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Israeli Promises Inquiry of Holy Land Violations

Washington—(NC)—The minister for religious affairs of the Israeli government has ordered "an immediate investigation" into complaints that Jews have maltreated Catholics and desecrated Catholic shrines and holy places in Palestine. He has pledged if the complaints are verified "the men responsible will be punished." It has been disclosed by officials of the Israeli government here.

An investigation by the United Nations into the complaints has been requested by Msgr. Thomas J. McMahon, national secretary of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association.

The Monsignor in a letter to Trygve Lie, UN Secretary General, called attention to a report of specific charges made by Msgr. Anthony Vergani, Vicar of the Latin Patriarchate for Galilee, claiming that seven churches, convents and hospices had been looted by Jews and others seized by force.

The statement of the Israeli government minister, Rabbi L. Fishman, was released in Tel-Aviv, and a copy of it forwarded here. The text of Rabbi Fishman's statement follows:

"I have ordered an immediate investigation into these reports. If these reports are verified the men responsible will be punished. The suggestion that the State of Israel has, or ever had, any intention of expropriating church property wholly without foundation. Respect for church property rights has repeatedly been promised and guaranteed.

"If any sacred sites are now occupied due to vital military exigency they will be evacuated at the first opportunity. The suggestion that 'irresponsible elements' have been deliberately appointed for the purpose of defacing or destroying holy places is a fantastic slander typical of present-day anti-Israel propaganda.

"In fact, the Israeli Army has appointed special liaison officers throughout the country to insure that the religious life of non-Israeli communities will be affected as little as possible by war conditions and that places of holy content or association will be safeguarded."

School Garden To Aid Relief

New York—(NC)—Boys and girls of the Immaculate Conception parish school at Conception, Minn., are raising cucumbers to get money for the relief of starving children in war-stricken countries.

The Rev. Leo Neudecker, pastor, described in a letter to War Relief Services, National Catholic Welfare Conference, here how the children are growing the cucumbers on an acre of ground adjoining the school.

"We will realize at least \$100 on our project which we will send to the poor children overseas through your organization," Father Neudecker writes.

Poe Is Read Where Poe Was Written



Students in Fordham University's first Summer Institute of Professional Writing gather under the "poetry tree" outside the house in which Edgar Allan Poe once lived, to hear the Rev. Alfred Barrett, S.J., of the Fordham faculty read some of the celebrated American author. Poe is said to have lived in the small house before which Father Barrett stands, from 1846 to 1849, and that it was here his wife endured the illness which caused her death. His celebrated poem "The Bells" is said to have been written when he heard the bells of the present Fordham chapel. Many of his mystery stories were written on what is now the university's campus. (NC Photo).

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 at question which goes beyond freedom of speech."

RABBI PAUL RICHMAN of Washington, representing the Synagogue Council of America, said that "separation of Church and State has at no time meant that we wish to see our institutions subverted by atheism" and expressed the view that "there is no validity to the demand" by atheists that they receive radio time because such time is furnished to such programs as the Church of the Air, the Catholic Hour and the Message of Israel.

On the other hand, the Rabbi held that those who espouse godless philosophies have a constitutional right to be heard on the air, "particularly where they feel themselves unjustly accused or improperly represented."

Dr. Robert Lowry Calhoun, Congregationalist professor of historical theology at Yale University, told the committee that where atheism had been "systematically attacked" on the air, time should be granted atheists for reply. He also proposed that broadcasters cooperate to provide "well-planned debates on philosophical issues." He included the existence of a Supreme Being among these questions, and said it is a "healthy thing that persons of widely divergent views have a chance to get together."

DR. CALHOUN criticized the FCC opinion in the Scott case as "patently incompetent" on the meaning of atheism, declaring it to be a "tissue of naive, inaccurate, self-contradictory argument." The divinity professor went into a detailed discussion

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on the varieties of atheists, separating those who deny the existence of God but follow the accepted pattern of behavior from those who hold the Marxian dialectic materialism and carry their atheism into practice in political and economic life.

The House committee heard testimony from three atheists, Charles Smith of New York, representing the 400-member American Association for the Advancement of Atheism; Kenneth M. Whitten of Philadelphia, appearing for the 300-member Friendship Liberal League; and William J. McCarthy of Clifton, N. J., a member of the American Progressive Association, which he said has a membership of 3,000. Each contended that it was in the public interest to debate the existence of God on the air waves.

MR. SMITH argued that the "real issue is whether religion should be given a preferred position" in the national life. He said that the United States is not a religious nation, that the U.S. Constitution is a "godless document" and that the American people have actually taken the lead in "giving religion the go-by."

"The world is going atheist and why deny it?" he stated. "Fifty million Americans today live as if there is no God. They would object if you called them atheists but why deny it?"

In answer to a question from Representative Harness on what the organized atheists hope to accomplish in a positive way, Mr. Smith immediately responded that his group was working for the complete separation of church and state, for the abolition of

such "remnants" of another age as the Sunday laws and the provisions for chaplains in Congress.

Mr. Smith said there were some communists among the members of the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism, but that he didn't know if they were card-carrying Party members. He explained somewhat ruefully that "the communists don't like us, they call us 'bourgeois atheists.'"

THE ATHEIST leader said that his organization was "instrumental" in bringing the McCollum case on released-time religious education in the public schools into the Supreme Court.

FCC Commissioner Rosel H. Hyde appeared before the Congressional unit to defend the Scott decision. He said that he could not understand the complaints against the ruling, and declared that the FCC never intended to give atheists the opportunity to answer every program. But he reaffirmed the 1946 expression of the FCC that atheism could be legitimate subject matter for the radio.

The Scott decision held, he explained, "that preservation of freedom of speech in the public domain of the radio precluded a license from absolutely barring subjects of discussion over the radio, including atheism, on the ground that any presentation, whatever its nature, would be contrary to the public interest."

While he described in detail what he indicated was the friendliness of the FCC toward church-supported stations and religious broadcasts, Commissioner Hyde stated that "it would be manifestly dangerous and inconsistent with our traditions of separation of church and state and the free exercise of religion to give religious organizations a preferred status on the radio."

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