

UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE

COMMITTEE ON JERUSALEM

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MEMORANDUM
PRESENTED TO THE CONCILIATION COMMISSION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS
BY THE CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES
OF THE JEWISH SECTOR OF JERUSALEM

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The following memorandum is circulated
for the information of the Committee on Jerusalem

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N O T E S

I

While the United Nations continues to examine the Palestine problem, the Catholic institutions of Jerusalem desire to explain to the Conciliation Commission their situation in Palestine and more particularly in the Holy City.

In the conflict opposing the Arabs and Jews we are neutral and we remain completely neutral.

Our institutions have already suffered too deeply; we feel that their very existence is threatened; our duty is to neglect nothing in an endeavour to save them. It is for this reason that we address an urgent appeal to the United Nations, in order that it may bring about, in favour of our institutions, the triumph of justice and of right.

II

We recognise the right of the Jews, whether they are Zionists or not, to live in peace and to create for themselves a free and independent nation.

Individual or collective deportations, forced expropriations without equitable compensation - when they are not motivated by reasons of the deepest gravity - are contrary to the most elementary ethics. The individual has rights which States themselves must respect.

On 14 March 1937 Pope Pius XI, in his Encyclical "With Burning Sorrow" vigorously condemned the racial theories which have caused terrible suffering to Christians and above all

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to Jews. All nations which still harbour some feelings of humanity, justice and fraternity have the duty to do their utmost to prevent the return of this sanguinary madness and to grant freedom to the thousands of human beings who are behind the bars of concentration camps and who have committed no crime other than that of belonging to their race or of professing their religion.

But was it necessary, in order to suppress the problem of "displaced persons" to create another equally inhuman problem? Are 600,000 Arabs to give up their property and their homes, simply to hand them over to 200,000 Jews?

III

Since the Arabs have accepted the decisions of the United Nations concerning Jerusalem and the Holy Places, we shall confine ourselves here to refuting the arguments put forward by the Jews against the internationalisation of Jerusalem and its surrounding area.

THE INTERNATIONALISATION OF JERUSALEM

I. A HISTORICAL FACT: JERUSALEM - THE HOLY CITY

Jerusalem is not an ordinary city, a city like any other, it is a HOLY CITY. It is in fact the religious capital of all the dispersed Jews (12 or 13 millions). It is also the religious capital of all Christians (over 670 millions). The Moslems claim it as one of their principal holy cities, and they number over 250 millions. The fact that it is thus a Holy City makes Jerusalem a city unique in the world, a city which does not belong exclusively to its present inhabitants but to the Jews, Christians and Moslems of the whole world. Because of this sacred character it was respected by all the belligerents during the last two world wars.

In vain for the last year have Jews and Arabs battled desperately for Jerusalem, respecting neither the most venerable sanctuaries, nor places of worship, hospitals, foreign institutions, educational or charitable; in vain did the Arabs seize the Jewish quarter of the Old City, blow up the synagogues, demolish all the houses, devastate the Jewish cemeteries on the Mount of Olives; in vain did the Jews invade the Arab sectors of the New City, looting all the houses and
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installing everywhere inhabitants of their own race; in vain does the Jewish press proclaim that since the United Nations vote of 29 November 1947 the situation of Jerusalem has changed, that national aspirations and the victories of Israel's soldiers demand that Jerusalem shall be Jewish; despite profanation and destruction, Jerusalem remains the Holy City, and as such cannot be the exclusive domain of either Jews or Arabs.

The reasons which led the United Nations to place Jerusalem and its surrounding area under an international regime are as valid today as they were yesterday, for they do not depend on political and military fluctuations. Ruse and force can oppress the truth and the right, but they cannot suppress them.

II. NECESSITY OF AN INTERNATIONAL REGIME FOR JERUSALEM AND THE HOLY PLACES OF PALESTINE

In order to save what can still be saved and to prevent the return of massacres and destruction as ruinous for one side as for the other, it is indispensable that a just and strong Government should ensure order and peace. Such a Government cannot be either Jewish or Arab, for feelings run so high and interests are so divergent that the fighting might start again at a moment's notice. The signing of the armistice agreements between the State of Israel and the Arab States does not greatly reassure us, for everyone knows that the present partition of the country has only been accepted by the Zionists as a first stage. The goal to be achieved is the conquest of the whole of Palestine, of Transjordan and of a part of Syria and the Lebanon, with Jerusalem as capital. The Irgun and the Stern Gang do not conceal their aims in this respect. (See Annex No. 1, "Aims of Political Zionism")* If the leaders of the State of Israel appear to be satisfied with the present boundaries, it is purely for reasons of political prudence. In reality they think exactly as do the Irgun and the Stern Gang, and this explains the violence with which they oppose the internationalisation of Jerusalem as voted by the United Nations. The presence in Palestine of an international police force could, in fact, obstruct and even thwart their plan of conquest. They would doubtless

*In files of Committee on Jerusalem

accept the placing of the Holy Places of the Old City under the nominal, but not the effective, protection of the United Nations and they declare that they are ready to ensure, through their Police and their Army, the protection of the Holy Places and religious institutions.

All these proposals and others which might be made along the same lines are totally unacceptable to Christians. In order that peace may reign in Jerusalem, a well-armed police force is indispensable, for we cannot count either on a Jewish or on an Arab police force.

At the beginning of the disturbances of 1929 the Arab police took sides with the Arabs and the Jewish police with the Jews. The British officers thus found themselves without men, and were unable to maintain order. The same situation prevailed at the time of the British withdrawal last year.

It is true that the Government of Israel has organised a police force and an army, but can we rely on them to protect and defend our rights? Certainly we cannot. A perusal of the documents in Annex 2* to the present memorandum will amply justify our point of view.

In this Annex there is no mention of the looting of Arab houses organised either by the army or by the civil Government, but only of the profanations and thefts committed by the Israeli Army in regard to neutral religious institutions, during the truces or after the signing of the armistices. All these documents were communicated at the time to the Jewish authorities, who admitted their exactitude. We summarise them briefly below as follows:

A. PROFANATIONS

Notre Dame
de France

In the Main Chapel, groups of soldiers of both sexes were surprised in the act of performing improvised dances, round a harmonium, in the Choir. The brass doors of the tabernacles had been forced, the white silk veils had been torn away, the figures of Christ taken from the crosses and carried off. The Chapel of the Sacred Heart had been transformed into a dance-hall and aW.C.

* "File of Notre Dame de France", in files of Committee on Jerusalem.

Hospital of Saint Louis	A figure of Christ and three statues in the dispensary were dismantled and smashed to little pieces, which were found in sacks of earth.
Sanctuary of the Dormition	Figures of Christ and statues broken. Ornaments crumpled and torn.
Chapel of the Cenacle	Several Crucifixes broken.
Chapel of St. Francis in Katamon	Four statues broken.
Chapel of the White Fathers at Ain Karim	Tabernacle smashed in, door torn off. Statue of the Virgin smashed to atoms.

B. LOOTING

We make no mention of simple thefts committed by isolated soldiers on their own account, but only of thefts which can only have been committed by apparently organised groups, under the leadership or with the at any rate tacit authorisation of those in command of them.

Notre Dame de France	<p>The well known Hospice used to be furnished and equipped to receive 350 persons. During its occupation by the British army, all the furniture and equipment had been put together in the part reserved for the use of the Community.</p> <p>With the exception of the ornaments, of a good part of the altar linen and of the library, during the twelve months of the occupation of Notre Dame de France, all or part of the following were removed: the furniture of the rooms (beds, tables, cupboards, wash-stands, carpets, etc.), china, kitchen utensils, cutlery, dining room tables, linen. The telephone switchboard and the carpenter's room had been looted. All this material had been collected together in closed rooms. The military authorities had even placed on the doors notices in Hebrew forbidding entry to them. The looting was carried</p>
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out above all during the truces uninterruptedly, in spite of protests and of the promises of the Jewish authorities (See "file of Notre Dame de France", Annex No. 2)*

Abbey of the
Dormition

The same looting as in the case of Notre Dame de France. The Benedictine Fathers having been expelled, the army was able to carry on its activities without protests being lodged. Everything was not stolen, since recently a Benedictine Father, authorised to visit the Abbey, was in a position to note that the military had left in its place -- one tap.

Franciscan
Club in
Katamon

Complete looting of all the material of the Club and of the Chapel.

School of the
Sisters of
Notre Dame

All the school furniture and the entire library was removed. From the beginning of the occupation, the Fathers of Zion had obtained from the Jewish authorities the authorisation to transport this furniture to their Ratisbon house, but the military authorities refused to allow them to do so. A few days later, everything had disappeared.

Country house
of the Fathers
of Zion at Abu
Ghosh

The Fathers had taken back to Jerusalem all their furniture. After having occupied the house for several months, the Israeli army took away, on their departure, all the doors, including the entrance door, all the windows and all the shutters. In the farm, the looting was even more thorough, for the soldiers even took away the roof, leaving only the walls. It should be stressed that the Fathers of Zion had given free shelter and food, in their Jerusalem institution, to over 300 Jewish refugees, including all the children, numbering a hundred, of the Maale Hamisha Colony, adjacent to their country house at Abu Ghosh.

*In files of Committee on Jerusalem

It should be noted that all these cases of looting, and many others which we have not been in a position to check, were carried out almost uninterruptedly, in spite of protests from religious and consular authorities. All the promises of the Jewish authorities that a stop would be put to them and that the stolen property would be returned have remained up to the present a dead letter.

Can we after this put our trust in the Government of Israel when it offers to take under its protection the Holy Places and the religious institutions?

Can we at least count on the police of this new State? We cannot count on it either. Experience has taught us that when it deigns to stir, it invariably arrives too late; that it sometimes instigates inquiries, but practically never brings them to a conclusion. As for complaints lodged with it, they apparently are carefully filed away and preserved, no doubt, for the Day of Judgment.

The Bornadotte case is typical of this manner of proceeding.

On 17 September 1948, the United Nations Mediator and Colonel Sérot were odiously assassinated. The police only began their inquiry 24 hours later, and the Hagana promptly enrolled in its ranks the soldiers who had belonged to the Stern Gang, the supposed murderers, who thus escaped all police investigations. Their leader was arrested ... Trial ... Verdict and condemnation to 8 years' imprisonment... General amnesty... Elections to the Constituent Assembly... and Friedmann-Yellin, leader of the Stern Gang, is elected Deputy!

III. THE REFUGEE QUESTION

In the Jerusalem sector, the great majority of the Arabs who had to abandon their houses or who were expelled from them were Christians. The Talbieh, Katamon, Baka, Mousrara, Jaffa Road and Mamillah Road Quarters were almost entirely occupied by Christian families. These families had always lived on good terms with the Jews, even during the disturbances of 1929; they had too much trust in the internationalisation of Jerusalem to foresee that they would be attacked.

The Israeli press and Government unjustly reproach the Arabs for having abandoned their houses and their property, and claim the right for themselves to take them over as "res nullius". They forget that, if the non-combattant Arabs

left, it was because they knew what fate was in store for them. The sack of Deir Yassin, whose entire population (women, children and old people) was savagely massacred by the Israeli army, had been a sufficient warning for them. Those who wished to remain were either forced to leave under pain of death or else sent to concentration camps.

Why do these camps contain those persons who, wishing to return to their homes in the Jewish zone, refused to sign an undertaking urged upon them to go to the Arab zone or to Transjordan? What is the reason for this moral pressure on civilian prisoners? Is it not in order to eliminate from the New City all Christian elements, and to thus oblige the religious institutions to close their doors? Why does Israel stubbornly refuse to allow the Arabs to return, while at the same time it loudly professes that it has no dearer wish than to live in brotherhood with them? This obstinacy, a fruit of Jewish racialism, runs the risk of widening still further the gap between Jews and Arabs and of creating in the whole world a wave of anti-semitism whose effects will be as disastrous for the young State of Israel as for the millions of Jews who live outside Palestine. "Caveant Consules" ! They should re-read the introduction to "The Jewish State" in which Herzl wrote:

"The Jewish question exists wherever the Jews live in any considerable numbers. Where it did not formerly exist, it is imported by Jewish immigrants."

It will certainly not be long before the Israeli press and Government invokes, to justify a new invasion of Arab Palestine, the notorious "Lebensraum" of Hitler. But why, if they lack space, do they make such difficulties over authorisation to leave for those of their own people who do not wish to remain because they find that the reality does not correspond to the promises made by Zionist propaganda?

IV. RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND FREEDOM OF EDUCATION

The State of Israel will no doubt incorporate in its Constitution freedom of worship and of education. Will these freedoms be effectively assured?

In passing, we would stress the difference between the mentality of the Jews of Jerusalem and those of other towns. In Tel Aviv and Haifa, for example, there is as yet no religious

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fanaticism, whereas in Jerusalem it is very pronounced. Non-Jewish Christians will not be too much troubled, but they will have to live in their homes as in a ghetto, while Christians of Jewish origin, not being allowed to work for Jews, will have to leave the country - if they are allowed to leave.

The United Nations voted on 10 November 1948 Article 18 of the Declaration of Human Rights which reads as follows:

"Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance."

Will Israel, who is now a member of the United Nations, accept this Declaration?

Will Christian educational institutions be able to receive Jewish pupils without being molested?

Will Jewish families be able to entrust the teaching and bringing up of their children to Christian schools?

If we ask these questions it is because great pressure has always been brought to bear, above all in Jerusalem, by the Jewish press and Jewish organisations on families who wished to make use of this freedom. The Jewish population does not scruple to announce to all and sundry that the Arabs and the foreigners, with the exception of tourists, have nothing more to do in the State of Israel.

C O N C L U S I O N

To sum up, we ask:

1. That the decision of the United Nations concerning the internationalisation of Jerusalem and its surrounding area should be put into effect.
2. That a strong neutral police force, supported if necessary by an auxiliary Jewish and Arab police force, should ensure order, peace and freedom.
3. That the Arab refugees should be able to return to their homes.
4. That the Declaration of Human Rights, voted by the United Nations, should be respected by the State of Israel.

This memorandum has been signed by:

Father Terence W. Kuehn, O.F.M., Director, Terra Sancta College

Father V. Mestre, Superior of St. Pierre de Sion (Ratisbonne)

Father Pascal St. Jean, Superior of Notre Dame de France

Rev. John O'Kourke, S.J. Superior of the Pontifical Biblical
Institute at Jerusalem

Father Maurus Killer, O.S.B. Senior Abbatiae Dormitionis at
Mount Zion

Sister Séraphine, Regional Superior, Sisters of St. Joseph of
the Apparition

Sister Francoise, Superior of the French Hospital in Jerusalem

Sister Marie Marguerite Thérèse de Sion, Superior of the
Orphanage of Notre Dame de Sion, Ain Karim

Sister Geneviève Chaland, Superior of the Hospice St. Vincent
de Paul

Sister Jeanne d'Arc, Superior of the Pensionnat St. Joseph

Sister Eustachia, Provincial Superior of the Sisters of
St. Charles
