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COMMITTEE ON JERUSALEM

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SUMMARY RECORD OF A MEETING
BETWEEN THE COMMITTEE ON JERUSALEM
AND THE DELEGATION OF ISRAEL

held in Lausanne, on Saturday,
13 August, at 10:30 a.m.

Present :	Mr. Eralp	(Turkey)	- Chairman
	Mr. Benoist	(France)	
	Mr. Barco	(U.S.A.)	
	Dr. Serup		- Committee Secretary
	Mr. Arazi)	- Representatives of
	Mr. Lifshitz)	Israel

The CHAIRMAN informed the Israeli delegation that the Committee had thought it necessary to hold the present meeting in order to request clarification of a news item which had appeared in the "Palestine Post" of 3 August 1949 according to which several more Government offices, including the Ministry of Finance's Controller of Banks and the water research section of the Ministry of Agriculture, had been transferred to Jerusalem and representatives had been appointed there of the Ministry of Agriculture's Departments of water and development, livestock, corn crops, fruit trees, protection of plants and forestry.

The Committee also wished to have some explanation on the reported statement made by Mr. Ben Gurion on the occasion of the re-opening of the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem railway. The statement had contained certain remarks which the Committee viewed with deep concern. The Chairman pointed out that the Committee was engaged in a most delicate task in seeking to draw up proposals for an international regime for Jerusalem which would be compatible with the General Assembly's resolution of 11 December 1948 and would, at the same time, satisfy the legitimate interests of the parties concerned. Incidents such as those would only serve to make the work of the Committee, and consequently of the Commission, still more difficult.

Mr. BENOIST requested that the following extract from the "Palestine Post" of 8 August 1949, containing the statement made by Mr. Ben Gurion on the occasion of the re-opening of the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem railway, be read to the Committee and to the Israeli delegation:

"On the arrival of the train at the Jerusalem station yesterday, the Prime Minister, Mr. David Ben Gurion said:

" Mayor of Jerusalem, soldiers of the Israeli army, and friends:

" This train, which is making the run to Jerusalem for the first time since our independence was declared, is a new and strong link in the chain built by the Army, Government and our economic effort for the redemption of Jerusalem. It binds all parts of the country to the capital of the land with strands of steel and love.

"Jerusalem was the burning point in our fight for independence from the very first. Both the cruelty of the enemy and the suffering and courage of the inhabitants reached their highest in this city.

" With blood and fire our enemies planned to cut off Jewish Jerusalem, and, with it, our hope for the establishment of the State; Jewish courage and labour put the enemy's plan to nought;

" When the Commercial Centre in Jerusalem was set on fire, the barbarous crusade of extermination began. With murderers laying in ambush along the whole length of the Tel Aviv - Jerusalem highway, the enemy tried to destroy the Jewish line of communication and to cut off the Eternal City of the Jewish people from every other centre of the Yishuv. Jerusalem was besieged and Jewish inhabitants were starved. The pumping station was blown up at Latrun so that the city might die of thirst. And the Arab invading armies, under Christian generalship, did what even the pagan Nazis and Fascists dared not do in the last World War: They bombed and shelled with unrelenting mercilessness the Holy City of three religions.

" The Christian world did not lift a finger to save Jerusalem. The sacredness of the City was forgotten. No voice of protest was raised against the profaners and destroyers of the Holy City.

" The Strength of Israel, however, will not fail. The Haganah, and after it the Israeli Army, saved the greater part of Jerusalem and freed it. With great courage, the Jews of Jerusalem withstood the ravages of murder, siege, hunger, thirst, shelling and bombing. Like a steel wall of defence and succour stood the few isolated agricultural settlements in the hills of Jerusalem - to the south, north and west.

" Operation Nahshon broke through the siege with an iron fist and captured the hills to the west. The fighters of Latrun gave their all to save shelled Jerusalem, and a New Road, the Road of Valour, was paved in the Shefelah, leading to the besieged capital. The struggle to deliver Jerusalem is crowned by the possession of all the district through which the Jaffa - Jerusalem train once passed.

" The work of the defenders and conqueror has borne fruit: Jerusalem to-day welcomes her first Israel train.

" This is no longer the stop-child train that used to come here after the Jaffa - Jerusalem rail line was built. This is an Israel train, all of whose workers are Jews, and which serves as an economic and strategic bulwark of our independence and our freedom. The valley, the plain and the mountain through which it passes have been conquered and freed by the Israel Army. Both ends of the way are part of the State of Israel.

" I believe that the train will fulfill its mission of restoring Jerusalem's economic importance and of strengthening the historic and political bond between the Jewish people and its eternal capital, and will return the crown to its former glory."

The "Palestine Post" of 8 August also reported the following statement by Mr. Ben Gurion:

.....Stepping from the train yesterday, the Prime Minister, Mr. Ben Gurion, began his speech by saying: "Mr. Mayor of Tel Aviv...." After a pause, followed by a wave of laughter from the crowd, Mr. Ben Gurion corrected himself, adding: "What is now in Tel Aviv will soon be in Jerusalem."

Mr. Benoist thereupon wished to present his delegation's views on the statement Mr. Ben Gurion was reported to have made.

The resolution adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 11 December 1948 had stipulated that the Jerusalem area, in view of the place it held in the Christian, Jewish and Moslem religions, should be accorded a special regime, distinct from that of the other regions of Palestine. According to the terms of that resolution, therefore, the Conciliation Commission, represented by the Committee on Jerusalem, was at present endeavouring to prepare draft proposals for an international regime for the Holy City acceptable to Jews, Arabs and Christians, as well as to the State of Israel, the Arab States and other Member States of the United Nations.

The least that could be said, in all impartiality, of the statements reported in the "Palestine Post" as having been made by the Prime Minister of the State of Israel, was that they were not of a nature to facilitate the work of the Committee on Jerusalem. The French delegation would naturally be glad to have the exact text of the statements made by Mr. Ben Gurion, in order to be able to refute the tendentious comments to which they had given rise.

Mr. Benoist added that he hoped the tenor of the speeches which would doubtless be made in Jerusalem the following Wednesday during the ceremonies to mark the transfer of the ashes of Theodore Herzl, the founder of Zionism, for whom he and his countrymen had always felt the greatest respect, would not increase the difficulties already confronting the Committee.

Mr. BARCO shared the views expressed by the other members of the Committee that anything which might prejudice the Committee's work should be avoided by the parties concerned. He hoped the matters which had occasioned the present meeting would not prejudice the Committee's work and that, moreover, further incidents of that kind would not arise.

Mr. ARAZI requested further elucidation from the Chairman as to the objections raised in connection with the transfer of certain Israeli Government offices to Jerusalem.

The CHAIRMAN, in explanation, recalled that correspondence had taken place on the subject of moving Government offices to Jerusalem between the Conciliation Commission and the State of Israel at the time when the Commission was meeting in Beirut and that the Commission had maintained that it considered such a procedure to be incompatible with article 8 of the General Assembly's resolution which called for a special status for Jerusalem.

The news report in the "Palestine Post" of 3 August would seem to indicate a systematic moving of Government offices from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. The Committee was therefore most anxious to receive some assurance that the capital was not in effect being transferred at the very moment when the Committee was endeavouring to draw up proposals for an international regime for the Jerusalem area.

Mr. ARAZI, in reply, said that the transfer of those Government offices did not mark any new development in the situation but were merely part of the normal return of certain offices which had always had their archives in Jerusalem and had always been housed in certain buildings there. At the time when the mandatory regime was abolished, some had been moved temporarily to Tel Aviv, but since their publications appeared in Jerusalem and considering moreover the housing shortage in Tel Aviv as well as the fact that many officials had their homes in Jerusalem, it was quite in order for such a return to have been effected.

The CHAIRMAN noted with satisfaction the explanation supplied by the representative of Israel, and specifically asked whether Mr. Arazi's remarks could be regarded as a denial that there was a systematic movement of Government offices to Jerusalem for the purpose of making it the capital.

Mr. ARAZI confirmed that view. He further informed the Committee that the report published in the "Palestine Post" of 8 August did in fact contain the full, official text of the speech made by the Prime Minister of Israel. He would appreciate some elucidation from the French representative as to which part of Mr. Ben Gurion's speech had given rise to unfavourable comment.

Mr. BENOIST mentioned in reply that the statement that the railway bound all parts of the country to "the capital of the land", although it could of course be taken to mean

Tel Aviv, would seem to indicate that Jerusalem was still regarded morally as the capital of the country. If Jerusalem were referred to by Mr. Ben Gurion as an integral part of Israel, he did not see how that could be taken to be compatible with the General Assembly's resolution providing for a separate regime for the Jerusalem area.

He wished strongly to emphasize the fact that since the Committee was endeavouring to prepare proposals which would prove acceptable to Jews, Arabs and Christians alike, it was essential that there should be a moral atmosphere favourable to such work. Accordingly it seemed to him that, although it was of course normal for the Prime Minister to congratulate the Israeli forces who had indeed fought with the utmost valour, it was most unfortunate that a phrase such as "Christian generalship" should have been used and a comparison drawn with pagan Nazis and Fascists. As for the statement that the Christian world had not lifted a finger to save Jerusalem, he wished to recall that three or four French officers had died there at the hands of Arabs and Jewish terrorists, not to mention other United Nations officials who had died in pursuance of their duty. He wished to draw particular attention to what he considered a most significant remark, namely that both ends of the way were part of the State of Israel. He found such a view difficult to reconcile with any proposal for an international regime for Jerusalem.

Mr. Benoist accepted the representative of Israel's explanation of the transfer of certain Government offices. In connection with Mr. Ben Gurion's reported statement that what was now in Tel Aviv would soon be in Jerusalem, he pointed out that it would be a most illogical course to follow if everything in Tel Aviv were moved to Jerusalem.

Mr. ARAZI, replying to the various points raised by the representative of France, said first of all that when Mr. Ben Gurion had referred to Jerusalem as the "capital of the land", it should be understood, in the same way as the phrases the "eternal capital" and the "crown", in the biblical sense.

With regard to the expression "under Christian generalship" referring to Glubb Pasha and others, commanding the Arab Legion, he explained that the Prime Minister, in addressing the crowd, had doubtless decided that it would be preferable not to mention those officers by name on such a glorious occasion

and had used this phrase merely to make his meaning clear to his audience. He could assure the Committee however that there had been no intention on the speaker's part to link the Christian world as a whole with Israel's enemies.

He thought however that some justification existed for drawing a comparison with pagan Nazis and Fascists since wholesale destruction of Jerusalem by cannon-fire had been attempted during the recent hostilities, whereas, during the last war, even the Nazis had not bombed either Jerusalem or Rome.

Referring to Mr. Ben Gurion's statement that the Christian world had not lifted a finger to save Jerusalem, he said that although his Government deeply deplored the death of the French officers and other officials, he wished to point out that these deplorable events had taken place, mostly in other parts of Palestine. When wholesale demolition of Jerusalem had been attempted, the Jewry of Jerusalem had stood alone in defending the City. No aid had been forthcoming from the Christian world. The Haganah alone, and later the Israeli Army had by their valour saved Jerusalem.

As for the reported statement by Mr. Ben Gurion that what was now in Tel Aviv would soon be in Jerusalem, he stressed the fact that the remark had been occasioned by a mere slip of the tongue. No undue importance should be attached to reports of that nature which appeared in the press. If all such statements were taken seriously at their face value, there would be cause for anxiety in reports on visits made to Jerusalem by King Abdullah and certain British generals.

With regard to the statement that both ends of the way were part of the State of Israel, he explained that the railway station in Jerusalem did belong to the State of Israel and was operated by Jews. Moreover the Jewish zone of Jerusalem was indeed regarded as part of the Jewish State.

In response to a query from Mr. BENOIST as to whether such a view were compatible with an international regime for the whole Jerusalem area, Mr. LIFSHITZ said that he thought it possible for the Jewish part of the Jerusalem area to be under Israeli jurisdiction and still to form part of an internationalised zone.

Mr. BENOIST thanked the Israeli delegation for its explanations which he would submit to his Government.