

GENERAL
ASSEMBLYASSEMBLEE
GENERALEA/AC.21/SR.3
13 January 1948

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE THIRD MEETING OF THE UNITED NATIONS
PALESTINE COMMISSION

Lake Success, New York, Tuesday,

13 January 1948, at 11.00 a.m.

Present:

Chairman: Mr. LISICKY (Czechoslovakia)

Members: Mr. Medina (Bolivia)

Mr. Federspiel (Denmark)

Mr. Morgan (Panama)

Mr. Francisco (Philippines)

Secretariat: Mr. Sobolev (Assistant Secretary-General)

Mr. Bunche (Secretary)

1. COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED FROM REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED KINGDOM GOVERNMENT AND OF THE JEWISH AGENCY (documents A/AC.21/3 and A/AC.21/4).

The CHAIRMAN drew the attention of the Members of the Commission to the fact that the United Kingdom Government and the Jewish Agency for Palestine had appointed representatives to furnish information and assistance to the Commission in accordance with the Resolution adopted at the first meeting of the Commission.

In this connection he had requested the Secretary to prepare a draft list of questions to be submitted to the United Kingdom representative when he appeared before the Commission. This list of questions would be discussed by the Commission at a later meeting and would be open to revision.

He further informed the Commission that Mr. Shertok had requested an interview with the Chairman. This interview would take place at 2.30 in the afternoon. He would inform the Members of the Commission of what had taken place at a later meeting.

It was agreed to request Sir Alexander Cadogan to appear before the Commission at the meeting to be held in the afternoon of 14 January 1948. It was further agreed to request Mr. Shertok to make a preliminary statement before the Commission on the following day.

2. INTRODUCTION OF THE PALESTINE COMMISSION SECRETARIAT

The CHAIRMAN asked the Secretary to introduce the Members of the Secretariat who had been appointed to serve the Palestine Commission.

The SECRETARY stated that the Palestine Commission Secretariat was under the direction of Mr. Sobolev, Assistant Secretary-General of the Security Council Affairs Department and read the names of the Secretariat Members appointed to serve the Commission.

3. CONSIDERATION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S RESOLUTION (documents A/516, A/AC.21/W.2 and A/AC.21/W.3).

The CHAIRMAN invited the Members of the Commission to make general comments on document A/AC.21/W.2 (Termination of the Mandate, Withdrawal of British Forces), prepared by the Secretariat.

The SECRETARY read document A/AC.21/W.2, paragraph by paragraph, and Members duly took note of the various suggested points on which additional information or clarification should be sought from the United Kingdom representative.

Referring to Part I, paragraph 3(a) concerning the statement of Mr. Creech Jones on the date of the termination of the Mandate, the CHAIRMAN said that the phrase "subject to negotiation with the United Nations" should be noted. It was obvious from Part I, paragraphs 3(a) and (b) that the date of the termination of the Mandate would be 15 May 1948 or before, but not later than 15 May 1948.

In connection with the arrangements to be made for the arrival of the Commission in Palestine and for the co-ordination of its plans with those of the Mandatory Power for the withdrawal of the British Administration and the British Military Forces, under Part I, paragraph 5, the Chairman said this was one of the questions which must be taken up with the United Kingdom representative when he appeared before the Commission, in view of the statement made by Mr. Creech Jones in the House of Commons on 11 December 1947 that "It will be undesirable for the Commission to arrive in Palestine until a short period before the termination of the Mandate".

He asked Members if they had any comments to make on the statement appearing in Part I, paragraph 5, that the Mandatory Power intended to "retain control of the country" as long as the Mandate was not terminated and not to relinquish the Mandate "piecemeal" but "as a whole" on the "appointed day".

Mr. MORGAN (Panama) commented that there was an apparent contradiction between this statement of the Mandatory Power and the terms of the General Assembly's Resolution, as the resolution provided that the armed forces of the Mandatory Power should be "progressively withdrawn" from Palestine and the administration of Palestine should be "progressively turned over to the Commission".

/It was

It was generally agreed that these questions should be resolved when the United Kingdom representative appeared before the Commission.

The SECRETARY informed the Commission, with reference to Part II, paragraph 4, that the 'outline plan' for the withdrawal of the Mandatory Power in Palestine referred to therein, had not yet been received by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. He further pointed out that Sir Alexander Cadogan, in a conversation he had had with him the previous day, had told him that it was his intention to submit the plan to the Commission at his first appearance before it.

The CHAIRMAN pointed out with reference to Part II, paragraph 5(d) that the withdrawal of forces referred to was not the withdrawal intended in the General Assembly's Resolution but was a purely internal matter. The Mandatory Power would remain responsible for the administration, and the maintenance of law and order in Palestine until the termination of the Mandate. He made this point as it was stated in the penultimate sentence of Part II, paragraph 5(d) that "the Commission might find it useful to explore with the United Kingdom the possibility of extending the area of such withdrawals prior to 15 May". The Mandatory Power might object to such a procedure on the grounds that they alone were responsible for the administration of Palestine until the termination of the Mandate.

Mr. FEDERSPIEL (Denmark) agreed with the Chairman but said that the Commission should be kept informed by the Mandatory Power of its actions in this respect. In this connection he suggested that the Commission should receive daily or as often as possible, summaries of the current events in Palestine.

The CHAIRMAN agreed with the representative of Denmark and asked the Secretary for information on this point.

The SECRETARY stated that there were at present no United Nations representatives in Palestine who could furnish the Commission with the desired authoritative information. The sources of information were limited to official reports of the Palestine Administration, press reports, and reports from the Jewish Agency. A daily summary of the current events in Palestine could readily be prepared from these sources of information.

The CHAIRMAN suggested that an observer might be sent to Palestine prior to the Commission, in order to keep the Commission informed of current events in that country.

It was agreed that the Secretariat should prepare daily summaries of information from the reports received from the Palestine administration, the Jewish Agency and the Press. The Secretariat would also explore the technical possibilities of sending an observer to Palestine.

/The CHAIRMAN,

The CHAIRMAN, referring to the statement in Part II, paragraph 5(h) that the Jewish Agency had "asked for the immediate evacuation of the Trans-Jordan troops", who had been serving under the orders of the British Commanding Officer, enquired as to what authority the Jewish Agency had approached in the matter.

In connection with Part II, paragraph 7(b) (ii) concerning the Commission's consultations with the Mandatory Power regarding the evacuation of a seaport by 1 February 1948 and the creation of some local authority to deal with immigration, the CHAIRMAN said this question should be decided first by the Commission and then in co-operation with the United Kingdom representative.

The CHAIRMAN, in reference to Part II, paragraph 7(b) (iv), inquired what authority would be responsible for equipping the local militias.

Mr. FEDERSPIEL (Denmark) was of the opinion that this would be the responsibility of the relevant Provisional Council of Government.

The Commission then turned to consideration of document A/AC.21/W.3 (Relations between the Mandatory Power and the Commission).

The CHAIRMAN commented with reference to the conclusion of paragraph 3 concerning the question of whether or not the British troops would exercise civil administrative authority as well as military authority in the areas from which they had not yet withdrawn, that this was a question to be taken up with the United Kingdom representative when he appeared before the Commission.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.
