

U.N. Trust Plan To Cover Town Of Bethlehem

**Nativity Site Is in Jerusalem
Area; Residents Today
Chiefly Christian Arabs**

By Peter Kihss

LAKE SUCCESS, L. I., Dec. 23. —The little town of Bethlehem, the City of David where Christ was born nearly two thousand years ago, will come under United Nations trust, according to the plan for a special international regime for Jerusalem to be set up by Oct. 1 "to insure that order and peace, and especially religious peace, reign in Jerusalem."

Under the statute which is now being worked out by experts for the Trusteeship Council the southernmost place of the seventy-eight-square-mile city of Jerusalem district would be Bethlehem—a town today housing 6,600 people, principally Christian Arabs, atop a limestone ridge five miles south of Jerusalem municipality.

John D. L. Hood, Australian member of the U. N. special committee on Palestine, which originally recommended the bounds for internationalized and neutralized Jerusalem, recalled that Bethlehem had been included because of its holy places. Chief among them is the Church of the Nativity, first built by Constantine, inclosing the grotto in which Jesus is believed to have been born.

"It obviously had to be included because of the Nativity," Mr. Hood explained. "It's only a short distance from Jerusalem, and then after Bethlehem there is nothing for about fifteen miles, a barren district, until you come to Hebron, an Arab town.

Mr. Hood has brought back "an impression of a town dominated by church towers and spires," with low gray limestone buildings, clear, attractive and self-contained "like most small towns anywhere."

Of the three experts drawing up the section of the statute for the

protection of the holy places, who recessed yesterday until Jan. 5, the British member is Leslie H. Gibson, Attorney General of Palestine. Mr. Gibson has attended Christmas Eve midnight mass at the Church of the Nativity and recalled carol singing in the seasonally bare fields below the city.

Mr. Gibson recalled the town with winding narrow streets and no pavements, "an old city, exactly what you would imagine from the Bible pictures" of the days when the Wise Men came, bearing gold and frankincense and myrrh to honor the new-born Babe.

The most shocking statement about present-day Bethlehem, without doubt, is contained in the U. N. S. C. O. P. report. David Horowitz, of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, was testifying about high rates of infant mortality in districts outside Jewish colonization. "The highest," he said, "is in Bethlehem, 176.4 per thousand, where there are no Jews at all," a child death rate almost double that of the Haifa and Jaffa areas."