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UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SEVENTH MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 13 February 1950, at 3.30 p.m.

Present:

Mr. PALMER (United States of America)

Chairman

Mr. de BOISANGER (France)

Mr. YALCIN (Turkey)

Mr. de AZCARATE

Principal Secretary

Procedure for the examination of the Egyptian proposals relating
to the refugees in the Gaza area.

The CHAIRMAN said that the Commission had before it a working paper (Document W/37) prepared by the Secretariat on the proposals of the Egyptian Government regarding the return to their lands of certain refugees in the Gaza area. He, himself, had not had time to study the document.

Mr. de BOISANGER (France) said that, after studying the document, he found himself in entire agreement, in principle, with the proposals it contained.

Mr. YALCIN (Turkey) found the Egyptian Government's proposals very reasonable.

The CHAIRMAN said he drew the conclusion that the Commission approved the referral of the proposals in question to the General Committee.

Mr. de BOISANGER (France) felt that it would be desirable for the Egyptian delegation to be informed that the Commission had transmitted the delegation's proposals to the General Committee and that it contemplated setting up a mixed committee to study the question. There was much to be said for informing the delegation in advance of the decision taken. The Chairman of the General Committee could convey the information.

He added that the Commission need have no hesitation in taking the step since it was likely to be most favourably received by the Egyptian delegation.

The Commission adopted the suggestion of Mr. de Boisanger.

The CHAIRMAN stated that he had met Mr. Eban and Mr. Rafael that morning and had impressed upon them the gravity of the refugee problem. Both of them had shown a desire to seek a solution to the problem and had recognized the desirability of negotiations with Egypt on the question of the Gaza area. They expressed surprise that no member of the Egyptian delegation present in Geneva was so far prepared to undertake direct negotiations on the question. Their own attitude appeared to be a favourable one.

Procedure for the preparation of the Summary Records of Meetings

The PRINCIPAL SECRETARY announced that, in deference to observations made by members of the Commission, it would in future be possible to prepare more detailed summary records, in which the discussions would be more fully reported. It would also be possible

to submit them to members of the Commission before they were drawn up in final form. It would be desirable for members to inform the Secretariat as quickly as possible of any corrections they wished to have made to the reports of their remarks since such amendments might sometimes make it necessary for other passages in the summary records to be altered.

The CHAIRMAN was in favour of producing more substantial summary records more closely approximating to a verbatim record, but without their being previously submitted to members of the Commission. Should the latter be absent or otherwise engaged, the publication of summary records might suffer undue delay.

Mr. de BOISANGER (France) for his part, would gladly dispense with the need for making corrections to the summary records. He asked that, in the preparation of summary records, it should be borne in mind that remarks made within the Commission were expressed in free style and that it was necessary to seize the gist of them rather than to reproduce the actual words. The Commission might request the Principal Secretary to revise the draft summary records before publishing them in final form.

The PRINCIPAL SECRETARY stated that it was his usual practice to revise the draft summary records. He considered that the new instructions of the Commission would enable its wishes to be satisfactorily observed.

The CHAIRMAN said that members of the Commission would be satisfied if their remarks were reproduced in the summary records without being abridged or summarized.

Mr. de BOISANGER (France) considered there might be some disadvantage in the summary records being regarded as official and

as giving an accurate reflection of the opinions of members of the Commission, even though they were a literal reproduction of the words used.

The PRINCIPAL SECRETARY pointed out that summary records of the Commission were intended only for its members and, when the case arose, for delegations present at the meetings. It was however almost inevitable that after a certain lapse of time, the summary records should be considered as authentic if no requests for correction had been submitted.

Mr. de BOISANGER (France) pointed out that the disadvantage of that state of affairs would only become evident if a historian sought to reconstitute the history of the Commission, taking the summary records of its meetings as his sole source.

Mr. YALCIN (Turkey) observed that history was full of inaccuracies.

The PRINCIPAL SECRETARY explained that the summary records of commissions were examined at United Nations headquarters, where the working of each commission was closely followed. It was certain that the summary records of the Conciliation Commission were being closely studied for that purpose but such study was chiefly concerned with questions of internal organization.

Interviews with the Arab delegations

Mr. de BOISANGER (France) considered that the Commission should decide whether, following on the meeting held with the Egyptian representative, it should extend an informal invitation to the other Arab delegations. He, himself, had told members of the Jordan delegation, with whom he had been in contact, that Egypt did not see any need for

the Commission to invite the Arab delegations to a combined meeting for the purpose of replying to the statement made from the chair. The Jordan representatives had appeared anxious to have the opportunity of replying to the memorandum submitted by the Israeli delegation but he had explained that the Commission saw no point in starting a discussion on that memorandum.

He added that, in his opinion, it would be advisable to give separate audiences to the various Arab delegations.

The CHAIRMAN thought the Commission should receive the delegations in the course of that week. He recalled the fact that the Principal Secretary had regretted that the meeting held that morning had not been more official in character and that no official record had been made of the views exchanged. The meeting had given more favourable results than he had hoped. One satisfactory outcome of the meeting had been that the Commission had learned that the Egyptian representative did not consider it desirable to hold a joint meeting of all the Arab delegations to enable them to present their observations on the Chairman's statement and the Israeli representative's memorandum. He felt that meetings of the type held that morning were a means of ensuring free expression of views.

Mr. YALCIN (Turkey) was doubtful as to the extent to which the Arab delegations could be said to be still united. He even wondered whether there was any appearance of unity between them, since information he had received led him to think that the representative of Jordan was not persona grata to his Arab colleagues.

The CHAIRMAN said that information at his disposal did not point to such a clear cut conclusion but he believed that the unity of the Arab delegations was beginning to be somewhat shaken. On that account, he considered it even more desirable to meet each of the Arab

delegations in turn. He admitted, nevertheless, that before that morning's meeting he had felt somewhat doubtful as to the usefulness of such semi-official meetings.

Mr. de BOISANGER (France) had the impression that the Arab delegations were not meeting among themselves as regularly as they had done at Lausanne.

The CHAIRMAN had observed that members of the Egyptian delegation and of the Syrian delegation met together informally outside working meetings. He enquired whether the Commission was in favour of inviting the Arab delegations in turn to informal meetings in alphabetical order, commencing with the Jordan delegation.

Mr. YALCIN (Turkey) thought that, even allowing for some exaggeration, the remarks made by the Israeli delegation on the subject of the Arab delegations gave grounds for thinking that the relations between them had in some way changed.

The CHAIRMAN asked the Commission whether, when the informal invitation was made to the Jordan delegation, it should be understood that the delegation would have the opportunity of replying to his own statement but not of replying to the Israeli memorandum. He admitted it would be difficult to prevent the alternate representative of Jordan from broaching the subject.

Mr. de BOISANGER (France) saw no objection to the Jordan delegation making a reply to the Israeli memorandum during the meeting in question, since its remarks would be made on an unofficial occasion. There was no doubt that the Jordan delegation regretted the fact that the Israeli memorandum had not been published, since that would have given it the opportunity of publishing an official reply. That was

precisely what the Commission had sought to avoid when it decided not to make the memorandum public. If, however, the Jordan delegation really wanted to make any observations on the memorandum at an informal meeting, he, himself, could see no objection to its doing so.

After an exchange of views,

The Commission, on the proposal of the Chairman, decided to invite the three Arab delegations in turn to meet the Commission on Tuesday, 14 February: the Jordan delegation to be invited to attend at 11 a.m., the Lebanese delegation at 4 p.m. and the delegation of Syria at 5 p.m., the meeting of the Commission usually held on Friday to be held on Thursday, 16 February instead.

Mr. de BOISANGER (France) said that the members of the Jordan delegation had reminded him that they attached very great importance to the question of compensation for property abandoned by the Arabs in Palestine. He considered that the Commission should come to some agreement on the principles for a settlement of the question and request the Israeli delegation to apply them.

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that, generally speaking, the Israeli delegation showed itself willing to discuss the Commission's proposals in a spirit of compromise.

Mr. BARCO (United States of America), Chairman of the General Committee, said that, in his opinion, the meeting which had taken place that morning represented a step towards a fortunate turn in the conversations. He thought it would be advisable to follow the same procedure at subsequent meetings, placing the conversations on the same footing as the interviews which the French representative had conducted with the Arab delegations, but providing for the further clarification of certain points in so far as the French representative considered it desirable.

That method of procedure would have the advantage of avoiding replies by the various delegations to both the statement and the memorandum.

Mr. de BOISANGER (France) agreed that there was everything to be said for giving subsequent meetings the same character as the previous one.

On a proposal from the CHAIRMAN,

The members of the Commission decided to meet the following day, Tuesday 14 February, at 10.45 a.m. in order to exchange any information they might in the meantime have obtained before meeting the Jordan delegation.

Objections of the Egyptian delegation to the General Committee's draft communiqué on the Reunion of Separated Families

The CHAIRMAN announced that the General Committee had submitted to the Commission the text of an amended communiqué (see COM.GEN./SR.51). He asked the Chairman of the General Committee to outline the reasons which had led to various modifications being made to the original text.

Mr. BARCO (United States of America), Chairman of the General Committee; recalled that on Friday, 3 February, the Principal Secretary had informed the General Committee that an agreement, concluded locally between Egypt and the State of Israel, provided for the return of certain Arab refugees in territory under Egyptian authority to their families remaining in Israel. On receipt of that information, the General Committee had decided, as on a previous occasion, to draw up a communiqué, the text of which was communicated to the delegations of the parties concerned with the intimation that it would be released to the Press the following day.

The afternoon of the same day, Mr. Labbane, approaching the speaker at a meeting of the Trusteeship Council, had informed him that the text was unacceptable and that there had been no agreement between Egypt and Israel. He had gone on to request, that the General Committee should withhold publication of the communiqué. He (the Chairman of the General Committee), with the assistance of the Principal Secretary, had been able to withdraw the communiqué before publication. He had informed Mr. Labbane of the fact, but the latter had returned the communication with an intimation that he regarded it as not having been addressed to him.

At a meeting held immediately before the meeting of the Commission then in progress, the General Committee had drawn up a new version which took into account both the remarks of Mr. Labbane and further explanations given by Mr. Mostapha at the informal meeting held that morning. Mr. Mostapha had pointed out that the transfer of the persons in question had been a purely local arrangement and that it was hence not possible to talk of an 'agreement'. The General Committee had endeavoured to take account of that objection which seemed to be the only one raised by the Egyptian delegation and had modified accordingly the offending sentence in the communiqué.

The CHAIRMAN said that the wording of the communiqué thus amended, was correct and seemed to him irreproachable. He believed that Mr. Mostapha had had other far broader objections to the text but there was no point in going into them. The new wording would show that the Commission had taken account of the observations actually formulated by the Egyptian representative. It had to be admitted that the communiqué, as at first drawn up, might have provoked an official denial on the part of the Egyptian delegation. There was no longer any danger of such an occurrence.

Mr. de BOISANGER pointed out that the Egyptian delegation had raised two kinds of objection to the wording of the communiqué. It had, in the first place, criticised the reference to a direct agreement between Egypt and Israel and, in the second place, had given it to be understood that the communiqué dealing with an operation which the small number of persons transferred rendered of no great importance, threatened to convey a false impression of the state of the refugee question.

Although he did not share the opinion of the Egyptian delegation on the second point, he could not help but recognise that there was an element of justice in its remarks.

Mr. BARCO (United States of America), Chairman of the General Committee, asked the Commission, since it approved of the amended wording of the communiqué, whether it considered it advisable to communicate afresh with all the delegations concerned, informing them that the original text of the communiqué had been withdrawn and that the General Committee intended to issue the Press the following day with a new text, a copy of which would be enclosed.

This was agreed

The CHAIRMAN informed members that, at the luncheon to which he had invited the Israeli delegation, he had acquainted the latter with the desire of the Arabs to obtain a broader interpretation of the word "family." Mr. Eban had replied that the Israeli authorities were prepared to adopt a broader interpretation of the term provided that it did not lead to abuses and that Arab refugees were not encouraged to claim, as a precedent led him to think they might, the return of an excessive number of wives and children.

Mr. BARCO (United States of America), Chairman of the General Committee, added that Mr. Rafael had for his part informed him that his delegation had asked the Israeli Government by telegram to accept a broader interpretation of the word "family".

The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.