

UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE

INDEX UNIT

COMMITTEE ON JERUSALEM

RESTRICTED
Com. Jer./W.23
10 June 1949

19 DEC 1950

M. | MEMORANDUM ON THE ORTHODOX PALESTINE SOCIETY
AND ITS PROPERTIES IN PALESTINE

The following memorandum, which was transmitted on 10 May 1949 to the French Representative on the Conciliation Commission by the Orthodox Palestine Society, is circulated by the Secretariat for the information of Members of the Committee on Jerusalem :

1. The Orthodox Palestine Society arose in Russia in 1882 as a private, lay, scientific and charitable institution with the following purposes :
 - (a) to study the Holy Land and spread information on it in Russia,
 - (b) to institute schools and exercise enlightening activity among the Orthodox population in Palestine, to support the local Orthodox people, monasteries and churches, and
 - (c) to render assistance to Russian pilgrims in the Holy Land by means of building for them hospices for accommodation and by decreasing expenses of travelling to the Holy Land, and to help them to visit the Holy Places by means of arranging caravans to such places, publishing guide books, etc.
2. During its more than half a century's activity the Orthodox Palestine Society at various times acquired and built many valuable properties all over Palestine and in particular in Jerusalem, namely :

Jerusalem.

 - (1) Land in the Russian Compound with the following buildings :
 - (a) Revenue House, Jaffa Road.
 - (b) Nicolaevsky Hospice.
 - (c) Ten stone barracks in the yard of Nicolaevsky Hospice.
 - (d) Elisavetinsky Hospice.
 - (e) Mariinsky Hospice.
 - (f) Eighteen stone barracks on the northern boundary of the Russian Compound.
 - (g) Hospital and isolation ward.
 - (h) House in Jaffa Road near the building of the hospital (in joint possession with the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission).
 - (i) Two huts near the Northern gate of the Russian Compound.
 - (j) A hut near the Southern gate.
 - (k) Stone shop near the Southern gate.

- (2) Land in the King George Avenue.
- (3) Serguievsky Hospice near the Russian Compound.
- (4) Veniaminovsky Hospice, Street of the Prophets.
- (5) Land near Damascus Gate with constructions.
- (6) Alexandrovsky Hospice, Old City, - Holy Place with antiquities and a Church.
- (7) Land near Bab Hotta.
- (8) Premises at Guethsemany, - Holy Place with a Church and cemetery.
- (9) Land on the slope of the Mount of Olives.

Bethlehem.

A piece of land with a fruit garden.

Beith Djala.

A piece of land with six buildings.

Ain Karem.

A piece of land.

Jericho.

A piece of land with a garden, two houses and appurtenances.

Haifa.

- (a) A piece of land near the sea shore.
- (b) Three storied house.
- (c) Two storied house and a garden.

Nazareth.

- (a) Two and three storied hospice with appurtenances.
- (b) A piece of land with a house.
- (c) A piece of land with a garden.
- (d) A piece of land near Tabor Road.

Affuleh.

A piece of land.

Cana.

A piece of land.

Er Ramah.

A piece of land with two storied house.

Ramallah.

A piece of land.

3. As under the Turkish regime the foreign juristical bodies were not entitled to possession of immovable properties and the Turkish laws provided a registration of such properties on a borrowed name (nameh mustear), the majority of the above-mentioned properties were registered in the name of the Russian Imperial Government and members of the Imperial family with a view to securing in this way a particular protection of the rights of the Society, or in the names of members and employees of the Society itself, and some of the said properties, built by the Society, were not registered at all. A

few properties during the period of the Mandate were transferred from the name of the formal owner to the name of the Orthodox Palestine Society under special laws issued by the Mandatory powers.

4. Although the abovementioned properties were registered in the name of the Russian Imperial Government and other formal owners, the Orthodox Palestine Society was always the actual and lawful owner of the same. During a period of about 35 years before the Russian Revolution the Society enjoyed all these properties and used the same for its purposes under the statute, received incomes from the same, paid taxes and repaired them without any interference in all acts of the Society in respect of the said properties either on the part of the Russian Imperial Government, its representatives, or of other formal owners, and without giving at the same time any accounts to the abovementioned formal owners or to the Russian Imperial Government regarding the same properties.
5. The Mandatory regime in Palestine brought no change into the situation described above, and the Administrator of the Russian properties appointed by the Government of Palestine managed the abovementioned properties of the Orthodox Palestine Society on behalf of the same, collected the revenues therefrom and handed over the said revenues to the institutions of the Society in Palestine for the purposes of its Statutes.
6. In view of the expiration of the Mandate a special body was instituted by a new law, namely the Orthodox Palestine Society (Administration of Properties) Order, 1948, under which the administration of the abovementioned properties is exercised by the Board of the Administrators:- Mr. B. Antipoff, Mr. S. Staroskolsky and Mr. A. Wahbe.

Conclusion.

As it is quite clear from the above information :

- (1) The Orthodox Palestine Society is a private institution exercising Christian purposes in the Holy Land,
- (2) The abovementioned properties are a private property of the Orthodox Palestine Society.
- (3) Such a position existed during a period of more than half a century and should be maintained at present.