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29 July 1949
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SUMMARY RECORD OF A MEETING BETWEEN THE
CONCILIATION COMMISSION AND THE DELEGATIONS
OF THE ARAB STATES

held in Lausanne, on Friday, 29 July 1949
at 5 p.m.

Present: Mr. de Boisanger (France) - Chairman
Mr. Yalcin (Turkey)
Mr. Porter (U.S.A.)

Dr. Azcarato - Principal Secretary
H.E. Abdel Monem Mostafa Bey) - Representatives of
Mr. Abdel Chafi El Labbane) Egypt
H.E. Fawzi Pasha Mulki) - Representatives of
Mr. Edmond Roch) the Hashemite
Jordan Kingdom

H.E. Mr. Fouad Ammoun) - Representatives of
H.E. Mr. Jamil Mikaoui) Lebanon
Mr. Mohamed Ali Hamade)

Mr. Ahmad Choukairi - Representative of
Syria

Statement by the Chairman of the Conciliation Commission.

The CHAIRMAN said that, while a draft statement had already been circulated to the Arab delegations by the Principal Secretary, what he was about to say at the present meeting should be taken as a more exact expression of the Commission's views.

He informed the Arab delegations that, in the course of a meeting held on 28 July, the delegation of Israel had informed the Conciliation Commission that it would be prepared to submit to the Commission concrete proposals regarding the settlement of the refugee question as soon as it had received assurances that the Arab delegations would agree to consider the immediate examination of that question as being the commencement of general negotiations for the final settlement of the Palestine problem and the establishment of a just and permanent peace in Palestine.

The Israeli Government had made it clear to the Commission that it offered that proposal with two conditions: that the repatriation of refugees be part of a comprehensive plan for the settlement of the entire refugee problem and

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that repatriation would be put into effect only as an integral part of a general and final peace settlement. Moreover, the Israeli delegation envisaged the refugee problem as the first item on the agenda of joint discussions of a general peace settlement.

The Chairman emphasized the salient points of the statement, namely the two conditions mentioned and furthermore the desire for joint discussions with the Arab delegations. He pointed out that, although joint discussions were in no way an additional condition, it had always been the Commission's view that such discussions should eventually take place between the parties concerned.

MOSTAFA BEY (Egypt) wished first of all to welcome Mr. Porter as representative of the United States on the Commission and stressed the role incumbent on the United States both with regard to world affairs in general and to the solution of the Palestine problem in particular.

His delegation had always maintained that a settlement of the refugee problem was a measure of extreme urgency and one which would contribute to a great extent towards easing the atmosphere surrounding the discussions. It would therefore give favourable consideration to any Israeli proposals in that connection.

Since he had only received the draft statement a short while ago, he reserved the right to make a fuller commentary upon it at a later meeting.

Mr. PORTER said that the United States was of course fully aware of its responsibilities in the settlement of the Palestine question. He appreciated the fact that all the delegations had returned with the intention of seeking a fundamental solution of the problem and hoped that he would in some measure be able to contribute towards such a solution.

MULKI PASHA (Hashemite Jordan Kingdom) emphasised the fact that, from the time when the Arab delegations had first established contact with the Conciliation Commission, the question of the refugees had been uppermost in their minds. It was with a solution of that question in view that they had signed the protocol of 12 May and addressed several memoranda on the subject to the Commission. Since the resumption of work after the recess, the Arab delegations had shown their willingness to cooperate in settling the Palestine problem as a whole by approving the communique
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which had been issued to the press on 28 July. He wished to stress the fact, however, that the implementation of the General Assembly's resolution of 11 December 1948 would mean that all the refugees should be repatriated. There could be no question therefore of discussing the matter on a bargaining basis.

He would comment more fully on the Israeli proposals at a later meeting, but wished nevertheless to state that any measure for the repatriation of refugees would receive full and favourable consideration from his delegation.

Mr. AMMOUN (Lebanon) pointed out that, by approving the previous day's communique, his delegation had shown that it was ready to cooperate in seeking a solution to the refugee problem and in establishing a just peace in Palestine. He stressed the fact that his country which had opened its frontiers to some 150,000 refugees, forming one-tenth of the country's entire population, had always done everything in its power to contribute in some way towards that urgent humanitarian problem.

In welcoming Mr. Porter, he said that his Government would cooperate to the fullest possible extent with the United States Government, as well as with the Governments of France and Turkey, in attempting to agree on a settlement of the Palestine problem as a whole and of the refugee problem in particular.

He made it clear, however, that his delegation would reject the proposal for joint discussions with the delegation of Israel since, not only had such a possibility been excluded by the attitude adopted by the Israeli delegation, but moreover the representatives of the Arab States had authority from their Governments to negotiate only with the Conciliation Commission itself and not directly with the Israeli representatives.

When his delegation received further elucidation of the Israeli proposals, it would be in a position to discuss more fully the statement as a whole.

Mr. CHOUKAIRI (Syria) also wished to welcome Mr. Porter to the Commission and to express the hope that, with his help, the negotiations for peace in Palestine would reach a successful conclusion.

Emphasising the fact that the General Assembly's resolution of 11 December 1948 called for complete and

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unconditional implementation and could not be made the subject for bargaining, especially considering the vast humanitarian issues involved, he expressed the opinion that the Israeli proposals were a departure from that resolution. In order to avoid any possible future misunderstandings, he thought it desirable at that stage that the Israeli statement be amplified further. More time would be needed by the Arab delegations to give the proposals careful study. The Arab States were of course always ready to cooperate in any measure to alleviate the plight of the refugees. .

MOSTAFA BEY (Egypt) said that his delegation was ready to collaborate with the Commission towards achieving an implementation of the General Assembly's resolution. Direct negotiations with the delegation of Israel were, however, out of the question.

MULKI PASHA (Hashemite Jordan Kingdom) associated himself with the statement made by the previous speaker.

Mr. CHOUKAIRI (Syria) associated himself with the views expressed by his colleagues. The Commission's invitation to the Arab delegations had envisaged the collaboration of those delegations with the Commission, nothing more.

The CHAIRMAN thanked the Arab representatives for their statements. In view of their categorical declarations that they were not prepared to undertake direct talks with the Israeli delegation, he considered the point settled; although he regretted the attitude of the Arab delegations, he recognized their right to hold that view. He hoped that they would examine as quickly as possible the proposals of the Israeli delegation and make an early reply to the Commission. He asked which further points in the declaration the Lebanese delegation wished to have clarified.

Mr. AMMOUN (Lebanon) desired further clarification of the last sentence of the declaration, and of the nature of the other questions which the Israeli delegation would wish to discuss. He assumed that the territorial question would be among them. In reply to a question from the Chairman, he said it would be difficult to fix a date on which the Arab delegations could reply to the Commission, until the additional information had been received.

/Mr. CHOUKAIRI

Mr. CHOUKAIRI (Syria) supported Mr. Amoun's request for clarification of the last sentence, which he considered to be worded in far too general terms. He felt that the final peace settlement would be the automatic result of the settlement of three problems: the Jerusalem question, the refugee problem and the territorial question. If anything else was implied in this sentence, it should be made clear.

The CHAIRMAN promised to request the desired information from the Israeli delegation without delay.

Mr. PORTER hoped that the Arab delegations would discuss the matter among themselves in the light of the Commission's position and of the necessity for beginning constructive work. It was apparent that the Israeli delegation had returned to Lausanne prepared to make specific proposals, of which the details were not yet known. Before making those proposals, however, they had requested the agreement of the Arab delegations to the two conditions mentioned in the present declaration. He considered those conditions reasonable and logical; he did not interpret them as an attempt on the part of the Israeli delegation to gain a technical or political advantage. The Commission accepted the position in good faith and hoped the Arab delegations would consider it in the same spirit. Rather than laying down formal conditions, the Israeli delegation was simply requesting from the Arab delegations an indication of an attitude of mind; acceptance by the Arab delegations of the Israeli position would provide the Commission with the means of dissolving the present deadlock. He hoped that the Arab delegations would accept the proposal at its face value, as a statement of broad principles, and thus enable practical discussion and planning to begin. If the Arab delegations approached the problem in the spirit which he had described, he had no doubt as to what their reply would be.

MOSTAFA BEY (Egypt) agreed with Mr. Porter that it was not unreasonable to consider the refugee question within the framework of the general settlement. The delegations were bound, both by the Protocol of 12 May and by the resolution of 11 December 1948, to discuss the questions listed in that resolution. His delegation had merely maintained that the refugee problem was the most urgent of those questions and must be settled first. Since the Israeli delegation now

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agreed to take up that question first, he felt that his delegation could support the position taken by Mr. Porter.

Mr. PORTER expressed his gratitude for the constructive attitude evidenced by the Egyptian delegation, and hoped that the other Arab delegations would be able to support it. He wished also to stress the importance of time in the settlement of the refugee question. The President of the United States would be unable to request additional funds for aid to the refugees until the Commission was able to report from Lausanne that definite progress was being made towards a settlement of the question. Both the Commission and the delegations, therefore, had a heavy responsibility in the matter; it must be dealt with urgently, if a great human tragedy were to be avoided.

Mr. AMMOUN (Lebanon) recalled his earlier statement that his delegation would welcome any constructive suggestions that would lead to a solution of the refugee problem. He had already expressed his thanks to Mr. Porter for the aid furnished by the United States to the refugees; he now extended those thanks to all Member States of the United Nations which had contributed to the care of the refugees. He could now state that his delegation was prepared to deal with the refugee question on the basis of the proposals received, and in particular of the position taken by Mr. Porter.

It was agreed that the Arab delegations would meet the Commission again on Tuesday, 2 August.

Mr. PORTER observed that the Principal Secretary would in the meantime transmit to the Arab delegations any additional information he (Mr. Porter) would be able to obtain from the Israeli delegation which might facilitate their decision. He hoped that decision might be taken promptly so that the Israeli delegation could be invited to present its specific proposals.