

PALESTINE REFUGEES TODAY

NEWSLETTER No 77



OUTLOOK ON UNRWA'S FINANCES



Nayfeh Abu Oweimer, a trainee at the Ramallah Women's Training Centre, with her mother. Story on page 16.

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Cover photo : A Palestine refugee mother and her child.



**UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY
FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST**

NEWSLETTER NO. 77
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COMMENTARY



Danish Ambassador Mogens Warberg presents a contribution cheque to UNRWA's Deputy Commissioner-General, William Kontos.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO EDUCATION

During the months of May through November of 1973, a number of governments and voluntary organizations made important contributions to UNRWA. Many of the contributions were earmarked for various aspects of the UNRWA/Unesco education programme, which takes almost half of UNRWA's total annual budget in providing education services for the Palestine refugees.

Elementary education, vocational and teacher training, and the university scholarship programme all benefited from cash donations by the American Near East Refugee Aid Inc. (ANERA), the Iranian Red Lion and Sun Society (a member of the International Red Cross), the Japanese Association for the Commemoration of OSAKA Expo'70, and the Government of the Libyan Arab Republic (one half of their total 1973 contribution of \$600,000 is for education).

Part (\$87,719) of the Swiss Government's contribution to UNRWA for 1973 went

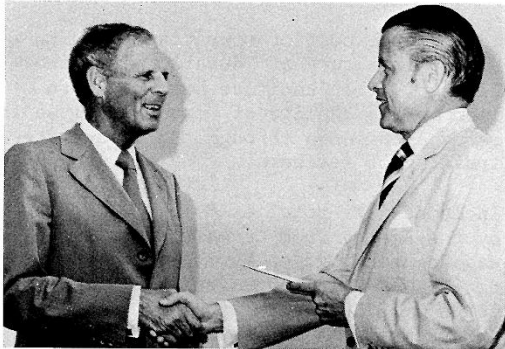
towards the cost of operating the UNRWA/Unesco Institute of Education in Beirut, Lebanon. The Institute has helped to improve the quality of education given to refugee children through the in-service training of teachers.

Included in a total of \$913,000 received by the Agency from Denmark during 1973, was an amount given by the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) for UNRWA's 1973/74 education and training programmes. As in previous years, the funds provided by DANIDA will be mainly used to help support the two UNRWA vocational and teacher training centres for men and women at Ramallah, in the West Bank of Jordan. These centres, along with the six other training centres, now provide places for 1,250 pre-service teacher trainees and 3,008 students in technical and vocational training courses. Since their establishment, they have made a major contribution towards fulfilling the need for skilled workers in the Middle East, in carrying out their task of helping the refugees qualify for employment that will support themselves and their families.



Ambassador Hans Christian Lankes of the Federal Republic of Germany, with UNRWA's Comptroller Lloyd Callow.

Commissioner-General Sir John Rennie receiving a Swedish Government contribution from Ambassador Ake A. Jonsson.



ANSWERING AN APPEAL

In June 1973, the Chairman of the United Nations General Assembly's Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA made an appeal to member governments for "urgent voluntary contributions" to assist the Agency in overcoming budget deficits for 1973 and 1974. (For details of the deficit see page 8.) In response to the financial crisis, on 9 November the Government of Switzerland informed UNRWA of their decision to make an "extraordinary" contribution to the Agency of 200,000 Swiss francs (\$65,574) for 1973, raising their total cash contribution in 1973 to \$431,150. The Swiss Government also pledged 4,000 tons of flour and donated 100 tons of whole milk, valued at \$556,420, for 1973.

On 15 November, His Majesty King Faisal of Saudi Arabia also responded to appeals for additional funds by pledging \$100,000 over Saudi Arabia's regular annual contribution of \$297,000.

OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS

From May through November, donations in cash or in kind were also either pledged to or received by UNRWA from other governments. Austria gave \$35,000, an increase of 15 per cent over 1972. Australia contributed \$240,213. France completed its total contribution for 1972 of almost \$1,262,000. Flour valued at

\$148,333 was received from the Federal Republic of Germany as part of its total 1973 contribution of \$4,720,000. Greece donated \$14,000 in cash, in addition to flour valued at \$170,000, which was received earlier this year. Japan paid the cash element of its \$1,100,000 contribution, an increase of some \$350,000 over last year. The Republic of Korea's \$7,000 donation was received. Pakistan's contribution of \$20,800 was turned over to UNRWA. Sweden made a payment of \$3,718,600, an increase of \$718,600 over 1972. And Thailand announced it would give rice valued at approximately \$10,600.

AN AMBASSADOR'S VISIT

Expressing the Canadian Government's interest in the welfare of the Palestine refugees, on 20 August the Canadian Ambassador to Lebanon, His Excellency Mr. Jacques Gignac, visited Burj el-Barajneh refugee camp on the outskirts of Beirut, Lebanon. Accompanied by Commissioner-General Sir John Rennie and other UNRWA officials, Ambassador Gignac inspected such facilities as the UNRWA health clinic and the supplementary feeding centres.

Later, on 13 November, the Canadian Government, which is one of the largest contributors to UNRWA, informed the Agency that, subject to parliamentary approval, it would make a contribution of Canadian \$450,000 in addition to the Canadian \$1,600,000 it had already pledged for 1973.



Canadian Ambassador Jacques Gignac inspects a supplementary feeding centre.

OUTLOOK ON FINANCES

1973 has been another year of financial crises for the Agency.

At the beginning of the year the situation did not look too bad, with a prospective deficit for 1973 of \$1.4 million, on the basis of estimated expenditure of some \$54.5 million and estimated income of \$53.1 million.

The situation changed dramatically, however, owing to the devaluation of the US dollar. Dollar devaluation, together with the need to increase local staff remuneration in response to sharp increases in the cost of living, meant that at the end of March 1973 the estimated budget deficit had risen to \$4.3 million, on the basis of estimated expenditure of \$61 million and estimated income of only \$56.7 million.

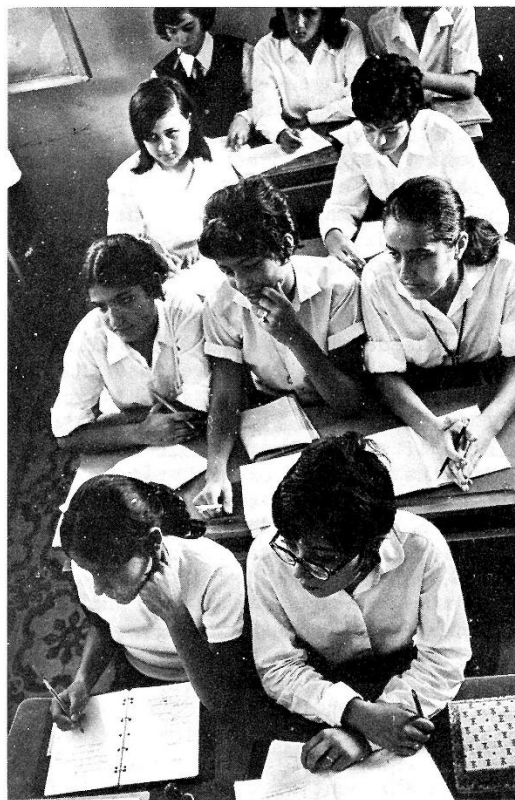
In his "Note for the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA - on UNRWA's financial situation as at 31 March 1973" the Commissioner-General advised the General Assembly's Working Group of the seriousness of UNRWA's financial position. In response to this note, the Group's Chairman addressed an appeal for urgent voluntary contributions to Permanent Representatives of Members of the United Nations, the text of which follows on page 7.

This was the state of the Agency's finances, with the outlook for 1974 even bleaker, when internal strife in Lebanon in May created further problems for UNRWA and the refugees. (See Commissioner-General's Annual Report summary, page 8.) Services were disrupted and the closing by the Syrian Arab Republic of its border with Lebanon resulted in delays in the transport of Agency supplies destined for refugees in Syria and Jordan.

Dollar devaluation and inflation have both played their part in aggravating UNRWA's financial difficulties. Further strains

on UNRWA's budget arise from the growth of the school population, now increasing at the rate of 12,000 pupils annually. Additional classrooms, teaching staff and books are urgently needed at the beginning of each school year.

By June, however, with the 1973 budget deficit estimated at over \$3 million and an estimated budget deficit for 1974 of over \$10 million, the Agency was forced to consider the prospect of drastic reductions in services, which would include



Studying geometry at UNRWA's Haifa school in Beirut: The preparatory cycle is threatened by budget deficits.

the elimination of the whole of the three-year preparatory cycle in the UNRWA/Unesco general education programme.

These were the problems facing the Agency when the Arab-Israeli hostilities broke out again on 6 October.

In his 5 November statement to the General Assembly's Special Political Committee (the full text of which will be reproduced in Newsletter No. 78), the Commissioner-General of UNRWA described as follows the effects of the fighting on the Palestine refugees registered with the Agency and on the Agency's operations:

"So far the Agency has been notified of eight refugees killed and 12 injured among the civilian casualties, all of them in Syria and most of them in Sbeineh camp on the outskirts of Damascus. One refugee camp, Khan Esh Shieh, between Damascus and Quneitra, had to be evacuated by the 7,000 refugees residing in it, but they are now beginning to return. About 700 refugees have been displaced from Sasa village and have taken shelter with relatives and friends, mainly in the camps in the Damascus area. I have no figures for displaced Syrian citizens, who are being cared for by the Syrian authorities as in 1967..."

"As regards damage to Agency installations, both the Central Warehouse and the Vocational Training Centre in the vicinity of Damascus were hit and a provisional estimate of the cost of repair is \$25,000. Despite the outbreak of war, ration distribution was carried out in Syria in October to the extent of about 95% and health services were maintained, but schools were closed..."

"In other fields than Syria, services were maintained throughout the war with the exception of some interruption of education through temporary closure of schools".

"Delay in shipment of supplies for basic rations had already caused problems this year and they were aggravated by the diversion of shipping from Aqaba and Ashdod and the off-loading of flour at



The Vocational Training Centre, Damascus.

other ports. Apart from the delay in delivery, extra transport costs to the Agency of the order of \$100,000 will be incurred. Local borrowing of flour and its replacement in wheat to maintain West Bank ration distribution will add from \$40,000 to \$50,000 to costs and a rise in fuel prices by 40% will increase annual expenditure by about \$100,000. The further delay in shipping caused by the war will prolong the reduced issue of sugar in all fields of operation, and in east Jordan shortage of flour and oil will reduce issues in November and possibly in December".

Towards the end of the year, the financial situation began to show some improvement, when additional contributions reduced the Agency's estimated deficit for 1974 to about \$7 million, although the estimated deficit for 1973 remained at about \$3 million.

Despite this improvement, the situation is still grave. UNRWA spends an average of only 13 cents per refugee per day. To make cuts in any of the Agency's already austere programmes could only spell further suffering and frustration for the one and a half million Palestine refugees registered with the Agency. And this, in turn, would not enhance the prospect of peace in the Middle East.

WORKING GROUP APPEAL

In response to the Commissioner-General's "Note for the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA", which comments "on UNRWA's financial position as at 31 March 1973", the Working Group's Chairman, Ambassador Osman Olcay of Turkey, addressed a letter of appeal for "urgent voluntary contributions" to Permanent Representatives of Members of the United Nations. The body of the Chairman's letter, dated 21 June 1973, is reproduced below.

Once more the services provided to the Palestine refugees by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East on behalf of the United Nations have been put in jeopardy by a new financial crisis resulting primarily from the recent unforeseeable changes in currency exchange rates and the burden of further inflation. Any reduction in these services would both worsen the plight of the refugees and contribute to instability in the area.

You will recall that thanks to the generous response by Governments to appeals for assistance last year, the Agency was able to survive 1972 without reducing the minimal services on which the refugees depend.

Now, however, the Commissioner-General of UNRWA has informed the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA that the Agency faces a deficit which has already reached the order of \$4.2 million. With continuing inflation the prospect for 1974 is even more alarming.

The Commissioner-General has advised the Working Group that if additional income is not forthcoming it will not be possible to maintain the Agency's relief, health and education services to the refugees, especially the education service for a quarter of a million children, which represents almost entirely cash expenditure and accounts for nearly half the budget. To meet a deficit of the magnitude involved would entail, for instance, the elimination of the last three years of the UNRWA/UNESCO nine-year education cycle, with tragic consequences for the future of the Palestine refugee children.

In this regard it is recalled that the General Assembly in its resolution 2964(XXVII) adopted unanimously on 13 December 1972, emphasized "the continuing need for extraordinary efforts in order to maintain, at least at their present level, the activities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East".

Therefore, after consultation with the Secretary-General and the Commissioner-General, I am addressing this appeal to your Government for urgent voluntary contributions to assist in overcoming the deficit for 1973 and the threatened deficit for 1974.

I deeply hope that your Government will give urgent consideration to this important matter and will find it possible to respond generously.

* * *

ANNUAL REPORT PRESS RELEASE

Each year the Commissioner-General of UNRWA reports on the Agency's activities to the General Assembly. Printed below is the press release issued at the time of the publication of the Annual Report for 12 months ending 30 June 1973.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is again desperately short of funds and will have drastically to reduce services to the refugees -- particularly education of children -- in 1974 unless budget deficits are eliminated. A cut-back of services of this nature and on this scale would cause more hardship and "would heighten tension and encourage further violence in the region", according to Sir John Rennie, Commissioner-General of UNRWA, in his annual report issued in October but written before hostilities broke out on 6 October.

The report covers the period 1 July 1972 to 30 June 1973. At the latter date there were 1,541,000 persons registered with the Agency -- an increase of 2.3% in 12 months. Over 1.3 million of these refugees were eligible for UNRWA health and education services and 829,000 were also in receipt of food rations. There were 256,000 children in 546 UNRWA/Unesco schools in the 1972/73 school year.

UNRWA, which began operations in May 1950, provides relief, health and education services for refugees who fled in 1948 from that part of Palestine which became Israel, who are in need and who reside in Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, east Jordan and the Israeli-occupied West Bank of Jordan and the Gaza Strip. UNRWA also provides limited assistance in the case of non-refugees displaced as a result of the June 1967 hostilities.

The Commissioner-General states in his

report that devaluation of the United States dollar and accelerating inflation have resulted in estimated budget deficits of over \$3 million in 1973 and over \$10 million in 1974 and the likely prospect of a more acute cash crisis at the beginning of 1974. Because ration items are donated, because health services are at a bare minimum, and because education absorbs 47.3% of the Agency's budget and is almost entirely cash expenditure, any substantial reduction would have to be in the education programme.

The size of UNRWA's estimated budget deficit for 1974 threatens "a very drastic reduction" in education; the elimination of the whole of the preparatory cycle (the



Visiting the Health Centre at Arkoub camp in the West Bank.

last three of the nine years of general education in the UNRWA/Unesco system), reducing expenditure by \$7.5 million a year, would only cover three-quarters of the 1974 deficit, according to the report.

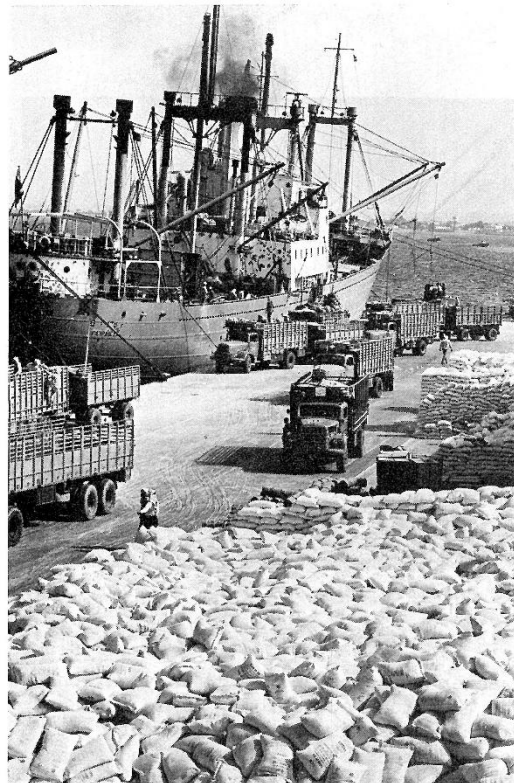
Reductions would cause more hardship, frustration and bitterness among the Palestine refugees, would wreck the hopes for future self-support of many thousands of young refugees, and would have "ominous implications for peace and security" in the region, the report states.

No Progress towards Settlement

During the period covered by the report, there was no progress towards a settlement of the basic Palestine refugee problem in accordance with United Nations resolutions. The report points out that recent resolutions of the General Assembly on respect for the rights of the refugees and the rights of the people of Palestine as an element in any just and lasting peace show how "the problem of the refugees has been further complicated and the political dimension enhanced since the hostilities of 1967." Moreover, despite repeated calls by the General Assembly, the vast majority of the hundreds of thousands of refugees and other persons displaced in 1967 have still not been allowed to return to the occupied territories, and of the 44,176 reported to have returned since 1967 less than 7,000 are believed to be registered refugees.

The report notes that "frustrations and uncertainties, the continued military occupation of areas where more than a third of the refugees still reside, violent action and reaction, and the absence of any reasonable foundation for an ordered future on which people can build their hopes and aspirations, continue to plague the Palestine refugees as they have done for the past quarter century."

The passage of time have not made action less urgent, states the report, which gives an account of developments during the year that have had an effect on the Agency's services to the refugees.



Flour for the refugees arrives at Aqaba.

Education and Training

For the most part, the UNRWA/Unesco education programmes operated smoothly from 1 July 1972 to 30 June 1973, but, even with extensive double-shifting, there is still an urgent need for more classrooms to accommodate a refugee school population growing by approximately 12,000 annually through natural increase. Enrolment in UNRWA/Unesco schools rose to 255,984, and the total teaching staff reached 7,747. More than 150 classrooms and ancillary rooms in new and existing schools were completed and about half of a further instalment of 161 were already under construction at the end of June 1973. Plans for 657 more rooms have been drawn up and submitted to a potential donor.

Enrolment in the Agency's training centres rose by nearly 400 to 3,967 (1,164 in



New shelters replaced tents at Qabr Essit, Syria.

teacher training and 2,803 in vocational and technical education). This increase was made possible by expansion of the training centres at Wadi Seer and Amman in east Jordan and restoration of suspended training capacity at Siblin in Lebanon. According to the report, the growth may be regarded as evidence of the high importance the Agency, the refugees and donors attach to the programme.

The UNRWA/Unesco Institute of Education continued to have an impact on education in the area beyond the Agency's schools and their teachers. Financial assistance from both UNDP and UNICEF enabled the Institute to expand its extension services for government educationalists engaged in in-service training of teachers at no cost to UNRWA.

Health

Within the limit of its resources, UNRWA, with the professional guidance of the World Health Organization, maintained an integrated and comprehensive health programme, the report says. Curative and preventive medical care services for refugees were provided by the Agency at 95 health units, at a further 13 units by Agency-subsidized voluntary organizations and at 11 units by governments. Nursing care, envir-

onmental sanitation, extra nutritional support for eligible refugees such as school children and expectant mothers, and school health programmes were also provided.

Improvements in Agency health facilities included completion of one new health centre in both east Jordan and Syria and the extension of a centre in the West Bank. Construction to replace an old health centre in Gaza is under way, and replacement of three old centres in Syria is planned. The replacement of three old supplementary feeding centres in Syria was authorized, with specially-contributed funds.

Operating problems

The report recalls that the 53 camps established before June 1967 and the 10 emergency camps set up after the hostilities of that year are not extra-territorial areas under United Nations jurisdiction and that police, legislative and other governmental functions are not the responsibility of UNRWA but of the host governments or the occupying power. Only 38.4 per cent (644,093) of the refugees live in the 63 camps in UNRWA's area of operations.

In the Lebanon camps affected by Israeli attacks in September 1972 and February 1973, services were temporarily interrupted and a number of Agency buildings and shelters were demolished or damaged. Disruptions in services also occurred during the internal fighting in May 1973 involving Lebanese security forces and Palestinian organizations in and around Beirut. The Agency recorded 50 dead and 130 wounded among registered refugees.

During this fighting in Lebanon the Syrian Arab Republic closed its border with Lebanon, thus delaying the transport from Beirut to Syria and Jordan of about 4,000 tons of Agency supplies, including rice and flour. Problems over land use and allocation held up the construction of shelters in two emergency camps in Syria, but a further 500 cement-block shelters were completed to replace tents in another camp there. In cooperation with the government progress was made in overtaking

the back-log in rectification of ration rolls.

In east Jordan, where one-third of the refugees registered with the Agency are to be found, a notable development was growing participation in "self-help" projects for the improvement of conditions in the camps. Discussions were held with the government authorities on procedures for the rectification of ration rolls but little progress had been made by 30 June. The Agency continued to co-operate with the Government in caring for persons displaced by the hostilities in 1967 who are not registered refugees.

In the West Bank of Jordan the co-ordination by the Occupying Power of the economy with that of Israel continued. Despite the high rate of inflation, there were immediate material benefits for many refugees through employment but much of this employment was with Israeli employers engaged in Israeli development, and the longer-term economic, social and cultural effects of occupation were causing concern. As in east Jordan self-help projects were a feature of Agency-refugee co-operation.

In the occupied Gaza Strip a survey carried out in 1973 jointly with the Israeli authorities showed that of those refugees whose houses were demolished by the military authorities in July and August 1971, 706 families were still inadequately housed, including 266 in urgent need. During the period covered by the report, a further 873 shelter rooms, affecting 383 families, were demolished by the Israeli Military Administration in housing construction and road-widening projects, but the families affected were found alternative accommodation by the Military Administration and compensation was paid for construction and improvements that had been carried out by the refugees themselves.

Conclusion

The report concludes by saying that in the Commissioner-General's opinion, in view of the serious political consequences, a decision on reductions in services ought to be taken at a governmental level and that guidance and directions are required from the General Assembly.

The recently completed UNRWA/Unesco school in Wavell camp, Lebanon.



THE SECRETARY-GENERAL VISITS THE MIDDLE EAST

The United Nations Secretary-General, Kurt Waldheim, visited the Middle East from 27 August to 4 September, during which he met the leaders of Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Egypt and Jordan.

The purpose of his visit was to establish direct contacts and to consult the governments concerned. As Mr. Waldheim himself said at the time, he did not expect to return with a solution to the complex, difficult and tragic problem of the Middle East; nor did he intend to present specific proposals. In view of the prevailing deadlock, it was his duty to determine in what way the United Nations could be helpful in the future. The Secretary-General said that his visit to the area did not replace the mission of his Special Representative to the Middle East, Gunnar V. Jarring.

During Mr. Waldheim's visit to Syria and Lebanon at the end of August, he had talks with the Syrian President, Hafez Al-Assad, Lebanese President, Suleiman Frangieh, and Prime Minister, Takiyeddine Solh, as well as other high-ranking Syrian and Lebanese Government officials.

In Beirut, Mr. Waldheim was briefed by UNRWA's Commissioner-General, Sir John Rennie.

After a two-day stop in Cyprus, for talks, Mr. Waldheim left Nicosia for Israel on 30 August. In Jerusalem, Mr. Waldheim discussed Israeli views on all aspects of Middle East problems during a meeting with Prime Minister Mrs. Golda Meir and Foreign Minister Abba Eban. He later met with other Government officials.

On his arrival at Cairo airport on 31 August, the Secretary-General made a statement to the press in which he said that all past efforts inside and outside the organization had failed to solve the Middle East problem. The United Nations, however, had a clear mandate to seek a solution. In Cairo, Mr. Waldheim had talks with President Anwar El-Sadat and other high-ranking officials.

On 2 September, the Secretary-General arrived in Amman, Jordan, where he had talks with the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Zeid Al-Rifai, and other Government leaders. He later met King Hussein and Crown Prince Hassan.

In the company of the Crown Prince and the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, Mr. Waldheim visited Marka refugee camp, outside Amman.

Marka emergency camp, which now has a population of some 25,000 Palestine refugees and displaced persons, sprang up in February 1968 when, following a series of military actions in the Jordan Valley, the tented camps which had been established after the 1967 hostilities were abandoned by the refugees and other displaced persons. They were joined in their flight by Jordanian villagers abandoning their homes in the Valley to seek refuge from the shooting. Some 75,000 people were involved in this movement to the upland areas where new emergency camps had to be established.

Conditions were harsh at first. Marka camp is set on bleak hillsides exposed to wind, and in winter to rain and snow. Tents provided scant shelter against the rigours of the climate.

Special contributions to UNRWA have since made it possible to replace all the tents by prefabricated shelters in a variety of materials. The camp, however, maintains its make-shift air.

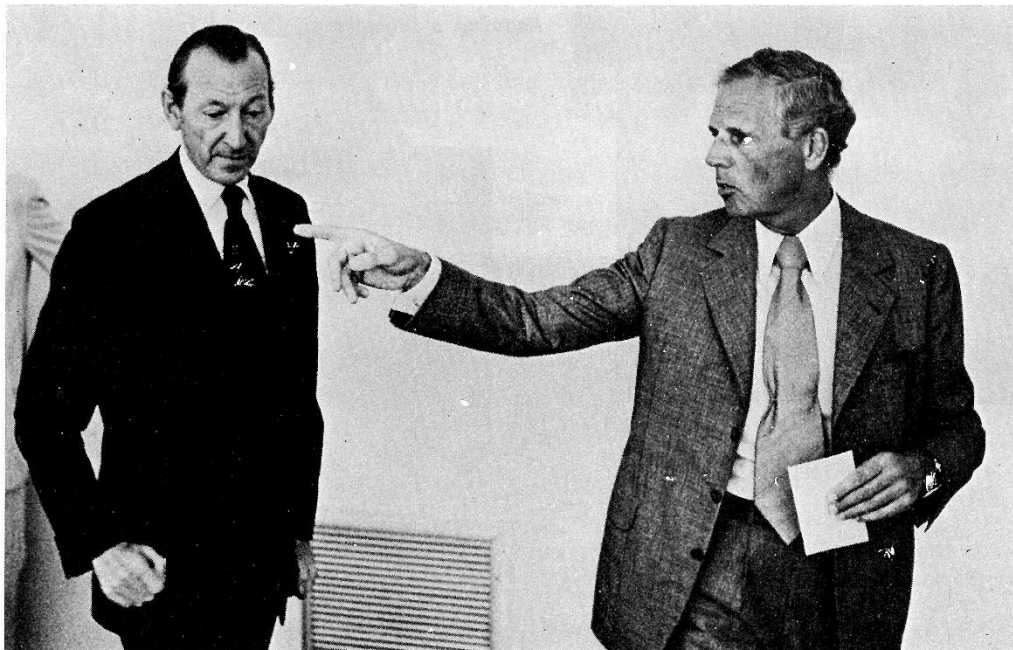
UNRWA facilities available are a health centre, supplementary feeding centres, a youth activities centre, and schools which serve over 5,000 children.

School buildings are prefabricated, and comprise 26 classrooms for the 2,000 or so girls at present enrolled, and 30 classrooms for the 3,000 boys. Because of the extreme shortage of space, a double-shift system is in operation. This unsatisfactory solution, which puts strains on pupils and teachers alike, is the only one possible until funds become available for additional buildings.

The conditions in Marka emergency camp are fairly typical of the conditions in which other emergency camp inhabitants are living. As far as Marka is concerned, the population of the camp has greatly increased since 1968, as refugees from other camps have come to Marka to live in the hope of finding work in nearby Amman. The influx of refugees from other areas puts additional pressures on UNRWA facilities.

On 4 September, Mr. Waldheim's visit to the Middle East terminated, when the Secretary-General left Amman for Algiers to attend the Conference of Heads of States and Governments of Non-Aligned Countries.

Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim and UNRWA's Commissioner-General, Sir John Rennie, inspecting UNRWA's facilities in Jordan.

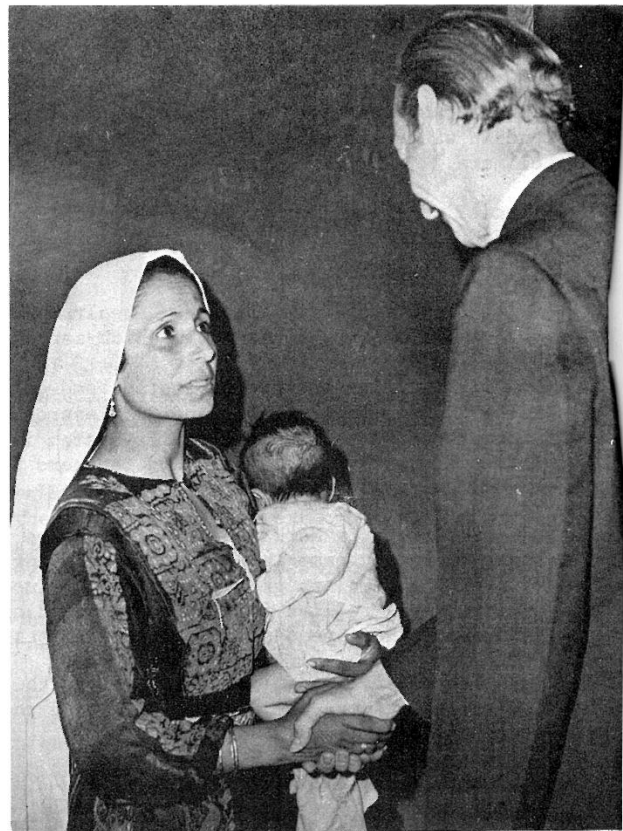




*Beginning the visit to Marka camp,
near Amman.*

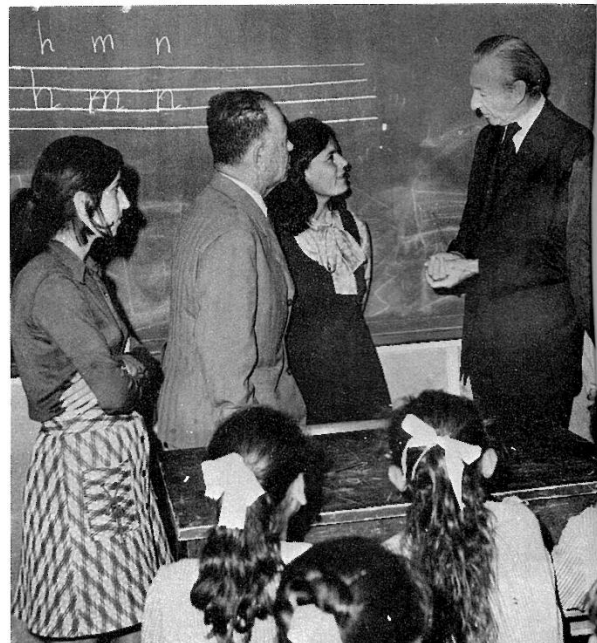


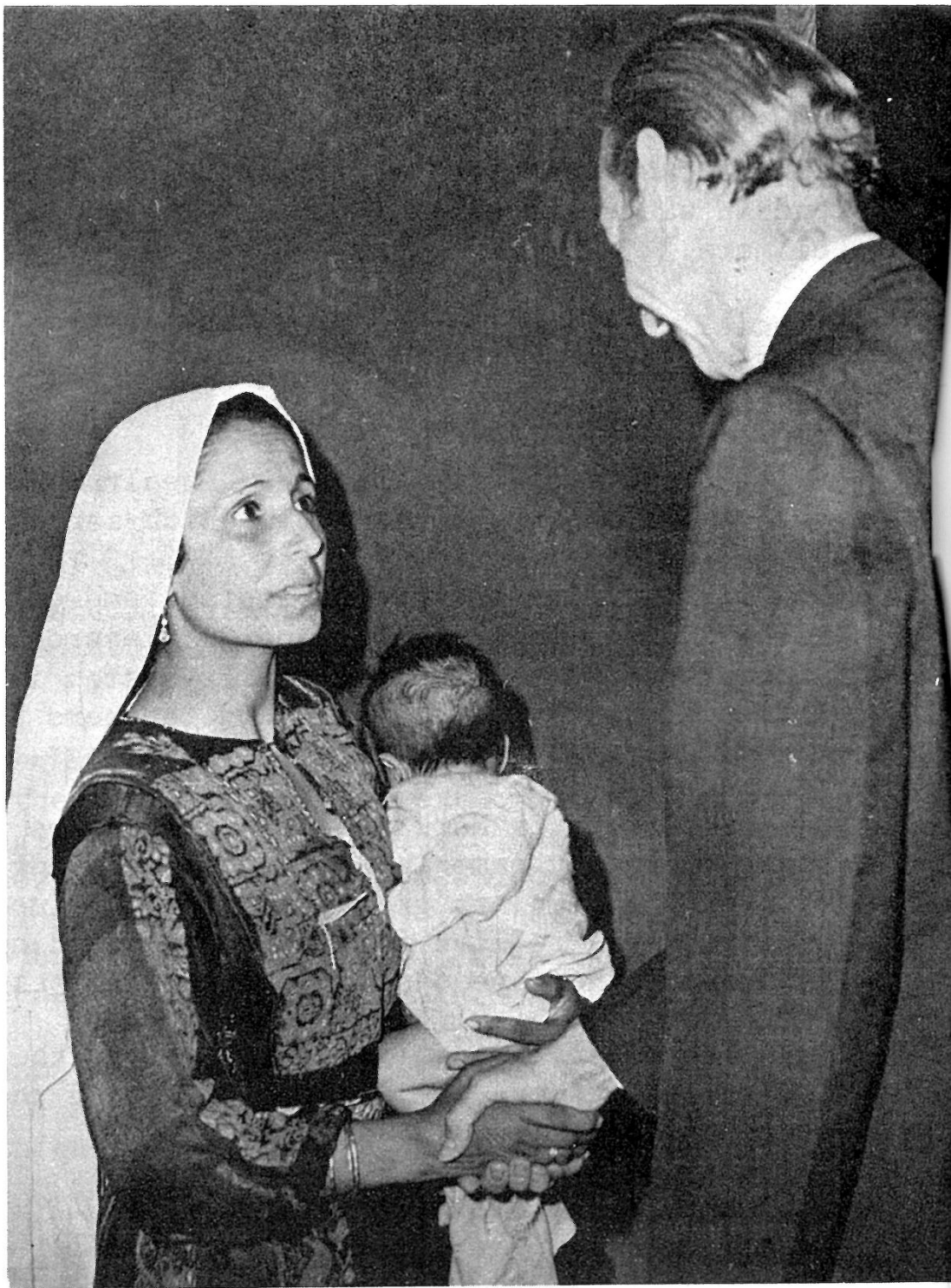
*Above: Hearing the views of a camp
inhabitant.*



Meeting a refugee mother.

*Right: Discussing education for Palestine
refugee children in an UNRWA/
Unesco school classroom at Marka.*

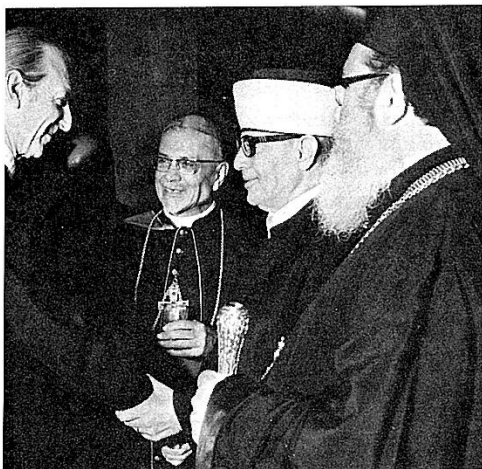




Meeting a refugee mother.



Above: Hearing the views of a camp inhabitant.



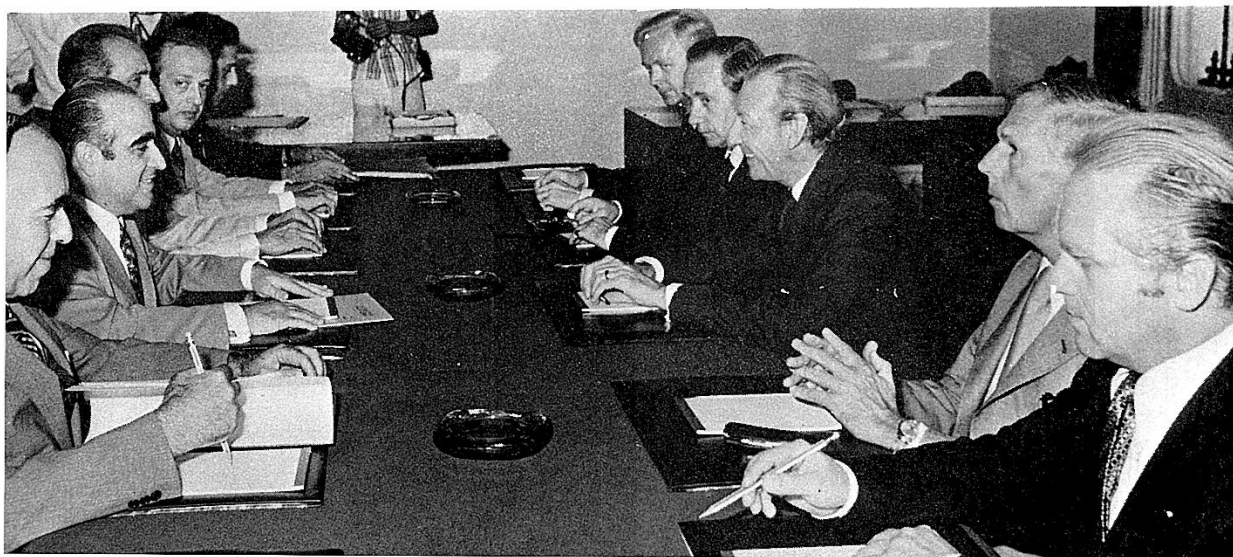
*Conversing with religious leaders...
I holding a press conference in Jordan.*



Kurt Waldheim and Sir John Rennie in conference with Lebanon's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Fouad Naffah (second from left).



Visiting the Omriads' Mosque in Damascus with Syria's Deputy Foreign Minister, Dr. Mohamed Zakaria Ismail (at left).



WHAT FUTURE FOR NAYFEH ?

A complex of modern buildings set in an olive grove dominates a hill overlooking the prosperous summer resort town of Ramallah in the West Bank of Jordan. It is a hive of purposeful activity, enthusiastically shown to the many visitors. In well-equipped rooms, girls are learning to type in English and Arabic. A group of four-year-olds are excitedly absorbed in the projects which trainee infant leaders have devised for them in the play-centre. The scene in the hairdressing salon could be found in any neighbouring town, as students practise the latest styles on their colleagues. And costumes for an historical pageant are taking shape in the work-rooms of the dressmaking and clothing production courses, alongside rows of uniforms which newly-enrolled trainees will wear in the coming school year.

Since 1962, the Ramallah Women's Training Centre has been a symbol for Palestine refugee girls of an opportunity to widen their horizons beyond the confines of the camp or village where they have been brought up, and to help their families become self-supporting. As many as 640 girls can be trained at the Centre at one time, enrolled in one of nine vocational and professional courses.

For several years, a number of organizations and individuals as well as the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) have given special contributions to UNRWA for the education and training of girls.

UNRWA's vocational and teacher training programme, carried out at eight centres, including the Ramallah Women's Training

Preparing classwork outside Ramallah Women's Training Centre, in the West Bank.



Centre, is also supported by a number of other contributors, both governmental and non-governmental.

The largest regular contributors to the vocational training programme are Oxfam, Zonta, Aramco, Norwegian Refugee Council, ANERA, and the governments of the U.S.A., Federal Republic of Germany and Denmark.

To obtain the total funds necessary to train as many students as the centres will hold, UNRWA has established a vocational training scholarship programme. Under this scheme, whole classes or individual trainees may be "sponsored" by individuals or voluntary organizations, at a cost per student of \$800 for the one-year course, or \$1,600 for the two-year course. These costs cover tuition, board and lodging, classroom and workroom supplies, library and recreation facilities, etc.

Like UNRWA and Unesco (which are jointly responsible for the UNRWA/Unesco education programme for Palestine refugees, of which the Ramallah Centre is a part), the sponsors are concerned that able young refugees should be helped as much as possible to realize their aspirations. But to appreciate the significance of the Centre in the lives of the girls who spend two years there, one must first have a picture of the backgrounds from which they have come. Take Nayfeh Abu Oweimer, for example, trainee in the 1971/73 business education course, sponsored by the Swiss Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, and in many ways representative of the girls recruited from the Gaza Strip.

Shelter number 65, Block B, Maghazi camp is situated a little way along a narrow alley. A rough door in the mud-brick wall, dignified with the Koranic inscription "In the name of God the all-merciful and compassionate", opens on to a sandy courtyard and two small rooms. Three generations of the Abu Oweimer family have made their home here for almost a quarter of a century - a shelter barely distinguishable from the hundreds of others which house around 8,500 Palestine refugees living in the camp.

One of the rooms, its floor area not more



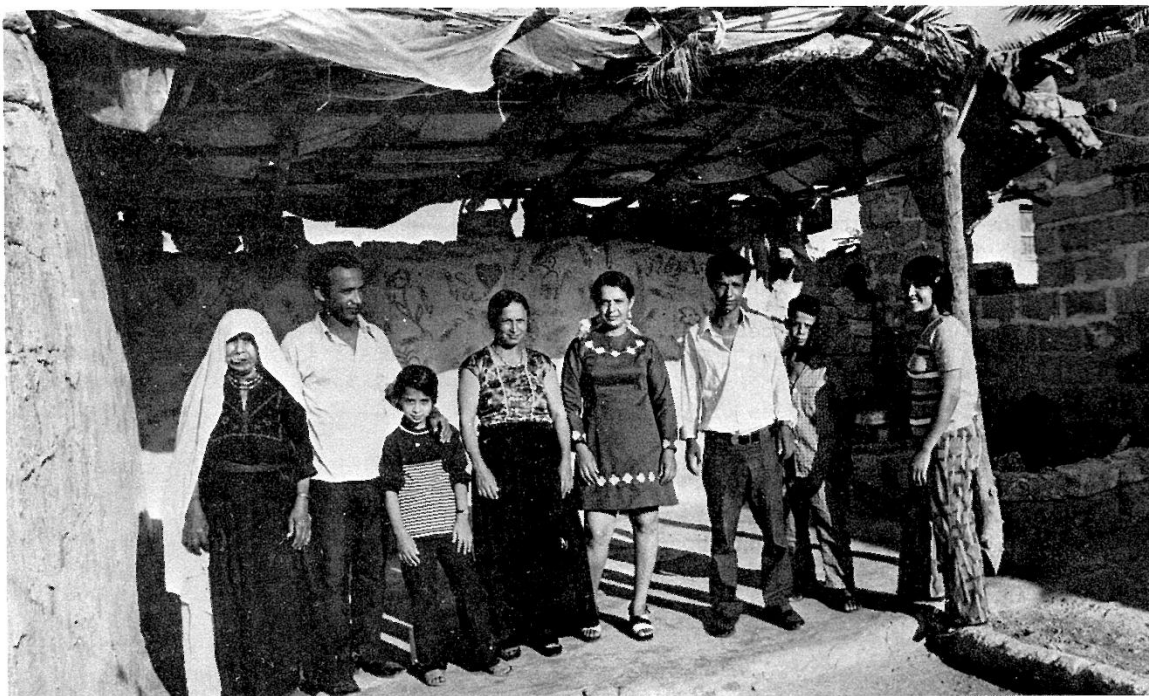
Nayfeh and her mother, wearing a dress made by Nayfeh.

than 10 square metres, serves as kitchen, working and eating area and a place to sit when it is cold or wet outside. The other is the communal sleeping room, where mattresses are rolled up during the day to make extra space for sitting or study. The hot dry summers make outdoor living possible for five months of the year, but there is little shade to give respite from the heat. An outside tap brings water into the home - an advantage not shared by all camp-dwelling refugees - and a private latrine has been installed. Kerosene oil provides fuel for the small stove which serves for both cooking and heating, and the lamp gives a little light in the dark evenings. Nine people share these rudimentary provisions.

The Abu Oweimers were never a wealthy family. Of Bedouin descent, they established themselves in Beersheba, where citrus fruits and vegetables grown on the plot of land around their home brought in only a small income. But it was an independent livelihood and a guarantee that the sons would be provided for in the future in a



*Nayfeh and her mother, wearing a dress
made by Nayfeh.*



Nayfeh's family. Her father is away in Jericho where he has found work.

modest way. Work and home were closely associated, and son followed father according to custom. The loss of this land in 1948, consequent upon the partition of Palestine, shattered a way of life which had seemed so solidly based.

The family fled westward to the Gaza Strip, a sadly congested enclave where today some 400,000 people, 70 per cent of them Palestine refugees, are crowded into less than 140 square miles. In 1949, when the numbers were less, the United Nations Economic Survey Commission for the Middle East reported: "It is clear that in the small area concerned there is no possibility of finding work projects to employ more than a small proportion of the large number of refugees concentrated there."

Because of the shortage of employment opportunities in the Gaza Strip, refugees sought work wherever it was available, even though it often meant the separation of families. Like many of the refugees, Nayfeh's father was ready to travel in search of regular earnings. First as a

driver in Yemen, then in Egypt, working as a labourer on the Aswan High Dam project, he spent 15 years away from home. But the work was not well paid and for a man unused to dealing with officials it was often difficult to arrange for money to reach his wife and children. So in 1963, he returned to Maghazi. In the past few years, the situation has been easier. A two-hour bus journey from Gaza takes him to Jericho, in the West Bank, where he works in a citrus grove. The results are visible in the improvements the family is beginning to make to Shelter B65: the walls of an additional room are under construction and a raised concrete terrace covered with woven branches will soon provide a cool outdoor sitting area.

Breaking with the traditional patterns does not come easily. It takes time for cultural values to catch up with rapid social and economic change in any society, and under any conditions. In the case of the refugees, the change was imposed from outside, against their will. Resistance, particularly in the early years, meant

clinging with greater fervour to those habits and values which could be salvaged.

Family solidarity is at the centre of Arab values. Organised for all practical purposes through the male line, it is in relation to the mother that the strongest ties are forged and preserved. The men are responsible for providing for the family's material needs, and may need to leave the home for long periods. But the mother symbolises the unity of the family. Her constant presence in the home is a guarantee of its permanence. Throughout their lives, her sons will turn to her for advice, approval or reassurance, and it is she who keeps alive the bonds of affection between brothers and sisters.

The women in Nayfeh Abu Oweimer's family have great respect for this tradition, which gives them a role of some importance in the management of the family's affairs and offers the security of permanent relationships and well-tried ways. Three generations of women share the task of running the household.

Following accepted practice, Nayfeh's grandmother has made her home with her eldest son. A weathered old lady, she still proudly bears the tattooing of the Bedouin women of Beersheba, and the worked brass nose-ring is a reminder of marriage customs of the past. Her daughter-in-law is best known to the family and in the camp as "Imm-Nayef", mother of Nayef, her own eldest son. As her six children have grown up, she has gradually taken over responsibility for decisions from her mother-in-law. Faizeh, the eldest of her daughters, can expect a very similar life. Taken from school while still in the elementary grades, to help with the household chores and look after her younger brothers and sisters, she will probably be married to a kinsman and move to his home, where in turn her status will be secured on the birth of her first son.

At the same time, it was important that Nayfeh's brothers, as future heads of families, should be given every opportunity for advancement. It did not take long for the Palestinians to realize that, in their changed circumstances, this meant

educating them to the point where they would be able to acquire qualifications leading to steady employment with good prospects in the developing economies of the area. To the sons was given, too, the challenge of restoring to the refugee community its independence and self-respect. So it was not very remarkable that Nayfeh, with the assistance of a scholarship from the Egyptian Government, should leave Maghazi in 1972 under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross to follow a degree course in commerce at the Mansoura University, in the Arab Republic of Egypt. With such an education, he will expect to be given preference for the jobs which are available locally, or will be free to seek work elsewhere in the Arab world.

Twenty-four years after the UN Economic Survey Mission's report, the number of permanent jobs in the Gaza Strip itself is still limited. Many of the refugees find seasonal work in citrus groves or the four citrus packing plants. Since 1967, growing numbers have been employed in Israel and the West Bank as agricultural or construction workers (although this trend was reversed after the renewal of Arab-Israeli hostilities in October 1973). But mainly the openings in Israel are for the unskilled and semi-skilled, and appear to offer little security of tenure for non-resident Arabs.

Yet as large numbers of wage-earners start to bring money home regularly the demand for other services grows - trading and banking, for example - and with it the chance for more educated young people to make a living without having to travel far.

The possibility of securing an improvement in their conditions has encouraged the refugees to take further steps to rid themselves of the economic and cultural poverty which has weighed so heavily on them. In this they have been supported by the UNRWA/Unesco education programme, which offers nine years of elementary and preparatory schooling free of charge to every eligible refugee child, and assists the best among those who show themselves able to profit from further study.

Nayfeh practices filing.



In the first years after the programme began in 1950, few girls attended school. The proposition was an altogether new one and appeared to offer little a girl needed to fulfil her traditional role - indeed it was seen by some to pose a threat to the preservation of family life as it had always been known. Even when a girl attended elementary school in the early grades, like Faizeh Abu Oweimer she might well be taken away to help in the home when she was still barely literate.

The situation has changed dramatically. Almost half of the 6-11 age-group attending UNRWA/Unesco schools in the Gaza Strip are girls. And girls represented more than 46 per cent of the 18-year-olds who were still continuing their studies in 1971/72. Cultural values are catching up with the changed circumstances, and the refugees have learned how to modify their customs without destroying what they value most highly.

Nayfeh Abu Oweimer began her schooling in the Maghazi camp, where she spent nine

years in the elementary and preparatory cycles. Three years later, she graduated from the Deir el Balah government secondary school, not far from Maghazi, possessor of the Tawjihi certificate awarded to successful students in the public examination set by the Egyptian Government (and held in the Israeli-occupied Gaza Strip under the auspices of Unesco). The certificate is a recognised qualification for entry to post-secondary courses, at college or university level. Her parents were reluctant to consider the possibility of her attending an Egyptian university alongside her brother, but they did actively encourage her to continue her education locally - that is, to apply to the Ramallah Women's Training Centre.

The economic advantages partly explain her parents' attitude. When she is qualified she will be expected to contribute to the budget, in her own and later her husband's household. Social considerations were also involved. Nayfeh's achievement has enhanced the family's status in the community. In recognition of this she is accorded special privileges within the family's means, just as her elder brother is. Her chances of making a good marriage, still seen as by far the most important criterion of her future satisfaction, have increased. As more girls are attending school, so the young men are keen that their wives should have a similar educational background to theirs. And if he is planning to seek work outside the occupied territories, in a country where a woman may be less bound by the conservative habits of her own people, the young suitor is well aware of the assistance a wife with good qualifications can give in building up the savings they will need to establish themselves.

Nayfeh entered the Ramallah Women's Training Centre in September 1971. It is an institution occupying a distinctive position in the Middle East, and no other of comparable size or character is open to Arab women in the occupied territories. The pre-service course is one of few in the area which offer a recognised teaching qualification to Palestine refugee girls. Secretarial training is given by a number of private schools, but is often

of an inadequate standard. And young women who want to become hairdressers or professional dressmakers would otherwise have to pay for experience gained as junior assistants to those already established.

The success of the Centre in attracting students has almost exceeded expectations. Although teaching had for some time been recognised in certain circles as a suitable profession for women, conservative parents were diffident at first about allowing their daughters to train for work traditionally done by men - in offices, clothing production factories, hairdressing salons and so on. An intensive publicity campaign before the Centre opened in 1962, through the press, radio, schools and camps, did much to remove apprehensions. Mrs. In'am Mufti, the Centre's energetic Principal, personally visited schools and homes to explain the intentions of the new venture. Since then, the graduates themselves have been the best advertisement the Centre could have hoped for. Sought after and respected by employers for the thoroughness of their training, they have made substantial contributions to their homes and the development of their communities.

The time was ripe for a change of outlook. The Ramallah Women's Training Centre acted as a catalyst for that change in the lives of girls like Nayfeh Abu Oweimer, and provided a disciplined framework within which it could take place without precipitating a personal crisis by alienating the girl from her early environment.

Now at the end of her two-year secretarial training, Nayfeh is justly proud of the skills she has acquired. Both the vocational and teacher training courses place great emphasis on a professional approach to a trainee's intended career and demand a commitment to high standards. Good grades in her subject have given her a large measure of self-confidence, which was reinforced when she tested her knowledge during a period of on-the-job training in UNRWA's office in Gaza this summer, and found that she could readily cope with the work.

To see Nayfeh and the other trainees now leaving the Centre back in their own homes, or even with fellow students only half-way through their courses, is to realize how much social poise they have also gained. The Ramallah Women's Training Centre has

Fast and accurate typing is an essential part of Nayfeh's secretarial training.





always been fully residential, and for good reasons. The contact with girls from other backgrounds and the opportunity to know her teachers as friends have helped Nayfeh to lose her shyness and handle unfamiliar situations with ease and charm. The broadening of her general education through formal courses, extra-curricular activities and a well-stocked library have brought hitherto unknown fields within her reach. She has learned, too, how to organise her time to the best advantage, to reconcile her various obligations to others with her duty to herself to make the most of her abilities. For perhaps the first time in her life, she has been encouraged to take her own decisions and accept the consequences.

Nayfeh recognises that it has helped her immeasurably to have around her women whose way of life was different from that she had seen in the camp and at school - women who became models for her own hopes, who had managed successfully to combine a career with running a home and caring for their husband and children. Mrs. Mufti herself was a magnetic example of what could be achieved. Already a young wife and mother when she began her training as a teacher, she went on to become a leading figure in the field of women's education and civic life in the Middle East. And Nayfeh knows too that if she needs guidance in her own career she can turn to Mrs. Mufti or one of her staff

for advice and practical assistance.

Nayfeh Abu Oweimer returned home to Maghazi camp at the beginning of August. For her, the search for work is just starting, and it is to local firms that she has made her first applications. It may take some time before she is happily settled in work with good prospects: such jobs are still not easily obtained in the Gaza Strip. If she is not successful, she may seek her parents' approval to return to the West Bank, where openings are more plentiful. At all events, she is resolved that her family will benefit from her training in every way possible.

Among the many relatives and neighbours who crowded into the Abu Oweimer's courtyard to congratulate Nayfeh and wish her well were some of the girls from Maghazi camp who will be entering the Ramallah Women's Training Centre for the first time this school year. Well over 300 girls are expected to enrol in the new courses. In a few years' time, another 300 families will enjoy the advantages a well-educated daughter, wife or mother can give them. And a further step will have been taken in the progress of the Palestine refugee community towards becoming economically independent, able to take its place on a more equal footing alongside its neighbours and contribute with them to the development of the region as a whole.

Learning the fundamentals of hair-dressing at Ramallah Women's Training Centre.





DIPLOMAS FROM A KING

"This occasion is a turning point. It is the end of a phase and the beginning of a new one, in which you would carry responsibility..." The speaker was His Majesty King Hussein of Jordan, addressing on 24 June 1973 the 234 graduating male and female teacher trainees to whom he presented diplomas, with Her Majesty Queen Alia at his side, at UNRWA's new training centre near Amman. The Amman Training Centre (ATC), which began classes in December 1971, has a capacity of 700 residential trainees, comprising 300 male and 250 female teacher trainees and 150 female vocational trainees. The ATC was established because, following the June 1967 Arab/Israeli hostilities, UNRWA's three training centres in the West Bank had become inaccessible for all practical purposes to Palestine refugees in east Jordan, while the demand for both teacher and vocational training there had risen sharply. Funds for the land, construction and equipment of the centre were provided by Near East Emergency Donations, Inc. (NEED), a private American organization.

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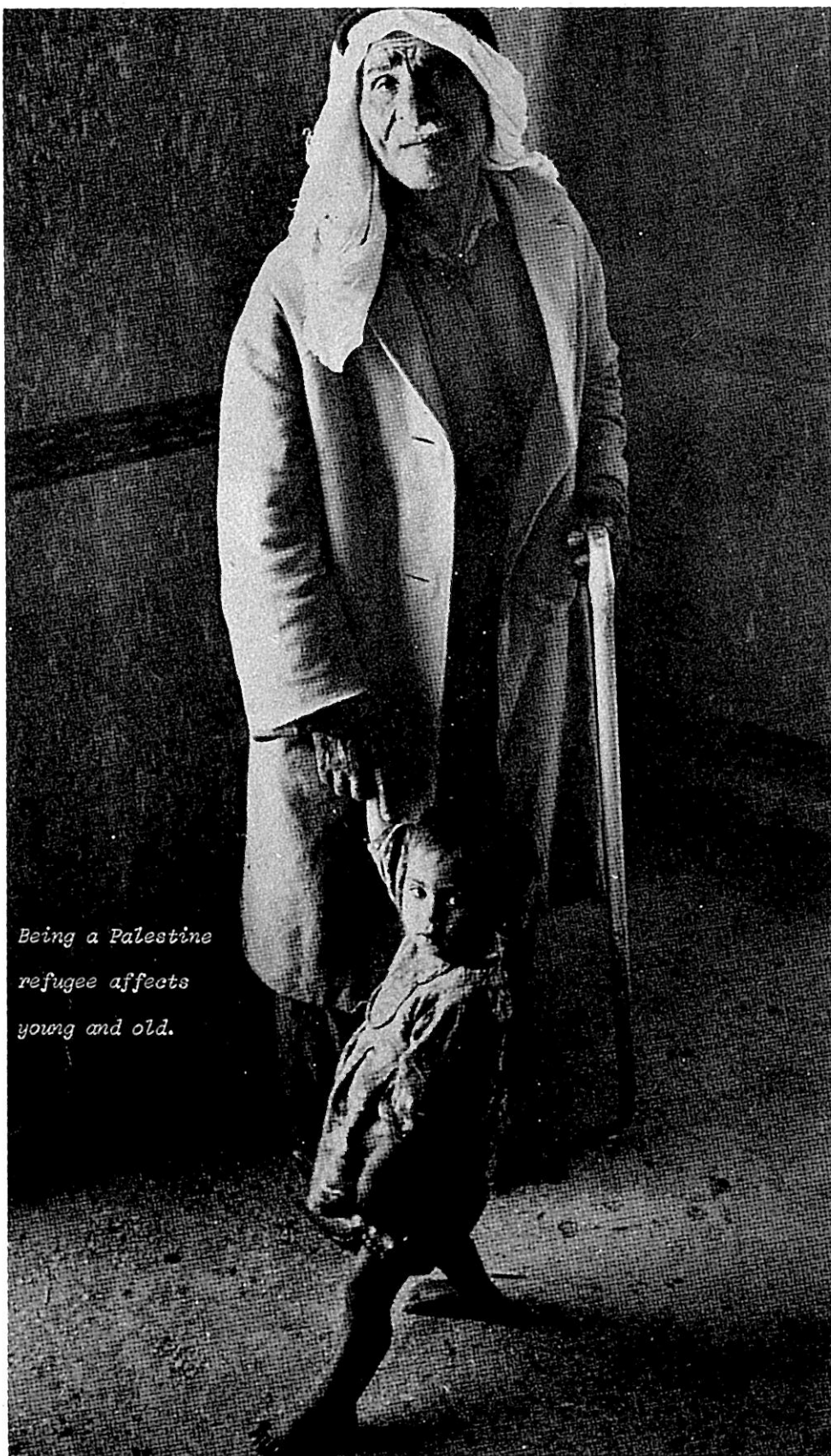
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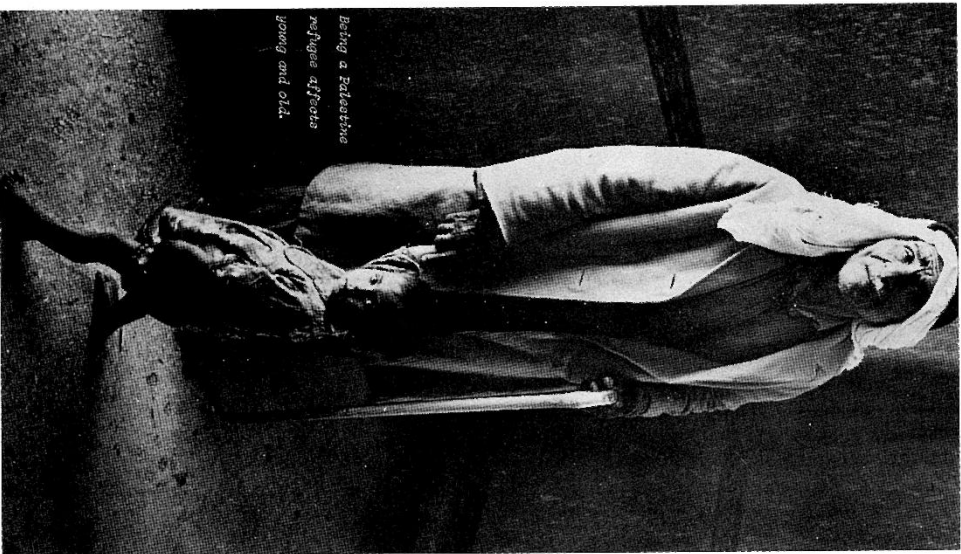
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