



COLONIAL OFFICE

PALESTINE

STATEMENT OF INFORMATION RELATING TO ACTS OF VIOLENCE

*Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for the Colonies
by Command of His Majesty
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EXPLANATORY NOTES.

The following notes on the three Jewish illegal para-military organisations in Palestine are based on the *Report of the Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry (pp. 40-41). His Majesty's Government have reason to believe that the figures given are on the conservative side.

The Hagana and Palmach:—An illegal and well-armed military organisation, organised under a central command with subsidiary territorial commands, in three branches, each of which includes women, viz.:—

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

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

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

Something in the nature of conscription is in force; a year's service being obligatory for senior schoolchildren, male and female, between the ages of 17 and 18. The Jewish publication, *Haboker*, stated that prior to 11th November, 1945, "every Movement must submit to the Jewish Agency's Recruiting Department in Tel Aviv a roster of its members, male and female, who must enlist."

The Irgun Zvai Leumi (National Military Organisation):—formed in 1935 from dissident members of the Hagana. Operates under its secret command, with a strength estimated between 3,000 and 5,000.

The Stern Group:—originated as a dissident faction within the Irgun Zvai Leumi when the latter decided temporarily to suspend activities in 1939. Its strength is said to be between 200 and 300 dangerous fanatics. They have been for some time fully co-operating with the Irgun Zvai Leumi, since both are equally committed to a policy of unrestrained extremism.

* Cmd. 6808.

PALESTINE

Statement of Information relating to Acts of Violence

The information which was in the possession of His Majesty's Government when they undertook their recent action in Palestine led them to draw the following conclusions:—

(1) That the Hagana and its associated force the Palmach (working under the political control of prominent members of the Jewish Agency) have been engaging in carefully planned movements of sabotage and violence under the guise of "the Jewish Resistance Movement";

(2) that the Irgun Zvai Leumi and the Stern Group have worked since last Autumn in co-operation with the Hagana High Command on certain of these operations; and

(3) that the broadcasting station "Kol Israel", which claims to be "the Voice of the Resistance Movement" and which was working under the general direction of the Jewish Agency has been supporting these organisations.

The evidence on which these conclusions are based is derived in the main from three sources—

(i) Information which has been obtained showing that between the 23rd September, 1945, and the 3rd November, 1945, seven telegrams passed between London and Jerusalem, and a further telegram on 12th May, 1946. Copies of these have been interpreted and are here set out;

(ii) various broadcasts by "Kol Israel" between 31st October, 1945, and the 23rd June, 1946, referring to specific acts of violence and sabotage; and

(iii) information on various dates derived from the pamphlet *Hamaas* (the publication of the Stern Group), from *Herut* (the publication of the Irgun Zvai Leumi) and from *Eshnav* (the publication of "the Jewish Resistance Movement"). Examples from these pamphlets are set out in this Paper.

This evidence relates to the three widespread sabotage operations of the 31st October/1st November, 1945; 20th-25th February, 1946, and 16-18th June, 1946. All three para-military organisations participated in these actions which not only caused very serious destruction but also loss of life.

I.—ATTACK ON RAILWAYS, POLICE LAUNCHES AND HAIFA REFINERY—31st OCTOBER-1st NOVEMBER, 1945.

Note.—The Palmach carried out widespread attacks on the Palestinian Railway system. The line was blown in 153 places in all, completely disrupting it. Other charges, though laid, did not explode. Three police launches were destroyed by explosives, two at Haifa and one at Jaffa. The same night, the Irgun Zvai Leumi attacked Lydda Station and Yards causing damage to three locomotives, the destruction of one signal box, and the burning of an engine shed. Several casualties were inflicted, including the death of one British soldier. A further attempt was made on the same night by the Stern Group to blow up the Oil Refinery at Haifa.

This incident was carefully planned in advance as part of a deliberate policy. It was intended as a warning to His Majesty's Government of the consequences that would follow if they did not comply with the wishes of the Yishuv (the Jewish Community in Palestine). The Jewish Agency

Executive was not prepared to wait for a declaration of Government policy, but decided to cause "one serious incident" in order to influence that policy. These facts can plainly be seen from the following telegrams.

Telegram No. 1.

To London from Sneh in Jerusalem—23rd September, 1945.

"It is suggested that we do not wait for the official announcement but call upon all Jewry to warn the authorities and to raise the morale of the Yishuv. If you agree ask Zeev Sharif for statistical material about the absorptive capacity and if you do not agree tell him that this material is not yet required. *It has also been suggested that we cause one serious incident.* We would then publish a declaration to the effect that it is *only a warning and an indication of much more serious incidents* that would threaten the safety of all British interests in the country, should the Government decide against us. Wire your views with the reference as before but referring to statistical material about immigration during the war years. *The Stern Group have expressed their willingness to join us completely on the basis of our programme of activity.* This time the intention seems serious. If there is such a union we may assume that we can prevent independent action even by the IZL. Wire your views on the question of the union referring to statistical material about Jewish recruitment to the Army. Sneh."

N.B.—Sneh is Security member of the Jewish Agency Executive. IZL is the Irgun Zvai Leumi.

That the Agency Executive agreed to the above action is clearly shown in the following telegrams:—

Telegram No. 2.

To London from Bernard Joseph in Jerusalem—10th October, 1945.

"Eliezer Kaplan basing himself on a word from Hayyim via Nwbw says that we should undertake nothing before you give us instructions to do. He is opposed to any real action on our part until we hear from you.

Other members, however, are of the opinion that it is necessary to back your political effort with activities which do not bear the character of a general conflict.

It is essential that we should know at once whether such actions are likely to be useful or detrimental to your struggle.

Should you be opposed to any action whatever, wire that we should wait for the arrival of Wlsly.

Should you agree to isolated actions, wire that you agree to sending a deputation to the dominions.

If Hayyim meant us only avoid a general conflict not isolated cases, send greetings to Chill for the birth of his daughter."

N.B.—Bernard Joseph is legal adviser to the Jewish Agency and a member of its Executive. He acts in Shertok's absence as Head of the Political Department. Eliezer Kaplan is Head of the Agency's Financial Department and a member of its Executive.

Telegram No. 3.

From Moshe Shertok in London to Bernard Joseph in Jerusalem.—12th October, 1945.

"David will not leave before fortnight. Meanwhile probably revisit Paris. Regarding Dobkin written. David himself favoured delegate dominions. Please congratulate Chill on birth of daughter. Signed Shertok."

N.B.—(1) Moshe Shertok is Head of the Agency's Political Department and a member of the Executive.

(2) A reference to telegram No. 2 will show that the phrases about "delegate dominions" and "greetings to Chill" meant that it was desired, whilst avoiding a general conflict, to indulge in isolated actions.

Telegram No. 4.

To London from Jerusalem.—2nd November, 1945.

"The Executive refuses to give authority to the political department to act within the limits of Ben Gurion's instructions. Gsbr argues that he will oppose this as soon as Ben Gurion and Shertok return. I declared that I will act according to the instructions which I have received until an authoritative message is received which cancels Ben Gurion's instructions. They did not dare to cancel the instructions but insisted that we inform the Executive in advance of each action and that they should have the right of veto. *We received agreement for the police boats and for the railway.* All activities may thus be spoiled owing to pressure from the party on Bernard Joseph and on Eliahu."

N.B.—David Ben Gurion is Chairman of the Jewish Agency Executive.

For the operations of the 31st October-1st November the Agency sought and obtained the co-operation of the "dissident organisations".

Telegram No. 5.

To London from Jerusalem.—1st November, 1945.

"*We have come to a working arrangement with the dissident organisations according to which we shall assign certain tasks to them under our command.* They will act only according to our plan. Sneh, Shaul Meiroff, Kn'ny and Bernard Joseph consider such an agreement as most desirable, but it is not being put into effect because the Party is delaying it. Some of them are opposed to any sort of activity and especially to any agreement with the dissidents. Information on the operations follows:—

The following activities were carried out on Wednesday night. Two boats were sunk in the Haifa harbour and a third at Jaffa. The boats had been used to chase immigrants. Railway lines were blown up in 50 centres, in all 500 explosions. Railway traffic was stopped from the Syrian frontier to Gaza, from Haifa to Samakh, from Lydda to Jerusalem. In all the activities no one was hurt, stopped or arrested.

The same night the Izl attacked the Lydda station causing serious damage and some casualties. During the same night the Stern Group caused serious sabotage at the refineries at Haifa and one man was killed. *The dissidents had previously informed us of this and we did not object to Lydda but were opposed to the refinery job.* Had the agreement come into effect we could have avoided victims at Lydda and prevented the refinery operation. I regard the fact that the Party and the Executive are withholding their approval as a crime.

The activities have made a great impression in the country. The authorities are bewildered and have proclaimed a curfew on the roads at night. They are waiting for instructions from London. We are apprehensive of a general attack against the Hagana. We have taken the necessary security measures and are prepared for sacrifices. Confirm by telegram to Ada enquiries about the health of her children."

"Hamaas", the publication of the Stern Group in referring to the above operation, stated:—

"The events of 1st November have given a striking expression of the firm resolution of the Jews to fight for the freedom of their homeland. The scope of the attack has proved that the Jews are capable of acting under the most difficult conditions.

However, the most significant achievement on that night was that for the first time the attack was co-ordinated and concentrated. The Jewish Resistance Movement has embraced all the Jewish resistance forces with a view to their being guided by a single authority which would control the common fight". ("Hamaas" Issue No. 2 of November, 1945.)

These operations were widely publicised by the Jewish illegal broadcasting station, Kol Israel, as follows:—

"The paralysing of the Railways all over the country through cutting the lines in 242 places serves as a warning to the Government of the White Paper.

The nights of heroism since Athlit* are an expression of our strength and decision. We lament the British, Arab and Jewish victims who fell in the attacks on the railways and ports of Palestine. They are all victims of the White Paper. All our men returned safely with their equipment. None of our men is missing." (2nd November, 1945.)

As proof of the fact that the Kol Israel station was working with the agreement of the Jewish Agency, reference may be made to the following telegrams. (See also telegram No. 8 on page 9):—

Telegram No. 6.

To London from Sneh in Jerusalem—12th October, 1945.

"With effect from 4/10 the broadcasts of the 'Voice of Israel' have been renewed. Two broadcasts were successful. Eliezer Kaplan and Bernard Joseph were invited to see the High Commissioner this morning.

The agreement for the renewal of the broadcasts and the Athlit* undertakings have been obtained with difficulty. In future I shall not enquire but decide in conjunction with Shaul Meiroff and Kn'ny."

Telegram No. 7.

To London from Jerusalem—14th October, 1945.

"The Voice of Israel started to function as the broadcasting station of the Jewish Resistance Movement three days before we received your letter and your telegram.

We also have had the same doubts and we voiced them before the broadcasts were started but the expert says that there are no grounds for anxiety from the technical point of view."

N.B.—The phrase "grounds for anxiety from the technical point of view" probably refers to apprehension that the station, which is a mobile one, might be located.

* On 10th October the Palmach released over 200 illegal immigrants from Athlit Clearance Camp. A British police tender was ambushed during the subsequent search for the escaped persons and one British policeman and two Palestinians were wounded.

II.—ATTACKS ON HAIFA RADAR STATION, PALESTINE MOBILE FORCE CAMPS, AND AIRFIELDS—20th-25th FEBRUARY, 1946.

Note.—On 20th February, 1946, the Palmach attacked the R.A.F. Radar Station, Haifa, blowing it up and seriously wounding two R.A.F. N.C.Os. and inflicting lesser injuries on six others.

Two days later the Palmach carried out co-ordinated attacks on Palestine Mobile Force Camps at Shaffa Amr, Kfar Vitkin and Sarona. At Shaffa Amr serious damage was caused. One police officer suffered head injuries. Three British women and one child suffered from shock.

On 25th February, the Irgun Zvai Leumi and Stern Group followed this up with attacks on airfields at Lydda, Petah Tikvah, and Qastina, destroying seven aircraft and damaging eight others.

These incidents seem to have been intended as a "second warning", as the "first warning" on the 31st October/1st November, 1945, had been "disregarded". These incidents were described in a Kol Israel broadcast of the 3rd March, 1946.

"This last fortnight has seen a renewed intensity in the struggle of the Jewish people against the forces which aim to throttle them and their natural aspirations for normal nationhood in their National Home.

The attack on the Radar Station on Mount Carmel was aimed at destroying one of the principal agents of the Government in its hunt for Jewish refugees. The sabotage of the airfields (i.e., by Irgun Zvai Leumi and Stern Group) was the sabotage of a weapon which has been degraded from its glorious fight against the evil forces of Nazism to the dishonourable task of fighting against the victims of Nazism.

Those three attacks are symptomatic of our struggle. In all cases the onslaught was made against the weapon used by the White Paper in its despicable battle to repudiate its undertaking to the Jewish people and the world, and not against the men who use this weapon. It is not our object to cause the loss of life of any Briton in this country; we have nothing against them because we realise that they are but instruments of a policy, and in many cases unwilling instruments."

In addition to the above broadcast, Herut, the publication of the Irgun Zvai Leumi, and Eshnav, the pamphlet published in the name of the Resistance Movement, made the following allusions to these extensive operations:—

"Heavy tasks were imposed on all the Forces of the nation. The soldiers of the Hagana were ordered to attack the forces in their lairs (i.e. the Palestine Mobile Force). No less difficult was the task imposed on the members of the National Military Organisation* who were sent to attack the Military airfields at Qastina and the central airfield at Lydda; and on the members of the Fighters for Freedom of Israel* who were ordered to attack the aerodrome at Kfar Sirkin. The importance of this week's events lies in the fact that this was the first time that the military bases of the British rulers were shaken". ("Herut", Issue No. 55 of February, 1946.)

"A Big Week.

The actions of this glorious week have been carried out with the support of the entire, united Jewish youth. This is a political achievement.

The Palestine Mobile Force has been attacked by the Hagana; at two camps considerable damage has been inflicted. At Sarona the fighters

* National Military Organisation is the Irgun Zvai Leumi and Fighters for Freedom of Israel is the Stern Group.

retired after a continuation of the attack had proved useless. Here four of them fell.

Lydda and Qastina airfields have been attacked by Irgun Zvai Leumi whilst Lohemei Herut Israel (Fighters for Freedom of Israel) men chose as their aim the airfield at Kfar Sirkin". ("Herut", Issue No. 56 of February, 1946.)

"The first warning on 1st November, 1945, by the Jewish Resistance was disregarded, and the whole Yishuv was compelled to carry out a second warning during the last fortnight expressed in the attacks on Palestine Mobile Force Stations and Airfields." ("Eshnav", Issue No. 116 of 4th March, 1946.)

III.—ATTACKS ON ROAD AND RAIL BRIDGES, RAILWAY WORKSHOPS AND KIDNAPPING OF BRITISH OFFICERS.—16th to 18th JUNE, 1946.

Note.—During the evening of 16th June, 1946, Hagana carried out attacks on road and rail bridges on the frontier of Palestine causing damage estimated at £250,000. Four road and four rail bridges were destroyed or damaged during the night, and one road bridge across the Jordan was destroyed by a delayed action mine, while attempts were being made to remove the charges. One British officer of the Royal Engineers was killed by the explosion.

The following evening the Stern Group carried out an attack on the Haifa Railway Workshops.

On 18th June, 1946, five British officers were kidnapped while lunching at an officers club in Tel Aviv and a sixth British officer was kidnapped in a main street of Jerusalem.

Indication that a further series of incidents might be imminent was given on 12th May, 1946, when Kol Israel broadcast a warning which it considered "desirable" to "lay before His Majesty's Government". The text of this broadcast was as follows:—

"The Jewish Resistance Movement thinks it *desirable to publish the warning it intends to lay before His Majesty's Government.* Present British policy is executing a dangerous manoeuvre and is based on an erroneous assumption: Britain, in evacuating Syria, Lebanon and Egypt intends to concentrate her military bases in Palestine and is therefore concerned to strengthen her hold over the mandate, and is using her responsibility to the Jewish people merely as a means to that end. But this double game will not work. Britain cannot hold both ends of the rope; she cannot exploit the tragic Jewish question for her own benefit as mandatory power, while attempting to wriggle out of the various responsibilities which that mandate confers. *From the Zionist point of view, the tepid conclusions of the Commission bear no relation to the political claims of the Jewish people,* but even so, in the execution of these proposals, the British Government is displaying a vacillation at once disappointing and discreditable. We would therefore warn publicly His Majesty's Government that if it does not fulfil its responsibilities under the mandate—above all with regard to the question of immigration—the Jewish people will feel obliged to lay before the nations of the world the request that the British leave Palestine. The Jewish Resistance Movement will make every effort to hinder the transfer of British Bases to Palestine and to prevent their establishment in the country."

This broadcast is of particular significance by reason of the fact that it was given at the express request of Moshe Shertok, Head of the Jewish Agency's Political Department and a member of its Executive Committee,

and had also been passed to David Ben Gurion, Chairman of the Executive Committee. This is made clear in the following telegram:—

Telegram No. 8.

To "Daniel" in London from Sneh in Jerusalem—

12th May, 1946.

"Please pass on to Ben Gurion the text of the broadcast of Kol Israel sent herewith; with a note that the broadcast was made at the request of Shertok."

The telegram then repeats textually the broadcast message of the same date.

There followed on the night of the 16th June, 1946, the widespread and carefully planned attacks on vital communications and on the following night the attack on railway workshops. Kol Israel accepted full responsibility on behalf of "the Resistance Movement for the renewal of its activity as a result of the delaying policy of the British Government".

Kol Israel Broadcast.

18th June, 1946.

"The action of blowing up the bridges expressed the high morale and courage of the Jewish fighters who carried out the attack. They had to pass long distances and to carry a large quantity of material for that purpose. The withdrawal was most difficult since all the police and army were on their feet and aircraft were looking for the attackers; despite all this the operation was executed and all objectives were reached according to plan without causing any loss of life to the guards. There were some casualties among the attackers in the North owing to an unfortunate accident which was caused by the fall of a rocket directly on to a lorry loaded with explosives and the whole load blew up and the persons there were killed. Honour to their memory! The Army and Police became furious and started to discharge their wrath on the peaceful people of the nearby settlements; many settlers of Beth Haareva, Matzuva and Eilon were arrested and taken to Acre.

Many messages of heartfelt appreciation were sent by various personalities and journalists to the Resistance Movement for *the renewal of its activity as a result of the delaying policy of the British Government*, the recent Bevin speech and the known announcement of Attlee. These objectives were chosen to disturb British bases and communications, to prevent the Arabs of the neighbouring countries who talked so much about coming to fight the Jews in Palestine, and to mark the closing up of these frontiers before Jewish immigrants."

23rd June, 1946.

"This is the Voice of Israel, the voice of Jewish Resistance. Last week we had to destroy the bridges—these bridges are just as much use to us as the authorities but they had to be destroyed to show our feelings."

CONCLUSION.

The evidence contained in the foregoing pages is not, and is not intended to be, a complete statement of all the evidence in the possession of His Majesty's Government.

Nor are the specific instances herein referred to by any means a complete list of all the incidents of violence and sabotage which have taken place in recent months.

The fact is that in the first six months of 1946 there were nearly fifty separate incidents involving violence, and in many cases loss of life: material damage to a very great extent has been done to railway installations, police and R.A.F. stations, and coastguard stations. Roads have been mined and vehicles have been blown up.

The above operations were widespread in character and caused very extensive damage. When they were almost immediately followed by the kidnapping of British officers, it was no longer possible for His Majesty's Government to adopt a passive attitude. Unless the Government were prepared to yield to threats of violence and to abandon all hope of establishing law and order, they were bound to take active steps against any persons or organisations who had made themselves responsible for the planning and carrying out of the outrages which are dealt with in this Paper.

The evidence contained in the foregoing pages is not, and is not intended to be, a complete statement of all the evidence in the possession of His Majesty's Government. The specific instances herein referred to by any means a complete list of all the incidents of violence and sabotage which have taken place in recent months. It is a selection of the more serious and striking incidents, taken from a larger body of material, which has been collected and collated in order to provide a clear and concise summary of the evidence available to the Government at the present time. It is intended to be a fair and accurate statement of the facts as they are, and not a statement of the Government's policy or of its views on the situation. The Government are prepared to accept full responsibility for the actions which have been taken, and they are confident that the public will understand the reasons for these actions. It is the duty of the Government to protect the life and property of their subjects, and to maintain law and order. They are determined to do this, and they are confident that the public will support them in this task.

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CONCLUSION