

UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE

RESTRICTED

SR/1

17 January 1949

ENGLISH

ORIGINAL : FRENCH

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FIRST MEETING

Held at the Hôtel des Bergues, Geneva,  
on Monday, 17 January 1949, at 11 a.m.

Present: Mr. YALCIN (Turkey)  
Mr. de BOISANGER (France) Chairman  
Mr. WILKINS\* (United States of America)  
Mr. de AZCARATE Principal Secretary  
Mr. COOK Chief of Administration

\* Alternate

---

Chairmanship of the Commission and Election of a Chairman

At the suggestion of Mr. de BOISANGER (France), the Commission agreed not to lay down strict rules of procedure and decided that for the chairmanship there should be a rota system whereby there would be a different chairman about every fortnight, if the nature of the Commission's work permitted; that the first chairman would be the representative of Turkey, Mr. Yalcin, and that he would be succeeded by the representative of the United States of America, followed by the representative of France.

Methods of work

The PRINCIPAL SECRETARY suggested that it would be desirable to prepare a memorandum setting out the provisions made by the General Assembly and subsequently by the Security Council relative to the task given to the Conciliation Commission and showing clearly whence the Commission derived its powers and what were its duties.

As far as administration was concerned, Mr. Cook, Chief of Administration for the Commission, would prepare another memorandum containing an account of all the administrative arrangements which had been made.

After the Commission had signified its agreement to the adoption of those suggestions, Mr. de BOISANGER endeavoured to define the nature of the Commission's actual work and pointed out that it would have political and diplomatic features necessitating private meetings and discussions of a fairly secret nature, unlike the work of the Special Committee the previous year. In his view the Secretariat should be kept small and the staffs of the delegations should be paid for by the Secretariat; the staff of the French delegation would not number more than three or four persons. It would not be necessary to take over a large number of offices in Jerusalem since the Commission would have to be almost continually on the move. Such measures would bring about a saving of expenditure which should be pointed out immediately to the Secretariat.

The PRINCIPAL SECRETARY expressed agreement with the Chairman on the first point, namely, the confidential nature of the Commission's discussions. Referring to the problem of staff, he said that the first essential was to decide how the Commission was going to work, in other words whether the main effort was to be directed towards making the Commission mobile to enable it to approach Governments or towards giving it some stability which would make it easier for Governments to make the approaches. The structure of the Secretariat would depend on which of the two courses was followed. His view was that at the present stage too much attention should not be paid to mobility; for psychological reasons it would be unwise for the Commission to establish too intimate connections in the countries of the Middle East. The Headquarters of the Commission should be in Jerusalem, but under prevailing conditions it would obviously be somewhat difficult to establish Headquarters there.

Mr. de BOISANGER maintained that the Commission's task was to establish relations with the Governments of the countries concerned and to make contacts by moving about. It should get to know the local atmosphere and sound the possibilities of reconciliation without, however, taking a firm stand on any point. First and foremost it should create an atmosphere of confidence between itself and the Arab States. Representatives of each delegation would accordingly be left in Jerusalem, but most of the time the Commission itself would be on the move, trying to make direct contacts with the responsible leaders of Middle East countries.

Mr. YALCIN expressed agreement, and added that the procedure followed by the Commission would be very flexible and would no doubt have to be altered to suit the circumstances.

Headquarters of the Commission

The PRINCIPAL SECRETARY repeated that there were great administrative difficulties in the way of establishing the headquarters in Jerusalem; he gave a brief account of conditions prevailing there.

Mr. de BOISANGER said that the relevant General Assembly resolution was strictly worded and that the Commission's headquarters should be established in Jerusalem; however, there should be no question of setting up an organization with a large base in Jerusalem.

Mr. COOK (Secretariat) said that it would take another 2 to 3 months to repair the road running from the Old City to Government House, where the United Nations administration was located.

Replying to a question put by the United States representative, the PRINCIPAL SECRETARY said that without a truce it was impossible to make the King David Hotel and Government House area neutral territory.

Mr. COOK continued his description of the conditions prevailing in Jerusalem, particularly those in Government House, where the United Nations observers were accommodated. It would take at least 6 weeks to put Government House sufficiently in order to enable the Commission to meet there with the minimum of comfort.

Mr. YALCIN proposed that, in view of existing conditions, the Commission establish provisional headquarters in Beirut or in Cairo and that it begin its round of visits in the Arab countries so as not to lose time. In the meantime, the United Nations could put in order the building in Jerusalem destined for the Commission.

The Commission proceeded to discuss various possibilities, but finally returned to its first decision that delegations should be accommodated in the King David Hotel and offices established in Government House. Mr. COOK then observed that Government House was not outside the Stern Gang's range of fire, although it was situated in neutral territory. At present it was obviously the best place in

Jerusalem, but that fact did not necessarily mean that it was a good place for the Commission. However, it could be used straightaway and in six weeks time the work which was to be begun on it immediately would make it possible to provide offices there. It might still happen that, after the Commission had arrived in Jerusalem, it would decide that another building was more suitable; it could always make an inspection on the spot. Living conditions there were satisfactory and food could be brought by air from Beirut.

#### Departure of the Commission

Mr. de BOISANGER said that his Government had given him strict instructions and wanted the Commission to be installed before 25 January, the date of the constituent elections.

Mr. COOK informed the Commission of the air travel arrangements. Mr. de BOISANGER was of the opinion that Thursday, 20 January, should be fixed as the date of departure and that the whole Commission should arrive at its destination together even if the United States representative to replace Mr. Keenan was not designated in time; in that event someone else could deputize for the United States representative.

The Commission decided that the United Nations aeroplane should go to Athens to pick up the French and United States representatives, then to Istanbul to pick up the Turkish delegation and then to Jerusalem, and that the arrival in Jerusalem should take place on Monday, 24 January, and the departure from Geneva on the Thursday.

#### Press Releases

Mr. de BOISANGER undertook to inform the press that the Commission had met to discuss the organization of its work and he also undertook to draft the text to be issued to journalists. The press should be informed immediately that the meetings would be private and confidential and that releases would only be issued from time to time as the Commission judged appropriate.

#### Miscellaneous Arrangements

It was assumed that each delegation would not comprise more than 5 or 6 persons at the most.

It was stated that the United Nations would pay for transportation and that the delegates' per diem allowance would be \$20.

Mr. de BOISANGER said that the Secretariat should revise the budgetary estimates, since it was already apparent that previous forecasts of the number of staff and guards required could be reduced. On the other hand, the United Nations should pay the expenses of secretaries accompanying delegations and give them a per diem allowance of \$15 like other United Nations officials at present in Palestine. The French delegation wanted to choose its own secretaries because the Commission's work would be of a confidential and secret nature, and consequently staff recruited locally would not be suitable for the task.

Mr. YALCIN expressed the opinion that the per diem allowance of \$20 would undoubtedly be insufficient to cover the expenses of the titular members of the Commission and wanted the amount to be increased.

The PRINCIPAL SECRETARY undertook to transmit the requests to the Secretary-General and to obtain more precise instructions on the subject.

For official entertainment the Commission would have at its disposal a representation expenses fund.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.