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PALESTINE

DAILY NEWS SUMMARY

29 January 1948

(Sources: New York Times, New York Herald Tribune)

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London, Jan. 28 - According to a Government spokesman, the annual subsidy of about £2,000,000 from the British Treasury accorded the Arab Legion will be withdrawn if that force should launch an aggressive attack against the proposed Jewish state in Palestine. Meanwhile, A.V. Alexander, Minister of Defense, reaffirmed in the House of Commons that it was the intention of the British Government to complete the evacuation of its military forces from Palestine by August. (Clifton Daniel, N.Y. Times)

Washington, Jan. 28 - Secretary of State Marshall declared at a press conference today that no consideration was being given at present to a relaxation of the American embargo against the shipment of arms and ammunition to Palestine. (NY Times)

(The attached Note on Recent Developments in Palestine was submitted by the United Kingdom Delegation to the United Nations on 28 January 1948.)

NOTE ON RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN PALESTINE

The following information has been received from Palestine since the United Kingdom Delegation appeared before the Commission on Wednesday, 21 January:

A. GOVERNMENT SERVICES

(1) British Police

British Police have been withdrawn from the Tel Aviv area. British Police have also been withdrawn (except for Divisional Headquarters Staff) from Nablus, Hebron, Jericho, and from certain isolated police posts in Northern Palestine.

(2) Local Authorities

Legislation is being prepared to give Local Authorities wider powers. Local Authorities are now operating all water supplies owned by the Government of Palestine. Plans for the handing over of Arab schools to the management of Local Authorities are also being prepared. It is proposed to supply a six months' stock of drugs and dressings to the treatment centres and it is hoped to persuade medical practitioners to maintain these centres. As the Commission have already been informed, it is proposed to empower Local Authorities to collect and disburse the Urban Property Tax with effect from 1 April 1948 so as to furnish them with funds to meet the cost of these transferred services.

It has not yet proved possible to make arrangements for the disposal of grain and other food stuffs.

In Jaffa, the Arab Municipal Police Force of 300 men has been formed. A similar force with Jewish and Arab police is being formed for the Jerusalem Municipality. Municipal police forces on a similar basis are being formed in eighteen other medium-sized Arab towns. A country-wide scheme for the enrollment of armed Special Constables in Arab villages is being initiated. The intention is that these forces shall be part of the Palestine Police Force until they are transferred to the Local Authorities.

(3) Extent of Government Services

As the Commission has already been informed, it is the policy to maintain administration in full until the termination of the Mandate, and it is not the present intention to close down any department until then. In Jerusalem, Headquarters offices which were recently working at below 50% overall efficiency are

now working at about 75%. This improvement is due to the introduction into Jerusalem of additional British police and other security arrangements. As regards the rest of Palestine, all services are working but not above the 75% efficiency level.

(4) Replacement of British by Palestinian Officers

No British Officers have as yet been replaced by Palestinians but arrangements are being made whereby Palestinian Officers are appointed to perform the duties of British Officers as and when the latter proceed on leave. It is reported that the practical effect of this scheme will be very limited.

B. SECURITY

(1) Main Areas of Trouble

The main areas of trouble are:

(a) the mixed quarters of the three large towns (i.e. Jerusalem, Haifa, and Jaffa-Tel Aviv)

(b) the Jerusalem-Jaffa Road where incidents have been reduced by extensive patrolling but where it is impossible to prevent incidents entirely

(c) the Haifa-Kantara Railway in the Samaria-Lyddá district where there have been a number of armed hold-ups, by Arabs, now reduced as a result of provision of armed escorts conveying trains.

(d) Isolated Jewish Colonies, particularly in the Beersheba, Hebron, and Galilee districts.

(2) Maintenance of Law and Order

The general position is precarious because of planned outrages by large Arab gangs and the reprisal policy of the Hagana. Individual Arab and Jewish murders are escaping "unscathed". Apart from these inter-communal clashes, crime has not increased markedly and the degree of law enforcement in respect of such crime is much the same as usual. Except in small areas where Arab-Jewish strife is endemic (such as the Jaffa-Tel Aviv border, near Jarrah in Jerusalem and in parts of Haifa) the security forces have been able to restore order after individual incidents.

(3) Arab Legion and Trans-Jordan Frontier Force

Arab Legion units in Palestine are employed on static and escort duties and not in dealing with communal disorders. Their behaviour is reported to be good. The Trans-Jordan Frontier Force has been withdrawn to Trans-Jordan and plans are in train for the disbandment of the force.

C. ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

(1) Commercial Life

There has been a serious restriction on commercial activities as a result of insecurity of communications, disturbed conditions in mixed areas and the reluctance of Arabs to enter Jewish localities and vice-versa. Merchants are reluctant to clear goods from the ports of Haifa and Jaffa, partly as a result of the fact that the mixed labour-force there has had an aggravating effect. The building trade is particularly affected. Prices of food stuffs have risen considerably, mainly in Jewish areas, as a result of distribution difficulties. The programme for the export of the citrus crop is somewhat behind schedule but prospects of completion are fair if the present rate of progress is maintained. Much depends on the maintenance of rail services.

(2) Railways

Railways are continuing to operate but the possibility of staff refusing to work on account of the security situation is continually present.

(3) Road Transport

Road Transport is considerably restricted owing to the insecurity of the roads.

(4) Power Supply

The Palestine Electricity and Jerusalem Electricity Corporations held reserves of one month's fuel supply. If the output of the Refineries at Haifa continues to be seriously restricted, both concerns will have to face a drastic reduction in output.

(5) Palestine Potash

Production of potash has temporarily ceased owing to the lack of adequate fuel reserve and the inability as yet to procure fresh supplies. A further source of difficulty in this respect is due to attacks on convoys despite the fact that they have been fully escorted.

(6) Haifa Oil Refineries

The Consolidated Refineries Limited resumed work on a modest scale on 22 January and it is hoped that they will be in full production within three weeks. If further troubles do not prevent this, the shortage of fuel supplies referred to above will be much alleviated.

D. GOVERNMENT FINANCES

So far as can be seen at present, a considerable deficit may be expected at the termination of the Mandate. The main causes of this are:

(a) that the Government of Palestine has had to bear the cost of maintaining illegal immigrants in Cyprus, which up to 15 May (but excluding the additional cost due to the recent 100% increase in the number of illegal immigrants in Cyprus) is estimated at about five and three-quarter million pounds;

(b) The falling-off in anticipated revenue due to the deterioration in the security situation, which is estimated to amount to about one and one-quarter million pounds.

The deficit is expected to amount to some six million pounds.

E. EVACUATION OF CIVILIANS AND FAMILIES

Since the 1st January, 51 officials, 2 wives and 5 children of officials, have left Palestine on final departure. British Officers whose services can be dispensed with are being sent on leave with their families. The intention is that there shall be no women officials or British wives and children of officials in the country during the month preceding the date of the termination of the Mandate. There will, of course, be certain non-government British civilians in Palestine after that date.

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