

GENERAL
ASSEMBLYASSEMBLEE
GENERALEA/AC.13/P.V.27
15 July 1947
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON PALESTINE

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE TWENTY-SEVENTH MEETING (PUBLIC)

Held at the Y.M.C.A. Building, Jerusalem, Palestine,
Friday, 11 July 1947, at 11:00 a.m.

PRESENT:

The CHAIRMAN:	Mr. Sandstrom	Sweden
	Mr. Hood	Australia
	Mr. Rand	Canada
	Mr. Lisicky	Czechoslovakia
	Mr. Garcia Granados	Guatemala
	Mr. Viswanathan	India
	Mr. Entezam	Iran
	Mr. Blom	Netherlands
	Mr. Garcia Salazar	Peru
	Mr. Fabregat	Uruguay
	Mr. Simic	Yugoslavia

SECRETARIAT : Mr. Hoo, Assistant Secretary-General
Mr. Garcia Robles, Secretary.

CHAIRMAN : I declare the Twenty-seventh Meeting open.

The hearing has been delayed owing to our having been detained on the flight we made over the Holy Land this morning.

Adoption of the Agenda.

CHAIRMAN : The agenda contains two items: One, public hearing of representatives of the Church of England and the Church of Scotland; and public hearing of representatives of the Jewish Women's Organizations of Palestine.

/Shall we adopt

Shall we adopt that agenda ?

(No objection voiced)

CHAIRMAN : It is adopted.

Public hearing of representatives of the Church of England and the Church of Scotland.

CHAIRMAN : I understand that His Lordship The Right Reverend W.H. Stewart, Bishop of the Church of England in Jerusalem, and the Reverend W. Clark-Kerr, Moderator of the Church of Scotland in Jerusalem will speak on behalf of these Churches. Will His Lordship please come up to the platform ?

(His Lordship, the Right Reverend W.H. Stewart, took a seat at the table).

Rt. Rev. W.H. STEWART (Bishop of the Church of England in Jerusalem): The Moderator of the Church of Scotland and I have already submitted in writing a joint memorandum prepared especially for the meetings of this Committee. Each of us has also submitted a copy of memoranda put in by our respective Churches to the Anglo-American Committee last year. I presume that you do not wish us to read today the memorandum which we submitted some time ago, and which is, presumably, in your hands. It is, perhaps, inevitable that there should be a little repetition between the documents that we put in last year and the joint document we have put in this year. I hope there is not so much repetition as to make them valueless.

The Moderator and I are here, of course, prepared to refer, each of us to our respective documents of last year, and both of us to our joint document of this year. Speaking for myself, in both of those documents I have tried to confine myself to those aspects of the problem which seem to me to be rightly the concern of the representative of a religious body.

/In the documents

In the documents that we have put forward as more or less an official expression of the views of our respective Churches, we have tried not to volunteer political views or to impinge on political questions. For myself, I feel -- and I believe my colleague feels -- that if the Committee wishes to ask us questions on the more political side, it is our duty, and we shall be prepared to answer them, but that so far as anything that we volunteer is concerned, we have endeavoured to keep on the religious and the ecclesiastical side.

May I, sir, first refer to two items in these two documents, one of which, I think, requires correction, and one of which is perhaps liable to misunderstanding. In the larger document, which I submitted in March, 1946, and on the first page of it, there is a sentence towards the end of the first paragraph in which it may seem that the Churches somewhat complain of the attitude towards our schools that was taken by the Department of Education. I should like so far to correct that as to point out that since March, 1946, when that document was written, there has been a change in the Directorate of the Department of Education, and a change also in their attitude towards our schools. In so far as this thought suggests any complaint against the Department of Education, I believe they would allow me to say in so far as it suggests a complaint of theirs against our mission schools, I should wish to withdraw it entirely in view of the circumstances of the present day.

A second point I would like to make is in regard to our joint memorandum of this year. At the close of the first paragraph there is a sentence about the Mandatory Government which reads as follows: "The Mandatory Government is mainly Christian in its composition, but for that very reason has so scrupulously refrained from any bias in the Christian interest

/that it has

that it has sometimes been accused of being biased in the opposite direction". I am given to understand that some people have taken that to be a criticism of or a complaint against the Government. It was meant to be a sincere compliment. But I do think it is true that sometimes in its very considerateness to the religious feelings, practices, and customs of non-Christians, the Government has, for example, been reduced to being rather hard on the religious feelings of Christians.

Mr. Chairman, will you allow me, with no discourtesy, to suggest an example within ^{your} our own experience. I do know that Christians have been hurt that this Committee, in its right and proper respect of the holy days of other faiths, have found it necessary to sit on Sundays. You will forgive me for saying that, sir. It is an example that sometimes occurs with the Government and it is something that we bear in mind with regret.

Now, sir, may I turn to what I think are the two main factors in our joint document of this year. We have emphasized, perhaps somewhat severely, what we regard to be really the lack of true religious freedom in this country, particularly when religious freedom is interpreted, and we hold it should be, to allow freedom of conversion from one faith to another. We have also said, at the bottom of page 4, that we know there are many, far more than is commonly recognized, both amongst Arabs and Jews, who deprecate, though they dare not say so, the intransigence of their own political leaders.

/May I, sir,

May I, sir, in support of those two statements, record very briefly four incidents that have taken place in my own study since this memorandum was submitted to you.

Only yesterday I received the enclosed letter which is addressed to you, sir, with the request that I submit it. I do not know the author. I have never heard of him. He writes describing for your benefit the experiences of a Jew who wishes to worship in a Christian church. I think the rest of the letter speaks for itself, and it is not for me to read it. It is significant perhaps that the writer sends it through one of my clergy to me to pass on to you in the hope of preserving his anonymity, though he does sign his name to the letter.

Equally, only yesterday, I was appealed to to assist in getting out of this country an Arab convert to Christianity, now ruined and in fear. Both these things happened to me yesterday.

A few days ago, again since this memorandum was written, two Christian Arabs came to me. They were from Trans-Jordan, which I know excludes them from your purview, sir. But the parallel is interesting. They came to complain to me of the results of independence and its effect on the Christian minority. I said to them: "Yes, but did you not clamour for independence?" And, the answer was: "Of course we did. We dared not do anything else."

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139 The day after that three Orthodox Jews came to call on me, and they asked me to plead with this Committee for the right of the strictly orthodox Jews to be organized as a religious community, apart from the Knesset Israel, and its organization, the Vaad Leumi. It is, I believe, a fact that such application has been made several times in the past to the Palestine Government and has been refused. All that they are allowed to do is individually to opt out of the Jewish community. I asked them how many there were of them. I had no means of checking their figure, but the answer was "twenty-five thousand now and another twenty-five thousand in a week, if we were allowed to be a religious community."

That group at any rate, and indeed the persons concerned in all those four incidents that I have tried to retell, are to my mind evidence of the point that I am trying to make -- that on every hand there is a bigger element of cooperation -- may I say of cooperability - than the political leaders either recognize or admit, and that you will find that element amongst the religious people. It may seem strange that the people of whom I have spoken, other than actual converts to Christianity, should come to me with their complaints and their difficulties and ask for my help. The fact remains that they do, and I am proud of it. I believe that it is there that you will find the

Arab and the Jew having no quarrel with one another. It is in the godly and religious elements on both sides that you will find the makings of peace. And, it is to me a tragedy that a group, neither of my own race nor of my own creed, should come to me to ask to be allowed to be a religious community outside the community of their own people, once the mainspring of the religion of the world.

Sir, I have no more to say, myself, unless in answer to questions. I do not know if my colleague wishes to speak. I will be happy to answer questions if I can, or if I may.

CHAIRMAN: Thank you, your Lordship.

Rt. Rev. CLARK-KERR: Have you something you would like to add to what his Lordship has said?

Rt. Rev. CLARK-KERR: There is very little that I would like to say, Mr. Chairman, except merely to emphasize that memoranda from the Christian stand point to other commissions have usually confined themselves to stressing what we call briefly among ourselves "Shrines and Souls", that is, the protection of Holy Places and religious liberty. As we have stressed in our present memorandum, in thinking of Holy Places we are not merely thinking of a few ancient buildings in Jerusalem and Bethlehem; to at least the Western Christian mind this whole country is a Holy Land and perhaps even more holy than the few buildings. The whole atmosphere of the country, its tradition and its history, are sacred: there is no part of it that lies outside of our sense of reverence and sense of its sacredness.

In answer to the question of religious liberty, which has been much stressed already, no matter what statutes are on the statute books of countries, and particularly this country, religious liberty is not protected by lines written into the law. Something more is required, and that something more we have tried to underline in this memorandum - that is, that whatever system of government is formulated for this

/country...

country in the future, because of Christian world interest and because of our desire not only for Christian liberty for ourselves but for the other religions in the land, we feel that each religion should be adequately represented in the administration of the country. This has led us a little further in this memorandum than others have gone. We have attempted to stress that some form of cooperation between the communities, and particularly between the religious people in the communities, should be worked out for the development of the country along religious, cultural and humanitarian lines, seeking to lift the country out of the realm of politics and put it back to where it has been -- a Holy Land, not only for the three great faiths, but pointing the way to cooperation and enlightenment for the whole world.

CHAIRMAN: I thank you. I read in the joint memorandum on the last page that some form of positive and constructive cooperation between the communities is the inescapable conclusion. Does that also refer to the political issue?

BISHOP STEWART: I think, sir, it must mean that at least in any projected form of government, assuming this to remain a unitary state, the Christian voice in government and the Christian share in any governing body should be sufficiently clear and strong to maintain justice towards the Christian minorities as well as to non-Christian majorities.

CHAIRMAN: Do you want to develop how you have sought this cooperation? Do you feel that you will enter into these political questions or do you wish to avoid touching on them?

BISHOP STEWART: I rather think, sir, that perhaps the Moderator could answer that more fully than I. It is true that we considered and finally decided not to submit any possible draft scheme. We felt it was not our business. I

do not think, myself, that it would be possible to ask the representatives of small Christian bodies to produce a scheme of government for this country which started from their own desire for a fair share in it. I do think that if we were presented with any projected scheme we might be able to say how and where we thought Christian interests should be protected. But I should not, myself, feel competent to begin from that and then find myself having to deal with all the rest.

CHAIRMAN: Will you say then how the Christian interests ought to be protected?

BISHOP STEWART: Only if we knew the shape of government in which we were asking for protection, sir, could I answer that.

CHAIRMAN: Well, then, I do not want to push my question.

Mr. VISWANATHAN (India): I can quite understand that when the right of conversion is exercised, if a Jew or a Moslem happens to be converted to Christianity the social group to which he belongs gets up in arms against him and uses pressure of various social forms against him. But how exactly would you provide in a constitutional or administrative way against such kind of pressure on the new convert? I do not think such a provision has been made in the government or the administration of any country, and I am afraid this is a phenomenon which is common to the whole world.

BISHOP STEWART: Yes, it does seem to me, and we have really tried to make the point, that there is a difficulty about religious liberty which has not been adequately realized. If we, as Christians, ask for religious liberty
/for the

for the Christians, we are of course prepared to concede religious liberty to anyone else. But there are tenets in, for example the religion of Islam, which in themselves are in conflict with the religious liberty of other people. I do not know. It is a matter for lawyers how that can be evaded. We have suggested that at least any future government should have a strong enough Christian element in it to protect us against that kind of thing. I am not lawyer enough to know how it can be done, but I have in mind a Moslem work on Moslem jurisprudence which makes it perfectly clear, for example, that difference of religion is in the Moslem faith and the Moslem law, which are identical, I think. Difference of religion is an absolute bar to inheritance. Therefore, a Moslem adopting any other religion is automatically disinherited. It is commonly said and believed that the penalty for apostasy from Islam is death. I am, I believe, right in saying that that is nowhere clearly laid down in the "Koran", but that the Hadith traditions are unanimous in interpreting the Koran in that way. Disinheritance and death are not religious sanctions but civil ones, and the difficulty we are suggesting is that it is undesirable that civil penalties should be attached to change of religion. You asked me how to get out of it. I wish I could answer you. I was hoping that this Committee would answer the question.

Mr. VISWANATHAN (India): When we sit down, for example, to draw up the constitution of your country, how exactly would we provide for this -- if we tried to provide for this?

CHAIRMAN: I did not hear the question, please.

Mr. VISWANATHAN (India): If we are trying to draw up some kind of a constitution for this country, how exactly would the Lord Bishop like us to put this sort of thing into

/the constitution.....

the constitution as a safeguard for the right of conversion?
Do you have any concrete suggestions in the matter?

BISHOP STEWART: I do not think, quite frankly, sir, I should like to see any regulation of any faith which imposed civil sanctions abrogated even at the cost, which I admit, of to that extent infringing on somebody else's religious liberty.

Mr. VISWANATHAN (India): In the recent past there has been no danger of any kind to any of the Christian institutions in this country. The world, as a whole, has helped Palestine preserve the sacred character of everything in this land. Is there any special need for any special action to be taken in the future? Are not the present conditions satisfactory?

BISHOP STEWART: These are, I think, two different points, sir. In regard to the first, there being no danger to Christian institutions, I wish I could agree. I could name two or three Christian schools which we have been obliged to evacuate because we were told it was not safe for our European staffs to work in them. I could name one which had a bomb deposited upon its doorstep only three or four weeks ago. I do not think it is entirely true to say that there is no danger, though I do not think any of us Christian workers would for a moment wish to make much of the danger or to exaggerate it -- and, indeed, most of us cheerfully, frankly, laugh at it. But, it is there. The other question, as to the character of the whole country, seems to me quite a different point. The danger there is not a question of physical danger; it is a danger of secularization of sacred things and of sacred places. It is a danger of, shall we say, "corruption of atmosphere." We have spoken of it to some extent in our memorandum, and the Anglo-American Committee referred to it in one particular case which happened to catch their eye, though it was by no means the

most outstanding case they could have selected. I think we do feel very strongly that, for example, Galilee has a character and association for the 700 millions of Christians which is being slowly, and sometimes rapidly, undermined.

Mr. VISWANATHAN (India): One more question. You have suggested a share in the government for the Christians. Would you base that share of Christianity in the Government of Palestine on the basis of the Christian minority population of the country, or on the basis of Christianity being one of the three religions concerned with this country?

BISHOP STEWART: I think, sir, the answer is in our memorandum. I would say, sir, as I have said before, that it would depend on what proportion of representation was given to other religions. It is at the moment a fact that the interests of the two other great religions are being weighed not on their proportion in the country, but on their proportion in the world. All Jewry is interested in the Jews in Palestine. All Islam is interested in the Arabs in Palestine. And, all Christianity is interested in the Christians in Palestine. If the first two were to be adequately represented, we plead the third should be equally represented.

Mr. VISWANATHAN (India): Not merely on the basis of the minority in this country?

BISHOP STEWART: Not merely on the basis of its minority.

CHAIRMAN: Are there any further questions?

(No response).

CHAIRMAN: Then, I thank you.

The next item on the agenda is the hearing of representatives of the Jewish Women's Organisations of Palestine, and I understand that for these Organisations, Mrs. Rachel Katznelson-Rubatchov and Mrs. Rebecca Sieff.

Will you please come up on the platform.

I recognise Mrs. Katznelson-Rubatchov.

(Mrs. Katnelson-Rubatchov spoke in Hebrew. The following translation was circulated).

MRS. KATZNELSON-RUBATCHOV: The Council of Jewish Women's Organisations in Palestine has asked for the privilege of appearing before you, not in order to repeat the comprehensive evidence which you have already heard from the representatives of the Yishuv and of the Jewish Agency, but because we feel that a consideration of the woman's role in the unbuilding of the Jewish National Home might help to clarify that problem for which you have been delegated to find a solution.

Among our people, as among all modern peoples, woman's part in public life has been growing, and there is no doubt that a great part of this progress is due to the activities of the organised women's movements, which have a history of some 100 years in the democracies of Europe and America.

The women's organisations in whose names we are speaking are part of this international women's movement. But the women's movement in the Yishuv and in Zionism has two distinctive features. Although our movement also concerned itself with safeguarding women's particular interests, its main concern was to take its full share in the upbuilding of the Jewish National Home. This is natural for women of a persecuted and oppressed people struggling for freedom. Another characteristic is the urge to develop basic services in health, education, and social welfare - which is typical of the women of a pioneering people.

In order to show to what extent and in what manner the upbuilding process has been influenced by the work of women, I shall cite only a few instances, since the special memorandum submitted by the Council of Jewish Women's Organisations in Palestine describes these in greater detail:-

One of the aims of the Zionist movement has been to imbue Jewish youth with a desire to do manual labour - primarily agricultural work. This objective could not have been so largely achieved if the women's movement had not educated generations of young women here and in the Diaspora to respect physical work, particularly on the land. A considerable part of the effort and the money which women's organisations have poured into the country, have been for the agricultural training of girls. In the years since the first Girls' Farm School was established in 1911, thousands of women farmers have come out of the educational institutions set up and maintained by the women's organisations. And it must be remembered that it was these formerly city-bred girls - far removed from work on the land - who played so large a part in agricultural development in Palestine. Out of their desire to create a people of workers and qualify the women for all fields of work, general vocational training in addition to agricultural became one of the chief aims of the Zionist women's movement in Palestine and abroad.

In a community of diverse origins and backgrounds, Hebrew is today the unifying element. It is the language spoken in the home and in social life; it is the medium of instruction in the school. A common Hebrew culture is being fashioned from the rich sources of our past and the creative efforts of the present. We could not have attained this without the effort of the Jewish mother, who not infrequently had to learn the language with her children and the active cooperation of the woman in every field of our cultural endeavour in the country.

The transition was difficult for the immigrants who came several decades ago - a transition from an established society in Europe to a strange and desolate land, in which there was no organised Government, no housing, no medical facilities, and only primitive means of transportation. The pioneer women of that period, despite rampant infectious diseases and the trials of a climate hard on people from northern climes, succeeded in raising families - the first generation of modern Palestine - a healthy working generation filled with the joy of living. And so the foundations of the new Yishuv were laid.

These self-same mothers, having raised their children under such adverse circumstances, later turned their energies and talents to creating organisations that covered the country with a network of educational and social welfare institutions for the care of children of mothers working outside their homes, of children of new immigrants, of underprivileged children. It was a Zionist Women's Organization in the United States which, at the end of the first World War, laid the foundation of a health programme for Palestine to combat endemic diseases, to train nurses, to extend medical aid and provide special care for the mother and child. Without this early service pioneering would have been even more hazardous.

Hadassah

During your tours of the country, you saw some of the medical and public health institutions, the schools, the immigrants' hostels, which were established through the efforts of women in Palestine and abroad. The funds which made these projects possible did not come from the rich. They are the result of the intensive work of women in Palestine and of their sisters in the Diaspora.

And at this point I should like to make a remark which seems to us pertinent. You have seen our beautiful farms and institutions - but there is another side to this picture of which you may not be sufficiently aware - the daily struggle for existence of part of the Yishuv.

The first years of their adjustment are difficult for all immigrants, and how much more so for the refugee of today, who has lost all his dear ones and been robbed of all his earthly possessions by the Nazis. And in contrast we have an immigration of families with numerous children who are making their way into Palestine from neighbouring countries - from the Yemen, from Syria, from North Africa. They come out of love for Palestine and out of a deep need to escape from a life of degradation and serfdom. Their numerous children are a blessing to Palestine, but they require education and care. The women's organisations have gladly taken upon themselves the task of initiating social welfare and health institutions, but they have received little assistance from the Government.

And there is another important sphere of life (of which you will undoubtedly hear in detail from representatives of the Jewish Federation of Labour) in which there

in which there has hardly been any Government assistance, and that is the provision of proper working conditions and the assurance of a fair wage for women workers.

It was only through our efforts in co-operation with the organised workers' movement that these objectives have to some extent been achieved, and that women in the liberal professions receive equal pay with men, while women can continue to work in all occupations after marriage. In the same way, in our democratic Jewish community - the woman enjoys the right to vote and to be elected to municipal bodies (except in mixed communities where this right is denied) and are represented in the elected bodies of the Yishuv and the Zionist movement.

As pointed out at the beginning, it is not the fight for her rights which is the main objective of women's public work in our community. We do not rest content with our contribution to the development of our agricultural economy, education and literature, nor with the fact that Palestinian women took their full share in the war effort and volunteered in their thousands to the auxiliary women's services and war industries. It is quite clear to us that these achievements are practically and ethically valueless if we are to remain a minority in this country and the gates of Palestine are to remain closed for Jews who are waiting to begin life anew in Palestine.

While still a small group of women pioneers we began to assume our responsibility towards the Diaspora. In the pioneer movement which served as a reserve corps for the upbuilding of the country, men and women from Palestine worked together. Palestine women travelled from country to country and brought to a dispersed people the message of Zionism and organised the women of the Diaspora for the upbuilding of the Homeland. Jewish women partisans from Palestine died in foreign lands, in the hope that they might save those destined for extermination by the Nazis. Thousands of Palestine women joined the active services not only to fight the common foe but because they wanted to reach Europe and help their kinsmen, the victims of Nazism.

Together with the Yishuv the Jewish women of Palestine resisted the edicts of the White Paper which closed the gates of Palestine and forced refugee-laden ships to be

ships to be sent away to Cyprus - and in these acts of resistance precious lives were lost.

And today women from Palestine are in the D.P. camps of Germany, Austria and Italy; among them are mothers who left their families in Palestine. They are taking care of children and orphans and young people who were the victims of Nazi terror. They are restoring their faith in humanity and filling them with the hope of beginning life anew. And they are able to do so because of what Palestine means to them.

Last winter I worked for several months in a German camp in the American zone. There I met boys and girls and young people, and thus I can touch on this question. And I say to you, not only as a Zionist but as a Jewish mother: there can be neither spiritual nor physical rehabilitation for these children so long as they remain in the camps.

Quite apart from any basic political solution, we ask you to urge that the children and young people from the D.P. camps in Europe and Cyprus be allowed to come to us. Here we mothers will receive them. Here they will not lack affection. And if it is experience which is required for the bringing up of these thousands of boys and girls, our teachers, nurses, social workers in the Yishuv, have the necessary experience.

We believe that there can be no argument against this plea of ours, that a people mourning a million children, put to death by foul hands, should yearn to give to the few survivors an opportunity to live in the Homeland, for only the Palestine air and climate - physical and spiritual - can give them what they need.

May the rescue of these children be your first step towards paving the way for a solution that will bring to an end the distress of the Jewish people.

CHAIRMAN: I suppose that the writing we have been given contains the exact translation of your address, and therefore I think we need not have an interpretation given to us now. I thank you, Mrs. Katznelson-Rubatchov.

/I recognize

I recognize Mrs. Sieff.

Mrs. SIEFF: Mr. Chairman and gentlemen of the Committee, I have been asked to preface my statement by enumerating the organizations that are represented here today: Hadassah - the Women's Zionist Organization of the United States of America; WIZO - the Women's International Zionist Organization; the General Council of Women Workers; the Zionist Women's Organization in Palestine; Mizrahi - the Women's Organization in Palestine and in America; the Pioneer Women's Organization in America; the Women Workers' Organization of Mizrahi; the Women's League for Palestine in New York; the Jewish Women's Equal Rights Association of Palestine. The Mizrahi, as I dare say you have learned, represents the religious organizations.

I should like to join my colleague in expressing our appreciation of your consent to give us a hearing. We would not have further burdened your heavy agenda had we not felt that such is the plight of our people that the voice of the Jewish woman should not go unheard before this international forum.

In order to complete the picture drawn by my colleague of the woman's part in the upbuilding of the Jewish National Home, I should like briefly to outline the role played by women in the Zionist World Movement. The original constitution of the Zionist Organization as adopted by the first Zionist Congress fifty years ago gave full and equal rights to women, thus emphasizing its democratic and progressive character. In consequence, the first women Zionists were able, from the outset, to devote all their energies to the task of enrolling the Jewish woman into the Movement and enabling her to make her specific contribution to the renaissance of her people. As it is a sine qua non for the modern woman to fulfil a dual role, so in addition to these specific tasks, Zionist women have also played a notable part in the raising of the great national funds.

In the memoranda submitted to you by the various women's organizations and in the joint summary presented by the Council of Jewish Women, we have endeavoured to give a concise record of their specific character and activities.

These organizations sprang up under regimes with such diverse social and economic conditions as those which prevailed in Tsarist Russia, the free United States of America, liberal Great Britain, extending to all countries of Europe, to the Latin Americas, the British Commonwealth, and even to the smallest Jewish communities in the Far East. The essential unity of the Jewish people is reflected with crystal clarity in this very fact that Jewish women under such diverse conditions and in face of the special difficulties common to all women, have organized themselves for one fundamental ideal - the rebuilding and return to their Ancient Homeland. Throughout all the bitter centuries of the exile, the Jewish woman has joined in the daily prayers for the return to Zion and zealously guarded those age-long religious traditions and festivals indissolubly bound with the life and soil of the Land of Israel. In the lullabies she sang to her child, the Jewish mother expressed this deep yearning and passed it on from generation to generation. To translate this deep-rooted faith into terms of concrete world-wide organization, embracing close on half a million women, has been no light task. It has indeed demanded untiring devotion and constant personal sacrifice.

Women had to learn the significance of the woman as pioneer, to shoulder the responsibility for clearly defined tasks, of which my colleague has given you a picture, and finally, to raise the funds required for their material realisation in the land of their prayers.

The rise of the Nazi regime with the incredible suffering it brought in its wake for the Jewish people, demanded an immediate intensification of our efforts and a wide extension of all our institutions and services. That we were able in no small measure to meet the situation, was due to the basic

soundness of our work and our organization.

It was a woman - herself a potential victim of the Nazi fury - who conceived the idea of Youth Aliyah - the rescue of Jewish youth from the Fascist hell by bringing them at an early age to Palestine, the one place in the world which could compensate these victimized children for the loss of their parental home and offer them the prospect of a full life as free human beings. This moving idea made a powerful appeal to the maternal instincts of Jewish women the world over, who accepted these children spiritually and materially as their precious charges - brands snatched from the burning! It was a great woman in Israel to whom was entrusted the task of absorbing them into the life and soil of Palestine. In this she had the enthusiastic cooperation of the whole of the Yishuv which opened its arms to embrace the disinherited.

Another new problem now presented itself - the reorientation of the older women from Nazi-occupied Europe, coming in the main from the so-called middle classes. New and very practical ways and means had to be evolved in order to enable them to adjust themselves to the entirely new conditions of life in Palestine. Again, the Jewish woman everywhere responded to the appeal of her uprooted sisters and found the material wherewithal for this great work of rehabilitation.

Then came the war. Millions of Jews trapped in the European inferno - every avenue of escape barred and bolted! In this desperate plight our Zionist women came to the forefront, displaying invincible courage, qualities of leadership and heroism under conditions never known before in human history. What gave them this courage? It was the strong sense of national pride and dignity which they had developed during two decades of intensive Zionist activity. They had already rejected every possibility of individual escape, in order to hold together their

shattered and disrupted communities in the different stages on that road of martyrdom which led to the concentration camp and the gas-chamber. They kept alive the cultural heritage of the Jewish people so long as there was breath in their bodies. They risked and lost their lives in that strangest of all smuggling activities, spiriting away the children over forbidden frontiers or hiding them in hospitable non-Jewish homes. Many of them went underground to find their way to the partisans, fighting by their side on mountain and in forest. In that last heroic stand of the warsaw ghetto, that unique battle for freedom in the world's history, our young women fought and fell. A mere handful have survived to tell the tale.

In the countries at war the Jewish women, despite the heavy demands naturally made upon them as citizens for the war effort, did not for one moment neglect their work for the national upbuilding. On the contrary, they increased their activities, firstly in order to fill the gap caused by the obliteration of our Federations and Groups in Europe; secondly, to meet the new demands which I have already described and which gained further momentum even during the war; and thirdly, to take care of and participate in the financial responsibility for large numbers of women, young people and children who came to their respective countries as refugees.

It is significant that the vast majority of the young people who so escaped looked upon this period only as a transition and preparation for their future life in Palestine. In England, for example, since all the young people had either joined the Forces or made a valuable contribution to the war effort as agricultural workers, there was no obstacle placed in their way of becoming British citizens. This they did not accept since their one desire was to come to their own Homeland. Many are already here; the others are eagerly awaiting their

day.

But whatever we have been able to achieve, what does it avail us if, after the great extermination, the remnants of our people still languish in Displaced Persons Camps and still live in daily terror of their lives in countries to which they were compelled to return, since the one way they would have chosen is barred to them? Perhaps only those, who, like myself, have visited the D.P. camps in Germany can fully realize this bitter humiliation that the survivors of the first people outraged by the Nazis should be placed in a category lower than those who are responsible for launching this hideous war upon mankind, instead of having been made the first consideration of the victorious nations.

I should like to interrupt my statement for a moment to express our gratitude to UNRRA for what it has done in Europe, and to countries like Sweden and Switzerland, which did all they could to help to rescue and take care of the thousands that found their way over the Nazi-occupied countries to their hospitable shores.

Despite this, such is the attachment of our women to their ideal that even behind the barbed wire of the Displaced Persons camps they have spontaneously re-grouped themselves under the banner of Zionism, not only trying to prepare themselves for the future but organising once again social and cultural service for their fellow-prisoners.

Only men and women desperate to go home and nowhere else, could muster up the strength to break through these barriers imposed by their so-called liberators to sail the high seas in such perilous craft and under such indescribable conditions. Amongst them are large numbers of expectant mothers and women with babes in arms. Need one say more? It takes the force of

the British Navy to prevent this human flotsam and jetsam from landing in the homeland, and to escort them to the new concentration camps in Cyprus where only yesterday the hungry proclaimed a hunger strike to protest against the degrading and foul conditions under which they are being held.

The prolongation of this agony is a stain upon humanity which can only be effaced if the state of homelessness of the Jewish people is ended. We identify ourselves fully with the political demands of the Jewish Agency for free and unfettered immigration into Palestine and for that independent statehood through which alone this can be achieved.

But there is one vital matter which brooks not a moment's delay and which we as women and mothers feel our sacred duty and our moral right to place before the United Nations: that the 30,000 children surviving in the Displaced Persons camps in Europe in the American zone and the 2,000 now in Cyprus be given at once into the care of the Yishuv. How can we make the world realise that almost all these children are the sole survivors of whole families and entirely without kith and kin. Can you imagine the psychological state of such a child - after what his eyes have witnessed and after that which he has survived? Laughter is banished from his lips. Even in the games which I saw children playing in a newly established camp outside Frankfurt, there was no childish joy, nor that spontaneity which should be every child's birthright. The Jewish woman longs to restore this birthright in so far as it is humanly possible. Where else can this be but in that vigorous life which is Jewish Palestine, together with its healthynormal young generation.

Gentlemen, this is no situation that can be dealt with through ordinarily formulae or through normal channels of procedure. We ask you, as representatives of the United Nations and as simple

members of the human race, to join in our demand for the immediate release of our children.

We shall not rest nor, Gentlemen, shall we give you rest until we have brought our children home.

CHAIRMAN: I thank you, Mrs. Sieff. Does any member of the Committee wish to ask any questions?

(No response.)

CHAIRMAN: As that is the case, I thank you once more.

We have now gone through the agenda for today, and I therefore adjourn the hearing until Sunday at 9:30 a.m. I regret that we must have hearings on Sunday, but the time at our disposal is so short that if we want to get through we have to do it.

The hearing is adjourned.

(The meeting was adjourned at 1:25 p.m.)
