

PEACE ONLY SOLUTION TO REFUGEE PROBLEM

By MORTON YARMON

NEW YORK -- The Arab refugee problem cannot be solved until there is peace between Israel and the Arab countries, but negotiation of the problem can precede a peace settlement, an authority on the Middle East declared.

In a report entitled "The Refugees of Arab-Israel Conflict," published by the American Jewish Committee as the ninth in a series of reports on subjects to its foreign affairs program, George C. Gruen, the Committee's Middle East specialist, recalled that Israeli Foreign Minister Abda Eban told the U. N. General Assembly last October that Israel was willing to discuss a five-year plan for the refugees in advance of peace negotiations.

"Since the 1967 war," Mr. Gruen writes, "it has been increasingly recognized that while a just solution of the refugee problem is vital to an Arab-Israel peace settlement, the question cannot be isolated from other basic elements, such as Israel's secure and recognized boundaries, freedom of navigation and guarantees of territorial inviolability and political independence. However, Israel has suggested that consideration of the refugee problem could precede a peace settlement."

Mr. Gruen adds: "How many of the Arab refugees will ultimately be living as citizens of Israel, of Jordan and other Arab countries, or of some sort of autonomous Palestinian Arab state will depend on territorial and other ar-



CHAPLAIN SEYMOUR MOSKOWITZ (CENTER), USING HOLIDAY FOODS RECEIVED THROUGH THE COMMISSION ON JEWISH CHAPLAINCY OF THE NATIONAL JEWISH WELFARE BOARD, CONDUCTS PASSOVER SERVICES IN A DESERT TENT IN LONG BIN, VIETNAM.

rangements that will emerge from an Arab-Israel settlement. If the difficult transition can be made from war to peace, the problem, which now looms so large, will be on the path to solution."

The need for a settlement of the Arab refugee problem is becoming increasingly acute, Mr. Gruen points out. "Even before the outbreak of hostilities in 1967," he states, "the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was hard-pressed to meet its normal expenses. In recent years, it has incurred increasing deficits. The United States has provided more than two-thirds of the \$629 million expended by UNRWA from 1950 through 1968, but

cial Welfare provided cash grants and other aids to needy families to supplement UNRWA rations. In Gaza, the Israeli authorities helped UNRWA repair some 400 war-damaged refugee homes.

"In November, 1968, Ambassador Comay announced that Israel would make a special contribution of \$6,000 for expansion of UNRWA's Vocational Training Center at Gaza, and that it was developing its own vocational training services in Israeli-held areas. He said the Israel Government had contributed more than \$2.5 million directly during the year ending June, 1968, and had made a cash contribution of \$300,000, plus \$600,000 for port services, transport, storage and other expenses, making a total of \$3.5 million toward its program."

Congress has become increasingly reluctant to continue to contribute such a disproportionate share of the funds. It has also hesitated to approve grants without evidence of action to reform UNRWA's relief roll system."

Arabs were not the only victims of the Middle East conflict, Mr. Gruen stresses. "Consideration of the problems of persons displaced since the 1967 Arab-Israel conflict," he says, "should include the more than 15,000 Jews in Arab countries who fled mob violence and severe official restrictions during and after the June war. The plight of these refugees, and of Jews arrested and still imprisoned in Arab countries, also merits attention."

It should not be overlooked that Israel has undertaken measures on behalf of the Arab refugees, Mr. Gruen states. "In Gaza and West Bank towns," he reports, "the Israel Ministry of So-

Lebanon and Syria numbered 1,344,576 - a figure United Nations sources believe to be inflated by retention on relief rolls of many persons who have become self-sufficient, moved away or died."

Mr. Gruen states that Israel's approach to the Arab refugee problem could be of value given some degree of Arab cooperation. In a settlement by Foreign Minister Abda Eban in October 1968, Mr. Gruen writes, Mr. Eban "proposed that under a peace settlement, joint refugee integration and rehabilitation commissions be set up to approve plans for

refugee integration in the Middle East with regional and international aid. The plan projects a reintegration and compensation fund for land settlement, compensation for abandoned property, and training to which Israel would give substantial financial support."

"The Refugee of Arab-Israel Conflict" traces the development of the Arab refugee problem from its inception in 1948. It also discusses the findings of the United Nations envoy Nils Goran-Gussing on his mission to the Middle East in the summer of 1967.



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