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Series A: Writings and Addresses. 1947-1991

Box 2, Folder 6, International seminar on "Justice and Peace in the Near East", 1968.



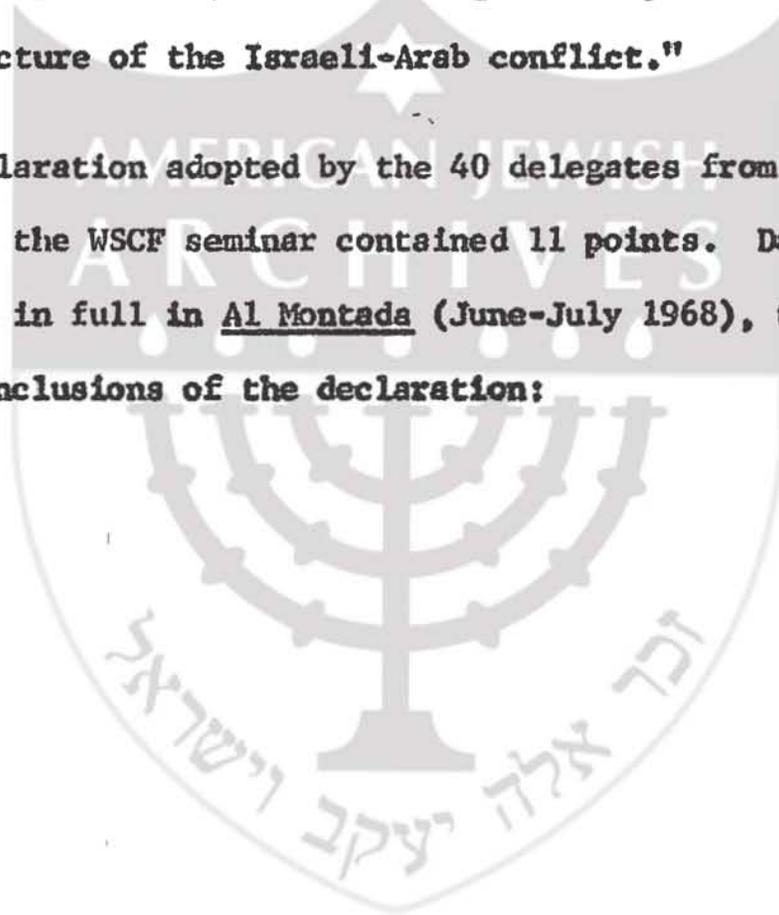
III. B. INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON "JUSTICE AND PEACE IN THE NEAR EAST"

Forty delegates from youth, student, and university Christian movements from the U.S., Europe and the Middle East met in Beirut, Lebanon, and Amman, Jordan, May 10-18, for an international consultation on "Justice and Peace in the Near East." This seminar, organized by the Student Christian Coordinating Committee of Lebanon and co-sponsored by the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF), was attended by nine American Protestants: William Bengtson-New York Theological Seminary; the Rev. Bartlett Beavin - campus minister in Ann Arbor, Michigan; John Dillon - student in London; Mr. & Mrs. Richard Ittner - minister in Brooklyn; George Pike - minister in Bettendorf, Iowa; Jesse Truvillion minister in New York City; and William Weisenback - student at New York Theological Seminary, affiliated with the University Christian Movement (UCM). The University Christian Movement, founded in September 1966, as successor to the National Student Christian Federation (NSCF) was "phased out" as of June 1969. The termination of the national UCM structure does not affect the local or regional student work carried on under ecumenical or individual church auspices. UCM plans an Annual Assembly on the Middle East, June 11-16, at Boulder, Colorado. Its members are also invited to take part in another study seminar on the Middle East at the Church Center for the United Nations in the Fall of 1969. Other delegates, including teachers, pastors, and students, came from Egyptian, Jordanian, Lebanese, Palestinian, and Syrian groups, as well as from European youth movements, Britain, the Netherlands,

Orthodox Club of Amman where Father Moubarac (See p. 20 - "Israeli Zionism is surely no better an answer than the Medieval Crusades.") led the prayer at the end of the evening.

3) "At the end of the Seminar, each delegate studied the possibilities of making his own association aware of what he had learned and experienced, in order to give Europe and the USA a more objective picture of the Israeli-Arab conflict."

The declaration adopted by the 40 delegates from eleven countries who attended the WSCF seminar contained 11 points. Dated May 20, 1968, and reprinted in full in Al Montada (June-July 1968), the following are major conclusions of the declaration:



1) "We are opposed to the conquest by military force that has marked Israel's role in the Near East since its inception...The present Arab enmity towards Israel is a product not of anti-Semitism, but rather of repeated acts of Israeli oppression."

2) "The source of this Israeli oppression lies in the ideology of Zionism, with all of its exclusiveness and intolerance. This ideology fosters a type of religion and ~~which we believe~~ and politico which we believe to be contrary to the spirit of the Old Testament... that the present policies of Israel We do not believe ~~that the present policies of Israel~~ are grounded in the best traditions of the Jewish religion. We believe that the Old Testament vision of Zion is one which cannot be transposed into that a particular state within human history." [This statement is evidential one of the results that "the experts...managed to place in its true light" as the Arab delegates sought to correct "the theological Judaic vision of the people of God" that the Western Christians brought to the Seminar. Editor]

3) In our times it is anachronistic and dangerous to found a society upon the primary of a particular religious tradition. This is true not only in the case of Israel, but throughout the world. Our hope, therefore, for the people of Palestine - Jewish, Muslim and Christian is an open, pluralistic society that guarantees the same real rights and opportunities for all citizens." [The seminar's delegates had not read apparently the Israeli declaration of independence now had consulted with thousands of Israeli Christians and Muslims who have repeatedly testified to their complete freedoms in Israel. See, for Example, declarations of the Rev. Dr. Douglas Young,

president of the Institute of Bible Studies in the Holy land, Father Bruno Hussar, St. Isaiah House of Dominican Studies, Jerusalem, among many other testimonies.]

4) "We affirm the right of the Palestian Arabs to live in their own lands, and deplore the forced evacuation of more than one and a half million of them from their homeland in the wars prompted by the existence of Israel in 1948, 1956 and 1967." [That six Arab states initiated the 1948 war against Israel and that the Palestine Arab High Command called upon Arabs in 1948 to leave Palestine in order to return with victorious Arab conquering armies who would share with them Jewish booty is simply dismissed in the pro-Arab line of this declaration.]

5) "Our ~~last~~ hope is that each side will refrain from resorting to ~~viol~~ violence in attempting to resolve the conflict. But at the same time we realize that this becomes increasingly problematic for Palestian Arabs with each further act of Israeli aggression."

6) "An essential first step to the resolution of the conflict is / Israeli compliance with the United Nations resolution calling for the wi drawal of troops from the areas occupied as a result of the June 1967 appression." [The declaration makes no reference to any other condition contained in the Nov. 1967 U N resolution, including a call for an end to Arab belligerency, the recognition of the sovereignty of all the states in the region, free access to international waterways, etc.]

7) "The increasing improbability of a political resolution of the Naar East conflict because of Israel's intransigence has prompted the formation of Palestine Liberation Movements, the most prominent of which is AL-FATH. This movement appears to be according to all evidence avail

able to us, a liberation movement representing the popular aspirations of the Palestinian Arabs and not a terrorist organization. Its primary objective is to make possible the building of a democratic Palestinian state in which Muslims, Jews, Christians and others can live peacefully and participate fully. For Palestinian Arabs it appears to play a role analogue to that of European resistance movements in Nazi-occupied countries during World War II." [The declaration reflects an incredible moral brutality in that it does not regard as "terrorist" the wanton murder of innocent Israeli ~~isrl~~ civilians in supermarkets, of students in university cafeterias, of passengers in civilian aircraft. That Christians mindlessly endorse such terrorism overseas but decry it in their cities at home, when it strikes at their own homes, reflects the moral and st soft-mindedness if not schizophrenia, at work in some current moral theologies.]

8) "The struggle of Palestinian Arabs is analogous to the national liberation struggles of many other peoples in the rest of the Third World. The state of Israel has appeared to the Arab World to be an outpost of the Western world in the Near East, as it indeed often has functioned."

9) "We consider the suffering of the Vietnamese people because of American aggression, the suffering of the non-white peoples of South Africa because of apartheid, the suffering of the non-white peoples of Rhodesia because of white racism, and the suffering of Arabs because of Israeli Zionism to be analogous and inter-related. And we appeal for freedom, peace, justice and equality for all these peoples."

10) "We regret that the majority of European and North American Mass Media have varied only in the degree of their approval of the Israeli position. We deplore this imbalance, which we do not believe is justified by the factual record, and we hope for more objectivity in the future in the interpretation of news related to the Arab-Israeli conflict."

11) "The significance of Jerusalem for all believers addresses it to the conscience of all men of good will as the symbol of understanding among peoples. Delivered from every form of fait accompli, it should become again, in this ecumenical era, a sign of blessing in the heart of the world. Peace upon Jerusalem."

This declaration opened with the following appeal: "We urge our respective national organizations and the World Student Christian Federation to continue to ~~initiate~~ initiate programs and projects to carry forward the concerns defined by this consultation, (i.e., the above 11 points). In response to that call to action, one of the 9 American delegates, representing the University Christian Movement. The Rev. Richard E. Ittner, pastor of the Arlington Avenue Presbyterian Church (Arlington Ave. and Elton St. Brooklyn, N. Y. 11208) drafted "a strategy that might be implemented (by the American delegates) upon their return home."

The strategy, whose programs and projects are detailed below, was published in the June-July issue of Al Montada, the English language "Christian News Bulletin" published by the Documentation Center for Youth and Students in the Middle East, whose headquarters are in Beirut. The strategy was distributed to all the organizations

represented at the seminar. In the United States, Rev. Ittner's 19 points strategy was distributed by the University Christian Movement to its constituent, Protestant, Roman Catholic and Orthodox student groups on the university and seminary campuses.

The strategy urged the following action:

- a) Sponsor teach-ins, dialogues and debates between factions on campuses
- b) Help disseminate statements of Lebanese missionaries to churches and newspapers
- c) Aid in distribution of Americans for Justice in the Middle East Newsletter
- d) Check for biased reporting and pressure media for more objective analysis
- e) Seek to encourage a TV "White Paper" on the refugee ~~pl~~ situation
- f) Encourage work and dialogue with the American Council for Judaism
- g) Attempt to get information into Approach and other church-related newsletters
- h) Help make the United Nations resolutions known
- i) Meet with the NCC Middle East committee
- j) Meet with Congressmen, State Department and UN representatives to discuss conflict
- k) Seek cooperation with existing pro-Arab groups in the US
- l) Sponsor Arab discussions with Arab student leadership in US
- m) Encourage more hospitality to Arab students studying in the US
- n) Organize letter-writing campaign for quick response to crises
- o) Sponsor Jewish-Arab dialogues in the US, Europe and the Middle East
- p) Seek to introduce Middle East issues into the 1968 Presidential campaign
- q) Organize boycotts of tours to the Holy Land during the Crisis
- r) Seek to support a non-violent march of the refugees to their homeland
- s) Show refugee films available through the UN and Jordanian Information Service.

(III-B)

THE UNIVERSITY CHRISTIAN CENTER, BEIRUT, LEBANON

Sponsored by 15 Arab Christian and Western Christian bodies
~~(11/11)~~
listed on p. 18) this center has become a major forum for disseminating pro-Arab and anti-Israel declarations, publications, and other propaganda. A key functionary in the Center has been the Rev. James E. Pierce

formerly Associate Director of the U.C.C., the first president of the American for Justice in the Middle East, and now pastor of the University Heights Presbyterian Church, Bronx, New York.

In a letter dated July 10, 1967, on the stationery of the University Christian Center (P.O.Box 235, Rue Makhoul, Deeb Building, Beirut, Lebanon), Rev. Pierce wrote a letter to American clergymen and lay leaders of all denominations that "the Arab position in general has not been fully clarified." To help American Christians "understand" the Arab position, Rev. Pierce enclosed a package of "reflections, statements, and letters of the Middle Eastern Churches." These included:

- a) the statement on the Middle East by the officers of the World Council of Churches;
- b) telegram to the W C C with a clarifying letter by Patriarches of Syria and Lebanon (which declares, "The State of Israel was unjustly created and should cease to exist as a racial state..."; (see p.9)
- c) memorandum on "The Requirements of the Christian Faith vis-a-vis the Palestinian Problem," by Father Jean Corban, Beirut ("Israel is based on a racist state of mind, which no human or Christian conscience can accept..." (see p.17)
- d) report on trip to Middle East by Father Paul Verghese, WCC associate General Secretary (see p. 10)

Rev. Pierce then writes:

"The students and staff of the University Christian Center ask you to read the enclosed materials ...and then share these materials with your church congregation, colleagues, friends, and/or any other

means of communication...

" The students and staff of the University Christian Center urge you to evaluate and understand the thinking contained in this packet; we urge you to bring the cutting edge of the Gospel and theological reflection to bear on political Zionism, we urge you to understand the depth of agony that millions of Middle Eastern Christians will have to face (and are presently facing) if cut off from the Holy Lands and particularly Jerusalem; and we urge you to participate in alleviating the suffering of tens of thousands of refugees leaving the newly occupied parts of Jordan, Syria, and Egypt."

The University Christian Center sponsors in Beirut many lectures on the Middle East, and seven recent talks have been published as a single booklet for world-wide distribution at a cost of \$1.00 per copy. The booklets are disseminated by the Americans for Middle East Understanding in New York City (see p.)

Three have a common title, "Suffering Humanity, the Refugees in the Middle East." The authors are the American, Peter Dodd, the English United Nations expert, John Reddaway, and the Korean refugee, Yoon Gu Lee.

Two others bear the title, "Zionism-Judaism." One is by Professor William Halladay and the other by Dr. Fritz Steppat. Both teach in Christian Seminaries in Beirut.

The remaining two are Arab views of "War and Peace in the Middle East." Dr. Eli E. Salem and the late Professor Nabih A. Faris are the Arab authors.

The "imprimatur" of the University Christian Center gives these seven lectures an ecclesiastical ecumenical endorsement. All seven

are hostile to Israel and some can be classified as outright anti-Semitic tracts. (for details, see p.)

(III-B)

METROPOLITAN PHILIP SALIBA OF NEW YORK

The Archbishop of the Syrian ~~Archdiocese~~ A Orthodox Archdiocese of New York and of North American visited Lebanon and then Rome, disclosing plans to advance the Arab political cause ~~of~~ in Western Christian circles and in the United States. As reported in Al Hayot of Beirut, Metropolitan Saliba held a press conference there on May 27th during which he announced plans to hold the 24th General Congress of his diocese in 1970 in Lebanon. ~~The~~ The 37 year old Archbishop claims about 110,000 constituents in the United States of Lebanese, Syrian, Palestinian and other emigrants of Arab origin. The purpose of the congress, Metropolitan Saliba stated, is to strengthen " relations between those Arabs who emigrated to the United States and those who remained in the Middle East."

The Al Payot article (headlined - "Talking Action in the Matter of Palestine Does Not Lead to a Positive Result") quoted the Archbishop as saying, "It is the duty of the Arab League nations to contribute not less than twenty million dollars to establish information centers in U. S. Cities."

Metropolitan Saliba added that Arab emigrants living in the USA will be in charge of these centers "because they know how to talk to the American mind and they can penetrate it." The Archbishop indicated that his church had raised \$50,000 to aid victims of the June 1967 war.

The Archbishop also mentioned that because of his "sensitivity toward

the Arab problem in general and the Palestine problem in particular" he has established a "special organization" on Beirut which will use its energy to teach some of the "awakened students."

The Committee of the organization for the teaching of Arab nationalism consists of Archbishop Elia El-Salibi, chairman; Archbishop Phillip Kurban, Archbishop Phillip Saliba, Dr. Constantine Zureiq; Architect Antoine Maaslouf, George Medri (for Syria); Simaan Daood (for Jordan); Mansour Lahham (for America.)

The Arab = language article concluded with the quote from Archbishop Saliba: "There is a historical hatred on the part of the Jews toward Islam and Christianity...and I believe that Israel will never be satisfied with the borders that she has reached now."

According to the Religious News Service (June 3, 1968) Metropolitan Saliba had an audience with Pope Paul VI at Vatican City. The RNS reports that the New York churchman sought from the Pope a statement on the internationalization of Jerusalem "but he was told by the Pontiff that such a statement should be one on which all Christian leaders could agree."

Archbishop Saliba was one of the speakers who had been invited to a Washington, D. C. pro-Arab rally on June 8, 1968. The rally was to be held at Lafayette Park across from the White House. According to A. T. Mehdi, the Executive Director of the Federated Organizations of American Arab Relations (see p.) the rally was to "call upon President Johnson...to bring pressure upon Israel to withdraw from the areas occupied" in June 1967. Attached to Mehdi's letter announcing Saliba's participation in the rally was a cartoon of Moshe Dayan dressed in a Nazi stormtrooper's uniform with the

Caption "WANTED!" Under the cartoon was a listing of the alleged "atrocities" that the Israelis have committed against the "civilian Arab population of the Holy Land." Mehdi's letter called upon the American people in general and the "Jewish community in particular to denounce and oppose "these latter day Nazis."

Archbishop Saliba and others had been invited to speak ~~to~~ at the rally that was ironically and tragically never held due to the funeral of Senator Robert F. Kennedy.

III-B

AMERICANS FOR JUSTICE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Created since June 1967 Americans for Justice in the Middle East (P O Box 4841 - Beirut, Lebanon, Rev. James Pierce, President, Room 924, 475 Riverside Drive, New York (870-2506); Mrs. F. Renno, Secretary; Mrs. J. Dagilaitis, Membership Chairman) consists "of professional and business people mostly in their 20's and 30's who want to give fellow Americans back home a fuller comprehension of the Arab world in which to work, believing that Americans are largely uninformed or misinformed on matters crucial to area peace, especially on the Arab view of the central Palestine issue." They publish monthly The Middle East Newsletter edited by Robert J. Fraga and Anne Ricketson Zahlan (see publications). "Our readers are urged to share the material in the Newsletter with their friends, local newspapers, and ~~press~~ representatives ~~of/over~~ in government."

An example of the kind of "faller comprehension the Americans for Justice in the Middle East seek to communicate "back home" is the lecture by Dr. William Halladay, professor Old Testament at the Near East School of Theology, Beirut, delivered in January 1968 at the University Christian Center Forum there.

Prof. Halladay's lecture, entitled "Is the Old Testament Zionist?" was published in the June-July 1968 issue of the Middle East Newsletter (Vol. II, No. 6, pp.8-13), reprinted in the "Occasional Bulletin" (Oct. 1968, Vol. XIX, no. 10) from the Missionary Research Library (Room 678, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, N.Y. 10027), and ~~distributed~~ tributed by the University Christian Movement.

Prof. Holladay has written a lengthy essay in which he draws distinctions between ancient Israel and modern Israel on the basis of political history, religious history, and theology. "On the basis of bare historical events," he writes, "the Zionist claim to the land carries little weight, as we all recognize."

As to "the relevance of the Old Testament to the policy of modern Israel," ~~Professor~~ Professor ~~Holladay~~ Holladay writes, "Zionism does not want to listen to the Old Testament because it does not want to be subject to the God of judgment and grace/ these revealed." (p. 11). He concludes his essay with an admonition to Christians, "We who are Christian must take seriously the New Testament affirmation that it is the church, we ourselves, who are the true Israel...we are it, the Israel of God. We have said that modern Israel is not in theological continuity with ancient Israel. Now we must affirm that the church is in continuity with ancient Israel in the sense that it is the community charged to continue to be attentive to the

voice of the God of judgment and grace who can be met in the Old Testament."

While Prof. Holladay eschews modern anti-Semitism (see p. 5A) as practiced by Gerald L.K. Smith and the Nazi, Communist and Arab purveyors of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, it is a tragic commentary that he has learned nothing about the relationship between that form of higher Biblical criticism of Wellhausen and Kuenen which he espouses and the foundations that that "higher anti-Semitism" provided for Alfred Rosenberg and Hitler's Mein Kampf. Furthermore, his 19th century theological views regarding "the true Israel" represent a regressive influence in the contemporary theological scene which finds a growing number of leading Catholic and Protestant scholars developing a significant consensus regarding the permanent ~~validity~~ validity of Judaism and its legitimate claims to truth and value, and a theology of the people of God which under (?) religious coexistence between Judaism and Christianity--and Islam, and other Oriental religions.

The same issue of the Middle East Newsletter, at the conclusion of Prof. Holladay's article, publishes a photograph with this caption:

"On Saturday April 27 the people of the Republic of Lebanon paid homage to the heroism of their youthful compatriot, Khalil Izzedine El-Jamal who met his death in a resistance action within Occupied Palestine. The coffin containing the remains of the young freedom fighter, who had joined the Palestine National Liberation Movement, Al-Fatah, after the June war, was brought to Lebanon

by way of Jordan and Syria in a ~~REVERSE~~ convoy accompanied by
Palestinian commandos in uniform. From the frontier where the
funeral train was met by the Administrator of the Bekaa region
representing the Lebanese government to Beirut where the funeral
was held at the Al-Omari Mosque, people gathered along the road to salute
the memory of their compatriot. Church bells tolled the dirge
as religious leaders of all faiths took part in the procession: May
6 is Martyrs' Day in Lebanon and this year among the names of those
Lebanese who have given their lives for their country was inscribed
that of Khalil Al-Jamal."



IV Response of Christian Groups to Arab Initiatives

Church Center at the United Nations

insert P. 8A from the press release

National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.

insert p. 8

A. "Middle East Refugees" - In September 1968

B. Athens-Beirut - See bottom p. 6, and p. 7-same press release



A. Middle East Refugees

In September 1968, the General Board of the National Council of Churches, meeting in Houston, Texas, received a report on the "refugee situation in the Middle East." The survey, conducted by Rev. Edwin M. Luidens, general secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Reformed Church in America, the Rev. Raymond E. Maxwell, of the Episcopal Church, and the Rev. Rodney A. Sundberg, of the United Presbyterian Church, dealt only with the situation of the Arab refugees and made no reference to 500,000 Jews who were refugees from Arab countries.

In seeking to explain the "convictions of Christian people there," the report stated: "Western nations out of a sense of guilt for the persecution of Jews in Europe created the State of Israel and thus contributed toward the persecution of Arabs.

"For 20 years Israel has been permitted to ignore the resolutions of the United Nations aimed at justice for dispossessed Arabs, and thus has been enabled to enlarge and consolidate her position."

According to a Religious News Service report, "there was strongly worded opposition to the survey from some who held it was unbalanced in favor of the Arab position." The refugee report, however, was published in Approach, an official journal of the National Council of Churches and the United Presbyterian Church, under the title, "Do Churches Betray Mid-East Christians?" No mention was made of the

opposition to the report during the floor debate. A reprint of the pro-Arab report was made by the Middle East and Europe Department of the Division of Overseas Ministries of the National Council of Churches, and was sent to the 34 member denominations of the Protestant Council.

Middle East Refugees



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B. Athens-Beirut

National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.

Following the Israeli attack on the Beirut airport the National Council of Churches sent telegrams on Dec. 31, 1968, to President Johnson and to UN Ambassador J. Russell Wiggins expressing gratitude "for your firm stand in the Security Council...in condemning the Israeli attack on the Beirut Airport, your call to break the pattern of violence and your plea for a meaningful arms agreement in the ~~area~~ area." The telegram to President Johnson also added: "We are grateful...for Mr. Rostow's condemnation of the attack on 'a civil international airport' in a country which has been striving for moderation in the Middle East." The telegrams made no reference to the attack by Arab commandos on an El Al plane at Athens airport, which had preceded the Beirut incident.

Three days later, the National Council of Churches issued a second statement which spoke in general terms about the "need for compassion, justice and peace in the Middle East." It called for "renewed efforts" to "secure implementation of the Security Council resolution," and called on the Israeli Government to permit and facilitate on "a far larger scale" the return of the Arab refugees and displaced persons to their homes on the West Bank of the Jordan.

The National Council concluded its statement with a brief reference to the plight of Jewish refugees in Arab countries, the first time it is believed that the Protestant agency took public notice of the persecution of Jews in Arab lands.