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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE TWO HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SECOND MEETING

held at Government House, Jerusalem, on Wednesday,
30 May 1951, at 11 a.m.

Present:

Mr. Aras	(Turkey)	- Chairman
Mr. de Boisanger	(France)	
Mr. Palmer	(United States)	
Mr. de Azcarate		- Principal Secretary

1. Assessment of property abandoned in Israel by Arab refugees (W/63)

Mr. ANDERSEN (Head of the Refugee Office) stated that, having read the record of the Commission's discussions concerning the various methods which, according to Mr. Berncastle, might be used to assess property abandoned in Israel by Arab refugees, and having discussed the question with the land specialist, he understood that the Commission would favour the adoption of a procedure combining two of the methods set out in working paper W/63. He had, moreover, examined with Mr. Berncastle the methods which might permit the work of assessment to be speeded up, in order to arrive as quickly as possible at a global sum representing the amount of compensation to be paid. In that connection Mr. Berncastle had informed him of the conclusions he had reached following his preliminary work, and he would ask him to explain them to the Commission.

Mr. BERNCASTLE (Land Specialist) said that he had brought with him from London the "Village Statistics" published by the Mandatory Government. These statistics contained a list of the towns and villages in Palestine with the number of dunums in each village, divided into seventeen categories of value,

arranged in nine groups. The number of dunums held by Arabs and Jews in each group of categories was given. He had gone through the statistics and deleted all those villages not now under Israel jurisdiction. In cases where villages were divided by the demarcation line, he had taken a proportion of the areas based on available maps and his knowledge of the terrain. He had then considered the ninety to a hundred villages where the present Arab population of approximately 154,000 persons was still living and had found that generally speaking the original Arab population was intact, and he had deleted those villages from the statistics. The total of the figures arrived at for each village in each group represented the total land in Israel which had been abandoned by the former Arab inhabitants. By multiplying the corrected total figure by the coefficient representing the value of the land according to category, the total value of abandoned Arab rural property in Israel was obtained.

In order to assess urban property, Mr. Berncastle had previously thought that the only practicable approach would be to consult the records of the Custodian of Absentee Property or the Urban Property Tax records. However, in examining the Village Statistics he had observed that there were columns representing the annual tax in each town paid by Arabs, Jews and Others. In the majority of cases, towns inhabited by Arabs had been completely evacuated and all the property had passed into Jewish hands. In order to obtain the approximate net annual value, therefore, it would suffice to multiply the amount of the tax by ten, since the tax generally represented ten per cent of the net annual value.

The only town for which it was not possible to use that method was Jerusalem, and in that case it would be necessary to refer to the registers of the Custodian of Absentee Property or to the taxation records. As the difficulties were thus confined to one town, Mr. Berncastle thought that the work of assessment might be carried out much more rapidly than had been anticipated. He pointed out that in the event of the Custodian of Absentee Property not being able to place at his disposal the list of property abandoned by the Arabs, he would have to prepare such a list and would require extra staff

for that work.

Mr. de BOISANGER (France) had several questions to ask Mr. Berncastle. He wished to know in the first place whether Mr. Berncastle had encountered any difficulty in calculating the amount of immovable property in towns like Haifa and Jaffa which had been evacuated by about two-thirds of the Arab population; secondly, whether he had taken into account, in his assessment, property situated in the no man's land and in the demilitarized zones; and finally in what manner he intended to go about assessing property situated in such areas. Would he take the present armistice lines as the basis of his calculations? Did he foresee any difficulty in assessing property situated in the demilitarized zone between Syria and Israel?

The CHAIRMAN proposed that Mr. Berncastle should reply in detail to Mr. de Boisanger's questions and to any other questions raised by members of the Commission during the meeting on the following day.

This was agreed.

The meeting rose at 12 noon.