

UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE

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SUMMARY RECORD OF A MEETING BETWEEN THE CONCILIATION  
COMMISSION AND HIS EXCELLENCY TEWFIK PASHA, PRIME MINISTER  
AND ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER OF TRANSJORDAN

held in Jericho on 11 February, 1949.

Present: H.E. Tewfik Pasha - Prime Minister and Acting Foreign  
Minister of Transjordan.  
Mr. Yalchin (Turkey) - Chairman  
Mr. de Boisanger (France)  
Mr. Ethridge (U.S.A.)  
Mr. Azcarate - Principal Secretary.

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The PRIME MINISTER welcomed the Commission and expressed his appreciation of its visit to Jericho. He said he hoped the Commission would be of great assistance in solving the Palestine problem. He was ready to express the views of his Government on any points and to answer any questions which the Commission might wish to discuss.

Mr. de BOISANGER thanked the Prime Minister for his expression of welcome and pointed out that the Commission intended within a short time to go to Amman for an official discussion with King Abdullah. The Commission had felt, however, that it would be useful at the very outset to meet with the Prime Minister informally and establish in that way a direct contact with the Transjordanian Government.

Mr. de Boisanger said that the task given to the Commission by the General Assembly was very broad in scope and directed at the general objective of bringing peace to this part of the world. The Commission would like to hear the opinions of the Prime Minister on how he thought this task might be accomplished. In addition, the Commission would like to discuss several

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specific problems which were included in its mandate, such as the Holy Places, Jerusalem, economic problems and the refugee question.

The PRIME MINISTER replied that the Government of Transjordan had always been very eager to have peace. This had always been the aim since Transjordan had gained its independence twenty-seven years ago. The Government of Transjordan wished to see peace re-established as soon as possible.

With respect to Jerusalem, the Prime Minister said he thought that the Jews would try to keep in their hands the territory occupied by them. Since the days of Omar, the Prime Minister recalled, the Holy Places had been under the control of the Moslems. The conduct of this trust, he said, had proved through all the ages a satisfactory way of safeguarding the interests of all the interested religions. He said his Government desired to keep the responsibility for protection of the Holy Places. If the Jews insisted on retaining the territory they had now occupied, Transjordan would wish to retake certain areas which had been taken by the Jews without fighting prior to 14 May 1948, before there was any army to oppose them. The interest of the Transjordanian Government in the protection of the Holy Places extended, the Prime Minister said, to other Holy Places in Palestine. His Government would be prepared to guarantee full freedom of access and protection of all sects at all times and to give the necessary guarantees to all interested Governments in this regard.

Concerning the refugee problem, the Prime Minister said he wished it were possible for every refugee at present in Transjordan and Arab Palestine to go back to his own property in Palestine. The Government of Transjordan also wanted the refugees now in Syria and the Lebanon to return to Israeli territory if they had property there. Those refugees who had no property in Palestine, however, could settle either in Arab Palestine or in Transjordan itself.

/If the Jews

If the Jews should refuse to accept the return of any refugees, indemnities would have to be paid. The Government of Transjordan, the Prime Minister said, would welcome the resettlement of these refugees either in Transjordan or in Arab Palestine. He said the Government of Transjordan was inclined to the view that indemnities should not be paid direct to individuals, because in many cases the funds would be misspent. It would be wiser, he said, if indemnities were negotiated and decided between Governments. The Government of Transjordan was ready to take over the problem and undertake to resettle the refugees by providing them with land at nominal prices. In this way, he felt, it would be possible for them to be absorbed back into a normal social life in an orderly way and avoid personal catastrophe for many individuals. In this connection he emphasized that the Government of Transjordan might need a loan from the outside to supplement the total of indemnities, which might not be adequate to cover the cost of the resettlement program.

Following the general statement of the Prime Minister, Mr. de BOISANGER said he would like to return to a discussion of the general subject of re-establishing peace. He said he was gratified by the Prime Minister's assurance that Transjordan desires peace and that this was also the goal of the Commission. It would be the hope of the Commission, he said, to invite the Governments of the Arab countries and Israel to a general peace conference, and he asked whether the Commission might count on the Transjordanian Government's support in this undertaking.

Mr. ETHRIDGE pointed out that the Jews might prefer to enter into separate peace conferences with each of the Arab States. He enquired whether Transjordan had any views with respect to this possibility.

The PRIME MINISTER replied that he thought the point of view of the Jews in this respect was correct. He felt that separate peace conferences would be more profitable.

/Mr. YALCHIN ..

Mr. YALCHIN asked the Prime Minister whether the Government of Transjordan would be in a position, acting through the Commission, to conclude a separate peace with Israel (or enter into a separate peace conference), even though one or more Arab Governments might object, and if the Conciliation Commission could be in a position to fulfill the requirements of the Transjordanian Government, would the Government undertake such peace negotiations.

The PRIME MINISTER replied that Transjordan had always attempted to proceed on the basis of a practical policy. His Government, he said, was ready without reference to any other Arab State or influence of any Arab State, to act freely and individually in any way it thought most practical and acceptable.

Mr. YALCHIN said he was very gratified to hear this point of view.

Mr. de BOISANGER said it was difficult to see how all questions could be solved by separate conferences. There were certain common questions to be solved, he pointed out, such as the question of refugees, and economic matters. He said he wondered if it were possible for practical reasons to envisage, in addition to separate talks on specific matters, a common meeting of all the parties on matters of general concern.

The PRIME MINISTER replied that it would be difficult, in his opinion, to have general, collective peace talks.

With respect to the question of refugees, he said that Transjordan was giving help to all refugees to come and settle in Transjordan or the Arab parts of Palestine and that the Governments of the countries in which they were did not object to this, since they were not prepared themselves to keep them. Thus, he said, a solution of the refugee problem need not affect the interests of any other State. The refugees, he said, did not want to stay where they were, outside of Transjordan and Palestine, and the other Governments did not want to keep them there.

/Mr. de BOISANGER ..

Mr. de BOISANGER then turned to the question of Jerusalem. He said it was certainly true that the Holy Places had been well guarded under Moslem control. But the Commission had a mandate from the General Assembly to bring Jerusalem and the Holy Places under international control. He told the Prime Minister that the Commission had set up a Committee to talk with the authorities of both Governments on this matter, and he hoped that Trans-jordan would enter wholeheartedly into these discussions.

The PRIME MINISTER replied that he had expected the Commission to evidence this desire with respect to Jerusalem. The problem, however, was one of execution, and he did not believe that the United Nations could carry out an effective international control. To do so, he said, would require a military force under the direction of the United Nations, but no such force existed, and in his opinion, in the present situation, it would not be possible to form such a force. The present political situation between the Western powers and the Soviet Union precluded the possibility of Big Four co-operation on the creation of a United Nations force, and the necessary element for effective United Nations control would therefore be lacking.

Mr. de BOISANGER said that the Commission was not certain that an international force was necessary in order to establish international authority. Goodwill and a desire to co-operate on the part of both parties would be important, and he was therefore interested to know what the attitude of Trans-jordan would be towards the resolution of the General Assembly, since its implementation would depend on the attitude adopted by all parties concerned.

The PRIME MINISTER answered that he did not want to argue the point at the present stage. He felt that the question was not open to argument and that time would show that a force was required, since its success would depend on the goodwill of the Jews. He preferred to make no statement but to let the matter rest there for the present.

/Mr. ETHRIDGE ..

Mr. ETHRIDGE then enquired whether the Government of Transjordan would envisage the creation of a Claims Commission as between Governments in connection with the problem of resettling the Arab refugees.

The PRIME MINISTER replied that his Government would envisage such a Commission in due course.

The Prime Minister then told the Commission that he would like to mention two points which had not yet been raised. The first of these was the Negev. Transjordan needed very much to have a port on the Mediterranean in territory which would be incorporated into Transjordan. He said his Government would insist on acquiring the port of Gaza and access thereto. In order to achieve this, all the Government's influence would be used and every effort would be made. He reminded the Commission that the Arab Legion had not yet been in a position to cease war and that it might be necessary to resort to any means to achieve Transjordan's goal of getting a Mediterranean port.

The second point which the Prime Minister wished to discuss was the fact that the Government of Iraq had not yet reached the stage of entering into peace discussions, but was inclined to accept an armistice. He said the Prime Minister of Iraq had delegated to Transjordan the right to negotiate and conclude an armistice with the Jews on Iraq's behalf. If an armistice were concluded, the Iraqi Government would be able to withdraw its forces from the northern part of Palestine which was far from Iraq and in which Iraq had no territorial interest. Public opinion in Iraq would thus be satisfied, because the Government would not have entered into peace negotiations or concluded a peace, but would still be able to recall its army.

Mr. YALCHIN said that he had received a very favourable impression from the remarks of the Prime Minister. Whether all the conditions which he

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had indicated could be accepted was a matter to be discussed at a later stage. On the whole, however, he found the attitude of the Transjordanian Government to be sound.

The PRIME MINISTER said that he hoped the Commission would return shortly and see the King on its return from Cairo, so that it might be possible to arrive at conclusions on all the points discussed.

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