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UNITED NATIONS PALESTINE COMMISSION

Public Information Services and Communications  
Facilities

The attached paper sets forth the answers received from the United Kingdom Delegation in response to questions submitted to it by Mr. Medina concerning public information and communications matters.

## PUBLIC INFORMATION SERVICES AND COMMUNICATIONS FACILITIES

On 6 February, at the instance of the Commission, Mr. Medina submitted to the United Kingdom Delegation a list of fourteen questions pertaining to public information and communications matters.

Replies to most of these questions, received by Mr. Medina in two communications from the United Kingdom Delegation, are as follows:

(Replies to other questions on this subject have been circulated as UK/81 and UK/84)

-1-

Question: Is the Mandatory Power removing or planning to remove, prior to termination of the Mandate, the communications (transmitting and receiving) facilities at Beit Jala, including power equipment? If so, is the Mandatory Power willing to postpone removal pending consultation with representatives of the Commission?

Answer: The wireless equipment at Beit Jala is not the property of the Government of Palestine but of the War Department of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom. These installations are being removed by the Military authorities in accordance with the military evacuation programme. They are required for the use of British military forces in the Middle East and cannot, therefore, be made available to the Commission. For security reasons, it is not possible to postpone their removal from Palestine which is scheduled to take place very shortly.

-2-

Question: Does the Mandatory Power plan to remove or otherwise alter the status of the radio transmitters of the Palestine Administration at Ramala? Will the Mandatory Power guarantee the security of these transmitters until the termination of the Mandate?

Answer: (1) The Mandatory Power does not plan to remove or otherwise alter the status of the radio transmitters of the Palestine Administration at Ramallah.

(11) The Government of Palestine will do its utmost to ensure the safety of these installations until the termination of the Mandate.

-3-

Question: Will the Mandatory Power provide the Commission at once with circuit and traffic diagrams showing the inside and outside plant of Palestine communications, indicating what equipment is to be removed before or after termination of the Mandate? This includes radio, telephone, telegraph, teleprinter, broadcasting, repeater stations, primary power supply equipment, auxiliary power supply equipment, and all other tele-communications equipment now in operation in Palestine?

Answer: The Government of Palestine is sending the information required and it will be communicated to the Commission as soon as it is received. No part of these installations, which are the property of the Government, will be removed from Palestine.

-4-

Question: What is the size of any security detachments which may now be protecting communication facilities of the Palestine Administration or the Mandatory Power? At what date will any such security detachments be withdrawn?

Answer: It is presumed that the "communication facilities" referred to in this Question mean telephone and telegraph lines. There is no special security detachment detailed for safeguarding these communications, the maintenance of which is part of the general commitment of the security forces and will remain so until the termination of the Mandate. Thereafter, those British forces which remain in Palestine will only be concerned with protecting these communications insofar as any particular line is deemed by the General Officer Commanding to be essential to the military withdrawal.

-5-

Question: Will the Cable and Wireless company continue to operate Palestine terminal equipment on a commercial basis for providing essential communications service between Jerusalem, London, and New York? What volume of traffic is the company equipped to handle through its Palestine facilities? If Cable and Wireless continues to operate the terminal equipment in Palestine, when will the direct circuit to New York, already authorized, be placed in service?

Answer: (1) Cable and Wireless Limited intend to continue operations on a commercial basis so far as conditions permit. Communications abroad from the Haifa terminal may be considered reasonably secure. Communications from places in Palestine other than Haifa will depend upon the maintenance of communications between such places and the Haifa terminal.

(11) The existing capacity of the Company's equipment is about 150,000 words per diem.

(111) Cable and Wireless Limited hope to have their direct circuit in operation to New York by the end of April 1948.

(a) A comprehensive memorandum on Cable and Wireless facilities in Palestine is being prepared and will be forwarded to you for the information of the Commission as soon as it is received.

(b) The figure of 150,000 words per diem referred to in (11) of the Answer to Question 5 is the combined total of both paid and unpaid groups (i.e. service messages and unpaid service indicators on paid messages, etc). The figures given by the Company in respect of paid groups only are: -

(1) Jerusalem wireless circuit 40,000 to 50,000 daily.

(This figure could be increased if a larger staff were available)

(2) Haifa cable route 63,000 groups daily.

(3) Haifa wireless circuit when it is opened in the middle of May 40,000 to 50,000 groups daily.

-6-

Question: In the event the Commission decides that it will require a medium wave transmitter in the Jerusalem area, would the Mandatory Power permit the work of construction and installation to proceed prior to the termination of the Mandate so that such facilities may be prepared for use at the time of the arrival of the Commission or immediately upon termination of the Mandate?

Answer: On the termination of the Mandate, the Government of Palestine will hand over to the Commission the two medium wave transmitters of the Palestine Broadcasting Service. If, however, the Commission wish to set up a further medium wave transmitter in the Jerusalem area, the Government of Palestine would not object provided

- (a) that the setting up of any such transmitter was undertaken in agreement with the Government of Palestine, and
- (b) that arrangements were made after discussion that no transmissions affecting security should be made before the termination of the Mandate, except with the prior agreement of the Government of Palestine.

It would be for the United Nations to arrange for the allocation of an international wave-length for any transmitter that might be established by the Commission in accordance with the arrangements described above.

One of the two medium wave transmitters referred to in the first sentence of the answer to Question 6 is the property of His Majesty's Government but negotiations are in progress for its transfer to the Government of Palestine.

-7-

Question: Prior to the termination of the Mandate, would the Mandatory Power be willing to make available to the Commission an appropriate amount of time daily on Palestine broadcasting facilities?

Answer: It is proposed that the possibility of making available for the Commission a suitable amount of time daily on existing broadcasting facilities in Palestine should be discussed with the Commission's staff in Jerusalem. There would, of course, be no objection to the reporting over the Palestine Broadcasting Service of official statements and press releases by the Commission, but if the Commission wished to use the Palestine Broadcasting Service directly, all the Arab staff would leave, while the danger to the Commission itself and to the existing broadcasting facilities would be much increased.

The considerations referred to in the answer to Question 6 are also applicable in this case.

-8-

Question: Will the Mandatory Power provide the Commission at the earliest possible moment a Manning table indicating the nationality and function of the personnel of the following units of the Palestine Administration:

- (a) Broadcasting Services (Director of Broadcasting)
- (b) Public Information Office
- (c) Printing and Stationery
- (d) Department of Posts and Telegraph (including all tele-communications facilities)

Answer: The Government of Palestine will provide the information requested as soon as possible.

-9-

Question: What facilities and equipment does the Palestine Administration now possess in the following categories:

- (a) Sound recording and motion picture camera
- (b) Motion picture laboratories and photographic dark rooms
- (c) Mobile loudspeaker or visual information units

Answer: The Government of Palestine will provide the information requested as soon as possible.

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Question: What is the nature and extent of official censorship of the press by the Palestine Administration? What personnel is engaged in censorship functions? Will the Mandatory Power continue to exercise censorship of the local press prior to the termination of the Mandate?

Answer: (1) Pages 873 et seq. of the Survey of Palestine give an indication of the nature and extent of the press censorship exercised by the Government of Palestine. Press censorship is enforced under the provisions of Part VIII of the Defence (Emergency) Regulations. The main Regulations involved are Nos. 87 and 89. Under Regulation No. 89, the Press Censor requires the submission for censorship of all matters excluding certain defined categories. Matter which is considered by the Press Censor to be detrimental to the defence of Palestine or to the public safety or to public order is excised.

(11) One Press Censor (British), three assistant censors (one British, one Jewish, one Arab), three deputy assistant censors (two Jewish, one Arab), two reporting officers (both Jewish), five chief examiners (four Jewish, one Arab), three senior examiners (two Jewish, one Arab), eleven examiners (nine Jewish, two Arab), clerical staff and messengers.

(111) The Mandatory Power will continue to exercise censorship of the local press until the termination of the Mandate.

-11-

Question: Will present governmental printing facilities and equipment continue to exist after the termination of the Mandate?

What is the nature and capacity of these facilities? What technical personnel is required for their operation?

Answer: (1) The printing plant of the Government of Palestine will continue to exist after the termination of the Mandate, but it is, of course, uncertain how many of the present staff will be prepared to work for the Commission.

(11) (a) Government Printing Press

- (1) Twelve letter press machines, of which four take metric sized sheets.
- (2) Eight slug composing machines, of which four are Hebrew English and four Arabic English. There are no monotypes.

(b) Department of Surveys

- (1) One rotary double demi offset machine
- (2) One rotary offset quad crown machine
- (3) One double demi flat bed machine
- (4) One camera - negative size 65x75 centimetres
- (5) Two proving presses

(111) (a) Government Printing Press

- (1) One Government printer, one deputy Government printer, one assistant Government printer (all British).
- (2) Six foremen (three Jews, three Arabs).
- (3) 163 printers, etc (37 Jews, 107 Arabs, 14 Greeks and 5 Armenians).

(b) Department of Surveys

- (1) One litho printer
- (2) One printer's assistant
- (3) Two provers
- (4) One helio man
- (5) One assistant Helioman



- (6) One disembarker
- (7) Two machine feeders
- (8) One machine repairer
- (9) One printing labourer

(All above personnel at present Jewish)

-12-

Question:

Question: What is contemplated with respect to the teletype circuits now operated by the Public Information Office between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv and Jerusalem and Jaffa?

Answer: The teletype circuits now operated by the Public Information Office between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv and Jerusalem and Haifa (not Jaffa) are the property of the Government of Palestine and will be handed over to the Commission with other assets.

-13-

Question: Will the Mandatory Power permit the Commission to continue to use radio frequencies now employed by transmitters in Palestine until such time as other frequencies may be secured from the International Telecommunications Union?

Answer: Presumably the Commission will inherit existing wave-lengths now allocated to Palestine.

The frequencies in use in Palestine may be divided into the following categories: -

(1) Internal and external aeronautical and other services operated by the Government of Palestine. These frequencies will remain at the disposal of the Commission.

(2) Medium wave broadcast services operated by the Government of Palestine. These will also remain at the disposal of the Commission. (All medium frequencies for broadcasting will come under review at the forthcoming European Area Broadcasting Conference in June.)

(3) Frequencies used by various enterprises in Palestine, e.g. the Iraq Petroleum Company. These frequencies can remain in use at the present.

(4) Frequencies used by Cable and Wireless Company for the operation of external services under concession from the Government of Palestine. These frequencies are and will continue to be used in the operation of external services carried on in Palestine by Cable and Wireless Company under their existing concession. If Cable and Wireless Company should leave Palestine and the operation of external telecommunication services be taken over by the Commission, then so far as His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom is concerned, the frequencies would remain for their existing registered purposes. The Services concerned are Palestine - United Kingdom, Palestine - United States of America, Palestine - Egypt and Palestine - Cyprus.

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Question: Does the Palestine Administration exercise any licensing function with respect to radio broadcasting stations, newspapers, periodicals, motion picture distribution or printing plants?

Answer: The Government of Palestine exercises licensing functions in respect of radio broadcasting stations, newspapers and periodicals and printing plants. In this connection reference is invited to the definition of "press" in Section 2 of the Press Ordinance (CAP 116) and also to Section 31 of the same Ordinance.

The Government of Palestine does not exercise any license function in respect of the distribution of motion pictures, although individual films are subject to censorship.