

# With Arabs Today, Russia is In, U.S. is Out

By MSGR. JOHN G. NOLAN (NC News Service)

(The author of the following article is president of the Pontifical Mission for Palestine and executive head of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association. He is in Bethlehem en route to southern India.)

**Bethlehem** — Christmas pilgrims to the Middle East have seen signs this year of two kinds of war.

There's the first — smudged basilla of the Nativity, here's a bombed-out house; there a battle-scarred orphanage; everywhere an uneasy military occupation something like the days of that first Roman census.

These are the signs of the visible war, the one between the Arabs and the Israelis.

But the pilgrims on their way here also saw signs of less visible, more ominous war.

They saw Soviet sailors and "military advisors" in the streets of Cairo.

They heard Damascus Radio rally volunteers for an openly

communist-trained, Viet-Cong style guerrilla force poised against Israel.

They saw Arab newspapers, once independent, now bitterly anti-American.

In Lebanon, the Soviet ambassador presents another Moscow bell to another Orthodox church.

What's new in the Middle East this Christmas is a new war for the Arab mind — and the West is losing.

The Near East is now the only place in the world where the Soviet Union is openly engaged in cold war, the one that was supposed to have thawed when the superpowers discovered a common threat in China.

Ten Soviet long-range bombers landed in Egypt a few weeks ago in the first foreign deployment of Russian forces since the Hungarian uprising in 1956. Egyptians cheered their arrival.

The United States Sixth Fleet is today unwelcome in every Arab port, but Soviet ships of war, fulfilling a Russian dream dating back to Peter the Great,

now sweep the Mediterranean as far west as Oran, flanking NATO Europe.

Soviet scholars, traditionally anti-religious, are now engaged in a sweetly ironic dialogue with Islam.

All of this was unthinkable before June 5.

Before June, Arabs resisted Soviet-style revolution as inimical to their profound religious instincts, whether Moslem or Christian.

In June, America's stand changed all that. Until then sophisticated Arabs could dismiss much of American fumbling in the Middle East to ineptitude, anti-Semitic guilt, and preoccupation with Vietnam.

But after the June war broke out, Arabs also believed that:

The plea of President Lyndon B. Johnson for the territorial integrity of Middle East nations seemed to apply only to Israel and its annexations;

The United States ambassador was the most effective defender of Israel in the United Nations debate;

The United States seemed to abandon its former support for the internationalization of Jerusalem and abstained from the 99-to-0 vote against Israeli annexation of the Holy City;

American aid and arms were rushed to reinforce Israel — which lost practically nothing — while new hordes of Arab refugees were forced into beggary.

What has happened to the Middle East since last Christmas — the polarization of the Arab-Israeli belligerents around the superpowers — I attribute not so much to American simplicity as to Russian cunning.

Indeed, Lt. Gen. Sir John B. Glubb, whose Arab Legion in Jordan was the only Arab force to withhold ground from the Israelis in the first Arab-Israeli war, offers military testimony that the Soviets actually triggered the June war, to induce an Arab defeat and a consequent dependence on Soviet penetration into the Mediterranean.

It was the Soviet ambassador to Egypt who telephoned President Gamal Abdel Nasser of a purported Israeli threat against Syria. As the world now knows, Nasser responded by moving into Sinai in force.

Up until June, world opinion could dismiss as propaganda allegations by either Arabs or Israelis that either superpower was quarterbacking their enemies.

It is now too evidently true: The Holy Land is now a potential flash-point in a new confrontation of the nuclear powers.

America's refusal to understand the Arab world has also weakened its force for good in still another Mid East war — the daily struggle for survival by innocent victims of the shooting wars.

When I was in Jerusalem in June, I saw gifts of food refused by the desperate poor because they were marked with American and British slogans.

We were able to distribute food, medicine, blankets, tents where they were needed most — marked by the flag of the Holy See.

In a Christmas appeal for Holy Land refugees, Pope Paul VI praised Caritas International, the Pontifical Mission for Palestine and U.S. Catholic Relief Services for helping to ease the plight of the indigent poor at this newest flash-point.

I am proud to say that most of this help continues to come from individual American Catholics, and I tell this to Arabs every chance I get.

It confirms my belief that Americans are still capable of winning hearts and minds though losing ground, that the Mid East crisis yet ahead of us may be the opportunity we have needed to see ourselves precisely as the have-not world sees us.

Here is what I am compelled to report from Bethlehem this Christmas:

War in the Middle East is no longer a local matter, remote from the safety of Americans, or something to be cheered by Saturday afternoon partisans in the bleachers.

As historian Arnold Toynbee has lately said: "It may at any moment produce a clash between the United States and the Soviet Union, and this might lead to an atomic third world war. In working or reconciliation, our primary concern should be with the welfare of individual human beings, Arabs and Israelis alike, not with the power or prestige of states, small or great."

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**Around The**

**Archbishop Sees End of**

Cologne, Germany — (NC) — Archbishop O.M.I., of Durban, South Africa, published in Marianhall magazine his racial policies are doomed to failure economic development.

Commenting that he had been w mates of when apartheid, or racial seg the archbishop said he had overestima and underestimated the strength of

However, he emphasized, South tween increased economic developme separation. Because the country now growth or fall as an independent na pointed out, apartheid will have to be ly abandoned.

**Spanish Author Ac**

Madrid — (NC) — An author indicted ing the Catholic Church has been ac court here.

Vincente Sillio Belena was indicted study, "A Man Faces History," was ciones, a rightist daily of Madrid, and

Insulting the Catholic Church is rent civil code of Spain.

The book had the approval of t before it was published five months praised its thoroughness and what presentation of the life of Christ an

Several theologians testified on S The prosecution asked for a three-m disbarment of the author for 11 year

**Priest Sentenced i**

Madrid — (NC) — Father Domingo Bilbao was sentenced to three months give prior notice of his book "Is God try of information.

His book on the celibacy of prie Bilbao bookstores a day before cop government agency. Prior notice is a ish law on press and publishing.

The Court of Public Order for state security branded the book "c down the sentence. Prior consent fo by the Basque priest's ecclesiastical with the regulations of the concordat Holy See.

**Bishop Blames Dismissal**

Buenos Aires — (NC) — Bishop Je laneda, whose forced resignation cre here, has blamed his dismissal on "f high Church officials."

Speaking at a press conference his last words on the subject, the b tried to live his life in accord with t Vatican Council.

"Neither honor nor glory has Podesta emphasized, "I have soug with the people, confided to my care, reign of the Lord; not in an abstra the world in which they live."

Bishop Podesta, known as the "b been an advocate of labor organizat Argentina. He had been bishop of A



## Pope, President Confer on Peace

VATICAN CITY—(RNS)—Pope Paul VI and President Johnson met privately at the Vatican for 75 minutes to discuss prospects for world peace, particularly in Vietnam. The U.S. Chief Executive told Pope Paul that America was ready to stop bombing North Vietnam whenever the enemy showed "some guarantee" of its readiness to take part in peace talks.

## Pope Praises German Aid

Munich — (RNS)—A special message sent by Pope Paul VI to Roman Catholics of Germany praised their special programs of assistance to Latin America which have been conducted for seven years.

He urged generous contributions to the annual "Advent" campaign for aid to Latin America and said German Catholics have "rendered generous and valuable service which is appreciated by the whole world."

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