

ARTHUR KIRBY AND THE LAST
YEARS OF PALESTINE RAILWAYS.
1945 - 1948.

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Berlin.

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Dedication.

Many people assisted with the research and production of this work. Dr. Rory Miller and Prof. Efraim Karsh of King's College, University of London, Mediterranean Studies Programme, were the academic advisors who brought the PhD thesis to a satisfactory conclusion. It was orally 'defended' before Prof. Moshe Gat of Bar-Ilan University and Dr. Colin Shindler of SOAS, London, on 20th. December 2007, resubmitted shortly thereafter with a few minor alterations.

However, the rigours of the academic submission meant that a vast amount of material had to be omitted, lengthy documents could be quoted only in small segments or paraphrased, and a length limit and certain stylistic rules had to be observed. In consequence I have decided to produce a fuller version, incorporating the additional materials and topics, on the basis that almost none of these had been published and many of those that had, had been published only by myself in the small amateur magazine 'Harakevet' - and yet there is clearly a vast degree of ignorance, confusion and downright falsification about many details surrounding this very complex period of history. So it was important to me to make this material more widely available, even if the work as such is not 'commercial'.

My main thanks must be to the late Paul Cotterell, who passed away suddenly in Qishon Workshops in May 2007 - whilst in the middle of further research into their records. He is regarded as the doyen of researchers and historians in this entire field, his book informed me and inspired me to continue, and he became a good friend. His duties - a labour of love - in effectively running and expanding the Israel Railway Museum at Haifa Mizrach and the 'archive' made much of what follows possible. (There was initially just a pile of papers under pigeon droppings, it was thanks to him and his team of volunteer helpers that the term 'archive' even became appropriate.) I am grateful that he read, before his untimely death, one of the initial drafts of my thesis.

I thank also the numerous correspondents who, over the years, provided me with their own eye-witness accounts or guided me to obscure archival resources.

And of course my Parents, Edgar and Esther Rothschild, who supported, financed, urged and pushed me on my way so that they too could eventually proudly say "My son, the Doctor"!

Walter Rothschild.

CONTENTS.

p. 11.	Introduction.
p. 21.	Chapter 1. Palestine and its Railways in the Mandate Period.
p. 43.	Chapter 2. Palestine Railways During World War 2.
p. 71.	Chapter 3. The Management of P.R. in 1945.
p. 95.	Chapter 4. The Management of P.R. in 1946.
p.111.	Chapter 5. The Management of P.R. in 1947.
p.129.	Chapter 6. Disposal of the Haifa - Beirut - Tripoli Railway.
p.149.	Chapter 7. Disposal of the Kantara - Rafa Railway.
p.169.	Chapter 8. Disposal of Hejaz Railway lines in Palestine and Transjordan.
p.205.	Chapter 9. Acquisition of Rolling-Stock 1945-1948.
p.231.	Chapter 10. Plans for Withdrawal: P.R. in January - April 1948.
p.303.	Chapter 11. May 1948, The Last Days.
p.312.	Appendix 1 Transcript of Letter by I. Nissenbaum to Kirby, 1948.
p.313.	Appendix 2 What Rolling Stock was inherited by I.R.
p.329.	Appendix 3 History of Khoury House as Palestine Railways Headquarters.
p.335.	Appendix 4 Some Staff and Financial Arrangements at the Termination.
p.338.	Appendix 5 Memoirs of Capt. Mapstone, Royal Engineers.
p.343.	Appendix 6 'Origins of the Hebrew Railway'; Article by Isaac Nissenbaum.
p.353.	Appendix 7 Epilogue: Early days of Israel Railways.
p.370.	Appendix 8 Notes on British Military Involvement in P.R. 1939 - 1948.
p.397.	Appendix 9 The American Military Railroad Contribution in Middle East.
p.402.	Appendix 10. Some Correspondence with and from Arthur Kirby.
p.408.	Bibliography.
p.413.	Glossary.

LIST OF TABLES.

Table 1.	Palestine's Postwar Population.	p. 22
Table 2.	P.R. Freight Stock in 1939.	p. 38
Table 3.	P.R. Motive Power in 1939.	p 39
Table 4.	P.R. Goods Traffic 1939-1945.	p. 46
Table 5.	P.R. Staff Statistics.	p. 47
Table 6.	Locomotive Failures 1940-1946.	p. 57.
Table 7.	W.D. Wagons Available for Use.	p. 61.
Table 8.	Foreign Wagons Available for Use.	p. 64.
Table 9.	Civil Goods Traffic Egypt-Palestine, 1942-5.	p. 66.
Table 10.	P.R. Traffic Statistics.	p. 68.
Table 11.	P.R. Working Results 1939-1945.	p. 69.
Table 12.	Military Owned Stock on P.R. System.	p.206.
Table 13.	Disposal of Military Stock.	p.208.
Table 14.	Expenditure on freight Stock.	p.224.
Table 15.	Incidents on P.R. January 1948.	p.250.
Table 16.	Incidents on P.R. February 1948.	p.267.
Table 17.	Incidents on P.R. March 1948.	p.285.
Table 18.	Incidents on P.R. April 1948.	p.299.

LIST OF MAPS.

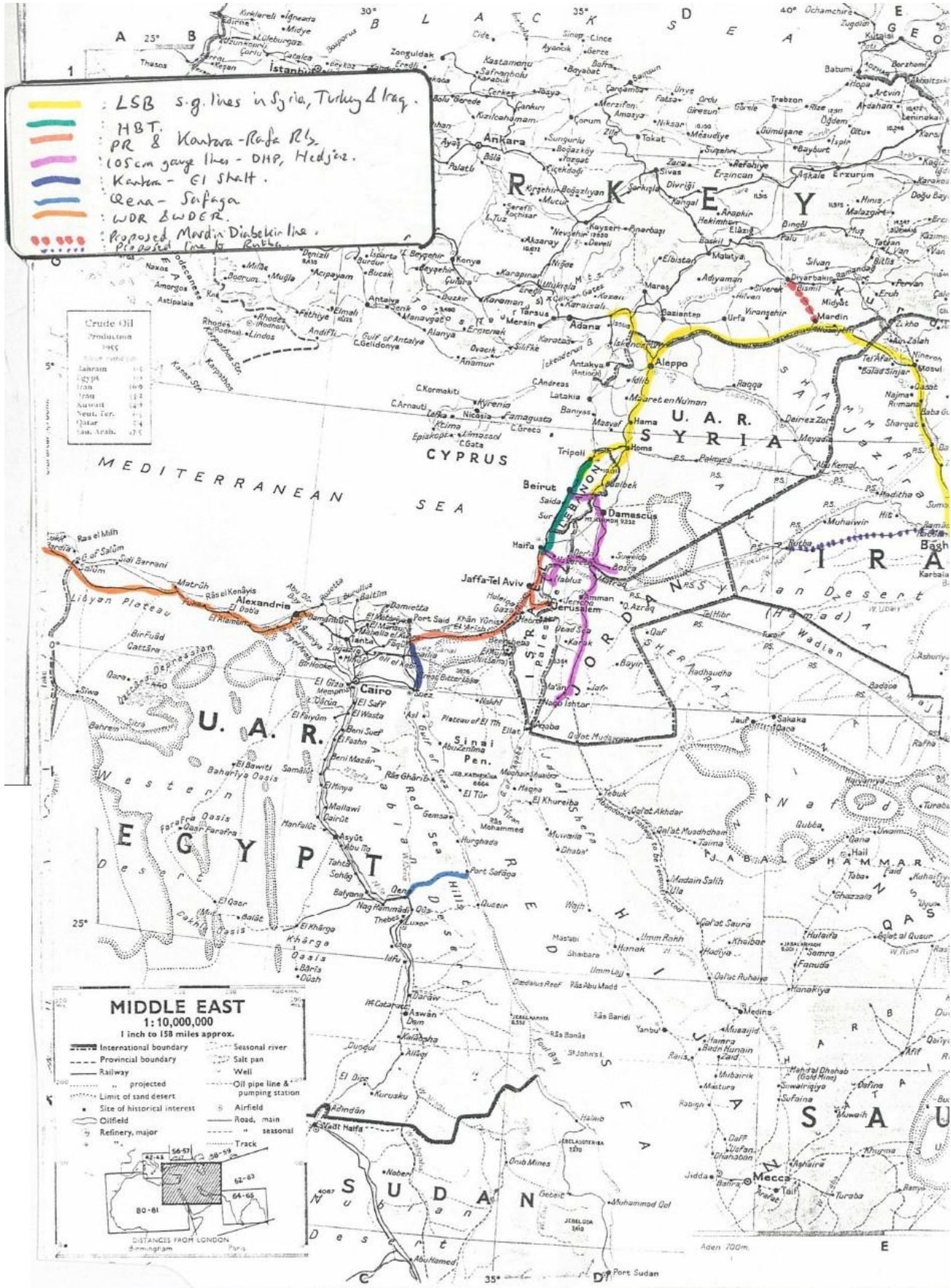
MAP 1. Railways in the Middle East, showing Palestine Railways and its links with neighbouring systems. 1945.

MAP 2. Palestine Railways system. (Source: Cotterell op. cit. p.96).

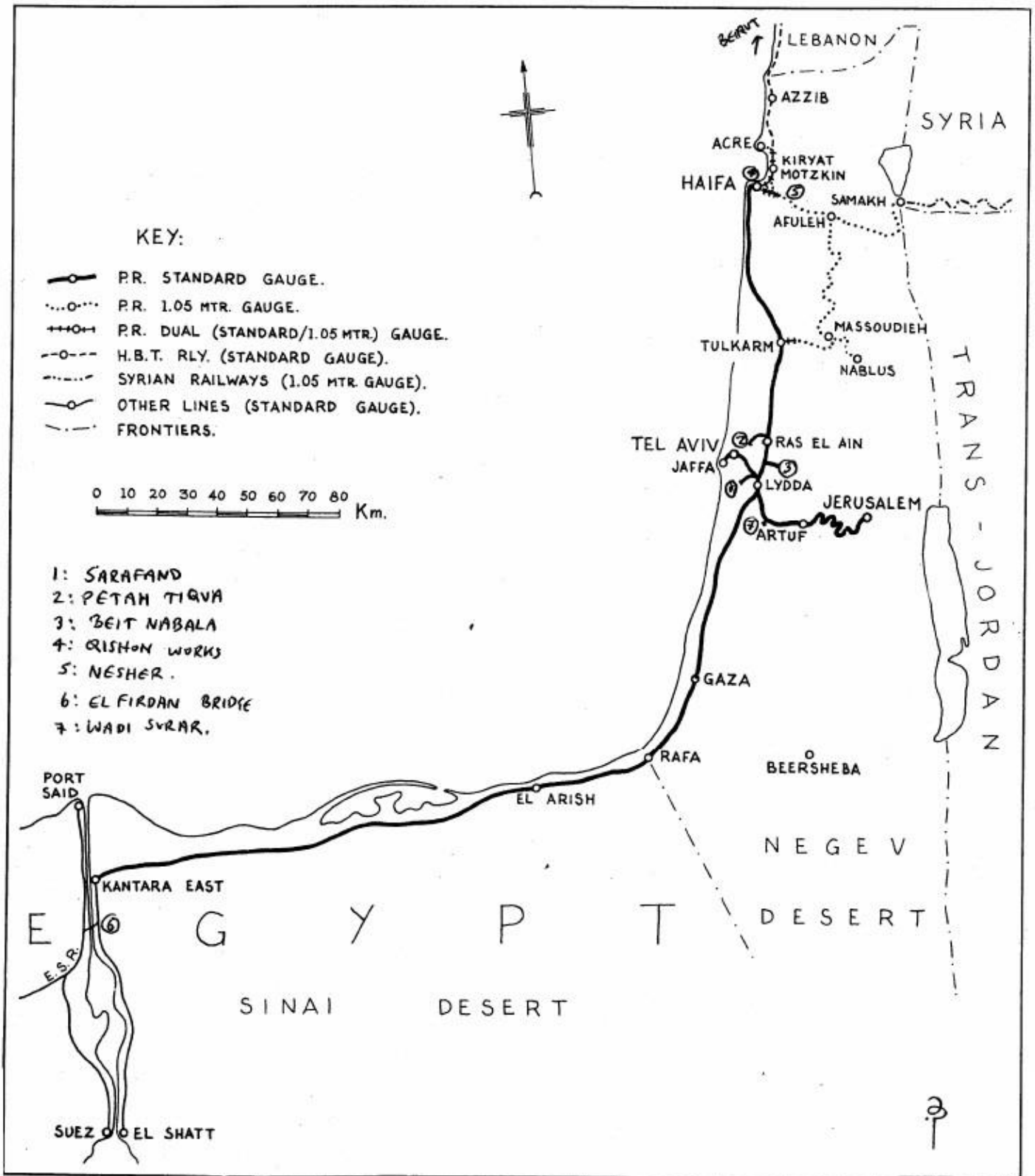
MAP 3. The Hedjaz Railway System at its fullest extent, 1918.
(Source: Noll, Bickel, von Denfer: op. cit. p. 16.)

MAP 4. UNSCOP (United Nations Special Committee on Palestine) Map of proposed Partition. 1946. (N.B. There were different versions.)

**MAP 1. RAILWAYS IN THE MIDDLE EAST,
SHOWING PALESTINE RAILWAYS AND ITS LINKS; 1945.**

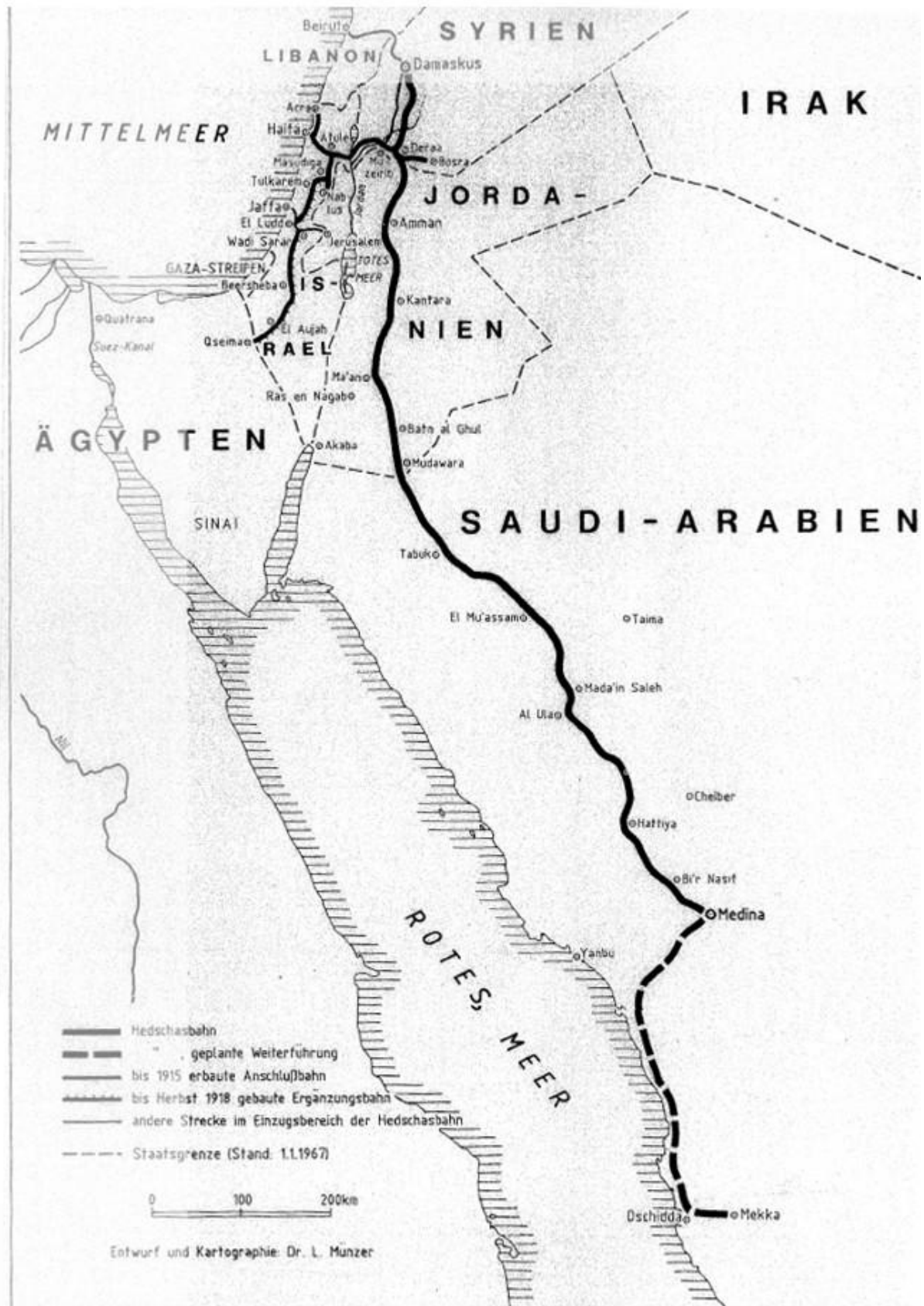


MAP 2. PALESTINE RAILWAYS. (Source: Cotterell p.96).

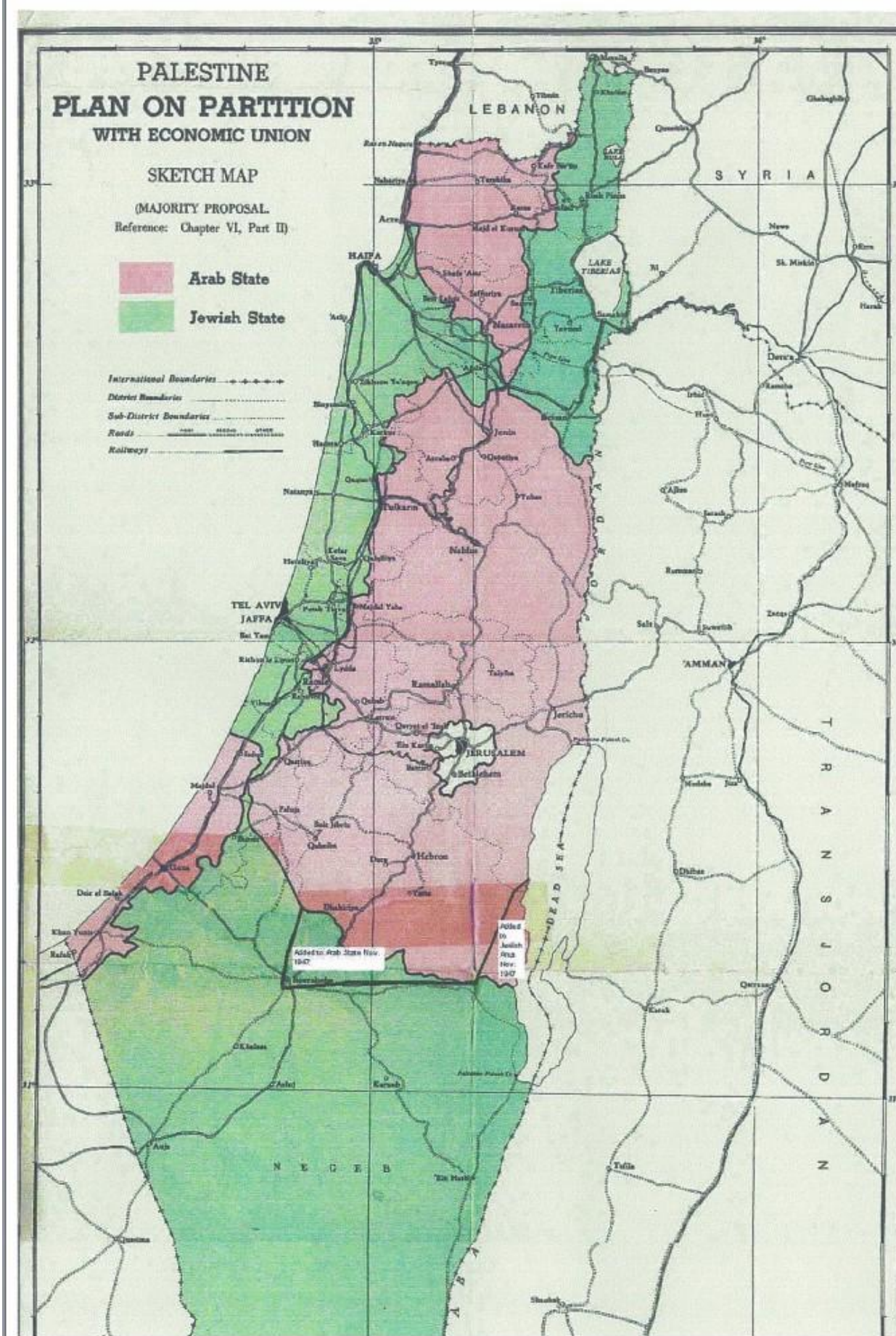


(Cotterell p 46)

MAP 3. THE HEDJAZ RAILWAY SYSTEM ITS FULLEST EXTENT, ca. 1918.
 (Source: Noll, Bickel, von Denfer: p. 16.)



MAP 4. U.N.S.C.O.P. PROPOSED PARTITION PLAN 1946.



INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW.

(A). INTRODUCTION AND SOURCES.

In April 1942 there appeared in the 'Palestine Gazette'¹ a small but very significant item: "The Officer Administrating the Government has appointed: Mr. A.F. Kirby to be General Manager, Palestine Railways, w/e/f 9th. April 1942."²

Arthur Kirby served in this post for almost exactly six years, until the end of the Mandate on 15. May 1948. They were not easy years. Kirby's first task was to rescue a railway system that was on the verge of collapse, so that it could serve an unaccustomed wartime transport function; his second was to reorganise it to meet anticipated peacetime needs; thirdly, when the "peacetime" failed to materialise, he took it upon himself to discharge his duties - as he saw them - to maintain the railway system in the best possible condition and finally - as a self-imposed fourth duty - to hand it over to a later Administration as a going concern.

He succeeded in the first three of these responsibilities, despite enormous obstacles from all sides, and almost succeeded in the fourth - being to some extent hindered and to some extent assisted by clandestine parallel moves amongst a small group of his trusted senior Jewish employees.

It is hoped to demonstrate in this study just how much of the short-, medium- and long-term destinies of the Palestine Railways in the period 1945-1948 was influenced by this one man and his drive to professionalism and perfectionism. It is also hoped to set this in the context of the period - both before and during his term in office, in terms of the developments on the Railways of the region, and also the contemporary political developments that led to the dismemberment of the system. In this respect Kirby could on occasion exercise influence or offer advice, but could not make the decisions.

Because many original P.R. records were lost during the fighting in Haifa in April 1948, which saw the destruction of the Railways Headquarters in Khoury House,³ there are certain unavoidable gaps in the available knowledge. Kirby (by then "Sir Arthur") died in 1983.⁴ Fortunately he had sent copies of many items of Minutes, Memoranda and Correspondence to the Chief Secretary's Office in Jerusalem, and these have survived in the Israel State Archives there.⁵ He retained some other items personally, and thanks to generous assistance from his daughter and step-daughter,⁶ several gaps have been filled, especially in his personal life story. An overall and condensed Palestine Railways Report was published in 1946, to cover the whole 1942-46 period.⁷ Other papers of the period that have survived include those of the P.R. Chief

¹ 'Palestine Gazette' No. 1190, of Thurs. 30. April 1942. p.520.

² Unfortunately the unavailability of any Crown Agents records mean that it is impossible to ascertain exactly who chose him for this post and why, or even whether other candidates were considered. It is even unclear whether he applied, or was 'head-hunted' due to wartime conditions. It must be assumed he had impressed his superiors in his previous posts on the Gold Coast and in Kenya.

³ Haifa East station and offices were also blown up on 20. Sept. 1946, and crated documents were burned at Haifa East in May 1948.

⁴ Obituary in 'The Times' 14. Feb. 1983.

⁵ "*Ginzach haMedinah*".

⁶ Mrs. Christine Howlett, of New York; Mrs. Jean Cox of Dursley, Gloucestershire.

⁷ Referred to henceforth as 'P.R. G.M. Report 1946'. The first draft Annual Report had been introduced by Campigli in 1930, apparently on his own initiative; earlier unpublished draft reports for 1928 and 1929 have been located in the Haifa Railway Museum archives. Webb expanded these regular reports until 1938. The implication is that Kirby felt it important to reintroduce this system, at least for the period in which he was responsible. He noted (p.8) that Annual Reports "were not published for the financial years 1939/40 to 1944/45 because the rendition of departmental annual reports was suspended as a wartime measure of

Engineer, R. F. Scrivener.⁸ Contact was made with former P.R. Loco Engineers (John Lee, Robin Davies, George Cowley), with several former members of the Royal Engineers and the Palestine Police, with the daughter⁹ of the P.R. Chief Accountant, and others.¹⁰ All have been generous with memories, photographs on loan, and papers to copy. Museums and archives in Britain and Israel have been visited, individuals interviewed, and correspondence conducted over a period of more than a decade. In the end, despite all this, there remain gaps. These include, of necessity, the Arab perspective - our personal sources include British servicemen, British expatriate officers, Jewish Palestinians and even Greek civil servants - but not Arab Palestinian memoirs.¹¹ Because so many of the sources are unpublished or difficult to access, sections will be reproduced as text or as notes.¹²

We shall concentrate mainly on the operational and political difficulties, but refer also when necessary to the commercial, traffic or economic elements of railway operation. Rather than providing one composite and comprehensive chronological narrative we shall deal with certain specific themes and issues, such as Rolling Stock Acquisition or the Disposal of sections of the system separately, in parallel, for the sake of clarity, even if this means occasional overlap.

It is a difficult matter to decide how much extraneous detail is necessary to explain the events described here; we shall work on the principle that the reader knows already much of the outline of the history of Mandatory Palestine - what the 'Haganah' or 'I.Z.L.' or the 'King David Hotel attack' means, for example - but has never viewed these events through the prism of the Railway History and, as a non-specialist, may require additional explanations for Railway terminology. And we shall quote from some unpublished documents at length, because we consider their style to be as important as their content - and this would be lost by undue paraphrasing or excerpting.

Several Appendices provide an opportunity to present material which is hitherto either unpublished or only published within a small private circulation.

(B). HISTORICAL OVERVIEW.

Before we address the issues of why the British had to leave Palestine in 1948, and how they did so, it is necessary to describe how and why they went there in the first place. Kirby's task was profoundly affected by so many factors which would not

economy and security; the compilation of certain statistical information...was also suspended. This report is an endeavour to present a picture of the working results and activities for the four years 1942/3-1945/6.... Whenever practicable, the financial and statistical tables give figures for the four years under review with comparable figures for years previous thereto." There were also official annual P.R. Audits, with the same 'missing' years. No report was published after 1946 due to the political circumstances.

⁸ At the Middle East Centre, St. Antony's College, Oxford.

⁹ Mrs. Pat Hay-Wills, daughter of K. A. Mansfield, the P.R. Chief Accountant for some years.

¹⁰ In addition to the fragmentary surviving records in the correspondence files of the Chief Secretary to the Palestine Government, the surviving papers of Arthur Kirby and R. F. Scrivener, we have used the 'Palestine Gazette' and 'Palestine Post' on microfilm at British Library, Colindale; papers from the P.R.O., Kew, including War Diaries of several Royal Engineers units, and various other published and unpublished sources and memoirs.

¹¹ There appear to be few Moslem sources (published or unpublished) available; one reason could be that many of the Moslems employed on the Railway were employed as artisans and labourers in relatively menial capacities; it was Christian Arabs who took the clerical posts. Official Reports occasionally refer to problems of illiteracy amongst the workforce.

¹² Several accounts and sources have been published only in 'Harakevet', a small, private quarterly newsletter (obtainable by subscription only but available in Deposit Libraries) and published by the author of this thesis. They are therefore in essence still 'Primary Sources'.

necessarily appear in a 'normal' railway history or biography. He was responsible for a railway system which operated partly in a newly-created country (Palestine) which was administered but not technically governed by another country (Great Britain) whereas sovereignty as such lay in the League of Nations¹³ and its successor from 1945, the United Nations Organisation; the system operated partly in another country (Transjordan) which was made independent, and partly in another country (Egypt) which was at odds with his own. He was therefore answerable to an Administration (in Palestine) which took its orders from the British Government, yet which was itself technically answerable to an international body which had presented the administrators with a document (the 'Mandate') over which there was great confusion, and which had been modified considerably but one-sidedly.¹⁴ There was no precedent for this, and no parallel. Debates about the purpose of the Mandate and its implementation had led to armed internal conflict between some inhabitants and the Authorities over two decades from the 1920's, and by the end of his tenure it was leading to formal division and further armed conflict between some inhabitants and also with adjoining States.

This railway system served an ill-defined purpose - or set of purposes. It was unclear whether it existed to open up economic development, or to serve perceived colonial needs, or to build up autonomous skills amongst the population (and if so, in what proportions to their ethnic divisions), or to serve the Military in a time of conflict, or to provide links with neighbouring countries, or to make a commercial profit - Or a bit of all these. It was unclear what influence such organisations as the Crown Agents should possess.

This is all relevant background. Subject to all these conflicting demands, Kirby consistently submitted only to his own demands of conscience; to demonstrate this, some of the other conflicting demands and their history need to be described.

It was not part of the initial British strategic aims to conquer Palestine - this occurred only as a reaction to events. When Turkey joined the Central Powers, and Turkish troops attempted to attack the Suez Canal in January and February 1915,¹⁵ it was seen as important to counter-attack and remove this threat - not because Palestine held oil reserves like Persia, or large strategically-vital Mediterranean naval bases on a par with Gibraltar or Malta or Alexandria - but simply because a strong Turkish/German presence there threatened the real concern, which was the Canal and the route to India. The first attempts under General Murray failed; General Allenby succeeded in 1917 in breaking the Turkish/German line at Gaza and invading the region. By the end of 1918 the Ottoman Empire had crumbled and Britain had invaded and was administering most of the area south of the Yarmuk River. Under the (secret) Sykes-Picqot treaty of 1916, French colonial interests had been granted influence over the area to the north and north-east - what are now Syria and Lebanon.¹⁶ To gain the aid of the Bedouin tribal

¹³ Even more complex was that the P.R. also operated lines in Transjordan, which was independent from 1946, but access to which was only available through Syria.

¹⁴ An excellent study of the Mandate text and Churchill's 1922 "Memorandum" by Evyatar Freisel appears in R. I. Cohen (ed.) 'British Policy in Palestine: The 'Churchill Memorandum' of 1922', in 'Vision & Conflict in the Holy Land', pp. 190-214.

¹⁵ P. Cotterell 'Railways of Palestine & Israel', pub. Turret, Abingdon. 1984. p. 14. Henceforth "Cotterell".

¹⁶ These were first revealed in 'Isvestia', the organ of the Petrograd Soviet, on 24. Nov. 1917. The translation is that of the 'Manchester Guardian' (6. March 1918) -

"As a result of negotiations which took place in London and Petrograd in the spring of 1916, the allied British, French and Russian Governments came to an agreement as regards the future delineations of their respective zones of influence and territorial acquisitions in Asiatic Turkey, as well as the formation in Arabia or a federation of Arab States. The general principles of the agreement are:

.....Great Britain obtains the southern part of Mesopotamia, with Baghdad, and stipulates for herself in

population of the Hedjaz the idea of 'Arab Nationalism' had been sown and promised, albeit in an undefined area, and at the same time, to gain the sympathy and help of the Jews, they had also been rather vaguely promised a 'National Home' in the area.¹⁷ The majority of the inhabitants had, of course, never been consulted on either issue.

In 1920 the League of Nations granted Britain the Mandate to rule the area it had conquered, subject to annual reports and overview.¹⁸ It appears that this form of administration was one that the British always had, at some deep level, trouble in understanding; Unlike the rest of the colonial Empire, this small country was technically to be administered in trust on behalf of ALL the inhabitants, whether native or new arrivals.¹⁹ Since many of these new arrivals were educated and sophisticated Europeans, demanding their rights, and not mere primitive but picturesque natives, the colonial administrators found themselves treading an increasingly-complex and difficult path between opposing (and irreconcilable) political demands.

During the Second World War the region again became strategically vital. Even following closure of the Mediterranean to British shipping, it remained a lynchpin for Allied resistance to German aggression through the Caucasus from the North and from North Africa in the West. By the end of this conflict Palestine had itself become strategically very important - it possessed a fine naval harbour at Haifa,²⁰ a terminal of the oil pipeline from Iraq,²¹ and a standard-gauge railway link that now joined Egypt with Lebanon and, through Lebanon, with Syria, Turkey and Iraq.²² It had become developed and industrialised to the extent that it had become an indispensable part of the British war effort in North Africa and the Middle East, and with the rise of nationalism in Egypt,²³ Syria and Iraq it had become, ironically, one of the few countries where it appeared the British felt they could rely on a long-term future on their own terms.

A war produces not only death and destruction but also the creation of new systems for the movement - sometimes at great risk and cost in lives - of persons, stores and equipment. Most of this becomes technically redundant the moment the conflict

Syria the ports of Haifa and Akka.

By agreement between France and England the zone between the French and British territories forms a confederation of Arab states, or one independent Arab state, the zones of influence in which are determined at the same time.

With a view to securing the religious interests of the Entente Powers, Palestine with the holy places, is separated from Turkish territory and subjected to a special regime to be determined by agreement between Russia, France and England." (Sidebotham, p.247.)

¹⁷ Known as 'The Balfour Declaration', in a letter dated 2. Nov. 1917 - a matter of days BEFORE Allenby broke through at the 3rd. Battle of Gaza. i.e. At the time, Balfour was promising land the British did not yet control. It promised, deliberately vaguely, a "national home for the Jews", but not at any cost to the rights of the existing non-Jewish population. It proved impossible to resolve this inherent contradiction.

¹⁸ See Sir Herbert Samuel's 'Report for the Years 1920-25'. The Civil Administration took over from the 'OETA - Occupied Enemy Territory Administration' - on 1. July 1920.

¹⁹ See the Mandate Document of 24. July 1924: "Article 6 :The Administration of Palestine, while ensuring that the rights and position of other sections of the population are not prejudiced, shall facilitate Jewish immigration under suitable conditions and shall encourage, in cooperation with the Jewish agency referred to in Article 4, close settlement by Jews on the land, including State lands and waste lands not required for public purposes."

²⁰ Built 1930-1937. Cotterell p.58 & various P.R. Reports.

²¹ A railway had initially been proposed and surveyed. The refineries at the Haifa end were only opened in 1939.

²² From Kantara to Haifa had been built in 1917/8; the extension through Lebanon to Beirut and Tripoli was built in 1942. In both cases the lines were initially constructed for short-term military requirements.

²³ In late-1945 Egypt requested a revision of the 1936 Treaty; this amounted to a request for British withdrawal. On 7. May 1946 the British Government announced a plan for the complete evacuation of Egypt. (Sutton, p. 287.)

formally ends; some might remain relevant while the post-war period continues in the shape of informal conflict; and some is actually dangerous should it fall into the hands of enemies or successor states. So one further issue to be dealt with was that of the disposal of railway infrastructure and equipment and the dispersal of military railway personnel following the War - in the Middle East, with its changing political geography, the fate of Military Lines of Communication and supply depots based on earlier realities became a major issue.

Unfortunately, it would seem that neither the British Foreign Office nor the Colonial Office, under the new post-war Labour government, could bring themselves to come to terms with the changing political realities post-1945.²⁴ Whilst being compelled to negotiate treaties with new and independent governments in Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, and Persia - and with Transjordan, a country it had itself created by ceding a large section of Palestine in 1922²⁵ - and coping with the partition of India into separate Hindu and Moslem states, and whilst conscious of the new and growing influences of America and Soviet Russia in the oil-rich region - Britain tried to prevent the same situation arising in Palestine, apparently deciding to rule as though it were a straightforward Colonial power serving its own interests rather than a Mandatory power serving (theoretically) the interests of the inhabitants.²⁶ The result was growing political turmoil, civil conflict and revolt, until in 1947 there was a major psychological reverse, and it was decided not to try to hold on to Palestine but instead - it seems - simply to give it up, to get out, and to let it sink into its own morass.²⁷ The Mandate was handed back to the United Nations - a useful legal move that would not have been possible had the country not been administered in this way. The British announced unilaterally their plan to close down the administration as from 14. May 1948, and to withdraw their last military presence by 1. August 1948.

Several possible solutions were explored including Trusteeship by the UN, but in the end no proper solution was applied in Palestine, and the British withdrawal became in some respects little more than a rout.

More disturbingly, there is some evidence that not only was no formal handover of power planned and executed, but that it was actually decided at a high level that no such handover should take place, and that the equivalent of an administrative 'scorched earth' policy should be applied.²⁸ Records were deliberately destroyed, administrative

²⁴ See Richard Crossman, M.P. 'Palestine Mission', p.200: (Hamish Hamilton, London, Aug. 1946). On the 1946 Anglo-American Report, completed on Good Friday 1946, he wrote:

"Our report could not have been submitted at a more inopportune moment. The Peace Conference was just beginning; Mr. Bevin was in Paris and the Government was harrassed by amountain of crises, including the Egyptian and Indian negotiations, as well as the Russian deadlock. Palestine was just something extra on an overcrowded plate, and it was dealt with hurriedly. Busy Ministers could not possibly immerse themselves in the intricacies of the Jewish problem, follow its ramifications in America and Europe, or think their way through the baffling confusions of Zionism. We had had 120 days to meditate and make up our minds. They were lucky if they had 100 consecutive minutes to make up theirs."

²⁵ Through a Note on Article 25 of the Mandate, dated 23. Sept. 1922, which effectively abrogated for the section of land east of the Jordan all Articles that made any reference to Jews, religious freedom, equality etc. Full independence came in 1946.

²⁶ See especially Articles 3 & 28 in the Mandate Document.

²⁷ The question is whether this was a rational decision at the time, or reflected personal prejudices and even exhaustion on the part of Ernest Bevin, the then-Foreign Minister; At the period, of course, there were so many other Foreign Policy Problems to deal with - including the situation in India and the beginning of the Cold War.

²⁸ "Drew Pearson, the well-known ABC radio commentator, claims to have obtained a copy of a secret 32-page Foreign Office document to the Palestine Government, giving instructions how to dispose of its

institutions closed down rather than transferred, useful equipment destroyed rather than sold or left to the new incoming government. Pique and petulance characterised some administrative decisions.²⁹

It is the aim of this study to demonstrate that, in contrast to the above, the Railways system was kept intact for as long as possible, with the intention of handing it over as an intact operational unit to the new administration, and that this exception to the rule outlined above was due more to the personalities and personal standards of several British expatriate professional railwaymen - especially Arthur Kirby - than to the political will of the Palestine Administration.

(C). BIOGRAPHICAL OVERVIEW.

At this point it is worth looking more closely at Arthur Frank Kirby and his personal life and background, beyond the brief official outlines as given in "Who's Who" and his obituary in 'The Times'.³⁰ Since official sources are sparse, contact has been established with some surviving family members.³¹

He was born 13. July 1899, and attended London School of Economics. In World War 1 he served with the London Rifle Brigade (2nd. Battn.) and was wounded in Flanders.

He had joined the GWR before the war began - his father had been a Lamplighter and Porter on the GWR at Reading, and his grandfather had also served that Company. He was sent initially to Bristol as a Ticket Clerk and there met and married Margaret Mizen.

His Palestine Identity Card (No. 3185 of 05.02.1947) describes him as 5 feet 10 inches tall, blue eyes, fair hair, medium build.

He joined the Gold Coast Railway in 1928,³² taking his young wife with him. Here the couple met a Dr. and Mrs. Pottinger; Pottinger was in the Gold Coast Medical Service, and they had two children, Alan (born ca. 1920), and Jean (born 1923). They had been left behind in England, at the Talbot Heath Boarding School in Bournemouth, cared for by their grandmother.

Somehow these two respectable colonial civil servants ended up exchanging partners. Margaret apparently 'chased' the Doctor, and there was a divorce. (Pottinger, as a doctor, wished to be the Plaintiff for reasons of professional respectability; He later moved to British Guyana, before - ironically - running a medical practice in Jerusalem,

goods and services..." ('Palestine Post' 7. March 1948 p.1.).

²⁹ An example: "We left Kishon camp around June 5 (1948), having been told that the Israeli army was to take over the camp. We were given five minutes to do as much damage as we could, except arson. We did this with such fervour that not a single window pane remained, doors were smashed and floorboards lifted. At least it would take the Israelis many months to repair five minutes of total mayhem." Leslie Morgan in 'Palestine Scrapbook', Newsletter of R.A.O.C. veterans, Issue 3, (no date) p.9.

A. Taylor describes an angry meeting between Bevin and Weizmann in 1946, where Bevin demanded belligerently "Are you trying to force my hand? If you want a fight you can have it!" (p.91, citing also 'Trial & Error' p. 440.) The 'Palestine Post' described Bevin as "Fed up with Palestine" after the first UN partition vote, 25. November 1947, p.1. These are not signs of rational and calm strategic calculations of national interest. The 'Palestine Post' also describes later, during December 1947, conflicts between the Foreign and Colonial Offices on Palestine policy.

³⁰ 14. February 1983.

³¹ One daughter, Mrs. Jean Cox, was interviewed 29. October 1992 at her home in Dursley, Glos; The other, Mrs. Christine Howlett of Westfield, New Jersey, supplied information by correspondence, and loaned a family photo album for copying; this included copies of official and private correspondence. But there is almost nothing available in terms of private correspondence and no form of diary.

³² "While there he redrafted the Railway and Ports Ordinances, remade the railway and harbour tariffs and completely recast the Rule Book which later formed the model for other colonial railways." 'Times'. op. cit. We see a pattern here.

adjacent to the King David Hotel). Dr. Pottinger and Margaret Kirby married in 1936; Arthur in turn married Winifred Kate Pottinger in 1937, back in Britain, and became Step-Father to her children. (Margaret Pottinger died in Clevedon in 1960 or 1961, aged only 52; Dr. Pottinger died in 1961. The former couples had had as little contact as possible, though there was at least one meeting in Jerusalem to discuss the children.) With Winifred he had one daughter, Christine, born when her mother was already 45. Winifred died aged 90 in 1990.

In 1938 Kirby moved to the Kenya and Uganda Railways. As his 'Times' obituarist noted, whilst here he organised the movement of the South African and West African brigades in connection with the Abyssinian Campaign. "In April 1942 he took over the management of the Palestine Railways which were in a state of near collapse and had recently suffered no fewer than seven head-on collisions."³³

Winifred spent these war years in Haifa - there were lengthy periods in 1946-47 when, for security reasons, she was unable to leave the compound where they lived on Carmel, but she occupied herself with work for the SSAFA,³⁴ chairing a Ladies Committee running a canteen on the Jaffa Road, as well, of course, as caring for Christine. Jean stayed at Boarding School in England during the whole war period, Alan served as a Marine. There was no Leave available for Kirby during this whole time. He had planned to join them for a Leave, but then Italy joined the War. An album contains a presentation made to Kirby by the International Union of Railways, Port & Telegraph Workers, Central Committee, "on the event of your Home Leave on 5. July 1946."

Prior to this he had been made a Knight of the Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George (CMG) at a ceremony at Government House, Jerusalem, on 4. February 1946.

It appears to have been his initiative to establish the "Middle East Railways Conference Association" (M.E.R.C.A.); The first meeting took place in Cairo in 1946; The second (and possibly last) meeting of this body took place in Istanbul in 1947.³⁵

It is clear that the work he did while in the Gold Coast (aged 29-37) was important to his career in Palestine later, where he also redrafted the Rule Book, introduced new commercial ideas, and combined Railway with Port operations.

An undated and anonymous typescript translation of an article in 'Yediot Achronot', stuck into this album with several photos, details a personal visit made to Israel as a guest of the Israel Ports Authority, when he visited several former friends and colleagues, and even travelled up to Jerusalem in the former Official Saloon. It describes him as having had "an almost chronic headache as a result of the constant troubles and problems." When he came "only about 1½ trains travelled daily along the lengthy railroad tracks. The armed forces pressed upon the new General Manager to arrange at least 17 trains per day, claiming that this was vital for the transportation of army units and supplies from the North (Turkey, Syria and Lebanon) to the besieged South, namely

³³ 'Times' op.cit.. His 'Defence Regulations Official Pass' was issued at Jerusalem 16. May 1942.

³⁴ Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Families Association.

³⁵ From a memoir of Dror Allon concerning his father Moshe Paicovitch: "In November 1947 Arthur Kirby took my father with him to the Middle East Railways Conference in Istanbul. They travelled in the P.R. Saloon No. 98, from Haifa to Beirut and on to Istanbul! At this period the H.B.T. line was still in operation, though for military trains only, until early 1948; it was used for Army trains and conveying only Army equipment.

Whilst they were at the conference, on 29. November 1947, the U.N. voted to approve Partition. The Turkish General Manager took my father aside and said, "Listen - only you and I know who the Arabs really are. Don't worry - you'll win!" The next morning the Arab states declared war, so it was impossible for Kirby and Paicovitch to get back by rail; they had to return to Palestine via Cyprus and a very grotty little passenger boat, much beneath the standard befitting a General Manager! Somehow No. 98 was eventually returned by rail." (Personal Interview, 2. September 1996.)

Egypt.” He managed to run twelve trains a day, but “when crossing the Sinai desert, Bedouin gangs used to attack the train and loot anything of value.” The article continues by describing troubles with the Hagana, the I.Z.L. and the Stern group. “Summing up his experience in Israel, did Sir Arthur consider the Jews as his enemies? Sir Arthur smiles forgivingly: “Oh no, my dear, I just considered them a damn nuisance!” ”

The newspaper also refers to a close shave with death. “On the eve of the termination of the Mandate he travelled to the port of Jaffa in order to release from there Jewish cargo worth about a quarter of a million Pounds (Sterling) as well as to free the British Port Manager, who was being kept prisoner in the port. He managed to pass all the barriers, to enter the port and to arrange for the cargoes to be transferred by sea to Tel Aviv. As he was about to leave, together with the British Port Manager, they were caught by Arab mobs who decided that they were “Yehoud” and consequently put them against a wall. Luckily an Arab doctor passed by who knew him from Haifa. He had a hard job convincing the angry crowds that the prisoners were honest representatives of the British Empire.

He was the last one to leave Haifa, and before his departure, he took the stock-sheets and the keys of the Port of Haifa and handed them over to the then-Mayor of Haifa, Shabatai Levy, with the words “Here you are”.

It is the intention of this study to examine more closely the details of this man and his efforts to maintain and develop the Palestine Railways - efforts which were, by their nature, largely doomed to failure by the political developments of the following years. It is also intended to demonstrate how he coped with the changing circumstances - all of them difficult - and endeavoured to maintain the Railways an an operating and operable entity until the very end. His step-daughter remembered him as “getting on very well with the staff - engine drivers and track workers and so on. He had a great ability to get on well with others, a very human man.” No doubt the fact that he had himself worked his way up from a humble position on a railway contributed to this. But he was clearly a committed organiser, a determined writer of detailed memos, letters and reports, an indefatigable reviser of rules and procedures. Surviving files attest to his vision and ability, and surviving testimonials from former colleagues and staff attest to the manner in which he was respected, admired and liked - something which, it must be said, is not usual for a colonial administrator or officer in Mandatory Palestine.

Kirby remained involved in Railways and Ports Management, and international affairs, until his retirement in 1971 aged 72.³⁶ He was knighted in the New Years

³⁶From ‘Who’s Who’ 1962. (pub. Adam & Charles Black, London, 1962.) p.1,708:

KIRBY, Sir Arthur Frank. KBE 1957; CMG 1945. M. Inst. T.; Commissioner for East Africa since 1958. Born Slough 13 July 1899. Married 1935 Winifred Kate, One daughter. Educated: London School of Economics.

Entered service with GWR 1917. Returned 1919 after serving with London Rifle Brigade and 2nd. Rifle Brigade. Special training for six years with G.W.R. Entered Colonial Service. Assistant Secretary, Takoradi Harbour, Gold Coast, 1928. Traffic Manager, Gold Coast Railway, 1936. Asst. Supt. of the Line, Kenya & Uganda Railways & Harbours, 1938. Gen. Manager, Palestine Railways & Ports Authority, 1942-48. Supt. of the Line, E. African Railways & Harbours, 1949-50. O.St.J. Address: 10, Offington Gardens, Worthing, Sussex.

More on his later career can be found in the 1974 Edition, p. 1,830f.

Commissioner for East Africa, London. 1958-1963. Chairman, British Transport Docks Board, 1963-67. National Ports Council 1967-71. Pres., Shipping & Forwarding Agents Inst., 1966. Dep. Chairman, Royal Commonwealth Soc., 1965-68. Gt. Ormond Street Children’s Hospital 1963-69. Governor, National Hospital for Nervous Diseases, 1066-69. Mem. Council, Royal Society of Art, 1966-71. Chmn., Palestine Association; Treasurer, British Inst. in Eastern Africa. O.St. J. Change of Address: 6, Baltimore Court, The Drive, Hove, Sussex. BN3 3PR.

Honours of 1957; and when he died, in a Brighton hospital, “everything was arranged; he had written his own obituary, and his body was donated to science”.³⁷

³⁷ Personal communication from Christine Howlett.

CHAPTER 1.

PALESTINE AND ITS RAILWAYS IN THE MANDATE PERIOD: 1920 TO 1945.

1: (A). GEOGRAPHICAL DEFINITIONS.

For our purposes the borders of 'Palestine' are those as defined after the First World War in accordance with the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916, together with later alterations of 1922/23 and other amendments made when the Emirate of Transjordan was formed as a separate administrative entity (also under British Mandate) in 1922.³⁸ These were the boundaries as far as Palestine Railways was concerned from 1920 to 1948.³⁹

This means that the border between Sinai and Palestine was set arbitrarily at Rafah, at km. 201.6 from Kantara on the railway linking Egypt and Palestine; the border between Palestine and Lebanon was established at the rocky headland of Ras en-Nakoura, around 40km. north of Haifa;⁴⁰ that with Syria at an anonymous spot between Samakh and El Hamme in the Yarmuk Valley 91.8km. from Haifa and 4.8km. from Samakh.⁴¹ For historical reasons Palestine Railways was also charged with the operation of the 1.05m-gauge Hedjaz Railway through Transjordan, whose border with Syria was at km. 139 from Damascus, km. 90.0 from Samakh, a point three kilometres south of Nessib,⁴² and onwards down to Ma'an, km. 459.0.⁴³ This railway was of comparatively minor importance, commercially and politically, although facilities were expanded during World War 2.

1: (B). POPULATION.

(a). The Population in 1920, including returning refugees, was estimated by the British administration as approximately 673,200.⁴⁴ A formal census was taken in October 1922 and another in November 1931. Total figures were 752,048 and 1,035,821 respectively. Estimated figures were published for subsequent years (though civil disturbances, public non-co-operation and illegal immigration make the exact figures hard to establish), and

³⁸ 'Geographical Handbook, Palestine & Transjordan', Naval Intelligence Division, December 1943, ref. B.R. 514 p.461-3; henceforth 'B.R. 514'.

³⁹ Kirby noted in a 1948 article: "The conditions in which the railways were operated were unique in several respects - especially for a small administration. The engineers had to cope with widely varying topographical and climatic conditions. Political problems were unusual. Although the Palestine Railways was a department of the Mandatory Palestine Government, the ramifications of its activities went far outside Palestine. Apart from its international connections with other railways throughout the Middle East and Europe, the Palestine Railways Administration operated in Egypt, for the Kantara-Rafa Railway, and in Transjordan, for the Hedjaz Railway; in the one case for King Farouk and in the other under King Abdullah, though in both cases acting as the agent of the British Government. Another extraneous commitment was the running right through Syria over the Hedjaz Railway." (This MS in Kirby's Papers will be referred to as "1948 Railway Gazette article" - in fact it appeared as a 'Communication received' in 'Railway Gazette' 2. July 1948 pp.3f. with the editorial comment "Abnormal conditions in Palestine during the period.... make it impracticable to measure traffic operations by normal standards.")

⁴⁰ When a railway was built to link Palestine with Lebanon, in 1942, the operational boundary was established at Azzib, 2.6 km. south of the headland. The 'Naval Intelligence Division Geographical Handbook, Syria. April 1943', ref. B.R. 513 (Henceforth cited as 'B.R. 513') p. 378 indicates the beginning of the section within Lebanon as "Nakourah Passing Loop" at km. 49.5, but this is north of the border itself.

⁴¹ For operational reasons Samakh (Hebrew: Tzemach.) 87.0km. from Haifa and 4.8km. from the border, was the locomotive changeover point on trains from Haifa to Dera'a and Damascus. B.R. 513 p.386.

⁴² 16.2km. south of Dera'a. op. cit. B.R. 513 p.386. & B.R. 514 ('Palestine & Transjordan') p. 510.

⁴³ op. cit. B.R. 513 p.386f

⁴⁴ op. cit. B. R. 514 p.171. This would have included what later became Transjordan.

for 1939 it was estimated that the population was 1,469,974 - i.e. almost 1½ million - and had almost doubled in 17 years.

This population was unevenly distributed; the official "Geographical Handbook" of 1943 describes the situation thus:

“The total area of Palestine is 10,000 square miles, of which 261 are water, 89 are swamps and dunes, 4,452 are the Negeb (sic) desert. In Palestine, north of the Negeb, there are both inhabited and uninhabited districts, but there is no considerably empty district.”⁴⁵

The population was concentrated in the urban districts. “The considerable increase of population since 1931 has not been spread evenly across the country. The empty spaces remain empty, and in Arab districts the growth has not been very great. The new population has for the most part gone to the four towns, (Jerusalem, Jaffa, Tel Aviv and Haifa) and to the Jewish villages along the coast from north of Haifa to south of Jaffa, and in the plain of Esdraelon.”

It should be noted that the overall passenger capacity of the railways system was barely increased over this period. Tel Aviv remained a small single-platform station with few facilities, on a branch line, and although a 1935 Report by Sir Felix Pole⁴⁶ had recommended a diversion of the main line so that it would pass through Tel Aviv and Petah Tikva rather than Lydda, this was never implemented.

(b). TABLE 1 : POSTWAR POPULATION.

Looking ahead for comparison, in December 1946⁴⁷ the following “Population Figures” were published:

	<u>Moslems</u>	<u>Jews</u>	<u>Christians</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Total</u>
<u>Palestine</u>	1,143,339	608,230	145,000 ⁴⁸	15,490	1,912,110
<u>Jerusalem:</u>	33,680	99,320	31,330	110	
164,440					
<u>Haifa</u>	41,000	74,230	29,910	290	
145,440					
<u>Tel Aviv</u> ⁴⁹	120	182,520	230	330	
183,200					
<u>Jaffa</u>	53,930	30,820	16,800	30	
101,580					

1: (C). AGRICULTURE.⁵⁰

It was estimated that about 2,140,000 acres was theoretically cultivable, of which 460,000 acres (approx. 20%) was irrigable, although only 74,000 acres was actually irrigated. Of the cultivated area 81% was arable land, and just under 15% orchards. The chief cereals were wheat and barley. In 1939 89,000 metric tons of wheat were produced,

⁴⁵ op. cit. B. R. 514 p.184

⁴⁶ ‘Report in Proposed Railway Improvements in Palestine’ by Sir Felix J. C. Pole, pub. by Crown Agents, Millbank, London, on behalf of the Govt. of Palestine. February 1935. Source: Hebrew University, Givat Ram, ref. 2C 53B 1339.

⁴⁷ Published May 1947 in the ‘1946 Bulletin of Current Statistics’, reported in ‘Palestine Post’, 1. June 1947, p. 3.

⁴⁸ A suspiciously round figure.

⁴⁹ Noticeable is that Jews predominate in urban areas.

⁵⁰ op. cit. B.R. 514 p.239

86,000 tons of barley and 42,000 tons of Durra.⁵¹ By 1939 the area under citrus cultivation was 75,000 acres; In 1937-8 almost 11½ Million cases of citrus fruit were exported - almost all via Haifa harbour - and by 1938-9 this had grown to 15,310,736 cases.⁵²

1: (D). RESOURCES & INDUSTRY.⁵³

In 1920 Industry in Palestine was almost non-existent, comprising merely a small amount of glass and soap manufacture.⁵⁴ By 1939 the large potash and bromine deposits in the Dead Sea had begun to be exploited, the first plant at the north end (Kallia) opening in 1929 and the second plant at the southern end (Sodom) in 1937. Extracted minerals were conveyed by road lorry to Jerusalem station for loading onto rail wagons for transport to Haifa. In 1939 74,700 tons of potash and 552 tons of bromine were exported in this way.⁵⁵

There had been some Afforestation, and some Quarrying, mainly of limestone, as well as Salt-extraction at salt pans at Atlit,⁵⁶ but otherwise there were no major industries. A Portland Cement factory at Nesher near Haifa produced almost 200,000 tons in 1936, for home consumption, though this slumped to under 100,000 tons in 1938. There was a small amount of Textile and Wine production. Oil was conveyed from Iraq by pipeline through Mafrq in Transjordan and refined at Haifa, but there were no local sources of supply.

In short, there was little (apart from agricultural produce) to provide major sources of mineral or freight traffic for the railway system. There was also little through traffic to Syria, due partly to the need for transshipment between the gauges at Haifa.⁵⁷

1: (E). ADMINISTRATION.

The Civil Administration of Palestine was formally initiated on 1. July 1920, taking over on that date from the O.E.T.A. (Occupied Enemy Territory Administration). Formal approval of the Mandate by the Council of the League of Nations was not granted until two years later on 24. July 1922. Under Article 22 of the Covenant of the League, 'Type A Mandates' covered "communities (that) had reached a stage of development where their existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognized, subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory, until such time as they are able to stand alone". Whereas the other "A Mandates" covering Syria and Iraq were comparatively straightforward, the political challenges in Palestine meant that the administration of the country was placed from the outset in the hands of British officials. The High Commissioner had powers and functions very similar to those of the Governor of a Crown Colony, but final decisions rested always with the Secretary of State for the

⁵¹ op. cit. B.R. 514 p.246_

⁵² op. cit. B.R. 514 p.245

⁵³ op. cit. B.R. 514 p.256 ff.

⁵⁴ Herbert Samuels, Report 1920-25, p.18: "Before the war, industries were almost non-existent in Palestine."

⁵⁵ op. cit. B.R. 514 p.259. Kirby (1948 article) considered this to be the only worthwhile traffic on the line - were this to be transported in some other way, the Jerusalem line could be closed.

⁵⁶ The works was served by a private siding; 7,335 tons were produced in 1939, all for home consumption.

⁵⁷ Another reason was political - the French-administered Syria looked to the port of Beirut for its main import/export access. It is certainly significant that the administrative and commercial links with Egypt now took much greater precedence over those with Syria and Turkey. The 1934 'P.R. Coaching Station Instruction Book' permits military bookings only between Palestine and Egypt, not between Palestine and Syria; Egyptian and British military personnel received 50% discount on fares, French military from Syria received 25%; there are many similar minor indications of where traffic was encouraged and where not.

Colonies in London. This was of great significance, particularly in the 1940's, since it meant that, after a quarter of a century, there was still no significant formal cadre of local political or administrative, or even technical, officers in Government.⁵⁸

The Constitution of Palestine was imposed by the 'Palestine Order in Council' of 10. August 1922. An Advisory Council consisting of British officers, with an Executive Council consisting of three or four British officials under the chairmanship of the High Commissioner, governed the country. Legislation was promulgated by a series of Ordinances, first through the Executive Council; Any major issues required provisional approval of the Secretary of State. They were then submitted to the Advisory Council and published in the official 'Palestine Gazette' for comments before being finally enacted. All Heads of Department communicated with the High Commissioner through the Chief Secretary. The Railways were administered as a Government Department, latterly under the legislation of the 'Government Railways Ordinance 1936' and various subsequent Amendments. Any variations in tariffs, ticket conditions and conditions of carriage required an Amendment Ordinance, finances were regulated under various Appropriations Ordinances, land acquisitions came under the Land (Expropriation) Ordinance, and so forth; Railway officials were all Government employees, and the appointments, retirements and even leave dates and temporary appointments were duly advertised in the Official Gazette. It follows that the General Manager of Palestine Railways was bound by a complex series of conditions that drastically restricted his freedom of manoeuvre, almost every decision concerning investment or operations requiring approval from the Chief Secretary and above.

1:(F). A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE PALESTINE RAILWAY SYSTEM TO 1945.

For such a small country Palestine had a complex railway system - at least in terms of its history and original purposes. A review of the origins of the system, its traffic, infrastructure, equipment and staff; can be divided into three rough periods: (a). until 1939, (b). during the Second World War, and (c). in the period 1945-1948. Though Kirby's time covered half of the second and all of the third, much of the discussion over the ownership, valuation and disposal of infrastructure in the 1945-48 period can only be understood with the earlier background.

The first railway to be built in the region was the Jaffa - Jerusalem line, opened as a cheaply-constructed metre-gauge line in 1892 and built largely at the behest of French Catholic Missionary interests, since the only real sources of traffic envisaged were to be pilgrims. The next lines in the region were to 1.05m. gauge and built by French and Belgian interests. They linked Beirut via Rayak with Damascus (149km.) and Damascus with Muzeirib on the fertile Hauran, (ca. 100km.) thus providing a link between the grain-producing areas and the coast's major port.⁵⁹ The Ottoman government then took an interest in extending this line east of the Jordan valley and into the Hedjaz, with the ultimate intention of linking Damascus with Medina and Mecca - ostensibly to ease the lot of the Moslem pilgrims,⁶⁰ though with the added desire to strengthen their

⁵⁸ Despite Article 3 which encouraged Autonomy.

⁵⁹ H. Hughes 'Middle East Railways' (London C.R.C. 1981) p. 61; R Tourret 'Hedjaz Railway' (Abingdon, Tourret, 1989), pp. 1-4. Both these sources describe the complex political and economic negotiations of concessions and financing that surround these and neighbour lines.

⁶⁰ The key issue for us here is the status of this project as a "Waqf", a religious foundation; This means technically it belongs to "all Moslems" and cannot be bought and sold as a normal commercial concern. This issue raised problems in P.R. times and in some respects these continue until the present day. (e.g. The railways in Syria and Jordan may not sell old rolling stock for scrap!) See B.R. 514 p.203: "The Waqfs are religious endowments, not necessarily Moslem although in effect generally so. These endowments

military and administrative grip on this wild, desolate and inaccessible country. After unresolved negotiations with the proprietors, the Turks decided not to purchase the Belgian line to Muzeirib but to build their own duplicate line a few miles to the east and, rather than being dependent on the French link with Beirut, to open a link with Haifa on the coast to enable track and other materials to be brought in by sea. This system - known collectively as 'The Hedjaz Railway'⁶¹ - was built with considerable German technical assistance and opened in stages as far as Medina by September 1908, though the planned extension to Mecca itself was abandoned due to pressures from local tribesmen. (Incidentally no non-Moslem was allowed to travel or work south of El Ula). This line was magnificently engineered, but served mainly desert areas; the stations were merely military blockposts, and the line was frequently attacked by tribesmen seeking payment of 'subsides', the costs of which extortion payments were added to ticket prices for travel south of Dera'a.⁶²

In 1911 an 18km. spur was built to link Haifa with Acre,⁶³ and in 1912 another spur was built southwards from Afule through Jenin, with the long-term aim of reaching Jerusalem. The outbreak of the First World War frustrated these plans - instead, in 1914, as part of a strategy of attacking the Suez Canal,⁶⁴ the line was diverted from Mas'udiyah near Nablus down to the coastal plain at Tulkarm, extended southwards (crossing and absorbing the Jaffa-Jerusalem line, which was requisitioned, regauged and the section Lydda - Jaffa torn up to provide track materials), pushed into the Negev past Beersheba and deep into Sinai, reaching Kosseima, an oasis in the middle of nowhere. Solidly built, this line had a life of two years at most before the fortunes of war saw most of it rendered useless.

The British response to the Turkish attack was to push a standard-gauge line along the coast of Sinai (under the range of their naval guns - the Turks had had to build inland to avoid the same guns). The hold-up caused by Turkish resistance at Gaza, where three major battles were fought, saw a spur thrown out which eventually reached Beersheba - then a settlement consisting of only three or four streets - and once Gaza had fallen the line was extended to supply the army. Having reached Lydda it followed the Turkish route northwards as far as Tulkarm, purely for speed and ease, then headed for the coast to pass the narrow headland at Carmel and so entered Haifa.⁶⁵ The Hedjaz station at Haifa now became the interchange point, no attempt being made to convert the rest of the narrow-gauge lines at this point.

The Rafah - Beer Sheba line dwindled to a weekly service and then closed in 1927; the Jaffa - Jerusalem line was converted to standard gauge by 1918 and the Lydda - Jaffa section re-instated. A few short spurs were added, but otherwise the system remained static from this point on till 1939, with the exception of the construction in the 1930's of the large new harbour on reclaimed land at Haifa. This latter project involved also the relocation of the main railway line past the docks and the construction of an

consist of property appropriated or dedicated (by a document called a *Waqfiah*) to charitable uses and the service of God. They are divided as regards their administration into two categories, those formerly administered by the Ottoman Ministry of Waqf, and those which are independent of Government control."

⁶¹ Or "Hejaz" or "Hijaz". The terms are used interchangeably in correspondence and reports and will be so cited.

⁶² Tourret op. cit. p.26

⁶³ At this period Acre was more important than Haifa; the branch junction actually faced east, at what later became "Kilo 2", meaning that until a direct line was built in 1936 Haifa - Acre trains had to reverse here.

⁶⁴ The attacks took place in January/February 1915. Cotterell op. cit. p.14. The British, though surprised, were able to beat them back, but then had to undertake Canal defences on the eastern bank to prevent a repetition.

⁶⁵ Cotterell pp. 15-20 describes the two campaigns with maps of the Turkish and the British-built military railways.

additional modern Haifa Central Station, the original now becoming Haifa East.

Despite some plans in the 1920's for a Haifa - Bagdad line, here was never any serious suggestion of rebuilding the Haifa - Dera'a - Damascus line as standard gauge, and so Haifa was essentially the northern end of a standard gauge line from Egypt, connecting with a narrow gauge line to Syria. A standard-gauge link with the north came only in 1942 with the construction in great haste of the military Haifa - Beirut - Tripoli Railway which provided a link with the standard-gauge lines in the north of Syria and, through these, with Iraq⁶⁶ and Turkey.

For our purposes it is important to note that:

- a). the line from Jaffa to Jerusalem was originally built from religious rather than commercial or political motives;
- b). the lines Haifa - Dera'a and Damascus - Dera'a - Medina were built ostensibly for religious but actually for military and imperial motives;
- c). the line Nablus - Tulkarm was a relic of a military short-term supply route;
- d). the line Kantara - Haifa was built to supply short-term military needs, and avoided several major settlements nearer the Palestine coast;
- e). the H.B.T. line was built in haste to serve military transportation requirements; and
- f). the line Ras el-Ain - Petah-Tikva was the only line actually constructed from economic motives to transport produce - in this case citrus - to a port for onward transit.

In short, in no way can P.R. be classified as a 'normal' railway system planned, financed, constructed and operated under normal commercial conditions.⁶⁷ It inherited a mixture of lines of different technical standards and operational philosophies. Chronologically it was a new railway - it had not existed before the second decade of the 20th. century, making it very late in terms of railway history - yet much of it was built either provisionally or using second-hand materials, and throughout its existence it fought with the consequences. This was merely repeated in the 1940's - indeed, one could argue that the Palestine Railways system was largely created by the First World War and re-created by the Second. The result was a series of facilities and installations not designed for longer-term civilian use and with some doubts about longer-term ownership, doubts which were left for later to resolve. Following the first 'boom' a new Mandated Territory was to emerge; following the second, there was much doubt as to what should emerge - more of the same, either as a continuing Mandate or as some form of Trusteeship under the new United Nations which replaced the earlier League of Nations - one can see the parallels here - or a new independent country, or two independent countries, and if so how, where and controlled by whom.

⁶⁶ The through connection to Iraq, the culmination of the "Bagdadbahn" dream, was effected with the opening of the Mosul - Baiji section only on 15. July 1940. (Hughes p. 90).

⁶⁷ Under normal circumstances a railway line is built for commercial reasons, either to serve a specific traffic source (a mine, quarry, industry, harbour, refinery, etc.) or to provide cheaper transportation for an agricultural region which can then be better served with raw materials and fuels, and whose products can be transported to markets. Sometimes a line is deliberately built for political reasons into undeveloped areas (e.g. in Canada or America) in order to aid economic development. But a brief glance shows the Hedjaz line in Palestine was built to provide a link for building and track materials for the 'Main' HR line, avoiding dependence on the French Lebanese railway; the Jerusalem line was built for vague and symbolic religious reasons - proof of the lack of real traffic base being provided by the fact that the railway, despite cheap construction and very basic services, was bankrupt within years); and most of the rest was built to serve a short-term military campaign.

So the 'normal' issues of railways did not apply here. It was not a fully 'Colonial' railway as such, it operated lines for and on behalf of a variety of other agencies - the War Office, some of the local residents, a Religious Trust whose headquarters was in a different country. 'Normal' issues of traffic or depreciation or investment rarely applied, for the stock and equipment came from different sources, some new, some old, and much was then deliberately damaged in war and sabotage. This makes a 'normal' railway history impossible.

These inner contradictions continued up until the dissolution in 1948.

1.(G). ROUTES.

For simplicity we take here 1945 as the baseline. The Palestine Railways system comprised.⁶⁸

(a). Standard Gauge Lines. (4'8½" or 1435 mm):

(i): A main line from Haifa through Atlit, Zichron Yaakov, Binyamina, Hadera, Tulkarm, Qalqilya, Ras el-Ain, Kafr Jinnis, Lydda, Rehovot, Yibna, Majdal, Gaza, Khan Yunis, to Rafah. (212.5km.)

Operationally this was linked to and dependent on the "Sinai Military Railway" or "Kantara - Rafa Railway" from Kantara East (on the East bank of the Suez Canal) to Rafah, built as part of the same campaign. This line of ca. 202km. formed the main link between Palestine and Egypt. Technically outside the borders of Palestine and owned by the British Government, the operating accounts being kept separate, it was nevertheless operated by P.R. as an integral part of its system and is therefore included in this study.

(ii): A railway from Jaffa (on the coast) through Tel Aviv (a new town built largely in the 1920's and 1930's), crossing the north-south main line at Lydda, then heading south-eastwards to Niana, thence largely eastwards through the Sorek valley to Artuf (Hebrew: Har Tuv, now Beit Shemesh), then on heavy gradients and following a sinuous course through the wadi, past Bittir to Jerusalem. (Length: 86.7km.)

(iii): A branch line from Ras el-Ain to Petah-Tikvah. (6.6km.); This line, little more than an extended siding, had been built in 1920-21 in response to a request from the Jewish settlers at Petach Tikvah, who had desired a better transport facility for passenger and goods traffic. It was 50% financed and owned by the Petah-Tikvah municipality, and always appeared separately in the accounts, classed as "The Petah Tiqva Railway".⁶⁹

(iv): A spur running south from the Jaffa-Lydda line (at 15.8km. from Jaffa) to serve the large military cantonment at Sarafand. This had been constructed in 1917. (4.0km.)

(v): A branch from Kafr Yinis (also known as Kafr Jinnis, or Wilhelma, 104.3km. from Haifa), 5.3km. eastwards to quarries at Beit Nabala. (This had originally been constructed as a 2' 6" line in May 1917).⁷⁰

(vi): The line from Haifa to Azzib (dual gauge as far as Na'amin Junction) - the southern section of the H.B.T. Railway. To Azzib was 23.0 miles or 37.0km.⁷¹

(b). Dual Gauge Lines (4'8½" / 1435 mm, and 105 cm.):

(i): A branch from Tulkarm as far as the ballast quarries at Nur esh Shems (5.0km.), on part of the narrow-gauge line from Tulkarm to Masudiya and Nablus.

⁶⁸ The kilometrages here are mostly taken from 'Geographical Handbook to Palestine and Transjordan'; the Palestine Railways General Manager's Reports occasionally give figures that vary slightly, up to a maximum of 2km. but usually only a fraction of a kilometre. But see following notes for queries as to accuracy.

⁶⁹ P.R. General Manager's 'Annual Report' 1930 p. 6. para.6. (Henceforth these are referred to as 'P.R. G.M. Report' and a specific year.)

⁷⁰ 'Harakevet' 14:19, p.25; 'Harakevet' 47:11, p.26.

⁷¹ B.R. 514 p. 360.

(ii): A 5.6km. branch to the north of Haifa as far as the Qishon workshops was constructed in 1930-3; the line was partly new construction, partly incorporating the 105cm.-gauge branch that formerly ran from Kilo. 4.5 (on the Samakh line) to Acre, built in 1911. In 1936-37 the dual gauge was extended a further 4km. to Kiryat Motzkin. There were several dual-gauge sidings in this area serving industrial and oil installations. In 1942 the dual gauge was extended to Na'amin Junction (km. 19.1) where the new H.B.T. line diverged from what was left of the Acre branch. There is some fragmentary evidence that the dual gauge extended one or two kilometres further north to military stores depots at Manshiya (km. 20.8).

(iii): From Acre Junction north of Haifa to the Nesher cement works (5.4km.), on the line to Samakh.

(iv): Various sidings and spurs in the Haifa East station area, including the locomotive depot, and to the port and oil installations.

The total route-kilometrage of the standard-gauge (including dual-gauge sections), including the S.M.R. to Kantara but excluding loops and sidings, was about 547km. (343 miles). The Sinai Military Railway from El Kantara East to Rafah was 203km. (excluding sidings).⁷²

(c). Narrow Gauge Lines (105cm.)

(i): From Haifa East to Samakh via Acre Junction, Nesher, Affula, Beisan (Beth Shean), Jisr el-Majami (Gesher) and Naharayim. 87.0km. (El Hamme station is 8.5km. further but was operated by the Syrian railways, the 'Chemin de Fer du Hedjaz' (C.F.H.).)

(ii): From Haifa East to Acre. 12.6 miles, 20.2km.⁷³

(iii): From Affule (36.4km. from Haifa) southwards via Jenin to Masudiya (37.3 miles, 59.9km.) Here it formed a junction with the 37.7km. line from Tulkarm (on the standard gauge main line) to Nablus via Nur esh-Shams, Anabta and Sebastiyeh.

In fact the Affule - Masudiya line and the associated Masudiya - Tulkarm line, relics of the Turkish plans during the First World War, had been effectively closed and retained on a 'care and maintenance' basis since 1. March 1932, though they had been briefly reactivated in winter 1934/5 when the main line was cut by flood damage, and again by the military in 1936 during the disturbances of that year.⁷⁴ The Tulkarm - Nablus line had then remained open for goods traffic at a rate of two trains per week. Jenkin-Jones had recommended in 1935 a trial operation of three goods trains per week.⁷⁵

The total route length of the narrow-gauge lines (including dual-gauge sections) within Palestine itself (i.e. excluding the sections operated in Transjordan) was 204.8km. (127.2 miles). The section in Transjordan from Nassib (the Syrian border) via Amman to Ma'an was 323km. Beyond Ma'an a further 113km. of line continued to the Saudi Arabian border at Mudawara, but this was disused from 1924 following damage during World War 1 and later flood damage.⁷⁶

It should be noted that there are several versions of almost all kilometrages.⁷⁷

⁷² P.R. G.M. Report 1938, p.5 & B.R. 514 p. 346.

⁷³ As noted, this was Dual-gauge as far as Na'amin Junc., and possibly mixed/narrow-gauge track served a military stores depot adjacent to Manshiye, i.e. north of Na'amin Junc..

⁷⁴ B.R. 514, pp. 365-372). (refs: P.R. G.M. Report 1935 p.5 para.2; 1937 Report p.5; Jenkin-Jones Report, p.43.)

⁷⁵ op. cit. p.43 para.136

⁷⁶ P.R. G.M. Report 1938, p.5. The line in Saudi Arabia was derelict and never used again.

⁷⁷ P.R. G.M. Report 1938. There remain an intriguing variety of alternative route lengths. cf. 'Universal Directory of Railway Officials 1927' p. 160: "The total length of the Palestine Railways including the Hedjaz and Sinai Military Railway sections and sidings is 1,405.708 klms." [sic]; and 'The 1930 Railway

For completeness it should be noted again here that there had been other lines built during the First World War years but abandoned thereafter.⁷⁸ They are relevant insofar as the cost of their infrastructure had been partially included in the Wickham Valuations at the beginning of P.R.'s existence, and these had therefore to be discounted in the initial Israel Railways Report of Assets and Liabilities in 1951.⁷⁹

Significantly, Jaffa Port remained without rail access.⁸⁰ A link was proposed in 1936 but the disturbances of the following year ended any further development.⁸¹ The new port at Tel Aviv, inaugurated in 1936, was never rail-connected.

1:(H). OWNERSHIP OF THE DIFFERENT SECTIONS.

Following the conquest of Palestine by the British Army's Egyptian Expeditionary Force (E.E.F.) in 1918, the area was designated 'Occupied Enemy Territory Administration South' (O.E.T.A.), until the League of Nations granted to Britain the Mandate to govern Palestine from 25. April 1920. The Mandate for Syria was granted to France, which meant that the railway from Haifa to Damascus was thereafter split between two Administrations. On 1. October 1920 the Civil Administration took over the Palestine Railways,⁸² the fixed and other assets being subsequently purchased by the Palestine Government.

P.R.'s full title was "Palestine Railways and Operated Lines", reflecting the fact that the Railways Administration had responsibilities extending over a varied system with various origins. Ownership of the system was complex, and later became a source of confusion when Disposal was necessary. A brief outline shows the following:

a). The Jaffa - Jerusalem line was originally built in 1892 by the Paris-based 'Chemin de Fer de Jaffa à Jerusalem et Prolongements'. This railway was sequestered by the Turkish authorities in 1915, but following the capture of Palestine by the British a lengthy legal battle ensued in which the French company sued the British for compensation for the remainder of their concessionary term, plus loss of equipment, profits and the like, under article 311 of the Treaty of Sèvres, for over 25 Million French Francs. (The British Military Authorities never formally requisitioned this line, despite requests in July 1919 by the Company that it should do so). This dispute went to arbitration in 1922⁸³ and was resolved with a payment of £565,000. Thereafter the line belonged, without dispute, to the Palestine Government.⁸⁴

Year Book' p.257, under "Asiatic Railways". "Total length of the Palestine Railways, including the Hijaz and Sinai (Kantara - Rafa) sections is 1,315.386km.". Caution is advised on all these statistics.

⁷⁸ These included the standard gauge line from Rafah to Beer Sheba (built 1917, closed 1928), and the Turkish military lines from 'Junction Station' (later Wadi Surar) at km. 37.3 on the Jerusalem line to Beer Sheba and into Sinai as far as Kosseima, (built 1915; sections were abandoned after 1917, other sections were converted to standard gauge and used by British military traffic until 1918).

⁷⁹ This Report was an attempt to calculate what assets had been taken over by the new State, and what had already been written off before the end of the Mandate.

⁸⁰ There had been a short-lived 60cm.-gauge tramway between the station at Jaffa and the quay, constructed by the British military in 1917; this was closed in 1927. 'Harakevet' 9:7; P.R. G.M. Report 1928, p.16, para. 46

⁸¹ P.R. G.M. Report 1936, p.6 para. 4

⁸² Cotterell p.32

⁸³ There are reports in 'Palestine Weekly' Vol. VIII No. 5, (3. February 1922) p.32, to an EGM held in Paris on 19. December 1921, and in Vol. VIII No. 7 (17. February 1922) p. 112 to an AGM to be held 15. March 1922, to accept the resolution and offer.

⁸⁴ Tourret: 'Hedjaz Rly.' pp. 85f. Possibly it was felt important to minimise French influence in the new Mandated Territory.

b). The (Kantara) - Rafa - Haifa line was built by the military, and known variously in documents as the ‘Sinai Military Railway’ (S.M.R.), the ‘Palestine Military Railway’ (P.M.R.) and the ‘Kantara-Rafah Railway’ (K.-R.R.); It had actually been constructed from the Sinai end, eastwards and then northwards.

Following the establishment of the Mandatory Government in 1920 the section of the S.M.R. within Palestine (i.e. from Rafa to Haifa) was formally sold to the Palestine Government for £P 831,758.⁸⁵ This sale was a constant source of irritation and perceived injustice⁸⁶ since the line as transferred did not meet the needs of the new Administration, showed signs of hasty construction, was stocked with a motley and mostly-unsuitable range of motive power and rolling stock, mostly second-hand, and required extensive upgrading.⁸⁷ Moreover, this purchase ensured that interest charges continuously weighted down the annual accounts. (In 1930 these amounted to £P 138,604, though interest charges were payable neither on the Kantara - Rafa Railway nor the Hijaz Railway).⁸⁸ It was felt that it would have been perfectly equitable simply to donate this military line and military stock to the new administration.⁸⁹ The result however was that this section of line belonged to the Palestine Government, whereas:

c). The Kantara - Rafa Railway, i.e. that section of the S.M.R. running outside the borders of Palestine but essential to the operation of the Palestine Railways, remained under British ownership and was not transferred either to Egyptian State Railways control or to Palestine Railways ownership; Instead it was operated by P.R. on behalf of the War Office (Air Ministry). In March 1948 this line was unilaterally transferred to E.S.R. operation. P.R. paid initially a proportion of revenues, later a fixed rent⁹⁰ for use of this line.⁹¹

⁸⁵ Plus the Hijaz at £P 8,889 - total £P 840,647, as listed in P.R. G.M. Report 1930 p.8, para.20; later reduced by the "Wickham Valuation" to £P 784,855. cf. P.R. G.M. Report 1938 p. 8.

⁸⁶ e.g. P.R. G.M. Report 1930, p.7, para. 13.

⁸⁷ cf. P.R. G.M. Report 1930, p.7, paras. 13, 14

⁸⁸ P.R. G.M. Report 1930, p.8

⁸⁹ As was done initially in Iraq. The railway system built there during the War by the British was sold to the new Iraqi Government in 1936 for what Hughes terms "a bargain price of 494,000 Pounds; previously they had been British property, having been transferred from Military to Civil administration on 1. April 1920 and then operated by the Iraqi authorities from 1 April 1923." (Hughes, p.90.) i.e. there was no capital outlay until the country became independent.

⁹⁰ P.R. paid LP 4,000 p.a. rent. P.R. G.M. Report 1938 p.10.

⁹¹ There were political as well as financial implications. cf. Samuel in Nov. 1920: "The High Commissioner.... announced that the Palestine Government is to operate, without owning, the line between Kantara and Rafa. It is understood that this section was originally offered to the Egyptian State railways, but refused by them, doubtless because of the heavy loss involved in operating it. As the Egyptian Government has no financial interest in this section, and as the Palestine Government likewise has no financial liabilities on its account, it is natural to conclude that the Imperial Government retains financial responsibility for the Kantara-Rafa section. That would be perfectly just, because not only did the Imperial Government build the railway for strategical purposes, but those strategical reasons still hold good. Now that the British Garrison in Egypt is to be withdrawn to Kantara and the Canal Zone, the maintenance of the railway connection between Kantara and Palestine stands out as a strategical necessity.

These decisions in regard to the desert railway cannot fail to have certain political consequences. The Imperial Government, as the owner of this railway and as the guardian of Imperial strategical interests, is bound to intervene energetically to secure the preservation of through traffic between Palestine and Egypt, now threatened by the demand of the Suez Canal Company for the removal of the railway bridge. That is one consequence. Another is that the refusal of the Egyptian state to take over the responsibility for the desert railway, and the transference of it for the purpose of operation to the Palestine Government, must tend to place the whole Sinai Peninsula in more direct association with Palestine and to remove it from association with Egypt." ('Palestine Weekly' 12. Nov. 1920.)

d). The Petach Tikvah Railway, comprising the branch built in 1920-21⁹² from Ras el-Ain to Petach-Tikvah, remained under dual ownership of the Palestine Government and the Municipality of Petach-Tikvah. The accounts were kept separate, profits to be split between the two owners once fixed operating costs of £P840 p.a. had been met.⁹³

e). The Narrow-Gauge Haifa/Acre - Dera'a - Damascus/Ma'an system was split in 1920 between the P.R. and the French-controlled D.H.P. Railway, following the grant of the Mandate for Syria to France. During the 1930's there were several disputes as to the equitable distribution of locomotives and rolling-stock between these two railways, which in 1918 had been acquired as 'spoils of war', wherever they happened to be standing at the moment of the Turkish collapse, and even a claim by the D.H.P. for the return of, or compensation for, track materials the Turks had removed from Syrian soil to use in the Negev. By 1939 all these issues had been resolved, at some cost,⁹⁴ but in the late-1940's the intriguing point was raised that the entire Hedjaz Railway (including the Haifa branch) had been built for religious purposes through contributions from Moslems throughout the world, and therefore should be classed as a "Waqf"⁹⁵ and retained as Moslem property, whatever partition plan might eventually be adopted.

Incidentally, the Turkish military lines in Palestine were not constructed from Moslem funds, but a note in the 1930 Report⁹⁶ states that the surviving section (essentially that from Afule to Tulkarm) had been "considered as part of the Hijaz Railway for purposes of convenience."

It should be noted that the narrow-gauge line from Haifa to Acre was included in the Hedjaz accounts, but most of it was incorporated in 1942 into the standard-gauge Haifa - Beirut - Tripoli Railway constructed for the War Office. Palestine Railways retained ownership as far as Na'amin Junction at Kilo 19.1, where the Acre branch (which remained narrow-gauge) left the new line, and after the war retained operating rights as far as Azzib, Kilo. 37.0 from Haifa, just south of the Lebanese border. The line north of the border at Ras Nakura was sold to the Lebanese Government in 1946 for £5,000,000,⁹⁷ to be operated by the D.H.P. Railway, but because the intervening mile or so remained in War Office ownership P.R. did not actually adjoin the D.H.P. lines here.

All the above reflected the confused nature of the system's history and geography, made Accounting a very complex process, and became relevant when the lines were disposed of.

f). The Wartime Additions.

Palestine Railways experienced a surge of traffic and also had to react to changing circumstances with the closure of shipping lanes. Various extensions were built to suit the changing military strategic requirements. These included lines to serve new bases and depots at Kantara, Rafah, El Jiya, Manshiyeh, Tel Litvinsky and Wadi Surar, and additional loops to increase track capacity on the Kantara-Rafah section. Many of these were paid for by the Military authorities. The major addition involved the construction (by the military) of the Haifa-Beirut-Tripoli Railway, with its effects on the various bases and spurs north of Haifa and which opened up the possibility at last for standard-gauge

Sale to Egypt was only considered from around December 1947, once evacuation from Palestine became policy. (e.g. Letter of 11. December 1947 PRO Ref. CO 537/2271 etc.).

⁹² Formally opened 11. November 1921; cf. 'Palestine Weekly' Vol. VI No. 42, 4. November 1921.

⁹³ Source - P.R. G.M. Report 1938 p.11

⁹⁴ ref. C.S. File 370/R/4/31

⁹⁵ Source - Kirby & C.S. papers. This concept remains current on the Hejaz - Jordan Railway.

⁹⁶ P.R. G.M. Report 1930 p.6 para.10

⁹⁷ Hughes, 'Middle East Railways', p.63

communication to the north, to Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Turkey. The H.B.T. was built by and for the War Office, but incorporating its first section the Acre branch with all the complications that this implies, and P.R. operated only until just south of the Lebanese border, whereas military locomotives, stock and crew worked right through.

On the narrow-gauge this period saw the short-term rehabilitation and rebuilding of the Afule-Nablus-Tulkarm lines (owned by P.R.) and the construction by the Military of a new narrow-gauge branch from Ma'an towards Aqaba (actually terminating at Naqb Ashtar) as a possible emergency escape and supply route from the Red Sea, using track materials which were already owned by the Hedjaz Railway..

1:(I). TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION OF PERMANENT WAY.

All lines were single track, with passing loops. The Sinai Military Railway from Kantara to Rafah was mostly laid straight onto the sand, although during the 1930's work was carried out to improve alignments and gradients and to plant scrub to reduce the drifting of sand onto the line - a constant and severe hazard. The rest of the standard-gauge and most of the narrow-gauge was ballasted with crushed limestone, mostly obtained from the P.R.'s own quarries at Nur esh-Shams.⁹⁸ Steel sleepers had been introduced on the standard gauge in the 1930's and by 1939 had been laid on the majority of the Jaffa-Jerusalem line⁹⁹ and a section of the 'main line'. They cost three times the price of untreated Anatolian wooden sleepers, but were expected to last five times as long (i.e. forty years rather than eight), and would be less liable to damage from termites.¹⁰⁰ The aim was eventually to make the steel sleepers standard. 75 lb. per yard flat-bottom rail was standard, in 36ft. lengths with 14 sleepers per rail,¹⁰¹ giving a maximum axle-load of 17 tons.

The narrow-gauge was laid with flat-bottom rail of 21.5 kg. per metre (approx. 43½lb. per yard) on steel sleepers, giving a maximum permissible axle-load of 10 tons. Part of the narrow gauge line was ballasted with black basalt.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ The actual labour being provided by prisoners, supervision being by the Palestine Police.

⁹⁹ The aim here was partly to reduce derailments, as the curvature led to severe outward pressure on the rails and it proved difficult to maintain gauge.

¹⁰⁰ P.R. G.M. Report 1930, p.24, para.82

¹⁰¹ P.R. G.M. Report 1930, p.24, para.82.

¹⁰² Source: B.R. 514, p.349. & various P.R. G.M. Reports.

1:(J). ENGINEERING WORKS.

On the standard-gauge (including the S.M.R.) there were 113 bridges, (112 of them underbridges) but no tunnels. Despite the steady improvement of drainage measures, washouts during wet weather were not infrequent.

On the narrow-gauge lines within Palestine there were 163 bridges and one tunnel - near Nablus; (Between Samakh and Dera'a, in the section operated by the Syrian C.F.H., the line traversed the Yarmuk gorge via several viaducts and seven tunnels).¹⁰³

1:(K). OPERATION.

The P.R. headquarters were at Haifa East station, and the main lines were measured from a 'Point 0' there. Main locomotive depots for the narrow gauge were at Haifa East and Samakh; for the standard gauge at Haifa East, Lydda, Gaza and Jerusalem. The standard-gauge lines were fully signalled with semaphores and tablets were used on the single-line sections. 'Webb & Thompson' miniature indicating staff instruments were connected by 689km. of wire, and the Train Control system was Western Electric 60V AC, connected to all stations from the Headquarters Control Office at Haifa by 1,342km. of wire.¹⁰⁴

1:(L). P.R. ADMINISTRATION.

As noted, being a Department of Government the Railways were run on very strict lines, with the General Manager having to gain approval from the Chief Secretary for even minor decisions, and then advertise them in the official 'Palestine Gazette'. Thus, even slight amendments to the timetables or fare tariffs required permission "from above".

The main initial instrument used was the Railways Ordinance (No. 30) of 1927,¹⁰⁵ amended by Order 29 of 1936. This permitted the High Commissioner to appoint a Railways Board "consisting of such officers of the Government and other persons as he may think fit to advise him in matters affecting the administration of a Railway".¹⁰⁶ The Board was normally chaired by the General Manager, who was then directly responsible to the High Commissioner.¹⁰⁷

Finance was allocated from the Palestine Loan Funds, raised in December 1927¹⁰⁸ by the Bank of England on behalf of the Palestine Government - an issue of £4,475,000 of Palestine Govt. £5% Guaranteed Stock. "The loan was required for the construction of a harbour at Haifa, on the improvement of the Port of Jaffa, on Railway capital improvements and public works; for the payment of £1,000,000 to His Majesty's Government for Railway and other capital assets taken over by the Palestine Government; and to repay moneys advanced to defray expenditure on Railway equipment and improvement, on other public works, and on the acquisition of the Jaffa-Jerusalem Railway."¹⁰⁹

¹⁰³ B.R. 514, p.349f.

¹⁰⁴ P.R. G.M. Report 1930. p.27, para. 97

¹⁰⁵ An initial Railways Ordinance was promulgated in 'Palestine Gazette' No. 117, p. 711 of 15. June 1924, but this was subject to several revisions.

¹⁰⁶ para. 3

¹⁰⁷ 'Laws of Palestine, 1926-1931', Vol. IV; compiled under editorship of Moses Doukhan; pub. L. M. Rotenberg, Tel Aviv, 1933

¹⁰⁸ Under the Palestine Loan Ordinance 1927.

¹⁰⁹ 'Palestine Blue Book', 1928, p.67

1:(M). STAFFING & MANAGEMENT.

P.R. was largely run as a colonial railway. This meant that the Crown Agents¹¹⁰ acted as recruitment agents in the U.K., and also acted as agents for purchase of stock and supplies.¹¹¹ The Palestine Government was the actual employer. Within P.R. the majority of the senior posts were held by expatriate Englishmen, with most other posts filled by local staff - principally Jews, Arabs, Armenians and Greeks.

In 1920 many of the senior posts were filled by those who had been previously operating the system in a military capacity. These included:

The General Manager, **Col. Robert Blake Worsley Holmes**, (1920-1929).¹¹²

The 'Assistant General Manager', **Lt.-Col. George Murray Campigli** who was 'Officer-in-Charge Palestine Military Railways' in early 1919, and transferred to the civil government as 'Assistant General Manager' in 1920, remaining in this post almost until the end of P.R.'s existence.¹¹³ He took over as 'Acting General Manager' from June 1929 till May 1930. He was eased out in 1944 by Kirby.¹¹⁴

Rupert Frederick Scrivener commanded the 29th. Railway Company, Sappers & Miners, Indian Army, serving in Gallipoli, Egypt, Mesopotamia, India and Palestine, and from 1920 became Assistant Chief Engineer, P.R., taking office as 'Engineer of Ways and Works' from 1924 and staying in this position till 1948.¹¹⁵

Later significant appointments include:-

Cecil Richard Webb who assumed office as General Manager from May 1930 to succeed Holmes. His earlier posts included 'Assistant Traffic Manager', Uganda Railway from 1914, Traffic Manager on Tanganyika Territory Railways from 1919 and General Manager of the Sierra Leone Government Railways from 1923.¹¹⁶ Webb retired as from 25. September 1942.¹¹⁷

Arthur Frank Kirby was appointed as General Manager from 9. April 1942¹¹⁸ and was in charge until the final British withdrawal six years later. As noted, he served the Great Western Railway before and after military service, entered the Colonial Service in 1928 as 'Asst. Sec. of Takoradi Harbour', Gold Coast - significant in view of his later interest in ports and harbours; He then served the Gold Coast Railway from 1936, and was 'Asst. Superintendent of the Line' on the Kenya and Uganda Railways and Harbours from 1938.¹¹⁹

The initial 'C.M.E.'¹²⁰ in 1920 was H. A. Cotching A.M.I. Mech. E., who had originally served the North Eastern Railway 1903-1915, then joined the Royal Engineers and by 1919 was acting as 'Locomotive Superintendent' on the Hedjaz Railway.¹²¹ He

¹¹⁰ The Crown Agents archives are unfortunately unavailable.

¹¹¹ Which would all come from British manufacturers.

¹¹² Colonial Office List, 1929, p.696. He was only 51 at this point but the reasons for such early retirement are not known.

¹¹³ Colonial Office List 1929, p.630. Remarkably, he was passed over for promotion to General Manager twice, remaining "Assistant" or "Acting" throughout his career.

¹¹⁴ According to Davies there had been poor relations between them. This would be very understandable as Campigli had been passed over for promotion once again and Kirby was the newcomer from outside.

¹¹⁵ Colonial Office List, 1929, p. 778

¹¹⁶ Colonial Office List, 1933, p.790. We see that experience on African Railways often preceded a post in Palestine.

¹¹⁷ 'Palestine Gazette' 1226, 1. October 1942, p.1085. This included Leave Due, so there was no overlap.

¹¹⁸ 'Palestine Gazette' 1190, 30. April 1942

¹¹⁹ 'Who's Who', 1962 ed., p.1708

¹²⁰ Chief Mechanical Engineer, responsible for all locomotives, rolling stock, workshops and machinery.

¹²¹ Colonial Office List, 1929, p.643

retired 16. March 1940,¹²² and was replaced by E. R. Masters from 4. November 1940 to 7. August 1945.¹²³ He was in turn succeeded by W. G. W. Wilson.¹²⁴ In the meantime P. A. Challoner had been specially appointed from Iraq from 3. August 1944 until 18. December 1945 to sort out some of the problems with oil-firing.¹²⁵ A. L. Jones was 'Assistant C.M.E.' throughout much of P.R.'s existence, occasionally acting as C.M.E. during interregna. He retired 7. November 1942.¹²⁶

The remainder of the staff came from diverse backgrounds. As the 1930 Report noted¹²⁷:

"It is of interest that the Railway is in the probably unique position of having a staff in which some 31 nationalities are represented and it is noteworthy that they work together extraordinarily well."

Total staff at 31. December 1930 were 3,361.¹²⁸ At that time there were no pensionable staff, no Provident Fund and no facilities for Staff Training.¹²⁹ By March 1938 the figure had grown to 4,323, of whom 23 were "1st. Division", 415 "2nd. Division", 894 paid on a monthly basis and 2,991 on a daily basis.¹³⁰ By this time there were 33 nationalities represented; Regarding the religious identity of the staff - a very serious issue in Palestine - 22.74% were Christians, 67.59% were Moslems, 9.46% were Jews,¹³¹ and the remaining 0.2% Bahais or Druse.¹³²

¹²² 'Palestine Gazette' No 995, 21. April 1940

¹²³ 'Palestine Gazette' No. 1059, 28. November 1940 & No. 1435, 30. August 1945

¹²⁴ From 9. December 1945 - 'Palestine Gazette' No. 1467, 10. January 1946

¹²⁵ 'Palestine Gazette' No. 1467, 10. January 1946

¹²⁶ 'Palestine Gazette' No. 1233, 12. November 1942, p. 1248

¹²⁷ 'Palestine Blue Book' 1926-7. p.30 para. 115

¹²⁸ *ibid.* p.51

¹²⁹ P.R. G.M. Report 1930 p.30, paras. 117f

¹³⁰ P.R. G.M. Report 1938 p.128

¹³¹ Why were there proportionally so few Jews employed by P.R.? Several partial answers can be given. One is the issue of religious observance; as stated in B.R. 514 p. 208, "The regular days of rest of the various creeds are official days of rest for members of the respective communities. In practice it is not possible - for instance, in the Post Office, where most of the telephonists are Jewish - for this rule to be rigidly observed, but every effort is made." The railways also were a 24-hour 7-day operation, so observance of the Sabbath and festivals would be difficult, if not impossible for certain Grades.

Another is political; many Jews were more concerned to develop rural settlements and these were best served by road passenger and freight services; the cooperatives were also independent of Government and could be perceived as a part of the 'Upbuilding of the Land'. A further factor was Fear; there were many recorded examples of persons of one ethnic origin being isolated and attacked in areas which were dominated by another, and it would have been no joy for a Jewish station master or signaller to do night duty in an 'Arab' area. In later years this became a major matter of personal security, as recorded in issues of Lydda depot, the fears of Jewish workers in the Qishon Workshops - and the fate of Jewish workers in the massacre at the Central Oil Refinery is vivid evidence that this was not unfounded. In a personal interview in 1981/2 with Menachem Savidor, former IR General Manager and at the time Speaker of the Knesset, he described his fears as a young Jew employed in the Drawing Office at Qishon and having in the course of his duties to go to distant parts of the extensive site, where he felt very insecure.

This became an issue also with the founding of Israel Railways in 1948 - there were very few trained practical operating railwaymen available - fitters, engine drivers, signallers, track workers - since most of the Jewish employees had been in the clerical or administrative grades.

Comparing the statistical tables of Palestine's population in 1946 and of PR employees in 1938 and 1947 (i.e. not exactly like-for-like but at least representative) we find:

Christians formed 7.58 % of the population, but 22.74% of the PR employees. (7.58% in 1947).

Muslims formed 59.79% of the population but 67.59% of PR employees. (70.52% in 1947)

Jews formed 31.80% of the population but 9.46% of PR employees (down to 6.75% in 1947).

Others are statistically insignificant at 0.81% of the population and 0.2% of the workforce.

¹³² P.R. G.M. Report 1938 p.129. It is perhaps significant that it was even considered necessary to note

P.R. accounts were subject to annual Audit by the Audit Department of the Palestine Government. In addition three separate independent Reports were commissioned and published in 1935. These were authored by Sir Felix Pole,¹³³ C. M. Jenkins-Jones¹³⁴ and Price, Waterhouse & Co.,¹³⁵ and were investigations and analyses of possible future developments, the improvement of operating practices, and the accounting systems in use.

1:(N). MOTIVE POWER AND ROLLING STOCK: 1920 - 1939.

The initial standard-gauge stock taken over in 1920 had been of very mixed quality. Detailed lists do not exist, but motive power comprised 50 modern American 'Baldwin' 4-6-0's, specifically constructed for the War Department for use in the Middle East campaign, about 29 former L.S.W.R. 'Adams' 0-6-0's built 1881-1885, 42 L.N.W.R. 'Coal Engine' 0-6-0's and 7 miscellaneous shunters. Most of the above were already superannuated before they had been shipped out for wartime use, and after the war were in poor condition. The L.N.W.R. locos were hardly used - according to one report they were employed as buffer-stops!¹³⁶ Egyptian locos were not taken over, though they had been employed on the S.M.R. during the war.

Rolling stock included British 4-wheel unbraked wood-framed short-wheelbase wagons requisitioned by the War Department, several former M.R. and L.S.W.R. coaches converted to Ambulance Coaches, and some varied ancient Egyptian pieces.

The L.N.W.R. and most of the L.S.W.R. locos were soon withdrawn and scrapped. In their place came six 2-8-4T's from Kitsons of Leeds, for use on the Jerusalem line. Six of the Baldwin locos were sent to Robert Stephenson & Hawthorns, Newcastle to be rebuilt as tank engines for the Jerusalem line, where the weight of water in the tanks would assist adhesion whereas the deadweight of the tender would form a hindrance.

As at 31. December 1930, (the first full list available),¹³⁷ the standard-gauge Locomotive stock had totalled 70:

- 44 'Class H' Baldwin 4-6-0 tender engines¹³⁸
- 6 'Class H2' Baldwin 4-6-0 rebuilt as 4-6-2T,
- 7 L.S.W.R 0-6-0 tender engines,
- 4 Manning Wardle 0-6-0ST,
- 6 'Class K' Kitson 2-8-4T,¹³⁹
- 1 Sentinel 4wVBT.¹⁴⁰ and
- 2 two-car articulated Sentinel Steam Railcars.¹⁴¹

such statistics.

¹³³ 'Report on Proposed Railway Improvements in Palestine', by Sir Felix J. C. Pole, pub. by Crown Agents for the Colonies, 4, Millbank, London, on behalf of the Government of Palestine. No date, but Report is dated February 1935. 17pp, plus map, plus 2-page Appendix.

¹³⁴ 'Report on the Traffic Organisation, Facilities and Rates on the Palestine Railways. 1935.' by C. M. Jenkin-Jones, London & North Eastern Railway, York. Pub. by Crown Agents, on behalf of the Government of Palestine. 76pp, plus Recommendations, 3pp., plus 25 Appendices, total 112pp. Signed April 1935.

¹³⁵ 'Palestine Railways: Report on the System of Accounting and Internal Control', 23. May 1935. Price, Waterhouse & Co., 3, Frederick's Place, London EC2, total 147 pp. incl. Appendices.

¹³⁶ Quoted in Cotterell op. cit. p.127.

¹³⁷ P.R. G.M. Report 1930, p.46.

¹³⁸ These and the rebuilds were rated as Maximum Load 30 wagons on main line.

¹³⁹ These were rated as Maximum Load 40 wagons on main line.

¹⁴⁰ Purchased 1929. Erroneously listed for some years as an 0-6-0.

¹⁴¹ Purchased in 1929.

It should be noted that although occasional remarks in the 1929 Report and elsewhere show that the Management was aware of diesel railcar development, and there were even rumours of electrification plans at one time,¹⁴² throughout this period all power remained steam only, and coal-fired. Welsh steam coal was imported via Haifa.

Solid British-built steel-framed carriages were also acquired in 1922 to form the backbone of the new passenger fleet:

- 10 1st.-Class coaches and
- 9 3rd.-Class coaches, from B.R.C.W.¹⁴³
- 6 2nd.-Class coaches,
- 4 1st./2nd. Composites,
- 4 Brake/3rds,
- 2 Brake Tri-Composites and
- 3 Full Brakes, all from Metropolitan R.C.W.

In 1927 five 3rds. were bought from Gloucester R.C.W. In 1929 two Sentinel-Cammell two-car steam railcars were bought for the standard gauge - these are noted above as motive power since they were self-propelled.¹⁴⁴

Total standard-gauge purchases therefore amounted to 43 coaches plus 2 railcars.

The total number of Coaching Vehicles in 1930 was 95, comprising:

59 Carriages "of uniform class" (i.e. 1st., 2nd. or 3rd.), 6 Composites, 3 "Miscellaneous" coaches, 4 Luggage, Parcel Post Office & Brake Vans, 1 Horse Box, 15 Miscellaneous vehicles.¹⁴⁵ In addition there were 3 Restaurant and 4 Sleeping Cars which were owned by the C.I.W.L.¹⁴⁶ and operated under contract on P.R.

The total number of Goods Vehicles in 1930 was 2,008.¹⁴⁷ These consisted of 269 Service Stock and 1,739 Revenue Stock. Apart from oil tanks and four bogie flats (and 17 6-wheeled flats) all goods vehicles were four-wheelers.

The stock figures did not vary much for several years. No new locomotives, carriages or wagons were purchased between 1930 and 1934.¹⁴⁸ In 1934-35 three new 0-6-0 Tanks (Nasmyth-Wilson type) were bought for shunting, plus 100 12T. 4wh. covered vans largely for citrus traffic, four 30T. bogie flat wagons and three 30T. bogie oil tanks.¹⁴⁹ In 1935-36 six 4-6-0 NBL¹⁵⁰ Passenger locomotives were bought (the 'P' class), a further four 0-6-0T shunters were acquired,¹⁵¹ plus 90 12T. 4-wheel vans, six 30T. bogie flats

¹⁴² There were articles in 'Palestine Weekly' as early as 1921 discussing means of reducing fuel costs once the Rutenberg Yarmuk Power Station came into operation.

¹⁴³ The Birmingham Railway Carriage and Wagon Works.

¹⁴⁴ Purchase of these 'Sentinel Patent' vehicles in 1929 - two s.g. railcars, two n.g. railcars and a shunter - indicate an interest in following contemporary trends towards economical working. The two n.g. railcars were the only stock P.R. ever purchased for the narrow-gauge lines. The s.g. ones were later used, without their power units, as hauled coaching stock in the 1940's, hence they are listed here in both categories.

¹⁴⁵ P.R. G.M. Report 1930 p.35, 47. Under "Miscellaneous" would be vans for perishable goods and milk, but also Saloons for the Medical Officer or for other staff purposes. Apart from three 6-wheel and one 4-wheel 'Misc'. vehicle, all probably ancient coaches taken over from the E.S.R., all vehicles were of bogie type.

¹⁴⁶ 'Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits'.

¹⁴⁷ P.R. G.M. Report 1930. p.48

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.* p.20, para.60 & p.21 paras.47-50; P.R. G.M. 1933 Report p.23, para.38; 1934 Report p.25 para.82.

¹⁴⁹ P.R. G.M. Report 1934, p.20 para.36

¹⁵⁰ North British Locomotive Works, Glasgow.

¹⁵¹ From Nasmyth-Wilson, Manchester, identical to the earlier three.

and six 30T. bogie oil tanks.¹⁵² In 1936-7 a further two 0-6-0T shunters were bought, plus six 3rd.-Class coaches and two bogie Parcels Vans, a further 75 12T. 4-wh. vans and 25 15T. 4-wh. timber wagons.

In 1937-38 five of the Baldwin 4-6-0 tender locos were rebuilt (at Jenkin-Jones' suggestion) into 4-6-4 Tank engines for use on the Jerusalem line. This time the work was carried out "in-house" at Qishon Workshops, only the additional parts required being supplied from England. They became 'Class H3'. Two more 3rd.-Class bogie carriages were acquired to replace former LSWR stock destroyed by fire in the 1936 disturbances, plus a further 125 12T. 4-wh. goods vans and a further 30T. bogie tank wagon.¹⁵³

TABLE 2. FREIGHT STOCK at the start of 1939 comprised:

304 Flat wagons,

503 Open wagons,

990 Vans,

74 Livestock vans,

25 Timber wagons,

59 Oil tanks,

14 bogie Oil tanks,

33 Brake vans,

and a few miscellaneous vehicles, totalling 2,038 revenue freight stock, and 279 service vehicles.¹⁵⁴

During the period some wagons were written-off after accidents or sabotage, and several were rebuilt. P.R. had the facilities at its workshops to carry out major repairs and conversions, though not total new construction. (Carriages were shipped from Britain whole, whereas wagons were mostly shipped in component form to be erected at the Qishon Workshops). There was also a programme of gradual improvement of the stock by fitting screw couplings and vacuum brakes (or at least through-piping for the vacuum brake system) to older stock, all new stock being so provided. In 1937-8, for example, there were 68 Heavy and 87 Light repairs to standard-gauge coaching stock, (including the virtual rebuilding of four vehicles after sabotage), and 965 Heavy and 146 Light repairs to goods stock, in addition to the erection of the 125 new covered vans.¹⁵⁵

The provision of the new shunting locomotives permitted the withdrawal of the last L.S.W.R. 0-6-0s, which had been used until now for this purpose.

A list of March 1938 shows 78 steam locos in stock, 102 coaching stock vehicles, 2,318 goods vehicles, and 24 armoured rail trolleys for protection purposes.

¹⁵² P.R. G.M. Report 1936 p.18 para.29

¹⁵³ P.R. G.M. Report 1938 p.21 para.20

¹⁵⁴ e.g. ballast wagons, water tanks and rail wagons.

¹⁵⁵ P.R. G.M. Report 1938. p.22 para.22

TABLE 3. P.R. Motive Power in 1939 comprised:¹⁵⁶

6 "Class P" North-British Loco. 4-6-0 passenger tender engines.
39 "Class H" Baldwin 4-6-0 mixed-traffic tender.
6 "Class H2" Baldwin-converted 4-6-2 tank.
5 "Class H3" Baldwin-converted 4-6-4 tank.
6 "Class K" Kitson 2-8-4 tank.

Total: 62 'Line locomotives'.

4 Manning-Wardle 0-6-0ST.
9 Nasmyth-Wilson 0-6-0T.
1 Sentinel 4wVBT.

Total: 14 Shunting locomotives.

Plus: two double-articulated Sentinel-Cammell Steam Rail Cars.

On paper this appears to be plentiful provision for the system; However, throughout this period the locomotives suffered a very high failure rate due to poor water supplies at Haifa and Lydda, which led to increased wear and strain on the boilers. This was partially alleviated by use of new wells in the Acre Bay area near Haifa, but on occasions the situation had been sufficiently critical for trains to be cancelled due to lack of serviceable locomotives. It was partly in response to this problem that C.M. Jenkin-Jones of the L.N.E.R. had been called upon to investigate the capacity of the line and the stock in 1935. By 1939 the Classes "H", "H2", "H3" and "K" were, despite rebuilding and maintenance, already around twenty years old.

1:(O). TRAFFIC.

Traffic grew as the country developed, the citrus industry expanded, the new potash industry at the Dead Sea began to produce potash and bromide for transport by rail from Jerusalem, and construction required transport of raw materials. At the same time there was increasing competition from road traffic. The opening of the Haifa - Acre road led to a drop in suburban traffic on the narrow-gauge suburban services, and the opening of the through Jaffa - Haifa road in 1937-38 led to an immediate halving of passenger receipts on this route.

Other competition came from new sea routes (the opening of the direct Haifa - Trieste route led to a severe drop in first-class passengers travelling from/to Port Said to connect with steamers) and even from the air (the inauguration of Palestine - Egypt air links led to further drops in 1st.-Class traffic). In addition more Moslem pilgrims began to travel by sea rather than rail to Mecca, and tourist traffic fluctuated, dependent on the international financial situation or the internal security situation - both factors outside the railways' control.

The railways had fought back - with reduced fares and freight tariffs as necessary; they had also introduced contract road services providing combined road-rail transits - a very advanced idea for the period. These services ran from Ras El-Ein on the main line to Petah Tiqva, Tel Aviv and Jaffa, thus saving substantial journey time for through travellers from Haifa. Another railway-operated road service took through passengers from Lydda to Jerusalem much quicker than did the train!

The system did not however grow to meet the needs of the developing country and its industries. Pick observes that, between the wars, the railways stagnated

“because the lands they had been supposed to open became cut up, owing to the

¹⁵⁶from P.R. G.M. Report 1938, pp.59, 60.

demise of the Ottoman Empire. The newly-conquered, and later mandated, territories of Palestine and Trans-Jordan ceased to face north, towards the former centre of power in Anatolia, but now looked west, to the sea, and to the holder of the mandate (from 1922), namely Britain. The newly-established boundaries hindered railway traffic, though they did not prevent it. The unstable political situation in Palestine from 1920 did not permit resources to be spent on railway improvements.”¹⁵⁷

The new Haifa harbour opened in 1936, and the new Haifa Central Station on the reclaimed land in June 1938. There were plenty of plans. Pole's report recommending a deviation of the main line to serve Tel Aviv was never implemented. Proposals for a standard-gauge line linking Haifa with Baghdad reached the stage of aerial surveys in 1934, but the construction of oil pipelines from Iraq to Haifa removed much of any perceived need for this line. Surveys by the French for a line linking Beirut with Haifa also came to nothing,¹⁵⁸ and through traffic from Egypt to Lebanon had to travel from Haifa by road.

From 1932 Webb, the new General Manager, was able to urge the establishment of a Renewals Fund which enabled some long-outstanding arrears of renewals and maintenance to be tackled. By 1936 this had involved substantial re-sleepering, ballasting, regrading, easing of some curves, provision of some new staff quarters, the construction of a large new Workshops facility at Qishon, provision of new crossing places at Qaqun and Tineh on the Main Line, the new Harbour facilities and station at Haifa, provision of some new locomotives, and the commissioning of three independent Reports on:

- a). a diversion to better serve Tel Aviv.
- b). handling of goods and other traffic, and necessary improvements.
- c). the organisation of the accounts.

All three largely vindicated the Railways' viewpoint, and the future looked very positive, but before much action could be taken the outbreak of political disturbances disrupted all further investment. Lines were sabotaged, locos and stock were damaged or destroyed, staff attacked, and night-running was suspended on occasions. Protection measures adopted included running escort or patrol trollies, reducing line speeds, the construction of guard towers at strategic points, employing additional police - and the complete suspension of services on occasion. The Lydda - Jerusalem line was virtually closed for several months in 1938. In the circumstances other new investment was delayed or diverted, and attention focussed on the maintenance of services rather than their improvement, to the repair of damage rather than the strengthening of the line and its structures. In retrospect, 1935-6 must be seen as the 'high point' of the optimistic development of the railway, with growing traffic and revenues, new facilities 'on stream' and long-term plans for expansion.

¹⁵⁷ Pinchas Pick. Unpub. Thesis, Dropsie University, no date. Typescript, p. 550.

¹⁵⁸ The Homs - Tripoli line had re-opened in 1920, with French support, after the tracks had been lifted during World War 1 for re-use on the Bagdadbahn project.

1:(P). OVERALL VIEW AND CONCLUSIONS.

By 1939 the standard-gauge Palestine Railways was a system under stress. It suffered partly from its origins, as a line built in haste to low standards for a very different purpose from that which it was later called to serve. Following an initial burst of necessary investment in the early 1920's it stagnated or declined, as superannuated stock was taken out of service and not replaced, or kept in service long after due for replacement; this applied also to buildings, track and infrastructure. Though operating profits were achieved, the imposition of debt charges meant that an overall profit was not shown, and funds for reinvestment were therefore limited.

Economies were of sufficient impact for the Chief Mechanical Engineer and the Engineer of Ways and Works to feel constrained to qualify their annual Certificates by reference to their limited budgets. In 1930 the C.M.E. certified that stock and machinery were only "in as good order as the available facilities and funds permitted." Repairs to a number of engines had been "delayed owing to lack of funds and facilities and these engines were consequently out of use or in traffic in an unsatisfactory state."¹⁵⁹ He felt constrained to

"draw attention to the fact that with the funds available it has not been possible to arrest and much less to overtake arrears of maintenance. Improvements and betterments have been almost entirely impossible."¹⁶⁰

The Chief Engineer noted that the railway

"was hurriedly laid... during the War and little was done in the way of ballasting and drainage. This work has had to be done since as funds have permitted.... It is unfortunate that this work cannot proceed more rapidly as the lack of ballast and proper drainage, as well as the condition of the sleepers, involves speed and local restrictions."¹⁶¹

He referred to "the disadvantages for commercial purposes of a railway built purely for military purposes. the line is... in some places unsuitably located. It was constructed and equipped in some respects with old and unsuitable material and buildings. In some directions it is under-equipped, in others it is over-equipped."¹⁶²

Several bridges had "been propped up with timber until funds permit of their reconstruction."¹⁶³ and "the track, bridges, safety devices and permanent structures have been adequately maintained *and to as high a standard as the financial situation warranted*"¹⁶⁴ while "tracks etc. have been maintained to as high a standard as the demand for economy warranted."¹⁶⁵ The pattern is clear!

The facts remained, by 1939 the P.R. network was still divided into two gauges, and was connected to the rest of the world only through a standard-gauge line which it did not own, across a desert in Sinai, and a narrow-gauge one which it did not own, through mountains to Syria. The lines, originally built in a different era and for different purposes, did not serve well the main centres of population or production; The political and administrative divisions cut across the pre-war routes for trade, pilgrimage and governance; The gauge break even militated against any real chance of forming a 'land bridge' between Europe and Asia on the north, and Africa to the south - Palestine's

¹⁵⁹ P.R. G.M. Report 1930, p.22 para.75

¹⁶⁰ P.R. G.M. Report 1931, p.26 para.73.

¹⁶¹ P.R. G.M. Report 1931, on P.Way. p.24

¹⁶² P.R. G.M. Report 1933, p. 9 para. 12

¹⁶³ P.R. G.M. Report 1933, para. 61

¹⁶⁴ Our Italics.

¹⁶⁵ P.R. G.M. Report 1934, p.35, para.120

historic role. Essentially the system, after the initial boosts, had stagnated whilst the land developed economically and politically. The P.R. system was able to cope with its regular demands, though the goods locomotives all dated in essence from 1918. However, it suffered from severe arrears of maintenance, and was in no position to take on greatly-increased traffic demands. The approaching war was to see the system almost collapse as it tried to cope with the changed situation.

CHAPTER 2.

PALESTINE RAILWAYS DURING WORLD WAR 2.

2:(A). INTRODUCTION:-

A major element in this period was the unprecedented demands of military traffic, both within the existing pre-war system and on the various extensions added to it to suit the changing military strategic requirements, plus the influx of military locomotives, rolling stock, workshop and operating personnel onto an already-overcrowded system.

By 1942 many of the pressures already described had come to the fore. Militarily, Britain was still facing enormous challenges in North Africa. However, Syria had been forcibly calmed, as had Iraq, and Turkey had remained neutral; the major German threat through the Ukraine was being held up by Soviet resistance - bolstered by the efforts of the British supply line through the Trans-Iran Railway.

The crisis on Palestine Railways, when it came, threatened to strangle British supply lines at a critical moment. A combination of factors included the sudden rocketing rise in traffic, the limited capacity of a system only partially adapted to its new demands, a shortage of power and capacity - the additional military locos and stock were just beginning to come 'on-stream' - and the ill-conceived attempt to reduce dependence on coal supplies, which led to a catastrophic decline in the availability of such locomotives as existed. But the new General Manager, when he was appointed to sort out the mess, found other factors as well - a *laissez-faire* and unimaginative management, weakened by years of financial scraping and the Arab Disturbances, poor internal communications, lack of strategic planning and much more besides.

Palestine Railways seemed to have reached rock-bottom. The General Manager was clearly tired and unable to cope with the situation. Webb was by now 55 years old.¹⁶⁶ The excessive traffic demands and the frantic construction activity, whether northwards along the Lebanese Coast or in the form of an alternative "emergency" parallel route via Aqaba or the new loops and sidings, together with the enormous growth in military traffic, all put the system under enormous strain.

Kirby was able to describe the situation from a safe distance in the 1942-46 "Annual Report".¹⁶⁷ The two main flows of traffic over P.R. during the years under review had been from Egypt into Palestine, and from Haifa Port to destinations in Palestine, Syria and Transjordan. The first flow had shown considerable fluctuation from month to month, being determined almost entirely by the current military situation. Thus at the beginning of 1942 an average of only four goods trains per day had been sufficient to clear freight traffic from Egypt. He singled out a number of factors which had seriously hindered or prevented, efficient operation. The more important of these were, he considered:-

- (i) The existence of only a temporary skeleton timetable, inadequate for the demands

¹⁶⁶ For fuller biographical details of Cecil Richard Webb (17. August 1887 - 4. April 1974), based on an interview with his son Jeremy, see 'Harakevet' 36:15. He was 'voluntarily transferred' from Sierra Leone to Palestine in 1930. Here he found the problems of Palestine complicated and frustrating, compared to life in Africa which had been in many respects much simpler. After a while he also began to feel he was being passed over for promotion or honours. It appears the P.R. were considered rather 'meagre' amongst the unspoken hierarchy of Colonial railway systems, especially in contrast to the Indian railways. He was taken on by the Ministry of War Transport in Africa, and later in 1945/46 moved back to Britain, still with the Ministry. The implication was that his services were still considered very useful, despite the problems.

¹⁶⁷ P.R. G.M. Report 1946 p. 60.

of traffic moving, resulting in continuous departure from timetable working.

(ii) Inadequate control facilities, rendering proper control from the Control Office at Haifa impossible, chiefly due to a gross lack of telephone communication.

(iii) Locomotive troubles.

(iv) Shortage of ground staff.

(v) Shortage of equipment.

(vi) Shortage of inspectorial and supervisory staff.

He gave as an example of the problems, that goods trains in April 1942 were taking up to 20 hours for the journey between Kantara and Lydda, against a scheduled time of 11.5 hours. So action was taken, including:-

- preparation of a new timetable with services for different traffic categories and 'paths' provided for troop trains and other non-regular or special services. This was in place of "the old practice of sending special trains out at any time and leaving it to Control to arrange the best possible crossings."

- A Sub-Control was established at Lydda to supervise traffic to Kantara, with special additional telephone lines connecting Lydda, Gaza, El Arish and Kantara.

- During May 1942 the recruitment of extra staff was authorised. Over 200 were added to the Lydda District establishment alone.

- Supervision was improved through recruitment of additional Traffic Inspectors.

- Locomotives were fitted with an additional bogie water tank wagon, to supplement their tenders and avoid the need to ship water supplies separately to stations.

The situation was also eased by the arrival of some W.D. locomotives and military personnel to work them, and additional resources were devoted to solving the problems created by the conversion of locomotives to oil burning.

2:(B). TRAFFIC GROWTH AND THE PROGRESS OF THE WAR.

Economically, the effect of wartime was to stimulate military traffic whilst suppressing civilian traffic flows. Tourists were replaced by soldiers on leave; Citrus could no longer be exported from Mediterranean ports; Shipping and mail links with France, Italy and Greece were cut. Track capacity was required to its utmost for military needs. On the other hand, restrictions on road traffic placed yet further demands upon the railways. Railway revenue was increased, but only due to these artificial traffic conditions. Spares, maintenance and supplies also suffered. In 1939 there were some 27,500 soldiers in the country who depended entirely on the railway for their logistic support. Pick notes that in the late 1930's the P.R. had "played a largely unsung role" transporting some 25-30,000 British troops to Palestine, in order to quell the Arab disturbances of 1936-39, and that "railways were the chief strategic means that served to shift British forces, including the R.A.F. ... throughout the Middle East area. Troops and their supplies were moved by rail from Egypt, or through Haifa Port."¹⁶⁸

The best overview of this period is provided by Arthur Kirby himself:

"The four years under review were years of unprecedented traffic increases and of traffic operation under difficult conditions. The heavy calls which were made upon the P.R. followed hard upon years of financial stringency. There had been practically no expansion or improvement of plant and equipment during the years immediately preceding the second World War, and the railway had suffered severely from damage by saboteurs during political disturbances. The staff of the railways in all sections had been cut to a dangerously low level so that, when the impact of the heavy demands of war fell

¹⁶⁸ Pick (p.586f.) "The rolling stock at the disposal of P.R. when it entered the Second World War comprised 92 locomotives (of which 30 were narrow gauge), 78 passenger coaches (standard and narrow), and 2,358 goods wagons, of which 337 were narrow gauge." [i.e. 2,021 were s.g.] (He cites Ettinger in 'Encyclopaedia Hebraica' vol. 6, col. 962). "Total carrying capacity was 24,867 tons."

upon the railways early in 1942, they were not adequately equipped, either in staff or equipment, to cope with the situation.”

He remarked appreciatively on the efforts of the officers who had served P.R. since its inception, who were now approaching or even past retirement age. “Such success as the railways have achieved in coping with wartime traffic is largely due to their efforts.”

Kirby was clearly being generous to colleagues and former colleagues here, for he was appointed largely to help sort out the mess they had sunk into.¹⁶⁹

War broke out in September 1939, and spread to the Eastern Mediterranean in the summer of 1940. Egypt was the main British base in the Middle East; with Palestine playing a role as an important subsidiary base (and rest and training area). Its light industry and food industry came to play an increasingly-important role in supplying the troops of the Middle East Forces. Haifa became an important ancillary naval base. After the Vichy French pulled out of the war in the summer of 1940, Palestine and Transjordan became forward outposts watching over a potentially-hostile Syria (and the German threat to Ukraine and the neutral Turkey). In July 1941 Palestine became a springboard for the invasion of Syria, and also for efforts to subdue the rebellion in Iraq, and the occupation of Persia in August 1941.

Palestine became the geographic and strategic focus of the British-occupied states of the Levant. The country became the hub for military and civilian traffic, to and from Egypt in the south, Cyprus in the north-west, Lebanon and Syria (and also neutral Turkey) in the north, Iraq and Persia (the area of ‘Paiforce’) in the north-east, and Trans-Jordan in the east. Towards 1942 Palestine became also the base for new American installations that had to be supplied by rail. It hosted a major concentration of airfields that played an increasingly important role in 1942-43, aircraft operating as far away as Libya and the Italian Dodecanese. These airfields also had to be supplied - by rail - with fuel and ammunition.¹⁷⁰

The first impact of wartime traffic came in 1941 and fell most heavily upon the Hijaz Railway to and from Syria. To support the campaign against Vichy forces in Syria and the rebels in Iraq, at the opening of the Syrian Campaign in June 1941 the Yarmuk Valley, which had been initially closed, was soon opened by New Zealand troops. Almost coincident with the successful conclusion of this campaign, measures were taken to increase the capacity of the Hijaz Railway, and in particular in Trans-Jordan to serve the wartime emergency port which was then being built at Aqaba.

“Several stations, which had remained demolished since the Lawrence campaign, were brought back into use and 15 derelict locomotives and 41 wagons were renovated and brought back into use at considerable cost. The locomotives were reconditioned to serve for not more than 18 months.¹⁷¹ These extra locomotives and wagons were fully required... to cope with traffic to and from Palestine, Syria, Iraq and Turkey. The Hijaz Railway in Trans-Jordan was extended from Ma'an to Naqb Ashtar to serve the port of Aqaba and the capacity of the Trans-Jordan section was expanded to take a two-way traffic of 600 tons per day.

¹⁶⁹ P.R. G.M. Report 1946 pp. 27-29. In his notes for ‘Railway Gazette’ of July 1948 he refers to this period: “All the locomotives and other steam-raising installations are oil-burning. The conversion from coal to oil was undertaken during the critical period 1942-3, and the consequent overworking of locomotives and troubles from poor design almost brought disaster, but by 1948 a high standard of oil-burning had been achieved.”

¹⁷⁰ Based on Pick p. 587.

¹⁷¹ Much of this work was done by 199 Rly. Wksps. Coy. R.E.

Fortunately the tide of war turned in favour of the Allies, and it was never necessary to use the Aqaba route as an alternative to the Suez route.”¹⁷²

The Hijaz system, of course, included the Haifa - Samakh (- Dera'a) line as well as the branches to Acre and the various oil and military installations north of Haifa. There was also the small amount of traffic on the Afule - Tulkarm line to consider. Due to various problems and in order to improve supervision of the Hijaz Railway in Transjordan, a Senior Officer was posted to Amman in September 1944. He was to keep an eye on operations and be responsible for the conduct of all railway business and administration.

Although there was a sharp upward trend in traffic over the section in Palestine and Sinai in 1940-1941, the full impact of wartime demands did not come until 1942 when Palestine was being developed as a strategic base, both for military operations and as an industrial centre for the production of military plant and equipment, and consumer goods to satisfy the civil markets of the Middle East by replacing those items which had hitherto come from overseas. “Within a period of a few months the railways were called upon to cope with a phenomenal increase in traffic”.¹⁷³

TABLE 4: P.R. GOODS TRAFFICS 1939 - 1945.

	(x 1000) :	<u>Ton/km. Civil.</u>	<u>Ton/km. Military.</u>	<u>Total.</u>
1939/40:	:	-	-	105,746
1940/41:	:	112,811	46,622	159,433
1941/42:	:	114,829	106,461	221,290
1942/43:	:	119,086	218,359	337,445
1943/44:	:	128,417	323,274	451,691
1944/45:	:	145,376	207,933	353,309

It will be observed that Ton-kilometrage rose by 50% between 1941/42, another 50% in 1942/43, and another 30% in 1943/44.¹⁷⁴

2:(C). THE "MILITARY OPERATING GROUP".

All this could not have been achieved without military assistance. Kirby noted that, whereas the heavy increases in traffic during the year 1941-1942 were met without any material increase in staff and without additional equipment, by early 1942 “it was evident that staff were being overworked and that the condition of locomotives was seriously deteriorating because of lack of maintenance.” In addition, though drastic steps were taken to recruit and train additional staff, conditions were such that recruitment was difficult, and there was no time to train engine crews and station staff to cope with the imminent increases in traffic which were anticipated by the Military authorities. To cover this emergency, a military Operating Group, comprising most of two Railway Operating Companies of the Royal Engineers, was attached to the Palestine Railways from November 1942 to take over the operation of Kantara Depot and the running of all trains between Kantara and Gaza. The stations remained in the charge of the Palestine Railways civilian staff, though several additional crossing stations were added to those normally open to traffic before the war. Kirby considered that the arrangement had worked smoothly. “By October 1943 sufficient civilian staff had been recruited and trained to

¹⁷² Kirby in P.R. G.M. Report 1946. From para. 22 “Syrian Campaign and Expansions of Hijaz Railway”.

¹⁷³ Kirby G.M. Report 1946. para. 23 “Standard Gauge Railways: Wartime Expansion”.

¹⁷⁴ Noticeable is how the civilian traffic rises comparatively slowly, albeit steadily, whilst military traffic more than doubles during 1941/2, doubles again in 1942/3, rises by almost another 50% to a peak in 1943/4, exceeding the civilian traffic for three of the five years.

enable the military personnel to be released to other spheres of operation.”¹⁷⁵

TABLE 5.¹⁷⁶ The following **P.R. STAFF STATISTICS** can be given for the period:

<u>Year</u>	<u>1st.Div.</u>	<u>2nd.Div.</u>	<u>Monthly paid</u>	<u>Daily paid</u>	<u>Total</u>
1942	21	429	1,032	5,393	6,877
1943	24	537	2,004	5,213	7,728
1944	36	519	2,557	4,634	7,746
1945	35	533	2,536	4,181	7,285

During the period, several military personnel were attached to P.R.; These were known collectively as the ‘Palestine Railways Liaison Unit’ and provided vital strengthening of staff in administrative and executive positions, enabling the railways and ports to carry on until civilian staff could be recruited in the United Kingdom. The P.R. Liaison Unit was eventually dissolved in September 1945. The cost of this personnel was borne by the P.R.¹⁷⁷

2:(D). MILITARY EXTENSIONS AND RAIL-SERVED BASES.

Several new lines and sidings had to be constructed, at short notice, to meet military requirements:-

(i). The Haifa-Beirut-Tripoli Railway.

This line, having been originally proposed (as a line from Haifa to Rayak) in 1940 and surveyed in August 1941, was opened to Beirut in August 1942 and throughout to Tripoli in December 1942, thus opening up P.R. to through traffic from the North. Except for certain military passenger trains which were worked through to Haifa by W.D. crews and locos, all traffic was exchanged at the border station of Azzib¹⁷⁸ where the Army established a large marshalling yard, loco depot and stores yard. At Acre itself (though the station was known as Manshiya - at H.B.T. Kilo.20.6) a large ammunition depot was built, with spurs into the hills on the east side. The section from Haifa to Azzib incorporated the dual-gauge P.R. line as far as Kiryat Motzkin and the narrow-gauge line towards Acre as far as Na’amin Junction on the outskirts of Acre. The section from Haifa to Azzib was staffed and operated by P.R., payment being received at the current rates for military traffic; a Wagon Exchange Control was set up at Azzib, and on 30. May 1945 a formal agreement was drawn up to regulate procedures. The line was officially used solely for military traffic. From 1. July 1945 civilian passenger trains were inaugurated Haifa - Naharia,¹⁷⁹ i.e. only within Palestine.

(ii). The Ma'an - Naqb Ashtar line.

This was constructed in March 1942 as part of an emergency alternative route, to

¹⁷⁵ Kirby G.M. report 1946. para. 24 “Military Operating Group”.

¹⁷⁶ From Para. 145, p.94; It can be seen that the ‘First Division’ senior staff was increased by over 50%, ‘Second Division’ (clerical staff and foremen etc.) by around 25% and, of the manual staff, the monthly-salaried number employed almost doubled in 1942-43, only part of this rise being accounted for by a drop in the daily-paid labouring staff.

¹⁷⁷ From Kirby, G.M. Report 1946, para. 25. “Palestine Railways Liaison Unit.” From Table 149 in the Report, p.96f, a total of 48 personnel were appointed at various times from 15. April 1941 to 6. September 1944 and were seconded for differing periods until July 1945. They acted as Assistant District Engineers, Signal Fitters, Asst. Running Supt., Asst. Works Supt., Loco Inspectors, Asst. District Traffic Supts., Wagon Controllers, Asst. Station Masters, Telegraphists and in a variety of other roles.

¹⁷⁸ Also known as Ez Zeeb, Az Zib, later Bassa and now Betzet.

¹⁷⁹ ‘Palestine Post’. 2. July 1945.

provide access to Akaba should the Canal be blocked. It never carried any traffic and was formally closed down from September 1943 as the changing strategic situation made its future use unlikely.¹⁸⁰ This was the only narrow-gauge extension as such, though it is believed the R.A.F. had a siding built at Mafraq.¹⁸¹

(iii). The Kantara - Rafah Railway, Capacity Improvements.

During 1941 new crossing stations were opened at Isdud, Deir Suneid, Balah, Gabr Amir, Midan, Missfak, El Negilah and El Burg. This increase in capacity was not, however, considered enough for the anticipated requirements of the military authorities.

In July 1941 it was proposed to double this entire line to cope with increased traffic. At the end of that month the Director of Railways proposed instead the construction of 12 new passing loops, as this would involve much less track and could reduce the maximum block section to 14km., around 25 minutes' transit time. This would give a theoretical capacity of 20 trains each way per day, of which it was considered "15 should be realised on an efficiently-operated controlled section such as this; this would give a daily tonnage figure of 3,850 tons per day against the present 2,800..."¹⁸²

Doubling the line had been intended to raise capacity to 5,400 tons per day plus 4 passenger or ambulance trains. By 5. December 1941 an estimate of £P107,277 had been offered and accepted¹⁸³ and involved construction of another 13 crossing stations at Sukreir, Rashida, Sheikh Zoweid, Geradi, Bardawil, Sebika, Tilul, Salama, Khirba, Rabah, Paluza, Tel Heir and Al Jiya, as well as considerable expansion of yard and locomotive depot facilities at Lydda and Kantara East.¹⁸⁴

Kirby noted¹⁸⁵ that, owing to delays in supply of materials and the inadequacy of labour and supervision, the new crossing stations were only partially completed by June 1942, and work on the marshalling yards and locomotive depots was in the initial stages only. "It was in these circumstances that the Palestine Railway was called upon to cope with the heavy traffic resulting from the retreat upon El Alamein. Fortunately, most of the track work of the new stations had been completed and the station staff had already been trained. It was, therefore, possible to set up emergency train working arrangements and to accommodate station staff in tents." Although a greater daily tonnage than planned was eventually moved during peak periods, the operation of the line never reached the maximum planned 17 trains because train loads of 1,000 tons could be handled by the U.S.A. 2-8-2 locomotives, as compared with the planned loads of only 600 tons.

(iv). The El Shatt Line and Firdan bridge.

By June 1941 a 112km. line was under construction along the east side of the Suez Canal from Kantara East to serve a new lighter-port at El Shatt¹⁸⁶ at the southern end of the Canal. This was intended to relieve the Canal and the Suez - Ismailia line, especially as the Canal was subject to frequent air and mining attack at the time. The line was built through uninhabited country with several stations named purely after Arabic numerals,

¹⁸⁰ Pick p. 600.

¹⁸¹ The ammunition depot at Acre/Akko was apparently served by a new mixed-gauge section of the H.B.T. from Na'amin Junc. See map in 'Harakevet' 61:12.

¹⁸² P.R.O. Kew, File WO 169/960, Letter Tn./R/4523/1 from GHQ MEF.

¹⁸³ Also Letter Tn.3/4523/1

¹⁸⁴ Pick notes: "In July/Sept. 1942, just before El Alamein, twelve crossing-places were opened on the Kantara - Rafa section..... These crossing places.... enabled the capacity of the Palestine - Egypt trunk line to be increased to about 17-18 trains daily. [each way] In other words, the carrying capacity of the line rose to some 5-6,000 tons daily." (p.599).

¹⁸⁵ P.R. G.M. Report 1946 para. 41, p.36.

¹⁸⁶ Also called Suez East, and sometimes referred to as Port Tewfiq or Taufiq.

and with occasional dog-leg curves to make air attack more difficult.¹⁸⁷

Associated with this was a swing-bridge over the Canal at El Firdan¹⁸⁸; this was originally planned for Kantara in January 1941, but the site was moved 21km. southwards to Ferdan by July 1941. By October it had been agreed that the bridge would cost £80,000 and that the approaches on the east side would be incorporated into the El Shatt line.¹⁸⁹ The bridge was opened to traffic on 7. August 1942; shortly afterwards the Kantara ferry was mothballed. During the war years rail traffic was allowed to pass uninterrupted during the night; However, once the war finished the Suez Canal Co. resumed 24-hour working, causing extensive and unpredictable delays to rail traffic. Through trains from Haifa to Cairo were introduced in August 1942, obviating the need for transshipment at Kantara.¹⁹⁰

(v). Military Bases.

The increased military traffic required increased infrastructure. Pick noted¹⁹¹ that, as the war went on, sections of the tracks were realigned and shortened, bridges were strengthened for heavier trains, and stations improved. Shunting yards were greatly expanded, so that Kantara was ultimately able to handle 2,000 goods wagons a day, Lydda 1,000 and Haifa 900.

In addition, major bases were built at: (Working northwards from Kantara):

Gilbana	(km. 396 from Haifa, on the K-R Rly.);	Base Ammunition Depot.
Rafa.	(km. 212 from Haifa, K-R Rly.)	Ordnance Depot.
Rashida.	(km. 185.45) P.R.	RAF base.

¹⁸⁷ Pick noted that the line was about 120km. long. "Its practical importance was very great, as it enabled stores, military and civilian, for Palestine and the Levant as a whole, to be discharged directly from ships onto trains over the new jetties - built in the war - at Port Tewfiq." In this way loads could be carried directly to their destinations in Palestine and beyond without cluttering up the wharves on the western bank of the Canal, especially at Suez, which were busy enough supplying the needs of Egypt and all the North African front.

(Pick could find no references to this line in the sources available to him, and reckoned it had fallen out of use by about 1943, but he knew the rails were still there until the 1967 war. The line appears in E.S.R. timetables at least until the WTT 1. Nov 1944 - 31. Oct 1945 (p.58/9). Stations listed on p. 24 are "Wahid, Itnein, Talata, Khamsa, Sab'a, Tisa and El Shatt" - Arabic equivalents to One, Two, Three, Five, Seven, Nine - so some numbers are missing.)

At Kantara a series of wharfs was also built for transshipment on the East side of the Canal - see memoirs of Bert Dyke in 'Harakevet' 37:17, 47:12, 49:9.

¹⁸⁸ Also called Ferdan.

¹⁸⁹ GHQ MEF Letter Tn/3/4089/1, WO 169/960-6.

¹⁹⁰ By 1946, with traffic ebbing, an inspection was paid to the Ferdan bridge, and is recorded as follows:

para. 7. "(We).. saw it opened (in four minutes) and closed. We discussed it with the R.E. Lieutenant in charge, who had never left his lonely post for months, and the Company's official (a Junior), and a Brigadier from GHQ..."

para. 8. "The bridge is seen as 'a potential danger', although not necessarily a great one. .. para. 14. "My own conclusion is that the present bridge does constitute a potential danger to ships, especially bad steerers at low speed, and it often a cause for anxiety."

para. 15. "The Brigadier.... told me 'that there had been a drive to remove the R.E. Subaltern for reasons of economy, but that in consequence of instructions from London he was to be retained.' ...His duties are not very onerous, but are continuous, as he turns out every time the bridge is closed to allow trains to pass, day or night. The average number of trains passing is eight in the 24 hours, but sometimes it rises to fourteen trains a day. Otherwise his duties are limited to communications with the Canal Co.'s Transit Dept. and for keeping in touch with and recording railway traffic approaching the bridge, for which he has a staff of three O.R.'s. [Other Ranks.]"

(Hankey to Scrivener, in: 'Egypt, J. 1030. Letter of 7. March 1946, Hankey, Privy Council, to P. S. Scrivener, CMG, F. Office, re. Ferdan Bridge. From the P.R.O., Kew, File FO/371. 53373.')

¹⁹¹ Pick, p. 597. He notes his source as the 1947 'British Handbook on Palestine', Jerusalem 1947. Restricted.

El Jiya (km. 156.49) P.R.	Fuel dump.
Beit Nabala, (with a 5.3km. branch from Kafr Jinnis at km. 104.3, north of Lydda). ¹⁹²	Ordnance Depot.
Tel Litvinsky. (km. 104.8).	US Army base.
Atlit. (km. 18.768)	Army & Navy; also D.P. Camp.
Kafr Samir. (km.8.32)	Base Workshop.
Neuhardhoff. (km. 8.7).	Army.
Kiryat Motzkin. (km.9.3 north of Haifa)	Ordnance Depot.
Kurdani. (km. 14.48, H.B.T.)	Workshops.
Manshiya. (km. 20.6, H.B.T.)	Ammunition Depot.
Azzib. (km. 37.36, H.B.T.)	Transportation Stores.

Wadi es Surar. (km. 37.19 from Jaffa, on Jerusalem line.)	Ammunition.
Zur. (km. 4.93 on H.R. line from Haifa).	Army.

The majority of these were built in 1941-1942. Most incorporated several kilometres of railway spread over a wide area amongst dispersed stores dumps. Gilbana, Rafa, El Jiya, Wadi Surar and Azzib were shunted by W.D. locos and crews, the others by P.R..¹⁹³

¹⁹² Paul Cotterell explored remains and prepared a map of this facility in 'Harakevet' 47:11, updated in 56:8, p.10.

¹⁹³ Pick's list of depots and sidings includes (p.599):

Bassa, near the Lebanese border. [*This is also Azzib and Betzet*].

At both sides of Tel el-Fukhar. (Acre.) [cf. article by Paul Cotterell in 'Harakevet 61'.]

Kurdani (in Haifa Bay).

Beled esh-Sheikh. (to serve the Royal Navy's underground oil storage tanks).

Neuhardhof and Tire (both south of Haifa.)

Ras el Ain. (for the R.A.F.) [*No further evidence for this has been seen.*]

Kafr Jinnis. (branch to Beit Nabala, on former WW1 route to Lubban.)

Wadi Sarar.

El Jiye.

"- other places in the south, especially around Gaza and Rafa." [There was a military stores siding at Majdal. See 'Harakevet' 52:10.]

"In August 1942 a ca. 10km. long spur, actually a fully-fledged branch line, was laid down from Kafr Jinnis to Tel Litvinsky, to serve the new American base there."

2:(E). MANAGEMENT CHANGES.

Another significant element was the changeover of senior management personnel within P.R. The period to 1945 saw the retirement of many senior staff who had been with the railway either since the very beginning in 1920, or at least since the 1930's. It is unclear from information available whether in all these cases the normal retirement age had been reached, or exceeded, or whether retirement was constrained by the additional pressures of wartime. This was certainly the case in one position - that of the C.M.E. By 1945 the P.R. senior cadre was of a very different order and nature to that of 1939, with the exceptions of the Chief Engineer, Scrivener, and the Assistant General Manager, Campigli.

- The shake-up in the Mechanical Department was near-total, whereas Scrivener and the Civil Engineering Department continued as before. However, Kirby shook up the entire managerial style of the railway so completely that one can detect an implied criticism that certain measures were not already in place. He took up his new appointment from 9. April 1942.¹⁹⁴ From the Staff Lists¹⁹⁵ we see on the Management side that J. Norman was appointed Principal Assistant only three days later, on 12. April 1942; G. M. Campigli, who had been Assistant General Manager for decades, was retired as from 18. September 1944.

As already noted, on the Mechanical side, A. L. Jones, the Asst. C.M.E., was retired from 6. November 1942, and from 7. November 1942, the very next day, T. H. Baggaley was promoted to Locomotive Superintendent.¹⁹⁶ P. A. Challoner came on board as Locomotive Engineer from 3. June.1944. E. R. Masters as C.M.E. had been retired from 25. July 1945, and was succeeded by W. G. W. Wilson as C.M.E. from 9. December 1945.

Three new Assistant Locomotive Superintendents were appointed - R. M. Davies on 12. July 1943, J. W. Lee from 16. August 1943, and A. G. Cowley from 13. January 1946.

On the Administrative side, W. D. Charlton, a new Chief Accountant, was brought in from 1. March 1944,¹⁹⁷ with an Assistant Accountant, J. Howat, from 15. July 1944 and C. D. Butcher as Accountant on 20. August 1944. Prior to this T. Saleh and J. Belivsky had both been promoted to Accountant from 1. October 1942. (W. F. L. Bate had been made Senior Accountant on 1. April 1942, just a few days before Kirby's official installation - it is unclear whether his promotion was therefore a part of Kirby's wholesale re-ordering of the P.R.'s Accounts Dept.) From 1943 mechanical methods were successfully introduced into the Accounts Dept., as "during the war accounting work in the Railway and in ports increased to an unprecedented degree and a considerable number of untrained, albeit costly, staff had to be engaged."¹⁹⁸

On the Operations side, several new Assistant Traffic Superintendents were appointed - C. J. G. Taylor on 1. September 1943, C. A. Chapple from 1. January 1944 till 24. February 1946, E. H. Johnson on 17. March 1944, R. E. Morris from 1. April 1944 also till 24. February 1946, E. H. Johnson from 17. March 1944 and N. W. Hall

¹⁹⁴ Webb's official retirement date was 24. September 1942 but it is worth noting, from the 'Palestine Gazette' and other sources, that the official date of retirement for senior officers usually incorporated accumulated Leave due, plus travel time to the U.K., and would be some months after they had last actually been at work.

¹⁹⁵ P.R. G.M. Report. 1942-46 p. 95.

¹⁹⁶ 'Promotion' means that he was already serving P.R.; where this term was not used, we indicate outside appointments.

¹⁹⁷ His predecessor W. M. Young retiring from 28. October 1944.

¹⁹⁸ P.R. G.M. Report 1942-46 p. 98 para. 156.

from 15. March 1946; S. A. Collins and M. Paicovitch had both been promoted to Asst. Traffic Supt. from 1. January 1946.

2:(F). ORGANISATION, PRODUCTIVITY AND STAFF RELATIONS.

Other changes which affected the staff were important both for morale and good organisation. These included:

A post of Welfare Officer was created from 15. March 1943 (S. A. Reading, succeeded after his retirement from 1. October 1945 by R. Lehrer). A Progress Officer, E. Moore, was appointed from 1. April 1943.

A Provident Fund Ordinance was promulgated on August 1943, having effect from 1. April 1943, whereby all salaried and monthly-rated staff drawing between LP60 and LP300 p.a. came within the Provident Fund scheme.¹⁹⁹ From January 1943 all “daily-rated artisan and comparable grades” became eligible for monthly-rated status; this affected 745 employees who immediately, due to the transfer, received improved leave and sick benefits.²⁰⁰ A Medical Officer was appointed in 1943 to deal solely with railway staff in Haifa; elsewhere the staff were cared for by District Government Medical Officers.

Water supplies were improved.²⁰¹ A system of centralising signal-levers was worked out by the Telegraph and Signal Inspector and by the end of March 1945 most stations had been equipped with this system “whereby the officer on charge of the station has complete control of all fixed signals controlling the movement of trains”²⁰² - a pretty basic matter. A Sub-Control Office was installed at Lydda and opened on 17. June 1942, to control traffic between Lydda and Kantara; it was closed (though retained for emergency use only) from 1. October 1945. By this time several new telephone and telegraph lines had also been opened; Prior to these improvements it had been impossible for Control at Haifa to communicate by telephone with anywhere south of Lydda due to the quality of the line!²⁰³

A Conciliation Staff Committee was formed in January 1943, with the Chief Accountant as Chairman, two Railway representatives, two Workers’ representatives, and one of the Labour Dept. The Welfare Officer acted as Secretary. It was noted that this committee had “suffered from inexperience on both sides but, though it is not yet the efficient negotiating machine it should be, it has achieved a good deal.”²⁰⁴

The Welfare Officer was charged from March 1943 with promotion of good relationships between the Management and Employees, by examining conditions of employment, implementing where possible the Government’s labour policy, and building up records and statistics relating to employment, with a view to economic working and the elimination of abuses.²⁰⁵

A Suggestions Scheme was also introduced in January 1943. It was drily noted that “the nature of the suggestions made has been a disappointing revelation of the calibre of the majority of the railway staff; Nevertheless, some thoughtful proposals have been received from younger members of the staff and it is hoped that the raising of the

¹⁹⁹ P.R. G.M. Report 1942-46. p.97. Para. 150. By 31. March 1946 there were 2,188 members of the Fund with more expected.

²⁰⁰ op. cit. p. 97. para. 151.

²⁰¹ op. cit. p. 40 para. 49.

²⁰² op. cit. p. 40 para. 50.

²⁰³ op. cit. p.40 para. 51. Also p. 60: “It had previously been practically impossible for Control to raise any station below Yibna (Kilo 125) and speech with Kantara had usually been impossible on the Control line.”

²⁰⁴ op. cit. p. 42. para. 54.

²⁰⁵ op. cit. p. 42 para. 56. His task seems from this to have been more to promote the welfare of the Railway than that of the individual workers!

general educational level and proficiency will stimulate interest enough to provoke a desire for improvement in the individuals.”²⁰⁶

Cost-of-Living Allowances based on an Index were introduced from 1942, since the original Government measures were proving insufficient in view of greatly-increased prices under wartime conditions. A Food Shop was opened at Haifa East in September 1942, to facilitate the purchase of food at controlled prices and assist in regular and sure supply. By 1946 this had 412 registered customers. At the same time a shop established by a Workers’ Cooperative at Lydda was supported by the Railway with use of a building and a financial advance.²⁰⁷

Staff Training was clearly seen as a priority. The 1942-46 Report notes that a Training School was opened in October 1943 at Haifa East for Locomotive and Traffic staff, and a Hostel for 48 students created; Regular refresher courses were held to raise the standards of proficiency of serving employees, and the intention was to provide longer courses for new recruits; Specialised courses were given for drivers and firemen, traffic staff, and gangers and platelayers.²⁰⁸ It was also hoped to introduce ‘Mutual Improvement Classes’ whereby the staff could learn from each other.²⁰⁹

2:(G). SECURITY.

Security was also an issue, and not just in terms of matters of sabotage. Pilferage had reached endemic proportions, including not just ‘normal’ losses during transshipment, or fittings and railway property, but organised thefts on a large scale from running trains. “Trains were being stopped in section in collaboration with railway staff and valuable consignments stolen. In particular this was happening in the Sinai Desert.” Therefore “in the early part of 1943 a Railway Police Division was formed, as a branch of the Palestine Police Force, under charge of a Deputy Superintendent of Police”.²¹⁰ This force comprised static guards, train escorts and an Investigation Branch. “Within a year of its formation theft fell to a low level and pilferage was reduced to negligible proportion.” The precautions were unusual for railway practice, with ALL goods trains escorted, and Kirby noted “the precaution is a costly one, but not so costly in reputation and money as would be the heavy incidence of theft without the force.” The Railway Police also took over anti-sabotage guard duties previously covered by the Palestine Railway Police Division, who appear not to have been fulfilling - or been able to fulfil - what was required of them.

Since Palestine Police were not able to operate in the Sinai - which was nominally Egyptian territory - “with the good offices of the Governor of Sinai” a Ghaffir Force was formed to escort all trains. “The result was most satisfactory, and the arrangement has become a permanent feature of train operation across Sinai. The ghaffirs are not armed.”

²⁰⁶ op. cit. p. 42 para. 55.

²⁰⁷ op. cit. p. 43 para. 58.

²⁰⁸ op. cit. p. 44 para. 59.

²⁰⁹ This was remarkably advanced for the time; in Britain almost all training was purely ‘on the job’ or by Mutual Improvement Classes, in the employees’ own time and at no cost to the railways!

²¹⁰ op. cit. p. 44 para. 61.

2:(H). COMMUNICATION AND DOCUMENTATION.

There was a lot more to do in terms of creating an efficient railway out of what had been the weakest link of the British supply chain. Almost immediately, from 20. June 1942, a General Manager's Weekly Notice was inaugurated "for the purpose of disseminating general information to the staff".²¹¹

It was noted that the P.R. was "unusually deficient in codified books of instructions" and steps were taken to prepare Staff Regulations, an Official Tariff Book, a new Rule Book,²¹² and a General Appendix to the Rule Book. In 1941 it appeared that no printed Working Timetable was available at all, "the train staff being dependent upon cyclostyled sheets which were issued from time to time". Kirby sorted out this item quickly. "Working Time Table No. 1 was issued with effect from 15. August 1942 complete with General Instructions - load tables, engine, coach and guards working, rolling stock particulars etc. - the first issue of its kind. Timetables 2 and 3 were issued on 1. April 1943 and 1. May 1944 respectively, each embodying improvements."²¹³ A pamphlet with instructions governing Enquiries into Accidents was issued on 1. March 1945, and Traffic Inspectors' Reports were inaugurated in September 1945.²¹⁴ In the meantime, a bi-weekly Traffic & Locomotive Meeting was introduced, and these were later combined into a Monthly Officers' Meeting attended by all Heads of Branches, with the General Manager of course in the chair. A monthly Stores Conference had been called into being in June 1944, due to the acute supply situation.²¹⁵ Through these and other measures, communication within the Railway was immeasurably improved.

2:(I). POSTWAR PLANNING.

Yet another element was the extent to which this new leadership team was able to plan ahead, from about 1942 onwards as the intensity of the wartime threats receded, for the postwar world. Whilst this is a theme to be explored in greater depth later, it was clearly an issue which exercised the minds of several senior managers as they looked forward to a situation transformed both politically and also in terms of increased regional co-operation over transport links.

2:(J).MOTIVE POWER PROBLEMS: SHORTAGES, MAINTENANCE, DESIGN FAULTS.

Due to wartime conditions no new locomotives or items of rolling stock were ordered and purchased during the war; however, a large amount of War Department (W.D.) and United States Army Transportation Corps (U.S.A.T.C.) power and stock²¹⁶ was hired as available and as necessary. These will be described later. Nevertheless, it was problems with the motive power that created the crisis which precipitated so many changes and brought Kirby in.

It is perhaps fair to say that P.R. almost came to a standstill in 1942-1943 - and the consequences for the Allied war effort, desperately dependent on land-based supply and communication lines, could have been disastrous. Part of the problem was the sheer overloading of the system - the capacity of the existing single track and the passing loops, capacity of sidings and marshalling yards, the number of wagons available, and so

²¹¹ op. cit. p. 45 para. 63.

²¹² This was published in 1948.

²¹³ op. cit. p. 45 para. 62.

²¹⁴ op. cit. p. 45 para. 62(c).

²¹⁵ op. cit. p. 45 para. 64.

²¹⁶ Normally referred to as "Lease-Lend" material.

forth. There were no real alternatives - the Eastern Mediterranean was effectively closed to shipping, and road transport was limited and ineffective.²¹⁷ At this period the utilization of motor transport over roads was not very practicable, except to a very limited extent, and usually only over short distances. Trucks with a large carrying capacity existed only in limited numbers in Palestine (and adjoining countries), and they also demanded spares and petrol which were in short supply

A part of the problem was however self-inflicted; Due to the shortage of coal and the difficulties of supply,²¹⁸ it was decided towards the end of 1941 to convert some standard-gauge P.R. locomotives to oil-firing; and by early 1942 it was considered necessary to convert all the locomotives of both standard- and narrow-gauge to oil-firing.²¹⁹ Unfortunately there were major problems, and it was this which, more than anything else, seemed to lead to the crisis that led to Kirby's appointment.

H. A. Cotching had retired as C.M.E. 16. March 1940,²²⁰ A. L. Jones was appointed Acting C.M.E. from 25. February 1940,²²¹ and retired from 6. November 1942; from 7. November 1942, the very next day, T. H. Baggaley was promoted to Locomotive Superintendent, and E. R. Masters was appointed w/e/f 4. November 1940.²²² E. R. Masters as C.M.E. had been retired from 25. July 1944, but officially retired on 7. August 1945,²²³ and was replaced by W. G. W. Wilson who was appointed from 9. December 1945.²²⁴ In the meantime P. A. Challoner (see below) was appointed "Loco Engineer for Special Duty" on 3. June 1944,²²⁵ this appointment ceased from 18. December 1945.²²⁶

2:(K). CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF THE OIL-FIRING FIASCO.

Since closure of the Eastern Mediterranean to shipping had made coal supplies difficult, it was natural that thought should be given to using a more indigenous fuel supply - especially with Haifa at the end of an oil pipeline and with a refinery capable of producing Heavy Oils (though not lubricating oils, nor aviation fuel). But this proved to

²¹⁷ Pick observed (p.589.) "There were only some 14,700 motor vehicles of all types in Palestine in 1944 (trucks were a minority) - their numbers had actually decreased since 1940. The number of trucks in other Levant states must have been even less, as there more reliance was placed on traditional means of transport, camels and donkeys." (based on 'Encyclopaedia Hebraica' Vol. 6 col. 956.)

Some 75-120 of the standard 3-ton lorries of the period were needed to carry the load hauled by one train of approx. 15-20ton wagons. See 'Rakavoth Eretz Israel veNimleiha;' Palestine, poss. Haifa, ca.1947., p.7.)

²¹⁸ As an example, in 1934 31,947 tons of loco coal were imported, from Lewis Merthyr and Great Western collieries. (P.R. G.M. Report 1934, p.24. para.77.)

²¹⁹ According to R. Tustin & E. Jones: "§.12. "In 1930, experiments in the use of oil fuel were carried out on one of the P.R. locos, by a leading oil company, at the latter's request. Results did not indicate sufficient prospect of economy to justify its universal adoption and the idea was dropped. Ironically enough, during the recent war, oil fuel had to be resorted to, in view of the acute coal shortage. Necessity, we are told, is the mother of invention, and sure enough the various difficulties that had previously been experienced in 1930 were, one by one, overcome. It is reasonable to assume that oil burning will continue here even after the country settles down to peacetime conditions and the coal shortage is a thing of the past." No confirmation of this 1930 experiment has been found elsewhere.

²²⁰ 'Palestine Gazette' 995 of 21. April 1940.

²²¹ 'Palestine Gazette' 990 of 7. March 1940. This meant there was an 'interregnum' at a very difficult time.

²²² 'Palestine Gazette' 1059 of 28. July 1940.

²²³ 'Palestine Gazette' 1432 of 16. August 1945 p. 956.

²²⁴ 'Palestine Gazette' 1467 of 10. Jan. 1946, p. 29.

²²⁵ 'Palestine Gazette' 1349 of 3. August 1944

²²⁶ 'Palestine Gazette' 1467 of 10. January 1946.

be merely the catalyst for further problems, which need to be described fully because their implications were so significant. What really happened?

Several contemporary reports indicate the technical side of the problem, though there are differences in their accounts. It seems Masters had employed a cylindrical oil burner with a swirling action. It is believed that he had been persuaded by the Army to use this type, which had been extensively used in Egypt.²²⁷ He also used an inadequate number of firebricks in the design. The consequence was that the oil-fired locos rapidly burned the backplate around the firebox rings. Kirby refers²²⁸ to the system adopted as being "readily revertible to coal burning",²²⁹ by direction of the military authorities. "The conversion programme was put in hand at a time when traffic on the P.R. was increasingly rapidly, when the locomotives were already being overtaxed, and when additional W.D. locomotives had not begun to arrive in sufficient numbers to provide real assistance."

Stead described the conversion of P.R. locomotives from coal to oil burning, initiated in 1942, as "a not too happy development". The system employed, which was hurriedly adopted under the direction of the Military authorities, was that in use on the neighbouring Chemin de Fer du Hedjaz. Unfortunately, in service on larger standard-gauge engines this was found to present serious disadvantages. These included relatively poor atomisation and incomplete combustion of the oil; lack of control of air entry to the firebox; the necessity for auxiliary coal fires; excessive wastage and burning of the firebox roof stay nuts, superheater elements and tube ends; and relatively poor steaming due to poor spreading of the oil flame, plus the poor atomisation and incomplete combustion. In short, the locomotive fireboxes and their component parts were suffering from the way the heat was being distributed - or not.²³⁰ A radical modification was therefore made in 1943. This involved placing the oil burner at the front of the firebox through a ferrule in the water space; later a firepan was provided to carry firebricks, and a better pattern of firehole door with a damper was fitted. The existing firebars were scrapped. Further burner modifications were introduced in November 1943, and ultimately in 1944 a 'Mexican Trough'-type burner was employed. Additional improvements enabled the oil-burning engines to be operated at

²²⁷ This, and most of the information and assessments on the technical nature of the oil-firing fiasco, is from a series of interviews with R. M. Davies, a former P.R. Loco Supt. and published in 'Harakevet' 8:17. However, P.R.O. WO169/963 indicates: "4-6. Aug. 1941 - Simner visited Jerusalem & Damascus to discuss rail needs & problems, incl. use of C.F.H. workshops at Cadem. 9. August 1941 - Simner met with Masters (C.M.E., P.R.) re. conversion of locos to oil firing."

²²⁸ P.R. G.M. Report 1946 para.28, pp. 29f.

²²⁹ Coal supplies at this stage in 1941 were at a parlous state. By February 1941, Palestine had 2 months supply (11,058 Tons - 4,064 T were consumed in January 1941). P.R. had consumed 3,942 tons in January 1941, and had only supplies for two months - 7,116 tons - left in stock. P.R. imported Welsh Steam Coal - the Annual Reports list ships and tonnages per year. Middle East Supply Centre (M.E.S.C.) was also concerned about dwindling coalstocks in the entire area. Notes at the PRO illustrate the problem: No coal at all was received in the Middle East in that month; A demand for 6 months' supply was signalled to W.O. & India. In March 1941 India agreed to supply 6 months military coal for ME. On 23. Sept. 1941 a ship ('San Antonio') loaded with 4,500 tons was not permitted to sail from Port Said to Haifa because of her charter conditions. Clearly any attempt to reduce coal consumption was vital, but flexibility was also important. Details can be found in WO169/964, Minute 3450. "Coal". (p.11). On 25. Sept. 1941. 25,000 tons was believed to be held for M.E.S.C. (Min. 3503). Min. 4297 of 3. Nov. 1941 notes: Coal for Haifa - but ship not allowed through Suez Canal due to terms of its charter. Min. 4402, 8. Nov. 1941: MILPAL said that P.R. had agreed to look after all Army shipments of coal but could not deal with mixed shipments.

²³⁰ As a matter of elementary physics, the uneven distribution of heat, or a sudden ingress of cold air, would lead to uneven expansion and contraction - and therefore damage to the metals of which the firebox and boiler were constructed.

last without excessive wear and tear of the firebox and to steam satisfactorily under all conditions, but a much greater degree of boiler maintenance was found essential. “Eventually, in the years 1944-46, the P.R. undertook conversions from coal to oil burning with good results, on the system developed by the Iraqi State Railways.”²³¹

Touret notes²³² the following problems with respect to the narrow-gauge locomotives: “Originally the system applied was supposed to be convertible back to coal, although none of the locomotives ever were, and the system was that already employed on the Syrian part of the Hedjaz. The ‘mazout’ fuel did not atomise or burn well, and poor steaming resulted until various modifications were carried out.” As can be seen from the serviceability figures, there was considerable trouble:

TABLE 6. LOCOMOTIVE FAILURES.

Year.	No. of Failures.	Engine km. per failure.
1940/1.	14	33,703.
1941/2.	89	6,958.
1942/3.	351	2,195.
1943/4.	532	1,312.
1944/5.	227	2,429.
1945/6.	63	10,404.

Kenneth Cameron recalled that his unit, the 199 Railway Workshops Coy., Royal Engineers, were first billeted at Haifa in 1941, and worked mainly alongside the Palestine Railways civilian staff in Qishon Works. The conversion of coal-burning engines to burn heavy oil was a priority, as was getting some almost-derelict Hedjaz engines back into service. “The oil-burning system used initially was the somewhat crude method of blowing oil by steam jet directly into the existing firehole, the firebox being suitably bricked up; the main result of this was poor steaming and appalling amounts of black smoke! Following the importation of the American 2-8-2 engines, their method of injecting the oil and steam backwards into the firebox from the front of the foundation ring towards the rear of the box was adopted, again with suitable firebox brick linings.”²³³

²³¹ Arthur L. Stead. Article in “The Locomotive”, 15. Oct. 1948, p. 158.

²³² op. cit. p. 98.

²³³ A full and ‘official’ account of this crisis is given in the P.R. G.M. Report 1942-46, p. 79. This lists four changes in sequence: In 1942 the system then in use on the C de F. du Hedjaz was adopted, but led to severe problems of wastage of superheater elements and tube ends, incomplete combustion due to poor atomisation, poor control over air admission and poor steaming in general. In 1943 the oil burner was placed at the front of the firebox, through a ferrule in the waterspace, and this was followed by provision of a firepan to carry brickwork and a correct pattern of firehole door with a damper. Further modifications in Nov. 1943 improved atomisation of the oil but still did not give satisfactory results, with burning of roof stay nuts, tube ends and superheater elements, and in 1944 the system was modified once again, involving introduction of an improved type (Mexican Trough) burner, improved firepan and hopper and improved system of air supply, control of the flames by installing firebricks to protect the firedoor plate and roofstays, brickwork to protect the tubeplate from chilling when the burner was turned off - these bricks retained the heat - and smokebox modifications to change the blast. Other minor alterations included chimney caps to prevent draught when an engine was standing without fire, a blowback valve fitted to enable the driver to clear the fuel pipe of obstructions, and a redesigned fuel pipe from tender tank to burner. The transformation was complete but clearly required time and effort and ingenuity. The Report refers to implementation of the Iraqi State Railways system.

It should be noted that the design of steam locomotives is as much an art as it is a science; the exact proportions of firebox, boiler, chimney-blastpipe, cylinders, driving wheels etc. allows for almost endless permutations and hefty debate amongst engineers; add to these the issue of the fuels available - different types of coal with different calorific values, thicker or thinner oils - and the result is that the scope for producing something that ought to work - but doesn't - is also great. The misfortune here resulted from the haste and the urgency of the wartime situation, and the lack of time for various trials. In the First World

This meant a heavy conversion load on the Works, but the results justified it, with much better steaming and less smoke.

The Royal Engineers found the working arrangements at Qishon unsatisfactory as the military workload increased with the arrival of additional W.D. stock, and it became essential to find additional and separate premises. At Jaffa station a large Citrus Shed and two Customs warehouses, all rail-connected, were requisitioned in 1942. The conversion of P.R. Baldwin 4-6-0 and '04' R.O.D. 2-8-0 locomotives from coal- to oil-burning remained the main priority after transfer to Jaffa, the work being carried out at the same time as the new workshops were being converted. In addition, the locomotive availability of the P.R. was so low - down to 45% - that a detachment of the company had to be stationed at Lydda in order to assist the civil repair force at the depot. "By herculean efforts the availability very soon reached the much better figure of 70% and the detachment was withdrawn to Jaffa."²³⁴

Clearly this was a disastrous situation - less than half the locomotives were available for traffic! The loco stock, already mostly elderly, was further reduced by accidents. Five main-line standard-gauge locomotives were written-off through train accidents in late 1941 and early 1942 leaving a fleet of only 57, "which was seriously inadequate to cope with increasing traffic."²³⁵

Eventually a total of 57 main-line and 15 shunting locos were converted to oil-firing on the standard gauge, plus 20 of the W.D. "R.O.D."-type 2-8-0's, and 22 narrow-gauge locos. In addition oil fuel storage tanks and servicing installations had to be constructed at Haifa, Tulkarm, Lydda, Gaza, Kantara, Samakh, Amman and Ma'an. These tanks were constructed of concrete, mostly below ground level.

The problems became horrendous. As Kirby writes:

"It was to be expected that the adoption of oil burning in the circumstances mentioned would not be without difficulties. The conversion was undertaken hurriedly, without adequate research, and the new system was introduced to staff who had no previous training or experience in the technique of oil burning. At the same time, every locomotive possible was being pressed into service to cope with the increasing demands of military traffic. Running maintenance was being sacrificed and there was little opportunity for experimental work upon oil burning. The hasty introduction of a new system, with untutored staff, soon resulted in much damage to boilers and the availability of locomotives fell to dangerously low levels during the years 1942 and 1943. Experience was dearly bought."

Robin Davies noted in his diary during September-December 1943 that the Baldwins were suffering from firehole rings burning due to lack of firebricks. By the end of 1943, about 93 out of around 150 locos were in workshops! This was a disaster, and "there were mutterings in high places. This situation had arisen principally due to the boiler troubles."

- At his wits' end,²³⁶ Kirby²³⁷ asked for an engineer from Nairobi to inspect the

War the British blockade of the Mediterranean and consequent coal shortages had resulted in the Turkish railways being forced to employ timber instead of coal - a very different type of fuel, with different heat and ash properties and similar disastrous consequences for steam output.

²³⁴ From K.R.M. Cameron: "Some Reminiscences on Railways in Palestine 1942-44." Typescript of 11. Jan. 1978, in the then-National Museum of Army Transport, Beverley. [N.B. This museum has since closed.]

²³⁵ Stead. op. cit. p. 157.

²³⁶ R. M. Davies' opinion. In private conversation. Harakevet 8:17.

system and make a formal report, since the system was coming under heavy criticism from the military. Rob Kirkland, Assistant C.M.E. of the Kenya-Uganda Railway and Works Manager at Nairobi, arrived in February 1944. He was an experienced engineer, aged around 55. Although his report criticised the standard of boiler washouts,²³⁸ his main finding was that the wrong sort of burner was being used and that the swirling-cylindrical burner should be replaced by the more-common "Mexican Trough" design. In consequence Masters was moved,²³⁹ and a new engineer appointed.²⁴⁰ This was P. A. Challoner, who had worked for Lord Beaverbrook at the Ministry of Aircraft Production, and who came from service on the Iraq State Railways where he had been responsible immediately pre-war for the design of some large new oil-burning 4-6-2 express locomotives.²⁴¹

Within 18 months Challoner had turned the loco situation round. He redesigned the fireboxes, installing a 1½-brick, tapered protective layer to turn the flames back from vulnerable fireplates. He also instituted use of steel boiler stays, after it became clear that Qishon Works had been employing poor-quality copper due to wartime supply difficulties; In one case in April 1944 a tank loco from the Jerusalem line booked for repairs was found to have 117 broken boiler stays - so that it was quite miraculous the boiler had not exploded. Having tried out his ideas on Baldwin 4-6-0 No. 892, other locos were soon modified.²⁴²

Challoner also redesigned the lubrication on the Kitson 2-8-4T's (which, despite the motive power shortage, were being stored out of use at Lydda shed!) and had them re-weighed and the suspension adjusted, after which they became "quite useful engines".²⁴³ In addition he had boiler blow-down equipment fitted to the 'R.O.D.' type 2-8-0's. He was perhaps most famous amongst staff for insisting that all locomotive numbers be painted in enormous figures on tender or tank sides - apparently so that he could tell from a distance which loco was making too much smoke, and have the crew disciplined accordingly.²⁴⁴

Challoner also tightened-up many other maintenance procedures - including the frequency of boiler washouts - and abolished the Lydda District as an autonomous unit, causing the District Loco Supt. (Harvey) to be prematurely retired. The headquarters at Haifa could now supervise the entire Loco Department.

According to Davies, Masters was "an adequate engineer, who had only been in post for three or four years and would have been quite all right in normal times" - a

²³⁷ Kirby had of course served on the Kenya-Uganda Railway, hence presumably his choice of this adviser.

²³⁸ Needed to remove alkaline scale built up when the water was boiled, depositing any impurities in the solution.

²³⁹ He returned to work at the Crown Agents.

²⁴⁰ As noted, his title was not "C.M.E." but he was effectively the trouble-shooter brought in to do what the real C.M.E. could not manage.

²⁴¹ These four express engines were built, amazingly, by Robert Stephenson of Newcastle in 1940, presumably with a view to use on international trains when the link with Nusaybin was complete. Three were delivered (Nos. 501-503; No. 504 was sunk *en route.*) (Hughes p. 98f.).

²⁴² Information from R. M. Davies & J. Lee. In 'Harakevet' 8:17 & 34:10, 34:12, 35:12.

²⁴³ per R. M. Davies, who was given this job to do.

²⁴⁴ The impact his personality made can be seen in this memoir from R.M. Davies, fifty years later: "He was an incredible man; about 60 years old, knowledgeable, competent and ruthless. Challoner could give lessons on how to get things done. Up at 6am., he'd go around the whole of Qishon and the sheds, and arrive at his office at 7.30am with a list of questions - and one had to have the answers ready! The interview would be on the lines of: "You've had a failure; what are you doing about it, why did it happen, what are you going to do to prevent it happening again?" He could be blunt and rude with colleagues - but when Baker, the Superintendent of the Line, once complained to Kirby, Kirby backed Challoner."

reflection, perhaps, on the extraordinary nature of those times and the demands they made. Cotching had been little more than a figurehead; Jones, "a very clever engineer", had done most of the design work in recent years - such as the conversion of Baldwin 4-6-0's into 4-6-4T's, and general improvements to the Baldwin locos with Belpaire fireboxes to replace their original round-topped ones, stouter coupling rods (made at Qishon) and other miscellaneous strengthening of weak spots.

On Challoner's departure, just before Christmas 1945, W. G. W. Wilson was appointed from Nigeria - "a very different character, and rather pedantic".²⁴⁵

Kirby, was of course, not a mechanic but an "operating man", and was dependent on the advice of his trusted assistants and associates in clearing up this enormous problem. The fact that so many staff were brought in from OUTSIDE Palestine is revealing of his (and others') opinions of the current staff. But it had been this crisis, with the vital transport link between the Egyptian supply bases through Palestine and the new Haifa-Beirut-Tripoli line which linked to Syria, Iraq and even Turkey crippled through motive power shortage, that appears to have led to the decision to bring Arthur Kirby in as General Manager²⁴⁶ when Cecil Webb took Sick Leave.

This decision was to have a major impact on the remaining six years or so of the existence of Palestine Railways. Kirby brought a 'new broom' approach, and an unusual combination of realism, professionalism and idealism, which saw P.R. through the rest of the War and then into the uneasy and conflict-filled period which led to the end of the Mandate and the winding-up of Palestine Railways.

²⁴⁵ R.M. Davies' opinion again. See above.

²⁴⁶ 'Palestine Gazette' No. 1190. Thurs. 30. April 1942. p.520. "The Officer Adminstrating the Government has appointed: Mr. A.F. Kirby to be General Manager, Palestine Railways, w/e/f 9. April 1942."

2:(L). HIRE OF W.D. LOCOMOTIVES.²⁴⁷

A series of accidents in late 1941 and early 1942 had led to the writing-off of five main-line locos,²⁴⁸ leaving a fleet of only 57 - seriously inadequate to cope with the increasing traffic. Replacement purchases were impossible and so military (W.D. and U.S.A.T.C) locomotives were drafted in to help relieve the situation, whether by working the new lines or assisting on the existing lines. In March 1942 the first locos arrived under W.D. auspices to assist with traffic working. First came two²⁴⁹ L.M.S.-type 2-8-0's²⁵⁰, followed by 20 "R.O.D." 2-8-0's of Robinson G.C.R. design as built for the Railway Operating Division in France in World War 1 - hence their designation "R.O.D.". By June 1942 the first of the Lease-Lend U.S.A.T.C. 'Middle East' ('M.E.') 2-8-2's designed by Hill had arrived, and at one point there were 26 of these locos in use augmenting the P.R. stock. By the latter part of 1943 more of the L.M.S.-type "8F" 2-8-0's had arrived, and these found more favour with the P.R. authorities,²⁵¹ gradually replacing the U.S.A. 2-8-2 and R.O.D. 2-8-0 types. "By March 1946 the P.R. had on hire from the War Department five U.S.A. 2-8-2 and twenty L.M.S. 2-8-0 engines."²⁵²

For shunting, the military authorities also operated several U.S.A.T.C. 0-6-0T locos at bases such as Rafah; the Wadi Surar ammunition factory was initially served by Hunslet 0-6-0ST's from the Haifa Harbour Works, reconditioned at Qishon Works by the 199 Rly. Wkshps. Coy. R.E., but W.D. locos served here later. The Kantara-Rafah line was for a period in 1942-1943 operated by the U.S.A.T.C. Whitcomb 165hp. Bo-Bo diesels, which also operated on the H.B.T. line.

All these locomotives, however helpful, had their problems and weak spots. According to Davies the M.E. 2-8-2's "were not as rugged as they looked". Although they had good boilers, inferior-quality steel had been used in their construction and, until

²⁴⁷ It may be appropriate here to clarify some commonly-used abbreviations. "WD" or "W.D." refers to the War Department, "R.O.D." to the Railway Operating Division as indicated in the text - a term which technically applied only to the First World War. "G.C.R." is the Great Central Railway, which was merged in 1923 into the London & North Eastern Railway. The L.N.E.R. gave this engine - classified 8K by the G.C.R. - the classification "O4" - "O" being their classification letter for 2-8-0 freight engines, "4" meaning simply that there were several types with this wheel arrangement. But these engines were referred to as "O4's" "O.4's" or "R.O.D.'s" interchangeably.

"L.M.S." is the "London, Midland and Scottish Railway", formed also in 1923 from a combination of several smaller companies. This was what is referred to as the "Grouping" of U.K. railway companies into four main-line and one London system. "8F" was a power classification term employed by the L.M.S. - '8' being high on the 0-9 scale of tractive effort, 'F' standing for Freight. "U.S.A.T.C." is the U.S. Army Transportation Corps.

²⁴⁸ Cotterell p.128 lists these as Baldwins 875, 877, 888, 889, 908; cf. Draft typescript article on 'Railways of Palestine', by Ray Tustin and Ernie Jones, prepared for "S.L.S. Journal" but never published. Written ca. 1947/8, copy via E. Jones. (private correspondence).

p.8. "Five further Baldwins were rebuilt in 1937, this time as 4-6-4T's, the purpose being to release the Kitson 2-8-4T for duty on the main line. During the second World War there have been several accidents, involving the withdrawal of five Baldwin 4-6-0, whilst more latterly the Terrorists have blown up several more locos, details of which are not known."

²⁴⁹ Nos. 9305 & 9335. These were MEF 1942 numbers; Rowledge (Vol. 2 p. 54f.) has 9305 as W.D. 366 and E.S.R. 879, 9335 as W.D. 436 and as becoming E.S.R. No. 888 by 1944.

²⁵⁰ These were a new standard class on the London, Midland & Scottish Railway (L.M.S.), designed by Sir William Stanier, and allocated the power class "8F" - see above. They were therefore colloquially referred to later variously as the "Eight-Effs", or "Ha-Ellemmesses".

²⁵¹ Various modifications had to be made to suit local conditions, and also to the oil-firing system. These are described in various issues of "Black Eight" magazine.

²⁵² Stead. op. cit. p.157. In fact the situation was much more fluid than this - Tourret has five pages (pp.201-205) just on the distribution and allocations of the U.S.A.T.C. M.E. 2-8-2's in the "Middle East", and this excludes separate treatment of Iraq, Iran and Turkey.

high-tensile steel tyres had been fitted, they had a tendency to wear out a hollow up to ½-in deep in the tyres at the point of hammer-blow.²⁵³ The Whitcombs kept blowing cylinder-heads, possibly because their engines had been uprated beyond their design level. The R.O.D.'s had heavy and unreliable exhaust injectors, vulnerable nuts rather than rivets in the firebox (unsuitable when oil-firing apparatus was fitted), and needed replacement bronze piston-glands to help reduce the incidence of major damage should there be a lubrication failure. The 8F's were fitted with a 'continuous blowdown' system which removed impurities from the top of the water surface, at a cost in water consumption, so Challoner had manual blowdown valves fitted at the base of the firebox to allow accumulated sludge and scale to be expelled.

2:(M). HIRE OF W.D. GOODS ROLLING STOCK.

A large proportion of the wagons in traffic over the P.R. system from 1942 onwards were of W.D. origin or ownership. Although numbers fluctuated slightly the P.R. Working Timetable No. 4 for 1. November 1945 lists ²⁵⁴ the following:

TABLE 7: WAR DEPARTMENT WAGONS AVAILABLE FOR USE.

216 13T Open wagons, purchased from W.D. (hand-brake only).

On hire from W.D. were:-

110 35T bogie box vans. (vacuum brakes). (plus 120 to be hired).

137 20T box vans. vacuum brakes. (plus 150 to be hired).

32 18T tank wagons. (hand brakes).

5 8½-14T tank wagons, misc. Hand brakes.

7 30T bogie tanks, for Black oils, hand brake but piped for vacuum & Westinghouse.

20 30T bogie tanks for White oils, brakes as above.

3 18T Water tanks.

4 25T SR-type Brake Vans.

18 USATC Brake Vans (8 converted from 12 to 22 tons).

In addition there were available, in the Middle East theatre, around 300 Tank wagons of 10-20T. capacity, 277 Flat trucks ranging from 10-50T. capacity, 28 Refrigerator Vans, 880 Box vans of 12-40T. capacity, and 1,435 Highsided Open wagons of 10-40T. capacity. This was exclusive of W.D. stock allocated to the H.B.T. Railway,²⁵⁵ which in 1945 totalled around 180 Box Vans, 116 Opens, 7 Flats, 7 Refrigerator Vans, 25 Tank wagons, 46 U.S.A.T.C. Open wagons and 32 Brake Vans. On top of these there were 'foreign' workings from other standard-gauge railways, once the H.B.T. line linked P.R. (directly or indirectly) with the Syrian, Turkish and Iraqi railways.

The first W.D. wagons to arrive were those built for service in France but which had never got there due to the German invasion - these are often referred to as 'French-type' in contemporary records. The declared intention was that all W.D. stock should be available for free use on all the railways of the Middle East; In practice most vehicles which traversed the P.R. system were on direct hire to the E.S.R.. At one point in 1942 the P.R. wagon stock of 2,236 was artificially supplemented by around 2,000 E.S.R. and W.D. wagons, but for most of the period an average of 1,000 such wagons were available and in use on P.R., including a number of specialist wagons on direct hire

²⁵³ Rotating wheels powered by an eccentric rod will always have one point in the cycle at which they bear most heavily on the track - this is referred to as the 'hammer-blow' effect.

²⁵⁴ p. xvi.

²⁵⁵ As of 1. August 1944, the H.B.T. operated 37 Brake Vans, 239 Box vans, 88 Opens, 10 Flats, 13 Low-sider wagons, 7 Refrigerator Vans, 21 Tank wagons and a Breakdown van. Total: 366 vehicles

to P.R..²⁵⁶ These W.D. wagons totalled 2,926 at May 1944.

The hire charges for W.D. stock were set at the rate of 10% of the cost complete in the Middle East, plus 5% war insurance risk, paid by P.R. to the War Department for all locos, wagons and other equipment on hire. A special rate was negotiated for hire charges on W.D. wagons from the E.S.R. As hirers, P.R. was also responsible for all maintenance and repair costs.

The hire charges for use of E.S.R. stock dated from a 1939 Wagon Exchange Agreement which was aimed at ensuring that one railway did not excessively use the stock of the other. Thus, hire charges were set at 150 mills. per wagon if 1-100 wagons were on the P.R. system, 500 mills if 101-150, 1000 mills (i.e. £P1) if 151-200, and £P2 per wagon if over 250 wagons. Kirby wrote²⁵⁷:

"It is clear...that the intention was to limit the number of E.S.R. wagons in Palestine to approximately 100 and, in peace-time, this may have been a fair enough figure. The average number of wagons passing from Egypt to Palestine in 1942, however, was anything from 200 upwards per day and therefore, allowing for a 5-day turn-round (which is the best which could be achieved with the troop movements etc.) there was always a balance of over 1000 wagons on the Palestine side of the Canal."

As the E.S.R. was at that time the almost exclusive hirer of W.D. stock, the normal exchange agreement imposed very heavy penalty charges on P.R. Eventually, after long negotiation, during the course of which the charges under the agreement had mounted to £P420,000, a supplementary agreement was accepted, by which P.R. paid for the additional stock on the same basis as the normal hire rate for W.D. stock. Clearly the E.S.R. had been onto a winner - hiring stock from the W.D. at one rate and hiring it out to P.R. at a much higher one!

²⁵⁶ The issue of Rolling Stock is complex. For this brief analysis of wartime conditions, however, let us note:

The P.R. "WTT No. 3" of 1. May 1944 lists (p. xx) "War Department Rolling Stock - from information supplied by the W.D.". They comprise:

190 4-wh. Tank wagons for Water, Mazot (sic) or Kerosene; 106 bogie Tank wagons; 262 bogie Flat trucks (some bolster-fitted), 28 4-wh. Refrigerator Vans, 8 Brakevans, 183 4-wh. Box trucks, 638 bogie Box trucks, 570 4-wh. Opens, 865 "High sided trucks" (i.e. bogie Opens); Curiosities included 15 10T. 6-wh. flat trucks "for internal use only by the Army", 59 4-wh. box trucks "for internal use by the Army" and 2 4-wh. "Concrete Tank Wagons."

The listing distinguishes number series and different capacities; "Internal User" ('I.U.') wagons would be for use within major depots such as Wadi Sarar and technically should not normally be used in traffic over the main lines; the P.R. list also notes six Ammunition vans and 12 Flats "for internal use in military depots only". The list uses terms such as "8-wheeled" where one would nowadays use "bogie", and "trucks" rather than "wagons", but is nevertheless clear with the above exceptions.

²⁵⁷ Op. cit. p.32.

2:(N). ROLLING STOCK FROM OTHER RAILWAYS.

The same WTT lists wagons from other Administrations which were cleared for or liable for use over the P.R. system, as follows:

TABLE 8: FOREIGN WAGONS AVAILABLE FOR USE.

14,338	wagons from the E.S.R.
1,936	wagons from the Iraq State Railways (p. xxi),
404	wagons from the D.H.P. Standard Gauge (p. xxii), and
a handwritten	note adds
89	“of Hong Kong type”. ²⁵⁸
299	“belonging to French Government”
7	oil tanks “belonging to British Army”
229	wagons belonging to “C.D.” (“Chemins de fer du Sud”
(Turquie”).)	
623	wagons belonging to L.S.B. (“Lignes Syriennes de Bagdad”)

This makes a grand total of 18,291 “Foreign” wagons, 2,926 “War Dept.” wagons and the P.R. stock itself. It is hard to be wholly exact about the P.R. stock as the lists available²⁵⁹ have been amended several times and include reference to W.D. stock on hire as a separate item, but an approximate figure can be stated of 2,311 revenue traffic wagons, plus 56 Brake Vans and Cabooses, 58 W.D. Oil Tanks, 26 W.D. Brake vans, the Internal wagons mentioned already, 12 engine tenders used for fuel oil, Breakdown vans etc.

Naturally not all these vehicles, almost 25,000 in all, were on the P.R. system at any one time. It is noticeable also that a distinction is made between “W.D.” vehicles and “H.B.T.” or “British Army” ones.²⁶⁰

2:(O). PROBLEMS WITH P.R. GOODS STOCK IN THIS PERIOD.

During this period P.R. lost 59 vehicles due to accidents or enemy action in Palestine, Syria and Egypt. Much of its pre-war stock had been wooden-framed and obsolescent, and indeed by the end of the financial year 1941/42 almost one-half of its total wagon stock - 1,000 wagons - was technically due to be written-off, as well as almost all of its Brake Vans, which were mostly of pre-World War 1 vintage.²⁶¹

The condition of foreign wagons that came onto the system was often appalling - with missing buffers and couplings, uncovered axle-boxes and weak coupling links that were distorted and caused breakaways when they unhooked themselves under load. Additional catch-sidings and sand-drags had to be installed to cope with the increased number of breakaways. Very few P.R., E.S.R. or W.D. wagons were fitted with vacuum brakes - and none of the P.R. brake vans - leading to further operational problems, especially on the steeply-graded Jerusalem line. In these circumstances the feats of haulage and the increase in average train loads was commendable.

²⁵⁸ Believed to be bogie vans, built by Burns of Howrah.

²⁵⁹ op. cit. p. xviii

²⁶⁰ The author has seen just one photograph showing a U.S.A.T.C.-type goods van painted “HBT”. This distinction became important later when Disposals were involved.

²⁶¹ i.e. they had been second-hand when requisitioned during the War and were then left in Palestine in 1920.

2:(P). NARROW GAUGE ROLLING STOCK.

On the Narrow-Gauge no new stock was introduced, though at one point the possibility of importing locos and stock from the South African 3'-6" gauge lines was seriously considered. Instead, some engines were temporarily 'borrowed' from the C.F.H., several locos and wagons were restored from dereliction by 199 Rly. Wkshps. Coy. R.E., and six coaches converted to ambulance coaches (three of which were destroyed at Damascus in May 1945 during the Levant crisis) - costs of this work being apportioned between the P.R. and the military authorities.

2:(O). PASSENGER COACHING STOCK.

P.R. commenced the war with sufficient stock for its normal services but with little in reserve. The nature of that traffic now changed drastically, as Kirby wrote: ²⁶²

"One of the most difficult problems was to keep the limited coaching stock in continual service to cope with troop movements. The stock of the P.R. was subjected to excessive use during the period under review.... The problem of maintenance, difficult enough in any case, was rendered more difficult by the depredations caused by thieves and vandalism. Nearly every kind of fitting, ranging from electric light bulbs and lamp fittings, to door handles and seat leather could command high prices in the black market. Switches were torn out, whole seat coverings cut away and dynamos filched. Vandalism was rife. Often a coach only a few weeks from general overhaul would present an appearance as if it had been neglected for years. The necessity for quick turn-round of stock meant that little could be done to repair ravages on such a scale and some coaches were in service with little more than springs left to the seats and with no lighting whatever."

Although measures were taken to reduce vandalism and theft by means of train guards and special surveillance while coaches were standing in yards, it was impossible to exercise control over coaches working through to foreign railways.

No new passenger stock could be acquired, though several troop trains were formed of E.S.R. stock on loan or hire. In addition two trains of 40T. U.S.A.T.C. boxcars were specially fitted out for transport of troops and W.D. civilian workers in the Haifa area.

2:(R). PASSENGER TRAFFIC.

The operation of civil passenger trains was "reduced to the lowest possible minimum"²⁶³ to make way for essential troop movements and to release motive power for transport of essential stores; in addition, all available coaching stock was constantly in use for military traffic - with the consequences noted above. In 1942 and 1943 the only civil passenger services remaining comprised the daily through train to and from Egypt and connecting services on the Jaffa-Jerusalem line. In May 1944 this was improved slightly by providing an additional train between Haifa and Lydda and two additional trains on the Jaffa-Jerusalem line.

In August 1942 the running of Wagons-Lits Sleeping Cars and Dining Cars on the through trains to Egypt was suppressed to make way for the heavy military traffic. A Sleeping Car was reintroduced from 1. March 1943, and the full Dining and Sleeping Car services from 1. February 1945. This suppression involved payment of compensation of almost £4,000 to the Wagons-Lits Co. for non-running of services - the Army contributed one-half of this sum.

Despite the wartime conditions eight Royal Trains were operated between

²⁶² P.R. G.M. Report 1942-46, para. 30, p.31.

²⁶³ Kirby, G.M. Report 1942-6, p. 34.

1942-45, and pilgrims to Mecca were conveyed from Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Palestine by train to Suez and thence by ship to Jeddah; this traffic amounted to 8 trains in the years 1942-43, 22 in 1943-44 and 35 in 1944-45.

2:(S). FREIGHT TRAFFIC FROM EGYPT.

With the closing of the Eastern Mediterranean to normal shipping, Palestine was cut off from direct sea imports; the bulk of cargoes henceforth came via the Cape and were discharged at Suez. The Palestine Government accordingly established a barge service from Suez to Kantara, from where the cargo was taken by rail to Palestine. This was Palestine's main and vital international link for imported commodities. Other traffic came from Egypt itself, over the Kantara ferry or Ferdan bridge. The total number of wagon loads conveying civilian traffic in this manner amounted to:

TABLE 9: CIVIL WAGON-LOAD TRAFFIC FROM EGYPT TO PALESTINE

		<u>1942/3</u>	<u>1943/4</u>
1944/5			
By rail throughout	:	5,088	6,420
By barge from Suez			4,139
to Kantara, thence rail	:	3,020	4,282
Booked from Kantara East	:	2,388	126
		-	2,602
	<u>Total:</u>	10,496	10,828
6,741			

Goods rates were increased by 10% from 14. May 1940, but even this surcharge soon became inadequate due to the sharp increases in labour and material costs.²⁶⁴ Therefore from 1. March 1943 a 50% surcharge was imposed on standard-gauge goods rates, 75% on narrow-gauge goods, and 25% on 3rd. class passenger fares on both gauges.

Rates for military traffic were much more complex. In 1941 a formula was introduced for the purpose of arriving at a cost-rate for conveyance of military stores, on the basis of the policy of the Secretary of State that Colonial Governments should not make any profit from the war. The problem was that this formula did not work. It was based on the "working ratio" figure to produce a supposed cost-rate - the traffic then being charged at Cost. (Petrol, ammunition and passenger traffic were exempt from this formula, being charged at full public rate). However, by reducing the revenue this increased the Working or Operating Ratio of Costs/Revenue, which therefore resulted in a higher rate. After some negotiations with the Army it was agreed to charge from 1 April 1942 a figure based on cost per gross ton/km. Accordingly the actual figures charged varied each year, and there was constant argument between the military and the civilian accountants.

2:(T). WAR-RELATED INCIDENTS.

Palestine Railways suffered very little damage from enemy action, and all that was sustained came from air attack, mostly in 1940 and 1941, in the Haifa area and at Kantara. In July 1940 the Headquarters at Haifa East suffered from nearby bomb explosions and administrative staff were moved to various houses in Haifa away from the danger zone; the C.M.E.'s headquarters staff was moved from Qishon Works, though the Works continued without interruption. In the latter part of 1942 an air raid caused damage to the rail approaches to the quays at Haifa Port. One railway employee was

²⁶⁴ By 1942 labour costs had doubled and material costs had tripled or quadrupled.

killed and 10 injured in enemy raids.²⁶⁵

The same year there were fears that German advances through the Caucasus and Turkey might lead to an attack through Syria and a breakthrough threatening Haifa. A scheme was therefore devised for the evacuation of Workshops and Headquarters offices from Haifa; in addition emergency workshops and running sheds were erected at Jaffa, Tulkarm (km. 66.8 on Main Line) and Kfar Yehoshua (km. 21.9 on H.R. line to Samakh). It was never necessary to implement this scheme, but the sheds at Jaffa were taken over in October 1942 by the 199 Rly. Workshops Coy. R.E., who had until then been working in Qishon Works on repairs to narrow-gauge and standard-gauge stock for military use.

2:(U). ACCIDENTS AND INCIDENTS DURING THIS PERIOD.

Falling standards of maintenance, increased traffic and inexperienced staff led to several unfortunate incidents during the war, with natural calamities and increased (and careless) use of road crossings by military traffic adding to the casualties. There were 400 derailments in 1942/43, 415 in 1943/44, 250 in 1944/45 and 189 in 1945/6 - the decrease resulting from better maintenance and reduced traffic.²⁶⁶ Level Crossing accidents totalled 84 in 1942/43, 99 in 1943/44, down to 83 in 1944/45 but up to 125 in 1945/46.

Early in 1942 there were three major head-on collisions, two of which involved a passenger train. In November 1944 the through Egypt-Palestine passenger train was derailed when the track was washed away after a cloudburst; Seven passengers were killed and forty injured. On 27-29. March 1944 sandstorms in Sinai caused several derailments; passenger and troop trains were held up for several days and at Romani one had to be supplied with food by parachute!²⁶⁷

²⁶⁵ P.R. G.M. Report 1946, p. 39.

²⁶⁶ op. cit. Para. 84, p.65.

²⁶⁷ Cyril Mercer, an R.A.F. Corporal based at Romanah, has written an account of this incident; the passengers included many Indian soldiers and civilian refugees from the island of Kos; food and water was dropped on 28. and 29. March by R.A.F. DC3's; many parachutes failed to open; sanitation was also a problem. (Private correspondence, 1992).

2:(V). SOME TRAFFIC STATISTICS.

TABLE 10: Palestine Railways - Statistical Notes for Year Ending 1944, & Jan. 1945.²⁶⁸

<u>(i). Train Running.</u>						
<u>Average No. of Trains Run per Day.</u>		<u>S.G.</u>		<u>N.G.</u>		
Regular Passenger and Mixed.		32		11		
Through Goods		32		4		
All other trains		11		-		
<u>(ii). Average Mins. Late Start and Arrival - S.G.</u>						
		<u>Late Start.</u>		<u>Late Arrival.</u>		
Regular Passenger and Mixed		4		9		
Through Goods		23		47		
All other trains		30		78		
<u>(iii). Loco Availability.</u>						
		<u>S.G.</u>		<u>N.G.</u>		
		<u>Main Line</u>	<u>Shunters</u>	<u>Main Line</u>	<u>Shunters.</u>	
Stock		100	20	19	5	
Available for Traffic.		60	12	11	3	
<u>(iv). Average Gross Train Load (Freight)</u>						
		<u>Tons.</u>				
Kantara - Rafa		550				
Rafa - Haifa		440				
Jaffa - Jerusalem		190				
Haifa - Azzib		390				
105 cm. gauge		180				
<u>(v). Freight Operations.</u>						
		<u>S.G.</u>		<u>N.G.</u>		
Average Net Train Load		200		71		
Av. Haul Paying Traffic (Kms.)		150		72		
Av. Haul Service Traffic (Kms.)		100		38		
<u>(vi). Coaching Stock - S.G.</u>						
70 Coaches - average of 20 in workshops.		<i>(return to average of 5 by July 1945.)*</i>				
<u>(vii). Wagon User.</u>						
		<u>S.G.</u>		<u>N.G.</u>		
Av. Net Availability		2336		327		
Av. Daily Loadings		493		66		
Av. Interval Turnround (Days)		5.0		4.7		
Av. Daily Crippled		380		86		
Av. % of Availability		16%		23%		
<u>(viii). Statistics for January 1945.</u>						
Av. Daily Wagon Availability		2304		388		
Av. Daily Wagon Availability (10-Ton Units)		3580		558		
Av. Wagon Load (Tons) (per 10-Ton unit*) ²⁶⁹		9.96		5.0		
% Empty Wagon haulage to Total		25%		32.9%		
<u>(ix). Average Daily Loadings.</u>						
		<u>Wagons.</u>	<u>10Ton units.</u>	<u>Wagons.</u>	<u>10Ton</u>	
<u>Units.</u>						
Military:		224	350	15	22	
Civil:		201	284	53	79	
Service:		96	99	8	12	
<u>Total:</u>		521	733	76	113	

²⁶⁸ via IRM Archive, Haifa; no file ref.; Material was a donation from Adrian N.W. Smith of London, in 2002.

²⁶⁹ Handwritten pencil notes on original typescript.

(x). Commodities Carried.

Military Stores - Grain - Flour - Forage - Potash - Oil - Citrus Fruits.
Service Traffic - Water - Oil - Ballast.

TABLE 11: SUMMARY OF PR WORKING RESULTS 1939-1945.²⁷⁰

	1938/9	1939/40	1940/1	1941/2	1942/3	1943/4	1944/5.
P.R. lines (km).	334	334	334	344	361	361	360
K-R Rly. (km).	203	203	203	203	205	205	205
H.R. (km).	435	435	435	435	477	477	467
Total:	972	972	982	1,043	1,043	1,043	1,032
P.R. Locos.	80	80	80	80	74	74	72
H.R. Locos.	53	53	53	53	53	25	23
P.R. Coaching Stock.	98	98	98	96	96	94	91
H.R. Coaching Stock.	40	40	41	44	44	44	44
P.R. Goods Stock.	2,353	2,350	2,345	2,350	2,365	2,443	2,375
H.R. Goods Stock.	361	361	360	384	384	384	379
Train/km. P.R.	866,998	735,260	1,023,776	1,321,335	1,592,324	1,964,589	1,948,521
Train/km. K-R.	231,572	266,146	628,243	829,087	968,123	939,076	761,895
Train/km. H.R.	410,810	326,943	365,125	457,924	549,636	523,499	409,798
Passenger Journeys.							
P.R.	296,557	683,474	1,017,012	948,564	1,118,479	1,590,509	1,611,037
K-R	55,146	69,581	253,124	615,973	796,427	877,594	751,112
H.R.	745,729	1,151,969	931,504	1,003,685	852,403	844,800	922,162

2:(W). CORDINATION WITH PORTS, ROADS AND RAILWAYS.

As if this were not enough, control of the Ports was transferred to the Railways (from the Customs Dept.) on 1. April 1943, and in November 1943 Kirby was appointed Chairman of the newly-formed Transport Advisory Board, charged with securing better

²⁷⁰ Taken from Table 19, p.21. P.R. G.M. Report, 1942/3-1945/6.

²⁷¹ Including season tickets. Much of the H.R. growth was due to suburban traffic on the Haifa-Acre route.

co-ordination of rail and road transport in Palestine, advising Government on transport matters, and exploring post-war communications links.²⁷² Kirby was interested in maintaining good relations with neighbouring Railway Administrations, involving the Egyptian State Railways, the D.H.P. Railway, the Iraqi State Railways, Haifa-Beirut-Tripoli Railway, Turkish State Railways and Chemin de Fer du Hedjaz, which on 1. March 1945 was taken over by the Syrian Government. During the war monthly inter-railway meetings were held, sponsored by GHQ, Middle East,²⁷³ and in June 1946 the Middle East Railway Conference (MERCAs) was established, sponsored by P.R. - i.e. by Kirby himself. Its first meeting was held at E.S.R. HQ in Cairo.²⁷⁴

Less success was met by First Aid courses and "Educational Lectures in subjects pertaining to railway and port affairs"²⁷⁵ established in 1946. Likewise a Social Club established in Haifa in 1945 met problems, "mainly because it was difficult to find suitable premises and also because of the disturbed political conditions in Palestine."²⁷⁶

2:(X). CONCLUSIONS.

The above demonstrates a railway system that was at times worked to its capacity and even well beyond it. Kirby as new and energetic General Manager had to do a great deal to revise and reform procedures and institute new methods of catching up with arrears of maintenance and dealing with the many problems of attracting, training and keeping a labour force at a time of high demand for manpower throughout the region. To be fair, not all the above lapses can be blamed upon the war. The lack until now of a suitable Timetable or up-to-date Rule Book indicates severe slips in management. Kirby inherited a degree of chaos and incompetence.

In the end, Palestine Railways managed to maintain its services for most of the time - though often only with help from the military. It ended the war linked by standard-gauge lines to both Egypt to the south and Lebanon and Syria to the north, increased marshalling yard facilities and the possibility of purchasing some modern locomotives and goods rolling stock, and some experience of operating with diesel traction. All this gave Kirby optimism that P.R. would be able to continue as a vital part of a through railway linking both Europe and Iraq with Africa.

²⁷² op. cit. p. 45 para. 65.

²⁷³ Presumably the Movements & Transportation Section ('Mov.7'), which in summer 1945 produced a Middle East Timetable. See 'Harakevet' 14:14.

²⁷⁴ op. cit. p. 47. para. 69.

²⁷⁵ op. cit. p. 97 paras. 152, 153.

²⁷⁶ op. cit. p. 98 para. 154.

CHAPTER 3.

KIRBY TAKES CHARGE.

THE MANAGEMENT OF PALESTINE RAILWAYS 1944 TO 1945.

INTRODUCTION.

The task facing Kirby as a Railway Manager was an unusual one, if not unique - we have already indicated the complex background to the railway system he had been brought in to manage; added to this are several other major factors:- the war and its effects on traffic, manpower and supplies; the increasing political turmoil in the country which expressed itself in strikes, boycotts, and increasingly in violence and sabotage; the degree to which neighbouring railway systems were cut off as the relevant countries sought independence at the cost of any constructive regional concept; and the doubt concerning the long-term future of the Administration he served, culminating eventually in a rather hasty and in many respects unplanned evacuation of the country by the ruling class (not just the Administration as such but almost all those expatriate Officers who had served it.) - a total caesura in the national history. In this and following chapters we seek to describe his attempts to run the railways as a 'normal' going concern - which involved attention to such routine matters as motive power, rolling stock, manpower, timetables, traffic, wages, supplies, training, discipline, safety, repairs and renewals - all against the background of these other factors.

Issues of Rolling Stock and the Dismemberment of the system will largely be examined separately; For the sake of clarity we shall deal with other matters essentially chronologically and, as we explore the period from the perspective of the Railways, we shall present the Railway view first and then add political or security factors which are relevant - without attempting a full description of the political developments, which are mostly well known.

Although Kirby was a senior Government official - and gained positions of importance both nationally in the Transport Advisory Committee and internationally with the Middle East Railways Conference he established - it is quite clear that he was not privy to high-level diplomatic developments and we must make the - reasonable - assumption that he gathered the majority of his information, like many expatriate officials, from the English-language 'Palestine Post', supplemented perhaps by occasional newspapers or magazines from England. We shall therefore present the complex political developments that would affect his work from this main source.

We have already noted the effects of the war on P.R. and its motive-power and rolling-stock situation. By 1944 the main additional construction of new lines and spurs was completed, the H.B.T. was in operation and therefore pressure on the narrow gauge lines much reduced. The course of the war moved towards the Allies' favour, yet post-war conditions remained difficult and the political future unclear.

It took Kirby some little time to make the transition from Kenya to Palestine, but he obviously favoured a 'hands-on' approach from the very start.

Few internal papers apart from those already cited are available for his first two years, though the 'Report' for 1942-1946 indicates the facts and some of his early actions in this period have been described in Ch. 2. From late-1944 onwards we have more correspondence and minutes. His aim was clearly a modern management style - he

wished to be informed of everything, to be able to identify troublesome trends and incidents, to be able to allocate responsibility (and blame) for problems, and to centralise control. What is currently termed 'Micro-Management'. One can detect from the Minutes, and from reading between the lines, what issues of authority and personality were also on the agenda. Bearing in mind that some of the Officers had been with P.R. since the very beginnings, and that P.R. had hit a crisis for which none would willingly accept responsibility, plus the normal inter-departmental rivalries of any organisation, he as newcomer had to assert himself on several levels at once.

DECEMBER 1944.

In December 1944 Kirby began a series of regular monthly Officers' Meetings.²⁷⁷ The Officers initially comprised himself, Scrivener the Chief Engineer (C.E.), Baker the Superintendent of the Line (Supt.o.t.L), Challoner the (Acting) C.M.E., Charlton the Chief Accountant (C.A.), Capt. Foard as Acting Stores Supt. and J. Norman as the General Manager's Principal Assistant. At later meetings the Port Manager was also present, and of course some of the Principals were represented by Acting or Assistant representatives.

These Minutes form a useful 'backbone' of regular monthly images of the situation on the Palestine Railways over the period, onto which other information from a variety of sources can be appended. We can observe how certain issues arose and were dealt with.

Kirby began briskly enough, declaring on 12. December 1944 that "this was the first of monthly General Manager's Conferences for the purpose of discussing all matters pertaining to the railways and ports. [They would]... combine the existing monthly Stores Conference and the Power & Traffic Meeting..... During each month Heads of Branches must consider and prepare matter for discussion - questions of difficulty and 'stumbling blocks'."²⁷⁸ Heads of Branches were meant to submit items for discussion a week before each meeting - but in practice, of course, sudden crises often dominated the discussion.

At this first meeting many of Kirby's concerns - almost obsessions - were presented, and the initial reactions of others present were also characteristic. He had been 'doing his homework'. Throughout all these meetings the emphasis was on economy, which was addressed in various ways. These included: the reduction of staff where possible; reduction or removal of services, lines or crossing loops and other infrastructure where possible; reallocation of traffic where possible; reallocation of responsibilities so as to make better use of available manpower; a close look each month at statistics of engine-working, failures, accidents (which had to be separately categorised and analysed), oil consumption, crew overtime. What is noticeable throughout all these Minutes is that it is the General Manager constantly making suggestions, asking for information, commenting on the basis of personal observations, querying reports, making comparisons with other railways in Britain, America or the Colonies. It is management "from the top down". We shall cite extensively, giving more detail from the earlier meetings where the structure was being established, and then selecting only specific

²⁷⁷ A set of typescript and duplicated Minutes has survived, in File GM/MAND/G/2, annotated "last four years" and deposited in the Library of the Middle East Centre, St. Antony's College, Oxford, as "Kirby Papers". These Minutes are extensive and only certain topics have been excerpted here; however we have retained the practice of stressing that certain decisions were "directed" or "instructed" - to show how authority was imposed. We shall simply refer to 'The Meeting'. Minutes were numbered consecutively; In citing, they will be referred to by 'No. of Meeting : No. of Minute'.

²⁷⁸ Minute 1:1.

exemplary topics which illustrate developments.

“The main subject for the present meeting was Economy. The G.M.suggested that expenditure was too liberal, following on from the period when additional staff was taken on to cope with an urgent situation.” For Kirby, the situation now was no longer urgent, and he identified “staff inflation to a considerable degree”, asserting that “closer attention to work actually done, and to ways of doing it, would show up redundancies of staff.”

He backed up this assertion with statistics. He “suggested 1936/7 as the best pre-war year for purposes of comparison”; Revenue that year had been nearly a million Pounds, and “last year it was just over 3 Millions; That did not connote three times as much work however.” Revenue had increased, but as this was largely due to increases in rates, there was no justification for proportionate staff increases. S.G. Train/km. had been 1,800,000 in 1936/7, 2,903,655 for 1943/4, and were running at around 2,800,000 for the current year - i.e. an increase of just over 55% over 1936/7. “N.G. traffic was on the decrease; yet staff employed on all sections in 1944 totalled 8,000 as compared with 4,500 in 1936/7, an increase of almost 80%.”²⁷⁹ There was a great increase in ton-kilometrage, but “as this figure was largely affected by length of haul, trans-Sinai traffic and bulk military traffic, it was not a good measure in relation to staff.”²⁸⁰

Clearly he had a point - the peak crisis period had passed, and the system was taking time to adapt to new circumstances.²⁸¹ Kirby was trying to impose new attitudes - not an easy task. He “warned Heads of Branches against the attitude of ‘what worked last year will work this year’. Each year must have its own basis, through of course in relation to the year-to-year programme. With regard to savings, he was concerned with real economy, not savings by deferred maintenance, transfer from closed to open votes, etc.”²⁸² He pounced upon the Chief Engineer’s statements which showed a saving of almost LP3,000 on the Estimates, and “referred to the heavy cost of working the Hijaz Railway” which was “disturbing in spite of assurances that the utmost had been done to achieve efficiency. The H.R. was well constructed and relatively cheap to maintain,²⁸³ yet in 1944 there were 12 gangers and 103 platelayers, as compared with 10 and 82 respectively in 1938.”

Scrivener was put on the defensive, and said that “this was due to the whole line having come to life” - Kirby however pointed out that this was not true of the present position, as traffic was now at about the same level as before the war, so why had maintenance not been reduced to the 1938 level? He felt that insufficient effort had been made towards reductions in expenditure, despite continual pressure to reduce the deficit on the Hijaz Railway. Scrivener felt that he was being taken to task on one set of figures, but Kirby thought that the figures in themselves were indicative enough, and he feared

²⁷⁹ In this connection, note an interesting interview with Lord Northcliffe from ‘The Palestine Weekly’. 3. March 1922. p. 151: “The total number of officials and workmen on the railways is 4,658, of whom 3,141 are Moslems, 986 Christians and 528 Jews; that is to say that only about 11 per cent are Jews.”

²⁸⁰ 12. December 1944 Meeting Minute 1:2.

²⁸¹ At the same time, it must be noted - since this does not always appear so in the Minutes - that the system was still suffering from a backlog of maintenance due not only to the pressures of wartime traffic (and shortage of materials) but to low investment from the outset, compounded by the pre-war troubles. It was perhaps unfair of him to assume that, simply because the war in Europe appeared to be reaching a conclusion, that all should swiftly revert to “business as normal”. As events transpired, of course, military traffic remained a significant factor, as did repairs to deliberate as well as accidental damage to stock and infrastructure.

²⁸² Minute 1:5.

²⁸³ Kirby had a point here; the H.R. line was laid on metal sleepers; rails and sleepers were lighter than on the standard gauge and could therefore be more easily handled; there was almost no signalling.

that. “the position on the S.G. might be shown up even less favourably on close examination. The C.E. contended that the figures showed only that no successful effort had been made, not that no effort had been made.”²⁸⁴ Significantly and embarrassingly, “Corresponding figures for the S.G. were not available and the Chief Engineer could not produce them.”

That such a spat could even appear in the Minutes indicates that the atmosphere was not good, and that Kirby wanted this form of complete Minuting. He stressed that “real economy, or saving of money, must be the governing factor. This might involve reorganisation - e.g. centralisation. The Kenya and Uganda Railways and Harbours was cited as example of what could be achieved by centralisation.” But his attempt to bring in the same broom that he had applied in Africa met Scrivener’s retort that “Palestine was different, in that there were difficulties caused by the more sophisticated type of population and consequent requirements.”²⁸⁵ Or to paraphrase: “What worked there in the jungle won’t work here.”

But Kirby had the bit between his teeth. When Scrivener added that “centralisation could cause a waste of time in travelling” Kirby would not agree. “We had a frequent train service and central telephone control. Centralisation would reduce correspondence and circumlocution. Staff could be reduced, e.g. instead of having a senior draughtsman and senior clerk for each District Office, one of each would be required at central headquarters.” For practical working purposes, he felt, P.R. could be worked as one District. The Engineering organisation could be centralised at Haifa, with executive officers only at Haifa and Lydda and a senior Engineer at HQ with the C.E. and an office assistant. The same applied to the Traffic Branch. “After the war, it was not the G.M.’s intention to have a District Traffic Supt. at Lydda. The executive officers should not have to trouble with staff matters, claims, paysheets etc., which could be done at HQ..... It would be wise not to build up permanent posts with the present low grade of staff in order to maintain the existing inflated establishments.”

Such a comment would naturally upset Heads of Branches keen to defend their domains. The C.E. was again singled out, and must have ended this meeting with a headache. Kirby thought the staff establishment was liberal, and asked how the 28 ‘Class IV’ clerks were occupied. “A top-heavy clerical staff was usually indicative of inefficiency.”²⁸⁶

Scrivener’s defence was that “the paperwork had vastly increased” - but Kirby countered that he was anxious to reduce unnecessary paperwork and was “constantly asking Heads of Branches to suggest ways and means of doing so, but he received no practical responses.” The topic closed with “The C.E. to submit details of savings in staff achieved.”²⁸⁷

Scrivener tried bravely to deflect criticism by reference to natural phenomena such as rainfall upsetting estimates for drainage and other work required. But this did not help him. “The G.M. agreed that there were variables, but affirmed that there was only one effective way to control expenditure, and that was to work to specification. For example, was there a definite plan for the maintenance and repair of buildings and bridges as a basis for the 1945-46 estimates?..... The Principal Assistant said there appeared to be no such planning.”²⁸⁸

²⁸⁴ Minute 1:4. Emphasis in original.

²⁸⁵ Minute 1:3.

²⁸⁶ Minute 1:5.

²⁸⁷ Minute 1:6.

²⁸⁸ Minute 1:7.

The hunt for economies continued. Kirby insisted that “current expenditure must be properly controlled, with a planned framework; otherwise spending must be haphazard.” This, of course, involved the prompt production of accounts, but “the Chief Accountant pointed out that control, to be adequate, could not depend on his Branch but must be exercised in the executive stage.” Kirby agreed and said that work done at present appeared to depend too much upon “fortuitous finding out”, rather than according to a set plan. He found it “impossible to ascertain how far we were behind programme, or upon what basis repairs were being undertaken. Records were inadequate.” Once again, one feels that he was being rather harsh - there had, after all, been a war on, major operational and manpower crises, sudden changes of plan to meet new traffic flows according to the exigencies of war - but Kirby’s aim seems to have been to focus minds once more upon a more rational and long-term approach to planning for the post-war world, and shake up some of the complacency (or perhaps war-weariness) that affected the senior staff. The C.A., when himself challenged as to what progress had been made towards closer control of expenditure, responded that this was impossible “until estimates were upon a proper basis; Without this, how could there be control?”²⁸⁹

The Acting C.M.E., having witnessed the humiliation of Scrivener, was next on the block. He agreed with Kirby that the Mechanical branch was over-staffed in all sections. He was making reductions, both in clerical and artisan staff, and achieving savings by handing R.O.D. locomotives back to the Army. Regarding staff reductions, he pointed out that “his labour was well organised and he had to go carefully. He gave an instance of where regular overtime (which had been really ‘*baksheesh*’) had been reduced and that, as a result, the Lydda Running Shed staff would not work overtime at all.”²⁹⁰

But he defended high fuel-consumption costs by claiming that the estimates had been unrealistic, that there had been increased engine-kilometrage and the estimates had been based only on train-kilometrage, omitting requirements for engine preparation, shunting etc. There was a lack of detailed information - “he has no knowledge of how much oil is consumed by each individual engine, all he gets is that a certain class of engine uses so many kilos per kilometre.” He then stated that the issue of oil at present was in the hands of the clerical side, whereas the mechanical side should issue the oil. A revised procedure to improve matters was being held up solely because the necessary printed forms could not be obtained!

Such a bureaucratic blame-shifting excuse was likely to get short shrift. However, in relation to the extra expenditure on maintenance, it “was agreed that much more material was being used in efforts now being made to overcome arrears of maintenance. Here again the estimates were not worth the name.”²⁹¹

But what estimates truly existed? Debate on the cost of overhauling a coach (average LP250) led to an awareness that a “Cost-of-Living” component was often being added to such estimates, thus distorting them. Discussion on repair costs for wagons revealed that “this included repair of foreign-type wagons which were badly maintained compared with P.R. wagons so that although the E.S.R. did supposedly equivalent service for us we lost by the transaction. This was a difficult problem, because anything we might say to the E.S.R. would merely produce the retort that they did not want their wagons on our lines, and we must, perforce, wait until we were in a more favourable negotiating position.” This seems remarkable, inasmuch as a competent P.R. Wagon Inspector at Kantara East could theoretically have ‘stopped’ any E.S.R. wagons deemed

²⁸⁹ Minute 1:9, emphasis in the original.

²⁹⁰ Minute 1:10.

²⁹¹ Minute 1:11.

unfit for further travel before they had penetrated too far onto the P.R. system. But it reveals a political reality behind the official formal relations between neighbouring railways.²⁹²

The Acting C.M.E. also came under criticism for overmanning. There was an increase of 89 staff on the H.R., whilst the kilometrage was down. Since “work was down to 1937/8 level the staff should be down too.” As for overtime, the G.M. stated that he did not favour the time basis of overtime for running staff, as this could result in slow running.²⁹³

Many of these points regarding overmanning were reiterated in relation to the Traffic Department. The Superintendent of the Line pointed out in mitigation that “In 1938 a 12-hour day was in force as against the present 8-hour day”.²⁹⁴ The response was blunt - he was instructed “to examine the possibility of reverting to the 12-hour day at each station.” The G.M. “did not accept, as had been suggested, that the extra staff were due to the innovation of a day of rest, because that had begun in 1935 - before the year of comparison.”²⁹⁵

It transpired that the C.A. “had 84 men in the Revenue section, engaged almost wholly on checking work which should properly be undertaken by station staff.” The C.A. had to do a 100% check because there was no check at the receiving station. The Supt.o.t.L. considered the question of checking was a question of training the station staff. Kirby observed that this matter revealed the necessity of a complete overhaul of the present system.²⁹⁶

The meeting continued with proposals to reform the complex system of inter-station accounting; the C.A. also proposed eliminating the procedure whereby the Kantara-Rafa Railway required separate accounts; Kirby’s response was that this would be welcome if it simplified procedures, but that H.M.G. would still require presentation of the financial results for this line.²⁹⁷

There was clearly a lot to deal with.

JANUARY 1945.

By the Second Meeting²⁹⁸ on 16. January 1945 something had been achieved.

The C.E. had already reported that his H.R. staff had been reduced to the 1938 level. The A.C.M.E. stated that “reduction of H.R. staff was still being examined.” Kirby expressed the view that since the C.E. had come down to the 1938 level he looked to

²⁹² The Minutes reveal a relationship of hostility rather than co-operation between the P.R. and E.S.R. at many levels, concerning the quality of wagon maintenance, damage to P.R. stock while in Egypt, pilfering of P.R. equipment while stock was on the E.S.R. system, obstructionism regarding assistance to or supply of P.R. staff in Sinai, etc.

²⁹³ i.e. there would be no incentive to catch up on lateness, since exceeding a booked duty time could in fact lead to a financial bonus for the crew.

²⁹⁴ Why had none of the others thought of this splendid excuse for a 50% increase in staff, at least for those departments requiring shifts to cover the full 24-hour cycle?

²⁹⁵ This small detail reveals a manager who had made it his business to be aware of developments that had occurred some seven years before his appointment.

²⁹⁶ Minute 2:7. His exasperation can be well understood. Checking of receipts by receiving as well as despatching stations was a principle incorporated already in the 1934 Coaching Station Instruction Book. Kirby had earlier proposed centralising a lot of the clerical work in any case!

²⁹⁷ Minute 2:19. As stated elsewhere, P.R. laboured under the incredibly cumbersome system of maintaining separate accounts for almost every line, due to the different nature of the ownerships.

²⁹⁸ Present were Kirby, Scrivener, Baker, Challoner, Charlton, Rogers and Norman. Minutes are not referred to as such, but Kirby’s letter 5/3/13 of 27. Dec. 1944 was “taken as basis of reference”.

other branches to do likewise. He intervened in similar forthright manner into a conflict between C.E. and C.A. over the preparation of paysheets - "The G.M. could not accept that lack of cooperation should prevent a desirable and economic change being made and he would not countenance any such submission." Since the C.M.E.'s paysheets could be successfully handled by the C.A. then "the C.E.'s, whose Branch was simpler, could also be handled successfully." Heads were being banged together. "The G.M. emphasized that he did not propose to allow wrong ways of working - even though they may be traditional - to prevent the implementation of improved accounting. The C.E. - with the C.A.'s guidance if need be - should see that methods of correct allocation - from the outset - were introduced forthwith so as to be applied to the 1945-46 allocations."

The issue of working hours was as significant as the number of how many were working those hours, and here Kirby seems to have considered a return to Victorian principles might be helpful! He directed that the possibility of basing overtime on kilometrage should be pursued in conjunction with a possible re-scheduling of turns of duty to give a longer day. It was agreed that the opinion of the Labour Dept. be sought to establish the maximum hours which could safely be scheduled for train staff. It was thought that 10 hours should not be excessive."

A similar impression is given by a discussion on the abolition of Rest Days!²⁹⁹ "The G.M. thought that considerable economies might be achieved by eliminating the regular rest day per week for station staff, and paying overtime for work on the seventh day or, alternatively, arranging for the rest days to be taken once monthly." The Supt.o.t.L. had to plead here that the men would have to be consulted first, since they were legally entitled to "one day of rest per week" and "the main consideration must be one of safety." However, the G.M. "instructed the S.o.t.L. to explore the practicabilities of the proposal and to report at the next meeting. The Labour Dept. should be consulted if advisable."

Similarly, no patience was shown with the Supt.o.t.L.'s arguments concerning problems with simplifying the Goods Waybill system for service stores. He insisted there should be a proper system of service waybills and signature for delivery by responsible men and "suggested the possibility of a combined service consignment note, waybill and delivery note; two copies to go with the goods, one copy being retained at the sending station, and one serving as the waybill and delivery sheet. The issue note could be endorsed with the service waybill number." Note here that the General Manager is overriding his subordinates, and concerning himself with details of stationery design and implementation of new procedures. This is what today would be termed "Micro-Management".

Statistical Reports were demanded and provided for³⁰⁰:

- a). Locomotive Availability, divided by Standard- and Narrow-Gauge, and showing the highest, lowest and average, together with an assessment as to whether these were adequate or whether shortfalls were anticipated. .
- b). The Traffic Position - whether traffic was being adequately cleared from the consignors.
- c). "Loco User" - the average kilometrage per day per locomotive.
- d). "Cripple Position"³⁰¹ divided again by gauge, separating coaches, wagons and tank wagons, and tabulated to show the total number in stock, the total in traffic, those being repaired in the workshops and those being repaired on sidings at outstations. To these

²⁹⁹ Minute 2:27.

³⁰⁰ These tables were maintained for the following meetings.

³⁰¹ "Cripple" is railway terminology for a vehicle incapable of use in traffic and requiring repair.

were added:-

- e). "Hot Boxes",³⁰² divided into 'P.R.' and 'Foreign' wagons.³⁰³
- f). Vehicles 'Lifted'³⁰⁴ in Workshops and in the District depots.
- g). Washouts.³⁰⁵
- h). Accidents. Divided also by Gauge, and by Derailment, Collision, Breakaway and 'Misc.'
- i). Engine Failures.³⁰⁶

Throughout the following months these statistical tables were modified slightly in the light of experience - for example, to distinguish between accidents involving derailments on the line and in stations, or between collisions with rail and with road vehicles - but it is clear that Kirby required a regular overview and regular comparisons with the preceding one or two months so as to show developing trends. It is unclear whether all these statistics had been collected before, but it is certain they had never been collated and presented at such departmental managerial meetings.

Kirby demonstrated that the statistics were important to him and that he could and would draw conclusions from them. Responding to a report by the A.C.M.E. regarding the slow supply of spare boiler parts he "lamented the extraordinary delay in the transport of these vital parts and once again emphasized the poor efforts we appeared to make for ourselves and hoped this did not apply to public traffic."

Another important regular heading was the "General Traffic Position". At this meeting, for example, it was reported that grapefruit traffic should reach 1M. cases only against the anticipated 1.5M. Military traffic inwards still continued and there were no indications that the depots were clearing out. The coaching stock position was still being adversely affected by abnormal wear and tear which put up the normal figure out of service to 17 instead of only 7.

Regular attention was paid to the trend in Revenue; Kirby referred³⁰⁷ to the

³⁰² The axle-box upon which a vehicle rests upon the axle and wheels requires regular lubrication; any interruption leads to overheating ('hot box') and damage to the bearing surfaces, thus rendering the vehicle a 'cripple'. Regular maintenance is required for all lubrication systems.

³⁰³ It was considered that P.R. maintained its stock much better than did the E.S.R. However, should a wagon fail in service on the P.R. system, it would fall to P.R. to carry out the repair.

³⁰⁴ A rail vehicle needs regular lifting from its axles to allow inspection and maintenance of the running gear, especially the braking system and the drawgear.

³⁰⁵ Steam locomotive boilers require regular washing-out to remove mineral scale which has accumulated on the heating surfaces and prevents efficient heat transfer. This is dependent partially on the quality of the water itself.

³⁰⁶ Also subdivided. The statistics for this month are presented here as an example:

<u>Summary of failures:</u>	<u>SG</u>	<u>NG</u>
Mechanical defects	10	3
Burst superheater elements	7	1
Blocked fuel pipes	7	-
Leaking tubes	6	5
Hot bearings	3	-
Mismanagement	4	1
Leaking fusible plugs	2	-
Injector trouble	1	-
Short of water	1	-
Burner defects	1	-
Disputed	4	2
Overload	1	-
Others (under investigation)	7	2
<u>Total:</u>	56	14.

³⁰⁷ Minute 2:35.

falling revenue and the necessity to watch expenditure in relation thereto. The approximate revenue for December had been LP198,000 as compared with the estimate of LP200,000, yet expenditure was above the estimate.

Very revealing was Kirby's response to a complaint by the Chief Accountant³⁰⁸ regarding the non-cooperative attitude in the Branches. He stressed "the imperative need for cooperative working not only between Heads of Branches themselves, but between their staff." As regards the apparent irksomeness of accounting, he "emphasized that the efficiency of a commercial concern like the railway must be measured in terms of finance - hence the necessity for close cooperation with the C.A. and the maintenance of the liveliest interest in expenditure and revenue for all officers of the railway." What is noteworthy here is that Kirby is referring to the Railway as a commercial concern - something which had not really been taken seriously before, and an idea which needed some time for others to absorb.

FEBRUARY 1945.

The Third meeting took place on Tuesday 27. February 1945.³⁰⁹ Attention was paid to problems in the preparation of Engineering Branch paysheets, and Kirby demanded that "timesheets were to be devised so as to be suitable (a) for machine accountancy and (b) for use by illiterate staff", stressing that even if reduction in staff was not achieved, greater efficiency with the same staff was in itself a desideratum.

Regarding the Revenue Trend,³¹⁰ the approx. revenue in January 1945 was LP214,000. February was expected to be high, but this would be offset by a short month. Kirby reiterated his emphasis on the necessity for the closest watch on expenditure in relation to traffic revenue. Losses on the H.R. were still disturbing - a LP9,400 deficit in January 1945 - and there was discussion on how many wagons should be overhauled for the amount of traffic now on offer.

But for almost the first time we see praise being given too; He considered the general accounting position better this year than last and "complimented the C.A. on the information now presented with his monthly accounts."

Issues discussed included the use of water for non-locomotive purposes and how this could be reduced, the problem of supplying flour or other foodstuffs to staff in Sinai,³¹¹ staff sickness statistics, whether Permanent-Way men in an emergency should travel on the locomotive to repair the track - an indication that there was an increasing incidence of such need - and then a further example of 'enlightened management': the formation of Staff Committees.³¹² Kirby noted that the A.C.M.E. had monthly meetings with his men at which work in general was discussed. By this means the interest of the staff was encouraged and they were kept advised of current work and progress; They thus felt that they were part of the organisation and could contribute something to their own good. He therefore suggested that the C.E. and Supt.o.t.L. might institute a similar type of meeting - that is, one in which the men were "made sensible of confidence placed in them, and their co-operation enlisted." The C.E. already had such meetings of Asst. P.-Way Inspectors and considered this met the requirements, but Kirby "left the Supt.o.t.L. to consider introducing monthly meetings for his staff. Much could be done through the dissemination of information through Traffic Inspectors." This was true, but

³⁰⁸ Minute 2:45.

³⁰⁹ Present: Kirby, Scrivener, Baker, Challoner, Charlton, Norman and Bridges (Stores Supt.)

³¹⁰ Minute 3:63.

³¹¹ The problem here was partly that the Egyptian Customs authorities refused to allow such supplies, classing them as 'Imports'.

³¹² Minute 3:74.

one wonders how this squared with the concurrent moves to extend shifts, cut out rest days, sack anyone surplus to current needs, and generally work the staff harder.

MARCH 1945.

At the fourth, March meeting³¹³ it appeared that the Paysheets revision was held up because there was three or four years' supply of the old paperwork still in stock!³¹⁴ "The G.M. instructed that this question should not be allowed to delay an important change in procedure" - clearly exasperated. Issues of the economic use of staff continued to exercise minds; The C.M.E. had proposed a scheme to pay drivers on a basis of 'Basic Wage plus kilometrage allowance', but while Kirby agreed with the scheme in principle, he doubted the practicalities of its introduction at the present time. "The greatest objection was the necessity to reduce drivers' wages." It was explained that the object was to give drivers an inducement to work regularly and efficiently, an inducement not present with the existing basis of payment, and to secure better productivity of engine crews. Crews currently worked an average of 48 hours per week and the C.M.E. considered that introduction of the scheme would mean no great increase in hours worked, but that considerably more work would be done during these hours, with a consequent saving in engine crews, while crews themselves would earn more. There was no great objection to hours in excess of 48 hours per week being worked and he had been informed by the Dept. of Labour that there was no statutory limit to the hours which could be worked in such circumstances! Kirby considered however that the time was not opportune for the introduction of the scheme, instructing that it should remain in abeyance for the time being while various implications were examined.

No trains had been cancelled in the month due to shortage of power, and Kirby directed that the additional summer service to Jerusalem and Tel Aviv should be instituted again, with effect from April 1945. The A.C.M.E. confirmed that engines were available for the service. Operational problems on the Jerusalem line were due to issues of balancing the weight on the wheels of the Kitson tanks, and several locos had suffered leaking oil fuel tanks.

More paperwork was needed. Kirby drew attention³¹⁵ to the fact that duplicated Guards' Journals were not being sent to the C.M.E. and "directed that suitable action be taken by the A.Supt.o.t.L."³¹⁶ he also "directed that, as from 1. April 1945, shunting certificates should be issued to drivers by Station Masters in respect of shunting work at stations. Certificates will not be issued in respect of train delays due to crossings." Clearly drivers were using the need to shunt *en route* as an excuse for late running and Kirby wished to tighten up on this.

He also wished to tighten up on accounting procedures. The Revenue in February had shown a continued downward trend³¹⁷ but expenditure had increased. The A.C.M.E. pointed out that all outstanding bills due by the Administration, to a total of approx. LP30,000, had been cleared during the month, and pricing of work and rendering of bills to outside parties had improved with the arrival of the Branch Accountant. The C.E. stated that the position in this respect in the Engineering Branch was also improving. Nevertheless, Kirby "instructed that every effort should be made to start the

³¹³ 27. March 1946. Present: A. F. Kirby (G.M.), R. F. Scrivener (Chief Engineer), F. A. Sargent (Acting Supt. of the Line), Challoner (C.M.E.), J. Norman (Principal Asst.), W. F. L. Bate (Acting Asst. Chief Accountant), C. W. Bridgen (Stores Supt.).

³¹⁴ Minute 4:77.

³¹⁵ Minute 4:90.

³¹⁶ 'Palestine Gazette' 1404. 26. April. p.515. "Appointment: Mr. F.A. Sargent, District Traffic Supt., P.R., to act as Superintendent of the Line, w/e/f 17. March u.f.o." This ended on 4. May.

³¹⁷ Minute 4:94.

new financial year with as few outstanding items as possible.”

Road transport was discussed. Three lorries had been acquired, one for the Stores Branch, one for a regular pick-up service and one for a transport pool, and once these were in use, lorries should not be hired from outside parties except in very exceptional circumstances.³¹⁸

For the Permanent-Way, the C.E. stated that the Stores Supt. was in consultation with the Military regarding supplies of sleepers for the next two years. Kirby emphasized that the use of Katrani sleepers was impracticable owing to their prohibitive cost and instructed the C.E. and Stores Supt. to examine the question of whether a large order could be placed for supplies from East Africa. The Stores Supt. was also examining the supply of concrete sleepers at reasonable prices. There was of course a heavy backlog due to the wartime supply problems.

Staff matters were complex.³¹⁹ The C.E. was reminded of a circular³²⁰ in which “the principle was laid down that increases of pay to staff must be earned by increased value of work and that staff are not entitled to yearly increases as of right.” Regarding Absenteeism, Kirby had noted that absenteeism through sickness accounted for only about 4% of total absentees. It was therefore evident that absence through other causes was prevalent, and both the A.C.M.E. and C.E. were requested to investigate this. The practice of allowing Accounts staff at HQ to work to the old office hours of 7am. to 2pm. was causing dissatisfaction among other staff there and the Asst. C.A. was “instructed that normal office hours should be reverted to immediately”, though Kirby added that office hours would be altered during the summer months.

APRIL 1945.

The Fifth meeting was held on 26. April 1945.³²¹ The search for staff economies led Kirby to refer to a system used in East Africa for Works Trains, whereby one man acted both as Guard and as Supervisor for works done. Although the C.E. stated that no man trained for both functions was presently available, and that works trains were very few, Kirby had made his point. Both the A.C.M.E. and the C.E. reported that overtime had been reduced as far as possible.³²² The issue of Conveyance of Service Stores was still unresolved; the Acting Supt.o.t.L. stated that a proposed form for use in connection with the carriage of service traffic had been circulated to Branches. The General Manager instructed the A.Supt.o.t.L. to report, by letter, when the revised form was introduced.³²³ Regarding the proposal to consolidate Rest Days, the A.Supt.o.t.L. reported that, with the exception of staff at Kantara,³²⁴ all station staff had indicated that they would prefer to continue to take their rest days as at present. So Kirby gave up on this idea and ruled that the present practice in this respect should be continued.

In regard to Traffic, the A.Supt.o.t.L. stated that the Summer passenger train service would be introduced on 1. May 1945. A time-table for a Nahariah³²⁵ service had

³¹⁸ The pickup service for Stores started on 1. May 1945.

³¹⁹ Minutes 4:110-114.

³²⁰ General Manager's Circular No. 17 of 9. May 1944

³²¹ Kirby, Scrivener, Sargent as Acting Supt.o.t.L., Challoner, Charlton, Norman, Bridgen.

³²² Minute 5:119.

³²³ Minute 5:121.

³²⁴ Presumably there was nothing to do at Kantara anyway on a rest day, so the chance of accumulating time to go elsewhere would be attractive.

³²⁵ Sic. Various spellings are used even within these Minutes.

been worked out and it was anticipated that the service would be introduced about the middle of May. He also reported that Shunting Certificates had been introduced. The A.C.M.E. reported that considerably improved working had resulted from forwarding duplicated Journals to the Mechanical Branch.³²⁶

There was much discussion on the question of Stores, their acquisition, ordering, tendering and the demands of the Railway to claim supplies from the Military. Clearly Kirby had been devoting attention to these fields as well. He drew attention to the very poor standard of tailoring evident in newly-issued uniforms and “instructed that the contractor be advised that if the same low standard is evident in... new uniforms, contracts would not, in future, be awarded to him.” Future requirements should be put out to tender.

He had been informed by the D. Tn. that the position regarding supply of Sleepers from the Army was now easier and he would not therefore accept the statement of the A.D. Tn. (Stores) that sleepers were in heavy demand and that the P.R.’s requirements would only be met after the Army’s requirements. The Army had undertaken to meet the Administration’s requirements for track maintenance and as far as he was concerned, urgent main line requirements should be met before minor Military requirements. The Stores Supt. was therefore “instructed” to communicate again with the Army, immediately.

Regarding Firebricks,³²⁷ he instructed that future contracts should be on the basis of monthly supply against monthly payment, and demanded tighter standards involving firms being required to submit sample bricks, with the result of a laboratory test, and to give a guarantee with each delivery that bricks conformed to the sample supplied. He considered that adoption of this procedure should ensure that satisfactory bricks were supplied, would result in stocks being maintained by the suppliers instead of the Railways, and would prevent the Administration incurring heavy losses through deliveries not being up to the standard of samples supplied with tenders. Clearly there is some history of poor quality and dispute behind this decision, though we have no details.

Revenue trend³²⁸ was still downwards, and there appeared to be no immediate prospect of any rise. Branches should therefore effect economies in staff and in other directions. The A.Supt.o.t.L. was instructed to examine the possibility of shortening Trains 1 and 2 to conform with current passenger journeys, and also of reducing station and running staff to conform with the reduction in goods traffic. Accountancy issues were complicated by the lax practices of neighbouring Administrations which led to sudden and unexpected bills for work carried out several years previously, thus distorting the figures. The C.A. stated that bills were always submitted very late by the E.S.R., D.H.P. and C.F.H., and that considerable difficulty was also experienced in obtaining settlement of bills against those Administrations. There was in fact no means of ascertaining whether any other large bills for services performed by other Administrations a considerable time ago might be presented, though no such cases were anticipated.

Kirby instructed that a time limit for claims should be incorporated in the new agreement with the C.F.H. and in any future similar agreements, to ensure that heavy payments would not require to be made long after the relevant works had been performed.

³²⁶ Minute 5:128.

³²⁷ Used in the fireboxes of locomotives.

³²⁸ Minute 5:132.

Consumption of Water (other than for Locomotive Purposes)³²⁹ was discussed further; Although reductions at stations had been made, Kirby nevertheless considered the standard consumption per head fixed was too high, and that further reductions could be made. He suspected that non-railway staff were being provided with water in Sinai, and the result of the C.E.'s further investigation would be awaited.

The A.Supt.o.t.L. confirmed that Staff Committee Meetings were now in operation.

The Tendering process in general needed tightening up. The P.A. pointed out that tenders which required to be called for at regular stated intervals were usually left until late, with the result that the matter had usually to be dealt with in a very hurried manner. Kirby therefore directed the Stores Supt. to investigate the procedure for such tenders and ensure that they were called for at least three months before first deliveries were required.

MAY/JUNE 1945.

A new timetable was introduced on 1. May.³³⁰ On 10. May Kirby signed an advertisement for a new position of Welfare Officer.³³¹ The Sixth Meeting was held on 7. June 1945, with the Stores Controller and Port Manager also present. A close watch was being maintained on loadings. The Supt.o.t.L. reported that additional week-end services were being used very little by the public. The Station Master, Jerusalem, had told the C.A. that the poor use of these trains was due to their too early timings; the Supt.o.t.L. stated that enquiries had been made prior to their introduction, from Chambers of Commerce and similar bodies, but he would examine the matter again. Kirby directed that, if necessary, the trains should be retimed and that, if public support was still lacking, they should be cancelled. P.R. had no need to run half-empty trains.

But maybe there was traffic potential elsewhere. In connection with the proposed Nahariyya service, he referred to a report by the Haifa Bay Development Co. that, before the war, a service of 14 trains each way per day to Kiryat Haim and Kiryat Motzkin had been in operation. "There was at present considerable dissatisfaction among the public with the bus service to those settlements and it would appear to be desirable to use the light train set being prepared for the Nahariyya service for additional services to these places, with, in addition, a stop at the Vulcan Foundries." With these additional short workings one could see the beginnings of a suburban service - for the first time ever on P.R. The Supt.o.t.L. was instructed to examine the proposal, taking into consideration the practicability of collecting fares on the train, if necessary by several collectors, to avoid loss of revenue.³³²

Rolling-stock capacity remained very tight. Coaching stock available was just sufficient for present requirements but, unless the E.S.R. would agree to use of an E.S.R. set in the additional daily train service envisaged under the new timetable, there would

³²⁹ Minute 5:139.

³³⁰ Strangely, a Tuesday.

³³¹ 'Palestine Gazette' 1411. 24. May. p.615. "The Duties of the Welfare Officer will be to deal with all matters concerning the conditions of service, and employment of the Railway labour, including the large Workshops staff at Haifa. Candidates must have a knowledge of the three official languages, the Law governing employment and compensation payments for injuries, local wages conditions and general Government procedures. ...Candidates must be between the ages of 25 and 45...have had a sound education, be able to make reports in English..." Salary LP300 rising to LP600 p.a. by annual increments. Applications by 31.May.

³³² Culminating typically in 'Palestine Gazette' 1421, 28. June 1945. Supplement No. 2, p.714: "Govt. Rlys. (Haifa - Nahariya Fares & Rates) Bye-Laws 1945, under the Govt. Rlys. Ordinance 1936."

not be sufficient stock available for traffic when the timetable was introduced.³³³

Accident statistics were confused as different periods were being used, and the Supt.o.t.L. was requested to submit, in future, figures per calendar month and to divide collisions between: 'Collisions between Trains', and 'Others'.³³⁴

Engine Failures were increasing again; the majority continued to occur on engines based at Lydda shed and the A.C.M.E. was still not satisfied with the standard of supervision there. Although kilometres per failure had improved, the figure was still very low and efforts were being made to improve it. Fuel consumption figures were still high and this question was being examined. With the figures available, however, it was apparent that considerable wastage of fuel oil was occurring and this matter also was being investigated. The position was noted by Kirby who requested the A.C.M.E. to produce figures of average overall fuel oil consumption and of failures per class of engine at future meetings.³³⁵

Further economies were sought. The main passenger service (it could hardly be termed an "Express") on P.R. was the daily train pair from Cairo via Kantara to Haifa, Trains 1 & 2. They were long trains, and Kirby directed that they should be reduced to a Baldwin load forthwith.³³⁶ Though the A.C.M.E. pointed out the military had demanded the allotment of L.M.S. engines, Kirby directed that Baldwin engines should be used on the smaller train and the L.M.S. engines should be used on goods traffic, on the Haifa-Lyddda section, since it was likely that all available power would be required in the next citrus season. He added that the E.S.R. would accept the running of a smaller train, provided a daily troop train were operated, and instructed the Supt.o.t.L. to introduce this train, on one of the available troop-train paths, before the introduction of the new timetable. It appeared he would rather separate the civilian and military traffic, and run two shorter trains than one long one. It is not clear whether additional stock would be required for this.

Issues of water supplies to stations for staff use remained a concern.³³⁷ Kirby drew attention to the fact that although water supplies had been installed at stations between Lydda and Rafa at a total cost of LP2,500, there had been no reduction in the tonnage of water conveyed by train to stations. The Supt.o.t.L. however responded that the transport of water to stations north of Rafa had been reduced commensurately with the station supplies and that practically all water was being used in Sinai. Kirby thereupon accepted that the main point of the enquiry had been established, i.e. that water consumption at stations was not after all excessive, and decided that it was more a matter of controlling wastage and utilizing tank capacity effectively.³³⁸

But operations in Sinai involved political as well as technical problems. Kirby had noticed³³⁹ during a recent visit to Kantara that extreme difficulty was being experienced by staff there obtaining food and other essentials, owing to the refusal of the Egyptian Authorities to allow any goods purchased in Egypt to cross the Canal. As a result, black market operations were encouraged and staff were agitating for increased

³³³ At this time there were 75 SG coaches in stock: 63 in traffic, 12 under repair and a shortage of spare tyres for coach wheels was making itself felt.

³³⁴ Minute 6:152.

³³⁵ Minute 6:153.

³³⁶ The Baldwin 4-6-0's were allowed to haul up to 600 tons, though this had been lowered a few months earlier during the wet season to 500 tons.

³³⁷ Minute 6:159. This is but one example of many that could be taken to indicate the way relatively-minor issues were raised, investigated and followed-through.

³³⁸ The water needed to be conveyed in railway tank wagons, bringing costs but no revenue.

³³⁹ Minute 6:161.

cost-of-living allowances. He considered however that the remedy lay in improving the position at Kantara rather than increasing the allowance and stated that he would approach the Governor, Sinai Province, regarding the matter. If such action failed to be effective, the Food Controller might be approached to permit the forwarding of food supplies to Kantara, though this might involve difficulties.

So high-level bureaucratic involvement might be necessary to ensure that enough pita bread could be legitimately purchased - symptomatic of many issues with the Egyptians.

There had also been a spate of derailments in the Sinai in recent months, and although Scrivener did not wish to accept that any blame lay with the track, there had been concerns that the real causes were not being adequately investigated. The A.C.M.E. considered that the new forms being devised for the collection of data in connection with accidents would do much to ensure that all relevant factors were taken into consideration, but suggested that Branch representatives were often more concerned with exonerating their own Branches from blame than with establishing the true causes. He also considered it essential for Joint Enquiries to be held as early as possible after the occurrence of an accident. Kirby agreed and stated that the new Instructions governing enquiries into accidents were designed to ensure that enquiries were concluded as soon as possible - indeed, if a time limit was not already provided for, this would be included. He reiterated that the only effective way of establishing the causes of derailments was by effective Joint Enquiries. There could be no object in the Heads of Branches setting up their proposed Committee if no conclusive result could be achieved, and he doubted if this could be done at this stage. He required, however, a definite joint recommendation from the Heads of Branches concerned as to what steps should be taken.

A new "Working Time Table No. 3." was being prepared by the Supt.o.t.L. There were issues of breakdown equipment being safely stored in coaches, and Kirby considered it essential that such equipment be placed in E.S.R. coaches as they arrived in Kantara. He was also interested in introducing First Aid Classes. It transpired that a recent attempt to run classes at HQ had proved ineffective owing to a loss of interest; that courses were already held at regular intervals in Haifa Port where a considerable number of men had qualified and were interested in the work, and that one-tenth of the Engineering Branch staff had qualified, this subject being covered in the Gangers' course. Kirby considered that courses in First Aid should be part of the Training School curriculum when the longer courses were instituted.³⁴⁰

He had clearly immersed himself in many details of operation, staff welfare, improvements to facilities, the issues of which materials were best suited for P.R. use, and more. Through these Minutes we can see just how involved he was, and how involved he wished to be, in controlling and coordinating what the various heads of Department were up to.

There was good news too. On 14. June the 'Palestine Gazette' announced the conferral of several honours, for Kirby and for several other P.R. Staff.³⁴¹

³⁴⁰ The Staff Training School at Haifa was another Kirby project.

³⁴¹ 'Palestine Gazette' 1418. 'Extraordinary' 14. June: Birthday Honours. incl: "His Majesty the King has been graciously pleased to give directions for the following appointments and awards on the occasion of the celebration of His Majesty's Birthday: The Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George: incl: Arthur Frank Kirby, General Manager, The Palestine Railways.

The British Empire Medal: (Civil Division): Incl:- Mohammad Abdullah, Mikhail Rossides & Shams Ed-Din Ahmad, Locomotive Drivers, The Palestine Railways." One must assume that Kirby himself had proposed these drivers, due either to long-service or acts of courage during attacks. He was

JULY 1945.

The Seventh meeting was held on 12. July 1945 and Motive Power was the first matter for worry. SG Engine availability had deteriorated during the previous month, to between 47 and 56 at any one time, though an improvement had since been effected. The deterioration of the position in respect of Lydda-based engines was due to 45 members of the running staff being on sick leave and out of a total of 23 fitters, only 4 were working! Four fitters were being sent from Haifa to alleviate the position.

In view of these problems, Kirby considered that the present weekend passenger services were extravagant in the use of engines. In the light of figures recently produced by the C.A., which showed that a loss had been made on military traffic, he suspected that the weekend services were also run at a loss. "While it was essential that daily passenger services should be maintained, there was no point in maintaining the weekend services unless profits were being earned, as they were of a purely temporary nature and would not be economic after the return of normal conditions."³⁴² He therefore instructed the Supt.o.t.L. to examine immediately whether to discontinue these trains, since this could save engines which could be utilised for goods traffic and reliefs to the daily passenger trains at week-ends.

It was reported that the Haifa-Nahariya service was producing fairly good results but a certain proportion of the traffic was being diverted from the Haifa-Acre service.³⁴³ The position was being examined, but during the previous weekend it had been necessary to strengthen the train by two coaches.

Two periods of serious congestion had recently occurred, but Kirby noted that on the basis of the figures supplied, it should be possible to meet all requirements. If the weekend passenger services were discontinued, the power position would be considerably improved. Every effort should be made, particularly by clearance at night, to prevent the building-up of vehicles awaiting clearance from Haifa yard.

As a result of this debate the A.C.M.E. was requested to submit, at future meetings, statistics of 'Total' and 'Average' locomotive availability in relation to trains run, similar statistics submitted by the Supt.o.t.L. being discontinued.

Rolling stock was also an issue. There had been complaints from customers about wagon shortages. During inspection of a 1st.-Class coach at Jerusalem Kirby had found the seating to be in an extremely bad state, although the coach had only been out of shops a year - some seat coverings had been removed, and the canvas which had been used instead of leather was in extremely bad condition. The A.C.M.E. responded that locally-made rattan was being tried out and he had asked the Stores Supt. to obtain, for experimental purposes, a locally-made cloth which was considered to be suitable.

On Accidents Kirby instructed that, in future, cases of running through points should be indicated separately in the statistics and not included under "Misc." Detailed information regarding the circumstances of each accident would not be required in future, but the Supt.o.t.L. should show the causes of accidents in a detailed summary. Attention was drawn to the increased number of breakaways, the A.C.M.E. stating that some

formally invested as C.M.G. on 4. February 1946 at a ceremony at Government House, Jerusalem.

³⁴² By 'normal conditions' he presumably meant the de-restricting of road traffic and increased availability of fuel and tyres for road vehicles. He was apparently concerned not to establish permanent services which would be more difficult to withdraw later.

³⁴³ This was undesirable since the two services, sharing the same set of rails for most of the distance, were for accounting purposes on two different systems - the narrow-gauge Acre trains were part of the Hedjaz, and a portion of traffic on the standard-gauge Nahariya trains went to the H.B.T. accounts! Such were the complexities of the P.R. system.

deterioration in engine management had been mainly due to Haifa drivers being unfamiliar with the L.M.S. engines which had recently been allocated there. Three cases of slipped couplings were stated to be due to drawn links.³⁴⁴ The collation of regular statistics was clearly still important but the system could be refined as required, based on experience gained.

Relations with Egypt were difficult in other respects too.³⁴⁵ Sleepers from the Army were not yet coming forward because the E.S.R. would not agree to wagons loaded with 'service traffic' being forwarded to the P.R.! Further, they would not agree to sleepers being charged at military rates. The Stores Supt. was instructed to ascertain where the sleepers were loaded and to arrange for delivery by the cheapest means, taking into consideration the use of P.R. wagons, barge transport from Suez or shipment by schooner and the locations at which the sleepers were required.

An indication of the times is provided by a discussion on Stores:³⁴⁶ It was necessary to build up stocks of preserved meat and condensed milk for use in emergency and a release order from the Food Controller was awaited. "It might be necessary for some preserved fish to be taken in place of preserved meat."

The Senior Accountant reported³⁴⁷ that surplus of revenue over expenditure would be small. Revenue was down slightly on the previous month, and expenditure, in respect of cost-of-living allowances would again be heavy. Kirby considered that, but for the increased expenditure in these allowances, the position would have been satisfactory.³⁴⁸

Expenditure on locomotives and stock was under control. The A.C.M.E. held only two R.O.D. engines above the number which had been estimated for and the cost of these was more than offset by the fact that three shunting engines had been handed back to the Army. Economies had been effected in fuel-oil consumption but certain items not provided for in the Estimates, notably the reconditioning of the Nahariya train, had to be met. On the whole, however, he considered that total expenditure during the year would be within the Estimates.

Regarding Trains 1 and 2, Kirby stated he had advised the Army that, with the introduction of a new timetable on 1. Sept. 1945, their composition would be reduced. Any question arising from this decision was a matter for discussion between the Supt.o.t.L. and the Army. As for Water Consumption, he had been informed by the Army that the allowance for men on active service was from 0.5 to 1 gallon a day. In the light of these figures he considered the allowances proposed by the C.E. to be excessive but was satisfied that the present allowance was adequate but not wasteful.

The Second Division Civil Service Association had requested the formation of a Central Committee on the lines of the Conciliation Committee established for wages grades, and this had been agreed to.

Regarding the Derailments in Sinai, Scrivener had reported that he considered any results which would be achieved by a Committee of investigation would not justify the time spent in the investigation. In this he was supported by the A.C.M.E. who confirmed his suspicion that one of the causes was incorrect buffer height on

³⁴⁴ The "Three-Link coupling" comprises three oval chain links, one of which fits over a hook on the next wagon. If a locomotive starts its train with a sudden jerk, the force exerted can break one of these steel links and the train becomes divided.

³⁴⁵ Minute 7:177.

³⁴⁶ Minute 7:177.

³⁴⁷ Minute 7:178.

³⁴⁸ i.e. Staff costs remained high, but other operational costs had been reduced.

wooden-underframed wagons owing to distortion of the underframe. He was taking action to increase the buffer heights on such wagons, anticipating that 50% could be dealt with successfully. Wooden blocks were being fitted in the axle-spring-bed, as a temporary measure, and all wagons were being gauged for height at Lydda, Gaza and Kantara, before being allowed to travel over the Sinai desert. He did not favour the marking of wooden-underframed wagons to the effect that they should not be worked south of Gaza.³⁴⁹ Kirby noted this and instructed that the proposal for a Committee of Enquiry should be abandoned - thus proving that he could respond positively to advice from his subordinates when the situation warranted.

Instructions for both First Aid Training and the Handling of Dangerous Liquids would be issued from the G.M.'s Office.³⁵⁰

Lengthy discussion followed on the use of the limited motive power available. Under normal circumstances traffic was operated according to a list of priorities, and at the bottom came the humble non-revenue-earning service trains. However, Kirby was keen to see improvements to the quality of the track. The C.E. complained³⁵¹ that running of ballast trains was unsatisfactory, as provision of power for these trains had been very irregular. The Supt.o.t.L. explained that a daily programme, including provision for the ballast train, was given to the Locomotive Foreman but, in the event of power being insufficient to meet requirements, it was the practice to cancel the ballast train before any other. To meet the full requirements of the programme put forward by the C.E. would involve the use of three engines. However, Kirby emphasised the necessity of providing a regular ballast train service, if the ballasting programme were to be maintained. An irregular service also impacted on quarry production. Until new stone crushers, now on order, were received, the full programme put forward by the C.E. would not be necessary and it should be possible to provide sufficient power for present requirements from the present availability of 56 engines. By the time the crushers were in operation, the availability position would probably have improved to such an extent as to enable three engines to be used for the service. In any event, however, a regular programme must be adhered to and, for this purpose, priority was even to be given to ballast trains over certain goods trains in respect of regular running, and instructions to this effect must be given for the guidance of the Locomotive Foreman and Traffic staff. He therefore instructed the C.E. and Supt.o.t.L. to work out a programme for immediate implementation to give an assured service for the clearance of Nur Esh-Shams and Beit Nabala quarries - allowing for modification in the light of quarry output and improved engine availability.

Scrivener then took over for a while in Kirby's absence.³⁵²

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 1945.

From 1. September the use of metric weights and measures became compulsory in Palestine.³⁵³ The Eighth meeting was held on 6. Sept. 1945.³⁵⁴ Loco availability had varied between 52 and 61 in July, 52 and 63 in August. This wide variation was noted by Kirby who stated that, although average availability of total stock had shown a very

³⁴⁹ P.R. was still using antiquated if not archaic stock.

³⁵⁰ Minutes 7:190, 192.

³⁵¹ Minute 7:193. As we have seen, a large proportion of the P.R. main line was inadequately ballasted.

³⁵² 'Palestine Gazette' 1426, 26. July. p.829. "Mr. R.F. Scrivener, Chief Engineer, P.R., to act as General Manager w/e/f 20. July 1945 u.f.o." ; "p.830. J.P. Graham, District Engineer, P.R., to act as Chief Engineer, in addition to his substantive duties, w/e/f 20/7/45 u.f.o." This was till 6. September.

³⁵³ 'Palestine Gazette' 1417, 14. June. p.682.

³⁵⁴ Present were Kirby, who had just returned, Scrivener (C.E.), Sargent (D.T.S. - District Traffic Supt.), Challoner (A.C.M.E.), Mansfield (A. Ch. Acct.), Bridgen (Stores Supt.)

considerable improvement, being now approx. 70%, it was still lower than it should be and necessitated the maintenance of a larger total stock to move the traffic offering. The A.C.M.E.³⁵⁵ stated that the main factor causing the low availability was the deterioration in the condition of older engines which had not recently had a general repair. Trouble was being experienced particularly with tubeplates. Regarding the total stock of engines, it was anticipated that one R.O.D. and one U.S.A.T.C. loco would be handed back to the Army in the near future and that one L.M.S. loco would eventually be received in replacement. Although engine-km. per day per engine in use were high, running maintenance was not being sacrificed. The staff position at Lydda shed was improving, and the D.T.S. confirmed that during the previous month all requests for power had been met.

Local passenger results during July and August had been excellent and it was proposed to maintain the present local passenger train service, including the week-end trains, until the end of September, the date originally contemplated. Kirby approved this, and suggested also a change to the timing of the morning Nahariya train "for the convenience of passengers going to Nahariya for the day." The D.T.S. also stated that a second booking window had been opened at Jerusalem Station, and was instructed that the Army should be advised that the accommodation they occupied would be required by a specific date. He reported that continuous checking of tickets was maintained in the trains and, in addition, spot-checks were made by the Railway Police.

The D.T.S. reported that SG goods traffic was good with no prospect of a drop in the near future. Heavy loadings of both civil and military traffic was taking place in Haifa Port, but no congestion was occurring. 10.2 trains had been run per day between Haifa and Lydda and 6.4 per day between Lydda and Kantara, of which about 4.5 trains daily were goods trains. A considerable volume of civil traffic was passing, including melon traffic. Wagon supplies were good and no indents had been refused. On the NG loadings were not heavy and consisted mainly of cereals and phosphates from Trans-Jordan. Engine kilometrage per day per engine in use had risen substantially from 105.9 in June to 194.5 in July. Further coaches had been released to traffic on 5. Sept.1945, and the improvement was noted by Kirby, who instructed³⁵⁶ that action be taken to obtain plastic material for seating direct from the Crown Agents. Colours should be green for first class and chocolate for second class coaches.

The A.C.M.E. had recommended 160 wagons (of a total 2,278) for write-off, stating that a number were completely smashed. The repair of wooden-underframe wagons represented a very high proportion of total repair costs. Many were not worth repairing but had to be kept in service to meet present traffic requirements. As against the ca. 350 wagons taken out of service, 187 open wagons had been purchased and 150 box wagons were on permanent hire. The position was 'noted' by the G.M.

The tank wagon position had partly deteriorated owing to an accident at Battir; 16 oil tank wagons were under repair and preference was being given to fuel-oil tank wagons. Two 30-Ton water tank wagons were being converted. Kirby began a discussion on the separation of 'white oils' and 'black oils'; the Crown Agents had told him that, on British Railways, kerosene was treated as less dangerous than petrol, any oil with a flash point of more than 76 degrees being regarded as non-dangerous. The A.C.M.E. explained that the position on P.R. was that 'white oil' tanks were used for either kerosene or petrol and that the only division in the allocation of tank wagons was between 'black oils' and 'white oils'. A proper procedure had been laid down for the change-over of any tank

³⁵⁵ 'Palestine Gazette' 1432, 16. August p.956. "Mr. E.R. Masters, C.M.E., P.R., retired from the public service w/e/f 7. Aug. 1945."

³⁵⁶ Minute 8:197.

from one type of oil to another, in accordance with traffic requirements.

Kirby then instructed that delivery of wagons still to be acquired from the Army should be effected as early as possible, and the desirability of obtaining ten vacuum-fitted Brakevans from the Army, to replace P.R. vans in bad condition, should be investigated.

Accident Statistics showed³⁵⁷: June July August.

Derailments	14	13	18
Collisions	5	7	5
Breakaways	9	9	15
Points run through	3	1	1
Misc.	8	9	12
Public injuries	1	2	2
Staff Injuries	4	5	2

The D.T.S. stated that all derailments in August had been in yards and that breakaways were mostly due to shunting.

Engine Failures³⁵⁸ per class were:

	<u>June</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>August.</u>
L.M.S.	26	12	14
U.S.A.	3	2	2
H. Class	13	13	10
K. Class	4	-	-
P. Class	-	2	2
<u>Total:</u>	<u>46</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>28.</u>

Kirby considered that, in relation to the kilometrage run, the position was good, but that there still remained room for improvement.

Causes for failures included:

Mismanagement	10, 2, 6 respectively per month.
Mechanical defects.	7, 8, 9.
Leaking tubes.	3, 4, 4.
Burst superheater elements.	5, 3, 3.
Injector trouble.	7, 3, 4.

The D.T.S. reported that the English copy of the new time-table ('W.T.T. No. 3') was well in hand and the Arabic copy would be issued before the date of operation, on 1. Nov. 1945.³⁵⁹

OCTOBER 1945.

At the Ninth meeting on 11. October 1945 the Supt.o.t.L. stated that traffic was heavy; at least 13 trains Haifa-Lyddá would be required during the next two or three weeks to move traffic offering and 14 trains a day would be essential with the advent of the citrus season in mid-November. The A.C.M.E. could only guarantee availability of 61 engines, which should normally allow of a train service of 14 trains per day if all engines were in good condition and could be worked throughout the 24 hours. This was not the case, however, and therefore power for a programme of more than 12-13 trains a day could not be guaranteed. Kirby instructed that the Supt.o.t.L. should arrange the trains programme on this basis.

He understood that it might be possible to hire two W.D. 2-10-0's at present in

³⁵⁷ Minute 8:196.

³⁵⁸ Minute 8:197.

³⁵⁹ Minute 8:206.

use in Syria. The A.C.M.E. responded that these were coal-burning engines and he would prefer to try to obtain further L.M.S. engines from the Army before application was made for the 2-10-0's. Kirby however drew attention to the poor condition in which L.M.S. engines had been received from the Army and instructed that, in the event of any further engines being obtained, a declaration of condition should be obtained from the Army to enable relief from hire charges to be obtained, should they be out of traffic for long periods.

He also drew attention to an example of bad marshalling of wagons with overhanging loads which he had observed.³⁶⁰

Reports on the Training School were as follows:³⁶¹

- A.C.M.E.: Refresher courses were in progress. A scheme for the appointment of acting drivers had been introduced for which men were required to be literate and to have 6/6 vision.

- C.E.: 'Gangers' courses had been introduced and had been found to be beneficial.

- Supt.o.t.L: Refresher courses were still being held, mostly for signalmen, and Station Masters' courses would be introduced later. It had been found that better results were obtained with small classes.

On the same day the appointment by the High Commissioner of a Transport Advisory Board was announced. Its terms of reference were: "To advise Government on any matters relating to transport by road, rail, sea or air, including questions of policy, legislation, economy and planning, which may be referred to it by Government." Kirby was appointed Chairman, other members included the Director of Civil Aviation, Military Liaison Officer, the Controller of Road Transport, a Principal Asst. Secretary from the Chief Secretary's Office and four others.³⁶² Clearly this gave him much better access to information and some slight influence over planning and must indicate to some extent the extent to which he was esteemed.

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 1945.

A new Timetable was introduced on 1. November (its introduction having been postponed from 1. September),³⁶³ promising "improved train services and accelerated timings between Palestine and Egypt." At the same time, significantly, a Curfew on motor vehicles outside towns, 10pm-6am was imposed.³⁶⁴ On 21. November Cunningham, who was destined to be the last High Commissioner, arrived to take up his post.³⁶⁵

On 3. December a southbound train was derailed at Nahariya due to flooding following torrential rains, an engine and one coach falling off the line, and from 29-31. Dec. the line was cut near Gaza due to flooding. On 11. December Bevin nominated the 12-man 'Anglo-American Inquiry' Team.

Line Capacity was an issue at the Tenth meeting, on 13. December 1945. Kirby considered that, provided sufficient reliable engines were available, it should be possible to run 14-15 trains per day between Haifa and Lydda, without serious delays occurring.

³⁶⁰ Minute 9:214. He seemed to see and note everything.

³⁶¹ Minute 9:230.

³⁶² 'Palestine Gazette' 1145, 11. Oct. 1945. p.1177.

³⁶³ 'Palestine Gazette' 1148, 1. Nov. 1945. p. 1264.

³⁶⁴ 'Palestine Gazette' 1449. 1. Nov. 1945; an 'Extra' and emergency issue.

³⁶⁵ 'Palestine Gazette' 1455 21. Nov. 1945.

The A.C.M.E. had stated that trains were at present taking up to 8 hours *en-route*, a situation which prejudiced engine availability. From statistics provided, unreasonable delay did not appear to be occurring at stations and the reasons appeared to be divided between slow running and delays due to cautions, or some other cause not at present revealed. Adequate and accurate records would need to be produced and examined to determine the cause of the present unsatisfactory position. The present timetable provided for 16 paths and the question of the efficiency of the Control in operating the line should also be examined, particularly in regard to the arrangement of the most suitable crossings, the number of trains shunting at stations, and similar factors.³⁶⁶

When Kirby asked whether the present stock of locomotives should be augmented by hiring from the War Department, the A.C.M.E. responded that no W.D. engines worth hiring were available, only some in very poor condition which would probably require extensive repair after a few trips.

An improvement in the efficiency of engine crews was being effected by weeding out the more inefficient staff. The first, elementary course at the Training School had nearly finished and a more advanced course would shortly be started. Difficulty was experienced because of illiteracy but this did not apply to the younger men, who also had a greater sense of responsibility and were generally more satisfactory.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁶ Minute 10:234.

³⁶⁷ Minute 10:236. This says something about the more experienced men!

CHAPTER 4.

THE MANAGEMENT OF PALESTINE RAILWAYS IN 1946.

JANUARY 1946.

The year began with some optimism. On 10. January the 'Palestine Post' reported on several plans, having been briefed in Haifa by "a senior official of the Palestine Railways". These included the construction this year of a loop from Kafr Jinnis (near Ras el-Ein) to Sarafand Junction which would cut out Lydda Junction, both to save time and obviate the necessity for passengers changing trains. The loop was estimated to cost some LP60,000 (including materials and land). On the other hand, plans for a new station in Tel Aviv and the realignment of the line in a cutting to obviate level crossings "will not be carried out for the time being, as approval for the expenditure has been deferred". Kirby (for we presume it was he) announced "General improvements in both passenger and goods traffic on all the lines will gradually be introduced, but it is not expected that the full benefits will make themselves felt before the end of next year. By then it is hoped that the new rolling stock (including air-conditioned coaches) and modern engines ordered last year in England, will have been delivered."³⁶⁸

At the Eleventh meeting on 11. January 1946 Kirby welcomed W. G. W. Wilson, the newly-appointed Chief Mechanical Engineer; He stated that "Mr. Challoner would be leaving Palestine toward the end of the month and he wished to record his appreciation of the work which Mr Challoner had done during his period of service as Locomotive Engineer, and as Acting Chief Mechanical Engineer. Although the locomotive and rolling stock position was not yet perfect, a great improvement had been achieved by Mr. Challoner despite very difficult circumstances."³⁶⁹

He noted that the brakevan situation was poor, it was evident that a total stock of 54 brakevans was insufficient to meet requirements with 63 engines in service, and so instructed the C.M.E. to approach the Army and E.S.R. to ascertain whether brakevans could be made available for purchase or hire. In the meantime a service of 14 trains a day must be maintained, and if necessary, E.S.R. brakevans at Kantara, for which hire charges were paid to E.S.R., could be used.³⁷⁰ Despite the the bad running of Trains 1 and 2, he expected trains to run on time with the introduction of the new timetable.³⁷¹

However, the very next day at 10am. occurred a major attack on the Payroll train, some 2km. north of Hadera. Three policemen were slightly injured; Some LP35,000 in notes and coins was stolen. The 'Palestine Post' reported: "According to official sources, the attack was very carefully planned and the attackers, who are believed to be Jews, must have known all particulars of the train, its contents, movements and personnel. The spot was carefully selected on a curve in a wooded area. The train, on its

³⁶⁸ 'Palestine Post' 10. January 1946. We have not found details of what had been ordered!

³⁶⁹ Minute 11:256. cf. 'Palestine Gazette' 1467, 10. Jan. 1946. p.29. "W.G.W. Wilson to be C.M.E., P.R., w/e/f 9. Dec. 1945. Acting appointment of P.A. Challoner, Loco Engineer for Special Duty, P.R., as C.M.E., pub. 'Gazette' 1349 (3. Aug. 1944), ceased w/e/f 18. Dec. 1945."

³⁷⁰ Minute 11:257.

³⁷¹ Minute 11:266. This was introduced from 15. January. "P.R.. Notice: Owing to the continued and increasing heavy demand for the conveyance of civilian and military goods traffic, it has become necessary to curtail certain passenger train services and to amend the timings of others, as from 15. January 1946. Revised passenger train timetables are exhibited at all railway stations." A.F. Kirby, 10. Jan. 1946. 'Palestine Gazette' 1468, 17. January. p.52. The 'Palestine Post' noted "Two trains instead of three will run between Jerusalem and Jaffa, the journey taking the same time, three hours and 10 minutes. Most of the other cuts are in local services."

way to deliver the pay to staff and workers at stations on the Haifa-Lydd-Kantara, Lydda-Jerusalem and Lydda-Jaffa lines, consisted of the engine and tender, followed by three coaches, seven wagons and the brake van..... The attackers had placed an explosive charge under the track and were concealed behind a hillock.....the explosive charge was touched off when the engine ran over the spot. The coupling of the engine broke, but there was little damage to the locomotive itself; the three following coaches were completely wrecked as they ran off the track. The next five wagons were telescoped and badly damaged, lying zigzag across the line, but they are not beyond repair, while the remaining three were left on the track more or less intact.”³⁷²

FEBRUARY/MARCH 1946.

At the Twelfth meeting on 12. March 1946 it was reported that 6 Brakevans had been taken over from the Army, though there was dispute about the hiring charges, and it was not proposed at present to hire vans from the E.S.R.; U.S.A.T.C. vans incorporating modifications were performing well. Kirby drew attention to the fact that brakevans on order from the U.K. were unlikely to be delivered for some considerable time and, in view of the bad condition of P.R. vans, it might become necessary, in the interim, to obtain further U.S.A. vehicles. If so, the price to be paid would be on the basis of a 2-year life only.³⁷³

Kirby was optimistic; an average movement of 4,000 tons a day was anticipated at Haifa Port for the next few months and every effort should be made to provide as good a rail service as possible. He had information that road transport rates were extraordinarily high and if a satisfactory rail service could be provided, there would be no lack of traffic offering for some time.³⁷⁴

In future Accident statistics previously presented at the meeting by the Supt.o.t.L. should be incorporated in a monthly report submitted prior to the meeting. A slight improvement in accident figures was noted but these were considered still too high.³⁷⁵

During this period the process of ‘ethnic separation’ within Palestine was continuing. It was reported that 60 Jewish railway employees had resigned during 1945, leaving 605 out of a total of about 6,500 in the service. There were now only 20 Jewish locomotive drivers and stokers out of some 500.³⁷⁶

APRIL 1946.

The month began with coordinated attacks by I.Z.L. to cut P.R.’s links both north and south. Two railway bridges were blown up on the evening of 2-3. April, one between Yibna and Isdud, and the other just south of Acre.³⁷⁷ Ironically at the time Kirby was in

³⁷² ‘Palestine Post’ 13. January 1946. The line was cleared by the next day, a Sunday. Another bomb was found some 200 yards away and defused.

³⁷³ Minute 12:275(g). It is not known which vans had been ordered, how many or from whom.

³⁷⁴ Minute 12:275.

³⁷⁵ Minute 12:276.

³⁷⁶ ‘Palestine Post’ 3. March 1946 p.3. Report on a meeting of the Tel Aviv Jaffa Jewish Labour Council

³⁷⁷ ‘Palestine Post’ 3. April 1946. On 4. April was added that repairs were estimated at 24 hours; “Freight traffic only will be resumed on the Haifa-Cairo line tomorrow (Thursday) morning, while owing to the dislocation of rolling stock there will be no passenger trains until Friday. The Haifa-Beirut line will be working normally again tomorrow. The attack on the main line was concentrated on the stretch between Yibna and Isdud stations where the track was blown up at six places, including two large culverts. The Isdud station building was wrecked by explosives, and a locomotive standing there was very badly damaged.” The Official Communiqué included more detail: “At about 8.45 pm. two unknown persons dressed as Arabs held up the police guard at Na’amin bridge, south of Acre. At the same time some 20

Cairo for the first of the Middle East Railway Conferences, which he had initiated, and which was aimed at improving international links and cooperation. The 'Palestine Post' reported somewhat enthusiastically that the General Managers of the Palestine, Egyptian, Iraqi, Turkish and Hejaz railways had attended; "The object is ultimately to connect the Middle East railways with the European lines, and such questions as through Sleeper service connecting with the Taurus express and the running of through traffic for passenger rolling stock will be explored at subsequent meetings." The next conference was planned for June 1947 in Ankara. In addition, the paper had "learned that negotiations were in progress for the sale to the Lebanese Government of the Haifa-Beirut-Tripoli line built by the Army during the war. The British terms have been communicated to the Lebanese and the latter's reply was expected to be received yesterday."³⁷⁸ At this point this news could have been interpreted either positively - the military line would be transferred to a civilian and commercial administration - or negatively, that Palestine's link with Lebanon would soon be under Lebanese control. The seeds for regional disintegration were being sown. In fact the importance of the railway was also being undermined by air competition. On 4. April the allocation of permits for a thrice-weekly air service Lydda-Beirut and a thrice-weekly Haifa-Beirut to 'Middle East Airlines', a Lebanese company, was officially announced, on condition a Palestinian air company could do the same - i.e. amounting to a daily service from each airport.³⁷⁹

A further report on 15. April included discussions on use of the H.B.T. line for passenger traffic, though significantly "consideration of various other matters, such as the operation of sleeping-cars and dining-cars and the formation of a clearing office for accounts, was postponed until a settlement would be reached on the future of the 'link' railway." The Conference had also discussed the issue of the Suez Canal crossing; The Canal Company wanted the bridge removed, but the Railway Conference "expressed strong disapproval of such a step, considering the retention of the bridge as vital in Middle East rail communications." It planned instead that the passenger trains should use the bridge during daylight hours rather than at night-time, and the G.M. of E.S.R. even proposed as an alternative a railway tunnel at Port Said, with a connection to the existing line.³⁸⁰

The Thirteenth meeting on 11. April 1946 examined further the wagon situation. The supply was adequate although there was a shortage in Haifa Port of flat trucks for timber and iron. The 20-Ton trucks which were being acquired would help to cover this deficiency and were apparently some 5 feet longer than present stock. Some 300 wagons were expected from the Army and after these had been taken over and stencilled they were to be brought into early use for keeping Haifa Port clear. Some would require timber repairs. It was agreed that these wagons would be useful for a

armed Jews surrounded and blew up the bridge causing severe damage. In addition the railway line was cut in several places near Mishmar Hayam colony. As the saboteurs withdrew they were fired on by a nearby guard post, but so far as is known no casualties were inflicted.

Shortly after 10.00p.m. a large party of Jews attacked Isdud railway station between Majdal and Yibna. A temporary additional policeman who challenged them was killed by machine gun fire. The Jews planted a bomb inside a railway engine which exploded causing damage. The signal office was also damaged. The five remaining members of the temporary additional police guard were overpowered and their weapons were stolen."

³⁷⁸ 'Palestine Post' 5. April 1946.

³⁷⁹ 'Palestine Gazette' 1486, 4. April p.337.

³⁸⁰ 'Palestine Post' 15. April 1946. It is worth noting that a similar Middle East Conference to fix lower air passenger and freight rates was to be held in Cairo in October, and an IATA Traffic Conference was held in Aleppo in July. ('Palestine Post' 23. July 1946 p.3.)

number of types of traffic, such as timber, building materials and even for ballast if some were converted to 'drop-side' stock.³⁸¹

Kirby then produced a letter from Arditi Ltd. offering some U.S. stock, for which payment would have to be made in dollars. On discussion, the vehicles did not seem to be completely suitable; they would not be really necessary if a promise of 50 50-Ton war flats from the Army were fulfilled; and it was doubtful whether anyway the Secretary of State would authorise the purchase. In consequence he "ruled that we could not consider the offer."³⁸²

But he was concerned about Accidents. Breakaways were serious involving several types of stock, and he pointed out that one particular vehicle, E.S.R. 10954, figured twice in the record within a fortnight.³⁸³ The C.M.E. would enquire into action taken after the first incident and would also instruct his inspectors to watch the matter generally, as Kirby expressed concern at having 6 breakaways in section and 3 more in starting. Bad driving was implied and the predominance of '70000' class engines suggested 'over-powering' and the need for drivers to exercise more care.³⁸⁴

Only a few days later, on 15. April, P.R. was hit by a national strike, called by the 'Second Division'. The press reported that "All railway services in Palestine have been cancelled until further notice, following the strike of the railway staff."³⁸⁵ The workers were demanding an increase of basic pay to 320mils daily for unskilled workers, and a proportionate increase in other grades, an increase of the Cost-of-Living allowance, and a compensatory war bonus. This was a major crisis for P.R. - the press reported on Friday 19. April that "No further progress was made at Thursday morning's discussions between the General Manager and railwaymen's representatives for a settlement of the strike, although the outlook last night had been promising. There will be no civilian trains during the next few days, but only urgent military traffic will be handled. Goods traffic will be confined to the movement of essential foodstuffs and fuel..." Royal Engineers were drafted in to work an emergency skeleton service.³⁸⁶ The Strike was finally ended on Thursday 25. April, after ten days, with an unspecified compromise.

MAY 1946.

The Fourteenth meeting on 14. May 1946 was under the cloud of the recent strike. Kirby acknowledged that April could hardly be considered a fair month for comparative purposes because of the strike but when the Supt.o.t.L. reported that, although forwardings were not exceptionally heavy they had been maintaining 11-12 trains per day from the port, this struck warning bells with Kirby. If these were enough to clear the

³⁸¹ Minute 13:302.

³⁸² Minute 13:303.

³⁸³ He had clearly read the reports very carefully!

³⁸⁴ Minute 13:303.

³⁸⁵ 'Palestine Post' 17. April 1946. The crew of the up-train from Egypt abandoned it at 10.00 on Monday 15. April at Khan Yunis, the first station in Palestine, and passengers were left stranded until a crew of British personnel arrived on a trolley from Lydda at noon and took the train as far as Lydda.

³⁸⁶ "... A railway operating unit of the R.E.'s began work on Thursday night and the first troop train left Lydda for Egypt at midday yesterday, followed in the early afternoon by another train from Haifa. For the time being four trains will be run daily carrying essential oil and food supplies to various centres of the country. Kerosene prices have already gone up in Tel Aviv, but sufficient quantities will be available there to check this trend.

It is unlikely that passenger trains will be run before the middle of next week (in four or five days), and the first passenger train will take back to Egypt about 5,000 Copt Easter pilgrims now in Jerusalem." 'Palestine Post' 20. April 1946.

traffic offering, in spite of the presumed piling-up during the strike, it suggested to him that the real current offer of traffic was falling - even if some shipping had been diverted to Jaffa, and even if military traffic was easing-off. Officers were "exhorted to seek every means of maintaining and improving services, even if this might entail reasonable capital works". He was concerned at loss of traffic to road and felt that, as road rates were higher than rail, if there was appreciable diversion from rail to road "there must presumably be better service given to justify traders in making the additional payment." He referred to recent congestion at Lydda "which must seriously have retarded transits for Tel Aviv and encouraged diversions to road."³⁸⁷ There was a tendency for road transport to increase "at our expense, especially in the way of 'Ex-Service Cooperatives', groups of ex-servicemen to whom preference is given even in the buying of vehicles and who use sentimental arguments to foster their business."³⁸⁸

The C.A. stated that April tended to be a light month in any case due to holidays, and Kirby confirmed this by reference to records of previous years. Even if statistics for this April were not worth considering because of the strike, it was clearly good to have comparative statistics to refer to.

JUNE 1946.

The tone changes with the Fifteenth meeting on 17. June 1946. The political situation had altered and from this point on issues of sabotage and violence become more prevalent in the Minutes and also indicate the problems the system was now facing. Rather than seeking new traffic it became a matter of maintaining what could still be maintained.

Kirby referred to "the recent outrages on the Railway, of which one had occurred a week before, and led to the loss of 10 coaches apart from other damage especially to 3 locomotives."³⁸⁹ The latest attack had taken place only the night before, when three bridges had been blown up, each being in a key position to cripple international communications."³⁹⁰

The bridges affected were:-

1. Over the Yarmuk near El Hami Springs. This was a steel structure with a 50-metre span, 70 feet over the stream.³⁹¹ "It was completely wrecked and presented a serious problem as it would take some 9 months to reconstruct it. Meanwhile it might be possible to construct a small footbridge at a lower level for passengers to cross and to provide a cableway for the transshipment of heavier goods." Heavy loads of over a ton per article were likely to have to go throughout by road.

"The possibilities in this direction were left for the C.E. to investigate and report and Kirby made arrangements with Brig. Roe of Palestine Headquarters for the Assistant Civil Engineer of the Army to come to Haifa to discuss the questions of reconstruction and interim measures."

But this attack proved, in time, to be the death sentence on the Hedjaz line to Haifa. The obvious heavy cost of replacing the bridge raised doubts as to whether it

³⁸⁷ Minute 14:338.

³⁸⁸ Minute 14:338 (a).

³⁸⁹ Minute 15:377. This was a coordinated attack on three trains departing from Lydda in different directions on Mon. 10. June. In addition a section of line 3 km. north of Hadera Station was damaged by an explosion at 01.30 11. June - this was quickly repaired. On the same day a mine was discovered on the line near Beer Ya'akov, and defused. 'Palestine Post' 11 & 12. June 1946.

³⁹⁰ This coordinated attack became known as "The Night of the Bridges", the 15-16. June, and again the intention was clearly to isolate P.R. from neighbouring railways.

³⁹¹ Note the mixture of Imperial and metric measurements. This is typical.

might not be more economic in the long run to leave the bridge down and allow the narrow-gauge line in Transjordan to fall into disuse. New stock and equipment would also soon be needed for continued operation. The Supt.o.t.L. envisaged however a period of heavy traffic for the I.P.C. in the immediate future which would give a return on expenditure involved.

2). A bridge at Azzib, 2.5 metres above the water and containing four 5.5 metre spans. This was not badly damaged and repairs would not take long. "Here the marauders suffered casualties."

3). A reinforced-concrete bridge at Wadi Gaza, kilo 185, 40 feet over the wadi bed which was usually dry. The bridge had 9 spans each of 10.5 metres and had lost 50% of each of the two northern piers. "Already our engineers were propping and building cribs, and repairs would take about two months. Meanwhile movement over the bridge was infrequent and allowable only by consent of the engineers on the spot."

So effectively P.R. had been isolated from the east and the south for several months. The C.E. tentatively proposed a cable ropeway to take a whole wagon and contents across the Yarmuk. Part of the Syrian traffic could be diverted over the H.B.T. via Beirut. "Although he felt it might be politically undesirable to leave Transjordan without rail communication except via Syria, the C.A. was inclined on commercial grounds to favour disbanding the Hijaz line, while the C.E. too felt that the shorter road route from Haifa to Mafrak was much more practical." The line's fate appeared sealed.³⁹²

That very night, 17. June, witnessed further violence and destruction, when the Haifa Workshops at Qishon were attacked by the I.Z.L. and set ablaze. Some of the raiders were killed by security forces. Two days later the damage could be inspected, and it was reported:

"Most of the destruction was caused in the machine shop, both by explosion and fire. During the attack only a handful of workers were on maintenance and preparatory work for this morning's shift, and all escaped injury." One locomotive, "due to return to service after a general overhaul during the past six months" was completely wrecked. The compressors were also blown, and the engine in the powerhouse was mined and destroyed. Structural damage to the building had been caused by blast and fire, and there was also loss of tools and various materials. "The clearing of the plaster-strewn workshops, where many unexploded bombs and other explosives had to be carefully removed, went on at top speed throughout today, and the 1,300 workers normally employed there were sent home this morning. They will return tomorrow, when the workshops will be functioning again."³⁹³

Early on 19. April an explosive charge blew up several rails on the main line at Kafr Jinnis, north of Lydda. Serious damage was averted by the explosion occurring only after a goods train had passed the spot, and not while it was running over the charge. According to an official account the engineer saw what looked like a red flag on the line, but since a similar ruse had been used the previous week, when three trains were stopped and damaged, he went straight on.

Train services on the Haifa-Beirut-Tripoli line were resumed on 19. June, following the completion of temporary repairs to the Azzib bridge. It appears that a larger attack had been planned, for a further 400kg. of explosives were found near the site and

³⁹² Minute 15:378.

³⁹³ 'Palestine Post' 19. June p.1.

had to be exploded at Ahuza.³⁹⁴ We can see that there were several major blows to the system and an atmosphere of constant fear and alertness.

JULY/AUGUST 1946.

The British authorities reacted to the state of tension; Police recruitment was stepped-up, the leaders of the Jewish Agency were arrested in July, and on 9. July General Sir Miles Dempsey, the new C.-in-C., Middle East Forces, flew to Palestine.³⁹⁵ There was however no clear political idea what to do.³⁹⁶

When the Sixteenth meeting was held on 8. August 1946, Kirby was in England; Scrivener stepped up from 7. August as A.G.M. (Campigli had already gone), so Taylor stepped up as A.C.E.; and Coulman had to stand in for Baker as Acting Supt.o.t.L. There had been no meeting during July, principally because of “circumstances arising out of the outrage perpetrated in the Secretariat in Jerusalem on the 22nd. July 1946.”³⁹⁷

There had been little progress on the Yarmuk bridge; Intriguingly, the C.A. noted that the agreement with the contractors for repairs was “unconventional and somewhat irregular, but that as we were in difficulty in getting any contractor to undertake the work we had to be prepared to forego some of the formalities on which we might normally insist.”³⁹⁸ In discussion on a shed in Tulkarm which could be moved to Qishon, the C.M.E. asked for a ruling as to whether he was to release the shed, as its future seemed bound up with plans for the Nablus line. “It was agreed that we would be unlikely to reopen the line and the A.G.M. told the C.M.E. to work on the assumption that it had been finally closed.” Another section of the Hedjaz had been effectively abandoned.³⁹⁹

A second warning to evacuate Khoury House had been made at about 11.00 hours on the previous day and the question of Security in the offices generally was discussed. Various buildings housing the management and Branch Headquarters were to be examined and suggestions for their better protection made; Meanwhile the A.G.M. was pressing the Police Dept. to provide British Police protection at Khoury House, as it was not the intention to move the Railway Headquarters into the proposed central block of Government offices.⁴⁰⁰

On 16. August Egypt announced that Britain had agreed to withdraw within three years.⁴⁰¹ On 30. August the trial of the survivors of the I.Z.L. raiders, who had been captured after the Workshops raid on 17. June, ended with a commutation of the Life sentences imposed on 18 prisoners.

³⁹⁴ ‘Palestine Post’ 20. June & 25. June.

³⁹⁵ ‘Palestine Post’ 9. July.

³⁹⁶ On 11. July the Transfer of Colonies of Tanganyika, Togoland and Cameroons to UNO Trusteeship was reported as being proposed by Colonial Sec., Mr. Hall. ‘Palestine Post’ p.1. Palestine was not the only country on the agenda.

³⁹⁷ The bomb attack on the King David Hotel.

³⁹⁸ Minute 16:418.

³⁹⁹ cf. ‘Palestine Gazette’ 1501, 27. June. p.597. P.R. Notice. “The Railway between Nablus and Tulkarm will be closed with effect as from the 1. July 1946, owing to the insufficiency of traffic.” A.F.Kirby, 18. June 1946.

⁴⁰⁰ Minute 16:442. See ‘Palestine Post’ 23. August. p.3. “Shortly after midday yesterday a mystery phone call was put through to Palestine Railways HQ informing them that the building was about to be blown up. Police and Military immediately carried out a search, but nothing suspicious was found.”

⁴⁰¹ ‘Palestine Post’ 16. August 1946. p.1. On 21. August it reported that Egypt rejected the Treaty terms.

SEPTEMBER 1946.

On 1. September it was reported that Trans-Jordan's application to join the U.N.O. had been rejected. There were complex moves to summon a Conference in London involving both Jewish and Arab delegations - in May the Anglo-American Committee's recommendations had been rejected by the Foreign Office.⁴⁰² On 22. September the 'Palestine Post' reported that the Palestine Conference in London had come to a standstill, but that plans for a 'Greater Syria'⁴⁰³ and for a union of Iraq and Transjordan were being aired. Clearly there was great political instability at this period.

Sabotage was heavy this month. On 8. September the signal box at Haifa East was blown up. On 9. September two goods trains were attacked with gunfire and bombs - near Battir and between Ras el-Ain and Kalkilya.⁴⁰⁴ The I.Z.L. later claimed responsibility; traffic was running again by noon next day.

Scrivener opened the Seventeenth meeting (17. September 1946) by reminding everyone of the need to maintain effective security for secret and confidential papers and documents. Clearly there must have been an incident and an awareness of leaks.⁴⁰⁵

Mr. Hossack (for the Acting C.E.) reported that the Egyptian Authorities had refused to let some of his workmen pass into Sinai from Rafa. He had the matter in hand with the authorities at El Arish and hoped to prevent further difficulty.⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰² The Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry met from January to March 1946; Its recommendations display a deep, considered perceptive and even idealistic understanding of the issues and a total inability to find any concrete long-term practical solution; in the short term another 100,000 immigration certificates for Jews should be issued, but the comments extracted here from Recommendations 3 & 4 illustrate the problem:

"A Palestinian put the matter thus: "In the hearts of us Jews there has always been a fear that some day this country would be turned into an Arab State and the Arabs would rule over us. This fear has at times reached the proportions of terror . . . Now this same feeling of fear has started up in the hearts of Arabs . . . fear lest the Jews acquire the ascendancy and rule over them."

Palestine, then, must be established as a country in which the legitimate national aspirations of both Jews and Arabs can be reconciled, without either side fearing the ascendancy of the other. In our view this cannot be done under any form of constitution in which a mere numerical majority is decisive, since it is precisely the struggle for a numerical majority which bedevils Arab-Jewish relations. To ensure genuine self-government for both the Arab and the Jewish communities, this struggle must be made purposeless by the constitution itself.

Recommendation No. 4. We have reached the conclusion that the hostility between Jews and Arabs and, in particular, the determination of each to achieve domination, if necessary by violence. make it almost certain that, now and for some time to come, any attempt to establish either an independent Palestinian State or independent Palestinian States would result in civil strife such as might threaten the peace of the world.

We therefore recommend that, until this hostility disappears, the Government of Palestine be continued as at present under mandate pending the execution of a trusteeship agreement under the United Nations."

⁴⁰³ Amir (later King) Abdullah's vision of effectively turning the clock back and re-combining what had, since the end of the Ottoman Empire, become Palestine Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan and Iraq.. First posited in 1940 and renewed in 1942, the idea of re-combining the disparate ethnic groups in the Fertile Crescent took various forms proved attractive to many but has yet to be carried out.

⁴⁰⁴ 'Palestine Post' 9. September p.1. ('Stop Press') "The line was blown in at least three other places in that area and also in the Lydda District between Rehovoth and Beer Ya'acov." Also 10. September p. 1. Signalling was also damaged and several unexploded mines were later found, one injuring some gangers on a trolley.

⁴⁰⁵ Minute 17:447.

⁴⁰⁶ Minute 17:455. This could have been because they were Jewish. The Egyptian Government did put pressure on the Palestine Government to keep Jewish officials out of Sinai, and forbade Jewish tourists from landing at Alexandria ('Palestine Post' 29. Nov. 1946 p.3.). In August the Palestine Government rejected a Syrian proposal that all goods exported from Palestine to Syria should be marked "Arab" or

At this point there were still ambitious plans to improve the network. However, an element of doubt was also creeping in, and Scrivener felt that Kirby should have the final word in such matters. Some decisions would depend upon major intentions in the way of policy. Thus, the Kafr Jinis-Sarafand loop line⁴⁰⁷ might be unnecessary were the line generally to be doubled; If the latter work were intended the former project could be dropped. "This only called for land acquisition at present but even that would entail considerable loss if, having acquired it, we then had to dispose of it again. Hence the desirability of the G.M. taking the decision."⁴⁰⁸ But work began on a thorough rebuilding of Rehovot station and the laying of a ninth siding.⁴⁰⁹

P.R. was a multi-lingual organisation; Kirby's P.A. said he hoped the posts of Arab and Hebrew translators would be filled shortly and wanted to know whether they could be kept fully employed. The Supt.o.t.L., who had a Rule Book, Appendix, Tariffs etc. for translation, promised work enough for the translators when they came, probably for some two years. Appropriate typewriters were also available.⁴¹⁰

On the 20. September an attack was made on Haifa East station and a substantial part of the station building was destroyed.⁴¹¹ On the evening of 23. September a Haifa-Lyddá Oil Train was mined near Hadera. The locomotive, tender and seven oil tanks were derailed (five of them 30-Tonners) but there were no casualties.⁴¹² The line was reopened to traffic by 15.00 on 24. September.

OCTOBER / NOVEMBER 1946.

On 1. October the 'Palestine Post' reported that Egypt desired to acquire the Kantara - Rafa Railway. On the same day the British announced they had completed evacuation of the Lebanon. It was clear that relations with the neighbouring countries were changing. In London the Anglo-Arab talks were postponed from 4. to 16. October, the 'Palstine Post' commenting⁴¹³ that "... For the moment, one has the impression that most of the Arab delegates are more concerned what will happen in Egypt than with Palestine. It is feared that unless the negotiations succeed, Cairo will become the centre for unrest in the Middle East, which will communicate itself to Palestine and other Middle East countries."

"Jewish" according to the race of the produce. The reply stressed that there was no racial discrimination in Palestine. ('Palestine Post' 6. August p.3.)

⁴⁰⁷ The proposed west-to-north spur avoiding Lydda.

⁴⁰⁸ Minute 17:461.

⁴⁰⁹ 'Palestine Post' 4. Sept. 1946 p.23 The work was to cost LP15,000 and be finished within 6 months.

⁴¹⁰ Minute 17:474.

⁴¹¹ "The booking office and the waiting room on the ground floor, the stationmaster's office, some administration offices and the NAAFI Buffet on the first floor and the clock tower collapsed into a mass of rubble, masonry, wrecked furniture and twisted iron beams, raining a thick cloud of dust. According to an eye-witness report, four youths in khaki shorts and white shirts drove up in a lorry about 11.30 a.m. and unloaded an oil drum with the word 'Danger' in the three official languages painted on it in red letters and rolled it into the central hall. They then approached an Arab news vendor standing nearby and, instructing him to leave the building before the bomb went off and 'to tell everyone else', they raced back to their lorry and drove off at top-speed along the Haifa-Acre road. Within a few seconds there was a general scramble for safety and five minutes later the building was completely destroyed." ('Palestine Post' 22. Sept. p.1.)

⁴¹² "The train ... stopped when a small explosion took place. A gang of armed men appeared on the scene, forced the driver and fireman to leave, and then exploded a number of charges under the train. The engine and leading trucks, as well as the track, were severely damaged but no casualties have been reported. Passengers on a Tel Aviv-Haifa train could not proceed any further than Hadera, and permission was not given for them to proceed by road owing to the curfew." ('Palestine Post' 24. Sept. p.1.) Next days's issue reported six wagons had derailed, they had leaked but not caught fire. An Arab T.A.C. guarding a bridge near Lydda was also shot dead.

⁴¹³ 5. October p.1.

But the situation in Egypt could have major knock-on effects on Palestine. On 8. October Reuters reported from London that “there is no doubt in informed quarters here that... preparations are being made for the transfer from Egypt of British military supply and administration centres to Colonial possessions in Africa. It was pointed out today by informed sources that such a move was logical for two reasons:- 1). The impending evacuation of Egypt by British forces, and 2) The consideration at a high level of the abandonment of Palestine as a subsidiary central base after the withdrawal from Egypt.” It appeared that the development of communications to British-controlled territory south of Egypt, such as “parts of the Sudan, Tanganyika and Kenya.” would be pursued. In this case the Kantara-Rafah line and P.R. would lose much of their traffic and purpose!⁴¹⁴ This theme was expanded on 11.Oct., with a report that Kenya had already been decided upon as a base area and that Mombasa, its port, was destined to take the place of Alexandria. Since Britain’s two main interests in the Middle East were “the safeguarding of her imperial communications and the guarding of her oil interests in Persia and Iraq”, and with Egypt out of the question, the choice of Kenya as the new base was “obvious since the War has shown how easily the Mediterranean route to the east can be put out of action...”⁴¹⁵ In the following weeks the Anglo-Egyptian treaty talks were taking place contemporaneously with talks with Arab and then Jewish representatives - and Britain was donating 11M Pounds worth of military equipment to Greece. Thousands were being killed in riots in Bengal and in wars in Persia. This was a very confused period. And on 21. October the topic of Britain’s possible imminent surrender of the Mandate to the United Nations was reported, “because no settlement acceptable to both Jews and Arabs appeared possible under present conditions.”⁴¹⁶

During all this railway operations continued. But Scrivener was clearly worried about making any decisions in Kirby’s absence. He was still Acting G.M. during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth meetings (24. October 1946 and 26. November 1946) during which latter he referred to general concern with the state of unrest from which the country was suffering. He hoped it might soon be possible to revert to full working of the Jerusalem-Lydd-Jaffa routes again.⁴¹⁷ The Supt.o.t.L. stated bluntly that the position was bad. Capacity for transporting citrus had been halved between October and November, from an average 9.3 to 4.5 trains daily Lydda-Haifa. He was striving to maintain even that halved capacity but the Military operations in connection with the safety of the line prevented any improvement at present.⁴¹⁸

R. Lehrer had been appointed as Welfare Officer for P.R. from 1. October,⁴¹⁹ and the staff certainly were in need of some welfare as they were constantly in fear of attack.

On 22. October there was a mine attack on the track outside Jerusalem station,⁴²⁰ and

⁴¹⁴ ‘Palestine Post’ 9. October 1946 p.1.

⁴¹⁵ ‘Palestine Post’ 11. October 1946 p.1.

⁴¹⁶ ‘Palestine Post’ 21. October 1946 p.1.

⁴¹⁷ Operation had been disrupted by sabotage. From 7. November an emergency daylight-only timetable had been introduced. (‘Palestine Post’ 8. November 1946 p.1.) On 13. November P.R. announced services on the Jerusalem line were “suspended until further notice.” (‘Palestine Post’ 14. November 1946 p.1) following further attacks. On 19. November ALL rail services were temporarily suspended (‘Palestine Post’ 20. November 1946 p.1), only resuming partially on 23. November.

⁴¹⁸ Minute 19:494.

⁴¹⁹ ‘Palestine Gazette’ 1506, 18. July, p.668.

⁴²⁰ “A train of two engines and a guard van was derailed by an explosion at kilo. 5 between Jerusalem and Battir, about 02.15 hours yesterday morning. The rail track was damaged, but there were no casualties. The incident took place while the train was on its way from Jerusalem to Lydda.” (‘Palestine Post’ 23.

on 30. October Jerusalem station was attacked by a bomb and damaged.⁴²¹

Sabotage on the railways continued into November on an almost daily basis. On the evening of 3. November, a day marked by a Jewish national strike against the deportation of internees from Latrun, the engine and four empty wagons of a goods train were derailed when a mine exploded on the track near Ras el-Ain. The fireman was seriously hurt, and two other members of the crew slightly injured. At 05.00 on 4. November another train was mined near Battir, and a second mine was found a little further on.⁴²² Then at 22.30 on 5. November 'Bonfire Night' was marked in a spectacular way with the demolition of an oil train near Ras el-Ain.⁴²³ On 6. November a mine attack on a passenger train near Kiryat Haim was narrowly averted when a (Jewish) workmen noted a wire and found a wooden box; the bomb was dismantled successfully and traffic only held up for two hours.⁴²⁴ On 7. November several troops were injured in a mine attack near Beer Ya'akov and the result was the introduction of a revised timetable whereby no passenger trains would move in Palestine during the hours of darkness. Trains were either re-timed to depart earlier, so as to reach their destinations in daylight, or cancelled. The 'Post' reported a potential imminent strike by footplate staff owing to the repeated attacks on night trains, and Citrus growers in the Southern area were also much concerned as transport to Haifa has been seriously held up.⁴²⁵

The Railway was almost under siege. On 8. November an alert driver noted a wire across the track near Tel Aviv and a large bomb was found and dismantled. But the next day another explosion damaged the track between Ramle and Na'ana.⁴²⁶ On 10. November the station at Ras el-Ain was demolished by a suitcase-bomb.⁴²⁷

October p.3.)

⁴²¹ "At 2.30 yesterday afternoon a car... drove up to the Jerusalem railway station, and a girl alighted carrying three suitcases into the booking hall. She ran back and boarded the taxi.... As the taxi left, the occupants peppered the barbed-wire pavement in front of the station with tommy-gun fire. The police returned the volleys and then summoned assistance. The station was immediately cordoned off, and traffic diverted. A British police sergeant of the District Investigation Bureau entered the booking-hall and removed one of the suit-cases which was then detonated by revolver-fire in the square outside - blowing a hole in a traffic island. The sergeant returned to take out the other two mines but as he touched one, they both exploded and he was killed instantly. The stationmaster's office, booking office hall, and waiting rooms on the ground floor were wrecked, the nearby station buffet was destroyed, and windows were blown out in the stationmaster's flat on the second floor." ('Palestine Post' 31. October 1946 p.1). There were also several further mine attacks on the roads.

⁴²² 'Palestine Post' 5. November p.1. No damage was caused.

⁴²³ 'Palestine Post' 6. November p.1. "Five petrol tankers were completely destroyed by fire... when five mines blew up under a passing train and heavy fire with incendiary bullets were directed at it from both sides. Tall pillars of fire could be seen for miles around, and the flames were still visible this morning. The attack occurred at a spot on the Ras el-Ain - Kalkilieh line near which an attack was made on a train only a few days ago. As a result of the explosion the engine was overturned, but the driver managed to jump clear. He was slightly wounded by a bullet, and given first aid by a Red Shield ambulance called from Petah Tikvah. The military guard in the last of the 17 carriages escaped harm from the explosions, and returned the fire of the attackers. After an exchange lasting for some time, the attackers escaped. The line has been destroyed in several places as a result of the explosions."

⁴²⁴ 'Palestine Post' 7. November p.1.

⁴²⁵ "In the attack... which took place at 05.40 near km. 114 on the Beer Ya'akov - Ramle line, three coaches were derailed and damaged. The front and rear sections of the eight-coach train were undamaged. A wire was found running from the scene of the explosion to an electrical detonator concealed in an orange grove. The tracks at the spot were torn up, and the Palestine - Egypt train was unable to proceed." ('Palestine Post' 8. November p.1).

⁴²⁶ 'Palestine Post' 10. November p.1.

⁴²⁷ 'Palestine Post' 11. November p.1: "The two-storey Ras el-Ain railway station was completely destroyed at 11.48 this morning by the explosion of a suitcase-bomb. An Arab supernumerary constable was fatally injured and three British soldiers were slightly hurt in the explosion..... The stationmaster's house and the adjacent corrugated iron hut were also wrecked. Nothing was left of the police watch-tower

Precautions were not always successful. On 13. November a trolley conveying policemen to check the Jerusalem line was itself blown up near Beit Safafa, killing all six occupants.⁴²⁸ On the same morning an explosion at km. 5 on the Jaffa-Lydda line left three wagons destroyed, the engine overturned and 50 yards of track damaged.⁴²⁹ This was to some extent the final straw, and on that afternoon P.R. announced the passenger train service on the Jerusalem-Lydda and Lydda-Jaffa lines had been suspended until further notice.⁴³⁰ The 'Post' reported on 15. November on rumours circulating in Tel Aviv that passenger as well as troop trains would in future be liable to be mined. In the past, it was claimed, all railway explosions had been confined to trains carrying members of the armed forces, or goods trains, but according to the reported warning, Jewish and Arab travellers had been cautioned against using the railway lines, even in daylight. The Haifa-Samakh and the Haifa-Kiryat Motzkin lines were believed to be exempted from the threat.

On 15. November an armoured rail-car was blown up by an electrically-detonated mine about two kms. south of Binyamina. A second car was derailed. One soldier was seriously injured.⁴³¹ On 17. November there were three attacks. In one a Royal Engineers bomb-disposal expert was killed near Kfar Sirkin while removing a mine that had been discovered by a patrol of the 6th. Airborne Division; A goods train was damaged at km. 122 between Rehovot and Yavne, and a third mine was discovered at km. 4 on the Jaffa - Lydda line and dismantled.⁴³²

and the signals room, while considerable damage to the telephone and electric centre disrupted communications. Damage is estimated at LP10,000.

Eye-witnesses state that about 11.45, just before the passenger train from Lydda was due, a black van, looking like a police tender, pulled up outside the station. Two men jumped from the truck and carried a suitcase into the waiting room, covering it with a cloth marked 'Bombs - Dangerous' in Hebrew, Arabic and English. The stationmaster, who challenged the men, was held up at revolver point and told that the building had been mined. "You have 30 minutes to get your family to safety" the men consoled the stationmaster, who cried out that his wife and children were in the building and would be killed.

Brandishing revolvers, the men ran from the station and escaped in the waiting van, where several more men had kept guard. As it drove off, police and military were called and the area was cordoned off. Three British soldiers and an Arab supernumerary constable then endeavoured to save the building by removing the bomb. Ropes were thrown round the suitcase to pull it clear but the bomb exploded as it was touched. All four men were injured and the supernumary constable died on his way to hospital. Three other soldiers and three civilians who were standing nearby were slightly hurt."

⁴²⁸ 'Palestine Post' 14. November p.1. "Morning and evening mine outrages yesterday killed six policemen and wounded 10 others in the Jerusalem area. Both explosions were caused by electrically-detonated mines under or near the road and rail vehicles in which the policemen were travelling.

The six dead are two British Constables, an Arab Temporary Additional Sergeant and three Temporary Additional Constables. They were killed when a railway trolley which they were using as a scout car was blown up at 5 a.m. on the Jerusalem-Lydda railway line at Beit Safafa, just outside Jerusalem. The trolley ... was patrolling the line 500 yards ahead of a goods train which had pulled out of Jerusalem at 4.50 a.m. The force of the explosion threw the trolley into the air and fragments of the vehicle severed telephone wires along the track which, however, was undamaged.

Five of the policemen were killed instantaneously and the sixth died just as an ambulance arrived on the scene. Police, who followed an electric wire from the railway track, discovered the detonator amongst some olive trees. A number of spent cartridges were found on the line and it is thought possible that the crew of the trolley may have spotted the ambush and opened fire before they met their death."

⁴²⁹ *ibid.* The driver was injured and a T.A.C. severely burned. The line had been declared clear by a police patrol 30 minutes earlier.

⁴³⁰ *ibid.* Passengers for Egypt or Haifa would have to make their own way to Lydda.

⁴³¹ 'Palestine Post' 17. November. p.3. "Before the explosion a ganger working on the line was held up by three armed men dressed in khaki. They gagged and bound him and held him prisoner. He was released after the explosion." In another incident a soldier at Lydda was shot and wounded when he disturbed some suspicious characters.

⁴³² 'Palestine Post' 18. November p.3.

The toll continued. A further army officer was killed dismantling a mine near Ras El-Ain on 18. November, and four servicemen were injured. Another British soldier was slightly injured when an armoured railcar was derailed by a mine on the railway line near Rehovot. The 'Post' summed up: "Terrorism in Palestine has taken a toll of 20 lives in the first 18 days of November - with 14 British police and army personnel and six Arab policemen and railway workers killed by yesterday morning. A further 34 persons have been injured during the month, including 29 British, four Arab and one Jew."⁴³³ An additional division was to be transferred to Palestine, though the situation in Egypt was also a factor.

The frustration was palpable. The same day's issue included an unattributed article that bears all the hallmarks of Kirby's style, clearly aimed at influencing public opinion:⁴³⁴

"The loss to the Palestine Railways through the destruction of rolling stock in the recent explosions is negligible in comparison with the loss entailed in the curtailment of traffic capacity, both to the railway and in the economy of the country. The primary aim of repair gangs which are on the scene as soon as possible after an accident or act of sabotage is to get the line cleared, even where this entails further damage to obstructing rolling stock.

All damage is paid for by the Palestinian tax-payer, who eventually also pays for the inevitable additional expense entailed in the deterioration in economic conditions which must result from the partial or total paralysis of one of the country's main systems of communication.

All bulk transportation in this country is handled by the railways, and two of the country's main industries are entirely dependent on them. The rapid transportation of the citrus crops during the relatively short season necessitates the running of up to about 200 wagons a day. Delay in the movement of this traffic results in deterioration of the fruit. Serious delay results in total loss of fruit and loss of shipping space. The transportation of potash to the coast, and then by ship to a highly competitive market, is also entirely dependent on the railways.

Foodstuffs, oil and oil products are other commodities carried almost exclusively by rail and are further reductions in rail traffic may well result in serious shortages, especially in the Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and southern areas, with a consequent rise in prices. About 20 trains a day in each direction are needed to transport the citrus crops to Haifa and this traffic must be handled on the single track running north. With rail transport now limited to daylight hours the railway's citrus carrying capacity has already been halved.

Since last June there have been more than 50 attacks on the railways. Trains and stations have been blown up, destroyed or seriously damaged, the permanent way and bridges destroyed, locomotives, carriages and wagons wrecked and terminal facilities, including the large workshops at Haifa, seriously damaged. Each incident has been tackled with zeal and efficiency and with such success that, with the exception of the line to Trans-Jordan and Syria, the system should, if permitted to do so, work to full capacity and meet all demands made upon it.

Some of the so-called incidents have been major rail disasters, yet with the exception of the line north of Samakh, where a girder bridge was destroyed, the track was never out of commission for more than eight hours at a stretch. The railways could now be in full operation within 24 hours if security conditions permitted."

⁴³³ 'Palestine Post' 19. November p.1. This figure includes some victims of mine attacks on the roads.

⁴³⁴ *ibid.* p.3. We cite this at length. We see the pride in his men and their ability to repair damage, the statistics and the wider view of the national economy and infrastructure. The Chief Rabbinate also appealed for an end to the terrorism.

However, conditions did not so permit and the next day's paper reported that all rail traffic had been suspended. "No trains ran in Palestine yesterday. It was not known last night whether there would be any trains today, or when they would be resumed." They resumed partially on the 22. November, on a part-time daylight schedule under Army protection, with goods trains and limited passenger traffic. The 'Post' noted that 5 northbound trains carried citrus to Haifa and 7 southbound trains conveyed oil and foodstuffs; the Egyptian passenger train resumed service, but trains were late. One train also left Lydda for Jerusalem on 22. November with troops, who disembarked at stations along the line to carry out inspection duties. The train returned empty from Jerusalem to Lydda. "Troops will be employed on guarding the railways, and will patrol stretches of track accompanied by railwaymen." Inspection was important - another bomb was found on the line between Lydda and Tel Aviv; on exploding, it damaged 15m. of track.⁴³⁵ Goods traffic resumed on the Jaffa line on 27. November, but not initially conveying citrus.

DECEMBER 1946.

On 4. December the 'Post' could report that Palestine Railways were now operating five or six trains a day in each direction, "the maximum possible in present circumstances." Trains still ran only during daylight hours and patrols went out at dawn to ensure that the line was clear. "Schedules are to a great extent dependent on the condition of the line in the morning, as a few mines have been found on the track, despite the apparent suspension of sabotage against the railways. Passenger services are on a curtailed scale. The Haifa-Cairo train runs on a new daylight-only schedule, leaving Haifa early in the morning at the same time as the train from Cairo arrives at Haifa."⁴³⁶ On 13. December it reported that the railways were losing LP3,000 a day due to this situation. The regional political situation remained unstable, with Syrian government crises, the civil war continuing in Persia, and disagreements at the Anglo-Egyptian talks.⁴³⁷

Kirby chaired the Twentieth meeting, 20. December 1946. Amazingly, the meeting discussed mainly relatively-routine issues. The Railways were now back to 24-hour running after a period of daylight-only operation for security reasons, but there were still problems with traffic and especially citrus, where lorries were taking a larger proportion of traffic on offer. Relations with the Army were ambivalent - on the one hand, Security issues were important; on the other, the Army were demanding strengthening of Trains 1 & 2 - if necessary at the expense of dropping the Wagons-Lits portions, which would involve paying compensation to that company; and in view of the continued poor state of rolling stock, Kirby "foresaw continued trouble while we had troops in our stock, however much we renovated it, and laid down that as far as possible coaches, once repaired and repainted, should be kept out of the Military portions of trains."⁴³⁸

Stock issues included possible purchase of two U.S.A. shunting locos⁴³⁹ and

⁴³⁵ 'Palestine Post' 24. November p.3.

⁴³⁶ p.3.

⁴³⁷ Amazingly, progress was being made elsewhere. On 21. December Attlee announced in the Commons that a Burmese delegation had been invited to Britain to discuss independence, as "Britain does not desire to retain within the British Commonwealth and the Empire any unwilling nations." 'Palestine Post' 22. Dec. p.1.

⁴³⁸ Minute 20:509. Soldiers were seen as little more than destructive vandals.

⁴³⁹ Minute 20:511. See below Note 111.

wagons from the W.D.⁴⁴⁰ Here Kirby felt that purchase would be inevitable, “since we were using it and notwithstanding were hard-pressed to manage” and were heavily in debt to E.S.R. on the wagon-exchange account, but it was not necessary “unduly to hasten completion of purchase as hire charges were offset by a cumulative reduction of the purchase price as time went by.” On the other hand there was urgent need for a heavy-capacity well wagon, as the P.E.C. would be bringing some large equipment from England, and it was decided to investigate whether a 50-Ton or 80-Ton wagon from W.D. stocks in England should be purchased.⁴⁴¹

In a discussion on coach-cleaning, Kirby mentioned a coach-cleaning plant on the Southern railway in England, which he had inspected, but which he considered unsuitable for Palestinian conditions. Clearly he had used such opportunities during his recent Leave.

One of Kirby’s ideas had been to create the post of Chief Staff Officer. At this meeting he could only report that a prospective candidate for the post would not be coming, but he was “pressing privately for personal recommendations from certain quarters in England” and was optimistic. He was, despite everything, still building up his management team.⁴⁴²

But the political situation was difficult. Barbed-wire lanes and other security measures at stations were being taken with help from the Railway Police.⁴⁴³ Housing for Railway Officers in ‘safe areas’ was becoming hard to find.

⁴⁴⁰ Minute 20:514.

⁴⁴¹ Minute 20:582. In the following meeting the C.M.E. reported (21:537) costs of L. 850 for a 40-ton and L 1,250 for an 80-ton well wagon; There would be little real need, but Kirby still considered the acquisition worth pursuing further.

⁴⁴² Minute 20:520.

⁴⁴³ Minute 20:524.

CHAPTER 5.

THE MANAGEMENT OF PALESTINE RAILWAYS IN 1947.

JANUARY 1947.

1947 began with several political developments. The 'Post' reported on 7. January that India had accepted the British plan for Partition, and, citing the 'Daily Telegraph', added that Britain was also considering a Palestine Partition Plan, allocating 40% of the land to the Jews, with Dominion status, their own flag, Foreign Minister and Army.⁴⁴⁴

P.R. was concerned about traffic trends. At the Twenty-First meeting, 14. January 1947, Kirby pointed out during a rather dispirited discussion that P.R. relied mainly on cement, oil, potash and Military traffic, and he "wished to know what proportion of the carryings was really competitive and what room there was for a more aggressive commercial policy. He considered fact-finding research was necessary to determine what flows of traffic there were for which P.R. might hope to compete".⁴⁴⁵ This would also be relevant in any negotiations regarding cooperation with road transport contractors. This comment reveals that Kirby was still envisaging the railways not as a mere 'Government Department' employed to transport bulk commodities, but as a commercial operation working in the competitive market-place. But "the outlook was admittedly not bright."

The local Disposals Officer had offered P.R. twenty shunting engines from local depots! But it was decided these were not needed, with the exception of those required for shunting the depots at Wadi Es-Sarar, Rafa and El Jiya. Two U.S.A. locos would be ordered by the C.M.E..⁴⁴⁶

The value of Statistics now became apparent. Kirby was envisaging a deficit of LP750,000 for 1946/47. "The need for improving revenue and above all for intelligent economies was stressed." The C.A. had prepared comparative tables which showed that the level of traffic was roughly at 1941 levels, but Mechanical and Traffic staff were currently 75% higher than at that time. Postwar costs had risen steeply. Working expenditure per net ton/km. had risen by 183% as compared with 1938/39. Road competition made a further increase in freight rates inadvisable. The cost of hiring stock was 2,400% higher than in 1941! This was mainly covered by hire of W.D. stock⁴⁴⁷ and Kirby wondered whether some could be dispensed with, though this would make it unavailable for later purchase. The C.M.E. was unconvinced. Locomotive running staff had increased from 669 in 1938 to 1,448, and Traffic Branch staff from 789 to 1,725, but this reflected partly the drastically changed circumstances. "In 1938 eight trains a day between Haifa and Lydda represented normal conditions of traffic; now it meant slack business. Moreover, hopes of restoring prosperity to the line depended on heavier carryings, not on reversion to the previous norm." He hoped for fourteen trains a day on this section. Nevertheless, the C.A. "considered a reduction in staff was imperative" and Kirby "emphasised that where it was necessary to dispense with staff, the first to go would have to be the least efficient." He rammèd his philosophy home, exhorting all officers "to examine the possibility of cutting expenditure sensibly. Survival depended

⁴⁴⁴ 'Palestine Post' 7. January 1947 p.1. We must see the Palestine situation in the context of other British-administered countries.

⁴⁴⁵ Minute 21:528(a). Ironically at this period the nationalisation of the railways in Britain was being considered!

⁴⁴⁶ Minute 21:530. In February he decided he didn't need them urgently and, in view of Government demands to reduce capital expenditure, Kirby decided not to go ahead with the purchase. (Minute 22:546).

⁴⁴⁷ A cost of 300 mils per 10-Ton unit per day.

upon it. The other side of the business, the revenue, must be safeguarded too, as increasing traffics were necessary if unit costs were to be reduced in the face of rising expenditure.”

It must be stated here that no evidence has been found for direct pressure upon Kirby, by the Palestine Government, to make such economies. That is to say, whilst a good civil servant would of course seek to reduce any loss to the Government, which in any case had to approve budgets and reports, it is unclear whether there was similar pressure on other Palestine Government Departments - Post, Education, Public Health - to cover all costs or even make a profit. One suspects that so long as the work was being carried out with reasonable competence and efficiency, and an annual report detailed the achievements and expenditure, there would be little pressure on any ‘bottom line’. It seems that it was to some extent Kirby’s own self-esteem and not just demand from above which had demanded this aggressive approach to economy. However, figures presented at the next meeting indicate some of the real background pressures.

The Hejaz line was now firmly a political issue. In view of estimates for the repair of the Yarmuk Bridge at LP100,000, and the low traffic density, Kirby had already told the Government that continued operation was not commercially justified. “The other considerations affecting the continued existence of the line were for Government to decide.” That is, if it was felt politically necessary to maintain the rail link, the Government would have to subsidise it - he was washing his hands of this line.⁴⁴⁸

On 16. January Lebanese interest in purchasing the H.B.T. line was first reported, and Jerusalem line passenger services, connecting with the main line at Lydda, were resumed from 19. January.⁴⁴⁹ On 21. January ‘Operation Polly’ and the evacuation of family dependents of expatriate officers began, and Jerusalem was divided into several ‘Security Zones’. Some evacuees went by air, others by rail to Egypt, necessitating the suspension of the passenger service for several days.

FEBRUARY 1947.

The atmosphere was deteriorating. Bevin had told the Labour Party that Britain would “wash its hands of Palestine” and give the issue to the U.N.; George Lichtheim in an op-ed. article commented: “There is a strong impression that he still fails to realise that this is not a wage dispute, to be settled by arbitration, but a matter of life or death.”⁴⁵⁰ And this sentence does to a large extent illustrate the totally different perspectives of the politicians in London and the inhabitants of Palestine. The Officers running the Administration were caught in between.

The Twenty-Second meeting on 18. February 1947 noted moderate traffic but, Kirby said, a monthly deficit of some LP40-50,000. Government was making drastic cuts in capital works and on capital expenditure, and this led to decisions to cut back on Stores and stock acquisition.⁴⁵¹

At this point Kirby reported on a recent meeting with the Railway Estimates Committee which does, indeed, cast some light on the background to his concerns. “The essence of the problem was the fiscal state of the country which, although budgeting for a slight surplus this year, had to face an estimated deficit of LP2,000,000 in 1947/48. Funds not being available in the public market at reasonable rates, the Government was

⁴⁴⁸ Minute 21:542 covers all of the above.

⁴⁴⁹ ‘Palestine Post’ 17. January p.3.

⁴⁵⁰ ‘Palestine Post’ 17. February.

⁴⁵¹ Minute 22:544.

obliged to restrict expenditure to the utmost limit. In consequence... [he] had been directed to recast his proposed expenditure for 1947/48 to restrict it to the amount nominally the the Renewals Account....”⁴⁵² Drastic prunings of budgets were to be expected, a stop on any new appointments or upgradings, and where possible orders for machinery should be cancelled.

The C.A. pointed out helpfully that the biggest and indeed only realistic savings would come when the Kantara-Rafa Railway and the Hijaz lines were no longer operated - “it being likely that the latter would drop out of use and the former pass from the control of P.R. Meanwhile capital expenditure on these railways should cease.” If the Department were to be reduced to the standard-gauge lines within Palestine alone, then expenditure on workshops and administration could also be reduced. Everything else was clearly perceived as a millstone round P.R.’s neck, of no real worth and just soaking up expenditure.

On 19. January a mine exploded near Ras el-Ain but no damage resulted.⁴⁵³

MARCH 1947.

On Sun. 2. March 1947 Martial Law was imposed, following ten “outrages” in Haifa, Jerusalem etc. which had left 20 killed and 30 wounded. ‘Operation Hippo’ began, with Tel Aviv isolated. 10,000 troops were involved; “The isolated area has been completely cut off from the rest of the world. Communications have ceased. The railway system, with the exception of certain food and through trains, has been dislocated and road transport has been stopped.”⁴⁵⁴ Some perspective may be gained from an announcement by Hugh Dalton that Britain had spent £82M over the last two years in Palestine, and £87M in Greece.⁴⁵⁵

On 13. March two attacks were made; near Beit Safafa on the Jerusalem line a fireman was killed and a guard injured when a goods train was derailed; near Petah-Tiqvah an oil train was shot at; half was derailed and the rest overturned down an embankment but did not catch fire. Firing continued for over two hours.⁴⁵⁶

As a result night operations were suspended once again; “The railway authorities, who state that the train crews are showing remarkable co-operation and willingness to continue uninterrupted service, feel that the workers are entitled to protection. Passenger trains, normally scheduled for daylight hours, are unaffected by the change.”⁴⁵⁷ The Haifa to Egypt service was resumed on 17. March.

By the Twenty-Third meeting on 18. March 1947 the Supt.o.t.L. could confirm that P.R. was indeed confined to certain basic bulk traffics, that only one half of the goods imported through Haifa were being conveyed onwards by rail, and that competitive traffic was increasingly moved by road. “Even during the recent difficulties of Martial Law, Government itself had allowed traffic to pass from Haifa to Tel-Aviv by road but not by rail.”⁴⁵⁸ Road competition was now a major threat. “The competitive fleet

⁴⁵² Minute 22:558. But he had of course instituted economy measures long before. It is unclear to us to what extent these figures affected general Palestine Government and even British Government policy.

⁴⁵³ ‘Palestine Post’ 20. February p.3.

⁴⁵⁴ ‘Palestine Post’ 3. March p.1. The Curfew ended Mon. 17. March after 15 days.

⁴⁵⁵ ‘Palestine Post’ 7. March 1947 p.3.

⁴⁵⁶ ‘Palestine Post’ 14. March p.1.

⁴⁵⁷ ‘Palestine Post’ 17. March p.1. However, railwaymen organised in the Arab Workers' Congress in Jaffa threatened at a meeting on 16. March to strike unless adequate security measures were provided.

⁴⁵⁸ Minute 23:563(a).

of road vehicles, encouraged by Government on the grounds of re-establishing ex-servicemen, had doubled itself in 18 months and was still growing.” Kirby’s response was that P.R. would have to offer better, cheaper services in order to compete, even though “the Jewish trading community would prefer the Jewish road hauliers for political reasons.” We see here, starkly expressed, the effects of Government policy as it affected negatively a Government Department, and the ethnic and political pressures which from now on would distort any free market and effectively make the Railways’ case hopeless. Even with daylight running in force traffic was restricted and the Supt.o.t.L. emphasised the difficulties caused by “so much interference, actual and potential, from sabotage.”

Little political support could be expected. Kirby reported rather bitterly on a meeting he had attended in Jerusalem the previous day, where Government had considered alternatives should the railways be totally immobilised by sabotage. “The Controller of Road Transport had reached the conclusion that road hauliers could carry on the country’s transport business if necessary.” Kirby felt that this was a somewhat hasty conclusion, and “founded on inadequately-considered premises”, but nevertheless this was the advice Government had received. In short, the Railways were now embattled, on the defensive and had been officially declared expendable! In the circumstances the increased repair costs due to sabotage were hardly worth detailed discussion. What had to be done had to be done, with gritted teeth. And yet the meeting continued to discuss water supplies, duplicating machines, wagon repairs, accommodation for records and a host of other routine but important matters. There was even a possibility of a windfall payment from the Army of some LP250,000 for freight from the previous year - if this transpired, Kirby wanted to spend it on purchase of surplus W.D. material.⁴⁵⁹

The Palestine issue was taken to the U.N. Trustee Council on 26. March. On 29. March the I.Z.L. attacked the Shell oil installations at Haifa Port, wrecking eight storage tanks.

APRIL 1947.

On 1. April a Sapper on duty at a military control box on the railway line near Nahariya was shot dead.⁴⁶⁰ During this period emotions ran high due to the impending execution of Dov Gruner and the trial of the I.Z.L. members arrested for blowing up Jerusalem station; two of the latter committed suicide in their cell in Jerusalem on 21. April, on the eve of their execution.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵⁹ Minute 23:472.

⁴⁶⁰ ‘Palestine Post’ 2. April p.3. According to an official statement, he was approached by two men, aged about 25, and shot. The murderers stole a tommy-gun, two magazines, two rifles and 100 rounds of ammunition.

⁴⁶¹ ‘Palestine Post’, 17 & 22 April 1947. They were Bazarani and Feinstein - the latter arrested after the attack on Jerusalem Railway Station. Gruner, arrested after the I.Z.L. attack on Ramat-Gan police station on 23 April 1946, was hanged at Acre Jail.

In terms of the sabotage attacks by Jewish forces, it could be perceived that differing ‘strategic’ policies were being employed by the Irgun (I.Z.L.), Lehi (‘Stern Gang’) and Haganah. Of course, from the point of view of a railwayman, whether Kirby himself or a track worker or engine driver, it was pretty irrelevant who was shooting at him or blowing up the track in front of a train, and such niceties of political and ideological differences amongst the different militias and the Yishuv leadership were unknown and in any case beyond his control.

The Irgun Zvai Leumi, formed in 1937 in opposition to the Haganah’s policy of ‘Havlagah’ (‘Restraint’), ceased anti-British operations during the War but resumed in 1944; a further split saw Avraham Stern, an Irgun leader, form his own group ‘Lehi’, which continued attacks even during the war. The Irgun rather specialised in mines and in attacks on bridges, on 2-3. April 1946 cutting the links

At the Twenty-Fourth meeting on 10. April 1947 topics for discussion included compensation for staff killed in sabotage attacks⁴⁶² and the poor security situation that still prevented 24-hour working.⁴⁶³ Kirby mused that it was “obvious the Railways were facing a difficult period of rising costs and falling receipts.” All operating economies and savings in capital charges were being absorbed in high cost-of-living allowances, and the best hope for recovery lay in improving the proportion of imports through the ports being distributed by rail. This is intriguing, for it implies that local produce for export - whether cement, phosphates or citrus - would not cover the costs, and P.R. would become effectively an arm of the import trade.

On 22. April a major attack destroyed several coaches and killed 8, injuring 27 staff and passengers when the Cairo-Haifa train was blown up by an electrically-detonated bomb near Rehovoth.⁴⁶⁴

between North and South, with bridges blown south of Acre and between Yibna and Isdud; In June 1946 destroying bridges to cut communications to Egypt, Syria and Lebanon. On 17. June 1946 the attack on Qishon Workshops was carried out by Irgun, the trial of the 18 raiders captured afterwards culminating on 30. August with the commutation of two death sentences.

But there were further Irgun attacks in September 1946, Haifa East station being substantially damaged on 20. September, and several mining attacks on the roads and railways, the taking of hostages, the freeing of imprisoned members, and other actions. These internal political conflicts within the Yishuv have been well documented elsewhere. See J. Bowyer Bell ‘Terror Out of Zion: The Fight for Israeli Independence’ (Dublin Academy Press 1977, also Transaction Press edition 1996, ISBN 1 560000-870-9, used here. pp. 35, 192, 196, 199 et seq.

⁴⁶² Minute 24:591.

⁴⁶³ Minute 24:581.

⁴⁶⁴ ‘Palestine Post’ 23. April p.1. “The locomotive, a mail truck and the first three coaches, filled with troops, passed safely over the mine which went off under a first-class coach, the seventh in the train. Two first-class coaches before, and a sleeping car and diner behind were derailed, while the next car telescoped into it, turning the interiors into a shambles. A 20-foot section of up-ended steel rail stabbed through the bottom of one coach and rammed its way out at the end.... A relief train arrived at the scene two hours after the tragedy. The mail was removed and work gangs were brought to clear the tracks.

A railway official [said] service would be resumed at noon tomorrow. The locomotive and leading coaches were uncoupled this afternoon and steamed off. The rear coaches were left standing on the tracks.

The entire roof of the coach underneath which the charge exploded - half first-class and half second-class - was blown off, as were the walls at the rear end of the coach - the first-class half, an eye-witness reported. The coach was hurled from the track and came to rest with all its wheels in the air.

The front part in the dining car behind was not badly damaged but the sleeping car behind it rammed into the rear end of the diner, killing one man in the vestibule between the two and pinning the cook there.... Several cars behind the sleeper telescoped into it, but the last four coaches were intact and stayed on the rails.

A goods train had passed the spot safely about 15 minutes before, and a squad of track walkers had been over the scene earlier in the morning.” It was initially reported in Tel Aviv that the train had been blown up by the Stern Gang, which had also carried out attacks on Army camps in Nathanya and Rehovoth that week. In fact it was the I.Z.L. The Hebrew press largely condemned the attack; the Arab press exaggerated the casualty figures, claimed Stubbs, the P.I.O. The ‘Lake Success’ talks were under way at this time.

MAY 1947.

Labour relations were another area for concern. On 28. April a protest mass meeting of the Palestine Arab Workers Society was addressed by Sami eff. Taha, General Secretary of the P.A.W.S., and by representatives of the railway workers, and sent a 17-point telegram of protest to Kirby. A two-page circular had been distributed among the 8,000 railway employees some days previously explaining that retrenchment was necessary now that the wartime boom was over, and the railways would have to "retract to the peacetime level". The staff had numbered only 4,500 workers in 1935, but a reduction was envisaged to the 1940 level, since the railways were benefitting from increased transport of oil, cement and foodstuffs, and were looking forward to industrial development, according to this circular.⁴⁶⁵

The Twenty-Fifth meeting took place on 8. May 1947 and it is clear that no-one realised that at this point P.R. had just one year of existence left.⁴⁶⁶ Plans for a Road/Rail service were being progressed and Kirby spoke of the necessity of reconsidering the rating policy, if to do so would draw sufficient business to the Railways.⁴⁶⁷ The current cost per ton/km was over 7mils, far too high to permit the Traffic Dept. to canvass for new business which was vitally needed - he foresaw the need to reduce those costs to something a little over 4mils. Nearly 70% of the Railways' costs were payments to staff and as the reductions possible there were limited, it was clear that the aim must be more and more traffic over which to spread those costs. The Supt.o.t.L. could envisage several important flows to and from private sidings being constructed or negotiated, but only in several months' time.

During the night 15-16. May further widespread sabotage of railway lines resulted in the deaths of two Army officers, injuries to troops and railway workers, and the destruction of rolling stock, bridges and tracks. Damage amounted to about LP10,000.

Two officers of a bomb disposal squad were killed while removing a mine from the Haifa-Acre line at Kilometre 13, near Kurdani, and two other soldiers seriously injured.

A W.D. workers' train carrying hundreds of Arab and Jewish workers employed at the Khayat and Tireh military camps was derailed by a mine near Bat Galim at 06.00. The engine and two passenger coaches left the line, and oil leaking from the engine burst into flames. One passenger was slightly hurt. The fire was put out by the Municipal Fire Brigade. According to the official report, 30 metres of the railway line were blown up, and repairs were begun shortly afterwards.

The workers returned to Haifa and assembled at the Palestine Arab Workers Society. Their demand for security, compensation in case of injury, and ordinary wages for the day were presented to the Superintendent of the Pioneer and Labour Control Officer, Major Mason, who called at the offices of the Organization that morning.

⁴⁶⁵ 'Palestine Post' 29. April p.3.

⁴⁶⁶ In May 1947 the UNSCOP (U.N. Special Committee on Palestine) was formed, and met 15 June - 1 September. Bowyer notes: "There would thus be one more committee, the twenty-second since the establishment of the Mandate. In Palestine few had any faith that such an international expedition would fashion an accommodation of any sort. The Zionists, especially the Revisionists, did not believe that the British intended to evacuate the Mandate. They thought UNSCOP was a delaying tactic. Actually, High Commissioner Cunningham and the Mandate authorities had no clear idea what London intended, or ever had intended. They had to stumble along day by day, trying to keep the machine running and waiting for a firm directive. On May 29 Bevin announced at a Labour Party conference in Margate that Britain would not give up its Middle East position - whatever that meant." (Terror out of Zion. pp.220f.)

⁴⁶⁷ Minute 25:598.

Neither the Arab nor Jewish W. D. employees returned to work, and the authorities promised that W.D. workers would be conveyed in military lorries to the camps until other arrangements have been made.

The engine of the train derailed at Bat Galim was brought into the workshops for repairs but a locomotive blown up at Rehovot at 07.30 while hauling a 50-wagon goods train to Lydda was beyond repair. The driver and three other crew members were injured. This attack was close to the site of the blast three weeks previously; A powerful mine was exploded beneath the locomotive as it passed near Hatzofim; the engine and two wagons, one containing kerosene, landed in a wadi 30 metres away. Four other wagons were derailed and damaged. The 'Post' noted that, unlike previous explosions, this mine was not electrically detonated, but was touched off by the wheels of the train. The track was torn and twisted for about 100 metres. The Cairo-Haifa train could not pass.

The line was cleared by 16.00 and traffic resumed, but it was announced that there would be no railway service between Haifa and Lydda on 16. May, as only two of three bridges damaged between Zichron Ya'akov and Binyamina had been temporarily repaired. Passengers from Haifa to Cairo would be taken by bus to Lydda to join the train for Egypt.

Unexploded mines were also discovered that morning on the railway line near Beit Safafa village (Jerusalem area) and near Hatikvah Quarter in Tel Aviv.⁴⁶⁸

Ironically, in view of the problems affecting the service, the E.S.R. turned down a proposal for the Haifa-Egypt train to be terminated at Kantara and insisted on through running to Cairo. It was noted that the train was held up anywhere between one and six hours at Kantara for frontier and Customs checks by the Egyptian authorities. As a consequence, many passengers preferred to get off at Kantara, cross the Canal and go on to Port Said or Cairo by an Egyptian train, rather than wait for the Palestinian train to be allowed through. Coaches coming back from Egypt were described as being frequently damaged and dirty, and P.R. spent "a disproportionately large sum" on cleaning and repairs.⁴⁶⁹

There were reports of the Stern Gang issuing warnings not to travel by train. A sign of the times is a report that weekly air shuttles had been started for 30 British officials from Palestine to take their leave at a time. Leave was now annual, not every 18 months; it comprised 4 days per month served, but now with only 4 days rather than 20 days added for travel purposes.⁴⁷⁰

27. May saw further coordinated simultaneous attacks. Ramle station was almost totally demolished by a bomb - there was some confusion as to how the attack was carried out, especially as the I.Z.L. had telephoned Rehovot station to issue a warning! There was slight damage to the track near Hatikvah Quarter in Tel Aviv when a bomb exploded at about the same time, and a goods train which arrived a minute after the explosion returned to Tel Aviv. At the same time an explosion occurred under a goods train at Kilometre 39 on the Binyamina - Zichron Ya'acov line, and the line was also cut at Hulda.⁴⁷¹

JUNE 1947.

⁴⁶⁸ 'Palestine Post' 16. May 1947. p.1.

⁴⁶⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁷⁰ 'Palestine Post' 20. May. p.3. Effectively saving two weeks per Officer!

⁴⁷¹ 'Palestine Post' 28. May. p.1.

J. H. Dunn had represented P.R. at the International Timetable Conference at Venice, and on 1. June was reported as announcing that Baghdad-London was now possible by rail in only nine days; "It had already been decided to extend the Paris-Istanbul sleeper service to three times a week, and the 'Taurus Express' would run twice a week between Haydar Pasha and Baghdad connecting with Tripoli to join up with the Paris-Istanbul line. It was hoped to have a connecting link through Palestine to Cairo, if conditions have returned to normal."⁴⁷²

What was 'normality'? On 4. June two separate attacks were made on the railway. The engine and five tank wagons of a southbound oil train were derailed when a mine exploded at km. 37 on the Haifa-Lyddá line between Zichron Ya'acov and Hadera at 08.50. The attackers were thought to have planted the mine after the Haifa-Cairo passenger train had passed at 08.30, and detonated it under the goods train. Some 100 metres of track were damaged, the driver was slightly injured, but the line was repaired by nightfall. Damage was estimated at LP1,000. This was also the locomotive's first trip after six months in the workshops for repairs following a terrorist attack the previous November!

Slight damage was also caused to a morning goods train travelling from Jerusalem to Jaffa when the track was mined near the Hatikvah Quarter. The locomotive and three wagons were damaged, but not derailed, and the tracks were torn up a few metres. A stoker was slightly injured. The tracks were repaired by the afternoon and traffic was resumed.⁴⁷³

But this was the 'normality'. The same issue reported the indefinite detention of two 17-year-old youths who had been caught by the Army near Hadera on the night of 14. May, with a revolver, a grenade and a mine in a tin. Early in the morning of 5. June five men attacked and blew up Atlit station, giving the Station Master and his family time to get out.⁴⁷⁴

On 9. June, however, the official opening of the Nakoura - Tripoli Railway to through traffic from Egypt to Lebanon was announced.⁴⁷⁵

How many more months would P.R. have? By the Twenty-Sixth meeting on 16. June 1947 "Retrenchment" was the new theme, one that recurred from now on. But how to apply this fairly? Kirby stressed the need, subject to the requirements of efficiency, for the principle of 'First In, Last Out' to be applied.⁴⁷⁶ For the time being retrenchment should be mainly confined to staff taken on during the war years, that is, since April 1942. The Traffic Branch was already applying this principle, and where appropriate was offering persons due for retrenchment a grade lower than that enjoyed at the time, the man filling that lower post being downgraded too, or discharged as the case might be. Transfers might also be offered, to avoid discharging older men; Stress was laid on the need for avoiding the transfer of "men who might fall victim to a later cut, if and when further economies became necessary. One should also bear in mind the undesirability of discharging a Palestinian to make room for a non-Palestinian subject within Palestine itself." Kirby directed that, for the purposes of retrenchment, Palestine Railways and the Kantara-Rafa Railways should be treated as separate entities, the same principles being applied within each to ensure fairness.

⁴⁷² 'Palestine Post' 1. June. p.1.

⁴⁷³ 'Palestine Post' 5. June pp. 1 & 3.

⁴⁷⁴ 'Palestine Post' 6. June p.1. Damage was estimated at LP1,500.

⁴⁷⁵ 'Palestine Post' 9. June p.1. "Trains carrying goods and passengers will operate daily between Tripoli, Beirut, Haifa and Cairo." Though details are scanty, it seems this was not to be.

⁴⁷⁶ Minute 26:619.

Arab railway workers had informed Kirby that, to avoid excessive disruption, they would only observe the national all-day Arab strike called for that day to protest against the UNSCOP visit⁴⁷⁷ to the extent of a token half-hour. Kirby reported he had “acknowledged the intimation with an expression of thanks for the consideration shown, and had made it clear that no pay would be granted for the lost time concerned.”⁴⁷⁸

Could the Hedjaz Railway still be saved? On 19. June a conference was announced, to be held in Damascus on 21. June, between representatives of railway companies from Syria, Trans-Jordan, Palestine, and Saudi Arabia, to discuss the possibility of reopening the Hedjaz line.⁴⁷⁹

JULY 1947.

From 1. July Transjordan became independent. It was announced that “British subjects who were previously able to enter Trans-Jordan by having their passports endorsed must now obtain a Trans-Jordan visa. Foreign postage rates between Palestine and Trans-Jordan came into force from 1. July.”⁴⁸⁰

Retrenchment and associated labour relations remained a major issue at the Twenty-Seventh meeting on 15. July 1947. Kirby had received a letter of complaint from

⁴⁷⁷ United Nations Special Committee on Palestine. “There would thus be one more committee, the twenty-second since the establishment of the Mandate. In Palestine few had any faith that such an international expedition would fashion an accommodation of any sort. The Zionists, especially the Revisionists, did not believe that the British intended to evacuate the Mandate. They thought UNSCOP was a delaying tactic. Actually, High Commissioner Cunningham and the Mandate authorities had no clear idea what London intended, or ever had intended. They had to stumble along day by day, trying to keep the machine running and waiting for a firm directive. On May 29 Bevin announced at a Labour Party conference in Margate that Britain would not give up its Middle East position - whatever that meant.” (J. Bowyer Bell, ‘Terror out of Zion’, p.220f.)

The UNSCOP delegates and staff met 15. June to 1. September, with a tour of several Middle East countries and also a tour of Displaced Persons camps in Europe. For our purposes most relevant was the recommendation of Partition and the creation of two separate states under a federal structure, with Jerusalem administered separately.

“1. The peoples of Palestine are entitled to recognition of their right to independence, and an independent federal State of Palestine shall be created following a transitional period not exceeding three years.

2. With regard to the transitional period, responsibility for administering Palestine and preparing it for independence under the conditions herein prescribed shall be entrusted ' to such authority as may be decided upon by the General Assembly.

3. The independent federal State of Palestine shall comprise an Arab state and a Jewish state.

4. In delimiting the boundaries of the Arab and Jewish states, respectively, consideration shall be given to anticipated population growth.

5. During the transitional period, a constituent assembly shall be elected by the population of Palestine and shall formulate the constitution of the independent federal State of Palestine. The authority entrusted by the General Assembly with responsibility for administering Palestine during the transitional period shall convene the constituent assembly on the basis of electoral provisions which shall ensure the fullest possible representation of the population, providing that all adult persons who have acquired Palestinian citizenship as well as all Arabs and Jews who, though non-citizens, may be resident in Palestine and who shall have applied for citizenship in Palestine not less than three months before the date of the election, shall be entitled to vote therein.

6. The attainment of independence by the independent federal State of Palestine shall be declared by the General Assembly of the United Nations as soon as the authority administering the territory shall have certified to the General Assembly that the constituent assembly referred to in the preceding paragraph has adopted a constitution incorporating the provisions set forth.....”.

⁴⁷⁸ Minute 26:625.

⁴⁷⁹ ‘Palestine Post’ p.3.

⁴⁸⁰ ‘Palestine Post’ 3. July p.3.

the Railway Arab Trade Unions that retrenchment of staff was not following the spirit of his pronouncements.

He therefore asked for and was given an assurance that his directions were being faithfully followed, and stressed the importance of this being done. He also referred to the probability that further retrenchment would be necessary, which would inevitably include staff recruited before 1942, but notwithstanding this, any exceptionally-able employee, whether taken on before or after that year, should be retained in the service.⁴⁸¹

Strains were beginning to show. He had been advised from London that there were no suitable candidates for the vacancy at Qishon for a Works Superintendent. Since the C.M.E. had no suitable local candidate, Kirby felt he would have to review a number of persons in the Colonial Service elsewhere, whom he had last year "considered not fully to meet his requirements."⁴⁸² Presumably the disturbed security situation was putting-off potential applicants.

Relationships with Egypt were further strained. The Cashier from El Kantara had been refused permission to bring back cash from Ismailia, where he had gone as usual for it. The incident appeared to arise out of the change in Egypt's relationship with the Sterling Group, and it was not clear whether this was a case of discrimination against Palestine Railways or the Palestine Government, or whether the same restriction would apply to any British concern in Sinai or to any other national in the Sterling Bloc. The Acting C.A. promised to enquire into the matter as rapidly as possible and to inform Kirby of any developments.⁴⁸³

On 20. July the funerals of three persons from the 'Exodus' took place. Possibly connected to the emotions raised, that same day there were seven attacks on P.R. Slight damage was caused but no casualties. The attacks comprised:-⁴⁸⁴

(a). 05.57 between Rehovot and Yibneh; workers in a trolley found a mine on the side of the line, covered with a newspaper. The Army detonated it at 11.00, damaging 20 metres of track. The line was repaired two hours later, and the train from Egypt arrived some five hours late.

(b). 07.00. A bomb was found by farmers at Km. 14 on the Haifa-Samakh line, a short time before the workers' train was due to pass.

(c). 07.35. Two pressure-type mines were found near Elroi on the Haifa-Samakh line; they were removed and detonated by the Army.

(d). 07.45. A pressure-type mine with an alternate time-switch arrangement attachment set for 08.25 was found at Km. 80, near Jerusalem on the Jaffa-Jerusalem line. A shot was fired at the railway worker who found the mine, but he was not hurt.

(e). 08.45. A mine exploded under a goods train at Km. 5, near Jaffa. The engine and track were slightly damaged.

(f). 09.00. An explosion occurred under a goods train at Km. 38, destroying a metre of track. The train was not damaged.

(g). 12.00. A mine exploded at Km. 39, between Zichron Ya'akov and Binyamina in front of a goods train. The track was slightly damaged.

To the slight damage must of course be added the enormous disruption and the great worries about what might happen next, and where.

⁴⁸¹ Minute 27:634.

⁴⁸² Minute 27:640.

⁴⁸³ Minute 27:641.

⁴⁸⁴ We should note the frequency with which coordinated attacks, on the same day or even at approximately the same time, were planned and carried out by the Jewish saboteurs. In contrast the later Arab sabotage appears more random and aimed at looting rather than destruction and disruption.

On the night 23-24. July there was yet more sabotage, and this time with more severe consequences. At 20.30 the track was blown up south of Gaza, but was repaired shortly afterwards. A culvert between Binyamina and Zichron Ya'akov was partially destroyed at 06.00 when the Royal Engineers exploded a charge which they were unable to remove. There were no casualties in either incident, but the main line was cut until further notice - it was hoped, 27. July.⁴⁸⁵ But this was not to be, for on the evening of 26. July, after the bridge had been provisionally restored and the first few trains had tentatively made their way across, it was attacked again and burned down!

Things could (just) have been worse. There was a failed attempt to blow up the Cairo-Haifa train with a mine near Ness Ziona at 08.00 on 26. July - the mine failed to explode - and near Beer Ya'akov a mine containing 160 sticks of explosive was reported to have been found shortly after 13.00.⁴⁸⁶

On 27. July at 07.30 an officer was seriously injured and four others slightly hurt when a patrol trolley was blown up at km. 4 near Mikvé Israel (Tel Aviv). The trolley was damaged and about 50 yards of tracks ripped up. A second trolley following behind was also slightly damaged.⁴⁸⁷

AUGUST 1947.

From 1. August additional Cairo-Beirut trains were planned for the holiday traffic.⁴⁸⁸

On 3. August at 04.00 an explosion damaged tracks south of Rehovot and an Arab was killed and another injured by what appeared to be booby-traps set up in the adjacent groves for any pursuers. The pace was now speeding up again; on 7. August at 06.00 twelve oil wagons were derailed and 250 metres of track damaged when a mine exploded beneath a northbound goods train between Ras el-Ain and Qalqilya.⁴⁸⁹

Daylight operation was no guarantee of security. On Saturday 9. August at 10.00 a Cairo-Haifa troop train was blown up by two contact mines which exploded under the engine near Kilometre 97 (Nuzeira) on the Lydda-Haifa line. The engine, tender and five coaches containing troops were derailed, but the passengers escaped with minor injuries. Rescue workers hacked away at the wreckage of the engine for eight hours before they could release the body of the Jewish driver, Vita Cohen.⁴⁹⁰ Two armed Jews were arrested nearby by police. Repair gangs began to clear the track immediately and it was expected that trains would run to schedule the following day.

Slight damage was also done when a mine exploded on the railway near Ghussein Bridge, about a kilometre south of Gaza Station, on the night 7-8. August.⁴⁹¹ A

⁴⁸⁵ 'Palestine Post' 25. July p.1.

⁴⁸⁶ 'Palestine Post' 27. July p.1.

⁴⁸⁷ 'Palestine Post' 28. July p.1.

⁴⁸⁸ *ibid.* p.3. No timetables or other materials have been found for this service, which remains something of a mystery; It is not even known which locos, stock and crews were used or whether and where change of engine took place.

⁴⁸⁹ 'Palestine Post' 8. August p.1. Four troops were hurt in several other mine attacks on road traffic.

⁴⁹⁰ Aged 44, married with 6 children and with 27 years service on P.R., he was buried next day. "Hundreds of fellow workers from all over the country, including Arabs, attended his funeral. Wreaths placed on his grave included one on behalf of the General Manager, P.R." ('Palestine Post' 11. August p.3). When the trial of two attackers began on 17. November his age was given as 50 and the Prosecutor, Stubbs described him as "an honest, hard-working, non-political Jew" who had been employed by the Palestine Railways since 1925.

⁴⁹¹ 'Palestine Post' 10. August p.1. The article adds that terrorist activities since July 16 had resulted in the deaths of 18 members of the security forces, four civilians and two "dissidents" and injury to another

further bomb exploded on 11. August near Gaza and on 16. August at km. 43 near Hadera.

By the Twenty-Eight meeting on 12. August 1947 Kirby had had time to consider again the real impact on overheads of any reduction of the P.R. system. Should the Kantara-Rafa Railway pass out of P.R.'s control for example, the entire cost of the Standard-Gauge rolling stock, complete with debt charges, would be thrown back upon the Palestine Railway itself.⁴⁹² However, the Traffic, Engineering and Mechanical Branches were congratulated upon some extremely intensive operating results, achieved in the face of difficulties at a time of persistent sabotage. This reflected well on the state of inter-branch cooperation, particularly between the Traffic and Mechanical Branches, and he "derived particular satisfaction from the thought that it indicated a good, willing spirit among the staff" and hoped everything possible would be done to maintain this.

It was clear that reversion to night operating, desirable though it was, was not possible for the time being.⁴⁹³ Similarly the security situation made the return of any of the evacuated wives, should this be allowed, problematical.⁴⁹⁴ No clear solution was seen until "the present state of affairs gave way to something approaching normality." As we know, this was never to occur. Kirby had to report that no appointment had been made to the post of Qishon Works Superintendent or indeed a new C.M.E., though an offer for the latter post had been made to a serving officer of the Kenya and Uganda Railways.⁴⁹⁵

On 20. and 21. August two "primitive mines" were found on railway tracks in the south on and dismantled by the army before the arrival of any trains. They "appeared of amateur make" and "a suspicion that the bombs were placed on the rails by Arabs" was being investigated by the police.⁴⁹⁶

SEPTEMBER 1947.

By 11. September 1947, when the Twenty-Ninth meeting was held, chaired by Scrivener, some of the political developments were becoming clearer.⁴⁹⁷ "The Egyptian Authorities required the British Army to evacuate from Sinai territory a depot which was more than half on that side of the frontier at Rafa. In all probability this would be followed by an evacuation in due course of Palestine Railways, in which case consideration would have to be given to our requirements in the way of a new frontier station, possibly a joint station with the Egyptian State Railways, possibly a separate one." The War Department wished to know P.R.'s probable development in such a case, in order that their own depot and siding connections might be sited to best advantage.⁴⁹⁸ A survey was required, but what had been until now a 'soft' border was clearly becoming a 'hard' one.

Amazingly, no serious acts of sabotage on the railways were reported for most of the month. The I.Z.L. and others had diverted their attention elsewhere. But this was

84 soldiers or policemen and 20 civilians.

⁴⁹² Minute 28:647.

⁴⁹³ Minute 28:651.

⁴⁹⁴ Minute 28:652. Families and dependents had been evacuated under 'Operation Polly', and most of the British expatriate officers were now living bachelor existences.

⁴⁹⁵ Minute 28:653. Clearly Kirby was using his own personal contacts here.

⁴⁹⁶ 'Palestine Post' 24. August p.3. Was this amateurishness meant to be a comfort or a contrast?

⁴⁹⁷ On 8. September an article by George Lichtheim postulated September 1949 as the probable date of [British] withdrawal from Egypt and Palestine. ('Palestine Post' p.1.)

⁴⁹⁸ Minute 29:671.

not to last. On 31. September at 11.30 the engine and two coaches of the Haifa-Cairo train were derailed between Binyamina and Zichron Ya'acov, when a mine exploded under the engine.⁴⁹⁹

OCTOBER 1947.

How far should they now be planning ahead? Suddenly everything was unclear.⁵⁰⁰ On 17. October the 'Post' reported that "The British Government is at present holding discussions with the Administration in Palestine in an endeavour to fix a definite date for the withdrawal of British military and civil personnel."⁵⁰¹

By the time of the Thirtieth meeting on 21. October 1947 this issue was raised in relation to Stores. Kirby told the meeting that, bearing in mind that the Palestine Railways Stores policy committed the Department to expenditure up to two years ahead, he had sought Government's guidance as to the extent to which this was desirable in view of the prospect of a change of regime in Palestine.⁵⁰² Not much major machinery was due for delivery for a year or two, and Kirby stressed to the C.E. and A.C.M.E. that it was necessary to consider cancellations. Not only was it undesirable to saddle any successor with other than essential commitments; cancellation now might avoid a disappointment to or dispute with manufacturers later. Moreover the Palestine Railways was likely to become smaller by the removal of the Hijaz Railways (Trans-Jordan) and/or the Kantara-Rafa Railway and its needs would be modified accordingly.

Staff reductions had taken place - the Chief Staff Officer produced figures of total staff employed by the Railway Department on 31. March 1947 (7,428) and 31. August 1947 (6,034). Part of this was due to the stopping of capital works and Kirby drew attention to the relatively-small reduction in clerical staffs and asked all Heads of Branches to review their position in regard to clerical staff.⁵⁰³

On 24. October 1947 it was announced that "Britain Plans to Withdraw Before March 1949."⁵⁰⁴ It is clear that there was no certainty at all, and this must have had an enormous effect on those charged with actually administering the country and its infrastructure. For example, the issue for 29. October announced that the Army had no withdrawal plans yet and reports of telephone purchases being cancelled because of the possible British withdrawal were incorrect - "No purchases have been cancelled and the placing of orders for telephone equipment continues, the Postmaster General added."

⁴⁹⁹ 'Palestine Post' 1. October p.1. On this day Pakistan and Yemen also joined the U.N., two Moslem countries, bringing the total membership to 57.

⁵⁰⁰ In contrast, the Past was clearer. On 1. October 1947 a Notice of publication of the "Report made to Government by the General Manager in respect of the Administration of the Palestine Railways and Operated Lines for the years 1942/43, 1943/44, 1944/45 and 1945/46 and on the Palestine Ports for the years 1943/44, 1944/45 and 1945/46" appeared. It was available to the public, at LP1. "The Report is written in English, but indexes thereto are available in Hebrew and Arabic. P.J.C. Baker, Acting G.M., Haifa." ('Palestine Post' 1. Oct. 1947 p.3.)

On 8. October the British withdrew from Iraq; in coming days the date of 1. January 1948 for withdrawal from Palestine was mooted, and on 15. October an assurance was printed that any withdrawal would be "orderly".

⁵⁰¹ p.1. A Withdrawal is not the same as a Handover! It was considered a minimum of six months would be required.

⁵⁰² Minute 30:677. Though reference to other railways was made the previous month, this is the first major and clear indication of substantial political change foreseen in Palestine.

⁵⁰³ Minute 30:691. A reduction of around 18%!

⁵⁰⁴ 'Palestine Post' p.1.

NOVEMBER 1947.

On 14. November the 'Post' announced that Cadogan at the U.N. had rejected the U.S. Partition Plan and that the British would withdraw by 1. August 1948.

For the first time "Withdrawal from Palestine" was a topic at the Thirty-First meeting on 18. November 1947,⁵⁰⁵ though the Minutes indicate merely "This subject was discussed generally." From now on a countdown was effectively in progress. And yet, almost like those rearranging the deckchairs on the 'Titanic', routine matters were discussed at length. Issues of the repair or replacement of old wooden-framed wagons continued to exercise minds, and Kirby, who considered it would probably be cheaper to purchase W.D. stock than to continue repairing worn-out wagons, directed the A.C.M.E. to contact the Army with a view to acquiring 6 W.D. brakevans. A further topic of note was the instruction for the "Scotch Derrick, located on the Tourist Line" at Haifa Port, to be put in a fit condition for use within a month.⁵⁰⁶ This could be an indication of plans for evacuation of baggage along with withdrawal of the population, on the line normally used for passenger coaches rather than freight.

The conflicts and developing civil war in the country were now having greater effects on operations. There was difficulty at Petah-Tiqva, as Arab crews would not work trains from Ras El-Ein to Petah-Tiqva. After discussion it appeared that the only solutions likely to be practicable would be, either for the Jewish community to provide guarantees of safe conduct which would satisfy the Arab personnel concerned, or for four Jewish crews currently idle at Tel-Aviv to be persuaded to work the trains between Petah-Tiqva and Lydda. Citrus traffic was held up and hard to predict.

Kirby wished to know whether the citrus traffic was likely to reach 300 wagons per day. The Supt.o.t.L. was doubtful, especially because of a shortage of wagons. The demands for War Department traffic were heavy and rather long terminal turn-round periods were accentuating the difficulties. Anticipation of heavy traffic on the Kantara-Rafa Railway had given rise to the reopening of crossing stations, but it appeared that wagon supply would be as important a factor as operating ones, even more so probably until the citrus season was over.

They appeared not to know this, but in fact on the previous day the Suez Canal bridge had been struck and severely damaged by a Dutch ship, the 13,300 ton 'Volendam'. The 'Post' reported on 18. November, the day of their meeting, that "the east side section of the bridge was destroyed and the bridge will have to be demolished."⁵⁰⁷

Sir Alexander Cadogan told the Palestine Committee at Lake Success on 20. November that the British Government could not allow any dual authority in Palestine during the transitional period as recommended by the sub-committees; Further, that Britain could not wait for the Security Council's permission to relinquish the Mandate, nor could it accept the Sub-Committee's recommendation for a "progressive transfer" of the administrative power from the Mandatory to the proposed Provisional Government

⁵⁰⁵ Minute 31:706. This was just days before the U.N. votes. At this point, on 11. November the USA and USSR had proposed 1. May as the end of the Mandate, on 14. November Britain had rejected Partition, on 22. November Sir Alexander Cadogan (British ambassador to the U.N.) proposed August as the end of the Mandate, a vote took place at Lake Success on 23. November and the final poll confirmed Partition on 30. November.

⁵⁰⁶ Minute 31:708.

⁵⁰⁷ p.3. After all Kirby's efforts through the M.E.Railway Conference to prevent the through route being closed!

Councils. "The Palestine authorities would not permit any activity within the zones under their control which might provoke disorder."⁵⁰⁸

There was of course protest. 'Ha'aretz' wrote: "The administration is beginning the winding-up process with a tendency to look after its own interests rather than those of the population."⁵⁰⁹ On 22. November Cadogan spoke again at the U.N.; The end of Mandate was now not likely until August. Wherever the military remained in control the British would not hand over the powers to the U.N. "We cannot whittle the Mandate down piecemeal", he commented. He had said before the Sub-Committee that Haifa would be the last point to be evacuated. He also told reporters that evacuation would be slow, because at present, for example, the railways were being tied up by citrus exports. He expressed doubts that the General Assembly had any authority to terminate the Mandate, but gave his assurance that the Commission would be given sufficient advance notice of the evacuation date.⁵¹⁰ On 24. November the 'Post' reported that large quantities of stores from the R.E. depot at Kiryat Motzkin was being shipped by rail to Haifa for sea transport, even though no date for the end of the Mandate had been set.

On 29. November the final vote on Partition was passed at the U.N.,⁵¹¹ to some rejoicing in Jewish circles but presumably consternation in others.⁵¹² Open civil war now broke out, with numerous attacks on road convoys. On 7. December it was formally announced the Mandate would end on 15. May 1948 - i.e. almost exactly six months hence. What remained of public order now began to break down. Whereas until now Jewish extremists had attacked the railways to persuade the British to withdraw, now that the withdrawal had been announced it was mainly Arabs who attacked the railways, either for loot or to prevent the new Jewish State gaining any benefit.

DECEMBER 1947.

By the Thirty-Second meeting on 16. December 1947 issues of Military shipments and Port working were relevant. No potash was arriving for export owing to the disturbed state of the country. The Stores Supt. reported that stores were still arriving but that the quantities had been heavily reduced by cancellations.⁵¹³ Kirby explained that the present stores policy was to restrict ordering and to cancel orders wherever possible, certainly in the case of stores which would not be delivered during the current financial year. This would not have the effect of leaving the stores denuded at the close of the current year.

⁵⁰⁸ 'Palestine Post' 21. November p.1. By this time British forces in Palestine had been reduced to 50,000.

⁵⁰⁹ *ibid.* p.8.

⁵¹⁰ 'Palestine Post' 23. November, p.1. One wonders what Kirby thought, when he read that the Railways were now being blamed for the slowness of the evacuation.

⁵¹¹ UNSCOP recommended that Palestine be divided into a Jewish State and an Arab State. The commission called for Jerusalem to be put under international administration. The original plan called for Beersheba to be a part of Israel. The US State Department however wanted all of the Negev to be part of the Palestinian State. A compromise effected between President Truman and Chaim Weizmann gave Beersheba (Bir Saba) to the Arabs, and a small strip of land near the Dead Sea was given to the Jews. The UN General Assembly adopted this plan on 29. November 1947. "The plan for 'partition with economic union' divided the land into several cantons, Both the Jewish and the Arab state had three cantons each that touched each other south of Nazareth and near Gaza. This jigsaw-puzzle would have been difficult enough to implement for friendly populations, and was impossible to implement given the hostility between Arabs and Jews." (from "Mid-East Web" website.)

The vote for UN Resolution GA 181 was 33 for, 13 against, 10 abstentions. The Partition Map (numbered Map 1982, Presentation 520) was dated September 1947 with alterations made in November especially as regards the southern boundary between Jewish and Arab sectors and the Negev desert, and was "based on the Survey of Palestine of 1946. (modified)."

⁵¹² 'Palestine Post' Sun. 30. November 1947 p.1.

⁵¹³ Minute 32:711.

The Hijaz Railway was due to be formally handed over and Kirby was still waiting for information regarding the assets, but the transfer of the Hijaz Railway in Transjordan was not expected to take place as quickly as had been thought.⁵¹⁴

The increasing lawlessness was making staff nervous. There had been numerous applications for provision of, or assistance in procuring licenses for, fire arms. But Kirby told Heads of Branches firmly that any such applications should be rejected forthwith without reference to the Management.⁵¹⁵

From 16. December Arab workers refused to serve without an armed escort on the branch from Ras el-Ain to Petach-Tiqva. In consequence it was reported on 19. Nov. that about 12,000 cases of citrus had been shipped to Hadera by truck in the last three days.

Three Arabs were wounded when Police returned the fire of a gang of seven men who were shooting at a goods train in Lydda Station on 18. December; There were no casualties amongst the Police or train crew.⁵¹⁶

On 19. December just after 12.00 about 100 armed Arabs held up a Haifa-Lydda goods train and stole 35 tons of sugar. The gang halted the train by exploding a small charge in front of the engine; The crew were held up and the raiders then unloaded the sugar into trucks and drove off.⁵¹⁷

The country was now splitting *de facto* into different ethnic areas. Many Jews were worried about security on their way to work, or of being dismissed for absenteeism. But the Publicity Officer of the Palestine Railways on 20. December denied statements in the press that employees in Haifa had been advised by their superiors to resign after they had complained of difficulty in getting to and from work. Any resignations that there had been, he said, had been made on the initiative of the employees themselves.⁵¹⁸

On 21. December, with conflict intensifying and Upper Galilee cut off, Arab gunmen held up a cattle train on its way from Samakh to Haifa, according to the Jaffa daily 'Ad Difa'a', and stole 400 head of cattle worth about LP12,000. The cattle were on their way from Arab dealers to Jewish butchers in Tel-Aviv.⁵¹⁹ The following day the Arab National Committee appealed to villagers in the Tulkarm area for an immediate halt on attacks on Police and trains, as being against "our national honour".⁵²⁰

To no avail. The 'Post' reported an attack on a goods train carrying cement shortly before midnight on 22. December by a gang of Arabs near Kakun village on the Haifa-Lydda line. "The driver stopped the train when the fire was opened, and the gang opened five wagons and stole quantities of cement. Arab TAC's escorting the train did not interfere." On the same night an Arab gang seized Majdal station, disarming the Station Master and imprisoning the staff in a room. They broke open all the wagons of a goods train but took nothing. "It is believed that they thought it was an ammunition train taking British supplies to Egypt."⁵²¹ On 24. December an army evacuation train of 11 wagons bound for Egypt was held up by Arab gunmen shortly after leaving the army base at Sarafand on the Lydda line. Supplies were stolen and loaded onto eight lorries.

⁵¹⁴ Minute 32:712 and see the separate chapter on this handover.

⁵¹⁵ Minute 32:719. Kirby himself possessed a revolver.

⁵¹⁶ 'Palestine Post' 19. December pp.3 &.5.

⁵¹⁷ 'Palestine Post' 21. December p.1.

⁵¹⁸ *ibid.* p.3.

⁵¹⁹ 'Palestine Post' 23. December p.3.

⁵²⁰ *ibid.*

⁵²¹ 'Palestine Post' 24. December p.1.

“About 200 attackers are believed to have taken part in the raid.”⁵²² This is a totally different form of raid to the secretive detonation of mines by small groups of a few months previously; Now large private armies or bands of marauders were stopping trains with impunity in broad daylight and looting them. Shots were also fired at two trains between Hadera and Kakun, but there were neither casualties nor damage. Between 24-26. December, it was belatedly reported, Arab train robbers, operating in large gangs in the Tulkarm area, had attacked six trains.

On 24. December two oil trains were fired on between Hadera and Kakun; The windows of the locomotive cab of Train No. 67 were smashed at 21.45 when an Arab gang opened fire. The train stopped and the TAC escort fired a few rounds at the attackers, who made off when they realised that the train consisted of oil tanks. A second oil train was attacked at 23.20 near the same spot. After a three-minute engagement the train continued but was again fired on. During a third attack 300 metres away one of the couplings broke and the escort alighted. They were then surrounded by the gang and robbed of 2 rifles and 20 rounds. On the following night a large gang of Arabs held up a southbound train north of Kakun, broke into 11 wagons and stole 376 sacks of flour, 120 of wheat and 310 of cement. Troops repulsed another attempt to hold up a train shortly after noon on 26. December: The train had just left Tulkarm when a small explosion occurred in front of it, and fire was opened by Arabs, but soldiers aboard returned fire and the train did not stop. That evening the raiders succeeded in stealing 96 bags of flour when they held up a train south of Tulkarm. Just before midnight troops foiled another hold-up north of Kakun; Raiders had uncoupled 20 vans and were unloading cement when a patrol of 4/7th. Dragoon Guards approached and dispersed the Arabs with overhead fire. The cement was replaced, the vans recoupled and the train went on its way.⁵²³

Palestine was becoming economically and politically isolated, and internally chaotic. Egypt prohibited all exports to Palestine “until the Egyptian Government is satisfied that the goods exported to Palestine are received exclusively by Arabs.” Izzedeem Shawa Bey, head of the Palestine Arab Political Mission in London, declared on 26. December that “Many people were making a mistake in not taking seriously Arab attempts to oppose any attempt at forming a Jewish_state in Palestine” as “...Arabs of all ranks are determined to clear up once and for all this question of the Jews in Palestine.”⁵²⁴

On 27-28. December there were two more attacks on trains on the Haifa-Tulkarm line within three hours of each other; About midnight an armed Arab gang held up a southbound train at kilo 55, and stole 131 sacks of mail, 71 bags of durra, 4 sacks of wheat, 107 of beans, 230 of cement, a wagonload of boxwood and a wagon load of toilet paper, as well as robbing the TAC escort of two rifles. Three hours later, the driver of another train refused to stop when he saw a red light on the line at kilo 15 near Kafr Shamir. There were no casualties when fire was opened on the train, which arrived safely at Haifa.

On 27. December also Arab railway workers at Haifa went on strike, demanding extra security measures. The Arabic daily *‘Ad-Difa’a’* reported that a delegation called on the General Manager and demanded Arab guards on the trains leaving Haifa, and special measures to guard against the roofs of Jewish houses near the

⁵²² ‘Palestine Post’ 25. December p.1.

⁵²³ ‘Palestine Post’ 28. December p.1.

⁵²⁴ *ibid.* p.2.

railway. These demands, the paper said, were immediately met. Haganah squads were removed from roofs and the workers went back at 14.00.⁵²⁵

The miserable year ended with a dreadful pogrom at the Haifa Oil Refineries; at least 39 Jewish workers were massacred by 2,000 Arab workers on a rampage after 6 Arabs had been killed by a bomb at the main gate.⁵²⁶

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⁵²⁵ 'Palestine Post' 29. December p.1. The irony was that now the attackers were more likely also to be Arabs.

⁵²⁶ 'Palestine Post' 31. December. p.1.

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CHAPTER 6.

DISPOSAL OF THE HAIFA - BEIRUT - TRIPOLI RAILWAY.

6:(A). INTRODUCTION.

Before describing the last months of P.R., within Palestine, we must explore the fate of the associated railways which linked the P.R. system to the outside world.

Although not part of Palestine Railways, this line linking Palestine with Lebanon (and thence with Syria, Turkey and Iraq) was inextricably linked to the system for four important years. A wartime expedient, it offered sudden possibilities, and it was only a series of cruel post-war political blows that prevented the line reaching its intended destiny as part of a new version of the “Fertile Crescent”, channelling traffic from Turkey, Iraq and Syria along the western coast of the Mediterranean to Egypt. Though soon robbed of this strategic long-term element, a small section within Palestine remained relevant for the short term and for local purposes.⁵²⁷

There were complex postwar negotiations leading to the disposal of the infrastructure, which are relevant also as they illustrate what did NOT occur when the Palestine Railways system itself had to be disposed of to a new independent State or States.⁵²⁸

⁵²⁷ Indeed, the section to Nahariya is still a very busy part of Israel Railways’ network.

⁵²⁸ The term ‘Lebanese Independence’ is somewhat hard to define as there were several stages. The Vichy government’s control ended when its forces were unable to repel the advance of French and British troops into Lebanon and Syria. An armistice was signed in Acre on July 14, 1941.

After signing the Armistice, General Charles de Gaulle visited Lebanon, officially ending Vichy control. Lebanese national leaders took the opportunity to ask de Gaulle to end the French Mandate and unconditionally recognize Lebanon’s independence. As a result of national and international pressure, on 26. November 1941 General Catroux, delegate-general under de Gaulle, proclaimed the independence of Lebanon in the name of his government. The United States, Britain, the Soviet Union, the Arab states, and certain Asian countries recognized this independence, and some of them exchanged ambassadors with Beirut. However, even though the French technically recognized Lebanon’s independence, they continued to exercise authority. General elections were held, and on 21 September 1943, the new Chamber of Deputies elected Bishara al Khuri as president. He appointed Riyad as Sulh as prime minister and asked him to form the first government of independent Lebanon. On 8. November 1943 the Chamber of Deputies amended the Constitution, abolishing the articles that referred to the Mandate and modifying those that specified the powers of the high commissioner, thus unilaterally ending the Mandate. The French authorities responded by arresting a number of prominent Lebanese politicians, including the president, the prime minister, and other cabinet members. This action united the Christian and Muslim leaders in their determination to get rid of the French. France, finally yielding to mounting internal pressure and to the influence of Britain, the United States, and the Arab countries, released the prisoners on 22. November 1943; This day has since been celebrated as Independence Day.

The foundations of the new Lebanese state were established in 1943 by an unwritten agreement between the two most prominent Christian and Muslim leaders. The contents of this agreement, later known as the National Covenant, were approved and supported by their followers. Lebanon became a member of the League of Arab States (Arab League) on 22. March 1945. It also participated in the San Francisco Conference of the United Nations (UN) and became a member in 1945. On 31. December 1946, French troops were completely withdrawn from the country, with the signing of the Franco-Lebanese Treaty. (Adapted from U.S. Library of Congress website).

6:(B). PLANNING AND CONSTRUCTION.

The line's history is bound with the complex political and strategic picture in the Eastern Mediterranean theatre. In June 1940 the French Commander-in-Chief in Syria, General Mittelhauser, declared for the Vichy Government under Pétain, thus making Palestine's northern flank vulnerable, raising the possibility of the forces in Palestine and Iraq being split and of the army in Egypt being forced to fight on two fronts. By April 1941 the British were forced to retreat from Greece, and Yugoslavia capitulated to the Germans. In May German aircraft were permitted to land at Damascus, and the attempted *coup d'état* in Iraq under Rashid Ali threatened Allied interests in that country too.

This situation could be tolerated no further, and on 8. June 1941 an Allied force invaded Syria. Fighting was fierce but Allied troops entered Damascus by 18. June (the same day that a German-Turkish neutrality pact was signed). The fighting ceased on 12. July.

This campaign provided some additional security for Suez, and protected the Basra-Baghdad-Haifa Mediterranean route, (the I.P.C. "H"-route pipeline⁵²⁹ and overland desert transport), as well as the overland supply route through Persia to Russia.

Standard-gauge railways in the area comprised the line from Cairo via Kantara to Haifa in the south and from Turkey in the north lines to Tripoli on the coast and to Rayak in the mountains. The narrow-gauge lines Haifa-Dera'a-Damascus and Damascus-Rayak-Beirut had heavy grades, sharp curves and were incapable of carrying heavy traffic; Moreover they were vulnerable to attack, particularly in the Yarmuk gorge with its numerous bridges and tunnels. There remained therefore a significant gap between the standard-gauge systems to north and south. Ideas for a link had been occasionally aired since the 1920's.

The Middle East Command had commenced initial surveys in 1940 for a possible railway line to the Lebanese border, though work beyond there was impossible. Plans were obtained of a route surveyed by the French in 1924. From an initial study of maps it appeared initially as though a line either inland through Metulla or inland from the coast north of Haifa along the Litani River valley to Rayak, joining there the standard-gauge Rayak-Aleppo line, would be the most obvious options. However it soon became clear after surveys that the black basalt rock encountered *en route* would be very difficult and time-consuming to work, and major engineering works would be needed. Accordingly a quick appreciation was made in August 1941 of a coastal route, and this was followed up by detailed surveys.⁵³⁰

From September 1941 work began, initially involving conversion of 19kms. of the existing Haifa-Acre line⁵³¹ to dual-gauge.⁵³² South African engineers were made

⁵²⁹ "H" for "Haifa". In the 1920's a railway route had been surveyed.

⁵³⁰ Work was carried out by 1st. Survey Co. of Railway Construction & Maintenance Group, Royal Australian Engineers, Australian Imperial Forces. This unit began survey work in July 1940. An inland route via Rosh Pina was considered to be too expensive and would require too much time for construction. (Source: Correspondence with Douglas Helsham, former member of this Unit. March 1992.)

⁵³¹ Part was already dual. In many respects it would have been simpler all round to convert the whole line to standard-gauge, but supplies were short, this was wartime, and in any case narrow-gauge stock needed access as far as Qishon Workshops and the Oil Refineries. The final 1.2km. from what became Na'amin Junc. to Acre remained narrow-gauge only.

⁵³² Simner asked Webb on 15. Oct. 1941 to "put in hand the conversion of the 105cm.-gauge line from Kiryat Motzkin to the point of take off of the standard-gauge line to Beirut beyond the Na'amin River Bridge near Acre to dual-gauge. Liability for debit will be accepted on receipt of an approximate estimate of cost." (Tn/3/4788/1/1. In WO 169/965, folio XC 002642.) The line from Haifa to the army depot at Kiryat Motzkin was already dual-gauge. On 21 Oct. he requested (Tn/3/4788/1/3) a crossing loop "at or near Kiryat Motzkin" and some additional sidings at Haifa.

responsible for the construction of the Haifa-Beirut section (137kms.), including the difficult tunnelling through the Nakura and Bayada headlands, and Australian engineers for the 92kms. of line from just south of Beirut to Tripoli, where junction was made with the Syrian standard-gauge. Depots were built at Bahsas, immediately south of Tripoli itself, at Azzib⁵³³ just south of the Lebanese border, and at Beirut, where there was interchange with the narrow-gauge D.H.P. line to Damascus.

A specially-recruited Company of tunnellers was recruited from South African gold-miners, and this managed to bore the long tunnel through the Chekka headland, on the Australian section.⁵³⁴

Seven major and eight smaller bridges were required on the 144kms. (86 miles) between Haifa and Beirut across river-mouths, and 98 culverts. This section was opened in August 1942. There were nine large bridges on the northern section, as well as numerous smaller works. Tripoli to Chekka (where there was a large cement works) opened on 22. July 1942, and after the works required on the Chekka tunnel and a few other difficult places were completed the 229km. line opened throughout with a formal ceremony on 20. December 1942, having taken just one year to construct - six months less than the War Office had estimated.

The Allies were justifiably proud of this achievement. An official Report stated: "In Syria, the Yarmuk Gorge from Samakh to Dera'a on the 105cm. gauge line, with its numerous bridges and tunnels, was obviously a section on which damage would take a long time to repair,⁵³⁵ and the capture of this line intact by a surprise attack was the first objective of the Syrian campaign.... The final choice was a coastal line from Haifa to Tripoli; this also included heavy work, including small tunnels at Naqura and Bayada headlands, and about a mile of tunnelling at the Chekka headland. Several major bridges and heavy works were necessary.... On the other hand, this route had the advantage of serving Beirut and the Chekka cement works, and the rock work was not in basalt.

Work began in December 1941... Hundreds of Arab labourers were employed with scores of Arab masons... for the heavy masonry work, required in bridge piers, abutments and retaining walls. As much mechanical plant as possible was pressed into service to accelerate the work. In some places, cuttings 60 feet deep and embankments 80 feet high were needed to keep the grade line within reasonable limits. In spite of these difficulties, work proceeded at high speed. ... the whole line to Tripoli was completed by December 1942. Thus a total length of 176 miles was finished in a year, that is at the rate of approximately half-a-mile a day. This rapid railway construction through semi-mountainous country ranks among the more remarkable engineering achievements of the war."⁵³⁶

The line followed the coast very closely - so closely that in places a foothold was obtained only by dropping concrete blocks off the clifftops to form a ledge. There are tales of waves breaking over trains on the line.⁵³⁷ It is probably the only railway line

⁵³³ Also called Ez Zib; now Betzet.

⁵³⁴ By agreement, South African conscripted troops were to be used only in 'Africa'.

⁵³⁵ As was borne out in 1947 with the sabotage of the El Hamme bridge over the Yarmuk.

⁵³⁶ This is taken from an Official Report, bearing no author's name, (published by the War Office) but believed to be by Brigadier K. N. Simner, the Director of Railways ME 1940-41, Deputy Director Transportation ME 1941-42.

⁵³⁷ Major R.A.R. Hoare of Farnham wrote: "In January 1943 the whole regiment entrained ... and proceeded on this very long and tedious journey.... up through Haifa to Beirut. The line was built... along the coast - almost on the beach, at places only a few feet above sea level. At the time we passed through

ever to have been torpedoed by a U-boat (!), though in this case damage was minimal; It did suffer several severe washouts during its history. It was designed as a first-class military railway to carry axle-loads of 20 Tons and with a 1-in-50 ruling gradient, and 10-chains minimum curvature. Bridging materials and rails came from India and South Africa. It was operated by the Royal Engineers, using W.D. rolling stock and motive power (this latter including U.S.A.T.C. 2-8-2's, R.O.D. 2-8-0's, L.M.S. 8F 2-8-0's, Whitcomb Bo-Bo diesels) P.R. had running powers to Azzib, and the W.D. had running powers from Na'amin Junction (near Acre) into Haifa. So this section of line north of Haifa saw P.R. narrow-gauge trains to Acre, P.R. standard-gauge serving the sidings north of there, and W.D. military trains. It called for complex organisation.

The opening of this line reduced the pressure on the narrow-gauge system linking Haifa with Rayak via Dera'a and Damascus. It effectively provided the Palestine Railways with a standard-gauge outlet to the North, making P.R. into a potential transit route for through traffic from Turkey, Syria, etc. to Egypt. This figured also in some post-war plans.

6:(C). DISPOSAL.

This was a wartime line built by what was in essence an Occupying Power. With the end of the conflict and the changing political climate - and authorities - a new destiny for the line had to be sought. Hughes⁵³⁸ writes simply: "In 1946 the Government of Lebanon, by then an independent state, agreed to purchase for 5 Million Pounds⁵³⁹ the line from the Israel border at Naqoura to Tripoli, the railway being operated by the D.H.P. The... original Lebanese Tramway⁵⁴⁰ concession contained a provision enabling the government to purchase the property if it was proposed to construct a broad gauge coastal railway." As for the post-sale use, he adds: "In fact only the Beirut-Tripoli section was fully used, the main traffic being cement from Chekka, although there was some oil transported from a refinery near Sidon. The only regular passenger services consisted of a weekly sleeping car which joined the 'Taurus Express' at Aleppo and the through Beirut-Aleppo railcars belonging to Syria." That is to say, there was no through traffic southwards to Haifa.

However, the actual story was much more complicated, and no source has been found for Hughes' figure or statement. Instead, records⁵⁴¹ indicate a complex tangle of negotiations and misunderstandings, involving Britain, France, Palestine and Lebanon, the Army, the Foreign Office, Colonial Office, and various diplomatic or military representatives of all these in different cities - in Beirut, Cairo, London, Paris etc. We shall here attempt to summarise, in sequence, the course of events that led to the termination of British - and Palestine - involvement in this line, which had promised so much but eventually delivered so little.

An early shot was fired in a Note on 28. September 1945, not found in the file but referred to in a letter of 8. December 1945 from the Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Lebanon to the British Legation in Beirut. It expressed "surprise" that the British and

there was a severe gale in the Eastern Mediterranean, and large waves at several points were breaking over the track and the train. At one point this very long and heavy train got stuck on a reverse curve, and the drivers had to reverse the train more than once to take a run at it. We were told that 12 hours after our train got through, the line was washed into the sea at this point!" (Private correspondence).

⁵³⁸ p.63.

⁵³⁹ He does not even specify whether Pounds Sterling or Lebanese Pounds!

⁵⁴⁰ A metre-gauge steam tramway from Beirut northwards to Mameltein. This line was rebuilt and absorbed into the H.B.T.

⁵⁴¹ P.R.O. Kew, file FO 371.

French governments had been conducting negotiations about a line in a third country without consulting that country. Instead, the Lebanese intended to exercise their right to purchase it themselves,⁵⁴² and ensure that whether operated by the State or by a private company, it conformed to their concept of a public service. Accordingly, the Legation was requested to pass notification of intention to purchase on to H.M.G..

What had got them so concerned? There is little in the file⁵⁴³ to indicate what discussions had already taken place. Mr. Shone of the Legation passed this demand on by telegram on 15. Dec. 1945,⁵⁴⁴ and a Minute dated 1. January 1946 notes that someone at the F.O. had spoken to the W.O. (“Messrs Fife and Brabant”) about this - “they are going to write us a letter asking us to take the matter up with the French before arranging for final disposal to the Lebanese Govt.” From this it appears that the British were in any case planning to dispose of the line to the Lebanese - the only other logical possibility is that the French intended to absorb the line into the D.H.P.

A fortnight later Shone wrote again from Beirut. He had been officially informed that the Lebanese Government had completed legislation providing for the formation of an Anglo-Lebanese Commission to settle claims of payment of compensation for land expropriated for the H.B.T. Railway and had asked that British members be appointed to this commission. French involvement is conspicuous here by its absence.

But here an intriguing snag appears and puts the unfortunate Mr. Shone - a bit like the railway itself in places - ‘between a rock and a hard place’. H.M.G. had sent him a telegram⁵⁴⁵ suggesting he take up with the Lebanese Government the idea of their taking over H.M.G.’s liabilities towards these landowners. As a result, discretion being the better part of valour, he had refrained from answering the invitation. He now needed urgent advice. “May I learn whether this procedure is in fact to be adopted? Lebanese Govt. are obviously anxious that some progress should be made towards settlement of these very long-outstanding liabilities, and whatever is the eventual disposal of the line, it seems inequitable that landowners should continue to be deprived of their money.”

What was going on here? Military infrastructure, unlike equipment, is hard to withdraw after the need for it has passed. This line had been built at some expense; in places land had been taken, in others land had in effect to be (re)claimed from the sea by building a ledge. There had been little urban land-take, but a certain amount of agricultural land had presumably been requisitioned to enable this line to be constructed at greatest possible speed. Now the possibility existed for the new Lebanese Government to ‘inherit’ a valuable public utility. Despite its somewhat parlous state of repair, it was a north-south main line along the coast with expensive viaducts and tunnels, that would almost certainly never have been built under peacetime conditions or with commercial considerations in mind.⁵⁴⁶ By 28. January 1946 Shone was pressing for an answer,⁵⁴⁷ as

⁵⁴² “.. le Gouvernement libanais ne désire en aucune façon que la ligne soit cédée à n’importe quelle société, mais entend la racheter lui-même comme c’est son droit strict. Si l’Administration libanaise estime ensuite devoir confier la gestion de cette entreprise de service public à une société, elle le fera sous un régime à déterminer conformément aux principes de droit public...”

⁵⁴³ PRO. FO 371/52478.

⁵⁴⁴ Beirut Telegram 1119; (ref. E 9839/849/88), FO Registry No. E 15/15/88.

⁵⁴⁵ No 608 of 19. August 1945.

⁵⁴⁶ Evidence for this is the simple fact that it had not been built until 1942 despite several pre-war schemes being drawn up.

⁵⁴⁷ Telegram No. 120, sent 29. January 1946 at 7.28am, received 9.25am. same day. i.e. allowing for time difference, almost instantaneously.

the Lebanese were pressing for a reply regarding the proposed Commission. The result was a "Theme Paper" giving some intriguing background, drawn up by an F.O. official, on what he terms the "Nakoura-Tripoli Railway" - the name is significant, because it demonstrates that as far as the F.O. were concerned, the issue was that section of the line outside Palestine territory, not the line as an operational entity.⁵⁴⁸ From his summary:

"The British Military Authorities built a railway from Haifa to Tripoli in 1941/2. The French had always wanted to build and own such a railway and we agreed at the time that they should have the option to purchase it when it was built.⁵⁴⁹ In due course an Option Agreement was drafted, but agreement could never be reached on the Article which was to provide for the conditions in which commercial use should be made of the railway.⁵⁵⁰ We never obtained the title to the land on which the railway is built and have therefore never paid compensation to the owners. Early in 1944 the French made a tentative offer to pay the landowners and buy the railway after the war at cost. By this time it was clear to us that the railway would be commercially valueless without Lebanese cooperation and we therefore turned down the French offer and proposed instead an Anglo-French approach to the Lebanese Govt. suggesting a Tripartite Agreement, omitting the disputed Article about commercial traffic but providing for the exploitation of the line by a private company with French participation. The French then held the matter up for about 18 months and it was only recently (Sept. 29. 1945), and under pressure from us, that joint proposals were made by the French Delegation General and H.M. Legation to the Lebanese Govt. The latter have now rejected these proposals, as we expected. We have always taken the view that we should now be free to dispose of the line as best we can and the W.O. are of course anxious to dispose of their interests before the departure of our troops."

The French had made some specific reservations; Their Ministry for Foreign Affairs had sent a Memorandum on 25. September agreeing finally to the forwarding of proposals for a Tripartite Agreement but "reserving entirely the right of option which the French Government continues to hold in this matter."⁵⁵¹ They had earlier sent a Note on 16. May regarding the rights of the D.H.P. Company, "and we promised to take count of this in communicating our proposals to the Lebanese Govt., while observing that the matter was primarily one for arrangement between the French and Lebanese Governments." The British did not want to get drawn into a spat between the former Colonial administrators and their former colonial subjects. The Memorandum continues that legal advisers had confirmed that "our legal obligations to the French would expire when we had once made a proposal to the Lebanese Govt., in the sense of the original arrangement we made with the French", and then, rather smugly, "We have not actually told the French Govt. in so many words that we proposed to dispose of the line should the Lebanese Govt. reject our joint approach, but it has been made fairly clear that this is the only reasonable solution." It appeared the British Embassy in Paris had sent a Note to the French Govt. on 12. September 1945, stating that if the draft Tripartite Option

⁵⁴⁸ We will see that this blinkered perception led to further problems for P.R. and its traffic.

⁵⁴⁹ It is unclear why such an agreement should have been made at a time when the railway was built purely to cement the occupation of territory conquered from French forces! Unless it was to ensure Free French cooperation and agreement to this campaign against Vichy French, at a time when the French fleet sat idly in Alexandria harbour. This agreement seems to have taken the form of a letter by Sir Horace Seymour to M. Dejean, on 19. November 1941.

⁵⁵⁰ This document has not been found - but it indicates a typical stubbornness in the French negotiations despite the weakness of their negotiating position - making demands regarding a line they did not own and had not built.

⁵⁵¹ Referring to the letter of November 1941.

Agreement were to be rejected, "H.M.G. would have to start thinking on other lines." No pun was clearly intended, but it does appear rather like a double-cross, an impression only reinforced by the conclusion - "The only further point to be settled is whether we should, for courtesy's sake, inform the French before we instruct Mr. Shone to negotiate the disposal of the line. I think that our standpoint has already been made sufficiently clear to them and that it will not be too much of a *fait accompli* if we simply go ahead and inform the French authorities that we are so doing." So the initial Lebanese prickliness had been misplaced - it was not a conspiracy of British and French against Lebanese interests that was occurring, but a three-handed and quite mutual intrigue. Shone, it appears, was not aware of most of this background, hence his questioning.

A further handwritten note from J. Thyne-Henderson on 8. February 1946 adds: "I cannot help feeling that our position will be stronger in future if we carry out this operation in two stages: 1). Send the despatch to Paris asking H.M. Ambassador to let us know when the message has been delivered, then, after about a week or ten days, when the French have had time to react, 2) send the telegram to Beirut." To which Maxted added piously "The French would have no cause for complaint, in view of the circumstances. But let us get off this despatch urgently, and hold up the telegram for a week as proposed."

In the meantime the War Office had naturally become involved as well, since this was a military asset. On 22. January 1946 they had written,⁵⁵² rather exasperatedly, to the Foreign Office noting that they had at last managed to secure a copy of the despatch dated 8. December from the Lebanese Govt. to the British Legation, stressing "We should now wish to sell the Railway to the Lebanese Government as it stands on the basis that they will acquire the land and take over all liabilities (e.g. for compensation, reinstatement etc.) in connection therewith and in addition pay us for the Railway." However "We understand you consider it necessary to inform the French Government of our proposed action; the exact form of this negotiation is a matter for your consideration, but if possible we would like it to be couched in such terms as would allow us to proceed with the Lebanese negotiations with little or no delay." The W.O. therefore diplomatically acknowledged the competency of the F.O. in this matter, but nevertheless urged speed, and warned "the Sale of this Railway will involve complicated and probably lengthy negotiations and we are very anxious to get them launched at the earliest possible moment. It is particularly desirable from our point of view to get the question settled well before we withdraw from the Lebanon."

This last point provided a perfect excuse for the F.O. The despatch discussed above was sent to Duff Cooper, Ambassador in Paris, for him to convey further.⁵⁵³ Blame for the refusal to sell to a French company was placed squarely on the Lebanese, it was now urgent to proceed with the negotiations, as "the British military authorities are in particular concerned to liquidate their interests in this line before the competent military and technical staff are withdrawn from the Levant States." Moreover "The situation has radically changed since the line was begun and it is manifestly impossible for the Government or Company to operate the line without the co-operation of the Government of the Lebanon, which is now a fully independent State and a member of the United Nations." The Colonial days in the Middle East were, it was politely implied, over for the French; Whether the British at this point realised that the same applied to them, is doubtful.

On 20. February 1946, thus fulfilling the policy discussed earlier, the

⁵⁵² 118/Abroad/4888. To R.G. Howe, from Kenneth Lyon.

⁵⁵³ No. 266. (E774/15/88) 11. February 1946.

appropriate telegram⁵⁵⁴ was sent from the F.O. to Beirut telling Shone that he “may now inform the Lebanese Govt. that we are prepared to enter into negotiations for the disposal of the Line on the basis that they take over H.M.G.’s liabilities in respect of compensation to land-owners.”

In the meantime the line was of course continuing to be operated by the Military. The C.-in-C. MEF had drawn up an Aide-Memoire for the War Office on 15. January 1946 - thus presumably prompting the approach of the latter to the F.O. - and copied to GHQ and to Shone in Beirut who had then copied it in turn to Ernest Bevin at the F.O. Whilst the document⁵⁵⁵ essentially summarised the position as already known, and Shone was at pains to point out that there were a few inaccuracies in it, it does add: “Approval to construction of the H.B.T. Rly. by the British Govt. was given by the French National Committee in October 1941, on the understanding that at the end of the war the Rly. might be disposed of to either:- a) The French Government or b) subject to agreement of French Govt., to a third party such as the Lebanese Govt. or D.H.P. Rly. Subsequent events, covering a period of virtually inconclusive negotiations from January 1942 to the present time, have served to emphasise the outstanding interest of the Lebanese Govt.”

The position now was:-

“(a). That the Lebanese Govt. alone are capable of giving titles in respect of the expropriated land on which the Rly. is built; (b). that any ultimate purchaser of the line may buy it only with the consent of the Lebanese Govt.; (c). that the D.H.P. Rly., under the terms of a concession granted by the Ottoman Govt. in 1913, were given the right to construct and operate a line to join the Syrian and Palestinian Rly. system, and have in effect a mortgage on the Lebanese section of the H.B.T.⁵⁵⁶ (d) that the Lebanese Govt. will not accept operation of the line by the D.H.P. Rly. for political reasons,⁵⁵⁷ and (e) that the W.D. must cease to operate the H.B.T. Rly. with British Rly. troops upon joint withdrawal of French and British Forces from the Levant States.”

In September 1944 a Lebanese “Decree 1948/k” had authorised registration of the land upon which the railway had been built “in the name of the British Secretary of State for War”, at the same time reserving to the Lebanese the rights to eventual exploitation of the line. The C.-in-C. noted: “owing to the ineffective legislative facilities of the Lebanon, registration has never in effect taken place, but following the request of the D.H.P. Rly. in July 1945 to be allowed to operate the H.B.T. Rly., the Lebanese Govt. drew the attention of H.M. Minister in Beirut to the reservations made in issuing the decree.” The Lebanese had then made two counter-proposals: Either that they should operate the railway themselves, guaranteeing to meet military requirement, or that the W.D. could continue to operate the line, but withdraw troops, and the Lebanese Govt. would provide the necessary labour.

The military interest in maintenance of the line as an operational entity was clear, albeit there was flexibility as to the identity of the operator so long as military needs were met. Whilst “disposal of the line to the Lebanese or their agreed nominees” remained the “ultimate goal”, it was possible to envisage provisional or temporary expedient solutions, to cover continuity of movement of military supplies from Iraq and

⁵⁵⁴ No. 151 to Beirut. (Copied as 392 to Paris, 208 to Cairo). Departmental No. 2.

⁵⁵⁵ Ref. MovTn (Org)/321/00/4.

⁵⁵⁶ This is one of the points, the accuracy of which Shone challenged.

⁵⁵⁷ The Damas-Hamas et Prolongements railway was based in Syria and owned by French interests. It had gained concessions in 1893 and opened the line Rayak-Aleppo by 1906, and Homs-Tripoli in 1911. It thus already operated to the northern end of the H.B.T. (Hughes p.61).

Syria to Palestine, Middle East security in general, and avoidance of the depreciation in value of the line that would occur were it to be left non-operational. The C.-in-C. put forward four possible means “by which the H.B.T. may be run as a military commitment pending final disposal”:

(a) That the D.H.P. Rly., should operate and maintain the line as Agents of the Army. “This is apparently impossible, although the best solution from other points of view.”⁵⁵⁸

(b). That the P.R. should operate and maintain the line as Agents of the Army. The difficulties associated with this were further discussed. (c). That the line be operated wholly by civilians under W.D. control; and (d). That the Lebanese Govt. take over operation as Agents for the Army. “At present impossible, as the Lebanese Govt. with their available resources are incapable of working the Railway.”⁵⁵⁹

He proposed option (c) as the “only positive project”. The process of “civilianisation” was already well under way - but “the Lebanese are averse to the employment of other than Lebanese nationals..... and naturally there are very few civilian recruits who are skilled in railway trades.”⁵⁶⁰ Nevertheless it was hoped to have this procedure of transfer of daily technical operations complete by July 1946.

The grounds for dismissing any P.R. involvement “even if the Palestine Rly. would accept this commitment and the Lebanese would accept operation by the Palestine Rly. as the W.D. nominee” make interesting reading. Firstly, “the line is commercially unsound, since civil traffic (under provision of the D.H.P. concession) is prohibited.” Presumably such operation of civilian traffic would not be prohibited to the D.H.P. itself or a subsidiary company, but it is noteworthy that ‘changed circumstances’ are cited in some contexts and not in others to justify amending or ignoring previous agreements. “The P.R. would have to raise charges on all traffic passing over the H.B.T. Rly. Some cash benefit would most certainly be required by the Lebanese Govt. in exchange for the concessions they might make. Any excess of income over operating costs would most certainly be kept by the P.R.; the more probable deficit would have to be met by the Army.” And yet, at present the Army was in any case meeting all costs. Further “The P.R. would be unable to use other than Lebanese on the Railway. Training of these personnel would inevitably fall upon the Army”. It is unclear where the problem lies here - the Army would have to train personnel under the other options as well, and indeed P.R. had ample facilities in Haifa or Qishon, not so far away, for some basic staff training in loco maintenance, shunting or signalling.⁵⁶¹

But there were two factors limiting the time available. It had been agreed that all Indian Railway Operating and Maintenance troops were to be withdrawn from the Middle East by the end of March 1946⁵⁶² - thus putting paid to Thyne-Henderson’s doodled idea - and “a general Franco-British withdrawal from the Lebanon is now under examination.” However, the paper concluded, “the final disposal of the line as a going

⁵⁵⁸ As noted, the D.H.P. already operated into Lebanon and could operate the H.B.T. as an extension of their Tripoli branch.

⁵⁵⁹ Thyne-Henderson had memo’d on 9. February, presumably in response to this point, “Surely we should persuade the Govt. of India or Indian Army to allow the secondment of Indian Rly. troops for sufficiently long to train Lebanese, leaving all responsibility, however, both operational and financial, for running the railway in the hands of the Lebanese Govt.” Clearly various options were being considered to reduce direct British involvement.

⁵⁶⁰ There would have been some used to working - under different rules and techniques - on the narrow gauge lines Beirut - Rayak and Beirut - Mameltein.

⁵⁶¹ Of course, until this point the line had operated under Military signalling rules. P.R. Operated a Railway School in Haifa.

⁵⁶² Further, this would leave a shortfall on railway troops in the Middle East overall - for example in Iraq - and certainly no reserves to take on new commitments.

concern is the thing that matters.”

The C.-in-C. Middle East, who was of course isolated from the internal musings of the W.O. and the F.O., sent a further telegram⁵⁶³ on 10. February 1946 declaring that issues of land liability were nothing to do either with the Transportation troops or the Palestine Railways, but suggesting that negotiations with P.R. be opened regarding sale of Transportation (Tn) assets excluding land. This would refer to track materials, signalling insofar as any existed,⁵⁶⁴ rolling stock, workshops equipment etc. Very firmly this issue - relating presumably only to the assets within Palestine - were to be separated from “parallel discussions in Lebanon. No such discussions yet authorised - await your policy decision on Nakoura-Tripoli section.” Once again a through route that only had any purpose as a through route was being deliberately sliced up and disposed of piecemeal, for political reasons. Although at the same time it was considered “in the interests of P.R. to encourage through traffic - conditions noted in memo of 15. November should ensure no prejudice to the sale of the Northern Section of line.” Here was a remarkable change - P.R. was being actively encouraged to develop civilian traffic, whereas earlier it had been stated that this would not be allowed.⁵⁶⁵

This telegram had itself been a response to a W.O. cipher despatch of 22. December 1945,⁵⁶⁶ regarding sale of the Haifa-Nakoura section; the W.O. response on 18. February⁵⁶⁷ confirmed this and indicated that the “Director of Hirings Disposals”⁵⁶⁸ would be charged with sale of both sections.

As a result of all this, ten days later on 28. February the W.O. informed the C.-in-C. MEF⁵⁶⁹ that he was authorised to open negotiations for the sale of the Nakoura-Tripoli Railway to the Lebanese Government. The basis of negotiations was to be that the Lebanese Govt. would acquire the land direct from owners as necessary, taking over all liabilities in respect of compensation, “and in addition pay us in cash for the railway as a going concern.” It appeared desirable that “transfer of ownership should if possible coincide with British withdrawal from Lebanon” - this aspect would require further consideration as it was at this point unclear if there would be a unilateral British or a joint Franco-British withdrawal, but “urgency will be appreciated in view of conversation now proceeding to prepare for evacuation of Lebanon as soon as possible.”

Negotiations began. Not all the details have been preserved in files available to us. By 9. August 1946 it was reported⁵⁷⁰ that Brigadier Hayes, having learned that the Lebanese Council of Ministers on 5. August had failed to take any firm decision on purchase, was proposing to set them a time limit to make up their minds, “and meanwhile to examine the prospect of piecemeal offers by other purchasers, which he considers likely.” Was this bluff? In view of earlier analyses, it seems unlikely that either P.R. or D.H.P. would be interested in purchase, and the only others entitled to purchase would be individual landowners, interested more in dismantling than in operating the line. It would of course require only one such, and the entire line would become worthless as a through route. GHQ considered it seemed probable that the Lebanese intention was “to wait until

⁵⁶³ Tn1/87134 Cipher.

⁵⁶⁴ The Military Railway Rule Book allowed for flags or lamps rather than fixed semaphores to be used, but there would be telephone equipment at and between Block Posts.

⁵⁶⁵ By 14. Sept. 1946 the C.-in-C. MEF was noting that the line was not suitable for civilian use and there would be little chance of profitable traffic! This might well have been a more realistic view.

⁵⁶⁶ Tn1/90531.

⁵⁶⁷ 0176/756 No. 97978. All in P.R.O. FO 371/52478.

⁵⁶⁸ Brigadier Hayes.

⁵⁶⁹ WO 118/Abroad/4888.

⁵⁷⁰ From GHQ Cairo to Beirut. Cypher No. 123.

we are obliged to abandon the railway on 30. September, when they hope to be able to acquire what remains without payment or for a small proportion of its value.”⁵⁷¹ Beirut was therefore urged to “bring all possible pressure to bear on them between now and 31. August.”

The Beirut office replied to Cairo on 16. August.⁵⁷² “The matter was taken up with the President of the Lebanese Republic yesterday. He said he would discuss it with his Cabinet and hoped to give us an answer on 19. or 20. August.” He maintained however that the price was altogether excessive - “in view of the probability that the President will formally demand a reduction in price, I should be grateful if I might be informed before 20. August what is the minimum we can accept.” The British Government had descended, willy-nilly, into Oriental haggling over an item of real estate whose freehold it did not own, but which it had constructed at enormous expense, and which it was going to have to abandon in any case. Or was it?

Cairo responded swiftly; On 17. August 1946⁵⁷³ Shone was informed that Hayes emphasised that the Lebanese were required to make a firm counter-offer if they found the offer unacceptable. “Proposal of a new and lower figure by ourselves would clearly be detrimental to our bargaining position.” So the haggling would be left to those expert in it, and Britain would stand firm and dignified, and await a formal counter-proposal.

File FO 371/52478 includes several internal handwritten memoranda, mostly with indecipherable signatures; these indicate some of the inner workings of the Department. Also on 17. August the W.O. had sent Brigadier Hayes in Cairo a stiff correction.⁵⁷⁴ Referring to a report of June 1946⁵⁷⁵ Hayes was advised that he had made a mathematical miscalculation, that from the estimated economic cost he gave of £2,513,000 he had deducted the cost of land as £500,000 twice, and this would “give the Lebanese Government the land free of charge”; the net total should therefore be £1,700,000 and not (repeat NOT!) £1,200,000. However - the British had not actually paid for the land! Someone else therefore commented “This seems off the rails - the Lebanese were to take over the responsibility for paying the expropriated landowners. Hence, presumably, the deduction. I am pointing this out to W.O. by telephone.”

The haggling continued. The next shot was a proposal by Lebanon to pay only scrap rates. A meeting in Cairo on 27. August 1946 had received a Despatch from Beirut, describing a meeting between the Lebanese Minister for Foreign Affairs and Mr. G. Young of the British Legation, at which the Lebanese Government offered “to purchase the Railway for whatever price we could obtain from a private purchase at salvage rates.” Young had told the Lebanese that this was a fantastic proposition and certain to be rejected, and had then informed Col. Lawton-Goodman, the Disposals Representative in Beirut, and Brigadier Hayes in Cairo. The Cairo meeting agreed that this Lebanese offer was absurdly low, and decided on the following immediate action:-

- a). That all rolling stock, mobile workshops and other moveable assets should be withdrawn immediately into Palestine, and
- b). that the General Staff should prepare a Paper covering the whole question of disposal of this railway, dealing in particular with its strategic value *in situ*. In addition “investigation was to be made into dismantling the permanent way and disposing of other fixed assets as salvage.” So - an extreme, scorched-earth policy of taking whatever could

⁵⁷¹ There are echoes here of the parallel events in Transjordan in 1948.

⁵⁷² Cypher Telegram No. 121.

⁵⁷³ Cypher Telegram No. 128.

⁵⁷⁴ Confidential 65389.

⁵⁷⁵ Not in file.

be unscrewed, lifted or rolled away was also being contemplated - a reversal of earlier considerations of maintaining the line as a going concern for military through traffic. It was hoped this would force the Lebanese' hands, for they would stand to gain nothing at all - not even the land, which would of course revert to the previous owners. The H.B.T. would be reduced to a strip of levelled but useless trackbed.

Other handwritten notes dated 5. September 1946 ask "if Beirut could be asked to provide a full report on the negotiations for the sale of the H.B.T. railway to Lebanese Govt. who wish to get railway in good condition at cut-throat price", and a response the next day that a letter would be sent "urgently by airbag to Chancery, Beirut", asking for a full report of the Legations's recommendations "which are long overdue." "The Lebanese are of course trying to squeeze us as we are leaving. I don't see why we should not resist to the best of our ability."

On 4. September the C.-in-C. MEF once more expressed his concern at the slow pace of developments. There was now less than a month to go until withdrawal. "The situation will greatly deteriorate unless satisfactory and firm agreement is reached before 30. Sept." Two especially important proposals were to "pursue possibilities of sale to Palestine or Turkish railways and/or private purchasers", and "Failing satisfactory firm agreement with Lebanese Govt., we should wish to consider removal of certain essential sections of the line to deny use of Railway to Lebanese for the longest possible period of time available." Though not stated, it would seem that blowing one of the major viaducts or one of the tunnels was in mind, rather than merely lifting a few rails.

On 12. September 1946 Young at Beirut contacted the MEF office in Cairo again.⁵⁷⁶ The Lebanese counter-offer was 3 Million Lebanese Pounds over a ten-year period. The Government reserved the right to buy as much of the rolling stock offered as would be necessary to exploit the railway, and would indemnify the land owners. What did H.M.G. make of this?

A scribbled memo noted caustically that "This is only about £400,000 Sterling and I see.... that we estimate the cost of the line as something in the nature of £1 1/2 Million Sterling." A Jordan Moss also memo'd to Williams on 14. September pointing out a further potential problem - "I assume you will bear in mind Lend-Lease aspect of proposed sale... of H.B.T. Rly. If we are to maintain attitude towards Americans that eventual sale of H.B.T. rolling stock to Palestine Govt. constitutes disposal within that Colony, we must scrupulously observe obligation which requires us to secure prior American consent to the sale of this equipment (or a part of it) to the Lebanese Govt."⁵⁷⁷

Lend-Lease was yet another unexpected and unwanted complication for those involved. It was true that, in the desperate days of wartime, the Allies had been grateful for any support on almost any terms, but now in the post-war world it was suddenly becoming clear how the interests of Britain and America were strongly divergent. And could this stock, which had been used interchangeably with British military and stock and the civilian stock of various administrations, continue to be so viewed? Could it be sold without the original owner's permission and, if so, to whom and on what terms? This was a matter which affected several areas of Asset Disposal.⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷⁶ Telegram 130.

⁵⁷⁷ Palestine was, of course, NOT a 'Colony', an aspect which appears to have been overlooked; and the indication is that the majority of the rolling stock currently in use was of U.S.A.T.C. origin, and special conditions applied. Whether this condition also applied to stock in Persia is not known.

⁵⁷⁸ For example, Persia, Iraq, Egypt, Syria; the sale of some W.D. locomotives and stock to Greece and to Turkey, direct or via UNRRA, was also not without complications.

On 14. September the C.-in-C. MEF in a Cipher Telegram⁵⁷⁹ to the W.O. summarised Brigadier Hayes' achievements to date - viz. the agreement to buy the line for 3M Lebanese Pounds over 10 years, plus appropriate rolling stock, plus an indemnity to the landowners, though it was cautiously noted that the "last clause was given orally - official confirmation promised." Further technicalities included agreement on an Exchange Rate and payment of "a small rate of interest" on the balance due.⁵⁸⁰ But it was clear that the military, at least, were looking forwards. It was considered that were the line simply to be packed up and sold, a revenue of £E145,000 or £E165,000 would be feasible - though were the materials to be sold in Lebanon, other than to the Government, there would be a 15% Customs levy. However, rent of £E350,000 would then need to be paid, leaving a Deficit of £E248,000 including the Customs! i.e. It would cost a lot more to take the line away than to leave it. At least there was no Lend-Lease complication with the permanent way. And it was considered that "the Line as constructed is not eminently suitable for civilian use and will require considerable realignment before it can be used for this purpose. The present insufficiency of goods and passenger traffic ...[makes] ..running of line a doubtful proposition for the foreseeable future." In the circumstances it was recommended that the Lebanese offer be accepted as a minimum. It appeared that the line, built at such great cost and effort, was becoming a financial millstone - it would cost more to abandon it than to sell it, yet it would be hard to sell it for anything like a reasonable price..... and hard for any purchaser to make a profit whatever happened.

Topics for a future meeting with the Lebanese Government were to include reservation of the British right to stipulate the quantity of rolling stock to be included in the deal, maintenance of the line as standard-gauge, and "the W.D. to be granted if possible facilities in future use of railway for any military requirements which may arise at any time."

This last rang warning bells in Whitehall. The Foreign Office informed Beirut⁵⁸¹ that the War Office had been advised:

- a). The Lebanese Government are hardly likely to accept this suggestion;
- b). The suggestion had important political implications, which should in any case be considered further. It was moreover a Treaty matter and not one for insertion in a sale contract.

The W.O.⁵⁸² considered the Lebanese offer as "extremely low" and suggested an endeavour "to increase to at least £500,000 Sterling."⁵⁸³ However, not unnaturally they approved the idea of securing "an undertaking by Lebanese Government for future use of the line by British Govt."

The 'Fixed Assets Disposals Committee' met on 19. September 1946. This brought together representatives of the Military Transportation and Quartermaster Directorates, the Foreign Office, Treasury and others, and was chaired by Major-General Cole. Sole item on the agenda was consideration of the Lebanese offer. Brigadier

⁵⁷⁹ E9270 of 18. Sept. 1946.

⁵⁸⁰ No details are given.

⁵⁸¹ Cypher telegram E 9270/15/88.

⁵⁸² Cipher Telegram 118/Abd/4888, Desp. 19. Sept. 1946.

⁵⁸³ An interesting comparison: "The F.O. announced on 7. October 1946 that Siam had purchased from the British Government for GBP1,250,000 that part of the Burma-Siam Railway in Siamese territory..... built during the war by the Japanese with Allied POW's and conscripted civilian labour, whose construction cost the lives of some 16,000 British and Allied prisoners..." (Source: 'Keesing Contemporary Archives' 1946, p.8191). From this one sees that similar negotiations were under way in other parts of the world, with much more 'satisfactory' outcomes - the irony being that in Siam the British were selling a line they had neither planned nor built, albeit many of their soldiers had suffered and died in the construction.

Simner (D.D. Tn.(O).) commented that “the Railway was not a very practicable proposition for civilian use, owing to the fact that it had many sharp curves and heavy gradients, and probably from a working point of view the railways in Lebanon should run east to west and not north to south as this one does.”⁵⁸⁴ Mr. L. Petch of the Treasury insisted that only such rolling stock as “we considered should be included” ought to be so included in any sale, and reminded the meeting to remind Brig. Hayes concerning the possible Lease-Lend restrictions on sale of some of the stock. Simner felt that, were all stock to be withdrawn and not sold, the Lebanese would simply be able to give Palestine and Turkish Railways running-rights over the Lebanese section.⁵⁸⁵

Cole pointed out that “the only likely alternative, if we did not sell to the Lebanese Government, is for the line to be pulled up and sold as scrap. In this event we should be faced with paying an amount of 15% for customs duty, and that after paying rent and compensation to the landowners there would be a considerable deficit balance.” In other words, Something was better than Less-than-Nothing. It was clear which way the meeting was being steered. Petch, however, saw a possible problem in the spreading of payments over ten years, and considered the Chancellor of the Exchequer was unlikely to authorise anything longer than five years. Cole accepted this, but emphasised that the 30. September - barely three weeks hence - was the date arranged for the evacuation of all troops in Lebanon, and “it was most desirable that the negotiations should reach a final stage on or about this date.” Dalton added that “it would be quite impossible to guard the railway after 30. September,” and Simner noted that “it was quite impracticable for any part of it to be removed now except under contract with a Lebanese contractor, which would obviously be undesirable” - i.e. it was too late for Royal Engineers to remove the rails and sleepers, so the demolition option should be discarded. Dalton considered that the General Staff would in all likelihood “wish to retain the railway as a going concern for possible future use, although this would be desirable only but probably not absolutely essential.” It would be impossible to force the Lebanese to agree to maintain the railway in good condition once it had become their property, and it was agreed that such a condition “was hardly that of one of sale, but should be dealt with rather as a condition of treaty.”

The looming deadline served to concentrate minds on a speedy solution. It was proposed and agreed that Hayes be informed forthwith that the price of about £340,000 currently offered was considered to be too low, but that a figure of about £500,000 would be acceptable, if he could in some way raise the Lebanese offer to the latter figure. “Any agreement will be subject to the Lebanese Govt. being responsible for all the claims in respect of expropriation of land, and the Minister should be requested to try and obtain an undertaking that the railway be kept in good order.”

The F.O. subsequently reconsidered the implication of this latter condition, and considered it to be unrealistic. In a later typed addition to the Minutes of this meeting they requested that it be recorded that the Lebanese Government were very likely to reject this condition, it was in any case a matter which should form the subject of a separate agreement, and that they could visualise difficulties within the Lebanese Government were such a condition to be part of the sale, possibly jeopardising a vote on

⁵⁸⁴ This is a bizarre comment. Firstly, it implies that no railway with curves or gradients is practicable - neglecting the large number of such railways around the world! Secondly, Lebanon is geographically an oblong oriented north-south, with a thin coastal strip paralleled by mountain ranges. It is unclear why Simner, an experienced railway engineer and builder, should say this, unless he was hoping thereby to influence the Treasury representatives and others to settle for a lower price and conclude the entire business quickly, without further fuss.

⁵⁸⁵ Therefore they would not need any stock of their own.

payment of the purchase price.

Two days later, on 21. Sept. 1946 (a Saturday!) GHQ ME sent an 'Immediate' Telegram⁵⁸⁶ to the Cabinet Offices, urging speed. The conditions they hoped for were the same as previously outlined; If payment was to be by instalments, then they recommended a small rate of interest, exchange guarantee, annual fixed instalments, the first payable on 1. January 1947. More urgent however was the request for "authority to sell required in time to enable final negotiations to begin on 23. September (i.e. the following Monday), and "If authority not received in time for sale to be completed by 30. September, necessary that authority be given for Tn. care-and-maintenance party of 2 Officers and 17 Other Ranks to return to Lebanon after that date."⁵⁸⁷

With just a week to go to deadline, it is clear that some hurried consultations must have taken place. On 30. September the Beirut office sent Brigadier Hayes in Cairo a cypher telegram, informing him that "The Lebanese Govt. have orally agreed to accept our terms for sale of railways except for exchange guarantee which they say is superfluous."

This was the last sticking point. Cairo told the Foreign Office in London⁵⁸⁸ that "the Lebanese state such guarantee is superfluous since under Anglo-French-Syrian-Lebanese Agreement signed 8. February 1944 no modification of exchange-rates is possible without previous consultation by all four governments." Further, "Lebanese also decline to pay interest and propose to make the number of annual instalments the subject of further representations. They have stated that they would agree to payment by annual instalments over five years, provided that a clause were inserted in the Agreement to the effect that, if they were faced with unforeseen financial difficulties payment might be further extended..." This does seem rather remarkable, but it is clear the Lebanese knew that they had already got most of what they wanted and that the British were in no position to argue - and nor were they inclined to do so. An anonymous Memo on a Foreign Office Minute sheet⁵⁸⁹ reads: "All to the good; from the political point of view, the sooner we get shut of this Rly. the better."

Nevertheless, British resistance had a few final gasps. On 10. October 1946 Hayes in Cairo was informed that he should insist on the sale price to be fixed in Sterling - the February 1944 agreement provided indeed for consultation but was no guarantee against a loss in terms of Sterling. It was accepted that "payment of interest on outstanding balances need not be pressed" but he should resist inclusion of any clause for extension of the period of payment.

Hayes wrote⁵⁹⁰ - it appears that the telegrams may have crossed *en route* - that the President of the Lebanese Republic at the Legation in Beirut had agreed orally - this was stressed - to pay 5 Million Lebanese Pounds for the line, excluding rolling stock; all liabilities for indemnification of landowners would be accepted and, significantly, had no objection to the British Government being granted facilities for future use of the line, which would remain standard-gauge.⁵⁹¹ Payment would follow over five years. The

⁵⁸⁶ IZ 4183 of 26. Sept. 1946.

⁵⁸⁷ This would mean returning a small party of military servicemen to Lebanon after the date set for the total withdrawal. On 1. October 1946 "The British Legation announced formally the complete military evacuation of the Lebanon with the departure today of the British Army Liquidation staff, which has gone to Egypt." ('Palestine Post' 2. Oct. 1946 p.4.)

⁵⁸⁸ Telegram No. 153; 3. Oct. 1946.

⁵⁸⁹ E 9859/15/88.

⁵⁹⁰ Secret / Immediate 64589/FAD. Marked received 4. Oct. or 8. Oct. 1946

⁵⁹¹ Another fear had been that the Lebanese might convert the line to the 1.05cm.-gauge of the Beirut-Damascus railway, to create one operational unit. For internal purposes, and bearing in mind the

Lease-Lend position of rolling stock had been considered, and the F.O. was requested to “send authority to draw up agreement on above terms.”

A further meeting of the Disposals Committee was summoned for Tuesday 8. October; On that day the War Office informed Hayes⁵⁹² that they agreed essentially with the majority of his points. However, insistence was still made, in the absence of an exchange guarantee, on a fixed price in Sterling, and a cash payment for any rolling stock which was to be sold.

The Fixed Assets Disposals Committee duly met; All members had received and read the outlines of the Lebanese offer. The Chairman, Major-General Cole, asked the estimated value of the cost of expropriation of the land, and Colonel Robertson informed the meeting that this was about £500,000. In these circumstances, “the meeting considered the cash offer of five million Lebanese pounds (about £565,000 sterling) ... and unanimously agreed that, taking this in conjunction with the saving on the cost of land expropriation, the price offered was satisfactory and should be accepted.” Face had been saved all round by the simple expedient of factoring in assumed land costs, thus doubling the financial benefit to the vendor.

For the rest, the Treasury preferred a maximum of five years for payment, and the Transportation Dept. should decide what rolling stock was to be transferred, and fix a sale price, this to be kept separate from the line sale price, and if possible to be met in cash.

Later scribbled Memos indicate (6. November) that the F.O. considered there to be a real danger that “local parliamentary opposition may lead to a complete breakdown and we shall be left with an inoperable railway” and (9. Nov.) that the Treasury had agreed to drop the Exchange Guarantee question.

The problem of the Lebanese internal political situation was a new factor which threatened to disturb the peaceful solution of the negotiations. The Memo above was clearly predicated on a telegram⁵⁹³ from the British Middle East Office in Cairo on 5. November 1946 which, while accepting disappointment that not all aims had been achieved, warned that Brigadier Hayes felt that “Lebanese Government has gone as far as it can or dare to go in face of local opposition both public and governmental, and that rejection would mean complete and final breakdown of negotiations with the Government” and concluded “In view of the above we strongly recommend immediate acceptance of agreement as it stands. We understand that local opposition mentioned above is increasingly active.”

The exact nature of the opposition is not made clear in the documents available in this file, but can be deduced from certain comments. The GHQ MEF warned the War Office on 5. Nov. that the final Lebanese offer, following further talks, provided for payment of the 5M. Lebanese Pounds over seven years, starting 1. March 1947; they would take over the line “as *in situ* on 31. Oct. 1946; W.D. not responsible for condition of line or material but will return material removed for safe keeping”;⁵⁹⁴ The Lebanese Govt. had the faculty to purchase rolling stock “to be paid for on delivery in accordance with schedule prepared by Tn. to be attached to agreement”; and, significantly, “The clause re. future use of the line is expunged. Agree that this will be settled by an

curvature and gradients, this would not have been unreasonable, but would ruin the chances of through traffic to adjoining systems.

⁵⁹² Secret 69382.

⁵⁹³ No. 164 REMAC, despatched 5. Nov. 6pm.

⁵⁹⁴ This is not specified, but probably included signalling equipment and copper wire, and maybe machinery from the locomotive depot..

exchange of letters. The clause re. maintenance of line as standard-gauge expunged as it raises political issues. Tacit understanding that it will not be altered.” Regarding Exchange Guarantees and other matters, it was “confirmed with Legation that in view of local political situation no further pressure would induce them to modify their attitudes. Indeed President has gone as far as he can to meet us against powerful local parliamentary and press opposition.”

The Legation also sent a telegram⁵⁹⁵ suggesting that local currency could be accepted after all, and absorbed in various ways into the local budget of the Legation - including purchase of premises, costs for the Consulate in Aleppo, etc. This idea had also been expressed by the W.O. to Hayes,⁵⁹⁶ when a Treasury telegram of 25. October was quoted - “Regret confusion. We are resigned to accepting Lebanese (repeat Lebanese) Pounds which we shall endeavour to use to meet Legation expenses and other local expenditure in the future.”⁵⁹⁷

What were the potential problems that prevented further progress on the issue of use of the line by the British in the future? Seymour of the War Office wanted to know what the F.O. was going to do about ensuring British access for the future. J.G.S. Beith of the F.O. on 13. November minuted his own thoughts on the problem of making new political arrangements: “a). We risk the possibility of a rebuff; b). The Soviets may get hold of it and distort the facts to prove that we are maintaining a strategic network in independent countries of the Middle East; and c). Ill-disposed elements in France might claim that we were building up our position in the Lebanon when they have had to withdraw entirely themselves.” So the issues were threefold - local, the Russians and the French. He considered that the War Office should be asked once more exactly how important the strategic considerations surrounding this line were, and only if they were considered supremely important would it be worth taking the risk of pressing the Lebanese further.

A result of these musings was a letter of 27. November 1946 from the F.O. to the W.O.,⁵⁹⁸ informing Seymour that his cause was now hopeless. “I am afraid that we are reluctant to pursue it on account of the political considerations involved. In the first place, we think it most improbable that the Lebanese Government, who are naturally jealous of their newly-won independence and who are constantly under pressure by Opposition elements not to give any privileges to foreigners, either could or would consent. Again, the French are still suspicious of our intentions in the Levant States, and would be likely to take the strongest exception to any attempt on our part to obtain privileges for our forces in a country from which they have only recently been compelled to withdraw their own. And finally, if the Soviets were to hear of our having concluded any such agreement with the Lebanese, they could hardly fail to exploit the situation in every possible way.....”

There was now a pause - a dangerous pause. Although it appeared that the agreement for sale of the H.B.T. had been signed on 20. November, an F.O. Minute⁵⁹⁹ of

⁵⁹⁵ No. 872 of 9. Nov. 1946.

⁵⁹⁶ Secret 71184, 1. Nov. 1946.

⁵⁹⁷ It remains unclear why, on some occasions, answers seem swift and well-informed, and on others, the various parties appear to be in ignorance of simultaneous developments in other office, departments or legations.

⁵⁹⁸ E.11088/15/88. To Col. G. Seymour, I. of L. (Disposals), War Office. 27. November 1946. On reading, one has to remind oneself that until some 18 months previous, the USSR, France and Britain had all theoretically been on the same side..... But the world had changed substantially in that time.

⁵⁹⁹ Sheet numbered simply E11455.

3. December⁶⁰⁰ noted that “although Brig. Hayes has reported that ratification of the sale of this railway by the Lebanese Chamber of Deputies is promised for early December, these matters usually take a long time. There is a danger that the Government which concluded the agreement may fall, and that we shall be indefinitely out of our money.” Accordingly the Legation in Beirut was to be urged to “press this question and secure early ratification.” This was done by a telegram from the Eastern Desk on 4. December.⁶⁰¹ By 23. December 1946 it appeared no news of ratification had yet been received.⁶⁰²

No more information is available to us. However, it was reported⁶⁰³ that the Lebanese Premier, M. Saadi Munlah, resigned on 7. December 1946 “following allegations by the opposition parties of irregularities in the distribution of funds, benefiting Government supporters.” His predecessor, M. Riad es-Solh, was asked by the President to form a new Government whose personnel was announced on 15. December.

In the meantime there had been political turmoil in Syria also. On 24. December 1946 M. Quatly, President of Syria, had asked M. Jamil Mardam to form a new Cabinet.⁶⁰⁴ This was announced on 28. December 1946.

CONCLUSION.

From the information available to us it is unclear what, if anything, was ever paid for this railway line and its infrastructure. It seems the Lebanese Government was persuaded through negotiations to raise their offer of purchase from 3M to 5M Lebanese Pounds (thus explaining Hughes’ assertion of this sum at the outset, though he omitted the vital adjective), that the options of demolition were discarded as impracticable, that no rolling-stock of either W.D. or U.S.A.T.C. origin was in the end ever sold to the Lebanese, and that as time went by all British parties concerned - the War Office, the Foreign Office, the Treasury - gradually resigned themselves to, in effect, writing-off totally this asset, which was now of dubious strategic and economic value and which would in any case have to be abandoned as it lay on the territory of a newly-independent state.⁶⁰⁵ Palestine Railways slowly but inexorably lost its window to the north, and

⁶⁰⁰ Probably by Beith.

⁶⁰¹ Typescript Draft preserved (with handwritten amendments) as sheet E 11455/15/18.

⁶⁰² Secret 75180, War Office to C.-in-C. MELF.

⁶⁰³ Source: ‘Keesing’s Contemporary Archive’, p. 8367.B. 11-18. January 1947: ‘Lebanon. New Cabinet.’

⁶⁰⁴ ‘Keesing Contemporary Archive’ p.8341D. prev. ref. 7464D.

⁶⁰⁵ First reference in the Palestine press was: “Lebanon to Buy Tripoli Railway”. Beirut, A.N.A. “The Lebanon will probably buy the Nakoura-Tripoli railway, built during the war, from Britain for 5 Million Lebanese pounds to be paid in several annual instalments. After hearing a recommendation from the Foreign Minister, the Finance Sub-Committee of the Chamber approved the agreement to purchase the line. The matter now comes before the Chamber. The Minister explained that the Govt. will not operate the railway itself, but hand it over to a national company.” (‘Palestine Post’ 16. January 1947. p.1).

However, two days later it was announced that the line was not yet sold! “Matters relating to the Ras el Nakura-Tripoli Line, the Hedjaz Railway, Haifa Port and the development of Palestine Railways were discussed at a press conference held here by Mr. J. H. Dunn, Publicity Officer of the Ports & Railways,” (19. January) at Tel Aviv. “Mr. J.C. Thetford, Acting Public Information Officer, was present. As far as he knew, said Mr. Dunn, negotiations on the ownership of the Ras el Nakura-Tripoli line, built by the military during the war, were still in progress between the British Disposals Mission and the Lebanese Government. The Palestine section of the line was the subject of discussions between the Palestine Govt. and the War Ministry... although the P.R. were already using the Acre-Nahariyya track “under a working arrangement”. (‘Palestine Post’ 20. January 1947 p.3.)

On the other hand, one cannot take at face value all that appeared in the press. On 9. June 1947 the same newspaper (p.1.) carried a report from Beirut that “The Tripoli-Nakoura railway line, bought by the

Nahariya became henceforth the effective terminus of any real traffic north of Haifa.⁶⁰⁶

Lebanese Government from the British Military authorities for £5,000,000, will be operated officially as from today, [Sunday 8. June.]. Trains carrying goods and passengers will operate daily between Tripoli, Beirut, Haifa and Cairo.”

And: “As from August 1st. additional trains will be run on the Cairo-Beirut line, to cope with the holiday traffic to the Lebanon.” (‘Palestine Post’ 28. July 1947 p.3. There is no evidence of any regular through traffic, although Kirby travelled this way in the P.R. Special Saloon to the M.E. Railways Conference in Istanbul in October 1947. No timetables, photographs or tickets are known, nor is there any record of where locomotives would have been exchanged or which stock would have been used. However, at this, the third Middle East Railways Conference, at which Kirby presided, it was agreed that “as soon as conditions in Palestine permit”, sleeping-car services would be inaugurated between Istanbul and Egypt.. The conference was attended by representatives of the Turkish, Palestine, Lebanese, Syrian and Iraqi railways - The Egyptians were not represented because of the current cholera epidemic. It was also agreed that the Palestine Railways would join the northern systems in the Simplon-Orient Express and Taurus Express conferences, governing the through-booking of passengers. As soon as conditions "become more propitious" it was decided all Middle East railways would enter into similar arrangements for the through-booking of merchandise traffic in Europe. (‘Palestine Post’ 3. November 1947 p.3.)

⁶⁰⁶ Some I.R. freight traffic to Azzib/Betzet continued until the early 1990’s.

CHAPTER 7.

DISPOSAL OF THE "SINAI MILITARY RAILWAY".

7:(A). INTRODUCTION.

It was the fate of the Palestine Railways that all three of its eventual links with the outside world were not really under its control. The Haifa-Beirut-Tripoli line to the North remained under military ownership until this was partially transferred to a separate state - Lebanon; the Hedjaz Railway line to Dera'a via Samakh to the East was technically a "Waqf"; and the main link with the South was also - although operated by P.R. - owned or influenced by a combination of military and governmental agencies. The disposition of all three led to a great deal of uncertainty. We treat them here separately.

The Sinai has always been a form of 'buffer zone' between Egypt and Palestine, perceived as either a 'neutral area' between the two or as an integral part of one or the other. The Bible refers to the river at El Arish as a natural southern border of what became known as Palestine,⁶⁰⁷ but the construction of the Suez Canal created a form of caesura, a new non-natural barrier, so that psychologically and operationally, if not politically, anything East of the Canal became somehow separated from Egypt itself.

The railway line between Kantara East, on the East bank of the Suez Canal, across the northern Sinai Peninsula and - at Rafah - crossing the border of Palestine, was an anomaly, but a vital one. In the circumstances surrounding the period in question, this anomaly caused a great deal of confusion. The significance of this line lies also in the fact that it formed a part of the 'backbone' of the later P.R. system, and therefore its origins and history before the 1940's deserve close consideration.

7:(B). HISTORY.

The line was built for military supply purposes, in great haste, employing whatever materials were available. Construction began after a failed Turkish attempt to breach the Suez Canal defences and cross to the Egyptian side, in February 1915. Initially Kitchener proposed improved defences on the East bank of the Canal, but then Sir Archibald Murray, commander of the new Egyptian Expeditionary Force from 19. March 1916, ordered an advance across the Sinai to engage the Turks.⁶⁰⁸ Materials were brought from Egypt and Britain and a standard-gauge line laid along a route that roughly followed that of the ancient "Via Maris"⁶⁰⁹ along the coast - theoretically under the protection of British naval guns. As Cotterell notes: "It is apparent that Murray had made the right decision when choosing a standard-gauge line; Wavell was to write that it was Murray's 'foresight in basing the advance from the first on so broad a foundation as the standard-gauge railway... which made possible the subsequent drive of the army up to and beyond the gates of Aleppo'."⁶¹⁰ In fact Murray was careful never to let his advance through Sinai outstrip the rate of railway construction - after fruitless Turkish resistance

⁶⁰⁷ e.g. Joshua 15:5 refers to "the river of Egypt", though there is doubt as to the exact meaning of this verse.

⁶⁰⁸ Britain and Turkey had been at war since 5. November 1914, three months after the outbreak of hostilities in Europe. (Cotterell p. 14f.)

⁶⁰⁹ "The Way of the Sea", an ancient route for travellers and traders between Syria and Egypt.

⁶¹⁰ op. cit. p. 17. This point is stressed here because the entire future of the railway system in Palestine became dependent on the gauge of this initial link from Egypt. Had a different gauge been chosen the later use of stock from different systems, or through running to Cairo, or the connection with Syria through Lebanon, would not have been possible in the forms eventually used.

at Romani on 4. August 1916, construction proceeded in steady fashion, El Arish being reached in January 1917. Following unsuccessful assaults on Turkish defences at Gaza in March and April 1917 a branch line was begun in the direction of Beersheba,⁶¹¹ and Murray was replaced by General Sir Edmund Allenby on 27. June 1917.⁶¹² In July the doubling of the line from Kantara was authorised, to increase capacity.

The Third Battle of Gaza was fought in the first week of November 1917, and following the Turkish defeat and retreat the railway was pushed northwards to Deir Seneid by 28. November 1917. On 13. November the British captured the “Junction Station”.⁶¹³ The standard-gauge line was continued in a north-easterly direction to join with the Turkish line(s)⁶¹⁴ at Lydda.

Thence it ran parallel to, or on the same trackbed, as the Turkish military line of 1.05cm.-gauge that had been built southwards from Massudiyyeh, on the Afulah-Jenin-Nablus line, down the valley to Tulkarm and thence southwards along the coastal plain (but well inland to avoid the British naval threat), through Lydda. From Tulkarm the British line swung back north-westwards towards the coast which it then followed from Atlit and round the Carmel range to Haifa.

Thus the “P.R. Main Line” displays on the map the hybrid characteristics of a route which follows the coast roughly eastwards from near Romani to Gaza, then heads inland roughly northwards through Lydda, Tulkarm and Hadera, and returns to the coast for the final run to Haifa. This explains why the major port and traffic centre of Jaffa/Tel Aviv and the later settlements along the coast remained unserved.

The double track was necessary for war-time traffic, but this capacity was naturally not required for peacetime traffic and it was later lifted.

7:(C). GEOGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTION.

There was, for most of the line’s history, no physical connection to the E.S.R. system or the line at Kantara West. Instead, Kantara East was laid out as a (substantial) terminal station; the swing bridges built during First and Second World Wars were at El Ferdan, some little way south, and reached by a spur. Another spur led to a ferry berth at the Canal Bank, and here wagons could be shunted onto what was effectively a bridge girder mounted on a steam-driven pontoon, for transfer across the Canal to similar sidings where an E.S.R. locomotive would shunt the wagons off. The Suez Canal Company was naturally opposed to any traffic or structure that might hinder their own traffic.

During 1941-2 a new line was constructed southwards along the east bank of the Canal to El Shatt; a new swing bridge was erected (the exigencies of war and increased traffic overcoming any doubts as to the commercial necessity, or the objections of the Canal authorities), and the size of the engine depot was increased. In addition a wharf for unloading military traffic was constructed at El Kantara, on the east bank, accessed by a

⁶¹¹ Cotterell p. 20. The aim was to outflank the Turkish defences at Gaza; Beersheba fell at the end of October and the line reached Beersheba finally on 3. May 1918. For completeness’ sake it can be noted here that this branch of 59.5 km. withered away post-war and was closed in 1928.

⁶¹² Cotterell pp. 18f.

⁶¹³ The “Junction” being between the former Jaffa - Jerusalem line, built to metre-gauge in 1892 but converted in 1915 to 1.05cm.-gauge, and the line the Turks had built - to 1.05cm.-gauge - southwards to Beersheba and into the Sinai desert at El Auja to support their campaign. As such it was strategically vital for the Turkish southern front. This station is later referred to as Wadi Surar and Nahal Soreq.

⁶¹⁴ The Jaffa-Jerusalem line of metre-gauge had been joined in 1915 by a 1.05cm. line from the north, from Massoudiyyeh. The Lydda-Jaffa section was then lifted to provide track materials for further extensions. The British station of 1917 was approximately a kilometre to the south-west of the Turkish one of 1892 but the line then proceeded northwards.

siding which was operated by P.R. rather than the military.⁶¹⁵

Although the line was built from Kantara, for railway operating purposes once P.R. was established the kilometrage was calculated in the other direction, from Haifa.⁶¹⁶

Water Supply was a major issue. Water was plentiful in Palestine, even at Gaza, but “in the Sinai section the supply has always been inadequate, even for the restricted service in peace-time. There is no suitable water between El Arish and Kantara, and special water-trains have had to be run from Kantara to Mazar, a distance of just over 70 miles, to fill the water-tanks at this station. Under war-time conditions, with many more trains running, this is a costly operation.” By January 1943 a new plan was to be in operation. This comprised the erection of a water-softening plant and 14 new tanks at El Arish, from which locomotives would be able to fill their own tenders for use between Mazar and Kantara, and from which they would also take an additional 30-Ton water-tank load, half to be used for the journey to Mazar and half to be picked up for the return journey from Mazar to El Arish. The reserve storage tanks at Mazar were to be kept filled but only for emergency use.

The line⁶¹⁷ was by now single track, ‘ballasted’ almost entirely only with sand,⁶¹⁸ Flat-bottom rails of 75lb. per yard were laid on wooden sleepers. Maximum speed for this section was 43 m.p.h. for passenger and 31 m.p.h. for goods.

The route is described in detail in the 1942 Geographical Handbook⁶¹⁹ as follows - the asterisks indicate loops laid since 1939, i.e. to cope with the expansion in military traffic:

Km. 212.5. RAFA.	(13 km. to next loop.) 3 Passing Loops; Turning Triangle; Marshalling Yard. The village is about 2 miles north of the station on the Palestine side of the border. The continuation of the line is known as the Sinai Railway.
c. Km. 225.5. SHEIKH ZOWAID.*	(11 km. to next loop.) 1 Passing Loop.
c. Km. 236.5. KABR AMEIR.*	(11 km. to next loop.) 1 Passing Loop.
c. Km. 247.5. GERADI.*	(11 km. to next loop.) 1 Passing Loop.
Km. 258.6. Steel bridge over Wadi El Arish, length 160 m., 10 steel girders on pillars.	
Km. 258.7. EL ARISH.	(11 km. to next loop.). 2 Passing Loops; Water-Softening Plant; 2 Sidings.
c. Km. 269.7. BARDAWIL.*	(11 km. to next loop.) 1 Passing Loop.
c. Km. 280.7. EL MIDAN.*	(11 km. to next loop.) 1 Passing Loop.
c. Km. 291.7. ZEBRIKA.*	(9 km. to next loop.) 1 Passing Loop.
Km. 300.7. MAZAR.	(11 km. to next loop.) 1 Passing Loops; Water (Tank, 14,000 gallons; Water Facilities Unreliable. Reservoir 80,000 gallons filled by water-trains from Kantara. 2 Water columns. Siding.
c. Km. 311.2. EL TILLUL.*	(11 km. to next loop.) 1 Passing Loop.

⁶¹⁵ This was known as “Kilo 40”.

⁶¹⁶ The “0” Kilometre post is still standing opposite the signal box at the south end of Haifa East station.

⁶¹⁷ Handbook B.R. 514 p. 352.

⁶¹⁸ i.e. no actual stone ballast at all. Ballast is important for drainage and to provide a flexible base for the track.

⁶¹⁹ Handbook ‘B.R. 514’ pp. 356f. The abbreviations used in the book are here replaced with full text.

- Km. 321.8. MISFAK. (8 km. to next loop.) 1 Passing Loop.
 c. Km. 329.7. SALMANAH. * (8 km. to next loop.) 1 Passing Loop.
 Km. 337.4. BIR EL ABD. (12 km. to next loop.) 2 Passing Loops.
 c. Km. 349.4. EL KHIRBA.* (12 km. to next loop.) 1 Passing Loop.
 c. Km. 361.4. RABAA.* (11 km. to next loop.) 1 Passing Loop.
 Km. 372.5. ROMANEH.⁶²⁰ (9 km. to next loop.) 2 Passing Loops.
 c. Km. 381.5. PALUZEH.* (10 km. to next loop.) 1 Passing Loop.
 c. Km. 391.5. TELL EL HEIR.* (8 km. to next loop.) 1 Passing Loop.
 c. Km. 399.5. GILBANEH.* (15 km. to next loop.) 1 Passing Loop.
 Km. 414.1. KANTARA EAST. 1 Passing Loop. Water (Tanks 70,000 galls;
 Reliable; reservoir 600,000 galls; filtered and pumped from Sweet-Water
 Canal;
 6 water columns; Fuel; Passenger Platform, Goods Platform;
 End-Loading Ramp; Repair Shops; Engine Shed for 6 locomotives;
 Turning Triangle; Marshalling Yard (11 roads.)
-

It will be noted that, prior to 1939, loops were available only at Rafa (km. 212.5), El Arish (km. 258.7), Mazar (km. 300.7), Misfak (km. 321.8), Bir el Abd (km. 337.4) and Romaneh (km. 372.5.) Following the construction of no fewer than thirteen new crossing stations, mainly at approx. 11-kilometre intervals, the longest section of single track was now that between Gilbaneh and Kantara East at 15 km.⁶²¹

The 1942-46 P. R. Report⁶²² gives a different account, which presumably postdates the compilation of the Naval Intelligence Handbook: “During 1941 the capacity of the Lydda-Kantara line was increased by the opening of the undermentioned crossing stations:

Isdud, Deir Suneid, Balah, Gabr Amir, Midan, Missfak, El Negilah, El Burg.⁶²³

This increase of capacity was not, however, sufficient for the anticipated requirements of the military authorities and a second expansion scheme was evolved, as a military commitment, to increase the capacity of the line to 17 trains each way per day. The plan was agreed in late 1941 and was undertaken departmentally by the P.R.” It included the construction of 13 additional stations at Sukreir, Rashida, Sheikh Zoweid, Geradi, Bardawil, Sebika, Tilul, Salama, Khirba, Rabah, Paluzya, Tel Heir, Al Jiya,⁶²⁴ and considerable expansion of yard and locomotive depot facilities at Lydda and Kantara.

Due to supply problems with materials and the inadequacy of labour and supervision,

⁶²⁰ Also frequently referred to as Romani.

⁶²¹ The extra loops were ordered by GHQ(ME) Cairo under Tn(3)4523/1 on 15. August 1941: “Instructions have been received that the capacity of the single line Kantara East to Lydda is to be increased by the provision of 14 new stations.” (Two between Yibna/Isdud and Gaza/Deir el Balah respectively). The letter continues “If the above proposals are agreed to, it will mean that the longest Block Section will be about 12 km. Will you please approach the P.R. and ask for this work to be put in hand, if approved by them.” The letter continues noting a need for a rough estimate of costs and of permanent-way materials required, and that a shortage of electrical block instruments for signalling purposes would require some to be issued from military stock. (Other equipment was taken from H.R. stations where it was considered to be more dispensable.) See also WO169/963 XC 002642.

It should be noted that the above letter indicates already a major problem with allocating costs and duties to the line “to Rafah”, to the notional border crossing point, for operationally it continued to Lydda.

⁶²² p. 36.

⁶²³ Note that several are north of Rafah but, as stated, on the route to Lydda.

⁶²⁴ 1942-46 P.R. G.M. Report p. 61. Even allowing for differences in place-names, it is hard to reconcile all these versions or the directional sequence. We have retained this version of the spellings as well.

the new crossing stations were only partially constructed by June 1942, and work on the marshalling yards and locomotive depots was only at an initial stage. P.R. was then called upon to cope with the heavy traffic resulting from the retreat to El Alamein. Fortunately, most of the trackwork of the new stations had been completed, and emergency working arrangements were established, with staff accommodated in tents.

Traffic on this section began to decline from December 1943, owing to the reopening of ports on the Syrian and Palestinian coast to shipping traffic following the capitulation of Italy in summer 1943, and by the spring of 1944 it was possible to close ten of these new loops again - Tel el Heir, Peluza, Rabaa, El Khirba, Salmana, El Tilul, Sabika, El Bardawil, El Geradi and Esh Sheikh Zewaied.

The 1929 P.R. Report⁶²⁵ describes the Kantara-Rafa Railway as 203 kilometres long (the Handbook would indicate 212km.)⁶²⁶ Since Haifa-Rafa was 238km., one can see that this section across Sinai amounted to almost 50% of the Haifa-Egypt route, and revenue and costs had accordingly to be apportioned proportionally.

Thus the railway line across Sinai was maintained (at Government expense) for strategic reasons rather than as a traffic-generating measure in itself; Its capacity was increased to match wartime requirements, and in the postwar era some of this extra capacity became surplus to requirements - though the question of exactly how much, and who should pay for the additions and the removals, and who should benefit, exercised minds and managements.

No locomotives or rolling stock were actually "owned by" or "allocated to" the Kantara-Rafah Railway - all was Palestine Railways,⁶²⁷ and any allocations were purely by means of entries in accounts ledgers. The same applies to staff and staffing costs.

7:(D). LEGAL STATUS.

For accountancy purposes the "Kantara-Rafa Railway" (it is so referred to in P.R. Annual Reports) was recorded separately.⁶²⁸ Official control was vested in the Air Ministry, apparently because the RAF maintained a greater presence in 1920's Palestine than did the Army.⁶²⁹ The problem can be expressed, in simple terms, as follows: The Kantara-Rafa Railway was essentially a burden to the P.R., but it was a necessary burden. P.R. operated it but did not own it; it had been hastily built and equipped with

⁶²⁵P.R. G.M. Report 1929. p. 1.

⁶²⁶ The 'British Directory for Palestine' for 1923, p. 163ff., notes: "Section Kantara, Haifa (Kantara, Rafa double line): Kilos 617.315."

It is known that on several occasions the line was realigned to avoid encroaching sand dunes, which may account for some variation; P.R. operated a tree school at Lydda to enable saplings to be planted to prevent sand encroachment, and later Decauville lines with small locos and tipper wagons were employed to move dunes - in general, this was simply a line laid on top of a desert and exact measurements were always inclined to vary.

⁶²⁷ Shunting at Gilbana was handled by "Army in Egypt" rather than "Army in Palestine". Shunting at Kantara was done by P.R..

⁶²⁸ The P.R. G.M. 1930 Report (p. 6) notes in rather exasperated fashion that "separate accounts are kept for the three Railways, a procedure which causes considerable difficulty and does not tend to economy in staff and effort". The three were the Palestine Railways, the Kantara-Rafa Railway and the Hijaz [sic] Railway. Separate accounts were also kept for the Petah Tikva Railway. In 1945 the Chief Accountant proposed ending the separate accounting for the Kantara-Rafa Railway but after several months it became clear that this could not be easily changed.

⁶²⁹ This situation, whereby "The Palestine Railways shall continue to operate the Kantara-Rafa Railway nominally as Agents for the Air Ministry" was confirmed (along with arrangements for financial responsibilities) in Treasury Letter No. S.3395/3 of 7. April 1924, cited in Kirby's 1947 Memorandum Appendix 'A'.

outdated and worn-out equipment as a temporary wartime expedient; it served no intermediate traffic centres; due to climatic conditions it was a very difficult line to operate. And yet - it formed the essential link with the 'outside world', without which P.R. would have been a purely internal group of minor branch lines. In the 1920's and 1930's it was a major artery for Palestine imports and exports, in the 1940's it formed a vital strategic artery for military traffic.

It was essentially this challenge which faced those charged with negotiating a future for this line once the political situation changed post-1945: The line had been to some extent a financial burden; yet it was considered vital to maintain its existence and availability as a political and economic asset. There were those - most notably Kirby - who envisaged Palestine as lying astride a future international through route, with trains from Turkey travelling through Syria and Lebanon to Egypt. Others were concerned more with maintaining a means of transporting military stores between the Canal Zone and the Depots in Palestine; And there were also those whose priority was to offload a major financial burden on H.M.G., but at the same time were concerned to get as good a price as possible from the Egyptians. These aims were of course contradictory.

The 1930 P.R. Report⁶³⁰ gives the following jaundiced view of this section:⁶³¹

"There was no railway in Sinai before the war. The standard-gauge line from Kantara to Haifa was constructed by the British Army during the War.... The acquisition and operation for commercial purposes of the lines constructed for military purposes has many serious disadvantages from the railway point of view. In the first instance they are of unnecessarily wide gauge for traffic requirements with the consequent heavier expense on improvements, renewals, maintenance and operation.⁶³² The location of the line is by no means the most suitable and does not properly serve important traffic areas."⁶³³

Most of the locos, rolling stock and track materials had been second-hand when imported during the War and, especially after their hard usage during the War, were "unduly costly in maintenance and in many cases already due or overdue for replacement."⁶³⁴

⁶³⁰ This was the first produced by C.R. Webb as General Manager. Webb always prefaced his reports with a brief historical summary for the benefit of those readers not acquainted with the situation.

⁶³¹ P.R. G.M. 1930 Report, p. 7, paras. 12-17.

⁶³² As a rough rule of thumb, the narrower the gauge of a railway, the easier and cheaper it is to construct through difficult terrain. The track is lighter, the curves may be sharper, the locomotives and stock are smaller, less fuel is required - of course, the carrying capacity is limited but, in this case, Webb is implying that the traffic then on offer could quite adequately and economically have been carried on Hijaz-gauge tracks. Most Colonial railways built by the British were constructed to 2' 0" or 3' 6" (the latter known as 'Cape Gauge' from its use in South Africa). Examples include the lines in East Africa and Sudan. Only the main lines in India, at 5' 6", form a major exception. As late as 1932 there were proposals for the line linking Haifa with Baghdad to be constructed either to metre, 1.05m or standard-gauge. (Cotterell p. 61.)

⁶³³ This has remained a problem until the present day. In 1936 Sir Felix Pole was commissioned by the Palestine Government to prepare a report on deviating the main line from Rehovot through Tel Aviv and back to the existing route near Kalkilya - the idea being to serve the growing conurbation directly rather than via a detour through the insignificant town of Lydda, which route had been chosen in 1917 purely for military reasons. In the 1950's Israel Railways planned and constructed a new 51 km. line along the coastal strip to serve such places as Herzliyya and Netanya direct from Tel Aviv; this was opened fully by 4. November 1954. (Cotterell p. 90.) The 'main line' of P.R. was, as noted, constructed in haste along the route of the Turkish line from Tulkarm via Lydda to Wadi Surar, and this had deliberately been built inland to provide protection against British Naval guns. Yet it remained the main line even after 1948 until the new coastal line could be opened, despite being cut at Tulkarm in May 1948 (a short deviation was later constructed) and being vulnerably close to the new border. The Pole Report was shelved due to political difficulties and only with the opening of the Ayalon Line in 1993 was Tel Aviv finally put on a through north-south route.

⁶³⁴ The R.O.D. had imported a rag-bag mixture of elderly L.N.W.R. "Coal Engine" inside-cylinder 0-6-0's

The equipment of the line was also not up to usual and proper standards. "Some of the staff quarters are old army huts of a temporary character..... "

No interest charges were payable by the Kantara-Rafa or Hijaz railways, and the real capital cost were not known.

7:(E). OPERATIONS.

Originating traffic was negligible and this was almost exclusively a "Transit route" linking two populated areas through an unpopulated area.⁶³⁵ At Kantara traffic entered the system either via the ferry⁶³⁶ (a swing bridge had also been constructed in 1918 but was later removed), or the bridge at El Ferdan which replaced the ferry, while during the Second World War some military traffic originated at the wharves constructed just south of El Kantara on the east side of the Canal.

In 1929, for example, 5,700 passengers took advantage of through bookings from Egypt to Lebanon⁶³⁷; Freight traffic included melons (37,286 tons) and grapes (750 tons) exported to Egypt, and transport of bananas was also commenced in this year,⁶³⁸ although many such commodities were subject to fluctuations in the Egyptian customs duties. Oil traffic ceased in 1930 with the construction of oil depots at Haifa, served by sea.⁶³⁹ Flour was imported from Egypt. In 1930 an estimated 2,000 Pilgrims travelled in the direction of Mecca via Egypt and Jeddah.⁶⁴⁰

Kantara had the original Army locomotive depot and sole workshops, at which a breakdown crane was based, but the main workshops were transferred from there to the newly-built workshops at Qishon, north of Haifa, in 1932.⁶⁴¹ These workshops, constructed mainly of corrugated steel, were also a relic of the First World War, and had been quite extensive in capacity. They were used (inter alia) for the erection of the Baldwin 4-6-0 locomotives which were delivered there in parts from America.⁶⁴² In 1929, for example, 11 locomotives had received heavy repairs (some including new fireboxes), and 83 coaches and 122 wagons were repaired at the Kantara workshops.⁶⁴³

Although the main workshops had been moved, Kantara retained a locomotive depot with some workshops facilities - it was, after all, at the end of a long and gruelling desert

and L.S.W.R. '0395-Class' 0-6-0's. See Cotterell p. 127, Table 2 for details; Many such locos were sold for scrap in 1928, others were used as buffer stops!

⁶³⁵ Since Kantara was merely a crossing point on the Suez Canal the traffic "originating" here is actually transit traffic from Egypt; El Arish was the only other settlement of note.

There was also a certain amount of "unofficial traffic" in the form of drugs smuggled by almost every available means. See 'Desert & Delta' by Major C. S. Jarvis, a former Governor of Sinai, (pub. John Murray, London 1938), esp. pp. 109f. quoted in 'Harakevet' 17:18 : "It is an old Palestinian and Sinaitic custom for trains carrying personages to be heavily loaded with contraband.... It is believed that when King Fuad returned from El Arish he took with him sufficient hashish to supply all Egypt for six months.... it was sufficient to put the Arab camel-runners out of business for half a year". Bert Dyke also refers to an R.E. loco driver who was caught with a box of hashish on the footplate in 1942 ('Harakevet' 37:17), and Ossie Marshall to his experience as a Military Policeman searching military personnel ('Harakevet' 12:18).

⁶³⁶ The steam ferry could carry only four box vans at a time. Passenger stock was not normally conveyed, the passengers detraining and crossing on a separate ferry.

⁶³⁷ P.R. G.M. Report 1929 p.12. i.e. an average of just over 15.5 per day.

⁶³⁸ P.R. G.M. Report 1929 p. 13.

⁶³⁹ P.R. G.M. Report 1930 p. 13 para. 41.

⁶⁴⁰ P.R. G.M. Report 1930 p. 12, para. 35.

⁶⁴¹ Cotterell p. 58.

⁶⁴² An account of working at these workshops by Ron Garraway was published in 'Harakevet' 7:15.

⁶⁴³ P.R. G.M. Report 1929 p.10.

route. Facilities were clearly also expanded to suit military railway requirements. When the time came for official handover to the E.S.R. in April 1948, John Lee (then the Loco Supt. at Lydda) travelled down to supervise this.⁶⁴⁴

7:(F). IMPROVEMENTS TO THE LINE.

In the debate concerning the sale or transfer of this line in 1946-48 reference is made in passing to various problems, expenditures and investments before and during the war. It is therefore worth noting what some of these were:

In 1929⁶⁴⁵ Train Kilometrage had been 323,582 (compared to 309,442 in 1928); Expenditure per kilometre had been £P647 (up from £577 in 1928), Expenditure per train kilometre 406 Mils (378 in 1928.) Average wagon load on the "Kantara - Rafa Section" was 9.1 tons.⁶⁴⁶

The 1929 Report notes that in Sinai several deviations had been pegged out, many curves had been reset and a corrected longitudinal section had been produced of the length from Rafa to Kantara. Similarly all stations except Kantara had been surveyed and the plans brought up-to-date.⁶⁴⁷

"In Sinai thirty-four curves of radii varying from 382 to 1,146 metres have been eased by resetting to radii of 700 metres and 2,296 metres. The Kantara-Rafa Railway, a hastily located War line, abounds in bad curves and unnecessary grades and there remains yet much to be done before this part of the system will be fit for normal speeds. The formation is sand throughout and is unballasted..... During the winter an area of approximately 300 dunams was planted with shrubs to hold the dunes." To add to the difficulties, a species of termite had been found to be very active in parts of the desert. During 1929 no less than 1,000 termite-infected sleepers were removed and burnt. It was suggested that it might be necessary to adopt steel sleepers or sleepers of wood capable of withstanding termite attack and desert conditions, in order to reduce long-term expenditure.

Further engineering improvements are also indicated.⁶⁴⁸ At El Arish a wrought-iron lattice girder bridge, which had been on the point of total failure and could only be crossed at the slowest speed, was replaced by a new bridge of ten 16-metre steel girders on ferro-concrete foundations, allowing removal of the speed restriction. Water supply was problematical - water had to be hauled in tanks from Kantara or Gaza and stored at stations and where the permanent-way gangs needed it.⁶⁴⁹

7:(G). THE NEGOTIATIONS FOR DISPOSAL.

Once the war had concluded, the political situation in the entire Middle East altered substantially. Britain's Treaty and other relations with Egypt underwent complex

⁶⁴⁴ In an interview in June 1995 he stated: "I represented the Mechanical Dept. and my task was basically to look for anything that really belonged to P.R. I found a brand-new 1-metre steel rule, unused, in the Stores, and reckoned that the Egyptians couldn't read a rule, let alone use it, so took it away." A photo of this handover was also published as 'Harakevet' 31:1, and a photo of a 4-6-0 on lifting jacks there on the same occasion as 31:21.

⁶⁴⁵ P.R. G.M. Report 1929 p.2.

⁶⁴⁶ P.R. G.M. Report 1929 p.4.

⁶⁴⁷ P.R. G.M. Report 1929 p.5f.

⁶⁴⁸ P.R. G.M. Report 1929 p.7.

⁶⁴⁹ P.R. G.M. Report 1929 p.8. In 1945 Kirby was concerned at monitoring these supplies, as he was convinced more water was being shipped to the Sinai stations than was required just for the railway personnel.

alterations;⁶⁵⁰ the demands of nationalist parties for independence in Transjordan, Syria and Lebanon also meant a reappraisal of the relations between Palestine and its neighbours - and all this was independent of the internal turmoil within Palestine itself.⁶⁵¹ Nothing was as it had been, and the British authorities found themselves facing issues of disposal and negotiation on all the lines outside Palestine. Here the status of Palestine as a Mandated Territory meant, in effect, that all important decisions of foreign policy had to be made in London, and the Palestinian Government had at best a consulting role. Whether Palestine Railways was informed fully of the state of negotiations (or even of their existence) is another issue entirely.

On 29. July 1946 The Chiefs of Staff Committee (Joint Administration Planning Staff) met in Westminster to discuss disposal of the line.⁶⁵² Material for discussion was provided by a Foreign Office memo of 9. July 1946⁶⁵³ presented as 'Annex 1 to the Minutes'; this referred in turn to a Cairo Despatch No. 677 of 29. May, which had been passed on a month later on 28. June.

This referred to "the Egyptian desire that negotiations should be begun for the transfer of the Sinai railway to the Egyptian Government",⁶⁵⁴ and copies had been sent to a variety of potential commentators - including the Under-Secretary of State for Air, the War Office, Colonial Office, Admiralty and Treasury.⁶⁵⁵ As the F.O. noted, "the Palestine Government cannot continue to operate a railway through Egyptian territory against the will of the Egyptian Government."⁶⁵⁶ Therefore, should the Egyptian

⁶⁵⁰ Culminating of course in the Suez "Emergency" and the 1956 Campaign.

⁶⁵¹ In April 1946 the Middle East Railway Conference, held at Cairo, saw a bright postwar future, including even through trains up to Beirut for holidaymakers. The conference also discussed the question of the bridge over the Suez Canal near Kantara. The Canal Company wished to have the existing bridge removed but the conference expressed strong disapproval of such a step, considering the retention of the bridge as vital to Middle East rail communications. The bridge carried military, passenger and goods trains in each direction nightly. It was now planned that passenger trains should cross in daylight to achieve more convenient times of arrival and to enable the delay for Customs inspection at Kantara to be reduced from two hours to one. Shaker Pasha, Manager of the Egyptian State Railways, put forward a scheme to construct a tunnel under the Canal at Port Said, with a short line on the Palestine side linking it to present main line. ('Palestine Post' 15. April 1946.)

⁶⁵² P.R.O. Kew, File CO537/2271. "Transfer of Sinai Railway to Egyptian Government".

⁶⁵³ (J.2569/173/16)

⁶⁵⁴ In the form of a letter (in French) from 'Le Ministre Royal des Affaires Étrangères' to the Ambassador, dated 9. May 1946, which proposed the formation of a small committee comprising the Director General of E.S.R., the Chief Accountant of E.S.R., and a representative of the Palestine Government, "pour arriver, après étude, à fixer le montant que devra payer l'Égypte comme prix du matériel de la voie ferrée construite en territoire égyptien ainsi que des lignes télégraphiques et téléphoniques." The Ambassador had noted in an accompanying Memorandum (CO537/2271, XC002671): "An approach in this connection had been threatened for many months, and the question has of course been discussed at intervals for many years. The last comprehensive attempt to consider the question on our side resulted in the 'preliminary draft of note to Egyptian Government' dated 21. July 1939. This note was prepared by this Embassy for use in case the Egyptian Govt. took up the question with us, which in fact they never have until now. It had received the concurrence of the military authorities of that time. The Palestine Govt. wrote to the Colonial Office on 17. July 1940, commenting on the draft note. There is nothing in the Embassy files to show whether the F.O. approved of the draft note or whether anything was done about the Palestine Government's comments. Presumably the question was dropped as not being actual during the war. The situation has of course changed entirely since July 1939, and is particularly fluid at the moment in view of the treaty negotiations. It is presumably not an accident that the Egyptian Note should be sent to us now in the middle of the negotiations." Indeed not - the timing was clearly intended to put the British onto the defensive on this issue.

⁶⁵⁵ This list alone indicates the political and military significance of this line.

⁶⁵⁶ This phrase and others were lifted from 'Annex 1 of 9. July 1946', a memo by P.S. Scrivener, who had in addition noted that this seemed to have been the view taken before the war, and that "our position in a future where there will be no British troops stationed in Egypt in peace-time is weaker rather than stronger

Government insist on the transfer of the Sinai Railway to Egypt, the question became, in the view of the F.O., not so much one of whether to accept or reject this demand but merely “of the conditions, financial and otherwise, for the handing over, on which we can stand as firm as we like.”⁶⁵⁷ It also considered hopefully that “the Egyptian Government would probably wish to maintain the efficiency of the line since it is the link between the Egyptian State Railway and railways outside Egypt.” The Joint Administrative Planning Staff were invited to consider this issue and prepare a draft report for the Chiefs of Staff, to be considered in turn by the Principal Administrative Officers.

It is clear that the Sinai Railway, while by no means as important to perceived British interests as the Suez Canal, was nevertheless an international transport link that could be significant for British military mobility in the region.

So answers were sought. The Commanders-in-Chief in Egypt responded that they would have to accept whatever the Egyptians decided, but noted hopefully, “It is possible that the Egyptian Government may not press their demand for the opening of discussions before the end of the Treaty negotiations, but in any case... it would be desirable to decide as soon as possible on alternative conditions, financial and otherwise, for the handing over of the railway.”⁶⁵⁸ Clearly there was no idea of attempting to retain the line. Cunningham, the High Commissioner in Palestine, agreed on 7. September 1946 that it would “be difficult to resist the claim of the Egyptian Government to acquire by purchase the Sinai railway since it lies in Egyptian territory”, and acknowledged that “the strategic aspects of the proposal have undergone considerable change since the project was first raised” but assumed that “these will no doubt be dealt with by the Chiefs of Staff.”

However, he also raised the issue of the pre-war Note, though unfortunately there is no copy of this in the file. It had formed “an enclosure to Sir Miles Lampson’s despatch of 21. July 1939”, there had been some comment on 17. July 1940 (i.e. a year later!), and “since then the position has changed in many respects, and no doubt the draft note will require modification in the light of the current Anglo-Egyptian Treaty negotiations.” It is clear that these comments of 1939 were essentially concerned with technical matters of operation, presumably from a local rather than London perspective. Thus he proposes a change to the para. 2(ii) of the 1939 Note to read: “The E.S.R. shall enter into an agreement with the P.R. for the interchange of rolling stock on a basis which conforms with the principles which govern international exchange agreements”, adding “The present draft presupposes that the P.R. must always be the borrowers, but since 1939 the situation has changed in favour of Palestine and we should not envisage the necessity of borrowing E.S.R. rolling stock under the onerous conditions of the existing exchange agreement between the two railways.”⁶⁵⁹ As regards the Suez Canal crossing, he noted “It is not altogether clear why, in the event of a new railway being constructed to Port Fuad, the Kantara crossing would be necessary. It might be relevant to insert some mention of retention of the Firdan bridge, because if it is to be retained it is improbable

in respect of the terms which we can demand for the handing-over of the line.” The military reasons for wanting the line to be maintained in good running order were as strong as ever, and he saw no reason why the Egyptian Government should not wish to maintain the efficiency of the line, though he considered that “in view of the very special circumstances of the construction of the line the conditions of disposal must be agreed jointly.”

⁶⁵⁷ An interesting comment; Of course Sinai had been technically Egyptian territory throughout, but until this point Egypt had shown no concern or interest in the area whatsoever; Customs and border formalities had pragmatically been carried out at Kantara rather than Rafa. *De facto* and psychologically, Sinai had effectively been treated as a form of ‘no-man’s land’ or buffer zone between Egypt and Palestine.

⁶⁵⁸ Letter of 25. July 1946 from British Embassy, Cairo, to Ernest Bevin.

⁶⁵⁹ i.e. P.R. had paid E.S.R. substantial hire charges - and had not always been happy with the quality of the E.S.R. stock which came onto its system. Now its own wagon stock had been increased by absorption of W.D. stock, and such borrowings would be less necessary.

that the Port Fuad scheme would in fact be implemented. Conversely, if the Port Fuad scheme will in fact be undertaken, it is unlikely that the Firdan bridge would be retained.”⁶⁶⁰ Cunningham saw no dangers in competition between the E.S.R. and Haifa Port, and agreed with the concept of “running rights” whereby the engines and rolling stock of the two countries “are permitted to run over the railway system of the other territory and consider that the details should be governed by a special ‘Running Rights Agreement’.”

Significantly, he took a cautious approach to the future significance of this line. “It now seems permissible to take the view that if Palestine continues to develop industrially, the loss of revenue from the Kantara-Rafa section of the railway would become relatively less important” than under the conditions visualised in 1939. With industrial expansion, local resources could be directed to building up the railway system within Palestine, and with the re-establishment of normal sea communications and the withdrawal of British troops from Egypt it was probable that the demand for rail transport between Palestine and Egypt would decline. The railway’s “function as a commercial artery may accordingly be regarded as a factor of diminishing importance.”

This seems remarkable, albeit - with hindsight - not so unrealistic. However, it is a principle of rail transport that the economics improve with the length of transit, and the concept of cutting an existing, functioning link in favour of sea transport (he mentions neither air nor road competition) appears more than reactionary.

For the rest, he agreed to the sale “at a valuation, [of] such equipment and stores on this section of the line as are not required by the P.R.”, and considered that any Palestinian staff from this section not absorbed by the P.R. should have their employment terminated under the usual conditions. Kirby, characteristically, had responded to the High Commissioner’s request for information with a closely-typed and argued 24-page report on the expenditure on the line to date and traffic expectations (which will be summarised below). Cunningham attached this to his letter, noting drily that “these estimates have not been adopted as part of a definite programme and may cease to be the concern of this Government, but the detailed information which they contain will no doubt be of assistance to the negotiators as providing an up-to-date factual background.”

The Army Council reacted with alarm, on 4. September 1946. While raising no objections to the proposed handover, they wished to stress that “while there are British depots in Egypt, which are supplying our forces in Egypt and Palestine, and while stores are being evacuated from Egypt, the volume of military traffic is considerable and of great importance. The Council consider therefore that the railway should not be handed over to the Egyptians until our forces have evacuated Egypt..... As soon as the evacuation of Egypt is complete, the Council see no military requirement for the railway in peace. In time of war, however, the military requirement is the same as for the remainder of the E.S.R. system, namely that it should be kept in working order so as to make possible the smooth running of our base in Egypt.”⁶⁶¹

The first reference in the Press to this entire subject appeared in the ‘Palestine

⁶⁶⁰ Little is known of this 1930’s Port Fuad scheme, but clearly the idea was to create a fixed link, probably a tunnel, at a point closer to settlements than El Kantara, which was effectively in the middle of nowhere. The line would have diverged from Romani, and the British Military were concerned - should the scheme be revived - to lose the more direct route via Kantara and Ferdan to their bases in the Canal Zone.

⁶⁶¹ At the same period plans were being drawn up for a transfer of Britain’s base from Egypt not to the Sinai but to Kenya, to be accessed through Mombasa Port. In this case the Sinai Railway would not have been so important. (‘Palestine Post’ 11. Oct. 1946).

Post' on 1. October 1946,⁶⁶² headlined "Egypt Wants Sinai Railway." The matter was now public.

There was no feeling that the Egyptians would co-operate simply by inserting clauses into an agreement. Despite this, the War Office took a similarly relaxed view to Cunningham. In a letter of 27. November 1946 D. C. Merry of the Transportation Directorate informed the Colonial Office that it was their opinion that, although it would be important to maintain this line in a serviceable condition for handling anticipated military traffic, there would be no military justification for incurring the cost of bringing it up to the standard of an international route as envisaged by Kirby. Moreover, "having regard to the present political situation and the contemplated opening of negotiations for the sale of the railway to the Egyptian Govt., it is felt that any question of involving H.M.G. in a large contribution towards such costs should not be considered at the present time."⁶⁶³ In effect, the existing standard of the track would suffice for occasional military movements.

Four months had gone by, and events had not stood still. By coincidence, on the very next day, 28. November 1946, the Egyptian Minister for Foreign Affairs advised the British Ambassador that the Egyptian Government was "prepared to consider the proposal to establish a joint railway station as a basis for discussion"⁶⁶⁴ and invited the Palestine Government to nominate representatives for this discussion. A Palestine Government Memorandum⁶⁶⁵ referred to some previous desultory discussions on this topic, and added "Owing to the large military installations on both sides of the frontier at Rafa it is clearly desirable that the British military authorities should be represented at the negotiations."⁶⁶⁶ It is understood that the question of a change of frontier, so as to include within Palestine military establishments lying south of the present line, has been under consideration in the course of negotiations for a revision of the Egyptian Treaty. It is clearly undesirable that discussions with the Egyptian Government as to a joint frontier railway station and control post should take place if the proposed change of frontier is still a live issue."⁶⁶⁷

By 21. February 1947 Cunningham had to send the Secretary-of-State for the Colonies a Secret and urgent 'Savingram' reminder as "the question has now become one of some urgency on two counts." The Egyptian Government had recently informed the British Embassy in Cairo that it was anxious to effect the early transfer of frontier controls from Kantara to Rafa, and that the Egyptian authorities in Sinai were apparently proposing to erect a fence along the Palestine frontier to prevent smuggling and illicit entry into Egypt. This fence, it was understood, would pass right through the British military camps which straddled the frontier at Rafa, and even cut several road and branch railway lines within

⁶⁶² p.1. By Victor Azam, Palestine Post Correspondent. Cairo, Monday. "Egypt wants the outright possession of the railway line running across the Sinai Peninsula from Kantara to Rafa, on the frontier of Palestine. The Egyptian Government is reported to have sent a note to the British Embassy advancing that proposal. The line, built by the British Army in the 1914-18 war, is at present run by Palestine Railways."

⁶⁶³ P.R.O. CO537/2271. XC 002671. Transportation Dir. to C.O. 27. November 1946.

⁶⁶⁴ At Rafa.

⁶⁶⁵ Undated, but - as evidenced by the next document - from January 1947. P.R.O. CO 537/2271. XC 002671.

⁶⁶⁶ This is the best possible evidence that the actual technical political frontier had not been considered when petrol dumps, sidings and camps at Rafah had been laid out on the basis purely of practical geographical considerations.

⁶⁶⁷ By 18. August 1947 the F.O. was telling the C.O.: "There is no possibility of arguing that the camp at Rafah West is not on Egyptian territory, and that sooner or later we shall be obliged to liquidate it. The present position, however, is that the Chiefs of Staff hold out no prospect of its liquidation until firm decisions have been made about their future Middle East requirements."

the camps!⁶⁶⁸

In January the Transportation Directorate at the War Office had prepared a fuller (albeit 'Secret') memorandum on the "Proposed Transfer of Sinai Railway".⁶⁶⁹ Noting (para.2) that the Railway "consists only of the track and some limited installations, buildings and equipment; it does not include among its assets any locomotives and rolling stock", it then explained that "the Railway is jointly owned by H.M.G. and Palestine Government, the holding of the former being over twelve times that of the latter." These figures were based on the Wickham Valuation of 1920, on capital and other expenditure incurred by Palestine Government since this valuation, and on capital expenditure by H.M.G. during the war. It warned "The total holdings of the two Governments do NOT necessarily represent the present-day value of assets."

The "Wickham Valuation" refers to the survey carried out by General Wickham at the time of the establishment of the Mandate, when the value of British military assets transferred to the new Mandate Government was assessed. Para. 9 of this memorandum noted that in 1920 the Kantara-Rafa Railway had been valued at P739,174.⁶⁷⁰ This valuation had included a double track railway, the second track of which was taken up in 1926, but the Wickham valuation had nevertheless been adhered to as the measurement of H.M.G.'s capital investment in the railway, together with further capital expenditure of P192,267 incurred during the 1939-1945 war. The Palestine Government's holding in the railway was P73,736. "The importance of the above figure is to indicate the relative shares of the owners of the railway. It is understood that Director of Hirings and Disposals, GHQ MELF,⁶⁷¹ has now carried out a valuation of the railway and the total value is assessed at P1,000,000."

A "Special Fund" had operated since 1923 for "meeting as far as possible the cost of renewals or extraordinary maintenance of a like character". The Fund's revenue derived from profits on operation and as at 31. March 1946 stood at LP200,098 in credit. The railway had actually shown a profit on every year's working, except in 1924 and 1938, enabling contributions to be paid into the Special Fund and, latterly, a return on their investments to H.M.G. and the Palestine Government, though the Report warned that with sinking traffic there would be a deficit on the current year, and a further deficit was expected for the year 1947/48.

The military authorities perceived a future role for the line, regarding it as "essential that the railway shall be maintained in working order throughout its entire length - both for dealing with military maintenance traffic to Palestine from depots in Egypt before the evacuation is complete, and subsequently in the event of another war."⁶⁷² At this point, the plan was to evacuate British bases in Egypt to Palestine - it was only later that the plan was reversed - but the potential for further conflict (clearly, at this point, not involving Germany or Italy) was still there.

Regarding the date of handover, it was argued that it should not occur "until we have evacuated Egypt, unless we are covered by clauses to safeguard our military traffic.

⁶⁶⁸ Sadly, an arbitrary line on a map can become the cause of much bloody-mindedness when no-one is prepared pragmatically to move a line a few hundred yards across a piece of desert. And this was not the last time.

⁶⁶⁹ PRO. CO537/2271. XC 002671.

⁶⁷⁰ In this correspondence it is not always clear whether Egyptian Pounds, Palestine Pounds or Pounds Sterling are meant. We have simply used the abbreviation "P" here, and "LP" for Palestine Pounds".

⁶⁷¹ General Headquarters, Middle East Land Forces.

⁶⁷² Memorandum, para. 3.

These would probably prove distasteful to the Egyptians.”⁶⁷³ Nor should it take place “until the major movement consequent on evacuation is substantially complete”⁶⁷⁴ - because of fear that the E.S.R. would impose higher rates while British use of the railway was still heavy.⁶⁷⁵

The attempts to outguess the opponent continued: “The view has also been expressed that early transfer of ownership might obviate the expenditure by us of putting the railway into good order;”⁶⁷⁶ but this is a matter over which the Egyptian Government would probably be shrewd enough to ensure, during the negotiations, that they were not placed at a disadvantage. They would presumably stand out for paying a reduced sum for the railway if they were committed to undertake renewals to bring the line at least up to the standard of good running order for military traffic.” Parallels were drawn with “other British military assets, such as depots in the Canal area” in hoping that a delay would be acceptable to the Egyptians.

The War Office⁶⁷⁷ considered Kirby’s detailed outlines and costings “to bring the railway up to a reasonable present day standard - it must be so improved that trains may be able to run with safety up to a speed of 80kph. throughout, with comfort to the passengers and without undue wear and tear on the rolling stock.” This was, for the military, an irrelevant luxury. “It is to fulfil the above requirements that he recommends ballasting throughout and replacing 75-lb. by 90-lb. rail. The railway has been used unballasted during two wars (except for a total length of 12 km. done between 1942 and 1946), and it cannot be claimed that 90-lb. rail is essential for military traffic which is adequately served by a maximum speed of 50kph.” In these circumstances, Kirby’s recommended costings were thrown out, and it was instead recommended that “GHQ should approach P.R. for an estimate of the cost of essential renewals (less value of recovered rails) to be done within the next two years, say, to put the Railway into reliable order for military traffic at maximum speeds of 50kph.” The minimum only was being considered.⁶⁷⁸

⁶⁷³ Army Council Letter of 4. September 1946 to Foreign Office, cited in para. 5.

⁶⁷⁴ GHQ Middle East Signal 124/CCL of 17. October 1946, cited also in para. 5.

⁶⁷⁵ Para. 11 notes: “In the event of transfer of ownership...before our evacuation from Egypt is complete, it is suggested that GHQ MELF should negotiate with E.S.R. to ensure that traffic charges will not be more than those applying on the rest of their system. If possible, we should not, in any event, pay for the use of the railway at higher rates than the Egyptian Army would pay.” There was, of course, no guarantee that this could be achieved.

⁶⁷⁶ Referring to Kirby’s memorandum.

⁶⁷⁷ Para. 7.

⁶⁷⁸ Essentially, Kirby appears to have seen this request as an opportunity to put into effect a dream of improvement. In his lengthy Memorandum he seems to list and cost almost every nut, bolt and fishplate used on the line over the previous 28 years or so, but he commences with the current situation, pursues the option of dealing with “the worst bits”, then works towards an ‘ideal’ treatment that amounts to a full rebuilding.

The current situation can be summed up: The main line was 205 kms., there were 41 kms. of P.R.-owned sidings and 63 km. of non-P.R.-owned sidings - presumably all military. (Para 11). All was single track. “Because of the relatively light-weight rail on unballasted formation, the riding qualities of the track are poor; not only does this cause discomfort to passengers but, more seriously, locomotives and rolling stock suffer undue wear and tear and the safety margin is a narrow one.” In addition, “If the railway is to be of real strategic value, it must be maintained in sufficiently good condition to be in immediate readiness to carry heavy traffic which may be contingent upon any future possible military requirements.”

He then presents a series of “progressive scheme of improvements”. Para. 3: “Ballasting throughout from Rafa to Kantara is estimated to cost not less than LP774,000; as a practical immediate scheme, however, 33 kilometres in 18 separate lengths can be usefully ballasted to eliminate bad spots..... to cost not less than LP115,000.” 12,000 new sleepers would be employed. In Para. 4, “certain grades should be eliminated or lessened”, at an estimated cost of LP29,000. This would then allow for a gradual progressive

There was a method to this. It was acknowledged that Kirby's suggestions would be appropriate for the future development of a commercial railway, but that they were not

improvement on an annual budgeted basis over a period of years. There follows much discussion on the basis of allocating costs to either H.M.G. or the Palestine Government, based on the Wickham valuation, exact definitions of what, in his opinion, constituted "renewals" and what "capital investment", and a disquisition on the poor quality of the surviving rail and the even worse quality of the scrap rail recovered earlier, much of which had been second-hand even when first laid. "Although it is assumed that one half of the line was laid originally with new rail, the new rail was not all in one place; it was mixed with old rail throughout. Wear has not been even, being heavier on curves than on straights, with the consequence that on certain sharp curves the rail has been renewed more than once since the line was laid. According to the Chief Engineer, P.R., the present condition is that... the rail throughout is poor and no particular length can be singled out as being much different from another. In support of his contention that [the rails on this section] cannot remain in effective use for more than 30 years the CE states that the remaining 100km., which is assumed to have been laid with new rail, is for the greater part in need of replacement; it appears that even the new American rail recently laid will not last very long, because it appears to be of poor quality steel and is already showing heavy wear." This latter point, of course, indicates that the investment made during wartime would have little long-term worth.

He proposed re-railing - "The 75lb. per yard, 36ft. rail which is now in use, however good the formation and ballast may be, is too flexible for the volume and weight of the traffic it has to carry - it flexes and transmits movement to the fittings and sleepers, ballast and formation, with consequent displacement and wear. A 90lb. per yard, Flat Bottom rail of 60ft. length is therefore suggested for all renewals... If steel sleepers are to be used successfully, ballasting is essential." Steel sleepers would avoid any further trouble with termites, and should last almost indefinitely in the desert, apart from concerns of abrasion, but rerailing 100km. of line to this standard would cost an estimated LP525,000. The remaining 100km. could be kept in operation as it was for a maximum of ten years, subject to all the inconveniences and problems already indicated, and to relay this - allowing for 100% steel sleepers - would cost a further LP585,000. The sleepers originally used in 1917/18 had also been half new and half second-hand (taken from stocks in Egypt and even by lifting certain lines in England) and the C.E. had stated that 100,000 new sleepers would be needed within the next two years just to keep the line in a "safe condition" - "i.e. though safe, the track is below a desirable running standard." (Para. 12b.)

Ballasting (Para. 14) would now cost around LP3,000 per km., allowing for labour costs, transport from quarry etc. - the small amount of ballasting work carried out on 'bad spots' between Bardawil and El Arish in 1942/3 had cost around LP1,800 per km. He noted (para. 14 (d)), "If a ballasting programme of any magnitude is to be carried out, it will be necessary to provide additional locomotives and wagons for the purpose, in that, with the constantly increasing traffic, it has been found impossible to keep even the present modest ballasting programmes going smoothly." There follow several paragraphs listing each building, whether operational or staff accommodation, their initial costs, costs of repairs and current valuations, and issues of water supply (Kantara was served by a syphon from the Sweet Water Canal on the west side of the Canal, and there were various pumping stations, wells, windmills and storage tanks). Signalling costs (para. 18) were complex as five stations had been opened in 1942/3 (El Burg, Negilah, Missfak, Midan and Kaber Smir), five had had centralised interlocking fitted (Romanah, Bir El Abd, Mazar, El Arish and Rafa), some costs had been met by the W.D., some work was classed as permanent improvements and some equipment was to be or had been recovered.

H.M.G. had invested some LP192,267 in capital improvements on the line since 1940. But when all figures were collated and summarised in para. 22, it appeared that an additional capital expenditure of around LP2,247,000 would still be required, plus annual contributions towards renewals of around LP86,000. "Against the expenditure envisaged in the foregoing proposals, the balance available in the Special Fund at 31. March 1946 was only LP220,098."

In sum, Kirby was effectively asking for LP2 Million to refurbish the line to a proper international standard, plus almost LP100,000 for maintenance and renewals - and it becomes clear why the other parties involved balked at this prospect, and why the Palestine Government saw no need to invest such sums outside its own boundaries, even though the line formed such a vital link. On the other hand, according to Kirby's undated article for 'Railway Gazette', "There was an accumulated deficit of LP690,711 on the Palestine and Transjordan sections at 31. March 1947. The Kantara-Rafa Railway, normally a deficit concern, earned startling profits during the recent war, solely because of the closure of the Eastern Mediterranean sea route. From 1941-42 to 1946-47 the surplus revenue, after deduction for depreciation payments, was no less than LP1,191,798, of which LP1,100,947 accrued to the direct benefit of the British taxpayer. Last year there was a deficit of LP119,800 because of the troubles in Palestine and the Arab boycott of Palestine trade." So around half of what Kirby envisaged had in fact been already earned during the 'fat years'.

needed for the military. "When the Egyptians take over the railway, E.S.R. may wish to turn the line into a fast-running and comfortable railway for international traffic between Egypt, Palestine and Lebanon." One purpose of the estimate which GHQ MELF should obtain would be for use in the financial negotiations with the Egyptian Government, assuming they were to take over the railway before the renewals backlog was overcome. "If we insist, in the terms of handover, that the railway shall be maintained in good working order for military traffic, then either (a). the line should be in good order when we hand over, or (b). account will have to be taken in the negotiations of the cost of putting it in order by E.S.R.. When we know this amount and the negotiations start, it will be important to get the Egyptians to accept it, or a near figure..... But only the 'military renewals' figure should be recognised in the negotiations if the Egyptians try to bargain for a reduced price on account of buying a rather shabby article." One has an image of refined civil servants suddenly contemplating the awful possibility that they would have to start haggling, as in a souk - with experts.

So - the line had been built as a basic military railway and should be sold as a basic military railway, with as little expenditure put into it as possible. Kirby had concluded his report by suggesting that all the heavy capital expenditure should come from H.M.G. "because it cannot reasonably be expected that Palestine Government should invest heavily in a railway which is not within its own territory and in which it has not the controlling interest."

The Memorandum closes with some wishful thinking; The line should remain commercially attractive since terminal costs were low and almost all traffic traversed the full 205km. of line to Rafah, and then beyond; but it warned that "once the railway has passed to E.S.R. control, we will be able to do little to influence its standard of efficiency," though there was no real reason why this should decline.⁶⁷⁹

On the basis of these Memoranda the W.O. instructed GHQ MELF on 12. March 1947⁶⁸⁰ to "examine and report as soon as possible" the operational and financial implications of options of sale in the immediate future or at some later date. GHQ was told that the C.O. had informed the Palestine Govt. that the examination would take place, and that they might consult with them "on technical but not on financial questions; No negotiations will be entered into with the Egyptian Government without further instructions from the War Office."⁶⁸¹

It appears GHQ did not rush at this task. On 11. June 1947, almost three months later, a Secret Cipher Telegram was despatched from the W.O. to the C.-in-C. MELF, to inform him that the Treasury was due to open negotiations with Egyptian representatives in London in the coming week, regarding Sterling balances; Time was now running short. "In connection with these discussions Treasury have asked us to say definitely whether we would be prepared to transfer Sinai railway to Egyptian Government forthwith subject of course to suitable guarantees regarding maintenance and operation for military traffic. Treasury consider it possible that immediate transfer of Sinai Railway would prove a valuable negotiating point in detailed financial discussions with Egyptian Government..." The line had become little more than a bargaining counter, a pawn to be sacrificed in the greater game.

No immediate answer from the C.-in-C. is recorded. Instead, the political circumstances changed yet again, with the Partition decision, and on 13. July the Egyptian Prime Minister informed Sir Ronald Campbell, the Ambassador, that his

⁶⁷⁹ Para. 12.

⁶⁸⁰ P.R.O. CO 537/2271. XC 002671.

⁶⁸¹ On 1. Sept. 1947 Kirby received a letter from the E.S.R. G.M. suggesting that the respective Chief Engineers meet to discuss and examine the Kantara-Rafah railway, and was able to reply that he had no authority to negotiate at all.

Government wished to purchase the railway line. This was high-level intervention indeed. Nevertheless, the Embassy advised the Egyptian Dept. of the F.O. on 22. Oct. to take time over negotiations, pointing out that the major traffic on the Sinai Railway was the movement of military personnel and goods to and from Palestine. "Whatever the legal or Treaty position of this railway may be, such traffic is difficult to justify under the 1936 Treaty..... We therefore share the view of the military that express safeguards for the maintenance of the railway in efficient running order and the preservation of military transit facilities are very desirable..... We would have supposed it better to avoid handing over the railway until that need has in fact passed." It was recommended to apply some delaying tactics, by establishing a committee to discuss valuing the railway, but to refuse to discuss for the time being what any other terms of transfer should be, or the date when the actual transfer should be completed.

The Secretary-of-State for the Colonies accordingly informed the High Commissioner in Palestine, on 6. November 1947, that it had now been agreed that negotiations should be entered into with the Egyptian Government. "It has been proposed that the proceedings throughout should be controlled by the Fixed Assets Disposals Committee of the War Office, through the Directors of Hirings and Disposals, Middle East, and that the General Manager of P.R. should participate as the representative of the Palestine Government in all discussions, inspections and negotiations entailed by the transfer." Possibly it was felt that Kirby, so keen on detail, would act as an enthusiastic brake on any hasty decisions.

Six months after he had been requested for a report, on 5. December 1947⁶⁸² a Top Secret Cipher Telegram⁶⁸³ from the C.-in-C. stated brusquely "We consider it would be unwise at present to enter into negotiations for the sale of the Sinai Railway to the Egyptian Government. In view of the impending evacuation of Palestine and the uses to which the Rafa depot will be put, we consider it essential to retain full and unconditional control of the railway." The concern was now more tactical than strategic. The political and military situation had changed - Palestine was now unlikely to be the base for troops and equipment from Egypt, quite the reverse.

D.W. Lascelles of the F.O. then wrote with some foresight on 11. December 1947 to the War Office, noting that the proposed total evacuation of Palestine had introduced a new factor into the situation. It was possible that, towards the end of the evacuation and after its completion, conditions in Palestine might be such that the Kantara-Rafah section would be cut off from the main Palestine system and would thus become for all practical purposes part of the E.S.R. system. The provision of locomotives and rolling stock and the maintenance of the permanent way would then have to be organised from the Kantara end. He warned, "We should presumably still require the line to operate efficiently (if only for the evacuation of Rafah West) but would be completely at the mercy of the Egyptians."

Conclusions were drawn from this change of operational status. The time for prevarication was over. In view of this possibility it seemed important to the F.O. that "we should come to terms with the Egyptians as soon as possible, and that our hitherto hesitant policy should be changed to a more active one of doing what is possible to hasten the transfer of the line to the Egyptian State Railways at a price which will

⁶⁸² By chance or mischance, the through route had just been disrupted. On 17. November 1947 traffic through the Suez Canal was temporarily suspended after a Dutch ship had struck and damaged the military swing bridge. "The east side section of the bridge was destroyed and the bridge will have to be demolished." ('Palestine Post' 18. Nov. 1947 p.3.) Ironically the 3rd. Middle East Railway Conference at Istanbul in October - at which Kirby presided - had just decided on efforts to maintain the Firdan bridge for through Istanbul-Cairo traffic. ('Palestine Post' 3. Nov. 1947 p.3.)

⁶⁸³ P.R.O. CO 537/2271. XC 002671.

probably decrease in proportion as the date for the completion of withdrawal from Palestine approaches.” The British negotiating position was indeed now severely weakened.

The end now came fairly swiftly. It has proved impossible to ascertain what price was eventually agreed,⁶⁸⁴ or what arrangements for transfer of rolling-stock⁶⁸⁵ and other material were made.⁶⁸⁶ Nevertheless, on 12. March 1948 Kirby drafted, for the necessary

⁶⁸⁴ On 18. February 1948 the ‘Palestine Post’ correspondent in Cairo wrote optimistically: “The Egyptian Government is to take over the Egyptian section of the Palestine Railways on April 1. The negotiations between the two Governments have not yet been concluded, but they are making good progress, it was stated here.” (‘Palestine Post’ 19. February 1948).

On 2. February 1948 (p.4.) Kirby responded characteristically with a Reader’s Letter:

“Sir, It might avoid possible misunderstanding if it were known that, although the section in Sinai has been operated integrally with the Palestine Railways system, it has never been owned by the Palestine Government but has remained the property of the British Government since the railway was first constructed by General Allenby in the 1914/1918 war.

By an agreement with the British Treasury the railway was operated by the Palestine Railways. This arrangement has proved to be of financial advantage to Palestine and during the last war enabled a vital line of supply to remain under the control of the Palestine Government. It is but natural however that, with the termination of the British Mandate in Palestine, the Egyptian Government should seek to acquire the ownership of the railway within its own territory. The negotiations to which you referred in your paragraph are between the British Government, as owners of the railway, and the Egyptian Government. The Palestine Government is not a first party in these negotiations but the Palestine Railways, as the Operating Agent, are an interested party. The Palestine Government has acquired a relatively small capital holding in the railway and is due to receive an appropriate credit.

Yours etc. A. F. Kirby, General Manager, Palestine Railways.”

⁶⁸⁵ It is known that one P.R. Baldwin 4-6-0 was still on lifting jacks at Kantara Depot when the handover took place. But presumably the E.S.R. had to draft in a complete new range of motive power, stock, drivers, signalmen, guards etc.

⁶⁸⁶ 34th. HoD Meeting, 17. Feb. 1948: “The GM announced the probable physical transfer of this Railway as from 1. April 1948, irrespective of the financial negotiations which were proceeding in that connection. He mentioned that a part of the price would be recoverable by the Palestine Government which owned a proportion of the capital of the line. He understood that the track valuation had been a reasonable one and was promising an adequate return.

The hand-over, he thought, would be simple. The Chief Engineer and the Acting Chief Mechanical Engineer were to have their assets ready to be handed over, and the C.M.E. would need to have arrangements ready for working at Rafa and for the recovery of P.R. locomotives from the Kantara-Rafa line. The A.C.M.E. did not anticipate undue difficulty and referred to the fact that Gaza was a locomotive depot and that there was no reason to anticipate it being cut off from Egyptian territory by the disturbances. As from the 1. April, locomotives of the Egyptian State Railways would work the Kantara-Rafa Railway. In reply to the A.C.M.E., the G.M. said he should grease and lay up locomotives not actually required for the reduced Palestine Railways.

The G.M. also referred Heads of Branches concerned to the possibility that withdrawal of through working might be desirable a few days before the change-over - he was sending out a full letter giving comprehensive information and directions regarding the transfer.

He said that the real difficulty in regard to the transfer lay in staff matters. The E.S.R. could not give P.R. conditions to the staff they took over. The Egyptian Government could offer no guarantee to pensionable staff which would satisfy the Palestine Government and justify transferring such staff in a similar status. There was in Egypt no such thing as a Provident Fund for the railway staff. Therefore it would be necessary to terminate the services of staff serving the Kantara-Rafa Railway as from 1. April 1948. They would be given retiring benefits and the C.S.O. would proceed in regard to provident fund people in accordance with the present regulations in the absence of directives from Jerusalem. He would give due credit for arrears of leave. There were very few pensionable people, perhaps twenty, and these could be dealt with as soon as Government’s directive arrived.

Palestinian staff were to have the option of returning to Palestine. They were very few in number. Alternatively, the E.S.R. would take them over, but it was the G.M.’s impression that this would not be in their interest. The E.S.R. had, in fact, agreed to take over all the staff serving on the Kantara-Rafa Railway at the time of the transfer and would sort them out into their own grades etc., later. They had admitted, in

approval of Gurney, the Chief Secretary, Draft By-Laws cancelling all rates and fares which were then in force for through traffic over the Kantara-Rafa Railway, and a Public Notice regarding the assumption by the E.S.R. of the operation of the Kantara-Rafah Railway with effect from 1. April, 1948. This was accordingly published in the 'Palestine Gazette'.⁶⁸⁷ The effects of the changeover were soon noticeable - a P.R. Notice⁶⁸⁸ appeared in the Gazette of 8. April, only a week after the handover, advising that the Kantara-Haifa train would now run on Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays Only. The daily service had been halved, and through booking was no longer possible, passengers having to rebook at Rafah.

principle, for the need for a cost of living allowance by way of compensation for the higher cost of living in Sinai, as compared with Egypt.

The GM was providing a pro-forma of a letter to give notice to the staff of the Kantara-Rafa Railway of termination of their services with Palestine Railways. The letter for the pensionable people would promise further information at an early date with regard to terms etc.- This notice had to be served on all staff on the Kantara-Rafa Railway by the 29. February 1948. [*i.e. one month.*] The G.M. thought that P.R. would pay their immediate entitlement to pensionable persons, but that thereafter any pensions would be payable in Cairo by the British Authorities there, in view of the fact that the operation of by the P.R. of the Kantara-Rafa Railway had been by way of an agency.

The Chief Engineer was asked to provide the G.M. with five copies of assets etc. in all sections of the Kantara-Rafa Railway. These must be fully checked as to accuracy and the G.M. had to supply copies to the E.S.R. and to the Army.

Reference was made by the Chief Accountant to money owed by the Egyptian Government in respect of mails carried over the Kantara-Rafa Railway. The G.M. made a note of the outstanding sum as one to be borne in mind in making the settlement which would be made with that Government in respect of its acquisition of the Kantara-Rafa Railway." (Minute 34:746).

⁶⁸⁷ No. 1655 of 25. March 1948, p. 225. Also in the 'Palestine Post' 16. March 1946, p.3. Advert for P.R. re. 'Kantara-Rafah Railway', dated Haifa, 13. March 1948.

"Notice .. With effect from the same date (April 1) the said railway, which runs from Rafah to Kantara, will be operated by the Egyptian State Railways and the Palestine Railways will cease to have any jurisdiction over the Kantara-Rafah Railway nor will it accept any liability for traffic thereon. In all respects, the Kantara-Rafah Railway will become a "foreign" railway and ... all Palestine Railways rates and freight with respect to through traffic over the Kantara-Rafah Railway will be rescinded. .. The through booking of passengers and of consignments by passenger train services between stations on the Palestine Railways and stations on the Kantara-Rafah Railway will be discontinued as is already the case with stations on the Egyptian State Railways. the through booking of goods train traffic will be discontinued. ... Rafah will become the junction between the Palestine Railways and the Egyptian State Railways. Any person requiring to travel by train between stations in Palestine and stations in Egyptian territory will take a ticket to Rafah and re-book therefrom to destinations in Egypt or Palestine as the case may be. Similarly, consignments sent by passenger or goods train services will be booked locally to Rafah by the railways on which the traffic originates and will be re-booked locally thence to the final destination. The owners of goods in wagon loads will be responsible for arranging transhipment of the goods at Rafah.

[*This would be a major discouragement to any through traffic. It is not clear what would happen regarding military traffic, Stores evacuation, nor how long would trains wait at Rafah for all passengers to swarm to the tiny ticket office, nor whether they would they have to change money there to purchase their onward tickets.*]

So far as is known at present, Rafah will become the frontier post for the purpose of immigration and custom formalities such as are now performed at Kantara."

⁶⁸⁸ p.265. Also in 'Palestine Post' Wed. 31. March 1948 p.2: "P.R. Notice. The Public is hereby notified that the daily Passenger Train Service between Haifa and Kantara will, with effect from April 1st. 1948, run Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, in each direction. The first train after March 31st. 1948 will run on Sun. April 4th. 1948.

2. All Passengers except those travelling in sleeping cars will be required to change trains at Rafa Station, which will be the junction between the Palestine Railways and the Egyptian State Railways.

3. Through tickets will not be available and the passengers will be required to book tickets to Rafa and to rebook therefrom to their destination.

A. F. Kirby. G.M. Headquarters Officers, March 30, 1948."

7:(H). CONCLUSION.

Thus the proud link on which international sleeping- and dining-car trains had travelled for two decades, through which so many imports and exports had travelled, not to mention troops on active service and leave in both directions, dwindled and vanished as a through route. Months before the end of the Mandate, Palestine Railways had become a rump, an island, cut off from its neighbouring systems.⁶⁸⁹

⁶⁸⁹ One bizarre and sad footnote must be added, to illustrate the ramifications of what lay behind some of the official pleasantries and obfuscations: On 20. September 1946 Nafe Zada, the Acting Consul-General for Egypt, in Jerusalem, had written to the Chief Secretary that “according to instructions received from the Royal Government of Egypt”, Jewish officers of Palestine Railways should no longer be permitted to cross the El Arish bridge and thus enter Sinai. Fear of terrorism was the reason given, and Zada attached two lists - one of “officers and workers of all denominations who are allowed to cross Al Arish Bridge on official duty”, and one, to be forwarded to the Palestine Railways Administration, calling upon them to “cancel all permits which were granted to Jewish officers and workers, whose names appear on the attached list, and to request the Railways Administration not to employ Jews at all on the line between Rafah and Kantara.”

To his credit, H. L. Gurney responded on 16. October that “the Palestine Govt. finds itself unable to accept the general suggestion (at which indeed it cannot but feel some surprise) - that employees of the Palestine Railways belonging to a particular community of Palestinian nationals should be excluded from service on a certain section of the line on security grounds. If, however, you are in a position to provide reliable information establishing the connection of any particular individual with terrorist groups, this Government would be obliged if you would furnish full particulars.” The matter seems to have ended there - for the time being. At this same period Jews were being denied transit visas through Egypt.

CHAPTER 8.

DISPOSAL OF THE NARROW GAUGE LINES OF P.R. (“HIJAZ RAILWAY”).

8:(A). INTRODUCTION.

The Hedjaz (or ‘Hijaz’) Railway was unique and very complex. Much of its story has been written and published,⁶⁹⁰ but there remain many ‘dark’ areas. For Palestine Railways a lot of the early history is of relevance and must be briefly explored here, simply because it influenced the decision-making processes in the 1940’s and, indeed, could have affected the entire destiny of Haifa, Acre and other towns.

Operationally the line within Palestine became a mere backwater once the H.B.T. line had been constructed. The line had largely stagnated after 1920, and was a financial drain on the system; Nevertheless, it remained a matter requiring much management time and concern - there was constant discussion in the Officers’ Meetings, sections were devoted to it in the P.R. Annual Reports and there was extensive collection of statistics divided by Standard- and Narrow-Gauge; there were concerns over rolling stock, issues of sabotage and traffic, the problems of running a section of railway in a different country whose relationship to Palestine was itself complex (in many respects the Palestine taxpayer subsidised the Trans-Jordan Frontier Force, Railways and other matters) and which then became itself independent, the railway system itself being run by several countries, so that access to Transjordan involved traversing Syria.

We shall concentrate here on the processes that led to the disposal of these lines. These processes were complicated because they fell into several sections; (a). P.R. operated a section of the “H.R. Main Line” which had once run from Damascus to Medina; (b). It operated a section of the H.R.’s Dera’a - Haifa branch. (c). It operated the Haifa - Acre branch, part of which had been realigned and dual-gauged in the 1930’s to provide access to the new Qishon Workshops; a further section of which was dual-gauged in 1942 as part of the H.B.T.; a part of which remained narrow-gauge to the end. (d). It had operated lines Afule-Nablus and Tulkarm - Massudiyeh - Nablus. By this time these lines, relics of World War 1, were moribund but still (just) in existence. (e). In addition - mentioned here only for the sake of completeness - the H.R. had in World War 1 extended into the Sinai and had absorbed the Jerusalem line; by our period most outstanding issues of track materials and rolling stock had been resolved after some complicated and difficult negotiations in the 1930’s. But because of the overlap and the issues of ownership, all these elements need to be dealt with together.

The Narrow- (and Mixed-) Gauge portions of the Palestine Railways system were never as significant as the Standard-Gauge. One reason is that during the Mandate period Palestine ‘faced’ much more to the South and Egypt, whereas the lines had been built when it faced ‘north’ into Syria. This also affected through traffic. Their special status and histories led to very complex negotiating problems, for two main reasons. Firstly, they were operated by but not owned by the Palestine Railways (or Palestine Government), possessing legally the status of a Waqf.⁶⁹¹ Secondly, a section was

⁶⁹⁰ See Bibliography: Tourret, Cotterell, Nicholson, Hughes.

⁶⁹¹ Wakf or Waqf: A Moslem Holy Charitable Foundation, which cannot apparently ever be wound up or the assets transferred. Note from Article 9 of the Mandate: “Respect for the personal status of the various people and communities and for their religious interests shall be fully guaranteed. In particular, the control and administration of Wakfs shall be exercised in accordance with religious law and the dispositions of the founders.” The 1929 ‘Palestine Blue Book’ p. 129 has a note on the “Hijaz Railway in Palestine” and an

operated by P.R. within Transjordan, a section which was isolated from the main P.R. by a length of route from Samakh via Dera'a which was within Syria, operated by the C.F.H..

In 1930, the lengths were:⁶⁹²

In Palestine: 241.316 km (incl. 37.807 km. of sidings.)

In Trans-Jordan: 331.394 km (incl. 8.075 km. of sidings.)

Services were mostly sparse. In 1930 the service on the Amman - Ma'an section in Transjordan was reduced from two to one mixed train per week.⁶⁹³ From June 1930 the service on the Afule-Nablus-Tulkarm line was reduced from three to two trains per week.⁶⁹⁴

In the discussions on disposal we can therefore distinguish separate issues:-

- (a). Who owned the line in Transjordan? and
- (b). Who owned the line in Palestine?
- (c). Who was entitled to take over the Railway? and
- (d). What other assets and liabilities were involved?

In no case were these matters clear.

In an article for 'Railway Gazette' in 1948, Kirby informed his readers:

"The Hedjaz Railway was constructed by the Ottoman Government ostensibly to facilitate the pilgrimage to Mecca, but the main purpose seemed to have been to link up the remote provinces better to suppress rebellious tribes. All the sections south of Tulkarem, where the 105cm. gauge has a junction with the 4ft. 8½in gauge, were taken up after the first world war, and the section south of Ma'an and into Saudi Arabia has not been reopened since its destruction by Lawrence's forces."⁶⁹⁵

Several conferences have been held to clarify the ownership of the Hedjaz Railway and reopen the section to Medina, but the prospects of the latter are unpromising. Under the Treaty of Lausanne, the various sections of the Hedjaz Railway fall to be acquired, without payment, by the states which are heirs to the Ottoman Empire. The sections in Syria and Transjordan are therefore now owned by those governments, **but the ownership of the sections in Palestine must remain obscure until the outcome of the present conflict.**"⁶⁹⁶

Except for some short sections in Palestine, the Hedjaz Railway traversed arid country and tapped no industrial areas. It had never been commercially self-supporting. Passenger traffic was negligible; Apart from some imported traffic from Haifa to Damascus, goods were mainly confined to the grain harvest, which was not enough to produce profits on year-round working. During the Second World War the line from Haifa to Damascus had been intensively used in the Syrian campaign in 1941, and later the section in Transjordan was extended to Naqb Ashtar to serve Akaba as a strategic alternative to the Suez Canal.

The implications of Kirby's comments are that "the conflict" was still unresolved.⁶⁹⁷ He does not explain further, and the only conclusion which seems feasible is that the

identical one for "in Trans-Jordan" - "Constructed by Turkish Government. Owned by the Moslem Wakf Administration. Worked by Palestine Government."

⁶⁹² P.R. G.M. Report 1930 p. 26, para. 90.

⁶⁹³ P.R. G.M. Report 1930 p. 18 para. 61.

⁶⁹⁴ Ditto.

⁶⁹⁵ In fact there had been some sporadic services until 1924.

⁶⁹⁶ Our emphasis.

⁶⁹⁷ By 2003 the question had still not been fully resolved, and there were plans to rebuild sections of the Haifa branch at least as far as Beit Shean.

other countries mentioned were ruled by Moslems and therefore their ability to “absorb” a Waqf might be more readily accepted, whereas “Palestine” could still be classed as divided at that time into Jewish and ‘other’ areas.

The issue of Waqf status is not wholly clear. Nicholson⁶⁹⁸ states that this status had been claimed by the Turkish Government only in 1914, that is not before the construction was carried out, but afterwards, in order to frustrate attempts by the French-owned D.H.P. railway to take over the line.⁶⁹⁹ As a Moslem religious institution it would have been out of the question for non-Moslems to assume control. Once the Ottoman Empire had been dismantled, a *de facto* situation existed whereby British and French interests indeed controlled the system and the “Waqf” issue became a weapon in the hands of Arab leaders in the political intrigues and negotiations which followed. Arab nationalists established a Government in Syria in defiance of the Allies, with Faisal declared its first constitutional monarch on 8 March 1920. In order to frustrate British plans to develop an oil pipeline from the oilfields of Iraq through Syria to the port of Haifa in Palestine - for which they would have needed control over the Hejaz Railway line from Haifa to Dera’a - this Government declared the entire Hejaz system, including its later branches, to be a Waqf. British officials responded by claiming (actually erroneously) that the Haifa branch had never been an integral part of the original railway.⁷⁰⁰

The issue was then further complicated by the seizure of Damascus by the French. A month after the Syrian Declaration of Independence, the San Remo Conference confirmed the claims of the Allies to a division of the area into ‘Mandates’, with Britain taking Palestine, Transjordan and Iraq, and France gaining Lebanon and sections of Syria. Arab anger turned to violence, thus giving the French the excuse they needed to expel Faisal from Damascus. He was forced out in July 1920, and was eventually given the throne of Iraq instead.⁷⁰¹

This had not resolved the issue of the railway’s ownership - indeed, it made the matter yet more complex. In the negotiations preceding the Treaty of Sèvres in August 1920, the Turks now abandoned their previous claim that the entire line was a religious endowment! They argued instead that it was State property, and as such should be included in any assessment for reparations.⁷⁰² However, they were ultimately compelled to accept the British and French terms. Under Article 360 of the Treaty the Turkish Government formally relinquished all claims to ownership of the railway, but did attempt to retain some recognition of its “special position from a religious point of view.”⁷⁰³

⁶⁹⁸ ‘The Hejaz Railway’. James Nicholson. (Stacey International 2005) p. 165.

⁶⁹⁹ An agreement of September 1913 had placed a French director as Administrator of the effectively-bankrupt H.R. system; “Concerns that the French proposals would include a demand for a concession to run the Hejaz Railway resulted in it quickly being registered as a religious trust foundation (waqf) under the Ministry of Awqaf. As a religious institution, it could not be taken over by non-Moslems, and the new agreement of April 1914 therefore stopped short of granting the French a concession..... With the outbreak of war, the agreement was never implemented.” (Nicholson *op. cit.* p. 83f.)

⁷⁰⁰ It is one of those ‘might-have-beens’ of history, to consider how different matters might have been had the original British ‘Syria-Ottoman Railway’ scheme to build a standard-gauge line from Haifa to Damascus succeeded. In such a scenario, the Jezreel Valley line (and Acre branch) would have been much more fully integrated into the later P.R. system and Arab interests would have been kept, in this respect at least, much further to the east.

⁷⁰¹ At the Cairo Conference of 1921.

⁷⁰² i.e. since they had lost it anyway, it could be treated as an asset that might now be disposed of formally, its value set against any claims against the Ottoman regime. Nicholson *op. cit.* p. 167.

⁷⁰³ Nicholson p. 167 citing ‘The Treaties of Peace 1916-1923’, Carnegie Endowment, New York, 1924.

In a Convention of December 1920 the line was divided thus: The French obtained the Damascus-Nessib section of the main line, and the Dera'a-Samakh section of the Haifa branch. The British gained the rest of the Haifa branch west of Samakh with its further branches Haifa-Acre and Afule-Nablus-Tulkarm, and the main line from Nessib southwards to Qatrana. From here southwards through Ma'an remained a part of the Hedjaz until June 1925. However, in November 1920 Prince Abdullah, Faisal's brother, together with some 500 men, travelled (somehow) by train from Medina to Ma'an and called on the Syrians to revolt against the French. In March 1921 he moved to Amman and received a popular welcome. The British, alarmed, sought to defuse the situation⁷⁰⁴ by creating the new State of Transjordan with Abdullah as its ruler - first Amir, then King. The section of railway within this new State therefore became a State asset, albeit controlled still from Palestine. During riots in Damascus in 1921 the main H.R. administrative building with all the Arabic records concerning the construction, financing and operation of the railway was apparently burned.⁷⁰⁵

By 1923 Turkey, reformed by Mustafa Kemal (known as 'Atatürk') had been re-established as a sovereign state and renounced the Treaty of Sèvres. The Allies were compelled to return to negotiations. At talks preceding the Treaty of Lausanne the Turkish representative, Ismet Pasha Inonu, declared that Turkey refused to accept Article 360, and that the railway was indeed a religious endowment, so that as such its ownership and administration should be returned to the Caliph as representative of all Moslems. The British and French were reluctant to get drawn into ownership issues but did agree to a compromise on the matter of the administration of the line; a Moslem Advisory Council was to be established at Medina, with members from Syria, Palestine, Transjordan and the Hedjaz.⁷⁰⁶

The Turkish position then shifted yet again. In order, despite the above, to include the railways' assets in the reparations negotiations, it was now argued that the line was the property of the Turkish State, paid for through national taxation - the Sultan having been acting as the Head of State rather than the Caliph of the religious community when he authorised the line. The League of Nations brought in Professor Eugène Borel as an arbitrator, and he found for the Turkish side. This meant that the line was indeed classed as State rather than as Religious property, and through what was referred to as the 'Borel Decision of 1925' the succeeding secular states - or the Mandate powers - were effectively given the right to dispose of the line as they saw fit.⁷⁰⁷ But this issue of true ownership did not go away.

⁷⁰⁴ The Cairo Conference with Churchill had just opened.

⁷⁰⁵ This would be relevant to later discussions in the 1940's.

⁷⁰⁶ This was the 'Bompard Declaration' of 27. January 1923. The Council was to comprise four Moslem members representing the above countries plus two other members chosen from "Moslem inhabitants of other countries interested in the pilgrimage". The British and French Governments made the declaration "in order to give effect to the desire to recognise the religious character of the Hedjaz Railway" and assured that "all profits remaining after the costs of working of the line have been paid shall be applied to the maintenance and general improvement of the whole line", and "all sums remaining after provision has been made for this... will be applied to the assistance of pilgrims." There is a five-page Memorandum analysing many of these discussions, by the Economic Research Institute of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, dated May 1938, in Central Zionist Archives, No. 8250.

⁷⁰⁷ This section relies on Nicholson's account (op. cit. pp. 168f.) which in turn is based on W. Ochsenwald 'A Modern Waqf: The Hijaz Railway 1900-1948' in 'Arabian Studies' III, 1976.

8:(B). THE FORMER HEDJAZ LINES IN PALESTINE.

These comprised:

(a). The Jezreel Valley line ran from Haifa East, dual-gauge as far as the Nesher Cement Works, then continuing south-eastwards via Afule and Beisan to Samakh. Here traffic was transferred to the C.F.H., and locomotives were normally changed, though the stock worked through to Dera'a and Damascus or Amman. There was a small loco shed and turntable at Samakh for these purposes. The main engine shed was at Haifa East.⁷⁰⁸

The line was described thus:⁷⁰⁹

<u>km.</u>	<u>Station</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
0.0	HAIFA EAST	7 Loops. Turntable. Sidings,
2.0	Acre Junction.	Junction for Acre line.
4.5	-	Quarry siding.
7.4	NESHER	2 Passing Loops. 2 Sidings. Serves Cement Works.
10.2	MESHEK YAJUR	Halt only.
15.0	EL ROY	Halt only.
17.0	KIRYAT HAROSHET.	Goods Platform.
21.9	KEFAR YEHOSHUA	2 Passing loops.
26.7	KEFAR BARUCH.	(Halt only).
36.4	AFFULA.	4 Passing Loops. Goods Platform, Goods shed. Triangle; Siding. Junc. for Masudiyah, Nablus & Tulkarm. At ca. 175ft., the highest station on the line.
45.8	AIN HAROD.	Sdg.
48.7	TEL YOSEF.	(Halt).
51.0	SHATTA.	Passing Loop; Goods Platform; Siding.
ca. 57.0	HASSADEH.	(Halt).
59.2	BEISAN.	2 Sidings. One sdg. goes to quarry. 351 ft. below sea level.
61.5	-	P.W.D. Siding & Quarry.,
69.9	BEIT YOSEF.	Goods Platform; Goods Shed.
76.5	JISR EL MAJAMI.	2 Passing Loops. (ca. 800 feet below sea level.)
78.0	-	Palestine Electric Co. siding.
79.0	NAHARAYIM.	
81.4	DELHAMIYA	Quarry & Siding.
84.2	EMEK HAYARDEN.	(Halt.)
87.0	SAMAKH.	4 Passing Loops. Goods Platform, Goods Shed; Engine Shed. Turntable. 617 feet below sea level.

It will be seen that of the 20 designated stopping places, at least 8 are mere Halts - a simple platform of gravel and in many cases a hut - serving settlements newly established by Jewish colonists. 15 km. between passing loops was quite common.

(b). The 20.2 km. line along Haifa Bay to Acre - the majority of which had been, since 1942, dual-gauged north of Qishon Works (km. 5.6) as far as Na'amin Junc. (km. 19.1) for use of H.B.T. traffic.⁷¹⁰ This had presumably meant total relaying with wooden sleepers, since the standard H.R. sleeper was of steel, and short, and therefore incapable

⁷⁰⁸ This building, suitably refurbished, now forms the Israel Railway Museum.

⁷⁰⁹ From 'Naval Intelligence Handbook', B.R. 514. December 1943. pp.368f.

⁷¹⁰ B.R. 514 p. 366.

of modification. Passenger and some freight traffic worked to Acre, and it is known that a section of track into the ammunition dumps east of Acre was also mixed or narrow gauge. However this line, isolated from the rest of the P.R. network by its gauge difference, served no major centres of population, and the only industrial areas it touched - including the refineries at Haifa, the port at Haifa and the Nesher cement works - were also served by standard gauge traffic.

(c). In Samaria. By the 1945 period the line from Afule south through Jenin to Masoudiya/Sebastiya, thence Nablus, or down the Samarian hills to Tulkarm, was effectively moribund.⁷¹¹

Even without the political developments of the period it is clear that, in the postwar world with increasing motorisation and road improvements, the line was - and had been for some time already - living on borrowed time. Perhaps a significant indication is that during the whole of the Mandate period the only capital investment in this section was in the form of two Sentinel steam railcars, for more economic working of lightly-loaded services.⁷¹² The only new stations were, as already mentioned, mere Halts. No other new locomotives, coaches or wagons were purchased, though some derelict specimens were overhauled and returned to service during the war years; no new lines or branches were built, apart from a quarry spur and the lines needed for construction of the Yarmuk Power Station. In short, time effectively stood still for almost thirty years as the equipment aged or decayed.

The 'Working Timetable No. 4' of 1. November 1945, a period when the wartime traffic had already subsided to a more normal level, shows three 'Mixed Daily' train pairs to Samakh from Haifa, one return Railcar working to Beisan, one Daily Goods, one Conditional Goods. A thrice-weekly (Tues./Thurs./Sat.) service worked through to Damascus in just over twelve hours. There were five Haifa - Acre Mixed return trains plus an early Workmen's service to Qishon.⁷¹³

The destruction of the second Yarmuk bridge led to necessary changes. An Emergency Timetable⁷¹⁴ was introduced from 1. July 1946, with one Mixed return working from Haifa to Samakh, and a return working from Samakh to Haifa by the

⁷¹¹ Tulkarm-Nablus 37.78km. Affula-Masoudiya 59.9km. (B.R. 514 pp.370ff.) Afule-Mesoudieh was closed in 1932 due to decreasing traffic, but the track remained and was used intermittently as a diversion in 1934/5 when floods blocked the main line, and for a month in 1936 for freight; Nablus-Nur-esh-Shams (a quarry near Tulkarm, reached by a mixed-gauge spur from the standard gauge main line) had closed in June 1936, reopened in November 1936 and closed again in June 1938 after sabotage damaged several bridges. (Tourret p.95.) Both lines had then been reconditioned during the war by Royal Engineers. The November 1945 timetable still allowed for a daily (except Fridays) freight Tulkarm-Masoudiya- Nablus and return, but no link with the line through Jenin. Tourret (p.106) notes that "the line from Nablus to Nur-esh-Shams was reopened in November 1944 for a daily freight train to relieve the general transport position, but was closed again in July 1946 owing to lack of traffic." The 1942-46 P.R. G.M. Report (p.62) notes that the line was reopened to give Nablus merchants a rail service for their traffic and to link up the area with a rail connection to the main line at Tulkarm, the principal traffic being cereals from the ports to the mills at Nablus. At that point the reopening of the Masoudiya - Affula section for "seasonal special train working from Tulkarm with citrus exports for the Syrian market" was "under consideration". In fact the Nablus line was closed from 17. Oct. 1945 - 18. Nov. 1945, "and the engine and wagons used for grain traffic from Jisr El-Majami to Haifa", indicating where priorities lay. (ibid).

⁷¹² And also built so that they could be converted to Standard Gauge if necessary. In the event this was never done.

⁷¹³ WTT pp. 23-26.

⁷¹⁴ This information is found in a letter from the Superintendent of the Line dated 28. June 1946, found in the Tel Aviv Municipal Archives, no ref.

Sentinel Railcar, which now stabled overnight at Samakh. This gave two trains in each direction over this section, all other services being 'suppressed'.

Operations were, of course, based at Haifa East, where locomotive and carriage facilities were situated. The locos were by now mostly oil-burning.

8:(C). THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SITUATION IN TRANSJORDAN.

Syria had come under French influence (especially after 1920 when General Gouraud, the Commissioner-in-Chief in Western Syria, effectively expelled Faisal from his new state there), but Transjordan was in the British sphere, and the British High Commissioner called a meeting of sheikhs and notables at Es Salt in August 1920, "where he declared that H.M. Government favoured self-government for them, with the assistance of a few British officers and advisers." That policy was followed for the next 25 years. However, as noted, three months later the Amir Abdulla, Faisal's brother, had appeared in Transjordan with a small force from the Hedjaz, intent on raising the tribes and marching into Syria against the French. In March 1921 he was still at Amman; "At a meeting in Jerusalem between Churchill (then Sec. of State for the Colonies), Sir Herbert Samuel (High Commissioner for Palestine), Abdulla and Lawrence (Churchill's adviser), Abdulla agreed to abandon his Syrian project and accept the Amirate⁷¹⁵ of Transjordan under British mandate, with a grant-in-aid from the British."⁷¹⁶ Faisal was elected as King of the new state of Iraq in June 1922.

The Organic Law of 1928, following agreement between Britain and Transjordan, laid down the constitution and set up an independent government 'provided that such Government is constitutional and places His Britannic Majesty in a position to fulfil his international obligations.'⁷¹⁷ This was accepted by an elected Legislative Council in April 1929 and from that date self-government in Transjordan became effective." The status of the Amirate was further advanced in 1939 by a new agreement with the British Government., whereby a six-member cabinet, responsible to the Amir, took the place of an Executive Council, and the Amir was authorised to raise military forces and to appoint consuls in neighbouring states. The British Government only retained the right to maintain armed forces in Transjordan. It was noted "The periodic outbreaks in Palestine have had their reactions in Transjordan, where the sympathy of the people has been unanimously with the Arabs in Palestine. No colonization or settlement by immigrant Jews in Transjordan is permitted".⁷¹⁸

⁷¹⁵ "Amirate" was the official name and title, but "Emirate" and "Emir" are actually the terms most frequently used.

⁷¹⁶ It could be argued this was in contravention of Article 5 of the Mandate, which read: "The Mandatory shall be responsible for seeing that no Palestine territory shall be ceded or leased to, or in any way placed under the control of, the Government of any other Power." However, Article 25 provided that "In the territories lying between the Jordan and **the eastern boundary of Palestine as ultimately determined**, the Mandatory shall be entitled, with the consent of the Council of the League of Nations, to postpone or withhold application of such provisions of this mandate as he may consider inapplicable to the existing local conditions, and to make such provision for the administration of the territories as he may consider suitable to those conditions, provided that no action shall be taken which is inconsistent with the provisions of Articles 15, 16 and 18."

⁷¹⁷ Cmd. 3069, 1928.

⁷¹⁸ This and earlier historical notes are taken from "Handbook to Palestine and Transjordan" B.R. 514 pub. Naval Intelligence Division, 1943 pp. 460-463, and 473. This is clearly a summarised and sanitised version of the entire history from 1918-1945 but will suffice for our purpose. The High Commissioner for Palestine acted also (separately) for Transjordan, represented in Amman by a British Resident. In 1946 a new Treaty was negotiated with the Govt. of Transjordan.

In terms of economic geography, the Handbook had to admit⁷¹⁹ that there had been no census of Transjordan; the population was estimated at “from 300,000 to 350,000, although in 1940 a figure as high as 440,000 was suggested...” It was described⁷²⁰ as a pastoral and agricultural country, and “except for some tailoring and dyeing, two small tobacco factories at Amman and three small distilleries near Es Salt it has no industries”.

8:(D). THE HEDJAZ RAILWAY LINE IN TRANSJORDAN.

What actually existed to be handed or taken over? Ignoring for now the 73.8 km. section from Samakh to the junction of Dera'a, and the 12.8km. section of the ‘main’ HR line southwards from Dera'a to Nessib, which fell within Syria, the Handbook describes the relevant line thus:⁷²¹

Nessib - Amman	86.5 km.
Amman - Maan	236.4 km.
Maan - Nakb Shtar ⁷²²	41.0 km.

The line was narrow-gauge (105cm.), and single track. The ballast comprised crushed crystalline limestone and black basalt. Rails were flat-bottom, of 43.5 lb. per yard,⁷²³ laid on steel Sleepers (of pea-pod shape). Maximum axle-load was 10 tons. Minimum radius of curves was 100m. Maximum gradient was 1-in-50 (quite frequent between Amman and Kassir). Other steep gradients of between 1-in-52 and 1-in-60 were located near Zerka, Rusaifa, Kalat ed-Daba, and Suwaga. The maximum distance between passing-loops was 25km.; Kilometre-posts were numbered from Damascus, from km.124 to 459 (at Ma'an).

In terms of the Speed and Capacity of the line, before 1939 the weekly passenger train had been scheduled to take about 11 hours to cover the 209 miles to Ma'an. Goods trains took 14 or 15 hours. Train speeds were between 20 and 30m.p.h., with several speed restrictions because of the gradients and sharp curves. With the new passing-loops added since 1939, capacity was said to have been increased to 8 trains a day, the Nett load of trains being 125 tons.

A detailed description of the line was included. Those stations in italics indicate passing loops installed during the war; The asterisked stations Khan Zebib, Menzil and Aneiza were closed again as crossing stations from April 1944.⁷²⁴

<u>km.</u> (from Damascus).	<u>Station Name.</u>	<u>Facilities & Remarks.</u>
136.1.	NESSIB or NASIB.	Passing loop.
ca. 149.5.	<i>Ghadir el Abyad.</i>	Passing Loop. (new station).
161.9.	MAFRAK.	Passing loop. Station acts as the base for the I.P.C. pipeline engineers, and starting point for the trans-desert road to Baghdad.

⁷¹⁹ *ibid.* p.456f.

⁷²⁰ *ibid.* p.484.

⁷²¹ *ibid.* p.508.

⁷²² Normally referred to as Naqb Ashtar; this was the wartime emergency line built in 1942 but, so far as is known, never used. Turret notes it was opened in March 1942 and closed in August 1943. (p. 97). It was never, strictly speaking, part of the original “Hedjaz Railway” as such but did use materials taken from other disused stretches. Apparently the line was still largely intact in 1995 - see ‘Harakevet’ 33:7(a).; also ‘Harakevet’ 62:12 for a description of the station, and 63:10 for a note on lifting of track in the station area in 1944/45.

⁷²³ Note once again a mixture of Imperial and Metric measurements.

⁷²⁴ 1942-46 P.R. Report p. 62.

		Goods Platform.
ca. 177.9.	<i>Toghra.</i>	Passing Loop.
185.5.	SAMRA.	Passing Loop.
203.0.	ZERKA.	Passing Loop. Loading Platform.
211.4.	<i>Rusaifa.</i>	Passing Loop.
222.6.	AMMAN.	5 Passing Loops. Goods platform and shed. Engine Shed for 6 locos. Turntable. 6 sidings.
234.4.	KASSIR.	Passing Loop, Siding.
249.1.	LIBBAN.	Passing Loop. Loading Platform.
260.0.	ZIZA.	2 Passing Loops; Loading Platform.
278.9.	<i>Kalat ed Daba.</i>	Passing Loop.
295.7.	KHAN ZEBIB.*	Passing loop; Loading Platform.
309.7.	<i>Suwaga.</i>	Passing Loop.
326.6.	KATRANI.	2 Passing Loops; Turning Triangle. Loading Platform. The station for Kerak, which is reached by the motor-road through Lejjun and is 20 miles distant to the west.
225.5.	MENZIL*.	Passing Loop.
ca. 367.5.	<i>Fareifra.</i>	Passing Loop.
378.2.	KALAT EL HASA. (El Hassa).	Passing Loop. Loading Platform.
397.8.	JEROUF. (Jurf ed Derwish).	Road leads north-west to Tafileh.
4230.0.	ANEIZA*.	Passing Loop. Track leads west to Shobek.
ca. 440.3.	WADI JARDUN.	3 Passing Loops; Goods platform; Goods Shed.
459.0.	MAAN.	3 Passing Loops; Goods Platform, Goods shed; Engine Shed for 3 Locos. 7 Sidings.
ca. 349.7.	<i>Ain Waheida.</i>	Passing Loop.
ca. 490.0.	<i>Ain Abu Lisan.</i>	Passing Loop.
ca. 500.0.	<i>Nakb Shtar.</i>	Passing Loop. Heavy motor transport can reach Nakb Shtar from the port of Akaba, by way of Wadi Itm. ⁷²⁵

For the purposes of this study it is important simply to illustrate that this was a line which could theoretically be described as self-contained, but essentially went from nowhere to nowhere, serving almost nowhere in between. The northern end at Nessib was merely a small passing station (with no turning facility) that found itself on the post-1920 border, and without through running to Dera'a and Damascus would serve no purpose whatsoever; the southern end at Ma'an did possess depot facilities but had no traffic potential, since the old main line to Medina was derelict and disused,⁷²⁶ and the new

⁷²⁵ See track plans in 'Harakevet' 62:12.

⁷²⁶ Tourret p. 87: "In 1925 the pilgrim traffic was of small volume and was considered not likely to recover until the H.R. was reconditioned to Medina. Unless the pilgrim traffic could be revived, it was considered that the H.R. in Transjordan was unlikely to pay its way. It was estimated that it would cost LE10,670 to fully recondition the railway between Amman and Ma'an, so it was decided to spend only the minimum money necessary (LE1,250) to keep the railway in bare running order from Amman to Ma'an until the pilgrim traffic grew enough to produce sufficient revenue to pay for rebuilding the line. [i.e. retaining deviations around the sites of blown-up bridges.] Between Ma'an and Mudawara the estimate for

branch to Naqb Ashtar had been built for specific wartime purposes that no longer applied. The phosphate traffic which made this line (and new extensions to mines and to Aqaba) important in the 1960's were at this stage not yet relevant.⁷²⁷ In peacetime, one train per week had been sufficient for the traffic south of the capital. There was a small depot at Amman but no major workshops for engines or rolling stock. This was, truly, merely a "section" of what had once been conceived as a main trunk route system.⁷²⁸

From the P.R. perspective there was virtually nothing to be lost and perhaps something to be gained by "hiving off" this drain on its resources.⁷²⁹

The November 1944 WTT⁷³⁰ showed a Conditional Goods on Saturdays and Sundays Only, departing Amman 07.00, arriving Dera'a 12.05, a Mixed Train daily except Saturdays and Sundays dep. Amman 08.10, arriving 12.00, and a Conditional Goods daily at 09.20, arriving 14.25. Southbound from Dera'a there were also just two trains - Mixed daily (except Saturdays and Sundays) 15.00, arriving Amman 19.20, and Conditional Goods at 16.10, arriving 21.39.⁷³¹ The Amman-Ma'an service⁷³² comprised 08.00 Amman-16.43 Ma'an Saturdays Only, returning Sundays Only on exactly the same timings. It seems the useable locomotive or train set was therefore occupied south of Amman on these days. The Naqb Ashtar branch is still listed on this page, but without any workings shown.⁷³³

Little is known of actual operations on this line in the period in question.⁷³⁴ However, there was one major incident with tragic consequences - a washout between Mafraq and Jaber on the evening of 5. March 1947 with severe consequences. Arthur Kirby wrote on 22. March 1947⁷³⁵ to the Chief Secretary to report. The embankment, approximately 3 metres high, had been completely washed out over a length of 30 metres and a train, running in darkness from Mafraq to Jaber, ran into the washout. With the aid of bulldozers and other equipment borrowed from the Iraq Petroleum Company it was possible to restore the line for traffic by 13. March. Typically, Kirby noted that "Much credit is due to Mr. Fogarty, a newly appointed young Assistant Engineer, for his initiative and resourcefulness on this occasion." He stressed that the washout was a result of a sudden cloudburst and could not have been foreseen or guarded against by the normal track patrols.

The damage to rolling stock as a result of this washout amounted to 9 wagons

reconditioning was LE41,500, so it was decided not to spend any money until reconditioning was started from Mudawara to Medina."

⁷²⁷ Phosphate beds were discovered at Ruseifa, 7 miles NE from Amman, in 1936. In 1942 it was announced that rock phosphate quarried there was being used in the manufacture of fertilizers in Palestine. (B.R. 514 Handbook, p.483.)

⁷²⁸ It was only during the war that the narrow-gauge section had served any important purpose at all - though this had indeed been a period when capacity was put under enormous strain. The main source of traffic from Palestine was probably Mafraq, the IPC railhead, for pipes and other stores traffic.

⁷²⁹ According to Lee, the Amman Depot was constantly indenting for "shiny pieces of brass".

⁷³⁰ p.30.

⁷³¹ Presumably only one of these Conditional Goods train ran on any one day, or they returned together.

⁷³² p.32.

⁷³³ Tourret describes it as "closed to regular traffic although special arrangements could be made to operate a train."

⁷³⁴ Tourret (p. 102f). notes that the Haifa-Damascus service in 1945 was normally maintained by carriage sets U (P.R.) and V (C.F.H.), both comprising two first/second class coaches, two third-class coaches and a Brake/Postal/Luggage van. Dera'a-Amman services at the same period were normally worked by Set Y, consisting of one first/second class coach, two third-class and a BPL. (p.105). He does not mention the Amman-Ma'an service but presumably the same set was used. The Emergency Timetable introduced from 1. July 1946 noted that Mixed 700/701 Amman-Dera'a would run Mondays & Fridays Only.

⁷³⁵ File 371/22 (microfilm G93/108 at Ginzach HaMedinah, frames 975ff.)

scrapped, one badly damaged, and C.F.H. engine No. 260: “Cab and fittings completely destroyed, Engine pony truck and frames twisted, Smokebox badly damaged and miscellaneous pipework fittings etc. scrapped or damaged, R.H. cylinder casting broken”. Severe damage indeed.

A Hartmann 2-8-2⁷³⁶ - and not even P.R. property - would seem to have met its end here, for the above description of twisted frames and broken cylinders really indicates a write-off in these circumstances.⁷³⁷ There is no mention of the fate of the footplate crew or any brakemen, nor why a C.F.H. engine was in use here, but it is typical of Kirby to give especial praise to a young and enthusiastic assistant.

8:(E). INITIAL DISCUSSIONS ON THE DISPOSAL OF THE H.R. LINES IN TRANSJORDAN.

Various political dynamics now led to the formal abrogation of Palestine Railways' involvement in the Hedjaz Railway.⁷³⁸ This process was complicated not only because P.R. operated sections in two countries, divided by a third, but also because it did so under two different sets of rules. Most of those involved in the discussions were initially not clear about this. These rules reflected the different political reality shortly after the First World War; Further, the sections were themselves part of a greater whole which was at precisely this point attracting the attention of neighbouring and newly-independent states; and the “British” side involved not only Kirby at P.R. but the High Commissioner of Palestine in Jerusalem, British Residents or Ministers in Amman, Damascus and Jeddah, and in London both the Colonial Office (for Palestine) and the Foreign Office. This required a large amount of correspondence, some of it repetitive, some reflecting misunderstandings that had to be laboriously expounded and clarified, and all involving delay to varying degree. This cumbersome structure, combined with political changes on all sides, hampered what might otherwise have been a relatively smooth handover.⁷³⁹

We will not describe in detail the negotiations that led to Transjordan's independence. It should be noted that on 5. April 1946 there were angry comments in the U.S. Senate when three Senators accused Britain of breaking a 1942 Treaty with the USA on the Palestine Mandate by going ahead unilaterally with the granting of independence, and on 8. April it was admitted that “the Anglo-Trans Jordan Treaty has not yet been submitted to the Arab League Council for discussion and confirmation...”⁷⁴⁰ The Anglo-Transjordan Treaty of Alliance was ratified on 17. June 1946 and on 2. January 1947 Kirkbride⁷⁴¹ drafted an initial “Annual Report for 1946”⁷⁴² which reveals

⁷³⁶ Hartmann (Chemnitz) 4029 of 1918.

⁷³⁷ However, remarkably, the loco in question is still in existence, Tourret noting it as under repair in 1979 and in service in 1983. Tourret p.179. See also ‘Harakevet’ 51:6(A).

⁷³⁸ As noted elsewhere, there are various spellings in use; we prefer this for our use, but shall quote other versions as they appear in documents. There is no chance of misunderstandings arising. In the same way, Ma’an and Maan, Dera’a and Deraa are used interchangeably.

⁷³⁹ File FO 816/49 is the basis for most of what follows in this section; No papers on this topic were found in Ginzach HaMedina in Jerusalem, nor in the P.R. archives in Haifa.

⁷⁴⁰ ‘Palestine Post’ 8. April 1946 p.1.

⁷⁴¹ Sir Alec Kirkbride, K.C.M.G., O.B.E., British Resident in Amman.

⁷⁴² P.R.O. FO 371/62202. Later published 13. Jan. 1947 as E 417/417/80. On p.3 para. 7: “Terrorism in Palestine affected Transjordan more closely than the other Arab countries and the three bridges connecting the two countries were blown up on the day of the ratification of the treaty. It was to the credit of the authorities... that the outrages in Palestine were not translated into some practical form of resentment. Although the Transjordan Government subscribed to the decision of the Arab League to boycott Jewish

much detail on political and diplomatic developments but refers only briefly to the railways. He also describes Abdullah's new political ambitions, which included the inclusion in Transjordan of the Arab districts of Palestine following partition, a closer union between Iraq and Transjordan, and the establishment of a monarchy over Syria and Transjordan or 'Greater Syria'.⁷⁴³

The issue of disposal of the narrow-gauge railway system in Palestine and Transjordan had been formally noted in a Memorandum by Kirkbride to the F.O. on 4. June 1946.⁷⁴⁴ He emphasised that there were "two related but different issues, for the Kingdom of Transjordan acquired a special treaty relationship to Britain in June 1946, and therefore the matter of Palestine Railway assets, stock and operations there should be seen as a separate matter from that of the Hedjaz system within the original Palestine Mandate borders after 1922." This explains his Foreign Office concern and perspective. Regarding the Transjordan section, the Transjordan Government's position had always been that the line was a religious endowment (Waqf) while H.M.G. had "declined to commit themselves on the subject of ownership", their last communication, some considerable time ago, being that H.M.G. "held the Hejaz Railway in trust pending a final decision as to its ownership." The Transjordan Government had acquiesced to this at that time. The line was currently operated by the General Manager of the Palestine Railways on behalf of H.M.G..⁷⁴⁵ Now that the Transjordan Government had almost achieved independence, it would appear that the section of line in Transjordan territory should pass into their possession "on either event, that is to say, either as Waqf or as an asset of the Ottoman Government which they now inherit." Perhaps with relief he added, "They have not yet raised the question."⁷⁴⁶

This being the case, why raise the question at all? Because there now existed an anomaly whereby the existing *status quo* of P.R. operating the lines no longer truly applied. Indeed, Transjordan had effectively moved from being a Colonial Office to a Foreign Office concern. Kirkbride doubted whether the Transjordan Government could operate the line efficiently, and noted he had suggested previously⁷⁴⁷ that they should be asked to agree to P.R. continuing to operate the section, but now on behalf of the Transjordan Government instead of on behalf of H.M.G.. He had, it seems, understood previously that the Transjordan Govt. would be prepared to accept some such agreement. The General Manager of P.R. had been consulted, but the conditions which he desired to impose seemed to be so complicated and so unlikely to be accepted by the Transjordan Government that no attempt had been made to decide the matter while the Transjordan Treaty was being negotiated.⁷⁴⁸ One alternative would be for it to be operated by the

goods, the boycott was enforced more in theory than in practice, and articles of Jewish manufacture, for which a real need existed here, were imported without restrictions...." and p.8 para. 15: "The Transjordan section of the Hejaz Railway continued to be operated by the Palestine Railways, and the Transjordan Government showed no anxiety to press its claim to the ownership and custody of the line."

⁷⁴³ Each of these could theoretically have had implications for the development of the Railway system - the first could have involved the H.R. sections in Palestine, the third would have brought the Transjordan and Syrian sections of the H.R. under common ownership once more.

⁷⁴⁴ This and subsequent documents cited here are all retained in P.R.O. File FO 371/52922.

⁷⁴⁵ Hence, of course, the need for such total separation of accounts.

⁷⁴⁶ One could barely expect to see a greater contrast with the manner in which the Independence of Palestine or the negotiations with Egypt were handled. Here, potential issues are being raised even before any claim or complaint has been raised.

⁷⁴⁷ He refers elsewhere to 'Colonial Office file 79036 (1945)' and adds "I believe there is other correspondence in the Secret archives of the Colonial Office on this subject."

⁷⁴⁸ Exactly what was proposed has not been found. But it seems characteristic of Kirby to approach such a topic with what seemed to others to be excessive energy and attention to detail.

Syrian section, from Damascus.⁷⁴⁹ There would, however, be some advantage in keeping the line under British control, especially in time of war. Moreover, he noted, “the present relations between Transjordan and Syria are not cordial, and at the moment I doubt whether either Government would be willing to cooperate in a matter such as the operation of the railway.”⁷⁵⁰ This being so, it seemed desirable to take the opportunity of concluding the agreement first mooted earlier in the year. In order to achieve this, however, it would be necessary for the conditions proposed by the G.M. of P.R. to be modified considerably.

So the pressure was on Kirby to compromise. The F.O. sent Kirkbride’s memo to the C.O. six weeks later on 16. July, with the comment “We think that this is a matter which should be settled locally, if possible between the Transjordan Govt. and Palestine Railways, with the High Commissioner and Kirkbride holding the ring.” So now P.R. was expected to assume a diplomatic role as well, and negotiate with a foreign Government! On 18. September 1946 (a further two months having passed in the meantime) a more pragmatic attitude took hold and the F.O. addressed Kirkbride in Amman directly, advising him that if the question were raised by the Government of Transjordan, he should get in touch with the High Commissioner in Palestine, and “attempt to secure agreed terms locally for the management of this section of the line by the Palestine Railways, on behalf of the Govt. of Transjordan.”⁷⁵¹ Clearly this was the option preferred in London, and the Colonial Office was to inform the High Commissioner - these two offices of State working in parallel within their respective spheres of responsibility.

On 3. May 1947 Samir Rifai, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs in Transjordan, wrote to the British Resident in Amman to raise the dreaded subject. Intriguingly he referred to an exchange of letters between his predecessor, Ibrahim Pasha Hashim⁷⁵² and Ernest Bevin, the Foreign Minister, on 22. March 1946, at the time of signing the Treaty of Alliance. From this it appears that, some months before Kirkbride’s cogitations, there had already been correspondence on the topic of P.R.’s continuing to operate the “Transjordan section of the Hedjaz Railway”⁷⁵³ on behalf of the Transjordan Government; he refers also to “verbal conversations between Your Excellency and myself on the same subject.” His letter expressed formally the desire of the Transjordan Government to take over the line in Transjordan, and requested that he be informed of “the arrangements which should be made for the handing over of the said section to the Transjordan Government”.

There was little economic or commercial justification for assuming responsibility for operating this line, so it was presumably more a matter of political prestige - though the political uncertainty concerning the future operator of Palestine Railways in general may have been an additional factor.

By 9. May 1947 things were getting more concrete. The British Legation at Amman notified Bevin of the latest detailed proposal.⁷⁵⁴ The Transjordan Government was prepared to take over any railway personnel who wished to transfer, and would

⁷⁴⁹ i.e. Absorb it into the C.F.H. which in any case ran south through Dera’a to Nassib.

⁷⁵⁰ Not much has changed in the past 60 years.

⁷⁵¹ E.9022/5259/80.

⁷⁵² Mohammed Shureiki had become Foreign Minister in the Council of Ministers in September 1946 and there were several subsequent changes of ministers and portfolios.

⁷⁵³ Note this useage.

⁷⁵⁴ P.R.O. FO 816/49. XC 910.

guarantee all payments, pensions and retirement gratuities; they were prepared to accept a division of the rolling stock on the basis which had been agreed during a conference held at Haifa in October 1935 on the subject of the Hejaz Railway as a whole - namely, the length of track and amount of traffic in August 1914 as measured by train kilometrage.⁷⁵⁵ And importantly, but understandably, they were “not prepared to accept any liability in respect of the deficit which accrued in the working of the Hejaz Railway over a period during which they had no responsibility for or say in the operation of the line.” Moreover, they had “abandoned any idea of asking the Palestine Railway administration to continue to operate the line on their behalf and would not agree to any such suggestion if it was made from our side.”

Kirkbride’s comment was that it might be reasonable to expect payment of any deficit from 22. March 1946 to the date of handover, on the basis that “their ownership of the line was admitted tacitly for the first time on that date and the operation of the line thereafter by the P.R. Administration was at their request”.⁷⁵⁶ Prior to that date, he wrote, H.M.G. had regarded themselves as holding the Palestine and Transjordan sections of the Railway in trust pending a final decision as to the ownership of the line as a whole. Once Transjordan was recognised as an independent state it was clear that H.M.G. could no longer act in that capacity and the responsibility for the Transjordan section would be passed to the Transjordan Government. He referred to a letter from the Foreign Office to the League of Nations in May 1930 which had skirted the issue on the basis of “the controversy which had arisen on the subject with the Transjordan Govt. who maintained the view that the line was an Islamic ‘Waqf’”; that difference of opinion was now academic, for “the Transjordan section of the railway becomes the responsibility of the Transjordan Govt., whether as a ‘waqf’ or as ex-state property of the Ottoman Empire.”⁷⁵⁷

On the same date a ‘Restricted’ despatch was sent from Amman, advising that the Transjordan Govt. was also unwilling to make any financial contribution to the reconstitution of the entire Hedjaz Railway, on the basis that their section of the line was intact, and they considered the Saudi Arabian Government alone should pay for the rebuilding of the damaged section in their territory! The concept of mutual responsibility

⁷⁵⁵ Apparently the Minutes were sent in a Confidential despatch in January 1936. This file has not been found in surviving P.R. records. However, the formula to be applied raises interesting problems. Who had any records of traffic in August 1914, in the Ottoman period? Would these indicate traffic from Nessib, at that point an unimportant passing place and not a border? How would kilometrage be assessed, bearing in mind that the lines Nablus-Tulkarm and Ma’an-Naqb Ashtar did not exist at that time?

⁷⁵⁶ The full text of the Anglo-Trans-Jordan Treaty with the Annex and Exchange of Notes between the Prime Minister, Ibrahim Pasha Hashim, and Mr. Bevan, was published in the ‘Palestine Post’ on 24. May 1946, p.8. The “Exchange of Notes” includes “No. 3. Ibrahim Pasha Hashim to Mr. Ernest Bevin. (*Translation*). London, 22. March 1946. Sir Alec Kirkbride, K.C.M.G., O.B.E., British Resident in Amman.

At the moment of signature of the Treaty of Alliance, I have the honour to place on record the desire of the Trans-Jordan Government, that the Palestine Railways should continue to operate on their behalf the Trans-Jordan section of the Hejaz Railway, and that negotiations with the object of deciding upon agreed financial and administrative arrangements to this end shall be opened as soon as possible between the Governments of Trans-Jordan and Palestine.”

The response was listed as “No. 4. Mr. Ernest Bevin to Ibrahim Pasha Hashim. Foreign Office, London. 22. March 1946. I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of Your Excellency’s Note of today’s date on the subject of the Hejaz Railway and to inform you that His Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom agree that the Palestine Railways shall continue to operate, on behalf of the Trans-Jordan Government, the Trans-Jordan section of the Hejaz Railway and that negotiations with the object of deciding upon agreed financial and administrative arrangements to this end shall be opened as soon as possible between the Governments of Trans-Jordan and Palestine.”

⁷⁵⁷ We have found no information as to how the French colonial administration treated the “Waqf” question for their section in Syria, which had been reconstituted into the C.F.H.

for an asset held in the name of “all Moslems” was clearly restricted when it came to paying out money.

But what was going on here? There were rumours of plans to rebuild the line back to Medina, and possibly even complete the original vision of extensions to Mecca and the Red Sea coast. On 20. May 1947 the British Embassy in Cairo advised the Minister at Amman, and the Secretariat in Jerusalem,⁷⁵⁸ that they had made some enquiries of the Transjordan Minister in Cairo as to whether a conference on this theme had actually (as claimed) taken place in March that year. Apparently it had not!⁷⁵⁹ Instead, the Minister had explained that he had been approached by Sheikh Youssef Yassin,⁷⁶⁰ who had produced a note which suggested a discussion with a view to the reconstituting of the railway. Yassin had apparently suggested at the same time that, as a preliminary step, the accounts of the Railway relating to the years during which sections had been under either French or British administration should be audited. A copy of Yassin’s note had been sent to Amman, and Samir Rifai Pasha⁷⁶¹ had told the Minister not to engage himself in any discussion on this subject at that time. Yassin had also approached the Syrian authorities during a visit to Damascus.

On the same day a totally different version of events was sent from the British Legation in Damascus.⁷⁶² According to this, based on ‘unofficial enquiries’, there had indeed been a conference in Cairo on 5. March of representatives from various Middle East railways. This had been attended by Mr. A. F. Kirby as the representative of Palestine Railways, and minutes of the meeting had been circulated. It was noted that the Transport Committee of the Arab League met periodically under the chairmanship of Jamil Bey Mardam, the Syrian Prime Minister. “About 16 months ago there was a meeting at Sofar, Lebanon, during which a decision was taken that the Hejaz Railway was not a concern of the Arab League but was a matter for intergovernmental action on the part of Syria, Transjordan and Saudi Arabia.” The Committee had therefore recommended that the three states concerned should reach an agreement by which the Hejaz line would run to Medina and Mecca.⁷⁶³ Further, the Committee had met again in Damascus in April, during which it had been agreed that the three states would establish a unified administration for the H.R.

Two days later more concrete information was to hand - confirming that on the 18 April a meeting had indeed passed such a resolution, proposed by Yassin, supported by the representatives of Syria and Transjordan, restating the line’s status as a Moslem Waqf, declaring it to be “with its branches and prolongations a complete and indivisible entity”,⁷⁶⁴ calling on the parties in whose territories it passed to restore all rights and possessions pertaining to it, and ensuring that all revenues should be spent on maintenance, any surpluses to be devoted to the welfare of Pilgrims. But, significantly, the three Governments had “taken it upon themselves to make the necessary endeavours for the Government of Palestine to acknowledge... these... principles”, and in calling

⁷⁵⁸ 1021/4/47, in response to Jerusalem paper SF/193/47 of 3. May 1947.

⁷⁵⁹ But see below.

⁷⁶⁰ Saudi Arabian Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs.

⁷⁶¹ Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Transjordan.

⁷⁶² 98/1947 of 20. May 1947.

⁷⁶³ Palestine is conspicuous by its absence. The east-west Dera’a-Haifa branch was clearly not considered so relevant here, but the north-south axis was to be rehabilitated and extended.

⁷⁶⁴ This would include all the lines in Palestine.

together a Technical Committee to pursue investigations into the issue of rebuilding the line to Medina, "the Government of Palestine shall be invited to send her delegate." The implications of this would affect also the former H.R. line to Haifa, with its branch to Acre, and the branch to Nablus and down to Tulkarm, thus unifying the status of both sections currently under P.R. operation or even closed. The Legation letter advised in addition that the Syrian Government had just passed 'Law 316', published in the 'Syrian Gazette', publicising the decision that the H.R. line in Syria became an Islamic Waqf having legal personality and financial independence under the Syrian Prime Minister, laying down the method of appointing a Director-General and an Administrative Council to deal with the line's affairs, and that any profit arising from the working was to be placed in the reserve funds, and any deficit would be found from the reserve funds, but "if these are insufficient the Syrian Ministry for Finance will advance without interest any necessary amount up to a maximum of one million Syrian Pounds per year."

By 28. May a letter had been sent to the British Legation in Damascus asking them to convey this message - tantamount to a demand - to the Palestine Government. Were the Palestine Government to deny this request, they would now be publicly out of step with the entire Moslem world and their three immediate neighbours!

What was to be done? First, more information was necessary. The British Legation in Jeddah⁷⁶⁵ was able to supply a more detailed background to the discussions to date. The tone of their report is one of weariness. According to Sheikh Yusuf Yassin, the meeting in Cairo had been held later than 15. March and had been rather ineffective. Transjordan had not been effectively represented. Instead, Yusuf had "returned to the charge" at a meeting in Damascus of Foreign Ministers of the Arab League, and a meeting had been held there on 18. April 1947, (as noted above). The document had been signed by Samir al Rifai, Yusuf Yassin and Sa'id al-Ghazzi, the Syrian Minister of Finance - and the presence of Samir Pasha's signature "makes nonsense of the version of the story recorded in Cairo Embassy letter 1021/4/47." The letter also makes it clear that the pressure for this entire reawakening of the moribund line was coming from Saudi Arabia, and it was hoped that the Palestine Government "would be able to adhere.... to the certain statements of principle." Moreover, the Saudi Government based its expectations on a note of 28. February 1926⁷⁶⁶ by the Acting British Agent in Jeddah. Once more the past was coming back to haunt those whose predecessors had committed

⁷⁶⁵ Letter 405/12/47 No. 9. of 28. May 1947, to High Commissioner, Palestine.

⁷⁶⁶ This document has not been found. However, a lengthy and informative summary of the historical situation was sent by Cunningham on 6. November 1947, (FO 816/49 XC 910) bearing all the hallmarks of one of Kirby's memoranda in terms of its style and detail (and even the typeface of the original document). From this:

"Under Article 60 of the Lausanne Treaty, that section of the Hejaz Railway which is situated in Transjordan fell to be acquired by that territory, but until Transjordan was granted independence, the Railway was operated by H.M.G. as the Mandatory power. In the early years of the Mandatory Government, the Railway was placed under the direct administration of the British Resident in Transjordan; this proved to be unsatisfactory and the Management and control was transferred to the Palestine Railways in 1924. To allay apprehensions expressed by the Transjordan authorities..... a letter was addressed by the then High Commissioner for Palestine to the Amir Abdullah on 21st. April:

"There is no question of this Railway being incorporated into the P.R. system; moreover, H.M.G. has given instructions to the effect that the section of the Hejaz Railway which runs through Palestine territory is also to be considered as completely separate from the P.R. system. H.M.G. is responsible for all those portions of the H.R. which run through territories for which Great Britain has taken responsibility under the Mandate, and it is therefore necessary to secure that this Railway is properly administered until such time as a general arrangement is arrived at..... It will be clear, therefore, that Colonel Holmes [P.R. General Manager] is not acting in regard to this Railway as an officer of the Palestine Govt. but as an Agent appointed by H.M.G." This was clearly a Note to Transjordan rather than to Saudi Arabia.

themselves to paper.

A meeting of the Technical Committee was planned for 21. June, and Jeddah urged that a delegate from Palestine be sent, as “this would be useful, whether or not the Palestine Government decide to endorse the principles enunciated in the enclosed Resolution.”⁷⁶⁷

Invitations were duly sent and acknowledged, but the Colonial Office entered the fray on 17. July 1947 with a note of warning, as political and security circumstances were changing. “We think that you should know that we recently received an intimation from the Palestine authorities that it might be necessary for them in the near future to consider the question of completely discontinuing the maintenance of that section of the Hejaz Railway lying within Palestine territory. The reason is that the estimated cost of repairing the Yarmuk bridge which was blown up by Jewish saboteurs⁷⁶⁸ has risen to a figure between P50,000 and P70,000. In view of the size of this expenditure and also security considerations, apart from the uncertainty regarding the future of the railway, the repair work on the Bridge which was already in progress has been stopped.”

Furthermore, the accumulated deficit on the railway by 31. March 1946 was stated as P488,963, and this would be increased by a further estimated deficit of P184,000 in respect of the year 1947-48. In the circumstances the C.O. felt that the Palestine taxpayer could not be asked to continue indefinitely to bear the financial burden involved in maintaining the railway without any sound economic justification. On the other hand, the possibility that H.M.G. would itself feel justified in considering a grant of financial assistance appeared to be remote.

Was the destruction of the Yarmuk bridge a long-awaited excuse to abandon a loss-making operation? There was another side to this, however - and all due to Politics. Since the whole Hejaz Railway was regarded by the Arab States (but not H.M.G.) as being an Islamic Trust, it was assumed that any decision to discontinue the operation of the Palestine sections of the line would be contested by the Arab States as a political issue. That H.M.G. actually contested the Waqf concept is a new development, as is the thought that reconstruction and operation could be forced in perpetuity in compliance to the provisions of a pre-existing and eternal Trust, for the sake of maintaining peaceful relations with the neighbours.

On 5. July Kirby sent the Chief Secretary a report on this meeting in Damascus on 21-23. June, together with a translation of the Arabic Minutes.⁷⁶⁹ From his notes, the main points to emerge were:

- That a ‘Higher Authority’ should be appointed to administer the H.R as an indivisible entity.
- That a Board of Management should be appointed, answerable to this ‘Higher Authority’.
- That the constitution of the ‘Higher Authority’ and the Board of Management should be drafted by the General Manager of the Syrian Railways⁷⁷⁰.

⁷⁶⁷ Effectively Palestine could be expected to make a financial contribution to rebuilding a line well outside its borders, simply because other parts of this system lay on its territory.

⁷⁶⁸ On the night 16/17. June. See Tourret p.106.

⁷⁶⁹ The letter bears no number or reference, and apologises for the poor English of the translation from Arabic.

⁷⁷⁰ This would be logical, inasmuch as, of the four countries technically involved, only Syria was a Moslem country with experience of running a railway system. Palestine’s rulers were suspect from the Moslem perspective, Transjordan was still negotiating and had no experience, and Saudi Arabia had no operable railway and no experience of having one. Since the line had been built from north to south, Syria also held the original H.R. head offices and at Cadem (Damascus) the main workshops.

- That a survey party should be arranged to report upon the current condition of the railway between Ma'an and Medina, with the object of arriving at an estimate of the cost of restoration and the time necessary for this work.
- That an expedition should be sent immediately to Medina to report on the possibilities of the current year's pilgrims being conveyed by rail to Ma'an and thence by road to Medina, and
- That a full statement of the existing assets of the Hedjaz Railway should be compiled.

Clearly there had been an initial flush of enthusiasm and activity. Kirby felt however that "nothing really decisive emerged from the Conference", and that the participants were exceeding their authority in getting involved in political issues of a "higher authority", something which more properly should be dealt with at inter-governmental level - although the Chairman, Abdul Wahab Bey el Malki, had insisted that it was within the competence of the Conference to decide upon these matters and that "any decisions made would be accepted by the respective Governments."⁷⁷¹ Kirby was not convinced. He could not ascertain, he wrote, who was going to initiate the approach to the respective governments but, since the Palestine Government had not accepted the decisions of the meeting of 18. April 1947, it followed that it was not yet committed to any of the decisions of the Conference. Except to compile the statement of assets, there was nothing further for the Palestine Government to do until a decision was made regarding the future of the Hejaz Railway in Palestine.

A month later some realism had crept in. Kirby wrote again to the Chief Secretary⁷⁷² on 31. July 1947, describing his impressions of a further meeting held in Damascus on 21-23. July.⁷⁷³ It had been agreed that the Technical Committee was NOT the right place to discuss the Higher Authority or the Board of Directors; the Syrian and Saudi Arabian Governments had indeed agreed to contribute LP3,000 each to the costs of a survey party; the proposal to send pilgrims by land this year as far as Ma'an by rail had however been dropped. The Survey Party would be organised by the Syrians, who would place an Engineer in charge; P.R. would second two technical officers and a clerk to accompany the party; Transjordan's contribution would take the form of lending the services of the Arab Legion for purposes of housing, transport, feeding and protecting the Survey Party. Kirby noted acidly: "My aim at the meeting was to confine discussion to practicalities and to insist that the first step to take must be to find out the condition of the railway. I aimed at 'keeping the pot boiling' and I wished to ensure that the onus of arranging the party would fall upon the countries most interested; At the same time, I ensured the placing of some of our own officers in the party to ensure some measure of control without incurring any financial burden, as we can well afford to second the officers concerned now that the Hijaz Railway is practically inactive."⁷⁷⁴

⁷⁷¹ At issue here is of course the entire problem of running a non-national entity with international operations and assets through a series of new nations still attempting to define themselves. This matter has bedevilled all "Pan-Arab" projects ever since, and certainly led to the failure of several later attempts to revive the Hejaz railway in the 1950's, 1960's and beyond. (Tourret p. 115 refers to a committee in 1955, a 1966 scheme was described by Ingerslev in 'Harakevet' 28:24, with responses in 32:7, 33:0, and a description of works 37:9.) Kirby was at this point doubtful if even the financing of the survey party from Ma'an to Medina would be easily agreed between the three other Governments.

⁷⁷² GM 85, referring to CS letter SF/193/46.

⁷⁷³ "A conference is to be held in Damascus on Saturday between representatives of railway companies from Syria, Trans-Jordan, Palestine, and Saudi Arabia, to discuss the possibility of reopening the Hedjaz line." ('Palestine Post' Thurs. 19. June 1947 p.3.)

⁷⁷⁴ i.e. The officers might as well do something to earn their salaries, and could also provide a private P.R.

He discussed whether, as a symbolic gesture, a contribution with a top limit of LP2,000 should be provided by Palestine towards any Survey costs, but he warned he “would deprecate giving the Syrian Railway a credit of LP2,000 and letting them proceed to spend it without a further check” and should “make it clear that any such assistance would not connote acceptance of the principles agreed at the ...meeting of 18. April.” He would also stipulate that the first stage should be for the party to complete the survey as far as Medawara, that a time limit of one month should be imposed for their first report, and that the survey report should be submitted to both the Syrian and Palestine Railways’ technical officers for costing. “Further, I should insist upon receiving assurances of good conduct and assistance for the Survey Party before it proceeded into Saudi Arabia”⁷⁷⁵ and, again, would impose a time limit for submitting the report.

Although a Draft Constitution had been circulated in Arabic (only a poor translation was available, his best translator being on leave) this had not been discussed at the meeting, and he suggested that “we need spend no time considering the draft at this stage”.

His first conclusion was that “the British Government should rid itself of this liability of the Hijaz Railway which “appears to have no economic future”⁷⁷⁶ and no strategic importance.”⁷⁷⁷

His second conclusion was more of a bombshell. He acknowledged that the Palestine Government, as at present constituted, clearly could not be a participating Government in the control of the Hijaz Railway as could the Moslem Governments of Syria, Saudi Arabia and Trans-Jordan. Partition of Palestine might simplify the problem. Otherwise, he would “favour the establishment of an approved and properly-constituted Moslem body to own and operate the Hijaz Railway in its entirety, and that if there is no change in the Government of Palestine, such a body should operate within Palestine as a concessionary undertaking.”⁷⁷⁸ This proposal required a lot of working out, however, because “the implications of a settlement on this basis are far-reaching and complicated.”⁷⁷⁹ This argument illustrates the extent to which almost any solution now

report.

⁷⁷⁵ Medawara (also Mudawara) at km. 572.0, around 114km. south of Ma’an, had been the border station between Transjordan and Saudi Arabia. (Tourret p.20). It is significant that the 1943 Handbook does not even mention the former line south of Ma’an - which had lain derelict, was partly covered in sand, partly lifted for materials for the Naqb Ashtar emergency line, and could only be described as a Railway at all in purely academic terms.

⁷⁷⁶ Back in 1908 Lt.-Col. F.R. Maunsell had written: “On leaving Ma’an it may be said that all hope of dividend is left behind, and the line enters a spirit world without towns or even inhabitants.” (‘Geographical Journal’ 1908, p.575.)

⁷⁷⁷ He intended to write a more detailed report, but this would take time as “our records have been so badly kept in past years, and there has been so much disturbance by the evacuation of Headquarters offices during and since the war”.

⁷⁷⁸ i.e. to some extent “extra-territorially” - not that different in essence from the manner in which Britain had operated the Sinai railway on Egyptian territory. But the political implications would be immense. He added “Whether or not the proposal to restore the railway to Medina materialises - and I doubt if it will - we shall have to settle the problem of the Hijaz Railway and I hope that I shall be able to work out a workable scheme - despite the complications.” He does not here delineate these complications, but we can think of a few - including the issue of whether non-Moslem staff could be employed, and the ‘interface’ at Haifa where station, shed and yard were shared by standard and narrow gauge but could technically be described as all a part of the original “Waqf”. Presumably he assumed that Partition would lead to a part at least of the Jezreel line coming under a Moslem Arab Palestinian Government.

⁷⁷⁹ In fact the reactivated Hedjaz line might indeed have had long-term strategic implications. An article by Jon Kimche from London appeared in the ‘Palestine Post’ on 6. July 1947 (p.4) on the “Trans-Arabian Railway Scheme”; A new line was planned from the Persian Gulf to Riyadh, leading to “an important shift in the strategic position of Saudi Arabia - and of American influence in the Middle East”. Further plans were also being made to extend the railway another 600 miles to the Red Sea coast to Jedda, and to link up

had to be found to this growing problem. Palestine was now in the post-war, post-colonial world, having to deal with neighbours on three sides who were independent Moslem states.⁷⁸⁰ —

By 7. October 1947 Kirkbride in Amman felt the need to hurry things along, it now being “six months since the Transjordan Government expressed their desire to take over the line which is undoubtedly their responsibility whatever may be its status, i.e. Waqf or otherwise.” Spurred perhaps by the deteriorating political situation, further developments now took place. On 10 Oct. 1947 Creech-Jones⁷⁸¹ sent Cunningham in Palestine a telegram on the topic. The matter had been mentioned to Kirby who had expressed his personal opinion that the sooner negotiations were opened for the transfer of the railway to Transjordan, the better. “We have told F.O., who are being pressed by Amman Legation, that, subject to your views, we think that Transjordan... might be informed that we agree in principle to the transfer of Administration, and that we suggest Palestine Govt. should be invited to enter into direct negotiation.” The C.O. also agreed with the suggestion that Transjordan should be held responsible for the deficit on line from 22. March 1946 onwards. He was afraid, he wrote, that the present was “not an altogether auspicious time to start negotiations, but there would seem to be little to be gained by further delay.” In other words, once again matters had been delayed until it was too late to approach the topic calmly and from an advantageous position. But Kirby could not wait to be rid of this distracting millstone round the neck of a railway increasingly concerned with simple survival.

The C.O. accordingly wrote also to Palestine,⁷⁸² considering that Palestine and Transjordan should now settle the matter between them, and the sooner the better, since the line continued to be operated at a loss which, under present arrangements, had to be met by the Palestine Government; Although it supported Kirkbride’s suggestion that Transjordan accept at least the losses of the past two years, it was acknowledged once more that “the present is not exactly an auspicious moment for Palestine to start negotiating financial matters with an Arab State, but this cannot be helped and [we] do not feel that any useful purpose will be served by longer delay.” On 31. October 1947 the F.O. told Kirkbride⁷⁸³ that they were still awaiting the Palestine Government’s reply, adding “We are inclined to wonder whether such direct negotiations will be practicable in the circumstances that are developing but we hope to have the High Commissioner’s reply shortly.....”

The Palestine Government however reacted relatively swiftly, asking the

with the Hedjaz Railway. When completed, this would give Ibn Saud direct rail connections to Trans-Jordan, Syria, Palestine, Egypt and Turkey, and “much greater power within the Arab League. Once this railway is completed it will gradually shift the strategic emphasis of Saudi Arabia from the Red Sea to the Persian Gulf - from the British "zone" of the Middle East to the American "zone". Much greater importance is attached to this development as the Americans are already extending the natural port at Ras Tannura into a large commercial harbour which, it is believed here, could easily be extended to include a base for naval forces....” Those concerned in these discussions seem to have been unaware of or uninterested in such long-term implications.

⁷⁸⁰ For example: “British subjects who were previously able to enter Trans-Jordan by having their passports endorsed must now obtain a Trans-Jordan visa, it is officially announced. Foreign postage rates between Palestine and Trans-Jordan came into force from 1st. July.” (“Palestine Post” 3. July 1947 p.3.)

⁷⁸¹ Rt. Hon. Arthur Creech Jones M.P., Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies.

⁷⁸² Kirby had been in London and his comments “that the time was ripe for the negotiations to be initiated, and that there was no longer anything to stand in the way of the transfer” were made in personal consultations at the C.O. Letter 79086/47 CO of 16. October. P.R.O. FO 816/49.

⁷⁸³ P.R.O. FO 816/49, XC910. Letter E 9690/4282/80. P.R.O. FO 816/49, XC910.

British Minister in Amman on 6. November 1947 to approach the Transjordan Government immediately and tell them that the line was theirs for the asking, and that P.R. would “detail technical officers to finalise the handing over formalities” as soon as a formal request was received. However, the ball was thrown back into the FO’s court. Whilst it could be argued that as from 22. March 1946 the P.R. had been operating the H.R. on behalf of the Transjordan Government as direct agents of that Government, the P.R., in thus acting as agents, were still actually doing so on behalf of H.M.G., and not as a department of the Palestine Government, since any arrangement was between H.M.G. and the Transjordan Government, and not between the Palestine and Transjordan Governments. Force was given to this belief in that it had been to the Foreign Office and not to the Palestine Government that the Transjordan Government’s request had been addressed. “This point has been dealt with at some length to avoid any possible misunderstanding in relation to negotiations for the handing over of the administration and operation of the Railway to the Transjordan Govt..... The point is also of vital importance in dealing with the disposal of the accumulated deficits on the working of the Hejaz Railway in Palestine and Transjordan.”

Not only was Palestine washing its hands of the matter, transferring all responsibility to the F.O., but it was now coupling the deficit on working in Transjordan with that in Palestine itself! Here a chance had presented itself to deal with the H.R. as one unit, as the Arab States were demanding, and perhaps wipe out the deficit on both sections.

The detailed proposals from the Palestine side included:

(a). Staffing: Transjordan should be asked to meet the pensions and retirement gratuities that P.R. personnel would have received had they continued in the employ of the P.R. throughout the whole of their service. This should be the absolute minimum acceptable guarantee by Transjordan regarding financial settlements, and would apply to 4 Pensionable officers, 74 Provident Fund officers and 95 Monthly- and Daily-rated staff.⁷⁸⁴ All personnel should be granted the option of transferring to either P.R. or H.R.

(b). Rolling Stock: There were complex mathematical calculations to be made,⁷⁸⁵ but in the circumstances these were considered to be irrelevant, and the pragmatic recommendation was that the Transjordan Government should take over such of the P.R. portion of the rolling stock as currently remained on the Transjordan side of the El Hamme bridge. This consisted of three locomotives, seven passenger coaches and 146 goods wagons,⁷⁸⁶ and was felt to be more than adequate to deal with the current traffic. Should any re-assessment be required, any balance of locomotives and wagons to go to Transjordan was more likely to have to come from Syria than from Palestine. “It is

⁷⁸⁴ Total of 173 staff. One of the pensionable officers is British “who will either be transferred to Palestine or to another Colony or retired from the Service”; seven of the Provident Fund staff were Palestinian. All the rest in all categories were Transjordanian.

⁷⁸⁵ on the basis of Article 108 of the Treaty of Lausanne.... it would have to be on the basis of the material registered on the respective lines in the last inventory made before the 30 October 1918, “The available rolling stock after the 1914-18 war was divided on a 50-50 basis between the French and the British, thus giving the P.R., for the Palestine and Transjordan sections, approximately one-half of the rolling stock which was available in 1926. Since then, however, much of the rolling stock allocated to the P.R. has been destroyed or written off..... It is doubtful whether the Syrian Government ...would be likely to agree to any reassessment of the rolling stock resulting in a reduction of the quantity now in their possession... [and] in practice, no physical adjustment of rolling stock between Palestine and Transjordan can be made while the Railway remains cut by the destruction of the El Hamme bridge.” But the pragmatic solution, as stated, was simply to say “The line is cut - what is here is here, what is there is there”.

⁷⁸⁶ From correspondence in Jan. 1948, 15 of these were fuel tank wagons. See below.

certain that in present circumstances distribution of the rolling stock on the basis recommended at the Haifa Conference of October 1935 could not be achieved without the collaboration of the States of Syria and Saudi Arabia, and these two States have already declared that the Hejaz Railway shall be a single indivisible unit.”

(c). **Deficits:** Here also complex financial calculations were presented, and the main thrust was to reduce the charge to the Palestine accounts. If, as was being stated, the Transjordanian section was only being operated by P.R. on behalf of others, then it was unfair that the deficits were affecting P.R.’s own accounts. Otherwise Transjordan had effectively had free use of a facility at Palestine’s expense - a grievance which, incidentally, had been noted on several occasions by Zionist leaders.⁷⁸⁷ At least here some responsibility for the Palestine share of the deficit was acknowledged. “It seems to me to be incontrovertible that the deficits of the working of the railway during the Mandatory period should properly fall as an obligation to be met by the successor States which acquired possession of the Railway under the Lausanne Treaty. If this be admitted, then Palestine and Transjordan must separately accept their shares of the deficits” - during the entire Mandatory period. Separate accounts had not been maintained for the Palestine and Transjordan sections of the H.R. between 1927 and 1946, but it would be possible to apportion the deficits “on a reasonable basis in relation to net revenue of the two sections.” Total deficits to 31 March 1947 were calculated as LP489,022, of which LP354,360 fell to Palestine and LP134,662 to Transjordan. To this were to be added LP518,477, divided as LP390,707 to Palestine and LP127,770 to Transjordan - these represented the deficits on working, actual and estimated, from the period 1. April 1946 to 31. March 1948.⁷⁸⁸ As a grand total, Transjordan was to be asked for LP262,432, its share of the total of LP1,007,499. Palestine would be prepared to pick up the tab on the remaining LP745,067.

The Palestine Government had borne the whole cost of operating the Hejaz Railway until now, and it was suggested that the handing over of this Railway to the Transjordan Government provided a suitable opportunity for reaching a settlement as regards the deficit accumulated during the period 1920 to 1946. It was reiterated that the costs up to 1946 should be met at least insofar as they would cover costs of pensions and gratuities to staff, and “as regards the deficit which has accumulated since 1. April 1946.....there can be... no doubt that the Transjordan Government is liable for this, since it was at that date that the Transjordan Government requested the P.R. to operate the H.R. in Transjordan on their behalf.” The despatch continued with a warning that the Transjordan Government might try to repudiate this liability on two counts - that the traffic volume had been adversely affected by the destruction of the El Hamme bridge,⁷⁸⁹ and that they had requested to take over already since May 1947. As regards this latter point - they should simply be informed they could take over as soon as possible.

(d). **Stores and Fuels** would need to be calculated and assessed by the responsible technical officers, though this need not delay the date of handing over, since “at that date the Transjordan Government would take over the section in running condition and would sign for all stores, fuel, stationery, and materials then existing.” For economic reasons stocks had been reduced to a low level, but arrangements could be made prior to the handover for these stocks to be brought up to a level as would safeguard operation for a suitable period. Stocks already present would be included in the ‘purchase price’ - i.e. the

⁷⁸⁷ e.g. grumbles about financing of the T.J.F.F.

⁷⁸⁸ Pages 8-10 of this letter.

⁷⁸⁹ Since most traffic was probably Haifa-Amman, this would be logical. The railway from Ma’an to Nessib was pretty pointless unless it was part of an international connection.

acceptance of the deficit - and any further ones only against a guarantee of repayment.

P.R. saw little chance of reducing its own administrative overheads when this section was transferred out of its control. However, Cunningham concluded that as soon as Transjordan had signified its willingness, he would “immediately arrange for technical officers of P.R., **acting on His Majesty’s Government’s behalf**,⁷⁹⁰ to work out the details in collaboration with technical officers of the Transjordan Government.” The time required for this purpose should not exceed one month. In the meantime, he suggested that negotiations relating to such important questions as finance, staff and rolling stock should be conducted for H.M.G. by H.M.’s Minister at Amman.

In the meantime, however, not only politics and sabotage but also nature had intervened. Now it was winter again and another blow had been struck by floodwaters. Kirby sent a telegram on 27. November 1947 to the British Legation in Amman noting that the estimated cost of restoring the washed-out line between Katrani and Ma’an was LP3,000; “Does Transjordan Govt. wish P.R. incur this expenditure on its behalf?” he asked. The response was brusque - a Telegram dated the next day, “Transjordan Govt. decline to accept any responsibility or liability for the line until it is handed over to them.” Kirby’s response on 29. November was equally brusque: “With P.R. acting only as agents for Transjordan Govt. in operating railway, if Govt. as Principal content to allow washed-out railway to remain in present condition, I propose to take no restorative action. Please confirm that this is what is required.”

The atmosphere was deteriorating. Kirby had effectively snapped - “If they don’t ask nicely, and don’t promise to pay us back, I won’t bother to repair the line.” Kirkbride sent Kirby a stiff letter on 1 December, noting that the Transjordan Government not only wanted him to repair the line but expected him to do so. “What they cannot understand is why you should have thought it necessary to consult them. They point out that you have now been operating the line on their behalf for over a year and that during that period many questions have been decided by you without reference to them. You did not for instance consult them about repairing a washout north of Mafrak last winter.⁷⁹¹ In short, they are a little suspicious about your motive.”

Was this a reflection of injured diplomatic pride, or irritation that they had been asked something they would rather not have been asked (since to agree would indicate preparedness to pay, either directly or through an increase in the agreed deficit)? It seems rather harsh, since Kirby was now working under different circumstances than back in March of that year, when maintenance of operability was most clearly his responsibility. In addition, the line south of Amman was of much lower economic worth than that north of it, and so it would appear to have been a legitimate question. Kirby answered with stiff politeness,⁷⁹² explaining that his motive in asking had been due to the relatively heavy cost involved, “and the fact that the Trans-Jordan Government is, we hope, likely to take over the management and operation of the railway very shortly”, whereas they had not even asked at the time of the previous washout. On 3. January 1948 he sent a further telegram informing Amman that he was proceeding with the necessary work “on the understanding cost is accepted by Transjordan Government.”

In the meantime, the delay in transfer had been costing the British Government yet more money, so on 10. December 1947 the F.O. sent Kirkbride in Amman a ciphered telegram accepting that H.M.G. must now accept the responsibility for conducting

⁷⁹⁰ Our emphasis.

⁷⁹¹ i.e. that of 22. March 1947 noted above.

⁷⁹² G.W.18 of 9. December 1947.

negotiations - through him in Amman - and asking for his observations. He responded the next day, agreeing to the terms of negotiations, but noting "I doubt....whether it is possible to insist as suggested that the Transjordan Government must submit to our conditions before their property is handed over to them, especially as it would appear that the line would in any case revert to them unconditionally in a few months time when H.M.G. surrender the mandate."⁷⁹³ He concluded, "The only other difficulty which will arise is over the deficit... as apart from the readiness of the Transjordan Govt. to accept any liability.... their financial position makes payments of the order indicated.... impracticable." So the coffers were empty, and even had they wanted to pay, they could not.

Now, suddenly, the stakes were raised enormously. Tewfik Abu el-Huda, of the Transjordan Ministry for Foreign Affairs, wrote to Kirkbride in Amman⁷⁹⁴ with some polite demands which must have come, at first, as a major shock. Referring to the meeting of 18. April 1947 at which "the Government of the Syrian Republic, the Hashemite Kingdom of Transjordan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia" were entrusted with the administration and protection of the Hedjaz Railways as well as safeguarding the rights and property thereof, he proceeded to point out the the Hedjaz Railways⁷⁹⁵ owned all the lands through which their line passed as well as those on which their constructions and installations were erected. Furthermore, the Hedjaz Railways owned several other properties and lands, all of which had been acquired during the Ottoman Regime. "The said estate was acquired by the Hedjaz Rlys. with the intention either of benefitting from the revenue thereof or for erecting additional installations thereon. The relevant title deeds in respect of the property in question are held at the Hedjaz Rlys' General Manager's Office in Damascus."⁷⁹⁶ In addition, the Hedjaz Railways owned many other concessions and rights, all of which were, he wrote, supported by Firmans and Decrees from the Sultans and by official letters from the Premier's office. Certified true copies of the said Firmans and letters were held at the General Manager's Office in Damascus.

He now proceeded to list these concessions. They included:

"1. ...to construct a harbour and platform at Haifa (vide Sultanic Firman dated 17th. of Ramadan 1331, as can be seen in the Ottoman constitution, vol. 5, p. 634ff.)

2. ...to utilize al-Hammeh springs (vide Sultanic Firman of the 5th. of Jumada al Akhirat, 1322). The Hedjaz Rly. owns the springs themselves.....

3. Concession of all waterfalls along the Rly. line and as far as 60 km. therefrom (vide Sultanic decree dated 8th. Jumada al-Akhirat, 1326, and the Premier's letter of the 9th. of the same month.)

4. prohibition of the sale of lands adjoining the Hedjaz Rly. line to a distance of 10 km. at either side. (vide the Premier's letter No. 57 dated 16th. of May, 1326.⁷⁹⁷)"

Now, in view of the British Government's intention to give up the mandate over Palestine, and since it had come to the knowledge of the Transjordan Government that the Palestine Government was planning to sell "some time about the 15. January 1948 to the lessees, most of whom are not Arabs, the property in the Haifa harbour (which forms

⁷⁹³ Telegram No. 374 to F.O.. He added that he saw little problem with the staff continuing in either Transjordan or Palestine with appropriate conditions of service, but would try to get the Transjordan Govt. "to agree to guarantee transferred personnel their present terms."

⁷⁹⁴ Ref. No. 11/8/136 of 14. January 1948 and marked 'Very Urgent'.

⁷⁹⁵ Note use of the plural, consistently employed in this text.

⁷⁹⁶ One wonders whether these had only come to light during the 'office clear-out' associated with the attempt to list all assets. Certainly this had not been mentioned before. Indeed, Nicholson states that all original documents had been lost in a fire in 1921.

⁷⁹⁷ Note the strange use of mixed calendars.

a part of the property owned by the Hedjaz Rlys. as per the concession),⁷⁹⁸ the cost of which at the present rate amounts to hundreds of thousands of pounds”, he wished to stake a claim to the area in question.

He therefore asked Kirkbride to request the Government of Palestine to postpone selling to any party the property at Haifa harbour, and at the same time to include the section of the Hedjaz line in Palestine territory “together with all property and rights thereof” in the agreement of 18. April 1947.

The effect of this bombshell was that the majority of the city of Haifa and its Port were suddenly being claimed as Arab Moslem property, with presumably large areas of Afule, Acre, Nablus and other places in addition! It could be argued that a 20km.-wide swathe of land through the entire Jezreel Valley was also affected, although some land had been purchased through Jewish agencies. Suddenly the issue was no longer one of merely apportioning a few semi-derelict goods wagons or calculating possible future pensions, but the entire nature of any post-Mandate state or states.⁷⁹⁹

A more formal typed document to this effect was presented to the President of the Council of Ministers in Damascus, signed on 4. January 1948 by Abdul Wahab El-Malki, in his capacity as “Director-General of the Hejaz Railway Line”, and forwarded to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs two days later. In addition to the points raised in the earlier letter it stresses that at the meeting of the Committee held in Damascus on 22. December 1947 each member of the Committee had been urged to submit the same memorandum to their government, requesting “a joint approach be made to the Palestinian authorities with a view to ensuring the preservation of the branches of the Hejaz Line, all its possessions and rights in Palestine territory, and to handing them over to the Unified Administration of this Line, in accordance with the 18. April agreement.” It then repeats in more formal terms the outline of the claims already described, but adds caustically that in view of the recent attitude taken by the British Government in Palestine, in announcing their desire to give up the Mandate, “on which grounds their delegate declined to attend the meetings of our Committee charged with studying the reconstruction of the Hejaz Railway Line and with compiling the information relevant to the assets and liabilities of the Line, this Committee has found it to be its duty to draw the attention of the Arab Governments to the necessity of undertaking the necessary endeavours with the British Government....”

But a footnote contradicts this, adding that “after the adjournment of the Committee a letter was received from Mr. Kirby.... the representative of the British Govt. on the reconstruction committee.. in which he expresses his regret for not having been able to attend the meeting of the Committee..... and requests to be informed of the date of the next meeting. This shows that vis-à-vis the Agreement of 18. April 1947, regarding the unity and Waqfship of the Hejaz Line, the British Govt. was still maintaining an attitude of expectation until the developments in Palestine have become clear; and this confirms the Committee in their view point....”⁸⁰⁰

Indeed, Kirby seemed to have stirred up a hornets’ nest - whether through his

⁷⁹⁸ There would be little point in pleading that much of the land around the harbour had been reclaimed in the 1930’s.

⁷⁹⁹ It should be noted that there was never any such complexity regarding the disposal of the H.B.T. or Kantara-Rafa Railways, where purely political and commercial and not religious considerations were involved.

⁸⁰⁰ It would seem that Kirby was perceived as representing the British Government, not the Palestine Railways.

presence or absence. The letter accompanying this Memorandum, from the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs,⁸⁰¹ makes this plain. It complained that at the first meetings he had openly declared that the decision of the Government of Palestine to adhere to the Agreement of the 18. April 1947 depended on the instructions of H.M. Government in London, and had likewise explained that he was delegated to participate only in the discussions of the Technical Committee. He had not manifested any opposition to fixing the subscription of the Palestine Government towards the expenses of the Technical Committee at LP2,000, but had declared afterwards, at the meeting held on 24. Nov. 1947 in Amman,⁸⁰² that the British Government, which had now decided to withdraw from Palestine, was not prepared to commit Palestine to any new obligations before the situation in the country was clarified. He had then declined to attend the next meeting, held in Damascus on 22. December 1947.

In view of this attitude, the Syrian Government was now formally requesting the British Legation to intercede in respect of the list of rights and properties already enumerated, being “prepared, when necessary, to supply a detailed list of all the estates owned by the Line in Palestine, the title-deeds of which are kept at the Directorate-General of the Hejaz Railway Line, Damascus.”

The C.O. meanwhile had written⁸⁰³ to Cunningham in Palestine, asking his opinion on several matters to do with the Transjordan transfer. It was now accepted that P.R. had operated H.R. during the period of the Mandate “and since” as agents of H.M.G., who had assumed various obligations in respect of Railway under the Bompard Declaration and Treaty of Lausanne.⁸⁰⁴ Although an undertaking had been given that any positive revenue balances would be applied in the interest of Moslem pilgrims, it had so far not been possible to trace in London any correspondence bearing on the question of responsibility for meeting any deficits, although these had of course been charged for years to Palestine revenues.⁸⁰⁵ The query was whether therefore Palestine was staking a ‘first claim’ for compensation from H.M.G. to make good these deficits.

Further, the F.O. was anxious to discuss transfer with the Transjordan Prime Minister “during his current visit”. Since Transjordan is “not in a position to meet liability for deficit”, they suggested “that consideration might be given to waiving claim against Transjordan for a refund provided the latter would forego claims which they may

⁸⁰¹ Translation is D1(292/45/124) of H.M. Legation, Damascus. The letter is dated 11 January, but the translation was forwarded by the Legation to Bevin at the F.O. only on 28. February. No reason for this delay is clear.

⁸⁰² There are no minutes of this meeting in the file. But coming so soon after the UN Partition decision this seems to have been a sensible and legitimate response.

⁸⁰³ Telegram 79086/48, of 27. January 1948. No. 338 Confidential.

⁸⁰⁴ In a later response (of 11. May 1948) the view of H.M.G. is elaborated as being based upon “(1) the Borel Award of the 18th. April 1925 to the effect that the first paragraph of Article 60 of the Treaty of Lausanne applied to the Hedjaz Railway since ‘dans l’esprit du Traité le chemin de fer du Hedjaz doit être considéré comme bien de l’Empire Ottoman”, and (2) a declaration of the 27. June 1923, made by Monsieur Bompard on behalf of the British and French Governments, in which it is stated that “in order to give effect to the desire to recognise the religious character of the Hedjaz Railway” the Governments concerned agreed among other things that “so far as the sections of the railway in Syria, Palestine and Transjordan are concerned, all profits remaining after the costs of working the line have been paid shall be applied to the maintenance and general betterment of the whole line.” This at least shows the issue had been dealt with earlier, though a lot had happened since then.

⁸⁰⁵ A very revealing comment - it seems no-one had considered the line might make a loss, and Palestine had been treated as the ‘milch cow’ ever since. One cannot help wondering whether things might have been different for the H.R. had Transjordan been allowed to develop economically as much as Palestine - something which would probably have depended, as there, on the immigration of Europeans with their skills and attitudes.

be expected to raise against Palestine in respect of (a) destruction of El Hamme bridge and (b) increased share of rolling stock.” In short, Palestine would simply waive any claims that Kirby had already warned might need to be defended, and get nothing in return for all its expenditures, while Transjordan would be able to write off a major debt as something purely notional.

Cunningham’s response came on 18. February 1948.⁸⁰⁶ He robustly defended Palestine’s financial interests in this complex debate on deficits, noting first that, although the question of possible deficits had not been dealt with in the Bompard Declaration, which seems to have been very optimistic in this respect, it followed inferentially that if any profits were to be shared between the owning States, then any deficits in the working of the railway should likewise be borne by the owning States. In the capacity of Mandatory, H.M.G. were acting not as owners but only as trustees in Transjordan, and “it would be unreasonable for the trustees themselves to have to bear the costs which should properly fall upon the State in respect of which the Trustees were acting. Consequently Transjordan, as the succeeding State acquiring ownership of the H.R. in Transjordan, should be regarded as liable for the costs incurred by the Mandatory Government during the period they were acting as trustees.” So Transjordan should pay the proper price - amounting in any case only to the payment of historic debt - for what had only been maintained in existence for their and not Palestine’s ultimate benefit.

He then offered an alternative argument, that the British Government had utilised the H.R. largely for strategic purposes “in pursuance of their empire defence policy, and that to this extent the Mandatory Government [had] acted outside their role of trustee.” From this it could be argued that the deficits were largely incurred because of the strategic rather than local use of the Railway. It was appreciated that H.M.G. might be unable to collect the deficit from the Transjordan Government, due to its financial incapacity to pay what was now demanded. This would merely mean, however, that H.M.G. and not Palestine should bear the brunt of these costs.

Cunningham expanded further upon this idea. Since P.R. had operated the H.R. both in Palestine and Transjordan as agents of H.M.G., it could be argued that the deficits should be borne by H.M.G.. But in any event it would be “altogether inequitable if Palestine has ultimately to bear the deficit in respect of the Transjordan part of the line simply because of the financial inability of the Transjordan Government to bear its part of the deficit.” This was a legitimate grievance - that Palestine should be asked to bail out a neighbouring territory simply because it had failed, within the same time-span, to develop itself economically to the point where it could pay for its own transport infrastructure. It was also his opinion that any claim which the Transjordan Government might make against either H.M.G. or the Palestine Government in respect of the destruction of the El-Hamme Bridge or rolling stock would have no substance. “The Palestine Government is under no legal obligation to Transjordan, and in fact Transjordan has suffered no economic loss by the destruction of the Bridge.”⁸⁰⁷ He had little doubt that an actuarial assessment would show that the the rolling stock at present in Transjordan was adequate to meet the country’s fair share of the available H.R. rolling stock.⁸⁰⁸

⁸⁰⁶ ref. SF/193/46.

⁸⁰⁷ This was naturally challenged by Transjordan, and by Kirkbride in Amman.

⁸⁰⁸ This was partially to do with the self-contained nature of the Transjordan section, with locos and coaches rarely leaving P.R. for C.F.H. tracks, but merely connecting at Samakh or Dera’a, and only freight working through. As noted by Tourret elsewhere, this meant that the locos and stock on the Dera’a-Ma’an section were those normally required for and adequate for the traffic. The distribution of stock was of course the result merely of what was where when the system was cut, everything being now ‘stranded’ on

Whatever the effects of the bridge's destruction were from the Government viewpoint, the railwaymen saw things clearly. In a further letter to Kirkbride⁸⁰⁹ Kirby stressed that the Traffic returns from the Hijaz Railway in Trans-Jordan were now so poor that operation of the Railway was "a dead loss. The revenue is practically nothing and if the decision was left to me I should close the Railway down at once and pay off the staff." He doubted, however, whether this line of action would meet with favour from the Transjordan Government, and asked him to sound out the Authorities on what their reaction would be if he closed down at least the Amman - Ma'an section. Clearly he was unwilling to proceed further on repairs to the washout if the future seemed so uncertain, but he was naturally also aware of the intention to transfer to the Transjordan Government a working railway, however useless, and of the political sensitivities he seemed to have aroused the last time he had raised the subject..

The political sensitivities remained to the extent that Fouzi Mulqi, Transjordan's Minister for Foreign Affairs, had to communicate with Kirkbride⁸¹⁰ and ask him to intercede with the authorities in Palestine to intercede in turn with Palestine Railways, rather than simply going to Amman station to talk to the P.R. Office in Charge. Issues included the poor condition of sections of the line in Transjordan (with "damaged bridges in several localities almost paralyzing rail traffic") and the damaged bridge at El Hamme, which meant that merchandise being unloaded at Samakh for re-loading at El-Hamme was being exposed to theft - and those concerned in the matter were refusing all responsibility. There was also the washout between Katrani and Jurf el-Darawish; It was noted that the suspension of rail traffic here had led to a rise in fares and transport costs in Transjordan. Although suggestions had now apparently been made that this section should be repaired by the Transjordan P.W.D.⁸¹¹ at P.R.'s cost, a consignment of wheat was expected shortly and difficulties were envisaged if the line had not been repaired in time. It is interesting that Transjordan suddenly valued this stretch of line and perceived it as relevant to its own interests in terms of transport and distribution, yet was unwilling to contribute either financially or in terms of labour (presumably this suggestion had been made to avoid the need for Transjordan to pay) to improve matters.

8:(F). DETAILED PREPARATIONS FOR THE TRANSFER OF THE H.R. IN TRANSJORDAN.

Time was now beginning to run out. Long-term plans were being discussed at one level whilst those involved on the spot were facing enough problems of daily survival and withdrawal. On 5. March 1948 Kirby wrote to the Chief Secretary in Palestine expressing his anxiety regarding the completion of orderly formalities for the handing-over of the Hijaz Railway in Trans-Jordan. For some time past, he stated, P.R. had been ready to undertake the handing-over of physical assets and to finalise accounting arrangements, but unless a decision were to be made very soon, it would be impossible for any orderly handing-over to be achieved, since the officers nominated for the task would have been evacuated from Palestine. Furthermore, as the time for the final evacuation drew nearer, all available British officers would be required in Palestine. He then delivered an ultimatum: "Unless the hand-over can be made before the end of

one side of the bridge or the other, but even so the distribution was effectively appropriate to use on either side of the breach.

⁸⁰⁹ G.M. 85 of 23. Feb. 1948.

⁸¹⁰ Ref. 11/8/844 of 6. March 1948. "Urgent".

⁸¹¹ Public Works Dept.

March, no orderly process of handing over will be possible.” Stung by this, the High Commissioner informed the F.O. of the problem.⁸¹²

Despite this urgency, the F.O. responded to the Minister in Amman only on the 26. March,⁸¹³ close to Kirby’s deadline, regretting the delay in sending instructions, but stating that they would “be glad if you will now as soon as possible open negotiations for the transfer of the Transjordan Section of the Hejaz Railway to the Transjordan Government. The Palestine Government will make available any experts you may require and you should communicate with them direct for this purpose.....” At this point there were but six weeks to go to the end of the Mandate and the Palestine Government was busily dismantling itself, but it appears that London was blissfully unaware of this. Kirkbride was asked to warn the Transjordan Government that, subject to the High Commissioner’s concurrence, which he should obtain direct, and subject to their acceptance of the proposals (listed below) Britain intended to “hand the Railway over to their control on⁸¹⁴ next and that the Palestine Government is being asked to make arrangements for a reasonable supply of fuel stores etc. to be available on repayment to ensure the running of the Railway for a reasonable period thereafter.”⁸¹⁵

The proposals demonstrate that Kirby’s comments had belatedly been taken on board. They included demands for an assurance that all Railway staff hitherto employed on the Transjordan section who so desired should be continued in Transjordan employment at the same rates and on the same terms; The Transjordan Government was to be informed that the deficit on working the Railway from 1. April 1946 to 31. March 1948 was expected to amount to LP127,770 and Kirkbride was formally to request a refund of this amount, which had now been claimed by the Palestine Government from H.M.G..⁸¹⁶ As regards rolling stock, he was to affirm that in the opinion of the Railway administration, the Transjordan Section could be effectively run with the rolling stock currently in Transjordan, and this this constituted a fair and equitable share for Transjordan in accordance with the agreed terms.⁸¹⁷

For some reason a second Telegram⁸¹⁸ was sent immediately afterwards, with further, more private material.⁸¹⁹ It urged him to make no mention of the Hamme Bridge, and if the Transjordan Government entered a claim in respect of its destruction, to do no more than agree to refer it to H.M.G. The F.O. went on to ask a series of questions. Would Transjordan have a legal basis for the claiming compensation either for the cost of

⁸¹² Telegram No. 557 Secret of 6.3.48.

⁸¹³ Telegram No. 192, in Amman File No. 236 Secret. Addressed to Amman, copy to Jerusalem. A further three-week delay.

⁸¹⁴ The poor cipher clerk notes at this point: “Group undecipherable; 1 change gives April 15th., June 5th. and June 29th.” We can assume that April 15 is intended. Note that “over to their control” is not the same as “over to their ownership.”

⁸¹⁵ No attempt to define the word “reasonable” in a Middle East context has ever succeeded.

⁸¹⁶ Purely a negotiating tactic, since it had already been acknowledged that this could not be reimbursed - but it would put the Transjordan representatives on the defensive. The next telegram acknowledges “We realise that even if the Transjordan Government admit our claim for the deficit they are unlikely to be able to pay but we feel that we must make the claim.”

⁸¹⁷ Once more a “group Undecipherable”, but clearly referring to the correspondence above.

⁸¹⁸ No. 193 of same date, to same recipients.

⁸¹⁹ Was Kirkbride getting the benefit of some afterthoughts, or was there a reason to keep these two documents separate? The issue is unclear. His private opinion is asked on several matters. What is clear is that he was now receiving exactly the detailed instructions for negotiations that he had been pressing for for almost a year.

rebuilding or for the loss of traffic, or would the only claim lie with Syria? What about the rolling stock? Did he consider the division proposed by Palestine was fair or should the British Government be prepared to concede anything on this point? Could he say why no claim had ever been made before against the Transjordan Government for working deficits? And was there any reason to suppose that the Transjordan section of the railway had ever made a profit? Was there any likelihood of the Transjordan Government making a counter-claim against H.M.G. for removing part of the line South of Ma'an during the war?"⁸²⁰

This correspondence makes very sensible points, but forces us wonder why the questions were being asked now, several months too late?⁸²¹ The final point raised is perhaps the most significant, and may indicate a partial answer: "The question of the Hejaz Railway property in Palestine is being considered separately." In other words, it was vital to try to keep these two issues apart, and maybe to buy time.

Kirkbride's response to these questions came on 31. March.⁸²² By this time traffic on the line had effectively ceased.⁸²³ He considered that the rail traffic to Transjordan was just as much affected by the destruction of the bridge as was that to Syria. The bridge in question was on Transjordan's only railway link with the port of Haifa, through which the majority of its imports had passed hitherto,⁸²⁴ and thus he felt that Transjordan's claims were just as valid as Syria's. He considered the rolling stock now in Transjordan to be a fair division;⁸²⁵ As regards the finances, he believed that the revenue of the Transjordan section of the railway had, prior to the destruction of the

⁸²⁰ As noted elsewhere, the actual track materials used for the Naqb Ashtar branch were still on Transjordan territory and had not been removed. Turret reckons 40 miles' worth was lifted. (p.97). However, File C.103/99 Sec.28(2) in the IRM Archives allows some insight into what seems to have been a prolonged and complicated closure procedure for the Naqb Ashtar line. See 'Harakevet' 62:12 & 63:10.

There is more information in the "War Diaries, Directorate of Transportation, GHQ, Middle East Forces", (P.R.O. Kew, WO 169/966); the Oct. 1941 'Progress Report' notes: "P-way material recovered from Maan-Mudawarra: incl. 3,024 rails, 12,650 sleepers, 3,130 fishplates etc."

⁸²¹ One could also ask why the concern for "fairness" is applied to Transjordan but not to Palestine. But this is the F.O. and not C.O.

⁸²² Telegram 197. despatched 31. March 1948, 16.55.

⁸²³ On 19 March Kirby had written to the C.S. "Wherever possible, passenger train services are being reduced. On the Haifa-Samakh line the train service will be reduced to one train only every alternate day." And on 26 March "I had considered the advisability of closing down the Hijaz Railway between Haifa and Samakh but the issue has now been forced by the destruction of the bridge at Kilo 67. There is no traffic of any consequence offering over this railway and I do not propose to reopen it. All Hijaz Railway locomotives and rolling stock will be brought into Haifa for stabling. The locomotives will be greased and left in as good condition as possible in the running shed at Haifa East Station. For some time we have undertaken no general repair work for the Hijaz Railway at the Qishon Workshops.

The public are so little interested in this section of the line that I do not think it is worth making any public announcement."

It is not clear what bridge is referred to at Km. 67. According to the Naval Intelligence Handbook there is no bridge listed at this site, but a masonry bridge at km. 74.5 between Beit Yosef and Jisr el Majamie. The girder bridge destroyed by Haganah at El Hamme was the Second Yarmuk Bridge at km. 92 (Turret p. 32) and beyond Samakh. It is unlike Kirby to make such a mistake. But a later note reports two bridges destroyed on this section.

⁸²⁴ Exports were, of course, negligible.

⁸²⁵ Exact details of what stock was left east of the break are incomplete. Locos are listed below. However, Turret mentions the following coaches:-
1st. class AR3; 1st./3rd. Composite ABF 48; 3rd. Class CF 66; 1st./2nd. ABF 181; 3rd. Saloon 431; 3rd. 432. BPL Van 622; Pay Coach (converted van) 24. On p. 143 he tabulates P.R. wagon stock as at 1939, 1946 and 1947 but does not confirm which wagons ended up in which country.

bridge at Hammeh, covered local expenditure, and in years of good harvest even showed a profit. He had no information as to why no claim had been made before against the Transjordan Government, but noted that “their claim to the ownership of the line was never admitted prior to the signature of the letters which accompanied the Anglo-Transjordan Treaty of March 1946.” In the circumstances of the low traffic since the destruction of the bridge, he advised against making any financial claims, since any claim against the Transjordan Government for the loss would have to be substantiated in detail, and its presentation might well give rise to a counter-claim in connection with the bridge at El Hammeh and the diversion from Ma’an which would not otherwise have been raised. He seems therefore to have preferred to accept a dead loss of monies disbursed by P.R., and therefore by the Palestine Government, to making a real effort at this very late stage to enter into Souk-style haggling negotiations.

A further telegram from Amman on 10. April⁸²⁶ shows that it was now the Arab side which was attempting to delay action. Kirkbride reported that the matter had been discussed provisionally with the Foreign Minister, who was also Minister of Communications. He had requested that the handing-over of the Railway should not take place until after his return from the Arab League meeting in Cairo, and he had suggested that the P.R. Officers should get in direct touch with him in his capacity as Minister of Communications at that point, and complete the handover as quickly as possible. But he had also pointed out that it would be quite impossible to give any undertaking to re-employ all the existing members of staff, as it was more than doubtful whether the Transjordan Government would be able to keep the Railway in operation at all. The question of its entire future depended on negotiations currently in progress in Damascus for a possible combination with the Syrian Railways.

Why the sudden change of heart? Maybe it had sunk in that the Railway lacked workshops and supply bases and indeed a *raison d'être* without a connection to a functioning link with the coast; Maybe there were elements of the “Greater Syria” proposals which were being floated at the period; Maybe there was a sudden surge of panic lest anything happen in his absence. Whichever, the sudden application of the brakes and the subordination of any decisions to the Arab League and especially the Syrians was not helpful.⁸²⁷ And the F.O. responded on 22. April⁸²⁸ advising Kirkbride that he should warn the Transjordan authorities that, if they could not undertake to continue the employment of all H.R. employees in Transjordan on the existing terms with their superannuation benefits, or grant them ‘Abolition of Office’⁸²⁹ terms defined in the appropriate Palestine Ordinance, a claim would have to be entered against the Transjordan Governmentt. for the deficit on the railway **before** the 31. March 1946.⁸³⁰

In the meantime, of course, Palestine was descending further into chaos. On 14.

⁸²⁶ No. 221, despatched 17.32, 10. April 1948.

⁸²⁷ We are not aware of any Arab League documents on this issue. The ‘Bompard Declaration’ had, as noted, agreed to the formation of an Advisory Council. This Council would comprise four Moslem members, nominated by Syria, Palestine, Trans-Jordan and the Hejaz respectively, and two additional member chosen from the Moslem inhabitants of other countries interested in the pilgrimage. Its seat would be at Medina, thus excluding any non-Moslems in any case. So there was some form of precedent for an acknowledgement of Moslems from elsewhere being involved in deciding the fate of the line.

⁸²⁸ Telegram 233 of 20. April, despatched 21. April 1948 18.15, received 22. April 1948, 06.75. These details (found on most such telegrams) are typical and included here merely to illustrate how long it took a despatch to get from the desk of the official writing it to that of the official receiving it.

⁸²⁹ i.e. Redundancy.

⁸³⁰ Our emphasis. This refers back of course to the initial correspondence that the Minimum that could be demanded of the Transjordan Govt. was the coverage of all Pension etc. benefits.

April 1948 the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs wrote to the British Legation in Damascus⁸³¹ informing them that they had received a formal notification from P.R. that “their duties will terminate on the 16. May next and that probably after that date the affairs of the Palestine Railways will be run by a new administration under the supervision of the Committee delegated by the U.N.O.” In these circumstances, the Syrians sought assurances - via the Legation and the H.M.G. - that the Hedjaz Railway with all its branches and properties in Palestine would be excluded from this definition of ‘Palestine Railways’, “preliminary to handing them over to the Administration of the Hejaz Line.” This was duly passed on to the F.O.

Issues relating to Palestine and Transjordan were now running so closely in parallel that they need to be dealt with together. The Legation in Amman, now represented by Mr. C. M. Pirie-Gordon, wrote formally to Dr. Fauzi Pasha el-Mulki, the Minister for Foreign Affairs (and Communications) on 30. April 1948. Referring to a conversation between the parties on the 10. April, he noted that “The Palestine Mandate will only continue in being another two weeks, I would be grateful if the matter could be dealt with as one of urgency.”

He then delineated H.M.G.’s terms, which he defines as “Requests”.⁸³² They were:

- 1). That the Palestine Government “should be allowed to hand over the Railway to the Transjordan Government forthwith”.⁸³³ They were even “prepared on repayment to make available a reasonable supply of fuel and stores.” This offer was made conditional on the security conditions in Palestine making the transport of such supplies possible.⁸³⁴

- 2). “That the Transjordan Government should give an undertaking to continue employing all members of the staff of the Railway hitherto employed in the Transjordan section on the same rates and the same terms. In return for such an undertaking, H.M.G. would be prepared to waive the accumulated deficit on working the Railway up to 31. March 1946, which amounted to LP134,662.⁸³⁵ (If redundancies were indeed necessary, then the ‘abolition terms’ as approved in Palestine would be applied.)

- 3). The deficit on running the Railway between 1. April 1946 and 31. March 1948 amounted to LP127,7790, and it was “requested” that this sum, which had already been claimed by the Palestine Government from H.M.G., should now be refunded to H.M.G..⁸³⁶

- 4). It was proposed that all the rolling stock currently in Transjordan should be handed over as representing Transjordan’s fair share of the total stock available.

Thus a formal offer was finally placed on the table - but only two weeks before the last High Commissioner for Palestine was due to embark at Haifa Port and leave! On 10. May 1948 a handwritten Message Form⁸³⁷ was despatched from Jerusalem to Amman - indicating probably that not even clerks and typewriters were still available. “It is understood that General Manager has been in communication with you direct as

⁸³¹ No. D.24 (124/45/292).

⁸³² We have come a long way from the trenchant demands of earlier correspondence, and it is doubtful whether this is purely a result of the use of diplomatic terminology.

⁸³³ It is not clear what he could have done had they replied “No”.

⁸³⁴ By this time it is pretty certain that this would NOT have been possible.

⁸³⁵ A suitably delicate way of making the point above, that if they do not accept, then they become liable to the full deficit.

⁸³⁶ The blame for this demand is therefore placed on Palestine, which is in any case soon to be dissolved, and so the matter should not sour relations between Transjordan and H.M.G..

⁸³⁷ No reference number.

instructed and in order to save time. Owing to developments here in April he was not in a position to send a senior officer to Amman but telegraphed offer send statement of assets and personnel. Understand you had not up to a recent date replied. Am now uncertain what information can be transmitted and how soon in view of destruction almost all railway records in Haifa battle.”⁸³⁸ Further comment was unnecessary, but Amman replied formally on 12. May to Jerusalem⁸³⁹ that no communications had reached him from the General Manager on the subject of handing over of Transjordan section. “The Transjordan Government will take this over without further formality day after end of mandate.”

So, with a bang in Haifa and a whimper in Amman, “without further formality” or, it appears, any of the written guarantees that had been requested, the Transjordan Section of the Hedjaz Railway ceased to be a part of Palestine Railways.

8:(G). DISPOSAL OF H.R. PROPERTY IN PALESTINE.

The issue of H.R. property in Palestine itself continued to simmer. Although by now Kirby himself had departed, we present it here for the sake of completeness. On 11. May 1948 the F.O. wrote to Kirkbride in Amman⁸⁴⁰ that, despite careful consideration, there was nothing which had appeared to H.M.G. to justify any change in the policy which Kirby had stated at Amman on the 24. Nov. 1947. H.M.G. considered it impossible for them to take any decision now which might commit in advance any successor authority in Palestine on the question of whether or not the line was or should be declared “Waqf”.⁸⁴¹ Certain land had been sold to the Haifa Municipality and H.M.G. had noted that this was claimed to be the property of the Hedjaz Railway. “Any evidence of this which the Transjordan Government wishes to make available will of course be given due consideration. It must however be pointed out that the Hedjaz Railway in Palestine has accumulated a deficit of about LP740,000, which has been met from the general revenues of the Palestine Government. Pending consideration of whether any financial adjustment may be necessary in respect of this deficit, the proceeds of the sale of the land is being paid into the general revenue account of the Palestine Government.”

The F.O. was employing here a bargaining tactic. If the Moslem States (and not just Transjordan, of course) wished to benefit from the revenues of Hedjaz property, then they must also accept the liability for any debts. But this equation was considered to be too coarse and undiplomatic. Broadmead in Damascus⁸⁴² contacted Kirkbride in Amman; he felt that he had been put in a difficult position and now reacted tartly on 18. May⁸⁴³ that “the despatch was received after the termination of the Mandate and some of its language would be inappropriate if submitted in a note bearing a date later than 14.

⁸³⁸ Reference to the burning of Khoury House. Kirby had sent an ‘Air Mail’ on 19. April confirming his telegram, which had not been received, that “Conditions here prevent my sending senior British officer to implement handover railway. Detailed lists of assets and personnel are available, shall I send them to you?” This alone is evidence of the increasing breakdown in communications within Palestine itself.

⁸³⁹ Telegram No. 68. Despatched 12. May 1948 12.40.

⁸⁴⁰ Ref. E 5374/1417/80. A similar despatch went to Damascus.

⁸⁴¹ Among the questions being begged here is why H.M.G. had allowed the degree of unclarity as to the future administration of Palestine to develop - as opposed to the situation in Transjordan - and whether there were other instances of “Waqf” property which could be used as reference. For example, till the present day the issue of authority over the Temple Mount in Jerusalem has remained a source of debate and conflict, and Palestine had/Israel has much experience of dealing with different religious foundations, institutions and demands.

⁸⁴² P.M. Broadmead, C.M.G., M.C. at the British Legation.

⁸⁴³ Telegram No. 93. to F.O., copy to Amman

May.” He asked whether Kirkbride would prefer to draft a better reply. The F.O. agreed and suggested a revised and slightly milder draft on 28. May, but making the same point, that proceeds from land sold at Haifa had been paid into the general fund and was considered to be to some extent equivalent to the monies and lands which were being demanded. A version of this was duly re-typed and submitted by the British Legation at Damascus on 29. May 1948⁸⁴⁴ to the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Suddenly there was no rush any more, and all went quiet. The next move was a note from the F.O. to Kirkbride in Amman on 12. August.⁸⁴⁵ It bears the hallmarks of an attempt to shut the stable door after the horse has been put down, whilst covering his own back at the same time. “Since it appears from your telegram No. 68 of 12. May to the High Commissioner at Jerusalem that the Railway was taken over by the Transjordan authorities on the termination of the Palestine Mandate without any conclusion of the negotiations contemplated in my telegram of 26. March, I think it would be as well that H.M.G.’s position should be made clear to the Transjordan Government if, as I assume, no written communication was made to them as a result of my telegram of 20. April” The deficit had not been paid. H.M.G. had been prepared to waive any claim in return for an undertaking to continue employing all Railway staff on the same terms as they had received from the Government of Palestine; But since no such undertaking had been given by the Transjordan Government, it was now necessary for H.M.G. to safeguard themselves against any possible claims from the successor authorities in Palestine for payment of these deficits. Otherwise it could occur that H.M.G. would have to make good these deficits to Palestine Government Funds on the grounds that the Hejaz Railway in Transjordan had been operated by the Palestine Administration on behalf of H.M.G. in the United Kingdom. In the circumstances, all that could be suggested for now was that he address a formal Note to the Transjordan Government, “reserving the right of H.M.G. to present to them a claim for these deficits should it become necessary to do so in the future.” This Kirkbride duly did, on 7. September 1948.

And with this move the failure to negotiate a timely and constructive settlement was sealed.

⁸⁴⁴ No. 155. (81/20/48).

⁸⁴⁵ No. 132, ref. E 8204/1417/80.

CHAPTER 9.

PLANS FOR ROLLING STOCK. 1945-48.

(A). INTRODUCTION.

Palestine Railways had accumulated a mixed bag of motive power and rolling stock, some quite modern for its time, some extremely depreciated before it was delivered under First World War conditions.⁸⁴⁶ During the Second War desperate measures had been taken to acquire additional locomotives, wagons and, to a lesser extent, coaching stock to cater for the increased traffic demands.⁸⁴⁷ This included new stock built for military transport, hire of rolling stock from Egypt and (following the connection through the H.B.T. which made this possible) use of stock from Iraq, Syria and Turkey.

Once this emergency period ended, the four main issues to be faced included:

- (a). Rental or Purchase of British War Department stock already in the region.
- (b). Purchase of American (U.S.A.T.C.)⁸⁴⁸ stock, likewise already in the region.
- (c). Repair and restoration of rolling stock damaged or severely worn-out during the wartime period - in such cases where this could be economically justified.
- (d). Purchase of new motive power and stock to replace that fully depreciated.

To complicate matters further, the rules for W.D. and U.S.A.T.C. stock (delivered under 'Lend-Lease' agreements) differed, British and American interests being not always identical. Post-war shortages led to severe delays in procurement of new stock and spare parts for existing stock; and issues had to be faced, on the basis of wartime experience and modern technology, of whether to replace 'like-for-like' or instead to upgrade to new standards - especially in terms of the passenger stock (air-conditioning etc.) and the use of Diesel locomotives rather than steam. Much of the wartime stock had been constructed to reduced standards or with poor-quality materials, intended only for a brief operational life.

Additional complications involved the further loss of operational equipment due to sabotage in the 1945-48 period, and the changes in political policy which clearly changed all long-term planning perspectives radically. Existing P.R. stock has already been described, and repairs and renewals will not be discussed in depth. The problems caused by an ageing fleet, heavy wartime usage, maintenance problems, vandalism and shortage of spare parts formed a major concern to all involved.⁸⁴⁹

⁸⁴⁶ In 1935 Price Waterhouse & Co. accepted an annual rates of depreciation for Locomotives, Coaches and Wagons of 3%. In 1943, the principal railways of the USA declared an average annual rate of depreciation of 3.41%. From 1920, the date of the Wickham Valuation, 25 years had passed. $25 \times 3.41 = 82.25\%$ - so one could theoretically argue that depreciation had been almost total in this period. (Information taken from 1948 I.R. Assets Report.)

⁸⁴⁷ Some stock was imported from India, Iraq, Hong-Kong etc. See Tourret p. 142 for details of nine engines brought from Hong Kong; Also P.R.O. WO 169/960, Appendix E & F. for a listing of W.D. stock ordered and cancelled in the 1941/2 period. Coaching stock expansion was limited to some Indian-type coaches from Iraq, and conversions of goods vans for troop trains.

⁸⁴⁸ United States Army Transportation Corps.

⁸⁴⁹ At the May 1946 Monthly Meeting, Kirby noted that "only 84% of the wagons were in service but this heavy figure of cripples (16%) was partially explained by the fact that about 8% were in the process of being written-off. The position in regard to coaching stock was admitted to be very bad." (Minute 14:336.)

(B). W.D. & U.S.A.T.C. STOCK.

We should first examine just what existing Military stock passed for use, or on hire on the P.R. system, was at issue.⁸⁵⁰ In addition there was stock used elsewhere in the Middle East, still on Military account and possibly available.

TABLE 12. MILITARY-OWNED STOCK IN USE ON THE P.R. SYSTEM.⁸⁵¹

TABLE 12A: Locomotives.

<u>Type.</u>	<u>Wheel arrangement</u>	<u>Number in use</u>	<u>Number Range.</u>
U.S.A.	2-8-2.	"varies"	
71028-71179.			
R.O.D.	2-8-0.	"varies"	70701-70791.
L.M.S.	2-8-0.	"10 - Varies"	70414-70532.
U.S.A.	0-6-0T.	"Varies"	71260-71299.

TABLE 12B: W.D. Goods Rolling Stock on P.R. List.⁸⁵²

<u>Type.</u>	<u>Capacity.</u>	<u>No. in service.</u>	<u>Remarks.</u>
W.D. Boxes.	40T	58	"A total of 120 of these wagons are being taken over on hire from W.D."
W.D. Oil tanks	18	32	
W.D. Oil Tanks.	11.5	2	
W.D. Oil Tanks.	14	3	
W.D. Oil Tanks.	30	17	Bogie.
W.D. Benzine Tanks	7.5	2	
W.D. Solar Oil Tanks	8.5	2	
W.D. Brake Vans	10	19	
W.D. Brake Vans.	25	8	
Open Wagons.	13T	80	1209-1288. "Purchased from W.D." 1650-1786 (also later acquired.) ⁸⁵³

TABLE 12C: "Other Stock"⁸⁵⁴

(i). War Department.

<u>Type.</u>	<u>Capacity.</u>	<u>No. in Service.</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
6wh. Tanks	19	\	for Water.
-do-	17.5	120 total.	for Mazout.
-do-	14.5	/	for Kerosene.

⁸⁵⁰ This information taken from P.R. WTT of 1. May 1944.

⁸⁵¹ WTT p. xvi.

⁸⁵² WTT, p. xviii.

⁸⁵³ Handwritten alteration to list. Undated.

⁸⁵⁴ WTT, pp. xx & xxii respectively. We omit a few vehicles 'for Internal Army Use Only'. The W.D. used terms such as "eight-wheeled" for "bogie" and "Box Trucks" for Vans; we shall on occasion alter the terminology for the sake of consistency. The Americans used terms such as "Cistern" where the British use "Tank". P. xix/xx indicates a range of E.S.R. passenger and rolling stock passed for use on P.R.; p. xxi Iraqi State Railways goods rolling stock; p. xxii D.H.P. and C.D. standard-gauge stock; p. xxiii L.S.B. stock.

4wh. Tanks.	10	12	Miscellaneous”.
4wh. Tanks.	8.1-10.5	60	Water/Mazout/Ker.
Bogie Flats.	50	50	
Bogie Flats.	40.	29.	
Refrigerator Van.	10.	28.	4wh.
Brakevan.	-	8.	
Bogie Flats.	50.	149.	
Bogie Bolster	40	34	
Conc. Tanks.	7.5	2.	Built from Concrete.
Bogie Tanks.	35	106	
Box Vans.	20	183	4wh.
Bogie Vans	40	241	
Bogie Vans.	35.	397	
Open Wagons.	20	155	4wh.
Open Wagons.	10.	415	4wh.
Bogie Opens.	40.	252	
Bogie Opens.	35.	280	

(ii). “H.B.T. Railway Goods Rolling Stock Working Over P.R. System.”⁸⁵⁵

Brake Vans	12T	11	US Type.
Brake Vans.	25T	22	US type converted.
Brake Vans.	25T	4	S.R. Type.
Box Vans.	20T	108.	Wood.
Open Wagons	13T	80	
Box Vans.	40T	131	Wood. Bogie.
Bogie Flats	40T	10	
Low-Siders.	40T	13	
Refrigerated	20T	7	

British and American wagons followed very different construction philosophies.⁸⁵⁶ British stock was predominantly four-wheel, of 10 - 20 Ton capacity, and not always fitted with continuous brakes at all. The majority of American vehicles exported to Persia and the Middle East (and later to Europe) were of bogie design, of 35 - 40 Ton capacity, and with vacuum brakes. This was clearly the way forward in terms of technology and operations, and would be more attractive for later purchasers.

(D).HISTORICAL CONTEXT FOR SALES OF RAILWAY STOCK.

The overall political context for the post-war period is relevant. Altered military needs meant that much military materiél was surplus to requirements, including railway equipment. Stock was needed for the rebuilding of Europe. At the same time the unclear political situation meant that some stock at least had to be retained for the foreseeable future, and dumps were established - including Azzib, Sarafand and Suez -

⁸⁵⁵ The H.B.T. Table on p. xxii has, in our copy, been covered with a later sticker dated ‘1.8.1944’, and some further alterations made in ink at a later date which we have incorporated. We have omitted a few miscellaneous wagons. It is unclear how it was decided which stock was ‘allocated’ to the H.B.T., as opposed to working through from Egypt to Syria as part of a common military pool. Only one photograph has been found which shows “HBT” branding on a vehicle, and this was on an American-type steel box van, none of which are on this list!

⁸⁵⁶ See ‘Harakevet’ 53:16 for details of W.D. Wagons in the Middle East.

where locomotives and machinery could be stored against further requirements. Royal Engineer supply depots at Rafah, Beit Nabala, Wadi Surar etc. also required the retention of shunting locomotives and military-owned wagons, and some military Transportation staff to service and operate them. The British authorities engaged over the period in a gradual disposal of stock to Iraq, Greece, Turkey and Egypt or in a repatriation to Britain, where some of the serviceable L.M.S.-type locos were in demand.⁸⁵⁷ The Americans saw things differently; partly through idealism, partly due to the fact that almost none of the stock built for overseas was standard to their home railroads,⁸⁵⁸ and was in any case depreciated. In America itself dieselisation was far advanced, so no need was seen to re-import steam locomotives, and it was decided that these should be disposed of within Europe or the Middle East to assist in reconstruction in these regions. It appears that these political differences came as a shock to those who had, for some years, been using the stock on virtually a 'Common-User' basis and had grown accustomed to having it available.

To illustrate the context in which Kirby and his P.R. staff were operating, we list briefly some other significant sales of this period. There was clearly competition for the better and more serviceable material available.

TABLE 13. MILITARY STOCK DISPOSALS.

Turkey. Had received 20 "L.M.S. 8F" locos in 1941-43.⁸⁵⁹ Received 29 USATC 2-8-2's in 1943 and a further 25 from MEF in 1946.⁸⁶⁰

Persia. Retained 22 "L.M.S. 8F" locos.

Iraq. Purchased 6 R.O.D. 2-8-0's in 1946.⁸⁶¹ Purchased 10 "L.M.S. 8F" locos from W.D. before April 1947, plus 2 from Persia in 1948.⁸⁶² Also 5 USATC 0-6-0T's in 1948.

Italy. F.S. purchased 15 "L.M.S. 8F" locos,⁸⁶³ 4 0-6-0T's,⁸⁶⁴ 30 USATC 2-8-2's⁸⁶⁵ and 49 Whitcomb Bo-Bo diesels.⁸⁶⁶

Britain. 39 "L.M.S. 8F" locos were returned.⁸⁶⁷

Syria. Acquired 4 W.D. 2-10-0 locos.⁸⁶⁸

⁸⁵⁷ Ray Tustin wrote: "During 1946 some 59 8F 2-8-0's were transferred to Palestine from Iran via Baghdad and Turkey, passing over the H.B.T. line to Azzib where most of them were, at one time, stored. They were in very run-down condition, but a start was made at shopping them at Jaffa, with the intention of selling them in the Middle East. A good enough price could not be obtained, however, and many which could be repaired were eventually brought back to the U.K.." ('S.L.S. Journal' May/June 1988 pp. 95-98.)

⁸⁵⁸ For example, the wagons had different buffing and brake gear. The exception was the ALCO diesels.

⁸⁵⁹ All were still in use in 1975. R. Tourret 'Allied Military Locomotives of the Second World War' p.59.

⁸⁶⁰ Tourret op. cit. p. 206.

⁸⁶¹ Tourret op. cit. p. 78. Became Iq.S.R. Nos, 1401-1406, withdrawn in Feb. 1955.

⁸⁶² Tourret op. cit. p. 66.

⁸⁶³ Tourret op. cit. p. 63.

⁸⁶⁴ Tourret op. cit. p. 213. F.S. 831.001-004. Withdrawn by 1953.

⁸⁶⁵ Tourret op. cit. p. 207. F.S. 747.001-030. Withdrawn by 1956.

⁸⁶⁶ Tourret op. cit. p. 101.

⁸⁶⁷ Tourret op. cit. p. 65. "Towards the end of 1947 the W.D. decided that certain locomotives were surplus to their requirements in the Middle East and they were offered to British Railways. 43 engines were chosen by the London Midland Region as being suitable. However, in the event only 39 were shipped, the military authorities deciding that the four remaining locomotives... could not be spared. By the end of June 1948 all the engines had arrived at Crewe Works, together with four spare tenders...."

⁸⁶⁸ Tourret p. 124. Twenty of the 2-10-0's went to the Middle East in late-1943. Four were sent to the

Greece. 16 W.D. 2-10-0 locos.⁸⁶⁹ 20 USATC 0-6-0T locos. (Not from MEF stock.)⁸⁷⁰

Tanganyika. Narrow-gauge engines and stock (430 wagons) from stocks at Basra, Suez, Malaya and Burma were imported for increasing capacity for the Groundnut Scheme, 1946-47.⁸⁷¹

Egypt. Acquired a total of 62 “LMS 8F”s”, the last ten in 1954, the last of which were withdrawn by 1963.⁸⁷² Also purchased 8 0-6-0T’s⁸⁷³ and at least 35 R.O.D. 2-8-0’s.⁸⁷⁴

Transjordan. Acquired 6 metre-gauge 4-6-4T’s from the Rly. Stores at Suez in 1951. These were regauged to 1.05m.⁸⁷⁵

(E). PURCHASE BY P.R. OF AVAILABLE W.D. STOCK.

(i). Motive Power.

There were several types; the main batch was L.M.S.-type 2-8-0 tender engines known as the “Stanier 8F”.⁸⁷⁶ There were former Robinson “R.O.D.” 2-8-0’s⁸⁷⁷ of the L.N.E.R.

D.H.P. lines on 10. July 1944, and were sold to the D.H.P. in April 1946. Hughes notes the sale on p. 71, they were renumbered 150.685-588. The other 16 remained in store at Suez until shipped to Greece in January 1946.

⁸⁶⁹ See ‘Harakevet’ 44:13 for fuller details. Purchase price for locos stored at Ein Shams appears to have been £12,5000 each. Rowledge refers in Vol. 3 pp.17f.. Also *Ginzach HaMedina* file *Mem/376/R/19/45*. In ‘Harakevet’ 45:6 Paul Waters, citing UNRRA History Reports of 1947 and 1950, adds that UNRRA acquired the 2-10-0’s for US\$ 806,400 (i.e. near enough to £12,5000 each at US\$ 4.03 to the Pound.) The locos were loaned to Greece until UNRRA went into liquidation at the end of 1948, following which they were donated to Greece. UNRRA also purchased 206 wagons ex-MEF, intending to use half in Greece and half in Yugoslavia. By 6. Aug. 1946 both countries had agreed they did not need them. UNRRA then tried to sell them to Egypt or Palestine, but no satisfactory price could be agreed and so they were sold to Turkey in exchange for cigarettes for the DP camps in Germany! It appears from this source that the locos for Syria were also ‘donated’ when UNRRA was wound up.

⁸⁷⁰ Tourret op. cit. p. 215.

⁸⁷¹ ‘British Overseas Railway Journal’ No. 16, Spring 1998, p. 61. cf. ‘Harakevet’ 51:4:(j).

⁸⁷² Tourret op. cit. p. 68.

⁸⁷³ Tourret op. cit. p. 213.

⁸⁷⁴ Tourret op. cit. p. 78.

⁸⁷⁵ From Tourret ‘Hedjaz Railway’ p. 112: These engines had been built for Malaya in 1941, but due to the Japanese occupation were not delivered. The MoS took them over.... “In 1945 they were prepared for despatch to Malaya... but difficulties arose regarding the purchase price and the engines were not sent. In 1951 they were converted to 1050mm gauge and sent to the Jordan Royal Hashemite Railways, retaining the same numbers 140-145.”

⁸⁷⁶ Sir William Stanier F.R.S. was C.M.E. of the London, Midland & Scottish Railway, responsible for the design of this freight engine which was adopted by the W.D. as a standard for wartime construction. The ‘8’ refers to the power classification (on a scale of 0-9), ‘F’ refers to a Freight locomotive. These engines were also referred to by railwaymen as “Ellemesses” after the originating railway. Fuller details of construction, allocation and operation can be found in Tourret ‘Allied Military Locomotives of the Second World War’ pp. 56-68.

⁸⁷⁷ The Railway Operating Division (R.O.D.) during World War 1 had standardised on this robust freight design of the Great Central Railway. The London & North Eastern Railway, of which the G.C.R. was a component after 1923, classified these as ‘04’. We find that both these terms - ‘R.O.D.’ and ‘04’ - were used interchangeably. See also Tourret op. cit. pp. 75-78. 92 locos were requisitioned for MEF in 1941/2, 90 of which arrived. At 31. December 1945 there were 55 on the E.S.R., 20 on the H.B.T., 4 on D.H.P., 1 on P.R., 1 with Army in Palestine and 3 with Army in Egypt. By June 1946 all the D.H.P. locos had been transferred to Egypt, the H.B.T. locos were also being transferred to the E.S.R., the sole P.R. loco had gone to Army in Palestine. H.B.T. engine W.D. 745 (or 70745) remained dumped at Haifa and was scrapped in 1952.

Six were sent in July/Aug. 1945 to Iraq on loan, and were purchased by IqSR in 1946. The rest, including five more sent from Britain in 1952, ended up postwar in Egypt.

'04' class. W.D.⁸⁷⁸ 2-10-0's were imported but rarely used in Palestine. In addition, Steam and Diesel shunters were employed at several military bases, but these do not concern us here.

In essence Kirby had interest solely in the L.M.S. 8F engines. These had been used in Persia, Egypt, the Western Desert, the H.B.T. as well as Palestine. Various transfers of engines from and to "Army in Palestine" and "On hire to P.R." are detailed in Tourret.⁸⁷⁹ He notes however⁸⁸⁰ that of the remaining 40 engines in the Middle East, 24 were still at work on P.R.. By 31. March 1947 those engines on the P.R. were officially regarded as on loan to that system, and the P.R. wished to standardise on this class. By 18. December 1947, the P.R. had agreed a price of £P251,150 for all 24 locomotives,⁸⁸¹ and the sale went through. In May 1948 there was a *de facto* take-over by the Israel Railways and 23 of them were used until 1958 when displaced by diesels. The fate of the 24th. locomotive, W.D. 372, remained a mystery until it was eventually discovered in 1967 that it had been abandoned at Tulkarm station when the area was held by Jordan in 1948, and had become derelict there.⁸⁸²

(ii). Wagons.

British wagons were smaller than American vehicles, and mostly without automatic vacuum brakes. It appears that several vehicles were sent to the H.B.T. for sale (or disposal without purchase) to the Lebanese Government. None of the 'passenger coaches' for troop trains was absorbed by Palestine Railways, but some steel bogie vans built by Burns of Howrah, presumably imported during the war under W.D. aegis, were absorbed by Israel Railways. Their purchase does not seem to have been documented.⁸⁸³

⁸⁷⁸ The term "W.D." for "War Department" is usually used specifically to refer to new designs by Robin Riddles of 2-8-0 and 2-10-0 engines conceived and constructed purely for wartime use, employing a minimum of non-ferrous fittings and designed for a short and rough working life under combat and poor-maintenance conditions. In fact many survived in use for over 25 years in Britain and up to 40 years in Greece. Of course, the W.D. was responsible for supply of other locos, but the term "W.D." is nevertheless employed restrictively. See Tourret pp. 79-97 & 120-128 for more details, though the 2-8-0 version was not employed in the ME.

⁸⁷⁹ Tourret pp. 64ff.

⁸⁸⁰ W.D. Nos. 305, 308, 335, 336, 369, 374, 388, 391, 397, 400, 410, 424, 503, 510, 513, 515, 521, 541, 572, 586, 596, 605.

⁸⁸¹ Not a round figure but essentially £10,500 each.

⁸⁸² Details of how it got there are unknown. Since I.R. built a deviation line around Tulkarm station in 1948/9, the engine remained there until June 1967 but disappeared, presumed scrapped, shortly thereafter.

⁸⁸³ Some of these vans were rebuilt as grain hoppers, and a few remained in departmental stock in 2005. Howrah is in India, West Bengal.

(F). PURCHASE BY P.R. OF AVAILABLE U.S.A.T.C. STOCK.

(i). What Stock was for Sale?

The main American loco stock in the Middle East comprised the ‘Hill’ 2-8-2’s,⁸⁸⁴ referred to as “Middle East type”, and used *inter alia* in Palestine, Turkey, North Africa, the H.B.T. and Persia.⁸⁸⁵

In addition there were 0-6-0T shunting locomotives,⁸⁸⁶ and the ‘Whitcomb’ Bo-Bo Diesel locos.⁸⁸⁷ There were no passenger vehicles but a range of standard pre-fabricated standardised wagons, mostly bogie of around 35-40T., in the form of flat wagons, box vans, high-sided open wagons, liquid tank wagons and refrigerated vans, plus some four-wheel Caboose Brake Vans which had required weighting and strengthening before they were effective.⁸⁸⁸

Disposal matters were complicated by concerns of what could be used and sold where, in accordance with developing US policy,⁸⁸⁹ by politics and by currency issues.

(ii). Negotiations for Purchase.

The discussions began in March 1946.⁸⁹⁰ It appeared that the Americans had

⁸⁸⁴ See Tourret op. cit. pp. 200-207.

⁸⁸⁵ Tourret pp. 205f. 29 engines were sent to Turkey in 1943. By July 1946, 14 locos were in store at Azzib, Sarafand and Suez, one was on the H.B.T. and five were on loan to P.R. In 1946, these were all sent to Turkey. The last four in service in Iraq also went to Turkey in Oct. 1946. 91 were sent to Iran in 1942/3. 70 were sold to Iran in 1945. 20 were sold to the Far East, ending in China under UNRRA auspices.

⁸⁸⁶ Referred to as ‘Switchers’ by the Americans. Tourret op. cit. pp. 207-222. From pp. 210ff: “30 of these engines were sent to the Middle East and Iraq, arriving in late 1942 and 1943.... Two were lost *en route*.... Eight went to Iraq, three were transferred to MEF after a few months, the remaining five were sold to IqSR ... probably in 1948. 1267 / 1270 were hired to P.R. in Nov. 1942. By June 1946 W.D. 1267 / 1270 / 1276 / 1294 / 1299 were with the Army in Palestine, W.D. 1270 / 1299 being in store at Sarafand. 1287 / 1298 were on hire to P.R.; 1290 was with the Army in Egypt at Gilbana.” Gilbana was an army ammunition depot in the Sinai, some 15km. from Kantara East, and therefore served by the S.M.R. 1296 was on hire to E.S.R.. Soon afterwards W.D. 1270 / 1299 were brought out of store and loaned to the P.R. In 1946, eight were sold to the E.S.R.

By 1946, four 0-6-0T’s, W.D. 1270 / 1287 / 1298 / 1299 remained on loan to the Palestine Railways. P.R. then found out somewhat indirectly that ownership of these engines, formerly on lend-lease to the W.D., had reverted to the US Army, who were considering sale to the Turkish State Railways! “There was, not surprisingly, a lot of correspondence on the subject of these engines... now essential to the well-being of the P.R., during the course of which the four locomotives became two and then seemed to disappear completely! Nevertheless, all four locomotives remained in Palestine. 1287 & 1296 were purchased in 1946 and became P.R. 20 & 21. The other two were probably deemed to be only worth scrap value. P.R. 21 was reputedly used as a battering ram against Arab fortifications at Lydda in May 1948.... W.D. 1270, which was out of service at the end of WW2, was surprisingly put back to work by Israel Railways about 1956/57 as I.R. 22....”

⁸⁸⁷ Tourret op. cit. pp. 97-102. 105 units were allocated to MEF. Two were sent to the UK, 49 sold to the F.S. as Class Ne 1200, later D.143. The destiny of the other 51 is not given, but they did not stay in the ME and so by 1947 are effectively irrelevant to us, though presumably they could have been available for purchase if desired.

⁸⁸⁸ These wagons were also shipped in parts to Britain and erected there, then used also in the European theatre, supplemented by four-wheel vans and open wagons. The 4-wh. vans were made of plywood, whereas the bogie vans used in ME had tougher planking. Like some other ‘temporary’ wartime products, they proved durable.

⁸⁸⁹ The ALCO diesels used in Persia were indeed shipped back to the USA.

⁸⁹⁰ P.R.O. File FO/371 52617 has the majority of the ‘diplomatic’ correspondence cited. Other material has been found in Israel State Archives (*Ginzach haMedinah*) File *Mem/376/R/17/45*. Some has been published in ‘Harakevet’ 12:24.

simply declared that, the war being over, the former Lend-Lease conditions no longer applied.

The High Commissioner in Palestine sent a Telegram to the Sec. of State on 10. April.⁸⁹¹ “To safeguard rolling stock position of Palestine Railways, it is imperative that the following U.S.A. stock now on hire be purchased, viz. 4 shunting locomotives, 50 cistern wagons, 230 box wagons, 25 brake vans, 90 open wagons. Total estimated purchase price £252,000, which allows for agreed rate of depreciation. All British-built W.D. stock reserved for eventual purchase by Palestine Railways but not sufficient to meet traffic requirements. Unless U.S.A. stock acquired, P.R. will be dependent on E.S.R. at hire rate of two pounds per day because of recent decision by War Office to retain all U.S.A. stock in Egypt. Expenditure now envisaged can be found from provision made in ‘Abstract G’ Renewals Estimates for 1946/7. Unless immediate decision given U.S.A. stock in P.R. will be declared global surplus and disposed of elsewhere. This would leave P.R. in impossible position. U.S.A. authorities will accept payment in Palestine Pounds. Grateful early approval.”

This terminology and detail clearly reflects a memo by Kirby, which has however not been found in the files.

On 10. May 1946 Kirby sent a letter of complaint to the Chief Secretary. It appears that P.R. had been left totally in the dark, and various decisions had been taken at higher level, and in London, without those involved in running the railway knowing anything about them. In another letter to Gurney on 27. May 1946, he complained that it was only by chance that he had discovered, through conversation with Turkish officials in March,⁸⁹² that the Americans were offering the U.S.A. rolling stock for sale. “General Headquarters did not know of this move until I had informed them. Except for certain steps which the P.R. had taken to obtain the allocation of wagons for special purposes, the position would have been much worse..... No previous warning had been given of this action, either by the U.S. Authorities or by the British Military Authorities.”

Presumably still referring to what must have been a frantic round of visits during the Cairo meeting, Kirby noted sourly that Brigadier Payne⁸⁹³ had produced telegrams which made it clear that the Treasury in London, through the War Office, had given a strong directive that the rolling stock in question was to be handed back to the Americans and that the British Army was to facilitate this in very respect. “I explained that I had not been kept fully aware of the position and that, in fact, I had not realised until an interview with Mr. Kitchen⁸⁹⁴ on the 4. May that the full rights in the rolling stock had reverted to the U.S. and that we should therefore now be required to deal direct with the U.S. Authorities in the payment of hire charges. This situation had not been realised by GHQ until the question had been raised by myself.... However, the position was now so delicate that this point could not be argued.”

It does seem strange that those responsible for making the payments were unaware to whom they should be paying. He had learned from Kitchen that all the U.S. rolling-stock formerly on lend-lease to the British Army and on hire to P.R. had been ‘captured’ by the United States with effect from 10. April 1946. Therefore the stock was now on direct hire from America and P.R. was called upon to pay hire charges to the U.S. Authorities instead of to the British Army! “It would therefore be advantageous to complete the purchase of this equipment as soon as possible.”

⁸⁹¹ File *Mem/376/R/17/45*.

⁸⁹² This was presumably at the Inter-Railway meeting held in Cairo that month and, if so, the incident illuminates dramatically how important such meetings could be.

⁸⁹³ Director of Transportation at GHQ, ME.

⁸⁹⁴ Of the United States Foreign Liquidation Commission

Moreover, a deadline of 21. May 1946 had been imposed for purchase by P.R. - "If no definite decision is made by that date the U.S. Authorities will hold themselves at liberty to dispose of the rolling stock to the Turkish State Railways who, as I know, are interested in acquiring it." There were further problems. The U.S.F.L.C. considered that the assets available for disposal should be purchased as a whole, or not at all. This was a difficult point because "We do not wish to purchase five Mikado type (2-8-2) locomotives which we have on hire. The Liquidation Commission may endeavour to force an issue on this point; I on my side will equally endeavour to avoid purchasing the locomotives." Although these were at present giving good service, they were not built for long life and were non-standard with P.R.'s other locomotives. "We are already more-or-less committed to standardising on L.M.S.-type British-built W.D. locomotives and I wish to avoid having only five locomotives of a particular type. However, we may be forced into having to take them because we cannot afford to let the wagon stock go. If we are forced into this position I shall adopt every possible means of obtaining the locomotives at a reduced price."⁸⁹⁵ A revealing comment; At this stage Kirby was already, in his mind, deciding to purchase the 24 L.M.S. 2-8-0's, even though he was also considering purchase of entirely new mixed-traffic machines from Britain. But the wagons were vital. Presumably the Mikadoes, if Turkey were so interested, could have been re-sold later.⁸⁹⁶

But it is noteworthy that, if a sale were envisaged, the Americans had not even considered contacting the Palestine Government or Palestine Railways direct. It almost seems as though a confrontation was being planned, with five locomotives steaming off one day hauling with them all the vital wagons.

The diplomatic wheels now began turning furiously. What followed comprised negotiations in both Cairo and Washington, with the Foreign Office steadfastly refusing to pay or to admit any liability for as long as possible. They held that under the Military Holdings Agreement "the Americans could only recapture Lend-Lease articles if either the American Government required the use of them elsewhere or they were no longer essential to us"⁸⁹⁷ and any attempt to "recapture Lend-Lease articles in the Colonies"⁸⁹⁸

⁸⁹⁵ At the Monthly Heads of Depts. Meeting of 14. May 1946 he reported that the U.S. Authorities were "being very hard-headed about the sale of their equipment and he really expected to be forced to buy five Mikado engines in order to get the wagons which we really need and for which Turkey offers a ready market if we do not purchase by 21. May 1946." He did not want these 5 Mikado engines, but would buy them if he could get the £P250,000 worth of stock no other way, and he would then have to use part of the sum provided at present for 12 locomotives. They would cost about £P15,000 each. He hoped to get Treasury authority through in time, as it would be a difficult situation if he did not. He would have been "prepared to buy a quantity of the engines and even standardising on them rather than acquiring five only, but it was not clear that we should get good stock; in fact, he gathered they would have to be collected up from odd places in a way that suggested anything but well-kept engines."

Reference was made to an arrangement for exchanging with the British Army four L.M.S. engines against five Mikados. The first of the Mikados was almost ready and the C.M.E. wanted to know if he should proceed to hand it over. Kirby told him not to do so. "The stock we had been holding on hire from the British Authorities was now on direct hire from U.S.A. except for stock on H.B.T. line. He had heard this himself and had since obtained confirmation. *Prima facie* it would seem that the British Army authorities could not exchange vehicles which were not under their control. The exchange must depend upon the American reaction to it. He promised to clarify the position and inform the C.M.E." (Minute 14:360).

⁸⁹⁶ These engines did eventually go to Turkey, where some were still in service into the 1980's.

⁸⁹⁷ OF.74/2/2, to Washington 11. May 1946, copied to Cairo, Palestine, Chancellor of Exchequer and Middle East Secretariat.

⁸⁹⁸ Technically Palestine was not a Colony, but the distinction here barely mattered. Britain was paying the bills. In fact the Americans did take this distinction seriously.

with a view to selling them back to the Colonies (or to the U.K.) was contrary to both the spirit and the terms of the Agreement.” In this case, not only were the items required to meet military traffic in Palestine, but the Americans clearly did not require them for their own purposes elsewhere, because they intended to dispose of them in Turkey. Lee, the Ambassador, was urged to play for time.

Lee’s response⁸⁹⁹ was that the Americans “alleged” that the Agreement did not apply to stock in Palestine! Instead, since this stock had been hired to Palestine Railways it had “in effect been diverted to civilian end-use in Palestine.” The logic was that the British Government had profited financially from hiring this stock to a third party - P.R. - and therefore had not held it under direct military control. Now they were being asked to pay! He felt that if it were really the case that this particular equipment must be retained in Palestine “there will be no alternative but for Government of Palestine to purchase it at a fair valuation. It will be understood of course that no similar question will arise as regards the lend-lease rolling stock in Palestine which was not the subject of hire to the Palestine Railways.”

The F.O. was not yet prepared to bite this bullet. On 23. May 1946 the Embassy was informed⁹⁰⁰ that they would not accept that lend-lease rolling stock on hire to P.R. was in effect diverted to civilian end-use, as it was still required for military purposes. This was avoidance of the issue, which was that the Palestine Government had been paying the British Government for use of these wagons. The F.O. tried other tacks, looking for a way out: They had “not known of the commitment” when concluding the Claims Agreement.

If pleading ignorance didn’t work, then some justified outrage could be tried: “How do the Americans justify the statement that our agreement in principle to return this rolling stock was given before 6. Dec. last? We repeat that this rolling stock is required solely on account of military commitments. If the Americans really had the understanding [you] mentioned... it was clearly an exception to the general run of the settlement which they should have made clear at the time. It was not an understanding shared by us.”

So it was now all the Americans’ fault for reading the text differently.

There was a fascinating admission. “We referred in our telegram No. 162 of 20. March (not repeated to Palestine), to our concern at the possibility that Americans would seek to recapture rolling stock required to meet military commitments and received assurance in your telegram 145 of 1. April.... The Egyptian case was cleared up because the E.S.R. agreed to buy and being in a third country we had no objection.⁹⁰¹ But had they not agreed and had the Americans carried out their threat to remove the rolling stock, we should have been forced to buy ourselves to protect our position. ... As we see it, our error was to allow recapture in all Middle East countries including Palestine. You will remember that the Americans turned the heat on over this question with reference to the Middle East generally and in our haste to meet their point we overlooked the special considerations in Palestine. We feel that we should not be penalised now to the extent of going back for a technicality on an agreement which has been concluded.”

The F.O. had therefore been in discussions in March, had NOT informed Palestine, had completely forgotten about Palestine and now felt aggrieved and even victimised that their own errors had led to this mess.

⁸⁹⁹ No. 262 Remac. received 18. May.

⁹⁰⁰ No. 289 Camer. Treasury Ref. OF.74/2/2. Repeated to B.M.E.O. (British Middle East Office) and Palestine High Commissioner.

⁹⁰¹ i.e. Because Egypt was paying. It is not known exactly what stock is here referred to, but clearly the E.S.R. also decided to purchase some of the war-surplus stock.

Time was passing, the deadline was nearing and Kirby was almost in a state of panic. Illiff of the B.M.E.O. at Cairo told the F.O. on 18. May⁹⁰² that Kirby had telephoned the previous day, following another visit to Palestine by Ramsay of the American Field Liquidation Commission, who had maintained that the 21. May deadline for a decision still stood. He had mentioned that no authority for purchase had yet been given to Palestine by the Colonial Office.⁹⁰³ “I told him that the question was now being handled in Washington....” Further, Ramsay had said that if the Palestine authorities had not notified him by 21. May 1946, his clear instructions were to accept offers from other sources at present under consideration, and had argued that since the British military authorities had been declaring as surplus substantial quantities of rolling stock in the Middle East, how could the military necessity argument be upheld?⁹⁰⁴ The Americans were prepared to give P.R. first offer of purchase.

Illiff summarised: “I think we are on a sticky wicket here.I therefore think Jerusalem should have authority from Colonial Office to purchase this rolling stock, the authority only to be used in the event of Lee being unable to secure a postponement of the May 21st. date.” He did not consider Lee’s chances of success in this endeavour to be high.

Indeed Lee was having difficulties. In an acerbic telegram also on 18. May⁹⁰⁵ to the F.O. he complained that it was very difficult to see how he could successfully claim that 59 vehicles for Palestine were made available on straight Lend-Lease, unless he could show either that they were never transferred to civilian end-use but remained under military control until V.J. Day or had been transferred to civilian end-use in Palestine before 31. March 1944, the date on which Palestine was regarded as no longer eligible for civilian Lend-Lease. “Unless we can do so, we see no alternative but to pay for these vehicles.”

Two days later Illiff reported⁹⁰⁶ that he and Kirby had met together with Ramsay of the American Commission. Ramsay had received further instructions, that “if the Palestine Railways wish to acquire this rolling stock they must be prepared to purchase it” - though he was authorised to extend the deadline date for a “reasonable period” to “give London time to absorb Washington attitude.” Illiff advised that “we cannot on military grounds release the rolling stock.” He suggested as an interim solution that the P.R. should purchase the stock, the purchase price to be paid to a joint UK/US suspense account. The F.O. agreed to this proposal immediately, on 21. May.⁹⁰⁷ In the meantime Illiff was able to be more specific as to what was involved. In contrast to the telegram of 10. May, the stock in question now comprised 2 shunting locomotives⁹⁰⁸ (4), 54 cistern wagons (50), 113 box cars (230) and 18 brake vans.(25). All of these had been

⁹⁰² No. 69 REMAC, repeated to Jerusalem & Washington.

⁹⁰³ Further evidence of confusion of roles between C.O. and F.O.

⁹⁰⁴ In a later telegram (No. 71 Remac) sent 5.15pm. the same day (his previous one had been 12.05pm) he added urgently, to avoid misunderstandings, that he had spoken with GHQ who had informed him that “the bulk of the British declared surpluses of locomotives and rolling stock in Middle East Command have been metric-gauge equipment which cannot be used in Egypt or Palestine. Of standard-gauge equipment which became surplus in Persia and Iraq all that was suitable for use in Palestine and Egypt is being moved there, and Palestine’s requirements take this into account. In short there is no validity in this American argument...”

⁹⁰⁵ No. 265 Remac, sent 9.15pm. 18. May, received 3.20am. 19. May. Of course one must allow for the time differences as well. This was copied in addition to Cairo and to the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

⁹⁰⁶ No. 72 Remac, 10.52pm. 20. May 1946.

⁹⁰⁷ Telegram No. 104 Camer.

⁹⁰⁸ Numbers in brackets refer to the 10. May proposals. None of the 90 Open wagons are now mentioned.

actually on hire to P.R. on 9. April and were recaptured by the Americans with effect from 10. April.

There was a complication. He continued: "In addition, Palestine Railways wish to acquire 117 box cars and 13 open 35-Ton wagons which are in the course of being moved from the H.B.T. Rly. to Palestine under G.H.Q. arrangements.⁹⁰⁹ This was lend-lease equipment in the possession of the British Army for operating the H.B.T. which is a military line. On transfer to Palestine railways system it would automatically come on hire and Americans claim that it should be dealt with in the same way....."

Lee told the F.O. on 21. May⁹¹⁰ "We agree with Illiff that the only way out of the immediate impasse is for Palestine Railways to be authorised to purchase the rolling stock in question..... We are not pursuing negotiations here as regards engines⁹¹¹ for the moment." He saw no chance of success in persuading the Americans to change their attitude. A lengthy report on 28. May confirmed that the Americans were convinced that sale to local government should not prejudice the position as regards continuing military needs. The time would therefore come when the British would have to pay for what they were using, and if they were hiring the stock to a third party (i.e. Palestine Railways) they could not then suddenly claim that they were being denied control, should the Americans decide to sell the material.

The status of the H.B.T. stock not yet transferred was now accepted as different and not covered by the earlier agreement. The Americans opposed the suspense-account idea but were prepared to extend Ramsay's deadline till 10. June. After that date he would be free to take any action which he thought was in the best financial interests of the United States.

A further two weeks had been bought as a breathing-space. In the meantime, it is unclear from the sources what was actually happening 'on the ground' - i.e. whether these locos and wagons were still being used, still being loaded and despatched, or whether they had all been gathered into some specific sidings (the U.S. Army still operated the branch to Tel Litvinsky)⁹¹² and, if so, how the actual military traffic was being handled. Lee repeated that he saw no hope of persuading the Americans to reconsider regarding the stock already hired out, but considered the position as regards other equipment was more open and they might be able to avoid payment. "Certainly we could probably do so if it were not made the subject of an automatic hiring arrangement. Is this inevitable? ...Our advice is to accept American standpoint on original Palestine rolling stock but to continue to argue about propriety of any payment on rolling stock transferred to Palestine. If we can accept defeat on the former with good grace and make a speedy settlement it may help us on the latter."

The F.O. were unwilling to accept defeat.⁹¹³ "It is alarming that, when we have, as we thought, purchased for a consideration Lend-Lease stocks in the Colonies, including Palestine, we should now discover that there are exceptions. While it would appear that the Americans had made a reservation, mental or otherwise, about this rolling stock in Palestine we had no such intention." The Americans were to be asked for their reasons in a detailed written report so as to avoid further difficulties in the future. It was piously hoped that preparation of the written justification would take them so much time that they would extend the 10. June deadline further.

⁹⁰⁹ See the list of H.B.T. stock above. 14 of the 131 Box Vans are missing, but all the Opens are included.

⁹¹⁰ No. 270 Remac. 9.06pm. 21. May 1946. Copied to Cairo and High Commissioner, Palestine.

⁹¹¹ This word is marked in the original with a question mark as "group undecipherable".

⁹¹² IRM Archive Plan E/95/15 of 9. June 1945 has a later hand-written note stating that the Tel Litvinsky branch closed on 8. May 1947.

⁹¹³ Telegram No. 312 Camer, 30. May 1946 to Washington, copied to Cairo & Chancellor of Exchequer.

While London prevaricated, developments continued. The next day, Cairo advised⁹¹⁴ that they had just been told by the Americans of Washington's reply. The Field Liquidation Commissioner would be instructed that unless the P.R. were prepared to make an outright purchase before 10. June he was to regard himself as free to make arrangements to dispose of rolling stock either in Turkey or elsewhere. "In view of the American attitude and the short time available to us for the difficult task of persuading.... I see no alternative to immediate purchase by the Palestine Railways. Please let me have your comments by immediate telegram."

However, although Kirby in Palestine, the British office in Cairo and Lee in Washington were all advising submission, London was still dragging its feet, due partly to internal debates between the F.O.'s Eastern and American Departments and the Treasury.

In the meantime the Embassy had been doing its best to find a sensible way forward, and calming feelings in London. On 31. May Lee wrote⁹¹⁵ urging the F.O. not to insist upon a written statement from the Americans - "as I feel convinced that it will not modify basic American attitude, and it will make them less receptive of possible bargain on rolling stock from the Haifa-Beirut-Tripoli Railway, and will be very reluctant indeed (to say the least) to modify their date line of 10. June, which was a concession which they clearly regard as final." In short, it would annoy them unnecessarily.

The F.O. at last gave way, if a little petulantly. "Very well", they cabled Washington,⁹¹⁶ "We agree to payment being made in the case of the Lend-Lease rolling stock which was hired to the Palestine Railways and has been recaptured."⁹¹⁷ This is subject to it being clearly understood by the Americans that it is a quite isolated case and creates no precedent." The H.B.T. stock was to be kept separate, the question "will depend upon the outcome of the discussion of the question of principle" whereby Illiff was attempting to avoid a hiring agreement being necessary.

Principles are well and good, but possession is much better. At exactly the same time as the above telegram was being sent, the Middle East Office in Cairo was sending a possible excuse regarding the H.B.T. stock:

"GHQ inform me that rolling stock referred to... is on charge to military transportation stores depot at Azzib which is in Northern Palestine. It seems to me therefore that we can reasonably [maintain] this rolling stock was a military holding in a Colonial dependency at V.J. Day and that the question of transfer from a third country does not arise.... GHQ propose to retain under military control rolling stock referred to... while it is in use by Palestine Railways and do not propose to raise a hire charge in respect of it."

So, they maintained, the H.B.T. stock was not endangered after all - it was based not in Lebanon but a few kilometres over the border in Palestine, and was still 'military'.

On the same day, Cairo had sent a longer cable⁹¹⁸ with different suggestions, pointing out that Palestine Railways was "a Government-owned undertaking" - therefore the British Government was, through a devious procedure, effectively hiring stock to itself. Moreover, "Half the system (Rafa to Kantara) is in Egyptian territory and is entirely

⁹¹⁴ No. 81 Remac. Cairo to F.O., copy to Washington & Jerusalem. 31. May 1946. 11.55am.

⁹¹⁵ No. 300 Remac, 11.50pm. 31. May 1946.

⁹¹⁶ OF 74/2/2; Camer No. 316. 3. June 1946, 9.00pm. Copied to Cairo & Jerusalem.

⁹¹⁷ Remac No. 84. 3. June 1946. Repeated to Washington & Jerusalem.

⁹¹⁸ Remac No. 85. 3. June 1946.

owned by H.M.G.," being operated by P.R. as agents for H.M.G.. Therefore wagons hired out by H.M.G. were being used on H.M.G. property by an H.M.G.-affiliated enterprise. "Palestine Railways carry all military traffic at cost" - so in addition, no commercial profit was being made from the 'hired' rolling stock.

Was the stock actually required to meet a military commitment? It appeared so. Lengthy calculations demonstrated that the "annual tonnage capacity"⁹¹⁹ available for Palestine Railways on V.J. Day comprised 47,750 tons; this in turn was composed of the pre-war civil fleet of 24,251 tons, W.D. hirings of U.K. stock at 3,658 tons, W.D. hirings of U.S. lend-lease stock of 6,800 tons, wagons available from the E.S.R. under exchange arrangements, 12,000 tons, and H.B.T. wagons, 1,000 tons.⁹²⁰ The pre-war civil fleet was noted as being barely enough to meet pre-war civil traffic and there had been no replacements since the war. The current amount of civil traffic was approximately equal to the 1938-1939 level. The acute shortage of stock had led to many more Egyptian wagons being hired than normally envisaged under the customary residuary exchange arrangements - this had proved expensive and "for this and other reasons P.R. propose in future to be as independent as possible of these arrangements with Egypt. They therefore propose to maintain their wagon fleet at about the present level by transfers from H.B.T. and by the acquisition of rolling stock declared surplus in PAL force theatre."

To back this up, it was stated that pre-war ton-kilometrage was "approx. 145M, of which military traffic was negligible, whereas 1945-46 ton-kilometrage was 325M, of which 144M was civil and 181M was military." This indicated the vast increase, which was purely military in nature. Moreover, "P.R. point out that if the military and civil rolling stock were segregated to carry respectively only military and civil traffic, then 3 or 4 times the present number of additional wagons would be needed" - i.e. a common-user policy with use of any wagon for any traffic return load made the most sense.

On 5. June Lord Inverchapel in Washington informed the F.O.⁹²¹ he had informed the Americans of London's preparedness to pay for "all rolling stock on hire to Palestine Railways as of Nov. 30. 1945." But now it appeared that there were considerable discrepancies between the British and American figures as to what these actually were, and Inverchapel held out some hope that "this may enable us to save something from the wreck." There was argument about methods of payment and depreciation rates. The F.O. noted tartly on 11. June that "generally speaking American rolling-stock lend-leased in the Middle East was built, on American admission, for a short life only and 30% may prove to be inadequate depreciation." The General Manager of P.R. and the Director of Transportation at GHQ ME were to be asked for guidance. If payment had to be made, at least the Americans could be beaten down on price!⁹²²

A price was paid. But only a half at first. A price was somehow negotiated on the basis of Kirby's recommendations that 7% p.a. depreciation be allowed - therefore a deduction of 21% for the three years in service - from the full original cost, plus 25% for freight insurance. On 28. June Cairo informed the Foreign Office⁹²³ that a cheque for £P133,992.396 (i.e. half of £P267,984.792) had on that day been passed by Palestine

⁹¹⁹ 'Daily' must be meant here.

⁹²⁰ This actually totals 17,609. What "capacity" is meant here is hard to specify - it is not just the totalling of the theoretical loading capacity of all wagons at a given time, for time must be factored in for loading and unloading, empty running back to loading points, a proportion of time for repairs, etc. The 1948 I.R. Report (Sub-Head 19) mentions a "capacity tonnage" of 38,000 tons of wagons inherited by I.R.

⁹²¹ No. 313 Remac. 5. June 11.36pm., received London 6am. 6. June 1946. Just two years after 'D-Day'!

⁹²² Most U.S.A.T.C. stock carries '1942' branding, even though erection may have occurred a little later, so the stock in question was now at most four years old and probably less.

⁹²³ No. 93 Remac. 28. June 1946, repeated to Jerusalem & Washington.

Railways to the Office of Field Liquidation Commissioner Cairo, as payment for half of the stock in question - i.e. 2 (of the 4) 0-6-0 Shunting locos, 52 (of the 104) 40-Ton Cistern wagons, 113 (of the 226) 40-Ton Box cars and 18 (of the 36) 12-Ton Brake vans. It was stressed that “the purchase did not include any H.B.T. rolling stock.”⁹²⁴

(iii). Stock from the Haifa-Beirut-Tripoli Line.

How peaceful was the situation now? Only two days before, Lord Inverchapel in Washington had advised the F.O. that negotiations had hit a sticky patch.⁹²⁵ “We spoke to State Dept. ... and emphasised in our view this rolling stock [i.e. that on the H.B.T.] must be considered as a disposable in a Colonial dependency. The Americans replied they had information to the effect that we had deliberately shuffled rolling stock on H.B.T. shortly before declaring rolling stock of Lend-Lease origin surplus stock. This had meant that rolling stock of United Kingdom origin was moved up to Lebanese section of H.B.T. for sale to Lebanese Govt. and that rolling stock of Lend-Lease origin was moved down to Palestine and declared surplus. They said that this was not cricket and that they must therefore consider transaction in question as a proposed sale of stores located in a third country at the time of disposal.” The British could only plead ignorance and refer the matter back for further comment. And then, very tellingly, “Unfortunately, questions regarding Middle East disposals here are handled by rather informal types who obviously intend to screw every penny they can out of this.” But at least they understood cricket.

Cairo responded to this accusation indignantly. “This is a very tendentious and offensive presentation on the part of the Americans.... and anyhow in taking this line the Americans are only drawing a red herring across the cricket pitch.⁹²⁶ The so-called re-shuffle of rolling stock was dictated not at all by financial but entirely by operational and technical considerations. We can if necessary document the case, but I think it is insulting that the Americans should ask us to do so. The rolling stock which we moved from Egypt to H.B.T. to replace the rolling stock transferred from H.B.T. to the Palestine Railways was not suitable for use on P.R. as it was not fitted with vacuum braking system. Moreover by moving it to H.B.T. we were actually deprived of the opportunity of selling it to the E.S.R. from whom we had already an offer. So far we have had no offer for this rolling stock from the Lebanese Government.”⁹²⁷

A further comment is remarkable - “We have not at any time admitted that any rolling stock of Lend-Lease origin was surplus to military requirements in Egypt,

⁹²⁴ cf. Kirby’s letter of 10. May, above, which stated that the Americans wished to sell the entire stock as one lot. It is also unclear why just a half was purchased, and what was now meant to occur to the rest - whether it was indeed to be sold now to Turkey. Yet we know P.R. wanted the lot. On 17. June 1946 at the Heads of Dept. meeting Kirby explained that the British and U.S. Authorities “had been ‘at sixes and sevens’” and the United States had recaptured much of their material which had been with the Palestine Railways. However, the position reached was that Palestine Railways would buy all United States rolling stock which was on their system on 10. April 1946. This meant 113 vans, 52 cistern wagons, 18 brakevans and 2 shunting locomotives.

An arrangement had been reached with the British Government whereby Army stock from H.B.T. was to be hire-free to the Palestine Railways pending ultimate purchase. “The SotL then raised the question of hire charges in the event of the wagons passing back to the H.B.T. The G.M. ruled that the H.B.T. should carry a credit of hire charges up to 130 wagons, the number of those received from that line. The number is made up of 117 35-ton box wagons and 13 35-ton opens. With other railways hire charges would be unaffected”. (Minute 15:399).

⁹²⁵ 348 Remac, 26. June 1946, copied to Cairo (but not Jerusalem).

⁹²⁶ We do not understand this reference to what appears to be a rather unusual facet of Cricket.

⁹²⁷ See chapter on sale of H.B.T. In the end the parallel negotiations with the Lebanese Govt. also proved fruitless.

Palestine or the Levant States. But to facilitate American re-capture we went through the technical processes of declaration of surpluses in the case of rolling stock they wished to recapture.”

If this were so, then the entire conflict had been stimulated by a misunderstanding as to what was in fact surplus, the Americans assuming (naively, since they did not understand the British mentality) that the term ‘surplus’ meant ‘no longer needed and therefore available for disposal’, and the British assuming that everyone was still on the same side, or at least on the same cricket pitch.

This assumption is revealed in the next telegram from Cairo, of 6. July.⁹²⁸ “We have still got to fight on what is the real issue, namely their right to recapture any lend-lease material whether located in colonial dependency or elsewhere. As I read the lend-lease settlement, their ultimate right to recapture is absolute and we can only confront them with arguments based on the spirit underlying the settlement.” Such arguments presumably being that the material was provided to assist all concerned to win a major war.⁹²⁹

That spirit was certainly lacking now. On 20. July Inverchapel informed the F.O. that the Americans claimed the rule of geographical location should govern, and since the major part of H.B.T. track was outside Palestine, the rolling stock should be regarded as having been outside Palestine, consequently this was a disposal in a third country, and that United States was entitled to the proceeds. “We countered by saying that in our view location of headquarters of a railroad should govern and that H.B.T. was a Palestinian railroad just as Pan American Airways was an American airline even though its operations lay almost entirely outside the United States..... We thought any attempt to apply criteria of geographic location to such things as rolling stock was quite pointless since, given the nature of rolling stock, geographic location must vary so very much from time to time.” Lane, very much a diplomat, wondered whether it might not be possible to reach a compromise - this being based on dividing the proceeds according to a formula based on the ratio of H.B.T. track in Palestine and in Lebanon.⁹³⁰

The F.O. gratefully grasped the arguments that the stock had never been in ‘commercial’ use as such, just military under different headings, and that rolling stock by definition cannot be claimed to be geographically limited or static, and passed this on to Washington on 26. July.⁹³¹

Ironically this telegram crossed two from Cairo with more information. The first⁹³² noted that the rolling stock in question had not been declared surplus to military requirements. “It is still a direct holding of the United Kingdom Armed Forces and is in use partly on H.B.T. system and partly on Palestine Railways..... Before it can become available for disposal.... either (a) British Military Authorities must declare it surplus, or (b) US authorities must re-capture.” Cairo was clearly concerned that high-level

⁹²⁸ No. 101 Remac, to F.O., repeated to Washington. 6. July 1946.

⁹²⁹ One could also analyse these events from the perspective that the British had somehow mentally defined ‘Lend-Lease’ as ‘Donate’, and were unpleasantly surprised when the war was over to discover that the lender or lessor still maintained ownership and the rights appertaining thereto.

⁹³⁰ This would hardly help since, as we note elsewhere, the H.B.T. could be classed as beginning at Azzib, at the very most from Haifa East, so the proportion on Palestinian soil would be small. Inverchapel added, sensibly, that the H.B.T. should not necessarily be treated as a separate railway in any case - “It had been built to link existing railroads and to give through railroad communication between Egypt and Turkey. Consequently the same rolling stock must have operated all the way between Egypt and Turkey”. He felt therefore that any division on the basis of Lane’s suggestion would be “unfair to United Kingdom.”

⁹³¹ No. 393 Camer 26. July 1946. Copied to Cairo.

⁹³² No. 61 Camer 26. July 1946. To Washington, repeated to F.O..

discussions were taking place over this additional stock that was still very much in use! In either case, Palestine Railways would wish to purchase the bulk of it. The fear - apparently legitimate - was that the H.B.T. stock had become a football⁹³³ in this match of wills between British and American bureaucrats and diplomats in distant Washington, whereas those working in the Middle East simply needed the assurance that they could continue to use what was already there, on tracks and sidings, in daily use. It was therefore suggested "that Palestine Railways be authorised to purchase."

The second telegram⁹³⁴ allowed the writer a few more hours to gather the necessary facts and calmly marshal arguments for the British representatives in Washington.

The H.B.T. rolling stock might be found at all times in use anywhere between Kantara and Chohban Bey (Turco-Syrian border station.). This could be divided into:

Kantara - Rafa (195 km), built by H.M.G. and operated by P.R. on an agency basis.

Rafa - Haifa (260 km), Palestinian Railways.

Haifa - Tripoli (230 km) H.B.T., also owned by H.M.G.

(Of this, Haifa - Nakhoura in Palestinian territory measures 43 km,

Nakhoura - Tripoli in Levant territory measures 185 km.)

Tripoli -Chohban Bey (368 km), Syrian.

Lane's proposal, now referred to as Formula A "would give split of U.K. 43 to U.S. 187."⁹³⁵ Instead, a counter-proposal would involve a split on a different basis (Formula B) of calculating the H.B.T. proportion of the entire route. This would give a split U.K. 303 to U.S. 187.⁹³⁶

It was wryly accepted that "Formula B would probably be no more acceptable to the Americans than Formula A to us" and he proposed a compromise on "Formula C, namely:

Total track mileage from Kantara to Chohban Bey to be taken as basis; Nakhoura (frontier station in north Palestine) to be dividing point; Nakhoura to Kantara to be regarded as 'Colonial dependency' and Nakhoura to Chohban Bey to be regarded as 'third country'. This would give a split U.K. 498 and U.S. 555."

Honour could thus be satisfied with an almost 50-50 split, if the issue of British ownership of the H.B.T. line as far as Tripoli were ignored; By throwing EVERYTHING between the Suez Canal and Turkey into the equation as the effective radius of operation of H.B.T. stock, and then dividing by national border rather than operational boundary, an acceptable compromise could be formulated.

It is not recorded whether this compromise was put forward. The next documents available indicate that tension was still high. Inverchapel informed the F.O. on 8. August⁹³⁷ that they should be prepared "either (a) to negotiate for a settlement on the best possible terms, or (b) to stall still further on grounds that the rolling stock is required for military purposes."⁹³⁸

It seems remarkable that so much international time and effort, potentially putting the entire Anglo-American relationship at risk, should be invested in the issue of several second-hand railway wagons from a line that was being disposed of in any case.

⁹³³ Or perhaps a cricket ball?

⁹³⁴ Camer No. 62. 10.15am. 26. July 1946. Cairo to Washington, repeated to F.O..

⁹³⁵ sic. Maybe 185 is meant. The difference is unimportant, the point being that purely the Haifa-Tripoli section would be split in these proportions.

⁹³⁶ That is, adding the Sinai, P.R. and Syrian sections to the H.B.T. total to be divided.

⁹³⁷ No. 422 Remac. Copied to Cairo.

⁹³⁸ He admits that the British have merely been 'stalling'. Of course, the situation in Lebanon was also changing at this time, a factor the Americans had not overlooked.

But this may be only one issue amongst many. Inverchapel did propose at the end that agreement according to the formula suggested above might still be feasible, “we assume that sale of rolling stock would take place fairly soon after word from Washington.”

Cairo confirmed the stock at issue on 21. August.⁹³⁹

“Following quantities of rolling stock will be involved in withdrawal from H.B.T. Railway on the settlement. Figures are expressed in terms of 10-Ton units, i.e. 1 unit represents carrying capacity of 10Tons.⁹⁴⁰ a). of British origin, 563 units, b) of lend-lease origin, 686 units. In addition its locomotives, all of British origin, will be involved.”

This would not be surplus in a strict sense, since there would be a continuing military requirement for them in Palestine for some time to come. The Army considered it essential, however, that either the Palestine or Lebanese Governments should purchase them, since the Army no longer had sufficient personnel to maintain them. In fact the Army was withdrawing Royal Engineer units from Lebanon in this time, but was maintaining the depots at Azzib and at Suez.

“If the Lebanese buy the H.B.T. Railway they will be offered at any rate sufficient rolling stock and locomotives to enable them to continue to operate the lines to a capacity of 300 tons each way *per diem*. This represents 1946 saleable units of ten tons or about one third of total H.B.T. stock, i.e. roughly the amount presently operating on H.B.T. line. Remainder (or all if Lebanese do not purchase the lines) will be offered to Palestine Railways to purchase.”

The implication is that two-thirds of the stock nominally allocated to the H.B.T. was in use off that line, presumably elsewhere between Kantara and the Turkish border. “Surplus” was here being very carefully defined.

The F.O. accepted now⁹⁴¹ that any eventual sale to the Lebanese Govt. would be regarded as a disposal to a third government, requiring prior U.S. consent and surrender of net proceeds. “As regards eventual sale to Palestine Govt., we have so far taken our stand on the basis... that we regard the entire transaction as a disposal within a colony. We realise full well that this is likely to be a losing battle, but for the present we prefer to await the next American move.”

Surviving documentation now peters out. The GHQ had however “learned confidentially that the Americans have again approached the Acting General Manager of P.R.⁹⁴² with the same questions as were put to GHQ. Prior to this American approach, which we anticipated, copy of GHQ’s reply was passed by GHQ in confidence to Acting-G.M., who wrote to GHQ expressing complete agreement.” This seems real cloak-and-dagger stuff. Dismayingly, however, something had gone drastically wrong. “It now appears that despite this, and despite the opinions of his own Lines Superintendent, he has sent to the Americans a reply which is a complete *volte face* from his original position and which assesses proportion of military to civil traffic at nine as to ten. His answer is not supported by statistics (indeed Lines Superintendent repudiates it) and seems merely a piece of unfortunate guesswork.”⁹⁴³ The position was complicated by

⁹³⁹ Remac No. 140. Cairo to F.O., copied to Washington. 21. August 1946.

⁹⁴⁰ This makes it hard to calculate exactly how many vehicles were involved, although one could take British wagons as 10T. (i.e. 1 unit) and American as 40T. (i.e. 4 units.)

⁹⁴¹ No. 455 Camer. 16. September 1946. Repeated to Cairo.

⁹⁴² At this point Kirby would have been on Leave in the UK. The term ‘again’ is however interesting, and it is certain that he would have left instructions for GHQ to be kept informed of any developments - he wanted this stock! The Acting G.M. from 7. July 1946 to 5. December 1946 was R.F. Scrivener, the Chief Engineer (see ‘Palestine Gazette’ 1505 of 11. July 1946 & 1542 of 19. December 1946.)

⁹⁴³ From the HoD monthly meeting of 24.10.1946: “It seemed that the stock had already been declared in London and elsewhere as on the Haifa - Beirut - Tripoli line and we were expecting a claim for hire

the fact that GHQ's knowledge of both the American approach and the reply was obtained confidentially from the Acting G.M. himself.⁹⁴⁴ Unfortunately we do not have this reply, existence of which seems to indicate that the British Military were effectively spying on Palestine Railways, though P.R. in turn might by now have been getting very concerned that the British prevarications were endangering their chances of obtaining the stock they needed. Details were to follow by diplomatic bag, but they are not in the F.O. file. So what happened?

Kirby noted cryptically in the 1946-47 Report⁹⁴⁵ "The Palestine Railways continued to hire from the War Department a quantity of locomotives and wagon stock..... Negotiations for the purchase of the stock were opened during the year, but could not be completed owing to the uncertain future of Palestine. Negotiations were, however, completed for the purchase of 2 locomotives and 183 wagons from the U.S.A. Liquidation Commission." And further: "Wagon availability was sufficient throughout the year to meet all requirements. 408 open 20Ton War Department wagons from the Haifa-Beirut-Tripoli Railway were made available to the Administration on hire when the military closed down in Syria and Lebanon. The use of this additional stock, combined with the falling off of daily average loadings, averted any shortage of wagons which may well otherwise have arisen as a result of the increased wagon turnround."⁹⁴⁶ There is no mention in the files of more of this American Lend-Lease stock being purchased.⁹⁴⁷

However, the 1948 I.R. Report on Assets⁹⁴⁸ notes the following:-

TABLE 14. EXPENDITURE ON FREIGHT STOCK.

Capital Expenditure from Revenue on Wagons:

1947/8. Purchase of 47 x 14T. W.D. Tank Wagons.	£P 18,000.
1947/8. Purchase of 13 x 40T. Low-Sided Wagons.	£P 9,308.
1947/8. Purchase of 200 x 20T. High-Sided Wagons.	£P 100,000.
1947/8. Purchase of 10 x SR-type Brake Vans.	£P
5,785.	
1947/8. Purchase of 150 x 20T. Box Vans.	£P 100,000.
1947/8. Purchase of 117 x 40T. Box Vans.	£P 70,000.
1947/8. Purchase of 7 x W.D. Refrigerator Vans	£P
9,500.	

charges for the civilian user. It was difficult to assess the actual proportions of the total user which had gone to civilian and military journeys respectively, because we had pooled the wagons with our own for general use, but the SotL was asked to reply as accurately as he could." (Minute 18:480). On 26.11.1946 at the 19th. meeting: "This had been done and the proportion was found to be 38.5 to 61.5. These figures had been communicated to the U.S. Disposals Authority." (Minute 19:496).

⁹⁴⁴ This seems incorrect - if Scrivener had told GHQ then it would hardly be confidential. The recipient of the text at the F.O. had also queried this with a marginal note wondering whether the Director of Transportation was meant here.

⁹⁴⁵ P.R. G. M. Report 1946-1947. p.9. Para. 8.

⁹⁴⁶ Palestine Railways Report 1946-1947 p.47.

⁹⁴⁷ At the 28th. HoD meeting (12. Aug. 1947) Kirby "mentioned incidentally that he had authority from Government to negotiate for W.D. rolling stock at present circulating on the system, and would proceed to do so."

⁹⁴⁸ See Appendix. Prepared in 1951 on the basis of information available. Sub-Head 19. 'Wagons'. We can assume that the 40T. wagons are American and the rest of British origin.

Overview of Expenditure on Wagons:-

In 1940/1 a total of	£P 1,075,
In 1941/2 a total of	£P 2,475,
In 1942/3 a total of	NIL.
In 1943/4 a total of	£P 17.
In 1944/5 a total of	NIL.
In 1945/6 a total of	£P 14,774.
In 1946/7 a total of	£P 1,005,
In 1947/8 a total of	£P313,032.

Expenditure from Renewals Fund on Wagons:

1944/5. Purchase of 217 x 13T W.D. Open Wagons:	£P 72,261.
1946/7: Purchase of 113 x 35/40T USA Covered Vans:	£P 74,563.
1946/7: Purchase of 52x 35/40T USA bogie Tank Wagons.	£P 31,771
1946/7: Purchase of 18 x USA Brake Vans.	<u>£P 12,995.</u>

We can see from these figures alone what sort of backlog is being dealt with.

(G). NEW LOCOMOTIVE PURCHASES.

The P.R. loco fleet was worn-out and getting elderly. Something had to be done if the railway was to run for the next twenty years or more - as, at this time, was still envisaged. Kirby faced essentially four options, some the result of recent technological progress, some the result of the difficult post-war economic and political situation. It is clear that he considered all, yet was compelled to discard some as unrealistic at the time.

Option A. Dieselisation.

Kirby was looking ahead. On 25. Sept. 1946 he wrote to the Chief Secretary⁹⁴⁹ that he had been considering the best means of renewing the Palestine Railways locomotive fleet and, in view of the fact that no fewer than 50 of the prewar fleet of 62 locomotives would fall due for renewal within the next five to seven years, "I have investigated the advisability of adopting diesel traction or alternatively the condenser type of locomotive. As a result of my discussions with the Crown Agents and other technical advisers during my recent visit to England, however, I have decided that the railways cannot afford the risk of adopting either of the two alternatives mentioned because, in each case, locomotives of the type and size which we would require have not been developed beyond the experimental stage." As far as he was aware there was no firm in England which could yet offer a main-line diesel locomotive of about 1,000 BHP of proven long-term performance.⁹⁵⁰ The only locomotives of the type which had been in use over any period for main line purposes were those the U.S.A.T.C. had used in Persia; "I believe that these have given satisfactory war service but they have not yet been proved as a commercial proposition."⁹⁵¹

⁹⁴⁹ Ref. No. F.6/6/4. File *Mem* 376/R/17/45.

⁹⁵⁰ At this period English Electric was working on some Diesel locomotives for the E.S.R., parts of which were also used in two experimental locos for the L.M.S.R. in Britain, Nos. 10000 and 10001.

⁹⁵¹ These were the Alco 1000hp. Co-Cos of 1942-44, U.S.A.T.C. Nos. 8000-8056. See Hughes p.110. An additional problem would have been foreign exchange and the sourcing of such engines from America,

By July 1947 it was clear that dieselisation for P.R. was at present a non-starter. On 3. July 1947⁹⁵² Kirby wrote: to D.G. Stewart, Financial Secretary of the Palestine Government, "Much as I should like to adopt this form of locomotion, the time is not yet opportune for us to do so. I discussed the question at some length with the Crown Agents when I was home on leave⁹⁵³ and their technical experts strongly advised me against diesel at that stage and nothing has since transpired to upset this advice." He was concerned that P.R. would have to shoulder extra design and experimentation costs, since there was nothing available 'off the shelf'.

"The lowest quotation for the steam locomotives which we have on order is about £P25,000 each. The lowest quotation which we could obtain two years ago for a diesel locomotive likely to suit our purposes was £P36,000. This price would be considerably higher at present rates."⁹⁵⁴ Despite his own preference he had reluctantly to accept that P.R. must continue with steam for some years to come. Principal considerations were the heavy capital cost of the diesel locomotives and their necessity to install entirely different machinery for their maintenance. "There are still two minds about the Diesel - even in America. We can well afford to cover the next five years or so with steam locomotives; we shall not lose thereby and it need not hinder progressive development otherwise. I anticipate that the first use of diesel locomotion on these railways will be for passenger railcar units for high-speed work if we ever achieve double-tracking of the railway."⁹⁵⁵

Option B. Condensing Steam Engines.

Kirby was aware of developments in steam locomotive technology. He wrote, "The condenser locomotive would appear to be an attractive proposition for operation in the desert conditions. I was given the opportunity by Major-General McMullen, the Director General of the War Office, of seeing the confidential report made upon the Henshell [*sic*] type of condenser which was captured intact in Germany." It was clear to him as a result that it would not be advisable for the P.R. to adopt condenser locomotives at this stage. "To begin with we should require a much smaller type than that captured in Germany and we should have to operate under different climatic conditions. Furthermore, the locomotives would need to be newly designed throughout, which would involve considerable extra cost - put by the Crown Agents at as much as £P10,000 - and would probably mean that our order would be considerably delayed owing to the extensive amount of work which the Drawing Offices and the designers in the United

where General Motors was also showing great progress in diesel loco development.

Touret pp. 280-283 describes these engines as exceedingly successful; they could be adapted from four-wheel to six-wheel bogies for use on lighter track such as in Persia, and were even fitted with multiple-unit controls, so that one loco crew could control two or more engines. The Soviet Union was impressed and ordered 70 units, later building several hundred to a locally-adapted design. Some engines were still in service in 1991. The locos in Persia were however crated up in 1946 and sent back to the USA, where they were mostly employed at various military bases.

⁹⁵² ref. 33/13/44.

⁹⁵³ It is typical of Kirby that he used his Leave also for work-related visits to factories and government offices.

⁹⁵⁴ It is not clear who was asked to quote, nor what order had been placed - see below under Option D.

⁹⁵⁵ Aside from the interesting reiteration of his desire to double the main line and so improve capacity, it should be noted that diesel railcar development was under way especially in Northern Ireland, where coal was likewise an imported and expensive fuel. But similar arguments in Britain, where coal was still easily available, led to the postponement of any Modernisation Plan for dieselisation and electrification until 1955, and in the meantime construction of a new range of steam locomotives for British Railways. And many of the early Diesel designs introduced then were indeed poor and unreliable.

Kingdom are at present having to cope with.”⁹⁵⁶

Option C. Standardisation on New Engines.

He therefore came to the conclusion that the most suitable course for P. R. to follow, both from the long-term economic standpoint and for immediate postwar requirements, would be to renew the existing Baldwin fleet by an improved type of straightforward steam locomotive embodying requirements which experience had shown to be necessary. P.R. required a locomotive which could haul a goods train of 800 tons as compared with the present load of 600 tons⁹⁵⁷ and which could also be utilised satisfactorily on passenger services. Such a type of “mixed-traffic” locomotive was in common use on most of the smaller railways and, if adopted, would result in considerable savings in maintenance and in the standardisation of spare parts. On a railway of the size of P.R. it was unnecessarily expensive to have separate types of locomotive for passenger and goods operation.⁹⁵⁸ He had in mind a type which would not only replace the 50 Baldwin type locomotives currently due for renewal but “will also replace the remaining 12 P.R. locomotives which will fall due for renewal immediately following the completion of the Baldwin locomotives.”⁹⁵⁹

Option D.(i). Short-term Renewals and Partial Replacement of Existing Engines.

Planning requires finance, and also an awareness of the difficult market conditions. In the circumstances this meant taking a risk and ordering in bulk, exceeding the annual estimates. Kirby noted that in the 1945/6 estimates provision had been made for renewal of only three locomotives. This had been due to the experimental nature of condenser locomotives, but, since idea was now dropped, it should now be possible to think in terms of larger numbers.⁹⁶⁰ From discussions with the Chief Engineer of the

⁹⁵⁶ Henschel of Kassel had been experimenting with condensing tenders for some time, including supplying one such tender to Iraq in 1939. (‘Harakevet’ 55:6). During World War 2 large five-axle tenders on this principle were supplied with several ‘Kriegslok’ 2-10-0’s of classes 52 and 42 for the Eastern Front. The idea is that exhaust steam should be gathered and piped back into the tender, where cooling fans condense it into water again, thus permitting it to be recycled and so cutting down requirements for water in arid regions. The principle was developed after the war, and from 1950 adopted successfully in ninety Class 25 4-8-4 steam locos for South Africa. Henschel built all the tenders. Clearly this indicates that the technology and expertise was still perceived as ‘German’. See ‘Harakevet’ 12:6. Such a loco could cover 600 miles without refilling the tender. Kirby is correct in that the length of P.R. desert operations - essentially the Kantara-Rafa section - would not make these technical complications worthwhile. The P-Class were able with their 6,500 gallon tenders to traverse the 147-mile section Kantara-Gaza without refilling. See ‘Railway Gazette’ Vol. 1935/II, p. 232f. & ‘Harakevet’ 13:7. However, whilst the tenders were complex, the actual modifications to the locomotive would not have been so extensive as he suggests. There is no indication that major rebuilding work on the engine in Iraq in 1939 was necessary.

⁹⁵⁷ In P.R. G.M. Report 1942-6 p. 36 it is noted that in wartime loads were increased from 600 to 1000 tons by the use of more powerful W.D. locos.

⁹⁵⁸ In Britain this is referred to as an MT or Mixed Traffic loco. The Baldwins with their rebuilt sub-classes were essentially such, and really the ‘P’ class locos were P.R.’s sole real passenger engines.

⁹⁵⁹ It is obvious that these 12 were the Kitson 2-8-4T’s and the P-class 4-6-0’s, though the latter were hardly due for replacement after only ten years in service. In fact the 50 would include the 6 Baldwins rebuilt to ‘H2’ and the 5 rebuilt to ‘H3’ tank engines, and five of the tender locos had been withdrawn during the war years, so only 34 of the tender variety remained. Standardisation as a principle is not incorrect, but can be carried too far; The Jerusalem line would not be suitable for eight-coupled engines due to its curvature, and the rebuilding of the tank engines had been done to increase adhesion on this line.

⁹⁶⁰ The implication is that the condensing concept had been carried through quite far, to the extent of taking a gamble when considering numbers to be ordered.

Crown Agents he understood that the placing of such a small order was not likely to receive a very high priority with the manufacturers, so even in the best circumstances it was not likely that P.R. would obtain delivery of any locomotives before the end of 1947, and if they did not obtain priority could conceivably lose another year. The present condition of P.R.'s locomotives meant no delay could be risked, especially as there were indications for fairly heavy traffic during the immediate postwar years.

He had also changed his mind on renewing the boilers of any of the existing Baldwin locomotives, as he had hoped and indeed had provided for in the 1945/46 estimates. The quoted price by the Crown Agents was now £P3,400 f.o.b.⁹⁶¹ British port, which meant the provision for 10 boilers in the current year's estimates would be sufficient to buy only two boilers, as prices had risen five-fold. "Considering that since the year 1936 no fewer than 50 new boilers and 38 new tube plates have been put into the Baldwin locomotives - a surprisingly expensive procedure - I do not propose to spend any more money in the wholesale renewal of boilers. For this reason, therefore, it becomes more important that the renewal of our existing locomotives should not be unduly delayed."

50 boilers for less than 50 locos within ten years is indeed an extravagance - or an indication of the problems caused by poor water and the oil-burning experiments.

He wished instead to order 12 new locomotives at once - the full number planned for renewal up to the end of 1951. By placing such a bulk order P.R. was more likely to receive favourable attention from manufacturers and have the work put in hand without delay. He noted, as a 'sweetener', that payment would not be required until 1948. "By that time I anticipate that we shall be in a position to increase the order from 12 to 24 or more, and if we can do so before the order for the first 12 locomotives has been completed, we shall be likely to obtain the second 12 locos at a considerably-reduced price." He was hoping for reductions due to continuity of production with all moulds and patterns, and the economy of scale combined. It was not clear which firm would receive the order, since this might depend on allocation by the authorities, but he hoped for the North British Loco. Co. whose P-Class engines were well built. He closed, "I shall be grateful for your approval to my indenting immediately for 12 mixed-traffic locomotives at an estimated cost of £P16,000 each in anticipation of provision for this being made in the 1946/47 renewals estimates."

The Chief Secretary's reply has not been found. We do know that the order was not executed and P.R. did not have any further new locomotives built for it - instead purchasing 24 of the L.M.S. 8F-type 2-8-0 from W.D. stocks. These were a known quantity, were available, and largely met the specifications Kirby had outlined.

Option D.(ii). Renewal of Rolling Stock through Purchase of New Material.

The military authorities, both British and American, had employed a great deal of freight stock in the Middle East but very little in the way of purpose-built passenger rolling stock. There was, therefore, nothing available for purchase second-hand and any renewals would involve new construction.

Kirby wrote⁹⁶² that Coaching stock was in a generally unsatisfactory condition, due to its age and the intensive use during the war. "With a view to securing manufacturing capacity in the United Kingdom, a tentative programme for renewing all life-expired and obsolete stock was prepared but had to be deferred on account of the

⁹⁶¹ 'Free on board'. i.e. transport costs to port and crantage onto ship paid.

⁹⁶² P.R. G:M. Report 1946-47 p. 58 para. 94.

urgent need for economy.”⁹⁶³

This meant that only repair was possible, but even here “difficulty in obtaining materials for repair purposes continues..... The output of repaired coaches in 1946/47 is equivalent to shopping all stock once in twenty months.” This was certainly an indication of what rough wear the ageing and patched vehicles were getting.

(H). CRANES.

In 1939 P.R. possessed only three cranes - two 25-Ton cranes located at Haifa and Lydda, with a 20-ton crane based at Kantara, and therefore not available for salvage work in the area where sabotage occurred. A consequence was that derailed locos were still awaiting recovery more than a fortnight after the incidents and the Board considered that another breakdown crane of not less than 35-Ton capacity should be regarded as an essential addition to the railway’s equipment, both to facilitate salvage work by its greater capacity and in order that there might be one crane in reserve. (In all major salvage operations the use of two cranes is essential.)

By 20. April 1942 Arthur Kirby had just taken over and was giving the system a much-needed shaking. A surviving letter⁹⁶⁴ is addressed to the D.Q.M.G. Mov. & Tn.⁹⁶⁵ at GHQ in Cairo, responding to his letter⁹⁶⁶ of 8. April. Presumably the military were clearing some stocks out of the Canal Zone or Western Desert, or were simply aware of the problems facing P.R. Kirby, of course, has to beg politely and drop hints that he cannot pay!

“A 35-Ton breakdown crane is essential as a stand-by for the clearance of incidents expeditiously. I assume that in offering “another crane” you refer to Ransome 36-Ton breakdown crane mentioned in the D.Q.M.G. Mov. & Tn.’s letter CRME/7601/H/2/TN(2) of the 12. October 1941. If so will you please arrange for this to be despatched to Lydda as early as possible.

I am not in a position to purchase this crane, nor do I suppose that it was your intention that this should be done. I propose that it should be loaned to this Department under similar conditions to those which apply to the loan of locomotives. Will you please advise me when the crane will be handed over at Kantara.”

The crane came. On 13. June 1947 Kirby wrote⁹⁶⁷ to the Chief Secretary: “Since the year 1942 we have had on hire from the Army a Ransomes & Rapier 36-Ton Breakdown Crane and several times during the war we attempted to acquire this crane outright to avoid the possibility of its being transferred elsewhere. The crane has now been declared surplus and P.R. have been given the first offer by the British Disposals Mission. Allowing for depreciation, we can acquire the crane for a sum of £P8,000.” A

⁹⁶³ However, at the Monthly Meeting on 14. May 1946 Kirby mentioned that he had met a director of Wagons Lits recently, who had told him they had a new agreement with ‘Egypt’ and were placing orders for improved stock with air conditioning; He thought that if they were going to provide the facility “we might consider foregoing it in our coaches recently ordered, in which case we could hope for delivery a year or so earlier than could be anticipated at present. He thought we should stipulate instead a form of improved filter ventilation.” It was rumoured that in Iraq the air-conditioning never worked, but this seemed hard to reconcile with the recent orders for more air-conditioned stock for that country. The contract with the ‘Wagons Lits’ was due to expire in 1953. (Minute 14:467).

We have no information as to what coaches had been ordered.

⁹⁶⁴ also ref. 33/1/8.

⁹⁶⁵ Divisional Quartermaster General, Movements & Transportation.

⁹⁶⁶ (not survived) ref. Tn.5/1742.

⁹⁶⁷ Ref. No. F.6/16/1 in file R/9/47.

new one would be around £P14,000.

It is absolutely essential that we retain this crane, because all our other cranes are old and unsuitable to cover present-day requirements, especially to deal with the constant cases of train derailments by sabotage. I recommend, therefore, that we should acquire the crane forthwith. It is anticipated that, because of the non-delivery of materials this year, it will be possible to cover the cost from savings under Abstract 'F' of the Railway Estimates."

On 10. July C.G.M. Heathcote, for the Chief Secretary, replied formally but positively to approve purchase of the Crane for the sum of £P8,000, "provided that the cost would be met from savings under abstract 'F'."

He added though that, despite the British Disposals Mission declaring the crane to be surplus, it was not clear whether an offer to purchase had to be made now. "I assume that if a formal offer to purchase is expected, the transaction need not be concluded until the offer is received." That is, it would not hurt if payment could be delayed as long as possible!

Kirby's response on 17. July 1947 was snappy and forthright - he had to deliver the Palestine Administration a quick lesson in procedure, and he did not want to let this knock-down price opportunity to be lost in mutual squabbling between the Palestine and British Treasuries:

"It is not until equipment is declared surplus by the Army, or any other service, that such equipment is handed over to the British Disposals Mission for sale. The object of the Disposals Mission is to dispose of the equipment as soon as possible and to the best advantage to the British Treasury. A formal offer for the crane has been made by this Administration by the British Disposals Mission and unless this offer is accepted, the Mission will hold itself free to dispose of the crane elsewhere."

The much-needed crane was, it seems, finally purchased.

(I). CONCLUSIONS.

In this difficult period Palestine Railways faced difficulties in repair and refurbishment of existing stock, in purchase of new replacement stock, purchase of second-hand military rolling stock of both British and American origin, and development of new motive power policies to meet the changing conditions of a post-war world which, on the one hand, promised new through international traffic routes, and on the other showed signs of political fragmentation. These difficulties proved in many cases to be not only frustrating but insurmountable, being exacerbated by the fact that he could not make his own decisions but was dependent on a variety of distant authorities who controlled not only the purse-strings but the policies in Palestine. Kirby did however succeed in obtaining some ex-military stock he wanted, without being compelled to purchase items he did not want.

CHAPTER 10.

PALESTINE RAILWAYS - THE LAST FIVE MONTHS.

- We shall only describe the period until British withdrawal on 14. May 1948 - although the Haifa Enclave remained in British control until 30. June; We shall also concentrate on issues within Palestine itself - matters relating to the international rail links are dealt with separately for clarity but, it should be borne in mind, were to some extent taking place parallel to the internal problems. In fact., there was a great deal happening all at the same time.⁹⁶⁸

Again, for clarity's sake, we shall describe incidents month by month.

(A). JANUARY 1948.

Technically the 'Count-Down' had begun from the beginning of December and we must include this period again. On 14. February 1947 the British Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, had announced that the British Government had decided to refer the Palestine problem to the United Nations. Palestine, he considered, could not be divided in such a manner as to create two viable states. Since the Arab side appeared unwilling to agree to it, the Mandate could not be administered in its present form, and so Britain would ask the United Nations how it could be amended.

The U.N. set up a "U.N. Special Committee on Palestine" ("U.N.S.C.O.P."), composed of representatives from eleven of its member states. Its report and recommendations were published on 31. August 1947. The Jewish Agency accepted the plan, somewhat reluctantly, whereas the Arab governments and the Arab Higher Executive rejected it. On 29. November 1947 the U.N. General Assembly endorsed the partition plan by a vote of 33 to 16.

For our concerns the following points are of especial relevance:-

The General Recommendations of the Committee⁹⁶⁹ included:

- I & II. that the Mandate should be terminated and Palestine granted independence at the earliest practicable date.
- II & IV. That there should be a short transitional period preceding the granting of independence, during which the authority responsible for administering Palestine should be responsible to the United Nations.
- IX. That the economic unity of Palestine should be preserved."

The majority recommendation⁹⁷⁰ was for Palestine to be partitioned into three - a Jewish State, an Arab State and the City of Jerusalem, the transitional period leading to independence beginning on 1. Sept. 1947, and both new States would be required to sign a treaty by which a system of economic collaboration and the economic union of Palestine would be created. A Joint Economic Board would be established consisting of representatives of both states and members appointed by the U.N.'s Economic and Social

⁹⁶⁸ For this period, we have Minutes, Memoranda, Newspapers and other papers from the British side, some personal reminiscences from British military and police staff of the period, and some Memoirs from the Jewish side. Unfortunately we have not had access to any accounts from the Arab side.

Since the main political debates and developments have been well covered elsewhere, we shall mostly focus on the 'micro' scale, on the workings of these developments upon the railways and those attempting to run them.

⁹⁶⁹ We use here the text in 'The Israel-Arab Reader' ed. W. Laqueur & Barry Rubin, 6th. ed., Penguin, 2001. pp. 66-69.

⁹⁷⁰ Representatives of Canada, Czechoslovakia, Guatemala, Netherlands, Peru, Sweden, Uruguay.

Council, to organise and administer the Economic Union.

There was also a Minority Report⁹⁷¹ proposing instead a single but federal state. The Federal government would be responsible, *inter alia*, for transport and communications.

On 29. November 1947 the U.N. General Assembly passed its “Resolution on the Future Government of Palestine” whereby it “Considers that the present situation in Palestine is one which is likely to impair the general welfare and friendly relations among nations, takes note of the declaration by the mandatory Power that it plans to complete its evacuation by 1 August 1948, and Recommends to the United Kingdom, as the mandatory Power in Palestine and to all other Members of the U.N., the adoption and implementation, with regard to the future government of Palestine, of the Plan for Partition with Economic Union” as set out.

This included (A.1.) the termination “as soon as possible but in any case not later than 1. August 1948”, (A.2.) the armed forces to be progressively withdrawn, and (A.3.) the independent Arab and Jewish States were to come into being “not later than 1 October 1948”.

In Section B “Steps Preparatory to Independence” a 5-man Commission was to be established and sent to supervise, and (B.2.) “the administration of Palestine shall, as the mandatory Power withdraws its armed forces, be progressively turned over to the Commission...”; The mandatory power was “to fullest possible extent” to “co-ordinate its plans for withdrawal with the plans of the Commission to take over and administer areas which have been evacuated” and “not take any action to prevent, obstruct or delay the implementation by the Commission of the measures recommended by the General Assembly.” B.6: in due course “the Provisional Council of Government of each State, acting under the Commission, shall progressively receive from the Commission full responsibility for the administration of the State in the period between the termination of the Mandate and the establishment of the State’s independence.”

From this it is fairly clear that the Railways, as an arm of Government, should progressively be transferred to the Commission, which would in turn hand over the sections in the Arab State to the Arab Government and in the Jewish State to the Jewish Government. Of course this is a nonsense, for the simple reason that a railway network is linear and geographically spread - to turn over a single station or a section of line simply means a network becomes fragmented - but nevertheless if an Economic Union were to be created, the Railways would be able to stay as an intact administrative unit. It was for this that Kirby now, initially at least, directed his attentions.

From the surviving correspondence it is clear that Kirby - as a professional railway and ports manager - was representing an old-fashioned view of loyalty to his workers and loyalty to the concept of system’s integrity at a time when he was becoming increasingly isolated. The Military authorities clearly did not take seriously his repeated requests for help, and the political masters in Jerusalem seemed also disinclined to get too involved in the real problems which he presented to them - problems of withdrawal, of continuity, of the stability of the railway system until the last possible moment, of the need to see the railway system as a whole, a unifying whole, all this at a period when the country - and individual towns - were increasingly divided along ethnic lines. There were few precedents for such a wholesale changeover in authority, made more complex by the hostilities, civil war, the ‘evacuation mentality’ and the apparent political

⁹⁷¹ Representatives of India, Iran and Yugoslavia:

'bloody-mindedness' that placed no value on orderly handover.⁹⁷²

The following are examples of areas of concern:

- a). Maintenance of Lines and Operations until 15. May 1948 if at all possible.
- b). Fuel Oil Supplies.
- c). Care of Railway Staff -
 - during the period of troubles.
 - for the period after the withdrawal of the Palestine Government.
 - Expatriate officers and their rights to repatriation, furniture and goods, pensions.

Although his reports cover both Railways and Ports, for our purposes we shall concentrate on the information regarding Railways only.

An important opening document is a "Note of a Meeting with Mr. Mills in company with Mr. McGeagh on Wed. 19th. November 1947." The memo is dated 21. Nov. 1947,⁹⁷³ and clearly represented for Kirby rather a stark and shocking encounter.

"1. **Mr. Mills stated that it was Government's policy that there should be no transfer of power direct from the Mandatory Government to a succeeding power in Palestine,**⁹⁷⁴ but that the civil administration should be continued for as long as possible until the termination of the Mandate.

2. I stressed to Mr. Mills that the Railways and Ports will have to keep functioning fully until the last possible moment and that there could, therefore, be no gradual withdrawal. I also emphasised the necessity for the maintenance of the civil administration in those areas through which the railway would require to be operated. It was important, I stated, that there should be nothing done or said which would lower the morale of the staff and, with this in view, it was of the highest degree of importance that an early announcement should be made with regard to any retiring benefits or the conditions under which the staff might serve under a succeeding administration. Mr. Mills informed me that this matter was under urgent consideration.

3. Mr. Mills gave me clearly to understand that there would be no transfer and, therefore, that after a certain date the Mandatory would no longer be responsible. We then discussed in relation to this situation, the question of stocks of maintenance stores and material and I took the general directive that these should be reduced to the lowest practical level.

4. Several other points were discussed which were not of a nature which can be resolved for the time being."

Kirby reacted, according to his own recollection, in typical style - thinking first, at this bombshell, of his staff, and then of the value of stocks and stores. There seemed little point at this stage in objecting to the concept of allowing chaos to happen and then simply withdrawing. Instead, on the same day, 21. Nov. 1947, he sent his Chief Staff Officer a confidential memo asking that he ensure "all personnel records are brought

⁹⁷² That it COULD be different is illustrated by what happened in Sudan.

"The evacuation of the Sudan, under the terms of the Cairo Agreement of 1953, took place in the period August 16 - November 14 1955. Military families left gradually by air, and troops by rail, sea and air. Large quantities of military equipment and stores (such as vehicles, foodstuffs, lubricants and furniture) were held by units and depots and it was not until quite late in the evacuation period that GHQ Middle East Forces issued definite orders on their disposal. Some were sold to the local population by auction. Eventually, however, the majority were handed over to the Sudan Defence Forces who were amazed - and grateful - at their good fortune!" From: 'The Story of the Royal Army Service Corps and the Royal Corps of Transport: 1945 - 1982.' Ed. Brigadier D.J. Sutton. (p. 309).

⁹⁷³ Ref. G.C. 90/A/1. This was before the U.N. vote.

⁹⁷⁴ Our emphasis.

right up to date so that all our records shall be complete in every respect for all personnel purposes which may be connected with the withdrawal of the British administration from Palestine.”⁹⁷⁵

The sand of Uncertainty was now thrown into the cogs of daily operation. A proposal by the Superintendent of the Line to adapt tariffs on the Petah-Tiqva Railway to the P.R. standards was held back on the basis of “the probability of the Railway passing to a new administration in the near future”.

But although the railwaymen were doing their best, the civil servants seemed to be dragging their feet as the clock ticked towards the new and ultimate deadlines. On 17. Dec. 1947 Kirby wrote to the Chief Secretary on a number of points.⁹⁷⁶ These included:

“**1a (i).** The absence of any announcement regarding pensions and gratuities was already causing grave concern and unrest amongst the railway staff “upon whose loyalty we must rely to continue the operation of the railways to the end of the Mandate.” Staff issues included that of who might have to work in the Haifa Enclave until 31. July 1948, and how payments could be effected once the Administration had been withdrawn.

1a (iv). It would be impossible for P.R. to operate the Kantara-Rafa section after the termination of the British Mandate in Palestine. He suggested “the railway might be operated as a civil undertaking operating arbitrarily by HMG and most conveniently answerable to the C.-in-C., British Troops in Egypt.” The alternative would be for the E.S.R. to take over the Kantara-Rafah Rly. as soon as possible after the withdrawal of the British Mandatory Government from Palestine. The issues of staff payments and gratuities would in any case be different from that of staff in Palestine itself, “in that there will, presumably, be an orderly handing over, on agreed terms, to the E.S.R..”

The implication is impossible to miss - in Palestine there would be NO orderly handing over. Staff in Trans-Jordan would also be dealt with separately.⁹⁷⁷

What should be paid and how? An Advance Payment “of a few months salaries and wages, coupled with release of currency by way of the payment of Provident Fund and Pensions Ordinance bonuses and gratuities”⁹⁷⁸ appeared to be problematical, since this could lead to inflationary pressures which would reduce the value of the benefits paid, and “in any event it may prove difficult to retain confidence in Palestine currency towards the end of the Mandate.” An alternative suggestion was for final payments to be made by a British Consular Authority post-withdrawal, “the object being a gradual release of payments over a period.”

Kirby also asked some pertinent questions - the fact that he even had to ask implying also that no-one else seemed to have considered these matters. For example, para. 5: “Presumably⁹⁷⁹ the District Commissioners will not have the task of handing over the railway and port assets to local authorities? Some special arrangements will have

⁹⁷⁵ “Employees of the P.R., prior to the relinquishment of the Mandate, totalled 7,701. Of this number 5,568 were Palestinians; 1,626 Egyptians; 233 Transjordanians; 88 British; 51 Poles; 36 Greeks; and the balance drawn from various other nationalities. Breaking down the total of 7,701 employees by their religions, there were 1,736 Christians, 5,431 Moslems, 520 Jews; 4 Bahais, and 10 Druses. One of the most satisfactory features in Palestine up to May 15 last was the manner in which, under British direction, railway employees of different races, including Arabs and Jews, worked together quietly side-by-side, providing a fine example of tolerance to others.” From ‘Railways of Palestine’ by Arthur Stead in ‘The Locomotive’, 15. October 1948, pp. 156-158.

⁹⁷⁶ This document is also filed as G.C.90/A(1).

⁹⁷⁷ We have dealt with these other railways separately.

⁹⁷⁸ para. vi.

⁹⁷⁹ Kirby used the word “presumably” extensively, but many of his presumptions transpired to be unfounded.

to be made. In any case, the railway passes through several different areas and much of it does not fall within the purview of a local authority. The railway must be treated as a whole, if possible.” Was this possible? Winding up accounts could not be done from a London office, as was being suggested, but instead Kirby suggested that “some of the serving British personnel be seconded to U.N.O. to implement the handing over to a succeeding authority.” He was clearly keen to provide at least some form of continuity, noting “nearly all documents of the railways and ports will have to be retained for the use of a succeeding authority,”⁹⁸⁰ and “Acting on directives already given, we have already taken action, by way of cancellation of indents, stoppage of works etc... which is bound to cause serious frustration to a successor.... The greater damage has already been done.”⁹⁸¹ Bureaucrats were demanding full inventories in octuplicate, and he expostulated that this “would be a tremendous task and beyond all scope of the staff at my disposal, especially as all our efforts are to be directed to keeping the railways and port services functioning until the end of the Mandate”. Besides, “many of the assets are in movement and some - e.g. wagons - may be in another country.”

He noted: “The present indications are that the railway will be required to operate within the Haifa enclave after the termination of the Mandate and until the final withdrawal of the British forces. It is anticipated that up to 15. May, or whatever date is eventually decided upon for the termination of the Mandate, the railway will be able to operate under the existing law and the staff continue to work under the present conditions of service. By the termination of the Mandate the Palestine Government will cease to be and... the railways and ports staff could continue in employment only under new conditions of service. The British expatriate staff could be given the option of staying on by secondment to the War Department or the U.N.O. - according to whatever working arrangement is finally agreed upon - but they would, in fairness, have to be offered special conditions... more favourable than those under which they would have been serving under the Palestine Govt. They would also have to be paid in a currency which would be firmly tied to the sterling value.”

We see here his grasp of details while running a complex organisation, and his concept of ‘fairness’ at a time when expedience seemed to many to be more applicable.

Palestinian staff were more likely to go off home once they had received their pay and benefits and would “not be in a great hurry to seek re-employment”. If no satisfactory method could be found to assure continuity, “it may well be that operation within the Haifa enclave will have to be entrusted to British Military personnel” - a possibility which he considered desirable to avoid from every standpoint. If there were to be no satisfactory transfer of function through the U.N.O., he considered that “a collapse of the service is likely to come about some time before the termination of the Mandate.”

There were practical issues that perhaps only a railwayman would notice. “The winding up of and handing-over of the railway will present many problems. If there is to be no handing-over, what will be done with all the rolling stock on various parts of the system; who will take over the stations, buildings, valuable workshops, permanent way etc. How will rolling stock on foreign railways be accounted for; what will happen to goods in transit; who will collect monies which would normally be outstanding in ledger accounts...?” There must, it seemed obvious to him, be some process of handing-over, and such an orderly handing-over would take several weeks, meaning that existing British Officers might have to be seconded for several months to leave a satisfactorily

⁹⁸⁰ para. 9.

⁹⁸¹ para. 15.

working concern.

On 7. January 1948 the Financial Secretary replied⁹⁸² accepting most of his points, especially as to the need for a Clearing Office in Palestine to deal with winding-up affairs. But Kirby had other important political and operational, not just financial points to make.

“The railway outside the Haifa enclave cannot well be operated separately, in that the main locomotive running sheds, workshops and operational and maintenance headquarters are in Haifa. **Withdrawal into the enclave and the operation of the railway therein only for military evacuation purposes would entail the most effective frustration possible for a succeeding authority. This course would also cut off the supplies of bulk oil and other essential supplies which are now distributed by rail to the main centres of population.**⁹⁸³ The closing down of the main workshops and other activities of the railway.... would probably mean that the railway would not be able to operate again for a prolonged period. It is to be hoped, therefore, that some sensible procedure for the continuation of the service will be devised.”

No-one in the Administration could now say they had not been told what the effect of what amounted to a ‘scorched earth policy’ of non-orderly, non-transfer of assets and equipment and access would lead to.

In the meantime the security situation was worsening. A Confidential memo from the Chief Engineer⁹⁸⁴ of 19. December 1947 illuminates the sense of vulnerability and distrust at Lydda. The staff train to and from Jaffa was escorted, but the position at Lydda was:

“(a). The Loco Shed area is well protected by infantry guards at all hours.

(b). All Army posts around other parts of the station area have been withdrawn. Some are now manned by Arab TAC which I suppose are not considered by Jews as being a protection.

(c). Movement troops and R.E. perform no guard duties at the station and cannot be considered as preventive to communal violence.

(d). That the station is at some hours crowded with troops and British Police does not make the area any safer during the other regular hours daily when the platforms are completely deserted.”

The staff were unhappy and jittery. The Chief Engineer expressed puzzlement at this attitude, as, although there were no guards over the approaches to the offices, “with the comparative proximity of troops they must be in less danger than is the average man working in a town of mixed races or in a settlement. It seems unreasonable to expect Army or British Police guards over every government office, and they must well know that Jewish TACs at Lydda would merely provoke strife. In regard to surveyors, foremen, chargemen and artisans expected to work singly in outlying stations, no protection is feasible and the danger real.” He suggested that unless the situation soon improved these should be discharged with full leave, pension or gratuity that may be due to them.

“The trouble with Arab employees is precisely the same. Permanent Way men will not work in the Tel-Aviv and Petah-Tiqva areas. Workshop men refuse to work at Tel-Aviv and Petah-Tiqva, they still work at Rehovoth and Ras El-Ein but will not stay the night there and may refuse to go there as soon as Arab TACs are withdrawn from those

⁹⁸² Ref. SF/468/47.

⁹⁸³ Our emphasis.

⁹⁸⁴ ref. 151/542.

stations. Maintenance can fall into arrear for some two months without actual danger, but serious emergencies are likely to arise, such as flooding of the Petah-Tiqva line.”

The country was splitting *de facto* into Jewish and Arab areas, and for a railway network that traversed both this raised complex issues. He wrote, “Unless conditions improve, and if both Military and Citrus transportation is to be maintained, a much more flexible system is essential. Many permanent employees will have to be discharged and replaced by casuals, whether Arab or Jew according to which people is prepared to work in the particular locality. So far we have had no contacts with Jewish labour.... I would be grateful for an expression of your views on the desirability of approaching Jewish Labour Exchanges...”

Scrivener scribbled a P.S. on his typed letter - “There has since been an attack on Lydda Sheds - on the night of 18./19. Dec. 1947 - it was repulsed.”

Kirby took note of the contents of this memo and conveyed them to the Chief Secretary in a letter of 20. Dec. The problems in the maintenance of the Railways were becoming more and more difficult. In particular,

“the disinclination of Jews to work in Arab areas or in places where Arab employees are in the majority, is creating complications which it is difficult, if not impossible to solve without partiality. Any expedients which are adopted with the sole object of keeping the Railway going are generally capable of interpretation by one side or the other as partial treatment. **No Jewish staff are working at Haifa East Station, because on the advice of the Police it would be unwise to insist upon any Jewish staff going there. The result is that the Arabs have come to regard this area as peculiarly their own.**⁹⁸⁵ Jews and Arabs continue to work side by side in the Qishon Workshops.

No Jewish staff are coming to work at Lydda station. The result of this is that, although we have assistance from a Military Workshops Unit, the standard of locomotive maintenance is fast deteriorating because the standard of competency of the personnel in the Military Workshops Unit is not of a high order because of lack of training and experience. If, therefore, the Jewish staff continue to absent themselves from duty there is bound to be a deleterious effect upon locomotive operation. Failures will increase with consequent adverse effect upon train running.”

This is a surprisingly biting criticism of the Royal Engineers.

The Memo regarding Lydda had clearly been in response to representations from the Jewish side. “I am satisfied that the conditions are reasonably safe” he wrote, “in that the staff travel the whole way from Tel-Aviv into the Lydda depot on a Workmen’s train which carries British Military Guards and is preceded and followed by Military armoured trolleys. Within the Lydda depot and in the immediate area there are strong bodies of British Military personnel. Nevertheless, these conditions do not satisfy the Jewish staff concerned, whose main objection appears to be that the entrances to the area are guarded only by Arab Police.” Attempts were being made to get the Army to post men at the entrances as well, as “it is in the interests of the Army that Lydda depot should be kept working efficiently”. Disciplinary measures against staff who refused to report for duty were considered to be counter-productive in the circumstances.

A further indication of the desperate situation comes in the next paragraph:

“We have relinquished entirely operation of the Petah-Tiqva line because Arab crews will not work into Petah-Tiqva and Jewish crews decline to work ... because this entails

⁹⁸⁵ Our emphasis.

their passing through Lydda and Ras El-Ein stations which are in Arab areas. I have examined every possible expedient, even to the extent of working the line with British Military or civil personnel, but each one has proved to be impracticable.” At a meeting with the Citrus Marketing Board he had suggested that Jewish crews should nevertheless work the line. Plaintively he notes “It would be in the interests of all concerned that both Jewish and Arab authoritative bodies should make a clear announcement that railway staff of any race or creed would not be interfered with in the course of performing their duties.”

He was clear that “piece-meal expedients” could not continue to be used to operate the railway.

“We have certainly done this during past years and have managed to keep things going, but the indications are now that matters are passing beyond the province of what a Railway Administration can achieve. In many Jewish areas the Arab track maintenance staff are refusing to carry on with their work, because they have been threatened or pestered by Jews. The track maintenance staff have to work in small gangs or as single individuals, and it would be impracticable to provide Military protection with the force at our disposal. If there is a further deterioration of confidence amongst the track maintenance staff the effects will be very serious. On the Tel Aviv-Lydda line and on the Petah-Tiqva-Ras El-Ein line the Arab staff have refused to work for the past week or so, and the Chief Engineer is now trying to replace them by Jewish staff recruited locally.....”

As well as staff problems there were the more normal security problems associated with robbery and assault. He told the Chief Secretary, “I have always anticipated that with withdrawal of civil administration, trains would be interfered with by marauding bands. We have reached this stage sooner than I expected and, as you are aware, several trains have been stopped during the past 24 hours by bands of armed Arabs and large quantities of foodstuffs such as wheat, rice and sugar removed.⁹⁸⁶ I am, however, continuing to operate trains as usual because to do otherwise would mean blocking back at the Haifa port and would not only result in congestion there but would leave Tel Aviv and Jaffa areas without any food supplies. At least we are taking through the major proportion of the cargo which leaves Haifa.” He had already been in touch with the Army to “prevent further interference with trains by marauding bands of thieves.”

He pleaded also for publicity, “especially from the Arab side”, to the importance of the railway service to the welfare of the general community.

Between the lines we see a desperate situation; trains were sent off in the near-certainty that they would be robbed *en route*, staff were scared to poke their noses out of the building where they worked or the window of their locomotive cab or even to walk along certain pathways within the workshops, and one wonders where on earth the military were, when such a major strategic asset, upon which they themselves relied for supplies, had reached such a chaotic state.

Things got worse. 1948 opened with more grim news. On 3. January he wrote

⁹⁸⁶ There are many contemporary newspaper references to railway problems. e.g. "Armed Arab gangs carried out four more train robberies yesterday, three of them between Wadi Sarrar and Artuf. The first attack occurred when a large gang of armed Arabs held up the Lydda - Jerusalem train at 8.40a.m. between Wadi Sarrar and Artuf. The gangsters removed two wagonloads of cement and two boxes of oranges from the train. More cement and oranges were stolen when the same train was held up about an hour later. At 3pm. another train on the same stretch of line was held up by armed Arabs who opened every truck and stole mail, potatoes, salt, cement and oranges. Three Arabs, armed with pistols, held up the guard on the Kantara-Haifa passenger train between Kalkilya and Tulkarm at 11 o'clock yesterday. They escaped with a safe containing money." ('Palestine Post' 1. Jan. 1948. p.1.)

another report for the Chief Secretary.⁹⁸⁷

“The major problem in maintaining services is the reluctance of staff to work without what they consider to be adequate protection. Following the serious disturbances at the Consolidated Refineries a few days ago,⁹⁸⁸ all staff, both Arab and Jewish, in the Haifa and the Haifa Bay area have become very nervous. Since then no Jews have attended for duty at the Qishon Workshops and no Arabs have been coming in from Acre. The Jews are fearful because they are in the minority and the Arabs from Acre are fearful and refuse to travel unless the train is protected against possible reprisal action by Jews. The result is that we have had less than half the usual complement of workers in the Qishon Workshops with consequent dislocation of the chain of production.

General Stockwell..... has arranged for the Anti-Tank Regt. to provide escorts on the workmens trains from Haifa to Qishon and Acre to Qishon and also for static guards in the Haifa East Station area and in the Qishon Workshops. The provision of these train escorts and guards was fully implemented this morning and the indications are that the reaction of the staff concerned will be favourable. The Jewish staff in the Headquarters Offices here are apprehensive regarding their security. This building is on the midway line between the Jewish and Arab quarters of Haifa and is, therefore, in a potentially troublesome area.”⁹⁸⁹

At present he had only Arab Constables on guard at the gate. The Jewish request was that the guards should be half Jewish and half Arab and he was examining the possibility with the Police. In the meantime, the Arab and Jewish staff were working together.⁹⁹⁰

The situation at Lydda Depot was deteriorating. Since early December no Jewish staff had reported to duty and during the previous few days there had been an increased absenteeism of Arab staff. “This morning very few Arabs have reported to duty and the situation will become serious..... The Arab staff have probably been deterred.... because of the blowing up of the railway line between Tel-Aviv and Jaffa coupled with threats from Jews.⁹⁹¹ The Jewish staff refuse... until independent British Military guards are posted at the entrance to the Lydda Station area instead of the present Arab unarmed constables. I have this matter in hand....”

Except for Rehovot station Arab staff were still working at stations in Jewish areas. At Rehovot all the Arab Traffic Staff had left and were being replaced by locally-recruited Jews.

On 28. December Military escorts had been provided for trains on the main line between Lydda and Hadera. Although only three trains were covered by escorts, the bands of robbers had transferred their activities from the main line to trains running on the Jaffa-Jerusalem line. Escorts were provided for that line on 1. January but “the immediate response was the placing of barriers of boulders at several points across the track and when the train escorts removed these barriers they were continuously sniped from the surrounding hills. Eventually the train managed to get as far as Artuf but beyond there the barriers effectively prevented the train from proceeding any further and it had to

⁹⁸⁷ GM/MAND/G/2. This reference applies now to the whole file.

⁹⁸⁸ 39 Jewish workers at oil refineries were massacred by 2,000 Arab workers after 6 Arabs had been killed by a bomb at the main gate. (‘Palestine Post’. Wed. 31. Dec. 1947 p.1).

⁹⁸⁹ These were prophetic words, for Khoury House did indeed become a focal point in the violence.

⁹⁹⁰ The Jews of course required access to the papers and information - see the Aubrey Milstein memoirs. It was therefore worth the risk for the Haganah.

⁹⁹¹ “Railway Tracks Blown Up. Tel Aviv, Thurs. (2am.) “In four violent explosions the railway line between Jaffa and here was blown up by unknown attackers about midnight tonight. More explosions were heard about 2 a.m.” ‘Palestine Post’ 1. Jan. 1948 p.1.

be returned to Lydda. No trains were run on the Jerusalem line yesterday but we are attempting to resume the services today under escort. The indications are, however, that some drastic action will have to be taken to round up the robber bands if we are to work trains without interference.” As from today he hoped that all trains working on the main line south of Hadera to Rafa and between Jaffa and Jerusalem would be escorted. Some difficulty had been experienced in repairing the line between Jaffa and Tel-Aviv but it was hoped to complete this “today”.

He reported, “After many disappointments and difficulties we succeeded in reopening traffic on the Petah-Tiqva Branch yesterday and brought out one train-load of fruit. The trains are being worked by military crews. We are now carrying on entirely on our reserves of fuel oil which are enough to last us for about a month assuming that we get no further supplies of the reserves of the Shell and Socony Vacuum Oil companies in Haifa.⁹⁹² Throughout the line we are suffering from thefts of a relatively petty nature such as the loss of sleepers, roofing and other material from the permanent way and structures. More of this may be expected with the progressive thinning out of security forces. The general effect of delays and interference is a slowing down of the evacuation of military stores.”

Although on the whole the British seemed to expect a ‘stiff upper lip’ approach to the problems of working in a war zone, and there was much correspondence about Absenteeism and how to deal with (or punish) it, we see in a letter of 9. January⁹⁹³ just how severe the issue was. The problem was the Jewish staff who had not reported for work at Lydda depot since early December. Every effort had been made to provide escorted workmen’s trains, and “we have contended that Lydda depot could be considered to be a reasonably safe area because of the presence of Military personnel. It is now generally admitted, however, that it will be most unwise to reintroduce Jewish staff into the Lydda depot, which is situated in an entirely Arab area. The Arabs generally have now become so incensed against the Jews that I fear that we should be precipitating the most serious trouble if we took in Jews into the Lydda depot; such action would be almost as bad as taking Jews into Jaffa.” Accordingly he had to accept that the 50-60 Jewish staff were effectively ‘lost’ to Lydda; “This is having a serious effect upon the maintenance of locomotives but I am hoping that with the assistance of the Military Workshops Company we shall be able to carry on well enough to cover the citrus season and the evacuation period.

There was little chance of absorbing or transferring most of these staff.

The next day, 10. January, he reported again - it is not clear whether these daily situation reports had been requested or represented his own initiative in keeping Government informed, though there are separate regular reports on “Progress on Withdrawal” in response to the “Special Commissioner’s Memorandum of 2. December 1947.” Provision of military escorts on the workmen’s trains to Qishon and British military guards for the Qishon workshop area had had a good effect, resulting in a full attendance of both Arabs and Jews at the workshops since the beginning of the week. The Jewish staff had at first demanded that Haganah guards be posted, but did not pursue this demand. The Qishon workshops were therefore working normally.

Considerable trouble had been experienced because Arabs had declined to work in the signalling boxes in the Jewish area in Haifa Bay, and train crews had refused to work trains without escorts into factories and military depots in the same area. After

⁹⁹² Presumably supplies had been disrupted also by the events at the refineries.

⁹⁹³ In GM/MAND/P/1. Letter to Chief Secretary.

considerable trouble he had succeeded in obtaining escorts to cover train working, and was obtaining military personnel to man signal boxes or, alternatively, would attempt to recruit Jewish personnel.

At Lydda depot he had now arranged for the Arab staff to be brought in daily by road, escorted by military personnel. "We have had to arrange for the embarkation point for the road transport to be removed from Jaffa station to a place which cannot be sniped by Jews. As often as we repair the line between Tel-Aviv and Jaffa it is broken again by saboteurs. When I was recently in Jaffa I requested the District Commissioner to advise the Tel-Aviv Municipal Authorities that unless immediate measures were taken to prevent the sabotage, the inevitable result would be that Tel-Aviv would be deprived of its regular supplies of household and industrial fuel oil....."

Apart from Rehovot station Arab staff were still working at stations in Jewish areas. The provision of train escorts had prevented train robberies without, so far, any violent repercussions.

On the Petah-Tiqva branch, on the second day of military operation the outcoming train had been derailed. In view of the "political importance" of working this branch, he noted, and "the probable reactions if we fail to do so, I have... arranged with the Army for them to make another attempt to keep the branch open" and he had warned General Murray of the First Division of the possibility of sabotage, so that suitable precautionary measures could be taken.

The issues of citrus export from the differing Jewish and Arab areas seem to have concerned Kirby and others extensively. It was assumed each side would attempt to sabotage and disrupt the exports of the other side, but do all it could to protect its own.

The fuel situation was precarious. At Haifa "we have been living from day to day on supplies from the Shell Company but this morning I have been advised by the Manager of the Shell Co. that all available supplies of fuel oil in the Refineries are to be given for the bunkering of ships in Haifa port." The Railways were thus left with a relatively small supply in the Shell Company's tanks which would keep Haifa going for only a few days. After that, it would be necessary to begin drawing from reserve supplies in Lydda and Gaza to keep going. This meant they should be able to continue for another three weeks only on the existing train programme.

It does seem incredible that such a major strategic asset as the railway system should be so poorly supplied.

The security of goods in transit, except when actually under military escort, was almost non-existent. Kirby complained that he had no static police or military guards in the marshalling yards and thefts were becoming more frequent and on a larger scale. Why were there no guards? It was obvious they were needed, and the thefts were causing operational problems too. For example, he wrote that he had experienced some difficulty in supplying food to the railway staff in Sinai because two truck loads of flour containing one month's supply had been stolen by bandits on the way to Sinai. He had now arranged that staff in Sinai should be supplied by British Troops in Egypt, as "from the early days of the war the Egyptian Government refused to undertake the supply of food to the Palestine Railways staff in Sinai." This is illuminating, since the transport routes for flour and other foodstuffs from Egypt were of course much shorter than from Haifa.

However, the evacuation of military stores was proceeding satisfactorily despite constant interruptions arising from train robberies, staff difficulties and so forth.

On the same day the Civil Service Commissioner in Jerusalem, K.G. Lindsay,

wrote concerning various questions of termination arrangements for British and other staff. He noted⁹⁹⁴:

“There is no proposal that I am aware of to ‘advance a few months’ salaries and wages’, nor is there any intention to commute pensions for cash. The problem of paying-off Railway staff is complicated by the fact that it will be necessary to keep most of them on duty until the Army has completed its withdrawal, quite apart from the general desirability of keeping the railways open after the termination of the Mandate.....”

In fact W.R. McGeagh (for E. Mills) memoed in Kirby’s defence on 15. Jan. that “When I saw Kirby I told him that such a proposal was under consideration. That was some time ago and has now been replaced by the suggested abolition terms. The lapse of time and lack of opportunity to acquaint Kirby orally with progress is, I think, the explanation.” To this Kirby, whose memory had been vindicated, wrote caustically in the margin: “Such honesty as this is a pleasure to see in Govt. correspondence.”

On 15. January one of the ‘progress reports’ noted, inter alia, that Security files would be destroyed before withdrawal, an up-to-date Index of files left would be provided, inventories of equipment were being prepared; as from 1. March all ledger account credits were to be discontinued and all transactions would be on a cash basis.

There would need to be guidance as to the disposal of cash, and the Railway was “vitaly concerned in any decisions respecting Palestine currency up to termination of Mandate and thereafter until final withdrawal. In particular must know basis of monetary transactions during period 16. May - 1. August 1948.”

There were of course several groups interested in forming the successor authority and in ensuring as seamless and continuous a process of handover as possible. The Arab National Committee of Jaffa wrote on 16. January to Kirby as “a national member and as an Officer”, requesting his cooperation “regarding matters dealing with the upkeep of Government Administration in Jaffa city, after the withdrawal of the foreign forces, in good condition and immediate action.” Whilst it appears that their concern was more the port than the railway installation, we nevertheless cite this document as evidence of the different political pressures under which Kirby was being put. It was necessary for a “responsible officer” to “work for the benefit of his nation.... and to serve the Holy Home by affording every help and assistance to the future National Administration”. Whilst no direct remuneration or bribe was indicated, the Committee noted it would “not be revealing any secret in assuring you that insofar as every officer offers help to the future National Administration, he will receive the national appreciation and his name will be recorded in the register of those who establish the National Administration; his rights will also be preserved.”

The work of transporting what there was to be transported went on. But Kirby was getting a little irritable. On 17. January a meeting was held at Khoury House to discuss evacuation of military stores. Present were, in addition to Kirby, Baker (as P.R. Supt. of the Line), Norman (as Kirby’s Principal Assistant), Rogers as Haifa Port Manager, and three military representatives: Brigadier Lawrence (D. Mov., GHQ, MELF), Brigadier Brien, D.Tn., GHQ, MELF and Col. Farley, Col. W(M), Mov., Levant. A high-ranking delegation indeed. But although Lawrence tried to start the discussion on movement of remaining stores, Kirby insisted that the vital immediate requirement was the security of the railway itself. “After citing instances of the existing unsatisfactory state of affairs, he stated the following essential requirements.....

⁹⁹⁴ No ref. Letter dated 10. January 1948.

(i). The attachment to the G.M. Railways at his HQ at Khoury House, of a military officer with authority to take decision..... being of sufficient weight to bear upon the Commands to take action.” He suggested for this role Col. Gorle of the Anti-Tank Regt., “who was already conversant with railway affairs and some of whose men were already performing railway escort and protection duties.” Moreover, “It was essential that the liaison officer should be able to take effective action and, therefore, that he should have forces at his command.”

(ii). Khoury House was to be made secure from sniping and local conflicts. “The past few days have proved that unless the area surrounding... were clear of militant belligerents, it would be impossible to carry on with work there and the result would be a breakdown of the railway services.”

(iii). “Safe escorts must be immediately available, without question, for senior British staff and Railway workers, Considerable difficulty had been experienced during the past week in obtaining necessary escorts.” Clearly there was some personal experience speaking here.

(iv). “Lydda depot must be made secure and British guards provided and control the whole area. British police were being withdrawn from the area and the situation there was fast deteriorating and might collapse unless something were done to provide British guards within the following 48 hours.”

Kirby warned that unless early action was taken to deal with these demands, he could give no guarantee to keep the railways and ports operating. His patience appeared to be exhausted.

Later in the meeting it was decided to maintain a reserve stock of 200 ‘compo rations’ as a reserve at Khory House, presumably in case the staff were trapped there during fighting and were unable to leave. It was also considered that Railway HQ might move down the hill to Haifa Central Station and No. 12 Shed in the port area, as part of the withdrawal plan.

Because of the ‘no-man’s land’ situation on the track at certain areas, it was agreed that 603 Construction Squadron R.E.⁹⁹⁵ be approached to take over some tasks. There were weekly meetings regarding ‘Haifa Security’ but remarkably, although there was a Port representative, there was as yet no-one from the Railway, and Kirby considered this would be helpful. Water supplies were at risk owing to the lack of escorts for water inspectors, and fuel stocks were down to a fortnight’s supply - unless the CRL were to reopen imminently, it would be necessary to import oil (to Haifa!) by tanker from Egypt.⁹⁹⁶

Military stores were being still being moved southwards; it was decided that those W.D. locos still on loan should be sent south of Rafa as soon as possible after the end of February - if the line continued to be used after this point, other W.D. stock should also be moved southward. And it was agreed that the Kantara-Rafa Railway should be taken over by the E.S.R. as soon as possible after the end of February. This would remove to a large extent the need for the distant ‘outpost’ mentality and situation of the P.R. installations and staff on this section.

At the 33rd. Officers’ Monthly Meeting on 20. January it became clear that there was as yet no guidance as to whether expatriate railway officers could be compelled

⁹⁹⁵ 603 Railway Construction Company/Squadron, Royal Engineers. The Coy was in MEF from January 1946 based in Egypt (Suez canal area) spread out in detachments from Tobruk to Palestine. The whole Coy was moved to Palestine in January 1947 where we were engaged in repairs following damage to railway lines, sidings, culverts etc. Based at Beit Nabala Camp, Palestine January 1947 - 1948. C O was Major F D Goodwin.

⁹⁹⁶ Equivalent to importing coals to Newcastle.

to stay on after the end of the Mandate, but this appeared unlikely. And yet - attempts to retain some sense of normality can be perceived. Officers discussed traffic density on the Kantara-Rafa Railway (average 3.7 through-trains per day in December), traffic on the Lydda-Jerusalem line - which was being maintained but without any increase, any tendency in that direction having been stopped by the outbreak of train robberies.⁹⁹⁷

Nevertheless, it was necessary to start clearing out. Kirby spoke of the eventual need to work locomotives on loan from the War Department southwards for return to that department. For the time being the present distribution of engines should continue, he said, but with the citrus traffic well advanced it would be necessary next month to consider the return to Kantara of those War Department locomotives which were in excess of actual requirements. They would then be available for return to the War Department upon request, but meanwhile they would also be obtainable in case of need by the Palestine Railways. The A.C.M.E. was to review the situation on 10. February 1948.

The Port Manager reported on "an important Sheikh" who had addressed the Port foremen in the name of the Arab Higher Executive, to the effect that it was in the interests of the Arabs that the Port should function properly, and that they should conduct themselves to this end, and including an injunction against the pilfering which was going on.

Work in the Haifa running shed was going on reasonably, the A.C.M.E. said, while the Arab staff at Lydda were working well but were too few adequately to cope with requirements. The Jewish staff at Tel-Aviv, who could not attend for duty at Lydda,⁹⁹⁸ were not prepared to transfer to Haifa.

Kirby visualised the possibility that if in, say, March, the traffic on the Kantara-Rafa Railway fell away until only the passenger trains were left, Lydda might become no more than a turn-round depot. Haifa would then become the central depot. He hoped that it would be possible to hand over the Kantara-Rafa Railway to the Egyptian Government during the current financial year so that it would be advisable, towards the close of that period, to concentrate Palestine Railways rolling stock on the Palestine Railways proper. He also referred to authority he had received to acquire locomotives and wagons from the War Department.

Stocks of fuel oil were reported to be critically low, sufficient for about fourteen days only. The probable date of further supplies from the Consolidated Refineries was uncertain, since work there was still stopped following the recent incident there, and even after recommencement some time would probably elapse before the heavier oils were available. Possible supplies from the Military in Egypt were described as unsuitable for locomotives, being of too high a viscosity (index 1000 as compared with our requirement of index 200). Conversion to coal burning would not help as there was no suitable coal available either.

Security issues were raised. Kirby referred to a wagon forwarded from Haifa Port to Sarafand but diverted to Shemen Siding, where it was found to have been emptied. He wished to have the circumstances of this diversion fully investigated and directed the Supt.o.t.L. to arrange this.⁹⁹⁹ The Chief Engineer had had difficulty with Army interference of his staff and Kirby said he had arranged for the Officer in Charge

⁹⁹⁷ Minute 33:720.

⁹⁹⁸ Due to fears for their personal security. There were 25 staff in this situation. See also Minute 33:735.

⁹⁹⁹ Minute 33:721. Shemen siding was in Haifa and clearly the wagon, originally directed to a military depot, had held an 'attractive' cargo.

of the appropriate Army unit to see him about it.¹⁰⁰⁰ Referring to the previous discussion on firearms, Kirby mentioned an accident at Haifa East which indicated that firearms were being brought into Railway premises. He wished everything possible to be done to make effective the ban on the introduction of firearms by members of the staff into any premises of the Department

But a major topic was now headed "Matters Arising out of the Termination of the Mandate, and Post-Mandate Operation."¹⁰⁰¹ As a Government Department, P.R. was answerable to an Administration which was now in the process of winding itself up, and which was itself subject to the whims and contradictory instructions issuing from London. Kirby had clearly given a lot of thought to the matter of an orderly winding-up and handover - as we shall see in other documents - but here he tried to be as open with his staff as possible.

He acknowledged that, "In the absence of clearer directives from Government... neither the Heads of Branches nor he could lay down an effective organisation for their branch work after 15th. May." Nevertheless, bearing the potential developments in mind, he wished them to think about their intentions and prepare for possible scenarios. The Chief Accountant asked whether expatriate officers would be placed under any obligation to stay or whether the decision to stay or go would be purely voluntary. On such a basic matter as this, Kirby had to reply that he had not been able to get a clear directive from Government in this respect, but that he did not think an officer could be forced to stay.¹⁰⁰²

Bearing in mind the possible reduction in the scope of the Administration's operations, Kirby visualised the ultimate possibility of directing it from the neighbourhood of Haifa Port. He therefore wished the C.E. to consider and report what accommodation could be provided in Haifa Central Station and in No. 12 Shed in the Port.

In order to facilitate the closing of accounts, it was desirable that Branches should acquire sufficient stores to carry over the remainder of the period well in advance of the end of the financial year. Issues would, in any case, cease on or about 15. March 1948, so supplies for three months should be taken. This would also provide enhanced security for the stores, as it would spread them. Heads of Branches would take such steps as necessary for their protection.

Bearing in mind the extreme importance of getting traffic officers to their posts in all circumstances, Kirby agreed to the purchase of two further saloon cars, one for the Port Manager, one for the HQ Pool. But in view of possible further disturbances in Haifa, he would try to arrange for military transport to ensure, where necessary, that senior British Staff could reach their place of duty. He stressed the need, when approaching the Army for assistance of any kind, for being very specific as to requirements.

The Chief Engineer asked that British Police should be on duty at Haifa Central Station. Even when Army units were there, British Police were desirable as an effective liaison.

The C.S.O. emphasized the importance, in view of the extensive work necessary to close the various personal accounts, of having the appropriate directives

¹⁰⁰⁰ Minute 33:726.

¹⁰⁰¹ Minute 33:734.

¹⁰⁰² What employment, let alone advancement, options would such expatriate railway officers have in a shrinking Empire? There were no chances in South Africa, India, Burma etc. and British Railways had just been nationalised. These men were stuck in a bind.

from Government so that a start could be made in good time. The G.M. then spoke of the necessity which would arise for branches to contribute staff for this work of winding up the establishment. Heads of Branches, he said, would be asked in a few days to eliminate all work not essential now in view of the lack of foreseeable continuity. This would release staff, and thus create a pool which the C.S.O. would use. Heads of Branches would have to cooperate with him so that he had a reasonable opportunity (in advance) to introduce members of the staff who were to come to him to the nature of their tasks.

In regard to these directives for which the Chief Staff Officer asked, Kirby said that every possible pressure had already been applied. The Chief Accountant foresaw the need for clerical staff to work overtime during the next few months and suggested overtime rates of pay. He also enquired as to the whereabouts of suitable facilities for destroying records. It transpired that there were incinerators at both Qishon and Haifa Port. Branches sending papers for destruction must send a responsible officer to ensure that they are destroyed.

On the same day - 20. January 1948 - Kirby wrote once more to the Chief Secretary,¹⁰⁰³ reporting that trains were continuing to run regularly.

“It is a tribute to the railway staff that the citrus crop is being transported smoothly and that the trains ran to schedule even during the recent troubles in Haifa when most other concerns were closed down.” Evacuation of military stores was proceeding.

“Trains have been attacked north of Hadera and it has become necessary to escort trains for the throughout journey from Haifa to Lydda instead of only from Hadera to Lydda as hitherto. The time is fast approaching when all trains will have to be escorted.” One would have thought this time had been reached long ago!

The Qishon Workshops were working with the normal complement of Arab and Jewish staff. The Main Stores were under heavy fire in the previous week and the staff had had to be evacuated. The area in which the Stores building was situated was vulnerable to theft. Some very heavy losses by theft from trucks standing in the adjacent Haifa East Marshalling Yard had been suffered, and he feared that these thefts were undertaken in collaboration with railway staff. The area was now being patrolled by Military personnel but the possibility of looting from the Stores remained a real danger which was not yet covered.

Signal boxes in the Haifa Bay area were now manned by Military personnel additional to his own staff. Conditions at Lydda were not good but the maintenance of locomotives was being continued sufficiently well to keep trains running. Arab staff from Jaffa were being brought in by road but no Jewish staff were attending. He was managing to keep the Lydda-Jerusalem line open and also the Petah-Tiqva Branch, but “it is impossible to work the line between Tel Aviv and Jaffa because of sniping and, therefore, Jaffa remains cut off by rail. This, I understand, is the policy of Jewish political parties. In the meantime we are endeavouring to deliver Jaffa traffic by road from Lydda.” Jewish and Arab staff continued to work together at stations except at Rehovot.

Further, five crossing stations in Sinai had been re-opened to cope with a possible emergency movement southwards. As the evacuation was continuing, sudden peaks were clearly feared. Fortunately these crossings had been mothballed rather than dismantled.

In the North also, “We are now planning for the movement of materials of the

¹⁰⁰³ Also ref. ref. GM/MAND/G/2. He based himself on his report of 10. January and a discussion which had been held on the 16. Jan. between with himself, the Chief Secretary and the High Commissioner.

Iraq Petroleum Co. from Haifa to Beirut over the new Naqura-Beirut-Tripoli Railway.” This was the former H.B.T., now under new Lebanese management, which Kirby hoped would allow for through traffic once more. These hopes were not to be realised.¹⁰⁰⁴

But in para. 3 of this letter his frustrations and fears were laid out in ghastly clarity: “I am becoming increasingly apprehensive of our possibility to keep the Railways working. Unless active steps are taken to ensure uninterrupted protection for the staff, and for the effective guarding of offices and installations which are vital to the operation of the Railways, we shall soon be faced with the possibility of our being unable to keep the railway services going.

During the past week the conditions in Haifa brought Headquarters work almost to a standstill and it was under the greatest difficulties that we managed to keep open the Control Office for the day to day operation of the trains. Khoury House, in which the Railways Headquarters Offices are situated, is on the Arab-Jewish border area. It is ideally situated for Arab and Jewish staff to approach without encroaching upon areas of the opposing race. Separate entrances exist for Arab and Jewish staff but the building is continually under fire when inter-racial disturbances break out. The building is surrounded by snipers’ posts. We cannot expect our staff to risk the dangers of sniping every day when they come on and off duty. Two days ago the exchange of fire around the building was so intense that it was impossible to approach the building without incurring the risk of serious personal harm. It is impossible to find alternative accommodation and, therefore, immediate steps must be taken to make the area more secure. I am discussing this matter with the local Security Authorities but it is my experience that it is difficult to persuade these Authorities of the imperative necessity of maintaining the Railway Headquarters offices as part of the essentiality of keeping the railway operating. To keep the railway working we must not only have our Traffic Control Organisation working, but we must also be able to deal with day to day staff matters, prepare paysheets etc. We are also faced with the impending heavy task of preparing the documents relating to the retirement of 6,000 employees.

Unless the Railway staff has evidence that their interests are being safely cared for, it is not likely that they will perform their duties loyally from day to day. Behind the actual operation of the railway there is a bureaucratic machine which must be kept working.”

Clearly the demands for some better liason had not been fulfilled. Kirby spells it out:

“I have always advocated that a Military Officer sufficiently high in rank to have authority should be attached to the Railways Headquarters as a Liaison Officer to whom the problems of security, protection etc. could be referred. As things are, the time of my officers and myself is almost entirely taken up in dealing with such matters as train escorts etc. No matter whether it be the Railway HQ Offices, the Haifa East Marshalling Yard, workmen’s trains, and the several other operations with which we are involved, we are faced with constantly changing conditions which demand immediate action and the application of effective remedies in order to keep the whole machinery of the Railways and Ports moving.

I have found myself in the position of having to beg for assistance to run an essential service and in effect the protection which is given to an essential service depends upon the skill of my advocacy in competition with the importunate demands of

¹⁰⁰⁴ See Chapter on the H.B.T. Railway. There is no evidence known to us of regular civilian traffic on this route once the British military traffic ceased.

scores of other people who are NOT operating essential services.¹⁰⁰⁵ The task of actually running the Railways is onerous enough without my having to spend a disproportionate amount of my time in having to deal with matters of detail concerning Military protection. If the situation is to continue as it has been during the last weeks I must make it clear that I cannot guarantee to keep the railways operating....”

At Lydda, he wrote, the Officer-in-Charge was becoming very nervous because he considered the area without protection. Some British troops were available in the area in the Movements Camp and as technical personnel in the Running Shed, but these troops were not available for guard duties and the depot was freely open to unauthorised persons. If Lydda Depot could not be kept open, the railway could not continue to work. A full report on the situation had been made to the Inspector General of Police by the Supt. of Railway Police.

On a more positive note, he was pleased to report that the staff were, generally, responding well and that relationships between the Management and the Staff were excellent.

“We are weak in British staff in the Traffic Branch because the Supt. of the Line, Mr Baker, is feeling his age, Mr. Coulman, the District Traffic Supt. at Lydda, is feeling the strain of present day conditions, and at Haifa we have only a young Asst. Traffic Supt. who suffers from lack of balance and experience, acting as District Traffic Supt. With reluctance, therefore, I have asked that Mr. Leverett, the District Traffic Supt. now on leave in the United Kingdom, should come back to Palestine for a few months before taking up an appointment which he has been offered in East Africa. The Locomotive Branch is being competently managed under difficulties by Mr. Baggaley, Locomotive Supt. who is acting as C.M.E.

Generally, however, the staff of all grades are becoming increasingly anxious about their future and it is necessary that something definite should be declared very soon, If the necessary directives about retiring benefits and final payments are not given very soon, we shall be unable to complete the necessary work entailed before the end of the Mandate. The staff are feeling this too.”

He now had only two weeks reserve of fuel oil left. Supplies from Egypt would not be suitable because “the oil produced there is of too high a viscosity for our use.” This is a strange comment, since oil-burning locos were transferred by the W.D. from Palestine to Egypt and back, or locos were refuelled at Kantara. However, in a letter of 21. January to the Chief Secretary he noted that, despite this, and as a precaution, he had ordered immersion heating coils to be prepared so that some temporary means, however inconvenient, of using the higher viscosity oil could be devised should this become necessary. Unless, therefore, the CRL were able to get back into full production very soon, the Railways would be faced with a breakdown because of oil shortage. On 26. January Kirby advised Baggaley to make arrangements for the oil storage tank at Tulkarm to be filled as a reserve as soon as supplies should become available.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Our emphasis.

TABLE 15: INCIDENTS ON PALESTINE RAILWAYS IN JANUARY 1948.

<u>Date.</u>	<u>Location.</u>	<u>Particulars.</u>
01. January	Jaffa-Tel Aviv.	Track blown up.
01. January	Km. 15, J-J Line.	Goods train looted.
01. January	Wadi Es Sarar-Artuf.	Goods train fired on. No damage, no injuries.
01. January	Balah Station, Rashida-Gaza.	One wagon looted Balah station. Goods train attacked between Rashida and Gaza and 2 wagons partly looted.
01. January	Battir-Deir Esh Sheikh.	Goods train held up between Battir and Deir Esh Sheikh owing to obstruction on the line.
01. January	Haifa Marshalling Yard.	Rifle stolen by 3 armed men from T.A.C. guard.
02. January	Kafr Samir Station.	Armed gang attacked goods train and stole rifle from train escort.
02. January	Rafa-Khan Yunis.	Goods train attacked by armed gang. 5 wagons looted.
02. January	Tulkarem Station.	Rifle of train escort stolen by armed gang.
02. January	Zichron Yaakov Station.	Bomb thrown at engine of goods train at station. Engine damaged, no injuries.
03. January	Deir Esh Sheikh-Battir.	Goods train held up between Deir Esh Sheikh and Battir.
03. January	Beit Nabala-Kafr Jinis.	Engine driver on Beit Nabala shunting trip shot and seriously injured.
04. January	Ras El Ein - Petah Tiqva.	Engine and 4 wagons on Petah Tiqva shunting trip derailed owing to sabotage.
05. January	Petah-Tiqva-Jaffa.	Track at km. 0.850 damaged by explosion.
06. January	Sarafand Junction-Tel Aviv.	Rails removed from track at Km. 8 J-J line. Services temporarily suspended.
07. January	Khan Yunis-Balah.	Push-trolley stolen from Balah station and entered Khan Yunis section, collided with goods train coming from Khan Yunis.
08. January	Qaqun Station	Goods train held up by armed gang at Qaqun station. Thirteen wagons looted and emergency telephone stolen.
09. January	Jaffa Station.	Fireman shot whilst entering a bus at station.
09. January	Kafr Jinis-Ras El-Ein.	Travelling safe and one mail bag stolen by armed gang from passenger train No. 2.
10. January	Sarafand Junc.-Sarafand.	Wagon looted on Sarafand shunting trip.
12. January	Gaza Station.	Station safe at Gaza Station stolen by armed gang. Safe contained LP82 in cash, some tickets and official documents.
13. January	Atlit-Zichron Yaacov.	Goods train attacked by armed gang.
14. January.	Jaffa Station.	Platelayer shot and injured.
14. January	Qaqun-Hadera.	Engine of goods train slightly damaged by mine explosion.

14. January	Kafr Jinis-Lyddá.	Wagon looted on Beit Nabala shunting trip.
15. January	Isdud Station.	Wagon looted on goods train.
15. January	Atlit-Zichron Yaacov.	Goods train attacked. 12 wagons looted.
15. January	Atlit-Zichron Yaacov.	Goods train attacked. 8 wagons looted. Engine driver beaten up and injured.
16. January.	Atlit-Zichron Yaacov.	Goods train attacked. 17 wagons looted. Train crew beaten up.
16. January	Wadi Es Sarar-Artuf.	Goods train held up by obstruction on the line. Shots exchanged between armed gang and train escort.
18. January	Hadera-Qaqun.	Goods train attacked by armed gang.
18. January	Qaqun-Hadera.	Train guard of goods train beaten up.
18. January	Kafr Jinis-Lyddá.	Beit Nabala shunting trip attacked. Several wagons looted.
19. January	Qaqun-Hadera.	Goods train attacked and train crew roughly handled. Emergency telephone and first aid box stolen.
24. January	Lydda Station.	Armed gang entered goods shed at Lydda. Case containing telegraphic equipment set on fire.
24. January	Isdud Station.	8 wooden doors removed from the station building.
25. January	Qaqun Station.	Goods train attacked by armed gang.
25. January	Qaqun Station.	Goods train attacked. Guards equipment, emergency telephone and first aid box stolen.
25. January.	Es Safiriya-Sarafand Junc.	Track at km. 13.450 to km. 13.630 J-J Line blown up. Train services temporarily suspended.
25. January	Kafr Jinis-Lyddá.	Beit Nabala shunting trip attacked and wagons looted.
26. January	Lydda Station.	Wagon looted in station yard.
26. January	Haifa East Station.	Wagon looted Haifa East marshalling yard. TAC guard injured.
26. January	Qaqun-Hadera.	Engine of goods train damaged by explosion.
26. January	Isdud Station.	Isdud Station again looted by armed gang.
27. January	Rashida Station.	Rashida Station attacked and a wagon loaded with military personal effects looted.
27. January	Tel Aviv-Sarafand Junc.	Track at km. 13.440 to km. 13.670 J-J Line and railway bridge at km. 16.230 J-J Line damaged.
27. January	Tulkarem-Qaqun.	Goods train attacked. Emergency telephone damaged.
27. January	Tulkarem-Qaqun.	Goods train attacked.
27. January.	Deir Esh Sheikh-Battir.	Track damaged at km. 70.050 J-J Line.
27. January	Kafr Samir-Atlit.	Goods train attacked. 5 wagons loaded with cement looted. Equipment of Saloon

		No. 95 looted. Engine fireman shot and injured. ¹⁰⁰⁶
27. January	Hadera-Qaqun.	Goods train attacked. Saloon 95 looted a second time, looted also 2 wagons.
27. January	Qaqun Station.	Station attacked by armed gang. One wagon looted.
28. January	Es Safiriyah-Sarafand Junc.	Railway bridge at km. 15.300 J-J Line damaged by explosion.
28. January	Deir Esh Sheikh-Battir.	Track at km. 70.050 J-J Line damaged.
28. January	Es Safiriyah-Sarafand Junc.	Railway bridge at km. 15.300 J-J Line damaged. ¹⁰⁰⁷
28. January	Hadera-Qaqun.	Goods train attacked. Engine damaged.
28. January	Qaqun-Tulkarem.	Goods train attacked. Engine damaged.
28. January	Hadera-Qaqun.	Goods train attacked. Engine damaged.
28. January	Sarafand Junc.- Lydda.	Breakdown train held up and robbed of materials.
29. January	Hadera-Qaqun.	Goods train collided with obstruction on track. Engine damaged.
29. January	Qaqun-Hadera.	Goods train collided with obstruction on track. Engine damaged.
29. January	Hadera-Qaqun.	Goods train attacked and 11 wagons looted.
29. January	Hadera-Qaqun.	Goods train attacked and 4 wagons looted. Emergency telephone stolen.
29. January	El Majdal Station.	Station raided and all telephone lines cut. Minor damage.
29. January	Beisan-Jisr El Majami.	Goods train attacked and 4 wagons looted. Loot subsequently recovered by military personnel who happened to be nearby.
29. January	Lydda-Sarafand Junc.	Track at km. 17.900 J-J Line damaged.
29. January	Haifa Marshalling Yard.	Looting attempt frustrated by military guards.
30. January	Qaqun-Hadera.	Goods train held up by obstruction on line.
30. January	Hadera-Qaqun.	Engine of goods train damaged by mine explosion.
30. January	Hadera-Qaqun.	Goods train collided with obstruction on track. Fire exchanged between saboteurs and train escort. Engine damaged.
30. January	Tel Aviv-Es Safiriya.	150 metres of track removed at km. 11, J-J Line.
30. January	Es Safiriya-Sarafand Junc.	Track at km. 15.500 J-J Line damaged.
30. January J-J	Sarafand Junc.-Lydda.	Fishplates removed at Km. 17.100 Line.
30. January	Es Safiriya-Sarafand Junc.	& Sarafand Junc.-Lydda. Rails removed from track. 2 wagons loaded with sleepers

¹⁰⁰⁶ This is intriguing. Was Saloon 95 attached to this goods train?

¹⁰⁰⁷ sic. Is this the same attack mentioned twice, or was there a later, repeat attack on the same bridge?

30. January. Kafr Jinis-Lyddda. looted.
Beit Nabala shunt attacked at Km. 107. 20
wagons loaded with timber looted.

What lies hidden behind these grim statistics is also detail of what was being looted. Since much of the goods traffic, apart from citrus fruit, consisted of military stores, one must assume that supplies of weapons and ammunition were being targeted. Presumably the listing of stations indicates the direction in which an attacked train was travelling.

(B). FEBRUARY 1948.

On 2. February Kirby received an urgent memo¹⁰⁰⁸ from the Chief Engineer concerning the situation on the Lydda-Jaffa line:

“Since the night 24/25. inst. [i.e. January] every night stretches of rails in the above section have been taken up and thrown off the formation. One bridge was damaged by explosives charges. On two occasions the breakdown train was held up and robbed of sleepers and tools. Rails have also been taken out in the rear of the breakdown train in broad daylight while the train personnel were engaged in track repair.

It is obvious that people in the locality are determined to stop all traffic on this line, and that the Government is unwilling or unable to maintain sufficient order for continuance of train service.

I suggest that repairs may be tried a little longer and if it is then found that the sabotage does not cease, and security is not available, it will become incumbent to write off all railway moveable (communications being severed) and also all destructable immovable assets and to discharge all employees engaged in this sector. Most sleepers from under the shunting neck at Lydda and of Sarafand Junction have been stolen. This is irrelevant to sabotage and is just plain theft.

It seems obvious that unless the Army or Police take more effective measures to prevent these repeated attacks, it will be impracticable to keep the Lydda-Jaffa line open for traffic. In this case there is a comparatively small area of country involved as is also the case with other repeated train robberies in the Tulkarem neighbourhood and of the Petah Tikva line, and it is necessary for Government to decide whether or not the line should be guarded as the only alternative to the action which the District Engineer suggests.”

Once again we are left to wonder at the sanguine disinterest in track protection apparently displayed by Army and Police in this matter. The rather acerbic comment about only a small area being involved hints that the Army had in the past used the excuse that the area of operation of saboteurs etc. had been too large to police effectively. But the choice was clear - either protect the assets, or write them off.

Kirby wrote accordingly on 2 February to Gurney, repeating points he had made before.

“...For some time past, the railway track between Tel Aviv and Jaffa has been cut¹⁰⁰⁹

¹⁰⁰⁸ Since these documents are valuable eye-witness accounts and have never been published, we shall quote *in extenso* from them rather than paraphrase. They also indicate that, whatever other pressures they were under, Kirby and his Officers could find time to marshal their thoughts and type systematic analyses and proposals.

¹⁰⁰⁹ The ‘Palestine Post’ reported on four attacks in four days - by the Stern gang - clearly aiming to isolate

and the indications are that it is highly unlikely that we shall be able to restore rail communication between Lydda and Tel Aviv. For the time being we are continuing a ding-dong struggle in endeavouring to keep pace with saboteurs, but I fear that unless the line can be effectively protected day and night we are not likely to be successful in re-establishing rail communication.

2. As an alternative to serving Tel Aviv from Lydda we have diverted traffic via Ras El-Ein to Petah-Tiqva. As you are aware, the Petah-Tiqva line has been operated by military personnel for the past few weeks for the purpose of bringing out citrus. The immediate response to our diverting Tel Aviv traffic to the Petah-Tiqva line is the destruction of the bridge near Ras El-Ein. The 1st. Div. has been requested to provide guards for the repair train repairing the bridge and also to keep static guards between Ras El-Ein and the bridge to ensure that the Petah-Tiqva line is not broken again, The view of the Army, however, is that as the bridge is likely to be destroyed again, there could be no purpose in their providing guards for the repair train.¹⁰¹⁰

3. The situation, therefore, is that rail communication to serve Tel Aviv is now effectively cut off. I have examined the possibility of goods for Tel Aviv being delivered at Rehovot station but the road journey from there into Tel Aviv is somewhat hazardous and, moreover, I have no doubt that the use of Rehovot station for Tel Aviv would invite sabotage of the main line to the South.

4. It is my view that, from the point of law and order, it is undesirable that Tel Aviv should be unable to obtain supplies by rail. The town relies a great deal upon the railway for supplies of essential foodstuffs, building materials, fuel oil and other necessities to the economic welfare of the city. The railway is also now being very largely used for the carriage of goods from Haifa Port to Tel Aviv which consignees are reluctant to take by road in present circumstances.¹⁰¹¹ The cutting-off of Tel Aviv from rail communication, therefore, has the effect of lessening the possibilities of the clearance of cargo from Haifa port.

As we see the situation, the only way of maintaining rail communication with Tel Aviv is by the use of security forces to guard the railway. It is almost impossible to deploy security forces to ensure the safety of the Lydda-Tel Aviv line. On the other hand, there is only a relatively short distance of the Petah-Tiqva line which runs through an Arab area and it should not be too difficult a job for the Army to ensure that this short stretch of line is kept secure from sabotage.

I regard it as of considerable importance to Government that we should continue to be able to serve Tel Aviv by rail even though this will have to be from Petah-Tiqva, and I should be grateful if the necessary directive could be given to the Military Authorities. In the meantime, although we have stopped loading traffic for Tel Aviv and Petah-Tiqva we have no fewer than 400 wagons waiting under load for those two destinations.”

Again, it seems remarkable that it should be the task of the Railways Manager to advise the Chief Secretary and the Army about the importance of law and order. It appears that Jewish forces had attempted to cut off the last section of route into Jaffa, and in response the Arabs had tried to cut off the rest, to Tel Aviv.

On 3. February he wrote yet another report and plea to the Chief Secretary, revealing the chaotic situation in which he and others were working:

“1. Train services are being well maintained and, except for Tel Aviv, we can handle

Jaffa.

¹⁰¹⁰ This seems a rather sanguine attitude to Security.

¹⁰¹¹ i.e. the roads were also cut and dangerous.

all the traffic which is offered to the railway for transport. It is unfortunate that the closure of the Tel Aviv and Petah-Tiqva branches by saboteurs has forced us to have to refuse traffic for Tel Aviv.

The evacuation of military stores continues satisfactorily.

All trains on the main line and the Jaffa-Jerusalem line are now escorted and arrangements have been made for steel box-vans to be specially equipped with plastic armoured plating and firing holes. Trains on the Haifa-Samakh line are being escorted when they are conveying military stores.¹⁰¹² The proposal for the working of traffic through to Beirut and Tripoli has had to be dropped because the D.H.P. Railway will not come southwards into the Az Zeeb depot for the exchange of traffic and the Military Operating Unit cannot go into the Lebanon.¹⁰¹³

Losses by thefts from running trains have been reduced to a relatively negligible volume, but thefts from wagons standing in marshalling yards are still serious. In Haifa the situation is now more satisfactory because the yard is constantly patrolled by military and police security forces. At Lydda, however, the situation is almost out of hand. Despite representations which have been made by me, both to you and to the Military authorities, Lydda yard has been left virtually unguarded. In consequence there is night looting from the wagons standing there and last night the looting from wagons waiting for Tel Aviv was so serious that this morning the remains of the loot, including mail bags, lie scattered about the yard. This situation is a most unsatisfactory one. Because of the insecurity at Lydda, I have arranged for all the traffic which is waiting there for Tel Aviv to be brought back to Haifa.

2..... Saboteurs have effectively prevented us from working traffic over the Lydda-Tel Aviv and Ras el-Ein-Petah-Tiqva branches. The sabotage on the Lydda-Tel Aviv line has become so persistent and is of such a nature that it is no longer possible for us to continue to work the line and we have had to abandon the idea of working traffic over the line. Our final effort was to send in a double-headed train immediately behind a works repair train in the hope that by this means we should get the traffic through to Tel Aviv, however, saboteurs not only continued to remove rails in front of the train but, despite the train having military escort, looted goods and also removed rails from the repaired section behind the train.¹⁰¹⁴

3. I hope that the necessary directive will now have been given to the Military authorities to provide the necessary protection for the Petah-Tiqva line so that we may work Tel Aviv traffic to Petah-Tiqva via Ras el-Ein.

4. We are suffering severely from the activities of looting parties at stations south of Lydda, in particular Isdud, Majdal and Balah stations, from which much equipment has been taken including even the doors from the station building. If this sort of activity continues, it will soon have a serious effect upon our working of trains to and from Egypt.

5. A few days ago I was visited by General Hewer, who has been posted to Palestine to coordinate the evacuation, and we discussed various problems of keeping the railways and ports working. In particular I then emphasized to him the necessity of main line trains, whether carrying civil or military traffic, being protected. The essentiality of protection for Lydda depot and, finally, the necessity for a Military Liaison Officer to be attached to Railway HQ. Till now no effective protection has been provided for Lydda

¹⁰¹² A handwritten note defines this as 'local escort'. It is unclear what military stores were being handled on this line!

¹⁰¹³ This seems a particularly stupid matter - the border was of course not at an actual station, but the D.H.P.'s refusal to cooperate merely means that for political reasons they were refusing ALL hopes of any through traffic from the south so long as this inflexibility was maintained.

¹⁰¹⁴ This occurred during daylight!

depot nor has a M.L.O. been attached to Railway HQ. We have good liaison with the Divisions, but this is not altogether satisfactory.”

It is unclear what the problem was with attaching a single military officer to Haifa Does this constant delay in providing the Railways Manager with a single sensible point of contact reflect some ‘death wish’ by the Administration NOT to keep the Railways working? Was it part of some secret policy?

“6. The absence of any adequate security guard at Lydda, and the consequent looting, is having a very serious effect upon the morale of the staff. They feel that they now have matters in their own hands, they are participating in the looting and, according to the reports received from the District Traffic Supt., it will be very difficult to hold the situation very much longer unless some very firm action is taken to provide the necessary security. Staff who otherwise would have continued to work loyally and satisfactorily have now become so involved in the looting that it will be difficult to restore stability and the exercise of normal discipline. It is most discouraging for the officers on the spot who have worked very hard to maintain the traffic in the face of so many difficulties. I must once again emphasise that unless we can maintain stability at Lydda depot we shall not be able to maintain the operation of the railway to Jerusalem or south of Lydda and it would only be with difficulty that we shall be able to operate trains southwards from Haifa.¹⁰¹⁵

7. Unless, therefore, Lydda depot can be operated, it does not seem likely that the Railways will be able to continue operating until the termination of the Mandate. I assume that the evacuation of materials from Sarafand is of importance to the Military authorities and, therefore, it is surely a military necessity for Lydda depot to continue in operation. It is in such matters as this that I should find the value of having a M.L.O. attached to my HQ.

8. The indications are that the Arabs will develop more intensively their campaign to wreck the Jewish economy and it seems likely that the main railway line between Haifa and Lydda will be sabotaged very soon after the bulk of the Arab citrus crop has been exported. I understand that this is likely to be not later than the middle of March.¹⁰¹⁶ It is, in my view, imperative that the military authorities should plan to move the maximum possible by rail within the next month and not to rely upon being able to use the railway until the termination of the Mandate, and certainly not thereafter, except within the Haifa enclave.”¹⁰¹⁷

9. Kirby complained that he had still received no answer to his letter of 9 Jan. regarding the absenteeism at Lydda. “In the meantime the staff concerned have been paid in full up to the date of the expiration of the notice which was given to them to return to duty and they are now being treated as being absent on leave without pay. The question

¹⁰¹⁵ i.e. this depot was the key to all operations in the southern part of the system. And again Kirby stresses the efforts of his staff.

¹⁰¹⁶ On 3. February the ‘Palestine Post’ reported on a speech by Sir Alexander Cadogan at the U.N. on 21. January: “The Arabs, Sir Alexander had told the Commission, were “determined to show that they would not submit tamely” to the U.N. plan, “while the Jews were trying to consolidate the advantages they gained at the General Assembly by a succession of drastic operations designed to intimidate and cure the Arabs of any desire for further conflicts.” Thus, elements were engaged on each side in attacking or taking reprisals indistinguishable from attacks.

“The Palestine Government fears that strife in Palestine will be greatly intensified when the Mandate is terminated, and that the international status of the U.N. Commission will mean little or nothing to the Arabs in Palestine, to whom killing Jews now transcends all other consideration.”

¹⁰¹⁷ So the deadline for effective termination of rail services was being brought forward almost two months!

now arises as to the method of treatment of staff employed on sections of the line which, because of sabotage, have had to be abandoned. Such staff will be regarded as being absent on leave without pay as from the end of the month following the date of the abandonment of their section of line.”¹⁰¹⁸

10. “The attendance at Qishon Workshops has been fairly satisfactory until today, but this morning the Acting C.M.E. has informed me that the absenteeism has risen to over 30%, and that the reason for this appears to be the high degree of nervousness on the part of many of the staff who appear to expect an outbreak of violence in Haifa during the next few days.

Generally, the indications are that the staff are looking forward to the day when they will be able to receive their retiring benefits. Many wish to leave the country and others to retire into obscurity away from political turmoil.¹⁰¹⁹ In these conditions it will be increasingly difficult to maintain morale and efficiency is bound to be deleteriously affected.”

A brief excerpt from part of the Ports report also illuminates the conditions of work:

“There is still 1,400 tons of Jewish cargo in the Jaffa section of the port and 300 tons of Arab cargo in the Tel Aviv section. Despite almost continuous negotiations with the parties concerned, we have not yet found any means by which the cargo can be cleared from the two sections. The apparently insuperable difficulty at Jaffa is that the lightermen will not, in any circumstances, handle the Jewish cargo. My information is that if any attempt were made to move the cargo from the port, the port area would be looted.”

Behind his back, decisions were still being taken. A brief letter of 7. February to the Chief Secretary¹⁰²⁰ refers to a Circular¹⁰²¹ of 7. January - “I was not present at the discussion with the Heads of Departments referred to in the last part of your circular. It would be impossible for this Dept. to wind up its affairs at one month’s notice if, before withdrawal, final payments would have to be made to all the staff with respect to wages and salaries, gratuities, Provident Fund etc. Presumably, however, any hasty withdrawal of the Administration would not affect the decision already taken that the Railways and Ports will have to continue in operation until the final withdrawal of the British Forces in Palestine.” That is, the Railways would have to stay and serve, even as the rest of the civil administration scuttled away.

On 10. February he wrote as such to the Col. Q. (M) Mov. Levant¹⁰²² warning him of this deterioration and the need to hold military staff in readiness:

“...The indications are that the possibilities of my being able to operate the Railways with civilian staff after the termination of the Mandate are not very promising. The conditions in which we operate are seriously deteriorating and I fear that when the citrus season is ended Arab dissidents may become so active in sabotaging the railway that it

¹⁰¹⁸ The actual lines are not specified - after all, Petah-Tiqva was still being envisaged as a possibility for working - so one assumes that staff at Tel Aviv and Jaffa are here intended. See below, 2. March.

¹⁰¹⁹ Lake Success. "Employees of the Palestine Administration will be welcome if they wish to continue in service after the termination of the Mandate, the Palestine Commission announced yesterday. The Commission has requested Britain to notify the officials accordingly." ('Palestine Post' 8. February 1948 p.1.) This looked increasingly unlikely.

¹⁰²⁰ File GM/MAND/G/2.

¹⁰²¹ Circular No. 2 (SF/44/47) - presumably that stating that Government Departments should be ready to evacuate at one month’s notice, mentioned in 'Palestine Post' 11. January 1948 p.1.

¹⁰²² GM/MAND/M/5

will not be possible to deploy the necessary security forces to keep the railway in operation. We have already had experience of trying to keep the Lydda-Jaffa line open; it may well be the same with the main line in a few weeks' time. In my view, therefore, it becomes increasingly important that everything possible which it is intended to move by rail should be moved within the next few weeks and not left until the last few weeks of the Mandate.

2. A further serious development is that the events of the past few weeks have seriously undermined the confidence of the railway staff and it is now evident that most of the staff are merely waiting to take their final payments before either leaving the country or retiring into obscurity. I feel.... it is not likely that we shall be able to recruit sufficient local staff to keep the Railways in operation during the last week or so of the Mandate and for the immediately succeeding few weeks. If, as now seems not improbable, the situation does deteriorate to the stage when we cannot operate the Railways outside Haifa, I doubt whether we should find the requisite civil Palestinian staff to operate trains within the Haifa Enclave. It may well be.... the final movement of Military stores within the Haifa Enclave will have to be undertaken by Military personnel.....

4. We shall continue to operate the Railways with existing personnel for as long as we can do so and I sincerely hope that we shall be able to do so until the final withdrawal of the British forces.¹⁰²³ If we cannot, I think conditions will be such that sabotage by dissidents and looting will render it impossible for the railway to be operated by such military personnel as are available for operational and protection purposes. It is imperative, therefore, that the railway shall be kept working as a whole - hence the importance of maintaining Lydda depot and of continuing the operation of the Tel Aviv/Jaffa branch. I fear that the abandonment of any section will be gangrenous in effect.”

An interesting metaphor - with gangrene the system would decay and fall apart bit by bit.

On 11. February another report to the Chief Secretary:

“We are continuing to operate train services fully over the main line between Haifa and Kantara and on the Jerusalem line. It has not yet been possible to reopen traffic working on the Tel Aviv/Jaffa branch, nor Petah-Tiqva branch. We are endeavouring to reopen the Petah-Tiqva branch by repairing the bridge which was destroyed by saboteurs. The work has been delayed because it has taken some time to persuade the military authorities to provide the necessary guards to protect the repair train. I understand that Jewish Police are being provided to guard the bridge when it has been repaired. It is hoped that the stretch of track between Ras El-Ein and the bridge will be covered by armoured trolleys which have been withdrawn from the Jerusalem line. I fear, however, that we shall have trouble at Ras El-Ein station which is in Arab hands. The station has already been attacked by robbers and some of the equipment stolen.

If we cannot manage to bring the Tel Aviv/Jaffa or the Petah-Tiqva lines back into operation, Jaffa and Tel Aviv will suffer shortage of oil and foodstuffs, which have hitherto been conveyed by rail.

We continue to suffer from repeated acts of sabotage, such as removal of rails and other efforts designed to interrupt traffic at various parts of the line. Losses of goods by robberies from trains have fallen to negligible proportions now that all trains carrying

¹⁰²³ This seems to indicate it was still his intention to operate throughout the country between 15. May and 31. July.

lootable goods are escorted. Proof of the value of the escorts is that of one train which recently had to leave Haifa without an escort, three trucks of sugar were looted at Qalkilya Station.

We have had some trouble with respect to escorts for local trains in the Haifa area. Until about a week ago these services were escorted by police, but these have been withdrawn and we are having difficulty in persuading the military to provide escorts for what they regard as a non-military necessity. I have received a promise that escorts will be provided as from tomorrow; in the meantime we have carried on only by dint of seeking escorts unofficially from police and army units. The delays in obtaining escorts for these services has had a serious effect upon the clearance of cargo from Haifa Port. Guards have not yet been provided for Lydda depot.

For the time being the traffic waiting in the marshalling yard is much smaller than usual because of the closure of the Tel Aviv/Jaffa line. Nevertheless the situation is still unsatisfactory and goods which are waiting at Lydda, destined for Jerusalem, are still left unguarded in the yard.

I have reported to you... that British police have now been withdrawn from Gaza. From now onwards we must face the possibility of further depredations by thieves at stations in Arab places south of Lydda.

The indications are that we may expect sabotage of the railways as soon as the Arab citrus crop has been exported, in that after that time the Arabs will have little interest in permitting the railway to operate. By wrecking railway operations they may consider that they are striking a blow at Jewish economy and will be destroying an asset which will fall into the proposed Jewish State. If this attitude is adopted by the Arabs, I fear that we shall have great difficulty in keeping the railway in operation after the end of March. Experience of the Tel Aviv/Jaffa line proves how effective Arab sabotage can be unless adequate security forces can be provided to guard the track continuously day and night.

The uncertainty of the future is having an adverse effect on the confidence of the Railway staff. The feeling that there will be no orderly hand-over is becoming stronger¹⁰²⁴ and unless something definite, regarding the future, is announced soon there will be so serious a deterioration in morale that it will be difficult to keep things working until 15 May.¹⁰²⁵ As I can see things at present, I have little hope of being able to work the Railways after the beginning of May, and certainly not after the staff have received their final payments.¹⁰²⁶

There has been a marked change in the attitude of the British expatriate staff. Whereas a month or so ago most of them accepted that they would remain until the final withdrawal of the British forces, many now wish to be able to leave Palestine with as little delay as possible. In the Engineering Branch, for example, every British officer has stated that he would not work after the termination of the Mandate. In other branches the responses are more favourable but, generally, there is a loss of confidence. This undoubtedly springs from the uncertainty of the future and, in the case of heads of branches, their feeling has undoubtedly been affected by their disappointment at their unfavourable treatment under the recent revision of salaries.

I have informed the military authorities of my fears...

I have already taken such steps as seemed sensible to me¹⁰²⁷ with regard to

¹⁰²⁴ Had they not been told? Kirby knew this months ago!

¹⁰²⁵ At this point three months hence.

¹⁰²⁶ i.e. he felt many of them were likely to skip the last two weeks of service, and forego the half-month's pay.

¹⁰²⁷ i.e. on his own initiative alone.

accounting, cash transactions, stores etc., with the view to winding up our affairs by the 15. May. I hope that it will be possible to finalise the accounts for 1947-48 before the 15. May; there will, however, be many matters which will require to be finalised after that date either here in Palestine or in London. On many of these matters I am still awaiting directives from the Accountant-General.

The Qishon Workshops are working satisfactorily and, despite the heavy absenteeism and other difficulties, the work is ahead of programme. For the purpose of continuing the operation of the Railways until the 15. May there is no necessity for the Workshops to be kept working fully, but I think it would be unwise to close them down because this would have a very bad moral effect not only on the Railway but in Haifa. I shall, therefore, continue to let the Qishon Workshops work according to programme until the final pay-off of the staff concerned.¹⁰²⁸

If the U.N.O. Commission has taken over by that time and can arrange for the Workshops to continue in operation, so much the better.¹⁰²⁹ There are indications that the Arab staff are being very much affected by the political situation and that a large proportion of the sick leave which is now being taken is for political reasons. The information has come to me that in many cases sick leave is taken for the express purpose of military training.¹⁰³⁰

Unless there is a satisfactory and organised handover of the Railways to the United Nations Commission in such circumstances that the Railway can continue in full operation, I fear that there will be a considerable loss of stores and equipment by looting. By having to continue the Railways in operation until the last possible moment it will not be possible to concentrate available stores and equipment in a safe place. In the case of Lydda, we may have to withdraw at short notice and leave many thousands of pounds worth of consumable stores and also locomotives, wagons and other equipment without adequate security.”¹⁰³¹

A rather plaintive request reached Kirby's desk from E. Perelson, the Acting Mayor of Tel Aviv.¹⁰³² After noting that the line from Lydda was still closed to traffic, due to a bridge having been blown up, and that this was causing disruption to trade, he called upon Kirby to do all he could to resume traffic. And as for the political background: “We would draw your attention to the fact that when the Tel Aviv-Jaffa line was blown up, we protested in the Council Chamber against such acts and brought home the understanding that they were detrimental not only to the interests of the neighbouring town of Jaffa but to those of Tel Aviv too; as a result of this appeal, this line has not been interfered with since, and after its last repair, has remained intact and useable. It seems to me that it would be only fair and equitable if a similar appeal was made by the Municipal Council of Jaffa that to the members of their own Community, demanding that the railway line be left out of the present conflict, it being the vital lifeline of the population as a whole. We look to you to use your influence in this direction...”

Sauce for the Goose required, nay demanded, equivalent sauce for the Gander, though one could argue that there was no need for Jews to block the line to Jaffa if the whole route was in any case blocked. Kirby's brusque and defensive reply of 12. Feb. noted that everything was already being done and that reopening had not yet been

¹⁰²⁸ This is equivalent to continuing maintenance of the 'Titanic' up till the very last moment.

¹⁰²⁹ It appears an orderly handover was still his dream.

¹⁰³⁰ One wonders at his source, and also whether other Security forces were as informed.

¹⁰³¹ As we know, others were also concerned about the possible loss of locomotives and wagons. Moshe Paicovitch was attempting to store rolling stock in Jewish areas for “future use”. ('Harakevet' 32:19.)

¹⁰³² ref. 1/3/8-3522. 10. Feb. 1948.

achieved was “no fault of this Administration”.

A progress report of 15. February notes, *inter alia*, that “All records other than secret documents affecting security will be retained for use by a succeeding authority. Obsolete records of no further use are being destroyed.” He asserted “the handing over of railways and port assets to local authorities is not contemplated” - this is a reminder that the Railways, as a national asset, could only suitably be transferred to a national successor organisation, not fragmented in the way that local buildings and facilities were.

“The sale of stores is not contemplated as the railways are required to work up to and possibly after the termination of the Mandate. Ledger accounts are being discontinued from 1. March 1948, from when all transactions will be on a cash basis..... Through-booking arrangements with other railways are being modified so that P.R. will be concerned only in that portion of charges over the P.R. system.”¹⁰³³

In many cases “Information was awaited” as to how to proceed with winding up of specific funds, procedures etc. “As many expatriate officers as possible will be released for evacuation before 15. May as circumstances permit. The position is governed solely by operating necessity..... Out of a total expatriate staff of 68 on 1. Jan. 1948, 8 officers have already been repatriated, 10 are earmarked for repatriation before 31. March and 50 will be released for repatriation as soon after 1. April as possible.....As far as possible officers will be released so that they can travel with their families.”¹⁰³⁴

On the Kantara-Rafa Railway - “Negotiations between the military authorities and the Egyptian Govt. for the disposal of the Railway are well advanced and it is understood that the Egyptian State Railways will take over operation of the Sinai section on 1. April 1948. Rafa will then replace Kantara as the exchange station for rolling stock and what little P.R. rolling stock remains south of Rafa on 1. April 1948 will be taken into account in the rolling stock exchange balances as on hire to the E.S.R.” There seems little regret at loss of this ‘limb’. “The few Palestinians stationed in Sinai will be afforded opportunity of transferring to Palestine if they so wish. If they elect to remain in Sinai, they, together with the Egyptians now employed on the Kantara-Rafa Rly., will be paid off on 31. March 1948...”

“Sabotage continues and is expected to increase. It has not yet extended to the mainline, mainly because both sections of their community are vitally interested in the mainline being kept open for citrus exports. The Lydda-Jaffa line has been unworkable for some time and likely to remain so. The Ras El-Ein - Petah-Tiqva line, although sabotaged consistently is still being operated and as far as possible Tel Aviv is served by this route. The Lydda-Jerusalem line is in commission but can be worked only in daylight. Train crews have worked loyally throughout. Thefts of goods in transit have been arrested by the provision of military escorts (armed) on main and branch line trains but great difficulty continues to be experienced in working sidings owing to escorts not being available. While several thefts of railway assets have occurred at outstations the position has not got out of hand.....”

The security of the Headquarters at Khoury House required revised opening times and guarding arrangements from 16. February.¹⁰³⁵ The perimeter was guarded by

¹⁰³³ This explains the ‘Palestine Gazette’ announcement of passengers needing to rebook at the border. But why were 2 1/2 months necessary for this?

¹⁰³⁴ Although many families had already left.

¹⁰³⁵ G.M.’s Circular No. 3/48.

walls and fencing, with only two Gates being kept for rigidly-controlled access.¹⁰³⁶

The situation was deteriorating rapidly. The Thirty-Fourth Officers' Meeting was held on 17. February. The Petah-Tiqva Railway had been put out of action that very morning due to culverts being blown up. Since rail links with Tel Aviv had been cut, Kirby considered it desirable to develop communication through Petah-Tiqva, especially for oil, which would require unloading facilities, possibly at the Olamit Siding.¹⁰³⁷ The Supt.o.t.L. stated that traffic on the Lydda-Kantara line had been maintained, but that traffic between Lydda and Jerusalem had decreased, the reason for this having been primarily a number of accidents to trolleys which had blocked the line for several days in all. Potash traffic had been steady, although at a relatively low level. There was plenty of traffic offering for and from Jerusalem if the service could be maintained.

The A.C.M.E. reported that the W.D. locomotives had been returned to Kantara.

Fair quantities of Stores¹⁰³⁸ were still arriving on account of the Crown Agents, who were also cancelling many indents. Kirby asked the Heads of Branches, in increasing their drawings, to bear in mind the possibility of reduced activity as the termination of the Mandate drew nearer. Both the C.E. and the A.C.M.E. reported heavy pilferages from stocks.

The C.A. referred to East African sleepers which the Tanganyika Railways were shipping for use on the Palestine Railways. The sum of LP25,000 had already been paid to the Tanganyika administration, but sleepers to the value of some LP4,000 only had been received to date. It was possible that some sleepers were on their way - reference was made to the perils of the transit under present conditions, including the possibility of confiscation in Egypt, particularly after termination of the Mandate. In view of the fact that there was a year's supply of sleepers already in stock, he felt it would be better to stop the forwarding of further sleepers and realise their value. The G.M. directed the Principal Asst. to cable the Tanganyika Railways, explaining the difficulty in the way of taking delivery and asking whether they would be able to dispose of the sleepers elsewhere on our account.

Kirby referred to stacks of steel sleepers on the Kantara-Rafa Railway which he wished to have cleared. Mention was also made of a regenerating set which was expected. There had been a possibility that it would be used at Kantara, but as P.R. had paid for it, he said it should be retained.

But things were disintegrating. Kirby visualised the possibility of having to close certain lines. Staff who could not be employed would have to be stood-off without pay, but Heads of Branches should take no initiative in this respect until a ruling had been obtained from him that the line in question had been officially closed. This decision could not be taken if there was a prospect of re-opening at a reasonably proximate date.¹⁰³⁹

The C.S.O. said that no staff had yet been paid-off. The Jewish staff who had been unable to attend at Lydda were at present on leave without pay.

¹⁰³⁶ See 'Harakevet' 32:19 for some accounts of the dangers of working here. Max Glückstern, interviewed in Berlin in 2008, worked in the Bookkeeping Dept., and described having to crawl to work for 50m. on his belly due to the sniping, and how a friend of his was shot.

¹⁰³⁷ Minute 34:379.

¹⁰³⁸ Minute 34:741.

¹⁰³⁹ Minute 34:745.

A major issue for the meeting, but one which presented more questions than answers, was headed “Matters Arising out of the Termination of the Mandate, and Post-Mandate Operation”.¹⁰⁴⁰

Kirby “spoke generally of possible developments on the railways and in the ports, and referred to the **lack of information from Government** as to the conditions under which service was to be terminated etc. In the absence of directives the Chief Staff Officer would proceed as far as he could in regard to, for instance, provident fund staff on the basis of existing regulations.

The position in regard to handing over the Railways and Ports to the United Nations was obscure and was becoming more so, to judge by newspaper reports.¹⁰⁴¹ He considered the spirit of the staff to be very good in the circumstances and hoped it would continue.”

Families of expatriate officers would be evacuated by the 15. April, 1948. As far as possible, the G.M. would give preference to family men also to enable them to travel with their families or as soon afterwards as might be practicable. There were issues of annual rental agreements and leases to consider.

The C.E. also noted the closure of quarries at Nur Esh-Shams; further supplies of quarry products would have to be sought elsewhere.

Heads of Branches stated that all assets were listed in readiness for transfer. The G.M. stated that upon handing over the assets the lists were to be receipted and the receipted copy would have to be sent to London. Other copies would, of course, remain here.

Security was becoming even more of a headache. The Acting Stores Supt. referred to requests by his office staff for Police Patrols in Plumer Square outside Haifa Central Station. “There were no longer any Military detachments there, and armed persons were exhibiting themselves openly in the square, where transfers of arms were said to be taking place without any attempt at concealment.” The C.E. supported the request and considered that at least three police officers should be on duty there. So Kirby directed the C.S.O. to refer the matter to the Police Authorities, asking for a minimum of three men to be on duty. If Royal Marines could be provided, then so much the better.¹⁰⁴²

And Kirby felt impelled to bring to the attention of the public his concerns and his pride in his staff, by means of a defensive, hurt ‘Letter to the Editor’ sent to various publications on 17. February:

“...Since I have been in Palestine I have neither seen nor heard any real public appreciation for the Railways, which have been taken for granted, or if not taken for granted have been regarded as a concern upon which to pour contempt or to level abuse and virulent criticism. The Railways have also been chosen as an easy target by political dissidents. During the many years of unrest in Palestine, bullets have been poured railway staff honestly and conscientiously performing their duties as public servants, and bombs and mines have been used to wreck trains and destroy railway installations. Yet neither the railway management nor its loyal staff have flinched from a determination to keep railway services operating. I think it is important for the public of Palestine, whatever their race or creed, to realise the praiseworthy manner in which railway staff

¹⁰⁴⁰ Minute 34:747.

¹⁰⁴¹ Evidence that these reports were, indeed, one of his major sources of information.

¹⁰⁴² Minute 34:750.

have taken trains out by day and night in all weathers, fair and foul, in conditions which have been highly dangerous, and usually with no personal defence against saboteurs, attacking and wrecking trains from hiding places, or large bands of robbers.

I wonder if the average person in Palestine realises the heartbreaking task of railway administration and operating officers in keeping things going against the heavy odds? It has not been by just waving a wand that bridges have been repaired and the line made fit for trains within a few hours of destruction, nor has it been by taking thought that locomotives wrecked by mines have been repaired time and time again so that most of them, though blown up several times, are still working after 28 years of service - and working efficiently."

He was especially annoyed by the negative comments the public were making - that "calumny was being poured upon the Railway management".

"I do not expect people outside the Railway to appreciate fully the great technical difficulties which have had to be surmounted.... but I do expect that the public should show some appreciation of the altogether remarkable loyalty of the railway staff, both Arab and Jew, which has been so vital a factor in enabling the Railways to 'deliver the goods'. During the war the Palestine Railways successfully coped with an increase in traffic unequalled, in relation to its normal volume, by any other Railway. Since the war it has continued to operate under conditions comparable only to those which might exist in a country at war; yet the railways keep operating..... Without the railways Palestine would not have reached its present stage of industrial development."

But who cared about such facts? There were of course negative rumours about thefts from trains - but,

"it is generally not realised that thousands of tons are moved daily by rail. The problem of the Railway Management is to continue to move those thousands of tons in a country where security is deteriorating..... An indication of what is being done and of the loyalty of the staff is that even today, ten or more trains operate each way daily between Haifa and Lydda carrying essential supplies, while the railway between Lydda and Jerusalem is fully occupied in the conveyance of essential supplies and exports. The export of this season's citrus crop is due in no small measure to the Railways. This is not achieved without effort and suffering. We have no fewer than 50 personnel of the train crews absent from duty, some in hospital, suffering from the effects of having been interfered with while trying to perform their duty. Men have been killed while performing their duties. Running trains are subject to attack and the principal marshalling depot is constantly being fired over by snipers. Only a loyal staff would continue working in such conditions."

Perspective was important:

"The report of losses from the railway have been exaggerated. These losses are serious in themselves, but they have been relatively small compared with the total tonnages conveyed. Since train robberies first began in December last, less than 70 tons of wheat have been lost, about 120 tons of barley, 28 tons of rice and 200 tons of flour. Not more than 40 tons of sugar in all has been lost. To any transport organisation losses of goods on this scale while in their custody is heartbreaking but it must be realised that the losses take place despite the efforts of the railway to achieve safe delivery. During the period the railway conveyed no less than a total tonnage of about 200,000 tons; of this over 30,000 tons was essential foodstuffs for civil consumption and the losses mentioned should be reckoned against these totals. The Railway Management takes the view that it is better to get through with 99% even at the risk of train robberies and other sabotage."

After lamenting the situation on the Lydda-Jaffa and Petah-Tiqva lines,
“...It must be remembered that the railway administration... is a transport concern and has no security forces of its own.” “My object in writing this letter is not only with the object of evoking some real appreciation of the work which the railway is performing and of the loyalty of its staff, but also to appeal to all parties concerned to endeavour to sink political differences so far as the railway operation is concerned. In my opinion the uninterrupted continuance of the railway and ports is vital to the stability of the country. Finally, let me emphasize that so long as the present Railway Management exists, it will endeavour to maintain the railways and ports as fully as possible without fear or favour and irrespective of politics.”

Is this idealism or naivety? This letter was sent to several Jewish and Arab newspapers, Chambers of Commerce and the Public Information Office. A covering note to the ‘Palestine Post’ refers to an article on the heroism of bus drivers and seeks to make the point that the railwaymen are just as heroic.

However, on the night of 17/18. February more damage was caused to the Tel Aviv line, following a successful attempt to bring some empty wagons out but before any loaded wagons could be brought in. Kirby wrote in some anger and frustration to the ‘Palestine Economist’ and on the 24. February to the ‘Palestine Post’ again, once more justifying the Railways’ efforts and the odds they were coping with. He was really acting as much as a Public Relations Officer, and demonstrates a grasp of detail for the facts of each line and incident. To the ‘Post’, on 24 February:

“In your Friday’s issue you reported the re-opening of the Petah-Tiqva line in such a way that it gave the impression that damage to only one culvert had closed the line for a fortnight. It is only with the greatest difficulty that we have worked any traffic at all over the Petah-Tiqva line. Neither Arab nor Jewish staff would work the trains and we have been using military personnel, although there is no military objective served by the Petah-Tiqva line. The following is a timetable of events since the 11th. inst:-

Feb. 11th. 12th. and 13th. Repair train working to repair damage to track and large bridge.

Feb. 14th. Repairs to bridge complete and line open, 12.00 hours.

Feb. 15th. Trains working fully to and from Petah Tiqva.

Feb. 16th. Track damage at culverts in two places.

Feb. 18th. Repairs completed and line opened 15.30 hours.

Feb. 19th. Trains working.

Feb. 20th. Track damaged and repaired 14.00 hours.

Feb. 21st. Track damaged again, repaired 14.30 hours.

Feb. 22nd. Track damaged again, 2 places. Repair train attacked by armed men and had to return to Lydda.

Feb. 23rd. Repair train making another attempt to repair track.”

This letter was apparently published on 27. February and there were positive reactions from the Chief Secretary’s office.

A progress report on Withdrawal plans to 29. February noted, *inter alia*, that while there was no development to report on establishment of a Palestine Clearance Office in London, “consideration was now being given to establishment of a small organisation in Cyprus to clear up post-mandate railways and ports business.” 6 Expatriate Officers could be released immediately passages became available, a further 8

could be released by 1. April. As regards Families of Expatriate Officers, a total of 48 persons were involved, in 18 families, and their evacuation was expected to be completed by 1. April.

On the Kantara-Rafa Rly. the Egyptian staff had been given one month's notice of termination of services, in anticipation of the E.S.R. takeover from 1. April, "Arrangements for the actual hand-over are complete but it remains for the Army to confirm that the hand-over may take place."

Other parts of the report were grim. "Services continue to be operated under most difficult conditions. Lydda-Tel Aviv-Jaffa section cannot be worked because of continual sabotage while the Ras El-Ein- Petah-Tiqva line is worked by military crews in the face of incessant attack. Main line services have been maintained in spite of mining and armed hold-ups. Citrus exports are moving steadily. Sabotage continues unabated, throughout the system. On the 29. February the through passenger train from Cairo was blown up at Rehovot causing the death of 28 passengers (military personnel) and injury to 35 others. Two coaches were completely wrecked and one very badly damaged. The permanent way was destroyed over a distance of 50 metres. Train crews continue to work loyally in spite of the precarious nature of their jobs in the conditions prevailing.

While the looting of trains has been reduced to almost negligible proportions, the theft of goods from wagons in station yards continues. Station assets are also being stolen freely. At Haifa East the Yard staff are exposed to continual sniping and difficulty is experienced in keeping the men at work. Additional troops have been posted to the area without material effect so far as exposure of the Yard Staff are concerned."

TABLE 16. INCIDENTS ON PALESTINE RAILWAYS IN FEBRUARY 1948.

01. February	Ras El Ein- Petah Tiqva.	Railway bridge at km. 2 Ras El-Ein - Petah-Tiqva damaged by sabotage. Traffic temporarily suspended.
01. February	Deir Esh Sheikh - Artuf.	Armoured military motor trolley derailed by obstructions on line. Heavy traffic delays.
02. February	Ras El-Ein -Petah Tiqva.	Railway bridge at km. 2 again damaged by sabotage.
02. February.	Sarafand Junc.-Es Safiriya; Sarafand Junc.-Lydda.	Goods train attacked and looted.
02. February	Wadi Es Sarar-Artuf.	Goods train stopped by obstructions on line. Train defended by military escorts and attackers driven off.
02. February	Samakh Station.	Wagon looted in station yard.
02. February	Atlit - Zichron Yaaqov.	Rails removed from track at km. 32.900.
08. February	Haifa East Station.	Passenger injured by stray bullet.*
08. February	Haifa East Station.	Pointsman shot and killed at post.*
04. February	Ras El Ein Station.	Cement mixer stolen from station yard.
04. February	Balah Station.	Weighing machine stolen from station.
05. February	Qalqilya-Ras El Ein.	Engine of goods train slightly damaged by obstruction on line.
05. February	Qaqun-Tulkarm.	Engine of goods train slightly damaged by obstruction on line.
05. February	Qalqilya Station.	Goods train attacked by armed gang on arrival at station. Three wagons looted.
05. February	Ras El-Ein Station.	Goods train attacked by armed gang on arrival at station. One wagon looted.
06. February	Tulkarm-Qaqun.	Engine of goods train slightly damaged by obstruction on line.
06. February	Deir Esh Sheikh-Artuf.	Armoured military trolleys derailed by obstruction on track. Heavy traffic delays.
08. February	Battir-Deir Esh Sheikh.	Two armoured military trolleys derailed by obstruction on track. Trolleys attacked by armed gang who injured military personnel and stole their firearms.
10. February	Ras El-Ein Station.	Telephone and first aid box stolen from station.
11. February	Battir-Deir Esh Sheikh.	Goods train stopped by obstruction on track and attacked by armed gang.
12. February	Haifa East Cabin.	Military signalman killed and a second wounded in attack by armed gang. Firearms stolen.
13. February	Kafr Jinis-Lydda.	Beit Nabala shunt attacked by armed gang. One wagon looted.
15. February	Ras El-Ein-Qalqilya.	Block-house on bridge at km. 90 blown up.
16. February	Kafr Jinis-Ras El-Ein.	Goods train attacked by armed gang, three wagons looted.
17. February	Ras El-Ein - Petah-Tiqva.	Culverts damaged by sabotage, Traffic

		temporarily suspended.
17. February	Sarafand Junc.-Es Safiriya.	Track damaged by sabotage.
18. February	Qalqilya-Tulkarm.	Goods train mined. Engine slightly damaged.
19. February	El Hamme Station.	Two railway policemen stabbed and their firearms stolen.
19. February	Haifa East Station.	One passenger injured by sniping.
19. February	Sarafand Station.	Semaphore damaged.
19. February	Haifa East Station.	Two wagons looted in marshalling yard by armed gangsters.
20. February	Ras El-Ein - Petah-Tiqva.	Track damaged by mine explosions.
20. February	Kafr Samir Station.	Wagon containing military stores looted in Stn. Yard.
21. February	Ras El-Ein - Petah-Tiqva.	Culvert blown up. Traffic temporarily suspended.
22. February	Kafr Samir Station.	Wagon containing military stores looted in Stn.Yard.
22. February	Ras El-Ein - Petah-Tiqva.	Permanent way damaged by saboteurs.
22. February	Ras El-Ein - Petah-Tiqva.	Works train attacked.
22. February	Lydda Station.	Two wagons looted in Station Yard.
22. February	Yibna Station.	Timber sleepers stolen from Station Yard.
27. February	Hadera Station.	Cash bag containing LP67.120m stolen.
29. February	Rehovot-Lydda.	Passenger train No. 2 mined and wrecked.
		Two coaches completely destroyed; one badly damaged. Track destroyed for distance of 50 metres. 28 British soldiers killed and 38 wounded. ¹⁰⁴³
29. February	Haifa East Yard. ca. 15.00.	Hanna Bakshishan seriously wounded when troops opened fire as he was looting mail.

(Items marked * were reported only later and are found in a list attached to Kirby's farewell letter of 24. April). After such a list one can only be thankful that February, even in a Leap Year, had no more days.

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¹⁰⁴³At 09.45, near Rehovot. The troop train from Cairo was attacked by 3 electrically-detonated mines. 2 coaches destroyed, 2 damaged. 20 soldiers, 8 RAF killed; 35 injured (13 seriously). "The three mines were spaced several metres apart on the rail sleepers. Army sappers who arrived to clear the wreckage found a fourth mine, which failed to explode. It contained 100 pounds of ammonal, and 40 feet of wire led to an orange grove. In Tel Aviv, the Stern Gang claimed responsibility." ('Palestine Post' 1. March. p.1)

(C). MARCH 1948.

On 1. March Kirby had to send an urgent telegram to Gurney, the Chief Secretary - the staff at Haifa East had stopped work the previous night, mainly because of a misleading article in the newspaper '*Falastin*', which had given the impression that only British staff were to receive immediate retiring benefits. He urged Gurney to compel '*Falastin*' to publish an article with the correct version, that gratuities, Provident Fund payments etc, would indeed be paid. Misinformation and Disinformation were clearly also valuable weapons in the hands of extremists.¹⁰⁴⁴

On this day the Va'ad Leumi decided that the Palestine members of the Jewish Agency Executive and the Va'ad Leumi would constitute the Provisional Council of the future Jewish State.¹⁰⁴⁵ At least someone was making plans!

By 2. March Kirby had largely given up most hope of reopening the Jaffa line and instructed various departments to lay off temporary and other staff employed at Tel Aviv station, though nevertheless "the regular Tel Aviv and Jaffa Engineering, Locomotive and Traffic staff must be retained in the hope that we can re-open the line."

On 3. March an "Extra-Ordinary Officers' meeting"¹⁰⁴⁶ was held "To Discuss Matters Arising out of the Termination of the Mandate." Clearly there was a need for some coordination of efforts. Present were Kirby, Scrivener as C.E., Baker as Supt.o.t.L., Norman as Kirby's Principal Assistant, Charlton the C.A., Davis the C.S.O., Bidgen the Stores Supt. and Baggaley as A.C.M.E. Kirby explained that the meeting's purpose was "to review the progress made in the arrangements consequent upon the termination of the Mandate and the evacuation of British personnel from Palestine." He wanted to be sure that Heads of Branches were fully acquainted with the current position and that "everything possible had been done towards completion of those policies according to the directives so far received from Government."

It was still Government's intention that the railways and ports should function up to the completion of the evacuation of H.M. Forces. The practicability of this would depend upon a number of factors, including the staff situation and the incidence of political interference. British staff who stayed on to work for the evacuation after the 15th. May would continue on their present conditions of service. He was "actively pressing home to Government the need for a clearing office, possibly in Cyprus, where the affairs of the railways and ports, so far as the Mandatory was concerned, could be finally settled." Although there was as yet no clear indication how the United Nations would take over the Palestine Railways and Ports, he had been directed to ask the Palestinian staff whether they would be willing to continue their work for the United Nations.

The two main immediate aims now were the finalisation of the affairs of the railways and ports and the evacuation¹⁰⁴⁷ of families and expatriate officers according to

¹⁰⁴⁴ That morning the 'Palestine Post' reported, p.1.: "Lake Success. "Following Mr. Per Deferspiel's inquiry from the British Government as to the status of Palestine Government employees, the Mandatory has informed the Palestine Commission that all contracts would terminate on May 15...."

¹⁰⁴⁵ 'Palestine Post' 2. March p.1. Railways came low down any list of priorities for the new Government.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Listed as No. 34a. All is Minute 752. The next routine meeting had been scheduled for 17. March but was in fact held on Sat. 20. March!

¹⁰⁴⁷ Note the use of this term rather than 'withdrawal' or 'repatriation'. What was occurring was virtually a rout.

programme. Issues of baggage for evacuees were discussed and the sequence of officers being 'let go' - the Stores Supt. was asked to stay on after 15. May to provide continuity and agreed.

Kirby explained that as it would be necessary for duplicate copies of inventories and other vital documents to be available for despatch to the United Kingdom, films had been obtained so that "photostatic copies could be made of selected documents, registers of assets, agreements, financial records, staff records etc. The organisation of the photographing was discussed and Heads of Branches were directed to inform the ACME what documents they had or would have for photographing. A copy of the notifications was to be addressed to the GM." He directed that where, duplicate records already existed or was being prepared in multiple, then provided that one copy would be available to take away from Palestine, a photostatic copy would not be necessary.

The Chief Accountant stated his intention to have a set of books from 1. April to 15. May and to leave a fresh set for the period commencing 16. May 1948. He would certainly need to take a photostatic copy of his capital ledger, together with supporting documents and records.

The ACME did not anticipate difficulty in finding operators to work the apparatus, but he was reminded of the need to ensure safe custody of the documents entrusted to him for photographing.

Minor works could be completed but only essential maintenance carried out after the end of the month. Kirby stressed the proximity of 15. May, and the need to get on with preparation of handing-over notes where these were not already complete. Norman stressed the need to cover every point in connection with the closing of the Department's financial accounts, and Kirby added that other railways would have to be informed that the present management would cease to function on 15. May 1948, "whereafter the United Nations would be responsible for the railways and ports of Palestine."

It was decided that it was not desirable at this stage to proceed with the evacuation of the present headquarters offices, but Kirby considered that a small office would be necessary, possibly in Cyprus, for the final closing of outstanding accounts of the Department. The need to take documents to the UK would in some measure depend upon the possibility of forming a clearing office locally to operate as from 16. May, 1948, for the purpose of clearing up outstanding business. Heads of Branches would be required in due course to say what documents they would anticipate needing for the final clearance of their branch affairs.

Kirby re-affirmed that, subject to confirmation from London, the date for the transfer of the Kantara-Rafa Railway to the Egyptian Government would be 1. April 1948. Action on the Traffic side had been initiated with a view to facilitating the handover, and the Assistant Traffic Superintendent, Kantara, was in Cairo to confer with the management of the Egyptian State Railways and agree as to the procedure to be followed. The sabotage at Rehovot had prevented his being joined by any other officer from the Haifa side of the incident. But no confirmation had yet been received that the staff of the Kantara-Rafa Railway would receive benefits as upon abolition of office as though their service was being concluded, in common with that of other Palestine Railways' staff, in connection with the withdrawal of the British as the mandatory power in Palestine.

What were these terms? No-one seemed yet to know! Kirby referred to a Circular which had just been received, giving particulars of the compensatory benefits to retiring officers, but there were many points requiring further clarification to discuss. The

C.A. thought that lump sum payments would not be subject to income tax, either in Palestine or in the UK, but felt the Government could usefully issue a set of notes for the guidance of officers, indicating the effect on them, having particular regard to present circumstances, of the income tax regulations of both countries. Kirby was not certain of the position of British Officers in relation to the Widows' and Orphans' Fund, or of that Fund's destiny. The issue of whether Cost-of-Living allowances should be factored in for all monthly-rated staff was unclear. It appeared that the grant of 50% of Provident Fund bonus was intended to cover everything for such officers. He also wondered whether it was intended that an officer transferred should get the "disturbance grant", while the possibility of such grants being paid elsewhere than in Palestine should be considered. Payment in the UK would save most officers the worry of transferring the funds in the present state of controlled exchanges, and he would ask for the option of payment in the UK to be granted.

One must bear in mind that these were skilled and experienced men who had accepted contracts with a major Government, who had worked hard for several years, and now felt they were being simply discarded, fobbed off with a payment that might be in a currency about to be devalued, taking no account of all they had invested and lost in their families and households in the places where they worked, and with no guarantee of where their next month's salary would be coming from.

In these circumstances, the Staffing issue was taking on new dimensions. To the Chief Secretary he wrote on 4. March¹⁰⁴⁸ that:

"the staff generally have been apprehensive of their future ... but they have been building up exaggerated hopes of retiring benefits. The recently announced retiring benefits appear to have been disappointing to many and they have been misrepresented through the medium of the Arab press to such an extent that most of the Railway operating staff in the subordinate ranks are feeling very disgruntled. We are doing our best to dispel misapprehensions. The main grievance appears to be the impression that no-one will receive retiring benefits until the Railways are taken over by U.N.O. The absence of any promise of continuity of employment is, as I have always envisaged, beginning to have a very disturbing effect upon the staff, especially upon the Arab staff who, so I understand, have received orders that they must not work for U.N.O.

I foresee even greater difficulty in keeping the Railways going until the end of the Mandate and very little possibility of a successor authority being able to continue with the existing staff after the Mandate."

One can understand that staff who had worked for several decades, through the difficulties of the 1930's and the War, in what was considered to be a steady job, in a vital State-owned and -operated public service industry, would be alarmed, depressed, anxious and angry on suddenly being told, around December 1947, that their jobs - or at least their employer - would no longer exist a mere six months later. Effectively they were being forcibly retired, declared redundant or unnecessary, hived off to other railway administrations, having their lines and stations removed almost from under their feet (literally when it came to sabotage, but psychologically when it meant being told they were no longer wanted after a specific date, at short notice, not necessarily due to their own actions or own choice.) Continuity was clearly being sacrificed for British political reasons. On the other hand, a political refusal to work with a designated successor authority would indicate a preparedness to cooperate in the liquidation of the work they

¹⁰⁴⁸ The letter is originally dated 2. March but has '4th' written in.

had done so far.

Kirby continued: “Sabotage south of Lydda continues. At El Jiya station which serves a Military Depot most of the sleepers have been torn out from the siding leading up to the Depot two nights ago.¹⁰⁴⁹ The Qishon Workshops continue to work satisfactorily though, as everywhere else, there is a high rate of absenteeism. We are experiencing more and more difficulties from failures from electrical installations. This interferes with the safety working instruments and with the train telephonic control system. Despite this, however, the full schedule of trains is being operated..... [Regarding the Rehovot sabotage on 29. Feb.] the track has already been repaired and the passenger trains are operating again as usual from today.”

On 5. March he wrote formally to neighbouring railway Administrations - the E.S.R. at Cairo, Syrian Railways at Damascus, Iraqi State Railways at Baghdad, Turkish State Railways at Ankara, D.H.P. at Beirut, Sudan Rly. at Atbara, and the Wagons-Lits Co. in Cairo and Simplon-Orient Express in Paris, taking a formal departure and informing them that the Palestine Railways Administration would cease to exist as from 16. May. “The conditions in which the railways in Palestine will continue to be operated with effect from 16. May have not yet been made clear, but present indications are that the United Nations Commission will take over and that it will be in collaboration with an Administration having authority under that Commission that you will have dealings. I will let you have more definite information should it be possible for me to do so....”

Politics continued. On 8. March the Sec. of State for the Colonies in London wrote to the ‘Officer Administering the Govt. of Palestine’, (copied to UK delegations in Washington and New York - the latter presumably with the UN - relating to “certain questions relating to the maintenance of central Government services and collection of Port dues and customs revenue after 15. May.” The opinions of the G.O.C. (General Officer Commanding) were to be obtained. It appeared that a Draft Directive and some Administrative Instructions had been sent to the G.O.C. on 23. January, i.e. some six weeks previously - though why from the Colonial and not the War Office is unclear, except that the Military would be left in effective control of everything remaining, once the Civil Administration had withdrawn. Six weeks on, it appeared that no satisfactory answers had been obtained to some of the issues, especially as relating to that vague period after the Mandate had officially terminated and yet the British were, unilaterally, hanging on to the Haifa area for a further six weeks to allow themselves more time for evacuation, whilst not actually administering the area.

The question we need to ask is whether Kirby, along with other Heads of Department, was aware at the time of what was being considered in London.¹⁰⁵⁰

The letter included only some of the relevant paragraphs, cited here in full:

Draft Directive para. 9.

¹⁰⁴⁹ See ‘Harakevet’ 26:12. A plan has a note to the effect that El Jiya station was closed and the loops removed on 13. March 1948.

¹⁰⁵⁰ The fact that this copy is filed in his correspondence as a copy from the Chief Secretary, ref. CS 809/11, indicates to us that this is when he received the information. That morning the ‘Palestine Post’ published (p.1) an item: “End of Mandate Bill Severs 25-Year Link. “A Bill ‘to make provision with respect to the termination of His Majesty’s jurisdiction in Palestine, and for purposes connected therewith’ is to be debated in the British Parliament on Wednesday (10. March).. To be known, when passed, as the ‘Palestine Act, 1948’, the instrument severs the civil connection of this country with the United Kingdom which began on September 29, 1923 when the Mandate officially entered into force.”

“It is no part of your duty to undertake any administration of any part of Palestine except in so far as it is essential in order satisfactorily to achieve your object. You will, however, conduct the evacuation with due regard to the welfare of the civilian population and the economy of the country.”

Draft Directive para. 10.

“You will allow such civilian authority as may be effective in any area under your control to operate to the greatest possible degree and you should interfere only when necessary to achieve your object.”

Administrative Instruction para. 1.

“All expenditure on the civil administration of the areas under your control should be met by whatever civil authorities are functioning in the areas. Only if these authorities refuse to meet expenditure on services of this nature which you consider to be essential for the purpose of the military evacuation should any expenditure be incurred by us. In the event of such expenditure being unavoidable, separate records should be kept as far as possible of the amounts spent in order that subsequent recovery may if necessary be effected from the appropriate authorities. Similarly records should be kept of stores, surveys and supplies used for such purposes.”

Administrative Instruction para. 4.

“You are authorized to employ temporarily officers of the former Government of Palestine under the arrangements described below to the extent that they may be essential to assist in the military evacuation. If such officers are required for purely military purposes or to act as your advisers or liaison officers to the civilian authorities the expenditure involved is a proper charge against the Army votes. If, on the other hand, they are required by you to perform administrative functions which should ordinarily be performed by the civil authorities, all expenditure in respect of this should ultimately be met by the responsible civil authorities and should be dealt with in the manner described on para. 1 above.”

For the Military, the issue was purely one of military evacuation; but surely for the British Government the issue should have been one of withdrawal and handover of a civilian administration in a territory held under Mandate from the League of Nations and now its successor, the United Nations? There is little hint of this in the parts of the documents available to us.

The Colonial Secretary continued:-

5. It is noted from your telegram 277¹⁰⁵¹ that it is your intention to turn over the whole of the railways and ports administration to the Commission on 15. May, but that British staff remaining would be employed by the G.O.C. who would instruct the management to operate the railways and Haifa Port so as to meet his requirements and would, if necessary himself employ the railway and Haifa Port staff required for his purposes.

6. I should be grateful for your views on how far it is expected that the G.O.C. will find it necessary to operate the railways and Port service for purposes other than those immediately connected with the evacuation. To what extent will it be necessary to permit Imports required to maintain the life of the country to pass through the Port and will a certain amount of rail transport to meet civil requirements also be essential? In particular,

¹⁰⁵¹ i.e. from the C.S., not available to us.

will it be necessary to make available essential workshops at Haifa for the purpose of servicing and repairing locomotives and rolling stock, operating under the Civil Administration outside the 'Enclave'? I am not quite clear whether you contemplate that it will be possible for the Civil Administration physically to operate any of the Railway and Port services in the Haifa enclave.

7. If certain services in Haifa will have to be maintained by the G.O.C. in the interests of the civilian population, the question of the extent to which it will be necessary for the Military Authorities (through the agency of seconded British staff) to collect Port dues, railway passenger and freight charges and customs revenue. It was understood from Fletcher-Cooke, when he was here, that the collection of customs duties could not be carried out without the supervision of British staff, and since British staff could only be employed by the G.O.C. and not by the Commission (except on voluntary engagement after leaving the Colonial Service), any collection of revenue would presumably have to be undertaken by the Military Authorities (particularly as the presence of any United Nations Commission Administration in Haifa might well cause disturbances.)¹⁰⁵²

“The rapid clearance of goods through the Port might in any case be essential for the purpose of evacuation, and there are various objections to allowing valuable revenue to remain uncollected. On the other hand, it is not intended that the Military Commander should undertake civil administrative tasks, unless it is essential in the interests of evacuation, and I understand that the C.-in-C. M.E.L.F. has informed the War Office that it is unlikely to be practical for the G.O.C. to collect port and customs duties.

8. The Foreign Office Legal Adviser's opinion is that while the Military Commander should leave the operation of public services as much as possible to the authorities responsible for them, he may, to the extent which the achievement of his object and his resources permit, undertake so much of the operation of the services as is necessary for his purpose, or enables the Civil Administration of the country to be carried on with the minimum of interference. Within these limits therefore, the Military Commander would be entitled to raise revenue from the operation of railways, ports and customs for civilian purposes in the areas under his control. It is a recognised principle of International Law that if the military occupant collects taxes, he should do so as far as possible in accordance with the legal basis and assessment in force under the ordinary law of the country.¹⁰⁵³

10. The Military Commander in Palestine would not, in the opinion of the Foreign Office Legal Adviser, be entitled to levy contributions to meet the expenses of his force, but he would be entitled to apply revenue derived by him from civil forces in defraying expenses of so much of the civil administration as he undertakes. Any balance would normally be paid by him to the Civil Authorities which would otherwise be entitled to receive it. The transfer of revenue collected by the British Military Authorities to the United Nations Commission might however be considered open to objection, that it might constitute implementation of the Partition Plan. [*Which Britain had opposed.*] On the other hand, revenue of the nature mentioned would under the plan be payable properly to the Joint Economic Board, and if and when making over funds for the eventual use of this body would perhaps not be so great. It might in any case be difficult

¹⁰⁵² There is something wryly amusing in the concern that London felt for possible disturbances in Haifa; at this period the city had already largely descended into violent chaos with no-go areas for different ethnic groups.

¹⁰⁵³ There is no para. 9 in the original.

to withhold any available balance from the successor authority.

11. Before this question is discussed further by the Official Committee on Palestine, I should be grateful for your views in consultation with the G.O.C. It would be helpful if in your reply you could indicate whether you anticipate any considerable falling-off in imports through Haifa, between 15. May and 1. August, either as a result of diversion by trade to Jaffa-Tel Aviv or of the holding back of shipments by importers.”

Gurney, the Chief Secretary was bemused by this unrealistic view from the mandarins in London. He wrote to J.M. Martin¹⁰⁵⁴ that “It is difficult to send a helpful official reply”, but that it might be useful to have “an indication of our present intentions, which are agreed with the G.O.C. and which have been discussed with the U.N. Commission’s staff here.”

“There can be question of the G.O.C. attempting to operate the customs service at Haifa.” Discussions had been held with UNO Commission staff about the importance of maintaining some form of continuity, especially in revenue collection, but “if conditions turn out to be such as make it impossible for customs duties to be collected at other ports there would be little purpose in attempting to collect them at Haifa.” “The Commission’s staff here appear to recognise fully the importance of maintaining the common services of customs, post and telegraphs and civil aviation, and are recommending to Lake Success that suitable expert senior staff should be sent here to do what they can to maintain these services in operation.”

In regard to railways and ports however, “nobody here believes that it will be feasible to operate the railway outside the Haifa enclave after about the middle of April. On the other hand, the G.O.C. considers at present that he will require the railway to continue operating within the enclave for the evacuation of military stores, and he will certainly require Haifa Port to operate in such a manner as to give priority to his requirement. All this has recently been discussed with Kirby and the Commission’s staff, and the present plan is that the G.M. Railways, together with sufficient staff to operate the railway within the enclave and Haifa port to the extent of meeting the Army’s requirements, should be employed by the G.O.C. As regards the handling of civil cargo, the G.M.Rlys. would contract the appropriate Jewish and Arab firms through the Chamber of Shipping at Haifa..... Any port revenue collected on this account would go to the contractors and any payment made by the contractors to the port would naturally accrue to the G.O.C. All railway and port assets not required for the above purposes would be available to be taken over by the Commission on 15. May.”

The UN staff appeared to find this proposal acceptable but were awaiting formal authorisation. “What is completely uncertain is the ability of the Commission to take over the railway and port assets and what is partly uncertain is whether the G.O.C. will in fact require the railway to continue operating within the enclave and, if so, for what period and to what extent...” “So far as we can see there will be no civil administration capable of operating the railway or Haifa port **in any manner whatever** after 15. May¹⁰⁵⁵ We are of course constantly considering how this problem can best be dealt with and adjusting our proposed solutions to the political developments at Lake Success. No final plan can yet be made for obvious reasons.”

¹⁰⁵⁴ 13. March, ref. C.S. 809/11.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Our emphasis.

On 15. March Kirby wrote¹⁰⁵⁶ to Brigadier W. S. Cole, of Movt. HQ (Levant), referring to a meeting the previous day.

“We are already utilising Military Railway Operating personnel in the Haifa East area. Three signalling boxes and a shunting engine are completely manned by personnel of the 193 Company. We had already arranged for more shunters to come in from 193 Company and we hope to be able to undertake the Kiryat Motzkin and Zur shunting trips entirely with military personnel. From now onwards we hope, by careful infiltration, to introduce more and more military personnel, but..... we shall have to do it carefully to avoid the possibility of precipitating serious trouble from our own staff who are in a very disgruntled frame of mind.....

Our big weakness is at night, when we have no British supervisory staff available. ...We are very thin in senior officers and, unfortunately, the supervisory staff at Haifa East were all Jewish and they have had to be withdrawn. The result is that, in their disgruntled frame of mind, the Arab Staff do not work well when they are not being directly supervised by British Officers. I have not enough British Officers to cover the full 24 hours. I hope, however, that by filtering in more and more British military personnel we shall be able to get more work done during the night shift.

From all the enquiries which I have made... I have understood that your evacuation of stores is ahead of the original programme. I assume, therefore, that when you mention ‘targets’ you are referring to new targets which have been set up recently to speed up the evacuation programme. I am absolutely in agreement with this policy, but I would not like there to be any impression that the railway has failed in relation to your original programme! I have always anticipated that the situation would seriously deteriorate and I consider that we have done pretty well to move as much as we have done. We shall continue to do as much as we possibly can,. though I hope that when things do not go as well as you expected the railway will not be held entirely responsible! It is the easiest thing in the world to blame everything to “no shunting” or something similar!”¹⁰⁵⁷

We are, of course, dealing with much traffic in addition to the port. We still have the stuff to clear to Egypt and also the C.R.L. stuff from Beit Nabala.”

The ‘Progress Report to 15 March’ indicated that Provident Funds were being wound up in accordance with an Accountant General’s Circular 6/48 of 5. February, with preference being given to the accounts of staff on the Kantara-Rafa Railway “whose services will terminate on the 31. March 1948 on handing over of the Railway to the Egyptian State Railways.” Of the 60 Expatriate Officers for whom evacuation had to be arranged, 11 passages had already been organised leaving 49 to be done; of the 29 families, 10 had been arranged leaving 19 to do. The Army had confirmed that the Kantara-Rafa Railway was to be handed over from 1. April - but it is not clear why the Army and no civil authority had informed Palestine Railways of this substantial alteration in status. (After all, it was a matter of less than a year previously that Kirby had been discussing track and signalling materials on this section.) As for operating, “Main line services continue to be maintained in spite of all manner of difficulties. The Lydda-Tel Aviv-Jaffa Section cannot be worked because of repeated sabotage involving destruction of the track. The Ras-el-Ein-Petah Tiqva line continues to be worked by

¹⁰⁵⁶ GM/MAND/M/5.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Kirby was clearly irritated here. Clearly this sort of criticism had been made, unjustly in Kirby’s opinion - for he adds: “My purpose in mentioning this is that I have so often known the railway to be blamed for delays for which the real causes are not revealed.”

military crews. Citrus exports are moving freely. No serious acts of sabotage occurred during the period under review [i.e. from 1. March], thefts from goods wagons in station yards continues, as does the theft of station assets. Difficulty in working Haifa East working remains, because of continuous sniping.”

In fact citrus was moving with some difficulty. An urgent telegram from Robinson of the Citrus Marketing Board in Jaffa on 22. March indicated that 200 wagons were *en route*, ten ships were at Haifa but only three could load at Jaffa, Haifa was inaccessible by telephone and Kirby’s urgent estimation was needed as “further picking dependent on guarantee railways functioning.” Kirby replied by telegram on 25. March that “Doing all possible maintain train services but impossible to predict possibilities which depend entirely upon security situation.” The response on 29. March indicated appreciation for efforts and goodwill of railway staff under trying circumstances - “balance of citrus programme until 20. April approx. 1M cases of which 350,000 Jaffa/Tel Aviv, balance Haifa. Wagon requirements daily average about 30,000 cases”, priority assurance was sought to ensure wagon provision. Kirby’s response on the same date was as reassuring as he dared be: “Provided citrus can be worked from Petah Tiqva until 20th. April and railway otherwise working hope meet your requirements; if Petah Tiqva impossible Rehovot and Hadera loadings would be insufficient meet your programme.”

On 16. March it was reported that the Army might have completed withdrawal by 1. August “if the movement of troops and stores continues at the present rate of speed”, and also that a new Anglo- Trans-Jordan Treaty had been signed in Amman.¹⁰⁵⁸

On 19. March Kirby wrote again to Gurney:

“We are still not operating the Tel Aviv line, but we are managing to keep open the Petah-Tiqva line from which a citrus traffic is being worked daily into Haifa Port.

Looting from trains occurs only when there is no escort. During the last few days, trains carrying citrus and potash, which have not hitherto been regarded as attractive to looters, have been looted at Tulkarm station. The looting takes place whilst the train engine is detached to take water tanks into the Nur Es-Shems Jail Labour Camp.

.... Looting from wagons standing in marshalling yards, particularly at Haifa, has increased during the last two weeks. The evidence also points to a British Military Personnel as also taking part in the looting.

The operating staff, who are almost entirely monthly-rated, are feeling in a very disgruntled state of mind because of their extreme disappointment at the compensation benefits. We have held several meetings with the Union Representatives on the subject, but we cannot eradicate bitterness regarding what the men consider to be the less favourable treatment granted to the ‘working men’ as compared with the more favourable terms granted to the clerical staff. The men see no justification whatever for allowing a 25% increase on account of cost of living in calculating benefits for the clerical staff while this is denied to the monthly-rated staff. It is very difficult to find any justification for this discrimination, and in respect of the cost of living, I should have liked to see the same treatment meted out to all Provident Fund staff, and no matter whether they were monthly-rated or salaried.”¹⁰⁵⁹

“Undoubtedly the disappointment with the compensation terms, coupled with

¹⁰⁵⁸ ‘Palestine Post’ 16. March 1948 p.1.

¹⁰⁵⁹ It is unclear whether he had been asked, nor why there was such parsimony within months of leaving in any case.

uncertainty of the future and **the order of the Arab Higher Committee that no Arab may work for the U.N.O.**¹⁰⁶⁰ is having a very unsettling effect upon our staff. Their loyalty is, in consequence, being very severely tested and, unsatisfactory as the present staff position is, I feel pleased that the staff are responding as well as they are doing.

Sickness absenteeism has assumed alarming proportions.... it has been quite obvious from many of the sick reports rendered that the sick leave granted was unjustified.

The situation at Lydda has stabilised itself largely because of the closing to traffic of the Tel Aviv line with the consequent smaller volume of traffic standing in Lydda yard and also **because of the orders issued to the local Arab committee to stop looting in the area.**

The Qishon workshops are continuing to work satisfactorily and, despite the high degree of absenteeism, the programme of work is ahead of schedule.

Although the Military programme of movement provided for no movement of stores southwards after the end of February, we are continuing to evacuate stores from Haifa to Egypt at the rate of roughly two trains daily. At the same time evacuation stores are being brought into Haifa and we are also moving a big tonnage of stores from Beit Nabala into Haifa for the Consolidated Refineries Ltd. Citrus traffic is still moving.

The most troublesome point on the Railway is Haifa East where the staff have been harrassed by sniping and have begun to take part in looting. Military personnel is gradually being infiltrated to provide against further deterioration in the staff situation. The use of Military personnel has to be undertaken with the utmost care to avoid a conflict with our own civil staff. Last week an ultimatum was presented by the staff at Haifa East to the effect that if effective steps were not taken by the Army to prevent sniping, work would be discontinued. I am pleased to say that effective action by the Army has been taken and the sniping has been greatly reduced.....

Wherever possible, passenger train services are being reduced. On the Haifa-Samakh line the train service will be reduced to one train only every alternate day and it is probable that with effect from 1. April the service through to Cairo will be reduced to only twice a week because of the operating limitations by the E.S.R. on the Kantara-Rafa line. Wherever possible locomotives, carriages and wagons will be stabled when they are not required for traffic purposes.

The handing over of the Kantara-Rafa Railway to the E.S.R. as from the 1. April 1948 is being proceeded with and should be completed before the end of this month..

I have given consideration to the advisability of finding alternative accommodation for the present Railway Headquarters' Offices, but have come to the decision that the only course possible is to continue to use the existing offices for as long as possible. Any attempt to move the Headquarters at this stage would be most catastrophic in effect."

Almost despairing, he ended: "In my capacity of the General Manager of the Railways and Ports Authority, I feel very keenly my invidious position as the custodian of public goods. In present circumstances I cannot possibly guarantee the safety of any goods which come into the possession of the Railways and Ports and there is no action which I can take except by appealing to the Security Forces to improve the situation."

On 20. March he wrote again¹⁰⁶¹ to the Chief Secretary.

"....a definite announcement regarding the continued employment of the staff by an

¹⁰⁶⁰ Our emphasis.

¹⁰⁶¹ GM/MAND/M/5.

authority acceptable to both of the opposing political parties would improve the outlook, but I doubt if any such announcement is possible. My information is that the Arab Higher Committee has issued instructions that no Arab may work for the the U.N.O. Commission. If this is so, and supposing our Arab staff to be willing to obey the instructions, the only possibility of obtaining Arabs to work for the Railways would appear to be for them to be recruited by the G.O.C., although this is a possibility, but I am not sanguine. Much will depend upon the political situation and whether or not the men who have just received final payments equal to several months' pay will wish to work in the conditions which are likely immediately following the termination of the Mandate. If, as is not improbable, the Arabs will attempt to prevent any Jewish goods travelling by rail, it is unlikely that our Arab staff would be prepared to work, even if paid by the G.O.C.

The Jewish Agency appears to be planning to keep the Railway open from Haifa to Hadera, as a minimum, but I doubt if any such plan is likely to be effective for the G.O.C.'s purposes."

As for operation within the Haifa Enclave, he doubted whether it would be possible to recruit sufficient civilian staff, especially as the workers were disgruntled about their financial compensation. "At Haifa East, which is our key point, the staff appear to be doing as little as possible and some of them have openly declared that they will make up in other ways what they are not receiving by way of a fair compensation. This has led to an increase in looting and a serious deterioration in morale." Many had stated they were waiting simply for their final payments and would then leave. "The prospects of persuading such staff to work during the period immediately succeeding the end of the Mandate are not promising and it seems, therefore, that if any rail traffic is to be worked in the Haifa Enclave after 15. May it will have to be undertaken by Military Personnel..... I hope the situation will become clearer during the next few weeks but if the development is as I have envisaged... the only civil staff who would be required by the G.O.C. should be one or two key men for the railways and the few key men in the port....."

On 22. March Brig. Cole replied to Kirby's letter of the 15. in conciliatory tone.

"We fully realise your difficulties and are more than grateful to you for the action you have taken to assist us and keep things going. We, on our part, will, as you know, do everything we can to assist you.... I would say that on the whole the evacuation of stores is up to programme but NOT in advance of target. The target has not been increased, but we are trying to get finished earlier if it is possible to do so. I hope that as a result of the meeting with General Stockwell on 20. March in Haifa, better arrangements will now be made for the protection of Haifa East yard, and that in consequence shunting at night should improve.

It is essential for me to clear Kiryat Motzkin as early as possible, particularly in view of the possibility that you will not be able to continue operating the Railway South very much longer. In this connection I have asked the Chief Secretary to give you the directive you require to continue working Palestine Railway stock South of Rafah after 25. March. I would be most grateful if you could issue instructions now to your Railway Staff that this operation is to continue, as I fear that on your existing instructions they may stop trucks moving South after the 25. March, and this would be a disaster as far as we are concerned.¹⁰⁶²

¹⁰⁶² Kirby noted in the margin: "I am awaiting directive from C.S." - no change would be made till he had seen the paper.

As you know, we have sold a large quantity of stores estimated at between 20 and 30 thousand tons to the CRL¹⁰⁶³ in Beit Nabala. At present they have either moved or loaded for despatch 9,500 tons. I went down yesterday, however, and they told me that some trucks had been waiting for six days before they had been moved. I fully realise that this movement depends largely on movement from Haifa East yard, but I would be most grateful if you could ensure that as many trucks as possible are placed daily in Beit Nabala and that they are moved as expeditiously as possible. The CRL representative at Beit Nabala told me that he had sufficient labour to load 150 trucks of any type daily.”

Kirby noted: “Supt.o.t.L. says *faut de mieux* we will have to work P.R. stock south to Rafah. P.R. trucks are continuing to move southwards.”

In the meantime a strange but gracious letter from the Iraq Petroleum Company, dated 18. March, thanked Kirby and his staff for the assistance which the Railways and the Haifa Port had rendered in connection with the transfer during recent weeks of the considerable volume of materials that we have had to move from Haifa to Lebanon”. This raises the question as to whether the material had in fact gone by rail through Azzib and Nakoura after all?

A week later the situation had changed, due in part to the ‘Night of the Bridges’, the Haganah attacks on railway installations. On 26. March he informed Gurney:

“The Tel Aviv line is still closed; the Petah-Tiqvah line is being kept in operation by Military crews.

The Railway line northwards to Beirut has been effectively cut by the destruction of the Na’amein bridge. This has also cut off rail connection with Acre. The Army intend to repair the Na’amein Bridge by the use of Bailey bridging.¹⁰⁶⁴

The line between Haifa and Acre was again effectively cut a few days ago by the catastrophic derailment of an empty coach train proceeding to Acre for the return morning service. The leading locomotive is upside down and several coaches are little more than matchwood. In view of the apparent determination of interested parties to cut off Acre and of the unlikelihood of Arabs travelling by rail from Acre to Haifa because of the possibility of the train being mined, I am not taking any urgent action to re-establish communication.¹⁰⁶⁵

I had considered the advisability of closing down the Hijaz Railway between Haifa and Samakh but the issue has now been forced by the destruction of the bridge at Kilo 67.¹⁰⁶⁶ There is no traffic of any consequence offering over this railway and I do not

¹⁰⁶³ i.e. the Consolidated Refineries Ltd. - see above.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Presumably this would be for standard-gauge only, to remove items from Azzib. The line into Acre itself was of course narrow-gauge.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Km. 18.7. From photos this might indeed have been a standard-gauge train with some former Indian coaches, in which case the H.B.T. station at Acre would have been the intended destination, not the former H.R. station near the Old Town. The accident was indeed that, a washout, and not sabotage. But the result was the effective end of train services north of Haifa.

¹⁰⁶⁶ It is not at first clear what bridge is referred to at Km. 67. According to the Naval Intelligence Handbook there is no bridge listed at this site, but a masonry bridge at km. 74.5 between Beit Yosef and Jisr el Majamie. On 26. March the ‘Palestine Post’ reported (p.1) from Affule, that three railway bridges were blown up by Haganah sappers shortly before midnight on 24. March. “The action was aimed to cut the line as Arab gangs had fired from passenger trains on Jewish settlements. Trains on this line had also been used for the transport of Arab reinforcements.” However, a list found in the April papers mentions: Beisan-Jisr El Majame. Bridge at Km. 67.5809 destroyed by sabotage.

propose to reopen it. All Hijaz Railway locomotives and rolling stock will be brought into Haifa for stabling. The locomotives will be greased and left in as good condition as possible in the running shed at Haifa East Station. For some time we have undertaken no general repair work for the Hijaz Railway at the Qishon Workshops.

The public are so little interested in this section of the line that I do not think it is worth making any public announcement.” [!]

“Following the derailment of a goods train in section, as a result of which two of the train crew lost their lives, and in consequence of the general insecurity, the railway staff at Haifa East stopped work a few days ago and presented an ultimatum that unless certain conditions were complied with for the purpose of affording them a greater security they would not resume work. I am pleased to say that as a result of an immediate meeting with the men, work was resumed within 24 hours. The present procedure is:-

- (a). Night trains are worked by Military personnel.
- (b). Military escorts accompany every train.
- (c). Armoured trolleys are used to patrol the line and to accompany platelayers when they are inspecting the track.
- (d). The Military Authorities, through General Stockwell, have been requested to impose a curfew within an area of 50 yards on either side of the railway throughout.

I am pleased to say that the men showed a ready willingness to work provided they could be assured of some security. Their attitude throughout was reasonable. They regard the curfew on the railway as an important requirement. The Military Authorities are reluctant to impose a curfew which cannot be enforced by military means. The purpose of the curfew, however, is not so much to enforce it but to enable any persons who are found within 50 yards of the railway track during curfew hours to be regarded as suspect immediately and, if necessary, shot at sight. If the patrol trolley could take such action this would be most effective. I regard the imposition of the curfew as an effective means of contributing to the safety of railway operation, and I trust that you will lend your support to the proposal.”¹⁰⁶⁷

Absenteeism was increasing, mainly due to sickness claims which were clearly being abused. “The staff situation outside Haifa is not yet causing us any serious trouble. Undoubtedly the high absenteeism in Haifa is because the Haifa East area is almost constantly under fire from snipers and is surrounded by the most troublesome area in town. Qishon Workshops are continuing as usual except that the severance of rail connection with Acre prevents about 300 men coming into Haifa daily. Any deterioration in the output of Qishon Workshops, however, will not now affect the operation of the Railways adversely between now and the final withdrawal of the British Forces.” That is, it was too late to worry much more now.

P.R. was continuing to work citrus, supplies such as fuel oils and cement, in addition to military evacuation stores and a very heavy programme of movement of stores from Beit Nabala which had been purchased by the Consolidated Refineries.... “This last commitment alone involves approximately 40,000 tons of which we have already moved over 10,000 tons.” Telegraphic and telephonic communications were so bad as to be almost non-existent. This affected train working very adversely and limited

Affula-Shatta.

Bridge at km. 44 destroyed by sabotage.

Kfar Yehoshua-Affula. Bridge at Km 34 destroyed by sabotage.

¹⁰⁶⁷ But see another letter on 7. April.

the capacity of the line. "Most of the train operation is now almost entirely dependent upon the personal element and we are necessarily running risks with every train because of the absence of the usual control through the electric safety working instruments."

The track was no longer being effectively controlled by the permanent way staff. Many Arab staff had received warnings from the Haganah to desist from patrolling the line in Jewish areas. In other areas the situation was deteriorating because of supervision difficulties, and staff morale generally was deteriorating due to the uncertainty of the future. Looting was still giving trouble at Haifa East. An approach had been made to the Arab Authorities who had promised their assistance in the prevention of looting. "It is quite clear that very little assistance can be expected from the security forces."

There were severe problems in Haifa:

"We have recently had some difficulty at Railway Headquarters because of heavy shooting in the immediate neighbourhood and because of the activities of snipers. The situation is now much better but the few days interruption has had a very serious effect upon the completion of staff matters in preparation for the termination of the Mandate. We are still awaiting instructions from the Accountant-General and I fear that unless these instructions are forthcoming within the next day or so it will be impossible for us to complete the final payments to staff before 15. May, even supposing there is no further interruption in work.... I hope that it will prove possible to complete the final payments to the Kantara-Rafa Railway staff along with their March salaries and wages."

Why were important financial instructions still awaited?

On 18. March G.B.G. Bradbury, a Section Clerk, was shot while travelling on duty in Carmel Avenue. P.R. had lost two lorries and two staff cars by robbery in Haifa, plus one by shooting during the "fracas in Carmel Avenue", and to enable essential movements to be made Kriby said he would transfer his own car to the Railway. It was essential for the operation of the railways and ports that lorries could move about constantly and that officers should have transport for them to move on duty. "Every possible precaution is taken to guard against these robberies, but the vehicles were taken by armed robbers in the public streets."

The 35th. Officers' Meeting took place, as noted, on a Saturday, 20. March - probably an indication of how chaotic the timescale had become.

As a facade of normality traffic was discussed; The Supt.o.t.L. reported the average trains run per day as:-

Haifa - Lydda.	7.15.	
Lydda - Haifa.	3.85.	[N.B. normally the numbers are for both ways...]
Lydda - Jerusalem.	2.85.	

The Petah-Tiqva Railway was still working, with one train daily operated by military personnel. They would be withdrawn on 11. April. The Consolidated Refineries Ltd. traffic was being cleared from Beit Nabala. Military evacuation stores were continuing to pass from Haifa to Kantara. But future traffic depended upon citrus - which was finishing - and military stores. Civil cement and oil were continuing.

Too many wagons remained under load at Haifa for the military to offload.¹⁰⁶⁸ It was hoped that the additional shed and stacking space for the Army in the port would assist. Locomotive availability was adequate. The A.C.M.E. said that it was essential to keep military personnel and Lydda Locomotive Shed for so long as traffic worked

¹⁰⁶⁸ At this period much was being shipped out by sea rather than through Egypt; quite a lot was even being dumped at sea.

southwards.¹⁰⁶⁹

As regards the Kantara-Rafa Railway, Kirby confirmed that the Egyptian State Railways would operate from 1. April and that Heads of Branches should ensure that the handing-over procedure was satisfactorily completed before that date. The Staff would be paid out their statutory retiring benefits only up until that date, as H.M.G. had to be consulted for a decision regarding compensation terms.¹⁰⁷⁰

But what about the Termination of the Mandate?

Kirby stated that America's withdrawal of its support for Partition - as announced that very day - might change the situation in Palestine, but that otherwise the British withdrawal was proceeding according to programme and **every endeavour possible must be made to ensure that the Railways and Ports were handed over to a Successor Authority as satisfactorily as possible, - or, alternatively, left as orderly as possible - in the unfortunate event of there being no Successor to which to hand over.**¹⁰⁷¹

It was agreed that the A.C.M.E. would work three shifts to achieve the photographing of all railway records - including Provident Fund forms.

Kirby reported that a Government circular was being issued, explaining that it would not be possible for compensatory benefits to be paid out before 15. May, but that all statutory benefits would be paid. This ensured that Officers and employees would get something! The payments of compensatory benefits would be handled in the Cyprus office, with payments to be made through British Offices in Palestine. It was agreed that it was in the interests of the staff to have the payment of compensatory benefits deferred until conditions became more stabilized. The Chief Staff Officer was explaining the circumstances to the Union Representatives and also to the Consultative Committee, but Heads of Branches were requested to ensure that the circular was properly understood by all, and to make it quite clear that there was no intention to deprive staff of their proper payment - on the contrary, the course now proposed was the most suitable.¹⁰⁷²

On 31. March Kirby wrote formally to the International Sleeping Car Co. in Cairo to inform that the contract with Palestine Railways, dating from 13. December 1920, would terminate "because one party to the Agreement will no longer exist. Full particulars of the Agreement will be left for the information of a Successor Authority and doubtless you will communicate with that Authority as soon as it is known to you." This was but a pious hope, and the days of through sleeping cars to Cairo had ended for ever. Kirby also noted on the copy, "Are there other agreements for which we should take similar action?"

The Progress Report to 31. March notes that "Only a few British officers have volunteered for service after termination of the Mandate and it is not anticipated that experienced Arab staff will be available." Therefore Military staff were likely to be required after 15. May for any movements. Evacuation of Officers and Families was continuing, some were awaiting passages to Australia, Cyprus and South Africa. The Kantara-Rafa Rly. was being taken over by E.S.R..

"Operating conditions have deteriorated considerably, mainly as a result of the breakdown of telephone and telegraphic communications; mainline services are being

¹⁰⁶⁹ Minute 35:752.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Minute 35:756.

¹⁰⁷¹ Our emphasis.

¹⁰⁷² Minute 35:757.

maintained but night operation has had to be taken over by the Military. Jaffa-Tel Aviv remains closed, service on the Haifa-Samakh and between Naamin Junc. and Acre on the Haifa-Acre line have had to be suspended following the destruction of bridges. The Naamin bridge on the Haifa-Acre line and two bridges on the Haifa-Samakh line have been completely destroyed by sabotage. The military are endeavouring to repair the Naamin Bridge by the use of Bailey Bridging and if possible through services to Acre will be resumed.

Passenger Train No. 2 from Cairo to Haifa was blown up on 31. March 1948 between Benjamina and Zikhron Ya'aqov. Twenty-six passengers were killed and sixty-one injured, many seriously.¹⁰⁷³

Thefts from goods wagons in station yards continued. Working at Haifa East had come to a standstill on numerous occasions due to lack of security. This also affected the transport of officers to and from their work. Assistance had been sought from the Army and from the Police but without result.

And so ended March. But the security measures requested were not delivered, as will be made clear.

TABLE 17: INCIDENTS ON PALESTINE RAILWAYS, MARCH 1948.¹⁰⁷⁴

01. March.	El Jiya Station. Track in sidings dismantled and sleepers stolen.
02. March. March.	Rehovot. The line has been repaired, traffic to resume 3. March. A military armoured trolley was derailed by Arabs, but the 4 soldiers in it were unharmed. ¹⁰⁷⁵
04. March.	Beer Ya'aqov-Lydd. Rails removed from track resulting in derailment of military motor trolley
10. March.	Lydda. A tank wagon loaded with petrol exploded and caught fire. The fire started accidentally as unknown persons were attempting to steal oil. Fumes spread to the oil wagons, one of which, containing 25 tons of fuel, blew up. ¹⁰⁷⁶
17-18. March.	Rashida Almost 800 wooden sleepers and about 500 metres of track stolen from the siding at the abandoned military camp.
20. March. Morning.	Tulkarm. 4 Arabs held up goods train; broke into 2 wagons of military stores, emptied 1 wagon completely, 1 partially. 2 armed Arabs stole wireless set from Tulkarm station.
20. March. Afternoon.	Tulkarm. 3 Arabs and 2 British soldiers injured when Arabs cut the line near Qalqilya station. Locomotive and three wagons derailed; Line blocked, Police guarding the wreck. ¹⁰⁷⁷
24. March	Nr. Midnight. Affule. Three railway bridges south and west of Affule

¹⁰⁷³ This would have been the last through train before the E.S.R. takeover.

¹⁰⁷⁴ The circumstances now meant that no official P.R. lists of all incidents were made or have survived; Indeed a note by Kirby of 3. March had stated "Sabotage and thefts need not be reported." A partial list for March, with some dates or figures missing or unreadable, was found with Kirby's 'farewell letter' of 24. April and has been partially incorporated here (without press references.) For March and April we have therefore extracted information largely from press reports. References are to 'Palestine Post'.

¹⁰⁷⁵ 2. March p.1.

¹⁰⁷⁶ 11. March p.3.

¹⁰⁷⁷ all 21. March p.3.

blown up by Haganah.¹⁰⁷⁸
 26. March Ras El-Ein - Petah-Tiqva. Mine exploded under Petah-Tiqva shunt. Engine and 3 box wagons derailed. Driver and Fireman injured.
 Permanent way damaged.
 29. March. Carmel. "An Arab was killed in Carmel Station when two bombs he was holding suddenly exploded."¹⁰⁷⁹
 31. March. 13.00. Binyamina - Zichron Ya'acov. "About 40 Arabs killed and 60 injured" when the engine and 5 coaches of a Tulkarm-Haifa train were derailed by a mine. The attack was carried out by the Stern Gang. "Official sources said none of the 30 soldiers on the train was hurt."¹⁰⁸⁰ "Passenger train No. 2 blown up. Two coaches completely destroyed and three badly damaged."

No exact dates specified:-

Lydda station. Station attacked by armed gangs and two wagons looted.
 Haifa. Headquarters offices damaged by blast from explosion in Allenby Road.
 Atlit - Zikhron Ya'acov Goods train held up by armed gang and six wagons looted. Heavy traffic delays.
 Haifa East Station. Wagon looted and set on fire.
 Tulkarm Station. Station attacked by armed gang and one wagon looted.
 Tulkarm - Qaqun. Goods train held up by armed gang and nine wagons looted.
 Rashida Station. Station attacked by armed gang and all equipment stolen.
 Qalqilya Station. Two wagons looted.
 Ras el Ein - Qalqilya. Mine exploded under goods train. Engine and two box wagons blown up. Driver killed, foreman, guard and two military escorts seriously injured.
 Naamin bridge, Acre Line. Bridge blown up by saboteurs. Rail services to Acre suspended.
 Kiriath Motzkin - Naamin Junction. Passenger train derailed by sabotage. Engine and five coaches overturned. Rail services from Haifa to Naamin bridge suspended.

¹⁰⁷⁸ 26. March p.1. At km. 67.58 Beisan - Jisr El Majame; at km. 44 .Affula - Shatta; km. 34 Kfar

Yehoshua - Affula. All traffic on Haifa-Samakha Line suspended.

¹⁰⁷⁹ 30. March p.3.

¹⁰⁸⁰ 1. April p.1.

(D). APRIL 1948.

The country was now in the grip of a civil war and the British had largely lost control. There were battles on the roads and around kibbutzim. We will not describe all these, but some obviously had an impact on railway operations. This especially applied to Haifa. The Battle for Haifa began on 21. April when British forces in Haifa evacuated their positions and concentrated in a number of military camps and in the Port of Haifa. The Haganah's 'Carmeli Brigade' launched 'Operation Scissors', attacking from the high ground, surprised the Arabs and succeeded in cutting Arab Haifa into three parts. The Arab commander of the city fled to Beirut. Major-General Hugh Stockwell, Commander of the British 6th. Airborne Division, convened a meeting of the Arab and Jewish notables of the city, a 5-Day Truce was arranged, and a mass evacuation was begun. Out of an Arab population of 100,000, only a few thousand Arabs opted to remain in Haifa.¹⁰⁸¹

From P.R.'s point of view, not only did this mean the loss of many workers, but more importantly, the loss of Khoury House. Aubrey Milstein wrote¹⁰⁸²:

"Khoury House only got burned down because an Arab sniper set himself up in the roof. He surrounded himself with old files going back 60 or 70 years! Reams of paper, all tied with string, made an excellent defence against bullets. So - the only way to get him out was by using incendiary bullets. In consequence, that night the Haganah used incendiaries. They arrived in the morning to find the place still burning, As the building was on the 'border' between Jewish and Arab areas, the Fire Brigade wouldn't come; Eventually the Army Fire Brigade came, but didn't salvage much. "

Robin Davies¹⁰⁸³ recalls standing with Kirby on top of Carmel, in the Cantonment, watching Khoury House go up in flames. "There it all goes - all the records", Kirby said. It must have been heartbreaking.

What appears to be a final Officers' meeting was held at Haifa Central on 23. April.¹⁰⁸⁴ Present were Kirby, Baker, Charlton, Norman, Davis, F. J. Hossack as 'Acting Chief Engineer', T. H. Baggaley as 'Acting Chief Mechanical Engineer', and Rogers, the Port Manager, Haifa. The atmosphere was partially one of crisis, but partially

Kirby began by outlining briefly the events of the past few days, culminating in the destruction of Khoury House by fire and the capitulation of the Arab forces in Haifa to the Jewish forces. There was no further talk of Traffic or Loco Availability; there was no Routine any more at all. The most immediate problem was to make the payment of three months advance to the Lydda and Haifa staff. Mr. Davis stated that, entirely due to the energy and initiative shown by Mr. Gadalla, the paysheets were all ready and complete except for one small section south of Lydda. Mr. Gadalla had taken the paysheets away from the Headquarters Office and had had them completed in his

¹⁰⁸¹ See 'The Arab-Israeli Wars' by Chaim Herzog. (Random House, New York, 1982. ISBN 0-394-50379-1.) p.35.

¹⁰⁸² 'Harakevet' 32:19'. He worked for P.R. and the Haganah simultaneously!

¹⁰⁸³ Locomotive Superintendent from early 1947 and finally C.M.E. of P.R. He was interviewed at his home in Caterham, Surrey, 29.Aug. 1991, and questioned further by correspondence.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Source: Haifa Railway Museum archive. No ref., but in a file labelled 'Termination of Mandate', dealing mainly with personal matters, in particular "termination of service & payments." These Minutes are not filed with others.

home.¹⁰⁸⁵

It was agreed:-

- (a). to send all remaining cash to Lydda in one trip while the going was possible.
- (b). to begin the payout of Haifa staff the following morning at Haifa Central station.

While the meeting was in progress the Bank was opened and the necessary cash withdrawn and placed in Police Headquarters. Security arrangements were also made for the payment at Haifa Central and escorts for the Lydda cash. A Wireless/Telegraph message was sent to the District Traffic Superintendent, Lydda, who had sent a message stating that he must have all cash by 10.00 the following day. Payment to the Jewish staff could be made through the Hadar Hacarmel branch of Barclay's Bank if this would prove the better expedient to adopt. Staff from the line southwards to Tulkarm would have to come into Haifa unless payments proved possible by train, and special arrangements would have to be made for staff who had already gone to Acre.

Not everything had been lost. The Provident Fund summaries were intact in the possession of Mr. Attalla. It also appeared that the Provident Fund records had been untouched by the fire in Khoury House and would be recoverable. The cabinets containing the gratuity forms for payment to the Daily rated staff appear to be intact and recoverable. Most Provident Fund forms were intact and at Qishon for photostating, those for the Mechanical Branch might have been lost. Jewish workers were at work in Qishon. The Personnel files and records of the Chief Accountant, Chief Staff Officer and Superintendent of the Line Branches had been destroyed in the fire, but enough information was available on the Provident Fund forms for the calculation of retiring benefits. Only the records wanted in Cyprus would be evacuated, and the more work which could be done before 15. May, the less would have to be taken to Cyprus. Final payments for the period 1 April to 15. May would have to be prepared on the basis of potential earnings in the absence of time sheets. It seemed nevertheless doubtful whether much of any real value would be achieved in Palestine.

All working Accounts documents were probably destroyed in the fire, but statements of the accounts to the end of February were available in Branch Offices and it should be possible, the C.A. thought, to prepare a fair statement of accounts for the year 1947/48, though no detailed statements would be possible. From 1. April the Railway had worked on a cash basis only.

The melancholy listing continued. Records relating to revenue and expenditure, registers of assets, agreements and statistical statements were probably destroyed, likewise all documentary records of the Traffic Branch. But it was not just a case of - literally - raking through the ashes. There was a Railway to run! The Transport Branch noted:-

“The Western Electric Control Board is intact and has been recovered. A Control Office is to be set up at Haifa East and the Western Electric installed as soon as possible. Traffic Headquarters would be at Haifa East and the staff informed at once that the Management intended to keep the railway going. **“There is no intention of giving up at this stage.”**¹⁰⁸⁶

As many locomotives and wagons as possible were to be worked from Lydda to Haifa; Thereafter all trains possible were to be worked in the Haifa area, priority being given to Military traffic and for as far southwards as possible - maybe to Hadera only. Traffic Headquarters were also to be set up at Haifa East and the procedure for booking

¹⁰⁸⁵ So they had survived the fire.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Our emphasis.

traffic and performing documentary work set up without delay.

The Superintendent of the Line was to ascertain the situation at Haifa East as early as possible with the object of resuming smooth operation of trains, and the staff to be so informed.

The Mechanical Branch was likewise still active. It was decided that Haifa Running Shed was to be kept working and as many locomotives as possible kept in commission; Qishon Workshops likewise to be kept working - even though with a small staff. The Locomotives and breakdown crane were to be brought from Lydda. All Jewish staff possible were to be taken on if Arabs failed to turn up - possibly including Lydda staff now in Tel Aviv might become available and, if so, they should be permitted to report. (The Acting C.M.E. stated that the Arab staff were waiting only their money before leaving and the prospects of retaining any Arab staff seemed to be poor.). The present indications were that Lydda would have to be abandoned temporarily for purposes of through train working, but nevertheless the A.C.M.E. would ascertain the situation at Haifa East and **let it be known that the railway was not closing down and we wanted all staff possible to remain to keep things going.**

The Engineering Branch report was less optimistic - no men were at work in the District Workshops, all Arab staff had gone from the line and Jewish track staff was not available. The Main Stores were closed, but it was hoped that they would remain secure from looting and the issue of stores resumed in due course.

With activity centred now on Haifa there was a problem of the staff left further south - virtually isolated due to the state of warfare and the lack of security. It was agreed that the Lydda British Staff should evacuate through Jaffa, as it seemed a ship was available there. This also applied to the Port Manager, Jaffa, who would supply funds for passages from his cash. A Wireless/Telegram message would be sent accordingly. The salaries of the Lydda British Staff for the period 1. April to 15. May would be paid through the Crown Agents. The District Traffic Superintendent, Lydda, had arranged to leave the assets in charge of a Committee of the most senior Palestinian staff and had informed the local authorities. That was all that could be done.

With this immediate work set up and out of the way, Kirby sat down at a typewriter somewhere on **24th. April** and wrote once more to the Chief Secretary. What was in his mind, and what he expected, is unclear, but we can make a good guess at his feelings. Maybe the letter was to clear his thoughts. A lot of his work had gone up in flames because he had been let down by other officials whose duty should have been to protect the assets he had himself been safeguarding and cherishing.

After first repeating for the record his two messages of 21st. and 22nd. April, (above), he wrote, also for the record - after all, who would now do anything about it?

“2. On the evening of 20th. April I visited the Headquarters of the 1st. Guards Brigade in a last, almost desperate attempt to obtain increased security for the Railway Headquarters Offices in Khoury House - at the least so as to permit the staff to enter and leave the premises without danger from sniping and also to obtain something more satisfactory in the way of static guards.¹⁰⁸⁷ For some time the situation in the Khoury

¹⁰⁸⁷ On this sniping: Gus Waverley of Victoria, Australia, formerly Stafford Hendry of the Palestine Police wrote: “I remember, as will others, the sniper who felled fair-skinned females who traversed the roads south of Khoury House, on the assumption that they must be Jewesses. We never got this sniper on the lower Carmel; his citadel was pushed over by Army Staghound heavy tanks, but apart from some spent ammunition no trace was claimed. I personally recovered three ladies' bodies and believe he must have got at least as many more. We were not allowed to broadcast/morse that sort of information.” (Private

House area had been difficult, but we had no option but to carry on there for as long as possible. Because of the deteriorating security situation, however, I had tentatively agreed that Jewish staff should be set up in a separate office away from Khoury House, but I did not wish to have to do this because it would have been inadvisable to have only Arabs working in the Khoury House HQ and would have involved serious dislocation of work at a critical time.

My visit to the Brigade was a last attempt to obtain security. I presented my problem to the Brigadier Commander, but he quite firmly told me that he could do nothing and that I should be well advised to evacuate the building as early as possible. This was unpleasant news and I asked for security for another few days and for security forces to cover the evacuation. The Brigadier could not help and he gave me the cryptic reply that I should realise why the following day, but he gave me no indication as to what the situation might be. I can see now that it was not within his province to be able to do so.

When I arrived back from Brigade HQ I received a message stating that all Police had been withdrawn from the Railway HQ building, leaving it without any security whatever. The message was taken by my Principal Assistant whose protest was met by the response that "you must arrange your own security." Without transport (because all railway cars and pick-ups had been stolen) and without telephonic communications (because the railway exchange had been burned out by an accident two nights previously) I could obtain no further information, except that, from the noise, it was evident that there was heavy firing in the immediate neighbourhood of the HQ building. This was not unusual at night. I was most unhappy about the situation, but could obtain no assistance from the Army or Police.

3. The following morning I learnt of the military operations in Haifa for the first time, from my Chief Staff Officer, Mr. Davis, who had been awakened at 5 a.m. and told by British Army personnel to leave his house within an hour. He was allowed to stay when it was known that he was British and he learned from the Officer in Charge of the party of the happenings in Haifa, and he immediately telephoned to me from a nearby house. Soon afterwards I learned that the staff could not enter the HQ building because it was locked. This was the situation when the British staff arrived at the entrance gate - in a military truck. I should mention that the Army Authorities had warned against approaching the HQ building from the Hadar Hacarmel side, which was the usual way in for the British staff, because of sniping, and therefore the approach was made from the Khoury Street side, through an Arab stronghold. However, the British staff could not enter the building because everything was locked up and so turned back (a) in an endeavour to find who had the keys and (b) because it was not considered safe to remain long in the milling mass of Arabs assembling in the area.

It transpired that the building had been vacated and locked up by the Military Movements Office the night before, taking with them our Civil Traffic Controllers. The key was obtained from the Military independently by the Chief Traffic Controller, Mr. Paicovitch, who with his usual devotion to duty entered the building along with Mr. Hardy the District Traffic Superintendent, and opened up the doors to allow the Arab staff to enter. The Jewish staff were waiting the outcome of my attempt to obtain security before coming on duty.

All this time I was waiting for a staff car to take me from my home to the office. It had not arrived by 9 o'clock, so I took the opportunity of a lift in someone else's car to the port. There I learnt that the car (arranged through Military Movements) had not been

sent because it was not desired that I should go to Khoury House and run into trouble. I could obtain no transport from the port to Railway HQ and the conditions in the Arab approaches thereto were reported to be too dangerous for British Officers to enter unguarded.

I managed to contact the Police and learnt of the withdrawal of the Military and Police forces and that it was expected that the Khoury House area would become a critical point. I at once tried to arrange with the Police the evacuation of essential records from the HQ building under armed escort, and stressed that I considered it imperative that this should be done that day. A convoy with two armoured cars was arranged for the afternoon, this being the earliest possible. Everything was arranged for this operation at the Headquarters end, but by noon the report came though that Arab forces had entered the building. The Superintendent of Police considered it too dangerous an enterprise to attempt with armoured cars in so difficult an area. I then hoped to secure the essential personnel records by sending in the two remaining railway lorries with Arab drivers and labourers to contact an Arab Senior Clerk who, I understood, was able to negotiate with the Iraqi Commandant who was in charge of the HQ building. This was a distasteful expedient for me, but I realised that the situation was desperate. Unfortunately the Arab labourers and drivers refused to enter the area approaching the HQ building. It was then mid-afternoon and I had to abandon further attempts. The Supt. of Police came to see me about 3 o'clock but it was too late to do anything that day and his opinion was that we would have to wait a favourable opportunity.

I went to Brigade HQ later on and arranged for a troop of heavy armoured cars to escort in from the Hadar Hacarmel side two trucks and British staff in an armoured vehicle early the following morning in the hope that the situation would not have deteriorated and that the Iraqi Commander would be willing to allow the evacuation of records. It was likely to be a hazardous venture, but the staff concerned were willing to try it.

By the following morning, however, the building had changed hands and was occupied by the Haganah but had been set on fire during the concluding stages of the struggle for possession. All this I learnt only in time to stop the operation planned for recovering the records. My remaining telephone was then cut by the fire in the HQ Offices.

It has now been possible to ascertain the extent of the damage. The upper floor and most of the ground floor of the main headquarters building is gutted. A few records may be salvaged. This involves the loss of all revenue and expenditure accounting documents except such as may be saved though having been in fire-proof cabinets and safes. (Apart from military traffic, however, all transactions had been on a cash basis since the 1st. April.) All traffic and commercial documents are lost. My own office was badly damaged. By chance only, the previous day I had brought to my home the files dealing with the withdrawal arrangements together with some other files, so that I might work on them in the event of my being without transport - as had been happening from time to time. These files were of no great value or importance in themselves but their loss would have caused immediate inconvenience. It is fortunate that most of the essential personnel records relating to retiring benefits were in the annexe building which has not been touched by the fire. Arrangements are being made to recover these records as soon as possible, but the effect upon the finalisation of Provident Fund and gratuity payments will be very serious. All personal files in HQ were destroyed but it is hoped that the Provident Fund forms, most of which were at Qishon Workshops for photographing, will be saved. Most of the information relating to assets, such as inventories, registers of assets, stores ledgers and accounts appear to have been destroyed. The originals of all

agreements also have probably been lost.

The paysheets which were being prepared for the payment of a three months' advance in accordance with a recent instruction were recovered by Arab staff before the HQ building was completely occupied by Iraqi forces, and they have been finalised in the homes of the staff. It is hoped that the payment of Lydda staff will be completed tomorrow and that a start will be made on paying out the Haifa staff also.

I am setting up HQ offices in the Haifa Central station and hope to re-establish within the next few days an office for finalising personnel accounts as far as is possible before proceeding to Cyprus. We may be able to find sufficient information with which to produce accounts for the year 1947/48. **I shall continue the management and operation of the railway without complete breakdown.** For the past few days trains have been operated the Army, but I hope that we shall have sufficient Jewish staff to keep things going at least as far as Hadera. At the moment the prospects of Arab staff at Haifa continuing to work are uncertain. If they continue, so much the better from the railway operating standpoint. The desire of most Arabs today was to collect any money due to them before leaving Haifa.

The foregoing is a sorry story, but the situation in which we now find ourselves would not have been anything like so bad if only I could have been given a warning to evacuate essential documents etc. from the HQ offices. I was angry when I heard that the police security had been withdrawn from the building without notice, but I was not astonished. I accepted it as just another security problem I would have to tackle - just another example of my being expected to make bricks without straw - but I was stunned with incredulity when I realised the situation on Wednesday morning.

The Railway Headquarters were left isolated in the frontier area between Arab and Jewish forces. I do not challenge the strategic necessity for this move since that is something beyond my province, but some warning could and should have been given to me. **It is unbelievable to me that while on the one hand the District Commissioner was given 24 hours notice of the move and so was able to salve something from his offices, I was left completely unaware of any immediate necessity to vacate my Headquarters.**

I have been expected to carry on the railway and ports under almost impossible conditions; I have taken upon myself risks and responsibilities which have seldom, if ever, fallen upon the General Manager of a Colonial Railway; I have achieved more than could have been hoped for - yet I am not, apparently, thought to be sufficiently responsible or worthy of confidence to be informed of operations which were so vitally to affect the work of my Department and the welfare of the thousands of people who have given their services loyally to the railways for many years.

It is a fitting culmination to the disillusionment which I have suffered during my recent years of service in Palestine - but I never expected the final disillusionment to be so catastrophic or severe - nor did I expect such harsh confirmation of the bitterly disappointing realisation that I can expect no more from the Colonial Services and that, for my self respect, I must seek retirement, and enter a new field of endeavour."

Clearly he was reeling emotionally from the blow and in a state of severe (and justified) depression. Handwritten notes attached show the text of a telegram, to the Secretariat - "Inform Brig. Cole that I am not repeat not remaining to assist GOC. My decision is firm, Chief Secretary already knows. Kirby."

It is hard to work out exactly what was going on on the fateful night. It appears as though the British Military had been fully aware that Iraqi forces intended to make a

presence in the Khoury House area and possibly even take it, and their only aim was not to prevent this, and keep order, but instead to keep out of the way, keep their heads down, and get everyone else - including Kirby - out of the way as well. It was on this day - the 22nd. April - that the "Battle of Haifa" had reached its climax.

Within a few days Kirby had recovered his composure and determination to keep going, at least until 15. May. On 26. April a 'General Manager's Circular No. 14/48' was issued, entitled "Termination of Mandate - Continuity of Railway and Port Services."

This remarkable document reveals nevertheless the extent of the rot - there was clear realisation that no trains were likely to reach Jerusalem again under P.R. auspices, nor Petah-Tiqva, nor even to Rafa - once Lydda was evacuated, the entire southern region and the links with Egypt would be cut off from the northern region. There is no surviving official indication as to when the last service actually called at Jerusalem, Rehovot etc., when the last fire was dropped from a locomotive, and the 'Enclave Mentality' had already had the effect of narrowing geographical horizons - 'Palestine' now consisted largely of those areas that could be reached safely from Haifa. Whether a brave solitary engine made its way along what had been, until weeks earlier, a well-run and busy main line, to bring the needed funds and documentation from Haifa to Lydda, and whether it then made its way back north, is not clear from surviving sources. But it seems to have been a case of 'Last one out, turn out the lights'. It was in such conditions that Paicovitch and others were able to secrete some stock away.¹⁰⁸⁸

The circular starts bluntly with British bulldog determination:

"1. Railways. The intention of the management is that the Railways will be kept in operation and handed over on the 15. May as a going concern. The severe loss of Khoury House, Headquarters, and the secession of the Arab staff in Haifa will not interfere with these intentions."

2. Various Headquarters offices were to be established at Haifa Central, Traffic Control at Haifa East, CME's office at Qishon "as soon as conditions permit" and "Qishon Workshops will be kept working with such staff as are remaining."

3. Extent of Operation:

"It is expected that Lydda Depot will have to close down on the withdrawal of the British staff for evacuation during the last few days of April and that operation of the main line will be possible only as far as Hadera until the situation in the country stabilises. Ample locomotive and rolling stock will be in the Haifa area for this purpose.

Sidings and depots in the Haifa area will continue to be operated as hitherto.

The main line south of Lydda and the Tel Aviv/Jaffa, Jerusalem and Petah Tiqva Branches must be relinquished for the time being.

4. Locomotives, Carriages & Wagons.

The S.G. shed at Haifa will undertake all running repairs and will supervise carriage and wagon examinations.

Light repairs will be undertaken at the Qishon Workshops, as also will work upon the repairs of roiling stock to the extent possible with the limited staff available.

5. Stores.

As soon as the necessary staff can be assembled, store issuing will recommence. The Stores Supt. will at once initiate the reorganisation of his Branch with such staff as become available.

¹⁰⁸⁸ See Harakevet 11:24 for an outline of the story regarding secretion of locomotives at Petah Tiqva.

6. Track Maintenance.

The Acting Chief Engineer will at once initiate the recruitment of the necessary staff to continue work in the Haifa area and, if necessary, to ensure the maintenance of the line as far south as Hadera.

7. Accounts.

The Chief Accountant will initiate a working basis of accounts adequate to immediate requirements, i.e for the collection of revenue and control of expenditure. The accounts for 1947/48 will be finalised as soon as possible with the intention of avoiding the necessity to set up an Accounts Clearing Office for the railways in Cyprus.

8. Traffic.

The Supt. of the Line will make all arrangements for the continuity of traffic in the Haifa area and as far south as Hadera. He will also ensure an adequate system of documentation and the recording of traffic and collection of revenue.

9. Staff.

All the Staff reporting for duty will be allocated to the best advantage, irrespective of the Branch in which they have hitherto been employed. The staff of the Management, Staff, Accounts and Stores Branches will report at Haifa Central Station; the staff of the Engineering and Traffic Control Branches will report at Haifa East Station, and the staff of the Mechanical Branch will report at Qishon, except Running Staff who will report to Haifa S.G. Shed. Heads of Branches will at once take a census of all staff reporting, giving names, numbers and designation and will send the census lists to the Management Office at Haifa Central immediately.

10. Payment of Wages and Salaries.

All Staff will already have received a three-months' advance of wages and salaries. An attempt will be made to finalise some personnel accounts before the 15th. May, but if this proves to be impossible - because of the recent loss of Headquarters - finalisation will be undertaken in Cyprus. A procedure will be set up for the engagement and payment of temporary labour to cope with immediate requirements.

11. Fuel, Water & Power.

It is hoped that supplies will continue as heretofore.

12. Haifa Port.

The Port Manager and Acting CME will engage all necessary labour and carry on with the services. For skilled labour, such as tug crews, mechanics etc., an endeavour will be made to introduce weekly payments. Portering may be continued by Messrs. Solel Boneh on the present basis. The Engineering Branch should have sufficient labour to carry on in present emergent conditions.

13. Acting Appointments.

With the object of achieving smooth continuity of the services, the following acting appointments are designated and Heads of Branches must formulate plans accordingly so that the acting appointment will become effectively operative immediately following the evacuation of British officers who now hold the substantive posts, and the officers designated to act should be schooled accordingly:-

<u>Post.</u>	<u>Officer designated to act.</u>
General Manager.	Mr. P.C.J. Baker OBE.
Chief Engineer.	Mr. Boukstein.
Chief Mechanical Engineer.	Mr. Sacalavitch.
Supt. of Line.	Mr. Hardy.
Chief Accountant.	Mr. Beliavsky.
Stores Superintendent.	Mr. Nissenbaum.
Port Manager.	Mr. Stebbens.

The Chief Staff Officer's Branch will be reabsorbed into the General Manager's office

organisation.

Heads of Branches will report to the General Manager as early as possible the general outline of the basis of the above mentioned appointments and will also report the scope of work to be undertaken in present circumstances. The reports can be made verbally, but prompt action is needed.”

So we see a further attempt to create order and continuity - in this case through designation of British and Jewish staff to take over some of the reins of organisation.

But now the chaos was getting truly out of hand. Kirby managed a further report for the Chief Secretary (though one wonders why he bothered) on 28. April:

“A few days after my previous report we succeeded in persuading our train crews to resume work over the main line despite the fact that we could offer them no protection. It is a great tribute to their loyalty that they were willing to work in such circumstances. I was particularly anxious to get them back to work because the military train crews were bringing operations to a stop because of the high frequency of accidents and the consequent blockage of the line by derailments.

Unfortunately a few days after we had resumed full main line operation with our civil staff an ammunition train was wrecked and looted. This occurred on Saturday 17th. of April.

We immediately sent a relief train driven by a British Officer¹⁰⁸⁹ to the scene of the sabotage and succeeded in arriving there long before military reinforcements, with the result that it proved possible to rescue some of the wounded armed escort who were with the ammunition train. The following day some of the wagons of ammunition which had been derailed were successfully re-railed and brought back to Haifa, and the remaining wagons of ammunition which could not be rescued were blown up on site.

It was unfortunate that during the night following the attack on the ammunition train, the railway main telephone exchange in Headquarters was burnt out as a result of a power line falling across the cables. It was fortunate that the building was not destroyed by fire but by bringing into use all available fire extinguishers the fire was kept under control. Nevertheless the destruction of the telephone exchange effectively disrupted all communications between the various railway offices and Departments and made working conditions very difficult. I am pleased to say, however, that by Wednesday the main line was cleared of the wreckage of the ammunition train and the operation of trains from Haifa to Lydda and southwards was resumed. The main line was eventually blocked on Sunday last when Arab saboteurs wrecked a train of military stores just north of Lydda and looted the whole train. In present conditions it is impossible to repair the main line and Lydda southwards will remain cut off from Haifa until conditions in the country become more stable.

2. The curfew asked for by me towards the end of March was eventually imposed about 10 days ago. [i.e. ca. 18. April.] This was too late to be effective.

3. Looting and destruction of railway equipment and property became more widespread during the last months. At Lydda three wagons and the breakvan¹⁰⁹⁰ were detached from the train under the eyes of the Military escort and were taken away to

¹⁰⁸⁹ Robin Davies.

¹⁰⁹⁰ This is an archaic spelling which Kirby probably retained from his days on the GWR. “Brake Van” is the more normal later spelling.

Sarafand where the guns in the wagons were unloaded and taken away, presumably by Arabs. The Station staff at Rehovot were held up about 10 days ago and cash amounting to LP1,100 stolen.

4. The Military crews ceased operation on Monday the 26th. and from now onwards are interested only in moving stores within the Haifa enclave.

5. On Wednesday the 14th. I was held up by armed Jews, said to be I.Z.L., and my car stolen. During the past few weeks we have suffered severely by having to operate without effective means of transport in Haifa.

6. On the night of Monday the 19th. the Qishon Workshops were occupied by the Haganah. The Army went in the following day and took over the security from Haganah. From that time onwards the Qishon Workshops have not operated effectively because only the Jewish staff would attend and they are far too few to achieve any really useful work on the scale necessary for the general maintenance programme.

7. I have already reported the circumstances in which Khoury House was left without security and was set on fire during the struggle for possession between Arabs and Jews. Following the loss of Khoury House, events moved very suddenly and, as you will already know, the whole of the Arab population is evacuating Haifa. This has resulted in the Railways not only being deprived of their Headquarters but also of the bulk of the staff. Only a relatively small handful of Jewish staff are remaining to carry on. I enclose a copy of the Circular which I have issued in an endeavour to maintain some stability of organisation so that I may leave a working unit when the British staff is evacuated.

8. We have successfully achieved the payment of most of the railway staff of a three months' advance of salaries or wages. The only remaining difficulty is the payment of several hundreds of the Arab staff who fled to Acre during the first day of the collapse in Haifa. I hope to be able to arrange for this staff to be brought across by sea before the end of the month.

9. I directed that the British staff at Lydda and the Port Manager at Jaffa should conform to the evacuation arrangements made by the District Commissioner, Lydda, and a few days ago I agreed that they could be evacuated through Jaffa port. During the last few days, however, the situation in that Area has deteriorated and, in the absence of communications, I have been unable to obtain any information as to whether or not British staff have been evacuated.

10. **I fear that any ordinary hand-over of the railways is now impossible.** In the Lydda area I had arranged that the District Traffic Superintendent should advise all the village mukhtars of their responsibility with respect to railway property within their area. A Committee of the Senior Palestinian Officers left was formed with the object of ensuring as far as possible that the railway property should be taken care of. I fear, however, that there will be general looting once the British forces have withdrawn from the area.

It has not been possible to communicate with Jerusalem for several weeks but the District Commissioner was informed of the Railway Assets which will be left in that area. The same applies to assets in all other Districts. In Haifa most of the assets are now beyond the control of the Management. Khoury House is in possession of the Hagana, the Qishon Workshops are occupied by the Army on a care-taking basis, and the whole

of Haifa East is virtually being controlled by the Jewish forces. All records relating to assets, that is tools and plant registers, register of assets and all inventories were destroyed in the fire at Khoury House. The register containing particulars of the valuable machinery in the Qishon Workshops and at the Locomotive Depots disappeared from Haifa East during the recent battle there. The situation is, therefore, that on the one hand most of the Railway assets are no longer in our possession or, if they are, we have no records to record what is being left for a successor authority. I propose to approach the Mayor of Haifa with the suggestion that the Municipality should take over responsibility for the assets in the Haifa area.”¹⁰⁹¹

“11. It is unfortunate that the capital ledgers and other prime accounting documents which were normally kept in the fire-proof safe had been taken out the day before ready for packing into boxes for despatching to Cyprus. They were all destroyed in the fire. We, therefore, have nothing on record regarding the detailed valuation of the assets. Also all the records relating to the detail of the 1947/48 accounts were destroyed. We shall, however, endeavour to produce some form of account for the past financial year.

12. I hope to get some trains operating as far as Hadera or Benyamina today, but I fear that in present circumstances it will be almost impossible to reconstitute any stable administrative organisation before the end of the Mandate. The most that we shall be able to achieve is to assemble all the records possible for the compilation of pensions and gratuities, etc., and to complete the final payout of staff to deal with the avalanche of enquiries which are coming from people who allege that they had monies owing to them by the Railways.

Ports - Haifa Port has been severely affected by the recent events in Haifa. There is no Arab labour and no Arab clerical or shed personnel. All the Arabs have left the tugs and the launches. We are doing our best to carry on with Jewish staff and are recruiting Jewish staff to avoid a complete collapse. I am pleased to say that we are carrying on very well in the circumstances.

I have no information regarding the situation at Jaffa port because of the breakdown in communications.”

¹⁰⁹¹ Two weeks before the end of the Mandate, someone had finally come up with a scheme for a handover of some sort....

**TABLE 18: INCIDENTS & ISSUES ON PALESTINE RAILWAYS IN APRIL
1948.**
(References to 'Palestine Post').

05 - 07. April.	Jerusalem.	Supplies of Fuel Oil and Kerosene used to generate electricity in Jerusalem are at danger level. Emergency stocks being used. "Jerusalem Electricity Corporation is pressing for more supplies to be brought in from Haifa by rail, but has been told that the lines were being used for 'higher priorities' - believed to be Army supplies. A locomotive was derailed between Haifa and Lydda, and traffic has been held up between the two points for the past two days." ¹⁰⁹²
09. April.		"The Army will run the Haifa-Lydda-Rafa section of the P.R. according to reports in the Hebrew press. Arab engine drivers are reported to have refused to work for fear of attack. Arab engineers and supervisors will continue to work on the Lydda- Beit Nabala, Lydda-Jerusalem and Lydda-Sarafand lines." "The Government is inquiring into the measures taken at the southern frontier to prevent armed Arabs from entering Palestine by rail. This follows a report that a few days ago the Cairo-Haifa train brought into Palestine, apart from half a dozen or so British soldiers, a large number of heavily-armed Arabs who made no secret of their mission. When passing through predominantly Jewish parts in Southern Arabs, Egyptians and Palestinians
	Palestine... these and Syrians trained in	Egypt were seen brandishing their weapons." ¹⁰⁹³
09. April.	Lydda. Station, drove them five hours containing 120 been stolen." ¹⁰⁹⁴	15 armed Arabs broke into Lydda Railway forced all the employees into a truck and away. "When the staff returned unharmed later, it was discovered that 12 wagons tons of flour and 12 weapons had
10. April.	Battir.	"The Army escort of a Lydda-bound ammunition train killed 3 Arabs who were among 300 that attacked the train. There were no British casualties and the train arrived safely." ¹⁰⁹⁵
11. April.	Main Line.	No passenger services Haifa-Rafa today; Service will then be curtailed to Weekly - "Trains will run Haifa to Rafa on Mondays, and Rafa to Haifa on Tuesdays." ¹⁰⁹⁶
11. April.	Nesher.	Army guards shot and killed an Arab who was among a

¹⁰⁹² 8. April p.3.
¹⁰⁹³ 9. April p.3.
¹⁰⁹⁴ 11. April p.3.
¹⁰⁹⁵ 12. April p.3.
¹⁰⁹⁶ 11. April p.3.

- group of 30 trying to steal from an Army wagon.¹⁰⁹⁷
12. April.Main Line. “Passenger train service between Haifa and Rafa has been suspended until further notice. No rail connections will therefore be available for passengers between Palestine and Egypt. This notice cancels all notices recently published concerning curtailment of the passenger train service between Haifa and Rafa.”¹⁰⁹⁸
14. April. Palestine Government's ‘Difficulties’ explained to the U.N. by Mr. Fletcher Cooke. - “The carrying of supplies to Jerusalem by train was ruled out because of Arab attacks, and also because the Jerusalem railway station was in Arab control, he said.”¹⁰⁹⁹
14. April.Jerusalem. “An alert Jewish truck driver foiled an Arab attempt to introduce a bomb into Jewish Jerusalem.... His suspicions were aroused while crates of oranges were being loaded on his vehicle at the Railway Station.... When he reached a Jewish roadblock he asked the guard to call a Haganah demolition squad. A search was made of the truck, and a crate was found to contain gelignite with a detonator and timer fuse. The bomb was dismantled by Haganah sappers.”¹¹⁰⁰
14. April.Haifa. Iraqi snipers shot at Jewish employees as they were leaving the offices of the Palestine Railways. Haganah guards replied, hitting three of them. The Army also joined in with 2-pounder, firing at attackers and defenders. They hit an Arab position at 17 Prophets Stairs, caused several casualties among the Iraqis.¹¹⁰¹
15. April.Haifa. “Rolling a railway oil tanker down the track from the Grand Moulin flour mill, Jewish watchmen and workers foiled the second Arab bombing attempt in three days. The bomb in the tanker blew up at 12.15, but caused only slight damage and a few minor casualties. Just about noon, a shunting engine with 3 wagons drew up at the gate to the siding leading to the mills. One of the wagons was a tanker containing fuel oil ordered by the mills. The watchman became suspicious of the other 2 wagons and refused to let the Arab engine driver through until he had uncoupled the two trucks. He agreed to this, shunted in the oil tanker, and came back rather hurriedly. The watchmen tried to hold him in conversation and offered him some bread. He refused to stop and drove off at high speed. The Jewish guards noticed smoke coming from the tanker and raised the alarm. Workers left the

¹⁰⁹⁷ 12. April p.3.

¹⁰⁹⁸ 13. April p.4.

¹⁰⁹⁹ 14. April p.1. This issue also reported the Hadassah Hospital convoy massacre.

¹¹⁰⁰ 15. April p.1. This implies that rail supplies of food were reaching Jerusalem at this time. This incident, though rail-related, would not have appeared in any P.R. reports.

¹¹⁰¹ 15. April p.3.

- mills and other buildings while the guard and volunteers rolled the wagon back as far as they could. The bomb exploded a few minutes later.”¹¹⁰²
15. April. Yibna. 3 British soldiers were killed and 1 wounded when a party of Jews, believed to be I.Z.L. men, blew up two armoured rail cars north of Yibna. Following the explosions of four of the five mines which were planted, the attackers sprayed the cars with fire.”¹¹⁰³
16. April. Lydda. 3 wagon-loads of military stores were stolen by armed Arabs, while 4 vehicles, among them an oil tanker, have been stolen since 15. April.¹¹⁰⁴
17. April. noon. N. of Hadera. 3 British soldiers were killed, 2 wounded when I.Z.L. blew up a southbound ammunition train. “The bodies of five of the attackers were found on the scene after an exchange of fire with the troops. Soon after the explosion, the attackers surrounded one rail car, in which 18 soldiers were held. Troops from the northern sector arrived, and the attackers fled after an exchange of fire.”¹¹⁰⁵
- 12 tons of 2" mortar ammunition, 800,000 rounds of rifle ammo and a quantity of arms were stolen. A relief train that was sent out was mined and attacked with small-arms. The escort of the second train returned the fire.”¹¹⁰⁶
18. April. Rehovot. “Cashier's Till in Rehoboth station was robbed of £P1,066 by 3 armed Jews who held up the stationmaster.”¹¹⁰⁷
- 21-22. April. Haifa “Haganah forces in a 30-hour battle beginning at noon on Wednesday, crushed all resistance, occupied many major buildings, forcing thousands of Arabs to flee by the only open escape route - the sea. At noon yesterday the Arabs sued for a truce through the Army.
- Among the buildings seized by the Haganah are the telephone exchange, Salameh Building and the District Commissioner's Offices....**Palestine Railways HQ has gone up in flames.**”¹¹⁰⁸
22. April. Lydda. troops “An Arab was killed and one was wounded when
- opened fire at a party looting steel bars from a Beit Nabala to Lydda train which was standing on a siding north of Lydda Station.”¹¹⁰⁹
25. April. Lydda. “Air communication with Palestine was cut...

¹¹⁰² 16. April p.1.

¹¹⁰³ 16. April p.1.

¹¹⁰⁴ 18. April p.3.

¹¹⁰⁵ 18. April p.1.

¹¹⁰⁶ 19. April p.4. See Menachem Begin ‘The Revolt’ for an account of this attack.

¹¹⁰⁷ 19. April p.3.

¹¹⁰⁸ 23. April p.1.

¹¹⁰⁹ 23. April p.3.

when the British evacuated Lydda Airport and it was taken over by Arabs under the watch of Arab Legion troops who were stationed nearby. The action ended passenger and airmail service into and out of Palestine, and the Post Office in Jerusalem said it did not know what was to be the fate of airmail service.”

25. April.Nr. Lydda. 3 British soldiers were killed yesterday and 6 injured when a troop train was derailed at Km. 5 on Lydda-Kfar Jinnis lands. Part of the track had been removed.” ¹¹¹⁰

25. April.Main Line “The railway line from Haifa to Gaza and a strip of land 50 yards wide on each side of it has been declared a Closed Area. Only members of the Police, Army and Railways staff may enter this area. The Order does not apply to railway stations and their immediate vicinity, or level crossings, or the Gaza-Rehovot and Ramle-Haifa roads.”¹¹¹¹

26. April. Acre. Haganah attacks town.

26. April.Jaffa. I.Z.L. continue attack. “At one time I.Z.L. was reported to have captured the railway station and the Manshieh Police Station, but was forced to withdraw. The assault is taking place without the consent of the Haganah.” ¹¹¹²

26. April.Rehovot. “The first transfer of a railway station to Jews by the evacuating authorities took place here yesterday. In a letter to the Local Council here, the Railways Management wished their successors good luck. The Jewish flag now flies from the station.”¹¹¹³

28. April. King Abdullah declares war.

“Evacuation of British Civilians will be virtually complete today, when all Britons except 20 high Government employees will fly to the UK. Their flight from Lydda will be the last from that Airport under British administration. An unknown number of British Constables will remain with the High Commissioner and other remaining officials until the final evacuation. They are expected to sail from Haifa on May 16.” ¹¹¹⁴

28. April.Jaffa. “Jaffa Overrun by Jewish troops. the centre column spearheaded by mobile armour, engaged strong forces entrenched in the Railway Station.....” ¹¹¹⁵

¹¹¹⁰ 26. April p.3. N.B. There is no Km. 5 here.

¹¹¹¹ 26. April p.3. These roads ran close to the line.

¹¹¹² 27. April p.1.

¹¹¹³ 28. April p.3.

¹¹¹⁴ 28. April pp.1,3.

¹¹¹⁵ 29. April p.1.

CHAPTER 11. FINAL WITHDRAWAL PLANS: MAY 1948.

PLANNING FOR THE END.

From the surviving correspondence it is clear that Kirby - as a professional manager, railway and ports manager - as representing an old-fashioned view of loyalty to his workers and loyalty to the concept of systems integrity at a time when he was increasingly isolated. The Military authorities clearly did not take seriously his requests for help, and the political masters in Jerusalem seemed also disinclined to get too involved in the real problems which he presented to them - problems of withdrawal, of continuity, of the stability of the railway system until the last possible moment, of the need to see the railway system as a whole, a unifying whole, at a period when the country - and individual towns - were increasingly divided along ethnic lines.

The following are examples of areas of concern:

- Maintenance of lines and operations until May 15 if at all possible.
- Care of staff - during the period of troubles.
 - for the period after the withdrawal of the Palestine Government.
 - Expatriate officers and their rights to repatriation, furniture and goods, pensions.

These were difficult times and we would rather cite from the surviving original documents '*in extenso*' rather than paraphrase them, for the calm and competent style in which they were prepared - under fire, as it were - are as important as their content. For this period there are few references in the Press.

On 1. May, with two weeks to go to the final melt-down, Kirby managed to wireless-telephone another telegram to the Port Manager at Jaffa, via the police and the District Commissioner.

“Thanks for message. Have Coulman and others left? If so did he receive instructions regarding disposal cash and paysheets. When and how are you leaving and are handing over arrangements to Municipality complete? My regards and thanks to District Commissioner.”

On the same day the hapless Port Manager, who no doubt at this point spent his time dodging bullets or worse, received another message from Charlton, the Chief Accountant, also through W/T and the indefatigable Sergeant Jeffries:

“Bank account should be closed at close of business 15. May and balance transferred to Barclays Haifa for credit of Accountant General. All monies held by you to be paid in before then. Certificate of closing balance and all accounting books and documents from January 1948 and onwards to be sent to me personally at PLATRES, CYPRUS. Please acknowledge.”

One wonders at this extraordinary request - extraordinary in the circumstances prevailing at the time - and whether Charlton knew what the situation was like. The idea of walking to the bank with large amounts of cash, or posting cases filled with ledgers, on the actual day of termination itself, would hardly appeal.

At the same time it is clear that some financial arrangements did have to be made. The Manager of Barclays Bank wrote formally to Kirby on 5. May, acknowledging instructions that the P.R. account be closed as from 12. May, the balance

being transferred to the Accountant General's account.

In the meantime some Jewish P.R. staff had been laying the foundations for a new Israel Railways, and on 4. May they ran their first train, from Haifa to Hadera.¹¹¹⁶

And on 7. May, a week before the end, some statistics were reported:

"The Accountant-General's latest survey of Government finances, published in the 'Palestine Gazette', shows that receipts from local sources during the first nine months of the financial year 1947/48 aggregated LP19,927,000 while ordinary expenditure amounted to LP23,022,000 leaving a deficit of LP3,095,000.

Compared with figures for the corresponding period of the preceding fiscal period, receipts showed a rise of LP 8,588,000.

Among the items responsible for the increased expenditure are Police from LP3,866,000 to LP5,055,000, and "Temporary Services" replacing the item "War Services" of former budgets, from LP1,320,000 to LP2,016,000.

Ports and Railways.

The 1947/48 accounts of the Ports and Railways are not included in the above figures. It is revealed, however, that the year's accounts of the Palestine Railways will close with a deficit of LP 800,000, whereas a net surplus of LP 400,000 is expected from the Ports of Palestine.¹¹¹⁷

On 10. May Kirby wrote to the Mayor of Haifa:

"Confirming my recent discussion with you, I am pleased to be able to inform you that the General Officer Commanding British Troops in Palestine has raised no objection to the Railways in the Haifa area being placed in the charge of the Haifa Municipality with effect from 16. May 1948.

2. All the railway assets in the Haifa area will be left in your custody pending the establishment of a stable Government in Palestine. A statement of the railway assets in the Haifa District is attached. As I informed you during our interview, I regret that detailed inventories of the railway assets are not available because of losses incurred in the fire at Khoury House HQ and because the inventories of the tools and plant of the Qishon Workshops went astray during the fighting around Haifa East station. However, apart from Khoury House and certain losses by destruction and looting in the Haifa East area and Main Stores the railway assets in the Haifa District are substantially intact. The British Security Forces are at present in the Qishon Workshops; all other railway installations in the Haifa area are cared for by Jewish forces.

3. I enclose, in duplicate, a Memorandum which I had prepared for the United Nations Organisation. It is not as complete as I had intended because it had to be cut short after the fire at Khoury House Headquarters. Accompanying the Memorandum is a pamphlet setting out the organisation of the Palestine Railways together with a copy of the Railways Ordinances and the General Manager's Powers and also files setting out the organisation of each Branch of the Railways. The Memorandum and enclosures should be made available to any successor Government which may eventually be established in Palestine. I also enclose one copy each of the Report on the working of the Railways and Ports for the years 1942/46 and 1946/47.

¹¹¹⁶ "Carrying the blue-white flag and run by an all-Jewish crew, the first Jewish railway train was met on its arrival here by cheering crowds. The train drove from Haifa to Hadera - 40 kilometres - without incident." ('Palestine Post' 5. May p.3)

¹¹¹⁷ 'Palestine Post' 7. May p.3.

4. Copies of the handing-over notes of the Chief Engineer and the Chief Mechanical Engineer were sent to you with my letter GM/MAND/M.1 of the 8. May 1948, on the subject of Haifa port. I am sending with this letter a copy of the handing-over notes of the Stores Superintendent and Chief Staff Officer. The handing-over notes of the Superintendent of the Line and the Chief Accountant are not available because they were destroyed by the fire at Khoury House.

A list of staff at present working is also enclosed.

5. The Railways are at present being operated in the Haifa area and southwards as far as Hadera by Palestine Railway civil staff, with the assistance of Military Units who have undertaken the responsibility for operating the military traffic within the Haifa area and in the manning of signal boxes and the performance of certain maintenance and shunting services. All the Palestine Railways civil staff are, I believe, prepared to continue to work and it should, therefore, be possible to ensure continuity of the existing services by retaining the existing Palestine Railways staff and organisation. The General Officer Commanding is anxious not to interfere with the existing arrangements, provided completely satisfactory services and facilities are given for the smooth and efficient evacuation of the military stores, equipment and personnel; otherwise the G.O.C. would, perforce, have to take over the operation of the railway services.

6. I enclose a copy of my Circular No. 14/48 dated 26. April 1948 relating to the continuity of the Railway services and setting out the acting appointments which be in existence as at the 15. May. I shall be leaving Palestine on the 12. May. Mr. Baker will relinquish his appointment of Acting General Manager on the 15. of May but he informs me that he will be ready to offer you any advice that you may require, without any obligation on his part. The other acting officers mentioned in the Circular will, of course, also relinquish their appointment under the Palestine Railways Administration.

7. All tariffs relating to the services are available in the Traffic Office at Haifa East. I fear, however, that all accounting documents were destroyed and that it will be necessary for an entirely new accounting organisation to be established. In the meantime, however, it should be a relatively simple matter to account for such traffic as is likely to pass immediately following the 15th. of May.

8. I suggest that you should, as soon as possible, inform Colonel Farley, Military Movements, whose Headquarters are in Carmel Avenue, of the name of the person or persons who will be appointed by you to take charge of the railway operations in Haifa. By this means it should be possible to ensure smooth continuity in collaboration with the military with respect to the handling of their traffic and the services which they are at present rendering to the railway.

9. Finally let me express my appreciation of your having taken the charge of the railway assets in Haifa and I trust that when the time comes for you to hand over the railway assets in Haifa to a successor government, you will be able to hand over a working organisation.”

For security, copies of this letter went to the G.O.C., Mr. J. Pollock the Civil Adviser to the G.O.C., to the U.N.O. and to the Supt. of the Line. A similar letter dealt with the Port.

On 10. May he wrote ¹¹¹⁸ to W.D. Charlton, the Chief Accountant:

“You will be in charge of the Railways and Ports Section of the Palestine Government Clearing Office in Cyprus.” and followed this with a lengthy and detailed list of instructions regarding the tasks to be accomplished, comprising the completion of accounts “as far as possible” for the financial year 1947/8 and up to 15. May 1948, “rendition of satisfactory accounts of the financial affairs of the Railways and Ports to the Accountant General and the Government Auditor”, and a variety of finicky details relating to final paysheets, pensions, Provident Fund benefits, compensation claims and so forth. “The Trans-Jordan Govt. must assume responsibility for the pensions of staff who have been confirmed so that no action is necessary in such cases, and the Trans-Jordan Government must also pay the wages and salaries of the Trans-Jordan staff as from the 1. April 1948.”

Attached was a list of the staff who were allocated to the Clearing Office - arrangements had been made for them and cases of necessary papers to be shipped by the “Fouadieh”, leaving Haifa on 16. May. They included the Chief Accountant, Welfare Officer, Chief Cashier, Asst. Traffic Supt., four Office Superintendents, 6 Clerks Grade I, eight Clerks Grade II, ten Clerks Grade III, plus seven Ladies - clerks, typists and secretaries.

The Personal Files of Expatriate Officers (listed) were to be shipped to the Crown Agents (Palestine Railways Clearing Office) in London on the S.S. ‘Samaria’ on 12. May.

Kirby’s own Handing-Over Notes were sent to Baker on **10. May**. Since he himself would be leaving on the “Samaria” on 12. May, Baker was to assume the duties of Acting General Manager as from that date for all of four days.

“Arrangements have already been made for the railways and ports in Haifa to be handed over to the Municipality and I attach copies of the two letters on this subject which have been addressed to the Mayor.”

“All financial transactions of the Palestine Railways Administration were closed on 12. May and the accounts which stand in your name and the Port Manager’s are closed as from that date.”

The present scope of operation of the Railways is to serve all civil and military depots in the Haifa area and southwards as far as Hadera. This should be continued until the 15. of May. An attempt has been made to clear the line north of Lydda; if this is accomplished, you should arrange to work to Egypt the Egyptian State Railways wagons which are at present north of Lydda.”¹¹¹⁹

“At the time of handing over the Branches are in charge of the following Officers:-

General Manager’s Office.	Mr. Melzer.
Staff Office.	Mr. Lehrer.
Mechanical Branch.	Mr. Sacalovitch.
Engineering Branch.	Mr. Boukstein.
Traffic Branch.	Mr. Baker, who will hand over to Mr. Hardy.
Accounts Branch.	Mr. Charlton who will hand over to Mr. Beliafsky.
Stores Branch.	Mr. Nissenbaum.

¹¹¹⁸ Ref. GM/MAND/G.20

¹¹¹⁹ At this point this would have meant as far as Rafah.

Haifa Port.	Mr. Rogers who will hand over to Mr. Stebbens if he leaves before 15. May.
Jaffa Port.	Situation unknown.”

He also attached a further copy of his UNO Memorandum, and some Covering Notes which are also remarkably detailed and for which he had somehow found the time and energy: Those on the Railways are reproduced here:

COVERING NOTES TO NOTES FOR UNITED NATIONS ORGANISATION.

“The attached notes were prepared by me before the disastrous fire in Khoury House Headquarters on the 22. April following a fight between Arabs and Jews for possession of the building. Then followed the evacuation of the Arab population from Haifa. Railway Headquarters are now occupied by Jewish forces and are no longer available to the Palestine Railways Administration.

The Qishon Workshops were occupied by the Hagana forces on the night of the 19. April, but the British Army took over the security the following day. Since then no Arab staff have attended the Workshops for duty.

2. The fire at Khoury House resulted in the destruction of most accounting and traffic records and some of the personnel records. All the handing-over documents of the Chief Accountant and the Superintendent of the Line were lost, as also were all prime accounting and financial records, including registers of assets, capital ledgers, etc. It is, therefore, impossible at this stage to produce records of the assets comprising the Palestine Railways.¹¹²⁰

The Tools and Plant lists and inventories for the Lydda District which also had been specially brought up-to-date and re-written must be presumed to have been lost in transit because they were despatched from Lydda but never reached Haifa.

It is also impossible to check the valuable machinery and equipment in the Qishon Workshops and Locomotive Running Sheds because the Tool and Plant Lists and inventories, which had been brought up-to-date over a period of several weeks, went astray during the disturbances in Haifa. The documents were in the charge of the Chief Clerk of the Workshops, Mr. Dibsi, and it is possible that he may have taken them with him when he evacuated from Haifa. Otherwise, they must be lost. To compile the tools and plant list anew would take several weeks and, therefore, no proper handing over of the Qishon Workshops machinery is possible.

Although the records of the assets have been lost, most of the assets themselves are intact. There was some looting of a minor nature in the Workshops and some pilferage from the Main Stores, but the losses are relatively negligible. **Owing to the disturbed conditions in Haifa and the country generally, it is not possible to state the disposition of rolling stock as at the 15. May.**

3. The secession of the Arab staff in Haifa, following immediately on the loss of Khoury House, threw the whole administrative machinery out of gear. With only a few Jewish staff, no offices and without telephones and office equipment, it was impossible to re-create a working administrative machine during the last two weeks of the Mandate. Following the capitulation of the Arabs in Haifa, the time and energy of most of the

¹¹²⁰ This was why Israel Railways had to produce its own ledger of such assets.

remaining British and local staff was taken up:-

- (a) in implementing the payment of wages and salaries to the staff, involving about 6,000 employees and half a million pounds cash.
- (b) in recovering essential records from the burnt out Headquarters building, and
- (c) in the maintenance of Railway services.

These tasks were achieved despite the chaotic and hazardous conditions prevailing.

4. By mustering all possible Jewish staff, and with assistance from a Military Operating Unit, train operation was kept going without interruption in the Haifa area and as far south as Hadera. The Port of Haifa was also kept in operation without serious interruption.

5. The situation at the beginning of May was:-

Railways.

Lydda District.

The Main Line was blocked just north of Lydda Depot following the derailment of a freight train by saboteurs during the last days of April. An endeavour is being made to clear the block, but with little hope of success before the 15. May. No trains are operating south of Lydda nor on the Jerusalem, Petah Tiqva or Jaffa/Tel Aviv lines because of sabotage and political disturbances.

All villages and town authorities in the Lydda District have been advised of the railway assets within their area and a Committee of the most senior Palestinian Officers, headed by Mr. Naari Sayagh, Traffic Inspector, was left in charge at Lydda Depot when the British Officers had to leave on 25. April. The situation on the Jerusalem line is not known because it has not been possible to visit or inspect the stations for some weeks past.¹¹²¹ Station Masters were in charge at all stations, however. Because of the conditions which have prevailed during the past months, the inventories of station equipment are not available and as already stated, the inventories of the equipment at Lydda have been lost.

So far as is known the following rolling stock was in the Lydda area at the beginning of May:-

- 1 35-ton breakdown crane.
- 25 Locomotives - Main Line - Baldwin.
- 1 Locomotive - Main Line - "P" Class.
- 10 Locomotives - Main Line - L.M.S. Class.
- 4 Locomotives - Shunting.

Records of wagons and coaching stock were destroyed in the Khoury House fire and it was not possible to take a census during the conditions immediately prior to the 15. of May.

Haifa District.

The main line is being operated as far as Hadera and all military installations and industrial depots and installations of the Haifa area are being operated, as also is traffic to and from Haifa port.

The Hijaz Railway is closed.

The Standard Gauge locomotive running shed is working with Palestine Railways civil staff.

The Qishon Workshops are open but very little work is being done because only a few P.R. staff are available.

¹¹²¹ A very significant commentary on the state of security prior to the British withdrawal.

The main stores at Haifa East are functioning. The subsidiary stores at Qishon and near Haifa Central Station are intact but are at present closed.

The following locomotives are available in Haifa:-

11 Baldwin type.

12 L.M.S. type.

4 'P' Class.

9 Shunting.

The records of wagons and coaching stock are not available but an endeavour is being made to build up fresh records.

Arrangements have been made to hand over all the railway assets in the Haifa area to the Municipality. Copy of the letter addressed to the Municipality accompanies these notes and it is hoped that continuity of the railway services will prove possible."

There follow paragraphs on the Ports, making similar points.

The time to clear desks had arrived. On 11. May Charlton, the Chief Accountant, wrote to Mr. J. Beliavsky, M.B.E.:

"In view of the termination of the Mandate you will take over charge of the Accounts Branch on 14. May 1948.

2. Keys of the Cash Office and the safes therein will be handed over to you against signature. The keys of the safe deposit boxes in Barclays Bank Haifa have already been returned to the Bank.

3. You have already taken over the Ticket Printing and Stationery Office at Haifa East and also the remains of the Accounts Office at Khoury House. Included in the latter is the Powers Samas installation upon which a copy of Mr. Valk's report is attached.

Mr. Bate has handed you the key of the padlock of his desk. In the top drawer of the desk is a bunch of keys, one of which is for the safe containing all duplicate keys and particulars thereof. There are also the keys of the Phoenix safe and of various cupboards. Inside the Phoenix safe are two spare motors for the Accounting Machines (there are another two in the Cash office) and several sporting trophies - football cups etc. There is also an automatic pistol, my own personal property, which please hand over to the proper authorities. A file, recovered from Khoury House, regarding Railway safes is attached hereto.

4. Part II of the file containing Agreements and Bank Guarantees, which was also recovered from Khoury House, is being taken to Cyprus for reference purposes (this is necessary because of the loss of the P.A. ledger.) and will be returned to you as soon as possible.

5. I take this opportunity of thanking you most sincerely for your long and valuable service and with the Palestine Railways and wishing you a happy and prosperous future."

And so Kirby and some colleagues and piles of paper boarded the "Samaria" and watched Haifa and Mount Carmel slip behind them. Touching are some letters written to him when he had already left all such authority behind him, and was staying at the Byron Hall Hotel in Worthing. From a Barclays Bank on 27. May came a letter of appreciation for a letter he had written on 11. May, noting that "What you say about our people there [in Haifa] and in particular about the Manager, Mr. Stokes, is very greatly appreciated. The fact that in the middle of your difficulties you found time to write in this way is a very special tribute and one which we shall not forget." But it was typical.

Haj Hussein Nassar, Secretary of the Arab Workers Trade Union, wrote from Platres in Cyprus on 28. June 1948, seeking Kirby's intervention in resolving difficulties for those Arabs who had become refugees and who were already learning that they were receiving no help from their Arab brothers in neighbouring countries - the beginning of the "Refugee Problem":-

"I write to apologise for having to leave Haifa without saying good-bye to you, but events which rapidly and successively took place as from the 21. April precipitated my departure.

Nevertheless, I always remember the noble spirit of friendship and cooperation to the mutual benefit of employer and employee which characterised our dealings together.

Now at Platres in Cyprus we are working on the finalisation of accounts. The work progresses fairly well but there seems to be lack of sympathy with the staff now in great need of immediate help.

As you are aware many members of the staff left before drawing their advance payment. Those who were paid were subjected to abnormal circumstances calling for heavy expenses. People had to abandon their homes, leaving everything behind. They reached places of safety at great expense in the way of transport. They had no furniture, no clothing and had to buy those needs at exorbitant prices. The amount supposed to have carried the staff through some three months was almost spent in less than a month.

Every day's mail brings us sordid stories of hardship and suffering. I suggested to the people in authority here to make a further advance within the safe limits of the amounts due as gratuity or Provident Fund benefits. I pointed out that payment may be effected through British Legations at Beirut, Damascus, Amman, Jerusalem and Cairo as the case may be. Addresses for payment may be called for by announcements in the Press and on the wireless. So far no real sympathy has been shown or the red tape is taking its full course.

It is tragic that the Mandatory Authority, now assumed by the Colonial Office, should so indifferently handle so serious a matter, affecting thousands of families of civil servants with a long and loyal service record under the Mandate.

From personal enquiries here, I gather that within a week we can get addresses of most of the people and simultaneously paysheets can be made out for advance payments, say:-

Pensionable service with over 20 years' service:	LP 250.
Pensionable with 15-20 years service:	LP 150.
Provident Fund with over 20 years service:	LP 150.
Provident Fund with 10-20 years service:	LP 100.
Provident Fund with 5 - 10 years service:	LP 50.

In the meantime, the Colonial Office might forthwith obtain release of cash to effect payments. This operation, which is estimated to take about two weeks, will give immediate relief to those in desperate need of it.

The finalisation of accounts is expected to be completed by the 15. August as everybody is working hard to achieve that end. It is recalled that Government before 15. May 1948 declared repeatedly that it was its earnest intention to pay dues on or as soon after 15. May 1948 as possible. There is no excuse now to delay a further advance and to pay as accounts are finalised.

It is being spread out here and there that completed pension forms have not yet been computed pending instructions from London. If true, this is really shocking.

I am confident that you will sympathise with your old staff and will not spare any effort to bring pressure to bear on the Colonial Office with a view to moving them to

early action.

All here present to you and to your family their best regards and wishes.”

No answer is recorded, but it is clear that the workers sitting in the hot offices in Cyprus - there are no details of how they spent their time - really did feel they could rely on their old chief, who had indeed been in charge of Palestine Railways for only some five difficult years, yet in that time had achieved so much and planned so much more.

APPENDIX 1.

Un-edited Transcript of Letter from I. Nissenbaum to Mr. Arthur Kirby (later Sir Arthur), last General Manager of Palestine Railways.¹¹²²

" I. Nissenbaum,
c/o Israel Railway,
Israel,
Haifa.

Haifa. 3rd. January 1949.

Dear Mr. Kirby,

For a long time I hesitated whether to write to you or not. I have never had the chance to know you personally and I could only respect and esteem your personality by judging from the office files how clever you are. I therefore thought that you may not like the idea that one of your office clerks will address you personally.

I have however learnt from Lehrer how interested you still are in the Israel Rly. and that you have been, all the time, asking him for news from us. I feel it therefore my duty to drop to you a few lines and let you know, as far as the present conditions permit, the events. You will appreciate that there are many subjects on which I would like to write to you but I better refrain for the time being.

You may be glad to learn that the Palestine Railways did not perish, that we kept it running and that we are doing our utmost to fulfill your aim in establishing a modern railway in the Middle East. You will also be interested to hear that most of the Rly Jewish Staff have remained with us, all still on temporary conditions of service and many engaged in outdoor work instead of indoor one. Unfortunately we lack the experience and the "drive" you had but we all are doing our best.

Speaking for myself I can only now realise how short was the period of training I had under your and Mr. Norman's direction yet how much had I learnt from you both.

As I first thought I had to leave the stores which you entrusted into my hands before leaving and assist Picovitz [sic] in organising the department. I have with me Melzer, Guberman and Gotlib and the female staff of the G.M.'s and E.S.O.'s offices. We had a terrible job to try and sort the remnants of the documents, as most of those saved from Khoury's buildings and brought to Haifa Central were set on fire by the troops before departure from Palestine. On the other hand most of the rolling stock were found intact. The stores records were found to be mostly faulty and we had to stock-take all the stores before approving any issue.

One of our main difficulty is the labour costs. This destroys all calculations for economic operation and we can only hope that this will be fixed when normal conditions resume.

I hope to be able to write to you more fully on the subject in my next letter and if you will permit me, consult you about the new projects we have in mind.

Let me conclude by expressing to you my best wishes for the new year.

Yours sincerely,"

This seems an appropriate conclusion, illustrating how both Arab and Jewish employees valued his competence, his consideration and above all his passionate care for his work.

APPENDIX 2.

¹¹²² Source: Private papers of Sir Arthur Kirby, in the possession of Mrs. Christine Howlett (daughter of A.F.Kirby). Transcript: WLR. 2. April 1993. (Nissenbaum became later Mr. Isaac Nissan) (Spellings etc. as in original.)

WHAT ROLLING STOCK WAS TAKEN OVER BY ISRAEL RAILWAYS IN 1948 ?

The new railway inherited what can only be described as a mixed bunch of assets. A survey was necessary. Aubrey Milstein¹¹²³ was commissioned to do this, and has written¹¹²⁴ :

“The list quoted is only part of a complete record of ALL rolling stock, both Broad¹¹²⁵ and Narrow Gauge, which I compiled, at the behest of Moshe Paicovitch, in Feb./March 1949, when I covered the whole system by motorbike, and was thus able to reach many of those parts which others couldn’t!

As I remember, it was during one of the “cease-fire” periods, and I visited every station, and even walked the track, in some places on the Jerusalem line which had not yet been inspected by the track staff, equipped only with a notebook, pencil and rifle - and a change of underwear, when I was going to stay at a “friendly” station overnight.

It was, as I recall, a lonely, sweaty, and sometimes frightening inspection, particularly since some of the areas had not been checked by the army for mines, and I think that Moshe chose me because of my British Army Ordnance knowledge in that field. I hope the full report, which as I recall was submitted in Hebrew, may ultimately be found!”

The report has NOT been found in full; Standard Gauge stock will be explored below in Part B. In IR File 4-7021 is however a list of the Narrow-Gauge HR stock left at some points of the HR lines in the new State of Israel.

PART A. NARROW GAUGE.

The whole issue of “What Happened on the Narrow Gauge” remains a bit of a mystery - on the one hand, one hears stories that nothing ever ran again, on the other there are newsreel shots¹¹²⁶ of a Hartmann 2-8-2 leaving Haifa on a lengthy excursion train along the Jezreel, and rumours that this occurred on several occasions.¹¹²⁷

A surprise find at Kibbutz Ein Gev in the early 1980’s was of a former HR box van body with an IR symbol painted on the side. (There were actually two bodies used as huts, with their bogies and wheelsets used on the boatslip.) The implication was that someone had bothered to repaint the stock with the ownership details of the new Israel Railways. But why, when, and where? Following the demolition of the Yarmuk Bridge by the Haganah, the narrow-gauge in what became Israel became an “island” - comprising the Jezreel Valley line, the line to Acre/Akko, the disused and derelict Afule -

¹¹²³ See ‘Harakevet’ 32:19 for his personal account and memoir.

¹¹²⁴ In Correspondence with the author.

¹¹²⁵ i.e. Standard Gauge 4ft. 8½ in..

¹¹²⁶ Seen at Jerusalem Cinemathèque in 1982; further details unavailable.

¹¹²⁷ See I. Nissan Memoir: “All their plans were based on retaining and operating the Standard-Gauge system only; the idea was to rebuild the Emek line from Haifa as standard-gauge, with an exchange point to the narrow-gauge at Tzemach. They even wondered why Kirby had never thought of this! Later they ran one train from Haifa to Afule; they found that many rails in the Emek had been taken up and used as shelters, only the line as far as Afule remained in order. So a few further experimental trains were run thus far, but it was found there was no commercial need for it.”

Also Milstein noted, without being specific: “You may be aware that we did, at some period, run both a passenger and goods service to Afule, where the Stationmaster Gordon remained, for some years after the service was closed as uneconomic - it couldn’t compete with Egged.”

Sebastiye (- Nablus) - Tulkarm branch that had been reactivated during the war, and odd spurs in the Haifa area. Although rusting and derelict rails and sleepers could be found at various points, it remains unclear when the narrow gauge and mixed-gauge trackwork was lifted on, for example, the Haifa - Manshiya Junction section (nor why the narrow-gauge-only spur to the original Acre station was totally abandoned). Odd relics survived in level crossings at Gesher Paz, at Qishon Works etc. until the 1980's and even the present. Clearly the HR lines were a lower priority for the new State - but then, the same arguments about being cut off from surrounding systems could be made about the standard gauge lines as well.

The fact that these lists were made at all indicate that someone, somewhere, wanted the information - IR certainly possessed active and serviceable narrow-gauge locos, coaches and wagons at this period, admittedly mainly elderly and suffering from wartime use - but the new State could have used them had it wanted to.¹¹²⁸

The full list was published in Harakevet 47:7(k):

Hedjaz Railway Stock in Israel, 1948.

From the IR General Manager's Report for the Years 1948/49-1951-52 the following details concerning Hedjaz Railway rolling stock left in Israel following the British withdrawal have been extracted:

(1): HR Locomotives according to the last Mandatory Report of 31/3/47:

Krauss 0-6-0T's -	total 4.
La Meuse 0-10-0T's -	total 2.
La Meuse 2-6-2T's -	total 1.
Hartmann 2-8-0's -	total 4.
Hartmann 2-8-2's -	total 6.
Winterthur 2-8-0's -	total 6.
Borsig 2-8-0's -	total 2.
Krauss 2-8-0's -	total 1.
Sentinel-Cammell Railcars -	total 2.

Less Locomotives damaged between 31/3/47 and 15/5/48:

Krauss 0-6-0T -	total 1.
La Meuse 0-10-0T's -	total 2.
La Meuse 2-6-2T -	total 1.
Hartmann 2-8-0's -	total 4.
Jung 2-8-0's -	total 2. (NB: These were not listed above.)
Krauss 2-8-0 -	total 1.
Sentinel-Cammell railcars -	total 2.

Less Locomotives "missing" as of 15/5/48:

Hartmann 2-8-2's -	total 3.
--------------------	----------

Total HR Locomotives in IR stock as of 15/5/48:

Krauss 0-6-0T's -	total 3. (Nos. 10, 16, 19.)
Hartmann 2-8-2's -	total 3. (Nos. 254, 256, 265.)
Winterthur 2-8-0's -	total 6. (Nos. 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 159.)

¹¹²⁸ The only other possible explanation is that these were still considered 'Waqf' property, and a list might have been necessary either for purposes of eventual compensation or for negotiations with Syria and Jordan concerning exchange of other assets.

Borsig 2-8-0's - total 2. (Nos. 163, 164.)

[In addition there was a 15-ton steam crane - unnumbered - and a "helper" wagon - i.e. crane runner No. 1502 - included in the fourteen-strong loco stock. For some reason this list omits the SC railcars 11 & 12, although it is clear from correspondence above that these were also in Israel.]

2. HR Coaches according to last Mandatory Report of 31/3/47:

1st. Class	-	total 1.	
1st./2nd. Class	-	total 3.	
3rd. Class	-	total 23.	
3rd./Brake	-	total 1.	
Brake/Postal/Luggage	-	total 3.	
Saloon	-	total 1.	
Pay (?) coach	-	total 1.	
Ambulances	-	total 2.	
Guard's coach	-	total 1.	(This possibly Full Brake? "Van unclear. See below - No. 1726.)
<i>Pivoach</i> - Heb.			
Service Coaches	-	total 2.	<u>(Total = 38 vehicles.)</u>

Less Coaches damaged between 31/3/47 and 15/5/48:

3rd. Class	-	total 7.	
Ambulances	-	total 2.	
Service coach	-	total 1.	<u>(Total = 10 vehicles.)</u>

Less Coaches "Missing" as of 15/5/48:

1st./2nd. Class	-	total 2.	
3rd. Class	-	total 5.	
Brake/Postal/Luggage	-	total 1.	
Pay (?) Coach	-	total 1.	
Service coach	-	total 1.	<u>(Total = 10 vehicles.)</u>

Total HR Coaches in IR stock as of 15/5/48:

1st. Class	-	total 1. (No. 418).	
1st./2nd. Class	-	total 1. (No. 438).	
3rd. Class	-	total 11. (Nos. 45, 55, 57, 62, 67, 69, 70, 84, 259, 430, 435.)	
3rd. Brake	-	total 1. (No. 51).	
Brake/Postal/Luggage	-	total 2. (Nos. 618, 1763.)	
Saloon	-	total 1. (No. 437). ¹¹²⁹	
Guard's (?) Coach	-	total 1. (No. 1726.) ¹¹³⁰	
			<u>(Total = 17 vehicles.)</u>

For completeness - and using information taken from the WTT cited above:

1st. 418 was built Baume et Marpent, and had 30 seats. (*See Turret p.61 Fig 45*)

¹¹²⁹ A coach body, considered to be "King Abdullah's Saloon", is currently (2003) in use at Qishon Workshops as a synagogue for the workers. This is probably No. 437.

¹¹³⁰ Note: The 1944 PR WTT lists 1726 on p. xxiv as an "Inspector Van", but under "Goods Rolling Stock".

1st./2nd. 438 was built Roelux (for Yemen); 12 1st. & 32 2nd. Class seats.
(Tourret p. 105 Fig.65.)

Of the 3rds: 45 was B & M, with 64 seats;
55 was ex-J&J and had 47 seats,
57 was ex-J&J with 48 seats; *(See*
Tourret p. 112 Fig. 73).

62 & 67 are noted in this WTT as being Ambulance Coaches under
conversion back to 3rds. The builder is noted as B & M.; *(See Tourret p.*
117 fig. 80).

69 was Roelux (for Yemen) with 36 seats; *(See Tourret*
p.112 Fig. 74.)

70 and 84 were former J&J 3rds. with 50 seats. *(See Tourret p. 110*
Fig. 70).

259 a Baume & Marpent with 64 seats. *(See Tourret*
p.114 Fig. 77).

430 & 435 B. & M. with 68 seats. *(See Tourret p.*
115 Fig. 78.)

Brake/3rd. 51 was ex-J&J with 32 3rd.-class seats and Brake/Luggage compartment;
(See Tourret p.116, Fig.79.)

BPL's 618 & 1763 were from Ammendorf, 6 Ton capacity; *(See Tourret p. 61 Fig.*
47.)

Saloon 437 was built Baume et Marpent, and had 2 beds. *(See Tourret p.117,*
Fig.81).

We note that hardly any two of the seventeen coaches were alike! Noticeable, however, is that all the above coaches are found listed as PR stock in 1944 - i.e. no CFH coaches from Syria appear to have been included after the Yarmuk bridges were blown and effectively isolated the Haifa-Tzemach stretch from the rest of the HR system. The "missing" coaches could include those in use in PR service in Transjordan.¹¹³¹

The "Missing coaches" or those "Damaged-Written-Off" between the 1944 WTT and the 1948 list would appear to be:

1st./2nds. Nos. 48 & 81 (Roelux).
3rds. Nos. 52, 58 & 60 (J&J);
65 (B&M);
66 (B&M Ambulance);
68 (B&M Ambulance);
72 (J&J);
85 (Nürnberg);
86 (Ammendorf);
232 (B&M); 428 (B&M); 431 (B&M); 432 (B&M);
BPL No. 622 (Ammendorf).
Total = 16.

The Pay and Service coaches are hard to identify - though the WTT refers to a Brake Van (unnumbered) "under conversion in Shops". However, these 3 coaches did not make it to May 1948 and need not concern us too much. The situation regarding 3rds. and Ambulance coaches is hard to resolve, since the 1947 Report clearly reflects a very

¹¹³¹ If this is so, it raises the intriguing possibility of Israel claiming them as former "Palestine Railways" stock! TEFS reports in 1999 indicated that at least two ex-PR coaches, including 1st. No. 48 and 3rd. No. 66, were at Amman.

different situation to the 1944 WTT, and coaches were being converted back to civilian use. For the rest, the information fills the identity gaps.¹¹³²

3. HR Freight Stock according to last Mandatory Report of 31/3/47.

Low-sided Open wagons - total	97.	
High-sided Open wagons - total	42.	
Vans	- total	171.
Brake Vans	- total	2.
Cattle wagons	- total	5.
Tank wagons	- total	36.
Flat wagons	- total	23.
Ballast wagon	- total	1.
Tare wagon	- total	1.
		<u>(Total = 378 vehicles.)</u>

Less freight stock damaged between 31/3/47 and 15/5/48:

Low-sided Open wagon - total	1.	
Vans	- total	5.
Brake Vans	- total	2.
Tank wagons	- total	1.
Ballast wagon	- total	1.
		<u>(Total = 10 vehicles.)</u>

Less Freight Stock "missing" as of 15/5/48.

Low-sided Open wagons - total	27.	
High-sided Open wagons - total	16.	
Vans	- total	85.
Cattle wagons	- total	3.
Tank wagons	- total	22.
Flat wagons	- total	8.
		<u>(Total = 161 vehicles.)</u>

Total HR freight stock in IR stock as of 15/5/48:

Low-Sided wagons: total 69. (Nos.	
1501, 1505, 1509, 1510, 1512, 1514, 1519, 1521, 1524, 1532,	
1534, 1539, 1544, 1546, 1548, 1551, 1552,	
2404, 2405, 2407, 2408, 2410, 2414, 2418, 2421, 2424, 2426, 2429, 2433,	
2444, 2445, 2455, 2473, 2478, 2480, 2481, 2482, 2483, 2484, 2486, 2489,	
2531, 2549, 2561, 2564, 2565, 2583, 2587, 2590, 2592, 2593, 2594,	
2612, 2614, 2616, 2618, 2620, 2811, 2812, 2847, 2848, 2857, 2861, 2914,	
2975,	
3000, 3005, 3015, 3646.)	
High-Sided wagons: Total 26. (Nos.	
1556, 1600, 1605, 1606, 1608, 1613, 1614, 1619, 1626,	
2449, 2461, 2477, 2516, 2611, 2622, 2624, 2650, 2863, 2873, 2948, 2994,	
3014, 3205, 3218, 3633, 3635.)	
Vans: Total 81. (Nos.	
801, 810, 812, 817, 818, 820, 834, 843, 851, 855, 858, 864, 871, 873,	
885, 890, 892, 920, 932, 933, 945, 948, 979,	
1006, 1204, 1208, 1231, 1248, 1262, 1266, 1267, 1271, 1277, 1278, 1283,	
1288, 1291, 1322, 1393, 1399, 1416, 1700, 1702, 1703, 1706, 1710,	

¹¹³² Incidentally, the current stock of the HJR at Amman in 1999 included 48, 66, 81, 221, 231, 432; in Syria the CFH has 231, 234, (See Harakevet 38:8).

1711, 1712, 1713, 1720, 1723, 1727, 1734, 1735, 1739, 1740, 1744, 1747,
 1749, 1755, 1760, 1761, 1767, 1768, 1769, 1771, 1774, 1775, 1776, 1781,
 1784, 1785, 1786, 1787, 1789, 1794, 1795, 3249, 5004, 5007.)

Cattle wagons: Total 2. (Nos. 751, 1777).

Tank wagons: Total 13. (Nos. 1511, 1516, 1523, 1553, 2411, 2427, 2507, 2552,
 2810, 2842, 2918, 2946, 3252.)

Flat wagons: Total 15. (Nos. 1506, 1552, 2569, 2573, 2702, 2703, 2704, 2705, 2706,
 2919, 2926, 2934, 2947, 5002, 5102.)

Tare wagon: Total 1. (No. 605.)

(Total = 207 vehicles.)

Here are comments on some vehicles standing around - comments made first in
 February 1949 by Aubrey Milstein, and some made three years later.

<u>Wagon</u>	<u>As per Milstein Report (10.2.1949).</u>	<u>As at 29.6.1952.</u>
BB 1235	Damaged by shellfire.	Vacuum cylinder missing.
BB 942	Damaged by shellfire.	Parts stolen.
BB 1399	Satisfactory.	Parts stolen.
BB 1771	Slightly damaged by shellfire.	Parts stolen.
BB 1723	Slightly damaged by shellfire.	Parts stolen.
BB 948	Slightly damaged by shellfire.	Parts stolen.
BB 1706	Good condition.	Parts stolen.
BB 1267	Good condition.	In use as wood store.
BB 930	Slightly damaged by shellfire.	Parts stolen.
BB 851	Good condition.	Parts stolen.
HSB 1266	Good condition.	Good condition.
BB 3205	Good condition.	Good condition.
CFH 1208	Good condition.	Parts stolen.
1061	Good condition.	Parts stolen.
BB 1210	Damaged by shellfire.	No change.
BB 1626	Good condition.	Parts stolen.
BB 1619	Good condition.	Good condition.
BB 1600	Good condition.	Parts stolen.
BB 1297	Damaged by shellfire.	No change.
LB 2407	Good condition.	Good condition.
LB 2020	Good condition.	Good condition.
LB 2444	Good condition.	Good condition.
LB 3646	Good condition.	Side door missing.
Brake Van No. 1	Badly damaged by shellfire.	Frames only.
Brake Van No. 21	Badly damaged by shellfire.	Frames only.
SRc 3060	3 tanks on 15-ton bogie wagon frame.	Tanks stolen.
Mc 3031.	Tank wagon, frames only, tanks stolen.	Bogies also missing.
Tender, loco 130	Slightly damaged.	No change.
SRH 2851	25-ton tank wagon, good condition.	Tanks stolen.
Tender, loco 127	Slightly damaged.	No change.
BB 1731	Damaged by shellfire.	No change.
HRP 1525	Tank wagon, frames only, tanks stolen.	No change.
2032	? (nothing recorded).	Appears in good condition.
Loco 264	? (nothing recorded).	Nearly all non-ferrous fittings stolen.

At Arlozorov Halt.

CFH 4101

Mazout tank wagon.

Appears complete.

Hartmann 2-8-2 264 is described in the file as a 2-8-0. Probably an error. It was also noted that the Samakh turntable was in good condition.

Paul Cotterell noted: "The apparently haphazard listing of vehicles will be remarked. This probably reflected their location on site, with no attempt being made to list them in numerical order. If this was the case then the inspection was probably begun at the west end of the station, working east towards the engine shed. A search through the whole file failed to turn up any information what became of Hartmann 264. The above list may be compared with other fairly detailed information on HR stock in Israel as set out in Harakevet 47:7:(k). There is much to ponder."

There is indeed. Locos 127 and 130 were Jung 2-8-0's of 1907, listed by Tourret in "Hedjaz Railway" p. 179 as "boiler only" in 1979, and "withdrawn by /44" respectively, and both allocated to Syria. Presumably the tenders were in use as water-carriers. Cotterell notes that "Those wagons shown here as having "parts stolen" by 1952 were mostly missing planks and piping. This supply of rusting and seemingly-abandoned equipment must have been a Godsend to various local farmers seeking a water- or oil tank, some tubing, and so forth. It is hardly surprising that bits were removed for further use."

LB's are perhaps low-sided wagons, BB are bogie vans. One wonders if the fact that Milstein did not record a 2-8-2 loco and wagon in 1949 means that these made their way to Samach/Tzemach later? Or were they just hidden behind a shed or in undergrowth somewhere..... The end of June is hardly a pleasant time to wander around a place like Tzemach with a pencil and pad (we write from experience!) and so no-one could be blamed for failing to identify every missing item. But the numbers given here do NOT tally well with the list in 'Harakevet' issue 47. For example:

There are 19 "BB" types - including 1208 allocated to CFH. Of these: 851, 948, 1208, 1266, 1267, 1399, 1706, 1723, 1771 do appear in the list in issue 47 of items taken into IR stock, whereas 930, 942, 1210, 1235, 1297, 1731 do not appear. They are therefore presumably among those "damaged" in this period, though here there are six "damaged by shellfire" whereas in 47:7:(k) only five fall into this category. (1210 was also CFH in 1944).

BB's 1600, 1619, 1626, 3205 appear in 47:7:(k) as High-Sided Opens rather than as Vans.

LB's 2407, 2444, 3646 are in the 47:7:(k) list, 2020 is not.

1061 (no prefix) was in good condition, but does not appear in the official list. The two Brake Vans are mentioned in 47:7:(k) as having been "damaged between 31/3/47 and 15/5/48". In the May 1944 WTT No. 3 (p. xxiv) only one Brake Van is mentioned, unnumbered, with a note "1 under conversion in shops". So these were rather late conversions - it is not clear from which vehicles they were converted, nor what form this conversion took.

A few further deductions can be made from this comparison between the WTT of 5/44 and the list of 1949-51:

In 1944, "Animal trucks" included 702, 751, 752, 1706 & 1777. Of these, 702, 752 and 1706 must be the three "Cattle Wagons" listed in 'Harakevet' 47:7:(k) that did not survive.

CFH 4101 is actually listed (p. xxiii) as a Water Tank wagon, not for Mazout.

SRH 2851 is also listed as a CFH vehicle, an oil tank.

None of the DHP vehicles passed in 1944 for running over PR appear, but a few CFH ones do; no passenger rolling stock was left behind at Samakh.

PART B. STANDARD GAUGE.

As for the **Standard Gauge**, here the situation is complicated in that the only comprehensive source appears to be the 1948 Financial Report, which needs to be set for comparison purposes against Cotterell Tables 2 ('Standard Gauge locos of the Palestine Military Railway', p.127-129), 3 ('Standard Gauge Locomotives built for Palestine Railways', p.130), 4 ('Standard Gauge War Department Locomotives', p.131-134) and Appendix B Table 1 'Passenger Coaches'. (p.138.). Cotterell does not list the wagon stock in similar depth.

The 1948 Report takes the Wickham Valuation as its base line, and then adds or subtracts items, and their presumed financial value, accordingly. We have simplified and realigned the data, and omitted some of the financial costings for our purposes.

Subhead No. 15: Locomotives.

"This subhead of capital expenditure is one of the few that is reasonably supported by detail.

Wickham Valuation: Locomotives & Cranes: LP 883,976.

<u>Rejections:</u>	1. Manning Wardle 0-6-0T w/d 1928,	total	£P
	810.		
	2. German 0-6-0T w/d 1928.		total
£P	489.		
	3. 29 0-6-0 LSW. 22 w/d 1928, 7 w/d 1937.		
£P	11,387.		
	4. 10 Tender locos 4-6-0 Baldwin. 5 w/d 1942, 2 w/d 1948.		£P
	66,026.		
	5. Sentinel Cammel shunter*. w/d 1948.		
(£P	3,379, 1928).		
	6. LMS - loco missing at 15/5/1948:		£P 10,464.
		<u>Total:</u>	£P 92,518.
			Less <u>Depreciation</u> at
3% =	£P266,200.		

Book Value at 15th. May

1948: £P 525,258.

The LMS loco missing was presumably that stranded at Tulkarm station. It is not clear which Baldwins were withdrawn. The five withdrawn after accidents in 1942, at a time of loco shortage, are known, but not the others, nor the reasons

(presumably sabotage?).

Wartime etc:

Purchase 1946/7 of (2 x) USA tank locos:	£P 14,663.
Purchase from WD of 24 x LMS locos:	£P 251,150.
Purchase from WD of 1 x 36T Breakdown Crane.	£P 8,000.
1941/2: Purchase of two new boilers for 5T steam travelling cranes.	£P 284.

(i.e. total of £P274,097).

(26 new locos bought from WD).

From this we can deduce that the loco stock inherited by IR will have included:

- 6 K-Class Kitson 2-8-4T. Nos. 1-6.
- 6 H2 4-6-2T rebuilt by Armstrong Whitworth from Baldwin 4-6-0's. Nos. 7 - 12.
- 5 H3 4-6-4T rebuilt at Qishon from Baldwin 4-6-0's. Nos. 13-17.
- 6 P-Class 4-6-0. built North British Loco Co., 1935. Nos. 60-65.
- 29 Baldwin 4-6-0's. (orig. 50, minus ten withdrawn, and 6 rebuilt to H2 4-6-2T in 1926, 5 rebuilt to H3 4-6-4T in 1937). Number range 871-920.
- 11 N-Class 0-6-0T, built Nasmyth-Wilson 1934-38, Nos. 40-50.
- 23 LMS-Type "8F" Stanier 2-8-0, built or requisitioned for WD, several builders, built 1936 - 1942, and purchased post-war. These kept their WD numbers allocated in 1944; known to have been purchased are:
70305; 70308; 70335; 70336; 70369; 70374; 70388; 70391; 70397; 70400; 70410;
70412; 70414; 70503; 70510; 70513; 70515; 70521; 70541; 70572; 70586; 70596;
70605. [70372, purchased by PR, remained stranded at Tulkarm station in
Jordanian-held territory until 1967 and never entered IR service.]
- 2 USATC 0-6-0T built for WD & purchased post-war. Built Davenport,
purchased by PR 1946, WD Nos. 71287 & 71298, PR Nos. 20, 21.

i.e. IR inherited a total of 88 steam locomotives; no railcars, no diesels.

Subhead No. 16: Sentinel-Cammel Cars.

Cost : £P 10,963 in 1928.

[These had been reduced to coaching units by 1945.]

Subhead No. 17: Inspection Cars and Trolleys.

Rejections: include

three railcars of 1936/7 - "scrap and awaits write-off":	£P 3,807.
12 Ford chassis for Patrol Trolleys - scrap and write off 1936/7:	£P 3,632.
12 Ford Motors ex. WD Egypt for Patrol Trolleys - scrap and w/o.1937/8:	£P 911.
12 Ford Chassis for Rail trolleys - scrap and write-off 1937/8:	£P 3,745.
1 Wickham Gang Trolley. Missing & Write-off 1945/6:	£P 336.

Purchase: 1947/8: 1 Jap & Wickham Gang Trolley, £P 336.

2 Wickham Gang Trolleys. £P 653.

It is not known how many such trollies had ever been purchased or locally built/converted, nor which were classified as PR stock and which as military (e.g. converted scout cars on rail wheels.)

Subhead No. 18: Coaches.

The analysis of capital expenditure under this sub-head has been found reasonably reliable as details of the expenditure in the Wickham Valuation and the Loan Schedule are available.

It is necessary to point out that of the original expenditure in the years 1920-1922 (i.e. £P 238,391) only £P 18,571 has been spent in renewals over a period of approx. 28 years. This clearly indicates that a very high percentage of the coaches now in possession of the Israel Railways are practically life-expired and will require early replacement if economical maintenance is to be attained.

Rejections : Coaches Written-Off.

Midland Saloon 99 written-off 1942/3.

Midland 1st. No.105 w/o 1938/9.

101 w/o 1946/7.

Midland 2nd. w/o 305 w/o 1938/9,

307 w/o 1946/7.

Midland 3rds. 301 w/o 1946/7.

302 w/o 1946/7.

303 w/o 1946/7.

304 w/o 1946/7.

5 LSWR Ambulance Coaches:

315 w/o 1936/7.

317 w/o 1936/7.

311 w/o 1938/9.

79 w/o 1942/3.

309 w/o 1946/7.

LSW BPL 556 w/o 1938/9.

Birmingham 2nd. 128 w/o 1942/3.

129 w/o 1947/8.

Metro. 1st/3rds.400 w/o 1946/7.

403 w/o 1947/8.

Birmingham 3rd.327 w/o 1947/8.

Metro Brake/3rd. 502 w/o 1946/7.

505 w/o 1946/7.

ESR Service Coaches 42 w/o 1934/5.

91 w/o 1946/7.

90 w/o 1947/8.

Clayton 3rd.330 w/o 1947/8.

333 w/o 1947/8.

Perishable Vans 563 w/o 1941/2.

566 w/o 1946/7.

Gloucester 3rd.341 w/o 1947/8.

(i.e. 30 coaches were written off during PR period: incl. 1 in 1941/2, 3 in 1942/3, 12 in 1946/7, 7 in 1947/8.)

“Book Value of Coaches as at 15th. May 1948: £P 74,6569.”

Those left, according to deductions from Cotterell's list, will have included:

LSWR Pay Coach 77;

Midland Rly. Saloon 95;

BRCW Saloons 97, 98.

Midland Rly. 1st. 100, 103.

1st./2nd./Brake 102, 103,

1st./Brake 104.

BRCW 1sts. 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127. (Series 120-129 built 1921-22).

Metro RCW. 2nds. 220, 221, 222, 223, 225. (Series 220-225 built 1922).

Midland Rly. 3rds. 300. 306. 308. (Series 300-308).

LSWR. 3rds. 310, 312, 313, 314, 318. (Series 309-315, 317-318).

LSWR Brake/3rd. 316.

BRCW. 3rds. 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 328. (Series 320-328. built 1922).

Clayton 3rds. 329, 331, 332, 334. (Series 329-334, built 1927).

Gloucester RC&W. 3rds. 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 342. (Series 335-342, built 1936).

Cammell-Laird. 3rds. 343, 344, 345, 346. (Series 344-346. built 1923.)

Metro RCW. 1st./2nd. 401, 402. (Series 400-403, built 1922)

Metro RCW. 3rd./Brake. 500, 501, 503, 504 (Series 500-505, built 1921-22, or reb. 1935/6.)

In addition the remains of several 'odd' coaches such as Wagons-Lits restaurant or dining cars are known to have mouldered at Qishon Works for a while, but it is doubtful if they ever entered service.

This meant a total of 61 'operational' coaches of various types, four of which could better be described as "special" vehicles for service purposes; 16 pre-dated World War 1, most of the rest were around 23 years old. There was little standardisation, and many vehicles had been repeatedly damaged and rebuilt.

Wickham Valuation: Coaches: £P 14,315. Made up of:

1 Midland Saloon £P 660.

6 Midland 1sts. £P 4,402.

4 Midland 2nds. £P 2,544.

5 Midland 3rds. £P 2,935.

10 LSWR Ambulance Coaches £P 2,904.

2 LSWR BPL's £P 870.

Total: £P 14,315. (i.e. PR had started life in 1920 with 28 coaches, all second-hand and adapted for military use.)

Bought 1921/22/23, from Loan Schedule: Total £P 224,076. Made up of:

10 Birmingham 1sts. £P 66,260.

4 Metro 1st/2nds. £P 23,504.

9 Birmingham 3rds. £P 39,609.

6 Metro Brake/3rds. £P 24,365.

2 Birmingham Saloons £P 15,776.

3 Metro BPL's £P 11,253.

4 ESR Service Coaches £P 2,052.

6 Metro 2nds. £P 32,652. (i.e. PR had purchased 44

coaches by 1923.)

Debit items: No details: £P 8,605."

"Total: £P 224,076.

<u>Details of Capital Expenditure from Revenue: Total £P 53,909. (made up of:)</u>	
1926/7: Purchase of 6 new Clayton 3rds	£P 23,315.
1927 : Purchase of 2 bogies for Passenger stock 703.	£P
1927 : Purchase of 6 Perishable & 2 Refrigerator Vans:	£P 12,526.
1929 : Conversion of Saloon.	£P 1,542.
1931 : Modification of 3 BPL's for Mails.	£P 72.
1932/3: Conversion of Midland 1st. 104. (To Composite ?)	£P 89.
1933/4: Conversion of Midland 1sts. 101, 102, 105 to 1st/2nd. Composites:	£P 60.
1935/6: Electric lighting in s.g. coaches and ditto in 1936/7:	£P 183, £P 2,272.
(or 2172 ?)	
1936/7: Purchase of 2 new Parcels Vans:	£P 1,973.
1936/7: Purchase of 6 new Gloucester 3rds.	£P 21,839.
1937/8: Conversion of coaches 102 & 104 to Buffet Cars. (Note: this was the 2nd. conversion in 6 years.)	£P 42.
1945/6: Unexplained Credit of (Plus a few minor items, to make up the total.)	£P 12,613.

(i.e. PR then purchased a further 12 coaches, 10 Vans, and rebuilt 7 coaches & 3 Parcels/Mail vans under this heading.)

“Details of Capital Expenditure from Renewals Fund - Mechanical.

1936/7 & 1937/8: Part cost of Rebuilding Coaches 123-129.	£P 1,282.
1937/40: Rebuilding 123, 126, (Same or second rebuilding of same stock ?)	£P 3,901.
1937/38: Renewal of 2 Gloucester s.g. coaches:	£P 7,293.
1943/4 & 1944/5: Bogie Service Coach No. 95, total:	£P 6,095.
<u>Total::</u>	£P18,571.”

(i.e. 2 coaches purchased as replacements, & 7 coaches rebuilt.)

“Note: The numbers of Perishable and Refrigerator Vans is allowed for in the Goods Stock Summary; the cost of this stock is temporarily accommodated in the Coaching Stock Summary.”

<u>Coaches: Mandatory Capital Value at 29th. Feb. 1948:</u>	£P 310,871.
<u>Less - Rejections by IR:</u>	£P 63,351.
=	£P
247,540.	
<u>Less: Depreciation at 3% p.</u>	£P 172,871.
<u>Total Book Value to IR at 15th. May 1948:</u>	£P 74,669.”

The coaches are seen to have come in three main phases:

a). What was taken over from the military in 1920. (28 vehicles, all second-hand).

b). What was bought in the first flush of optimistic planning, from the “Loan funds”.

(44 coaches, mostly new.)

c). What was later purchased as the system settled down. (12+2 coaches, 10 Perishables Vans, various vehicles rebuilt to suit traffic requirements.)

Subhead No. 19: Wagons.

“General Comments: Details of the original expenditure under this subhead are available as shown.....

It is of considerable importance to the Israel Government to note that in addition to the 2,264 Mandatory wagons in possession of the IR at the 15th. May 1948, there is [*sic*] also approximately 250 wagons, the property of Foreign Railways and the British War Department, which were in Israel at the time of the evacuation, but have not been included in the supporting schedules.

It is essential to definitely ascertain whether or not it is necessary to maintain a fleet of wagons with a capacity tonnage of 38,000 tons to meet the actual tonnage which the IR is required to convey during the busiest periods.

If, however, it is found necessary to maintain this high figure of capacity tonnage, then the question of replacements of many of the older type of wagons, especially covered wagons, must be considered at an early date.”

<u>Wagons: Mandatory Capital Value as at 29th. Feb. 1948:</u>	£P 1,000,667.
<u>Less: Rejections by IR</u>	£P
174,507.	
=	£P 826,160.
<u>Less: Depreciation at 3% p.a.</u>	= £P 225,921.
<u>Book Value to IR at 15th. May 1948:</u>	£P 600,239.

Rejections Include:

Original Value (Wickham) of 1048 wagons written-off or missing (from 1920 stock).
£P 71,788.

Loan Schedule: Original value of 27 wagons w/o or missing (bought 1921-3).£P 14,346.

Original value of 157 Wagons w/o or missing 1934-38, under Abstract F. £P 39,555.
and 1st. April 1947 to 28th. Feb. 1948: £P 44,032.

Total: £P 74,987.

From Renewals: 39 Wagons w/o or missing:

£P 877 in 1941/2.

£P 9,658 in 1944/5.

£P 3,251 in 1946/7.

Total: £P 13,786.

Total: £P 174, 507.

Less Depreciation: £P 225,921.
Book Value at 15th. May 1948: £P 600,239.

Wagons: Wickham Valuation of 1920: £P 157,066.

1002 x WD 10T Open Wagons:	£P 62,316.
47 x 10T Cambrian Open Wagons:	£P
2,338.	
224 x GWR 10T Open Wagons	£P 21,592.
120 x WD 10T wooden Covered Wagons	£P 7,762.
58 x WD 12T wooden Covered Wagons	£P 4,329.
250 x WD 12T steel Covered vans	£P 43,534.
46 x GCR Brake Vans:	£P 5,722.

48 x WD Bolster Wagons:	£P	2,985.
14 x WD Water Tank Wagons :	£P	856.
80 x Ballast Wagons :	£P	
3,582.		
2 x Crane Runners :	£P	
80.		
10 x 15T WD wood Covered Repairs Vans	£P	1,990.
<u>Total:</u>	£P	157,066.

(i.e. PR began life in 1920 with 1,273 Open Wagons, 428 Covered Vans, 48 Bolsters & 142 Non-Revenue/Service Vehicles. Total: 1,891 Goods Vehicles.)

Wagons: Capital Expenditure from Loan Schedule. £P 125,124. 1921/3:

2 x Gas Holders (ESR).	£P	2,896.
2 x Disinfector Steel Box Vans (ESR)	£P	
500.		
200 x 12T Steel Vans:	£P	108,585.
17 x 15T Flats (ESR	£P	1,447.
4 x 30T bogie Flats	£P	
4,457.		
4 x 30T bogie Tank Wagons:	£P	4,740.
Debit Items (no details).	(£P	2,449).
<u>Total:</u>	£P	125,124.

(i.e. 229 Vehicles were initially purchased. Combined total of 2,320 Vehicles by 1923.)

Wagons: Capital Expenditure from Revenue: £P 518,238.

1930. 3 x Tanks.	£P	1,208.
1928/9. 6 x S.G. Water Tanks (@179).	£P	1,075
1931. 1 x Benzine and 5 x Kerosene Tanks.	£P	1,066.
1931. 10 x Kerosene Tanks. (@149).	£P	1,492.
(1931: Fitting of Baldwin tenders for oil:	£P	156.)
1932/3. 6 x Benzine Tanks. (@122).	£P	734
1932/3. 100 wagons fitted with through pipes.		
25 wagons fitted with Vacuum Brakes.		
1931-3. For fitting new ventilators to box wagons for Citrus.	£P	1,081
1934/5: 3 x 30T oil tank wagons. (@976).	£P	2,929.
1934/5. Purchase of additional goods wagons, wood.	£P	33,034.

(No indication of number!)

1934/5. Purchase of 4 x 30T Flats. (@581	£P	2,325.)
1934-5. Hire of Shell tank wagons.	£P	505.
1934/5. Purchase of 6 x Benzine Tanks. (@145).	£P	869
1935/6. Purchase of 7 x S.G. oil tanks. (@145).	£P	1,015
1935/6. Purchase of 6 x 30T Flats.	£P	3,519.
1938/9. Purchase of 90 new s.g. wagons, wood. (@ 374)	£P	
33,660.		
1938/9. Conversion of box wagons to refrigerator vans. (How many?)	£P	

323.		
1938/9. Purchase of 25 Timber Flats.	£P	7,608.
1938/9 & 1940/41: Purchase of 125 covered wooden vans.	£P	46,761.
1938/9. Purchase of 11 x Oil Tanks.	£P	1,487.
1938/9. Reconversion of 50 x 10T Flats to Open Wagons.	£P	1,147.
1938/9. Construction of 3 x Armoured Wagons.	£P	168.
1938/9. Conversion of 50 Open Wagons to Cattle Wagons.	£P	2,216.
1940/1. Purchase of 75 x 12T covered Vans (wood).£P 31,036.		
		plus in 1941/2, £P 413

total	£P	31,499.	
1940/1. Purchase of 1 x 30T Tank Wagon	£P	1,068.	
1942/3. Conversion of 4 x Box Vans to Refrigerator Vans,	£P	1,081.	
1943/4. Conversion of 12 x Box Vans to Brake Vans.	£P	2,475.*	
1945/6. Construction of 6 x Travelling Tanks for conveyance of Oil.	£P	2,921,	
plus £P1,005 in 1946/7, and £P 439 in 1947/8,		<u>total</u> :	£P
4,365.			
1945/6. Unexplained Debit:	£P	11,853.	
1947/8. Purchase of 47 x 14T WD Tank Wagons.	£P	18,000.	
1947/8. Purchase of 13 x 40T Low-Sided Wagons.	£P	9,308.	
1947/8. Purchase of 200 x 20T High-Sided Wagons.	£P	100,000.	
1947/8. Purchase of 10 x SR-type Brake Vans.	£P	5,785.	
1947/8. Purchase of 150 x 20T Box Vans.	£P	100,000.	
1947/8. Purchase of 117 x 40T Box Vans.	£P	70,000.	
1947/8. Purchase of 7 x WD Refrigerator Vans	£P	9,500.	

* (A sign of desperation in wartime traffic conditions!)

(i.e. in the 1930's and until 1945, another 364 plus an unspecified number of vehicles were bought; following the war, a further 544 ex-WD wagons were bought.)

i.e. Expenditure on Wagons:

In 1940/1 a total of	£P	1,075,	
In 1941/2 a total of	£P	2,475,	
In 1942/3 a total of			NIL.
In 1943/4 a total of	£P	17. (!)	
In 1944/5 a total of			NIL.
In 1945/6 a total of	£P	14,774.	
In 1946/7 a total of	£P	1,005,	
In 1947/8 a total of	£P	313,032 (!!!)	

Details of Capital Expenditure from Renewals Fund: Wagons: £P 200,239.

1932/3. Purchase of 4 x Water Tanks.	£P	540.
1933/4: Purchase of 5 x Water Tanks.	£P	592.
1933/4: Purchase of 3 x Oil Tanks.	£P	422.
1934/5: Purchase of 5 x Water Tanks.	£P	751.
1934/5: Purchase of 2 x Oil Tanks.	£P	272.
1935/6: Purchase of 5 x Water Tanks.	£P	623.
1937/8: Purchase of 5 x Water Tanks.	£P	333.
	plus others	£P

833.

plus 4 x Tanks. £P

450.

1938/39: Purchase of 5 x Water Tanks.	£P	842.
1939/40: Purchase of 5 x Water Tanks.	£P	793.
1940/41: Purchase of 19 x 10/12T GWR LSB Open Wagons.	£P	1,772.
Plus in 1944/5:	£P	1,557.
	<u>Total:</u>	£P

3,329.

1944/5. Purchase of 217 x 13T WD Open Wagons:	£P	72,261.
1946/7: Purchase of 113 x 35/40T USA Covered Vans:	£P	74,563.
1946/7: Purchase of 52 x 35/40T USA bogie Tank Wagons.	£P	31,771.
1946/7: Purchase of 18 x USA Brake Vans.	£P	12,995.
	<u>Total</u>	£P200,239.

(of which £P 119,329 in 1946/7, and £P 72,261 in

1944/5.)

Wagons Rejected: Written-off or Missing.

From Wickham 1920:

675 x 10T WD Open.
 36 x 10T (Cambrian) Open.
 49 x 10T (GWR) Open.
 76 x 10T (WD) Vans.
 43 x 12T (WD) wooden Vans.
 36 x 12T (WD) steel Vans.
 30 x GCR Brake Vans.
 22 units WD Bolster wagons. (*These would normally
 operate in pairs*)
 12 x 10T Water Tank Wagon.
 67 x 10T Ballast wagons.
 2 x Crane Tenders. (= 1,048 of the 1,891
 vehicles of 1920.)

From Loan 1921/3.

2 x Gas Holder wagons.
 1 x ESR Disinfector Van (steel).
 20 x 12 Covered Vans (steel).
 4 x 15T Covered Vans. (= 26 of the 229 vehicles
 bought 1921-3.)

1934/5: 21 x 12T wooden Vans.
 1935/6: 1 x 30T bogie Flat.
 1 x 30T bogie Tank Wagon.
 18 x 12T wood Vans.
 1936/7. 23 x 12T wood Vans.
 1937/8. 16 x 12T wood Vans.
 1947/8: 2 x 14/18T Oil Tank Wagons.
 24 x 20T high-sided Open Wagons.
 11 x 20T Vans.
 40 x 35T Covered Vans.
 5 x 10/12T GWR ex-LSB Open Wagons.
 29 x 13T WD Open Wagons.
 4 x 35T USA Covered Vans.
 1 x 35/40T USA Tank Wagons. (= 196 wagons bought

1930's-40's.)

(i.e. Total wagons written-off during existence of PR: $1,048 + 26 + 196 = 1,270$.)

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APPENDIX 3.

THE HISTORY OF KHOURY HOUSE AS P.R. HEADQUARTERS.

(a). One of the steps taken to improve efficiency was the acquisition of a new Railway Headquarters building, situated at some distance from the railway itself. From papers deposited in Ginzach HaMedinah it is clear that this process had actually commenced earlier. On 14. June 1940 Webb wrote¹¹³³ to the Chief Secretary that he had received a written petition from 85 members of the clerical staff then working at Haifa East Station - including the offices of the General Manager, Superintendent of the Line, Chief Accountant, Chief Engineer and Running Superintendent. It read:

“In view of the noisy, dusty, unhealthy and highly vulnerable situation of the railway headquarter offices we should be grateful if immediate arrangements may be made to move them into another part of the town.

To relieve the Exchequer we undertake to contribute by monthly deductions from our salaries half or, if it is considered desirable, the full rent of the leased accommodation.”

This remarkable petition - other members of staff, it was noted, were unable to sign but agreed with its sentiments - indicates two causes for dissatisfaction - the physical environment in a busy part of town¹¹³⁴, and the physical vulnerability in a time of war.¹¹³⁵

Webb felt it would be inappropriate to accept the financial sacrifice on the part of the staff, but did urge that “the present offices (which also contain valuable records) should be evacuated” and sought permission to “obtain other temporary and less dangerously situated accommodation elsewhere in the town.”

There were in fact three good reasons for moving the Headquarters Offices, and they were: The congestion caused by the growth of the organisation; the poor physical working environment in the existing HQ; and the new risk of war activity. It seems there had been plans in 1936 for the new Central Station to incorporate new headquarters office accommodation as well. The irony of history is that within a few years the new HQ would be in a totally different form of ‘Combat Zone’ and that the ‘valuable records’ would still suffer near-total loss.

By 15. June 1940 Webb was making formal application¹¹³⁶ to use the Salesian Boys School¹¹³⁷ for use as temporary offices. He had inspected it, thought it would have space

¹¹³³ File R/141/36. Subject “New Railway Headquarter Offices at Haifa.” From the ‘36’ suffix it can be surmised that this topic had first been raised and the file opened four years earlier, but no such correspondence survives. Webb had apparently considered a new HQ eventually necessary in a “recent” proposal to the ‘Development & Welfare Fund’, in which he mentions reports from the Senior Medical Officer, Rlys. in the Reports for 1938 and 1939, both describing working conditions as “overcrowded... hot and dusty in summer and draughty in winter...deplorable”.

¹¹³⁴ Webb notes: “Several rough census taken recently in the busiest part of the morning between 10 and 11am. show that some 600 motor vehicles pass these offices in that one hour alone and the noise of the hooting and gear changing on such a busy but narrow road and which divides near my own office into three forks can well be imagined.” Also: “Immediately below the windows [of his office] is an ill-kept cemetery in which mosquitoes and sandflies breed.” (The small Moslem cemetery is still there, and was noted in March 2003.)

¹¹³⁵ “The present request from the staff is... prompted principally by the danger involved by the entry of Italy into the war..... railway stations and marshalling yards (the offices are situated on a marshalling yard and include the main station) are a principal object of attack and the situation of the station at Haifa probably makes it particularly vulnerable....” In addition there were large oil storage tanks in the vicinity.

¹¹³⁶ Item 26 in File R/141/36.

¹¹³⁷ Being an Italian Foundation, this had therefore become vacant after Italy’s declaration as an aggressor; Italy entered the war on the Axis side on 10. June 1940.

for most if not all staff, and noted “from the safety point of view the situation of the school still leaves something to be desired but it seems better than the position of the present offices.” Ten days later¹¹³⁸ it was clear that the Education Director did not want to let go of the school building, but Webb told the Chief Secretary “Since receiving your letter, and indeed before, we have not ceased to search for other accommodation for the railway, but for our large staff and with our organisation it is most difficult to find anywhere suitable without splitting up in different parts of the town which... would be very unsatisfactory and more expensive.” The Carmel Missionheim¹¹³⁹ came up as a suggestion, although being up on Mount Carmel it would be both too small and too far away. By 2. July firm proposals were being made to move the offices of Chief Engineer and District Engineer to “Frank’s Pension which is already on lease to Government” but two weeks later Webb¹¹⁴⁰ was able to report “a large house, formerly the property of a rich Haifa family¹¹⁴¹, is available for occupation as soon as essential repairs and the necessary sanitary arrangements have been carried out. It is by no means ideal and is in shabby and somewhat dilapidated condition but would suffice for temporary accommodation and would house the offices of the General Manager, Superintendent of the Line and Chief Accountant.” By this time the Engineers had already moved, and there was doubt whether the Running Superintendent would fit into the new building. The proposed rent was LP500 p.a., which Webb considered “not unreasonable for premises of this size”.¹¹⁴²

Webb felt the Chief Accountant’s Staff, numbering 82, including the Colonial Audit staff of 10, should move as soon as possible; he explained that “Railway headquarters offices are usually near the railway and the main stations because all the land is taken together in the first place, but there is no actual necessity for it and in some countries now the offices care to be found elsewhere.” Whereas some elements of railway management require close physical presence and supervision, many functions could be performed in any suitable office location. A distinction could be made between Operational and Administrative functions. So Webb recommended that the British Station Master, Permanent Way Inspector and Locomotive Shed Foreman should remain at Haifa East, possibly under at least one “First Division” officer to maintain a presence, and that the military transport liaison officers would probably also need to stay close to the Superintendent of the Line.

This proposal was approved in a letter¹¹⁴³ suggesting Webb negotiate a one-year lease with an option for a further year. Clearly the war outlook was still vague.

This still left other branches “at risk”. On 28. August 1940 Webb wrote again regarding the District Traffic Superintendent, Cash & Pay section of the Accountants, Government Transport Section and the Stores. The first two were still at Haifa East station “in fairly close proximity to the oil tanks”, the third “in a small wooden building in the Port” and the Stores “near the Shell Oil Company’s installation... and has had near misses in two raids, the building, which is of wood and iron only, being perforated by

¹¹³⁸ Letter 25/6/40, item 30 in file.

¹¹³⁹ A German Foundation and therefore also ‘potentially available’.

¹¹⁴⁰ Letter of 15. July 1940, ref. 2/1/3, Item 38 in file. Marked “Urgent” it is stamped “Received 20. July”.

¹¹⁴¹ Intriguingly, the Executive Committee of the Palestine Railway Institute, formed in 1922, included “Mr. Khoury, representing Provision and Medical dept.; G. Khoury Bey, representing Audit and Accounts Dept.” (“Palestine Weekly”, May 5. 1922, p.320.) It must be assumed that these are the same extended family at least.

¹¹⁴² A map in ‘The Arab-Israeli Wars’ by Chaim Herzog, p.35. shows the Khoury building as ‘ref. 2’ at the front line of the conflict in April 1948, between Shabtai Levi St. and Abbas St.

¹¹⁴³ Dated only “July 1940” in the carbon copy which survives; item 39 in the file.

bomb splinters on both occasions.”¹¹⁴⁴ Despite difficulties, he reckons it inevitable to move Stores as “the staff are in such a state of nervousness that their work is being seriously affected; several are away sick after each raid”, and recommended expenditure on increased protection would enable the others to be concentrated at Haifa East as “it is desirable these be on the railway and near the port”.

(b). The Subsequent Fate of Khoury House in 1947/8.

The following is edited and condensed from several letters from Mr. Gus Hardy of Glen Waverley, Victoria, Australia. Hardy served with the Palestine Police, under his former name of Stafford Hendry¹¹⁴⁵:

“The Railway Police were simply members of the Palestine Police allocated to duties at and on railway installations. They were never a separate service, but British, Jewish or Arab personnel of the Police who were detailed to perform their duties on beats on railway property.....

I also worked as a guard at Khoury House (the Railways HQ), and went to the cinema on the Hadar Carmel pretending to be an Arab or Jew or Levantine with members of all the races who worked as clerks and professionals there.

I remember, as will others, the sniper who felled fair-skinned females who traversed the roads south of Khoury House, on the assumption that they must be Jewesses. We never got this sniper on the lower Carmel; his citadel was pushed over by Army Staghound heavy tanks, but apart from some spent ammunition no trace was claimed. I personally recovered three ladies' bodies and believe he must have got at least as many more. We were not allowed to broadcast/morse that sort of information. We walked Khoury House staff across the road in the lee of any vehicle we had free at the time. Towards the end of my tenure Arabs would not drive the vehicles, there were not enough Jewish drivers, and not all Brits could drive. That sniper was sporadic - we couldn't pick out his pattern, and he was one whom I believe the Haganah couldn't deploy any effort against in these last months in 1948.

I was no longer around at the time of the 'Haifa Enclave' (the period between the British relinquishing the Mandate on May 15th., and the final troop withdrawals by the end of July, when Haifa and its surrounding area, including the port, airport and railway installations, remained under British control), but I am in touch with several civilians who survived through that period. These multi-lingual professional people, mostly Levantines, survived for weeks pending rescue despite starvation and lack of all public utilities during this period of warfare; yet they remained loyal to the firm - i.e. the railways - and administration personnel, even during that period, scrounged through the rubble and ruins for survival and rescued valuable Railway and personnel records, some now in the hands of the Haifa Municipal Archives.

Duty hours were usually 08.00 - 18.00 or 15.00 to 00.01, with a full night shift (19.00 - 07.00), worked as a 'picquet', on top of normal shift, with all meals at one's post - No Absence whatever was allowed in the Railway Division!

¹¹⁴⁴ Details of these air raids have not been found, but it is believed they were carried out by Italian bombers.

¹¹⁴⁵ As Hendry he wrote several articles in the Newsletter of the P.P.O.C.A., which is how contact was eventually established.

At Khoury House we had dogs to back up our sentry-go picquet duty - mostly Boxers, trained to sniff out graphite, hashish and gun grease. We also had good meals at Khoury House; the Christian Arab uniformed but unarmed security staff always ate well and shared with us!"

Other evidence for what occurred is also anecdotal.

Robin Davies¹¹⁴⁶ recalls standing with Kirby on top of Carmel, in the Cantonment, watching Khoury House go up in flames. "There it all goes - all the records", Kirby said.

A cutting from the 'News Chronicle' has an article by Geoffrey Hoare¹¹⁴⁷: "Desperate Fighting has been going on in Palestine's main seaport since midday yesterday - and not a hint of it known in Jerusalem until nearly 24 hours later.

First indication in British circles in Haifa of anything amiss occurred early yesterday. When Mr. A. F. Kirby, general manager of the Palestine Railways, reached his office he found it occupied by Haganah men who had also taken over an evacuated police station next door.

Whether British troops or Arabs tried to dislodge Haganah is not clear, but by that evening railway headquarters were blazing from top to bottom and all records for the past 30 years were destroyed."

On Mr. Yitzhak Nissenbaum¹¹⁴⁸ (later Nissan) fell the task of dealing with the issues of organising an administration, this in addition to his duty for the Haganah of taking care of the security of the Jewish workers in the Mandate Railway Administration Building at Khoury House. (See below). He noted: "Khoury House stood on what is now the site of the Shekem store, on the border of Hadar, on Khoury Street. Khoury had been a very rich Arab man, and the place was like a palace; it had been rented by the British during the war. Webb ran the HQ in Haifa East, but the administration moved to Khoury House before A. F. Kirby's arrival.

Haifa East station was completely in the area ruled at this period by the Arabs; Haifa Central was still in the mixed area, but the situation in Haifa became progressively worse. Even Khoury House itself, which was on the border of the Jewish and Arab areas of settlement, was vulnerable to gunfire. More than that, after the murder of the Jewish people in the refineries there was a great worry that the Jewish clerks would stop coming to work."

Nissan, as one of the Haganah commanders in Haifa, received instructions to ensure the security of Jewish workers in Khoury House. "At a meeting with Mr. Salz I received a gun and a number of fragmentation grenades, and especially three grenades hidden in a Players Cigarette tin (half cigarettes and half explosives). At the time there were tin boxes of 'Player's Cigarettes', the cigarettes covered with silver foil. The Haganah made a bomb in one half. You could open the box and take out some cigarettes, and people never knew that the other half was a bomb!

One of the grenades was always in my pocket; I began to smoke and began to offer

¹¹⁴⁶ Locomotive Superintendent from early 1947 and finally C.M.E. of P.R. He was interviewed at his home in Caterham, Surrey, 29.Aug. 1991, and questioned further by correspondence.

¹¹⁴⁷ Undated but clearly of this period. Pasted in a photograph album loaned by Mrs. C. Howlett. It will be noted that he places the blame for the initial occupation on the Haganah, whereas Kirby wrote that it was Arabs.

¹¹⁴⁸ Personal Assistant to Kirby. Author of an unpublished article in Hebrew, translated as "The Origins of the Hebrew Railway" and published in "Harakevet" 28:17; later interviewed in Haifa in 1994.

cigarettes every morning to the Arab guards who guarded the building. The remaining two grenades I gave to the young Jewish employees who worked in the offices.”

I also organised a signal link with the nearest Haganah post, and even moved into Beit Moushayoff, near to the administration building.

“I smuggled a gun under a plaster cast that we put on the leg of Mr. Mannheim, as though it had been broken. The gun was taken out of the cast in the toilets and given to Mr. Falk to hide between the calculators in the Accountants' Offices.”

With the worsening situation we arranged meetings of the Jewish workers in Beit HaHistadrut in Halutz Street, Haifa, and I announced to them that, according to the instructions of the authorities, they must continue working in all places possible, especially in Khoury House.

There were some who argued vehemently against me and said, "If one Jew should be killed, their blood will be on your head!" - but at the end of the day most of the workers listened and continued coming to work (sometimes crawling!) to Beit Khoury.”

Dror Allon informed us¹¹⁴⁹ that there was an Arab (Iraqi) sniper positioned on the roof of Khoury House, who had created a ‘nest’ for himself formed of bundles of papers and files - hence the Haganah attacked the building with incendiary bullets to force him out. There is no documentary evidence for this verbal statement.

He added: “After Khoury House had been burned down with the occupation of Haifa on 23. April 1948, the administration of the Mandate Railways was moved into Haifa Central Station. This place was not really suitable for observing the workers or for work to be carried out, so the clerks (male and female) rolled up their sleeves and became porters and cleaners, and took from the ruined Khoury House everything they could still use. This was evidence of the strong will of the workers to help in operating a Hebrew Railway.”¹¹⁵⁰

(c). As for **Haifa East station**: ¹¹⁵¹“On the 20. September 1946 there was a heavy explosion at noon which partly demolished the Palestine Railway Eastern Station at Haifa. However, no lives were lost. It was stated by the police that a party of Jews deposited a barrel marked “dangerous” in the station. The police then cordoned off the area and the barrel exploded. It appears that the terrorists used transport which they had stolen the day before the attack. The damage was considerable to the booking office, and the N.A.A.F.I. (above the booking office) was completely destroyed.”

Nevertheless, it appears the station, goods yard, signal boxes and locomotive depot remained fully operational until the end of the Mandate and beyond, forming a key operational link between the Army camps to the north of Haifa and the Port Area itself, during the brief period of the “Haifa Enclave”. Narrow-gauge traffic continued to Acre and Samakh well into 1948. Engineering and Operating functions were continued at East station.¹¹⁵²

¹¹⁴⁹ In conversation with the writer. 1994.

¹¹⁵⁰ From some late PR meeting minutes it appears that it did prove possible to salvage some papers, from which it was hoped to clarify final payments to staff.

¹¹⁵¹ cf. IWM Photos: “Haifa Railway Station blown up. Taken by Sgt. W. Turner. 22. Sept. 1946. Nos. E32079-80.”

¹¹⁵² Kirby's GENERAL MANAGER'S CIRCULAR No. 14/48. of 26. April, 1948 on the Termination of Mandate - Continuity of Railway and Port Service” commenced:

“The intention of the Management is that the Railways will be kept in operation and handed over on the

15th May as a going concern. The severe loss of Khoury House, Headquarters, and the secession of Arab staff in Haifa will not interfere with this intention.

Headquarters Offices.

Administrative Head Offices will be established at Haifa Central Station where the following offices will be situated:-

General Manager's Office.

Chief Accountant's Office.

Chief Staff Officer's Office.

The Chief Engineer and Superintendent of the Line's Office will be at Haifa East.

The Stores Superintendent's Offices will be at the Main Stores.

The Chief Mechanical Engineer's Offices will revert to Qishon as soon as conditions permit.

The Traffic Control Office will be at Haifa East Station.

Qishon Workshops will be kept working with such staff as are remaining."

APPENDIX 4. SOME STAFF AND FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:

Further insight into the plans for winding up the administration can be gained from a File entitled “**TERMINATION OF MANDATE**”. (No Number) in the Israel Railway Museum Archives, Haifa.

A letter from the Chief Engineer’s office, though also headed Office of the Chief Staff Officer, Ref. CSO/M/P2, signed by S. Davis the Chief Staff Officer, dated 17. April 1948 and addressed to All Heads of Branches, dealt with “Special advance against final salary payments - Non-Expatriate staff.” Clearly it was necessary to “pay off” certain grades of workers as the final weeks to the withdrawal approached, rather than wait until the normal formalities at the end of a month could be arranged and the ‘Pay Train’ sent south. In this manner at least some payments could be enabled before everything broke down - this at least was the hope.

There were four categories of employees:

- (1) All pensionable officers, and (2) all monthly-rated officers (except “temporary officers”) were to receive 3 months basic pay plus cost-of-living allowances.
- (3) Daily rated and temporary officers - were to get 1 1/2 months’ basic pay plus c-o-l allowances.
- (4). Finally, “Casual employees should be paid their wages in the normal way and will not be paid any such advance.”

Para.3: Paysheets in respect of these amounts to the nearest whole pound, i.e. 500 mils and over to the next pound above, ... should be prepared and submitted to the Chief Accountant direct according to the following timetable:

(a): Jaffa-Jerusalem Line by 9 a.m. on 19. April 1948. (It will be seen that this was considered urgent, since little time would remain from receiving this letter to the deadline for submissions).

(b). Gaza - Rafa Line by 9 a.m. on 20. April 1948.

(c) Deir Suneid to Lydda Department inclusive by... 20. April.

(d). Kafr Jinis - Qalqiliya by... 21. April.

(e). Other paysheets should be submitted as soon as possible.

Any pensionable officer who is on leave without pay until 15. May 1948, and any other officer who has been given notice with effect from 16. April 1948, will have the advance authorised above reduced by one month.

Daily rated staff will paid on the basis of 26 working days to a month.

.....deductions such as Widows’ and Orphans’ Pension Fund etc, etc, will not be made on this paysheet.”

“General Circular No. 10” from the Chief Secretary’s Office in Jerusalem (signed H.L.G. Gurney) had been dated 16. March 1948, i.e. a whole month earlier, and had certainly concentrated minds in this direction. It contained:

“I am directed by the High Commissioner to inform you that His Excellency attaches great importance to arrangements being made to ensure that all non-expatriate officers are paid before the 15th. May the retiring benefits to which they will then be entitled.

There is little likelihood that it will be feasible, in the large majority of cases, to decide for some time the issues involved in the question whether an officer has good cause to refuse the offer of continued employment made to him by the United Nations’ Commission. It has therefore been decided that computations will proceed on the basis that payments will be made before the 15. May 1948 of the statutory awards payable

under the Pensions Ordinance and the Provident Fund, as they now stand, in order to ensure that these sums are in the hands of the officers eligible for them at the termination of the Mandate.

There will be a few cases, particularly where the officer is neither an Arab nor a Jew, in which it will be possible to decide claim for the full compensatory benefits and to pay on that basis before the 15. May.

The completion of all personal records and all documents required for the computation of retiring awards is now a matter of great urgency and must be given priority over other work. It should be impressed upon Departmental staffs that the payment of these benefits now depends upon their own efforts, and Heads of Departments are asked to give their personal attention to this matter and to arrange, where necessary, that staff are taken off other work in order to complete the material required by the Accountant General at the earliest possible moment. Option forms for reduced pension and gratuity should reach the Civil Service Commission not later than 15. April. Under Pension Rule 14 as recently amended an officer may exercise this option up to the day before actual retirement, but in the present circumstances the Accountant General will require to know the officer's decision before that date.....”

Here we detect a sense of panic creeping in. This matter is “very urgent”, collection of pay and pensions statistics takes priority over all other matters, rules are thrown to the wind due to “the present circumstances”, and the chances of a clear picture of the situation post-15. May, and who might actually choose to continue working under the new political situation, remain very poor. The only sense of comfort comes in the last paragraph: “Palestinian officers will wish to know that it is intended to make arrangements for the payment to them of sums due after the 15th. May through an organization under the aegis of the British Representative in Palestine.”

So why the panic? Clearly the increasing breakdown in communications and the increasing rate of violence and insecurity contributed to the desire to get as many of these possible loose ends tied up as soon as possible. On 12. April a calm letter (ref. CE/MAND/P/3) from the G.M.'s office had stated: “It has now been decided by Government that all daily rated staff with two years continuous and satisfactory employment, may be granted, for the purpose of termination benefits, monthly status. In this connection it will not be necessary to issue new agreements altering their terms of employment, but arrangements should be made to deal with such staff in relation to notice of termination of appointment.....” and mentioning, inter alia, that such staff “will be treated as though they had become contributors to the Provident Fund” albeit “for the time being.... statutory benefits only are being calculated, it being impracticable to revise the calculations already made in the time at our disposal before the termination of the mandate.”

In fact, the impending date of termination had of course been known for some time. Staff Circular 2/48 of 28. Feb. 1948 on “Benefits to Personnel” was augmented by an explanatory circular 3/48 of 1. March, which stressed the need for “Certificates of Service” to be issued for “all serving officers and employees”..... “It is desirable that drafts be forwarded in sufficient time to enable the certificates being issued to the officers concerned prior to their departure from the country”. An orderly handover was being planned, with adequate provision of “references”, pension and leave entitlements etc. By 30. March the Chief Staff Officer was writing (ref. 120/11 & GM/MAND/P/3) “It is the intention that all such staff who remain on duty up to and including the 15. May

1948 will be given pay in lieu of notice. (This was in accord with Civil Service Commissioner Staff Circular 2/48 para.13). "In the case of Wages Staff on monthly rated basis they will be entitled to take a maximum of 19 days accumulated leave where applicable, but in the case of daily rated staff no provision exists for the accumulation of leave, and such staff will be granted their pro rata entitlement in respect of the current year, i.e. 3 days."

A Habiby, the Senior Foreman of Works at Haifa, had already submitted a list of 33 names of workers (all Arab) who were prepared to take leave without pay from 1. April. On 7. April the District Engineer had written to the engineering branches that the CSO was preparing "for payment of salaries and wages for April and half May also for statutory benefits with the general rates of pay for April.... Staff outside Haifa will be paid first." Bit by bit the system was being prepared for closure, the outer limbs first. For example, on 2. April Scrivener memoed the District Engineer, Haifa, that "Traffic Haifa-Samakh hasbeen suspended following destruction of the bridge at Km. 67.800. You may, therefore, include the names of the men withdrawn from Affula, Geva and Shatta in the list called for in my GM/MAND/P/3 of 20.3.1948. You may also include others whose services may be dispensed with as a result of the closing of Samakh line." From this it appears that the Narrow Gauge was thus effectively dead, 6 weeks before the Termination.

APPENDIX 5. A ROYAL ENGINEER'S MEMOIR.

CAPTAIN J. MAPSTONE.

Captain Mapstone of Northampton was interviewed on holiday in Berlin on 28 May 2000; there had also been prior e-mail correspondence.

General:

I felt that most of the British troops in Palestine were essentially more pro-Jewish than pro-Arab; this may have had to do with cultural differences, such as the way the Arabs treated their women - third in priority, after Camel and Donkey !

Overview of Military Career.

I joined up in May 1943, as a volunteer, aged 18, straight from school; but then I had to wait six months, and became a Pupil Engineer with a town Council, while waiting for my acceptance. In the end this occurred only because I was accepted as an Officer Cadet for a future Commission. I went straight into the Royal Engineers, and spent my whole time in the same unit, even though it changed its name. I was commissioned in January 1946.

Initial training was at Preston (Lancs.), and Officer Cadet training at Newark-on-Trent; the cadets were sent to college at Northampton for engineering training, and training was completed at Chatham, the R.E. HQ. Then I went straight out to Palestine, in early 1947. Round Africa and the Canal Zone, then to Fayed, then by train to Jerusalem. I had two days there, and was put up at the Syrian Orphanage (which was overlooked by surrounding buildings, so one could be observed whilst eating etc. - an insecure and vulnerable billet, I thought) - and was then sent down to Gaza to the CRE, then north once more to take command at El Majdal.

I was in "65 CRE" - ("Commander Royal Engineers", the R.E. equivalent of a Regiment, commanded by a Lieut. Col. and with three or four Companies.) Like Transportation Troops, they did not come under the District Command but under the HQ in Jerusalem. At first "Stores" was just a section of 65 CRE, but was later formed into an independent unit, the "1295 Stores & Workshops Coy." BSED means 'Bulk Stores of Engineers and Ordnance' - at the end, this was the railway's main customer.

Later on I suffered from Stress and, as the M.O. could find nothing physically wrong with me, I was sent to the main Middle East Convalescent Depot at Netanya (Nathanya) for a while. I had been shoved into a hectic job, placed in command immediately after getting a commission, which was not normally allowed - so I almost collapsed. I was only skin and bone by the time I got to Tripoli. Normally older, experienced Quartermasters would have handled this sort of job.

Majdal.

I was here for a year. This was the first station north of Gaza. There was a siding, and from this diverged another siding into our depot. The Stores Depot was on the east side of the line. We weren't big enough to have our own engine, so as each truck was filled we pushed it (with Arab hand power!) out into the station track to be collected by the northbound goods train, which came by always in hours of darkness, at night or very early morning, when we weren't there. This wasn't a problem though, as the line was dead flat. The goods train loco would normally shunt the wagons in.

[NB: In the 1944/5 WTT, the northbound pick-up goods No. 158, dep. Kantara 17.30, is timed to be at Majdal 08.19-08.39. Regular Goods Trip 150A was dep. Rafa 12.20,

pick up Majdal 16.59-17.25.]

There were only three British there; I was in command, as a 2nd. Lieut.; there were two N.C.O.'s (at one point a Staff Sergeant and a Corporal), and all the Clerks were Jewish, bussed in from local Jewish settlements. All the Storekeepers were Jews or Arabs, whereas all the Labour was formed of local Arabs. Guarding was done by Arab Supernumary Police.

There was no accommodation at the Stores, and so we lived at Beit Jerza, about 7 or 8 miles towards Gaza, and commuted every day - we were short of vehicles by this time, so we had to do this commuting by motor cycle, which could be risky in Palestine in at that time, as wires were sometimes strung across between the orange groves."

From September 1947, 1295 Stores & Workshops R.E. were tasked with evacuating the stocks of Engineer Stores from El Majdal and Al Jiya Stores Depot, mainly by rail from the El Majdal Station, from which a siding ran into the depot. Being very busy and under considerable stress, it did not occur to me at the time to query why we were instructed to send most of our stock to 10 BESD (Base Engineers Stores Depot) at Beit Nabal, when that depot was itself closing and clearing out its stocks, with a lesser amount to 4 BESD at Haifa, which was placed convenient for shipment from Haifa Port, but none at all southwards to the Suez Canal Zone. With hindsight I can see the reasons.

10 BESD was staffed by Jews, with a Jewish Commanding Officer and I have good reason to believe that little, if any, of the large tonnage of stores that we railed them, ever arrived at the depot, though we received back the issue vouchers signed and stamped as received. We loaded goods wagons at the sidings within our depot, and full wagons were pushed out into the station siding late afternoon for collection by the northbound goods train later that evening, and Issue Vouchers were posted immediately.

One afternoon I was needed to visit the Arab Station Master and happened to notice that all the military labels on the wagons loaded that day had been removed and new labels addressed to a contractor at Petah Tiqva - Faber I think - had been substituted. By this time almost all our stock had been cleared. A few days later, the last wagon from our depot was loaded with tools, pushed out to the siding, and Issue Vouchers posted to 10 BESD. Local Arabs who worked in our Depot knew the value of the tools. The northbound goods train was unable to pick up the wagon due to being fully loaded, and the locals ransacked it. Receipt Vouchers, properly signed and stamped, were received from 10 BESD for all the tools a few days later.

Was the train really already fully-loaded? Or was this a bit of jiggery-pokery by the Arabs, to persuade the Station Master not to have the train stop to pick it up? [*The 1944/5 WTT indicates trains on this section could load 600-800 tons, depending on loco. How much material was being transported northwards from Egypt at this time?*] "You couldn't be sure that anything there was what it looked like. Corruption was endemic to the railway administration during the last 6 - 9 months of British administration."

There was obviously collusion between the staff of 10 BESD, railway staff and Jewish contractors to misappropriate all, or most of the British Army stores.

Several convoys of Army lorries manned by Jewish civilian drivers collected stock of barbed wire and picket, of which 1295 Stores & Workshops RE held a major stock. I was later informed that all this was distributed to vulnerable Jewish settlements, although 10 BESD acknowledged receipt.

I soon realised that as a 2nd. Lieutenant I could do nothing about the racketeering as

when I placed a driver under arrest for flogging a lorry load of cement, he was given just a nominal fine in Tel Aviv Court, without even calling for our evidence. In January 1948, when I was in hospital at Bir Yaacov, I discovered that my bed at Al Jiya had been occupied by a female Haganah officer, civilian clerk at 10 BESD, who had a sexual liaison with the other RE officer at Al Jiya. This RE officer, after further suspicious actions, was placed under arrest, where he remained when I and 1295 S&W/S left the Middle East.

Later on - 193 Coy. RE came to dig up the siding and lift the rails.

Al Jiya.

We took over half of Al Jiya (*pronounced "Jaia"*). This was "a rather decrepit sort of camp". There was no siding into the Engineer Depot or the Ordnance Depot; when we wanted to send anything by rail, it had to be taken by road first to El Majdal! The only siding(s) was into the Petrol Depot.

It was a dangerous camp, since the main line ran right through it, between the Ordnance and Engineering depots. I nearly got killed one night - by that time, Beit Jerza had closed and we were living at Al Jiya, despite the primitive conditions there. To exit the camp, a road left the compound, past some Arab Legion units there for our Security, (a man got shot at the living area of the Petrol Depot), then there was a sharp turn over the railway line, through the Ordnance camp, and out to the main road. Late one night I got a call that some Arabs were raiding the stores at El Majdal - so I went out with a small lorry and some men to raid them, had to do a right turn to the crossing, and suddenly there was a goods train thundering down towards me with no headlight on! I saw the sparks from the firebox, and stopped the lorry just in time. I wasn't expecting that train at all.

Rafa.

Eventually we moved down to Rafa, and there we had a small argument - it was clear that one Stores Unit would have to stay on in Palestine, and the question was whether it would be 1295 or 1296. We won the argument, so 1296 stayed. So we were only a very short time at Rafa.

Immediately on taking command at Rafa - the day after I arrived - I was instructed to place my predecessor as O.C., Lt. Geoffrey Huddart, under arrest. (I was also only a Lieutenant - I never pushed for promotion.). He had been at Beit Nabala, and had come down from there to Al Jiya and then Rafa. It was discovered that the Arms Register had never been kept up to date, and the whole Unit Administration was a shambles. The suspicion was that his main interest had been flogging stores to his Jewish friends, and looking after his unit. When we left, he was still under arrest in the Canal Zone. I don't know what happened to him. The Colonel had said to me "We don't want trouble with that bloody man - let's send him on leave to Palestine, and hope he doesn't come back." But he did come back - as he was clearly of no further use to the Haganah. So he returned two or three days before we left for Tripoli.

The previous Lt. Col. at 10 BESD Beit Nabala, Hulme, was also taken into custody; he had come out to Palestine in 1938, as a Sergeant. He was Jewish, and 10-12 years later had risen to Lt. Col. When the police arrested him they found £30,000 on him. Everything there was a mess. Corruption was rife, and he must have known of and been involved in it. They had to check the books, and found that two Caterpillar tractors, two

Graders and twelve Mobile Tar Boilers were missing. They were on the books, but they were not to be found! I reckon Hulme flogged them. A whole lot was missing, but the excuse was always "it must be a book error". But I realised later what had happened - during the pull-out, all proper book-keeping was scrubbed, except at Majdal.

I recall just one exception: At Majdal the Arabs came one night and dismantled the wooden buildings and took everything inside - including an old typewriter. No-one bothered about anything else, but an RASC unit in Port Tewfik which kept the Register of Typewriters pursued me on this matter as far as Tripoli, demanding a Court of Enquiry for negligence and insubordination, for loss of a Typewriter! I had to ask them if they had any idea what was going on in Palestine at the time. I reckon at least £2M worth of Stores was written-off.

Two Examples: Our only vehicle at 1295 Coy. was a Canadian Chevrolet. It wanted only a diaphragm for the petrol pump - and we couldn't get one. The LAD of the Life Guards lashed up a repair but it wouldn't hold. But there were no Dollars, and the clerks in Jerusalem wouldn't authorise purchase of spare parts. So for the sake of a one-dollar part, we ended up having to leave the whole vehicle behind, near Gaza - at Userat, the R.E. HQ for the District.

When I got to Rafa, we had to cross the Sinai - but there were no vehicles. The Regulations were that trucks could not cross in groups of less than three, with at least three men in the front vehicle, and three in the rear, and at least two in any intermediate ones - so the minimum possible convoy was three trucks and eight men. But we had none! An RASC Company had been disbanded, and had used American Dodge trucks. These were all lined up at Rafa, on the sand dunes - maybe 150 of them - therefore I had to go along one night and take three of them, a Half-Tonner and two Three-Tonners. Officers were not meant to drive, but I was the only one with a valid driving licence! (Two others could also drive). We had eight men, so just enough to get out. The other 147 lorries probably just stayed there and would have been taken by the Egyptians.

There were many other cases of such waste. Further up Palestine it was probably not so bad, but south of, say, Sarafand, was Arab territory, and they knocked down every building to pieces and carted it all away, bricks and all, on their camels and donkeys. For our last three days at Al Jiya we had no water - the well was outside the camp (probably the perimeter had shrunk with withdrawals), and Arabs had taken away the pipes! At El Majdal, the water came from a well situated in orange groves on the other side of the tracks. It was decided (by someone) that the Arab owner was charging too much for the water, and so the clerks wouldn't authorise payment; therefore, for a year, a tanker of water had to be driven from Al Jiya almost every day - at much greater cost than just paying the owner the few extra pence.

Regarding the blowing up of the troop train in February 1948 - one point has particularly worried me. Normal procedure, which I had regularly observed from our depot at El Majdal Station, had been for an armoured car on rail wheels, manned by men of the Life Guards, to precede this train. But all the combatant troops in South Palestine, including the Life Guards, had been evacuated to the Suez Canal Zone a month before the outrage, so presumably the armoured car was not in operation on the railway. Although I understand that a dead donkey stuffed with explosives was detonated by remote control just as the First Class coach containing officers passed over it, if the armoured car had preceded the train, surely the dead donkey would have been investigated. All troops in Palestine had been drilled to regard with the greatest suspicion

any objects on rail or road.

It seems to me that all combatant troops were withdrawn before the Sappers, leaving us unprotected. Fortunately the Arabs, whilst happy to rob us of anything, did not wish to injure us.”

APPENDIX 6.

"THE ORIGINS OF THE HEBREW RAILWAY."

Translation of an Article by Isaac Nissan:¹¹⁵³

¹¹⁵³ This Memoir was first published in Harakevet 28:17 with further comments in 29:5. The translation had been made by Mrs. Tepler. The following notes are taken from a conversation/interview in 1994 with Isaac Nissan, together with a few references from correspondence and are added here - since the eye-witnesses of these momentous years are regrettably getting fewer by the year.

I had been put in touch with Mr. Nissan around 1992 through Mrs. Christine Howlett, the daughter of Arthur Kirby, who was living in New Jersey.

Isaac Nissan was born Nissenbaum, in Palestine in 1917 at Yavniel in the Emek; his father had come as one of the '*Biluim*' pioneers, but when his mother became sick in 1925/6 the family moved to Haifa. (The surname was changed on the establishment of the State.)

He was educated at the Haifa Reali School, which was the best school in town in those days. When about to finish his schooling he was "asked or ordered" by the Jewish Agency to join the Railway service for two years - this was a part of the scheme known as "*Kibbush Avodah*", whereby the Land could be attained by work, and experience in various fields was required. So in 1936 he joined Palestine Railways.

He thought of leaving the railway after two years' service, and went to Britain in 1938, where he was accepted by London University. He returned to Palestine because of the potential outbreak of war, as he had no family in England - and on return he rejoined the railways. He saw no future however for a Jew in a minor position in the Railway service; he was a clerk, then a Hebrew/English translator, and was then appointed to a small part of the Administration in the Traffic Department, charged with preparation for commercialising the Railway.

The British then refused him permission to leave the railways during the war - he fought against this, as his salary was very poor. Kirby then called him to his office (this must have been after 1942), and asked him to create a financial section of the Railways' management. And so Nissan (then Nissenbaum) created the finances and records, under Kirby - the budget, commercials etc.

He considered Kirby was "a man of vision and a very strong personality", one who saw the railway as a commercial entity, not a military man - he felt that it existed to give service to the Jews who were now beginning to dominate the country. Webb had brought British railway personnel from Britain to Palestine - and Jews and Arabs could only reach up to a certain junior level, all senior posts being filled by the expatriates.

A. F. Kirby was one of the few who said that he would hand over the railway system intact to anyone - Jew or Arab - who could run it. Unofficially, though, he favoured the Jews. Kirby arrived in 1942; Wilson and Masters (the CME's) were all anti-Jewish in their personal feelings.

Khoury House stood on what was now the site of the Shekem store, on the border of Hadar, on Khoury Street. Khoury had been a very rich Arab man, and the place was like a palace; it had been rented by the British during the war. Webb ran the HQ in Haifa East, but the administration moved to Khoury House before A. F. Kirby's arrival.

Nissan was in charge of safety for Jews working at the HQ. The city was fenced and guarded by the Arab personnel of the Railway, then Palestine Police after the massacre in the refineries. He put a plaster cast on the leg of one man, with revolvers inside, took him to the WC, broke the top of cast open, and hid the gun in Khoury House.

At the time there were tin boxes of 'Player's Cigarettes', the cigarettes covered with silver foil. The Haganah made a bomb in one half. You could open the box and take out some cigarettes, and people never knew that the other half was a bomb!

Kirby was a very dedicated man. There was a big distance between him and the Juniors. Nissan had to check letters to the Chief Secretary, so he took these to another man named Norman for advice. The response was "You want me to tell Kirby he made a mistake in the figures? You can tell Jack Norman!" Jack however just laughed and told him to see Kirby, so he went in and told Kirby about the mistakes. "Do you know who wrote the letter?" "I did". "Show me" - and he corrected the figures as simply as that.

He was a very respected man - everyone was afraid of him, though he was comradely. He was on the Executive Committee and therefore a very high man. He had married someone whilst in Africa; then his wife and he swapped partners! He enjoyed sailing boats - Nissan has no idea if he had other hobbies - and Jack Norman was his Principal Assistant. The Controller of Manpower advised Kirby either to promote Nissan or release him - so Kirby took him as a Personal Assistant, actually as Head of the

As a result of the U.N. decision concerning the partition of Palestine into two countries, Jewish and Arab (29/11/47), discussions began amongst several employees of the Palestine Railways in Eretz Israel (Moshe Paicovitch, Y. Efrati and Y. Nissan) concerning the continuation of the administration of the railways, which at that period was the major means of transport of both passengers and goods in the country. Some were of the opinion that there would be no place for railways in the small country that would be formed from the Partition.

My opinion was that the population of the country would be concentrated, and the means of transportation that would be most suited would be the railways; Also I expressed the opinion that, with a state of peace with the neighbouring states, the railway would continue to be the bridge of communication between the countries of the Middle East.

At that period the railways of Palestine (Eretz Israel) operated from Kantara in the Sinai area to Rabbat Ammon and Amman in Jordan. There was also a railway link with Syria and Lebanon (Lebanon did not yet exist as an independent civil state) and also there were discussions that had begun in the time of Arthur Kirby concerning the rail link via Turkey to Europe.....

The discussions came to the conclusion that we needed to ask questions of the appointed institutions of the nascent country. (The Sochnut [i.e. Jewish Agency] etc.)

All efforts to obtain any direction from all the founding organisations of the nascent State met with no result at all. Many efforts were made by the Organisation of the Railway and Postal Workers to obtain terms of reference or guidance from all of them, but there was no-one with whom to speak.

It was after a series of meetings between Paicovitch, Efrati and Nissan and after various contacts, that Mr. Paicovitch, with the Council of the Haifa branch made the decision to take steps to establish the Hebrew Railways. It was clear to us that in order to take such steps it was vital for us to continue to work in the railways headquarters administration in Khoury House.

Mr. Paicovitch, as part of his position as Chief Operations Controller, had begun to store the carriages and locomotives on the tracks of Jewish settlements (Rehovot, Petach

Financial Services under both Norman and Kirby.

Nissan was the right-hand man of Jack Norman. He recalls one incident, when Norman said "I saw a long queue of women". He answered, "They were getting their petrol rations" - the next day Norman sent two tins of petrol to Nissan to his house. He was a little deaf, and wore a hearing-aid with a battery. One day he said "Do you know what your people did to me ? They stopped us on the way to work, and made us walk down!" He was furious at this car-hijacking. Nissan's response was: "Jack, how many cars did you have on the railways? Most were taken by the Arabs - so why this fuss over one car taken by Jews?"

Nissan was in charge of office inventory; One day he did a check and found that one of the ventilators was missing - so he came into Jack Norman's office and informed him of the missing fan. "Shall I report it to the Police?" The response was "All right - it's in my house - I'll bring it back". Then they became friends.

Secret letters were sent to Kirby as head of the Ports Authority in code; he had to issue Confiscation orders for immigrant ships approaching Palestine. Nissan had the stamp and the code, and so would get the letters, open them with a hot knife, copy the telegram-style text inside, close it and reseal and stamp it, and then convey the knowledge to the Haganah so they could change the route.

Tikva, Tel Aviv, Hadera, Binyamina, Atlit, Kiryat Motzkin and Haifa). (Haifa, it is obvious, was a unique situation, for it was the last point of the British withdrawal.)

The number of empty tracks in Hebrew settlements (as listed above) was limited, but in spite of that Paicovitch succeeded in gathering the majority of the locomotives and rolling stock in the area which was left to the Jewish State according to the Partition Plan. (With the exception of one locomotive and two wagons that were left in Tulkarm, and similarly locos and wagons at Lod.)

Mr. Efrati was asked to organise, at the Technion in Hadar (HaCarmel), courses for locomotive drivers and firemen. Mr. Dror Allon (the son of Mr. Paicovitch) dealt with the training of traffic/operations workers, whilst on the roof of Mr. Paicovitch's house a demonstration model of a signal box and tracks was built.

On Mr. Yitzhak Nissenbaum (later Nissan) fell the task of dealing with the issues of organising an administration, this in addition to his duty for the Haganah of taking care of the security of the Jewish workers in the Mandate Railway Administration Building at Khoury House. In consequence, Mr. Nissan started to gather at his house Rule Books, Operating Instructions and a lot of other documents that would be needed to organise and operate the Jewish Railways.

We made attempts to add to our three-strong team some Jewish representatives from the Engineering Dept. The most senior amongst them was Sando Mirsky, but it became clear that this man was not qualified for this sort of position.

It must be remembered that after the decision of the U.N. there began a period of riots and the "small war" between the Jewish and Arab inhabitants.

Haifa East station was completely in the area ruled by the Arabs; Haifa Central was still in the mixed area, but the situation in Haifa became progressively worse. Even Khoury House itself, which was on the border of the Jewish and Arab areas of settlement, was vulnerable to gunfire. More than that, after the murder of the Jewish people in the refineries there was a great worry that the Jewish clerks would stop coming to work.

Nissan, as one of the Haganah commanders in Haifa, received instructions to ensure the security of Jewish workers in Khoury House. "At a meeting with Mr. Salz I received a gun and a number of fragmentation grenades, and especially three grenades hidden in a Players Cigarette box (half cigarettes and half explosives). One of the grenades was always in my pocket; I began to smoke and began to offer cigarettes every morning to the Arab guards who guarded the building. The remaining two grenades I gave to the young Jewish employees who worked in the offices."

(I also organised a signal link with the nearest Haganah post, and even moved into Beit Moushayoff, near to the administration building.)

"I smuggled a gun under a plaster cast that we put on the leg of Mr. Mannheim, as though it had been broken. The gun was taken out of the cast in the toilets and given to Mr. Falk to hide between the calculators in the Accountants' Offices."

Mr. Moshe Paicovitch was a veteran amongst the Jewish employees on the Mandate Railways, and he organised the meetings with the Area Council in Haifa; he also had very good relations with the Army authorities who were in charge of directing the retreat of the British to Haifa.

He made very many efforts to arrange the transfer of locos and wagons to safe storage

in Jewish areas, since without them there would have been no point to our efforts to establish a 'Hebrew Railway'.

The link between the Jewish populations in Tel Aviv and Haifa wasn't adequate, and the Jewish workers in Tel Aviv, who had initially thought about creating a centre there in Tel Aviv, did not in the end succeed in creating an coherent organisation.

Most of the Jews in the South were working in the Engineering Department - on tracks and bridges - and only a few of them were left in Lod engaged in maintaining locomotives. The town of Lod was a huge Arab centre and the station was also a very important junction for rail traffic. Tel Aviv itself was a small and modest station, and was not very significant in terms of railway traffic operations; also the length of tracks in the station was not very great.

With the worsening situation we arranged meetings of the Jewish workers in Beit HaHistadrut in Halutz Street, Haifa, and I announced to them that, according to the instructions of the authorities, they must continue working in all places possible, especially in Khoury House.

There were some who argued vehemently against me and said, "If one Jew should be killed, their blood will be on your head!" - but at the end of the day most of the workers listened and continued coming to work (sometimes crawling!) to Beit Khoury.

The work by Mr. Paicovitch of storing the wagons also made possible the placing of wagons loaded with ammunition in Jewish stations, and the Haganah was informed about this, and enriched its reserves with British ammunition.

Also in the area of information about the immigration boats approaching the country, Mr. Melzer and I gave information to the Intelligence Branch concerning the fact that the British had learned about this or that immigration boat. (Mr. Kirby, as the Manager of the Ports Authority, had by law to confiscate the boats) The information to the Railways management passed by coded telegram, the code of which we had; we took care of opening the envelopes, reading the information, and passing it to the Intelligence Branch.

Another activity was the preparation of Jewish crews to operate the locomotives and stock. The number of Jews who were loco drivers (if at all), firemen or traffic staff in the stations was very limited, and we started training our workers in the evenings at the Technion. (Mr. Efrati organised this activity). The same applied to Traffic problems, when the model railway was built on the roof of Mr. Paicovitch's house on Hadar Carmel, with the help of the Jewish workers Zvi Greenbaum (Rimmon) and Asher Roth, who worked at the Signalling Dept.

In addition Mr. Paicovitch arranged with Solel Boneh that a number of Jewish workers, who were employed "as though" on works on behalf of the British Army, trained in Kiryat Motzkin in operating steam engines, moving wagons and coupling them.

Nissan was concentrating on preparing Rule Books, procedures etc., which he quietly took out from Khoury House and gathered in his house; he also made a list of Jewish workers in the key positions - see Table A.

Nissan had discussions with Mr. Beliavsky and Mr. Azrieli, Chief Accountants of the Mandate Government, in order to ensure that we would have the data and also names of Jewish companies which owed money to the Mandate Railway, so that that it might be possible to collect it; this would be a small source of money towards the beginning of

operations.

It was clear to us that without a strong connection to the British Army, and even providing a service to them, that it would be very difficult for us to take over the property that was in the hands of Palestine Railways (Eretz Yisrael).

Paicovitch had discussions with the Army and it was hinted to Kirby that the Jews would operate the Hebrew Railways. The reaction of the British (railway) officers or the Army officers was "You won't be able to move even one loco one metre!"

The British Government and the Palestine Railways.

The British filled all the important posts on the Mandate Railways. The workers on the 2nd. level were Jews and Arabs (mostly Arabs), and at the lowest level the majority were Arabs.

In the Railways Administration there was a change after the appointment of Kirby as the General Manager of both the Railways and Ports. In contrast to the example set by his predecessors, who saw the railway as a transport service mainly for the British Army, he saw the railway also as providing a civilian and commercial service, and he worked hard for this aim.

Of course during the period of the Second World War he gave all his efforts and initiative to the Army's needs, but near to the end of the war he commenced laying his plans for a commercial railway serving the public.

In addition to 'Appendix B', the structure of the railway as he prepared it in 1946, he travelled to and developed contacts with neighbouring railway managers in order to secure additional communication with Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey.

In contrast to the senior management officers in the British Government in Eretz Yisrael, Kirby was interested in maintaining the complete system of the railways and in handing it over as a well-oiled machine into the hands of those who would inherit it from the British, who were leaving the country, and not to leave complete chaos (as was the intention of the majority of the British authorities before the end of the Mandate).

It is possible that one of the motives for keeping the railway at work was to help in the evacuation of the British.

With the conquest of Haifa on 23rd. April 1948, and after the burning of Khoury House and the flight from the country of the majority of Arab workers, he took steps to ensure the maintenance of basic services for as long as possible, and to hand over the railway in the best shape possible to the Jewish railway workers.

Concerning this theme, I have to add that a very warm and even friendly relationship had developed, during their work together, between Kirby, Paicovitch and Nissenbaum. Mr. Paicovitch, because of his key position and his knowledge of Hebrew, English, French, Arabic and Turkish, escorted Mr. Kirby on his travels to the Managers of neighbouring railways.

There were also close links of friendship between Nissenbaum, Kirby and Mr. J. Norman. A farewell letter to Mr. Norman from Nissenbaum is in Appendix 3.

With the conquest of Haifa and despite the flight of the Arab workers, the Jewish

employees worked together with the British Army to operate the trains.

However, as I mentioned before, their strong connections made it possible for the Jewish workers, mainly under the instructions of Mr. Paicovitch, to arrange movement of wagons with British ammunition and weapons to the stations; there it was possible during the nights for the Haganah to 'recover' the British weapons, but the fact that the railway services continued working till the last moment was another reason for Kirby's decision to give the running of the railway over to the Jewish workers.

Amongst the British who stayed in Israel was the Traffic Manager, Mr. Baker, who was married to a German lady and who had to postpone his departure from the country because of the old age of his mother-in-law. This made it possible for Kirby to hand over the running of the railway to Mr. Baker, but Baker knew, and Kirby also knew, that Mr. Paicovitch had been appointed by the Jewish Provisional Government Council to be the Manager of the Hebrew Railways, and that the moment the British left the country (15th. May 1948) the General Management would be given automatically into Paicovitch's hands.

Close to the evacuation, Mr. Kirby called upon Mr. Nissenbaum and in open conversation told him that he had full confidence in him and he would appoint him to the Management of the Stores and Supplies Dept. (He said, "They'll not steal a locomotive, but they could well rob the storerooms and there are a lot of expensive goods in them, and I want to give these into faithful hands.")

On 26th. April 1948, that is to say, after the occupation of Haifa, Mr. Kirby gave the instructions to transfer the railway to the Jews, and on the 10th. May 1948 he issued his last Memorandum as General Manager of Palestine Railways; in it he announced the temporary appointments of Jews to run the railways.

The Operation of the Hebrew Railways.

On 15th. May 1948 the management of the railways passed officially into the hands of the Jews, and there was established, de facto, the Hebrew Railways.

Mr. Paicovitch invited me to come back to him to the railway Administration from the Stores Management to act as his own Personal Assistant, in order to organise the administration of the railway, and I appointed Mr. Shermak for a short while to be Manager of the Stores Department, until the appointment of Mr. Verlinsky to this position.

We had to face many problems, amongst them:-

a). Conscription of youngsters.

The Jewish security authorities issued orders to call up all young Jewish men to "Tzahal". It was clear to us that we had to make sure of a minimum of experienced workers, because otherwise we should not be able to run any operations.

Paicovitch had begun negotiations with the Provisional Council and a minimum of Jewish men was called up, and joined to a work unit that was established under the authority of Yosef Almogi. This unit was manned in the main with men from the Posts and Telegraphs, and men from the Railway. The unit fought at night, helping to occupy all the Arab villages around Haifa, whilst in the daytime they didn't fight, but instead most of them were released in order to ensure that work continued smoothly on the railway, posts and telegraph.

At the head of the Postal section was Arye Gurel, then as now the Mayor of Haifa, and the head of the railway section was Nissan.

b). Sending teams of workers to Cyprus.

The British requested that a number of workers be sent to Cyprus, to prepare the final accounts etc. of the employees, and we, the Jewish workers, were interested in doing this in order to secure the rights of the Jewish workers who stayed in the country.

After meeting with the Provisional Council in Haifa, a small number of workers went to Cyprus (Mr. Norman invited me to go with them to Cyprus and to head the Office, but I declined his offer.) Among those who went were Mr. Lehrer, Gottlieb, Baker etc.

c). Conscription of Workers.

In order to operate the service, it was vital that workers be called up to carry out the duties that had been left vacant by the Arab workers. This was especially the case in the Traffic, Engineering and Mechanical Departments. Nissan, and after him Dror Allon, worked hard at classifying workers, especially men who were no longer young, and also those left over from the Army call-up (also not so young), and to place them in the railway service.

d). Classification and Transfer of Workers.

A significant proportion of the Jewish employees, especially the women, were not manual workers. Nissan accordingly made efforts to send those workers who were physically fit to work in the Traffic Department, whilst the women workers and the remainder were sent to the various other departments that were beginning to be organised under the leadership of the senior Jewish employees there, who took upon themselves the management of those departments.

e). Training.

We established a modest school for training workers, to give them the basic knowledge of railway operation; the tutors were Jewish veterans of the Mandate period. Mr. Zeira was appointed as the head of the school, which was held in a building at the Haifa Central Railway Station.

Here I must point out that there was not even one Jewish worker in the Permanent Way Department, and a great deal of assistance to those allocated to this section was given by Mr. Asher Roth, who knew something about this sort of work. Later on, after the occupation of Lod, the Engineering Department workers in the south played the main role in training the Permanent-Way workers.

f). Accommodation.

In order to operate the railways we called upon Jewish workers from Tel Aviv to move into Haifa; For this purpose we rented several floors in a building at Rehov Melachim 55, and at the same time fitted them out as temporary accommodation.

g). Watches.

In order to maintain the timetable and punctuality we had to supply the engine drivers

with watches. It was necessary to purchase identical watches, and Nisan succeeded in buying fifty watches that had been confiscated at the time by the Customs Authorities, and gave them to the engine drivers; all the watches were engraved with the letters "R.I." ("Rakevet Israel"), and the number of the watch.

h). The First Movements.

The first civilian traffic movements were the operation of passenger trains between Haifa and Kiryat Motzkin and also to Hadera. This had already commenced in June 1948, and the first timetable of the railway was published to announce these.

i). Co-ordination with the Army.

It was necessary to liaise continuously with Tzahal ('Tzva HaHaganah LeYisra'el' - Israel Defence Forces), who appointed Mr. Nelkin (an employee of the Defence Ministry) to liaise with the the Traffic Department concerning operations. Matters included the need to transport heavy freight items (tanks) and also to operate armoured trollies for defence - especially near Tulkarm.

j). Money and Budgets.

A difficult problem was the transfer of money to pay the weekly salaries after we had commenced work. Here we were helped by being able to use the money that the Accounts Department under Mr. Beliavsky and Mr. Azrieli had succeeded in collecting from Jewish companies that had owed it to the Mandatory railway. By the end of June salaries were already paid through the Transport Ministry.

The first budget, prepared by Nisan, was presented to the Transport Ministry at the first meeting with Mr. Lifschitz, who had been appointed by Minister Remez (the first Minister of Transport) to head the Inland Transport Section.

k). Furniture and Office Arrangements.

After Khoury House had been burned down with the occupation of Haifa on 23rd. April 1948, the administration of the Mandate Railways was moved into Haifa Central Station. This place was not really suitable for observing the workers or for work to be carried out, so the clerks (male and female) rolled up their sleeves and became porters and cleaners, and took from the ruined Khoury House everything they could still use. This was evidence of the strong will of the workers to help in operating a Hebrew Railway.

l). Operations.

With the occupation of Lod the Engineering Department made efforts to build a line by-passing Tulkarm, and this made possible for us a direct railway link with Lod and Petach Tikva, enabling the transfer of engines, wagons etc. that had been in storage in Petach Tikva, Rehovot etc. and driving them to the workshops in Haifa in order to make them fit once again for regular traffic.

In this way regular rail traffic from Haifa to Tel Aviv and later to Jerusalem was begun.

m). The Occupation of Lod.

With the conquest of Lod and the flight of the Arabs from the town, Weilichman and Berkovitz had to check the situation in Lod, the collection of wagons and engines and the rest of the railway property. Mr. Seiffer was appointed as head of the engine shed at Lod, and he made great efforts to reconstruct the depot installations and make it operational.

Mr. Levanoni dealt with the equipment of the Engineering Department - the rails, sleepers etc.

In conclusion, I want to emphasise the very special and vital role, the intense efforts and devotion to duty (beyond their regular hours of service) of the Jewish workers in the Mandate Government; without them the Israeli Railway would not have been able to work even before the establishment of the State, and certainly not providing a service to the country in its earliest days.

Factual details concerning the operation of the Hebrew Railways in its first year I have laid out in a special Memorandum which we handed, over the signature of Mr. Paicovitch, the first General Manager of the Railway, to the Transport Minister in the beginning of 1949.

I cannot finish without recalling the resignation - or the dismissal - of Mr. Moshe Paicovitch, which remains an enigma until today.

A far as I know, Mr. Levy (who worked in Mr. Paicovitch's office) sent the correspondence to the very senior Messrs. Rimmon and Nimmes, and Nimmes sent it to the newspapers. The Transport Minister, Mr. Dov Joseph, blamed Mr. Paicovitch as though he had passed this correspondence to the newspapers, though this was not true, and there was no justification for his dismissal on the grounds that he had leaked this information to the Press.

Table A.

Names of Jewish Workers in Key Positions in the Mandate Railway.

(These are names of the Jewish workers, insofar as I can recall them, that I collected at the time in case one day there would ever be a Hebrew Railway. The full list remains in the Railway offices, and there is no doubt that I have not recalled the whole list.)

Traffic Dept.

M. Paicovitch.

Y. Allon. [NB: should this be D. Allon?]

Y. Hardy. (An Englishman, who converted to Judaism).

A. Milshtein.

G. Hardy. (son of above).

Elbagly (or Albegly ?)

Elbagly (") (his son).

Levy. (Motzkin Station).

Shapira. (Atlit station)

Akrish. (Zichron Yaakov Station).

Trop. (Hadera Station).

Malka. (Binyamina Station)

Yulichman. (Petach Tikva Station).

Berkovitz. (Tel Aviv Station).

Sabah. (Haifa Port).

Kossover. (Rehovot Station).

Signals and Telephones Dept.

Z. Greenboim. (Rimmon).

A. Roth.

Mechanical Dept.

Sokolovitch. (Efrati).

Gissman.

Lifshitz.

Zonderman.

Stampel.

Livni.

Sh. Steinberg.

Rabinovitch.

Krisher.

Seiffer.

Seiffer (son of the Depot Manager; an engine driver).

Engineering Dept.

Taktz.

Golan.

Nachmani.

Levanoni.

Sandobosky.

Bukshtein.

Zemirin.

Lifkin.

Headquarters Administration.

Lehrer.

Hankin.

Gottlieb - Personnel.

Baum. (Later transferred to Traffic Dept.) Levy.

Nissan.

M. Melzer.

Baker - Personnel.

Accounts Dept.

Beliavsky.

Wincour.

Elkiyim.

Azrieli.

Bacher.

APPENDIX 7.

EPILOGUE. THE EARLY DAYS OF ISRAEL RAILWAYS.

What did the new Israel Railways take over in May 1948? The main answer can be found in a large Ledger, found at the Archive of the Israel Railway Museum, Haifa. Typescript, actually a carbon copy, with even the few necessary entries in red also in red carbon. The following is a partial copy of this document, with our notes and comments in Italics:

“CAPITAL ACCOUNT, as at the 15th. MAY 1948. Report by Mr. P. B. C. Baker. Railway Adviser”

(Note: The signature at the bottom of the first (title) page is illegible, but does not look like “Baker”, more like “C. Maus..”)

“Prepared at Headquarters, Israel Railways, Haifa. 18th. May 1951.

To Minister of Communications, through the General Manager, Israel Railways.

1. Subject:

- 1). **Detailed reconstruction of the I.R. (Standard Gauge) Capital Account as declared in bulk main-head totals by the Mandatory Government as at the 29th. Feb. 1948.**
- 2). **Rejection of abandoned and missing assets, including moveable and fixed assets now situated in Arab territory.**
- 3). **Depreciation of moveable and fixed assets situated in Israel Territory and in possession of Israel Railways as at 15th. May 1948.**

In submitting this Report on the above subject matter I have initially to state that my report of the 8th. February 1949, dealing with the reconstruction of the Rolling Stock section of the P.R. (S.G.) Capital Account must now be regarded as cancelled due to the fact that the records from which this section was reconstructed have since been found to be incomplete and therefore not reliable.

In para. 6 of my report of 8th. Feb. 1949, I stated that the reconstruction of the Capital Account in respect of Land, Buildings, Stations, Permanent Way, Machinery and Plant etc. had still to be undertaken. This work, together with the revision of the Rolling Stock section, has now been completed and constitutes the reconstruction of the Palestine Railways (Standard Gauge) Capital Account as a whole, together with full details of items rejected by the I.R., also of the amount of Depreciation in respect of assets in possession of the I.R. as at 15th. May 1948.

2. Reasons Necessitating the Reconstruction of the Capital Account.

The official Capital Ledgers and other records of the P.R. were inadvertently completely destroyed by fire a short time prior to the evacuation of the Mandatory Government, and in consequence it became imperative, when the Israeli Government assumed control of that portion of the current commercial value, of the Capital Assets in possession of the IR as at 15th. May 1948.....*[to reconstruct the accounts.]*

3. Procedure for Reconstruction of Capital Accounts.

It was quite clear from the onset, that the reconstruction was going to be a most formidable task and depended upon the availability of the relevant data, irrespective of source.

It is not the purpose of this report to record the many difficulties encountered, but it has to be admitted that on more than one occasion it appeared that the task was impossible of achievement.

However, after months of searching through the official yearly reports and those of the Heads of Railway Branches, together with other files and documents relative to the Capital Account, sufficient data was collected enabling the main-heads of the account to be reconstructed and reconciled with the Mandatory figures as at the 29th. Feb. 1948. As regards the period from the 1st. March 1948 to 14th. May 1948, no records whatsoever are available and consequently there has been no alternative but to adopt the Mandatory figures as at 29/2/48, and assume that no further capital expenditure was incurred during this period. [*i.e. ca. 10 weeks.*]

Having reconstructed the main-heads the next step was to sub-divide them into the standard sub-heads, which proved to be an even more difficult task due to the fact that the Mandatory sub-head totals were only available at sporadic dates, the latest of which was the 31st. March 1946, and resulted in a number of unexplainable debits and credits having to be inserted into the reconstruction schedules as balancing figures. These credits and debits, amounting to £P 116,942 and £P 110,013 respectively, when set against each other left a credit balance of £P 6,929 which, I submit, is infinitesimal when reconstructing an account totalling £P 5,995,703.

4. Expenditure from the Renewals Fund dealt with as Additional Capital Expenditure.

It is of importance to note that the Capital Account as compiled by the Mandatory excluded all expenditure from the Renewals Fund on the generally recognised grounds that such expenditure replaced the relative wasting assets of the Capital Account.

This fund, however, appears to have been the source of considerable contention since its inception in 1933 and has only been theoretical in application.

The General Manager of the Palestine Railways in his official annual report for the combined years 1942/3, 1943/4, 1944/5 and 1945/6 stated as under.....

[*Paras. 10 & 11. cited from that report.*]

In reconstructing the PR (SG) Capital Account there has been no alternative but to treat all expenditure from the Renewals Fund as additional capital expenditure and to increase the Capital Account figures declared by the PR accordingly. The expenditure from this theoretical fund (actually from Revenue) up to 29/2/48 was as under:

Permanent Way, Stations, Buildings etc.	£P 847,628.
Rolling Stock:	£P 343,587.
Machinery & Plant:	£P 38,878.
<u>Total:</u>	£P 1,230,093.

5. Capital Accounts Main-Head Totals as Declared by the Palestine Railways.

The last official report issued by the GM of PR for the financial year ending on the 31st. March 1947 declared the main-head totals of the PR (SG) Capital Account to be as under:

Land:	£P 143,999.
Permanent-Way, Stations etc:	£P 1,988,730.
Rolling Stock:	£P 1,313,110.

Machinery & Plant:	£P	313,890.
Investment in Other Railways:	£P	214,350.
Loan Expenditure:	£P	74,165.
<u>Total:</u>	£P	4,765,610.

6. The Capital Account main-head totals up to 29th. Feb. 1948 including expenditure from the Renewals Fund requiring detailed reconstruction and sub-division to sub-heads or as under:

Land:	£P	145,152.
Permanent Way, Stations, Buildings etc.:	£P	2,855,547.
Rolling Stock:	£P	2,230,593.
Machinery & Plant:	£P	354,710.
Investment in other Railways:	£P	335,536.
Loan Expenses:	£P	74,165.
<u>Total:</u>	£P	5,995,703.

7. Rejected Items by Israel Railways (Total: £P 1,151,486.)

Total including Wickham Valuation (Loan Funds):	£P	249,880.	
Loan Schedule (Loan Funds):	£P	216,768.	
Loan Expenses:	£P	14,272.	
Abstract "F" (Revenue Expenditure):	£P	504,106.	
Renewals Fund (Revenue Expenditure):	£P	166,460.	
		<u>Total:</u>	£P
1,151,486.			

In general, the rejected items fall under two heads, namely (1) the original capital value of the railway assets situated in and on that portion of line now in Arab territory, (2) the original capital value of the railway assets situated in and on that portion of line now in Israel Territory which have been either written-off, abandoned or otherwise missing.

In many cases the original expenditure from Loan Funds was only recorded by the PR in bulk totals and consequently in assessing the rejections in Arab Territory there has been no alternative but to effect division on a kilometric basis.

.....

8. Depreciation Assessment. (Total £P 2,136,605.)

In 1935, Price Waterhouse & Co., accepted the following annual rates of depreciation as the basis for assessing the yearly contributions to the Renewals Fund:

Rails & Fittings;		3% p.a.
Sleepers (Wooden):	10%	
Sleepers (Steel);		3%
Buildings & Bridges;	2½%	
Turnouts & Timbers	10%	
Water Supply		4%
Signalling & Interlocking	5%	
Ballasting	20%	
Locomotives, Coaches and Wagons	3%	
Machinery & Plant	5%	

Further, for the year 1943, the principal railways of the USA declared an

average annual rate of depreciation of 3.41%.

[Therefore, from 1920, the date of the Wickham Valuation, 27 years had passed. $27 \times 3.41 = 94.5$ - so one could theoretically argue that depreciation had been almost total in this period.]

9. Final Results of this Reconstruction.

....It has to be clearly understood that at no time during the reconstruction of the Capital Account has any doubt arisen as to the correctness of the bulk totals of Capital and Renewals Expenditure declared by the PR. There have been, however, innumerable cases detected of misallocation of expenditure to the sub-heads of the account, and to a more minor extent to the "main heads". For instance, the amount of £P 663,840 allocated to the sub-head of "Subsidiary Lines" could have been completely absorbed in the remaining sub-heads had such expenditure been more closely analysed and recorded at the time it was incurred. Many instances of misallocation have been recorded in the "General Comments" which precede the reconstruction schedules supporting each sub-head, but during the reconstruction of the Capital Account as a whole, no attempt has been made to rectify such misallocations, the sole aim having been to endeavour to support the figure as declared by the PR, as far as possible.

.....

In brief, the result of reconstruction and the application of "rejections" and "depreciation" is as follows:

P.R. Capital Account as at 29th. Feb. 1948:	£P 4,765,610.
<u>Add: P.R. Renewals Expenditure as at 29th. Feb. 1948:</u>	<u>£P 1,230,093.</u>
	<u>Total: £P</u>
5,995,703.	
<u>Less:</u>	a). Rejections by I.R. : £P
1,151,486.	
	b). Depreciation : <u>£P</u>
<u>2,136,605.</u>	
<u>Total:</u>	£P 3,288,091.

Total: Book Value of Railway Assets in possession of Israel Railways as at 29th. Feb. 1948 (deemed to be 15th. May 1948): = £P

5,995,703 -

3,288,091

£P

2,707,612.

£P

"Statement B".

Subhead 1. Expenditure 1924 - 28th. Feb. 1948:

Land - Purchase:	£P 26,520.
Land - Compensation:	£P 1,730.
Surveys:	£P 2,494.
Roads:	£P 4,383.
Bridges:	£P 23,372 (of which 9,215 since 1/4/45.)
Drainage:	£P 15,085 (of which 1,246 1945-6, 1,193 1946-7, 6,769

1947-8)			
Fencing;	£P 15,085.	(of which 14,763 since 1/4/45.)	(Note !!!)
Trackwork:	£P 154,186	(of which £P 12,109 since 1/4/45.)	
Ballasting:	£P 35,392	- all since 1945.	(!!)
Buildings:	£P 162,730.	(ca. £P 61,000 since 1/4/45.)	
.....			
Rolling Stock: Sentinel Cammell Cars;	£P 14,581.		
Inspection Cars and Trolleys:	£P 12,338.		(£P 1,580 since 1/4/45.)
Coaches:	£P 53,909		(£P 12,613 <u>Less</u> since 1/4/45).
Wagons:	£P 518,238.		(£P 328,811 since 1/4/45.)
Locos:	£P 533,767.		(£P 304,730 since 1/4/45.)

Investment in Other Railways:

Petah Tikva Railway	£P 10,598.
Kantara-Rafa Railway	£P 266,854.
Hijaz Railway	£P 5.

Subhead No. 2. Surveying Charges.

Haifa East - Kilo. 66.500 (Israel)	66½ Kilometres.
Kilo. 66.500 - Kilo. 68.000 (Arab)	1½ Kilos.
Kilo. 68.000 - Kilo 166.000 (Israel)	98 Kilos.
Kilo. 166.000 - Kilo 212.500 (Arab)	46½ Kilos.

Survey Costs. Include:

1/4/45 - 31/3/46:	£P 513.	No details.
1/4/46 - 31/3/47: Proposed deviation of Main Line via Tel Aviv.	£P 377.	
	Proposed Loop Line Kafr Jinis - Sarafand <u>Junction</u>	£P

432.

Total: £P 809.

Subhead No. 3. Roads.

Subhead No. 4. Bridges.

“Of the original expenditure of £P 41,558 under the Wickham Valuation, details are only available in respect of an amount of £P 13,597, leaving an amount of £P 27,961 which has of necessity been allocated to Israel and the Arab territories on a kilometric basis. Similarly, the amount of £P 72,900 expended under the ‘Loan Schedule’ has also been allocated on a kilometric basis, due to complete absence of details. It is of interest to note that of the original Capital cost of this subhead i.e. £P 145,661, only £P 7,801 represents renewals expenditure, whereas the modest rate of depreciation at 3% p.a. totals £P 66,581. This can only indicate that the renewal of bridges must be seriously in arrears.”

Rejections include:

Kilo 66.5 - Kilo 68.000	(Arab Territory)	1½ Km.
Kilo 166.000 to Kilo 212.500	(Arab Territory)	46½ Km.
Rafa to Beer Sheva.	(Abandoned).	59½ km.

Works: Include:

1940:	Strengthening bridge at Km. 107.3 (Main Line):	£P	449.
1941/2:	Strengthening of Qishon Rly. Bridge	£P	2,013,
	plus 1942/3 ditto.	£P	377.
1945/6:	Additional Span at Bridge at Km. 32.2:	£P	587.
1946/7:	Construction of culverts at Khan Yunis stn.	£P	583.
	Construction of culvert at Km. 187.4:	£P	645.
1947/8:	Strengthening bridges between Haifa and Lydda:	£P	4,836.
	Strengthening bridge at Km. 51.4 Jaffa-J'lem line:	£P	1,407.
	Additional Span at Km. 25 Main Line:	£P	523.

(plus odds and ends).

<u>Total</u>	£P	377 in 1942/3,
	£P	1,253 in 1945/6,
	£P	1,193 in 1946/7,
	£P	6,769 in 1947/8.

(Note - NO expenditure during 1943-5.)

1945-48 Works:

Replacement of five steel spans by concrete slabs at Kilo. 15.300, Main Line. 1945/6.

Renewal of Bridges at: Kilo. 124.139.

Kilo. 148.749.

Kilo. 148.986.

Kilo. 149.176.

Total £P 3,130 in

1946/7 & 1947/8.

Renewal of bridge at Kilo. 81.554 £P 3,075 in
1945/6.

Renewal of Culvert at Kilo. 60.523. £P 382
in 1946/7.

Renewal of steel spans by concrete slabs at Kilo. 49.941. £P 714 in 1946/7.

Combined Total: £P 7,801.

Subhead No. 5: Drainage.

Subhead No. 6. Fencing.

Subhead No. 7. Trackwork.

“.....In conclusion from the foregoing remarks it is quite clear that the condition of the ‘track’ (i.e. the rails and fittings and sleepers) at the time of the evacuation of the Mandatory were in an extremely poor condition, and thus represents a very serious commitment of the IR if the track is to be put into first-class condition, which is essential for expeditious and satisfactory train operation.”

Rejections: Trackwork: £P 254,335.

1920:	Haifa E. to Kilo. 66.5	(Israel)
	Kilo 66.5 to Kilo 68.00	(Arab)
	Kilo 68 to Kilo 166.	(Israel.)
	Kilo 166.000 to Kilo 212.500	(Arab.)
	Rafa - Beersheva 59½ Km.	(Abandoned.)
	Tulkarm - Nur esh Shams. 5 km	(Arab).

Recovered track and turnouts from Wadis Tireh, and Beersheva Lines.

Sidings: Khan Yunis, Belah and Gaza: 5.6 km. (Arab)
Tulkarm - Nur esh Shams : 3.9km. (Arab).
Imara - Beersheva : 3.4 km. (Abandoned.)
Other Stations : 50.2 km. (Israel).

Subhead No. 8: Ballasting.

“The expenditure of £P 35,952 from ‘Abstract F’ was totally spent on new ballasting in the Arab territory and has therefore been rejected.”

Subhead No. 9: Buildings.

Renewal of Signal Cabin, Acre Junc., 1946-7 and 1947/8 : £P 241.
Renewal of Rehovoth Station : £P 3,145.
Renewal of Majdal Station : £P 1,342.
Junior Staff Quarters, Lydda : £P 229.
Reroofing Goods Shed and Station Tulkarm : £P 683.
Reconstructing Ras el Ain Station : £P 1,233.
etc.

Subhead No. 10: Signalling.

“It is to be noted that no expenditure from the Renewals Fund was incurred throughout the 28 years of Mandatory operation and reflects on the proper maintenance of the capital assets. Under this sub-head. It is known that in general the signalling equipment is in very poor condition and that spare parts etc. are practically non-existent. This matter demands early attention.

Rejections: Include:

Arab Territory. Km. 66.5 - 68; Km. 166.0 - 212.5.
Abandoned: Rafa - Beer Sheba.
Tulkarm, - Nur esh Shams.
Interlocking at Deir esh Sheikh, Battir & Qalqilya,
“destroyed during military action in 1947/8.”
(N.B. What about Lod signal box blown up?)

Subhead No. 11: Water Supply.

Subhead No. 12: Lighting.

Subhead No. 13: Station Stores and Equipment.

Subhead No. 14: Subsidiary Lines.

- 1). Beit Nabala Line.
- 2). Sarafand Line.
- 3). Jaffa - Jerusalem Line.

Book value to Israel Railways at 15/5/48 £P 128,153. From the aspect of detail analysis this subhead is highly unsatisfactory, especially as it involved the large amount of original capital expenditure, namely £P 663,840.

- (i). Construction of the Beit Nabala Branch Line, 1921/3 Loan Schedule: £P 14,513.
- (ii). Construction of the Sarafand Branch Line, Loan Schedule 1921/3. :£P

19,239.

(iii). Jaffa-Jerusalem Line.

a). Purchase of Assets from the British Army (Wickham Valuation 1920):

£P 95,176.

b). Converting Lydda-Jaffa section from 60cm. to std. gauge (Loan 1921/3.)

£ P 13,661.

c). Compensation paid to Soc. du Chemin de Fer Ottoman J-J:

1921/3	£P 219,145.
1923/4	£P 100,292.
1924/5	£P 95,931.
1925/6	£P 91,570.

Unexplainable adjustment: 1945/6: £P 14,313.

Total (of (i), (ii) & (iii).): £P 663,840.

“In brief, the foregoing clearly shows how completely unreliable were the various allocations of capital expenditure made by the Mandatory Government.”

Subhead No. 15: Locomotives.

“This subhead of capital expenditure is one of the few that is reasonably supported by detail, as shown in various supporting schedules, and therefore does not call for comment, other than the amount of £P 83,931 under the heading of “Conversion of locos to oil burning” in Abstract F during the period 1941/2 to 1947/8, and the unexplainable debit of £P 22,710 in Abstract F, 1945/6. From careful analysis of these amounts totalling £P 106,641 it is estimated that approx. £P 54,502 was spent on the construction of service and storage oil tanks at various locations, whilst the remainder was actually spent on locos.

It is considered that the foregoing amount of £P 54,502 would have more appropriately been accommodated under the subhead of “Machinery & Plant (C.M.E.)”.

Wickham Valuation: Locos & Cranes: LP 883,976.

<u>Rejections:</u>	1. Manning Wardle 0-6-0T w/d 1928,	total
£P 810.		
	2. German 0-6-0T w/d 1928.	
total	£P 489.	
	3. 29 0-6-0 LSW. 22 w/d 1928, 7 w/d 1937.	£P 11,387.
	4. 10 Tender locos 4-6-0 Baldwin. 5 w/d 1942, 2 w/d 1948.	£P
66,026.		
	5. Sentinel Cammel shunter*. w/d 1948. (£P 3,379 in 1928).	
	6. LMS - loco missing at 15/5/1948:	£P 10,464.
	<u>Total:</u>	£P
92,518.		
		Less <u>Depreciation</u> at
3% =	£P266,200.	

Book Value at 15th. May

1948: £P 525,258.

* sic - this was in fact purely Sentinel; Cammell (sic) built carriages for the railcar units. The LMS loco missing was presumably that stranded at Tulkarm station.

Which Baldwins were withdrawn? The five withdrawn after accidents in 1942, at a time of loco shortage, are known, but not the others, nor the reasons (sabotage?).

Wartime etc:

Purchase 1946/7 of (2 x) USA tank locos:	£P 14,663.
Purchase from WD of 24 x LMS locos:	£P 251,150.
Purchase from WD of 1 x 36T Breakdown Crane.	£P 8,000.
1941/2: Purchase of two new boilers for 5T steam travelling cranes.	£P 284.

(i.e. total of £P274,097).

(26 new locos bought from WD).

Subhead No. 16: Sentinel Cammel Cars.

Cost : £P 10,963 in 1928.

Subhead No. 17: Inspection Cars and Trolleys.

Rejections: include

three railcars of 1936/7 - "scrap and awaits write-off"	£P 3,807.
12 Ford chassis for Patrol Trolleys - scrap and write off 1936/7	£P 3,632.
12 Ford Motors ex. WD Egypt for Patrol Trolleys - scrap and w/o.1937/8:	£P 911.
12 Ford Chassis for Rail trolleys - scrap and write-off 1937/8.	£P 3,745.
1 Wickham Gang Trolley. Missing & Write-off 1945/6.:	£P 336.

Purchase: 1947/8: 1 Jap & Wickham Gang Trolley, £P 336.

2 Wickham Gang Trolleys. £P 653.

Subhead No. 18: Coaches.

The analysis of capital expenditure under this sub-head has been found reasonably reliable as details of the expenditure in the Wickham Valuation and the Loan Schedule are available.

It is necessary to point out that of the original expenditure in the years 1920-1922 (i.e. £P 238,391) only £P 18,571 has been spent in renewals over a period of approx. 28 years. This clearly indicates that a very high percentage of the coaches now in possession of the Israel Railways are practically life-expired and will require early replacement if economical maintenance is to be attained.

Rejections : Coaches Written-Off.

Midland Saloon 99 written-off 1942/3.

Midland 1st. No. 105 w/o 1938/9.

101 w/o 1946/7.

Midland 2nd. 305 w/o 1938/9,

307 w/o 1946/7.

Midland 3rds. 301 w/o 1946/7.

302 w/o 1946/7.

303 w/o 1946/7.

304 w/o 1946/7.

5 LSWR Ambulance Coaches:

315 w/o 1936/7.

317 w/o 1936/7.

311 w/o 1938/9.

	79 w/o	1942/3.
	309 w/o	1946/7.
LSW BPL	556 w/o	1938/9.
Birmingham 2nd.	128 w/o	1942/3.
	129 w/o	1947/8.
Metro. 1st/3rds.	400 w/o	1946/7.
	403 w/o	1947/8.
Birmingham 3rd.	327 w/o	1947/8.
Metro Brake/3rd.	502 w/o	1946/7.
	505 w/o	1946/7.
ESR Service Coaches	42 w/o	1934/5.
	91 w/o	1946/7.
	90 w/o	1947/8.
Clayton 3rd.	330 w/o	1947/8.
	333 w/o	1947/8.
Perishable Vans	563 w/o	1941/2.
	566 w/o	1946/7.
Gloucester 3rd.	341 w/o	1947/8.
	<i>(i.e. 30 coaches written off during PR period: incl. 1 in 1941/2, 3 in 1942/3, 12 in 1946/7, 7 in 1947/8.)</i>	

Book Value of Coaches as at 15th. May 1948: £P 74,6569.

Wickham Valuation: Coaches: £P 14,315. Made up of:

1 Midland Saloon	£P	660.
6 Midland 1sts.	£P	4,402.
4 Midland 2nds.	£P	2,544.
5 Midland 3rds.	£P	2,935.
10 LSWR Ambulance Coaches	£P	2,904.
2 LSWR BPL's	£P	870.
<u>Total:</u>	<u>£P</u>	<u>14,315.</u> <i>(i.e. PR started life in 1920 with 28 coaches.)</i>

Bought 1921/22/23, from Loan Schedule: Total £P 224,076. Made up of:

10 Birmingham 1sts.	£P	66,260.
4 Metro 1st/2nds.	£P	23,504.
9 Birmingham 3rds.	£P	39,609.
6 Metro Brake/3rds.	£P	24,365.
2 Birmingham Saloons	£P	15,776.
3 Metro BPL's	£P	11,253.
4 ESR Service Coaches	£P	2,052.
6 Metro 2nds.	£P	32,652. <i>(i.e. PR purchased 44 coaches by 1923.)</i>

Debit items: No details: £P 8,605.
Total: £P 224,076.

Details of Capital Expenditure from Revenue: Total £P 53,909. (made up of:)

1926/7: Purchase of 6 new Clayton 3rds	£P	23,315.
1927 : Purchase of 2 bogies for Passenger stock	£P	703.

1927	: Purchase of 6 Perishable & 2 Refrigerator Vans:	£P 12,526.
1929	: Conversion of Saloon.	£P 1,542.
1931	: Modification of 3 BPL's for Mails.	£P 72.
1932/3:	Conversion of Midland 1st. 104. (<i>To Composite ?</i>)	£P 89.
1933/4:	Conversion of Midland 1sts. 101, 102, 105 to 1st/2nd.	
		Composites: £P 60.
1935/6:	Electric lighting in s.g. coaches	£P 183,
	and ditto in 1936/7:	£P 2,272.
	(<i>or 2172?</i>)	
1936/7:	Purchase of 2 new Parcels Vans:	£P 1,973.
1936/7:	Purchase of 6 new Gloucester 3rds.	£P 21,839.
1937/8:	Conversion of coaches 102 & 104 to Buffet Cars.	£P 42.
	(<i>Note: this was the 2nd. conversion in 6 years.</i>)	
1945/6:	Unexplained Credit of	£P 12,613.
	(<i>Plus a few minor items, to make up the total.</i>)	

(*i.e. PR then purchased a further 12 coaches, 10 Vans, and rebuilt 7 coaches & 3 Parcels/Mail vans under this heading.*)

Details of Capital Expenditure from Renewals Fund - Mechanical.

1936/7 & 1937/8:	Part cost of Rebuilding Coaches 123-129.	£P 1,282.
1937/40:	Rebuilding 123, 126,	£P 3,901.
	(<i>Same or second rebuilding of same stock ?</i>)	
1937/38:	Renewal of 2 Gloucester s.g. coaches:	£P 7,293.
1943/4 & 1944/5:	Bogie Service Coach No. 95, total:	£P 6,095.
	Total::	£P18,571.

(*i.e. 2 coaches purchased as replacements, & 7 coaches rebuilt.*)

“Note: The numbers of Perishable and Refrigerator Vans is allowed for in the Goods Stock Summary; the cost of this stock is temporarily accommodated in the Coaching Stock Summary.”

<u>Coaches: Mandatory Capital Value at 29th. Feb. 1948:</u>	£P 310,871.
<u>Less - Rejections by IR:</u>	£P 63,351.
	=
247,540.	£P
<u>Less: Depreciation at 3% p.</u>	£P 172,871.
<u>Total Book Value to IR at 15th. May 1948:</u>	£P 74,669.

The coaches are seen to have come in three main phases:

a). What was taken over from the military in 1920. (28 vehicles, all second-hand).

b). What was bought in the first flush of optimistic planning, from the “Loan funds”.

(44 coaches, mostly new.)

c). What was later purchased as the system settled down. (12+2 coaches, 10 Perishables Vans, various vehicles rebuilt to suit traffic requirements.)

Subhead No. 19: Wagons.

“General Comments: Details of the original expenditure under this subhead are available as shown.....

It is of considerable importance to the Israel Government to note that in addition to the 2,264 Mandatory wagons in possession of the IR at the 15th. May 1948, there is [sic] also approximately 250 wagons, the property of Foreign Railways and the British War Department, which were in Israel at the time of the evacuation, but have not been included in the supporting schedules.

It is essential to definitely ascertain whether or not it is necessary to maintain a fleet of wagons with a capacity tonnage of 38,000 tons to meet the actual tonnage which the IR is required to convey during the busiest periods.

If, however, it is found necessary to maintain this high figure of capacity tonnage, then the question of replacements of many of the older type of wagons, especially covered wagons, must be considered at an early date.”

<u>Wagons: Mandatory Capital Value as at 29th. Feb. 1948:</u>	£P 1,000,667.
<u>Less: Rejections by IR</u>	£P
174,507.	
=	£P 826,160.
<u>Less: Depreciation at 3% p.a.</u>	= £P 225,921.
<u>Book Value to IR at 15th. May 1948:</u>	£P 600,239.

Rejections Include:

Original Value (Wickham) of 1048 wagons written off or missing (from 1920 stock).
£P 71,788.

Loan Schedule: Original value of 27 wagons w/o or missing (bought 1921-3). £P 14,346.

Original value of 157 Wagons w/o or missing 1934-38, under Abstract F. £P 39,555.

and 1st. April 1947 to 28th. Feb. 1948: £P 44,032.

Total: £P 74,987.

From Renewals: 39 Wagons w/o or missing:

£P 877 in 1941/2.

£P 9,658 in 1944/5.

£P 3,251 in 1946/7.

Total: £P 13,786.

Total: £P 174,507.

Less Depreciation: £P 225,921.

Book Value at 15th. May 1948: £P 600,239.

Wagons: Wickham Valuation of 1920: £P 157,066.

1002 x WD 10T Open Wagons: £P 62,316.

47 x 10T Cambrian Open Wagons: £P

2,338.

224 x GWR 10T Open Wagons £P 21,592.

120 x WD 10T wooden Covered Wagons £P 7,762.

58 x WD 12T wooden Covered Wagons £P 4,329.

250 x WD 12T steel Covered vans £P 43,534.

46 x GCR Brake Vans: £P 5,722.

48 x WD Bolster Wagons: £P 2,985.

14 x WD Water Tank Wagons : £P 856.

3,582.	80 x Ballast Wagons :	£P
80.	2 x Crane Runners :	£P
	10 x 15T WD wood Covered Repairs Vans	£P 1,990.
	Total:	£P 157,066.

(i.e. PR began life in 1920 with 1,273 Open Wagons, 428 Covered Vans, 48 Bolsters & 142 Non-Revenue/Service Vehicles. Total: 1,891 Goods Vehicles.)

Wagons: Capital Expenditure from Loan Schedule. £P 125,124.

1921/3:

500.	2 x Gas Holders (ESR).	£P 2,896.
	2 x Disinfector Steel Box Vans (ESR)	£P
	200 x 12T Steel Vans:	£P 108,585.
	17 x 15T Flats (ESR	£P 1,447.
	4 x 30T bogie Flats	£P
4,457.	4 x 30T bogie Tank Wagons:	£P 4,740.
	Debit Items (no details).	<u>(£P 2,449).</u>
	Total:	£P 125,124.

(i.e. 229 Vehicles. Combined total of 2,320 Vehicles by 1923.)

Wagons: Capital Expenditure from Revenue: £P 518,238.

1930.	3 x Tanks.	£P 1,208.
1928/9.	6 x S.G. Water Tanks (@179).	£P 1,075.
1931.	1 x Benzine and 5 x Kerosene Tanks.	£P 1,066.
1931.	10 x Kerosene Tanks. (@149).	£P 1,492.
	(1931: Fitting of Baldwin tenders for oil:	£P 156
	1932/3. 6 x Benzine Tanks. (@122). £P 734.	
	1932/3. 100 wagons fitted with through pipes.	
	25 wagons fitted with Vacuum Brakes.	
	1931-3. Fitting new ventilators to box wagons for Citrus.	£P 1,081
	1934/5: 3 x 30T oil tank wagons. (@976).	£P 2,929.
	1934/5. Purchase of additional goods wagons, wood.	£P 33,034.
	<i>(No indication of number !)</i>	
	1934/5. Purchase of 4 x 30T Flats. (@581).	£P 2,325.
	1934-5. Hire of Shell tank wagons.	£P 505.
	1934/5. Purchase of 6 x Benzine Tanks. (@145).	£P 869.
	1935/6. Purchase of 7 x S.G. oil tanks.	£P 1,015.
	1935/6. Purchase of 6 x 30T Flats. (@145).	£P
3,519.		
	1938/9. Purchase of 90 new s.g. wagons, wood. (@ 374)	£P 33,660.
	1938/9. Conversion of box wagons to refrigerator vans.	£P 323.
	<i>(How many ?)</i>	
	1938/9. Purchase of 25 Timber Flats.	£P 7,608.
	1938/9 & 1940/41: Purchase of 125 covered wooden vans.	£P 46,761.
	1938/9. Purchase of 11 x Oil Tanks.	£P 1,487.
	1938/9. Reconversion of 50 x 10T Flats to Open Wagons.	£P 1,147.
	1938/9. Construction of 3 x Armoured Wagons.	£P 168.

1938/9. Conversion of 50 Open Wagons to Cattle Wagons.	£P	2,216
1940/1. Purchase of 75 x 12T covered Vans (wood).	£P	31,036.
		plus in 1941/2, £P 413
total	£P	31,499.
1940/1. Purchase of 1 x 30T Tank Wagon	£P	1,068.
1942/3. Conversion of 4 x Box Vans to Refrigerator Vans,	£P	1,081.
1943/4. Conversion of 12 x Box Vans to Brake Vans.	£P	2,475.*
1945/6. Construction of 6 x Travelling Tanks for conveyance of Oil.	£P	2,921,
plus £P1,005 in 1946/7, and £P 439 in 1947/8,		<u>total</u> : £P
4,365.		
1945/6. Unexplained Debit:	£P	11,853.
1947/8. Purchase of 47 x 14T WD Tank Wagons.	£P	18,000.
1947/8. Purchase of 13 x 40T Low-Sided Wagons.	£P	9,308.
1947/8. Purchase of 200 x 20T High-Sided Wagons.	£P	100,000.
1947/8. Purchase of 10 x SR-type Brake Vans.	£P	5,785.
1947/8. Purchase of 150 x 20T Box Vans.	£P	100,000.
1947/8. Purchase of 117 x 40T Box Vans.	£P	70,000.
1947/8. Purchase of 7 x WD Refrigerator Vans	£P	9,500.

* (A sign of desperation in wartime traffic conditions !)

(i.e. in the 1930's and until 1945, another 364 plus an unspecified number of vehicles bought; following the war, a further 544 ex-WD wagons bought.)

i.e. Expenditure on Wagons:

In 1940/1 a total of	£P	1,075,
In 1941/2 a total of	£P	2,475,
In 1942/3 a total of		NIL.
In 1943/4 a total of	£P	17. (!)
In 1944/5 a total of		NIL.
In 1945/6 a total of	£P	14,774.
In 1946/7 a total of	£P	1,005,
In 1947/8 a total of	£P	313,032 (!!!)

Details of Capital Expenditure from Renewals Fund: Wagons: £P 200,239.

1932/3. Purchase of 4 x Water Tanks.	£P	540.
1933/4: Purchase of 5 x Water Tanks.	£P	592.
1933/4: Purchase of 3 x Oil Tanks.	£P	422.
1934/5: Purchase of 5 x Water Tanks.	£P	751.
1934/5: Purchase of 2 x Oil Tanks.	£P	272.
1935/6: Purchase of 5 x Water Tanks.	£P	623.
1937/8: Purchase of 5 x Water Tanks.	£P	333.
		plus others £P
833.		
		plus 4 x Tanks. £P
450.		
1938/39: Purchase of 5 x Water Tanks.	£P	842.
1939/40: Purchase of 5 x Water Tanks.	£P	793.
1940/41: Purchase of 19 x 10/12T GWR LSB Open Wagons.	£P	1,772
		Plus in 1944/5:
£P		1,557.
	Total:	£P

3,329.

1944/5. Purchase of 217 x 13T WD Open Wagons:	£P 72,261.
1946/7: Purchase of 113 x 35/40T USA Covered Vans:	£P 74,563.
1946/7: Purchase of 52 x 35/40T USA bogie Tank Wagons.	£P 31,771
1946/7: Purchase of 18 x USA Brake Vans.	_____ £P
<u>12,995.</u>	

Total

£P200,239.

(of which £P 119,329 in 1946/7, and £P 72,261 in 1944/5.)

Wagons Rejected: Written-off or Missing.

From Wickham 1920:

675 x 10T WD Open.	
36 x 10T (Cambrian) Open.	
49 x 10T (GWR) Open.	
76 x 10T (WD) Vans.	
43 x 12T (WD) wooden Vans.	
36 x 12T (WD) steel Vans.	
30 x GCR Brake Vans.	
22 units WD Bolster wagons.	(These would normally operate in pairs)
12 x 10T Water Tank Wagon.	
67 x 10T Ballast wagons.	
2 x Crane Tenders.	(= 1,048 of the 1,891 vehicles of 1920.)

From Loan 1921/3.

2 x Gas Holder wagons.	
1 x ESR Disinfector Van (steel).	
20 x 12 Covered Vans (steel).	
4 x 15T Covered Vans.	(= 26 of the 229 vehicles bought 1921-3.)

1934/5:	21 x 12T wooden Vans.
1935/6.	1 x 30T bogie Flat.
	1 x 30T bogie Tank Wagon.
	18 x 12T wood Vans.
1936/7.	23 x 12T wood Vans.
1937/8.	16 x 12T wood Vans.
1947/8:	2 x 14/18T Oil Tank Wagons.
	24 x 20T high-sided Open Wagons.
	11 x 20T Vans.
	40 x 35T Covered Vans.
	5 x 10/12T GWR ex-LSB Open Wagons.
	29 x 13T WD Open Wagons.
	4 x 35T USA Covered Vans.
	1 x 35/40T USA Tank Wagons. (= 196 wagons bought

1930's-40's.)

(i.e. Total wagons written-off during existence of PR: 1,048 + 26 + 196 = 1,270.)

Subhead No. 20. Road Motors and Lorries.

Book Value to IR at 15th. May 1948: £P 1,374.

Rejections: Include:

2 Rio omnibuses (£P1,597) sold in approx. 1922 and written-off.

1 Ford pick-up, stolen by Arabs & awaits write-off.

2 Vauxhall motor cars stolen during Disturbance - awaits write-off.

Subhead No. 21. Machinery & Plant. Chief Engineer.

Mandatory Capital Value, at 29th. Feb. 1948: £P 296,364.

Rejections by IR £P 34,892.

£P 261,472.

Less Depreciation: £P 142,394.

Book Value to IR at 15/5/1948: £P 119,078.

Rejections include:

Power House, Haifa - (abandoned.) £P 7,729.

C & W Repair & Cleaning Sheds, Haifa. (abandoned) £P 10,705.

Foundry, Haifa. (Abandoned.) £P 55.

Bat Galim & Kfar Samir (abandoned.) £P 10,798.

Machinery Nur Esh Shams (Arab Territory). £P 5,465.

etc.

Total:

£P 34,892.

1947/8. "Stone crushers at Nur esh Shams" £P 1,150.

1947/8. Renewal of Decauville track at Nur esh Shams. £P 629.

1947/8. Renewal of 2 Stone crushers & screens, at Nur esh Shams. £P 2,318.

Subhead No. 22. Machinery & Plant CME.

Book Value, IR. 15th. May 1948. £P 41,856.

Subhead No. 23. Chief Accountant.

IR Book Value: £P 6,366.

Subhead No. 24. Petah Tiqva Railway.

Mandatory Capital Investment: Value at 29th. Feb. 1948: £P 65,130.

Less: Depreciation at 3% p.a. Book Value to IR, £P 23,719.

General Comments: The original Capital expenditure on this branch line was £P 54,532 from the 'Loan Schedule' of which £P 20,513 was invested by the Petah Tiqva Colony (though P.I.C.A.) and £P 34,019 expended by the Palestine Government. At 31th. March 1947, the investment by the Petah Tiqva Colony had been amortised to the extent of £P 835 leaving a balance of £P 19,678 still due to the Colonists. During the period 1/4/1922 to 31/3/47, the Colonists (through PICA) were paid the sum of £P 21,812 by way of interest rated at 6% p.a.

It would appear to be a matter for the Israel Government to decide whether or not they are prepared to continue the financial agreement as made between the Mandatory Government and the Palestine Jewish Colonisation Association. This matter demands early attention.”

1946/8. Transfer of Kfar Yehoshua Loco Shed to Citrus Shed Petah Tiqva: £P 1,096.

Subhead No. 25. Kantara - Rafa Railway.

Mandatory Capital Value at 29/2/48: £P 269,398.
 Less: Rejections by Israel Government: £P 269,398.
Book Value to Israel Railways: Nil.

“Comments: The investment by the Palestine Government in the Kantara - Rafah Railway up to 29th. Feb. 1948 amounted to £P 269,398, and figured as a charge to the Capital Account of the Palestine Railways. The Kantara - Rafa Rly. was at all time the property of the British Government and was operated by the Palestine Government under agreement with the former.

On 1/4/48 the Kantara-Rafa Railway was transferred by the British Government to the Egyptian Government, it can only be presumed that the investment by the Palestine Government on that railway was included in the financial settlement made between the British Government and the Egyptian Government.

This investment does not appear to affect the Israel Government and has therefore been rejected in full in the reconstruction of the Palestine Railways Capital Account.

Investment in the Kantara - Rafa Line. Includes:

1940/1. Additional dead-end siding for Transporter at Kantara.	£P 622.
1941/2. “New Works Kantara - Rafa Line”.	£P 2,637.
1942/3. New goods shed at El Arish.	£P 307.
plus Air-Raid Precautions etc.	
1942/3. Construction of siding at Kantara Wharf.	

Subhead No. 27. Loan Expenses.

Mandatory Capital Value: £P 74,163.
 Less: Rejections. £P 14,272.
Book Value to IR: £P 59,893.

“In the absence of any information as to whether or not any agreement has been arrived at between the British Government (on behalf of the Mandatory Government) and the Israel Government in respect of Loan Funds, liabilities, this item has been temporarily included in the reconstruction.”

Palestine Railways Capital Account as at 29th. February 1948.

	<u>Prior 1947/8</u>	<u>During 1947/8</u>	<u>Total</u>
Land	£P 143,999.	£P 1,153.	£P 145,152.
P-Way, Stations & Buildings	£P1,988,750.	£P 19,189.	£P2,007,919.
Locos, Carriages, Wagons	£P1,313,110.	£P 575,896.	£P1,887,006.
Manufacture & Repair			

of Works & Plant.	£P	313,890.	£P	1,542.	£P	315,832.
Investment on Kantara-Rafa	£P	149,839.	£P	119,559.	£P	269,398.
on Hijaz	£P	1,008.				-
£P		1,008.				
on Petah Tiqva			£P	63,503.		£P
1,627.	£P	65,130.				
Loan Issue Expenses (1926)	£P	66,620.		-	£P	66,620.
Loan Conversion Expenses	£P	7,545.				-
£P		7,545.				
	Total:		£P	4,048,244.		£P 717,366.
<u>£P 4,765,610.</u>						

Clearly the aim of this Analysis is not specifically to convince Israel Railways' bankers of its net worth, but to justify and, if possible, minimise the amounts that IR was taking over from the Mandatory Government, lest such sums be demanded by Great Britain in compensation for what had been purchased for Palestine and then left behind.

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APPENDIX 8.

NOTES ON BRITISH MILITARY RAILWAY INVOLVEMENT IN PALESTINE RAILWAYS (AND RELATED LINES) FROM 1939 TO 1948.

It is clear that Palestine Railways were by no means equipped to deal with the major surges of traffic that were caused by the Second World War - the conflicts themselves in North Africa, Syria and Iraq; the expansion of troop movements between Egypt and the Recreation bases and Hospitals in Palestine; the revised traffic flows caused especially by the opening of the Haifa - Beirut - Tripoli line which made it part of a through route; or the reduction in civilian shipping.

The development of P.R. during this period from the perspective of P.R. itself is dealt with elsewhere, as is the issue of W.D. and USATC rolling-stock. Here, we mainly examine (from the military side) the role of several military units and the assistance they provided both to P.R. through provision of staff and equipment, and for the direct handling of military traffic. Total clarity is impossible to attain; Sometimes military staff worked P.R. lines, and sometimes the reverse; sometimes P.R. locos worked military branches, and sometimes W.D. locos were hired to work P.R. trains.

These units served at different times in different locations, often with detachments operating at several locations separate from the main base. Their history is complex, sometimes overlapping, and not fully recorded. Nevertheless, although some had ceased their activity in Palestine itself by the end of the War, their activity in maintenance etc. elsewhere may have influenced the availability of motive power in Palestine; and some remained active until the very final British withdrawal from the Haifa Enclave in June 1948. It is part of the whole nature of this history that military involvement in the region did not end in 1945, so no specific "caesura" can be made on VE-Day. In addition, many men were transferred from one unit to another as circumstances required. It is hard to draw exact boundaries - the context of operations of course was different during the War, when Palestine formed a "bridge" between Egypt / North Africa and Syria / Turkey / Iraq, and after the War, when Palestine was more of an "appendage" to Egypt. Therefore some information is given here of wartime developments, policies, and changes of policy, to provide background for the 1945-48 period.

Egypt was considered the base for operations in the Balkans, Syria and North Africa. However, in March 1941 it became necessary to transport all supplies between India, Australia and the East and the UK via the Cape, because the Mediterranean was becoming too dangerous. The closure of the Suez Canal due to mining by German aircraft led to hold-ups for naval oil, coal for the Greek railways, and war materials for Greece and Turkey.

Additional wharves were built at a number of points along the Canal, the capacity of Suez port increased, and to get around this problem further construction of alternative routes was planned:

1. Railway Suez - Ismailia to be doubled to increase clearance from Suez.
 2. Pipeline Suez - Port Said to be laid for naval fuel oil.
 3. Enlarge Aqaba as a Port and link it to Hedjaz Railway at Ma'an.
 4. Because the route via Aqaba was difficult, to build wharves near the mouth of the Canal at El Shatt on the East bank, and a railway to Kantara to join the Trans-Sinai railway, replaced later by deep water berths at Marrakeb.
 5. To develop lighterage port of Safaga, south of Gulf of Suez, and build a narrow-gauge line to Qena.
 6. To expand Port Sudan, from which there was a railway to Egypt via the Nile Valley.¹¹⁵⁴
- All these schemes required military railway surveyors, builders and operators.

¹¹⁵⁴ "History of the Second World War. The Mediterranean and Middle East." by I.S.O. Playfair. HMSO, 1956. p.226.

What was the function of these military railwaymen? As Booker writes of his own unit,¹¹⁵⁵ “193 Railway Operating Squadron¹¹⁵⁶ were used to supplement the existing Palestine Railways administration by furnishing operating and running staff, or by taking over and staffing certain yards, stations or sections of the line, or both, to ensure the working of military trains. The railway troops would work military trains to whatever destination from whatever starting point as authorised, and would also operate the railway in the docks.”¹¹⁵⁷

Military Transportation Personnel

It would not be appropriate or necessary to this thesis to list every unit and every movement, but it is hoped that a “snapshot” and some personal memoirs will give some indication of what was involved. From PRO/WO169/960, (Appendix F.) the situation in 1941 can be extracted:

In Palestine, January 1941 : 199 Rly. Wksp. Coy.	6 + 370.
1st. Aust. Rly. Con. Coy.	5 + 235.
3rd. Aust. Rly. Con. Coy.	4 + 157.
1st. Aust. Rly. Surv. Coy.	5 + 61.
HQ, Aust. Rly. Survey Gp.	2 + 7.
Tn. Branch Directorate, Pal.	4 + 5.
<u>Total</u> : 26 Officers, 835 O.R.'s.	

Various movements are recorded, including some to Tobruk.
In Egypt, in January 1941, 71 Officers, 1,314 OR's.)

From contemporary reports: NZE Rly. Const. & Maintenance Group HQ & Nos. 10 & 13 NZE Rly. Coys. moved into the Canal Area in February 1941, "and have settled down to work on depot construction". 17th. NZE R.O.C. stationed on Suez-Ismailia area to expedite traffic. This was a Unit formed of N.Z. Tn. troops already in the ME area, "and is really only a composite Coy., formed from existing units to meet existing demands". Moved 15 June 1941.

Balance of HQ & 3rd. Aust. units due March 1941, also the 2nd. Aust. R.Con.Coy. RAE., 12 Rly. Liaison officers etc.

In July 1941 for the Exercise ‘Defence of Egypt’: up to 10 Rly. Optg. Coys. were required - there shortfall of 4. 2 more were being recruited in S. Africa.

20 August 1941: 29th. Rly. Cons. Coy. SAEC & 47th. Rly. Survey Oy. SAEC had left for Egypt.

The history of some of the units involved has been extracted from a variety of such mixed sources.

a). 169 Railway Workshops Company, Royal Engineers.

Commanding Officer in 1943 was Andrew Henderson¹¹⁵⁸; a railway engineer with training and experience in Switzerland, Britain and Argentina, he had been mobilised in March 1940, worked first on the Melbourne Military Railway, was then sent as Staff Captain (Bridging) to GHQ, MEF, from March 1941. Following this in October 1942 he was appointed 2 i/c Railway Workshop Group RE, responsible for military railway workshops in the Middle East and repairs to WD locomotives in Palestine and Syria. From January 1943 he was O.C. of 169 Railway Workshops Coy., Works Manager, responsible for equipping workshops and repairing three steam

¹¹⁵⁵ Letter of 31. Jan. 1993.

¹¹⁵⁶ The later title, from May 1947.

¹¹⁵⁷ Sources for this section are partly certain War Diaries and records found at the P.R.O., Kew; (Especially Files WO 169 / 960 - 966, “Diaries of Directorate of Transportation, GHQ, Middle East Forces”); the “War Cabinet Middle East Principal Telegrams Relating to Operations in the Middle East” (printed for War Cabinet; 1941 et seq.); There is nevertheless very little official information available on the military railway operations, and much information has been assembled from anecdotes, interviews, letters and notes from former servicemen. This comes more under the category of “Oral History”, with all its advantages and disadvantages, and some of the information is fragmentary or contradictory.

¹¹⁵⁸ Information on Henderson is taken from a brief Biography by Dr. Paul E. Waters in “British Overseas Railway Journal” No. 10, 1993, p. 150.

locos per month, maintaining 12 diesel-electric shunting locos, and re-erecting 2,000 wagons from the UK, USA and India. He was responsible for 600 military personnel and 1,000 natives. From December 1943 to August 1945 he was Railway Transportation (Railway Workshops) at GHQ MEF, and was demobilised in Nov. 1945 as Major.

A later commanding officer was a Major Stone. By 1946/7 169 Coy. was based mainly at Suez, with detachments under a Lt. Vick at various points along the Canal area servicing diesel shunting locos. 169 Coy. was formed largely from a Territorial Squadron, possibly from Crewe¹¹⁵⁹, and many of the men were called up in 1951 for further service in 155 Railway Workshops Squadron.¹¹⁶⁰

Peter Hartley¹¹⁶¹ recalls serving with 169 Coy. for three years “on and off”, though he also spent some time with 199 Coy. In fact, when he first arrived in Egypt in adventurous circumstances he was not expected, and went to 169 for a month until it transpired he should have been sent to 10th. Railway Mobile Workshop at Moascar and should have been made Sergeant! Having served his apprenticeship at John Fowler’s Works, Leeds, he reckoned he was the only “Fitter-Locomotive-Diesel” in the Army at the time, and a friend, Geoff Small, the only Electrical Diesel Loco Fitter. He recalls around 1947 being ordered by a Capt. Hodgkinson (of B.R., Derby)¹¹⁶² to get several ME 2-8-2 locomotives in steam - they had not been inspected, but were due to be sold to Turkey. They were transported to Port Said in one trainload. There was a large German POW camp, with prisoners allocated to work all over the Suez garrisons, and around 150 were still working with the Unit at this time.

Around 150 8F 2-8-0’s were prepared for transport back to Great Britain via Port Said and the “Belships”¹¹⁶³.

In 1948¹¹⁶⁴ he and a Sapper Short were sent by E.S.R. passenger train to Rafa to inspect some locos for possible transport back. They were the only two British soldiers on the train - this was soon after the pullout. He recollects at least eight standard-gauge 4-8-2’s; His O.C. had told him unofficially that “they didn’t need the job”, and he had to make a report on the difficulty of transporting these locos across Sinai, since they had central couplings and no buffers, could not be steamed, had poor seams on the boilers, were definitely tender locos with W.D. numbers but were not similar to the ME 2-8-2’s. No match wagons were available¹¹⁶⁵. They returned on an E.S.R. train together with Jewish POW’s in handcuffs, and he recalls “feeling sorry for them, as they were having a hard time”. On return there was uproar that British soldiers had gone to Palestine after the British withdrawal - they were asked what arms they had taken, and replied that they had simply been advised to “keep their heads down”.

Bob Crane wrote: “At 1945 at the end of hostilities in Europe I was posted to Ismailia, Canal Zone, then to G.H.Q. Cairo Signals Office. One morning a signal came through marked “Urgent”. “Experienced Foundryman needed at 169 Railway Workshops Suez.” Grabbing the signal I took it to the Officer in Charge and asked him, could I be posted? A short while later I was

¹¹⁵⁹ The major L.M.S.R. Locomotive Works.

¹¹⁶⁰ From a telephone conversation with Mr. Ken McKeand of Workington, 6. Jan. 1994.

¹¹⁶¹ Interviewed in Leeds, 01. December 1992.

¹¹⁶² Technically British Railways was not formed until 1. Jan. 1948. L.M.S.R. must be meant here.

¹¹⁶³ Ships of the ‘Bel’ Line (“Belpamela”, “Belray” etc.) - were fitted with powerful derricks for loading such heavy machinery as locomotives.

¹¹⁶⁴ This is a strange story, and no further substantiation has been found for it, nor can these locomotives be identified. Central couplings imply narrow-gauge or American practice. Yet - during personal interview this man’s recollections were otherwise clear and detailed and accurate. So many strange events occurred at this period that this story has been included - with this warning. As noted elsewhere (*Appendix 5*), several unidentified “Army locos” were left behind in 1948, to be scrapped in the 1950’s.

¹¹⁶⁵ i.e. wagons with different couplings at each end, to act as “matching” drawgear for stock fitted with different types of buffers or couplings.

called to his office and given my posting orders and told to report to the R.T.O. at Cairo Main station the next morning for onward transport to Suez.

At Suez station I was met by a driver from 169. Arriving at the camp I was taken to the R.S.M. who allocated me a bed in the tent near the sidings which was to be my home for the next two years. I was told to report to Company office Workshops Officer - walking through the sidings to company office, it was a schoolboy's dream come true. I was really on a high - here were wagons and trains everywhere, some trains under steam, some dead and the rest cannibalised for their parts and left by the track side.

Captain Christie took me to see Sgt. Bell who was going home on demobilisation in a few days, so he could not help me much and I was more or less thrown in the deep end.

The Foundry! Well, after serving my time in a high-tech aero foundry this was like going back a hundred years, a sort of foundry I read about in my school books, but never thought I would ever see. In January 1946 orders came from Company office that as many locomotives as possible were to be refurbished up to working order ready for shipping home or wherever.

For the next two years we worked flat-out with the help of the German prisoners, three shifts 6 to 2, 2 to 10 and 10 to 6. Our small foundry of 100 feet by 100 feet approx. was, at its peak, producing 4 tons of ferrous and 500 lbs of non-ferrous castings a week.

Although our main purpose at 169 Coy. was to service and repair locomotives we also made anything from church bells to small ships' propellers plus dockside parts. With the help of the British, German and Egyptian engineers there was not much we could not do."¹¹⁶⁶

b). 182 Railway Operating Coy. (And South African Composite Operating Coy.)

The Company formed at Al Jiya, Palestine, early in 1942, as "HQ Z Base Depot, Railway Operating Group, R.E." with a number of personnel from the old 10th. Railway Operating and Construction Company.¹¹⁶⁷ There were detachments at Gilbana, Rafa, Wadi Sarah, etc.¹¹⁶⁸

In August 1942 it became the "B" Railway Operating Coy. and moved to Kantara, Egypt, where it became a full-scale Company as the "182". For a time it operated over Palestine Railways over the Sinai Desert with a sister Company¹¹⁶⁹, under a Railway Operating Group. During this time a Detachment was sent to Tripoli (in Tripolitania). After a short time the other Company and the Group were withdrawn, and the 182 operated the P.R. on its own. (sic.), the O.C., Major R. H. Frankland R.E., being District Operating and Running Superintendent, Palestine Railways.¹¹⁷⁰

In October 1943 it moved to Beirut, Lebanon, where detachments were sent out to help the South African Railways and Harbours Company on the Haifa - Beirut - Tripoli line.

In March/April 1944 the Coy. was moved to the U.K. in two halves, and went to Stratford-on-Avon, from which HQ detachments were then sent to various places to assist the civilian railways..... in December 1944 it went to Eindhoven... and Nijmegen... This unit disbanded in 1946."

George Williams¹¹⁷¹ wrote that "The first railway operating I did was at Rafa where a very large Ordnance base was being built. A team of Australians laid the track and the group which I

¹¹⁶⁶ "Black Eight" No. 113. p.11.

¹¹⁶⁷ This outline is taken from the Official History as recorded in the front of the Group's Photographic Album, seen and copied during a Reunion of former members of the Coy. in York, 1995. Other information comes from former members who were either interviewed during this Reunion or corresponded later. There were also some who had served in the 8th. Railway Operating Coy. R.E. - the 8th. and 10th. had been established pre-war.

¹¹⁶⁸ W. E. Webster was one of 25 men sent as replacements for South African engineers and had served in "Z Base" at Geneifa, on the Sweet Water Canal, before being transferred to Kantara. Correspondence April 1993.

¹¹⁶⁹ 193 R. O. Coy. R.E.

¹¹⁷⁰ Despite the memories of these men, it is not at all clear that a military man would have also held a civilian post. Major (Later Lt. Col.) Harry Frankland died 23. Oct. 1993. (46th. Reunion Newsletter.) We had corresponded in February 1993 and he had offered to 'look through his papers' and meet but this never transpired.

¹¹⁷¹ Of Derby. Correspondence 18. May 1993.

belonged to (drivers, fireman and shunters) operated the railways. The two steam locomotives which we operated were 0-6-0 Saddle Tanks¹¹⁷² ... They were not in tip-top condition, and as in the earlier stages of operation we did not have a Fitter (but we did have a boilermaker) it was my duty to do minor repairs. Operations did not always run smoothly and we had many derailments... but we were a young and enthusiastic group which worked very well together.

The Australians told us they had laid 22 miles of track in the area, and the buildings were constructed by Jewish contractors. I served at Rafa from about July 1941 to May 1942 and was then posted to the newly-formed 182 R.O. Coy. and based at El Kantara.”

W. E Webster¹¹⁷³ noted “apart from Military traffic we worked civilian trains; the Haifa to Cairo passenger service, we carried the Moslems on their pilgrimage to Mecca, and sometimes Queen Farida and the two children to Jerusalem. To help with the problem of water supply we kept old engine tenders full at Mazar.”

Some South Africans were also seconded for a while to this unit. Hugh O’Mullane¹¹⁷⁴ wrote: “My Company, 3rd. Docks Coy., arrived in the Middle East around the middle of May 1942; We were South African railwaymen drawn from various departments. We were in Alexandria at about the time of the fall of Tobruk.

Twenty of us, ten steam drivers and ten firemen, were sent to Palestine to a place called El Magdab where we joined up with the 182 R.O.Coy. Five drivers and five firemen were sent to Lydda, the other five drivers and five firemen to Kantara. I was one of these. That was the HQ of 182 Coy., who were busy taking over from the civilian railway staff. As soon as we learned the road and the workings we first worked to El Arish... the crews from Lydda also worked to El Arish, and so we changed over there and worked back to Kantara. When 182 got organised we worked through to Gaza where we booked off for a few hours’ rest before working back to Kantara..... Towards the latter part of 1943 we were withdrawn from the Royal Engineers and sent to Beirut. The new railway line between Haifa, Beirut and Tripoli was being operated by another South African R.O.Coy., “The Composite Operating Coy.” Beirut was the base camp; we worked trains to Haifa and back, and Tripoli and back.”

Delville Juby described some of the action¹¹⁷⁵:-

“Originally we went up North with the 3rd. Docks Operating Coy. and as a Company took over part of Alexandria Docks operating from Dock 16 to 42, excluding Royal Navy Docks.

We had hardly settled in when 20 of us, 10 Drivers and 10 Firemen, were detailed to pack up and go to Palestine to help out there as Tobruk had fallen and all Ordnance material was despatched to Palestine, as that would be the last line of defence against the Germans. We arrived in Palestine at a place called El Jiya, but were only there 24 hours before we were despatched back to El Kantara where we took up duties as Drivers and Firemen, 5 sets to El Kantara and 5 sets to Lydda. I was fireman to Driver W. Campbell for two months. I was asked if I would like to be a Driver; I passed the Driver's exam within 30 minutes (I knew more about a locomotive than the Loco Inspector, as I was studying to become a driver in South Africa). The Loco Inspector was Sergeant Shellcross. The next day I was taken out to El Arish on a test trip and was passed out O.K. I was given an English Fireman and we got on very well together; Sid Westwood was his name. Incidentally, the Sergeant Drivers worked the Passenger trains between them and the Goods was left to us younger drivers, but quite often a Special Train (passenger or troop) had to be worked and we had to do so. One of the Special Trains that I worked was for Queen Farida of Egypt who went to Jerusalem to have her third child, Nacha Pasha. Prince Mis..(?) accompanied her and on arrival at Gaza he gave me a bottle of whisky (he said it was the first ride he had ever had on a train without

¹¹⁷² Built by Hunslet of Leeds, formerly used in Athlit Quarries for the Haifa Harbour Works.

¹¹⁷³ Correspondence April 1993.

¹¹⁷⁴ Correspondence March 1993. He died in May 1993. (46th. Reunion Newsletter.)

¹¹⁷⁵ In Correspondence, 9 March 1993.

being bumped). The next passenger I worked was King Fuad of Iraq; he was only a young boy but was escorted by a train full of bodyguards.

Our Officer Commanding at El Kantara was Major Frankland who thought the world of us South Africans, as we battled with all the old rubbish. Locos wouldn't steam, and were in terrible conditions - Baldwin, and ROD (Grey engines)¹¹⁷⁶. The tenders had wooden brake blocks and we had to be continually spraying blocks with water to stop them from burning. Our Loco Foreman was Lt. Smart. He had a trying job of creating a working crew for the Loco Workshops, Fitters, Shedmen, Boilermakers, machine fitters, but in the end managed O.K.

Things were easier after the American locomotives arrived. The first to arrive were Coal Burners. The coal was of poor quality and fortunately at Mazar, our final water station from El Kantara, there were men provided to clean the fire and fill the tenders, which gave us a chance to have a meal. (Bread or biscuits with Bully Beef with a mug of tea - make it yourself). Then push on to El Arish where we were relieved and went to sleep in tents under the palm trees. Daytime was practically impossible because of the flies. We handed over to Arab drivers who went on to Gaza and waited for our train to come to return to El Kantara.

When the oil-burners arrived it was a bit of heaven - no dirty coal dust, only oil - out of this world, after working these old engines! The job settled down and after a while we were extended to Gaza, where we slept in tents in the triangle behind the station.

One incident we had was that, after leaving El Arish, a refrigerator truck derailed on a straight and so we tried to rerail it. We had a Palestinian Guard who couldn't speak English; When he came up and saw what had happened he said to the Driver "Me, I go back to call Sarafandi" (Operating Control), so we agreed. Between Driver Bill Campbell and myself we managed to rerail the truck which had a wooden frame, and then moved the train back to look for the guard. On finding him the Driver asked what had he told the Station. His reply, "I tell them this truck is not walking on the line but walking on the sand". In all our railway working we were never bombed once. Our biggest trouble was the Arabs, who knocked out the wooden wedges on the double-crown (i.e. bullhead) rails to make fires with, which we eventually overcame by putting in metal spring clips which they couldn't move.

At times the traffic was very heavy as the 9th. Army was being rebuilt and Sidon tanks, artillery, everything went by train at one time. Three troop trains a day. And also slowly the 182 Rly. Operating Coy. was being brought up to full strength and eventually we S.A. men were sent back to El War for reporting; our unit was at Benghazi following the 8th. Army up and always supplying.

At El War we were re-posted to the Composite Railway Operating Coy. which was stationed at Beirut, and I stayed with that Coy. until I was recalled to South Africa. I must say at this point that the Haifa - Beirut - Tripoli Railway, as it was called, was run in a most efficient manner, and the Working Time Book prepared by our Company was a most efficient book to use compared to any other railway - as a matter of fact we didn't have such a thing at El Kantara.

When I arrived at Beirut the Diesel-Electrics¹¹⁷⁷ had arrived and the steam engines had a rest as we were all Diesel and the trains were run most efficiently. Everybody pulled their weight, and men in the Loco were under a good boss - no nonsense. Sergeant-Major J. Clare was our Running Superintendent; three shifts of Shedmen, three shifts of American Diesel Fitters to service engines as they arrived in the Depot. All locomotives were refuelled on arrival including steam locos; an 0-4-0 Diesel shunting engine was used continuously for three shifts, 24 hours around the clock, and no traffic stood longer than 2 hours in Beirut; As a train came in from Azzib, so it was despatched to Tripoli, and vice versa. Everybody (Running Staff) had their leave due to them in rotation; If a set of men (Driver & Fireman) worked three Sundays in succession they were given the fourth Sunday off. Every week an issue of soap was made - carbolic soap for oneself and yellow Dhoby

¹¹⁷⁶ Presumably a reference to the grey War Department paintwork.

¹¹⁷⁷ i.e. the Whitcomb USATC Bo-Bos.

soap for our overalls. On coming on duty one signed on on the roster and on going off, one signed off, so there was no cheating. Everybody worked flat-out except when on Leave.

One afternoon we worked a goods train to Tripoli. I was the observer, and on running down to the station before Tripoli, as we came around the bend, water was over the bridge and all the ballast was washed away. We could not stop as the only brakes we had were those on the engine. We almost got over, but the bogie behind the engine decided to jump off the tracks, and so pulled the back engine bogie off, and there we stuck in the water. I waded through 100 feet of water, feeling for the sleepers, until getting out of the mud to go and report at the station in advance that we were stranded off the track. The Station Foreman, a Corporal, looked at me and said I was bloody mad - there was no rain about! I said, "Come and have a look at the water", so we trudged back up the track, and he was shocked to see half the train washed away down the ravine. At the same time a lorry loaded with goods was washed off the road bridge and taken down all the way into the sea without turning over, the load was still intact. That was the only 'breakdown' I had during my stay at Beirut.

I received.... my Driver's Certificate for Proficiency for the Palestine Railways, signed by Mr. Ward (?) Locomotive Engineer at Haifa, and on the back of one, one can see how the headlights had to burn, but when we went to Beirut all that was changed and we had a big electric head lamp, and the numbers of our trains were in the W.T.B. (Working Time Book)¹¹⁷⁸, and everyone was in communication with headquarters, and electric train staff was in use for train control, so there was no trouble with the running of trains.

At Beirut, when a loco was due for a big overhaul, the engine was worked to Azzib and changed over or was arranged into the Loco, changed over and out and onto the up train and back home. The next engine for examination would change over with the engine just completed which was then brought back to Beirut.

The train service was such that there were never more than four or five engines in the Loco; all were working either Up or Down. Every morning the Passenger train left for Haifa at 7.30 and returned home at 10.30 in the evening, and incidentally the train was always full. At Haifa station we were given a hot meal, usually a stew cooked on the platform, which was a pleasant change to the usual food we had on trips which was Bread, Corned Beef, Tea, Milk, Sugar. I used to buy vegetables along the road and make our own stews on the engine, as I had my own primus stove and carried curry etc. with me to make our own meals.

In 1944 we were sent to Italy, but never worked railways, although we built bridges and opened tunnels that the Germans had blown in.

The 'Composite Railway Coy.' went north towards June 1941 but never operated railways until the Haifa - Tripoli line was completed; What they did do was constructing military Trucks that were sent out from England in sections; they put them together at Suez, then they went to Beirut."

c). 193 Railway Operating Company, Royal Engineers.

The Coy. operated the H.B.T. from ca. 1943 to April 1946; In the 1944-46 period the Officers were:

Major Mauldin (O.C.); Capt. E. Howells (later Major and succeeded Mauldin.)

Capt. Brittain, i/c Loco Dept. Capt. G.H.R. Gardiner; Capt. Jeffries. (All these were in early Demobilisation groups).

Major Cartwright succeeded Howells as O.C.; with Capt. Maclean, Lt. Merrifield and Lt. Price he moved the unit to Egypt in 1946.

Lieut. C. R. Elliott¹¹⁷⁹ was promoted to Captain and 2i/c in May 1947. He was posted to 193 Coy. in 1946, at that time headquartered in the pre-war Italian School in Beirut. "By the time I

¹¹⁷⁸ Normally referred to as a Working Timetable (W.T.T.), to distinguish it from the Public Timetable.

¹¹⁷⁹ Correspondence, Nov. 1999 based on a reader's letter in 'Backtrack' Nov. 1999 p. 626.

arrived preparations were already being made to evacuate all British troops from Lebanon and the line was busy moving troops and stores down to Palestine and Egypt. 193 were among the last to leave and for several months there was very little traffic. When the main party of 193 had moved down to Azzib a few of us were left behind to tie up the loose ends. At this time the Lebanese Government intended to take over the running of the railway and I was selected to stay behind in Beirut as an advisor and liaison officer. I was even provided with civilian clothes, unheard of in the army at that time. Sadly for me, Jewish/Arab relations worsened in view of the planned establishment of Israel as a separate state and the whole plan was dropped.

Once in Azzib everything changed, no more of the high life. It was a vast sprawling camp incorporating a stores depot set in a bleak landscape bordering the sea. Accommodation was in tents and the Officers Mess was a Nissen hut. Electricity supply was produced by its own generator powered by an enormous and temperamental diesel engine which took the combined efforts of four men on a starting handle to get it going each evening and was the most hated task in the camp!

At this time terrorist activity was at its height and all troops were confined to camp except for essential journeys into Haifa and then only in convoy with fully-armed escorts..... in May 1947 I became entitled to home leave and this time travelled both ways by ship from Alexandria. I left home to return on my 21st. birthday.... when I arrived back I found that I had been promoted to Captain and appointed Second in Command of the company.

Politically things were moving apace and plans were already being made for evacuation. For several years camp guards had been provided by a detachment of the Arab Legion who had a separate camp nearby. One morning it was reported that no guards were on duty and investigation revealed that the camp had disappeared overnight. Everything had gone, guards, tents, equipment and of course arms and ammunition!

Early in 1948 I was posted back to the UK and so missed the final evacuation..... I later joined the Army Emergency Reserve and was eventually promoted to Major in Command of a Dock Operating Squadron....”

One of his photos shows an (unidentified) 8F with a wreath on the smokebox door, "193 Leaving Beirut" - presumably the last train.

193 Coy. moved from Beirut to Egypt in April/May 1946, initially to Suez and in June/July to Fayid. In 1947 they returned to Azzib under Major I. L. Roney-Dougal O.B.E., a Regular Army officer. Later C.O. was Major David R. Inkster, who came to Azzib in 1947 and had been 2 i/c to Roney-Dougal but was promoted on this officer's departure. The Establishment at this period was 365 men.¹¹⁸⁰ Railway Operating Companies were “War-Office Controlled” troops, i.e. not under the full disposition of regional Commands.

C. L. York¹¹⁸¹ was a railwayman who was initially called up to the R.A.S.C. but was then transferred to the R.E.; after time in 190 ROC and 153 ROC in France and Belgium he managed to return to England; in March 1941 he attended a Diesel course at Derby. He joined 193 ROC in Dec. 1941; the unit sailed in January 1942 for the Middle East. He served as a “Locomotive Driver” from April 1942 to December 1945 - first on the WDER from Similla to Tobruk, the WDR line Alexandria - Mersa Matruh, then various E.S.R. locations, a period on the Qena - Safaga line, followed by a spell on the Palestine Railways, from Kantara East to El Arish and Gaza. Then followed service on the H.B.T. line from Haifa to Tripoli, (locos were collected from the workshops at Jaffa - and included R.O.D. 2-8-0's, L.M.S. 8F 2-8-0's, USATC 2-8-2's and Whitcomb Bo-Bo diesels.) He also worked on the D.H.P. from Tripoli to Hama, and the L.S.B. from Hama via Aleppo to Medain Ekbes, on the Turkish border. He notes that the crews were intended to “learn the road” in case Turkey came into the war, (“hopefully on our side”), and worked together with Syrian crews on the “Taurus Express”.

¹¹⁸⁰ Correspondence with A. Booker, Jan. 1993. He has provided extensive notes on personnel in this Coy.

¹¹⁸¹ Correspondence, Feb./March 1993.

G. L. Place ¹¹⁸² was posted to 193 after service with 153 ROC (formed largely of L.N.E.R. men) and later 154 ROC (formed mainly of G.W.R. men) in France. He was one of a batch of 20 men sent via Longmoor to Port Tewfik in December 1941.

Arthur Booker¹¹⁸³ served with 193 Coy. on the H.B.T. (He joined as a Sapper, his Trade was "Railway Engine Driver (Steam & Diesel) A1"; By 1945 he was a Staff Sergeant and by May 1947 a Warrant Officer.) 193 Coy. operated here from early 1944. The main depot was at Beirut, with a smaller one at Azzib and servicing facilities at Tripoli. 193 continued to operate this line until it was handed over to the Lebanese in April 1946, then moved to Egypt. He was placed for a period in command of a detachment at Lydda charged with learning the routes, to be prepared to operate trains should P.R. be affected by strikes. He joined the staff of D.A.D.Tn. Haifa, and opened a Railway Training School based at Azzib - the stretch of line between Azzib and Haifa was used to train railway operating troops. At this point he believes the line between Haifa and Nahariyya was operated by P.R., but the military had running rights and operated their own trains over this stretch.¹¹⁸⁴ There were several 193 R.O.Coy. staff attached as liaison to the P.R. HQ at Khoury House at this time. 193 Coy. moved from Egypt to Azzib in 1947 and in May 1947 the designation 'Company' was changed to 'Squadron' (i.e. "R.O. Sqdn.>"). They remained at Azzib until leaving Palestine in June 1948, after which the unit was disbanded.

Booker returned from a leave in Britain on the H.M. Troopship "Georgic" to Haifa on 4th.-5th. June 1948. Still attached to 193, though on the D.A.D. Tn. staff, he was not allowed to disembark, but watched from the deck as around 190 members of 193 Sqdn. embarked. A Corporal and a Sapper came to see him to organise razor blades, soap, haircuts etc. - "They were in a terrible state, unshaven, unkempt" and had been unable to get such supplies for over six weeks. He continued to Suez and then to Movement Control at Moascar, near Ismailia.

He has photos of a southbound freight (grain) headed by an R.O.D. 2-8-0 derailed at Furn el Chebak, near Beirut, in early 1946; of a Haifa - Beirut passenger train badly derailed near Adloun, early 1946; of W.D. (L.M.S.) 2-8-0 70386, one of 59 such locos brought by rail from Iran in 1946 and stored at Azzib; this loco and two others were restored by 193 Coy. in early 1947 for use on the training runs.

Harry Serginson¹¹⁸⁵ noted that by 1947/8 the unit was performing comparatively little actual railway work and were more involved with Internal Security duties. He and a Lieut. Duncan were detailed to spend three months carrying out a complete survey of the P.R. "with a view to acquiring details of facilities etc. to provide to the U.N. who were to exercise the Mandate..... when we left."

d). 199 Railway Workshops Coy.

John Newell wrote¹¹⁸⁶: The 199 Rly. Wks. Coy. was formed at Longmoor in April/May 1940 and was initially sent to France, but returned after Dunkirk. After re-forming they sailed from Liverpool around Africa up to Suez, disembarked, then travelled by railway to Haifa, where a school by the side of Qishon Railway Yard had been allocated to us. This was the ATS or Arab Trade School.

The Palestine Railway authorities allowed our Coy. to use part of the Workshops for the renovation of (I think Baldwin) steam locomotives and rolling stock, all of which had been burnt

¹¹⁸² Correspondence, Dec. 1992.

¹¹⁸³ Correspondence, Jan. 1993.

¹¹⁸⁴ P.R. commenced a passenger service to Nahariya on 1 July 1945 ('Palestine Post' 2 July 1945) and at this point still operated narrow-gauge trains to Acre and of course access to the Qishon Works and refineries - these must have placed timetabling constraints on training sessions and military traffic.

¹¹⁸⁵ Letter, 14. Feb. 1994.

¹¹⁸⁶ Letter, 20. Dec. 1992.

out during the pre-1939 Palestine troubles.

When Jaffa Workshops was ready 199 Rly. Coy. transferred itself there. The buildings of the workshops were originally, I understand, Customs & Excise buildings. If my memory serves me correctly in late 1941 the 155 Rly. Workshops Coy. was re-formed from part of the 199 Rly. Wks., and then proceeded to the Suez area. I believe they also undertook waterway transport work, because one of our ex-199 Sappers who was then part of 155 was on detachment, with other Sappers who went up the desert with General Auchinleck's advance. This Sapper was in Tobruk when it fell and, rather than be captured, he with several others commandeered a boat - I believe a tug - and sailed out of the harbour, hugged the coastline and eventually arrived at Alexandria. He was awarded a commendation for this.

Sgt. Durrant was the NCO in charge of developing Jaffa Workshops; Sapper W. Wild and myself were sent as Millwrights to install the various machinery and equipment necessary for a Railway Workshop capable of handling the general maintenance of steam locos, cranes and the occasional piece of rolling stock.

On completion of installation the 199 Rly. Workshops Coy. Royal Engineers, was moved to Jaffa, and barracked into what was originally a tile factory, complete with bed-bugs, leaving a small group of R.E.'s at Haifa under C.S.M. Hayworth.

Most of my time until I was made Sergeant, eventually becoming NCO in charge of sixteen millwrights, and also the inspection of various sizes of steam cranes in this sector, was on detachment with Sapper Wild as my apprentice. Part of our maintenance and installation duties was to service the sawmill plant at Azzib, where Sgt. Fullelove was NCO in charge of R.E. Sappers on running repairs to rolling stock; part of his crew were two brothers from Leeds who had been employed as carriage & wagon repairers from Holbeck C.&W..

There were (confusingly) two Major Camerons - both from Scotland - who were successively C.O.'s of 199 Rly. Wks. Coy; One of them¹¹⁸⁷ took over as C.O. when Major Lemon reformed the 155 Rly. Wks. Coy.; part of the nucleus was from the 199 Rly. Wks. Coy., the other Cameron was only a Lieutenant at the time, and I believe I can recall him taking photographs of the plant at the time. I believe he was a regular soldier, originally in the Scots Greys Regiment, which had been changed from horses to an armoured corps. He had come up from the desert and was not enamoured with us part-time soldiers. He eventually became O.C. (Officer Commanding), when our other Major Cameron was made up to Colonel and went to HQ at Cairo. There was also a Company of South African Royal Engineer Sappers at Azzib; they were in charge of the rolling stock.

I left the 199 Rly. Wks. Coy. in early 1945 and returned to Longmoor, where I had to take various courses of instruction."

Ron Lewis¹¹⁸⁸ transferred in 1942 from the 1st. Cavalry to the Royal Engineers and, as a loco man, was sent to 199 Coy. as a "Trials Driver". During 1942/3 they were modifying 2-8-2 American Lease-Lend locos - they were delivered dual-braked, and 199 Coy. men were stripping out the vacuum brake equipment prior to their being sent to Turkey. Two or three times he took a loco as far as Tripoli, whence civilian drivers took over.

¹¹⁸⁷ An Obituary in the "S.L.S. Journal" Mar./April 1987 p.44f. refers to Kenneth Reid Mackenzie Cameron, 22. Dec.1905 - 24.Nov.1986. "... in 1939 he was appointed District Motive Power Superintendent, Carstairs. On mobilisation at the outbreak of war in September 1939 he became Electrical & Mechanical Engineer at the Shoeburyness Experimental Establishment of R.E.M.E. In 1941 he was posted to Egypt and in 1942 took command of the Military Railway Workshops at Jaffa, Palestine. In 1944 he was Commanding Officer of No. 2 Railway Workshops Group, Royal Engineers, with the rank of Lieut.-Colonel and in 1945 became Assistant Director of Transportation (Mechanical) Railways & Docks, Middle East Command. He was awarded the Emergency Reserve Decoration in recognition of his war service. Following demobilisation he returned to the L.M.S. and became Divisional Locomotive Superintendent, Perth, and later in 1946 took up a similar appointment at Corkehill....." It is clear from a further note he returned to the U.K. in 1945.

¹¹⁸⁸ Correspondence Feb. 1993.

Col. K.R.M. Cameron¹¹⁸⁹ also wrote a Memoir entitled: “SOME REMINISCENCES ON RAILWAYS IN PALESTINE: 1942-1944”.¹¹⁹⁰

“The Royal Engineers (199 Railway Workshop Coy.) were first billeted at Haifa in 1941; working alongside the Palestine Railways civilian staff in Qishon Works, with very small detachments working at Tripoli and Suez. The Tripoli people were landing some 0.4 R.O.D. locomotives¹¹⁹¹ from ships by using landing barges, prior to the linking up by means of the H.B.T. Railway. The men at Suez (El Shatt) on the East Bank of the canal were unloading the 2-8-2 locomotives ex-USA.

The work of the military at Qishon consisted mainly of assisting the Palestine Railways civilian staff as well as military commitments. Conversion of coal-burning engines to burn heavy oil was a priority, as well as getting some almost derelict n.g. Hedjaz engines back into service. The oil-burning system used initially was the somewhat crude method of blowing oil by steam jet direct into the existing firehole, the firebox being suitably bricked up; The main result of this was poor steaming and appalling amounts of black smoke! Following the importation of the American 2-8-2 engines, their method of injecting the oil and steam backwards into the firebox from the front of the foundation ring towards the rear of the box was adopted, again with suitable firebox brick linings. This meant a heavy conversion load on the works, but the results justified it, and much better steaming and less smoke was the result.

Working arrangements at Qishon were not entirely satisfactory for a number of reasons. Firstly there was the difficulty of working under two disciplines - civil and military. Secondly, certain key tradesmen, if Jewish, were absent on Saturdays, the Jewish Sabbath, while if Palestinian Arab, were absent on Fridays, and the soldiers were usually off duty on Sundays. Primarily, however, the military work load was increasing to such an extent with the arrival of additional W.D. stock that it became essential to find additional and separate premises. At Jaffa station, and railway connected, there was a large citrus shed alongside two customs warehouses; These were requisitioned, while adjoining them was a tile works belonging to a man named Weiland who had been interned, and these were readily converted into a habitable barracks for the military. Mr. Weiland's private house overlooked the station and made an ideal Mess for the officers.

Conversion of P.R. Baldwin 4-6-0 and 0.4 R.O.D. locomotives from coal to oil burning was still a first priority after transfer to Jaffa in 1942. There was much work to be done to make the new works into an efficient unit, not an easy job while we were trying to keep up to schedule with essential work. In addition, the locomotive availability of the P.R. was so low - down to 45% - that a detachment of the company had to be stationed at Lydda, under the local control of Sgt. (later W.O. 2) H. H. Mason, BEM, in order to supplement the civil repair force at that depot. By herculean efforts the availability very soon reached the much better figure of 70% and the detachment was withdrawn to Jaffa. The General Manager of the P.R. at that time was Arthur Kirby, with Mr. Masters as C.M.E., the latter to be succeeded in 1943 by Mr. Challoner, who had at one time been C.M.E. of Iraq Railways.

Jaffa Shops developed further, and we built a foundry, pattern shop, office block, and sundry other facilities such as a new sub-station. Quite heavy repairs to all the W.D. locomotive classes were undertaken, as well as quite an amount of permanent way point and crossing work. Initially, all lifting of locomotives was done by means of hand operated beam jacks, a most laborious process which required eight men for most of a shift to lift an O.4 engine clear of its wheels. The arrival and installation of the American Whiting electric beam jacks was a godsend, a complete lift of a 2-8-2 taking about eight minutes! The floor of the citrus shed - our erecting shop - was far too weak to withstand the load of lifting a 2-8-2, so it was strengthened by making it a metre deep in reinforced

¹¹⁸⁹ i.e. the Second Col. Cameron!

¹¹⁹⁰ Typescript dated 11. Jan. 1978, in the then-National Museum of Army Transport, Beverley (since closed).

¹¹⁹¹ As noted elsewhere, the term “R.O.D.” refers to the Railway Operating Division of World War 1, and “0.4” or “04” to the L.N.E.R. classification of the former G.C.R. ‘8K’-class 2-8-0 locomotives.

concrete, the reinforcing being interlaced lengths of old rails! I often wonder if anyone has attempted to dig out that floor, or if like the Pyramids it is still left in situ!

Operation of the Palestine Railways was of course left in the hands of the civilian staff, but the Railway Operating Coy. of the R.E. at Kantara manned many of the trains between Kantara and Rafa or Gaza. At Jaffa the Workshop Coy. had a few of its personnel passed out as fit to drive on the P.R. system (including the C.O. and the 2 i/c, Capt. Peter Martin). We regularly ran all our own trial runs, and one or two special trains which deserve special mention.

Two locomotives came into W.D. stock from the Chinese Railways (the Canton to Kowloon line) and one of these, No. 9805 was involved in both of the specials which can be mentioned. No. 9805, the 2-6-0 tender engine, which had been shunting to and fro between El Jiya and Rafa, required shops repair. We were informed one day that it had arrived at Lydda, had no brakes working, and would we fetch it. Our driver, Corporal Lewis, who was sent to Lydda for it, phoned to Jaffa that the Westinghouse pump was virtually non-operative, unless one kept hitting it with a hammer, so he was told to bring it to shops on the hand brake. He phoned again from Sarafand Junction, that the hand brake didn't work either, so I went out there and decided to bring it to Jaffa using the reversing gear for stopping. At the top of the 1 in 50 descent to Jaffa I was in two minds whether or not to take the chance of stopping in Jaffa shops (or landing in Jaffa streets!). However, taking courage in both hands, the engine was safely brought down the bank and stopped exactly where we wanted it. No sooner had we stepped off the engine than the Westinghouse pump started by itself, ticking away like a well regulated watch, and it never gave any further trouble!

After a service repair we gave it a trial run with a train, so got a load of empty ballast wagons to take to Nur es Shams on the dual gauge branch from Tulkarm, and brought back a train of loads. The injectors proved to be a nightmare, and on two occasions we started to throw out the fire, although before we finished this the injectors would restart. The boiler just refused to steam, and the overall journey took almost twelve hours. However the engine proved to be the sweetest running one I ever had, and I persisted in trying to get it working satisfactorily. It became known as "the C.O.'s engine", "Clan Cameron", or alternatively as my "Ming Dynasty" piece. We fitted it up with O.4 injectors, which removed at least one of its worst features.

Another memorable journey was with a set of six ambulance coaches, of E.S.R. stock, which had been fitted up with Westinghouse brakes at Jaffa (presumably for use in Syria and possibly Turkey if events had moved that way.) It was decided to work these to Az Zib, some 80 miles or so, with No. 9805 which happened to be the only Westinghouse-fitted engine on hand. We laid on an excellent timetable leaving Jaffa at 1.00 a.m. and allowing for reversal at Lydda, we decided that breakfast would be taken at Zichron Yaacov at about 8.00 a.m., the nursing sisters on the train laying in a stock of bacon and eggs so as to provide us with a sumptuous meal. We celebrated the completion of the brake conversion by a party at Jaffa, most of the Company being 'on parade' to see us off.

We thought that the load (about 250 tons) was a bit much for 9805 on the 1 in 50 bank to Tel Aviv, but decided that we would manage and did not turn out the Works' shunting engine. Because of the reversal at Lydda 12 miles away we went off tender first, and having no back sanders we were very quickly in dire straits. We slipped and slipped, the engine's exhaust wakened almost all the people of Tel Aviv - the 1 in 50 bank was between houses all the way - and the injectors misbehaved abominably. The level crossings were kept closed at Allenby and Herzl Streets for nearly an hour, and by the time we reached Sarafand Junction the water was out of sight. We started to throw out the fire, but again the injectors restarted, and we had to try to rekindle what was left of the fire. We reached Lydda at 6.00 a.m.! Twelve miles, five hours! The only thing that worked perfectly was the brake. We dumped the train in a siding at Lydda and returned to Jaffa, and when the nurses awoke they found themselves abandoned in a siding instead of getting near Hadera. However, they must have had a very good breakfast, but somehow or other I lost a bit of prestige over the affair.

The trains on the P.R. with which we were particularly concerned were of course the

through ones, freight and passenger, between Haifa and Cairo. Trains Nos. 1 and 2 were the highlight of the day, and eventually we even had a Wagons-Lits sleeper each way. Mr. Grunberg, the P.R. Mechanical Foreman at Lydda, was a staunch friend as well as being a most capable mechanic, and another I remember was the Locomotive Inspector Zaki Getass. One of the main line drivers was called Alexander (whether it was forename or surname I was never able to find out.)¹¹⁹², and he was a most capable engineman.

During the 1942-44 period there were no really major mishaps on the P.R. The head-on Gaza smash occurred before my time in Palestine, and I have no details. One of the American 2-8-2's was completely destroyed by fire at El Mazar, and it was quite beyond repair with our facilities. We kept the chassis at Qishon and used it for spares, e.g. boiler and wheels.¹¹⁹³ The military attended a few of the minor derailments, and the W.D. 36 ton steam breakdown crane was kept at Lydda. There was one major derailment on the H.B.T. at kilo 108, but that did not affect the P.R.. In this mishap one O.4 had gone off at a curve, so the line was slued to one side allow traffic to continue. Almost immediately another O.4 went off at the same place but at the other side of the line, and the 36 ton crane was sent to help to retrieve the pair. The officer in charge of the rerailing then decided to make a one-point lift of a complete tender without bothering to put out the propping girders, with the result that the crane went over upside down beside the two locomotives and their tenders! It took us about five months to eventually clear up this mess.

We had one fairly spectacular smash at Kafr Jinis, fortunately without any casualties. The 'Oil Train' ex Haifa usually brought the ambulance coach south, marshalled immediately behind the locomotive, but with about 500 tons of oil tank wagons behind the coach. At Kafr Jinis it was scheduled to go into the loop, the main line being kept free for a later north-bound train to cross. Unfortunately, a shunt from Beit Nabala arrived off the branch in the loop apparently without proper authority, and the north end pointsman, having had instructions to put the oil train in the loop and having no authority to divert it into the vacant main line, diverted the heavy oil train into the already occupied loop, where it met the Beit Nabala train head on, but fortunately at a much reduced speed. The only major damage was to the ambulance coach, an old L.S.W.R. vehicle, which was sandwiched between the heavy 2-8-2 and 500 tons of oil tankers. This was too much for the old carriage, and the sides burst open and spilled the sleeping inmates onto the track, but without any serious injury. It took four days to get this one straightened out. It is perhaps a most masterly statement to see the item in the coaching stock list, page xvii of the W.T.T. that the ambulance coach No. 79 is "out of service".

One final incident. One of the earliest 2-8-2 locos was to go to Turkey¹¹⁹⁴, and HQ were worried because we were not going to test the engine before delivery to Turkey at Medain Ekbes, the frontier station between Syria and Turkey. Actually all the Turkish batch were reconditioned before being despatched, and each one had had a light trial run. HQ however decided that at least one engine should work a train on its way north, so 9010 was prepared for a run with 900 tons of freight train from Lydda to Haifa. I was the driver, with Cpl. Lewis as fireman (this was a coal burner) and we got our train all ready in Lydda yard. Unfortunately the P.R. authorities thought that the train would be overweight for us to stop on the down grades, especially at Ras el Ain and Binyamina, so they provided four vacuum-braked (ex-L.S.W.R.) coaches for braking purposes. Since the vacuum-brake apparatus on 9010 had been stripped off before going to Turkey they provided a Baldwin 4-6-0 No. 912 to act as train engine and provide the necessary vacuum. We had hardly left Lydda when we realised that No. 912 was a liability; its tubes were leaking like a sieve (it was on its way to works at Qishon) and it could not generate enough steam even to create vacuum. The result was that No. 9010 had to haul the whole lot to Haifa, which it did without

¹¹⁹² Perhaps Alexander Moldevan - cf. Robin Davies notes.

¹¹⁹³ No. 1086, in Oct. 1942. (Tourret "Allied Locos" p.202).

¹¹⁹⁴ Tourret op. cit. p. 203: "To Turkey March 1943: 9002/9/11/13/15/24 9158/62. April 1943: 9023, 9154. May 1943: 9000/01/08/14. June: 9004/10/17/18/19/22. Dec.1943: 9003/05/9131/55/59. Feb. 1944: 9105." i.e. this was in June 1943.

turning a hair, and steamed like a kettle. Up hill and down it made no difference; our only breathtaking moment being when descending Ras el Ain bank (1 in 100); the home signal was at danger and we had to stop the lot on engine brakes alone. We did stop before reaching the station, but I suppose a purist would insist that we had passed a signal at danger. However, no-one in authority was looking!"

g). U.S.A.T.C. (United States Army Transportation Corps). (*See also the Appendix 2 on "American Railway Contribution"*).

Only one Unit was specifically active in this region, although large quantities of locomotives and rolling stock were also sent, and are dealt with elsewhere.

This was **760 RSB** (Railway Shop Battalion) MRS (Military Railroad Service.)¹¹⁹⁵ Records have been obtained from USATC Museum, Fort Eustis, Virginia, USA.

This was one of two RSB (Diesel) units activated in Spring 1942, sponsored by the American Locomotive Co. (Alco), Baldwin Locomotive Company and the Electro-Motive Corporation (GM-EMD). No. 760 RSB was activated at Camp Claiborne, Louisiana, on 15 June 1942 under Lt-Col. A. R. Walker, and after training sailed for the Middle East from Charleston., S.C., arriving at Suez 12 November 1942. By this time there were 140 diesel-electric locos ordered for use in the M.E. and this unit was tasked with maintaining them. Since the locos were used in Egypt, Libya, Palestine and Syria, detachments were sent over a geographically extensive area. By Oct. 1943 it was considered there were sufficient other units available to maintain these locos, and 760 RSB was moved to Naples, along with batches of the Whitcomb diesel locomotives.¹¹⁹⁶

A commemorative Dinner Programme for 7. October 1944,¹¹⁹⁷ to mark their second anniversary overseas, lists a total of 25 Officers, 65 in the 'Headquarters & Service Company', 119 in 'Company A', 138 in 'Company B', 8 in the Attached Medical Section, and around 40 who had been transferred by this time to 753th. RSB, or the 713rd., 715th., 719th., 727th. or 759th. Railway Operating Battalions. It seems that these other units were active only from the Italian campaign onwards.

h). New Zealand /Australian and South African units.

In January 1941 the 1st. Australian Railway Construction Coy. (5 officers, 235 men), the 3rd. Australian Railway Construction Coy (4 officers, 157 men), the 1st. Australian Railway Survey Coy. (5 officers, 61 men) were recorded as being in Palestine.¹¹⁹⁸

At this point the balance of the Aust. 3rd. Coy was still expected by March 1941; a New Zealand Railway Construction & Maintenance Group and Nos. 10 & 13 New Zealand Engineers Railway Operating Coys. moved into the Suez Canal Area in February 1941 and began work on depot construction. The 17th. NZE R.O.C. was stationed on the Suez - Ismailia line to expedite traffic. A 'composite' (i.e. makeshift) Company of New Zealand Transportation troops was also in the M.E. area. The 2nd. Aust. R.E. Coy was also expected by March/April and 12 Railway Liaison Officers.

An Exercise "Defence of Egypt" was held in July 1941; it was decided as a result that at least ten Railway Operating Coys. were required; This meant a shortfall of two, as two were currently being recruited in South Africa. On 20 August 1941 the 29th. Rly. Construction Coy SAEC (South African Engineering Corps) and the 47th. Rly. Survey Coy. SAEC left for Egypt.

It is known that the New Zealand troops worked the Western Desert, Sinai and also the H.B.T. lines at different periods, plus the Afule - Nablus - Tulkarm narrow-gauge line; the South

¹¹⁹⁵ The few surviving records are in USATC Museum, Fort Eustis, Va. USA. Some of these diesel locos were still in service with the FS in 2003!

¹¹⁹⁶ From Carl R. Gray, "Railroading in Eighteen Countries". Pub. Scribner's Sons, New York, 1955. pp. 136-138. Also "The Yankee Boomer" Vol. 2 No. 2, pp. 1-3.

¹¹⁹⁷ Dinner held at Roma Smistamento Workshops. Programme from USATC archives, Fort Eustis, Va. No reference.

¹¹⁹⁸ P.R.O. W.O. 169 / 960, Appendix F.

Africans were engaged in construction of part of the H.B.T. line.¹¹⁹⁹ Bantu troops were also employed on construction of the H.B.T..

i). 115 Indian Railway Operating Coy. In Dec. 1942 were operating Abd el Kadr to Ghazal on the Mersa Matruh line, when 193 Coy. was working all traffic west of Daba.¹²⁰⁰ It is not thought that this unit actually operated within Palestine.

j). R.E. Construction Coys.

Derek Wright¹²⁰¹ was born 1918. Pre-war, he worked in the building trade; He was called up into the infantry, but got a transfer to the Royal Engineers at Longmoor, and trained there.

He sailed from Liverpool in 1941, and took two months on the trip round the Cape, first sailing west almost as far as the USA, then to Freetown, and Cape Town. It was 130° when they got off the boat at Ismailiya. He stayed there a while, then went to Cairo on his own to GHQ, and from Cairo to Suez. There was an air raid on in Cairo at the time, and Suez also got bombed a few times. He went to the Bridging School at Suez; one Australian and one New Zealand Section went through a Bridging Class there, prior to going up to the work sites. His job was teaching them to use 'Flying Foxes' and launching methods for girders. Standard bridges had been designed for the Transportation Section of the R.E.

He was attached from GHQ in Cairo in May 1942, to work as liaison officer with the Australians, on bridge liaison, dealing with the delivery. At the El Firdan bridge, they screwed piles into the sand, like big propellers. These were 3-foot diameter cast iron tubes, which jointed up in sections; they fixed a propeller to the base, attached cables, attached donkey winches, and screwed them in. He did some Drawing Office work on that, then went out to see the work in progress.

Material for the bridges on the H.B.T. line was delivered by sea to Haifa, thence by road to the various work sites. They came from all over, some from India, some standard ones from the U.K. He worked at the Royal Engineers Drawing Office, in Beirut, ensuring things went to the right site. Parts were sometimes mixed, two or three bridges coming on the same boat, the parts all mixed up. He was there only for the beginning of the delivery period, due to his road accident. The Australian depot was at Dora, north of Beirut; There was a depot in Beirut centre, and another British Stores Depot at Beirut.”

He ran the Drawing Office at Azzib, which was occupied with rolling stock repair, with a Railway Stores Co. There was an atmosphere of great freedom in the unit - “you felt freelance out there.” Accommodation was in tents. He remembers the bugs and the scorpions. The "Passion Wagon" (a road lorry) took men into Haifa every weekend.

He was stationed at Azzib for 18 months (but can't remember the exact commencement), as a Corporal, with the R.E. Stores Coy. until 1944 when he came home. He came back on his own as well, not with a Company.

On Saturday nights he would sometimes go up to Beirut on his own. This meant jumping the train at Azzib, and getting into the Guard's Van. He'd get to Beirut about 6 p.m., and get a train back about 1 a.m., so as to be back at camp about 5 a.m.. He was only about 24 years old at this time, and so able to cope! He was the only one who knew Beirut, so he thinks he was the only one to do this.

He doesn't recall a great deal of railway activity on the H.B.T. at this time - maybe four trains a week up and down. All were steam-operated.

(k). Military Railway Projects on the PR system.¹²⁰²

¹¹⁹⁹ P.R.O. W.O. 169 / 960, Appendix F.

¹²⁰⁰ HQ No. 6 Railway Operating Group R.E., M.E.F., Operating Instruction No. 1, 2. December 1942.

¹²⁰¹ Notes from Interview with Douglas Wright, 4, Park Court, Pool-in-Wharfedale. (tel. 842978), on 14. Oct. 1992.

¹²⁰² Source: P.R.O., Kew: Files WO 169/960-966. These are the “War Diaries, Directorate of Transportation, GHQ,

A. Specific Construction Projects.¹²⁰³

1. Suez Canal Bridge at El Ferdan. Agreement for construction of a new bridge was obtained by January 1941. E.S.R. prepared the design; steelwork was fabricated on site by Messrs. Braithwaite, of India. Approach works were ordered 18. July 1940.

March 1941: An agreement was made (Between the P.M. of Egypt, British Ambassador & C-in-C) that the cost of the bridge and connections was to be borne by the Army and it was to remain military property throughout the war; Afterwards the Egyptian Government could have it free of charge; Alternatively, the British could remove the bridge, but must then restore the *status quo ante*.

[Regarding Egyptian sidings in General: (i.e. including lines in Sinai): March 1941, p.18: It was agreed that any railway and dock works not covered by the Treaty and paid for by H.M.G. may be purchased after the war by the Egyptian Govt. at independent valuation, or recoverable materials may be purchased at cost less 4% depreciation. Also other refs. in March 1941.]

20 July 1941: Capt. Puddy (D.A.D. Bridging) "visited Ismailia in connection with proposal to move site of proposed Suez Canal bridge from Kantara to Firdan" (sic.) This was at Canal Km. 64.473 instead of Km. 43.025. A 'Rail Level' of 23.393m. was proposed, giving a distance of 4.893m to high water level and clear headroom of approx. 3.993m. A final decision was made on 26/08/41: Km. 64.255. Final measurements on 26 August 1941 were slightly different - e.g. rail level above water of 17' 3 5/8", i.e. 5.27m.

23 July 1941: A proposal was made to work the bridge by power rather than hand (at the request of the Suez Canal Co.) - and a re-design was requested. Braithwaites said this would save only 8 mins. over hand operation - and Simner preferred hand operation.

September 1941: Borings were made at km.64.255: Findings: 1m. fine sand, then 15m. of clay and coarse sand, then (after 16m) medium sand.

£1,325 had been spent on general expenses in Egypt by Braithwaites & Co. (Sept. 1941, Monthly Progress Rept., para. 3(h).)

The estimated total cost of Bridge was now £80,000. (mentioned in Appendix).

GHQ MEF Letter Tn/3/4089/1 of 14 Oct. 1941: "It has now been decided that the rail approaches on the East side of the Suez Canal bridge will be incorporated in the Kantara East - El Shatt new line, Job. No. 585 & on the west side of the Canal will be part of the Ismailia-El Firdan doubling Job No. 97. The above cancels Job No. 203 previously given to the work."

Oct. 1941 Progress Report, App. C. 2 x 250' swing bridge. First 4 consignments of plant & material have arrived. Due completion 30 April 1942.

2. Kantara East: Bridge & Wharf connections. 4km. (*On the Sinai side of the Canal.*)

Layout was under consideration January 1941. Rail ferry approaches were ordered 18 July 1941. E.S.R. was constructing a bridge over the Sweet Water Canal. P.R. was constructing the lines; pegging out under way at March 1941.

3/9/41. Minute 3131. Ref. Min. 3118. Mov. 7 said he had received information with regard to the handing over of the line from the P.R. Station Master at Kantara E.; AD Tn.(Constr.) said that the line had, in fact, been passed on 31 July 1941 (and handed over for traffic on 04 August 1941), and possibly P.R. had neglected to inform their Station Master!

Middle East Forces", and appear to be usually signed or compiled by Col. K.N. Simner, Director of Rlys.

Some references are given in miles, some in kilometres. There appears to be no pattern to this. I have given some dates in a "3/41" format (= "March 1941"), referring to the separate Folios of these War Diaries, since there are no page references.

The Documents are not quoted wholly verbatim; some minor editing has been done, and much appears in Note form. Our own comments are in Italics. Place names are left as they appear in the documents.

¹²⁰³ Omitted from this list are projects that were solely relevant to Egypt and the Western Desert, whereas some other projects geographically in Egypt are considered relevant also to the subject in hand and are therefore included.

3. Kantara East Transporter Sidings:

In hand with P.R. 80% completed by January 1941. length 1.335 miles. Completion due 01 April 1941.

Sept. 1941 Progress report. 3(g)(i): "The E.S.R. claim that there is no necessity at present for two ferries at Kantara, & in reply we have stated that the need might arise at any moment, either through increase of traffic or damage to their ferry by enemy action. Consequently the provision of an additional ferry by the W.D. is regarded as a desirable insurance against these contingencies."

Sept. 1941 Progress Report: estimated cost of Rail Ferry: £40,000.

4. Kantara East BAD.

11 Sept. 1941: Final plan of Kantara BAD (Base Ammunition Depot) settled at site.

25 Sept 1941. Min. 3524. Some rails on Kantara Wharf to be used to lay a "whisker" for new depot at K. East - ca. 400 yds. from the main line.

Sept. 1941 Progress Report: "Started 24 Sept 1941; 17.000 miles track involved; estimated date of completion 28 Feb. 1942; earthworks commenced on temporary sidings."

Oct. '41 Prog. Report: Appendix B2: Trackwork 17% complete.

5. El Shatt line. (*This was a new line on the east side of the Suez Canal, built as an emergency reserve and link to bases.*)

Construction under way June 1941, materials (and water) offloaded at sites by IWT barges.

21 July 1941: proposed layout for Kantara E. in connection with new line thence to El Shatt. "E.S.R. have not yet decided what they want".

(In July 1941 - the line Nefisha - Suez was being doubled).

July 1941: 71.000 miles of line was now 20% complete, due completion 30 Oct. 1941; built by E.S.R. & R.E., to be operated by E.S.R.

25 Sept 1941. Minute 3523. 1,500 tons of sleepers for El Shatt, to be unloaded at Kantara E.

Sept. 1941 Progress Rept: "new line ordered 28 May 1941. Started 09 June 1941. 71.000 miles track. 50% complete last month, 60% complete this. Due completion by 28 Feb. 1942. Being built by E.S.R. & Tn. unit; earthwork in hand for bridge approaches; RAE¹²⁰⁴ have completed earthworks to Kabrit; SAE¹²⁰⁵ working from Kabrit to El Shatt. This is to be operated by E.S.R.

09 Oct. 1941: East side of Bitter Lakes was surveyed for sites for unloading rails; the only possible location was opposite Kabrit Canal Stn.

13 Oct. 1941. ADofTN Con. visited Kantara East - Suez E. rly. extension with E.S.R. Resident Engineer, also inspected work at Port Said.

19 Nov. 1941. (WO169/966). Survey for a new wharf at Selta (?): "This station is on the new El Shatt-Kantara line".

October 1941 Progress Report. Earthworks completed for main line & crossing stations, approach to Firdan bridge & approach to El Shatt lighter berth. E.S.R. tracklaying from Kantara East railhead at 20km., sleepers laid out by RAE to 60km.

6. Sinai. Additional crossing stations: (*To increase track capacity from Kantara to Gaza.*)

Noted as "In hand" with PR, Jan. 1941.

By July 1941, doubling (*of entire line*) under investigation.

23 July 1941 - PR GM was asked to estimate signalling & telegraph equipment required for this.

29 July 1941, Dir. of Rlys. to D.G.Tn. recommends construction of 12 new passing loops instead of doubling, thus reducing longest block section to 14 km., "which on the existing timetable

¹²⁰⁴ Australian Engineers.

¹²⁰⁵ South African Engineers.

is a 25 minute run. This gives a theoretical capacity of 20 trains each way per day of which 15 should be realised on an efficiently-operated controlled section such as this; This would give a daily tonnage figure of 3,850 tons per day against the present 2,800, and while it does not entirely fulfil requirements it is at least a substantial improvement which can be obtained at the expense of only 17km. of track." Doubling work would take a minimum of 4 months, and no benefit would be obtained for up to 12 months allowing for time required in obtaining track materials etc. Tn/R/4523/1. *The aim of this doubling was to attain a capacity of 5,400 tons per day plus 4 passenger or ambulance trains.*

15 Aug. 1941 Instructions were sent to ADTn. Haifa to approach the P.R. with regard to putting the work of constructing 14 additional crossing stations in hand on K-R section.

Sept 1941 Financial Report: est. cost: £150,000.

13 Nov. 1941. (WO 169/966). AD for Tn. Const. visited Asst. Engineer & Supt. of Line of PR with a view to increasing the line capacity between Kantara East & Lydda.

28 Nov. 1941. Signals Officer visited Haifa & Beyrouth & discussed signal & telegraph requirements for Transjordan, Kantara-Lydda etc...

08 Dec. 1941. Signals Officer despatched remainder of mechanical signalling apparatus required for Palestine Rlys. for increase in capacity of Kantara-Lydda & Transjordan line..."

05 Dec. 1941: re. letter GM 19 of 07 Nov. 1941: Cost of work re. Job 552, increasing capacity of Kantara-Lydda section, estimates of £P 107,277 were accepted. Tn.3/4523/1.

Letter 09 Dec. 1941, Simner to G.M., P.R.: Tn.3/4523/1: All layouts have been discussed between Maj. Harvey & Supt. of Line. Re. Kantara E.- the loco shed layout ...has been agreed to by E.S.R. With regard to the Traffic Yard the layout shown is agreed to subject to modification of the North End...which permits reception of trains from Lydda, without interfering with shunting movements to and from the shunting neck."

8. H.B.T. Rly. (*Haifa - Beirut - Tripoli Railway.*)

A Haifa - Rayak line was surveyed by Jan. 1941, but the scheme was shelved. (Other surveys of possible new lines were under way in Iraq, Sudan, Kenya, Greece.)

27 Aug. 1941: AD of Tn. Cons. etc. departed on reconnaissance of route for Haifa-Tripoli railway.

01 Sept. 1941: AA of Tn. Constr. returned from a reconnaissance of Syria, of projected railway from Haifa to Batroun incl. the possible routes over Ras el-Chekka.

09 Sept. 1941: Dets. of 1st. Austr. Survey Coy. moved from Ferry Point to Naqura and Ras Chekka to carry out survey of proposed Haifa - Tripoli Rly.

14 Sept. 1941. DAD Bridging returned from Syria after having made inspection of Wadi Ralid and Kalb (sic) bridges situated on Libanais Tramway system; with regard to the former, a certain amount of co-operation was lacking between the Army & the Resident Engineer of the C.F.H. but was ironed out. The piers of Kelb bridge were examined with a view to its being used for the Haifa - Tripoli rly.

19 Sept. 1941. A meeting was held between ADofTn. Cons. & OC Rly. Cons. & Maint. Grp. RAE & OC Rly.& Harbour Cons. Btn. SAEC concerning the construction of the Haifa - Tripoli Rly. which has now been approved. The GM of PR was informed and asked to co-operate.

20 Sept. 1941: Letter Tn/3/4788/1/1, OC Rly. Const. & Maint. Group RAE & SAEC from GHQ ME, Cairo:

Re. H.B.T. line - "The above project has been sanctioned and is to be put in hand immediately.

4 copies each of the Plan and Profile prepared by the D.H.P. in 1924 have been handed to you. The alignment indicated will be followed except where it is advantageous to deviate to avoid tunnels, heavy cut and fill, viaducts and heavy land occupation.

In the first instance it is intended to terminate the Haifa-Beyrouth section at a transshipment

station to be constructed in conjunction with a 105cm. gauge branch line serving Beyrouth aerodrome.

...Steps will be taken to acquire the Tramway Libanais from Beyrouth to Mameltein. A portion of this tramway will be converted to dual gauge where it is necessary to do so in order to continue to serve existing industrial undertakings in the vicinity of Beyrouth with the 105cm. gauge rly. The rest of the line will be taken up to allow of the formation being adapted for a standard gauge where suitable."

19 Sept. 1941: letter to G.M., P.R., informing him of need to use Acre line to "a point just over the River Naaman", 6½ miles from Kiryat Motzkin - P.R. to carry out dualling of this section.

24 Sept. 1941. Det. of HQ Rly. & Harbour SAEC left Suez for Haifa to establish HQ & make preliminary arrangements for the move of the Constr. Coys. for the H-T line.

26 Sept. 1941. DAD Bridging left for reconnaissance on Haifa-Beyrouth line; inspected various bridges & culverts for estimation of bridging requirements, also inspected Beyrouth-Tripoli section for above requirements.

28 Sept 1941. Information received that S.S. 'Kola' had been sunk in collision off Port Sudan, with the loss of all the heavy earthworks plant for the 38th. & 39th. Rly. Const. Coys. SAEC.

Sept. 1941 Financial Rept: estimated the cost of the H.B.T. £700,000. (estimated cost of Haifa-Rayak line had been £563,000).

WO 169/965. 04 Oct. 1941. "ADofTn Const. left for Haifa in connection with new H-T extension. S.O.i.C [*Senior Officer in Charge*] was requested to place a firm demand for one Rly. Telegraph Coy. composed of HQ & 2 Line Maintenance & 1 Optg. Sections, from S. Africa. This is as a result of a visit of Dir. of Signals UDF [*Union Defence Force*] to S.O.-i.C. & his offer of Rly. Signals Units to be used with SAEC Coys. on Haifa-Tripoli extension.

05 Oct. 1941. ADofTn Const. visited Aust. Survey Section at Ras Nakura & RE depot at Kiryat Motzkin.

06 Oct. 1941. 47th. Rly. Survey Coy. SAEC left Suez for Nahariya to fix location of Haifa-Tripoli extension.

07 Oct. 1941. ADofTn.Con. with A.Q.M. G(M) Beyrouth interviewed Spears Mission & M. Vassilet, Inspecteur General des Travaux Publiques, in connection with Haifa-Tripoli Extn."

Reconnaissance of Beyrouth Port rails connection also carried out.

08 Oct. 1941. ADofTn Con. examined Tripoli station yard lay-out in connection with extension.

15 Oct. 1941. Letter to DADTn, Beirut: "In confirmation of verbal instructions will you please get out plans for the extension of the Bir Hassan branch of the 105cm. gauge rly. through the ammunition depot to open ground where a transshipment siding capable of handling 600 tons a day can be sited. It is possible that it will be necessary to extend it beyond the point examined on the occasion of my visit but this can be settled in consultation with the OC 47th. Rly. Survey Coy. SAEC. In the first instance this extension will be required to serve Tn. Stores Depot to hold P-Way material for the s.g. line, which will be sent to Beirut by sea."

(Letter Tn/3/4788/1/1 20 Oct. 1941, Simner to DAD Tn.Con., Syria - requests that s.g. ammunition sidings at Taalia be completed a.s.a.p.; that an alternative depot to Bir Hassan served by both s.g. & n.g. lines be provided "in the vicinity of Beirut in the sand dune country. This depot is to comprise 16 sheds 150ft.x30ft. on two whisksers each of 8 sheds 100 yds. apart, the two whisksers being 400 yds. apart; when this is provided Bir Hassan ammunition depot will be abandoned entirely & could if the site was suitable be utilised for final transshipment depot."

17 Oct. 1941. Staff Capt. (Bridging) inspected likely bridge sites on H-T extension.

18 Oct. 1941. 40th. Rly. Cons. Coy. SAEC moved from El Shatt to Haifa in connection with H-T extension.

22 Oct. 1941. RSM Griffin, Telegraph Inspector SAEC, proceeded to Haifa with 6 sample tablet instruments for Pal. Rlys. [*NB - It is not clear whether these were for use on the H.B.T. or*

Sinai line.]

31 Oct. 1941. DAD(Bridging) agreed to ordering 4 x 40' spans W.D. Type & 6 x 60' spans from India, for use on the Haifa-Beyrouth extension.

WO 169/166. 03/11/41. DADTn.(Bridging) visited bridge sites on Beyrouth-Tripoli line with a view to using 2nd-hand bridges ex-India.

12 Nov. 1941. ADforTn.Const. met the Asst. District Commissioner, Acre & Director of Public Works for Palestine at Acre & discussed the rly. alignment between Haifa & the Pal-Syria frontier.

14 Nov. 1941. ADforTn Constr. interviewed the Sec. of the Pal. Govt. regarding the portion of the Haifa - Tripoli Rly. within the boundaries of Palestine.

16 Nov. 1941. S. African Rly. Const. Gp. were requested to state exact bridging requirements for Haifa - Tripoli extension.

28 Nov. 1941. Signals Officer visited Haifa & Beyrouth & discussed signal & telegraph requirements for Transjordan, Kantara - Lydda & operating circuits for Haifa - Tripoli extension. In regard to the latter, extra wires will be put in existing civil telegraph posts.

Oct. '41 Prog. Rept. 175.000 track miles - est. date for completion 31 Aug. 1942.

04 Nov. 1941, Letter Tn/3/4788/1/1 Simner to GM, PR, re. his letter GM 23 of 31 Oct. 1941:

"I thank you for your estimate for the conversion to dual gauge of the section Kiriath Motzkin to point of divergence of the above rly., construction & additional trackwork required in Haifa yard amounting in all to £P 14,550. Liability for debit up to this amount is accepted on behalf of the British Army subject to negotiations regarding credit to be allowed on account of recovery value of the existing track.¹²⁰⁶ This letter will be discussed on the occasion of my next visit to Haifa."

Locos at Tripoli: Min. 4404 08 Nov. 1941. Discussion re. possibilities of modifying barge at present in use or replacing with a bigger one - or for use of Z-craft.

11 Dec. 1941 DAD Tn (Docks Construction) investigated further the possibilities of using Tripoli for loading locos. Draught in the harbour is only 16' so 'Belboats' (*large ships of the "Bel" Line fitted for carrying locomotives*) will have to anchor 1½ miles out. NOIC suggests that the swell will allow landing only three days per month during winter. A special berth is being prepared to allow locomotives to be landed from adapted Z-craft.

03 Dec. 1941. Progress inspection on Haifa-Beyrouth section.

15 Dec. 1941: DADTn.(Rly. Bridging) went over new location of Beyrouth-Tripoli section noting departure from previous layout. India signalled to say that the bridges ordered were not available due to Irak priority. The whole question is now being taken up again with India.

17 Dec. 1941: meeting with 9th. Army re. use of rly. bridges by road traffic in emergencies.

18 Dec. 1941. Inspection of bridging on Haifa - Beyrouth.

21 Dec. 1941: HQ Australian Con. & Main. Gp. left Moascar for Beyrouth.

22 Dec. 1941. Operating Det. of 10th. Rly. Con.& Main. Gp. left for Haifa.

24-31 Dec. 1941: reconnaissances of Tripoli, Beyrouth, Acre, Bekaa etc. areas.

20 Dec. 1941: letter Simner to OC Rly. Con. Gp. SAEC. re hardness of water supply at Naharia - request for the analysis of the water to be carried out by P.R. at Haifa.

9. Syria.

July 1941 - inspection of destroyed Wadi Khalid bridge; [*This could be one of either 18.6km. from Samakh (6x40' spans) or 26.6km. from Samakh (5x40' spans; both masonry). Station is at Km. 20.5.] 2 x 100' spans ordered from S. Africa as replacements. Kum Gharz bridge [6.2km. south of Deraa - 6 x 20' masonry spans.] - C.F.H. do not have sufficient material for repairs, & British Army will supply 4 x 20' spans. The C.F.H. will do all the repairs themselves and all*

¹²⁰⁶ In reality, the H.R. track to be lifted would be in steel panels useable only in other areas of the HR system, whereas the new dual-gauge track would require wooden sleepers and three rails and complex pointwork.

dealings will be conducted through P.R. on a normal inter-railway basis. Scrivener (*P.R. Chief Engineer*) said P.R. had no material at all to repair either bridge, & Kum Gharz was subject to sabotage - he therefore recommended the shorter spans.

From 19 July 1941 C.F.H. resumed working with their personnel between Dera'a & Samakh, but 17th. R.O.C. NZE double-banked each train. (*i.e. a New Zealand Railway Engineers crew accompanied the civilian CFH loco crew.*)

12 Oct. 1941. (WO169/965). Staff Capt. (Bridging) arrived at Wadi Khalid to inspect progress of reconstruction. Work is proceeding to schedule but considerable difficulties are being experienced due to large numbers of casualties with malaria & uncertainty of Arab labour during Ramadan.

15 Oct. 1941. Force HQ Pal. was asked to supply an Indian Labour Coy. to assist at Wadi Khalid bridge. (No. 1 Rly. Const. Coy. RAE at present working there).

(From letter, Simner to Force HQ, Pal. CR/ME/4319/Tn(3)): "As you are [probably aware the bridge over the Wadi Khalid on the Yarmak Valley section of the Haifa-Sammak-Derar Railway¹²⁰⁷ was washed away last year and traffic is at present being passed on a temporary diversion across the river bed.... It is anticipated that the Wadi Khalid will flood in early December, when the temporary diversion will be washed away and this important railway line of communication will then be cut until such time as the flood has subsided and the diversion restored. Recurrent floods may be expected throughout the winter months and with the melting of the snow in spring, with the result that communication in this section will be interrupted for periods of weeks at intervals unless the permanent structure is completed by 1st. December. From the engineering point of view no difficulty is anticipated in completing the reconstruction work in time, provided that the labour supplied is adequate, but at present difficulty is being experienced with local labour which is both inadequate and unsatisfactory....."

28 Oct. 1941. DAD(Bridg) arrived at Wadi Khalid to inspect pier excavation, which is giving trouble due to an old pier interfering with excavation.

Wadi Khalid Bridge - Job. No.518. Report on Site visit by Maj. H.M. Puddy on 31 Oct. 1941: "Very great difficulty has been experienced due to the Station Master at W.Kh. station refusing to allow the passage of rail cars between W.Kh. stn. & the bridge site while there was any shunting in progress at W. Kh. stn.....

I saw M. Bellot & M. Nidelet, Director of D.H.P., who instantly agreed that W.Kh. bridge site should be treated as a station, and that rail cars & construction trains could run between the stn. & the bridge even if it caused a delay to normal services of an hour or so. M. Bellot also agreed to loan a Diesel shunting locomotive & the necessary trucks for moving the steelwork for the bridge from W. Kh. stn., where it would be offloaded, down to the bridge site. The S.M. is now extremely helpful.

...owing to delay in the arrival of the ME spans Dec. 15th. will be nearer the mark (for completion)."

20 Oct. 1941. Letter re provision of 3 sidings for an Ammunition depot at Taalia, Syria, to be done by D.H.P.. (*Prob. Taliyeh, km. 13.0 from Rayak - shown in Geog. Handbook p.370 as "Mil."*)

Progress Report Oct. 1941. (WO 169/966) Appendix I: Work in Syria: includes:

- new siding at Baalbek due 30 Oct.1941.
- Rayak (n.g.) Quay. not yet started.
- Rayak. Quay at km. 1. due 15 Nov. 1941.
- Zahleh. Quay. due 26 Oct. 1941.
- Tripoli. Quay. due 20 Dec. 1941.
- Medjaloun. siding for RE. due 30 Nov. 1941.

¹²⁰⁷ sic. Spellings are always variable in these documents.

- Tallia transshipment area. not yet started.

Appendix C. Job 517, Kum Gharz, 4 x 20' spans; steelwork in course of erection; should be ready by 05 Nov. 1941.

Job 518, Wadi Khalid. 2 x 100' M.E. spans substituted for spans not yet arrived from S. Africa.

01 & 06 Dec. 1941: Visit of inspection to Wadi Kh. by ADofTn. Const.

04 Dec. 1941: ADTn.(Con.) inspected works & depot sites on the D.H.P. between Rayak & Baalbek.

05 Dec. 1941. "C.F.H. is requested to take steps to ensure that the dead slow speed restriction on W.Kh. bridge is kept. This speed restriction is necessary owing to the temporary steelwork being increased from 80' to 105'."

06 Dec. 1941 - letter suggesting use of C.F.H. method of operation - use of a locked box requiring the driver to stop and place a ticket inside it.

Letter 17 Dec. 1941, Tn. 3/4788/- re improving railway capacity between Aleppo & Meidan Ekbes; 5 new crossing stations are proposed.

10. Kafr Samir. RASC Depot. started 10 July 1940. Track mileage 2.000. Construction by R.E., to be operated by P.R.. Completion due 21 March 1941, then 12 April 1941. 2.701 miles.

11. Beit Nabala. RE Stores Depot. (*north-east of Lod.*) Survey completed by Jan. 1941. 3.5 miles. Earthworks started Feb. 1941, completion due 11 April 1941. 5.5miles.

12. Kiryat Motzkin RE depot. (*North of Haifa.*) Work in hand 27 Jan. 1941 by 1st. Australian Rly. Con. Coy. 5.000km. planned. Completion due 31 March 1941. (6.210km.), then 12 April 1941. Built by R.E. for R.E. operation.

13. Wady Sarar Ammunition Depot sidings. 42,310 cu. yds. earth excavated; 16,848 man hours on platelaying; 8 turnouts; total 6.732 miles or 10.840 km. (excluding marshalling yard). Built by R.E. for R.E. operation. Completed 10 March 1941.

14. Affule-Tulkarm. (*Part of the narrow-gauge system; this line had been closed for lack of traffic, then reconditioned and operated by the military during the 1936 'Disturbances'.*)

Reconditioning of line ordered 30 Nov. 1940. Jan. 1941: Culverts rebuilt, track reconditioned Affule-Jenin (16.999km.), Jenin-Araba (11.417km.), Araba-Silat (12.004km.), plus drainage and fettling; Mas'udya-Anabta 9.157km completed; Anabta-Nur Ash Shams 5.211km. completed. Mas'udya-Nablus 17.939km. cuttings cleared; work being concentrated on Silat-Mas'udya section 19.497km. "which is the heaviest section on the line." Completion due 10 March 1941.

09 Aug. 1941: Tulkarm-Affule opened for goods traffic, 1 train each way daily, operated by 17th. Coy. NZE.

15. Atlit. Cold Storage Depot sidings. Ordered 07 Nov. 1940. 0.500km. (*N.B.: Used by RASC for storage of potatoes; the building still stands, north of Atlit stn. on the east side of the line.*)

16. Rafa. Base Development. Survey completed, Jan. 1941: 12.000 miles. R.E.

Work started Feb. 1941. Completion due 01 July 1941.

17. Majdal. Base Development. Survey completed, January 1941; 5.000 miles. R.E. Pegging out Feb. 1941, completion due 01 July 1941. Marshalling Yard of 2.210 miles 98% complete by Aug.

1941, awaiting material. Construction by R.E., for R.E. operation.

18. Majdal. Jan. 1941. Spur for DCRE, South Pal. & concrete end-loading ramp.

19. Mafrak. (*On the Hedjaz line south of Deraa, in Transjordan. An RAF fuel depot was built here.*) R.E. siding. work started 29 Dec. 1940, completed 30 Jan. 1941.

20. Ma'an-Naqb Ashtar. (*This was an emergency line, narrow gauge, planned and built in case the Suez Canal was closed to traffic by enemy action and supplies would have to be transferred from the Red Sea by alternative routes.*) (*See Ch. 7*).

29 July 1941: "Establishment Committee" - recommended doubling Kantara-Lydd, & instructed Austr. Rly. Con. & Main. Gp. RAE re detailed location survey of Ma'an-Naqb Ashtar. (To Grid ref. 194933). Ruling gradient & curvature to existing Ma'an-Dera'a section standards.

18 Aug. 1941. Detachment of 1st. Aust. Survey Coy. left for Ma'an.

23 Aug. 1941: Instructions sent to AD Tn Haifa to reconnect Ma'an with Mudawarra & signal figure of serviceable track recoverable for new line Ma'an - Naqb Ashtar.

[29 Sept. 1941: Min. 35365: Query as to whether 2 trains a week could be run El Mafrak (i.e. Mafrak) & Ma'an instead of one as at present.)

13 Sept. 1941: 3 Off. & 80 OR of 3rd. Aust. Rly. Const. Coy. RAE moved by road from Kantara to Maan for construction of Ma'an - Naqb Ashtar Rly. (Further officer & 50 ORs on 01 Oct. 1941 - a 2-day journey).

Sept. 1941: estimated cost of line £120,000.

"Line ordered 22 Aug. 1941; 30 miles; poss. date completion 30 Nov. 1941; built by Tn. units; survey in hand; work commenced on recovering material from Medina line". (Sept. 1941 Progress Rept.)

01 Oct. 1941. Det. of 3rd. Rly. Const. Coy. RAE left for Ma'an to commence work on Naqb Ashtar to Ma'an line.¹²⁰⁸

11 Oct. 1941. ADofTn. Con. inspected proposed layout of tranship stn. at Naqb Ashtar on Ma'an - Naqb Ashtar extension. Also examined route for proposed rly.

Oct. 1941 Progress Report (WO 169/966), App. C: Job 535. 15/20' steelwork has left Suez Depot by rail for Maan. Work by No. 3 Coy. RAE. Estimated completion 30 Nov. 1941.

App. G: Progress: 31,066 linear yards surveyed & pegged; 107 culverts sited, etc. P-way material recovered from Maan-Mudawarra: incl. 3,024 rails, 12,650 sleepers, 3,130 fishplates etc.

08/Dec. 1941: Progress inspection.

21. Workshops.

2 Hunslet locos ex-Haifa Shops sent to shunt Abu Sultan (Egypt). March 1941.

Feb. 1941: repair of n.g. locos & stock suspended; effort transferred to overhaul s.g. engines "which are badly needed." 4 completed, 2 under repair, 1 awaiting repair.

Aug. 1941- boiler of WD2 placed in frames of WD4, boiler off WD4 placed in frames of WD2, to be used as mobile disinfectant unit - at lower pressure.

B. Military Transportation Personnel (169/960. Appendix F.)

In Palestine, Jan. 1941 : 199 Rly. Wksps. Coy. 6 + 370.

1st. Aust. Rly. Con. Coy.	5 + 235.
3rd. Aust. Rly. Con. Coy.	4 + 157.
1st. Aust. Rly. Surv. Coy.	5 + 61.
HQ, Aust. Rly. Survey Gp.	2 + 7.

¹²⁰⁸ Sic. Interesting that the direction is here reversed.

Tn. Branch Directorate, Pal. 4 + 5.

Total: 26 Officers, 835 O.R.'s.

Various movements recorded, including some to Tobruk.

(In Jan. 1941, 71 Officers, 1314 OR's in Egypt.)

NZE Rly. Const. & Maintenance Group HQ & Nos. 10 & 13 NZE Rly. Coys. moved into Canal Area in Feb. 1941, "and have settled down to work on depot construction." 17th. NZE R.O.C. stationed on Suez-Ismailia area to expedite traffic. Unit formed of N.Z. Tn. troops already in the ME area, "and is really only a composite Coy., formed from existing units to meet existing demands." Moved 15 June 1941.

Balance of HQ & 3rd. Aust. units due March 1941, also 2nd. Aust. R.Con.Coy. RAE., 12 Rly. Liaison officers etc.

July 1941 - Exercise 'Defence of Egypt': Up to 10 Rly. Optg. Coys. required - there is a shortfall of 4. 2 are being recruited in S. Africa.

20 Aug. 1941: 29th. Rly. Cons. Coy. SAEC & 47th. Rly. Survey Oy. SAEC had left for Egypt.

C. General Information Items.

Jan. 1941. The Suez Canal was closed by air activity for most of the month (except for wooden craft carrying non-ferrous cargoes - i.e. safe from magnetic mines).

It was decided to develop Suez and Ataka Ports on Gulf of Suez, and consider developing port on E. side of Suez Bay and build a line from Kantara on the E. of the Canal. (*i.e. El Shatt.*)

Agreement with Egypt: (*see above*) re. future destiny of all rail and port construction.

Sept. 1941 - RAF is considering storing 2-months supply of petrol at Beirut, in case Canal is closed again. (Min. 3575, 29 Sept. 1941).

Evacuation of Greece - was described as "a shambles".

WO 169-961. 17 May 1941: D.G.Tn. to meeting of Pal. War Supply Board - strongly urged the control of all rail traffic (both civil & Govt.) from Egypt & Pal. Military Movt. Control Organisation would offer every assistance. Schooner traffic from Egypt to Jaffa so as to relieve pressure on rail.

18 May 1941 - discussions with Webb (P.R. G.M.) etc. on railway operating problems and future policy.

18 May 1941 - evacuation of military & RAF families from Egypt & Palestine to S. Africa. Special train ex-Jerusalem 17.30 15 May 1941 to Kantara E. arr 16 May 1941 06.00.

23 May 1941 - GHQ Movt. Control Working Instructions No. 18, Stores, Amendment No. 2: No stores of any kind for Pal. to be despatched by rail without a calling order from Q(M)GHQ; bi-weekly return to be submitted re. cargoes awaiting transport to Palestine, and decision then to be made by Q(M) 5 & Q(M)4 re. best method of transport from Egypt to Pal.

(Daily Movts. Conf.; 19 May 1941, Minute 1663 - 500 wagons stuck at Kantara E. due to blockage; hoped to clear at ca. 80-90 per day.

22 May 1941, Min. 1700 - re. Traffic to Pal. "AD(Mov.)R said that we were trying to initiate a system of control over traffic, civil & mil., in order to prevent congestion at the ferry. Palestine Govt. had been written to on these lines and we were awaiting a reply".

June 1941. "The operations in Syria have naturally accounted for a heavy increase in traffic between Egypt & Pal. During the month, 17,106 personnel, travelling by rail, crossed the ferry at Kantara..."

33% increase in Pal. traffic across Kantara ferry. Traffic ex-Haifa docks up 43%.

p.4: military rail traffic forwarded to ESR from Pal. area: 439 wagons, 3889 tons.

Kantara statistics:

May: 1,175 wagons & 11,011 personnel to Pal.
359 wagons & 7,715 personnel to Egypt.
June: 1,564 wagons & 17,106 personnel to Pal;
472 wagons & 10,519 personnel to Egypt.
July: 1,480 wagons & 21,658 personnel to Pal. (military stores.)
409 wagons & 14,992 personnel to Egypt.

WO169/962. July 1941. E.S.R. was asked to erect imported W.D. wagons at Bulac rather than Gabbari Works - to relieve congestion and reduce the risk of air raid damage.

08 July 1941 - Train 267 (Matruh-Alexandria passenger) attacked by aircraft at Itnooh Stn., W.D. loco 9319 hit, boiler pierced in two places. (Egyptian driver & NZE fireman died of wounds.)

15 July 1941: "At this period there was a great shortage of rails; all that were available were sent to Ataka for extension of sidings."

Doubling of line Kantara-Lydd under investigation.

Min. 2342 of 03 July 1941: Discussion on using train ferries e.g. ex Dover-Dunkirk to shuttle Suez-Port Sudan; Min. 2357, 04 July 1941 - it is doubtful if these could be obtained - but the Harwich ferries might be a better bet.

30 July 1941, Min. 2476: The n.g. line from Haifa is already being used to capacity.

12 Aug. 1941. (WO 169/963). From 12 Aug. 1941 Directorate of Tn. ceased to function as a separate Directorate; henceforth combined under jurisdiction of D. Movements & Tn. Directorate of Rlys. ceased to function as such - DAD Operations & DAD (Mech.) being transferred under DD Movts. Rlys. & Directorate of Rly. & Harbour Construction being formed in its place.

Aug. 1941 - proposals for Shellal - Wadi Halfa Rly.

04-06 Aug. 1941 - Simner visited Jerusalem & Damascus to discuss rail needs & problems, incl. use of C.F.H. workshops at Cadem.

09 Aug. 1941 - Simner met with Masters (C.M.E., P.R.) re. conversion of locos to oil firing.

WO 169/964. CR/ME/11616/Mov(7), Amendment No.1: Division of Responsibility between Movement Control Personnel & Railway Operating Units, dated 17 Sept. 1941.

'1. Amalgamation of Movts. & Transportation...';

"2: Rly. Optg. Units may be employed to operate sections of open lines, to operate certain depots, docks, sidings or marshalling yards, to assist civilian railways to operate lines, depots, yards or sidings, or to form a "shadow" operating staff, ready to carry on if a civilian railway is unable to carry out its obligations."

Min.3643, 23 Sept. 1941: Only 50 vegetable vans were in service, with a 5½ day turn-round to the Western Desert.

APPENDIX 9:

THE AMERICAN MILITARY RAILROAD CONTRIBUTION IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

A. Introduction.

The American contribution to the military railways in this theatre of war (we shall omit here the operations in Persia / Iran)¹²⁰⁹ comprised a large number of steam and diesel locomotives, and freight rolling stock. Only one unit, the 760th. RSB, actually served in the area, servicing and maintaining the diesel locomotives which the USATC used and which made such a profound impression on the P.R. General Manager, Kirby. It appears no operating personnel were employed on the Tel Litwinsky branch, and that this was worked solely by P.R.¹²¹⁰ In the following peacetime period 1945-48, there was much correspondence concerning the purchase of some of this USATC stock by P.R., and quantities were indeed absorbed.¹²¹¹

At the outbreak of the war the Americans were badly prepared for any such activity. The Railway Branch of the Army Corps of Engineers in July 1940 consisted of one office staffed by four men; Designs had been prepared over the past fifteen years for locomotives and four-wheel wagons based on World War 1 practice, but these were soon discarded as unsuitable and outmoded. The first organised railway battalion in the U.S. Army was only activated on 18 July 1941. Training and equipment trials were carried out at Camps Claiborne and Polk, Louisiana, and the 50-mile military railroad between them.

The Chief Designer of the Railway Branch was Major Howard G. Hill.

On 31. July 1942 the U.S. Army Transportation Corps was established, and the personnel of the Railway Branch of the Corps of Engineers transferred to this new body in November that year.

¹²⁰⁹ See Hughes p. 100-113 for a chapter on this country; the USATC took over working of the main North-South line from the Royal Engineers and imported 56 Alco Co-Co diesel locomotives together with 8 GE Bo-Bo's and 24 Davenport 0-4-0D 'switchers'.

¹²¹⁰ There is some mystery as to what exactly the Tel Litwinsky branch from Kafr Jinnis was used for. There was a US Military Hospital here, but also, it appears, storage sheds for dangerous weapons. See Harakevet 33:23 and 48:13:3. It was worked from Lod. Haifa Museum, Plan E/95/15 of 09. June 1945 has a later hand-written note added, stating that the Tel Litwinsky branch closed on 08. May 1947.

¹²¹¹ Sources used for this Chapter:

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'Trains' Magazine, December 1964. pp. 20-35.

'Harakevet' 12:24 (Rolling stock); 17:16 (USATC 2-8-2's); 18:6 (USATC 0-6-0T's); 20:12 ("Whitcombs");

'Railroading in Eighteen Countries: The Story of American Railroad Men Serving in the Military Railway Service 1862-1953' by Maj.-Gen. Carl R. Gray. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1955.

'American "Rails" in Eight Countries, The Story of 1st. Military Railway Service', pub. Transportation Corps, no date.

Tables of Organization and Equipment, 55-235 - 55-239. Issued by War Dept., Washington, Oct. 1943. (From USATC Museum, Fort Eustis, Va.)

760th. History Card. (US Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pa., Microfilm Reel No. 70.)

B. The 'Middle East' 2-8-2 Steam Locomotives.

On 13. Sept. 1941 Major R. Hart-Davies of the Royal Engineers, attached to the British Army staff, presented to this office under the Lease-Lend arrangements a requisition for 50 'Pershing'-type 2-8-0's (of World War 1 design) for use by the British Army in the Middle East. Hill considered this an unsuitable locomotive for the conditions of service envisaged, and suggested instead a modern lightweight 2-8-2 or 'Mikado'.¹²¹² After consultations with various locomotive builders a design originally prepared by Baldwins in 1924 for a domestic railway was taken as the basis for a new locomotive, and Hill prepared detailed specifications, employing what he considered to be the best and most appropriate of contemporary practice. In doing this he had to contend both with the conservatism of the British (who claimed to have little experience with trailing trucks, didn't see the need for a headlight, insisted on oil lubrication for crank pins when he wanted grease lubrication, and wanted British-style steam- rather than air-sanding gear), and the insistence of the American locomotive equipment supply industry which tried to apply pressure through various channels for him to use specific brands of equipment. Interestingly the locos had only been in use a short time in Iran etc. when electric headlights and air sanding had to be fitted and the lubrication changed, thus vindicating his decisions!

By 21. September 1941 a new outline design had been prepared and was sent to the Ministry of Supply in London; In the meantime the requisition had been increased from 50 to 200 locomotives. The revised detailed specification was completed by 15. October 1941 and orders were placed in November with ALCO (American Locomotive Company), Lima and Baldwin. The first locomotive was completed in February 1942, and the last on 20. June; the 200 locos, initially numbered 1000 - 1199, were immediately shipped to the Middle East, coal burners to Egypt and oil-burners elsewhere. (They were designed for easy conversion from one to the other). 24 locos were sunk en route, and 75 went directly to Iran. 65 locos were unloaded at Suez or Port Said from June 1942 onwards, and prepared for service by detachments of 199 Rly. Wksps. Coy. at Suez, Kantara, El Shatt, Haifa, Jaffa and Lydda. They were used on the Western Desert line, the H.B.T. line, and hired to P.R. and E.S.R. for use on their systems. One was burned out in unusual circumstances on the Sinai Military Railway at Mazar, when in October 1942 No. 1086 set itself alight and, before the fire could be extinguished, melted itself to the track!¹²¹³ There are unconfirmed reports that another loco also suffered major fire damage on the H.B.T.

Cost per loco was \$75,650, or \$15 million for the 200. These locos were often referred to as 'Middle East 2-8-2's', 'USATC Baldwins' or 'Mikadoes'. Between 1943 and 1947 53 were transferred to Turkey at a cost of approx. US\$ 25,000 each.

These engines proved extremely useful, after some initial settling-down and resolution of minor technical problems¹²¹⁴, and were put to work on the Sinai section where the blowing sand affected their motion parts less badly than it did the British-design 8F 2-8-0's. One was used on the opening train of the H.B.T., and the class worked the line almost exclusively for a while; others were hired to P.R., and some were used on the through Haifa - Cairo trains for a while - 415km. in

¹²¹² The British also employed the "R.O.D."-type 2-8-0 of World War 1 vintage, though these were requisitioned rather than newly built for World War 2. To ask for more of the American equivalent was therefore not as strange as it may at first seem.

¹²¹³ This incident has been recorded elsewhere; according to one version the crew were apparently Polish-speaking and had not realised that they could pull a cord to cut the oil flow from the tender to the burner. Cameron notes: "One of the American 2-8-2's was completely destroyed by fire at El Mazar, and it was quite beyond repair with our facilities. We kept the chassis at Qishon and used it for spares, e.g. boiler and wheels". Tourret notes a cylinder casting was used on 1016 which had spent a year at Jaffa awaiting repairs. (Locos. p.202).

¹²¹⁴ R.M. Davies noted: "During Sept.-Dec. 1943 the standard-gauge was having trouble. The M.E. 2-8-2s were O.K. in this respect [burnt fireboxes], but had "soft tyres", which wore out a hollow at the point of hammer-blow. This depression could be up to 1/2" deep on a tyre! These engines were only successful after high-tensile steel tyres were fitted. They were not as rugged as they looked; inferior-quality steel had been used for the motion. However, the boilers were first-rate."

13 hours. Later renumbered into first the 8000-8199 and later 9000-9199 series, an August 1944 "Stock Position" paper shows that 6 were officially in service in Egypt, 21 in Palestine, 4 on the H.B.T. and 11 retained under direct Army control (one of these being 1086), either under repair or awaiting transfer, in addition to 29 in Turkey, 10 in Iraq and 90 in Iran. At the end of hostilities around 90 were sold to Iran and most of the rest had been transferred to Italy or Turkey, with 5 sold to the UNRRA in China, and none of the engines remained in Palestine after 1946.

C. The USATC 0-6-0T 'Switchers'¹²¹⁵

On 7. November 1941 Major Hart-Davies brought a further Lease-Lend requisition for 50 steam shunting locomotives for the British Army, together with several thousand goods wagons of both four-wheel and bogie design; again, the locos were originally intended to be duplicates of the Baldwin 0-6-0T's constructed during World War 1. Hill again suggested that the designs needed updating, and by Nov. 13. specifications had been prepared for the locos and eight designs of bogie wagons.

Eventually almost 450 of the 0-6-0 Tank engines were constructed by Porter, Vulcan and Davenport. Thirty went to the Middle East, (nineteen of these to Iraq) though many went to Britain¹²¹⁶ and Europe. Eleven worked in Palestine. They were W.D. 1267-76 (Vulcan Iron Works, 1942), 1287-1301 (Davenport 1942) and 1992-96 (Vulcan 1943). The first two arrived at Suez on 2. September 1942, and were hired to P.R. from November 1942; the next two arrived in February 1943 and were allocated immediately to the H.B.T. line. All had arrived by April 1943 and, apart from the three by then hired to P.R. and one hired to the E.S.R., they worked army depots at Gilbana, Wadi Sarar, Sarafand etc. By 1946 most of these engines had either been sold to the E.S.R. or transferred, via MEF, to Italy or other areas of North Africa; some went to Greece. Two remained, sold to Palestine Railways, where they became Nos. 20 & 21¹²¹⁷.

D. The Whitcomb Diesel Locomotives.

In 1941 52 0-4-4-0DE¹²¹⁸ were ordered under the Lend-Lease arrangements, specifically for service in the Middle East. They were built by the Whitcomb Locomotive Co. of Rochelle, Illinois, a Baldwin subsidiary, and numbered W.D. 1200-1251. A further sixty (W.D. 1537-96) were constructed in 1942, incorporating certain modifications, especially to the braking system which was initially inadequate. These were conventional American locos for the time (diesel locomotive development in Britain was at this point restricted to shunting engines only), powered initially by two Buda diesel engines giving a total of 650hp. (Some were later rebuilt with Caterpillar engines).

Whilst seven were lost at sea, the others all served in the MEF. The first arrived at Suez in June 1942 and, so great was the urgency of the time, was in working order within four hours of the engine chassis being set onto the bogies. A further 21 arrived by October 1942, and a further 25 slightly later. They were mostly available for the second offensive in the Western Desert, where some were fitted with armour plate and some were even disguised as box-cars and worked unobtrusively in the middle of trains, to confuse enemy pilots.¹²¹⁹ Some worked from Kantara East on trains across the Ferdan swing bridge and on the new line to El Shatt, and they worked the majority of traffic on the H.B.T. line for a period until mid-1944¹²²⁰ when they were replaced by

¹²¹⁵ 'Switching' is the American term for the English word 'Shunting'.

¹²¹⁶ In Britain they were known as the 'USA Tanks'. Some were purchased post-war by the Southern Railway for dock shunting at Southampton Docks.

¹²¹⁷ Tourret p.49. See also Harakevet 64:14 on USATC 0-6-0T shunting locos in Middle East.

¹²¹⁸ In British nomenclature: Bo-Bos, i.e. locomotives with two powered bogies, separate transmission to each axle.

¹²¹⁹ A photo of one such camouflaged loco appeared in 'Railway Magazine'.

¹²²⁰ According to Tustin & Jones: "The Whitcomb Diesels met an ignoble end. Owing to lack of spares, they soon were working on single units and in time it became necessary to cannibalise some of them in order to keep others going, with

steam locomotives.¹²²¹

As the war progressed the majority were later transferred to Italy and worked later throughout Europe; none remained in the Middle East after 1946. A later series of similar locos built in 1943 and 1944 worked only in Europe and do not fall within the scope of this thesis.¹²²²

E. Freight Rolling Stock.

The wagons (the American term is 'Freight Cars') designed by Hill conformed in most respects to the Association of American Railroads¹²²³ and Interstate Commerce Commission standards though modified to meet differing weight standards and various detail differences in couplings, buffers and brake gear to suit European requirements.¹²²⁴ The four-wheel wagon came in Flat, Gondola (British: "Open"), Box (British: 'Van'), Caboose (British: 'Brake Van') and Tank (British: 'Cistern') versions, and the bogie vehicles in Flat, Gondola, Box, Reefer (British 'Refrigerated') and Tank versions; within each series the underframes and running gear were standardised.

It is not known how exactly many were built, nor where - most were shipped as kits of parts, and erected in railroad yards across Europe, North Africa, Iran etc. during various stages of the war.¹²²⁵ These wagons played a major role in enabling essential freight to be moved. The 'P.R. Working Timetable No. 4' for 1. November 1945 lists¹²²⁶ the "War Department Rolling Stock on the Middle East" as including 56 USA Brake Vans, 242 USA Flats, 282 USA Cisterns of 8000 gall. capacity, 810 USA 35T box wagons and 198 20T box vans (these latter being the 4-wheel type), and 1,475 USA open wagons; These figures include those hired to other railways - at this time P.R. had for example hired at least 18 brake vans and 110 of the 35T boxvans, whilst photos show some stock to have been 'captive' on the H.B.T. Some of the boxvans were fitted with seats to become rudimentary troop-carriers. Postwar, in June 1946 Kirby was attempting to purchase 113 boxvans, 52 40-ton cisterns and 16 brakevans from the surplus American stock (in addition to surplus British stock), and in the event, whilst much stock was sold by the Liquidation Commission to Turkey, Greece etc., a substantial amount remained on the former P.R. lines when, by fortunes of war, they became stranded there; some vehicles were still in use on I.R. until the mid-1990's.

F. U.S. Railroad Troops in the Middle East.

In autumn 1942 U.S. troops under Lt.-Gen. Eisenhower invaded North Africa, and military railroad units of the USATC Military Railway Service (MRS) were soon working in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, including the 703rd. Railway Grand Division which arrived in March 1943.

the result that Azzib became a veritable graveyard of diesels. About the same time, the position in the Egyptian Western Desert was also becoming acute for the same reasons and as it was essential, in view of the water shortage, to use diesel power here, the whole bunch of diesels were transferred from the H.B.T. as spares for the Desert line. This left the 04's to run all the long-distance trains, both goods and passenger." (Typescript, p.20).

¹²²¹ Davies noted in August 1943 "At that stage the ME 2-8-2's and Whitcomb diesels were operating Kantara - Lydda and Haifa - Beirut. These latter were giving a lot of trouble, and only lasted another six months. They kept blowing cylinder heads; possibly someone had uprated the engines beyond their design level. PR operated a tough timetable - e.g., a little later, 32 trains each way per day at the period of the 8F's - and demanded exact punctuality."

¹²²² Except to note that approx. 50 were still at work as Class D.143 on the FS (Italian State Railways) in 2002! They were modernised between 1966 and 1974. See 'Today's Railways' No. 41, p.14.

¹²²³ The letters "AAR" are found on various parts, e.g. bogies.

¹²²⁴ American railroads have used automatic centre couplers and no buffers since the late 19th. Century.

¹²²⁵ On the other hand, the diary of Bert Dyke, who worked at the wharf at 'Kilo 40' on the Suez Canal, notes that on 7. June 1942 'Belray' tied up, "loaded with goods wagons, Yankee 40-tonners, both Open and Box (the 50-tonners came later in the year) and Bolsters with lovely Commonwealth bogies." (WW2RSG Newsletter Vol. 14 No. 1, p. 14.22.) This implies they arrived fully-erected.

¹²²⁶ p.xviii.

701st. & 704th. RGD's also served in North Africa at various times. (A "RGD" normally consisted of four or five Railway Operating Battalions, a Railway Shop Battalion and a small HQ section)¹²²⁷. The 727th. and 713th. Railway Operating Battalions operated in this theatre,¹²²⁸ In May 1942 two 'Railway Shop Battalions Diesel' were authorized, organized with ALCO, Baldwins and General Motors Electro-Motive Corporation. One of these, the 760th. R.S.B., commanded by Lt. Col. A.R. Walker, was activated at Camp Claiborne on 15. June 1942, underwent training, and sailed from the USA on 7. October 1942 to Suez, arriving 12. November 1942. Their duty was to maintain the 140 diesel-electric locos that had been allocated to the region - detachments had to be sent for this purpose to Egypt, Libya, Palestine and Syria. This unit's stay lasted just a year¹²²⁹; On 1. September 1943 the unit moved from Darb el Hag and Similla, Egypt, to Kantara, and the 760th. RSB moved to Italy in several detachments between November 1943 and July 1944, together with many of the diesel locos themselves.¹²³⁰

From this point on it appears that there was no direct American involvement in the operation of the military railways in the Middle East theatre. The rolling stock remained an issue, and the disposal/acquisition of this is dealt with elsewhere, in Chap. 9.

¹²²⁷ Tourret: 'W.D. Locomotives'. p.1

¹²²⁸ 'United States Military Railway Service' p.42.

¹²²⁹ cf. 'The Ballad of 760th.' 760 RSB song. In Harakevet 59:20.

¹²³⁰ 'Railroading in Eighteen Countries'. pp.136-8.

APPENDIX 10. SOME CORRESPONDENCE OF ARTHUR KIRBY.

In an album of photos, cuttings and memorabilia in the possession of his daughter are preserved copies of letters received by and written by Arthur Kirby in the latter months of his time in Palestine, and an article he wrote for the 'Railway Gazette'. Some are also written by former colleagues after his departure. We have added explanatory comments where necessary, or indicated incomplete or inconsistent entries.

(a). *Newspaper cutting - no date, but clearly from late April/early May 1948.*

"From Geoffrey Hoare, News Chronicle Correspondent, Jerusalem, Thursday.

"The eve-of-Passover battle for the British evacuation port of Haifa has ended in overwhelming victory for the Jews.

Arab resistance has been overcome throughout the city, except for one or two isolated posts, which Haganah are now mortaring heavily.

The Jews are also drawing a cordon round Haifa where British forces hold a narrow strip of the harbour area, and have attacked the nearby Arab village of Tireh, presumably to prevent reinforcements from reaching the hard-pressed Arabs inside the town.

Moving rapidly on the heels of the departing British, the Jews are taking over police outposts and Army camps in the Holy Land. By the time UNO has reached a decision on Palestine, they will have placed themselves in an almost unassailable position, and partition will be a fact.

Haifa, Palestine's main seaport, has a population of 150,000 - half Arabs, half Jews. Until trouble began last December, Arabs and Jews worked well together and Haifa's joint municipality was often put forward as an example.

Desperate Fighting has been going on in Palestine's main seaport since midday yesterday - and not a hint of it known in Jerusalem until nearly 24 hours later.

First indication in British circles in Haifa of anything amiss occurred early yesterday. When Mr. A. F. Kirby, general manager of the Palestine Railways, reached his office he found it occupied by Hagana men who had also taken over an evacuated police station next door.

Whether British troops or Arabs tried to dislodge Haganah is not clear, but by that evening railway headquarters were blazing from top to bottom and all records for the past 30 years were destroyed.

By evening, too, the Jews had opened a wild offensive against Arab districts in the congested area between the great port and the slopes of Mount Carmel. Fighting raged through the night.

There have been hundreds of Arab casualties, mainly in the bazaar where the Jews' mortar bombs and heavy machine-guns took a terrible toll."

(b). Letter from **"Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits et des grands Express Européens."**

The Representative for Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Iraq & Iran. **Cairo, 16th. March 1948.**
Ref. 568/A-49/2.

"Dear Sir,

I have to acknowledge receipt of your letter GM/MAND/G.A. of 5th. March 1948, informing me that with effect from 16th. May 1948, the British Mandatory Government of Palestine will cease and that from that date the Palestine Railways Administration which is part of the Mandatory Government will also cease.

I hope that arrangements will be made before the end of the Mandate so as the Palestine Railways continue to be operated in a normal way.

I deeply appreciate your co-operation during the long years our two Administrations have worked together and please accept my Company's and my personal thanks.

I would be grateful for any information you may have, concerning the Palestine Railways and my Company before the 15th. May."

(Signature illegible.)

(c). Letter: Egyptian State Railways, Telegraphs and Telephones. General Manager's Office.
Ref. / No.64/29/5. **Cairo Station, 24th. April 1948.**

"Dear Sir,

I would acknowledge receipt of your letter No. GC/30/12 of 8th. instant, contents of which have been noted.

I regret your leaving the Palestine Railways Administration, which has been so wisely and efficiently directed under your management.

I also regret that I shall not have the pleasure of sitting with you at the next meeting of the Middle East Railways Conference Association and should thank you for your valuable cooperation in the Association and for your good wishes.

Many thanks for the expression of your good feeling in our association and my best wishes to you for successful future prospects.

Yours Faithfully, A. Badr (?), General Manager."

(d). Chemin de Fer Damas, Hama & Prolongements. Direction. Beyruth, le 16 mars, 1948.

No. 6197.

"Cher Monsieur,

J'ai bien reçu votre lettre GM/MAND/G.2 du 5 mars 1948, et mes collaborateurs et moi-même tenon à vous remercier vivement de votre aimable appréciation pour notre longue et fructueuse coopération avec vous-même, et avec tous les fonctionnaires des Palestine Railways.

Nous n'oublierons pas tout l'appui que nous avons trouvé près de vous, notamment pendant les difficiles années de la guerre, et en toutes circonstances.

Nous continuerons certainement à la collaborer dans le même esprit avec la future Administration des chemins de fer de Palestine.

Je vous prie de croire à mes meilleurs sentiments."

(Signature illegible.)

(e).

“PALESTINE RAILWAYS:

The Closing of an Interesting Chapter in British Colonial Railway History.

By A.F. Kirby, CMG. General Manager & Ports Authority, Palestine Railways and Ports, 1942-48.

[An article, probably from Railway Gazette but bearing no page number or date (maybe a proof copy sent to him for checking?) - the context implies post-1948, and includes his analysis of the worth of the various lines. He had also written a two-page detailed article, covering the war years, published in the Railway Gazette Aug. 31 1945 (pp.219-220, 227, plus Map.)]

“The 1946-47 annual report was destined to be the last on the combined working of the Palestine Railways as constituted under the British Mandatory Government of Palestine. No matter what form the railway system in Palestine may take in the future, the framework will be much smaller than that within which the Palestine Railways Administration operated the several railways which came within its scope, and which totalled 1,211 km.

The railways traverse what were probably the most ancient highways of the world, dating back to biblical times. The only section built with direct commercial intention was the original Jaffa - Jerusalem railway, from which the promoters hoped to derive profit from the pilgrim traffic to Jerusalem. under a 71 years concession from the Ottoman Government. The pilgrim traffic was hardly profitable, nor were there any extensions, but the concessionaires were awarded LP 565,000 when the British acquired the rights after the first world war, during which the Turks had converted the tracks to 105cm. gauge.....

The railway negotiates mountainous country, with a ruling gradient of 2 per cent, and engineers have had constant trouble in maintaining accuracy of gauge in 4 ft. 8½ in. track on curves designed for metre gauge, because of the prohibitive cost of widening the formation and easing the curves. High speeds are impossible, and the excellent roads now available take most of the passenger traffic from the coast to Jerusalem. Goods traffic is confined to imported goods and bulk oils, with an outwards traffic of potash from the Dead Sea for export. If another route is found for the evacuation of potash, there would be no economic justification for the retention of the Jerusalem Railway.

The Hedjaz Railway was constructed by the Ottoman Government ostensibly to facilitate the pilgrimage to Mecca, but the main purpose seemed to have been to link up the remote provinces better to suppress rebellious tribes.....

All the sections south of Tulkarem, where the 105cm gauge has a junction with the 4ft. 8½ in gauge, were taken up after the first world war, and the section south of Ma'an and into Saudi Arabia has not been reopened since its destruction by Lawrence's forces.

Several conferences have been held to clarify the ownership of the Hedjaz Railway and reopen the section to Medina, but the prospects of the latter are unpromising. Under the Treaty of Lausanne, the various sections of the Hedjaz Railway fall to be acquired, without payment, by the states which are heirs to the Ottoman Empire. The sections in Syria and Transjordan are therefore now owned by those governments, but the ownership of the sections in Palestine must remain obscure until the outcome of the present conflict.

Except for some short sections in Palestine, the Hedjaz Railway traverses arid country and taps no industrial areas. It has never been commercially self-supporting, and under the Ottoman regime its revenues were augmented by a special stamp duty levied throughout the Empire. Passenger traffic is negligible, and but for some imported traffic from Haifa to Damascus, goods are confined to the grain harvest, which is not enough to produce profits on the yearly working.

During the second world war, the section from Haifa to Damascus was intensively used in

the Syrian campaign in 1941, and later the section in Transjordan was extended to Naqb Ashtar to serve Akaba as a strategic alternative to the Suez Canal.

The Sinai Line.

The main standard-gauge line from Kantara to Haifa was the direct outcome of the first world war, and was constructed by military engineers. The bridge at El Arish in Sinai was the original wrought-iron bridge brought by the Stephensons to cross the Nile for the first railway from Alexandria.

At the close of the first world war there was a double track from Kantara to Rafa, and a water pipe line from Kantara to Mazar in Sinai., but the second track and the pipeline were removed afterwards. The Kantara - Rafa section remained British Government-owned, and it was operated by the Palestine Railways until it was handed over to the Egyptian State Railways for operation at the end of March 1948. The section traverses desert for the whole of its route and has little normal commercial traffic. During the second world war it again became of military importance and its capacity was increased to 17 trains a day each way over the single line, but by using lend-lease 2-8-2 locomotives with 1,000 ton loads, the peak requirements of the army were met with not more than 10 to 12 trains each way at the most. This line played a vital part in maintaining Palestine as a war base and wartime industrial area, by securing the route from Suez to Palestine, by canal and rail, under British control.

The branch from Ras el Ain to Petah Tiqvah, built in 1923, is partially owned by the Jewish Colonisation and the Palestine Government (as distinct from the British) and is the origin of a large part of the citrus traffic.

The latest addition to the Palestine Railways system was the extension northwards forming part of the military railway to Beirut and Tripoli, which was completed in 1942 to give through connection to Turkey, Europe and Iraq. It was never used for its full military possibilities, but was valuable in maintaining British forces in Syria and providing a land route from the Mediterranean to Iraq. It is now owned by the Lebanese Government, but the southern section from Beirut to Palestine is not being operated, because of the troubles in Palestine.

In April 1943 the management and control of the ports in Palestine were placed under the railway administration.

Except for rolling stock acquired from lend-lease, and the Hedjaz stock, the rolling stock of the Palestine Railways followed British 4ft. 8½ in. gauge pattern. All the locomotives and other steam-raising installations are oil-burning. The conversion from coal to oil was undertaken during the critical period 1942-3, and the consequent overworking of locomotives and troubles from poor design almost brought disaster, but by 1948 a high standard of oil-burning had been achieved.

Rail Traffics.

The principal traffics by rail within Palestine were general imports, consisting mainly of foodstuffs and building materials, bulk oils from the refineries at Haifa, potash for export and, most important, the country's staple crop of citrus. Traffic during the second world war exceeded by far all previous records, an average of 12 trains each way, with peaks of 15, being required day in and day out over a single line - an achievement possible only with telephonic control. Wartime traffic figures were:-

<u>Year</u>	<u>Net ton km.</u>	<u>Revenue. (LP).</u>	
1936/37.	166,638,000.	1,000,513.	(This was the peak pre-war year.)
1942/43.	388,173,000	2,485,379.	
1943/44.	501,243,000	3,115,470.	
1944/45.	397,267,000	2,658,122.	
1945/56.	373,754,000	2,863,305.	

The greatest factor in the increase in expenditure was the fantastic increase in the labour

costs. During the year 1946-47 the Government-imposed cost-of-living allowances and wages increases accounted for LP 1,161,826 in relation to a total basic wages bill of only LP 938,174. Most of these allowances are awarded with retroactive effect and could not be recovered in current charges.

There was an accumulated deficit of LP 690,711 on the Palestine and Transjordan sections at March 31, 1947. The Kantara - Rafa Railway, normally a deficit concern, earned startling profits during the recent war, solely because of the closure of the Eastern Mediterranean sea route. From 1941-42 to 1946-47 the surplus revenue, after deduction for depreciation payments, was no less than LP 1,191,798, of which LP 1,100,947 accrued to the direct benefit of the British taxpayer. Last year there was a deficit of LP 119,800 because of the troubles in Palestine and the Arab boycott of Palestine trade. The only section of the railway capable of commercial development was the Government-owned section in Palestine, which served areas which were being developed intensively in agriculture and industry.

A statement of accounts of that section as at March 31, 1946, showed an accumulated profit of LP 391,186 on capital improvements and LP 262,929 upon renewals; there was a recorded liability of LP 502,052 for renewals. The years following were so catastrophic in sabotage that all accumulated profits were wiped out by deficits of LP 326,674 in 1946-47 and LP 354,985 in 1947-48. The accounts for the last year are taken only until February 1948, because all essential records were destroyed when the railway headquarters were gutted by fire during the battle of Haifa in April, 1948.

Diverse Operating Conditions.

The conditions in which the railways were operated were unique in several respects - especially for a small administration. The engineers had to cope with widely varying topographical and climatic conditions. Political problems were unusual. Although the Palestine Railways was a department of the Palestine Mandatory Government, the ramifications of its activities went far outside Palestine. Apart from its international connections with other railways throughout the Middle East and Europe, the Palestine Railways Administration operated in Egypt, for the Kantara-Rafa Railway, and in Transjordan, for the Hedjaz Railway; in the one case King Farouk and in the other under King Abdullah, though in both cases acting as the agent of the British Government. Another extraneous commitment was the running right through Syria over the Hedjaz Railway. The Palestine Railways sponsored the Middle East Railways Conference Association.

Throughout its history the Palestine Railways suffered severely from political disturbance and wars. In Palestine, the most severe periods of sabotage were during the Arab troubles in 1935-36, more recently in 1944-48 from Jewish dissident forces, and finally from both Jews and Arabs. Nevertheless, the railways were kept operating almost continuously, thanks to the incredible loyalty of the staff.

End of Administration.

With the end of the British Mandate the Palestine Railways Administration came to an end, and its railway system was disintegrated. The Hedjaz Railway in Transjordan naturally affiliates with the Syrian Railway and the Kantara-Rafa Railway with the Egyptian State Railways. It is not improbable that the Jerusalem line and the Hedjaz Railway in Palestine will remain closed. The standard-gauge railway within Palestine was virtually owned by the country and its future must depend on the outcome of present events there. Except for the headquarters offices, which were only temporary in replacement of the offices bombed out during the last war, all the railway and port assets remained essentially intact at the end of the mandate. The main line was blocked by a train wreck north of Lydda, thus effectively separating Arab and Jewish sectors when the conditions precluded the possibility of restoring the line. The Egyptians took over the southern portion, and the northern portion was operated by Palestine Railways Jewish staff. Only one large depot, Lydda, remained in Arab hands immediately before the withdrawal of the British and, following the flight

of all the Arab population of Haifa, from whom 90% of the railway staff was drawn, the main workshops, stores, and other headquarters installations were handed over to the Jewish authorities at the end of the mandate. On March 31, 1947, the rolling stock of Palestine Railways was 103 locomotives¹²³¹, 142 coaches and 3,077 wagons.

The final months were exceptionally hazardous, but it is pleasing to record that the railways and ports were kept working while conditions in the rest of the country had become chaotic.”

NOTE: The 1946/7 report, Foreword, §V, states: At 31/3/47 there were in stock: 75 PR & 24 WD s.g. locos = 99, plus 30 n.g. = 129. 91 s.g. coaches, 38 n.g. = 129. 2121 s.g. wagons (plus WD) and 366 n.g. = 2487. These are fairly major discrepancies with the article above.

(f). Letter to the ‘Sunday Times’, dated 22nd. Dec. 1958 (and noted as having been published in the following week’s edition).

“Dear Sir,

In his vivid story about the latter days of the Palestine Mandate, as published in yesterday’s “Sunday Times”, Lord Montgomery states that “rail communication was at a standstill”. I can but think that Lord Montgomery is speaking in metaphor, because the main route of the railway in Palestine [...] to the very end of the Mandate in May 1948. Interruptions in rail communication were never for more than a day or so and even when the railway track was blown up in 154 different places in one night, trains were running again within 24 hours. The loyalty of the railway staff was supreme; they carried on with their duties at great personal risk and against severe hazards comprising every known kind of vicious sabotage. Bridges were blown up almost nightly, staff were sniped at and killed while at their work, trains were burned and stations wrecked. When all semblance of military protection of the railway had been withdrawn (and it could never be more than window dressing) the railwaymen kept working and trains were running the full length of Palestine, to and from Egypt, when all the Government Administrative Service, Police and Army had been withdrawn from the area south of Haifa. By that time the trains not only had to run the gauntlet of Jewish terrorists but also the marauding, pillaging Bedouin. Because of the steadfast loyalty of the railway staff, a greater quantity of military stores was evacuated from Palestine to Egypt than had been estimated as possible by the military authorities. Three weeks before the end of the Mandate we managed, despite the destruction of railway headquarters in Haifa, to make a final pay-out of salary and provident fund benefits to all the railway staff who, though they had no more money to come, continued to work until the very end, restoring communications on the very last day of the Mandate.

I am happy to be able to correct any possible misapprehension that might have been caused by Lord Montgomery’s figure of speech, and especially am I happy to testify to the loyalty of the staff of the Palestine Railways - so many of whom, with their families, are languishing in refugee camps.

Yours Faithfully,.....”

[Note: This letter is rather ‘touchy’ - in all reality, normal public through services were NOT being run on the majority of P.R. by the last few weeks of the Mandate. But it is clear he wishes to defend not only his own reputation but that of his staff. The notes of the 23/04/48 meeting and comments by Baggaley indicate that he did NOT expect the staff to continue working after they had been paid.

One wonders what was the source of his seemingly constant desire to justify himself to himself and others? Was it a conflict with his father, a need to do better than he (we have no information when his father died), or a shock caused by the divorce from his first wife?

¹²³¹ This number is hard to read on the surviving copy, but 103 is believed correct.

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In addition I have been in private correspondence with several former P.R. employees and former Royal Engineers who served in Railway Operating and Workshops Companies, and some former Palestine Police, and have also carried out several personal interviews with such persons. These include Robin Davies, Goerge Cowley, John Lee, Isaac Nissan (formerly Nissenbaum), Aubrey Milstein.

GLOSSARY AND ABBREVIATIONS.

Note: Not all Technical terms, Military Ranks. etc. can be listed here. There are different useages as regards the full-stop; On the whole it appears that Railways used them more and the Military used them less, but there will be some inconsistency. For example, we use such stops for “W.D.” but not always for “USATC” or “NZEF”.

2 i/c. 2nd. in Command.

App. Appendix.

Asst. Assistant.

Aust. Australian.

BAD. Base Ammunition Depot.

BSD. Base Stores Depot.

BSED. Bulk Stores Engineers & Ordnance (Depot).

Bn. Battalion.

BPL. Brake/Parcels/Luggage Van, i.e. a Guards Van for passenger trains.

B.R.C.W Birmingham Railway Carriage & Wagon Co.

C.A Chief Accountant. (P.R.)

C.D.S. Syrian State Railways.

CE or C.E. Chief Engineer. (P.R.)

C.M.E. Chief Mechanical Engineer. (P.R.)

C&W Carriage & Wagon Dept.

C.-in-C. Commander in Chief.

C.F.H. Chemin de Fer du Hedjaz.

ckd. Completely knocked down. (i.e. supplied as parts, to be assembled locally).

C.O. or CO Colonial Office.

Co. Company. (Civilian.)

Composite. A railway coach laid out for more than one class of accommodation.
 i.e. 1st./2nd. or 2nd./3rd. Class.

Cons. Construction.

Coy. Company. (Military - used in Royal Engineers.)

CRE. Commander Royal Engineers. (Equivalent to a Regiment.)

C.S.O. Chief Staff Officer. P.R.)

DAD. Divisional Assistant Director.

Decauville. Light railways of 60cm. (or 2ft.) gauge, semi-portable, used for construction, military or agricultural purposes. Named after Paul Decauville, a French engineer who first initiated this concept, and applied even to equipment supplied by other firms.

Det. Detachment.

D.H.P. Chemin de Fer Damas - Hama et Prolongements.

E. East.

Extn. Extension.

E.S.R. Egyptian State Railways.

F.O. or FO Foreign Office.

F.S. Ferrovie della Stato. Italian State Railways.
 G.C.R. Great Central Railway. (Britain.)
 Ghaffir. A Guard or Supervisor. (Presumably origin of the British slang term 'Gaffer'.)
 GHQ. General Headquarters.
 G.I.P.R. Great Indian Peninsular Railway.
Ginzach HaMedinah. Israel State Archives, Jerusalem.
 G.M. General Manager. (PR)
 GM-EMD. General Motors - Electro-Motive Division. Diesel Locomotive constructors.
 Gp. Group.
 G.W.R. Great Western Railway. (Britain.)

H.B.T. Haifa - Beirut - Tripoli Railway. (Sometimes referred to as H-T or "Haifa - Tripoli" line.)
 H.M.G. His Majesty's Government.
 HMSO His Majesty's Stationery Office.
 H.R. Hedjaz Railway. (also Hijaz, Hejaz).
 H.J.R. Hedjaz Jordan Railway - i.e. the post-1948 Jordanian railway administration.
 IPC Iraq Petroleum Company.
 Irgun. See I.Z.L..
 I.S.R. Iraq State Railways.
 IWM. Imperial War Museum.
 IWT. Inland Water Transport. i.e. Canals, Rivers. Barge traffic, not sea-going.
 I.Z.L. "*Irgun HeTzeva'i HaLe'Umi*". (also referred to as "*Etzel*". Hebrew acronym, "People's Military Organisation.")

Jc. or Junc. Junction.
 K-R. Kantara - Rafa (or Rafah) Railway. (Also known as Sinai Military Railway.)
"Kibush HaAvodah" 'Conquest Through Work'. A Zionist political concept whereby Jews were encouraged to become involved in specific trades and industries so as to ensure a pool of skills and an element of influence over the future of these industries.

km. Kilometre.
 kph. Kilometres per hour.

LoC (Military) Line of Communication.
 L.M.S. London, Midland & Scottish Railway. (Britain, 1923-1948). The WD adopted a design of 2-8-0 "Class 8" or "8F" (i.e. Power classification 8, Freight) locomotive from this railway and many were built for WD service in Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Palestine etc. Following 1948 many remained in service in Egypt, and several were acquired by the new Israel Railways and referred to as "*Ha-Ellemess*." Some were also sent to Turkey.

L.N.E.R. London & North Eastern Railway. (Britain, 1923-1948).
 L.N.W.R. London & North Western Railway. A constituent in 1923 of the L.M.S.R.
 LE Light Engine. i.e. a locomotive travelling by itself, without hauling or propelling any vehicles.
 LE Egyptian Pound. Currency.
 LP Palestine Pound. Currency. Divided into 1,000 "Millièmes" or Mils.
 L.S.B. Lignes Syriennes de Bagdad.
 L.S.W.R. London & South Western Railway. (Britain, till 1923.) (Source of locos & coaches used in and from WW1.)

Machal Hebrew acronym. “*Mitnadvei Chutz La’aretz*”. “Volunteers from Abroad” - the organisation for foreign volunteers in the Israel War of Independence.

ME. Middle East. Often used to refer to the U.S.A.T.C. 2-8-2 locos. designed by Hill and built for the U.S.A.T.C., used on P.R. and H.B.T. lines and in Turkey. (e.g. “ME 2-8-2”.)

MEF Middle East Forces.

MESC. Middle East Supply Commission.

m. Metre.

Maint. Maintenance.

Mils. Millièmes. 1000th. of a Pound. (Currency).

MILPAL. Military Command, Palestine.

Min. Minute.

MLEF. Middle East Land Forces.

MOS. Ministry of Supply.

Mov. Movements. (Section of military organisation responsible for traffic movement.)

NBL North British Locomotive Co. Glasgow.

NG or n.g. Narrow Gauge. (Less than 4ft. 8½ in. between the wheels. On P.R. refers to the 105cm. gauge of the H.R. sections, but there were also 60cm. gauge works railways.)

NZ. New Zealand.

NZE. New Zealand Army Engineer Corps.

O.C. Officer Commanding.

Optg. Operating.

OR or O.R. Other Ranks. (i.e. not Officers.)

Paiforce. Military Abbreviation: “Palestine and Iraq Force” - assembled for the suppression of the Rashid Ali Revolt in Iraq in 1942.

P.B.S. Palestine Broadcasting Service.

P.E.C. Palestine Electric Company.

P.E.F. Palestine Exploration Fund.

P.M. Prime Minister.

P.P.O.C.A. Palestine Police Old Comrades Association.

P.R. Palestine Railways.

PWD Public Works Department.

Q. Quartermaster.

Ref. Reference.

R.A.E. Royal Australian Engineers.

R.A.S.C. Royal Army Service Corps.

R.C.& W. Railway Carriage & Wagon. Part of name of carriage-building firms.

R.O.C. Railway Operating Company.

R.E. Royal Engineers. The Royal Engineers used different terminology to other Army units; a Private was called a ‘Sapper’, a Regiment a Commander’ (probably reflecting that numbers of skilled Tradesmen were smaller than a normal regiment with its Battalion formations). Most of its men were of course Tradesmen and Supply personnel rather than intended

- for combat duties.
- R.O.D. Railway Operating Division. A First World War term, used here to describe locomotives built to the GCR “8K” design for military use at that time; these were 2-8-0 tender engines later classified as “04” by the LNER. Many of these veterans were employed by the WD once more and sent to the Middle East during the Second World War.
- R.S.B. Railway Shop Battalion. A USATC workshops unit. For some reason the USATC used the term “Railway” rather than the normal American term “Railroad” in its nomenclature.
- Rly. Railway.
- Rly. Wksp. Coy. (Also Whshps.) Railway Workshops Company, Royal Engineers.
- SG or s.g. Standard Gauge. (4ft. 8½in. between wheels.)
- SAEC. South African Army Engineerings Corps.
- SAFB. Société Anglo-Franco-Belge. Locomotive Constructors, Belgium.
- S.B. Signal Box.
- Sigs. Signals. (whether Military : ref. to a Signals unit; or Railway: semaphore signals for traffic control).
- S.O. Stationery Office.
- Sqd. Squadron. (Term used for RE Railway Units after 1947).
- S.R. Southern Railway. (England).
- Supt. Superintendent.
- Supt.o.t.L. Superintendent of the Line.
- T (as in “12T”) Ton. (No difference is made here between Tons, Metric Tonnes and American Short Tons; however, it should be noted that the U.S.A.T.C. “40T” vans were later designated “35T” by Israel Railways.)
- T.C.D.D. Turkish State Railways. (“Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Devlet Demiryollari Isletmesi”).
- TEFS “To Everywhere For Steam”, an organisation running tours for railway enthusiasts. Based Loughborough, England. TEFS has run several tours to the surviving Hedjaz Railway lines.
- Tn. Transportation.
- TSD. Transportation Stores Depot. (Royal Engineers.)
- U.K. United Kingdom.
- UNRRA United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, 1943 - 1948.
- U.S.A.T.C. United States Army Transportation Corps.
- W. West.
- W.D. or WD War Department.
- w/d Withdrawn from service.
- WDR. Western Desert Railway. (Alexandria westwards to Mersa Matruh, built 1930’s).
- WDER. Western Desert Extension Railway. (Similla, near Mersa Matruh, westwards to Tobruk. Built 1941-2.)
- wh. Wheel. (e.g. 4-wh., 6-wh. refs. to rolling stock with two or three axles.)
- Whisker. (Military). Term for a fan of sidings. Also called “Triage”, French for a marshalling yard.
- W.O. War Office.
- w/o Written-off. Removed from Inventory.
- Wksp. Workshops.

- W.T.T. Working Timetable. A timetable issued to railway staff, showing details of goods and shunting movements, as opposed to the Public Timetable made available to potential customers.
- Yishuv*. “Settlement”. Term used to describe the nascent Jewish community and administration in Palestine.
- ZDPV. Zeitschrift der Deutsche Palästina Verein.

Local Ranks & Slang.

From: “Story of the Royal Army Service Corps”. From p.395:

Bimbashi = Captain.

Kaimakam = Major.

Miralai = Lieutenant-Colonel.

Shifta = Bandits.
