

# The Jerusalem Challenge

BY ROBERT E. SEGAL

Pope John Paul II, during his celebrated visit to the United States, did not issue a new call for the internationalization of the State of Israel's capital, Jerusalem; but he did, in effect, say "there ought to be a law."

This will strike many as a crude way of putting it, but how else can it be set forth? To use his actual words, the Pontiff said, "I also hope a statute that, under international

guarantees (emphasis added), would respect the particular nature of Jerusalem, a heritage to the veneration of millions of believers of the three great monotheistic religions -- Judaism, Christianity and Islam."

The Holy Father's statement hints at a longing to be as bold on this vital issue as Pope Pius XII was. That Pontiff, who ruled from the Vatican in the stormy years, 1939 - 1958, issued two encyclicals calling for Jerusalem's internationalization as a "separate body" in 1948 soon after Israel -- to the dismay of its Arab attackers and other foes -- gained statehood. Pope Paul VI, who was elevated to the papal throne in 1963, drew back a little from the Pius demands but said it wasn't enough for Israel unilaterally to guarantee free access of members of all faiths to their Jerusalem shrines. He wanted international commitments of "citizenship" in Jerusalem for Christians, Moslems, and Jews. He appealed for "an appropriate statute with international guarantees for the Holy City and a convenient Juridical guardianship for the holy places."

One searches fruitlessly for such demands during the two decades that Jordan held the Old City in its grasp. What one does find in such an historical quest is that 34 of the Old City's 35 synagogues were dynamited, that some became stables, some chicken coops, and that thousands of Jewish tombstones were taken from the ancient cemetery of the Mount of Olives, some to be used to surface the footpath leading to a Jordanian army camp latrine.

In that dark period, when Jordan controlled East Jerusalem and the West Bank, Jews were not permitted to approach the Western Wall, let alone pray there. Further demonstrating their contempt for religious freedom the Jordanian government insisted on keeping control of Christian schools in Jerusalem and barred Muslims from making traditional pilgrimages to Jerusalem.

This has been set down scores of times in the press and in scholarly journals, but where are those who remember? And who now recalls that in March, 1971, the Vatican newspaper, Osservatore Romano raised warnings against Israel's "forcible Judaization of the Holy City" and spoke irresponsibly of "the slow suffocation of non - Jewish minorities" at the hands of

Israel's leaders in clear contradiction of the truth?

This is for the Jerusalem constituting the spiritual home of Jews for 3000 years. Save for a short time during the Christian Crusader kingdom of the 12th Century, Jews have been in the majority in that golden city.

Pope John Paul II is being urged by the leaders of Israel to visit this holiest of cities. All who have been warmed and heartened by his journey through America now hope he accepts the invitation. If he does, both he and the world will be assured anew that those who watch over Jerusalem neither slumber nor sleep. Their hearts are attuned to the great call of their stewardship.

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