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NOTE BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

The attached letter dated 30 June 1980 from the Chargé d'Affaires a.i. of the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations was addressed to the President of the Security Council.

In accordance with the request contained therein, the letter is circulated as a document of the Security Council.

Annex I

Letter dated 30 June 1980 from the Chargé d'Affaires a.i. of the
Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations
addressed to the President of the Security Council

On instructions from His Eminence the Cardinal Secretary of State of His Holiness, I have the honour to request you to circulate as a Security Council document the attached text published in the 30 June issue of Osservatore Romano, which reflects the position of the Holy See concerning Jerusalem and all the Holy Places. The English translation, which was made from Italian, may be regarded as authorized.

(Signed) Monsignor Alain LEBEAUPIN
Chargé d'Affaires a.i.

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Annex II

Text on the question of Jerusalem published by the
Osservatore Romano (30 June 1980)

JERUSALEM

In his speech to the President of the United States of America, Mr. Jimmy Carter, on Saturday 21 June 1980, the Holy Father spoke of Jerusalem in these terms: "The question of Jerusalem, which during these very days attracts the attention of the world in a special way, is pivotal to a just peace in those parts of the world, since this Holy City embodies interests and aspirations that are shared by different peoples in different ways. It is my hope that a common monotheistic tradition of faith will help to promote harmony among all those who call upon God."

In His Holiness's words we find references to permanent historical features (the "common monotheistic tradition of faith"), to present facts (the "interests and aspirations that are shared by different peoples") and to a "hope" for Jerusalem (that "harmony among all those who call upon God" may be promoted in Jerusalem, in the Middle East and throughout the world).

History and contemporary reality

Throughout the centuries Jerusalem has been endowed with deep religious significance and spiritual value for Christians, Jews and Moslems.

The Holy City is the object of fervent love and has exercised a constant appeal for the Jewish people, ever since David chose it as his capital and Solomon built the temple there. Within it much of the history of Judaism took place, and the thoughts of the Jews were directed to it down the centuries, even when scattered in the "diaspora" of the past and the present.

There is no ignoring either the deep attachment of the Moslems to Jerusalem "the Holy", as they call it. This attachment was already explicit in the life and thoughts of the founder of Islam. It has been reinforced by an almost unbroken Islamic presence in Jerusalem since 638 A.D., and it is attested by outstanding monuments such as the Aksa Mosque and the Mosque of Omar.

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There is no need to point out that Jerusalem also belongs spiritually to all Christians. There the voice of Christ was heard many times. The great events of the redemption, the passion, death and resurrection of the Lord, took place there. It was there that the first Christian community sprang up, and there has been, even if at times with great difficulty, a continuous ecclesiastical presence. Numerous shrines indicate the places connected with Christ's life and, ever since the beginnings of christianity, there has been a constant flow of pilgrims to them. Saint Jerome is one of the most illustrious witnesses to the Christian presence. In the picture of the world presented by Dante Alighieri in his Divina Commedia Jerusalem is seen as the centre of the earth.

At present all three communities, the Christian, the Jewish and the Moslem, are part of the Holy City's population and are closely linked with its life and sacred character. Each community is the "guardian" of its shrines and holy places. Jerusalem has a whole network of organizations, reception centres for pilgrims, educational and research institutes and welfare bodies. These organizations have great importance for the community they belong to and also for the followers of the same religion throughout the world.

In short, the history and contemporary reality of Jerusalem present a unique case of a city that is in itself deeply united by nature but is at the same time characterized by a closely intertwined religious plurality. Preservation of the treasures of the significance of Jerusalem requires that this plurality be recognized and safeguarded in a stable concrete manner and therefore publicly and juridically, so as to ensure for all three religions a level of parity, without any of them feeling subordinate with regard to the others.

The religious communities of Jerusalem and the international community

The three religious communities of Jerusalem, the Christian, the Jewish and the Moslem, are the primary subjects interested in the preservation of the sacred character of the city and should be partners in deciding their own future. No less than the monuments and holy places, the situation of these communities cannot fail to be a matter of concern for all. As regards the presence of the Christians, everyone is aware of the importance, both in the past and still today, not only of the Catholic community with its various rites, but also of the Greek Orthodox, the Armenian and the other eastern communities, not forgetting the Anglican groups and others springing from the Reformation.

In short, the Jerusalem question cannot be reduced to mere "free access for all to the holy places." Concretely it is also required: (1) that the overall character of Jerusalem as a sacred heritage shared by all three monotheistic religions be guaranteed by appropriate measures; (2) that the religious freedom in all its aspects be safeguarded for them; (3) that the complex of rights acquired by the various communities over the shrines and the centres for spirituality, study and welfare be protected; (4) that the continuance and development of religious, educational and social activity by each community be ensured; (5) that this be actuated with equality of treatment for all three religions; (6) that this be achieved through an "appropriate juridical safeguard" that does not derive from the will of only one of the parties interested.

This "juridical safeguard" corresponds, in substance, to the "special statute" that the Holy See desires for Jerusalem: "this Holy City embodies interests and aspirations that are shared by different peoples". The very universalism of the three monotheistic religions, which constitute the faith of many hundreds of millions of believers in every continent, calls for a responsibility that goes well beyond the limits of the States of the regions. The significance and value of Jerusalem are such as to surpass the interests of any single State or bilateral agreements between one State and others.

Furthermore, the international community has already dealt with the Jerusalem question; for instance, UNESCO very recently made an important intervention with the aim of safeguarding the artistic and religious riches represented by Jerusalem as a whole, as the "common heritage of humanity".

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THE UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATION AND JERUSALEM

As early as its second session, the General Assembly of the United Nations approved on 29 November 1947 a resolution on Palestine of which the third part was devoted to Jerusalem. The resolution was confirmed in the next two sessions, on 11 December 1948 and 9 December 1949 while on 14 April 1950 the Trusteeship Council approved a "special statute" for the city on the basis of the Assembly's decisions. The solution proposed by the United Nations envisaged the setting up of a "corpus separatum" for "Jerusalem and the surrounding area", administered by the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations.

This "territorial internationalization" of Jerusalem was not of course put into effect, because in the 1948 conflict the Arab side occupied the eastern zone of the city and the Israeli side, the western. The position of the United Nations does not appear at least as yet to have been formally revoked. The General Assembly, as well as the Security Council, has repeatedly, beginning with the resolution of 4 July 1967, insisted on the invalidity of any measure taken to change the status of the city.

The Holy See considers the safeguarding of the Sacred and Universal character of Jerusalem to be of such primary importance as to require any Power that comes to exercise sovereignty over the Holy Land to assume the obligation, to the three religious confessions spread throughout the world, to protect not only the special character of the City, but also the rights connected, on the basis of an appropriate juridical system guaranteed by a higher international body.

HOPES FOR JERUSALEM

In his address to President Carter, the Holy Father referred to the fact that the question of Jerusalem "during these very days attracts the attention of the world in a special way".

The positions of the two sides on the question of sovereignty over Jerusalem are known to be very far apart; any unilateral act tending to modify the status of the Holy City would be very serious. The Holy Father's hope is that the representatives of the nations will keep in mind the "common monotheistic tradition of faith" and succeed in finding the historical and present day reality of Jerusalem reasons for softening the bitterness of confrontation and for promoting "harmony among all those who call upon God". The aim will be to ensure that Jerusalem will no longer be an object of contention but a place of encounter and brotherhood between the peoples and believers of the three religions and a pledge of friendship between the peoples who see in Jerusalem something that is part of their very soul.
