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UNITED NATIONS PALESTINE COMMISSION

Communication Received from Advance Party Concerning Possibilities for Avoiding Armed Conflict in Palestine

The following memorandum on the possibilities for avoiding armed conflict in Palestine has been received from Colonel Roscher Lund of the Secretariat Advance Party, Jerusalem, by Air Pouch No. 3 on 5 April.

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PALESTINE COMMISSION ADVANCE PARTY

POSSIBILITIES FOR ACTION IN PALESTINE

(Memorandum by Colonel Roscher Lund)

The situation in Palestine is getting more and more tense day by day. The number of incidents and the number of casualties is steadily increasing. This is partly due to the fact that both sides get better and better organized for fighting, more weapons are distributed and more people trained and ready for action. Accordingly, more eager or nervous people cause incidents. Partly it is due to the time getting closer to the day when the two parties will start the fighting fully.

If a decision should be taken on any solution for Palestine it must be backed by force. To back by force any solution for the whole of Palestine if the transfer of responsibilities is to be 15 May, can only be done by British troops that are on the spot now and know the country and the conditions. To organize an international United Nations force large enough to cope with the situation before 15 May is hardly possible.

It would be optimistic to believe that there is any easy way out of this security problem. It is doubtful whether the Jews or Arabs will have any respect for a token force even if it consisted of soldiers of one of the big nations. Between the two World Wars Great Britain was one of the world's most powerful nations, but that did not stop the Arabs and Jews from killing British soldiers. When a fight between some hundred armed Jews and Arabs on each side is going on, no prestige can break that fight up, only solid force.

A number of Jews have in private conversations urged that the Commission should come here and carry out its work under Jewish protection and with a token force of international police or troops. Such a solution has its dangerous disadvantages. A United Nations body here would have to be entirely independent of both sides to be able, in action, to do its duty without thinking about whether the one or the other party would like it. If the Commission depended, in security matters, upon the one side, it would not

have full freedom of action.

Another easy way has been hoped for in the form of agreement or truce between the two opponents. It is, however, doubtful whether the political leaders have the grip on the situation today to stop fighting, and even if they can the development may bring the leaders one side or the other to change their minds. That would place a United Nations body here in the middle of fighting without the necessary means of protection. United Nations prestige in this part of the world has already suffered so much that this risk should be avoided.

To achieve a peaceful settlement of the problems in Palestine is obviously very difficult and if United Nations does not find a solution the result will probably be that the two parties may fight it out to a practical arrangement -- a practical partition. This result, however regrettable, has a few practical advantages. Any solution enforced on the country will need substantial military forces for its implementation and be very expensive. Forces cannot be kept in the country for a long time and the fighting will probably start as soon as they leave again. A temporary mandate will, in itself, not solve any of the difficult problems here, but will eventually, if it can be carried through, only give some time for further negotiations.

The only practical possibility within United Nations limitation if the civil war cannot be avoided is to try to save Jerusalem from fighting. This ought to be possible if quick action can be taken.

Both the Arabs and the Jews have the Holy Places that they would have to see damaged. If fighting starts in Jerusalem, the bloodshed will be very heavy. The Jews here (about 100,000) for practical and political reasons cannot be evacuated. Supply for this population will be very difficult to keep up. Both parties will have to try to capture the whole city for tactical reasons and for reasons of prestige. The outcome of such a fight is very uncertain. There is, therefore, a chance that negotiations for a truce for the Jerusalem area might give results on both sides. The Jews would most probably agree on a plan of truce. A United Nations body in Jerusalem would also reduce the danger of any of the neighbouring Arab countries interfering in the conflict with their troops, and it would mean a good deal also regarding possibilities for later negotiations for the whole of Palestine.

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If truce negotiations for the Jerusalem area should be successful, civil war will still go on in the country and in areas vital for Jerusalem's needs. An international force will be needed to guard the borders of the Jerusalem area and the vital supply organs. The decision of the size and composition of a force and regulation of its movements will be entirely a matter for the Security Council and the Military Staff Committee to decide, but to give an idea of the extent of the problem, below is given an estimate of what, roughly, would be needed in this connection:

Protection of Jerusalem with its necessary public services will include the following tasks:

1. Protection of Government offices and key personnel.
2. Maintenance of law and order within the area and form reserve for municipal police.
3. Protection of Holy Sites.
4. Protection of Jerusalem Power Station and grid.
5. " " " water supply.
 - (a) Ras el Ein and pipeline with pumping stations to Jerusalem;
 - (b) Solomon's Pools;
 - (c) Ein Farah.
6. Protection and service Lydda and Kalandia Airfields.
7. Protection of harbour base (Haifa, Tel-Aviv or Jaffa) and communication from base to Jerusalem.
8. Eventual protection and service of railway from Haifa to Jerusalem. This has up to now transported all oil and fuel to Jerusalem and there might be a chance to get an agreement on keeping it going as it is of equal interest to both parties.

For protection mentioned above under points 1-7, a military force of about 10,000 with assistance of municipal police might be sufficient.