

UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE

RESTRICTED  
SR/BM/I  
21 March 1949

SUMMARY RECORD OF A MEETING BETWEEN THE CONCILIATION  
COMMISSION AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ARAB STATES

held in Beirut on 21 March, 1949

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

H.E. Ahmed Khashaba Pasha - Foreign Minister of Egypt  
H.E. Abdel Monem Mostafa - Minister Plenipotentiary.  
Mr. Awni Khalidy - Representative of Iraq  
H.E. Riad Bey el Solh - Prime Minister of Lebanon  
H.E. Hamid Bey Frangie - Foreign Minister of Lebanon  
H.E. Yussef Yassin - Deputy Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia  
H.E. Sheikh Abdul Aziz Ben Zaid - Minister Plenipotentiary  
H.E. Khaled el Azem - Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Syria  
H.E. Dr. Farid Zein ed Din - Minister Plenipotentiary  
H.E. Tewfik Pasha Aboul Hada - Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Transjordan  
H.E. Fawzi Pasha el Malki - Defence Minister of Transjordan

-----

In welcoming the representatives of the Arab States, the  
CHAIRMAN made the following statement :

Your Excellencies, Gentlemen,

Permit me, Your Excellency, in the first place, to express through you to the Lebanese Government the sincere gratitude of the Conciliation Commission for the willingness with which the Government of Lebanon has offered us its hospitality for the holding of our meetings. In expressing to you my warmest thanks I know that I am also interpreting the sentiments of all the Delegates present.

At the same time, I should like to stress the great satisfaction with which the Conciliation Commission has noted that its initiative in inviting the Arab countries to gather in Beirut has been received by their Governments with the good will so clearly manifested in the presence at this table of the many eminent personalities to whom I have the honour of addressing our most cordial welcome.

I would like at this time to take the opportunity offered by the cordial and intimate atmosphere in which the Conciliation Commission proposes to carry out its work to submit to you certain observations concerning both the substance and the procedure of our deliberations.

As regards the substance, I have only a few things to say today. You all know that the refugee question is the subject of our conversations. I am fully aware that this general subject  
/involves

involves a great number of concrete problems, first as regards the relief which it will be necessary to give to the refugees for a certain period of time - a task for which the Organization directed by Mr. Griffis is responsible - second as regards an intermediate stage during which certain kinds of work would be provided for the refugees in order to end their present enforced idleness, and finally, as regards the last stage of repatriation resettlement and economic and social rehabilitation. We shall examine all these problems and as a result I hope that we shall be able to arrive at a more complete understanding of the point of view of the Arab Governments than we were able to obtain during our too brief visits of a month ago. If, following our deliberations, it should prove impossible to adopt definitive solutions for these various problems - for in undertaking the solution of problems as difficult and complex as those now before us, one should not be too ambitious - I am convinced that it will at least be possible for us to establish the general lines along which their solution may be found.

As regards the possibility of extending our exchanges of view to questions other than that of the refugees, I have only to repeat that which was said in the invitation addressed to your Governments. The Commission is always ready to extend the scope of our deliberations and even to take the initiative in examining certain problems should the course of our work make such action advisable.

And now I would like to say a few words about the method of our work. You remember, no doubt, that in the invitation addressed to your Governments by the Commission it was said that the Commission wished to have "preliminary exchanges of views" with the Representatives of the Arab Governments. It was not fortuitously that this wording was adopted. It expresses in a very precise way the character that the Commission wishes to give

to these meetings. It is within the limits of preliminary exchanges of views that we propose to keep our deliberations. This involves a certain number of consequences, the first of which is the following: we do not see that any purpose would be served by engaging at present in a kind of general discussion which might tend to hamper our freedom of action. It is essential in our opinion to maintain as much fluidity and flexibility as possible in our discussions. It is for this purpose that we would wish to see the real work being done in the form of conversations with each delegation, after our formal meeting today. We propose, therefore, to begin these conversations tomorrow and perhaps to continue them, if necessary, until Wednesday or Thursday.

Subsequently, we will agree on the future course of our deliberations. I believe that we are all staying at the St. George Hotel and that it will be easy for us to meet as well as to arrange and prepare our future meetings without loss of time. Furthermore, I would like to inform you that the Commission has decided to reserve the day of Thursday 24 March, for hearing the representatives of the non-governmental organizations that might wish to present themselves.

It is evident that the fact that we will limit ourselves here to a preliminary exchange of views should not prevent us from keeping the public informed as much as possible of the general progress of our work. The Commission will maintain contact with the press either by means of "communiqués" or by press conferences since we are well aware of the interest with which the meetings in Beirut will be followed in the whole world.

I believe that this is all that I have to say today. We hope to have the pleasure of seeing you all at tonight's reception at the Normandy Hotel. This will be an opportunity to establish contacts and personal relations between the delegations and the members and staff of the Commission; for such cordial relations, inspiring mutual confidence, are an important factor in all undertakings of conciliation and international peace.

H.E. RIAD EL SOLH (Prime Minister of Lebanon) welcomed the Commission and the Arab delegations on behalf of the Government of Lebanon. His Government, he said, was happy to offer all facilities for the success of the meetings. The Prime Minister expressed his hope that the meetings would result in peace, not only for Palestine but for the world, based on the principles of right and justice.

The Prime Minister was of the opinion that the Commission would find in its meetings with the Arab delegations, both collectively and individually, a unified point of view concerning Palestine and especially concerning the refugees.

The Prime Minister repeated his welcome and hoped that the forthcoming meetings would be crowned with success.