



PALESTINE REFUGEES TODAY

An **UNRWA** Newsletter

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THE ROAD TO BETHLEHEM

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THE ROAD TO BETHLEHEM

Almost 2,000 years ago a carpenter and his wife set out from their little village on a never-to-be-forgotten journey.

The story of that journey has passed down through the centuries in the words of a physician named Luke, who told it in these words:

"And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the City of David, which is called Bethlehem . . . to be taxed with Mary, his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn."

Luke 2: 4-7

Retracing their steps today, one can get a good idea of what they saw as they wended their way through the rolling, rocky countryside from Nazareth to Bethlehem, 100 miles to the south. The flinty fields and the terraced olive groves are much the same today as they were 2,000 years ago. There is much that has not changed since that first Christmas.

But there is much that has changed. The land where "peace on earth" was first proclaimed is now a land divided by conflict.

If Joseph and Mary set out on their journey today, they would find their road barred by barbed wire and armed guards a little way south of Nazareth. For Nazareth is in Israel, and Bethlehem in Jordan.

If they were able to continue into Jordan and on to Bethlehem, they would see along the way evidence of the tragedy which resulted from the Arab-Israeli conflict that divided the Holy Land in 1948. In the refugee camps and in the towns and villages along their way, they would see the hardship and the poverty that have characterized the lives of most of the Palestine refugees for the past fifteen years. The road to Bethlehem is littered with harsh reminders of a people uprooted from their homes.



The road to Bethlehem passes near UNRWA's Nablus Camp No. 1. The picturesque setting belies the hardship suffered by most of the refugees, for though there is some fertile land in the valleys, the hills are barren, and there is little work to be found.

Near the town of Jenin, just south of the border which seals the Nazareth-Bethlehem road, is the first evidence of refugee life in UNRWA's Jenin camp, where some 7,500 refugees live in their tiny mud-brick huts.

One day's journey from Jenin, at the pace of 2,000 years ago, brought Mary and Joseph to the biblical Shechem, now called Nablus. Not far away is the place where Christ many years later asked a Samaritan woman for a drink as she drew water from a well, and in return he offered her the water "of everlasting life." The few remaining descendants of those Samaritans still practice their ancient religion on the heights above Nablus.

Today Nablus is a bustling town, swollen as are so many towns and cities in Jordan by the influx of thousands of refugees. The four surrounding camps give shelter to more than 22,000 refugees. Like most of the Palestine refugees, the majority of them are dependent on UNRWA for even the basic necessities of life: food, health care, shelter and education. The relief services are meager indeed. But to those who have

nothing, even a little is a blessing.

The road to Bethlehem winds on through the heartland of the Bible into Judea, skirting Mount Gerizim, where the Samaritans believe Abraham went to sacrifice Isaac, and past Bethel, where Jacob laid his head on a stone and dreamed he saw a ladder reaching from earth to heaven.

The town of Ramallah is built not far from the traditional site of Bethel. When the Holy Family passed, they may have seen a Roman camp or lookout post at the summit of one of the highest hills. That same hillside is now occupied by UNRWA's training center for girls, which was opened in 1962. The Roman cisterns found at the site, indicating the presence of some Roman establishment many centuries ago, have been cleaned out and may be put to some use by the center. The girls' center and the nearby Ramallah Men's Teacher Training Center are two of the ten UNRWA training centers which have a total capacity for some 4,000 young refugees, teaching them skills that will enable them to lead productive and satisfying lives wherever they may live.

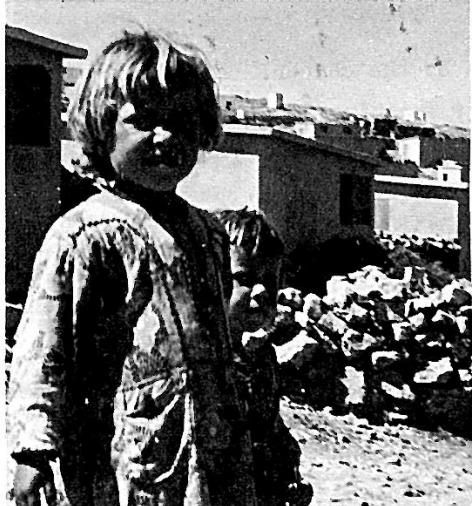
A few miles south of Ramallah is another UNRWA training center, the Kalandia Vocational Training Center, situated near the site of the ancient village of Bire. It was probably here that twelve years after that first Christmas Mary and Joseph stopped after one day's journey on their way back from Jerusalem and found the boy Jesus missing. For Bire is thought to have been the first caravan stop on the road to Galilee. After searching for three days, they found him in the temple discussing with the elders.

Along this highway of history which runs so close to a dozen refugee camps, these three training centers bring opportunity to hundreds of young refugees and hope to thousands.

On their way to Bethlehem Mary and Joseph passed through the Holy City of Jerusalem, little knowing that thirty-two years later their son would die there on the cross. The old walled city of Jerusalem, a fascinating maze of narrow alleys and markets to the visitor, is also home to thousands of refugees. They live in tiny rooms or cellars, many of which are no more than dark, dank holes in the wall with few

furnishings or conveniences. To these people, many of whom are Christians, Christmas will be far from the joyous feast that many of us know. Their Christmas feast will be made possible, as often as not, by saving a little from the previous months' food rations from UNRWA. To many of them Christmas Day is just another day in the hard struggle for survival.

Thousands of pilgrims and tourists will flock along the road from Jerusalem to Bethlehem this Christmas. On Christmas Eve they will assemble in the Shepherds' Field and in Manger Square outside the Church of the Nativity to sing the familiar music of Christmas. Many will descend into the grotto beneath the church to see the place where, it is said, Jesus was born. The place of the Nativity is a natural cave beneath the church. In the days of Mary and Joseph, it was common practice to build a house or an inn over a cavern which could serve as a stable. Such was the inn where there was no room; such was the stable where Jesus was born.



From their hut in UNRWA's Dehesheh camp, these young refugees can see the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. More than 7,000 refugees live in the camp.

The cave which served as a stable so many years ago is like many of the hundreds of caves in the rocky hills around Bethlehem. In their flight fifteen years ago, many refugees found their first refuge in these caves. Most have since moved to camps established by UNRWA, where they live in conditions which, though a great improvement on those of fifteen years ago, would shock many of the Christmas visitors to the City of David.

Few of the visitors will be aware of the frustration and poverty

of the refugees in those camps and in other camps and town throughout the area. But frustration and poverty have been the lot of most of the refugees for the past fifteen years.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the heart of the Holy Land along the road to Bethlehem.

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A CHRISTMAS REMINDER

The Palestine Arab refugees have many needs which cannot be filled with UNRWA's limited funds. Your Christmas gift could help to brighten the lives of young people who all too often live on the margins of destitution, facing a harsh present and an uncertain future. A vocational scholarship (\$500) provides a year's training for a refugee boy or girl. Smaller gifts can be put towards a scholarship or used to help provide training for handicapped children (see page 7), to run play centers for young children or to provide such things as sports equipment for youth activity centers or uniforms for boy scout and girl guide troops.

Donations may be sent to the UNRWA Liaison Office, United Nations, New York 17, New York, or to the United States Committee for Refugees, 20 West Fortieth Street, New York, New York, earmarked for Palestine refugees. In Canada contributions may be sent to the United Nations Association in Canada, 329 Bloor Street West, Toronto 5, Canada, earmarked for UNRWA. Contributions may also be made through UNESCO gift coupons.

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On 4 November 1963 the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, Dr. John H. Davis, addressed the Special Political Committee of the United Nations, and on 9 December 1963 he spoke to the Ad Hoc Committee of the General Assembly for the announcement of voluntary contributions to UNRWA. Copies of Dr. Davis' statements are available from the UNRWA Liaison Office, United Nations, New York 17, New York.

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NEW COMMISSIONER-GENERAL APPOINTED

Laurence Michelmore to Head UNRWA

Secretary-General U Thant has announced the appointment of Mr. Laurence Michelmore as Commissioner-General of UNRWA.

Mr. Michelmore, an American, will assume his new duties in January, succeeding Dr. John H. Davis, whose resignation is effective 31 December 1963. The new Commissioner-General is expected to arrive at UNRWA headquarters in Beirut, Lebanon, around the middle of January.

Announcing the appointment, the Secretary-General stated: "I have selected Mr. Michelmore for the difficult and challenging task of Commissioner-General of UNRWA, confident that his wide experience during seventeen years as a senior United Nations staff member and his deep feeling for the welfare of the people make him eminently suited for the position. Under his leadership I know that UNRWA will continue to assist the Palestine refugees in the effective and efficient manner that has characterized the Agency's work to date."

Mr. Michelmore, who is 54 years old, was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He holds an A.B. degree in political science from the University of California and M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in government from Harvard University. Mr. Michelmore has had a distinguished career in public service. From 1936 to 1942 he served on the research staff of the Detroit Bureau of Government Research and as an assistant professor at Wayne State University, Michigan, and from 1942 to 1946 he was Assistant Chief of the International Branch of the United States Bureau of the Budget.

Mr. Michelmore has been in United Nations service since 1946 and is presently Deputy Director of Personnel. During his UN career Mr. Michelmore has served as Deputy Controller of the UN, Senior Director of the Technical Assistance Board and consultant on administrative and budgetary matters to the Executive Director of UNICEF and to the Managing Director of the Special Fund. In 1963 he was the Secretary-General's representative on Malaysia.

Mr. Michelmore is married and has two daughters.

DR. DAVIS APPOINTED TO UNIVERSITY POST

The American University of Beirut has announced that Dr. John H. Davis, who will retire as Commissioner-General of UNRWA on 31 December, will join the University as director of its New York office. Dr. Davis will be appointed vice-chairman of the Board of the University and will be primarily concerned with the University's interests in Beirut and in the Middle East, as well as in the United States, said the announcement. Dr. Davis' resignation from UNRWA, for personal reasons, was announced last August. He will have served as Commissioner-General for almost five years.

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ALLIA LEARNS TO HEAR WITH HER EYES

It was a fine summer day, and little Allia Khalil was glad to be out of school.

She was running, dancing and skipping home with her friends when her foot slipped. She fell on her back, hitting her head on the ground. She was carried unconscious to the little, two-room hut in UNRWA's Naher el-Bared camp in Lebanon where her family lived. She developed a high fever. Five days later she became deaf.

The accident happened in June 1962 when Allia was ten years old. She recovered from her fever but has not recovered her hearing. She will be deaf for the rest of her life.

Allia's accident was a tragic turning point in her life. A happier turning point came last October when she began hearing again--with her eyes.

Allia Khalil is one of the 149 handicapped refugee children who are receiving special treatment and training with aid from UNRWA. In addition, 109 handicapped refugees, mostly young people, have been placed in institutions by UNRWA free of charge, including 48 youngsters at the Pontifical Mission Center for the Blind in the Gaza Strip, which is financed by the Pontifical Mission and run by UNRWA in co-operation with the Gaza authorities.



UNRWA's program for handicapped refugees began in 1957-58. Since then, some 450 refugees have been helped by the Agency, some of them with spectacular success. Khader Qubtan, although blind, completed his law training at Damascus University and is now in a law office in Amman, Jordan; Yusra Natour, a blind girl, is now working at the Home for Blind Girls in Bethlehem, after completing her secondary education with help from UNRWA; others are working as teachers, or employed in manual work such as cane-weaving or broom-making.

UNRWA's program for handicapped children is limited to those who are blind, deaf and dumb or crippled. Of the 149 currently receiving help from the Agency, 77 are deaf and dumb, 60 are blind and 12 are crippled. They have been placed by UNRWA in institutions in the United Arab Republic, Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic

THE PICTURES (top to bottom): 1. Allia continues her elementary education using lip-reading. 2. Tests in the audio clinic showed severe impairment in her hearing, although she can hear highly amplified sounds. 3 and 4. Allia has learned to distinguish the differences in pitch of amplified trombone notes and can point out the correct note on the blackboard or on a model musical scale.

and the Gaza Strip. Most of the youngsters enter the institutions between the ages of six and nine and receive an average of six years of education and training. All receive special training according to their handicap: lip-reading and speaking for the deaf and dumb, most of whom are not able to speak when they enter the institutions simply because they have never heard speech, and braille for the blind. They also receive basic general education and are taught suitable vocational skills so that they may be self-supporting when they leave the institutions.

Allia Khalil was accepted for training because, although she was able to speak when she became deaf, her speech, her vocabulary and her education would have remained at ten-year-old level without special training.

In October 1963 she was placed by UNRWA in the Institute for the Deaf, near Beirut, Lebanon. Thirty of the 70 youngsters at the Institute are refugees placed there by UNRWA. Allia underwent thorough tests, which showed severe impairment of her hearing in both ears. But her eyes light up when she hears and feels the vibrations of the amplified notes of a trombone in the music room. She has already learned to distinguish variations in pitch and can point out the appropriate note on a musical scale on the blackboard. This exercise will help to make her speech more melodious, instead of being monotonous in tone, as is common with deaf people.

Allia was able to lip-read a little before she went to the Institute for the Deaf. Now she is being taught to improve her lip-reading, and she is using it in class, where she is continuing the education that was abruptly interrupted as she was leaving school 18 months ago.

Allia will "graduate" from the Institute with six years of elementary education. She will be trained as a nursemaid for deaf and dumb children and may remain at the Institute after she completes her training helping to care for the younger children.

Allia's training will cost UNRWA about \$2,000. The number of handicapped youngsters who can be helped by the Agency is limited by a shortage of funds. Until this year UNRWA estimates that it has given training to almost all of the handicapped children who have applied and qualified for such training. But the outlook of many parents towards training for their handicapped children is rapidly changing. More parents are coming forward with their blind, deaf-mute or crippled children, instead of keeping them at home. In 1963 about 85 to 90 per cent of the qualified applicants were placed in institutions. In 1964 a greater number are expected to apply. But unless additional funds are available to give them training, some may have to bear their burdens of darkness and silence all their lives.

TENTH UNRWA VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTRE OPENED

The "Apex" to UNRWA's Training Programme

UNRWA's tenth training centre -- and in many respects the most important centre -- was inaugurated at the end of October.

The Siblin Technical and Teacher Training Institute, perched on a hill-side 25 miles south of Beirut, Lebanon, was officially opened when a trilingual plaque was unveiled. The three languages--Swedish, English and Arabic--symbolized the international cooperation which made the Institute possible, for it was established by UNRWA with funds from Sweden and with the cooperation of the Government of Lebanon.

The plaque was unveiled jointly by Mr. Rachid Karame, the Prime Minister of Lebanon, and by Governor Valter Aman, the Chairman of the Board of the Swedish Agency for International Assistance (NIB), which made a technical assistance grant of almost

\$800,000 to UNRWA for the establishment of the new Institute. The plaque paid tribute to the Government and people of Sweden for their generosity and to the Government of Lebanon for its co-operation.

Governor Aman, who flew from Sweden to attend the opening ceremony, together with Ambassador Carl Bergenstrahl of the Swedish Foreign Ministry, told the 500 assembled guests, instructors and trainees that the Swedish Government and NIB were "proud and

Governor Valter Aman (left) and Prime Minister Rachid Karame of Lebanon jointly unveiled the plaque marking the inauguration of the new Institute.



Mr. Reddaway paid tribute to the people and Government of Sweden, who, he said, "have always taken a special, deeply sympathetic interest in the plight of the Palestine refugees."

"It is with humble and sincere gratitude that I take this opportunity, on behalf of the refugee community and of UNRWA, to thank the good and generous people of Sweden for their steadfast, generous support and, particularly, for the munificent grant of funds which has turned the ambitious plans for this Institute into the impressive reality which you see here today," said Mr. Reddaway.

Prime Minister Karame expressed thanks to UNRWA "for the sincere efforts it makes in giving educational and training facilities as well as employment to the Palestinians -- facilities which help them to lead a decent life."

"I also must thank the State of Sweden for this liberal donation which testified to an ideal cooperation and a readiness to share in the responsibility," said Prime Minister Karame.

Present at the inauguration ceremony were representatives of the Lebanese Government, members of the diplomatic corps, including the ambassadors of Sweden, Belgium, Jordan, the United Kingdom, the United States, Switzerland and Canada, and senior officers of the Swedish Battalion of the United Nations Emergency Force from the Gaza Strip.

The new Institute is adjacent to UNRWA's Siblin Vocational Training Centre but is completely self-contained. It has its own dormitory block, 13 classrooms, 3 workshop blocks, a library, kitchen and dining facilities and staff accommodation. It has an enrolment of 157 trainees this year and will reach its capacity enrolment of 264 trainees next year.

The opening of the Siblin Technical and Teacher Training Institute brings to completion UNRWA's three-year programme of expansion of its vocational training facilities. The expansion programme, financed almost entirely with World Refugee Year donations and other special contributions to UNRWA, has raised the number of training centres from two in 1959-60 to ten at present and the total capacity of the Agency's training programme from 600 to 4,000 trainees.

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honoured to have been offered the opportunity to cooperate with UNRWA in realizing this important project."

"The Swedish Government shares the belief of your Agency in the beneficial and cumulative effects of education and vocational and teacher training," he added.

Governor Aman addressed a brief message in Swedish to the group of young refugees who had recently returned from Sweden and who are now enrolled at the new Institute. "They were well liked by everybody and we were very glad to have them with us," added Governor Aman in English. "The second group has also arrived in Sweden and a third one will come next year."

The trainees referred to by Governor Aman were those taking the course for vocational training instructors or industrial foremen -- perhaps the most important feature of the Institute. The course is a form of "post-graduate" training for graduates from UNRWA training centres, most of whom have completed two years of training. Fifty selected young men go to Sweden every fall to spend a year training and working in Swedish industry, then return to the Siblin Institute for another year of training. When they graduate from the new Institute, most of them will have had four years of training and experience.

Mr. John Reddaway, the Acting Commissioner-General of UNRWA, called the new Institute the "apex to our vocational training programme" and said that its "over-all importance . . . derives from its role as a source of trained instructors and exponents of technical and industrial skills." Mr. Reddaway said that after their year in Sweden -- "a priceless opportunity for them to acquire practical experience in a highly industrialised society" -- and after their training at the Siblin Institute, the trainees would be well qualified to make a contribution to the teaching and practice of industrial skills in the Arab world. Mr. Reddaway said he hoped Sweden's example of giving young refugees the opportunity to gain experience abroad would inspire other governments to follow suit.

Reviewing the courses offered at the Institute, Mr. Reddaway said that young refugees would also be trained as teachers, handicraft instructors and telecommunications mechanics.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is a special, temporary, non-political body established by the General Assembly of the United Nations in December 1949. In cooperation with the "host" governments (Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the United Arab Republic) it carries out its two-fold task: immediate: to provide food, health services, education, training and shelter for the refugees; long-term: to assist the refugees to become self-supporting.

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Further information may be obtained from

UNRWA Liaison Office
United Nations
New York

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In the United States the United States Committee for Refugees is an organization co-operating with UNRWA.

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