

UNITED NATIONS PALESTINE COMMISSION
SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FORTY-SIXTH MEETINGLake Success, New York
Monday, 1 March 1948, at 3.00 p.m.

Present:

Chairman:	Mr. LISICKY	(Czechoslovakia)
Members:	Mr. Medina	(Bolivia)
	Mr. Federspiel	(Denmark)
	Mr. Morgan	(Panama)
	Mr. Francisco	(Philippines)
Secretariat:	Mr. Bunche	(Secretary)
	Mr. Reedman	(Senior Economic Adviser)

EXPLANATION OF MEMORANDUM SUBMITTED TO THE CHAIRMAN BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE HEBREW COMMITTEE OF NATIONAL LIBERATION

The CHAIRMAN suggested that the following procedure be followed in the hearing of Mr. P. Bergson, on behalf of the Hebrew Committee of National Liberation. Mr. Bergson was to be received unaccompanied by any other members of his committee. After he had concluded his statement he was to be questioned only on matters concerning which the Commission was in need of enlightenment. The limitation of time at Mr. Bergson's disposal was to be left to the discretion of the Chairman.

The Chairman's suggestions were agreed to. It was further decided to release to the Press only the bare statement that a representative of The Hebrew Committee of National Liberation had appeared before the Commission for the purpose of making a statement on behalf of that Committee.

On the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. P. Bergson, Chairman of The Hebrew Committee of National Liberation, took his place at the Commission Table.

The CHAIRMAN invited Mr. Bergson to present his views on the memorandum which he had submitted ([Informal Paper JA/19](#)).

Mr. BERGSON (Chairman of The Hebrew Committee of National Liberation) stated that he had brought with him copies of the statement which he intended to submit to the Commission embodying certain proposals which he proceeded to elaborate.

Copies of Mr. Bergson's statement were distributed to the members of the Commission.

Mr. BERGSON said that he would not burden the Commission with a reading of the whole document which he had submitted but would state only the gist of its contents.

He wanted first of all to stress that his appearance before the Commission did not signify that the Committee which he represented had altered the position it had taken with respect to the overall question of partition, and that, at the same time, the proposals they were submitting had been formulated in strict adherence to the [terms of reference](#) of the Commission.

In analysing the present situation in Palestine and the difficulties confronting its solution, Mr. Bergson stated that the Hebrew Committee of National Liberation believed that there were two underlying conditions facing the Commission; firstly, the deliberate hampering and sabotaging of the Commission's tasks by the United Kingdom Government, which was doing all within its power to create a state of chaos in Palestine, and secondly, that the Commission, on 15 May, would undeniably become the *de facto* or *de jure* Government of Palestine.

The Committee believed that the overall question in Palestine could not be solved without taking into account the attitude of the United Kingdom Government. They also believed that the Commission should realize that the Hebrew people were determined never again to permit themselves to be reduced to a sub-human status as had occurred in Europe and not to submit further to massacres and campaigns of extermination; While the Hebrew people were weak and peace loving, yet they were strong enough to retaliate in kind and cause an equal number of casualties to those attacking them, namely, the British and the Arabs, as they would sustain themselves. He made it clear that if there were a war it would be a two-sided war and not a one-sided massacre.

He then read from the memorandum a passage stating that the United Kingdom Government had prevented the Palestine Commission from carrying out its duties and informed the Commission that the Hebrew Committee for National Liberation had formulated proposals whose adoption would not be conditional upon the acquiescence of the Mandatory Power. He stressed that his Committee believed that only by proceeding independently of the Mandatory Power could the Commission resolve the present crisis in Palestine.

Mr. Bergson then proceeded to read to the Commission the proposals contained in the supplementary document which he had previously circulated. In elaborating the first proposal regarding the immediate establishment of a sovereign Hebrew republic by the Palestine Commission, he stated that the notion that the [plan](#) of the General Assembly had to be carried out in its entirety was unwarranted and provided an excuse to its enemies for frustrating it. The Commission should therefore make it clear to all Members of the United Nations that it would proceed to carry out some of the provisions of the [resolution](#) irrespective of the impossibility of

carrying out others.

Mr. Bergson questioned the authority of the Arab spokesmen to speak for the Arab people. He accused them of being foreign adventurers and collaborators with the Axis who had been installed in their present positions by the British. He said that the neighbouring Arab States were more concerned with acquiring a seventh sovereign Arab State and therefore would oppose partition.

He explained that his Committee drew a distinction between Hebrews and Jews. The term Hebrew was synonymous for them with the term Palestinian and was used to describe Moslems, Christians, and Jews who were natives or had become citizens of Palestine. In the Hebrew Republic these religious groups would be equal in the eyes of the law. He stated that the religious division should be understood as such and that the purpose of the Assembly [resolution](#) was not to establish religious states but political institutions. In their view the General Assembly [Plan](#) provided for the creation of democratic, progressive, and not archaic states. The Hebrew Republic in Palestine could and would include members of all groups.

With respect to the second proposal regarding the formation of a militia, Mr. Bergson stressed again its general Palestinian character as opposed to a purely Jewish one. His Committee believed that the Commission would proceed with the organization of a volunteer armed force immediately even while it was still in New York. He pointed out that there was no need for a draft law since there were plenty of eager volunteers available, and proceeded to explain the ways and means for the immediate creation of an armed force. He told the Commission that his Committee had information from people coming from Palestine who had been in contact with the underground forces that there were thousands of Christians and Moslems who were prepared to volunteer for such a force in order to participate actively in the restoration of order in Palestine. He claimed that no Palestinian Arabs were taking part in the present clashes in Palestine but that the fighting was being instigated by foreigners who employed non-Palestinian mercenaries. He stressed the amicable relations that existed even now between the Arab and Jewish natives of Palestine. Regarding the proposal for the formation of a small bodyguard for the protection of the Commission, which would be composed of small contingents granted to each member by his own government, Mr. Bergson stated that this was necessary as he had concluded from reading the Commission's report that the Commission was unwilling to see itself protected only by the Arab and the Jewish forces. He took the opportunity to stress again that this difficulty was due to the determination of the non-Palestinian Arab mercenaries to frustrate the work of the Commission. He stated that this proposal, although it might appear fantastic at first sight, had been examined carefully by several experts whom his Committee had consulted and was found to be feasible. He pointed out that owing to the length of the present deliberations of the Security Council and other technical reasons it would be impossible to send an armed force of the United Nations to Palestine in time to avert the impending tragedy, nor would it be possible to avert it by keeping the troops of the Mandatory Power there any longer, an act which would only make the clash more violent. He emphasized that the Hebrew people did not need the assistance of an armed force, but military equipment and supplies and the moral support of the Commission. The task of the Commission was to establish the sovereign states. His Committee believed that the responsibility for the integrity and the security of the two States, once they had been created, would not lie with the Commission but with the Security Council, which should protect them from external aggression but not from internal disorders.

Regarding the seventh proposal, namely the financing of the Commission, Mr. Bergson thought that the fulfilment of the Commission's task could not be carried out on a charitable basis, and he therefore proposed a loan from the International Bank. He noted that in the case of the application by the United Nations to the International Bank for a loan in connection with the building of the United Nations Permanent Headquarters, when the loan was turned down, an application had been made directly to the United States Government. He thought that the same procedure could be followed by the Commission should an application made by it to the Bank be turned down.

On the question of the prisoners held by the Mandatory Power outside Palestine Mr. Bergson deplored the fact that they had been ignored both by the Jewish Agency and the United Nations and expressed the hope that something would be done about them shortly.

In conclusion, Mr. Bergson reaffirmed that his Committee believed that the sense of the General Assembly [resolution](#) was a recognition of the right of the Hebrew people to Palestine. The issue was not a question of territory, but a question of a people: Therefore, the Assembly [resolution](#) had stressed the urgency and the prime importance of the question of immigration and provided for the date of 1 February as the time when the flow of displaced persons to Palestine should commence. His Committee considered that the nullification of that deadline by the United Kingdom Government had been the most severe blow to the whole [Plan](#), and that the Commission should counteract its effect as much as possible by expediting the flow of displaced persons to Palestine.

Mr. Bergson repeated that the Hebrew people did not need armed support and expressed his regret that he could not share the Commission's view that an international force in Palestine was imperative for the carrying out of the Commission's task. There were many degrees of action between the two extremes of sending an international force to Palestine and maintaining an embargo on arms to Palestine. He reaffirmed his conviction that the Hebrew Republic once created would defend itself and would receive the protection of the Security Council.

In reply to a question by the CHAIRMAN as to the meaning of the phrase "Hebrew Republic" used by his Committee, Mr. BERGSON (The Hebrew Committee of National Liberation) replied that it was the Committee's term for the "Jewish State" referred to in the General Assembly [Resolution](#). He clarified his understanding of the term "Hebrew" as including all the inhabitants of Palestine as well as all European displaced Jews. His Committee preferred "Hebrew Republic" because they considered that the Commission would not be setting up a religious state but would be establishing the independence of a certain area of the world.

Mr. FEDERSPIEL (Denmark) noted that Mr. Bergson defined those who belonged to the Hebrew Republic as the population in Palestine and the displaced persons of Europe desiring to go to Palestine. He asked whether the Committee held the question of general immigration as being a separate matter.

Mr. BERGSON (The Hebrew Committee of National Liberation) replied that the Committee considered the people in Europe who wished to go to Palestine not as immigrants but as those returning to Palestine by right and not by sufferance. They became Hebrews by the process of self-determination. On the other hand, the Jews of America, for instance, were considered by them as Americans. When the States were set up and their immigration laws established, American Jews wishing to go to Palestine should, in the Committee's opinion, apply for visas in the normal way.

The CHAIRMAN asked what was the relationship, if any, between the Jewish Agency and the Hebrew Committee of National Liberation.

Mr. BERGSON (The Hebrew Committee of National Liberation) replied that there was no relationship between the two organizations. His Committee considered the Jewish Agency to be an international body, which, though entitled to represent the interests of the Jews in Palestine, had no right to act as their spokesmen, especially since it was collaborating with the Mandatory Power, which was opposed to the independence of Palestine. The Committee did not challenge the right of the Jewish Agency to be recognized by the Commission as the representative of Jewry, but it did challenge its right to be the spokesman of the Hebrew people of Palestine, inasmuch as a vast part of the population of Palestine who had fought for the liberation of Palestine did not maintain any relations with the Jewish Agency. He defined the Hebrew Committee as being a Palestinian body in exile since 1944, having no direct affiliation with the militant underground organizations in Palestine except insofar as they had the same ends in view, namely the independence of Palestine. The Committee would remain in exile only as long as Palestine remained under the occupation of the United Kingdom.

The CHAIRMAN enquired whether the Hebrew Committee of National Liberation represented any political party of Palestine, had any political affiliations, or was backed by any organization in Palestine.

Mr. BERGSON (The Hebrew Committee of National Liberation) replied in the negative. He stated that the Committee, although a political organization, did not speak for any political party in Palestine as there were in fact none other than international Zionist parties and those collaborating with the Mandatory Power. The Committee concerned itself with the national interests of the whole population irrespective of any political views. It maintained that Palestine had been occupied by United Kingdom forces and had set as its objective the liberation of Palestine. He added that there was wide support of the Committee in Palestine which would become apparent when the forces of the Mandatory Power had left the country and there was no longer fear of British reprisals. He claimed to speak for all those Palestinians who were seeking the independence of their country.

Mr. MORGAN (Panama) enquired whether the Committee had any relationship with the Irgun or Stern Groups.

Mr. BERGSON (The Hebrew Committee of National Liberation) replied that the Committee aimed at fighting politically for independence, while the Irgun and Stern groups aimed at fighting for it militarily. Therefore their aims were the same.

The CHAIRMAN asked whether independence was not the aim of all the parties in Palestine.

Mr. BERGSON (The Hebrew Committee of National Liberation) replied in the negative. The Jewish Agency, he said, were co-operating with the Mandatory Power in Palestine while the latter were merely trying to create chaos. However he would draw the Commission's attention to the second paragraph of page 3 of the document he had submitted which pointed out that the Committee were not anti-British in general and were reluctant to cite such bitter truths about the United Kingdom

Government's policy in Palestine.

Mr. MORGAN (Panama) referred to the statement in [Mr. Bergson's memorandum](#) that the Hebrew people would never accept partition as the final solution, and asked whether the Commission could at present expect the Committee's co-operation in its specific task.

Mr. BERGSON (The Hebrew Committee of National Liberation) replied that although his Committee wanted to make it clear for the record that they thought that the Hebrew people had no right to cede part of their national territory by accepting the establishment within that territory of two alien states, Trans-Jordan and the Arab State, and that therefore it reserved its approval of the [Plan](#) as a final solution, the Committee was there to help the Commission in whatever way the Commission wished them to. They understood, of course, that their proposals to the Commission had to be within the [terms of reference](#) of the Commission. The Committee thought that it would be possible to arrive at a revision of the partition scheme later by negotiations. He affirmed that if the Commission accepted even some of his proposals his Committee would assist the Commission in its work both here and in Palestine, but stated that it was at present impossible and in fact pointless to try to determine the nature of the future political regime in Palestine.

Mr. MORGAN (Panama) asked if Mr. Bergson believed in the principle of democracy, and if so, whether he understood that the Commission had to work with organized groups in setting up the Provisional Councils of Government.

Mr. BERGSON (The Hebrew Committee of National Liberation) replied that he did believe in democracy and that the Committee was equally concerned that the democratic rights of the Hebrew citizens of Palestine, irrespective of whether they were Christians, Moslems, or Jews; for, only if a formula were found making it possible for all the groups to live together in friendship would peace be secured. However, he believed that it was impossible to apply democracy in Palestine today when people were shot for expressing opinions. Therefore, the Commission should, in his opinion, first set up Provisional Councils of Government as best it could.

Mr. MORGAN (Panama) asked what specific assistance the Committee could give the Commission.

Mr. BERGSON (The Hebrew Committee of National Liberation) replied that it could give military co-operation by putting at the Commission's disposal, after its arrival in Palestine, Palestinian officers and men to carry out the Commission's orders.

The CHAIRMAN thanked Mr. Bergson for his statement and his answers to questions.

Mr. BERGSON (The Hebrew Committee of National Liberation) stated that he was most grateful to the Commission for its courtesy in allowing him to come before it and assured the Commission that the Committee would be glad to assist the Commission at any time.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM DELEGATION CONCERNING CERTAIN POINTS WHICH WERE AT PRESENT OUTSTANDING ([Informal Paper UK/49](#))

The Commission took up the five points mentioned in the above [communication](#) and took the following decisions;

Regarding point (a) Mr. FEDERSPIEL (Denmark) observed that he had understood that, as a result of the previous correspondence on the subject of the Palestine Museum in Jerusalem, a Board of Trustees would be set up and that the proposals of the Mandatory Power had been found acceptable. However, he would take up the matter again and give them a reply in writing.

Regarding point (b), it was decided after a brief discussion that the Commission agreed with the proposal it contained, in principle, and that, in this connection, it would have no comment on point (c).

Regarding point (c), it was agreed that the Commission should accept the Mandatory Power's proposal. The International Red Cross Committee could probably provide for the vacuum in other similar services which would be created after 15 May.

It was pointed out that the United Nations Appeal for Children fell in the same category as the matter concerning the International Red Cross Committee. It was agreed that no contribution could be made to the Appeal under the present circumstances.

Regarding point (d), Mr. FEDERSPIEL (Denmark) read a draft he had prepared of a letter to be sent to the International Bureau of the Universal Postal Union. He remarked that the legal position regarding the Postal Union was very obscure and Mr. Stavropoulos (Senior Legal Adviser) had prepared a working paper on it ([document A/AC.21/W.26](#)). It was clear, he said, that the Commission would wish to consult with the Universal Postal Union on the arrangements to be made for the continuation of the postal service after 15 May.

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that there remained the question regarding the differentiation between ordinary and parcel post, also regarding Money Orders. It was agreed that Mr. Federspiel would send a letter to the International Bureau of the Universal Postal Union, with a copy to be sent to Mr. Fletcher-Cooke.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM DELEGATION CONCERNING MILITIA IN PALESTINE ([Informal Paper UK/46](#))

The CHAIRMAN ASKED Mr. FRANCISCO (Philippines) to investigate the matter dealt with by the above [communication](#) .

COMMUNICATION FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM DELEGATION CONCERNING THE FOOD SUPPLY POSITION IN PALESTINE ([Informal Paper UK/51](#))

Mr. REEDMAN (Senior Economic Adviser) read his report to the Commission on financing the food supply of Palestine.

The opinion was expressed that, judging by the Agreement, enclosed with the above document, which the Government of Palestine had entered into with Steel Brothers and Company, the latter provided ready made machinery which the Commission could utilize with respect to the procurement of food supplies. The Company was accustomed to doing the buying and distributing. However, the financing question remained. It was pointed out that the subsidy paid to Steel Brothers was very small and therefore it should be possible for the Commission to retain their services, which would be of great value.

The CHAIRMAN asked about the Company's machinery.

Mr. REEDMAN (Senior Economic Adviser) replied that the Company acted as agent in the procurement of cereals, the allocation being made by the International Emergency Food Council, within the framework of the British Ministry of Food quota for the whole of the Middle East. Sugar supplies were obtained by the Ministry of Food by direct arrangement with the Palestine Administration. In any case, nearly all the shipments were obtained through the Ministry. Fats and oils were only partially provided through the machinery of Steel Brothers, the balance being provided for through Unilever, and other private traders. Also, fats and oils could be obtained outside the British Empire if dollar funds could be found.

The CHAIRMAN observed that Steel Brothers did not therefore provide the total machinery which would be necessary.

Mr. REEDMAN (Senior Economic Adviser) agreed that it did not. It would be necessary in the first place to be able to guarantee payment. Then, the Commission would have to satisfy itself regarding the machinery of procurement. He noted that allocations had been made through the existing machinery for wheat and bread cereals beyond 15 May - in fact, to 30 June. There was a strong case for extending the use of the trading account by the United Kingdom authorities for a period somewhat beyond 15 May as a part of the responsibilities of the Mandatory Power, since then Commission had no way of continuing the supply of food to Palestine without interruption.

It was agreed that with respect to the machinery of procurement, the Commission should address itself to the United Kingdom Governments which was not unsympathetic to the idea.

It was further agreed that the technical side of procurement should be separated from the financing of supplies regarding the former, it was agreed to transmit an official request to the United Kingdom Government asking them not to liquidate their trading accounts until 31 July, as well as to extend the contract of Steel Brothers until that date. The adopted date could be changed if necessary to 15 July in order to facilitate the negotiations.

On the question of the financing of supplies during the transition period, it was decided to approach the United States Government as a feeler for subsequent negotiations for a \$10 million loan to the Palestine Commission either from the United States Treasury or from the Export-Import Bank. It was pointed out, however, that with respect to the Export-Import Bank, there was a limitation in that loans could only be secured if they were spent on products bought in the United States or its dependencies. The original figure of \$4 million submitted by Mr. Reedman in his report, and arrived at by the calculation of the present annual rate of spending for

a period of six weeks, was changed to a tentative figure of \$10 million to cover a longer period. Mr. Reedmen was instructed by the Chairman to prepare an analysis and justification for the amount of the proposed loan. It was agreed that the Chairman should sound out the United States delegation to the United Nations regarding the best procedure to be followed in applying for a loan from the United States Government.

[SECOND MONTHLY REPORT](#) TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL

The Commission decided to defer consideration of the [second monthly progress report](#) to the Security Council until a later date.
The meeting rose at 6.26 p.m.

[Document in PDF format](#)