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SUMMARY RECORD OF A MEETING BETWEEN
THE CONCILIATION COMMISSION AND
THE DELEGATION OF ISRAEL

Present: Mr. de Boisanger (France) - Chairman
Mr. Yalcin (Turkey)
Mr. Ethridge (U.S.A.)
Mr. Azcarate - Principal Secretary
Dr. Walter Eytan) - Representatives of
Mr. Elias Sasson) Israel

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The CHAIRMAN asked whether Dr. Eytan could now give the Commission a more precise statement of Israel's position on the boundary question. The Commission had had some difficulties in persuading the Arab delegations to discuss the territorial question; however, it would be helpful to know the Israeli position, and the content of the statement would be transmitted in one way or another to the Arab delegations.

The Chairman considered it necessary to insist that for the time being the discussions concerning boundaries should not be made public.

Dr. EYTAN was glad to avail himself of the opportunity of making precise suggestions on one or two points. Those suggestions took the shape of formal proposals concerning Israel's northern and southern boundaries, and he requested that they should be transmitted to the Arab delegations.

The Government of Israel proposed that the political frontier between Israel and Lebanon should be identical with the frontier which had existed between Lebanon and Palestine under the Mandate. Similarly, it proposed that the frontier between Israel and Egypt should be identical with the boundary which had existed between Egypt and Palestine under the Mandate.

Dr. Eytan added that the boundaries he mentioned were envisaged as permanent frontiers and that his Government would accept them as such. If at a later stage any Government concerned should desire to put forward proposals regarding changes in those frontiers, it would of course take up the matter directly with the other

Government concerned and attempt to arrive at an agreement through negotiations. That statement might be included in the proposal as put to the Arab delegations, or it might be omitted, at the discretion of the Commission. Dr. Eytan himself considered the proposition self-evident.

The CHAIRMAN observed that the Israeli proposals seemed a rather broad interpretation of the term "territorial adjustments" used in the Protocol of 12 May 1949. He wondered whether Dr. Eytan could explain the reasons why his delegation considered such proposals fair and reasonable.

With regard to the matter of possible future changes in the frontiers, he thought that if such changes were contemplated at all at present, they should be effected before the boundaries were finalized rather than afterwards.

Mr. EHTRIDGE also had certain questions to put to Dr. Eytan. First, as regards the proposal for the frontier between Israel and Lebanon, he asked whether it was Dr. Eytan's understanding that under such an agreement western Galilee would become a part of Israel. Secondly, concerning the suggested frontier with Egypt, he requested clarification of the proposed disposition of the "Gaza strip". Thirdly, he wished to know whether the Israeli delegation was willing to omit from any agreement the stipulation regarding a possible re-opening of negotiations on frontiers. Fourthly, since the negotiations were taking place through the Commission as intermediary, he asked whether he might correctly assume that the formal proposals made constituted Israel's basis for negotiation.

Dr. EYTAN, replying to the Chairman's second observation, said he had no intention of excluding the possibility of changes in the frontiers being negotiated at once. With a view, however, to finding as much ground of common agreement as possible with the Arab States, he had endeavoured to put the matter in its simplest form. He put forward his proposals with some confidence because he felt convinced that neither Israel, Lebanon nor Egypt had any desire for territorial expansion. Any changes to be effected in the boundary lines would be of a very minor character; he did not wish to jeopardise the chances of agreement by entering upon what might be a long argument over such minor points. Given the basic viewpoints of the three Governments on the territorial question, he thought it probable that they would find it easy to agree on these simple proposals.

As regards Mr. Ethridge's third question, Dr. Eytan was quite agreeable to the omission of what Mr. Ethridge had called his "stipulation" from the terms of any agreement to be concluded; he had, indeed, not intended it to be considered as a stipulation. It was natural to conceive that any permanent boundary between two States was always subject to changes if such changes were deemed desirable or necessary by both sides, alterations could always be effected by negotiations between Governments.

With regard to the Chairman's first question, he would be willing to put forward a detailed justification of his delegation's reasons for framing its proposals; however, he pointed out that such explanations would entail going back over ground which had already been covered in meetings with the Commission. The word "adjustments", as used in the Protocol, was vague and difficult to define precisely. The areas in question were regions in which neither party concerned was actively discontented with the existing frontiers nor had any desire to extend its territory beyond them. His delegation had put forward the proposals which seemed to them to have the greatest chance for success, with a view to providing a starting point for practical negotiations.

Concerning Mr. Ethridge's second question, the delegation of Israel was aware that acceptance of the frontier existing under the Mandate would leave the "Gaza strip" within the boundaries of Israel, together with a considerable number of Arab inhabitants of that territory. He wished to inform the Commission that if agreement were reached on the basis of his proposal, his Government would be prepared to accept the Arab population of that area, whether inhabitants or refugees, as citizens of Israel. It was to be understood that resettlement of the refugees in Israel would be subject to such international aid and technical facilities as might be made available for resettlement of refugees in any part of the Middle East. In principle, however, the Government of Israel would accept responsibility for the Arabs in that area if the political frontiers were drawn in accordance with the proposal he had made.

In reply to a question from Mr. Ethridge, who asked whether the Government of Israel would make a stipulation regarding guarantees of civil rights to the population and refugees of the Gaza area, Dr. EYTAN declared that it would, since as he had stated, it was understood that they would become citizens of

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Israel.

Mr. ETHRIDGE noted that the Arab delegations had indicated their desire to carry on any negotiations en bloc, and that the Israeli delegation had put forward proposals involving only two of the Arab States. He asked whether the delegation of Israel would be prepared to make further proposals to the other two Arab States at the present time.

Dr. EYTAN replied that further proposals would be premature at the moment. If an accord was reached on the present suggestions, his delegation would certainly have some proposals to make to the other two Arab States when the proper time came. He hoped that by that time Syria would have signed an armistice with Israel.

If, however, the Arab States persisted in maintaining their common front, his delegation would take the view that negotiations on such a basis were not possible. The frontier between Israel and Lebanon was a matter to be determined between Israel and Lebanon; it did not concern any other Arab State, and Israel would reject the validity of any claim by another State to be heard on the subject. The decision of the Arab States to negotiate collectively did not impose upon Israel the obligation to put forward proposals to all four of those States. Israel had advanced proposals which it considered to have good prospects of success; an insistence on the part of the Arab States on negotiating en bloc would be regarded by Israel as tactics designed to wreck those prospects of success.

Mr. YALCIN requested clarification of certain points. First, he pointed out that the proposals put forward did not take into consideration the possible creation of an Arab State in Palestine, although the creation of such a State was envisaged in the Partition map which had been accepted as a basis for discussion. He asked whether Israel no longer contemplated the possibility of establishment of such a State and whether Israel considered itself as being the only Power in the whole of Palestine. Secondly, if the possible future alterations in frontiers were simply the natural minor adjustments described by Dr. Eytan, he did not see why the matter should be mentioned at all. Thirdly, he noted that although it had been stated that Israel had no territorial ambitions to the north and south, no mention had been made by the Israeli delegation of its eastern boundary; this had perhaps been an oversight, but he thought some specific statement should be made in that connection. Fourthly, since the Arab States had fought

as allies during the hostilities and had a common interest in the problems involved, he did not think it unnatural that they should wish to negotiate the peace as a united group. If Israel were able to negotiate agreements with them separately, the Commission would be more than satisfied; however, if they maintained their present position, he could not see what the outcome would be.

Dr. EYTAN, replying to Mr. Yalcin's last question, declared that if the Arab States wished to present a common front in their encounters with the Commission, Israel had no objection. Nevertheless, Israel would not admit of any intervention in its individual boundary agreements by a State not directly concerned. The Arab States might make whatever observations they desire to the Commission, but they could not force Israel to take their arguments into consideration. He pointed out that although the Arab States had fought as allies, they had found no difficulty in negotiating separate armistice agreements with Israel; he did not see, therefore, why they should be averse to concluding separate territorial agreements.

As regards Mr. Yalcin's second observation, Dr. Eytan stressed the fact that his remarks on the subject of possible future alterations of the frontiers had not been put in the form of a demand or a stipulation. He had simply been discussing frankly a perfectly natural and normal eventuality; even the Swiss-Italian frontier, one of the most stable in the world, had undergone such a minor alteration by agreement within the past few days. He left it entirely to the discretion of the Commission to include or omit his remarks when transmitting the proposals to the Arab delegations.

In reply to Mr. Yalcin's third question, Dr. Eytan declared that when he had disclaimed any desire for territorial expansion on the part of Israel as regards Lebanon or Egypt, he had not intended to imply that Israel entertained any such desires in any other direction. His statement had applied equally to Syria and the Hashemite Jordan Kingdom.

Replying to Mr. Yalcin's first question, Dr. Eytan stated that his Government would encourage the establishment of an independent Arab State in Palestine if it seemed at all feasible. The question would doubtless be explored further in the course of the present negotiations. In any case, he had certainly not wished to imply that Israel would not admit the legitimacy of such a State.

The CHAIRMAN asked for clarification of one point. He did not have the impression that Lebanon desired any changes in the frontier as it had existed under the Mandate; nevertheless, any State was entitled to know what authority existed on the other side of its frontiers. On the Partition map, which had been accepted as the basis for discussion, it had been indicated that certain territory in western Galilee was to be attached to the Palestine Arab State. Dr. Eytan had declared that the question of the establishment of such a State was a matter to be decided at a later stage. He asked whether the Israeli delegation did not recognize the possibility of the inclusion of the western Galilee area within the limits of such a State.

The CHAIRMAN did not consider, moreover, that Dr. Eytan's justification of the proposals was an adequate one; the Commission's task of conciliation demanded a more precise explanation.

Dr. EYTAN felt that he could not answer the Chairman without entering into the realm of the hypothetical, since it was impossible to judge at the present time whether or not such an Arab State would ever be created. If the Chairman's implication was that the Lebanese-Israeli frontier might be influenced by the creation and extent of such a State, it then followed that the question of that State's establishment must be settled finally before Israel's frontier with Lebanon could be determined. Such a procedure would leave the delegations in a vicious circle, in which each decision would depend upon another hypothetical decision. It was in an effort to progress from hypothetical to practical discussions that his delegation had framed its proposals, which of all possible alternatives, had seemed the most likely to succeed since they would produce the least discord. Dr. Eytan felt that if his proposals were viewed in a practical rather than philosophical light, they might point the way out of the present tangle. He recognized the fact that the political future of Arab Palestine was an issue which must be faced, in all its humanitarian and economic aspects; he did not feel, however, that it should be settled at the present moment.