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AP/21
6 April 1948

UNITED NATIONS PALESTINE COMMISSION

Confidential Correspondence Relating to Attempt to Arrange a Truce in Jerusalem by the President of the Municipal Corporation

The following confidential correspondence relating to the effort of the President of the Municipal Corporation of Jerusalem to arrange a truce in that City, arrived in air-pouch number 3 from the Advance Party on 5 April 1948.

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MUNICIPAL CORPORATION OF
JERUSALEM

13 March 1948

Dear Dr. Azcarate:

I enclose herewith copies of my Peace Project for Jerusalem and correspondence on the subject between representatives of the Arab and Jewish Communities and myself.

You will of course treat them as confidential for the time being though the time may come when it will be good policy to publish them.

I also send for your information a copy of a letter which I have just addressed to the District Commissioner. In it I give further explanations regarding the present and future financial needs of the Municipality.

I know you will want the Municipality kept alive until the new order is installed, when, presumably, we shall be under the care of the international regime. I can assure you that any influence you can exert to help us will be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) R. M. GRAVES

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A/13/94. March 1948

Dear Dr. Khalidi,

Further to my letter of 9th March No.A/13/94 I send you herewith a copy of the Jewish Agency's reply to my Peace Project for Jerusalem.

2. I cannot help thinking that in view of the misery and destruction now being caused to the citizens of Jerusalem without any serious military damage being done to either side, it would be prudent as well as humane to call a halt to hostilities in the City of Jerusalem.

3. Why not follow the suggestion made by the Jewish Agency for a "ceasefire" for an experimental period of, say, fourteen days, which would be long enough to show that the parties were serious, and could be renewed by mutual consent?

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) R. M. GRAVES

CHAIRMAN
MUNICIPAL COMMISSION

Dr. H. F. Khalidi,
Secretary,
Arab Higher Executive,
P.O.B. 1269, Jerusalem.

RMG/CJG.

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C O P Y

THE JEWISH AGENCY FOR PALESTINE

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE

P.O. Box 92,
Jerusalem.

8th March,
1948

Dear Mr. Graves,

I am directed to acknowledge the receipt of your Project of Peace for Jerusalem and to reply as follows:

We are ready, and indeed, eager to secure a truce, armistice, or peace in Jerusalem, for any length of time, so that every man, woman and child in this city may be safe and there be no firing or hostilities within either the new or the old Jerusalem.

Jews object most strongly to the setting up of mutually inaccessible zones in the city. Moslems, Christians and Jews must have free access in equal measure to all parts of Jerusalem. Jews do not wish or require their "safety to be guaranteed by the Arabs." They desire the safety of all who dwell in the city to be guaranteed in equal measure by all parties concerned. They are prepared, for their part, to give an undertaking to that effect.

Yours sincerely

Signed Leo Kohn.

SECRETARY.

R.M. Graves Esq.,
Chairman,
Municipal Commission,
J e r u s a l e m.

CJG.

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C O P Y

THE ARAB HIGHER COMMITTEE

Ref. A/68/1576

JERUSALEM

Jerusalem 6th March 1948

Dear Mr. Graves,

I have read with great interest your peace project for Jerusalem and fully appreciated the motives underlying your good endeavours.

I have discussed the matter with members of the Executive and other responsible persons who are of the opinion that such a move is premature until such time at least as the whole political situation in Palestine is renewed and becomes more settled.

Yours very truly,

(Signed) H. F. KHALIDI

DR. H. F. KHALIDI
Secretary A.H.Executive.

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COPY
A/13/94

SECRET

9th March 1948

Sir:

I have the honour to inform you that I have handed copies of my Peace Project for Jerusalem as amended by you, and with a few minor additions, to Dr. Khalidi and Mr. Ben Gurion.

2. Dr. Khalidi was very polité and thanked me for my initiative, promising to submit the Project to his Executive. He has now sent me a letter, of which I enclose a copy, stating that he and the Higher Executive consider that the arrangements contemplated are premature at the present stage.

3. I saw Mr. Ben Gurion yesterday and discussed the Project which had been in his hands for a few days.

4. He disagreed with the number and the variety of the clauses, and would not accept the proposal that the Jews of the Old City should be guaranteed by the Arabs after the withdrawal of the Haganah which he said was insulting to Jewry, and considered that the proposed restriction of Jews to Jewish areas and Arabs to Arab areas was undesirable and offensive to both Communities.

5. However, he said that he and the Yishuv were very anxious for the peace of Jerusalem and were prepared to undertake that not a shot would be fired by any Jew in the City for a specified agreed period - a week, a month or a year - if the Arabs would make and observe a similar undertaking. When I mentioned that he might have some difficulty in making Jewish dissidents comply with such an undertaking, he said that he would be able to do so.

6. I promised to convey his views to the Arab Higher Executive.

I have the honour to be, Sir,
Your obedient servant,
(Signed) R. M. GRAVES
CHAIRMAN MUNICIPAL COMMISSION

The Chief Secretary,
Secretariat, Jerusalem
Copy to District Commissioner

RMG/CJG.

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PEACE PROJECT FOR JERUSALEM

During the past three months hundreds of people have been killed or injured in Jerusalem in a species of warfare devoid of rules and humanity. Many more have lost property or their livelihood. Nobody has gained anything and no good can possibly come to either side from the continuance of strife and bloodshed in the City.

The vast majority of the inhabitants desire to live in peace and to be freed from the increasing dangers of communal disorders. They recognise that while there must be political disagreements these can never be solved by violence, and that if the life of the City is to survive some modus vivendi must be found to enable the two Communities to live together until their political relationship can be permanently settled.

For this purpose I ask that both Communities should henceforth conscientiously observe a truce of God and the following rules of conduct:

(a) Each Community should for the time being restrict the movement of its members to its own areas which will be policed by its own members of the Municipal Police Force.

(b) Each Community should solemnly undertake not to attack the other by sending armed men into that Community's area or by firing from one area into another.

(c) Each Community should bind itself to exercise the utmost self-restraint and control the violent elements in its midst.

(d) Each Community should refrain from retaliation and reprisals which can only make it more difficult for the leaders of either Community to prevent further attacks and counter-repirsals. This recommendation is the most difficult of fulfilment, but it is the most important of all.

(e) Each Community should fully respect all vehicles carrying the Red Cross, Red Crescent or Red Shield, and should undertake that any such vehicle would not be used for any purpose not authorised by these signs.

(f) Passage by members of one Community through the territory of the other would be permitted in the case of funeral parties or revictualling parties under a flag of truce. A minimum number of omnibuses should be permitted to operate.

(g) No armed men should be permitted to live within any area reserved for the other Community.

(h) All armed men should leave the portion of the Old City occupied by Orthodox Jews, whose safety would be guaranteed by the Arabs if this were done, and the Old Montefiore quarter should be similarly evacuated by all armed men and placed under the protection of British forces and the Municipality.

This appeal has the support and goodwill of all the people of Jerusalem except those who are determined to submerge this sacred City in chaos and bloodshed for political ends.

If these rules of conduct are observed peace, if not at first goodwill, will be restored, and the life of this city, so often destroyed in the past, will be able to continue.

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copy

March, 1948

District Commissioner,
Jerusalem District,
Jerusalem.

Sir:

I have the honour to refer to my letter No. A/2/3"47/48" addressed to you on 1st March, 1948, describing the serious financial situation of the Jerusalem Municipality.

2. Since writing to you I have appealed to the public at a press-conference held on March 3rd to resume payment of Municipal rates and taxes together with the rapidly accumulating arrears, but I am unable to report that the press has supported my appeal in a serious manner and am not aware that any leading articles on our Municipal finances have been published in the newspapers of either Communi Some publicity was of course given to my appeal in the press and the P.B.S. broad cast must have been listened to by a great many persons.

3. Revenue in February was slightly better than in January and amounted to about LP.13,000 as compared with LP.10,500 in the previous month. This increase is almost negligible, if compared with the average of over LP.40,000, which we expect to collect monthly.

Since the beginning of March the collections of water-rates have been approaching the normal but, though we have collected an appreciable sum in liquor licences, the revenue for the month is unlikely to be much more than half of the normal and I expect the collections for the months of February and March to fall short by several thousand pounds of the amount estimated by the Treasurer viz. LP.46,000 (see para 5 of my letter of March 1st). In addition we have incurred an expenditure of LP.2,000 for clearing debris and similar operations in Ben Yehuda Street during the week following the outrage. This expenditure would have been much greater, if a large number of unpaid volunteers had not assisted in the operations.

When I reported my impressions of the scene of destruction to Mr. Stewart, then Acting Chief Secretary, and told him that the cost of restoring the roadway to normal would fall on the Municipality - this being one of our regular duties - he asked me to address him on the subject with a view to obtaining assistance from Government, in the shape of a contribution to the cost of the work.

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4. At the last meeting of the Municipal Commission on 10th March the financial situation was again discussed, and the Commission decided that the extremely grave situation in which the Municipality finds itself, should again be brought to the notice of Government, to whom it should be explained in unmistakable terms that in addition to requiring a sum of probably not less than LP.30,000 to meet our obligations at the end of the current month, we should certainly require important financial assistance to enable us to carry on in the new financial year.

5. It was felt by the Commission, and I personally hold this view very strongly, that the financial misfortunes of the Municipality are not in any way due to extravagance, maladministration, miscalculation or other forms of financial error. The situation which has arisen is the direct consequence of the police of His Majesty's Government and of the United Nations Organization. In the circumstances the Commission are of opinion that they have the right to count upon the aid of the Palestine Government. The latter cannot contemplate with indifference the prospect that the Municipality, for which under the Ordinance they have a direct responsibilit and whose administration they have placed under the direction of a Commission of Government Officers, should be forced to declare itself bankrupt and withdraw services from the citizens.

6. Most of the reasons for the non-payment of rates and taxes enumerated in my letter of 1st March still hold good, but I feel that even more importance should now be given to the fact that the Commission is out of touch with the citizens of both Communities and that they cannot count on enlisting the sympathy and cooperation of the public through the District Officers, whose own situation vis-a-vis the politicians of their Communities must be extremely difficult.

7. I am of opinion that in view of the general unwillingness of the ratepayers to fulfil their financial obligations to a Municipality governed by a body non-representative of the citizens, and in view of the fact that the Commission is in the natural course of events on the verge of dissolution, the High Commissioner should be advised to dissolve the Commission at the end of the current month and set up two independent Emergency Committees representative of the Arab and Jewish Communities to administer the Municipal affairs of their

respective Communities. It would doubtless be necessary to duplicate the financial organization of the Municipality, but I should not expect to have to add to the Staff. In any case the details of a new, if temporary organization, would have to be worked out with the Communities, without whose cooperation we shall be unable to carry on. For the present I would invite you to impress upon Government the need for creating conditions in which we shall be able to count on the aid of the Communities. But I should add that however desirable such aid may be, it would be folly to expect that it would restore the Municipality to solvency in a short time. I, therefore, recommend that Government should at once envisage the necessity for contributing sufficient funds to the Municipality whether by way of a loan or a grant in aid to enable normal services to be rendered, including a minimum amount of maintenance of streets and pavements. Such contributions should continue, I submit, until the Successor Government of Jerusalem is in a position to make funds available for the continuance of the work of the Municipality.

8. I fully understand what difficulties are involved in taking wise decisions to meet this emergency, considering the extreme obscurity of the political situation, but I am convinced that Government will realize that they are in honour bound not to let the Municipality collapse for lack of funds, at any rate for the period during which they continue to administer the country. I also trust that the necessity will be realised, if the Government of Jerusalem devolves upon the United Nations Organization in future, to make arrangements with that Organization to keep the Municipality afloat until normal conditions, including security and a stable administration, are restored.

9. The City Treasurer has prepared under my instructions a summary estimate of revenue and expenditure for the coming financial year based upon the prospect that revenue, with the exception of water-rates, will be very difficult to collect. Apart from the water-rate which, it is hoped, may be collected nearly in full, the Treasurer anticipates a falling off in collections of about 73%. He has reckoned upon a decrease of expenditure of LP.117,000 as compared with the final estimate for the current year, most of the reduction being in expenditure on works. The upshot of the Treasurer's calculations is that a deficit of LP.209,000 on the whole year might be anticipated.

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I forward you a copy of the Treasurer's rough estimate of a "Starvation" budget for the year 1948-1949.

10. Before closing I wish to draw your attention to the views expressed by the Commission on the suggestion that money specifically reserved for certain purposes such as Provide t Fund and Water Department Renewals should be raided and used for the time being to make up the deficit. It has also been suggested that the LP.60,000 promised by Government as a loan to the Municipality for the purpose of erecting dwellings for Ex-Servicemen should be used for paying salaries and meeting other expenditure, and eventually recoveredland utilised for its original purpose. You are aware that no applications for the dwellings in question have been received from qualified members of the Arab Community and that this Scheme will consequently only benefit Jewish Ex-Servicemen. I am convinced that the amount in question should be received by the Municipality and, after deduction of whatever is at present due to the architect for fees, the residue should be deposited in the bank until such time as it may be possible to proceed with the Scheme and on the strict understanding that it should not be used for any other purpose. Any other method of disposing of this money after it passes into the hands of the Municipality would, to put it mildly, cause the most unfavourable comment among the Jewish Community and I trust that the Commission will not be asked to make what I consider an improper use of these monies or the funds referred to at the beginning of this paragraph.

11. I shall be grateful if you will be good enough to convey the contents of this letter to Government at the earliest possible moment and to request that no time should be lost in taking decisions on the various urgent and vital matters with which I have dealt.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

(Signed) R. M. GRAVES
CHAIRMAN
MUNICIPAL COMMISSION

RMG/AL