

THE MIDEAST...

an eyewitness report

By A. E. P. WALL

Editor, Baltimore
Catholic Review

Jerusalem — (NC) —
Soviet fliers are minutes
away.

I visited Tiberius on the
shore of the Sea of Galilee
not long after 10 shells fired
from guns east of the Jordan
fell into a heavily populated
district, killing two persons
and wounding four others.

On the beaches of the
Mediterranean, I heard Israeli
jets screaming toward
Suez to unload their deadly
cargo on Egyptian positions.

After two weeks in Israel
with a group of U.S. editors
on a trip paid for by the Israeli
government, my reactions
are mixed. Besides
talking with Israeli officials,
I had the opportunity to talk
with Arab leaders and officials
of the United Nations
Relief and Work Agency
(UNRWA) and to visit an
Arab refugee camp.

Certain things stand out:

Israel is an action nation.
With fewer than 3 million
inhabitants, it swings hammers,
pours concrete, assembles
vehicles, loads and unloads
cargo, spreads asphalt,
feeds tourists and educates
its young with a sustained
energy that almost overwhelms
the visitor.

Israel is a socialist state,
but Moscow has become its
principal enemy.

Israel is a nation of enormous
personal industry and talent,
but its foreign trade deficit
may amount to \$750 million
this year. Economic growth
is spectacular. But too much
of Israel's cash and credit
are being expended along
the Suez, are being absorbed
by jet planes and fuel and
bullets.

Israel buys its arms —
when it can find anybody to
sell them. But the Allied
Arab Republic is armed by
Russia, and at least 10,000
Soviet troops are now believed
to be on active duty in
Egypt. Israel faces a hostile
Arab world of 115 million
persons in 25 nations. The
immediate enemies are
Egypt, Syria, Iraq and
Jordan. With Soviet help,
those four Arab nations now
have 1,230 fighter-bombers
and bombers compared to only
330 in Israel. On top of that,
Moscow provides tanks,
artillery, missiles, advisers
and pilots to its Arab clients.

An official of the UNRWA
who appeared unbiased was
C. P. Cassels, the agency's
director for the West Bank
area. Speaking of the Arab
refugee camps, he said:

"There are a number of
misconceptions about
UNRWA. The first is that all
refugees live in camps,
where they have been rotting
in idleness for the last
20 years. They don't live in
camps. Only about one third
do. Others live in villages
and towns.

"Refugees in or out of
camps have the same opportunities.
They don't have to live
in camps to be eligible for
UNRWA services. Eligibility
is a question of income,
or need.

"People think of refugee
camps in terms of ghettos.
This is not at all correct.
The camps are just like ordinary
villages, except that houses
are built in rows. Basically
the camps are villages. You'll
see schools, a clinic, market,
trees, gardens, a mosque.

"Those who live in the
camps have the same opportunity
to work outside as anybody
else. There is no barbed wire
to keep people inside. Many
do work."

Another UNRWA official,
A. Bakerjian of the Jerusalem
area, however, expressed
bitterness toward the creation
of a Jewish nation that I heard
from other Arabs who live in
Israeli territory.

"We are Palestine Arabs,"
he said. "We have been living
here for centuries. We accepted
Christianity."

"I was born in 1922. When
I opened my eyes Palestine
was in strife. The only time
we felt a bit of peace was
between 1940 and 1942,
when the war brought a common
effort against a common enemy."

He said Arab Moslems and



Young Guerillas

Young El Fatah guerillas stand at attention during recent graduation ceremony at camp in Jordan. (RNS)

Christians dislike the Soviet
Union because of the atheistic
foundations of Marxism.

"But despite many years
of trying to remain in the
Western orbit, we found the
only government that will
come to our aid in time of
difficulty is that of Russia.
You have failed as Americans
to do what you should have
done to help your friends."

Here in Jerusalem our
group heard an address by
Dr. Yona Malachy of the
Ministry of Religious Affairs.

"Relations between Cath-

olics and Jews have improved
since the Six-Day War,
but relations between Protestants
and Jews have not improved.

"Catholicism is theologically
closer to Judaism than
Protestantism is. The non-acceptance
of Judaism is deeper in
Protestant theology than in
Catholic theology.

"The Catholic Church in a
political sense is more ready
to accept reality than the
Protestants are. Since the
Six-Day War there has not
been one anti-Jewish declaration
by the Catholic Church."

The Issue: Israel's Right to Live in Peace

By FR. EDWARD FLANNERY
(NC News Service)

The root-issue in the Arab-
Israeli conflict is Israel's right
to exist in peace and security.

It is the denial of this right
by Israel's enemies that has,
for the greatest part, produced
three wars during the last 23
years, the Arab refugee problem,
and the present explosive
situation in the Middle East.
The effective resolution of this
issue could all but solve other
issues and problems involved
in the situation; failure to resolve
it renders their solution
all but impossible.

In 1949, Israel was accepted
as a member of the United
Nations. The problems that
followed that date have no
decisive bearing on the question
of Israel's basic right to exist.
It is significant that most
arguments against this right are
frequently drawn from happenings

after 1949 — proof again of the
confusion on the issue.

While my intent is to affirm
Israel's claim to a secure
existence, I am not insensitive
to the rights and aspirations
of the Palestinian Arabs. They
too have a right to a state of
their own. This latter right,
however, cannot infringe on
what comprises the Israeli state
within secure and negotiated
boundaries. Arab rights and
grievances require a separate
treatment.

Some say that Israel must be
accepted as a brute-fact, that
the history of the last 23 years
simply cannot be undone. This,
to my mind, is not adequate
justification for the state of
Israel.

Many Christians, sometimes
encouraged by Jewish spokesmen,
believe that Israel's claim
to the land is based on an original
possession of it in biblical
times. It is a false basis. This

biblical possession can, of
course, provide Israel with
theological significance but can
provide no legitimate foundation
today. Today a political
conclusion cannot be drawn
from theological or scriptural
premises.

To concede Israel a valid
foundation, juridical and moral
norms binding in the present
are necessary. Only on such a
basis can the common lie that
the Jews stole the land from its
rightful owners, the Arabs, be
put to rest.

Did they steal it? They did
not, as anyone familiar with
the history of the Zionist movement
knows. The coming of
Jews to Palestine and the
acquisition of a juridical basis for
a Jewish state comprise a record
of open settlement by peaceful
purchase and by political
strategy going back at least
to the last quarter of the
19th century. The crescendo of
violence that marked the lat-

ter part of that period came
from Arab opposition to these
business-like and legal efforts
and in no sense the result of
Jewish appropriation or aggression.

Much playing with figures
and statistics by Israel's
opponents goes on. By a
selectivity of both figures and
dates, it is made to appear
that Jews formed a minuscule
part of the population of
Palestine at any selected time.
The essential fact is that in
that part of Palestine assigned
to Israel in 1948 by the United
Nations Jews made up a
majority. This majority had
come into being under Turkish
and British rule, so it could
not have been the result of
conquest or aggression.

The immigration of Jews to
Palestine occurred under
international encouragement
from 1917 on, with the issuance
of the Balfour Declaration,
the British statement of support

for a Jewish homeland in
Palestine which was supported
by the main Allied powers,
including the United States.

Despite growing Arab
opposition to the Balfour
principle and the prospect of
a Jewish state, these survived
and finally culminated in 1947
in a vote of the General
Assembly of the United Nations
(33 to 13 with 10 abstentions)
to partition Palestine (excluding
Transjordan) between the
Jewish and Arab populations.

In a rare agreement, the
United States and the Soviet
Union voted together for the
partition. As the Jewish state
was set up, five Arab armies
marched against it. This first
of the Arab-Israeli wars altered
the partition boundaries and
originated the refugee problem.
What was to have been the
Palestinian Arab state was
annexed by Jordan in 1950.

In 1949 Israel was accepted
as a member of the United
Nations.

What Is An Arab?

By PATRICK RILEY
NC News Service

While the question of what
is a Jew has been debated
extensively in Israel's courts
and legislature, and thus in
the newspapers of the world,
the politically complementary
question of what is an Arab
has hardly been raised.

It may lack the mystical and
eschatological dimensions of
the question, "What is a Jew?"
yet to the violence-ridden and
explosive Middle East — and
thus to the world — it is fully
as basic and vital. For the
Middle East finds itself torn
into two camps, Jews and
Arabs, each heavily armed
and deeply hostile.

Like the question, "What
is a Jew?" the question "What
is an Arab?" stubbornly resists

yielding a wholly satisfactory
answer.

Webster's Third New
International Dictionary says an
Arab is:

"A member of the Semitic
people of the Arabian peninsula,
orig. of the Bedouin tribes
in the north of the peninsula
and east of Palestine: Arabian.
A member of any Arabic-speaking
people."

Those Arabs whose fate has
the Middle East in turmoil are
the uprooted Palestinian Arabs,
refugees who are demanding
restoration of their homes,
lands and livelihoods within
the present borders of Israel.

Very few Bedouins, proportionately,
are among them. The
Palestinian Arabs are not
desert dwellers (which, etymologically,
as well as in fact, is what
Bedouin means, and is one of the

origins ascribed to the word
Arabic), but farmers, merchants,
laborers, mechanics, clerical
workers and professionals.
They are not nomads.

That is one reason why it is
inexact to call an Arab a Jew
on a camel, as did the British
statesman Benjamin Disraeli.

Yet Disraeli, himself a Jew,
was making at least one
important point. The Arabic-speaking
people of Palestine are
Semitic, and almost certainly
have a stronger dose of Semitic
blood in their veins than the
modern Jews who have
immigrated to Israel from Europe.

Some of them are descendants
of the Hebrews themselves,
and if blood alone were to
make a Jew, would have a
stronger mystical claim on the
promised land than Western
Jews.

Even if the word Arab were

taken to mean an inhabitant
of Arabia, and not just an
Arabic-speaking person, the
definition would still be hard
to pin down.

In ancient times Arabia
extended beyond the Arabian
peninsula itself into what
now is called Jordan and to
the borders of what was
called Philistine Syria, or
Palestine.

It had a substantial Christian
population, and boasted
perhaps the unlikelyst
missioner of all time, St.
Simeon Stylites, himself
probably an Arab, who
converted whole tribes from
his fixed abode atop a pillar.

The exact lineage of the
Palestinian Arabs cannot
conceivably be traced
without the help of a
third-generation computer.
Palestine was a crossroads
of trade and invasion
from the dawn of recorded
history.

The realm of known fact is
rich enough. The blood of
invaders and subduers such
as the Hebrews and the
Romans and the Franks
and the Turks, mingled
with the blood of the
original peoples, whoever
they were.

From the speculative point
of view it is even possible
that a Celtic strain found
its way into the early
peoples of Palestine,
and thus into the
Palestinian Arabs. There
was a brisk trade in tin
between Cornwall and
the maritime cities of
the Levant. Joseph of
Aramitheia, who gave his
tomb for the body of
Christ, is held by tradition
to have gotten his wealth
from tin.

The question, "What is
an Arab?" receives no
clear answer from history,
whether secular or sacred.