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SUMMARY RECORD OF A MEETING BETWEEN THE CONCILIATION
COMMISSION AND HIS EXCELLENCY HAMID FRANGIE,
MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF LEBANON,

held at Beirut on 23 February 1949.

Present: H.E. Hamid Frangie - Minister for Foreign Affairs
of Lebanon.
Mr. Ethridge (U.S.A.) - Chairman
Mr. de Boisanger (France)
Mr. Yalchin (Turkey)
Mr. Azcarate - Principal Secretary

In reply to a request by the Chairman for a frank statement of the Lebanese Government's position on all points of the General Assembly's resolution of 11 December 1948, the FOREIGN MINISTER made the following points:

With regard to the general question of peace negotiations and conciliation, he stated that their success depended on the mutual confidence of the parties concerned. There was no assurance of Jewish good faith.

The Commission, however, had two special tasks entrusted to it: namely, the question of Jerusalem and that of the refugees. In these questions, too, the Jews had done nothing to allay the suspicions of the Arab States. They had awaited the occasion of the Conciliation Commission's arrival to present it with a fait accompli in Jerusalem. This was the purpose of the holding of the Constituent Assembly there and the declaration stating that they intended to make it the capital of their State. The tactics of the Jews were to destroy the United Nations decisions gradually. This method had, unfortunately, been only too successful.

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With regard to the refugees, the Jews had declared that they wanted the solution of this problem to be part of the general settlement. This was against all United Nations resolutions. The partition plan did not provide for the dispersal of the Arab population of the Jewish State.

What solution did the Jews envisage for the questions of the refugees and Jerusalem? In the opinion of the Foreign Minister, the Conciliation Commission should first find the solution to the problems of Jerusalem and the refugees and then proceed to the solution of the general problem.

The CHAIRMAN reminded the Foreign Minister that the Commission had received a specific mandate for the internationalization of Jerusalem. The Commission had reacted very rapidly to the possibility of being presented with a fait accompli by the Jews, and had stated its position to Mr. Shertok in unequivocal terms. The Commission's attitude towards the question of Jerusalem was that set down by the General Assembly's resolution. However, the Commission wished to have the advice of all interested parties on the best method of internationalizing the Jerusalem area and making it economically viable.

He informed the Foreign Minister that the Commission had established a special Committee which was to study and present a plan for internationalization. The Commission was not aware that the Jews had made a statement concerning either the creation of Jerusalem as a capital or its annexation to Israel.

With regard to the refugees, the Commission had requested the services of an expert to advise it on the repatriation, resettlement and indemnification of refugees. The Conciliation Commission had taken the stand, although this had not been done officially, that Israel should accept the General Assembly's resolution in principle. The Commission, however, was of the opinion that the refugee question would have to be considered together with the other problems, although it might come first

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on the agenda. The Chairman informed the Foreign Minister of the proposed conference of Arab States and asked him for his Government's attitude in this regard.

The FOREIGN MINISTER remarked that the questions of Jerusalem and the refugees would be the test of the good intentions of the Jews and of their desire for peace and a just solution. The refugee question would have to be examined separately and not in conjunction with other problems of interest to Israel, such as the absorption of immigrants. The General Assembly's resolution did not mention the possibility of exchange of populations. Was that Israel's intention? Economic and social readjustment was only possible for the refugees in their own homes after they had received indemnities for losses sustained. If the problem were linked with others it would be giving the Jews one more opportunity to evade a United Nations decision. The Jews would then bargain for advantages against the natural right of refugees to return to their own homes. The refugees were creating an insoluble problem for the countries in which they settled. The only solution was their return to their own homes. He called attention to Western Galilee, where the Jews were less than 10 per cent of the total population. In spite of the fact that this territory was not given to them by the partition plan, they had overrun it in order to settle their own immigrants. They had also taken the Negev and yet they still complained against the decisions of the United Nations. He repeated that the refugee question would be the test case of Jewish intentions.

In reply to a question by the Chairman as to whether there would be any advantage in a conference of Arab States and the Conciliation Commission to discuss the refugee problem, the Foreign Minister answered in the affirmative. In reply to a further question concerning the position of the Lebanon with regard to the Rhodes talks, the Foreign Minister stated that his Government had been invited to participate but that it had informed

/Dr. Bunche

Dr. Bunche that it would not enter into negotiations with the Jews with a view to arriving at an armistice unless the talks between the Jews and the Egyptians were successful. He remarked that the speed with which an armistice might be concluded between Israel and Lebanon would depend on the conditions but that Lebanon was ready to negotiate.

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the Commission had not yet officially approached the Government of Israel on the refugee question but that they had learned during their preliminary conversations that the Jews were prepared to accept a certain number of refugees. This was not the complete or the final picture. If the Arabs were to make the solution of the refugee problem a condition sine qua non of the discussion of other problems, the Conciliation Commission would find itself in a stalemate as far as its other tasks were concerned. These were many and the most important was the maintenance of peace in the Middle East. Up to the present the Arabs had refused to impart their points of view on other questions such as the Negev, Galilee, Haifa, Lydda and the question of boundaries. The Commission was instructed to make periodic progress reports to the Secretary-General for transmission to the Security Council and members of the United Nations. There was to be a session of the General Assembly in April and the Commission might be expected to report whether it had made any progress or whether it considered the resolution of 11 December 1948 as inapplicable. It was therefore urgent to have the points of view of all the parties concerned.

The Foreign Minister had expressed interest in Jerusalem. The other Arab Governments had stated that Jerusalem should be retained by the Arabs. This attitude was against the General Assembly's resolution. There were many types of internationalization and the Committee established for the purpose of studying the question could proceed on its own. It would, however, be preferable if the Committee were to receive the advice of the interested parties.

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The FOREIGN MINISTER, after agreeing to provide the Committee with his Government's opinions, stated that the problem was one of reconciling two different points of view. The Commission was mostly interested in maintaining the peace of the Middle East. The Arabs were mostly concerned with the injustice committed against their fellows in Palestine. Would the natural right of the refugees to return be recognized? The Commission had stated that the Jews were prepared to receive some of them back. The Lebanese Government wished that the Jews should admit all except those who had violated public order. The situation in Palestine had consistently been aggravated by Jewish discrimination against the Arabs. The Arabs, however, had the means to retaliate. There was a possibility of reprisals. The Arab States were ready to discuss, but the solution of the refugee problem was a condition sine qua non of the peace settlement.

Returning to the question of Jerusalem, the Foreign Minister remarked that there were many solutions but the main condition was that the city should not be placed under supreme Jewish authority.

Mr. de BOISANGER pointed out that the Conciliation Commission understood Arab preoccupation with the refugee problem and was anxious to avoid delay; but the passage of time worked against conciliation. Any delay would permit the Jews to import immigrants and establish them in the lands and houses of Arab refugees and then their return would be impossible. He expressed the hope that although the proposed conference of Arab States was officially intended to discuss the refugee problem the Conciliation Commission might secure their points of view on other subjects.

The FOREIGN MINISTER replied that this was a salient point. The Arabs had an adversary. Both they and the Jews, however, were subject to the supreme authority of the United Nations. The decisions of this

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authority had been respected by the Arabs. They had been ignored by the Jews. The question to be decided was whether the United Nations would permit the ousting of the Arab population by alien immigrants. Before this matter was settled the Arabs could not discuss peace. If Tel Aviv refused to comply with the United Nations decision, there could be no peace talks. There was a truce in force and therefore there was time for the Commission to find out from the Jews what their intentions were with regard to the refugees. On the basis of this reply, the Conciliation Commission could continue its conversations with the parties concerned, whether officially or unofficially. If the Jewish reply were negative it was pointless to proceed any further.
