

DEBATE ON THE ARAB REFUGEE PROBLEM
GENERAL ASSEMBLY - SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE

(Each year the United Nations Works and Relief Agency -- UNRWA -- comes under review by the Special Political Committee of the U.N.'s General Assembly. And each year the ensuing debate touches off a spate of heated charges and counter-charges. The record of the XIVth General Assembly discussions of this controversial issue took on a special intensity as UNRWA was originally scheduled to terminate its activities in June, 1960.)

November 10 - Dr. John H. Davis, UNRWA director, appearing before the General Assembly Special Political Committee, said that assistance for the Arab refugees would be needed for a decade or more. He indicated that work for at least two-third's of the nearly 1,000,000 refugees could not be found in the countries where they are now mainly concentrated, in Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt. The UNRWA head did not specify which countries in the area could (or should) provide permanent livelihoods for the refugees. Dr. Davis and Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold, who also spoke to the Committee, urged that the work of UNRWA be continued, in the latter's words, "for all the time and to all the extent necessary."

November 11 - Ahmed Shukairy, permanent delegate of Saudi Arabia to the U.N., declared that the Palestine Arab refugees would resort to arms unless they were restored to their former homes -- in which event they would have the support of 80 million Arabs.

November 12 - Israel's chief delegate to the U.N., Michael Comay, in his first appearance as successor to Abba Eban, said that his government was ready "to sit down earnestly and with humility" with Arab representatives, inside or outside the U.N., to negotiate a settlement of the problem. He repeated Israel's opposition to any large-scale repatriation of the Palestine Arabs, who "must be helped to build new lives for themselves among their brethren in the Arab countries." Mr. Shukairy replied that there was nothing to negotiate as long as Israel declined to repatriate the Arab refugees or to accept the internationalization of Jerusalem.

November 17 - "We refuse to believe," the Ceylonese delegate, Mr. G.P. Malalasekara said, as the Arab-Israel debate continued, "that responsible statesmen will reject out-of-hand any alternative whatsoever to the solution proposed by them, that they will insist unyieldingly and adamantly that there is only one solution and none other." Pointing to the need for an Arab-Israel compromise, he noted that there was "room for discussion and negotiation." Mr. Malalasekara urged both sides to refrain from fighting the Arab-Israel war over again in the councils of the U.N.

November 20 - Calling for a "constructive" approach, the U.S. alternate delegate, Dr. Virgil Hancher, told the members of the Special Political Committee that relief alone was "not a satisfactory way to solve the long-term problems of the Arab refugees." He announced further that the U.S. would support any suggestion, whether related to the Palestine Conciliation Commission or not, that might help resolve the impasse. [The Palestine Conciliation Commission was formed in 1948 with the participation of the U.S., France and Turkey to reach a basic settlement of Arab-Israel issues. It has been inactive for some years.]

November 26 - A new stage-by-stage proposal for a solution of the Arab