

March 20th 1939

We have finally received a setback which no amount of wire-pulling and friendly intervention on the part of the authorities can remedy for the time being. Three days ago, I received a telephone message from the British Residency in Amman which gave me somewhat of a shock. I had previously informed Col. Peake, the Commander of the Arab Legion, that I proposed to arrive in Amman about Monday noon, March 20th, with the members of the staff, on the way south through Transjordan to Aqabah, to set up camp for the second campaign at Tell el-Kheleifeh. I was informed over the telephone that as a result of disturbances which had suddenly begun to take place throughout Transjordan, including the southern part of Transjordan, both Sir Henry Cox, the British Resident in Transjordan, and Col. Peake had after a conference decided to request me to postpone the excavations for the present. There was naturally nothing for me to do but to acquiesce. I had already previously sent our chauffeur Ylias Tutundjian with our Dodge station-waggon twice to Amman, to bring over the camp equipment there. The food supplies I had had shipped directly from Spinney's in Haifa via train to the Spinney's branch in Amman. It had been my intention to send the architect, the artist, the cook and the chauffeur on Saturday morning, March 18th, to Aqabah via the Palestine side. I had received the offer of a convoy as far as Beersheba, and a member of the Secretariat was going in his car with our group as far as Aqabah. That group was to have set up as much of the camp as I had stored at the police-post at Aqabah after the close of our excavations last year. The telephone call which came on Friday morning was thus received in time to cancel this part of the trip also. The member of the Secretariat likewise cancelled his trip.

Hectic days are not an uncommon experience during recent months for the Director of the School, but Friday morning was rather outstanding even in this respect. Thursday night I had received the offer of a convoy down the Palestine side as far as Beersheba. I was informed, however, that as a result of new regulations we would have to have Egyptian transit visas for our car to pass through the tip of Sinai which has to be traversed on the way down to Aqabah via the Palestine side. One can get down to Aqabah on the Palestine side, and remain completely within the Palestine boundary by turning off from Beersheba and descending eastward via Kurnub and el-Husb to the Arabah, and then directly southward through the Arabah to Mrashrash and Aqabah. However, after last year's trip along the "new" road through the Arabah, I was not inclined to let the car go that way. So early Friday morning I started out to get Egyptian transit visas and then remembered that it was Friday and that the Egyptian Consulate would be hermetically closed. In as much as the offer of the convoy would probably not have soon been repeated, I was about to get in touch with the Egyptian Consul to see if I could nevertheless get him to issue the visas for us even though it was Friday. Then the long-distance phone from Transjordan began to

ring, the British Residency Office speaking. This time, however, it was to be a very welcome message. The British Residency Office was phoning through to inform me that the roads in Transjordan were now sufficiently dry for our cars to pass along the desert track to Aqabah. Therein too lies another indication of the present difficulties under which one labours today in Palestine. It is no longer possible for the ordinary person to use the trunk lines leading outside of Palestine proper. I happened to mention to the District Commissioner, Mr. Keith-Roach, that this limitation on the use of the long-distance telephone was somewhat inconvenient, because on occasion I might want to phone from Palestine to Transjordan or vice versa in connection with School affairs. With his usual kindness and extreme helpfulness, the District Commissioner immediately suggested that he would arrange to have the School placed on the official telephone list. Shortly thereafter, the Director of the Press Bureau, which evidently has immediate charge over such matters, phoned me and told me they were putting my name down among those who could use the telephone to Transjordan. It would take some days, however, before the permission could be formally granted, and in the meantime he would do whatever phoning for me had to be done. At my request, the Director of the Press Bureau then phoned Transjordan to ask about the weather and the condition of the dirt track leading to Aqabah. About an hour later, another phone call came from Transjordan, this time to the effect that troubles had broken out also in the southern part of Transjordan, and that the government would appreciate it if I postponed the excavations for the present. The British Residency Office is to phone me in a few days from now and tell me whether or not the situation has cleared up. If it has, we shall go on to Aqabah, and have a short season there. If not, I shall have to have our equipment brought back from Amman, and plan to undertake the excavations next November-December or next spring.

This is the first time during all these years of troubles in Palestine that there have been any disturbances whatsoever in Transjordan. The situation there is completely different from the situation here. There are no Jews in Transjordan, there is no question of Jewish immigration there, and there has been up till now the greatest desire on the part of the population that peace be maintained and that quiet be restored to Palestine. Transjordan has suffered ~~as a result~~ of the disturbances in Palestine, because it has not been able to export anywhere near the normal amount of agricultural produce to Palestine during the last few years that it normally does. The sudden flaring up of disturbances in Transjordan can only be due to outside intervention. There was a large battle near Irbid last week. A strong, armed and uniformed band which seems to have entered from Syria or northeastern Palestine, was surrounded by the loyal Arab troops, and driven into a wadi. Military airplanes engaged in the battle, and the next day we read in the newspapers that the band had been wiped out, and 45 bodies had been picked up by the troops. I am reliably informed that the casualties to the band were much more severe than published in the newspaper. A very large number of bombs was dropped from the planes, some of them of great size, exploding with such effect that the course of the wadi in the vicinity of the battle ~~was~~ changed.

*The first phone call from Transjordan was a direct reply concerning the weather.*

The Prime Minister of Transjordan issued a proclamation saying that the punishment meted out to this band should be taken as a warning to others desiring to destroy the peace of Transjordan. I am particularly concerned about disturbances in the Irbid region, because the continuation of the American School's survey of Transjordan depends upon peaceful conditions just in this particular district. The survey has been carried out as far as the Wadi Zerqa, and during the coming year it was our hope to bring it to completion by doing the area between the Wadi Zerqa and the Yarmuk. We still hope that conditions will again become sufficiently normal to carry out our plans. Troubles also broke out near et-Tafileh and Maan, I am given to understand. Et-Tafileh is only a few kilometres removed from the site of the School's excavations at Khirbet et-Tannur. I am hoping that nothing happens to the police-post at Aqabah, because we have a considerable amount of equipment stored there from last year. This morning's newspaper also reports riots in Damascus with 15 killed and a considerable number of wounded. The witches cauldron is spilling over with a vengeance these days; We live in the hope that the fire can somehow or other be extinguished before civilized work becomes completely impossible and chaos becomes general.

More cheerful news is that the Director's wife was instrumental in adding a new member to the American School of Oriental Research Jerusalem, by giving birth to a boy on the evening of March 10th. Both are doing well. About the same time as the new member of the School was entering Palestine, there were considerable fireworks immediately back of our tennis-court. Sheikh Aref Yunis Hussein, who had gone to Egypt for a number of months for his "health", returned to his house which is two doors removed from the back of our grounds. He was greeted by three bombs and eight shots directed at his house. He had better go back to Egypt, or he won't have any health to worry about. The students at the School insist, however, that the fireworks were in reality merely a friendly demonstration to celebrate the advent of the baby.

It has been a pleasure during the last two weeks to receive several members of supporting institutions of the American Schools of Oriental Research. Dr. Waldo H. Dubberstein, of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, who had spent some time at Luxor, came to the School on March 11th, and stayed till March 17th, when he left for Megiddo. Prof. and Mrs. George Dahl of the Yale Divinity School arrived on March 16th, and are staying at the School till April 9th. The military and civil authorities in Jerusalem are very cooperative, and it was possible for me to obtain the necessary travel and identity cards very quickly for our guests. Dr. Dubberstein was able to go in the School car to Amman and back on one of the trips when I sent the car to Amman with camp equipment. Despite the troubled conditions here, by being circumspect, and listening to suggestions, visitors to the School can still see a considerable part of Jerusalem.

The Two Brothers Fellow and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Donald West, who were also to have been members of the staff at Tell el-Kheleifeh, are now leaving for home. They are sailing this coming Wednesday from Haifa. In as much as the possibility of commencing

the excavations at the end of this month seems ~~very~~ remote, I could not advise them to stay over on the chance that the excavations might begin after all. I am sorry to see them go, they are an exceedingly nice and alert couple; they have learned, I believe, much from their stay at the School and their general experiences in Palestine, and have contributed largely to the harmony and good spirits that have prevailed at the School during the past academic year despite the somewhat unusual times. Prof. Dahl, under whom Mr. West took some of his work at the Yale Divinity School, is, I believe, also impressed with what the Wests have gained from their stay here. It has always seemed to me to be one of the best investments from every point of view that a divinity student, or any one interested in the history of the ancient Near East could make, to spend at least a year as a student at the Jerusalem School after finishing his studies at home.

Another of our students, Mr. William B. Ward, who graduated from the Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Virginia, also left for home about a week ago. He too had benefited greatly from his stay here.

March 21st, 1939.

A whole line of military trucks and armoured cars is drawn up in the playing field back of our tennis-court. Troops are making searches in nearby houses for arms and bombs and so forth. Mr. Reynolds just rode by and told me that the soldiers were tearing down part of the wall around one of the houses in the vicinity, on the assumption that arms or bombs may have been hidden there. The morning newspaper again reports riots in Damascus, and the appearance of barricades in the streets there, and the assumption of all government authority by French troops. It certainly is peculiar that as if almost by signal, a wave of unrest should sweep through Syria and Transjordan, although it is less unexpected in Syria than it is in Transjordan. The fomented disturbances in these two countries are bringing, at least for the present, an effective halt to all archaeological activities.

March 22nd, 1939

There is as yet no further news from Transjordan. Heavy rainfall, however, last night and today have once again put the Transjordan roads out of commission. It has, I believe, been almost ten years, at least so far as my experience is concerned, ~~and~~ we have had such inclement weather so late in March. About a week ago, we had the second severe hailstorm this month. It seems that the weather is trying to keep company with the politics in this part of the world. The Arabs have again declared a strike in Jerusalem today, this time against the inconclusive results of the recent London Conference. We noticed older schoolchildren preventing the younger children from going to school.

The late rains, however, are having at least a beneficial effect upon our garden. The fruit-trees we set out last year in the ~~part~~ part of the garden in front of the tennis-court are doing very well and are covered with white and pink blossoms. This part of the garden, by the way, is situated over a Byzantine cemetery, which Prof. Burrows excavated in 1931 when he was the Director of the Jerusalem School.