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The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title-content=t713635365>

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Online Publication Date: 01 March 2008

To cite this Article Norris, Jacob(2008)'Repression and Rebellion: Britain's Response to the Arab Revolt in Palestine of 1936-39',The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History,36:1,25 — 45

To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/03086530801889350

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03086530801889350>

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Repression and Rebellion: Britain's Response to the Arab Revolt in Palestine of 1936–39

Jacob Norris

In April 1936 growing unrest among the Arab community of Palestine led to the outbreak of a sustained revolt that would pose the most serious threat to British rule thus far experienced by the mandate government. Initially manifesting itself as an urban-led campaign of civil disobedience directed against the Zionist presence in Palestine, the second phase of the rebellion developed into a far more violent and peasant-led resistance movement that increasingly targeted British forces. Britain's response to this unrest has been the focus of much historical research, but few studies have examined the realities of the counterinsurgency at ground level or the relevance of this to the internal fracturing and collapse of the rebel movement in 1939. This article investigates the interplay between the colonial forces and the rural Arab population, highlighting Britain's resort to more heavy-handed military violence during the second phase of the Revolt, and situating these tactics in the wider issue of British abuses perpetrated during states of emergency.

Imperial historians have provided a number of detailed accounts of Britain's response to the Arab Revolt in Palestine of 1936 to 1939. Some of these accounts have emphasised the shift in British policy that occurred between the two phases of the revolt, leading to the implementation of a more robust and military-orientated policy in Palestine during the second phase of the rebellion.¹ However, such accounts have largely focused on the political and military elites, meaning that the implementation of British strategy at ground level has not yet been fully investigated. This article will therefore seek to add further substance to the existing historiography by exploring the surface of contact between the British armed forces and the Palestinian Arab rebels from 1936 to 1939. Drawing on private and official accounts provided by military and civil personnel serving in Palestine, the article will offer a reappraisal of the British response, demonstrating that the actions of soldiers and policemen were more repressive and often more brutal than has previously been appreciated.

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The conduct of British forces will, first, be contextualised with a summary of British policy-making during the revolt. This will be necessary in order to challenge those historical accounts that assert the primacy of Foreign Office diplomacy with the Arab world during the period of the revolt in Palestine. Under the threat of impending war in Europe, it is argued, Britain was forced to maintain control of its territories in the Middle East without a large military presence, meaning full-scale repression of the revolt in Palestine was ruled out.² Scholars such as Charles Townshend have further downplayed the scale of British repression by highlighting the conflicting imperatives of the civil and military authorities within Palestine, leading to the conclusion that British policy towards the revolt was highly unstable and never decisive.³ This article will demonstrate, however, that civil-military tensions were largely resolved during the latter stages of the revolt, leading to the implementation of complete military control in Palestine by October 1938. While the various conflicts within the British policy-making domain should be considered, it is essential to recognise the emergence of a broad consensus in Whitehall that the threat to British rule in Palestine had to be fully extinguished by military means before any pro-Arab diplomacy could be implemented.

With this established, the second section of the article will look in greater detail at how the political resolve to crush the revolt was carried out by the British army and the Palestine police force. Exploring the attitudes as well as the actions of soldiers and policemen, it will be shown that a marked shift occurred in their approach as the revolt progressed and gained strength. Often starting out with a romanticised respect for Arab customs, British servicemen became increasingly embittered during the second phase of the revolt as the danger to their safety rose significantly. This led them to adopt a more aggressive approach towards the wider Arab population, with a number of indiscriminate killings, beatings and humiliations of Arab villagers being carried out by British troops during 1938 and 1939.

The increasing brutalisation of the British response will be placed within the wider context of abuses perpetrated by British personnel during times of anti-colonial unrest in the twentieth century, with particular regard to later counterinsurgencies in Malaya and Kenya. It will be argued that the abuses in Palestine were not isolated cases involving a few errant troops; rather they can be situated within a tradition of violent tactics being employed in order to subdue large segments of colonial societies into submission. Following the consensus in Whitehall to end the revolt in Palestine as quickly as possible, it can be shown that military and colonial officials tolerated and often encouraged the troops' increasingly violent outbursts in order to intimidate the wider Arab population and thus cut off the revolt's base of popular support.

By highlighting Britain's resort to brutal tactics in order to overpower rebellious populations, colonial historiography can make important contributions to debates surrounding the rebellions themselves. In the case of Palestine too little attention has thus far been placed on the role of British repression in the rebellion's demise, with imperial historians and scholars of the Middle East operating in mutually exclusive fields of study. Consequently, most scholars of the Middle East have emphasised the revolt's internal weaknesses as the main reason for its decline in 1939 with little

weight given to the colonial force that opposed the rebels.⁴ The conclusion of this paper will therefore seek to add greater historical balance to these assessments by demonstrating the primary role played by the British counterinsurgency in the revolt's collapse.

I

The revolt in Palestine consisted of two distinct phases of rebel activity which were met with differing responses by the British. During the first phase of the revolt, which began with the declaration of an Arab general strike in April 1936, the apparatus of normal civilian government was maintained in Palestine, with the army employed in a subsidiary and defensive capacity. Despite the formation in rural areas of armed Arab bands launching attacks on Jewish settlements during this period, the first phase of the rebellion was largely directed by the urban and elitist Higher Arab Committee (HAC), established on 25 April 1936 to coordinate the general strike. Seeking to downplay the scale and significance of rebellious activity in Palestine, the British applied heavy pressure on the HAC leadership to call off the strikes while seeking to contain the rebel bands using orthodox civilian policing.⁵

By October 1936 a combination of political concessions, international diplomacy and the threat of martial law had succeeded in ending the initial wave of strikes and disturbances.⁶ This did not, however, prevent heavy criticism being heaped on the British administration. As far as the military was concerned, the failure to concede greater power to the armed forces at an earlier stage meant the revolt had been able to gain greater strength and durability than it would otherwise have enjoyed. 'The rebellion in Palestine provides perhaps more than anything else an example of the consequences of delaying the application of force to meet force', read the General Staff report on the 1936 disturbances, going on to state that the length of the rebellion demonstrated 'the failure to carry repression to its logical conclusion'.⁷

As the military applied increasing pressure on the London government for martial law to be implemented in the event of further disturbances, long-standing divisions between the Colonial Office and the Foreign Office became more pronounced. While fearful that martial law would constitute a confession of political failure in Palestine, the Colonial Office nonetheless strongly opposed Foreign Office proposals to suspend Jewish immigration to Palestine as a way of placating opposition to British policy in Palestine and the wider Arab world.⁸ This divide would widen during 1937 as Colonial Office reservations about martial law gradually diminished under the weight of military calls for 'immediate and drastic measures which the civil power could not provide'.⁹ Compounding Colonial Office concerns was the rising international criticism of British policy in Palestine. This reached a peak in the summer of 1937 when both the Palestine Royal Commission Report (led by Lord Peel) and the League of Nations Permanent Mandates Commission censured Britain for failing to impose martial law at the onset of the disorders.¹⁰

The net result of these assessments was to undermine the softer approach of the Foreign Office and convince the colonial secretary, William Ormsby-Gore, that a far

tougher and more militarised response would be required in the event of further disorder in Palestine.¹¹ Although martial law was never officially declared in Palestine, the shift in the political climate that occurred in Whitehall in the wake of the 1936 disturbances meant that a vastly different British response was put into action when outright Arab rebellion resumed in late 1937.¹² As the power of the civilian government in Palestine gradually gave way to military supremacy, the nature of British rule in Palestine was drastically changed. In this context it can be shown that a repressive military regime was installed in Palestine during the second phase of the revolt that allowed British troops to operate with relative impunity in their struggle to suppress the rebellion's base of popular support.

The tougher British policy in Palestine began in earnest when Arab rebels assassinated the district commissioner of the Galilee district, Lewis Andrews, on 26 September 1937. This event definitively broke the uneasy truce that had existed since the autumn of 1936 and marked the beginning of the second phase of the revolt that would prove to be far more widespread and violent than the first phase. In response to the assassination of the district commissioner, the officer administering the government in Palestine quickly outlawed both the HAC and the Arab National Committees (the regional bodies that had initially called the strikes in 1936). This move, approved by the cabinet in London on 29 September, meant that the British administration was able to cripple the revolt's central command by arresting, detaining or exiling the entire HAC leadership.¹³ It also ensured that the second phase of the revolt would assume a strongly peasant character as guerrilla bands began to re-form in the countryside in late 1937, no longer operating under an organised urban leadership. This new dynamic meant that any effort to diffuse the crisis could no longer operate within orthodox channels of political negotiation with the established Arab elites, and the British focus consequently shifted to localised and rural military activity.¹⁴

Symbolising the tougher approach to the Arab rebellion was the appointment in November 1937 of Sir Charles Tegart as chief adviser on terrorism and policing in Palestine. Replacing the previously civilian-orientated approach to colonial policing of Herbert Dowbiggin, Tegart promoted the idea of a flexible, security-focused police force with special semi-military squads that included a rural mounted police and a frontier force.¹⁵ Among Tegart's initiatives was the construction of seventy concrete fortresses at every main vantage-point in Palestine and a wire fence erected along the 80-kilometre frontier with Lebanon and Syria designed to stem the flow of foreign weapons and insurgents. Basing his approach on his experiences of anti-colonial insurgencies in northern India, Tegart classified rural villages as either 'good' or 'bad' with rewards and punishments to be dealt out accordingly. He also secured the importation of Doberman dogs from South Africa for the purpose of 'terrorist tracking' and established a centre in Jerusalem to train troops and policemen in methods of interrogation.¹⁶

The legal structure was also tightened in late 1937 by the introduction of new emergency measures (the Palestine Defence Order in Council of 1937), permitting the use of press censorship, collective fines, demolition of houses and arrest and detention without need of a warrant.¹⁷ In addition to this, military courts were established

with the power to impose the death penalty for a number of charges including sabotage, arson and intimidation.¹⁸ Under the 1937 Defence Order in Council the sentences of the military courts were subject to the confirmation of the GOC, but no appeal could be made once this confirmation was given. Replacing General Wavell as general officer commanding (GOC) on 9 April 1938, Lieutenant-General R. H. Haining successfully lobbied for further relaxations in the laws of evidence, including the acceptance of verbal statements made outside the courts. Haining also ordered the widening of the range of offences that could be tried by the courts to include possession of arms, damage to Tegart's security fence and wearing uniform likely to be mistaken for that of the military or police.¹⁹

In an effort to strangle the base of popular support enjoyed by the rebels in rural areas, the military was also allowed to make increasing use of collective punishments. In 1935 an amendment to the Collective Responsibility Ordinance of 1924 removed the necessity of proving that the original crime had been committed in the area of the village or tribe being punished. Then, under the 1937 Defence Order in Council, the ordinance was extended to the entire country as a means of specifically combating the revolt.²⁰ To this end, regulation 19 of the Defence Order sanctioned the use of collective levies as a punitive measure, while regulation 20 provided for 'the forfeiture and destruction of any property (whether owned in common or privately) which has been used as a base for hostile action or outrage'.²¹

Despite the introduction of more stringent legislation, a relatively subdued period in the spring of 1938 was followed that summer by a resurgence in rebel activity, prompting General Haining to make increasingly urgent appeals for a second division to be sent to Palestine.²² The reinforcements were initially denied by a London government preoccupied with the threat of war in Europe and thus unwilling to commit further troops to the Middle East.²³ But this obstacle was temporarily removed after the Munich agreement of 29 September 1938 averted the immediate threat of war with Nazi Germany, thus allowing Britain to free an additional division for service in Palestine.²⁴ As a result some 20,000 troops were stationed in Palestine by the end of 1938, complemented by a strong RAF deployment.²⁵

While the resolution of the Munich crisis allowed the temporary dispatch of an extra division to Palestine, the heightened threat of war in Europe led to deeper changes in British imperial strategy as policy-makers realised a permanent transfer of troops to the Middle East was now an impossibility. Given that protection of the Suez Canal was still the priority for British troops in the region, the Foreign Office's emphasis on Arab-friendly diplomacy now became Britain's principal means for maintaining her territories in the rest of the Middle East. Some historians have consequently concluded that British policy-makers held back from full-scale repression of the revolt in Palestine. Under the threat of war in Europe, it is argued, the pro-Arab concerns of the Foreign Office eventually prevailed over military and Colonial Office demands for a more ruthless approach in Palestine.²⁶

While such accounts portray significant developments in the way Palestine was viewed by policy-makers in London, their focus on Britain's wider strategic thinking means that treatment of the revolt itself is submerged in a broader geopolitical debate.

When looking at the specific policy decisions affecting the revolt in Palestine, it can be seen that Britain refused to consider Arab demands in Palestine until the revolt had been firmly put down. This approach, described by historian Martin Kolinsky as a 'dual policy' of 'appeasement and suppression of violence', was formalised at the inter-departmental government talks held in October 1938 and attended by the Foreign Office, the Colonial Office, the Palestine high commissioner and military commanders.²⁷ The new consensus was summarised by the secretary of state for the colonies at the talks: 'if concessions were to be made, it was essential to avoid the appearance of surrender to terrorism. . . thorough-going measures for the restoration of security must therefore precede and accompany the proposed declaration of policy'.²⁸ Also present at these talks was the officer administering the government in Palestine who confirmed the support of the civil authority in Jerusalem for comprehensive military repression of the revolt:

As regards ultimate policy. . . the necessity of restoring order, and preventing the recurrence of disturbances in the future by a systematic disarming of the population. . . it is essential for our prestige both now and in the future that the extensive reinforcements which are now reaching Palestine should in fact be used to put an end to terrorism.²⁹

Thus it emerges that the new emphasis on appeasing Arab public opinion was strongly tempered among policy-makers by the realisation that the revolt was posing an increasingly serious threat to British rule in Palestine. Government bodies in Whitehall and Jerusalem were agreed on the need to make conciliatory moves towards the Palestinian Arabs, but it was decided this policy could be implemented only once the revolt had been comprehensively defeated. In this context, gestures to the Arab community, such as the publication of the White Paper of May 1939 with its rejection of the Peel Commission partition plan, were not implemented until the rebellion was being successfully contained and suppressed by British forces.³⁰

In order to achieve the necessary calm that would allow the diplomatic measures to be implemented, the extra division sent to Palestine was accompanied in late 1938 by a further strengthening of military powers at the expense of civilian government. With high commissioner Wauchope having been replaced by the more subservient Sir Harold MacMichael in February 1938, civil-military tensions over security operations had evaporated and in October 1938 the secretary of state for the colonies was able to place the Palestine police force under the operational authority of the GOC.³¹ Military rule was thus extended to the whole of Palestine with the country now divided into four districts, each under the jurisdiction of a military commander.³² In addition to this, new regulations came into force after November 1938, allowing the military further to tighten its control over the country. These included a permanent night curfew and new travel restrictions requiring every male over 16 years of age to carry an identity card and a permit to travel.³³

The ensuing military drive in late 1938 and early 1939 to crush the rebel movement achieved great success and has been documented in much of the existing historiography that examines British military strategy during the Arab Revolt.³⁴ While these

accounts affirm the strength of the post-October 1938 counterinsurgency, their focus on military tactics and political decision-making means that no detailed description of how the counterinsurgency initiatives were carried out at ground level has yet been given. The second section of this article will therefore seek to build upon the existing historiography's depiction of a tougher, more militarised British response to the second phase of the revolt by recounting the experiences of British personnel serving in Palestine during the rebellion.

II

As with the policy-makers in London, a clear change in the attitude and approach of British troops serving in Palestine occurred as the revolt progressed. This can be summarised as a switch from a feeling of calm and normality during the first phase of the rebellion to the pervasion of a far more belligerent and aggressive atmosphere during the second phase. Similarly, the general attitude of British personnel towards the wider Arab population underwent a significantly negative change as the revolt wore on.

At the outbreak of the rebellion in the spring of 1936, British soldiers and policemen generally appeared to hold positive, if heavily stereotyped, perceptions of 'the Arab' and his customs. Often arriving in the country expecting to find the Palestine they had encountered in the Bible, British troops seemed to find many of these romantic images fulfilled in the Arab community.³⁵ Notions of valiant tribesmen with a strong sense of pride and hospitality are frequently found in soldiers' descriptions of life in Palestine in 1936 and 1937. As Patrick Norman, an officer with a naval armoured car squadron in Tiberias, comments: 'I think practically everybody in the services admired the Arab. He's a good tough chap and... they're virile people.'³⁶

Many soldiers and policemen describe how the importance attached to ceremony, politeness and hospitality in Arab culture made it easier to develop friendly relations, partly because these were also considered to be typically British characteristics. In contrast, the Jews, while often respected for their cultural sophistication, were commonly held to be abrupt and difficult to converse with. As police officer Richard Catling summarised: 'the Arab of course with his love of sport, his love of hospitality, the sort of Lawrence of Arabia connotation, I suppose attracted a lot of us more than the undoubted qualities of the Jewish population... one admired the Jewish intelligence and excellence in art and in medicine'.³⁷

As the Arab Revolt began to gather strength in 1936, the British military was confined to a defensive role in Palestine, attempting to contain the violence rather than carry out offensive missions against the rebels.³⁸ Still operating under the authority of the civil power, soldiers were stationed in large and relatively immobile garrisons whose presence was designed to restore law and order to troubled areas. In the first phase of the revolt the garrisons were typically employed to guard the country's transport and energy infrastructure or protect the life and property of Jewish communities.³⁹ Working on the Iraqi Petroleum Company pipeline that came out in Haifa, aircraftman Samuel Wentworth reports that his armoured cars were never attacked or bombed in 1936 and 1937. This, he states, was largely due to the inferiority of

Arab weaponry which limited the rebels to nocturnal acts of sabotage on the pipeline.⁴⁰ Other British soldiers confirm this when they speak of rebels carrying 'ancient muskets using rusty nails as ammo' or throwing 'home-made grenades which were beer cans stuffed with stones. . . with an explosive in it and a bit of fuse which made more noise than cause any damage'.⁴¹

In this context of relatively low-risk operations being carried out against a poorly armed rebel force, British soldiers seem to have generally maintained their sympathies for the Arab population during the first phase of the revolt.⁴² These feelings are often contrasted with the strong antipathy that soldiers later developed for Jewish rebels in the 1940s.⁴³ Similar attitudes were to be found in the Palestine police force in 1936, despite the fact that the police was still in control of security operations at this stage and therefore in the front line of the struggle to contain the rebellion:

Compared with the Jewish brand of terrorism which was to come later, it was all good clean fun. We chased them [the Arab rebels] and they did their best to get out of the way. . . You were chasing an enemy you could see who stopped and fired at you and you fired at him. It wasn't a case of a concealed land mine or killing from ambush. That came later.⁴⁴

The early stages of the revolt therefore presented relatively low levels of danger to the majority of troops and policemen serving in Palestine. As a result life was generally relaxed for them during this period and the focus on sporting and social events in the private correspondences dating from 1936 and 1937 indicates an air of normality during this period.⁴⁵

Descriptions of the tranquillity of life in Palestine are much harder to come by, however, in British accounts dating from the second phase of the revolt. As the rebel bands began to re-form in the latter months of 1937, the urban-led movement of civil disobedience and low-key skirmishes that had characterised the disturbances of 1936 gave way to a protracted campaign of peasant guerrilla warfare.⁴⁶ With the rebel attacks now directly targeting British forces, the soldiers' respect and sympathy for the Arab community came to be replaced by bitterness and anger.

Operating in small bands and usually indistinguishable from the wider Arab population, the rebels were able to inflict increasing damage on British forces, not by open confrontation, but by sniping, ambush and roadside bombs.⁴⁷ Seeing their comrades injured or killed in this manner became a common experience for British troops and, however sporadic the attacks, they began to feel under constant threat in the face of an unpredictable and unseen enemy.⁴⁸

The growing feeling of vulnerability was compounded by a wider failure on the part of the Palestine government to engage with rural Arab communities and maintain contact with the village mukhtars.⁴⁹ As a result, when the urban leadership of the HAC was expelled in September 1937 and the revolt's centre of gravity shifted to the countryside, British forces were increasingly isolated in their struggle to contain the rebellion. By the summer of 1939 General Haining was forced to admit that 'contact with the fellah [Arab peasant] has been almost completely lost during the last three years of trouble'.⁵⁰

With Arab villagers having little sympathy for the counterinsurgency, the series of British offensive operations launched in early 1938 against rural commanders such as 'Abd al-Rahim al-Hajj Muhammad were largely unsuccessful.⁵¹ In this context new approaches were adopted after a series of conferences in the spring of 1938. One such policy, beginning on 20 May 1938, involved the prolonged occupation of large numbers of villages in Galilee and Samaria, designed to deny the rebel groups any kind of base from which to work.⁵² While military reports claimed this led to a decrease in incidents in the occupied areas, they also acknowledged that the occupation of as many as twenty-five villages at any one time (with around forty troops at each post) led to further disaffection among the local population.⁵³

The growing tide of opposition to British forces in the rural community was augmented by the erection of Tegart's security fence along the northern Palestinian border to prevent the infiltration of rebel fighters from Syria and Lebanon. The course of the fence cut through the middle of Arab farms, thus denying many Arab farmers access to their own land.⁵⁴ The resulting opposition to this project culminated on 29 June 1938 with the destruction of six kilometres of the fence, prompting the military to transfer the Royal Ulster Rifles battalion to the northern frontier where a 22-hour curfew was imposed for three days.⁵⁵

Acknowledging the scale and popularity of the rebellion in Palestine, British forces increasingly targeted the revolt's wider base of support by imposing collective fines on whole towns and villages, as documented in section I of this article. If collective fines could not be paid then other methods of extracting the money were found, often involving the confiscation of a village's entire livestock.⁵⁶ Despite these measures, however, it seems villagers generally refused to cooperate with the British, especially as the revolt's popular base mushroomed in the rural northern areas in the summer and autumn of 1938. Indeed by November of that year General Haining was moved to report: 'The rebel gangs have now acquired, by terrorist methods, such a hold over the mass of the population that it is not untrue to say that every Arab in the country is a potential enemy of the government'.⁵⁷

In their increasing awareness of the popular support now backing the revolt, the British began to resort to stronger forms of collective punishment, sending their relations with the peasantry into a downward spiral. Villagers who refused to cooperate with the military were now subject to the wholesale destruction of their property, as stipulated in regulation nine of the 1937 Defence Orders.⁵⁸ Lieutenant General Carr, for example, describes how he journeyed to the town of Qala to oversee the demolition of houses thought to belong to Arabs who had taken part in a train derailment: 'I saw to it that the RE put in extra explosive to not only demolish the culprits' houses but also those adjoining it. In all I had eight houses obliterated'.⁵⁹ According to historian Bruce Hoffman, the authorities destroyed around 2,000 houses between 1936 and 1940.⁶⁰

As well as the demolitions, soldiers began to target the domestic base of women villagers in an effort to discourage them from lending their support to the rebels. As policeman S. Burr wrote in September 1938, 'anything European is looked upon [by local villagers] with suspicion, the only concession being Singer sowing machines

which are the first things the soldiers destroy when searching a house'.⁶¹ In addition, village 'search and clean' operations would often include the ransacking of store cupboards and the tearing open of sacks of sugar, flour and rice to be emptied around the inhabitants' living quarters or covered in olive oil, thus ruining the household's store of basic supplies for the year. One British civil servant in Palestine informed the Colonial Office in 1938: 'Practically no search carried out by troops is not accompanied by... smashing up of property, mixing of grain (which naturally makes all of it useless) and, worst of all, extensive robbery and looting'.⁶²

Having halted the recruitment of any Arab personnel in the Palestine police force in 1937, the previously civilian-based approach to security operations had now been replaced by Tegart's semi-military strike forces that paid little regard to relations with the wider Arab community.⁶³ Although the military had by this stage taken over complete command of security operations in Palestine, army generals were nonetheless keen to transfer responsibility for the daily maintenance of public security to the Palestine police force.⁶⁴ As a result, policemen continued to work on the frontline in the fight against the Arab rebels, mirroring the army's eagerness to disrupt the domestic base of villagers:

We did certainly mess villages up... furniture was broken, drawers were pulled out, stuff thrown on the floor... Afterwards the villagers would complain that the British police and the British troops had ransacked their house and destroyed things and some people pooh-poohed that, but it was quite right.⁶⁵

The hardship imposed on the rural population was augmented by the military's policy of placing villagers in open-air pens for several hours while the living quarters were searched. In May 1939 this policy led to disaster in the village of Halhoul, near Hebron, as documented by Eliot Forster, a British doctor working at St Luke's hospital in Nablus. Forster's diary records how a number of villagers, including women and elderly men, had been forced to sit in a cage for hours at a time without water, over a period of seven days, eventually causing eight men to die of exposure.⁶⁶

British records show, however, that the military's 'search and clean' operations were continually frustrated by the support given to rebel commanders by local villagers, creating further distance between an aggressive colonial counterinsurgency and an increasingly disgruntled Arab peasantry. This in turn led many British troops to dehumanise the Arab population, as exemplified by the treatment of Arab prisoners placed at the front of trains in order to combat the sabotage of railway lines. Private Bellows of the Royal Hampshire Regiment states: 'If there was any land mines it was them [the Arab prisoner] that hit them. Rather a dirty trick, but we enjoyed it'.⁶⁷ The memoirs of the district commissioner of Jerusalem, Edward Keith-Roach, confirm this tactic was widely used during the second phase of the revolt, and soldier Arthur Lane recounts how it was extended to include military lorries.⁶⁸ If the prisoner survived a day on the bonnet of a lorry, the driver would swerve the vehicle suddenly: 'the poor wog on the front would roll off onto the deck. Well if he was lucky he'd get away with a broken leg, but if he was unlucky the truck coming up behind would hit him. But nobody bothered to go and pick the bits up'.⁶⁹

Without the support of the local population, it was military might that eventually led the British counterinsurgency to prevail. The turning point came in October 1938 when the extra division was dispatched to Palestine and the military's rule was extended to the whole of Palestine. Along with the new restrictions on freedom of movement, these measures meant that the army was finally able to stamp its authority over the rebel bands. Basing their approach on the success enjoyed by Captain Orde Wingate who had unofficially been conducting Jewish and British commandos in 'Special Night Squads', British operations now became far more offensive, aggressive and willing to target the wider Arab community.⁷⁰

By the time the new troops began to arrive, the village occupation scheme had brought most of northern Palestine under British control, forcing the rebel groups south to the previously quieter areas around Jerusalem, Hebron, Beersheba and Gaza. Thus, after an interim period of reorganisation, the extra division began a process described by military staff as 'combing the country northwards' in an effort to crush the revolt definitively and disarm the population.⁷¹

The success of this sweep northwards in late 1938 and early 1939 allowed soldiers the opportunity to vent their aggression and frustration. A common way of doing this was by inflicting humiliation on Arab peasants during the village searches that were now a constant feature of the counterinsurgency. The memoirs of Major B. A. Pond describe villagers being stripped naked and herded into fenced off areas where they were fire hosed: 'As I approached he [the British sergeant] said, "Sir, I am giving these dirty buggers a bath". And they needed it!'⁷²

Arthur Lane, meanwhile, recalls the brutal treatment of seven Arab rebels who were captured by his regiment following a skirmish in late 1938. The rebels were first beaten by the British troops with rifle butts and bayonets: 'this lad's eye was hanging down on his cheek. The whole eye had been knocked out and it was hanging down and there was blood dripping on his face'. The captives were then made to run a gauntlet consisting of two lines of British soldiers armed with pickaxes and bayonet scabbards: 'Now, any that could run when they got to the other end would run straight into the police meat wagon and they were sent down to Acre [prison]. Any that died, they went straight into the other meat wagon and they were dumped at one of the villages on the outside.'⁷³

Further acts of brutality are recorded by policeman S. Burr who writes that, after observing the killing of two Jews in the village of Manshiya near Acre, soldiers from the Ulster Rifles battalion chased the assailant to nearby Kafr Yasif: 'their first objective was the shooting of four men on horseback. Presuming, I suppose, that anyone on a horse was a bad hat'. When Arabs from the village responded by killing two soldiers with a land mine placed on their return path, the response of the Ulsters was ferocious. Burr describes the destruction of the whole village (about 150 houses and all their perishable goods) and the killing of over twenty-five Arabs, adding that it was only the arrival of the district commissioner that 'restrained them from killing all and sundry'.⁷⁴ This incident at Kafr Yasif is confirmed by correspondence between the high commissioner and the Colonial Office, as well as the private correspondence of Eric F. Bishop, an Anglican minister in Jerusalem at the time, who gives a more

conservative estimate of nine Arab deaths and the burning of between sixty-eight and seventy-two houses.⁷⁵

Ample evidence that this type of reprisal mission had become commonplace in Palestine can be found in official British records and private papers. In this vein, Keith-Roach's memoirs describe 'the running amok and committal of atrocities by British troops against the village of Bassa in Northern Palestine'.⁷⁶ The Archdeacon of St George's in Jerusalem, Bishop Graham-Brown, lodged protests against this attack and a number of others like it, including a revenge mission carried out by British troops on the village of Kawkab Abu Haija, near Jerusalem, in which the threshing floors were burned and the entire village destroyed.⁷⁷ Meanwhile, after four British constables killed seven villagers in a reprisal mission in the village of Miska near Kfar Saba, the official explanation that the attack was carried out by a Jewish group had to be abandoned after police chief Fitzgerald's investigations in August established that 'the motive of the crime was revenge for the death of British Constable Stevens'.⁷⁸

British forces were also widely involved in looting and criminal rackets during the second phase of the revolt. One of these rackets involved British troops selling Arab villagers cans of petrol, ownership of which had been outlawed under the new security restrictions. After taking money from the villagers, troops would inform the Palestine police that illegal supplies of petrol were being held in the village, resulting in the arrest and imprisonment of the Arab.⁷⁹ Stories of soldiers looting Arab homes and shops as they made their sweep northwards are also common: 'The soldier of today has quite a good time and seems to have plenty of money, of course out here he has plenty of looting to augment his salary'.⁸⁰

Clearly then, a significant change occurred in the approach and attitude of the British police and military toward the Arab population during the second phase of the revolt. Initially holding a romanticised respect for Arab customs and viewing the rebels as an honourable enemy, British troops became increasingly brutal towards rural Arab communities as the rebellion wore on. By the latter stages of 1938, troops were resorting to violent acts of reprisal on whole towns and villages in order to strangle the revolt's popular base of support. As police officer Kitson put it, 'it got to the stage where the so-called terrorism became critical and in order to fight terrorism we became terrorists ourselves more or less'.⁸¹

Key to this change in the mindset of British forces is the frustration and fear that built up as the rebellion became ever more successful in 1937 and 1938.⁸² But this must also be placed in the wider political-military context of British policy towards the revolt. We have seen in the first section of this article that the London government became increasingly convinced after 1937 that the revolt had to be crushed as quickly as possible and that a repressive military regime in Palestine was the best way to achieve this. In this context, the military leadership in Palestine sought to harness the troops' rising aggression in order to frighten the rebellion's popular base of support into submission. As chief secretary Battershill wrote in 1937, 'I am sure Arabs look upon murder as a justifiable weapon to use not only in private feuds but in political controversies... so our only hope is to make murder as unpleasant as possible'.⁸³

As a result of this approach, senior officers often gave free rein to the anger that had built up in the soldiers under their command. Arthur Lane discusses this at length, describing how the commanding officer of his battalion recognised the need for soldiers to vent their frustrations after men had been lost in a battle: 'I'll give him [the commanding officer] credit for it, he told the NCO's to back off, let them blow off steam, let them do what they wanted'.⁸⁴ Meanwhile, when asked if there were officers present when Arab prisoners were beaten by the 'gauntlet' of pickaxes and bayonet scabbards (described above), Lane replies: 'oh yes, definitely done with their approval'.⁸⁵

At a higher level, the desire to minimise the attention paid to troops' transgressions meant that the political and military leadership in Palestine gave tacit endorsement of the army's conduct. As hundreds of allegations and complaints of British atrocities were filed by Arab lobby groups, the Colonial Office and the Palestine government were initially reluctant to give any response, believing that to answer the accusations was to give them a credence they did not deserve.⁸⁶ When the allegations began to circulate in the European media, however, Colonial Office officials became concerned at the effect of German- and Italian-supported Arab propaganda on Britain's standing in the wider Arab world and Muslim India. A more active campaign of counter-propaganda was consequently put into action in early 1939 that included 'the establishment of special machinery in Jerusalem for furnishing regularly and rapidly material to enable us to deal with allegations put out by the Arab Centre'.⁸⁷

In this atmosphere of propaganda point scoring, any thorough investigation into the conduct of British troops in Palestine was rendered impossible. When the GOC in Palestine compiled a report on the subject, the approach was one of unquestioning defence of British soldiers: 'It is realised that responsible people do not believe the wild stories of wholesale destruction and brutality now being circulated by interested propagandists. . . and the foregoing paragraphs are not written with the object of dispelling such beliefs'.⁸⁸ From this starting point Haining's report was primarily concerned with defending the reputation of British forces, focusing on 'the many institutions under German and Italian control' who 'encourage the retailing by Arabs of "atrocities" stories against the Military which they later circulate'.⁸⁹

A similar report published by the high commissioner, Harold MacMichael, mirrors Haining's approach: 'It is impossible to take seriously, or to attempt a detailed refutation of these fantastic and baseless inventions', writes MacMichael, adding, 'the honourable reputation and traditions of H. M. Forces and of the Police should be sufficient to discredit them'.⁹⁰ As rumours of British brutality began to filter through to the House of Commons in January 1939, the secretary of state for the colonies, Malcolm MacDonald, wrote to high commissioner MacMichael regarding punitive measures taken at Jenin on 24 August 1938. The high commissioner replied, confirming that ninety-six dwellings and six walls had been obliterated in controlled explosions, adding 'advantage was taken of the demolitions to open up the inconveniently narrow main street of Jenin'. Despite the admission that an innocent woman had also been killed in these operations, MacMichael concluded: 'I do not consider that any enquiry into the conduct of the operations was or is necessary or desirable'.⁹¹

The high commissioner was similarly dismissive of the many protests made against British reprisal missions on Arab villages. In response to Bishop Graham-Brown's complaint concerning the destruction of the village of Kawkab Abu Haija (described above), for example, MacMichael asserted that the village had a consistent record of rebel activity and that the action taken by British troops had produced 'an extremely salutary effect. . . . Though no doubt hardship was suffered by individuals, the corporate guilt of the village rendered it, I fear, inevitable'.⁹²

The reluctance of the civil and military authorities in Palestine to take seriously the allegations of British abuses was a common feature of subsequent British counterinsurgency campaigns where inquiries into events such as the 1948 Batang Kali massacre in Malaya were either obstructed or dropped altogether.⁹³ Some of the most widely documented cases of British abuse occurred during the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya, where whole sections of the Kikuyu population were detained in camps such as the ones at Ruthagathi and Hola. Despite the many accusations that began to be levelled against the Kenyan administration in the 1950s, the Colonial Office vehemently resisted attempts to investigate the claims. As with the Palestine Revolt, many of the complaints came from British 'insiders' – clergymen, doctors and social workers – who often used the channels of media and parliament to make their protests heard back in Britain. Thus the complaints made by non-governmental workers in Palestine such as Bishop Graham-Brown, Eliot Forster and Eric F. Bishop were mirrored by the likes of Eileen Fletcher and Victor Sluter who had witnessed police atrocities in Kenya. In the case of Kenya, the response of the Colonial Office was to seek to undermine the complainants' character and question their political motives in much the same way as MacMichael and Haining's reports had dismissed the protests in Palestine as 'wild stories' circulated by 'interested propagandists'.⁹⁴

The historian David Anderson has shown how in Kenya this endorsement of police brutality helped foster an intrinsically violent colonial regime in which 'the culture of impunity went right to the very top'.⁹⁵ While there is no evidence to suggest that incidents in Palestine, such as the killings at Halhoul and Kafr Yasif, were part of an institutionalised framework, it is nonetheless clear that the troops' growing anger and violence towards the general Arab population were given tacit encouragement by their superiors. The tactic of instilling fear into the wider populace in order to cut off a guerrilla rebellion's base of popular support, as well as the importance of defending the reputation of British forces against fascist propaganda, therefore meant that no thorough and impartial investigation was launched into the conduct of the armed forces. As a result, the brutal tactics employed by low-level soldiers were allowed to continue relatively unchecked during the second phase of the revolt.

III

We have seen that the British dealt with the two phases of the Arab rebellion in highly contrasting ways. This was true at both the policy level and in the conduct of troops and policemen on the ground. Operating under the normal procedures of civilian government during the first phase of the revolt, British troops and policemen were often

sympathetic toward the Arab community and performed their duties with a relative degree of normality. During the second phase of the revolt this situation changed dramatically as the rebel campaign shifted to the countryside and became increasingly difficult to distinguish from the general peasant population. Coinciding with a new consensus in Whitehall to crush the revolt by military means, soldiers were given free rein to vent their frustrations on the wider Arab population, leading to many brutal episodes of British repression and reprisals being recorded in 1938 and 1939.

It is argued here that the growing tendency towards violent coercion of the Arab population should be considered in the wider context of British abuses perpetrated during anti-colonial uprisings. Recent studies carried out on a diverse range of British counterinsurgencies have investigated the misconduct of British troops and its role in subduing rebellious populations.⁹⁶ Thus, while Sir Gerald Templar's much celebrated campaign of winning the 'hearts and minds' of the Malayan people was crucial to Britain's eventual success against the communists, the use of detention camps, reprisal killings and food deprivation in order to control and intimidate the wider population was also of vital importance.⁹⁷

So it proves to be with the revolt in Palestine, where the British campaign shared many common features with both previous and subsequent counterinsurgencies. In this way the aerial bombing of dissident villages, most famously pioneered in Iraq in 1920, was enthusiastically applied against the rebels in Palestine by RAF commander Arthur Harris (later to lead the Second World War aerial destruction of German cities), as it was against the tribes of the Northwest Frontier Province of India, the Nuers in Sudan and the communists in Malaya.⁹⁸ In a similar way, the collective punishments used in Palestine and the legal structures which incorporated them were mirrored in a number of future 'emergency situations', most notably during the Malayan rebellion of 1948 to 1960.⁹⁹

In the case of Palestine, however, little scholarly attention has thus far been given to the abuses committed by British forces and the extent to which British repression caused the internal fracturing of the rebellion, with many historical accounts simply replicating the official colonial narrative. Thus, where General Haining states the aim of the village occupation scheme of 1938 was 'to protect, and gain the confidence of, the law-abiding among the inhabitants', historian Tom Bowden describes the same policy as 'an early attempt to win hearts and minds'.¹⁰⁰ This short study of the British response has shown that the use of tactics such as the village occupation scheme was in fact a principal factor in the complete alienation of the Palestinian peasantry from the British administration during the revolt, leading the police force and the military to apply increasingly indiscriminate violence in order to control the population.

As a result, the analytical balance between the revolt's internal weaknesses and British repression must be reconsidered when it comes to explaining the reasons for the collapse of the rebellion in 1939. While the rebel movement undoubtedly suffered from infighting and a lack of cohesion, the extent of British repression meant that a home-grown, rurally based rebel movement had little or no chance of succeeding. With the British army sweeping northwards in late 1938, the rebel groups were denied any refuge as their rural retreats were subjected to constant inspections and

raids. As General Haining's report on the post-October 1938 offensive stated, 'The whole country. . . was now in the hands of, and occupied by, British troops. From this time on it became increasingly difficult for the remnants of the rebel gangs to find any security or rest. Constant searches of villages and areas harried them by day and night'.¹⁰¹

This constant surveillance and harassment of the wider population rendered it impossible for the rebel bands to tap into their previously crucial base of support from the towns and villages in rural areas. Furthermore, the imposition of measures such as a permanent night curfew on all roads outside urban areas and obligatory identity cards meant that British troops could identify and attack rebel forces with greater ease. Military reports testify to the success of these operations, recording in the five months between November 1938 and March 1939 the capture of 589 rifles, 204 pistols and revolvers, 105 shotguns and over 50,000 rounds of ammunition. In the same period the reports describe 'the most important engagements' leading to the killing of some 231 rebel fighters, including the revolt's most charismatic rural figurehead, 'Abd al-Rahim al-Hajj Muhammad'.¹⁰²

By 1939 over 9,000 Arab detainees were being held in Palestinian prisons and detention centres, some ten times the figure of 1937.¹⁰³ The two military courts in Jerusalem and Haifa, meanwhile, applied the death penalty with greater frequency during the second phase of the rebellion. This peaked in 1938 when the GOC confirmed 54 death sentences out of 382 trials.¹⁰⁴ Under this kind of pressure, it is clear that the rebel movement stood little chance of survival, and British repression must therefore rank as the principal factor in the revolt's disintegration in 1939. As Napier Crookenden, a British officer stationed in Palestine with the Cheshire Regiment, recalled, 'There was never any question of their succeeding in their rebellion'.¹⁰⁵

Usually focusing on the internal dynamics of the rebel movement, most western and Zionist scholars of the Arab Revolt have argued that traditional factional and regional divisions among the *fellahin* submerged the anti-colonial political goals of the revolt after the urban leadership was expelled in 1937.¹⁰⁶ Linked to these explanations of the revolt's failure is the perception of an inherently backward peasantry that lacked a revolutionary command structure.¹⁰⁷ More recently, Ted Swedenburg has challenged these ideas by asserting that the rebels possessed a coherent political agenda based on traditions of peasant resistance to feudal and colonial subjugation. This leads Swedenburg to conclude: 'If anything it was the formidable strength of the enemy that was more crucial to the peasant rebels' defeat than their purported "backwardness"'.¹⁰⁸

Clearly then, studying the British counterinsurgency and its effect on the rebellion can make a worthwhile contribution to these debates. Generally, however, imperial historians have steered away from such debates, preferring to concentrate on policy-making and military strategy rather than the interaction between troops and the local Arab population. By focusing on the conduct of British troops at ground level, this article has shown the counterinsurgency was more repressive and brutal than is usually appreciated. The implications of these findings for the way we view the collapse of the rebel bands suggests that imperial historians can add much needed perspective to scholarship dealing with the evolution of the Zionist-Palestinian conflict. In the case of the Arab Revolt of 1936 to 1939, greater emphasis on British repression

must be assigned to the collapse of the rebellion, without replicating the nationalist Palestinian narrative of an entirely unified and heroic Arab struggle.¹⁰⁹ In addition to this, great scope exists for further study exploring the extent to which the shift in British policy towards virtual military government reflected an increasingly mobilised Arab resistance movement. In this way it is hoped that imperial history can contribute to the emergence of a more rounded investigation of the revolt, examining the complex interplay between colonial actors and Arab society.

Notes

- [1] Among the historians that have documented the trend towards a hardening of the British response in 1937 and 1938 are Kolinsky, 'The Collapse and Restoration of Public Security', 158–64, and Bowden, *The Breakdown of Public Security*.
- [2] See, for example, Cohen, 'British Strategy and the Palestine Question, 1936–39', 182–83.
- [3] Townshend, 'The Defence of Palestine', 921–36.
- [4] Examples of scholars who place more emphasis on the revolt's internal weaknesses include: Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement*, 269; Arnon-Ohanna, 'The Bands in the Palestinian Arab Revolt', 229–47; Bowden, 'The Politics of Arab Rebellion', 147–74.
- [5] For the approach of the Palestine police force, see Kroizer, 'From Dowbiggin to Tegart', 122–23.
- [6] For the focus on diplomacy in order to end the rebellion of 1936, see Cohen, *Palestine: Retreat from the Mandate*, 26–31.
- [7] 'Military Lessons of the Arab Rebellion in Palestine 1936' (167), The National Archives, London (TNA), War Office (WO) 191/70.
- [8] See Cohen, *Palestine: Retreat from the Mandate*, 12–14. For Colonial Office reluctance to impose martial law, see colonial secretary Ormsby-Gore's comments in 'Palestine: Defence Orders in Council, 1931 and 1936', memorandum from colonial secretary, 4 March 1937, TNA WO 32/9618.
- [9] 'Military Lessons', TNA WO 191/70, 34.
- [10] See Colonial Office, *Palestine Royal Commission Report*, 368; League of Nations Permanent Mandates Commission, Minutes of the 32nd Session, 6th Meeting, 3 Aug. 1937. Available from <http://domino.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF> (5 Aug. 2006).
- [11] See Cohen, *Palestine: Retreat from the Mandate*, 53.
- [12] The difference between the emergency regulations imposed by Britain in 1937–38 and a full declaration of martial law is discussed by Townshend in 'The Defence of Palestine', 927.
- [13] See Telegram no.453, Battershill to Ormsby-Gore, 6 Oct. 1937, TNA, Colonial Office (CO) 733/332/75156/1–64.
- [14] For rural hegemony during the second phase of the revolt, see Abboushi, 'The Road to Rebellion', 42–44. For the decentralisation of British military activity in early 1938, see 'Operations from 1 April 1938 to 18 May 1938' (5–6), TNA WO 32/9496.
- [15] See Kroizer, 'From Dowbiggin to Tegart', 118.
- [16] Report of meeting held on 31 Dec 1937 involving Charles Tegart and high-ranking police officials, in Wauchope's dispatch of 24 Jan. 1938, TNA CO 733/383/1. See also Keith-Roach, *Pasha of Jerusalem*, 191.
- [17] 'Disturbances and Martial Law Policy', TNA WO 32/9618.
- [18] General Haining, 'Report on Military Control in Palestine' (18–23), TNA WO 191/89.
- [19] 'GOC's report on emergency regulations of 1938/39' (21–22), TNA WO 191/89.
- [20] 'Disturbances and Martial Law Policy', TNA WO 32/9618.
- [21] JAG's Office to DPS, 3 May 1937, TNA WO 32/9618.

- [22] Haining, 'Report on Operations in Palestine from 1 Aug. 1938 to 31 Oct 1938' (2–3), TNA WO 32/9498. For the resurgence of rebel activity in the summer of 1938, see Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement*, 237.
- [23] SSC to HC, 1 Sep 1938, TNA CO 733/367.
- [24] Minutes from 'Palestine Discussions', first and second meetings, 7 Oct 1938, TNA, Foreign Office (FO) 371/21864.
- [25] The extra division consisted of five battalions of infantry, a battery of Royal Horse Artillery, the 11th Hussars and ancillary troops. 'Report on Operations in Palestine from 1 Aug. 1938 to 31 Oct 1938' (6), TNA WO 32/9498. For details of the RAF deployment see Harris to Nicholl, 5 Sep 1938, TNA, Air Force (AIR) 23/765.
- [26] See, for example, Cohen, 'British Strategy and the Palestine Question', 182–83. Other historians who make this point include Bethell, *The Palestine Triangle*, 42–49; Sheffer, 'Appeasement and the Problems of Palestine', 395.
- [27] Kolinsky, 'The Collapse and Restoration of Public Security', 160.
- [28] 'Palestine Discussions', first meeting, 7 October 1938, TNA FO 371/21864.
- [29] 'Military Operations in Palestine', telegram from officer administering the government of Palestine to secretary of state for the colonies, 12 Oct 1938 (83), TNA FO 371/21864.
- [30] The 1939 White Paper reversed the recommendations of the 1937 Peel Commission Report by calling for an independent and unified Palestinian state to be created within ten years, while Jewish immigration would be halted after five years unless approved by the Arab majority. See Colonial Office, *Palestine: Statement of Policy by His Majesty's Government*. For assessments of Britain's success in containing and suppressing the Revolt by May 1939, see Haining, 'Operations from 1 April 1939 to 30 July 1939' (2), TNA WO 32/9500.
- [31] SSC to HC, 24 Oct 1938, TNA WO 32/9618. For the more subservient approach of high commissioner MacMichael, see Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement*, 238.
- [32] The four districts were Samaria, Haifa and Galilee, the Southern District and the Jordan Valley. See Haining, 'Report on Operations from 1 Aug. 1938 to 31 Oct 1938' (6), TNA WO 32/9498.
- [33] Bowden, 'The Politics of Arab Rebellion', 162–68.
- [34] For examples, see Kolinsky, 'The Collapse and Restoration of Public Security', 160–62; Bowden, 'The Politics of Arab Rebellion', 162–68.
- [35] For a detailed discussion of perceptions of Palestine in English culture, see Bar-Yosef, *The Holy Land in English Culture*, 247–95.
- [36] Interview with Patrick Norman, Imperial War Museum London (IWM), Sound Archive (SA) 4629/1. See also interview with Reubin Kitson, IWM SA, 10688/6/1.
- [37] Interview with Richard Catling, IWM SA, 10392/9/3.
- [38] See letter dated 3 June 1936, TNA WO 32/9401.
- [39] See, for example, Norman, IWM SA, 4629/1.
- [40] Interview with Samuel Wentworth, IWM SA, 4767/5/4.
- [41] Interview with Napier Crookenden, IWM SA, 16395/7/1 and James Bellows, IWM SA, 12913/17/2. For historiography dealing with Arab weaponry, see Bowden, 'The Politics of Arab Rebellion', 158.
- [42] See Norman, IWM SA, 4629/1.
- [43] This is typified by Crookenden, IWM SA, 16395/7/1.
- [44] Catling, IWM SA 10392/9/3.
- [45] See, for example, A. Morrison, 'On the Road to Anywhere!', IWM, Department of Documents (DD), 75/75/1, 19–20.
- [46] See Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement*, 235–38.
- [47] Norman, IWM SA, 4629/1–2.
- [48] For example, see interview with Arthur Lane, IWM SA, 10295/11/3.
- [49] For the decentralisation of British military activity in early 1938, see 'Operations from 1 April 1938 to 18 May 1938' (5–6), TNA WO 32/9496. The head of Britain's security forces in

- Palestine, Charles Tegart, was repeatedly warned in 1937 that the traditional point of contact with villages, the mukhtars, were now largely inactive. See Tegart's diary, 22 Dec 1937, 2 and 5 Jan. 1938, Middle East Centre Archives (MEC), St. Anthony's College, Oxford.
- [50] Haining, 'Report on Operations from 1 April 1939 to 30 July 1939' (7), TNA WO 32/9500.
- [51] For the testimonies of Palestinian Arabs who deliberately misinformed the British on the whereabouts of rebel groups, see Swedenburg, *Memories of Revolt*, 166.
- [52] Haining, 'Report on Operations, 1 April 1938 to 18 May 1938' (5), TNA WO 32/9496.
- [53] See Haining, 'Report on Operations, 20 May 1938 to 31 July 1938' (2), TNA WO 32/9497.
- [54] *Ibid.*, 4.
- [55] *Ibid.*, 3.
- [56] See Kitson (IWM SA, 10688/6/1) and S. Burr (IWM DD, 88/8/1, letter dated 24 Feb. 1938).
- [57] Haining, 'Report on Operations from 1 Aug. 1938 to 31 Oct 1938' (2), TNA WO 32/9498.
- [58] JAG's Office to DPS, 3 May 1937, TNA WO 32/9618.
- [59] Carr papers, 277, the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives (LHC), Kings College London, letter dated 17 Oct 1937.
- [60] Hoffman, *The Failure of British Strategy*, 81.
- [61] Burr, IWM DD, 88/8/1, letter dated 9 Sep 1938.
- [62] Letter by Aubrey Lees, TNA CO 733/371/4.
- [63] Kolinsky, 'The Collapse and Restoration of Public Security', 157.
- [64] See Kroizer, 'From Dowbiggin to Tegart', 117.
- [65] Kitson, IWM SA, 10688/6/1.
- [66] Forster Papers, MEC. The eight deaths are confirmed in the Colonial Office archives, as is the compensation payment of £2,065 made to the families of the deceased. See HC to SSC, 24 March 1939, TNA CO 733/398/1.
- [67] Bellows, IWM SA, 12913/17/2.
- [68] See Keith-Roach, *Pasha of Jerusalem*, 196.
- [69] Lane, IWM SA, 10295/11/2.
- [70] For the early activities of the Special Night Squads, see Orde Wingate, Secret Memorandum, 5 June 1938, LHC, 15/5/300. Testimonies of Jewish soldiers who speak of the brutality employed by the Night Squads are found in the Central Zionist Archive, and cited in Segev, *One Palestine, Complete*, 430–31. For the influence of these tactics on official army operations, see Haining, 'Report on Operations from 20 May 1938 to 31 July 1938' (6), TNA WO 32/9497.
- [71] Haining, 'Operations from 1 Aug. 1938 to 31 Oct 1938' (6), TNA WO 32/9498.
- [72] B. A. Pond typescript memoirs, IWM DD, 78/27/1.
- [73] Lane, IWM SA, 10295/11/2–3.
- [74] Burr, IWM DD, 88/8/1, letter written from Acre Police Station (Burr's time at Acre spanned from Jan. 1939 to Feb. 1940; as the revolt was still in progress at the time of this letter, it must have been written in early 1939).
- [75] Eric Bishop, enclosure 5 May 1939, National Archives in Washington DC, NA 867 N 4016/86, cited in Shepherd, *Ploughing Sand*, 214.
- [76] Keith-Roach, *Pasha of Jerusalem*, 194.
- [77] MacMichael to Graham-Brown, 8 Aug. 1938, MEC, Jerusalem and the East Mission Papers, Box LXVI, file 2.
- [78] MacMichael to MacDonald, 10 Aug. 1938, TNA CO 733/371/3.
- [79] See, for example, Lane, IWM SA, 10295/11/3.
- [80] Burr, IWM DD, 88/8/1, letter dated 8 March 1939. For further stories of looting see Kitson, IWM SA, 10688/6/1.
- [81] Kitson, IWM SA, 10688/6/1.
- [82] See, in particular, Lane, IWM SA, 10295/11/2–3.
- [83] Battershill to Shuckburgh, 21 Nov. 1937, Rhodes House Library (RHL), Oxford, Battershill Papers, 10:3.

- [84] Lane, IWM SA, 10295/11/2.
- [85] Ibid., 10295/11/3.
- [86] See, for example, Battershill to Ormsby-Gore, 18 Dec 1937, TNA CO 733/333/7. For the hundreds of Arab complaints arriving at the high commissioner's office, see TNA WO 32/4562, CO 733/333/7, CO 733/371/2, CO 733/398/15 and CO 733/368/9.
- [87] Colonial Office memo, 6 Feb. 1939, TNA CO/733/371/2.
- [88] Haining, 'Palestine, 1938 – Allegations Against British troops' (preface), 12 Jan. 1939, and 'Hostile propaganda in Palestine. Its origin and progress in 1938' (12), WO 32/4562.
- [89] Ibid., 11.
- [90] MacMichael to MacDonald, 'Draft Commentary on Hussein letter' (6), 22 Sep 1939, TNA WO 32/4562.
- [91] HC to SSC, 21 Jan. 1939, TNA CO 733/398/2.
- [92] MacMichael to Graham-Brown, 8 Aug. 1938, MEC, Jerusalem and the East Mission Papers, Box LXVI, file 2.
- [93] See Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds*, 74.
- [94] See Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*, 322–24.
- [95] Ibid. 325–27.
- [96] See, for example, Elkins, *Britain's Gulag*; Newsinger, *British Counterinsurgency*.
- [97] See Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds*, 164–68; Coates, *Suppressing Insurgency*, 150–57.
- [98] For Arthur Harris and his role in the counterinsurgency in Palestine see Townshend, 'The Defence of Palestine', 934; for other cases of British airpower used against dissident villages, see Omissi, *Air Power and Colonial Control*; for the use of aerial bombardment for 'pinpoint and harassing tactics' during the counterinsurgency in Malaya, see Postgate, *Operation Firedog*, esp. 39–42.
- [99] See Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds*, 165–66.
- [100] Haining, 'Operations in Palestine from 20 May 1938 to 31 July 1938' (2), TNA WO 32/9497; Bowden, 'The Politics of Arab Rebellion', 167.
- [101] Haining, 'Operations from 1 Nov 1938 to 31 March 1939' (6), TNA WO 32/9499.
- [102] Ibid., 7, 10.
- [103] Hoffman, *The Failure of British Strategy*, 80.
- [104] Great Britain, Colonial Office, *A Survey of Palestine*, vo. 1, 46–48.
- [105] Crookenden, IWM SA, 16395/7/1.
- [106] Exponents of this view include: Abboushi, 'The Road to Rebellion', 42; Stein 'The Intifada and the 1936–39 Uprising', 71.
- [107] See Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement*, 269. Other exponents of this view include: Bowden, 'The Politics of Arab Rebellion', 147–74; Kayyali, *Palestine: A Modern History*, 231.
- [108] Swedenburg, 'The Role of the Palestinian Peasantry', 496.
- [109] For examples of this type of Palestinian historiography, see Yasin, *Al-thawra al-'Arabiyya*; al-Azhari, 'Thawra 1936 wa Intifada 1987'.

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