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UNITED NATIONS PALESTINE COMMISSION

Communication from the United Kingdom Delegation on Arrangements for the Maintenance of Law and Order in Palestine after May 15th.

The following communication, concerning the preservation of Jerusalem and the Holy Places, and the arrangements for the maintenance of law and order in Palestine after May 15th, has been received from Mr. Trafford Smith of the United Kingdom Delegation:

UNITED KINGDOM DELEGATION TO THE UNITED  
NATIONS

19 February 1948

My dear Bunche,

I have been asked to send to you, for the information of the Commission, the enclosed texts of questions and answers exchanged in the House of Commons on 18th February on the subject of the preservation of Jerusalem and the Holy Places, and the arrangements for the maintenance of law and order in Palestine after 15th May.

Yours sincerely,

TRAFFORD SMITH

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS

18th February 1948

Sir Ralph Glyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs what steps are being taken to ensure that the plans of the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations are made effective so far as preserving Jerusalem and the surrounding Holy Places from damage is concerned, and whether to this end he will take steps to see that the United Nations Palestine Commissioners on no account select the city as a headquarters which would result in making Jerusalem the centre of political conflict.

Mr. Bevin replied: The Trusteeship Council will consider the future of Jerusalem at its session which begins today. So far as I am aware the United Nations Commission have not expressed any intention of establishing their headquarters at Jerusalem.

Sir. R. Glyn: While recognizing the delicacy of the present position, may I ask my Right Honourable Friend if he will do everything possible to prevent Holy Places in Palestine from becoming seats of war, as they undoubtedly will become, if the seat of government of the United Nations is established in Jerusalem?

Mr. Bevin: I have already explained to the House that it is our intention to come out of Palestine and I cannot add to that. The matter is now in the hands of the United Nations and I have no doubt that this question and answer will be considered by them.

Mr. Ivor Thomas: Will my Right Honourable Friend make a distinction between Jerusalem and the rest of Palestine in the matter of security, and will he be assured that public opinion will be behind him if the United Kingdom will make a contribution to the defence of Jerusalem, whatever is done by the rest of the country?

Mr. Bevin: I cannot undertake to leave British troops there.

Sir Patrick Hannon: As the Holy City of Jerusalem has been the inspiration of human progress for thousands of years, will the Right Honourable Gentleman make it clear that it will be protected from riot and bloodshed?

Mr. Bevin: It is now the responsibility of the United Nations. His Majesty's Government cannot undertake it.

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Major Tufton Beamish asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs if he has now received details of the organization of the U.N.O. Naval, Air Force, Army and Police units on whom responsibility for the maintenance of law and order in Palestine will fall after 15th May: whether detailed arrangements for the hand-over of these responsibilities are now completed: and whether he is satisfied with the arrangements.

Mr. Bevin: The only arrangements hitherto approved by the United Nations for the maintenance of law and order in Palestine after 15th May are those contained in the resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 29th November. Under this resolution, the United Nations Commission are to establish in each state a provisional council of government and these provisional councils are to recruit armed militias "sufficient in number to maintain order and to prevent frontier clashes". General military control, including the choice of the High Command of the militias, is to be exercised by the Commission. The United Nations Commission have now made certain additional proposals which have yet to be examined by the Security Council.

Mr. Warbey: Will my Right Honourable Friend recognize that this country still has a responsibility in this matter as a member of the United Nations and a member of the Security Council, and will he take a positive attitude towards this by framing practical and constructive proposals for the United Nations forces along the lines indicated?

Mr. Bevin: I have repeatedly announced, as my Right Honourable Friend the Secretary of State for the Colonies announced at the beginning and His Majesty's Government adhere to it now, that we cannot take part in forcing partition in Palestine or in any solution that is not acceptable to the Arabs and the Jews.