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Analysis of Information Transmitted
by the Technical Committee
up to 31 July 1949

(Prepared by the Secretariat)

The Technical Committee was appointed by the Commission following a decision taken on 11 April 1949 in conformity with paragraph 12 of the General Assembly's resolution of 11 December 1948. Under the authority of the Commission, the Committee was requested to study a certain number of problems concerning refugees, the most important of which are:

1. Estimate of number of refugees.
2. Study of a practical procedure to determine, at the appropriate time, which of the refugees wish to return.
3. Consideration of any questions submitted to it by the Commission in the nature of preliminary measures.
4. Study of practical plans for aid to refugees in the form of employment.
5. Study of information of a technical nature which might help to facilitate the repatriation, resettlement and rehabilitation of the refugees.
6. Study of the question and practical methods regarding the payment of allowances due as compensation to refugees who decide not to return to their homes or for all lost or damaged property.

Those studies were to be undertaken on the spot in co-operation with the authorities concerned. The Committee was required moreover to keep in close contact with the United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees and to enter into relations with non-governmental relief organizations.

Two of the Committee's members (Mr. Kunde and Mr. Lucas) left Geneva on 18 June 1949 and arrived in Jerusalem on 20 June. The Turkish member (Mr. R. Zorlu) joined them on 24 June, on which date a first visit was paid by the Committee to the Israeli authorities at Tel Aviv, and was followed by others to the Jordanian, Syrian and Lebanese authorities on 27 June 1949. On 9 and 10 July 1949, the Committee went to Cairo where it established contact with a representative of the Egyptian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and, unofficially, with a representative of the Arab League in charge of the question of

refugees. On 12 July 1949, a first meeting was held in Beirut with the representatives of the UNRPR and the UNICEF as well as those of the relief organizations (ICRC, LRCS, Quakers). On the following day, separate meetings were arranged with each of the above-mentioned organizations on the basis of an agenda drawn up by the Committee.

1. Estimate of number of refugees.

In its report dated 4 July (Com.Tech./2), the Technical Committee stated that, in the course of preliminary contacts with the relief organizations, those organizations had said that, with the help of a small staff, they would be in a position to make a census of the refugees, which would take into account not only their number, but their place of origin and occupation. Such a census could be completed within approximately six weeks.

Moreover, the Committee stated in its telegram of 17 July 1949 that a meeting had been arranged on 12 July with the representatives of the relief organizations and with the participation of a representative of both the UNRPR and the UNICEF. In the course of this meeting, the question of estimating the number of refugees was apparently discussed, as well as other problems concerning the refugees. The same telegram stated that the Committee intended to visit several camps in order to study on the spot, and in a detailed way, methods for taking a census of the refugees and for recording information on them. Following these visits, a meeting was planned in Beirut with various experts from the American University in order to study with them the most efficient procedure for ascertaining as accurately as possible the number of the refugees. According to the conclusions previously stated by the Committee in its report of 4 July (Com.Tech./2), it would appear that the various categories of refugees should first be defined so that statistics on them could be prepared. Later, in the course of a visit to the Jordanian authorities, the Minister of Communications again raised the question of a census and explained in detail the method which the Jordanian authorities had in mind (telegram of 27 July 1949). The Committee has stated that it does not favour a census which would take place under the direct responsibility of the local authorities.

On 29 July 1949, the Committee sent a telegraphic report concerning the Beirut meeting, at which representatives of the relief organizations, experts from the American University,

officials and representatives of UNRPR were present. In the Committee's opinion, a single United Nations agency assisted by an expert and having assurances of cooperation from the Governments concerned; should undertake the actual census as well as its supervision. The census established in the Gaza region (ORG/25) by the Quakers would appear to be satisfactory. In Syria and Lebanon however, it would be advisable to revise somewhat the methods used hitherto. With regard to the Hashemite Jordan Kingdom and Arab Palestine, it would seem that the Committee and UNRPR were reconsidering the offer made by the Jordanian authorities with respect to a census of refugees and of the local population and that, moreover, UNRPR was studying the possibilities of undertaking such a census itself.

2. Study of a practical procedure to determine which of the refugees wish to return

The Committee has not as yet made known its conclusions on this subject. Its report of 4 July (Com.Tech./2), however, refers to the stand taken by the Israeli authorities on the question of a mass repatriation of refugees. Those authorities consider that such repatriation is precluded for reasons of security and because of Jewish immigration, which amounted to 250,000 persons during 1948. Moreover, more than 60,000 refugees are said to have infiltrated into the country up to the present time, so that the Arab population would now seem to number 150,000. The Israeli authorities are also said to have stated clearly that repatriation could not be conceived in terms of allowing refugees to return to their homes because of changes which had occurred in the economic structure of the country. Those refugees who, in more or less large numbers, would be authorised to return would be treated as new immigrants and as such would be integrated in the planned economy of the State of Israel. They would therefore not be allowed to choose their occupation or domicile, but would be resettled in groups and not individually and would be obliged to accept employment in the interests of the country's economic requirements. This information is supplied by the telegram of 19 July 1949 which concludes by saying that, if repatriation of the refugees takes place in the manner indicated by the Israeli authorities, it will be necessary to provide for an international body to supervise the resettlement of Arab refugees and to safeguard the rights which might be granted them.

3. Preliminary measures

The Committee had been called upon to study, as preliminary measures, the following questions:

A) Reunion of families

In its report of 6 July 1949 (Com.Tech./3), the Committee refers to a meeting it held on that subject in Tel Aviv, during which the Israeli authorities stated that they accepted the return of wives with legal married status, of male children up to the age of 14 years and of female children up to the age of 16 years. The report adds that the return of members of separated families seems to have become confused with the return of individuals or of groups allowed by the local authorities, and that therefore it is impossible to quote exact figures for members of separated families.

The Committee further states in its telegrams of 19 July 1949 that it has been informed by the Israeli authorities that the wives and minor unmarried children who would be allowed to return to Israel would not do so under the reunion of families, but as part of the established categories of Arab refugees who would benefit from the authorisation to return to their homes.

B) Orange Groves

The Committee has made two proposals to the Israeli authorities with regard to orange groves. The first of these proposed the creation of a group of experts, consisting of one Israeli, one Arab and one member of "another nationality". This would be in keeping with the conclusions already stated by the Committee in its report of 4 July 1949 (Com.Tech./2) which stressed the importance of ensuring mixed technical co-operation between Arabs and Jews on the main problems, including the question of compensation.

The second suggestion proposed, with the same end in view, a single "neutral member". The Israeli authorities have indicated that they prefer the latter "for reasons of security". The Committee adopted the second alternative and, after securing authorisation of the Commission, availed itself of the assistance of Mr. Delbes, an agricultural expert. With him it has visited a certain number of orange groves in the regions of Jaffa, Ramle, Tulkarm and Acre.

According to the report prepared by Mr. Delbes dated 19 July 1949 (Com.Tech./6), about one-third of the Arab orange groves in Israel were the subject of a brief inquiry. The total

area of these groves is given as about 118,000 dunums, of which 63,000 may be considered as lost. Not more than 5% of the damage observed would appear to be due to war operations, and 95% to the abandonment of the plantations and the cessation of maintenance work since the hostilities. In most cases, this abandonment was evidently made necessary by the destruction of virtually all hydraulic installations.

About 25% of the plantations, amounting to 29,000 dunums, have been the object of measures of conservation on the part of the local authorities. The remaining groves (26,000 dunums) could still be saved if immediate measures were taken; these measures would consist in the rehabilitation of the hydraulic installations and the employment of skilled labour, which appears to be insufficient. Before the hostilities the Arabs not only maintained their own groves, but also furnished the Jewish planters with a large number of permanent and seasonal workers, the greater part of whom have now left Israel.

The Committee states that it intends to request the Israeli authorities to furnish as soon as possible a statement of the equipment which would be necessary for the immediate rehabilitation of those groves which can still be saved.

The Delbes report adds that in the Ramle and Tulkarm districts the Israeli authorities have made an effort to save the orange groves. In the Jaffa area very few plantations have received any care, and in the Acre district barely 250 dunums out of 6,000 are being maintained.

According to the same report, a detailed survey of the groves by experts in order to determine the damage sustained by each grove would require about two months' work and the employment of eight experts. These experts would work in teams of two. According to the Committee's view, and Israeli expert and an Arab expert might be added to each team.

In its report of 19 July 1949 (Com.Tech./5), the Committee states that the Israeli Government has promised to send it a report on 20 July on the groves destroyed, together with a detailed plan of each of the Arab groves.

In an earlier report (6 July 1949, Com.Tech./3), the Committee notes the Israeli attitude with regard to the return of orange grove proprietors or workers. The Israeli authorities refused to admit any connection between the condition of the groves and the return of the proprietors or workers, on the

ground that the return of the Arabs should be considered, in general, as a political question falling within the competence of the Commission and not of the Technical Committee.

4. Aid to the refugees in the form of employment

According to the report of 4 July 1949 (Com.Tech./2), the Jordan authorities envisage the creation of opportunities for work for the refugees, by means of provisional measures such as the building of roads and houses and agricultural projects. Those authorities had promised to prepare a plan on the subject, but in the opinion of the Committee such a plan could not be submitted in the near future owing to divergences of opinion on the matter existing within the Cabinet. The Syrian authorities, while promising to examine the question as it related to themselves, had made no specific commitment. They had stated, however, that under present conditions they would be unable to furnish work for the refugees. The Lebanese authorities had given the same reply.

5. Information concerning practical possibilities for the repatriation, establishment and rehabilitation of the refugees

In its telegram of 17 July 1949, the Committee informed the Commission that it was making inquiries in this field. Its report of 4 July 1949 noted certain information it had received, according to which the Jordan authorities would be prepared to furnish lands for the settlement of a certain number of refugees provided that outside aid was promised them for the purpose. At the present moment no broad plan exists for the development of the Jordan Kingdom. An English society, however, has sent a certain number of experts to work out a scheme for irrigation on the left bank of the Jordan. The State budget for the current year even contains certain credits for this purpose.

6. Inquiry concerning payments due to refugees as compensation for damage sustained by their property

The Jordan authorities have agreed to the creation of Arab-Israeli working groups to make inquiries on the spot with a view to evaluating the damage done to Arab properties. This information was given in the Committee's report of 4 July 1949 (Com.Tech./2). In a telegram to the Committee on 19 July 1949, the Commission declared that it favoured in principle the creation of such working groups, but that the question must be reserved pending an agreement in principle which it was endeavouring to achieve between the Israelis and

the Arabs. In its telegram of 27 July 1949, the Committee stated that the Jordan authorities had received favorably a suggestion for the creation of a mixed committee to be charged with making inquiries on the spot with a view to evaluating the damage done to Arab properties, including the orange groves. This committee would be composed of Arab, Israeli and neutral technicians and experts. The Minister for Foreign Affairs had promised to submit the question to the Council of Ministers and to give a definite reply on the subject at the earliest possible moment.

7. Visit to the camps.

The Committee visited the Jericho camps on 23 June 1949 (Com.Tech./4). The general living conditions, although precarious, appeared tolerable. Sanitary conditions seemed fairly good. The conditions of family life had been somewhat ameliorated by the departure of the men for the harvesting in the Jordan Kingdom; however, this was a temporary amelioration, since the refugees were not inclined to accept work which differed from their usual occupations. The camp authorities favoured and encouraged teaching for the children.

In the five camps which the Committee visited, its attention was attracted by the cases of contagious diseases such as tuberculosis among the refugees. The Committee made the suggestion that the Arab States should be requested to admit such cases to their own hospitals. The basic calory intake was about 1200, which was insufficient to resist tuberculosis.

The Committee also pointed out the necessity for social services. Morale was deteriorating rapidly, owing to general inactivity and the delay in repatriation.