

UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE

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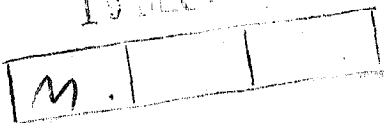
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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-SIXTH MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 15 March 1950, at 11 a.m.

Present:

Mr. de BOISANGER (France)	Chairman
Mr. PALMER (United States of America)	
Mr. YALCIN (Turkey)	
Mr. de AZCARATE	Principal Secretary
Mr. BARCO	Chairman, General Committee

Report of the General Committee on the establishment of Joint Committees
(COM.GEN/15)

Mr. BARCO (Chairman of the General Committee), at the request of the Chairman of the Commission, gave an account of the work of the General Committee leading up to its Report to the Commission on the establishment of Joint Committees. The Commission having contemplated adopting a new programme of general scope and with far-reaching aims, the task of the General Committee had been to recommend the establishment, at the appropriate times, of committees to examine all outstanding questions. It had come to the conclusion that two types of body might be set up. In the first place, committees of general scope but bilateral as to membership which might be termed "national committees" and would each be made up of a representative of Israel and a representative of a single Arab State. In practice, such committees would be in the nature of peace conferences.

To facilitate acceptance of the procedure by all parties, the establishment of other committees for the study of questions of interest to all would also be proposed. This second series of committees, which would be multilateral ones, would have a more technical or economic character.

The General Committee also considered that it would be necessary to examine thoroughly all the questions with which such committees would be called upon to deal, when the proposal of the Commission had been accepted in principle.

So far as compensation was concerned, the General Committee thought that the Commission's proposals would have added weight if linked up with a new general procedure. For that reason it advocated setting up a study group, establishing a fund and appointing a Trustee, once the parties accepted the general procedure.

The report of the General Committee, in his opinion, offered at least some indication of the line that the Commission might follow in its conversations with the parties concerned. He would be glad to answer any questions the Commission might like to ask.

The CHAIRMAN, replying to Mr. Yalcin (Turkey), stated that approval of the General Committee's Report by the Commission would not presuppose that the various Governments represented on the Commission had agreed to its contents. It was, however, indispensable for such agreement to be obtained before undertaking any discussion with the parties.

To meet the wishes of the French Government, it would no doubt be desirable to add to the study of land communications and telecommunications, the study of obstacles in the way of free circulation of persons - business men, tourists or pilgrims - caused by the difficulty in obtaining visas.

The Commission should be prepared to enter into the details of the application of the general procedure, if it thought there was any likelihood of its being accepted.

There being no objections, the Report of the General Committee was taken as approved.

The CHAIRMAN thought it should be clearly understood that the continuation of the Commission's work with regard to compensation for loss of and damage to Arab property was not necessarily bound up with the acceptance of the general formula of procedure. Even if the Commission's proposal in principle were to

meet with a refusal from the parties concerned, the question of compensation should none the less be brought forward and it would be desirable, whatever the circumstances, for it to be raised before the members of the Commission left for the Near East, so that they could broach it in their conversations with the members of the Israeli Government at Tel-Aviv.

Mr. PALMER (United States of America) remarked that the Report which they had just approved was drafted in fairly general terms with a view to allowing the Commission the greatest possible latitude. He agreed with the Chairman that, however things might develop, the question of compensation should be raised.

Question of the publicity to be given to the suggested note to Delegations on the adoption of a new procedure.

The PRINCIPAL SECRETARY suggested that before the departure of Mr. Fisher, the Commission should decide what publicity should be given to the note addressed to the Arab and Israeli delegations on the adoption of a new procedure combining mediation with direct negotiations, supposing such a note were sent. The subject was one on which Mr. Fisher could be of particular help to the Commission. Mr. Fisher had prepared a draft press release to be published when the note was handed to delegations. The complete text of the note would only be made public two or three days later after delegations had had time to communicate it to their Governments. The draft press release in question had already been submitted to members of the Commission.

Mr. PALMER (United States of America) observed that the information given by the draft press release was still somewhat incomplete and might provoke a number of inquiries from the public. He asked Mr. Fisher to explain what he had had in mind when preparing the draft.

Mr. FISHER (Secretariat) said that his idea in proposing the publication of a press release on the subject was to prepare public opinion for the decisive step envisaged by the Commission and, at the same time, by making it clear that it was only what the parties concerned had themselves been asking for a long time, to make it more difficult for them to refuse the Commission's proposal.

It was a question of preparing the ground without saying too much, so as not to upset the Governments concerned and to take the initiative before the press of the countries concerned had time to voice their criticisms, at the same time, keeping the possibility open of releasing a more complete statement once the note had been communicated to the Governments.

The "Palestine Post" had already made an advance announcement of the future proposals of the Commission, in which it alleged that one of the members of the Commission had been responsible for initiating them, and prophesied that the proposals would meet with a flat refusal. That instance showed how important it was to enlist goodwill for the Commission's proposals beforehand.

The CHAIRMAN explained that the newspaper article in question dated back to the beginning of March, a time when the Commission's proposals had not yet assumed any definite form. He was unable to understand how the author of the article, whom he had not seen for a long time, could attribute the proposals to him.

Mr. PALMER (United States of America) said that in conversation with the journalist in question, the latter had stated that part of his original article had been changed by the editor.

He requested Mr. Fisher to inform the Commission what circles in particular he thought the proposed press release would reach.

Mr. FISHER, Secretariat, thought the press release would be taken up by the press of the Arab capitals to whose opinion, as was well known, Israel and the Arab States were particularly sensitive. On the spot in Israel, it would interest those circles which desired peace for economic reasons and who would bring pressure to bear on their Government in favour of the Commission's proposals, should they find them acceptable. Among the Palestinian Arabs there would also be persons who likewise desired peace for economic reasons and who had been disappointed in their hopes of the recent peace negotiations.

Mr. PALMER (United States of America) asked what elements among the interested parties were opposed to the efforts of the Commission and how business circles would be able to overcome their resistance.

Mr. FISHER, Secretariat, stated that on the spot, opposition to the Commission's proposals would be shown by well-known elements within the various Governments. In Israel, certain prominent figures thought that, by prolonging the existing state of affairs, Israel would find itself in a more favourable position to negotiate with the Arab countries within the framework of the United Nations. Among the Arabs there were those who thought that by letting the existing state of neither peace nor war drag on Israel might be induced to give way. In Palestine, the press release would have the effect of bringing the editors of the independent newspapers into the picture.

In the rest of the world, the big newspapers would no doubt publish editorials before the replies of the Governments of the parties concerned were known. As an example of how those Governments were sensitive to opinion in the great newspapers, he mentioned that when "The Times" in one of its leaders came out in favour of an international status for Jerusalem, the reaction of the Israeli government was instantaneous and a few hours later the Tel Aviv papers were talking of the need for making concessions.

Mr. PALMER (United States of America) pointed out that, in theory, the effect of a press release could be either to harden opposition or else to bring opinion round to a favourable attitude. He asked Mr. Fisher, in the light of his experience, to give the Commission some clearer indication of the lines that reaction to the press release would follow.

Mr. FISHER, Secretariat, thought that the press release would tend to make acceptance of the proposals easier for Governments. Circles which, though well-disposed, were afraid of the strength of the opposition, would find support in the editorials of the world press and would thus be able more easily to overcome the opposition of the die-hards.

Mr. PALMER (United States of America) thought that Mr. Fisher's reply was reassuring. The Commission was anxious not to lose the goodwill of the Governments of the parties concerned and wished, on the contrary, to ensure their co-operation. The fact that there were bodies of opinion which might be strengthened by outside assistance was a further argument in favour of the press release.

Mr. YALCIN (Turkey) recognized the desirability of informing public opinion, which was an imponderable factor that had to be won over. The press release should facilitate the work of the Commission. It was carefully worded, and in harmony with the conciliatory aims of the Commission. There was hence no ground for fearing that it might upset anybody.

Mr. PALMER (United States of America) was also of opinion that the proposal should be carried out. The aim of the questions he had asked had merely been to make it clear that the Commission was not trying to start a fight but to assist those members of the interested Governments who were well-disposed towards them.

The CHAIRMAN thought there was no reason for hesitating to publish the press release, at the appropriate time, since it would assist the Commission in its negotiations.

He added that, quite apart from the newspapers, many private individuals in all the countries concerned were also in favour of a peaceful settlement.

Mr. FISHER, Secretariat, summing up his previous statements, stated that the main purpose of the press release would be to help the Governments concerned to rally to their support all those in favour of any proposal likely to lead to a solution of the problems of Palestine.

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the next thing to do was to hand the note drawn up by the Commission to the delegations of the parties concerned.

Relations with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency.

The CHAIRMAN announced that he had been informed that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency had begun work in New York and that the Advisory Committee, which had elected the United States representative as its Chairman for three months, would meet at Geneva on 17 April next and arrive at Beirut on 23 April. A certain division of labour had been agreed on between the Advisory Committee, which had kept for itself the task of maintaining relations with Governments, and the Director of the Agency, who was entrusted more particularly with the care of refugees and administrative questions.

To enable the Conciliation Commission to meet the Director of the Agency and the Advisory Committee, it would be desirable for members to be back in Geneva for 17 April at the latest.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.