

CHAPTER IX

PUBLIC SECURITY

1. Palestine is an armed camp. We saw signs of this almost as soon as we crossed the frontier, and we became more and more aware of the tense atmosphere each day. Many buildings have barbed wire and other defences. We ourselves were closely guarded by armed police, and often escorted by armoured cars. It is obvious that very considerable military forces and large numbers of police are kept in Palestine. The police are armed; they are conspicuous everywhere; and throughout the country there are substantially built police barracks.

2. We do not think that the conditions in Palestine since the Mandate have been fully appreciated throughout the world, and accordingly we have thought it right to set out in Appendix V a list of the main incidents of disorder. It will be seen that up to the year 1939 the Jews exercised very great restraint. It is in recent years that the threat to law and order has come from them.

3. A revival of the illegal immigration traffic has occurred since the end of the war in Europe. During the summer of 1945 there was an influx on a substantial scale by land over the northern frontier. More recently there have been successive cases of entry by sea. The Jewish organisations are actively engaged in these operations, carried out latterly by the purchase or charter of ships for voyages from southern Europe, in the absence of effective control of embarkation. Armed clashes are liable to arise from the efforts to prevent interference; a number have arisen from the search for illegal immigrants and arms. Moreover, as recent incidents directly concerned with illegal immigration, may be cited the sabotage of patrol launches, and attacks on coast-guard stations.

The present scale and method of illegal immigration by sea can be seen from three recent cases. Two ships arrived towards the end of our stay in Palestine, and one a few weeks previously. All three were intercepted and, in accordance with the usual procedure, the illegal immigrants taken to a clearance camp where, subject to check, they were released, their numbers being deducted from the immigration quota. The first of these ships sailed from northern Italy. It was her maiden voyage. She carried 911 immigrants, 554 men and 357 women. Practically all were young people. The second carried 247 immigrants, of whom 89 were women. With one exception, all were young people. The third, which arrived on the day of our departure from Palestine, was reported in the press as coming from a French Mediterranean port and carrying 733 immigrants.

The second ship, according to press reports, was expected to land the immigrants at Tel-Aviv, and the plans for screening the immigrants were evident in the sporadic incidents which occurred in that area. Apart from firing on the police, there were incidents of mining and blocking of access by road and rail which could only be designed to isolate the approach to the beach.

4. A sinister aspect of recent years is the development of large illegal armed forces. The following is the structure as stated to us by the military authorities.

The general organisation is the "Haganah." It is an illegal development of the former organisation, in the days of Turkish rule, of armed watchmen who protected Jewish settlements. To-day it is completely organised, under a

central control and with subsidiary territorial commands, in three branches, each of which includes women, viz. :—

a static force composed of settlers and townfolk, with an estimated strength of 40,000 ;

a field army, based on the Jewish Settlement Police and trained in more mobile operations, with an estimated strength of 16,000 ;

a full-time force (Palmach), permanently mobilised and provided with transport, with an estimated peace establishment of 2,000 and war establishment of some 6,000.

It is known that the Haganah has been procuring arms over a period of years. Vast quantities have been obtained from the residue of the campaigns in the Middle East. Arms and ammunition are kept and concealed in specially constructed caches in settlements and towns. The following are particulars, furnished to us by the military authorities, of a search which was conducted at Biriya Settlement about the time of our arrival in Palestine.

During the night of 27th/28th February, 1946, shots were fired at a sentry of the Arab Legion at his post, distant some mile or mile and a half from Biriya. Although wounded in the thigh, he returned the fire. Next morning blood stains and bandages were found and police dogs carried a line direct from there to Biriya.

Biriya is situated in a commanding position on the hills of Northern Galilee. It can only be described as a fort.

The population of Biriya were detained. They consisted of 25 men. Their identity cards showed that they came from other parts of Palestine. It was apparent that they were a platoon undergoing training.

A search in the neighbourhood revealed two arms caches. They contained, among other equipment, one Sten gun, one Bren, four modern rifles, one wireless set and grenades.

Numerous documents were also discovered in the caches. Their substance connected the caches with Biriya, and a police dog taking scent from the documents identified one of the men in the building at Biriya. The documents included standing orders for the camp, notes on the structure and duties of the Haganah, training manuals, notes on neighbouring military and police camps.

5. Something in the nature of conscription is in force, as is shown by two press notices of the 6th November, 1945 :—

Palestine Post

"A year's national service in communal settlements will now be required from all Jewish senior school children aged 17-18; till now it was obligatory only to those who had already left school."

Haboker. (In this case a translation from Hebrew.)

"The national institutions have decided to widen the scope of the year's service duty, which up to now has been imposed on graduates of the secondary schools, and to impose it on all girls and boys aged 17-18.

"The Council of Youth Organisations decided, at its session on 31st October, 1945, immediately to begin fulfilment of the order given to the Youth. The Council assumed the responsibility of enlisting immediately all members of the Movements who were born in 1928. The enlistment of the pupils of the secondary and trade schools will be carried out at a time which is to be specially fixed. Before 11th November, 1945, every Movement must submit to the Jewish Agency's Recruiting Department in Tel-Aviv a roster of its members, male and female, who must enlist."

A useful adjunct for training purposes is provided from the Jewish Settlement Police, a supplementary police force originally formed in 1936 for the close protection of Jewish settlements. The minimum term of service is six months, during which period they are paid by the Government. We were informed that it often happens that they leave the police force after a short period of service and thereafter serve in the Haganah.

6. Apart from the Haganah, two further illegal armed organisations exist, both having cut away from the parent body. One is the "Irgun Zvai Leumi," which was formed in 1935 by dissident members of the Haganah. The other is the "Stern Group" which broke away from the Irgun early in the war when the latter announced an "armistice." The Irgun operates under its own secret command mainly in sabotage and terrorism against the Mandatory; its strength is estimated at from 3,000 to 5,000. The Stern Group engages in terrorism; its strength is said to be between 200 and 300.

7. It seems clear that the activities of all these bodies could be greatly reduced if there was any co-operation with the authorities by the Jewish Agency and its officers, and by the rest of the population. Unfortunately the Jewish Agency ceased to co-operate with the Government, or at least reduced the measure of their co-operation as from the end of the war.

We set out in the form of an extract from the *Palestine Post* of 30th December, 1945, the attitude of the Chairman of the Executive of the Jewish Agency after the murders of the 27th December, 1945. In the course of his evidence before us Mr. Ben Gurion said that he took responsibility for giving this statement to the press:—

"Following upon the outrages which occurred on Thursday night, His Excellency the High Commissioner summoned Mr. D. Ben Gurion and Mr. M. Shertok to see him at Government House on Friday morning, it was officially stated yesterday.

It is learned that during the interview, Mr. Ben Gurion and Mr. Shertok declared that the Jewish Agency completely dissociated themselves from the murderous attacks on Government and army establishments perpetrated on Thursday night. They expressed their profound sorrow at the loss of life caused by the attacks.

But, they stated, any efforts by the Jewish Agency to assist in preventing such acts would be rendered futile by the policy pursued in Palestine by His Majesty's Government on which the primary responsibility rests for the tragic situation created in the country, and which had led in recent weeks to bloodshed and innocent victims among Jews, Britons and others.

The Jewish Agency representatives added that it was difficult to appeal to the Yishuv to observe the law at a time when the Mandatory Government itself was consistently violating the fundamental law of the country embodied in the Palestine Mandate."

So long as this kind of view is put forward by the leaders of the Jewish Agency it is impossible to look for settled conditions.

All three organisations to which reference has been made are illegal.

We recognise that until comparatively recently, efforts were made by the Jewish Agency to curb attacks; we regret that these efforts appear to have ceased. We believe that those responsible for the working of the Jewish Agency—a body of great power and influence over the Jews in Palestine—could do a great deal towards putting an end to outrages such as we have

described, which place the people of Palestine as well as British soldiers and police in constant danger.

Private armies ought not to exist ; they constitute a danger to the peace of the world.

8. The position of Great Britain as Mandatory is not a happy one. The Chairman of the Executive of the Jewish Agency said that, in the event of the withdrawal of the British troops, the Jews would take care of themselves. Jamal Effendi Husseini, replying to a question, said that it was the wish of the Arabs of Palestine that British forces and police should be withdrawn forthwith. Auni Bey Abdul Hadi, also representing the Arab Higher Committee, expressed his agreement. Jamal Effendi Husseini stated that he did not expect bloodshed but that, on the withdrawal of British forces, there would be a return to the condition which preceded the first world war (*i.e.*, pre-Balfour Declaration). We are clear in our minds that if British forces were withdrawn there would be immediate and prolonged bloodshed the end of which it is impossible to predict