

FIFTY-FIRST MEETING

Held at Lake Success, New York, on Wednesday, 30 November 1949, at 11 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Nasrollah ENTEZAM (Iran).

Palestine (continued)

ASSISTANCE TO PALESTINE REFUGEES: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

1. The CHAIRMAN invited discussion on the question of assistance to Palestine refugees.
2. Mr. EBAN (Israel) wished to correct a statement appearing in the last part of the first interim report of the United Nations Economic Survey Mission for the Middle East (A/1106), entitled "Discussion of findings and recommendations," which read as follows:

"The Governments of Iraq and Israel are both engaged in finding work for the relatively small number of refugees within their territories, and advised the Mission that they do not immediately need external assistance to this end."
3. The latter part of that statement could not be correctly ascribed to the Government of Israel. On receipt of the Economic Survey Mission's report, the delegation of Israel had consulted by telegram with Mr. David Horowitz who had represented the Government of Israel in its negotiations with the Mission. It appeared that the representative of Israel, far from supporting the view ascribed to him in the report, had drawn attention to the particularly high cost involved in refugee work projects in Israel where wages and the cost of living were higher than anywhere else in the Middle East.
4. Reserving the right to comment on that point later, he added that his Government had always understood that international financial assistance for refugees would be available to all countries in proportion to their efforts to solve the refugee problem.
5. Mr. DE LA TOURNELLE (France) emphasized that his Government continued to abide by the principles set forth in the General Assembly's resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948 and particularly the provision in paragraph 11 dealing with the repatriation of Arab refugees wishing to return to their homes. Unfortunately, the attempts of the Conciliation Commission, of which France was a member, to implement that provision had so far been unavailing. However, the machinery established by the General Assembly's resolution 212 (III) of 19 November 1948 was designed to care for the refugees during the interim period and had functioned satisfactorily. The French delegation paid tribute to the States, organizations and specialized agencies which had so generously contributed to the alleviation of the plight of the victims of the war in Palestine.
6. While the material conditions in the refugee camps had been comparatively good, moral conditions had become critical. The refugees lived in a state of enforced idleness which was thoroughly demoralizing and constituted a potential danger to stability in the Middle East. Accordingly, by the authority vested in it under resolution 194 III, the Conciliation Commission had set up an Economic Survey Mission consisting of representatives of the four countries best qualified to study the situation on the spot. In its first interim re-

port (A/1106), the Economic Survey Mission had outlined a plan for employing a large number of refugees in public works projects in the vicinity of the camps. The programme would not only raise the standard of living and morale of the refugees themselves but also benefit the host countries.

7. The object of the draft resolution sponsored jointly by France, Turkey, the United States and the United Kingdom (A/AC.31/L.46) was to give effect to the recommendations of the Economic Survey Mission (A/1106), with whose conclusions the French Government agreed. The draft resolution also appealed to Member and non-member States as well as to the specialized agencies to make further contributions to the success of the programme. It took note of the warning, by the Chairman of the International Red Cross, in the name of all the organizations engaged in the distribution of relief, regarding the serious effects of an excessively rapid reduction in the number of rations issued (A/1106, annex I (A)).

8. The French delegation was confident that the Member States would reaffirm their interest in continuing United Nations assistance to alleviate the distress of the Arab refugees and effect their moral rehabilitation.

9. Mr. KURAL (Turkey) stressed the gravity of the political and human problem arising from the plight of the Arab refugees. The General Assembly, recognizing its serious implications, had resolved in its resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948 "that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return". It had further instructed "the Conciliation Commission to facilitate their repatriation, resettlement and economic and social rehabilitation..." As everything largely depended on an economic settlement, the Commission, while continuing to negotiate for a political settlement of the entire question of peace and stability in the Middle East, had established the Economic Survey Mission whose terms of reference were to be found in A/1106, appendix D. The new body, on which Turkey was represented together with France, the United Kingdom and the United States, had reported the wretched conditions in which the refugees had been forced to live after their flight into exile. The Mission's interim report confirmed their desire to return to their homes; unfortunately, that desire had not yet been satisfied.

10. The problem could only be solved effectively in the manner advocated in the General Assembly's resolution 194 (III), that is, by the repatriation and resettlement of the victims of the war in Palestine. In the interim period, the situation was deteriorating and emergency measures had to be taken. The assistance given in response to a first appeal had been generous, but it would not be adequate to prevent famine and suffering during the coming winter. Moreover, if the refu-

gees were to continue to depend on charity, it would be all the more difficult and costly to take constructive measures for their rehabilitation at a later stage.

11. In order to avert a further deterioration of the condition of the Arab refugees, Turkey had joined with France, the United Kingdom and the United States in sponsoring the draft resolution before the Committee. Mr. Kural reviewed the terms of that draft resolution, stressing that 33,700,000 dollars would be required for direct relief and works programmes for the period 1 January to 31 December 1950, and an additional 21,200,000 dollars would cover works programmes from 1 January to 30 June 1951. The joint draft resolution contained an appeal to Member States as well as non-member States for voluntary contributions in money or in kind to make up those sums. The joint resolution also provided for the creation of a Near East relief and works agency and an advisory commission composed of representatives of the four States sponsoring the proposal to assist the director of that agency, who would be appointed by the Secretary-General.

12. The delegation of Turkey reaffirmed its view that the adoption of the joint draft resolution in no way conflicted with the terms of the General Assembly's resolution 194 (III) concerning repatriation and resettlement, which it regarded as the proper methods for dealing with the refugee problem.

13. Sir Alexander CADOGAN (United Kingdom) said the draft resolution of which his delegation was a co-sponsor ought to be regarded as a strictly practical approach to the problem of the Palestine refugees. That problem was the product of the whole complex Palestine situation and the rehabilitation of the refugees depended on a solution accepted by all the parties concerned. Since the Assembly could not hope to find a final solution of the larger question of Palestine during the current session, a final solution of the refugee question was equally unlikely during the session.

14. The basic principles of an effective solution of the refugee question had been laid down in the Assembly's resolution 194 (III). The Government of the United Kingdom regretted that so little progress had been made in putting those principles into effect through the agency of the Conciliation Commission, as recommended in the resolution. It urged the Government of Israel to take the necessary positive steps to comply with the elementary principles of justice proclaimed by the Assembly. It also appealed to the Arab States to seek agreement by negotiations either directly, or through the Conciliation Commission, with a view to a final settlement of all questions outstanding between them and Israel. That final settlement would determine the ultimate solution of the refugee problem, and all the parties concerned bore a heavy responsibility to contribute to it.

15. The immediate problem was to ensure that the refugees would not die of starvation. The funds made available through the United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees (UNRPR) were almost exhausted; and a continuation of charity would be unsatisfactory both to the donors and the recipients. Consequently, the Conciliation Commission had established the Economic Survey Mission on 23 August 1949 to consider the economic and social aspects of the refugee problem. The

Mission's report (A/1106) represented a constructive and realistic approach. It suggested a practical means of employing a large number of refugees usefully within a comparatively short time, without prejudice to the final determination of their future. Its works programme would benefit both the refugees and the countries concerned. Moreover, contributors would be glad to know that their contributions were being used constructively and not simply for direct relief which did nothing to raise morale.

16. The object of the joint draft resolution was to give effect to the recommendations of the Economic Survey Mission. It might be criticized for failing to deal with repatriation and compensation. It did, however, constitute a practical measure which must be taken pending a final political settlement. It might also be criticized because it called for an end of direct relief on 31 December 1950. The United Kingdom Government considered that the States directly concerned would have had ample opportunity before that time to reach a final settlement which would make direct relief unnecessary. Finally, it might be criticized for the provision in paragraph 11 for the reduction of the number of rations by progressive stages from 940,000 to 652,000. The UNRPR had interpreted the General Assembly's resolution 212 (III) of 19 November 1948 liberally, so as to cover people who were not technically refugees; yet the time had come to reconsider the expenditure of international funds and to effect economies with a view to putting whatever funds were available to more constructive use. The increased burden on certain Arab States resulting from such economies would be offset by the investment of the savings effected by the proposed Near East relief and works agency (A/AC.31/L.46) in public works which would be of permanent benefit to the countries where they were carried out. The United Kingdom was confident that the Arab Governments would co-operate fully with the agency.

17. He hoped the States not directly concerned in the Palestine question would contribute generously towards the proposed programme; their contributions would do much to speed the restoration of peace and security in the Middle East.

18. Sir Alexander concluded his statement with a tribute to the organizations which had done splendid work in alleviating the distress of the Palestine refugees.

19. Mr. Ross (United States of America) said his delegation associated itself with the remarks made by the representatives of France, Turkey and the United Kingdom in support of the draft resolution of which the United States was a co-sponsor.

20. He recalled that resolution 212 (III) of the General Assembly had recognized that "the alleviation of conditions of starvation and distress among the Palestine refugees is one of the minimum conditions for the success of the United Nations efforts to bring peace to that land". Accordingly, UNRPR, an emergency relief organization, had been established to carry out a programme of providing food and shelter to those unhappy people.

21. Governments, private and voluntary agencies and specialized agencies had generously contributed to the relief programme. Unfortun-

ately the original hope that UNRPR might conclude its operations during 1949 had not been realized, and there was a continuing need to assist the Near Eastern Governments to meet the pressing problem. But there was a limit to the resources which could be made available through philanthropic contributions and contributions by Governments. Furthermore, direct relief alone, although the only available instrument for a short term programme, was undesirable over a longer period because dole and enforced idleness were demoralizing and unproductive. Accordingly the Palestine Conciliation Commission had, very commendably, taken the initiative of constituting an Economic Survey Mission to study the refugee problem on the spot, to make recommendations concerning that problem and to consider means of overcoming economic dislocations created by the hostilities in Palestine.

22. In considering the report and recommendations of the Economic Survey Mission which provided an excellent basis for discussion, the Committee should bear in mind that the Mission, by its terms of reference, had been limited to the study of economic matters as distinct from political problems which were the direct concern of the Palestine Conciliation Commission itself.

23. Although in the short time since its establishment the Economic Survey Mission had been unable to report on all the items within its limited terms of reference, its first interim report (A/1106) included recommendations which foresaw the end of direct relief and made provision for the transition from a programme of direct relief to a programme of constructive public works. These, while limited in scope, would be of ultimate permanent benefit to the local communities concerned and to the countries in which those works were to be executed.

24. The Economic Survey Mission also recommended that direct relief for the refugees should be continued until 31 December 1950 on a scale that would be gradually reduced to avoid duplication between direct relief and work relief. It further recommended stricter regulations for the granting of direct relief so that rations would be distributed only to persons qualifying as refugees and without means of their own to purchase food, clothing and shelter. In that connexion the Mission recommended a reduction of the number of persons receiving relief from 940,000 to 652,000 by 1 January 1950. While the United States accepted the Mission's current estimate of 652,000 as the number of *bona fide* refugees, it was impressed by the consideration that too rapid reduction in the number of persons receiving relief might lead to grave difficulties and by the difficulties faced by those in charge of field operations. In the light of those considerations, the United States delegation did not believe that the target of 652,000 persons on direct relief could be achieved as early as 1 January 1950, though it did feel that such reduction must be achieved by progressive stages at the earliest possible date.

25. It was also clear that further substantial reductions must and could take place when once the work relief programme came into operation and its direct and indirect benefits to local economies were felt with increased force.

26. In order to carry forward the programme of relief and public works, the Economic Survey

Mission had recommended that a new agency, the Near East relief and works agency, should be established within the framework of the United Nations, but with sufficient autonomy and authority to enable it to carry out field operations with a maximum degree of efficiency. The joint draft resolution before the Committee took that recommendation into account. The proposed agency was to be headed by a director of outstanding international reputation, to be assisted by an advisory commission and to be provided with a small expert staff. The agency would have its headquarters in the Near East and would co-operate with local Governments in carrying out the programme proposed by the Economic Survey Mission. It was to be hoped that many phases of the programme would be executed by local Governments with the advice of the agency. It was also proposed that the agency be authorized to consult with Near Eastern Governments, which so desired, concerning measures that those Governments might take in preparation for the time when United Nations funds for relief and work projects would no longer be available.

27. The proposal that the advisory commission should be composed of representatives of the Governments of France, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States, was in recognition of the services of those Governments on the Palestine Conciliation Commission and the Economic Survey Mission, and their very substantial contributions to the work of UNRPR.

28. The report of the Economic Survey Mission indicated that the useful works to be undertaken would cover water and soil conservation, terracing, afforestation, road-building, housing schemes, as well as work on air and sea ports. Such projects would make a substantial contribution towards better economic and social conditions in the countries concerned.

29. It was estimated that the programme of eighteen months duration would cost the equivalent of 54,900,000 dollars for both relief and public works. The average monthly cost of the programme would only slightly exceed the current monthly rate of expenditures for direct relief alone. The delegation of the United States believed that the programme had been conceived within prudent and wise financial limits, and was confident that the necessary amount could be supplied in cash or in kind by voluntary contributions from non-member as well as Member Governments, including those Governments now sheltering refugees.

30. The final report of the Economic Survey Mission to be distributed in December 1949 should serve as a further guide to the new agency for application within the scope of its activities and within the limits of its financial resources.

31. The United States, which had consistently felt that improved economic conditions in the Near East would provide a basis for solution of many of the problems confronting that area, considered the recommendations already made by the Economic Survey Mission as well conceived and desirable.

32. The fourth session of the General Assembly had made a notable contribution toward furthering the technical assistance programme of the United Nations. In the Near East there was a concrete and pressing need for such works and

development to aid the refugees. The report of the Economic Survey Mission offered an opportunity to initiate useful work immediately and would make possible effective co-ordination of all technical assistance programmes in the area.

33. At the time of the establishment of the Economic Survey Mission, the President of the United States had pledged full support of the new Mission and careful consideration of appropriate assistance by the United States in carrying out the recommendations of that body. The resolution before the Committee provided for the implementation of the recommendations of the Mission. While it was impossible for his Government to make commitments without legislative approval, Mr. Ross indicated that, if the resolution was approved by the General Assembly, the Executive Branch of the United States Government would seek from Congress the authority and funds necessary to implement its fair share of the programme envisaged by the resolution during the coming eighteen months.

34. Pending the receipt of contributions from the various Governments, the joint resolution (A/AC.31/L.46) would authorize the Secretary-General to arrange advances from the working capital fund of the United Nations and from the International Refugee Organization (IRO). Since the funds of UNRPR would be exhausted in January 1950, all possible steps must be taken to prevent any lapse in the funds available for the programme, and to ensure the receipt of contributions at a timely rate to make possible the implementation of the programme as recommended.

35. The United States delegation believed that the programme presented in the joint draft resolution offered a prudent and constructive basis for implementing the recommendations of the Economic Survey Mission. The United Nations must continue to assist the unfortunate victims of the conflict in Palestine, but must at the earliest possible moment eliminate the demoralizing effects of the dole, through a programme of useful and productive work which would assist the refugees materially and morally, bring lasting benefit to the communities concerned and contribute to the economic stability, peace and security of the Near East. For all those reasons he hoped that the draft resolution would meet with the Committee's support.

36. Mr. DROHOJOWSKI (Poland) said the problem of the many thousands of refugees who had left their homes as a result of war operations in Palestine was intimately connected with the entire situation in the Middle East. Its solution was to a large extent dependent on the establishment of permanent peace in Palestine. Accordingly the political background of the problem had to be borne in mind.

37. In the first part of the second progress report of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (A/838), "the Arab delegations were unanimous in recognizing the necessity, both for humanitarian and political reasons, of giving absolute priority to the refugee question, over and above all other questions pending between the Arab States and the State of Israel". On page 3 of the same report, the Commission had stressed the intimate connexion between the refugee problem and political questions, and stated that "neither repatriation to Israel nor resettle-

ment in Arab territories can be carried out in satisfactory conditions without a considerable amount of preparatory work of a technical nature".

38. The policies of the United Kingdom and, later, of the United States, had been responsible for the war in Palestine; consequently those two Powers, and particularly the United States, bore the primary responsibility for the tragic situation of the refugees. It would be an over-simplification of the issue to place the blame on either or both of the sides actually involved in the war in Palestine.

39. While recognizing that the United States and the United Kingdom were mainly responsible for the plight of the refugees, the United Nations could not disclaim its obligations in the matter, if only because of its resolution 194 III which stated "that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date".

40. In interpreting that decision, it should be understood first of all that refugees returning to that part of Palestine which was now the State of Israel should in no way impair the safety of that State. Guarantees to that effect should be provided. Secondly, the United Nations should not, in helping the countries concerned to find a solution of the refugee problem, overlook the economic implications of large-scale movements of population. That element was of particular importance in determining the date when refugees should be permitted to return to Israel. As regards the question of compensation to refugees, also provided for in paragraph 11 of the resolution 194 (III), "the loss of, or damage to, property" involved would no doubt be determined by special agreements.

41. It was to be expected that many refugees would, for various reasons, refuse to return to their homes. In that connexion, it was suggested in the Conciliation Commission's Second Progress Report (A/838) that Israel and the Arab States might undertake a programme of public works which would make possible both the return of the refugees and the immediate absorption of those who did not desire to return to their homes. Such a course, if wisely executed, might solve at least a part of the problem.

42. The United Nations was faced with a difficult problem because it had to make a collective decision on a situation which was not of the making of the great majority of Members. It was to be hoped that those mainly responsible would not, at that juncture, obstruct whatever steps might be taken for the welfare of the many innocent victims of the war in Palestine.

43. The Polish delegation, while agreeing with the views expressed in the Secretary-General's report (A/1060) regarding the urgency of the problem and the need for immediate action in order to avoid the termination of the relief programme, especially during the winter period, felt that the Assembly should not lose sight of a permanent solution of the refugee problem with all its implications, political and otherwise.

44. According to a letter from the American Friends Service Committee to the Secretary-General (A/1060, annex I, (C)), prolonged direct

relief would contribute to the moral degeneration of the refugees and might also militate against a swift political settlement of the problem. The greatest obstruction to the present programme was the persistent lack of an over-all political settlement for the Palestine area. Similar views had been expressed by the representative of France and other speakers, and also appeared in the report of the Economic Survey Mission (A/1106). The latter also stated that the continuing political stalemate in the relations between the Arab countries and Israel precluded any early solution of the refugee problem by means of repatriation or large-scale resettlement, and stressed that the prime object was the finding of temporary work. The report frankly admitted that the repatriation of refugees required political decisions outside the Mission's competence.

45. The Polish delegation thought that the General Assembly could, in the near future, ensure the survival of the refugees merely in conditions which would not contribute to a further deterioration of their morale, but for a permanent solution, it must look further ahead.

46. Mr. Drohojowski reserved his delegation's right to comment at a later stage on the joint draft resolution (A/AC.31/L.46). The sponsors

of the draft resolution, and particularly the representative of the United States, had implied that a permanent solution of the refugee problem could be found, without regard to the political situation in the Palestine area. The Polish delegation was convinced that it would be impossible to solve the problem of the refugees until peace was established in Palestine. Unless the United Nations put an end to the practice of interference by the imperialistic Powers in Middle Eastern affairs, a practice of which the refugee problem was an inevitable consequence, that problem would continue to exist as part of a wider situation constituting in itself a grave threat to peace.

47. The Polish Government, which knew from its own experience of all the implications of a refugee problem, was deeply concerned about the fate of the refugees in the Middle East. It also knew that any solution must take into account not only the welfare of the refugees themselves but also the interests of the States concerned. The Polish delegation strongly urged the Committee to recommend such measures as might be considered adequate for the purpose of liquidating a situation which threatened to become a permanent source of friction in an important part of the world.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.

FIFTY-SECOND MEETING

Held at Lake Success, New York, on Wednesday, 30 November 1949, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Nasrollah ENTEZAM (Iran).

Palestine (continued)

ASSISTANCE TO PALESTINE REFUGEES: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/1060, A/1060/ADD. 1, A/1106) (*continued*)

1. RAHIM Bey (Egypt) said that by a strange irony of fate the problem of the refugees, one of the most tragic aspects of the Palestine question, was a direct consequence of a movement, the Zionist movement, which had long been regarded as humanitarian. Although the Zionist appeal for the establishment of a refuge for oppressed European Jews had been based on humanitarian grounds, the methods they had employed to realize their aim had been no less cruel than those practised by the nazis against the Jews. The General Assembly was now confronted with the problem of the Arab refugees, a problem far more extensive and serious than the problem of displaced Jews, which the Zionists had prided themselves on having solved. The Deir Yasin massacre, perpetrated on 10 April 1948, i.e. well before the outbreak of hostilities in Palestine, was a typical example of the methods later employed in other places to drive the Arabs from their homes and country. In that connexion it should be stressed that the terrorist organizations responsible for the massacre had boasted of it in public, and had asserted that the same method used elsewhere had caused the flight of the Arabs. A million human beings, suffering from cold and hunger and in utter despair, had been driven from their homes, deprived of both property and means of livelihood, and were now on the borders of Palestine. A million human beings, Moslem and Christian, who were the rightful owners of Palestine, had been

expelled from their homes so that Jews from all over the world might take their place.

2. The Conciliation Commission, which had been appointed to bring about a settlement of the Palestine problem, including the refugee problem, had worked untiringly for many months with the sincere co-operation of the Arab States; its efforts had, however, proved unavailing. Rahim Bey referred in that connexion to the findings of the first interim report (A/1106) of the United Nations Economic Survey Mission for the Middle East, and submitted by the Chairman of the Conciliation Commission on 16 November 1949. It appeared from that report that the Arab refugees, who had been unable to return to their homes because Israel refused to admit them, had not succeeded in gaining a livelihood in the Arab States which had received them, on account of the limited opportunities of employment in those States. It was worthy of note that the State of Israel had announced its willingness to repatriate 100,000 Arab refugees on two conditions, first, that such repatriation should form part of a general settlement of the Jewish-Arab conflict and secondly, that the 100,000 Arabs to be repatriated should not be sent back to their original homes but should be resettled in areas especially designated by Israel, i.e. by the foreigners at that time in control of their country. Such a procedure would amount to the creation of Arab ghettos in an Arab country.

3. According to the report of the Secretary-General (A/1060), the number of Arab refugees exceeded one million, or four-fifths of the total Arab population of Palestine. Thus, 80 per cent