

## A STRUGGLE BETWEEN DIFFERENT APPROACHES AS RESPONSE TO THE ARAB REVOLT IN 1936

### *A DISPUTA ENTRE DUAS RESPOSTAS DIFERENTES À REVOLTA ÁRABE DE 1936*

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#### **Abstract**

The objective of this paper, based on archival research in London and Jerusalem, is to analyse the point of view of the civilian authority in the debate between conciliatory vs. coercive approaches during the Arab revolt in 1936. The research question, therefore, is why the civilian authority's assessment of the situation was so different from the military's to the extent that it polarized views of the most appropriate response to the revolt between the civilian and military authorities. The paper argues that the civilian authority had greater understanding of the situation in Palestine than the military, which led to advocating a conciliatory approach instead of a coercive one as favoured by the military. The deteriorating situation in Palestine is not to be interpreted as a failure of the civilian authority's policy *per se*, but as the outcome of the situation with complex political and human factors aggravated by the fear of the Palestinian Arab population about their destiny. In the end, a reference to contemporary Middle East is made highlighting the relevance of Edward Azar's protracted social conflict theory as it explains, in part, the root causes of the Revolt as well as contemporary upheavals in the Arab world.

**Keywords:** Arab Revolt, Palestine Mandate, civil-military cooperation, Arthur Wauchope, Edward Azar.

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## Resumo

O objetivo deste trabalho, baseado em pesquisa realizada em arquivos, em Londres e Jerusalém, é analisar o ponto de vista da autoridade civil no debate entre a abordagem conciliatória vs. coerciva, durante a revolta árabe na Palestina em 1936. A questão de pesquisa consiste em determinar porque razão a avaliação da situação feita pela autoridade civil foi tão diferente da efectuada pela autoridade militar, a ponto de ter polarizado as perspetivas sobre qual a resposta mais adequada à revolta. O artigo argumenta que a autoridade civil dispunha de melhor conhecimento da situação na Palestina do que os militares, motivando a defesa duma abordagem conciliatória oposta à linha coerciva favorecida pelos militares. A deterioração da situação na Palestina não deve ser interpretada como uma falha da autoridade civil per se, mas sim como o resultado de uma situação com fatores políticos e humanos complexos, agravados, principalmente, pelo temor da população árabe da Palestina acerca do seu destino. No final, é feita uma referência a um Médio Oriente contemporâneo, destacando a relevância da teoria do conflito social prolongado, de Edward Azar, uma vez que, pelo menos parcialmente, explica as causas da revolta na Palestina, bem como convulsões contemporâneas no mundo árabe.

**Palavras-chave:** Revolta Árabe, Mandato na Palestina, Cooperação civil-militar, Arthur Wauchope, Edward Azar.

*“If peace were imposed by this means, it would not last long”<sup>1</sup>*

## Introduction<sup>2</sup>

The League of Nations legalized the temporary rule of the former Ottoman governed areas of Palestine under Great Britain as the Mandate for Palestine in 1923. Palestine had already been under British military rule in the framework of the Occupied Enemy Territory Administration (OETA) since the occupation of Jerusalem in December 1917. The British were not only rulers of Palestine, but they were also facilitating implementation of the Balfour Declaration<sup>3</sup> by their support of Jewish immigration and settlement in Palestine. The Civil Administration was established in 1920 following the deadly Nabi Musa riots in Jerusalem.

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<sup>1</sup> Wauchope, A. (1936). *Comments by High Commissioner on Air Vice-Marshal Peirse's Secret Memorandum of 20 Aug 1936*. Central Zionist Archives, S25/22764, Jerusalem.

<sup>2</sup> My gratitude goes to the University of Helsinki, where I began archival research for this study in 2006. My tenure in the Finnish Institute in the Middle East enabled me to draft the paper, which was finally completed during my visiting senior fellowship in the Tampere Peace Research Institute. I also acknowledge the following archives whose collections have made this article possible: The Trustees of the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives (London), The National Archive (London), and the Central Zionist Archives (Jerusalem). I'm also in a depth of gratitude to Prof. Sari Hanafi and Dr. William Matchett, who read the manuscript and gave me valuable suggestions.

<sup>3</sup> Arthur James Balfour, Britain's foreign secretary, stated on 2 November 1917 his government's support for the establishment of "a national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine but on condition that "nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine".

Competing national movements of the Palestinian Arabs and Jews eventually led to violent clashes. British Police were mainly responsible for the killing of more than 130 Jews and 110 Arabs in the so-called Western Wall riots in 1929. It was the Arab Revolt of 1936, however, which lasted until 1939, where for the first time Palestinian Arabs revolted against British rule in Palestine on a massive scale and jeopardized British rule over Palestine.

This paper proposes a twofold argument. Firstly, it argues that it was the deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the underlying causes of the revolt by the civilian authority in the Palestine Mandate that was the primary reason behind advocacy of High Commissioner, Arthur Wauchope, for a conciliatory approach. Secondly, the paper argues that the military's understanding of the revolt was less nuanced and far narrower. They perceived the rebellion as a direct challenge to British authority without fully understanding the socio-political context of the revolt. This paper, therefore, focuses on analysis of the position of the civilian authority in the civil-military rift. The core issue and dilemma for the British civilian authorities was to find the most effective response to the revolt and to restore law and order while at the same time maintaining the provisions of the Balfour Declaration concerned with supporting the establishment of a National Home for Jews. The civilian and military authorities disagreed sharply in their approach, underlining their very different perception of whether to exercise a conciliatory or a coercive (soft power vs. hard power) approach as a response; in other words, whether the objective was to resolve the conflict or to suppress the revolt. The Arab Revolt in Palestine, like one of its predecessors, the Great Revolt in Syria 1925-27, are timely research subjects in light of later popular uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa, including those that emerged in 2011. Analysis, and learning from past uprisings provide for enhanced understanding of the contemporary upheavals in the Middle East.

This paper deals with a relatively short period of time. It starts with the beginning of the revolt and ends in the so-called inter-departmental meeting in London on 16 February 1937. This meeting, requested by the High Commissioner (HC) and the General Officer Commanding (GOC) to clarify command responsibilities, discussed the functions of the HC and the GOC. The main purpose of the meeting was to resolve the civil-military debate that had emerged during the revolt and remained unresolved, although the general strike that spearheaded the revolt, had ended.<sup>4</sup> The HC, representing the civilian authority, and the GOC, representing the military authority in Palestine were in the eye of the storm of this debate.

High Commissioner, Sir Arthur Grenfell Wauchope, was also nominal Commander-in-Chief and bore the ultimate responsibility for the maintenance of law and order in the British Mandate for Palestine, and therefore was the supreme co-ordinating authority in charge of higher policy. Wauchope acted, as the longest serving High Commissioner for

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<sup>4</sup> *Minute Sheet*, (1937). Reg. No. 0176/484, TNA, WO 32/4178, London; and *Cabinet*, (1937). C.P. 95 (37), TNA, CO 733/317/8, Kew.

Palestine and Trans-Jordan from 1931 until 1938. When appointed in 1931, Wauchope was an active duty officer and held the rank of Lieutenant General.<sup>5</sup>

The Air Officer Commanding (AOC), Air Vice-Marshal R.E.C. Peirse, to be followed by GOC, Lt Gen. John Dill as of September 1936, were the High Commissioner's military advisers, and were answerable to the High Commissioner for the deployment of military forces. The command system between the civilian and the military authorities appeared to be clear on paper but not in practice. The HC dealt strictly with the Colonial Office while the AOC had to communicate with the Air Ministry, Middle East Command, and naturally the HC.<sup>6</sup> The GOC was answerable to the War Office, as well as the Middle East Command and the HC.

The civil-military debate during the revolt features in a number of research papers. The civilian point of view of the debate has so far received scarcer attention. Amongst researchers,<sup>7</sup> it appears there is a tendency to lean on the interpretation of the military view echoing their assessment of the civilian authority with Wauchope at the helm, as a failure. It is time to put the perspective of civilian authority under closer scrutiny in order to attain more comprehensive understanding of the debate, its reasons and consequences. Different understandings are at the crux of conciliatory vs. coercive approach as reflected in the debates about martial law and command responsibility.

## Unfolding Revolt

A murder of two Jews by a group of armed Arabs near Nablus on 15 April 1936 triggered the Arab revolt in Palestine. In response, Jews killed two Arabs a couple of days later near Petah Tiqva. Following these murders Arab mobs in Jaffa incited by unfounded rumours about Arabs being killed in Tel Aviv resulted in the killing of 9 Jews in Jaffa. Palestinian Arabs declared strikes and in most of the Arab towns National Committees were established to supervise them by 23 April. The Higher Arab Committee (HAC)<sup>8</sup> was formed as a national leadership under Amin al-Husayni, the Mufti of Jerusalem.<sup>9</sup> The HAC decided to continue the general strike until the British government changed their policy, beginning with the cessation of Jewish immigration and prohibition of the transfer of Arab land to Jews, as well as the establishment of a National Government responsible to a Representative Council.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Passfield, S. W. (1931). *Submission for letter of appointment of Lieutenant-General Arthur Grenfell Wauchope for His Majesty's approval, 1 July 1931*, TNA, CO 323/1144/7, Kew.

<sup>6</sup> General Staff, Headquarters, The British Forces, Palestine & Trans-Jordan. (1938). *Military Lessons of the Arab Rebellion in Palestine 1936*. TNA, WO 282/6 (44816-1), Kew.

<sup>7</sup> See for example *ibid*.

<sup>8</sup> The Higher Arab Committee was established with Amin al-Husayni as its President, as a political organ on 25 April 1936 to present Palestinian demands to the British government during the general strike. The British banned the HAC in 1937.

<sup>9</sup> Amin al-Husayni, a leading Palestinian nationalist, was appointed by the British High Commissioner as the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem in 1921. He was in charge of Jerusalem's Islamic holy places and President of the Supreme Muslim Council, the highest body in charge of Muslim community affairs in the Palestine Mandate.

<sup>10</sup> Porath, Y. (1977). *The Palestinian Arab National Movement. From Riots to Rebellion*, Vol. II. London: Frank Cass 1, pp. 160-166.

The strike became violent and rapidly turned into revolt. The rebels targeted both Jews and the government of the Palestine Mandate. As of 10 May 1936, the first wave of bombings took place, along with the first organised attacks by peasants on British troops and police, as well as Jewish settlements. These attacks were usually carried out by armed bands, which were formed during the second half of May. The emergence and spread of rural bands started to tip the military balance. The rebel fighters were familiar with the terrain and counted on the villagers for food and information on army movements. The army faced difficulties in controlling these bands.<sup>11</sup> It is noteworthy that in the beginning of the revolt many rural bands in different hamlets were formed rather spontaneously as a response to the general atmosphere of insurgency without orders from the rebel commanders.<sup>12</sup>

The revolt not only created a challenge to the Mandate law and security enforcement (police, judiciary and military), but also to the administration of the Palestine Mandate as a whole. For the first time in Palestine the administration of the Mandate was struggling to maintain law and order and the unrest was directly reflected in the emerging rift between the civil and military authorities about the most appropriate way to respond to the revolt.

Palestine had experienced public demonstrations and smaller uprisings in the 1920s but nothing in comparison to the scale of the revolt in the summer of 1936. Rebel activity reached its peak between 27 August and 5 September. His Majesty's Government announced its decision to restore law and order by resorting to more coercive measures, including martial law, on 7 September. The announcement appears to have surprised the rebel leaders, but Air Vice-Marshal Richard Peirse, General Officer Commanding the British troops in Palestine, reported a decrease in violence from that date.<sup>13</sup> The HAC, acting on the advice of the Arab rulers (i.e. Emir Abdullah of Transjordan, Ghazi of Iraq and Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia), ordered the strike to end on 12 October.<sup>14</sup> The strike ended just before martial law was implemented, or statutory martial law as it was called; a sort of diluted version of martial law. Regional diplomacy, a threat of martial law and political concessions (the Royal Commission) had all contributed to the ending of the strike.<sup>15</sup>

### The Discussion on Civil-Military Functions

In Palestine the debate focussed on the most appropriate way to counter the revolt to enable law and order in general, and on what were the exact functions of the civilian and the military authorities upon the declaration of martial law in particular. For the British

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, pp. 182, 184.

<sup>12</sup> Swedenburg, T. (1995). *Memories of Revolt. The 1936-1939 Rebellion and the Palestinian National Past*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, p. 122.

<sup>13</sup> Peirse, R. (1936). *Despatch by Air Vice-Marshal Peirse on Disturbances in Palestine 19th April to 14th September 1936*. Headquarters, British Forces in Palestine and Trans-Jordan, TNA, WO 32/4177, Kew.

<sup>14</sup> General Staff, Headquarters, The British Forces, Palestine & Trans-Jordan. (1938). *Military Lessons of the Arab Rebellion in Palestine 1936*, TNA, WO 282/6 (44816-1), Kew.

<sup>15</sup> Norris, J. (2008). Repression and Rebellion: Britain's Response to the Arab Revolt in Palestine of 1936-39. *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 36, No. 1, March 2008, p. 27.

government potential differences between the civil and military authorities in the colonies were not new ones and they had already been recognised earlier in the context of British imperial policing. Major General, Sir Charles W. Gwynn dealt with this question in his well-known treatise on imperial policing. He states, based on the examination of a number of crisis encountered by the British Empire that: "When unity of control, which is perhaps the most important result of proclaiming martial law, is not provided, the necessity of close co-operation and of mutual understanding is all the more important. Anything in the nature of jealousy or competition to secure credit is certain to lead to lack of co-ordination in courses of action."<sup>16</sup> Gwynn also notes that the benefit of martial law is that it establishes unity of control and the unity of control gives the military authority sole responsibility for carrying out government policy. It mitigates possible misunderstandings and misinterpretation of the policy in comparison to the situation where the civil and military authorities are merely acting in co-operation.<sup>17</sup>

Tom Bowden observes that politics dominated the British army when it came to aiding civil power and that the army's defence strategy as adopted by the government of the Mandate was flawed. The government's rationale was to use minimum force. Therefore policy was typically a civilian one, not a military one.<sup>18</sup> The statutes governing civil-military relations were quite clear and explicit. In Bowden's view there should not have been ambiguity in the 'Notes for Guidance on Imperial Policing' and the King's Regulations of 1935 delineating the respective spheres of influence. According to the latter: "The governor of a colony, protectorate or mandated territory is the single and supreme authority responsible to and representative of his majority. He is by virtue of his commission and the letters patent entitled to the obedience and assistance of all military and civil officers, but, although bearing the title of Captain-General or Commander-in-Chief, and although he may be a military officer senior in rank to the Officer Commanding forces, he is not, except on special appointment from His Majesty, invested with the command of His Majesty's Forces in the colony, protectorate or mandated territory."<sup>19</sup>

Michael J. Cohen focused in his analysis on the friction between the civil and military authorities during the revolt in Palestine and observed that: "The friction between the civil and military authorities stemmed from a fundamental difference in the nature of their responsibilities. The War Office and the Air Ministry -whose vice marshal commanded the troops in Palestine- were concerned primarily to suppress a rebellion, which by its very existence challenged British authority and military prestige. On the other hand, the Colonial Office, and more particularly the High Commissioner, were concerned that the grievances which had provoked the rebellion should be as far as possible remedied."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Gwynn, C. W. (1936). *Imperial Policing*. London: Macmillan and Co., p. 15.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, p. 16.

<sup>18</sup> Bowden, T. (1975). *The Politics of the Arab Rebellion in Palestine 1936-39*. *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 2, p. 160.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in *ibid*, pp. 163-164.

<sup>20</sup> Cohen, M. J. (1973). *Sir Arthur Wauchope, the Army and the Rebellion in Palestine, 1936*. *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 9, No 1, p. 20.

Whether or not to declare martial law was at the crux of the debate between the civilian and military authorities during the Arab revolt, as Cohen correctly notes. Declaring martial law would have meant transferring all the executive and judicial powers of the civil administration to the military authorities. In normal times the military was always answerable for its conduct to the High Commissioner. Cohen argues that dual army and civilian control was incompatible, e.g. protests against alleged misconduct by troops might easily lead to curbs on the army's activities.<sup>21</sup>

Jacob Norris notes that the friction existed also at the level of the British government and points out long-standing divisions between the Colonial Office and the Foreign Office that became more pronounced over the issue of implementing martial law. The Colonial Office was fearful that martial law would constitute a confession of political failure in Palestine.<sup>22</sup> Last but not least, Matthew Kelly argues in his recently published article, albeit not directly related to civil-military dilemma, that British violence was a basic cause of the revolt as they used the practise of systematic Palestinian village searches as a punitive method.<sup>23</sup> While the violence was certainly one of the aggravating factors, it can hardly be defined as a basic cause of the revolt; the causes of which Wauchope developed a profound understanding as the following section demonstrates.

### Wauchope's Contextual Understanding

Wauchope as HC, was the person who was put between the hammer and the anvil over the policy, which was perceived too conciliatory by the military. The military's frustration with Wauchope reached the point where War Secretary Duff Cooper wrote to Colonial Secretary William Ormsby-Gore in October 1936 about his firm conviction that "the situation will continue and may deteriorate until Wauchope leaves the country. Wauchope has been given five months to try out his policy and it has lamentably failed."<sup>24</sup>

Wauchope has been regarded in a number of memoirs as the High Commissioner who meticulously endeavoured to fulfil his mandate. He, of course, was bound to follow the Palestine Order of Council as his terms of reference. It, in turn, was anchored in the League of Nations Mandate stipulations, which took into consideration the British pledges given in the Balfour Declaration for establishing a National Home for Jews.

Before the outbreak of the revolt he won the sympathy of the Palestinian Jewish community as he was seen to be helping the establishment of the Jewish National Home. Norman Bentwich, Attorney-General of the Palestine Mandate until 1931, records that Wauchope was a stark contrast to his predecessor and felt a deep sense of mission to the two peoples of

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, pp. 20-21.

<sup>22</sup> Norris, J. (2008). Repression and Rebellion: Britain's Response to the Arab Revolt in Palestine of 1936-39. *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 36, No. 1, p. 27.

<sup>23</sup> Kelly, M. K. (2015). The Revolt of 1936: A Revision. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XLIV, No. 2, pp. 29, 32-35.

<sup>24</sup> Cooper, D. (1936). *Letter to William Ormsby-Gore, 2 Oct 1936*. TNA, CO 967/92, London.

Palestine, including development of the Jewish National Home.<sup>25</sup> Bentwich, however, did not enjoy later seeing Wauchope upholding ties to personalities like Amin al Husayni.<sup>26</sup> Bentwich recalls - concurring with Musa Alami's memoirs - that Wauchope was determined "to see everything with his own eyes and hear everything with his own ears. For this reason he made unannounced visits to Arab and Jewish villages".<sup>27</sup> He was a wealthy bachelor, who, as John Marlowe characterises it, "took Palestine to his heart with an affection which was wholly unrequited either by Arabs or Jews".<sup>28</sup>

Musa Alami, Wauchope's private secretary on Arab Affairs, underlines Wauchope's thirst for understanding the situation. Wauchope was determined that his policy and actions should be based on the fullest and most exact information and knowledge about both communities and their feelings.<sup>29</sup> He had already served in Palestine for more than 4 years when the revolt erupted. The Colonial Secretary, William Ormsby-Gore acknowledged Wauchope's close and personal contact with Jews and Arabs and his success in getting them to serve together on various boards and committees as well as in municipal councils.<sup>30</sup>

Wauchope was well aware of the problems fermenting in Palestine. He reported already in 1933 about the mounting unrest among the Palestinian Arabs.<sup>31</sup> In 1935 he underlined their extreme depression as their lands were more and more transferred to Jewish ownership.<sup>32</sup> He assessed that the widespread feeling of hopelessness and resentment among the Arab population had grown into active hostility against the Jews in the spring of 1935 because the Palestinian Arabs did not believe that the government would meet their principal demands.<sup>33</sup> By the end of 1935 Wauchope became more concerned, considering that the tension might cause considerable disturbances, including strikes.<sup>34</sup> He had explained to Arab and Jewish leaders already in 1933 that the Administration's policy was to introduce self-government in Palestine by stages, starting with the introduction of non-official members to administrative committees, then holding municipal council elections and finally, to establish a Legislative Council.<sup>35</sup>

The Palestinian Arabs submitted the Arab Memorandum in which they expressed their grievances towards Wauchope in November 1935. The Memorandum states that Wauchope had continually spoken of self-government, but had delivered nothing. Moreover, they

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<sup>25</sup> Bentwich, N. & H. (1965). *Mandate Memories 1918-1948*. London: The Hogarth Press 1965). p. 149.

<sup>26</sup> Pappe, I. (2010). *The Rise and Fall of a Palestinian Dynasty. The Husaynis 1700-1948*. London: Saqi Books, pp. 257-258.

<sup>27</sup> Bentwich, N. & H., pp. 152-3.

<sup>28</sup> Marlowe, J. (1959). *The Seat of Pilate. An Account of the Palestine Mandate*. London: The Cresset Press, p. 4.

<sup>29</sup> Furlonge, G. (1969). *Palestine is my country. The Story of Musa Alami*. London: Butler & Tanner Ltd., pp. 98-99.

<sup>30</sup> Cabinet, Palestine Situation. (1937). *Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1 Jan 1937, C.P. 1 (37)*, TNA, CO 733/297/5 Kew.

<sup>31</sup> Wauchope, A. (1933). *Telegram to Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister, 23 Oct 1933, Ref. No. CF/269/33, TNA, CO 733/239/5, Kew.*

<sup>32</sup> Wauchope, A. (1935). *Telegram to Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister, 11 Feb 1935, TNA, CO 733/278/13, Kew.*

<sup>33</sup> Wauchope, A. (1935). *Telegram to Secretary of State, 7 May 1935, CZA, S25/22765, Jerusalem.*

<sup>34</sup> Wauchope, A. (1935). *Telegram to J.H. Thomas, His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Colonies, Dec 1935, Ref. No. CF/409/35, TNA, CO 733/278/13, Kew.*

<sup>35</sup> Marlowe 1959, p. 134.

blamed him for increasing Jewish immigration. Wauchope had also continued to allow the Jews to acquire land ignoring the recommendations of commissions and experts.<sup>36</sup>

The Arab Memorandum likely influenced Wauchope, as he articulated in December 1935 that the causes of the hostility stemmed from three fundamental grievances against the government. Firstly, Arabs believed they were promised an independent Arab state including Palestine. Secondly, a cause of resentment was the Balfour Declaration and its results, and thirdly, the government had disregarded its duty to encourage local autonomy. The Palestinian Arab society genuinely felt these grievances. Wauchope assessed that these three grievances might be viewed as imaginary, but they are real to the Arabs. They felt that they have been unjustly treated. A genuine fear of Jews establishing themselves in large numbers and gaining economic and political control over the whole country in the near future only added to this sense of injustice.<sup>37</sup>

Wauchope highlighted fear and saw it as a psychological factor and underlying cause for the disturbances. The Arabs felt they had been overrun politically, economically and socially and that they would become an insignificant political and social minority after having enjoyed a majority status for centuries. They would also lose their economic sustainability. He concludes that the real inspiration for the disturbances was fear genuinely felt by all Arabs.<sup>38</sup>

There is no doubt that Wauchope sensed the pulse of the Arab population, their dissatisfaction and mistrust. In order to defuse the escalating situation he recommended in his telegram to J.H. Thomas, Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies, to take action, but also explicitly stated that this does not mean yielding to Arab pressure. He recommended restrictions on land sales and reducing the number of immigrants without altering the policy of facilitating the National Home. Wauchope admitted that stopping all immigration or dramatically reducing its volume would end troubles with Arabs for a long time, but it would be unjust towards the Jews as well as being contradictory to the British commitments. "If these three measures are not carried out without delay", he states, "fear will not dissipate, and Palestine may be faced with long periods of disorder and civil disobedience." In making these recommendations, he upheld them as equitable and just in themselves and considered them as unbending to Arab pressure.<sup>39</sup>

Almost immediately after the strike was called, Wauchope advocated on 8 May 1936 the appointment of a Royal Commission to investigate the causes of the disorders as well as make to recommendations for reducing animosities.<sup>40</sup> The immediate announcement of a

<sup>36</sup> Translation of the Arab Memorandum handed to the High Commissioner for Palestine on 25 Nov 1935 (Appendix 1). TNA, CO 733/297/1, Kew.

<sup>37</sup> Wauchope, A. (1935). *Telegram to J.H. Thomas, His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Colonies*, Dec 1935, Ref. No.CF/409/35. TNA, CO 733/278/13, Kew.

<sup>38</sup> Memorandum on the Underlying Causes of the Disturbances of 1936. CZA, S25/22725, Jerusalem.

<sup>39</sup> Wauchope, A. (1936). *Telegram to J.H. Thomas, His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies*. 30 Apr 1936, Ref. CF/235/36. CZA, S25/22725, Jerusalem.

<sup>40</sup> Wauchope, A. (1936). *Telegram to J.H. Thomas, His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 29 Apr 1936, Ref. No. CF/233/36. TNA, CO 733/297/2, Kew.

Commission would be the most helpful to prevent public disorder spreading and curb levels of violence. More coercive methods like drastic military action, he considered, may hold in check major disorders but would lead to an increase of permanent embitterment likely to recur in the future.<sup>41</sup> About a week later, on 16 May 1936, Wauchope restated the need for an impartial investigation. Without it there would be no lasting peace in Palestine.<sup>42</sup> Eventually it was announced in the House of Commons on 29 July 1936 that the Royal Commission would investigate the underlying causes of the disturbances.<sup>43</sup>

Wauchope was well aware since the early phase of the revolt that soldiers wished to apply stronger measures. He acknowledged that stronger measures could meet the difficulties the government was facing but it would generate bitterness that would need to be tackled in the future.<sup>44</sup> His overall objectives were to maintain British prestige as well as restore law and order but in addition, and referring to the views of the Secretary of State of 10 June 1936, his objective was to achieve compromise that “would not leave an embittered, rebellious Muslim population. This objective would not be achieved if drastic air and military action were applied.”<sup>45</sup>

### **Towards Conciliatory Approach - Reasonable Moderation**

In August 1936 Wauchope proposed three alternative courses of action for consideration acknowledging that each one had drawbacks. Nevertheless, one of them should be employed. The first was the continuance of policy along then present lines. Wauchope’s assessment, concurring with the views of Peirse, was that this would not likely achieve success insofar as restoring order was concerned. The second course of action was the granting of some concessions to people, with whom, Wauchope underlines, it is most important the government should live on friendly terms in future years. He states, however, that granting concessions should not give the impression of yielding to disorder. The third option, advocated by Peirse, would be “subduing the Revolt by force including bombing of villages and towns as well as introducing martial law in some districts or in the whole country”. Wauchope disagreed on the third, coercive option, as it would make more innocent people suffer and intensify the already bitter feeling. In his opinion, some concessions had to be granted that would meet the approval of the extremists, in order to ensure the cessation of the violence.<sup>46</sup>

Wauchope sent a request to Ormsby-Gore to approve a more conciliatory approach, as well as some concessions, until recommendations were received from the Royal Commission. He justified his request by referring to the many officials and long-time residents in Palestine with whom he had spoken, who said that concessions are the only course open to

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<sup>41</sup> Wauchope, A. (1936). *Telegram to the Secretary of State for the Colonies*, No. 197, 8 May 1936. TNA, CO 733/297/2, Kew.

<sup>42</sup> Wauchope, A. (1936). *Telegram to the Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 16 May 1936. TNA, CO 733/297/2, Kew.

<sup>43</sup> Ormsby-Gore, W. (1936). *Telegram to Sir Arthur Wauchope*, No. 459, 3 Sep 1936, CZA, S25/22725, Jerusalem.

<sup>44</sup> Wauchope, A. (1936). *Telegram to William Ormsby-Gore*, 7 June 1936, Ref. No. CF/203/36. TNA, CO 733/297/2, Kew.

<sup>45</sup> Wauchope, A. (1936). *Telegram to William Ormsby-Gore*, 22 Aug 1936, CZA, S25/22764, Jerusalem.

<sup>46</sup> Wauchope, A. (1936). *Telegram to William Ormsby-Gore*, 22 Aug 1936, CZA, S25/22764, Jerusalem.

the government.<sup>47</sup> Wauchope called the second option a method of reasonable moderation but he left the door open for the coercive option in case order would not be restored.<sup>48</sup> Peirse believed that the option adopted by Wauchope would be interpreted as a retreat.<sup>49</sup> Wauchope was clear in his view that coercion would cause deplorable results and “bombing of a single village will not restore order; nor is bombing calculated to bring back armed men from the hills to the labour of village and husbandry”.<sup>50</sup> These positions, the conciliatory of Wauchope versus the coercive of Peirse, characterised the difference between civilian and military authority and were an underlying thorn in the debate. Wauchope justified his views and argued that they were based on sound information and a developed understanding of the real reasons for the unrest. Moreover, he was of the view that experienced civil officers were more likely to possess this information than military officers, who lacked thorough acquaintance with the people of the country.<sup>51</sup>

Discussion heated up on 20 August when Peirse, who was working actively to advocate coercive methods to nullify the uprising, sent a long memorandum to promote his view about the effectiveness of coercive methods, including precision bombing of villages.<sup>52</sup> Wauchope refuted Peirse’s arguments, bound by his conviction that “if peace were imposed by this means, it would not last long.”<sup>53</sup> In his view it would cause the embittered population to seize every chance of disturbing the peace.<sup>54</sup> Wauchope considered not only potential tactical gains of certain actions but the bigger picture with potential strategic consequences. Peirse had initiated punitive search measures in villages in May, if not already in April,<sup>55</sup> where rebels were known to be coming from, disguised as searches for arms and wanted persons, but Wauchope stopped village searches within a few days of their initiation.<sup>56</sup> This seems to be slightly misleading as it is implausible he was unaware of these punitive village searches since they had begun, and as they certainly continued longer than just for a few days.<sup>57</sup>

The debate on the coercive versus conciliatory approaches, and basically due to different understandings about the most appropriate way to deal with the revolt, culminated in the

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Wauchope, A. (1936). *Dispatch to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, No. 320, 2 June 1936*. TNA, CO 733/297/2. Kew.

<sup>49</sup> Peirse, R. (1936). *Telegram to Sir Arthur Wauchope, 20 Aug 1936*, (Ref. PTJ/CS/10045/1), Appendix I. CZA S25/22764, Jerusalem.

<sup>50</sup> Wauchope, A. (1936). *Telegram to William Ormsby-Gore, 22 Aug 1936*. CZA, S25/22764, Jerusalem.

<sup>51</sup> Wauchope, A. (1936). *Comments on Air Vice-Marshal Peirse’s Secret Memorandum of 20 Aug 1936*. CZA S25/22764, Jerusalem (sent to Parkinson under formal personal letter on 22.8.36).

<sup>52</sup> Peirse, R. (1936). *Telegram to Sir Arthur Wauchope, 20 Aug 1936*, (Ref. PTJ/CS/10045/1), Appendix I. CZA, S25/22764, Jerusalem.

<sup>53</sup> Wauchope, A. (1936). *Comments by High Commissioner on Air Vice-Marshal Peirse’s Secret Memorandum of 20 Aug 1936*. CZA, S25/22764, Jerusalem.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Kelly, M. K. (2015). The Revolt of 1936: A Revision. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XLIV, No. 2, p. 33.

<sup>56</sup> *Colonial Office, Letter to P. J. Oldfield, 5 Dec 1936*. TNA, AIR 2/1938, Kew (including Wauchope’s notes on Air Vice-Marshal Peirse’s despatch on the disturbances in Palestine, covering the period from 19 Apr to 14 Sep).

<sup>57</sup> Kelly, M. K. (2015). The Revolt of 1936: A Revision. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XLIV, No. 2, pp. 33-34.

issue of martial law. Wauchope and Peirse shared the view that in order to impose severer measures than martial law should be declared.<sup>58</sup> But still in June 1936 Ormsby-Gore supported Wauchope's view that proclaiming martial law was not yet required.<sup>59</sup>

### **The Debate on Command Responsibility under Martial Law**

Wauchope, however, prepared himself for the possibility that martial law would eventually materialise and requested clarifications from Ormsby-Gore in the beginning of June concerning martial law. Wauchope reminded him that because the AOC would wield authority over police and civil administration as the martial law administrator, the HC could not exercise effective control of action. Full responsibility would be with the AOC. He also requested the Colonial Office to consider if there were any objections to making a complete or partial proclamation of martial law on the basis of need.<sup>60</sup>

Lieutenant General John Dill, who replaced Peirse on 15 September 1936,<sup>61</sup> received clear instructions from the War Office upon his appointment, of the intensive methods to be applied in crushing the revolt. According to these instructions, the HC had been informed of the government's decision and was instructed to consult Dill on points relating to the application of martial law.<sup>62</sup> Instructions were immediately clarified over martial law which made clear that the HC was the actual authority for the application of martial law.<sup>63</sup> Upon his arrival, Dill embarked on solving the problem of unrest by coercion. Insights about his attitude can be gleaned from the derogative language he uttered, such as wanting "to teach them (Palestinian Arabs) a lesson".<sup>64</sup> He was firmly convinced upon his arrival that the earliest possible declaration of martial law for the whole of Palestine was unquestionably necessary.<sup>65</sup>

Dill discussed with his superiors at the War Office his command responsibility under martial law. In his view martial law would not be effective if any powers remained with the civil authority. Dismissing the civil administration, Dill asserts: "It is much better that

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<sup>58</sup> Wauchope, A. (1936). *Comments on Air Vice-Marshal Peirse's Secret Memorandum of 20 Aug 1936*. CZA, S25/22764, Jerusalem.

<sup>59</sup> Wauchope, A. (1936). *Telegram to William Ormsby-Gore, 7 June 1936*. Ref. No. CF/203/36. TNA, CO 733/297/2, Kew.

<sup>60</sup> Wauchope, A. (1936). *Dispatch to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, William Ormsby-Gore, No. 320, 2 June 1936*. TNA, CO 733/297/2, Kew.

<sup>61</sup> *HQ British Forces Palestine to Air Ministry, Situation report 113, 14 Sep 1936*. TNA, WO 32/4174, Kew.

<sup>62</sup> *Appointment of Lt. General J.G. Dill, C.B., C.M.O., D.S.O., 7 Sept. 1936*. TNA, WO 32/4174, London. These instructions were based on the Cabinet meeting 56 (36) agreement on 2 Sep 1936. TNA, WO 32/4176, Kew.

<sup>63</sup> Shuckburgh, J. (1936). *Letter to Sir Herbert Greedy on draft instructions to Gen. Dill, 7 Sep 1936*. TNA, WO 32/4174, Kew.

<sup>64</sup> Dill, J. G. (1936). *Letter to the Field Marshal, Sir C.J. Deverell, 10 Nov 1936*. Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, Private Papers. Dill 2/9, London. Dill's attitude becomes clear as he writes about "preventive measures for road bombs: our ultimate answer to this will be to carry a couple of Arab mascots on the leading car." Quoted in Dill, J. G. (1936). *Letter to the Field Marshal, Sir C.J. Deverell, 18 Sep 1936*. Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, Private Papers. Dill 2/9, London.

<sup>65</sup> General Staff, Headquarters, The British Forces, Palestine & Trans-Jordan. (1938). *Military Lessons of the Arab Rebellion in Palestine 1936*. TNA, WO 282/6 (44816-1), Kew.

we soldiers should have the whole odium of the unpleasant acts we shall probably have to commit and that when order is fully restored the civil administration can return with olive branches.”<sup>66</sup>

As the revolt intensified in the beginning of September, it appears that Wauchope began to question his firm trust in conciliatory methods. In a letter to Ormsby-Gore, dated 4 September, he acknowledged that settlement by agreement would lead to increased aggression and strengthening of armed bands. He agreed that the situation now demanded supreme military control to be entrusted to Dill, who would administer martial law. Wauchope further continued that unless Dill disagreed, martial law should be applied to the whole country as soon as Dill was prepared to administer it. Wauchope expressed regret for not having been able together with Peirse to end the unrest. Likewise, Wauchope recognised that a single military commander must be responsible for administering martial law.<sup>67</sup> It is notable, that having expressed these views just a few days prior to Dill’s arrival, Wauchope, upon his arrival, reverted to his former thinking about the merits of conciliatory means. It should be asked if Wauchope calculated this approach to please the Colonial Office, in conjunction with Peirse’s departure and Dill’s arrival, especially as Ormsby-Gore had shown some sympathy for Peirse’s views earlier in the summer, when he stated that the problem in Palestine is essentially a military one.<sup>68</sup> The weeks following demonstrated that Wauchope had not abandoned his opposition to the declaration of martial law.

Dill complained in his report to the Field Marshal on 22 September that Wauchope has not closed the door to negotiations with the HAC, and he himself was concerned that the strike would be called off, making a declaration of martial law difficult. In the same message Dill asserted that it is clear that under martial law the military authority must be supreme and not allow the civil administration to be in a position to overrule decisions the military deems necessary to make.<sup>69</sup> The War Office continued to stand firm over the need for coercive methods and wanted martial law declared. Duff Cooper stated in his letter to Ormsby-Gore on 2 October that once martial law was proclaimed, Wauchope’s mere presence in Palestine would be a very serious handicap to Dill. Cooper further states that he would like to authorise Dill to proclaim martial law on 6 October, unless the rebellion was called off by 5 October, and that instructions be sent to Wauchope to return immediately.<sup>70</sup>

Eventually King Edward signed the Martial Law Order-in-Council on 26 September and it was proclaimed on 30 September. It authorised the HC to delegate at his discretion any or all of his powers to the GOC. There was, however, an unexpected element for Dill (and most likely

<sup>66</sup> Dill, J. G. (1936). *Letter to the Field Marshal*, Sir C.J. Deverell, 18 Sep 1936. Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, Private Papers, Dill 2/9, London.

<sup>67</sup> Ormsby-Gore, W. (1936). *Memorandum*, 9 Sep 1936, Cabinet. Palestine. C.P. 238 (36). TNA, CO 733/297/5, Kew; *Circulation of Wauchope’s letter to Ormsby-Gore*, 4 Sep 1936 (original attached).

<sup>68</sup> Ormsby-Gore, W. (1936). *Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies* C.P. 138 (36). TNA, WO 32/4176, Kew.

<sup>69</sup> Dill, J. G. (1936). *Letter to the Field Marshal*, Sir C.J. Deverell, 22 Sep 1936. Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, Private Papers, Dill 2/9, London.

<sup>70</sup> Cooper, D. (1936). *Letter to William Ormsby-Gore*, 2 Oct 1936. TNA, CO 967/92, Kew.

to Wauchope, too) within the order. The Order-in-Council introduced a statutory martial law, which did not authorise martial law in its fullest sense. Powers conferred were meticulously defined in statutory martial law.<sup>71</sup> Matthew Hughes explains statutory martial law as a level between semi-military rule under civil powers and full martial law under military powers and that the British had ruled out full martial law in situations of ‘sub-wars’ by the 1930s.<sup>72</sup>

It seems that none of the actors on the ground, whether civilian or military, would have foreseen the possibility of a diluted version of martial law that didn’t change the hierarchy of responsibility, keeping civilian authority in power. As a result of the government’s decision, the confusion of functions and responsibilities between the civilian and military authorities only deepened though the government had had its logic not to resort to a full martial law as it would have signalled the failure of the Mandate policy.<sup>73</sup> Politically, in a state of sub-war, the full martial law was out of question. In addition, the Colonial Office found it difficult to hand over complete control of Palestine, “lock, stock and barrel,” to the War Office.<sup>74</sup>

The introduction of statutory martial law further complicated the situation and led to continuing discussions about the delegation of powers to the GOC. This led to the postponement of the start date of statutory martial law to 10 October.<sup>75</sup> On 8 October, Wauchope reported that the agreement with Dill over the delegation of powers had been reached. Ormsby-Gore’s telegram on 9 October to Wauchope conveyed the delegation of formal authority to Dill from 14 October if the strike was not over by the previous day.<sup>76</sup> On 10 October Wauchope decided, on the basis of the telegram received from Ormsby-Gore, on a further postponement of delegation of powers until 14 October hoping that the HAC would call off the rebellion before that date.<sup>77</sup>

### **The Strike is called off - But the Debate Remains**

Simultaneously, the decision about the delegation of powers was communicated to the Arab rulers, as it was known that they were preparing to call off the strike. On 11 October the same information was passed to the HAC including the Mufti. Following deliberations and correspondence with Wauchope, the Secretary of State had decided to delay the

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<sup>71</sup> General Staff, Headquarters, The British Forces, Palestine & Trans-Jordan. (1938). *Military Lessons of the Arab Rebellion in Palestine 1936*. TNA, WO 282/6 (44816-1), Kew.

<sup>72</sup> Hughes, M. (2010). Lawlessness was the Law: British Armed Forces, the Legal System and the Repression of the Arab Revolt in Palestine, 1936-1939. In: Rory Miller, ed., *Britain, Palestine and Empire: The Mandate Years*. Farnham: Ashgate, p. 146.

<sup>73</sup> Bowden, T. (1975). The Politics of the Arab Rebellion in Palestine 1936-39. *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (May 1975), p. 165.

<sup>74</sup> Deverell, C. J. (1936). *Letter to General Dill*, 29 Sep 1936. Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, Private Papers, Dill 2/9, London.

<sup>75</sup> General Staff, Headquarters, The British Forces, Palestine & Trans-Jordan. (1938). *Military Lessons of the Arab Rebellion in Palestine 1936*. TNA, WO 282/6 (44816-1), Kew.

<sup>76</sup> Wauchope, A. (1936). *Memorandum of Comments by the High Commissioner on General Dill’s report on Events in Palestine from 15 Sep to 30 Oct 1936*. CZA, S25/22764, Jerusalem.

<sup>77</sup> General Staff, Headquarters, The British Forces, Palestine & Trans-Jordan. (1938). *Military Lessons of the Arab Rebellion in Palestine 1936*. TNA, WO 282/6 (44816-1), Kew.

handover of authority until 19 October but this decision was not revealed to the HAC or the Arab rulers.<sup>78</sup> It is obvious that the delegation of authority was used to pressure the HAC to call off the strike. Wauchope's hope was fulfilled, as the HAC – acting on the advice of the Arab rulers, which arrived on 9 October – issued orders for resistance to cease on 12 October. This was instantly obeyed and the strike came to an end.<sup>79</sup> This came as a relief for Wauchope as he stated on 20 October, “Happily now there is but little chance of martial law or delegation of powers of High Commissioner becoming advisable. I have always seen the evils for the future had the repressive measures become necessary to restore order.”<sup>80</sup> Wauchope's elevated spirit – a reflection of the relief in the end of the strike – leads him to some self-congratulatory remarks: “I think I deserve great praise for the forbearance I've shown during the last six months, even to such good friends as Peirse and Dill. I certainly saved the former from some extraordinary stupidities. If I ever had to ‘delegate my responsibilities’, it would entail greater evils than I had ever foreseen.”<sup>81</sup>

Wauchope certainly felt, as the strike was called off, that his conciliatory approach had been justified and the British (civilian) authority had demonstrated a proper understanding of the situation. In his comments on General Dill's report he feels confident about stating that: “British authority based on firmness tempered by understanding, is now on a more stable foundation than if it had been re-established by means of indiscriminatory severity, with its inevitable embitterment not only of the Arab population of Palestine but also of other Arab and Moslem peoples.”<sup>82</sup>

But the debate on martial law continued in November the same year despite the immediate danger subsiding. Dill was of the view that the delegation of martial law powers should be governed by the advice of the GOC, as the HC's military adviser. Under martial law the GOC would be responsible for restoring public security. But Wauchope drew attention to the Notes on Imperial Policing, pointing out that it was clearly laid down that the decision to impose martial law rested ordinarily with the civil authority and not the military commander.<sup>83</sup> Despite this, Wauchope made a promise to Ormsby-Gore to delegate martial law powers to Dill if a scenario were to arise wherein the Palestinian Arabs regarded the Royal Commission report and the following decisions as unsatisfactory and the revolt is upheld. He asserts that: “should rebellion occur, rebellion will be suppressed, if need be

<sup>78</sup> Wauchope, A. (1936). *Memorandum of Comments by the High Commissioner on General Dill's report on Events in Palestine from 15 Sep to 30 Oct 1936*. CZA, S25/22764, Jerusalem.

<sup>79</sup> General Staff, Headquarters, The British Forces, Palestine & Trans-Jordan. (1938). *Military Lessons of the Arab Rebellion in Palestine 1936*. TNA, WO 282/6 (44816-1), Kew.

<sup>80</sup> Wauchope, A. (1936). *Letter on 20 Oct 1936*. TNA, CO 967/92, Kew.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> Wauchope, A. (1936). *Memorandum of Comments by the High Commissioner on General Dill's report on Events in Palestine from 15 Sep to 30 Oct 1936*. CZA, S25/22764, Jerusalem.

<sup>83</sup> *Note on discussion between Sir Arthur Wauchope and Gen. Dill, 26 Nov 1936*, Ref. No. CF/866/36. TNA, FO 371/20804, Kew.

by severe measures such as will prevent any further rising for some years to come”<sup>84</sup>, even if such action leaves bitterness afterwards.<sup>85</sup>

Dill, for his part, was bitter about the way the delegation of powers on martial law had been concluded and the degree, namely statutory, of martial law. In October 1936, a couple of weeks after the strikes were called off, Dill was still convinced that the command question was the one that required a decision most urgently. He outlined his view that when the situation went beyond civil authority and police control, the military must be given control, and when authority is delegated to the military commander, he should have power to act under martial law, not under statutory martial law.<sup>86</sup>

The question of the most appropriate response to the revolt, and directly related to the respective functions of the civil and military authorities continued to nag relations between Wauchope and Dill. Wauchope explained the situation in his letter to Ormsby-Gore in the beginning of 1937, stating that if maintenance of order is required, he should have the right to request the GOC to send troops; whereas Dill held the view that the decision should lie with him.<sup>87</sup> Wauchope thought it was of utmost importance to decide who would be the final decision maker.<sup>88</sup> Alongside Wauchope, Dill also came to the conclusion that questions related to command powers should be settled in London.<sup>89</sup>

The London meeting took place on 16 February 1937. Questions of the authority were finally discussed in an interdepartmental conference at the Colonial Office. The conference admitted that the possibility of conflicting opinions between the HC and the GOC could not be excluded, although the general principle was clear. The principle was that until the HC delegated powers to the GOC, the HC, as head of the civil government in Palestine, must be the supreme and final authority on questions affecting security. The conference, however, agreed that the powers of the HC as ‘Commander-in-Chief’ did not include direct command of the forces. The HC would, however, be authorised to require any specific plan of military action to be modified, if he considered that it would lead to dangerous consequences on political or religious grounds.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Ormsby-Gore, W. (1937). *Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1 Jan 1937* with Annexure III: Wauchope, A. (1936). *Letter to William Ormsby-Gore, 24 Dec 1936*. Cabinet, Palestine Situation. C.P. 1 (37). TNA, CO 733/297/5, Kew.

<sup>85</sup> *Summary of view of Sir Arthur Wauchope and Gen. Dill on points discussed on 26 Nov 1936*. TNA, WO 32/4178, Kew.

<sup>86</sup> Dill, J. G. (1936). *Despatch on events in Palestine during the period 15 Sep 1936 to 27 Oct 1936*. TNA WO 32/9401, Kew.

<sup>87</sup> Wauchope, A. (1937). *Telegram to William Ormsby-Gore, 26 Jan 1937*, Ref. No. CF/866/36. TNA, FO 371/20804, Kew.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, see also *Note on discussion between Sir Arthur Wauchope and Gen. Dill, 26 Nov 1936*, Ref. No. CF/866/36, TNA, FO 371/20804, Kew.

<sup>89</sup> Dill, J. G. (1936). *Letter to Sir Arthur Wauchope, 16 Dec 1936* and Wauchope, A. (1936). *Letter to Gen. Dill, Letters, 15 Dec 1936*. TNA, WO 32/4178, Kew.

<sup>90</sup> Ormsby-Gore, W. (1937). *Minute Sheet, 15 Mar 1937*, Reg. No. 0176/484. TNA, WO 32/4178, Kew.

## Conclusions

The debate on conciliatory vs. coercive approach during the Arab revolt in 1936 reflects basically different understandings about the situation in Palestine. The civilian administration and especially Wauchope represented a conciliatory one, while the military one represented by Peirse and Dill was coercive. Wauchope had spent several years in Palestine before the outbreak of the revolt and succeeded in getting Arabs and Jews to co-operate in many areas of public life.<sup>91</sup> Wauchope had made undisputed achievements during the years 1931–35 supporting the establishment of a Jewish National Home but not at the expense of the indigenous population.

The revolt put all these achievements in jeopardy. Therefore, Wauchope sought a conciliatory and political solution with the limited use of power whereas the military solution was to impose law and order by military means i.e. by coerciveness, including martial law, to be followed by a political solution second. Documentary sources bear clear evidence that Wauchope looked at the situation from a wider perspective, with political and societal impacts always in mind, whereas Peirse and Dill both saw the situation narrowly as an uprising against the British government that should be crushed. Different readings of the situation by the civilian and the military authorities, as well as conclusions about the most appropriate approach are the result of not only different responsibilities, as Cohen concluded, but also different understandings of the situation on the ground stemming from situational, political and security analysis. It is to be noted, however, that although exercising a conciliatory approach Wauchope did not hesitate to use force, if he deemed it necessary.<sup>92</sup>

At the core of Wauchope's analysis were his understanding of feelings and fears of the Palestinian Arabs. He repeatedly underlined the strong feelings of dissatisfaction held by the Arabs; that they feared for their future. As he appreciated, the root cause of their fear was more psychological than physical. This was the guiding principle in Wauchope's contemplation about an appropriate response to the revolt. He didn't believe matters of sub-consciousness, feelings, and fear could be remedied by coercive measures as the military proposed. He expressed deep concern at the activities of government troops causing civilian casualties. Wauchope based his understanding both on the information gathered for him and on his own observations and experience. This would not have been possible without his personal commitment as illustrated in some of the memoirs. He was consistent in his view that repressive actions should be the last resort; he realised that coercive methods would destroy the chances to achieve a political solution, the solution he was focused on achieving. Moreover, it would destroy the work for which he was credited; fostering successfully co-operation between the Arabs and Jews.

<sup>91</sup> Ormsby-Gore, W. (1937). *Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Cabinet, Palestine Situation*. C.P. 1 (37), 1 Jan 1937. TNA, CO 733/297/5, Kew.

<sup>92</sup> He crushed a hostile stronghold of the Old City of Jaffa with the military destroying some 220–240 buildings on 16 June 1936, and cutting pathways through the old city, making up to 6,000 Palestinians homeless. Wauchope, A. (1936). *Letter to Williams Ormsby-Gore, 16 June 1936*. CZA, S25/22727, Jerusalem, and Matthew Hughes, M. (2009). The Banality of Brutality: British Armed Forces and the Repression of the Arab Revolt in Palestine, 1936-39. *English Historical Review* Vol. CXXIV No. 507, p. 322.

The military's perspective and understanding of the situation was less nuanced and far narrower. They perceived the rebellion as a direct challenge to the British authority. They regarded Wauchope's conciliatory approach as a retreat and advocated its abandonment. Cohen described his efforts as being one of appeasing the Palestinian Arabs.<sup>93</sup>

This paper argues that it was not only different responsibilities of the civilian and military authorities that contributed to the disagreement on respective functions of the HC and the GOC under the martial law. The incompatibility of command responsibilities was the outcome of markedly different understandings of the situation, not only a product of the different nature of responsibilities. Wauchope maintained a more holistic view of the overall situation, which stemmed from the years preceding the revolt and his analysis that to give the military a free hand would mean a deplorable situation for Mandatory Palestine. He took into consideration aspects of politics, security, atmosphere, feeling and regional issues in Palestine, whereas for the military it was all about crushing the revolt. Wauchope, certainly feeling the full responsibility as the highest mandate official, did his utmost to find a peaceful and sustainable solution; and in part, his conciliatory policy contributed to the cancellation of the strike, negating the deployment of more coercive methods at that time. The fact that the revolt continued in the autumn of 1937 was by and large a reaction to the results of the Royal Commission and therefore not related directly to the policy applied in 1936.

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One cannot but think about the wave of popular uprisings sweeping through North Africa and the Middle East since late 2010 without reflecting upon the Revolt in Palestine in the 30s as well as other early popular uprisings in the Middle East. Despite differences in time, political settings and power structures many similarities are striking as observed in case of Libya and Syria, for example. Above all, the quest for understanding of the underlying root causes of societal upheavals and turmoil is today as crucial as it was in past. Unfortunately, it seems that history keeps repeating itself and often, if lessons were identified nothing was actually learnt. These lessons, related directly to understanding the root causes of societal upheavals, have been left unnoticed not only in case of indigenous uprisings but also in political decision-making leading to external military interventions in the region, too. Coercive means as a solution are in the forefront no matter whether the question is about quelling the popular uprising by authoritarian regimes or about the so-called war against terror by international coalitions. Means used by the regimes and the established international order are basically the same. It is striking to observe that similar military assertiveness as propagated by Peirse and Dill in Palestine is still prevailing in contemporary conflict response. One just needs to think about military interventions led by the US in Afghanistan and mainly EU countries in Libya (with UN consent) and Iraq (without

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<sup>93</sup> Cohen, M. J (1975). Direction of Policy in Palestine, 1936-45. *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (October 1975), p. 252.

the consent), which have led to unintended consequences that the world is now coping with, including the robust emergency of the so-called Islamic State. Military interventions, very much echoing Peirse's wish to crush the "enemy" without any understanding of the root causes for unrest, have caused proliferation of radicalism on an unprecedented scale. Wauchope underlined the necessity of understanding of the currents driving the revolt; similar understanding, if it existed, would most likely have led to different international approach in countries like Afghanistan and Iraq with outcomes mitigating radicalism instead of promoting it. As observed, it is even doubtful whether the invasion, in the case of Afghanistan, would have been launched had the sufficient thought been given.<sup>94</sup>

There exist several relevant studies explaining causes leading to social upheavals and conflicts. The Lebanese born Edward Azar's studies are still timely as he, partly based on his Lebanese experience, formulated the so-called protracted social conflict (PSC) model. The PSC usually originates whenever communal groups (defined by shared ethnic, religious, linguistic or other cultural characteristics) are denied their distinct identity or the fulfilment of their collective developmental needs.<sup>95</sup> This model describes quite accurately what caused the Revolt in Palestine and what has been behind more contemporary popular uprisings in the Arab world. Azar's definition of PSC and other related approaches and models are salient because they assist us to better understand the roots and dynamics of complex and multidimensional conflicts; and would consequently lead to the application of more conciliatory methods of addressing the root causes of societal uprisings and increasing radicalism.

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<sup>94</sup> Quoted in Gray, J. (2014). The Dangers of Democracy. *New York Review of Books*, March 20 - April 2, 2014, Vol. LXI, Number 5, p. 43.

<sup>95</sup> Wibke Hansen, Oliver Ramsbotham, and Tom Woodhouse, Eds. (2004). *Hawks and Doves: Peacekeeping and Conflict Resolution*. Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management - Edited version August 2004, pp. 9-10.

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