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UK/57
8 March 1948

UNITED NATIONS PALESTINE COMMISSION

Communication Received from United Kingdom
Delegation Concerning Administrative Machinery
after 15 May

The following communication, concerning discussions between the Palestine Government and the Secretariat Advance Party on the question of the continuance of present administrative machinery after 15 May, has been received from Mr. Fletcher-Cooke of the United Kingdom Delegation.

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Y UNITED KINGDOM DELEGATION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

URGENT & CONFIDENTIAL

6th March, 1948

My dear Bunche,

As I mentioned to you on the telephone this morning, I have just received a personal telegram from Sir Henry Gurney informing me that discussions were opened on 4th March with Azcarate and other members of the Secretariat advance party.

As a result of these discussions, it emerged that the Government of Palestine are not yet clear whether the Commission intend to attempt to operate the administrative machinery of the Government of Palestine after the 15th May. Sir Henry Gurney pointed out that if the Commission do not intend to take over the administration of the various departments, then the plan of the Government of Palestine for the withdrawal of civil personnel could be revised so as to leave after the end of April only a few key officers to hand over records, etc. to the Commission.

On the question of accommodation, Sir Henry Gurney has informed me that he has explained to Azcarate the reasons why Aqir is now impossible. Consideration was given to the possibility of using certain German property at Wilhelma and this question is to be further discussed with Azcarate.

The upshot of these preliminary discussions is that the Government of Palestine are very anxious to know whether it is the Commission's view that the discussions with the advance party should proceed on the basis that the Commission will not attempt to operate the Administration as such. If the Commission decide to operate certain departments and not others, it would be helpful to know which departments they have in mind. You will appreciate I think that until a clear answer is given to this question, the discussions proceeding between the Government of Palestine and the Secretariat advance party will be rather in the air.

You have explained to me in the past that the Secretariat advance party have no authority to take decisions but must merely confine themselves to exploratory talks with a view to bringing certain facts to the notice of the Commission. I have already explained this to Sir Henry Gurney in previous correspondence but in order that there shall be no misunderstanding, I propose to send him a telegram reiterating this point which you have confirmed to me this morning.

You will no doubt let me have the Commission's views as soon as possible so that I can send an appropriate reply to Sir Henry Gurney on the particular point which he has raised.

Sincerely yours,

sd) J. Fletcher-Cooke

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