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SUBCOMMITTEE I OF AD HOC COMMITTEE  
ON THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION,  
20th MEETING.

Press Release GA/PAL/60  
13 November, 1947.

U.K. STATES POSITION ON WITHDRAWAL OF TROOPS FROM PALESTINE.

Sub-Committee I of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Palestinian Question, meeting at Lake Success, today heard a statement by Sir ALEXANDER CADOGAN on the U.K. position on the withdrawal of British troops from Palestine. SIR ALEXANDER said:

"In his statement to the Ad Hoc Committee on the 26th September, the Colonial Secretary announced that his majesty's Government in the United Kingdom had decided that they must plan for an early withdrawal of the British Forces and of the British Administration from Palestine. The various technical problems connected with this withdrawal have since been carefully examined in London, and I am now in a position to provide this Sub-Committee and the Ad Hoc Committee with more detailed information of the intentions of my Government.

"There are two aspects of this withdrawal, the military and the civil. On the military side, every effort is being made to reduce to a minimum the period required for the operation. It is still not possible to foresee exactly how long it will take to withdraw from Palestine not only the troops themselves but also their very substantial supplies and equipment. I am authorised to state, however, that our authorities have been directed to plan for the evacuation to be completed by the 1st August, 1948. So long as British troops remain in any part of Palestine, they must of course maintain law and order in the areas of which they are still in occupation. I am instructed, however, to make it clear that British troops would not be available as the instrument for the enforcement of settlement in Palestine against either Arabs or Jews.

"The fact that it would be impracticable to withdraw the last military contingents from Palestine before next summer does not by any means imply that we shall continue to maintain a civil administration in Palestine throughout the intervening period. On the contrary, we reserve the right to lay down the mandate and to bring our civil administration to an end at anytime after it has become evident that no settlement acceptable to both Jews and Arabs has been reached by the Assembly.

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"In that event there would be an interval between the termination of the Mandate and the withdrawal of the last British troops. During that interval His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom would no longer maintain a civil administration in Palestine and would confine themselves to preserving order in areas still controlled by their remaining forces. It follows, and I think it my duty to the Sub-Committee to remove any doubt upon this point without further delay, that if a United Nations Commission were at work in Palestine taking preparatory steps for a settlement which would require enforcement it must not expect British authorities either to exercise administrative responsibility or to maintain law and order except in the limited areas of which they would necessarily remain in occupation during the process of withdrawal."

MR. GARCIA GRANADOS (Guatemala) then asked the following questions and Sir Alexander's answers are presented in order:

General Question:

Will the United Kingdom, as a good member of the United Nations, accept the recommendations of the General Assembly in regard to Palestine, if those recommendations do not require it to play an active role, that is to say, to enforce those recommendations?

Answer: If the Assembly, by a two-thirds majority, agrees on a plan, the United Kingdom would not take action contrary to it.

Question: (1) Will the UK accept the date of termination of the Mandate?

Answer: They could not answer because they were not certain what date was meant in the question, but referred to the original date proposed for the termination.

Question: (2) Will the Mandatory Power agree not to obstruct the general task of the General Assembly Commission appointed to implement partition?

Answer: Yes, subject to the general reservation that the UK authorities retain a sufficient degree of control in areas still under their occupation to ensure the safety of their forces and to assure their orderly withdrawal.

Question: (3) Will the Mandatory Power agree not to obstruct the establishment of the provisional councils of government for the Jewish and Arab States?

Answer: Same as answer to Question 2.

Question: (4) Will the Mandatory Power agree not to obstruct the recruit-

ment and organization of the militias that will police the states when independent?

Answer: Same as answer to Question 2.

Question: (5) Will the Mandatory Power agree not to obstruct the work of the Committee put in charge of the demarcation of the boundaries?

Answer: Same as answer to Question 2.

Question: (6) Will the Mandatory Power, when requested, surrender the different branches of the administration, in a gradual and progressive way, to the Commission, the Provisional Council of Government and the Economic Board?

Answer: When the time comes, the United Kingdom might not be in the position to actually hand over all these functions. The United Kingdom can assure, however, that the British authorities will in no way obstruct the Commission, the Provisional Councils of Government or the Economic Board in their assuming those functions in the territory evacuated by the British, as and when it is evacuated.

Question: (7) Will the Mandatory Power instruct the administration of Palestine to facilitate the task of the Commission giving to it any kind of data deemed necessary by the said Commission?

Answer: It is impossible at this moment to give a categorically affirmative reply to that question, but it is possible to encourage the Committee to believe that that will in fact be so.

Question: (8) Will the Mandatory Power agree not to obstruct the General Assembly recommendations in regard to immigration and land regulations for the territory of the future Jewish state?

Answer: Same as answer to Question 2.

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(End of Press Release GA/PAL/60)