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UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE

SUMMARY RECORD OF A MEETING OF THE CONCILIATION COMMISSION
WITH THE RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY

Held at the Hotel Crillon, Paris,
on Saturday 10 November 1951 at 10 a.m.

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PRESENT:

Conciliation Commission for Palestine

<u>Chairman:</u>	Mr. PALMER	United States of America
<u>Members:</u>	Mr. MARCHAL	France
	Mr. ARAS	Turkey
<u>Secretariat:</u>	Mr. de AZCARATE	Principal Secretary

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

<u>Director:</u>	Mr. BLANDFORD	United States of America
<u>Chairman of the</u>	Mr. TARBE de	
<u>Advisory Commission:</u>	SAINT-HARDOUIN	France
<u>Members of the</u>	Mr. MACATIE	United States of America
<u>Advisory Commission:</u>	Sir Henry KNIGHT	United Kingdom
	General R. BELE	

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMISSION ON THE WORK OF THE PARIS CONFERENCE, AND DISCUSSION OF THE PROCEDURE TO BE ADOPTED FOR TRANSMITTING THE REPORTS OF UNRWA AND OF THE COMMISSION TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

The CHAIRMAN welcomed the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency and the Chairman and members of the Advisory Commission. Before opening the discussion he said that, in view of the state of progress of the negotiations with the delegation of Israel and with the Arab delegations, the Conciliation Commission could not yet formulate the conclusions which it intended to insert in its report to the Secretary-General. Summing up the salient features of the work done at the Paris Conference, he explained that, after refusing at first to discuss the Conciliation Commission's proposals, the delegation of Israel had changed its original attitude and had agreed to receive the Commission's explanations. The Commission had, in a letter dated 31 October, asked the Arab and Israel delegations to inform it before 6 November whether they were prepared to consider the proposals which the Commission had submitted to them. The Commission had now received replies from the Egyptian and Lebanese delegations, who maintained their attitude and again declared themselves ready to continue to discuss the Commission's proposals with it. The Syrian delegation's reply would probably arrive very soon. The Commission had received from the Government of Israel, not a direct reply to its question, but a letter explaining the stand taken by that Government towards the attitude adopted by the Arab delegations with regard to acceptance of the preamble. That stand was clear: Israel was not prepared to discuss the subject matter of the Commission's proposals either directly with the Arab delegations or through the Commission; but it was ready to state its observations before the Commission. He considered that those might be important.

The question now arose, therefore, whether those conversations could be continued. The Commission was doubtful, but nevertheless considered it valuable that all delegations should explain their attitudes. If it were decided to adjourn the conference, the Commission might perhaps consider hearing the views of the delegations.

/The Chairman

The Chairman then called upon the members of the Relief and Works Agency to comment on their report.

Mr. de SAINT-HARDOUIN (France) (Chairman of the Advisory Commission) thanked the Chairman of the Conciliation Commission for his words of welcome and for his remarks on the current state of the Commission's work, and stated that the Agency was preparing the recommendations to be embodied in its report to the Secretary-General. In so doing the Agency would obviously to a certain extent have to take into account the development in the political situation that might result from the current work of the Commission. He wished to know the lines along which the Conciliation Commission expected the two bodies to collaborate during the next few days.

The CHAIRMAN (Conciliation Commission) said he understood that the Agency was to submit its report to the Secretary-General by 21 November at the very latest. The Commission hoped that it would be able by that date to submit its conclusions to him, if not in final form, at least in their main outline. The Commission intended to present the facts very plainly and to set forth its conclusions, whatever they might be, with extreme care, as they would obviously determine the Commission's future. The two bodies could therefore keep in touch with one another and meet again after the Commission had prepared its conclusions in the light of the conversations it intended to conduct with the delegations concerned.

Mr. ARAS (Turkey) (Conciliation Commission) added to the Chairman's statement that the Commission should, in its report, emphasize first that it had discharged its duty of mediation, and next stress the problem of repatriation and the necessity of finding a prompt solution for the refugee problem, which constituted a grave obstacle to the re-establishment of peace.

Mr. MARCHEL (France) (Conciliation Commission) remarked that, at the stage now reached in its work, the Commission valued an exchange of views with the Relief and Works Agency, if not on the drafting of its report at least for guidance of its activities. In its conversations with the Parties the Commission had encountered numerous difficulties, which were practically the same as those encountered by the Agency in its daily work. The present need was to aid the refugees by means of the existing bodies and end their stay at the camps, which could not be prolonged indefinitely.

Mr. BLANDFORD (Director of the Relief and Works Agency) presented a brief statement on the activities of the Relief and Works Agency since he had become its Director, and said that in the fulfilment of his daily duties he had considered it useful to consult the Arab Governments with a view to hastening the solution of the Agency's problems. The Agency, after considering various alternatives, had chosen that of inducing the Arab Governments to accept a three-year programme of work, of an estimated cost of between 150 and 200 million dollars to settle the refugees in new housing and give them further opportunities of employment. That programme had been drawn up, submitted to the Arab Governments -- except that of Saudi Arabia -- and discussed officially at Alexandria under the auspices of the Arab League. The Agency had received some encouragement, but the question arose how soon the scheme could be started and how it could be paid for. The question could be raised with the Arab Governments at once, but quite plainly their assumption of commitments depended upon the political atmosphere.

That being so, he asked whether the Commission could give any idea of the time which it thought would be necessary to obtain from Israel and the Arab countries the agreement sought by the conversations at present in progress. Political results would obviously influence the negotiations conducted by the Agency in its own practical sphere.

Speaking of the connexion between the reports of the two bodies, he maintained that the more completely the Agency could keep clear of the political issues which were the Commission's concern, the more progress the United Nations would make towards a solution of the refugee problem. He therefore thought it

better, in connexion with the refugee problem, that the Conciliation Commission's report should not mention the Agency, and that the Agency's report should leave the political aspects of the problem alone. It might even be a good plan to present the two reports separately under two separate agenda items. That would not prevent the two bodies from consulting together, but for reasons which he detailed, he did not agree with the Commission's suggestion to transfer some of its own duties, such as payment of compensation, to the Agency.

He thought that the idea of issuing a statement on repatriation might be considered. That would inevitably evoke reactions, but might perhaps in the long run have the salutary effect of dispelling the illusions of the refugees concerning a problematical repatriation by presenting to them more frankly the advantages of re-settlement.

Mr. MACATIE (United States of America) (Advisory Commission) also considered that the more completely the Relief and Works Agency avoided all political aspects of the refugee problem, the better would be its chances of achieving satisfactory results. He also thought that the Member Governments of the two bodies would be influenced by the outcome of the present exchange of views.

Sir Henry KNIGHT (United Kingdom) (Advisory Commission) stated that his Government thought it better for the Relief and Works Agency to refrain from all political activities, which were the concern of the Conciliation Commission. He also asked the Commission whether the report of its Refugees Office would be published. If so, he maintained that the two bodies should then reach agreement on certain points so as to forestall debate in the General Assembly. If, for example, the Commission proposed to assign to the Agency certain duties concerning compensation, the Agency would be obliged to decline them.

The two bodies might, moreover, appropriately consider whether the Commission should intimate in its report that refugees must not be pressed to accept re-settlement until all possibility of having them repatriated had been exhausted, or whether it should express the opinion that repatriation was

impossible. Quite obviously such a statement would influence the policy of the Agency towards the Arab States. He stressed very strongly the need to make clear to the delegations to the General Assembly of the countries represented both on the Relief and Works Agency and on the Conciliation Commission, that all problems which the two bodies were seeking to solve must be considered in the general context of the political, economic and military problems of the Middle East.

Mr. de AZCARATE (Principal Secretary, Conciliation Commission) said that the Commission's report to the Secretary-General of the United Nations would take due account of the conclusions of the report of its Refugee Office. Before deciding whether the Refugee Office's report, which was at present limited to members of the Commission, should be annexed in full to the Commission's report, the Commission would have to discuss the question.

Mr. de SAINT-HARDOUIN (France) (Chairman of the Advisory Commission) said that the question whether repatriation was impossible was primarily a political one and therefore within the competence of the Commission. A statement that repatriation was impossible would clearly arouse lively reaction, but perhaps the moment had come -- as indeed the French Government thought -- to disperse the refugees' illusions by showing frankness and firmness.

Mr. PALMER (United States of America) (Chairman of the Conciliation Commission) said, in reply to Mr. Blandford's first question, that it would be impossible to state when the conversations opened in Paris with the Parties would end until the Commission had received replies from all governments to the questions which it had recently asked them. The two bodies would then be able to hold a further exchange of views.

With regard to the various points raised by the Director of the Relief and Works Agency and the members of the Advisory Commission, he said that he himself had always felt that to entrust the Relief and Works Agency with a political question such as compensation, or even with the payment of compensation awards, would place it in a difficult position. The Commission would therefore respect as far as possible the Relief and Works Agency's wish not to be given additional duties which might hinder it in carrying out its main task.

/With regard

With regard to the Relief and Works Agency's desire that the reports of the two bodies should be made two separate items on the General Assembly's agenda, he pointed out that that decision lay with the delegations represented on the General Assembly committees which settled the agenda; and the desire could therefore be transmitted to them. A further question was which report should be placed before the General Assembly first.

After the discussions which the Commission had held with delegations taking part in the Conference, it would be difficult to avoid making a statement on repatriation. He personally believed, and the United States Government held the same view, that before long it would be necessary to declare frankly what the repatriation situation was, and naturally such a statement would have to come from the Conciliation Commission.

Mr. ARAS (Turkey) (Conciliation Commission) agreed with the Chairman that each of the two bodies had its own work to do, and that the representatives of those countries which were members of either body had a duty to inform their national delegations to the General Assembly on the Palestine question, so as to facilitate the United Nations' task.

It appeared to be difficult at present to give an opinion on the possibilities of repatriation, and he wondered whether the desired results would follow if the Commission were to define its attitude to that question. Moreover, he agreed with Sir Henry Knight that Middle-Eastern problems formed a whole and that an effective and coherent solution for them must be at the same time political, economic and military.

Although the question of compensation must not interfere with the work of the Relief and Works Agency, it affected the Agency intimately for well-known reasons.

It seemed premature as yet to decide concerning publication of the report of the Refugee Office. It was more important to decide which report should be placed on the General Assembly's agenda first, although the former question deserved study because of the possible repercussions of a decision upon it.

/Mr. MARCHAL

Mr. MARCHAL (France) (Conciliation Commission) thought that the decision on which report to submit to the General Assembly first should be governed primarily by expediency. If the Relief and Works Agency were able to submit its report fairly soon, the Assembly might conveniently consider that report and take the opportunity to study the refugee problem more thoroughly. The fact should be faced that the Arab Governments' refusal up to the present to support resettlement plans was due to the refugees' persistent illusion that they would be repatriated. The more success the Relief and Works Agency had in persuading the General Assembly to accept the solution of resettlement, the easier it would be politically to overcome the objections which had been raised in connexion with repatriation. The Conciliation Commission, when drafting its report, would find it difficult to avoid an unequivocal statement on the practical possibilities of repatriation. In any case the proposals which it had submitted to the Governments participating in the Conference clearly showed its own views on the question.

Mr. de SAINT-HARDOUIN (France) (Chairman of the Advisory Commission) explained that the Relief and Works Agency had to submit to the General Assembly two reports: in the first, which was completed, the Director of the Relief and Works Agency reviewed the situation; the second, which was being prepared, was a combined report including the recommendations of the Director and those of the Advisory Commission.

The question of the order in which the reports of the Relief and Works Agency and the Conciliation Commission should be submitted to the General Assembly was rather delicate and deserved some thought. If the Agency's report were considered before the Conciliation Commission's and the political situation were still obscure, there was a danger that political questions in which the Agency did not wish to be entangled might be raised in the debates.

Mr. PALMER (United States of America) (Chairman of the Conciliation Commission) said that the important need was that the General Assembly should discuss the Palestine problem at what appeared to be psychologically the most favourable moment for it to give its whole attention to those serious issues.

Mr. BLANDFORD (Director of the Relief and Works Agency) said that the Relief and Works Agency would point out in the conclusions to its report that the Arab Governments seemed inclined to seek a formula which would enable them to work with the Agency, but that in order to do so they had to find means of modifying in their countries both public opinion and the attitude of the refugees. That was the hypothesis that the Relief and Works Agency was advancing, and on which it was basing its programme of future work.

Mr. PALMER (United States of America) (Chairman of the Conciliation Commission) said that the Conciliation Commission adopted that hypothesis and that, given the opportunity, it would certainly assist the Arab Governments to find a formula which would facilitate their dealings with the Relief and Works Agency.

In conclusion, he suggested that the Agency and the Commission should both ponder the questions raised during the present exchange of views, remain in contact so as to exchange information on the progress of their work, and later, if necessary, hold another joint meeting.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.