Globe at His Fingertips

Vatican City — (RNS) — St. Ignatius seems to balance on his fingertips the global dome atop St. Peter's Basilica. The unusual view was taken by a camera with telephoto lens. The saint's statute is one of many on top of Bernini's Colonnade in Vatican City.

Mid-East Crisis UN Debate Topic

United Nations, N.Y.—(RNS) The Middle East crisis, studied by the Security Council, is attended by much confusion, continued recriminations, and urgent calls for action now lest emotions boil over and a new, and perhaps more involved, Arab-Israeli conflict is ignited.

While the Arabs and Israel have not appreciably inched away from their respective and diametrically opposed positions on how to arrive at peace, the international community is showing new vigor in attempts to persuade both sides to accept a compromise as the only peaceful way out of the explosive dilemma.

There is appreciable degree of interest evinced by the big powers to prevent the conflict from growing worse. It is also generally recognized that inaction in the present circumstances represents deterioration of whatever chances for agreement might exist at present.

The 15-man Security Council has before it two draft resolutions, both dealing principally with the mechanism of peacemaking rather than specific terms of feasible solutions.

The United States draft is based on President Johnson's June five-point Middle East policy, still in effect — 1. the recognized right of national life; 2. justice for the Palestine refugees; 3. maritime passage for all; 4. limits on the wasteful and destructive arms race; and 5. political independence and territorial integrity for all.

This draft is totally rejected by the Arabs and the Communist countries, with the exception of Romania, the only East European nation still maintaining diplomatic relations with Israel.

Israel finds these points acceptable but regrets the lack of emphasis in the American draft on the need for direct talks between Israel and the Arabs.

India, Mali and Nigeria co-sponsored the other draft. It is generally described as pro-Arab, although the authors deny it. Israel calls some of its provisions "irrational." Egypt brushed it aside without comment. The Soviet Union said it could support it "in the spirit of compromise, if the Arabs accept it."

Neither draft calls for enforcement measures against Israel which the Council could invoke, if all principal powers agreed — and that is unlikely. The Arabs still insist on measures which would have the U.N. force Israel out of Arab territories by force if necessary.

The fundamentals have not appreciably changed despite weeks of strenuous, quiet diplomacy here and in various world capitals The Arabs still insist that discussion of any issue could come only "after" withdrawal of Israeli troops from conquered territory, while Israel warns it will remain entrenched in the Arab lands until the Arabs are ready to talk guaranteed and equitable peace.

Thus, the Security Council, recognizing these vital facts, is now attempting to affect the crisis from the point of mediating possibilities rather than issues like boundaries, maritime rights or long-range refugee solutions.

But even here the controversy runs deep.

Israel conceives of the role of the proposed special U.N. envoy for the area as one providing "useful contacts" between the two parties. The Arabs, which are in no mood for face-to-face talks, would like to see the envoy do the "mediating" for them.

Under these conditions, the Security Council, despite occasional political invective, is trying to eliminate the climate of compulsion and to create an atmosphere conducive to conciliation.

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'Cussin' Parrot Roasted By Catholic Paper

Georgetown, Guyana — (NC) This country's post office department has come in for some strong "cussin' out" by the Georgetown Catholic diocese's weekly newspaper for its report-decision to put a portrait of Guyana's salty "Millie" on this year's Christmas stamp.

Millie is the notorious swearing macaw that displayed astonishing talent for cursing bilingually at Canada's Expo 67.

The Catholic Standard here editorially roasted the post office department for its choice of subject for the Christmas stamp, declaring that featuring Millie in its Yuletide philately is blasphemous in a country which, the paper said, is religious if not entirely Christian. It said Christmas has great significance in Guyana for Christians, non-Christians and even atheists.

The paper declared that Millie has nothing to do with Christmas and to commemorate the season with Millie as the center of attraction is "the ultimate blasphemy."

"We are, of course, aware of how commercilized Christmas has tended to become," the Standard editorial continued, "and have therefore welcomed those efforts made in recent years to put Christ back into Christmas."

This, the paper added, is another example, "though the most glaring, of the persistent neglect by the postal authorities of the feelings and convenience of the public."

Three Dead, Nun Wounded In Congo Civil Rebellion

Brussels, Belgium — (NC) — A Belgian nun told of her escape from death at the hands of Congolese soldiers in the Congo's Katanga province on her arrival here.

Sister Josefa Jonkheere of the Sisters Hospitallers-Augustinesses of Lierre, Belgium, told how she had been wounded by soldiers of the Congolese national army, who had killed three other Europeans.

Speaking to newsmen at the airport here, the 52-year-old Sister Josefa, who had been head infirmarian of the hospital of Kasaji, said: "On Nov. 1, everything was calm. Then the Congolese soldiers arrived. They entered the hospital, insulted and beat us, treated us like mercenaries.

"I was with three other white people . . . They took the hospital's truck, then made us go out. They told us to run along the highway, then they fired. I fell, a bullet in the knee. The three others were dead."

Sister Josefa added that the other white people of the region had been gathered together and protected by the mercenaries.

The mercenaries to whom she referred are those under the command of Belgian Col. Jean Schramme. They have been in rebellion against the regime of Congolese President Joseph Mobutu since last July. After holding out in Bukavu, in Katanga province, for three months, they escaped last week to the neighboring republic of Rwanda.

"The role of the mercenaries," Sister Josefa said, "is a disgrace. It's their fault if the blacks think that all whites are mercenaries."

The nun then said: "I lived 15 years in Africa. But now that's finished. I shall never return there."

Bucharest Church Re-Opens Its Doors

Bonn, Germany — (NC) — The Italian national Catholic church in Bucharest, Rumania, used for secular purposes since World War II, has been re-opened for religious use and reconsecrated.

The re-opening was made possible by a consular treaty negotiated by Foreign Ministers Amintore Fanfani of Italy and Corneliu Manescu of Rumania.

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