

UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE

COMMITTEE ON JERUSALEM

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SUMMARY RECORD OF A MEETING BETWEEN THE  
COMMITTEE ON JERUSALEM AND Mr. DANIEL AUSTER,  
MAYOR OF JERUSALEM (JEWISH SECTOR)  
(THIRTEENTH MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE)

Held in Jerusalem on 16 March 1949 at 11 a.m.

Present :	Mr. Halderman	(United States) - Chairman	
	Mr. Benoist	(France)	
	Mr. de La Tour du Pin	(France)	
	Mr. Yenisey	(Turkey)	
	Mr. Eralp	(Turkey)	
	Mr. Azcarate		- Principal Secretary of Commission
	Mr. Barnes		-- Secretary of Committee
	Mr. Daniel Auster		- Mayor of Jerusalem Jewish Sector
	Mr. Gaulan		- Liaison Officer of Government of Israel to Commission

The CHAIRMAN welcomed Mr. Auster and explained the general purpose of the Committee's work. He stated that the Committee would be particularly interested to hear a statement by Mr. Auster on such matters as Holy Places, the economic future of Jerusalem, and his personal experiences as Mayor.

Mr. AUSTER, after giving a brief account of his long career as a member of the Jerusalem Municipal Council and subsequently as Deputy and acting Mayor, explained that he had held office as Mayor of Jerusalem since the end of the British Mandate.

In reply to a question as to which sites in Jerusalem were revered as Holy Places by the Jews, Mr. Auster stated that for the Jews Jerusalem as a whole was a Holy City; there was no place in Jerusalem, Old or New, which was not sacred to Jews all over the world. Jerusalem had been founded by Jews and had become famous through Jews. In regard to specific Holy Places, while emphasising that he was not speaking as a specialist, Mr. Auster explained that in addition to the Wailing Wall, the Old City had contained a large number of ancient synagogues which /which had all

which had all been held in special veneration. He understood that they had been entirely demolished, whereas by contrast the Mosques in Jewish hands in the New City were entirely untouched. In reply to a question regarding access to Jewish Holy Places, Mr. Auster said that he had himself been responsible in 1937-38 for the construction of a new road leading directly from Zion Gate to the Wailing Wall. Prior to this, the only road giving access to the Wailing Wall had been David Street, a narrow, dirty and sometimes dangerous route.

In regard to representation on the Municipal Council under the Mandate, Mr. Auster stated that although there had been a Jewish majority in the city since 1840, the Jews had always been underrepresented on the Municipal Council. The 1947 Municipal Census had revealed a Jewish majority of 63%. The Municipal Council, however, had been composed of six Jews, 4 Moslems and 2 Christians. Further, the Jews paid 70%, and in some instances, 80% of the municipal revenue. The Jews of Jerusalem also considered that the Mandatory had acted unfairly to them by passing legislation which limited the right to vote in municipal elections inter alia to Palestinian citizens, thus depriving large numbers of Jews of the vote.

In general, Mr. Auster's experiences on the Municipal Council had led him to the reluctant conclusion that Arab-Jewish cooperation on such a council was impossible. Not only did the fundamental attitudes of Jews and Arabs differ on the whole question of municipal development, but the system of parity on the Municipal Council had precluded progress in any direction, and in his view was a complete failure. The Jews had formed one block, the Arabs, Moslem and Christian, another, and decisions had only been taken when one member of the Council had been absent. Mr. Auster admitted that Jews and Arabs had cooperated and were still cooperating successfully on the Haifa Municipality; but in his view the predominance of politics in Jerusalem barred any possibility in that city of harmonious and progressive collaboration in municipal affairs.

In regard to the economic development of Jerusalem, Mr. Auster

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stressed that the city's altitude and comparatively cool climate made it a particularly suitable location for light industries, notably the food and diamond industries. Further, the proximity of the Dead Sea had given rise to the development of the pharmaceutical industry in Jerusalem. It was considered that Jerusalem was unsuitable as a site for heavy industries, on account of its distance from the sea. Jerusalem had always been regarded primarily as a city of science and religion and as a seat of Government. Mr. Auster added that although the seat of the Government of Israel was temporarily not in Jerusalem, the citizens of Israel would always regard the city as their eternal capital.

On the subject of internationalization, Mr. Auster stated categorically that he did not believe it would be possible to internationalise Jerusalem. Emphasising that he was speaking as a representative of the citizens of Jerusalem and not as a politician, he declared that the Jews of Jerusalem would never consent to an international government of Jerusalem. Moreover, they wished to have the whole of the city under Jewish control. Mr. Auster explained that in November 1947 he, like the majority of Jews in Jerusalem, had reluctantly accepted the Assembly's decision to internationalise the city. He had been a member of the Jewish Agency's delegation to the Working Committee of the Trusteeship Council charged with the elaboration of the Draft Statute for Jerusalem. The subsequent history of the Statute, the abandonment of Jerusalem to its fate by the world community in May 1948 and above all Count Bernadotte's proposal that Jerusalem should be included within an Arab State had, however, convinced him that the United Nations had never seriously intended to internationalise the city. Since that time he had considered the pretext of internationalising Jerusalem on the grounds that it was a Holy City to be an exploded myth.