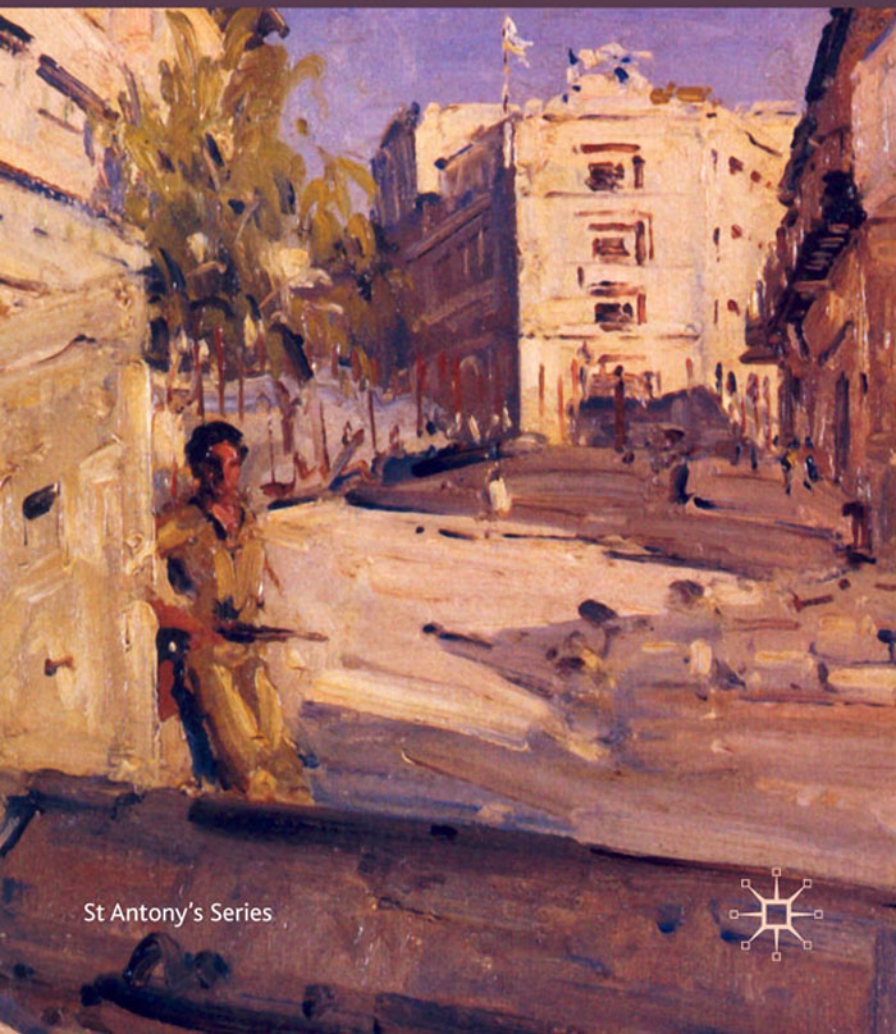


The End of the British Mandate for Palestine, 1948

The Diary of Sir Henry Gurney

Motti Golani



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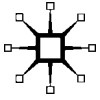
The End of the British Mandate for Palestine, 1948

The Diary of Sir Henry Gurney

Motti Golani

Historian, Department of Israeli Studies, University of Haifa, Israel

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Abbreviations and Terms

AB DIV = Airborne Division
AHC = Arab Higher Committee
AIR = Air Ministry
AOC = Air of Command
CAB = Cabinet Office
C.B.E. = Commander of the Order of the British Empire
CID = Criminal Investigation Department
CIGS = Commander of Imperial General Staff
C-in-C. ME = Commander in Chief Middle East
CO = Colonial Office
C.O. = Command Officer
CP = Cunningham Papers
CZA = Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem
D.C. = District Commissioner
DEFE = Ministry of Defense
F.F.I. = Fighters for the Freedom of Israel
FO = Foreign Office
GADNA = Youth Battalions
GB = Great Britain
GOC = General Officer Commanding
GP = Gurney Papers
HA = Haganah Archives, Tel Aviv
Haganah (1920–1948) = Semi-underground militia army of the Yishuv
Hish = Haganah Field Forces
H.L.I. = Highland Light Infantry
HQ = Headquarters
IDFA = Israel Defense Forces Archives, Ramat-Gan
IGP = Inspector General of the Police
I.R.O. = International Refugees Organization
ISA = Israel State Archives, Jerusalem
IWM = Imperial War Museum, London.
ITZL = National Military Organization (“Irgun” = I.Z.L.)
LEHI = Israel Freedom Fighters (Stern Gang)
LHCMA = Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, London
MECA = Middle East Centre Archive, Oxford
MSC = Minutes of Security Conference

Nakba = Arabic for “catastrophe” – Palestinian term for the 1948 war

NORTHSEC – Military HQ North Sector [Palestine]

NYC = New York City

O.R. = Other Ranks

P.B.S. = Palestine Broadcasting Service

Palmah = “Shock Troops” (The Haganah Regular Army)

PREM = Prime Minister Office

PWD = Public Works Department

REME = Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers

SOE = Special Operations Executive

TNA (PRO) = The National Archives, Kew (formerly Public Record Office)

UN(O) = United Nation (Organization)

UNSCOP = United Nations Special Committee on Palestine

WO = War Office

Yishuv = Jewish community in pre-1948 Palestine

Acknowledgments

The fact that this book contains a personal diary immediately raises the pertinent question of the protection of privacy. Where does the line lie between gossip, unnecessary exposure or sheer voyeurism, and “respectable” historiography? There is no absolute answer to this question; it depends, when all is said and done, on the eye of the beholder. For my part, I have tried to take a purely substantive approach, without subjugating the “interesting” to voyeurism per se. In any event, where intimate details are concerned, the diarist, for good or for ill, is quite parsimonious.

Of course, I would not have been able to publish this diary without the permission of the Gurney family. I am grateful, therefore, to Peter and Michael Gurney, Henry’s sons, for allowing me to publish the text in full; to Sue, Peter’s wife, for the trouble she went to as my hostess, and for the lengthy, cordial, and useful conversation I had with her husband and her brother-in-law in their home in Hammersmith, London. The family was kind enough to place at my disposal their photo album.

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Motti Golani
Haifa, November 2008

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The Diary and the Diarist

He fell in the line of duty...

The High Commissioner was assassinated on October 6, 1951, ambushed by underground fighters. When the car in which he and his wife were traveling came under fire, he pulled over to the roadside, got out, and with his famous sangfroid crossed the road in order to draw fire to himself and spare his wife. He was gunned down and died on the spot; she and the chauffeur emerged unscathed. The underground terrorists had been lying in wait for the convoy of the Malayan Chief of Police, who was directing the campaign against them. However, the only senior personage in the small convoy of three poorly armed cars was the High Commissioner.¹

William Gray, the intended target of the attack, was the Inspector-General of the Palestine Police for the last two years of the British Mandate and now held the same post in Malaya (today's Malaysia). In Palestine he had gained a wealth of experience combating Jewish terrorism, and now bore the main responsibility for the war against the terrorists in Malaya. The assassins were members of the Malayan Communist underground (MCP). The victim was the High Commissioner to Malaya, Sir Henry Gurney, whose diary is the subject of this book.²

¹Anthony Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya 1948–1960*, London 1975, pp. 303–306; A. J. Sherman, *Mandate Days*, New York, 1998, pp. 254–255.

²Gray, like Gurney, arrived in Malaya directly from Palestine. It was Gurney, who had been Gray's superior in Palestine, who brought him to Malaya, where terrorism had been rife since June 1948. The two shared a mutual trust, based on their cooperation in Palestine. Gray was dismissed shortly after Gurney's assassination. Lieutenant General Hugh Stockwell, the General Officer Commanding Malaya (1952–1954), had also served in Palestine, as commander of the 6th Airborne Division and of the Haifa and North District.

Sir Henry Gurney was the British High Commissioner to Malaya from October 1948 until his assassination there exactly three years later. In the spring of 1948, immediately after the end of Britain's Palestine episode and amid the general atmosphere of unrest in the waning British Empire, a Communist insurrection broke out in Malaya. Even though the terrorism there was different in character, anyone with experience in Palestine was considered an excellent qualification for service with the British Administration in Malaya. In the summer of 1948, no few people with such qualifications were at loose ends in London.

In Malaya, much as in Palestine, Britain found itself caught between its commitment to establish an independent federation and its resolve to eradicate the mounting terrorism. Gray, the police officer, was sent to stamp out the terrorism; Gurney, the colonial official, to advance Malayan independence, based on London's belief – as it had previously believed with regard to India and Palestine – that this was commensurate with Britain's interests at the time.³

A few months earlier, in mid-May, Gurney had returned to England from Palestine, where he had been Chief Secretary in the Mandate Administration – a position that combined the duties of a kind of supreme director-general with those of a Prime Minister in the Fifth French Republic, for example. (The role of "President" in this analogy was filled by the High Commissioner.) Gurney served in this post from October 1946 until the termination of the British Mandate on May 14, 1948. In the summer of 1948 his future was already behind him and he

³In January 1948, an agreement was signed between Britain and the nine states that comprised Malaya on the establishment of a future federation to include all nine. Malayan joy over this development was tempered by the apprehension that the creation of the federation would heighten British colonial rule in the country. The insurrection, which had China's backing, lasted until 1960. In that year the independent federation of Malaya, which was established three years earlier, succeeded, with British help, in suppressing the uprising. Although Sir Edward Gent, the British High Commissioner in Malaysia in June 1948, had been behind the federation agreement, he was unable to win the confidence of either the Malaysians or of the various branches of the British colonial regime when the Communist insurgency broke out. Gent was recalled to London for "consultations" and was killed in an air disaster near London on July 4, 1948. Gurney was named to succeed him on October 6 and arrived in Kuala Lumpur the following month to take up his duties. He was assassinated on his way to a weekend vacation at Fraser's Hill on October 6, 1951, three years to the day after his appointment. See Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya*, pp. 115–148, 303–306; Richard Allen, *Malaysia, Prospect and Retrospect*, London 1968, pp. 91–103.

was only 50. He was about to leave the colonial service, perhaps to go back to teaching in Africa, where he spent most of his colonial career. However, when the High Commissioner to Malaya was killed in a plane crash, Gurney was called to the flag. It was not the first appointment he had received without sufficient preparation – because of his character no less than his experience.

Henry Lovell Goldsworthy Gurney was born on June 27, 1898, in Bude, a resort town in the county of Cornwall, England, the only child of a middle-class family. In 1912 he was admitted to Winchester College, graduating in 1917. He joined the Royal Rifle Corps and was wounded on the French front shortly before the end of the First World War. After recuperating and getting his army discharge (1919) he was admitted to University College at Oxford on a scholarship as part of a government project to make higher education available to the survivors of the bloodbath in Europe and the Middle East. Not everyone was cut out for this arrangement: at Oxford, Henry Gurney excelled mainly in golf, his great love until his last day. He never completed his studies. In 1921, to his father's chagrin, he joined the Colonial Office as a teacher and then as a colonial official in Africa. Not yet 25, he left his homeland never to return, apart from brief stays between postings, in common with many of his colleagues in the colonial service. On one occasion, in the 1930s, he sought to leave the service, but he and the members of his household quickly discovered that the colonial service was his one and only calling. Gurney returned to Africa, where he was not only the golf champion of the eastern part of the continent but also a promising colonial official with a bright future ahead of him.

At the height of the British Empire, from the mid-nineteenth century until the Second World War, many British-born members of the colonial service, and not only the upper classes, spent their lives far from the British Isles. Such careers enjoyed a stable economic and social status and offered an opportunity for those who, like Gurney, were not high-born, to achieve social mobility which was not possible in Britain itself.⁴

Gurney served in Africa until 1946 (apart from a few months in Jamaica in 1934). His service in Kenya was particularly meaningful to him: it was there that his colonial worldview was formed. He would view his future postings, including Palestine, through the prism of his

⁴See, for example, Ronald Storrs, *Orientalisms*, London, 1937; or John W. Cell, *Hailey*, Cambridge 1992.

Kenya experience. Gurney showed little interest in establishing contact with the natives or in their poverty-ridden way of life. His prime concern, and hence his excellence, lay in the sphere of colonial administration and bureaucracy. His immersion in administrative intricacies gained him promotion in the Colonial Office, culminating in the highest rank he could aspire to in his chosen professional track: High Commissioner. This was the position in which he fulfilled his avocation and, ironically, in which he found his death.

Gurney concluded the African phase of his career in the western region of the continent as Colonial Secretary of Gold Coast (now Ghana) and acting Governor General and as a sure candidate for that post in the future. However, in late September 1946 he was sent to Palestine in order to head up its Administration after the previous Chief Secretary, John Shaw, was unable to continue in office because he was under certain threat of assassination. The Mandate Administration's senior officials were targeted by Jewish terrorists. Shaw's ability to function declined dramatically after July 22, 1946, when he miraculously survived the dynamiting of the southern wing of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem – the headquarters of the British Administration and Army – by terrorists from the ITZL, a Jewish rightwing underground military organization.⁵

Ninety-one people – Britons, Arabs, and Jews – were murdered, and dozens wounded. Body parts were found splattered on the wall of the YMCA building across the road. Shaw felt unable to continue and was sent to London to rest, but when he returned it emerged that he was also being targeted by the Stern Gang, the other Jewish extreme nationalist terrorist group.⁶ He left Palestine secretly on September 13, 1946. Shaw quietly sympathized with the Zionist enterprise; Gurney, his successor, did not, as his diary shows.⁷

The Colonial Office scouted about for a “hardy” official who would be able to manage the impossible Mandatory colony of Palestine with sangfroid and a hard hand. Gurney was already well known for his coolness and imperturbability. On August 22, 1946, the Colonial Office

⁵Hebrew: Irgun Zvai Leumi (ITZL, often referred to in English as “the Irgun”), 1937–1948 = National Military Organization.

⁶Hebrew: Lohamei Herut Israel (LEHI), 1940–1948 = Israel Freedom Fighters.

⁷See letters of the High Commissioner General A. Cunningham to Sir G. Gater, Colonial Office, MECA, CP, GB 165–0128, B1, F2 (hereafter, 1/2), August 13, September 12, 1946. In an interview years later, Shaw displayed a moral approach which was sharply anti-colonial and pro-Zionist. *Ibid.* GB165–0282, 3.

proposed to the High Commissioner, Sir Alan Cunningham, that Gurney replace Shaw. Cunningham had previously expressed his doubts about another candidate, arguing that he was too young and lacked the necessary experience for such a complex post in a trying period. Gurney, who was 48, was suggested even though he had already held a more senior post than Chief Secretary. According to officials in the Colonial Office, the reports received about Gurney's performance in East Africa during the just-concluded world war lauded his unflappable judgment and his diplomatic skills, which had been badly needed during a critical period in Africa and now in Palestine. Nor was Gurney a stranger to the High Commissioner in Palestine. General Sir Alan Gordon Cunningham had been in Kenya since 1939 and had led the British military campaign in East Africa to expel the Italian Army from Somalia and Ethiopia in 1940–1941. There he probably met or had at least heard about Henry Gurney, who during the war was the Chief Secretary of the Conference of East African Governors. He would have known that Gurney was the right person for the special needs of Palestine at the time.

Gurney, for his part, and to the relief of the Colonial Office – which had feared he would turn the post down because, as noted, it was formally inferior in rank to his present position and he had virtually no time to prepare – accepted it immediately. He was promised that his future promotion would not be delayed, and in any event it was not a long-term appointment. In the summer of 1946, the British authorities did not know how long the Palestine episode would last, but did know it would not be for much longer. Palestine and Jerusalem were even more attractive to Gurney than a promotion, but his disappointment at the country comes through clearly in the diary.⁸

Gurney's self-control – his most pronounced trait until the very moment of his death – was despised by his rivals and admired by those who worked under him, or at least by some of them. Knowing this makes the diary more comprehensible. His unshakable composure infuriated Golda Meyerson (later Meir), as John Fletcher-Cooke, a senior official of the Mandate government and Gurney's deputy for administration and finances, recalled years later: "I well remember, many years later, discussing Gurney with Mrs. Golda Meir... and the question of his restraint cropped up. 'Yes' she said, that was why we

⁸Sir G. Gater to Sir A. Cunningham, *ibid.* GB 165–0128, 1/2, August 22, 1946; High Commissioner's response, *ibid.* August 24, 1946. On August 30 the Colonial Office already informed Cunningham that Gurney had agreed to take the post.

hated him. No one in that position had any right to be unruffled. He ought to have been pacing his room day and night, trying to find a solution to the Jewish problem. It was our objective to 'ruffle' people but we could not make any impression on him."⁹ This says something about Golda Meir, too, not just about Gurney. In any event, both Meyerson, then the acting director of the Jewish Agency's Political Department, and her colleagues who were in the forefront of the contacts with the British Administration, failed utterly. To their astonishment and anger, the Chief Secretary kept his cool. Nor did he stop playing golf.

Fletcher-Cooke and his friends, for their part, had high regard for this quality. As he recalled, "Gurney never spared himself when there was work to be done; but he was not prepared to 'flap' for the sake of appearances. I well remember a number of occasions when it fell to me... to report to him, out of office hours, on one further 'bloody' incident. His reaction was always the same. After courteous word of thanks for being kept informed, he enquired whether there was anything useful he could do. If there was not (and usually there was not) he would say in his quiet way: 'Well, I might as well go and play the round of golf I had planned' or 'I think I'll be off to Askelon for a bathe'."¹⁰

That response can be viewed as equanimity but also as the product of an unfeeling temperament, not to say high-handed, alienated, and cruel indifference. Not all of Gurney's underlings admired his behavior. In the last analysis, though, this approach was apparently right for the Mandate's administrative director whose nerves were frayed by mounting Jewish terrorism, Arab harassment, and an unclear personal and political future. Dr. Pablo Azc'arate, who led the U.N. advance delegation to Palestine in the winter-spring of 1948, described Gurney as the strongman in Palestine in the last months of the Mandate, energetic, intelligent, and an excellent organizer.¹¹

⁹Testimony of Sir John Fletcher-Cooke, MECA, GB 165-0072, 6/5, April 18, 1963; Hadara Lazar, in her fascinating book, *In and Out of Palestine*, Jerusalem 2003 (Hebrew), p. 206, quotes Fletcher-Cooke's remarks (citing Golda Meir) verbatim, without any critical comment. She too was not fond of Gurney.

¹⁰Fletcher-Cooke, *ibid.*

¹¹The biographical details about Gurney are from MECA, GB165-0128; Peretz Cornfeld (ed.), *Palestine Personalities 1947*, Tel Aviv August 1947, p. 111; and from my conversation with Gurney's two sons, Peter and Michael, in London, on February 15, 2004; Pablo De Azc'arate, *Mission in Palestine 1948-1952*, Washington D.C. 1966, p.12; on the U.N. advance group, see Fourth Perspective, below.

Fadeout, nerves, terror

By the fall of 1946, as Henry Gurney's appointment took effect (October 1, 1946), it seemed clear that nothing good would accrue to Britain from its rule in the Holy Land. No explicit decisions had been made, but questions of when and how – not if – the nightmare would end hung heavy in the air.

Gurney's tour of duty in Palestine came at a difficult time for Britain on both the domestic front – the postwar economic and social crisis – and externally, as the British Empire continued its rapid and irreversible disintegration. Moreover, the empire's collapse was not always consistent with the needs of the Cold War, which was already a conscious reality. These developments tied Britain's hands in Palestine as elsewhere. Its ability to contribute to the resolution of the local conflict was dependent, on the one hand, on the domestic front, which no longer demanded intense activity overseas. At the same time, the occupant of the White House, Harry Truman, who propounded a doctrine of his own, was eager for re-election on his own merits. The result was that the United States pressured Britain to work for the benefit of the Jews and also to remain in Palestine for the benefit of the Cold War. The former Great Power, battered and bruised, found it difficult to stand up to these contradictory pressures. It should be mentioned here that, as discussed by Roger Louis, one of the pressures on Britain's policy in Palestine was the increased significance of the Middle East in Bevin's vision for the future of the empire, and his interest in not offending the Arab world.

Against this background, nerves in Palestine were stretched to the breaking point. This was especially so for the Jews, whose European calamity and self-perceived shoulder-to-shoulder stand with Britain against Germany rendered a political solution both urgent and, they believed, realistic. In this period the relations of the Yishuv – the pre-1948 Jewish community in Palestine – with the British Administration reached an unprecedented nadir, worse even than the summer of 1939, when the Palestine Jews staged demonstrations and perpetrated selective terrorism in response to the British White Paper published that May.

A few months after Gurney's arrival in Jerusalem, Britain began its withdrawal from the "jewel in the crown" of the Empire – the Indian subcontinent. By August 1947 British rule in India no longer effectively existed. The British Government was prepared to leave places like Palestine and India at this stage, but was originally determined to

maintain its hold on places that had become more economically and strategically significant, such as the Gold Coast and Malaya.

Contemporaries did not need the benefit of hindsight to grasp the historic meaning of this development. The retreat began from the top, from Britain's major colonial asset. Like a brushfire, unrest spread rapidly through the entire empire, which at its height comprised a quarter of the world's landmass. Imperial outposts which had already been wobbling, such as Greece, Malaya, and Palestine, went first, followed by countries which seemed to be more stable, such as Egypt, Kenya, and Cyprus.¹²

Palestine had long been one of Britain's shakier colonies. The Jewish-Arab conflict was not conducive to Britain's attempt to implement the terms of the Mandate entrusted to it by the League of Nations in 1923. Those terms entailed the establishment of a "national home" for the Jews in an orderly *bildung* process, taking into account – at first vaguely, afterward more decisively – the rights of the Arabs, and all for the greater glory of the new international organization, the welfare of the country's residents, and, not least, Britain's own interests. In the struggle between the prospects that British policy was made available to the two sides and their national instincts, the latter were victorious. The road to that victory was fraught with brutal violence by the two sides against each other and by both against the British.

Arab violence against the British reached its peak in the second half of the 1930s. At that time Britain still possessed the ability and, more important, the will to react quickly and effectively to violence. The Arab Revolt, which broke out in April 1936, was therefore quelled with the sword.¹³ It is apparent now that the damage the British wrought to the emerging infrastructure of fledgling Palestinian nationalism set its cause back for generations. The British mauling of the Palestinians also turned out to be a crucial "down payment" to the Yishuv ahead of the decisive Palestine round in the confrontation with the Palestinian Arabs in 1948.

In contrast, the Yishuv and its leaders generally succeeded in exploiting British policy for the benefit of the Zionist enterprise, at least until

¹²For a general discussion of the British Empire as its demise loomed, and from the Middle Eastern perspective in particular: Roger W. Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East, 1945–1951*, London 1984; R. Louis, W. Stookey (eds), *The End of the Palestine Mandate*, Austin 1988; Alan Bullock, *Ernest Bevin, Foreign Secretary, 1945–1951*, London 1983; Correlli Barnett, *The Lost Victory*, London 1995.

¹³See Jacob Norris, "Britain's Response to the Arab Revolt in Palestine of 1936–39", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 36, no. 1 (March 2008), pp. 25–45.

the end of the Second World War (even if they did not always agree with every British move). However, after the catastrophe in Europe the Yishuv's strength and will flagged, until in the autumn of 1945, in a desperate bid, it resorted to the use of arms to force Britain to change its Palestine policy. That the United Resistance Movement, established by the Jewish Agency Executive, was a mistake was soon evident to the Agency and the Zionist Movement. Pursuit of this path would have brought down Britain's full might on the Yishuv. Even in its enfeebled condition after a prolonged and brutal war, the British – in the form of the Mandatory Power – could have divested the Yishuv of all the assets it had accumulated in nearly thirty years of British rule in Palestine, as they did to the Palestinian Arabs in the wake of their revolt in the previous decade. Aware of this, the Zionist leadership desisted from its violence against the British by the summer of 1946, though not from the struggle against British policy – blind to the fact that London had been considering for some time the very solution the Zionist movement had sought before the crisis in relations with Britain in 1939: partition.

In the meantime, in a pattern which has been repeated elsewhere as well – especially in cases compounded by an absence of sovereignty – the central leadership could not bring violent fringe groups under control. These groups – the ITZL and the Stern Gang – which during what they perceived as the glorious, if brief, period of the United Resistance Movement imagined themselves to be the vanguard of success in the struggle, refused to return to the fringes. The anti-British violence thus persisted. In a situation like this, all it takes is an explosion here or an act of sabotage there for everyone, and especially – in this case – the central British Administration, which was the target of Jewish terrorism, to feel that they are being swept up in a threatening maelstrom of violence. At the personal level, at least, a terrorist attack is a terrorist attack, whether the order to perpetrate emanates from the central leadership or from a fringe group.

At the same time, the historiography of the period is generally united in the conclusion that it was neither Arab nor Jewish terrorism which brought British rule in Palestine to an end. That result, as I suggested above, was part of an all-encompassing imperial process whose roots lay in what Britain underwent domestically and externally following the First World War and more especially after the Second World War.¹⁴

¹⁴On the roots of the British departure from Palestine, see, for example, Louis & Stookey, *The End of the Palestine Mandate*; Kenneth O. Morgan, *The People's Peace*, Reading 1999.

It was at the conclusion of the Yishuv-wide resistance campaign, which left a bitter residue in Yishuv-British relations, and at the height of the terrorist offensive by the two breakaway groups, the ITZL and the Stern Gang, that Henry Gurney took up his duties in Palestine.

His hatred

Of course, the historical reality described above was not apparent at the time to the Mandate officials, and what is more, even if they had had an inkling of it, the basic and overriding fact – that the life of each and every one of them was under concrete threat – would not have changed. For Henry Gurney, this fact was the formative experience of his stay in Palestine, leaving its imprint on every day he spent there. His service in Jerusalem began with Jewish terrorism and its threat continued to hang over him, at the most personal level, until the day he left the country upon the termination of the British Mandate more than a year and a half later.

For the new Chief Secretary, then, Britain's special relationship with the Zionist and Yishuv leadership as it had developed since the First World War, alongside the harsh violence the Arabs had unleashed against the British in the 1930s were the necessary background with which he had to familiarize himself in order to execute his duties. However, his own experience turned out to be different, revolving around the ongoing confrontation with the Jewish side, and especially with Jewish terrorism.

In addition to his inability to get close to the local residents and his lack of any real interest in doing so, compounded by the festering violence, which further alienated him, Gurney's baggage contained the conceptions of the British middle class into which he was born at the end of the nineteenth century. English society was not devoid of anti-Semitism, or at least of what could, given the appropriate circumstances, develop into anti-Semitism. Chaim Weizmann, who was at pains to magnify the strength of the Zionist Movement in his interaction with the representatives of the Great Power which ruled Palestine, played this anti-Semitic note successfully, portraying himself as the envoy of a public whose influence and money were universal. For example, during an argument that broke out in the British Foreign Office in 1917 on the eve of the Balfour Declaration, Weizmann threatened that the large Jewish communities would raise a hue and cry that would resound in

every corner of the world against the blow to the principle of justice for small nations.¹⁵

In the case of Henry Gurney, this message was definitely internalized, as his diary shows. He forgoes no opportunity to assail the Jews and the Zionists and their tentacular global intentions. Nor, in the same spirit, does he conceal his amazement at the contribution of “Jewish money” to the development of Palestine during the Mandate period. The mixture of anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism which prevails today is not of course unequivocal; at the same time, it is not impossible, as the story of Henry Gurney makes plain.¹⁶

Gurney’s basic, if not always conscious anti-Semitism is illustrated in his diary entry for March 27, 1948, which refers to the famous incident of 35 Jewish soldiers who disappeared in action earlier that year. On the night of January 14–15, 1948, communication was lost with a group of 35 Hish (the Haganah’s Field Forces) and Palmah (Haganah’s commando unit) soldiers who were making their way by foot from Hartuv, west of Jerusalem, to the Gush Etzion settlement bloc, south of Bethlehem. It soon emerged that the entire group was wiped out in battle, to the last man. In his diary, Gurney attacks American Zionists for using the incident as a propaganda vehicle to advance their cause. It is not clear, ostensibly, why Gurney describes the incident as “an entirely false story of an attack by Arabs on a party of Jews near Kfar Etzion in January. In fact, on that occasion the Jewish party who were ambushed were on their way to attack an Arab village.” In the absence of information and given Gurney’s knowledge of the mode of operation of the Haganah (the Jewish defense force), this might have been a reasonable conclusion. His staff at the Hebron police station, who collected the mutilated bodies, could have apprised him about the battle’s devastating outcome. Justifying his approach were the exaggerations by the Arabs, who thirsted for an achievement, along with the myth cultivated by the Jewish side, among whom imagination took flight in the absence of survivors to describe what happened and in the wake of a previously unparalleled disaster. It is also possible that the balance of forces in the civil war, which Gurney already grasped at the end of March, made him think that such a rout of a Jewish force was untenable.

¹⁵Dvorah Barzilaay-Yager, *A National Home for the Jewish People*, Jerusalem 2003 (Hebrew), p. 21.

¹⁶His anti-Semitism is also pronounced in his introduction to the diary: see following note.

In fact, something else was also at work here: his point of departure in the diary concerning the Jews' extraordinary strength could not coexist with such a one-sided defeat. So immersed was he in his stereotypical approach that he failed to notice that on the very day of this diary entry, March 27, and the next day, he himself was involved in the efforts to rescue another Jewish force (the Nebi Daniel convoy), which might have become a repeat of the January event, had the Jewish soldiers not been rescued by the British Army and Administration at the Chief Secretary's instructions.

The diary of Henry Gurney

In his last 60 days in Palestine, before leaving on May 14, 1948, Gurney kept a diary in which he describes the winding down of British rule in the country from the point of view of the official who headed the British Administration and was in charge of dismantling it. It is not an orderly diary, having been written partly in the Chief Secretary's residence and partly in his office, a bit here and a bit there, in the scraps of free time he found on the eve of the evacuation. The diary was written literally under fire, of both Jews and Arabs, and in an atmosphere of mounting uncertainty at both the personal and general level.¹⁷

The diary is in longhand; Gurney had it typed up in London during the summer of 1948. After giving it a preliminary proofreading, he left for Malaya, never to return. He probably intended to publish the diary, hence the introduction. However, what an ordinary retiree may do a civil servant may not, especially if he is a High Commissioner. The diary was shelved. His sons did not know of its existence and thus were not in a position to publish it.¹⁸

Fairness dictated that Gurney show the diary to his former superior in Palestine ahead of its possible publication. It is not known whether he did so. In any event, the diary was later discovered in the collection of personal papers at the Middle East Centre Archive of St. Antony's College, Oxford. That is where I found it, next to the private collection of Alan Cunningham, the High Commissioner who was Gurney's superior. It is

¹⁷The diary includes an introduction by the author which is not appended here, as it was written after the fact, in the summer of 1948 in London. I have drawn on it for my introduction and for the footnotes to the diary itself: Sir Henry Gurney, "Introduction," *Palestine Postscript*, A short record of the last days of the Mandate, 15 March–14 May 1948, MECA, GP, GB 165–0128, 1/1.

¹⁸*Ibid.*; conversation with Gurney's sons, note 11 above.

not clear how the diary came to be at the Middle East Centre Archives of St. Antony's College at Oxford. Gurney's sons only learned of its existence when historians began to quote it randomly at the end of the 1990s.¹⁹

Keeping a diary was not unusual in the social milieu from which Gurney came or in the colonial service in which he spent most of his adult life.²⁰ In Gurney's case, the circumstances of its writing were singular, nor did he call it a "diary". "The notes put together in this book were written in odd half-hours in the last two months of the Palestine Mandate...", he wrote in the summer of 1948 in the Introduction to a book that would never be published, "...when the remaining members of the Administration were making their last efforts to prevent civil war or at least to save the Holy City of Jerusalem from its consequence."²¹

By then, in March 1948, the Chief Secretary knew that it was his task to dismantle the Administration with the least possible number of casualties and minimal harm to property and to British honor. According to his diary, Gurney did not like the mission. He loathed the situation in which he found himself from the moment he agreed – with a delight he afterward regretted – to go to Palestine. He regretted even more the task of dismantlement that was imposed on him. Abandoning a colony was no work for a colonial official who viewed the Empire as his life and purpose. According to the "chain of being" that underlay the imperial outlook, the Empire could not exist without colonies; without an Empire Britain's very existence was in danger; and without Britain the way of life and the

¹⁹Lazar, *In and out of Palestine*; Sherman, *Mandate Days*; Naomi Shepherd, *Ploughing Sand, British Rule in Palestine 1917–1948*, London 1999; Tom Segev, *One Complete, Palestine*, New York 2001; conversation with Gurney's sons, note 11, above.

²⁰There are many examples in Palestine and of course elsewhere. At the very time when Gurney was making his diary entries, one of his subordinates, Richard Graves, who headed the committee that administered Jerusalem on behalf of the Mandate government, kept a diary which was later published: see, R. M. Graves, *Experiment in Anarchy*, London 1949; Sherman's book, cited in note 19, is based on diaries, and Segev's book, cited in the same note, makes abundant use of diaries.

²¹Gurney, *Introduction*, see note 17, above. The term "civil war" is noteworthy. It was frequently used by the British in the period when the war between the Arab Palestinians and the Jewish Palestinians surged. That is how they viewed the events. Only recently have several historians adopted the term – which is indeed the most accurate description of the period – in reference to the violence that raged between December 1947 and May 1948, when the British left and Arab states invaded. See, for example, Yoav Gelber, *A Budding Fleur-de-Lis*, Israel 2000 (Hebrew), pp. 8–9. I also accept this term.

very existence of the British citizen was in doubt. Here was the colonial official's burden. From their vantage point of time and place, Gurney and his colleagues could not yet see the cosmic changes that would be fomented by the just-concluded Second World War and by the third one (the Cold War), which had just begun.

Why did Gurney begin keeping his diary on March 15, 1948? Indeed, why did this highly professional, very devoted official whose prose production consisted largely of reports, memoranda, and summations of meetings decide to keep a diary at all? For the educated class of the time writing was a habit, a way of life, and especially for those who spent many years overseas: writing for them was a vital and constant connection with their superiors and their family back home, and a way to dispel years-long loneliness. Gurney's sons would recall that their father occasionally wrote pieces of satire which were more bitter than humorous. He resorted to this form of expression in periods of personal distress, such as during his brief service in Jamaica in the 1930s, when he sought to return to Africa, where he had loved the work, or to leave the colonial service if his request was turned down; and again in Palestine, where he experienced one of the most acute periods of distress he had ever known. Cool, detached humor was difficult to maintain in the Jerusalem of March–May 1948. Gurney's quest for the satirical and critical point of view, as reflected in the diary, attests as much to his mood and the mood in his milieu as it does to concrete developments.²²

The diary's inception is related to the circumstances which then prevailed – at the height of two processes in which Gurney and his staff were caught up intensely: the escalating Palestine civil war and the advanced state of the British evacuation. The clashes between Jews and Arabs reached their peak in March–April 1948, concurrent with a critical stage of the evacuation, in which the Administration was unable to protect itself but was committed to hang on until the middle of May. The withdrawal process was arduous, shrouded in fog, fraught with political confusion, and compounded by Britain's strained relations with the United States, the United Nations, and the Arab League.²³ In

²²Conversations with Gurney's sons in London, note 11, above. During his period in Palestine, Gurney wrote for the satirical magazine *Punch* under a pen name and incorporated excerpts in his introduction to the diary: note 17, above.

²³See, my forthcoming book, *The Last Commissioner of Judea: General Sir Alan Gordon Cunningham and the Jewish Yishuv, 1945–48*. Chaim Weizmann Institute of Tel-Aviv University and Am Oved, be published 2009 (Hebrew), Chapter 10.

March 1948 the staff of the Administration experienced the surging war, the conclusion of the evacuation, and the contradiction between the two with an exceptional intensity which they had not previously known. This background is essential for understanding the reason that this diary was written.

As usual, though, we must also look for the personal experience which underlies the desire to start writing, in this case to keep a diary. The diarist left us several clues. These are subsumable under the categories of explicit clues in the text, those that were articulated retroactively, and others that are implicit in the circumstances of the time, even if the writer was not aware of them.

Toward the end of February 1948, the British officials who remained in Jerusalem found themselves in an increasingly untenable situation. The war in and around the city grew increasingly more fierce in the light of the attempt by the Arabs to block the ever larger Haganah convoys. As a result, the British were reduced to using one route – the Ramallah-Latrun road.²⁴ A siege atmosphere dominated “British Jerusalem” – along a north-south line running from Mount Scopus via Sheikh Jarrah and the American Colony to the Russian Compound, the YMCA and the King David Hotel, Talbiya and the German Colony, to the train station, Allenby Camp, El Alamein Camp and the High Commissioner’s Residence – and fomented a feeling of helpless aimlessness which intensified as May 14 loomed.

During February 1948 tensions between the British and the Jewish population in Jerusalem were severely exacerbated. On the night of February 1–2 a booby-trapped car exploded outside the Jewish-Zionist English-language newspaper *Palestine Post* in the city centre. The Haganah alleged that British defectors were involved. On the 12th of the month four Haganah men were murdered next to Lions’ Gate (St. Stephen’s Gate) in the Old City. According to the Haganah, the four were arrested there by the British and abandoned to their fate. On February 22 a group of British defectors detonated a booby-trapped car on Ben Yehuda Street in the centre of Jewish Jerusalem, killing 54 people. The British were on the brink of losing control in the city.

²⁴This road is known today as Ma’aleh Beit Horon. The Mandate-period route now exists only in the connection between the Arab villages themselves along the *ma’aleh*, or ascent. The Mandate ascent has been replaced by an Israeli bypass road which links the new city of Modi’in with Givat Ze’ev, a settlement in the northwest outskirts of Jerusalem.

The Haganah stepped up its attacks against the Arabs in and around the city, and activists of the two breakaway groups, the ITZL and the Stern Gang, monitored the movements of British officials and soldiers with the intention of killing them. On the day of the explosion on Ben Yehuda Street, British vehicles were attacked by the ITZL, killing three people, and a soldier was wounded when another British vehicle was attacked by the Stern Gang. Members of the organization then burst into Shaare Zedek Hospital on Jaffa Street, the main thoroughfare of Jerusalem, and murdered the wounded British soldier. The next day five more British soldiers were killed in an ITZL ambush. In reaction the British opened fire at Haganah forces throughout the city. British impatience reached a point that posed a threat to the Jewish side, prompting the Haganah to take action against the breakaway groups and put a stop to their activity for more than six weeks, until they re-entered the arena with the attack on Deir Yassin. The British, for their part, kept off the streets as much as possible in the city, effectively placing themselves under siege in their Security Zone, as they had since 1947.

On March 11, Arabs detonated a booby-trapped car in the courtyard of the Yishuv's National Institutions compound on Keren Kayemet Street in Jerusalem, the heart of the autonomous Jewish government in Palestine. Again an accusing finger was pointed at the British, though this time without proof of their involvement. On March 27–28 the British came to the rescue of a Haganah convoy which was attacked south of Bethlehem on the way back from Gus Etzion, saving dozens of lives. To the city's Arabs this constituted further "proof" that the British were fighting on the side of the Jews.²⁵

The question of "who started it" was no longer relevant, certainly not for the British civilian and military personnel. They existed in a state of growing fear in Jerusalem, desperately attempting to take action simultaneously against the two warring sides, which were shooting

²⁵In his book *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, Tel Aviv 1986 (Hebrew), Yitzhak Levy (Levitze) charts in detail the clashes between Jews and Arabs and between them and the British from December 1947 to May 1948 (pp. 431–472). The chronology of events is reliable and authoritative, and the commentary, as the author explains, draws heavily on testimony of individuals who took an active part in the fighting. Haganah attacks at this stage targeted mainly Arab transportation to the city and in the Arab neighborhoods on its outskirts. Beginning in December 1947, the British often opened fire to protect Haganah convoys en route to or from Jerusalem. Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, Chronology of Events and p. 331.

at each other and both of which were shooting at the British. Jews and Arabs alike blamed the waning Mandate administration for their problems. The British seemed to have become fair game.

It is difficult and probably impossible to sleep if you are being shot at: that simple truth is articulated repeatedly in the diary. On those sleepless nights Henry Gurney had time to be with himself and face himself, without the formality and mannerisms of his public persona behind which he found it convenient to hide. His loneliness was even more pronounced because his wife was sent home about a month after he started to keep the diary. It turns out that beneath the cold exterior lurked powerful feelings of anger, fear, and romantic sentiment. Without venturing too far into irresponsible interpretation, it seems fair to surmise that the diary was partly a means of emotional release for its author.

This, however, is not the only explanation for the diary. Ahead of its possible publication, Gurney himself offered his potential future readers a softer, seemingly less personal but no less authentic explanation, though one that the contemporary Israeli reader will probably find uncomfortable: "Most people are heartily sick of Palestine and in recent days the name of Jerusalem has been too often profaned to need any further profanation. But because the birth of the Zionist State of Israel has now taken place under a cloud of propaganda, conducted on the one hand by the Zionists in every country whose help they need and on the other by the six Arab States who find difficulty in acting up to their threats and high-sounding promises of aid to the Arabs of Palestine, it may be useful to put on record some of the facts that are already becoming obscure or distorted."²⁶

This passage, after all, defines the goal after the fact: Gurney wrote the introduction to the diary in the summer of 1948, after his return to Britain and when the war between the fledgling State of Israel and the four invading Arab armies was at its height. Nevertheless, the motivation he cites – for the writer to tell his truth – also found expression in "real time" during the writing of the diary itself as the Palestine civil war raged in the spring of 1948.

²⁶Gurney, *Introduction*, p. 2, note 17, above. It is not clear why Gurney referred to six Arab armies operating in Israel. (He avoided the term "invasion" because in his perception and for many of the Britons who experienced the hostilities in Palestine beginning in December 1947, the Arabs were victims. The violence of the victors received more emphatic expression.) Gurney did not know that the Lebanese Army had not invaded and that in practice four Arab armies – of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and Syria – were operating in the former Mandate area.

In spare, precise language, punctuated by poetic passages – particularly about the city’s appearance or its natural surroundings – the diary evokes the atmosphere in Jerusalem during the period of the civil war. Everyone – Jews, Arabs, and the British, too, is involved: shooting, fighting for food, fighting for their lives, without, he believes, any defined purpose. Jerusalem, it should be recalled, was supposed to become a separate political entity. The Jews did not gainsay this, at least not aloud, and the Arabs’ collective will was not given voice. Gurney had a sense of an aimless war. The diary describes a war reality which quickly became a battle for survival of Jews and Arabs alike – and to hell with everything else. In his perception, fear ruled on both sides and dictated events. From his position as involved observer, Gurney had a better view than either the Jews or the Arabs of the mutual pummeling, the divorce between leaderships and their public, the quality of the organized Jewish side, and the collapse of the Arabs, for whom abandoning the fray was the rule rather than the exception.

Gurney seethed with anger in this period. He was angry at his own government, which in his view had repeatedly failed to articulate a policy that entailed an answer to Britain’s true problems overall and particularly in Palestine. He was furious at the United States and especially at President Truman, whom he believed was in thrall to the Jewish vote and blind to the needs of the Anglo-American alliance and its interests in the Middle East and Palestine in the light of the developing Cold War.²⁷ He was angry at the Arabs for being incapable of doing more than fantasize, he believed, though he forgave them, somehow, by force of the colonial habits he had acquired in Africa. The colonial outlook forgives the native for his trespasses, for he is, after all, a “child” whose authentic caprices and mistakes are not fueled by any real ill will and whose forgivable errors also partake of a humorous dimension when viewed with the proper patronizing attitude. The diary is studded with often constrained attempts to find a humorous side in the actions of the Palestinian Arabs.

But Gurney’s fiercest anger was reserved for the Jews and more especially for the Zionists among them – for those in Palestine and even more for “world Zionism”. His wrath becomes more visceral as the Zionist

²⁷Gurney did not understand, and perhaps had no way to understand, that even at the height of the “special relations” between the two “English-speaking nations” during the Second World War, the Americans viewed themselves as committed to the safety of Britain, not its empire. See for example, Geoffrey Best, *Churchill, A Study in Greatness*, London 2001. pp. 246–248.

threat which he perceives – to British rule in Palestine, to his ability to execute his mission, and to his very life – grows more concrete. The course of the Palestine civil war did in fact reflect clearly the advantage of the Jewish side. By April 1948 that advantage was unequivocal. The diary offered him an outlet to express this distress, too.

One institution of which he is wholly uncritical is the Colonial Office – his professional and social home – and especially his staff, for whom he has only praise. Some of them were his appointees and all of them carried out his policy. When it comes to self-criticism, the diarist is as deficient as the objects of his barbs. His “victory formula”, the way he consolidated his status in his various posts, was based on two elements: first, imperturbability under any conditions; and second, unswerving loyalty to his superiors and even more to his subordinates. In addition to his sangfroid and his rich experience as a capable administrator, he was unreservedly supportive of the British personnel and the local Jewish and Arab staff he worked with under difficult conditions and in a constant state of mounting uncertainty.²⁸

Gurney always had time to listen to the problems of his staff. His management approach was in many ways ahead of its time; he knew that his people, because they were his people, merited high regard and a good word, no matter what position they held. He insisted on holding “motivation events” (parties, picnics, and the like) even in the darkest days of Jewish terrorism. His identification with the colonial administration was in large measure identification with the story of his life. His staff was for him in many ways akin to a family.²⁹

Faithful to the culture of the British colonial service, Gurney did not express his emotions in public, especially if they ran contrary to what his position obliged. The most he allowed himself comes through in the following anecdote, related in the late 1980s by one of his senior officials, Richard Stubbs, the last director of the Mandate-era Press Information Office in Jerusalem. According to Stubbs, Gurney, who was “very formal and very British,” was once brought to a press conference in Tel Aviv on a hot summer day. The Jewish journalists wore

²⁸See the testimony of Sir John Fletcher-Cooke, Palestine Chief Under-Secretary for Administration and Finance (1947), MECA, CP, GB 165-0072, 6/5, April 18, 1963.

²⁹*Ibid.* At the same time, he also had a family of his own. His wife, Isabel, was with him in Jerusalem, and their two sons were already grown. On this, see, Raul Hilberg and Stanislaw Staron, “Who Was Adam Tcherniakov”, *Yalkut Moreshet*, 27 April 1979 (Hebrew), that “a [personal] diary reveals the person, his beliefs, his viewpoints, and above all his lifestyle,” p. 122.

open shirts, and the Chief Secretary, appalled, said he had no intention of speaking to people who had not even bothered to put on a tie, and left the hall.³⁰

Gurney's great success as Chief Secretary to the Conference of East African Governors during the Second World War, for example, was due to his ability not to say anything unnecessary, to emphasize commonly held beliefs, and above to be faithful to his role as an implementer of policy, not its formulator. According to one of his colleagues, he did not budge right or left from the policy of restraint laid down by his direct superior, the High Commissioner, during the period of the United Jewish Resistance movement, from the end of 1945 until the summer of 1946. Not even when Cunningham was out of the country for weeks on end and Gurney effectively replaced him, and whether or not that he agreed with the policy. His service in Palestine confronted him with a particularly harsh dilemma relating to his service heritage. Gurney appears to have had little respect for the High Commissioner and he disagreed sharply with the way he managed the crisis in Palestine and the British withdrawal. He did his utmost to conceal his loathing of General Sir Alan Cunningham's policy, and he succeeded. His loyalty to the High Commissioner was viewed very favorably, as a model of how a senior official in the colonial service should manage his affairs. Like many of his colleagues, Gurney sometimes failed to understand the reality in which he functioned. Azc'arate, who sang the Chief Secretary's praises, also noted that he never succeeded in truly assimilating the special character of the problems he confronted in Palestine – they were of a different nature than the problems normally faced by a colonial government.³¹

To alleviate his distress, he kept a personal diary in which, in his way, he gave free rein to his feelings. However, it is difficult to change one's second nature even in a crisis, even to the point of indirect, even implicit criticism of his superior. Gurney rails at "the situation" and at the policy of his superiors, but there is not a negative word about Cunningham personally. Nevertheless, in his criticism and even in his identification with the High Commissioner, whom he believes is cracking under the pressure, a very clear viewpoint comes through, namely that the High Commissioner and his policy were in a certain sense

³⁰Quoted by Lazar, *In and out of Palestine*, p. 204.

³¹Azc'arate, *Mission in Palestine*, p. 12.

one more obstacle in a lengthy series of obstacles, which included the United Nations, the United States, the American Zionists, the Arab states, and even the British government itself, all of which were interfering with efforts to manage the colonies as they used to be managed. Above all else, Gurney was a protégé and devoted loyalist of the British imperial way of life.

As for the element of fear, it seems to me, with the latitude permitted the historian who spends some time in the company of his protagonist and his era, that one reason Gurney started to keep the diary was a powerful feeling of almost certain death. Suffice it to read about the number of times that bullets flew past his head or about bombs that exploded next to his residence at the edge of the Qatamon neighborhood and by his headquarters in the King David Hotel. It is to this category that recurring descriptions such as the following also belong: "The Lebanese Vice-Consul just down the road was shot on his veranda; the donkey that brings the Belgian Consulate's milk was shot outside his door."³² The reader comes to feel that Gurney produced something approaching a testament, or at least a summation of his activity in Palestine. The departure of his wife on March 24 must have heightened his fears and intensified his need to find a way to vent his feelings.

The diary fairly bristles with a fierce but unrealized desire to offer an explanation for the unfolding events, to confer meaning on the ram-paging violence. His prejudices apart, the diarist is sincerely unable to comprehend why the two sides insist on battering each other and why they refuse, unless no alternative presents itself, to avail themselves of his good offices. Gurney sometimes sets forth this desire in the form of a rather simplistic question: "Who is to blame?" His chart of the blameworthy is very clear – too clear.

It was this same approach that prompted Gurney, after he survived – temporarily, as it turned out – his role as implementer of the imperial retreat, to publish the diary. It is not by chance that his final entry states that he is leaving Palestine with a clean conscience. Both while keeping the diary and after his almost stealth-like departure from the country, he was consumed by the need to explain to himself, and then to his potential readers, what it all meant. And, no less important, that neither Britain nor its Colonial Office, nor its emissaries

³²Diary, April 12, 1948.

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in Palestine, nor he himself had anything to be ashamed of: on the contrary.

It is, then, of all these elements – his anger, fears, distress, his judicious evaluations and less judicious evaluations, the period and the background – that this diary is made.

Real Time and Researcher's Time

For the historian, a diary is also a source text. It can be an extraordinarily useful source if it addresses issues which are of interest to scholars. Its singularity (assuming that no changes have been made in it) lies in the fact that it was written in real time. "Researcher's time" and "real time" are in a state of dialogue. Therefore, in addition to these introductory remarks, Gurney's diary is accompanied by footnotes which shed light on words, terms, and events that are mentioned in the text. I have also added, in the body of the diary itself, though without intervening in the text, "Perspectives" of time and research. This indirect dialogue between the source (in this case, the diarist) and the historian is not intended to "correct" the author of the diary, who of course had no way of knowing "what would happen". Its purpose is to elucidate some of his remarks from the perspective and interests of contemporary research. The order of the Perspectives is effectively dictated by the diarist, who reacted to what was engaging him at a particular time or even on a particular day. That said, it will be clear that the choice of the subjects for the Perspectives naturally reflects my own interests. The reader, though, might be interested in other themes which are suggested by the diary but are not addressed in the Perspectives. Can a diary from the past that is supplemented by comments from the perspective of the present enhance our understanding of contemporary events in Israel and Palestine? It is my fervent hope and belief that it can.

The full details of secondary sources cited in the footnotes in abbreviated form appear in the bibliography at the end of the book. More information about officials and other individuals, who are mentioned in the diary and the footnotes only in the context of their position at the time, can be found in an appendix of Biographical Notes.

Annotated Diary and Perspectives

Sir Henry Gurney

“Palestine Postscript, a Short Record of the Last Days of the Mandate: 15 March–14 May, 1948.”³³

15th March

Two months left, and to-morrow at Lake Success³⁴ the Big Four³⁵ will report their conclusions to the Security Council. There seems very little chance of the Palestine Commission³⁶ ever being able to carry out its

³³MECA, GP, GB 165–0128, 1/1.

³⁴Temporary site of the United Nations Organization, near NYC. The UNO, which was established at a conference in San Francisco in April–June 1945, moved to its permanent headquarters, in East Manhattan, in May 1951. The General Assembly met at Flushing Meadow in NYC.

³⁵Referring to four of the permanent members of the Security Council: the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, and France. British officials were fond of the term “Big Four”, though it bore increasingly less relevance to international reality. The fifth permanent member was the Republic of China (Taiwan).

³⁶The United Nations Palestine Commission also called the “UN Commission” by the Mandate Administration and in the Yishuv (pre-1948 Jewish community in Palestine). Even before the General Assembly vote on partition, on November 29, 1947, the UN decided to establish a commission consisting of representatives of five countries which would be responsible for implementing the resolution. The panel was headed by Karel Lisicky, from Czechoslovakia, a jurist and diplomat, who was also a member of UNSCOP (United Nations Special Committee on Palestine, 1947). The other member-states were Denmark, Panama, Bolivia, and the Philippines. The commission met for the first time on January 9, 1948, and sent an advance delegation to Palestine at the beginning of March. Even though the commission was supposed to succeed the Mandate Administration, the dispute between Britain and the U.N. effectively made it little more than a “postbox to transmit complaints between the Zionists and the British”, Yehoshua Freundlich, *From Destruction to Resurrection*, Tel Aviv 1994, p. 205.

task. What chance was there, in fact, from the start, of the United Nations being successful where the British Government with all its knowledge of the problem and its men and forces on the spot had failed? Yet they took it on with their eyes open, under partisan pressure and in full ignorance.

On this wet cheerless day in Jerusalem – it was snowing this morning – all is quiet, because in this weather both sides prefer to remain indoors. But the nightly battle begins regularly about 8 o'clock, and continues sporadically till dawn. Two nights ago our windows were blown in by some monstrous explosions when some more Arab houses just outside the zone were destroyed by Jews. The sky on these occasions is criss-crossed with tracers, yellow for the Arabs, red for the Jews. There is little sleep to be had, and one remembers that Jerusalem cocks have started crowing at 10:30 ever since the time of Peter.³⁷

The Ethiopian Consul-General called this morning to deliver a protest against the theft of his car yesterday by Arabs, who went off with the Ethiopian flag. Consular cars are becoming quite a popular target for the robbers, as they are pretty sure to be good ones. One can understand why the Americans' cars have also been taken, but it is a bit hard, as the Ethiopian said, when your country has remained neutral at Lake Success. No doubt his car will change color.

I sent for Ahmed Hilmi Pasha³⁸ this afternoon and spoke to him severely on the subject of the ruffians the Arab Higher Committee have collected to protect their headquarters. Yesterday these people dragged one of our officers out of his car and manhandled him. Perhaps he may have looked a little like a Jew.

I talked to him also about peace in the Old City, but made little headway. When the Haganah and Irgun³⁹ come out, he said, we will give the fullest guarantees. The Jews say: "When we have the fullest guarantees, we will consider pulling them out." Meanwhile, the peace is kept by a company of H.L.I.,⁴⁰ whose task is one of which any Crusader would be proud, and is done better than any Crusader ever did it.

³⁷According to the tradition, Peter denied Jesus three times at the crowing of the cock.

³⁸A member of the Arab Higher Committee.

³⁹The British called ITZL (acronym for National Military Organization) the "Irgun". Later in the diary, Gurney refers to the underground organization as "I.T.Z.L", an uncommon usage in British correspondence in Palestine or elsewhere.

⁴⁰H.L.I. = Highland Light Infantry. Scottish Regiment, one of two regiments of the 2nd Infantry Brigade, remained in Jerusalem until May 3, 1948.

Two more British police deserted with 13 Sten guns⁴¹ last night. It is a tragedy that these men should forfeit their whole future for a handful of gold (though prices and pay are high), and at the same time make things much more difficult for the loyal members of the Force. But out of 3,500 British police there have been only 16 possible cases of desertion in the last six months, and the temptations are great. No one envies them their task. The Army comes and goes and does a show and rests, but the British police are always on the job and have been for years. There is much talk in the House and elsewhere in England of credit to the Forces in Palestine, but the Police deserve a piece of cake all to themselves. They haven't so many constituents as the Army, but we must see that they get it.⁴²

First Perspective

The Mandate Administration and Palestine's porous borders

In the entry for March 16th, Gurney refers indirectly to allegations voiced by supporters of the Zionist cause abroad that the Mandate Administration was taking vigorous action to prevent illegal Jewish immigration via the sea but was doing nothing to block Arab land infiltration, which had increased since the onset of the civil war in late 1947.

The reality, as usual, was somewhat more complex. Even in its waning period of existence, the Mandate Administration's immigration policy was not the result the personal sympathy of one official, however senior in rank (such as the High Commissioner himself), for the Jews, and of another for the Arabs (such as the Chief Secretary). Such policy was determined by British interests. Where those interests lay, how-

⁴¹The Sten submachine gun, first manufactured in 1941, was named for its inventors and place of origin (Sheffield Turpin England). It was in use by the IDF until the beginning of the 1950s and by the Jordanian army until the 1970s.

⁴²Desertion among the British forces in Palestine after 1945 – the period of Jewish terrorism and the civil war – was notably low. The situation in the police force, in which Jews and Arabs served, was more complicated; the Mandate Administration made efforts to have its contribution recognized. In this period there was a decline in the status of the colonial administrations and of their sub-units, such as the police (in contrast to the army). The Administration was aware of the problem. High Commissioner to Sir Alan Lascelles, private secretary to King George VI, MECA, CP, 4/5, 20.2.1948; the secretary's reply with the King's reassuring words, *ibid.* 4.3.1948.

ever, was a contentious issue among Britain's emissaries in the region and between them and London.

Already in December 1947 the Mandate Administration took note of the worrisome phenomenon, from its point of view, that combat personnel and weapons were being moved into Palestine from the neighboring Arab states. The continued entry of Jewish illegals into the country, mainly across the borders of Syria and Lebanon, was negligible compared to the scale of illegal Arab entry. Arab infiltration was primarily from Syria, which implemented the decision of the Arab League to assist the Palestinian Arabs and thereby prevent the execution of the United Nations partition resolution. The phenomenon grew in scale during January–February 1948 when soldiers for the “Arab League Army” (“Arab Liberation Army”) were sent to Palestine from Syria. According to British estimates, by the end of February between 4,000 and 5,000 armed soldiers had crossed the border illegally, augmented by additional volunteers, many of them semi-regulars, who embarrassed the hapless Administration.

The High Commissioner, General Sir Alan Cunningham, sought to curb the infiltration, as this, he believed, was necessary to maintain Britain's status in the region, in the post-Mandate period as well. However, Cunningham failed abjectly in this regard owing to the continuing evacuation – which substantially reduced the forces at Cunningham's disposal – the disbanding of the Trans-Jordan Frontier Force, and the need to protect his forces against both Jews and Arabs.⁴³

⁴³On the Administration's concern and the statement by High Commissioner to the ambassador in Damascus that he was determined to prevent the phenomenon, see the weekly meeting of the Mandate Government's Security Committee (on this forum, see note 66, below), December 19, 1947, MECA, CP, Minutes of Security Conference (MSC), 4/1; on the number of Arab combat personnel who infiltrated into Palestine by the end of February 1948 see the report conveyed by the Near East Department of the Foreign Office to Britain's delegation to the United Nations Security Council, TNA FO371/68538, March 11, 1948; on the Arab Liberation Army and the circumstances of its operation during the civil war, Avraham Sela, “King Abdullah and the Government of Israel during The War of Independence: Another View”, *Katedra*, 57 1990, pp. 120–162 (Hebrew); and Sela, “The Rescue Army at the Galilee in the 1948 War”, A. Kadish (ed.) *Israel's War Of Independence 1948–1949*, Tel Aviv 2004, pp. 207–228 (Hebrew); and on unidentified Arab mechanized columns and conjectured movement by the Egyptian Red Cross, CP, *ibid.*, February 20, 1948. Yoav Gelber, *Independence Versus Nakba*, Or Yehuda 2004 (Hebrew), p. 49, maintains that the number of trainees of the Arab Liberation Army in Syria did not exceed 2,500 (not including volunteers in other frameworks); see also Gurney's estimates, diary entry for April 4.

In the face of the ongoing failure to curb the land infiltrations, the GOC (General Officer Commanding), Lieutenant General Gordon MacMillan, explained that military means against the illegal infiltrators were in any case unnecessary, because King Abdullah was doing everything to prevent infiltration from his territory and the "Syrian Arabs" who crossed into Palestine were scattering in every direction and not having an impact. He was backed up by the Inspector General of the Palestine Police, Colonel William Gray, who noted that the former officers from Arab armies who were organizing the Arab force in Palestine were curbing the internal violence and crime among the Arab population, so that the emerging situation was actually beneficial.

Accordingly, Cunningham and MacMillan wanted to place the emphasis on preventive diplomacy in the Arab capitals. The High Commissioner wrote to the British ambassadors in the Arab world that the large-scale infiltration was casting him and the Administration in a ridiculous light. However, this was of little avail: the embassies wrote back, with more than a little impatience, that British protests on this issue would only aggravate the already sensitive relations between Britain and the Arab states; and in any event, they added, the Arab states had no intention of doing anything to prevent infiltration into Palestine, whether organized or unorganized.⁴⁴

The Administration's enfeeblement left Cunningham with only one option: to continue to declare that he was committed to controlling the borders (a declaration which, as will be seen, was of great importance). Within the realm of the possible the Administration tried to prevent Arab regulars from entering the country before the expiration of the Mandate. This was the background, for example, to the Army's intensive operation on the Syrian border, where Syrian forces made substantial efforts to enter eastern Upper Galilee. It was also the reason for the tough policy adopted against units of Transjordan's Arab Legion (which was in Palestine on loan to the British Mandate authorities) whose Transjordanian commanders wanted to join in the fighting

⁴⁴General MacMillan's remarks, January 30, 1948, MECA, CP, MSC, 4/1; Colonel Gray's remarks, *ibid.*, February 13, 1948; the High Commissioner's request for preventive action to be taken in the Arab states, in his cable to the Colonial Office and for the attention of the ambassadors in Amman, Baghdad, Beirut, Damascus, Jeddah, and Cairo, February 1, 1948, TNA FO371/68367; response of the embassies in the Arab capitals to Cunningham, for example, Kirkbride (Amman) to Foreign Office, *ibid.*, February 11, 1948.

on the side of the Palestinian Arabs. On February 20, 1948, General MacMillan informed the Security Conference that the Arab Legion's guard unit in Haifa had been removed from the city after its position there had become untenable following its acts of "provocation and propaganda".⁴⁵

This is also the background to events that are described later in Gurney's diary. At the same time, there is no doubt that the manner in which the Chief Secretary viewed the Arab infiltration – is "a sort of Robin Hood" spirit, in his words – whereas his superior, the High Commissioner, saw nothing amusing about the phenomenon, attests to differences on the subject within the Administration itself, and this situation was exploited by the volunteer infiltrators.

This episode casts the operations of the Mandate Administration and Army during the war in a light that is not necessarily anti-Jewish. British support for the Yishuv – the pre-1948 Jewish community in Palestine – for its own sake or not, did not end here, as the diary relates and as I will show later.

16th March

Dined with the Suffolks⁴⁶ last night, and drove home at 11:30 through a snowstorm. The armored car escort looked like a great white beetle in the headlights. This morning it was still snowing, and later the sun shone for a moment on the domes and towers of the Old City, glistening as though dusted with sugar. But in a town of flat roofs the change of scenery is noticeable really only in the open spaces.

In this weather the Arab national guards⁴⁷ go to ground and leave their blocks wide open. Fortunately the Jewish terrorists seem to have the same dislike for it.

⁴⁵On the operations of the British Army on the Syrian and Lebanon border and the Administration's declarations on this subject: MECA, CP, MSC, 4/1, January 16, February 6, 13, 20, 1948.

⁴⁶The Suffolk Regiment (from the County of Suffolk, England), one of two regiments of the 2nd Infantry Brigade, remained in Jerusalem until May 14, 1948.

⁴⁷Popular militias which were established in the Arab cities based on the model of the National Guard and the Guard Corps on the Jewish side. In theory the units operated under the commanders of the Al-Muqades EL-Jihad, but in practice each group operated independently in its locale. Although untrained, the members of the units were very active and as such constituted an obstacle which the Haganah had to take into account.

The Supreme Moslem Council⁴⁸ came along this morning with various requests, including one that the Government's 1948–1949 payment to the Council representing converted tithes should be made in full in April. I asked them whether they thought that all Arabs would pay their 1948–1949 taxes in April. In fact, the Council has been generously treated in having had a lump sum of £300,000 last month to settle claims back to 1942. The Jews criticized this payment on the ground that the money would be misused, but it will not. Repair and maintenance of the Dome of the Rock and the various other Moslem religious fabrics in Palestine are expensive liabilities.

One of my officers told me to-day that he had been offered employment by the Jews, the Arabs and the U.N. Commission, and was feeling quite swollen-headed. I find that the Commission have offered me continued service in Palestine, and wonder what they would do if I accepted it.

Fawzi Quwakji, [one of] the commander[s] of the Army of the Liberation⁴⁹ in Samaria, has apparently left for Syria, having completed his visit of inspection and given interviews to foreign press correspondents thanking the British for their hospitality. This will make good Jewish propaganda, but in fact everybody knows that to arrest Fawzi in the wild fastnesses of Tubas, guarded by some thousand of his followers, is not at the moment a practical proposition. These people are maintaining "law and order" in this area rather better than we could. When the theft of a lorry was reported recently to the Police, the Liberation Army recovered it and returned it to its owner within a few hours with its

⁴⁸Established by the British Administration on January 1, 1922, to enable the Muslim community to conduct its religious affairs, the body consisted of four members who represented different regions, under the leadership of a chairman. From 1923 the Council was controlled by the Mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj Amin al-Husseini, and under his leadership it became the dominant political body in the Palestinian Arab community until the beginning of the 1930s.

⁴⁹Also known as the "Rescue Army" (Jaish al-Inqadh), the "Salvation Army" or the "League Army". It was a volunteer force created by the Arab League to intervene in the Palestine civil war. Its members began infiltrating into the country beginning in January 1948. The Army of Liberation operated in the north and then, toward the end of the Mandate, in the Jerusalem area. It had limited military achievements and was mauled in the battle at Kibbutz Mishmar Ha'emek (April 4–14). Toward the middle of May the force was expelled by King Abdullah but in July launched another invasion, from Lebanon, attacking in Lower Galilee. Was forced to withdraw following the IDF's "Operation Hiram" in October–November 1948.

contents of bags of flour and £20 in cash intact, and shot the thief. The District Commissioner, Samaria, told me that, after the decking of one of the Jordan bridges was removed in February to check these incursions, he had been asked for the loan of the planks for one night, not to bring troops in – just a few guns for training. When he said he thought the country beyond the Jordan was just as suitable for training, there were just smiles. There is a sort of Robin Hood relationship between ourselves and the Arabs that no amount of toughness on either side seems to affect.

Last week, when the High Commissioner landed at Gaza on a day's visit, the airfield was occupied by about a hundred armed Egyptians, who wanted to provide a guard of honor. They were told to get out and stay out, which they scrupulously did.

There are two points about all this. These Arab incursions are no more illegal than the Jewish immigration and importation of arms which have been the policy of the Jewish Agency for years. It is odd that the Arabs should be expected not to do what the Jews are doing as hard as they can. Secondly, the Arabs do have a sense of humor occasionally, and are not always immersed in morbid self-interest and suicidal gloom.

Second Perspective

The Administration's qualms in the face of the surging war

In February 1947 London made a decision of principle to evacuate Palestine. Two months later, the British Government decided to return the Mandate to the United Nations "without recommendations" and since then had informally relinquished its omnipotent status with regard to the Palestine question. In short order the Government lost its power to shape the country's fate. A series of events – the special session of the United Nations General Assembly, in May 1947; the activity of UNSCOP, the special investigative commission, which operated from June to August 1947; the preparatory discussions in the U.N. in the fall of 1947; and the General Assembly vote at the end of November – underscored the sharp decline of Britain's status in Palestine. Indeed, the formal decision by the British Government to withdraw from Palestine (September 20, 1947) and the evacuation plan which followed (approved and signed on December 4), were a reaction

to a series of resolutions passed by the U.N. under the aegis of the Great Powers, with very little consultation with London.⁵⁰

Until the end of November 1947, Britain was capable of changing the course of events, either by making a dramatic declaration of its ability to bring about a Jewish-Arab solution or by taking aggressive military action in Palestine which would have forced the sides to do its will. The latter possibility was far from theoretical, as it was the course of action advocated by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff at the time, Field Marshal Montgomery. He urged a military solution with no political-diplomatic restrictions for the problem of the ongoing unrest in Palestine, especially against the mounting Jewish terrorism.⁵¹

However, following the General Assembly resolution of November 29, 1947 (passed with U.S. backing) and the onset of the evacuation plan, all that remained for the British Government was to extricate itself from Palestine with as little damage as possible. After the UNSCOP recommendations became known, in late August 1947, Britain was more able to say what it would not do rather than what it would, or could do. The repeated assertion by London and by the Mandate authorities that Britain would not be able to assist in realizing the partition solution, and the readiness of the other Great Powers to postpone the conclusion of the evacuation from the beginning of May until the beginning of August, as requested by Britain, represented no more than a "consolation prize" for a global power whose word had been law in Palestine only yesterday.⁵²

Even before the General Assembly passed a resolution which not only recommended partition but also called on Britain to leave Palestine, Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin and the entire Cabinet were determined to terminate the Mandate and complete the evacuation of British forces by August 1, 1948, at the latest. No one in the Cabinet or on its various committees objected in any significant way to Bevin's Palestine policy. He was so determined to leave that he did not accept the mil-

⁵⁰An extensive literature exists on the reasons that prompted Britain to return the Palestine Mandate to the U.N. For example, Gavriel Cohen, "The British Policy on the eve of the 1948 War", Y. Wallah (ed.), *Like We Were Dreaming*, Givattaim 1985, pp. 13–140 (Hebrew); Louis, *The British Empire*, pp. 439–494.

⁵¹Montgomery, *The Memories of Field-Marshal the Viscount Montgomery of Alamein*, London 1958, pp. 472–475.

⁵²On the pressure exerted by the Great Powers on Britain during the U.N. deliberations and on Britain's reactions: G. Cohen, *British Policy*, pp. 140–142.

itary's recommendation to stay in Palestine.⁵³ Logically, then, from this moment the British Government should have tried to assess the reaction of the two national groups in Palestine to its unilateral act. However, on December 4, 1947, in what was probably its last fully independent move in Palestine, Britain decided to adopt an ambiguous policy calculated not to anger anyone. In accordance with the principles which were laid down already on September 20, the Government decided:

(A) That it would do nothing in practice to sabotage the implementation of the U.N. partition resolution, though its forces would definitely not help implement the resolution. There was no need to brief the Chiefs of Staff again, as they had already issued directives to the forces in Palestine and the Middle East in this spirit.

(B) At the same time, Britain would not tolerate partners to its rule in Palestine as long as the High Commissioner was in charge there under the terms of the Mandate.

(C) The Mandate would end on May 15, 1948, and the evacuation of the armed forces by August 1.

This impossible policy – we will not cooperate but we will also not allow others to prepare the ground for the post-Mandate era – which was concocted by the Foreign Secretary and the Colonial Secretary, was duly approved by the Government. The High Commissioner did not receive a clear directive about how to act in the interim period between the decision taken in London and the termination of the Mandate and the evacuation. He was, however, told, as noted above, what not to do.⁵⁴

Gurney summed up the dilemma succinctly in his diary entry for March 17: “when one is sitting on a razor edge of not obstructing and not helping, every word has to be weighed so that it should not over-balance on one side or the other”.

⁵³Bevin in the Cabinet's Defence Committee, November 27, 1947, TNA PREM8/859. On the attitude of the military, Appendix 2 of the Defence Secretary's memorandum to the Cabinet, September 18, 1947, TNA CAB 129/21.

⁵⁴Draft motion by Bevin and Creech Jones, December 3, 1947, TNA CAB129/22; Cabinet decision, December 4, 1947, TNA CAB128/10.

17th March

The High Commissioner was to have gone to present St. Patrick's Day shamrocks to the Irish Guards near Safad to-day, but the weather prevented it.⁵⁵

Started with the weekly publicity conference at 9:00. This consists of all the information and broadcasting people, who come in looking terribly hungry for a tasty piece of meat and so rarely get it. One could write a volume on the handling of publicity (several have been), but when one is sitting on a razor edge of not obstructing and not helping, every word has to be weighed so that it should not overbalance on one side or the other. The British and Foreign Press generally could not be more friendly at the moment. Is this due to anything we have done or to the blatancies of the Jews and Arabs? The local press are past redemption and engage freely in sedition, falsehood and slander. To meet, they are the most harmless-looking crowd, but after apparently friendly intercourse they go off and dip their pens in poison of the most immoderate character. The Arab vocabulary is well known to consist of superlatives only: the Hebrew one specializes in the innuendo.

I thought to-day: if Palestine has to be written on my heart, must it be in Arabic and Hebrew?

A conference of all 35 Heads of Departments in the afternoon to impress on them the urgency of completing all the computations required to pay minimum abolition benefits to over 20,000 Palestinian officers before we leave. This in itself is a vast problem. It is a sad comment on our situation that some of these officers I hardly recognized, not having seen them for months on account of pre-occupation with the completely unremunerative problems of security.⁵⁶

⁵⁵Since 1901, the holiday of the patron saint of Ireland has been marked by ceremonies in which a member of the royal family or a personage representing the royal family presents shamrocks to the soldiers of the Irish regiments.

⁵⁶At its peak, after the Second World War, the Administration had 45 departments. From the latter part of 1946 until the end of the Mandate, departments were dismantled and merged. Jacob Reuveny, *The Administration of Palestine Under the British Mandate 1920–1948*, Ramat-Gan 1993 (Hebrew), p. 36.

Afterwards the General Manager of Railways⁵⁷ conferred with the U.N. Commission's staff⁵⁸ for two hours on what is to happen after May 15. The answer as usual was completely negative, barring a comment by one of them that it was a bit conceited to claim to have been chosen by God. But even this is not a major contribution towards operating a Railway. Some of the stations are now guarded by Arabs and others by Jews, and I understand the engine crew changes their hats according to the station they are running into. What keeps the Railway running? The answer is (almost) a lemon, as it won't run at all after the citrus crop for the British children's orange juice has all gone out in three weeks' time.⁵⁹

The Big Four appear to have got nowhere yet, and the Security Council have adjourned to the 22nd. The U.N. Commission have handed out a seasonable gift of a few raspberries for everybody in their second monthly report. One does certainly get the impression that there are wide differences between international politics in vacuo and running a Government.

Finished the day by seeing "Great Expectations" at the British Council.⁶⁰ Not a very apt title for our present outlook, but a grand diversion into one's own traditions. Dickens certainly had a great insight into the mind of the small boy.

⁵⁷Arthur Frank Kirby.

⁵⁸The Advance Group of the U.N. Commission arrived on March 2. The Administration was reserved, the Arabs boycotted the group, and the liaison work fell to the Jewish Agency, which had an interest in the U.N.'s entry into Jerusalem, in the hope that the city's internationalization would prevent a war there. Conversation of Kaplan, the Jewish Agency Treasurer, with Dr. Pablo De Azc'arate the head of the Advance Group, March 2, 1948, Gedalia Yogev (General Editor), *Political and Diplomatic Documents*, December 1947–May 1948, Jerusalem 1979 (Hebrew, English), (hereafter, *Diplomatic Documents*), pp. 406–407.

⁵⁹By tacit agreement, the two sides refrained from attacking trains and trucks that were on their way to the ports of Haifa, Jaffa, or Gaza during the season of citrus exports.

⁶⁰The British Council was founded in 1934 as a not-for-profit organization in order to counteract anti-British propaganda which was being disseminated in this period mainly by Germany and Italy. In 1940 the Council operated in Palestine from its centre in Egypt; it opened a branch in Jerusalem in 1942 and afterward in the big cities. The public participated avidly in its activities. Many people availed themselves of British Council programs to prepare themselves for the high-school matriculation examination in English and for the Bar Association examination. The Council resumed its activity in Israel in 1950. Simcha Yannai, *The British Council in Palestine During the Period of the Mandate*, Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the M.A. degree, The Department of Eretz-Israel Studies, University of Haifa, November 2003 (Hebrew).

18th March

The Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem⁶¹ talked to me of the problem of the Christian Jews. There are only some 70 in Palestine, but they are terribly victimized by their fellow Jews, who have promised religious freedom in the Jewish State. Yet they are staunch Christians, holding services in odd rooms and corners, much as the early Christian Jews must have done. Something has to be done to look after them when we go, and it is a hard responsibility for the Anglican Church.⁶²

This afternoon representatives of our Arab Government officers came to see me about their abolition terms and the situation that was facing them. The interview was conducted in a tone of great moderation and politeness for an hour. I am afraid it must be said that we appreciate their point of view and they ours. It must be heartbreaking to face this disruption of all the work you have done for your own people as well as complete uncertainty as to what is going to happen to yourself.

The (UN) Commission's staffs have run out of food. The police Sergeant who was shopping for them in the Arab markets has been threatened. Eggs in the Jewish markets are about six times the price, because Jewish hens are much more expensive, and eggs and bombs don't mix well. However, the United Nations must obviously be fed.

They are not as fed up with Palestine as the British. The man who was sick of the palsy for the forty years had some reason to be sick of it. UN has not had Palestine for a year yet.

The snow has gone, and to-day is glorious with a quarter-moon, in which every sniper and bomber in the place should be out. But there has been only sporadic shooting all day, and even the Bishop got only some machine-gun bullets in his bedroom. But this is premature.

⁶¹Bishop W. H. Stewart represented a policy which he considered beneficial for his church: opposition to anti-Semitism and opposition to the connection which prevailed within his community between the Bible and the establishment in practice of a Jewish state. Kelvin Crombie, *For the Love of Zion*, London 1991, p. 207.

⁶²The Christian Jews, or Hebrew Christians, resided primarily in Jerusalem and, from the mid-1930s, in Tel Aviv and Jaffa as well. In 1948 they were suspected of inimical intentions by both sides in the war. The Church Mission to the Jews, an Anglican institution, saw no other possibility but to help them leave the country. At the beginning of May, 35 of them were smuggled out of Jerusalem secretly (Operation Mercy) and sent to Britain with other evacuees. A few remained in the city, scattered between its two parts. *Ibid.*, pp. 211–214.

As regards the U.N. appeal for a truce, the Jews say "Yes, provided Partition"; the Arabs say "Yes, provided no Partition". So what?

Third Perspective

Britain's reaction to the American attempt to annul the U.N. partition plan

On March 19, 1948, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Warren Austin, proposed to the General Assembly that it annul the partition resolution (Resolution 181) of November 29, 1947. From the outset the State Department, swayed by the view of some of its senior officials who held that Western control in this sensitive region should not be relinquished, had objected to the partition plan in particular and to the creation of a Jewish state in general. Western control required the good will of the Arabs. The State Department was acting in the spirit of the Truman Doctrine, which held that the United States and the West must not forgo even a seemingly small outpost, for fear it would be seized by the Soviet Union and its allies. Now the staff of George Marshall, the dominant Secretary of State, heaped one obstacle after another in the path of the White House, which urged support for the partition plan, whose major implication was the creation of a Jewish state. The President's staff, for their part, backed partition mainly for domestic electoral reasons: in November 1948, President Harry S. Truman, who as President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Vice President had succeeded to the presidency when Roosevelt died, in April 1945, hoped to become the Democratic Party's candidate and be elected President in his own right.

According to the State Department, the mounting conflict in Palestine was voiding the partition plan of practical content and the United States had neither the inclination nor the capability to dispatch forces to guarantee the U.N. plan (a view that was shared by the President). Austin was therefore sent to propose a temporary trusteeship in place of partition. The role of trustee would be taken by the U.N. with the aid of a Governor General under whom a democratic majority government (meaning, at the time, an Arab government) would operate. The American plan was a late and unviable echo of Britain's attempts since the 1920s to establish in Palestine one state under the administration of an elected "legislative council".

The British reaction to the American idea was two-pronged. On the one hand, the Palestine question was a subject of bitter controversy between

the two Atlantic allies. Since 1946, and now even more forcefully, Britain had refused to be the blood-drenched emissary of Washington's Cold War policy throughout the world. This was especially so in Palestine, where the potential harm to Britain outweighed any possible benefits. Moreover, a U.N. debacle was of less concern to Britain than to the United States. Indeed, London went so far as to promote an alternative partition of Palestine between a Jewish state and Transjordan, which was then still a British protectorate (see *Nineteenth Perspective*). On the other hand, the desire to win the goodwill of the Arab world, the urgent need to find a successor to Britain in Palestine, and the escalating problems of the Cold War, which the British understood, prompted London not to reject the American trusteeship plan outright, certainly not for public consumption. Britain preferred to go on implementing the evacuation plan, on the assumption that it would effectively kill the trusteeship idea without an open confrontation between London and Washington.

Which is exactly what happened. As with the U.N. partition plan, Britain's refusal to support a plan that was not acceptable to both sides (the Arabs rejected partition, the Jews rejected trusteeship) doomed the American plan to failure. The British, unwilling to even consider the idea of being involved in direct rule in Palestine one day after May 15, were the major obstacle to the implementation of their ally's plan.

The trusteeship plan also encountered a domestic obstacle which was every bit as formidable as the British objections and infuriated President Truman. On the day before Austin's statement to the U.N., Truman had met with the Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann and assured him solemnly of Washington's unreserved support for the partition plan, even if some officials thought otherwise. Truman took his revenge on the State Department for its breach of discipline and for casting him in an uncomplimentary light close to the elections by quickly recognizing the newborn State of Israel. Indeed, the United States became the first country to recognize Israel, even before it achieved formal statehood. Ultimately, the President's reaction played into the hands of the British Government, which was unwilling to cooperate with any plan that was liable to keep it in Palestine. The State Department, though, continued to promote the trusteeship plan – which a few days before the termination of the Mandate was described as an “emergency trusteeship” – until Israel's establishment and even a bit afterward.

Yet another obstacle to the trusteeship plan presented itself in the form of the leaders of the Zionist movement, who protested the plan vociferously and enlisted the aid of the Soviet Union and its allies in order to scuttle it. The plan had no chance in the U.N., given the unholy

and undeclared Soviet-British front in this instance. The success of the Haganah in Haifa in late April hastened the Palestinian defeat and made it possible for the White House to support partition (i.e., the establishment of Israel) without concern that external forces would be needed to implement it.⁶³

From Jerusalem the picture seemed even less clear. Gurney assumed, with some justice, that the Arabs were likely to support the trusteeship concept because, even if it was not the most desirable alternative from their point of view, it would at least annul partition and do away with the establishment of the Jewish state. He was wrong. So weak were the Palestinian Arabs that they could at most unite around what they did not want to do and less, if at all, around what they wanted to do. From their standpoint, support for trusteeship was right, even if only tactically; that is, temporary support for trusteeship on the way to their goal of one state, which even if not fully independent would have an Arab majority.

Gurney was not surprised by President Truman's attitude, as in his opinion the White House was effectively a Zionist bastion. Already on March 25, before Truman spoke out openly against the trusteeship plan which his own government had put forward, he stated at a press conference that the plan did not entail American backtracking from partition.⁶⁴ London breathed a sigh of relief. But others did not, certainly not some in Jerusalem, and definitely not the Chief Secretary. Gurney, contrary to his superiors, apparently took a clearly positive view of the principle that was enshrined in the American idea, if the outcome would be to leave Britain in Palestine. Unlike either Prime Minister Clement Attlee himself, or Foreign Secretary Bevin, or even Gurney's direct superior, the High Commissioner, Gurney did not believe in the partition of Palestine. He believed that the Jewish state that was to be established would constitute a danger to British interests. He was at odds with the High Commissioner, who believed that

⁶³On the trusteeship plan from the American angle, David McCullough *Truman*, New York 1992, pp. 595–620; and Menahem Kaufman, "The American Trusteeship Proposal 1948", *Yahadut Ze'manenu*, (Contemporary Jewry) Vol. 1 1983, pp. 249–273 (Hebrew). From the British angle, Louis, *The British Empire*, pp. 514–531. From the Zionist angle, Freundlich, *From Destruction to Resurrection*, pp. 215–231. On Britain's alternative plan to partition, Bevin to Kirkbride (the British ambassador to Amman), February 9, 1948, TNA FO 371/68366.

⁶⁴Kaufman, *ibid.*

the U.N. was capable of assuming responsibility for partition, and on this matter London shared his view.⁶⁵

This episode highlights the disparity between the views held in London and the approach of Administration officials in Palestine. Although the latter had allies in London, and even though some of them tended to agree with London's approach, overall the relations between the Administration in Palestine and the central Government were characterized more by the imposition of authority than by dialogue and mutual persuasion.

19th March

Today started at 9:00 with the weekly meeting of the Security Committee, with the High Commissioner, G.O.C., A.O.C., and I.G. of Police;⁶⁶ a meeting of Executive Council⁶⁷ at 10.00 to consider the latest developments at Lake Success: and went on through interviews with the Chief of Staff (Macmillan), Dr. Magnes of the Hebrew University, who wished to discuss the future of Jerusalem, the Defence Security Officer⁶⁸ and the American Consul,⁶⁹ to an hour with Schmidt of the *New York Times* and an hour with Ainsworth, Hulton's Art Editor for the *Picture Post*, who is endeavoring to construct a pictorial conspectus of the Palestine scene. To the last two repeated my familiar theme that you

⁶⁵In London a similar approach was taken by Harold Beeley, the Foreign Secretary's adviser on the Middle East and Palestine, whereas the Colonial Secretary and, as noted, the High Commissioner – Gurney's direct superiors – viewed favorably partition and the establishment of a Jewish state.

⁶⁶This regular Thursday gathering became the Administration's effective operative forum. In addition to the High Commissioner, the participants were: the Chief Secretary; the GOC Lieutenant General Gordon MacMillan (commander of the ground forces); the AOC Air Commodore William Dawson (commander of the airforces); the Inspector-General of the Police, Colonel William Gray; the Governor of the Jerusalem District, James Pollock; a representative of Middle East HQ in Cairo; and ad hoc invitees. Even though the agenda was set in advance, the Security Committee was able to respond to ongoing events. The body's minutes, a crucial document for anyone wishing to understand the development of the frame of mind within the Administration during the war, are at MECA, CP, MSC, GB165-0072.

⁶⁷The Cabinet of the Mandate Administration, it consisted of senior functionaries and, on occasion, representatives of the local public.

⁶⁸Apparently the official in charge of Administration security.

⁶⁹William R. Macatee (1901-).

can't understand two thousand years of history in two days, however hard you try, and people in Palestine were civilized when people in Britain were not, and were indeed rather more civilized than they are now. I always like to point out to them that it is wise when talking to anyone in Palestine to find out what particular century he is living in. There are many who have not yet got beyond the year 1500. It is admittedly confusing when the Jews are in 5708, the Arabs in 1367 and ourselves in 1948. The Copts are in something else. Apart from that, the monthly calendars are Julian, Gregorian, Arab and Hebrew. No wonder time becomes of small importance.

But time is of immense importance at Lake Success. If the Security Council are really going to invite the United Nations General Assembly to do a volte face and adopt some other plan at this stage and have it working by the 15th May, there is hardly an hour to lose.⁷⁰

There is constant criticism that our purpose is to leave "chaos and bloodshed" when we go, both to show how necessary we were as a buffer between Arabs and Jews, and to punish the people of Palestine for their wickedness. Nothing, of course, could be further from the truth. We have been trying hard for months to get the United Nations to take a realistic view of the responsibilities which they so lightly assumed on the 29th November. To take over and run a complex Government machine involves problems that are clear only to people with some practical administrative experience, and rarely to Foreign Office and United Nations people who stake around the pond and content themselves with avoiding the deep water. In the present case there were plenty of signs marking the thin ice, but these were overlooked when the "pressure boys" were turned on last November in the shallow end of Lake Success. Could the U.N. decision then taken have been reached anywhere else than in New York, with its enormous and irresponsible Jewish vote, press and influence?

One has to work quickly here now, and pass many papers that in other circumstances could have been pondered on and improved. Yet the standard of work remains extraordinarily high, and is a great tribute to our British staff. I have been reading to-day the Hansard⁷¹ of March 9th

⁷⁰This was the date on which the U.S. delegate to the U.N. proposed replacing the November 1947 partition plan with a trusteeship plan.

⁷¹The official published transcript of the debates, speeches, and questions in the House of Commons.

on the Palestine Bill⁷² and agree fully with Ivor Thomas⁷³ that we have the best team of officers you could find in the Colonial Service. The tragedy is that because of politics in New York and Cairo (a slight oversimplification) they can do almost nothing. But reading the debate is a depressing experience. It is curious that so many members can get away with so many complete misrepresentations of the facts. Never (except in the House) were so many misstatements made by so many people in so few hours.⁷⁴ Why do the Jewish members always act as Jews, and not as British representatives of their constituencies? The answer to that is known in Palestine, but not so well yet in England.

20th March

Last night, after the Jewish Sabbath had begun, the news of the American volte-face broke on the world. The proposed U.N. Trusteeship for Palestine has, as Trygve Lie⁷⁵ says, been considered before and rejected. It is playing for time, a Munich agreement, 1938: it is putting the patient, who was almost on the operating table, back into bed where no other cure for his chronic disorders is at all likely to be found. U.N. trusteeship, if accepted, will be very difficult to end. In my experience, temporary buildings are either bad or the most permanent of all – or both.

This new problem occupied much of the morning. Certainly one never has a dull moment in Palestine. The assessment of other people's reactions is not easy, particularly when they don't know what they are themselves. But the Jews are shocked and stunned, and when they recover their breath will pronounce their determination not to weaken in their political pursuit of a Jewish State. Beyond that, they will wait and see what Russia will do. The Arabs will acclaim Senator Austin's statement as a victory for justice, and then, when they have thought about it a bit, they will not be so happy after all. All the problems remain: immigration, illegal armies, no legislature, militant Zionism. Can a U.N. administration really solve these peacefully?

⁷²On March 23 the House enacted legislation according to which the British Government assumed the debts of the Mandate Administration. The main problem lay with the debts to the civil servants. In April 1948 an office was established in Cyprus to deal with the financial debts to the civil servants in the former Mandate countries. Reuveny, *The Administration of Palestine*, p. 216.

⁷³Parliamentary Under-Secretary for the Colonies.

⁷⁴A paraphrase of Winston Churchill's famous remark at the outset of the Battle of Britain in 1940, referring to Royal Air Force pilots: "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."

⁷⁵Norwegian diplomat (1896–1968), first U.N. Secretary-General, 1946–1953.

At noon the Consular Corps sent a deputation to discuss the problem of their diplomatic mails, delays in telephones, etc. Out of 47 trunk circuits only 13 now remain in operation, the rest having been either blown up or blown down. The repair parties are most reluctant to go out and do their job in some areas, more especially as post office vans are held up and stolen every day. The Jews took six last week.

Then we presented, in the presence of all our Arab staff, a silver cigarette box to Ruhi Bey Abdulhadi, who is retiring after 43 years service, 15 in the Turkish Diplomatic Service and 28 with us. Ruhi has been guide, philosopher and friend to a multitude of British officers, past and present, finding their way through the complexities of life in Palestine – Patriarchs, Metropolitans, Waqfs, Consuls-General, oil Kings, Rabbis, Holy Places, Moslem traditions form his expertise. He is a remarkable linguist. He has known, as I do, the ten previous Chief Secretaries of Palestine, and all the High Commissioners, Generals and other senior British officers who have been at some time or other on the Palestine stage. These gatherings of all the staff are the only occasions on which I see many of them, and they do help to get a team spirit into the office. On this Jewish Sabbath there were no Jews there. I have no doubt this was arranged intentionally, but I was not told of it till last night, when it was too late to change the plans.

Last night there was a really good battle when 30 Jews attacked Beit Safafa about three kilometers south of Jerusalem. Between 4:30 and 6:00 this morning the rattle of machine guns and thumps of mortars and grenades scarcely paused. One would suppose hundreds of people to have been killed; in fact, as usual, only two. All day there have been sniping, shooting, explosions and they are still going on. Saturday night, when the Sabbath has ended at nightfall, always brings some unusual outburst.⁷⁶

⁷⁶According to Haganah sources, about 60 Arab troops tried to attack Mekor Haim, a Jerusalem neighborhood adjacent to Beit Safafa. The attack was repulsed with mortars and machine gun fire. Reports spoke of 12 killed and eight wounded (or *vice versa*: the sources were contradictory) on the Arab side and one killed and one wounded on the Jewish side. The Haganah maintained that the Arabs asked the British to help them remove the wounded and that the latter believed that captives had been taken in the incident. The British threatened to mount a search of the neighborhood but were finally persuaded that there were no captives. Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, pp. 186–187, 443, based on IDFA and ISA. The daily report of the Army for the 22nd of the month, based on the 2nd Infantry Brigade in Jerusalem, notes that one Arab was killed and one Jew wounded in a battle between Mekor Haim and Baka at 4 a.m. on the 20th. TNA WO275/67.

But today has been our first glorious spring day; the air itself almost coruscating in the brilliant sunlight in which every stone and tree becomes a jewel – urbs Sion aurea, Jerusalem the golden; or, as Josephus put it, a golden bowl full of scorpions.

Palestine light is of incredible clarity. It is brittle rather than glaring; translucent like cold spring water. In March and April among the hills of Samaria, Galilee and Transjordan, the wild flowers sprinkle the rocky and pale green landscape with red, yellow and blue. Sometimes the red anemones cover a whole hillside, and the blue lupines shine for miles like great splashes of ultramarine paint split among the young grass.

Five sets of tennis this afternoon were the first exercise I have had for weeks.

21st March

I found Peter Towers Clark⁷⁷ waiting outside St. George's,⁷⁸ when I came out of church after a long Palm Sunday service, to summon me to Government House.⁷⁹ Yesterday was one of our most disorderly days. The U.N. decision of November 29th has now caused the loss of about

⁷⁷Apparently Gurney's chauffeur.

⁷⁸St. George's Cathedral, the centre of the Anglican Church in the country and the headquarters of the Jerusalem and East Mission; located in East Jerusalem at the convergence of Nablus Road and Salah a-Din Street.

⁷⁹Headquarters of the British Mandate Administration in Palestine, located on the Jabel al-Mukaber ridge (traditional site of the Hill of Evil Counsel), which in the Mandate period was south of Jerusalem. In 1927, Augusta Victoria, on the Mount of Olives, the residence of the High Commissioner, was damaged in an earthquake. The British proceeded to build a compound for the High Commissioner's residence and office and as a symbol of the Mandatory's rule. Its designer was Austen Harrison, the chief architect of the British Administration from 1922 to 1937, whose work also included the Rockefeller Museum in East Jerusalem and the Central Post Office in West Jerusalem. David Kroyanker, *The Architecture of Jerusalem during the British Mandate*, Jerusalem 1989 (Hebrew), p. 437. Government House has a view to the city's traditional centres; since 1949 it has been the Middle East headquarters of UNTSO, the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization.

2,000 lives and 5,000 wounded.⁸⁰ The Jews have declared their determination not to be deflected by a hair's breadth from their goal of a Jewish State, to which they are entitled by Justice and historic right. The Arabs will probably accept a temporary trusteeship, provided that it does not prejudice their claim to an independent unitary state, to which they are entitled by the same historic right and justice.

Lunch with Hamburger at the King David Hotel was a memory of what he as manager did to make the King David Hotel the best hotel in the Middle East.⁸¹

An afternoon of battle and bullets, and the Army playing football among them. Another lovely day.

Was it Milton who wrote "When chaos umpire sits and by decision The worse embroils the fray?"⁸² Chaos seems pretty certain; what remains to be seen is who is going to get the blame for it. Leslie Gibson and the Hagans returned from Amman with arms full of blue lupines.⁸³

⁸⁰Emmanuel Sivan's view in *The 1948 Generation: Myth, Profile and Memory*, Tel Aviv 1991 (Hebrew), pp. 17–21 – that it is possible to estimate the number of mobilized Jewish troops who were killed but that it is difficult to estimate the number of civilians killed – is equally applicable to the less organized Palestinian population. Gurney's figures are a good estimate. They are based on the daily report of events and casualties submitted by the headquarters of the 6th Airborne Division (6 AB DIV), which as of April became the headquarters of the Northern District (NORTHSEC), TNA WO275/67. According to a report of the Middle East headquarters of the Ministry of War, TNA CO637/3867, March 16, the number of those killed stood at 1,330 (625 Jews and 705 Arabs). Gurney added the British and others who were killed, based on the daily reports. The losses sustained by both sides in the bloody clashes on the roads from the end of March bear noting. According to the summation of events by the CID (Criminal Investigation Department) on April 9, 1948, TNA CO537/3875, the number of those killed in the hostilities stood at 2,047: 895 Jews, 991 Arabs, 123 British soldiers and policemen, and 38 others.

⁸¹Designed by the Swiss architect Emile Vogt, who drew his inspiration from motifs of the ancient Middle East, the hotel was inaugurated in 1931. At the beginning of the Second World War the Administration leased its southern wing to house its Chief Secretariat and Army headquarters. Max Hamburger took over as the hotel's manager in 1937.

⁸²The quotation – not quite accurate – is from *Paradise Lost* by John Milton (1608–1674), Ann Arbor 2000, p. 907.

⁸³Leslie Gibson, the General Prosecutor of the British Administration.

Fourth Perspective

“The five lone pilgrims”

On March 1, 1948, the advance group of the U.N. Commission appointed by the General Assembly to implement the November 1947 partition resolution arrived in Palestine. “The five lone pilgrims”, as the group was dubbed, set out following lengthy negotiations between Britain and the U.N. The group’s leader, Dr. Pablo de Azc’arate, who was later appointed acting governor of Jerusalem on behalf of the U.N. (a position without true substance), was an ardent advocate of partition. He was also the most courageous and most determined of the members of the advance party, risking his life to carry out the mission even after it had become clear that it could not succeed. The military aspect was covered by Colonel Roscher Lund, from Norway; Prof. Dwarkanath Ghush, from India, was responsible for the economic side; and the political and legal adviser was Constantine Stravropoulos, from Greece. Audrey Owen, from Australia, was the group’s secretary and moving force.

The repeated delays in the group’s departure, the attitude it encountered in Palestine, and its failure to bring in its wake the full commission, reflected the inability of the new world body to implement its resolutions in general and the Palestine resolution in particular. The result was that within six months – from November 1947 to May 1948 – the U.N. lost its status as initiator and was reduced to acting as a mediator after the Mandate expired.

The British Government, as noted, was loath to find itself in a situation where it would have to resort to force in Palestine, and therefore refused to cooperate with any proposal which was not agreed to by both sides. The British had neither the desire nor the capability to make effective use of their military force, which was rapidly dwindling due to the evacuation and their increasingly tenuous political status in the region. Both the Arabs and the Jews treated the commission as they usually did with British or international bodies: the Arabs with a boycott, the Jews with inordinate attention. The Political Department of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem hosted the group enthusiastically. The Jewish Agency Executive was willing to accept Jerusalem’s internationalization in return for the establishment of a Jewish state and the city’s exclusion from hostilities. The common interest of both the advance party and the Jewish Agency in the implementation of the Partition Plan, and the treatment the “five lone pilgrims” received from the Jewish side made them, and Dr. Azc’arate in particular, effective allies of the Zionist cause and advocates for it *vis-à-vis* the Mandate authorities.

Because the High Commissioner himself, in contrast to the Administration he led, favored the U.N. Partition Plan, his staff was compelled to cooperate – albeit with blatant reservations – with the U.N. group. Gurney led the opposition within the Administration to the U.N. in general and to the advance party especially. His reluctance to cooperate with the group was plain to see and he missed no opportunity to tell its members what he thought of their mode of operation and their prospects of success. In contrast to the High Commissioner, he did not believe that the group would be capable of engineering a transfer of power to the U.N. when the time came (and that time was fast approaching).⁸⁴

22nd March

The American Consul-General called this morning, and had a talk on the new situation at Lake Success. He has been warned on the telephone by the Jews that no Jews would attack the Consulate, but possibly the Arabs would and blame it on the Jews; two days ago he had an exactly similar communication from the Arabs *mutatis mutandis*. The only conclusion he can come to is that somebody intends to have a shot at it. I should think it very unlikely.

In the afternoon Dr. Azc'arate of the U.N. Commission advance party had an hour's discussion about the future of Jerusalem. These exploratory talks don't achieve much.

The Army has been using 25 pounders for the first time today, against the Arabs at Artuf and at Haifa. This has caused a good many Arab casualties, but they have had plenty of warning.⁸⁵

The High Commissioner had a farewell dinner party for Isabel,⁸⁶ which was most pleasant and friendly, though there is a general air of dissolution about. One cannot help wondering who will be in Government House in 53 days from now, and whether the U.N. can in fact make

⁸⁴Azc'arate, *Mission in Palestine*, pp. 4–12.

⁸⁵British artillery at the time prevented the Arabs from capturing Hartuv, west of Jerusalem. In Haifa there was increasing cooperation between the Haganah and the British, who believed that a takeover by the strongest force in the city – the Haganah – would create the calm they needed in order to complete the evacuation without casualties or property damage. (The port of Haifa was the destination of the departing forces and equipment.) This approach would find its salient expression a month later in the battle of Haifa.

⁸⁶Isabel Gurney, the Chief Secretary's wife.

it in time. Ruhi Bey sent two boxes of Turkish Delight from Amman as a parting present and as a means of adding to the general indigestion.

Fifth Perspective

The deterioration in the Civil War from the viewpoint of the Mandate Administration

In his entry for March 23, Gurney mentions a booby-trapped truck which the Haganah blew up in a crowded Arab area of Haifa the previous day. The fact that he omitted to mention that on the day before that the Arabs exploded a booby-trapped car next to the offices of the Solel Boneh construction company near the Haifa Port, might say something about his personal viewpoint. However, his comment – “This ruthlessness, which the Jews mistakenly believe will deter the Arabs, merely drives them on to further retaliations” – also reflects the Mandate Administration’s attitude toward the increasingly violent civil war and should alter, at least to a degree, the Israeli collective memory, which tends to be void of complexity.

That collective memory would later be preoccupied with the question of “who started” the conflict in Palestine, but this was of no concern to the British. What they saw was a self-nourishing cycle of violence. They were not interested in differentiating between “freedom fighters” and “terrorists”. The question that interested them was who could break the cycle of violence so that the evacuation could be completed on schedule, without casualties, and without the British having to mount operations favoring one side or the other. And as it became increasingly apparent to the British that their forces, now sharply reduced in number (as the evacuation proceeded according to plan), were incapable of taking action, they pointed an accusing finger at the Yishuv, simply because they understood that it was superior in every respect to the Arab forces. Within a short time – in April – the initiative, too, would pass to the Yishuv.⁸⁷

From the outset there was disagreement between the civilian and military authorities of the Administration about the Yishuv’s strength.

⁸⁷An appraisal that the Administration was incapable of dealing with the violence was voiced as early as the eve of the U.N. partition vote. Administration leaders afterward reiterated this time and again; for example, at a coordination meeting held at Government House on November 14, 1947, in the presence of the High Commissioner, the GOC Middle East, the Chief Secretary, the GOC Palestine, and aides. MECA, CP, 4/2.

Thanks to its direct interaction with the Jewish community, the civilian leadership had a better understanding of the Yishuv's political, organizational, and military capabilities and knew that it could be restrained only if the central leadership in London so desired. The military tended to accept the assessments of the Chiefs of Staff in London, their superiors, who were unfazed at the Yishuv's rising military power. They thought it best to calm the Palestinian Arabs and that ways could be found to get along with the Jews. The view in the weekly meetings of the Mandate leadership was that it was essential to monitor closely the Jews' actions. The meetings generally addressed the question of what the Jews would do next and how the Administration should behave so as not to jeopardize its interests or endanger the militarily inferior Arabs. The civilian and military authorities' evaluations of the strength of the Yishuv – the former usually exaggerated, the latter understated – were a crucial factor in the Administration's ultimately failed attempts to cope with the civil war.⁸⁸

The High Commissioner was sympathetic toward the Yishuv and thought its strength might be advantageous for British interests as well, if the sides could identify their common interests. The Chief Secretary rejected this approach. However, the two officials shared the view that the Jews, as the superior force, bore responsibility for the course of events.

It is not by chance that the example Gurney chooses to cite here refers to an event that occurred in Haifa. The dynamics of the situation were particularly clear there due to the rapid transition in the city from Jewish-Arab coexistence to a situation of uncontrolled violence and because Haifa was the nerve centre of the British evacuation. Although there were calls for moderation on both sides, in the end a thirst for revenge, compounded by despair and anxiety, generated mutual violence that soon lurched out of control. The reaction of the Jewish side was more lethal because of its superior military prowess. The British understood this well.⁸⁹

⁸⁸On the differences between the civilian and military authorities, see, for example, a meeting in Jerusalem held on the day of the U.N. vote on partition, on the eve of the civil war: 29.11.1947, MECA, CP, MSC, 4/1; On the contrary evaluation of the Chiefs of Staff on the eve of the war: Message from Chiefs of Staff for Commanders in Chief Middle East 11.11.1947, TNA AIR23/8342.

⁸⁹On the attempts at restraint on the Arab side: Tamir Goren, "The Arab Leadership in Between the British Command and the Haganah One", Y. Ben-Artzi (ed.), *Haifa, Local History*, Haifa 1998, p. 190; on the ambivalent mood on the Jewish side, for example. in regard to the efforts of the local leadership to persuade the Arabs not to leave, *ibid.*, p. 208, and attorney Salomon, letter to Ben Gurion, June 19, 1961, in Yaakov Salomon, *In My Own Way*, Jerusalem 1980 (Hebrew), pp. 128–131, in contrast to the letter of Moshe Carmel, the commander of the Carmeli Brigade, in Tzadok Eshel, *The Haganah Battle Over Haifa*, Tel Aviv 1998 (Hebrew), p. 340.

The inability of either the civilian or the military echelon to restore calm was frustrating for both the Jews and the Arabs, and led to some of the violence being aimed at the British. The repeated attacks by both sides against the British, as Gurney notes in the diary, were more than merely tactical ploys. In addition to anger and a desire for revenge against those who still ultimately bore responsibility for the events (responsibility that was much intensified in the perception of the warring sides because of their shared assumption that the British intended to stay), the attacks were also motivated by a desire to put pressure on the Administration in the hope that it would act to suppress the other side, as it had done effectively during the Arab Revolt of 1936–1939 and had threatened to do during the uprising of the United Jewish Resistance movement in 1945–1946 – a threat that sufficed to put a stop to the insurrection.⁹⁰

23rd March

Wet and cold again, but fairly quiet (so far). When I went to St. George's School in the afternoon to present leaving certificates and deliver a most dismally moralizing speech, the boys' parents had evidently arranged a few hours truce. This school, run by the Anglican Church since long before the British occupation, is one of our most successful institutions in which Arabs and Jews and others have got a good education together.⁹¹ Out of 380 boys only some 80 now remain and no Jews. I talked to them of the hopelessness of any peace imposed and maintained by force, and that the British looked upon such a state of affairs as no peace at all. I quoted to them Cecil Spring-Rice's:

They may not count her armies, they may not see her King,
Her fortress is a faithful heart, her pride is suffering,

⁹⁰On the expectations of the two sides from the British: Goren, "The Arab Leadership", pp. 185–190; Ben Gurion, Letter to the High Commissioner, 8.12.1947, in David Ben Gurion, *When Israel Fought in Battle*, Tel Aviv 1975 (Hebrew), pp. 19–20. The Yishuv's anger at the British, caused by a misunderstanding of their actions, was not translated into attempts to attack them. The violence against the British was perpetrated by the breakaway groups.

⁹¹The school was located in the compound of St. George's Cathedral.

And soul by soul and silently her shining bounds increase,
And her ways are ways of gentleness, and all her paths are peace.⁹²

And also, in contrast to the eastern liking for drifting with the tide of events:

Their shoulders held the heavens suspended;
They stood, and earth's foundations stay.⁹³

But speaking to a mixed audience of parents and boys in present circumstances is not easy, and one feels more than usually sanctimonious.

The ship "Flying Arrow" arrived at Haifa today with about 50 half-track armored vehicles on board, for the Jews from America. The landing of these could not be allowed. Although entered as tractors, they are clearly warlike stores: if they were landed and warehoused, the Arabs, who know all about them, would certainly have a shot at blowing them up.⁹⁴

Yesterday a party of Jews, dressed as British officers and soldiers, exploded a truck in an Arab street in Haifa and caused many casualties. This ruthlessness, which the Jews mistakenly believe will deter the Arabs, merely drives them on to further retaliations. Moreover, the

⁹²Cecil Spring-Rice (1859–1918), a British diplomat; the quotation is from the hymn "I Vow to Thee My Country."

⁹³From A. E. Housman (1859–1936), Cambridge professor of classical Greek literature; the quotation is from the hymn, "Epitaph on an Army of Mercenaries."

⁹⁴As part of its efforts to build up its arsenal ahead of a possible Arab invasion, the Haganah sought to acquire armored combat vehicles from foreign suppliers, mainly in the United States. The major obstacles to these efforts were the American arms embargo, in force since 1947, and British supervision. In January 1948, more than a hundred M3 halftracks were purchased by agents acting for the Haganah in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. They were painted red and labeled tractors. When the intensifying war prompted the early shipment of 53 of the items, the FBI passed on the information to the U.S. consul-general in Jerusalem. In Haifa, the Haganah succeeded in offloading 13 of the halftracks before the British deputy director of the Ports Authority arrived on the scene, accompanied by a U.S. representative. After examining the shipment, the two officials ordered the ship to sail. The vessel proceeded to Bombay, where the remaining 40 halftracks were mothballed. Amitzur Ilan, *Embargo, Power, and Military decision in the 1948 Palestine War*, Tel Aviv 1995 (Hebrew), pp. 103–104.

habit, which both sides now have, of dressing up as British makes the British troops' task infinitely harder. But an officer killed near Lydda two days ago was wearing a kilt.⁹⁵

A number of Arabs have told me during the last few days that none of them wants the British to leave and that we ought to stay. I always refer them to their political leaders and press, which urge us to depart and let them get on with establishing their own independence themselves. But the Christian Arabs, some 120,000 of them, are in an unenviable minority position and believe that they will get no more consideration from the Moslem brethren than they had under the Turks.

A party of 40 Moslems armed with Sten guns have apparently established themselves in the courtyard of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, to assist in keeping order during the Easter ceremonies. By various means this party has now been reduced to eight with unloaded rifles. The old City at Eastertide, with its Christian, Moslem and Jewish shrines and ceremonies all mixed up, is like the proverbial powder magazine surrounded by people with boxes of matches. What has to be remembered is that order is being maintained in the Old City by the British and by nobody else. A false step could cause the death of thousands of people.

Sixth Perspective

The crisis of the convoys in winter–spring 1948 in British eyes

During February and March the Palestinian Arabs experienced a relative surge of strength. Diagnosing accurately the Achilles heel of the Yishuv – movement on the roads, especially in rural areas – they targeted that arena. As a result, both “Ben Gurionist historiography” and later historians viewed the “crisis of the convoys” as the nadir of the Jewish side in the civil war and, concomitantly, the height of the Arabs’

⁹⁵On March 21 an Arab booby-trapped car was blown up on Hanamal Street in Haifa, adjacent to the offices of the Solel Boneh construction company, killing six people and wounding about 50. The Haganah retaliated with a booby-trapped truck the next day on Iraq Street, in Haifa’s lower city, killing five and wounding dozens. Eshel, *The Haganah Battle Over Haifa*, pp. 340–342; Salomon, *In My Own Way*, p. 123; Goren, “The Arab Leadership”, p. 196.

success.⁹⁶ It is also generally accepted that the Haganah initiative at the beginning of April (“Operation Nahshon”) reversed the situation.⁹⁷

An examination of the civil war in Palestine from the viewpoint of the Mandate authorities provides a different view of the period. As observers (albeit involved observers), the British took a more balanced view of the unfolding events. British documentation of the period makes no mention of a “crisis of convoys”. Even at the end of March 1948, when the “crisis of the convoys” of the Haganah was at its height, the British – both the civilian and military echelons – continued to believe that the Jewish side was stronger and was dictating the pace and character of the fighting. In their view, the Jews’ harsh response to the Arab violence – launched at the beginning of December 1947 – was accelerating the crisis, not eradicating it. Even in February–March 1948, the British could not understand what they perceived as the Jews’ eagerness for battle: Why, they wondered, did the Jews not take advantage of the British readiness to transport everything – even weapons (for purposes of defense only), not to mention food and medical supplies – from place to place? Why did they insist on using convoys just when British protection was not operative? Thus, from the British perspective the convoys were clear acts of provocation, intended to give the “boastful” Jews a pretext to attack.⁹⁸

This is not the place for an extended discussion about the logic that underlay the Haganah’s policy of convoys – how much of it was dictated by constraint and how much was done by choice. Moreover, the method worked. The fact that the forces of Abd al Kader al Husseini concentrated their offensive at the one site where they stood a chance

⁹⁶On March 18 a convoy to Jerusalem was attacked; on the 22nd a convoy to Hartuv; on the 24th to Atarot; and that night another convoy to Jerusalem. On March 27 a convoy making for Kibbutz Yehiam, in Western Galilee, came under attack, and on March 27–28 the battle for the Nebi Daniel convoy was fought. A convoy was attacked near Kibbutz Hulda, near Rehovot, on March 31.

⁹⁷On the Jewish side the war was managed by Ben Gurion, and his comments are a faithful reflection of the way the war was perceived by most of the Yishuv. The description of Operation Nahshon, on the road to Jerusalem, as the turning point in this phase of the war first appears in remarks made by Ben Gurion at the dedication ceremony of the “Road of Heroism” (Nahshon-Shimshon-Sha’ar Haggai) on December 7, 1948, *When Israel Fought*, p. 340.

⁹⁸On the Administration’s astonishment at the unwillingness of the Jewish Agency to accept aid in securing the convoys and on the accusation that the Jews were fomenting deliberate provocations on the roads, see, for example, 30.1.1948, MECA, CP, MSC, B4, F1. The Haganah’s major preoccupation in March was not necessarily survival, but preparations – “Plan Dalet” – to take control of the country when the Mandate ended.

against the Jewish forces – at Sha’ar Haggai, on the way to Jerusalem – and thus severely reduced the city’s food supply, did not affect the balance of forces in the war overall.⁹⁹

The prime factor in reducing the need for convoys was the abandonment of the strategy of defending every settlement separately (the reason for the “convoys strategy”) and the transition to an offensive strategy in the spirit of “Plan Dalet”, rather than the difficulties on the way to Jerusalem at the end of March and the beginning of April. At the same time, it should be borne in mind that for the Haganah high command, the convoys in general, and the convoys to Jerusalem in particular, were not only an urgent operational necessity, but also a symbol of acquired independence. The convoys to Jerusalem brought more than reinforcements and food: in the final analysis they also brought Israeli sovereignty, which filled the void left in the city by the British and the United Nations. This was also the case in the Negev and Western Galilee. This perspective, of course, could not have been apparent to the British as the ruling authority or as an observer.

The important fact for our purposes is that the British did in fact seek to assist both sides, which during these months found themselves in a serious plight on the roads. The fact that the Jews almost always refused to accept the help that was offered, and their insistence on operating their own independent system of convoys, reinforced the Administration’s feeling about the Haganah’s strength. The Arabs, who were incapable of organizing convoys of their own, certainly tried to move under British Army protection. However, as British military capability diminished, the Arabs increasingly had to face the superior Haganah forces on the roads, and elsewhere, alone. The Haganah, too, was well aware of the benefits of the British presence on the roads. From the latter part of February 1948, most of the British traffic to Jerusalem was rerouted westward from the Sha’ar Haggai road to the Ma’aleh Beit Horon road (Ramallah-Latron) – a safer route because the Jews did not use it, so it was free of hostilities. The British move was a severe blow to the Haganah convoys. To counteract it, Yigal Allon, the commander of the Palmah, the

⁹⁹Motti Golani, “The ‘Haifa Turning Point’: The British Administration and the Civil War in Palestine, December 1947–May 1948”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 2 April 2001 pp. 35–37, questions the traditional historical place assigned to the “crisis of the convoys”. More recently, similar reservations have appeared in the most comprehensive study published to date about the 1948 war: Gelber, *Independence Versus Nakba*, pp. 108–112.

Haganah commando force, which was assigned to protect Jewish transportation, proposed “cutting off completely the Ramallah and Latrun road [by blowing up bridges and sabotaging sections of the road] in order to force the [British] Army to return to our road [the Sha’ar Haggai road]”.¹⁰⁰

Both sides encountered transportation difficulties. The apparent strengthening of the Arabs in March, even if only temporarily – seen in the formation of the Army of Liberation and their relative success in attacking Haganah convoys bound for Jerusalem – made little impression on the British. In fact, the British on both sides of the Jordan thought little of the Arabs’ military and organizational capability. The British ambassador and strongman in Amman, Sir Alec Kirkbride, who had an intimate knowledge of the region, viewed Fawzi al Quwakji, the most prominent commanding officer in the Army of Liberation, as “almost a danger to his own side”.¹⁰¹

Even though Gurney mentions in the diary almost all the breakdowns of the Haganah convoys, he does not identify any sort of crisis. Still, in his entry for March 30 he refers to a food crisis on the Jewish side. This he attributes to the Jewish Agency’s obdurate refusal to accept the assistance the British were offering in regard to food and medical convoys, rather than to the Haganah’s military inferiority. On the contrary: Gurney was aware of the high organizational capability of the Jewish Agency and the Haganah as an operational instrument. He understood that the Arabs’ success was only local and could be overcome with the right coordination between the dwindling British Army and the rising power of the Haganah. From March, the official food authorities under his responsibility could rely only on Haganah convoys – another reason for the aid the Army gave these convoys in many instances. Indeed, until late March the convoys made their way to the city in orderly fashion, most of them arriving safely.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰In cases where the Jews accepted the British offer to assist in securing transportation, the result was beneficial; for example, Ben Gurion on the British escort of the convoys to the Negev, *When Israel Fought*, pp. 26–27; also Sasha (Yigal Allon) to Hillel (Israel Galili) and Azariya (M. Shaham, who was responsible for transportation on the General Staff), “On Securing the Transportation on the Jerusalem Road”, March 7, 1948, IDFA 922/75/1026.

¹⁰¹Roger Louis, “Sir Alan Cunningham and the End of the British Rule in Palestine”, G. Sheffer (ed.), *The Struggle for the State*, Jerusalem 1992 (Hebrew), p. 148.

¹⁰²On the Army’s attitude toward the convoys, see, for example, Intelligence Newsletter No. 65, HQ, British Troops in Palestine, 23 March–7 April 48, TNA WO275/67.

Gurney attributed the crisis on the road to Jerusalem to four causes: the absence of an alternative to the Jaffa-Jerusalem road (via Sha'ar Haggai through Nahshon Creek); the loss of essential vehicles in the Nebi Daniel convoy (March 27–28); the relatively poor discipline of the Jewish public in Jerusalem; and the transport of “other things” – arms, ammunition, reinforcements – at the expense of food. The first three causes were accepted by the Yishuv leadership even at the time and thus also entered Israeli historiography. The fourth cause was the dispute between the British and the Yishuv leadership.

It is well commonly assumed that “Operation Nahshon” (April 3–13, 1948), conducted on the road to Jerusalem, was the turning point in the civil war – but it was not. Certainly the operation bore historic importance because of the decision on principle to concentrate manpower and arms. On the Jewish side, it was definitely an internal/organizational turning point, with long-term implications in terms of the outcome of the war. However, the operation itself failed and so had little impact on the events of April. After April 20 (amid the turning point in Haifa, as I will show later), following a series of actions within the framework of two consecutive operations which were effectively one (“Nahshon” and “Harel”), the Jaffa-Jerusalem road remained closed to the movement of Haganah convoys. The major importance of “Operation Nahshon”, from the perspective of the war’s turning point, lay in its cumulative effect in determining the approach on the eve of the Haifa turning point.¹⁰³

The so-called “Nahshon turning point” was hardly a surprise to the British, who, as we saw, were aware of the Jewish side’s superiority before April 1948. There is little in the British documents of the time to suggest that either the Administration or the military was particularly impressed by “Operation Nahshon”. For the British, as external observers, it was definitely not a turning point but a continuation of the Yishuv leadership’s insistence on adopting a confrontational stance toward the Arabs, despite British readiness to help calm the situation.

But readiness was one thing and capability another. In the last week of March, the Army wanted to but could not provide effective assistance to three large Haganah convoys: Yehiam (March 26–27), Nebi Daniel (March 27–28), and Hulda (March 31). The failed British attempt to come

¹⁰³According to Gelber, the major importance of the operation was internal, in that it confirmed the Yishuv’s ability to concentrate and activate military formations openly. *A Budding Fleur-de-Lis*, pp. 113–114, 128.

to the aid of the convoys which were attacked, especially in the case of the Yehiam convoy, in Galilee, was due to military weakness which led the field commanders to be wary of becoming entangled without the ability to back up the interventionist forces. In the case of the Hulda convoy, near Rehovot, there were no British forces in the area to begin with. In the wake of these failures, Gurney on April 1 proposed to the two sides to agree on checkpoints on the Jaffa-Jerusalem road, at which the British, together with the Arabs, would ascertain that the convoys contained only food and non-military equipment. Both sides declined to cooperate. The Arabs were not about to undercut their one success in the war: the battle for the Sha'ar Haggai-Jerusalem road; the Jewish side was about the launch "Operation Nahshon" and, in any event, by this time its leadership had lost faith in the Mandate authorities.¹⁰⁴

24th March

This morning a problem came up in the shape of the 50 American armored vehicles brought to Haifa from Philadelphia in the "Flying Arrow" as agricultural tractors. All sorts of bribes have been offered to Customs and Police to let these through for the Jews, but, as they are obviously warlike stores, with a good many other things in the ship, they must go away again.

The publicity conference this morning produced a magnificent fog. Publicity people always have the dual problem of (a) understanding what is happening (b) knowing what they can say about it. Very often it is just as well to avoid confusion and stick to.

Saw Isabel off at Lydda airport¹⁰⁵ this afternoon, but not without some adventures. Our Convoy formed up at the King David at 1.15, consisting of a police armored car, a busload of air passengers, a pickup

¹⁰⁴On the Yehiam, Nebi Daniel, and Hulda convoys, and on the failed British attempt to come to the aid of the first two: Motti Golani, *The Yishuv Leadership and the Question of Jerusalem in the War of Independence, December 1947–May 1948*, MA thesis, the Institute of Contemporary Judaism, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, December 1988 (Hebrew), pp. 136–137; Gelber, *A Budding Fleur-de-Lis*, pp. 104–105.

¹⁰⁵The international airport at Lod (Lydda) was planned and built by the British as part of an alignment that included the train station at Lod and the nearby Sarafand (Tzrifin) military base. Construction of the airport began in 1935 and it was opened for air transport in 1937.

with baggage, our car and a police escort. The start was delayed for an hour and three quarters, because the Arabs had just blown up two Jewish buses two miles out, killing nine and wounding several, who, but for the personal intervention of General MacMillan and the Life Guards would also have been killed. At the scene as we passed several hundred Arabs, armed with every conceivable weapon and covered with bandoliers and grenades, contemplated with obvious relish the still smoking remains of an overturned armored bus, from which the dead had now been extracted.¹⁰⁶ Two miles further on, between the Jewish settlements of Atarot and Nebi Yaakov, a Jewish machine gun opened up on us and we were under fire all the way across Kalundia landing ground.¹⁰⁷ Goodman, my police driver, stepped on the gas and passed the armored car which was leading and was firing over our heads. When we were out of range we stopped and the bus came up with 3 bullet holes through it and the pickup with its near front tire shot off. No one in the bus was hit, which was a miracle, two bullets passing within inches of one of the passengers' heads.

This rather spoilt what would have been a glorious spring afternoon's outing, and meant that when we got to Lydda at 4:15 I had to leave almost at once to get back by dark.¹⁰⁸ Between Jerusalem and Latrun on the Arab road there are now at least 12 Arab roadblocks, manned by Syrians and the wildest-looking ruffians all pointing guns

¹⁰⁶At about 1 p.m. a convoy of the Moriah Battalion was attacked at the southern entrance to the village of Shuafat; 14 people were killed and nine wounded. Army GOC, General MacMillan, whose convoy was delayed up by the battle, ordered his troops to put a stop to the hostilities and the wounded to be evacuated; the equipment was left to the Arabs (a procedure the British would repeat, on a larger scale, a few days later in the incident of the Nebi Daniel convoy). On the same day another convoy was also badly mauled at Sha'ar Haggai, near the lower pumping station; it was rescued by the British unit which guarded the pumps. Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, pp. 81, 135, 444. The British persisted in escorting Haganah convoys to the Atarot-Neveh Yaakov bloc, and they got through without casualties from then until the end of the Mandate on May 14.

¹⁰⁷From the point of view of the British and the Arabs, Neveh Yaakov, which lay east of and adjacent to the Jerusalem-Ramallah road, was an outpost which effectively blocked movement on the road. The Haganah did not always distinguish between British personnel and Arabs, mainly because the Arab Legion, which was still on loan to the British, defied their orders and harassed the Yishuv. 9.4, 16.4, 23.4, 1948, MECA, CP, MSC, 4/1.

¹⁰⁸There was no logic to Gurney's trip that day on the Jerusalem-Lod road other than his desire to accompany his wife as she left the country.

at you as you drive up. We mounted the largest Union Jack we could find, left the armored car behind, and went on with the police car only. When we came to Kalundia, there were four cars ditched and full of bullet holes, with the doors open and showing obvious signs of rapid evacuation,¹⁰⁹ but we got through without incident – and with speed. In Ramallah I saw Glubb in a jeep surrounded by large Arab crowds.¹¹⁰

At 6:30 Pollock, D.C. Jerusalem, just returned from ten days in London, came in to report on his discussions there.

The Arab bomb in Yemin Moshe yesterday evening broke several of our office windows. I had gone at about 6.15, half an hour before the explosion. The Arabs loaded a three ton truck with explosive, locked the steering, fixed the throttle full on and drove it, unmanned, at the outer defences of this slum quarter facing Zion. It brought down the upper framework of my window, and Dobbs, who was in his office a few yards away, was showered with glass. There were no casualties.¹¹¹

25th March

The Security Council has adjourned again for five days, until after Easter. Time is now so short that the U.N. can clearly do nothing, and there will be chaos. Truman made his statement this afternoon to the effect that the Jews and Arabs must be taken before the Security Council to arrange a truce; such acceptance as this might have had from the Arabs was destroyed by the addition that the U.S. Government stood by its immigration policy for Palestine. Without that embellishment, the President's appeal might have stood some chance. When one remembers that it is the American press and American Zionists who are responsible

¹⁰⁹It is not clear what cars these were; since December 1947 both sides had attacked each other's transportation in this area.

¹¹⁰John Glubb Pasha, the commander of the Arab Legion. Until mid-May the Legion was on loan to the British and part of their deployment of forces. The British wanted to end this arrangement before the end of the Mandate but felt constrained to retain the Legion because of their shortfall of manpower as the evacuation continued and the war was intensified. Glubb was in Palestine in order to familiarize himself with the terrain, prepare his army, and win the trust of the Palestinians. Benny Morris, *The Road to Jerusalem*, London & New York 2002.

¹¹¹James Pollock, the Commissioner of the Jerusalem District. Dobbs, the assistant to the aide to the Interior Secretary in the Administration. According to Haganah sources, at 6:20 p.m. on March 23 a car was rolled down to the northern end of the neighborhood, where it exploded, wounding two residents. Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, p. 200.

more than anyone else for the present troubles in Palestine, this realistic approach, at the eleventh hour, is a bit overdone.¹¹²

The High Commissioner is laid up with flu.

Another Yemin Moshe battle this evening, eventually stopped by the Army, but for an hour or so every known sort of small arm and mortar seemed to be engaged. During this uproar, I was occupied with the local Jewish representative of the Palestine Corporation, confirming his worst fears on the future.¹¹³

The I.G.P. came in with further depressing news.

It seems to be only a question of time now before it will become clear that the U.N. can do nothing to provide an effective administration for Palestine in any form. It would be useful for us to know when exactly this will be, because if the U.N. failure means chaos anyhow, the sooner we go the better.¹¹⁴ But so long as there is any chance at all of anything helpful emerging at Lake Success, we must hang on. President Truman's statement, no doubt made under strong pressure from the Zionist voters and the formidable array of American bodies and organizations in America that the Jews control, only shows up the lack of sincerity behind Senator Austin's statement and [the lack] of understanding [by the State Department] of the real issues between Arabs and Jews.¹¹⁵ The Jewish line will now no doubt be to filibuster and delay and prevent the Assembly from substituting any other plan for their 29th November resolution before the end of the Mandate, so that it can then be shown that the resolution still holds good, and in

¹¹²In a press conference on March 25, President Truman tried to restore diplomatic calm in the wake of the surprise statement by his U.N. envoy six days earlier. The President asserted that the trusteeship concept adduced by the U.S. delegation was not intended to replace the partition plan. His desire was for the U.N. to concentrate solely on the effort to bring about a truce. *Diplomatic Documents*, p. 588, note 3.

¹¹³The battle was over the Arabs' success that evening in blowing up a house at the southern end of the neighborhood: Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, p. 200. The Palestine Corporation was an economic venture established by the Anglo-Palestine Company (which afterward became the Anglo-Palestine Bank); the imminent departure of the British threatened the corporation's future, as it did other projects which relied on Mandatory guarantees.

¹¹⁴An echo of the differences among the civilian and military authorities in Palestine and between them and London regarding the timing of the evacuation.

¹¹⁵The U.S. ambassador to the U.N. was sent by the State Department, behind the President's back, to put forward the trusteeship concept as a substitute for partition.

setting up their State the Jews will be acting in accordance with it, and anyone who opposes it will be defying the U.N.

However, the U.N. allowed themselves to be jockeyed into this position and so used for partisan purposes, [it] is hard to understand, and it was of course only by means of American pressure organized by the Zionists that this result was achieved.

Last December Mrs. Meyerson, then the political head of the Jewish Agency in Palestine, told me that we British could not of course understand what it felt like to become an independent people and nation after 2,000 years of endeavor. I had to tell her frankly that it seemed a pity that so desirable an achievement should have had to be built upon a foundation of lies, chauvinism, suspicion and deception. She then departed for America and I have not seen her since.¹¹⁶

I have not done 27 years' Government service without recognizing the value of restraint and concealment of one's personal opinions, but in some circumstances only good can be done by exposing them. The choice of opportunity for frankness is not always easy to the politician, but with the Zionists we should have been frank 20 years ago and told them exactly where they stood so long as we were responsible for governing Palestine. In fact, the last 30 years in this country have seen nothing but fluctuations of policy, hesitations, or no policy at all. When Monty¹¹⁷ asked me here last year what was really wrong with Palestine, I said, "Merely a lack of policy with which nobody agrees." It is this continual surrender to pressure of one sort or another – American Jewry or Arab rebellion – that has made British policy in Palestine, with all its first-class administrative achievements, unintelligible to and mistrusted by both sides.

26th March

Good Friday. How quickly the days pass and how much the same they all seem. The usual morning in the office; the afternoon spent in trying to catch up with private correspondence. Went to see the High Commissioner at 7:30 and stayed for dinner. Rear Admiral Norman, Chief

¹¹⁶Meyerson was sent to the United States to raise funds for arms procurement on January 22, 1948; she returned on March 18, after raising more than \$30 million. Meron Medzini, *The Proud Jewess*, Jerusalem 1990 (Hebrew), pp. 146–154.

¹¹⁷Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery (Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, 1887–1976) was Commander of the Imperial General Staff (IGS) (1946–1948). He visited Palestine in June 1946 and November 1947; Gurney is referring to the second visit.

of Staff, Mediterranean was there, and we did not get away until after 11:00. As the High Commissioner is still obviously not well, this should have ended earlier.

27th March

The Good Friday services seem to have gone off all right. Last night between 3:00 and 5:00 in the morning there was a battle in which a number of new machine gun posts around here joined in. Mortars and bullets made it impossible to sleep. Security conference at 9:00 and a series of meetings through to lunch time.

This morning early the Jews launched a convoy of some 30 vehicles on the road from Jerusalem to their colony at Kfar Etzion. We have asked them on innumerable occasions to give us advance information of these convoys so that we can help them through. Like many others, this one started off in secret and contrary to our advice.

Pretending to be a British Army convoy, it got through Bethlehem and was then firmly wedged between mined Arab roadblocks. Appeals to the Army for help poured in, but there is now little to give. There was never a clearer case of willful defiance of all our efforts to help, and now of the usual squeals to extricate these people. The Chief Rabbi rang me up twice this evening, saying that 200 Jews were being murdered at that very hour, and asked me in God's name to assist in their rescue. I told him that our attitude was in no way influenced by their deliberate disregard of all our directions and that everything possible was being done. But at this late stage, very little can be done, and there is a major tragedy going on now.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸The Chief Rabbi was Isaac Herzog. The diary describes the convoy that was later known as the "Nebi Daniel convoy". The monthly report of British Army HQ in Palestine is more accurate. This, combined with Haganah sources, turns up the following description of the events. The convoy, under the command of Z. Zamir (commander of the 6th Battalion of the Harel Brigade), reached the Etzion Bloc on the morning of March 27. By the time it organized for the return, fighters of Abd al Kader set up roadblocks near the site known as Solomon's Pools. The nearly 200 members of the convoy barricaded themselves in a roadside building. The Army rescued them after about 24 hours of fighting in return for the handover to the Arabs of the weapons and vehicles (including the armored vehicles). This loss of equipment seriously affected the Haganah's ability to send convoys to Jerusalem. The British were aware of the quality of the convoy and of the price that was paid for its loss; Intelligence Newsletter No. 65, HQ British Troops in Palestine, 9.4.1948, TNA WO275/67; Johann Ben Yacov, *Gus Etzion*, Kfar Etzion, 1979 (Hebrew), pp. 210–227.

Meanwhile, the Jews in Jerusalem have been dropping mortars this afternoon on Damascus Gate, and have caused some Arab casualties there. This is one of the sensitive Arab spots on the walls of the Holy City. Such wanton firing at the precincts of Holy Places is in marked contrast with the Jewish Army's statement issued on Good Friday in America, calling for peace in the Holy City, and claiming that the Jews are the only people who really care about it, or are doing anything to secure it. Seen in its true light, the real cause of the trouble in Jerusalem is Zionist ambition, and nothing else.¹¹⁹

What is it that makes the Zionist so unpopular? There is a good illustration today. The American Zionist Emergency Council¹²⁰ has protested against the action threatened by the State Department against Americans for volunteering for service with the Jewish forces in Palestine, characterizing it as un-American and contrary to the best American traditions. What makes people really angry is to have their best traditions, their decent instincts, their sense of justice traded upon, exploited and prostituted to some partisan cause. The Zionist is an expert at this game. I was looking today at a full page advertisement for the United Jewish Appeal in the *New York Times* of the 16th March; a charcoal drawing, extremely well done, of a dead man sprawled across the page – “After seven hours, he died with a stone in his hand” – followed by an entirely false story of an attack by Arabs on a party of Jews near Kfar Etzion in January. In fact, on that occasion the Jewish party who were ambushed, were on their way to attack an Arab village.¹²¹ The art and the publicity technique are

¹¹⁹The Haganah that day launched concentrated fire at Arab-held areas in which massed troops were identified (“Operation Hizkiyahu”); 23 Arabs were killed, most of them next to Damascus Gate. Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, pp. 200, 445.

¹²⁰The Emergency Committee for Zionist Affairs was established in 1939 by the 21st Zionist Congress in order to centralize and coordinate the activity of the Zionist organizations in the United States. In 1943 it was renamed the Emergency Council. Its activity was the basis for the Israeli lobby in the United States since 1948.

¹²¹On the night of January 15–16, 35 soldiers from the Field Corps and the Palmah set out for the Etzion Bloc, which had been attacked on the 14th. They carried mainly ammunition and medical equipment. As they proceeded east from Hartuv they were ambushed by fighters of Abd el Kader who succeeded in reaching the ruins of Sensan (about one kilometer south of the present-day community of Tsur Hadassah). All 35 were killed in the ensuing battle and their bodies mutilated. The British brought the dead to the Etzion Bloc for burial; after the war they were reburied in Jerusalem. This was the Haganah's worst debacle to date. On the motivations for Gurney's remarks, see the above, p. 11.

first-class; but they are used only to deceive. The Zionist knows well the decent instincts of the Gentile, particularly the British and the Americans, that he can exploit to his own ends. In doing so, he creates anti-Semitism, and he knows it, but he takes the line that it is in his nature and he cannot help it. It is a part of the suicidal make-up, a seed of his own destruction, which he knows he carries, and this makes him desperate, ruthless, and utterly self-centred.

The Arab feels as strongly about the freedom of his country as any American would if a Jewish State were proclaimed in New York, and is completely intransigent and wooden in the face of any argument or persuasion to recognize the hard facts. He has achieved, under the British Mandate, a prosperity and development that he never knew before, largely through the help of Jewish money, but he does not want these things at the expense of his liberty and of his country. He is easy-going to the point of indolence, disposed to cruelty and capable of only about one idea at a time. The idea is formed on emotion rather than from any rational thought; it is nursed and chewed over on innumerable occasions in coffee-houses and in the press, until it is firmly stuck and nothing on earth will shift it.

Such is the conflict between Arab and Zionist. Not between Arab and Jew, because the Arab draws a distinction between the Jew and the Zionist. He recognizes the Jew as a fellow-Semite, and in many parts of Palestine the two have lived and worked together for years and still do, just as 120,000 Jews get along quite happily in Baghdad.¹²² This has led some observers to pronounce that Jews and Arabs are perfectly capable of getting on together and making friends. So they are: it is only the Zionist Jew who has made any cooperation impossible, and the Arab knows the Zionist Jew a good deal better than most other people. He has had the opportunity to see through all the propaganda and all the smokescreen, at the naked spectacle of Zionist aggression on his country as it really is. And it is this aggression that, in his view, the British have been helping and encouraging since the Balfour Declaration of 1917.

¹²²There were about 135,000 Jews in Iraq in 1947. From November 1947 until the middle of May 1948 they were subjected to relentless pressure. Their situation improved from the middle of May, in the wake of the Arab invasion of Palestine, as the Baghdad regime sought to ensure domestic stability. Some 3,800 Iraqi Jews reached Palestine by May 1948. The major exodus began in 1949, and by 1951 the entire community was in Israel. Esther Meir, "Illegal Immigration and the 'Haganah' in Iraq", H. Saadoun and Y. Rappel (eds), *Zionist Underground Activity in Muslim Countries*, Jerusalem 1997 (Hebrew), pp. 95–96.

28th March

Easter Sunday and a glorious morning. Went to a choral communion service at St. George's to the sound of battle beyond Bethlehem. Pollock, the District Commissioner, rang up before I left to give me the latest report. It seems that some 30 survivors of the party of 150 or so in the convoy are trapped in an abandoned Arab house, where they are surrounded by hundreds of Arabs, with little chance of escape.

The G.O.C. came around at mid-day and together we saw the High Commissioner, with whom I stayed till nearly 4:00. In the end, after many complicated and delicate moves, 40 British troops and police succeeded in extricating the Jews, now numbering 149, who walked out with their hands up and were brought back to Jerusalem in Army transport. The police were largely responsible for this result, and there is no doubt that but for our efforts all these 149 would now have been dead for some hours, surrounded as they were in the end by about 3,000 angry Arabs. The Jews sent some aircraft over, dropping bombs on the Arabs, and the (Jewish) Agency had to be told to stop it, to which they agreed provided that a record was made that it was stopped at our request. But it now seems that some sort of assurance was given to the Arabs that the Jews would be detained, whereas they have been released now by the Police. This is a difficult one that will have to be settled tomorrow.

As against this scene, the Haganah in the Old City have killed one H.L.I.¹²³ corporal and wounded an officer and two others; and a Jewish sniper near St. George's has shot and seriously injured Miss Marston of the Jerusalem Girl's College.¹²⁴ On the other side, again, the Jews have lost 42 killed near Acre and 12 in the Bethlehem show as well as about 60 wounded.¹²⁵ So long as they break all the rules that we ask them to observe, they will go on killing themselves off.

Returning at 4:00 I went to the Sports Club terrace for a few minutes' peace, but a bullet came so close that I retired inside, and was then

¹²³The Highland Light Infantry, a Scottish regiment which was part of the 2nd Infantry Brigade left Jerusalem on May 14.

¹²⁴In Jerusalem Girl's College in Ussishkin St. at Rehavia had theoretical, secretariat and commercial studies.

¹²⁵The references are, respectively, to what was later known as the "Yehiam convoy" and to the "Nebi Daniel convoy" (on which see the entry for March 27). According to the Haganah, the death toll in the former was 46 and in the latter 15 (the British reported 12). Yehuda Slutsky, *History of the Haganah*, Vol. 3, Tel Aviv 1972, p. 1455; Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, p. 444; Intelligence Newsletter No. 65, HQ British Troops in Palestine, 9.4.1948, TNA WO275/67.

discovered by somebody with a bunch of telegrams, and so it went on. Today I was to have gone to see the Umayyad Palace near Jericho, which is being excavated by the Department of Antiquities and which I have never yet managed to see.¹²⁶ When I told the office yesterday I was going, they said all right, if anyone wants to see you we'll tell him to go to Jericho. I wish they had.

We had the prayer this morning about those who truly and indifferently minister justice. This always reminds me of the story of the local Police Inspector's remark to the visiting lawyer who commented upon the speed with which the Bench had disposed of his case – "Yes, sir, his Worship dispenses with justice very expeditiously".

A visit from the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. When I told Ken Lindsay that it was time that the shooting from St. Andrews was moderated, I doubted whether he liked it.¹²⁷ It seems that mosques, synagogues and churches are now mostly strategic points, and as Jerusalem is full of them... [In origin].

Seventh Perspective

The British policy of separation

Gurney's proposals or rather, demand to Chief Rabbi Isaac Herzog (entry of March 29) "to get the provocative Jewish element out of the Old City" was not a mere caprice. The Administration, with the assistance of the Army and the police, wanted to compensate for its growing weakness due to the evacuation by effecting a physical separation between Jews and Arabs. The primary effort in this regard was made in the mixed (Jewish-Arab) cities, which were the most potentially explosive.

In Jerusalem the British were concerned about a possible eruption of violence at the holy places in particular, not least due to the tension

¹²⁶The Sports Club, which was dedicated in 1946, exists today at 30 Hatzfirah Street. The Administration's Antiquities Department was excavating a site two kilometers north of Jericho, at the ruins of a palace built by the Umayyad Caliph Hisham in the 8th century CE.

¹²⁷The Church of St. Andrews (the "Scottish church"), built 1927–1930, lies just north of the old railway track, above Hinnom Valley. The reference is probably to shooting by Arabs at Hebron Road and the Mishkenot Sha'ananim and Yemin Moshe areas. The church official undoubtedly took such accusations as an affront. Concerts are now held in the church, which also runs a coffee shop and a hotel on the premises.

between Jews and Arabs at these sites since the advent of British rule. The most dangerous areas were thought to be the city's mixed neighborhoods. The event that effectively launched the civil war – a serious clash between Jews and Arabs in the mixed commercial centre in the Mamilla neighborhood – effectively translated their assessment into a harsh and threatening reality. On December 2, 1947, a two-pronged Arab mob burst out of Jaffa Gate and Damascus Gate in the Old City and made for the centre of the Jewish city, on nearby Jaffa Street. Rebuffed by the British police, the mob headed for the new commercial centre in Mamilla, just west of Jaffa Gate. Most of the businesses in the centre were Jewish-owned, with Arabs living above the shops. The rampaging mob set fire to businesses and assaulted residents. The British, who labored to push the mob back toward the Old City, had to contend immediately afterward with a Jewish mob which emerged from Jaffa Street and ransacked Arab property. For a few hours the British lost control in the city. They imposed a curfew on the Arab neighborhoods, because they believed that no one there would try to restrain the populace, and carried out arms searches among the Jews, the better organized side.¹²⁸

The upshot was that the Army was instructed to separate Jews from Arabs and to support, as far as possible, without getting embroiled with either side, the transfer of people to areas in which their nation had a clear majority. Consequently, the British did not prevent the mass flight of Arabs from the city's southwest neighborhoods of Qatamon, Talbiya, the German Colony, the Greek Colony, Baka, and Malha; from the northwest neighborhoods of Sheikh Bader and Lifta; in the west, from Beit Mazmil (today's Kiryat Yovel neighborhood), Ein Kerem and Hirbet Hamama (now Mount Herzl park and military cemetery). Similarly, it would have been convenient for the British if the Jews had left the Makor Haim neighborhood in the south of the city, the Old City, Mount Scopus, and Nahalat Shimon, which was adjacent to the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah (Nahalat Shimon was eventually evacuated).

This policy was inspired by the directives of the Evacuation Plan, which was approved in London on December 4, 1947. It stipulated that the Army, upon its withdrawal (and, implicitly, beforehand as well), was to assist the minority population to leave any area in which

¹²⁸On the Mamilla event, Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, pp. 21–25, 431–432; on the response of the High Commissioner and senior Administration officials to the events in the commercial centre, 5.12.1947, MECA, CP, MSC, 4/1.

it was endangered by the majority group. The major instances in which these directives were implemented were the British attempt to remove the Jews from Safed on the eve of their withdrawal from the town, on April 16; and the removal of the Arabs from Tiberias on April 18 and from Haifa during April 22–26. On the border of Jaffa and Tel Aviv the British civilian and military authorities tried from the start of the war to effect a separation between the two cities. In the end, this policy also encompassed isolated settlements. In these cases the situation of the Jewish settlements was more difficult, as some of them were cut off from a settlement bloc or from an urban centre, and they were far more dependent on the latter than their Arab neighbors.¹²⁹

In this case, the Yishuv's highly centralist and organized structure was a drawback for the British. After initial attempts to assist transportation to isolated Jewish and Arab communities, they despaired. By refraining from providing such assistance the British put pressure on the isolated settlements and on the central leadership (or the district leadership, in the Arab case) to evacuate in line with the Administration's separation approach. Examples on the Jewish side are the Etzion Bloc, Hartuv, Beit Ha'aravah, Yehiam, Yad Mordechai, the Negev settlements, and others, though not all of them were evacuated. The evacuations that were implemented occurred later, on the eve of the state's establishment and especially afterward, under the pressure of the invading Arab armies. By this time, they had been much weakened due to the absence of British assistance earlier. As for the Arabs, I know of no significant British attempt to prevent Arab civilians from leaving their villages or to stop them (including Arab city dwellers) from leaving the country.

If this British policy generally "succeeded" *vis-à-vis* the Arabs (whether passively or actively), it failed with regard to the Yishuv. The collapse of the Palestinian rural sector began as early as December 1947. From April 1948 the Arab urban centres also collapsed in rapid succession. The

¹²⁹On the signing of the Evacuation Plan on December 4, 1947, TNA CAB 128/10; on the evacuation of Safed and Galilee, Report of the Northern Battalion Commander to General Stockwell, Commander of Haifa and the North, Stockwell Papers, LHCMA 6/12/5; on the evacuation of the Arabs from Tiberias, R. Zaslani (Shiloah) wrote to Shertok, "The evacuation [of the Arabs] was managed by the British police and Army, amid appropriate arrangements with Jewish bodies", April 26, 1948, *Diplomatic Documents*, p. 666; on the British assistance to those fleeing from Haifa: Report by Major General HC Stockwell, Leading up to, and After the Arab-Jewish Clashes in Haifa on 21/22 April 1948, TNA WO275/20, 24.4.1948. The last of the Jews had left Jaffa long before – in 1936–1937, at the start of the Arab Revolt.

British welcomed this, albeit silently. The Yishuv's organizational, political, and military superiority was also manifested in the directive issued by the Haganah high command to the Jewish population not to leave even when the British proposed or pressed for evacuation and were capable of enforcing the order if necessary, as in the Old City of Jerusalem or Safad.¹³⁰

29th March

I rang up the Chief Rabbi early this morning, and drew his attention to what we had done to save the Jewish party south of Bethlehem yesterday (which the B.B.C. put over very well), and suggested that this would no doubt make it easier for him to get the provocative Jewish element out of the Old City. He said he would do his best, but I don't think he will.¹³¹

The I.G. called about various internal squabbles, and I had to say that we seemed to be fighting quite enough people without fighting each other as well.¹³²

¹³⁰On a similar Jewish and Arab response to the British separation policy in Safed, Tel Aviv, Jaffa, and Haifa, see, 26.12.1947, MECA, CP, MSC, 4/1; on the Yishuv's effective acceptance of the separation approach: Golani, "The Question of Jerusalem", pp. 158–173; on Safad on the eve of the British departure, Mustafa Abbasi, "The Battle for Safad in the War of 1948: A Revised Study", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 36 (2004) pp. 27–32.

¹³¹An echo of the British attempt, as part of the separation plan, to enable the population of the Jewish Quarter to move to the western city. At the Jewish Agency's behest, the Haganah command in the Old City prevented the residents from leaving. The Administration sought to locate the commanders in the Jewish Quarter (the "provocative Jewish element") and expel them (on March 3, A. Halperin, who had been the commander there since January 20, 1948, was expelled), while exerting pressure via religious leaders on the assumption that they would wish to prevent bloodshed at holy places and in the knowledge that the religious Zionist movement was a moderate element in the Yishuv.

¹³²The Inspector General of the Police was William Gray. The situation of the Mandate police force was a reflection of the Administration's general situation on the eve of the departure, in the sense that a large disparity existed between the quantity and quality of the missions called for by the surging war, and declining capability due to the ongoing evacuation. Such pressures generated friction within the police force, and between it and the Army, over questions of policy and acceptance of responsibility. Rivka Itzhaki-Harel, *Towards a State: British Rule, the Yishuv Leadership, the Police Force and the Supernumerary Police, 1918–1948*, Ph.D. Thesis, The Department of Eretz-Israel Studies, University of Haifa 2004 (Hebrew), pp. 249–274.

The American Consul-General called, and we discussed President Truman's statement.¹³³ We had been hoping for some urgent guidance from London, but the Government have gone to ground over Easter. We have no Easter holidays here.

Today has been a fairly quiet day, but that is usually a fatal thing to say, and is most provocative of violent explosions. The Jews are licking their wounds over yesterday's loss of all their crack armored convoy vehicles, and the Arabs are for the moment content. Dick Stubbs, the Public Information Officer, came in this afternoon over some of his problems. Apart from the 120 Palestine newspapers, there are about 70 foreign correspondents who send out a continual stream of facts or misstatements, according to whom they get it from. The American press go about in pink baseball caps and white jeeps: "*The Times*" in a Wolseley;¹³⁴ the rest in anything they can get, labeled largely "PRESS", which of course entitles them to intervene anywhere. I don't envy their job, particularly those who for years have been on sticky assignments in Greece and elsewhere. It's not easy to follow what is going on, even when you have access to all the information there is, but these fellows have to go out and get it for themselves. I see that Peter Duffield of the "*Daily Express*" recently criticized our Principal Information Office (P.I.O.) for being so helpful that all journalists were reduced to the same level by being able to get all they wanted by merely sitting in his press room.

In the Yemin Moshe explosion last week Stubbs had everything blown clean off his office table except the typewriter, which was hopelessly buckled inside. He has several good stories of life in the David building,¹³⁵ which is about 100 yards away from the Secretariat and in the direct line of fire in Yemin Moshe battles. A few nights ago a bullet came in at the open window and went through the picture behind his head. Is not some tribute due to people who do not seem to mind these things?

¹³³On March 25, President Truman stated that the trusteeship plan which the State Department had put forward a week earlier did not mean the end of the partition plan.

¹³⁴The Wolseley was manufactured in Britain from 1896 to 1975 by a family concern, the Wolseley Tool and Motor Car Company.

¹³⁵At the corner of Keren Hayesod and Jabotinsky Streets, built in the 1930s by a Christian Arab, the building housed several Administration offices and the Government Information Office. The British wanted to expand the building to beef up the southern route to the city centre.

I thought today that in spite of internal civil war in the country the Administration with its 30,000 Palestinian employees and only about 200 British officers left carries on cheerfully. Only six weeks and a bit to the 15th May and to the end of their career and all prospects for many of them. But the vast majority are still working loyally and doing what they can, at the mercy of events, and hoping. Like anyone else, they wonder what is going to happen to themselves, their wives, their children. They go to their work through bullets and bombs. I put this down as a tribute to the ordinary decent Arab and Jew and to the British who trained them. Many of them have already lost relatives, property and friends, but they go on. In recent speeches I have often used Burke's quotation: "When the waters are out and the bridges are down and the storm arises over the sea; then it is that we must give that thought to the welfare of mankind that no office has ever given and no office can ever give." (I realize that it is misquoted). But this line is already wearing thin. On the civil side we have really only one essential thing left to carry through – the paying off of all the abolition benefits to our officers. This is a vast operation, involving over 20,000 computations and the payment of about £2 m. in cash over all Palestine in face of the risk of theft and attack. But to this at least we are pledged.

Who would have thought that this was a holiday?

Eighth Perspective

Shedding light on the failed British attempt to establish an autonomous Palestinian entity

Gurney's comment (diary entry for March 30) – "our officers engaged in this task [convening and activating the Advisory Council] had never seen a Legislative Council and probably suffered from the usual bureaucratic feeling that it might not be very important, after all" – may shed additional light on the failure of the British to meet their commitment under the terms of the Mandate, in 1922, to establish elected institutions to precede Palestinian autonomy and afterward independence.

In October 1920, the first High Commissioner, Herbert Samuel, established the Advisory Council as a temporary body that would give expression to the British Government's intentions toward Palestine in the light of the deliberations being conducted by the League of Nations about Britain's future rule there. The Advisory Council, consisting of 20 members – ten Administration officials and ten public representatives

(three Jews, three Christians, and four Muslims) – advised the Mandate Administration on matters of legislation. Even though its formal approval was not obligatory, this forum was an instrument by which the Administration could find out the public’s opinion on a particular subject and possibly introduce amendments if the matter came up before the High Commissioner and his Administration. Despite the Council’s limitations, membership on it was a status symbol for both Administration officials and for the Jewish and Arab representatives. Twenty-eight years after this “temporary” body was created, Henry Gurney found himself facing the same Advisory Council a few weeks before the termination of the Mandate which the British received in order to rule Palestine and prepare it for independence.

In 1922, immediately after the Mandate was approved, an Order in Council issued in London decreed that the Jewish and Arab citizens of Palestine would be represented by means of a Colonial Legislative Council. From the outset this body was given limited powers. Although elections were held in 1923, the efforts to establish the Legislative Council, in both the 1920s and the 1930s, failed because of the disagreements between the Jews and the Arabs, and within each group, about whether to recognize it and how it would function.

Even though no legislative body was ever created in the spirit of the Mandate’s terms, the Administration was able to establish an executive body which operated, largely because most of its members were Administration officials. The Executive Council, established in 1922, was similar to a Cabinet but without Cabinet powers. Its members held central positions in the Administration, and in some cases Jewish and Arab public representatives were also co-opted. The permanent members were the High Commissioner, the Chief Secretary (the Colonial Secretary), the legal adviser, and the Treasurer. In time, other officials were added: the advisers on development and economic affairs, the Commissioner of the District of Jerusalem, and the Civil Service Commissioner. The Executive Council was the decision-making body in most of the practical matters involving local policy. However, it was precluded from making decisions that were contrary to the opinion of the High Commissioner.¹³⁶

Gurney’s approach to the absence of a legislative council and to the mode of operation of the Advisory Council reflects a sincere dilemma.

¹³⁶This subject is elaborated in Reuveny, *The Administration of Palestine*, pp. 31–36.

Despite his view that such a body was needed to ensure, for example, that the Jewish-Arab battlefield would not be moved from conference rooms to the towns and villages, he did not oppose the position taken by his staff – veteran colonial officials – who displayed very little enthusiasm for a legislative council which would involve public representatives concretely in the workings of the Administration. One could suspect with the Chief Secretary's remark that he and his Administration did not consider a legislative council necessary, as they had never seen one operating in Palestine. In fact, they had also never seen such a council in the majority of the places where they had served previously – and indeed, the “Mandatory phenomenon”, with its central element of tutelage leading to independence, thus going beyond classic colonial rule, was something new and not necessarily gladdening in the lengthy tradition of the Colonial Service. The practical approach of the colonial bureaucracy played a certain role in the failure to establish an institutional and judicial infrastructure leading to a state under the auspices of the Mandate and as a direct continuation thereof. At the same time, it is clear that overriding this, in the case of Palestine, were the “dual commitment” that Britain took on itself (which turned out to be unviable) and the Jewish-Arab conflict.

30th March

At 9:00 I met the Committee of the Jerusalem British Community,¹³⁷ to talk to them as to the future. I told them that we were not going to advise anyone to leave, partly because of the differences between individual cases, but would put the prospects before them as they appeared to us, and leave them to weigh up the problem for themselves. It was naturally rather a depressing party. There are about 100 British people who at present propose to stay after the 15th May, and have thought out plans for concentration, water, rations and evacuation if necessary. But if anyone wants Government help in getting out, he must let us know by the 15th April.

Remarkable effect of a Bank Holiday on his Majesty's Government – only one telegram.

¹³⁷This body was founded in the light of the dangers that confronted the employees of the Administration, the military and police personnel, and other Britons and their families in Jerusalem as Jewish terrorism intensified beginning in 1945, followed by the outbreak of war in December 1947.

A crisis arose over the food supplies of the 100,000 Jews of Jerusalem. What has really happened is that as they cannot get supplies now except by the single Jaffa road and have lost large numbers of armored trucks lately on expeditions loaded with cargoes other than food, they have only four days' supply of flour left and nothing in the shops, which have been more or less emptied by hoarders. One of my Jewish officers told me that he had seen no fresh meat or fish for two months, and that for the past week no Jew could get vegetables, milk, or fats. The Jaffa road is patrolled continuously by the Army, but the Jewish convoys have always refused to give any advance notice of themselves or to cooperate with the patrolling units; and when they do appear they are loaded with arms and other things inviting Arab attack. The Food Controller must use Jewish transport on this road, and the only thing to do seems to be to search, convoy food only, and give assurances to the Arabs accordingly. It is a highly vulnerable road.

At 11:00 the last meeting of Advisory Council, when we passed five Ordinances in ten minutes and silently put the Council to death after 265 meetings. It is a complete farce as a substitute for a legislature, being composed wholly of British Government officers who either do not read the Bills, rightly judging that it doesn't matter whether they do or not, or prefer to remain silent witnesses of their enactment. I often wonder how serious were the efforts made in 1923 and 1935 to establish a Legislative Council (frustrated by the Jews and by the Arabs in turn), seeing that our officers engaged in this task had never seen a Legislative Council and probably suffered from the usual bureaucratic feeling that it might not be very important, after all. The absence of any legislature after 30 years is a terrible handicap; so much of the steam that is left off in any public forum prevents it building up and coming out later – too late – in bullets and bombs.¹³⁸

Still very wet and cold weather. In the afternoon I saw a deputation of Jewish Government officers about their retiring benefits. One must feel some sympathy with them in the uncertainty they are feeling. I asked them about the offer of continued employment made to them by the U.N. Commission; one of them said he had taken legal advice and the offer was not one that could be sued on.

At 5:00 a meeting of Executive Council¹³⁹ at Government House, in a small and rather airless room. After about an hour the atmosphere

¹³⁸On the Advisory Council and the Legislative Council, see in the Eighth perspective. Another meeting was held on April 27, as the diary notes.

¹³⁹On the Executive Council, see the Introduction.

becomes unbearable. This evening we sat for an hour and three quarters discussing the most frightfully dull agenda about provident funds, rent restriction and the like, at the end of which I felt slightly sick and went off to give an hour's talk at 7:00 to the Suffolks¹⁴⁰ on current affairs in Palestine.

31st March

A bad night last night and I have got some sort of flu. At the publicity conference at 9:00 everyone seemed more than usually stupid.

Yesterday afternoon our Miss Thompson, who was acting Director of Social Welfare, was shot and killed in her car a few miles out of Jerusalem. She was to have left today and had gone to say goodbye to some friends. It seems that two Jews ran out into the road and poured bullets into her car. She was a wonderful person, who devoted herself to the people of this country and will never be forgotten by many of them.¹⁴¹

A problem now coming up in acute form is that of the disposal of Army camps and equipment. Sarafand Camp alone is worth over £1 m., which is what the Jews are prepared to pay for it, but it was previously Arab land, in the area of the proposed Jewish State, and the Arabs will strenuously oppose its sale to the Jews, because it lies right across the Jaffa-Ramle road, and find it hard to put up such a big offer as the Jews.¹⁴²

Several more prisoners escaped. Some now get away every day; yesterday's escapes from Acre include five British.

¹⁴⁰One of the two battalions of the 2nd Infantry Brigade which remained in Jerusalem until May 14, 1948.

¹⁴¹The Administration tended to believe that she was killed by Jews on her way from Bethlehem; cf. Graves, *Experiment in Anarchy*, p. 168.

¹⁴²Under the Evacuation Plan, the Administration was to sell its immovable facilities in each area to the side which was in the majority there. The complex of camps constituting Sarafand (now the Israeli army base of Tzrifin) was problematic because even though it lay within the area designated for the Jewish state, an Arab majority existed in that area, along the Jaffa-Ramle road. The British therefore decided to have it both ways, selling the camps to the Jewish Agency (the economic consideration played a major role) but allowing the Arabs to enter then when the British troops left. The Haganah captured the camps on May 13. Amiram Oren, *Military and Space in State of Israel*, A thesis submitted for PhD, University of Haifa, Department of Geography July 2003 (Hebrew), pp. 32-35.

The Security Council last night received the American resolution calling for a truce and another meeting of the General Assembly to reconsider the Partition plan. After hearing the Russians, who are opposed to the latter part of the resolution, the Council has adjourned again until to-morrow, when it will have 44 days left in which to do something. There is now terrific lobbying going on at Lake Success and elsewhere. But we get no nearer to the practical problems of what Government, if any, will be here on the 16th May.

1st April

After an hour with the High Commissioner and the G.O.C. considering some rather unintelligent telegrams from London,¹⁴³ I saw Dr. Khalidi, the Secretary of the Arab High Committee at 10:30 and discussed with him the sale of Sarafand Camp, the disposal of convicted prisoners and criminal lunatics on the 15th May, the arrangement of food convoys for the Jews of Jerusalem and the possibilities of a truce in the Old City. He seemed rather on top of the world. Later I had an hour and a half with Ben Zvi, the President of the Va'ad Leumi, with Dr. Katznelson of their Social Services Department, turning down their requests for (a) financial grants for six months after the 15th May, (b) special grants for emergency services and (c) other grants for various other things. Ben Zvi's son was killed recently in an Arab attack on a settlement, and I wrote him a little note of sympathy. He is a likeable person. I told him I had heard that some Jews wanted to leave Jerusalem. In a moment he changed from the friendly, frank old gentleman into the Jewish leader – Not a soul was thinking of leaving. He looked at me as though to see whether I knew he was prevaricating. Then he went on to talk of the Jews in the Old City in his interesting, intelligent way.¹⁴⁴

This afternoon Fielding Eliot came in to talk about the future of Jerusalem. He is on a Middle East tour for the *New York Post*. He has

¹⁴³This remark reflects the tense relations between the Mandate Administration and the Government in London against the background of the disagreements over how to manage the evacuation. For further elaboration: Yona Bendman, *When will Britain Withdraw from Jerusalem*, Tel Aviv 2004 (Hebrew).

¹⁴⁴Eli, the son of Yitzhak Ben Zvi – afterward Israel's second President – and Rachael Yanait Ben Zvi was killed on March 16, 1948, in a battle near Kibbutz Beit Keshet, in Lower Galilee. Gurney discerned Ben Zvi's discomfiture. Ben Zvi wrote an internal memorandum on this subject to the Jewish Agency on April 5, *Diplomatic Documents*, pp. 559–561.

ideas about the use of American troops, and is evidently well-informed.¹⁴⁵

Later I saw Jardine (Robert), Director of Land Settlement, who said "All my Haifa problems are settled. The Arab Liberation Army have been into the Haifa office and taken everything except the staff."

There is a crisis in Jerusalem Zone C, where the Jewish staff have walked out again because they are sniped at along the top of Princess Mary Avenue and one was killed there yesterday. So it is now proposed to build a protective wall at the danger point. But the question is who is to build it? For obvious reasons no Arab can be found to do it; no Jew will go near the place. So it is the sappers once again. I told Pollock to send a wire to Rome for Bilbus.¹⁴⁶

The General told me tonight that an urgent demand had come up today to escort 750 pigs from Acre to Haifa. The unit commander detailed for the job had merely said, "All right, I know it's the first of April."

This afternoon armed Arabs broke into the Public Information office film store in Zone A and got away with cameras, projectors, and other equipment worth £10,000. Dick Stubbs,¹⁴⁷ who seldom fails to see the amusing side of things, couldn't see much funny in this. Nor do I.

Every day now about 20 people are killed. Two bullets came quite close today; one going to the office this morning, and one outside the house tonight.¹⁴⁸ These incidents become too numerous for words.

¹⁴⁵Gurney understood that the reports by Major Fielding Eliot, the military commentator for the *New York Post*, would influence his countrymen's perception of the unfolding events in Palestine. One reason for Washington's refusal to assist the British in Palestine was that it was out of the question for the President, on the eve of elections and so soon after the war, to consider direct military intervention overseas.

¹⁴⁶Security Zone C (created as a result of the Jewish terrorism in 1946–1947) covered the area from the "Generali Building" (an area that was exposed to firing from the Old City wall) via the Russian Compound to the Italian Hospital. The British did not manage to build the wall in question. James Pollock was the Jerusalem District Commissioner; "to send a wire to Rome for Bilbus": In other words, with the humor that the two of them apparently understood and was also based on a certain level of education, to "sent a wire to Bilbus," the chief of engineers who was responsible for the fortifications under Julius Caesar in Rome in the first century BCE, meaning: Do nothing.

¹⁴⁷Head of the Government Information Office (the Press office).

¹⁴⁸Gurney's office was in the southern wing of the King David Hotel, where the Palestine Administration was headquartered; his house was on the border of the Qatamon and Givat Shmuel neighborhoods in security Zone A.

Yesterday the Jewish blowing up of the Haifa-Kantara train killed 40 Arabs and wounded 60.¹⁴⁹ Since the Partition Resolution over 2,000 people have lost their lives because of it, and about 7,000 wounded.¹⁵⁰ But no one is a whit better for it, or any less anxious to go on killing.

It was a lovely spring afternoon, in which the Russian tower on the Mount of Olives¹⁵¹ stood sharp against a soft blue sky and the Mountains of Moab were etched with delicate, distant shadows. The mined wire of Yemin Moshe, lay in the foreground as a dismal and sordid reminder of human degradation.

There still seems to be grave misunderstanding in London as to the wisdom of going on with this for another six weeks. The P.B.S. put on a thoroughly good 1st April program on this subject tonight; only the British could do this.¹⁵²

Fox-Strangways,¹⁵³ who got back from Damascus today, told me that at Bushara¹⁵⁴ in the Lebanon he had come upon a crowd of villagers around a figure hanging from the gallows. But it was only the annual execution of Judas on Good Friday. At the Orient Palace in Damascus he had the next bedroom to the Mufti. I wonder why the Arabs never

¹⁴⁹According to an Army report to the Administration, LEHI on March 31 attacked a passenger train near Binyamina; LEHI claimed responsibility but did not explain its motives. The British thought it was in revenge for the Nebi Daniel and Yehiam convoys, or a general desire for revenge. Intelligence Newsletter No. 65, HQ British Troops in Palestine, 23 March–7 April 48, TNA WO275/67.

¹⁵⁰See *ibid.* for the similar estimate of March 21 and the daily report of the CID for April 9, 1948, TNA 537/3875.

¹⁵¹The Russian Church of the Ascension – a house of worship and hostel for pilgrims, inaugurated in 1887; the tower is 50 meters high.

¹⁵²A trenchant debate was conducted among the leaders of the British civil and military authorities in Palestine, and between them and London over whether to advance the evacuation, since the British could no longer control events, their losses were higher than expected, and every day that passed worsened their relations with the Arab world and with the United States, which was pressing them to remain due to Cold War considerations.

¹⁵³Under-secretary in the Chief Secretariat and in charge of ties with the Jewish Agency.

¹⁵⁴Referring to Bcharre', in northern Lebanon (southeast of Tripoli). Above the town of Arz, which is said to be the last known surviving site of the biblical Cedars of Lebanon. Local residents refer to it as Arz el Rab, the Cedars of the Lord, and go on pilgrimage there.

object to their leaders living in comfortable hotels far from the scene: the same applies to the Jewish leaders in Tel Aviv.¹⁵⁵

2nd April

The Security Council yesterday voted unanimously for a call for a truce in Palestine and by 9 votes to 0 (Russia and the Ukraine abstaining) for a special session of the General Assembly on the 16th April. This will not leave much time for any effective trusteeship administration to be formed, particularly when the Jews are determined that it should not be born.

After Security Conferences this morning, Executive Council met for two hours on various problems, including the disposal of military camps.¹⁵⁶ A lovely afternoon in which, after a game of tennis, we got down to working out the actual run-down of civil staff, leaving only 50 British officers (outside the Railway and Customs at Haifa and Police and Prison) in Palestine after the 28th April. Gradually the superficial problems are beginning to sort themselves out; the fundamental ones remain untouched.¹⁵⁷

The nuns at the Marie Reparatrice Convent in Allenby Square¹⁵⁸ now want to be evacuated, as the Mother Superior can no longer feed them.

¹⁵⁵It was the British themselves who barred the Mufti from entering Palestine after he fled the country in 1937. His leadership of the Arab Revolt 1936–1939, his support for the pro-Nazi revolt in Iraq in 1941, and his presence in Berlin from 1941 to 1945, as an ally of Germany and Italy, made him an enemy. The Palestinian leadership, including most of the members of the Arab Higher Committee, left Palestine in the winter of 1948. Ilan Pappé, *Aristocracy of the Land: the Husayni Family Political Biography*, Jerusalem 2002 (Hebrew), pp. 329–364; On the Jewish side there was disagreement between the junior officials of the Jewish Agency who remained in Jerusalem and the senior officials, who moved to Tel Aviv. The former maintained that the move to Tel Aviv adversely affected the morale of the population. The senior officials who remained in Jerusalem were Eliezer Kaplan, the Treasurer, Golda Meyerson, the deputy chief of the Political Department, and Yitzhak Ben Zvi, the President of the Va'ad Leumi (National Council), whose executive role was limited.

¹⁵⁶On the Security Committee, see above, note 65. The Executive Council served as the Cabinet of the Mandate Administration and its members were the senior functionaries. In some cases representatives of a local public were invited to take part in its deliberations.

¹⁵⁷Probably a reference to the question of who would succeed the British – a question which, according to the diary, was much on the minds of the entire British mission in Palestine and their superiors in London.

¹⁵⁸The convent, which was adjacent to the New Gate in the walled city, was badly damaged in 1948 and demolished in 1967. Allenby Square, now known as IDF Square, lies between the Old City wall and the former City Hall.

In the Convent church it is a pleasant relief to go to Benediction on any afternoon at 5:15. From the once busy and crowded (but now deserted) street you enter through an archway into one of these water-tight chambers of peace that are to be found all over Jerusalem; where the din and strife of the outside world are not heard, and time does not exist.

3rd April

This morning the railway track was blown up in three places near Majdal, and the train crew have chucked their hand in and refuse to operate any longer. One cannot well blame them. We did not count on the railway continuing after the end of March, when nearly all the citrus has gone.¹⁵⁹ Otherwise today and yesterday have been quiet; there was a big bang somewhere in the night, but nobody seems to know what it was.

Thefts of cars go on. Seven more cars were stolen in Jerusalem today, and two ten-ton trucks of flour coming up the Jaffa-Jerusalem road, which doesn't make it any easier to get the Jewish food convoys through.

Lunch at Darouti's Hotel¹⁶⁰ with Ken Nichol and a cheerful party, it being Saturday; had a talk afterwards with Caminada of "The Times". Tonight the High Commissioner is broadcasting on the Security Council's demand for a cease-fire. This has, I suppose, about a 1 in 10 chance of being observed, but must be tried. Anyhow, here is something in which our support for U.N. action can be entirely forthcoming and not hedged about with neutrality. It seems inconceivable, though, that one of these mortars should not go off by accident, and then bang goes the truce.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹Under an unwritten "citrus agreement", the warring parties did not interfere with each other's citrus exports.

¹⁶⁰The hotel, named for the family that owned it, was located at the eastern end of Jaffa Road. A cottage industry of recreation and holiday accommodations for foreign visitors and Administration personnel developed in the homes of affluent Jews and Arabs. Kroyanker, *The Architect of Jerusalem*, pp. 135–136.

¹⁶¹Earlier in the paragraph, Gurney refers to a cease-fire – a level below a truce – which was in fact what the U.N. was trying to achieve. In addition to the U.N. and the Administration, the Red Cross also made efforts in this direction. On the eve of the Mandate's termination the United States intervened more effectively in this regard. Motti Golani, *Zion in Zionism*, Tel Aviv 1992 (Hebrew), pp. 115–126.

In the past few weeks both Lord Listowel and Rees-Williams have passed through or very near Palestine, but neither has been able to spend a few hours here. Only one member of the Colonial Office has been to see us since 1942, and then only for a week.¹⁶²

Ninth Perspective

The British view of the balance of forces on the eve of the turning point of the civil war

The next entry in the diary, for April 4, is highly significant for historians of the 1948 war. In addition to the essential details it provides, it sheds light on the place that the Israeli and Palestinian collective memories assigned, and in part still assign, to the British in the war. This, in turn, has a bearing on the research and other value that is placed on the contemporaneous spokesmen and their memoirs.

The collective memory evokes the British from two mutually complementary perspectives: in charge and hostile. In a traditional reading of Gurney's diary, the shapers of memory on the Israeli-Zionist side would treat his comments of April 4 as merely another expression of British enmity laced with anti-Semitism. For example, "It is a typical Jewish move, in that just when we are doing our best to bring off a peaceful settlement of a problem in their interests they wade in with an attack and render all our efforts fruitless... The General Zionist Council is meeting at Tel Aviv today, and there is a chance, I suppose, of their taking the rash step of proclaiming a Jewish State to come into

¹⁶²Referring to two senior officials from the Colonial Office: Lord Listowel (1906–1997), the last Secretary of State for India and for Burma (in 1947 and 1948) and then Minister of State for Colonial Affairs, the number-two in the Colonial Office (1948–1950); and David Rees-Williams (1903–1976; created Lord Ogmores in 1950), Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies (1947–1950). In the summer of 1948, when Gurney was preparing the diary for possible publication, he decided to delete this paragraph (it is crossed out in his manuscript). Was this because he was about to be appointed High Commissioner in Malaya? This passage reflects the feeling of the Palestine Administration personnel that they were being shunned by London.

being on the 16th May [i.e., the 15th]." As for the Palestinian collective memory, it would surely single out part of that same sentence: "just when we are doing our best to bring off a peaceful settlement of a problem in their interests" – meaning the interests of the Jews.

But the April 4 entry contains much more than this. Leaving aside, for the moment, both Gurney's loathing for the Jewish side and the general mockery with which he treats the Arab side, and his waxing lyrical about the local flora (which he does elsewhere in the diary as well), we are left with the data he cites and his assessments, which paint a picture that is not far removed from that painted by the latest research. This passage reflects the distinctive quality that marked the British view of the war in real time.

It is especially pertinent with regard to the Israeli-Zionist memory. Gurney, who was indeed hostile to the Zionist enterprise and anti-Semitic to boot, provides a most judicious assessment of the balance of forces and of the operative advantages and disadvantages of the two sides.

His description of the balance of forces on the eve of the decisive phase of the civil war is credible both quantitatively and qualitatively. Contemporary Israeli research on this war, which is the most thorough anywhere – even as compared with the fine but relatively little research being done in Britain and the United States – is quite consistent with Gurney's data and evaluations, of which the main points are:

- A. The pronounced numerical superiority of the Haganah over the various Palestinian forces.
- B. The Haganah's qualitative and quantitative advantage in weapons.
- C. The pointlessness of the Arabs' attempts to attack what Gurney describes as the "strongly defended" Jewish settlements.
- D. The Arabs' only chance for a military achievement lies in the transportation sector, where the Haganah is vulnerable.
- E. Though Gurney does not say so explicitly, it follows from his general description of the Palestinian Arabs' method of regional organization and their plethora of forces without a central nationwide command, that they are definitely weak.

Gurney's data are based on ongoing surveillance carried out by professional units of the Administration and the Army. In addition, the

credibility of Gurney's assessment is enhanced by the fact that even if he was not neutral and indeed had a vested interest, he practiced professional fairness and also had the benefit, in this case, of being neither Jew nor Arab.¹⁶³

The British often tended to overstate the Haganah's strength. However, even when they were mistaken in their numbers, they were accurate when it came to analyzing the thrust of events. In other words, they understood that the Yishuv had the advantage in organizational, political, and military strength.

4th April

It is interesting to see the tactical picture revealing itself, the important features coming out strongly like the dark parts of a developing negative. The military's situation is now something like this Fawzi's Liberation Army of about 6,000 Syrians with a handful of Germans, Yugoslavs and other Europeans, and some Iraqis and Lebanese in Samaria and Galilee, having taken over operations in the north-eastern parts of Palestine.¹⁶⁴ Abdul [Q]ader Husseini with some 3,000 Palestinian Syrians and odds and ends based on Bir Zeit north of Ramallah, and operating in and around Jerusalem.¹⁶⁵ Hassan Salame at or near

¹⁶³The High Commissioner, the CID, and the Army disseminated detailed daily, weekly, and monthly reports of events, intelligence, and assessment, which can be found in the TNA WO/275 series. Below, in notes to the numerical data cited by Gurney in the April 4 entry, I have drawn comparisons with the main research findings on the subject. Gelber, *A Budding Fleur-de-Lis*, pp. 307–308, notes the British assessment of February 1948 to the effect that the Haganah had 80,000 armed fighters. He does not note their assessment of the beginning of April – which is 50 per cent lower – as it appears in Gurney's diary.

¹⁶⁴As of this date, part of the Army of Liberation, led by Fawzi al Quwakji, operated in Samaria and Galilee. In the second half of April, following the collapse of the forces that were subordinate to the Mufti (Al-Jihad al-Muqades) in the Jerusalem region and in the centre of the country, the Army of Liberation was given responsibility for those areas, which ended with the invasion. Sela, "The Rescue Army," p. 207, estimates its strength at 4,000 fighters; Joseph Nevo, "The Palestinian and the Jewish State, 1947–1948", Y. Wallah (ed.), *Like We Were Dreaming*, Tel Aviv 1985 (Hebrew), p. 315, note 97, bases himself partly on Gurney but his estimate is a bit high; according to Ilan, *Embargo*, p. 66, the Army of Liberation numbered 5,000 fighters at its peak. Gelber, *Independence Versus Nakba*, p. 49, cites no more than 2,500 men who underwent training and not all of whom reached Palestine; like Gurney, Gelber views the volunteers from Europe as a marginal few: *ibid.*, pp. 56–58.

¹⁶⁵Nevo, *ibid.*, pp. 323–324, offers the same assessment.

Jaffa, with a thousand or two Iraqis and Palestinians.¹⁶⁶ The position at Haifa and in the north-west is confused.¹⁶⁷ In Gaza and the south-west there are a few hundred Egyptians and a retired Egyptian major-general.¹⁶⁸ The Arab forces now in Palestine with any sort of training and discipline thus do not exceed 10,000, armed mostly with all sorts of antiquated small-arms, some automatics and a few mortars.

On the Jewish side the Haganah could put perhaps 40,000 into the field, better armed and better equipped.¹⁶⁹ This would include the two or three thousand Irgun¹⁷⁰ members and the few hundred Sternists.¹⁷¹ There is little sign that the Arabs yet appreciate that direct attack on strongly defended settlements will cost them dearly and can scarcely

¹⁶⁶Salame's strength lay in the Jaffa-Ramla-Lod area, hence his importance as the main threat to the Dan Bloc (Greater Tel Aviv); Nevo, *ibid.*, agrees with these figures.

¹⁶⁷Anarchy prevailed among the Palestinian forces in the north, especially in Haifa, since the Haganah's ambush of an arms convoy near Kiryat Motzkin (north of Haifa) on March 17. Among those killed in the attack was Muhammad Alhamed al-Hunitti, the senior commander in Haifa.

¹⁶⁸On the activity of the Palestinians under the supervision of the Egyptian Army from February–May 1948, in the spirit of Gurney's comment, see Gelber, *Independence Versus Nakba*, pp. 55–56.

¹⁶⁹According to Ilan, *Embargo*, p. 69, 90,000 people reported for the draft by April 1, and 36,000 received a call-up order. This potential has to be taken into account together with the forces already mobilized at the time – 19,000 on April 1, according to Zehava Ostfeld, *An Army is Born*, Tel Aviv 1994 (Hebrew), pp. 820–821; while Yoav Gelber, *The Emergence of a Jewish Army*, Jerusalem 1986 (Hebrew), pp. 151–152, maintains that the Haganah had some 30,000 fighters at the beginning of May, excluding the members of the Guard Corps in the cities, who in many cases were also fighters. These data render Gurney's assessment reasonable.

¹⁷⁰The Irgun (ITZL) and still less LEHI, was untrained in the demands of the open warfare of the time. Their experience in terrorist operations, ranging from attacks on British military or civilian targets (by the ITZL) to personal terror (LEHI). During the war the ITZL numbered about 3,000 fighters and it had only a few dozen sympathizers. David Niv, *The Irgun Zvai Leumi*, Vol. 6, Tel Aviv 1980 (Hebrew), pp. 25–26.

¹⁷¹The British term for LEHI. Avraham Stern left the ITZL at the head of his followers in 1940, against the background of his refusal to cooperate with the Yishuv in its war with Britain against Germany. He was gunned down by British police in 1942. The organization was also known as the "Stern Gang" or the "Stern Group". It had about 600–700 activists at the beginning of April. Niv, *ibid.*, pp. 26–27.

succeed;¹⁷² whereas they can easily throttle communications such as the Jerusalem-Jaffa lifeline.¹⁷³ Our negotiations for the safety of food convoys on this road, by the way, have now been almost hopelessly upset by the Jewish attack yesterday on the Arab hill village of Castel overlooking the road near Jerusalem. The Jews have now occupied the village and are supplying the Haganah there by air.¹⁷⁴ So long as they are in it, there is little chance of getting any agreement with the Arabs regarding free passage on the road. It is a typical Jewish move, in that just when we are doing our best to bring off a peaceful settlement of a problem in their interests they wade in with an attack and render all our efforts fruitless. They will now have to get out of Castel before we can do anything more, and there will be the usual howls and screams about that.

The General Zionist Council is meeting at Tel Aviv today, and there is a chance, I suppose, of their taking the rash step of proclaiming a Jewish State to come into being on the 16th May.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷²Not one Jewish settlement fell from December 1947 to the middle of May 1948. The Etzion Bloc surrendered on May 14 to regular forces of Transjordan's Arab Legion.

¹⁷³Gurney is referring to the relative success of troops fielded by Abd al Kader to block Haganah convoys since the "battle of the Hulda convoy" on March 31. The Haganah was compelled to mass forces on an unprecedented scale from its point of view (Operations Nahshon, Harel and part of Operations "Yevussi" and "Maccabi") in order to capture the Hulda-Sha'ar Haggai region and the ridges dominating the section of road from Sha'ar Haggai to Saris (today's Shoeva) in the channel of Nahshon Creek, from which the blockers of the road were able to act effectively. The Haganah's distinct numerical superiority was neutralized in this narrow corridor.

¹⁷⁴On the night of April 2–3 the Palmah's 4th Battalion captured Castel (the village of Al Qastal) and handed it over to a company from the Etzioni Brigade's Moriah Battalion. On the 3rd a counterattack began, which continued until Moriah's retreat, with the aid of the Palmah, on the 8th. On the 9th forces of "Operation Nahshon" (Palmah and Etzioni) returned to the village without a fight and blew up its houses.

¹⁷⁵The Zionist Executive Committee met on April 6 (not on the 4th – Gurney is referring to delegations that arrived and convened for preliminary meetings) in order to fulfill U.N. General Assembly Resolution 181, of November 29, 1947, which called on the sides to establish governments at the beginning of April. On the 12th, after the relations between the Jewish Agency and the future state were arranged, the Minhelet Ha'am (National Executive) was established, which on May 15 became the provisional Government of Israel.

Judging from the firing that went on all night and is still continuing around the house, there must be many people without wireless sets.¹⁷⁶

I was looking at the garden this morning which is now almost at its best. There is a bank of wild cyclamen, blue lupins and red anemones and ranunculus, freesias, and narcissus. Below it there are bed of white and purple stocks, yellow wallflowers and antirrhinums. Then a bed of sweet peas fringed with Parma violets, which grow more profusely here than anywhere else I know. The plants are a blue mass of big long-stemmed blooms, which last a week in water. Then there are borders of larkspurs, calendulas and nemesia and the ordinary English annuals. The hollyhocks, which grow wild all over Palestine, are now three and four feet high. The Crusaders took them to England from the Holy Land – hence their name.

5th April

A fairly noisy night of firing and grenades, but in the country outside there does seem to be a general slackening of tension. Incidents continue daily such as that at (near) Rehovot yesterday, in which a party of Jews attacked 11 Arabs working in an orange grove and shot 10 of them through the head. One escaped to tell the story.¹⁷⁷

Jerusalem is getting very short of oil and we shall have to ration electricity soon.¹⁷⁸ Another problem was brought up by the American Consul-General, that of extricating American citizens who are Jews. In the end it will come to our escorting them out.

¹⁷⁶On April 3 the High Commissioner stated in a radio broadcast that he was ready to mediate a truce between the sides.

¹⁷⁷Referring to a Haganah attack on the headquarters of Hassan Salame in the orchards between Ramla and Sarafand (Tzrifin) on the night of April 4–5. According to British estimates, about 16 of Salame's men were killed, he himself was not at the site. General Sir A. Cunningham, Weekly Intelligence Appreciation, 10.4.1948, TNA CO537/3869.

¹⁷⁸On the activity of the Electric Corporation in the waning days of the Mandate period, see Abraham Zohar, *Electricity From the Fire*, Tel Aviv 1994 (Hebrew), pp. 91–110; Concurrent with the British activity, the Jews, under the responsibility of the Jerusalem Emergency Committee, stored fuel in water cisterns. Dov Joseph, *Faithful City*, Jerusalem & Tel Aviv 1960 (Hebrew), pp. 92–95.

There is also the problem of the Jewish girls who want to marry British police in order to get out of the country – over 50 of them. The law will be amended to-morrow to deal with this.¹⁷⁹

I was glad to hear that Kendall's book "Jerusalem City Plan", which the Stationery Office are producing, will be published next week, and "The Times" will do a turnover article on it on the 14th, which will be quite good timing. With its admirable pictures and photographs this book will tell something of the story of the development of the Holy City under British care.¹⁸⁰

Reeves came in from Nablus and I told him to get into personal touch with Fawzi (al-Quwakji) and induce him to observe the cease-fire. There will not be much difficulty about this. Most of Fawzi's truculent Iraqis have left him to join the trouble-makers in and around Jerusalem. Fawzi himself asked the other day whether he could have a flat in the Police station, as he wanted to bring his wife here. She is an attractive German girl.

Reeves has done good work in keeping the Haganah at the coastal end of his district apart from the Liberation Army and so avoiding a clash.

Forty days left – in the wilderness, but no particular temptations.¹⁸¹

Tenth Perspective

The Jewish Agency Executive and the Haganah vs. the Jewish population in Jerusalem

In his diary entry for April 6, Gurney remarks, "The Jews of Jerusalem are becoming more and more Nazi and ruthless in their treatment of

¹⁷⁹The reality was more complex. Marriages between Yishuv women and Britons serving in the country did not begin in 1948. The reasons for the marriages were diverse. Probably now, on the eve of the Mandate's termination and in the light of the uncertainty, a number of couples wanted to formalize the relations between them and marry. The Administration was compelled to address the issue. The subject is further elaborated in Daniela Reich, *Between National Mission and Social Ostracism*, Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the M.A. Degree, Eertz Israel Studies, University of Haifa 2003 (Hebrew).

¹⁸⁰Henry Kendall, *Jerusalem, the City Plan*, Preservation and Development During the British Mandate, HM Stationery Office, London 1948. The book, which has an introduction by the High Commissioner, is a summing up of the development, building, and preservation activity undertaken by the British in Jerusalem. It is a professional document which bears a propaganda thrust.

¹⁸¹See the Gospel According to Matthew 4: 1–11.

their own people." What strikes the reader first is the intolerable facility with which the term "Nazi" is evoked, just three years after the end of the war and the massive publicity the concentration camps and death camps received. One need not accept this vulgarity in order to understand that precisely because only three years had gone by the use of the term, even if not acceptable, was less charged than it would be in our time. Germany had been a brutal enemy of Britain and the Nazi regime was synonymous with infamy. Moreover, in the view of the British, it was the war they waged and the blood they shed that had put an end to the camps. Nevertheless, it would be years before the horrors trickled into people's personal consciousness and more especially into the collective Jewish and world consciousness. In the United States, this would not occur before the 1980s. Use of the term "Nazi" was undoubtedly more widespread then than it is today. The Chief Secretary did indeed occasionally resort to coarse, unbridled expressions – which he did not delete from the manuscript of the diary he considered publishing after the termination of the Mandate. In this case, it seems to me, it was not Gurney's innate anti-Semitism that was at work, but the routine mindset of his time and milieu.¹⁸² Moreover, his poor choice of analogy should not deter readers, and especially Israeli readers, from considering what his description of the situation says about the Yishuv leadership's attitude toward the Jewish civilian population in a city that was being subjected to a lengthy war of attrition and had no idea when and how it would end.¹⁸³

Even a cursory glance at the events of the period in Jerusalem shows the determination of the Jewish Agency and the Haganah not to allow anyone to leave the danger zone – that is, to leave the city. The Yishuv's central leadership and its representatives in Jerusalem (the Jewish Agency Executive, the Haganah District Command, the Presidium of the Va'ad Leumi – National Council – and various local bodies) had to contend with a large and fragmented civilian population in the city. The majority of the population was poor or not within the Zionist circle and hence

¹⁸²For wider discussion see, Tony Kushner, *The Persistence of Prejudice: Antisemitism in Britain during the Second World War*, Manchester 1989 and *We Europeans? Mass-Observation, 'Race' and British Identity in the Twentieth Century*, Aldershot and Burlington 2004.

¹⁸³The High Commissioner used these words to describe the Haganah's behavior during its seizure of Haifa. Alan Cunningham was both pro Zionist and far from anti-Semitic. High Commissioner to Colonial Secretary, April 26, 1948, MECA, CP, 5/4.

disinclined to accept the authority of the Yishuv institutions. As a result, civilian control of the city was extremely problematic as compared with other urban centres such as Tel Aviv or Haifa. At the same time, conditions in Jerusalem were unlike those in the other cities, with the residents in constant danger due to shelling and armed clashes, and having to cope with the uncertainties caused by a protracted siege. Thus, extreme measures were required to prevent a civilian collapse and flight. On April 5, Yitzhak Ben Zvi, the president of the Va'ad Leumi, wrote from his office in Jerusalem to his Jewish Agency colleagues in Tel Aviv about "elements who lack national discipline, and demoralization has already set in – we must not ignore it. First comes vicious incitement against the [national] institutions, and there have already been threats to create separate institutions and even attempts to hoist white flags and seek mercy from the [British] Governor and from the Arabs." To combat such tendencies, the Jewish Agency issued orders and in some cases resorted to physical force, to prevent Jews from leaving the Old City or western Jerusalem. These measures were only partially successful: between December 1947 and June 1948, about 35,000 of the city's 100,000 Jews left.¹⁸⁴

Characteristically, Israeli historiography has consistently ignored this exodus and preferred to present a heroic, one-dimensional account which is as inhuman in its way as the Jewish leadership's attitude toward the population at the time.¹⁸⁵ It is tempting to compare the understanding shown (in general) by the public and the state authorities toward the residents of Kiryat Shmona, in Upper Galilee, who left the town in the early 1980s under the impact of shelling from Lebanon, and the residents of Tel Aviv who left a decade later, during the Gulf War – despite the different conditions – and the attitude toward a similar reaction in the late 1940s. Perhaps it would also not be out of place to recall the behavior of the civilian population in London and elsewhere in Britain during the German offensive in 1940–1941 and again in 1944. There, too, despite the image of stead-

¹⁸⁴Yitzhak Ben Zvi to Jewish Agency Executive, *Diplomatic Documents*, April 5, 1948, pp. 559–561. On April 21, the Jewish Agency Executive established the Jerusalem Emergency Committee, headed by Dov Joseph and Golda Meyerson. The committee received the powers of a military government, even though the British were the de facto rulers in the city, and was charged with the task of seeing to the needs of the civilian population and ensuring that they did not loot food or flee the city. Golani, *Zion in Zionism*, pp. 85–90.

¹⁸⁵For example, Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, pp. 379–380.

fastness that has been engraved in the collective memory, the fact is that large numbers of people left the cities that were targeted by the Germans. The difference is that in England neither the royal family nor the Prime Minister and the Government left, and their example was invoked to persuade the population to stay; whereas in Palestine, by contrast, with all the differences, the senior Yishuv leadership moved to Tel Aviv as soon as hostilities erupted in Jerusalem, in December 1947. Ben Gurion alone continued to visit the city, about once every two weeks, but not even he shared the day-to-day fate of the city's permanent residents.

6th April

The American proposals for trusteeships were published this morning. In the atmosphere of Jerusalem they seem very unrealistic in their reference to two chambers, etc., whereas what is wanted here is something to stop a war.¹⁸⁶ The Jews of Jerusalem are becoming more and more Nazi and ruthless in their treatment of their own people, and there is growing among them a terrible feeling of fear and desperation. A British friend told me this evening that he had rung up a member of his Jewish staff to ask whether he had enough meat or required any help with food, and had got the answer by telephone that of course everything was all right, and there was no shortage of anything at all. A few hours later a letter came by from this same man, marked 'personal and confidential', saying that he had had no meat for weeks and could he please have eight kilos by some secret means. How could he say this by telephone when the wires were tapped and everyone else was listening? No Jew can now get out of Jerusalem without a Haganah pass, and no pass is given to anyone about to leave Palestine; though there are hundreds of decent Jews here wanting to go on entirely legitimate grounds.¹⁸⁷

Jardine (John) of the British Council was talking to me tonight of the problem of his £30,000 library in Jerusalem, which he is shifting to

¹⁸⁶The proposal was published orally on March 19 at the United Nations, *Diplomatic Documents*, p. 475. On April 5, the U.S. delegation submitted to the Security Council a proposal containing the principles of a temporary trusteeship regime for Palestine. *Ibid.* pp. 606–607. This was unrealistic not only because of the military situation – intervention would have been required to impose the trusteeship – but also because of the balance of forces at the U.N., which was tilted against the proposal due to the adamant opposition of the Soviet Union and Britain.

¹⁸⁷See tenth perspective.

Amman, and of the 800 Arab London University students due to be examined in June. The British Council have done admirable work in Palestine, but in this atmosphere it soon evaporates.¹⁸⁸

There are about 150 Jews waiting to leave Jerusalem to take up air passages from Lydda, but at the moment none of them can go. The situation of the 100,000 Jews in Jerusalem, cut off as they are from Tel Aviv, from which the Jewish leaders now never venture, is not an enviable one.¹⁸⁹ Since the Jewish capture of Castel, the Arabs have declined to discuss any *modus vivendi* for the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv road, so our efforts in that direction have been frustrated.

Yesterday four Jerusalem Arabs were kidnapped in Petah Tikvah: this morning the Arabs of Jerusalem kidnapped Mr. Gottlieb of the P.W.D. and his son and daughter as hostages. Mr. Gottlieb was allowed to get through to Petah Tikva by telephone to make the necessary request.

This morning a party of armed Jews entered Pardess Hanna Camp, and shot and killed the C.O. and seven soldiers. Sheer murder of innocent people who are trying to help them, and it is a little hard to have to go on bearing such things for purely political reasons that have no substance.¹⁹⁰

This evening we considered a quite unique budget for April and May (at the same time as Sir Stafford Cripps was introducing the U.K. budget in the House), showing an expenditure of £6 m. odd as against a revenue of one third that amount. Our liquid deficit at the end of the Mandate will be about £7 m. In 1947–48 Palestine revenue was

¹⁸⁸Following the termination of the Mandate, Jardine went to Amman with part of the British Council's property. The rest was entrusted to two lawyers, one Jewish (Hurvitz) and one Arab (Aliya), who served as the British Council's powers of attorney until it resumed operations in Israel. Yannai, *The British Council in Palestine During the Period of the Mandate*.

¹⁸⁹See tenth perspective.

¹⁹⁰On the morning of April 6, ITZL men dressed as British soldiers burst into an artillery base next to Pardes Hanna in order to steal arms. In the ensuing battle the base commander, seven soldiers and an ITZL man were killed. The Army responded by imposing a curfew in the area and cutting off north-south traffic, a move which hampered Haganah efforts to deploy at Kibbutz Mishmar Ha'emek, where the battle was about to be decided. An ITZL communiqué stated, "In a commando attack on an elite battalion of British artillery, our soldiers reclaimed for the fighting nation many times more than what the Nazi-British enemy handed over to its gangs of mercenaries in [the battle of the convoy of] Nebi Daniel [see above, March 27–28]." Niv, *The Irgun Zvai Leumi*, 139–141; Yehuda Slutsky, *History of the Haganah*, pp. 1549–1550. Senior British officials were thus not the only ones who made unnecessary references to the Nazis (as in the April 6 diary entry).

£24 m. and expenditure £32 m. (equal to the Union of S. Africa's expenditure in 1938), including £6 m. on the Cyprus camps for Jewish immigrants and £7 m. for Police. Palestine has never paid anything for the British troops here, which have been the British taxpayers' liability throughout.¹⁹¹

Our April–May estimates were so unreal that we did not spend much time on them, though they are carefully framed to continue education services up to the end of the summer term, to pay mukhtars the usual half-year's salary in advance, etc.¹⁹²

The Palestine Commission asked today how many British police would volunteer for service with an international police force for Jerusalem. Some months ago we could have got many, but now it is too late, as the one thing that has gone well is resettlement and employment for the Police. But there may be a few.¹⁹³

The (UN) Commission's staff here went to see the (Rockefeller) Museum last Sunday under a strong Police escort, which fortunately frustrated an Arab attempt to kidnap them as they left. There are press reports that they are to be recalled to Lake Success to report. It is unfortunate (but no fault of theirs) that they have scarcely been able to get out of their house since they arrived.

Summer almost came this afternoon, and as we came down from Government House at sunset, the sky, the towers of Jerusalem and the deep obscurities of the valleys had the colors of a Japanese print. A few red tracers floating across a very pale blue sky were like flowers blown in the wind.

¹⁹¹Stafford Cripps was Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Labour Government, November 1947–October 1950. The Mandate Administration operated on a self-sustaining basis and financed its expenditures from its revenues, other than security outlays.

¹⁹²The Arab mukhtars (headmen) were appointed by the Administration and their main task was as liaisons with the authorities. Gabriel Baer, *The Village Mukhtar in Palestine*, Jerusalem 1979 (Hebrew), pp. 18–23.

¹⁹³The natural candidates for the multinational police force in Jerusalem, under the auspices of the U.N. Commission, which was to succeed the Mandate, were from the Mandatory Police. The Commission wanted to recruit a thousand British policemen. The U.N.'s haplessness and the Administration's small interest and low budget were not conducive to realizing the idea. Itzhaki-Harel, *The Police 1918–1948*, pp. 271–272.

The following draft of a resolution for the U.N. came from a light-hearted American source:-

A RESOLUTION

(To be submitted to the United Nations Organization for the purpose of creating an independent Jewish State in America)

WHEREAS the total population of the area known as Palestine is 2,000,000; of which 1,400,000 or 70 per cent are Arabs, and 600,000 or 30 per cent are Jews:

WHEREAS the total population of the area known as New York City is 7,500,000; of which 4,500,000 or 60 per cent are Christians, and 3,000,000 or 40 per cent are Jews; and

WHEREAS the total number of Jews now living in New York City is 5-times greater than the number of Jews living in Palestine, and 7-times greater than the number of Jews that lived in all Judea at the peak of Solomon's glory; and

WHEREAS throughout four thousand years of recorded history the Jews have been hated, despised and unwanted in every country in which they sought to live; and

WHEREAS the Jews are "God's chosen people", and therefore by divine right should and must receive preference over every other minority race in every country of the world; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Assembly and Council of the United Nations Organization:

1. That the City of New York be partitioned from the State of New York and from the United States of America; and
2. That the City of New York be set up as a separate, independent State, to be known as "New Jerusalem"; and
3. That all the Jews now in Palestine, and all the Jews not wanted in other countries of the world, be transported at public expense to the City of New York, which hereafter shall be their exclusive homeland; and
4. That all Christians now living in New York City shall be required to migrate at their own expense to other parts of the United States of America; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the United Nations Organization shall use its full civil and military powers to accomplish the objectives

and to enforce the purposes of this Resolution within one year from the date hereof.¹⁹⁴

7th April

The Jews have come out with the story that the H.L.I. in the Old City have been shooting at the Great Synagogue and willfully damaging it. What has happened is that for weeks Haganah men have been shooting from the Synagogue roof; round the upper walls of the Synagogue are sandbagged snipers' posts, in which our men have found many empty cartridge cases. When we suggested to the Chief Rabbi, Dr. Herzog that perhaps he would like the troops withdrawn, he changed the subject quickly.¹⁹⁵

Lunched with the High Commissioner to say goodbye to Macatee, the American Consul-General.¹⁹⁶ The wild flowers in Government House garden are astonishing; irises, veitches, ranunculus, lupins among pine trees and grey stones. Across the valley, on this summer afternoon lay the Mount of Olives, as it has done for thousands of years. Later on my office

¹⁹⁴This "satire" is of no interest in itself. I have retained it both because I wanted to present a complete document and also because Gurney saw fit not only to enter it into the diary but to leave it in for publication, as his editing in the summer of 1948 attest. This is an authentic expression of anti-Semitism but also of the Administration's distress in the wake of the General Assembly's adoption of Resolution 181, which London would not accept and which the U.N. could not implement. The result was an intolerably thick fog just five weeks before the end of the Mandate. Chaos was a threat to the British, not a plan of action.

¹⁹⁵The Haganah position in the eastern section of the Jewish Quarter was atop the Sephardi synagogue Porath Yosef, which dominated the Arab Mugrabi neighborhood and the Temple Mount to the east as well as the Muslim Quarter to the north. The Army expelled Jews and Arabs from positions which in its view contributed to the intensification of the fighting in the Old City and then itself manned the abandoned emplacements of both sides. This was also the case with the position mentioned by Gurney here. Rami Izrael, *The Jewish Quarter During the War of Independence* Jerusalem 1991 (Hebrew), p. 35. He notes, "It is a hard fact that in all five months of the British presence [in the Old City] the Arabs did not move even one meter beyond the line of positions they held at the start of the battle for the [Jewish] Quarter. Even positions that were evacuated by the defenders were seized by the British, rather than the Arabs. In addition, their very presence [of the British] made it necessary for them to ensure the almost continuous connection [from the western city] to the [Jewish] Quarter. The effective result was the lifting of the total siege imposed by Arabs, a siege which the Haganah would probably not have been able to lift." *Ibid.*, p. 47. This is another example – one of many – of the convergence of interests between the British and the Yishuv in the civil war.

¹⁹⁶William R. Macatee was replaced by Thomas Wasson.

verandah I found Gray, the Press Censor, painting the view of the Church of the Dormition. He has done many water-colors that are coming out in "Jerusalem City Plan".¹⁹⁷

We are doing everything we can to follow up the drive for a cease-fire. This is not a truce, but a cease-fire to enable a truce to be discussed. If it fails, we shall have to seek, I suppose, a standfast to discuss a cease-fire. But certainly it has been a quiet day in Jerusalem, though the battle for Mishmar Ha'emek has been going on brightly for three days now.¹⁹⁸

It seems already clear that the U.N. can produce nothing effective in a month's time, and it is a disheartening job going downhill day after day towards the precipice. This Gadarene tendency seems to appeal to many people in Palestine; but to those British officers who have given all they had to the good of this country, it is sheer disaster. To the people of Britain who are merely fed up with Palestine and no longer interested in it, the feelings of the Service here are not intelligible.

A large cocktail party in the Officer's Club next to the King David this evening. This club was only finished two months ago, and it always amused us that work was going ahead on it all the time the Information Office across the road was trying to make people believe the British were going in May, whatever happened.¹⁹⁹ It always seems to me that the American delegates must be getting very tired of our universal answer to all questions at Lake Success, "We're going on the 15th May." It doesn't help much; and to say that you will have nothing to do with any plan to

¹⁹⁷H. G. Gray, the Administration's press censor and an amateur painter who worked on his paintings literally under fire. His series of paintings of the Old City gates appeared in April 1948 in Henry Kendall's *Jerusalem, the City Plan*. The German Catholic Dormition Church on Mount Zion was dedicated in 1910; according to a seventh century tradition, the Virgin Mary "fell asleep".

¹⁹⁸In the absence of the senior hierarchy of the Jewish Agency, the High Commissioner invited Leo Cohen, the secretary of the Agency's Political Department, for a conversation in which he almost begged to be allowed to mediate in the cease-fire negotiations. *Diplomatic Documents*, pp. 572-573; High Commissioner to Colonial Office, TNA CO537/3869, April 10, 1948. On the Administration and the cease-fire, see here perspective no. 21.

¹⁹⁹In a personal conversation, the architect David Kroyanker, who has researched British Mandate Jerusalem, suggested that this is a reference to a two-story building located to the south of and adjacent to the King David Hotel. The club was built on the site of the one that was blown up by the ITZL in 1946; the Government Press Information Office was across the way, at the corner of Keren Hayesod and Jabotinsky Streets.

which Arabs and Jews do not both agree is merely to say that you will have nothing to do with any plan at all. Is this all we can contribute? Must we be silent against the tired voices and the lying propaganda? The American press is still carrying full-page advertisements "Save the Jewish State and the United Nations". Why unite the two? Do the Zionists care two pins for the United Nations? Or the Arabs either, if it comes to that? The clouds at Lake Success are still very high.

In contrast, and on a different plane, it is worth recording that the Railways are still running, though this was what happened to them in March:-

28.2.48 (reported late)	Haifa East Station	Passenger injured by stray bullet.
28.2.48 (reported late)	Haifa East Station	Pointsman shot and killed at post.
1.3.48	El Jiya Station ²⁰⁰	Track in sidings dismantled and sleepers s stolen.
1.3.48	Beér Ya'aqov-Lyddá	Rails removed from track, resulting in derailment of military motor trolley.
3.3.48	Lydda Station	Station attacked by armed gangs and two wagons looted.
3.3.48	Haifa	Headquarters offices damaged by blast from explosion in Allenby Road.
4.3.48	Atlit-Zikhron Ya'aqov	Goods train held up by armed gangs and six wagons looted. Heavy traffic delays.
10.3.48	Haifa East Station	Wagon looted and set on fire.
14.3.48	Tulkarm Station	Station attacked by armed gang and one wagon looted.
16.3.48	Tulkarm-Qaqun	Goods train held up by armed gang and nine wagons looted.
17.3.48	Rashida Station	Station attacked by armed gang and nine wagons looted.
19.3.48	Qalqilya Station	Two wagons looted.
20.3.48	Ras El Ein-Qalqilia	Mine exploded under goods train. Engine and two box wagons blown up. Driver killed, fireman, guard and two military escorts seriously injured.
21.3.48	Naaman Bridge, Acre Line	Bridge blown up by saboteurs. Rail services to Acre suspended.

²⁰⁰An error; the reference is probably to Jalama, today's Valleys Junction east of Haifa.

23.3.48	Kiriat Motzkin– Naamin Junction	Passenger train derailed by sabotage. Engine and five coaches overturned. Rail services from Haifa to Naamin Bridge suspended.
25.3.48	Beisan–Jisr El Majame ²⁰¹	Bridge at Km. 67.500 destroyed by sabotage. All traffic on Haifa/Samakh line suspended.
25.3.48	Affula–Shatta	Bridge at Km. 44 destroyed by sabotage.
25.3.48	Kfar Yehoshua– Affula	Bridge at Km. 34 destroyed by sabotage.
26.3.48	Ras El Ein–Petah Tiqva	Mine exploded under Petah Tiqva shunt. Engine and three box wagons derailed. Driver and fireman injured. Permanent way damaged.
31.3.48	Benyamina–Zichron Ya'aqov	Passenger train No. 2 blown up. Two coaches completely destroyed and three badly damaged. Twenty-five passengers killed, and 60 injured.

8th April

Today we have been asked by the United Nations Commission how many British Police would volunteer for continued service with an international police force in Jerusalem. This is a bit late: many who would have volunteered some time ago have now got themselves other employment.²⁰²

This morning the Arabs recaptured Castel. Apparently Abdul Qader, taunting his men for hesitation, led a small party himself to the attack and became surrounded, as a result of which his followers walked in and mopped up the Jews. We can no longer intervene in these battles. Neither side wants us to. Like Tweedledum and Tweedledee, they have agreed to fight a battle.²⁰³

²⁰¹Naharayim Bridge over the Jordan, to the east of Kibbutz Geshet, which at the time was situated on the Jordan adjacent to the waterline.

²⁰²The few members of the advance delegation of the U.N. Commission who were still in the country continued to exert pressure concerning the international police force, which was supposed to be a guarantee of the arrival of the U.N.-appointed Special Municipal Commissioner.

²⁰³The Arabs' success derived from determination generated by a rumor that their revered commander, Abd al Kader al Hussein, had been captured by the Haganah. In fact, he had been killed at Castel before dawn. The British, their military force in Jerusalem constantly dwindling, needed the good will of both sides.

A mukhtar of an Arab village near Gaza was responsible for a good story recently. A British military convoy was attacked by Arabs near his village, who mistook them for Jews. The mukhtar, on learning of their error, was most apologetic and invited the whole military party to breakfast and added: "Please bring some ammunition with you, as we have wasted about 200 rounds on you."

The "victory" at Castel was celebrated by much Arab fighting de joie this afternoon, which attracted a corresponding fusillade from the Jews – mostly in the air.

The supply position in Jerusalem is getting serious. The water supply pipe-line was blown up by Arabs this morning and has been cut off. There is enough oil to continue pumping for another three days only and to keep the electricity supply going for another two. This is due to the consequent failure of the fuel trains to get through. As regards water, the Arabs of Jerusalem are much better off than the Jews. Their houses have underground rainwater cisterns, on which they have subsisted for thousands of years. It is a remarkable fact that Jerusalem never had a piped water supply until 1935, when we introduced the pumped supply from Ras el Ain near Lydda. The modern Jewish quarters depend on this, and any interruption in the water supply could have the most serious effect on the Jews. This has been one of our major security preoccupations for weeks, protecting the pumping stations and the staff, Arab and Jew, who operate them.²⁰⁴

Now there is the problem of the Germans who are interned at and near Haifa and those at Wilhelma. If we cannot get them out to Australia, where some of them have been since early in the last war, or back to Germany under I.R.O. auspices, both their lives and their property will receive scant consideration from the Jews.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴The water pipeline from Rosh Haayin (Ras el Ain) to Jerusalem was first cut off, for a brief time, on May 14, and not blown up until August 1948. Gurney did not know that the municipality's Jewish water engineer had pumped water into cisterns in the Jewish neighborhoods.

²⁰⁵I.R.O. = the International Refugee Organization (1945–1952); The Germans were mostly members of the Templar movement, a German protestant sect, which was active in Palestine since 1868. By the time of the British conquest they had established four urban colonies – at Haifa, Jaffa, Tel Aviv (Sharona), and Jerusalem – and three agricultural communities: Wilhelma (Bnei Atarot), Waldheim (Alonei Abba), and Beit Lehag Haglilit. In the WWII the farming villages were encircled and the urban colonies placed under curfew. Males up to the age of 50 were taken into custody. The members of the community left or were deported to Germany and Australia and their request to return after the war was denied. The British deported the last of the Templars on April 20, 1948, and their villages and communities were captured by the Haganah. Yaron Peri, "The Exchange of German with Palestinians Citizens, 1941–1944", *The Holocaust Research*, 13, (1996), pp. 149–164 (Hebrew), pp. 149–164.

A khamsin²⁰⁶ today, which, coming so soon after snow and cold weather, makes one feel thoroughly exhausted and lethargic.

Mr. Lopez of Colombia is continuing his truce talks with Jamal Husseini and Moshe Shertok at Lake Success.²⁰⁷ I am afraid he won't have much success with either, particularly as Jamal refuses to sit even in the same room with Shertok. It is all very unreal to anyone in Jerusalem. The only way the U.N. would get a truce would be by sending someone here – to Cairo to deal with the Arab League and to Tel Aviv to meet the (Jewish) Agency. These single delegates cannot let their side down and have to justify themselves; if you want somebody to give up something, you must go to him and not to his representative who is merely expected to keep his end up. This is where the U.N. lacks experience and understanding, and I am afraid some of their staff are just plain incompetent.

All our British female staff went off today. How very dependent one is on confidential stenographers, and how very loyal and good some of them are.

Eleventh Perspective

Haganah successes from April and their impact on British policy

The Administration's growing perception of Haganah successes, especially since the beginning of April 1948, dramatically altered its approach to the role it should play in the war – a shift which effectively constituted the turning point in the Jewish-Arab civil war. The war reached its peak and point of decision from April 16–25 – on the eve of, during, and immediately after the battle for Haifa. In other words, the Haganah's successes and the rapid weakening of the British Administration in Palestine as the evacuation progressed and the fighting escalated, led the High Commissioner and the Army – to the chagrin of the Chief Secretary – to rely on the Jewish force in order to complete the evacuation as planned. This approach was apparent to contemporaries, too, in the battle for Haifa (April 20–22), and indications of this unplanned British policy shift were discernible even earlier, at the end of March and early April.

²⁰⁶Khamsin – Arabic for fifty (50) = very hot day. There are, according to the common knowledge, 50 hot and dry days each year.

²⁰⁷The three officials mentioned are, respectively, the President of the Security Council, the chairman of the Arab Higher Committee, and the head of the Jewish Agency's Political Department.

At the end of March, the GOC Palestine, Lieutenant General Gordon MacMillan, remarked on the fact that the evacuation process, which was proceeding on schedule, was disabling the Army from reacting properly to the escalation in hostilities: "The Task of the troops in every sector are made more complex, not only by the increase Arab and Jew activity, but also by the reduction in strength and effectiveness of both the civil police and the Government Administration. These factors, coupled with the progressive run-down of the troops themselves, result in my reserves being so small that effective military action can no longer be taken to forestall, break up or punish large scale attacks by either community." He added that he had no intention to make efforts to calm the sides, as he lacked the capability to do so. Aware that these developments were detrimental to the evacuation, he recommended that the date be moved up.²⁰⁸

The British had a prior, very positive assessment of the Haganah's strength (*Ninth and Thirteenth Perspectives*) and advance information about its deployment for attack. They were deeply concerned about this possibility, and when they failed to prevent it they exploited it for the benefit of the evacuation plan. The events of the first half of April confirmed the British authorities' apprehensions. As Gurney's diary shows (April 7, 9, and 17), the British were particularly impressed by the Jewish forces' performance in the battle for Mishmar Ha'emek, in which the 1st Battalion of the Palmah defeated the Army of Liberation in an orderly counterattack which for the first time showed clearly the Haganah's operational capability. Nor did the British miss the significance of the capture of the villages of Arab Hulda, Deir Muheisin, and Castel, west of Jerusalem, from April 3–8, and afterward of Qaluniya and Saris (April 9–13), or of the death of the most prominent Palestinian commander, the "holy jihad", Abd al Kader al Husseini, in the battle for the Castel (night of April 7–8). By mid-April, the British could safely assume that the Haganah was superior to the local Palestinian forces and the Army of Liberation combined. Events bore out this assessment.²⁰⁹

The Administration's weakness and its awareness of its inability to mount an effective response to a possible imminent Jewish offensive or

²⁰⁸Statement of the military situation in Palestine, Lieut. General MacMillan, 28 March 1948, MECA, CP, 5/4.

²⁰⁹Survey of events by British Army commanders in Palestine from March 23–April 7, TNA WO275/67, April 9, 1948; daily report of events by the commander of the Northern District (NORTHSEC), *ibid.*, April 10, 11, 1948.

to provocations against the Army by the Arab forces were clearly reflected in the key events at this time – the Army’s withdrawal from Safed (April 16), Tiberias (on the 18th), and most of Haifa (April 19–22); the failure to react to the Haganah offensive on the road to Jerusalem and in the city itself (Operations “Harel” and “Yevussi”, April 15–23) or to the Deir Yassin affair (April 9–10); and the unplanned changes in the Army’s deployment in the north.²¹⁰

The Administration lacked sufficient military force to prevent the Haganah operation on the road to Jerusalem. During April the Haganah mounted a major daylight offensive on the road to the city and within Jerusalem. The response by the fighters of Abd al Kader and afterward by the Army of Liberation also occurred in broad daylight and was effective just once. The British wanted to stop the surging war but could not. Rebuffing the Haganah’s “Operation Nahshon” would be the Palestinians Arabs’ one success in the civil war.

Although the Haganah mounted its offensive on the road to Jerusalem based on the mistaken assumption that the British refused to assist the Jews because they sympathized with the Arabs, it turned out, in retrospect, to possess great logic in the light of the British weakness. The fact is that the British, even if they had wished to, could not have helped either side in Jerusalem.

Deeply concerned about their haplessness on the road to Jerusalem, the British authorities could only look on as the city itself, where the High Commissioner sought to remain until the end of the Mandate, slipped rapidly out of their hands. They found themselves under threat there from both the organized Jewish forces and from Arab forces whose reactions were unpredictable because their combatants were not organized. The upshot of the growing British weakness in the Jerusalem region (and elsewhere) was a reassessment by the Administration of the optimal date to end the Mandate and, more important, an operative decision to rely on the strength of the Haganah to enable an orderly evacuation, which would be outwardly respectable, follow the original plan, and avert a mortal blow to the image of the Mandate Administration and its leaders and, in the larger picture, to Britain and its future Middle East interests.

²¹⁰On the information the British possessed about the Haganah’s preparations to launch an offensive: MECA, CP, MSC, CP, 4/1, 19.3.1948.

9th April

Abdul Qader was killed yesterday, and the wildest rumours have been current today. When his body was brought into Jerusalem this morning, all the Arabs started shooting as a demonstration, and the story went around that the Jews had been firing on his funeral.²¹¹ The Jews have now retaken Castel, when the Arabs were looking the other way, and have got half of Lifta, an Arab village just west of Jerusalem. It was then rumored that the Arabs proposed to liquidate Yemin Moshe in Jerusalem, and the Warwicks were sent in there this morning. Yemin Moshe is now nothing but a honeycomb of rifle pits, pillboxes, mines and wire, occupied by 170 Haganah. I take an interest in it, as it lies just outside my office window. A Yemin Moshe battle means that the road between the office and the house is full of bullets.²¹²

The battle of Mishmar Ha'emek, between Haifa and Jenin, is still going on but much in favor of the Jews. The Arabs have been using French 75 mm's and say that it is only a training exercise.

Security Conference at 9:00 this morning, followed by Executive Council. Work is certainly dying away on everything except purely withdrawal problems. The General Zionist Council is still sitting in Tel Aviv, and the Political Committee of the Arab League in Damascus. As the President of Syria is a member of the latter, it is odd that the Arabs manage to maintain that it is not the Arab States who are resisting with violence the U.N. Partition resolution, particularly as Syria sits as a member of the Security Council.²¹³

²¹¹Abd al Kader was killed at Castel on April 8 between 3 and 3:30 a.m. and was buried in Al-Aqsa Mosque the next day. An authoritative description of the events from the Haganah point of view appears in Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, pp. 150–158. He related that he himself gave an order to fire on the convoy of fighters who came to the funeral and that two people were killed in the funeral as a result of shooting by mourners. For the British angle: High Commissioner to Colonial Office, April 10, 1948, TNA CO537/3869.

²¹²The Royal Warwickshire Regiment, from the 2nd Infantry Brigade, was in charge of protecting the security zone from the King David Hotel west to Talbiya, Qatamon, and the German Colony. The unit was evacuated from Jerusalem on the eve of the British departure from the city.

²¹³On the Security Committee, see note 66; on the Executive Council, see Eighth perspective. Syria was both a temporary member of the Security Council and one of the most active countries in opposing General Assembly Resolution 181. Not long before the vote the Syrians massed forces on their border with Palestine and on October 20, 1947, crossed the border in the Nuheila area and seized Tel Dan. They were expelled by the British. In January they attacked Kfar Szold and again at Tel Dan, and were driven back by the British, who operated on the ground and in the air, in cooperation with the Haganah and local Jewish settlements. Elchanan Oren, "the Galilee Campaign of the 1948 War", *The Galilee*, Vol. 2, Haifa 1983, pp. 819–851 (Hebrew), pp. 819–823.

I saw Stravopoulous, the legal member of the U.N. Secretariat party here, this morning. The Commission had called upon all members of the Palestine Government service to continue in employment with the Commission as the successor authority. Our terms for retiring benefits to the Palestine service make a distinction between those who have good cause to refuse employment with a successor authority and those who have not. This question we obviously cannot decide yet, but it is not possible to maintain that the Commission's declaration is not an offer of employment. It is clear that the Commission will never be able to fulfill it. It is a pity that the United Nations seem to have so few competent people with real administrative experience; and that they can seriously contemplate taking on Palestine as their first ward at a month's notice, with no staff in view and no first-hand knowledge of what they are taking on.

No doubt the Commission will seek to hide their failure behind our unwillingness to have them in Palestine before the 1st May. I see that the Canadian delegate has already taken this point. There was of course always a danger of this. The fact is that the Arabs have always made it clear that the Commission's arrival in Palestine would be the signal for their full armed revolt. In face of this, without a force, the Commission could have done nothing. Secondly, the Commission could have done nothing here that they could not do in New York. It was obvious from the start that they could never set up any Arab provisional council of government; it was obvious also that they would have had no control over the Zionists' ambitions, as anyone with any first-hand experience of these could have told them. There were two problems that faced the Commission some months ago: (a) could they ever do their job without a force; (b) would they attempt to operate a government of Palestine. These were the vital and fundamental issues and neither has been faced. Nevertheless, there must be a scapegoat. The British have enjoyed so much abuse over Palestine, as anyone else will who gets mixed up with the Zionists, that one further criticism of this sort can easily be borne.²¹⁴

This evening a large party of Fawzi's has come down from the north to join in the Castel battle. In the environment of these problems, I saw the Chief Justice about the promotion of a candidate to be registrar of the Supreme Court. The Courts are still functioning with Bench and

²¹⁴Before the General Assembly vote, Britain announced that it would not permit the U.N. Commission to enter Palestine until just before the Administration's departure, and in any event not before May 1, to obviate a situation of two governmental authorities in the country – and in any event, Britain could not guarantee the implementation of a resolution which was opposed by both sides. Freundlich, *From Destruction to Resurrection*, pp. 204–205.

Bar in full force, and much credit for this is due to the Chief Justice, Fitzgerald, who, as an Irishman, understands these inconsistencies.²¹⁵

Jerusalem is now the worst spot in Palestine. The High Commissioner yesterday presented the C.B.E. to the Jewish chairman of the Haifa Municipal Commission at a ceremony which Arabs attended. At Haifa there is commerce and business to attend to; in Jerusalem there is no industry but religion and all the political bitterness that this can generate.²¹⁶

A thoroughly warm, enervating and slack day, which I finished by trying to demonstrate to the Attorney-General the niceties of a back-handed cast with a short rod in the form of a billiard cue in the Club. Some of the Jewish carp ponds in Palestine would produce some curious stories for the Fisherman's Bedside Book. When the Arabs attacked a settlement in Galilee about a month ago, the Jews opened a carp pond on them down a Wadi and the attackers came out pulling carp out of their hair. Why anyone should grow them for food is hard to understand, seeing that they are made entirely of wool, blotting paper and bones.²¹⁷

Twelfth Perspective

The Administration's reaction to the events at Deir Yassin

On April 9, 1948, a combined ITZL-LEHI force captured the small village of Deir Yassin, on the western outskirts of Jerusalem. It is not my intention here to discuss in details the question of what actually happened in the village, or the equally important question of whether murder was committed there, and if so, how many victims it claimed. No thorough

²¹⁵William Fitzgerald, in common with the High Commissioner and contrary to many of his colleagues, believed that the internationalization of Jerusalem was a timely solution, and he preceded the U.N. by drawing up a plan to this effect, in 1945. The courts operated until May 14, and until June 30 in the British enclave in Haifa.

²¹⁶C.B.E. – Commander of the Order of the British Empire; Even though Jewish-Arab relations soured bitterly in these months, and half the Arab population had already left, the total collapse of those relations in Haifa, less than two weeks after the event described here, came as a complete surprise following the years-long tradition of cooperation in the city.

²¹⁷No other source has been found for this story. In the early 1950s there was talk about digging fish ponds in both the north and south of the country as military facilities, for defense, and to exploit them economically as well, as far as feasible. D. Goldberg to A. Bovritksy, "Canals and fish ponds for defense", Top Secret, August 13, 1951, CZA S15-8775.

study has been made on the subject and opinions are divided. To sum up the research claims – at least those that I find acceptable – this was a case of an operational and a propaganda failure alike. The breakaway groups were adept only in terrorist actions; certainly they had no training in combat in built-up areas. What apparently happened is that the unit panicked when it failed to capture the village and also sustained casualties – five killed and a number wounded – and opened fire indiscriminately. The number of villagers killed was commensurate with this. The number of victims cited by the ITZL-LEHI force – 254 villagers, undoubtedly an exaggeration – stemmed from enthusiasm at an achievement that could enhance the organizations' image among Jewish public opinion, or so they thought. Certainly their image was poor, but this idea, which was conceived, according to his testimony, by Mordechai Ra'anan, the ITZL commander in Jerusalem, probably did little to improve it.²¹⁸

What is in no doubt is that the story about the indiscriminate massacre that was perpetrated in the village resonated far and wide. The British authorities in Palestine accepted the story at face value. Their attitude toward the ITZL and LEHI was formed long before the events at Deir Yassin, and thus the High Commissioner's reaction to them would not have been a surprise if he had made do with Cunningham's comment: "The world must be told about these people, the Irgun and the Stern Gang – the absolute dregs of degradation." As usual, the Administration cast responsibility on the Jewish Agency, which it viewed as a powerful and effective umbrella organization capable of reining in the extremist Jewish groups if it only wanted to.²¹⁹

However, the reaction of the High Commissioner and his staff was not confined to Cunningham's comment. From their point of view it was equally and perhaps more important that the authorities learned about the events at Deir Yassin in real time but were unable to do

²¹⁸A surprisingly balanced account appears in History of the Haganah, pp. 1546–1548; and see also Golani, *The Question of Jerusalem*, pp. 121–125; Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, pp. 342–345; Gelber, *Independence Versus Nakba*, pp. 153–161. For a summation of the historiographic debate, Benny Morris, "The Historiography of Deir Yassin", *Journal of Israeli History*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (March 2005), pp. 79–107.

²¹⁹High Commissioner to Colonial Secretary, April 12, 1948, MECA, CP, B4, F4. The British assumed immediately that the operation had been carried out with the knowledge of the Jewish Agency – an assumption which proved to be correct. General Sir A. Cunningham to Secretary of State (Colonial Office), Weekly Intelligence Appreciation, 10 April 1948, TNA CO537/3869.

anything. This fact was even more blatant because of the village's location, on the western edge of Jerusalem and within walking distance of the Administration's centres in the city. The British response in the wake of their inability to prevent the massacre, the Arab reactions, or even to punish the perpetrators showed clear signs that they were at their wits' end. Gurney wrote about "piles of bodies, obviously shot in cold blood". A few days later he added, "The bestialities of Deir Yassin are... too horrible for words and [Bergen-] Belsen pales beside them." We need not accept this analogy in order to understand what it says about the Chief Secretary's frame of mind, following this total loss of control. Incidentally, he did not exempt the Arabs of responsibility, either: "No doubt we shall have a competition in atrocity stories before long."

The High Commissioner himself, deeply troubled about his personal public image and that of the Administration, made an effort to remain more restrained. Yet his remarks about Deir Yassin also reflect considerable distress. To the Colonial Secretary he reported that he had wanted to punish those who had captured Deir Yassin but was told that this was beyond the Army's capability at present. In their desperation, the Mandate authorities had decided to bomb the village from the air to stop the fight and to hit unexpected terrorists assemblage – an unprecedented act – but the Royal Air Force could not accomplish this relatively simple mission in the required time. Cunningham added, in this connection that, "This is only one example out of many where the Civil Government has to stand idle while its authority is flouted in all directions." Indeed, on April 13, the day after this was written, Jerusalem Arabs massacred the occupants of a convoy that was en route to Hadassah Hospital on Mount Scopus. British haplessness made no distinction between Jews and Arabs.²²⁰

²²⁰Gurney's comments: diary entries for April 10, 11, 15; Cunningham's remarks, MECA, CP, 12 April 1948, 5/4: Immediately after the Hadassah convoy tragedy the Jewish Agency assumed that the British could have prevented it, had they wished to: Leo Cohen to General MacMillan, April 16, 1948, *Diplomatic Documents*, pp. 648–650. The comments by Levy, a senior Haganah figure in Jerusalem, about the convoy reflect the widespread assumption among the Yishuv leaders, and afterward in the Israeli collective memory, about the role of the British in the event: "The behavior of the British leaves room for the conclusion that it was a deliberate failure, with the aim of allowing the Arabs to do their evil work against the convoy." Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, p. 194. That the weakened British were unable to or fearful of intervening was not taken into account.

General MacMillan, who did not hide the fact that his forces were effectively nonfunctional (see Eleventh Perspective), did not refer to the significance of the events at Deir Yassin itself. He was preoccupied with his own problems, both practical and those relating to image (also undoubtedly a practical matter in this instance). In response to the High Commissioner's comment that he intended "to attack it [the Jews at Deir Yasin]... with all the power they [the army] can produce..." and "to publish the details of the atrocities at Deir Yasin, MacMillan noted that it would be useful to let him see the statement before its publication, as he was afraid that explanations of our inability to assist the Arabs might show up our military weakness".²²¹ Such a scenario was not compatible with the "strong but restrained" image which the High Commissioner sought to forge in this period as a substitute for his true situation of barely being able to protect his own people. Cunningham accepted the Army's approach. After all, the Mandate Government's senior officials, Gurney among them, knew that they were incapable of dealing militarily even with problems that arose very close to the seat of power in Jerusalem.

10th April

Woke to the sound of guns at 5:00 a.m.; about 50 rounds of what sounded like 105 mm about two miles out on the Latrun road. A battle has been going on there all day in which the Arabs now seem to have recaptured Castel, but the Jews have got some other villages. There are now several thousand engaged on each side, and mortars are falling on the road, one of which this afternoon killed two sappers on the way to repair the Jerusalem water pipeline. Apparently their car got mixed up with a Jewish convoy.²²²

²²¹Cunningham, *Ibid.*; Cunningham-MacMillan conversation, Security Committee, April 16, 1948, MECA, CP, MSC, 4/1.

²²²Following the capture of Castel and the demolition of the houses there the previous day, the Haganah now moved to broaden its control of the region bordering on western Jerusalem: the village of Qaluniyah, which abutted the Jewish village of Motza on the north and the west, was captured and leveled. To block the Haganah's progress, the Arab forces and units of the Army of Liberation operated from the north by means of long-range fire from the villages of Beit Iksa and Beit Surik, but made no attempt to assault Castel. According to the Haganah, a British vehicle was hit by the Arab gunfire five kilometers from Jerusalem, killing three of its passengers and wounding five.

Yesterday the Irgun and Stern staged a press conference to which some American correspondents went, in spite of it being illegal to have such contact with these people. The spokesman claimed to have killed 200 Arabs in Deir Yassin, a village on the road of about 700 Arabs; including 100 women and children. Certainly about 150 Arab women were brought into Jerusalem and dumped in the Street of the Prophets. This boasting of the killing of women and children is typical of the ruthlessness and degradation of these people.

I read today a good pamphlet called "Is this the Way?" by Walter Zander, a British Jew, who exposes very soundly the Zionists' errors. As he says, The Zionists' first necessity was obviously to make friends of the Arabs and give them a *quid pro quo* for the sacrifice they were asking them to make. They could, for example, have done something for Arab education and welfare and they could have backed the cause of independence in the Arab world. Instead, they thought only of themselves and relied on the British to fight their battles with the Arabs for them, although they knew all the time that one day the British would go and they would be left with 1¼ million hostile Arabs in their midst. This blindness and their present belief that force can solve their difficulties have made the Zionists the most hated people in the countries between Pakistan and Greece, and can be due only to some almost conscious suicidal trait in their character and policy.²²³

Yesterday there was a general rupture of communications; the Latrun-Ramle road blown in three places, the Jenin-Haifa road in 17 and Jenin-Affula road in two. The people waiting for ships at Jenin are temporarily almost cut off, but not quite. The Jerusalem-Latron road is now virtually closed. An oil train came up today after rails pulled up by Arabs had been replaced, but later the rails were pulled up again, and nothing more can

²²³Immediately after the United Nations' adoption of the partition resolution, Zander, a Zionist of the Ahad Ha'am school, which espoused "cultural Zionism", published a pamphlet entitled "Is This the Way? A Call to Jews", London, 1948, an attempt to sound a different voice in the light of the wave of enthusiasm that marked the Jews in general and the Zionist movement in particular. Zander acknowledges the historic significance of the developments, but maintains that if the Zionists persist in following their present path, their state will inevitably fail. It is not by chance that my copy of the pamphlet is from the library of Prof. Shmuel Hugo Bergman, one of the leaders of "Brit Shalom" and the "Ihud" – advocates of a bi-national state – whose spirit is reflected in the pamphlet. Gurney found in it reinforcement of his criticism of "world Jewry" and Zionism.

get through. No water today and we had to pump from our reserve cistern which most Arab houses have.²²⁴

Abdul Qader's funeral yesterday was attended by enormous crowds. I heard that the British Council Arab staff got special leave to attend, visited the Museum gardens on the way, and arrived at the funeral with a wreath of Government flowers nicely labeled "From the Representative of the British Council".

Three houses just behind mine, previously used as R.A.F. married quarters and now evacuated by them, are now occupied by the Haganah, who cut the zone wire and got in. They will have to get out.²²⁵

There is now not the slightest possibility of a truce. I do not know why anyone should suppose that the Colombian delegate at Lake Success should be able to achieve a truce, when we have failed to do it for the last 30 years, more particularly as there is a revolution going on in Colombia which seems to have interrupted the debate in the Pan-American conference on the wickedness of colonial imperialism in the western hemisphere.²²⁶

It is indeed difficult to see why, in the absence of a truce, there is any reason for us to stay here a day after the 20th April. If there is no truce, what chance is there of trusteeship?²²⁷

I see a Reuters' report that the U.N. Commission have appealed to Britain for quick action on certain administrative problems which require attention if chaos is to be avoided on 15th May. This would be amusing if it were not so tragic, as these are the very problems which

²²⁴Each side operated against the other's transportation and both of them against that of the British. Gurney's comments here reflect, on the one hand, the Haganah's success in besieging large Arab areas – this was the implication of cutting off Arab northern Samaria from Affula and especially from Haifa; and, on the other hand, the failure of "Operation Nahshon", which began on April 6. A few days later the Haganah would attack on the Jerusalem road again, in "Operation Harel". Many Jewish houses also had cisterns, which were filled with water.

²²⁵The buildings, located on presently Hagedud Ha'ivri Street, in Qatamon, were demolished in the 1960s.

²²⁶In the wake of the assassination of Jorge Eliasar Gaitan, the leader of the liberals in Bogota, Colombia, in April 1948, a furious mob went on the rampage and destroyed the capital, the start of a five-year civil war in which about 250,000 people died. The Ninth Pan-American Conference was held in Bogota from March 30 to May 1, 1948, and approved the charter of the Organization of American States.

²²⁷April 20 was one of the alternative dates proposed by the Army for ending the Mandate, for example in the memorandum of the GOC Palestine, Statement of the Military, Situation in Palestine, Lieut. General MacMillan, 28 March 1948, MECA, CP, 5/4.

we represented to the Commission some months ago as requiring their urgent attention. We have given them all the information we have about them and even suggested to them what they should do. But I fear that they have been caught in the political toils and don't perhaps know much of what is involved in running a post office or a railway. It takes a good many years' experience to understand these things.

It is easy to be wise afterwards, but it seems now that both the Commission and ourselves were at fault; the Commission for not recognizing earlier that it could never do its job without adequate forces at its disposal, and ourselves for not making this quite clear to the General Assembly at the time of the November Resolution. But, on the other hand, it would have required very large forces to impose partition "peacefully", and why should such large forces be employed to enable the Zionists to realize their political ambitions, when the Zionists themselves make no contribution to the interests of the United Nations or any of its members?

Clearly it was thought at the General Assembly that the British would do it, and though we said mildly that we could not, we seem never to have declared this with sufficient emphasis and clarity. Again, there were some who thought that the Jews could do it themselves with a "militia", not recognizing, first, that this meant war and, secondly, that a Jewish militia in a Jewish State containing 45 per cent Arabs represented the worst form of racial discrimination.

Have made plans to move out of the house in a fortnight's time, and take my bed to the office, as the house will very soon be untenable.

11th April

*Vera Jerusalem
Est illa civitas
Cuius pax iugis est,
Summa jucunditas.*²²⁸

On this second Sunday after Easter, the day broke with a hail of bullets going in all directions around the house. Firing had been going on all

²²⁸"Jerusalem is the city of everlasting peace, a peace that is surpassing and utter blessedness...". From "Sabbato ad Vesperas", (Vespers: Saturday Evening) by the 12th century poet Peter Abelard, in Helen Waddell, *Mediaeval Latin Lyrics*, Middlesex 1964, pp. 174–175.

night, and sleep was impossible. There is now much more of this in and around Jerusalem than anywhere else in Palestine; we have now had it, on and off, for four months and its stupidity becomes more and more evident. Yet the Administration is still functioning and limping along, with every man at his post. The Director of Education²²⁹ told me yesterday that he can now communicate with his District Inspector of Schools in Galilee only through police wireless, but the schools are all carrying on and both Arabs and Jews are determined to continue them. There are now no mixed schools at all. For years the Jewish educational system has been a watertight machine, breeding a narrow nationalism, with certain militarist features such as a year's compulsory service at the age of 17, without which the school leaving certificate is not obtainable. The Arab schools have been nearly all Government ones. It is a truism that this separatist system of education has tended to drive the two communities away from each other; but neither would have it otherwise.²³⁰

The truth about Deir Yassin came out this afternoon. This massacre of innocent women and children, some 200 of them, is one of the worst things the Irgun and Stern have done. De Reynier of the International Red Cross brought back terrible stories of piles of bodies, obviously shot in cold blood.²³¹ "The Times" correspondent told me he tried to get through, but was stopped by the Haganah. Jewish police – no British police could get near it – tried to play it down, as though little had

²²⁹Sir Bernard De Bunsen, from 1946.

²³⁰The Yishuv education system was autonomous from the beginning of the 1920s. From December 1947 it was unable to function properly, and schooling came to a virtual halt until mid-May. The Administration's Department of Education continued its activity in regard to the Arab population. As of February, the institutions began to be transferred to the local education authorities.

²³¹The number of villagers killed according to what Dr. Jacques De-Reynier, the head of the International Red Cross delegation in Palestine, told Gurney, his close friend. De Reynier visited the village on April 11 at the request of the Arab Higher Committee and tried to mediate between that body and the ITZL in order to bring the dead to burial and search for survivors. He himself rescued a ten-year-old girl and an elderly woman. He refused to condemn the events in the village, saying he was not a judge. Dominique-D. Junod, *The Imperiled Red Cross And The Palestine – Eretz-Yisrael Conflict 1945–1952*, London & New York 1996, Ch. 3, pp. 133–191.

happened.²³² Some of the Jewish press this morning pretended to condemn the outrage, as “sabotaging Jewish interests”. Unfortunately these are the only interests the Jews can think of.²³³

The Arabs have been guilty of many horrible barbarities and are selling picture postcards of some of them. No doubt we shall have a competition in atrocity stories before long.

12th April

For the third night running there was practically no sleep, owing to heavy firing all around the house. The Lebanese Vice-Consul just down the road was shot on his verandah; the donkey that brings the Belgian Consulate’s milk was shot outside his door²³⁴; two Arabs were killed and four wounded in the (security) Zone (A) last night.

I find that one of the causes of this is that the Warwicks have handed over to the Haganah a roof-post about 80 yards behind the house. This post commands most of the Zone and fires indiscriminately into it, being shot at itself from all directions. I saw various British people this afternoon changing their quarters, bag in hand. No notice of this was given by the Army, and this withdrawal has thrown the whole Zone (A) open to Jewish fire, with the usual Arab retaliation.²³⁵

The Bishop and three padres called on the subject of the Christian Jews. These are in a piteous plight. One of them was caught by his Jewish friends recently, beaten for 18 hours and then released after he had signed a cheque for every penny he possessed in Palestine. This is

²³²*The NY Times* correspondent was one of the important contemporaneous sources for the number of victims that was etched into the public consciousness – 254. The ITZL-LEHI wanted to leave the village quickly, claiming (correctly, as it turned out: see below, April 13–14) that the British were liable to take advantage of their concentration in one place to attack them. Following negotiations with the District Command, and after the Haganah blocked the approach to the village, they left on April 12. *New York Times*, April 13, 1948; Security Committee, April 16, 1948, MECA, CP, MSC, 4/11; Gelber, *Independence Versus Nakba*, p. 156.

²³³The Chief Rabbinate, the Haganah District Command, and the Jewish Agency accepted the ITZL, Administration, and Red Cross account of a massacre and on April 11 published a statement of condemnation, on the assumption that the attack was detrimental to the interests of the Yishuv and was a “brutal and barbaric act, which is inconsistent with the spirit of the Jewish people...”, Jewish Agency to Abdullah (Amman), April 12, 1948, CZA S25/17.

²³⁴Presently at 35 Kovshei Qatamon Street, Reha Freier Square.

²³⁵The Warwicks, of 2nd Infant Brig: The site referred to was at the corner of today’s Palmah and Hagedud Ha’ivri St., which dominated the security zone (A) in Qatamon and the neighborhoods of the German Colony and the Greek Colony.

the sort of religious tolerance to be expected in the Jewish State. In England all religion is free and synagogues are tolerated together with Moslem mosques. What a long way the Jews have to go to understand these things.²³⁶

I was to have seen Khalidi²³⁷ at noon, but he has disappeared again to see the Mufti at Damascus.

A conference this afternoon with the High Commissioner and the soldiers to discuss the plans for the actual withdrawal in May. Dined at Government House and all was quiet when I got back at 11:00.

Thirteenth Perspective

The Mandate Administration's evaluation of the Yishuv's organizational, political, and military capability

A brief comment is in order here about the British perception of the Yishuv's growing autonomy and its high organizational and military capability, beyond their assessment of its military successes in this period. Their viewpoint is generally implicit in the next few diary entries and indeed throughout the rest of the diary. The British evaluation of the Yishuv's capability assumed a more practical than declarative character. On the one hand, Administration officials were deterred by the Jews' scowling, determined, and always secretive cohesiveness. On the other hand they found the Yishuv effective for the evacuation needs.

Already on March 16, Gurney noted, "the Arabs do have a sense of humor occasionally, and are not always immersed in morbid self-interest and suicidal gloom." He was not alone among his colleagues in holding this view. Hadara Lazar, who interviewed Britons who served in Palestine during the 1940s, quotes similar remarks in her book. According to Lord Martin Chaitrees, Commander of Military Intelligence in Palestine (1945–1946) the Arabs belonged to Palestine more than the Jews, who arrived from the outside. He added that the Jews were united in their desire to return to Palestine – something impelled them to go there. The Jews, he said, are different from everyone else and are incapable of understanding the viewpoint of others, only theirs. Or Edward Horen of the CID, who had claimed that he never felt that he was a stranger

²³⁶On the Christian Jews, see note 62; The English themselves went a long way in this regard since expelling the Jews from their country in the eleventh century.

²³⁷Dr. Hussein Fakhri al-Khalidi, secretary of the AHC.

in an Arab locale or in the home of an Arab, whether he was an academic, a physician, or a fellah, whereas in the home of a Jew he always felt like a stranger, even in Tel Aviv. In the eyes of the English, he added, the Jews were hysterical, troublemakers and complete outsiders in the country. No Jew ever truly became friends with the English in Palestine, he said.²³⁸

Such comments are not just anti-Semitic: that is too easy. The hostility of the Jewish street to the British in the 1940s even as fruitful cooperation took place between the Yishuv leadership and Britain and the Mandate Administration merits study. At the same time, it is now possible to understand the British perception of the Yishuv as a highly organized, resolute community, and closed to outsiders, be they British or Arab. These “traits” of the Yishuv and its leadership became very pronounced after the hostilities erupted, in December 1947. The British, particularly toward the end of their presence in the country, were able to utilize this situation for their own ends.

The Mandate authorities, both civilian and military, were concerned about the Jews’ growing military strength. Their concern was that the continuation of this trend would endanger the evacuation process and the safety of the British in Palestine, civilians and military personnel alike. The initiative, firepower, mobility, and organizational prowess that the Jews showed as the war intensified frequently placed the Mandate’s security forces in a difficult situation – physically as well as politically. The ongoing assessment in the weekly meetings of the Administration’s leadership was that it was necessary to keep an eye on what the Jews were doing. Their discussions focused on what the Jews were likely to do and what action the Administration should take to ensure that they did not put either British interests or the Arab population at risk. The opposite orientation was taken by the Chiefs of Staff in London: they thought it more prudent to try to calm the Arabs and that an accommodation could be reached with the Jews. The result of these differences was a growing severance between those serving in Palestine and their superiors in London.²³⁹

²³⁸Lazar, *In and Out of Palestine*, pp. 33, 171–173.

²³⁹For example, the Security Committee on the day of the partition resolution, on the eve of the civil war: MECA, CP, MSC, 29.11.1947, CP, 4/1; for the opposite viewpoint, by the Chiefs of Staff on the eve of the war: Message from Chiefs of Staff for Commanders in Chief Middle East, 11.11.1947, TNA AIR23/8342.

These apprehensions were due largely to the high quality of the Haganah's operations and the rapidly dwindling British military presence in Palestine. Months before the outbreak of the war, the British military in Palestine reached the conclusion that the Haganah was to all intents and purposes an army and that the Palestinian Arabs would be no match for the Jewish forces. This concern is probably what underlay British arms searches among the Jewish population in the war's first months. Against the Arabs, in contrast, the British relied primarily on curfew and arrests – the usual methods for dealing with popular resistance. So potent was the Jews' military force that the High Commissioner believed that the U.N. should warn them not to utilize it without prior coordination with the Mandate authorities.²⁴⁰

The growing dependence of the British on the Haganah during the fighting was seen, for example, in the bringing of food to Jerusalem and in the continued mining of potash in the Dead Sea and the mineral's transportation to the ports mainly in Yishuv trucks, as mentioned later in the diary. This practical assessment was the basis for the Haganah-British cooperation in Haifa and thus for the turning point in the war in its wake.

The conceptual universe of the colonial service did not include dependence on subject populations. However, such dependence, which existed in colonies other than Palestine as well, merely reflected the approaching end of Britain's imperial age.

13th April

The Tempests²⁴¹ arrived today from Iraq in response to decisions taken last night, but it is too late, as the Irgun and Stern have now evacuated

²⁴⁰Memorandum of Staff Officer, British Army Headquarters, Palestine, July 10, 1947, MECA, CP, B4, F4; G. Cohen, *British Policy*, pp. 142–143, notes that this memorandum had the concurrence of MacMillan, who conveyed it to Cunningham. On the characteristics of the activity against the Jews as compared with actions against the Arabs, see, for example, 12.12.1947, MECA, CP, MSC, 4/1.

²⁴¹The Tempest, a British fighter plane with a range of 2,640 kilometers, began to come off the Production line in 1943. In April, the 249th Squadron, which was stationed at Habbaniyah, Iraq, sent Tempest VI planes to Palestine to secure the evacuation, the model's last combat mission before it was retired from active service in March 1950.

Deir Yassin and the Haganah are there. Thus, by the action of the dissidents which they have condemned, the Haganah capture an Arab village.²⁴²

As a reprisal for Deir Yassin the Arabs attacked a convoy making for Mt. Scopus this morning, which they suspected of carrying arms for the Jewish defences there. They killed over 30 Jews and the G.O.C.'s car, passing through in the early stages of the battle, got a couple of bullets through the windscreen. Firing and mortaring went on till teatime. So much for the cease-fire.²⁴³

Dr. Azc'arate, the only remaining member of the U.N. Commission's advance party, came in this morning. We British are often resentful of foreign criticism of our ability to administer anything, but he had some quite fair criticisms – which is something new in Palestine – no doubt partly clouded by his having been restricted to short commons for so long. I pointed out to him that as the United Nations had shown no sign yet of assuming their responsibilities we had to begin closing post offices on the 15th. I also explained that although in February the Commission had said that they were prepared to offer employment to British police volunteers for further service in Jerusalem, it was only last week that they had made any request to us to ascertain whether any volunteers would be forthcoming.²⁴⁴

A Jewish convoy of 160 vehicles got through to Jerusalem this morning, which will slightly ease the famine. Oil supplies, on which

²⁴²On April 12, the Security Committee decided to launch an air strike against an unprecedented concentration of breakaway forces in Deir Yassin. The Administration announced its intention publicly. On the same day a GADNA (Youth Battalions) unit of the Haganah entered the village and the ITZL and LEHI left. On April 13 the Administration stated that it had canceled its bombing plans. See Gurney, April 14; Louis, "Cunningham," pp. 152–153, 162; MECA, CP, MSC, 4/1, 16.4.1948.

²⁴³At 9:40 a.m., at the northern exit from the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood, a convoy carrying medical staff of Hadassah Hospital, patients, university staff, and Haganah personnel was attacked on its way to Mount Scopus. In the afternoon, the British succeeded – after the Haganah failed – in rescuing the wounded and the few who were not hurt. Of the 112 members of the convoy, 78 were killed and 24 wounded. The Haganah account appears in Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, pp. 192–197, and that of the Jewish Agency in Leo Cohen to General MacMillan, April 16, 1948, *Diplomatic Documents*, pp. 648–650; Security Committee, April 16 1948, MECA, CP, MSC, 4/1.

²⁴⁴Dr. Pablo Azc'arate volunteered to remain in Jerusalem in order to prepare the arrival of the U.N. Municipal Commissioner. The other members of the advance party fled the city as the fighting intensified and the U.N.'s impotence became increasingly apparent.

the water and electricity undertakings depend, are still touch and go, and it is only because of the Army's efforts that any are coming up at all. Shell have more or less given up Jerusalem. The distribution of oil to the various pumping stations on the Jerusalem pipe-line, which rises 2,000 feet, is another problem.²⁴⁵

The convoys which have been bringing up potash from the Dead Sea under military and air escort will have to stop in two days' time, as the escorts will no longer be available. This is the principal Empire source of potash and of great importance to Britain. Jews and Arabs work together at the works at the northern and southern ends of the Dead Sea, and the concession is one of the most valuable British assets in the Middle East.²⁴⁶

The Arab labor at the Haifa Refineries walked out yesterday after being shot at by Jews and the Refineries are at a standstill. This may be serious.²⁴⁷ Still no water. The engineer in charge of distribution is a Jew and distributes accordingly.²⁴⁸

The General Zionist Council has come out with a formidable concoction of religion and politics, designed to assert their intention of

²⁴⁵The major result of "Operation Nahshon" was a food convoy of 200 trucks which arrived in Jerusalem on April 13 and returned without a hitch to Hulda. Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, pp. 158–159. Another convoy would get through on the 17th.

²⁴⁶The Administration ordered the continued mining off potash and its transport to Jaffa and Haifa. The Army was assigned the task of guarding the convoys, which consisted mainly of Jewish trucks, but stopped doing so on April 11. Yair Giladi, *New Life for Dead Sea*, Jerusalem 1998 (Hebrew), p. 132.

²⁴⁷Reflecting the relations at the refineries after the massacre of Jewish workers on December 29, 1947, which followed a massacre by the ITZL of Arab workers there. David Koren, *The Massacre at the Refineries*, Tel Aviv 1987 (Hebrew); The oil refineries were at the centre of a crisis which involved Britain and the Administration in Palestine; the oil companies, which found it difficult to operate; Iraq, which announced that it would stop sending crude oil to Haifa; the relevant Arab states; and the leaders of the Yishuv, who were afraid that they would remain without fuel and blamed Britain, whose approach was far more complex than the simplistic view of its policy by the Jewish Agency. The subject is elaborated in Uri Bialer, *Oil and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1948–1963*, Oxford 1999, Chp. 2–3.

²⁴⁸Gurney shared the general feeling that "there is no water in Jerusalem." The rationing was harsh, but even more difficult was the fear that the water would suddenly stop. The water engineer of the Jerusalem Municipality, Zvi Leibowitz, transferred water from the main pipe (which did not stop until August) to the reservoirs of the Jerusalem Jewish Emergency Committee in cisterns which were. The Arabs in the city, who were also under siege, naturally used cisterns. Joseph, *The Faithful City*, p. 95.

establishing a Jewish State on the 16th May, at all costs.²⁴⁹ When people get into present pathological condition of both Jews and Arabs, the only sort of truce they can possibly accept is one that is forced upon them, so that each side can satisfy its extremists that it has been compelled by force majeure to come to an agreement. How much bluff of this sort is there on each side? Certainly there can now be no willing standfast. The only hope is that the United Nations, in the rarefied atmosphere of Lake Success, should send a dove to the Middle East to present in Cairo and Tel Aviv an olive branch and an ultimatum that the U.N. will take action if it is not accepted. The slenderness of this hope is the consequence of the fact that everyone knows that the U.N. are not in a position to take action, and the Big Five are really concerned with much larger issues than Palestine, which most of them regard as a general nuisance that has gone on all too long.²⁵⁰

14th April

The Commission's report to the General Assembly contains the expected criticism of the Mandatory for failing to cooperate in implementing partition. This is not difficult to answer, since we have always made it abundantly clear, even before the Commission was appointed, that we would not do so. But scapegoats must be found somewhere. So far as this administration is concerned, it is a case of "Cet animal est mechant; il se defend", and we are saying quite frankly what we think of the lack of realism shown by the Commission in its approach to its responsibilities. It is easier for us to do this in our small way, than for

²⁴⁹On April 12, the Zionist Executive, in accordance with U.N. General Assembly Resolution 181, established Minhelet Ha'am (the National Executive) would become a provisional government on May 15. Gurney cites the 16th even though he knew that the 14th would be the final day of the Mandate.

²⁵⁰The five permanent members of the Security Council – the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, France, and China (Taiwan) – were preoccupied with the intensification of the Cold War on the eve of the looming crisis in Berlin, which would erupt full-blown in June.

H.M.G. to risk becoming embroiled in recriminations with the U.N. over Palestine.²⁵¹

Our Haganah post, which had been causing trouble, has now been taken over again by the Army and things should be better.

An Anglo-Indian new to Palestine said yesterday: "I can't understand what is going on here: in our province in India we dealt with 20,000 rioters with a couple of companies of infantry." "What were they armed with?" "Lathis."²⁵² "Did you realise that we have in Palestine 80,000 Jews armed with rifles and automatics and every Arab has a gun?" "No; of course, that might explain it."²⁵³

At 12:15 this morning, I told the Army that we had no objection to their blowing up the Yemin Moshe windmill, on the top of which the Haganah have built a pillbox, thus infuriating the local Arabs. Half an hour later there was a large explosion from the vicinity of the windmill (only about 100 yards from the King David), but it was only a house being blown up by Arabs.²⁵⁴

Our failure to act against the Irgun and Stern after the Deir Yassin incident is not easy to explain satisfactorily, and the British press here

²⁵¹The report was submitted in a special session on April 16, 1948. The clash between the Administration and the U.N. did not stem solely from Britain's announcement that it would not cooperate with the partition plan. The evacuation, the travails of the war, and the cooling off of the Jewish Agency's relations with the Administration heightened the importance of the contacts with the British delegation to the U.N. and with the senior members of the Palestine Commission, who operated directly with the Yishuv in an open confrontation with Britain and its Palestine Administration. The U.N.'s failure does not detract from the importance of the contacts at the time; for example, the meeting of Siegfried Hoofien, the Chairman of the Board of the Anglo-Palestine Bank, and Joseph Linton, the Political Secretary of the Jewish Agency in London and an attaché of its U.N. delegation, with Karl Lisicky, the chairman of the Palestine Commission, and John Reedman, the Commission's economic adviser, on April 12, 1948. *Diplomatic Documents*, pp. 621–624.

²⁵²A long, heavy bamboo stick used by the police in India.

²⁵³The numbers are exaggerated. Gurney's estimate, on April 4, that the Haganah had about 40,000 members, was closer to the truth. The notion that "every Arab has a gun" was also more image than reality. Gelber, *Independence Versus Nakba*, pp. 41–43.

²⁵⁴The windmill was built in the Mishkenot Sha'ananim neighborhood in 1857 at the initiative of Sir Moses Montefiore; it ceased to function after a few months. The Haganah opened fire from the windmill at Arab vehicles on the Hebron-Jerusalem road. On April 15 the British blew up the dome of the windmill in order to destroy the Haganah position, but left the rest of the structure intact.

are rather shaken by it. This afternoon came a report that the Jews are preparing to attack Ain Karem (where Mary visited Elizabeth).²⁵⁵ This has been acted on promptly.

As examples of the state of lawlessness now prevalent in Jerusalem, thefts of cars by Arabs are getting worse and worse. During the last four days the Director of Public Works had his taken from outside the Club; the Director of Land Registration lost his to an Iraqi officer who walked into his office and offered £50 for it, and was told to get out; the Director of Education had his stolen from outside the Secretariat. They ought to have been immobilized; one trouble is that cars are checked into, but not out of, (Security) Zones.

As an example of the difficulty of correct publicity; yesterday we announced that an air strike on the dissidents at Deir Yassin had been arranged but had been suspended as they had left. The Arabic and Hebrew translators, not knowing what an air strike was, provided something about the R.A.F. having gone on strike, but it had now been called off. An air strike looked to them like a short of soft coal strike. The oil strike at Haifa continues.

15th April

Today at lunch time enormous clouds of black smoke rose from the oil tanks at the Railway Station, and we all said "There goes our electric light". But it turned out to be only a rubbish heap full of oil waste, lit by somebody cooking his lunch. Such natural explanations become quite abnormal in Jerusalem; there have been occasions when the sirens blew after a clap of thunder.

The Belgian Consul-General's milk donkey is still lying outside his door, and no one can move it for Jewish snipers. A police armored car is going to have a shot to-morrow. Meanwhile it is by no means so pleasant a donkey as it was.

The Palestine donkeys have the most patient and pleasant expressions of any of the living occupants of this country. It is easy to picture the face of the donkey that Christ rode in from Bethany. In "The Robe" the author makes his Roman hero traveling from Gaza follow Christ as he came in on his ass from Bethany, but this could not have happened,

²⁵⁵See Luke 1: 39–59, which describes Mary's visit to Elisabeth, the mother of John the Baptist. The Church of the Visitation in Ein Kerem commemorates this tradition.



Illustration 1 The King David Hotel, location of the Chief Secretary's Office and British military headquarters in Palestine.



Illustration 2 Henry Gurney, Acting Governor of Ghana (Gold Coast), 1946, on the eve of his arrival in Palestine: level headed, resilient, loyal to his men, and not very nice...



Illustration 3 Waiting for the High Commissioner's Return from London. Lydda Airport, most likely September 1947. From right to left: James Blewitt, Cunningham's Personal Secretary; Chief Secretary Henry Gurney; and Director of Civilian Aviation in Palestine Air Vice-Marshal Sydney Storrar. Unconditional loyalty to his superiors and those in his command.



Illustration 4 Senior members of the Mandate Government at a World War I Memorial Day Ceremony. Mt. Scopus, Jerusalem, 10 November 1946. From left to right: Commander of the Armed Forces in Palestine Lieutenant-General Evelyn Barker; High Commissioner Sir Alan Cunningham; and Gurney (fifth from the left).



Illustration 5 Gurney's collection: Nature with no connection to the country or its inhabitants.



Illustration 6 She spent more time by his side than with the children. Isabel and Henry Gurney and their bodyguard at the entrance of the Imperial Military Cemetery, Mt. Scopus, Jerusalem, 10 November 1946.



Illustration 7 The Gurneys in their yard, Qatamon, Jerusalem.

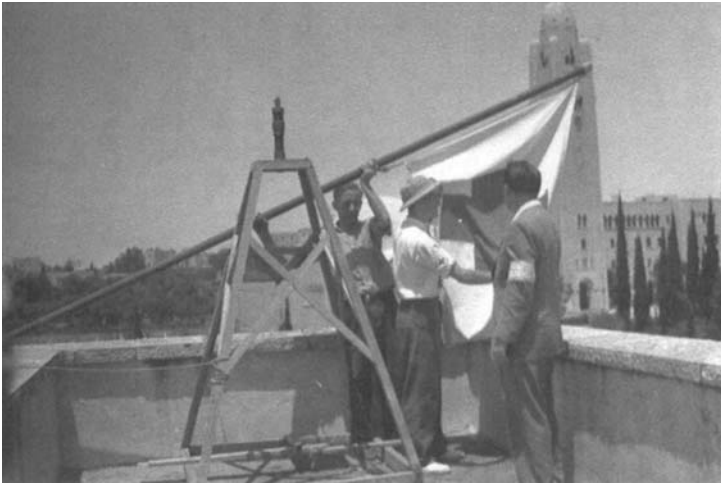
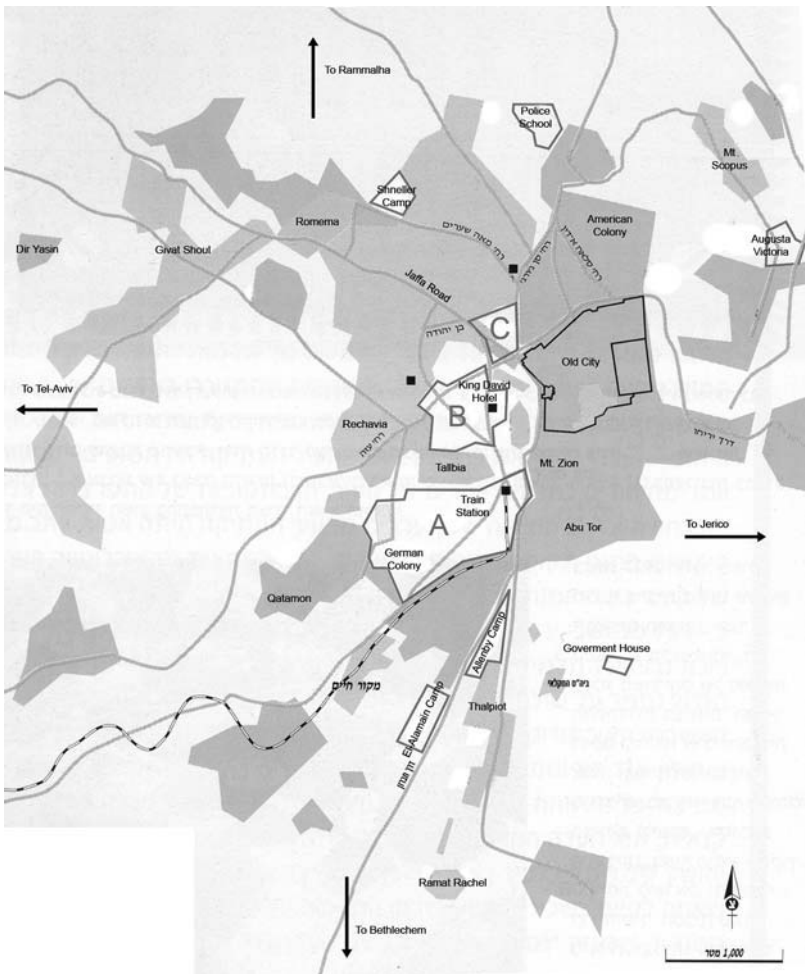


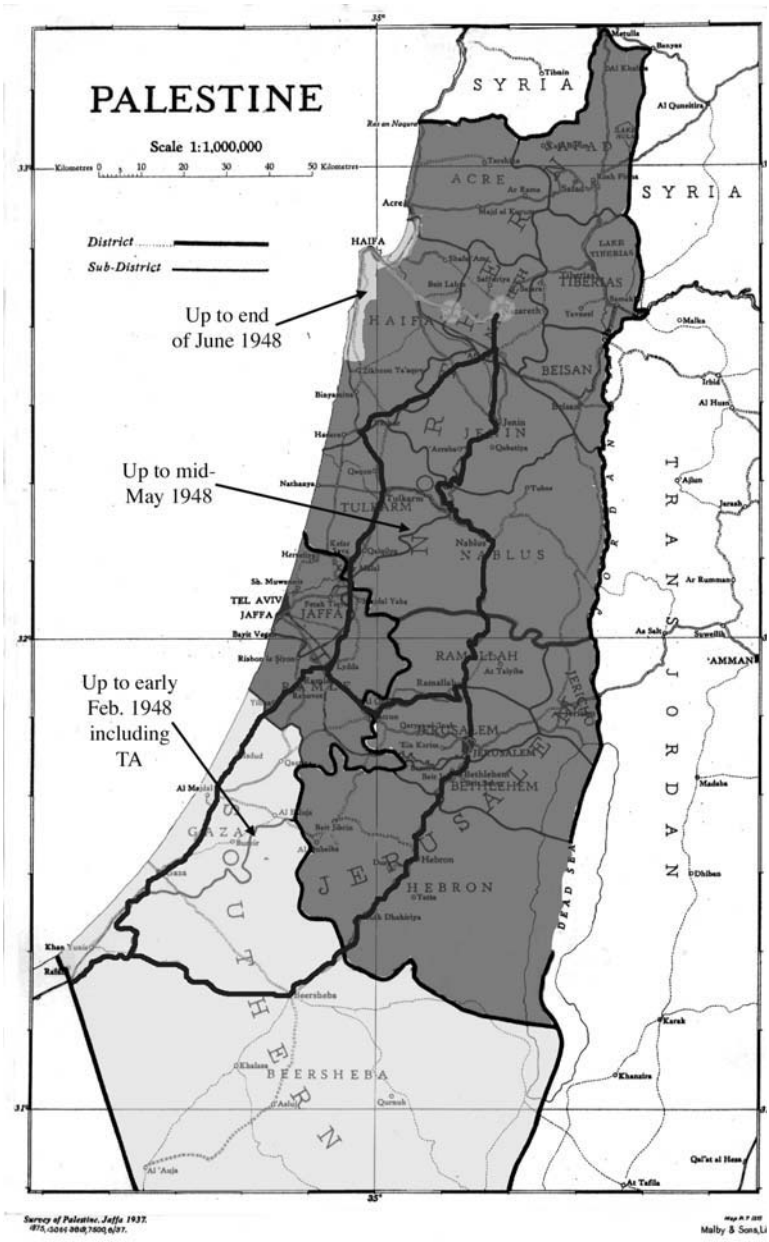
Illustration 8 The End of an Era. Raising the Red Cross flag over the former Chief Secretary's Office. Friday, 14 May 1948, approximately 6:30 am. Two hours later, with the High Commissioner's departure from the city, the same three lowered the Red Cross flag and raised the U.N. flag in its place. From left to right: a hotel employee and representatives of the Red Cross and the U.N.



Illustration 9 The Last Day. Friday 14 May 1948, approximately 8:30 am. The High Commissioner's convoy drives past an honor guard down Julian Street (today, King David Street), between what had just two hours earlier been the Chief Secretary's Office and the Y.M.C.A.



Map 1 The Security Zones in Jerusalem. During the winter of 1948, the Mandate Government in Jerusalem reverted to operating from within the security zones of the winter of 1947. Both Jews and Arabs posed a threat.



Map 2 The British Evacuation in Practice, December 1947 through May 1948. Due to the pressure of the High Commissioner, Jerusalem was evacuated in mid-May instead of early February as originally planned. The British evacuated the Galilee during the second half of April instead of mid-May as originally planned.

as the Gaza road came in through Bethlehem from the south and Christ was coming from the east. I have often asked officers, as I go around, the price of donkeys in their districts. It is not a bad test of how close an officer is to the people. The price of camels, donkeys, cows and corn are things of vital and daily concern to them and cannot be ignored.²⁵⁶

This morning the Army blew the Haganah pillbox off the top of the Yemin Moshe windmill. Strangely enough, I was reading last night the diary of an Orthodox monk who recorded the building of this windmill in 1836. It was then the first windmill to be seen in Palestine.²⁵⁷

I had a long conference with the High Commissioner this morning; also with Sir Hugh Dow and the Foreign Office representatives who will represent the British Government in Palestine after the 15th May. A veil can be drawn over this.²⁵⁸

The bestialities of Deir Yassin are now coming to light. They are too horrible for words and Belsen pales beside them. We have decided to publish them. As the Arabs know all about them already, publication cannot affect the 'truce'; and it is right that the world should know what these people are; the dregs of utter degradation.²⁵⁹

President Truman seems to have come out today with another of his ill-timed statements. It is most unfortunate that whenever anyone else seems to be working intelligently for peace, their efforts should be

²⁵⁶For many of those who served in Palestine the encounter between the landscape around them and the texts of the Bible and the New Testament was a thrilling experience. Lloyd C. Douglas, *The Robe*, Boston 1942.

²⁵⁷The windmill was built in 1857.

²⁵⁸The presence of this delegation gave rise to rumors about a discussion – which indeed took place between the Administration and the Army, and between them and the Colonial Office and the Foreign Office – over the possibility of advancing the termination of the Mandate. As a result, the Haganah was instructed to desist from Operation Harel on the road to Jerusalem, and to evacuate the city itself – “Operation Yevussi”, which began on April 20. The Foreign Office delegation included the future British Consul General in Haifa, Cyril Marriott, who represented Britain’s interests in Israel after May 14, Sir Hugh Dow, who represented its interests in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, and the delegation’s secretary, Leggett, who was killed in Jerusalem on April 27 (see diary entry, April 27). Graves, *Experiment in Anarchy*, p. 181.

²⁵⁹In the consciousness of many Britons of the time, the liberation of the Bergen Belsen camp by the British Army symbolized both Nazi evil and the place and role of Britain in the destruction of Nazi Germany.

undone in a moment by a Presidential pronouncement related not to the interests of peace but to [the] United States election year.²⁶⁰

Played five sets of tennis this afternoon in an effort to dispel some of the funereal gloom. Still no water.

The Jewish flour mill containing Passover bread at Haifa was blown up,²⁶¹ and there have been more attacks on the Railway, killing three British soldiers in one of the pilot trolley cars. The Railway, after all its gallant efforts, is now just about finished. A few trains with Army crews still run.

16th April

Security Conference, Executive Council, Dr. Magnes²⁶² and a series of crises occupied the morning, which was one of Jerusalem's best. Today the General Assembly meets in Lake Success to continue its dreary and impractical way until the 15th May.

Dealt with oil supply crisis, the new [oil] pipe-line agreement, the sale of enemy property lands to Tel Aviv, innumerable telegrams and saw de Reynier, the International Red Cross delegate who has been showing admirable initiative in negotiating with Arabs and Jews for the observance of certain areas of Jerusalem including Government House and the King David, as neutral zones under the Red Cross Flag after the 15th May. This is an excellent scheme: so good in fact that

²⁶⁰The Security Council reconvened on April 15 to discuss the truce; in the background was the U.S. trusteeship concept, which threatened the partition plan. Gurney is referring to the disagreement between President Truman and the State Department, which had published the trusteeship plan behind his back on March 19. In contrast to his Government, Gurney favored the idea, which in practice would mean continued British rule in Palestine. The Jewish vote in the November 1948 elections, which Truman intended to contest, obliged him to back partition. *Diplomatic Documents*, pp. 632–634.

²⁶¹Employees of the mill discovered the booby-trapped train car, which was distanced from the building. The damage was slight, but one employee was killed. Eshel, *The Haganah Battle Over Haifa*, p. 343.

²⁶²The British sought to recruit Prof. Yehuda Magnes the President of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, for the campaign against partition. He shared their anti-partition stance but favored the trusteeship plan, which would leave the British in Palestine and which they opposed. This disagreement, together with the killing of Hebrew University staff in the massacre of April 13 (the Hadassah convoy), caused a rupture between Magnes and the Administration. At the invitation of the State Department he traveled to New York to promote the trusteeship plan and thus save the Yishuv, in his view. He died in New York in October 1948. Joseph Heller, *From Brit Shalom to Ichud*, Jerusalem 2003 (Hebrew), pp. 362–376.

although it upsets various plans of ours we must help it all we can. It is a great relief to see one international body that can really get things done and doesn't mind taking risks to do so. De Reynier and his team are first-class, and take on the most terrific and difficult responsibilities with a smile and energy and courage. Such is the power of faith.²⁶³

Spent the afternoon sorting out the Police withdrawal plans with the Army and others. There will be 2,000 British Police still in Palestine on withdrawal day, and there is as yet nobody to whom they can hand their equipment and arms, records and police stations.²⁶⁴

If someone were to put the Security Council on the Greek stage, it would go something like this.²⁶⁵

Senator Warren Austin.²⁶⁶ The United States, having got Partition adopted by the General Assembly last year by the use of her pressure boys and having ignored the warnings of the U.K. that this could not be done by peaceful means, is now most surprised that the plan looks like leading to war, and therefore proposes trusteeship as an alternative, although there are only three weeks to go to the end of the Mandate, and neither Arabs nor Jews want trusteeship. Trusteeship would be completely divorced from any idea of partition.

President Truman (off): I am still backing partition.

Moshe Shertok, for the Jewish Agency: This is most un-American and a cynical betrayal of the United Nations. We are thinking of course of the United Nations, and not of the Jews. All civilized people, which includes ourselves in spite of the murderers and assassins we have been

²⁶³The Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC) stopped sending oil to the Haifa refineries because of the war. Bialer, *Oil and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, pp. 39–41; The Sharona neighborhood in Tel Aviv, a Templer "German colony" (1871), was impounded during the Second World War. The British withdrew from it on December 16, 1947, and transferred it to the municipality, afterward also selling it the land – which was later expropriated for the benefit of the Ministry of Defense, the IDF, and the Prime Minister's Office.

²⁶⁴As they were evacuated, the stations were handed over to the side deemed to be in the majority in each region. If no decision could be made on this basis, the station was abandoned unilaterally. The mobile equipment was removed.

²⁶⁵What follows is evidence of the Administration's growing frustration at an historical fact which few in Palestine or elsewhere were inclined to accept at face value: Britain's statement, toward the end of 1947, that the Mandate would end by May 15, 1948 (effectively the 14th).

²⁶⁶The U.S. envoy to the United Nations.

backing for the last few years because of the policy of the Mandatory Power,²⁶⁷ must see to it that the United Nations are fully supported.

CHORUS of British delegates:

Strophe: We are going on May 15th.

Antistrophe:²⁶⁸ On May 15th we are going.

Jam[al] Husseini, for the Arab Higher Committee: We are prepared to agree to anything that does not include partition, Jewish immigration and a Jewish State.

Moshe Shertok: We are prepared to agree to anything provided that it includes partition, immigration and a Jewish State.

Senator W. Austin: All I suggest is something that commits nobody to anything at all.

President Truman (off): I am still backing partition.

Chorus of British delegates: If you haven't heard up properly, let us say again that we are going on the 15th May. We have kept these people from each other's throats for the last 25 years, and if anyone else is prepared to come and do it let him say so now and do something about it. Only don't say we haven't warned you. If there is a vacuum, it is not our fault but yours, because you have assumed responsibility for Palestine from the 15th May. This is a thoroughly wicked child, though we brought it up as well as we could, and it was really very nice of you to agree to take it over. It is rather urgent, because the child is getting more and more out of hand, and we are finding it almost impossible to look after it properly. Cutting it in half may well be the best thing that could happen to it, but we warned you that it wasn't likely to agree.

Moshe Shertok: (The first 500 lines of this speech are omitted in most versions). Having given you a carefully prepared attack on Britain, some bitter criticism of the United States, a castigation of the Arabs and a general bit of propagandea on Zionism, freedom and the persecution of the Jews, and having carefully omitted any reference to the minor mistakes made by the Jews in Palestine such as hanging British soldiers, raping and butchering innocent women and tyrannizing over

²⁶⁷The British assumed that the Jewish Agency was the most effective force in the struggle against the breakaway organizations. Sometimes this approach worked, sometimes not. From October 1945 to August 1946, and off and on in 1947–1948, the breakaways coordinated their moves with the Jewish Agency, or at least the latter refrained from taking action against them.

²⁶⁸Strophe, antistrophe: In ancient Greek drama, the movement of the Chorus in one direction as it sang, followed by a symmetrical movement in the opposite direction.

their own people,²⁶⁹ I can confidently leave in your hands the judgment as to whether we are right and everybody else is wrong. I don't want to assert that myself too strongly, because that might cause anti-Semitism, which is never the fault of the Jews but of those misguided Gentiles whose attitude to chauvinism and chicanery is all wrong. (The last 1,500 lines of this speech are omitted, because they occur in every other drama in which this character appears.)²⁷⁰

CHORUS of British delegates: This is the 15th May. We're off.

President Truman (off): I'm still backing ...

(The last words are drowned in loud catcalls from the chorus of Guatemalans and Uruguayans;²⁷¹ thunder and lightning; and the arrival of a herald bearing the agenda for the next meeting of the Assembly on Kashmir, Greece, Korea, and Palestine.)

Lunched with Fitzgerald and shared his excellent quails.²⁷² The recent Foreign Office arrivals came to dinner; three Foreign Office and three Colonial Service officers dining together can get quite a lot of amusement out of seeing which has the lower opinion of the other.²⁷³

17th April

Saturday mornings are always either slack or desperately busy. This one was the latter. From 8:30 onwards an insoluble problem came in every half-hour.

The evacuation of about 400 Germans has suddenly become urgent, because last night the Jews raided the internment camp at Waldheim (where some of them are or were) and though the British guard are safe, there is no news of the Germans. The organization of this move at

²⁶⁹On July 31, 1947, the ITZL hanged two British sergeants near Netanya in retaliation for the hanging of Dov Gruner, who was apprehended during the Acre Prison break in May; "raping and butchering" refers to the Deir Yassin incident, and "tyrannizing over their own people" to the Haganah's preventing Jews from leaving Jerusalem.

²⁷⁰Shertok's U.N. addresses were well edited, lengthy, and highly effective – a situation which was anathema to the foes of Zionism in the Administration.

²⁷¹These countries led the Latin American bloc which supported partition.

²⁷²William Fitzgerald was the last President of the Mandatory Supreme Court.

²⁷³The Foreign Office delegation was interested in Britain's political-diplomatic deployment ahead of the refashioning of relations with Palestine, with responsibility to be transferred from the Colonial Office to the Foreign Office. The situation described reflects the declining status of the former and the rising status of the latter, as well as the looming end of the Empire. See also entry for April 15.

a few days' notice, with nowhere for them to go to and no shipping arrangements and no transport, is a headache.²⁷⁴

Then there are the American Jews that the Americans want escorted out of Jerusalem;²⁷⁵ the Hadassah Hospital staff that the Jews want escorted out of Mount Scopus;²⁷⁶ the breakdown in the water supply;²⁷⁷ the necessity to push a locomotive down a wadi and write it off in order to clear the line for oil trains; the immediate future of Lydda airport and its foreign services;²⁷⁸ currency supplies and bank moratoria;²⁷⁹ and requests from Cairo to rescue 300 Arabs near Mishmar Ha'emek who are alleged by the Associated Press to be surrounded by 12,000 Jews. This last is all nonsense, particularly as the Jews themselves appealed to us two days ago to rescue Mishmar Ha'emek from the Arabs, but it gave us the opportunity to point out that if the Arabs insist on sending their Liberation Army in while we are here and in face of all our protests, they have only themselves to blame if, as a result of their own offensive operations, they find themselves in difficulties. They seem likely to be fighting among themselves before long, a situation which will not be lost on the Jews.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁴Waldhein was a Templer colony, now Alonei Abba; the last of the Germans were expelled by the end of April. See also the entry for April 8.

²⁷⁵The only reference I know of to this episode.

²⁷⁶With the exception of the attack on the Hadassah convoy, the British successfully safeguarded travel to and from Mount Scopus until their departure. From January 1948 the hospital transferred the bulk of its operation to the city proper. A number of terminal patients were left at the Mount Scopus site in order to maintain its status, a fact which limited the maneuverability of the Arab Legion. Both the hospital and the Hebrew University continued to operate at a token level in order to show a presence. On July 7, the IDF and the Arab Legion signed an agreement for the demilitarization of the hill under Israeli control. Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, pp. 191–192, 252–253.

²⁷⁷See diary entry for April 8.

²⁷⁸The international airport at Lod (later Ben Gurion International Airport) was operated by the British until the day of their final departure, May 14. See also entry for March 24.

²⁷⁹Toward the end of the Mandate, the Administration instructed the Palestine Currency Board to remove from the country its stock of banknotes and coins and desist from operating. Israel Bar-Joseph, *Bank of Israel, Theoretically and in Practice*, Tel Aviv 1985 (Hebrew), p.10; London pledged to honor its debts to those who worked in its service and to transfer its bonds to the country's citizens at their face value to the successor body. See comments on the Palestine Bill in entry for March 19; Reuveny, *The Administration of Palestine*, p. 216; Graves, *Experiment in Anarchy*, p. 181.

²⁸⁰The battle for Mishmar Ha'emek was decided on April 14, following a successful counterattack by the Palmah and the Golani Brigade.

I have been looking today at some of the New York newspapers which are running full-page appeals for funds to assist the terrorists in Palestine. The terrorists are represented as fighters for freedom against Arab opponents armed by Britain, and the most blatant lies, worthy of the Nazis at their height, accompany these demands on the decent instincts of the American people. Does anyone really believe all this? I find it hard to think so; but too true it is that we are sadly reticent and over-restrained in our dissemination of the truth. We are, I fear, not really good enough people to rely entirely upon silence, but propaganda as such we have always hated and suspected. We have yet to learn that other people don't.²⁸¹

Two Arabs were killed by Jewish snipers about 50 yards from the house [in Qatamon] this morning, and all day there has been firing and mortaring going on all round. We passed another dead donkey on the way to the office.²⁸²

Last night the Arabs walked off with three 17-pounder guns loaded on trucks at Lydda station; but as they had no firing mechanism and no ammunition, they aren't likely to be much use.

Ken Lindsay²⁸³ had his car stolen while he was having breakfast in the club this morning. Two armed Arabs simply walked up and put a pistol in the back of the driver's neck. But in these cases there is generally collusion; and I am told that the Arab Higher Committee for all their protestations, take a 20 per cent rake off.

The second Arab Liberation Army is signaled as on the way from Damascus, containing many of those whom we have recently disbanded from the Transjordan Frontier Force, but other reports say that this does not exist. There is a feeling of depression generally among the Arab invaders that they aren't really doing as well as they ought to be. But in fact no thinking Arab ever expected to win the first round.²⁸⁴

²⁸¹Referring to ITZL notices (inserted by the Hillel Kook group).

²⁸²The Haganah reported mutual sniping that day, in Qatamon among other areas, in which one Arab was killed. Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, p. 449.

²⁸³The Moderator of the Scottish Church (see entry for March 28).

²⁸⁴The Frontier Force was established in the 1920s to safeguard the Mandate borders on both sides of the Jordan. Since the Second World War it was active mainly in northern Palestine. Its personnel were Palestinian Arabs and a small number of Jews. The British, fearing the defection of the Arabs after the outbreak of the war in Palestine, moved quickly to disband the unit. In January 1948 it was decided to do so in Transjordan, far from the arena of battle. The Arab defection was insignificant. As far as is known, the force mentioned by Gurney did not arrive. Lt. General MacMillan, Report on Palestine, 1947-1948, July 1948, IWM, London; for the fears in the Yishuv, Gelber, *Independence Versus Nakba*, p. 45.

18th April

Sunday. Last night between 8.00 and 11.00 there was a glorious battle between Qatamon and Rehavia; bullets rattled against the west side of the house and mortar bombs fell quite close to us. The D.C., who lives fairly near, rang up the police duty officer to ask for information and was told that all was quiet.²⁸⁵

Spent the morning in the office, dealing with press releases on the subject of the Security Council truce resolution and the Jewish policies of intimidation. The Jewish staff (whose Sabbath is Saturday) refused to come this morning, because on Friday they had seen some Iraqis in the (Security) Zone (B). Eventually they had to be fetched by (Maurice) Dorman. It is becoming increasingly difficult to keep the office and other Departments running at all, but to upset the usual routine of filing, etc., and short-circuit papers would so disturb our clerical staff that they might then throw in their hands completely.

This afternoon an I.R.O. man arrived from Cairo to discuss the urgent problem of getting our Germans out of the country. In fact, it is being vigorously discussed within a few feet of where I am writing this. It is not easy to find time in these days to keep this diary going at all.²⁸⁶

It is wise to put this withdrawal, which seems of such importance to us, in its proper historical perspective. Those who were responsible for the Balfour declaration knew all too little of the long story of this country; if they had studied it they could never have involved Britain in a sixth crusade, though I well remember thinking in 1918 that there was something creditable in the declaration and in the association of British arms with the return of the Jews to Palestine I wonder whether the U.N. Commission know that in the year 637, when Omar took over the country from the Patriarch, the latter insisted that Omar should send his secretariat staff in advance and should not come himself until the end of the Patriarchal 'mandate', so as to avoid duality of authority.²⁸⁷ The Commission have now withdrawn all their staff but one, Azc'arate, who, unless he gets away quickly, looks like

²⁸⁵On April 17 there were exchanges of fire throughout the day and night, including between the Qatamon and Rehavia neighborhoods: Graves, *Experiment in Anarchy*, p. 181; the Jerusalem District Commissioner was James Pollock.

²⁸⁶Referring to the International Refugee Organization and to the German Templers (entry for April 8).

²⁸⁷The Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab laid siege to the city in July 637 and entered it the following February, after defeating the forces of the Patriarch Sophronius.

receiving in three weeks' time all the assets and liabilities of the Palestine Government single-handed.

Seven hundred and fifty more Liberation Army came into the Jerusalem district yesterday. These are reported to be all ex-Transjordan Frontier Force, whom we disbanded a few weeks ago.

There are now 26 days left, and every day from now convoys will be leaving with British civilians, soldiers, Christian Jews, Germans, Poles, the Clearance Office staff in Cyprus and various others. The organization of all this is being admirably done by Dorman and Butterfield,²⁸⁸ but the plans change every day and we still do not know whether it will be feasible to stay in Jerusalem for 26 days.

Two more than usually big bangs this afternoon from the Yemin Moshe quarter. Yesterday the I.Z.L. held up an ammunition train near Hadera, shot three British soldiers and got away with 20 tons of ammunition. Five of them were killed, but unless one knows the real truth about conditions in Palestine it is not easy to see why such large hauls of warlike stores cannot be prevented.²⁸⁹

This evening the Jewish village of Nere Yaacor [sic; = Neve Yaacov], which has been shooting up Arab transport on the Ramallah road, has been engaged by the Arabs and no transport can get through. This village has had frequent warnings that it will be removed if it continues in this fashion.²⁹⁰

The food situation in the Jewish quarters is better and a large convoy came up the Bab-el-Wad route yesterday, which the Haganah now seem to have under some sort of control. Having occupied certain Arab

²⁸⁸The Deputy Chief Secretary and Chief Transport Officer (Withdrawal), respectively. Butterfield was in charge of transportation for the evacuation process.

²⁸⁹Between 70 and 100 ITZL men under the command of Amichai Paglin attacked an evacuation train on its way to Egypt between Hadera and Binyamina making off with about 50 tons of ammunition which, they alleged, was bound for the Army of Liberation. Niv, *The Irgun Zvai Leumi*, p. 141; Yehuda Slutsky, *History of the Haganah*, p. 1550.

²⁹⁰It was not "Arabs" but the Arab Legion that attacked but did not seize Neve Yaacov, which was an effective Jewish barrier on the Jerusalem-Ramallah road. Operation Yevussi, which was launched on April 20, reduced the pressure on the village. In the night of May 16-17, after the departure of the British, the village was vacated. The Haganah sources: Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, pp. 78-82; for the discussion in the Administration concerning the siege of Arab Jerusalem and the towns of Samaria: MECA, CP, MSC, 9, 16, 23.4.1948 CP, 4/1.

key villages on this road, I don't suppose that they will ever come out of them; this may well be a permanent change of control of the road to Jerusalem with important political consequences.²⁹¹

Some water at last.²⁹²

19th April

In the Neve Yaacov affray last night an Arab Legion officer and two troopers were killed, and it will now be necessary to put British troops into this Haganah strongpoint, which is not an agricultural settlement at all.²⁹³

Yesterday the Jews attacked Arab snipers in Tiberias, blew up a building or two, and in consequence the Arab population of the town is evacuating under military supervision. This will mean that Arab troops will go in, and there will be a battle of Tiberias.²⁹⁴

We recently passed an Ordinance to prevent the desecration of the Sea of Galilee and its neighborhood, as a result of the objections felt by the Anglo-American Committee to the Lido at Tiberias and its music and dancing. It is a sad reflection that music should be prohibited and killing permitted.²⁹⁵

The Railway has been so badly damaged by the four explosions two days ago in which the ammunition train was ditched at Hadera, that it

²⁹¹On April 17, as part of Operation Harel, a convoy of 227 trucks arrived in Jerusalem; on the night of April 15–16 the Haganah captured Saris, in the Jerusalem Corridor, and the Haganah controlled the stretch from Sha'ar Haggai to Jerusalem.

²⁹²The Administration suffered from water problems because the Jews controlled the opening of the pipeline. The head of the Emergency Committee in the city reported in his diary that on April 17, for example, no water reached Government House. Graves, *Experiment in Anarchy*, p. 171.

²⁹³The number of casualties is in dispute. The Government Press Office reported that the casualties were two Arabs and two Britons (apparently defectors). Haganah sources reported two killed in an armored vehicle that came under attack – an Arab and a Briton wearing civilian clothes – and one dead from Neve Yaakov. Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, pp. 79–80, 449.

²⁹⁴The Army withdrew from Tiberias on April 18 and in accordance with the evacuation directives the British recommended that the weaker elements in the population leave – in this case the Arab population, which in fact left. No Arab forces entered and the city was henceforth under Haganah control.

²⁹⁵In its report of April 1946 the Anglo-American Committee recommended to bar the tourism development projects around the Sea of Galilee and along the Jordan River because of the Christian sensitivity to the sites there. Amikam Nachmani, *Great Power Discord in Palestine*, London, 1987, p. 212.

seems doubtful now whether any more trains will run at all. The only vital need is to get a couple of oil trains through to Jerusalem.²⁹⁶

Anyone listening to the rattle of small-arms fire in Jerusalem this morning would not have seen much of a truce about.²⁹⁷

There has been great anger on the part of the Irgun at the Jewish Agency's repudiation of the massacre at Deir Yassin, which they claim was carried out with the full approval of the Haganah. They came to blows over it yesterday, when the Haganah began tearing down some of the Irgun posters. One day the Jews will have to have a showdown with their terrorists.

Certainly at present in the military field the Arabs are getting the worst of it, and there are the usual signs of discontent and dissatisfaction with their leaders.

We are publishing today the story of the American Skymaster from Prague. On the 31st March this aircraft, having been loaded with 7 tons of arms and ammunition under the supervision of the Czechoslovak Police, landed at night on the abandoned R.A.F. airfield of Beit Dajan, handed over its cargo to the neighboring Jewish settlement with carts, refueled and took off again two hours later for Prague. We knew nothing about it until two days later. This incident has important implications as having Czechoslovak and also Russian backing for the arming of the Jews.²⁹⁸

Fourteenth Perspective

What to hand over to who, and when? The evacuation plan in the crucible of the surging war

Gurney's diary entry for April 20 contains two descriptions which reflect the mounting tension between the principles of the evacuation plan, as approved in London on December 4, 1947, and the reality of the surging war in Palestine.²⁹⁹ For example, he refers to the decision

²⁹⁶In the wake of an ITZL attack on April 17, the abandoned train blocked the track and prevented the British from bringing fuel to Jerusalem.

²⁹⁷The Security Council urged a cease-fire on April 1, and on the 17th added a resolution calling for a truce. *Diplomatic Documents*, pp. 632–634. The resolution stated that the U.N. and the Mandate Administration would oversee the truce. In practice, no one oversaw a truce which did not materialize.

²⁹⁸The smuggled arms plane made one sortie; it was part of an arms deal, with some of the weapons arriving by sea before the end of the Mandate. Ilan, *Embargo*, pp. 170–173. The plane landed at Beit Daras.

²⁹⁹TNA CAB128/10.

about which side would take over the police station at Al-Enab (in the village of Abu Ghosh, west of Jerusalem on the main road to the city). This is followed immediately by what I call, in the Sixteenth Perspective, the “Haifa turning point” (April 16–22), which was then in its incipient stage. In this period the Haganah, with tacit British support, seized the main positions from which the British forces left in the north, especially in Haifa, about a month before the planned evacuation.

As the evacuation proceeded the Army’s strength dwindled and its ability to impose law and order declined commensurately. More important, as the previous Perspective noted, it became increasingly clear to the senior Administration officials that the Army could not protect them, or even itself.

Under the evacuation plan, the Administration and the Army were to sell whatever they could and send everything else to Haifa or Rafah. Immovables, too were to be sold, or, failing this, to be transferred to the side that was in control in that particular area. This guideline was intended to ensure a fair approach and thereby reduce hostility to Britain so that its long-term status in the region would suffer as little as possible in the light of the Cold War. The primary goal, though, was to ensure calm to enable the evacuation to proceed smoothly and obviate a war in the short term.

However, as the violence mounted the authorities had to decide between the principles enshrined in the evacuation plan and their urgent needs, which at the end of April meant largely security, which the Haganah’s presence made possible. That is, the British believed that the vacuum being created by their departure could be filled by only one significant force which possessed the necessary mobility and military capability not only to inflict damage on the Administration and the Army (the “Holy Jihad” fighters were also capable of that), but also to enable a generally quiet evacuation if the British acted rightly – that is, **not** in accordance with the December 4 evacuation plan.

The authorities’ agonizing over the Abu Ghosh police station, as described by Gurney, is a good example of the choice they had to make between the (theoretical) evacuation plan and their (concrete) military distress as the Mandate wound down. The decision, finally, was to hand over the police station to the local Arabs under the principles of the evacuation plan. In this case, the uncertainty resolved itself: at 11:30 a.m. on April 21 the British left and placed the police station in the hands of about a dozen Arabs, and two and a half hours later, at 2:00 p.m., the Arabs turned it over to the Haganah.

In other cases, not long before this, when the Haganah captured Arab villages or neighborhoods, such as the village of Deir Muheisin (today's Bekoa, west of Latrun), on the night of April 5–6, the British ordered their immediate evacuation – though they later kept their promise to return power at each locale to the side that last controlled it – in accordance with the principles of the evacuation plan. In this period, the British were interested not so much in bolstering the enfeebled Arabs but in ensuring that no significant Jewish or Arab force held key points along their evacuation routes. The back-and-forth passage of neighborhoods or settlements from one side to another was an opportunity for the British to oust both sides from such locales and so make safe the evacuation routes. This arrangement died a natural death toward the end of April, when the British, far from forcing the Haganah to abandon its conquests, actually assisted the organization. The war's realities breached the principles of the evacuation plan in favor of the newly converging interests of the British and the Yishuv.

20th April

Last night we spent some time on one of the difficult small problems in an effort to be just at the expense of our own interests. The Enab Police Station near Aba Ghesh [sic = Abu Ghosh] on the Jerusalem-Latrun road has now to be evacuated. If no warning is given to the Arabs, the Jews will occupy it. On the other hand, it is in an Arab village and if the Arabs have it and can hold it, they can effectively block the road which we are trying to keep open. These 'Tegart' Police Stations are built like fortresses and would be difficult to capture against determined resistance or even to blow up, if properly watched. We decided that the Arabs must be warned.³⁰⁰

³⁰⁰Referring to the police station in the village of Abu Ghosh. From April 1940 to October 1941 the Administration built 55 similar police fortresses as part of a plan to improve internal security. The reinforced concrete structures bore the imprint of Sir Charles Tegart (1881–1946), the former Commissioner of the Calcutta Police and an imperial expert on police matters and fighting terrorism: Gad Kroizer, "Back to Station Control", *Katedra*, 111 (2004), pp. 95–128 (Hebrew). The British were aware of the close relations between Abu Ghosh and two adjacent kibbutzim, Kiryat Anavim and Ma'aleh Hahamisha, and according to the Army the local mukhtar sold the police station to the Haganah. TNA WO275/67 North Sector (6 AB DIV), 23 April 1948.

This morning the Haganah are reported to have occupied the Haifa airfield³⁰¹ and another Jewish convoy has been shot up and lost six vehicles on the Jerusalem road at Bab-el-Wad.³⁰²

Since Abdul Qader's death, the Arab forces around Jerusalem have been in comparative disorder, which is the principal reason for their appearing to observe the truce demanded by the Security Council. In spite of our efforts, many of them have never heard of the Security Council except as something connected with a Zionist scheme for partition.

Last night was fairly quiet, but we don't now mention things like this. The Qatamon sniping has now begun again.

We have been trying to finish off the various pieces of legislation designed to give reasonable autonomy to the institutions that will have to look after themselves when we have gone, such as the Rockefeller Museum,³⁰³ the Arab Higher College,³⁰⁴ Municipalities and Local Councils, etc. Next week's Gazette may be our last, as the printing staff will not stay much longer.³⁰⁵

On the whole the loyalty and continued devotion of our Arab and Jewish staff in increasingly disheartening circumstances is remarkable. We have now only six British officers left in the Secretariat, but our

³⁰¹This was the day on which the Haganah assault on Haifa began, in coordination with the British forces in the city, at the end of which the entire city was in Jewish hands apart from the British coastal enclave from Atilt to Kurdani and the headquarters at Stella Maris. The officials in Jerusalem (with the exception of the GOC Army and probably also the High Commissioner) did not grasp the nature of the battle in Haifa but took a positive attitude toward the Haganah's capture of the city, as this would facilitate the evacuation.

³⁰²This convoy, the second and last in Operation Harel, consisting of 300 vehicles carrying supplies and reinforcements for the Harel Brigade, was attacked in the morning at Sha'ar Haggai. Troops from the Harel and Givati Brigades rescued some of the vehicles. Among those in the convoy were Ben Gurion, Ben Zvi and Yitzhak Sadeh, the former commander-in-chief of the Haganah. Following this incident the road to Jerusalem was closed until the completion of the Burma Road through the Judean Hills on June 2.

³⁰³Situated across the road from Herod's Gate, its construction began in 1927. The archaeological museum is named for the American oil tycoon John D. Rockefeller Jr., who donated \$2 million to the project at the urging of the Egyptologist J. H. Breasted. Kroyanker, *The Architecture of Jerusalem*, p. 113.

³⁰⁴Established in 1931 to train teachers for government-run schools. Its graduates had the option of pursuing academic studies in the leading universities in Britain.

³⁰⁵The official organ of the Mandate Administration (*The Weekly Gazette*).

Arabs, Jews, Greeks and Armenians are all working fairly cheerfully. One has the feeling that anything may happen at any time.

The garden is now at its best, and I picked a large bunch of sweet peas yesterday. These are flowering among wallflowers, irises, cyclamen stocks and violets all at the same time. By June they will all be dried up and gone. The withering of the flowers of the field in summer is more complete than anywhere I have seen, and no one could believe that the August desert could blossom again in a few short months.

These days, beautiful though they would be under peaceful conditions, are becoming terribly monotonous. The feeling that nothing you can do is likely to make much difference anyhow is fairly exasperating, but even more so when it is accompanied by lies and chicanery on the part of both the Jews and Arabs whom one is trying to help.

Mail from London has now ceased, and we only get telegrams; though much too many of these, and a 24 hours staff can only just cope with the cipher work. Our outward telegrams alone now cost something over £5,000 a week. Nearly all inland trunk telephone and telegraph lines have now broken down, and as a result the Police wireless net (at headquarters) has handled 95,000 groups in the last 48 hours.

Fifteenth Perspective

The interaction between the end of the evacuation and the end of the Mandate

On April 21 Gurney described in his diary the essence of the problem facing the Government in London and the British authorities in Palestine as the Mandate's expiration loomed. "[W]e are staying on merely to get out, and by staying on make getting out more difficult," he wrote. That observation reflects directly and indirectly some of the paradoxes created by the Palestine civil war for Britain and its status in the country. Without understanding them it is difficult to decipher the war's results:

(A) The difference between "end of the evacuation" and "end of the Mandate" – The High Commissioner and his Administration had to address two dates: the "end of the Mandate" referring to the formal termination of British rule in Palestine, and the "end of the evacuation" referring to the departure of the British personnel and their equipment from the country. The two dates were not necessarily identical, though

they were certainly influenced by each other. In practice the Mandate ended on the night of May 14–15, whereas the evacuation went on until the latter part of June (it was originally scheduled to be concluded in early August). U.N. General Assembly Resolution 181, of November 29, 1947, cites August 1 as the termination of the Mandate. The British Government never maintained that the end of the Mandate would coincide with the conclusion of the evacuation. London sought to divest itself of responsibility for Palestine as quickly as possible. Even after the British Government decided unilaterally to disengage formally from Palestine at midnight on May 14, a fierce debate raged in London and Jerusalem over whether to move up the end of the Mandate. However, a properly executed and economically sound evacuation entailed a certain British presence after the Mandate's termination. Thus a plan was drawn up to create a "Haifa Enclave" for personnel and equipment that would not be evacuated by May 14; this area would remain under British military control up to the beginning of August, if needed. At the same time, under certain conditions it would be possible to concentrate the British forces rapidly into the Haifa Enclave within about two weeks and evacuate them within two months, even before the Mandate's termination. In the end, May 14 remained the operative date and the end of the evacuation was advanced by a month following a considerable effort. The last British soldier left Israel on June 30, 1948.

(B) Who protects who, who depends on who – the Administration on the Army, or vice versa? – The question of the end of British rule versus the needs of the evacuation brought to the fore an issue that was simultaneously technical and fraught with passions. Seemingly, without political and legal backing and a functioning Civil Administration, it was difficult for the Government in London to explain to the British public, to the Great Powers, and to the United Nations the meaning of its continued military operations in Palestine. In practice, however, it was clear that without military support the Civil Administration would collapse immediately. Even if the High Commissioner and the Chief Secretary found this inconvenient to admit, the fact is that the creation of the Haifa Enclave, which was controlled by the Army after the Civil Administration departed, not only answered the question of whether the end of the Mandate would precede the end of the evacuation, but also showed that the Civil Administration was dependent on the Army. British rule in Palestine began with a Military Government and also, in the event, ended with one. In between, things were more complex.

(C) The date for evacuating Jerusalem – The dual dispute described in section (B) – whether the end of the Mandate would precede the end of the evacuation, and who was dependent on who – fomented another disagreement: on the date for leaving Jerusalem. Under the evacuation plan, the Administration was supposed to withdraw from Jerusalem already in the first stage – that is, by February 1948. However, the High Commissioner and his staff maintained that no effective British rule was possible without control of Jerusalem, and from there of the entire country. The Army’s position was that keeping the road to the city from the coast open after the middle of April would “increase its unease” because of the need to intervene. By the end of March the High Commissioner thought that it would be best if he left together with the Army at the end of April, or by May 5 at the latest. Cunningham understood only too well that more than mere “unease” was involved – that the Army’s concern was that it would be incapable of keeping the road to Jerusalem open. Accordingly, he proposed moving up the end of the Mandate and with it the departure from Jerusalem, and not separating them (in contrast to the separation which would arise in practice between the end of the Mandate and the end of the evacuation). The High Commissioner and the Chief Secretary certainly did not object to an earlier end to the Mandate (indeed, they were all for this, as is apparent, for example, from Gurney’s diary entry for April 25), but they insisted that the evacuation of Jerusalem be linked to the termination of the Mandate, whenever that might occur.

This was no mere formality matter: what the authorities feared was the premature collapse of British rule. Such an outcome early in the war was prevented thanks to the High Commissioner’s success in preserving the British image from the period of the Arab Revolt (1936–1939) and of the Jewish Resistance Movement (1945–1946) – the perception that the British, if they wished, could take highly effective action against the Jews and the Arabs, together or separately. Even though this image was purely fanciful by winter/spring 1947–1948, it generally served as a useful weapon in the hands of the hapless Administration. For example, it spared the British a total debacle even after the “Haifa turning point” (April 16–22). Two decisions made by the High Commissioner ensured the preservation, however shaky, of British deterrence. The first was to maintain an appearance of self-confidence *vis-à-vis* the Jews and the Arabs alike. This decision was backed up by a propaganda drive which emphasized Britain’s determination not to let Palestine fall into disarray or to allow either side to put the departing forces at risk. Apart from a few days immediately after the “Haifa turning point”, the senior British personnel

kept up an appearance of confidence.³⁰⁶ The second decision involved a demand to link the evacuation of the Civil Administration from Jerusalem to the termination of the Mandate. Already in the first half of the civil war the British realized that the situation in Jerusalem was worse than elsewhere in Palestine. Nevertheless, and contrary to the approach of the Army and of the Government in London, the High Commissioner and the Chief Secretary continued to insist that they must not leave the capital city before the end of the Mandate. On the eve of the “Haifa turning point” and certainly afterward, even as the Administration secretly tried to persuade London that Jerusalem must be evacuated – and immediately – as part of an early departure from Palestine overall, in public the High Commissioner and his aides continued to assert that they were committed to remaining in Jerusalem until May 14. Disagreement was one thing, propaganda another, and not least because the propaganda in this case was not wholly divorced from the Administration’s attitude.³⁰⁷

(D) Do the British truly intend to leave? – The fact that it was not clear even to the British themselves when the Mandate would end or how this would interconnect with the end of the evacuation, left the authorities in Palestine in something of a limbo. As it did the Arabs and the Jews, who were not of course sides to the argument. The ambiguity, in turn, heightened the disparity between the British perception of their situation and its understanding by the local inhabitants, Arabs and Jews alike. This prolonged state of indecisiveness wreaked havoc with the Administration’s ability to explain its policy to the local leaders. Another effect, as noted, was to consolidate the assumption that the British could, if they wished, force the sides to do its bidding and might not leave at all. Probably the Administration’s effort to mediate between the sides until the very eve of the evacuation fueled

³⁰⁶A perusal of the issues which preoccupied the Administration’s Security Committee shows that propaganda emphasizing the determination of the Administration and the Army to take action became increasingly central as the days passed and the Administration’s de facto ability to act was diminished.

³⁰⁷The High Commissioner’s assessment that the military situation in Jerusalem was the worst in the country and the Army’s appraisal were given in a meeting of the Security Committee, February 13, 1948, MECA, CP, MSC, 4/1, and afterward in its meetings in March and April. For a specific discussion of the question of the British evacuation of Jerusalem, with a different interpretation: Bendman, *When Will Britain Withdraw*.

the feeling that it still had proposals up its sleeve (see Twenty-first Perspective). That Gurney was aware of this feeling, which was not confined solely to Palestine, is shown in his “play” in the entry for April 16.

The mistaken evaluation of British intentions in itself was an obstacle to the warring parties – Jews, Palestinian Arabs, and Arab states. This was especially so with regard to the dynamic element that generally dictated the course of the civil war – the Yishuv. Even though Ben Gurion felt that British rule was disintegrating, he and his aides constantly tested the waters to see how far the Administration was prepared to tolerate independent operations by the Haganah, not to mention direct action against the British themselves. Ben Gurion was unable to fathom the British reactions. Because he did not understand, he preferred to view the perceived British weakness as a scheme “to establish an Arab state throughout the Land of Israel”. This had no basis in fact, of course. A certain fear of the British did not disappear even after the effective collapse of the Mandate Administration following the events in Tiberias and Haifa in the second part of April. Even though the authorities suffered greatly from the decline in the level of obedience, they continued to preserve a measure of deterrent capability. The Administration’s success in maintaining a semblance of ruling capability was its greatest achievement in the face of the surging war, as it had to struggle against Jewish, local and regional Arab hostility, and against the policy of its own government, which was rife with contradictions and lacked backing.³⁰⁸

21st April

A long day with too many incidents to record and a number of quite new problems. The Commission at Lake Success is really a most surprisingly incompetent body, and the members of it are now drawing their large allowances for doing nothing else but blame us. They have

³⁰⁸On the Palestinians’ suspicious attitude toward the end of the Mandate, Nevo, “The Palestinians and the Jewish State”, pp. 295–334; on Ben Gurion’s conjecture of a “British scheme”, “With Force and with Wisdom”, Mapai Central Committee, January 8, 1948, in *When Israel Fought*, pp. 27–28. It is no accident that the underlying assumption of Haganah’s offensive plan (Plan Dalet) was that it should be implemented only after the end of the Mandate. A clash with the British was perceived as a danger to be avoided.

now published a statement that it is our fault that there are no British police volunteers for an international force for Jerusalem, whereas all the world knows that it is their own failure to reach any decision at all that has landed us in this impasse. They say that, had an earlier effort been made 4,000 British police might have been retained, but there never were 4,000 British police in the force. These are fantastic allegations.³⁰⁹

The leakages at Lake Success are frightening. The staff are, of course, largely Jewish and Jews know no loyalty but to themselves when they are employed in a show like the United Nations. Anything given to the (UN) Commission gets out at once in the New York Press and the Jewish news agencies.

The military view of the future became clearer today. The situation is full of paradoxes. First, we are staying on merely to get out, and by staying on make getting out more difficult. Secondly, whereas until recently we were staying on to help the Army to get out, now the Army is staying on because for political reasons we are not allowed to go, although the Army wants us to. It is quite clear that the situation in Jerusalem is not appreciated in London. We have now no petrol and no kerosine [sic]; enough heavy oil to keep the electricity supply going for another ten days; and about a week's diesel oil for the water supply, which has to be pumped up 2,000 feet and may be blown up at any time. It has been twice already.³¹⁰

Yesterday a convoy of 240 Jewish vehicles attempting to replenish Jerusalem before Passover left 50 vehicles stranded as a result of Arab

³⁰⁹On April 21, the Jerusalem Trusteeship Council of the UN approved the Constitution of International Jerusalem, pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 181 of November 29, 1947. This body, which was authorized by the General Assembly to act on its behalf in Jerusalem, was clumsy and slow, owing to the problems that affected the U.N. itself. By the time the constitution was published, it was no longer relevant. The British controlled the city largely in theory and the U.N. was incapable of replacing them. Control passed to the Haganah and in part to loyalists of the Mufti. As for the number of police, Gurney is correct. In 1938, at the height of the Arab Revolt, the Palestine Police numbered 4,239 most of them Palestinians (Jews and Arabs). Since then their number had declined. The report may be referring to the Administration's attempt to establish a police force of 600 Jews and Arabs in conjunction with the British departure – which failed. The Jewish Agency, which was supposed to help underwrite the plan, objected to the idea. Itzhaki-Harel, *The Police 1918–1948*, pp. 154, 171.

³¹⁰As noted, the western water pipeline to Jerusalem was not blown up until August 1948.

attack and the Life Guards have spent today rescuing them. The Haganah have gone into Enab.³¹¹

It is clear that one of the main problems now will be to get the Police out in time. They are not mobile and their transport is limited. The Army cannot help, so we must turn to the air.³¹²

The Jews now find that they cannot get to the Wailing Wall for Pass-over. Not that the large majority of them care anything about the Wailing Wall. But to the Orthodox Jews this does mean something and it seems unfortunate that they should be deprived of it as a result of the acts of their irreligious brethren. The Chief Rabbi belongs truly to the Sanhedrin and never ceases to blame Britain for the sufferings of the Jews or to attribute Britain's suffering to the maltreatment of the Jews. It is too light-hearted, I'm afraid, to remember the schoolboy's answer to the question "What are Rabies, and what would you do for them?" "Rabbis are Jewish priests and I wouldn't do anything for them."

Sixteenth Perspective

The Haifa turning point

On April 23 the inhabitants of Palestine felt that something momentous had happened – as Gurney maybe understood better than the ordinary citizen. The drama in Haifa, involving visible coordination between the British authorities and the Haganah, together with the mass Arab flight with British assistance, was having broad repercussions. In addition to the rift in Britain's relations with the Arab world, a crisis was about to erupt in the already sensitive relations between the Government in London and the Mandate Administration in Jerusalem. Gurney's attempt to claim that the Haganah "staged" an attack in Haifa and his complaint about the inaction of the Christian world in the light of the Jews' plans to seize control of Jerusalem (entry for April 23) reinforce historically, and not disinterestedly, the feeling at the time both in London and in the Arab capitals that the Mandate authorities were pleased with the Haganah actions in Haifa.

³¹¹Referring to the "Harel convoy" (entry for April 20); the "Life Guards", Regiment of the REME Brigade no. 1, stationed at Haifa.

³¹²The police shut down their storehouses in Jerusalem on May 13 and the last of the police left in the Administration convoy to Qalandiya on the morning of the 14th.

The most significant event in the civil war, as can be gleaned from the previous Perspectives, did not take place in Jerusalem or on the road to that city, or in Galilee, but on the edge of Galilee – in Haifa. The geostrategic importance of the city and its port, the Arab flight on an unprecedented scale from the city after the Haganah takeover, and the apparent close coordination between the British authorities and the Jewish leadership in the city make the events in Haifa from April 19 to April 22 the crux of the war's turning point. It needs to be emphasized here that from the British perspective Haifa, and not Jerusalem, was the key to both the defense of Palestine and its evacuation. Consequently, the developments in Haifa were crucial for the British. And because they were the cardinal factor in the war's development until May 1948, their open retreat in Haifa affected the course of the war throughout Palestine.³¹³

The official responsible for the early evacuation of Safed and Eastern Galilee, of Tiberias and then of Haifa, was the commander of the North Sector, Major General Hugh Stockwell – the first senior member of the Administration in Palestine who not only thought that the British had lost control of events but also acted on that assumption. As a professional military man, Stockwell gave expression to his distress by taking a series of decisive steps that were intended to ensure his ability to execute the major mission imposed on him: to guarantee an orderly evacuation. In this connection the planned British enclave in Haifa Port was of extraordinary importance.

In the wake of the formal evacuation decision, Haifa overall and the port especially became even more critical for the Administration. It was not by chance that the finest unit available to the British in Palestine, the 6th Airborne Division, was stationed there. The divisional commander, the same Hugh Stockwell, was given responsibility for the entire northern region; from the border to southern Mount Carmel. However, at the beginning of April, due to constraints of the evacuation plan and other imperial missions, the division's headquarters were reassigned outside Palestine. Stockwell was left with only a few aides and a force reduced by two-thirds, many of them inexperienced soldiers who had been sent to Palestine solely to secure the evacuation.³¹⁴

³¹³Haifa's centrality for the British is seen, for example, in the meeting of the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary, and the Army and Ministry of War chiefs, May 7, 1948, TNA CAB127/341.

³¹⁴Report by Major General H.C. Stockwell, Leading up to, and After the Arab-Jewish Clashes in Haifa on 21/22 April 1948, TNA WO275/20, 24.4.1948.

As early as February 20, the commander of the Paratroop regiment that was responsible for defending Haifa and its port informed Stockwell that in the light of the sharp rise in the level of violence he would only be able to secure the enclave but not operate outside it. He also suggested moving the centre of government immediately from Jerusalem to Haifa and terminating the Mandate early. Indeed, the Army, contrary to the Civil Administration, moved quickly to relocate its headquarters from Jerusalem to Stella Maris, in Haifa, in the first half of April.³¹⁵

Stockwell's increasingly acute plight forced him to cut back on missions. In addition to his inability to separate between the adversaries (for example, the Haganah's victory in the battle at Mishmar Ha'emek on April 14, under his nose, and of course the persistent Jewish-Arab clashes in Haifa) or protect weak communities (the Jews in Safed, the Arabs in Tiberias), doubts arose also about his ability to secure the British forces during the evacuation. His decision to deploy his forces on the eve of the turning point in a manner that would not interfere with the Haganah's activity in the city but would ensure the British interests in the enclave and on its access route, together with the quiet coordination with the Haganah on the eve of and during the battle for Haifa and the encouragement he gave the rapid Arab evacuation were congruent with the Administration's interests and therefore enjoyed the full backing of his superiors: Cunningham, Gurney, and MacMillan. Their approach, which was in flagrant contradiction to the policy of their superiors in London, notably Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, derived from their conclusion that it was no longer possible to execute the evacuation and bring about calm simultaneously and fully. This was probably clear even before, but Stockwell now gave it explicit expression. It followed that the evacuation should be given priority, and Stockwell translated his words into deeds. In Haifa the British Army backed down openly; moreover, it was henceforth apparent that the British authorities depended greatly on the good will of the Yishuv leadership.

What actually happened in Haifa during the turning point? Opinion is divided on this question. The following are the major relevant events, based on the British, Jewish, and Arab material. The redeployment of the British forces in Haifa began on the morning of April 19 and was completed at 6 a.m. on April 21. At midday on April 21 the Haganah

³¹⁵Memorandum of Commander of Paratroop Regiment of 6th Division, Haifa, TNA WO275/48, 20.2.1948; order of GOC Army to move headquarters from Jerusalem to Haifa, April 8, 1948, HA 105/196.

launched an offensive. Stockwell had informed both sides about his redeployment that morning, but this information was of use only to the Haganah, because of its high level of preparedness and capability in Haifa and its absolute superiority over the Arab military force in the city. Second, Stockwell held advance contacts with the local Jewish leadership, notably with the chairman of the Labor Council, Abba Hushi, the city's strongman. The first meeting, at which a minor British deployment was referred to, took place on April 16 between Hushi and a British intelligence officer. The decisive meeting was held on April 19, the day on which the redeployment began. According to Stockwell's summarizing report and Hushi's account, all the participants in the meeting understood that the Haganah would move to take control of the city immediately upon the British redeployment and that the British forces would not interfere. Stockwell met again with Hushi on the morning of the Haganah offensive to update him and hand him a written statement giving the details of the redeployment. The Arab leadership received the statement later that morning, though only in written form, and with no advance meeting. The British desire for the stronger side to restore order in the city was manifest.³¹⁶

³¹⁶On April 27 the headquarters of the Northern Sector reported that the transfer of the refugees from Haifa to Rosh Hanikra, via land, had been completed the previous day: NORTHSEC, TNA WO275/67. A detailed analysis of the battle for Haifa (April 21–22) is of no relevance here; for the events, Goren, "Why Did the Arab Population Leave Haifa?" Drawing on Arab and Jewish sources, Goren demonstrates that coordination existed between the British and the Haganah but not at the same level between the British and the Arabs. Not having seen British material, he did not address Stockwell's motives and was inaccurate concerning the manner and timing of his activity on the eve of the "Haifa turning point." He also maintained (*ibid.*, p. 193), based on Haganah material, that Macmillan visited Haifa on the 19th and approved the plan. I did not find evidence for this in the British material, though the visit is consistent with the spirit of the events. Hushi's meetings with the Army are consistent with the course of the evacuation from Galilee and from the city itself, *ibid.*, pp. 201–202). In his report, cited above, Stockwell described with open embarrassment his meeting on the 19th with a delegation led by Hushi; it was not by chance that senior British officers praised the Haganah operation in Haifa. Zaslani to Shertok, *Diplomatic Documents*, April 23, 1948, p. 666. It was in fact an opposition newspaper, seeking to attack the Haganah, which provided an accurate report, in contrast to the other papers, which are highly uninformative about the connection between the British deployment and the Haganah offensive. *Hamashkif* (April 25) wrote, "The British wanted someone else to impose quiet in the city in their place, and they chose the stronger side." Jon Kimche, *Seven Fallen Pillars*, London 1950, p. 220, a useful source mainly for atmosphere, speaks of "complete harmony" between the Jews and the British during and after the Haganah takeover of Haifa.

The Haganah completed its takeover of the city the next day, April 22. The failure of a brief attempt to reach an orderly capitulation agreement spurred the mass Arab exodus. The British forces provided comprehensive assistance to those wishing to leave, directing them and supplying land and sea transportation.

In his report, Stockwell noted that following the Jews' takeover, "stability is beginning to show itself". He added that the authorities would do well to take advantage of the opportunity and expedite the evacuation before the Arab states attacked. A more explicit account of what underlay the behavior of the British in Haifa was provided by Lieutenant General MacMillan to the Haifa city fathers three days after the end of the Mandate and the establishment of the State of Israel, which still contained, at the time, a British military enclave in Haifa Bay under the command of MacMillan himself. The gist of MacMillan's remarks was: We need a quiet, safe evacuation, and don't dare to interfere with it. Apart from minor problems of the theft of heavy vehicles, the Jewish/Israeli leadership lived up to the expectations of the British authorities.³¹⁷

Overriding the events themselves was the interpretation that was placed on them in Jerusalem and London. The authorities in Jerusalem viewed the Haganah as a risk but also as an opportunity; only its takeover of Haifa could guarantee the calm that Stockwell's forces could not ensure. The Administration's cooperation – not to say outright aid to the Haganah – was intended to protect a salient British interest. The Army's redeployment showed that it no longer had an interest in the city. The Army set out to protect the British enclave in the bay, the outposts it still held in the north (notably the airport at Ramat David and Nazareth), and the evacuation convoys arriving from Jerusalem via Nablus and Jenin. Stockwell was not dismissed or even reprimanded in the wake of the events in Haifa and the hasty evacuation of Upper Galilee and Tiberias which preceded them (since April 16). On the contrary: both MacMillan and Cunningham shielded him against the

³¹⁷The Army's redeployment, Stockwell's report, above, and an operational order of the Northern Sector command, April 27, 1948, TNA WO275/20; the High Commissioner defended Stockwell in a letter to the Colonial Secretary, April 23, 1948, TNA FO141/1246; MacMillan's backing and the satisfaction of the Administration leadership were given expression in a meeting of the Security Committee on April 23, MSC, MECA, CP, B4, F1; Speech by Lieutenant General G. H. A. MacMillan at Haifa on Monday 17th May 1948, ISA ST11/2391; on the theft of vehicles, MacMillan conversation with attorney Salomon, the Israeli liaison to the Haifa enclave, June 15, 1948, *ibid.*

mounting anger in London. As far as the Administration was concerned, as of April 22 Haifa was no longer a problem.

22nd April

This has been a ridiculous day: a continuous flood of new crises from 8:30 to 7:00. The Railway headquarters were completely burnt down in the fighting at Haifa, and all records destroyed, which presumably means that all the final pay papers for the Railway staff have gone.³¹⁸ This morning in Jerusalem the Accountant-General's office lost £18,000 on the steps of Barclay's Bank (Post Office pay), though whether through attack or collusion is not clear.³¹⁹ Later came reports that the Haganah had taken over the Migration Department and had seized 1,500 unused British passports.³²⁰ Then Graves, Chairman of the Jerusalem Municipal Commission, came in to say he proposed to go on the 6th May and there was now no quorum for the Commission anyhow and who should sign the cheques.³²¹

The 250 Arab prisoners at Latrun now seem likely to attain their liberty as soon as the warders are paid off on the 26th.³²²

Cable & Wireless now propose to remove their telecommunications unit to Amman on the 28th, which the Foreign Office say they favor.

³¹⁸On the night of April 21 the 22nd Battalion of the Carmeli Brigade captured the building known as Beit Khouri, which housed the offices of the railway administration. According to Haganah sources, the troops used incendiary bottles. The building burned down. Eshel, *The Haganah Battle over Haifa*, pp. 360–365.

³¹⁹Probably another robbery by the breakaways – a “confiscation operation”, as they called it.

³²⁰The Haganah seized the office in the course of capturing the city in the wake of the departing British Army.

³²¹The Jerusalem Municipality split into two, the British official remaining with the Arabs and the Jewish section, under attorney Daniel Auster, who had been the deputy mayor of the mixed city, being transferred to the Jewish camp. Both municipalities barely functioned. Auster and Richard Graves had good working relations, and Graves's comments suggest that Gurney instructed him to informally recognize the Jewish municipality. Graves, *Experiment in Anarchy*, pp. 184–188.

³²²The detention camps were established for Italian and German prisoners of war and were later also used to incarcerate some of the detainees of the British Operation Agatha against the Yishuv, 29.6–11.7.1946. The Arab prisoners to whom Gurney is referring were criminal convicts. On the night of May 15–16, the Haganah's Givati and Harel Brigades captured the camps and Deir Ayoub, adjacent to Sha'ar Haggai. “Operation Maccabi” II, Alert Order, CZA S25/9348; Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, p. 263.

But they may not have appreciated that this will cut Jerusalem off from the outside world, as no landlines in Palestine are now functioning. This move of cutting off Jerusalem is an excellent one from our point of view, as we should get less nonsense to deal with.

Azc'arate came in to say he had been recalled, to Lake Success for consultations. He did not know whether he would be returning. I said that no doubt he would not leave much baggage behind.³²³

Then a long conference on the problem of compressing three days' Police movement into one, involving consultations with the Navy, Army, R.A.F. and a few others.³²⁴ After that, the air charter ordered to take 31 people from Lydda this morning had never in fact been laid on in London and they are all stranded. All our air transport plans had to be revised this afternoon.

The American Consul-General called and discussed the general situation:³²⁵ and the Syrian also came in to ask for military protection for the Syrian community in Haifa, from which Arabs have been streaming all day. It was pointed out to him that Syria had only herself to thank for having ignored all our protests and advice and thus having endangered her own people. The Syrian Government cannot one day say that they know nothing about their armed bands in Palestine, and the next day claim protection for them. They overlook the fact that the Commanding Officer of the Coldstream Guards was wounded while helping to evacuate Arabs from the Amir (Amin) Hospital and that two other officers were wounded in trying to get Arabs away by sea from the port. If we published the complaints from both sides after each incident in which we intervene, it would be a revealing commentary on the meaning of the British lives lost in doing so.³²⁶

³²³Azc'arate had remained in Jerusalem to prepare the city's internationalization. It is clear from here and from the previous paragraph what did Gurney think about the international efforts to find political solution for Palestine.

³²⁴The police, unlike the other security forces, were under the direct responsibility of the Chief Secretary.

³²⁵Thomas Wasson, was shot by a sniper on May 22 and died the next day. See Biographical Notes.

³²⁶The "Coldstream" – Regiment of the REME Brigade no. 1, stationed at Haifa; Beginning in October 1947 the Syrian Army made efforts to enter Palestine but was repulsed by the British; on this same day an attempt to arrive at a Jewish-Arab agreement in Haifa under British mediation failed. Report by Major General H. C Stockwell, Leading up to, and After the Arab-Jewish Clashes in Haifa on 21/22 April 1948, TNA WO275/20, 24.4.1948. From this point until the 26th of the month the British helped the Arabs leave the city by land and sea.

23rd April

St. George's Day (St. George for England and everything else for export.) It is odd that this morning we should have been discussing evacuating Lydda, the airport where he lived.³²⁷

It became clear today that the Jewish offensive at Haifa was staged as a direct consequence of four days continuous Arab attacks. Not that it is contrary to Jewish policy. The Arabs have played right into their hands; we have seen this coming for some time but, with one or two exceptions, our requests that the Arab States should hold their hands have been largely ignored. Now there are signs that the Arabs after all would like the British Mandate to continue.³²⁸

The Jewish plans for the domination of the Holy City are becoming clear, and not a single Christian nation is prepared to do anything to help. There is plenty of talk and letters to the Press about the urgency of saving Jerusalem for Christendom, but still nothing happens, and there is no sign of anything happening.³²⁹

As a result of decisions taken today we shall now have only 15 British Government officers left in Jerusalem in five days' time. The Government's authority is being flouted right and left by both sides, and what good this prolongation of these humiliating conditions does to anybody is hard to see. Fortunately there is nothing left to do but work. Next week the Club will close, its furniture stored with the Sisters of Mercy and the doors and windows bricked up for the duration.³³⁰

Cable & Wireless are proposing to move their unit to Amman, which would leave Jerusalem cut off for two days (as regards press messages) while they move. No one in London seems to have thought of this.

³²⁷St. George, a warrior and the patron saint of England, was the subject of many legends involving his exploits against a fire-breathing dragon; he was martyred at Lydda (Lod) in 304 CE.

³²⁸Through the Foreign Office and the British embassies in the Arab states, the High Commissioner urged that the infiltration of volunteers into Palestine be halted. Their response was cool, though, on the grounds that Britain was already entangled with the Arab world and there was no point in aggravating the situation. For example, Kirkbride (Amman) to Foreign Office, February 11, 1948, TNA FO371/68367.

³²⁹See, for example, *London Times*, April 1, 1948.

³³⁰The new Officers' Club, which was inaugurated in February 1948 stood on the site of the club which was blown up by the ITZL in 1946 (south of and abutting the King David Hotel). As for the convent, Gurney is presumably referring to the Sisters of Marie Reparatrice (see entry for April 2).

The United Nations are as far as ever from any practical answer to this problem. They have got to learn. I headed a telegram yesterday "Oil and water for Jerusalem".

Tiberias has now gone the same way as Haifa: Arab evacuation following Jewish attack following Arab attack.³³¹ The Arabs have now lost all confidence in their military leadership and look more and more to King Abdullah to rescue them from the inevitable consequences of intrigue and feckless chicanery.³³² There is an Arab fifth column growing up, well paid by the Jews at £50 a month and a bonus of £30 for each Arab killed.³³³

Having lost my secretary, I now have to write everything out in longhand, which is a bad habit I dropped many years ago and is intolerable.

The machinery of the Jewish State now seems to be complete on paper with staff for press censorship and all the horrible equipment of a totalitarian regime. Any Jew who now offends against national discipline is subjected to the same sort of persecution that the Jews themselves know so well, detention, interrogation and all the rest. An officer of the I.R.O. who wandered recently too far into the Jewish quarters of Jerusalem on a work of rescue found himself arrested and spending the night with the Haganah. The fact is that the Jews have no respect for any law or interests but their own, but conceal this much more skillfully than the Arabs.³³⁴

³³¹The fate of Tiberias was sealed on April 18, before Haifa, but the similarity is not coincidental. In both cases the Arab collapse followed the departure of the British, enabling the Haganah to manifest its strength. Moshe Tsahar, head of the city's emergency leadership, "Historians Beware With Your Sources", *Alpayim*, 13 (1996), pp. 201–211 (Hebrew).

³³²On the Palestinian delegation that sought help from Abdullah, Nevo, "The Palestinians and the Jewish State".

³³³Among the paid collaborators recruited by the Haganah's Intelligence Service ("Shai") were defectors from the Army of Liberation who returned to their villages or who switched to the Jewish side in the wake of internal disputes. Gelber, *A Budding Fleur-de-Lis*, pp. 167–168.

³³⁴Referring to the International Refugees Organization (see diary entry for April 8); no other source has been found for this story.

*Seventeenth Perspective***The Administration's concern about the reactions to the "Haifa turning point"**

The fighting in Haifa ended on April 22 and the Arab exodus from the city went on for a few days more. However, even before the end of the exodus and before the fog of war had lifted, came the reactions. Gurney's diary entry for April 24 shows that he was well aware of them: from the Yishuv, from the Palestinian Arabs, from the Arab League states, and, more important, from London.

On April 26 the High Commissioner and the GOCs Middle East and Palestine sent a memorandum to the Colonial Secretary describing their serious plight. Operationally, they recommended an immediate redeployment to Haifa, warning that if this was not done the rapidly dwindling British forces would not be able to hold out even there, especially after their weakness had been so flagrantly exposed. The next day, High Commissioner Cunningham added an assessment of his own to the effect that he would very soon find it difficult to fight back; and on April 30, Cunningham, who supported the idea of an independent Jewish state, wrote to the Colonial Secretary:

Recent Jewish military successes (if indeed operations based on the mortaring of terrified women and children can be classed as such) have aroused extravagant reactions in the Jewish press, and among the Jews themselves a spirit of arrogance which blinds them to future difficulties and, perhaps clouds their vision of affairs outside Palestine. Jewish broadcasts, both in content and in manner of delivery, are remarkably like those of Nazi Germany. Jewish papers claim that the Haganah controls Haifa, imposes curfews, and decides on what term the Arabs may or may not live in the town; On the roads, Haganah armoured cars are increasingly impudent and intrusive; And in the plains areas Jewish settlers begin to domineer the local Fellahin.³³⁵

As I noted earlier, this was not anti-Semitism *per se*, and any such interpretation is simplistic. His tone suggests a loss of control. Apart from this one instance – with the possible exception of Deir Yassin, where the context was different (see Perspective 12) – I found no other distraught comment of this kind by General Cunningham. The senior Mandate officials felt they had no choice but to flee their remaining force to the Haifa enclave.

³³⁵High Commissioner to Colonial Secretary, April 30, MECA, CP, 3/4.

They were also deeply concerned about how the Yishuv would react. Aware of the different tendencies within the Jewish leadership, especially the debate between the activists and the more moderate wing, they assumed that if the activists got the upper hand not even the Haifa enclave would be safe, not to mention Jerusalem and other regions. Cunningham was thus firm in his conclusion that it was not enough to offer the Yishuv leadership and the Haganah an opportunity – after all, they were not subordinate to the Mandate authorities. The right course was to terminate the Mandate quickly, leave Jerusalem, and concentrate everything on the defense of the Haifa enclave.³³⁶

On the Arab side, the “Haifa turning point” prompted acutely intensifying anti-British pronouncements by the Arabs in Palestine and elsewhere in protest at what appeared to be a clearly pro-Jewish posture by the British. In the wake of the energetic British aid for the Arabs’ departure from Haifa – both for humanitarian reasons (and for the sake of their image) and to ensure quiet in the enclave on the eve of the evacuation – the Arabs became increasingly convinced that the Haganah’s conquest of the city had been coordinated with the British. In short order the Administration found that what had been operationally useful to achieve quiet in the city was a serious policy mistake. The British aid for the Arabs’ departure ended on April 26. The concern of the British authorities in both Jerusalem and London was that the Hashemite monarchs in Iraq and Transjordan, together with the other Arab leaders would now no longer show consideration for Britain and would order an early invasion of Palestine. Much of the anxiety focused on the Transjordanian Arab Legion, which was in Palestine on loan to the Administration. There was an acute danger that King Abdullah would throw off restraint and act contrary to the British interest by ordering his forces, who were already in Palestine, into action. At this stage, the British civilian and military authorities alike would be unable to cope with such a development. At the local level, another assessment forecast increasing attempts to attack the British evacuation convoys as they moved from Jerusalem to Haifa through Samaria through territory that was almost entirely under Arab control.³³⁷

³³⁶*Ibid*, April 26, 27, 30.

³³⁷Cessation of the aid for leaving Haifa, NORTHSEC, TNA WO275/67, 26.4.1948, Security Committee, MSC, MECA, CP, 4/1, 23.4.1948; King Abdullah to High Commissioner, MECA, CP, 6/2, 23.4.1948.

24th April

The United Nations have appointed a truce commission consisting of the three consuls-generals of the United States, France and Belgium in Jerusalem, to assist in the implementation of the truce. I fear that the U.N. make themselves more ridiculous and their impotence more obvious every day.

Anti-British reactions to the Haifa situation have been fairly strong among the Arabs and the usual reactions have been coming in from Cairo, Damascus and Baghdad, where the slogan was "Down with the British and the Zionists".

It seems clear that the Jews, full of confidence and optimism as they are, will go for an all-out offensive against the Arabs in Jerusalem and Jaffa in order to demonstrate their superior military strength, and, in the case of Jerusalem, to cut the remaining roads by which the Arab Legion could come into Jerusalem or Palestine.³³⁸

Said goodbye to more officers this morning. In the midst of a mass of "most immediate" headaches it is a good test of anybody to attempt ten minutes detachment for pleasantries and conversation as though there were nothing else to do at all. I try very hard but realize that I haven't entirely achieved this yet. As it always happens in a semi-disorganized machine, some pieces have too little to do and others too much.

More Arab attacks on cars and police. One of the last two Secretariat cars was stolen this morning and a British constable was killed for the sake of his arms in Mamillah Road this afternoon.³³⁹

Today is the eve of Passover, but the Jews will not be able to get to the Wailing Wall this year. The Rabbis recognize this, but no doubt political capital will be made of it.³⁴⁰

³³⁸On April 20 the Haganah launched Operation Yevussi to seize the Qatamon area in south Jerusalem and the Mount Scopus-Nebi Samuel sector in the city's north. On the 22nd the Haganah began to deploy for a siege of Jaffa ("Operation Hametz"). The ITZL operation in Jaffa, which began on the same day as Gurney's diary entry here, and the British intervention, made the siege a doubtful proposition – it did not begin until April 28, following the ITZL's failure. Jaffa surrendered on May 13 and on the 14th, when the British left, control there passed to the Haganah without hostilities.

³³⁹A second policeman was seriously wounded. *Haaretz*, April 25, 1948.

³⁴⁰Gurney seems to have misunderstood the concept of "holiday eve": the eve of Passover 1948 was April 23 (when the Seder is held), whereas the 24th, a Saturday, was the holy day itself.

*Eighteenth Perspective***The Administration, the Yishuv, and the breakaways**

In his diary entry for April 25, amid the furor stirred by the “Haifa turning point” and the Haganah’s growing activity throughout the country, especially its capture of the Sheikh Jarrah section of Jerusalem, a development which from the British perspective put at risk the ongoing evacuation operation, Gurney took the trouble to copy, word for word, an advertisement which was placed in the *New York Post* by supporters of LEHI (the Stern Group). The advertisement fused propaganda with a call for personal donations to the organization. What was it about this ad that so irritated Gurney? Was his reaction due simply to his hostility toward the Yishuv and Zionism, or in this case even his anti-Semitism?

Veterans of LEHI and the ITZL and their sympathizers will undoubtedly seize on this passage as ostensible proof of their claim that it was they who “expelled the British from the Land of Israel”, or at least played a central role in that event. This is easily refuted. However, as this is not the place to elaborate on the subject, I can only note that there is general agreement in the historiography concerning the diverse reasons which led the British to terminate their rule in Palestine unilaterally.³⁴¹ The overriding reason was the situation of Britain and its empire following the Second World War. Given its new order of priorities and its political, social, and economic constraints, the Labour Government pushed ahead vigorously with the effort – which had begun already in the wake of the First World War – to dismantle the British Empire.³⁴² Accordingly, it was pointless to invest money and blood in Palestine, which lay between two other countries, Egypt and India, which were also candidates for

³⁴¹Among the notable studies: Louis, *The British Empire*; G. Cohen, “British Policy”; and M. J. Cohen, “The Zionist Perspective”, R. Louis, W. Stookey (eds), *The End of the Palestine Mandate*, Austin 1988, pp. 79–103.

³⁴²Recent scholarship on the end of empire contends that the dismantling of the empire did not take place until after World War II. Even then, it has been argued, the departures from India, Palestine, Burma and Ceylon were not thought at the time to mark the end of the empire. Rather, these developments were thought to be the beginning of a new phase of empire that was focused on other areas, particularly Africa and the Middle East, to meet the economic and strategic needs of the period. See, John Darwin, *The End of the British Empire: the Historical Debate*, Oxford 1991; Ronald Hyam, *Britain’s Declining Empire: the Road to Decolonisation, 1918–1968*, Cambridge 2006.

evacuation³⁴³ – besides which, the two national groups which were fighting over Palestine rejected any compromise, especially one that would leave room for Britain. In this analysis Jewish terrorism plays a marginal role at best. The question of “who expelled the British from Palestine” has long since ceased to engage historians of the late-British Mandate period.

Nevertheless, even if Jewish terrorism was not a factor in London’s policy decision, it certainly had an impact on the members of the British Administration in Palestine. Beyond sheer physical fear, the Administration viewed Jewish terrorism as a stumbling block in its fruitful (if not always calm) relations with the Jewish Agency. The latter, like the Administration, considered a situation of quiet in which the country could continue to develop as essential, and this did not change even after Britain’s de facto disavowal of its Balfour Declaration policy from May 1939.

The Administration attributed the continuing Jewish terrorism, especially since 1945, to the Jewish Agency’s failure to exercise proper control over the “Jewish Autonomous Authority”. Moreover, following Britain’s final decision to leave Palestine and the formulation of the evacuation plan timetable, the Administration, like the Government in London and British public opinion in general, was acutely sensitive to the sacrifices exacted by continued rule in Palestine. Although historical analogies are always tenuous, we can shed light on the situation in Palestine in the spring of 1948 by means of a comparison to the connection, in our time, between the level of agreement between the Israeli street and the Israeli Government to the need to remain in Lebanon, and the changing attitude of both the Israeli public and the Government as casualties in Lebanon mounted. The former intensified the latter more than *vice versa*. Sensitivity of this kind was another factor that induced the Administration to try to advance the evacuation once it was decided on. Since the decision was to leave, and since the United Nations was incapable of assuming responsibility, and since it was increasingly clear that a power vacuum would ensue – why wait until May 14? Was the wait worth even one hair on the head of a British soldier, policeman, or civil servant after it had already been decided and declared that ruling Palestine was no longer a necessity for Britain?

³⁴³Negotiations with India reached the point of no return already in 1935, and India gained its independence in 1947. In 1936 Britain and Egypt reached an agreement according to which the talks on the future of the Suez Canal would be renewed 20 years later.

From December 1947, when the evacuation plan was set and the violence erupted, until May 1948 dozens of British soldiers and civilians were killed in Palestine, some of them as a result of Jewish and Arab terrorism against the British authorities.³⁴⁴ The Administration found the situation incomprehensible. One did not have to be hostile to the Zionist cause, like Gurney, in order to be enraged at the pointless anti-British terrorism when the Mandate was about to end in any case. Gurney, like many of his colleagues in the Administration, was unaware of the deep ambiguity with which the evacuation process was perceived by both the country's Jewish and Arab residents.

Of even greater concern to the Administration than the operations by the breakaway organizations was its assessment that the Jewish Agency was losing control of the Jewish street – control which was crucial for the British on the eve of the Mandate's termination. As a result, the Administration was more preoccupied with Jewish terrorism than with Arab terrorism, which reflected mere anarchy.

The Administration was aware of the importance of images (see Perspective 15), especially as its strength waned during the evacuation process. Its leaders hardly wanted to bow to terrorism but were also determined to make every effort to avoid unnecessary casualties. Accordingly, the High Commissioner declared that the Civil Administration will not abscond and abandon the Army because of a few bombs and bullets. At the same time, by the middle of January 1948 the decision had been made to evacuate all the families of the military by the end of February. It was recommended that the families of the civil servants also leave at the earliest possible date. The Administration believed that the ITZL intended to attack the wives and children of the British military and civilian authorities as they made their way to Haifa in order to leave the country. It was therefore decided to move the families that were awaiting their turn to leave to hotels in Shfaram and Jenin. In February it was decided to shut down Civil Administration departments which could not be properly guarded. As the date for the termination of the Mandate approached, the Administration became ever more dependent on the ability of the Jewish Agency and on the military force subordinate to it, the Haganah, to control the Jewish street. The continued acts of terror perpetrated by the breakaway groups in the winter and spring of 1948 only made the British more restive. The pace of the evacuation had to be

³⁴⁴According to a report in early April, 123 uniformed British personnel had been killed since December 1947 and 318 wounded; some could not be identified or were not reported. CID report, April 9, 1948, TNA CO537/3857.

slowed, because the Army and the police were obliged to take action, in some cases with the last of their forces, against the Yishuv, which for its part wasted unnecessary forces and made erroneous assumptions – which exacted a cost in blood – in coping with the British Army.³⁴⁵

This calls for an explanation. The advertisement in the *New York Post*, which Gurney copied into his diary, was equally intolerable to the Yishuv, which was then literally fighting for its life. The leadership was apprehensive, at least in principle, about the implications of the internal rift, even though the breakaways had only a small following. Their success might encourage independent action by far more significant groups, such as Mapam (Hakibbutz Hameuhad and Hashomer Hatzva'ir, the two movements then dominant in the Palmah, which in April grew to three combat brigades, about a third of the total order of battle of the Haganah at the time). The leadership's primary concern, though, related to the British use of force. Thus, for example, on February 29, 1948, after LEHI attacked a British military train near Rehovot, which was carrying soldiers on their way out of the country, killing 28 of them, British soldiers opened fire indiscriminately on the streets of Tel Aviv, which by then was under full Haganah responsibility. The Haganah also feared the consequences of the indiscriminate killing of Arabs, as in the case of the booby-trapped barrel which the Irgun rolled toward Arab civilians at Damascus Gate in Jerusalem on December 12, 1947, or the Deir Yassin incident (which has already been mentioned). In another case, the Jewish side suffered a substantial setback in the battle for Kibbutz Mishmar Ha'emek when the British imposed a closure in the wake of an Irgun attack on a British military camp at Pardes Hanna on April 6. The Yishuv leadership, which was then waging a desperate diplomatic campaign against U.S. policy, which effectively sought to leave Britain or another foreign power in the country to prevent its partition, on the grounds that the sides were capable of nothing but bloodshed, certainly did not need military aid or anachronistic propaganda of the type offered by the breakaways.³⁴⁶

³⁴⁵High Commissioner to Commission for Palestine Affairs, London, January 13, 1948, Louis, "Cunningham", p. 145; on the evacuation of families and the decision to close departments, MECA, CP, MSC, 13.2.1948, 4/1; police assessment of ITZL intention to attack civilians being evacuated in Haifa, and the High Commissioner's reaction, *ibid.*, February 22, 1948.

³⁴⁶The irresponsibility of LEHI was heightened by the chance fact that the attack on the train was perpetrated close to an important Haganah underground arms plant – which, in the event, was not discovered. The plant's personnel – future members of Kibbutz Ma'agan Michael – rushed to help the wounded soldiers: Yehuda Slutsky *History of the Haganah*, p. 1546. On the explosives-packed barrel, Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, p. 337.

Indeed, with the National Administration and the National Council already established, and the state about to be born, the question of authority was extremely acute. The possibility of a civil war following the termination of the Mandate did not seem far-fetched. Even though talks were held with the breakaway groups and several agreements were reached, their activity continued in Palestine and abroad. A flagrant case was the independent – and failed – operation by the ITZL in the Manshiya neighborhood of northern Jaffa exactly in the period covered by the diary (April 25–28).

It seems to me that there were two main motivations for the continued activity – both irrelevant and harmful – by the breakaway groups even on the eve of the Mandate’s termination:

1. The atmosphere of the eve of the possible end of the Mandate intensified the political struggle in which each side sought to appropriate the past and the present for the benefit of their future. In the struggle for political leverage in the future state a far more central role was taken by the bitter battle within the Labor movement itself, between Mapai and Mapam (which was established in January 1948 following the merger of Hashomer Hatzar and the Le’ahdut Ha’avodah faction, of which Hakibbutz Hameuhad was the linchpin). Mapam and its components wielded considerable political power because of their centrality in the defense establishment. In the end, however, and in contrast to the breakaways, they did not cross the red line of disobeying the one elected executive authority – the Jewish Agency, and afterward the National Administration. The ITZL and LEHI tried to ensure their place in the future state by means of activity outside the framework of voluntary obedience. Their efforts to carry out regular military activity, on the Haganah model, were generally unsuccessful. Frustrated, they resorted to the method they were familiar with: terrorism against known targets, usually British.³⁴⁷
2. The breakaways were generally isolated within the Yishuv society and thus lacked means of both livelihood and combat. They did not invent the method of robbing the British to get weapons – though the “organized Yishuv” abandoned the tactic in this period. Weapons were pur-

³⁴⁷On the struggle in the Labor movement, which revolved around the place of the Palmah: Yoav Gelber, *Why the Palmah Was Dismantled*, Jerusalem & Tel Aviv 1986 (Hebrew); Anita Shapira, *The Army Controversy, 1948*, Tel Aviv 1985 (Hebrew). The breakaways failed in their attempts to wage conventional warfare in Deir Yassin, Sheikh Jarrah, Ramat Rahel, and Ramle.

chased from the British, too, and in any event cooperation with them was more important. The breakaways' operations of this kind were generally unsophisticated due to a shortage of arms and people, and more especially because their experience was mainly in terrorism, not combat. These elements, combined with their loathing of the "foreign occupier", made their "procurement" operations against trains and military camps particularly violent. In some cases there were also casualties when the breakaways, for the reasons noted above, robbed banks.

In the final analysis, the effectiveness of the breakaways was most strikingly seen in their efforts to attack trains for the weapons they carried. As Gurney notes repeatedly in his diary, the Administration was extremely troubled by this state of affairs, which threatened to sabotage the effort to complete the evacuation as soon as possible. Though this was not their aim, the breakaways thus compounded the Administration's difficulty in meeting the evacuation timetable. This fact, of course, was unrelated to the decision of September 1947 to terminate the Mandate. In this period, then, there was full agreement between the Administration and the Jewish Agency on the issue of the breakaways and Jewish terrorism.³⁴⁸

On May 7, Gurney summed up this issue from the Administration's point of view: "The Stern Group has now 'declared war' on the British Army. We don't [t]ake any notice of this, beyond remembering that the Jewish Agency, by virtue of the recent Haganah-I.Z.L. agreement, are now held responsible for the actions of the I.Z.L."

25th April

Sunday. No sleep at all last night as there was heavy continuous firing in almost all parts of Jerusalem. As expected the Jews began their attack on Sheikh Jarrah, and have occupied the big Nashashibi house on the east side of the road. It took some time to get details as the road had been mined, but the Army soon had the mines removed and have given the Haganah until to-morrow morning to get out of the whole area. The Jewish plan to cut this road and then work round to cut the

³⁴⁸The British concern about the trains was given expression in a meeting of the Security Committee, MECA, CP, MSC, 4, 5.12.1947.

Jericho road, beyond the Mount of Olives is fairly obvious.³⁴⁹ The Qatamon battle that went on all night with mortars and every sort of small-arms round the house is designed to drive a Jewish wedge through to cut the Bethlehem road.³⁵⁰

The Arabs have now blown a cliff at Bab-el-Wad down on to the Jews' road and closed that, but it is difficult to block a road by this means for long.³⁵¹

Spent the morning in the office dealing with urgent telegrams from New York and London, but it is almost impossible to convey by telegram any idea of the situation in Jerusalem. Almost as impossible as it is to see any advantage in attempting to remain here until the 15th May. Both sides are now endeavoring to gain vantage points and to forestall each other.

It was reported this afternoon that the Jews had blown up the Jisr Majami bridge over the Jordan south of the Sea of Galilee;³⁵² the situation in Acre, where we have 300 Arab prisoners and criminal lunatics with only a few British in charge, has been exacerbated by the

³⁴⁹In the northern drive of Operation Yevussi, the 5th Battalion of Harel Brigade captured the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood on the night of April 24–25. The British, who were dependent on the northward road that passed through the neighborhood toward Latrun and from there to Haifa and the Kalandiya airfield, gave the Jewish side an ultimatum but also a pledge to hand over the neighborhood to the Haganah when they left. When the Haganah did not withdraw, they stormed the Nashashibi house, located at the highest point in the area; the Palmah retreated to Mount Scopus in the evening. Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, p. 213; Testimony of Rabin, Zrubaveel Gilad, *The Palmah*, Vol. 2, Tel Aviv 1957 (Hebrew), pp. 913–914; Ben Gurion conversation with High Commissioner on this subject, CP, MECA, 25.4.1948, 5/1; David Ben Gurion, *The War of Independence*, Ben-Gurion's Diary, Tel Aviv 1982 (Hebrew), p. 369; below, April 26.

³⁵⁰Abd al Kader's men, aided by three Arab Legion armoured vehicles, began to dig in at the St. Simeon Monastery, in Qatamon – a key position for controlling the south of the city. The Haganah had not yet attacked there, but tension reigned in the light of the troop movements related to Operation Yevussi in the north of the city.

³⁵¹The Haganah had in any case lost control of the road until May 15. The continuation of this episode appears in the diary entry for April 26.

³⁵²The existence of the "Bridge of the Meeting" (of the Yarmuk and Jordan Rivers), on the Jordan near the site of Kibbutz Gesher, has been documented since the Crusader period. Adjacent to it were an iron bridge which was part of the railway line and dated from 1904, and a concrete bridge which was built in 1925. All three bridges were sabotaged by the Haganah. The British left the nearby Gesher police station on April 27 and the members of the kibbutz seized the structure. In reaction, the Arab legion attacked the building, but unsuccessfully.

arrival of refugees from Haifa: the food position at Nablus has also become critical on account of more of these refugees, who are spreading the wildest and most untrue stories of events in Haifa. In Haifa itself things have been quiet for two days.

A telegram from Lake Success asked "What are the security arrangements in Jerusalem?" The answer was one word "Insufficient". Another telegram from London said "B/Constable Smith was reported in your telegram to be suffering from Malana. As this disease is not known here please report what he is suffering from". This gets first prize.³⁵³

None of the Consuls-General concerned had received any instructions this morning regarding the truce commission, although they have to report the day after to-morrow.

The High Commissioner saw Ben Gurion this afternoon and the I.G.P. came in to discuss several things on return from Haifa. His cook was shot outside his front door this morning.³⁵⁴

This has been one of the worst days yet. Jaffa was being mortared all the morning: another expected development. The Jews blew the road at Miqve Israel to stop the Army coming in to help the Arabs.³⁵⁵

I noticed that the Guard on the house this morning had declined to one Arab T.A.C. Most of these deserted yesterday, having received their pay and bonuses up to the 15th May. "No loyalty, no discipline", as my sole survivor observed, having served five years in the Army.

This afternoon the Jewish staff of Lydda airport walked out, taking with them some essential parts of the radio equipment. It may be that this airport is now finished, and future flights will have to be from Ramat David. The Army have gone in to occupy the airport building. One more commitment.³⁵⁶

³⁵³A reference to the report that a British policeman had been murdered in Jerusalem's Mamilla neighborhood by Arabs on the 24th.

³⁵⁴Meeting of the High Commissioner with Ben Gurion, CP, MECA, 25.4.1948, 5/1. I.G.P., Colonel Gray.

³⁵⁵The attack on the road from the west was part of the Haganah's siege of Jaffa ("Operation Hametz"); concurrently, though without coordination, the ITZL attacked Manshiya from the north.

³⁵⁶After the Jewish theft, Arabs entered and stole goods. *Haaretz*, April 28, reported only the Arab theft. The British continued to operate the airport until May 14 and held Ramat David until June 30. See also diary entry for April 26.

The following full-page advertisement in the *New York Post* of the 16th April, accompanied by a picture of a dagger and the words "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem" is worth remembering:

THE STERN GROUP
SPEARHEADS THE ATTACK

In Cairo: the Fighters for the Freedom of Israel (Stern Group) destroyed an Arab explosives depot destined for Palestine.

In Rehovoth: in retaliation for the Ben Yehuda street bombing the F.F.I. destroyed a ten coach British troop train carrying reinforcements into Palestine.

In Nablus: driving to the very heart of enemy territory, disguised as an Arab, Abraham Cohen of the F.F.I. was seized on his mission to destroy Fawzi El Quwakji Headquarters in Nablus. According to a British Communiqué, Cohen was executed. In trying to dismantle the half-ton mine that lay concealed under the oranges carried by his truck, two British demolition experts (one a participant in the Ben Yehuda street bombing) as well as several Iraqi officers, were killed.

In Benyamina: on the rails between Egypt and Haifa the F.F.I. destroyed a trainload of Arab officers and soldiers destined to fight in Palestine.

Arab Headquarters in Haifa, Jaffa, and in Jerusalem have been blasted by the F.F.I. In the Jerusalem area the many smashing counter-attacks of the F.F.I. have made the Arabs evacuate several quarters of the Holy City and forced them to go on the defensive.

The five thousand men and women of the Stern Group are five thousand living spearheads of the war for Jewish Liberation. You hold them in your hands. Do not fail them, for they shall not fail you. Send your spearhead now to support the Stern Group, commandos in the Jewish struggle for freedom.

To: American Friends of the Fighters for Freedom of Israel, Inc.
149, Second Ave., New York City 3, OR 3-0344.

I wish to spearhead the attack in the war for Jewish liberation.

I enclose \$ _____ I pledge \$ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City _____ Zone _____ State _____

Volunteer Help Urgently Needed.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁷On Rehovot, see perspective no. 18; the Cairo and Nablus events were not reported in British sources; in Binyamina 25 passengers were killed in a terrorist attack on a civilian train there on March 31. See diary entry for April 7.

26th April

This morning the B.B.C. came out with the news that the Mandate would terminate on May 4th. Last night they announced that the British had evacuated Lydda airport. I don't suppose they realize what they are doing in broadcasting these false agency reports. The date of the end of the Mandate is obviously a matter that affects the safety of several hundred British lives. It involves a military operation of great delicacy, and suggestions of an earlier date than the 15th May at this stage can only serve as encouragement to both Jews and Arabs to speed up their preparations and plans. As regards Lydda, it was the Jewish staff who walked out yesterday with 18 transmitter sets and the British who are trying hard to keep it going. We had chartered aircraft from Egypt and Cyprus to take some of our clearance office staff to Cyprus, but as a result of the broadcast Cyprus Airlines say they aren't coming to-morrow. We can only escort a single party to Lydda, which is in fact still working, though our U.K. charters of two Skymasters and one York for the 28th may have to be diverted from Ramat David.³⁵⁸

Last night the Jews dropped two mortar bombs on the roof of Acre Prison and all the 140 Arab prisoners escaped, leaving only one American and about 100 Arab criminal lunatics. The British prison staff are safe. This is at least one solution of a problem of what to do with these prisoners when we go.³⁵⁹

The Arab blocking of the Jewish life-line at Bab-el-Wad seems to have been well and properly done. In two places the cliff has been blown down on to the road where it passes through a narrow gorge. The sappers say it would take a week to clear. Meanwhile 1,000 Iraqis and Syrians in the vicinity have said that they propose to show their disapproval of any clearance work and to do another, even more effective, blow if and when the work is done. The Bab-el-Wad pumping station which is between the two blocks and has oil sufficient to last till the 13th May, is guarded by an officer and 13 British soldiers who are cut off from access by vehicle.

This means that there will be another Jewish food crisis in Jerusalem in a few days' time, and it looks as though the Jews will have to clear the road themselves. It will probably also mean that the Jews will

³⁵⁸See diary entry for April 25.

³⁵⁹No evidence has been found to support this story.

attack the Arab route and so sever communication between Jerusalem and Jaffa.³⁶⁰

The Sheikh Jarrah incident which might have been serious has been temporarily settled by the Army ejecting the Jews yesterday evening and putting British troops in. An area has been agreed as a “demilitarized zone” with the Jews, but not yet with the Arabs.³⁶¹ There is likely to be a battle for Alamein Camp tonight, as the Suffolks came out of it this morning and moved into Allenby Barracks. Any vacuum of this sort invariably produces a battle for possession. Last night was quieter and we were able to get some sleep.³⁶²

The Consular representatives of America, France and Belgium still say that they have received no instructions as to what to do, if anything, on the Security Council truce resolution. The U.N. discussions seem to be becoming more and more futile and unreal. A telegram arrived from Lake Success yesterday telling Dr. Azc'arate to stay here, but he left three days ago.³⁶³ At most there can be only 18 more days of this sort of thing, and that will be about as much as most of us can stick.

27th April

Today started badly. From 1 a.m. to about 4 there was the most shocking noise all round the house. About 50 mortars and 250,000 bullets.³⁶⁴ All this is sheer nonsense and does no one any good. Shortly before it started, Denham of the P.W.D. was shot in the back at short range outside the Club in the middle of the (Security) Zone (B). We have some Arab murderers living around us.

At 10 this morning, Leggett, one of the new Foreign Office staff was collecting money from Barclays Bank when he was set upon by Arabs

³⁶⁰The Haganah attacked at Sha'ar Haggai from May 10–15 (“Operation Maccabi” II).

³⁶¹The agreement was that the Haganah would not jeopardize transportation on the Sheikh Jarrah road, which was essential for the Army; see also diary entry for April 25.

³⁶²The camps referred were located on Hebron Road in south Jerusalem. It was only on May 14 at 11 a.m., when the British left the city, that a hundred Arab troops entered El Alamein Camp. The Haganah captured both camps in “Operation Kilshon”, May 14–18. Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, pp. 229–233. The Suffolk Regiment remained to escort the High Commissioner, Gurney, and the last of their staffs out of Jerusalem on May 14.

³⁶³He left on April 23 for consultations at the United Nations and returned on May 11.

³⁶⁴This was a first – and failed – attempt by the Haganah to capture the St. Simeon Monastery. Arie Hashbiya, *The Battle for St. Simon*, Tel Aviv 1978 (Hebrew).

and killed in the ensuing melee. One Arab was killed.³⁶⁵ Firing has been going on all day in most parts of Jerusalem, and I decided to move into the King David to-morrow, where it is at least a bit quieter, though the Arab mortars on Yemin Moshe are fairly disturbing.

The members of the Consular "truce" commission had their instructions yesterday and are seeing Arabs and Jews this afternoon. The trouble is that there are really no responsible Arabs to see. They always say it is necessary to refer the matter to Damascus or Cairo and then never produce an answer at all. There is certainly a growing anti-British feeling among the Arabs, largely as a result of Haifa and the refugees that have left there since the Jewish attack. Since Arab opinions are governed by emotions rather than facts, this tendency can very quickly spread and is another reason why the extrication of the Govt. and the garrison from an impossible position in Jerusalem becomes daily more pressing. It is not as though we could now conceivably do any good by staying. All the bad hats of Arabia seem to be here.

A convoy (the penultimate civilian convoy) leaves early to-morrow for Lydda, where we hope the planes to fetch them will be able to land. After that there will be only 20 of us left, and very few Palestinian officers, as the blowing up of the headquarters of the Labour and Civil Aviation Departments this morning has successfully dispersed most of them.³⁶⁶ The Director of the Labour Dept., going to his office for the last time, found it totally wrecked. Having placed his despatch-case in a corner while he had a look around, he came back and found that a wrist-watch, fountain pen and two pipes had been taken out of it, so he concluded he'd had it, and went.

Went to the Club in the evening to say goodbye to various people who go to-morrow, but it was very gloomy and depressing. Before that we had the final meeting of Advisory Council; a handful of officials sitting in the ballroom of Government House by heaps of stacked furniture solemnly going through the rigmarole of passing legislation about the Transjordan Frontier Force. It is a terrible confession to make, but in the various Legislative Councils I have been in I have seldom bothered to read a Bill that I wasn't introducing myself. There isn't time.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁵See diary entry April 15.

³⁶⁶Apparently a chance occurrence caused by the firing of one of the sides.

³⁶⁷On the Frontier Force, see diary entry for April 17.

Nineteenth Perspective

British-Transjordan relations during the war

The effect of the "Haifa turning point" went beyond the boundaries of Mandate Palestine. On April 28, Gurney wrote, "Yesterday there were rumours of a declaration of war on Zionism by Transjordan and of an intention on the part of King Abdullah to lead the Arab Legion into Palestine immediately. It is a fact that the reverse suffered at Haifa has had a sharp reaction in all the Arab States, who distrust our neutrality the moment things go badly for them." This observation reflects a serious British plight of the time. Transjordan, which became independent in May 1946 but remained a British protectorate, was assigned a central role in the British disengagement from Western Palestine. Jordan was known as the securest British wedge in the Middle East (even more than the Hashemites in Iraq). With their withdrawal the British sought Jordan's loyalty. The Jordanian Arab Legion, which operated as an army on loan in Palestine, was not removed from the country at the beginning of April, as originally planned. The Administration's growing haplessness and the close ties with Jordan both obliged and made possible its continued presence. Although it occasionally shed restraint and intervened in the fighting against the Jews, the Legion was generally a disciplined body.

Britain's relations with Jordan overall, and the episode of the Arab Legion in particular, were echoes of a wider and more significant problem, revolving around Britain's wish to shed responsibility for events in Palestine without at the same time forfeiting its influence there entirely. In the absence of a body to which authority could be transferred, it appeared that Transjordan might play a major role.

On December 2, 1947, serious disturbances erupted in the new Jewish-Arab commercial centre of Mamilla, in Jerusalem, close to the Old City (see Perspective 7). As a result, the Administration on December 4 adopted its "policy of evacuation without intervention". Although this was not stated explicitly, the import of the December 4 decision was that Britain was no longer committed to pacifying Jewish-Arab relations, not even in the event of war. Indeed, by this step Britain relinquished for good its responsibility for the fate of Palestine, though this was not declared overtly. Foreign Secretary Bevin apparently wanted to have his cake and eat it, too: to shed responsibility but not forgo it formally, with a view to the long-term British interest. As we saw, this impossible policy had a qualitative effect

on the Mandate authorities' ability to cope with the Palestine civil war.³⁶⁸

London, determined to be rid of the Mandate, now tried to introduce secretly an alternative partition plan. In February 1948, Bevin reached an agreement with the Prime Minister of Transjordan, Tawfiq Abu al-Huda, under which the Arab Legion would seize the area earmarked for the Arab state under the U.N. partition plan as soon as the Mandate expired. He warned the Jordanians that they must not enter the areas allotted for the Jewish state.

Bevin's Jewish-Hashemite "partition plan" came at the expense of the Palestinians, Britain's enemies, and was meant to bolster Britain's status in the Middle East, and in the Arab world especially, after the end of the Mandate. The Hashemite option was raised by the British ambassador to Amman, Sir Alec Kirkbride as early as October 1947. Bevin initially rejected it. However, in the light of the circumstances created by the U.N. resolution, U.S. policy, and the developments in the war, he returned to it in February 1948. With this step the British tried to avoid an open rift with the Truman Administration through informal recognition of the future Jewish state. London's assumption was that Washington, guided by Cold War considerations, would ultimately not reject the idea. Transjordan thus had a paramount role in Britain's dual effort: to meet the evacuation timetable and to preserve its interests in the Middle East as a whole and in Palestine in particular.³⁶⁹

28th April

Got up at 5:45 and went to see the convoy off from the King David at 6:30. About 100 British, including many heads of Departments. It was quite a bit of history, though it didn't look like it. Air passengers in old mackintoshes are not a stirring sight. But this party represented the main body of the Government leaving Jerusalem, the Holy City, in the early light of a grey morning: policemen in blue in their green armored cars; the parting of many friends and the finish, in some cases, of a life's work. The Press and the photographers missed it, and it all went

³⁶⁸On the Administration and the events in Mamilla, Security Committee, December 5, 1947, MECA, CP, MSC 4/1; the Cabinet discussion, December 4, 1947, TNA CO537/2363; Avi Shlaim, *Collusion Across the Jordan*, Oxford 1988, pp. 132–140.

³⁶⁹Bevin to Kirkbride, February 9, 1948, TNA FO371/68366; Louis, *The British Empire*, pp. 266–379.

off soberly and quietly, with handshakes and some rather studiously casual waves, hiding all kinds of thoughts and emotions. None of us would have it otherwise; every sign of sentiment had been magnificently dulled.

The Government Press packed up this morning just before the last issue of the Gazette to-morrow, which was to have been a sort of special withdrawal number. But I gather the Law Officers can produce an order to provide that none of this legislation (including the order itself) need be published, for which I give them full marks.

The I.Z.L. have been attacking Jaffa with mortars, and refugees are fleeing by sea and land. The Arab leaders of the town, the Mayor, many Municipal Councilors and members of the local National Committee have either left or are leaving. The Army took action this afternoon. The Arabs attach more value to Jaffa on historical and sentimental grounds than to any other Palestine town except Jerusalem, and there must be no repetition there of what happened last week in Haifa. It is pathetic to see how the Arabs have been deserted by their leaders, and how the firebrands all seek refuge in Damascus, Amman and elsewhere when the real trouble starts.³⁷⁰

The Jewish Agency has announced the pact between the Haganah and the I.Z.L. This means that henceforward the Agency will be responsible for I.Z.L. actions and will not be able to get away with the story that it has no control over these murderers and criminals. This pact should be recognized for what it is – a bargain with sin, a composition with evil things which will in the end destroy the Zionist cause.

The Truce Commission, consisting of the three Consuls-General, met yesterday to see the Jews and Arabs – separately. Typically, the Jews have furnished masses of literature, propaganda, statistics and pamphlets, and attended in force; equally typically, the Arabs refused to have anything to do with it.³⁷¹

Yesterday there were rumors of a declaration of war on Zionism by Transjordan and of an intention on the part of King Abdullah to lead the Arab Legion into Palestine immediately. It is a fact that the reverse

³⁷⁰For the ITZL attack on Jaffa beginning April 25, Yona Bendman, "British Military Efforts to Prevent the Fall of Jaffa, April 1948", *Iyunim Bitkumat Israel*, Vol. 2 (1992), pp. 279–316 (Hebrew). pp. 279–316; Even before this, about 35,000 Arabs, including the established families, had left, representing nearly half the population. Gelber, *Independence Versus Nakba*, p. 163.

³⁷¹An accurate description of Jewish and Arab behavior, each side according to its preferred method, *vis-à-vis* external commissions throughout the Mandate period.

suffered at Haifa has had a sharp reaction in all the Arab States, who distrust our neutrality the moment things go badly for them. Just as the Jews attacked us as unneutral a few weeks ago, when their prospects looked less bright and the American trusteeship proposals appeared.

Arabs are now leaving Jerusalem in large numbers; large residential areas like Bakaa and upper Qatamon have been almost evacuated. Petrol is very short, and is fetching £6 a 4-gallon tin.

29th April

A cease-fire for the Old City has been fixed up, and the Arab League issued a communiqué yesterday stating the terms on which they agreed. It is still not clear whether this enables a man to sit on the walls of the Old City and snipe outwards. Nevertheless it is a gleam of light and the first sign of anything at all being agreed between Arabs and Jews for many months.³⁷²

We sent a strong letter to the Jewish Agency this morning regarding the attacks on Jaffa, making it clear that if these did not cease immediately, the Army and Royal Air Force would take full action against those areas of Tel Aviv and other places from which they were launched. At 2 p.m. the Jews asked for a truce and withdrew, and that is about all we know at present. The R.A.F. action against the Bat Yam brewery was with cannon only, not rockets, as the Tempests have gone back to Iraq. The Jewish casualties at Jaffa are about 15 killed and 40 wounded: the Arab figures are said to be 23 and 60, but there is no means of checking these.³⁷³ Yesterday morning a mortar bomb fell in the D.C.'s garden, but failed to go off.

The High Commissioner has been to Haifa today, and seen things for himself.³⁷⁴ Armed Jews are walking about the Arab parts of the town with sten guns and the like, while hundreds of the peaceful Arab inhabitants are sitting with their belongings in the rain in the port area, waiting for evacuation. The Jews do not want them to evacuate, and do not see that they will not come back so long as there are armed

³⁷²The cease-fire in the Old City did not come into effect until May 2 and lasted until May 13, when the British left the area.

³⁷³On the Tempests, see diary entry for April 13.

³⁷⁴He met mainly with Arab representatives in an effort to deal with the adverse effect to Britain caused by the battle for Haifa. Press communiqué, CP, MECA, 29.4.1948, 4/5.

Jews in their quarters. The Haganah and the Jewish civil leaders seem not to have worked this out.³⁷⁵

As the **Palestine Post** this morning announced that the Secretariat has been closed, I called a meeting of the office staff – only some 70 remain – and talked to them about their difficulties and ours. The importance of the typist and stenographer only becomes clear when they are not there. Many of them are loyally putting up with all sorts of dangers and troubles, and are really trying very hard. Others have just gone. It is a fact that the Government of Palestine cannot now do very much. The Courts have stopped, and so has the Post Office, except for urgent and official telegrams; nearly all our prisoners have escaped, and the prisons are not functioning either.

We came into our prison, the King David, last night, Gibson, Dorman and I. Hamburger, the Manager, went to great trouble to furnish rooms for us and provide a dinner according to King David standards, which are as high as anywhere in the world. We sat down to a seven course dinner, beautifully cooked and served, and decided that this sort of thing, with the whole day in the office chair, would soon kill us. But I am bound to say it is a not unpleasant form of prison for the time being.³⁷⁶ The news of the two truces in one day has relaxed the “tension”, that horrible word that one gets used to in Jerusalem, and produced a widespread feeling of relief. But this afternoon, driving through the German Colony, we saw lorry after lorry loaded with household effects, people and baggage on the way out of Jerusalem. Others have gone into the Old City for refuge. Many of the rich have suddenly discovered that they have pressing assignments in Cairo or Beirut. This is Arab fickleness at its worst, with black market exploitation and throwing of the blame on somebody other than themselves, i.e., the British.³⁷⁷

³⁷⁵This appears to reflect Yishuv and, afterward, Israeli policy on this subject: not to encourage departure, not to prevent it, and to block attempts to return.

³⁷⁶Leslie Gibson was the General Prosecutor, Maurice Dorman the Under Chief Secretary.

³⁷⁷Gurney is referring to two false rumors which contributed to quiet. On April 28 the U.S. Secretary of State announced that a truce had been achieved between the Jewish Agency and the Arab Legion. The next day the press reported an agreement between Shertok and Jamal al-Husseini for a cease-fire in the Old City of Jerusalem. Ben Gurion-Shertok, April 29, 1948, *Diplomatic Documents*, p. 695; Shertok to Secretary of State, *ibid.*, pp. 695–696.

30th April

On this first morning of the Orthodox Easter, the day opened at 5:00 with an hour's battle in Yemin Moshe, about 200 yards away, in which the Army used 6-pounders and PIATS; and with the sound of church bells coming across from the Old City.³⁷⁸ All night there had been a growing battle in Qatamon, where the Jews entered the Orthodox Convent, leading to protests this morning from the Greek Orthodox Patriarch, and to telephone calls from the house, where I had left one British constable and the two servants.³⁷⁹ As no civil transport would come near the house to take the furniture and equipment out (valued at £3,000) for transfer to the new Foreign Office institution in St. Pal's [sic] Hospice,³⁸⁰ I told Francis, the constable, to bring the servants and their kit out, lock the house and leave it. I then tried to get the Police or the Army to move it. More Arabs are leaving the quarter, and the fighting there and apparently all over Jerusalem continued without a break until 3:00 in the afternoon. At mid-day the Arabs in Qatamon asked for a truce to attend to their dead and wounded.

The truce talks at Jaffa opened at 9:30, but the result has not come through yet. All is quiet there.³⁸¹

Reeves³⁸² was in from Nablus this morning, where they have 20,000 refugees and very little food. There is a great deal of squabbling and inefficiency and lack of intelligent leadership. A few rich people have all the flour and are making a fortune out of it. It is too late now to do anything about this, after all our careful price control and distribution schemes. If public opinion will tolerate this sort of thing, as seemingly it does, then one administrative officer, 15 British police and an Arab Magistrate can't be expected to stop it. The responsibility will

³⁷⁸The British intervened in the exchanges of fire between Yemin Moshe and the Old City in order to protect the Administration's offices in the King David Hotel.

³⁷⁹The Harel Brigade's 4th Battalion captured St. Simeon Monastery on the night of April 29–30. The residents there, previously assailants, now came under siege; they were rescued from the monastery in the afternoon, after the Arab alignment in the south of the city collapsed. Hashbiya, *The Battle for St. Simon*; Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, pp. 214–220.

³⁸⁰St. Paul's Hospice, a Protestant-Arab church on Shivtei Yisrael Street in Jerusalem, was dedicated in 1874.

³⁸¹The ITZL retreated in the face of British fire; the Haganah, which had no interest in fighting the British, believed that when the British left the city would fall – as it did.

³⁸²The Governor of the Nablus District.

be the U.N.'s in a fortnight's time, but whereas they had six people here recently now they have one and what he is doing is difficult to discover.

Today being also the Passover as well as the Moslem Friday, the office has a sort of holiday air.

The paradox of this situation is that so long as the Arabs and Jews were kept on an even balance, which in a sense it was the task of the Administration, being neutral, to do, there was no chance of a truce; it is only when the one side goes well down, as with the Jews in the Kfar Etzion convoy incident and now with the Arabs at Haifa and Jaffa, that the fighting can be concluded in a temporary armistice, the defeated side blaming us for not keeping the balance and so keeping the fighting alive.³⁸³

We have now had about five months of stens, brens, spandaus, mortars and all sorts of rifles, and I never want to hear any of them again. The one remaining cipher officer for this afternoon had three bullets through the back of his car coming to the office from Police Headquarters.

A significant reflection on the state of society is that 296 Arab prisoners, after a three day hunger strike, set fire to their prison camp at Latrun and all got away; and no one took the least notice of it. When one thinks of the courts of inquiry that take place in other parts of the world when even one prisoner escapes.³⁸⁴

1st May

The Brigadier³⁸⁵ attempted this afternoon to arrange a cease-fire in Qatamon, but after being shot at by both sides reported that the Arabs would not agree. This Qatamon situation is important, and I later saw the High Commissioner with the G.O.C. and arranged to see representatives of both the Arab Higher Committee and the Jewish Agency tomorrow.³⁸⁶

³⁸³Substantively the comparison between Nebi Daniel (diary entry for March 27) and Jaffa is correct. In one case the Jews asked for the Administration's assistance, in the other the Arabs did so. In Haifa the British were as much in need of help as the Jews.

³⁸⁴See entry for April 22.

³⁸⁵Brigadier Jones, commander of the 2nd Infantry Brigade, which remained in Jerusalem until the evacuation.

³⁸⁶On the meetings, see the diary entry for May 2.

All sorts of rumors of decisions at the Arab Conference at Amman to send regular forces at once into Palestine. Most of them untrue.³⁸⁷

This evening three of Fawzi's new guns (105 mm. and 75's) began shelling the Jewish outskirts of Jerusalem between 5:00 and 6:30 and put in about 60 rounds from Nebi Samwil.³⁸⁸

The Custodian of Enemy Property, Flannagan, was seen last week, before he left, with a cheque for £1½ million and complaining that he himself only had 30 piasters.³⁸⁹

Even the cleaners have left now and it is extraordinary what important people messengers and cleaners are – when you haven't got them.

The I.G.³⁹⁰ joined Mess today; his cook who was shot has died.

This evening Wasson, the American Consul-General, came round and discussed what the truce commission was doing. I asked him what was intended by the rather extraordinary letter we had just had from the Commission, drawing the "attention of the Mandatory power to the security problem in connection with the Commission's work in Palestine" – just that.

This morning we had a joint letter from the three Patriarchates acting together – an unprecedented event – asking for something to be done to get peace in Jerusalem and to establish some kind of stable Government after May 15th.³⁹¹ To this latter end the U.N. have now left things so late that it must now be impossible. There are only 12 days left – actually only 11, taking account of Sundays on which the U.N. cannot apparently work.

³⁸⁷At a meeting in Amman toward the end of April, the Arab League decided to invade Palestine upon the conclusion of the Mandate. Gelber, *Independence Versus Nakba*, p. 469.

³⁸⁸According to Haganah sources, 120 shells were fired by Army of Liberation field guns from Nebi Samwil that day; seven civilians and two soldiers were killed, and about 20 people were wounded. Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, p. 451. This was the first artillery shelling of West Jerusalem.

³⁸⁹The property was mainly that of the Templers, the German sect, which the British confiscated.

³⁹⁰Inspector General Gray.

³⁹¹The Greek Orthodox Patriarch, Timotheos I, held his post from 1931–1955; Msgr. Vincent Gelat was the acting Latin Patriarch from September 1947 until June 1948; the Armenian Patriarch, Gurech (Kyrilios) Israelian, served from 1944 to 1949 in this capacity. The latter was close to the Administration and to Gurney in particular.

2nd May

Sunday. At 10:00 I saw Ahmed Hilmi Pasha³⁹² and Nusseibi [Nusseibeh] (the Secretary of the Jerusalem Arab National Committee) and demanded a cease-fire in Qatamon from 4 o'clock today for 48 hours. They demurred, but I told them it just had to happen. Later I saw Kaplan of the Jewish Agency for 1½ hours and this afternoon he rang back to say that the Jews would agree to a cease-fire in order to enable truce talks to continue.³⁹³

The continued blocking of the Jerusalem-Latrun road is going very soon to reveal its great importance in the matter of a Jerusalem truce: free access over this road is now about the only condition that the Jews are making for peace in Jerusalem.³⁹⁴

Fuller came up from Jaffa and confirmed that of the original Arab population of 50,000 there were now only some 15,000 left in the town and more were still going. The Mayor and remaining councillors had announced their intention of leaving before the 15th May. The evacuation is largely to Gaza, and the cost of the hire of a lorry for the 40-mile trip is £150. Of the 300 municipal police we had worked hard to establish, only 22 remain. The I.Z.L. mortar attack was indiscriminately aimed at civilian targets and was designed to create panic among the population. Nearly all shops are closed and the streets deserted. The town is in fact dead. Fuller told me that his office staff now consisted of one messenger boy only, and that he and his small mess had been cooking their own meals. He is now going into the Argylls' mess.³⁹⁵

We managed to get some more furniture out of the house today.

At 3:30 the Brigade Commander rang up and said that he had no reply from the Arabs about Qatamon and that he was out of touch with them. He was, however, ready for eventualities. Later, there was a good deal of difference of opinion over the actual line and the

³⁹²Member of the Arab Higher Committee.

³⁹³The battle for Qatamon was decided on the night of April 30–May 1. By midday the Haganah had control of the neighborhood and the Arabs' reply was of no practical value. Gurney-Kaplan meeting, *Diplomatic Documents*, pp. 718–719.

³⁹⁴The Sha'ar Haggai road had been blocked by forces of Abd al Kader al Husseini and afterward by the Army of Liberation since the Harel Convoy battle on April 20.

³⁹⁵William V. Fuller (1907-?) was the Governor of the Lydda (Lod) District, and his offices were in Jaffa; on the mood in Arab Jaffa, Jacob Peleg, "The Battle for Jaffa", A. Kadish (ed.), *Israel's War Of Independence 1948–1949*, Tel Aviv 2004 (Hebrew). The Argylls Regiment was part of the 3rd Infantry Brigade, which was stationed in Tel Aviv and Jaffa.

cease-fire was well and truly broken about 6:00, but only for a short time, as some new H.L.I. posts had been provided.³⁹⁶

At 5:30 I went to see the High Commissioner with the G.O.C., who had just come back from Fayid,³⁹⁷ and we discussed some important new Red Cross proposals.³⁹⁸ Got back at 8:00, and realized that this Sunday had included about 10 hours' work.

Various scare telegrams about Arab intervention, but there are now only 12 days left.³⁹⁹ Fawzi dropped another 20 shells into the Jewish quarters this evening.⁴⁰⁰

Twentieth Perspective

Do the British really intend to leave?

During the three weeks or so from the "Haifa turning point" until the termination of the Mandate the Administration was preoccupied with two problems which outwardly seemed to converge into one: the confrontation with London heated up substantially, and the evacuation front was becoming increasingly dangerous for the last remaining members of the Civil Administration (among them the High Commissioner and the Chief Secretary themselves) and the few officers and soldiers who had not yet left.

On May 3 Gurney wrote, "A troop or so of tanks were due to arrive in Jerusalem this evening which together with other reinforcements greatly strengthens the position. But it looks odd to have to reinforce within 11 days of final withdrawal, and we now have people coming in at one door and others going out at the other." If the Chief Secretary felt uncomfortable, so much the more did Jews and Arabs, for whom the military reinforcements streaming into the country – about a week

³⁹⁶Referring to Brigadier Jones, whose 2nd Infantry Brigade included the Highlanders Regiment (H.L.I.); see also diary entry for May 1.

³⁹⁷MacMillan had been at Middle East Headquarters, in Fayid, Egypt, to plan the final stage of the evacuation. Contrary to the original plan, it was clear that without external reinforcements (a "rear guard") the civilian and military evacuation would not proceed safely. Bendman, *When Will Britain Withdraw*, pp. 99–103.

³⁹⁸As the diary shows repeatedly, the Administration viewed the Red Cross as an important candidate to assume responsibility for Jerusalem.

³⁹⁹See diary entry for May 1.

⁴⁰⁰According to the Haganah, 30 shells were fired at the western city that day, killing one soldier and three civilians. Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, p. 452.

before Gurney wrote this – constituted definitive proof that the British were not really intending to leave. This line of thought seemed to be validated when, on April 28, British forces showed a level of determination which was hard to understand in expelling the ITZL force which had attacked the Manshiya neighborhood. Why did the British involve themselves in a battle for Jaffa on the eve of the Mandate's expiration? The explanation lies in the two fronts which were noted above.

The dispute between London (mainly the Foreign Office and the Chiefs of Staff) and the Administration in Jerusalem did not begin with the "Haifa turning point" at the end of April. Even before that development the two sides disagreed about almost every conceivable issue, from evaluating the balance of forces in Palestine to the best way to handle the warring parties, and from the attitude toward the United Nations to the date for ending the Mandate and evacuating Jerusalem. After Haifa, though, the gloves came off. The collapse in Palestine had powerful reverberations. Both the Foreign Office and the Chiefs of Staff demanded that the High Commissioner take immediate forceful action to restore Britain's status in the Arab world. London did not like what happened in Haifa, to put it mildly. Foreign Secretary Bevin and his aides viewed the events there as a gross mistake by the Administration and more especially the Army – a mistake Britain would pay for with its essential interests in the Arab world. They rejected outright the request made by Cunningham and MacMillan after the "Haifa turning point" to move up the date for the termination of the Mandate and opposed MacMillan's desire to protect his remaining forces and what remained of his status by helping the United Nations take control in Palestine. London took a panoramic view of the Middle East situation, which by its nature was bound to focus primarily on the Arab world. The "Haifa turning point" adversely affected the broad British interest, and advancing the end of the Mandate, which would be tantamount to a flight from Palestine and cooperation with the United Nations, would only make things worse.⁴⁰¹

The attempt to undo the political damage wrought by the events at Haifa was as desperate as Britain's situation *vis-à-vis* its empire throughout the world and in Palestine in particular. The Administration had recourse to aggressive behavior both as a last effort to preserve something of its disintegrating image in the eyes of the warring sides and to

⁴⁰¹Based on summations of the meetings of the Security Committee, MECA, CP, MSC, B4.

act on the instructions of the Foreign Office and the Colonial Office to take action that would at least partially restore Britain's standing in the Arab world. From this point of view, the events of April 25 – an ITZL attack on Manshiya, an Arab neighborhood in north Jaffa, and a Haganah/Palmah operation in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in Jerusalem – were heaven-sent. The two attacks might almost have been “coordinated” with British interests.

On the night of April 24/25 the Palmah's Harel Brigade, under the command of Yitzhak Rabin, captured Sheikh Jarrah, which was located on the British evacuation route from Jerusalem northward and, no less important, on the access road to the airfield at Qalandiyah (Atarot), from which the Administration's leaders planned to flee the country in an emergency. Ben Gurion's conversation with the High Commissioner that day in Jerusalem reflected the atmosphere that prevailed. Cunningham almost begged (“The British are still in the country and it must be realized that we still count”), while the Chairman of the National Administration made demands and refused to evacuate the Jewish forces from Sheikh Jarrah. The dynamics of the situation had radically changed since the “Haifa turning point”. The British, unable to allow themselves to let the Haganah get the upper hand, were too weak to the point where they could only resort to firepower: sheer presence and warnings alone were no longer enough. However, because the attack in Sheikh Jarrah, carried out as part of “Operation Yevussi”, was backed up by the political connection between the Yishuv leadership and the Administration, it was quickly ended, to the relief of both sides.⁴⁰²

At the same time, it is not clear whether Ben Gurion grasped the weakness of his interlocutor or what underlay the British use of firepower in Sheikh Jarrah. He did not know how frightened the British were at having to engage the Haganah in battle. What the Haganah did not know at the time was that if the Harel Brigade, some of whose men were hit by British fire, had not been ordered to pull back so expeditiously, the British would have had to withdraw from the neighborhood. Given their weakness, they could not allow themselves (until the arrival of the reinforcements a week or so later) either to keep silent or to continue the battle. Thus, immediately after the Sheikh Jarrah battle, General MacMillan sought a meeting with Eliezer Kaplan, the most senior Jewish Agency official then in Jerusalem. MacMillan's comments showed that he realized that he was dependent on the Haganah.

⁴⁰²The sources of the affair are elaborated in the diary entries for April 25 and 26.

He said that “he wants to meet immediately with the heads of the Haganah HQ in order to explain his situation”. The British lost no time in promising the Arab neighborhood to the Haganah at the conclusion of the evacuation, and they were as good as their word.⁴⁰³

Matters were simpler in Jaffa. The intensity of the British response to the attack by the militarily weak ITZL was totally disproportionate to its response to the Haganah’s large-scale and significant operations in April. Indeed, the fact that Haganah controlled the Tel Aviv region imbued the British with greater confidence – as in Haifa – on the eve of the evacuation. Although the Colonial Office tried to tone down the fury in the Foreign Office and the military at the Administration, its directives to the High Commissioner were unequivocal. On April 26 Cunningham received the following cable from the Colonial Office:

It might have valuable effect on Arab opinion inflamed by events in Haifa and calling more stridently for immediate intervention by regular Arab forces of [if] suitable publicity could be given in the Middle East to action by our forces against Jewish offensive operations e.g. recent incidents in Jaffa and Sheikh Jarrah of Jerusalem. Please guide local publicity accordingly when occasion arises.⁴⁰⁴

The opportunity was found immediately. The British operation in Jaffa was a purely showcase affair, for the greater glory of the ITZL and His Majesty’s Government. The Administration knew very well who the assailants were and what their strength was. Cunningham explained that Irgon had attacked in Jaffa, using only light weapons and mortars. What London wanted, though, was an operation that would not only be felt but, more important, would also be seen. This time the Administration did not disappoint. The Jerusalem authorities understood that even a symbolic success by the ITZL, which might then receive Haganah backing, would influence the Arab states even more than Haifa. Three days after the start of the ITZL operation in Manshiya, the British Army showed its ability with the aid of reinforcements (the “rear guard”

⁴⁰³Ben Gurion, War Diary, April 25, 1948; Kaplan-MacMillan conversation, April 26, 1948, ZCA, S25/5635; report by Chaim Herzog, who was at the meeting, to Ben Gurion, April 27, 1958, *Diplomatic Documents*, pp. 688–689; the Sheikh Jarrah battle from a British perspective, Crocker-MacMillan memorandum, April 26, 1948, in letter from High Commissioner to Colonial Secretary, April 27, MECA, CP, 3/4.

⁴⁰⁴Colonial Office to High Commissioner, April 26 1948, MECA, CP, 3/4.

which had just arrived in the country). The High Commissioner informed the Colonial Office on April 28 that the: "Jews have launched heavy attacks on Jaffa today. Any success here will have a much greater effect on the Arab states than Haifa. I have asked the Army and Air [Forces] to take full action against the Jews and an attack was gone this afternoon result as yet unknown..."⁴⁰⁵

The British overreaction was also manifested in the appearance of two destroyers and a patrol boat off the coast of Tel Aviv and of RAF planes over the city, some of which released genuine bombs. It was the security provided by the Haganah's control of the Tel Aviv region that made it possible for the British to act freely against the ITZL, as demanded by London. The ITZL was forced out of Manshiya. The Haganah pressed its siege of Jaffa ("Operation Hametz"), which finally surrendered on the eve of the Mandate's termination. The British were incapable of blocking the Arab flight from Jaffa, just as they had been – even when they wanted to – in Safed, Tiberias, or Haifa.⁴⁰⁶

On April 29, the High Commissioner visited Haifa in order to strengthen the impression that nothing had changed and that the Administration was not biased in favor of the Jews. He surveyed the situation of his forces in the city and met with the Emergency Committee of the local Arabs, who had ceased to be a significant element there. Not by chance, Cunningham did not meet with representatives of the Jews, who were in control of the city.⁴⁰⁷

Bevin's summation of the Jaffa episode reflects his perception of the situation in Palestine and his expectations after the "Haifa turning point" and the show of strength in Jaffa: the army's determined and effective intervention in Jaffa must surely prove to the Arabs that Britain is capable of dealing with every violation of the peace in Palestine with all the might at its disposal.⁴⁰⁸

The British display in Haifa was rounded off by the reinforcements which streamed into the country from Egypt, Cyprus, Libya, and Malta

⁴⁰⁵High Commissioner to Colonial Office, *ibid.* April 28, 1948.

⁴⁰⁶*Ibid.* and April 30, 1948; Yona Bendman, "British Military Efforts to Prevent the Fall of Jaffa, April 1948", *Iyunim Bitkumat Israel*, Vol. 2 (1992), pp. 279–316 (Hebrew); The ITZL version is encapsulated in the title of, Chaim Lazar, *The Conquest of Yaffo*, Tel Aviv 1951 (Hebrew).

⁴⁰⁷Statement to the press on High Commissioner's visit to Haifa, April 29, 1948, MECA, CP, 4/5.

⁴⁰⁸Bevin to ambassador in Amman, with copies to Jerusalem and the embassies in the Arab capitals, *ibid.* April 30, 1948.

in an effort to prop up the collapsing Administration on the eve of the evacuation. London understood that the outgoing Administration would not last without a significant “rear guard”. And because London believed, in contrast to its representatives in Palestine, that the Mandate must not end before May 14, the decision was made to reinforce the British forces there immediately. This would back up the Government’s insistence that the High Commissioner and his staff remain in place until the planned termination of the Mandate and enable them to leave in a manner that would not further tarnish Britain’s image in the Arab world.

On April 26, General John Crocker, the commander of the British land forces in the Middle East, arrived in Palestine in order to coordinate the deployment of the reinforcements, which were intended primarily for Jerusalem and Haifa, and on the way saw action in Jaffa as well. Between April 29 and May 2, two commando units, an infantry battalion, and a battalion headquarters with two tank companies arrived. This influx of troops, which ran contrary to the evacuation thrust, generated total confusion among both the Jews and the Arabs, who even before this were unable to interpret correctly the Administration’s behavior.

Gurney was aware of this, as his diary shows, and on May 3 he added, “The Jews little know how much they owe to the British Army; perhaps they never will. I don’t suppose it matters.” This episode is best concluded with the words of the historian Gavriel Cohen, who described the political history of Palestine after the Second World War as “a clash between mistaken situation assessments” – including those of the British.⁴⁰⁹

3rd May

The Qatamon cease-fire held through the night and is still holding. Red Cross discussions this morning. Today has been the quietest day we have had in Jerusalem for months. I have heard only three shots fired and certainly there is a general atmosphere of relief. Stubbs told me that so many of his Palestinian staff came to the office that it was

⁴⁰⁹On the reinforcements that arrived at the end of April and the beginning of May, Report of the Chiefs of Staff Committee on the Progress of the Evacuation, April 7 – May 12, May 12, 1948, TNA DEFES/10; Report of the Cabinet’s Palestine Committee to the Defence Committee, May 25, 1948, TNA CAB131/6; G. Cohen, “British Policy” p. 132.

difficult to find work for them all, apart from sweeping out the rooms. Most of our own staff have managed to come this morning.⁴¹⁰

A troop or so of tanks were due to arrive in Jerusalem this evening which together with other reinforcements greatly strengthens the position. But it looks odd to have to reinforce within 11 days of final withdrawal, and we now have people coming in at one door and others going out at the other. The Jewish press today expresses "sympathy for the Army" in sarcastic tones. The Jews know little how much they owe to the British Army; perhaps they never will. I don't suppose it matters.

The I.G. told me that the Camelry Police from Beersheba had sent a deputation in to present him with a carpet. They had undertaken to carry on until the 15th May and thereafter to serve any 'good government'. These are good people.⁴¹¹

Red Cross and other flags are going up on all sorts of buildings throughout Jerusalem, which is beginning to look like a Wembley Exhibition.

We are still too close to this situation to get a clear view, but there seem to be better chances today of avoiding war in Jerusalem than there have been hitherto. There is, however, still no indication of who will take over all our physical assets on the 15th May, including all our valuable machinery. Two days ago looters smashed up most of the expensive equipment there.⁴¹²

Further meetings until late this evening with Mr. Niewenheys, the Belgian Chairman of the Truce Commission, and attempts to coordinate what the Red Cross and the Commission are doing.⁴¹³

4th May

New proposals come in with such rapidity that it is almost impossible to keep pace with them, particularly as our wireless communications

⁴¹⁰The quiet came in the wake of the Haganah conquests in the south of the city on May 1 and the mutual deployment for the continuation of hostilities. The shelling by the Army of Liberation thinned out that day. Richard Stubbs was the Administration's official spokesman and director of its Press Information Office.

⁴¹¹The "Camelry Police" consisted of Bedouin recruits.

⁴¹²The source of Gurney's optimism lay in the official start of the cease-fire in the Old City on May 2 and in what seemed to be progress in the truce talks being conducted by the Administration.

⁴¹³The coordination the British sought between the Red Cross and the consular Truce Commission was unsuccessful; in any event both of these bodies continued to be significant upon the British departure from Jerusalem.

with the outside world are now breaking down. Tomorrow we shall apparently be limited to 5,000 groups a day, whereas we ourselves require 15,000, apart from the horde of pressmen who spend their days and nights sending off every story they can think of.

We now have the (Jerusalem) Trusteeship Council⁴¹⁴ discussing a truce for Jerusalem with Jews and Arabs at Lake Success; the Security Council discussing a cease-fire for Palestine; the Political Committee⁴¹⁵ continuing to talk; the Truce Commission here charged with implementing a truce for Palestine which doesn't exist and which they do not regard it as part of their job to secure; the Arab League now wanting to discuss with the Truce Commission a truce for Jerusalem, which we are doing our best to negotiate with Arabs and Jews; the International Red Cross Delegation in Jerusalem discussing with everybody concerned plans for placing Jerusalem under the Red Cross flag;⁴¹⁶ and the U.K. Delegation in New York dealing with all sorts of "immediate" propositions (which take over 24 hours to reach us through London).⁴¹⁷

There was to have been a meeting this morning between the Truce Commission and Arab League representatives at Jericho, but this has not yet happened because communications with Amman have broken down. This is serious.⁴¹⁸

Meanwhile the Qatamon cease-fire was due to expire at 4 o'clock this afternoon, and the only course open was simply to order that it should continue. In fact, neither side has observed it and the Jews have advanced their line as Arab resistance collapsed. The Arabs have only themselves to thank for this dismal result of their use of this area as snipers' posts for months past. But the Jews have looted the Iraqi Consulate and still have possession of the consular records, which may be a serious matter for the 120,000 Jews in Baghdad, and are occupying the

⁴¹⁴Established according to U.N. General Assembly Resolution 181, Article 3, in order to draft the constitution of internationalized Jerusalem and dedicates it. See the diary entry for April 21st.

⁴¹⁵This committee had the task of implementing the partition resolution.

⁴¹⁶On the efforts of the International Red Cross and its ambitious plan, in conjunction with the Administration, Junod, *The Red Cross*, chapter 3.

⁴¹⁷Amid all this "abundance" of activity, only the mediation efforts of the High Commissioner himself remained effective; see diary entry for May 7.

⁴¹⁸Gurney had been very active in making the preparations for this meeting, which eventually took place on the following day, May 5, but ended inconclusively.

Greek Orthodox Church and Convent of St. Simeon, which was also used by the Arab forces previously.⁴¹⁹

The cease-fire in the Old City is now supposed to be in force. Yesterday five masked Jews stole some rifles, revolvers and ammunition from the Police Station, and I told the Agency this morning that food convoys for the Jews in the Old City would be resumed only when these arms or their equivalent were given up. It is almost as though the dissidents wanted the convoys to stop so as to force a situation in which the hotheads, who have been considering breaching the wall of the Old City, could get an excuse for action. This would blow any truce for Jerusalem sky-high at the moment.⁴²⁰

Twenty-first Perspective

The truce: Final opportunity for the Administration to influence events

Without an orderly decision-making process, but in the face of the serious constraints it faced, the Administration chose to conclude its rule with a show of verbal and military aggressiveness. To this posture, and in the same context, was added intensive intervention in an attempt to achieve a truce, or at least a cease-fire. On May 5, Gurney wrote in his diary, "In the light of the abortive outcome of the Truce Commission's [the U.N. Consular Commission] meeting I went to see the High Commissioner, and we decided on certain action at once. The favorable moment is passing. Everybody wants a truce for Jerusalem and it is up to the leaders to get it." What underlay the Adminis-

⁴¹⁹The Iraqi consulate was captured on May 2; until then the Arab Legion had used it as a base to assist the Arabs. In addition to the documents which were removed, looting took place: Levy, *Jerusalem in the War of Independence*, p. 219. After the British left, the Israeli forces completed the capture of the neighborhoods of Talbia, Baka, the German Colony, the Greek Colony, the western section of Abu Tor, and the railway station (Operation Kilshon South, May 15–18). The battle for St. Simeon decided the fate of the city's southwest area. It is difficult to estimate the damage that the event caused Iraq's Jews; the great exodus from Iraq began in 1949.

⁴²⁰The cease-fire in the Old City came at the behest of the U.N. Trusteeship Council for Jerusalem on May 2. Hostilities ceased on May 8 following British mediation and were resumed on May 13, when the Army left the Old City. Gurney's threat was not implemented.

tration's great efforts to obtain a truce on the very eve of the British departure from Palestine?

The underlying causes are not in fact straightforward. Seemingly, it was important both for the Administration in Jerusalem and the Government in London to be able to show successes as the Mandate concluded – this to bolster the status of both Britain and the entire West in the Middle East after May 14. In addition, calm in Palestine overall and in Jerusalem especially would ensure the peaceful conclusion of the evacuation and guarantee the safety of those who remained in Jerusalem – among them the High Commissioner and the Chief Secretary – and would be highly vulnerable in the course of their departure on evacuation day itself.

A truce was not a practical possibility at the end of April 1948; nevertheless, Cunningham and Gurney continued to pursue the idea relentlessly. It was clear that the cessation of hostilities – supposedly achievable by bringing military reinforcements into the country – would serve the Administration's purposes. However, these reinforcements were earmarked to secure the evacuation and were under orders not to intervene in the fighting other than in extreme circumstances. A showcase demonstration of strength such as the Jaffa episode was definitely a one-time event. The British Government's international and domestic problems, compounded by the shaky situation of the Palestine Administration in its final weeks, ruled out broad military intervention. The High Commissioner and his staff therefore intensified their efforts to achieve a truce in two tracks: directly with the warring parties and through the U.N. representatives.⁴²¹

The first to act was Richard Graves, the Administration-appointed chairman of Jerusalem's Municipal Commission. On March 4, Graves submitted a draft agreement to the two sides – a somewhat orotund proposal which spoke about a "Truce of God". Its primary importance lies in setting forth the guidelines for the Administration's subsequent truce policy. Graves's proposal called for a complete separation between Jewish and Arab areas, the mutual cessation of all combat actions, a passage arrangement under British auspices, and free movement for medical vehicles. At this stage both sides rejected the proposal outright. On March 8 the High Commissioner invited – separately – Ben Gurion and Hussein al-Khalidi, the secretary of the Arab Higher Committee, for a discussion of

⁴²¹Directive for the reinforcements not to intervene in the hostilities other than as a secondary mission: Colonial Office to High Commissioner, April 30, 1948, TNA FO371/68370.

various subjects, including the truce issue. Once again nothing came of it.

The pronounced weakness of the Administration overall and of the High Commissioner, who was "captive" in Jerusalem, was again manifested. In the wake of the Security Council's call, on April 1, for a cease-fire in Palestine, the Administration decided to act. Two days later the High Commissioner stated in a radio broadcast that he was ready to mediate between the sides in truce negotiations. Neither side responded.

In this state of affairs, and in the absence of the senior members of the Jewish Agency Executive from Jerusalem to attend a meeting of the Zionist Executive in Tel Aviv, the High Commissioner called in Leo Cohen, the political secretary of the Jewish Agency's Political Department. This was an unprecedented invitation, as will become clear below. The High Commissioner also invited Al-Khalidi. In these talks Cunningham almost begged to be permitted to mediate. He asked rather than demanded, and not in his Government's name but in his name, as one who was making a personal effort to end the bloodshed. The battle for Kibbutz Mishmar Ha'emek, on which the Arabs were pinning hopes and which was then at its height, and the onset of the Haganah's "Operation Nahshon", vitiated the High Commissioner's efforts. Moreover, the main relevance of the Administration, if any, in this regard lay in trying to broker a cease-fire in Jerusalem, not elsewhere. On April 25, after the Palmah's removal from Sheikh Jarrah in Jerusalem and the British assistance to the Haganah in Haifa, the High Commissioner felt a greater response to his lobbying. The Administration succeeded in bringing about a cease-fire in Jerusalem's Qatamon neighborhood on May 2.

In the end, the High Commissioner became an envoy of the Security Council, which on May 3 asked him to conduct on its behalf the talks on the details of the truce in the Old City. On May 6 Cunningham met with representatives of the sides and discussed with them this subject only. The discussions demonstrated to Cunningham and Gurney that without a truce throughout Jerusalem a truce in the Old City alone would be meaningless, owing mainly to the siege of the Jewish Quarter there. The two senior British officials therefore "exceeded" their Security Council mandate and on May 7 traveled to Jericho to negotiate the issue with the General Secretary of the Arab League, Azzam Pasha. The following day, the Administration declared a cease-fire in Jerusalem based solely on the Arabs' agreement. The Yishuv leaders were leery of the truce: they continued to be concerned about the

Jewish Quarter and in general were disinclined to trust the outgoing Administration. (The Jewish Agency left itself options. On May 13, when the British left the Old City, the Haganah launched an attack inside the walls, and the following day, when the British withdrew from Jerusalem, the Haganah mounted a citywide offensive in "Operation Kilshon").

On May 9, after the declaration of the cease-fire in Jerusalem (May 8), Cunningham asked to meet with the leaders of the Jewish Agency. The Agency suggested that he meet with Walter Eytan and Leo Cohen, senior members of the Political Department. Affronted, the High Commissioner declined, saying he did not meet with officials. He summed up the episode: "The Jews Prevaricated, and did not comply with the invitation to come to see me (the first time they had done this in the whole of any time in Palestine). I left without receiving a replay from them."⁴²² Gurney refers to this episode in his diary entry for May 11, attributing it to the Jewish Agency's affront at not having been privy to the secret meeting with Azzam Pasha on the 7th, in which the cease-fire breakthrough occurred.

On the eve of his departure from Jerusalem the High Commissioner complained that the Jewish Agency had ceased to treat him with due respect and at best was sending him middle-level bureaucrats. Indeed, this was the general experience of the British officials who remained in the country in the service of an Administration which was rapidly losing its authority. Its leaders felt that everyone involved – the Jews, the Arabs, the Great Powers, the United Nations, even their own Government – was acting ungratefully. The desire to demonstrate relevance *vis-à-vis* the United Nations, the Arabs, and other involved parties was a crucial motivating force in the mediation activity of Cunningham and Gurney until literally the last minute. Concern for their image probably also played a part. It was not by chance that they took the great risk – both physically and politically – of going to Jericho just a week before their departure to meet with the General Secretary of the Arab League, as Gurney describes in his diary entry for May 7.

The diary reflects the Administration's constantly declining ability to calm the situation, and its influence in this regard dwindled with each passing day. Initially setting its sights on an armistice, the Administration downgraded to a truce and finally sought only a cease-fire. And whereas

⁴²²General Sir Alan Cunningham, "Palestine – The Last Days of the Mandate", *International Affairs*, Vol. 24 (October 1948), p. 490.

at first the goal was the whole country, it was then reduced to Jerusalem alone (the exception was Haifa, where, as was seen, the problem was solved by a British decision in favor of one side). In the end the Administration had to be satisfied with a highly limited achievement, though with resounding propaganda power: a cease-fire which in theory covered the whole of Jerusalem though in practice only the Old City.⁴²³

The diary also attests to another episode in connection with the attempts to arrange a truce – in this case as part of the Administration's desperate effort, until the very last minute, to find an official successor. To hand power to the Jews openly was impossible, the Palestinian Arab leadership was effectively an enemy, and the United Nations was impotent. By process of elimination, the remaining option was the International Red Cross (IRC), at least in Jerusalem. The Administration harbored the illusion that in the light of the general chaos and haplessness, the IRC would be able to take the reins temporarily. The IRC gave the idea serious consideration, even though this would mark a departure from its historic mission. Jerusalem and London were in full agreement on this subject, and in this case Gurney's approach was fully consistent with Government policy. He had high regard for the IRC and especially for the work of its Palestine representative, Jacques de Reynier. The two were also on close personal terms, a fact of some importance. Some members of the U.N. mission, as well as Jewish Agency officials, viewed de Reynier as Gurney's tool. That was certainly true, in the same way that those officials wanted the IRC or the United Nations, in the case of the Jews and the Arabs, to be a tool in their hands.

On April 30, at a meeting of the Trusteeship Council of Jerusalem at the United Nations, the British representative, John Fletcher-Cooke, proposed that an IRC official be made chairman of an appointed Municipal Commission in Jerusalem. However, he retracted the proposal that same day, acknowledging that this was impossible under the IRC regulations. He therefore proposed to the Trusteeship Council, which referred the recommendation to the General Assembly, that a "Special

⁴²³The proposal by Graves, March 4, 1948, *Diplomatic Documents*, pp. 422–423; on the High Commissioner's efforts to bring about a truce in March – April, Golani, *The Yishuv Leadership and the Jerusalem Question*, pp. 160–164; Cunningham-Ben Gurion meeting, MECA, CP, 25.4.1948, 5/1; on the Jericho meeting of May 7, diary entry for that date; for summation of cease-fire and truce talks from the British side, MECA, CP 4/5; on the High Commissioner's relations with the Jewish Agency on the eve of his departure, *Diplomatic Documents*, p. 770; Cunningham, *Ibid.*

Municipal Commissioner" be appointed in Jerusalem. The General Assembly adopted the recommendation on May 6. The British failed to come up with a candidate for the post and on May 14 the U.N. appointed Harold Evans, a Philadelphia attorney, as the Commissioner. This was too little, and above all too late. The Administration and the United Nations had no recourse but to draw on the assistance of the IRC to bring about a truce, at least in Jerusalem.

The main points of the IRC plan, which was presented to the sides and to the Mandate authorities on May 8, were: mutual agreement that all of Jerusalem would be neutral territory; the positions held by the sides would be frozen as they were on the day of the plan's adoption; the city would be administered by the local Jewish and Arab municipal authorities; and the IRC would guarantee freedom of movement on the main road west to Jaffa. IRC headquarters in Geneva prohibited de Reynier to play any active role in ruling the city, other than to make recommendations and act as an observer. Even this was a departure by the organization from its historic mission, and here too it failed. The IRC's place in British activity on the eve of the Mandate's termination was a concrete reflection of the Administration's helplessness as the final evacuation loomed and of its desire not to leave behind chaos. Even more than the United Nations, the IRC viewed the events in Palestine as a "civil war", just as the British did, and this shared viewpoint abetted the cooperation between them. History needs to study failures, too, not only successes.

Even as the British were trying to bring about a cease-fire, the United Nations, which had failed until then, now acted. On April 23 the Security Council established the consular Truce Commission for Palestine. This was a noteworthy development, as the commission occupied the Administration in no small degree. As in the case of the advance party of the U.N. implementation commission, which had been in Jerusalem since March 1948, the Administration was not quite sure what to make of this new body. The Chief Secretary handled most of the contacts with the Truce Commission, and his diary reflects this.

The Commission was headed by the Belgian Consul-General, Jean Nieuwenhuys, and its members were the U.S. and French consuls, Thomas Wasson and René Neuville, respectively. In short order the commission found itself in the same position as the Administration, whose main relevance on the truce question was confined to Jerusalem, even though its members were at pains to influence events throughout the country. Despite the frosty relations at the time between the United Nations and Britain over the Palestine question, the Administration and

the Truce Commission supported each other in their mutual weakness. On May 12, on the eve of their departure, the leaders of the Administration asked the commission to manage the continuing efforts to achieve a truce.

Gurney, though he sometimes made the commission the brunt of his general anger at the United Nations, certainly cooperated with it. Thus, he wielded his full authority to organize the meeting between the commission and the General Secretary of the Arab League (his diary entry for May 4 attests to the depth of his involvement), which was held in Jericho on May 5. What underlay Gurney's effort? Did he want the commission to succeed – or perhaps to fail and thus enhance the High Commissioner's prospects for success two days later? Such a stratagem cannot be ruled out in the light of his attitude and that of London toward the U.N.'s activity in Palestine in this period. The Jewish Agency accused him of engaging in a ploy to make it look bad, on the assumption that the United Nations would reach an agreement and the Yishuv would reject it. Or, perhaps, Gurney sincerely wished to bring about a truce, or even only a cease-fire, before leaving, no matter who got credit for the breakthrough. After all, on the day after the meeting held by Gurney and the High Commissioner in Jericho (May 7), the United Nations, to his chagrin, was the one body that made it possible for the Administration to be effective in discussing a possible cease-fire or truce in Jerusalem.⁴²⁴

5th May

The Truce Commission met the Arab League representatives at Jericho this morning, but nothing was achieved. I went to talk to the Commission at 4:00 this afternoon on their return. They well know our views and agree with them. There are all the ingredients for a truce for Jerusalem and one must hope that the cooks are competent and not too many.

⁴²⁴Junod, *The Imperial Red Cross*, chapter 3, and pp. 163–168. On Gurney's lobbying for the consuls to see the Arab League Secretary and on de Reynier as an instrument in his hands, on the conversation of the Belgian Consul with H. Berman from the Jewish Agency's Political Department, May 3, 1948, and on C. Herzog's meeting with Colonel Alfred Roscher Lund, the Secretary of the Truce Commission, May 11, 1948: *Diplomatic Documents*, pp. 730–732, 778–779.

Really the Arabs are rabbits. Ninety per cent of the population of Jaffa have just run away, and only some 5,000 now remain.

Yesterday the municipal engineer locked the door of the water supply pumping station, and walked off. The Army have taken it on. The Mayor has gone, without even saying goodbye, and the remnants of the Liberation Army are looting and robbing. This is what the Palestinian Arabs get from the assistance provided by the Arab States. Perhaps our warnings to the States not to indulge in much premature military action were not always strong enough. True it is that this ill-organized and stupid intervention, in defiance of all our protests, has cost the Palestinian Arabs dearly and one could almost say that it is all over bar the shouting and the re-opening of the Jewish road to Jerusalem. A truce for Jerusalem must still include, as one of the Jewish terms, the opening of this road, at least to convoys under the Red Cross flag.⁴²⁵

Arabs have been flocking out of Jerusalem and into the Old City these last few days. I walked down to the Club last night through streets deserted except for an occasional armed Arab. That was after attending Benediction at the Church of Marie Reparatrice in Allenby Square. When I went there before, the thunder and throng of traffic outside made the Church seem a haven of deep peace: yesterday the absolute stillness outside, broken only by an occasional sniper, made the service almost noisy.⁴²⁶

In the light of the abortive outcome of the Truce Commission's meeting I went to see the High Commissioner, and we decided on certain action at once. The favorable moment is passing. Everybody wants a truce for Jerusalem and it is up to the leaders to get it.

⁴²⁵The Haganah tightened the siege of Jaffa at this time. The mayor, Yusuf Heikal, who had left, returned on April 28 but was unable to curb the flight. The British were equally unsuccessful; when they left there were about 4,000 Arabs still in the city. On the events in Jaffa on the eve of its surrender, on May 13, Peleg, "The Battle for Jaffa". The Administration's desire to have the road opened under the auspices of the Red Cross was thwarted, first by the Army of Liberation and afterward by the Arab Legion. The road was not opened until the beginning of June, after Sha'ar Haggai was taken (May 15) and the bypass Burma Road was completed (June 2). This was Ben Gurion's condition for a truce, at least until the eve of the state's proclamation.

⁴²⁶The Arabs left in the wake of the collapse of the city's southwest; on the church, see the diary entry for April 3.

Today an officer and six O.R.'s of the R.E.M.E., travelling near Nathanya, were ambushed by Jews and all shot through the head and killed.⁴²⁷

After dinner tonight, a battle started round the Mount of Olives between Jews in the Hebrew University and Arab Legion in the Kaiserin Auguste (Augusta Victoria). The Jews are anxious to get hold of the latter and so cut the road from Jericho to Arab Jerusalem. Apart from this and more or less continuous firing round (Security) Zone A, the Mamillah cemetery and a few other places, the last three days have been the quietest we have had for some time.⁴²⁸

6th May

[No diary]

7th May

There was no time to make any entry yesterday, as the whole day was spent in a rush of telegrams and conferences. The appointment of a Chairman of the Jerusalem Municipal Commission seems to be the only practical proposal made by the Trusteeship Council to the (General) Assembly. This is our own suggestion, but I see it is now thought that we can find the man. Of course this is impossible, and what is wanted is somebody entirely new. The U.N. now has five days left in which to find him and get him to Jerusalem.⁴²⁹

The High Commissioner saw Arabs and Jews for an hour each yesterday in an endeavor to get a truce in the Old City. But of course a truce

⁴²⁷Gurney is referring to the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. According to *The History of the Haganah*, Vol. III, Part 2, p. 1546, "In the final two weeks before the state's establishment, LEHI again launched anti-British activity in the wake of the report about British reinforcements being sent to Palestine, a move which LEHI viewed as a breach of Britain's promise to leave the country. On Nissan 27 [May 6; Gurney dates it May 5], LEHI attacked a British military vehicle adjacent to the Tel Mond Police Station and killed the seven soldiers who were its occupants."

⁴²⁸The Harel Brigade's 5th Battalion tried unsuccessfully to capture Augusta Victoria on the night of May 3-4; the staging ground for the operation was the nearby Hebrew University campus on Mount Scopus.

⁴²⁹On May 14 the U.N. appointed Harold Evans, an American, as Special Municipal Commissioner of Jerusalem, but he never took office.

for the Old City cannot be separated from a truce for Jerusalem, as one of the main difficulties for the Jews is that of ingress and egress.⁴³⁰

All sorts of alarmist stories are now flying about Damascus and Amman, and we can scarcely keep up with the job of telegraphing all round the world that Safad is not threatened with another Deir Yassin Massacre, that Beersheba is not cut off, that all the Arab villages in the Huleh are not being attacked, and that it is not unsafe for Arabs to return to Haifa.⁴³¹

The Stern Group has now 'declared war' on the British Army. We don't take any notice of this, beyond remembering that the Jewish Agency, by virtue, of the recent Haganah-I.Z.L. agreement, are now held responsible for the actions of the I.Z.L. (and LEHI).

The Dutch Consul-General called yesterday to protest against the entry of some H.L.I. soldiers into his Consulate which he had evacuated a week ago. The door had been blown open by an explosion, and the troops had gone in and taken a few blankets (now returned) and kitchen things to add to their comfort in a not too comfortable post. Most reprehensible, and of course the subject of a full and frank apology; I did not add any expression of hope that nothing worse would befall when the British troops had gone.⁴³²

⁴³⁰Representatives of the Jewish Agency explained to the High Commissioner that all the gates of the Old City were in Arab hands. Consequently, getting supplies to the Jewish Quarter depended on a British guarantee (which was given before they left) and afterward on a citywide truce. Otherwise, there would be no point to a truce in the Old City, while hostilities continued outside it. This approach underlay the position taken by Ben Gurion and his aides. Ben Gurion to Shertok, April 29, 1948, *Diplomatic Documents*, p. 695; High Commissioner's meeting with representatives of the sides on May 6, MECA, CP, 4/5.

⁴³¹Gurney here leaned toward defending the Yishuv. The British left Safad on April 16; on May 10, the Palmah's 3rd Battalion seized control in the city. Earlier, on May 1, the Palmah captured Ein Zeitoun, adjacent to Safed; dozens of its captives were murdered there. Gelber, *Independence Versus Nakba*, p. 302; Mustafa Abbasi, "The Battle for Safad in the War of 1948: A Revised Study", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 36 (2004), pp. 21–47; The Haganah, in an unsuccessful effort to cut off Beersheba from Gaza City, blew up the road linking the cities on the night of May 1–2. Daily Report, May 4, 1948, NORTHSEC, TNA WO275/167; The report came from the northern sector HQ, as it was the last active one in Palestine; In Haifa there was no organized expulsion after the city's capture by the Haganah, and some of the Arab residents returned; this possibility was blocked when the Mandate expired and the State of Israel came into being.

⁴³²The staff of the Dutch Consulate had to leave because their building was situated on the southeastern fringes of British Security Zone B, at the centre of which was the Russian Compound, and too close to the seam line in the city. There was a military position there even before the Dutch left.

We have managed to get 350 tons of flour off to Gaza.⁴³³

This morning we had a security conference at 9:00,⁴³⁴ Executive Council at 10:00, the American Consul-General at 10:30, the Egyptian Consul General at 11:00,⁴³⁵ and after lunch I set off for Jericho with the High Commissioner for a meeting with Azzam Pasha⁴³⁶ which we have been trying to arrange for some days, to discuss the truce for Jerusalem. We reached Jericho at 3:00 and Azzam and his party arrived a few minutes later. Nine of us then sat down in a small and very stuffy room in the police station on very hard wooden chairs and talked across a small table with a dirty pink tablecloth and one ashtray. Nothing else. It contrasted sadly with the panoply and appurtenances of the United Nations, but the very simplicity of the room emphasized the air of reality which we all felt. After nearly three hours' frank and straight talking we had got a cease-fire for Jerusalem and knew how a truce for Jerusalem might be obtained. This was an invaluable and vital meeting at the psychological moment, taken on our own initiative, but after full consultation with the Truce Commission.

We drove back to Jerusalem in the dusk with hearts full of hope, and a few minutes after our return the battle of Yemin Moshe was started again by Jewish snipers. Four 6-pounders and a couple of Piats from the Army soon silenced it, but one bullet hit the wall just outside our window and others were unusually close. Saw the American Consul-General (Wasson) at 7:30, and told him what had taken place at Jericho.⁴³⁷

8th May

It being the Jewish Sabbath, no further talks could take place with the Jews today, but the High Commissioner saw the Truce Commission at

⁴³³The southern region was the first to be evacuated. By now, there was no longer a British presence in Gaza. Harassment of transportation was mutual. The Arabs did not have the ability to organize convoys. The Administration tried to help out by sending food to the steadily growing population in the Gaza Strip.

⁴³⁴This was an effective forum, which enabled the Administration to formulate local policy, oversee the evacuation, try to achieve truce, and assist distressed populations. See also above, March 19.

⁴³⁵Farraj Bey, who was close to the Advance Group of the Truce Commission and a supporter of its activity. Azc'arate, *Mission in Palestine*, p. 13.

⁴³⁶The General Secretary of the Arab League.

⁴³⁷The Administration and the Army, apprehensive because of their limited ability to defend themselves, were eager to impose cease-fire or truce agreement. The meeting with Wasson was part of the coordination activity between the Administration and the Truce Commission.

noon, when the cease-fire began. The Jews are annoyed that they did not know beforehand of the Jericho meeting, and that they were not consulted about it. But as they have always said that when the Arabs stopped shooting, they would do the same, there was no need to. They accuse us of having snubbed the Truce Commission by acting unilaterally, not knowing that the Commission themselves know all about it and fully approved it. It is as usual, their idea to drive a wedge between the Commission and ourselves, but they won't get away with it this time. Really they seem to be piqued by the suggestion that anybody can do anything useful except themselves.

The cease-fire started at noon, and there have been only two shots heard all day. It all sounds very strange and quiet, and what we ought to be doing is to provide some diversion like a rodeo for all the wild men fingering their guns and longing to fire them, if only as an alternative to cleaning them.

The C.O. of the Marine Commando just arrived in Sheikh Jarrah from Malta came to dinner.⁴³⁸ Looking around the eight members of our mess at dinner, I thought what a breadth of accumulated experience was concentrated in our rather unique team here: Gibson, Attorney-General, from Malaya and Trinidad; Stewart, Financial Secretary, Nigeria and the Bahamas; Gray, Inspector-General of Police, ex-Marine Commando; Fox-Strangways, Under-Secretary, Nigeria, Nyasaland and Western Pacific, with war service in Palestine and the South-West Frontier; Dorman, Under-Secretary, Tanganyika and Malta; Stubbs, Public Information Officer, previously advertising manager for Bob Martin's condition powder; Butterfield, Chief Transport Officer, Tanganyika and war service in the Middle East and elsewhere; and myself, Kenya, Jamaica, Gold Coast and East Africa. This party of eight includes Old Wykehamists: the geographical range of stories and conversation is certainly wide and we talk of anything but Palestine.⁴³⁹

If the Jerusalem cease-fire holds and means anything, it will be worth noting that today is the third anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe.

⁴³⁸Part of the rear guard that was brought in to safeguard the evacuation, this select force was assigned to secure the one road the British had from Jerusalem: northward via Sheikh Jarrah toward Ramallah and Nablus and from there to Latrun and Haifa.

⁴³⁹Wykeham, another name for Winchester College, was established in 1832 by the English statesman and educator William Wykeham to prepare boys for study at New College, which he established in the same period in Oxford. Gurney attended Wykeham. On the officials, see Biographical Notes.

Lunched at the American Consulate, and had some tennis in the afternoon.

9th May

Tried to get to church this morning, but the truce negotiations super-vened and we spent some hours on tidying up the draft text of the terms. Before lunch it rained, which is most odd for this time of the year. The cease-fire has held for 24 hours, and we had a really quiet night, the first for months.

This diary now has to be written in odd minutes and under pressure. A two hours' talk with the High Commissioner this morning and two-and-a-half hours' this afternoon, during which the Red Cross delegates and the Truce Commission came along and consulted. If the wires don't get crossed between Lake Success, London and Jerusalem, and between the Truce Commission, the Red Cross, ourselves, Arabs and Jews, it will surely be a miracle. Last night things looked brighter, but with today's refusal on the part of the Jews even to come and discuss a 'British-made' truce and the re-arrival of the Red Cross on the scene, we have gone back a bit.

Got back to the office at 6:30. There are a few more people to be seen in the streets and generally a happier feeling about. Jerusalem is very sensitive to changes of tension, though she surely ought to be used to them by this time.

Only 4 days to go – working days – and there is still much to do. But we need not add "so little done", because in the last three months we seem to have settled innumerable problems with no precedents to guide us and in a virtual state of war: and, shall I add, with little appreciation outside the Colonial Office of what these problems really are.

At Lake Success the Palestine Commission is now out of the picture and the only practical possibility is a small commission to do what it can to run essential services which nobody else will run, e.g. railways, post office and telegraphs, airports and customs; which is what was suggested two months ago. The way the Jews have been allowed to use the United Nations for their own ends will one day have its certain reaction.

Twenty-second perspective

Departure day

With their departure the British left a military – rather than a Mandatory – wedge in Haifa. The Mandate ended just as the Administration wished:

in Jerusalem and not anywhere else, quietly, and in a relatively dignified manner. The conclusion of the British presence in Jerusalem was influenced by the events in Haifa. A “Haifa-like” solution in Jerusalem was impossible. First, because the Jewish advantage in the city was not as pronounced as it had been in Haifa: the two sides were still locked in combat on the access roads to the city. Second, Britain would have suffered an intolerable blow to its standing in the international community overall and in the Middle East in particular if it had assisted the Jews to take control of the Holy City. Even if the Administration had wished to reprise the Haifa episode in Jerusalem, this would have required a saliently modest and creative solution, similar to what Stockwell did in Haifa. The Administration had no desire to fail at the last minute, either in terms of casualties to its personnel or by being seen to cooperate openly with the Haganah. To avoid this scenario but at the same time acquire Haganah “auspices” and thus ensure quiet, the British took action.

The Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood, in the north of Jerusalem, which lay on the exit route northward to Qalandiya, was turned over to the Haganah, as promised, after the Haganah’s effort to capture the neighborhood near the end of April. Moreover, the British departure from the Security Zone in the city centre was coordinated with Yosef Schnurman (Shani), the Haganah liaison officer with the British Army. On the night of May 13 Schnurman was allowed to infiltrate a Haganah platoon secretly into the Security Zones. Weapons were cached at key points in coordination with the British, who, it was agreed, would signal the Haganah about a quarter of an hour before they left. The idea was for the Haganah’s takeover of these areas the next day quick, effective, and secret for the benefit of the British, who wanted to leave without interference as quiet a city as possible, and without being accused again of cooperating with the Jews. A major reason for the success of the Haganah’s “Operation Kilshon” in Jerusalem, which was aimed at taking control of the British-evacuated security areas, was the contribution of the departing Administration – as in Haifa.⁴⁴⁰

The evacuation also received significant aid in the form of the reinforcements which London sent in to secure the departure. Fresh forces – paratroopers, artillery, reconnaissance, and medical units – were brought to Jerusalem on the eve of the evacuation from Haifa and from Mediterranean bases. Their mission was to assure a quiet evacu-

⁴⁴⁰On this, TNA WO275/20; Yosef Schnurman report, CZA S25/10526.

ation. Upon their arrival the tactical headquarters which served both Cunningham and MacMillan pulled out. The reinforcements deployed to secure the entire length of the road from Government House to the Qalandiya airfield. It was thus no surprise that the evacuation, on May 14, went quickly and smoothly, as this diary also attests.

10th May

The local Jewish rag "*Palestine Post*" came out with a headline this morning "Govt. wants Jerusalem under Red Cross flag; Snubs U.N. Truce Consuls." This propaganda trick won't get very far if it is aimed at dividing the Commission from ourselves, since the Commission will themselves deny it.⁴⁴¹

The three members of the Emergency Committee of Jaffa have asked for Jaffa to be declared an undefended town with a neutral observer acceptable to both sides to see that its status is observed and respected. We have passed this on to the Truce Commission as obviously up their street, and they will no doubt pass it on to the Red Cross.⁴⁴²

Still quiet in Jerusalem, though there are rumors of an impending Jewish attempt to clear the block at Bab-el-Wad on the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem road. It is now nearly three weeks since any convoy came through and obviously the Jews have got to do something about it.⁴⁴³

The Jews are still rankling at their not having been told of our meeting with the Arabs at Jericho. It has wounded their vanity, and has exposed them to the charge of refusing to agree to obviously reasonable terms for peace in Jerusalem. At this stage they do not really want a truce at all. They always in any case want something more than they have got. At present they are confronted with our own draft terms, which are these:

⁴⁴¹The *Palestine Post* – the forerunner of today's *Jerusalem Post* – was founded by Gershon Agron (1893–1959) in 1932; Agron was mayor of Jerusalem 1955–1959. The claim about the preference for the Red Cross was correct; see perspective no. 21.

⁴⁴²Jaffa's Arabs set up an emergency committee on May 2, following a wave of flight in the wake of the ITZL assault, Peleg, *The Battle for Jaffa*.

⁴⁴³On May 8 the Harel Brigade launched an offensive in the area of the Sha'ar Haggai passage ("Operation Maccabi" II). On the night of May 10–11 Beit Mahsir was taken and fighting began with the Army of Liberation for control of the passage, which by the 15th had fallen to the brigade.

MEMORANDUM.

Proposed Terms of a Truce for Jerusalem.

1. In this memorandum the word "Jerusalem" means the town planning area of Jerusalem.
2. All hostilities within Jerusalem shall cease. No fire shall be directed into Jerusalem or from it.
3. No arms or warlike stores shall be permitted to enter Jerusalem.
4. Supplies essential to the civil life of the population of Jerusalem shall be allowed to be brought to Jerusalem subject to check by an impartial body acceptable to both Arabs and Jews which will ensure that supplies other than such essential supplies do not pass into Jerusalem.
5. At least one of the following routes shall be open for the transport to Jerusalem of essential supplies (subject to such control) from each of the places where they are available and for the movement of unarmed persons from the place where they may be, that is to say, the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem road *via* Bab-el-Wad when possible or Ramallah and the main roads leading to Jerusalem *via* Ramallah, Jericho and Bethlehem: Provided that no movement shall take place leading to any substantial increase in the Arab or Jewish population of Jerusalem or any exchange of population calculated to increase Arab or Jewish military strength in Jerusalem.
6. Jews, whether living within or without the Old City, shall have the right of free entry and exit to the Jewish Quarter of the Old City and from there to the Wailing Wall. Such entry and exit shall be affected through the Zion Gate. For the purpose of ensuring that no arms are taken into the Old City, control shall be established at a point outside the Zion Gate by the impartial body referred to in paragraph 4.
7. Jews shall evacuate the Arab quarters of Qatamon now occupied by them.
8. Any dispute concerning the meaning or application of these terms (including the interpretation of the term "essential supplies") shall be decided by the impartial body referred to in paragraph 4.

They also have to deal with the Red Cross plan, which is being published and publicized today. If the Jews have still not

come forward tomorrow to discuss our proposals, we shall publish them.⁴⁴⁴

Everything begins to have a very 'end of term' air. Cupboards full of files and maps and records that haven't been looked at for years suddenly come out into the light of day, and stand about waiting for some one strong enough to shift them.

At 4:30 this morning, the sun came up behind the Old City, and all the towers and domes of the Mount of Olives and the Dormition sharpened into silhouettes. It is one of the world's most beautiful and most intriguing views. But in the Old City typhoid was diagnosed yesterday. We had been hoping to avoid this. The Arab quarters are packed 12 to a room, and the water supply in them is chiefly from tanks and cisterns. The populations are now being inoculated. At first the Jewish bacteriologist at the Medical Dept. Laboratory refused to release the vaccine, and we had to tell the Jewish Agency to give him orders to do so.

This evening it became clear that the Jews have won the battle for Bab-el-Wad to clear the block on the Latrun-Jerusalem road. They have also had another victory at Safad. There were rumors in Jerusalem that in consequence the Arabs would break the cease-fire tonight, so I telephoned to some of our contacts pointing out how stupid this would be. They agreed.⁴⁴⁵

The C. in C. came up from Fayid today to discuss the arrangements for the final withdrawal, times of the various announcements,

⁴⁴⁴The Red Cross plan was presented to the sides and to the Administration on May 8; for its details, Junod, *The Imperial Red Cross*, pp. 163–168. Both sides ignored it. In the international arena the Soviet Union led the opposition to the plan, alleging that it was of Western devising. On May 14 the Red Cross flag was hoisted above the King David Hotel for a few hours. The Yishuv's National Administration accepted the British truce offer with reservations. In practice, though, apart from a partial cease-fire the sides did not uphold the terms of the truce, which they had supposedly agreed to.

⁴⁴⁵Beyond the battle at Beir Mahsir (today's Beit Meir), which was about to be decided, the Army on this day evacuated the upper and lower water pumps (at Saris and Sha'ar Haggai, respectively) and was replaced by the Harel Brigade. The Army of Liberation imposed four more days of fighting on the brigade.

including the G.O.C.'s proclamations for the period following the 15th May, farewell broadcasts and messages, etc.⁴⁴⁶

11th May

This morning the Truce Commission came along with the draft of another public appeal for the maintenance of the cease-fire in Jerusalem. As this was in "high" French, the English, Arabic and Hebrew translations were not done to the liking of the Commission until afternoon.

The Jews still decline to come and see the High Commissioner. They have sent on a formal protest against never having been consulted before the Arab decision to cease-fire was announced. As the Arab cease-fire was obtained only after seeing the Jews, who have been saying for months that they would stop shooting as soon as the Arabs did, this is a bit odd. But the Jews are evidently determined not to have any British-made agreement.⁴⁴⁷

This afternoon Azc'arate returned from New York with a party of two others. He saw the High Commissioner immediately on arrival, and came in to see me at 7:15. I tackled him on the problem of who in fact was going to take over our physical assets – files, records, stores – in three days' time, when the United Nations will be responsible for the administration of Palestine. He did not know, so we suggested that he should hoist the U.N. flag on the buildings where these things are.⁴⁴⁸

The Army has been practising with guns and mortars around the outskirts of Jerusalem today. This is a bit unfortunate as it spoils the psychological effect of the cease-fire.

Otherwise a quiet day and we played tennis this afternoon. If anyone had told me three months ago that we should be playing tennis within three days of the end of the Mandate, I should have laughed at him. But in fact we have run out of work.

This morning we assembled all the Secretariat staff remaining – about 100 – and I gave them a short speech of thanks and said goodbye to them. Several were on the edge of tears, and all were

⁴⁴⁶General John Crocker, the G.O.C. Middle East, had arrived already on April 26 to coordinate the arrival of the rear guard, which was assigned primarily to Jerusalem and Haifa. His visit was intended to ensure close supervision of the evacuation and of the Army's role in the post-evacuation Haifa enclave.

⁴⁴⁷This diary's analysis is not without foundation; see perspective no. 21.

⁴⁴⁸His unconvincing reply led the Red Cross to take responsibility, or at least to hoist its flag. Azacarte, *Mission in Palestine*, pp. 36–42.

genuinely sad. I said that by its very nature the Mandate could not last for ever, and the end had always had to come some time; they could be proud of belonging to the best administration Palestine had ever had – which is true – and that we should not forget them. All of them – Jews, Arabs, Greeks and Armenians – who have served us loyally and in many cases devotedly have had all they could do to carry on these last few months, but accept their fate with no recrimination and a friendly understanding.

The Prime Minister sent us a particularly good message of thanks yesterday. The *Palestine Post* have published it under the heading ‘Blaze of Glory’. They remain masters of the innuendo. The Jewish Press at the moment is surpassing itself, but no one takes any notice of it.⁴⁴⁹

12th May

We announced at 1:30 the plans for the High Commissioner’s departure on the 14th, since the Mandate legally ends immediately after midnight 14th–15th. There has been much speculation as to the hour at which the Mandate will in fact end, and this will settle the doubts. It is right that the High Commissioner should leave Haifa by cruiser after a day of full ceremonial provided by the Army and R.A.F. Today is Wednesday; the day after tomorrow we should be in London by air from Ramat David.⁴⁵⁰

We telegraphed London asking that our families should be advised, since we have had no mails from the outside world for three weeks; and referred the Colonial Office to Isaiah chapter 37 verse 32; “out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant and they escape from Mount Zion”.

The American Consul-General called this morning to discuss the future working of the Truce Commission.⁴⁵¹

13th May

Everything is now ready for departure at 6:30 tomorrow morning. This “goodbye” business has a depressing and upsetting effect on everyone.

⁴⁴⁹Referring to Prime Minister Clement Attlee, who was in office 1945–1951.

⁴⁵⁰High Commissioner’s personal departure plans, Cunningham to T. Lloyd, Colonial Office, 27.3.1948, MECA, CP B5, F4; Ramat David was the RAF base in the north of the country.

⁴⁵¹The Truce Commission effectively ended its role upon the Mandate’s expiration. Neither Israel nor Jordan – the two sides that decided matters in Jerusalem – was interested in U.N. mediation, which meant internationalization. Ten days later the other U.N. mediation roles in the war passed to the Swedish diplomat Count Folke Bernadotte.

Yesterday I called on the Armenian Patriarch, one of our best friends, and had a long talk with him in which he deplored our going. We sat at one end of his vast green reception room crowded with portraits of former Patriarchs and Kings and Queens of England, and discussed Jerusalem. How illogical it was, he said, to fight for a city because it is sacred and to destroy it in so doing. If it were really looked upon as so sacred as people said, they would not fight and murder in its streets and so kill its sanctity. The truth was that Jerusalem was and had always been the political and strategic key: the only Arab north-south road in Palestine passed through its centre in Allenby Square; the only main road from the East into Central Palestine passed through it from Allenby Bridge, the ancient road from Philadelphia (Amman) to Jaffa.

As the Kawasses with their tapping sticks conducted me out down the long stone corridor I looked back and saw him for the last time, waving faintly at the top of the steps: about to return to the problems of handling his 2,000 refugees and of keeping peace for his community in the Old City, crowded as they were into a corner between Arabs and Jews.⁴⁵²

The Arab Legion have been attacking the Jewish settlement of Kfar Etzion, where the settlers killed two members of the Legion yesterday, and have put 300 2-pounder shells into the place. They will now wipe out the settlement in a day or two. It is criminal folly on the part of the Jewish Agency to keep these people exposed to this certainty of extermination just for the sake of Jewish prestige. The Arabs would have wiped it out months ago if it had not been for our protection.⁴⁵³

⁴⁵²Kawasses – a Turkish term referring to guards or sentries. The residents of the Armenian Quarter – which borders the Jewish Quarter in the east and the Christian Quarter in the north – usually tried to stay out of the fighting, or to help the Arabs in the Old City.

⁴⁵³There was sharp disagreement between the High Command in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem District headquarters over whether the Etzion Bloc settlements were a burden or an asset. The instructions to the Bloc's residents (who were also divided over the issue) to take up positions on the road and attack Arab transportation and vehicles of the Arab Legion, which was pulling out, brought a number of attacks on the settlements, the latest of which took place on the day of Gurney's diary entry and in the wake of which Kfar Etzion, the largest of the settlements in the bloc, was captured. Two hundred and fifty of its defenders were killed, some of them murdered after the surrender by Arabs from the area, their neighbors, who had been at war with them for the past half a year. The Arab Legion put a stop to the massacre. The remaining three settlements surrendered to the Arab Legion on May 14 and their residents were taken into captivity in Jordan.

The offices where so much work has been done now stand bare and empty; the boxes and cupboards have gone and the rooms begin to look once more as though they might belong to a hotel.

The Police locked up their stores (worth over £1m.) and brought the keys to the United Nations, who refused to receive them. I had to point out that the United Nations would be responsible for the administration of Palestine in a few hours' time (in accordance with the November Resolution) and that we should leave the keys on their doorstep whether they accepted them or not; which we did.

The consular Truce Commission, having been asked two days ago to appoint a neutral observer for the Jaffa truce, have not yet done so because the Jews would not accept the British member of the U.N. staff; so this morning they appointed Col. Roscher Lund, who wanted a car and escort to Jaffa. I had to explain that this was no longer possible. The Government now has exactly two cars left in Jerusalem; all the rest have been stolen.⁴⁵⁴

Various unforeseen and quite unprecedented problems came up during the day, but eventually we sat down to dinner in Hamburger's flat and went to bed at 11.00.

This afternoon I went to see the C.O.'s of the H.L.I., Suffolks and Warwicks, and thanked them personally for all their efforts. The C.O. of the H.L.I. pointed to his casualty list.⁴⁵⁵

14th May

Practically no sleep last night, since soon after midnight firing started and went on in the usual stupid way until about 4:00. As the sun came up over the Mount of Olives, the shooting stopped and we got up and dressed for the last journey. We moved off at 6:45 from outside the King David, four police armored cars and 17 civilians in two cars and a bus. The B.B.C. and press photographers were there in force. Maurice Dorman lowered the flag, and ran up the Red Cross on the top of the hotel. In Allenby Square⁴⁵⁶ and along the route were tanks and troops,

⁴⁵⁴Colonel Lund, a Norwegian, the military expert of the UN Advance Group, arrived in Jerusalem on March 1; in late April he was appointed Secretary of the consular Truce Commission.

⁴⁵⁵The regiments that constituted the 2nd Infantry Brigade, which left Jerusalem and Palestine on May 14 via land for Egypt.

⁴⁵⁶See in the diary entry for April 2.

obviously out in strength and happy to be going. At this early hour only a few Arabs were about, and they waved us cheerfully on.

At Kalundia airstrip and along all the road leading to it were more troops and guns covering every danger point.

This operation of withdrawal we had at one time thought would be thoroughly difficult. In the event, with the reinforcements we had and with the admirable organization that Brigadier Jones applied, the whole plan worked out completely smoothly and without a shot fired.

At 8:00 the High Commissioner inspected the H.L.I. guard-of-honor at Government House, and left a few minutes later, the Red Cross having taken the place of the Union Jack. At Kalundia he said good-bye to us, and flew off to Haifa for the last ceremonies there. We then entered our Dakotas and flew to Ramat David, where our York picked us up and flew off at 11:00 for Malta and Heath Row. We landed at Heath Row on a perfect summer night at 11:30. As we drove into London, the clocks struck midnight and the Mandate was ended.⁴⁵⁷

We had thought out and planned this last day so often, that its historical importance had long given way in our minds to details of timing and transport. Nothing was left to chance. This bare and naked narrative leaves untouched the mountains of paper and telegrams that had been devoted to it. In the end, like all well-organized operations, it all looked very simple.

The night before, the Palestine Broadcasting Service⁴⁵⁸ came to an end with a broadcast by the High Commissioner and then, simply, God Save the King. In the silence that followed, you could think what you liked; the thoughts of most of us were woven against a vast background of difficult problems solved and hard work done, and our consciences were clear. But perhaps, at that short range, we missed the full point of what was happening: a page of history was turning over.

⁴⁵⁷The British held the Ramat David military airbase until they left the Haifa enclave, on June 30, 1948. The Avro York C1, a passenger and cargo plane was designed during World War II for military use.

⁴⁵⁸The official broadcasting service of the Mandate Administration, it was established in 1936.

Epilogue

His sons

Henry Gurney was enough of a skeptic to remark, on the day he left Palestine, that “perhaps, at that short range, we missed the full point of what was happening...”⁴⁵⁹ Indeed, how could he or anyone else comprehend the full human and historical meaning of an event of which he himself was a part, and from zero distance?

The above quotation shows that the question of whether the efforts, risks, and sacrifices were worthwhile occupied Gurney. Did he discuss the subject with his superiors or with his subordinates? We cannot know. And what did the family of the official who risked his life in the colonial service in Palestine feel? Gurney’s end – shot to death on a side road in Malaya – makes this question especially interesting. However, no definitive answer is likely in this case. It is also a reasonable assumption that this question was not confined solely to the Gurney family.

Family members are barely mentioned in the Chief Secretary’s diary. Even if it was far from clear whether he would be still be among the living the next day, he did not reflect about his family in this personal record. His wife, Isabel, who was with him in Jerusalem and left the country nearly two months before him, is mentioned with near miserly dryness. The existence of his sons is not even hinted at. Perhaps this was the degree of intimacy that a veteran colonial official could allow himself.⁴⁶⁰

Nevertheless, I went to see the Chief Secretary’s sons. Maybe I would be able to get even closer to the essence of the Mandate Administration in its waning days.

⁴⁵⁹Diary entry, May 14.

⁴⁶⁰On Isabel Gurney’s departure, see diary entries for March 23 and 24.

Sunday, February 15, 2004, was a cold, rainy day in London. The ride on the tube from the city centre on the Hammersmith & City line took more than 40 minutes. Most of the journey was above-ground, through blighted industrial areas, in part abandoned. Remnants of former bustling working areas are always brutal sights. I got off at Goldhawk Station, a nondescript place in the heart of the London of Hammersmith, and walked down a very broad and seemingly forsaken street to 201 Goldhawk Road, home of the son of the devoted civil servant who was Acting Governor General of Ghana, Chief Secretary in Palestine, and High Commissioner of Malaya.

Hammersmith has seen better days. It is a place with no *raison d'être* of its own. Most of its inhabitants are here because they cannot afford to live closer to the city centre. They live here but work elsewhere, spending large swaths of their time in trains. Others who pass through Hammersmith are usually "on the way to somewhere" – perhaps to Heathrow Airport, to which traffic flows incessantly in the air and on land, producing a relentless din, or to Wimbledon, or Richmond and the Botanical Gardens at Kew. And every historian of Britain, or of parts of its former empire, knows that this is also the way to the British National Archives (formerly the PRO), which are also located in Kew. It is only there that the British Empire continues to exist in its full sway. It exists a bit in Hammersmith, too, as the concentrated reflection of an empire that imploded and created an irresistible vacuum, drawing millions of its stepchildren into the mother state. Like his father, the son of the Governor General, Chief Secretary, and High Commissioner lives among natives of Asia and Africa. His father lived among them in their habitats; the son lives among them in his habitat. Peter Gurney was born in 1925 in Kenya, where his father was then stationed. At the age of six he was sent to boarding school in England. There was nothing unusual about this; it was the lot of Colonial Service children. Their childhood was sacrificed for the sake of the Empire. Peter's mother returned to England with him, stayed for six months until he became acclimatized, and resumed her place at her husband's side on his mission in Africa. Like many others in her situation, she made the decision to be more a wife and a colonial emissary than a mother.

Peter's younger brother, Michael, was born in England almost by chance, during a brief home leave of his parents in 1928. In 1934 the family returned to England temporarily. Michael spent more time with his mother and father and suffered less than his older brother. In 1934 Henry Gurney was sent to Jamaica without his family, but did not find the work congenial and returned home after half a year, bitter and

disappointed, and left the service. But with a slashed pension and with no natives around – only his two native sons – he could not make a go of it. In 1937 Henry and Isabel returned to Africa, leaving the children behind, in boarding schools.

The Sunday lunch prepared by Sue, Peter's cordial wife, was tasty but very modest, a meal of people who count their pennies. They live in a small home in a row of old Victorian-style Town Houses, clean, neat, and manifestly not renovated for many years.

As Peter and Michael tried to reconstruct the life of the Chief Secretary in Palestine and of the High Commissioner in Malaya, Sue repeatedly said, as though offhandedly, "We suffered from a lack of money." When I wrote to Peter asking for permission to publish the diary, he replied that he would be pleased to oblige, not only because his father deserved it, but also, and mainly, because this could be an opportunity to help his and Michael's children get along in life. I explained to him the hard economics of a book like this. He made no protest. He seems to have known more than his share of disappointments. He is about 80, and in him little remains of his father's imperial success: neither a spiritual nor an economic heritage. He himself, he says, had little success and bore the burden of the parental abandonment.

Anti-Semitism? No, they don't recall anything like that. Father did not talk about his Palestine experience, apart from constantly noting that things there had become impossible and "He was fed up with Palestine." Their memory of their father – a memory strengthened, in her way, by their mother, who died in the 1980s – remains rooted in Malaya. His success there and his heroic death erased the painful Palestine episode, which separated the promise in Africa from the brief glory of Malaya.

The sons seem to be pained less by the loss of the Empire than by their own distress. The family was on the threshold of the upper class, yet now the future is uncertain and they live on the margins of the city among those who should have been their subjects. After retiring, Michael moved far away, to a village in Wales; maybe he would find a scrap of happiness there.

The conversation about their father was almost academic. He loved us but did not show it. "Victorian, not warm," as they put it; and above all distant, both geographically and mentally. The colonial life left no place for the family. The many photographs the two sons had were in disarray and mostly without identification of place or date. Not one family photo with the children. Always Henry with Isabel or

Henry with his colleagues in the service. As absent as children in the photographs are natives – only a few in the background. I had the feeling that the act of remembering was not beneficial for them. They had not known about their father's diary until a few historians began to make use of it in their research, and even then it was of no particular interest to them. It is unlikely that they have read it from beginning to end.

Yes, they had visited Malaysia once. As regular tourists. They went to the site of their father's assassination, visited his grave, took pictures. Those who died in the course of colonial service were buried in the country in which they served. Henry Gurney left his native land and did not return, not even after his death. They have no objections to that. They do not miss him. Father was silent and they, after all, were never truly made full-fledged participants in the colonial experience. Excluded in their childhood, as adults they had already missed the "time of the Empire". In Kuala Lumpur they visited the former Government House, which had been converted into a hotel. "We ate there and we had to pay," Peter grumbled.

They never considered visiting Israel, nor did their long-lived mother. Her heart went out to the romance of Africa, to the golf courses there, on which she played every bit as well as Henry. There she was revered. In Palestine the locals, at least the Jews among them, looked down on her. And also opened fire. "It was dangerous and there was no social life," the sons summed up their Palestine heritage. These two aged colonial orphans are almost a microcosm of post-post-imperial Britain: what was, was, and is no longer of interest. But why is the present so gloomy?

Malaya... and Palestine

Henry Gurney's sojourn in Malaya places in a slightly broader perspective his failures and achievements at the head of the Mandate Administration in its last period in Palestine. His Palestine experience was still very fresh when he arrived in Malaya, less than five months after leaving Jerusalem. In Malaya, as in Palestine, an insurgency awaited him immediately upon his arrival and never let up: in Palestine until his departure from the country, in Malaya until his departure from life. Unremitting confrontation with nationalist terrorism was, after all, the experience of the colonial officials everywhere. Certainly after the Second World War, sometimes even before it, as in India, for example.

Gurney succeeded in refurbishing the internal relations between the various governmental branches and between them and the local

leadership in Malaya. He had a wealth of experience in administration, and under crisis conditions in particular. The Palestine lesson had been learned. Gurney arrived in Malaya with the belief that there was no better solution for the country than to embark on the path of political independence under the guidance of the colonial Administration itself.⁴⁶¹ So it was in India and so it could have been in Palestine, as the British had proposed in 1937 and again in 1946–1947. First the Arabs refused to listen, then the Jews balked, too.

Was this also Gurney's approach in Palestine? Is it correct to portray him and the Administration he oversaw as being opposed to the establishment of a Jewish state? Beyond the prejudices he expressed in moments of distress (which of course does not legitimize them), Gurney, like many of his staff, objected more to the manner in which the Yishuv and the Zionist movement behaved on their way to independence, than he did to Jewish independence itself. Indeed, the British had no other option: such independence suited the interests of their government in every corner of the collapsing Empire.

We will do well to listen to what the Chief Secretary has to tell us, not because we owe him anything – that is a matter for everyone to decide for himself – but because, for the Israeli reader especially, he offers a different perspective on the past. It is the perspective of a typical but very senior colonial official, so much so, indeed, that one can extrapolate from his experience and feelings about the general attitude of the colonial Administration in Palestine toward the civil war and the Mandate's final days. Above all, Henry Gurney and his colleagues were the devoted acolytes and loyalists of the British imperial way of life; hence their worldview, which was neither Zionist nor Arab-Palestinian.

The personal hatred of Henry Gurney on the part of the Yishuv leaders – genuine loathing – was a concentrated expression of the general hostility toward the British felt by that entire generation. It was that enmity and not the convergence of interests between Britain and the Zionist movement which was imparted to the Israeli street, and in large measure also to the chroniclers of Israel's history. Was this because the Yishuv preferred to cast the blame for the war on the Mandate Administration and on Britain, and not on the Arabs, with whom it would have to live after

⁴⁶¹Allen, *Malaysia*, pp. 91–103, 120.

the British left? This, at least, was what Gurney argued after he left Palestine.⁴⁶² Or perhaps the deep resentment toward the British was a denial of the Zionist connection to the evils of colonialism, with which it was improvident to be identified. Probably the sweeping Arab contention, though it is basically superficial (just like the reverse Zionist contention), alleging collaboration between Britain and the Yishuv against the Arabs, played a part in the formulation of the “counter-story”. Future research will have to address this contradiction.

Be that as it may, this approach and this collective memory continue to obscure the full historic landscape of Palestine in the final stage of the Mandate period and at the height of the war that erupted toward its end. Among the denizens of this landscape were Britons whose place was far from marginal and who were definitely not unequivocally hostile to the Yishuv and its interests. In fact, during the civil war, though unintentionally for the most part, they did much to further the interests of the Yishuv and set back those of the Palestinian Arabs.

Although studies have been published which show Yishuv-British relations in a more complex light,⁴⁶³ the widespread assumption continues to be that the British were systematically inimical to the Zionist cause in theory and more especially in practice, and in 1948 as well. It is precisely through the eyes of one who personally was unsympathetic to the Zionist cause that the Administration’s complex attitude toward the Yishuv becomes apparent. The difficult period which the diary chronicles, perhaps just because it was so difficult, undoubtedly enhances the sincerity of what he wrote.

The diary provides us with a fascinating mirror with which to observe the behavior of the Jewish side on the eve of the Mandate’s termination. The Yishuv preoccupied the Administration because it was stronger and more dynamic than the Arab community. As such, it had a greater impact on the quality of the Administration’s work and on the evacuation, subjects with which the Chief Secretary was concerned.

Indeed, what emerges from the diary of this colonial official is that the Administration’s substantive activity until the last minute, its desire to ensure the safety and well-being of the local inhabitants, and the concern for Britain’s interests in Palestine were not subordinate to

⁴⁶²Sir Henry Gurney, *Introduction*, note 17, above, p. 8.

⁴⁶³For example, G. Cohen, *Britain’s Policy*; Gideon Biger, *An Empire in the Holly Land*, New York, Jerusalem 1994; Gelber, *Budding a Fleur-de-Lis*; Motti Golani, “The ‘Haifa Turning Point’”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (April 2001), pp. 93–130.

the approach of any one official, however senior in rank. The diarist, though far from sympathetic to the Jewish/Zionist cause, swerved neither right nor left from his duty to serve both sides, including the Jewish community. Not only personal opinions underlay his activity. Also instrumental was the tradition of the colonial service and Britain's contemporaneous interests, which were not necessarily always saliently anti-Zionist or anti-Arab. Ultimately, what concerned the British more than the question of which side would prevail – though this certainly exercised the Administration – was the next mission, which the Chief Secretary described succinctly after the fact. “During the last two months therefore one of the Administration's tasks was to cut off the branch on which it was sitting. The branch must hold until May 15th but must fall exactly on that day”. His feeling was that “from the purely British standpoint, the whole programmed was completed accurately and precisely to an hour”.⁴⁶⁴

Blessed with a keen eye and cogent intuition, and notwithstanding his many prejudices, the last Chief Secretary succeeded, albeit unintentionally, in detecting early on some of symptoms, shortcomings, and problems of the Yishuv – soon to be the Israeli – society. He also discerned incipient problems which in time intensified. This diary also offers Israelis an opportunity to read about their past with the aid of an outside observer who experienced first-hand some of the moments of truth of Israel's early history. Nothing is more relevant than such a very early day's experience. At the same time, the relations between then and now call for a very cautious approach; historians are sometimes prone to take the easy way by overlaying the past on the present.

⁴⁶⁴Gurney, *Introduction*, note 17, above, p. 11.

Biographical Notes

Ben Gurion, David (1886–1973) – Chairman, Zionist Executive and Jewish Agency Executive (1935–1948), holder of Defense portfolio (1946–1948). Chairman, National Administration and holder of Defense portfolio (April–May 1948). Born in Russia, settled in Palestine 1906, helped found Ahdut Ha'avodah (“Unity of Labor”) movement (1919). Secretary-General, Histadrut federation of labor (1921–1935). Prime Minister and Defense Minister (1948–1953, 1955–1963). Member of Knesset (1948–1969). Leader of Rafi (Israel Workers List; 1965–1968). Leader of State List (1969–1970).

Ben Zvi, Yitzhak (Shimshelovich) (1884–1963) – President, National Committee of the Jewish Community of Palestine (1945–1948). Born in Russia, settled in Palestine 1907. Member of Hashomer (“The Watchman”), Ahdut Ha'avodah (“Unity of Labor”) movement, Histadrut federation of labor, Mapai (precursor of Labor Party). Chairman, National Committee (1931–1945). Member of First Knesset on Mapai list. President of Israel (1952–1963). Publicist, researcher of the history of the Land of Israel.

Bevin, Ernest (1881–1951) – British Foreign Secretary (1945–1951), a leader of the Labour Party and of the trade union movement in Britain. Minister of Labour and National Service in wartime Cabinet (1940–1945).

Butterfield, (?) – Director, Department of Transportation of the Mandate Administration (1948). Served in Colonial Administration in Tanganyika; military service in the Middle East.

Cohen, Leo (1894–1961) – Political Secretary, Jewish Agency Political Department (1948). Settled in Palestine 1921; returned to Germany in 1928 and moved back to Palestine 1932. Adviser to Moshe Shertok (Sharett) in Political Department and afterward in Foreign Ministry. Member, Jewish Agency Executive; deputy chairman of Keren Hayesod (Palestine Foundation Fund).

Cunningham, General Sir Alan Gordon (1887–1983) – High Commissioner and C-in-C Palestine, (1945–1948) and of Trans Jordan

(1945–1946). In the British Army from his youth. Commander, British southern task force which expelled Italian Army from Somalia and Ethiopia (1940–1941). First commander, 8th Army in the Western Desert; relieved of command, November 1941. Command and instruction posts in Britain (1942–1945). Retired 1948.

De Bunsen, Sir Bernard (1907–1990) – Head, Department of Education in Mandate Administration (1946–1948). Oxford graduate, headmaster and inspector in education system in Britain. Worked in education in Kenya after service in Palestine and concluded his service as President of the University of East Africa.

Dobbs, Henry (1914–?) – Assistant for administration to the Chief Secretary (1946–1948). Served in Ceylon (1937–1945). Lecturer in colonial administration studies, Oxford (1945–1946).

Dorman, Maurice (1912–?) – Principal Under-Secretary in Palestine (1947–1948). Colonial official in Trinidad and Tobago and in Tanganyika (1935–1945). Assistant to Governor of Malta (1945–1947).

Dow, Sir Hugh (1886–1978) – British Consul-General and representative of the Foreign Office in Jerusalem (1948–1949). Official of the colonial service and a diplomat. Governor of Sind (1941–1947) and Bihar (1946–1947). Remained in Jordan following the signing of the armistice agreements; representative of British interest in East Jerusalem and the West Bank.

Fitzgerald, Sir William (1894–1989) – The last Chief Justice of Palestine (1944–1948). Served in Nigeria as an officer and judge (1919–1931).

Fletcher-Cooke, John (1911–?). Chief Under-Secretary for Administration and Finance (1947). No. 2 after Gurney. From January 1948, adviser on Palestine to British delegation to U.N. As such, represented his government on Trusteeship Council of Jerusalem, established by the U.N. following the vote on partition and the internationalization of Jerusalem on November 29, 1947. Secretary and special envoy in the Colonial Office (1934–1942). Joined the army and was a POW in Germany (1942–1945). Special Assistant of Mac-Michal (the former High Commissioner of Palestine) as the Governor of Malta (1946).

Fox-Strangways, Vivian (1898–?) – Under-Secretary in Chief Secretariat, in charge of ties with Jewish Agency (1946–1948). Military service in Palestine and on the Western Front in France in World War I. Served in Nigeria and Malawi (1923–1933), New Zealand (1933–1941), Gilbert and Ellis Islands (1941–1946).

Gibson, Leslie (1896–?) – Attorney General in Palestine Mandate Administration (1944–1948). Served in Malaya Civil Administration (1920–1937) and in the legal department of the Colonial Office in London (1937–1940). General Prosecutor in Trinidad (1940–1944).

Graves, Richard (1880–1960) – British-appointed Chairman of Jerusalem Municipal Commission, July 1947–May 1948. Graduate of Oxford and Cambridge. In the colonial service since 1903, mainly in the Eastern Mediterranean – Turkey, Greece, and Egypt – serving in the latter as director of Departments of Interior, Trade, and Industry. Arrived in Palestine 1940 as adviser to the Administration for labor affairs, appointed head of Manpower and Labor Department when it was created, in 1942. Retired from the service in January 1947, recalled in June of that year.

Gray, G. Henry – Press censor of Mandate Administration.

Gray, Colonel William – Inspector General of Palestine Police (1946–1948), afterward of the Malaya Police (1948–1951). Previously a Naval Commando.

Hadi, Ruhi Abd al (Ruhi Bey Abdulhadi) – Principal Assistant Secretary (PAS) in Mandate Civil Administration in Palestine (1920–1948). Worked closely with the Chief Secretary. Also head of special liaison unit in the administrative-social branch of the Chief Secretariat and commissioner of a subdistrict. Foreign Minister of Jordan (1949–1950), Justice and Education Minister (1950–1952), and Defense Minister in 1952.

Hamburger, Max (1907–?) – Manager, King David Hotel from 1937. Previously was assistant manager of Shepherd Hotel in Cairo. Wanted to manage a large European hotel and ran the King David in that style. Stayed on as manager even during the war.

Herzog, Rabbi Isaac Halevy (1888–1959) – Chief Rabbi of Palestine (1936–1948) and of Israel (1948–1959). Formerly Chief Rabbi of Belfast

(1916–1919), of Dublin (1919–1925), and of independent Ireland (1925–1936).

Hilmi, Ahmed (Hilmi Pasha) (1880–1963) – Member, Arab Higher Committee. Member of Feisal government in Damascus (1920) and financial adviser to Government of Transjordan. Supervisor of Waqf (charitable religious trust; 1926), helped found Palestinian National Treasury. Among the founders of al-Istaqlal party (1932). Exiled by the British (1937–1938). Governor of East Jerusalem (June 1948). Prime Minister of “All-Palestine Government” in Gaza, September 1948.

Hushi, Abba (1898–1969) – Secretary of Haifa Labor Council (1927–1950). Senior member of Mapai (precursor of Labor Party). Settled in Palestine 1920. Founder, Land of Israel Workers Alliance. Member, Arab Department and Executive of Histadrut federation of labor. Member, First Knesset. Mayor of Haifa (1951–1969).

Husseini, Abd al Kadar al- (1907–1948) – Commander of Arab fighters loyal to the Mufti (Al-Jihad al-Muqades = the Mujahidin) in the eastern sector: from Ramallah in the north to Hebron in the south (1948). Born in Jerusalem. Studied chemistry at American University in Beirut. Returned to Palestine in 1932. Worked in the Mandate Registry Department (1933–1936). Led a group of fighters who operated in the Judean Hills during the Arab Revolt (1936–1939); wounded, fled to Syria. Resumed activity 1938 and was wounded again. Went to Iraq in 1939, where he taught and received officer training in Military Academy. Arrested in 1941 by the British on suspicion of murdering Fakhri Nashashibi of Jerusalem. Released in 1944 and deported to Saudi Arabia. Moved to Egypt in 1947 and joined his uncle, Hajj Amin al-Husseini (qv.). His units were responsible for the Palestinian Arabs’ successes in the “war of the convoys” on the Jerusalem road. Killed April 8, 1948, in the battle for Qastel, a strategic hilltop village outside Jerusalem.

Husseini, Hajj Amin al- (1895–1974) – Mufti of Jerusalem from 1921 and leader of the Palestinians. Officer in the Ottoman Army in World War I. President, Supreme Muslim Council from 1922. President, Arab Higher Committee from 1936. Led the Lie Arab Revolt in Palestine (1936–1937), a leader of the pro-Nazi revolt in Iraq (1941). Lived in Berlin and an ally of Germany and Italy (1941–1945). Returned to Egypt in 1946, moved to Lebanon in 1947, resided alternately in the

two countries. Lost his influence after 1948 and retained only symbolic strength.

Husseini, Jamal al- (1893–1982) – Chairman, Arab Higher Committee (1946–1948) and its U.N. envoy during the deliberations on Palestine. Born in Jerusalem. Secretary, Palestine Executive (1921–1934). From the mid-1920s, member of the Executive and Secretary of the Supreme Muslim Council. President, Palestine Arab Party, founded 1935, and from 1936 its representative on the Arab Higher Committee. Fled Palestine during the Arab Revolt (1937). Apprehended by the British in Iran in World War II and exiled to Rhodesia. Released in 1943, returned to Palestine in 1946.

Jardine, John – Lawyer, legal adviser to and afterward third and last director of the British Council in Palestine during the Mandate period.

Jardine, Robert (1894–?) – Water Commissioner and Director of Land Settlement in Palestine (1945–1948). Served in District Colonial Administration in Iraq (1917–1933); in charge of Property and Land Settlement there (1933–1936). Arrived in Palestine 1936, served in various posts. Entered military service 1941, reaching rank of lieutenant colonel.

Kaplan, Eliezer (1891–1952) – Member, Jewish Agency Executive, and Jewish Agency Treasurer (1933–1948). Senior representative of Jewish Agency in Jerusalem, 1948. Among leaders of Hapoel Hatzair (Young Worker) and Mapai (precursor of Labor Party). Israel's first Finance Minister (1948–1952).

Katznelson (Nissan), Dr. Avraham (1888–1956) – Member, Executive, Va'ad Leumi (National Committee of the Jewish Community of Palestine) and director of its Health Department (1931–1948). Director, Land of Israel Office, Constantinople (1919–1920). Vice-President, Zionist Executive Committee (1921). Director, Health Department of Zionist Executive in Palestine (1924–1930). Director-General, Ministry of Health (1948–1949). Member, Israel mission to United Nations (1949–1950). Israel ambassador to Scandinavia (1950–1956).

Khalidi, Dr. Hussein Fakhri al- (1894–1962) – Secretary, new Arab Higher Committee, after AHC split (1946–1948). Physician in the Ottoman Army in World War I. Mayor of Jerusalem (1934–1937). Established the Reform Party (1935) and represented it on the AHC.

Deported by the British to Seychelles (1937–1939), returning 1942. Minister of Health in “All-Palestine Government” (1949), held various posts in the Jordanian Government.

Kirby, A. Frank (1899–1983) General Manager, Palestine Railways and Ports Authority (1942–1948). Previously (1928–1942) served in similar capacity in Gold Coast (afterward Ghana).

Levy, Shabtai (1876–1956) – Mayor of Haifa (1940–1951). Born in Constantinople, where he obtained university degree. Settled in Palestine 1905. Official of Jewish Colonization Association (and later of Palestine JCA) in Haifa, heading the organizations’ Land Departments. Member, Haifa Municipal Council (1918–1951), deputy to Mayor Hassan Shukari (1934–1940).

Lie, Trygve (1896–1968) – First U.N. Secretary-General (1946–1953). Minister in Norwegian Government before World War II, in Government-in-Exile during the war, and again in the 1960s. Compromise candidate between the two great blocs for the U.N. post. Declined a third term, citing Eastern Bloc’s mistrust.

Lund, Alfred Roscher (1899–?) – Norwegian Army colonel. Military expert of the Advance Party of U.N. Palestine Commission, which arrived on March 1. In late April was appointed secretary of the Consular Truce Commission.

MacMillan, Lieutenant-General Gordon (1897–1988) – G.O.C. British Forces in Palestine, February 1947–June 1948. Brigade and divisional commander in North Africa and in northwest Europe in World War II. Head of the Scottish Command (1948–1952). Governor of Gibraltar (1952–1955).

Magnes, Judah Leib (1877–1948) – Chancellor, Hebrew University of Jerusalem from its inception in 1925, then its first president (1935–1948). Born in San Francisco. Ordained rabbi and holder of Ph.D. from Heidelberg University. Established the New York “Kehillah” (Community), helped found American Jewish Committee and Office for Jewish Education in New York. Settled in Palestine 1922. Founder of Brit Shalom and Ihud organizations, which favored binational state. Opposed partition plan, supported U.S. trusteeship in Palestine.

Marriott, Cyril – British Consul-General in Haifa (1948). Represented British interests in Israel after May 14, 1948.

Meyerson (Meir), Golda (1898–1978) – Director and Acting Director of Jewish Agency's Political Department (1946–1948). American-born, settled in Palestine 1921. Representative of Ahdut Ha'avodah ("Unity of Labor") movement in the institutions of the Histadrut federation of labor (1928–1932). Histadrut emissary to U.S. (1932–1934), member of Histadrut Executive (from 1934) and head of its Political Department (1936–1948). Israeli envoy to Soviet Union (1949). Secretary of Labor Alignment (1949–1956). Foreign Minister (1956–1966). Prime Minister (1969–1974).

Montgomery, Bernard (Viscount Montgomery of Alamein), Field Marshal (1887–1976) – Commander of the Imperial General Staff (1946–1948). In British Army service from 1908. Commander of the 8th Division in Palestine (1938–1939) and of the 3rd Division in France (1939–1940). Commander of the 5th Corps (1940), 12th Corps (1941), 8th Army (1942–1944). Commander of Allied forces in northern France and Low Countries (1944). Commander of British Army on the Rhine (1945–1946). Chairman of Western European Union's Commanders-in-Chief Committee (1948–1951), Deputy Supreme Commander of NATO (1951–1958).

Nusseibeh, Anwar (mistakenly spelled "Nusseibi" in the source) (1913–1989) – Secretary, National Arab Committee of Jerusalem (1948), member of Arab Higher Committee (1946–1948). Born in Jerusalem. Member of Palestine Propaganda Office (1945–1946). Secretary of "All-Palestine Government" in late 1948. Member of Jordanian Parliament. Defense Minister of Jordan and president of the East Jerusalem Electric Company.

Pollock, James (1893–1982) – Jerusalem District Commissioner (1944–1948). Born in Northern Ireland. Arrived in Palestine as officer in World War I. Deputy District Commissioner in Jerusalem (1919–1920), of Ramallah (1920). Served in Nigeria (1923–1930) and again in Palestine as Deputy Commissioner, Southern District (1930–1939). Chairman, Economic Standards Commission of the local authorities (1937). Member, Land Registry Committee (1937). Haifa District Commissioner (1939–1942). Galilee District Commissioner (1942–1944). Civil Administrator of British enclave in Haifa (May–June 1948).

Quwakji, Fawzi al- (1890–1976) – One of the commanders of Arab Liberation Army (1948). Born in Tripoli, Lebanon. Officer in Ottoman Army. Took part in anti-French uprising in Syria (1925–1927). Involved in establishing army core in Saudi Arabia, late 1920s. Instructor, Central Military School of Iraqi Army (1931). Led Arab Revolt in Palestine for a few months (1936). Liaison between Hajj Amin al-Husseini and Iraqi Army (1939–1941). Following the failure of the pro-Nazi revolt in Iraq, fled to Turkey and then to Germany (1941), where he headed an office of propaganda and recruitment of Arab volunteers to the German secret services. Returned to Syria in unsuccessful bid to become Minister of Defense (1947).

Reeves, Edward (1909–?) – Nablus District Commissioner (1945–1948). Colonial service, Nigeria (1932–1938).

Reynier, Jacques de – Head, Delegation of International Committee of the Red Cross to Palestine (1948). Swiss agricultural engineer, completed his studies in Rabat, Morocco, worked there and in Tunisia (1929–1939). Arabic speaker. Appointed to IRC delegation as being “accessible to Arabs” alongside delegation’s first head, Roland Marti, who was familiar with the Jewish side. The two were sent to Palestine in the wake of their experience in the Spanish and Greek civil wars.

Salame, Hassan (Abu Ali) (1910–1948) – Commander of Arab fighters loyal to the Mufti (Al-Jihad al-Muqades = Mujahidin) in the western sector (1948). Born in village of Kula. Worked as a guard at Jewish-owned quarries. One of Abd al Kadar al-Hussein’s (*q.v.*) men. Field commander and regional commander in Arab Revolt (1936–1937). Arrested by British and fled to Syria, Iraq, Turkey, and Bulgaria. Joined Mufti of Jerusalem in Germany in World War II. In 1944 parachuted by Germans near Jericho at head of sabotage group. Killed in battle, June 2, 1948, near Rosh Ha’ayin.

Schnurman (Shani), Yosef (1914–1997) – Haganah liaison officer to the British Army (1948). Immigrated to Palestine in 1935. Served with rank of major in British Army (1940–1946). Helped found IDF liaison system to United Nations. Member, IDF delegation to armistice talks with Lebanon and Syria (1949).

Shaw, Sir John (1894–?) – Chief Secretary of Mandate Administration (1943–1946). Joined colonial service in 1925, served in Gold Coast

(afterward Ghana) until 1935. Assistant Chief Secretary in Palestine (1935–1940). Colonial Secretary, Cyprus. Governor, Trinidad and Tobago (1947–1950). Seconded to War Office (1940–1945). Chairman, commission of inquiry into industrial strikes and riots in Sierra Leone (1955).

Shertok (Sharett), Moshe (1894–1965) – Head, Jewish Agency Political Department (1933–1948) and its United Nations representative (1947–1948). Born in Russia, immigrated to Palestine in 1906. Member, first graduating class of Gymnasia Herzliya High School in Tel Aviv. Officer in Turkish Army in World War I. Member, Executive of Ahdut Ha'avodah (labor movement). Member, *Davar* daily editorial board (1925–1931). Joined JA Political Department in 1931. Foreign Minister of Israel (1948–1956), Member of Knesset (1949–1965), Prime Minister (1953–1955). Chairman, Zionist Executive and Jewish Agency Executive (1960–1965).

Stavropoulos, Constantine – Legal adviser to Advance Party of U.N. Palestine Commission (1948). Greek diplomat, expert in international law. Legal adviser to UNSCOP (1947).

Stewart, G. Duncan (1904–) – Financial Secretary in Mandate Administration (1948). No. 2 after Gurney (January–May 1948). Previously served in Nigeria and Bahamas.

Stockwell, Major General Hugh (1903–1986) – Commander of Haifa and North (1948). Commander, 6th Airborne Division (1947–1948). Served in western Africa (1938–1940), Norway (1940), Burma (1943–1946; district commander 1946–1947). Commander of Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (1948–1950). Governor-General of Malaya (1952–1954). Commander of landing force of Anglo-French Operation Musketeer in Sinai War (1956). Military secretary to War Secretary (1957–1959). Chief Adjutant (1959–1960). Deputy Supreme Commander, NATO forces in Europe (1960–1964).

Stubbs, Richard (Dick) – Head of Mandate Administration's Press Information Office (1946–1948). Worked for propaganda services in Cairo in World War II. Upon returning to Britain engaged in public relations and painting.

Thompson, J. M. – Acting Director, Department of Social Welfare in Chief Secretariat (1942–1948). Arrived in Palestine in 1937 after

service in England. Murdered on her way from Bethlehem to Jerusalem, March 30, 1948.

Wasson, Thomas (1896–1948) – U.S. Consul General in Jerusalem since April 1948. Member of consular service since 1924. Shot by unknown sniper on May 22, 1948 (and died the next day) as he returned on foot to the U.S. Consulate from the French Consulate, where he had attended a meeting of the Consular Truce Commission. The place of the shooting reinforces the likelihood that the sniper was from the Arab Legion and fired at random from the Old City wall at passersby in the Mamilla area.

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IDFA = Israel Defense Forces Archives, Ramat-Gan
ISA = Israel State Archives, Jerusalem
HA = Haganah Archives, Tel Aviv
IWM = Imperial War Museum, London.
LHCMA = Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College, London.
MECA = Middle East Centre Archive, St. Antony's College, Oxford.
TNA (PRO) = The National Archives, Kew, London (formerly Public Record Office).

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