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POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENTS IN PALESTINE

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POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENTS IN PALESTINE

SUMMARY

It is apparent that the partition of Palestine into separate Arab and Jewish states (and an international zone), with economic union between the two states, as recommended by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on 29 November 1947, cannot be implemented. The Arab reaction to the recommendation has been violent, and the Arab refusal to cooperate in any way with the five-nation United Nations Commission will prevent the formation of an Arab state and the organization of economic union. The Arabs will use force to oppose the establishment of a Jewish state and to this end are training troops in Palestine and other Arab states. Moreover, the United Kingdom has stated repeatedly that it will take no part in implementing a UN decision not acceptable to both Jews and Arabs. The British have also declared that when the mandate terminates on 15 May, they will not transfer authority to the UN Commission but will merely relinquish that authority, which would then be assumed by the UN. Thus, without Arab and British cooperation, the Commission will be unable to carry out the task assigned to it.

Even among the Jews there is dissatisfaction over the partition plan. Irgun Zvai Leumi and the Stern Gang, the two extremist groups, have refused to accept the plan and continue to claim all of Palestine (and even Transjordan) for the Jewish state. The Jewish Agency, official representative of the Jewish community, had hoped to obtain a larger portion of Palestine for the new state but has decided to cooperate with the UN Commission. Recruiting and training for Hagana, the Agency's military arm, have been increased, and the terrorist groups will join Hagana in the Arab fight despite their opposition to partition. The Jewish effort, however, will not be sufficient to enable the UN Commission to carry out partition as envisaged by the UNGA.

Since the complete partition plan cannot be implemented, the possible developments in Palestine resolve themselves into three main groups:

(1) *UN attempts to set up a Jewish state by force.*

Again, the UN would be balked by lack of Arab and British cooperation. While the UN might attempt to set up an international police force (which would have to be large and remain in Palestine indefinitely), the US and UK would have to consider the danger of permitting Soviet and/or Satellite troops to enter Palestine, and the USSR would undoubtedly object to any force not including these troops. It is possible that the SC might consider authorizing unilateral aid to the Jews by the member states of the UN, but such a course would be extremely dangerous to world peace. Since the USSR would take advantage of the opportunity to increase its influence in Palestine by

Note: The information in this report is as of 18 February 1948, at which time the report was submitted to the member agencies of the Interdepartmental Advisory Council for coordination. This paper was concurred in by the Intelligence Agencies of the Department of State, Army, Navy, and Air Force on 19 February. On 20 February CIA disseminated an Advance Copy of the coordinated report.

supporting the Jews, the UK and the US would have good cause not to sanction such action in the SC.

(2) *No action by the UN.*

The UN would suffer a serious loss of prestige if it should wash its hands of the Palestine issue. Moreover, the Jewish-Arab conflict would increase and spread, and the USSR would be free to send troops into Palestine as it saw fit.

(3) *UN reconsideration of the whole issue.*

Reconsideration of the issue could be initiated in several ways. The SC might seek an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on the legality of the UNGA recommendations and simultaneously arrange an Arab-Jewish truce. The Arabs would welcome such a step and the Jews would probably have to agree (though reluctantly) since the entire Jewish position is based on UN action. Jewish violence, however, would undoubtedly continue.

Should the issue be returned to the General Assembly, partition could be considered abandoned. Subsequent developments cannot be predicted, but it is reasonable to assume that any new solution would have to be acceptable to the Arabs, who would probably be willing to make some concessions on the basis of the Minority Report of the UN Special Committee on Palestine.

POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENTS IN PALESTINE

1. AIMS IN PALESTINE AFTER THE PARTITION RECOMMENDATION.

a. Planned UN Course of Action.

When the UNGA voted on 29 November 1947 recommending the partition of Palestine into separate Arab and Jewish states, the course of action to be followed was clearly defined. A five-man commission with representatives from Denmark, Czechoslovakia, Bolivia, Panama, and the Philippines was to be organized in New York, together with a sizable secretariat of administrative officials and technical experts. After consultations with the mandatory power, the commission and its secretariat were to proceed to Palestine in the latter part of December 1947. When in Palestine, the UN Commission was to take over administrative responsibility from the UK in those areas from which the latter would progressively withdraw its troops. This withdrawal and the termination of the mandate were to take place not later than 1 August. (The mandatory subsequently announced that the mandate would terminate not later than 15 May.) During this period of transference of authority from the mandatory to the UN Commission, the latter was to cooperate with the Jewish Agency and the Arab Higher Committee in the formation of provisional councils of government of the prospective Jewish and Arab states and a Joint Economic Board. The provisional councils in both states were to be established by 1 April. Administrative authority was to be progressively turned over by the UN Commission to these two bodies, which would become the provisional governments of the two new states whose independence would be established not later than 1 October 1948. The UN Commission would also delimit the frontiers of the Arab and Jewish states. All these recommendations of the UNGA were to be carried out by the UN Commission with the guidance of the Security Council.

b. Planned UK Course of Action.

UK plans after the partition recommendation were exactly what they had been throughout the UNGA session. The British stated repeatedly that they would refuse to assist in implementing a UN decision not acceptable to both the Jews and the Arabs. They based their stand on the thesis that until the mandate was terminated they were bound by its provisions. On this basis, the UK was determined to retain undivided responsibility for the administration and internal security of Palestine until the mandate was terminated. Thereafter, the UK would retain responsibility in any areas occupied by its military forces until those forces were withdrawn. Finally, the UK stated unequivocally that it would not transfer administrative authority to the UN Commission but would simply relinquish that authority, which would be immediately assumed by the UN. The UK would not obstruct the efforts of the UN Commission; nor would it participate in the work of the Commission.

c. Planned Arab Course of Action.

The UNGA recommendation on Palestine put the Arabs on the defensive, and consequently their plans were largely undeveloped. The very multiplicity of Arab states

and of the groups within those states resulted in a spate of different proposals. In spite of these differences, however, the Arabs agreed that a Zionist state could not be tolerated in the Arab world. To prevent the formation of this state, the following general course of action was envisaged:

- (1) To make military preparations, both in Palestine and the Arab states, to prevent by military action the formation and functioning of a Jewish state.
- (2) To refuse to cooperate with the UN Commission in any way.
- (3) To establish an independent unitary state embracing all of Palestine.
- (4) To prevent further Jewish immigration until an immigration policy could be formulated by the unitary state.

Various Arab groups contemplated two additional lines of action. The most responsible and moderate groups considered further action in the UN, while the most extreme and nationalistic groups urged the cancellation of all diplomatic and economic relations with those states that had supported partition. While neither of these proposals was generally agreed to, the Arab states sent strong notes of protest to the respective US chiefs of missions.

d. Jewish Course of Action.

The Jewish plan of action after the UNGA recommendation was perfectly clear-cut. While the Jewish Agency, the official representative of the Jewish community, had hoped to obtain a larger portion of Palestine, it decided to cooperate with the UN Commission in the establishment of the proposed Jewish state. In the meantime, it planned to build up its internal security forces, train an administrative corps, and propagandize the rest of the world for financial and military assistance against any Arab attempts to prevent the implementation of the UNGA recommendation. The aims, however, of the Revisionists, including Irgun Zvai Leumi and the Stern Gang, were more extreme: to fight both the British and the Arabs and to set up a Jewish state in all of Palestine and Transjordan.

2. DEVELOPMENT OF THE SITUATION SINCE THE PARTITION RECOMMENDATION.

a. UN Activity.

From the very beginning, the UN had difficulty in carrying out its intended course of action. In spite of repeated urgent appeals by Secretary General Trygve Lie, the members of the UN Commission were not appointed by their respective governments until late in December and did not all reach New York for their first meeting until 9 January. Since then the UN Commission has made little progress, for its success was predicated on the assumption that it would receive the cooperation of the Jews, the Arabs, and the UK. Of these, only the Jews have fully cooperated. The Arabs have flatly refused to have anything to do with the Commission, and the UK's cooperation was considerably restricted by its interpretation of its responsibilities as mandatory power. UK refusal to allow the Commission to enter Palestine before 1 May (two weeks before the termination of the mandate) will make it impossible for the Commission to establish the provisional Arab and Jewish governments by the required date of 1 April. The UK refusal to relinquish any administrative authority in Pales-

tine until after the termination of the mandate has prevented the progressive transfer of authority to the UN Commission. The Commission has also been compelled to recognize the deplorable security situation in Palestine and realizes that it cannot attempt to carry out the recommendations of the UNGA without an adequate international police force.

b. UK Activity.

UK activity since the partition vote has been twofold. In Palestine the mandatory administration, its police, and the UK forces have been attempting to maintain internal security. They have been hampered by two main factors: (1) evacuation plans have considerably obstructed UK security measures; and (2) the UK desire not to antagonize the Arab states has prevented the implementation of full-scale security measures to repress Arab-Jewish hostilities. In spite of these reservations, UK forces have been impartial in attempting to curb Arab-Jewish hostilities. The major aims seem to have been to prevent general anarchy and full-scale war—at least until the forces themselves have withdrawn.

In the UN, the UK delegates have taken pains to acquaint the UN Commission with the difficulties of the Palestine situation. They have advised the UN Commission on administrative matters, on the question of the projected Jerusalem Trusteeship, and on the setting up of provisional governments. They have refused, however, to assume joint responsibility with the Commission for the establishment of the new states in Palestine or to permit any development which might be interpreted as UK support of one side against the other. On this ground, the UK has refused to open a port on 1 February to unlimited Jewish immigration, as recommended by the UNGA resolution.

c. Arab Activity.

Arab reaction to the UNGA partition plan was prompt and violent. Strikes and demonstrations led to scattered riots within Palestine, and Arab League action was instituted by the Arab states. The sporadic violence in Palestine had developed by the middle of January into more highly organized hostilities. By the beginning of February disciplined Arab bands were operating in different parts of the country, and the Arab Higher Committee claimed to be directing their activities. The nature of Arab activities indicated that until the British withdrawal Arab objectives were limited to: (1) avoiding, if possible, hostilities with the British forces; (2) purchasing and capturing essential supplies such as food, weapons, ammunition, and clothing; (3) disrupting Jewish commerce, transportation, and communications without launching full-scale attacks; (4) recruiting volunteer forces, within and without Palestine, and training them in guerrilla tactics; (5) setting up a unified military command; (6) establishing contact with Arab League channels of assistance. The entire emphasis has been on preparation for the British withdrawal, and the Arab leaders have apparently attempted to hold back their surging followers.

During a series of meetings at Sofar, Aley, and Cairo, Arab League representatives, despite differences of opinion, eventually evolved a program of action. The program, which in several particulars merely approved activities already under way,

was immediately implemented and provided that: (1) the partisan movement in Palestine be supported with funds, arms, and men; (2) troops of the Arab states be stationed on the frontier of Palestine as a border watch; and (3) these armies not be sent into Palestine until after the British withdrawal. Funds were immediately raised in all the Arab states. Volunteers from Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Transjordan foregathered at Qatana in Syria for training; and by the middle of February over 8,000 were known to have slipped, uniformed and armed, into Palestine. Syrian, Egyptian, and Transjordan troops had been moved to the Palestine border; and Iraqi contingents were reported to be moving into Transjordan. Determined efforts were made to obtain arms and ammunition. Syria signed a contract with Skoda, and a first delivery is known to have been made.

While the Arab chain of command has not been announced, the forces will be commanded by former Syrian and Iraqi army officers and experienced guerrilla leaders.

d. Jewish Activity.

Having won the initial victory in the acceptance by the UNGA of the partition plan, the Jews concentrated (with some exceptions) on preparing for the new state. In the face of violent Arab opposition, the Jewish Agency immediately undertook: (1) to strengthen the internal defense forces of the prospective Jewish state; (2) to organize and train an administrative corps; and (3) to cooperate with the UN in implementing the UNGA decision. Recruiting and training for Hagana were increased; and, in spite of the fact that the mandatory refused to recognize its legality, it attempted to protect the Jewish community from Arab attacks and also acted as a local police force. In time, Hagana adopted a policy of "active" defense and carried out terrorist raids against the Arabs similar in tactics to those of the Irgun Zvai Leumi and the Stern Gang against the UK forces. These two extremist groups continued their war against the British; and although they agreed to fight the Arabs together with Hagana, they refused to accept the partition recommendation and continued to claim all of Palestine (and even Transjordan) for the Jewish state.

3. POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENTS.

a. General Considerations.

Partition as envisaged by the UNGA involves not only the creation of two states (and an international zone) but also economic union between the states. Such a plan cannot be implemented without Arab cooperation, and it is inconceivable that the Arabs will abandon their present violent opposition to partition. To the masses, the fight has become almost a religious tenet; to the governing classes, it has become a political creed which they dare not forsake. The Arabs can never be forced to acquiesce in a Western-sponsored movement which they believe is threatening the twentieth century renaissance of their indigenous civilization. With implementation of the complete partition plan hopeless, the possible developments in Palestine resolve themselves into three main groups: (1) UN attempts to set up a Jewish state by force; (2) no action by the UN; and (3) UN reconsideration of the whole issue.

b. *UN Attempts to Set Up a Jewish State.*

(1) *Possible British Assistance.*

An attempt might be made to persuade the UK to alter its current Palestine policy and to permit the formation of a Jewish militia, to agree to the "progressive transfer" of authority, to allow the UN Commission to come to Palestine earlier than 1 May, to open immediately a "port and hinterland" for Jewish immigration, and to suppress Arab guerrilla activities. However, in view of the UK's serious economic difficulties, its disinclination to antagonize the Arab world, and its consistently "neutral" policy since it turned the whole problem over to the UN last year, the British cannot be expected to change their stand between now and 1 August. Therefore, a Jewish state can be established only in the event that the UN Commission is given a police force sufficiently strong to withstand Arab aggression or that the Jews in Palestine are provided with enough military support from outside to overcome Arab opposition.

(2) *Great Powers Police Force.*

An international police force established by the Security Council may be of various types. Obviously, the most effective force would be one composed of units from the armed forces of the five great powers. The USSR can be expected to welcome an opportunity to send its troops to Palestine; France, also, would probably be pleased to set foot once again in the Near East; China, for reasons of prestige, would want to be represented on an international police force but could scarcely afford to spare any troops from the civil war in China. The UK will almost certainly refuse to contribute. US troops, according to President Truman, will not be sent to Palestine. The dispatch of a force composed only of contingents from the USSR, France, and possibly China would present the UK and the US with the alternatives of exercising the veto or of opening Palestine to Soviet infiltration.

(3) *Medium Powers Police Force.*

A second possibility would be a force made up of contingents from the medium powers, but here again the UK and the US would have to consider the danger of permitting Soviet Satellite troops to enter Palestine. The USSR would probably veto the formation of any force that did not include Satellite representatives. Even if the great powers could agree on a force composed of contingents from the medium powers, it is unlikely that a sufficient number of nations would be willing to contribute adequate forces.

The formation of an international police force will depend, in the last analysis, not on a mere decision of the Security Council but on the willingness of nations to contribute to such a force. It is extremely unlikely that any nation would do so solely to maintain the prestige of the UN. In the present state of international security, probably no nation will send its troops to fight the Arabs in Palestine for the purpose of establishing a Jewish state unless its national interests are threatened by the failure of partition or unless it can hope to enlarge its sphere of influence. The USSR is the only nation that would gain from sending troops into Palestine. Since

both the UK and the US have strong strategic reasons for refusing to allow Soviet or Soviet-controlled troops to enter Palestine, it is highly improbable that an international police force will ever be formed.

(4) *Assistance to the Jews.*

The only alternative method, therefore, is for military aid to be sent to the Jews in such quantities that they will be able to suppress all Arab opposition, both internal and external, and set up and maintain an independent state. Such aid might take the form of a volunteer "international" force, or the Security Council could presumably recommend to the other member nations of the UN that the Arab states be boycotted as deliberately resisting a decision of the SC and that the Jewish state be supported with shipments of funds, arms, and ammunition. The UN Commission might be retained as a liaison body between the Security Council and the new Jewish state. It could not delineate the frontiers recommended by the UNGA nor could it have any contacts with the Arabs, or establish a special administration in Jerusalem. Thus the entire purpose of the UNGA partition resolution would be distorted from the creation of *two* independent states in Palestine to the organization and defense of *one* state—the Jewish state.

By sponsoring the formation of an "international" volunteer force, or by relinquishing the initiative and authorizing unilateral action by member states of the UN, the Security Council would recommend a course of action extremely dangerous to world peace. Since the USSR would be quick to take advantage of openings related to an SC decision to support the Jews, and thereby extend Soviet strategic influence into Palestine and the Near East, the UK and the US would have good cause not to sanction such action in the Security Council.

b. *No Action by the UN.*

If the UN were unable to agree on any action whatsoever, the consequences would be disastrous and appreciably decrease the prestige of the UN. The Jews and Arabs in Palestine would be completely free to solicit aid from and make alliances with individual nations. It would be practically impossible to localize the conflict; any nation with vital interests in the Arab world would inevitably be embroiled. Since the struggling Jews and Arabs would accept aid from whatever quarter offered, it is difficult to imagine how, under such circumstances, the USSR could be prevented from sending troops into Palestine.

c. *Reconsideration by the UN.*

(1) *General Considerations.*

Since the failure of partition is already evident, and in view of the dangers attendant on the establishment of a Jewish state, it appears that the only course open to the UN is to reconsider the whole issue. For the UN to admit error and to undertake reconsideration would be a momentous step necessitating considerable moral courage, but such procedure would be quite in line with the general practice of tribunals in permitting reargument where doubt is entertained as to the correctness of the original decision. To comprehend the overriding necessity for such a step, two factors must

be understood: (1) that Arab opposition automatically invalidates the UNGA partition recommendations, whose basic assumption is Arab-Jewish cooperation; (2) that even if a Jewish state could be established and defended by force of arms, it would have to defend itself continuously not only against its hostile neighbors but against the resistance of 450,000 Arabs within its own borders until such time as Arab nationalism no longer existed; and (3) that full recourse to all judicial procedures before action is taken would help to establish world confidence in the fairness and justice of the UN as an instrument for world peace.

(2) *Security Council Action.*

Reconsideration by the UN of the Palestine issue could be initiated in several ways. The Security Council, after failing to agree on measures to implement partition, may ask the International Court of Justice for an advisory opinion on the legality of the UNGA recommendations. At the same time, it might urge a truce between the Arabs and Jews and designate either the present Palestine Commission or some newly formed Security Council agent to arrange and supervise the truce. Since this step would constitute a completely new development, and one long urged by the Arabs, the Arabs would almost certainly agree to such a truce. Since the entire Jewish position is based on UN action, the Jews would have no alternative but to agree although Jewish violence would probably continue. The Security Council might, on the other hand, refer the question to the Little Assembly or take no action. The proposal for a UN Conciliation Board, if carried through, would furnish an opportunity for reconsideration without damage to UN prestige.

(3) *General Assembly Action.*

Should the Security Council fail to agree on any action whatsoever, the UN Commission, even if it agrees to go to Palestine to help the Jews set up their state, would probably report to the Secretary General that the UNGA recommendations could be implemented to only a limited extent. The Secretary General could then refer the issue to the Little Assembly or even summon a special session of the General Assembly to reconsider the whole question. (The Little Assembly itself has the authority to summon a special session of the General Assembly.) Once the issue had been returned to the General Assembly, partition could be considered abandoned. It is impossible to predict what new developments would take place, but it is reasonable to assume that any new solution would have to be acceptable to the Arabs, who would probably be willing to make some concessions on the basis of the UNSCOP Minority Report.

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