

RESTRICTED
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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE THIRTIETH MEETING

held in Beirut on 25 March 1949 at 10 p.m.

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

Referring to the decision taken by the Commission at the morning meeting, the CHAIRMAN explained that pursuant to a consultation with the Principal Secretary, he thought it desirable to present the question of a continuation of exchanges of views to the Arab Governments in two steps. First, a document should be prepared setting forth the acceptance in principle of the Arab States to continue the talks; secondly, the letter of invitation to be addressed to them by the Commission would be drafted. The Chairman had considered it useful to include in the first document a mention of the projected establishment by the Commission of a technical committee on the refugee question. This document might be drafted in the form of a communique which would be released to the Press at the close of the Beirut meetings. The Chairman pointed out that the draft now before the Commission was entirely tentative and intended only to facilitate the Commission's discussion of the matter.

Mr. ETHRIDGE had certain comments to make regarding the second paragraph of the draft communique, which dealt with the creation of the technical committee on refugees. In his opinion it was necessary to state precisely the limited sphere of action of this committee, and in particular its status as a

/consultative

consultative organ of the Commission. The creation of this technical mission must not be allowed to prejudice the settlement of the broader questions, - namely, the possibility of a request by the Arab States for technical assistance from the United Nations in their economic development, and the possibility of absorption of the refugees who might not wish to return to their homes.

Mr. YALCHIN commented upon the practical difficulties which the mission might encounter in the accomplishment of its task. He did not see how the mission would be able to verify the information which could be furnished to it by the Governments and interested authorities. On the other hand, the Commission could not afford to risk failure in this undertaking. In his opinion, before proceeding to the creation of such a body, the Commission should carefully define the task which would be entrusted to it and the conditions under which it would undertake that task. For example, if the mission should come to the conclusion that all the refugees wished to return to their homes, the Commission might find itself in an embarrassing and difficult position.

The CHAIRMAN reiterated that the text of the draft communique was entirely tentative and that it was necessary for the members of the Commission to be convinced of its usefulness.

Mr. ETHRIDGE and Mr. YALCHIN were in agreement that the draft communique should be transmitted to the Arab delegations in order that their reactions might be ascertained.

The CHAIRMAN then invited expressions of opinion from his colleagues on the draft letter of invitation to be sent to the Arab Governments if they agreed in principle to continue the exchanges of views. He pointed out once more that the draft was a tentative one and that he would like to have the Commission's comments on it. This gave rise to a preliminary discussion regarding the location to be chosen for the new conversations.

/Mr. ETHRIDGE

Mr. ETHRIDGE was in favour of beginning the talks in a place such as Rhodes. If the first conversations proved to be successful, the Commission might consider continuing them, for example, in Geneva. He felt, however, that the publicity which always surrounded meetings held in Geneva might be dangerous at this initial stage.

The CHAIRMAN recognized the advantages of holding the new conversations in a place such as Rhodes, which was close to Palestine; but on the other hand, the physical conditions at Rhodes, and the fact that there was only one hotel where all the Arab delegations as well as the Israeli delegation would have to be accommodated, would probably make the conversations difficult. There would be the danger that the talks might take on the appearance of direct negotiations, which would be unacceptable to the Arab delegations. It was even doubtful whether the number of rooms available at the Hotel des Roses would be sufficient to accommodate the Commission and all the delegations which would be present at the same time.

Mr. YALCHIN drew attention to the numerous facilities available in Geneva. He did not feel that the danger of publicity mentioned by Mr. Ethridge was a very serious one. Geneva was continually the scene of important conferences, for which reason the Commission would doubtless be able to hold its conversations unobtrusively, with no particular publicity.

Mr. ETHRIDGE raised the question of the sending of a cabled report to the General Assembly as early as possible, in view of the fact that Israel's application for membership in the United Nations would be considered by the Assembly during the April session.

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the question of the admission of Israel to membership in the United Nations was outside the competence of the Conciliation Commission, and that if the Arab

Governments should endeavour to have information requested from the Commission concerning Israel's observance of the resolutions of the Assembly (as Mr. Ethridge had suggested might occur), it could only be hoped that the Assembly would refuse the Arab request. Nevertheless, the Chairman was in full agreement that a report should be submitted to the Assembly as quickly as possible after the attitude of the Arab States on the subject of the new talks was known.