

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 Monday, 5 September 1949
at 6:30 p.m.

Present: Mr. Benoist (France) - Chairman
Mr. Eralp (Turkey)
Mr. Barco (U.S.A.)
Dr. Azcarate - Principal Secretary
Mr. Sasson) - Representatives of
Mr. Arazi) Israel

The CHAIRMAN informed the representatives of Israel that the present meeting had been convened following a decision taken by the Conciliation Commission at a meeting held that morning in the course of which certain reports had been brought to the Commission's attention concerning the alleged intention of the Government of Israel to transfer all its Government Departments to Jerusalem in the near future.

The Commission's attention had been drawn to a press report stating that during the debate on the budget in the Knesset, the Government had been asked to explain an item earmarked for a "planning department". The Chairman of the budget Commission, David Purkas, had replied according to the "Palestine Post": "The item refers to our intention to establish the Government in Jerusalem".

The Chairman stated that the Commission had requested the Committee on Jerusalem to ascertain from the representatives of Israel to what extent the information that had reached the Commission was well-founded. He recalled that during the meeting held between the Committee and the Israeli delegation on 13 August (see Com. Jer./SR.47) in connection with the transfer of certain ministries to Jerusalem for reasons such as the housing shortage, the Israeli representatives had given explanations to the entire satisfaction of the Committee. The reports quoted in the present meeting, however, as well as

certain allusions made in Mr. Ben Gurion's last speech, would seem to indicate that the whole Government was being transferred to Jerusalem. Not only would a creation of such a fait accompli completely invalidate the Committee's work in drawing up its proposals for an international regime for the Jerusalem area, it would moreover come as a matter of grave concern for the Commission itself and would seriously compromise the Commission's work at the resumption of plenary meetings in New York.

Mr. SASSON thanked the Committee for having brought the matter to the attention of his delegation.

As for the press report quoting a statement by Mr. Purkas, Mr. Sasson stated that he was not at present able to say whether the statements attributed to Mr. Purkas appearing in the "Palestine Post" had been given in their exact form. In view of the fact that Mr. Purkas was a responsible official of the Israeli Government, his delegation would of course be ready, if the Committee so desired, to request its Government to furnish an explanation and to forward a verbatim text of Mr. Purkas's statement. He did not at present have any information from his Government in that connection. He considered, however, that since, as had been explained in the course of the Committee's previous meeting with the Israeli delegation, some Government offices were returning to their normal premises in Jerusalem, it was natural that part of the budget would be allocated for expenditure in Jerusalem.

The CHAIRMAN stated that the Committee would welcome some explanation of Mr. Purkas's statement be offered by the Israeli Government. Furthermore, he thought it imperative that the Government be aware of the very considerable concern to which such news had given rise within the Conciliation Commission.

Mr. BARCO wished to add that his delegation also considered that it would be most helpful to have a definite statement from the Israeli Government on Mr. Purkas's statement since he was a responsible official making an official explanation on an official programme. In the meantime, he assumed that Mr. Sasson subscribed to the views expressed on the subject before the Committee by Mr. Arazi and Mr. Lifshitz.

Mr. SASSON repeated that he would naturally obtain the full text of Mr. Purkas's statement from his Government for the Commission. He did not think, however, that the Commission should be unduly concerned or should draw hasty conclusions following reports appearing in the press.

He had not intended to raise the question but since he had been afforded an opportunity to do so by virtue of the present meeting, he wished to point out that the Commission did not appear to have shown such concern following reports appearing in the Arab papers concerning Jerusalem and other matters, not to mention statements made by King Abdullah and the Jordanian Government on Jerusalem, as well as actual events which had taken place in the Arab section of Jerusalem, and had not on a single occasion, during the five months that the Commission had been meeting in Lausanne, convened the Jordanian delegation to lodge a protest in that connection. Such a procedure appeared the more surprising in view of the fact that statements made by the King and his Government were official in nature, whereas the reports concerning which the present meeting had been convened were not the responsibility of the Israeli Government and whereas the matter had already been explained by representatives of Israel at a previous meeting.

The CHAIRMAN, in reply, stated that the reasons for such a procedure were clearly drawn from the replies received to the questionnaire concerning Jerusalem which had been transmitted to all the delegations. The Israeli delegation had based its answer on the statement made by Mr. Eban before the United Nations to the effect that Israel would continue to exercise its authority in the New City, although no mention was made of sovereignty, and Israel would also agree to the Jordan Kingdom enjoying the same authority, and would agree to United Nations supervision of the Holy Places. The Chairman was all the more convinced of the sincerity of that statement since, as the greater part of the Holy Places being in the Arab zone, Israel had little to risk by granting the United Nations such supervisory rights.

The Jordanian delegation however, in common with the other Arab delegations, had declared itself to be in favour of the complete internationalisation of the Jerusalem area. Whatever statements might have been made within the Hashemite Jordan Kingdom, that had been the official view communicated to the

Commission. Should the Commission think fit, the possibility of convening the Jordanian delegation was not excluded.

Mr. SASSON also wished to point out that the reservation made by the Hashomite Jordan Kingdom in their reply to the questionnaire to the effect that they would decide upon their position at the time of the final settlement seemed to him to call for grave concern.

He emphasised the fact that, until the question were discussed in the General Assembly of the United Nations, his Government continued to follow the policy outlined by Mr. Eban.

Mr. BARCO wished to express his satisfaction with the explanations made by Mr. Sasson and was glad to see that no change had taken place in the Israeli position.