a list of fourteen names of members of the group captured in the raids.

⁷³ Heller, *The Stern Gang*, 81-83.

of the Sicarii at Masada, who committed mass suicide during the Jewish Revolt against the Romans in 74 A.D.⁷⁴

However, CID's reports on Stern and his followers do not reference the group's ideology, instead focusing on potential links to the Axis powers. Given Britain's concerns about the danger of Axis agents committing sabotage in Palestine, this focus on a possible fifth column is understandable. In 1940, the Battle of Britain was raging, and Great Britain stood virtually alone in a struggle that threatened the Home Islands. CID's reports on the threat of the Stern Gang in 1940 reflect this same focus on the war effort. On a tactical level, CID was able to gain solid intelligence that allowed them to effect arrests of Stern's followers. However, on a strategic level, the British did not see the Stern Gang in a similar vein to the other members the Zionist underground, the Irgun and the Haganah. The Stern Gang's appeals to the Axis powers led the British to frame the group not as a continuation of the struggle for Jewish statehood, but in light of the struggle with Germany.

Finding Stern

After the initial successes against the Stern Gang in 1940, the British continued to pursue Stern and his followers throughout 1941. British reports on the group throughout 1941 stressed CID's concerns that the Stern Group was preparing to provide assistance to the Italians, although the British still had no proof of these claims. On March 28, CID in the Lydda District reported that rumors within the *Yishuv* indicated that a member of the group had recently travelled to Syria.⁷⁵ By May, the rumors posited that Stern himself

⁷⁴ Golan, *Stern*, 26.

⁷⁵ HA 47-2, Stern Group, 28 March, 1941.

was in Beirut trying to meet with Italian agents.⁷⁶ Within Palestine, CID was monitoring the public's reaction to Stern's exploits. An intelligence summary from May reported that Stern Gang propaganda within the *Yishuv* was not well received and "has produced a feeling of disgust and regret that under present conditions the nucleus of a Quisling movement can exist among the Jewish community within Palestine."⁷⁷ The summary also detailed Jewish Agency and CID suspicions that Stern had in fact gained financial backing from the Italian government. While this was not the case, the report is revealing in that it continues to stress British fears that Stern was preparing a campaign of sabotage within Palestine. Another incorrect report from the time stated that Stern agents were en route to the United States for sabotage operations.⁷⁸

Despite serious concerns that Stern might be appealing to the Axis powers for assistance, the British were unable to confirm this as there was little information available. Many of the reports from 1941 were received from contacts within the Jewish Agency and the Revisionist Party and proved to be more rumor than actionable intelligence. The reality was that CID had few sources of solid intelligence on Stern. This was acknowledged by Arthur Giles in a letter to Police Superintendent Raymond Cafferata in June of 1941. "I would stress the fact that the members of this group are a danger to the war effort in this country and that, accordingly, we must not be squeamish in combatting them. You will realize that it is most difficult to obtain information against these people and that so far what has come to us has been from one source only, but a

⁷⁶ HA 47-3, Abraham Stern, 17 May, 1941.

⁷⁷ HA 47-3, *Intelligence Summary No: 16/41*, 23 May, 1941.

⁷⁸ HA 47-3, *Stern's Group*, 31 May, 1941.

source which has proved most reliable.”⁷⁹ Giles’s letter seems to hint that the source is himself a member of the Stern Gang. Later, Giles notes, “information is hard to get, but what is forthcoming is considered 100% reliable.”⁸⁰

Despite the limited intelligence, the police continued to arrest members of the Stern Gang. In March, Ittamar Ben Haroch, a member of the group, was arrested carrying a map of British military installations. In June, Giles recommended that four recently arrested members of the gang be prosecuted publicly in order to turn Jewish public opinion against the group.⁸¹ Four more members of the Stern Gang were arrested in July in Netanya, having been reported to the police for running an extortion racket in the area.⁸² By August, it appeared that the police were putting real pressure on the Stern Gang. In a memorandum, Giles indicated that intelligence had received word that the Stern Gang was telling members to limit operations to major cities, where they could more easily hide among the population.⁸³ Throughout the fall, the police continued to pressure the extremists. By October, CID received a report that arrests had forced the Stern Gang to reorganize, transferring members from the Galilee district to Tel Aviv and Haifa to compensate for losses.⁸⁴ A more startling revelation came in November, when an Irgun contact finally offered confirmation of Stern’s attempts to recruit Italian support. The IZL had sent an agent to Beirut to pose as a mediator with the Italian government. In

⁷⁹ HA 47-3, Giles to Cafferata, 18 June, 1941.

⁸⁰ HA 47-3, Giles to Cafferata, 18 June, 1941.

⁸¹ HA 47-3, Giles to Griffin, 3 June 1941.

⁸² HA 47-4, Extortion of Money—Nathanya—Stern Group, 22 July, 1941.

⁸³ HA 47-5, Stern Group, 20 August, 1941.

⁸⁴ HA 47-11, The Stern Group, 14 October, 1941.

a meeting, the Stern Group representative presented Stern's proposal, which the Irgun passed on to CID, who determined the document was genuine.⁸⁵ It was CID's contacts with Irgun that provided the first solid evidence of Stern's efforts to contact the Italian government.

By the beginning of 1942, Stern and his followers were under serious pressure from continual British operations. Reeling from repeated arrests and the strain of the continued manhunt, the group began to act in more desperate measures. A daylight robbery on January 9, 1942 quickly turned into a disaster when two members of the group became involved in a shoot-out with British detectives. Two Jewish passersby were killed in the exchange. The incident led to even more anger within the *Yishuv*, already frustrated by Stern's contacts with the Axis powers. As January continued, the police drew closer to Stern.

In response to the growing number of arrests, members of the Stern Gang plotted to kill the detectives leading the investigation, Geoffrey Morton and Tom Wilkin. The plot was put into motion on January 20. That morning, a small explosion was set off in a house at 8 Yael Street in Tel Aviv. When detectives under the command of Solomon Schiff, a Jewish CID veteran, arrived, a secondary explosion was triggered, killing Schiff and two other detectives.⁸⁶ While the explosion missed the primary targets, Morton and Wilkin, the loss of three detectives provoked a serious crackdown from the British. A 2,000-pound reward was offered for information on the Yael Street bombing, and a further 1,000 pounds was offered for information leading to Stern's capture. At the same time, CID detectives began pursuing all possible leads in the hopes of gleaning the

⁸⁵ HA 47-10, The Stern Group, 13 November, 1941

⁸⁶ Eliav, *Wanted*, 150-158; Morton, *Just the Job*, 137-140; Golan, *Stern*, 38.

critical piece of information that would lead them to Stern. The noose was starting to tighten.

The major breakthrough leading to Stern's capture came on January 27. A Jewish informant reported that four men were hiding in an apartment at 30 Dizengoff Street in Tel Aviv. Geoffrey Morton quickly led a detachment of policemen to the apartment, where he surprised three members of the Stern Gang: Zelik Zak, Moshe Zvorai, and Haim Amper. A fourth, Ya'acov Eliav, was in the next room. In his memoirs, Morton claimed that the three men in the apartment immediately moved to attack him, which necessitated that he open fire, wounding all three. Eliav, who was wounded by detectives while he tried to escape out a window, claimed that Morton shot the men in cold blood. In the end, only Zvorai and Eliav survived their wounds.

After the action at 30 Dizengoff, Morton continued his efforts to find Avraham Stern. It was Zvorai and Eliav who provided CID with Stern's location. Morton suspected Zvorai knew Stern's whereabouts after a letter to Zvorai's wife was intercepted which referenced "our guest" several times. Unsure of the address, Morton had a Hebrew-speaking Irish sergeant monitor Zvorai and Eliav in the hospital. During a visit by Eliav's mother, Zvorai asked her to look in on his wife, whispering the address, 8 Mizrachi Street.⁸⁷ The sergeant reported this information to Morton, who sent Tom Wilkin with two other detectives to search the apartment. Stern was found hiding in a wardrobe and arrested. Morton arrived soon after and took charge over the scene. What happened next is heavily disputed. Morton claimed that Stern, after tying his shoe, leaped for a nearby window, and Morton, suspecting that Stern was attempting to detonate hidden explosives,

⁸⁷ Morton, *Just the Job*, 144-145; Eliav, *Wanted*, 168-170.

fired, killing Stern.⁸⁸ Zvorai's wife claimed that Stern was executed by Morton.⁸⁹ In the end, Avraham Stern was dead. For the police, Stern's death was a major victory, and a terrorist and potential enemy agent had been neutralized.

Avraham Stern's death marked the end of the Stern Gang's first period of activity within Palestine. In the aftermath of Stern's death, the group had lost the charismatic leader who was the driving force for much of the group's activity. Throughout 1942 and 1943, the group's ability to conduct operations was severely limited, in no small part due to the decapitation of its leadership. While the Stern Gang would renew itself and conduct operations again, for two years, the threat was neutralized for the time being.

Conclusion

The White Paper of 1939 marked a turning point for the security forces in Palestine. Having spent the 1930s focused on the Arab community, political decisions in London forced the PPF to quickly develop the abilities to respond to an emerging threat from the *Yishuv*. In countering the early campaigns of the Irgun and the Stern Gang, the Palestine Police Force was able to successfully put into practice the security strategy it had spent the previous two decades developing. With the majority of British resources dedicated to the war effort, the PPF was left to its own devices in order to meet the challenges that followed in the wake of the MacDonald White Paper of 1939. The CID's quick development of a Jewish Affairs section proved decisive in allowing the police to quickly determine where any potential threats would emerge from within the *Yishuv*.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 145.

⁸⁹ Eliav, *Wanted*, 171-172.

Despite unfamiliarity with the *Yishuv*, CID was able to correctly predict that it was extremists within the Revisionist party that would prove the most immediate threat.

In examining the British response to the violence in Palestine during the Second World War, the evidence reveals that intelligence had proven to be a significant factor. In tracking down the Stern Gang from 1940 to 1942, CID's greatest successes came after informants provided actionable intelligence that led to arrests. It was information from the Irgun that confirmed Stern's attempts to align with Italy. Informants were also the key to the major arrests in the hunt for Stern, in particular the arrest of Moshe Zvorai and Ya'akov Eliav at 30 Dizengoff, which allowed the CID to determine Stern's whereabouts. The hunt for the Stern Gang revealed an important aspect of the Palestine Police Force's strategy for dealing with threats within the *Yishuv*. Years of contact with members of the various underground militias gave CID access to informants within the Jewish Agency, the Haganah, and the IZL, and each of these groups provided intelligence that was used to track Stern's activities. Of particular interest are the actions of the Irgun, who, fearing a threat to its own membership and influence, informed the British of Stern's activities. In just a few short years, the Irgun would find itself in a similar position as Stern, but for the moment, the militia was willing to work with the British.

CHAPTER FOUR

Cracks in the Foundation: Counterterrorism in Palestine, 1942-1945

After the death of Avraham Stern, the Stern Gang was neutralized for the time being. While reprisal operations were attempted on members of the CID, after 1942, the efforts of the Stern Gang were focused more on rebuilding the organization under the leadership of Nathan Yellin-Mor, Israel Eldad, and Yitzhak Shamir. Having neutralized the most immediate threat to stability in Palestine, the British began to focus their security efforts on monitoring the activities of the Jewish underground. In 1943, these efforts were directed primarily against the Haganah, who had begun to gather arms in anticipation of future violence, either against the Palestinian Arab community or the British themselves. However, as the war in Europe began to draw to a close, the *Irgun Zvai Leumi*, now under the command of Menachem Begin, began a new campaign against the Mandatory Government. Beginning in February of 1944, the Irgun committed a series of eight bombing attacks in a campaign that proved yet another test of the Palestine Police Force's ability to contain disturbances within the country. By this time, the Stern Gang had reconstituted itself, and in 1944 began targeting members of the Palestine Police Force and the Mandatory administration for assassination.

Having temporarily neutralized the earlier threat of Jewish terrorism through the intelligence work of the CID, the Palestine Police Force again turned to the CID to take the lead in the counterterrorism operations of 1945. However, the 1944 versions of the IZL and the Stern Gang, now operating under the name *Lohamei Herut Israel* (Fighters

for the Freedom of Israel, or Lehi) presented a far more substantial challenge than previously, and cracks began to appear in Britain's security apparatus in Palestine.

In the counterterrorist operations of 1944, the British attempted to implement elements of the security strategy that they had been developing throughout the Mandate. The Palestine Police Force was expected to single-handedly contain and eventually neutralize the most immediate threat to stability in Palestine, in this case the IZL and Lehi. The critical component of this strategy was CID's intelligence section, which was expected to provide information that led to arrests. Due to the secretive nature of both the Irgun and Lehi, as well as growing anti-British sentiment within the *Yishuv*, it was the critical intelligence component of the British security apparatus that broke down. In the counterterrorism operations of 1944, the Palestine Police Force, and the CID in particular, proved incapable of suppressing the attacks of the Irgun and Lehi. It was only through the intervention of the Haganah in an internal counterterrorism campaign known as the "Saison" that the violence was suppressed.¹

Calm Before the Storm

By the summer of 1942, the immediate danger of violence had largely passed over Palestine. Leaderless and reeling from the arrests of the majority of its personnel, the Stern Gang was operationally ineffective for the time being. The Palestine Police Force now focused its efforts on monitoring developments within the Jewish underground—in particular, the arms acquisitions of the Haganah. In the early years of the war, the British government had allowed the Haganah to train and gather arms in preparation for a

¹ "Saison," is a Hebrew transliteration of the English word "season." The word was used to liken the Haganah's efforts against the Irgun as a hunting season.

possible German invasion of Palestine. Most of this activity was carried out under the auspices of the *Plugot Machatz* (Hebrew for “Striking Companies,” referred to as the Palmach), the operational wing of the Haganah.² The Palmach was originally formed with British assistance in 1941 as a Jewish force to protect the *Yishuv* in the event of a German invasion of Palestine.³ The Axis defeat in North Africa had removed the threat of German invasion, and with it the need for the Palmach, so the British ordered the force disbanded. Instead, the Haganah continued developing the Palmach, now in secret training camps established across Palestine. With the threat of terrorism diminished within Palestine, CID focused its activities on the military training of the Palmach.

The Palestine Police Force had grown throughout the Second World War. By the end of 1943, the force numbered over 6,100 strong, with over 3,500 British constables constituting the majority of the force.⁴ The CID had a complement of 250 total detectives, and by this time the Jewish Affairs section was regularly reporting on activities within the *Yishuv*. These reports focused predominantly on the training activities of the Haganah, as well as its efforts to procure armaments. Geoffrey Morton led several police operations against suspected arms smugglers throughout this period, including one in August of 1942 at the *kibbutz* near Givat Brenner. One hundred and nineteen rifles were confiscated.⁵ Beginning in May 1943, the CID issued a number of reports on the

² Anita Shapira, *Yigal Allon, Native Son: A Biography* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 142.

³ *Ibid.*, 126; Edward Luttwak and Dan Horowitz, *The Israeli Army* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1975), 19-20.

⁴ Harouvi, *Palestine Investigated*, 7:6.

⁵ Morton, *Just the Job*, 154.

activities of the Haganah in relation to training and weapons procurement.⁶ The most serious of these reports came on October 8, when CID discovered that that the Haganah had confiscated 500 rifles and 20,000 rounds of ammunition from an Arab arms cache outside of Nablus.⁷

In response to the reports of the efforts of the Haganah to procure armaments, the police raided Jewish arms caches. Morton took part in another raid in November of 1943 at a Palmach training camp near Ramat Hakovesh.⁸ While no weapons were discovered in the raid, the police and a battalion of Sikh troops became involved in a major disturbance when the inhabitants of the camp resisted efforts to search the premises. In the end, twenty-four Jews were wounded and another thirty-five were placed under arrest.⁹ In his report on the raid, the battalion commander wrote, “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 on the search.”¹⁰ In the aftermath of the Ramat Hakovesh raid, the British administration in Palestine decided to limit the scale of arms searches in order to prevent further tumult. However, police operations continued. That same month, police officers attempted to search a hut after reports were received of Jewish youths gathering there. The search was called off after nearby Jewish workers informed the police that the hut was a “malarial isolation centre.”

⁶ Ibid., 6:64.

⁷ HA 47-146, “Catling to Supt. of Police, Nablus District, 8 October, 1943.

⁸ Morton, *Just the Job*, 154.

⁹ Horne, *A Job Well Done*, 280.

¹⁰ War Office Files, PRO, WO 208/1702, Area Report on Search of Ramat Hakovesh, November 1943, 19 November, 1943; quoted in Bruce Hoffman, *The Failure of British Military Strategy within Palestine, 1939-1947* (Jerusalem: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1983), 51

However, CID suspected that this was a Haganah training center.¹¹ While CID directed its attention to the activities of the Haganah through 1943, events in Europe soon pushed another group in the Jewish underground to action.

By 1942, reports of the Holocaust had begun to reach Palestine. Though the scale of destruction would not become apparent until after the war, many in the *Yishuv* called for Britain to reverse the White Paper and allow more refugees into Palestine. The plight of refugees was made even more urgent on February 25, 1942, when the *Struma*, a ship carrying 769 Jewish refugees, was torpedoed by a Soviet submarine and sunk, killing all but one of the refugees. The *Struma* sinking struck a nerve within the *Yishuv*, which blamed a British veto on immigration for the disaster. Ariel Sharon, a future I.D.F. general, was a member of the Haganah at the time. In his memoirs, he recalled the reaction of the *Yishuv* to the news of the sinking. “On the surface, life went on pretty much as usual, but underneath ran a subcurrent of rage and helplessness.”¹² For the *Irgun Zvai Leumi*, the situation called for action. Now, under the leadership of Menachem Begin, the IZL began to make preparations to attack British installations in an effort to drive the British out of Palestine.

The Return of the Irgun Zvai Leumi

After the group’s initial campaign against the British in 1939, the four-year truce with the British during the Second World War had left the Irgun in disarray. Irgun’s membership had steadily declined throughout the war, and the majority of the group’s

¹¹ HA 47-147, “Subject—Haganah—Training.” 9 November, 1943.

¹² Ariel Sharon, *Warrior: The Autobiography of Ariel Sharon* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1989), 32.

weapons and explosives were missing by 1943.¹³ Yitshaq Ben-Ami was overseas in the United States on a funding drive for the Irgun during this time, but he described the situation the Irgun faced in 1943. “After David Raziel’s death, our communications from Palestine were erratic . . . The remaining units of the *Irgun*—those who had neither enlisted in the British forces nor joined the seceding *Lehi*—were floundering, ideologically and organizationally.”¹⁴ When Menachem Begin arrived in Palestine in 1942, the Irgun was in no condition to conduct operations against the British.

Menachem Begin was originally born in Poland and had been an influential leader in Betar, the Revisionist youth organization. After the German invasion of Poland in 1939, Begin fled to the Vilnius, which had been taken over by the Soviet Union. In Vilnius Begin was arrested by the NKVD for Zionist activities.¹⁵ Following a two-year imprisonment, Begin was released and enlisted in Ander’s Army, a Polish unit formed in the Soviet Union that was later detached to serve under British command. Begin arrived in Palestine with Ander’s Army and, after receiving his discharge in 1942, was named commander of the Irgun.¹⁶ Throughout 1943, Begin directed his efforts at reviving the Irgun and preparing for the revolt he planned against the Mandatory Government. In December of 1943, the Irgun numbered some 600 members, with arms enough for only 100. In preparation for the renewed hostilities, the Irgun began collecting weapons, either

¹³ Zadka, *Blood in Zion*, 28.

¹⁴ Ben-Ami, *Years of Wrath, Days of Glory*, 294.

¹⁵ Menachem Begin, *White Nights: The Story of a Prisoner in Russia* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1977), 13.

¹⁶ Zvi Harry Hurwitz, *Begin: His Life, Words and Deeds* (Jerusalem: Gefen Publishing House, 2004), 9-13.

by purchasing them or, more often, stealing them.¹⁷ However, through 1945, the Irgun consistently found itself short of arms.

Begin's plans for revolution were noticeably different from those of Avraham Stern. Whereas Stern had stressed the need for action against the British with little regard for the consequences, Begin emphasized the importance of a propaganda campaign to coincide with attacks on British installations. It was not enough to simply blow up a building. Begin's plans called for the Irgun to publicize its activities and explain to the public the reasons why a particular attack was carried out. Begin described his strategy in his memoirs, titled *The Revolt*. "The fight would be a political one pursued by military means. Consequently political explanation, clear and persistent, would have to accompany the military operations."¹⁸ Begin's reorganization of the Irgun in 1943 was done with this strategy in mind.

In addition to an operations section, the Irgun developed a propaganda section called the Revolutionary Propaganda Force (R.P.F.).¹⁹ The purpose of the R.P.F. was to disseminate propaganda in an effort to link attacks with the specific British policies that the targets were meant to symbolize. Throughout the Revolt, the R.P.F. continuously operated underground radios and spread pamphlets in an effort to foster support for the Irgun within the *Yishuv* while at the same time damaging British prestige within Palestine. British prestige was the focus for much of the Irgun's actions from 1944 to 1945. As Begin wrote, "History and our observation persuaded us that if we could

¹⁷ Frank Gervasi, *The Life and Times of Menachem Begin: Rebel to Statesman* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1979), 153; Bell, *Terror Out of Zion*, 107; Zadka, *Blood Out of Zion*, 29; Menachem Begin, *The Revolt* (New York: Nash Publishing, 1977), 67.

¹⁸ Menachem Begin, *The Revolt*, 44.

¹⁹ Begin, *The Revolt*, 87.

succeed in destroying the government's prestige in Eretz Israel, the removal of its rule would follow automatically. Thenceforward, we gave no peace to this weak spot."²⁰ In contrast to the Stern Gang's hitting targets of necessity, such as banks for funding or targeted killings of policemen who threatened the movement, Begin sought to attack targets whose destruction would weaken British authority in Palestine.

Irgun's Revolt and the Reemergence of the Stern Gang

Throughout the spring and summer of 1944, Palestine was rocked by a series of major attacks on British installations. The first attacks were in February, when three separate Irgun teams planted explosives at the local immigration offices in Jerusalem, Haifa and Tel Aviv on February 12. In an effort to avoid casualties, the Irgun carried out the attacks at night. Two weeks later the IZL struck again, this time blowing up the tax offices in the same cities. Over the next seven months, the Irgun continued to carry out attacks on major government installations. In a particularly daring raid, the Irgun attacked the three major district headquarters of the CID on March 23. The raid on the Haifa CID headquarters was carried off without a hitch, but attacks in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem did not go as well. In Tel Aviv, an Irgun support team shot and killed a police officer who stopped them after the explosion. The attack in Jerusalem also ended in gunfire, as the IZL members were sighted before they could plant their explosives. A shoot-out ensued that resulted in the deaths of one Irgun member and four policemen, including the Assistant Superintendent of Police, John Scott.²¹ Despite the setback in Jerusalem, the attacks were deemed a major success for the IZL, as the group had carried out a major raid

²⁰ Begin, *The Revolt*, 52.

²¹ Zadka, *Blood in Zion*, 38-39; Bell, *Terror Out of Zion*, 113-117; Horne, *A Job Well Done*, 281-282.

on an important symbol of British authority. The attacks on CID headquarters were particularly brazen, and revealed that the security forces faced an opponent willing to engage in surgical strikes on Britain's security forces on targets chosen for their propaganda as well as their tactical value.

At the same time that the Irgun began its new campaign, the Stern Gang reappeared on the scene. After the death of Avraham Stern, a new leadership committee emerged, consisting of Nathan Yellin-Mor, Israel Eldad, and future Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir.²² Under this new leadership, Stern's former group spent the better part of 1942 and 1943 slowly rebuilding itself to a strength of 250 fighters. Now operating under its new name, Lehi reemerged and began a wave of assassinations targeting members of the Palestine Police Force, in particular the detectives of the CID. As one former member recalled, "The British Government was our enemy, and after that you know what to do with the enemy. Sometimes it was not gently."²³ Lehi did not limit itself to targeting only British members of the force. In fact, Lehi's first major assassination targeted a Jewish constable, Zeev Flesch, who was shot and killed on March 13 in Ramat Gan.²⁴ Shortly thereafter, members of Lehi shot three constables in Tel Aviv on March 23, the same day as the IZL's coordinated attacks on three CID headquarters. Another four attacks on policemen occurred in April, resulting in the death of one Jewish constable and the wounding of four other policemen, three British and one Jewish. On May 10, Lehi gunmen assassinated another Jewish constable, Haim Guttewitz, in Tel

²² Yitzhak Shamir, *Summing Up: An Autobiography* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1994), 45-46; Bell, *Terror Out of Zion*, 84-85.

²³ Giyora (pseudonym), interview by author, Tel Aviv, Israel, August 2, 2012.

²⁴ Martin, *Palestine Betrayed*, 149

Aviv.²⁵ Guttewitz's killing was the last major hit made by the Lehi for several months, but in the period from February to April, the group made at least twenty more assassination attempts.

Fighting Terrorism

The new outbreak of violence had caught the CID by surprise. While CID quickly assessed that the attacks were the work of the IZL and Lehi, initially the British were unsure if the attacks represented a major uprising or a merely a brief flare-up of violence. In a letter to Police Superintendent Richard Catling on February 28, 1944, Arthur Giles stated that CID could not determine if the attacks were carried out with the full backing of the Irgun, or if a group of extremists within the organization had carried out the operations unilaterally.²⁶ CID had still not come to a definite answer on the nature of this new development by the time it issued a memorandum on the violence on March 18. The memorandum contained a summary of the political situation within the *Yishuv*. The report warned that tensions within the Jewish community were beginning to rise as World War II drew to a close. The *Yishuv* had hoped that assistance in the war effort would lead to a reversal of the MacDonald White Paper, but by 1944, many Jews were beginning to lose hope. The IZL and the Stern Gang were cited as the groups most likely to participate in any disturbances, while the Haganah was viewed as less willing to resort to violence. The memorandum stated that “The declared policy of this organisation [Haganah] is defence, and it is unlikely that it will depart from this policy unless the Government take

²⁵ Horne, *A Job Well Done*, 282

²⁶ HA 47-148, Giles to Catling, February 28, 1944.

any action which the leaders may regard as definitively provocative.”²⁷ The report gave no indication that the Irgun was planning additional attacks, but specified that the group sought “the destruction of government property” and would only resort to firearms if confronted by the police, while Lehi, referred to as the Stern Group, was willing to engage in assassinations.²⁸ It was only after the March 23 attacks on its three headquarters that CID knew the violence would continue.

In the spring of 1944, CID sought to gauge the severity of the threat coming from the Jewish underground. The most pressing concern was whether or not the Haganah would resort to violence. In his letter to Catling, Arthur Giles mentioned this possibility, which he had discussed with Norman Bentwich, a British official with contacts in the Jewish Agency. From Bentwich, Giles had learned that the Jewish Agency was against the attacks, but there was a concern that some more extreme elements of the Haganah would join in. Bentwich also hinted that leaders of the Jewish Agency were in contact with the Irgun, trying to convince Begin to stop the violence.²⁹ CID continued monitoring the Haganah throughout the spring; however, it was soon apparent that the Haganah was opposed to the actions of the IZL. In April, CID circulated a translation of a Haganah pamphlet which strongly denounced the Irgun’s campaign. In a handwritten note on a copy of the translation, one CID officer implied that the Haganah was conducting operations against members of the Stern Group and the pamphlet was in part written to explain the Haganah’s reasons for opposing the violence.³⁰ While there is little evidence

²⁷ HA 47-148, *Palestine: Political: The Jewish Situation*, 18 March, 1944.

²⁸ HA 47-148, *Palestine: Political: The Jewish Situation*, 18 March, 1944.

²⁹ HA 47-148, Giles to Catling, February 28, 1944.

³⁰ HA 47-148, *Why do we condemn the terror?*, 4 April, 1944.

that Haganah conducted operations against Lehi at this time, it is apparent that the British were confident the Haganah did not pose a direct threat. Having ensured that violence was limited to the IZL and Lehi, the police prepared to move against these groups.

The most pressing concern for the police was stopping Lehi assassinations. Throughout the spring, police morale dropped as more constables were killed. For Geoffrey Morton, the spring of 1944 was especially trying. “I stayed on in Jerusalem for seven months, while my friends and comrades were killed one by one by terrorist organisations which seemed to be virtually immune from punishment. By this time Alec Shand and I were both suffering from chronic nervous indigestions and were consuming vast quantities of stomach powder together.”³¹ The police moved quickly to neutralize the threat. Detectives on patrol caught several members of the group during random searches. On March 19, Yerachmiel Aaronsohn was killed after opening fire on a detective who stopped him.³² In another incident, police raided a Lehi safehouse after one a member of the group was wounded when his revolver accidentally discharged. In the ensuing shootout, three Lehi fighters were killed.³³ Later in April, six Lehi members were arrested. Their trial became a national affair when the Lehi fighters used the courtroom as a forum to explain their motivations.³⁴ Despite these successes, the assassinations continued through May, when Lehi finally suspended its targeted killings.

³¹ Morton, *Just the Job*, 173.

³² Golan, *Stern*, 97.

³³ Katz, *LECHI*, 38; Harouvi, *Palestine Investigated*, 7:19; Golan, *Stern*, 97-98; Heller, *The Stern Gang*, 126.

³⁴ Jabotinsky Institute Archives, *How Can We Remain Silent?: Selections from the Defense Speeches delivered before the Military Courts in Palestine* (London, Metropolitan Press); Golan, *Stern*, 103; Heller, *The Stern Gang*, 126.

The police also conducted operations against the Irgun. In response to the March 23 attacks, the Police instituted a curfew in Haifa, Jerusalem, and Tel Aviv and conducted searches and identity checks.³⁵ More security sweeps continued through April. In that month alone, eighty-two suspects were arrested, including Arieh Ben-Eliezer, a member of the Irgun high command. Ben-Eliezer's arrest was a major setback for the IZL. As Begin later recalled, on that day "everything seemed to go black."³⁶ The arrest was the result of an informant providing a list of IZL members to the CID. Begin acknowledged the existence of the informant, whom he referred to as "Tsorros."³⁷ The informant's real name was Ya'akov Chylewicz, a member of the Revisionist party who had numerous contacts within the Irgun. Chylewicz had grown disillusioned with the Irgun and viewed their campaign against the British as harmful to the Zionist cause.³⁸ Shortly after the attacks of March 23, Chylewicz contacted Richard Catling and provided him with a list of names and addresses of Irgun personnel. That same night, March 31/April 1, the police conducted a major raid in which Ben-Eliezer was arrested, along with fifty-two other suspected IZL personnel. Menachem Begin was almost caught in his Jerusalem apartment, but he left a few hours before the police arrived.³⁹ The raid was CID's greatest success in the early stages of the revolt.

Despite the breakthrough from the information provided by Chylewicz, the Irgun was still able to stage major attacks. British intelligence acknowledged at the end of April

³⁵ Bell, *Terror Out of Zion*, 117; Gervasi, *The Life and Times of Menachem Begin*, 160;

³⁶ Begin, *The Revolt*, 67.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 101-102.

³⁸ Nicholas Bethel, *The Palestine Triangle: The Struggle for the Holy Land, 1935-1948* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1979), 158

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 158-160; Harouvi, *Palestine Investigated*, 7:15.

that the arrests based on Chylewicz's information had not neutralized the threat. One report read, "Though the situation has temporarily quietened, it is possible and not unlikely that further outrages will be committed."⁴⁰ The expected outrages began shortly thereafter. On May 17, members of the IZL occupied the Ramallah offices of a government radio station in an attempt to broadcast anti-British propaganda. CID continued efforts in their efforts to halt the attacks, but throughout the summer only one major attack was prevented, when, acting on a tip from Jewish auxiliary police, CID raided a weapons cache in the Nahlat Sheva district of Jerusalem on June 22. By early July, the police had discovered that the arms were being gathered for an attack on a nearby police station, but this was learned only after the raid.⁴¹ Despite this breakthrough, other Irgun operations were carried out soon after which demonstrated the powerlessness of the police to stop the violence. On July 13, the Irgun attacked the district police station in Jerusalem as well as the CID headquarters.⁴² The next day the Land Registry Office in Jerusalem was destroyed in another attack that killed two Arab constables.⁴³

Clearly, the activities of Lehi and the IZL were growing beyond the capabilities of the police to control the situation. In an attempt to boost the strength of the PPF, in the summer of 1944 the decision was made to create a militarized branch of the force, similar to the earlier British Gendarmerie section. This Palestine Mobile Force (P.M.F.) would be equipped with armored cars and serve as a quick reaction force to intervene in major

⁴⁰ The National Archives, KV 5/29, Item 23B, *DSO Extract*. 30 April, 1044; quoted in Wagner, *Britain and the Jewish Underground*, 99.

⁴¹ HA 47, roll 9, 934, Seizure of Explosives at Nahlat Sheva on 22.6.44, 3 July, 1944, JA, K4 1/7/19, *Jewish Terrorist Gang in Palestine*, 5.

⁴² Harouvi, *Palestine Investigated*, 7:21.

⁴³ Bell, *Terror Out of Zion*, 120; Zadka, *Blood in Zion*, 41.

attacks. Approval for the force was granted during the summer. However, the P.M.F. did not become operational until 1945.⁴⁴ In the interim, the Palestine Police Force was left to contain the deteriorating situation.

That the IZL was able to continue operations after the early arrests is indicative of the quality of the intelligence received by the CID. While Chylewicz provided accurate information that led to arrests, the information was not related to Irgun's operational plans, and the arrests did not bring in members of the Irgun's operations section. Furthermore, the language barrier was proving an additional hurdle. A major component of the Zionist program in Palestine involved the introduction of the Hebrew language as the primary language of the *Yishuv*. While this was the stated goal, the reality was that the thousands immigrants coming to Palestine from Eastern Europe did not arrive speaking Hebrew. As the Palestine Police training program stressed either Arabic or Hebrew, many constables and detectives were unable to communicate with members of the Jewish community unless they spoke a European language.⁴⁵ As one policeman later recalled:

In our particular section, we had a chap from the army, bloke called Lodge, Ken Lodge, and if we came across a Jew out after dark or curfew, we couldn't speak to them and they couldn't speak Hebrew and he'd have to speak to them in German. Well, that's all they spoke, German or Yiddish but not Hebrew so that was our contact with the Jewish population.⁴⁶

Arthur Giles understood the ineffectiveness of the police's efforts against Irgun. In a memorandum circulated in July, Giles wrote, "We have failed in the struggle against

⁴⁴ Horne, *A Job Well Done*, 516-518, 521.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 327.

⁴⁶ Edward Herbert Wells, Interview by Josie Delap, April 27, 2006, Palestine Police Force Project, Middle East Centre, St. Antony's College, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK, 5.

terror.”⁴⁷ Giles was not the only governmental figure who was pessimistic. In a report to London written four days after the Land Registry attack, High Commissioner Harold MacMichael expressed a similar attitude. “Available information indicates that the security position may have deteriorated and the outlook is not encouraging.”⁴⁸ Unless something changed, the British expected little respite from Irgun’s attacks.

The Turning Point

In the fall, both the Irgun and Lehi continued their attacks. The Irgun struck several police stations in the Lydda District on August 22. By September the group had grown even bolder, announcing that they would occupy the Western Wall in Jerusalem in celebration of Yom Kippur (The Day of Atonement) and blow the shofar, an act that had been banned since the British arrived in Palestine. The Irgun announcement was accompanied by pamphlets which threatened retaliation on any British policeman who interfered with the demonstration. This announcement was seen by many in the *Yishuv* to be a direct challenge to the British authority in Palestine, and on September 27, the demonstration went off without a hitch. Armed Irgun members escorted the demonstrators in full view of British policemen, who did not interfere with the demonstration.⁴⁹ The act was a brazen flaunting of the Status Quo in Palestine, and was meant to symbolize the Irgun’s complete disregard for British laws and the security forces. That same night, the Irgun conducted another major operations when police fortresses at Haifa, Bet Dagon, Gedara, and Qalqilya were attacked by 150 Irgun fighters

⁴⁷ HA 47, roll 9, 535-536, 27 July 1944, CID summary no. 14/44—Jewish terror; quoted in Harouvi, *Palestine Investigated*, 7:22.

⁴⁸ Foreign Office, 371/40126, 5052-27 July, 1944; quoted in Zadka, *Blood in Zion*, 208; Bell, *Terror Out of Zion*, 120.

⁴⁹ Begin, *The Revolt*, 91; Harouvi, *Palestine Investigated*, 7:24; Bell, *Terror Out of Zion*, 121-122.

in coordinated operations. Of these attacks, the most successful took place in Gedara, where the Irgun team made off with most of the armory. In the other raids, the Irgun fighters were eventually driven off, but only after mines were planted in the Haifa and Bet Dagon stations.⁵⁰ In British eyes, the actions of September 27 were viewed as a failure, since the Irgun had demonstrated the ability to pull off a major, complex operation with near impunity.

Lehi also continued its activities into the fall, carrying out attempts on several major figures. Throughout 1944, six attempts were made on the life of High Commissioner MacMichael. Lehi's seventh attempt, on August 8, came the closest. Eight Lehi militants divided into three teams attacked the High Commissioner's car as it drove from Jerusalem to Jaffa. MacMichael was wounded in the thigh and the hand, but he survived.⁵¹ Detective Tom Wilkin was not so lucky. Since 1942, Wilkin had been a major target of Lehi, due to his involvement in the arrest and shooting of Avraham Stern.⁵² On the morning of September 29, Wilkin was shot eleven times by two Lehi assassins as he was walking to his office. Wilkin's death was a major setback for the Palestine Police Force and CID. He was one of the PPF's few experts on Jewish affairs and had interrogated a number of high-level prisoners from both Lehi and the IZL, including Yitzhak Shamir and Ya'acov Eliav of Lehi.⁵³ Richard Catling later commented on the murder, saying, "It shows, I think, that we did not take the terrorist threat serious enough in 1944. Wilkin was worth his weight in gold. We ought to have guarded him night and

⁵⁰ Begin, *The Revolt*, 90-91; Zadka, *Blood in Zion*, 43; Bell, *Terror Out of Zion*, 121-123.

⁵¹ Golan, *Stern*, 109-110; Martin, *Palestine Betrayed*, 150; Gerold Frank, *The Deed* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963), 168-169

⁵² Eliav, *Wanted*, 151.

⁵³ Shamir, *Summing Up*, 35; Eliav, *Wanted*, 105.

day. As it was, when we lost him, it was like losing a good part of our filing system.”⁵⁴

While Wilkin’s assassination came as a major shock to the Palestine Police Force, another, even more high profile killing would draw the attention of the British Government, provoking a serious response.

The turning point in the revolt came in November of 1944, when two Lehi assassins shot and killed the British Minister of State for the Middle East, Walter Edward Guinness, Lord Moyne. The assassination was carried out on November 6 in Cairo. Eliyahu Bet-Zuri and Eliyahu Hakim ambushed Moyne’s car as it arrived at the minister’s residence. Moyne was shot three times and collapsed; he would later die in the hospital. Bet-Zuri and Hakim were arrested as they attempted to flee.⁵⁵ Moyne, a personal friend of British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, was the highest-ranking member of the British administration in the Middle East to be assassinated.

News of Moyne’s death received major coverage in the British media, with many calling for the *Yishuv* to crackdown on the underground. Four days after the assassination, Lehi was condemned harshly in the London Times. “The adherents of the Stern Group, and indeed of militant organizations in Palestine of which it constitutes but a section, together amount to no more than a fraction of the local Jewish community; there can be no doubt whatever that with its full and unflinching aid the cancer can be cut out.”⁵⁶ Almost immediately, the Jewish press within Palestine was equally harsh in its denouncements of the killing. In Tel Aviv, *Haaretz* wrote, “They have done more by this

⁵⁴ Bethell, *The Palestine Triangle*, 173.

⁵⁵ Frank, *The Deed*, 23-25; Horne, *A Job Well Done*, 285; Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-2001* (New York: Random House, Inc., 2001), 171.

⁵⁶ “A Call to Jewry,” *The Times*, November 10, 1944.

single reprehensible crime to demolish the edifice erected by three generations of Jewish pioneers than is imaginable.”⁵⁷ Speaking in the House of Lords, Winston Churchill issued a strong call for the *Yishuv* to respond.

I have received a letter from Dr. Weizmann . . . in which he assures me that Palestine Jewry will go to the utmost limit of its power to cut out this evil from its midst . . . 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.⁵⁸

The shock of Moyne’s death brought home the seriousness of the situation within Palestine, and the British government called for a serious response from the Jewish Agency.

The ‘Saison’

Throughout 1944, the leadership of the Jewish Agency had viewed the Irgun’s actions with growing concern. As early as April, the Haganah was distributing pamphlets condemning the violence. At the same time, Haganah intelligence (SHAY) began monitoring the activities of suspected IZL members.⁵⁹ By May, SHAY had begun sharing some of this information with British intelligence through a liaison officer named Teddy Kollek, who would later become the mayor of Jerusalem. SHAY’s information allowed the British to determine the target of the Nahlat Sheva plot that was disrupted on June 22, but through the summer of 1944 this cooperation was extremely limited.⁶⁰ The Jewish Agency saw the actions of the Irgun as a major threat to any potential negotiations over

⁵⁷ “Comment in Palestine,” *The Times*, November 9, 1944.

⁵⁸ Martin Gilbert, *Churchill and the Jews: a Lifelong Friendship* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2007), 227.

⁵⁹ Bell, *Terror Out of Zion*, 128.

⁶⁰ Wagner, *Britain and the Jewish Underground*, 103.

the repeal of the White Paper of 1939 after the war, as well as a threat to their control over the *Yishuv*. In turn, the *Yishuv* was beginning to fear that the British would not make any concessions at the end of the war. Nevertheless, the Jewish Agency was not yet prepared to turn in members of the Irgun or Lehi.

As the violence continued into October, the Jewish Agency began to reconsider this policy. On October 18, Eliahu Golomb, commander of the Haganah, denounced the actions of the Irgun during a press conference and declared that the Jewish Agency was prepared to fight to stop the terror. Serious policy discussions began on October 22, when Moshe Shertok, head of the Jewish Agency's political department proposed that the Agency begin preparations to hand over intelligence on the Irgun to the British Authorities.⁶¹ Shertok's proposal led to a sharp disagreement within the Jewish Agency over the idea of collaborating with the British against fellow Jews. It was only after Moyne's assassination and the public outcry in Great Britain that the decision was made by the Jewish Agency to crack down on the Irgun and Lehi.

Unbeknownst to the CID, the Jewish Agency held several meetings with the leaders of both Lehi and the Irgun, imploring both groups to cease attacks. Menachem Begin met with Moshe Sneh on October 8, but Begin refused to stop the attacks.⁶² A second meeting with Begin took place on October 25. Sneh, accompanied by Eliahu Golomb, took a harsher tone with Begin, threatening Haganah action if the IZL did not suspend operations. Again, Begin refused.⁶³ Haganah's meetings with Lehi leaders were more successful. Ya'acov Eliav and Nathan Yallin-Mor met several times with Golomb

⁶¹ HA 47-20, *Jewish Re-action to Terrorism*, 4 November, 1944.

⁶² Begin, *The Revolt*, 140; Zadka, *Blood in Zion*, 49.

⁶³ Bell, *Terror Out of Zion*, 125; Begin, *The Revolt*, 143.

in the hopes of uniting with Haganah. After the Moyne assassination, the meetings took on a more serious tone, and an agreement was made that Lehi would suspend assassinations in exchange for the Haganah not conducting operations against Lehi.⁶⁴ Having secured a cessation by Lehi, the Haganah turned its attention to the IZL.

Haganah began moving against the Irgun in November, in an operation referred to as “The Saison.” The Haganah command created a separate unit comprised of Palmach volunteers to begin kidnapping suspected Irgun fighters. The operation was overseen by Ya’akov Dori of the general staff, who controlled the unit from a house in Haifa.⁶⁵ Over the next five months hundreds of suspected Irgun members were rounded up by the Palmach teams, who handed the prisoners over to the SHAY for interrogation. The prisoners were jailed in secret, either in caves or basements. This arrangement proved difficult for the Haganah to maintain in secret, and the decision was made to begin handing over intelligence to the British authorities, who would make the arrests. From November 1944 to March 1945, over 500 names of suspects were given to the Palestine Police.

While the British were hopeful for cooperation from the Jewish Agency in combatting the Irgun and Lehi, CID files reveal that the British did not have a complete understanding of the turmoil within the *Yishuv*. CID was certainly aware of the discussions within the Jewish Agency over what to do with the Irgun. A report was circulated on November 4, entitled “Jewish Re-action to Terrorism.” The report reveals that the first hint of collaboration by the Jewish Agency was Golomb’s press conference

⁶⁴ Eliav, *Wanted*, 209-210; Bell, *Terror Out of Zion*, 128.

⁶⁵ Shapira, *Yigal Allon*, 150; Amos Perlmutter, *The Life and Times of Menachem Begin* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1987), 155.

on October 18. The CID was also aware of Moshe Shertok's proposal on October 22 that the Agency prepare for cooperation with British intelligence, as well as the details of several other meetings on the subject.⁶⁶ By November 4, however, the Jewish Agency had yet to come to a decision on collaboration. In an intelligence summary from December 15, it is apparent that while CID had confirmed that the Jewish Agency was moving against the terrorists, the British were still unaware of the extent of the Haganah's actions against the Irgun. It was reported that the Agency had adopted a policy known as Ben Gurion's Four Points, which were:

- 1) Reject all terrorist elements from offices, workshops, schools, and homes;
- 2) Refuse sanctuary and shelter to terrorists and drive them from their hideouts;
- 3) Resist threats and attempts at extortion;
- 4) Render to the authorities all necessary assistance for the prevention of terrorist outrages and the uprooting of terrorist organizations.⁶⁷

The summary also indicated that the Jewish Agency had achieved some success, as no major attacks had followed the assassination of Lord Moyne. Instead, the Irgun and Lehi were limiting their actions to the distribution of pamphlets denouncing British policies. The intelligence summary does not give a reason for the cessation of major attacks. Furthermore, it indicates that the British were unaware of the extent of the Haganah's activities against both groups.

While Haganah continued taking action against the Irgun, SHAY increased its cooperation with CID. By December, over 500 names of suspected Irgun members had been received by CID, and over 250 arrests were made based on the information.⁶⁸ In February, intelligence received from Haganah led to a major arrest when CID detectives

⁶⁶ HA 47-20, *Jewish Re-action to Terrorism*, 4 November, 1944.

⁶⁷ HA 47-143, Intelligence Summary No. 21/44, 15 December, 1944.

⁶⁸ JA, K4, 1/10/19, 454, Message to the Prime Minister from Dr. Weizmann, 18 December, 1944.

picked up Ya'acov Meridor, a former commander of Irgun and a member of the High Command, in his home in Tel Aviv on February 13.⁶⁹ Meridor was the highest ranking member of the IZL to be captured, and his arrest proved to be a major coup for the Palestine Police. In his interrogation, Meridor gave the CID a complete breakdown of the structure of the Irgun, which he assumed the British already had.⁷⁰ Additionally, he alerted the British to the earlier negotiations between Haganah and the Irgun, which had taken place earlier that fall, and confirmed that Lehi had suspended operations at the behest of Haganah.⁷¹ Meridor's arrest was a major achievement for the CID, and it came due to intelligence received from SHAY.

Haganah's efforts in the "Saison" had a significant impact on the security situation within Palestine. In addition to the arrests of a number of Irgun members, CID was receiving intelligence that the Irgun was feeling the pressure. A report from early 1945 revealed that Begin was growing pessimistic. "Informant states that although Beigin [*sic*] admits that the campaign has been a complete failure, he is determined to carry on. New acts of sabotage are therefore to be expected."⁷² While some attacks were carried out in May, these were limited efforts, consisting of some mortar fire or sabotage on telephone lines.⁷³ The major attacks from the previous summer were now beyond Irgun's

⁶⁹ Ya'acov Meridor, *Long is the Road to Freedom* (Hewlett, NY: Judaea Publishing Company, 1985), 2-3.

⁷⁰ HA 47-21, Sime Report No. 1, 1 March, 1945.

⁷¹ HA 47-21, Subject: Yaacov Meridor, 10 March, 1945.

⁷² HA 47-39, Catling to A./D.I.G., N.A.

⁷³ Joseph Kister, *The Irgun: The Story of the Irgun Zvai Leumi in Eretz-Israel* (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense Publishing House and Museum Unit, 2000), 260.

capabilities. By the time the Second World War ended in May of 1945, the Revolt was over.

In spite of the efforts of the Palestine Police Force, it was the intervention of the Jewish Agency that proved the decisive factor. By the summer of 1944, Arthur Giles was pessimistic about the ability of the police to quell the violence. The decisive factor in the struggle against terrorism had proven to be the quality of intelligence about the operations and the organization of the IZL and Lehi. Without informants who could provide them with information that led to the arrests of operatives, through October of 1944 the police were powerless to blunt the effectiveness of the two groups. While information gleaned from Chylewicz and SHAY had allowed the police to make some major arrests, the majority of police operations during the summer of 1944 focused on supporters of the IZL and Lehi within the Revisionist party. As a result, the police were unable to arrest members of the operations section of the Irgun until autumn, when SHAY began providing intelligence on IZL and Lehi operational personnel. That Haganah was able to more effectively apprehend members of the Irgun shows the difference in the quality of intelligence received by the Haganah. The Haganah operated exclusively from within the *Yishuv*, and therefore could go places CID detectives could not.

The CID files reveal just what the police knew about the “Saison.” While CID knew about the Jewish Agency’s policy of cooperation with the authorities, the Jewish Affairs section was unable to determine just how many people the Haganah apprehended. In a report on Jewish affairs from April, 1945, Giles noted that the police knew of thirty kidnappings that had been reported by the Irgun. Of these thirty, only eight of the missing

people were handed over to the police. The other twenty-two, Giles assumed, were simply interrogated and released. The report also revealed that Giles was still unsure of why Lehi stopped operations. Despite Meridor's confirmation that the Haganah had convinced Lehi to suspend its campaign through negotiations, the Jewish Agency gave no indication of this fact, instead reporting to Giles that Lehi's secrecy and tight organization was the reason why predominantly IZL members were arrested.⁷⁴ This is particularly telling, as it reveals that there were limits to the Jewish Agency's cooperation. While the Agency was willing to collaborate with the British for the time being, future cooperation depended on British policy for Palestine after the war.

Conclusion

By May of 1945, the IZL was severely depleted and the Haganah was established as the dominant military power within the Jewish underground. On the security front, major attacks had ceased for the time being, and the Irgun was limited to truck robberies and the sabotage of telephone lines, largely owing to British-Jewish Agency cooperation. For the time being, the level of violence within Palestine was diminished, although it was only a tenuous calm. With the end of World War II, the *Yishuv* began to look to London in the hopes that the British Government would reverse the policy of the MacDonald White Paper. However, no decision was expected in the immediate aftermath of the war. In the interim, the Palestine Police Force anticipated further disturbances.

The actions of the Irgun and Lehi, while ultimately unsuccessful, had revealed some serious cracks that had emerged in the British security forces in Palestine. Most importantly, the Palestine Police Force had again found itself unable to contain the

⁷⁴ HA 47, roll 9, 599-602, CID summary 8/45, 24 April, 1944; cited in Harouvi, *Palestine Investigated*, 8: 20.

violence that arose in the aftermath of British policy decisions. A critical component in Britain's security strategy at the time was human intelligence, and by 1944, this intelligence was largely dependent on the willingness of informants from the *Yishuv*. The Irgun's actions had allowed the British to gain one informant, Chylewicz, who provided information on several figures within the IZL. SHAY also provided some intelligence through the summer of 1944, however the arrests made in the spring and summer did not diminish Irgun's operational capabilities. It was after the Jewish Agency saw the IZL's revolt as a threat to the potential repeal of the White Paper that the Haganah and Palmach was directed to move against the Irgun. During the "Saison" SHAY began sharing operational intelligence on the Irgun which allowed the security forces to make arrests on operational personnel.

The evidence for the "Saison" is particularly compelling, in that it reveals that despite the cooperation between the two forces, the CID was kept in the dark on much of Haganah's activities. CID was aware of only thirty arrests by the Palmach and was unable to determine precisely why Lehi had stopped assassinations after the success of the Moyne operation. This reveals that, despite the successes in neutralizing the threats of the IZL and Lehi, the Palestine Police Force still had a major weakness: the reliance on the *Yishuv* for intelligence. While SHAY certainly provided the British with valuable intelligence, it did so in the hope that cooperation by the Jewish Agency would influence the British Government to reverse the White Paper of 1939. Without a change in British policy, the major risk going forward was that these sources would dry up, and the Palestine Police Force would be forced to confront a renewed outbreak of violence with even less information coming from the Jewish community.

CHAPTER FIVE

Losing their Grasp: British Counterinsurgency from 1945 to 1947

By the spring of 1945, the *Irgun Zvai Leumi* and *Lohamei Herut Israel* were recovering from the “Saison” and unable to launch major attacks. At the same time, the war in Europe was drawing rapidly to a close, as Hitler’s Germany found itself beset on all sides. However, with the collapse of the Third Reich came a new revelation that had direct implications for Palestine. As the Allied armies drove across Europe, they began to discover the infamous concentration camps where over eleven million people, including six million Jews perished under horrific conditions. Of the one million Jews who remained in Europe, the majority of them were left stateless, wandering across the continent in search of family members who had survived.¹ Within Palestine, the *Yishuv* looked toward the British Government in the hope that Jewish cooperation during the war and the plight of the Jews in Europe would persuade the newly elected Labour Party to reverse the British policies of the MacDonald White Paper of 1939. When this did not happen many in the Jewish Agency and the Haganah who had hoped for a change in policy instead began to view the British government as an impediment to their dream of a Jewish state within Palestine. By the fall of 1945, these frustrations turned into action, and the Haganah began to conduct anti-British operations in Palestine alongside the IZL and Lehi.

¹ Tom Segev, *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1991), 123.

With Britain's military now freed up from the war effort, the British security forces were soon bolstered with the addition of units from the British army to support the Palestine Police Force. However, as the Haganah had now turned against the British, the security forces had no reliable source of support or intelligence within the *Yishuv*. Unable to gain actionable intelligence, the police and the army were left unprepared to stem the tide of violence as it increased throughout 1946 and 1947. The cracks in security which had emerged during 1944 soon grew larger, and British control over Palestine was shattered.

In the last three years of the Mandate, the British Army and Palestine Police Force were left without reliable intelligence and were forced to conduct counterinsurgency operations among a population that was growing increasingly hostile. In earlier disturbances, the PPF had relied most heavily upon the Jewish Agency and the Haganah to provide information that would allow the security forces to restore order. Now, with the Jewish Agency working against the British, the security forces were left to their own devices to halt the violence. At the end of the Second World War, the situation in Palestine exploded as the Haganah, the Irgun, and Lehi united to conduct operations against the British administration in Palestine. Without the intelligence sources that it had relied upon in the past, the Palestine Police Force was unable to curb the growing violence, even with the support of the British Army.

The Aftermath of War

As the Second World War drew to a close, Palestine began increasingly to occupy the attention of the British Government. The assassination of Lord Moyne in November of 1944 had thrust Palestine into the spotlight, and as the five years of Jewish

immigration set forth in the White Paper of 1939 ended in February of 1945 many in the *Yishuv* began to appeal to the British Government to address the situation.² Throughout the spring and summer of 1945, Zionist leaders called for Churchill's government to reevaluate Britain's policy for Palestine; however, Churchill was content to hold off until the final peace conference at Potsdam. The situation changed in July of 1945 when Churchill was defeated in the national elections by Clement Attlee and the Labour Party, who took over on July 26.³ The Zionist leadership was optimistic since the Labour Party had been a strong advocate for Zionism throughout the war and publicly declared its opposition to the MacDonald White Paper at the party conference in May 1945.⁴ However, once in power, the Labour Party began to reverse its position toward the White Paper. This change in policy was driven by a reappraisal of Britain's interests within the Middle East.

Upon assuming the office of Foreign Minister in July, Ernest Bevin began immediately to reconsider the Labour Party's position towards Zionism. In part, this reexamination was driven by the growing Cold War, as Britain now sought to buttress her hold over Middle Eastern oil in the face of feared Soviet advances in the region. Britain's economy was wrecked at the end of the war, and Bevin saw British oil holdings in the Middle East as having great importance to the United Kingdom's economic stability. In order to preserve Britain's position in the region, Bevin sought to create a strategic defense network throughout the Middle East, in which Arab countries would ally with

² Michael J. Cohen, *Palestine: Retreat from the Mandate: The Making of British Policy, 1936-1945* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1978), 179.

³ Nicholas Bethell, *The Palestine Triangle: The Struggle for the Holy Land, 1935-1948* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1979), 200-202.

⁴ David A. Charters, *The British Army and Jewish Insurgency in Palestine, 1945-1947* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 17.

Great Britain to protect against Soviet encroachment. Moreover, Britain's military position within the Middle East was somewhat tenuous given the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, which limited Britain's Egyptian garrison to 10,000 soldiers. In an effort to find a viable alternative, Palestine was viewed as an acceptable solution to serve as a base of operations for British forces in the Middle East. The key to this strategy was the support of the nearby Arab countries. Bevin's concern was that increased Jewish immigration would threaten Anglo-Arab relations.⁵ However, the issue of Jewish immigration presented its own problems, particularly with the revelation of the full depravity of the Holocaust.

In the final months of the war, Allied soldiers began liberating German concentration camps in their final push into Germany. What they discovered in the camps was appalling. As one former liberator of the Buchenwald concentration camp recalled, "I couldn't count how many people that were just—just dead. And every one of them were skin and bones. It was awful."⁶ Newsreels broadcast the images of the camp across the world, and the plight of the remaining one million Jewish refugees in Europe became an urgent problem which demanded an immediate solution. In total, some 250,000 survivors of the concentration camps were left confined in Allied Displaced Persons (DP) Camps in Germany, Austria, and Poland.⁷ American President Harry Truman became a strong advocate for the Jewish refugees and publicly requested that the British

⁵ Charters, *The British Army and Jewish Insurgency in Palestine*, 20-24; Bethell, *The Palestine Triangle*, 203; Wm. Roger Louis, "British Imperialism and the End of the Palestine Mandate," in *The End of the Palestine Mandate*, edited by Wm. Roger Louis and Robert W. Stookey (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 2; John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World System, 1830-1970* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 533.

⁶ Raymond Watson, interviewed by Stephen Sloan, April 5, 2012, Texas Liberator's Project, Baylor University, Waco, TX, 30.

⁷ Segev, *The Seventh Million*, 126.

Government immediately allow 100,000 Jewish refugees to immigrate into Palestine. Within Palestine, members of the *Yishuv* saw it as a moral imperative that the survivors of Nazi atrocities be allowed to immigrate to Palestine to begin a new life.⁸ In the aftermath of the Holocaust, the leaders of the *Yishuv* felt a particular sense of urgency and saw the only solution for the Jewish people as being the creation of a Jewish state which could offer refuge from further persecution.⁹ This position brought the Jewish Agency increasingly into conflict with the Labour Government, who viewed Zionism as harmful to British strategic interests in the Middle East.

The Security Forces

In the midst of this tense political situation, the security forces in Palestine were readjusting to the end of the war. During the first months of 1945, there were some minor disturbances as both the Irgun and Lehi conducted several robberies and attacks on British trucks, but, due to the intervention of the Haganah the previous fall, major attacks on British installations had stopped.¹⁰ By the end of the war, the Palestine Police Force once again found itself in transition. As the war drew to a close, the economic situation in Britain became a top priority of the new Labour Government. Colonial police forces were again viewed as a troublesome expense, and this affected the disposition of security forces in Palestine. In 1945, the PPF could call on a total of some 20,000 personnel, although not all of these forces were considered reliable.¹¹ The regular police force

⁸ Segev, *The Seventh Million*, 119-121.

⁹ Charters, *The British Army and Jewish Insurgency in Palestine*, 26;

¹⁰ Edward Horne, *A Job Well Done: Being a History of the Palestine Police Force 1920-1948* (Sussex, UK: The Book Guild, Ltd., 2003), 288.

¹¹ Charters, *The British Army and Jewish Insurgency in Palestine*, 89.

consisted of a total of 6,792 total officers and men, a full 2,000 constables short of the required complement. More significantly, the British section of the force, which had been a 57 percent majority during the war, had dwindled to 2,816 men, 41 percent of the total force.¹² During this time, CID was staffed by 250 detectives deployed across Palestine.¹³ Additionally, the police were supported by the now operational Palestine Mobile Force, which had grown from its original complement of 760 personnel to a force almost 2,000 strong organized into four companies. The companies were deployed in Ramallah, Sarona (near Jaffa-Tel Aviv), Kafr Vitkin, and Shafr 'Amr (both near Haifa).¹⁴ During the war the Jewish Settlement Police had grown to over 12,00 personnel; however this force had begun to come under suspicion as a potential security risk after the Haganah became more active in 1943.¹⁵ All told, the PPF had approximately 9,000 non-Jewish personnel who would be available to conduct counterinsurgency operations against the Jewish underground.

Throughout the summer of 1945, the security forces in Palestine prepared for potential outbreaks of violence. Intelligence reports at the time focused on the action of the Irgun, which had begun to operate on a small scale, conducting arms acquisition raids and ambushing individual trucks in rural areas. In response, the PMF was deployed across the country, setting up static roadblocks to catch Jewish insurgents.¹⁶ In May, the CID focused its efforts on finding Menachem Begin, who was rumored to be hiding

¹² Eldad Harouvi, *Palestine Investigated* (N.A.), 8:2.

¹³ Horne, *A Job Well Done*, 477.

¹⁴ Ibid., 517; Charters, *The British Army and Jewish Insurgency in Palestine*, 90.

¹⁵ Charters, *The British Army and Jewish Insurgency in Palestine*, 90; Horne, *A Job Well Done*, 542.

¹⁶ Horne, *A Job Well Done*, 523.

among the Orthodox Jewish community in Jerusalem. The police conducted searches of local religious schools hoping to find Begin. As one report says, “The persons found there should not be taken at their ‘beard value’ but their identities should be carefully checked.”¹⁷ Another report in June indicates that CID was hearing from sources that the IZL was preparing to operate in Arab areas, creating teams of Arabic-speaking fighters for operations.¹⁸

In addition to monitoring the Irgun, British intelligence was keeping an eye on the political situation within the *Yishuv*. The consensus in Britain’s Middle Eastern intelligence community was that the *Yishuv* would eventually riot if no change was made in British policy. The threat of another major disturbance from the *Yishuv* was of primary concern for British intelligence, but the intelligence summary included another alarming report. It read, “British Intell. Are saying that Haganah has one of the best intelligence services in the world. Every Englishman has a file there. They know about the English agents more than the English Intell.”¹⁹ For the past several years, Haganah’s intelligence resources had been extremely useful to the British security forces in neutralizing the threat of the Irgun and Lehi. However, with the *Yishuv* growing more impatient over British policy, there was a danger that these resources could be turned against the British.

In response to the serious concerns over potential rioting, as well the need for more manpower to support the understaffed police force, in 1945, British army units were deployed in force to Palestine. Elements of the Sixth Airborne Division began to arrive in Palestine in September of 1945, and by November, the entire division was deployed in

¹⁷ HA 47-40, A.I.G CID to Supt. of Polish [sic], 31 May, 1945.

¹⁸ HA 47-40, Defence Security Officer to A.I.G. CID, 11 June, 1945.

¹⁹ HA 115-99, 20.8.45, 8 August, 1945.

the south to provide support for operations in Gaza, Jerusalem, and the Negev.²⁰ The British First Infantry Division arrived in Palestine in October of 1945 and was deployed in the north to provide security in the Galilee.²¹ By the end of 1945, some 100,000 soldiers were deployed to Palestine, although only 25,000 of these were combat personnel, the rest being administrative or support personnel.²² While these units provided the security forces in Palestine with additional manpower and force, the army would take a secondary role, acting in support of police operations.²³ The ultimate authority on security matters still rested with the civilian authorities.

The Haganah Joins the Fray

As the political situation in Palestine became tenser, many in the Haganah began to lose hope that the British would repudiate the White Paper of 1939. As future IDF general Uzi Narkiss later recalled, “High hopes tend to engender bitter disillusionment.”²⁴ A number of the Haganah were coming to the conclusion that the British must indeed be forced to leave Palestine. In the words of Moshe Dayan, “The world war had ended, Hitler had been defeated, and there was no point in continuing to cooperate with the British, who harshly restricted Jewish immigration into Palestine and Jewish settlement and development in the country.”²⁵ By September of 1945, the political tensions between

²⁰ R. Dare Wilson, *With 6th Airborne Division in Palestine, 1945-1948* (South Yorkshire, UK: Pen and Sword Military, 2008), 4-5.

²¹ Oliver Lindsay, *Once a Grenadier . . . The Grenadier Guards, 1945-1995* (London: Leo Cooper, 1996), 17-19.

²² Charters, *The British Army and Jewish Insurgency in Palestine*, 88.

²³ Wilson, *With 6th Airborne Division in Palestine*, 17-18.

²⁴ Uzi Narkiss, *Soldier of Jerusalem* (Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 1998), 17.

²⁵ Moshe Dayan, *Moshe Dayan: Story of my Life* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1992), 79.

the Jewish Agency and the British Government were coming to a head. That month, Chaim Weizmann discovered that the British would allow only 1,500 Jewish immigrants to Palestine each month.²⁶ By this time, many in the Jewish Agency began to lose hope that the British would reverse the White Paper, and instead would continue to restrict Jewish immigration. The situation was compounded when it was announced in November that Great Britain and the United States would send a joint commission of inquiry to Palestine to determine the appropriate solution.²⁷ For the *Yishuv*, it appeared that the British Government would continue to restrict Jewish immigration in favor of Arab interests. As Weizmann later recorded, “The letdown was complete.”²⁸ With this disappointment, many in the Haganah began to see no other alternative than a campaign to drive the British out of Palestine.

At the same time, David Ben Gurion authorized the Haganah to begin negotiations with the other organizations within the Jewish underground in the hope of creating a unified command. Soon after, the Haganah initiated negotiations with Lehi, who suggested that the Irgun be included in any unified resistance movement.²⁹ The Haganah agreed, and throughout October of 1945 several meetings were held to negotiate a possible union of the three underground organizations. These negotiations were conducted by Moshe Sneh and Yisrael Galili representing Haganah, Nathan Yellin-Mor

²⁶ Bethell, *The Palestine Triangle*, 209.

²⁷ Charters, *The British Army and Jewish Insurgency in Palestine*, 31-32;

²⁸ Chaim Weizmann, *Trial and Error: The Autobiography of Chaim Weizmann* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1972), 440.

²⁹ Ya’acov Eliav, *Wanted* (New York: Shengold Publishers, 1984), 218; Saul Zadka, *Blood in Zion: How the Jewish Guerillas Drove the British Out of Palestine* (Washington: Brassey’s, 1995), 58-59.

of Lehi, and Menachem Begin speaking for the Irgun.³⁰ Within a month, an agreement was reached between the three organizations, and the *Tenuat haMeri* (Hebrew Resistance) movement was formed. The agreement created a central committee, composed of members of each organization, to coordinate attacks. The agreement stipulated that major attacks must be approved by the central committee, although arms acquisition raids could be conducted without approval. Furthermore, local commanders were to coordinate with their counterparts in the other movements of the underground regarding the execution of specific attacks.³¹ With the formation of the United Resistance Movement (URM), the security situation in Palestine was now changed. With the Haganah now actively opposing the British in Palestine, CID's major source of intelligence on the IZL and Lehi was now no longer sharing intelligence with the British authorities, who would instead have to conduct operations on their own.

Throughout October, the CID monitored the activities of the Jewish underground in an attempt to determine what their reaction would be to new political developments within Palestine. By October 8, the CID was aware of discussions between the three organizations. "The Irgun Zvai Leumi and the Stern Group, it is reported, have decided to place themselves at the disposal of the Haganah if it is decided to resist a Brit decision to stand by the White Paper."³² What was unclear to the CID at this time was the Haganah's course of action going forward. While this report suggests the CID was confident of the situation, another report from a few days later suggests that CID had yet to receive confirmation of this development. On October 10, while negotiations were still being

³⁰ Menachem Begin, *The Revolt* (New York: Nash Publishing, 1977), 183.

³¹ Eliav, *Wanted*, 218-219.

³² HA 47-37, "Palestine: Political," 8 October, 1945.

conducted, the Haganah carried out its first major anti-British operation. A Palmach force under the command of Yitzhak Rabin raided the Atlit detainee camp, freeing 200 Jewish refugees who were interned there.³³ While the force that raided the camp was entirely from the Palmach, a CID source incorrectly asserted that thirty-five members of the Irgun participated in the attack. Furthermore, the report suggested that the Haganah had proposed a union after the successful raid, but, “owing to Haganah insistence on complete control, the NMO [Irgun] refused to parley.”³⁴

The CID reports from October are important because they reveal some of the difficulties faced by the CID at the time. There is a clear indication that CID was still gaining information from sources within the *Yishuv* that suggested the underground was beginning to unite. However, CID’s incorrect report on the Atlit raid reveals that these sources were not able to provide a clear picture of what was currently happening, regarding both operational details and the larger negotiations between the Irgun and Haganah. If CID continued to receive inaccurate reports, this would have serious repercussions on the effectiveness of British counterinsurgency operations against the Jewish underground.

The United Underground

The United Resistance Movement conducted its first major operation on October 31, 1945, in an incident which came to be called the Night of the Trains. On that day, Palmach units detonated 500 explosive charges in Palestine, including 240 that cut

³³ Yitzhak Rabin, *The Rabin Memoirs* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 15-16; Bell, *Terror Out of Zion*, 145.

³⁴ HA 47-37, “Singer,” 10 October, 1945.

railway lines throughout the country.³⁵ Police harbor patrol boats were also targeted, and two were sunk while a third was damaged.³⁶ At the same time, Lehi conducted a failed raid on the Haifa Oil refinery, in which the commander of the operation was killed when his explosives detonated prematurely.³⁷ The IZL attacked the Lydda Railway Station with explosives.³⁸ Six members of the security forces, including one Briton were killed, while another seven were injured.³⁹ This was the first major operation involving all three organizations within the Jewish underground.

In response to the attacks, CID began to investigate the disturbances, seeking information on the culprits, as well as any intelligence which would indicate whether the attacks were coordinated with the Haganah. One informant, labeled as P.86, gave a detailed summary of the Irgun's attack on the Haifa-Damascus rail line. While the source did not indicate if the attacks were coordinated with the Haganah, P.86 did say that the Jewish Agency viewed the actions of that night as "premature and very embarrassing to their efforts at the present time."⁴⁰ Despite the seriousness of the situation, the PPF's response to the attacks could be considered subdued. A search of the Lydda district with tracker dogs led investigators to the Ramat haKovesh settlement, scene of the disastrous 1943 arms raid; however, a gathering crowd compelled the police to withdraw before

³⁵ Wilson, *With 6th Airborne Division in Palestine*, 24; Bell, *Terror Out of Zion*, 146.

³⁶ Charters, *The British Army and Jewish Insurgency in Palestine*, 54.

³⁷ Eliav, *Wanted*, 223-225.

³⁸ Wilson, *With 6th Airborne Division in Palestine*, 24.

³⁹ Bethell, *The Palestine Triangle*, 215; Charters, *The British Army and Jewish Insurgency in Palestine*, 54.

⁴⁰ HA 47-36, "Extract from Report Submitted by P.86," 3 November, 1945.

another confrontation began.⁴¹ While this incident was resolved without violence, another demonstration in Tel Aviv quickly escalated into a riot. A CID report from November 11 indicated that the department had been expecting a disturbance in the *Yishuv* for some time.⁴² On November 14, the predicted disturbance occurred when a Jewish demonstration against British policy turned quickly into a riot with mobs attacking the Post Office and Income Tax Office. In response, the British Sixth Airborne Division was deployed to Tel Aviv to suppress the riot. A curfew was declared and soldiers were posted throughout the city, but the violence continued. Soldiers were pelted with rocks, which prompted them to open fire on the crowd. After three days of riots, the violence came to an end, leaving six Jews dead and another sixty Jews and twelve British soldiers wounded.⁴³

Ten days after the riots in Tel Aviv began, another attack was carried out under the auspices of the URM. On November 24, Palmach units attacked the coast guard stations at Givat Olga and Sidna Ali with automatic-weapons fire. A month later, the Irgun and Lehi joined the fray. On December 27, the Irgun and Lehi carried out three coordinated attacks on the CID headquarters in Jerusalem and Jaffa and a Royal Engineers motor pool in Tel Aviv.⁴⁴ The attack on CID headquarters in Jerusalem, at the Russian Compound, was particularly effective. Several teams of insurgents provided cover fire, which allowed a Lehi demolitions team to plant explosives.⁴⁵ In the ensuing

⁴¹ Wilson, *With 6th Airborne Division in Palestine*, 25.

⁴² HA 47-36, Top Secret Report to A.I.G. CID, 11 November, 1945.

⁴³ Wilson, *With 6th Airborne Division in Palestine*, 27-29.

⁴⁴ Wilson, *With 6th Airborne Division in Palestine*, 35.

⁴⁵ Eliav, *Wanted*, 226-228.

blast, an entire wing of the CID headquarters was demolished. Ten British policemen were killed in the attack, and another twelve were wounded.⁴⁶

Throughout the fall of 1945, three major operations had been carried out by the United Resistance Movement. These operations represent a significant turning point in the underground struggle against the British. Whereas in the past the IZL and Lehi had carried out attacks with no coordination, these later operations were executed with the approval of all three underground organizations. The scale of these operations, particularly those carried out on October 31, meant that the Palestine Police Force could not deploy enough policemen to stop the attacks. Furthermore, with the Haganah no longer providing intelligence to CID, the British were unable to identify the specific perpetrators of the attacks, and in some cases were unsure of which organizations were involved. In the aftermath of the December 27 raids, a source within the *Yishuv* confirmed that these operations had been the work of Lehi and the IZL.⁴⁷ However, the source's assertion that the Haganah and the Jewish Agency were both aware of the attacks but did not participate in the operations led the British to believe that the underground was not yet fully united.⁴⁸ With only limited intelligence, the Palestine Police Force was unable to effectively counter to the United Resistance Movement.

In response to the actions of the United Resistance Movement, the Palestine Police Force focused their efforts on searches to find suspected insurgents. The civilian administration for Palestine, under High Commissioner Alan Cunningham, still hoped to bring the more moderate elements of the Jewish Agency to the British side. Cunningham

⁴⁶ Bell, *Terror Out of Zion*, 151.

⁴⁷ HA 47-36, Defence Security Office to A.I.G CID, 29 December, 1945.

⁴⁸ Harouvi, *Palestine Investigated*, 8/2:3

had served in North Africa during the war, and had been relieved as commander of the British Eighth Army after a dismal performance. Now serving in Palestine, the High Commissioner was loathe to antagonize the political leadership of the *Yishuv*, and favored limited actions against the terrorists in the form of searches. The PMF and the British army took the lead in these operations, setting up roadblocks to inspect vehicles for weapons and conducting large-scale searches of Jewish settlements. It was hoped that with the army providing a cordon and effectively sealing off suspect settlements, the police and detectives of the CID would be able to screen the inhabitants and arrest members of the underground. Additionally, by specifically targeting members of the IZL, Lehi, and the Palmach, it was hoped that the more moderate elements of the *Yishuv*, particularly in the Jewish Agency, would reassert control over the more extreme elements and reign in the violence.⁴⁹

The first such operation was carried out two days after the attacks of November 24 on the coast guard stations. The nearby settlements of Givat Haim, Rishpon, Shefayim, and Kfar Holga were cordoned off by two brigades of the Sixth Airborne Division and the police conducted a screening of the inhabitants.⁵⁰ During the searches at Givat Haim and Kfar Holga, violence broke out when a further 3,000 Jews from surrounding settlements arrived and began to interfere with the operation. A total of 900 Jews were arrested for these actions, with a further 160 persons taken for additional screening at the prison camp in Latrun.⁵¹ The searches provoked a major response throughout the *Yishuv*. An army intelligence report from December 3 noted that the

⁴⁹ Charters, *The British Army and Jewish Insurgency in Palestine*, 55.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 198; Horne, *A Job Well Done*, 293; Harouvi, *Palestine Investigated*, 8: 35.

⁵¹ Bell, *Terror Out of Zion*, 150.

Jewish press was vigorously protesting the use of heavily armed soldiers during the searches. Additionally, Jewish members of the Palestine Police Force had begun to resign in protest of the searches, and twenty more resignations were expected.⁵² Another such operation was carried out following the December 27 attacks, this time in Ramat Gan. Another 1,500 people were screened, and a total of fifty-nine were arrested. Despite these numbers, not one of those arrested in either search could be proven to have participated in the attacks.

The searches conducted by security forces in last months of 1945 stand out not only as a new tactic of security forces, but also as indicators of several key problems which the British faced at this point. Without intelligence on specific individuals involved in attacks, the PPF was forced to cast a wide net in the hope of catching suspects. Additionally, British intelligence reports from shortly after the search indicated that the underground had advanced warning of the searches and was able to evacuate its personnel before the search even began.⁵³ This revealed a key problem within the Palestine Police Force: intelligence leaks. With a reduced presence of British personnel in the force, operational secrecy became a major problem for the PPF. One army report stated that the police force was even in the habit of using the reverse side of previously discarded memoranda to type new reports for economic reasons.⁵⁴ These leaks proved a further hindrance to search operations. In a report following the search on Ramat Gan, army intelligence reported that the IZL had received advanced warning of the search and

⁵² HA 115-99, "Weekly Report of 252 Section F.S.W. for W/Ending 3 Dec. 45," 3 December, 1945.

⁵³ HA 115-99, "Weekly Report of 252 Section F.S.W. for W/Ending 7 Jan 46.," 7 January, 1946.

⁵⁴ HA 115-99, "Routine Report for Period Ending 9 April, 1946, 9 April, 1946.

was able to evacuate most of its personnel before the raid. The report also noted that the IZL was already aware of another raid, scheduled to take place later that week in Tel Aviv.⁵⁵ As Major Dare Wilson of the Sixth Airborne later wrote, “It soon became a rule for formations and units to deal only with the Superintendents of Police Districts in these matters, and anything in writing was passed to them personally by hand.”⁵⁶

Furthermore, the failure of these operations to lead to the arrest of operational members of the Jewish underground reveals the depth of the *Yishuv*'s opposition to the British administration. During the search in Ramat Gan, Yaacov Eliav, a Lehi commander, sought refuge in the settlement, where he was hidden in a local home while the search occurred.⁵⁷ This is in marked contrast to operations in late 1944, when members of the IZL and Lehi were often handed over to the British. The purpose of these raids had been in part to persuade the moderate elements of the *Yishuv* to reassert control over the extremists. As Eliav's situation revealed, even the more moderate elements were turning against the British administration.

1946

As a new year dawned, the police continued to focus on large-scale searches, while bolstering defenses within Palestine. Arriving in January, General Richard Gale, a veteran of the Sixth Airborne during the Second World War and now the commander of the First Infantry Division, was shown a map of Palestine, with the vulnerable installations marked in red. “The map looked more like a child suffering from an attack

⁵⁵ HA 115-99, “Weekly Report of 252 Section F.S.W. for W/Ending 7 Jan 46.,” 7 January, 1946.

⁵⁶ Wilson, *With 6th Airborne Division in Palestine*, 39.

⁵⁷ Eliav, *Wanted*, 229.

of measles than a display of serious military dispositions.”⁵⁸ With the under-strength police force consisting mostly of Jewish and Arab policemen, who were considered unreliable at best, it was left to the British army to provide guard details for the majority of these installations. This proved to be a serious strain on the army’s resources. As one officer later wrote, “These calls for dispersion clashed with the necessity for concentration and mobility of available forces, and confronted the Higher Command with a dilemma which had far-reaching effects and was never satisfactorily solved.”⁵⁹

With British security forces so widely dispersed, members of the Jewish underground soon grew bolder in their actions. An army intelligence report from February of 1946 reveals just how bold the insurgents had become:

IZL is NOT generally appreciated as a consciously humourous body; that it has a sense of humor at all is surprising news. Recently a policeman was sitting in a RISHON café when a Yemenite group entered and distributed IZL leaflets; perceiving that he was interested they returned a few minutes later and presented him with two copies. Later in the evening they came back again, gave him an English translation and bought him a brandy!

While this incident displays a certain amount of levity, it reveals the serious problems with security at the time. Distributing any IZL or Lehi propoganda was a criminal offence within Palestine, and the police had often confiscated such literature and arrested those found carrying it.⁶⁰ Like the Yom Kippur demonstration at the Wailing Wall in September of 1944, this incident was another attempt by IZL members to boldly flaunt the law, and it speaks volumes as to the impunity the men of the Irgun felt they now operated with.

⁵⁸ Richard Gale, *Call to Arms: An Autobiography* (London: Hutchinson & Co., Ltd., 1968), 160.

⁵⁹ Wilson, *With 6th Airborne Division in Palestine*, 39-40.

⁶⁰ Bertie Braddick, Interview by William Ward, May 7, 2006, Palestine Police Force Project, Middle East Centre, St. Antony’s College, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK, 4.

The situation continued to deteriorate through the spring of 1946, as the IZL, Lehi, and the Haganah continued to carry out attacks on British targets. In a further sign of the boldness under which these organizations operated, the targets selected now included military targets, which during the war had been purposefully avoided by the Irgun and Lehi. In the first two months of 1946, a total of sixteen attacks were carried out by the Haganah, Irgun, and Lehi. The most prominent of these was an Irgun and Lehi attack on three RAF airfields in Lydda, Petah Tiqva, and Qastina on February 25 in which five aircraft were destroyed and another seventeen were damaged.⁶¹ In total, the raiders inflicted some 750,000 pounds worth of damage in the attack. On March 6, a team of Irgun fighters disguised as British soldiers, snuck into a camp near Sarafand and attempted to steal arms and ammunition. On this occasion, the raiders were discovered and two were wounded in the incident, while another nine were later arrested by police.⁶²

In response to the continued attacks on British military installations, the army was forced to expend more manpower on guard details. This soon proved a strain on military resources, given the number of vulnerable installations within Palestine. This added duty was also harmful for morale, as many soldiers began to complain about the more frequent shifts on guard.⁶³ Morale suffered a further blow in the aftermath of a Lehi attack on April 25. That night, twenty-five to thirty Lehi fighters attacked a British vehicle depot and army camp in Tel Aviv. A total of seven British soldiers were killed during the raid,

⁶¹ Charters, *The British Army and Jewish Insurgency in Palestine*, 183; Bell, *Terror Out of Zion*, 157-158.

⁶² HA 115-99, "Attack on Ammunition Dump of 3rd Hussars, Sarafand Camp." 9 March, 1946; Wilson, *With 6th Airborne Division in Palestine*, 41.

⁶³ HA 115-99, "Routine Report For Period Ending 12 March, 1946.

some in their tents.⁶⁴ The boldness and brutality of the attack infuriated British soldiers and policemen across Palestine. As Dare Wilson later recalled, “No man, whatever his rank, who was serving in the Division on this day will easily forget the feeling of revulsion and frustration which he experienced as a result of this despicable act.”⁶⁵ The next day, the Sixth Airborne Division and PPF conducted a search in the nearby Karton district of Tel Aviv, arresting seventy-nine persons, not one of whom could be linked to the raid on the depot. At this point, British frustrations boiled over, and a group of 300 airborne soldiers attacked a dozen Jewish homes in Qastina in retaliation.⁶⁶

The incident in Qastina is illustrative of the growing frustration among security personnel at the continuing deterioration of security within Palestine. Neither the PPF nor the British army had been able to bring the attacks to a halt. From January until June 1946, the Haganah, Irgun, and Lehi conducted a total of sixty-five separate attacks.⁶⁷ In this same period, eighteen British soldiers were killed and another 101 were injured, with similar casualty rates sustained by the police.⁶⁸ Additionally, security forces carried out over fifty search operations in this six-month period; however in spite of this activity, a critical gap was developing in the army’s security posture.⁶⁹ While the Army maintained regular patrols in Haifa and the rural areas of Palestine, there was virtually no military presence in Tel Aviv. As a result, the majority of insurgent activity occurred within the

⁶⁴ Charters, *The British Army and Jewish Insurgency in Palestine*, 184; Bell, *Terror Out of Zion*, 161.

⁶⁵ Wilson, *With 6th Airborne Division in Palestine*, 45.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 47-48; Bethell, *The Palestine Triangle*, 233.

⁶⁷ Charters, *The British Army and Jewish Insurgency in Palestine*, 196.

⁶⁸ Wilson, *With 6th Airborne Division in Palestine*, 57.

⁶⁹ Charters, *The British Army and Jewish Insurgency in Palestine*, 203.

Lydda District, specifically in the Jewish city of Tel Aviv, where the insurgents were able to operate with relatively little interference from security forces. In June, Field Marshall Bernard Law Montgomery arrived in Palestine on an inspection tour and drew attention to the security force's ineffectiveness in containing the violence. In his report to London on the situation, Montgomery was highly critical of the police efforts against the URM. Montgomery noted that the Palestine Police Force was 50 percent below strength, and of this, only 25 percent could be considered effective. To reverse the situation, Montgomery recommended that the police and army take a firmer stance against the underground, conducting aggressive searches while meeting violence with the force of arms.⁷⁰

Field Marshall Montgomery's assessment of the situation in June echoed the concerns of a number of personnel operating within Palestine, as is evident from the retaliatory attack on Qastina. Despite Montgomery's recommendations, High Commissioner Cunningham was still hesitant to risk open confrontation with the *Yishuv*. Instead, Cunningham favored a limited response to insurgent attacks, relying on searches but avoiding the harsh tactics that had been used during the Arab Revolt in the hopes of persuading the moderate elements of the Jewish Agency to rise up and gain control of the *Yishuv*. This strategy continued to inform British actions after a further escalation of the conflict, when six British officers were kidnapped by the Irgun on June 18. In response to this escalation by the Irgun, Cunningham ordered a major search operation to be conducted, codenamed Operation Agatha. On June 29, 10,000 soldiers and a further 7,000 police conducted search and arrest operations in Jerusalem, Haifa, and Tel Aviv, as well as a number of other Jewish settlements in Palestine. The search units were given

⁷⁰ Bernard Law Montgomery, *The Memoirs of Field-Marshal The Viscount Montgomery of Alamein*, K.G. (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1958), 378-379

lists of suspect personnel compiled by the CID and arrested 2,718 people, including six major leaders in the Jewish Agency.⁷¹ The primary targets of Operation Agatha were leaders of the Jewish Agency as well as members of the Haganah and Palmach, and as a consequence, few members of the Irgun and Lehi were captured in the operation.⁷² Another goal of the operation was the capture of the records of the Jewish Agency, which were suspected to contain the lists of Haganah's hidden weapons caches. Unfortunately for the British, there were no such documents in the Jewish Agency's offices.⁷³ Despite these setbacks, Operation Agatha was intended to be a major show of force that would persuade the moderates within the Jewish Agency to renounce the insurgency and force the Haganah to end its campaign.

The King David Hotel

Unfortunately for the British, Operation Agatha did not immediately bring about the desired change. Instead, on July 22, 1946, the Irgun carried out a bombing attack on the King David Hotel, the headquarters for the civilian administration in Palestine, in retaliation for Operation Agatha. The attack was proposed by the Irgun, who submitted their plan to the central committee of the URM for approval. This approval was granted, although the Haganah and Palmach representatives stressed that all precaution should be taken to limit the number of casualties.⁷⁴ Before the bombing, the Irgun issued several warnings to the British of the impending attack. CID records indicated that three

⁷¹ Charters, *The British Army and Jewish Insurgency in Palestine*, 118; Harouvi, *Palestine Investigated*, 8-2:14.

⁷² Charters, *The British Army and Jewish Insurgency in Palestine*, 97.

⁷³ Harouvi, *Palestine Investigated*, 8-2:13-14

⁷⁴ Begin, *The Revolt*, 213; Bethell, *The Palestine Triangle*, 253-254.

warnings were given immediately prior to the explosion, while a SHAY investigation revealed that both government personnel and hotel staff were warned in time to evacuate the building.⁷⁵ However, despite these warnings, no evacuation was ordered.⁷⁶ Ninety-one people were killed in the blast.⁷⁷

The bombing of the King David Hotel created a firestorm in both Palestine and the United Kingdom. Newspapers in England quickly condemned the attack by the Irgun, and also blamed the Jewish Agency for not controlling the violence within the *Yishuv*. "Terrorism has survived not because the terrorists have been strong, but because the wiser heads of the Agency have shown weakness in dealing with them."⁷⁸ Two days after the bombing, another article in *The Times* of London called for the Jewish Agency to take a firmer stance against terrorism. "This is the time when the Agency and the community may prove that they mean what they say when one declares it has no interest, however slight, in these terrorists, and the other expresses its deepest horror at yesterday's murders."⁷⁹ British policy in Palestine also came under scrutiny, particularly the inability of the British Government to determine a way forward. One article read, "But it is more than ever clear that the present situation in Palestine cannot be permitted to continue; and that the urgent need of the moment is the formulation of a policy, framed in accordance with the dictates of equity and justice, which can be administered with the assent and

⁷⁵ Harouvi, *Palestine Investigated*, 8-2:20-21.

⁷⁶ Begin, *The Revolt*, 219; Bethell, *The Palestine Triangle*, 261.

⁷⁷ John Newsinger, *British Counterinsurgency: From Palestine to Northern Ireland* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 21.

⁷⁸ "The Shadow of Terrorism," *The Times*, London, 25 July, 1946.

⁷⁹ "Gen. Cunningham Returns," *The Times*, London, 24 July, 1946.

assistance of the United Nations.”⁸⁰ The King David Hotel attack was a major blow to the civilian administration for Palestine, and in the coming months, the British Government began to seriously consider an exit strategy for Palestine.⁸¹ However, until a decision was made on Palestine, the security forces still tried to regain the initiative.

In the immediate aftermath of the King David Hotel explosion, security forces began conducting searches in Jerusalem. The Irgun claimed responsibility for the attack in a flyer posted on July 23, and the police and army directed their efforts toward apprehending members of the group. Two of the culprits were found that same day, one of whom was already dead, and a search by the Sixth Airborne Division netted another thirty-seven Jews, none of whom could be linked to the bombing. CID published a memorandum shortly after the bombing which reconstructed the course of events; however, this report does not name any suspects in the bombing, other than to say the attack was carried out by the Irgun. More intriguing is that fact that the King David Hotel bombing was not referenced in any CID intelligence summaries except for one on August 16, and this summary was limited in its distribution.⁸² CID’s absence of reporting on the King David Hotel bombing is particularly puzzling in that this was the highest-profile attack by Jewish insurgents to date. Despite the significance of the event, CID was not able to produce actionable intelligence to allow the British to respond effectively. Instead, the security forces conducted another security sweep, this time in Tel Aviv.

⁸⁰ “A Senseless Outrage,” *The Times*, London, July 23, 1946.

⁸¹ Louis, “British Imperialism and the End of the Palestine Mandate,” in *The End of the Palestine Mandate*, 10-11.

⁸² Harouvi, *Palestine Investigated*, 8-2: 20-21.

On July 30, 21,000 British soldiers and policemen cordoned off the entire city of Tel Aviv and conducted a house-to-house search in an operation codenamed Shark.⁸³ In the immediate aftermath of the King David Hotel bombing, CID discovered two of the vehicles used in the attack, which had been reported stolen in Tel Aviv.⁸⁴ General James Cassels, commander of the Sixth Airborne Division, was ordered by the General Officer Commanding (GOC) for Palestine, Evelyn Barker, to conduct the operation. In his instructions to Cassels, Barker is reported to have said, “Jim, I want you to search Tel Aviv, every single room and attic and cellar in Tel Aviv. Is that quite clear?”⁸⁵ Cassels followed these instructions to the letter. Over the next four days, policemen and soldiers screened 100,000 residents of Tel Aviv, 10,000 of whom were detained for further questioning. A total of 787 people were eventually arrested, although only a few were proven to be members of the Irgun.⁸⁶ More importantly, two key figures in the underground, Nathan Yellin-Mor, a commander of Lehi, and Menachem Begin of the Irgun were both missed.⁸⁷ Police failed to identify Yellin-Mor during screening, and Begin escaped by hiding in a kitchen cupboard for four days.⁸⁸

The End of the United Resistance Movement

The King David Hotel bombing proved to be a bridge too far for the Haganah. While Haganah had originally approved of the operation, the international outcry over the

⁸³ Charters, *The British Army and Jewish Insurgency in Palestine*, 119.

⁸⁴ Harouvi, *Palestine Investigated*, 8-2: 20.

⁸⁵ Bethell, *The Palestine Triangle*, 270.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 271.

⁸⁷ Wilson, *With 6th Airborne Division in Palestine*, 71.

⁸⁸ Charters, *The British Army and Jewish Insurgency in Palestine*, 119.

incident placed the Jewish Agency under tremendous pressure to contain the actions of the insurgents. In response to this pressure, the Haganah ended its military campaign against the British in August, focusing its efforts on an illegal immigration campaign to bring Jewish refugees from Europe into Palestine.⁸⁹ At the same time, the Jewish Agency pursued a diplomatic track with the British Government, submitting a proposal for the partition of Palestine.⁹⁰ It was left to the Irgun and Lehi to continue attacks on their own.

Despite break-up of the United Resistance Movement, the scale of violence increased dramatically throughout the fall and into 1947. In the fall of 1946, eighty-eight separate attacks were carried out by the Irgun and Lehi, ten more than were carried out through the entire existence of the URM.⁹¹ In September, Lehi again turned to targeting members of the police force for assassination.⁹² On September 8, Lehi agents shot and killed a CID detective in Haifa. The next day, another detective was killed in Tel Aviv, with several other British policemen wounded in the attack.⁹³ On September 30, another two detectives were shot, one fatally, by Lehi operatives.⁹⁴ The Irgun did not remain dormant either, focusing its activities on railroad sabotage and road mining operations. On September 9, a total of eighty-five mines were laid on tracks near Petah Taqva, Qalqilya, Kefar Sirkin, Rehovot, and Tel Aviv. That same month, there were eight

⁸⁹ Segev, *One Palestine, Complete*, 478; Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 179; Bethell, *The Palestine Triangle*, 273.

⁹⁰ Abba Eban, *Abba Eban: An Autobiography* (New York: Random House, 1977), 73; Bethell, *The Palestine Triangle*, 278-279;

⁹¹ Charters, *The British Army and Jewish Insurgency in Palestine*, 196.

⁹² HA 115-44, "Intelligence Summary No 12," 4 October, 1946.

⁹³ Charters, *The British Army and Jewish Insurgency in Palestine*, 185.

⁹⁴ HA 115-44, "Intelligence Summary No 12," 4 October, 1946.

separate road-mining operations conducted by the Irgun throughout Palestine.⁹⁵

Additionally, on September 20, the Irgun blew up the railway station in Haifa.⁹⁶ These incidents continued throughout the fall of 1946.⁹⁷ The road mining operations proved particularly effective, and the majority of Britain's 600 personnel killed in Palestine occurred after September 1946.⁹⁸

As the violence escalated, the police and army concentrated their efforts on preventing attacks. The Sixth Airborne Division and Palestine Mobile Force took the lead in these operations, running patrols on the major thoroughfares and enforcing a road curfew.⁹⁹ At the same time, CID focused its efforts on apprehending suspects through quick raids. While these efforts were limited due to the dearth of intelligence coming from informants, arrest operations were carried out regularly. As one former CID constable later recalled, "We'd go at 3 o'clock in the morning, surround a block of flats and we'd go and sort that out, the flats and things, and try to find these people . . . That went on consistently."¹⁰⁰ However, despite this regularity, CID was unable to arrest the operational figures within Lehi and the Irgun, and the violence continued. More success came from an army operation carried out in November. That month, the IZL had focused

⁹⁵ 115-44, "Railway Sabotage in Divisional Area Since 10 Jun 46;" 115-44, "Road Mining Incidents in Divisional Area Since 16 Jun 46."

⁹⁶ Charters, *The British Army and Jewish Insurgency in Palestine*, 185.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 186-188; 115-44, "Railway Sabotage in Divisional Area Since 10 Jun 46;" 115-44, "Road Mining Incidents in Divisional Area Since 16 Jun 46."

⁹⁸ Charters, *The British Army and Jewish Insurgency in Palestine*, 60.

⁹⁹ HA 115-44, "Intelligence Summary No 12," 4 October, 1946; James Hainge, Interview by Eugene Rogan, June 5, 2006, Palestine Police Force Project, Middle East Centre, St. Antony's College, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK, 4; Charters, *The British Army and Jewish Insurgency in Palestine*, 120.

¹⁰⁰ Francis Mark Russell, Interview by Eugene Rogan, May 16, 2006, Palestine Police Force Project, Middle East Centre, St. Antony's College, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK, 4.

exclusively on sabotaging Palestinian railway lines.¹⁰¹ In Operation Earwig, the entire Sixth Airborne Division established observation posts along the Lydda to Jerusalem lines, and ran patrols along the tracks. After two weeks of these patrols, railway sabotage in Palestine effectively ceased, although the Irgun continued to operate elsewhere.

Despite the success of Operation Earwig in preventing railway sabotage, the situation in Palestine continued to spiral out of control as both the Irgun and Lehi stepped up their efforts to target members of the British security forces. Through the months of October and November, Lehi and the IZL mines killed seventeen British soldiers and wounded another sixty-four.¹⁰² On December 5, Lehi detonated a car bomb at the Southern District Headquarters in Sarafand in which thirty soldiers were injured. That same month, the Irgun conducted a high-profile operation that drew the attention of the High Commissioner. In December, two Irgun members had been sentenced to eighteen lashes each after they were arrested in a failed bank robbery in September.¹⁰³ When the sentence was carried out on one of the prisoners, Benjamin Kimchi, the Irgun responded by kidnapping four British soldiers and flogging them, threatening to flog more British soldiers and police if the second sentence was carried out.¹⁰⁴ After the Irgun publicized the first four floggings, High Commissioner Cunningham commuted the second sentence.¹⁰⁵ The kidnapping and flogging of four British soldiers proved to be a major escalation in the conflict. By December, the situation had deteriorated to the point that

¹⁰¹ 115-44, "Railway Sabotage in Divisional Area Since 10 Jun 46;" HA 115-44, "Intelligence Summary No 19.," 22 November, 1946; Wilson, *With 6th Airborne Division in Palestine*, 84.

¹⁰² HA 115-44, "Intelligence Summary No 20.," 29 November, 1946.

¹⁰³ Begin, *The Revolt*, 232.

¹⁰⁴ Bell, *Terror Out of Zion*, 184-185.

¹⁰⁵ Charters, *The British Army and Jewish Insurgency in Palestine*, 61.

G.O.C. Evelyn Barker ordered all off duty personnel to be confined to quarters.¹⁰⁶

Additionally, all foot patrols through the Jewish cities of Haifa and Tel Aviv were to be conducted from now on in armored cars. As one former CID constable recalled, “You were armed all the time . . . Quite a lot of the people I knew were killed, you know. It was a fairly dangerous job. I mean, the CID got very dangerous in Jerusalem at one time, very dangerous.”¹⁰⁷ When the situation had not improved by January 30, High Commissioner Cunningham ordered the evacuation of all British non-essential personnel and dependents, to be completed in three days.¹⁰⁸

By January of 1947, the security situation in Palestine was critical. The continued attacks by the Irgun and Lehi showed how ineffective the security forces were in containing the violence. High Commissioner Cunningham’s commutation of the second flogging sentence was seen by many British personnel as a capitulation to the Irgun.¹⁰⁹ The confinement to barracks of all security personnel and the evacuation of all non-essential personnel is particularly revealing as to the severity of the situation. The British were no longer able to provide security to their own personnel in the face of continued attacks. These decisions by the High Commissioner suggest a serious failure by the Palestine Police Force and the British Army to maintain law and order in Palestine. The reality was that the situation was quickly spinning out of control, and continued terrorist attacks only revealed a further decline.

¹⁰⁶ A.J. Sherman, *Mandate Days: British Lives in Palestine, 1918-1948* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 190.

¹⁰⁷ Francis Mark Russell, Interview by Eugene Rogan, May 16, 2006, Palestine Police Force Project, Middle East Centre, St. Antony’s College, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK, 4.

¹⁰⁸ Sherman, *Mandate Days*, 192; Bethell, *The Palestine Triangle*, 301.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 190.

End Game

Having previously failed to counter Jewish terrorism, in the spring of 1947 the British security forces sought to regain the initiative. In doing so, for the first time in Palestine, the British began to consider a fresh approach to counterinsurgency operations. The previous model, relying on the force of the police and the army to reassert control was clearly proving ineffective. The large-scale searches, which had proven successful in the Arab Revolt were ineffective in the face of continued Jewish attacks. Furthermore, as the *Yishuv*'s frustrations with British policy continued, intelligence from Jewish sources was almost impossible to come by.¹¹⁰ Instead, drawing on the wartime experience of commando operations, such as those of the Chindits in Burma, led by Orde Wingate, the security forces began to examine the possibility of small units conducting more surgical strikes. The major champion of this approach was General Bernard Fergusson.

Fergusson had served in Palestine before, in the late 1930s during the Arab Revolt. After fighting in Burma during the Second World War, Fergusson returned to Palestine in 1946 to serve with the Palestine Mobile Force, which had been disbanded at the end of the year.¹¹¹ In February of 1947, he submitted a proposal for the formation of a new undercover team of police officers to conduct counterinsurgency operations.

It seemed to me, 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 or to repay in kind, but to anticipate and to give would-be raiders a bloody nose as they came in to raid.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Tim Jones, *Postwar Counterinsurgency and the SAS* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 30-35.

¹¹¹ David Cesarani, *Major Farran's Hat: The Untold Story of the Struggle to Establish the Jewish State* (Cambridge, MA: De Capo Press, 2009), 29.

¹¹² Bernard Fergusson, *The Trumpet in the Hall, 1930-1958* (London: Collins Clear-Type Press, 1970), 210

Fergusson recruited two former British commandos, Roy Farran and Alistair McGregor, to lead the squads, which were made up of members of the police force. These squads were to dress in plainclothes and operate from within the *Yishuv*, conducting operations against Lehi and the IZL.¹¹³ For several weeks, Farran and McGregor's teams conducted operations with limited success; however, disaster struck when a hat with Farran's name inscribed in it was found near the body of a murdered Jewish teenager.¹¹⁴ After a large outcry from the *Yishuv*, Fergusson was forced to resign and return to England and his teams were disbanded before they had been fully tested. After this brief experiment with small-unit operations, the security forces reverted to their previous tactics of large-scale searches.

After the Farran episode, events in Palestine progressed rapidly. In April, the British requested that a special commission be dispatched from the newly formed United Nations to examine the Palestine issue and make recommendations as to a solution.¹¹⁵ The proposal was accepted and on May 15, 1947, the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) was dispatched. Despite these developments on the political front, security operations continued throughout the summer. On April 16, the British executed Dov Gruner, an Irgun fighter who had been captured in 1946 after a raid in Ramat Gan.¹¹⁶ Following Gruner's death, the Irgun raided the British prison at Acre in a prison-break that had originally been planned to free Gruner and several other condemned fighters. In an operation involving thirty-four Irgun and Lehi fighters

¹¹³ Fergusson, *The Trumpet in the Hall*, 226-227; Richard J. Aldrich, *The Hidden Hand: Britain, America, and Cold War Secret Intelligence* (New York: The Overlook Press, 2002), 262-263.

¹¹⁴ Cesarani, *Major Farran's Hat*, 94-97

¹¹⁵ Bethell, *The Palestine Triangle*, 312-313.

¹¹⁶ Begin, *The Revolt*, 268.

disguised as British soldiers, a total of 214 Arab and twenty-nine Jewish prisoners escaped when the combined strike force blew a hole in the prison wall.¹¹⁷ An Army intelligence report written four days after the attack noted the preparations of the combined assault force, making particular mention of the “fairly voluminous” documentation that the party had prepared to assist in their disguise.¹¹⁸ In the end, eight Irgun fighters were killed in the raid and another five were captured¹¹⁹ In the aftermath of the prison break, the security forces conducted another series of searches. From May to July of 1947, a total of sixty-three search operations occurred.¹²⁰

Following the raid on Acre prison, the Irgun stepped up its operations throughout June and July. In this two-month period, seventy-two separate attacks were carried out.¹²¹ Of particular concern of the security forces at this time was the potential kidnapping of security personnel by the Irgun. Throughout the summer, the Irgun had attempted to kidnap soldiers to hold as hostage to forestall the execution of the five fighters captured in the Acre prison break. An army intelligence summary from June 13 warned of this possibility. “It is now apparent that the IZL have every intention of carrying out reprisals in the event of the death sentence being passed on the five extremists undergoing trial at Jerusalem.”¹²² As stated in the report, two soldiers had already been captured by the Irgun on June 9; however, they managed to escape the next day. In July, two other British

¹¹⁷ Bell, *Terror Out of Zion*, 208-213; Bethell, *The Palestine Triangle*, 308.

¹¹⁸ HA 115-44, “Intelligence Summary No 41.”

¹¹⁹ Bethell, *The Palestine Triangle*, 308.

¹²⁰ Charters, *The British Army and Jewish Insurgency in Palestine*, 204

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 196.

¹²² HA 115-44, “Intelligence Summary No 46.”

soldiers were not so lucky. On July 18, Sergeants Clifford Martin and Mervyn Paice were kidnapped in Nathanya by the Irgun.¹²³ Three of the captured Irgun fighters had been sentenced to death on July 12, and the Irgun threatened to execute the two British sergeants if this sentence was carried out.¹²⁴ Security forces immediately conducted several large searches in Nathanya and the surrounding communities in an effort to recover the sergeants.¹²⁵ Ten days later, the missing sergeants still had not been found despite intensive efforts by the police.¹²⁶ On July 29, the three captured Irgun fighters were executed in Acre prison. The next day, the Irgun followed through on its threat, and on July 31, the bodies of Sergeants Martin and Paice were discovered hanging in a eucalyptus grove outside of Tel Zur. After the execution, the IZL had planted a bomb under the bodies. When Martin and Paice were cut down, one of the bodies landed on the mine, which detonated, destroying the corpse and injuring the Captain D.H. Galetti, who had cut the rope.¹²⁷

The Sergeants Affair proved to be the last straw for the British Government. After the incident was publicized in Britain, anti-Semitic riots broke out in several major British cities. *The Times* of London compared the incident to the atrocities of the Nazi's during the Second World War.¹²⁸ In Palestine a number of retaliatory attacks were carried out by soldiers and police. Five Jews were killed when enraged police officers attacked a

¹²³ Bell, *Terror Out of Zion*, 227.

¹²⁴ Bethell, *The Palestine Triangle*, 336.

¹²⁵ HA 115-99, "Security Report for Week Ending 19 Jul 47."

¹²⁶ HA 115-99, "Security Report for Week Ending 28 Jul 47."

¹²⁷ Bethell, *The Palestine Triangle*, 337-338; Bell, *Terror Out of Zion*, 237-238.

¹²⁸ Bethell, *The Palestine Triangle*, 338-339.

Jewish owned café in Tel Aviv.¹²⁹ In another incident, a British armored car opened fire on a bus, killing one Jew.¹³⁰ The outrage in Britain led many to call for an end to the British Mandate for Palestine. These cries continued until November 27, when the UN General Assembly voted for the partition of Palestine into two separate states, one Jewish and the other Arab.¹³¹ Shortly after this vote, the British Government announced the full withdrawal of her personnel from Palestine, effective May 15, 1948.¹³² Throughout the fall of 1947, the British prepared to hand over control of Palestine to the Jewish and Arab communities. While security operations continued in this period, the primary focus of both the police and the army was to avoid getting caught up in the growing civil war which had emerged between Palestine's Jewish and Arab communities.

Conclusion

In 1945, the British stood firmly in control of Palestine. Assistance from the Haganah had rendered the Irgun and Lehi combat ineffective, and the security forces were in control of the country. By 1947, the British position in Palestine had eroded to the point that the civilian and military authorities were simply looking ahead to their forthcoming departure. In the intervening years, Palestine had been rocked by a continually escalating insurgency that ultimately shattered the pillars of Britain's security strategy for the country. The policies of the British Government had alienated the Haganah and driven the organization to form a union with the Irgun and Lehi. While this

¹²⁹ Sherman, *Mandate Days*, 207.

¹³⁰ Bethell, *The Palestine Triangle*, 340.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 351.

¹³² Morris, *1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 73-74.

union did not last for even a year, the Haganah had effectively turned against the British administration in Palestine, which proved to be a decisive blow to the potential success of British counterinsurgency operations. At the same time, the *Yishuv* had continued to grow, and by 1948, there were some 650,000 Jews living in Palestine, roughly 34 percent of the total population.¹³³

The Jewish underground presented a far greater challenge in the dying years of the Mandate than it had from 1939 until 1944. Facing a united Jewish underground, the Palestine Police Force was quickly shown to be far too small to contain the violence that began in the fall of 1945. The scale of the attacks, as well as their frequency, required the intervention of the British army. However, the effectiveness of this intervention was severely hampered by a lack of intelligence, which was a direct result of the Haganah turning against the British government. Instead of pursuing a counterinsurgency strategy directed by intelligence to strike crippling blows to the Jewish underground, the British were forced to adapt their tactics to compensate for the lack of intelligence. That these security sweeps ultimately failed to reverse the situation reveals the difficulties that the British faced in operating amongst a population that was now openly hostile. By January of 1947, the British were essentially driven from the streets of Palestine's major cities, unable to venture from the protection of army bases or police barracks for fear of kidnapping or assassination. That 100,000 soldiers were unable to control the escalating violence among a population of 600,000 reveals the seriousness of the situation. The final two and a half years of British rule in Palestine revealed major deficiencies in the British understanding of counterinsurgency. Foremost among these deficiencies was the lack of

¹³³ Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 14.

coordination between the policy makers in Whitehall and the security personnel in Palestine. The final years of the Mandate revealed the importance of policy in counterinsurgency strategy. As British policy had alienated the *Yishuv*, the critical intelligence links that the British had relied on throughout the Mandatory period dried up, and the British were forced to confront the underground with limited intelligence. While there was an attempt to rectify this problem, as evidenced by Bernard Fergusson's attempt to introduce a new counterinsurgency tactic, by the spring of 1947, it was too late and the British Government was ready to wash its hands of the entire situation.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

On May 14, 1948, in Jerusalem, General Sir Alan Cunningham, High Commissioner exited Government House for the last time. As he inspected an honor guard composed of soldiers from the Highland Light Infantry, a military band played “Auld Lang Syne” and “God Save the King.” After this final inspection, the Union Jack that flew over Government House was slowly lowered, to be replaced by the flag of the Red Cross. After the ceremony, High Commissioner Cunningham boarded an armor-plated limousine that had originally been designed to protect the King during the German *Blitz* in the early years of World War II. Accompanied by a procession of armored cars, the limousine was driven to Kalundia Airstrip, where Sir Alan boarded a plane for Haifa. In Haifa, the High Commissioner paraded past another honor guard before boarding a small boat that carried him out to the cruiser H.M.S. Euryalus. At precisely midnight, the British flag in Haifa was lowered and the Euryalus departed for England.¹ The British Mandate for Palestine had ended.

Britain’s departure from Palestine stood in marked contrast to her entrance. In 1917, Field Marshall Edmund Allenby had walked into Jerusalem as a conqueror, and had quickly set about the business of helping Palestine to recover from the effects of war. When High Commissioner Alan Cunningham departed Palestine in 1948, he did so humbly, with the knowledge the British had failed to maintain security within Palestine.

¹ Tom Segev, *One Palestine, Complete: Jews and Arabs Under the British Mandate* (New York: Holt Paperbacks, 1999), 517-518; A. J. Sherman, *Mandate Days: British Lives in Palestine, 1918-1948* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 243; Nicholas Bethell, *The Palestine Triangle: The Struggle for the Holy Land, 1935-1948* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s and Sons, 1979), 360.

As early as November of 1947, violence had broken out between the Arab and Jewish populations in Palestine. By January of 1948, a full-blown civil war had broken out as the Jews attempted to consolidate their position within Palestine and the Arabs tried to prevent further expansion of the *Yishuv*.² Caught in the middle of the conflict, the British security forces were no longer concerned with preventing violence. As one Briton wrote at the time, “All the military and the police are concerned with now is looking after themselves and their families. They let the Arabs and Jews shoot one another up without interfering.”³

Britain's Security Strategy in Practice

When the British took control of Palestine at the end of the First World War, they relied on previous colonial experience in building the security forces that would oversee the implementation of the Balfour Declaration. Britain had not established any official colonial security doctrine, and instead, the Palestine Police Force was built around the model which had first developed in Ireland. Following this model, the PPF was established as a militarized police force, which relied on a heavy contingent of predominantly Arab volunteers. As in other colonial ventures, the responsibility for maintaining security was entirely in the hands of the Palestine Police Force. A critical aspect of this strategy was the emphasis on suppressing violence as it arose, rather than developing the capabilities to respond to any potential threats that had not become violent yet. Ultimately, this strategy focused on results in the short-term, and few resources were directed towards potential threats. As a consequence, if a new challenge were to arise

² Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 13-14.

³ Sherman, *Mandate Days*, 217.

which exceeded the capabilities of the police to contain, there was a danger that the disturbance would spiral out of control. This strategy was dependent upon a stable political environment for success. Unfortunately for Great Britain, the political situation in Palestine was anything but stable.

The implementation of the Balfour Declaration of 1917 introduced a new, dynamic element into Palestinian society. In declaring their support for the creation of a Jewish national home within Palestine, the British Government had unwittingly set the clock ticking on a time bomb as the Jewish population in Palestine began to gradually increase at the expense of the Palestinian Arabs. However, throughout the 1920s there was little cause for concern. After the 1921 Jaffa Riots, the British interpreted the lack of disturbances as a sign that the Arabs would indeed gradually accept Zionism. Although the Haycraft Commission had cited ethnic tensions as a factor in the 1921 Riots, Bolshevism was seen as the most immediate threat to peace within Palestine, and the meager intelligence resources of the CID were directed towards monitoring Bolshevik activities. When ethnic tensions began to grow after the 1928 disturbance at the Western Wall, the lack of resources to monitor the Arab and Jewish communities meant that the British failed to see the emerging threat of ethnic violence, leaving them unprepared when Palestine was engulfed by major rioting in 1929.

The 1929 Riots had revealed to the British that the critical threat to security was the growing Arab resentment of Zionism. In response, the Palestine Police Force focused on improving their riot control techniques, and improving the intelligence capabilities of the CID. However, political developments in Palestine continued to outpace the changes in the security forces. Jewish immigration had increased considerably due to Hitler's rise

in Germany, and consequently, Arab frustrations also increased. By 1936, these frustrations reached a boiling point and a major revolt broke out in Palestine.

Despite the surprise of the Arab Revolt, the British security forces took advantage of the situation to make several key improvements. By 1939, CID had established itself as an effective intelligence-gathering unit. Additionally, the British had made several key contacts within the Jewish Agency, and more importantly the Haganah. These improvements proved decisive after the political environment was radically altered after the publication of the White Paper of 1939. CID's quick development of a Jewish Affairs section allowed the department to achieve arguably the greatest success of the Palestine Police Force, the neutralization of Avraham Stern and dispersal of his followers in 1942. Despite this success, there were still critical limitations to CID's intelligence-gathering ability, which were revealed in the counterterrorism operations against Menachem Begin's Irgun in 1944. The PPF's efforts against the Irgun were severely hindered by the lack of intelligence on operational personnel within the Irgun, and it was only the intervention of the Haganah which led to the cessation of major attacks. The "Saison" was a critical moment in the history of the Palestine Police Force because it revealed the depth of the force's dependency on Jewish cooperation for successful counterterrorism operations. Unfortunately, this cooperation ceased soon after the "Saison" had concluded in 1945. In response to the British Government's refusal to reverse course from the White Paper of 1939, the Haganah joined forces with the Irgun and the newly reconstituted Lehi.

The failure of British counterinsurgency in the final two years of the Mandate is particularly significant in light of the earlier successful counterinsurgency campaign in

the latter years of the Arab Revolt. This failure can be explained by the nature of the two insurgencies. The Arab Revolt was largely rural in nature, and the insurgents focused their actions on targets of opportunity rather than targets of strategic significance. Arab guerillas operated more often than not away from populated urban centers, allowing the British army to isolate the insurgents and bring the full force of arms to bear. In contrast, the Haganah, Lehi, and the Irgun operated amongst the civilian population, and struck targets chosen specifically for their strategic or political significance. The urban setting was particularly important in that it allowed the Jewish insurgents to attack suddenly and then just as quickly vanish into the crowds. In this environment, the security forces could not rely on their most significant asset, superiority in firepower.

The political situation proved decisive as well. The Arab Revolt was not a unified effort, and several prominent families were willing to cooperate with the British, providing intelligence, and, in the case of the Nashashibi family, forming a private militia to fight alongside the security forces against the rebels. Furthermore, the Jewish Agency proved a willing ally, sharing intelligence and bolstering the security forces with additional manpower in the Jewish Settlement Police and the Special Night Squads. In contrast, during the Jewish insurgency in 1945, the entire *Yishuv* stood united against British policy in Palestine. Additionally, due to fears of sparking an ethnic war as well as the lack of a reliable ally, the British were unable to rally the Arab community to provide the same assistance as the *Yishuv* had in 1938. As a result, the British were unable to gain the intelligence necessary to develop an effective counterinsurgency strategy. By 1947, the situation was so desperate that the security forces were no longer safe outside of their

barracks, and several high-profile kidnappings sparked calls in Great Britain for a withdrawal from Palestine.

Implications for Counterinsurgency

The British experience in Palestine revealed several key flaws in Britain's colonial security model. Political decisions made in London introduced a fluid and ever-changing political environment on the ground in Palestine. In this dynamic atmosphere, the Palestine Police Force was often caught unprepared for new security threats which emerged in response to political changes. In examining the timeline of events, a pattern emerges in which British political decisions led to new violence within Palestine that forced changes in the PPF, who were unable to contain the disturbance. This suggests poor coordination between the security apparatus and the civilian administration, both in Palestine and in London. Britain's implementation of the Balfour Declaration was a policy which emphasized gradual but constant change to the structure of Palestinian society. The emphasis on short-term security efforts naturally conflicted with the long-term aim of government policy.

The problems of policy also affected Britain's reliance on the *Yishuv* for security assistance. With no coordination between Whitehall and the personnel on the ground in Palestine, the security forces were required to oversee the implementation of policies that alienated the country's two major ethnic communities. The Balfour Declaration created a time-bomb that eventually exploded into a three-year revolt in which the British were forced to commit 10 percent of their entire army to restore order. Similarly, the White Paper of 1939 set the stage for three separate Jewish insurgencies throughout the 1940s. Britain's commitment to the White Paper of 1939 proved a serious obstacle for Anglo-

Jewish cooperation, particularly at the end of World War II. Without Jewish cooperation, the security forces were unable to suppress the united Jewish underground after 1945. It has almost become clichéd to say that counterinsurgency requires “winning the hearts and minds” of the local population, but, as Palestine reveals, this cliché rings true.

The issue of security within Palestine is not simply limited to academic discussions of the British Mandate, but rather is a current and ongoing issue. Insurgency has been a prominent part of the narrative of Palestine and the later state of Israel, from the conflicts of the Mandate to the civil war of late 1947 to the rise of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, Hamas, and the later *intifadas*. Certainly Israeli doctrine and policy has been drawn from the earlier British experience, most notably in the Israeli continuation of Britain’s Emergency Defence Regulations, the martial law codes for Palestine.⁴ The Palestine experience proved to be a significant turning point in the evolution of Britain’s counterinsurgency doctrine. At the end of the Mandate, many veterans of the Palestine Police Force received postings to other colonial hotspots, and took with them the lessons learned in Palestine. Over 500 veterans of the PPF served in Malaya, and their experience proved instrumental in allowing the British to achieve success against the communist insurgency there.⁵ The British defeat in Palestine sparked a serious reevaluation of Britain’s counterinsurgency doctrine, and after the lessons learned in Palestine were applied successfully in Malaya, Britain developed a modern counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine, which stressed the need for close cooperation

⁴ Efrat Silber, “Israel’s Policy of House Demolitions During the First Intifada, 1987-1993,” in *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 23 (2010), 92.

⁵ John Newsinger, *British Counterinsurgency: From Palestine to Northern Ireland* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 46; Thomas R. Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency in the Post-Imperial Era* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1995), 2;

between the security forces and civilian authorities in a strategy that would win the support of the local population.⁶

Final Thoughts

The relationship between strategic and tactical decisions in Palestine is a topic that begs further research. Although this study has examined certain aspects of British security policy in Palestine, there is still much more that can be done with this subject. It is clear that there was a lack of clear communication between the policy makers in London and the security personnel in Palestine; however, there were other factors in play as well. For instance, the impact of illegal immigration on the operations of British security forces is another topic that falls outside the parameters of this study, but it is an issue that may shed light on the inability of the security forces to control the situation in Palestine. Furthermore, there has been little research on the British withdrawal from Palestine. The Mandate for Palestine did not end in November of 1947, and until May of the following year, British security forces were still deployed in Palestine. While the strategic situation had dramatically altered, the security forces were still active in the early stages of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. Further research into British operations in this period would provide a broader scope to a study of British security policy in Palestine, as well as offer fresh insights into the 1948 War.

The end of the British Mandate for Palestine came at a time of transition for the British Empire. By the late 1940s, Britain's influence in Egypt was on the wane. India, the crown jewel of the British Empire, gained independence in 1947. By the end of that year, it was clear that the British could no longer hold Palestine. The Mandate had had

⁶ John Makinlay et al., *Rethinking Counterinsurgency: RAND Counterinsurgency Study. Vol. 5* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2008), 11–12.

proven unworkable, in large part due to the constant disruptions to security in Palestine. In the thirty years of the Mandatory Government, the British Government had been unable to find a solution to the problems in Palestine. As time wore on, the constant violence had gradually worn away the optimism which had first accompanied the Balfour Declaration, to be replaced by a cynicism and longing to be rid of Palestine. Sir Michael Hogan, the former Solicitor-General for Palestine later recalled the frustrations many Britons felt after serving in Palestine. “There was a saying that everyone who came to Palestine came there to a certain degree pro-Jew, but after a time became essentially pro-Arab, and generally ended pro-British.”⁷

⁷ Sherman, *Mandate Days*, 30.

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