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UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE

Summary Record of the 299th Meeting (Closed)

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 10 April 1953, at 10.30 a.m.

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PRESENT:

Chairman:

Mr. BARAN

Turkey

Members:

Mr. ORDONNEAU

France

Mr. ROSS

United States of America

Mr. BARCO

Secretariat:

Mr. CHAI

Acting Principal Secretary

Mr. REEDMAN

1. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The agenda was adopted.

2. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN CONNEXION WITH THE RELEASE OF BLOCKED ARAB ACCOUNTS

The CHAIRMAN said that as had been agreed at the previous meeting, he had seen the representative of Israel and the head of the Egyptian delegation. He had explained to the latter the views of the Commission and had asked him whether the Egyptian delegation could provide more information regarding the request that the Commission move to Jerusalem. The Egyptian representative had promised to send a cable to Cairo on the question but had not as yet informed the Chairman of the answer. The Chairman had also seen Mr. Rafael again and had told him that the Commission had been informed that Mr. Rafael was sending a cable to secure information on the reports that the Government of Israel was disposing of Arab refugee property in Israel. Mr. Rafael had not as yet informed him of an answer.

Mr. CHAI (Acting Principal Secretary) drew attention to the following documents and papers which had been circulated to the members of the Commission: (1) the communication from Mr. Vigier; (2) the cable from Mr. Shields regarding recent developments which described the order of the Jordan Government and referred to the possibility of similar steps being taken by other Arab Governments; (3) the application forms being used in the operation; (4) a draft statement on the question; and (5) a draft letter to the Arab delegations to ask their assistance in circulating the statement of the Commission.

Mr. ROSS (United States of America) and Mr. ORDONNEAU (France) felt that it would be best to take up the proposed draft statement first.

Mr. ROSS (United States of America) drew attention to the informal suggestion relating to the statement to be issued by the Commission which Mr. Rafael had handed to Mr. Barco.

Mr. BARCO (United States of America) explained that Mr. Rafael had said that his Government was very concerned over the problem and hoped for prompt and decisive action by the Commission to dispose of the allegations and rumours concerning the release which the Government of Israel said were untrue. Mr. Rafael had given him a draft of two points, which he thought should be covered in the Commission's statement, concerning the allegations that a ten per cent levy had been made on all accounts and that all balances over 500 pounds had been transferred to the Custodian of Alien Property. Mr. Barco had pointed out that it would be better for the Government of Israel to cover those points. However, Mr. Rafael had been very insistent that they should be made by the Conciliation Commission, after which Israel would issue an endorsement.

Mr. Rafael had also said that he had been instructed to inform the Commission that the Government of Israel doubted the usefulness of sending a representative of the Commission out to the Middle East. Mr. Barco observed that the Government of Israel probably feared that the occasion might be used for reopening the agreement and negotiations. Mr. Rafael had said that of course the negotiations and agreement could not be reopened or changed. Mr. Barco had told Mr. Rafael that he was sure that if the Commission sent someone out, it would not be to reopen the question but to emphasize the Commission's concern and to assist UNRWA, which, in view of its position, was unable to give official answers to the questions that had arisen. Mr. Rafael had seemed to accept that explanation but had, nevertheless, requested that his views be made known to the Commission. Mr. Barco had also referred to the form which the banks had given to the individual refugees, drawing attention to the unfortunate phraseology used in one or two places. Mr. Rafael had indicated that there was no question of altering or withdrawing the form. Adding that he thought that Mr. Rafael understood the Commission's viewpoint, Mr. Barco said that he had, of course, spoken for himself and not for the Commission.

The CHAIRMAN observed that there was only one question which Israel had not answered, namely, that relating to the disposal of property. His impression was that the Arabs sought to connect the two and that that was why the Jordan Government had taken the action which it had taken.

Mr. ROSS (United States of America) agreed that that might be so but pointed out that the two questions were quite separate. As for Mr. Rafael's observations on sending Mr. Reedman, Mr. Barco had made a start by clarifying that there was no question of re-negotiating the issue and that the Commission needed its own representative on the spot to observe and report. Mr. Ross suggested that they might say as much in the draft statement. He felt that the draft before the Commission was close to what they wanted. The Commission might agree to the following procedure: after agreement on the statement, the Chairman would show it to the representative of Israel. He felt that it would be preferable not to use the phraseology suggested by that representative.

The CHAIRMAN and Mr. ORDONNEAU (France) agreed.

Mr. BARCO (United States of America) thought that Mr. Rafael had sought to make the point that the allegations were due to the intention of the Arab Governments to maintain the stand that they were in a state of war with Israel and to their apprehension that to accept the applications implied recognition of Israel. Mr. Barco had pointed out that dealing with that aspect in the statement would involve reopening the whole Palestine question. Mr. Rafael had recognized that fact, but had said that it might have to be included in an Official statement by the Israel Government.

The CHAIRMAN thanked Mr. Barco and considered that what Mr. Barco had said accurately represented the position of the Commission.

Mr. ORDONNEAU (France) agreed.

Mr. BARCO (United States of America) suggested that one advantage in trying to cover the points on the 10 per cent loan and transfer of accounts as suggested by Israel would be that Israel might then content itself with issuing a short statement merely endorsing the Commission's. Otherwise, it might issue a statement which could have unfortunate repercussions.

Mr. ROSS (United States of America) felt that that was a risk which the Commission must take. It was important for the Commission to get the question settled, to issue a statement and to get Mr. Reedman to the Middle East as soon as possible.

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that they had always let Mr. Rafael understand that the Commission viewed the release as a first instalment which would be followed by the release of the balance of the accounts. Mr. Rafael had not agreed, but he had also not demurred.

Mr. BARCO (United States of America) suspected that the wording used in the second paragraph of the draft statement would not be regarded as strong enough by Mr. Rafael, but he was not arguing for that point of view. It was up to the Commission to decide whether it wished to strengthen the statement in any way.

Mr. ROSS (United States of America) said that his own reaction was that the present text was preferable. After all, it was the Government of Israel which was in a position to be more categorical, since it had both control and responsibility. The Chairman might inform the representative of Israel that the Commission was leaving it to Israel to make a more categorical statement.

The Commission approved the text of the draft statement with the addition proposed by Mr. Ross.

Mr. ROSS (United States of America) suggested that the second paragraph of the draft letter to the Arab delegations be revised so as to omit reference to the fulfilment of the resolutions of the General Assembly.

The Commission approved the text of the draft letter including the change proposed by Mr. Ross.

Mr. CHAI (Acting Principal Secretary) inquired as to the Commission's views on the procedure for releasing the statement. He took it that the

Commission wished to give copies to Israel and to send copies to the Arab delegations under cover of the letter approved before releasing the statement to the press.

Mr. ORDONNEAU (France) thought that the statement should be released to the press only when they could be certain that the Arab delegations had received it.

Mr. ROSS (United States of America) agreed, but pointed out that the question also had some bearing on Mr. Reedman's trip. It was desirable to get it out before Mr. Reedman arrived in the Middle East.

Mr. REEDMAN (Secretariat) said that he expected to reach Beirut on the evening of Thursday, 16 April, and Jerusalem on the following day.

Mr. BARCO (United States of America) noted that it was also possible that the other Arab Governments would act before the statement was released. It would, therefore, be desirable to get the statement to the Arab delegations and Israel that day, informing them that the statement was to be released on Monday.

Mr. ROSS (United States of America) agreed and suggested that the Department of Public Information might be consulted on what time would be most suitable from the point of view of publicity in the Middle East.

Mr. CHAI (Acting Principal Secretary) noted that the statement would reach all the delegations concerned, with the exception of Jordan, that same day.

Mr. BARCO (United States of America) suggested that the statement and letter might be cabled directly to Jordan, and that copies might be sent for information to the Jordan Legation in Washington.

Mr. ROSS (United States of America) suggested that the Chairman see Mr. Rafael as soon as possible so that if he felt that it was necessary to

consult with the Commission as a result, they could all meet before the Chairman signed the letters to the Arab delegations.

Mr. ORDONNEAU (France) observed that in any case it was quite evident that it was the Commission which was drafting the statement and not Israel. The fact that the statement might seem insufficient to Israel would impel them to add their own, which would be desirable from the Commission's point of view.

3. THE QUESTION OF THE DISPOSITION OF PRIVATE ARAB PROPERTY BY THE GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL

Mr. ROSS (United States of America) suggested that, since the Chairman had reported that there had been no response from Mr. Rafael as yet, the Commission might allow that question to rest for the time being so as to avoid confusion.

In reply to a question by Mr. ORDONNEAU (France), the CHAIRMAN said that he had seen Mr. Rafael shortly following the previous meeting some eight days ago.

Mr. ORDONNEAU (France) felt that the delay was not abnormal so far. He suggested that the Chairman might mention to Mr. Rafael the Commission's interest in the matter and say that the Commission intended to take it up again at the first opportunity.

It was so agreed.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.

12/5 p.m.