

Middle East Centre Archive, St Antony's College
British Mandate Palestine Police Oral History

I. Before going to Palestine

How many brothers and sisters in your family?

What was your parents' profession(s)?

Where did you go to school, and what level did you attain?

What was your profession before joining the Palestine Police?

Did you know anything about Palestine before joining the Police? E.g. about the Arab Revolt of 1936-1939, or about Zionism and Jewish immigration to Palestine?

What was your family's reaction to your decision to join the Palestine Police?

II. Recruitment, training, going to Palestine

How were you recruited into the Palestine Police?

Did you see any promotional films or respond to any advertisements or brochures?

Did you encounter Raymond Cafferata on one of his recruiting tours?

Did you receive police training in the U.K. before departing for Palestine?

How much training did you receive in Palestine?

Did you feel your training had prepared you adequately for the job?

How would you describe Palestine's place in the British Empire at the time?

Do you remember the day you arrived in Palestine?

What were your first impressions?

III. The Experience of Police Service in Palestine

How did experienced Palestine Policemen treat new recruits to the force?
What sort of interaction did you have with officers in the force?

Were some towns or posts considered 'better' places to serve than others? Were there any towns or posts or parts of the country to which policemen preferred or dreaded being assigned? Discuss with reference to specific places in which you served.

What was your daily routine? How often was that routine disrupted?

What were your leisure activities when off duty?
Were you married while in the Palestine Police? If unmarried, did you go out with anyone socially? British or Palestinian?

How much did you know about what was happening in Palestine at the time? In terms of British policy, the growing role of the UN, the agenda of Zionist and Arab groups?
What was your main source of news and information? Radio? Newspapers?
Did current affairs in Palestine seem important to you at the time, in your police work? E.g., did you ever think that a policy would have security implications that would make your work harder?

How do you think the Arab community of Palestine viewed the Police?
How do you think the Jewish community of Palestine viewed the Police?
Did their attitudes change over time?
What was your personal contact with Arab and Jewish civilians? Did you make any friends?

How were relations between Arab, Jewish and British members of the Police?
Did Arab and Jewish policemen ever work together? In an office capacity? On patrol?
Did you personally work with Arab and/or Jewish Policemen? In what capacity (commander, equal, subordinate)?
Did Arabs, Jews and Britons share quarters? Eat together? Fraternalize when off duty?
Did you personally make friends with native policemen?
Were native policemen (Arabs and Jews) reliable in all circumstances? Can you think of specific incidents when native policemen favoured their 'own' community?

Did anti-British attacks by the Stern Gang, the Irgun and others affect the perceptions you and your colleagues had of the Jewish community as a whole? In what way?

Do you recall your reaction at the time to the following events:

- Operation Agatha antiterrorism operation (June 1946)
- The bombing of the King David Hotel (22 July 1946)
- Breakout from Acre Prison (May 1947)
- Hanging of British sergeants
- The *Exodus* immigrant ship
- Irgun/LEHI massacre at Deir Yasin (April 1948)

Were you ever assigned to duties related to policing the activities of armed groups?
Were you ever involved in armed conflict?

Were you wounded in service? Please elaborate on the circumstances, treatment received, and if you returned to active duty.

How were relations and coordination between the Palestine Police and the British Army in Palestine?

Did the British forces share intelligence?

How were relations between the civil administration and the Palestine Police?

Do you have any recollections of the following events?

- Britain's decision to submit Palestine question to the UN (Feb. 1947) and Britain's announcement that it would withdraw from Palestine (26 September 1947)
- The U.N. Partition Resolution (29 November 1947)
- Israeli declaration of independence (14 May 1948)

Did the breakdown in security, and plans for British withdrawal for Palestine, affect morale in the Palestine Police?

Did these events lead to any breakdown in discipline in the force? E.g. policemen transferring arms to Palestinian Jews or Arabs? Other assistance to Jews or Arabs?

Retaliation against Palestinian Jews or Arabs?

Did you stay in Palestine after 15 May 1948?

What were your impressions of the first days of the State of Israel?

What were your impressions of the beginning of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War?

What are your most memorable experiences of service in the Police?

What was your best day in Palestine?

What was your worst day in Palestine?

IV. In retrospect

Do you remember the day you left Palestine? Describe the situation as you recall it.

As you left, did you have a clear sense of what your mission had been and did you believe you had accomplished it?

Did you have any regrets about your decision to join the Palestine Police? If you knew at the time of joining what you knew at the time of standing down, would you still have joined the Palestine Police?

Were you surprised by the outcome of the 1948 War?
Which side did you believe would win at the time and why?

What did you do after leaving Palestine?
Did you consider working in another police force? In Britain? The colonies?

Have you been back to Palestine/Israel? What were your impressions?

Have you been active in the PPOCA?
Are any of the men you served with at the time currently members?
Would you say the members of the PPOCA were shaped by their Palestine experiences? Do they share common views on things or agree to disagree?