

UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINEGENERAL COMMITTEE

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FIRST MEETING

held at Lausanne on Monday, 16 May 1949
at 3 p.m.

Present:

Mr. de la Tour du Pin (France) - Chairman

Mr. Yenisey (Turkey)

Mr. Wilkins (United States of America)

Mr. Azcarate - Principal Secretary

The CHAIRMAN requested the Principal Secretary to indicate the extent to which the Secretariat could be of assistance to the General Committee in its work.

Mr. AZCARATE replied that the Secretariat as a whole would be at the disposal of the Committee. When studying territorial questions, it would have the services of a military observer in charge of maps, while Mr. Milner, political adviser to the Commission would render special assistance.

Mr. YENISEY wished to define the position of the Turkish delegation on the question of the General Committee's terms of reference. During the discussion which had been held between the Chairman of the Commission and the representatives of the Arab countries, the Chairman had appeared to confine the Committee's terms of reference to securing the views of the various delegations and reporting on them to the Commission. If such were the Chairman's interpretation, he (the Turkish representative) did not share it. In his opinion the Committee should not be a mere recording body but should after hearing the proposals of the delegations, submit a report which would contain suggestions and proposals. If its work were

to be purely passive the Committee would merely be an unnecessary duplication of the Commission and serve only to prolong procedure.

The CHAIRMAN suggested that the members of the Commission had probably thought that, in view of the Arab attitude which that very morning had still shown itself to be reserved, the General Committee might hear certain views and obtain clarification of certain questions which the Arabs would not venture to discuss before the Commission itself. It was the task of the Committee to select subjects for discussion with the Israeli delegation and with the Arab delegations. If, during the conversations with the Israeli delegation, for example, the problem of frontiers was to be studied, the Committee after hearing the Israeli points of view, could confront them with those of the Arabs, ask for further clarifications and thus gather together a body of information which would be of the greatest interest to the Commission. In this way, during the coming week, a certain amount of exploratory work could be undertaken which would make it possible to bring to light the views of the parties involved and to discover a way of bringing them finally together.

Mr. YENISEY stressed the fact that the Committee was entrusted not only with "preparing" reports but also with "studying" them. This latter term implied an active role and the Committee could not confine itself to acting as a transmission agency between the delegations and the Commission.

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the Commission had seen fit to refer to the Protocol signed on 12 May 1949, thus implying that the Committee would have to deal, inter alia with the question of frontiers. For the moment, the Committee should endeavour to discover what question should be studied with one or other of the parties, but had been given no explicit directive on this point in its terms of reference. Furthermore, it would be difficult at the moment for the Committee to go further than the Commission itself, which had not yet submitted any recommendations to the Secretary-General but only ordinary reports.

In conclusion, he suggested that the Committee should await the results of the first meetings with the Israeli delegation and the Arab delegations so as to see the turn the conversations took and to discuss them subsequently with the Commission, if the need arose.

The PRINCIPAL SECRETARY intervened to point out that the General Committee's terms of reference were wide ones. In his opinion, the Committee had not merely to prepare a single report. The Commission would submit to it questions it might deem advisable to have studied and the Committee would then be called upon to prepare reports on these particular questions. For the time being, the Committee should find out what points the delegations seemed most disposed to discuss and then report the results of its conversations to the Commission. In the course of those conversations, the attitudes of the delegations would become more clearly defined and the Committee would be in a position to draw conclusions.

Mr. WILKINS supported the view of his Turkish colleague and considered that the Committee should express an opinion and make recommendations to the Commission,

The CHAIRMAN declared that the members of the Committee appeared to be in full agreement and that the Committee's work should consist not only in hearing the various delegations but, after exhaustive study of the questions, in submitting to the Commission reports which might possibly include suggestions and proposals. Since the Committee had to meet the Israeli delegation first, he proposed that the Committee should ask that delegation what questions it wished to discuss.

Mr. WILKINS considered it preferable for certain questions concerning refugees to be raised, and in particular, the question of urgent measures to hasten the return of Arab refugees to the orange plantations. He felt that a certain number of urgent problems could be discussed first, leaving the question of principle with regard to refugees until later when the territorial problem was broached.

With the Arab delegations, he felt it was preferable not to approach territorial questions directly but to discuss the refugee problem with reference to concrete cases such as, for example, that of the refugees from the district of western Galilee and then to go on from there to study the territorial aspect of the question. The same territorial aspect might also be discussed with the Israelis and by confronting the statements of the Arabs and the Israelis, the Committee would be able to draw some useful conclusions.

Mr. YENISEY expressed his agreement with that point of view and declared that, when studying the refugee problem, two aspects should be considered. The immediate one, namely certain urgent measures to be adopted could be studied straightway while the general aspect of the problem could be studied later.