

UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE TWO HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SEVENTH MEETING

held at the Hotel de Crillon, Paris, on Monday,  
27 August 1951, at 11.30 a.m.

Present:

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

Preliminary arrangements for the Paris Conference

The PRINCIPAL SECRETARY stated that the Commission's secretariat was now installed in the offices in the Hotel de Crillon. As regards the staff for the conference, he thought that the Commission's desires had been met. Mr. Serup, legal adviser, and Mr. Ladas, political officer, would arrive from New York on 8 September. Mrs Arakie, political officer, was also rejoining the secretariat as soon as possible. The secretariat which had been with the Commission in Jerusalem had now been transferred to Paris, with the exception of the information officer, Mr. Jankowski, who had remained behind as it had been felt essential that the Commission's liaison with Jerusalem should be maintained and that the members should be regularly informed of events and trends of thought in the Middle East.

The members of the Refugee Office had left for Geneva, in accordance with the request made by the Head of the Office, to finish drafting their report to the Commission.

The Principal Secretary also informed the Commission that on 25 August he had sent a cable to the five governments who had received the invitation to the conference, informing them that the Commission was now meeting in Paris and giving the exact address at which communications could reach the Chairman.

In reply to a question from Mr. Aras, the Principal Secretary explained the reasons why an invitation had not been sent to the Government of Iraq - namely, that Iraq had not accepted the invitation to send a delegation to the Commission's Lausanne meetings, stating that as she had no common frontier with Israel and did not consider that there were any questions outstanding between Iraq and Israel, she did not wish to send a delegation but would fall in with any decisions taken by the delegates of the other Arab States represented at the meetings.

In that connection, Mr. MARCHAL (France) said that when he had visited Amman the previous week the Foreign Minister of Jordan had mentioned the possibility that at the current meeting of the Arab League Political Committee it would be decided to recommend the attendance of Iraq, Saudi Arabia and possibly Yemen at the meetings with the Conciliation Commission.

Mr. ARAS (Turkey) said that his government had asked him whether the Commission had established an agenda for the conference. He had replied that the agenda would not be finally fixed until the Commission had had the opportunity of discussing it with the delegations of the governments concerned. In reply to a further question from his government, Mr. Aras had replied that the refugee question would almost certainly be discussed in some form or other, particularly as it was the only question which was specifically referred to in the letter of invitation.

The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Commission might meet again in a day or two to consider preliminary drafts of the proposals which the Commission had undertaken to put forward during the

conference. It was agreed that the Commission would meet for that purpose on 30 August, thus leaving about ten days in which to carry out the intensive preparatory work.

In reply to a question from the Chairman, the PRINCIPAL SECRETARY stated that he understood that the report which the Head of the Office was to submit to the Commission was almost complete, and that it would be available after having been translated and reproduced.

Mr. MARCHAL (France) realized that the Head of the Office wished to wait until the document was quite finished before submitting it officially to the Commission, but as it appeared that it was rather a lengthy report, and as some parts of it would undoubtedly be of great help to the Commission in working out the proposals to be put forward at the conference, he wondered whether the members of the Commission might not receive, informally, advance copies of those sections in which they were particularly interested.

There was general agreement that such a procedure, particularly insofar as the conclusions concerning compensation were concerned, would greatly assist the Commission.

At the request of the Chairman and Mr. Aras, Mr. MARCHAL (France) gave a brief account of his recent conversation in Cairo with Salah-ed-Din Pasha. The Minister for Foreign Affairs had informed him that it was considered almost certain that the Arab States would accept the Commission's invitation to attend a conference, although the governments would not reply officially until after the meeting of the Arab League Political Committee in Alexandria.

The Foreign Minister had also told him that the Arab States felt that the refugee question should be discussed at the conference. In that connection, they considered that the first step to be taken, in accordance with the resolutions of the General Assembly, was for the Commission to consult the refugees concerning repatriation, after which it would be possible to discuss other aspects, such as compensation and resettlement. Salah-ed-Din had mentioned the question of Jerusalem and expressed the opinion

that the United Nations plan for the internationalization of the City should be implemented. Finally, the Foreign Minister had declared that territorial questions should be discussed at the forthcoming conference.

The CHAIRMAN, after thanking Mr. Marchal for his account, informed the Commission of the two meetings which he and Mr. Barco had had with members of UNRWA in Beirut. At the first meeting it had been clear that the members of the Relief and Works Agency were disturbed at the possible effects of the proposed conference on the work on which they were engaged and on their plans for the future. One of the matters which was causing them anxiety was the possibility that if repatriation were discussed at the conference, then the Agency's whole reintegration programme might be delayed for many months. Another question of concern to the members of the Agency was whether resettlement would be discussed at the meetings. Mr. Palmer had assured them that the question of resettlement would not be introduced by the Commission itself, which was naturally anxious that the Agency's programme should go forward without hindrance.

At the second meeting, the Director of UNRWA had informed him of the encouraging results of his recent contacts with the Arab Governments and had seemed confident that, in spite of the difficulties of his task, he was making some progress.

It had been suggested that it would be desirable for the Relief and Works Agency to be represented at the conference by an observer. After some discussion had taken place, Mr. Palmer had received the impression that all present favoured the idea of sending, not an observer, but a liaison officer to the conference, although no decision had yet been taken by the Agency to that effect. Mr. Palmer himself thought that it would be of great assistance to the Commission to have a liaison officer, who would not attend official meetings but who would be capable of presenting the Agency's point of view on any question which arose, on the spot during the conference.

Sir Henry Knight, the United Kingdom representative on the Advisory Commission of UNRWA, had suggested to his Government that it would be desirable for a United Kingdom observer to attend the conference. On being asked for his opinion, Mr. Palmer, speaking

personally, had said that a similar arrangement to that suggested for the UNRWA liaison officer would probably prove to be useful.

Mr. Palmer had asked the Chief of Staff of the Truce Supervision Organization whether he wished to be represented at the conference, and General Riley had replied in the negative, although he had expressed a desire to be kept informed of the progress of the negotiations.

The Chairman then referred to the question of the Jordan River, which had been raised both by the Relief and Works Agency and by General Riley during the conversations which he had had with them. The Agency had plans for development in the Jordan Valley, while the Chief of Staff's interest in the question sprang from its relation to the Lake Huleh region. Bearing in mind both those points of view, Mr. Palmer stressed the need for the Commission to exercise great care if the Jordan River came under discussion during the conference.

In that connection, Mr. ARAS (Turkey) said that, as he had recently suggested to Mr. Shiloah of the Israel Foreign Ministry, a study of the Convention concerning the waters of the River Aras on the Russo-Turkish frontier, which had proved a most satisfactory agreement, might be useful as a background to the consideration of the question of the Jordan River.

In conclusion, the CHAIRMAN wished to mention a point which Mr. Blandford had brought up and which had, it appeared, caused some concern to the members of UNRWA. They had heard that a copy of the report of the Head of the Refugee Office to the Conciliation Commission was to be made available to the European Office of the United Nations in Geneva.

The PRINCIPAL SECRETARY assured the Commission that, as the Office was an organ of the Commission, there could be no question of its report being communicated to anyone but the Commission itself. It would be for the Commission, after having examined the report, to decide what was to be done with it.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.