

UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE

GENERAL COMMITTEE

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FORTY-SIXTH MEETING

held in New York on Wednesday,
26 October 1949, at 4:15 p.m.

Present: Mr. de la Tour du Pin (France) - Chairman
Mr. Savut (Turkey)
Mr. Rockwell (U.S.A.)
Dr. Azcarate - Principal Secretary

The CHAIRMAN invited the Principal Secretary to submit his report on the work done in Jerusalem, during the Commission's recess, on questions within the competence of the General Committee.

Separated Families

The PRINCIPAL SECRETARY recalled that the discussions in Lausanne had ended in a deadlock because it could not be determined whether or not the Arab Governments had issued the necessary instructions and appointed representatives to the Mixed Armistice Commission to handle the question. This was the first point which he had endeavoured to clarify upon his arrival in Jerusalem, by means of interviews with Israeli and Arab authorities and visits to Tel Aviv and Amman. Before leaving Jerusalem he had ascertained that representatives had been appointed by Egypt, Lebanon and the Hashemite Jordan Kingdom, to attend meetings of the Mixed Armistice Commission and set up a working procedure in collaboration with the Israeli representatives. No information had been received concerning action by the Syrian Government. It was hoped that the procedure now established by three of the Arab States would lead to practical results, and the Secretariat hoped to receive information soon regarding the practical functioning of the system. Lists including 2,000 to 3,000 names had now been established by Israel and would soon be ready for submission to the Arab representatives.

In reply to a question from Mr. ROCKWELL, the Principal Secretary affirmed that no refugees had as yet been actually repatriated under the system, although a certain number had returned to Israel by other means.

The CHAIRMAN reiterated the importance which his delegation attached to the question; he suggested that Mr. Barnes and Mr. Quimper, who were at present following up the matter in Jerusalem and maintaining liaison with General Riley, should be asked to report to the Commission at an early date, and also that the

Syrian representative with the Commission in New York should be asked to make inquiries with his Government to ascertain what action was being taken by Syria in the matter.

The Committee adopted the Chairman's suggestions.

Orange Groves

The PRINCIPAL SECRETARY regretted that he was forced to report failure concerning the question of preservation of the groves. The competent Israeli authorities with whom he had discussed the matter in Tel Aviv had considered it impossible to establish a mixed working group; moreover, while they would allow an expert to visit the groves, such an expert would not be permitted access to the records of the Custodian of absentee property. The attitude of the Israeli authorities in the matter had been unshakable. The Principal Secretary pointed out that it was not a question of negligence; the Israeli attitude was the result of a deliberate policy arising from the State's planned economy.

In reply to a question from the CHAIRMAN, who asked whether the Economic Survey Mission might interest itself in the matter, the Principal Secretary stated that complete and detailed information regarding the Commission's action on all the questions at issue had been furnished to the Economic Survey Mission.

Mr. ROCKWELL supported the view of the CHAIRMAN that the Committee must advise the Arab delegations of the Israeli attitude and of the fact that the Economic Survey Mission had been furnished full information; the Committee should also report formally to the Commission concerning its efforts, in order that the Commission could advise the Secretary-General of the action taken.

Frontier Agreement for Cultivation of Lands cut by Armistice Lines

The PRINCIPAL SECRETARY reported that he had discussed this question with the Israeli authorities, as well as with General Riley. The question was a complicated one, as in some cases a village lay within the Arab lines and its farmlands within the Israeli lines, while in other cases the situation was reversed. The Israeli Government had been willing to alter the frontier so as to reunite the villages with their lands, on condition that such alteration should be on a compensatory basis, i.e., certain villages being incorporated into Israeli territory and others into Arab territory; the Jordan Government, however, had refused this solution. As regards an arrangement permitting the villagers to cross the lines to cultivate their lands, the Israeli authorities had pointed out that certain complications would arise: it would be difficult in some cases to prove ownership of the land, and in other cases the land was already being cultivated by immigrants who could not now be displaced. It had been decided that the best solution would be to submit the question to the Special Committee created by the Armistice Agreement, which had not met for

some months; the Principal Secretary expected that that committee would now have met on the question, but he had no definite information as yet. The chief obstacle at present lay in the fact that Israel had agreed to submit the question to the Special Committee on condition that the committee should at the same time discuss certain questions in which Israel was interested, e. g., the questions of the Latrun road and of access to Mt. Scopus. In any case both parties had promised to keep the Commission informed.

The CHAIRMAN felt that procedure might prove unsatisfactory, since the Commission had no control over the Special Committee. He thought that all the General Committee could do at present would be to ask the Arab and Israeli delegations in New York for a report on the progress of the talks, and suggested that the matter be placed on the agenda of the Committee's next meeting with the Arab delegations.

The Chairman's suggestion was adopted.

Blocked Arab Accounts

The PRINCIPAL SECRETARY drew attention to the telegram received from Mr. Servoise, of which copies had been distributed. It had been determined that advances could not be made by the banks to the holders of blocked accounts, according to the formula previously contemplated; the present plan, therefore, was to persuade the Arab Governments to make advances which would be guaranteed by the Israeli Government against the funds blocked in Israeli banks. This idea had not yet been submitted to the Arab expert on the Mixed Committee, and it seemed doubtful whether that expert would receive it favorably; in any case, Mr. Servoise had been instructed to proceed to Cairo as soon as possible to discuss the matter.

In answer to a question from Mr. ROCKWELL, the Principal Secretary declared that according to the present estimate of the Director of the Israeli Ministry of Finance, the total amount of cash blocked in Israel was about 4 million Palestine pounds, a figure considerably larger than that originally given by the Israeli expert on the Mixed Committee. Of this amount, approximately 250,000 pounds was in about 10,000 small accounts of less than 100 pounds each. It was hoped that the Israeli Government might be persuaded to unfreeze such small accounts unconditionally, and to unblock as much as possible of the remaining sum on a compensatory basis, taking into consideration certain stocks of merchandise at present held in the Arab States.

In reply to a question from the CHAIRMAN concerning the procedure at present governing the work of the Mixed Committee, the Principal Secretary explained that during his absence Mr. Servoise had been instructed to continue the necessary exploratory work in collaboration with the financial experts in Tel Aviv and Cairo, in order to elaborate a practical formula. The Mixed

Committee, as such, was not at present holding meetings; but Mr. Servoise was continuing discussions with the two experts, and eventually would probably be called to New York, at which time meetings of the Committee would be resumed.

The CHAIRMAN thought it desirable that Mr. Servoise should continue his exploratory work, and that in the meantime the General Committee should explain to the Arab and Israeli delegations what was being done on the question and request them to press their respective Governments for further active co-operation.

Future Work of the General Committee

It was decided to convene a further meeting with the Arab delegations for Friday, 4 November, at 4 p.m.

The meeting rose at 5:30 p.m.