UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE

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

held in Lausanne on Monday, 16 May 1949, at 10:30 a.m.

Present:	Mr. de Boisanger (France)	- Chairman
	Mr. Yalcin (Turkey)	
	Mr. Ethridge (U.S.A.)	
	Mr. Azcarate	- Principal Secretary
	H.E. Abdel Monem Mostafa Bey	- Representative of Egypt
	H.E. Fawzi Pasha Mulki	- Representative of the Hashemite Jordan Kingdor
	Mr. Fouad Ammoun	- Representative of Lebanon
	Dr. Adnan El Atassi	- Representative of Syria

In a preliminary statement, MOSTAFA BEY (Egypt) drew attention to an Associated Press article appearing in the New York HERALD TRIBUNE (Paris edition) of 14 May 1949, stating that Israel and the Arab States had agreed to transform the present parley in Lausanne into a peace conference. In that connection he read the following statement, which was signed by the heads of the four Arab delegations:

"The Arab delegations have the honour to bring the following to the attention of the Conciliation Commission."

"Further to the interview which took place at the beginning of the meeting with the Conciliation Commission on 12 May 1949, the Arab delegations wish to re-affirm that they consider themselves as constituting, together, one party to the Palestine question, and that that question, in each and all of its aspects, has an equal interest for each of their Governments.

"The Arab delegations wish to take this opportunity of making it clear that they contemplate only exchanges of views with the Conciliation Commission."*

The CHAIRMAN made it clear that the article in question had not emanated from the Commission, and that the Commission did not envisage the present conversations as more than exchanges of views.

General Committee

In reply to a question from Mostafa Bey (Egypt), the CHAIRMAN explained that the new Committee was of a different nature from the Jerusalem Committee and the Technical Mission on Refugees. The General Committee was intended to facilitate the task of the Commission and of the delegations by affording an opportunity for a freer expression of views. In the Commission's opinion, the delegations might be able to speak more freely if the discussions had a less official character and if the opinions expressed need not necessarily be taken as final official positions. The Commission had judged this to be the most practical method of work, and had, moreover, made the Committee's terms of reference as general and broad in scope as possible.

Dr. ATASSI (Syria)asked whether the delegations would continue to meet with the Commission, at the same time that the Committee was meeting; and whether the Committee's reports to the Commission would be discussed by the Commission with the delegations.

The CHAIRMAN replied that it was not the Commission's intention to suspend its meetings and contacts with the delegations; such meetings would continue to be held as frequently as desired, and the Commission would always be at the disposal of the delegations. Regarding the reports of the Committee on the views expressed to it, such reports could, if desired, be submitted to the delegations at the same time as to the Commission; the delegations could then make such comments as they wished.

In reply to a question from Mulki Pasha (Hashemite Jordan Kingdom), the Chairman explained that the Committee's reports would contain no recommendations nor proposals, but would simply

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*Translation; original in French.

summarize for the Commission's information the views that had been expressed. The Committee would be entirely subordinate to the Commission and would take no decisions of its own. It would be, in effect, a technical political committee.

Mr. AMMOUN (Lebanon) considered it essential, since the scope of the Committee's work would be different from that of the Commission, that the delegations should be able to discuss a question in its broad outlines with the Commission before that question was sent to the Committee for discussion of details.

MOSTAFA BEY (Egypt) said that he hoped there would be no overlapping between the work of the new Committee and that of the two already in existence. He also drew attention to the fact that working with a number of different Committees might prove difficult for delegations which had only limited personnel, as did his own.

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the Jerusalem Committee was already drafting its report, and that the Technical Mission on Refugees would be working in the Middle East, not in Lausanne. Although the General Committee would naturally discuss the boundary question, which was closely linked with the refugee problem, he felt sure that every precaution would be taken to avoid overlapping.

Dr. ATASSI (Syria) was still of the opinion that the territorial question was far less important and urgent than the refugee question. The refugees could not continue much longer in their present desperate plight. Until the problem was settled and the relevant provisions of the resolution implemented, his delegation would find it difficult to enter upon a discussion of the boundary question, nor did it feel that such a discussion could have any useful result.

Mr. AMMOUN (Lebanon) understood that the General Committee would naturally take up all questions covered by the terms of the Protocol; however, some of those questions were of a more urgent nature than others. Although the Technical Mission on Refugees would be working in the Middle East, there were nevertheless certain steps which could and should be taken in Lausanne, certain measures which should be recommended to the Government of Israel. He asked whether the General Committee could not take up immediately the study of such measures, especially those directed toward the preservation of refugee property.

MULKI PASHA (Hashemite Jordan Kingdom) endorsed the views of the Lebanese representative.

The CHAIRMAN affirmed that the Commission had no intention of abandoning study of the refugee question in order to discuss the matter of boundaries; the two questions would be studied together. The Commission had been carrying on discussions for some time with the Israeli delegation on the refugee problem; those conversations were still going on. The Principal Secretary would shortly communicate to the Arab delegations a memorandum listing the questions which had been put to the Government of Israel and the replies so far received. The replies were not complete and not entirely satisfactory, and the memorandum should not be considered as definitive; however, the Arab delegstions might study it and suggest to the Committee any added points which they wished to have taken up with the Israeli delegation. He could not agree, however, to the Committee's being limited to a discussion of the refugee question.

Dr. ATASSI (Syria) declared that if the Israeli delegation continued its refusal to facilitate a settlement of the refugee problem, his delegation reserved the right to refuse to discuss the boundary question in the Committee.

MOSTAFA BEY (Egypt) wished to offer a compromise proposal. There had been some mention of the difficulty of determining which refugees wished to return to their homes; he pointed out, however, that the Commission had now heard representatives of the refugees who formed part of the citrus industry and who had expressed their desire to return. He suggested that immediate steps could be taken toward the prompt return of the number necessary to operate the orange groves.

The CHAIRMAN replied that the subject had already been mentioned to the Israeli delegation and no reply received. He pointed out also that the number of 165,000 persons, whose return was requested by the refugee committees, was a rather large number.

Mr. AMMOUN (Lebanon) shared the view that the return of the orange growers was a matter of urgency, but thought it was probably unnecessary for the entire number of 165,000 to return immediately; the Commission, in consultation with the refugees' representatives, could evaluate the number of essential workers, technicians, etc. He pointed out, moreover, that since the Israeli delegation's unsatisfactory reaction had been received before the signing of the Protocol, the Commission might well put the question again to the representatives of Israel.

Mr. ETHRIDGE felt that the situation was not as discouraging as it might appear. Although the replies of the Israeli representatives on the refugee question were not yet satisfactory, they had nevertheless made several concessions in principle, on the matter of compensation, reuniting of broken families, and other questions. At the request of the Commission, the refugee committees were submitting lists of emergency measures they thought should be taken; these were even now being extracted by the Secretariat and a memorandum based on them would be presented to the Israeli delegation. Mr. Ethridge had also told the representatives of the refugees, for their information, that Dr. Meron of the Israeli delegation had expressed his willingness to arrange a meeting of a non-political nature with representatives of the orange growers. It was not known whether or not the matter was under consideration by the refugee committees; but Mr. Ethridge pointed out that some problems could be discussed in that way on an economic basis. He suggested that the Arab delegations should study the memorandum which would be communicated to them during the afternoon by the Principal Secretary, and make such suggestions as they wished to the Committee regarding further action on the matter.

Mr. Ethridge observed that the Government of Israel had accepted many of the principles laid down in the resolution with regard to the refugee problem, but within the framework of a final settlement. He pointed out, therefore, that it was to the interest of all to proceed as rapidly as possible toward a final settlement.

The CHAIRMAN observed that the General Committee would hold a meeting with the Israeli delegation on Wednesday morning, and asked whether the Arab delegations would agree to meet the Committee Wednesday afternoon.

Mr. AMMOUN (Lebanon) thought that the Arab delegations should know beforehand what would be discussed at such a meeting. An agenda must be established; it must be decided what questions would be referred to the Committee and in what order they would be discussed. He agreed with the representative of Syria that the Arab delegations were within their rights in insisting that the refugee question should be discussed first.

Mr. ETHRIDGE pointed out that there were two aspects to a

settlement of the refugee problem. First, there were the emergency measures requested by the Arab delegations and the refugee committees; in his opinion the Commission should do all in its power to bring about such measures before the conclusion of the general agreement. Secondly, there was the permanent settlement of the question, which could not, in his opinion, be separated from the territorial agreement. Since the Partition Plan was the basis for negotiation, it was quite possible that the final territorial settlement might automatically liquidate a major part of the refugee problem. In the interests of the refugees it was essential and urgent that the Commission should obtain the views of all the delegations on all questions without delay. It was natural to expect that the emergency aspects of the refugee problem should receive prior consideration, but Mr. Ethridge urged that both aspects should be taken up together.

Mr. AMMOUN (Lebanon) thought that, on the basis of Mr. Ethridge's remarks, the emergency measures for the refugees could be placed first on an agenda, to be followed by the question of the permanent settlement of the refugee problem, as item 2.

Dr. ATASSI (Syria) supported Mr. Ammoun's suggestion. He added that there was a psychological factor which must be taken into account; the fundamental good intentions of the Government of Israel must be established. For that reason also the emergency measures must be studied first.

Mr. ETHRIDGE agreed that the psychological factor must be recognized; he would respect it to the point of asking his representative on the General Committee to raise the question of emergency measures as an urgent matter, and to press the Israeli delegation for the fullest compliance on those measures. He did not feel, however, that the Committee's first meeting should be confined to the study of any one question.

The CHAIRMAN added that there was no necessity for the Committee to conduct exactly parallel discussions with the Arab and Israeli delegations; it should proceed in each case with the greatest speed possible. It was not necessary that agendas for both sides should always be the same; he suggested that because of the urgent interest of the Arab delegations in the emergency measures for the refugees, the Committee, in its first meeting with them on Wednesday afternoon, should begin with the consider t

ration of those measures.

The Arab delegations agreed to the Chairman's proposal.

General Statement of views

The CHAIRMAN asked whether the Arab delegations were now ready to make a general statement of their position on the territorial question.

MOSTAFA BEY (Egypt) replied that his delegation had prepared a statement which expressed the views of the four Arab delegations. In view of the discussion just held, however, certain alterations in that statement would be necessary; he would make his revisions and submit the statement to the Commission at the earliest possible moment.
