

UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINEGENERAL COMMITTEE

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SUMMARY RECORD OF A MEETING BETWEEN
THE GENERAL COMMITTEE AND THE
DELEGATION OF ISRAEL

held in Lausanne on Tuesday,
 17 May 1949, at 4 p.m.

Present:	Mr. de la Tour du Pin (France)	Chairman
	Mr. Yenisey (Turkey)	
	Mr. Wilkins (U.S.A.)	
	Mr. Azcarate	- Principal Secretary
	Mr. Milner	- Committee Secretary
	Mr. Elias Sasson)	- Representatives
	Mr. Zalman Lifshitz)	of Israel
	Mr. Gershon Hirsch)	

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Press Problems

The CHAIRMAN welcomed the Israeli delegation in the name of the Committee and expressed the hope that meetings would be held as frequently as possible in order that the work might proceed rapidly. Procedure should be kept very flexible, and he hoped that delegations would express their views with entire freedom; anything of a confidential nature would, if desired, not appear in the records.

Mr. SASSON expressed his delegation's readiness to cooperate to the fullest with the Committee and to advance as rapidly as possible toward a solution of the problems at issue. He pointed out that the common aim would best be served if there were a minimum of publicity. In that connection he mentioned a report on the signing of the protocol and the working document chosen, which had appeared in the Arab press on 10 May; he felt that such releases would only complicate the Committee's task.

On the subject of the press, Mr. Sasson considered it essential that measures should be taken to put an end to the attacks upon and threats against Israel which were appearing in the Arab press. Such attacks jeopardized the success of the Lausanne negotiations by lessening the confidence of the Government and people of Israel in the good will of the Arab States. It was legitimate that the Arab press should continue to press its demands with regard to the peace settlement; his delegation only asked that the warlike tone at present evidenced should be abandoned. He

felt sure that no such warlike tone would be found in the Israeli press; in any case, if action was taken in the matter by the Commission, the Israeli delegation would so inform its Government in order to ensure that equal precaution would be exercised by the Israeli press.

The CHAIRMAN affirmed that the matter would be reported to the Commission, which would take a decision regarding the action to be taken. He drew attention, however, to another problem involving the press, which was causing some concern in the Commission; namely, the appearance in the world press of confidential information regarding the proceedings of Commission meetings. He mentioned three documents or statements which had appeared, in full or in substance, in the press, after having been treated as strictly confidential by the Commission; these included the draft "Preamble" submitted by the Israeli delegation, the questionnaire on Jerusalem prepared by the Committee on Jerusalem, and the statement made by Dr. Eytan to the Commission on 14 May concerning the withdrawal of Arab troops from Palestine. The Chairman drew attention to the difficulties which could be created, for the work of the Commission and the delegations, by such publications. It was hoped that in future the delegations would take advantage of the presence of the Commission's press officer and contact him before releasing information to the press.

Mr. SASSON explained that the "Preamble" and the questionnaire on Jerusalem had been released to the press by his delegation, not as propaganda, but in a desire to inform the people of Israel and to acquaint them with the policies of their Government. A further reason why publication had been considered necessary lay in the progress of the debates at Lake Success on the question of Israel's admission; the documents were relevant to those debates, and the Israeli delegation had found it desirable to keep its delegation at Lake Success advised of proceedings at Lausanne.

Mr. YENISEY observed that as a matter of future policy, it would be helpful if the delegations would agree not to release confidential information except with the agreement of all parties concerned, since it was often essential, for the success of the talks, that certain documents should be withheld from the press for a certain time.

Mr. SASSON agreed to submit the question to his delegation and report its decision to the Committee at a future meeting.

Refugee Question

Mr. WILKINS had certain questions to ask of the Israeli delegation and certain information to request concerning the refugee problem. First, he asked for approximate statistics concerning those refugees who would probably be the first to be returned to their homes; for this purpose he divided the refugees into categories, such as (a) those separated from their immediate families, (b) workers in orange groves, (c) workers in the ports of Haifa, Jaffa and Tel Aviv, (d) workers at the airport of Lydda, and any other categories which might be added. Secondly, in order to show shifts in population, he asked for general estimates of (a) the number of Arabs in Palestine, by districts, as of 29 November 1947, and (b) the number of Arabs in the State of Israel, by former districts, at the present time. Thirdly, he requested an estimate of the number of Arab refugees who had left homes in Israeli-occupied areas of Arab Palestine such as western Galilee, the Jaffa area, Beersheba, the Ramle-Lydda district, and the "Gaza strip". He pointed out that Dr. Eytan was already in correspondence with the Government of Israel on the subject of the separated families and the grove workers. The information desired was purely statistical information to aid in working out possible solutions of the refugee problem.

Mr. SASSON replied that his delegation would be glad to furnish all statistics at its command, purely as information. He stressed the fact, however, that his delegation's position had not changed as regards the principle involved; Israel would not agree to the return of any refugees whatsoever until a final settlement had been reached, nor would it enter upon a discussion of the refugee problem until the other questions involved in the final settlement were also under consideration.

At the request of Mr. Sasson, Mr. WILKINS agreed to hand his questions in writing to the Israeli delegation.

Boundary Question

Mr. SASSON pointed out that the boundary problem was different, since the Partition Plan map had been taken as a working basis, from what it would be if the parties were to work on the basis of existing facts. The Partition Plan envisaged a frontier between Israel and a Palestine Arab State; since that state had never come into existence, Israel could not begin a discussion of frontiers until the status of Arab Palestine had first been determined. The decision of the General Assembly had given no political rights

in Palestine to the neighbouring Arab States. It was not possible to work on the basis of only one part of the Partition Plan, without recognizing the rights of the Palestine Arabs. Israel had shown its good will and desire for cooperation by accepting the Commission's proposal to work on the basis of the Partition Plan; however, if that plan were adhered to, Israel could not discuss the fixing of boundaries with the Hashemite Jordan Kingdom since under the Plan Israel had no political frontier with that State.

There was the possibility that Israel, the Arab delegations and the Commission might agree that the situation had altered, that it was impossible to set up an independent Arab State in Palestine, and that the Partition Plan was no longer a workable scheme. In that case the basis of discussion must be changed; Israel could then enter into territorial negotiations with the Arab States, working on the basis of the present armistice frontiers. As far as Arab Palestine was concerned, if it were to be divided among the neighbouring Arab States, Israel too had a right to annexation of part of the territory.

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the terms of the Protocol did not mention the resolution of 29 November 1947, but only the map on which the Partition boundaries were drawn.

He asked whether the Commission might inform the Arabs that if they withdrew their troops from Palestine, Israel would in turn withdraw from the territory designated on the map as Arab territory, in order that a free plebiscite could be held.

Mr SASSON replied that there was a fundamental difference between Israel's position in Palestine and that of the Arab States: the General Assembly had conferred legal rights in Palestine upon the State of Israel, but the Arab States had no such rights. The question of frontiers was one between the Jews and the Arabs of Palestine, not between Israel and the neighbouring Arab States. As long as the Partition map formed the basis of discussion, the resolution itself must also be adhered to.

The Commission had no mandate to set up an independent Arab State in Palestine, but it did have a mandate to find a solution of the entire Palestine problem. Such a solution could not be found until the future status of Arab Palestine was decided.

Mr Sasson asked that the Commission should obtain a statement from the Arab States as to whether or not they wished to retain permanent political rights on the ground which they now occupied as a military measure. When that point was clarified, discussions could begin on a practical basis. Israel might be ready to conclude an

agreement with Lebanon for the preservation of the frontier as it had existed under the Mandate. If Egypt were to renounce all claim to territory in Palestine, Israel could enter into discussions regarding the Gaza area and thereby liquidate the refugee problem in that district.

Mr Sasson reiterated that Israel was ready to negotiate on either basis: either with an independent Arab Palestine state, on the basis of the Partition boundaries, or directly with the Arab States, on the basis of the existing armistice lines.
