



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE  
AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

*Preserving American Jewish History*

MS-603: Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum Collection, 1945-1992.

Series C: Interreligious Activities. 1952-1992

Box 40, Folder 1, National Council of Churches - Middle East  
policy, 1980.

TO: AJC AREA DIRECTORS, JCRCS, FEDERATIONS

FROM: Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum

DATE: Oct. 22, 1980

RE: PROPOSED MIDDLE EAST POLICY STATEMENT OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

As you know from our earlier memoranda on this subject, our Interreligious Affairs Department has been working intensively with key staff members of the National Council of Churches on the revision of the NCC's draft ~~policy~~ statement on the Middle East. This document is scheduled to be presented to the NCC General Board meeting around November 6th in New York City, at which Rabbi James Rudin and I will be official fraternal observers.

In connection with the revision process, the National Council of Churches' President, Dr. William Howard, went with two NCC staff members on a mission to Israel to update his knowledge of the present situation. AJC was asked to prepare his itinerary which included meetings with Prime Minister Beigin, Mayor Teddy Kollek and many others. The enclosed letter from Dr. Howard to Bert Gold is interesting as background.

Regarding the draft document itself, there have been a number of positive changes - but there remain a number of significant problems which we have communicated to the highest levels of the NCC leadership. These problems are detailed below, and after reflecting on them, we would ~~strongly~~ urge you to communicate your concerns to your key Protestant and local Council of Churches contacts, especially those who serve on the NCC's Governing Board.

Among the positive changes which deserve to be acknowledged are the following:

a) The removal of the call on the American government to enter into dialogue with the PLO without their having ~~made~~ given up the PLO Covenant's determination to destroy Israel and commitment to violence and terrorism.

b) The change in attitude toward the Camp David agreement, which the earlier draft called "fundamentally flawed;"

c) The removal of the appeal ~~ask~~ to the American government to reevaluate its economic and military aid to Israel pending greater "flexibility" by Israel on a number of issues - Palestinian autonomy, West Bank settlements, etc.

Welcome as are these basic changes - and they should not be minimized - there remain serious and substantial difficulties which we plan to press during the coming days on NCC leadership and on the Governing Board itself.

Following is a line-by-line analysis of the NCC document:

Page 1 - There is a strong anti-Western, anti-American slant reflecting a third world orientation; there is no meaningful indication of Soviet penetration of the Middle East which deserves at least equal judgment. Even more troublesome, there is no acknowledgment of the transformed role of the Arab oil powers who have consistently sought to influence and intimidate American and Western policy-making regarding Israel and the Middle East through oil and petrodollar blackmail. (see also p. 2, l. 30, 31)

1. 14 - Some reference to this powerful reality should be made in this way: "The most recent developments affecting the region - the deepening dependence of large and small nations outside the region upon the reserves of fossil fuels found in a number of the states in the region, which has brought unprecedented wealth through petrodollars and actual or potential world influence to certain states in the area - works to exacerbate these tendencies.

Some acknowledgment of the changed situation in the Middle East as a result of the Iraq-Iran conflict, the ensuing realignments, and the perspective this sheds on the inherent instability and turbulence in the area apart from the Israel-Palestinian conflict ~~would be necessary~~ is now in order.

p. 3, l. 43, 44, 45 - "Even within each religious community there are differences, particularly on issues" change to .."faith, peoplehood, land, and nation."

1. 44-47 are badly formulated; they suggest that Israel is caught up in a kind of religious tribalism while others in the area ~~have~~ have built national structures that are pluralistic. Something more accurate is required, such as, "It is an historical and religious reality that some people define themselves in terms of a religious civilization in which religious faith expresses itself in a communal ~~dimension~~ dimension of peoplehood centered in an ancient homeland, yet retaining a pluralistic and universal outlook; others affirm a monochromatic view of their religious society with no theological or ideological conception of pluralism; others advocate a secular society in which religious pluralism is an expression of voluntarism.

p. 7 - l. 148, 149 - "The role of the USA churches is to interpret and be supportive of the significant witness of Middle East churches." Obviously, the NCC has every right to affirm the need for closer ties with sister churches in the Arab world. It is deeply troubling to us, however, in view of two realities: a) A number of Arab Christian leaders regularly preach anti-Semitism as NCC people learned first-hand; what will that do to counter that horror? b) the Middle East Council of Churches have prepared several strategy documents in recent years calling upon the NCC to interpret their one-sided, pro-PLO positions through American churches; what safeguards will there be to counter that strategy; c) what plans are there for equal communication ~~with~~ with Christians in Israel who ~~also~~ also have a claim to have their "witness" interpreted among American churches? (applies also to p. 8, l. 167-177)



as the UN ~~242~~ 242, ~~in part~~ and it is thoroughly one-sided and anti-Israel as part of the UN campaign of labeling "Zionism as racism".  
p28

p. 670 - Not "the Israeli government declared this not binding" - a number of nations rejected it and declared it non-binding.

1.685 - "the Palestinian people themselves have not been a party in negotiations" - the truth is that the Palestinians have consciously chosen not to involve themselves in the negotiations, although the Camp David framework explicitly invited and encouraged their involvement, repeatedly restated by President Sadat, Prime Minister Begin, and President Carter.

1.686 - there is an established mechanism to accomplish this - the Palestinians thus far have chosen not to agree on it.

p. 687 - there is an advocacy here of the PLO as "the only organized voice." In light of the Iraq-Iran conflict and growing reactions against PLO by major Arab leaders, why does the NCC have to become their foremost advocates? Why not, in the spirit of democratic commitment, call upon the Palestinians to elect their leadership and charge them responsibility to negotiate their interests. At the very least, state first that the PLO must first cease to be a terrorist body and give up its commitment to violence before it can be considered as representing their actual membership of some 10,000 people.



DRAFT

October 20, 1980

To: AJC Area Staff

From: Marc H. Tanenbaum

Subject: NCC Proposed Policy Statement on the Middle East

The final draft version of the National Council of Churches' Policy Statement on the Middle East will be voted upon at the NCC's Governing Board meeting in New York on November 6th.

While Jim, Judi and Inge discussed their reactions to this document together, I asked each to submit a separate memo specifying specific reactions and recommendations. Since time is of the essence, -- and we do not have time to coordinate these reactions into a single document -- I am attaching herewith copies of each of their responses. You will note there is much common ground, plus some differences in nuance and suggestion. Together, these memos will summarize the major criticisms and concerns of our department, and may help you in briefing your own contacts within your communities, particularly those who will be going to the NCC General Board meeting.

# Jewish Organizations Critical Of NCC Middle East Stand

NEW YORK (NC) — Several Jewish organizations have criticized a National Council of Churches' (NCC) policy statement which says Israel must accept the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as a participant in Middle East peace negotiations.

Magr. John M. Oesterreicher, director of the Institute for Jewish-Christian Studies at Seton Hall University, South Orange, N.J., was also critical of the NCC statement.

The NCC policy statement, adopted by unanimous vote of the council's governing board, said also that the PLO must accept the right of Israel to exist as Jewish state and that Israel must officially declare its recognition of the right of Palestinians to self-determination, including the option of a sovereign state apart from the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

The NCC call for Israel to accept the PLO as a negotiating partner "is wholly unrealistic," said Magr. Oesterreicher. "The PLO is not a liberation organization, but a terrorist group. It attacks, not enemy troops, but innocent bystanders, either Jews, Christian pilgrims or Arabs. Perhaps more Arabs have been killed by the PLO than Jews.

"Israel cannot choose suicide," the priest said. He noted that the PLO representatives at the United Nations had recently reaffirmed that the PLO's goal is still the destruction of Israel.

In a statement issued by Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, national director of interreligious affairs of the American Jewish Committee (AJC), and Rabbi James Rudin, associate director, the AJC said it "deplores" the NCC governing board's adoption of a statement "whose crucial political recommendations endorse

the concept of a PLO state to be established on the borders of Israel."

The AJC accused the NCC of contributing to "undermining the Camp David agreements" between Israel and Egypt.

"By advocating a PLO state in the West Bank and Gaza 'apart from the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan' and by demanding that Israel acquiesce in the creation of such an untenable state," the AJC continued, "the National

Council has seriously compromised its potential role as a reconciling agent for peace and social justice for all the peoples of the Middle East."

The National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, a coalition of several agencies, called the NCC statement "a major disservice to peace."

The Anti-Defamation League, of B'nai B'rith (ADL) had asked the NCC to delay adoption of the Middle East statement

REDRAFT October 20, 1980

Reverend William Howard

The NCC's revised proposed Policy Statement for presentation to the NCC Governing Board on November 6-8, 1980 prompts the following observations in addition to those made in my letter to you of August 6, 1980. That letter remains our basic evaluation of the Policy Statement, including the recent revision. Because the current proposed Policy Statement retains or supplements passages that are of specific urgent concern, I must underscore these:

1. The Statement implicitly and without prior condition confers legitimacy on the PLO. The effect can only be to confirm <sup>to</sup> the PLO that it need not really abandon its terrorist policies as a condition of acceptance and recognition. Surely, by any code or standard of ethical and normative practice, the failure to make the conferral of legitimacy on the PLO conditional to its prior acceptance of the most elemental requirements of civilized conduct is unwise, unjustified and morally indefensible. (lines 685-695)

2. The core of the conflict is Arab refusal to recognize Israel. The Palestinian problem was created by the Arab refusal to accept the partition of Palestine as Israel did and their attack on the nascent state. More than three decades later, of the 21 Arab states, Egypt alone recognizes or even negotiates with Israel. (lines 629-632)

3. Self-determination for Palestinian Arabs (lines 719-721) does not depend upon some future unilateral action by Israel. A negotiating framework with an agreed-upon timetable for the resolution of this issue was provided at Camp David, promising recognition of "the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and their just requirements." Reports of Israeli positions in the recently resumed Autonomy

negotiations attest to Israel's genuine readiness to deal with her Palestinian Arab neighbors on a basis of equity and reciprocity.

4. For these reasons, we believe the revised draft Policy Statement does not advance the cause of peace by affirming recognition of the PLO as the "only organized voice of the Palestinian people" (lines 687-688) Jordan's voice and those of Israel's other Arab neighbors, including the Palestinian residents of the West Bank, must be heard in direct negotiations with Israel. The obligation of those states and the Palestinian people to enter such negotiations should be the thrust of your Policy Statement

Events in the Middle East since our earlier exchange of views have demonstrated anew that the Arab-Israel conflict is not the major destabilizing element there. We strongly urge a reformulation of your document which will take this into account.

The foregoing concerns are conveyed to you at the direction of the Executive Committee of the NJCRAC, the national planning and coordinating body for the eleven national and one hundred and seven local member agencies comprising the field of Jewish community relations.

Sincerely,

Bennett Yanowitz  
Chairman

REDRAFT Oct. 15, 1980

Reverend William Howard

The NCC's revised proposed Policy Statement for presentation to the NCC Governing Board on November 6-8, 1980 prompts the following observations in addition to those made in my letter to you of August 6, 1980. That letter remains our basic evaluation of the Policy Statement, including the recent revision. Because the current proposed Policy Statement retains or supplements passages that are of specific urgent concern, I must underscore these:

1. The revised Policy Statement (at lines 685-696) equates the State of Israel, a sovereign nation, with the Palestine Liberation Organization, a self-proclaimed "organization" dedicated to violence and terrorism. Thus, notwithstanding ~~xxx~~ the stipulation in the revised Statement that the PLO must recognize Israel's right to exist and refrain from hostile acts, the Statement implicitly and without prior condition confers legitimacy on the PLO. The effect can only be to confirm the PLO that it need not really abandon its terrorist policies as a condition of acceptance and recognition. Surely, by any code or standard of ethical and normative practice, the failure to make the conferral of legitimacy on the PLO conditional to its prior acceptance of the most elemental requirements of civilized conduct is unwise, unjustified and morally ~~xxxxx~~ indefensible. (lines 685-695)

~~The word~~  
2. The conflict ~~that must be resolved is not between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs (lines 629-632), but in its genesis and at its core, the conflict~~ borne of the Arab refusal to recognize Israel. The Palestinian problem was created by the Arab ~~states~~ refusal to accept the partition of Palestine ~~as Israel did~~ and their attack on the nascent state. More than three decades later, of the 21 Arab states, Egypt alone recognizes or even negotiates with Israel. (lines 629-632)

3. Self-determination for Palestinian Arabs (lines 719-721) does not depend upon some future unilateral action by Israel.

*Disposition of the remaining unallocated territories of the Palestine Mandate - Judea and Samaria (West Bank) and Gaza - is a matter for negotiations among the nation states concerned. (It should be remembered that in 1922 Transjordan - now Jordan - was created out of 80% of the Palestine Mandate set aside for a Jewish homeland. Transjordan was, Jordan became, and Jordan remains a sovereign homeland for Palestinian Arabs.)*

A negotiating framework with an agreed-upon timetable for the resolution of this issue was provided at Camp David, promising recognition of "the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and their just requirements." Reports of Israeli positions in the recently resumed Autonomy negotiations attest to Israel's genuine readiness to deal with her Palestinian Arabs/neighbors on a basis of equity and reciprocity.

4.

For these reasons, we believe the revised draft Policy Statement is *does not admit the cause of peace by* both misconceived and counterproductive of the *promise of peace in implicitly* affirming recognition of the PLO as the "only organized voice of the Palestinian people" (lines 687-688). Jordan's voice and those of Israel's other Arab neighbors including the Palestinian residents of the *West Bank* areas, ~~themselves~~, must be heard in direct negotiations with Israel. The obligation of those states and the Palestinian people to enter such negotiations should be the ~~sole~~ *goal* of your Policy Statement.

*must be*

~~the~~ Since our earlier exchange of views, ~~reflected in my letter of August 6 and your revised draft Policy Statement,~~ Events in the Middle East have demonstrated anew that the Arab-Israel conflict is not the major destabilizing element there. ~~Therefore, we strongly urge the early formulation of the more comprehensive statement, the need for which is asserted in the opening paragraph, on timeliness, of your Policy Statement.~~

*We strongly urge a reformulation of your document which will take this into account.*

7 The foregoing concerns are conveyed to you at the direction of the Executive Committee of the NJCRAC, the national planning and coordinating body for the eleven national and one hundred and seven local member agencies comprising the field of Jewish community relations.

Sincerely,

Bennett Yanowitz  
Chairman

5 .



Inge - Important!

memorandum

**THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE**

**date** October 21, 1980  
**to** Inge  
**from** Judy  
**subject** NJCRAC Letter to Bill Howard

Charney called. Has to cancel lunch meeting tomorrow because he can't get everybody together in one place at one time. He hopes to accomplish some interagency agreement by means of a conference call.

I found the letter <sup>(attached)</sup> and read him the changes made in your meeting with Selma and Abe. He agreed most of them improved the document considerably. However, he says Phil Baum has some other suggestions and some may also be forthcoming from ADL. In the meantime, he will phone these changes around.

Incidentally, let me report a little byplay between me and Charney for your information. He was a little troubled that the reference to Jordan was removed. I said I didn't mind noting in the document that Jordan was carved out of 80% of the Palestine Mandate set aside for a Jewish homeland, but that calling Jordan a "sovereign homeland for Palestinian Arabs" was not exactly accurate and would certainly not wash with NCC people. They may wish to reinstate the first part of that reference to Jordan. I have no objection to that, if they leave out the rest of the sentence.

JB:mr

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

DATE: 10/9

TO: M Tarenbaum

FROM: HAROLD APPLEBAUM

- For your information
- For approval
- Please Handle
- Please talk to me about this
- Read and return
- Returned as requested
- Your comments, please
- Per your request

REMARKS:

*forwarded by Phil  
Saperstein*

OCT 6 1980

# The New Jersey Council of Churches

116 North Oraton Parkway • East Orange, New Jersey 07017 • (201) 675 8600

B L I N D C O P Y

October 3, 1980

Dr. Lonnie Turnipseed  
National Council of Churches  
475 Riverside Drive  
New York, New York 10027

Dear Dr. Turnipseed:

Attached is my brief comment on the proposed Middle East policy statement of the National Council of Churches. I trust that the Committee will take into account the questions I have raised and the recommendations made in the final draft.

I made repeated efforts to reach you at New York and Washington this week by phone, and also Rufus Cornelson, Dick Butler, and Joan Campbell. All of you were away from your desks and not reachable by me. Otherwise, I would have shared the content of the attached statement to you early this week, and I trust that this statement will still reach you in time to be considered in the weighty decisions before you.

I wish you and the Committee a special grace of wisdom in writing the final draft. The statement has the potential of being a reconciling instrument, or just the opposite.

Shalom,



Rev. Paul L. Stagg  
General Secretary

PLS/as

cc: Dr. Rufus Cornelson  
Dr. Richard Butler  
Mrs. Joan Campbell

enc: Comments on Proposed Middle East Policy Statement

AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH New Jersey Conference • AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL ZION CHURCH New Jersey Conference • AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES OF NEW JERSEY • CHRISTIAN CHURCH Northeastern Area Association • EPISCOPAL CHURCH Diocese of Newark Diocese of New Jersey • GENERAL BAPTIST CONVENTION OF NEW JERSEY • LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA New Jersey Synod • OLD ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH • REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA Particular Synod of New Jersey • RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS New York Yearly Meeting • THE SALVATION ARMY • UNION AMERICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH • UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST Central Atlantic Conference • UNITED METHODIST CHURCH New Jersey Conferences • UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE U S A Synod of the Northeast

A BRIEF COMMENT  
on  
THE PROPOSED MIDDLE EAST POLICY STATEMENT

Paul L. Stagg

The effort of the National Council of Churches to review its policy on the Middle East and to formulate a statement to give guidance to the Council and to its member commissions in their relationship to the Middle East is welcomed. The proposed statement of policy has much to commend it. However, there are a number of serious questions that must be raised and that should be taken into account in the final document and its implementation.

One question has to do with who informs the policy statement. Although the statement advocates a reconciling position to be taken by the National Council of Churches vis a vis the various groups in the Middle East, the document reflects the influence of pro-Arab Christians in the Middle East and does not take into account the views of other Christians in the area. Any balanced position must take into account all sides and not only those views that reflect a pro-Arab position. Moreover, the most critical question has to do with the existence and security of Israel, and on this question the basic anxiety of the Jewish community has not been addressed.

The second question has to do with the basic anxiety that Jewish people have, an anxiety also shared by many Christians, with any advocacy of a Palestinian state that fails to reject the PLO covenant to destroy Israel. Although the document recognizes that advocacy of Palestinian self-determination frequently implies the vow to destroy Israel, it never really addresses the issue. The result only heightens the anxiety both of Jewish people and their many friends in the Christian community. Such a result is not compatible with the commendable intent of the National Council of Churches to play a reconciling role in the Middle East. Surely any policy that fails to reject the avowed threat of Al Fatah, the largest and most influential group in the PLO, to destroy Israel, a threat repeated as recently as May, 1980, is not consistent with the demand that the Arab states and the Palestinian Arabs recognize Israel as a Jewish state with secure, defined, and recognized borders.

This really goes to the heart of the matter. Although the present document does not mention the PLO, it leaves undefined the meaning of self-determination, a meaning left in no doubt by the PLO when applied to the objectives of Palestinians. In the context "self-determination" becomes a code word for liquidation of Israel. There is an unease that the final document may mention the PLO without demanding that organization to repudiate the Al Fatah covenant to destroy Israel and to cease all acts of terrorism against Israel and its citizens. If the PLO is included in the final text, it must be clear that the National Council of Churches specifically demands that this policy be rejected by the PLO.

Although other questions can be raised, I mention only one more. It has to do with the conspicuous absence in the proposed document of reference to the close relationship of Christianity and Judaism and of the fact that the Christian faith is rooted in the Hebrew Scriptures, the only scripture that Jesus, whose parentage and heritage were Jewish, knew. Why are the historical ties of Christians with the people of Israel not acknowledged? A Council that wishes to be reconciling must certainly face that question. The theological, historical, and pragmatic reasons for doing so are compelling.

In sum, it is hoped, and recommended that the final statement of the Council will reflect the legitimate concerns of Israel and the Jewish Community, the concern of Christians in the Middle East who are pro-Israel as well as those who are pro-Arab, and that it clearly reject any settlement that does not specifically reject the Al Fatah covenant to destroy Israel and condemn acts of terrorism against Israel. Moreover, Israel does represent a freedom movement of Jewish people and to fail to acknowledge this while recognizing the PLO as a liberation movement is to take a distorted and one-sided position. If the final paper is to move as a reconciling instrument, this distortion must be corrected.



PLS/as  
10/3/80

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The Star-Ledger, Thursday, September 25, 1982

# Bishop Spong and the value of Christian dialogue

By MONICA MASKE

The decision by Episcopal Bishop John S. Spong of Newark to end ecumenical relations with the local Catholic Church was seen by many to be precipitous, extreme and misdirected.

The worst part of it was the antagonistic manner he used to take public exception to the Vatican decision to accept into the Catholic Church priests who seceded from the Episcopal Church in opposition to the ordination of women.

Bishop Spong made some very telling points in his five-page statement. But by using a hostile, argumentative tone — by coming out from his corner of Christendom swinging his action as a modern-day demonstration of what was at the heart of Christian disunity 500 years ago.

Some may call it reform. Some may say the passionate declarations of the reformers led to an improved Christian church. But it was an undeniable shattering and splintering. And, it wasn't until this century that Christian church leaders began to sit down and talk together on world, national and state levels. Because of the developing ecumenical movement, it seemed to many that the time had arrived to begin to sew some stitches on the cloth that had been rent apart for so long.

For a local leader of the Episcopal Church — which in some ways is an important bridge between the Roman Catholic Church and Protestantism — to cut off ecumenical dialogue furthers nothing. It slams shut a door that had been inching open. And it ignores the inescapable lessons of the value of communication, lessons learned



painfully in this country because of civil rights activists, feminists and antiwar demonstrators.

Beyond that, Bishop Spong — who successfully and productively engaged in public discussion about Judaic-Christian relations with a rabbi in Virginia before his appointment to the Newark Diocese — was misguided in what appears to have been his intention to stir up public debate with local Catholic officials.

For one, that's generally not the Catholic style, although it is his. Secondly, the issue was a Vatican decision, albeit announced by U.S. Catholic officials and directed to a specific group of U.S. Anglicans.

But it was not the decision of Archbishop Peter L. Gerety of Newark nor of Bishop Frank J. Rodimer of Paterson. They certainly represent the Catholic Church

and can speak for it. In this case, however, they took no public stand on the Vatican decision. If they had, perhaps Bishop Spong would have been justified in directing to them his wrath at Rome.

Instead, the Episcopal bishop decided to take on an international and national issue with local Catholic prelates. And he opted to make an international statement at the expense of local ecumenical relations.

What was more important to him was the preservation of the integrity of the Episcopal Church and its women priests in the face of the blow dealt them by Rome's decision, which he suggested could be construed as an affirmation of the dissident Anglicans who opposed women's ordination.

He took his stand, even though Bishop John M. Allin, presiding bishop of the U.S. Episcopal Church, advised his bishops to not only continue ecumenical dialogue with Roman Catholics but to raise this controversy in those talks.

In his statement, Bishop Spong said, "If, as some believe, the Roman Catholic Church is saying that the price of continued ecumenical dialogue and further ecumenical relations is the cessation by the Episcopal Church of the ordination of women, then let me be very specific and say the price of continued ecumenical dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church has at this moment become too high."

The Vatican decision, however, was handed down in response to requests for admission policy by secessionist Anglican clergy in the U.S. Rome was saying nothing about continued ecumenical dialogue with the Episcopal Church. It was asked for a policy. It gave it.

Many in the Catholic Church didn't much like that policy either. Many Catholic ecumenists thought Rome was striking wrong notes, harmful notes; in that decision. Others were embarrassed by it, suggesting the pronouncement should be treated the same way one would react to a maiden aunt who belched at the dinner table. Turn away and continue on as usual as if it hadn't happened.

Christianity is not simple and certainly theological issues are of utmost importance. But hopefully, the "price" of continued ecumenism is not too high for Episcopalians and Catholics in several local New Jersey churches to continue their dialogues, continue praying together and studying Scripture together, thus recognizing the fundamental commonality they share. No high tone intellectual or theological debate for them.

Bishop Spong — an author, lecturer and scholar of renown — let the Vatican decision take on an overriding significance and it led him to an overreaching reaction. Why penalize the local Catholics? Why blow up the local

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Memo

October 16, 1980

TO : NJCRAC Member Agencies

FROM : Jacqueline K. Levine, Chairperson, Ad Hoc Committee on the NCC

SUBJECT: Revised NCC Draft Policy Statement

The NCC has completed redrafting of its proposed Policy Statement on the Middle East which it has shared with us for comment. On the Recommendation of the Israel Commission, which met Sunday, October 12 under the chairmanship of Arden Shenker and Benjamin Gettler, the Executive Committee directed that a letter under Bennett Yanowitz's signature be addressed to NCC President, the Reverend William Howard, indicating our urgent concerns with the revised document.

While there is evidence that the NCC drafting committee tried to address issues we raised in our letter of August 6th with regard to the concept of self-determination and the Camp David accords (which are not characterized in the new draft as "partial"), these accommodations have little or no practical effect.

Instead, those elements our Ad Hoc Committee on the NCC had judged positively in the first draft have been reversed. The call, in the first draft, for recognition of Israel as a Jewish state is, in the current version, a simple - but nonetheless a positive - call for recognition of Israel. The PLO, Israel's settlements policy, and Jerusalem, which were omitted in the initial draft are now mentioned conspicuously. In particular, the implicit recognition of the PLO in the current version is most distressing and the primary focus of the letter to Reverend Howard authorized by the Executive Committee on Monday.

#### Recommendations

We have previously alerted all communities in which members of the NCC Governing Board reside to the names and addresses of such members, so that they might be contacted personally for in-depth discussion of the draft Policy Statement. As well, we advised all communities to undertake an educational campaign with denominational leaders.

The Israel Commission repeated and underscored this recommendation, since there remain only three weeks until the draft is debated for adoption on November 6, 7, 8 at the NCC's Governing Board meeting in New York City.

Every effort should be made to renew or initiate personal contacts. While there are no tangible grounds to expect major positive changes, such changes cannot be achieved unless there is an intensive one-to-one effort; conversely, greater damage will surely be done if this effort is not pursued.

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Points for Interpretation

The principal grievance with the revised proposed Policy Statement is its implicit recognition of the PLO. This will be a prime focus of the Executive Committee mandated letter now being drafted by agency specialists for Bennett Yanowitz's signature. A copy of that letter will be forwarded to you as quickly as possible, but its absence should not inhibit you from proceeding with arrangements to set up meetings with NCC Board members and denominational leaders in your community. As noted before, because the proposed Policy Statement strikes at Israel's position regarding Jerusalem, you may wish to consult our previous communication of August 6, 1980 (enclosed) which also details our positions concerning the key issues of self-determination and the Camp David peace process.

Additionally, the following points might be emphasized:

1. It was the judgment of a small subcommittee of specialists who met prior to the Commission meeting that the overall anti-United States foreign policy tone of the document has been strengthened. Where appropriate, this should be a focus in your discussion with NCC Board members and denominational leaders.
2. The current draft unfortunately calls for a greater role for the United Nations (line 620). The UN is a captive of the Arab (oil) block and Soviet interests and, by its frequent and lopsided attacks upon Israel has disqualified itself as a trustworthy, impartial arbiter of peace.
3. The document would diminish the importance of UN Resolution 242, which is the only mutually agreed-upon basis for peace. It posits General Assembly resolutions and the October 1, 1977 U.S.-Soviet call for the resumption of the Geneva Conference as international agreements of similar value (lines 648-664). It gratuitously notes that Israel rejected the U.S.-Soviet call without reference to the response of the Arab world, and, most particularly, Anwar Sadat's emphatic reaction by undertaking direct negotiations with Israel rather than accepting the ill-advised reassertion of a Soviet role in the Middle East.

Detailed, line-by-line analyses are being prepared by the American Jewish Committee and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, which they will send to CRCs shortly. These should prove valuable tools in your interpretive efforts.

All communities are urged to be in touch with Joel Ollander and/or Charney Bromberg of NJCRAC to report on the impact of your discussions as well as to raise any questions that may arise.

JKL:woc

101680

O,X,X-INF,X-EC,A,R-COM,CJF-EX,I-COM,I-FYI,CS,ITF-NJ

416 issues of the Middle East as well as the short range issues, to be informed  
417 about these concerns, and to consider seriously the needs and rights of the  
418 peoples of the Middle East as well as those of the United States of America.

#### 419 1. Self Determination

420 The Middle East is made up of states that came into being in a variety of  
421 ways: as portions of ancient empires, as tribal kingdoms, as the creation of  
422 western colonial powers, and as part of a process of peoples asserting their  
423 independence. In some cases the national boundaries of these states bear lit-  
424 tle resemblance to ethnic, religious or historical considerations. When some  
425 states were created, communities of natural affinity were put asunder. In some  
426 instances states lacking a sense of national identity were formed, thereby all  
427 but guaranteeing internal conflict and instability. Additional problems were  
428 created in some cases by the imposition of forms of government which did not  
429 reflect the consent of the governed.

430 In the wake of western colonialism and the breakdown of the Ottoman Em-  
431 pire, it was inevitable that these precariously constituted states would suf-  
432 fer crises of identity and conflicts over sovereignty. Established states are  
433 continually being challenged by groups sharing historic, ethnic, cultural or  
434 religious bonds and therefore harboring national aspirations. Though the in-  
435 herent legitimacy of such aspirations is recognized in international law--"All  
436 peoples have the right to self-determination"<sup>1</sup>--the international community  
437 lacks both adequate criteria to define this right in particular instances and  
438

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439 <sup>1</sup>United Nations, "International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural  
440 Rights", Part I, Article 1. Also in United Nations, "International Covenant on  
Civil and Political Rights", Part I, Article 1, number 1.

441 adequate procedures to achieve peaceful and just implementation. In these cir-  
442 cumstances, self-determination has too often been a concept without real sub-  
443 stance either in law or equity. This is particularly the case when aspirations  
444 to self-determination involve conflicting claims to territory. Therefore, a  
445 peaceful resolution of these conflicting aspirations lies in each party recog-  
446 nizing the right of the other to the self-determination it claims for itself.  
447 Recognizing this sense of "justice" is a first step in negotiations. Establish-  
448 ing criteria for determining the justice of competing claims continues to be a  
449 responsibility of the international community. Further legal mechanisms are  
450 needed to adjudicate and implement agreements involving conflicting claims. A  
451 willingness to negotiate and compromise is essential to finding peaceful solu-  
452 tions that are recognized as just and provide a basis for reconciliation.

453 Those claiming the right to self-determination usually perceive themselves  
454 as the oppressed. Giving voice to the voiceless and providing support for the  
455 powerless when their claims are believed to be just are practical ways the Na-  
456 tional Council of the Churches of Christ, USA can express its commitment to  
457 justice. Therefore it is appropriate for the NCCCUSA and its member communions  
458 to assist those seeking recognition and protection of their rights to self-  
459 determination and those international bodies acting to affirm such rights. This  
460 assistance may include: providing forums wherein conflicting claims may be  
461 aired in an atmosphere of concern for justice and peace, monitoring develop-  
462 ments, fact-finding, theological reflection, and advocacy for human rights.

463 Above all, the NCCCUSA seeks to be a minister of the reconciling love of  
464 Jesus Christ--not another combatant in conflicts in which the victims are the  
465 peoples of the Middle East. Rather than seeking to impose any simplistic,

466 "Christian" answer on Middle East conflicts, the NCCCUSA sees itself as a ser-  
467 vant with resources of time, talent and treasure to share and a willingness to  
468 minister sacrificially to meet others' needs and to bear one another's burdens.

469 2. The Rights of Minorities in Middle Eastern Cultures

470 The international community has developed a consensus recognizing certain  
471 basic human rights and obligations that all governments owe to their citizens.  
472 This body of international law is based on the Universal Declaration of Human  
473 Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Interna-  
474 tional Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and other internation-  
475 al and regional human rights agreements.

476 These rights fall into three broad categories. First are those concern-  
477 ing the inviolability and integrity of the person, including such matters as  
478 freedom from torture or cruel and inhuman treatment or punishment, arbitrary  
479 arrest or imprisonment, denial of fair public trial and invasion of the home.  
480 Second are the rights to fulfillment of basic human needs such as food, shel-  
481 ter, health care and education. Third are civil and political rights includ-  
482 ing freedom of speech, press, assembly and religion, the right to leave one's  
483 own country and to return, and the right of freedom from discrimination based  
484 upon race or sex.

485 Virtually all governments acknowledge the validity of these rights. But,  
486 in no country is there full compliance with all the rights recognized in inter-  
487 national law. Human rights, however, do not exist in a vacuum, sometimes may  
488 appear to be conflicting, and are understood differently in differing cultures.  
489 Even when the context suggests explanations for the violations of human rights,  
490 their sanctity must be upheld.

491 A particular human rights problem in the Middle East concerns the rights  
492 of minorities. Where the distinction between organized religion and the state  
493 is not affirmed, and where peoples define themselves and their political and  
494 social structures in specifically religious terms, issues pertaining to relig-  
495 ious minorities become urgent.

496 While it is neither right nor wise nor possible for the peoples of the  
497 West to attempt to define for others a single mode of dealing with the rights  
498 of minorities, these rights must nevertheless be protected. A secular plural-  
499 ist society would imply to many Middle Easterners religious indifference or  
500 atheism. Historically, Middle Eastern states and societies whether specific-  
501 ally theocratic or simply dominated by one particular confession, have acknow-  
502 ledged the fact of religious pluralism by exercising tolerance for the communal  
503 and/or personal status of minorities. Religious minorities in Middle Eastern  
504 states have not usually enjoyed all the legal rights of citizens who are mem-  
505 bers of the religious majority. At issue today is whether a minority should  
506 exist by "toleration" or whether by right of birth into national citizenship  
507 they should enjoy the same rights as adherents of the majority religion. This  
508 debate is growing increasingly crucial as more states in the Middle East define  
509 themselves from a religious perspective.

510 The National Council of the Churches of Christ, USA recognizes that its  
511 understandings of human rights and majority-minority relations grow out of the  
512 tradition that envisions an ideal of pluralism that is not fully realized in  
513 the U.S.A. The NCCCUSA does not deny the right of a majority to define itself  
514 as it wishes, whether this be in terms of the separation of church and state  
515 guaranteed in the Constitution of the U.S.A., or in religious terms. Neverthe-

516 less, whatever form may be chosen by the majority, the NCCCUSA believes that  
517 the burden is on that majority to provide equal rights for citizens who may  
518 therefore be placed in a minority status. Included within these rights is that  
519 of a minority group to practice its religion with the same freedom as that en-  
520 joyed by the adherents of the dominant religion or ideology.

521 Within this context, the NCCCUSA notes with deep concern the diminution  
522 of the Christian community of the Middle East in recent years. Vital, living  
523 churches which trace their beginnings to the earliest Christian era are find-  
524 ing their members are being deported or emigrating in increased numbers because  
525 of turmoil of various types in the region. The NCCCUSA and its member commu-  
526 nions should support actions which contribute directly or indirectly to the  
527 strengthening of the Middle East Christian communities.

528 The National Council of the Churches of Christ, USA recognizes that par-  
529 ticularly in the Middle East questions of rights of minorities and other human  
530 rights issues often touch on serious questions of interfaith relationships.  
531 Concepts such as "human rights" may not convey precisely the same meaning to  
532 all who claim sincerely to uphold them. Therefore, these questions should be  
533 approached in a spirit of open dialogue. An appropriate task of the religious  
534 community alone or in cooperation with others committed to justice is to moni-  
535 tor alleged violations of rights of minority groups and to call to task those  
536 governments and groups whose record demonstrates a disregard for minority  
537 rights. The best proof of the integrity of concern of the U.S.A. Christian  
538 community will be given when it attends to violations of rights by its own gov-  
539 ernments (national, state and local) and its own institutions. What people in  
540 the United States of America do with respect to human rights can well affect

541 and influence the attitudes and actions of the people of the Middle East. It  
542 is the responsibility of individual Christians, churches and ecumenical bodies  
543 to persevere in raising these issues of violations of human rights both in the  
544 U.S.A. and throughout the world. Where the perceived interests or actions of  
545 the government of the U.S.A. or corporations may be contributing to the denial  
546 of full achievement of human rights in the Middle East, Christians in the U.S.A.  
547 have a special responsibility.

548 3. The Arms Race, Security and Justice

549 The National Council of the Churches of Christ, USA has consistently em-  
550 phasized that lasting peace with security depends on just international rela-  
551 tionships. While security is a legitimate concern of individuals, of peoples  
552 and of states, the concept of security is often used to justify the escalation  
553 of armament technology and production at enormous expense in order to achieve  
554 military superiority.

555 Weapons in themselves can never produce genuine and lasting security. Con-  
556 centration on the technical demands of the military without sufficient concern  
557 for the political, diplomatic and economic context in which the nations relate  
558 is dangerous and can be counterproductive.

559 The achievement of peace with justice and security must rest ultimately  
560 on a recognition of the mutuality of interests, rather than on the domination  
561 of one nation or group by another, on the mutual enhancement of the quality of  
562 life of the peoples of these nations rather than on the exploitation of one by  
563 another. In this context, genuine security can only be founded on cooperative  
564 relationships of mutual trust. A United States of America's Middle East policy  
565 guided by those principles would seek not so much to preserve the status quo,

566 as to support processes of change in the direction of justice. It would re-  
567 flect a broad conception of the U.S.A. national interest with a genuine concern  
568 for the well-being of the peoples of the Middle East. It would support and  
569 strengthen international agencies in efforts to overcome economic injustice,  
570 safeguard human rights and promote orderly and timely juridical and political  
571 processes.

572 The strategic location of the Middle East and its tremendous energy re-  
573 sources result in competition among the great powers for influence. The recent  
574 acquisition of great national wealth through increased oil income has created  
575 a lucrative market for arms sales. In this context, arms have been sold to off-  
576 set balance of payments deficits.

577 The Middle East has become the most heavily armed region, apart from the  
578 major powers, far exceeding the rest of the world in almost every measure.  
579 Since the early 1960s the average annual increase in military expenditures in  
580 the Middle East has been nearly 20 percent, or about seven times the world av-  
581 erage.

582 The United States is not alone at fault. Other arms producing states,  
583 both East and West, compete for influence in the region by supplying arms and  
584 military training. Superpower rivalries, ideological conflict and maneuvering  
585 to assure oil supplies or strategic advantage lead to outside interference in  
586 the internal affairs of Middle Eastern states. Transnational corporations  
587 seek to influence government policies in their own interest. All these factors,  
588 many of them in conflict, create destabilization and slow efforts to improve  
589 the quality of life of its people.

590 Ultimately, the people of the Middle East suffer severely from the eco-

591 nomic and social consequences of military buildups. For example, Saudi Arabia  
592 ranks fourth in the world in per capita military expenditures and ranks 117th  
593 in literacy; Jordan ranks 48th in per capita military expenditures and 75th in  
594 literacy; Israel ranks third in per capita military expenditures and 38th in  
595 literacy.<sup>2</sup> So it is that the arms race imposes a massive injustice on the peo-  
596 ples of the Middle East.

597 The United States of America, the Soviet Union and other arms producing  
598 nations justify arms supply and resupply as a stabilizing factor in the Middle  
599 East. However, serious attention must be devoted to defusing the explosive mix-  
600 ture of oil, arms and power politics. Basic to development of a new context for  
601 security would be a firm agreement by outside nations that no one or any group  
602 of them will seek to impose itself as dominant in the region. Efforts to pro-  
603 tect what the major powers understand as their vital interests, when carried on  
604 at the expense of the welfare--or even worse, the lives--of the people of the  
605 region, are unjust and immoral.

606 The potential for economic and social development of the Middle East is  
607 greater than ever before due to the same increased oil revenues now financing  
608 increased arms purchases. The entrance of the Middle East oil producing nations  
609 into world development organizations, as well as the creation of lending agen-  
610 cies by Arab countries offer new opportunities for cooperation in development  
611 of the resources of the region to benefit its peoples.

612 The National Council of the Churches of Christ, USA and its member commun-  
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614 <sup>2</sup>Ruth Leger Sivard, World Military and Social Expenditures 1979, Lees-  
615 burg, Va.: World Priorities, 1979. p. 30. (World Priorities; Box 1003;  
Leesburg, Virginia 22075).

616 ions should therefore support peackeeping and peacemaking efforts which  
617 a) seek to reduce military preparedness to its proper limits and to sub-  
618 ordinate it to the demands of justice and the work of reconciliation among peo-  
619 ples and nations;

620 b) strengthen the role of the United Nations;

621 c) move rapidly toward substantial reduction and control of arms;

622 d) encourage the establishment of a nuclear-weapons-free zone in the re-  
623 gion.

624 In addition, the National Council of the Churches of Christ, USA and its  
625 member communions, in cooperation with the World Council of Churches and the  
626 Middle East Council of Churches, should support programs and projects aimed at  
627 economic and social justice in the Middle East.

#### 628 4. Israel and the Palestinians

629 A major destabilizing element in the Middle East continues to be the con-  
630 flict between two nationalisms, that of the Israeli Jews and that of the Pales-  
631 tinian Arabs, as well as related conflicts involving surrounding Arab states,  
632 all of which affect the relations of the entire region and the world. This con-  
633 flict, while regionally focused, poses sufficient threat to world peace to de-  
634 serve special attention in any overall consideration of the Middle East. The  
635 resolution of this Israel-Palestinian conflict would not eliminate all tension  
636 nor potential conflict in the region, but would remove a major source of insta-  
637 bility and a major threat to world peace.

638 At the heart of any solution of the Israel-Palestinian conflict is a recog-  
639 nition that the struggle is between two peoples over the same territory. Con-  
640 flicting promises made to both Jews and Arabs at the time of World War I by the

641 great powers set the stage for the struggle of these two peoples. Palestinians  
642 feel they have been deprived of their homeland and denied the right of self-  
643 determination. Israelis feel they have legitimately acquired their homeland  
644 for rebuilding a Jewish national life. Attempts at solution are complicated  
645 because within each society there are differing concepts of the nature of re-  
646 ligious identification with the state and the degree to which pluralism should  
647 prevail.

648 Numerous proposals have been put forth and forums suggested in which a  
649 solution to the conflict could be achieved. In 1967, the United Nations Secur-  
650 ity Council unanimously adopted Resolution 242 which includes "respect for and  
651 acknowledgment of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political indepen-  
652 dence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure  
653 and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force", as well as  
654 "withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent  
655 [June 1967] conflict". This resolution has been generally regarded as provid-  
656 ing an acceptable basis for a resolution of the conflict between Israel and  
657 the Arab states. However, because it deals with the Palestinian people only  
658 as refugees, it has been insufficient in itself.

659 In November 1974, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution  
660 3236 on Palestinian rights. This resolution affirmed the right of the Pales-  
661 tinian Arabs to self-determination, national independence and sovereignty, as  
662 well as their right to return to their homes and properties in what is now  
663 Israel. As a General Assembly resolution, this document does not have the  
664 same force in practical terms as a Security Council resolution.

665 In October 1977, the United States of America and the Soviet Union, as

666 co-chairs of the Geneva Peace Conference on the Middle East, issued a Joint  
667 Communiqué calling for a comprehensive negotiated settlement of the conflict.  
668 Specific reference was made to insuring the borders between Israel and neigh-  
669 boring Arab states and for "insuring the legitimate rights of the Palestinian  
670 people". The Israeli government declared that this statement was not binding  
671 on it.

672 The 1978 Camp David Framework for Peace provided new hope and evidence  
673 that negotiation can bring an end to hostilities of long standing. The Egyp-  
674 tian-Israeli Peace Treaty of March 1979, resulting from the Camp David Frame-  
675 work, at least temporarily reduced the likelihood of war in the Middle East in  
676 that the two strongest military powers in the area resolved to settle differ-  
677 ences through peaceful means. This significant achievement provided the impetus  
678 for an important step of building trust and therefore security between two ad-  
679 versaries, Egypt and Israel, in the Middle East conflict.

680 While the Camp David Framework has provided a new climate of trust between  
681 Egypt and Israel, this has not been the case throughout the entire Middle East.  
682 This agreement has isolated Egypt from other Arab states and has not brought  
683 Israel closer to peace agreements with other Arab states or with the Palestin-  
684 ian people.

685 Further, the Palestinian people themselves have not been a party in nego-  
686 tiations, nor is there an agreed-upon mechanism to accomplish this. The Pal-  
687 estine Liberation Organization functions as the only organized voice of the  
688 Palestinian people and appears to be the only body able to negotiate a settle-  
689 ment on their behalf. Steps toward peace must include official action by the  
690 Palestine National Council, the legislative body of the Palestine Liberation

691 Organization, recognizing Israel's right to exist as a sovereign state, and  
692 the acceptance by Israel of the Palestine Liberation Organization as a parti-  
693 cipant in the peace negotiations. Each party must pledge to refrain from all  
694 hostile acts against the other. These actions will remove doubt about the ac-  
695 ceptance by the two parties of each other's right to exist as a national enti-  
696 ty.

697 Ceasefire and recognition do not come easily for either party. The Israeli  
698 government cites evidence that the Palestine Liberation Organization seeks the  
699 destruction of Israel and, in some formulations, the Jewish people. The Pales-  
700 tine Liberation Organization cites evidence that Israel seeks the destruction  
701 of the Palestine Liberation Organization and, in some formulations, the Pales-  
702 tinian people. Whether or not the critical steps in resolving these historic  
703 enmities can be achieved depends in large part on the ability of the interna-  
704 tional community to communicate its commitment to the survival of both peoples.

705 Whatever the formula for the peace process develops, there should be re-  
706 ciprocal recognition of the right of self-determination. The Jewish people  
707 claim and seek to exercise their right to self-determination (within a part of  
708 historic Palestine west of the Jordan River) in the state of Israel as a Jewish  
709 state. The Palestinian people claim and seek to exercise their right of self-  
710 determination by creating a Palestinian entity, including the option of a sov-  
711 ereign state (within a part of historic Palestine west of the Jordan River).

712 In order to build upon the existing, but partial, beginnings of a resol-  
713 ution of the conflicts between Israel and the Palestinians and the related Arab-  
714 Israel conflicts, the National Council of the Churches of Christ, USA considers  
715 the following affirmations essential:

- 716 a) Cessation of acts of violence in all its forms by all parties;
- 717 b) Recognition by the Arab states and by the Palēstiniān Arabš of the  
718 state of Israel with secure, defined and recognized borders; and recognition  
719 by Israel of the right of national self-determination for the Palestinian Arabs  
720 and of their right to select their own representatives and to establish a Pal-  
721 estinian entity, including a sovereign state. In the meantime, unilateral ac-  
722 tions in respect to such issues as settlement policy and land and water use in  
723 the occupied areas can only inflame attitudes, violate human rights and reduce  
724 the prospect of achieving peace;
- 725 c) Agreement on and creation of a mode of enforcement of international  
726 guarantees for the sovereign and secure borders of Israel and of any Palestin-  
727 ian entity established as part of the peace process. This would mean the im-  
728 plementation of the principles enunciated in United Nations Security Council  
729 Resolution 242 (1967);
- 730 d) Provision for solutions to problems of refugees and displaced persons,  
731 Palestinian Arab, Jewish and other, affected by the Israel-Palestinian and re-  
732 lated conflicts dating from 1948, including questions of compensation and re-  
733 turn;
- 734 e) Agreement on the future status of Jerusalem, a focus of the deepest  
735 religious inspiration and attachment of three faiths, Judaism, Christianity  
736 and Islam. Existing international treaties (Paris, 1856 and Berlin, 1878) and  
737 League of Nations actions regulating the rights and claims of the three mono-  
738 theistic religions to Holy Places should remain unaltered. At the same time,  
739 the destiny of Jerusalem should be viewed in terms of people and not only in  
740 terms of shrines. Therefore, the future status of Jerusalem should be included

741 in the agenda of the official negotiations including Israel and the Palestinian  
742 people for a comprehensive solution of the Middle East conflict. Unilateral  
743 actions by any one group in relation to Jerusalem will only perpetuate antagon-  
744 isms that will threaten the peace of the city and possibly of the region.

745 The National Council of the Churches of Christ, USA has a particular re-  
746 sponsibility in the U.S.A. which plays a key role in the resolution of the con-  
747 flict. In helping create a responsible public discourse in the U.S.A. on the  
748 conflict of Israel and the Palestinians and other Arabs, the NCCCUSA should  
749 seek to uphold a perspective that is holistic rather than partial. It is es-  
750 sential that U.S.A. Christians recognize that peace and justice for both Israelis  
751 and Palestinians requires peace and justice for each. This will depend upon  
752 bold initiatives by all parties seeking new options, risking courses of action  
753 which, while at one time appearing impossible, may provide a basis for a com-  
754 mon vision of peace and justice. The NCCCUSA and its member communions should  
755 remain open to such initiatives and seek to develop understanding and support  
756 for them within the U.S.A. Christian community and society at large.

757 Further, the National Council of the Churches of Christ, USA should use  
758 every available means to make possible constructive communication among the  
759 parties involved. The NCCCUSA has an important responsibility to promote un-  
760 derstanding and discussion because of its associations with Christian institu-  
761 tions, with the churches of the Middle East through the Middle East Council of  
762 Churches, and with the Muslim and Jewish communities both in the Middle East  
763 and in the United States of America. These relationships are a precious gift  
764 that must be nurtured, preserved and used to enhance a future of peace and jus-  
765 tice for the peoples of the Middle East and to ensure that opportunities for

766 peace not be lost.

767

### CONCLUSION

768 The Middle East is the place where the Church began its life. Current com-  
769 plexities in the Middle East help U.S.A. Christians to face their own question-  
770 ing of what it means to be a witnessing community to the world, and that their  
771 salvation must not be perceived only in individualist terms but in terms of the  
772 whole creation. U.S.A. Christians must not only proclaim the unity of creation  
773 and of humankind, they must also imagine and pursue ways of solidifying and cele-  
774 brating that unity. U.S.A. Christians have much to learn from the churches and  
775 other peoples of faith in the Middle East in this task.

776 The people of God are called to be caretakers of creation. This is an ac-  
777 tive, not a passive or reactive, role. The National Council of the Churches of  
778 Christ, USA and its member communions, if faithful to this role, may facilitate  
779 a new era of human encounter in their relations to the Middle East. To be the  
780 Body of Christ requires an openness to the Spirit, an awareness of historic  
781 opportunity, a radical understanding of life within the Kingdom of God both  
782 present and becoming. It is a vision of unity expressed first and most power-  
783 fully in the sacrament of communion through which the incarnate Christ is re-  
784 vealed to the community and the community becomes that Body of Christ in ser-  
785 vice to the world.

# National Jewish Community Relations NJCRAC Advisory Council

55 West 42nd Street, New York, N Y 10036

(212) 564-3450

August 6, 1980

Reverend M. William Howard, President  
National Council of Churches  
475 Riverside Drive  
New York, New York 10027

Dear Reverend Howard:

I am writing at the behest of the Executive Committee of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, the national planning and coordinating body for the 11-national and 107 local member agencies comprising the field of Jewish community relations.

Our national agencies are: American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Congress, B'nai B'rith-Anti-Defamation League, Hadassah, Jewish Labor Committee, Jewish War Veterans of the U.S.A., National Council of Jewish Women, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, United Synagogue of America, and Women's American ORT. The community agencies are listed on the reverse side of this letterhead.

Reflecting the commitment of the Jewish community relations field to the attainment of social and economic justice and full human rights on a broad range of domestic and international issues, several of our national member agencies have maintained a long-standing relationship with the National Council of Churches, as do our local member agencies with local councils of churches. In keeping with the spirit of that relationship, we have joined together to engage in a serious and collegial dialogue with lay leaders and staff of the National Council of Churches as your Governing Board works toward the adoption of a definitive Policy Statement concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict. In furtherance of this dialogue, I want to convey to you the joint thinking of our national and local constituent agencies concerning the National Council of Churches draft Policy Statement on the Middle East and hope that you will share this letter with members of the National Council of Churches Governing Board. It was formally acted upon by the NJCRAC Executive Committee, meeting in Baltimore on June 30.

As a people and a community of faith, we are steeped in the Biblical tradition of prophetic justice. We wish for all our fellow beings that which we wish for ourselves: social and economic justice, political freedom, and the full enjoyment of the intrinsic human rights intended by the Creator. We know these values inform your interest in the many human problems of the Middle East. As participants in a democratic and pluralistic society, we share the privilege and responsibility of working toward the establishment of conditions that will lead toward the ultimate resolution of the conflict between the Arab world and Israel.

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Norman D. Tilles, Rhode Island

It is not our purpose, here, to offer an exhaustive assessment of the ways in which we believe the National Council of Churches draft Policy Statement contributes to that purpose, or those ways in which we believe it is not as constructive as it might be. There are, we believe, four fundamental areas of discussion which are at the heart of the document and at the core of the issue of peace: the draft Policy Statement's forthright call for Arab recognition of Israel as a Jewish state, its diminution of the Camp David peace process; its implicit readiness to impute goodwill to the PLO and the Arab states which continue to reject Israel's right to exist, and finally, its hesitancy to reconcile the idea of self-determination for the Palestinian Arabs with the consequences of its practical meaning as put forward by the PLO.

In giving consideration to the concerns we seek to raise in this letter, we hope that the National Council of Churches will attach greater credence to the achievement and promise of Camp David in moving toward reconciliation between the Arab world and Israel. In so doing, we hope that the National Council of Churches Governing Board will also look more critically at the written and tangible evidence of the PLO's intentions, unchanged and reaffirmed in its commitment to the eradication of the Jewish state.

#### Recognition of Israel As A Jewish State

The draft Policy Statement's call for "recognition by the Arab States and by the Palestinian Arabs of Israel as a Jewish State with secure, defined and recognized borders," is an important and commendable step. Indeed, it is indispensable, because it is a validation not only of historical fact and justice, but of the centrality of the Zionist ideal to Jewish identity. One need only read Article 20 of the Palestinian National Covenant to learn that the PLO denies Jewish peoplehood, thereby dismissing not only fact, but the right of Jews to define themselves. This constitutes an affront to the most fundamental premise of religious and human freedom, and its consequence, as borne out by history, is the process of dehumanization that is requisite to genocide. Those who have tried to destroy us have first sought to define us.

#### Self-Determination

The Jewish people have always deeply valued the concept of human freedom implicit in the concept of self-determination, and historically, we have stood as champions of that right for others as well as for ourselves.

In point of fact, the history of modern Zionism provides instance after instance in which the Jews of Palestine sought alliance with the Arabs of Palestine in their mutual quest for independence. The Jews of Palestine implicitly recognized the applicability of the principle of self-determination for the Palestinian Arabs when 80% of the Palestinian mandate set aside for a Jewish homeland was unilaterally consigned by the British to Transjordan -- now Jordan -- in 1922. Whatever that nation chooses to call itself, it is, by geography, history, and population, the Palestinian Arab state. Moreover, the Jews of Palestine explicitly endorsed the principle of Palestinian Arab self-determination when they accepted the United Nations partition plan for the remnant of Palestine in 1947.

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August 6, 1980

At issue, now, is the disposition of the remaining unallocated territories of the Palestinian Mandate -- Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) taken in a war of aggression by Jordan and Gaza by Egypt; both won by Israel in a war of defense in 1967. (In this regard, it should not be forgotten that during the period of Jordanian and Egyptian military-occupation there was no call for the creation of a second Palestinian Arab state in the West Bank and Gaza.)

Here, Israel has proposed as an interim stage pending a final resolution of the conflict, to allow, immediately, a very wide latitude for self-government and full cultural and religious autonomy to the Arab-populations of the territories within the context of the Comprehensive Camp David framework. This arrangement is meant to foster mutual trust; building and testing a foundation for peace that will be responsive to the needs of all parties.

In contrast, the Arab demand, from the time of Israel's birth to the present -- as articulated by the PLO as a call for Palestinian self-determination -- was and is, in fact, a call for the extirpation of the Jewish state.

The troubling core of the Arab-Israeli conflict then is the insistence by the Arab rejectionist states and the Palestine Liberation Organization that the exercise of the right of self-determination of the Palestinian Arabs cannot be accomplished without denying the same right to the citizens of Israel. A careful reading of the Palestinian National Covenant reveals that 26 of the 33 articles deal either directly or indirectly with Israel's ultimate destruction, denying that Jews have historic or religious rights to any part of historic Palestine. In light of PLO reaffirmation of this document, how can we fail to take seriously these assertions? No matter how the Arab demand for Palestinian self-determination is perceived by others, this is how it was and is intended.

The draft Policy Statement takes note of the fact that the ideal of self-determination must be reconciled with the effects of the fulfillment of such aspirations upon the political stability and security of sovereign states. "Self-determination" by the PLO's own explicit definition, however, proclaims Palestinian statehood as an alternative to Israel, negating the National Council of Churches objective of reciprocity as well as the principle of Israel's right to be secure. The failure of the draft Policy Statement to point out the difference between the ideal of self-determination and its interpretation as advocated by the PLO may give support to the violent and irredentist aims which the National Council of Churches opposes. The recent rebuff by the PLO of the European Common Market declaration on the Middle East is evidence of the fact that such encouragement only promotes even more extreme demands.

The draft Policy Statement could assist in the Camp David settlement process by recognizing that self-determination is an ideal, the nature and practice of which must be negotiated by the parties. The drafters have done so to some extent by noting, as stated above, that the ideal of self-determination must be reconciled with the effects of the fulfillment of such aspirations upon the political stability and security of sovereign states. It would follow, then, that the Statement should urge the parties to negotiate within the Camp David framework in an attempt to reconcile the foregoing concepts. Presently, the rejectionist forces in the Arab world are holding out for acceptance of their concept of self-determination with all that implies and exercising a veto power over Palestinian Arab participation in the Camp David peace process in the belief that all they must do is wait

for pressure on Israel to concede everything before negotiations. A suggestion by the National Council of Churches that there are conflicting aspirations and interests which must be negotiated could have a beneficial effect.

#### The Camp David Peace Process

It is, then, of paramount significance that one of those states that would have destroyed Israel -- namely Egypt -- has now chosen the course of recognition and acceptance. The seemingly unbreachable wall of Arab hostility to Israel has been broken by the Camp David process. No other diplomatic forum or process has produced -- nor offers even the faintest hope of producing -- an achievement of such enormous diplomatic and human proportions. It should not be underestimated.

After 30 years of extending the hand of friendship and reconciliation, Israel was accorded a response, and at an enormous risk and sacrifice pursued that gesture toward fruition.

The Camp David Accords and the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel have given hope where there was none before that peace between Arabs and Israelis can, indeed, be achieved and war can be banished. Camp David brought progress, because it is based on realism -- appealing to those who want to make peace -- and on patience, recognizing that only a measured and incremental process over a defined period of time can heal wounds and bring compromise.

The Camp David comprehensive framework provides a five-year transitional period in the course of which the intractability of the issues might be moderated as a result of greater mutual trust which, it is hoped, will develop during those five years. The options of all the interested parties will remain open. Five years after the election of a Self-Governing Council provided for in the comprehensive framework, President Sadat will be free to press for Palestinian statehood, Israel to assert her claim, and Jordan to assert hers. The framework does not foreclose either a functional or geographic partition of the areas in the ultimate settlement.

If the draft Policy Statement had also taken into account in its concept of self-determination the existing opportunities for a people to achieve cultural and national expression, it might better regard the import of the Camp David Autonomy Plan

Surely, then, the Camp David accords meet the National Council of Churches' professed standards by leaving open the achievement of all the potentialities implicit in its concept of self-determination without defining them in advance of direct negotiations between the parties.

The most important contribution to the peace process that any of us can make, then, is to foster acceptance of the Camp David process rather than spelling out terms for a settlement which is precisely the role for the parties to the negotiation. Accordingly, we believe profoundly that the Christian leaders must support and encourage this first realistic peace plan to emerge in more than thirty years of Middle East conflict.

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The PLO

Wisely, the draft Policy Statement refrains from expressing the view of the Middle East Panel which regrettably recommends that our government engage in dialogue without the PLO's first renouncing terrorism, not to mention accepting Israel's right to exist and UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. In fact, Al Fatah, the principal constituent of the PLO, reaffirmed in late April of this year its commitment to revolutionary armed struggle, i.e. terrorism, in achieving its goal of "liberating" all of Palestine, thereby eliminating Israel.

Its language could hardly have been less ambiguous. "The armed struggle within the occupied land will be escalated across all borders of confrontation with the Zionist enemy. Fatah is an independent national revolutionary movement whose aim is to liberate Palestine completely and to liquidate the Zionist entity (Israel) politically, economically, militarily, culturally and ideologically."

As this and other events over the past year have proven, any movement toward recognition of the PLO and its code phrase of self-determination only strengthens the PLO belief that its aims can be achieved without any change in its policies, but, rather, through American pressure on Israel. Thus, despite the Panel's formal call for changes by the PLO in its National Covenant, the Panel report confirms the message to the PLO that it is making progress toward recognition without in any way having to change either its practice of terror or its policy seeking the eradication of Israel.

An additional issue to which the draft Policy Statement gives prominence is the question of American arms sales to the Middle East. We concur that the United States is "not alone at fault" for the massive build-up of arms in the region, and we agree that this is a "deadly self-perpetuating cycle." But this does not mean that both sides to the conflict bear equal responsibility for the arms escalation or that the consequences of the U.S. withholding arms, particularly from Israel, would lead to deescalation and peace. On the contrary, anything that would tend to weaken Israel would also tend to incite the more aggressive Arab states toward acts of war against Israel.

We believe, then, that U.S. arms for Israel, matching only fractionally the vast amounts purchased by the Arab states or given them by the Soviet Union, helps maintain a relative balance of power and deterrence to war, which, in the absence of Arab willingness to engage in direct negotiations and accept Israel into the community of nations, is a less than ideal, but necessary condition for peace. Perhaps this factor -- recognition that Israel could not be destroyed militarily -- was the principal motivation for President Sadat's historic efforts in peacemaking.

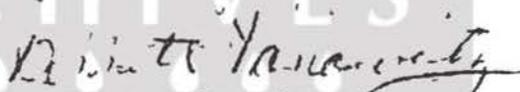
By the same token, we ask the National Council of Churches to consider whether the United States serves the cause of peace by providing advanced offensive weapons systems to Jordan and Saudi Arabia. It is our hope that the National Council of Churches would encourage our government instead, to intensify its efforts to bring Saudi Arabia and Jordan into the peace process.

August 6, 1980

There remain other points of agreement as well as disagreement in the text of the draft Policy Statement: for example, the omission of reference to Jerusalem and the settlements question is constructive since these issues are appropriately left to direct negotiations between the parties as part of the ongoing Camp David peace process. Those issues we have addressed in depth are, in our judgment, the most critical.

All of our constituent agencies, both national and local, acknowledge the sincerity of the efforts undertaken by the National Council of Churches to accord these complex issues the rigorous study and consideration which they require. We earnestly desire continued dialogue in the hope and expectation that it will bring us closer to our mutual goal of enhancing the conditions for the achievement of a full and durable peace for all the people of the Middle East. We hope too that you will find it possible to share this letter with members of the Governing Board of the National Council of Churches.

Sincerely,



Bennett Yanowitz  
Chairman

BY:ncg

cc. Reverend Tracey K. Jones, Jr.  
Dr. Claire Randall  
Dr. Robert L. Turnipseed  
Joan B. Campbell  
Reverend Rufus Cornelson

REDRAFT Oct. 15, 1980

Reverend William Howard

The NCC's revised proposed Policy Statement for presentation to the NCC Governing Board on November 6-8, 1980 prompts the following observations in addition to those made in my letter to you of August 6, 1980. That letter remains our basic evaluation of the Policy Statement, including the recent revision. Because the current proposed Policy Statement retains or supplements passages that are of specific urgent concern, I must underscore these:

1. The revised Policy Statement (at lines 685-696) equates the State of Israel, a sovereign nation, with the Palestine Liberation Organization, a self-proclaimed "organization" dedicated to violence and terrorism. Thus, notwithstanding ~~and~~ the stipulation in the revised Statement that the PLO must recognize Israel's right to exist and refrain <sup>✓</sup> from hostile acts, the Statement implicitly and without prior condition confers legitimacy on the PLO. The effect can only be to confirm <sup>to</sup> the PLO that it need not really abandon its terrorist policies as a condition of acceptance and recognition. Surely, by any code or standard of ethical and normative practice, the failure to make the conferral of legitimacy on the PLO conditional to its prior acceptance of the most elemental requirements of civilized conduct is unwise, unjustified and morally ~~inde~~ indefensible.

2. The conflict that must be resolved is not between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs (lines 629-632), but in its genesis and at its core, the conflict borne of the Arab refusal to recognize Israel. The Palestinian problem was created by the Arab states' refusal to accept the partition of Palestine (as Israel did) and their attack on the nascent state. More than three decades later, of the 21 Arab states, Egypt alone recognizes or even negotiates with Israel.

3. Self-determination for Palestinian Arabs (lines 719-721) does not depend upon some future unilateral action by Israel. Disposition of the remaining unallocated territories of the Palestine Mandate - Judea and Samaria (West Bank) and Gaza - is a matter for negotiations among the nation states concerned. (It should be remembered that in 1922 Transjordan - now Jordan - was created out of 80% of the Palestine Mandate set aside for a Jewish homeland. Transjordan was, Jordan became, and Jordan remains a sovereign homeland for Palestinian Arabs.) A negotiating framework with an agreed-upon timetable for the resolution of this issue was provided at Camp David, promising recognition of "the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and their just requirements." Reports of Israeli positions in the recently resumed Autonomy negotiations attest to Israel's genuine readiness to deal with her Palestinian Arabs <sup>neighbors</sup> on a basis of equity and reciprocity.

For these reasons, we believe the revised draft Policy Statement is both misconceived and counterproductive of the promise of peace in implicitly affirming recognition of the PLO as the "only organized voice of the Palestinian people" (lines 687-688). Jordan's voice and those of Israel's other Arab neighbors including the Palestinian residents of the areas, themselves, must be heard in direct negotiations with Israel. The obligation of those states and the Palestinian people to enter such negotiations should be the call of your Policy Statement, *(W.A.D.) as it is in the Camp David Framework for a Comprehensive Peace in the Middle East*

Since our earlier exchange of views, reflected in my letter of August 6 and your revised draft Policy Statement, events in the Middle East have demonstrated anew that the Arab-Israel conflict is not the major destabilizing element there. Therefore, we strongly urge the early formulation of the more comprehensive statement, the need for which is asserted in the opening paragraph, on timeliness, of your Policy Statement.

7 The foregoing concerns are conveyed to you at the direction of the Executive Committee of the NJCRAC, the national planning and coordinating body for the eleven national and one hundred and seven local member agencies comprising the field of Jewish community relations.

Sincerely,

Bennett Yanowitz  
Chairman



For presentation to  
NCCC GOVERNING BOARD  
May 7-9, 1980

Document \_\_\_\_\_

REPORT OF THE MIDDLE EAST PANEL

TO THE

GOVERNING BOARD OF THE NCCCUSA

May 7-9, 1980

In September, 1979 the Executive Committee of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. called for the creation of a special Panel on the Middle East. Its purpose was to review the situation in the Middle East in a holistic rather than a piecemeal fashion, to contribute to a new Middle East policy statement from a larger perspective than that of special interest or advocacy groups, and to consider whether there was a "new moment" in the Middle East that demanded new responses from the United States Christian community. Composed of officers of the Council and heads of some member communions, the Panel, confirmed by action of the Governing Board of the NCCCUSA in November, 1979, began a process of study, open hearings for all parties, a two-week visit to five countries of the Middle East, and further conversations with Middle East interest groups in the United States.

The action of the Council sprang from a sense that a new opportunity may exist to resolve the conflict of over thirty years in the Middle East. Motivated by a belief that opportunities for peace may have been lost in the past, the panel members have approached the last six months with a seriousness of purpose and a belief that, as a religious organization, the NCCCUSA has a role of reconciliation to play, a role different from that of political organizations and governments. At the same time, as an organization of United States churches, the NCCCUSA also has a responsibility to address its own people and government about the appropriate role for the United States of America in helping resolve the conflicts in the Middle East.

At the outset of this process of consultation and firsthand observation, the Panel identified five issues considered most crucial within the mandate given it by the NCCCUSA Executive Committee and Governing Board. These issues were

Security in the region

( The right of Palestinian Arabs to self-determination

Human rights issues

Settlements on the West Bank

Religious issues

As the Panel delved into the five issues, it became convinced of the inter-relatedness of each issue with all others, as part of a comprehensive peace settlement.

This report provides the findings and convictions of the Middle East Panel of the National Council of the Churches of Christ, U.S.A. to the NCCCUSA Governing Board. In making this report, the Panel wishes to emphasize an overall theme heard from the groups and persons with whom it has met. There is a deep longing and desire for peace in the Middle East. The "new moment" about which the Panel has spoken appears to be born out of hope and despair. On the one hand there is hope prompted by the signing of the Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty and the belief that negotiation is possible. On the other hand there is despair marked by a fear of the future, a weariness and near desperation brought on by five wars within thirty years. The Panel recognizes that there is an urgent need to ensure that opportunities for peace not be lost. It is with this sense of urgency and of the hope we know in Jesus Christ, which continues even when optimism fails, that we address this report to our brothers and sisters of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.

### SECURITY IN THE REGION

The Middle East Panel affirms that security is a legitimate concern of individuals, of peoples, and of states. Yet this very need for a nation's security is often used to justify escalating and excessive expenditures in order to develop a superior military position. The possession of military might by some then breeds fear and suspicion among others, who in turn seek to build comparable or greater military might. More fear and suspicion result, leading to an escalation of violence rather than the establishment of full security.

The peoples and nations of the Middle East are caught in this spiral of violence. In the long run, seeking security through arms alone is in fact a false and idolatrous hope. True security can ultimately be found only in relationships of trust. The late Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion recognized this fact when he stated: "As for security, militarily defensible borders, while desirable, cannot by themselves guarantee [Israel's] future. Real peace with our neighbors--mutual trust and friendship--that is the only true security."<sup>1</sup>

The Panel recognizes that for a region that has known only a state of war for thirty years, trust is not easily gained. Further, the Panel acknowledges the special and realistic concern of Israel with matters of security. This concern is tied to the experience of genocide and holocaust in our generation and persecution over many generations. It is also a result of a precarious geograph-

<sup>1</sup>David Ben-Gurion, The Saturday Review (interview), April 3, 1971. (Emphasis is in the original.)

Sanctions  
Arab  
Services

ical situation marked by unbending hostility from almost all of Israel's neighboring states and political entities. The commitment of the Jewish people to reestablish a state in the land of their origins has in part been motivated by this history of hostility and by their longing for a place where "we can be ourselves".<sup>1</sup> The commitment to a national identity and to self-reliance that manifests itself in the urgent Israeli concern for security is understandable, and this Panel expresses its absolute support of the right of the state of Israel to exist as a Jewish state in peace with its neighbors, within secure and recognized borders. The Panel therefore concurs with the Israeli perspective that a major obstacle to peace in the Middle East has been the unwillingness of Arab states and the Palestinian Arabs to recognize Israel's right to self-determination as a Jewish state which deserves the respect of the entire family of nations as a member of the world community and whose secure and defined borders must be recognized. UN Security Council Resolution 242 "Affirms . . . respect for and acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force".<sup>2</sup> This document, accepted by Egypt, Jordan and Syria, the major Arab states in a state of belligerency with Israel, became an important first step toward peace, as it implicitly acknowledged the presence and recognition of Israel's place among the Middle East nations.

Every act that builds trust builds security. The Panel is very conscious of the measure of trust that has developed between Israel and Egypt as a result of the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty of March, 1979. While that trust is now being severely tested, it is clear that the Camp David Frameworks for Peace of September, 1978 provided the impetus for this important step of building trust and therefore security between two adversaries in the Middle East conflict. The fact that Egypt, the largest of the Arab nations and the one that threatened the western flank of Israel, is now no longer at war is a significant development both for Israel and Egypt. The Panel underscores this achievement by stating again the words of the National Council of the Churches of Christ, USA Governing Board which

*Recognizes* that an Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement substantially removes the option of war in the Middle East in that the two strongest military powers in the area resolve to settle differences through peaceful means, enhancing the sense of security of both parties but especially that of Israel in not having to face the threat of a two-front war;

*Celebrates* the role of Egypt, and especially the initiatives of its president in the creative search for peace in the area;

*Rejoices* with Israel in feeling that its dream of peace

<sup>1</sup>This phrase was heard repeatedly during the Panel's Middle East trip.

<sup>2</sup>United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 (1967).

and deliverance might be realized and the threat of annihilation diminished;

*Concurs* with Presidents Carter and Sadat and Prime Minister Begin that peace is not simply the absence of war, but that peace and justice must be held in positions of equal importance;<sup>1</sup>

While the Camp David Accords have provided a new climate of trust between Egypt and Israel, this has not been the case throughout the entire Middle East. This agreement has isolated Egypt from other Arab states, weakening to a degree the security obtained through peace with Israel. Regretably, the Accords (and the lack of sufficient progress toward their full implementation) have not brought Israel closer to peace agreements with other Arab states, nor with the Palestinian people. Thus the Panel, while deeply appreciative of the Camp David initiatives, believes the Accords to be fundamentally flawed. They fail both to acknowledge the legitimate right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to provide in a sufficient way for the participation of those recognized representatives of the Palestinian people in the negotiations to define these rights. The Panel believes the Camp David Agreements should therefore be seen as part of the *process* of peace-making in the Middle East. The diplomatic initiatives taken there need to be amended and broadened if security for all, including Israel, is to be achieved (see further comments on self-determination in the next section).

Israel is not the only country of the area for which security is a legitimate concern. The Panel can only be deeply grieved at the continued military action in Lebanon, where neither sovereignty nor territorial integrity are fully respected. Lebanon, which has had a tradition of opening its doors to those in need from surrounding countries, now finds its soil the battleground of others. The Lebanese people themselves are drawn into a situation of growing self-destruction and national disintegration. It is clear to the Panel that there will be no ultimate peace for Lebanon until the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is resolved by a settlement that grants both the recognition of Israel's existence and the right of the Palestinian people to their own self-determination. Meanwhile, the Panel urges the fullest international support and assistance to the Lebanese government in its efforts to maintain its national identity and security in this tragic situation. Specifically, the Panel believes the United States government should undertake urgent initiatives with Israel, while at the same time seeking urgent initiatives by Arab states with Palestinian leaders. Such initiatives should seek a negotiated end to the escalating, open and covert warfare on and from Lebanese soil, particularly those forms of battle that deliberately inflict massive wounds on innocent civilians under the guise of necessity, and in which UN peace-keeping personnel are attacked and, indeed, killed.

<sup>1</sup>National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., "Resolution on the Middle East Peace Effort", adopted by the Governing Board November 3, 1978.

Finally, security is also a legitimate concern of people within other states in the Middle East. In this region, where the concept of "peoplehood" is particularly meaningful, the security needs of various ethnic and religious groups require continued attention. A few such cases include the Armenians in Turkey, the Assyrians in Iraq, the Copts in Egypt, the Jews in Syria, the Kurds in Turkey, Iran and Iraq, and the Palestinians in Israel, on the West Bank and Gaza, and in other Middle Eastern countries as well.

*Israeli Arabs*

The history of the Middle East is replete with instances of its peoples and states becoming surrogates or pawns of nations outside the area. Located as a bridge between three continents--Europe, Asia and Africa--the Middle East has long had strategic value to major world powers seeking to protect their national interests. The fact that nearly 60 percent of the world's oil reserves are located in the Middle East has once again given a strategic importance to some countries of the area, including the Gulf States, Iraq, Iran and Libya. Being contiguous to these states gives a significance to other countries of the region, and therefore makes the conflicts of the region command world-wide significance.

These factors help contribute to the great powers' interest in the region and their attempts to maintain a balance of power favorable to their interests there. This vying for support by the great powers makes the region more vulnerable to arms and weapons escalations. The Panel believes that a United States policy that seeks to build just relationships with peoples and governments of the region will, in the long run, be the major contribution toward securing the mutual interests of the U.S. and the peoples of the region. Creating militarily strong governments as surrogate powers, while ignoring other aspects of just relationships, can only end in escalating hostility toward the U.S. Similarly, the Panel urges the U.S. government to refuse to allow Soviet-U.S. tensions to undermine any efforts of Middle East nations and peoples to negotiate regarding their differences.

*NAIVE*

Finally, the Panel stresses again the urgency of the present moment in the Arab-Israeli conflict. This opportunity for the development of trust, peace, and thus security must not be missed. The agreement reached at Camp David and the subsequent withdrawal by Israel from the Sinai have demonstrated that differences can be resolved by negotiation rather than by war. Further, the Camp David process, as an important first step, indicates the role that a third party such as the United States must play in bringing the principal parties to negotiation.

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### THE RIGHT OF PALESTINIAN ARABS TO SELF-DETERMINATION

The Panel affirms that the right of self-determination is a basic human right recognized in international law. This right of all peoples to self-determination assures that "they freely determine their political . . . and cultural

development."<sup>1</sup> Although the international community recognizes this principle, the existing body of international law does not provide adequate criteria to define it in every instance. Neither has international law established procedures for its peaceful and just implementation. Therefore, in claims to self-determination involving conflicting claims to territory, the right of each party to self-determination must be seen in the context of the other's equally valid right.

During the course of its work, the Panel became convinced that a crucial element in the resolution of the Middle East conflict was the recognition of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. A variety of historical events and circumstances have forged a Palestinian identity over the last century--and particularly during the last fifty years--that is separate and distinct from, even if related to, other Arab national groups. In numbers, the Palestinians approximately equal the citizens of Israel proper. They are at a remarkable stage of development culturally and educationally, hardly surpassed by any country of the Middle East. Together with political, military, educational and social organization, a process of self-identification has clearly occurred. Today there is no doubt that a Palestinian people, calling for the exercise of their right to self-determination, does exist.

Mutuality and reciprocity should characterize the exercise of this right of self-determination by neighboring peoples. The Panel is convinced that, just as the Jewish people have claimed and exercised their right of self-determination in creating within a part of historic Palestine west of the Jordan River the state of Israel, so the Palestinian people should be able to exercise their right of self-determination. Until the precise boundaries of a Palestinian entity have been defined by mutual negotiation, it should be understood to involve lands referred to by Palestinians as the "occupied territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip" and by the Israelis as the "administered territories of Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District".

The Panel believes that a necessary next step in the peace process, and an essential one if the Camp David Accords are to continue to have relevance, is a U.S. declaration of support for the principle of Palestinian self-determination. The United States has indicated support of this concept to some degree by employing terminology such as "homeland",<sup>2</sup> the right "to participate in the determination of their own future",<sup>3</sup> and "insuring the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people".<sup>4</sup> The Panel believes that the United Nations Security Council

<sup>1</sup>United Nations, "International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights", Part I, Article 1, number 1. Also in United Nations, "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights", Part I, Article 1, number 1.

<sup>2</sup>President Carter, Statement at Clinton, Mass., March 16, 1977.

<sup>3</sup>President Carter, Statement at Aswan, Egypt, January 4, 1978.

<sup>4</sup>U.S.--USSR Joint Communique, October 1, 1977.

would be an appropriate forum in which a more forthright declaration could be made by the U.S. The Panel encourages the U.S. to support a Security Council resolution on behalf of self-determination for the Palestinian people. Such a resolution, along with steps to clarify that the principles enunciated in Security Council Resolution 242 (1967) are also applicable to the Palestinians, would be strong motivation to encourage Palestinian representatives to participate in the peace process and to subscribe to the entire Security Council Resolution 242.

The question of representation of the Palestinians is a crucial issue in any discussion of the future of this people. From its experience with Palestinians all over the Middle East, including the West Bank, the Panel came to believe that the Palestine Liberation Organization represents the aspirations of the Palestinian people for self-determination. The PLO functions as the only organized voice for the Palestinian people and appears to the Panel to be the only Palestinian body likely to negotiate a settlement on their behalf. We believe it is futile to claim that there are other Palestinian representatives as long as the Palestinian people, by the imperfect legislative and political means at their disposal, do not indicate themselves that they wish other representatives. At the appropriate time, of course, a plebiscite will need to be undertaken among the Palestinian people to afford them the opportunity in a free and open election to affirm the results of negotiation between their representatives and Israel and other concerned governments, as well as to create appropriate instruments for exercising their political and economic rights.

In making this statement, the Panel is aware of the negative image of the PLO, caused in part by its being an umbrella organization that includes diverse groups with widely varying programs and policies. The Panel believes that the Palestine Liberation Organization is more than an organization of military groups that command attention from the media. The Panel has noted the representative nature of the Palestine National Council, the legislative organ of the PLO, and the educational and social welfare programs operated by the PLO. The need for "consensus politics" within the Palestinian community and the PLO does not always enable more moderate voices to be heard, but gives undue hearing to more extreme positions. This is true not only of the PLO, but also of governments that operate in a democratic forum and whose policies are open to public debate.

The Panel, in expressing these views, is not unaware of or unconcerned about the violent activities of the organization and its member military groups. While violence (including violence against innocent persons) is not confined to one side in the Palestinian-Israeli struggle, as governments utilize a particular kind of systemic violence along with more overt forms, and while acts of terrorism are often the only form of armed resistance available to peoples without a standing army who are under the political and military authority of others, yet the violence of the Palestine Liberation Organization has a particular character. Rather than simply being the expected violence often associated with any national liberation movement to secure national self-determination, the violence of the Palestine Liberation Organization and its allies has been directed toward the very destruction of the state of Israel--and in some formulations against the Jewish people as well as the state. Articulation of this violence is con-

tained in the Palestine National Covenant of 1968, to which many Israelis refer when expressing pessimism about the possibility of a peaceful coexistence of the two peoples.

Palestinian leaders indicated to the Panel that some of the extreme positions contained in this document have been modified by subsequent actions of the Palestine National Council.<sup>1</sup> The Panel was told privately by Palestinians in positions of high leadership, including Yasir Arafat himself, that the PLO acknowledges the socio-political fact of the state of Israel and is prepared to recognize it and live peacefully with it in exchange for recognition of Palestinian rights to self-determination. However, the public statements of Yasir Arafat and other Palestinian leaders continue to reflect the disparity and contradictory nature of positions held by different factions of the PLO. The position of the PLO on this crucial issue is ambiguous to the Panel because of the conflicting statements attributed to Palestinian leaders.<sup>2</sup>

For these reasons, the Panel is convinced that either the Palestine National Covenant itself must be amended, or some clear, unambiguous declaration must be adopted by the PLO specifically denying the continued relevance of those sections of the Palestine National Covenant that commit the Palestinian national struggle to the destruction of Israel as a Jewish state, either in the immediate future or ultimately. Such amendment or declaration must remove any doubt about the acceptance by the Palestinians of the continued presence in the Middle East of the state of Israel, and of the right of Jews to the same self-determination sought by the Palestinians.

The Panel is convinced that such amendment of the Covenant by the Palestinians would strengthen those elements in Israel and in the world Jewish community who respond favorably to the concept of Palestinian self-determination but are reluctant to press for its implementation until the basic intentions of the Pal-

<sup>1</sup>For example: Article 21 of the Palestine National Covenant states that the "Palestinian Arab people . . . rejects every solution that is a substitute for a complete liberation of Palestine . . ." It was pointed out that in the Six Point Program adopted by the Palestine National Council on December 4, 1977 this maximum demand was altered to allow for ". . . the realization of the Palestinian people's rights to return and self-determination within the context of an independent Palestinian national state on any part of Palestinian land . . ." The Panel was told that this action permits the PLO to negotiate a settlement creating a West Bank-Gaza Palestinian state.

<sup>2</sup>For example, in an interview in the French newspaper *Le Figaro* (March 13, 1980), when asked about Israel's right to exist, Yasir Arafat responded: "Before asking me this question, it is perhaps necessary to ask this: what is the future of the victim?" and in this way avoided answering the question asked. In addition, the *New York Times* (April 21, 1980) states: "Arab diplomats say the thaw in Libyan-Palestinian relations was possible because Arafat endorsed the hard-line policy approved at last week's meeting," held on April 14 in Tripoli, Libya with leaders from Libya, Syria, Algeria and South Yemen.

Immediate  
(Settlements)  
by PLO  
agreements

estonians are clear.

By the same token, it is essential that Israel be prepared to recognize the right of Palestinians to self-determination and refrain from those statements and actions that ultimately deny this right. Therefore, the present impasse as perceived by the Panel is one in which Israel refuses to admit to Palestinian national rights so long as the Palestinians continue to express their claims in terms that, to Israelis and many others, jeopardize the existence of Israel.

At the same time, the Palestinians will not make public assertions of their professed willingness to recognize Israel and agree to peaceful coexistence until Israel's intentions toward Palestinian national rights are clarified.

The process of breaking this impasse--and creating a climate in which the Israeli and Palestinian communities might begin to build trust--is a delicate one. At present it appears that neither party is willing or able to take the first step toward a resolution of the impasse between them, or even to give a clear signal of intent to do so. Here, third parties such as the United States and the United Nations can play a crucial role. The Panel was grateful to learn of the deep reservoir of good will toward the U.S. among the people in the Middle East. This factor should encourage the U.S. government to come forward with creative, new options for peace. In the effort to bring about a mutual recognition by the Palestinians and the Israelis of the right of the other to what each claims for itself, these third parties must play a catalytic role. It is in this respect that the Panel would hope that the U.S. would encourage a UN Security Council resolution supporting Palestinian self-determination. Similarly, the U.S. should be engaged in open dialogue with the Palestine Liberation Organization to help clarify its position with regard to Israel and to help bring these two contending parties into negotiation for mutual recognition. Through such initiatives the U.S. can contribute to the long term security of Israel and to the stability of the Middle East.

#### HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

The human rights issue is inextricably interwoven into the fabric of the entire Middle East. The Panel was confronted in each of the countries which it visited with allegations, if not evidence, that some of the rights of persons with whom we met had been violated. It is with this in mind that the Panel concludes that any assessment of human rights issues in the area must be seen in the broadest context.

The international community has developed a consensus recognizing certain basic human rights and obligations that all governments owe to their citizens. This body of international law is based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Interna-

tional Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and other international and regional human rights agreements.

These rights fall into three broad categories. First are those concerning the inviolability and integrity of the person, including such matters as torture or cruel and inhuman treatment or punishment, arbitrary arrest or imprisonment, denial of fair public trial and invasion of the home. Second are the rights to fulfillment of basic human needs such as food, shelter, health care and education. Third are civil and political rights including free speech, press, assembly and religion, the right of travel to and from one's own country, and the right of freedom from discrimination based upon race or sex.

While virtually all governments acknowledge the validity of these rights, there is no doubt that some rights are violated regularly in the Middle East, as elsewhere, including the United States of America.

During its two-week visit to the Middle East, the Panel did not undertake the investigation, observation or verification of specific human rights violations that would enable it to make a definitive pronouncement on these matters. However, in each country visited the Panel had sufficient reports on these matters to put it on alert that there are problems requiring attention.

It might be said that human rights violations are always predicated upon the particular political situation in which the action occurs. Where a state of war exists, such as the Panel experienced in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Israel, human rights will undoubtedly suffer in the interest of security and military needs. In a situation of "occupation", as on the West Bank, other forms of human rights denials (such as preventive detention, exile, or collective punishment) will be expressed. In a situation where war is absent, as in the United States, rights to the necessities of life such as food, housing and health care can be claimed. Thus, human rights can never be understood in a vacuum.

The reported or alleged violations we encountered fell into various categories and in some cases are unique to special circumstances in the Middle East. In several countries the Panel heard that Christians are subject to harassment bordering on persecution. In several cities in Egypt, Christians have been attacked by religious extremists, and tension is growing in universities because of harassment of Christian students. Since these actions do not appear to be inspired by nor sanctioned by the Egyptian government, the Panel is encouraged by recent efforts by the churches of Egypt and the government to resolve or lessen the tensions which have developed.

Groups in these and similar circumstances claim that they are entitled to equal status and opportunity regardless of their religious affiliation or background--whether, for example, they be Christians in Egypt, Jews in Syria or Arab Christians or Muslims in Israel. This claim becomes increasingly problematic as a growing number of states in the region define themselves from a religious perspective. While the Panel does not deny the right of a majority to define itself as it wishes, the burden is on the majority group to provide equal rights

for citizens who may therefore be placed in a minority status.

In Syria, the Panel raised with Syrian and U.S. government officials the status of the Jewish minority. Restrictions on travel had been in effect, the Panel was told, because of both the state of war that exists with Israel and Israel's claim to represent all Jews everywhere. U.S. authorities in Syria indicated that the only restriction placed on Jews at present that were not similarly placed on other groups had to do with the right to emigrate. Although this was the only legal restriction mentioned, the Panel noted a distinct tension when the subject of the Jewish minority was discussed. The Jewish community is small and appears to be isolated from the larger community, although it is active and appears successful in the commercial life of Damascus. This situation was simply the first of those encountered in the region where the present state of war and considerations of national security are given as reasons for abridgement of rights.

The present situation of military government on the West Bank and in Gaza complicates the consideration of human rights violations there. Not only is there conflicting evidence put forth concerning the treatment of the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza, there is a disagreement over the standards by which this military administration is to be judged. While most governments, including that of the U.S., insist that the Fourth Geneva Convention (concerning the protection of civilian persons in time of war) is applicable in these situations, the Israeli authorities declare that they voluntarily observe most of the stipulations of this Convention.

Indeed, the Panel was impressed by the extent to which Israel has sought to provide as many rights as possible to a people under military occupation. Freedom of the press, with only rare exceptions, is evidenced in sharp criticisms of many Begin government policies, criticisms that add to dissenting opinion and provide support for Palestinian causes. Freedom of speech results in fiery political rhetoric among Palestinian people in East Jerusalem and elsewhere, even though it occurs in occupied territory. Acts of defiance are tolerated by the Israeli government, until understandable nervousness results in various forms of collective and official harassment of enemies of the state of Israel. Nevertheless, criticism of Israel is always more intense with regard to the denial of human and civil rights in Israel than in other countries of the Middle East, precisely because of Israel's claim to be a democratic state. Such a claim properly requires such honest criticism and judgment from others.

Israeli authorities with whom the Panel raised questions of human rights violations on the West Bank and in Gaza were quick to deny that there was any official policy allowing the use of torture or cruel and inhuman treatment or punishment of prisoners. They added, with illustrations of specifics, that when incidents have occurred, those responsible have been punished. The Panel heard sincere expressions of concern from some Israelis that the continued military administration was having a damaging effect on Israel and its moral sense.

At the same time, the Panel heard from persons on the West Bank of repeated

allegations of abuse and mistreatment, both by military occupation authorities and most recently by groups of armed Israeli civilian vigilante-type groups. Without in any way denying the reality of these allegations to the persons afflicted, the Panel realized that the situation of military occupation, by its very nature, brings violations of rights. And, from a larger perspective, the denial to Palestinians of the right of self-determination and the humiliating refugee status of many Palestinians are also gross violations of human rights. The Palestine issue once again leads the Panel to a sense of urgency that new initiatives be found to resolve this issue.

The Panel firmly believes that the best way to improve the lot of the Palestinians on the West Bank and Gaza is to exercise all efforts at helping the Palestinians achieve the goal of self-determination and to end as quickly as possible the military occupation by Israel of the West Bank and Gaza. Generalized condemnations or specific illustrations that can be volleyed back and forth do not appear to have been effective in this respect.

✓ Further, the Panel strongly underscores the need to apply the same standards of judgment to all countries of the Middle East in questions of human rights and to resist singling out any one country for particular focus.

#### SETTLEMENTS ON THE WEST BANK

Consideration of the establishment by the Israeli government of settlements in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip cannot be viewed in a vacuum. These settlements have definite implications for Israeli security concerns, both immediate and long term. Similarly, these settlements may well have an impact on the eventual exercise of the right of self-determination by the Palestinian Arab inhabitants of these areas.

In the short run, those settlements that were established for obvious military purposes, in some cases as companions to military installations, provide either real security or a sense of security. Meeting such security needs is understandable from an Israeli perspective, given the experience of Israel since its birth. Because the long term security of Israel and other nations of the area depends in large part on relations of justice between peoples, the settlements take on a more questionable character.

The settlements are clearly seen by the Palestinian Arabs and many others as a strategic initiative of Israel to populate and colonize, to control water and other resources, and to destabilize the predominantly Palestinian population during a critical period of transition. Specific proposals and plans put forward by some leading Israelis, along with government actions that appear to follow step-by-step the most developed of these "plans" and statements of Israeli political leaders, are troubling. Palestinians and many others are convinced that Israel has no intention ever to return the captured territories to Arab sov-

ereignty. They expect Israel to expel a significant number of the remaining Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza and to establish the state of Israel over all of what Israelis term *Eretz Israel*. In light of these convictions, the settlements serve to exacerbate intensely the already hostile relations between the Palestinian Arabs and the Israelis. Therefore, the Panel believes that further expansion of settlements, even for the sake of security, threatens the long term security of the state of Israel.

While the policy of the Israeli government in the period following the 1967 War up to 1977 was largely aimed at settlements in which security was a consideration, since 1977 the policy has been more ideologically oriented. In the decade after the 1967 War, some 36 settlements were established on the West Bank alone. In the three years since 1977, including the period of the Camp David Accords, the number of settlements has risen to over seventy. The settlements established by the present government policy in this latter period appear to be vulnerable to the charge leveled by opponents, both Israeli and Palestinian, that they are acts of colonization for obvious political purposes.

The Panel sees the continued development of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza as an obstacle to peace. This current policy heightens tension and is leading toward further serious deterioration in relationships between Palestinians and Israelis. Any successful peace process will require Israel to end its current policy of establishing new settlements and to desist from expropriating or confiscating private or "state-owned" land in these areas. Further, Israel should declare its intention to negotiate with the recognized representatives of the Palestinians about which settlements should remain--and under what conditions--within the framework of a comprehensive peace agreement. Obviously during peace negotiations no new settlements should be established.

At the same time, the Panel recognized that such declarations of intent by Israel must elicit an action from the Palestinians. Such Israeli declarations, along with the international recognition by the UN Security Council of the right of Palestinians to self-determination (see section on self-determination), will require the representatives of the Palestinian people to respond immediately with declarations of intent to cease acts of violence within Israel and the occupied territories and to recognize UN Security Council Resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) as primary bases for a resolution of the conflicts. They will also require the Palestinians to make clear that Jews are not, in principle, to be excluded from settlements anywhere within the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Israel will not accept a peace settlement, nor should it, which makes any area, especially in historic Palestine, *Judenrein*.<sup>1</sup> Jews should be free to live within a Palestinian entity with the same liberties, privileges and rights granted to Palestinian Arabs within the state of Israel.

<sup>1</sup>The German term conveys a prohibition against a Jewish person living in any given area or place.

While Israeli military installations in the occupied territories may be seen to constitute an infringement on the ultimate sovereignty over these territories, it is reasonable that they might remain with clearly defined powers and functions for a period of time after formal conclusion of the military occupation. Ultimately, however, in the final phases of the peace process, such military installations should also be withdrawn. When that happens the military security of Israel and its neighbors must be guaranteed. The entire area of presently occupied territories should be demilitarized for a fixed period of time under international auspices.

Concern related to the current settlement policy of Israel has led the United States government and the Security Council of the United Nations to call for the cessation of the establishment of settlements. The Panel supports the policy of the U.S. government in relation to the settlements issue as most recently expressed by the Department of State.<sup>1</sup> The continued tension between the U.S. and Israeli governments over this issue, and the disagreement between President Carter and Prime Minister Begin over the content of their agreement at Camp David concerning cessation of creating new settlements, further erodes the credibility of the United States as a broker in the peace process. The positive accomplishments of the Camp David Agreements and the Israeli-Egyptian Peace Treaty are jeopardized by the present settlement policy of Israel.

The importance of a change in Israeli policy regarding the building of new settlements cannot be stated too strongly. Continuation of the present policy would warrant a thorough review by the U.S. government of its policies towards Israel. Certainly continued support of those programs in Israel that have a direct or indirect relation to the building of new settlements is untenable. In order that the relationship between the U.S. Foreign Assistance Program and the construction of new settlements be better understood, the Panel believes that the appropriate Congressional committees should hold further public hearings on this subject.

#### RELIGIOUS ISSUES

The Panel saw the many religious issues encountered in the Middle East as coming together in Jerusalem, which continues as a focus of the deepest religious inspiration and attachment of three faiths: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. A key issue in this regard is the future of the Holy Places.<sup>2</sup> The Panel believes

<sup>1</sup>Statement by Secretary of State Cyrus Vance before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Washington, D.C., March 20, 1980.

<sup>2</sup>The principle Holy Places to which the Status Quo (cf. footnote 1, page 15) applies include: Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre, Beir al Sultan, Tomb of the Virgin, Sanctuary of the Ascension, Western (Wailing) Wall. Source: UN map 229,

1948-67-51a3

that the Status Quo of the Holy Places<sup>1</sup> and the age-old topography of the Old City of Jerusalem should continue to be respected. The rights of the worshipping communities in Jerusalem and its environs should be safeguarded, so that their existence around the Holy Places may be maintained and guaranteed.

International treaties (Paris, 1856 and Berlin, 1878) and the League of Nations have guaranteed the rights of the three monotheistic religions' claims to these Holy Places. These treaties have established the so-called Status Quo for these places, which, by way of compromise, has sought once and for all to resolve the conflicts among the various religious communities. In order to keep the existing peace among these communities and in order to avoid any possible conflicts in the future, this Status Quo has to remain unalterable.

The Panel rejoices in the fact that the above Status Quo is presently respected by the Israeli government, and that it has given guarantees that it will continue to do so in the future. At the same time, the Panel expresses the hope that the rights of the worshipping communities around the Holy Places will remain inviolable, in an environment in which worshipping communities have free access to the Holy Places and feel welcome and at home in the area.

In order to keep the peace among the three religious communities--Jewish, Christian and Muslim--the Panel feels that major alterations should not be made in the topography of Jerusalem, especially when these alterations may affect the Holy Places or other places sacred to one of these three religions. Any such major change will result in bitterness for the community that feels its rights are violated, thus endangering peace in the Holy City.

Since June, 1967, Israel has taken administrative and legislative actions to unify the city under its control. In doing so, it has maintained careful respect for the historic religious sites of the city. Access to the city's places of pilgrimage is guaranteed for all people, and the government has engaged in major archeological and reconstruction projects so as to preserve an ancient history which belongs to humankind itself. However, the United Nations, with the United States concurring, has criticized Israel's intention to maintain control over Jerusalem. While the Panel believes that Jerusalem should be physically unified, this does not mean that it supports unilateral actions of the occupying power. The Palestinians have not so far played a significant role in

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November, 1949 as reprinted in H. Eugene Bovis, *The Jerusalem Question: 1917-1968*, Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1971.

<sup>1</sup>"The special legislation regulating the relationship of the Christian communities and the authorities, guaranteed by international treaties (Paris, 1856 and Berlin, 1878) and the League of Nations . . . [is] known as the Status Quo of the Holy Places . . . ." World Council of Churches, "Jerusalem", Plenary Document No. PD 52, Fifth Assembly, Nairobi, Kenya: 23 November-10 December, 1975, paragraph 2. (Hereafter referred to as "Status Quo".)

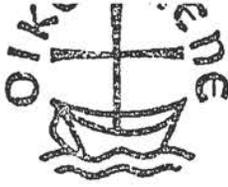
the planning and decision-making concerning the future of the city. Unless they actively and freely participate in all necessary decisions and actions, mutually acceptable agreements cannot be found that respond to the needs and rights of all the people in the city, and antagonisms will be perpetuated that threaten the peace of the city, and possibly of the region.

The Panel sees that the relationships between persons of different religious communities are significant religious issues in themselves and expresses concern over ways in which religious issues appear to be used for political purposes. While the experience of the members of the Panel in the United States gives us a preference for a separation of the power of organized religion from the power of the state, the Panel recognizes that others have had different experiences and understandings. The Panel believes that the right of self-determination does include the ability to determine whether a state will be a so-called "religious state" so long as those of minority religions in the state are guaranteed the full rights and privileges of citizenship.

Within this context, the Panel expresses deep concern for the diminution of the Christian community of the Middle East. Vital, living churches, which trace their beginnings to the earliest Christian era, are finding their people emigrating elsewhere because of political turmoil in the region. This weakening of the Christian community, described by a Christian leader as "a slow draining away of its lifeblood", depletes a strong Christian life in the region, particularly when churches in the western world encourage their immigration

*Fudging* { In the contacts the Panel had with some Middle East Christians, it was reminded of the theological differences that still exist within the Christian community over the meaning of the Abrahamic covenant and the continuing role of the Jewish people. Most Panel members saw that some theological positions, when combined with the political dynamics of the area, could be understood as what the West would call anti-semitism. Thus, the seeds of religious alienation can be carried through the churches themselves. The Panel feels that it is of crucial importance that there be further discussion and study of this theological issue with religious scholars and theologians from the Middle East.

In many ways, the Holy City of Jerusalem is a microcosm of the hopes and aspirations of all the peoples of the Middle East. In the midst of political uncertainty and conflict, there is still a search for the peace envisaged in the name of the Holy City--Jerusalem, *Yerushalim, al-Quds*. The Panel concludes with a prayer and determination that all effort be made to find peace for the Holy City of peace, as a sign that this peace may reign in the entire region and world, among all peoples and all religions.



**WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES**

**PROGRAMME UNIT ON FAITH AND WITNESS**

Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies

Geneva, September 30, 1980.

AB/LM

Rabbi Marc H. TANENBAUM,  
The American Jewish Committee  
165 East 56 Street  
NEW YORK, NY 10022

Dear Marc,

Here is the text of my address. I hope it comes close to meeting your needs. It occurs to me that you may wish to make available the texts of the Central Committee's Jerusalem statement and the IJCIC response, and also the text of the CCJP proposed Guidelines -- if you have not already done so -- to the National Interreligious Affairs Commission.

Enclosed also is a biographical sketch and photograph, which you requested.

As to travel expenses, I am not travelling this time on WCC business, per se (although, obviously, virtually everything I do these days is "WCC business" in one way or another). Rather, my expenses are to be covered by various speaking engagements, which makes the trip budget rather tight, as you might expect.

I was able to secure a most inexpensive trans-Atlantic flight at excursion rate: Geneva-New York, return, Sfr. 1050.- (which works out, at current exchange rates, to about \$640). If you could find it possible to handle this amount, it would be extremely helpful.

I will arrive in Cleveland on 23 October at 12 28 PM (AA 558) from St. Louis, and will proceed directly to the Bond Court Hotel.

I am delighted to be able to be with you, and the Interreligious Affairs Commission, and look forward to a genuinely beneficial mutual exchange.

Cordially,

Allan R. Brockway  
Christian-Jewish Relations

Enclosures

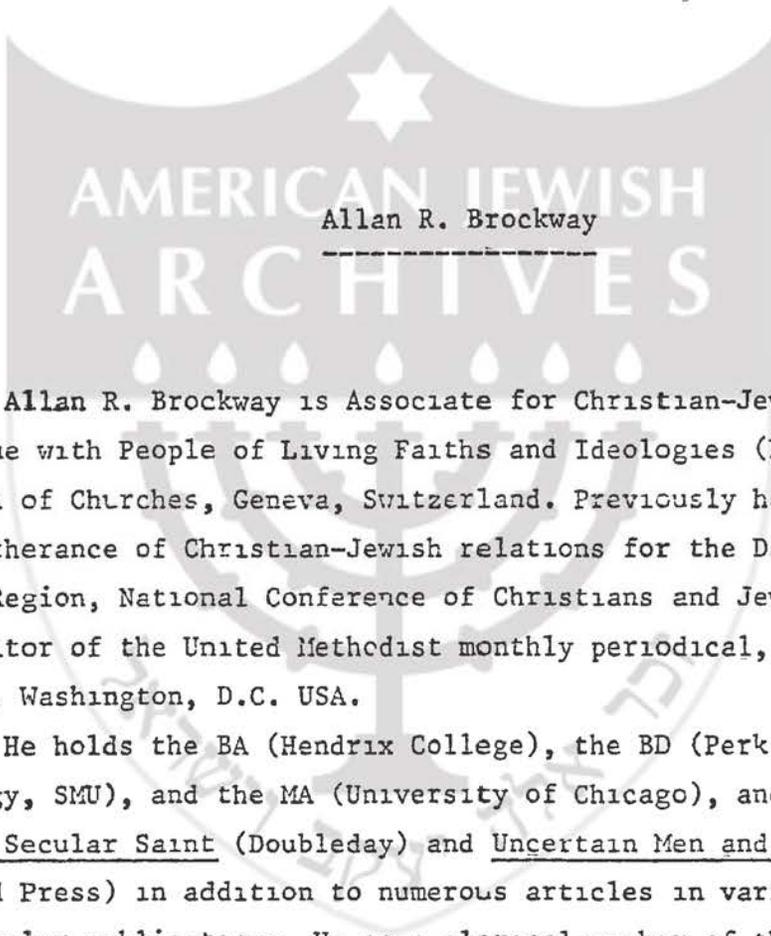


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## WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

PROGRAMME UNIT ON FAITH AND WITNESS

Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies



### AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

Allan R. Brockway

Allan R. Brockway is Associate for Christian-Jewish Relations, Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies (DFI), World Council of Churches, Geneva, Switzerland. Previously he was engaged in furtherance of Christian-Jewish relations for the Dallas-North Texas Region, National Conference of Christians and Jews and, earlier, was editor of the United Methodist monthly periodical, engage/social action, Washington, D.C. USA.

He holds the BA (Hendrix College), the BD (Perkins School of Theology, SMU), and the MA (University of Chicago), and is the author of The Secular Saint (Doubleday) and Uncertain Men and Certain Change (Graded Press) in addition to numerous articles in various religious and secular publications. He is a clerical member of the North Dakota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Allan R. Brockway

American Jewish Committee,  
National Interreligious Affairs Commission  
Cleveland, Ohio

23 October 1980

Much has happened, both to enhance and to jeopardize, the relationship between the protestant churches and the Jewish People since the World Council of Churches was formed in 1948. At its first Assembly, which met in Amsterdam of that year, the World Council stated that

In the design of God, Israel has a unique position. It was Israel with whom God made His Covenant by the call of Abraham. It was Israel to whom God revealed His name and gave His Law. It was to Israel that He sent His Prophets with their message of Judgment and of Grace. It was Israel to whom He promised the coming of His Messiah. By the history of Israel God prepared the manger in which in the fullness of time He put the Redeemer of all mankind, Jesus Christ. The Church has received this spiritual heritage from Israel and is therefore, in humble conviction to proclaim to the Jews, "The Messiah for whom you wait has come". The promise has been fulfilled by the coming of Jesus Christ.

In the intervening thirty-two years a vast amount of theological and historical research has produced, for instance, a much clearer understanding of Second-Temple Judaism; discussion at serious dialogical levels between those representing the World Council of Churches and those representing the Jewish community has increasingly taken place, and, significantly, work on more accurate understanding of the relationship between Christianity and Judaism has progressed within the churches themselves.

That at least a little progress has been made is evidenced by some of the observations made in the current draft "Guidelines for Jewish-Christian Dialogue" being prepared by the WCC's Consultation on the Church and the Jewish People. The "rejection of proselytism and our advocacy of respect for the integrity and the identity of all peoples and faith communities is the more urgent where Jews are concerned", the draft reads. And, it continues,

Our relationship to the Jews is of a unique and very close character. Moreover, the history of antisemitism among Christians and forced baptisms of Jews in the past makes it understandable that Jews are rightly sensitive towards all religious pressures from outside and all attempts at proselytizing.

We reject proselytism both in its gross and more refined forms. This implies that all triumphalism and every kind of manipulation are to be abrogated. We are called upon to minimize the power dimension in all encounters with Jews and to speak at every level from equal to equal. We have to be conscious of the pain and the perception of the others and have to respect their right to define themselves.

All, of course, is not sweetness and light. Much remains to be done within the churches to increase both the knowledge and sensitivity of Christians to their theological, social, and political relationship to Jews and Judaism. And, if you will allow me to say so, much remains to be done to increase the awareness among Jews of their practical need to be open and sensitive to the dynamics within the Christian communities that lead both to affirmative and negative statements and actions.

A case with reference to both points just cited is the recent statement of the World Council's Central Committee on "Jerusalem" (August 14-22, 1980) and the response to that statement from the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations (September 2, 1980). Not only is this sequence of statements a recent instance of the tensions that arise because of insensitivity to the differing political, if not obviously theological, contexts of the two religious communities, but is an example of the critical role that attitudes toward and/or responses to the State of Israel play in the on-going Jewish-Christian relationship.

Allow me, therefore, to reflect with you a bit on some of the factors that interact within the churches around the State of Israel and the Jewish People. You will understand, I know, when I enter the caveat that these reflections are my own and should not be attributed to the World Council of Churches or to any of its constituent bodies.

It is axiomatic that no serious Jewish-Christian discussion today can avoid touching centrally on Israel, even when the effort to do so is made. Indeed, it is hard to escape the impression that what one thinks - and what one feels - about Israel has become the test of whether or not dialogue may be continued or even be entered. A question lies implicit in many encounters between Christians and Jews: What do you say Israel is? And Christians, particularly those who have been involved in and concerned for Jewish-Christian relations, now tend to be very careful about how they answer.

Some of us have grown weary of answers that amount to "Of course I support the right of Israel to exist, but that doesn't mean I can't oppose the actions of the Israeli government at this time or its proposed action at that time." Too often the disclaimer has been followed by denunciations that imply that, even though Israel's right to be is still unquestioned, it would have been far better for everyone concerned if it had never been created in the first place.

Some of us are equally weary of answers that insist that, even though the Israeli government is misguided, it is "not the time" to say so publicly because that might imply support for those who would destroy the Jewish state.

And then there are those Christians who, as you know, rejoice in the return of the Jewish People to the land because such return is part of an eschatological scheme for the return of Jesus on the clouds of glory. These Christians usually tend to answer, "Israel, right or wrong," and expect to receive (as they sometimes do) a blessing from Israelis and other Jews. Some of us are mightily weary of that answer.

The problem with all these answers to the question, "What do you say Israel is?" is that they are answers to the wrong question. The time should have been long since past when Christians or anyone else should be called upon to deal with the question as to what Israel is. Instead, we should be struggling with the question, "How may we support Israel, or at least not obstruct the Jewish state in its effort to play its proper role in the lives of peoples and nations?"

I shall return to a direct consideration of that question in a moment. But first, a word or two about why it is that the question of Israel's very existence remains unresolved in the minds of Christians.

The fact is that there is a great perplexity in the Christian mind as to what Israel is and what it represents, a perplexity that arises out of the abysmal ignorance of Christians about the Jewish People, and about their national identity that has persisted through persecutions, the like of which obliterated other peoples and nations. They arise also, and paradoxically, from the fact that Christians, at least in the so-called western world, are acquainted with Jews and think they know them. Since Jews are American or British or French just as Christians are, why should they have this strange and sometimes fanatical attachment to Israel?

Israel is unique among the newly emerged nations of the world, in that it is a liberation movement of people who, for the most part, were not liberated from oppression in the land where they now dwell. Israel was brought into being by people who were persecuted in Europe. The extent of that persecution has been largely blurred and forgotten by those of us who live in an age of instant communication, but with little or no historical memory.

Consequently, Christians tend to be ambivalent about Israel because they have been taught that Jews took over a land that did not belong to them, displacing the indigenous population, the Palestinian Arabs. The lack of historical memory is particularly acute among Americans, who conveniently forget that they, themselves, are descendents of Europeans who took over a land that did not belong to them, displacing the indigenous population.

Thus, those Christians who have, quite properly, become conscious of social injustice and who identify the struggle for justice and economic well-being with their Christian faith - and who, at the same time, have a modicum of awareness of the theological and historical symbiosis in which the Church and the Jewish People live - are torn between what they perceive as injustice to Palestinian Arabs and their, poorly understood but nevertheless real, identity with the Jewish People.

They often tend, therefore -

and this is true particularly of councils of churches and policy-making bodies of major denominations - to solve their dilemma by a neat formula that grows out of the American experience of the separation of church and state.

The formula goes something like this:

We love the Jewish People and share with them their hope for the messianic age, but that should not prohibit us from encouraging international policy that may (but then it may not!) be dangerous to the continued existence of the State of Israel, for Israel and the Jewish People are not, after all, the same. Our concern must always first be with the poor and oppressed. Therefore, if we must make a choice between Israel and the Palestinians, we are compelled to choose the Palestinians.

I am not, of course, attempting to justify or rationalize this formula. I would suggest, however, that its existence is real and that it is an operating principal for many Christian bodies. It is a formula that is soundly based upon a type of Christian theology. The falacy in it, as we know, lies in that absence of historical memory and in a misreading of the complexities of contemporary political reality. When this falacy is coupled with an understanding of Judaism that allows Christians to separate Judaism as a "world religion" from the lived life of the Jewish People, a formidable ideological foundation is laid for an insidious form of antisemitism, disguised as anti-Zionism. When Zionism is defined solely as a political movement that has nothing to do with Judaism essentially, rejecting it is not thought to be in the least incompatible with concern for and identity

with the Jewish People.

Allow me now to point to another dynamic that complicates the attitude toward and response to Israel in the minds, and actions, of many Christians. This is the wide-spread reaction against supporting Israel "out of guilt". There once was a time when acting contrary to the way one had acted before, because one was assuming responsibility for wayward past actions, was considered noble and proper. No more. In addition to being an age of instant communication, ours is an age of instant psychoanalysis, in which it is thought to be little less than sinful to "act out of guilt".

The implications of this charge are worth brief exploration. The guilt out of which Christians supposedly act is guilt for the Holocaust, for the Inquisition, the Crusades, the pogroms, the ghettos, etc. There is, one must admit, ample guilt to be assumed. But, who is guilty? Just because someone is a member of a Christian church, does that someone bear responsibility for the Crusades? The majority of present-day Christians were not yet born or were small children when 6 million Jews were systematically murdered in Europe. Are they, just because they were baptised, guilty of those deaths? A considerable number of contemporary Christians are answering No! But they hear the message spread abroad that Israel was brought into being, in part at least, because of the guilt of the western nations - "Christian" nations - for those 6 million deaths. Well, so the emotional (if not the wholly conscious) rationale goes, the Christians in 1948 may have thought they were guilty, but we certainly are not. Today, we cannot act out of guilt, for we are innocent.

But even when Christians assume their proper guilt for the misery and destruction to which the Church has put the Jewish People, there remains a ground for concern about "acting out of guilt". And that is the assumption that Christians can be absolved from their guilt by the Jewish People.

The truth of the matter is that, even if all Jews were to forgive all Christians throughout all the centuries for what they have done, the guilt would still remain. In so far as the Church offers support for Israel in the hope that thereby it will earn forgiveness from Jews, that support is both a hollow illusion and a denial of Christian faith itself. No one forgives sin except God. The problem for Christians who "act out of guilt" is to receive divine forgiveness and then "go and sin no more".

The Christian denial of guilt results in rejection of responsibility for the Church's sin and loss of the necessary Christian identity with Jews and Judaism. At best it may produce a humanitarian concern for Israel that is of the same quality as concern for people everywhere. But it separates Christian faith from its life-giving root.

By seeking expiation from the Jews, Christians make a farce of their professed trust in God, insult the Jewish People, and produce shallow and unreliable support for Israel.

It is only by acting out of divine forgiveness (which does not, let it be noted, remove the guilt) that Christians can freely relate to Jews and to Israel. By so doing they affirm their own faith, which is the precondition for the elimination of antisemitism, of anti-Judaism, of anti-Zionism, and all the rest. It is to the advantage of both the Church and the Jewish People that confession of guilt and forgiveness of sin be preached, taught, and practised among the churches.

Before addressing the question I suggested is more proper concerning Israel, I must interject a brief comment on the global Christian dilemma. As the ecumenical movement (which is properly a Christian concern solely, as distinguished from inter-faith relations) becomes increasingly world-wide, no longer limited to Europe and North America, the influence of Christians from Asia, Africa, and Latin America becomes increasingly felt in church councils.

With reference to Israel, and to the Jewish People generally, that influence tends to be of a character that is different from that of the millenarianists, from that of the standard "mission to the Jews" approach, and also from that of Christians who are concerned for dialogue and for positive reconstruction of Christian theology. Representatives of third-world churches frequently claim to have no historical memory to forget. They deny that they and their societies are now or have ever been anti-semitic and that, most particularly, they cannot, by the greatest stretch of the imagination, be held responsible for the Holocaust.

There is, of course, truth to these assertions. Frequently, third-world Christians have had little or no contact with Jews; their knowledge of Jews and Judaism often is limited to study of the Old Testament, the term Hebrew Bible striking them as a little more than strange. Particularly in those situations where the population is still in the process of emerging from tribal societies, leaping from thence into the industrialized "global village" overnight, a close affinity with the Israelites of the Hebrew Bible is sometimes felt strongly. At the same time, however, there tends to be slight recognition of any connection between the Israelites "of old" and the contemporary Jewish People, much less the modern state of Israel.

Israel therefore tends to be viewed as a "western" nation, "imperialist" in its origin and current intentions. As such, Israel is lumped with the United States and Western Europe as a "colonial" power, the dominance of which must be rejected and overcome. In the context of current international political rhetoric, it is all but impossible for third-world church representatives to comprehend Israel as a nation of refugees from all three worlds.

Everything is complicated, of course, by the ever-present fact that third-world churches exist because of the very colonialism and imperialism that is now being rejected, and by the teaching of Christian theology by nineteenth- and twentieth-century missionaries. That missionary teaching may be the only knowledge available about "the Jews", so that a theological antisemitism lurks even farther beneath the conscious surface than is the case in Europe and North America.

Consequently, the theological, social, and political positions toward Israel urged by some western Christians in ecumenical discussion are often dismissed by their third-world colleagues as :

(1) but another instance of acting out of (misplaced) guilt for the crimes

of western society and

(2) evidence of insensitivity to the cries for justice of newly independent churches and nations.

So I turn now to the current relationship of the World Council of Churches to the Jewish People, and in that context address the question, "How may we support Israel in its effort to play its proper role in the lives of peoples and nations?"

This question is, admittedly, loaded. It assumes that the prior question, of what Israel is, has been moved from center stage. It assumes also that we, Christians and Jews, have some more-or-less clear-cut idea of Israel's "proper role" in this turbulent world of ours. Both of these, doubtless, are unwarranted assumptions. But sometimes there is merit in adopting the stance of our literary colleagues when they speak of the "intellectual suspension of disbelief". In the present instance that means we make the effort to answer the question, even though we know full well that its antecedents remain in doubt.

Though the fact is sometimes overlooked, the World Council of Churches has, and does, recognize fully the right of Israel to exist and, indeed, has on numerous occasions supported that right. For example, when the United Nations General Assembly called Zionism "a form of racism and racial discrimination", the General Secretary, in the name of the World Council, appealed to "all the parties involved in the Middle East conflict and to the UN. . . to find urgently ways to enable the Palestinian people to achieve their legitimate rights to nationhood and statehood, while recognizing the right of the State of Israel to exist peacefully within internationally agreed boundaries". Shortly thereafter, the 1975 Assembly of the WCC, meeting in Nairobi, insisted upon "The right of all states including Israel and the Arab states to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries." Since 1975 various representatives of the World Council have reiterated that concern.

It is obvious from these references that the consistent stance of the World Council of Churches has been one of "even-handedness", utilizing a formula that, in one way or the other, emphasized justice for both Israelis and Palestinians. As the WCC Executive Committee said at Bad Saarow, GDR, in 1974, "It is of first importance that the rights of the Israeli Jews and the implementation of the rights of the Palestinians should not lead to injustice to either people".

Critics may point out that "even-handedness", particularly as the concept has been used by church bodies, frequently has been translated into "tilt away from Israel toward the Palestinians". It is important, however, for critics to recognize that the WCC is composed of Christian churches, some of which, located in the Middle East, are composed of Palestinian Arabs. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Council should be concerned for the welfare, indeed the justice, of those churches and their members.

In that statement by the 1948 First Assembly with which I began these remarks, the World Council of Churches took note of the recent establishment of the state of Israel but elected not to go further. "On the political aspects of the Palestine problem, and the complex conflict of 'rights' involved," the Amsterdam Assembly said, "we do not undertake to express a judgment. Nevertheless we appeal to the nations to deal with the problem not as one of expediency - political, strategic, or economic - but as a moral and spiritual question that touches a nerve centre of the world's religious life." Increasingly since 1948, the "moral and spiritual question" has tended to be posed in terms of, first, the misery of the Palestinian refugees, and then toward their struggle for equal justice. Today that has come to mean their "right" to an independent state.

From the World Council's perspective, its constant insistence upon "secure and recognized boundaries" for Israel establishes its "credentials" for vigorously criticizing positions and actions of the Israeli government that appear to jeopardize the future of the Palestinian Arabs and, even, the churches in the West Bank and in Israel proper. What is often lacking, however, is an equal existential awareness of Israel's desperate fear - which is historically justified - that its own present and future is threatened by the positions and actions of the Palestinians.

Given the factors that interplay within the Christian communities I outlined earlier, the type of "even-handedness" displayed by the World Council in its specific responses to Israeli actions should take no one by surprise. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the WCC's Consultation on the Church and the Jewish People has been at work to focus attention on the

symbiotic relationship that Christianity has with Jews and Judaism - and thus with Israel. In the current draft of "Guidelines for Jewish-Christian Dialogue" that is being prepared by the CCJP, we find "reference to a feature of Jewish self-awareness which is often misunderstood by Christians: the indissoluble bond between the Jewish People and the Land of Israel, which has in the present time, after many centuries of exile, found social, cultural, economic, and political expression in the reality of the State of Israel." Further we read: "Although this Land has also special significance for Christians .... they often find it difficult to fully grasp the validity of the Jewish attachment to this land."

The significance of these words from the proposed "Guidelines" should not be lost on either Jewish or Christian critics of specific WCC reactions to Israeli actions. For they indicate a growing attention to Jewish sensibilities as sensibilities that are integral to Christianity as well. Before the World Council gathers for its Sixth Assembly in 1983 there is every hope that the "guidelines", doubtless in somewhat revised form, will become official WCC policy and will, as such, be a constant and visible context within which future positions toward Israel will be taken.

Let me make a quick note (in what is already an overly long address) about the proposed "Guidelines". This document has been in the process of development since before 1975, when the attempt was begun in earnest. Today the process is nearing its completion. Currently the time-table calls for the adoption of a "perfected" draft by the CCJP when it meets during June of next year. After being considered by the sub-unit on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies, it will be offered to the WCC Central Committee prior to the Assembly and should, therefore, be an integral part of Assembly deliberations. That is extremely important, because the Assembly, which meets only at 8-year intervals, sets ecumenical

policy for the long-term.

But, perhaps more importantly, the "Guidelines" will become a base for widening the constructive dialogue between the churches and the Jewish People in national churches and denominations at both bureaucratic and congregational levels. As more and more Christians have opportunity to listen to Jews explain who and what they are - and Jews have like opportunity to listen to Christians - new and far better ways may be found to answer the question, "How may we best support Israel and thus undergird all efforts toward peace in the Middle East and the world?"

In the meantime, it is incumbent upon both Jews and Christians to learn how to be more sensitive to the social, political, and religious contexts out of which the others speak. Just as, in the case of the recent Central Committee statement on the Knesset's Basic Law on Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, the Jewish community had a right to expect Christians to take cognizance of the political situation in Israel that gave rise to the Law, and to the successful attempts to ameliorate its most detrimental provisions, so the Christian communities have a right to expect Jews to take into account the social, political, and religious conditions in which today's representative Christian bodies must operate. In sum, both of us need to look deeper and with more compassion upon the other. Is it too much to expect that the result will be, not only salutary for Jewish-Christian relations, but also an impetus toward world peace, toward "the peace of Jerusalem"?

The weight of responsibility rests (and I am free to say this because I am a Christian) with Christians and the churches. A vast amount of new thinking, new education, new preaching is required to remove the sting from almost 2000 years of Christian hatred toward Jews. Some of us are dedicated to that task, and though our number is small it is growing.

We need the support of the world-wide Jewish community.

Now, and finally, I have a confession to make. I am deeply concerned that Christians support Israel and the Jewish People, not so much because I believe such support will enhance Judaism, but because I believe that the vitality and validity of Christianity is at stake. The real test for Christianity lies, not in its specific answers to the question, "What do you say Israel is?" (though that question will continue to be addressed), as it does in whether it is willing and able to transcend that essential question to struggle faithfully with the existential question, "How may we support Israel - people, land, and state - in assuming its God-given role in the lives of people and nations?" That is a goal in which Christians and Jews may join, though perhaps for different reasons.

May we, together, better learn through these trying days how to obey the injunction that comes from our common Scripture:

Prepare a road for the Lord through the wilderness,  
clear a highway across the desert for our God.  
Every valley shall be lifted up,  
every mountain and hill brought down;  
rugged places shall be made smooth  
and mountain-ranges become a plain.  
Thus shall the Glory of the Lord be revealed,  
and all mankind together shall see it;  
for the Lord himself has spoken. (Isaiah 40 : 3-5).