America was settled by fugitives, and great was the blessing. Perhaps the Middle East -- Israel, the ancient Garden of Eden in Iraq, and even the wastelands of the hinterland -- may come to life because of, and not in spite of, the existence of the Jewish and Arab refugees. But the preliminary stage is that of foregiveness, the will to peace, and a massive desire to build despite past or present difficulties. And does not this attitude finally embody the spirit of Christmas? Nature, with patient growth, erases the destruction wrought by volcano, floods, and man-made wars. The results are new beauty and fruitfulness. The Middle East has all the potentials for a renaissance of beauty and fruitfulness -- the land and the people.

Cordially yours,

Karl Baehr

Karl Baehr
Executive Director

A NEW LOOK AT UNRWA?

On December 12th, at its Thirteenth Session, the General Assembly voted and passed a resolution endorsing the budget and program of the United Nations Relief Works Agency for the Arab refugees. Last year the contributing countries fell far short on their pledges and the UNRWA vocational training and other "self-supporting" projects suffered as a result. The first operative paragraph of the resolution is therefore interesting in this respect. It

> "1. Draws the attention of Governments to the precarious financial position of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and urges them to consider to what extent they can contribute or increase their contributions in order that the Agency may carry out relief and rehabilitation programmes for the welfare of the refugees;"

Also the Agency was directed "to plan and carry out projects capable of supporting substantial numbers of refugees, and in particular programmes relating to education and vocational training," while the host governments were requested "to co-operate fully with the Agency and with its personnel and to extend to the Agency every appropriate assistance in carrying out its functions." The latter insertion had been made necessary by various restrictions imposed upon UNRWA in the performance of its relief activities.

But the resolution is perhaps particularly interesting for a paragraph which did not get into it and yet which formed the core of a draft resolution jointly submitted by the Netherlands, New Zealand, United Kingdom and the United States on December 10th. This Four-Power draft resolution was presented to the General Assembly's Special Political Committee, which has been delegated jurisdiction over UNRWA.

The omitted paragraph represented an effort to commit the General Assembly to some sense of the urgent need for finding new alternatives to