

CIVIL WAR A TURNING POINT?

NEW YORK - The recent civil war in Jordan has marked a turning point in attitude on the part of Arabs in Israel toward the Jewish state, but "it is still too soon to tell whether the change will be good or bad for Israel," according to a Roman Catholic nun who has been Mother Superior of a convent in East Jerusalem for the past three years. Speaking at a news conference at the headquarters of the American Jewish Committee, Mother Aline explained that "until the civil war, a Jerusalem Arab was able to live his daily life without feeling that he had to take a position on the political conflict."

"But the majority of Arabs living in Jerusalem are Palestinians," she continued, "and they all have friends and relatives in Amman. They were challenged by the brutal

and cruel fact of the civil war, and they have realized that they cannot be neutral. They are now facing up to the idea of a Palestinian state. Whether that state will be friendly to Israel will depend on many questions, one of which is the degree of respect and friendship that can be engendered between Arabs and Jews."

Mother Aline, whose Ecce Homo Convent on the Via Dolorosa in Old Jerusalem is in the center of the Arab quarter, has been making her own contribution to Arab-Israeli friendship and understanding since shortly after the Six Day War of June 1967.

In September of that year, together with Dr. Kalman Yaron, Director of Adult Education at Hebrew University, she established an ulpan, or language school, at the Convent, to teach Hebrew to Arabs, Arabic to Israelis, and both languages to Christians.

In the three years since, the ulpan has been attended by more than 1,000 students. Last year, Hebrew University granted 200 diplomas to students who had successfully completed its courses. The demand for classes has been so great that it became necessary to open other ulpanim - in a Moslem school across the street from the Convent, and in Bethlehem and Hebron, two primarily Arab cities in the West Bank.

The latest development, Mother Aline announced, is the building by Hebrew University of a new center on Mount Scopus, to be known as the Martin Buber Center, in honor of the late, renowned Jewish

philosopher. A gift of German Jewish benefactors, the center will not only house classrooms for the ulpanim, but will also provide space for artistic and folklore activities, and for social events in which Jews, Arabs and Christians will participate together.

Also announced at the press conference was a forthcoming international colloquium at Hebrew University, jointly sponsored by the American Jewish Committee and the Truman Peace Center, that will bring to Jerusalem 50 scholars, religious and academic leaders from Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe and the United States. The convocation, which will be held at the Peace Center, named for former President Harry J. Truman, November 1-8, will be devoted to an examination of the theme "Religion, Nationalism, Land and Peoplehood" as viewed from the major cultural and religious perspectives of Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Christianity.

Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, AJC's National Director of Interreligious Affairs, explained that this international meeting would build upon a program, already under way at AJC's office in Jerusalem, to build a community of trust and mutual respect between Jews, Moslems and Christians in the Middle East.

Mother Aline, who is on a year's sabbatical leave from her position at the Ecce Homo Convent, plans to spend the next twelve months touring the United States and Canada. She is a member of the Order of the

Sisters of Zion, which is dedicated to deepening relationships between Christians and Jews.

She has lived in Israel since 1952, when she went to Jerusalem from her native France to prepare for her doctorate at the French Ecole Biblique et Archeologique. She was the first nun from the West to learn Arabic in the Old City. She also speaks fluent Hebrew, as well as English, Italian and French.

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