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C.P. 169 (37).

**CABINET.****PALESTINE: REPORT OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION, 1936.***Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies.*

I CIRCULATE herewith, for the information of my colleagues, in connection with the Draft Statement of Policy on the Report of the Royal Commission for Palestine contained in paragraph 17 of C.P. 166 (37), which is on the Agenda Paper for the meeting of the Cabinet on Wednesday, the enclosed extract from a letter from General Sir Arthur Wauchope to Sir Cosmo Parkinson, Assistant Under-Secretary of State in the Colonial Office, enclosing one to the High Commissioner from Major-General Sir John Dill, General Officer Commanding in Palestine.

(Initialled) W. O. G.

*Colonial Office, Downing Street,  
June 28, 1937.*

**APPENDIX.**

*Extract from a semi-official letter from the High Commissioner for Palestine to Sir Cosmo Parkinson, dated June 15, 1937.*

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I shall be very sorry when Dill leaves and I hope his leaving may be postponed till we see what the reaction is to His Majesty's Government's decisions. Dill would like to stay if troops are needed this Autumn.

I cannot foretell. Many people think the Arabs will not take action for a year or two when England is in some difficulty. *I do not think there will be a sudden explosion*, but it will be a severe shock to Arab national feeling if a quarter million Arabs are placed in a Jewish State.

The other day when Dill and I were discussing the chances of disturbances this year, Dill said he felt strongly that the Arabs were at present in such an excited state they ought to be given time to quieten down. I said His Majesty's Government would find it very difficult to delay giving decisions. He replied in effect that decisions should be given now, but decisions alone would not cause a rebellion, and action to implement the decisions should be delayed.

I asked if he would let me have his views in writing. He did so and as I considered them valuable, I asked if I might send his letter to the Secretary of

State. Dill readily agreed and I enclose a copy of his thoughtful letter; Dill said he might send a copy of his letter to C.I.G.S.

The views of the General Officer Commanding as to future disturbances should be known and considered, more especially since I believe that when disturbances do break out, I think it probable much more help will come from Syria than before.

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*Letter from the General Officer Commanding in Palestine to the High  
Commissioner, June 14, 1937.*

(Secret.)

My dear Wauchope,

The other day we talked of the difficulties of finding a satisfactory permanent solution to the Palestine Problem in the present tense atmosphere. It may be of some assistance to you if I attempt to develop on paper the views I then expressed.

I have been thinking a good deal lately about this question, with a view to arriving at its purely military implications, but it seems to me impossible entirely to separate the military from the political aspects. If therefore I touch upon political matters which are outside my province I hope you will forgive me.

A main consideration seems to be the importance of avoiding another Arab rebellion, if this can be done without jeopardizing British interests and without dishonouring British pledges. This is particularly important when all our military energies should be directed towards the rehabilitation of our depleted defences, and when certain foreign powers, Italy in particular, may be expected to do all in their power, short of taking overt action, to exploit our difficulties.

No solution to the Palestine problem which the Royal Commission can reasonably recommend is likely to prove acceptable to the Arabs in their present mood. *That does not mean that they will immediately rise in rebellion when the Royal Commission's Report is known.* It is, in fact, unlikely that they will do so as long as the decision taken does not involve immediate action.

The Arab dislikes quick decisions, but while a question is partially open he is not disinclined to talk, and trust that something will turn up to prevent unpleasant consequences for him materialising. To a quick comprehensive solution to any problem he will react unfavourably, and when the problem concerns the regulation of his whole future he is likely to react violently. He is a leisurely man and believes in arriving at decisions gradually and by a process of bargaining. Should, then, the policy adopted by His Majesty's Government be announced in peremptory and irrevocable terms, the Arabs are likely again to resort to violent methods of protest.

It may be that the advantages of arriving quickly at finality on the Palestine issue would outweigh the risks involved in doing so. Such a course would have the immense advantage of having a clear irrevocable policy established, if necessary by force of arms. An end would be put at once to years of uncertainty.

The alternative is that His Majesty's Government, while laying down an unequivocal policy, should allow a reasonable period for its gradual establishment. The temperature of the body politic in Palestine is at present too high for the strain of drastic treatment, which may be necessary for its ultimate well-being, to be withstood without grave risk. An intervening period, lasting some three to five years, of relatively tranquil recuperation might therefore be a wise precaution. A requisite to recuperation in this period would be a conviction in the mind of the Arab that his position in Palestine is assured for the immediate future, and this could hardly be achieved except by an explicit maintenance of the existing relative positions of the two contending races—Arab and Jew.

Shortly, my opinion is that peace in the near future in Palestine can best be promoted by a period of recuperation precedent to the establishment of His Majesty's declared policy, and that, unless there are overriding political considerations, unknown to me, that make such a course inexpedient, I am convinced that by this means the ultimate policy of His Majesty's Government can be established no less surely.

Yours ever,  
J. G. DILL.