



UNITED NATIONS PALESTINE COMMISSION  
IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS IN CONNECTION WITH COMMUNICATIONS IN PALESTINE  
(Working Paper Prepared by the Secretariat)

### I. Railroads

1. The immediate practical problems that arise in connection with the railways in Palestine relate to:

- (a) ownership and jurisdiction;
- (b) administration; and
- (c) finance.

2. The Palestine Railway Administration which is a department of the Government of Palestine manages and operates a railway system with a total route mileage of 1,048 kilometres, extending over Palestine, Egypt (Sinai) and Transjordan with running rights in Syria. Only 520 kilometres of the total mileage is, however, in Palestine and the Palestine Government owns only the standard gauge railway with a route mileage of 316 kilometres.

The section from Kantara to Rafa (across Sinai) is operated behalf of His Majesty's Government which take a share of any profits derived proportionate to their capital investment. The Hedjaz Railway is operated by the Palestine Government on behalf of His Majesty's Government who hold it in trust;\* losses on this section are a charge to Palestine Government funds. "No disposition has been made yet of the military extension from Acre to Ras en Naqura, the part of the Haifa-Tripoli line within the boundaries of Palestine."\*\*\*

In view of the state of affairs briefly delineated above, it would appear necessary for the Commission:

- (a) to get a clear definition of the rights of several parties concerned with the ownership and operation of the various railroads now managed by the Palestine Railway Administration in and outside Palestine, and
- (b) to arrange for transfer of the rights enjoyed by the Mandatory Power over the portion of the system that lies in Palestine to the Joint Economic Board.

3. The staff employed by the Palestine Railways is predominantly Arab. In Transjordan and Sinai the staff employed is exclusively Arab. Of the total of about 6,700 persons in regular employment on all the Palestine Railways' systems, approximately 1,250 are in Sinai and Transjordan leaving approximately 5,450 employed in Palestine, of whom just over 600, or 11 percent are Jews. In the salaried and monthly grades, where Jews are likely to be found, the proportion of employment is approximately 13.5 percent. It would appear from the Staff list of Palestine Government of 1 April 1947, that a very large percentage of the higher positions were filled by persons other than Jews and Arabs.

4. In view of the possibility of British officers leaving Palestine Government Service on the termination of the Mandate and the unwillingness of Arabs, at least for a period, to serve the new organization it would appear, necessary for the Commission:

- (a) to have, in advance of the date of the termination of the mandate, a list of officials who have expressed their desire to continue in service under the new regime, and
- (b) to arrange for securing substitutes to fill the vacancies.

5. As a result of various factors, the Railways in Palestine seem to be in a bad state financially. The net position on 31 March 1947, was as follows:

	Deficit £	Expenses on Security and Repairs £
(a) Palestine Government Railways Excluding the Hajaza and Kantara-Rafa Railways)	284,000	90,000
(b) Hajaz Railway	705,000	56,000
Total £P 1,135,000	989,000	146,000

6. The physical condition of the railway equipment also appears to be bad. The roadbed is poorly ballasted, the rails and ties are second hand and much of the rolling stock pretty old. According to the Administration itself... "the railway will find itself ill-equipped to serve the country with an efficient rail transport service."\*\*\*

### II. Posts, Telegraphs, Telephones Broadcasting and Radio Services

1. The problems that would arise in connection with the intelligence services on the transfer of responsibility by the Mandatory Power relate chiefly to the maintenance of existing facilities within the country and to and from places abroad. This would imply, in particular, the continuance of:

(a) the existing arrangements with Messrs. Cable & Wireless Limited, Haifa, in respect of the transmission of the foreign telegrams; and the geographic distribution of employees according to one or more of the three characters, Hebrew, Latin or Arabic in which telegrams are accepted at different post offices and agencies.

2. In respect of broadcasting and radio service, arrangements will have to be made to take over from the Mandatory Power the broadcasting transmitters at Ramallah. The Department is now responsible for the maintenance and operation of two 20 k/w broadcasting transmitters at Ramallah, and for the maintenance and technical control of the broadcasting studios in Jerusalem. The department is also responsible for the maintenance of the police transmitter at Ramallah, and for the civil aviation radio services at Ramallah and Lydda.

3. The total staff strength of the department as of 31 December 1945, including classified and unclassified employees but excluding casual labour, was 2,287, sub-divided as follows:

	British		Palestinian		Other Nationalities	
	First <u>Division</u>	Second <u>Division</u>	First <u>Division</u>	Second <u>Division</u>	First <u>Division</u>	Second <u>Division</u>
Moslems	-	-	-	564	-	18
Jews	1	19	8	937	-	3
Christians	19	9	3	694	-	12

#### **Endnotes**

\*The Hedjaz B4ilYaY has remained under British control, with its ownership in dispute. The Palestine Railways has operated 527 kilometres of the Hedjaz line; comprised of the narrow 105 c.m. gauge railway between Haifa and Samakh, the branch from Haifa to Acre, and the whole section in Transjordan from Nasib to Maan. Trains from Haifa to Transjordan have to traverse a section of the Hedjaz line in Syria that is not operated by the Palestine Railways.” Palestine: Problem and Promise by Robert R. Nathan, Oscar Gass, Daniel Creamer. Page 264.

\*\*Palestine; Problem and Promise, by Robert R. Nathan, Oscar Gass, Daniel Creamer. Page 264.

\*\*\*Draft Estimates Palestine Government 1947-48 page 53.

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