

# THE HOUSEHOLD OF PEACE

by Shirley W. Madany

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There are things which we take for granted, such as our utilities and our mail service. We get rather upset when they fail us. Lately we have had some unexplainable power outages in our suburb. Unexplainable because there are no indications of lines down because of bad weather. We find it perturbing. At other times we feel that the mail is not flowing just as it should and that bothers us. But, in general, electricity, water and mail are tremendously reliable and it keeps our lives running much more peacefully than is so for a large proportion of this world.

Lebanon makes a good example. After seventeen years in which a deadly civil war raged around the vicinity of the capital city, Beirut, the water and the electricity are still erratic. The sounds of guns have receded into the distance but this major frustration remains. It wears on the nerves of the Lebanese who have stuck it out so long. And their mail service, always exceptionally reliable is still on the restricted list - they can only be serviced by air!

Speaking of mail service, the United States Post Office periodically issues a one-page statement about "SERVICE DISRUPTIONS." This one page notice tells quite a story. Kuwait, Iraq, Lebanon and Libya all have restrictions regarding mail. Somalia has an embargo on surface mail due to the horrendous civil war raging around her capital city of Muqdishu. These five countries make up one-quarter of the Arab bloc and they have all suffered in some way from the current unrest and outright war within their boundaries.

Glancing down the list one notices that too many countries in the continent of Africa have had "all service suspended." One wonders what is happening. Are things going backwards for Africa? It is pretty difficult to work in a country whose lines of communication have been broken.

Another Arab country is beginning to make the headlines because of internal unrest. Morocco and Tunisia, the neighbors of Algeria, are watching anxiously, hoping that the uprising will not spread to them like a contagious disease.

Algeria's problem? Well, when you consider that two-thirds of Algeria's population is under 30 and at least 30% of them unemployed with absolutely no hope of ever doing a good day's work, you get some idea of the picture. But if you knew more about Algeria's history you would be even more distressed for its unhappy population.

A recent article in the Wall Street Journal of January 23/92, datelined Algiers, tells of the conflict which is pitting father against son, as it develops along generational lines. Peter Waldman talks with various Algerians of all ages and discovers that the older generation, who are the survivors of a war of independence with France which claimed one million men and women, do not take kindly to the wave of Islamic fundamentalism which is promising a solution to the young people. He quotes this

rather pathetic and utopian remark: "When we have a Muslim country, there won't be poor people. Everybody will work. A man won't be able to take your wife, just because he is rich."

An Arabic magazine, Al Hawadeth, published in London, England, carried an editorial on the Algerian situation. It corroborated the report of notorious corruption of the present ruling one-party regime which has persisted in mis-running the country.

The editorial regards state socialism as a disaster. They are critical also of the expulsion of Algerian born Europeans which occasioned the breakdown of agriculture and the end of food self-sufficiency causing a trade deficit of \$3.5 billion. It is well known that the ruling elite embezzled billions of dollars (stashing it away in private bank accounts in Europe). Americans will recall the eager role which Algeria played at the time of the Iranian hostages. Algeria has wasted further monies on "fighting imperialism" and "helping" third world countries.

This is more than a passing crisis. One has only to look at another statistic to see a stormy future. Evidently oil production which constitutes 40% of the national income and covers 95% of imports will decrease in the year 2000 and cease in 2010. Meanwhile there will be an alarming population explosion: 25 million now will become 40 million in the year 2000!

A return to the past as heralded by the Islamic fundamentalists will not be an answer. Nor is it helpful for well-meaning but uninformed Westerners to deny these facts and look the other way. To do that is to perpetuate rather than to hasten the solution of these age-long problems.

Sentimentality vis-a-vis the problem in Algeria or for that matter in any Arab world country, especially the Middle East, is merely a palliative and does not contribute towards healing. True compassion requires enabling Arabs to see themselves as they truly are and to point them away from their manifold complexes which find their center in their basically legalistic outlook on life. When facts are taken seriously and the Gospel of Jesus Christ is proclaimed against this background, many young Arabs who belong to this angry generation will find a ray of hope in the Christian message. They will no longer regard the Gospel as the propaganda of the West, but as it genuinely is--a message which came from God and which was first revealed in the heart of the Middle East.

Realism is what is needed.

We have a special concern for the peoples of Algeria. We have been bringing them the Gospel for more than 30 years. That is why we are telling you their story. We want you to be aware of these thousands of young people who are turning desperately to a solution which is no solution.

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