Britain’s Palestine: Security, Cartography, and Surveillance

by

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Preface

Reuven Frankel was born on 31 October 1930 in Meah Shearim, an Orthodox Jewish community in the Old City of Jerusalem. Reuven’s father and grandfather were rabbis, and he had begun religious school before he was three; by the time he was seven years old, Reuven was studying Talmud. In 1939, Reuven immigrated with his family to Chicago after Arabs in Palestine burned down his father’s hotel and restaurant. The lights on the ship that carried Reuven to the United States, were all turned off; the Allied War against Nazi Germany had begun. That same year, on Martin Goldsmith’s fifth birthday, Britain and France declared war on Nazi Germany. Martin and his brother Lenny were evacuated several times during the War to the English countryside and returned home to London’s Jewish East End intermittently. On “VE Day” Martin’s father, Harry (“Herschel”) Goldsmith, who had survived three tours of duty including in Montgomery’s North African Campaign, died in a truck accident while being transported between the German-Dutch border en route home to England. In 1948, Martin, his mother, Muriel, his sister, Ruth Ann, and his brother, Lenny, emigrated from England on the RMS Queen Mary. That year, they arrived in Chicago, where Martin’s uncle, Lou Goldsmith, lived with his wife.

This thesis is dedicated to my Zadye, Reuven Frankel, and my Papa, Marty Goldsmith.

My thank-yous must begin with my thesis advisor, Professor Richard Elphick. It is quite simple: this thesis would not exist if it were not for his continual encouragement and patience with my writing. I want to thank my mother, Liz
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The foundations for this thesis were built during my time at Oxford University: the inspiration and ideas given to me by Jane Garnett, Robert Johnson, and Pietro Corsi can be readily found in the following pages.

Thank you to the Yule family for putting up with me and welcoming me into your home in London.

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INTRODUCTION

Imperialism, although central to the subsequent administration of the British Mandate for Palestine, does not explain why Britain became involved in the Eastern Theater of the First World War. Deeply embedded “Orientalist” notions contributed to the belief amongst war planners in Whitehall that the Turks would easily keel over and surrender in Constantinople. The Dardanelles Strait, a narrow passageway from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea with the Gallipoli peninsula on the western flank, was the only ice-free sea route for the Royal Navy to reach its Russian ally in late 1914. When two German ships, the Goeben and the Breslau, dodged the Royal Navy in the Mediterranean and docked in the Turkish capital of Constantinople at the end of October 1914, and German and Austrian-Hungarian forces were threatening Russia in the north, Russia requested the assistance of its Entente allies. Britain responded to Russia’s request in part because, with a comparatively small land force, the initial human cost of the War had fallen on the shoulders of Britain’s allies, France and Russia; the Gallipoli landing would be Britain’s way of demonstrating its commitment to the broader allied cause. Furthermore, the forcing of the Dardanelles, it was believed, would allow the British to support Balkan states in their efforts against Austria-Hungary and inspire Italy to join the allied cause.¹

Even so, before Russia pleaded for British help in the Caucasus and before the specifics of the Dardanelles and Gallipoli campaign crystalized, Winston Churchill, first lord of the Admiralty, had set his sights on a front in the Near East. The

increasing stalemate along Germany’s Western Front, ultimately the most important reason why the British became involved in the Eastern Theater, gave Churchill’s Eastern strategy the allure of a “war-winning venture.” The promise of oil in Mesopotamia (the British had recently bought a controlling interest in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company) and the possibility of increased security for the Suez Canal were potential spoils of war in the Near East. It should be repeated, however, that “oil imperialism” and the Canal were not the chief reasons why the Royal Navy and British Empire forces attacked the Near East in the First World War.\(^2\)

The element of surprise in offensive warfare seems to have escaped British naval strategists in November 1914; the preparations for the offensive on the Dardanelles staged in Alexandria and at Mudros Bay (off the coast of Greece) were easily spotted by Turco-German intelligence. With advanced knowledge of the British offensive strategy, the Turkish military fortified its position along the Strait. Under the exceptional command of Mustafa Kemal, Turkish gunnery repelled the British bombardment of the outer forts guarding the Dardanelles. Three and a half months later, the Royal Navy returned. This time, British war planners had set their sights on Gallipoli’s southern tip, a steep climb to the peninsula’s mainland, where they hoped to seize a small village about four miles inland. The British certainly incorporated the element of surprise in their strategy at Gallipoli. Before 1915, it would have been hard for a military strategist to think of a worse spot for a “…landing site most anywhere on the three-thousand-mile-long Mediterranean coast of the Ottoman Empire.” While shocked by Britain’s decision to land on the southern tip, Turkish artillery from the peninsula above easily shot dead every British soldier

\(^2\) Ibid.
who made it to the beach below on the first day of the British attack. That is, those who had not already drown in the barbed wire entanglements below the water’s surface. The attempt to land at Gallipoli would continue for seven months; nearly a quarter million British soldiers would die in the process.³

In order to offset “the blows to British prestige at Gallipoli” Lord Hardinge, the viceroy of India, in April 1915, sent diseased and overworked British Indian soldiers to attack Bagdad after they had taken control of Abadan, Mesopotamia. The Turkish forces stationed in Bagdad were stronger than British intelligence had predicted and pushed Sir Charles Townshend and the British Indian Army back to Kut, where, after sustaining some 23,000 causalities attempting to break months of siege, Townshend surrendered to the Turks in April 1916.⁴

The scale of the disaster at Gallipoli was shocking, but the fortitude of a Turkish commander had, once before, guarded a fort in the Near East against the British Navy. At the turn of the century, in an attempt to centralize control of its vast and crumbling Empire, Constantinople had ordered the construction of two major railways: the Berlin-Bagdad Railway (funded by German banks) and the Hejaz Railway from Damascus to Medina. The sheer scale of the Hejaz Railway project hinted at the colonial ambitions of the Ottoman Empire and of the Imperial German government. When the tracks of the Hejaz Railway reached the Sinai region in 1906, an agitated Lord Cromer, the British consul-general in Cairo, argued that if the Turks were allowed to lay rail tracks further south, the security of the Suez Canal would be

³ Trumpener, “Turkey’s War,” 89; Cataclysm: The First World War as Political Tragedy, 98-9; Anderson, Scott. Lawrence in Arabia: War, Deceit, Imperial Folly and the Making of the Modern Middle East, 2013, 103-21.
⁴ Trumpener, “Turkey’s War,” 89; Cataclysm: The First World War as Political Tragedy, 98-9.
comprised. In May 1906, Cromer pressured Constantinople into agreeing to a Turco-
Egyptian border extending from Rafah to ‘Aqaba. When British troops attempted to
land in ‘Aqaba that year, however, they were repelled by the commander of the
Turkish police station and forced to land in Taba. The British agreed to a northern
border for the protection of the Suez Canal extending straight from Taba to Rafah. It
was here, at the Battle of Rafah over ten years later that, after an unsuccessful Turco-
German raid on the Suez Canal in January 1915, that the British would capture the
Sinai Peninsula and from there, launch the Palestine campaign. The British would
remain in Palestine for the next three decades until the United Nations partitioned
Palestine in 1947 and victory in the 1948 War solidified the place of the State of
Israel in the Cold War era. 5

This study does not contribute to a Zionist or an Arab nationalist narrative of
the era before partition. 6 Countless books have been published on the Arab-Israeli
conflict and on the origins of the Palestine refugee crisis. 7 It has, however, proven
impossible to divorce a story of European imperialism from the story and characters
of twentieth-century Zionism entirely.

The Arab Rebellion of 1936-39 in Palestine, the subject of the second chapter
of this study, has sustained a great deal of interest amongst scholars attempting to

1914: A Study of the Antecedents of the Hussein-the McMahon Correspondence, the Sykes-Picot
6 I do not explore the difference, for example, between labor Zionists, socialist Zionists, militant
Zionists, etc… For my purposes, what is most important is that Zionism was a nationalistic movement
that (in its most popular twentieth-century form) aimed to establish Eretz Israel in the Palestine often
by whatever means necessary.
7 Charles D. Smith’s Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict. 7th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s,
2010 remains one of the most accessible accounts of the entire conflict. For an analysis of the central
debates in the historiography see: Roberts, Nicholas. “Re-Remembering the Mandate:
Historiographical Debates and Revisionist History in the Study of British Palestine.” History Compass
explain Israel’s dramatic defeat of three Arab nations in 1948.\(^8\) Thus, while this is not chiefly a study of the events leading up to the 1948 War, it is a study of violence, imperial policing, and security in Palestine, all of which have captured the attention of scholars for decades.\(^9\)

While the well-documented Anglo-Zionist colonial partnership was crucial to the colonial development of Palestine,\(^10\) it is important to remember that the British in the interwar period were not imagining the incorporation of Palestine into its imperial system solely or even primarily through the creation of a Zionist nation-state. Indeed, the first vote in support of the creation of the State of Israel at the United Nations in 1947 was cast not by Britain (or the United States) but rather by the Soviet Union. In fact, Britain abstained from the vote altogether.\(^11\)

Many “high political histories” have been published on the British Mandate for Palestine. Since the late 1970s and early 1980s (when the first wave of British archival documents were released following the expiration of Britain’s thirty-year rule on pre-1948 documents), the two most influential historians of Britain’s role in

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the Middle East have remained Michael J. Cohen and William Roger Louis.\textsuperscript{12} Prominent characters such as T.E. Lawrence, David Lloyd George, and Winston Churchill have received extensive treatment in historical and popular literature.\textsuperscript{13} Many of those characters can be found in the following pages, but this is not primarily a story about them. Above all, this is an “administrative history” about how “high political” decisions were arrived at, implemented, and changed on the ground by administrators of the Empire. The most important characters in the following pages are mid-level agents of the Empire: colonial administrators, imperial security officers, and intelligence operatives.

Palestine was a nodal point in the British Empire, during a time that W.R. Louis has called “…the golden age of British colonialism, at least in the imagination.”\textsuperscript{14} It connected the Suez and the Mediterranean Sea to India and oil fields in Iran and Iraq, but it was rarely a front-page story in the metropole. Nor was it a commercial colonial enterprise (imagined or real) on the scale of the British Raj in India, South Africa, Malaya, Egypt or Mesopotamia. Palestine was always referred to as an addendum to these colonies, if it was even mentioned at all. Depending on how a British imperialist imagined the Empire in the first half of the twentieth century,


\textsuperscript{14}Louis, \textit{Ends of British Imperialism}, 44.
Palestine could be seen as a critical point in the route between Africa and the Far East and (especially after commercial developments at Haifa were complete) as a critical point connecting the Middle East and North Africa. Nevertheless, the logic of British colonialism cannot, in general, be explained by economic motives. Except for a few colonies, British “…colonial possessions proved to be white elephants, not the least in trade and commerce.” Colonial possessions were about “national prestige, power, and destiny.”  

15 With this observation in mind, to what extent can we find the heart of postwar British imperialism in the sands of the Sinai Desert, in the valleys of the Golan Heights, or in the pre-1948 harbor of Haifa?

This study contributes to a recent and growing body of literature interested in strategies of population control tested throughout the British Empire in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Palestine was the site of three distinct attempts to apply nineteenth- and twentieth-century British colonial methods of population control to a unique historical landscape. British imperial strategies and tactics of population control in Palestine were contingent on shifting political, cultural, and economic realities in the first half of the twentieth century. Therefore, I will inflect my analysis of imperial methods of control in Palestine with an appreciation for the unique cultural geography of the “holy city,” the complexities of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Anglo-Jewish relations, and the particular political

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15 Ibid., 35–7.
16 Several British imperial and intelligence historians have explored the strategies and mechanisms of population control that are central to this study. Several of them, however, are limited by a trans-historical approach to the questions of security, cartography, and surveillance in the first half of the twentieth century. Other histories only discuss one of the three population control mechanisms that are highlighted in this study. See, for instance, Priya Satia, Spies in Arabia: The Great War and the Cultural Foundations of Britain’s Covert Empire in the Middle East (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Laleh Khalili, “The Location of Palestine in Global Counterinsurgencies,” International Journal of Middle East Studies 42, no. 3 (2010): 413–33; Walton, Empire of Secrets.
and economic consequences of two world wars and the Holocaust. How did these particular shifting realities shape the design and implementation of imperial control in Palestine?

Mandated Palestine was a transitory space that carried British imperial officers, British methods of imperial control, and British soldiers from the nineteenth into the twentieth century and from Dublin to Calcutta. The failure to realize President Woodrow Wilson’s vague principles of democracy and “self-determination” in the Peace agreements after the First World War left people in China, Korea, India, and Egypt with a relentless passion for political sovereignty and a bitterness against imperial powers. The technologies of “total warfare” deployed in World War I militarized generations of anti-colonial frustration and nationalist fervor and allowed large and small revolutionary groups to cause major problems for Britain’s postwar Empire. Industrialized technologies and tactics of control resurfaced with the transference of imperial personnel throughout the British Empire to combat different insurgent and revolutionary struggles. At this time, Palestine became a thoroughfare for a variety of brutal tactics of control. To what degree were the

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17 Khalili, “The Location of Palestine in Global Counterinsurgencies.”
19 Jay Winter has argued that “…once we move away from the great centres of the [Great War] on the Western Front, once we leave Western Europe and move to the multiple and varied periphery of the war, we will find at hand abundant evidence of the hard materials of imperial domination, resource exploitation, and colonial hypocrisy that Fritz Fischer identified in the German Foreign Office papers over half a century ago…. This interpretation resides on the notion that history moves at different tempos during the same time period, and that the Great War was at one and the same time a move forwards to an era of industrial mass killing and a move backwards to an organization of the non-European world according to the strategic and material needs of the dominant imperial powers,” (Ibid., 3).
tactics (used during the Arab Rebellion) imported from the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century of violence in South Africa, the British Raj in India, and Ireland?

Wilson’s vision of a new “international” order shifted the official discourse of imperialism. According to this discourse, “mandates” of the League of Nations were instituted to cultivate the minds of “semi-civilized” people not yet ready to govern themselves. The discourse of “mandates” was meant to appeal to a reformed Western imperial culture. As Paul Rich has pointed out, in the wake of the Anglo-Boer War, the English had already begun to see the Anglo-Saxon race-patriotism of nineteenth-century imperialism as distasteful. Nevertheless, the imperial character of the League of Nations’ “mandatory system” is quite clear and well documented. British mandates were deeply infused with an imperial logic used throughout the (British) Empire. It is less clear, however, if and how the subtle mandate/colony distinction played out in the tactics of state control. Does this distinction fully explain why certain strategies of population control were seen as productive in Mandated Palestine?

Divided in three parts, this study explores the continuities and discontinuities in three systems of population control that attempted to solidify a benign all-knowing institution of statecraft in Palestine. Nevertheless, the plethora of unplanned and unmapped trajectories that filled the history of British imperialism in the Middle East—a region out of which the British “scuttled” at the last minute in 1948—are not wanting in the following story. After all, in On the Origins of Species, Charles Darwin did not teach us to follow a linear tale of progress (that would be the later

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work of Herbert Spencer and the Social Darwinists), but rather to see the randomness of history perpetuated by the mechanism of natural selection. This is not a tale of the progressive decline of British control in Palestine until 1948, but rather a story of how British imperial officers and colonial administrators repeatedly attempted to innovate a system of control that would allow them to remain in Palestine, and how their multiple attempts to do so failed.

Air control, a novel system of imperial policing after World War I, was applied first to Iraq and Palestine beginning in 1921. With air control, the British attempted to utilize the ostensibly omniscient and omnipotent power of the aircraft to have a “moral effect” on the Arab and the Bedouin wandering across the Arabian Desert. After riots in Jaffa and Jerusalem in August 1929, most colonial administrators agreed that air control in Palestine had failed. In the Arab Rebellion of 1936-1939, British imperial officers extracted technologies and instruments of control from the turn of the century and from across the Empire in an attempt to secure Palestine through “panopticism”: the British attempted to dislocate the Arab in Palestine from the Middle East with barbed wire fencing and watchtowers, but this system of control failed as well. After World War II, Zionist terrorists posed a formidable threat to British authority in Palestine. With the diffusive eyes of intelligence agents, a massive British army, and a newly recruited English-born

21 "In retrospect the inter-war years represented the golden age of British colonialism, at least in the imagination…. The India Act of 1919 granted ministerial responsibility to the provinces and, through a system known as 'dyarchy', transferred to Indian hands authority in education, public health, public works and agriculture while reserving to the British the crucial departments of justice, police, finance, and foreign affairs. Part of the purpose was to win loyalty and collaborations of the Indian leaders. The India Act of 1935 granted further autonomy to the provinces and created a federal structure, including a Supreme Court, but, again, these measures were designed to prolong the Raj, not to end it, by consolidating British control at the centre of Indian government," (Louis, *Ends of British Imperialism*, 45).
constabulary, the British attempted to bring state control to the ground level and develop a relationship with the terrorist on a state-to-person level. Again, this system of state control failed. My question for each of these cases, is why?

The majority of archival sources that I have consulted below are newspaper accounts, official interdepartmental reports, British intelligence reports, and the personal papers of colonial officials in Palestine. Newspaper articles from the digital archives of The Times, the Guardian, The Palestine Bulletin, and The Palestine Post are used to provide examples of the debates between war and state headquarters officials in Whitehall and how they were publicized to the electorate. Archival documents from the Colonial Office (CO), Foreign Office (FO), Foreign-Commonwealth Office (FCO), Air Ministry (AIR), War Office (WO), and MI5, the British Security Service, (KV) were consulted at The National Archives (TNA) of Britain in Kew, London. Two archives located at the University of Oxford were also utilized in this project: the Middle East Centre, St. Anthony’s College, Oxford and the Rhodes House Library, Oxford.
Air Control: a “Fascinating Furrow” from Above

Approximately twenty-seven million people visited the British Empire Exhibition in London between the spring of 1924 and the autumn of 1925. It was, perhaps, the most important event for “bringing the Empire home” after the Great War. The Exhibition spread across 220 acres of the north London suburb of Wembley and included an amusement park, cinemas, restaurants, an artificial lake, and eighteen different buildings filled with imitations of colonies that were scattered throughout 12.2 million square miles of the interwar British Empire.

The Exhibition commenced in 1924 and it concluded in 1925, both times at the Empire Stadium. It was there that King George V welcomed a buzzing crowd of 100,000 people on 23 April 1924 (St. George’s Day) and that, in October 1925, a stammering Duke of York, Prince Bertie (the future George VI), gave the royal public address of the closing ceremonies. The Empire Stadium, located in the southwest quadrant of Wembley Park, directly next to the train station, became the metropole of the Exhibition’s imitation empire. The Exhibition “…brings the whole British Empire in review before every visitor,” exclaimed an advertisement in The Times. The “Map of the British Empire Exhibition,” included in the 1924 brochure (Figure 1), directed visitors to all of the imitation colonies from the imitation metropole. The

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24 A Round of Delight at the New Wembley, The Times, May 23, 1925.
imitation white Dominions of Canada, Australia, and South Africa were situated closest to the imitation metropole and along with India were housed in the largest of the eighteen buildings. A modest building in the African colonial pavilion housed displays of Palestine and Cyprus together. Yet imitation Palestine was located within walking distance of the imitation metropole. The British Empire Exhibition mapped Palestine just east of London, which was perhaps only fitting, as the entire purpose of the Exhibition was to bring the Empire home. British strategies and tactics of control in Palestine lay at the heart of a much larger moment in British imperialism when an anxious and exhausted metropole slowly “scuttled” out of its periphery.

Figure 1. The Palestine and Cyprus pavilion is hardly visible on the map in the guide to the Exhibition. The red arrow is my own and points to the pavilion, which had the Palestine exhibitions.

25 The British Empire Exhibition 1924 Official Guide: Designed to Display the Natural Resources of the Various Countries within the Empire, and the Activities, Industrial and Social, of Their People,”
Throughout the imitation empire, visitors were introduced to a discourse about a vast and rich empire filled with people of peculiar habits in the “Races in Residence” sections. The 1924 brochure proclaimed that in the Palestine and Cyprus building the “…native arts and crafts [of Palestine] are represented by glass-workers from Hebron, and Yemenite craftsmen in metal, who ply their trades under the eyes of visitors.”

One of the most exciting events at the 1925 British Empire Exhibition occurred in the evenings in May, when, starting at 8:30 p.m., the Royal Air Force (RAF) flew across the Empire Stadium and dropped faux bombs over the crowd. This “thrilling spectacle,” called “London Defended” was a grand display of the offensive and defensive capabilities of British aerial power. The crowd in Empire Stadium, as one newspaper explained, felt the …rush of the aeroplanes as they swoop and re-swoop overhead, the crash of anti-aircraft guns and clangour of fire-engine bells, the noise of the band and blaze of the burning building, set alight by incendiary bombs, all combining to make a scene of excitement and terror. The attacking aeroplanes were so beautiful, like great jeweled birds, that one was sorry they were enemies.

As the frozen trenches of the Great War slowly thawed and President Woodrow Wilson stood before the United States Congress to declare war on Imperial Germany.


27 “British Empire Exhibition.”

28 “Opening Display at Wembley,” The Times, March 2, 1925.

29 “In the Stadium,” The Times, May 11, 1925.
in the spring of 1917, a newly appointed British Prime Minister fashioned a wartime opportunity to conquer the Holy Land. A few months before Wilson’s declaration of war, David Lloyd George had moved to 10 Downing Street and soon thereafter launched a propaganda campaign with John Buchan, the head of the Ministry of Information, called “The Turk Must Go.” The campaign attempted to remap a biblical cartography and its historical referent—the “cradle of civilization”—onto the Ottoman Near East and demonstrate how the Bible’s “Mesopotamia” and “Palestine” along with its current inhabitants were writhing in the twentieth century under the weight of the “barbaric” Turks. Lloyd George conveniently ignored the geo-political realities of the four hundred year old Ottoman Empire in the process of resurrecting the cartography of the “Holy Land.” When he asked where he should label “Dan” (from the biblical “Dan to Beersheba”) on a map made at the turn-of-the-century, none of the Prime Minister’s administrators could tell him.\(^{30}\)

Britain had, before the Great War, considered the Ottoman Empire an ally in the burden of maintaining her “global balance of power.” The Turks were seen as a barrier between the imperialist ambitions of tsarist Russia and His Majesty’s crown jewel, India. This discourse, inscribing the Ottoman Empire as a stabilizing global force in aid of the British Empire, did not sit well in 1916 with the Prime Minister’s crusader agenda. Thus, “The Turk Must Go” campaign attempted to write a narrative for why the British (in particular) should drive Turkish forces out of Jerusalem. First-hand accounts of the 1915-16 Turkish massacre of Christian Armenians published in

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the British Parliament’s “Blue Book” in June 1916, aided Lloyd George’s narration of events.31

In April 1917, the Prime Minister’s War Cabinet blessed his crusade, noting that a victory in Palestine would raise British morale, which had fallen under the weight of a wartime economy and the seemingly endless stalemate in the trenches of France and Belgium.32 With the support of Whitehall, Lloyd George directed General Edmund Allenby to seize “Jerusalem by Christmas.”33 Despite significant losses during a month-long campaign in Palestine, Allenby walked through the Jaffa Gates in Jerusalem on 11 December (well within the Prime Minister’s timeframe) and claimed the Holy Land for His Majesty’s Government.34 Allenby had been directed three weeks earlier to enter Palestine on foot, not so much in reference to Jesus Christ, as in contrast to the Kaiser, who had rode into the Holy Land. Unlike the German Emperor, Allenby was, according to the Daily Mirror, “the restorer of justice and fairness among all creeds....”35

Despite the crusader rhetoric of the “The Turk Must Go” campaign, the War Cabinet and Ministry of Information carefully constructed the procession, which

31 In 2005, the Turkish Grand National Assembly attempted to discredit the 1916 British Parliament Blue Book, The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915-17 by linking it to Lloyd George’s “The Turk Must Go” propaganda campaign. The British Parliament commissioned a commission to study the book and found that while the publication may have been a part of the propaganda campaign, the evidence of the Armenian atrocity was neither morally nor intellectually dishonest (“The Turkish Parliament and the Denial of the Armenian Genocide,” Gomidas Institute, n.d.). James Renton, “Changing Languages of Empire and the Orient: Britain and the Invention of the Middle East, 1917-1918,” The Historical Journal 50, no. 3 (September 2007): 647–50; Arnold Toynbee, The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915-1916: Documents Presented to Viscount Grey of Falloden by Viscount Bryce (Gomidas Institute, 2000).
33 Ibid.
35 Quoted in Bar-Yosef, “The Last Crusade?,” 100.
followed Allenby through Jaffa Gates on 11 December, to showcase a benign British Empire tolerant of all the religions practiced by all of its subjects. “The British Empire is said to contain a hundred million Mohammedan subjects of the King and it is obviously mischievous to suggest that our quarrel with Turkey is one between Christianity and Islam,” stated the Ministry’s official censor of all references to holy wars and crusades in articles about the campaign in Palestine.\textsuperscript{36} The British Government knew that if they hoped to maintain influence along the Mediterranean coastline after the (presumed) fall of the Ottoman Empire, they would need the support of Muslim tribal leaders.

Only a small minority in Britain, mostly an elite Oxbridge-educated middle class raised on the Bible, adopted Lloyd George’s triumphant crusader rhetoric. In diary entries about their campaign in Palestine, cockney soldiers in the Anglo-Egyptian Expeditionary Force rarely, if ever, alluded to a “holy war.”\textsuperscript{37} Tom Harrison and Charles Madge explained this class divide two decades later in \textit{Mass-Observation}: “…the interest in oneself and one’s own home has predominated far and away, our international and general political concern except in the upper middle class.”\textsuperscript{38} Once Allenby established the military administration of Palestine, however, the soldiers spent a great deal of time pondering the “fuller and more vital” parts of life in solitude at the “famous sites of pilgrimage” in and around Jerusalem. In Mesopotamia, British soldiers searched for symbols from Christian history such as

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{36} Quoted in Ibid., 88.
\item \textsuperscript{38} Quoted in Joanna Bourke, \textit{Working-Class Cultures in Britain, 1890-1960: Gender, Class and Ethnicity} (London: Routledge, 1994), 221.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
the Garden of Eden, Ezra’s tomb, the Tower of Babel, and the Ur of the Chaldees.\textsuperscript{39}

The Prime Minister was well aware, however, that in order to appeal to an international audience, his crusade of the Holy Land required more than an appeal to Christian sentimentality; British forces need to be recognized as knights of democracy freeing Jerusalem from the chains of eastern despotism.

While certainly not a “little Englander” by the start of the Great War (even though some accused him of being one by pointing to his turn-of-the-century “pro-Boer” stance), as the banal, everyday gloss that imperialist culture enjoyed throughout much of the nineteenth century had gradually faded from London, Lloyd George appreciated the political necessity of moving away from the old Anglo-Saxon race-patriotism that had dominated the nineteenth-century imperial rhetoric. At the turn of the century, the British government had been forced to change its presentation of imperialism “…from a hegemonic concept intrinsic to British self-definition to a political controversy on which it was possible to hold opposing views.”\textsuperscript{40} Debates triggered by the Indian Mutiny (1857) and the Morant Bay uprising in Jamaica (1865) were catapulted into the twentieth century by the visceral images of “concentration camps” from the Anglo-Boer War, the continued agitation for Irish Home Rule, and the public trial of General Dyer over the Amritsar Massacre in India (1919).\textsuperscript{41}

Wilsonian liberal principles of “self-determination” and democracy influenced the public debate in favor of a new “internationalism,” which declared that, “every people

\textsuperscript{39} Priya Satia, \textit{Spies in Arabia: The Great War and the Cultural Foundations of Britain’s Covert Empire in the Middle East} (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 168.

\textsuperscript{40} Paula M. Krebs, \textit{Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire: Public Discourse and the Boer War}, Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture 23 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 35.

\textsuperscript{41} Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose, “Introduction: Being at Home with the Empire,” in \textit{At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 22–3.
has a right to choose the sovereignty under which they live...”

This shift towards a more liberal imperial discourse was not lost on the Prime Minister. Indeed in 1914, Lloyd George, minister of munitions at the time, had described the war primarily as a defense of small nation-states against Imperialist German and Austrian aggression.

Lloyd George’s Government needed an autochthonous Semitic partner to make his crusade in Palestine palatable in an age of Wilsonian internationalism. Jews had, at least since the Damascus affair in the middle of the nineteenth century, been seen as “middle men” in the maintenance of the British Empire. Furthermore, Chaim Weizmann, a Russian-born organic chemist who immigrated to Manchester in 1904, appealed to British insecurities about pro-German influence in the United States, imperialist notions of a land bridge to India in Central Asia, and Anglo-evangelical humanitarianism in the Holy Land to strengthen the case for Zionism in Westminster. Weizmann’s efforts paid off when, a month before Allenby arrived in Jerusalem, the Ministry of Information published a letter in The Times from Arthur Balfour, the British foreign secretary, to Walter Rothschild, an heir in the titled and influential Jewish banking family. Balfour’s letter declared the support of the British Government for the creation of a Jewish National Homeland in Palestine. In 1917, what came to be known as the “Balfour Declaration” was a tool used in the same propaganda campaign that highlighted photographs of Russian-Jews marching alongside Allenby’s men in the procession through Jerusalem. These men, part of the

Jewish Legion led by Vladimir Jabotinsky, a Russian-born cosmopolitan ultra-nationalist, never engaged in combat during the campaign in Palestine but images of them could be found scattered in “The Turk Must Go” propaganda literature as a visual aid to the notion that the British were knights of democracy victorious against Turkish despots.47

Even before Lloyd George had entered 10 Downing Street in December 1916, the imperialist ambitions of Britain had already made their mark on wartime decisions in the East and on the Entente’s plans for a postwar Middle East. In the spring of 1915, Sir Mark Sykes, a self-proclaimed expert on the Near East, and François Georges-Picot, the former French consul-general of Beirut, had imagined a new postwar geo-political region called the “middle east” on a map entitled “Eastern Turkey in Asia, Syria and Western Persia.” Picot claimed rights to Damascus, Aleppo, and Mosul, while Sykes claimed rights to the Sinai and Mesopotamia. Palestine (land east of the Dead Sea from Acre to Gaza) was set aside for international administration. In April 1916, in the Tripartite Agreement, Russia formally added its claims (which included Russian control of Constantinople) to the Anglo-French secret agreement. That same month, clandestine British operatives led by Thomas Edward (T.E.) Lawrence were planning, as part of the Palestine and Syria

47 Renton, “Changing Languages of Empire and the Orient: Britain and the Invention of the Middle East, 1917-1918,” 663.
48 The term “Middle East” had only gained currency after Alfred Mahan, an American naval officer, used the term in 1902 to describe the Ottoman Near East as a strategic land bridge midway between Africa and the Far East. Twelve years earlier, Mahan had published The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, which in part led to the significant expansion of the German Navy under Kaiser William II—a development that forced Britain to discard its “splendid isolation” and redefine its relationship with its rival across the Channel, (Robert K. Massie, Dreadnought: Britain, Germany, and the Coming of the Great War, 1st Ballantine Books ed [New York: Ballantine Books, 1992], xxi–xxv).
campaign, an Anglo-Arab Revolt in the Hejaz led by the Hashemite family.\(^1\) For the previous eight months, Husayn ibn Ali, King of the Hejaz, had been exchanging letters with Sir Henry McMahon, the British high commissioner in Egypt. In exchange for Hashemite military support in Britain’s crusade against the Turks, McMahon promised Husayn ibn Ali a postwar independent Arab state. Given that at the same time Sykes and Picot were sketching a new Anglo-French “Middle East” across much of the same geography, McMahon was instructed by the British foreign secretary to remain vague about the borders of this future “Arab state.” The Entente’s wartime imperialist agreements were revealed to the public in October 1917 when the Bolsheviks toppled the tsarist government in Russia.\(^49\)

Britain’s decision to remain in Palestine after the war was, in large part, a result of the sentimental imperialism of a prime minister who talked “‘about Jerusalem with the same enthusiasm as about his native hills’.”\(^50\) Even the “Indocentric” George Curzon, the foreign secretary and chairman of the Eastern Committee of the War Cabinet, who was dedicated after the war to securing strategic routes to India, argued that the British should pull out of Palestine after the War.\(^51\)

Arthur Balfour and a group of young “new imperialists,” including Mark Sykes and future colonial secretaries William Ormsby-Gore and Leo Amery, believed Zionist


\(^{50}\) In the winter of 1919, Georges Clemenceau ordered General Henri Gourand into Greater Syria to “establish a center of French influence in the heart of the Mediterranean…” In September, Lloyd George had ordered Allenby to pull out from his position in Damascus (to ease the financial burden of administering the Middle East) and establish the continued military administration of the Holy Land from Jerusalem (Margaret MacMillan, Peacemakers: The Paris Conference of 1919 and Its Attempt to End War (London: John Murray Ltd., 2001), 416). Barr, A Line in the Sand, 83.

development of Palestine through an empirical scientific approach, would lead to “a British dominion” in the heart of the Asiatic Middle East. The “cradle of civilization” deserved a rehabilitation, so went the argument, the scale of which could only be achieved by European design. Years later, Lloyd George would reflect upon the place of the Old Testament in his childhood education: “I was brought up in a school,” he wrote, “where I was taught far more about the history of the Jews than about the history of my own land.” The British remained for the next three decades in Palestine, often unsure of why they were there.

By 1921 the patience of Britons for peacetime military expenditure, especially in the remote backwater territories of Iraq and Palestine, was wearing thin at home. The annual cost of administering the British Empire had jumped from £81.3 millions in 1913 to some £523 millions in 1920-21 and then again to £590.7 millions in 1921. When the Arab and Kurdish population in Iraq, “writhing under protracted military occupation mounted a violent insurgency…” in 1920, the British spent £40 million to triumph in what turned out to be a fairly conventional war. At the same time, the Harmsworth press barons were rousing lower and middle-class discontent over general wastefulness at home and abroad. While few within the Harmsworth’s “Anti-

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53 Richard Lloyd, the Prime Minister’s maternal uncle (who had passed away two months before Lloyd George became Prime Minister) was a lay Baptist preacher in Wales and had raised David on the Bible (Barr, *A Line in the Sand*, 80). Quoted in Bar-Yosef, “The Last Crusade?,” 105.
54 The annual taxation per head in Britain had continued to increase after the war (from £18 in 1919 to £24 in 1921) and the income-taxpaying citizens (whose numbers had increased three fold since 1913) expected significant reductions (Andrew McDonald, “The Geddes Committee and the Formulation of Public Expenditure Policy, 1921-1922,” *The Historical Journal* 32, no. 3 [September 1989]: 643–74).
Waste campaign” could agree on what should be cut from government expenditure, fiscal retrenchment was a political necessity by 1921 for all members of Parliament. “We are all economists now,” wrote Herbert Asquith, the former prime minister. Retaining ground and naval troops in the newly acquired colonies of the Middle East was not politically viable in a postwar economy and period of demobilization.56

Winston Churchill, who was recently appointed colonial secretary, told the Commons in June 1921 that to leave Palestine would undermine the progress of Zionist agricultural and industrial development (which, he said, had overcome the natural “inhospitable soil” of Palestine) and thereby destroy the reputation of the British Empire in the East.57 Yet during the war, Churchill had bet his political future on a project of “financial retrenchment.” In order to relieve Parliament of the burden of administering a territory that seemed precarious and redundant to many throughout the Empire, Churchill devised a method of controlling the population from above, which (at least according to his calculations) did not compromise his program of “financial retrenchment.”58

“Air control,” Churchill argued, would apply the far-reaching and “objective” lens of the aircraft to the vast desert landscape of the Middle East. Only a few armored cars and a small local police force would be needed as ground support for

56 William Ormsby-Gore, later to become the Secretary of the State for the Colonies, tried to frame “Anti-Waste” as a Little Englander campaign that was anti-semitic. (Hansard, 5th ser., vol. 143, col. 311); McDonald, “The Geddes Committee and the Formulation of Public Expenditure Policy, 1921-1922,” 645–47.
58 Charles Townshend, Britain’s Civil Wars: Counterinsurgency in the Twentieth Century (London: Faber, 1986), 84.
aeroplane of the Royal Air Force (RAF).\textsuperscript{59} Churchill presented his plan to the Commons as a cheap, quick, and politically viable substitution for army and naval control in “semi-civilised count[ries]” of the Middle East.\textsuperscript{60} Most members of parliament responded enthusiastically to Churchill’s proposal for aerial policing; after all, it was a cost-effective strategy that placed few British lives at risk after a war that had revealed the utter disregard for humanity of industrialized weaponry. In December 1921, the defense of Iraq and Palestine was officially placed in the hands of the Air Ministry and the aircraft emerged as the preeminent “instrument of state power” in the Middle East.\textsuperscript{61}

While offensive aircraft had a very limited role between 1914 and 1918, aerial technology had grown rapidly with the full weight of Europe’s military expenditures. War industrialists throughout Europe had competed in an aerial arms race during the Great War, attempting to outfit the aircraft for precise and strategic mass killings. The Zeppelin airships of the German navy raided London in May 1915, killing 127 people, injuring 352, and inspiring mass panic. Two years later, on a bright summer day, German Gotha airplanes bombed London again, but this time the bombers killed some 600 civilians in one attack. That figure would quintuple by May 1918. Londoners began to hide in the Underground train stations and working-class longshoremen abandoned the docks, which (unlike the royal palaces of his British cousins) had been approved for complete destruction by the Kaiser. Within a year,

\textsuperscript{60} Chief of the Air Staff, Cabinet Memorandum, “The Fuller Employment of Air Power in Imperial Defence,” November 1929, C.P. 332 (29), CAB 24/207.
three thousand Londoners were buried beneath the weight of German destruction from the air. The technology of aerial bombardment was, according to an article in *Scientific American* in November 1917, “…many times deadlier than its equivalent weight of high explosive.”

The British Royal Flying Corps had fallen behind the French and German aircraft industry early on in the war. In May 1916, however, the British accelerated the development and deployment of offensive aerial attacks; more than 300 inexperienced pilots were lost (killed, wounded, or missing) after the Flying Corps sent out an initial 426 that month. Germany regained control of the skies for less than a month before the British S.E.5 and Sopwith Pup and the French Spad ascended to the heights of industrialized warfare. It was a constant back and forth between Germany, France, and Britain, but ultimately air combat had a marginal effect on the War. In fact, aerial photography and reconnaissance (addressed in detail below) had influenced the battlefield and wartime strategic decisions far more.62

At the end of the War, the newly established Royal Air Force (RAF) conducted bombing campaigns in British Somaliland, a colony that had caused London trouble since the 1890s, to regain control from Mohammed bin Abdullah Hassan (known to the British as “the Mad Mullah”), who, during the war, had fortified a Dervish State.63 Hugh Trenchard, the chief of staff of the RAF,64 described

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64 In 1912 Churchill was acquainted (for a second time) with Hugh Trenchard at the Central Flying School at Upavon in Wiltshire. When they met, Churchill was just beginning his own pilot training;
Somaliland as the first successful postwar aerial campaign on the periphery, even though the aircraft in Somaliland, was most often used for reconnaissance purposes to assist ground forces. In 1919 the Air Ministry was fighting to retain its institutional independence amidst loud opposition from the War Office and Admiralty. Thus, regardless of how much it had defeated “the Mad Mullah” on its own, Trenchard was careful to highlight the relatively small cost of the RAF’s pacification of Somaliland: a mere £80,000.65

The pressure to economize, however, does not fully explain why Churchill and Trenchard chose Iraq (primarily) and Palestine (secondarily) as the initial laboratories for air control. A group of young middle-class “Arabists,” marked the Holy Land as the ideal space for the increasing power of the aircraft. Mark Sykes, T.E. Lawrence, Richard Meinertzhagen, and St. John Philby66 were stationed during the War on the Eastern Front to orchestrate the downfall of the Ottoman Empire. These intelligence operatives generated a voluminous discourse on the topography of the Near East and the typology of the Arab. While cartography was a major part of these intelligence operatives’ work during the War, when confronted with a “featureless...mirage ridden desert,” they resolved to minimize the variety and complexity of the Near East topography and decided to see it as all one vast desert:

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“…it remained for them something of a desert idyll, ‘very much the same everywhere’.“\textsuperscript{67}

While the application of air control to Iraq and Palestine was still being considered in London, Robert Brooke-Popham, the director of research at the Air Ministry reminded his audience in a lecture in 1919 that in Palestine, “the enemy will not have aeroplanes and it is very doubtful if they will have anti-aircraft guns, and if they had, would probably be unable to use them with any effect.”\textsuperscript{68} This optimistic assessment of Western European monopoly of knowledge on aerial technology conveniently ignored the education and training that these “primitive” Arabs had received in the large subsidized military education system of the Ottoman Empire.

In 1850, the Turk’s first state-sponsored military educational institution outside of Anatolia reopened in Damascus after temporarily closing for ten years. Many students of the Damascus military preparatory school went on to the Imperial Military Academy in Constantinople, and by 1899 about twenty-five percent of the eighteen thousand men in the Ottoman officers corps had gone through the Turkish military educational system.\textsuperscript{69} Furthermore, alongside its German ally, the Turks had rapidly expanded the aerial weapons capabilities of its army.\textsuperscript{70}

Although the post-Ottoman Arab was seen as “primitive,” the decision to first test air control in the Holy Land was not merely the consequence of age-old orientalist racialism. When the principles of environmental determinism were applied


to the Arabist intelligence operatives’ reading of the Holy Land as “empty, unmapped, magical spaces,” an image was born of fervently religious Arab wandering the desert in need of the guiding hand of a higher power. The aircraft was imagined as the ideal technology to actualize the fear of God through the hand of human ingenuity. Indeed, air bombardment, Lawrence explained at a disarmament conference in Geneva in 1932 “…is not punishment, but a misfortune from heaven striking the [Arab] community.”\(^{71}\) This discourse arrived directly from biblical reckonings “…on God’s creative and judgmental view of the world.”\(^{72}\) Furthermore, these young middle-class explorers wrote home about the Holy Land as the last remaining bastion of bravery and honor. The British in Arabia derived the typology of the Arab from principles of environmental determinism, which produced a perpetually violent, yet romantic, tribal warrior. “The natives of a lot of these tribes,” Trenchard explained in 1930 to the Commons, “love fighting for fighting’s sake.”\(^{73}\) Arabs in the Holy Land, it was believed “…could bear random acts of violence in a way that Europeans,” explains one scholar, who were “coddled by secular notions of justice and human rights, could not.”\(^{74}\)

While the concept of the “Arab mind” suited the logic of air bombardment, the ostensible flatness of the desert topography promised an ideal landscape for overcoming the limitations of aerial technology. The desert “promised many landing grounds, little cover to insurgents,” and “radiating” outposts of British domination,

\(^{71}\) Satia, “The Defense of Inhumanity,” 20–40; Satia, Spies in Arabia, 239–46.  
\(^{72}\) Amad, “From God’s-Eye to Camera-Eye,” 67.  
\(^{73}\) Satia, “The Defense of Inhumanity,” 37.  
\(^{74}\) Ibid., 40.
notions, which fit the technological requirements of the early-twentieth century airplane well.\textsuperscript{75}

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In the absence of a serious imperial rival (France’s territorial commitments of Syria and Lebanon were relatively limited) and through the auspices of the League of Nations, Britain maintained an uncontested “sphere of influence” in the Middle East between 1918 and 1936, when Italy invaded Abyssinia and threatened British hegemony in the region.\textsuperscript{76} Although Britain’s immediate postwar decision to establish a civilian administration in Palestine reflects a brief moment of “sentimental imperialism,” the decision to remain in Palestine for two decades following the Great War, was part of two distinct, yet overlapping, debates about the condition and future of the British Empire in the interwar period.

In the first discourse, Palestine was part of a frenetic “desert corridor”, in which demonstrations of aerial bombardment and the perceived omniscience of the state from above would have a “moral effect” on the wandering Arab from Cairo to Bagdad. Palestine was also situated within a Wilsonian discourse on the exportation of democracy to the Middle East. The RAF aircraft used aerial photography to survey

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 28.

\textsuperscript{76} In a memorandum dated 11 June, 1936, Anthony Eden, the British foreign secretary, stated that the Italian threat in Abyssinia posed a major threat to British possessions in Greece, Turkey, Yugoslavia, Egypt, and Palestine: “I would only allude to the question of our oil supplies and to the importance to us of the Moslem opinion in India to show that the stress I have laid on this relatively local aspect of the question is not exaggerated.” Italy, Eden continued, threatened Britain’s “…imperial communications through the Mediterranean with Egypt, Palestine and the Far East.” (Eden, Mr. “Memorandum by Mr. Eden on the Problems Facing His Majesty’s Government in the Mediterranean as a Result of the Italo-League Dispute.” Memorandum. Foreign Office, June 11, 1936). Robert S. G. Fletcher, \textit{British Imperialism and “The Tribal Question”: Desert Administration and Nomadic Societies in the Middle East, 1919-1936} (Oxford University Press, 2015), 68–71.
and map Palestine in the service of the budding Zionist colonial enterprise that lay midway between Africa and India. Ultimately, air control would prove unable to do the “manly” duties of moralizing and corralling the Arab population but the RAF would find success in a joint Anglo-Zionist colonial development project.

Britain’s desert corridor connected the Mediterranean Sea to the Persian Gulf. The corridor facilitated the transfer of goods and people across Britain’s Middle East. In October 1923, A. L. Holt, a member of the Royal Engineers, gave a lecture to the Royal Geographic Society about a vision he and St. John Philby had for a railway “flung across the barren vastness of the desert, …which, by linking up the rivers and plains of the east with the sea of the west, [would] restore to the desert its former importance as one of the world’s greatest trade routes.” The Roman Empire and “courts of the Middle Ages” that followed it, Holt explained, depended on a trade route from Damascus to Persia or India for the transportation of “Eastern luxuries…rich silks, precious stones, and spices….“ The audience at the Royal Geographical Society dismissed Holt’s vision, citing a lack of commerce in the area and a large decree of “lawlessness” across Arabian lands. When Holt took the idea to the Royal Central Asian Society soon after, they responded well to his plan. In fact, earlier that year, the Royal Central Asian Society had begun discussing the possibility

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77 Norris, Land of Progress, 105–119.
of stretching an oil pipeline from Kirkuk to the Mediterranean. During the same month of 1923, Stewart Francis Newcombe, a British Army officer commissioned by the Royal Engineers was in Palestine negotiating the Palestine-Lebanon border with French authorities. In his free time, Newcombe mapped an extension of the Hejaz Railway, a line built at the turn of the century by the Ottoman Empire connecting Damascus to Medina along the Muslim pilgrimage trail, terminating at the port city of Haifa. Newcombe drew rail tracks across the Huleh Valley, just north of the Sea of Galilee, which would become an essential part of Britain’s “desert corridor.” While the boundaries of the mandate were slowly being demarcated, cartographers such as Holt, St. John Philby, and Newcombe as well as those in the Air Ministry, looked down on the Holy Land from the birds-eye view of a map or an aircraft and imagined a contiguous desert highway extending from Basra to Cairo, along which Palestine was a critical nodal point.

Haifa was “seen at the western extremity” of the “desert corridor”—a highway through the northeastern Transjordan, connecting the “resource-rich” oil regions of Iraq to the Mediterranean Sea. The aerodromes in Haifa and in the southern city and military base of Lydda were used to launch the RAF’s bombardment of Iraqi villages in 1920. By 1932, Imperial Airways, a commercial

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79 This oil pipeline would come online in 1934. Maurice Hankey, the British cabinet secretary, had convinced Lloyd George after the First World War that oil in Mosul was essential to any favorable postwar agreement. The United States—the main exporter of oil—had expended over eighty percent of its oil reserves during the war and the cost of importing oil had doubled between 1917 and 1918, widening Britain’s trade deficit with the United States. Since the 1870s, reports had surfaced about the similarities between Mosul’s geological layout and the oil-bearing regions of Persia—where, in 1908 the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (in which the British held fifty-one percent stock) discovered untapped petroleum deposits. Convinced by his cabinet secretary’s assessment of Mosul, Lloyd George had ordered troops to take the city in October 1918 (Darwin, Britain, Egypt and the Middle East, 62). Ibid., 259–62; Fletcher, British Imperialism and “The Tribal Question,” 71–8.


81 Fletcher, British Imperialism and “The Tribal Question,” 71–8.
airline company, operated flights from the RAF aerodrome in Haifa to Baghdad. As part of a large development project at Haifa that included the construction of a deep-water harbor,\(^{82}\) two international airports were built in Palestine, one in the southern city of Lydda and one in Haifa itself, which connected commercial flights between Karachi, Indian and London, and served as part of an alternative to the Cairo-Baghdad-Basra airline route.\(^{83}\) In 1935, the Iraq-Petroleum Company built a hangar in the airport in Haifa establishing the port as a major hub of Middle Eastern oil.\(^{84}\)

Unlike “the Turks,” according to one English newspaper, the pioneering journeys of Britons by railway, motorcar, and airplane from Cairo to Baghdad made it “certain that man would soon refuse any longer to regard a desert as a serious barrier to human intercourse.”\(^{85}\) Of course, the Ottoman Empire had transported processed goods and petroleum from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean throughout the Great War,\(^{86}\) but this seemed to matter little to a generation consumed by the possibilities of motorcars and airplanes. In 1921, the RAF dug a “furrow” from Baghdad to Palestine to ensure that pilots could find their way across the desert.\(^{87}\) Despite the rapid developments of aerial technology during the Great War, pilots in the 1920s still had to follow well-marked trails on the ground for navigational purposes (they would not start training in point-to-point navigation until 1930s). Christopher Thomson, the secretary for air, provided journalists in London with an estimation of the furrow after

\(^{82}\) Her Majesty’s Treasury approved a £1 million loan in 1926 for development Palestine under the Palestine and East Africa Loans Act (Norris, Land of Progress, 101).

\(^{83}\) The airport in Lydda served during World War II, along with the airport in Baghdad as regional headquarters for the British military between Europe, Africa, and Asia (Ibid., 119).

\(^{84}\) Ibid., 118.

\(^{85}\) “By Motor-Car to Bagdad,” The Manchester Guardian, November 21, 1923.


\(^{87}\) Michael Dump and Bruce E. Stanley, Cities of the Middle East and North Africa: A Historical Encyclopedia (ABC-CLIO, 2007), 60.
visiting the Middle East and seeing it firsthand. The secretary of air, according to one journalist, said: the “desert route…is a fascinating furrow, 500 miles, long, clearly visible from high in the air, and a motor track runs near it. There are from twenty to thirty landing places. You have the sensation of travelling along an aerial highway.”

The landing strips that Thomson mentioned were in part, pit stops along the highway for refueling the aircraft, but also enabled the British state to form a direct relationship with the Bedouin and the Arab. “Aeroplanes enable the chiefs” across the desert, Trenchard argued, “to come into the centres where the civil authorities are, and takes from them the conception of a British civil power so distant that it is but a name.”

One of the desert furrow air landing strips was located in Qalandia, Palestine.

At the same time that Palestine became a central hub in a web of railway, motorcar, and aerial transport and commercial travel, the British linked the security of Palestine to its control across the “desert corridor.” In the 1920s, pilots spent most of their active time patrolling the frontiers of Palestine, which included much of the Transjordan and the Sinai Desert. In fact, this hinterland cartography was determined more by the agricultural patterns and trade route of Bedouin tribes than by the political boundaries of the imperial mandates. British administrators across the “desert corridor” formed an informal, ad hoc, rarely “official” security system to curb the movement of goods, arms smugglers, and Bedouin tribes, whose trade networks

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89 Fletcher, *British Imperialism and “The Tribal Question,”* 72.
93 Fletcher, “Running the Corridor,” 185–215.
came long before the international marked boundaries of the postwar “nation-states”.

Although the term “border smuggler” was used with great currency for British aerial and ground policing operations, even though the British attempted generally to write the nomadic migration patterns into the boundary agreements in the Middle East in the 1920s, “borders” remained highly ambiguous to people on the ground.

The most important goal of air control was for it to have a “moral effect” on the Arab in the desert, including on the frontiers of Palestine. “The use of aircraft inspires the people with wonder and fear,” said Lord Thomson after a journey through the Middle East. The Arabs “…have been impressed as by nothing else by this unknown weapon, this all-seeing eye with its terrible effect.” The omniscience of the aircraft would serve as a classic “panopticon,” conceptualized by Jeremy Bentham in the eighteenth century as a penitentiary device. While the bombardment of Iraq in the 1920s had demonstrated the power of the RAF to local villages, Hugh Trenchard told the House of Commons that in Iraq, “The moral effect of the mere appearance of the aeroplane was sufficient to stay the trouble.” With air control, the long arm of the state, it was prophesized, would leave no aspect of Bedouin and Arab life untouched; “…with aeroplanes there is no such thing as an inaccessible spot, there is no place to which he can remove his source of wealth, which cannot be reached.” As the Air Staff had explained in March 1920: “the… new [aerial] weapon renders [the

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94 Ibid., 203–4.
96 Fletcher, “Running the Corridor,” 191.
97 “Air Minister’s Defence of Bombing.”
control of the state] ubiquitous...[and] makes it practicable to keep a whole country
under more or less constant surveillance.’’ [100]

Several years later, the Air Ministry reflected on the utility of air control along the desert corridor:

When the Cairo-Baghdad route commenced to function grave forebodings were expressed in some quarters as to the fate of the crew of any machine which might be compelled to make a forced landing in the desert. The Air Staff on the other hand were hopeful that the regular passage of aircraft over the desert stretch lying between Palestine and Iraq would have a tranquilising rather than a disturbing effect on the desert and border tribes, which would react favourably on the political situation in Iraq, Palestine and Trans-Jordania. This hope has been fully justified; a number of forced landings having occurred and, so far from the crews having been molested they have on more than one occasion received assistance from the Arabs.... [101]

By the mid-1920s, the “moral effect” of air control on Bedouins and Arabs was pronounced by-and-large successful by Churchill and the Air Ministry. Certainly some in Whitehall (including Churchill) were concerned about the ethical implications of aerial bombardment, but the utility of air control was not controversial. [102] In May 1921, the RAF dispersed a crowd of militant Arabs assembling around Hebron, an Arab-Jewish town about 20 miles outside of Jerusalem, and successfully protected the Jewish settlements at the town’s periphery. [103] Except for rioting and disturbances that occurred that year in Jaffa and in the previous year in Jerusalem, the urban centers of Palestine were relatively calm,

[101] Air Ministry, Memorandum “Notes on the Value of the Air Route Between Cairo and Baghdad for Strategic and Other Purposes,” [undated; 1921-1936], AIR 9/19, TNA.
as few Jews immigrated to Palestine in the mid-1920s.\textsuperscript{104} Few British administrators sensed an impending crisis and, in 1923, the Colonial Office signed off on Hugh Trenchard’s recommendations to withdraw all army troops from Palestine and entrusted the security of the mandate to RAF squadrons, RAF armored cars, and a local police force.\textsuperscript{105} The last remaining ground forces evacuated Palestine in 1924 and the security of Palestine was left to air squadrons stationed in neighboring Amman and in Egypt, armored cars, and local police. Palestine had finally realized the completion of Churchill and Trenchard’s system of air control.\textsuperscript{106} Yet Arab anxieties about the formation of a British-sponsored Jewish National Homeland in Palestine would soon bubble over.

Beginning in 1928 on Yom Kippur (the Jewish Day of Atonement) the relative calm in Palestine of the 1920s expired as both Zionist and Arab leaders vented frustrations at the Western Wall to inspire violent nationalist riots. The British had given Amin al-Husayni, a descendant of a noble family in Palestine, the title of mufti of Jerusalem in May 1921. Soon after, al-Husayni began a campaign to centralize the authority of Jerusalem across the Arab-Islamic world, renovating the Dome of the Rock (al-Haram) and al-Aqsa Mosque (al-Sharif) and securing the presidency of the Supreme Muslim Council, an administrative body created by the

\textsuperscript{104} Historian David Omissi points out that the “from 1926 to 1928 the total influx [of Jews] was more than matched by the natural increase of the Arab population,” (Ibid., 47). After August 1929, Whitehall sent two commissions to Palestine to investigate the causes of the disturbances. Both the Shaw Commission and the Hope Simpson Enquiry found the increase in Jewish immigration to Palestine in 1928 as a significant source of tension and anxiety in the Arab community. Both Walter Shaw and Sir John Hope Simpson called for a change in the British immigration and land purchase policies, which, they argued, were forcing the Arab peasantry off their land. A third report issued by the French Government in 1931 confirmed the Shaw and Hope Simpson’s assessments, which had led the Colonial Secretary, Sidney James Webb to publish the Passfield White Paper (Mark LeVine, \textit{Overthrowing Geography : Jaffa, Tel Aviv, and the Struggle for Palestine, 1880-1948} [Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005], 188).
\textsuperscript{105} Omissi, “Technology and Repression,” 44.
British high commissioner to control the Muslim *waqfs* ("pious endowments")\(^{107}\) and sharia courts in Palestine.\(^{108}\) At the same time, limitations on Jewish access to the Western Wall was increasingly politicized by Revisionist Zionists as a way to radicalize opinion in Europe and America over the supposed plight of Zionists in Palestine.\(^{109}\)

Since the beginning of the Mandate, British policy in Jerusalem had been to maintain the religious *status quo* set down by Turkish administration before the Great War. The *status quo* set the parameters for access to and control of the Temple Mount.\(^{110}\) In the summer of 1929 Vladimir Jabotinsky mobilized nationalist fervor and led Zionists through Jerusalem singing “Hatikvah” (an anthem calling for the return of the Diaspora to *Eretz Israel*), claiming Jewish rights to the land surrounding the Western Wall. Amin al-Husayni led a counterdemonstration, and after the death of two young boys (one Arab and one Jewish) in early August, nationalisms and anxieties turned violent. Some 133 Jews and 116 Arabs were killed and 600 people injured before the violence subsided at the end of August 1929.\(^{111}\) Ten Jewish settlements were evacuated; the worst attacks were in Hebron and Safed, where some eighty Jews were killed by Arab mobs from Jerusalem.\(^{112}\) The attack in Hebron was


\(^{109}\) Ibid., 234–35.


\(^{111}\) Thomas, *Empires of Intelligence*, 236.

not an Arab-orchestrated massacre of Jews, however. In fact, Arabs in Hebron saved most of their Jewish neighbors from the mobs.\footnote{113}

Given the complete realization of air control in Palestine, local policemen were left alone to strive off the early attacks in 1929 on the Jewish Quarter of the Old City. The day after the first attacks, the RAF shepherded two platoons of army soldiers from a base near Cairo. The mere presence of soldiers in Jerusalem seemed to deter attacks, which was fortunate for the British because the soldiers were ill after the turbulent flight and would have likely been useless in combat. Previous arrangements had stipulated that if more than one battalion was dispatched from Egypt, the War Office would take command of Palestine temporarily. On 26 August 1929, the air commanding officer in Palestine handed over command to a brigadier of the British Army.\footnote{114} After the Army took control of Palestine, the RAF’s role consisted almost entirely of reconnaissance work. When it spotted Arabs (from above) it was authorized to attack them with machine-guns and bomb “…large, obviously hostile bodies crossing the frontier into Palestine; or when ground troops in serious difficulties asked for help.” But no bombings were conducted in relation to the 1929 disturbances,\footnote{115} because the pilots could not distinguish between the “enemy” Arab and the “friendly” Jew from above. The “all-seeing” instrument of state control was, it turned out, unable to see the collective Arab enemy and distinguish it from the Jewish allies. As historian David Omissi has pointed out: “if a large party of Arabs was detected from the air there was no certain method of

\footnote{113}{Some propagandists and historians have called the attacks on Hebron a “massacre”. It is important to remember, however, that Arabs saved the lives of most of their Jewish neighbors in Hebron (Krämer, \textit{A History of Palestine}, 232).\footnote{114}{Omissi, “Technology and Repression,” 48–50.\footnote{115}{Ibid., 50.}}
deciding whether or not they had murderous intent. When overflying ruined Jewish settlements it was equally difficult for the aviator to tell Jews returning to salvage their possessions from Arabs picking over their spoils.”

Ramsay MacDonald, the British prime minister, attempted to solve the interdepartmental disputes over control of Palestine between the Air Ministry and the War Office by allowing the RAF to remain in control of security in Palestine while, at the same time giving an Army officer direct access to the high commissioner. The War Ministry accepted the compromise, but only under the condition that it had the right to revisit the issue whenever it saw fit; with this the Army both implied the temporariness of the Air Ministry’s control of Palestine, should major disturbances arise again, and asserted the failure of the Air Ministry’s system of air control in Palestine.

In an April 1930 edition of The Times, Major-General Sir Frederick Maurice, a retired British army general, argued that the unrest in Palestine eleven months earlier proved that air control was not capable of policing in urban environments. In his reply, published in a May edition of The Palestine Bulletin, Trenchard reminded Maurice that Palestine “… involved the maintenance of order in towns—work for which the Air Force… never claimed suitability.” Later, Trenchard sent a report to Parliament explaining that “the Air Staff have never contended that air action is an instrument well suited to intervene in aid of the civil powers in towns.”

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116 Ibid., 48–50.
117 Ibid., 53.
Several historians have since repeated Trenchard’s assertion, stating that before 1929 the Air Ministry recognized the limitations of air control in urban environments such as Palestine. The sources used by these historians to support Trenchard’s original statement were all written, however, after August 1929. In fact, it is difficult (perhaps impossible) to find any official recognition of this urban/rural distinction in the utility of air control (as it related to Palestine) before August 1929. Eventually the limitations of peacetime aerial policing would be acknowledged for all urban centers (including Britain and Ireland) and T.E. Lawrence was correct when he wrote to Captain B.H. Liddell Hart: “The system [of air control] is not capable of universal application.” Yet, Lawrence wrote this letter in 1933, well after the limitations of air control had been demonstrated by the failures of imperial policing in Palestine in August 1929.

Air control did not fail because it could not police urban centers in Palestine where the British showed their usual measure of relative restraint, choosing not to bomb the “holy city” of Jerusalem or the coastal city of Jaffa. In Palestine, the RAF was primarily concerned with “managing movement” and having a “moral effect” on the Arab across the corridor, through a total, yet ostensibly humane form of population control. In this, it failed.

The supposed “moral effect” of air control on Bedouins and Arab Muslims, whom the British meant to overawe by an “all-seeing” aircraft, was quickly

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121 For instance, see Chapter Seven, footnote four in Priya Satia’s *Spies in Arabia*. In addition, Martin Kolinsky does not provide a footnote for his assertion that air control tactics “…obviously…were not relevant to situations of urban rioting.” (*Kolinsky, Law, Order, and Riots in Mandatory Palestine, 1928-35*, 24).


123 See 4 of Chapter Seven in *Ibid.*
undermined by the Arabs’ ability, with weapons and training from the Ottoman Empire, to remove the aircraft from the skies. In an operation on 24 April 1920 near Semakh, a village located in the north of Palestine, below the Sea of Galilee, the RAF successfully dispersed Arabs who were cutting telegraph communications and holding up trains on the Hejaz Railway. Despite the temporary salutary effect of the aerial bombings, the sight of the aircraft did not overawe the Arabs. Instead, they shot at the RAF planes with rifles and injured one of the pilots, forcing him to land in a nearby military camp.\textsuperscript{124} This was not an isolated incident or simply an early failure in an otherwise successful attempt to control the desert. Arnold Wilson, a leading figure in the civil administration of Iraq, reported to London a couple of years later that the “Arabs had ‘become accustomed to regard the aeroplane as an enemy rather than a friend’, and ‘cannot resist the temptation of shooting at the bird’.” Even A.L. Holt, who was at the same time attempting to sell London on his vision of a railway “flung across the barren desert,” reported that “the Bedouins had [an] ‘almost unlimited arms [supply]… so that there was now not an Arab within…200 or 300 miles’ without modern rifles and ammunition.”\textsuperscript{125} Attacks on RAF planes in the desert corridor were frequent and distressing enough to London that when an article surfaced in 1930 claiming that Arabs had successfully shot down an RAF aircraft, the metropole rushed to refute the story and assure the British public that, in fact, the plane had merely crashed.\textsuperscript{126}

\textsuperscript{124} Omissi, “Technology and Repression,” 45.
\textsuperscript{125} Quoted in Fletcher, \textit{British Imperialism and “The Tribal Question,”} 74.
\textsuperscript{126} A newspaper article in \textit{The Manchester Guardian} demonstrated this anxiety in London: “An official statement from Amman reports that an aeroplane engaged in ordinary observation duties has crashed in the desert, its occupants being slightly injured. The accident has been magnified by the local press…into a minor catastrophe, it being alleged that two planes have been shot down while engaged in operations against the Wahabiss who were raiding Transjordan tribes. The papers add that the Arab
Whitehall sent two independent committees to Palestine to investigate the underlying causes of the 1929 riots. The Shaw Report, published in March 1930, and the subsequent Hope-Simpson Enquiry, dated 1 October 1930, contributed to the verdict of the Passfield White Paper. The Paper, which was published on the same day as the Hope-Simpson Enquiry, argued that Zionist settler-colonial land and immigration policies had, in large part, led to the 1929 riots. Additionally, the Passfield White Paper called upon the British government to significantly modify its Anglo-Zionist colonial policies. Chaim Weizmann resigned his post at the World Zionist Organization in protest, demanding that Whitehall retract the White Paper. Zionist influence in London, and the distant threat of American sanctions on Britain, led Whitehall to reverse its decision just in time for the rise of Adolf Hitler in Germany and the Nazi pressure to make Eastern Europe a “Jewish-free space”.  

The Air Ministry remained, until September 1936, nominally in control of the security of Palestine, but during the first phase of the Arab Rebellion Whitehall quickly asserted the dominance of military ground forces over the RAF and transferred responsibility for the security of Palestine to the War Office. Arab-Jewish violence in Palestine decreased between 1929 and 1936, which allowed the Air Ministry to maintain its official dominance over the War Office in Palestine, but air causalities were heavy and that the occupants of both planes were killed,” (“Plane Crash in Desert: Misrepresentations by Palestine Press,” The Manchester Guardian. March 12, 1930).

control was determined a failure well before the Arab Rebellion in 1936.\textsuperscript{128} The primary objective of air control was for aircraft to have a “moral effect” on the Arab in the “desert corridor” of the Holy Land. In this, it failed. If the fear of God played a role in the daily decisions of an Arab man in the Middle East, as the British assumed it would, his ability to perceive Western industrial capitalism in the aircraft was not clouded by his religiosity.

\textsuperscript{128} Omissi, “Technology and Repression,” 54–8.
Fortress Palestine

The Old City of Jaffa “formed a veritable rabbit warren through which dark and narrow streets turned and twisted into a maze in which the level of one street would often be the roof of the houses in the one below” so stated the General Staff of the British Military in its report on the 1936 Rebellion, which was an Arab strike and revolt against the Anglo-Zionist colonial project. The Old City, it continued, had “…few passages…so wide that they could not be spanned by the reach of a man’s arm.” In this jumbled eastern labyrinth, the General Staff concluded, the “tougher elements of Jaffa” had launched the Rebellion in the spring of 1936.129

A short series of photographs taken from aircraft accompanied the General Staff’s report of a birds-eye point-of-view depicting the Old City of Jaffa, with its port in the background. A straight line from points marked “A” and “B” is inserted over the first photograph in the series (Figure 1). The line runs along east-west coordinates (not marked in the report) and rests over the roofs of a row of buildings extending straight inland from the Jaffa port. The row of buildings is absent in a subsequent photo in the series and replaced by a messy row of rubble, along the same east-west line (Figure 2). The absence of the row of buildings in the second photo depicts the aftermath of a carefully executed British urban development scheme in the Old City of Jaffa. In the second to last photograph of the series, two new points marked “C” and “D,” appear at the outer edge of a line which, if drawn, would this

time, extend straight along north-south coordinates and lie perpendicular to the east-west row of rubble (Figure 3).

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130 “Military Lesson,” TNA WO 191/70, 137
131 Ibid.
On 16 June 1936 unsigned leaflets dropped from aircraft warned residents of Jaffa to evacuate their homes in the Old City by 7 p.m. that same day. “The Government is about to initiate a scheme for opening up and improving the Old City of Jaffa by construction of two roads, to the benefit both of that quarter and of the town as a whole,” explained the leaflets. After allegations that a mosque lay along the planned demolition route, a battalion of the Royal Scots Fusiliers (one of the six infantry battalions that had been recently deployed to Palestine) entered the Old City with Palestine policemen a day later than scheduled and found a deserted city. Only a few elderly residents remained in the Old City. They had, perhaps, not received a

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132 Ibid.
133 “A Sample of the Methods Adopted by the Government of Palestine in the Administration of the Country: as Expressed in the Judgment of the High Court No. 44/36, and Delivered on the 3rd of July 1936, by their Honours the Chief Justice of Palestine and the Senior British Puisne Judge,” CO 733/313/7, TNA, 30-7.
leaflet or perhaps they just were not fit enough to heed the Government’s warning without assistance. That day, the British Military bombed the straight row of buildings, depicted in the first photograph, running east-west inland from the port, and created a 10 meter-wide row of rubble.\textsuperscript{134}

William Ormsby-Gore, the colonial secretary, was well versed in the politics of Palestine. He had served during World War I as an intelligence officer in the Arab Bureau under Sir Henry McMahon and travelled to Palestine in 1918 as a British liaison officer to the Zionist mission.\textsuperscript{135} On 19 June 1936, following the demolitions in Jaffa, the colonial secretary stood before the House of Commons: “…at the outset I should like,” he said, “to express my own personal concern that Palestine, with which I have had myself close association in the past and the welfare of which I have so much at heart, should now be distracted by civil strife.” He then went on to explain that the demolition project in the Old City of Jaffa, at that time still underway, was a repressive measure that would restore law and order to the “congested slums of the old city.”\textsuperscript{136} When the legality of the project was challenged in Parliament by Edward Turnour, the Earl of Winterton, Ormsby-Gore explained that under Britain’s “Emergency Regulations” in Palestine any physical structure, holding suspected perpetrators of violence and/or aiders and abettors to violence, might be forfeited without compensation, demolished, or disposed of in any manner the Government saw fit.\textsuperscript{137}

\textsuperscript{134} “Military Lesson,” WO 191/70, TNA, 158.
\textsuperscript{136} Hansard Parliamentary Debates, 5\textsuperscript{th} ser., vol. 313 (1935-36) cols. 1309-1396.
While Sir Michael McDonnell, the British chief justice in Jaffa, reluctantly agreed with the colonial secretary’s estimation of the law, he doubted the “moral courage” of a Government that airdropped immediate evacuation instructions on unsigned leaflets. McDonnell was ashamed to be party to a colonial government that hid its role in the demolition project and attempted to remain anonymous in its assertion of control over the lives of its subjects.\(^\text{138}\) Without a signature on the leaflets there was no state to blame. The unsigned airdropped leaflets were meant to fall from the clouds above as if they were the verdict of a shapeless, nameless power from above, one which claimed the right to remake a space below in the image of itself.

The demolition project was not, as Ormsby-Gore had claimed, a punitive measure against rebels in Jaffa but, according to McDonnell, it was a defensive measure to protect British security forces from a foreign urban cartography.\(^\text{139}\) As Ronald Storrs, a British civilian administrator in Jerusalem, had written in 1920 after two days of riots:

… I wondered whether those who criticized us in Europe and America could have had the faintest conception of the steep, narrow and winding alleys within the Old City of Jerusalem, the series of steps up or down which no horse or car can even pass, the deadly dark corners beyond which a whole family can be murdered out of sight or sound of a police post not a hundred yards away.\(^\text{140}\)

Whitehall forced McDonnell into early retirement in October 1936; he would continue to criticize the British Mandate in London and so closely sided with the


\(^{139}\) Ibid.

Arabs that he later represented the Arab delegation at negotiations with the British in 1939.\footnote{Report of a Committee set up to consider Certain Correspondence between Sir Henry McMahon... and The Sharif of Mecca in 1915 and 1916,” March 16, 1939, Cmd. 5974, \url{http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/4C4F7515DC39195185256CF7006F878C}.}

Eleven days after the first demolitions in Jaffa, Hanna Michael Qasir, a resident of Jaffa, received an unsigned leaflet addressed directly to his home. “In accordance with the scheme for opening up the Old City of Jaffa, your house may be demolished.”\footnote{McDonnell, El-Qasir v. Attorney General, CO 733/313/7, TNA, 30.} In the last photo of the series in the General Staff’s report, two messy rows of rubble can be discerned, one extending east-west, the other north-south. The lines intersect in the middle of the Old City. By the first of July 1936, the British had effectively colonized the eastern labyrinth of Jaffa’s Old City and remapped onto it, the modest beginnings of a symmetrical urban grid plan. The demolition project was the work of an aesthetic colonial regime, which could not locate a rebel in a foreign Middle Eastern labyrinth.\footnote{Charles Townshend, “The Defense of Palestine: Insurrection and Public Security, 1936-1939,” The English Historical Review 103, no. 409 (October 1988): 940.} The British had to remove the Arab in Palestine from the Middle East and place him in the messy rubble of a colonial cartography in order to control him.

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\Addresses{} That same year in London, a young Cambridge graduate named John Sloman Bennett, unable to find a job at his college, sat for the Home Civil Service examination and passed fifth in his class. During World War I, John’s father, Ralph Bennett, had served at the base-hospital in the Suez Canal Zone and in cavalry operations in Egypt, Sinai, Palestine, and Syria. Ralph, impressed by what he saw in
Cairo, Alexandria, and Jerusalem, brought home illustrated books and traveler’s tales of the Near East and the Holy Land to his two young children Ralph and John. Well before John knew French or any other European language, he could count to ten in Arabic. At Cambridge, “John Bennett was said to be the ablest medievalist examinee in living memory,” which should have led him to college fellowship at Cambridge, but his brother Ralph had just been appointed as the medieval history lecturer at Magdalene College, which left little room for John beyond a one-year research fellowship. After placing fifth in the Home Civil Service examination in 1936, John was able to choose whichever government office he fancied. “I chose the Colonial Office from no sense of imperial mission but because it seemed small and friendly and offered the possibility of travel,” he later wrote. In 1936, John Bennett and his colleagues at the Middle East Department were consumed by the Rebellion in Palestine.144

Arab-Jewish violence began on 15 April 1936 and quickly escalated. On 15 April, Arab rebels attacked a convoy of Jewish passengers along the Tulkarm-Nablus road. In a revenge attack, Jews killed two Arab workers sleeping in a hut near the funeral in Tel Aviv of one of the Jewish victims.145 On 19 April, after nine Jews were killed and ten wounded, Arthur Wauchope, the British high commissioner of Palestine instated a curfew and declared a state of emergency in Jaffa.146

The 1936 Rebellion, while definitely not a large unified movement, was, in one sense, an expression of anti-colonial nationalism. Loyalty to foreign imperial

144 Ronald Hyam, Understanding the British Empire (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 269–73.
rule, which had existed mostly out of fear, internal repression, and external aggression, was lacking in Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine well before the French and British arrived. In 1913, when the Ottoman Empire conscripted thousands of young men in the widely unpopular Safarbarlik to fight the Empire’s wars in Russia, the Balkans, and against Yemeni tribes, reform committees in Beirut and Damascus demanded that soldiers be “posted solely to their home provinces.” This demand, which ultimately went nowhere, however, was not a sign of reform leaders’ approval of the Turkish administrative boundaries of Surriyya and sancak (Syrian provincial lands west of the Mediterranean Sea that the British and French would turn into the Mandates of Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon), which Ottoman authorities had assigned in the Tanzimat reforms in 1865. It was, instead, an attempt to compromise with foreign rulers whose authority they largely did not trust. World War I, the conscription of hundreds of thousands of young men from the region, Turk’s public executions of Syrian traitors, and the starvation, and disease (killing some 6 percent of the population in Palestine and a higher percentage in Syria) that came along with World War I, left Arab nationalists after 1918 feeling that Western European colonial rule had simply replaced Ottoman colonial rule. It is difficult to determine what the majority of civilian Arabs in Syrian provinces felt about the fall of the Ottoman Empire, but they “…definitely did not feel that they had been liberated by the British and French armies, even though there were some among the Christian population in what would become Lebanon who welcomed the change in masters.”

By the early 1930s, thousands of Arab tenant farmers in Palestine were displaced from land they had worked and resided on as a result of Anglo-Zionist land tenant policies enacted immediately after World War I, and Arab land sales and Zionist land purchases in the 1920s. Although the economy of Palestine experienced a boom in the 1930s, it almost exclusively benefitted Jewish families. At the same time, wheat production dropped and import prices rose in the tariff-free open-market of the British Mandate, forcing many rural peasants to seek low-paying jobs in the urban economy of Palestine, which was controlled mostly by Jews. An Arab underclass arose in Palestine as a result of their marginalization in the British Mandate.

This lack economic security combined with anxieties about Jewish immigration and Zionism, which were regional concerns at least since 1911, when representatives from Damascus and Aleppo met with Arab delegates in Jerusalem to attempt to impede Jewish land purchases. As Britain and the United States refused to receive more Jewish immigrants amidst the rise of Nazism and economic turmoil in Eastern Europe, Palestine experienced the largest influx of Jewish immigrants between 1931 and 1936 since the founding of the Mandate. And in 1935, Arab longshoremen in the port of Jaffa had discovered a large concealed shipment of arms that was addressed to a Zionist businessman in Tel Aviv. Fears of Anglo-Zionist

148 Hyam, Understanding the British Empire, 269–73.
149 Masters, The Arabs of the Ottoman Empire, 1516-1918, 213.
150 According to official statistics, the Jewish population increased from about 170,000 (16.5% of the mandate’s population) to over 370,000 (27%) between 1931 and 1936. In 1935 alone, 62,000 Jews immigrated legally to the Holy Land (A Zaiman, “Census of Palestine, 1931,” Journal of the Royal Statistical Society 96, no. 4 (1933): 661).
colonial objectives only increased when, in May 1936, the British approved the construction of a new port in the Zionist town of Tel Aviv just north of Jaffa.\footnote{151 Jacob Norris, “Repression and Rebellion: Britain’s Response to the Arab Revolt in Palestine of 1936–39,” \textit{The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History} 36, no. 1 (March 1, 2008): 28.}

Before 1935, “landless” peasants had been at the front lines of the armed campaign against settler-colonialism in Palestine. Driven off their land by the policies of the Jewish National Fund, they were the ones most directly affected by the Anglo-Zionist Jewish national home colonial project. By 1936, however, urban élite Arabs and peasants converged in a radical political and military agenda in Palestine.\footnote{152 May Seikaly, \textit{Haifa: Transformation of an Arab Society 1918–1939} (London: I.B. Tauris, 2001), 241.} On 25 April, the two main Arab political rivals in Palestine, the al-Nashashibi and al-Husayni families, were able, for a brief period, to put long-standing differences aside and establish the Arab Higher Committee (AHC).\footnote{153 Krämer, \textit{A History of Palestine}, 272–93; Jacob Norris, “Repression and Rebellion: Britain’s Response to the Arab Revolt in Palestine of 1936–39,” \textit{The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History} 36, no. 1 (March 1, 2008): 27.} While certainly not unified, the Arab political élite in Palestine channeled the frustrations of the Arab peasantry into a national revolt against the Anglo-Zionist colonial project. Every Palestinian Arab town from Gaza to Nablus formed a “national strike committee” that month. Although each committee was controlled locally without “national” oversight, the committee leaders were able to coordinate their efforts across towns with new communication technologies.\footnote{154 Krämer, \textit{A History of Palestine}, 271.} The 1936 Rebellion was also, however, a revival of the Syrian National Congress’ call in 1920 for a unified Syria including Palestine.\footnote{155 Michael Provence, “Ottoman Modernity, Colonialism, and Insurgency in the Interwar Arab East,” \textit{International Journal of Middle East Studies} 43 (2011): 217.}

In August 1932, the newly formed Istiqal (Independence) Party called for pan-Arab unity and the emergence of a Greater Syria, unifying British Palestine, with
French Syria and Lebanon and Transjordan.¹⁵⁶ Men from French Lebanon and Syria, most importantly Fawzi al-Qawuqji and Shaykh ‘Iz al-Din al-Qassam, veterans of World War I, joined the Istiqal Party and the al-Husayni family in the revolt against British colonial rule.¹⁵⁷

In November 1935, British security forces had killed Shaykh ‘Izz al-Din al-Qassam, who was considered a “public apostle of armed rural resistance” in Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon.¹⁵⁸ al-Qassam was born in Syria and served as a chaplain for the Ottoman-Syria’s provincial military preparatory school in Damascus, which was a feeder school for the Imperial Military Academy in Constantinople (as mentioned in the previous chapter). After French General Henri Gourand established a “center of French influence in the heart of the Mediterranean” (as Prime Minister Clemenceau had instructed him to do after the war), al-Qassam joined the anti-colonial resistance movement in the 1920s. In 1935 linked al-Qassam to the death of a British policeman, tracked him down and killed him. “His death in November ‘electrified the Palestinian people’.”¹⁵⁹

In the summer of 1936, Whitehall sent six additional infantry battalions, a second mechanical transport company, two field companies of Royal Engineers, and tanks and armored to Palestine to quell the Rebellion.¹⁶⁰ Despite the increase in military personnel and resources, British security forces were limited to mostly a defensive position, protecting property in Jewish communities, securing transport

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¹⁵⁶ Charles D. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 7th ed (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2010), 134.
¹⁵⁷ Provence, “Ottoman Modernity, Colonialism, and Insurgency in the Interwar Arab East.”
routes and energy resources.\textsuperscript{161}

By 12 October 1936, leaders of the Arab Higher Committee called an end to the national strike. The approaching citrus harvest likely motivated the \textit{fellahin} (at least those still working the land) to abandon the strike and violence. Throughout the 1930s, the AHC had attempted to make the fight against Zionism in Palestine a central issue for Arab leaders across the Middle East. The mufti of Jerusalem, Amin al-Husayni, mobilized leaders in the Transjordan, Iraq, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia to place “international,” pan-Arab pressure on Britain to force it into concessions on the Jewish National Home policy. In return, the AHC hoped, Zionists would pay heed to the interests of Arab Palestinian élites. In September 1936, the AHC formally requested those Arab governments to act as mediators to a diplomatic settlement to the Rebellion, which the Colonial Office had initiated in June. By drawing the Arab leadership (most importantly Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia) into the politics of Palestine, the AHC could paint the diplomatic settlement with the British as a victory in the internationalization of the Palestinian cause.\textsuperscript{162}

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“A spirit of calmness seems to be over the land at the moment,” wrote William Denis Battershill, the acting-high commissioner of Palestine in September 1937.\textsuperscript{163} On Sunday 26 September, Lewis Andrews, a district commander in the north, was driven by his bodyguard (a British constable) to evensong at the Anglican Church at

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\textsuperscript{162} Krämer, \textit{A History of Palestine}, 277–78.
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\textsuperscript{163} William Battershill to Arthur Wauchope, 20 September 1937, Correspondence and papers of Sir William Denis Battershill, Box 4, Rhodes House Library (RHL) MSS Brit. Emp. S. 467.
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Nazareth. As Andrews’ car approached the church, four Arabs hidden in an alleyway fired on the car, killing Andrews and his bodyguard. This event came to mark the beginning of the second phase of the Arab Rebellion.  

By 6 a.m. the morning after Andrews’ assassination, the British arrested and interned over one hundred Arab men in Acre. Battershill suspected that the Jewish Agency would press the government to take further action, and demand that the leadership of the Arab Higher Committee be arrested as well. The Jewish Agency had been insisting on the removal of the mufti for some time. Before Arthur Wauchope, the high commissioner of Palestine (who was awaiting treatment in London for an eye condition) learned of Andrews’ assassination, he had sent a letter informing Battershill that London had decided to accede to the Jewish Agency’s demands. The assassination of Andrews provided a convenient excuse for the execution of a pre-approved government plan to undermine the political leadership of the Palestinian Arab nationalist movement. On 27 September, the British banned the AHC, despite Battershill’s concerns that this would effectively remove any hope of a political settlement to the Rebellion.

Ten months before the assassination of Andrews, London had sent William Robert Wellesley, the Earl of Peel, to Palestine to examine the underlying causes of the first phase of the 1936 Rebellion. Wellesley’s report, known as the Peel Commission, recommended the partition of Palestine into an Arab state and a Jewish

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state as the only solution to the Arab-Jewish conflict.\textsuperscript{166} Long before the Peel Commission published its report, however, colonial administrators in Jerusalem and London knew perfectly well that the Arab Higher Committee would never accept a partition.\textsuperscript{167}

The second phase of the Rebellion, in rejection of the Peel Commission partition plan, began in September 1937 and lasted until January 1939. With the leadership of the AHC exiled, disbanded, and fragmented, “individual commanders took control in the field. Peasant despair at their lot and hatred of the great landowners caused the revolt to last a year and a half and to include retaliatory attacks on leading Arab families, not just on Jews and British troops.”\textsuperscript{168}

The 1936 Rebellion had persuaded the British that negotiations and conciliatory policies in Palestine were counter-productive.\textsuperscript{169} Later, Richard Catling, a Briton who had served as a policeman in Palestine, would recall that he and fellow officers found the policing of Arabs in 1936 to be “…all good clean fun. We chased them and they did their best to get out of the way,” he said.\textsuperscript{170} This jovial attitude towards policing the Arab threat was now, found to be inconsistent with the metropole’s political strategy in Palestine. In August 1937, the League of Nations Permanent Commission and the British Cabinet censured the colonial secretary for not installing a more repressive regime in Palestine in 1936: until colonial law and order were restored, by any means necessary (including martial law), a diplomatic

\textsuperscript{166} Krämer, \textit{A History of Palestine}, 278; Smith, \textit{Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict}, 157.
\textsuperscript{167} Battershill to Wauchope, 20 Sept. 1937, RHL MSS Brit. Emp. S. 467
\textsuperscript{168} Smith, \textit{Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict}, 140–41.
\textsuperscript{170} Quoted in Ibid., 32.
solution should not be pursued. By March, three months before the expected
publication of the Peel Commission’s recommendations, Colonial Secretary Ormsby-
Gore had already begun to implement a strategy that corresponded more to the
expectations of the metropole. That month, British police officers were training a
Jewish Auxiliary force, which, as Ormsby-Gore openly admitted to Battershill, was
“...ranged solely against the Arab population.” This meant, he explained, that the
training of Jewish soldiers had to be “...carried out in discretion...” so as not to give
away the fact that the British had never expected to find a diplomatic solution. The
decision to send Sir Charles Tegart to Palestine in 1937 clearly demonstrated
Whitehall’s shift towards a repressive, “any means necessary” strategy of control in
Palestine.

Charles Augustus Tegart, a “tall and muscular” Irishman (according to his wife), was
well known throughout the Empire for his success in suppressing anti-colonial
revolutionaries in Bengal, India. In 1905, Britain partitioned the province of Bengal

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173 In 1934, the four “lessons” were distilled from Britain’s experience of imperial policing since the
turn of the century: “the primacy of civil power, the use of minimum force, the need for firm and
timely action, and the need for civil-military cooperation...” One section of the pamphlet, written by
Sir Charles Gwynn, an Irish-born British Army officer, highlighted in *Imperial Policing* (1934) the
lesson of the Amritsar massacre of 1919, in which Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer had opened rifle
fire on a crowd of thousands of civilians for ten minutes, leaving 372 dead and 1,200 wounded. The
most that Gwynn could say in defense of Dyer’s action was that “Probably some of the crowd had
sticks, but they made no hostile movement.” The two British commissions that looked at the massacre
had a major impact on imperial policing doctrine by concluding that British personnel could only use
“the minimum amount of force to restore order” in the colonies. Gwynn did not rule out collective
punishment and argued that the “minimum force” doctrine did not apply to rural areas in Palestine
where ostensible rebels were not in the proximity of civilians (I. F. W. Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies
and Counter-Insurgencies: Guerrillas and Their Opponents Since 1750*, Warfare and History (New
York: Routledge, 2001), 785).
and created an eastern, predominately Muslim province and a western, predominately Hindu, province despite extensive opposition on the ground. Hindus, who controlled most of the commerce and administration in the east, protested the partition and boycotted the import of British goods. In 1911, the British responded to local demands and reunified east and west Bengal; Muslims over the previous years, however, had come to believe that the 1905 partition was beneficial to them. The city of Calcutta in Bengal experienced an increasingly fervent anti-colonial and violent Bengali nationalist movement against the British Raj.174

In 1906, Tegart was appointed the director of a newly established criminal investigation department in Calcutta. In 1913, it was renamed the intelligence branch.175 That summer, Tegart sailed about eight hundred miles southeast of Calcutta to the lush green Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Escaping the hotbed of urban unrest in Calcutta, he toured the Cellular Jail, a penal institution primarily for political prisoners, who were implicated in “…crimes of mutiny and rebellion and for other offenses therewith.”176

The British had completed the jail, which Bengalis called “‘Kala Pani’, or the final journey to the place of permanent exile,” five years before Tegart arrived. The location of the jail, miles away from the mainland, was selected to ensure that “…the convict would lose all links not only with his family but also with civilization.”

According to a report submitted by Lieutenant Colonel R. C. Temple, the British chief commissioner in residence in Andaman, the convict arrived at the Cellular Jail as “… an outcast, void of restraint, and unfit for association with his kind on equal terms….” After twenty years (the typical length of imprisonment) the criminal had evolved and went “…forth a useful citizen, broken to restraint, and not only fitted for human society, but well used to submit to the conventions by which alone that society [was] maintained….” These were the romantic notions of imprisonment that enticed visitors like Charles Tegart to journey to the tropical islands.

The official purpose of Tegart’s visit to the jail was to extract information from Bengali political prisoners through the infliction of psychological and physical pain. The information he would retain most vividly from his visit, however, were the mechanics of control imbedded within the architecture of the Cellular Jail. Tegart reflected in his diary on the totality of control at the prison: all of the inmates’ cells faced inwards towards a watchtower in the center, where prison guards sat and looked down on the inmates. The cells were illuminated at night by floodlighting, which “…ensur[ed] the continuous surveillance of… political criminals who… desire[d] to influence existing policy and power relations.” This image of perpetual control was to remain with Tegart.

Twenty-four years later, Tegart travelled to Palestine with David Petrie, the former head of the Criminal Investigation Division in Punjab, India,179 on what The Times called a “special mission of advising the Administration as to the best methods

177 Quoted in Ibid., 70–3.
178 Quoted in Ibid., 70–5.
for dealing with terrorism.” Soon after they arrived, Petrie imported a collective reward scheme to Palestine, which he had successfully used in India. He labeled entire villages of fellahin as either “good” or “bad” and distributed collective punishments (or rewards) accordingly. The logic of his imported tactic, Petrie explained, guaranteed that “…the hope of rewards as well as the fear of punishment should be kept before [the] mind…” of the Arab. Tegart and Petrie also imported Doberman “tracking” dogs from South Africa. Even though “tracker” dogs had failed to provide reliable intelligence in the Rebellion of 1936, Tegart and Petrie believed South Africa Doberman dogs would be a good substitute for, what they deemed poor intelligence gathering by the Palestine police force. Dogs, they concluded, could identify the Arab “threat” better than a human could.

181 “Summary of Recommendations Contain in Sir Charles Tegart’s Report on the Organisation of the Palestine Police,” n.d., Palestine and Trans-Jordan: Haifa air defence, 1940, CO 323/1787/54. TNA; Sir Charles Tegart to Battershill, February 19, 1938, Tegart papers, GB 165-0281, Box 3, File 2, MEC.
182 “Military Lesson,” WO 191/70, TNA, 156.
183 Kroizer, Gad. “From Dowbiggin to Tegart: Revolutionary Change in the Colonial Police in Palestine during the 1930s.” The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History 32, no. 2 (2004): 115–33, 126; While it was debated in the House of Commons, this tactic was ultimately used in Palestine and deemed highly successful by most counterinsurgent strategists; Norris, ‘Repression and Rebellion,’ 28; “Summary of Recommendations,” CO 323/1787/54, TNA.
These systems of control were meant to violently disrupt daily routines in order to identify the Arab threat in a seemingly endless and homogenous sea of threatening brown bodies. In villages suspected of storing illegal arms, the British military divided men from women and often placed them in wired-cages as they searched their homes for arms. Arab men were lined up single-file on the ground and the dogs were set free on them, pouncing on the man whose scent supposedly fit the scent at

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184 Photographic Collection of Sir William Battershill, MSS Brit. Emp. t. 8, RHL.
185 Ibid.
the scene of the crime (Figure 5). This was, however, not enough, argued Tegart, to stamp out the rebellion. The state needed to dig deeper and extricate the root of the problem from the soil of Palestine.

Tegart, early on in his tenure in the Mandate, became convinced that foreign influence had seeped through the porous Anglo-French borders in the north. The shadow of foreign powers had concerned the British since the beginning of the Mandate, such that in 1921, the British had concluded that Jewish Bolsheviks were responsible for the demonstrations in Jaffa. Yet, in 1938, the foreign influence that Tegart feared was not so much coming from the Soviet Union, as from the Arabs in Syria and Lebanon. French control in Damascus was deteriorating, warned Tegart, and given the current political climate there, the Surété Generale, the French intelligence agency, was not capable of dealing directly or effectively with the rebels. The imperial cartography of the Middle East, drawn by Sykes and Picot in 1916, was based on a joint Anglo-French security from foreign threats. This joint security was being violently undermined by local frustrations and anti-colonial movements. “The solution,” Tegart concluded was, “…for Palestine to protect, effectively, its own frontiers against raiding gangs.”

By 1937, John Dill, the general officer commanding in Palestine, had already

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187 Tegart asked the Government for a report on migration across the northern and northeastern borders; Jerusalem’s Office of Migration reported to him that sometimes Syrians were found in the North without a pass, but that this was uncommon. Tegart. The Bon-Voisinage Agreement signed by the French and British in 1926 had allowed residents in the border region of Syria to use “roads and routes that cross[ed] the boundary” to Palestine without passports or tolls (Gideon Biger, An Empire in the Holy Land: Historical Geography of the British Administration in Palestine 1917-1929 (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994), 155).

188 Townshend, Britain’s Civil Wars.

189 Tegart to Battershill, 19 February, 1937, Tegart papers, GB 165-0281, Box 3, File 2, MEC; Memorandum referred to as “a brief detailing my conversations with the French in Beirut and Damascus,” n.d., Tegart papers, GB 165-0281, Box 3, File 5, MEC.

190 Tegart to Colonel A. MacKereth, February 22, 1938, Tegart papers, GB 165-0281, Box 3, File 5, MEC.
begun to seal off the threat along the Anglo-French border. That February, Dill had proposed a new frontier road from Bassa, a Mediterranean coastal village just north of the town of Acre, to Metulla, a Jewish settlement on the eastern edge of the Upper Galilee. In Ford V8 “pick ups” a new mobile force would patrol the frontier along the Bassa-Metulla road. Searchlights would be affixed to the “pick ups,” allowing the police to sweep the frontier at night.\(^{191}\) John Bennett scoffed at the idea when he heard about it at the Middle East Department. There was a road from Acre to Safad, which, according to Bennett, offered the British Military the same advantages as the one that Dill had proposed. His Majesty’s Treasury was already spending over £100,000 on the construction of the Jaffa-Haifa road. According to Bennett, the government would never approve funds for a security redundancy in Palestine. He seems, however, to have miscalculated the metropole’s responsiveness to peacetime security requests on the periphery. The Treasury approved the funds for Dill’s road, along with every additional security measure he had requested.\(^{192}\) “Evidently,” Bennett remarked, the Treasury and the Military, “envisage…the turning of Palestine into a complete fortress.”\(^{193}\)

Over a year later, Tegart reviewed Dill’s frontier measures and concluded that the mobile police force had failed to seal off the northern border because the searchlights affixed to the roofs of the “pick ups” were staring into a void. How could the British see a “foreign Arab” crossing into Palestine without a definitive line at the border? A barbed wire fence, Tegart proposed, erected just beyond the frontier road

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\(^{191}\) Battershill to Ormsby-Gore, Telegram Paraphrased, February 9, 1937, CO 733/325/13, TNA.
\(^{192}\) J.S. Bennett, Minutes, March 3, 1937, CO 733/325/13, TNA; Chief Secretary, Memorandum, Feb. 19, 1937, Tegart papers, GB 165-0281, Box 3, File 2, MEC.
\(^{193}\) J.S. Bennett, Minutes, February 2, 1937, CO 733/325/13, TNA.
would establish a definitive line, and “...make searchlights a greater danger to the enemy.” In fact, Tegart argued, “without a fence, search lights operate, to some extent in the enemy’s favor...by disclosing Police dispositions.” The barbed wire fence, illuminated at night by searchlights, would allow the British to differentiate between the Palestinian Arab and the “foreign Arab”; it would allow the colonial eye to clearly see the “external” threat.

Tegart travelled to Damascus and Beirut that February and discussed his system of frontier control with Damien de Martel, the French high commissioner of Syria. De Martel was amused by Britain’s security troubles in Palestine: “You have only got about 60 kilometers to protect,” he said. “Turkey protects a much larger frontier than this and has stopped contraband smuggling. Mussolini has done much more in Libya; cannot Great Britain, one of the greatest powers in the world deal with 60 kilometers?” Despite his scoffing, De Martel approved of Tegart’s barbed wire solution; indeed, the French, he boasted to Tegart, had successfully used barbed wire entanglements in Damascus during the 1925-26 Rebellion. It seems the French high commissioner, in sketching out a basic map of territorial control in post-1918 geographies, forgot about Britain’s own experiments with barbed wire fencing. This gap in the French high commissioner’s short history of frontier control was understandable; after all, it had been nearly forty years since the British had used barbed wire to corral Boers in the South African veld.

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194 Tegart to Chief Secretary, February 19, 1937, Tegart papers, GB 165-0281, Box 3, File 2, MEC.
195 Memorandum referred to as “a brief detailing my conversations with the French in Beirut and Damascus,” n.d., Tegart papers, GB 165-0281, Box 3, File 5, MEC.
196 Ibid.
The Anglo-Boer War had begun in October 1899 to determine which of two white powers would control South Africa (the Cape Colony, the Orange Free State, and the South African Republic). The Boers had launched the war in a moment of military advantage and after two early successes in mid-December, had quickly taken to a defensive set-piece position. This proved poor strategy when an offensively-minded British commander-in-chief, Lord Frederick Roberts, arrived and easily took Bloemfontein, Johannesburg, and Pretoria by June 1900. Following this crushing defeat, it took the determination of a few Boer leaders to rekindle the white resistance to British authority. The Boer leaders, including General Jan Smuts, acknowledged the failure of the defensive set-piece strategy and shifted to a “war of movement” and guerilla tactics, for which the British were not ready in 1901. Boer commandos, well versed in the topography of the veld, mastered scouting, sabotaging railways, and the art of turning “flight into an offensive weapon by suddenly turning on their exhausted pursuers.” Between December 1900 and September 1901, 135 train sabotage incidents were reported. At first, the British forced Boer hostages to ride at the helm of the trains and destroyed homesteads near the places of sabotage, but soon they had erected a blockhouse-barbed wire system along the lines of rail to trap and kill the guerilla fighters. 197

The British had already placed barbed wire fencing near the lines of rail to protect them from stray animals, but this was not a sufficient barrier to the Boers who easily cut through the wire. In 1901, Major Spring R. Rice, commander of the 23rd Field Company of the Royal Engineers, designed a cheap and bullet-proof hut to

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protect the barbed wire fences. Blockhouses were octagonal huts encircled in barbed wire with six-inch thick walls made of two sheet of iron (one on each side) with gravel in-between. The British placed them about one and one-half miles apart along lines of rail and by May 1902, over 8,000 blockhouses guarded by at least 50,000 white troops and 16,000 African scouts over 3,700 square miles of the veld.\(^{198}\) It was at this time that Archibald Wavell, a young graduate of the Royal Military College in Sundhurst, who had arrived in South Africa in 1901, and his Black Watch column were riding northwest from Harrismith to the Bloemfontein-Johannesburg railway line to trap a party of Boer commandoes against a blockhouse. At the end of the operation, Wavell boasted in his diary, “1,100 Boers snaffled.” It only took the small bit of the blockhouse-barbed wire system to encircle and trap the Boer.\(^{199}\)

The War ended on 31 May 1902. It was, for the Boers, a war of “devastating attrition” that forced them to make peace and concede to British authority in the veld.\(^{200}\) The British Army had cordoned off large swaths of South Africa using thick layers of barbed wire to enclose some twenty-five thousand white Boer civilians by 1902 in unsanitary, badly provisioned conditions. Lord Herbert Kitchener’s “scorched earth” strategy led to the death from disease and malnutrition of some fourteen thousand civilians in the camps. Two Liberal Members of Parliament in the House of Commons, C. P. Scott and John Ellis, condemned the barbed wire enclosures, calling them “concentration camps”.\(^{201}\)


\(^{199}\) Quoted in Schofield, Wavell, 20.


Archibald Wavell would later serve as a brigadier general in the Egyptian Expeditionary Force during World War I, walk in Allenby’s processional through Jerusalem, and return to Palestine as general commanding officer in August 1937, a month after the publication of the Peel Commission report. That autumn, the citrus harvest—the primary export of Palestine—coincided with the second phase of the Arab Rebellion, and Wavell wanted to ensure that the Palestine Railways were secure for commercial transport. Thus, he ordered the construction of small blockhouses where sabotage was most likely to occur. A single structure, made of concrete had been erected during the 1936 Rebellion at the Palestine Railway station in Lydda, which would become a regional headquarters for the British military during World War II. Wavell, however, was the first to have a series of blockhouses erected, as they had been in South Africa, along rail lines in Palestine. John Bennett, once again, interjected with a dissenting voice, but once again Whitehall consented to Wavell plan. As Bennett explained, “… it [had] been proven impracticable… to criticize [the general officer commanding’s security] requirements” from the metropole. Under British command, men in the Jewish Auxiliary Force, which Colonial Secretary Ormsby-Gore had established in 1937, occupied the blockhouses along the Palestine Railways, sometimes catching a glimpse of an Arab hostage at the helm of the train, protecting it from sabotage. What the Jewish guards would not see was what happened to the Arab hostage if the train completed its journey without being wrecked. At that point, the train driver “would swerve the vehicle suddenly,” and, as

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202 Schofield, Wavell, 113.
203 Arthur Wauchope to Ormsby Gore, November, 26, 1937, CO 733/325/13, TNA.
204 Chief Secretary, Memorandum, Feb. 19, 1937, Tegart papers, GB 165-0281, Box 3, File 2, MEC.
205 J.S. Bennett, Minute, December 7, 1937, CO 733/325/13, TNA.
206 High Commissioner Harold MacMichael, unaddressed letter, July 2, 1937, CO 733/325/13
one British soldier remembered later, if the hostage was lucky “… he’d get away with a broken leg, but if he was unlucky the lorry coming up behind would hit him. But nobody bothered to go and pick the bits up’.”

The barbed wire frontier fence in the north would only be as strong as “its weakest link,” Tegart concluded. Therefore, he decided that, at the most vulnerable spots along the frontier, he needed additional protection, for which the blockhouses that Wavell had brought from South Africa were “most satisfactory.” “The attackers appeared to be overawed by the pill boxes [blockhouses] out of all proportion to the fire effect produced,” he said. At the most vulnerable spots along the frontier fence, the British constructed cement police forts with steel turrets. Jewish Palestine policemen were posted as guards in the blockhouses, on top of which floodlights were affixed, directed at Tegart’s barbed wire frontier fence.

In late February 1938, Wavell responded to a note he had received from Tegart. Tegart’s calculation did not make sense: “If [the distance between] AB equals 5 k[ilometers] and is patrolled at 24 k[ilometers] per hour, a [Ford V8 “pick up”] starting from B, going to A and returning to B will not be back at “X” [a point along AB] for about 25 minutes.” Wavell drew out the equation to make it clear to Tegart, who had calculated that he needed a total of thirteen patrol cars, each

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208 MacDonald to CO, September 1938, CO 733/383/3, TNA.
209 Tegart to Wavell, February 20, 1938, GB 165-0281, Tegart Papers, Box 3, File 2, MEC.
responsible for five kilometers along the fence, to illuminate every part of the sixty-three kilometers long barbed wire fence at a ten-minute interval. ²¹⁰ “I don’t think myself it is much good going into complicated mathematical problems,” Tegart professed to William Battershill, “but generally speaking, a car fitted with a searchlight illuminating 500 yards in either direction should be able to watch, very closely, five kilometres of this fence at night…. In any event, the cars could vary both their pace and their method of patrol.”²¹¹ The blockhouse-barbed wire system in the north of Palestine

… rested on an equation involving space and time. The spatial parameter was provided by the effective range of a rifle—at that point, over three-quarters of a mile. The temporal parameter was set by barbed wire. Cutting it—especially the thick, deep entanglements laid down by the British military engineers—was a slow business. ²¹²

²¹⁰ Chief Secretary, February 19, 1938, Memorandum, GB 165-0281, Tegart papers, Box 3, File 2, MEC.
²¹¹ Battershill to Tegart, January 21, 1938, GB 165-0281, Box 3, File 2, MEC.
²¹² Here Netz is talking about South Africa but the same applies to Palestine (Netz, Barbed Wire, 98-102).
Tegart estimated that the fence along both the northern and northeastern borders, about eighty kilometers in length, (Figure 7) would cost £70,400, including materials and labor.\textsuperscript{214} “You have allowed nothing for upkeep in your estimates; it might be quite heavy,” warned Wavell. “But if the Government is prepared to find the money, I should certainly welcome the fence.”\textsuperscript{215} Tegart appreciated the support of the general officer commanding—after all, the military was in control of Palestine. Tegart could “… see no other solution.” The Government had tried a variety of tactics and technologies to secure Palestine. “A great deal of money has been spent already, and is being spent annually, without affording protection,” argued Tegart. “What,” he

\textsuperscript{213} CO 733/383/3, TNA.
\textsuperscript{214} Chief Secretary, February 19, 1938, Memorandum, GB 165-0281, Tegart papers, Box 3, File 2, MEC.
\textsuperscript{215} Tegart to Wavell, February 20, 1938, GB 165-0281, Tegart Papers, Box 3, File 2, MEC.
asked “on all counts, is the cost of a Rebellion?” Tegart did not expect an answer to this question; indeed, no one would be able to tell him the full monetary or human cost of the Arab Rebellion for over another year. The Royal Engineers, however, had come up with an estimate for the fence—at £300,000 (not including electrification) their estimate was over four times what Tegart had originally calculated.

The British imported barbed wire from Mussolini’s Italy and employed (without inviting any other tenders) the construction company, Solel Boneh, part of the Jewish workers’ union (Histradrut) to build Tegart’s ten-foot high fence on the northern and northeastern borders and outfitted it with explosives. Two hundred and fifty Jewish policemen were employed to guard the Jewish construction workers of Solel Boneh. On 20 June 1938, Time magazine called Tegart’s fence “Britain’s most ingenious solution for handling terrorism in Palestine.” Later that month, the Daily Herald in London took a different view of the matter in an article titled, “Tegart’s ‘Wall’ Helps Raiding Gangs”:

British soldiers in Palestine have frequently been compelled recently to watch the gathering of hostile Arab bands without being able to interfere. This is because the barbed wire fence erected in the north of the country to keep out raiding Arabs, also works in the reverse way, and keeps the troops in.

What the article implied, but did not explicitly state, was that the barbed wire fence also forced Palestinian Arabs to remain in Palestine.

216 Chief Secretary, February 19, 1938, Memorandum, GB 165-0281, Tegart papers, Box 3, File 2, MEC.
217 CO 323/1787/54, TNA.
219 High Commissioner Harold MacMichael, unaddressed letter, July 2, 1937, CO 733/325/13
220 Khalili, “The Location of Palestine in Global Counterinsurgencies,” 422.
221 CO 733/383/3, TNA.
Tegart’s barbed wire-blockhouse system was the realization of what John Bennett had dreaded: “fortress” Palestine. However “fortress” would not perhaps have been the word that Tegart himself would have used. His population control system was intended to resemble the penal institution he had visited twenty-five years ago on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. “If one could imagine,” Tegart explained, “the country [of Palestine] towed into the middle of the sea there was nothing in its internal conditions to prevent law and order, or a kind at any rate, being maintained within its borders.” If only Tegart could have dragged the Arab in Palestine into the middle of the sea, and separated him from the Middle East and from his home, he would have been able to fashion him into a useful Palestinian Arab submitting to the interests of British security.

Arab rebels controlled the Old City of Jerusalem and several Palestinian towns for five days in October 1938. But this was a brief moment. Ultimately, the Arab Rebellion was brutally squashed with the help of two full-strength divisions of the British Army recently freed up by the Munich Agreement. Only after the full physical repression of the Rebellion, were political concessions made to the Arabs in the 1939 White Paper. That year, Tegart’s barbed wire fence was dismantled. In the end, Tegart’s fence “proved useless,” according to Edward Keith-Roach, a district commissioner in the north. “The Arabs dragged it apart with camels,” he said.

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224 Khalili, “The Location of Palestine in Global Counterinsurgencies,” 422.
At the same time, certain officials in the British Government, including Winston Churchill, were advocating for the reunification of Palestine with Greater Syria. Many in Whitehall such as the former high commissioner of Palestine, Sir Herbert Samuel, argued that Arabs would not be as opposed to the creation of a Jewish National Homeland, if Britain and France could agree to create a “federal Syria” that included Palestine. In August 1938, Sir Arnold Wilson wrote to the editors of *The Times* that the British Government should “jointly with the French [seek] a settlement which will embrace Syria as a whole, including Palestine, which was always politically and always must be geographically a part of Syria.”\(^{225}\) The “Greater Syria” solution to the Arab-Zionist conflict was not, however, look favorably upon by Arab Muslim delegates to the 1939 London Conference at St. James Palace because they saw it less as a realization of the pan-Arab revival that many supporters of the Istiqlal Party and Shaykh Izz al-Din al-Qassam were fighting for in the Rebellion, and more as a scheme to extend British hegemony over more of the Middle East.\(^{226}\)

After the first phase of the Rebellion in 1936, there emerged a broad consensus in Whitehall that conciliatory policies would only be considered after the British squashed the uprising. The decision to send Sir Charles Tegart to Palestine was, in part, a result of this shift in 1937 in British security policy towards Arab rebels. Tegart’s barbed wire fence and watchtower failed because the logic of colonialism on which it was based did not reflect the realities of the political subjects

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on the ground. The clear colonial divisions that the British were attempting to draw between Palestinian Arabs and non-Palestinian Arabs held little currency in Lebanon, Syria, or Palestine. The Arab Rebellion was squashed by increasingly brutal measures of repression that included leaving villagers in an open-air cage for hours without water over a period of seven days in the village of Halhoul where eight men died of exposure.\textsuperscript{227} After the Rebellion was repressed, political expediency dictated by the coming War with Nazi Germany demanded that Britain make concessions to Arab leadership in the Middle East to secure it from German encroachment during the War. The 1939 White Paper was issued on 17 May, less than four months before Britain and France declared war on Germany, and placed restriction on both Jewish immigration and Jewish land purchases in Palestine. The White Paper declared that in the next five years, Jewish immigration would only be allowed “at a rate that would bring the Jewish population in Palestine to a level of approximately one third of that of the total population.” It also gave the Government in Palestine the ability to prohibit, when it determined them detrimental to the living standard of Arab tenant farmers, Arab land sales or Jewish land purchases.\textsuperscript{228}

\textsuperscript{228} Smith, \textit{Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict}, 161.
British intelligence reported to Whitehall in September 1940 that over three thousand
Jews in Eastern Europe were preparing to depart on three ships for Palestine. 229

Britain’s White Paper of 1939, a concessionary policy meant to appease Arab leaders
in the Middle East before the start of the Second World War, had set the cap on the
total number of Jewish immigration visas at 75,000. This cap would expire in five
years beginning on 31 April 1939, and all additional visas for Jews would require the
(unlikely) approval of the Arab leadership in Palestine. 230 Despite intensifying anti-
Jewish laws in Nazi Europe and relentless pressure from the Zionist political
organizations, Britain deployed extensive naval, aerial, and ground forces to
implement the White Paper’s immigration policy. Although some of the more drastic
suggestions of the Middle East Department (including firing on refugee ships) were
quickly dismissed, the wartime government in Whitehall continued to strengthen
regulations between 1939 and 1942 against illegal Jewish immigration amidst
pressure from Nazi Germany and Zionist goals to transfer German and Eastern
Europe Jews to Palestine. 231

229 Bernard Wasserstein, Britain and the Jews of Europe, 1939-1945 (London : New York: Institute of
Jewish Affairs ; Oxford University Press, 1979), 60.
231 The Ha-Avara agreement signed between the World Zionist Organization and the German Third
Reich on 25 August 1933 facilitated the transfer of Jews to Palestine. “Ironically,” Tim J. Watts writes,
“the greatest support for the National Socialist ideas regarding the separation of races came from the
Zionists.” This ended when Nazi Germany shift to a policy of extermination in 1942, (Tim Watts, “Ha-
Avara,” The Encyclopedia of the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A Political, Social, and Military History
[Online: ABC-CLIO, n.d.]).
When two of the three Jewish refugee ships arrived in the port of Haifa in November 1940, carrying a total of 1,700 passengers, Harold MacMichael, the high commissioner of Palestine, transferred the refugees to the French liner *SS Patria* intending to deport them to a detention camp in Mauritius. While awaiting the arrival of the third refugee ship, the *SS Patria* sat in Haifa harbor. The sight of 1,700 Jewish refugees so close to *Eretz Israel*, but trapped by Britain’s commitment to the White Paper, infuriated Zionists. Commandos of the Haganah, the militant wing of the Jewish Agency, attempted to disable the French liner on 25 November by placing two bombs in the ship’s hull. Yet, the explosives (far stronger than suspected) blasted a hole in side of the ship. In a matter of fifteen minutes, the ship sank, and over 250 Jewish refugees, who were on board, drowned. Prime Minister Winston Churchill, horrified by the incident, ordered the high commissioner to admit to Palestine, under special circumstances, the survivors of the *SS Patria* disaster. In the process of doing so Churchill still reinforced the deportation scheme. All future illegal immigrants were to be deported to detention camps in Mauritius and Cyprus, further legitimizing the White Paper’s immigration policy, so that by October 1947 Cyprus was overflowing with illegal immigrants.\(^\text{232}\)

This was a rare moment in the history of the British Mandate. London, which had acquiesced in nearly every major Zionist demand before 1939, remained committed to enforcing an anti-Zionist policy that drew heavy criticism from the international community in the middle of a global war. Arab support of British wartime efforts to some extent depended upon Britain’s continued enforcement of the

\(^{\text{232}}\) Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe, 1939-1945*, 40-73; Minutes of Security Conference, October 17, 1947, Cunningham papers, GB165-0072, Box 4, File 1, MEC.
White Paper immigration policy as a result of Amin al-Husayni’s successful
campaign to place the Palestinian issue at the forefront of Pan-Arabism in the Middle
East. As Churchill’s Palestine Committee of the Cabinet would later explain in 1945:

The attitude of the Arab States to any decision which may be reached [on
Palestine] is a matter of the first importance. The Middle East is a region of
vital consequence for Britain and the British Empire…. Unfortunately, the
future of Palestine bulks large in all Arab eyes and is a subject of deep
moment to the Arab League…. To enforce any [policy that Arab leaders
object to], and especially one which lays us open to a charge of breach of
faith, is bound seriously to undermine our position and may well lead not only
to widespread disturbances in the Arab countries but to the withdrawal of the
co-operation on which our Imperial interests so largely depend.233

Arab support was crucial as a significant portion of the British armed forces, most
notably in the British Indian Army, was Muslim.234

In addition to the bombing of SS Patria, Zionist terrorists responded to
Britain’s announcement of its immigration policy in 1939 with two attacks on British
infrastructure. Once war broke out in September, however, they temporarily
suspended their anti-British campaign and joined the Allied cause.235 Mussolini
repeatedly bombed Tel Aviv and Haifa in 1940-1941,236 but the main theater of aerial
warfare was in the metropole at the “Battle of Britain.” Hitler was convinced, after
the fall of France, that he had effectively defeated Britain by mid-1940; if only

234 David Motadel, Islam and Nazi Germany’s War (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard
235 David Ben Gurion famously said, “We must support the [British] army as though there were no
White Paper, and fight the White Paper as though there were no war,” (Lauren Elise Apter, Disorderly
Decolonization: The White Paper of 1939 and the End of British Rule in Palestine [ProQuest, 2008],
11). The one exception was Avarham Stern who did not support the Allied cause because he believed
that there was no difference between Hitler and Chamberlain, and formed the terrorist group Lehi
(Hebrew for “Freedom Fighter”) (Joseph Heller, The Stern Gang: Ideology, Politics and Terror, 1940-
1949 (Routledge, 2012), 77).
236 Gudrun Krämer, A History of Palestine: From the Ottoman Conquest to the Founding of the State
2008), 297.
Britain would admit it, then Germany and Britain could begin reorganizing Europe
together. Unsuccessful in his attempts to convince Churchill of this, Hitler decided to
bring the war to England. By the end of August 1940, after two months of attacks on
English southern coastal towns and airbases, the Luftwaffe begun to rise above the
aerial stalemate and make headway against the Royal Air Force in the Battle of
Britain. The German air force was not gaining the upper hand fast enough, however,
for Hitler’s timeline, which included a naval offensive on the Royal Navy in the
Channel Narrows that year before the autumnal gales. Thus, Hitler decided to send
the Luftwaffe to the heart of Britain and launched an aerial attack on London
beginning on 7 September. For ten days in September, RAF Fighter Command
aircraft rose up to meet and repelled hundreds of German aircraft from the skies of
London. On 15 September 2500 young RAF Fighter Command pilots were left to
defend London from some two hundred Luftwaffe aircraft. The “Blitz” came soon
after, but on 17 September, Hitler postponed his offensive in the Channel Narrows.
The War would not turn decisively in favor of the Allies until 1942, but the heart of
Britain had been defended at its most vulnerable point. Much prestige was
bestowed upon the RAF and its young fighter pilots. Decades after the failures of air
control in Palestine, Churchill, in the middle of the “Battle of Britain,” stated of the
RAF: “Never in the field of human conflict has so much been owed by so many to so
few.”

Menachem Begin, a Polish Jew who had “escaped” the Russian gulags with
(as Britain had suspected at the time) the help of the Soviets, renewed the terrorist

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campaign in Palestine in 1944 when it seemed the Allies had won the War and the March 1944 expiration date of the White Paper loomed over the Zionist community.\footnote{Begin only fully quit the terrorist game in 1952; twenty-six years later he won a joint Nobel Peace Prize (Calder Walton, Empire of Secrets: British Intelligence, the Cold War and the Twilight of Empire [London: HarperPress, 2013], 112). Bruce Hoffman, “Jewish Terrorist Activities and the British Government in Palestine, 1939-1947,” 1986, 56–7.} After bombing the Immigration Department offices and tax offices in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and Haifa in February 1944, the Irgun attacked the Central Investigation Department (CID) at all the major urban Palestine police stations the next month.\footnote{David Charters, The British Army and Jewish Insurgency in Palestine, 1945-47 (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1989), 89.} After several failed attempts on the life of High Commissioner Harold MacMichael, two members of Lehi shot Lord Moyne, the minister of state in Cairo, in front of his home on 6 November 1944. Churchill (a good friend of Lord Moyne) shelved his plan for partition of Palestine in protest: “If our dreams for Zionism are to end in the smoke of assassins’ pistols and our labours for its future to produce only a new set of gangsters worthy of Nazi Germany many like myself will have to reconsider the position we have maintained so consistently in the past….”\footnote{Michael Joseph Cohen, Palestine, Retreat from the Mandate: The Making of British Policy, 1936-45 (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1978), 179.}

Two weeks after the assassination, John Vereker, who replaced MacMichael as high commissioner in Palestine wrote to Whitehall: “Although British prestige never stood higher than it does today throughout the world, I do consider that the attempt on Sir Harold MacMichael and the murder of Lord Moyne call for some positive display of disapproval.”\footnote{High Commissioner John Verker (Field Marshal Viscount Gort) to Secretary of State for the Colonies Oliver Stanley, Telegram on the use of military forces in arms search operations, November 21, 1944, WO 208/1706, TNA.} The assassins were tried, convicted, and sentenced to death (by hanging) by courts in Egypt, but Churchill’s War Cabinet did
not give security forces in Palestine ample leeway to take punitive counter-terrorism measures or to seize terrorist arms.\(^{243}\) Two days after the assassination, Miles Lampson, the British ambassador to Egypt and Sudan, echoed Vereker’s sentiments. The British must, he argued, “…eradicate this gang of terrorists. Is it really conceivable that we are still not going to so? And that we are still going to postpone action until yet another outrage occurs?”\(^{244}\) In this case, the answer was yes—without the political will to effectively root out terrorism, the Palestine Police Force turned to the Haganah for assistance, who continued to, at least officially, support the Allied cause until the end of the War. The Jewish Agency collaborated with British officials in the “Hunting Season,” between November 1944 and the spring of 1945, rounding up, interrogating, and occasionally beating up members of Lehi and Irgun.\(^{245}\) However once the War was over, the Haganah united with Zionist terrorist organizations, the Irgun and Lehi, and on the night of 31 October 1945, the “United Resistance Movement” coordinated attacks on railways and oil infrastructure across Palestine.\(^{246}\)

By October 1946, the British Secret Service (MI5), aware that some 350,000 Jewish refugees, scattered around Europe, were being assisted by the intelligence department of the Haganah (\textit{Mossad le Aliyah Bet}) and (at least passively) by the United Nations Relief and Reconstruction Agency,\(^{247}\) instituted a system of control

\(^{243}\) “No systematic searches for arms should at this stage be undertaken,” stated the War Cabinet in W.M. (44) 155\(^{\text{th}}\) Conclusions I(8) (Memorandum “Palestine: Illegal Jewish Military Organisations: The Haganah,” 1947, Cunningham papers, GB165-0072, Box 5, File 4, MEC).

\(^{244}\) Miles Lampson (Lord Killearn) to Foreign Office (FO). “War Cabinet Distribution,” Telegram (Cypher/OTP), November 23, 1944, WO 208/1706, TNA.

\(^{245}\) Charles D. Smith, \textit{Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict}, 7th ed (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2010), 174–75.

\(^{246}\) Charters, \textit{The British Army and Jewish Insurgency}, 52–4.

\(^{247}\) Walton, \textit{Empire of Secrets}, 105.
involving torpedo nets, RAF spotter planes, and floodlights along the coast of Haifa. British security forces agreed that “...by encircling [the harbor] with torpedo nets,” patrolling it with low-flying aircraft, and sweeping the area with floodlights at night, they could prevent a repeat of the SS *Patria* disaster. The RAF would circle ships in the Mediterranean, while searchlights would scan portions of the harbor unprotected by barbed wire fencing.²⁴⁸

In harbors across Europe between 1946 and 1948, where “displaced persons,” survivors of Hitler’s genocide, planned to depart for Palestine, former agents of the Special Operations Executive (SOE), an élite group dedicated to sabotage and espionage during the War, took direct action, prohibiting them from leaving. In an operation codenamed *Embarrass*, the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) recruited former SOE personnel to mine refugee ships at leaving docks, and prevent them from leaving Europe. That summer, special agents attached limpet mines to five ships docked in an Italian harbor, while no one was on board. When the limpet mines were discovered, “SIS blamed them first on a fictitious Arab opposition group, the ‘Defenders of Arab Palestine’, and then on the Soviet Government.” British intelligence went so far as to lie to Whitehall about Operation *Embarrass*.²⁴⁹

Advertisements in halfpenny papers (Figure 8) called on single men, between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five, with good eye-sight, “health and intelligence” to join “one of the finest Police Forces in the world.” The ads, which ran in weekly papers in Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Northern England, proclaimed that the job was distinct from that of a soldier yet a “man’s job.” Raymond Cafferata, the policeman who had gained widespread fame for his role in protecting Jews from Arab rioters in Hebron in 1929, travelled throughout England on a recruitment circuit, telling about a “land of milk and honey.” A Poster with “…more or less a desert image,” had, according to one recruit, Robert Ernest Hamilton from Belfast, “a bit of the old [Rudyard] Kipling touch.”

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252 Robert Ernest Hamilton, British Mandate Palestine Police Oral History Project, interview by Sharif Ismail, Transcript, October 9, 2006, MEC.
253 Ibid.
The recruits were often from working-class, parochial families; most had not attended university and often they had not been educated past primary school. Some had relatives who had served in Allenby’s Egyptian Expeditionary Force, but hardly any of them had read about the British Mandate in Palestine or the Arab-Jewish violence. Years later, when asked if he knew anything about the Mandate before he signed up for the Palestine Police Force, Hamilton responded, “No, not a thing.” They were young, seeking an adventure and a job, and at £20 a month, Palestine beckoned.

Martin Duchesne, the son of an ex-Indian Army Officer, was a bit of an exception. Duchesne was from Somerset, in southwest England. He had attended a boarding school for sixth-form and had read regularly about the troubles in Palestine before signing up. Duchesne had intended to go into the Marines during the War, but in 1945, when the War ended and after his father passed away, the Palestine Police Force, he explained later: “… just gave [him] a way out really.” For many of the recruits, this was not meant to be a temporary job. When Duchesne left for Palestine, he intended to stay for a while:

I was going to get quite well paid. It offered a career. Family money was short, there was no way I was going to University. So it was the ideal solution. I actually signed on for a three year—I wasn’t going to be a National Serviceman, I was going to be a regular, and that was the intention.

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255 Bertie Braddick, interview by William Ward, Interview Transcript, May 7, 2006, GB165-0386, MEC; Hamilton, GB165-0392, MEC.

256 Hamilton, GB165-0392 MEC.

257 Martin Duchesne, British Mandate Palestine Police Oral History Project, interview by Nick Kardahji, Interview Transcript, March 23, 2006, GB165-0390, MEC.
Duchesne was one of hundreds of young men that the metropole mobilized as agents of the crown in Palestine. In the stretch of only two weeks in November 1946, three hundred and fifteen British recruits arrived in Palestine.\textsuperscript{258} In the eyes of Whitehall, they were apolitical subjects of the crown ready for any task they were set upon and most importantly, the “manly” ones. London, after the War, was home to large immigrant communities of East London, with thousands of new immigrants; some 200,000 Jewish Polish refugees immigrated to England between 1939-1945.\textsuperscript{259} It is unlikely that the recruits, from the highly homogenous Northern England, Northern Ireland, and Scotland, had much contact with many of these immigrant communities before they arrived in Palestine. Without many preconceived notions about Palestine or the Arab-Jewish conflict, these young men were seen to be entirely free from outside influence and therefore willing agents on the ground of Whitehall’s policies.

The metropole shifted the eye of the state to a horizontal plane—hundreds of individual eyes on the state—in an effort to redefine the state-to-population relationship in Palestine as one based no longer on control of the collective population, but now on control of the individual. In exporting a constabulary to Palestine, the imperial eye moved to the ground level and state-to-individual relations of population control by the end of the Mandate. There was effectively one policeman for every street corner in Palestine.\textsuperscript{260}

\textsuperscript{258} Ibid.; Summary of conference held on November 6, 1946, Cunningham papers, GB165-0072, Box 4, File 1, MEC; Summary of conference held on November 20, 1946, Cunningham papers, GB165-0072, Box 4, File 1, MEC.
\textsuperscript{259} Panikos Panayi, \textit{Immigration, Ethnicity and Racism in Britain, 1815-1945} (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 23.
\textsuperscript{260} Walton, \textit{Empire of Secrets}, 108.
On 25 April 1946, Lehi bombed a car park in Tel Aviv used by the 6th Airborne Division and killed seven British soldiers guarding the vehicles and military equipment. The next day, for over two hours, Cunningham and several other high-ranking officials met in Jerusalem and discussed several possible options for punitive measures: seizure and occupation of buildings, the demolition of buildings, or even collective fines in Tel Aviv. In the end, however, Cunningham ruled out all of these options and decided merely to close “places of resort and [impose a] general curfew.”

The Report of the Anglo-American Committee, the suggestions of a joint British and American commission of inquiry, was due in five days and Cunningham was concerned that punitive measures would not bode well for the British in such a sensitive political climate. For practical reasons, seizure and occupation was out of the question as there was a shortage of housing due to overcrowding from recent Jewish immigrants. Moreover, emergency regulations required that a compensation be paid for the demolition of buildings. The imposition of collective fines, however, was ruled out for an entirely different reason. As the chief secretary of the government in Palestine explained: “The whole conception of collective fines and the procedure for levying them were unsuitable for application to such a city and community as Tel Aviv.”

What the chief secretary was probably trying to say was that the developed city of Tel Aviv was not fit for the type of collective punishment that the British had applied against rural villages during the Arab Rebellion and that

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261 Summary of a meeting held on April 26, 1946, Cunningham papers, GB165-0072, Box 5, File 4, MEC.
collective punishment was not suited to urban European Jewish individuals as it had been to the *fellahin*.

The 6th Airborne Division, one of only two airborne divisions raised jointly by the RAF and Army during the War, had been repurposed as an imperial security force and sent directly to Palestine in the autumn of 1945. Soon, some 100,000 British soldiers, one-tenth of the entire British Army at the time, were stationed in Palestine in camps and in defensive positions.  

Palestine had acted as a training ground for the British Army during the War and many of the British soldiers in Palestine were likely in the process of demobilization from the East. Bernard Montgomery, the chief of the Imperial Staff, complained in his memoirs (published in 1950) that Alan Cunningham, the high commissioner in Palestine, had refused to let the British Army make full use of its 100,000 troops or to take an offensive position in the counter-terrorist campaign. Indeed, only about a quarter of the troops in Palestine between 1945 and 1947 were assigned as security forces.  

Maps of ground troops in Palestine between October 1945 and May 1946 (Figure 9) show that the majority of them were stationed in defensive positions along lines of rail at points where sabotage was most likely.

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265 Charters, *The British Army and Jewish Insurgency*, 88.
Figure 9.266

Figure 10.267

267 Palestine situation reports, October 1945 – May 1946, WO 106/3107, TNA.
The maps do not, however, show (as might be expected) troops stationed along the Iraq Petroleum Company pipeline or Shell Oil Company’s refinery in Haifa. After the Irgun attacked railway lines in the fall of 1944, Whitehall specified that “The essential installations in Palestine (including Haifa port pipe-line and refinery) would require special protection and it will be necessary to import administrative units, transport and labour” to secure these installations if the disorder continued. In the post-war period, Britain and the United States had established a two-part consensus around the production of oil in the Middle East: Anglo-American oil companies were to maintain a monopoly in the Middle East and in order to retain high profit margins on oil (at home), both slowed the “development of oil production.” Britain and the United States called this policy “national security”. Britain, with its controlling interest in the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (which had changed its name in 1935 from Anglo-Persian Oil Company), however, was less concerned than the United States with “producing scarcity” for oil flowing from Iraq, which was controlled by the Americans, the French, and Shell. While Britain was concerned about the security of Shell’s oil installations in Palestine, it did not see it as directly an issue of its “national security”. The regular army of the Transjordan was sent briefly in April 1947 to guard Shell Oil Company’s installations in Haifa, but the

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268 Palestine situation reports, October 1945 – May 1946, WO 106/3107, TNA.
269 Summary of conference on security in Palestine, April 4, 1947, Cunningham papers, GB 165-0072, Box 4, File 1, MEC.
protection of the oil installations in Haifa were ultimately left to the security forces of the private companies.\textsuperscript{271}

Montgomery wanted to turn “the place upside down” and offered in January 1947 “…the whole strength of the British Army” to suppress the terrorist threat. After Cunningham expressed his concerns with this offer, the colonial secretary rejected Montgomery’s plan. The next day, Montgomery sent him a scathing letter:

I assume that when you require military advice about the use of the Army in Palestine, you get it from me and not from Cunningham. Equally I assume that if you want to know what the soldiers are thinking in Palestine, you ask me and not Cunningham. I mention this latter point because Cunningham is apt to give the impression that the military authorities in Palestine in no way want a change of policy, and that there is no disagreement; this is quite untrue; the military authorities regard the whole thing as complete nonsense…. If for political reasons such a restriction is necessary, then we will have no success in our efforts to control terrorism and we must face this fact.\textsuperscript{272}

Although the British Army outnumbered Zionist militants by more than twenty to one,\textsuperscript{273} it never gained control of the counter-terrorism efforts. Whitehall ensured that the high commissioner had the final word on any security measures that “may produce major political repercussions…”\textsuperscript{274} While martial law was declared in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem in March 1947—a month after the British military had already conceded much of Palestine to rebel forces—it was quickly regarded as counterproductive and ended in a fortnight.\textsuperscript{275}

\textsuperscript{271} Summary of conference on security in Palestine, April 4, 1947, Cunningham papers, GB 165-0072, Box 4, File 1, MEC; Colonial Secretary Oliver Stanley to High Commissioner Arthur Wauchope, Telegram (Cypher/OTA), November 27, 1944, WO 208/1706, TNA; Norris, Land of Progress, 108; Beckett, Modern Insurgencies and Counter-Insurgencies, 91.

\textsuperscript{272} Montgomery to Colonial Secretary Arthur Creech Jones, January 4, 1947, Arthur Creech Jones (ACJ) papers, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 332, Box 60, File 6, Rhodes House Library.


\textsuperscript{274} Arthur Creech Jones, Memorandum “Palestine: Use of the Armed Forces,” Cunningham papers, GB165-0072, Box 5, File 4, MEC.

the Headquarters of the 6th Airborne Division in Palestine, remembered years later that many in the Army in Palestine felt that if collective punishment had been imposed on the Jewish community after terrorist incidents, the terrorists “…would not have received the same measure of support from the Jew-in-the-street.”

Five months later, during its final months in Palestine, the Army took its first punitive action against Jewish property in Palestine when it demolished a home in the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem where illegal arms and ammunition had been discovered. As in the demolition project in Jaffa in 1936, nearby residents were escorted out of the area and warned to stay away from the marked demolition spot. Unlike in Jaffa, however, only the home in which the arms were discovered was demolished and the owner of a property next door filed the only complaint of additional damage.

On a single night in June 1946, Zionist terrorists wrecked several roads and railway bridges connecting Palestine to neighboring Arab countries. In response, the British Army led a classic “cordon-and-search” mission; the objective was to arrest individual leaders of the Jewish Agency, Haganah, and Palmach and seize documents from the Jewish Agency’s building in Tel Aviv for intelligence purposes. If the military discovered illegal arms they would seize them, but this was not the primary goal of the operation.

276 Wilson, Cordon and Search, 47–8.
278 Operation AGATHA (against Jewish illegal armed terrorist organisations in Palestine), June 1, 1946 – July 31, 1946, WO 275/30, TNA.
279 Operation AGATHA (against Jewish illegal armed terrorist organisations in Palestine), June 1, 1946 – July 31, 1946, WO 275/27, TNA.
While military forces conducted the operation in Tel Aviv, the high commissioner clarified the intent of the operation on a public statement aired on the Palestine Broadcasting Service: The cordon-and-search efforts, he said, were

…not directed against the Jewish community as a whole but solely against those few who are taking an active part in instigating and directing it. They are not reprisals; they are not punitive; they are being undertaken against one section of the Jewish community merely because it is from that section that present violence had emanated.280

The operation was not a form of collective punishment on the Zionist community but a search mission for individual Zionist leaders.

The British military was aware of the intelligence capabilities of the Jewish Agency; it took great precaution to ensure that knowledge of its operation was not leaked during planning and was confident enough to report that “complete tactical surprise [had been] achieved” after the operation. In order to identify target locations, the Army used a generic Jewish guidebook because they were not able, despite extensive British survey efforts since the beginning of the Mandate, to find an up-to-date map of Tel Aviv. Despite the ostensible secretiveness of the operation one of the few targets that the British were able to find apparently expressed relief when arrested. David Hacohen, an official of Solel Boneh (the Jewish construction company hired to construct Tegart’s fence), had been waiting for the previous two days for British forces to come. While a few high-ranking Jewish Agency officials were found and arrested in Tel Aviv, including Moshe Shertok,281 the head of the

280 Appendix ‘A’: “Statement by His Excellency the High Commissioner of Palestine Broadcast and Issue to the Press on 29 June 46,” WO 275/27, TNA
281 Shertok changed his name after the British left Palestine to Moshe Sharett and became the Second Prime Minister of Israel (Joan Comay and Lavinia Cohn-Sherbok, Who’s Who in Jewish History: After the Period of the Old Testament [Psychology Press, 2002], 336).
Political Department of the Jewish Agency, many could not be found at the addresses provided by intelligence. The address which the British had listed for David Ben-Gurion, the head of the Jewish Agency, 107 Keren Kayemet Avenue, “could not be found in Tel Aviv.” It was concluded that “such an address does not exist.” The Army did, however, cast a wide net around Tel Aviv and in Jewish settlements across Palestine where troops employed extensive means to force settlers out of hiding and detained over 2,700 suspects of the Jewish community.

The British would not, before the end of the Mandate, take collective action against the Zionist terrorists by imposing martial law. In April 1947, martial law was considered for the last time before Britain left Palestine. Henry Gurney, the chief security of the Government in Palestine, determined that sufficient legislation was on the books for the imposition of martial law in response to Zionist terrorism. By this time, however, most of the 100,000 troops had left Palestine and the War Office determined that there were not enough military personnel left both to enforce martial law and to assume the administrative responsibilities of the government. High Commissioner Cunningham continued to stress his belief that collective action against the Jewish community would push moderates, who were supposedly helping the government, into the hands of the terrorists. On this point the British Army agreed: “Collective action against the whole community in the shape of Martial Law,” wrote General John Crocker, the commander-in-chief of the Middle East Land Forces, in August 1947, “would certainly serve to check this encouraging tendency

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282 Operation AGATHA (against Jewish illegal armed terrorist organisations in Palestine), June 1, 1946 – July 31, 1946, WO 275/30, TNA.
283 Operation AGATHA (against Jewish illegal armed terrorist organisations in Palestine), June 1, 1946 – July 31, 1946, WO 275/27, TNA.
towards co-operation which we should, surely, do everything we can to foster as it is only through such co-operation that we can achieve ultimate and final success against terrorism.”

In April 1947, Brigadier Bernard Fergusson, with the encouragement of the general of Palestine Police Force and directorate of military operations, established a last ditch paramilitary unit to secure Palestine through innovative “counter-terrorist” measures. Fergusson had served in Burma under General Orde Wingate—the celebrated Zionist who had created the “Special Night Squads” in Palestine to terrorize Palestinian Arabs during the Arab Revolt. Fergusson applied the tactics he learned from Wingate to Palestine, where he gathered former Special Air Service (SAS) and SOE personnel to infiltrate the Irgun and Stern Gang in order to gather intelligence, and arrest or eliminate their members. The entire unit was dismantled when a young Sternist went missing and the hat of Major Roy Farran, a decorated former SAS man and one of Fergusson’s operatives, was discovered at the scene. Farran fled to Syria but was found and brought back for trial in Palestine. In the end he was acquitted, but soon after, the terrorists attempted to make an example of Farran, but the parcel bomb they sent killed his brother instead.

Around this time, Cunningham explained why he had not, when enough troops were in Palestine, imposed collective punishment: “Other governors elsewhere have found that you cannot beat terrorism without information from the population. Was I then to reject that they were hoping to deal with the Irgun terrorists themselves,

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284 Commander-in-Chief of Middle East Land Forces John Crocker to Alan Cunningham, August 13, 1947, Cunningham papers, GB165-0072, Box 5, File 4, MEC.

and examining plans to do so?”286 In this, Cunningham was referring to the widely accepted principle of twentieth-century counter-insurgency: “winning hearts and minds.” This slogan suggested that a key component to the success of British counter-insurgency campaigns rested in successfully isolating the insurgent faction from the civilian population by appealing to the “heart and mind” of the civilian. As historian David French has demonstrated, “winning hearts and minds” rarely, if ever, was applied effectively on-the-ground in twentieth-century British colonial settings. The British could not afford the price tag that went along with such a policy or their violent racism was too great to win the “hearts and minds” of colonial subjects.287 The British won on the periphery throughout the twentieth-century by squashing rebellions with highly repressive measures. Britain’s failure in Palestine was later held up as a lesson for British colonial control in Kenya and Malaya. When the British defeated violent nationalist movements, “on the balance…they did so by being nasty, not nice, to the people.”288

On 9 July 1946 the Foreign Office had received a report from a British intelligence officer in Palestine that the Irgun was planning an attack on the British legation in Beirut and planning to assassinate members of its staff. The Foreign Office quickly sent plain-clothed policemen to guard the entrance of the legation and the house of the head of the legation. According to the intelligence officer, the information had

286 “An Answer to Montgomery’s Criticisms,” n.d., Cunningham papers, GB165-0072, Box 5, File 4, MEC.
been “received from most secret sources….” The report was generated by Kim Philby, one of the notorious Cambridge Five, a group of Cambridge students who had been recruited before the War by Soviet intelligence to pass British records to Stalin during and after the War.\textsuperscript{289} It is unclear if Philby intentionally misdirected Whitehall and intelligence officers in Palestine. Either way, while they were preoccupied with security in Beirut, Zionist terrorists bombed the southwest wing of the King David Hotel, the site of the British Secretariat, Army Headquarters, and British intelligence (MI5 and SIS).\textsuperscript{290}

On 22 July 1946, six members of the Irgun placed five hundred pounds of explosives in the Hotel. Later, the terrorists claimed that three phone calls had been made to the hotel switchboard warning of an imminent attack. Yet, if warnings had been made and were early enough to allow for evacuation (which is doubtful), the terrorists knew full well that the British received too many unsubstantiated threats from Zionist terrorists to act on them. At 12:37 p.m. the explosives blasted a hole along the entire southwest corner of the building, killing ninety-one people.\textsuperscript{291}

MI5’s defence security officer (DSO) in Palestine learned four days after the bombing that on 21 July, Menachem Begin and leaders of the Haganah, Palmach, and Stern Gang had laid out a three-phased plan to attack the British in Palestine.

\textsuperscript{289} Certainly at the time, the Soviet Union had established connections with Zionist terrorism organization; it would be the first to vote in support of the creation of Israel in 1948, hoping it would prove a torn in the side of Western imperial nations (Calder Walton, “How Zionist Extremism Became British Spies’ Biggest Enemy,” \textit{Foreign Policy}, accessed March 19, 2015, http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/01/01/how-zionist-extremism-became-british-spies-biggest-enemy/).

\textsuperscript{290} Ibid., Harold Adrian Russell “Kim” Philby to T.E. Bromley, July 9, 1946, KV 5/36, TNA; Sir Terence Allen Stone to FO, July 20, 1946, KV 5/36, TNA; FO to Stone, July 19, 1946, KV 5/36, TNA.

\textsuperscript{291} In 2009, at the 60th Anniversary of the King David Hotel bombing, the Menachem Begin Heritage Center revealed a plaque commemorating the bombing that stated: “For reasons known only to the British, the hotel was not evacuated, (Walton, “How Zionist Extremism Became British Spies’ Biggest Enemy”). Walton, \textit{Empire of Secrets}, 100–9.
beginning with the bombing of the King David Hotel. The terrorists had prioritized the British Secretariat because they believed that the British held files (seized during the operation in Tel Aviv) that implicated David Ben-Gurion.\textsuperscript{292} Indeed, the British Government had been able to use some of the documents found during the raid in Tel Aviv to link the lower-ranking members of the Jewish Agency to Zionist terrorist attacks, but had not linked Ben-Gurion to terrorist attacks.\textsuperscript{293} The amount of reliable intelligence about Zionist terrorist organizations rapidly increased in the days following the bombing in part, the DSO explained, because Jewish civilians had become disillusioned with the Irgun. Even a member of Irgun defected after the bombing. After providing the British with useful information about future planned terrorist attacks and revealing the location of Irgun’s Jerusalem Headquarters, the Irgun defector was taken to London for questioning by the Secret Service and Metropolitan Police Special Branch.\textsuperscript{294} As an intelligence officer, codenamed PEKE, reported, this was an unusual case, and most of the Jewish civilian population was not sufficiently disillusioned enough with Zionist terrorism after the King David Hotel bombing “to assist in hunting down the terrorists.”\textsuperscript{295}

Arthur Creech Jones, the colonial secretary, met with Montgomery, Cunningham, and a few administrators at the Colonial Office in Whitehall on 3 January 1947 to discuss what measures the government should take to deal with terrorism in the future. Creech Jones was hopeful that recent improvements in the

\textsuperscript{292} Apparently Begin was unaware that British documents rarely ever left the police headquarters compound, which was housed in a separate building (Michael J. Cohen, \textit{Britain’s Moment in Palestine: Retrospect and Perspectives, 1917-1948}, 1 edition [London; New York: Routledge, 2014], 467).
\textsuperscript{293} Ibid., 468.
\textsuperscript{294} Walton, \textit{Empire of Secrets}, 77.
\textsuperscript{295} Summary of letter from DSO Palestine, July 26, 1946, KV 5/36, TNA; Crocker to WO, “Palestine: Jewish Reaction to Blowing up of King David Hotel,” August 9, 1946, KV 5/36, TNA.
situation would lead to greater stability in Palestine. The colonial secretary had recently met with David Ben-Gurion, who he said, had “denounced terrorism.” Montgomery, less confident in the recent developments, replied that “he was ready to stamp out lawlessness and terrorism in Palestine.” In one of the most telling remarks made by a British official after the War on the success of Zionist terrorism, Colonial Secretary Arthur Creech Jones, “replied that the two things [lawlessness and terrorism] were different.” He further stated that “the lawlessness of the Jewish community arose from their sense of grievance and their fierce belief that the Government’s [White Paper immigration policy], had no moral basis…. Terrorism [is] quite distinct,” he argued. This distinction, between unlawful acts committed out of a genuine “sense of grievance” and non-justified “terrorist” acts, defined British security policy towards the Zionist threat in Palestine after the War.

The British tried (as Zionist historians latter attempted to do) to draw very clear distinctions between the Jewish Agency’s Haganah on the one hand, the Irgun and the Stern Gang on the other. Not only did this “deliberately gloss over the more malign, clandestine” activities of the Haganah, but it blinded the British to the political nature of terrorism. The grievances of the Jewish Agency’s Haganah were not more genuine or more intensely felt than the grievances of self-proclaimed Zionist terrorists. These too were justifiably enraged when the racial hygiene project that had begun in nineteenth-century Europe and the United States with Social Darwinists and Eugenicists reached unprecedented heights in Nazi Germany’s attempt to cleanse Eastern Europe of the “Jewish race”. Six million Jews of the Diaspora died in the

Nazi’s attempt to make the East a “Jew-free space”.\(^{297}\) The acts of terrorism committed by the Irgun and Stern Gang were inherently political and contributed to the same fight waged by David Ben-Gurion and the Jewish Agency against British rule in Palestine after the War. “It is clear,” wrote Carl von Clausewitz, a Prussian general of the Napoleonic Wars, “that war is not a mere act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political activity by other means.”\(^{298}\)

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In the late 1940s, MI5 sealed the British Isles off from infiltration of Jewish immigrants from the Middle East. MI5 distributed an “Index of Terrorists” to ports and entry-points throughout the United Kingdom, with photographs of terrorist suspects.\(^{299}\) All visa applications that were made by Jews from the Middle East were promptly telephoned to MI5, which conducted extensive background checks before entry was permitted. In addition, MI5 obtained Home Office Warrants (HOWs) to conduct extensive surveillance measures on Anglo-Jews. MI5 used the warrants to tap the telephones and intercept the mail of all of the major Zionist organizations in Britain, ranging from the moderate Jewish Agency to the extreme United Zionist Revisionists (UZR) and United Zionist Youth Organization (often referred to as Betar).\(^{300}\) MI5 assumed (correctly) that the Irgun and Lehi would use contacts in these organizations to successfully bypass the border security measures that were


\(^{299}\) In October 1947, a microfilm copy of the “Index” was given to the Palestine police (Walton, “How Zionist Extremism Became British Spies’ Biggest Enemy”).

established to keep Jews from the Middle East out of Britain.\textsuperscript{301} Finally, after MI5 scrutinized the records of over 7,000 Jewish servicemen, suspecting them of extremist Zionist sympathies, they dismissed twenty-five Jews in the British armed forces.\textsuperscript{302}

These defensive, discriminatory measures at home were in response to several intelligence reports that indicated that Zionist terrorists were planning attacks in London, the heart of the colonial government.\textsuperscript{303} Given the history of successful major attacks on the British colonial establishment, the threat of Zionist terrorist attacks in London was (with good reason) taken seriously. Indeed, on 31 October 1946, a Zionist terrorist “cell” in Italy had bombed the British Embassy in Rome, destroying the lower half of the building and killing three people.\textsuperscript{304}

While MI5 placed Middle Eastern Jews and Anglo-Jews under surveillance, Parisian Jews were free to travel across the English Channel without suspicion. This allowed Ya’acov Eliav, a Russian-born bomb specialist later known as “Dynamite Man,” who had joined the Irgun in 1935, to access the heart of the British Empire easily. On 7 March 1947, a Jewish student at the Sorbonne and a member of Lehi placed one of Eliva’s bombs in the Colonial Club, a recreational facility for British servicemen at St. Martin’s Place in London. The explosion did not cause much damage (shattering the windows and blowing out the doors) but Lehi publicized it as a major attack on the British establishment:

\begin{quote}
On Friday 7 March at 6:56 p.m. our fighters launched an attack on the centre of British power in London. Notwithstanding the defensive measures and
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{301} Walton, “How Zionist Extremism Became British Spies’ Biggest Enemy.”
\textsuperscript{302} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{303} MI5 discovered that Robert Briscoe, a member of the Irish Parliament, had met in Britain with representatives of the Irgun and sent a Palestine police officer to Dublin to coordinate surveillance information sharing with the Irish CID (Walton, \textit{Empire of Secrets}, 77).
\end{footnotes}
numberless precautions our fighters were successful in...[destroying] the “British Colonial Club”—one of the centres of imperialist intrigue....The secret Jewish movement will continue and will strengthen the attacks against the enemy on his own soil...⁵⁰⁵

A month later, on 16 April, a cleaning woman at the Colonial Office in Whitehall discovered a bomb in the toilet of the ladies restroom. Earlier that day, a French Jewish female operative sent by Eliav, had convinced a security officer to allow her to use the restroom to “repair a ladder”⁶⁰⁶ in her stockings. She had placed the bomb, consisting of twenty-four sticks of explosives and wrapped in newspapers, in the toilets, but the timer jammed and the bomb never went off and after discovering the package, the cleaning woman called the police.

When the threat came home to Britain, MI5 realized that it was not capable of identifying each individual Zionist terrorists who attempted to land on the British Isles, so they grouped the threat into two categories “external” and “internal”. The external threat they labeled as “Middle Eastern Jews” and the internal threat was, of course, British Jews. British intelligence realized it was not capable of identifying every individual threat. With the imperial eye turned inwards to the metropole and to the British Mandate in Palestine, it was blind to the “foreign” threat. Because of the failure of the bomb’s timer, the British very narrowly avoided a major attack on the head office of its colonial operations, an attack that, according to the head of the

Metropolitan Police Special Branch, “would have blown the sort of hole in the Colonial Office that was blown in the King David Hotel.”

+++ Until February 1947, the British could still claim a modicum of control over Palestine. Even Colonial Secretary Ernest Bevin—who had announced to the House of Commons in November 1945: “I will stake my political future on solving the [Palestine] problem”—had to admit by February 1947 that the British had run out of all options for reaching a settlement. The decision to leave Palestine was linked to a much larger moment in the haphazard evacuation of the British Empire, in which the British abandoned Greece and importantly, “scuttled” out of India. “The critical period was December 1946-February 1947, when decisions were made during a savage winter of coal shortages, cuts in fuel and electricity, and limited supplies of food and milk. Two days after Christmas, Atlee and Bevin not only agreed on the question of withdrawal from Greece but also on the issue of submitting the Palestine question to the United Nations.”

Within a month, new army camps were built in Palestine to protect British armed forces from terrorist attacks. Small encampments (nicknamed “Bevingrads”) secured by barbed-wire fencing, identity cards, and body searches, isolated the British military from Palestinian civilians. Military personnel were only allowed to travel outside the barbed wire encampments on official business, and contact with

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Palestinians dwindled. Armored vehicles were repurposed as transport convoys to move military personnel and goods from one encampment to another. Earlier that year, the British had evacuated all non-essential personnel—some two thousand men, women, and children—from Palestine.\textsuperscript{310} In a letter to the Colonial Office, Henry Gurney, the chief secretary of the Government in Palestine wrote,

\begin{quote}
\ldots now that the remaining British are all behind barbed wire we are beginning to wonder how long it will be possible to carry on civil administration here at all—I don’t know whether any of our colleagues in the F.O. [Foreign Office] appreciate how it feels not to be allowed out of your home without an escort in British territory.\textsuperscript{311}
\end{quote}

The same technology of barbed wire fencing employed by Sir Charles Tegart (unsuccessfully) to isolate Palestine from the Middle East was now used, less than ten years later, to protect British security forces from dangers in Palestine. In the construction of barbed wire “Bevingrads,” the British acknowledged the failure of a three-decade long project to make the threat in Palestine visible to the British imperial eye.

Remote areas of Palestine were left wide open, on which Jews and Arabs laid the battlefield for an escalating war. It would take the creation of the State of Israel to successfully map a European colonial geography onto the Holy Land. All measure of restraint and the façade that British military forces were there to “secure” Palestine crumbled as soldiers retaliated against the hanging of two British sergeants with rampages in Tel Aviv. On 11 July 1947, the Irgun kidnapped two unarmed British sergeants—Cliff Martin and Mervyn Paice—at a café in Netanya. After martial law

\begin{footnotes}
\item[311] Cohen, \textit{Britain’s Moment in Palestine}, 472-78.
\end{footnotes}
had been declared in Netanya, five thousand troops swept the twenty surrounding Jewish settlements, and over a thousand Jews were interrogated. The Irgun radio announced that the sergeants would not be released until the British commuted the death sentences on three terrorists. On 27 July, Cunningham’s decision to carry out the executions of the terrorists was announced. The next day, the corpses of the sergeants, whom the Irgun had executed, were found hanging from a booby-trapped tree.312 British armed forces retaliated by destroying Jewish property and opening fire on civilians in Tel Aviv from armored cars. Five Jews were killed and two injured.313 Young men, some police recruits and others soldiers, who were meant to be the agents of a benign British Empire’s counter-insurgency strategy—however ill defined and unclear it was—were more thoroughly convinced by the facts on the ground and driven to make their own calculations about who deserved punishment for the death of their army companions.

In the wake of World War II, Palestine Police Force recruits and British intelligence officers after World War II had attempted to make clear distinctions between the “threat” of Zionist terrorist and the “non-threat” of the Jewish community. They were instructed to remove the terrorist “threat” from his Jewish community, thereby disassociating him from his social and political context. Yet, the constabulary and intelligence system of population control failed. Arthur Creech Jones was correct; Zionist terrorism was distinct, but not because it was less directed by political goals and deeply felt grievances. Zionist terrorism was part of a larger coordinated attack on British rule in Palestine, even if the tactics it used were not

313 Cohen, Britain’s Moment in Palestine, 476–77.
agreeable to most of the Jewish community. The creation of a false dichotomy between terrorism and politics compelled Whitehall to place a policeman on every corner in Palestine to identify individual threats to the Anglo-Zionist colonial project. This was precisely why it failed. It is clear that, at least in this case, Carl von Clausewitz’s often-cited concept that war is a means to political ends,\(^{314}\) applies here to terrorism as well. This constabulary and intelligence system failed in Palestine because it did not reflect the reality that terrorism is a means to political ends.

CONCLUSION

In September 1947, Ernest Bevin, the postwar Labour Government colonial secretary, announced to the United Nations that the British were ending the Mandate and pulling out of Palestine. This announcement was not the result of a gradual decision-making process by the Labour Government nor was it inevitable after the World War II or the successful attacks on the British Government by Zionist terrorists. It was the result of four interconnected yet distinct post-war British realities, and marked the end of thirty years in which the British attempted to maintain hegemony in Palestine.315

Britain’s decision in September 1947 to pull out of Palestine was not inevitable; it was the result of a specific historical moment following World War II and the Holocaust. It is clear, however, that one important part of the story of Britain’s withdrawal from Palestine is a history of failure of population control. While prominent historians such as William Roger Louis, Michael J. Cohen, and John Darwin have covered the political history of the Mandate extensively and several recently published books (many of which are quoted extensively above) discuss surveillance, authority, and control in the Mandate, the failure of three distinct attempts by the British to innovate and implement mechanisms of population control and secure the British Mandate in Palestine, has largely been ignored. As discussed in this study, Britain’s Palestine was, in large part a nodal point for twentieth-century methods of imperial security, cartography, and surveillance as articulated in air

control, Tegart’s fence, and the metropole’s constabulary. My question throughout this study has been why?

At first, Britain constructed a monolithic “desert Arab” whom it hoped to control through the ostensibly omniscient and omnipotent power of aircraft. Air control, a cheap alternative, according to Winston Churchill and Hugh Trenchard, to naval and ground forces, seemed ideal for “managing movement” in the Holy Land and along the “desert corridor,” (the land route from the Mediterranean Sea to the Persian Gulf). The Arab was meant to see the hand of God in the aircraft, but religiosity and living in the birthplace of Christendom did not cloud the ability of Arabs to perceive Western industrial capitalism in the aircraft. Air control did not fail in Palestine because the British objected to bombing urban centers in 1929. It failed because the “Holy Land” never prayed for Western imperialism; men born and trained in Ottoman Near East had both the technology and skill to counter aerial control.

British colonial administrators operated in the broader context of the British Empire as they implemented, changed, and arrived at these three distinct mechanisms of population control in the British Mandate. Palestine was both a laboratory for the new mechanism of air control and a thoroughfare for systems of control that had been tested in far off regions of the (British) Empire. Individual colonial administrators brought the heart of the Empire to Palestine. When discussing air control in the Middle East in the 1920s, colonial administrators almost always listed Palestine as an appendix to the British Mandate in Iraq. Mark Sykes and T.E. Lawrence, Hugh Trenchard and Winston Churchill all located Palestine on a crucial juncture at the
“western extremity” of the “desert corridor,” connecting the Mediterranean Sea to the Persian Gulf. Archibald Wavell imported the blockhouses system that he had seen successfully used when he was a young soldier in the Anglo-Boer War in South Africa. Thus, Palestine served as both a spatial link to the Cape and a temporal “link… between pre World War I and post World War II counterinsurgencies.” At the same time, Tegart mapped onto Palestine the archipelagic Cellular Jail on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

With the disappointing results of the air control campaign, in 1937, the imperial eye of the Britain moved to the watchtower, where it imagined a community of Palestinian Arabs divorced from the rest of the Middle East by a barbed wire fence and watchtowers along the frontier. The imperial boundaries of the Anglo-French Middle East, although often based on local migration patterns, were neither natural to the region nor undisputed by those whose daily realities they affected. After Arabs born in the Ottoman Empire tore down Tegart’s barbed wire fence, in 1938-39 the metropole acknowledged the limitations of its colonial cartography in Palestine. In aircraft and in watchtowers, British security forces had failed in their attempt to identify and eliminate the “threat” to the British Mandate, and so it trained a constabulary to be its eyes on the ground. With agents of the Empire on nearly every street corner in Palestine between 1945 and 1947, the British attempted to identify the individual Jewish terrorist and extract him from his political context, refusing to bow to the Anglo-Zionist colonial project. Like aerial and watchtower surveillance, constabulary control also failed.

Sir Charles Tegart’s panoptic barbed wire-blockhouse system (erected) on the northern frontier of Palestine was meant to identify and distinguish the Arab in Palestine from the non-Palestinian Arab. In “fortress” Palestine, Tegart hoped that the Palestinian Arab, removed from the broader Middle East, could be made, as the British chief commissioner suggested of the Cellular Jail in the Andaman Islands, fit “for human society”—a “fitness” determined by one’s proximity to the Anglo-Saxon. While during the Arab Rebellion men and women in Palestine converged on a radical nationalist and anti-colonial movement, they did not see themselves as removed from the regional context in which they operated. As Rashid Khalidi explains, “The Frenchwoman would refer her identity in some measure to a powerful, generations-old ‘historical’ narrative of Frenchness…[but] the Palestinian would be more likely to refer identity to a number of ‘historical narratives, each carrying different valence and a somewhat different message…. as an Arab in one context, as a Muslim or Christian in another, as a Nabulsi or Jaffan in yet another, and as a Palestinian in a fourth.” Tegart’s fence failed because the borders it attempted to impose were neither natural nor imagined by a community on the ground.

After World War II, the metropole sent hundreds of young British recruits to Palestine, rapidly increasing the size of the Palestine Police Force, to find the individual terrorists and pull them out of the Zionist community. In doing so, Britain hoped to win the “hearts and minds” of the Jewish community. The rigid dichotomy that the metropole attempted to make between politics and terrorism left them blind to the political nature of terrorism. It made the parochial constabulary’s task of

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extracting terrorists from their communities in a non-disruptive fashion more
difficult, if not impossible.

In a postwar economy and increasingly anxious about the possibility of war
with the Soviet Union, Britain paid close attention to the position of the United States
on Palestine. When President Harry S. Truman suspended the Lend-Lease program in
August 1945, “Austerity Britain” went to Washington begging for a $3.75 billion loan
to survive.\textsuperscript{318} At the same time, the political epicenter of the Zionist political machine
had shifted by 1945 from London to Washington, where influential Jewish families
lobbied for the creation of the State of Israel. Staffers in the White House convinced
President Harry S. Truman that financial support from the Jewish community was
essential to a Democratic victory in the 1948 presidential election. Thus, on Yom
Kippur in 1946 (4 October), Truman, without consulting London first, announced the
support of the United States for the creation of “a viable Jewish State in control of its
own immigration and economic policies in an adequate area of Palestine instead of in
the whole of Palestine.”\textsuperscript{319} At the time, the government was renegotiating the 1936
Anglo-Egyptian agreement, which the UN Security Council reinstated in 1947,
thereby permitting British forces to remain in the Suez Canal. With that decision, the
War Office no longer needed Palestine.\textsuperscript{320} Furthermore, as Elizabeth Monroe has
suggested, although Britain’s withdrawal from India in 1947 resulted in the death of
approximately one million people on the newly demarcated borders of India and

\textsuperscript{318} Michael J. Cohen, \textit{Britain’s Moment in Palestine: Retrospect and Perspectives, 1917-1948}, 1
\textsuperscript{319} Charles D. Smith, \textit{Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict}, 7th ed (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s,
2010), 188.
\textsuperscript{320} Cohen, \textit{Britain’s Moment in Palestine}, 446–48; Monroe, \textit{Britain’s Moment in the Middle East,
Pakistan, partition overall was successful—the Indian Independence Bill (which created the states of Pakistan and India) became law in July 1947—providing an example (however grim) of possible consequences which might result from partition in Palestine. More importantly, however, reports in London of the Zionist terrorist hangings of the British sergeants in Netanya drained the last bit of patience that the British public had for the violence in Palestine;\textsuperscript{321} between 1920 and 1948, five hundred and fifty Palestine policemen, many of whom were British, were killed. By 1947, Britons were ready to leave the Holy Land,\textsuperscript{322} and did so in September 1947.

\textsuperscript{321} Monroe, \textit{Britain’s Moment in the Middle East, 1914-1971}, 166.
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