

ADL BULLETIN

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Comment:

"The Miracle"

by Benjamin R. Epstein

I WRITE this from Jerusalem, called *Yerushalaim*, Foundation of Peace.

It is July and there is peace in Jerusalem, an uneasy and watchful peace, but *Am Yisrael Chai*—the people of Israel live.

They speak with joy about "the miracle" of winning the war, and with sadness about what war brings. There are no unknown soldiers in Israel. The population is close-knit. Every family has either suffered a loss or knows someone who did.

Arnold Forster and I are here to attend the annual meeting of the World Conference of Jewish Organizations (COJO) and to observe the situation in Israel at first hand. Arnold is meeting with and interviewing Israeli army and government officials. He is also interviewing Arabs. The series of taped interviews will be broadcast over radio stations in the United States after our return.

The COJO meeting, held for the first time in Jerusalem, has drawn the largest attendance in its ten-year history. Under the co-chairmanship of Nahum Goldmann, president of the World Jewish Congress, and William A. Wexler, president of B'nai B'rith, representatives of Jewish communities throughout the world are gathered to discuss problems of mutual concern.

It is impossible to convey the spirit of excitement and warmth that greets all visitors to Israel this summer. The people are deeply appreciative of the financial aid and unified support that came from Jews—and Gentiles—all over the world, and are proud, so very proud of their own accomplishments.

They are proud of men like the taxi driver who took us from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Over 50, and recently returned from fighting, he explained why he had gone: "Everybody did. I took my taxi and went right to the front."

This was truly a citizens' army. The response to the call-up was amazing. In some cities, 107 percent and 112 percent reported for duty—those over 50 years of age and not expected to serve went anyway.

We are amazed at the magnitude of the Israeli accomplishment as we look at Russian-made tanks and military equipment along Jordanian roads, at hundreds of bunkers, each large enough to conceal a tank or truck, in the Syrian hills. We are amazed, too, at the almost comic errors made by the Arabs and their Soviet suppliers. There are Russian boots dotting the

scene, left behind, too heavy for the Arabs to wear. They ran off barefooted.

We are impressed by the peaceful intermingling of Arab and Israeli in the Old City of Jerusalem and the freedom of movement everywhere. Arabs have flocked into the New City. Israelis and Arabs who haven't seen each other in 19 years meet like old, lost friends.

In sharp contrast, Arab refugees in the Gaza Strip, held within the territory as virtual prisoners by the Egyptians in charge, are hostile. All essential services—water, electricity, etc.—have been restored by the Israelis. In the city of Gaza, Israelis are loading buses full of Arab citizens who wish to visit their families in Jordan. It will be the first time since 1948 that they have been allowed out of the area.

The problems created by the new situation are staggering. If Israel keeps some of the territories, the Arabs will have to be incorporated into the economy. There will be labor problems. The Arabs can be absorbed only into agriculture or as unskilled workers.

WHILE HERE we have visited with the group of ten ADL staff members attending a six-week B'nai B'rith seminar. We attended and addressed the convention of 135 B'nai B'rith lodges in Israel.

At home, ADL's 28 regional offices, using League reports, surveys and analyses, are acting as information centers for Jews and non-Jews in their areas. There are those reports on which this issue of the *ADL Bulletin* is based; there are press surveys and fact sheets on the background of the conflict and all aspects of it, including the plight of Jews in Arab lands and that of the Arab refugees. The great wealth of in-depth materials prepared by the League are not only invaluable to the community at large, but to the work of the agency itself in striving to improve inter-group relations, in keeping constant vigilance against anti-Semitism.

I AM an American Jew in Israel filled with admiration for what this tiny nation has accomplished, filled with emotion at the significance of Jewish peoplehood. Our visit to the Wailing Wall was the emotional experience of a lifetime.

We are a people. What happens to us in any part of the world happens to all of us everywhere. This is the lesson the harsh facts of history have taught.