

Jerusalem Jewish buses and armoured car patrols were attacked. In Gaza barricades were placed across the streets and rioting took place after clashes with the Police on 25 May and armoured cars and tanks had to be despatched to clear the barricades. In almost all other towns and villages there was sniping at the Police and the troops.

The most serious situation, however, arose in the old city of Jaffa which, according to Wauchope, 'formed a hostile stronghold into which the Government forces dare not penetrate'.³³ The old city of Jaffa afforded refuge for the rebels by the impenetrable labyrinth of narrow alleys and the maze of closely packed old houses. British troops and military installations were subjected to continuous sniping from that strategic quarter which dominated the town while being unaccessible to wheeled traffic. The military demanded the driving of a wide road over the crest of the hill through the old city in order to bring it under their control. This involved the demolition of a large number of houses and wiping out a good deal of the town. After some opposition from the Civil Administration, a circular, emanating from the Government Press, was distributed to the inhabitants of the old town announcing that for sanitary and town-planning reasons it had been decided to demolish a number of houses in their quarter.

A great deal of hardship and bitterness was caused by these extensive demolitions and many of the tenants were forced to live in hovels built from old petrol tins on the outskirts of Jaffa.

The punitive measures of the military and the amendment of the emergency regulations to enable the death penalty to be passed in cases of discharging firearms and malicious damage, and the wholesale arrests of Arab nationalist activists served to add determination and perseverance to the general strike and to spread armed resistance in the countryside. Jamal Husseini's negotiations in London did not lead to an acceptable formula for ending the strike, and Amir 'Abdullah's efforts with the Higher Committee in that direction were also futile. Memoranda of protest against the Government and the brutality of the military were becoming even more violent. The 'Ulama were offended by the destruction of certain segments of various mosques and their mild attitude gave way to a more defiant one in July.

Impressive as the general strike certainly was, it began to look like a side-show or a smoke-screen as the sporadic activities of the armed bands began to assume revolutionary dimensions. In his report for the month of June, Peirse stated:

Armed bands which a fortnight previously consisted of 15-20 men

were now encountered in large parties of 50-70. The bands were not out for loot. They were fighting what they believed to be a patriotic war in defence of their country against injustice and the threat of Jewish domination.³⁴

The military endeavoured to counter the upsurge of sabotage and rebel activists by blowing up houses of people suspected of harbouring rebels and imposing collective fines on villages known to be actively backing the rebellion. Nevertheless, the military authorities were fully expecting greater armed resistance because of enhanced efforts to smuggle arms into Palestine, and because of the fact that the fellaheen were hastening on with the harvests so that the men would be free.³⁵

The Rebel's Military Formations

Inside the villages and the towns the rebels depended on the National Committee to provide food, recruits, shelter and information. Their military formations which operated on a regional-local rather than a national basis were divided into three categories. The first category comprised the full-time guerrillas (*mujahidin*) who took to the mountains, engaged the troops, sabotaged the oil pipeline etc. and formed the military backbone of the rebellion. The second category consisted of the town commandos who carried on their ordinary civilian life but performed specific terrorist acts on the request of their command. These were particularly instrumental in the liquidation of Arabs suspected of collaborating with the British as well as the assassination of British officers accused of committing excesses against the villagers and prisoners. The third category, by far the largest in number, was the partisans or auxiliary formations which were in the majority ordinary peasants and practising farmers who took up arms to relieve the guerrillas in case of a battle taking place in their vicinity.

During July the British military intelligence reported that the rebel bands were being reorganised by ex-officers from Syria and Trans-Jordan evidenced by the considerable improvement in their tactical handling during recent engagements. The rebel formations were divided into four fronts headed by a District Commander who had armed formations varying between 150-200 *mujahidin*, led by a platoon leader.

While hoping that the military repressive measures would succeed in crushing the rebellion, Wauchope and Ormsby-Gore were thinking of breaking the general strike and weakening the armed bands by means of political action. To appease the Arabs, without yielding to terrorism,