

UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE

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

held in Lausanne on Thursday,
28 July 1949, at 3:45 p.m.

Present: Mr. de Boisanger (France) - Chairman
Mr. Yalcin (Turkey)
Mr. Porter (U.S.A.)
Dr. Azcárate - Principal Secretary
Mr. Reuven Shiloah) - Representatives of
Mr. Elias Sasson) Israel

The CHAIRMAN asked the Israeli representatives whether, subsequent to their consultations in Tel Aviv during the interval in the Lausanne talks, they had any new information or views to present to the Commission.

Mr. SHILOAH recalled that it had always been the policy of his delegation to cooperate with the Commission and with the Arab delegations toward the achievement of a final settlement. Although much ground had been covered during the first part of the Lausanne conference, outwardly it seemed that little tangible progress had been made and that a stalemate had been reached. Accordingly, during the recess his Government had endeavoured to find ways of breaking the deadlock.

During the first part of the session, the Israeli delegation had submitted certain proposals of a procedural nature which it had hoped would help to advance the work of the Commission. Owing to the atmosphere prevailing, however, those suggestions had not met with the response hoped for. Therefore, the Israeli Government had now come to the conclusion that without departing from its basic contention that all the issues were interdependent, it would agree to take one issue, that of the refugees, out of its context and place it at the head of the list. The Israeli delegation

had always felt that the Arab delegations had come to Lausanne not to negotiate a peace but to discuss the refugee question; the Israeli delegation could not accept that approach, since it maintained that the refugee question was only one part of the whole problem. Now, however, his delegation would agree to discuss the refugee question first, on the understanding that any commitments entered into by Israel would be carried out only within the context of the general settlement, and that this discussion would be merely the first of a series of discussions of all the points involved in the general settlement. When that discussion began, his delegation would be ready to make a precise commitment regarding the number of refugees which Israel would be prepared to re-absorb. That commitment, however, would be subject to two reservations; first, that any scheme agreed upon would be put into operation only if there was agreement, or the prospect of imminent agreement, regarding the general settlement, and secondly, that Israel could not carry out any scheme of repatriation except as a part of the general plan for settlement of all the refugees.

Without wishing to enter upon a discussion of procedure at present, Mr. Shiloah recalled that a short time before the recess Dr. Eytan had suggested to the Commission the establishment of a certain number of sub-committees to study a series of practical issues related to the final settlement. Although the Commission had seen some merit in the plan, it had considered that the proper time had not come for the initiation of such a procedure. Now, however, with the completion of the last armistice agreement, Mr. Shiloah felt that the atmosphere prevailing between Israel and the Arab States had undergone a change, and that it might be appropriate to reconsider Dr. Eytan's suggestion. His delegation did not insist that all the sub-committees should begin work at the same time; it was prepared to begin with a sub-committee on the refugee question. He felt, however, that a decision by the Commission, agreed to by the parties, that such a series of sub-committees would in time be set up would be helpful in promoting the progress of the discussions. His delegation would cooperate in any reasonable suggestion put to it, but he hoped it would be made clear that the discussion of any question was part of an attempt to solve the overall problem.

The CHAIRMAN thanked Mr. Shiloah for his remarks. It had always been the opinion of the Commission that all the outstanding questions were interdependent and could not be solved separately. Although difficulties had been encountered in the past, he felt that a marked change had taken place in the general attitude of the Arab delegations, a change which was evidenced by their acceptance of the draft press communique which the Commission was about to publish.

With regard to the sub-committees, he observed that the Commission had always approved the principle of the suggestion; it would now reconsider the question and decide whether the appropriate time had arrived to implement the proposal.

He thought it would be useful and constructive to embark upon a fuller study of the refugee question at once. He understood the views of the Israeli delegation on the matter, and felt that the Arab delegations should be willing to take certain necessary measures. Before entering upon such a general discussion, however, the Commission would wish to obtain certain further indications from the Israeli delegation as to its intentions with regard to the refugees.

Mr. SHILOAH said that he would wish to consult his colleagues of the Israeli delegation with regard to the manner in which his detailed proposals would be put forward.

With regard to the press communiqué, Mr. Shiloah wondered whether the use of the phrase "formal agreement" was correct; he asked whether there had ever been a formal discussion of the question between the Commission and the Arab delegations, or a formal act of agreement by the latter.

The CHAIRMAN explained that the phrase used had not been "formal agreement" but "formal assurances", in the sense of express assurances, which might not necessarily be in formal or written form. There had been no meeting at which the Arab delegations had given a specific formal commitment, but they had approved the text of the communiqué as submitted to them. The Chairman thought that the phrase "express assurances" might be substituted as more clearly indicative of the intended meaning.

Mr. PORTER asked whether the Israeli delegation was at present in a position to state in general terms the principles upon which it had based the proposals which it would later submit concerning the refugee problem.

Mr. SHILOAH reiterated his statement that his delegation would reserve its more detailed comment until a later moment. In general, however, the principles which had guided his Government in reaching its conclusions had been the following: first, it had endeavoured to reach a figure which would constitute a substantial contribution to the final settlement of the problem; secondly, it had extended that figure to the limit of its ability to absorb refugees without undermining the security of the State of Israel; and thirdly, it had made certain that that figure represented the maximum number that Israel could absorb from an economic point of view.

In reply to a question from Mr. Porter as to when his delegation could make more specific proposals, Mr. Shiloah requested the Commission to ascertain whether or not the Arab delegations were ready to discuss the refugee question as the first item in the consideration of the general overall settlement. If the Arab delegations still maintained that all the refugees must be repatriated at once, without admitting any basis for further discussion, he felt it would be useless for his delegation to discuss details and figures.

Mr. PORTER asked whether the Israeli delegation could put forward any suggestions regarding a general overall settlement of the refugee problem.

Mr. SHILOAH replied that his delegation had not drawn up a complete detailed plan, since all the necessary data were not available. In general, however, and, on some points, in detail, he would be prepared to place before the Commission an outline of his Government's views on a final settlement. If a general discussion were initiated, his delegation would need a few days to bring to Lausanne certain experts who had worked for some time on the question and whose advice would be required.
