# 5 A Counter-Insurgency Defeat: Some Reasons Why

Clausewitz called the decisive phase of conflict the 'culminating point'.[1] This point may be easily discernible in a conventional conflict: a significant defeat on the battlefield which shifts the strategic balance conclusively against one belligerent. However, in insurgency the turning point is often less than clear, for the results on the battlefield are significant only to the extent that they affect political and strategic decisions on further conduct of the campaign. The culminating point is reached when the leaders on one side have been convinced that they can no longer impose constraints on the decisions and actions of the other. The result is a stalemate, which often favours the insurgents who win by demonstrating that the security forces cannot contain the insurgency.

By September 1947 just such a situation prevailed in Palestine. Because the insurgents had convinced the British government that it could not restore or maintain order, the operations of the security forces no longer affected the political outcome of the struggle. The difficulty in determining the reasons for this defeat is related both to understanding the nature of the war and the perspective from which the war is seen and examined. This is true not only for the participants in the conflict, but for those who attempt to analyse it after the fighting has ceased. The conflict in Palestine is a case in point: there is a general consensus among historians that insurgent terrorism played a role in persuading the British government to relinquish the Palestine Mandate. There is less agreement on the significance of the insurgent role. Apologists for the Haganah insist that the Irgun and the Lechi did not make a decisive contribution to the independence struggle.[2] Others, like Begin himself and some





historians, attribute the British withdrawal solely to the actions of the insurgents: J. Bowyer Bell, for example, describes the hanging of the two sergeants as 'the straw that broke the Mandate's back'.[3]

While it must be conceded that both viewpoints have their merits, they remain simplistic interpretations of a complex process; they simply are not the whole story. Most serious scholars have concluded that the effects of insurgent actions must be weighed against the political and economic conditions surrounding Britain's involvement in the Mandate at that time.[4] Indeed, there is compelling evidence to show that the insurgents' leverage strategy succeeded largely because of factors over which the insurgents had no control: the economic crisis in Britain, and the changes in Middle East strategy arising from the Labour government's different perception of Britain's global role. The insurgents can be credited with shaping their strategies to capitalise on these factors. Yet, even this interpretation leaves the story incomplete. For every victorious army there is a vanquished one. Until recently, serious scholars were either unable or unwilling to address in a critical way a central question raised by the conflict: why did the security forces fail to defeat the insurgents? The answer, to be explored in this chapter, is more complex than the earlier studies have led us to believe.

First, no military campaign, conventional or otherwise, is likely to succeed in the absence of a realistic, clearly defined strategy. Bruce Hoffman thus goes to the heart of the matter when he attributes the British defeat to the pursuit of inappropriate 'military strategies'.[5] This is an important step forward in understanding the problem, but Hoffman does not pursue the reasons why the British army might have adhered to an outmoded 'doctrine' of counter-insurgency. Nor does he address the institutional and situational obstacles to tactical innovation, nor the all-important question of intelligence. Examining these heretofore insufficiently explored aspects of the British campaign should shed some light on the intellectual and organisational conditions which contributed to the defeat.

## STRATEGIC THOUGHT AND COUNTER-INSURGENCY DOCTRINE

The British army did not enter the Palestine campaign devoid of knowledge and experience of counter-insurgency. Since the eight-

eenth century it had been an imperial army, tasked to defend the outposts of the empire rather than the homeland.[6] Moreover, from the end of the Napoleonic period low-intensity warfare, usually against primitive opponents in out-of-the-way places, was the predominant experience of the British army. Continental conventional wars were exceptions to the rule.[7] This operational history exerted a significant impact on the army as an institution, influencing its ability to learn from experience and to adapt to new situations. More will be said of this later in the chapter. For the moment, the important point is that the British army entered the Palestine campaign with a considerable body of experience in low-intensity operations to its credit. Whether that experience was relevant, and whether it was properly understood or not, is another matter.

In fact, the case can be made that there was little in this that could give the army guidance in countering a modern insurgency, wherein the enemy's organisation was clandestine and his tactics were political in intent and criminal, rather than military, in method and character. The principles of 'aid to the civil power', developed by trial and error through the nineteenth century, and considerably refined after the Amritsar incident of 1919, were intended for use in riot control.[8] The unrestrained employment of superior firepower and mobility that had characterised the nineteenth-century colonial campaigns were shown to be both irrelevant and inappropriate once insurgent campaigns shifted to urban areas. The Irish rebellion of 1919–21 was a case in point. In its rural aspects the campaign bore some slight resemblance to earlier colonial insurrections such as the Boer War, but urban terrorism and propaganda added entirely new dimensions which transformed the nature of the conflict and the army's role in it. Consequently, many new problems arose. Cooperation with the police was never satisfactory. Inadequate training led to reprisals by the army and the police. The security forces were unable to build a dependable intelligence service. The legal ramifications of martial law were never resolved, and there was a noticeable absence of policy direction from the British government. Most of the military operations involved fruitless raids and searches in urban areas, while mobile columns pursued the insurgents in the countryside.[9] There were lessons to be learned from this conflict, but even if the army had been so inclined – which it was not – there was no reason for the army to suppose that the Irish experience was anything but unique. The official account of the campaign concentrated mainly on a military analysis of operations



at divisional level and, with the exception of some perceptive observations on propaganda, did not offer many useful intellectual insights into the nature of revolutionary insurgency.[10] Moreover, its 'Most Secret' grading clearly restricted its circulation and probably prevented its useful aspects from being more widely studied within the army. Consequently, military writing from the period exhibited only a modicum of comprehension about the nature of Irish-type insurgencies.[11] The tendency was to look for answers in familiar methods; the theory and practice of internal security coalesced along purely military lines reminiscent of the pre-war period.

Exceptions to this general rule were rare and largely overlooked. In 1937, H. J. Simson, a retired officer, published a treatise on counter-insurgency, entitled *British Rule and Rebellion*. Simson's principal concern was to provide guidance to those dealing, ineffectively Simson thought, with the Arab rebellion in Palestine. 'We have not yet admitted,' Simson writes in his conclusions, '. . . that our methods of dealing with modern rebellion are comic . . . . Extremists under our rule rearmed themselves with new methods of resisting it. It is time that we rearmed ourselves with new methods of ruling.'[12] With that in mind, he wrote what may be fairly described as the first considered analysis of urban insurgency and counter-insurgency.

Drawing on the Irish experience, however inappropriate in view of the largely rural nature of the Arab rebellion, he described perceptively the new face of colonial insurgency: the combination of terrorism and propaganda he called 'sub-war'. Simson believed this strategy had two objectives: first, to support a carefully orchestrated political/psychological war against the government; and second, to isolate the police from the population, thereby ensuring a secure subversive organisation, and to disperse the security forces on defensive duties, thus denying them the initiative. Simson recognised that existing army doctrine had not been framed to deal with this type of war. To remedy this he favoured the application of martial law, but if that was not possible he recommended the appointment of a single director of operations, assisted by a joint civil/police/military staff to direct both the emergency and the normal administration. Most important, he felt the security forces had to destroy the clandestine subversive organisations and they needed, therefore, improved intelligence services.[13] Simson did not have all the answers. He gave little consideration to the negative aspects of martial law, despite the limitations obvious from the Irish case. He

said nothing about how to respond to propaganda. Nonetheless, the study was remarkable for its sophistication – it clearly defined insurgency as a form of political warfare, requiring both a political and a military response, and offered solutions to some of the problems posed by this form of conflict.

Yet, officers assigned to internal security duties in Palestine in 1945 were urged to read, not Simson, but Sir Charles Gwynn's *Imperial Policing*, published at about the same time.[14] While Gwynn recognised the importance of intelligence to both sides and the need for close cooperation between all elements of the security forces, his study revealed no understanding of the political nature of insurgency. For reasons he never makes clear he deliberately avoided drawing upon the Irish experience; instead, the case studies focused on either rural insurrection or urban riot control.[15] The latter could be dealt with by established procedures for aid to the civil power. Gwynn's approach to the former, with its emphasis on firepower and mobility, was little different from C. E. Callwell's three decades earlier.

Recent experience, however, tended to lend credence to Gwynn's approach. In Palestine from 1936 to 1939, the army had to suppress urban terrorism and rural guerrilla warfare. Although confined to defensive tasks in the early stages of the revolt, once on the offensive the army dealt harshly with the rebels. It eliminated urban terrorism in Jaffa by demolishing the centre of the old town and driving a road through it. In the rural areas the army searched villages, imposed collective fines, and demolished buildings thought to house guerrillas. Roads were driven into the hills where mechanised troops encircled and defeated the guerrillas. Military control, an abbreviated form of martial law, was imposed on Jerusalem, and military courts detained, deported, or executed activists and rebels.[16] General Bernard Montgomery, then commanding a division in northern Palestine, typified the British approach: in Ronald Lewin's words, he 'clamped the countryside in a vice'.[17] To an army inclined to conservatism in strategic thought and to neglect of the political aspects of conflict – such as, for example, the role of the 1939 White Paper in influencing Arab attitudes towards British policy in Palestine – the apparent suppression of the rebellion through the application of 'robust' military methods represented a vindication of the traditional, proven strategic formula. Certainly, as the debate on strategy indicated in Chapter 4, that campaign exerted a profound influence on Montgomery. It coloured his view as to how the British



army ought to deal with the Jewish insurgency. The wider impact of this school of thought can be seen in the fact that in 1939 the Staff College ran only three brief internal security exercises. They covered the basic principles of imperial policing, the use of mobile columns, and the lessons of the Arab revolt in Palestine.[18] Gwynn's book became, in the words of one former senior officer, 'part of the stock in trade of any Staff College candidate or graduate'.[19]

All of this tends to lend weight to Hoffman's assertion that in 1945 it was the *Imperial Policing* school of thought, drawing upon the Arab rebellion as the relevant 'model', that informed British preparations for dealing with a possible Jewish insurgency.[20] There was a tendency to define the threat and the responses in the purely military terms with which the army was most familiar. It was, presumably, in this light that in March 1945 the War Office issued to Middle East Forces a study on guerrilla warfare prepared for the forthcoming allied occupation of Germany. The paper discussed the strengths, weaknesses and tactics of guerrilla forces, and advised that offensive action by security forces – drives against centres of resistance, pursuit of sabotage bands, and searches – was the most effective strategy for defeating guerrillas. Counter-guerrilla operations were seen as purely military.[21] So it is not surprising that 'Notes for Officers on Internal Security Duties', the manual issued by GHQ Middle East Forces to provide the army with a body of tactical doctrine, fell short of providing guidance appropriate to the situation in Palestine. According to the manual, an organised revolt was thought likely to include guerrilla warfare, and to involve raids, ambushes, sniping, sabotage, and acts of terrorism. The pamphlet suggested that this conflict form presented the simpler problem of suppression, since each outbreak could be dealt with by 'action in aid of the civil power', that is, by riot control procedures of the type developed and refined since Amritsar. The pamphlet went on to observe that if the 'opposition' found it impossible to confront the army in this fashion, they would be 'driven underground'.[22] This was at variance not only with the War Office view of guerrilla warfare, but also with Gwynn and Simson. Moreover, the pamphlet did not explore the implications of driving the opposition underground.

Two other conflict forms were discussed in the pamphlet: outbreaks of civil disturbance directed against the government; and communal (inter-racial, religious, political) disputes not directed against the authorities, but which they have the responsibility to suppress. Both

of these types were expected to involve demonstrations, riots, and destruction of property, with the communal conflicts involving clashes between different sections of the population. Curiously, the former were believed to present a more difficult response problem than the organised revolt, owing to the difficulty of locating and dealing with 'hostile elements'. Unless prompt and effective measures were taken, the pamphlet warned, 'the opposition may gather strength by intimidating loyal elements of the population and by winning over or coercing neutrals'.[23] It is difficult to see how a conflict involving rioting should be more difficult to suppress than a guerrilla-style revolt, especially when proven riot-control methods were available. The GHQ Training Branch appears to have had such a muddled view of insurgency and counter-insurgency that it could not differentiate between distinct conflict forms, and thus could not prescribe appropriate military responses. With this kind of intellectual preparation it is understandable that the army proved unequal to the task in Palestine.

The guidelines began with a definition of the objectives of internal security operations: 'either to dissuade the opposition from any action which is liable to undermine the civil authority, or to force them to abandon their purpose and thus enable the civil authority to re-assume control'.[24] Regardless of the form of conflict, the army's task was two-fold: to prevent interference with the normal life of the afflicted area, and 'to get to grips with the hostile elements and bring them into subjection'.[25] In this regard, the army was guided by a number of general principles, the four most significant being: firm and timely action; the application of the minimum degree of force necessary to achieve the object of any operation; close cooperation between the army and the civil authorities, particularly the police; and mobility.[26] The pamphlet then went on to discuss in detail procedures for mobile columns, curfews, search operations, riot control, vehicle convoys, and the use of armoured vehicles and aircraft. While a major portion of the manual was taken up with standardised and entirely appropriate riot control measures, the influence of *Imperial Policing* attitudes was manifest throughout. The disjunction between these attitudes and both the likely threat and politically acceptable responses is apparent in the references to the use of 'offensive action' against armed bands, and to the use of air support for such operations, and in the admonition that 'when civil disturbances break out in town, the tactics to be employed are street fighting tactics, *modified* ... to suit the circumstances'.[27]



The pamphlet also covered legal aspects of internal security operations, training and administrative matters, such as accommodation, welfare, morale and discipline of troops. So, within its limitations, 'Notes for Officers on Internal Security Duties' was a reasonably comprehensive document, and it was supplemented by others. Army Headquarters in Jerusalem distributed instructions covering civil–military relations and responsibility for internal security. They defined the army's powers under the emergency regulations to make arrests and to detain persons without trial, to conduct searches, to use lethal force, to impose curfews, and to try suspected insurgents before military courts.[28] The Armoured Corps Staff at GHQ Middle East Forces issued a study on the role of armoured forces in internal security for tasks such as road patrols, convoy escort, clearance and occupation of urban areas. The document also emphasised the limitations and vulnerability of armoured vehicles in urban conflict.[29] The Airborne Division produced a brief on air support for internal security which included command and control procedures and the description of a new technique called the 'Air Pin' in which aircraft could be used to keep inhabitants inside a village while the army was laying a cordon around it.[30] In view of the political sensitivity of operations in Palestine higher authorities produced directives on several potentially controversial issues. The use of tear gas was discussed extensively and approved at Cabinet level.[31] The Chiefs of Staff Committee restricted the use of heavy weapons in areas likely to involve risk of innocent civilian casualties or damage to holy places. Discretion to approve use was vested in the Commander in Chief Middle East, but was delegated to the GOC Palestine.[32] While the high-level deliberations on these matters reflected an obvious understanding of the political sensitivity of the Palestine situation, there was an air of unreality to the discussion of the use of 'heavy weapons'. It represented a kind of 'worst case' contingency planning that was appropriate neither for the threat nor the response in Palestine at that time. Even with the political limitations imposed, the pervasive influence of Callwell and Gwynn is implicit in the consideration of these military options. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the operational policy dictated by Montgomery. That said, and wrong-headed as he was, it may be unfair to criticise the CIGS for clinging to obsolete tactical concepts *before* it was clear that they had become obsolete. It was not immediately apparent to the army – nor to many politicians – that Britain's relationship with its colonies had

been altered in any substantial way by the war. Britain, after all, had emerged victorious, so there was no reason for the army, unconcerned with political matters, to question the assumptions upon which imperial rule and imperial policing were based. It was a rare officer indeed who could draw the analogy between colonial rebellion and the wartime resistance and suggest that the British army could learn from its former enemies.[33] So the old methods, proven by previous experience in Palestine, would suffice.

Significantly, but not surprisingly, neither 'Notes for Officers on Internal Security Duties', nor any other set of instructions assigned the army a role in intelligence collection or countering insurgent propaganda. The former was a police responsibility, and army thinking emphasised that 'Troops are not trained for police duties . . . and should not be so employed'.[34] They were not to undertake on their own 'duties of a detective or secret service nature'.[35] There were two influences at work in this regard. The first was the army's legal position in Palestine; it was providing 'aid to the civil power': assisting the police, not replacing them. The conditions under which the army provided that aid were clearly defined in both operational and legal terms. Senior commanders expressed grave reservations about altering in any way those principles and procedures, for fear that the soldiers would not be protected adequately by the law.[36] Second, although the army had gained considerable experience of intelligence work during the war, historically it had never been entirely comfortable with the intelligence task. There was, in the immediate post-war period, substantial opposition within the army to the creation of even a small permanent intelligence corps.[37] Propaganda, on the other hand, was a purely political matter, out of the army's purview. There was no requirement for it to function in the counter-propaganda role, and no precedent for doing so. There was, of course, a need to deal with the news media and, as will be shown later, the army did adjust to that task, if somewhat imperfectly.

Two observations arise from the foregoing analysis. First, it is clear that the British army did not understand the nature of the insurgent challenge, and as a result, the methods prescribed for response were inappropriate. In a delicate political situation that called for precision, the army was a blunt, unwieldy instrument: existing doctrine of employment would not disrupt the insurgent infrastructure, and thus would leave the initiative in the hands of the insurgents. Indeed, it left the British with the worst possible



combination of methods: repressive in appearance – a political liability – and ineffective in fact. Applied in the absence of a policy, it virtually ensured the fulfilment of Casey's prescient prophecy.

Second, the arrangement by which the army provided 'aid to the civil power' implied an asymmetrical police/army relationship, instead of a partnership of equals in counter-insurgency. This was symbolised graphically by the GOC's exclusion from formal membership in the Central Security Committee. This meant that the Palestine conflict was perceived not as a war, which it was, but as merely another civil disturbance. Hence, the emphasis on the primacy of the police as the 'lead agency' in internal security, with the army in a subordinate role. This might not have proven a serious matter had the police force been strong and effective. But as this chapter will make clear, the police were not equal to the task. Consequently, the burden of security duties would fall increasingly on the army, a fact which exacerbated an already awkward security relationship. The third point is related to this; although the army was required increasingly to take the lead in the counter-insurgency campaign, contemporary methods made no provision for the army to operate in two fields where the civil authority was weak: intelligence and countering propaganda. The army was almost completely exposed on these two crucial flanks, and lacked both the intellectual tools and operational guidelines either to defend itself or to prosecute the counter-insurgency campaign effectively in these vital areas. In both it was forced to devise *ad hoc* measures which were neither wholly appropriate nor effective. In conclusion, then, it may be fair to suggest that the intellectual or conceptual limitations of British counter-insurgency thinking made operational failure – at both the strategic and tactical levels – the most likely outcome.

## OBSTACLES TO TACTICAL INNOVATION

Significant as it was, a failure of strategic thought to provide an appropriate doctrine was only part of the problem. The nature of the army itself, and the conditions prevailing in the army in Palestine in 1945–47, were probably equally important factors that contributed to the army's defeat.

Although the army had a long history of aid to the civil power at home, and low-intensity operations abroad, it lacked the intellectual tools, particularly an 'institutional memory' that would

allow it to learn from historical experience. This lacuna can be traced in large part to the army's imperial role. Never needed for defence of the homeland, posted overseas where it was largely forgotten by its countrymen, it never became a citizen army. Instead, Anthony Verrier observes, it acquired from the imperial experience 'habits and practices which not only distinguished it sharply from most other armies . . . but from many of the attributes which we now associate with British life'.[38] These unique habits and practices are probably most singularly manifest in the regimental system. Regimental organisation preceded by a wide historical margin the peak period of the British Empire, but imperial requirements in the latter half of the nineteenth century shaped regimental organisation and the character of the British army thereafter. The residual effects may still be seen today, even in the much diluted modern British regiments. The Cardwell system, introduced in 1873, reorganised the infantry into paired battalions so as to provide permanent forces for overseas duty, plus a home-based rotational reserve garrisoned and recruited on a territorial basis.[39] The system survived largely intact until its virtual collapse during the Second World War, owing to the demand for a vastly expanded army.

The pervasive impact of the regimental system cannot be overstated. More than one observer has described the British army as 'not so much an Army as a collection of regiments'.[40] Regimental loyalties, however diluted by reorganisation and amalgamation, have remained strong. They have precluded the development of a national 'officer corps'.[41] This approach has some obvious limitations. To this day, the army remains a conservative institution, resistant to change, neither deeply intellectual nor self-critical. In this sense it is not radically different from other professional armies which, as noted in Chapter 1, are inclined towards conservatism in strategic thought for sound reasons. But in the British army this tendency has been reinforced by the predominance of the regimental system, which has hindered the development of the kind of thinking that would see the army as a functional whole greater than the sum of its component parts. Traditionally shy of 'doctrine' in its approach to the study and practice of war, the British army was and remains today – in the view of Shelford Bidwell and Dominick Graham – 'an unprofessional coalition of arms and services'. Moreover, lacking the centralised 'brain' of a properly organised and trained general staff, the army was not good at retaining and learning from historical experience, until comparatively recently.[42] Instead, there was a



tendency on the part of senior officers to take the uncritical view that 'if it worked well in the last war, why shouldn't it work well in the next one?'[43]

At the operational level this meant that overseas commanders traditionally were allowed a fair degree of latitude in the formulation of strategy, execution of policy and devising of tactics for local situations. A certain independent habit of mind was both required and permitted. This lent itself neatly both to the individualistic nature of overseas regimental life and to operational necessity; the army was frequently 'outnumbered by its enemies and . . . more impoverished than its friends'.[44] The need to concentrate on the immediate requirements of practical 'down to earth' soldiering in such circumstances made the army a master of improvisation, flexibility and 'on the job' training and learning – making do with what was available on the spot. Unfortunately, this skill was often acquired at the expense of a 'wider view' of the conflicts in which the army was involved. Nor did it encourage officers to take the time during their service careers to reflect on experience and thus to learn from both failure and success.

The army's insular nature posed problems for the institution when it was forced to confront the political aspects of conflict. The history of the British army's involvement in internal security, and the traditions and professional assumptions of the army itself, mitigated against considerations of the political aspects of warfare. From the Restoration until the creation of regular police forces in the nineteenth century, the army was primarily responsible for enforcing law and order in Britain. But it was neither a satisfactory nor a popular arrangement, disliked by soldiers, politicians, and the public alike. Robin Higham has observed that soldiers not only detested aid to the civil power, they probably feared it, and with good reason: acting in this capacity soldiers found themselves bound by two contradictory sets of laws – civil and military – and the overriding principle of minimum force. The arrangement had the appearance of a legal trap.[45]

In the twentieth century political opinion began to insist that aid to the civil power be applied with equal restraint in the empire. This shift of attitudes was given considerable impetus by the army's massacre of Punjabis at Amritsar in 1919. The incident became a watershed in the development of internal security theory and practice, from which two lessons emerged. First, as noted in the previous section, the army had to refine its riot control drills and

train the troops properly for such duties. This was one case where the army did learn from bitter experience, but it is significant nonetheless that the most pressure for reform came from outside the army. This points directly to the second lesson, which is that incidents such as Amritsar could result in significant political consequences, which in turn could rebound to the detriment of the officer concerned. Most of the criticism of Brigadier-General R. E. H. Dyer, the British commander at Amritsar, came from those in Britain who had not been required to confront that, or a similar, situation. It may be fair to suggest, as Higham does, that the outcome of the Amritsar incident enhanced the army's distrust of politics and its distaste for internal security operations because:

> when the situation gets so bad that statesmen or mayors call in the military force, they are frequently more interested in saving their own reputations by restoring order than in giving the professional soldier a clear mandate. Too often the soldier finds himself attempting to back up men whose lack of planning has resulted in the soldier on the spot having to make unpalatable decisions which, . . . he will later find the Cabinet repudiating . . . . Politically naive, afraid for his career, the military man usually finds himself at a disadvantage in upholding his position and reputation because he will rarely resort to counter-pressure through a lawyer, Parliament, or the Press.[46]

With the example of General Dyer before them it is hardly surprising that the army wanted it clearly understood that troops should be employed only as a last resort, when the forces of local governments were unable or unwilling to act effectively.[47] Furthermore, both the political conduct and the outcome of the Irish campaign undoubtedly reinforced existing fears and prejudices and discouraged examination of the political dimensions of internal conflicts. At the very least it would have required a revolution of attitude in the army to induce its officers to study the crucial interplay of political, military and psychological dimensions of such campaigns. The atmosphere prevailing in the inter-war army ensured that no such revolution was likely. Bidwell and Graham's caustic assessment of the inter-war Royal Artillery might easily have applied to the army as a whole: 'guilty not so much of a failure of foresight, or of considering the wrong options, or making the wrong assumptions, but of failing to think about anything at all'.[48] With hide-bound traditionalists such as Field-Marshal Sir George Milne (Chief of the Imperial General Staff, 1926–33) in command, the small professional army remained resolutely anti-intellectual and insulated from examination of those aspects of warfare that bore heavily on political affairs. The Staff College discouraged discussion of such matters, and unorthodox officers who had been involved in unconventional operations, and had taken the trouble to think and write about them, were out of favour; T. E. Lawrence undoubtedly was the most prominent case in point, but by no means the only one.[49]



In 1939 the war intervened and the army had to concentrate on 'proper soldiering', engaging a conventionally armed, uniformed enemy with large-scale combined arms methods. To the extent that they were required at all, internal security operations were a minor consideration, confined to inactive rear areas. Palestine was one of these, but even here, where both the Jews and the Arabs posed modest security problems, political considerations dictated that internal security operations were not pursued vigorously.[50] In sum, then, it may be said that the army which deployed into Palestine in 1945–46 was influenced by a mindset which was, first, oriented to conventional war; second, distrustful of internal security operations, particularly their political aspects, and hence poorly informed about the nature of insurgency and how to respond; and finally, resistant to institutional change 'from the top down', but comparatively good at learning on the job at the tactical level. The army's situation in Palestine between 1945 and 1947, however, was such that even tactical innovation proved very difficult to achieve and sustain.

While the Palestine campaign was unfolding, the British army was engaged in the process of reorganisation from a wartime to a peacetime footing. In the first five years after the war the army declined in strength from more than two million in 1945 to 354 000 in 1950.[51] This pace of demobilisation meant that by October 1947 every regiment of the line was reduced, temporarily, to a single battalion. Similar reductions affected the other arms and services.[52] So for the duration of the Palestine campaign the British army was in a state of constant flux, and the garrison in Palestine was not immune to this. Formations were subject to frequent unit changes (unit turbulence), and units were constantly losing experienced officers and NCOs, while acquiring new ones and drafts of recruits in the other ranks (manpower turbulence). Even a cursory survey of the formations and units in Palestine illustrates this point clearly.

In the autumn of 1945, the 1st Infantry Division consisted only

of the 2nd and 3rd Infantry Brigades, with four attached Territorial Army and some colonial and imperial units. The arrival of the 1st Guards Brigade in November brought the division up to full strength, but shortly thereafter (early December) it went to Egypt for a four-month period of reorganisation. The Guards Brigade, the Territorials, and the colonial and imperial units were left behind under command of the 3rd Infantry Division. Two of the 1st Division's regular battalions left the division at the end of 1945. Unit turbulence continued after the 1st returned to Palestine in April 1946. The Territorial battalions dispersed during the autumn of 1946, and four of the regular battalions (including one complete brigade) had gone by the end of January 1947. Of the units added from Europe during reorganisation, two battalions stayed less than one year, and three others left in the spring of 1947 upon completion of one year tours. The King's Dragoon Guards, an armoured unit, was with the division from late 1945 until early 1947 when it handed over to the 17th/21st Lancers. During the course of one twelve-month period, unit turbulence had completely changed the face of the division.[53]

The 6th Airborne Division suffered similar instability. It arrived in Palestine with the 2nd and 3rd Parachute Brigades and the 6th Airlanding Brigade, plus the normal complement of divisional arms and services. In March 1946, the division's reconnaissance regiment disbanded; some of the officers and most of the men transferred to the 3rd King's Own Hussars, which remained on strength until withdrawal from Palestine. The following month, the 1st Parachute Brigade arrived to replace the Airlanding Brigade, which then left the division and moved to the Jerusalem sector to become an independent infantry brigade. The 2nd Parachute Brigade departed in late January 1947, taking with it a slice of the divisional arms and services.[54] Jerusalem was garrisoned by a succession of brigades: 185 (redesignated 7th) from November 1945 to April 1946; 31st Independent Infantry (formerly 6th Airlanding), April to November 1946; 9th Infantry, until the end of March 1947, and 8th Infantry thereafter. The 1st Battalion, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, which began their tour of duty in Palestine as part of the Airlanding Brigade, subsequently served under the 31st, 8th and 9th Brigades.[55]

Simultaneously, every unit and formation to a greater or lesser degree was subject to internal turbulence as a result of manpower turnover. Officers and men were being posted away from units temporarily on entitled or compassionate leave, extra-regimental employment, short- and long-term courses (e.g. at Staff College) and other temporary duties. Still others were being repatriated to the UK, either for demobilisation or return to a parent unit. At the same time, units in Palestine were receiving new officers and NCOs, and drafts of other ranks recruits, either from units disbanding in the theatre, or straight from depots in Britain. A glance at the staff list of the Airborne Division illustrates this point in a graphic fashion. Between 1945 and 1947, the divisional commander changed twice, and the GI(Ops) position was filled by three different officers. Brigade commanders changed frequently: Brigadier R. H. Bellamy, for example, commanded, in sequence, 6th Airlanding, 1st and 2nd Parachute Brigades. The 2nd had three different brigadiers, although it kept its battalion commanders for 1945 and 1946. The 3rd kept the same brigadier and one battalion commander for the first two years, but every other command position changed.[56] The same process was at work in the arms and services, and at every rank level.



Actual unit and formation strengths fluctuated constantly, often between extremes of 'boom and bust'. In April 1946 the minutes of the Brigadier General Staff's conference recorded the comment that the 'Offr posn in Middle East is reaching its most critical stage. Corps and Services other than RAC, RA, Inf and REME were in a very difficult posn.'[57] Nearly a year later the Commander in Chief Middle East, General Sir Miles Dempsey, reported confidently to the CIGS (Montgomery), 'We have ample troops in Palestine at present probably too many' and went on to add that a surplus of infantry meant that 'all battalions in the Middle East will be up to or over strength'.[58] Barely five months later his successor reported that there were in Palestine troops sufficient only for one sanction – imposition of martial law – at any one time, and that the situation might demand more. Not only would this delay the departure of a brigade and four battalions; he believed six additional battalions would be required.[59] Until that point, numbers had only been part of the problem, as unit strengths varied between formations and over time. For example, a King's Dragoon Guards Squadron Leaders Conference in April 1946, on the subject of squadron strengths, 'appeared to have a depressing effect on all Sqn Ldrs present'.[60] The war diary went on to record that 'D' Squadron was in no position to lose anyone, and to express the hope that the group currently on leave would return on time and not 'protract the agony'. By contrast, the battalion strengths of the 8th Infantry Brigade in

the first quarter of 1947 varied between 825 and 964,[61] which in terms of raw numbers was more than adequate. The more serious problem was that constant turnover precluded the retention of experienced officers and NCOs needed to train both the new officers and the large drafts of incoming other ranks. To cite but one example, the 9th Infantry Brigade suffered an 11 per cent reduction in other ranks strength between the beginning of the last quarter of 1946 and the end of the first quarter of 1947; but more important, it lost 20 per cent of its officer strength.[62] This experience was shared by many units.[63]

Unit and manpower turbulence exerted a significant impact on operational readiness, although this is difficult to represent in terms of empirical data. Moreover, these factors cannot be considered in isolation; they were concurrent with constant operational commitments, which compounded the problem. Most units complained of a lack of trained men in all ranks and branches, and some were hard pressed to maintain strengths sufficient for operations. The quality of administration, maintenance, and 'battle ready' status all declined accordingly, to the 'danger level' in some units. There were also some morale problems, although the scale and impact are difficult to assess.[64]

Undoubtedly, the most important aspect of readiness affected in this manner was training. As noted in Chapter 1, sufficient and proper training is central to the process of preparing army units and men for counter-insurgency operations. With regard to Palestine, first, the troops had to adjust their thinking from combat to peacekeeping. Second, the individual soldier had to learn the basic principles and tactical procedures laid down in the manuals, instructions and directives, as well as acquainting himself with the structure of the police, the administration and the two ethnic communities. This indoctrination process was particularly important for the 6th Airborne Division, which had been sent to Palestine at short notice and did not have time to adapt gradually to the situation. Training was conducted at two levels: in early autumn 1945, training teams from GHQ Middle East Forces taught street and house clearing, and command and control of a company-sized mobile column. Formations and headquarters, in accordance with the basic manual, carried out signals exercises and tactical exercises without troops covering cordon and search operations and suppression of large-scale insurrection. Two brigades, however, did not have time to run exercises before the first incidents at the end of October.[65]



As the campaign continued and the turbulence increased, the opportunities for in-depth training declined. While in Egypt in 1946, the 2nd Infantry Brigade held a two-day study period on tactical problems and procedures for internal security.[66] There is no indication that other units or formations experienced the luxury of such a session once the campaign escalated in 1946. Instead, most officers and other ranks received their training 'on the job', through participation in operations.[67] Yet, it is clear that this was regarded as insufficient. The 1946 war diary of the King's Dragoon Guards indicates that both operational deployments and manpower turbulence hampered proper training; young officers were not receiving the intensive training they needed because they were fully occupied dealing with the raw material in their troops, which unfortunately was increasing with each new draft of reinforcements.[68] Later that same year, the commander of the 9th Infantry Brigade commented that owing to operational commitments, the brigade had no men available for training. The infantry battalions had 200 men per day on IS duties, and every third night on guard. Moreover, leave schemes were taking away 40 to 50 men per battalion, with normal overlap leaving as many as 100 vacancies. The situation remained largely unchanged in the first quarter of 1947.[69] Other formations experienced the same problems.[70]

There was also a question of training priorities. Army headquarters in Palestine did not regard counter-insurgency as the primary task of field formations in the country. Throughout the 1945–47 period it expressed concern that internal security operations were interfering with the army's proper role there, which was to train for war. Whenever possible, units used spare time for conventional training.[71]

With all of these conflicting pressures at work, it is understandable that army operations tended to follow the standard procedures prescribed in the manual, with only minor variations. Between November 1945 and July 1947 the army carried out at least 176 search operations, 55 of which involved battalions of larger formations. In more than 50 cases, the searches were reactive, mounted in response to specific incidents.[72] These operations left considerable room for improvement, and the series of searches carried out at the end of June 1946 proved useful in exposing inadequacies in operational procedures. Reports by the 1st Guards Brigade indicated requirements for: unarmed troops to deal with passive resistance; special equipment and expert searchers to locate hidden arms; improved techniques and Hebrew interpreters to

facilitate identification and interrogation; reserve troops to relieve weary search teams; and above all, secrecy and surprise in executing operations.[73] However, there is little evidence from subsequent operations to suggest that the army followed up these recommendations. Given the army's predilection for large-scale reactive searches, it is not surprising that tactical surprise was almost invariably lost, with concommitant results. Weaknesses in the intelligence community, particularly the police, discussed later in this chapter, ensured that little could be done to improve identification and interrogation of suspected insurgents.

That said, the army was not devoid of innovation and adaptation. As the situation and unit circumstances permitted, some commanders attempted to compensate for such gaps as they perceived in procedures and training by revising techniques on the basis of operational experience. Several formations endeavoured to refine their roadblock procedures, since it was felt that this was the best way to restrict the insurgents' freedom of movement. The new techniques included pre-designated roadblock locations which would be occupied rapidly following an incident, and mobile roadblocks which could be mounted at short notice at random locations on main roads.[74] Other tactics which were not provided for in the manual, but which were tried experimentally and then incorporated into operational routine included snap searches of dwellings, transportation facilities (buses, bus and railroad stations), and places of entertainment. Some units conducted off-road foot patrols. Operational records indicate that knowledge of these procedures was transferred from unit to unit, implying at least a degree of institutionalisation.[75]

The most innovative methods were those employed by the special 'undercover' squads of Farran and McGregor. These were the brainchild of Colonel Bernard Fergusson, a former Chindit officer who was serving temporarily as an Assistant Inspector General of Police. Subsequent counter-insurgency campaigns have demonstrated clearly the value of such operations, which amount to using insurgent tactics against the insurgents themselves.[76] However, under the circumstances prevailing in Palestine the political risks – arising from exposure of these methods – were very high while, given the flawed application of the scheme, the chances for significant success were relatively low.

First, the squads became a 'private army'. While they operated ostensibly under the direction of a District Superintendent of Police,



they were answerable only to Colonel Fergusson, who in turn reported directly to the IG, Colonel Gray. They thus bypassed completely the normal police chain of command. Second, placed outside the normal command structure the squads never became fully integrated with the CID Political Branch, for whom covert anti-terrorist operations were routine. While close cooperation existed at lower levels, some senior police officers did not approve of or support the scheme. Furthermore, rather than exploit the talent available in the CID, Colonel Fergusson turned to the army for leaders with wartime experience of special operations. The squads, although recruited from the ranks of the police force, consisted largely of ex-servicemen rather than experienced police intelligence officers.[77]

Third, from the beginning the squads laboured under grave limitations. They had trained together for only a fortnight in a rural setting despite the fact that the cities were to be their theatre of operations. Special operations rely on secrecy for effect but by Farran's own account the activities of the squads were anything but secret.[78] Finally and most important, the tactical objectives of the squads were never clear. In theory, such units can be used to gather intelligence covertly for the CID. Alternatively, the squads could exploit CID intelligence to capture or kill the insurgents themselves. Colonel Fergusson clearly favoured the latter role since the squads did not consist of trained detectives and none of the men had more than a cursory comprehension of Hebrew. Thus, their value as intelligence gathering units was limited. However, if the squads were to operate in the anti-terrorist role they required good intelligence and their operational guidelines would have to be specific and in accordance with the law; as soldiers and policemen they were bound by regulations which were very clear on their powers of arrest and the circumstances under which they could open fire. But accurate intelligence was scarce and there was no clear directive to specify how the squads were to be employed. In his memoirs Fergusson noted that they were 'not to terrorize or repay in kind, but to anticipate and to give would-be raiders a bloody nose as they came in to raid'.[79] Farran, on the other hand, maintains that they were given full discretion to operate as they pleased within their area: to advise on defence against terrorism and to take an active part in hunting the insurgents. Farran considered this 'a *carte blanche* . . . a free hand for us against terror when all others were so closely hobbled'.[80] When the case became public, however, the Chief

Secretary insisted that, 'No authority has ever been given for the use by any member of the police force of other than ordinary police methods in dealing with apprehended persons'.[81]

The obvious discrepancies suggest that the guidelines were less than clear in some crucial aspects. In any case, these methods were out of step with the objectives of the internal security campaign; a mandate to restore law and order precluded the use of disruptive tactics of dubious legality. Furthermore, Fergusson's and Farran's wartime experience caused them to think of Palestine, and thereby to devise their operations, as if they were in occupied Europe. But the analogy was incorrect because the security forces were the occupiers and the insurgents were the resistance movement. Conducted in a poor intelligence environment without strategic purpose or clear tactical objectives, the operations could be expected to achieve only minor success at best. There was no reason to expect that the squads would be decisive by covert means when the overt system of internal security had already broken down.

What can be inferred from the foregoing is that army commanders were rarely in a position to think and plan beyond the next roadblock or the next search operation. The Palestine campaign demanded innovative, flexible tactical thinking. But unit and manpower turbulence and the pressure of constant operational commitments confined army operations largely to routine formats that could be implemented easily by successions of conventionally oriented officers and NCOs and relatively inexperienced other ranks. In fact, there were barely sufficient officers and NCOs with experience to instill even the most basic skills, let alone to be 'creative'. Moreover, there were strong institutional disincentives to modify operational 'doctrine'.

Nonetheless, modifications were made, in the imperial tradition, at unit and sub-unit level. When this was done, it usually was effective, producing positive results out of proportion to the effort involved. However, such efforts tended to be *ad hoc*, unsustained, unit specific, and insufficiently propagated to have permeated the army as a whole. As such, they were inadequate to disrupt the insurgent organisations beyond temporarily reducing their freedom of action, and thus could not reverse the gradual erosion of public order. The methods which clearly exhibited the greatest potential in this regard – covert special operations – were poorly conceived and politically inappropriate. It would be easy to fault the High Commissioner and the Colonial Office for approving the scheme



under such inauspicious circumstances. But the influence of the strategic decision-making described in Chapter 4, with the pressure for results, and the interplay of politics and personalities, helps to place operational policy, including this plan, in perspective.

## THE INTELLIGENCE PROCESS

In his memoir of the insurgency, Menachem Begin described the intelligence struggle between the security forces and the insurgents as 'the clash of brains', and 'perhaps the decisive battle in the struggle for liberation'.[82] Unnecessarily, he added that it was a battle the British lost. Begin's gift for hyperbole notwithstanding, his assessment of the importance of intelligence to the outcome of the campaign is scarcely exaggerated. The security forces were unable to collect, develop and exploit successfully intelligence sufficient to defeat the insurgents; nor were they able to use intelligence consistently to prevent major insurgent operations. Army officers who served in Palestine at this time were almost unanimous in the view that inadequate intelligence was one of the keys to the British defeat. 'You never have enough intelligence,' Lieutenant-General Sir Roger Bower observed, 'but we had virtually none.'[83] Moreover, the insurgents were able to penetrate and compromise the security of the principal British intelligence organisation, the Palestine police. This suggests an 'intelligence failure' of significant proportions. The idea of intelligence failure has become fashionable of late, but as Mark Lowenthal points out, it remains a valid concept even if it is over-used or misapplied. Intelligence failures happen.[84] Palestine was one of these. This section will examine the nature and consequences of that failure, and will attempt to suggest some reasons why it occurred.

Failure occurred at the levels of both strategic intelligence – that dealing with broad intentions and capabilities[85] – and tactical intelligence – specific detailed information about immediate plans, operations and targets.[86] There were some successes at both levels as well. As a general proposition it could be said that the security forces acquired strategic intelligence of adequate quality on the Haganah, but not on the Irgun or Lechi. That standard of strategic intelligence provided the basis for more effective operations against the former than against the latter. More often than not, however,

the security forces were unable to turn such strategic intelligence as they had into tactical intelligence that would allow them to forestall insurgent operations or to identify, locate and apprehend the perpetrators.

The Haganah's semi-clandestine existence, and its cooperation with the British during the war, gave the security forces an edge in intelligence collection on the organisation. Although they overestimated its size, they had relatively accurate information on its structure and general procedures.[87] This allowed the security forces to locate and apprehend with relative ease many of the Haganah and Palmach commanders selected for arrest and detention during Operation AGATHA.

The British were also well informed about the Haganah's strategic intentions. In January 1945 the GHQ Middle East Joint Intelligence Committee issued an assessment which anticipated two phases of Jewish resistance to British policy in Palestine. In the first of these, the JIC expected the Yishuv to use passive resistance in an effort to paralyse the Palestine government and to impede the operations of the security forces, coupled with the use of violence to resist searches for arms and to support illegal immigration operations. This corresponded almost exactly to the Haganah's strategy during the united resistance period. Even more notable for its accuracy was the annex to the assessment, which analysed the anticipated role of Zionist propaganda in such a campaign. It predicted that: propaganda would be directed to influence world opinion, particularly in the United States; that it would consist of efforts to discredit the Palestine government, the civil and military authorities; and that British measures would be represented as illegal and aggressive, contrary to Britain's obligations under the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate, and to the will of the Jewish people.[88] Strategic warning of such prescience is rare in counter-insurgency, but this was not the last accurate forecast. The British interpreted correctly the Haganah's efforts to create the united resistance, and received advance warning of the movement's intention to begin its campaign with a 'single serious incident'.[89]

Nonetheless, this was insufficient to permit the security forces to prevent that incident; indeed, the evidence suggests that the incidents of 31 October/1 November 1945 took the security forces by surprise. Nor was this the only occasion the security forces were caught off guard in spite of early warning. In May 1946 the Defence Security Office accurately forecast a revival of insurgent acitivity on a major



scale in June. This was followed up by specific warnings on the eve of the attacks to patrol and protect the lines of communication, particularly the railway bridges.[90] The insurgents reached and damaged or destroyed every target, including the bridges.

The Irgun and the Lechi posed an intelligence problem of a considerably greater scale. The two organisations were much smaller, more selectively recruited, and hence more secure from penetration. Unlike the Haganah, they had never had a legal existence, and had not cooperated with the British during the war. So British information on them was sketchy at best; the JIC's estimate of 3000 Irgun members[91] was at least twice as large as Irgun's active membership. In June 1946, during the planning of Operation AGATHA, General Barker admitted that '. . . our intelligence regarding them [Irgun and Lechi] is insufficient to permit of any preconceived plan for their extermination . . . . The fact that the whereabouts of the five officers who were kidnapped . . . is still unknown shows how negative is our intelligence on which to be able to act.'[92] At that time Barker did not expect the intelligence situation to improve, and his expectations were borne out.[93] That said, the security forces carried out a number of successful operations, described in the previous chapter, which led to the capture of members of the groups and the disruption of their operations, which subsided to a significant degree in the second quarter of 1947, following arrests during the Martial Law operation. But such successes tended to be the exception to the rule.[94] The security forces were demonstrably unable to collect or produce intelligence sufficient to prevent costly assaults on themselves – attacks on police stations being a case in point – or on other vital installations. According to Edward Horne, the Palestine police received information, well in advance of the event, which indicated that the insurgents were planning to attack the government offices in the King David Hotel.[95] Yet, such information proved inadequate to prevent the disaster. The statistics on violent crimes, detentions and prosecutions are equally telling. Violent crimes, many of them associated with the insurgency, increased significantly from 1945, but of the more than 2000 Jews placed in long-term detention, only 168 were convicted in the courts of offences relating to insurgent activities.[96] Against the rest there was insufficient evidence to proceed to prosecution; their involvement in insurgent activities was suspected, but could not be proven.

The implications of this failure were significant and severe for

Britain. It could not enforce the law in Palestine, and it could not control the activities of the insurgents. Together, these factors meant that intelligence failure contributed to the erosion of British legitimacy and control in Palestine. In short, intelligence failure was a direct cause of the British defeat.

On the basis of available evidence, however, it is difficult to establish with certainty the locus and causes of this failure, but the concept of an 'intelligence cycle' provides a useful analytical tool for understanding the problem. The cycle is the process by which, in Jeffrey Richelson's words, 'information is acquired, converted into intelligence, and made available to the policy-makers'.[97] Richelson identifies five basic stages of the cycle: planning and direction; collection; processing; production and analysis; and dissemination. As Lowenthal points out, the process can break down or otherwise go wrong at any one of these stages.[98] The evidence with respect to Palestine suggests failure at several points within the cycle.

Planning and direction began at the 'joint services' level, and it is here that the first indications of trouble may be found. The security committees, both central and district, served as joint operational planning forums. The frequency of meetings – weekly, daily, or otherwise – was determined by the urgency of the situation at the time. But the format was always the same. A representative from the CID political branch would brief the committee on the intelligence 'picture', covering the period since the last meeting; the committee would then formulate plans based on the available intelligence. According to former CID officer John Briance, there were also joint intelligence meetings, involving GSI and the Defence Security Office, once or twice per week.[99] So there were forums for establishing intelligence requirements; what is less clear is how well they functioned. It has since become a 'rule of thumb' that the ability to develop and exploit operational intelligence sufficient to defeat insurgents depends almost entirely on the establishment of a close and harmonious working relationship between the army and the police, the latter being the principal intelligence service.[100] With regard to Palestine, most former army officers and policemen felt that day-to-day relations were satisfactory, but it is clear from both contemporary sources and subsequent observations that army–police relations were in some respects neither close nor harmonious. At the heart of the problem lay, first, a clash of operational styles, approaches to the problem. The policeman, Simon Hutchinson suggests, sees the insurgents as highly organised, dangerous criminals and thus favours the methodical approach – evidence, written statements, photographs – which is likely to frustrate his army colleague although it is far more likely to produce results in court months later.[101] The army, however, was inclined to view the insurgents as a military force to be destroyed by military means, and had no patience for methodical intelligence methods. Major-General Sir Anthony Farrar-Hockley, then a company commander, summarised perceptively this clash of styles:



> The fundamental problem is that the army is not called in until the police are exhausted. Then you have the worst of all possible situations – the police are played out and feel that their efforts have not been appreciated, and the military come in with a superior attitude that they are going to restore order . . . . The upshot is that you start off in a muddle, with poor intelligence, without proper understanding of the other person's situation – this was very obvious in Palestine.[102]

For this and other reasons which will be examined shortly, the army tried to diversify its intelligence sources and sometimes excluded the police from operational planning. These efforts included the development of deceptive cover plans or informing the police and involving them only once the operations were underway. Some officers, however, like Brigadier E. H. Goulburn, felt that effective planning required cooperation of the police: 'not being able to inform the police is a great disadvantage'.[103]

Some policemen were equally critical of the army which, in the words of John Briance, 'didn't know what it was doing . . . . Big operations are fine for the military. But intelligence is a police responsibility.'[104] Catling, who headed the Jewish affairs section in the CID political branch, was more philosophical. He asserts that a great deal of the army's criticism of the police could be attributed to the fact that the army never felt comfortable with the intelligence task. Moreover, army–police cooperation was a relatively new idea, so it is not surprising that there were contrary views.[105] It would be misleading, in any case, to suggest that there was no cooperation between the two forces. Army units were assigned to assist and advise the police on the physical security of their stations, and they monitored the police radio frequencies to ensure prompt response in the event of attacks. Joint operations were conducted as a matter of routine. In the field of intelligence both forces made efforts to

share experience and knowledge.[106] Still, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the army and the police never established the kind of working relationship that would give appropriate direction to the intelligence task.[107]

There is also some question as to whether the Inspector General from 1946 to 1948, Colonel William Nicol Gray, gave sufficient priority to the CID's intelligence work. It is not appropriate to fix blame upon any one individual, and even if it were, to lay it wholly at the feet of Colonel Gray would be unjust, and probably historically inaccurate. Nonetheless, as the IG during the most critical period, he must bear some of the responsibility. Gray's appointment was controversial. The Palestine government had requested an experienced policeman to replace Rymer Jones, who was due to return to the Metropolitan Police. But the Colonial Office felt a non-policeman would be able to fill the position so long as he had an experienced policeman as his deputy. They pointed out that several recent Commissioners of the Metropolitan Police had not been policemen themselves, though the comparison was hardly relevant. Nonetheless, the Colonial Office criteria weighed heavily in favour of a military man, and when the only acceptable police candidate withdrew, Colonel Gray, a Royal Marines officer who came highly recommended, got the post. News of his appointment, Horne reports, 'came as a shock to all ranks'.[108] From the outset his appointment was viewed with suspicion within the force; some felt it reflected the British government's preoccupation with the military aspects of the insurgency. Even in retrospect, some of the leading policemen think Gray was the wrong man for the job. They feel that he was too concerned with 'firepower and mobility' to give appropriate attention to the intelligence aspect. In his own defence, Colonel Gray points out that his mandate was to build up the strength of the police force, a task for which it was expected that his experience in training and leading young men would be most valuable.[109] Moreover, it must be said that the force's intelligence problems were not of Gray's making, and they persisted in spite of efforts to correct them.

The security forces' difficulties in acquiring and exploiting both strategic and tactical intelligence, or even in obtaining evidence sufficient to permit successful prosecution of captured insurgents, points clearly to problems in the collection phase of the intelligence cycle. The sources of this problem were political and structural; indeed, up to a point, the two factors overlap. The hostility of the



Yishuv toward the British administration and its policies tended to isolate the two communities – Jewish and British – from each other. Miss J. S. M. Dannatt, who served in the Defence Security Office, suggests that this separation hampered British intelligence collection efforts,[110] and there is support for this thesis in contemporary sources. In a letter to Montgomery in March 1947, General Dempsey told the CIGS:

> In England there are I suspect just as many murders as in Palestine. In England the murderer is caught because the people . . . are on the side of law and order and assist the police. In Palestine the people do not assist the police and the murderers are not caught . . . . The people not being on our side the police find it difficult if not impossible to get evidence.[111]

The police needed the cooperation of the Yishuv to obtain the intimate details of groups and their activities that were essential to prevent or respond effectively to insurgent operations. But the Jewish community largely refused to cooperate with the police in such matters. Even if support for the insurgents was not always whole-hearted, there was reluctance to betray them. A language barrier reinforced the political one, and further isolated the police. Less than 4 per cent of the British police spoke Hebrew. This problem could not be resolved by recruiting since, as Colonel Gray points out, 'You can't suddenly recruit a lot of police efficiently into a multi-language society . . . a British constable who doesn't speak Hebrew isn't going to get very far'.[112] Thus isolated, the police could not be expected to see and hear all of the warning signs of impending insurgent activity. They were also left on their own to collect criminal evidence, since the Yishuv would not come forward to assist the prosecution of their own kind.

This problem could not be alleviated by relying on the Jewish members of the regular police. First of all, they were few in number: 725, all but 40 serving in the ranks. Until mid-1946, there had been no regular Jewish policemen 'on the beat', a lapse that Colonel Gray set about immediately to change.[113] Second, insurgent intimidation and infiltration rendered the few Jewish members of the CID unreliable from a security standpoint. Living unprotected in the Jewish community, they succumbed to pressure from the insurgents and, caught in a dilemma of conflicting loyalties, some Jewish policemen began to work for both sides.[114] This is a natural tendency, as William F. Whyte has observed in such situations:

> The smoothest course for the officer is to conform to the social organisation with which he is in direct contact and at the same time to try to give the impression . . . that he is enforcing the law. He must play an elaborate role of make believe.[115]

The police took no special precautions to deal with the problem and as a result, 'security was a nightmare. If you wanted to keep anything secret you did not tell anybody . . . nothing passed to a Jewish officer could be kept from the Jewish Agency or the Haganah.'[116] Menachem Begin claims that the Irgun knew in advance about security force operations and the evidence confirms some extraordinary breaches of security: top secret documents were stolen from the police and the security of at least one major search operation was compromised. Penetration was not confined to the police, however; Jews serving in government and military installations also acted as spies for the insurgents.[117]

This left the British section of the CID to bear the largest share of intelligence work, and it was not up to the task. Edward Horne, in his 'insider's' history of the police, credits Arthur Giles (CID head 1938–47) and John Rymer Jones (IG 1943–46) with shaping the CID into 'the finest intelligence system in the Middle East', a system which, he says, 'was to prove devastatingly effective against terrorism'.[118] Even allowing for a degree of professional pride, these assertions appear extravagant. At the very least, they are curiously at odds with the results of security forces operations, and with the numerous intelligence 'failures' cited earlier. The record suggests intelligence did not receive the priority attention that the situation required, and that the CID's resources fell short of being the well-oiled machine' described by Horne. Indeed, a critical examination of the CID calls into question Horne's glowing endorsement of its intelligence and anti-terrorist capabilities.

Although the Palestine police had a higher proportion of CID personnel than any normal police force at the time, they were not organised to deal effectively with the insurgency. Of the 627 CID members, only 80 were assigned to the political branch; Jewish Affairs accounted for only a proportion of the latter. None of the remainder of the district CID were assigned specifically to political work. Owing to lack of incentive, the risks and difficulty of the work, and the inability to produce spectacular results over long periods, they tended to ignore political investigation. Consequently, the ordinary CID was under-employed while the political branch was chronically over-worked. Furthermore, police stations requiring



plainclothes officers to exploit important intelligence were forced to apply to district headquarters, a process which inevitably delayed operations. Financially, criminal investigation – the heart of counter-insurgency intelligence work – had a low priority. The government postponed and under-spent purchases of scientific equipment for the CID and of a new wireless system for the force as a whole. The forensic laboratory and the records section lacked suitable accommodation. Nor was there within Palestine a secure interrogation centre for detailed questioning of captured insurgents. Out of a police budget of £6 million for 1946–47, only £50 000 was allocated to investigative/intelligence work.[119]

The manpower shortage in the political branch, which reflected the manpower problem afflicting the force as a whole,[120] had serious implications for intelligence collection and processing. By 1945 the activities of the political branch had expanded to such an extent that the CID officers did not have sufficient time to follow up on political intelligence reports, thereby creating a significant lacuna in the intelligence cycle. Furthermore, the Wickham Report suggests that, with the exception of some excellent officers and NCOs, the political branch was not staffed to a high quality. There were few in the branch with more than three years' service and, owing to a shortage of competent instructors, even good candidates could not be assured of proper training.[121]

Unable to gather intelligence through routine contact with the Yishuv, the CID political branch relied on clandestine methods: informers, wiretapping, mail interception, and monitoring of jailed insurgents. A small number of captured insurgents were subjected to 'in-depth' interrogation at the Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Centre. Former political branch officers assert that they used informers successfully in penetrating the insurgent groups. Begin, on the other hand, claims that informers betrayed the Irgun on only three occasions, all of which were discovered. Most informers, in any case, tended to act as double agents, which casts some doubt on their reliability. Moreover, evidence suggests that the political branch encountered some difficulties in 'servicing' their informers with prompt and adequate payment from secret service funds.[122] There is insufficient information upon which to assess the effectiveness of the other techniques. However, the overall intelligence performance obviously speaks for itself.

Unimpressed by police efforts in the intelligence field, and distrustful of police security, the army tried to develop and exploit its own intelligence sources, with mixed results. Some senior army

commanders developed personal contacts with highly placed and influential members of the Jewish community.[123] While this may have produced occasional intelligence bonuses, its cumulative impact remains unclear.

Nor is it clear that the 'I' Branch at army headquarters in Jerusalem, which had access to police and other sources of intelligence, fared much better. The head of the branch, Lieutenant-Colonel The Honorable (now Lord) M. M. C. Charteris, felt that one of his main tasks, given the army's non-political nature, was 'to make sense for the soldiers out of the tangle of the Palestine Problem, so that they may see things in their true perspective'.[124] He believed this was necessary because the troops, who were in Palestine temporarily and who regarded their security duties as an interference with proper soldiering, had neither the time nor the incentive to get to grips with the problem. This is a commendable sentiment, and Colonel Charteris clearly worked hard at fulfillling this mission. The 'Fortnightly Intelligence Newsletters' issued by HQ Palestine were full of insights, often quite perceptive, on the subtle nuances of Yishuv politics and opinion. However, they offered few and unremarkable insights on the insurgents; these tended to be buried in a mass of trivia.[125] This casts doubt on the newsletters' operational intelligence value. Occasionally GSI simply produced bad estimates. Newsletter no. 16, issued 9 June 1946, on the eve of the resistance movement's offensive, discounted reports that predicted an early resumption of terrorism and suggested that there was a 'good chance' this would not occur.[126]

General Gale has since criticised GSI for inaccurate intelligence on the Jewish Agency and the Haganah, to which he attributes the unnecessary arrests of many innocent persons during Operation AGATHA.[127] His criticism is only partly justified. The CID political branch, not GSI, drew up the arrest lists for that operation, and many Haganah and Palmach members were apprehended. Yet, it is clear that GSI's voluminous, intimate knowledge of the Yishuv was insufficiently complete to permit refining of the target lists. Like the JIC in 1945, GSI (and the police) probably tended to overestimate the size of the Haganah. Consequently, some 2000 of those arrested had to be released after only a brief detention owing to lack of evidence. This suggests that in trying to 'make sense' of the Palestine problem in the larger context, GSI lost sight of its more important and appropriate mission: facilitating the development of raw intelligence into 'operational' intelligence through evaluation,



analysis and interpretation. This process requires experience, which in turn demands prolonged service 'in-country'. It may be fair to suggest that GSI, which was subject to manpower turbulence as much as the rest of the army in Palestine, could not retain experienced analysts long enough to ensure that the task was done properly. But it was even more a question of priorities, and GSI's seemed to reflect the army's ambivalent attitude toward intelligence work and the institutional strictures that flowed therefrom.

Although information on the Defence Security Office is insufficient for definitive assessment, there is some evidence to suggest that it was better equipped to develop accurate intelligence. The staff were on permanent posting to Palestine; many had lengthy service in the country, and were based in all of the main cities, where they could observe and listen. As professional intelligence officers with experience and stability in their postings, they were probably better able to evaluate the information they acquired. That undoubtedly explains the DSO's record for providing more accurate intelligence reports.[128] Even if this assessment is correct, it is clear that the DSO could not by itself compensate for the deficiencies in the intelligence system as a whole.

## COUNTER-PROPAGANDA

In his authoritative study of revolutionary propaganda, Maurice Tugwell has identified the components of an effective counter-propaganda campaign. First, government policy should be clearly stated, since this provides the essential point of reference for effective counter-propaganda. Second, politicians and military leaders need to be 'educated', that is, to understand the nature of the problem and why a response is called for. Third, it may be necessary to create counter-propaganda staffs in government, the police, and the military. In effect, he argues that like the insurgents, they must treat counter-propaganda as a joint operation, carried out in support of the political and military campaigns. Fourth, there is a requirement for counter-propaganda advice in operational planning, to alert the security forces commander to the propaganda risks arising from proposed courses of action. Finally, hostile propaganda must be analysed for the themes and details that require a response. He points out that there are appropriate responses to the common themes of revolutionary propaganda. But these are also subject to

the same rules that make for effective insurgent propaganda: consistency both with verifiable facts and with pre-existing attitudes and fundamental trends; continuity, founded on repetition; speed of dissemination; and delivery of the appropriate message to each target audience. The methods available to the government are diverse. They include: ministerial statements and parliamentary speeches; press conferences and interviews with senior officials and commanders; briefing of journalists by counter-propaganda/information staffs; and direct means such as posters, leaflets, broadcasts, and press releases.[129]

At first glance it may appear unhistorical to judge this campaign by standards based on the advantage of thirty years' hindsight. It is important to recall, however, that in 1945 Britain had just terminated a major propaganda effort and that the principles Tugwell enunciates were not unfamiliar to policy-makers of the time.[130] They provide, moreover, a useful framework for assessment. The British campaign to counter Zionist propaganda, such as it was, exhibited weaknesses – some of which were indentified in the previous chapter – under all of the criteria identified above.

First, and foremost, Britain did not have a political programme upon which to found a propaganda campaign that could be expected to appeal to the Yishuv and to their supporters in the United States. Bevin's adviser, Harold Beeley, acknowledged this much in October 1946, when he observed that the only effective forms of counter-propaganda would be a conclusive policy decision on Palestine and an Arab effort to publicise their own case.[131] For the reasons already explained, no such policy was forthcoming, and the British government was reluctant to encourage the Arabs to press their case too strongly for fear of raising expectations that might further undermine the British position in the region. Furthermore, the government's unwillingness to renounce the White Paper policy left it open to Zionist propaganda attack while giving it nothing with which to challenge the basic assumptions of insurgent propaganda. In this regard, the propaganda objectives established in 1945 were inappropriate, and could not contribute to the pacification of Palestine. This, Tugwell notes, made it difficult for the British to appeal over the heads of the insurgents to the moderate Zionists by showing some benefit to be gained by restraint.[132] Thus, it was not possible to drive a permanent wedge between the moderates and the extremists.Nor was the task made any easier by the fact that the Labour government itself was largely sympathetic to the



Zionist cause and to their case. Differences were over interpretation, degree and methods. But propaganda cannot be effective if it is reduced to 'splitting hairs' over fine points of political semantics.

Second, while there was probably little need to 'educate' Britain's political leaders and Foreign Office officials about the nature, benefits, risks and requirements of propaganda in general terms, it is clear that the politicians did not believe it was appropriate for the post-war situation.[133] Hence, the disbanding of MOI and a similar run-down in Palestine. Peacetime thinking prevailed, and though the insurgents had 'declared war' on Britain in Palestine, the British viewed the insurgency as a form of civil disturbance not as a war. Not only was this consonant with army thinking that prevailed at the outset of the conflict, it was the only acceptable political standpoint. Effective propaganda would have required a 'wartime' adversary relationship with the Zionists, and this was not possible, both for moral reasons and because of the desire to resolve the issue through diplomacy. By the autumn of 1946 General Barker, who himself had become the target of insurgent propaganda, had changed his mind on the nature of the struggle sufficiently to urge the Palestine government to acquire a psychological warfare officer to conduct counter-propaganda. The Central Security Committee agreed, but the position apparently was never filled, undoubtedly because of the 'extreme delicacy' of the matter and the 'extremely serious repercussions' of any leak.[134] From that point forward the committee regularly included propaganda/psychological warfare matters and actions in their deliberations. But without the benefit of advice from an officer experienced in this field, their decisions lacked a sense of purpose. Such measures as were proposed tended to be *ad hoc*, reactive, and generally 'too little, too late'.[135] So, such formal 'education' as was undertaken was limited essentially to the army which, to its credit, appreciated the threat accurately. It concluded that its principal contribution to the propaganda war would be defensive – relying on the disciplined, professional bearing and actions of its troops to deny the insurgents the opportunities and material with which to make propaganda.

Third, the British were not organised to mount an effective counter-propaganda campaign. The reorganisation in London has already been described. Similar changes occurred in Palestine. The MOI carried 85 per cent of the cost of the PIO, and at the end of the war the British government wanted to reduce this burden. Between June and December 1945 budgets and establishment

proposals were constantly reviewed and reduced. By December the MOI had fixed the proposed reductions at about 30 per cent. The estimated budget for 1946/7 was reduced by as much again. The PIO staff, diminished by vacancies to 109 persons out of an establishment of 133, was to be run down to 65 by March 1946. The PIO cancelled two heavily subsidised government newspapers. The reading centre in Tel Aviv, though apparently successful as a means of reaching the Jewish population, was to be reduced in scale. Those in Haifa and Jaffa received funds for only a further six months and the proposal for a centre in Jerusalem was scrapped altogether.[136] The PIO also discontinued the quarterly report and appreciation which the MOI had used to brief British and American journalists. The Colonial Office rectified the situation by providing the MOI with copies of the Monthly Situation telegram.[137]

The cancellation of the government newspapers in Palestine may have been a mistake. The press in Palestine was without exception hostile to the government. Richard Graves, Mayor of Jerusalem in 1947/8, felt that the Palestine government was severely hampered in not having a press of its own. Its only means of answering criticism was by austere communiqués, in papers already slanted against the government, which could hardly be expected to win many converts. He concluded that the government should have subsidised an English language newspaper long before and given it a free hand to criticise as well as a general mandate to support the government. Such a paper would have been able to launch counter-attacks against criticism in the local papers.[138] Although correct perhaps in theory, Graves' view seems unduly optimistic. Under the circumstances prevailing it is difficult to see how such a paper could have overcome the government's credibility problem with the Zionists. Coming at a time when insurgent propagandists were initiating a major offensive against the British and Palestine governments, these changes and reductions could only make the British propaganda task more difficult. There is, however, no evidence to indicate whether the PIO or the Palestine government objected to these reductions or tried to compensate for them.

Fourth, the army did attempt to inject the propaganda element into operational planning, if only from a defensive point of view: alerting the troops to the propaganda risks inherent in their actions; promoting good relations with the press; and attempting to make incident information available as rapidly as possible. These were appropriate and commendable efforts, although the army's inexperience in these matters meant that mistakes were made. Despite all good intentions army–press relations were less than satisfactory. British correspondents complained of being 'held up, searched, and refused admittance to places where, with their passes, they have every right to go'.[139] If this was the case it is hardly surprising that the security forces had few defenders in the news media. The problem probably became self-sustaining, since hostile reporting generated a hostile attitude towards the press on the part of the army. General Cassels observed:

> It did make one hopping mad to read some of the comments in the Press . . . denigrating all or most of our actions. They sat in comfort and safety in England while we lived in fairly uncomfortable conditions and under the continued . . . threat of being sniped or blown up![140]

In fairness, it must be stressed that the army was not accustomed to conducting operations under the glare of publicity. Nonetheless, the army's inexperience and the government's low-profile approach to propaganda generally made it difficult for the Palestine authorities to present themselves as a winning side, let alone to recover from embarrassments like the Farran case which, as the GOC acknowledged, 'caused considerable agitation in the Jewish Press and also some sensation in the World Press . . . . '[141] He went on to add that the propaganda associated with the incident probably increased anti-British feeling among the more extreme elements of the Jewish community. In a similar vein, any political credit the British government might have gained from the King David atrocity, and from the White Paper on terrorism published several days later, was undermined by the exposure of General Barker's ill-advised letter, the tones of which were undeniably anti-Semitic. Insurgent propagandists quickly exploited the letter, forcing the British government to renounce it publicly.[142] It appears logical to conclude that it was this latter affair that persuaded Barker to urge the Security Committee to hire someone to conduct counter-propaganda.

Fifth, the GSI and DSO intelligence staffs did conduct propaganda analysis.[143] However, such analyses were produced apparently only for the general information purposes described earlier by Colonel Charteris. There is no evidence that they provided the basis for counter-propaganda, since British propaganda never attacked the basic themes of insurgent propaganda.

Finally, in a campaign otherwise undistinguished by success, one

propaganda effort adhered to all the rules. The police recruiting drive had a clear, if limited, objective. The various agencies concerned cooperated in the task and pursued the objective in a manner uncharacteristic of British propaganda efforts at that time. The initial message, which was reinforced and sustained, appealed to a receptive audience of young men and ex-servicemen who found peacetime life in Britain too dull or economically difficult and for whom the prospect of exciting work in Palestine provided a desirable alternative. In this sense perhaps the recruiting campaign was blessed by extraordinary timing: delayed much longer than was justified by police requirements, it opened against a background of rising violence which actually may have helped recruiting. In summary, it possessed and exploited what British propaganda on the Palestine issue lacked: consistency with facts, trends and attitudes; continuity; timing, targeting, and the appropriate methods. It was to Britain's considerable disadvantage that politics and economics conspired to preclude the conduct of a campaign of comparable vigour against the insurgents.

# 6 Palestine and the British Experience of Counter-Insurgency

To make war upon rebellion is messy and slow, like eating soup with a knife.[1]

T. E. Lawrence's wry observation on the Turkish predicament in the First World War has proven timeless in its relevance to armies in counter-insurgency, and no more so than for the British in Palestine. Counter-insurgency *is* 'messy and slow'; success requires skill and perseverance, both political and military. The evidence presented suggests that the British campaign lacked these essential qualities. It also indicates some reasons why this was the case. In these lie the answers to the two questions posed at the outset of this study.

Dennis Duncanson has observed that:

> the test of validity of experience in armed conflict ought to be victory or defeat. However, victory or defeat are not always easy to measure under conditions of de-colonisation, the end result of which was, by definition, surrender of the colonial power's mandate sooner or later.[2]

In these circumstances, applicable in Palestine and in most of Britain's other post-war campaigns, the outcome was determined by political and other factors, at home and within the colony, of which the military/insurgent struggle was merely one of many. The relative significance of the counter-insurgency dimension varied from one campaign to the other. However, the extent to which the army adapted effectively to the requirements of the situation could determine to a considerable extent the character of the British

surrender of authority: either an orderly transfer of power, as in Malaya, or chaos – as occurred in Palestine.

Whether judged by these standards or according to the criteria set out in Chapter 1, the British army – with few exceptions – did not adapt effectively to the operational situation in Palestine. Like its political masters, the army did not comprehend the nature of the conflict in which it was engaged. The politicians saw Palestine as a problem of diplomacy, and focused their attention accordingly. For them the insurgency was a nuisance, an embarrassment, and an obstacle to rational settlement of the dispute – but not a war. It was a civil disturbance, and the army's role was to contain it while a political arrangement was worked out. Neither they nor the army understood that they were involved in a war in which the issues at stake were the legitimacy of Britain's position in Palestine and its ability to exert *de facto* control in the territory. Field-Marshal Montgomery, the CIGS, recognised the insurgency as a war; in this he was an exception to the rule. But the subtle interplay of political and paramilitary actions eluded his grasp and that of his subordinate commanders. They could hardly have behaved otherwise, since the army's experience of 'imperial policing' had not prepared the institution intellectually for what amounted to a revolution in methods of warfare. Moreover, the army itself was inherently resistant to radical changes in strategic thought, particularly where military issues transgressed into the political domain. So the army's attention remained fixed on the military aspects of the situation, which were regarded as secondary to the army's real mission – to train for war. The 'frocks' and the 'brass' thus operated as 'two solitudes', neither one seeing the 'big picture', nor appreciating the other's role in it.

This exerted a significant influence on the course and direction of the campaign and on the army's ability to adapt to it. First, the need for a close political–military partnership in directing the campaign was only partly realised, and then only in Palestine itself. There, operating according to the principles of 'aid to the civil power', the government and the army developed a functional relationship, in the form of the Central Security Committee, for local planning and direction of internal security operations. But there was no similar meeting of minds at the strategic level. By the beginning of 1947 Montgomery had wrested direction of the campaign away from the civil and military powers in Palestine. Owing to his personality and prestige, and their tendency to isolate the political



issues from the military aspects, the Cabinet deferred to the CIGS on the question of military policy. This allowed him to ride roughshod over the arguments of the High Commissioner, whose efforts to coordinate political and military measures he did not understand, and even despised.

Second, and as a direct consequence of the above, there was no 'strategy' to defeat the insurgents. So, Sir Alan Cunningham's efforts notwithstanding, political and military measures were neither wholly in phase with each other nor with the situation on the ground. From November 1945 to January 1947, operational policy fluctuated largely according to the fortunes of Anglo-American diplomacy. In respect of insurgent activity, it was almost completely reactive. Then, once Montgomery imposed his style on military planning, operational policy became more 'offensive' in regard to the insurgency. Yet now it was completely divorced from the political battle which, in shifting to the forum of the United Nations, rendered such a policy untimely and politically inappropriate. Moreover, the absence of a coordinated political–military strategy meant that the British government could not exploit through diplomacy the 'military' victory they won over the Jewish Agency and the Haganah with Operation AGATHA.

Third, constrained both by political considerations and its own professional outlook to treat the insurgency only as a civil disturbance, the army left the intelligence task to the civil authorities – the Palestine police. But when institutional weakness and political isolation hampered the force's intelligence activities, the army intelligence branch was not oriented or prepared to fill the gap. Combined with the failure to understand the nature of the conflict and the consequent inability to forge a counter-insurgency strategy, this intelligence failure adversely affected operational policy and actions. The security forces did not have sufficient, timely and accurate tactical intelligence upon which to base operations that could have anticipated and pre-empted insurgent activity. So army operations tended to be reactive, responding to the insurgents. This left the initiative in their hands, and allowed the insurgents largely to set the pace and dictate the outcome of the conflict. Furthermore, with rare exceptions such as Operation AGATHA, army operations could not be and were not directed against the organisational and political structures of the most active and dangerous insurgent groups: the Irgun and the Lechi. Thus effectively undisrupted, these groups retained their freedom of action throughout the insurgency.

Fourth, although small unit operations (platoon or smaller), based

when possible on good intelligence, usually produced results out of proportion to their scale, several factors combined to make these the exception rather than the rule. Contemporary army doctrine of 'imperial policing' was one of the obstacles. Founded on an approach to insurgency that was outdated, it emphasised the value of the large-scale sweep or search at the expense of the more discriminate raid, patrol, or snap search. Nor did it prescribe for the army an intelligence role which, in view of the weakness of the police, might have made all operations, large and small, more effective. Moreover, the army's institutional resistance to innovation was reinforced by the fact that it had just emerged from a major conventional war in which the large operation was routine; it was the dominant experience of all ranks. So it was not easy for the army to adjust its operational thinking to the scale and restrained nature of the Palestine conflict, and the 'hide and seek' character of insurgent versus counter-insurgent operations. Finally, the combination of continuous operational commitments and army reorganisation disrupted training and continuity; the inability to retain experienced officers and NCOs was particularly troublesome. The struggle to maintain minimum standards of discipline, and professional and technical skills meant that operations had to be reduced to simple, familiar routines that could be absorbed quickly by new personnel. Consequently, commanders tended to mount operations 'by the book'. There was little scope and few opportunities for innovation. That said, some commanders and their units exhibited a capacity for 'on the spot' adaptation and a readiness to share their operational 'lessons' with others. However, these efforts were *ad hoc* and, in spite of efforts to transfer useful experience, innovation tended to be unit-specific and was not institutionalised throughout the army.

The most innovative and potentially most effective counter-insurgency ideas originated with army officers serving in the police whose wartime experience had been irregular rather than conventional. Their confidence in the value of covert special operations as a counter-insurgency technique has been borne out by subsequent experience in Malaya, Kenya and Northern Ireland.[3] But in the context of Palestine in 1947, their efforts were poorly conceived, inadequately controlled, and politically ill-timed. The resulting 'Farran Case' symbolises graphically the implications of the failure to integrate political aims and military means.

The fifth and final point regarding adaptation: the loss of the propaganda battle for legitimacy cannot be blamed on the army.



Conducting and countering propaganda was a civilian responsibility and it was the civilians who lost that battle, almost by default. The army's role was essentially defensive. It cooperated with the news media covering the army's operations, and sensitised the troops to the political/propaganda aspects of their own activities, so as to reduce the number of mistakes and excesses and, hence, the number of opportunities for the insurgents to make propaganda out of army actions. In spite of its limited experience in dealing with hostile propaganda and critical press coverage, the army adapted to the situation much better than might have been expected. It assessed accurately the propaganda threat to itself, and attempted to educate its troops intelligently on the matter. It tried to inject the propaganda factor into operational planning, even if only to be prepared to defend itself and its actions. The army intelligence branch, for all its limitations, did conduct insurgent propaganda analysis. That such material was not used to produce counter-propaganda was not the fault of the army; after all, it was the GOC who proposed that the Palestine government should hire a psychological warfare officer. Still, both the army and the civilians were slow to appreciate the potential counter-propaganda value of 'on the spot' interviews by operational commanders. Furthermore, the army made its share of propaganda mistakes, the senior commanders being as much – if not more – to blame than the other ranks for politically damaging *faux pas*.

The picture that emerges from this analysis is of a large and unwieldy institution grappling unsuccessfully with an unfamiliar, difficult problem that taxed some of the best military brains of the period. Politically unsophisticated, beset by post-war organisational turmoil, shackled to an outmoded operational doctrine, and buffeted by inconsistent and inappropriate strategic direction, the British army responded to the insurgency in the only way these constraints permitted. It relied on proven, if ponderous methods which were only marginally effective against the insurgents. They were, however, relatively easy to instill in an army in a state of flux. Moreover, however unimaginative, they were less likely to produce unpredictable or uncontrollable results, and hence to attract criticism and further interference from the army's political superiors. So, while it would be easy to dismiss the army's performance as a failure because it did not adapt fully to the insurgency, it also would be unhistorical. The politicians, after all, demanded of the army only that it buy time for them to reach a diplomatic solution. The methods the army

tried to apply were, in fact, appropriate for that mission. The problem was that British political objectives were completely out of step with the objectives and strategies of the insurgents.

This, of course, provides at least part of the answer to the second question, which concerns the army's contribution to the outcome of the conflict. First, lacking a coordinated political–military strategy, an appropriate counter-insurgency doctrine, and sufficient operational intelligence, the army and the other security forces were unable to disrupt the 'centre of gravity' – the political base and organisational infrastructure – of the two key insurgent groups: the Irgun and the Lechi. They were able to strike in this fashion at the Jewish Agency and the Haganah. Yet, this merely neutralised those elements of the Zionist movement with whom it might otherwise have been possible to negotiate a settlement of the dispute, but without any political benefit, since the British politicians were unprepared to exploit the disarray in the Zionist movement by seizing the diplomatic initiative. Worse still, it freed the other two groups to pursue their strategies unconstrained by the dictates of the more moderate organisations. Their freedom of action never seriously threatened, the Irgun and the Lechi gained and retained the strategic initiative in the battle for control. So it seems fair to conclude that the army's inability to adapt contributed directly to the escalation of the insurgency. Second, in the face of continuous and effective insurgent attacks on the security forces and on other components of the British administration in Palestine, the army's operations were ineffective both in appearance and in fact. Occasional tactical successes were overshadowed by the fact that major operations, which attracted the most attention and criticism, tended to produce meagre results in terms of captured insurgents; more important, they did not stop the insurgency. Furthermore, insurgent successes and security force failures and excesses provided ammunition to the insurgent propagandists, who were able to interpret and present the facts of the situation in such a way as to erode the political legitimacy of the British position. So, ineffective army operations allowed the insurgents to increase the human, material and political costs of the British presence in Palestine to the point where the British government ceased to view Palestine as an asset, but rather as a liability.[4]

That said, Britain's defeat in Palestine cannot be blamed solely on the performance of the army. Its inability to contain the insurgency can be attributed in large measure to factors over which



it had little or no control. The army's failure to understand and to adapt to the war in which it was engaged was but one factor in a complex matrix of politics, personalities and power. A quarter of a century of diplomacy had placed the British government – and hence, the army – in an untenable position over the Palestine question. A diplomatic solution would be difficult at best; a military solution was out of the question. Unable to achieve its objectives by either means, the government resorted to half-measures, while seeking an honourable exit. This left the army to apply methods which would do everything to aggravate the situation, and nothing to resolve it. In the final analysis, withdrawal was the only option that made sense.

In June 1948, barely a month after Britain had withdrawn from Palestine, another anti-colonial insurgency broke out, this time in Malaya. As in Palestine, the British authorities and security forces floundered during the early stages of the crisis; unlike Palestine, however, the relevant agencies developed a political–military strategy and a system of coordinated action which gradually allowed them to gain the initiative and ultimately to defeat the insurgents.[5] This scenario was repeated, although not always with the same degree of success, in Kenya, Cyprus, Aden, Oman and Northern Ireland. Over a period of thirty years, experience built upon experience. Old 'lessons' had to be relearned constantly, but in the process operational techniques were refined and a body of doctrine developed that was not only 'combat tested', but which proved sufficiently flexible to be adapted to varied operational situations world-wide.[6] Hardly surprising, then, that in 1981 even the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* could boast: 'Britain world leader in anti-guerrilla methods'.[7]

Undoubtedly because it was a significant victory, the Malayan campaign was seized upon as the 'model' for counter-insurgency success.[8] Yet the contribution of the Palestine experience to that and subsequent campaigns clearly has gone largely unrecognised. Some of the techniques that contributed to the victory in Malaya, such as the joint security committee system and special operations, were pioneered, however imperfectly, in Palestine. Colonel Gray served as Commissioner of Police in Malaya during the early and most difficult years of the Emergency. Along with him went some 450 former Palestine policemen whose arrival, it has been suggested, prevented the collapse of British rule in the early months of the insurgency.[9] A number of British army officers who held significant posts in subsequent campaigns 'cut their teeth' as junior officers in

Palestine. It is here, perhaps, that the campaign had its most long-lasting impact. Reflecting on three decades of counter-insurgency campaigning, Maurice Tugwell concluded:

> The Jews had the highest quality of terrorists the British Army faced in the post-war period, so the army probably set its standards by them, and it did them good . . . . What was learned was applied much better elsewhere. Palestine put the army in the right frame of mind, so they responded much better and much faster later.[10]

# Appendix I: Insurgent Organisation Charts

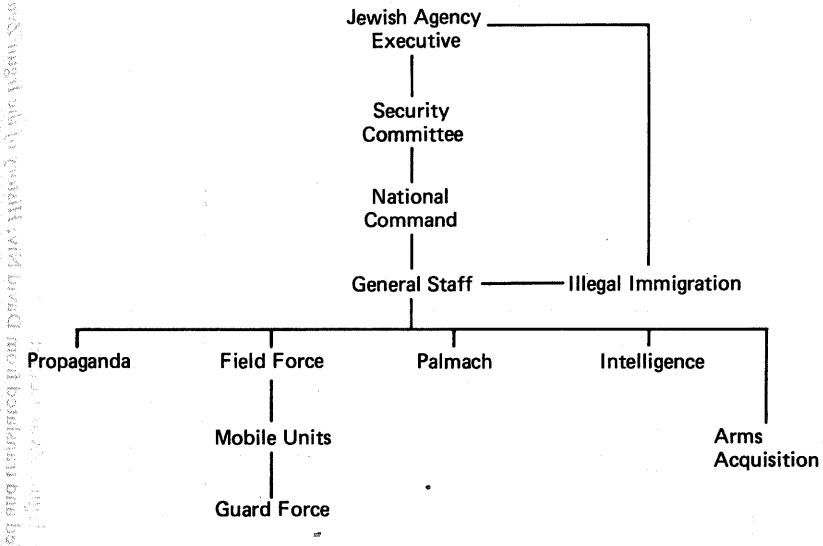



*Chart I.1*: The Haganah
SOURCE: HC [6873] (1946); Bauer, 'Rommel's Threat of Invasion', pp. 225–6.

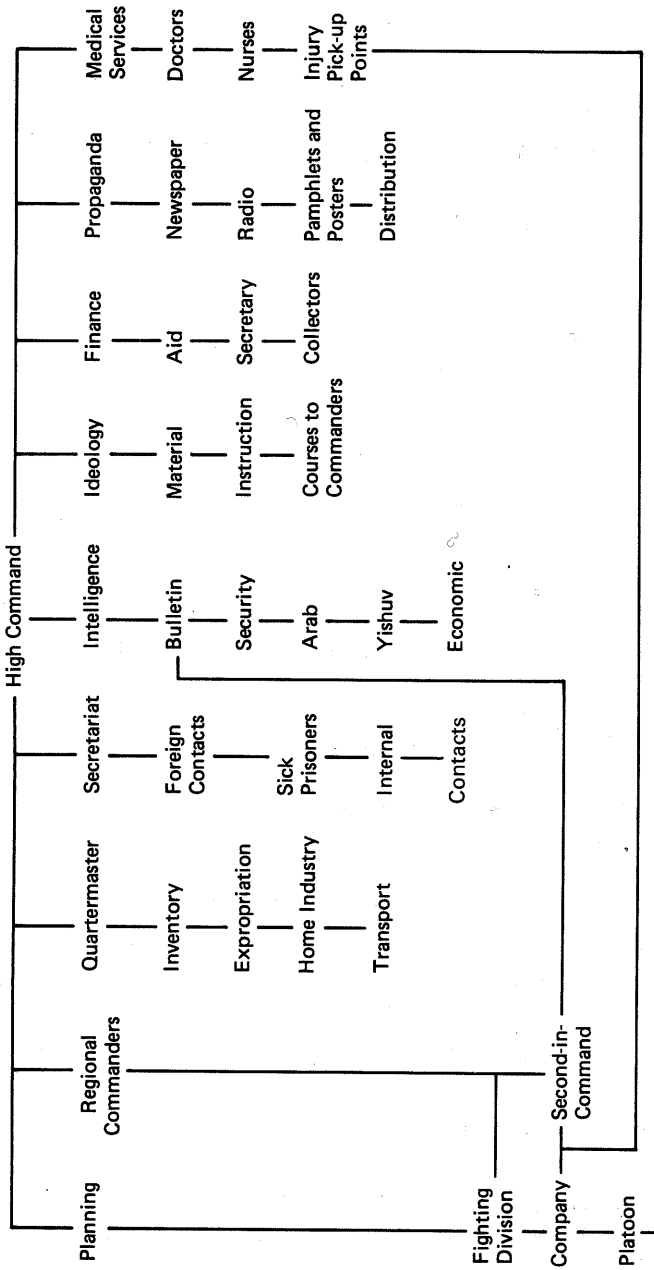
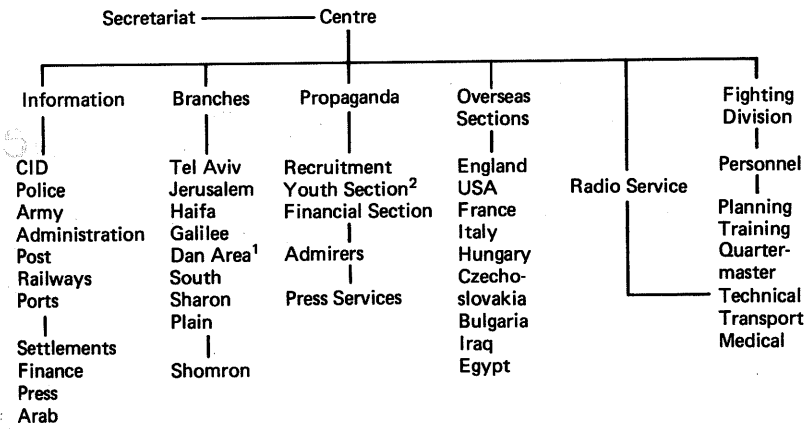



*Chart I.2*: The Irgun Zvai Leumi
SOURCE: Extracted and translated from David Niv, *History of the Irgun Zvai Leumi* (Tel Aviv, 1968) (in Hebrew), by Yisrael Medad, National Studies Institute, Jerusalem, 1978.






*Notes:* [1] Area around Tel Aviv proper.
[2] Includes recruitment, ideological and military training, and distribution of posters and newspapers.

*Chart I.3*: The Lochmei Heruth Israel
SOURCE: Extracted and translated from Y. Banai, *Chayalim Almonim* (Tel Aviv, 1958), by Yisrael Medad, 1978.

# Appendix II: The Palestine Police Force Organisation Charts

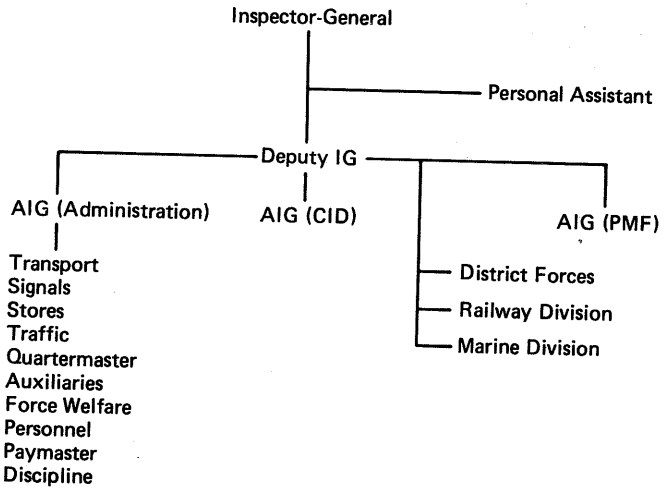



*Chart II.1*: The Organisation of the Palestine Police
SOURCE: 1 Armd. Div., "Appendix A to IS Instruction no. 4", 6 June 1947, WO 261/178.





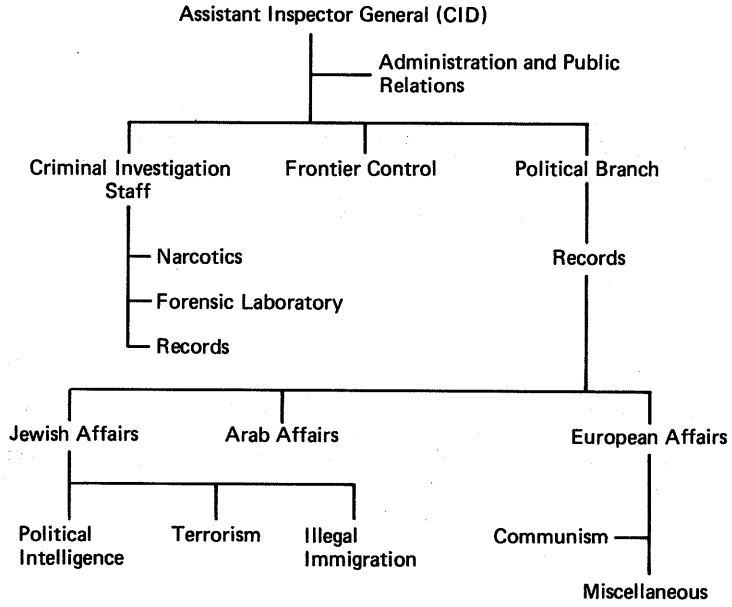



*Chart II.2*: The Criminal Investigation Department
SOURCE: John Briance, interview with author, 3 March 1977.

# Appendix III: Insurgent Operations in Palestine

Sources for this information are as follows: CO 537/2281; CO 733/456; FO 371/52563, 52565–6; WO 261/171, 181; 'Jewish Terrorist Outrages Since His Excellency's Arrival in Palestine', 1947, Cunningham Papers, V/4; 1 Inf. Div., 'Report on Operation ELEPHANT', Moore Papers.

*Note*: Unless otherwise specified operations were carried out by Irgun and/or Lechi.

| *Date* | *Location* | *Details* |
|---|---|---|
| *1945* | | |
| 31 Oct. | Across Palestine | Widespread damage to railway; some damage to oil refineries; 2 police launches damaged, one sunk; 13 casualties to security forces, railway staff (Haganah, Palmach, Irgun, Lechi). |
| ? Nov. | Haifa | Theft of 5 tons of nitrate from chemical firm (Irgun). |
| 23 Nov. | Ras El Ain | Major theft of arms from RAF camp. |
| 25 Nov. | Givat Olga | Attack on coastguard station; 4 policemen wounded (Haganah). |
| | Sidna Ali | Attack on police post; 10 policemen wounded (Haganah). |
| 1 Dec. | Tel Aviv | Textile robbery. |
| 17 Dec. | Tel Aviv | Abortive diamond robbery. |
| 27 Dec. | Jerusalem | CID HQ badly damaged by bomb; 22 security forces casualties (Irgun and Lechi). |
| | Jaffa | CID HQ partially destroyed (Irgun and Lechi). |





| *Date* | *Location* | *Details* |
|---|---|---|
| | Tel Aviv | Abortive arms theft at army workshops; one insurgent killed. |
| *1946* | | |
| 12 Jan. | Hadera | £35 000 stolen from derailed train. |
| 14 Jan. | Haifa | Robbery of chemical firm. |
| 19 Jan. | Jerusalem | Abortive attack on prison and broadcasting studios; electric sub-station damaged; insurgent, 7 security force casualties (Irgun). |
| 21 Jan. | Givat Olga | Coastguard station destroyed, 17 soldiers wounded (Haganah). |
| | Mount Carmel | Abortive attempt to blow up radar station (Haganah). |
| 25 Jan. | Tel Aviv | Theft of £6 000 worth of yarn. |
| 29 Jan. | Aqir | Abortive theft of arms from RAF station (Irgun). |
| 3 Feb. | Tel Aviv | Theft of small quantity of arms from RAF medical unit (Irgun). |
| 5 Feb. | Safad | Abortive attempt to rescue prisoners; one policeman wounded (Palmach). |
| 6 Feb. | Agrobank | Theft of arms and vehicle from army camp; 3 security force casualties (Lechi). |
| 15 Feb. | Haifa | Abortive attempt to assassinate DSP (Lechi). |
| 16 Feb. | Beit Nabala | Abortive attack on army camp. |
| 19 Feb. | Mount Carmel | Radar station destroyed; 8 RAF personnel wounded (Haganah). |
| 21 Feb. | Sarona, Kfar Vitkin, Shafr Amr | Some damage to PMF camps at two latter locations; 4 insurgents killed, one policeman, 2 civilians injured (Palmach). |
| 25 Feb. | Lydda, Petah Tiqva, Qastina | Attacks on airfields destroy 5 aircraft, damage 17; 4 insurgents killed (Irgun and Lechi). |
| 27 Feb. | near Safad | One policeman wounded in a shooting incident (Haganah). |

| Date | Location | Details |
|---|---|---|
| 6 Mar. | Sarafand | Theft of arms from army camp; 2 insurgents wounded, 9 captured; one soldier killed, one civilian wounded (Irgun). |
| 22 Mar. | near Sarona | Assassination of German internee (Lechi). |
| 25 Mar. | Tel Aviv, Sarona | One person killed in disturbances. |
| 27 Mar. | Sukreir | Abortive attack on railway station. |
| 2 Apr. | railway | Line cut at several locations; 5 bridges destroyed (Irgun). |
| 7 Apr. | Yibna | Shooting incident. |
| 13 Apr. | Nathanya | Theft of arms from RAF camp; bridge blown up; some soldiers wounded. |
| | ? | Abortive attempt to steal arms. |
| 23 Apr. | Ramat Gan | Theft of arms from police station; 4 insurgent, 3 security force casualties (Irgun). |
| | Tel Aviv | Abortive attack on railway station (Irgun). |
| 25 Apr. | Tel Aviv | 7 soldiers killed; some arms stolen (Lechi). |
| 1 May | Haifa | Abortive attempt to blow up Royal Navy destroyer. |
| 14 May | Tel Aviv | 2 jeeps stolen, one damaged in three attempts; 2 soldiers wounded. |
| 15 May | railway | Theft of 135 000 rounds of ammunition from train. |
| 20 May | Nablus | Theft of £6 200 from bank. |
| 6 June | Jerusalem | Rescue of captured leader from medical clinic (Lechi). |
| 10 June | railway | 4 trains seriously damaged; 3 security force personnel wounded. |
| 12 June | Tel Aviv | Soldier stabbed, wounded. |
| 14 June | Haifa | Arab District Officer wounded in assassination attempt (Lechi). |



| Date | Location | Details |
|---|---|---|
| | Haifa | Bombing of Arab café; 2 civilians wounded. |
| 16 June | across Palestine | 11 bridges damaged or destroyed; 8 insurgent, 5 security force casualties (Haganah and Palmach). |
| 17 June | Haifa | Railway workshops seriously damaged; 11 insurgents killed, 15 captured (Lechi). |
| 18 June | Tel Aviv, Jerusalem | Kidnapping of 6 army officers (Irgun). |
| 26 June | Tel Aviv? | Theft of £40 000-worth of diamonds. |
| 4 July | Haifa | 2 Jews abducted and tortured as informers (Haganah). |
| 22 July | Jerusalem | Bombing of King David Hotel; 91 killed, 69 wounded (Irgun). |
| 21 Aug. | Haifa | Sabotage of British ship used for transhipment of illegal immigrants (Palmach). |
| 8 Sept. | railway | Some damage to communications. |
| | Haifa | Sabotage of oil pipeline; one British casualty (Lechi). |
| | Haifa | Assassination of CID sergeant (Lechi). |
| 9 Sept. | Tel Aviv | Assassination of Area Security Officer; several other British casualties (Lechi). |
| | Tel Aviv | 6 soldiers wounded in shooting, mining incidents. |
| 13 Sept. | Tel Aviv, Jaffa | 3 banks robbed, one police station attacked; 7 security force and civilian casualties. |
| 20 Sept. | Haifa | Railway station blown up (Irgun). |
| 23 Sept. | railway | Attack on oil train; abortive attack on railway bridge; one guard killed. |
| 30 Sept. | ? | 2 British personnel casualties in separate attacks. |
| 1 Oct. | Haifa | Abortive attempt to blow up oil dock. |

| Date | Location | Details |
|---|---|---|
| 6 Oct. | Jerusalem | 2 RAF personnel shot, one killed. |
| 8 Oct. | across Palestine | Widespread road and rail mining; 8 security force, civilian casualties. |
| 17 Oct. | Jerusalem | Assassination of police officer (Lechi). |
| 17 Oct. | across Palestine | Widespread road mining, 2 army vehicles damaged; 5 security force casualties. |
| | ? | Café damaged by arson. |
| 20 Oct. | Rishon Le Zion | Army jeep blown up by mines; 2 casualties. |
| 22 Oct. | railway | Train derailed by mines |
| 24 Oct. | Jerusalem | Army checkpoint bombed; one soldier killed, 10 wounded; police billet bombed. |
| 26 Oct. | Hadera | Army lorry blown up and bridge damaged. |
| 29 Oct. | near Haifa | 2 army vehicles mined; 2 casualties. |
| 30 Oct. | Jerusalem | 2 army, one civilian vehicle mined, fired on; 13 military, one civilian casualties. |
| | Jerusalem | railway station blown up, one policeman killed (Irgun). |
| 31 Oct. | Petah Tiqva | Army lorry mined, 2 soldiers killed, 2 wounded. |
| | near Tel Aviv | Police vehicle fired on. |
| | Haifa District | Army lorry mined; one casualty. |
| 1 Nov. | near Hadera | Engine of goods train mined, slight damage to engine and bridge. |
| | ? | Army lorry blown up; 4 casualties. |
| 2 Nov. | ? | Attacks on army lorries and bridges; 10 casualties. |
| 3 Nov. | Qalqilya | Train derailed by mine, staff slightly injured. |
| | same area | Military vehicle detonated mine, no damage. |



| Date | Location | Details |
|---|---|---|
| 4 Nov. | south Palestine | Abortive attempt to mine railway. |
| | near Tel Aviv | Train derailed by mine, one train-man wounded. |
| | south Palestine | Train detonated a mine, no damage. |
| 5 Nov. | near Rishon Le Zion | Civilian car blown up by mine, no casualties. |
| | near Qalqilya | Oil train mined and fired on, some damage, no casualties; nearby blockhouse fired on (Lechi). |
| 6 Nov. | Kiryat Haim | Abortive attempt to mine railway. |
| 7 Nov. | Lydda District | Troop train derailed by mines, no casualties. |
| 9 Nov. | ? | 3 policemen killed by booby trap mine (Irgun). |
| 10 Nov. | Ras El Ain | Railway station blown up; 4 security force casualties (Irgun). |
| 11 Nov. | near Qalqilya | Railway damaged by mines at 3 locations. |
| 13 Nov. | railway and roads | 28 security force casualties from mines. |
| 15 Nov. | near Benyamina | Police rail trolley derailed by mine; 3 soldiers wounded. |
| 17 Nov. | railway | 2 successful attempts to mine railway, 2 failures; 2 army casualties. |
| | near Sarona | 10 security force casualties from road mine. |
| 18 Nov. | railway | Army rail trolley blown up, one casualty; second bomb found nearby. |
| 19 Nov. | railway | 5 army casualties from attempt to remove mine. |
| | Jerusalem | Abortive attempt to blow up police vehicle; one civilian injured. |
| | Tel Aviv | Assassination of Jewish policeman (Lechi). |
| | railway | 2 abortive attempts to mine railway. |

| Date | Location | Details |
|---|---|---|
| 20 Nov. | Jerusalem | Income Tax office destroyed by bomb; 5 security force casualties (Irgun). |
| | Tel Aviv | Jewish civilian shot by Jews, believed to be for political reasons. |
| 22 Nov. | railway | Section of line blown up. |
| 25 Nov. | near Beit Dajan | 2 military vehicles fired on in separate incidents; one casualty. |
| 30 Nov. | Jerusalem | Attack on police barracks, 4 casualties; roads mined. |
| 2 Dec. | near Jerusalem | Jeep blown up by mine; 4 soldiers killed. |
| | near Benyamina | Jeep blown up by mine; 4 casualties. |
| 3 Dec. | Tel Aviv | Abortive attempt to rob welfare officer; 2 insurgent casualties. |
| | near Kfar Vitkin | Jeep blown up by mine; 2 casualties. |
| | Haifa | Jeep blown up by mines; one soldier killed. |
| 5 Dec. | Sarafand | Truck bomb exploded in military camp; 30 casualties (Lechi). |
| | Jerusalem | 2 insurgents killed in abortive car bombing (Lechi). |
| | Jerusalem | Policeman wounded in shooting attack on police barracks. |
| | Jerusalem | Abortive grenade attack on guards of GOC's residence. |
| | Jerusalem | 2 bombs discovered at different locations. |
| 17 Dec. | Jerusalem | Army detonated bomb found in Jerusalem hotel; little damage. |
| 18 Dec. | Jerusalem | Insurgent killed in shooting incident. |
| 26 Dec. | Tel Aviv, Nathanya | 2 diamond robberies. |
| 29 Dec. | Tel Aviv, Rishon Le Zion, Nathanya | 4 soldiers abducted, flogged in 3 incidents (Irgun). |



| Date | Location | Details |
|---|---|---|
| *1947* | | |
| 2 Jan. | Jerusalem | Grenades thrown at 2 locations, no casualties. |
| | Jerusalem | Police patrol attacked with flame throwers, no casualties. |
| | Jerusalem | Abortive attempt to mine road. |
| | Hadera | One security force casualty in bombing, gunfire attack on army camp. |
| 2 Jan. | Kiryat Hayim | Attack on army camp with bombs, gunfire (Irgun). |
| | near Haifa | Army vehicle blown up by mine; 5 casualties. |
| | Haifa | 2 security force vehicles blown up by mine; no casualties. |
| | Tiberias | Attack on military car park; no damage or casualties |
| | Tel Aviv | Gunfire, mortar attack on army headquarters and police barracks; 4 casualties. |
| | Jaffa | Attack on police headquarters (Irgun). |
| | near Hadera | Abortive attempt to mine 2 jeeps. |
| | Tel Aviv | One policeman wounded in shooting attack on railway station. |
| | near Petah Tiqva | Lorry blown up by mine; 5 soldiers wounded. |
| | near Petah Tiqva | Jeep blown up by mine; 3 soldiers wounded. |
| | Tel Aviv | Police vehicle blown up; 2 casualties |
| | near Tel Aviv | Taxi blown up by mine; policeman wounded. |
| 3 Jan. | Lydda | Two military vehicles blown up; 6 injured. |
| | near Wilhelma | Military vehicle blown up; 3 casualties. |
| 4 Jan. | Jerusalem | Military vehicle blown up; 3 casualties. |
| | Haifa | Military vehicle blown up; 2 casualties. |
| 5 Jan. | Jerusalem, Haifa | Military vehicles blown up by mines in 2 incidents; one casualty. |

| Date | Location | Details |
|---|---|---|
| 6 Jan. | Lydda | Military vehicle blown up; no casualties. |
| 12 Jan. | Haifa | Bombing of District Police Headquarters; 104 casualties (Lechi). |
| 23 Jan. | ? | Bank robbery. |
| 26 Jan. | Jerusalem | Judge, businessman kidnapped (Irgun). |
| 29 Jan. | near Athlit | Textile robbery. |
| 13 Feb. | Haifa | Sabotage of 2 government vessels in harbour. |
| 18 Feb. | Jerusalem | Army lorry blown up by mine; 5 casualties. |
| | near Nathanya | Army vehicle blown up by mine. |
| 19 Feb. | Haifa | 2 army vehicles blown up by mines; no casualties. |
| | ? | Oil pipeline damaged by explosives. |
| | Ein Shemer | Mortar attack on airfield. |
| | Aqir | Abortive attempt to mine road. |
| 28 Feb. | Haifa | Bombing of shipping agency; 7 casualties. |
| 1 Mar. | Jerusalem | Officers' club bombed; 29 casualties (Irgun). |
| | Beit Lid | 2 vehicles destroyed by mines. |
| | Beit Lid | Mortar and gunfire attack on army camp; 4 casualties. |
| | Haifa | 4 military vehicles damaged by bomb. |
| | Haifa | Army jeep mined; 4 casualties. |
| | near Haifa | Army lorry mined. |
| | Rehovoth | 2 bombs exploded outside police station. |
| | Rehovoth | Army vehicle blown up; 4 casualties. |
| | Petah Tiqva | Slight damage to vehicle from road mine. |
| | Petah Tiqva | Army vehicle blown up; 2 soldiers killed. |
| | Nathanya | Army vehicle blown up. |
| | Kefar Yona | Mortar and gunfire attack on army camp. |
| | Aqir | Government vehicle mined: |
| 2 Mar. | near Hadera | Army lorry mined; 2 casualties. |



| Date | Location | Details |
|---|---|---|
| 3 Mar. | Haifa | Grenades thrown into army camp. |
| | Hadera | Gunfire attack on army camp. |
| 4 Mar. | Ramle/Aqir road | RAF lorry blown up; four casualties. |
| | Rishon | Army lorry blown up; 3 casualties. |
| 5 Mar. | Jerusalem | Armed robbery. |
| | Haifa | Sentry post bombed. |
| | Jerusalem | One soldier wounded in grenade attack. |
| | Jerusalem | Shooting at sentries. |
| | Rehovoth | Vehicle blown up; 2 casualties. |
| | Hadera | Mortar and gunfire attack on army camp; 3 casualties. |
| 6 Mar. | Ramle/Aqir road | Shooting at RAF vehicle. |
| | near Benyamina | Shooting at government vehicle. |
| 7 Mar. | near Hadera | Army vehicle blown up; 4 casualties. |
| | Rishon | Shooting at police station. |
| | near Rishon | Jeep fired on. |
| 8 Mar. | Jerusalem | Police vehicle fired on; 2 casualties. |
| | Haifa | Grenades thrown into army camp. |
| | Jerusalem | Grenades thrown into army camp; 2 casualties. |
| | Sarona | Grenades thrown into army camp; 3 security force casualties. |
| | Jaffa | Gunfire attack on police HQ. |
| | Tel Aviv | Gunfire attack on army HQ; 20 insurgent casualties. |
| | Tel Aviv | Gunfire attack on survey building. |
| 10 Mar. | Ramat Gan | 2 army vehicles mined. |
| 11 Mar. | Nathanya | Government vehicle fired on; one security force casualty. |
| | Tulkarm | Government vehicle fired on. |
| 12 Mar. | Ein Shemer | Gunfire, grenade attack on army camp. |
| | Jerusalem | Raid on government billet; 9 army casualties, considerable damage. |
| | Rishon | 2 civilian vehicles mined. |
| | Sarona | Army jeep mined, one casualty. |

| Date | Location | Details |
|---|---|---|
| 13 Mar. | Ras El Ain | Oil train mined and derailed. |
| | Battir | Goods train mined and derailed; 2 railway staff casualties. |
| | Tel Aviv | Grenades thrown at jeep. |
| | Kefar Yona | Gunfire, mortar attack on army camp. |
| | Haifa | 3 oil pipelines blown up. |
| 14 Mar. | Be'er Ya'acov | Railway mined. |
| 15 Mar. | Hadera | Army club set on fire by arsonists. |
| 16 Mar. | Nathanya | Gunfire attack on 2 army camps. |
| | Jerusalem | Jewish Agency public relations office bombed. |
| 19 Mar. | Zichron Ya'acov | Bomb thrown at security forces; 7 casualties. |
| 24 Mar. | Tel Aviv | Bank robbery; £27500 stolen, bank clerk wounded. |
| 28 Mar. | near Ramle | Security forces ambushed; 2 killed. |
| | Haifa | Oil pipeline damaged by bomb. |
| 31 Mar. | Haifa | Sabotage of oil refinery; 16000 tons of petroleum products destroyed (Lechi). |
| 1 Apr. | near Nahariya | Arms theft; one soldier killed. |
| | ? | Shooting incident; one policeman, 2 civilian casualties. |
| 8 Apr. | Jerusalem | Shooting incident; 2 police casualties. |
| 18 Apr. | Tel Aviv | Police vehicle attacked; 6 casualties. |
| | Nathanya | Army medical post bombed; one casualty. |
| 20 Apr. | Nathanya | Army cinema bombed; 4 casualties, extensive damage. |
| | Ramat Zev | Military vehicle blown up by mine; 4 casualties. |
| 22 Apr. | near Rehovoth | Train blown up, fired on, derailed; 13 casualties. |
| 23 Apr. | near Lydda | 2 government vehicles blown up; 4 casualties. |
| 24 Apr. | Tel Aviv | British civilian abducted (Irgun). |



| Date | Location | Details |
|---|---|---|
| 25 Apr. | Sarona | Police barracks bombed; 10 casualties. |
| | Afula | Bank robbery. |
| 26 Apr. | Haifa | Assassination of CID Superintendent (Lechi). |
| 30 Apr. | near Jerusalem | Abortive attempt to mine road. |
| 4 May | Acre | Prison escape. |
| 12 May | Jerusalem | Assassination of 2 policemen. |
| 14 May | railway | 7 incidents of sabotage. |
| | Jerusalem | Abortive attempt to bomb military court building. |
| | Sarafand | Army cinema bombed; 2 casualties. |
| 16 May | Haifa | CID car damaged by bomb; 4 casualties. |
| 19 May | Haifa | Assassination of policeman. |
| 20 May | Tel Aviv | CID car damaged by mine. |
| | Fejja, Yehudiyee | Insurgent attack on 2 Arab villages; one insurgent, 9 Arab casualties. |
| 27 May | Ramle | Railway station blown up; one casualty. |
| | railway | 2 explosions; no damage. |
| 28 May | Haifa | Oil dock slightly damaged by bombs; one casualty. |
| 3 June | Jerusalem | Bombing of military compound. |
| 4 June | railway | 2 trains derailed by mines in separate incidents; one casualty. |
| 5 June | Athlit | Railway station bombed; extensive damage. |
| | ? | Oil pipeline cut by explosion. |
| 9 June | Ramat Gan | 2 policemen kidnapped; recovered later. |
| 18 June | Tel Aviv | Abortive attempt to blow up army HQ (Irgun). |
| 22 June | Jerusalem | Abortive attempt to kidnap senior police officer (Irgun). |
| 25 June | Jerusalem | Abortive attempt to kidnap government official (Irgun). |

| Date | Location | Details |
|---|---|---|
| 28 June | Haifa | Shooting attack on soldiers; 3 casualties (Lechi). |
| | Tel Aviv | Shooting attack on soldiers; 4 casualties (Lechi). |
| 29 June | Herzliyia | Shooting attack on soldiers; 3 casualties (Lechi). |
| 12 July | Nathanya | 2 soldiers abducted (Irgun). |
| 15 July | Tel Litwinsky | Jewish policeman assassinated. |
| 16 July | Jerusalem | 2 military vehicles damaged by mines; 2 casualties. |
| | near Hadera | Army car mined. |
| | Petah Tiqva | Army lorry mined; 4 casualties. |
| | Petah Tiqva | Army jeep mined; 2 casualties. |
| 18 July | Jerusalem | Gunfire attack on military vehicle; 3 casualties. |
| | Jerusalem | Grenade thrown at military post; one casualty. |
| | Jerusalem | Police vehicle set on fire by bomb. |
| | Kefar Bilu | Army lorry mined; 4 casualties. |
| 19 July | Haifa | 2 policemen assassinated. |
| | Jerusalem | Incendiary bombs thrown at 2 police vehicles; one casualty. |
| 20 July | railway | Abortive attempt to mine railway. |
| | railway | Train mined; slight damage. |
| | railway | Goods trains mined; slight damage. |
| | railway | Oil train mined. |
| | Jerusalem | Policeman wounded in shooting. |
| | Jerusalem | 2 police vehicles mined; 5 casualties. |
| | Gan Menashe | Military vehicle mined; 4 casualties. |
| | Nathanya | Army car fired on. |
| | Tel Litwinsky | Gunfire, mortar attack on army camp. |
| 21 July | Haifa | Gunfire, grenade attack on army camp. |
| | Haifa | Attack on military installation; radio equipment damaged. |
| | Haifa | Oil pipeline slightly damaged by bomb. |
| | Haifa | Military vehicle blown up; 2 casualties. |



| Date | Location | Details |
|---|---|---|
| | near Afula | Oil pipeline damaged by two bombs. |
| | ? | Soldier fired on. |
| | near Hadera | Army lorry mined. |
| 22 July | Haifa | Army vehicle mined; one casualty. |
| | Jerusalem | Shooting at RAF vehicle; one casualty. |
| | Jerusalem | Fire bombs thrown at RAF, police vehicles. |
| | Jerusalem | Attack on police barracks; general firing throughout city. |
| 23 July | Haifa | Military vehicle mined; 4 casualties. |
| | Haifa | Bombing of army billet; one casualty. |
| | Haifa | Bombing of military car park; 3 casualties. |
| | near Haifa | Military vehicle mined; 7 casualties. |
| | near Beit Lid | Army jeep mined; 4 casualties. |
| | near Rishon Le Zion | Army lorry mined; 7 casualties. |
| 24 July | Tel Aviv | Diamond robbery. |
| | Jerusalem | Shooting at officers' mess. |
| 24 July | Jerusalem | Bombing of military vehicle; 3 casualties. |
| | Jerusalem | Police car mined; one casualty. |
| | ? | Railway bridge damaged by bomb. |
| 25 July | Haifa | Abortive attempt to mine road. |
| | Jerusalem | 2 explosions in open ground. |
| 26 July | ? | Two soldiers killed by mine. |
| | railway | Abortive attempt to mine railway. |
| | railway | Abortive attempt to mine railway. |
| 27 July | near Jaffa | Railway trolley mined; 2 casualties. |
| | Jerusalem | Gunfire, grenade attack on military convoy; 2 casualties. |
| 28 July | near Rehovoth | Abortive attempt to mine military convoy. |
| | Sarafand | Abortive arson attempt at army camp. |
| | Jerusalem | Shooting at police vehicle. |
| | Tel Litwinsky | Bombing of cinema; 3 casualties. |
| 29 July | Nathanya | 2 soldiers (kidnapped 12 July) hanged by Irgun. |

| *Date* | *Location* | *Details* |
|---|---|---|
| | near Haifa | Military post destroyed by bomb. |
| | Jerusalem | Grenade thrown at police vehicle. |
| | near Athlit | Railway considerably damaged by mine. |
| 30 July | Jerusalem | Abortive mining. |
| | near Nathanya | Military vehicle mined; 5 casualties. |
| 31 July | near Zichron Ya'acov | Train mined; considerable damage. |

## STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF INSURGENT OPERATIONS

### 1. Monthly Rate of Operations

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1945: | November | 4 |
| | December | 5 |
| 1946: | January | 7 |
| | February | 13 |
| | March | 4 |
| | April | 11 |
| | May | 6 |
| | June | 24 |
| | July | 2 |
| | August | 1 |
| | September | 13 |
| | October | 19 |
| | November | 35 |
| | December | 18 |
| 1947: | January | 29 |
| | February | 8 |
| | March | 58 |
| | April | 15 |
| | May | 19 |
| | June | 12 |
| | July | 60 |
| Total | | 363 |

Average: 17.285 incidents per month



United Resistance (November 1945–August 1946): 77 incidents (excluding the incidents of 31 October 1945) over 10 months; 7.7 incidents per month

IRGUN/LECHI ALONE (September 1946–July 1947): 286 incidents over 11 months; 26 incidents per month

### 2. Location of Insurgent Operations

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| (a) | Jerusalem | 58 |
| (b) | Tel Aviv | 34 |
| (c) | Haifa | 47 |
| (d) | Lydda District* | 69 |
| (e) | Other | 155 |

### 3. Types of Insurgent Operations (successful and abortive)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| (a) | Assassinations | 26 |
| (b) | Other shooting incidents | 31 |
| (c) | Bombings | 87 |
| (d) | Mining incidents | 119 |
| (e) | Robberies | 32 |
| (f) | Kidnappings | 14 |
| (g) | Other (including raids, mortar attacks) | 54 |

### 4. Targets of Insurgent Operations

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| (a) | Security forces | 212 |
| (b) | Government | 16 |
| (c) | Railway | 67 |
| (d) | Oil industry | 12 |
| (e) | Other | 56 |

* Apart from Tel Aviv (listed and counted separately), Lydda District includes the following major towns: Jaffa, Petah Tiqva, Ramat Gan, Rehovoth, Rishon Le Zion, Sarafand, Tel Litwinsky.