THE LINK

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**Struggling for Human Rights and Religious Liberty, the UCCI asks:**

# The New Israeli Law: Will it Doom the Christian Mission in the Holy Land?

**By L. Humphrey Walz**

Historically, the Christian mission began in Jerusalem (Acts 1: 4-7). In Jerusalem, too, ironically, a major step has been taken toward putting a stop to that mission as far as the Holy Land is concerned.

At least, the United Christian Council in Israel (UCCI) believes that the survival of freely expressed Christianity in the land of its birth is threatened by the new Israeli 'Anti-Missionary Law.' Passed by the Knesset (Israeli Parliament) on December 27, 1977 (Christmas week), this law went into effect on April 1, 1978 (Easter week), making it a criminal offense — punishable by five years in prison or a 50,000-pound fine — to offer material inducement to an Israeli to change his religion. Sentences for *converts* under such circumstances are set somewhat lower: three years in prison or a 30,000-pound fine.

The UCCI denies guilt, or intention, of any such "trafficking in souls." Still, it is quietly — and with a modicum of hope — campaigning for the new law's repeal. It is also asking for Israeli governmental rejection of the "calumny, slander, libel and incitement to hatred" which were advanced in the Knesset to secure its passage. In UCCI eyes, both the law and "the scurrilous verbal attacks against the Christian church" resorted to in promoting it, loom as dangers to "human rights, the legitimate freedom of the small Christian minority . . . and . . . Christian-Jewish relationships" *(Ecumenical Press Service*, Feb. 23, 1978).

## A Holy Season Spawns Unholy Legislation

To become law in Israel a bill must be read three times in the Knesset before being voted on. The initial reading of the 'Anti-Missionary Bill' — officially titled "Penal Code Amendment Law (Enticement to Change of Religion), 1977" — took place on December 5, the first day of Hanukkah.

Printed on the same page of the **Knesset Gazette** (as also on p. 2 of this **Link**) were the 'Words of Explanation' by which Deputy Speaker Rabbi Yehuda Meir Abramowitz sought to justify his having introduced this bill:

"The missionary organizations" in Israel, he contended, "use many and varied means to ensnare souls and to bring about the change of religion of those who fall into their net . . . . Flooded with unlimited financial means, . . . they are active especially among people whose economic situation is different, grant them economic benefits, and incite them to emigrate" from Israel "and to change their religion . . . . The organizations of The Mission are active even among soldiers . . . and try to influence them to desert . . . ."

Dr. Yitzhak Raphael had made further sweeping charges which he claimed to have researched as Minister of Religious Affairs (**Yediot Aharonot,** Dec. 8, 1977). The acting chairman of the Law Committee, former Supreme Court Judge Binyamin Halevy, added gratuitously in the Knesset that: "The Christian missions are a cancer in the body of the nation and are trying to carry forward the aim of physical liquidation (of Jews) which had been furthered by the Catholic Church since it was established" (**Jerusalem Post**, Dec. 6, 1977).

In this atmosphere — despite objections from Mordechai Wirshubsky, Shulamit Aloni and Meir Pail and the negative votes and abstentions of other MKs (Members of Knesset) — was born what a **Jerusalem Post** headline had labeled "The Law Against The Missionaries."

## The Engineering of a Railroading

Although the obstacles are many, the UCCI feels it has grounds to "trust that . . . the Knesset will have the courage to repeal this unworthy . . . legislation." The skillful engineering by which the vote was railroaded through

suggests that even its backers doubted that a majority of MKs would have voted for it in the first place or would do so if given another chance.

The Israeli press of December 28 indicated that the bill had been sprung for the vote — without docketing or prior announcement — when only 42 of the 120 MKs were present. Of the 42, a sizeable proportion — apparently tipped off in advance to show up — favored the bill. It was clearly an opportune moment to call for a vote. But the bill had only had one reading. Undismayed, its backers found an imaginative device convenient: They had it read *twice* in *one* day — December 27!

A small group of MKs present did ask for a week's postponement to permit consultation with affected parties. Such consultation the UCCI had urged in detailed, deliberately unpublicized December 13 telegrams to President Katzir, Prime Minister Begin and Speaker of the Knesset Israel Shamir. Dr. Reznikoff of the American Jewish Committee, Acting Director Daniel Rossing of the Division of Christian Communities in the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Jewish members of the government-backed Israel Inter-Faith Committee had made related requests.

However, when the plea for deferral for such purposes was voiced on December 27, the speaker of the Knesset and the Acting Law Committee Chairman quashed it. Rabbi Abramowitz was elated. The vote, taken without the requested delay, had made his bill the law of the land. This, he said, was for him the culmination of thirty years of dreams and two years of concentrated effort.

Downcast by the vote and the methods used to obtain it, the UCCI nonetheless takes courage from the number of Jews and Gentiles, at home and abroad, who share its view of the dangerous potentials in the law's enactment. Its December 13 telegrams to top politicos (still unanswered) had expressed grave concern over the law's hazy phrasing and its implications for personal rights and religious liberty. Now others, reportedly including the Anti-Defamation League and President Philip M. Klutzick of the World Jewish Congress, are coming to similar conclusions and have relayed their feelings to Prime Minister Begin.

## The Law's Loose Language

Under the new law's vague wording, as **Time** (Jan. 23, 1978) pointed out, Christ-


After the June War of 1967 the Israelis made a documentary film of its battles. Some footage was especially shot afterwards to fill in gaps or make special points. The above scene never took place during the war. It was staged later to make the East Jerusalem Young Men's Christian Association seem like a stronghold requiring tanks and storm troopers for its capture. With a mindset like that of the writer of the 'Words of Explanation' below, the producers apparently wanted the average Israeli viewer to think of Christian Associations as The Enemy.

## The 'Law Against the Mission' and the official 'Explanation' for it:

PENAL CODE AMENDMENT LAW (ENTICEMENT TO CHANGE OF RELIGION) 1977

**Text of the Law**

1. GIVING OF BONUSES AS ENTICEMENT TO CHANGE OF RELIGION

   He who gives or promises to give money, an equivalent of money, or other benefit in order to entice a person to change his religion, or in order to entice a person to bring about the change of another's religion, his sentence will be five years imprisonment, or a fine of IL 50,000.

2. RECEIVING OF BONUSES IN EXCHANGE FOR A CHANGE OF RELIGION

   He who receives or agrees to receive money, an equivalent of money, or a benefit in exchange for a promise to change his religion, or to bring about the change of another's religion, the sentence due to him is three years imprisonment, or a fine of IL 30,000.

**Words of Explanation**

The missionary organizations working in the land (Israel) use many and varied means in order to ensnare souls and to bring about the change of religion of those who fall into their net.

These organizations, which are flooded with unlimited financial means, use material means of enticement. They are active especially among people whose economic situation is difficult, they promise them large sums of money, grant them economic benefits, and incite them to emigrate from the land (Israel) and to change their religion.

Lately, there has been an increase in the activity of the missionaries who exploit the difficult economic situation in the land (Israel) to advance their purposes. The organizations of the mission are active even among soldiers of the Israel Defense Forces and try to influence them to desert from their units.

The only means that will be able to put a stop to the activity of the missionaries in Israel is the enactment of a law against this activity.

The purpose of the proposed law is, therefore, to put a stop to the activity of the organizations of the mission by means of prohibiting all missionary activity that is accompanied by material enticement.

Similar laws exist in many countries around the world.

**UCCI Notes**

1. The above is the text of the Law with explanatory matter as presented by the Deputy-Speaker of the Knesset, MK Rabbi Abramowitz in his Private Member's Bill in preparation for the Bill's First Reading on December 5, 1977. It was printed in the official **Knesset Gazette** (Draft Laws) No. 1313.
2. The text of the Law as finally passed in the Knesset added the word "material" to "benefit".

ians "could conceivably be convicted of offering material inducement if a recently converted Jew (had) made use of Christian-run schools or hospital services." To which the AP (Jan. 18) added: "To Jewish diehards, maintaining a nursery school that admits Jewish children is a 'material inducement' to conversion." In a nutshell, as a

"I was sick and you visited me"
Dr. Sarama John, a South Indian Christian pediatrician, examines an ailing child in Jerusalem.

sympathetic Israeli source phrases it: "Any simple act of kindness may be construed as a 'benefit'." Such considerations seem to deflate the reassurance of Israeli Ambassador Barromi (UN, Geneva) that "the law does not forbid any activity which might lead to conversion, provided that such activities do not involve any pressure or remuneration."

The law's loose wording is bothersome in other ways as well. The UCCI's voluminous January 23 memorandum to Attorney General Aharon Barak, for instance, includes the observation that under the new law "it is not actually necessary for the act of religious conversion ever to take place for a person to be brought to court." Within the letter of the law a Christian tourist at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, chatting

The Church of the Nativity stands watch near the spot where the Prince of Peace was born.

winsomely with his paid Israeli guide on what Christ's birth there meant to him, could wind up serving a five-year term in an Israeli jail.

Allowed free rein, the imagination can conjure up some intriguing scenarios. Here's one from a good-humored American who has served several stints in the Holy Land: Born-again Jimmy Carter meets with Menachem Begin in Tel Aviv to discuss more dollars to bolster Israel's tottering economy. The American President verbalizes his Christian concern so heartily that the Israeli Prime Minister spontaneously promises to use all future U.S. billions the Jesus way. Carter is then locked up for five years with Begin as his cellmate for the first three!

According to Alfred Lilienthal Chief Rabbi Israel Zolli of Rome converted to Catholicism out of gratitude to the Pope for protecting him and thousands of other Italian Jews during the Nazi occupation. He even took Pius XII's given name, Eugenio, as his own Christian name. Had there been in Italy a law such as the Knesset has just promulgated, the Pope and the ex-Chief Rabbi could have wound up either in jail or much poorer for a stiff fine!

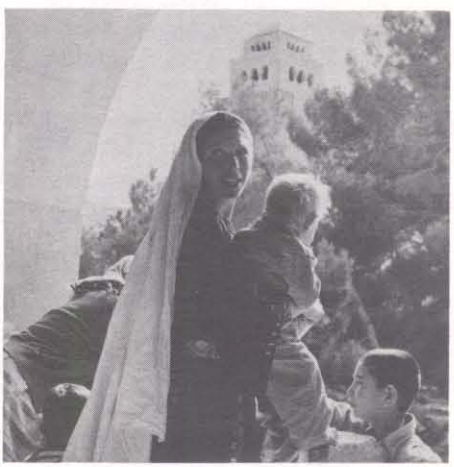
But even with a clear re-wording and official reinterpretation to avoid such travesties of justice, there are Israelis who, like the UCCI, find the concepts behind the new law unacceptable. Long before its first official reading, Haim Zadok opposed it as "incompatible with freedom of religion and expression" (**Israeli Press**, Feb. 10, 1977). Three years earlier, Shalom Ben-Chorin declared: "It is impossible in a democratic State, where there is freedom of religion, to publish a law against missionaries . . . . As there are conversions to Judaism in Christian countries, . . . so we as a majority practice the same tolerance to conversions" (**Israel Nachrichten**, Feb. 22, 1974).

## Devaluing the Declarations.

There are also serious Israelis who share the concern expressed by Prof. Raoul Berger in a different context (**Time**, Nov. 14, 1977). "The road to Weimar and Hitler," he said, "is to start tampering with constitutional guarantees allegedly for benign purposes." Though Israel has no constitution, it does have a high-sounding Declaration of Independence and has added its signature to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Concerned Israelis see the new law as a "parliamentary interference in matters of conscience and religious conviction" which clearly tampers with the guarantees in both those Declarations.

Says the May 14, 1948, Israeli Declaration of Independence: "The State of Israel . . . guarantees social and political rights to all her citizens without distinction of religion or race or sex, and guarantees freedom of religion, conscience, speech, education and culture . . ." For our purposes here, Article 18 of the Universal Declaration is even more explicit: "Everyone has the right," it insists, "to . . . change his religion . . . and freedom . . . to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance."

On the religious level, apart from human rights considerations, there are also Israelis who join the UCCI in challenging the new law's seeming assumption "that a 'change of religion' is something undesirable in itself quite apart from the quality of the act that leads to the 'change'." (The Hebrew word *Pitui* — translated "enticement" in the new law's title — means 'tempting or seducing a person to do something wrong or sinful.') This assumption, despite denials by the law's defenders, appears to be one basis for its heavy penal sanctions.



A refugee mother takes her children for outpatient treatment at the Augusta Victoria Lutheran Hospital, Jerusalem.

## Are Jews More Equal Than Christians?

Attempting to justify his resistance to delaying the vote for a week, in the course of which non-Jews could have been consulted, MK Halevy subsequently insisted: "This law will apply equally to all the religious communities in Israel." This claim is echoed in Israeli public relations abroad, both direct and through diplomatic channels. But, in publicly congratula-

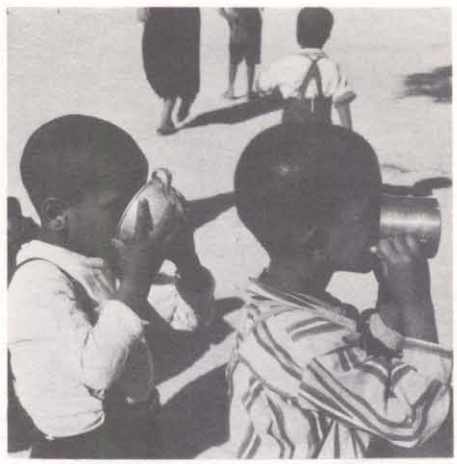
ting Rabbi Abramowitz with a warm handshake and a "Mazal Tov" on the affirmative vote he had secured in the Knesset, Prime Minister Begin felt it natural to refer to the rabbi's brainchild as "The Law *against the Mission*" (**Hamodiya**, Dec. 29, 1977; our emphasis).

Furthermore, the 'Words of Explanation', published with the proposed law on the same page of the **Knesset Gazette,** confirms Begin's selective interpretation. They indicate that the target of the law is Christianity, its tersely declared aim being "to put a stop to the activity" (not just *some*, but *the*, activity) "of the organizations of The Mission." Since the effectiveness of 'The Mission' is presumed to depend on selfish motives, it can be brought to an early end, the 'Words of Explanation' explain, simply "by means of prohibiting all missionary activity that is accompanied by material enticement."

The anxiety felt by Christians in Israel over this wording stem from decades of derogatory use of the term, 'The Mission,' in both the Knesset and the Israeli press. Like the anti-Semitic *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* which alleged a Jewish conspiracy to rule the world, anti-Christian propagandists in Israel have circulated ominous rumors about 'The Mission,' as the worldwide


IRGUN ZWAÏ LĔUMI BE-EREZ JISRAËL
ORGANISATION MILITAIRE NATIONALE JUIVE D'EREZ JISRAËL
JEWISH NATIONAL MILITARY ORGANISATION OF EREZ JISRAËL

1947 posters of Menachem Begin's terrorist Irgun made clear the area slated for Zionist military conquest: all of Palestine and Jordan and parts of Egypt, Lebanon and Syria. Is this still Begin's dream? And is it his plan to "put a stop to the activity of the missionaries" throughout?



"I was hungry and you gave me food, . . . thirsty and you gave me drink" (Matt. 25:35). Galilean villagers receive Church World Service flour. Palestinian boys drink milk from the World Council of Churches.

Christian structure whose dominant aim, they declare, is to destroy the Jewish peoplehood by conversions, forced or otherwise.

It was on the basis of these allegations, reiterated, that the new law was passed. Rabbi Abramowitz hopes that a more uncompromising prohibition will ensue (**Yediot Aharonot,** Jan. 9; **Maariv,** Jan. 12, 1978). "At a propitious time," he says, "we may succeed in pressing an amendment to this law absolutely prohibiting missionary propanganda." The fact that Prime Minister Begin needs Agudath Israel (the political party chiefly responsible for spreading such ideas) to maintain his majority coalition gives such people a worrisome balance of power (cf. **Hamodiya**, Dec. 29, 1977).

## How Interpret the New Law?

"Laws," according to a Harvard Law School dictum, "should be interpreted in the light of what the men who wrote them meant to signify." In this context, the ultimate goal of the new law, as it appears to the UCCI, is to put the quietus on "all Christian churches and individuals who are prepared to talk about their faith." This in a region which Christians, along with Muslims and Jews, regard as the Holy Land, where major Christian bodies date back at least to the Ottoman era and where some have existed continuously since New Testament times.

Threats of silencing or suppressing Christianity, the law's defenders point out, cannot be found in its actual wording. But this does not relieve the anxieties of Christians who can remember the results of an equally innocently worded law passed by the Knesset January 21, 1965. Titled, "Supervision of Housing Places," it included the clause: "No child is permitted to be taken to a children's home where religious education is practiced, unless the child belongs to the same religion."

"What the men who wrote the law meant to signify" came quickly to pass. Dr. Burg, the responsible government minister who had supported that bill before the Knesset, made its purpose clear when he said: "By the publication of these statutes, the first and decisive step has been taken in the direction of eliminating the plague of missionary activity in our midst" (**Maariv**, Nov. 3, 1965). Shortly after its passage Christian schools in Haifa and Jerusalem which had significant numbers of Jewish pupils had to close down. Jewish parents could no longer send their children to them. The 'Supervision of Housing' law forbade them to.

Other 1965 legislation added to what the UCCI calls "the long and now more radical campaign to end the presence of witnesses to the Christian faith in Israel." It forbade Christians to operate charities or other institutions in centers of Jewish population. As a result, such establishments are to be found almost exclusively among the Palestinian remnant.

## Why Not an Independent Investigation?

This trend the UCCI wants to reverse — for its own survival's sake as well as for civil rights and religious liberty. It would also like to reduce the malicious, unsubstantiated gossip-mongering — especially in the Knesset and the public press — which stirs up Jewish fears against Christians and leads to spiteful mischief

against them: rock-throwing, window-smashing, fire bombing and cemetery vandalizing (cf. AP, Jan. 18, 1978). It is therefore adding to its request for the new law's repeal a proposal for "an independent international Commission of Enquiry" to be given full authority to investigate the serious charges made in the Knesset as justification for enacting it.

Would such a Commission find members of 'The Mission' prompting military defection as the 'Words of Explanation' allege? "Where is the evidence?" asks the UCCI. "Why not bring them into court? . . . Influencing people to desert . . . is a crime . . ." Israeli military men like General Mattityahu Peled do denounce their government's repressive practices and expansionist policies. Young Israeli reserve officers are the instigators and leaders of the Peace Now movement which, among other activities, formed a twelve-mile human chain from the Judaean hills through Jerusalem to Begin's office with a petition, signed by thousands, to give peace a higher priority than territorial expansion (**International Herald Tribune**, Apr. 27, 1978.) Israeli soldiers who find assignments "to keep Palestinians forcibly in their place" distasteful do become conscientious objectors, risking secret trials. Some doubtless desert. But, as with hundreds of intellectual and religious objectors (**Action**, May 1, 1978), thousands of kibbutzniks (**New Outlook**, Feb.-Mar., 1978) and the Mayor of Jerusalem himself (**Chicago Tribune**, Mar. 20, 1978), such protests are the product of their own Hebrew consciences, not of any prodding from the churches.

A Sister of Nazereth tells a young patient that, after three months of care, he's about to be discharged from her Catholic missionary hospital "as good as new."

And what would a Commission find behind the charge that the missionary organizations give the Israeli poor "large sums of money" and then "incite them to emigrate"? Recently emigration has, indeed, exceeded immigration. But, says forthright lady-MK Shulamit Aloni, "if you look into the problems of emigration you will learn that the main force behind it is not Christian missionaries, but the Jewish Agency with its inept methods of handling immigration and absorption matters" (**Jerusalem Post**, Dec. 28, 1977).

The many-sided vocational training program of the Near East Christian Council in Gaza has had to undergo serious modifications since the conquest of 1967. Still, believing that "self-support leads to self-respect" for young Arab refugees as for others, it keeps on doing the best it can.

## The Statistics: Do They Lie?

Explaining the need for the new law, Israeli Minister of Justice Shmuel Tamir, in an internationally circulated letter of March 8, 1978, to President R. Maass of the American Jewish Committee, declared that the great loss of Jewish life in the Holocaust had "brought about a natural desire to see to it that no people will be lost to the Jewish faith in an undue and unjustified process."

What statistical basis would a Commission of Enquiry find for such fears? Rabbi Abramowitz says 70 to 80 Israeli Jews convert annually to Christianity (AP, loc. cit.). But, "by official record, only 17 Israeli Jews converted to Christianity from 1974 to 1976" (**Time**, loc. cit.). Would even the larger figure be sufficient grounds for a law to "put a stop to the activity of the missionaries in Israel"?

Some dozen years ago, in a period of heavy anti-Christian activity, Prof. Zvi Werblowsky of the Hebrew University conducted an investigation for the Israel Inter-Faith Committee into charges

Five-year-old Arab refugees play in the Fawar Camp near the Hebron tomb of their reputed ancestor, Abraham. Their teachers were trained by the Church of the Brethren. The Holy Land Christian Mission provided outdoor and indoor play equipment here as in a dozen other camps and villages. Reforestation in the background was undertaken by the Jordanians who governed this area until the June War of 1967.

against 'The Mission'. In his report he concluded: "I have never found a case where Jewish parents were put under pressure by Christians to send their children into a Christian school. But I have found many cases where the parents have been put under pressure by the Jews to take their children away from the Christian schools, warning the parents that they might lose their positions."

Speaking for its member church bodies, the UCCI told the Israeli Attorney General on January 23, 1978, "We are all opposed, as we have stated publicly on repeated occasions, to the use of improper inducements to bring about the change in anybody's religion." As one bit of documentary evidence, it called attention to the repeatedly reaffirmed July 14, 1963, Joint Declaration of Christian Communities in Israel to that effect. *(Full text of that Declaration is in box on page 7).*

In contrast, the UCCI reports evidence of enticements, pressure, threats, and built-in legal advantages to encourage conversion to Judaism. "Not a few" Christians, adds Bishop Hanna Kaldany of the Roman Catholic church in Israel, have consequently been "led . . . to change their religion under duress." On February 11, 1976, Religious Affairs Minister Yitzhak Raphael told the Knesset: "500 non-Jews have converted to Judaism in this country over the past year" (**Jerusalem Post**, Feb. 12, 1976). He did not say how many had been enticed by promises of money or other benefits to make this changeover. MK Aloni cast some light, however, when, in opposing the 'Anti-Missionary Law' as basically "anti-Christian, . . . she . . . argued that 'the Jewish Agency itself is using material benefits to convert to Judaism.' She explained this by saying that immigrant rights are offered only to Jews. In the case of immigrants from mixed marriages, where the mother is a gentile, the applicant is told he must convert to qualify for those rights and benefits" (**Jerusalem Post**, Dec. 28, 1977.)

To get all pertinent facts straight and on the record, the UCCI declares that its proposed "Commission of Enquiry could also . . . carry out a survey of all officially registered converts to Christianity, Judaism and Islam and to make a public report on what led these people to seek a change of religion."

## What to Do?

The two proposals of the UCCI confront one with three related questions: Does the UCCI determination to have the Knesset rescind the 'Anti-Missionary Law' make sense? Is it both feasible and desirable to recruit an impartial, international Commission to investigate the validity of the anti-Christian charges given as reasons for passing that law? If so, what can be constructively done?

Some Jews, who — because they cherish interfaith comradeship and dialogue — are troubled by the new law, feel that widespread Christian agitation for its repeal would be self-defeating. It would only confirm the die-hards' conviction that 'The Mission' is truly a worldwide conspiracy against Jewry. In any case, they see no possibility of rescinding the law while Begin is in power. Instead, they feel that they themselves can influence the Israeli Establishment to ignore or dilute the law in practice until a more flexible and tolerant regime comes to power. By way of reciprocity, Christians could focus their pressure unselfservingly on securing equal status for Conservative and Reform Jews in Orthodox-dominated Israel.

A contrasting viewpoint is expressed by those who feel that publicizing Human Rights violations provides the best incentive to improvement, no matter where. They see the Israeli establishment as particularly sensitive to its image in the West. They cite British and French newspaper revelations of Israeli torture, home demolitions and evictions of Palestinians as having reduced these practices when quiet churchly protests to appropriate authorities had failed.

They consider airing in the news media especially important in America for an added reason. Except in "extraordinary

At the Sawahreh Mosque School near Bethany, aide Fatima Abu-Hadeed and teacher Jihad Yaghour review curriculum and concepts with education specialists Ruth and Tom Nelson from Brethren Volunteer Services.

circumstances," the 1975 Foreign Assistance Act and the 1976 International Security and Arms Export Control Act forbid U.S. economic or military aid to "any country which engages in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights." In addition to economic subsidies, "Israel gets 48% of all (U.S.) foreign military credits and 97% of all outright military grants." (**Newsweek**, Mar. 20, 1978.) Hence, publicity in the States like the detailed AP (Jan. 18, 1978) and **Time** (Jan. 23) coverage of the 'Anti-Missionary Law' offers material as well as moral inducement to good behavior.

Complaints from Bethlehem University (Catholic) of constant harassment by the Israeli military governor, Lt. Col. Nathan Rom, were brushed off for months by his

Amidst the ruins of their dynamited homes in Halhul, between Hebron and Bethlehem, Palestinian youths discuss their needs with workers from the Pontifical Mission for Palestine.

superiors. Then details began to appear in American Jewish, Protestant and Catholic periodicals from January through April, 1978. In May, after a related incident, Rom was ordered to face a court-martial (UPI, May 3). And the results may be lasting. Since Terence Smith's November 22, 1974, **New York Times** report of Israel's groundless midnight deportation of Protestant President Hanna Nasir of Bir Zeit University, expulsions of Palestinian leaders without charge or trial have markedly decreased.

Advocates of publicity see cause and effect in these developments. Skeptics, however, believe that such spotlighting simply encourages the authorities to clamp down their censorship at home and step up their public relations 'snow jobs' abroad.

## To Clear the Air

The competent, objective, neutral data-finding Commission requested by the UCCI is an entirely different proposition. Given unhindered freedom of inquiry and legal access to all relevant persons and material, it could root out and clarify the full facts underlying the present tensions and controversy. After scrutinizing the practices of Christian missionary groups and Jewish religious organizations in Israel it could, the UCCI proposes, "be empowered to carry out a survey of all . . . converts to Christianity, Judaism and Islam and to make a public report on what circumstances and considerations led these people to seek a 'change of religion'."

The results would reveal the extent to which present mutual suspicions are unwarranted. Where there are genuine grounds for distrust on either side, the limelight could facilitate remedial action. "The Christian churches would," the UCCI believes, "be willing to pay a share toward a . . . Commission of Enquiry." Presumably the Israeli Establishment, if it is genuinely interested in understanding the full picture, would also contribute. Perhaps others would, too.

## The Joint Declaration of Christian Communities in Israel

**first made on July 14, 1963, and re-affirmed publicly many times since:**

Israeli newspapers have, during recent years, published a number of accusations against Christians in Israel for an attitude designated as 'missionary' with a bad taste. These accusations have sometimes resulted from lack of information, sometimes seemed ill-intentioned, but were always painful to those who respect the liberty of conscience of others.

We, the undersigned, affirm that our communities are not 'missionary' in the derogatory sense which some attach to this word.

We do not exploit the economic situation of any Israeli citizen - his poverty, unemployment, inadequate housing or desire to emigrate - in order to induce conversion; because faith in our eyes is a free gift of God and a disinterested response on the part of man.

Nor do we take advantage, with a view to conversion, of a negative psychological attitude some Jews may feel towards Israel, whether evidenced by bitterness or a desire to escape from their Jewishness; for we are convinced that a Jew who becomes a Christian still remains a member of his people, as he was from birth.

In our schools, hospitals and other institutions, our desire is to provide service in these fields. We do not exercise religious coercion in them.

Our positive aims are:

(1) To help the members of our communities to be better Christians and better citizens.

(2) To testify that Jesus is the source of truth and life for all mankind, by worship, in friendship towards all, and by loyal participation in the civic, economic and cultural life of the nation.

By discussion, talks and literature, we seek to answer the enquiries of those who desire to obtain information about Christianity. We believe that we cannot refuse to do so, because we must share with everyone the light and joy of our faith.

Therefore, we welcome as members of our churches those who ask to be admitted of their own free will and from strictly religious motives, and who have been under probation long enough to prove their sincerity, disinterestedness and ability to share the difficulities which are the lot of every religious minority.

This declaration expresses our conviction and our actual way of life, to both of which we wish to remain faithful.

The undersigned represent their various churches and dissociate themselves from any enterprise which individuals or groups may carry on otherwise than in the spirit of this declaration.

*This Declaration was signed by the Greek Catholic Church, The Greek Orthodox Church, the Latin (Roman Catholic) Church, the Anglican Church, the Baptist Church (American Southern Baptist, and Israeli Baptist), the Lutheran Churches in Israel, the Church of the Nazerene, the British Pentecostal Church in Israel and the Church of Scotland (Presbyterian, Overseas Department).*

**—Included on pp. 11f. of UCCI Jan. 23, 1978, Memorandum to Israeli Attorney-General Aharon Barak.**

# Letters from Lebanon

## Beirut to Tel Aviv

On March 11, Palestinian terrorists caused 34 (37?) Israeli deaths on the Tel Aviv-Haifa road. On March 15, in "retaliation," Israeli planes, gunboats and artillery invaded Lebanon, driving Palestinian and Lebanese families from their homes. On April 1, more significantly if less newsworthily, thousands of Israelis, led by "Peace Now" war veterans, marched through Tel Aviv to the slogan, "Peace is more important than territory."

Almost immediately in Beirut, **Monday Morning**, the weekly special edition of the English-language daily **Ike**, launched the idea of having Lebanese of all walks of life write to their Israeli counterparts who had paraded in the Tel Aviv demonstrations. In response, Lebanese MPs (Members of Parliament), doctors, artists, shopkeepers and students sent letters to MKs, doctors, artists, shopkeepers and students in Tel Aviv. Many gave copies to **Monday Morning** which has been filling pages and pages with samples since.

Some of the letters, especially from MPs, recommended courses of action they'd like peace-minded Israelis to prod their government toward or away from. Others are simply appreciative of the marchers' ideals or declare solidarity with their goals of peace and freedom. Still others call for clearer thinking on common goals and facing up to the sacrifices necessary to attain them.

Some are blunt, others tactful. Pharmacist Jacqueline Sarraf is downright cheerful. She expresses the hope "that the demonstration you staged for peace will be repeated in all parts of Israel and the Arab world. You are not alone. All of us, Lebanese and Arabs, want peace and need it." May Manassa, cultural editor of the Arabic daily **An-Nahar** waxes lyrical. Her letter is a long prose poem culminating in a call for the peace which is "a sparkle in childhood's eyes, a laugh in the lips of youth and serenity in the grey hairs of age."

Jacqueline Sarraf

All are deadly serious, even Sami Khayat who telegraphed an Israeli fellow-comedian: "YOU LIVE THANKS TO LAUGHTER . . . STOP . . . STUDY POSSIBILITY CLAIMING DAMAGES FROM ISRAELI GOVERNMENT . . ."

Hamzeh Ghalayini (top); Abu Kamel

On a more sober note of down-to-earth realism, baker Hamzeh Ghalayini states: . . . My bakery is full of bullet holes and shrapnel damage, all souvenirs of the war . . . I applaud those of you who marched in that demonstration because I love peace as you do . . ." And falafel vendor Abu Kamel pleads: " . . . Keep it up; push for peace; prevail on your government to accept peace so that you, we and the Palestinians can live a tranquil life, each in his own country."

## Americans to Americans

We thought it would also be a contribution to peace if we were to share excerpts from what Americans in Beirut have written us as fellow-Americans about the wounds of war and their healing. Here are just a few for now. More later, we hope, if you ask for them.

## The Refugee Influx

### From Jack Dagilaitis

The Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon has caused great human suffering and heavy material damage. According to the International Red Cross, over 1000 civilians were killed in the Israeli operation, and relief agencies estimate that over 200,000 refugees were created due to the conflict. Lebanese refugees include an estimated 40,000 from the Tyre area and 90,000 from villages in the south. Palestinian refugees include 50,000 from camps in the south and people outside of camps, and another 15,000 from the Damur and Nabatiyya areas.

Since the entrance of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, the repatriation of some refugees has begun, especially to those areas which were threatened but not actually seized by Israel. However, refugees from the Israeli-occupied areas have found repatriation to be an agonizingly slow process. Returnees are held up at roadblocks for up to two days due to stringent security checks by the occupation forces. Many, fearful of losing their places in line, are forced to go without food or water during the two-day wait.

Those refugees who finally do return home find a bleak situation awaiting them. Official government estimates say that 15% of South Lenanon's houses have been totally destroyed, 80% are damaged in some way, and only 5% have escaped damage. An International Red Cross report says that eight out of ten towns and villages in South Lebanon were damaged during the Israeli invasion, and that 82 villages were damaged and six were almost completely destroyed. The town of Bint Jbail suffered 100% destruction, i.e., every building in it was hit.

In addition to damage to homes and villages, farmers of South Lebanon are threatened with the loss of $30 million of unharvested citrus fruit and tobacco.

Local and international relief agencies are struggling to meet the needs of refugees and returnees. Items that will be needed for the next six months include foodstuffs, blankets, mattresses, towels and soap, kitchen sets, plastic gallon containers, plastic water jugs and can openers. It must be pointed out that even the most inexpensive items on this list might be too much for a family of refugees or returnees to afford. Many of them spent enormous sums of money to escape from the south while the invasion was occurring, and the cost of crop losses and damage to homes and property cannot be borne by people whose existence was often marginal to begin with.

During the Lebanese civil war of 1975-76 and afterwards, Americans for Justice in the Middle East (AJME) disbursed emergency aid funds to organizations which emphasized need over creed and minimal operating costs over heavy bureaucracies. And now once again AJME would be happy to channel any funds sent to its Beirut address (P.O. Box 11-4841) immediately into relief through agencies it judges do the most with every dollar for the widest spectrum of needy individuals.

## Women in the Van

### From Helga Beumgarden

Among the 250,000 refugees who fled from the bombing during the Israeli invasion of South Lebanon, beginning March 14/15, approximately 60,000 were Palestinians from several refugee camps in the embattled area. Many fled to Sidon to be absorbed among other refugee centers outside the city or within Sidon itself. However, many more streamed northward to Beirut, regarded as a safer haven.

Among the Palestinian organizations assuming responsibility in assisting these refugees, the General Union of Palestinian Women has been particularly busy in the coastal area south of Beirut and in the long established refugee centers in and near Beirut. They are daily caring for two to three thousand families, including both Lebanese and Palestinians. The areas which they serve include the already crowded district near the Arab University; the shanty-town section which sprang up during the Lebanese Civil War in the former tourist area of the Raouche; and the large refugee concentrations of Sabra, Shatila, Bir-Hasan and Tariq al-Jedid.

In the first days of the crisis, the women's union faced four main tasks: first, locating the people in need, dispersed at random all over the city; second, ascertaining their number, their names, villages, etc. Third, learning what forms of relief were most critically needed and which supplies were readily available; finally, discovering other sources of supplies, especially of blankets, medicine, dried milk, basic foodstuffs and soap.

In trying to cope with the basic daily needs of these refugees, the General Union of Palestinian Women continues in close contact with other organizations, especially women's organizations, to obtain funds for purchasing the basics urgently needed for maintaining life.

## Students and Faculty Pitch in

### From Elizabeth Scott

On March 15, the academic atmosphere prevailing on the campus of the American University of Beirut was suddenly shattered by the first reports of the massive Israeli invasion into the South of Lebanon. While various groups of students gathered outside the student center, West Hall, to listen to the latest reports of the fighting over transistor radios, other students set up a table under the trees and began to mobilize blood donors, in response to urgent requests for blood for casualties arriving in Beirut. Many students donated blood at once, while a list of future donors, according to blood type, was compiled.

After organizing this initial project, students began to set up other committees to try to meet the urgent needs of thousands of refugees who were suddenly appearing in the streets of Beirut, seeking shelter in empty apartments, schools and other facilities. Most of these refugees were women and children carrying a few personal belongings in plastic bags or in bundles on their heads. Within a few days the students had taken on the responsibility of feeding and sheltering 10,350 refugees, including 1729 under age five. No aid had been available through government or international organizations for any of these.

Several committees were promptly set up to cover specific aspects of the mammoth project. They include committees for Provisions, Medical Aid, Fund-Raising, Refugees (for direct assistance in the centers), Sorting of Food and Clothing, Documentation and Statistics, Camp-Building (erecting tents provided by the government and international aid), Publication, and Coordination of the total effort.

Each morning students, including many non-Lebanese, assemble on the campus between 7:00 and 7:30 to receive assignments: some to collect and carry food and clothing to 17 centers in Beirut, some to remain the full day in a particular center distributing provisions, assisting in first aid centers and, in some cases, helping to organize collective preparation of meals since cooking equipment and fuel are practically non-existent.

While a few refugees were able to bring out some bedding, it is estimated that there are two blankets for each 12 persons among these 10,000 displaced persons. The student committees have spent many days trying to locate more blankets from individual donors, government agencies and international relief organizations. Thus far they have obtained only 500.

The student relief project, now coordinated by a joint student-faculty committee, continues on a day-to-day basis to provide bread, dried milk, rice, dried lentils and beans, soap, cooking fat and anti-biotics for more than ten thousand homeless. The task looks unending, and in order to continue their humanitarian work, the students need support from all possible sources for at least several weeks to come. Send checks to: AUB Student-Faculty Committee for Relief, P.O. Box 33, Beirut, Lebanon.

**Among the Arabs Who Wrote Israeli Peace Marchers**

Joseph Nasr, grocer; Najib Abu-Haidar, M.D.; Sarkis Yenikomshian, tailor; Dr. Farid Serhal, MP

# Books

## The Gun and the Olive Branch

The Roots of Violence in the Middle East.

*By David Hirst.*
*Faber and Faber, London, 1977*
*367 pp. 6.50 pounds.*
Reprinted from *AJME News*

David Hirst has written what may well be 1977's most useful and stimulating book on the Palestine question. *The Gun and the Olive Branch: The Roots of Violence in the Middle East* is a well-researched analysis on the sources, expression and consequences of armed conflict in Palestine over the past century. As such it touches upon the tactics and motives of personalities and movements involved in modern Palestine as they developed, interacted and—always—clashed. The book is not a disembodied collection of political statements and documents nor one of those histories of the Palestine question which ultimately becomes a treatise on great power machinations, Jewish enterprise, or Arab diplomatic naiveté. Rather, *The Gun and the Olive Branch* focuses on the actual unfolding of ever-increasing violent confrontation on the ground in Palestine. This approach by itself makes the book very valuable.

Only in the case of Palestine has it been possible for recent historians to get away with presenting the history of a country based primarily on external developments, relegating to second place what its inhabitants were thinking and doing. No wonder the whole issue has been presented as a tangle of "irrational" encounters by "manipulated mobs" or "refugees" with industrious "returning pioneers." Hirst's book brings the Palestine question back to Palestine as he examines the evidence behind the violence. The result is as revealing as it is disturbing. The source of "irrationality" appears to be precisely those external forces which have disregarded the real demographic and historical facts in Palestine. The outbreaks of violence, far from reflecting devious effendi manipulation or ideological excesses, are shown to arise from more mundane stimuli: peasant dislocation and unemployment as traditional farmers are run off their lands by Jewish settlers; Arab reaction to British policy designed to ensure the predominance of the interests of a foreign community in Palestine; popular dissatisfaction with corrupt, self-seeking indigenous leaders who are unable to adapt to modern realities in Palestine.

Hirst's book shatters cherished myths. The negative colonial attitude of early Jewish settlers—including the so-called "socialists"—towards the "barbarian" Arab population buries the myth that Zionism had the best intentions at the beginning. The emphasis on Jewish labor to the exclusion of local workers is revealed as a fanatical theme from Mandate times up until 1967. Thereafter, the idea of a skilled Jewish leisure class subsisting on the hard work of unskilled Arab laborers begins to replace it. The early resistance of Palestinians—especially the peasants and certainly the intellectuals, but seldom the landlords—to Zionist settlement is documented from 1900. In fact one of the biggest fantasies—that Arab leaders have consistently egged on the masses to hate Zionists—is exploded by ample evidence to prove the opposite was in fact true (see especially pp. 55-62).

One of the basic assertions that the author makes is that Palestinian violence under the Mandate was inevitable in an environment which allowed for no alternate means of resisting the destruction of Arab economy and society. Accept Zionism—and implicit Jewish sovereignty—or get excepted by it.

After the creation of the Jewish state, the causes of violence become even

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## The Arabs

*By Peter Mansfield*
*Allen Lane, London, 1976.*
*572 pp. 8.50 pounds*

Reprinted from *Journal of Palestine Studies*

This is a very good history of the Arabs. There exists perhaps no better work for the general reader. Here, a clarification might be necessary. The term "general reader" is not used in any disparaging sense; a more accurate, though longer, description would be: the average non-specialist, but educated, Western reader interested in learning something about the Arab world and its past. For him, Mansfield has ably compressed in one volume the history of this world and of its inhabitants, from pre-Islamic times to our own days of oil wealth and the Gulf countries, described here as "the Eldorado states." The book is written in a clear style, its pages uncluttered with too many names and dates.

Outstanding among its chapters are those on the Crusades, the rise of Arab nationalism, and "The Second Arab Revolt" in the post-World War II period and the time of Nasser. On the Palestine problem, Mansfield gives his reader a balanced and objective account, without trying to conceal his belief "that an appalling injustice was done to the Arab people of Palestine." Of the consequences of the establishment of the State of Israel, he correctly observes that: "it left a legacy of bitterness among all the Arabs against Israel and the two Western powers most responsible for its creation—Britain and the United States," and this bitterness "has been the single most powerful factor behind the radicalization of the Arab world and the growth of anti-Western feeling

more compelling with the dismemberment of Palestine and displacement of most of its population. "Arab-fighter" Moshe Dayan is quoted as portraying the Arab response to injustice (infiltration, border raids, and eventually suicide missions) as natural. His solution is to "be prepared and armed, strong and tough"—and by retaliation increase the injustices and guarantee greater violence. More cynical is General Yehoshafat Harkabi who sums up the hypocrisy of Zionist diplomacy in a 1973 newspaper article:

> We must define our position and lay down basic principles for a settlement. Our demands should be moderate and balanced, and appear to be reasonable. But in fact they must involve such conditions as to ensure that the enemy rejects them. Then we should manoeuvre and allow him to define his own position, and reject a settlement on the basis of a compromise solution. We should then publish his demands as embodying unreasonable extremism. (p. 60)

Arab "extremism" then becomes the cause for Israeli intransigence and "retaliation" under the all-purpose Hebrew slogan "ein brera"—"no choice"; there is "no choice" but for the Zionists to use force against the Arabs. Of course, as David Hirst makes clear, it has been the Palestinians who have always been left with no choice but to respond with violence to the irrational injustice and intractability of their enemy.

David Hirst is an exceptional writer—a long-time Arab World correspondent for *The Guardian,* he is one of the few Western reporters who is fluent in Arabic. He has written an exceptional book—lucid, concise, subdued, even in describing the most outrageous events or ironies. He has drawn widely from Arabic, Hebrew and Western sources. Although his thesis puts the Zionists in the dock for their policies towards the Arabs, he spares neither Arab leader, Palestinian Resistance movement, nor individual Palestinian adventurist (whom he bluntly labels "terrorist") in their turn. At the same time, his sympathies are clearly with the Arab peasant and worker, provoked beyond bearing by events which conspire to strip him of livelihood, rights, country and dignity. Hirst remains faithful to this theme to the last page, he rarely engages in discussions of topics that do not directly relate to the question of violence. If anything, the interested reader is left without any guide—references or bibliography—with which to pursue other facets of the Palestinian issue. Occasionally the references given for individual quotes are not clearly ascribed and the sources for very interesting statements are not given. Passing quickly over certain decisive events and phenomena, such as the Arab-Israeli wars or the mechanics of Israeli political life, tightens the argument but may disappoint some readers. Similarly, juxtaposing analyses of past developments with vignettes from the present will be meaningful to readers familiar with Palestinian history, but may confuse others.

These are relatively minor criticisms of a book that has made a valuable contribution towards understanding the dynamics of Middle East violence. Its appearance at this time is most fortunate, particularly as the veils have dropped and the Israeli government is literally in the hands of the very saints of Zionist violence—Menachem Begin and the Likud. Perhaps *The Gun and the Olive Branch* can help the West understand why Israeli society has made heroes of "Arab-fighters" like Meir Har-Zion, who recommends killing with the knife for the "marvellous, sublime feeling" of "knowing you are a male," and why Begin has written "we fight, therefore we are."

Reviewed by Charles Oliver

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over the past two decades." Is this still true in the post-1973 Arab world? Or have oil and Sadat washed away this anti-Western bitterness? It is an interesting question which Mansfield does not ask.

Mansfield's strict chronological account is punctuated by asides and digressions. Thus, his account of the Crusades has the following footnote: "For the Arabs, who of all people have perhaps the most lively feeling of their own history, the aggressive invasion of the Crusades is still a vivid popular myth. It is no cause for surprise that they like to compare Zionists of today with the Crusaders and to point out that although the latter may have stayed for three centuries they were eventually ejected as an alien body." On the whole, this and other digressions do not seriously detract from the value of the book, as they occur at the right times and lengths.

Finally, the book shows that Peter Mansfield is *au courant* about the contemporary Arab world. He refers to, and discusses, Arabic music of today, the poetry of Mahmoud Darwish and Fadwa Tuqan, the film *al-'Asfour* (The Bird), and some current political jokes. I cannot help repeating one such joke that Mansfield reports. It is an Egyptian joke about Sadat and de-Nasserization, and goes thus: Sadat on an outing in the official limousine arrives at a crossroads, and the chauffeur asks him which way he should turn.

"Which way did President Nasser go?"

"Left, your excellency."

"Well, signal left and turn right!" instructs Sadat.

Reviewed by Khaldun S. Al-Husry

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☐ David Hirst THE GUN AND THE OLIVE BRANCH, Faber & Faber. 367 pp. 6.50 pounds. Aptly subtitled "The Roots of Violence in the Middle East." In tracing these roots, the author explodes a number of myths about both Arabs and Zionists. A carefully researched and documented account. Our price, $7.95.

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☐ Felicia Langer, WITH MY OWN EYES, Ithaca Press. 192 pp. 2.50 pounds (paperback). Noted Israeli Communist lawyer documents case histories of land seizure, property confiscation, deportations, etc., in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Golan Heights. Our price, $3.00.

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☐ Peter Mansfield, THE ARABS, Allen Lane, London, 572 pp. 8.50 pounds. A very readable history of the Arabs from pre-Islamic times to the present, with an objective account of the establishment of the State of Israel and the resultant effect on the attitudes of the Arabs. Our price, $10.00.

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