

RESTRICTED

SR/35

1 April 1949

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE THIRTY-FIFTH MEETING

held in Beirut on 1 April 1949 at 4 p.m.

Present: Mr. de Boisanger (France) - Chairman
Mr. Yalcin (Turkey)
Mr. Ethridge (U.S.A.)

Mr. Azcarate - Principal Secretary.

The CHAIRMAN observed that owing to the recent collapse of the Government in Syria and the general tension it had produced, the Arab delegations had postponed the meeting at which they were to take a decision regarding a continuation of the exchanges of view. It was hoped that their reply would be available the following afternoon.

Mr. ETHRIDGE, while understanding the position of the Arab States, felt that the Commission could not remain in Beirut indefinitely awaiting the reply. He proposed that the Chairman should inform the Arab delegations that unless a reply was forthcoming the following day, the Commission would take its own decision.

Concerning the projected visit to Tel Aviv, Mr. Ethridge suggested that as soon as the Arab reply had been received, the Chairman should telegraph Mr. Ben Gurion asking for an interview on Wednesday or Thursday of the following week.

The CHAIRMAN asked whether it was the Commission's desire to return to Beirut after the Tel Aviv meeting, which would presumably take only part of one day.

Mr. ETHRIDGE pointed out that if the Arab reply were favorable the Commission must then invite the Israeli Government to send representatives to

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the talks; if the reply were unfavorable, it must inform both sides that it had decided to call for meetings under the terms of the resolution. In either case, there would be an interval of approximately ten days, after the Tel Aviv meeting, while the Commission made its plans for the talks.

Mr. Ethridge expressed the view that from Tel Aviv the Commission should return to Jerusalem and remain there during the interval before the new meetings. He emphasized strongly the moral value to the Commission of such a return, which became all the more essential in view of the transfer of five Israeli ministries to Jerusalem. The Commission must not give the impression that it was abandoning the field, in the face of this new fait accompli.

The CHAIRMAN and Mr. YALCIN agreed with Mr. Ethridge's view.

In reply to an observation by the Chairman to the effect that it would probably not be necessary for the Commission to hold meetings during the interval in Jerusalem, Mr. ETHRIDGE gave it as his opinion that if the Commission did not hold meetings while it was there, the Israeli Government would have the right to consider that the Commission was abandoning the task entrusted to it concerning the refugee problem and the principle of internationalisation. In the present circumstances the Commission's only possible move was a counter-attack. Such a move might be only a symbolical gesture, but it was a very real and necessary one for the Commission, whose continued absence from Jerusalem would be even more symbolical.

It was agreed that the Commission would return to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv.

Concerning the drafting of the Commission's report, the CHAIRMAN thought it might be desirable not to wait until Mr. Ben Gurion's statement could be included, but to draft and forward the report immediately as soon as the Arab reply was available.

Mr. ETHRIDGE said it was his feeling that the General Assembly would expect a complete report from the Commission on the situation in Palestine, during the April session. Whether or not Israel was admitted to membership in the United Nations was not in itself the concern of the Commission; nevertheless,

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the Commission's opinion regarding Israel's acceptance or non-acceptance of the terms of the resolution would certainly be pertinent to the question of its application for membership. The Arab States were now considering having a friendly delegation in the General Assembly request a statement from the Commission concerning the extent to which the States involved were complying with the terms of the resolution. Regardless of the merits of such a move, the Commission must be prepared to give an answer; it should endeavour to obtain all possible definite commitments from both Arabs and Jews. He favoured waiting until after the meeting at Tel Aviv to draft the report.

The PRINCIPAL SECRETARY reported that he had just received a cable from the Secretary-General requesting a report from the Commission on the Beirut conversations by the beginning of the following week.

Mr. YALCIN saw no reason to delay the first part of the Commission's report. In view of the Secretary-General's cable, he thought that a report on the Beirut talks should be forwarded at once, with the statement that a full report would follow within a few days.

Mr. ETHRIDGE pointed out that the Jews were now in a position to say that the Commission had talked with them only once or twice, and not at all since the Beirut meetings. He would prefer to wait a few days in order to send a well-rounded report on the positions of both sides, rather than sending an incomplete report immediately. He would not object to Mr. Yalcin's proposal, however, if it were made clear that the Commission was sending a single report in two parts, and if the first part were to end with a statement that the Commission was now proceeding to Tel Aviv and would forward the second part of the report within a few days.

It was agreed that the procedure suggested by Mr. Ethridge would be followed, that the Principal Secretary would commence the drafting of the report immediately, and would cable the Secretary-General the plan of reporting agreed upon.

In reply to a question from the Chairman concerning the date of the next rotation of the chairmanship, Mr. YALCIN said he would prefer not to take over the chairmanship of the Commission until after the Arab reply had been received.