UNITED NATIONS

Distr.

A/AC.25/CCP.RWA/2
17 April 1950

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE

The Work of the Conciliation Commission in connection with the Refugee Problem

(Based on the five Progress reports submitted by the Commission to the Secretary-General of the United States)

Resolution of the General Assembly

1. On 11 December 1948, the Assembly resolved, in connection with the Palestine refugees, "that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible…" The Assembly also instructed the Conciliation Commission "to facilitate the repatriation, resettlement and economic and social rehabilitation of the refugees and the payment of compensation, and to maintain close relations with the Director of the United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees and, through him, with the appropriate organs and agencies of the United Nations …"

Preliminary Steps

2. Before establishing contact with the Governments concerned, the Commission took a certain number of steps in relation to the refugee and other questions outstanding between the parties.

3. With regard to refugees, the Commission held lengthy discussions with the Director of the United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees, with a view to establishing close relations between the two bodies.

4. Preliminary conversations with the interested Governments, with regard to the conditions under which sincere peace negotiations could be undertaken, persuaded the Commission that it would be useful to continue them in order to arrive at a greater clarification of views regarding the method of approaching and solving the refugee problem in order to determine the position that this problem would take in the final peace negotiations.

5. It should be noted that the importance and the extreme urgency of this question, both from the humanitarian and the political points of view, were recognised from the outset by the Commission and were greatly stressed by the Arab Governments. But, owing to the practical impossibility of continuing negotiations by repeated visits of the Commission to the various capitals, the Commission decided to invite first the Arab States to hold meetings for the purpose of exchanging views on the refugee problem with the Commission. These exchanges of views could eventually be extended to other questions should the desire be expressed in the course of the conversations.

Beirut Meeting — 21 March — 5 April 1949

6. In the ensuing conversations with the Arab Governments, which took place in Beirut from 21 March to 5 April 1949, the principal subject of the conversations was the refugee question. In their statements to the Commission the Arab delegations were unanimous in recognising:

(a) The necessity, both for humanitarian and practical reasons, of giving absolute priority to the refugee question, over and above all other questions pending between the Arab States and the State of Israel;

(b) The necessity that any solution of the problem must be contingent upon the acceptance by the Government of Israel of the principle established in paragraph 11 of the General Assembly's resolution of 11 December 1948 to the effect that "the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date".

7. The Arab delegations pointed out that, up to the present, the Government of Israel not only had not accepted that principle but had endeavoured to create a *de facto* situation which would render the practical application of the principle more difficult or even impossible. In this connection the Arab delegations mentioned the complete absence of security for the Arabs in areas under Israeli control, a lack of those guarantees provided for on behalf of minorities under the Partition Plan, as well as the measures taken by the Israeli Government to block the bank accounts of the refugees and to liquidate their real and personal property, and, in particular, the, Israeli absentee law. They requested the Commission to obtain from the Government of Israel positive clarifications of its position.

8. The Conciliation Commission had no difficulty in recognising the truth of the Arab contention regarding the first of the two points mentioned above. The visits paid by members of the Commission to several refugee camps gave them an opportunity to see for themselves the deplorable material and moral situation of the refugees. Moreover, the desperate uncertainty of the future for these unfortunates, when the funds then at the disposal of the United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees had been exhausted, made it imperative that measures be taken towards a prompt and permanent solution of the question.

9. As regards the principle of the return to their homes of the refugees wishing to do so, the Commission admitted that the Arab contention was well founded; but it considered it necessary to make certain observations regarding its practical application.

10. The Commission was of the opinion that, in the first place, granted this principle were accepted, it would nevertheless be wise to take account of the possibility that not all the refugees would decide to return to their homes. Therefore, it would be necessary to obtain an agreement in principle by the Arab States to the resettlement of those refugees who did not desire to return to their homes.

11. The Commission also considered that, for purely physical reasons, it would be necessary, in a certain number of cases, to envisage the return of the Arab refugees as taking place according to the general plans for resettlement under the control and supervision of the United Nations. The Commission considered that the refugees should be fully informed of the conditions under which they would return; in particular, of the obligations they might incur as well as of the rights that would be guaranteed to them. The Commission was also of the opinion that the refugee problem could not be permanently solved unless other political questions, notably the question of boundaries, were also solved.

Hearings of Non-Governmental Organisations

12. During the meetings in Beirut, the Commission heard statements by representatives of approximately fifteen non-governmental organisations. These included representatives of committees of refugees themselves, delegates from Arab and international organisations which are contributing to the work of assisting refugees, and dignitaries of the Catholic, Orthodox and Armenian churches. Other organisations sent letters, which emphasized the right and the desire of the refugees to return to their homes. The representatives of the refugees denied that the propaganda of the Arab States and of the Arab Higher Committee had had any influence on their decision to flee their homes. The Commission was informed that two to three hundred thousand people had fled before the end of the British mandate,

Meeting with the Israeli Prime Minister — 7 April 1949

13. Following the conversations in Beirut, the Commission proceeded on 7 April to Tel Aviv where it had a long interview with Mr. Ben Gurion, Prime Minister of Israel, during which the refugee question, among others, was examined in detail. The Commission explained that the Arab States firmly took the view that the refugee question must be considered as the most urgent question, constituting an imperative task of the Commission. They had however, relinquished their insistence that a settlement of the refugee question must precede the consideration of other outstanding matters. The Commission asked if the Government of Israel accepted the principle established by the General Assembly resolution , permitting the return to their homes of those refugees who expressed the desire to do so. The Commission stressed the importance which the acceptance of this principle, and its implementation by such steps as were, then possible, would have in creating an atmosphere favourable to the success of the exchanges of views.

14. Mr. Ben Gurion, without replying directly to this question, called attention, in particular, to the passage in paragraph 11 of the General Assembly resolution which states that refugees who wished to go to their homes should "live in peace with their neighbours". In Mr. Ben Gurion's view this passage made the possibility of a return of the refugees to their homes contingent, so to speak, on the establishment of peace, because, so long as the Arab States refused to make peace with the State of Israel, it was evident that Israel could not fully rely upon the declarations that Arab refugees might make concerning their intention to live in peace with their neighbours. Mr. Ben Gurion did not exclude the possibility of acceptance for repatriation of a limited number of Arab refugees, but he made it clear that the Government of Israel considered that a real solution of the major part of the refugee question lay in the resettlement of the refugees in Arab States. On the other hand, Mr. Ben Gurion fully recognised the humanitarian aspect of the problem and on several occasions declared that, when the time came, the Government of Israel would be ready to take part in the efforts necessary for its solution and that it would do this in a sincere spirit of co-operation. Mr. Ben Gurion told the Commission, however, that the Government of Israel considered the refugee question as one of those which should be examined and solved during the general negotiations for the establishment of peace in Palestine.

Need for Technical, Preparatory Work

15. During this period of its work, the Commission came to realise that neither repatriation to Israel nor resettlement in Arab territories could be carried out in satisfactory conditions without a considerable amount of preparatory work of a technical nature. It would be necessary, first, to establish the most exact figures possible as to the number of actual refugees, that is to say, persons who had fled from Israel-controlled territory. Consultations would then be required in order to ascertain which refugees would prefer to be repatriated to Israel and which would wish to be resettled in an Arab country; finally, both repatriation to Israel and resettlement in Arab territory would have to be preceded by considerable preparatory work of an economic, social and financial character. These considerations led the Commission to contemplate the creation of a technical committee, to which this preparatory work would be entrusted. This Committee would have the status of a "subsidiary body under the terms of paragraph 12 of the resolution of 11 December 1945. It would function under the immediate supervision of the Commission and would submit the results of its work to the Commission.

16. The Commission was fully aware of the difficulties inherent in the permanent rehabilitation of a group of persons which, although not particularly large in itself, nevertheless seemed so in proportion to the total population of the countries among which it would be distributed. The Commission considered that, in the long run, the final solution of the problem would be found within the framework of the economic and social rehabilitation of all the countries of the Near East. But the urgent need of an immediate solution to relieve the tragic material and moral situation of the Arab refugees indicated that some measures should be evolved which could be applied in the shortest possible time, such as a programme of public works undertaken by Israel and the Arab States which, would make possible the return of the refugees and the immediate absorbing of those who did not desire to return to their homes. The Commission indicated that it would be more than willing to recommend favourable action by the competent organs of the United Nations if Israel and the Arab States were to apply to the United Nations for technical and financial aid in the preparation and carrying out of such a programme.

The Lausanne Meetings — 27 April — 13 September 1949

17. Upon its return to Jerusalem, after the Beirut talks and its visit to Tel Aviv, the Commission proposed to the Governments of the Arab States and the Government of Israel that they send to Lausanne delegations with which the Commission could continue its work or conciliation. The Commission stressed the fact that the exchanges of views held in Lausanne, unlike those held in Beirut, were to be considered not only as bearing upon one of the specific tasks entrusted to the Commission by the Assembly's resolution , such as the refugee question, but also as bearing upon its general task of conciliation of the points of view of the parties with a view to achieving a settlement of all questions outstanding between them. The purpose of the Lausanne meetings was to continue the exchanges of views between the Commission and the respective delegations on a broader basis and in circumstances which would make possible the achievement of concrete and positive results.

18. The Commission, in its desire to stress; from the opening of the Lausanne meetings, that the matters outstanding between the Governments concerned, and particularly the refugee question and the territorial question, were closely interlinked, urged the Arab and Israeli delegations to extend their exchanges of views to all the problems covered by the Assembly resolution . To this end, it asked the two parties separately to sign with the Commission a Protocol which would constitute the basis of work. To this document was annexed a map on which was indicated the boundaries defined in the General Assembly resolution of 29 November 1947 , which was thus taken as the basis of discussion with the Commission. It was understood that any necessary adjustments of these boundaries could be proposed. It was by virtue of the signing of this Protocol that the Commission was able to press the two parties to make known their views on all outstanding questions.

19. The refugee question was the subject of discussion at numerous lengthy meetings in Lausanne held by the Commission with the delegations of Israel and of the Arab States, as well as with representatives of the refugees themselves, notably members of the Congress of Refugees of Ramallah, and of the Jaffa and District Inhabitants Committee. The question was also examined and discussed in all its aspects in the course of personal conversations between members of the Commission and members of the various delegations. These exchanges of views made it possible to make a precise distinction between the problem of repatriation, resettlement and social and economic rehabilitation of the refugees, and the problem raised by the immediate preliminary measures, which might be taken by the Government of Israel to safeguard the rights and property of the refugees.

20. Regarding repatriation resettlement and rehabilitation of the refugees, the Arab delegations continued to hold the view that the first step must be acceptance by the Government of Israel of the principle set forth in the resolution of 11 December 1948 concerning the repatriation of refugees who wish to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours. The Commission did not succeed in achieving the acceptance of this principle by the Government of Israel.

21. Two specific proposals concerning repatriation and resettlement of the refugees were submitted to the Commission by the delegation of Israel and by the Arab delegations, respectively. The delegation of Israel declared that if the Gaza area were incorporated in the State of Israel, its Government would be prepared to accept as citizens of Israel the entire Arab population of the area, both inhabitants and refugees, on the understanding that resettlement of the refugees in Israeli territory would be subject to such international aid as would be available for refugee resettlement in general. The delegation of Israel declared that it was not in a position to submit to the Commission proposals concerning the number of refugees it would accept in the event that the Gaze area were not incorporated in Israel. For their part, the Arab delegations submitted to the Commission a proposal directed toward the immediate return of the refugees coming from the territories now under Israeli authority which formed part of the Arab zone on the map attached to the Protocol of 12 May : that is, Western Galilee, the area of Lydda, Ramle and Beersheba, Jaffa, Jerusalem and the coast line north of Gaza.

22. The Commission transmitted these proposals to the Arab delegations and to the delegation of Israel respectively, without giving an opinion as to their merits or faults. Neither the Arab delegations nor the delegation of Israel felt able to accept any of these proposals.
23. A large part of the Commission's attention and activity during the Lausanne meetings was debated to the study of preliminary measures which should be taken for the preservation of the rights and property of the refugees. In Jerusalem, before its departure for Lausanne, the Commission had presented to the Government of Israel a list of preliminary measures which it considered fair and just if a favourable atmosphere were to be created for the meetings in Lausanne. In Lausanne, this aspect of the refugee problem was the subject of oral and written communications addressed to the Commission by the Arab delegations and by the organisation representing the refugees. The request included, among others, measures to facilitate the return of the proprietors of orange groves, together with the necessary labourers, in order to prevent the total loss of the groves; measures to facilitate the reuniting of families separated as a result of the hostilities; measures which would make it possible for the refugees to have access to all or part of the accounts now blocked by the Government of Israel, etc,
24. The Technical Committee was constituted and proceeded to Palestine in order to inaugurate, in the field, with the assistance of the Governments of the Arab States and Israel, preliminary studies concerning the refugees, to deal with the problems of repatriation, resettlement and social and economic rehabilitation of the refugees, as well as with the preliminary measures to be taken for the preservation of their rights and property.
25. On 7 June, .the Commission held a meeting with the Geneva representatives of the United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees and of the three organisations responsible for actual distribution of relief, namely, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the League of Red Cross Societies and the American Friends Service Committee. In the course of this meeting the representatives of these organisations stated emphatically that they were deeply concerned with the financial aspect of the question. They drew the Commission's attention to the gravity of the situation which would arise if it became necessary, owing to lack of funds, to interrupt the relief work during the winter. For the refugees in the mountainous areas of Palestine, such an interruption would constitute a real catastrophe for which the relief organisations would be unwilling to take any responsibility whatever.

26. The Commission was deeply impressed by the statements of the representatives of the relief organisations. Although aid to the refugees was not directly within its competence, the Commission in its third Progress Report drew the attention of the Secretary-General to the gravity of the situation, and suggested that it would be useful if the question of new funds for refugee relief were included among the first matters to be examined by the General Assembly at its forthcoming Session.

27. In its Third Progress Report dated 13 June 1949, the Commission concluded that, in order to further the negotiations, it would be advantageous to link together the refugee question and the territorial question, without neglecting a study of the economic and social problems which arise in the Middle East. The pressure exerted by the Arab delegations in favour of negotiations on the refugee question, combined with Israeli pressure in favour of territorial negotiations, threatened to create a situation in which, in the Commission's view, it would be difficult to arrive at agreement on the solution of these fundamental problems.
28. In order to give the delegations present in Lausanne the opportunity of consulting their Governments on these various points; the Commission suspended its meetings between 1 and 18 July. During the second phase of the Lausanne negotiations, from 18 July to 15 September, the refugee question was discussed intensively with the various delegations by the Commission and its General Committee.

29. With regard to the repatriation, resettlement and rehabilitation of the refugees, the delegation of Israel stated on 28 July that in response to the views of the Conciliation Commission and in order to facilitate the task of conciliation, the Government of Israel agreed that the problem of refugees be placed as the first item on the agenda of joint discussions of a general peace settlement; on initiation of such discussions the Israeli delegation would be prepared to convey to the Commission and to the Arab delegations the total figure of refugees which the Government of Israel would be ready to repatriate; in the view of the Government of Israel, such repatriation must form part of a comprehensive plan for the settlement of the entire refugee problem; and this repatriation would be put into effect only as an integral part of a general and final peace settlement. The Israeli delegation also expressed the wish that these negotiations should be carried out directly with the Arab delegations.

30. On 2 August the Arab delegations stated to the Commission that understanding that the Israeli delegation would advance concrete proposals within the framework of a final solution of the refugee problem and that these proposals would be considered as a first step toward stabilisation of the situation in Palestine and considering such a course to be in the spirit of the General Assembly's resolution of 11 December 1948 and the Protocol of 12 May 1949 , they agreed to discuss the Israeli proposals. They stated that this acceptance in no way prejudged acceptance of any particular plan.

31. Following the reply by the Arab delegations, the Israeli representative informed the Commission on 3 August that his Government was prepared to make its contribution to the solution of the refugee problem. This contribution would be limited by considerations affecting the security and the economy of the State. Thus, the refugees would be settled in areas where they would not come in contact with possible enemies of Israel; moreover, the Government of Israel reserved the right to resettle the repatriated refugees in specific locations, in order to ensure that their reinstallation would fit into the general plan of Israel's economic development. Subject to these conditions, the Government of Israel would be prepared to accept the return to Israel in its present limits of 100,000 refugees, over the total Arab population existing at the end of hostilities (including those who had already returned) thus increasing the total number of that population to a maximum of 250;000. This repatriation would form part of a general plan for resettlement of refugees which would be established by a special organ to be created for the purpose by the United Nations.
32. The Commission, considering the Israeli delegation's proposal as unsatisfactory, limited itself to communicating that proposal unofficially to the Arab delegations for their information.

33. On 15 August the Arab delegations transmitted to the Commission, also unofficially, their view that the Israeli proposal was contrary to the resolution of 11 December 1948 , as well as to the Protocol of 12 May . They considered that under the terms of the Protocol the Israeli proposal could bear only upon the territories allotted to Israel according to the map attached to that document. The Arab delegations protested the contention of the Israeli delegation that the settlement of Arabs in Israeli territory must be subordinated to economic and strategic considerations. They recalled, moreover, a memorandum addressed by them to the Commission on 23 May, requesting the repatriation of all refugees originating in territory allotted to the Arabs, or to be internationalized, according to the map attached to the Protocol of 12 May . If the Israeli proposal was to be interpreted as applying exclusively to refugees originating in areas allocated to Israel on the above-mentioned map, the Arab delegations would not object to its adoption as a basis for discussion of the disposition of those particular refugees. Finally; the Arab delegations favoured compensation in kind for the refugees who might not return to their homes; this indemnification might take the form of territorial compensation within the terms of the Protocol of 12 May .

34. On the same day the Commission submitted to all delegations present in Lausanne a memorandum w hich, *inter alia* , inquired whether the various delegations were prepared to sign a declaration according, to which, (a) the solution of the refugee problem should be sought in the repatriation of refugees in Israeli-controlled territory and in the resettlement of those not repatriated, in Arab countries or in the zone of Palestine not under Israeli control. It was to be understood that the repatriated refugees would become *ipso facto* citizens of Israel and that no discrimination would be practised against them both with regard to the civil and the political rights which they would exercise and to the obligations imposed upon them by the law of the land. It was also to be understood that repatriation in Israel as well as resettlement in the Arab countries or in the zone of Palestine not under Israel control would take place subject to technical and financial aid given to each party by the international community; (b) in case an Economic Mission (see paragraph 50 below) should be charged by the United Nations with the establishment of major work projects in the Middle East with a view to facilitating the repatriation, resettlement and economic and social rehabilitation of the Arab refugees, as well as with the study of the conditions under which that programme could take place, all the parties would undertake to facilitate the task of the Economic Mission and to take all possible measures to aid in the implementation of such solutions as the Mission might propose; (c) all the parties would specify that the above-mentioned conditions concerning the Arab refugees would not prejudice the rights which the parties reserve in connection with the final settlement of the territorial question in Palestine; and (d) the funds for emergency aid extended to the refugees must be renewed until technical and financial aid should have been allotted by the international community. The Commission also asked the delegations whether, without committing their Governments for the present or for the future, and taking

account of the fact that no exact and detailed statistics existed with regard to the refugees, they were prepared to present a provisional estimate of the approximate number of refugees which their Governments would be ready to accept.

35. On 29 August, in reply to this memorandum, the Arab delegations recalled the observations contained in their memorandum of 15 August and stated that keeping these observations in mind, they would be ready to study the implementation of that part of the declaration proposed by the Commission according to which the solution of the refugee problem should be sought in the repatriation of refugees in Israeli-controlled territory and in the resettlement of those not repatriated in Arab countries or in the zone of Palestine not Under Israeli control. They also drew the Commission's attention to the necessity of establishing international guarantees — to be determined at a later date — assuring to the refugees to be repatriated in areas under Israeli control just treatment, without discrimination on grounds of race or faith.
36. In connection with the Economic Mission for the Middle East, the Arab delegations stated that they would recommend that their Governments facilitate the work of that Mission and take all the steps which they might judge appropriate and possible to assist in the implementation of such solutions as the Mission might propose.
37. The delegations of Jordan and Syria stated that their Governments would be able to receive, in conjunction with the recommendations of the Economic Mission, such refugees as might not return to their homes. The Egyptian delegation declared that Egypt; being densely populated and unable to extend substantially the area of its arable land, would find it difficult to contemplate the resettlement of a number of refugees on its existing territory. When its eastern frontiers had been readjusted, however, the Egyptian delegation would be prepared to study the question in the light of the prevailing situation and within the framework of international technical and financial aid. The Lebanese delegation declared that Lebanon was in the same position as Egypt, since it was one of the most densely populated areas in the world.
38. Finally, the Arab delegations collectively urged that the United Nations continue to supply the funds necessary for emergency aid to refugees.

39. On 31 August, the Israeli delegation, replying to the Commission's memorandum, s tated that it was prepared to sign a declaration along the general lines suggested by the Commission with regard to refugees, subject to precision on the following points: that the solution of the refugee problem was to be sought primarily in resettlement in Arab territories; that though the Economic Mission would be facilitated in its task and its proposals would be given full consideration, the Government of Israel could not bind itself in advance to implement the solutions proposed; that the understanding with regard to non-discrimination against refugees should apply to the Arab States as well; and the international financial assistance, to which repatriation of Palestinian refugees to Israel would be subject, should also extend to the resettlement of Jewish refugees from Arab-controlled areas of Palestine.
40. The Israeli delegation, moreover, reiterated its previous offer with regard to the number of refugees which the Government of Israel would be ready to accept and pointed out that its willingness to facilitate the task of the Economic Mission would have to remain within the limits of this offer. Finally, the delegation repeated that its Government could agree to the repatriation of refugees to Israel only as part of an overall settlement of the Palestinian problem.

41. In reply to the Arab and Israeli notes dated 29 and 31 August respectively, the Commission informed all the delegations on 12 September that it did not consider that it would be useful at that moment to formulate more detailed suggestions with regard to the refugee question, notably concerning the number of persons who should return to Israel and the number who should be resettled in the Arab States, in view of the fact that the refugee question in general would be examined by the Economic Mission. The Commission preferred to await the conclusions and recommendations which would be submitted to it by the Mission, before formulating its own suggestions regarding the general solution of the refugee problem.

Report of the Technical Committee

42. In its exchanges of view with the Arab and Israeli delegations on the refugee question, the Commission relied to a great extent on the report of its Technical Committee on Refugees. This report of the Technical Committee, dealing with the problem of repatriation, resettlement, and social and economic rehabilitation of the refugees, as well as with preliminary measures to be taken for the preservation of their rights, property and interests, was transmitted to the Secretary General on 9 September. The Commission decided to dissolve the Technical Committee and to recommend to the Secretary-General that its members be placed at the disposal of the Economic Mission.

Work of the General Committee

43. In connection with preliminary measures to be taken for the preservation of the rights, property and interests of the refugees, the Commission charged the General Committee with the study of the following points raised by the Arab delegations: the return to their lands and homes of Arab owners of orange groves together with the necessary workmen and technicians; the immediate unfreezing of Arab accounts in Israeli banks; the abrogation of the Absentee Act; the suspension of all measures of requisition and occupation of Arab houses and lands; the reuniting in homes of refugees belonging to the same family; the assurance of freedom of worship and of respect of churches and mosques; the repatriation of religious personnel; the freeing of Wakf property; the assurance to refugees returning to their homes of the guarantees necessary to their security and their liberty.
44. The General Committee formulated concrete proposals in connection with the questions of separated families, of blocked Arab accounts and of orange groves: These questions are dealt with separately below.
45. With regard to other points, the Israeli delegation informed the Committee that its Government was unable to abrogate the Absented Act or to suspend measures of requisition of Arab immovable property; that freedom of worship and respect of churches and mosques were guaranteed throughout Israel and that further applications by religious a later date.

46. As regards orange groves belonging to Arabs and situated in Israeli-controlled territory, the General Committee, at the request of the Arab delegations and with the concurrence of the Technical Committee which, after an on-the-spot inspection the orange groves, had reported to the Commission their state of progressive deterioration, decided to propose the establishment of a mixed Arab-Israeli working group to proceed into the field and to recommend practical measures to it for the preservation of the orange groves. This group would also facilitate the implementation of such measures and evaluate the damage sustained by the groves. The Arab delegations declared themselves in favour of the above terms of reference. The Israeli delegation, however, stated that its Government was unable to accept the establishment of the proposed mixed group and that the Israeli custodian of enemy property was doing his best to care for the Arab orange groves. The Arab delegations thereupon stressed that responsibility for the damage sustained by these groves would rest entirely on the Israeli authorities. In its Fourth Progress Report, the Commission stated that its efforts to save this economic asset had produced no results.
47. On the question of reuniting in Israel refugee families separated by the war, the Government of Israel agreed, at the Commission's request, to permit the readmission of wives and minor children of Arab breadwinners lawfully resident in Israel and to consider other compassionate cases for readmission, and declared itself ready to put this measure into effect immediately and independently of the solution of the refugee problem as a whole. The Government of Israel approached the Arab Governments through the channel of the Mixed Armistice Commissions, with, the suggestion that they should send representatives to enter into contact with the competent Israeli authorities to discuss and carry out the administrative aspects of the return. After considerable delay the Arab States appointed their representatives on the Mixed Armistice Commissions to deal with the question. The scope of this measure was considered too restricted by the Arab delegations, which insisted on a wider interpretation of the term "family" in accordance with the Oriental concept.
48. On the question of blocked assets, the Government of Israel replied that it was prepared to discuss a reciprocal arrangement with the Arab States whereby the Arab assets blocked both in Israel and in the Arab States could be mutually released in equal proportion. The Arab delegations having accepted these conditions; it was possible to set up a Mixed Committee of Experts under neutral chairmanship, to study and recommend to the Commission the means by which the release of these funds could be put into effect. In this Committee, created on humanitarian grounds and on a purely technical level, Arab and Israeli representatives entered into direct contact for the first time. The Committee was composed of one Israeli member, one Arab member representing the four Arab States and the interests of the refugees, and the Commission's Principal Secretary, who acted as Chairman. Although the deliberations of the Mixed Committee were carried out in an atmosphere of cordiality, they did not at Lausanne reach the stage of concrete suggestions. The Principal Secretary, in his capacity as Chairman of the Committee, was charged with

pursuing the matter further upon his return to the Middle East in September.
49. The General Committee further proposed to the Israeli delegation that arrangements be made to permit certain Arabs living in territory under Arab control close to the Armistice demarcation lines to cultivate their lands which lay within territory under Israeli control. The delegation of Israel stated that the above question fell within the competence of the Mixed Armistice Commissions. Nevertheless, the Commission instructed its Principal Secretary to take up this matter upon his return to Jerusalem in September.

Economic Survey Mission

50. On 23 August , the Commission decided, pursuant to paragraph 12 of the General Assembly's resolution of 11 December 1948 , to establish an Economic Mission as a subsidiary body under the Commission's authority. The Mission was charged with examining the economic situation in the countries affected by the recent hostilities in Palestine and with making recommendations to the Commission for an integrated programme having the following purposes to enable the Governments concerned to further such measures and development programmes as would be required to overcome the economic dislocations created by the hostilities to facilitate the repatriation, resettlement and economic and social rehabilitation of the refugees and the payment of compensation pursuant to the provisions of paragraph 11 of the General Assembly's resolution of 11 December 1948 , in order to reintegrate the refugees into the economic life of the area on a self sustaining basis within a minimum period of time; and to promote economic, conditions conducive to the maintenance of peace and stability in the area. The Commission further agreed that the Mission should be composed of a Chairman, to be nominated by the United States, and three Deputy Chairmen, to be nominated by the United Kingdom, France and Turkey respectively. On its way to the Middle East, the Mission stopped in Lausanne on 8 September 1949 for discussions with the Commission, the Arab and Israeli delegations and various specialized agencies of the United Nations. The Mission departed on 11 September 1949 for Beirut, where it established its headquarters.

New York Meetings — 19 October — 9 December 1949

51. In order to give the interested Governments sufficient time to reconsider their positions on the territorial and refugee questions, the Commission decided to suspend its meetings on 15 September and reconvene in New York on 19 October. It held several meetings at its offices in the Empire State Building with the delegations of the Arab States and with the delegation of Israel, during which the refugee question and other problems were examined.

52. On 16 November, the interim report of the Economic Survey Mission, having been received by the Commission, was transmitted to the Secretary-General for communication to the Members of the General Assembly. In transmitting this document , the Commission indicated in a covering letter its opinion that the report constituted a constructive approach to the Palestine refugee problem, meriting urgent consideration by the General Assembly. The Commission further pointed out that the Assembly might wish to obtain additional information concerning certain of the findings and recommendations contained in the report and, in this connexion, drew attention to arrangements made by the Secretary-General with the organizations administering relief to Palestine refugees.

53. Paragraph 11 of the General Assembly's resolution of 11 December 1948 gave to the Conciliation Commission the specific mission of facilitating the repatriation, resettlement and economic and social rehabilitation of the refugees and the payment of compensation. In accordance with this disposition, the Commission included in the terms of reference given by it to the Economic Survey Mission the question of compensation to be paid to refugees not wishing to return to their homes. The Commission decided to resume consideration of this question upon the resumption of its work in January 1950, taking as a basis studies made by the Economic Survey Mission.
54. As regards those preliminary measures for the protection of the rights, property and interests of the refugees in the implementation of which the Commission had instructed its Principal Secretary to assist in during the recess the results achieved during that period were as follows:
In connexion with, the reunion of separated refugee families, Lebanon, Egypt and Jordan appointed representatives to discuss and carry out, in collaboration with the competent Israeli authorities, the actual plan for the return of these refugees. Syria indicated its readiness to appoint representatives as soon as possible.
With regard to blocked Arab accounts, conversations in Cairo and Tel Aviv of the experts of the two sides with the Commission's economic experts for the purpose of arriving at a mutually acceptable method of unfreezing these accounts were carried out in a favourable atmosphere.
In connexion with the arrangements to enable Arabs living in territory under Arab control close to the Armistice demarcation line to cultivate their lands which lie within territory under Israeli control, both the Israeli and Jordanian authorities agreed to discuss the matter in the Special Committee set up by the Armistice Agreement.

55. On 9 December the Commission adjourned its meetings until 16 January 1950 when it reconvened in Geneva to consider the final report from the Economic Survey Mission and to continue its negotiations with the delegations of the Arab States and Israel.

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