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SUMMARY RECORD OF A MEETING BETWEEN THE
CONCILIATION COMMISSION AND HIS EXCELLENCY
ABDEL HADI PASHA, PRIME MINISTER OF EGYPT

held at Cairo on 15 February 1949

Present: H.E. Abdel Hadi Pasha	-	Prime Minister of Egypt
H.E. Abaza Pasha	-	Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt
H.E. Hassouna Pasha	-	Under-Secretary of State of Egypt
Mr. Yalchin	(Turkey)	- Chairman
Mr. de Boisanger	(France)	
Mr. Ethridge	(U.S.A.)	
Mr. Azcarate		- Principal Secretary

The PRIME MINISTER stated that as the points which were raised by the Conciliation Commission were of a general nature and since their object was not definite, he could not give any definite answers. As far as final peace was concerned, he stated that Egypt was very eager to achieve this objective. This, however, seemed difficult without a permanent armistice being concluded in Rhodes. The two parties had entered into the Rhodes negotiations on the concrete basis of the Security Council decisions, which had been accepted by Egypt but which were not being respected by the Jews. Even the Acting Mediator's suggestions which exceeded the Security Council's resolutions and which were accepted by Egypt, were not accepted by the Jews. It seemed impossible to achieve success both in Rhodes and in the Conciliation Commission as long as the Jews did not respect the Security Council's resolutions. The Jews should be required to give assurances to the effect that they would accept what was proposed.

With regard to the refugees, the principle of their right to return and have their property would have to be accepted in advance. That principle, as well as the fact that compensation should be paid for those who did not wish to return, were clearly indicated in the General Assembly's resolution. The Prime Minister felt that the United Nations should guarantee these rights and look after the refugees as they had looked after the displaced persons in Western Europe.

The Prime Minister then turned to the question of Jerusalem and expressed the opinion that this City had been very satisfactorily governed by the Moslems and that there did not seem to be any reason for its internationalization. He added, however, that it was Egypt's /policy ..

policy to follow and be bound by resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

With regard to the questions mentioned in paragraph 5 of the Conciliation Commission's aide-mémoire, the Prime Minister stated that Egypt considered these questions bound by and dependent on the final settlement. The Egyptian Government promised to examine them at the appropriate time with the greatest attention and good will, as it had examined all other questions.

Returning to the question of refugees, the Prime Minister wished to stress the point that, although the resolution of the General Assembly had recognized the right of the refugees to return to their homes, there were still the Jewish objections to be removed. He pointed out that all other countries accepted religions other than their own and gave their citizens equal rights, and that no country maintained a monopoly of one religion for all its citizens. If this was accepted, the number of refugees that would have to be settled in adjoining countries would be limited and could possibly be arranged by an exchange against Jews resident in those countries who wished to go to Israel.

The CHAIRMAN asked what the result would be if the Rhodes talks failed, and pointed out that a failure of the Rhodes talks would be due to the fact that the negotiations had not been restricted to the armistice terms; that other elements had been included. The Chairman wondered whether Egypt would envisage other negotiations for permanent peace, in case the Rhodes talks failed, and added that in the opinion of the Conciliation Commission it would be wise for Egypt to do so.

The Chairman went on to say that the Commission considered the problem of the refugees as part of the general peace problem, which could not be separated from other problems, such as economic matters and territorial questions. He said that if the refugee question were solved and peace negotiations were to fail on territorial questions, the refugees would be once more ousted from their homes. Peace had to be a compromise and entailed mutual sacrifices.

With regard to Jerusalem, the Chairman said that he was pleased with the reassuring remark made by the Prime Minister to the effect that Egypt would abide by United Nations resolutions. In order to fulfill the task of the internationalization of Jerusalem entrusted to it by the General Assembly, the Commission needed the support of the interested parties, and it was essential for the Commission to know what parties were prepared to co-operate.

The PRIME MINISTER said that he had explained Egypt's point

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of view regarding Jerusalem, but that he would like to add that the resolution of the General Assembly also called for the reinstatement of the refugees and the acknowledgment of their rights. The Commission had expressed the opinion that it considered the refugee problem as part of the whole peace problem which should not be dealt with in advance, and the Prime Minister wished to know why this should not also apply to Jerusalem. The Commission had also mentioned the possibility of a failure of the Rhodes talks and the necessity of other efforts to be made in order to achieve peace. The Commission had further made the reflection that if the refugees went back and war were to be resumed they would be driven out again. The Prime Minister therefore concluded that an armistice would have to be settled first. He repeated that Egypt was eager for peace and anxious to crown the Conciliation Commission's efforts with success, and added that if the other party had suggestions to make, he would be prepared to examine them carefully and decide on them.

The CHAIRMAN remarked that the Jerusalem problem could not be solved before the general peace treaty was signed, and that the same applied to the Conciliation Commission's task of internationalization of Jerusalem. In order to implement the resolution the interested parties should meet around a table and discuss peace. He did not see why the end of the armistice talks should be awaited; there was an armistice already, and time should not be wasted. There were urgent problems to be solved immediately, and therefore the Egyptian Government should not be exacting on minor points.

Mr. de BOISANGER then said that the Prime Minister should understand that the Conciliation Commission attributed great importance to the success of the armistice negotiations and would do everything in its power to further their success, as the Commission would wish to extend the Rhodes talks. It had no definite plan covering all points and therefore it wished to find out the points of view of the interested parties. This would make possible a survey of all questions involved, including that of an armistice.

The PRIME MINISTER answered that he did not agree with the Commission that the Rhodes talks were simple. If the resolutions of the Security Council were to be disregarded, the situation would become incomprehensible. It seemed to him strange that the country which had abided by the Security Council's resolutions should be asked to submit proposals before the other party had complied with these decisions and because it had ignored them. It seemed to him more reasonable that the Jews should be asked to state their position, the reasonable basis of a solution being the decisions of the United Nations.

/Mr. ETHRIDGE..

Mr. ETHRIDGE repeated, as a member of the Conciliation Commission as well as in his capacity of representative of the United States, that great importance was being attached to the success of the Rhodes talks. The United States Government would help Dr. Bunche as much as possible and was already doing so. But what of the Conciliation Commission's task? The Egyptian position appeared to be that they would await the conclusion of an armistice agreement and then discuss the refugee question. If this were the attitude of the other Arab Governments and the armistice talks succeeded, the Conciliation Commission would have to start from the beginning in order to find out their points of view on the other aspects of the problem. If the Rhodes talks were to fail, the Security Council might issue new instructions regarding the next step to be taken, and it might instruct the Conciliation Commission to take over armistice negotiations where Dr. Bunche left off. This would mean a loss of time to the Commission. The refugee problem was urgent, not only for humanitarian reasons, but also because of the political unrest that was created by the displacement of a great number of people. Mr. Ethridge stated that he hoped that the Egyptian Government would assume that the armistice talks would succeed and would impart its views unofficially on other aspects of the problem to the Conciliation Commission during its stay in Cairo.

The PRIME MINISTER expressed once more the views of the Egyptian Government as follows:

(1) Regarding refugees:

- (a) Establishment of the principle of their right to return to their homes;
- (b) Compensation for those who did not wish to return to their homes;
- (c) Placing of the refugees under United Nations protection and care.

These were, in the Prime Minister's opinion, practical suggestions, and he could not see why the Conciliation Commission could not immediately decide to place the refugees under its protection until points (a) and (b), mentioned above, were settled.

(2) Regarding Jerusalem:

The Prime Minister stated clearly that the Egyptian Government did not see any reason for the internationalization of Jerusalem but that nevertheless it would abide by the resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly. He suggested that the Conciliation Commission should study the situation and

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submit proposals to the parties concerned.

The CHAIRMAN thanked the Prime Minister for his clear statements and said that the Commission would either have to return to Cairo or to submit its proposals in writing to the Egyptian Government.

The PRIME MINISTER remarked that there were many interested parties to this problem and that the attitude of the Jews was not yet clear.

The CHAIRMAN suggested that in order to find out the various points of view, the most practical solution would be to bring all the interested parties together.

The PRIME MINISTER then asked why the Commission did not propose this and added that the Egyptian Government would certainly consider such a proposal, even though it was not very optimistic about its fruitfulness since the attitude of the other side was unknown and suspect.

Mr. ETHRIDGE then turned to Egypt's attitude with regard to territorial arrangements. He asked what the Government thought of possible exchanges of territory now held by the Jews, outside the partition boundaries for other areas, such as parts of the Negev.

The PRIME MINISTER replied that Egypt considered that all this territory belonged to the Arabs but that it would abide by United Nations decisions.

Mr. de BOISANGER pointed out that with regard to the refugee question the Commission knew the attitude of the Jews. They refused to permit them to return. The only thing that could be done was to bring the parties together to discuss the matter, in the hope of reaching an agreement.

The PRIME MINISTER stated that he did not reject this proposal but that the first step was to establish the good intentions of all parties and that, in any case, the Conciliation Commission's task was to implement the General Assembly's resolution in this respect.