

UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE SIXTY-EIGHTH MEETING

held in Lausanne on Saturday,
4 June 1949, at 10 a.m.

Present: Mr. Yalcin (Turkey) - Chairman
Mr. de Boisanger (France)
Mr. Ethridge (U.S.A.)
Dr. Azcarate - Principal Secretary
Mr. Barnes - Deputy Principal Secretary

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Draft Memorandum submitting the Israeli Delegation's Proposals on Israel's Eastern Frontiers to the Arab Delegations

The CHAIRMAN reported that the Israeli delegation had expressed the wish that the canal should not be mentioned in the document transmitting their proposals to the Arabs, and asked for the views of the Commission on the matter.

Mr. ETHRIDGE and Mr. de BOISANGER considered it necessary to respect the wish, but suggested that, since the canal provided the main justification for the Israeli frontier proposals, the Israeli delegation might be persuaded to allow it to be mentioned to the Arabs verbally.

The PRINCIPAL SECRETARY said that the Israeli delegation, while objecting to any formal inclusion of the canal project in the proposals transmitted, was ready for it to be discussed with the Arabs either in the Commission or in the General Committee, or in informal conversations.

The Draft Memorandum was approved as amended.

Letter from Mr. Nassib Bulos, Secretary, Delegation of the Arab Refugee Congress, dated 3 June 1949

The PRINCIPAL SECRETARY said the letter raised a question of principle: whether the refugee organizations which had supplied information and been authorized to present their views to the Commission were therefore entitled to be kept informed of the Commission's activity. A request in the letter for information on the measures taken by the Commission to implement the Resolution of 11 December 1949, seemed to him excessive; the Commission was only bound to report to the Secretary General.

Mr. ETHRIDGE thought that Mr. Bulos, as representing a refugee organization, might be supplied with information in respect of the refugee problem, exclusively.

It was agreed that there could be no objection to such a course.

Transmission to the Arab Delegations of Mr. Eytan's letter of 29 May (Document IS/19).

Mr. ETHRIDGE drew attention to the reference to Mr. Eytan's letter of 29 May in item A. (4) of the Secretariat's Memorandum summarizing the recent discussions of the Commission on the territorial and refugee questions: should the letter be transmitted to the Arab delegations? Mr. Hirsch had asked Mr. Wilkins whether that had been done.

The PRINCIPAL SECRETARY said that he had gathered, in the course of a private conversation with Mr. Eytan that he agreed it was preferable to take no action on his letter for the time being.

Mr. de BOISANGER pointed out that it merely explained the Israeli proposals in respect of Gaza, supplementing a letter which had already been communicated to the Arab delegations. Though that explanation, to the effect that both politically and economically Gaza was more closely linked to Israel than to Egypt, appeared to him to be founded on valid arguments, he was uncertain whether its transmission would serve any useful purpose. The letter might, however, be transmitted under the category of proposals which did not require an answer, but were forwarded simply for purposes of information.

This was agreed to by the Commission.

Deputy Principal Secretary's Statement

Mr. BARNES who had arrived from Jerusalem the previous day made a statement in reply to a series of questions from Mr. de Boisanger as to the point reached by the Mixed Armistice Commission and Special Committee, conditions in Jerusalem and the setting up of Israeli Ministries in Jerusalem.

The Mixed Armistice Commission was dealing only with relatively minor questions concerning the demarcation line between Israel and the Jordan Kingdom. As he had said in his cable, the most important decision concerned the railroad, which had been placed entirely under Israeli control and would shortly be re-opened. Questions of major importance had been referred to the Special Committee, which had reached a deadlock over Mt. Scopus and Latrun--so much so that one of its more important members had tentatively

hinted to him that it might be necessary to ask the United Nations to intervene in some form as arbitrator if the work of the Committee was not to prove fruitless.

A proposal had been made to divide the neutral zones around Government House. The Mixed Armistice Commission had at one time agreed on such division and a map had been signed, but the agreement had been withdrawn on the request of the Transjordan Government on the grounds that the Mixed Armistice Commission was not competent to reach a decision in the matter. Israeli members of the Mixed Armistice Commission, who were also members of the Special Committee, were pressing for division on the grounds that the territory was not really neutral; both Arab and Israeli farmers were using the agricultural land and pastures of which it was composed, with consequent danger of conflict. The Chairman of the Mixed Armistice Commission, supported by General Riley, maintained that the United Nations had no authority to intervene if the two parties were able to reach agreement. The United Nations was concerned with protecting Government House property and both parties had declared their willingness to allow access to that property and the use of the Arab College which had been the property of the Mandatory Administration.

The atmosphere in Jerusalem had grown perceptibly less tense and more pacific. Crossing of the lines, though still forbidden to Jews and Arabs, was unrestricted by day as far as United Nations personnel were concerned. Government House was open till 2 a.m. The King David Hotel, to which the short road was now open, was preparing to receive tourists, while barricades were disappearing. A difficulty which the Commission might have to meet if it returned to Jerusalem was that first the Israelis and then the Arabs had started a customs control at Mandelbaum Gate and wished to search United Nations automobiles and baggage. Mr. Barnes had so far successfully protested such action, on grounds of U.N. privileges.

On the establishment of Israeli Ministries in Jerusalem, he had no special information. He understood that the Ministry of Religion was being transferred to Jerusalem and that in regard to other Ministries, such transfers as had been made had been those indicated before the Commission left.

Mr. de BOISANGER considered it all to the good that any transfers of Ministries to Jerusalem that had been made had taken place without advertisement and not in the provocative manner suggested by the press in regard to the Ministry of Religion. He regretted the inability of Israelis and Arabs to reach agreement over the various matters on which they were in direct negotiation.

In view of Mr. Eytan's letter of 31 May (Document Com.Jer./9) declaring that the Israeli Government was ready to discuss the organization of common public services with the Arab authorities in Jerusalem, he asked whether such failure to reach agreement was the result of a stiffening of attitude on the part of either the Israeli or Jordan Kingdom authorities.

Mr. BARNES said that the settlement of subsidiary questions, such as the administration of common public services, would be relatively easy but for the deadlock in the Special Committee over fundamental questions such as those of Mt. Scopus and Latrun, the return of Arab residents, the Bethlehem Road; they could not be solved until a general settlement was reached. Meanwhile mistrust between the two parties was so intense as to prevent agreement even on quite simple questions.

Meeting with Arab Delegations

The CHAIRMAN asked whether the Arab delegations should be invited to a meeting to discuss territorial questions, or be given further time to reflect on them.

Mr. de BOISANGER observed that their reluctance to engage in such discussions came from their difficulty in agreeing among themselves. He had urged upon various delegations the desirability of their expressing their point of view; the Egyptian delegation had assured him that they would be ready to do so in a private, unrecorded meeting. He suggested that the Chairman should approach the Arab delegations, with the proposal that the heads of delegations should meet with the three Commissioners.

Mr. ETHRIDGE had gathered that the Arab delegations were trying to shape an agreement, which would probably end by embracing their several claims.

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