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UNITED NATIONS PALESTINE COMMISSION

Communication Received from United Kingdom
Delegation in Response to Commission's
Letter of 9 April on Urgent Matters

The following communication has been received from Mr. J. Fletcher-Cooke of the United Kingdom Delegation in response to the Commission's letter of 9 April outlining certain urgent matters which should be disposed of in order to preserve order and essential services in Palestine.

UNITED KINGDOM DELEGATION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

12th April 1948

My dear Bunche,

I understand from press reports and from telephone conversations which I have had with you, that you sent me a letter on the 9th April relating to "a number of matters of considerable urgency which should be disposed of in order to preserve the greatest possible measure of order and the essential services in Palestine".

2. As I have already explained to you, the first I knew of the existence of this letter was when I was approached by representatives of the press at the United States Delegation offices after a meeting which I attended there on Friday afternoon. I was then informed that you had addressed a letter to me and that it had been released to the press. Subsequently, I saw a copy of this letter which came over the ticker-tape in this office, but up to the time of writing I have still not received the original of the letter.

3. It is hardly necessary for me to say that I should have preferred to have received this letter before it was issued to the press. You have explained to me that the Commission's Press Officer released the letter during the course of Friday afternoon and you have expressed your regret that the letter should have been released before I could possibly have received it.

4. As regards the substance of the letter itself (on the assumption that the text which came over the ticker-tape is correct), I have the following preliminary comments:-

(1) In the first place, with three or four exceptions, all the matters referred to in this letter have, as you will be aware, formed the subject of correspondence and discussions between this Delegation and the Commission during the past three months. In almost every case, His Majesty's Government's views have already been made clear to the Commission, and the urgent need for decisions in these matters has been constantly emphasised.

(2) Moreover, it is surely for the Commission and not for the Mandatory Power to make suggestions as to how the Commission propose to take over the administrative machine and to protect the assets of the Government of Palestine after the 15th May.

(3) The Commission's requests for information have been answered as expeditiously as circumstances in Palestine permitted and it is difficult to see what more could have been done in this respect.

5. The text of the Commission's letter has been transmitted to His Majesty's Government and I hope to be able to let you have their views in the near future. In the meanwhile, the following are some preliminary comments on the specific points raised in your letter:-

/(A) Security

Dr. Ralph J. Bunche,
Principal Secretary to the United Nations
Commission on Palestine,
United Nations,
Lake Success.

(A) Security

(1) His Majesty's Government's attention has been drawn to the fact that the General Officer Commanding's Directive has not yet been received here.

(2) The Commission have already been informed that these details will have to be discussed with their representatives in Palestine.

(3) The Commission have to-day been informed that His Majesty's Government agree that a representative may be sent to Palestine to make preparations for the recruitment of a Special Security Force for Jerusalem.

(4) It is felt that the Commission must make their own proposals as to how they shall preserve the physical property and assets of the Government of Palestine.

(B) Administration

(1) & (2) A considerable amount of information regarding the Departments concerned and the arrangements which the Government of Palestine contemplate has been brought to the notice of the Commission on a number of occasions and it is for the Commission now to make their own dispositions.

(3) The Commission have already been informed that these questions must be discussed between the Government of Palestine and the Commission's representatives there.

(4) This is a new point and His Majesty's Government's views have been sought.

(C) Economic and Financial

(1) I am still awaiting the Commission's views on the proposals made in my confidential letter of the 5th April.

(2) This would seem to be a matter for the Commission, in so far as it appears to relate to the period after the 15th May.

(3) His Majesty's Government's views have been sought on this point.

(4) As you will be aware, the Commission have already been invited to nominate an observer to the Palestine Currency Board and I have not yet received a reply to this invitation.

(5) As in the case of other departmental activities, it is felt that the Commission will have to make their own arrangements as regards the maintenance of import and export controls.

(6) The Commission have already been informed of the proposal that a two-months budget will be prepared covering the months of April and May and that it will be for them to take any necessary steps thereafter.

(7) Details of the assets and liabilities of the Government of Palestine will be discussed with the Commission at an early date.

(8) This is a new point and the views of His Majesty's Government have been sought.

Yours sincerely,

/Sd/ J. Fletcher-Cooke