

International Book Year

BY JOSEPH RAFAEL

This is International Book Year. Seven months of the year have now gone by, and UNESCO, the sponsors of IBY, report the response hitherto. One hundred countries across the globe are now engaged in national projects within the IBY programme.

There is a tacit agreement not to talk about underdeveloped countries. We only have in this world developing countries and developed countries.

The projects in hand range from the establishment of primitive libraries in developing countries to sophisticated publishing efforts in developed ones; from the distribution of textbooks to schools in primitive societies to the multi-lingual publication of classics in the West.

Jews have been pioneering books ever since man put quill to parchment if not before. The provision of books for readers who cannot afford to buy them has been developed by the Jews into a fine art. And this is the main aim of the IBY.

I have spent the first twelve years of my life in a small Lithuanian town. In the local Jewish library, which was free, I have discovered - in Hebrew translation - Alice in Wonderland, Gulliver's Travels, Kiplings' jungle tales, George Eliot's Daniel Deronda, and even Longfellow's Hiavatha and the Finnish epos Kalevala in Saul Tschernichovsky's incomparable renderings.

The Jewish publishing efforts in Warsaw and Berlin between the wars were truly amazing. The Jewish Publication Society of America is yet another of our great publishing enterprises. In Vilna, there was the world famous publishing firm of The Brothers and the Widow Rom, a splendid publishing house which used to offer one hundred roubles (a large sum) to anybody who would find a printing error in one of their books or tracts. They never had to pay out the 100 roubles.

There was no Jewish house of prayer in the whole of Europe, East or West, without a library of large proportions.


It is probably not by accident that our symbolic National Document is not a Charter, like the Magna Carta Libertatum, or a Declaration, like the Gettysburg one, but a book of fiction: Theodor Herzl's Judenstadt. It was this book that ushered in the Third Jewish Commonwealth. The Proclamation of 1948 was merely a summary of that book.

BONN (WNS) -- UNSecretary General Kurt Waldheim in a television interview said he favored the withdrawal of Israeli troops from "the occupied territories" instead of from "occupied territories." Observers here said that Waldheim, therefore "clearly favors" the withdrawal of Israel troops from all of the occupied territories.


NEW YORK -- The American Jewish Committee today reaffirmed its unequivocal opposition to quotas in employment, education and other aspects of American life, and its equally firm commitment to appropriate "affirmative action" programs as a means of correcting injustices suffered by disadvantaged minority groups, according to a statement by Bertram H. Gold, AJC Executive Vice President.

UNITED NATIONS (WNS) -- Israel walked out of a Security Council meeting and Israeli Ambassador Yosef Tekoah warned that Israel "would not consider any resolution that does not take into account the Israeli point of view" on the prisoner-of-war issue.

NEW YORK (WNS) -- The National Conference of Soviet Jewry reported that two Jews Lazar Liubarsky of Rostov, and Itzhak Shkolnik from Vinnitz in the Ukraine, were arrested after they sought exit visas.




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