

General Service Medal with clasp 'Palestine'. For service in Mandatory Palestine between 19th April 1936 and 3rd September 1939, during the Arab Revolt.

Qualifying Period – Service on the establishment of a unit or formation within the geographical limits of Palestine and or Trans-Jordan between the above dates.

The 1936–1939 Arab revolt in Palestine was a nationalist uprising by Palestinian Arabs in Mandatory Palestine against British colonial rule, as a demand for independence and opposition to mass Jewish immigration.

The revolt consisted of two distinct phases. The first phase was directed primarily by the urban and elitist Higher Arab Committee (HAC) and was focused mainly on strikes and other forms of political protest. By October 1936, this phase had been defeated by the British civil administration using a combination of political concessions, international diplomacy (involving the rulers of Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Transjordan and Yemen) and the threat of martial law. The second phase, which began late in 1937, was a violent and peasant-led resistance movement that increasingly targeted British forces. During this phase, the rebellion was brutally suppressed by the British Army and the Palestine Police Force using repressive measures that were intended to intimidate the Arab population and undermine popular support for the revolt.

According to official British figures covering the whole revolt, the army and police killed more than 2,000 Arabs in combat, 108 were hanged, and 961 died because of what they described as "gang and terrorist activities". In an analysis of the British statistics, Walid Khalidi estimates 19,792 casualties for the Arabs, with 5,032 dead: 3,832 killed by the British and 1,200 dead because of "terrorism", and 14,760 wounded. Over ten percent of the adult male Palestinian Arab population between 20 and 60 was killed, wounded, imprisoned or exiled. Estimates of the number of Palestinian Jews killed range from 91 to several hundred.

The revolt in Palestine was unsuccessful, and its consequences affected the outcome of the 1948 Palestine war. It caused the British Mandate to give crucial support to pre-state Zionist militias like the Haganah whereas on the Palestinian Arab side, the revolt forced the fleeing into exile of the main Palestinian Arab leader of the period, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem Haj Amin al-Husseini.

Contents

Origins

In 1930 Sheikh Izz ad-Din al-Qassam organized and established the Black Hand, an anti-Zionist and anti-British militant organization. He recruited and arranged military training for peasants and by 1935 he had enlisted between 200 and 800 men. The cells were equipped with bombs and firearms, which they used to murder Jewish farmers in the area, as well as engaging in a campaign of vandalizing trees planted by farmers and British-constructed rail lines. In November 1935, two of his men engaged in a firefight with the Palestine Police patrol hunting fruit thieves and a policeman was killed. Following the incident, the police launched a manhunt and surrounded al-Qassam in a cave near Ya'bad. In the ensuing battle, al-Qassam was killed leading to widespread outrage among Palestinian Arabs. Huge crowds accompanied Qassam's body to his grave in Haifa.

The dissent in Palestine was influenced also by the discovery in October 1935 at the port of Jaffa of a large arms shipment destined for the Haganah, sparking Arab fears of a Jewish military takeover of Palestine, Jewish immigration also peaked in 1935, just months before Palestinian Arabs began a full-scale, nationwide revolt. In the four years between 1933 and 1936 more than 164,000 Jewish immigrants arrived in Palestine, and between 1931 and 1936 the Jewish population more than doubled from 175,000 to 370,000 people, increasing the Jewish population share from 17% to 27%, bringing about a significant deterioration in relations between Palestinian Arabs and Jews.

The uprising began with an attack on 15 April 1936 on a convoy of trucks on the Nablus to Tulkarm road during which the (probably Qassamite) assailants shot two Jewish drivers, Israel Khazan, who was killed instantly, and Zvi Dannenberg, who died five days later. The next day Jewish Irgun gunmen shot and killed two Arab workers sleeping in a hut near Petah Tikva in a revenge attack, and the funeral for Khazan in Tel Aviv on 17 April became a turbulent Jewish nationalist event during which Jewish rioters beat Arab children and destroyed property. Between 19 and 22 April disturbances in Jaffa and Tel Aviv left 16 Jews and 5 Arabs dead. An Arab general strike and revolt ensued that lasted until October 1936. During the summer of that year, thousands of Jewish-farmed acres and orchards were destroyed, Jewish civilians were attacked and murdered, and some Jewish communities, such as those in Beisan and Acre, fled to safer areas.

Economic Background

Economic factors played a major role in the outbreak of the Arab revolt. Palestine's fellahin, the country's peasant farmers, comprised over two-thirds of the indigenous Arab population and from the 1920s onwards they were pushed off the land in increasingly large numbers into urban environments where they often encountered only poverty and social marginalisation. Many were crowded into shanty towns in Jaffa and Haifa where they found succor and encouragement in the teachings of the charismatic preacher Izz ad-Din al-Qassam who worked among the poor in Haifa. The revolt was thus a popular uprising that produced its own leaders and developed into a national revolt.

World War I left Palestine, especially the countryside, deeply impoverished. The Ottoman and then the Mandate authorities levied high taxes on farming and agricultural produce and during the 1920s and 1930s this together with a fall in prices, cheap imports, natural disasters and paltry harvests all contributed to the increasing indebtedness of the fellahin. The rents paid by tenant fellah increased sharply, owing to increased population density, and transfer of land from Arabs to the Jewish settlement agencies, such as the Jewish National Fund, increased the number of fellahin evicted while also removing the land as a future source of livelihood. By 1931 the 106,400 dunums of low-lying Category A farming land in Arab possession supported a farming population of 590,000 whereas the 102,000 dunums of such land in Jewish possession supported a farming population of only 50,000. The problem of 'landless' Arabs grew particularly grave after 1931, causing High Commissioner Wauchope to warn that this 'social peril ... would serve as a focus of discontent and might even result in serious disorders.'

Although the Mandatory government introduced measures to limit the transfer of land from Arabs to Jews these were easily circumvented by willing buyers and sellers. The failure of the authorities to invest in economic growth and healthcare and the Zionist policy of ensuring that their investments were directed only to facilitate expansion of the Yishuv further compounded matters. The government did, however, set the minimum wage for Arab workers below that for Jewish workers, which meant that those making capital investments in the Yishuv's economic infrastructure, such as Haifa's electricity plant, the Shemen oil and soap factory, the Grands Moulins flour mills and the Nesher cement factory, could take advantage of cheap Arab labour pouring in from the countryside.

After 1935 the slump in the construction boom and further concentration by the Yishuv on an exclusivist Hebrew labour programme removed most of the sources of employment for rural migrants. By 1935 only 12,000 Arabs (5% of the workforce) worked in the Jewish sector, half of these in agriculture, whereas 32,000 worked for the Mandate authorities and 211,000 were either self-employed or worked for Arab employers.

The ongoing disruption of agrarian life in Palestine, which had been continuing since Ottoman times, thus created a large population of landless peasant farmers who subsequently became mobile wage workers who were increasingly marginalised and impoverished; these became willing participants in nationalist rebellion.

Political and Socio-Cultural Background

Initially, the conflict with Zionism helped to make Palestinian Arab society more conservative in cultural, social, religious and political affairs because people were highly motivated to preserve their

distinct heritage and identity against the dual impact of British colonialism and Jewish innovation. Traditionally, the Arabs had an elite, but not a real leadership. Both of these things changed over the course of the 1930s. During this period new political organizations and new types of activist began to appear, marking the involvement of a far broader cross-section of the population; in particular, nationalism, which had been long-rooted in rural society began to take hold in urban society. Youth organisations proliferated at this time; these included the Young Men's Muslim Association, which from 1931 agitated for armed resistance against the Zionists, the Youth Congress Party, which expressed pan-Arab sentiments, and the Palestinian Boy Scout Movement, founded early in 1936, which became active in the general strike.

Women's organisations, which had been active in social matters, became politically involved from the end of the 1920s, with an Arab Women's Congress held in Jerusalem in 1929 attracting 200 participants, and an Arab Women's Association (later Arab Women's Union) being established at the same time, both organised by feminist Tarab Abdul Hadi.

From the beginning of the 1930s new political parties began to appear, including the Independence Party, which called for an Indian Congress Party-style boycott of the British, the pro-Nashashibi National Defence Party, the pro-Husayni Palestinian Arab Party the pro-Khalidi Arab-Palestinian Reform Party, and the National Bloc, based mainly around Nablus.

A few militant secret societies, which advocated armed struggle were formed; these included the Green Hand, which was active in the hills around Safad, but eliminated by the British in 1931, the Organization for Holy Struggle, led by Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni and active in the Hebron area, which was later to play an important role in the 1948 Palestine War, and the Young Rebels or Avenging Youth, active in the Tulkarm and Qalqilyah area from 1935.

Traditional feasts such as Nebi Musa began to acquire a political and nationalist dimension and new national memorial days were introduced or gained new significance; among them Balfour Day (2 November, marking the Balfour Declaration of 1917), the anniversary of the Battle of Hattin (4 July, marking Saladin's recapture of Jerusalem), and beginning in 1930 May 16 was celebrated as Palestine Day. The expansion of education, the development of civil society and of transportation, communications, and especially of broadcasting and other media, all facilitated these changes.

Regional Political Background

A number of political changes in neighbouring Arab countries illustrated to the Palestinian Arabs what could be achieved in a Western colony through political pressure and negotiating skill. In Syria a general strike took place from 20 January to 6 March 1936 spreading to all the major towns, and political demonstrations held throughout the country gave fresh momentum to the Syrian national movement. Although French reprisals were harsh the government agreed on 2 March to the formation of a Syrian delegation to travel to Paris to negotiate a Franco-Syrian Treaty of Independence. This demonstrated that determined economic and political pressure could challenge a fragile imperial administration.

In Egypt on 2 March 1936 a series of formal negotiations between the United Kingdom and Egypt began leading to the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936, which granted independence to Egypt, but allowed the British to keep forces in the Suez Canal Zone. In Iraq a general strike in July 1931, accompanied by organised demonstrations in the streets, led to independence for the former British mandate territory under prime minister Nuri as-Said, and full membership of the League of Nations in October 1932.

Khalil al-Sakakini called the revolt a "life-and-death struggle." The strike began on 19 April in Nablus, where an Arab National Committee was formed, and by the end of the month National Committees had been formed in all of the towns and some of the larger villages. On 21 April the leaders of the

five main parties accepted the decision at Nablus and called for a general strike of all Arabs engaged in labour, transport and shopkeeping for the following day.

While the strike was initially organised by workers and local committees, under pressure from below, political leaders became involved to help with co-ordination. This led to the formation on 25 April 1936 of the Arab Higher Committee (AHC). The Committee resolved "to continue the general strike until the British Government changes its present policy in a fundamental manner"; the demands were threefold: (1) the prohibition of Jewish immigration; (2) the prohibition of the transfer of Arab land to Jews; (3) the establishment of a National Government responsible to a representative council.

David Ben-Gurion told mourners at a funeral held on 20 April 1936 for nine victims of rioting in Jaffa the previous day that Jews would only be safe "in communities which are 100% Jewish and built on Jewish land."

About one month after the general strike started, the leadership group declared a general non-payment of taxes in explicit opposition to Jewish immigration. In the countryside, armed insurrection started sporadically, becoming more organised with time. One particular target of the rebels was the Mosul–Haifa oil pipeline of the Iraq Petroleum Company constructed only a few years earlier to Haifa from a point on the Jordan River south of Lake Tiberias. This was repeatedly bombed at various points along its length. Other attacks were on railways (including trains) and on civilian targets such as Jewish settlements, secluded Jewish neighbourhoods in the mixed cities, and Jews, both individually and in groups.

The measures taken against the strike were harsh at the beginning and grew harsher as it went along involving house searches without warrants, night raids, preventive detention, caning, flogging, deportation, confiscation of property, and torture. As early as May 1936 the British formed armed Jewish units equipped with armoured vehicles to serve as auxiliary police. The British government in Palestine was convinced that the strike had the full support of the Palestinian Arabs and they could see "no weakening in the will and spirit of the Arab people." Air Vice-Marshall Richard Peirse, commander of British forces in Palestine and Transjordan from 1933 to 1936, reported that because the rebel armed bands were supported by villagers,

It was quickly evident that the only way to regain the initiative from the rebels was by initiating measures against the villagers from which the rebels and saboteurs came ... I therefore initiated, in co-operation with the Inspector-General of Police R. G. B. Spicer, village searches. Ostensibly, these searches were undertaken to find arms and wanted persons, actually the measures adopted by the Police on the lines of similar Turkish methods, were punitive and effective.

In reality the measures created a sense of solidarity between the villagers and the rebels. The pro-Government Mayor of Nablus complained to the High Commissioner that, "During the last searches effected in villages properties were destroyed, jewels stolen, and the Holy Qu'ran torn, and this has increased the excitement of the fellahin." However, Moshe Shertok of the Jewish Agency even suggested that all villages in the area of an incident should be punished.

On 2 June, an attempt by rebels to derail a train bringing the 2nd Battalion Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment from Egypt led to the railways being put under guard, placing a great strain on the security forces. In response to this situation on 4 June the government rounded up a large number of Palestinian leaders and sent them to a detention camp at Auja al-Hafir in the Negev desert. During July, Arab volunteers from Syria and Transjordan, led by Fawzi al-Qawukji, helped the rebels to divide their formations into four fronts, each led by a District Commander who had armed platoons of 150–200 fighters, each commanded by a platoon leader.

A Statement of Policy issued by the Colonial Office in London on 7 September declared the situation a: "direct challenge to the authority of the British Government in Palestine" and announced the

appointment of Lieutenant-General John Dill as supreme military commander. By the end of September 20,000 British troops in Palestine were deployed to "round up Arab bands". In June 1936 the British involved their clients in Transjordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Egypt in an attempt to pacify the Palestinian Arabs and on 9 October the rulers made an appeal for the strike to be ended. A more pressing concern may have been the approaching citrus harvest and the soaring prices that were available because of the disruption caused to the Spanish citrus harvest by the Spanish Civil War.

Peel Commission

The strike was called off on 11 October 1936 and the violence abated for about a year while the Peel Commission deliberated. The Royal Commission was announced on 18 May 1936 and its members were appointed on 29 July, but the Commission did not arrive in Palestine until 11 November.

The Commission, which concluded that 1,000 Arab rebels had been killed during the strike, later described the disturbances as "an open rebellion of the Palestinian Arabs, assisted by fellow-Arabs from other countries, against Mandatory rule" and noted two unprecedented features of the revolt: the support of all senior Arab officials in the political and technical departments in the Palestine administration (including all of the Arab judges) and the "interest and sympathy of the neighbouring Arab peoples", which had resulted in support for the rebellion in the form of volunteers from Syria and Iraq.

Privately, Peel believed that most Jews would remain in the Diaspora. In the early 1920s the first High Commissioner of Palestine, Herbert Samuel, failed to create a unified political structure embracing both Palestinian Arabs and Palestinian Jews in constitutional government with joint political institutions. This failure facilitated internal institutional partition in which the Jewish Agency exercised a degree of autonomous control over the Jewish settlement and the Supreme Muslim Council performed a comparable role for Muslims. Thus, well before Lord Peel arrived in Palestine on 11 November 1936, the groundwork for territorial partition as proposed by the Royal Commission in its report on 7 July 1937 had already been done. Peel's main recommendation was for partition of Palestine into a small Jewish state (based on current Jewish land ownership population and incorporating the country's most productive agricultural land), a residual Mandatory area, and a larger Arab state linked to Transjordan. A second and more radical proposal was for transfer of 225,000 Palestinian Arabs from the Jewish state to the Arab state and Transjordan. It is likely that Zionist leaders played a role in persuading Peel to accept the notion of transfer, which had been a strand of Zionist ideology from its inception.

The Arab Higher Committee rejected the recommendations immediately, as did the Jewish Revisionists. Initially, the religious Zionists, some of the General Zionists, and sections of the Labour Zionist movement opposed the recommendations. Ben-Gurion was delighted by the Peel Commission's support for transfer, which he viewed as the foundation of "national consolidation in a free homeland." Subsequently, the 2 main Jewish leaders, Chaim Weizmann and Ben Gurion had convinced the Zionist Congress to approve equivocally the Peel recommendations as a basis for further negotiation, and to negotiate a modified Peel proposal with the British.

The British government initially accepted the Peel report in principle. However with war clouds looming over Europe, they realized that to attempt to implement it against the will of the Palestinian Arab majority would rouse up the entire Arab world against Britain. The Woodhead Commission considered three different plans, one of which was based on the Peel plan. Reporting in 1938, the Commission rejected the Peel plan primarily on the grounds that it could not be implemented without a massive forced transfer of Arabs (an option that the British government had already ruled out). With dissent from some of its members, the Commission instead recommended a plan that would leave the Galilee under British mandate, but emphasised serious problems with it that included a lack of financial self-sufficiency of the proposed Arab State. The British Government accompanied the publication of the Woodhead Report by a statement of policy rejecting partition as impracticable due to "political, administrative and financial difficulties".

Resumed Revolt (September 1937-August 1939)

With the failure of the Peel Commission's proposals the revolt resumed during the autumn of 1937 marked by the assassination on 26 September of Acting District Commissioner of the Galilee Lewis Andrews by Arab gunmen in Nazareth. On 30 September, regulations were issued allowing the Government to detain political deportees in any part of the British Empire, and authorizing the High Commissioner to outlaw associations whose objectives he regarded as contrary to public policy. Haj Amin al-Husseini was removed from the leadership of the Supreme Moslem Council and the General Waqf Committee, the local National Committees and the Arab Higher Committee were disbanded; five Arab leaders were arrested and deported to the Seychelles; and in fear of arrest Jamal el-Husseini fled to Syria and Haj Amin el-Husseini to Lebanon; all frontiers with Palestine were closed, telephone connections to neighbouring countries were withdrawn, press censorship was introduced and a special concentration camp was opened near Acre.

In November, 1937, military courts were established for the trial of offenses connected with the carrying and discharge of firearms, sabotage and intimidation. Despite this, however, the Arab campaign of murder and sabotage continued and Arab gangs in the hills took on the appearance of organized guerrilla fighters.

Violence continued throughout 1938. In July, 1938, when the Palestine Government seemed to have largely lost control of the situation, the garrison was strengthened from Egypt, and in September it was further reinforced from England. The police were placed under the operational control of the army commander, and military officials superseded the civil authorities in the enforcement of order. In October the Old City of Jerusalem, which had become a rebel stronghold, was reoccupied by the troops. By the end of the year a semblance of order had been restored in the towns, but terrorism continued in rural areas until the outbreak of the Second World War.

Despite cooperation of the Yishuv with the British to quell the revolt, some incidents towards the end of the conflict indicated a coming change in relations. On 12 June 1939, A British explosives expert was killed trying to defuse an Irgun bomb near a Jerusalem post office. On 26 August, two British police officers, Inspector Ronald Barker and Inspector Ralph Cairns, commander of the Jewish Department of the C.I.D., were killed by an Irgun mine in Jerusalem. In the final fifteen months of the revolt alone there were 936 murders and 351 attempted murders; 2,125 incidents of sniping; 472 bombs thrown and detonated; 364 cases of armed robbery; 1,453 cases of sabotage against government and commercial property; 323 people abducted; 72 cases of intimidation; 236 Jews killed by Arabs and 435 Arabs killed by Jews; 1,200 rebels killed by the police and military and 535 wounded.

Response

The role of the Mandate Government and the British Army.

Military law allowed swift prison sentences to be passed. Thousands of Arabs were held in administrative detention, without trial, and without proper sanitation, in overcrowded prison camps. The British had already formalised the principle of collective punishment in Palestine in the 1924–1925 Collective Responsibility and Punishment Ordinances and updated these ordinances in 1936 with the Collective Fines Ordinance. These collective fines (amounting to £1,000,000 over the revolt) eventually became a heavy burden for poor Palestinian villagers, especially when the army also confiscated livestock, destroyed properties, imposed long curfews and established police posts, demolished houses and detained some or all of the Arab men in distant detention camps. Full martial law was not introduced but in a series of Orders in Council and Emergency Regulations, 1936–37 'statutory' martial law, a stage between semi-military rule under civil powers and full martial law under military powers, and one in which the army and not the civil High Commissioner was pre-eminent was put in place. Following the Arab capture of the Old City of Jerusalem in October 1938, the army effectively took over Jerusalem and then all of Palestine.

The main form of collective punishment employed by the British forces was destruction of property. Sometimes entire villages were reduced to rubble, as happened to Mi'ar in October 1938; more often several prominent houses were blown up and others were trashed inside. The biggest single act of destruction occurred in Jaffa on 16 June 1936, when large gelignite charges were used to cut long pathways through the old city, destroying 220–240 buildings and rendering up to 6,000 Arabs homeless. Scathing criticism for this action from Palestine Chief Justice Sir Michael McDonnell was not well received by the administration and the judge was soon removed from the country. Villages were also frequently punished by fines and confiscation of livestock. The British even used sea mines from the battleship HMS Malaya to destroy houses. In addition to actions against property, a large amount of brutality by the British forces occurred, including beatings, torture and extrajudicial killings. A surprisingly large number of prisoners were "shot while trying to escape". Several incidents involved serious atrocities, such as massacres at al-Bassa and Halhul. Desmond Woods, an officer of the Royal Ulster Rifles, described the massacre at al-Bassa:

Now I will never forget this incident ... We were at al-Malikiyya, the other frontier base and word came through about 6 o'clock in the morning that one of our patrols had been blown up and Millie Law [the dead officer] had been killed. Now Gerald Whitfeld [Lieutenant-Colonel G.H.P. Whitfeld, the battalion commander] had told these mukhtars that if any of this sort of thing happened he would take punitive measures against the nearest village to the scene of the mine. Well the nearest village to the scene of the mine was a place called al-Bassa and our Company C were ordered to take part in punitive measures. And I will never forget arriving at al-Bassa and seeing the Rolls Royce armoured cars of the 11th Hussars peppering Bassa with machine gun fire and this went on for about 20 minutes and then we went in and I remembered we had lighted braziers and we set the houses on fire and we burnt the village to the ground ... Monty had him [the battalion commander] up and he asked him all about it and Gerald Whitfeld explained to him. He said "Sir, I have warned the mukhtars in these villages that if this happened to any of my officers or men, I would take punitive measures against them and I did this and I would've lost control of the frontier if I hadn't." Monty said "All right but just go a wee bit easier in the future."

As well as destroying the village the RUR and men from the Royal Engineers collected around fifty men from al-Bassa and blew some of them up with explosion under a bus. Harry Arrigonie, a policeman who was present said that about twenty men were put onto a bus; those who tried to escape were shot and then the driver of the bus was forced to drive over a powerful land mine buried by the soldiers which completely destroyed the bus, scattering the mutilated bodies of the prisoners everywhere. The other villagers were then forced to bury the bodies in a pit.

Despite these measures Lieutenant-General Haining, the General Officer Commanding, reported secretly to the Cabinet on 1 December 1938 that "practically every village in the country harbours and supports the rebels and will assist in concealing their identity from the Government Forces." Haining reported the method for searching villages: A cordon round the area to be searched is first established either by troops or aircraft and the inhabitants are warned that anybody trying to break through the cordon is likely to be shot. As literally hundreds of villages have been searched, in some cases more than once, during the past six months this procedure is well-known and it can be safely assumed that cordon-breakers have good reasons for wishing to avoid the troops. A number of such cordon-breakers have been shot during searches and it is probable that such cases form the basis of the propaganda that Arab prisoners are shot in cold blood and reported as "killed while trying to escape". After the cordon is established the troops enter the village and all male inhabitants are collected for identification and interrogation.

The report was issued in response to growing concern at the severity of the military measures amongst the general public in Great Britain, among members of the British Government, and among governments in countries neighbouring Palestine.

In addition to actions against villages the British Army also conducted punitive actions in the cities. In Nablus in August 1938 almost 5,000 men were held in a cage for two days and interrogated one after

another. During their detention the city was searched and then each of the detainees was marked with a rubber stamp on his release. At one point a night curfew was imposed on most of the cities. It was common British army practice to make local Arabs ride with military convoys to prevent mine attacks and sniping incidents: soldiers would tie the hostages to the bonnets of lorries, or put them on small flatbeds on the front of trains. The army told the hostages that any of them who tried to run away would be shot. On the lorries, some soldiers would brake hard at the end of a journey and then casually drive over the hostage, killing or maiming him, as Arthur Lane, a Manchester Regiment private recalled:

... when you'd finished your duty you would come away nothing had happened no bombs or anything and the driver would switch his wheel back and to make the truck waver and the poor wog on the front would roll off into the deck. Well if he was lucky he'd get away with a broken leg but if he was unlucky the truck behind coming up behind would hit him. But nobody bothered to pick up the bits they were left. You know we were there we were the masters we were the bosses and whatever we did was right ... Well you know you don't want him any more. He's fulfilled his job. And that's when Bill Usher [the commanding officer] said that it had to stop because before long they'd be running out of bloody rebels to sit on the bonnet.

British troops also left Arab wounded on the battlefield to die and maltreated Arab fighters taken in battle, so much so that the rebels tried to remove their wounded or dead from the field of battle. Sometimes, soldiers would occupy villages, expel all of the inhabitants and remain for months. The Army even burned the bodies of "terrorists" to prevent their funerals becoming the focus of protests. Nevertheless, it has been argued that British behaviour overall was good compared to most other examples where a foreign army suppressed a popular insurgency.

Sir Charles Tegart was a senior police officer brought into Palestine from the colonial force of British India on 21 October 1937. Tegart and his deputy David Petrie (later head of MI5) advised a greater emphasis on foreign intelligence gathering and closure of Palestine's borders. Accordingly, from 1938 Gilbert Mackereth, the British Consul in Damascus, corresponded with Syrian and Transjordan authorities regarding border control and security to counteract arms smuggling and "terrorist" infiltration and produced a report for Tegart on the activities of the Palestine Defence Committee in Damascus. Tegart recommended the construction of a frontier road with a barbed wire fence, which became known as Tegart's wall, along the borders with Lebanon and Syria to help prevent the flow of insurgents, goods and weapons. Tegart encouraged close co-operation with the Jewish Agency. It was built by the Histadrut construction company Solel Boneh. The total cost was £2 million. The Army forced the fellahin to work on the roads without pay. Tegart introduced Arab Investigation Centres where prisoners were subjected to beatings, foot whipping, electric shocks, denailing and what is now known as "waterboarding". Tegart also imported Doberman Pinschers from South Africa and set up a special centre in Jerusalem to train interrogators in torture.

Role of the Royal Air Force

The Royal Air Force developed close air support into its then most refined form during the Arab Revolt. Air patrols had been found effective in keeping convoys and trains free from attack, but this did not help to expose insurgents to battle conditions likely to cause their defeat. From the middle of June 1936 wireless vehicles accompanied all convoys and patrols. During rebel attacks these vehicles could issue emergency "XX calls" (XX with a coded location), which were given priority over all other radio traffic, to summon aerial reinforcements. Bombers, which were usually airborne within five minutes, could then either attack insurgents directly or "fix" their position for infantry troops. Forty-seven such XX calls were issued during the revolt, causing heavy losses to the rebels. This use of air power was so successful that the British were able to reduce the regular garrison. In 1936 an Air Staff Officer in Middle East Command based in the Kingdom of Egypt, Arthur Harris, known as an advocate of "air policing", commented on the revolt saying that "one 250 lb. or 500 lb. bomb in each village that speaks out of turn" would satisfactorily solve the problem. In 1937 Harris was promoted to Air Commodore and in 1938 he was posted to Palestine and Trans-Jordan as Air Officer Commanding the RAF contingent in the region until September 1939. "Limited" bombing attacks on

Arab villages were carried out by the RAF, although at times this involved razing whole villages to the ground. Harris described the system by which recalcitrant villages were kept under control by aerial bombardment as "Air-Pin". Aircraft of the RAF were also used to drop propaganda leaflets over Palestinian towns and villages telling the fellahin that they were the main sufferers of the rebellion and threatening an increase in taxes. Low flying RAF squadrons were able to produce detailed intelligence on the location of road blocks, sabotaged bridges, railways and pipelines. RAF aerial photographs were also used to build up a detailed map of Arab population distribution. Although the British Army was responsible for setting up the Arab counter-insurgent forces (known as the peace bands) and supplying them with arms and money these were operated by RAF Intelligence, commanded by Patrick Domville. At the beginning of the revolt RAF assets in the region comprised a bomber flight at RAF Ramleh, an RAF armoured car flight at Ramleh, fourteen bomber squadrons at RAF Amman, and a RAF armoured car company at Ma'an.

Role of the Royal Navy

At the beginning of the Revolt crew from the Haifa Naval Force's two cruisers were used to carry out tasks ashore, manning two howitzers and naval lorries equipped with QF 2 pounder naval guns and searchlights used to disperse Arab snipers. From the end of June two destroyers were used to patrol the coast of Palestine in a bid to prevent gun running. These searched as many as 150 vessels per week and were an effective preventive measure. At the request of the Army additional naval platoons landed in July to help protect Haifa and Jewish settlements in the surrounding countryside. The Navy also relieved the Army of duties in Haifa by using nine naval platoons to form the *Haifa Town Force* and in August three naval platoons were landed to support the police.

Following publication of the Peel Commission's report in July 1937 HMS *Repulse* sailed to Haifa where landing parties were put ashore to maintain calm. Various other naval vessels continued with this role until the end of the revolt. Following the Irgun's detonation of a large bomb in a market in Haifa on 6 July 1938 the High Commissioner signalled the Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Fleet, Admiral Sir Dudley Pound, requesting the assistance of naval vessels capable of providing landing parties. Pound dispatched HMS *Repulse* and diverted HMS *Emerald* to Haifa, which arrived the same day and landed five platoons, one to each police district. HMS *Repulse* relieved HMS *Emerald* the following day and after another bomb was detonated on 10 July five platoons from the ship, made up of sailors and Royal Marines, dispersed mobs and patrolled the city.

On 11 July provision of three platoons from *Repulse* released men of the West Kent Regiment for a punitive mission against Arabs who had attacked a Jewish colony near Haifa. By 17 July the *Repulse* established a Company Headquarters where seamen and Royal Marines manned a 3.7-inch howitzer. Sailors, Royal Marines, and men of the Suffolk Regiment, who had embarked on the *Repulse*, accompanied foot patrols of the Palestine Police Force. The *Repulse*, HMS *Hood* and HMS *Warspite* provided howitzer crews which were sent ashore to combat gun running near the border with Lebanon. Detained Arabs were used to build emplacements and the howitzers were moved quickly between these positions by day and night to confuse bandits as to the likely direction of fire. Periodically, the guns were used to fire warning rounds close to the vicinity of villages believed to have rebel sympathies.

Strategic importance of Haifa

Britain had completed the modern deep-sea port in Haifa in 1933 and finished laying a pipeline from the Iraqi oilfields to Haifa in 1935, shortly before the outbreak of the revolt. A refinery for processing oil from the pipeline was completed by Consolidated Refineries Ltd, a company jointly owned by British Petroleum and Royal Dutch Shell, in December 1939.

These facilities enhanced the strategic importance of Palestine and of Haifa in particular in Britain's control of the eastern Mediterranean. The threat to British control of the region posed by the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in October 1935 and the deteriorating situation in Europe toward the end of the 1930s probably made British policy makers more willing to make concessions to Arab governments on the Palestine issue following the furore over the recommendations of the Peel Commission.

The Role of the British Intelligence Services

The Arab Revolt was the last major test of Britain's security services in the Middle East before World War II. The development and deployment of intelligence-led counterinsurgency strategies was integral to the restoration of British imperial control in Palestine as the revolt had demonstrated to the British authorities how a popular rebellion could undermine intelligence gathering operations and thereby impair their ability to predict and respond to inter-communal disorder. The rebellion had brought together urban nationalism and peasant economic grievances arising from rural poverty and landlessness, which was blamed on British misrule. Accordingly, the Palestinian revolt targeted the political and economic apparatus of the British colonial state, including the communications network, pipelines, police stations, army outposts and British personnel. It was this aspect of the revolt, rather than attacks on Jews or violence between rivals for leadership of the national movement, that most concerned the high commissioner. The mandate authorities were further disturbed by the unity of purpose displayed during the six-month general strike and by the resurgence of pan-Arab nationalism as evidenced by the rise of the Istiqlal Party.

In response to these challenges the British army command ("I" Branch) and battalion headquarters across Palestine issued a daily intelligence bulletin every afternoon detailing political developments. Special Service Officers (SSOs) assigned to intelligence gathering reported directly to their local command headquarters and their cars were equipped with wireless transmitters so that high grade intelligence could be reported directly to "I" Branch immediately. These sources of intelligence gradually became more important than those of the C.I.D. in Palestine, which had been dependent on Arab informers, and which were no longer reliable.

In September 1937, the Jewish Agency appointed Reuven Zaslany liaison officer for intelligence and security affairs between the Political Department of the Jewish Agency and the intelligence arms of the Royal Air Force and the C.I.D. Zaslany sifted through intelligence collected by Jewish-controlled field operatives and forwarded it to the British military. He was a frequent visitor at the headquarters of British intelligence and the army, the police and C.I.D. and he also travelled to Damascus to liaise with the Arab opposition's peace bands and with the British Consul in Iraq. Colonel Frederick Kisch, a British army officer and Zionist leader, was appointed chief liaison officer between the British army and the Jewish Agency Executive with Zaslany as his deputy. Zaslany also worked as interpreter for Patrick Domville, head of RAF Intelligence in Palestine (who was described by Haganah leader Dov Hoz as the "best Zionist informer on the English"), until the latter was posted to Iraq in 1938, and through him became acquainted with many of the British intelligence officers.

In 1937 the Jewish Agency's intelligence groups were responsible for bugging the Peel Commission hearings in Palestine. Eventually, the Arab Revolt convinced the Agency that a central intelligence service was required and this led to the formation of a counter-intelligence agency known as the *Ran* (headed by Yehuda Arazi, who also helped to smuggle rifles, machine guns and ammunition from Poland to Palestine) and thereafter in 1940 to the creation of SHAI, the forerunner of Mossad.

British and Jewish Co-operation

The *Haganah* (Hebrew for "defence"), a Jewish paramilitary organisation, actively supported British efforts to suppress the uprising, which reached 10,000 Arab fighters at their peak during the summer and fall of 1938. Although the British administration did not officially recognise the *Haganah*, the British security forces cooperated with it by forming the Jewish Settlement Police, Jewish Supernumerary Police, and Special Night Squads. The Special Night Squads engaged in activities described by colonial administrator Sir Hugh Foot, as 'extreme and cruel' involving torture, whipping, abuse and execution of Arabs.

The British authorities maintained, financed and armed the Jewish police from this point onward until the end of the Mandate, and by the end of September 1939 around 20,000 Jewish policeman, supernumeraries and settlement guards had been authorised to carry arms by the government, which

also distributed weapons to outlying Jewish settlements, and allowed the Haganah to acquire arms. Independently of the British, *Ta'as*, the Haganah's clandestine munitions industry, developed an 81-mm mortar and manufactured mines and grenades, 17,500 of the latter being produced for use during the revolt.

In June 1937, the British imposed the death penalty for unauthorised possession of weapons, ammunition, and explosives, but since many Jews had permission to carry weapons and store ammunition for defence this order was directed primarily against Palestinian Arabs and most of the 112 executed in Acre Prison were hanged for illegal possession of arms.

In principle all of the joint units functioned as part of the British administration, but in practice they were under the command of the Jewish Agency and "intended to form the backbone of a Jewish military force set up under British sponsorship in preparation for the inevitable clash with the Arabs." The Agency and the Mandate authorities shared the costs of the new units equally. The administration also provided security services to Jewish commercial concerns at cost. Jewish and British officials worked together to co-ordinate manhunts and collective actions against villages and also discussed the imposition of penalties and sentences. Overall, the Jewish Agency was successful in making "the point that the Zionist movement and the British Empire were standing shoulder to shoulder against a common enemy, in a war in which they had common goals."

The rebellion also inspired the Jewish Agency to expand the intelligence-gathering of its Political Department and especially of its Arab Division, with the focus changing from political to military intelligence. The Arab Division set up a network of Jewish controllers and Arab agents around the country. Some of the intelligence gathered was shared with the British administration, the exchange of information sometimes being conducted by Moshe Shertok, then head of the Jewish Agency, directly with the high commissioner himself. Shertok also advised the administration on political affairs, on one occasion convincing the high commissioner not to arrest Professor Joseph Klausner, a Revisionist Maximalist activist who had played a key role in the riots of 1929, because of the likely negative consequences.

Forces of the Jewish Settlement

Table 1: Security forces and infrastructure created during the Arab revolt

| Joint British-Yishuv | Independent Yishuv | Other Yishuv defence infrastructure |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| Jewish Supernumerary Police | Mobile units (mobile arm of the Haganah) | Ta'as † (weapons manufacture) |
| Jewish Settlement Police | Fosh (field companies) | Rekhesh † (arms procurement) |
| Mobile Guards (mobile arm of the Settlement Police) | Hish (field corps) | Ran (counter intelligence) |
| Special Night Squads | Special Operations Squads | Community ransom (defence tax) |
| Tegart forts and Tegart's wall | Guards | Tower and stockade settlement |

† Ta'as and Rekhesh were developed and expanded during the Arab Revolt but already existed before 1936 and of course the Haganah had been in operation from the earliest days of the Mandate. Haganah intelligence services

There was no single body within the Jewish settlement capable of co-ordinating intelligence gathering before 1939. Until then there were four separate organisations without any regular or formal liaison. These were an underground militia, forerunner of the first official information service, *Sherut Yediot* (*Shai*); the *Arab Platoon* of the Palmach, which was staffed by Jews who were Arab-speaking and Arab-looking; *Rekhesh*, the arms procurement service, which had its own intelligence gathering

capabilities, and likewise the *Mossad LeAliyah Bet*, the illegal immigration service.^[119] In mid-1939 the effort to co-ordinate the activities of these groups was led by Shaul Avigur and Moshe Shertok.

The role of the Revisionist Zionists

In 1931, a Revisionist underground splinter group broke off from Haganah, calling itself the *Irgun* organisation (or *Etzel*). The organisation took its orders from Revisionist leader Ze'ev Jabotinsky who was at bitter loggerheads with the dominant Labour Zionist movement led by David Ben-Gurion. The rift between the two Zionist movements further deteriorated in 1933 when two Revisionists were blamed for the murder of Haim Arlosoroff, who had negotiated the Haavara Agreement between the Jewish Agency and Nazi Germany. The agreement brought 52,000 German Jews to Palestine between 1933 and 1939, and generated \$30,000,000 for the then almost bankrupt Jewish Agency, but in addition to the difficulties with the Revisionists, who advocated a boycott of Germany, it caused the Yishuv to be isolated from the rest of world Jewry.

Ultimately, however, the events of the Arab Revolt blurred the differences between the gradualist approach of Ben-Gurion and the Maximalist Iron Wall approach of Jabotinsky and turned militarist patriotism into a bipartisan philosophy. Indeed, Ben-Gurion's own Special Operations Squads conducted a punitive operation in the Arab village of Lubya firing weapons into a room through a window killing two men and one woman and injuring three people, including two children.

From October 1937 the Irgun instituted a wave of bombings against Arab crowds and buses. For the first time in the conflict massive bombs were placed in crowded Arab public places, killing and maiming dozens. These attacks substantially increased Arab casualties and sowed terror among the population. The first attack was on 11 November 1937, killing two Arabs at the bus depot near Jaffa Street in Jerusalem and then on 14 November, a day later commemorated as the "Day of the Breaking of the *Havlagah* (restraint)," Arabs were killed in simultaneous attacks around Palestine. More deadly attacks followed: on 6 July 1938 21 Arabs were killed and 52 wounded by a bomb in a Haifa market; on 25 July a second market bomb in Haifa killed at least 39 Arabs and injured 70; a bomb in Jaffa's vegetable market on 26 August killed 24 Arabs and wounded 39. The attacks were condemned by the Jewish Agency. Ironically, the Arab leader Mohammad Amin al-Husayni and his associates also received funding from Fascist Italy during the revolt as the Italians were in dispute with the United Kingdom over Abyssinia and wished not only to disrupt the British rear but also to extend Italian influence in the region.

The role of the "Peace Bands"

The "peace bands" (*fasa'il al-salam*) or "Nashashibi units" were made up of disaffected Arab peasants recruited by the British administration and the Nashashibis in late 1938 to battle against Arab rebels during the revolt. Despite their peasant origins the bands were representative mainly of the interests of landlords and rural notables. Some peace bands also sprang up in the Nablus area, on Mount Carmel (a stronghold of the Druze who largely opposed the rebellion after 1937), and around Nazareth without connection to the Nashashibi-Husayni power struggle.

From December 1937 the main opposition figures among the Arabs approached the Jewish Agency for funding and assistance, motivated by the assassination campaign pursued by the rebels at the behest of the Husseini leadership. In October 1937, shortly after Mohammad Amin al-Husayni, the leader of the Arab Higher Committee, had fled from Palestine to escape British retribution, Raghib al-Nashashibi had written to Moshe Shertok stating his full willingness to co-operate with the Jewish Agency and to agree with whatever policy it proposed. From early in 1938 the Nashashibis received funding specifically to conduct anti-rebel operations, with Raghib al-Nashashibi himself receiving £5,000. The British also supplied funding to the peace bands and sometimes directed their operations.

Fakhri Nashashibi was particularly successful in recruiting peace bands in the Hebron hills, on one occasion in December 1938 gathering 3,000 villagers for a rally in Yata, also attended by the British military commander of the Jerusalem District General Richard O'Connor. Just two months earlier, on 15 October 1938, rebels had seized the Old City and barricaded the gates. O'Connor had planned the operation by which men of the Coldstream Guards, Royal Northumberland Fusiliers and Black Watch recaptured the Old City, killing 19 rebels. He was later to win fame as the field commander for Operation *Compass* in World War II, in which his forces completely destroyed a much larger Italian army—a victory which nearly drove the Axis from Africa, and in turn, led Adolf Hitler to send the German Africa Corps under Erwin Rommel to try to reverse the situation.

Towards the end of the revolt in May 1939 the authorities dissolved the peace bands and confiscated their arms. However, because members of the bands had become tainted in the eyes of the Palestinian Arabs, and some were under sentence of death, they had little choice but to continue the battle against the national movement's leadership, which they did with the continuing help of the Zionist movement.

The role of the Rebel Leaders

At least 282 rebel leaders took part in the Arab Revolt and of these only four were Christians. Some of the principal leaders among them, often known as "brigands" in the Jewish press and as "bandits", "terrorists", "rebels" or "insurgents", but never as "nationalists," to the British are described below. The Arabs themselves used the term *Ursabi* meaning *gang* and the leader of an armed band was a *Qaid al Ursabi*. The plural form *Ursabat* spawned the British soldiers' nickname for all rebels, which was *Oozlebart*.

Nazareth Area

Abdul Khallik was an effective peasant leader appointed by Fawzi al-Qawukji who caused great damage and loss of life in the Nazareth District and was thus a significant adversary of the Mandate and Jewish settlement authorities. He was trapped by British troops in a major engagement on 2 October 1938 and was killed whilst trying to lead his men to safety.

Nablus Area

Abdul Rahim al Hajj Mohammed from the Tulkarm area was a deeply religious, intellectual man and as a fervent anti-Zionist was deeply committed to the revolt. He was regarded second to Qawukji in terms of leadership ability and maintained his independence from the exiled rebel leadership in Damascus. He personally led small groups of fighters called *fasa'il* and carried out nighttime attacks against British targets in the revolt's early stage in 1936. When the revolt was renewed in April 1937, he established a more organised command hierarchy consisting of four main brigades who operated in the north-central highlands (Tulkarm-Nablus-Jenin). He competed for the position of General Commander of the Revolt with Aref Abdul Razzik, and the two served the post in rotation from September 1938 to February 1939, when al-Hajj Muhammad was confirmed as the sole General Commander. Notably, he refused to carry out political assassinations at the behest of political factions, including al-Husayni, once stating "I dont work for Husayniya ('Husayni-ism'), but for wataniya ('nationalism')." He is still related by Palestinian Arabs as a hero and martyr and is regarded as a metonym "for a national movement that was popular, honourable, religious, and lofty in its aims and actions." He was shot dead in a firefight with British forces outside the village of Sanur on 27 March 1939, after Farid Irsheid's peace band informed the authorities of his location.

Yusuf Said Abu Durra, a Qassamite leader in the Jenin area, was born in Silat al-Harithiya and before becoming a rebel worked as a Gazoz vendor. He was said to be a narrow-minded man who thrived on extortion and cruelty and thus became greatly feared. Yusuf Hamdan was Durra's more respected lieutenant and later a leader of his own unit; he was killed by an army patrol in 1939 and buried in Lajjun. Durra himself was apprehended by the Arab Legion in Transjordan on 25 July 1939 and subsequently hanged.

Fakhri Abdul Hadi (Fakhri 'Abd al-Hadi) of the village of Arrabah worked closely with Fawzi al-Qawukji during 1936 but later defected to the British authorities. He bargained for a pardon by offering to collaborate with the British on countering rebel propaganda. Once on the payroll of the British consul in Damascus (Gilbert Mackereth) he carried out many attacks against the rebels in 1938–1939 as leader of his own "peace band".

Aref Abdul Razzik (Arif 'Abd al-Raziq) of Tayibe village, who was responsible for the area south of Tulkarm, was known for seemingly being able to vanish into thin air whilst being pursued by the security forces.^[155] He signed his bulletins 'The Ghost of Sheikh Qassam'. Razzik assumed a place in British army folklore and the troops sang a song about him. Razzik was capable and daring and gained a reputation as one of the army's problem heroes. Mohammad Mahmoud Rana'an of Jaba' village was noted for his courage but lacked in intellect.

Jerusalem Area

Issa Battat was a peasant leader in the southern hills below Jerusalem who caused enormous damage to security patrols in his area. He was killed by a patrol of armed police in a battle near Hebron in 1937.

Outcome

Casualties

Despite the intervention of up to 50,000 British troops and 15,000 Haganah men, the uprising continued for over three years. By the time it concluded in September 1939, more than 5,000 Arabs, over 300 Jews, and 262 Britons had been killed and at least 15,000 Arabs were wounded.

Impact on the Jewish Yishuv

In the overall context of the Jewish settlement's development in the 1930s the physical losses endured during the revolt were relatively insignificant. Although hundreds were killed and property was damaged no Jewish settlement was captured or destroyed and several dozen new ones were established. Over 50,000 new Jewish immigrants arrived in Palestine. In 1936 Jews made up about one-third of the population.

The hostilities contributed to further disengagement of the Jewish and Arab economies in Palestine, which were intertwined to some extent until that time. Development of the economy and infrastructure accelerated. For example, whereas the Jewish city of Tel Aviv relied on the nearby Arab seaport of Jaffa, hostilities dictated the construction of a separate Jewish-run seaport for Tel Aviv, inspiring the delighted Ben-Gurion to note in his diary "we ought to reward the Arabs for giving us the impetus for this great creation." Metal works were established to produce armoured sheeting for vehicles and a rudimentary arms industry was founded. The settlement's transportation capabilities were enhanced and Jewish unemployment was relieved owing to the employment of police officers, and replacement of striking Arab labourers, employees, craftsman and farmers by Jewish workers. Most of the important industries in Palestine were owned by Jews and in trade and the banking sector they were much better placed than the Arabs.

As a result of collaboration with the British colonial authorities and security forces many thousands of young men had their first experience of military training, which Moshe Shertok and Haganah leader Eliyahu Golomb cited as one of the fruits of the Haganah's policy of havlagah (restraint).

Although the Jewish settlement in Palestine was dismayed by the publication of the 1939 White Paper restricting Jewish immigration, David Ben-Gurion remained undeterred, believing that the policy would not be implemented, and in fact Neville Chamberlain had told him that the policy would last at the very most only for the duration of the war. In the event the White Paper quotas were exhausted only in December 1944, over five and a half years later, and in the same period the United Kingdom absorbed 50,000 Jewish refugees and the British Commonwealth (Australia, Canada and

South Africa) took many thousands more. During the War over 30,000 Jews joined the British forces and even the Irgun ceased operations against the British.

Impact on the Palestinian Arabs

The revolt weakened the military strength of Palestinian Arabs in advance of their ultimate confrontation with the Jewish settlement in the 1947–1948 Civil War in Mandatory Palestine and was thus counterproductive. During the uprising, British authorities attempted to confiscate all weapons from the Arab population. This, and the destruction of the main Arab political leadership in the revolt, greatly hindered their military efforts in the 1948 Palestine war,^[15] where imbalances between the Jewish and Arab economic performance, social cohesion, political organisation and military capability became apparent.

The Mufti, Hajj Amin al-Husseini and his supporters directed a Jihad against any person who did not obey the Mufti. Their national struggle was a religious holy war, and the incarnation of both the Palestinian Arab nation and Islam was Hajj Amin al-Husseini. Anyone who rejected his leadership was a heretic and his life was forfeit. After the Peel report publication, the murders of Arabs leaders who opposed the Mufti were accelerated. Pressed by the assassination campaign pursued by the rebels at the behest of the Husseini leadership, the opposition had a security cooperation with the Jews. The flight of wealthy Arabs, which occurred during the revolt, was also replicated in 1947–49.

Thousands of Palestinian houses were destroyed, and massive financial costs were incurred because of the general strike and the devastation of fields, crops and orchards. The economic boycott further damaged the fragile Palestinian Arab economy through loss of sales and goods and increased unemployment.

Clearly, the revolt did not achieve its goals, although it is "credited with signifying the birth of the Arab Palestinian identity." It is generally credited with forcing the issuance of the White Paper of 1939 in which Britain retreated from the partition arrangements proposed by the Peel Commission in favour of the creation of a bi-national state within ten years, although The League of Nations commission held that the White Paper was in conflict with the terms of the Mandate as put forth in the past. The White Paper of 1939 was regarded by many as incompatible with the commitment to a Jewish National Home in Palestine, as proclaimed in the 1917 Balfour Declaration. Al-Husseini rejected the new policy, although it seems that the ordinary Palestinian Arab accepted the White Paper of 1939. His biographer, Philip Mattar wrote that in that case, the Mufti preferred his personal interests and the ideology rather than the practical considerations.

Impact on the British Empire

As the inevitable war with Germany approached, British policy makers concluded that although they could rely on the support of the Jewish population in Palestine, who had no alternative but to support Britain, the support of Arab governments and populations in an area of great strategic importance for the British Empire was not assured. Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain concluded "if we must offend one side, let us offend the Jews rather than the Arabs."

In February 1939 Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs Malcolm MacDonald called together a conference of Arab and Zionist leaders on the future of Palestine at St. James's Palace in London but the discussions ended without agreement on 27 March. The government's new policy as published in White Paper of 17 May had been determined already and despite Jewish protests and Irgun attacks the British remained resolute.

There was a growing feeling among British officials that there was nothing left for them to do in Palestine. Perhaps the ultimate achievement of the Arab Revolt was to make the British sick of Palestine. Major-General Bernard "Monty" Montgomery concluded, "the Jew murders the Arab and the Arab murders the Jew. This is what is going on in Palestine now. And it will go on for the next 50 years in all probability."

Historiography

The 1936–1939 Arab Revolt has been and still is marginalized in both Western and Israeli historiography on Palestine, and even progressive Western scholars have little to say about the anti-colonial struggle of the Palestinian Arab rebels against the British Empire. According to Swedenberg's analysis, for instance, the Zionist version of Israeli history acknowledges only one authentic national movement: the struggle for Jewish self-determination that resulted in the Israeli Declaration of Independence in May 1948. Swedenberg writes that the Zionist narrative has no room for an anticolonial and anti-British Palestinian national revolt. Zionists often describe the revolt as a series of "events" (Hebrew תְּרִזָּעִים-ma'aravot terazim) "riots", or "happenings"

The appropriate description was debated by Jewish Agency officials, who were keen not to give a negative impression of Palestine to prospective immigrants. In private, however, David Ben-Gurion was unequivocal: the Arabs, he said, were "fighting dispossession ... The fear is not of losing land, but of losing the homeland of the Arab people, which others want to turn into the homeland of the Jewish people."

Units Present

The Royal Scots, Scots Greys, 4/7 Royal Dragoon Guards, 8, 11 Hussars, B,O and M/P Battery Royal Horse Artillery, 25/26, 27/28 Medium Battery, det. 19 Heavy Battery Royal Artillery (plus others), Royal Tank Corps, Royal Engineers, Royal Corps of Signals, Royal Army Service Corps, Royal Army Medical Corps, Royal Army Ordnance Corps, Coldstream Guards, Scots Guards, Irish Guards, Royal Scots, 2nd Queens, 1,2 Buffs, Kings Own, 2nsd Royal Northumberland Fusiliers, 2nd Royal Lincolnshire Regiment, 2nd West Yorkshire Regiment, 2nd East Yorkshire Regiment, 1,2 Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire Regiment, 2nd Leicestershire Regiment, Green Howards, 1st Royal Scots Fusiliers, 2nd Cheshire Regiment, 2nd South Wales Borderers, 1st Kings Own Scottish Borderers, 1st Worcestershire Regiment, Border Regiment, 1st Royal Sussex Regiment, 1st Hampshire Regiment, South Staffordshire Regiment, 1st Welch Regiment, Black Watch, 1st Essex Regiment, Foresters, 1st Loyal Regiment, 2nd Dorsetshire Regiment, 2nd Wiltshire Regiment, Manchester Regiment, 1st York and Lancaster Regiment, 2nd Royal Berkshire Regiment, 2nd Hampshire Regiment, 2nd Highland Light Infantry, 1st Seaforth Highlanders, 2nd Cameron Highlanders, Royal Ulster Rifles, 1st Royal Irish Fusiliers, 2nd Royal West Kents, 2nd North Staffordshire Regiment, 1st Kings Royal Rifle Corps, 1st Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders, Rifle Brigade, The Palestine Police. Royal Air Force: 6, 14, 33, 80, 208, 211, 216 Squadrons.