

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE SIXTEENTH MEETING

Held at the King David Hotel, Jerusalem,  
on Sunday, 27 February 1949, at 4 p.m.

Present: Mr. Ethridge (U.S.A.) - Chairman  
Mr. de Boisanger (France)  
Mr. Yalchin (Turkey)  
Mr. Azcarate - Principal Secretary

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General discussion of future work and plans; report of the Commission to the Secretary-General

The Commission had before it a paper prepared by the Secretariat on the stand taken by the Governments of the Arab States and of Israel with regard to the tasks entrusted to the Commission by the General Assembly.

Mr. AZCARATE explained that the purpose of the paper was to give a comparative analysis of the attitude of the Governments concerned on all points discussed. He suggested that the paper might form the basis of a draft of the Commission's report to the Secretary-General. The General Assembly's resolution instructed the Commission to submit progress reports to the Secretary-General; the Commission might wish to report at this stage on the situation which had emerged from the talks, and on its position with regard to such questions as Jerusalem, the refugee problem, and the proposed conference of Arab Governments. If desired, the Secretariat could submit a draft of such a report for the Commission's consideration by Tuesday, 1 March.

In the opinion of Mr. de BOISANGER, the report should state clearly in what way the Commission envisaged its task, not only as regards the questions discussed with the Arab and Israeli Governments, but also concerning the matter of the assumption by the Commission of the Acting Mediator's functions. He pointed out that the General Assembly's resolution provided for the taking over by the Commission, if it saw fit, of all the functions now assigned to the Acting Mediator.

The CHAIRMAN suggested that the draft report should comprise three parts: (a) an explanation of the reasons why the Commission had not yet taken over any of the Acting Mediator's functions; (b) a section giving the substance of the last part of the Secretariat's paper; and (c) a section giving the substance of the first part of the paper.

He noted the Commission's agreement to that suggestion.

Meeting with Arab Governments

Mr. YALCHIN (Turkey) proposed that the meeting should be arranged for 21 March in Beirut.

The Commission agreed in principle to that proposal.

In the CHAIRMAN's opinion, the letter of invitation should be so worded as to indicate clearly that the purpose of the meeting was discussion not only of the refugee problem but of other questions as well. He requested the French representative to draft a letter, which should be for the signature of all three members of the Commission.

Appointment of refugee expert

Mr. BARNES explained that he had interviewed Mr. Tellec and considered him well qualified for the work to be done, owing to his technical and administrative experience, knowledge of the country, and good standing with the Arabs. He was at present associated with Mr. Griffis, who might be willing to release him to work with the Commission. If the Commission approved of his work as consulting expert, he might later be entrusted with the long-term task of re-settlement.

The CHAIRMAN proposed that Mr. Barnes should go to Beirut at once, interview Mr. Griffis regarding the release of Mr. Tellec, and, if the conversations were successful, return in two days with Mr. Tellec in order that the latter might be interviewed by the Commission.

Telegram from the Director-General, International Refugee Organization.

The CHAIRMAN reported that he had had a conversation with Mr. Fisher of the Joint Distribution Committee, during which the latter had communicated to him the text of resolution No. 6, adopted by the Executive Committee of the International Refugee Organization on 28 January. The resolution provided

- "a) that before assisting the movement or making payment for the transportation costs of persons emigrating to Palestine and adjacent countries whose journeys originate after 31 January 1949, the Director-General should consult the Conciliation Commission with respect to such transportation and that payment for same shall be conditional on verification of eligibility and on priority being given to refugees and displaced persons who are at present in IRO camps or who have been for some months in transit in various countries..." etc.

Mr. Fisher had observed that the resolution would affect 50,000 refugees arriving in

Palestine during the current year; he hoped that the Commission would not reply in such a way as to obstruct payment of transportation costs.

The Chairman felt that three courses of action were open to the Commission:

- (1) it could decline to take any stand in the matter, considering that the responsibility belonged entirely to the International Refugee Organization;
- (2) it could reply that it had no objection to the movement, provided the refugee problem in Palestine would not be further complicated thereby; or (3) it could give its outright approval. The third course he considered dangerous and probably detrimental to the Commission's position of impartiality; he preferred the second.

The Chairman noted the Commission's agreement to defer a decision until after its meeting with Mr. Tuck the following day.

Letter from the League of Red Cross Societies

The Chairman noted the Commission's agreement to interview Mr. de Rouge on Friday, 4 March.

Letter from the "Federation Mondiale des Associations pour les Nations Unies"

The Chairman noted the Commission's agreement to acknowledge Mr. Ennals' letter.

Letter from Lt. Col. Abdullah Tell; telegram from Mr. John Asfour

The Chairman proposed that the Commission should designate one of its political officers to obtain more precise information on the cases reported. The Commission could then request an opinion from its legal adviser, and communicate its decision to the Military Governor and Mr. Asfour.

The meeting rose at 6:15 p.m.