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15 March 1948

**UNITED NATIONS PALESTINE COMMISSION**

**Communication of 3 March 1948 from the  
Advance Party on the Subject of Travel  
and Accommodation of the Advance Party.**

The following communication from the Advance Party, dated 3 March 1948,  
arrived on 13 March 1948 in the first air pouch delivery from the Party.

UNITED NATIONS PALESTINE COMMISSION  
ADVANCE PARTY

TRAVEL AND ACCOMMODATION OF THE ADVANCE PARTY

TRAVEL

1. The party left La Guardia airport at 4:40 p.m. on Sunday 22 February 1948, reaching London next morning at 11:30 GMT.
2. At a meeting of the Advance Party on Wednesday 25 March, in consultation with the UK Transport Office, London, it was decided that the party should leave for Paris on Saturday night, non-stop flight to Lydda by Air France, and as a result arrangements were made along these lines.
3. In London, Dr. Azcarate met Mr. Martin of the Colonial Office and Mr. Bealey of the Foreign Office and discussed various questions relating to the work of the Advance Party. He also met several members of Parliament and made a call on Sir Stafford Cripps. Mr. Bealey was also met by Mr. Stavropoulos.
4. On Thursday 26 March Mr. Azcarate left for Paris, where he contacted Mr. Boisanger, in charge of Palestinian questions in the Quai d'Orsay.
5. On Friday 27 March, Mr. Matheson of the Colonial Office contacted the UK Travel Office and reported that some difficulty was being experienced regarding accommodation in Jerusalem for the Advance Party. The Colonial Office was somewhat of the opinion that it might be wise for the party to postpone their departure for Jerusalem by some forty-eight hours. It seemed that there was some doubt as to whether the two apartments earmarked by the Palestine Government for the group would actually be ready for occupation on 29 February. Further, it seemed that domestic staff was unavailable for the present, since the Arabs would not like to serve the Commission and the Jews would not like to enter the Security Zone. The same was repeated to Mr. Stavropoulos by Mr. Bealey, who definitely stated that the Palestine Government did not wish the Advance Party to reach Palestine before Tuesday 2 March. As a result, the travel arrangements were cancelled and reservations were made with Swissair to leave Geneva on Tuesday 2 March and reach Lydda Airport on the same day late in the afternoon. However, since the Palestine Government had intimated that the party should not reach Lydda after noon, a

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telegram was sent through the Colonial Office to the Palestine Government informing them of the situation and also that if this was not acceptable to them the next opportunity for flying to Lydda would be on 9 March at the earliest. The Palestine Government answered the same day agreeing with the proposal.

6. The party left London by air on Monday 1 March, reaching Geneva early in the afternoon, where it was joined by Mr. Azcarate. The next day the party left Geneva at 6:00 a.m. and reached Lydda at 3:20 p.m. No one was at the airport to receive the party, which thus had to pass, together with all other passengers, through the usual passport formalities. This created an awkward situation, since it was difficult for the party when questioned in the usual manner to give reasons for visiting Palestine or to state where they would live in Palestine. It was known later that this was done intentionally by the local authorities in order not to make the arrival of the party conspicuous. Finally, representations having been made to the head of the passport authorities, the party was helped through the Customs and led to the office of the Manager of the Airport, where Mr. McGeagh, Liaison Officer between the Government of Palestine and the Advance Party, was waiting for them. It is to be pointed out that no one in the airport was aware of the coming of the party on that particular day. The party spent the night at the Lydda Airport Hotel, where special security measures had obviously been taken.

The next morning at 7:30 a.m. Mr. Azcarate, Col. Roscher Land and Mr. Stavropoulos, accompanied by the Liaison Officer, Mr. McGeagh, visited Wilhelma, within a distance of three or four miles of Lydda Airport. Wilhelma is proposed by the Government of Palestine as a site for the Commission when it comes to Palestine. The journey from the airport to Wilhelma and back was made in an armoured car preceded and followed by armoured cars with machine guns. Later the party left Lydda by an RAF plane (Anson -- 2-engine) and reached Kalandia airport just outside Jerusalem, on the road between Ramallah and Jerusalem, in fifteen minutes. On landing, the party was immediately conducted to a covered armoured car which was preceded and followed by armoured cars

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with machine guns and armed police and at a speedy pace entered Jerusalem. On entering Jerusalem the party was asked to lie flat in the armoured car for fear of snipers' bullets. However, with no untoward incident the party arrived at its destination, i.e., the two apartments earmarked by the Palestine Government inside the King David Hotel area. On the same afternoon the party was received at the Government offices in the King David Hotel by the Chief Secretary, Sir Henry Gurney, and the Attorney-General, Mr. Gibson. The next day, Thursday 4 March, Mr. Arcarate lunched with the High Commissioner at Government House. On Friday 5 March the party was received by the High Commissioner at a small reception arranged in its honour at Government House. Present were only high officials of the Government. Since the High Commissioner assumed that no Arab would like to meet the party, no invitations were extended to the Jewish community.

#### ACCOMMODATION

The Advance Party is housed in two basement apartments through which an opening has been made in the wall for the purpose of communication. The whole consists of seven rooms, a kitchen and two bathrooms. The apartments are part of a three-storied house situated to the right of the YMCA building. The other apartments are occupied by the Swiss Consul, some British Military Officers and a British journalist. When the party arrived the house was full of Arab workers installing electricity. It was in a filthy condition, without any kind of heating, although the weather was cold. The furnishings consisted only of bare necessities. It took days to get electric heaters, ash trays, waste paper baskets, brooms and cooking utensils. For four days the meals for the Advance Party were ensured by the kind services of Miss Owen and Mrs. Tobin, consisting mainly of eggs as there were no utensils in which proper meals could be prepared. The question of service was solved only after four days without help of any kind, by the acquisition of two Jewish women who were engaged through the local employment agency by the Government. These two women have to be commuted by taxi, paid for by the Advance Party. During that period the house was full of heaps of waste and the bathrooms were unusable. The foodstuffs are obtained through the medium of the Palestine Police. The house lies inside Security Zone "B" and is, in fact, a security zone of its own, special arrangements having

made by the Police for the safety of the Advance Party. Thus, inside the small garden of the house there is a police post manned day and night -- outside the house there are armed policemen patrolling. On the roof of the garage of the house there is a sand-bagged machine-gun post which has just been completed. Any person who wishes to see a member of the party has first to obtain a pass to enter the security zone "B" and then is screened by the police post of the house before being allowed to enter. However, no one has been prevented from entering.

The Advance Party is allowed to circulate freely inside zone "B", i.e. at the length of about 150 yards between the house and the King David Hotel. The principle is that if the party or members of the party wish to go outside the zone they have to inform the police, who will arrange for armoured-car escort. As a result, the party has never left the house except for the visiting of officials at the King David Hotel and for the reception at Government House, and does not intend to do so unless special necessity calls for it.

Although allowances should be made for the difficult situation existing in Jerusalem, there is no doubt whatsoever that at least lack of organization was shown by the Palestine Government in accommodating the Advance Party. Some elements suggested that this was not quite unintentional. At any rate, the situation has improved already so as to make possible the normal functioning of the Advance Party.

The house has been organized as follows -- five rooms are utilized as bedrooms, one room as a living and dining room, and one room as an office. The living room and the office communicate, and are being used for interviewing people, as well as the bedrooms. The latter, of course, does not enhance the prestige of the Advance Party. It is to be noted that the whole life of the members of the Advance Party is spent inside these two apartments and any communication with the outside is made through the medium of the Government of Palestine.

#### COLLABORATION WITH THE BRITISH AUTHORITIES

The members of the Advance Party have met with courtesy and a desire to co-operate on the part of all officials of the Government. It would seem that every official has been instructed to give to the party any help insofar as this help relates to information or to clarification in general.

RELATION WITH ARABS

The Party has had no opportunity formally to meet any Arabs. The idea expressed by the local authorities is that no Arab would like to meet the party or work for the party in any way, in fact, that the Arabs would hate even the sight of the party. The Chief Secretary, for instance, told Mr. Azcarate that he is unable to invite him to his house for dinner because his Arab servants would leave. It is very interesting to note, however, that every Arab that the Advance Party has met -- for instance the workers and the electricians in the house, the porters in the Government offices and the Arab barber at the King David Hotel -- have all been exceedingly pleasant, courteous and helpful. This was pointed out to the High Commissioner who found it very interesting and also to the Chief Secretary, who thought that this was so because the said Arabs did not know who the members of the party were. It is, however, very doubtful whether this is the explanation, since by now everyone should know exactly who the members of the party are.

From the above incidents, however, no hasty conclusions should be drawn.