

The Richmonds, Palestine and the Catholic Press, 1967-80

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After retiring from a successful diplomatic career in 1966, Sir John Richmond (1909-90) and his wife Diana (1914-97) settled in Durham, where he had accepted a lectureship in Modern Near East History at the University's School of Oriental Studies. Following the Six-Day War in June 1967, the Richmonds became increasingly concerned at the suffering of Palestinians living in the occupied territories and the strong media bias prevalent at that time. They were instrumental in founding the Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding (CAABU) and over the next few years devoted themselves to campaigning on behalf of Palestinians. In addition to monitoring and criticising the secular newspapers, the Richmonds—who were both converts to Catholicism—took a close interest in the leading Catholic papers: *The Tablet*, *The Catholic Herald* and *The Universe*. They engaged in extensive correspondence with their editors—both on the newspaper pages and in private—as well as involving a wider circle of influential Catholic writers and clergy. This article, drawing heavily from the Richmond Papers held at Exeter University's Special Collections, examines the motives and methods of the Richmonds' campaign, and attempts to assess whether or not their efforts achieved their aim of changing attitudes.

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Bishop Fenelon (1651-1715) believed that every Catholic priest should know the layout of the streets of Jerusalem as well as that of his hometown, but the city of Rome seems to have occupied a far greater place in the minds of English Catholics since the Reformation.¹ Indeed, studies of British Catholicism during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries rarely mention Jerusalem or the Holy Land—a place where the relationship between spiritual and temporal powers has been no less fraught than the *Urbs Aeterna*—even when discussing political

¹ Judith Champ, *The English Pilgrimage to Rome: a Dwelling for the Soul* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2000). See also J. Derek Holmes, *More Roman Than Rome: English Catholicism in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Patmos Press, 1978) and V. Alan McClelland and Michael Hodgetts, eds. *From Without the Flaminian Gate: 150 Years of Roman Catholicism in England and Wales 1850–2000* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd., 1999) in which the literal and metaphorical significance of the city of Rome is underscored in the titles.

involvement or international policy elsewhere. While British Catholic perspectives on the Spanish Civil War or the Holocaust have been studied in depth, attitudes towards the Middle East in general, and Palestine in particular, remain remarkably neglected.² This is in stark contrast to the attention paid to the role played by the Pope and European bishops during World War Two and the Holocaust, the subsequent developments in Jewish-Catholic relations, the position of Catholic and other Christian communities in the Middle East, and the Vatican's diplomatic relations with the state of Israel.

While existing literature might suggest that Catholics in post-war Britain showed little interest in the political and religious developments in Palestine, this article, drawing on the archival papers of Sir John and Lady Diana Richmond, argues that the Catholic community actively engaged with these issues, and that their involvement was primarily led by the laity, rather than the clergy. Studies of the Catholic Church in twentieth century Britain have tended to focus on clerical leadership, literary output and demographic changes in the relations of Catholicism within civil society in the UK, and, despite Vatican II's emphasis on the role of the laity, scant attention has been paid to the intellectual culture of lay Catholics in the post-conciliar decades.³ The Richmonds' case is particularly interesting in that they were both converts to Catholicism, whose concern for Palestinian issues was partially motivated by their respective family backgrounds. These personal narratives would connect the British Mandate for Palestine, the interwar culture of the Ditchling community, the diplomatic and political establishment of the postwar era, and the literary and editorial circles of the Catholic press during the 1960s and 1970s.

While some recent studies do mention the conservative attitudes and influence of newspaper editors such as Tom Burns and Douglas Woodruff within the context of the intellectual and political landscape of English Catholicism, more detailed analysis of how the Catholic press actually operated has been sadly lacking.⁴ Vatican II's 'Decree

² See for example discussions in Tom Buchanan and Martin Conway, *Political Catholicism in Europe, 1918–1965* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) and Kester Aspden, *Fortress Church: The English Roman Catholic Bishops and Politics 1903–63* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2002).

³ Jay P. Corrin's *Catholic Progressives in England after Vatican II* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2013) is one of the few studies on this topic, but neither it nor Patrick Allitt's *Catholic Converts: British and American Intellectuals Turn to Rome* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018)—which does not extend beyond the Second Vatican Council—include any discussion of Palestine or Israel within their analysis of English Catholic views on political and international affairs. Michael Hornsby-Smith, *Catholics in England 1950–2000: Historical and Sociological Perspectives* (London: Continuum, 1999), contains some valuable insights into developments in both attitudes and practices outwith the intellectual elites that are the main focus of Corrin and Allitt.

⁴ Some general discussion of the various newspapers during the twentieth century can be found in J. J. Dwyer, 'The Catholic Press, 1850–1950,' in George Andrew Beck, ed. *The English Catholics, 1850–1950: Centenary Essays to Commemorate the Restoration of*

on the Media of Social Communication' [*Inter mirifica*] addressed key issues such as the moral right of readers to unbiased information, and the pastoral duty of bishops to foster relations between the Church and the media as well as oversee the activities of the Catholic press. These were matters in which the Richmonds were active, not least in their appeal to the Apostolic Nuncio to intervene with regard to perceived bias on the subject of Palestine in the Catholic newspapers. This article aims to provide an insight into the internal working of the post-conciliar Catholic press through analysis of the Richmonds' campaigning activities. It also highlights the diverse ways in which different, and sometimes opposing, networks of Catholic laity engaged with the situation in Palestine, and the challenges faced in negotiating the complex web of religious, cultural and political alliances that defined opinions at the time. In order to appreciate the position taken on Palestine by Sir John and Lady Diana Richmond, it is necessary first to provide some details of their background.

Sir John and Lady Diana Richmond: family foundations

John Christopher Blake Richmond was born on 9 September 1909 at Hitcham Vale House in Taplow, Berkshire. Since 1895, his father, architect Ernest Tatham Richmond (1874-1955), had been working in Egypt and Palestine on various projects, beginning with the task of assisting Somers Clarke—an old friend of his father, Sir William Richmond R.A.—with preparing illustrations for J.J. Tylor's *Wall drawings and monuments of El Kab. The temple of Amenhetep III*.⁵ He was then appointed Assistant Architect to the Comité pour la Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe and carried out a series of restorations of Cairo mosques, as well as commissions for the British

the Hierarchy (1950), Michael J. Walsh, *The Tablet, 1840-1990: A Commemorative History Paperback* (London: Tablet Publishing, 1990) and Tom Burns' autobiography, *The Use of Memory: Publishing and Further Pursuits* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1993), while there is some valuable discussion of the relationship between the press, politics and antisemitism in Thomas R. Greene, 'Vichy France and the Catholic Press in England: Contrasting Attitudes to a Moral Problem,' *British Catholic History* Vol.21:1 (1992): 111-133. Alana Harris, *The Schism of '68: Catholicism, Contraception and Humanae Vitae in Europe, 1945-1975* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018) includes some comparative analysis of press coverage in *The Tablet* and *Catholic Herald*, while her *Sink or Swim: Catholicism in Sixties Britain through John Ryan's Cartoons* (Durham: Sacristy Press, 2020) examines the weekly illustrations provided by John Ryan for the *Catholic Herald*. One of these provoked the ire of Lady Diana Richmond: see her letter in the papers of Sir John and Lady Diana Richmond, Special Collections, University of Exeter. EUL MS 115/8/2. (All quotes published courtesy of Special Collections, University of Exeter). Owen Dudley Edwards, 'The Catholic press in Scotland since the restoration of the hierarchy', *Innes Review* 29:2 (Autumn 1978): 156-182, has no English counterpart as yet which covers the post-conciliar years. Almost all these studies deal exclusively with published content, rather than examining the editorial processes and internal workings of the press.

⁵ Painter, sculptor and stained glass designer Sir William Blake Richmond (1842-1921) was the son of the painter George Richmond RA.

Army of Occupation and the Ministry of Public Works.⁶ Richmond returned to England in 1911 to set up an architectural practice, but, after a spell in Gibraltar and London, returned to the Middle East in the spring of 1918, as a Temporary Major in the Military Administration in Jerusalem and assistant to Ronald Storrs (1881-1955).⁷ This work brought him into close contact with Muslim dignitaries in Jerusalem, and, having learnt Arabic in Egypt, he befriended many of the leading Arab families in Palestine. When Sir Herbert Samuel (1870-1963) arrived as High Commissioner for Palestine in 1920, he thought that Richmond could be useful in establishing links between the British administration and the local Arab population, and, following Storrs' recommendation, appointed him to a post of Assistant (Political) Secretary in the civil administration.⁸

Although the Mandate had been given to the British government in 1920, it remained in draft form and was not ratified by the League of Nations until July 1922. The future of the country was still uncertain, and Richmond was one of many who believed, wrongly as it turned out, that the rights of the Arab population in Palestine would be respected. Over the next few years, however, his beliefs led to growing tension with his superiors, who were strongly sympathetic to the Zionist Commission and deeply distrustful of Arab nationalists. Not all of his colleagues were unsympathetic, however, and he developed a close friendship with C.R. Ashbee (1863-1942) and his wife Janet, who had arrived in Jerusalem in 1918. Ashbee, one of the leading lights of the Arts and Crafts movement, had taken up a post as civic adviser, with responsibility for overseeing building works and the protection of other historic sites.⁹ Ashbee's friendship with Richmond may have contributed to the latter's involvement with the Ditchling community following his return to England. As disagreements with his other colleagues continued over the following eighteen months, Richmond realised his position was impossible and tendered his resignation,

⁶ On Richmond's work in Egypt, see the unpublished conference paper by Abdulrahman El-Taliawi, 'People Building with Earth, Mud and Concrete in Egypt at the Turn of the Century', given at Princeton University on 13 May 2022 for the Fung Hybrid Symposium, *The Profession's Extensions: Architecture Beyond Architects in the Modern Middle East*.

⁷ He spent about a year excavating in the Haram, with some of his findings subsequently published in *The Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. A Description of its Structure and Decoration* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924).

⁸ See Sir John Richmond's essay, 'Prophet of doom: E.T. Richmond, F.R.I.B.A., Palestine 1920-1924', in *Arabic and Islamic Garland: historical, educational and literary papers presented to Abdul Latif Tibawi by colleagues, friends and students* (London: Islamic Cultural Centre, 1977), 189-196, and also the numerous references to Richmond in Ronald Storrs, *Orientalisms* (London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 1945).

⁹ On returning to England, Ashbee published *A Palestine Notebook 1918-1923* (New York: Doubleday, 1923), in which Richmond's role as a bulwark against Zionist supporters in the Mandate was emphasised. Felicity Ashbee, *Janet Ashbee: Love, Marriage, and the Arts and Crafts Movement* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2002) p.159.

finally leaving Palestine in April 1924. He was not to return for another three years.

Roman Catholicism and Biblical antiquities

Back in England, both of John's parents became involved with the Ditchling community of craftsmen, which had been founded in 1920 by Hilary Pepler, Eric Gill and Desmond Chute. Gill had settled in Ditchling in 1907, and over the following years the village had attracted other artists, craftworkers and designers, including C.R. Ashbee's friends Ethel and Philip Mairet, who came to Ditchling in 1916, the same year as the Richmonds. A biographer of Gill named Richmond among the artists 'of a certain slightly awkward and reclusive personality' who were drawn to Ditchling during this period, along with Frank Brangwyn and calligrapher Amy Sawyer.¹⁰ Pepler acquired Fragbarrow Farm in 1919 and bought seven acres of land on which the community buildings would be built. In 1920 Gill, Pepler, Desmond Chute and Joseph Cribb founded the Guild of St Joseph and St Dominic, a religious fraternity modelled on medieval craft guilds, with its own rules and constitution, and spiritual guidance provided by the Dominican priest Fr. Vincent McNabb O.P. (1868-1943).

Among Richmond's papers at Durham University is a copy of *A Simple Prayer Book*, published by the Catholic Truth Society. This contains a photograph of Hilary Pepler, who presented Richmond with the prayerbook on 12 August 1925.¹¹ Tensions between Gill and Pepler in the early 1920s led to Pepler's resignation from the Guild in 1924 and Gill's departure for Capel y-Ffin. Pepler then sold Fragbarrow and moved to a house called Hopkins Crank. The Richmonds moved into Fragbarrow sometime in late 1925 or early 1926.¹²

At its peak in the early 1920s there were over forty Catholics living and working on Ditchling Common. There does not appear to be a detailed record of the Richmonds' activities here, but the influence of Pepler and Gill can be discerned from the Richmond's conversion. Ernest Richmond was received into the Church by Cardinal Bourne, whom he had met in Palestine, on 24 May 1926, and his wife Muriel on

¹⁰ Fiona MacCarthy, *Eric Gill* (London: Faber, 1989), 84.

¹¹ Durham University Library, Archives and Special Collections (hereafter DUL), Ernest Tatham Richmond papers, RIC 11/16. Writer, printer and poet Harry Douglas Clark Pepler (1878-1951) arrived in Ditchling in 1915, converted to Catholicism the following year, and adopted the name of 'Hilary' in 1918 after joining the Third Order of the Dominicans. One of his sons was Fr. Conrad Pepler O.P. (1908-93)

¹² 'Note by ETR of MMR [his wife Muriel]'s main activities during the period 1925-1926, spent at Fragbarrow on Ditchling Common, Sussex.' DUL, Ernest Tatham Richmond papers, RIC 8/5/27. *The Kalendar of the Royal Institute of British Architects, November 1925-October 1926* (London: RIBA, 1925), 138 gives The Elms, Ditchling, as Richmond's address.

29 March 1928.¹³ Ernest Richmond's scholarly writings take on a more religious character from this time onwards, with his analysis of antiquities being viewed from the perspective of the Scriptures and Catholic teaching.¹⁴

Before he left the British administration, Ernest Richmond had brought both John and his younger sister Elizabeth (1911-86) out to Palestine. The future diplomat's fascination with the Middle East began with these visits to 'the lands of the Bible' as a thirteen year old schoolboy. His father's involvement with Palestine was not interrupted for long: in 1927 he returned to Jerusalem to take up a strictly non-political appointment as Director of the Department of Antiquities, which he held for the next ten years. Although Eric Gill had left the Ditchling community in 1924, Richmond may have had some part in Gill's commission to sculpt bas-reliefs and signage (in English, Arabic and Hebrew) for the new Palestine Archaeological Museum that had been founded in 1930.¹⁵ Prior to the construction of this new building—funded by donations from American philanthropist John D. Rockefeller, Jr.—the Department of Antiquities had occupied a small building on the north of the city which they shared with the British School of Archaeology.¹⁶ The new premises, opened in 1935, provided greater facilities and resources, and a better location from which the museum's director could liaise with other scholars working in the field. Perhaps building on the Dominican connections established at Ditchling, Richmond made contact with the priest-scholars of L'École Biblique, the research centre based in the Dominican convent of St Stephen in Jerusalem which had been founded in 1890 by Father Marie-Joseph Lagrange OP (1855-1938). Richmond seems to have developed a particularly close

¹³ Ernest married Margaret Muriel Lubbock in 1906. Cardinal Bourne visited Palestine between January and March 1919, and was a vocal critic of Zionism thereafter. For an analysis of Bourne's rhetoric, the stance taken by the English Catholic hierarchy towards British policy in Palestine, and the charge of antisemitism, see Ulrike Ehret, *Church, Nation and Race: Catholics and Antisemitism in Germany and England, 1918-45* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 100-103.

¹⁴ See, for example, his pamphlet *The sites of the crucifixion and the resurrection* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1935) and the articles 'Basilica of the Nativity' and 'The Church of the Nativity' in *Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine*, Vol.5:3 and Vol.6:2 (1936) respectively.

¹⁵ Eric Gill's record of the commission, carried out in 1934, was published in *From the Jerusalem Diary* (London: Privately printed, 1953), which was edited by his wife Mary and privately printed. An earlier version, *The Palestine Diary* (London: Harvill Press, 1949), was aborted prior to publication. Gill made no reference to Richmond, but did draw on his expertise during his time in Jerusalem, according to Robert Speaight, *The Life of Eric Gill* (London: Methuen, 1966), 251-2. Gill's reputation was irrevocably damaged after the publication of Fiona MacCarthy's biography in 1989, with its revelations of incestuous sexual abuse, recorded in detail in his personal diaries.

¹⁶ For details on the Department's early history and the origins of the museum, see S. Gibson, 'British archaeological institutions in Mandatory Palestine, 1917-1948', *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 131:2 (1999): 115-143.

friendship with Fr. Louis-Hugues Vincent OP (1872-1960), whom Lagrange described as ‘the foremost Palestinian archaeologist in the world.’¹⁷

Given the significant role Catholicism played in his parents’ lives, it was unsurprising that John Richmond was received into the Catholic Church, while he was a student at Hertford College, Oxford.¹⁸ After graduating, he proceeded to the Bartlett School of Architecture at University College, London, leaving in 1931 to join Professor John Garstang’s celebrated archaeological expedition at Jericho. Another member of the team, Thomas Hodgkin, described dining with the Richmonds, in a letter written to his mother on 14 February 1933: ‘a charming family, especially the father—Director of Antiquities here—thin, like a knife, always ill, an architect, aesthetically cadaverous cheeks and nervous fingers—incisive talk—far the cleverest of the family and an artist.’¹⁹ A much later letter to John Richmond from Biblical scholar and Ampleforth monk Fr. Henry Wansbrough OSB suggests that John also excavated with Fr. Henry’s cousin, archaeologist Olga Tuffnell, during this period.²⁰ After a variety of other archaeological expeditions in the Jordan Valley and elsewhere between 1931 and 1936, John joined HM Office of Works, where he was employed at the time of his marriage to Diana Galbraith in February 1939.²¹

Born in London in June 1914, Diana Margaret Lyle Galbraith had been raised as a Presbyterian; her mother had been born in Scotland and her father was an elder of a Presbyterian church in St John’s Wood.²² The importance of this background for her views about

¹⁷ William F. Albright, ‘Report of the Director in the School, 1921-1922,’ *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, No. 8 (December 1922) p.16. Original letters from Fr. Vincent to Ernest Richmond, including those discussing the partition of Palestine, are preserved in DUL, Ernest Tatham Richmond papers, RIC 5/1/275-282. The priest also presented Richmond with an inscribed copy of his book *L’Authenticité des lieux saints* (Paris: Lecoffre, 1932) in 1937. As indication of the esteem in which the Dominican scholar was held by Richmond, his suggested reading at the end of *The Sites of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection* (1934) consists solely of published works by Fr. Vincent.

¹⁸ He matriculated at Hertford College in October 1928, and graduated with a third class degree in Modern History in 1931. *Oxford Historical Register Supplement*. My thanks to Dr Lucy Rutherford, Archivist at Hertford College, for confirming these dates.

¹⁹ Thomas Hodgkin, *Letters from Palestine 1932-36* (London: Quartet Books, 1986), 17.

²⁰ Letter from Fr. Henry Wansbrough OSB to Sir John Richmond, 28 October 1973. University of Exeter Special Collections, Richmond Papers, EUL MS 115/5/11. Tuffnell’s diaries confirm that she met Ernest and Margaret Richmond several times on digs during the 1930s—see John D.M. Green and Ros Henry, eds. *Olga Tuffnell’s ‘Perfect Journey’: Letters and photographs of an archaeologist in the Levant and Mediterranean* (London: UCL Press, 2021).

²¹ The best man at their wedding was Horatio Vester (1906-85), grandson of the founders of the Spafford Children’s Hospital in Jerusalem, who was married to John’s cousin Val Richmond.

²² Letter from Diana Richmond to Peter Nolan, 18 March 1974, EUL MS 115/10/5.

Palestine, Israel and the Jews should not be underestimated.²³ As she wrote to David Rosenberg on 26 June 1978, ‘anti-semitism . . . is really a very unlikely bias for a child brought up, as I was, in the Presbyterian Church. Jews are especially revered in this branch of Christianity.’²⁴ In a letter to David Cohen she wrote: ‘I was brought up a Protestant, a Presbyterian, and this was an advantage on the Judaism network as we really knew our Old Testament in a way that Catholics used not to do. I think they are better nowadays.’²⁵ Diana was educated privately, including two years (1929-31) at Downe House girls’ school in Berkshire, after which she worked in commercial art and music publishing. She met John Richmond through his younger sister Elizabeth, who was also a pupil at Downe House.²⁶ Although not Catholic at the time of their marriage, she was received into the Church shortly after, aged 25.

The newlyweds did not have much time together before the outbreak of the Second World War, during which John Richmond served as an Army Intelligence Officer in Palestine, Syria and Iraq, where his knowledge of Arabic proved invaluable.²⁷ Twin daughters Sally and Emma were born in Aberdeen on 8 July 1940, and before the end of the month their father left on active service. He would not see them again for almost six years. When the war ended John was stationed in Jerusalem and Diana travelled out to join him there in 1946, taking the two young girls with her. For about eight months—from August 1946 to April 1947—the Richmonds lived in Jerusalem, where John worked as Conservator of Ancient Monuments at the same museum where his father had been Director.

²³ For examples of the ways in which Knox identified sixteenth century Scotland with the Israel of the Old Testament, see John Knox, ‘History of the Reformation in Scotland’, *The Works of John Knox* ed. David Laing 6 vols (Edinburgh: Wodrow Society, 1848), 2: 286, 442-3. Gordon Donaldson, *The Scottish Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960) p.131. Israel’s Covenant with God remained a powerful and emotive symbol, providing the inspiration for the seventeenth century ‘Covenanters’ as well as the leaders of the Free Church of Scotland in 1843, who explicitly framed their ‘Act of Separation and Deed of Demission’ as the latest in a series of National Covenants, stretching back through the National Covenant (1683) and the First National Covenant (1581).

²⁴ Diana Richmond to David Rosenberg, 26 June 1978, EUL MS 115/18/1.

²⁵ Diana Richmond to David Cohen, 9 September 1974, EUL MS 115/10/11. See also her letter to Dr David Rosenberg, 19 March 1973, EUL MS 115/8/2 in which she discussed her father being a Presbyterian elder and her long-held respect for Judaism.

²⁶ Elizabeth Richmond (1911-86) lived in Palestine from 1922 to 1934, marrying Air Vice Marshal Sir Wilfrid Rhodes Freeman in 1935 and spending the war years as a W.R.A.F. staff officer, earning an MBE for her service. In the 1950s, Lady Elizabeth Freeman was a supporter of the right-wing League of Empire Loyalists (LEL) and sponsor of their journal *Candour*. Following a period of decline and fragmentation, the LEL’s founder A.K. Chesterton co-founded the National Front in 1967 and, according to Martin Durham, *Women in Fascism* (London: Routledge, 1998) p.101, Freeman served on the National Front’s National Council during its early years.

²⁷ A postcard sent from Diana Richmond to her father-in-law, dated 27 May 1940, refers to their plans for packing up in anticipation of John’s posting abroad. DUL, Ernest Tatham Richmond papers, RIC 2/7/7.

Although the war had ended, the British situation in Palestine was far from peaceful. Some 250,000 Jewish refugees remained stranded in European displaced persons camps and international pressure, led by US President Harry Truman, was put on the British government to remove their ban on immigration and admit 100,000 Jews into Palestine. According to the Balfour Declaration of 1917, Britain was committed to providing a 'national home for the Jewish people' in Palestine, but they had also made similar promises to the Arabs in return for military and political support during the First World War. The British were therefore faced with an impossible situation, unable to honour the promises they had made, and increasingly unable to maintain order as Zionist paramilitary groups took up arms to protest against the British refusal to admit Jewish immigrants. The murder of British soldiers, policemen and government officials became a regular occurrence, the most notorious incident being the bombing of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem on 22 July 1946, causing the death of over 90 people. This bombing occurred just ten days before the Richmonds arrived in the city. With the Mandate unpopular both at home and in Palestine, the British government—war-weary and economically exhausted—announced in September 1947 that the Mandate for Palestine would end at midnight on 14 May 1948. The British turned to the United Nations for help in finding a solution, but after the General Assembly adopted a resolution on 29 November 1947 recommending the adoption of the Partition Plan for Palestine, fighting broke out between Arab and Jewish communities. Over the next few months this would escalate into full-blown war, as the military forces of neighbouring Arab countries responded to the declaration of the new state of Israel on 15 May 1948. Thousands of Palestinian civilians were killed, over 400 Palestinian villages were destroyed, depopulated, re-occupied by Israeli settlers and/or renamed, while some 700,000 Palestinians became refugees—an event named in Arabic the *Nakba*, or 'catastrophe.'²⁸

As the British mandate broke up, John Richmond was recalled from Jerusalem and Diana was requested to return to the UK. She had no wish to do so, however, and instead took her daughters by bus to join friends in Baghdad, where, fortuitously, her husband was posted three months later, having been transferred to the Diplomatic Service as

²⁸ Historical narratives about these events remain contested, but key works include publications by the 'New Historians'—a group of revisionist Israeli scholars in the 1980s that include Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel: Myths And Realities* (1987), Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949* (1988), Ilan Pappé, *Britain and the Arab-Israeli conflict 1948-51* (1988) and *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (2006), and Avi Shlaim, *Collusion across the Jordan: King Abdullah, the Zionist Movement and the Partition of Palestine* (1988), as well as the extensive literature published by Walid Khalidi and more recent studies by Nur Masalha.

Oriental Secretary to the British Embassy.²⁹ The Richmonds spent the next four years in Baghdad, where two sons were born: Thomas in 1947 and Samuel in 1949. After returning to work (1951–53) at the Foreign Office in England—where their daughter Sophia was born in 1951—John was appointed to further diplomatic posts including Counsellor to the British Embassy in Amman, Jordan (1953–55), Consul-General in Houston, Texas (1955–58), Counsellor for the British Property Commission in Cairo (1959)—during which time he helped establish diplomatic relations between Britain and Egypt following the Suez debacle—and Political Agent in Kuwait, where he successfully handled the volatile relations with its neighbour Iraq, helping to oversee the emergence of Kuwait as an independent state and becoming the country's first British Ambassador (1961–63.) After a short academic stint as Supernumerary Fellow at St Antony's College, Oxford, he served as Ambassador to Sudan (1965–66) before retiring—with a knighthood for his services—and taking up a post as Lecturer in Modern Near East History at the School of Oriental Studies, University of Durham. Lady Diana Richmond studied for a French A-level and began teaching French at a small private girls' school in Darlington.

Palestine and post-war Catholicism

Before examining the Richmonds' campaign it is necessary to place their experiences between 1948 and 1967 within the context of the changes undergone by the Catholic community in England during the same period. Historians have already acknowledged the extent of the transformation wrought by the Second World War, breaking down the previous 'fortress Church' mentality that had encouraged a defensive, inward-looking emphasis on collective identity as a distinctive, traditional subculture. This stance, defined largely in opposition to other Christian denominations and left-wing political ideologies, including liberal democracy, led many Catholic intellectuals and clergy to naively support Fascist regimes in Spain and Italy, rendering them slow to recognise and condemn the threat posed by Nazi Germany.³⁰ There was also a strand of antisemitism among

²⁹ According to Diana Richmond, she refused to leave Jerusalem on the grounds that one of her young daughters was too ill to travel, backed up by a medical certificate obtained by 'a Jewish doctor friend.' See her accounts in her 1977 talk to the Durham Branch of the British Federation of University Women, EUL MS 115/15/7.

³⁰ This topic is addressed in detail by Tom Villis, *British Catholics and fascism. Religious identity and political extremism between the wars* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2013), especially chapter 3 for comparative analysis of the positions taken by *The Tablet* and *The Catholic Herald*, as well as Buchanan and Conway, *Political Catholicism*, Aspden, *Fortress Church*, and James R. Lothian, *The Making and Unmaking of the English Catholic Intellectual Community, 1910–1950* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009). Kevin L. Morris's two-part article, 'Fascism and British Catholic Writers 1924–1939' in

English Catholics, found explicitly in the writings of Belloc and Chesterton, and implicitly in the widespread Catholic silence over the persecution of Jews.³¹ *Catholic Herald* editor Michael de la Bédoyère continued to argue in his paper for an appeasement policy until the declaration of war with Germany, remained ambivalent for many months afterwards, and even expressed his hope for 'A Latin Catholic Bloc' in July 1940, formed by France, Spain and Italy, with the possibility of Britain joining in the future if the country's Catholics worked hard enough.³²

It was chiefly in response to this lack of support for the war among Catholic intellectuals that Cardinal Hinsley (1865-1943)—with the help of Barbara Ward (1914-81), Manya Harari (1905-69) and Christopher Dawson (1889-1970)—launched the Sword of the Spirit movement in 1940. Aimed at unifying English Catholics in support of the war, the 'SOS' advocated a programme of prayer, education, public meetings and publications, stressing the fundamental opposition between Christianity and totalitarianism. This was a significant shift towards liberal democracy and away from pre-war traditions of Bellocian triumphalism and support for authoritarianism. The latter were untenable after the war and prompted some soul-searching once the full extent of Jewish suffering during the Holocaust became public knowledge.³³ With rare exceptions, church and political leaders in Britain failed either to speak out against the mistreatment of European Jews in the 1930s or to offer asylum or practical support

New Blackfriars, Vol. 80, No. 935 (January 1999), 32-45 and Vol. 80, No. 936 (February 1999), 82-95, provides a careful examination of the range of ways in which writers such as Belloc, Dawson, Jerrold, de la Bédoyère, Hollis and Waugh expressed various degrees of empathy with political Fascism during the 1920s and 1930s. The Richmond archive contains some contentious correspondence between Diana Richmond and Christopher Hollis e.g. EUL MS 115/1/4, 115/2/1, 115/3/7 and 115/7/6.

³¹ Aspden points out antisemitism linked to antisocialism in many bishops' attitudes in *Fortress Church*, p. 215. Clergy such as Fr. Joseph Keating also resorted to outright antisemitism in articles such as 'Catholic Prospects of Hungary', *The Month* (November 1923), again driven by a perceived link between Jews and Socialism, but drawing on traditional theological stereotypes and prejudices about Judaism and Christianity. After the Russian Revolution, articles and editorials in *Blackfriars*, *The Month*, *The Tablet* and the *Catholic Herald* would regularly write about 'Jewish Bolsheviks' and 'Jewish-Masonic conspiracies' in their condemnations of the godless evils of Communist Russia and Republican Spain. The momentum behind such rhetoric was slow to decrease when news of the mistreatment of Jews in Nazi Germany emerged after 1933.

³² For a discussion of Christian attitudes beyond that of Catholicism, see Tony Kushner, 'Ambivalence or Antisemitism? Christian Attitudes and Responses in Britain to the Crisis of European Jewry during the Second World War', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 5 (1990), 175-189.

³³ As Lothian observes, the Sword of the Spirit's mission and the support given by the bishops 'empowered the previously insignificant minority of liberal democrats among English Catholics'. Lothian, *The Making and Unmaking of the English Catholic Intellectual Community*, 368. He argues this contributed to the 'unmaking' of the English Catholic intellectual community. See too the various studies of politics and Catholicism by Joan Keating, especially 'Looking to Europe: Roman Catholics and Christian Democracy in 1930s Britain', *European History Quarterly* Vol.26:1 (1996) 57-79.

for Jewish refugees in the 1940s.³⁴ While there is little evidence to support the idea that international guilt for the Holocaust contributed to support for a post-war Jewish state in Palestine, recent scholarship has addressed the subtler ways in which Europeans overcompensated for their previous failures by remaining silent on the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians in 1948 and their subsequent mistreatment under Israeli occupation, linking explicitly their denial or erasure of the Nakba with the Holocaust.³⁵ The Richmonds would find that their protests about Israeli policies and conduct in the Occupied Territories were often countered with references to Jewish suffering during the Holocaust. For example, one correspondent argued that the establishment of the State of Israel was ‘the only method of attempting to exorcise the centuries of persecution of the Jews.’³⁶

At the same time, after hundreds of years of seeing themselves as a persecuted subculture, Catholics in England were moving away from the ‘fortress’ mentality to engage with the wider world on different terms. The Sword of the Spirit movement was renamed the Catholic Institute for International Relations (CIIR) in 1965, working closely with the United Nations Food and Agricultural Association (FAO) to establish an overseas volunteer programme and humanitarian charity projects in Africa and Asia.³⁷ Parallels can be drawn with the foundation of other Catholic organisations such as the Catholic Fund for Overseas Development (CAFOD), founded in 1962, and Pax Christi, the English branch of which was established in 1971. As CIIR General Secretary Mildred Nevile has made clear elsewhere, social, cultural and educational developments within the Catholic community had begun to transform the nature of traditional Catholic organizations even before Vatican II.³⁸ There was a move

³⁴ Adrian Hastings, *A History of English Christianity, 1920-1990* (London: SCM Press, 1991), 376-77. See also Andrew Chandler, *British Christians and the Third Reich. Church, State, and the Judgement of Nations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

³⁵ See Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg, eds. *The Holocaust and the Nakba: A New Grammar of Trauma and History* (Columbia University Press, 2018) and G. Daniel Cohen, ‘Western European “Philosemitism” and the Nakba in the 1950s’ in Omer Bartov, ed. *Israel-Palestine: Lands and Peoples* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2021). For the role played by German reparations in the establishment of the State of Israel, see Michael Wolffsohn, *Eternal Guilt? Forty Years of German-Jewish-Israeli Relations* (New York: University Press, 1993), Lily Feldman, *The Special Relationship Between West Germany and Israel* (Boston: George Allen and Unwin, 1984) and Nicholas Balabkins, *West Germany Reparations to Israel* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1971).

³⁶ Letter from Margot Levy to Diana Richmond, 22 April 1974. EUL MS 115/9/2.

³⁷ Michael J. Walsh, *From sword to ploughshare: Sword of the spirit to Catholic Institute for International Relations 1940-1980* (London: Catholic Institute for International Relations, 1980).

³⁸ Mildred Nevile, ‘The Changing Nature of Catholic Organizations’ in Hornsby-Smith, *Catholics in England 1950-2000*, 99-121. Lady Diana Richmond corresponded with Mildred Nevile about the work of the CIIR in 1974 and 1977, EUL MS 115/10/9 and 115/15/2. She expressed admiration for the CIIR’s work in Yemen and agreeing to support

away from the local, parish-based group activities towards a more outward-looking attitude, working with non-Catholics on wider issues on a national and international level. Unsurprisingly, the Richmonds were members and active supporters of CAFOD and Pax Christi as well as CIIR, and would engage with these organisations as part of what they saw as a distinctively Catholic approach to humanitarian concerns and social justice in Palestine.³⁹ While the aims, methods and principles of the Richmonds' campaign might seem well-aligned with the general direction of postconciliar Catholicism, tension and conflict with the rest of the English Catholic community began almost immediately.

The Six-Day War and the beginning of the Richmonds' Palestinian campaign

During the Six Day War, fought between Israel and its Arab neighbours between 5 and 10 June 1967, the Richmonds were living in Durham. In the immediate aftermath of the war, they were founder members of the Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding (CAABU). This was a cross-party organisation of politicians, journalists, academics and others with an interest in the Arab World, who sought to promote Arab, and particularly, Palestinian interests. Other members include journalist Michael Adams (1920-2005), Christopher Mayhew MP (1915-97) (Vice-Chairman), former Conservative Minister Sir Anthony Nutting (1920-99), other MPs such as Ian Gilmour, David Watkins and Sir Dennis Walters, as well as diplomat John Reddaway (1916-90), who had experience of working in Cyprus and Palestine and would become a regular correspondent of the Richmonds. The catalyst for the foundation of CAABU was an awareness that British opinion about the Arab world was founded on widespread ignorance and stereotypes. A public opinion poll in July 1967 revealed that only 2% of the British people supported the Arab cause following the recent conflict.⁴⁰ Realising that this lack of sympathy was part of a wider issue, the members of CAABU hoped that a campaign of public lectures, press releases, correspondence and

the organisation in letters written to the *Catholic Herald* in response to criticism by Conservative MP Patrick Wall. See also correspondence, subscription forms and acknowledgments of donations to CAFOD and Pax Christi in EUL MS 115/17/9 and 115/19/8.

³⁹ While much of the CIIR's work focused on Latin America and Africa, they supported projects in Yemen and Lebanon, and published one of their *Comment* pamphlets (Issue No.19) on the Middle East. The stance taken on Palestine in *Comment* No.19 provoked a lengthy critical response from Louis Allen, including accusations that the Richmonds had been involved in writing the pamphlet. See the files EUL MS 115/8/7 and 115/13/11 which include correspondence between the Richmonds, Allen, Herbert McCabe O.P and Uri Davis, articles and replies in three issues of *New Blackfriars* (January, February and April 1975). The Richmonds ordered multiple copies of the CIIR pamphlet for distribution.

⁴⁰ *Sunday Times* Sunday 9 July 1967 p.2.

political pressure would be able to challenge these prejudices and encourage a more balanced and informed level of debate. As has recently been noted, historians ‘have tended to focus upon the 1980s as the decade in which levels of pro-Palestinian activism rose significantly’, and generally overlooked the extent of such activity in the late 1960s.⁴¹ There is, however, abundant evidence in the Richmond archive that members of the Catholic community were intensely active in this field.

The Richmonds’ concern to monitor media bias was clearly related to CAABU’s agenda, but they brought to it a strong religious impetus that was rooted in their Catholic faith. Writing to John Reddaway in 1980, Diana Richmond emphasised that ‘John and I have always seen the Palestine/Israel conflict in religious terms.’⁴² In due course, believing that the religious aspects of the Middle Eastern conflict were not receiving sufficient attention, they set up a Religious Affairs Group within CAABU to share theological expertise on topics such as Muslim-Christian dialogue and the Arab Christian churches.⁴³ The Richmonds’ work for Palestine can be divided into three main categories, although these were all interrelated. Firstly, there was their support of CAABU and other organisations and charities, including Musa Alami’s Arab Development Society, UNIPAL and the Friends of Bir Zeit University. Secondly, there was their use of personal contacts and teaching opportunities at Durham University, where they encouraged meetings between Jewish and Arab students, and tried to disseminate wider knowledge of the Middle East through lectures and public talks to local groups, such as the Women’s Institute and the United Nations Association. Thirdly, there was their role as self-appointed media watchers, and it is this work, with specific reference to the Catholic press, which will form the focus of the rest of this article.

Monastic Beginnings: the monks of Ampleforth and the psalms of Zion

Apart from CAABU, the Richmonds’ first efforts to challenge media bias began very close to home—at Ampleforth College, where their younger son Sam was a pupil. During the Six-Day War Sam had been extremely upset at the ‘whole-hearted support of the school, staff and community (so far as he could see) for Israel’, having visited Jerusalem with his parents several times and sharing their affection for the Arab

⁴¹ James R. Vaughan, “‘Mayhew’s outcasts’: anti-Zionism and the Arab lobby in Harold Wilson’s Labour Party”, *Israel Affairs*, Vol. 21:1 (2015), p.27.

⁴² Letter from Diana Richmond to John Reddaway 9 November 1980. EUL MS 115/21/7.

⁴³ The CAABU Religious Affairs Group (CRAG) was established in 1979 but eventually handed over by the Richmonds to Desmond Sullivan around 1980. Material on CRAG, including correspondence, administrative papers and circular newsletters can be found in EUL MS 119/21 and 119/22.

friends and culture he had known then. Distressed by the school's zealous pro-Israeli attitude, he had phoned his parents from school almost daily, to the extent that they were worried it would affect his exams.⁴⁴ Then, in the autumn of 1967, the college magazine *The Ampleforth Journal* ran an article on the war by *Observer* journalist and former pupil Patrick O'Donovan (1918-81), a self-declared 'hopeless partisan of Israel.'⁴⁵ John Richmond was upset not only by the text of the article but also by the inclusion of a photograph by David Newell Smith as the journal's frontispiece, which was captioned 'Victorious Israeli soldiers rejoice in front of The Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem, the site of the Temples of Herod and Solomon.' He wrote to the *Ampleforth Journal's* editor Br. Alberic Stacpoole OSB on 3 December 1967, protesting that publication of the photograph was 'a deplorable lapse from the standard of good manners to be expected from your journal.' While believing that O'Donovan had every right to state that he was 'not much interested in the morality of [Israel's] conception', he argued that 'surely the editorial staff of the *Ampleforth Journal* cannot shrug off so carelessly the question of whether justice or injustice is being done in the Holy Land.'⁴⁶ The Richmonds remained at loggerheads with O'Donovan for many years, and would clash again over his articles for the *Catholic Herald*. In 1978, Diana Richmond wrote to Dr Alan George of CAABU, stating her view that O'Donovan was: 'an admitted Zionist and has all the Cradle Catholic's hatred of Islam... He has to be watched when writing about Israel, I seem to remember he was there when the 1967 war took place, and wrote a glowing account of holy success for the *Ampleforth Journal*, which made a lot of work for both my John and for Glubb Pasha.'⁴⁷ Here Diana referred to Lieutenant-General

⁴⁴ Undated draft of a letter from Diana Richmond to Fr. Patrick Barry, Headmaster of Ampleforth, EUL MS 115/1/5. This refers to the Richmonds' continuing visits to Ampleforth: 'We come down to attend High Mass occasionally, to meet Father Benedict, to reminisce with Father Henry over Jerusalem, or argue with Brother Stacpoole about Israel.' Barry's reply, dated 17 September 1969, admitted 'I am sure all our reactions to the June war were conditioned by the press.' EUL MS 115/2/1.

⁴⁵ Patrick O' Donovan, 'War in the Holy Land', *Ampleforth Journal*, Vol.72:3 (Autumn 1967), 329-337. After leaving Ampleforth College, O'Donovan (1918-1981) saw active service with the Irish Guards during World War II, joining the staff of *The Observer* after the war. As the paper's foreign correspondent, he worked in Berlin, the United States, China, Palestine, Malaya, Korea and the Congo. He also wrote for the *Catholic Herald*. His posthumous memoirs were published as *A Journalist's Odyssey* (London: Esmonde Publishing Limited, 1985).

⁴⁶ The file EUL MS 115/1/1 also included Br. Alberic's letters to Richmond, on 11 December 1967 and 1 January 1968, and a second letter from Richmond to Br. Alberic on 28 December 1967. A former pupil of Ampleforth College, Alberic Stacpoole OSB (1931-2012) had a distinguished military career—including serving with the Parachute Regiment during the Suez Crisis—before he entered the monastery in 1960 and was ordained priest in 1970. He was editor of the *Ampleforth Journal* from 1967 to 1980.

⁴⁷ Letter from Diana Richmond to Alan George, 17 April 1978, EUL MS 115/18/1, in response to O'Donovan's article, 'Vatican Trouble Ahead over Israel' in *The Catholic*

Sir John Bagot Glubb (1897-1986), who had commanded the Arab Legion during the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict. Both he and Sir John Richmond were invited to make their case for the Arab point of view in the next issue of the *Ampleforth Journal*.⁴⁸ Br. Alberic was willing to concede ‘that we did slant that last *Journal* rather fiercely pro-Israeli. I can give you as part of the reason that we were reading the Churchills’ *Six Days War* in the refectory, and that by virtue of our Biblical training and constant recitation of the psalms, our consciousness is bound up with the Jewish eye upon the world.’⁴⁹ The Richmonds were not the only people to notice the monastic community’s leanings, and Raymond Asquith (eldest son of the 2nd Earl of Oxford), wrote to Diana Richmond from the college in 1969, stating ‘I think that Ampleforth is probably hopelessly pro-Israeli—but why, I have never managed to discover.’⁵⁰

The exchange of views between the Richmonds and the Ampleforth community was carried out on amicable terms and had no negative consequences on their relationship. Years later, Lady Diana reiterated her thanks to Fr. Henry Wansbrough for his ‘great kindness to Sam in 1967 when the Israeli forces overran the West Bank and Jerusalem’, and the Richmonds ‘were much refreshed’ by going on retreat to Ampleforth in 1979.⁵¹ The courteous and considerate nature of their exchanges with the Benedictine editors and scholars of Ampleforth would not always be found when the Richmonds turned their focus on the Catholic press.

The Tablet

The Tablet was founded in 1840. In February 1967, the editor, Douglas Woodruff, had stepped down after 30 years in post. Woodruff, along with Tom Burns, the new editor, had been part of a group that bought the weekly paper in 1936 after 68 years of clerical ownership. It had at once embarked on a new direction, adopting a less ecclesiastical tone and including extensive coverage of foreign affairs as well as literature, culture and politics.⁵² The Richmonds began reading *The Tablet* in

Herald, 14 April 1978, p.10. An effective riposte to this, written by David Gilmour, another CAABU member, was published or written on 20 April.

⁴⁸ Lengthy letters from Glubb and Richmond were published in the Correspondence columns of the *Ampleforth Journal*, Vol 73:1 (Spring 1968), 72-8.

⁴⁹ Letter from Br. Alberic Stacpoole OSB to Sir John Richmond, 11 December 1967. EUL MS 115/1/1. Randolph and Winston Churchill, *The Six Day War* (London: William Heinemann, 1967) was co-authored by the son and grandson of the wartime prime minister.

⁵⁰ Letter from Raymond Asquith to Diana Richmond, written on 26 September 1969 from Saint Oswald’s House, Ampleforth College. EUL MS 115/2/1

⁵¹ Letter from Diana Richmond to Fr. Henry Wansbrough OSB, 15 May 1980. EUL MS 115/21/1

⁵² *The Tablet* has received much more scholarly attention than other Catholic newspapers—see Walsh, *The Tablet, 1840-1900*, Burns, *The Use of Memory*, 143-69 and Dwyer, *The Catholic Press, 1850-1950*, 482-89.

1939, having been introduced to it by Ernest Richmond.⁵³ The new editor, 61 year old Tom Burns, although sharing the political conservatism and right-wing leanings of his predecessor, was by contrast a supporter of the Second Vatican Council and took the paper in a far more progressive direction in terms of its attitude towards Church teaching. These differences were brought sharply to the fore a year later with the publication of the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* in July 1968. Burns responded with an editorial headed 'Crisis in the Church', effectively rejecting papal authority and emphasising that in such matters, the Catholic laity needed to follow their own conscience. *The Tablet's* stance caused an ecclesiastical storm that lost them large numbers of subscribers—and severed his relationship with Woodruff after thirty years of friendship—but Burns resisted the pressures put on him to resign. He steered the newspaper onwards with a reputation for political conservatism and liberal theology. The bitter polarisation of views in the Catholic press and the attacks made on his editorial independence were almost certainly factors that shaped his dealings with the Richmonds.⁵⁴

Attitudes to Vatican II were not the only area in which the new editor made a sea change. In his 1993 autobiography, he acknowledged the antisemitism that had been present in the paper under Woodruff and stated that he made a deliberate decision to adopt a pro-Israel stance that soon saw him as a regular guest at events hosted by the British-Israel Society, enjoying friendly conversations with Chaim Herzog, the sixth President of Israel, and Teddy Kollek, the Mayor of Jerusalem from 1965 to 1993.⁵⁵ The Richmonds' criticism of the paper were summarised in a memorandum drawn up in January 1974:

Tablet and (lesser extent) *CH* [*Catholic Herald*] are

- 1) Unduly influenced by Israeli thinking and Zionist propaganda
- 2) Both ignorant of Arabic-speaking world and Christian inhabitants; *Tablet* actively hostile
- 3) *Tablet* only, anti-Islamic

⁵³ Letter from Diana Richmond to Latham Koenig, 9 July 1975, EUL MS 115/12/2. There are two drafts of this letter in EUL MS 115/12/4 which were shared with John Dingle and amended in the light of his comments.

⁵⁴ See the reflections on this written by Burns' assistant editor, John Wilkins, 'The tightrope: loyalty, independence & the Catholic press,' *Commonweal*, Vol. 136, no.19 (November 2009). As Alana Harris discusses, the *Catholic Herald* also attracted ecclesiastical disapproval for publishing in its pages lengthy and regular debates and correspondence on the subject, although Desmond Albrow was more careful in expressing his editorial viewpoint. Alana Harris, 'A Magna Carta for Marriage: Love, Catholic Masculinities and the *Humanae Vitae* Contraception Crisis in 1968 Britain,' *Cultural and Social History*, 17:3 (2020): 407-29.

⁵⁵ Burns, *The Use of Memory*, 158.

Possible reasons:

- 1) Working off Catholic guilt about Jews and transferring blame and hatred onto unreal Palestinians and other Arabs
- 2) Identification of Israeli government with Jewish people
- 3) Over-enthusiastic ecumenism between Jews and Christians⁵⁶

The Richmonds' belief in a 'Zionist bias' in the paper was founded upon analysis of the language and content of editorials and leading articles, omission of coverage of topics and news reports that presented Israeli actions in a negative light, the use of sources such as the Israeli Information Service and the regular space offered to contributors such as Terence Prittie and Rev. James Parkes whose pro-Israel stance was unambiguous and well-documented.⁵⁷ John Dingle confided in Diana Richmond his suspicion that anonymous leading articles in *The Tablet* were ghost-written by Prittie.⁵⁸

The Richmonds carefully read through *The Tablet* each week, cutting out articles on the Middle East and then retyping the text in order to add handwritten annotations with points for correction or comment. These drafts were then retyped, sometimes going through two or three further revisions, before a formal letter was drawn up and posted. As Diana Richmond later dated the start of her 'feud' with *The Tablet* to the series of articles published by Paul Sieghart, the correspondence relating to these articles will be used as a case study.⁵⁹

Sieghart (1927-88) was born in Vienna and came to England as a child when his family fled the Nazis, an experience that helped shape his lifelong work against oppression. He was called to the Bar at Gray's Inn in 1953 and practised as a barrister until 1966, after which he had a

⁵⁶ 'Notes for interview with Bishop Mahon on Jan 22 and with Archbishop Heim on Jan 23 1974. Israel and Palestine in the Catholic Press', EUL MS 115/7/7.

⁵⁷ Terence Prittie (1913-85) was West German correspondent of *The Guardian* from 1946 to 1963 and author of numerous books on the twentieth century history of Germany and Israel, including *Israel: Miracle in the desert* (London: Pall Mall, 1967), *Eshkol of Israel: The man and the nation* (London: Museum Press, 1969), *The Economic War Against the Jews* (Corgi, London, 1979)—co-written with Walter Nelson—and *Whose Jerusalem?* (London: Frederick Muller, 1981), as well as biographies of German leaders such as Konrad Adenauer and Willy Brandt. His hostility to all forms of anti-Semitism was shaped by his first-hand experiences in Nazi Germany during the 1930s. On Parkes, see See Alice Eckardt, 'Founding Father of Jewish-Christian Relations: The Rev. James Parkes (1896-1981)', *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 3, No.1 (2008): 1-9. <https://ejournals.bc.edu/index.php/scjr/article/view/1505>. Accessed 29 April 2019. A more critical approach to his work can be found in As'ad Razzūq's pamphlet *The Partisan Views of Reverend James Parkes* (Beirut: PLO, 1970).

⁵⁸ Letter from John Dingle to Diana Richmond, 12 January 1974, EUL MS 115/7/7. Insights into Prittie's journalistic practices can be found in Daphna Baram, *Disenchantment. The Guardian and Israel* (London: Guardian Books, 2004), which provides a balanced and detailed discussion of how the newspaper's editorial policy in relation to Zionism evolved and responded to events, including the tension with Michael Adams.

⁵⁹ Letter from Diana Richmond to Latham Koenig, 9 July 1975, EUL MS 115/12/2.

distinguished career as a jurist and human rights campaigner, writing books and articles on topics such as privacy and computers, AIDS, torture and prisoner rehabilitation. Prior to the visit to the Holy Land that provided the background to the *Tablet* articles, he had helped to draft the Right of Privacy Bill (1970). In May 1972 he had two articles published in *The Tablet*, the first one on 'The Holy Land in 1972', followed a fortnight later by 'Jerusalem in 1972.'⁶⁰ During the intervening week, an editorial was published under the heading of 'Israel and the Holy City,' which elicited a letter of praise from Terence Prittie.

Having read the first of these articles, Diana Richmond wrote at once to Tom Burns, editor of *The Tablet*, to inform that she was 'really horrified' by Sieghart's writing: 'it contains so many factual errors, and no understanding at all of the horrors that have happened to the Palestinians since the success of the Zionist idea.'⁶¹ Burns had not replied by the time the editorial, and a letter from Sieghart, had been published the following week, prompting Diana Richmond to send him a three-page letter with detailed criticisms of 'Israel and the Holy City.'⁶² Most of these concerned what might be termed points of grammar, such as Sieghart's reference to 'all governments concerned', which she noted excluded Palestinians who had no government, or his use of the term 'Israel' to include the occupied territories.

Burns wrote back on 25 May, thanking Lady Richmond for her two letters, but explaining that he could not:

'enter into correspondence on all the points that you raise. I am fully aware of the gravity of the subject under discussion and have no wish to see a purely one-sided attitude taken. Above all I want to work for peace in all this area and to that end will endeavour to have all sides fairly represented.'⁶³

Lady Richmond replied two days later, by which time Sieghart's second article had been published: she believed this to be 'so full of inaccuracies as to become almost ludicrous.'⁶⁴ She went on to type out a summarised list of Sieghart's statements, against which she wrote in pen a series of corrections or counter-statements. This formed the basis for a long letter, written the following day and published in *The Tablet* on 17 June, along with a reply from Sieghart, who recognised Sir John and Lady Richmond as 'sincere and dedicated advocates of the Palestinian Arab cause' and paid tribute to Sir John's

⁶⁰ 'The Holy Land in 1972' (13 May 1972), 444-5 and 'Jerusalem in 1972' (27 May 1972), 494-5.

⁶¹ Letter from Diana Richmond to Tom Burns, 15 May 1972, EUL MS 115/7/6.

⁶² Letter from Diana Richmond to Tom Burns, 22 May 1972 and accompanying notes on the editorial, EUL MS 115/7/6.

⁶³ Letter from Tom Burns to Diana Richmond, 25 May 1972, EUL MS 115/7/6.

⁶⁴ Letter from Diana Richmond to Tom Burns, 27 May 1972, EUL MS 115/7/6.

having ‘served with distinction’ during his diplomatic career. However, he also defended the opinions he had expressed in his articles and assured them that ‘Such bias as I have is in favour of justice and peace for all men and women, of all creeds, cultures and ethnic origins.’ His insistence that the Richmonds should ‘not assume that anyone whose views differ from theirs is just another conduit pipe for “The Israeli propaganda line”’ is one that would be echoed by other recipients of written criticism from the Richmonds.

Lady Richmond responded with a personal letter to Sieghart, clarifying some of the criticisms she had made which he had gently rebuffed in his published letter, many of which appeared to be directed at statements that he had not made. One recurring weakness of the Richmonds’ campaign, especially found in the letters of Lady Richmond, was the tendency either to exaggerate the significance of individual words or to write lengthy criticisms of views that had been extrapolated from a published text, but which were not actually present in the written word.

In a courteous and detailed letter that emphasised their points of agreement, Sieghart replied to Lady Richmond on 28 June after returning from abroad, expressing his lack of interest in any ‘brand of “ism”’. These are abstractions: what matters to me is people and their modes of existence.’ One of the statements in his letter would serve as a paraphrase for much of the dialogue that has taken place on the Palestinian issue: ‘I suspect that the differences between us are not so much questions of fact as of interpretation and underlying attitudes, and these do not yield readily to argument.’⁶⁵ After annotating his letter heavily in both red and blue ink, Lady Richmond replied to Sieghart on 11 July. As to whether he read it or replied or not, the archive is silent.

Editorial Policy: sins of omission and commission

While the exchange with Sieghart was concerned more with the factual content of his articles, the clashes that occurred on the correspondence pages of *The Tablet* were different in terms of the role played by editorial policy. The Richmonds were constantly frustrated at the way in which commissioned and editorial articles seemed to favour the Israeli perspective, with opposing views—whether those of the Richmonds or any others—being confined to the letters page.⁶⁶ Here, editorial control could be exercised to the extent of weighting the debate heavily on one side, with contributors of articles being given

⁶⁵ Letter from Paul Sieghart to Diana Richmond, 28 June 1972, EUL MS 115/7/6.

⁶⁶ Tom Burns revealed in a letter to John Dingle that *The Tablet* had commissioned an article from Rev. James Parkes, ‘Bridging the Chasm’, published on 8 December 1973. See letter from Dingle to Diana Richmond, 24 December 1972, EUL MS 119/7/8.

a substantial amount of space to reply to their critics before the correspondence was declared closed. The letters published over the winter of 1974-75 provide a good illustration.

Sir John Richmond wrote to criticise *The Tablet's* claims about the PLO, made on 30 November 1974. His letter was published on 7 December 1974 under the heading of 'The Palestinian's Plight'. A rejoinder from Terence Prittie was published on 14 December 1974, to which Richmond at once wrote a reply. The editor declined to publish this, but instead gave space to another attack on Richmond by David Jacobs, former Press Officer of the Zionist Federation, on the letters page of the issue for 21-28 December, forcing Richmond to phone in and withdraw his letter to reflect the changed circumstances. A rewritten letter was then published in *The Tablet* on 11 January, to be followed a week later by an emotional and accusatory letter from Prittie that used phrases such as 'complete fabrication on Sir John's part... shabby technique'. After the publication of Prittie's letter on 18 January 1975, Burns declared the correspondence closed.⁶⁷

Although editors are entitled to their independence and discretion—something that the Richmonds occasionally seemed to forget—it was, arguably, poor editorial etiquette to shut down an exchange of correspondence with a personal attack of this nature. John Dingle, who had several decades of experience as a professional journalist, sent a strongly-worded letter of protest to *The Tablet* about Burns' conduct, while John Richmond received many letters of support complaining about the way he had been treated. Burns replied to Dingle on 23 January 1975, justifying his decision on the grounds that the Richmonds were 'apologists and propagandists of the Arab cause.'⁶⁸

In all fairness, a clear discrepancy can be detected in Burns' attitude towards the two sides of the argument. He was certainly right to point to the Richmonds' public commitment to the Palestinian cause, but seemed unwilling to acknowledge that writers such as Terence Prittie, James Parkes and David Jacobs were equally partisan and arguably more dedicated to professional campaigning. As Christopher Walker pointed out, Prittie was 'employed as director of Britain and Israel Ltd, a public relations concern devoted to presenting the best face of Israel in its continuing conflict with the Arabs.'⁶⁹ Between November 1970 and August 1985, Britain and Israel Ltd. produced

⁶⁷ A copy of John Richmond's unpublished reply, written on 14 December 1974, is in EUL MS 115/12/1. Prittie's letters appeared in *The Tablet* on 14 December 1974, 1226, and 18 January 1975, 64.

⁶⁸ Copy of letter from Tom Burns to John Dingle, 23 January 1975, EUL MS 115/12/4.

⁶⁹ Christopher Walker, book review in the *Spectator* (28 March 1981), 25. Prittie signed himself 'Director, Britain and Israel' in the *Catholic Herald* (30 August 1974), 5 and his involvement was never denied.

a weekly commentary which was largely written by Prittie and published by the Narod Press. It was disingenuous, to say the least, for Burns to treat one party as professional apologists and not the other. The Richmonds' grievance lay not with the opinions being expressed in the pages of *The Tablet* but rather with the way in which pro-Zionists were allowed to write what purported to be general factual articles on the Middle East without their heavy commitments to one side of the argument being made clear.

The Richmonds' campaign was not confined to reactive criticism. Attempts were also made to submit articles to *The Tablet* on topics that they felt were not being covered. On 9 July 1972, Diana Richmond submitted an article on 'Christians in Israel', describing the destruction of the villages of Baraam and Ikrit. This was declined by Burns on the grounds of space and returned to her. She wrote again on 25 July and 2 August, enclosing further coverage of the story that had appeared in *Le Monde* and *The Guardian*, as well as new material from a member of the Knesset, and asking him to reconsider. Burns replied on the 15 August, assuring her that 'I have the whole question of peace in this area very much at heart and you must allow me my own ways of ensuring that this is ultimately obtained with justice to all.'⁷⁰

One of the Richmonds' objections was to the consistent use of phrases such as 'Christians living in Arab countries' instead of 'Arab Christians', which the Richmonds interpreted as ignorance of the presence of indigenous Christian communities within the Middle East. Diana Richmond offered to write an article on the topic for *The Tablet*, only for Burns to reject the idea in a letter of 5 February 1973.⁷¹ He later wrote to Lady Richmond: 'The poor little stunted Christian communities in Arab lands seem to be, for you, almost a justification of the relentless war throughout history that Mohammedians [sic] have waged on Christians. I am really not interested in the almost fanatical campaign which you appear to pursue in the interests of the Arab world.'⁷²

The Richmonds believed that *The Tablet*, more than *The Catholic Herald*, took a deliberately hostile stance towards Islam, something which Diana Richmond once suggested was rooted in Burns' love for Spain.⁷³ This was one of the issues the Richmonds identified in a lengthy eight-page letter sent to one of *The Tablet's* board of

⁷⁰ All letters in EUL MS 115/7/6.

⁷¹ Letter from Burns to Diana Richmond, 5 February 1973, EUL MS 115/8/1.

⁷² Letter from Tom Burns to Diana Richmond, 21 August 1973, EUL MS 115/7/7.

⁷³ Letter from Diana Richmond to John Dingle, 14 March 1979, EUL MS 115/20/9. More detail on Burns' involvement in Spanish politics during the Second World War can be found in Jimmy Burns, *Papa Spy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010), a memoir written by his son and recounting Tom Burns' work for military intelligence in Madrid. There was an upsurge of negative writing on Islam in the wake of the Iranian Revolution in 1979, prompting numerous letters from the Richmonds to the Catholic press: see the file EUL MS 115/20/1.

directors, Alfred Latham Koenig, on 9 July 1975. Their motive for doing so was the sense that relations with Tom Burns had reached an impasse, to the extent that their letters were being ignored. Building on a tenuous connection—Ghislaine Latham Koenig and Sophie Richmond had been school-friends at Mayfield—it was hoped that their concerns about editorial practices might be more effectively handled if raised higher up. The long letter explained how the Richmonds had been reading *The Tablet* for 36 years, having been introduced to it by Ernest Richmond, but that during his diplomatic service the Richmonds noticed that the publication's high standards of journalism were not being maintained in their coverage of the Middle East. They identified four main failings: 1) Narrow and essentially European view of Middle East problems 2) Underlying dislike and distrust of Islam 3) Strong tendency to see in modern Israel a connection with Biblical times which in practice does not exist and 4) uncritical support of Israel from 1969 onwards.⁷⁴ Despite the amount of work that went into the letter, Latham Koenig did not respond. This, coupled with the deterioration in relations with Tom Burns, led the Richmonds to stop writing to *The Tablet* that year.⁷⁵ Matters would only improve when Sarah Fawcett, another friend of one of the Richmonds' daughters, began working in *The Tablet* office in 1978.⁷⁶

The Catholic Herald

A later arrival than *The Tablet* by some forty years, *The Catholic Herald* was founded in 1888. It too had a tradition of long editorships with the almost thirty year reign of Michael de la Bédoyère, who was editor from 1934 to 1962. After two shorter periods under Desmond Fisher (1962-66) and Desmond Albrow (1966-71),⁷⁷ editorship passed to the Hon. Gerard Noel, who was to play a prominent part in the newspaper's direction for the following decades. Noel (1926-2016) was editor of *The Catholic Herald* from 1971 to 1976 and editor-in-chief from 1982 to 1984, although even when he was not occupying these roles he was still actively involved in the newspaper's work. He came from an aristocratic background—his father was the fourth Earl of Gainsborough—and after studying Modern History at Oxford, had dabbled in law and politics, as well as spending a short period at seminary in Rome, before devoting himself to a career in journalism.

⁷⁴ There are several drafts of this letter, which was read and commented upon by John Dingle during successive revisions. EUL MS 115/12/2 and 12/4.

⁷⁵ Diana Richmond mentioned her decision to stop writing to Tom Burns in a letter to John Dingle on 11 September 1975, EUL MS 115/12/4.

⁷⁶ See letter from Diana Richmond to David Gilmour, 9 September 1978, EUL MS 115/18/6.

⁷⁷ EUL MS 115/2/1 letter from Desmond Albrow. Albrow was editor of the *Catholic Herald* from 1966 to April 1971, when Gerard Noel took over).

He made no secret of his support for Israel, serving on the board of the aforementioned pro-Zionist organisation Britain and Israel Ltd, as well as being vice-president of the Council of Christians and Jews for many years.

Some of the paper's writers showed sympathy to the Palestinian cause and knowledge of the Arab world, such as Barbara Hamilton Smith and *Guardian* correspondent Desmond Sullivan, who would later take over as director of CAABU. However, other regular contributors included Paul Johnson (former editor of *New Statesman* and, in Richmond's words, a 'dyed-in-the-wool Zionist'), David Jacobs and Dr David Rosenberg, whose column *Shalom* Lady Richmond believed to be a means of subtly spreading a 'pro-Israeli, anti-Arab message'.⁷⁸ Patrick O'Donovan also wrote the weekly back page column 'Charterhouse Chronicle', which was taken over by Noel in 1982 after O'Donovan's death and would be continued by him for almost two decades. O'Donovan and the Richmonds had continued their correspondence over the years, and in 1980 he even went so far as to include Diana Richmond in his 'Charterhouse' column: 'There is a good Catholic lady in Durham who makes it her life work to refute traducers of Islam.'⁷⁹ In this instance, he was prepared to pay tribute to her diligence and gentle spirit, apologising for his hostility to her in the past. In 1979 for example, Diana Richmond had written to *The Catholic Herald* to protest again O'Donovan's comments on The Copts; upon receiving her letter, he wrote directly back to her:

So you are at it again! I cannot for the life of me see what you are complaining about. Being a christian [sic] I still take pain in the extinction of a most rich and lively christianity [sic] beneath the blank male boredom of Islam . . . I am afraid I cannot compromise with your wildly partisan and eccentric view of the tragedy of the Middle East.⁸⁰

O'Donovan's personal views notwithstanding, the Richmonds generally found the *Catholic Herald's* attitude toward Islam not nearly as hostile as that of *The Tablet*, and in September 1974 the newspaper published an article by Harry Brewer entitled 'What Islam can teach Catholics'. Four months later, Diana Richmond's article 'Return to Cordoba' celebrated the historic presence of Muslims in the city and their cultural contribution to the region in the light of Bishop

⁷⁸ The comments on Johnson and Rosenberg are both taken from the 'Notes for interview with Bishop Mahon on Jan 22 and with Archbishop Heim on Jan 23 1974. Israel and Palestine in the Catholic Press', EUL MS 119/7/7. Dennis Walters MP called Johnson 'a fanatical Zionist' in a letter to Lady Richmond, 30 January 1973, EUL MS 119/7/7. For more detailed analysis, see Khalid Kishtainy, *The New Statesman and the Middle East* (Beirut: Palestine Research Center, 1972).

⁷⁹ *The Catholic Herald* (21 March 1980), 10; EUL MS 115/21/4.

⁸⁰ Letter from Patrick O'Donovan to Lady Diana Richmond, 7 February 1979, EUL MS 115/20/1. She replied in a conciliatory tone on 15 March 1979.

Cirarda's recent decision to allow a group of Muslims to pray in Cordoba Cathedral.⁸¹

As discussed earlier, the extent to which media coverage can be considered biased needs to be measured as much by omissions as by its published content, and the Richmonds were keen to challenge Noel on topics that had been absent from the pages of the *Catholic Herald*. In late 1972, Diana Richmond wrote to ask why there had been no reference to the 'Christians for Palestine' Conference which had taken place at Canterbury in September 1972, attended by a number of distinguished Arab church leaders, nor any coverage of the land seizures by Israeli settlers in December 1972, far less Pope Paul VI's message to Cardinals on 22 December 1972 expressing his concern about the suffering of Palestinians. By contrast, an emotional leader written by Paul Johnson was published in January 1973 on the occasion of Pope Paul VI's meeting with Israel Prime Minister Golda Meir, which Diana Richmond found 'racist' in the language employed about Arabs.⁸²

A more serious issue was raised in October that year when a leading article referred to 'Anti-Semitism, in the form of anti-Zionism . . . Anti-Zionists, it should be added, invariably claim not to be anti-Semitic, somewhat similarly people who are against the Vatican claim not to be anti-Catholic.' John Reddaway and Michael Adams wrote a joint letter on 1 November 1973 to the editor of *The Catholic Herald* in protest at the way in which this statement had a 'clear implication that the claim is unjustified.' Subsequent efforts to obtain a response from Noel or clarification from the newspaper were unsuccessful.⁸³

As had been the case with the *Tablet*, the Richmonds had some justification for feeling that Noel did not always use his editorial powers fairly. In an article published on 9 August 1974, he referred to CAABU as being 'strictly pro-Arab and anti-Jewish', insinuating that it was an anti-Semitic organisation. Letters of protest from Christopher Walker and Diana Richmond were published on 23 August, but in the following week's paper responses from David Jacobs and Terence Prittie appeared under a banner headline, 'Gerard Noel's accusations unanswered by Arabists'.⁸⁴ Diana Richmond was

⁸¹ Harry Brewer, 'What Islam can teach Catholics', *Catholic Herald* (20 September 1974), 3, Diana Richmond, 'Return to Cordoba', *Catholic Herald* (31st January 1975) p.8. Both articles were subsequently reprinted in *The Muslim Herald*, Vol.14, No.10 (October 1974) 7-12 and Vol.15, No.3 (March 1975) 24-30 respectively.

⁸² See the letters from Diana Richmond to Gerard Noel, 7 November 1972 and to Tom Burns, 15 February 1973, EUL MS 115/7/7. These points were also detailed in the dossier prepared for Archbishop Heim and Bishop Mahon.

⁸³ The article on 'Diplomacy and Oil' was published in the *Catholic Herald* on 26 October 1973, 4. A copy of the letter from John Reddaway and Michael Adams, written on 1 November 1973, is in EUL MS 115/7/7.

⁸⁴ *Catholic Herald* (30 August 1974), 5.

puzzled by seeing herself described as an ‘Arabist’ and questioned whether it was true to say that the accusations had remained ‘unanswered’, believing that the letters from her and Walker had gone a considerable way in doing so.⁸⁵ It is certainly questionable if it was right for an editor to use a headline to dismiss his own critics.

Hopes that a change of editor would improve matters were raised in the spring of 1974 when Noel stepped down to devote more time to writing books. He was replaced by Maurice Hart, who had been a staff member and news editor of the paper for many years before leaving to work for the *Scotsman*, *Financial Times* and *Daily Telegraph*.⁸⁶ In response to a lengthy letter and typed critique from Lady Richmond sent the day before, detailing a series of errors and mis-statements in the 30 August issue of the *Catholic Herald*, Hart replied with a frank admission: ‘I agree with you that the *Catholic Herald* has been one sided in its coverage of Middle Eastern affairs, and can promise you that I am taking steps to create a more balanced newspaper on all fronts.’⁸⁷

Hart’s editorship lasted barely a year, however, and it was announced in March 1975 that he would be replaced by Stuart Reid, a 32-year-old former pupil from Ampleforth, who only lasted a few months. Noel returned to the helm in the autumn of 1975 and edited the paper until the following August when Richard Dowden was appointed as editor, with Noel continuing as ‘Editorial Director’.⁸⁸ With such a rapid turnover of editors there was little chance of any significant change of direction, especially as Gerard Noel continued to direct the paper from behind the scenes in various capacities such as editor, editorial director or editor-in-chief: the Richmonds also suspected he was the anonymous columnist who wrote under the name of ‘Urbanus’.⁸⁹

From Press to Prelates

By the end of 1973 the Richmonds had grown increasingly frustrated at their lack of progress in what they called ‘our campaign to educate the Catholic Press’, and decided upon a different strategy.⁹⁰ During the year they had made contact with John Dingle, a journalist who had been following their correspondence in the Catholic press with great interest. Although they differed on certain points, Dingle shared the

⁸⁵ Letter from Diana Richmond to Maurice Hart, 8 September 1974, EUL MS 115/10/11.

⁸⁶ Noel handed over to Hart in February 1974. See ‘A New Editor’, *Catholic Herald* (18th January 1974), 4.

⁸⁷ Letter from Maurice Hart to Lady Richmond, 12 September 1974, EUL MS 115/10/11.

⁸⁸ *Catholic Herald* (25th June 1976) p.1. A cutting is filed in EUL MS 115/14/2.

⁸⁹ The suggestion was made in a letter from Diana Richmond to Phyllida Ashton, 21 July 1980 on grounds including ‘it is rather like his style with lots of Latin tags’. EUL MS 115/21/10.

⁹⁰ Letter from Diana Richmond to Dennis Walters MP, 22 June 1973, EUL MS 115/8/3.

Richmonds' passion about the Palestinian cause and had contributed a number of letters on the topic himself.⁹¹ The Richmonds began corresponding regularly with Dingle, sharing newspaper cuttings, drafts of letters and articles, as well as co-ordinating their letter-writing campaign. If one or other had a letter published or rejected and felt the chance of publication was unlikely, the baton would be passed to the other.

The suggestion that a meeting could be arranged with senior Catholic clergy to discuss bias in the religious press seems to have come from Dingle, who had been at school with the auxiliary Bishop of Westminster, Gerald Mahon, and had some claims on his acquaintance. A former superior general of the Mill Hill Missionaries, Gerald Mahon had been appointed auxiliary to Cardinal Heenan in 1970. While well-liked in London for his pastoral care and simplicity, Mahon's missionary background had also provided him with experience of affairs in Africa and the Middle East, including visits to North Yemen, Jerusalem and Beirut, plus the acquisition of basic Arabic. His commitment to improving relations with the Jewish community was equally clear: like Gerard Noel, he served as Vice-Chairman of the Council of Christians and Jews, but he was also a member of the Vatican International Liaison Committee with World Jewry, and was president of the English and Welsh Bishops' Committee for Catholic-Jewish Relations.⁹² The Richmonds and John Dingle met with Bishop Mahon on Tuesday 22 January 1974 in Cardinal Manning's building at Westminster.

The following morning they had a second meeting with Archbishop Bruno Heim, the Apostolic Delegate, at his residence in Wimbledon. The Swiss archbishop had been appointed to the diplomatic post in 1973 after four years as Apostolic Pro-Nuncio in Egypt. Lady Richmond had written to him on 12 November 1973, sending him a copy of a pamphlet published from a 1972 address given by John Richmond to the Jewish Students of Northern Universities at Edinburgh.⁹³ Archbishop Heim sent a personal reply a few days later, inviting Lady Richmond to come and see him. The two meetings were

⁹¹ See his letter to Diana Richmond of 9 June 1973, explaining his background and career. EUL MS 115/9/8. A professional journalist since 1935, he was a leader writer for the *Eastern Daily Press* and a correspondent for *Le Croix*, and translator of *The Eastern Churches and Catholic Unity*, edited by Maximos IV Sayegh, the Melkite Greek Catholic Patriarch of Antioch (Herder, 1963). He was also well-connected with the Catholic community, and even if personally unacquainted with people, he knew who they were and had inside knowledge that the Richmonds—as converts—felt they lacked.

⁹² *The Times*, 4 May 1994, 20 reported on the first Bishop Gerald Mahon Memorial Lecture, at which Gerard Noel spoke on 'The Holy See and Israel—a new era?' under the auspices of the Council for Christians and Jews.

⁹³ There is a copy of the text of this talk in EUL MS 115/38/1.

then arranged back-to-back, which was more convenient given the length of the Richmonds' journey from Durham to London.

At both meetings Dingle and the Richmonds felt they were received with great courtesy, sympathy and humour, and their concerns were listened to attentively. Bishop Mahon promised to do what he could behind the scenes at the various committee meetings he chaired or attended, while Archbishop Heim—who occasionally met Tom Burns at social events—offered to do the same. Both prelates seemed to Lady Richmond to have a good understanding of the situation as well as appearing sympathetic towards the Palestinian cause.⁹⁴ There was general agreement that a confrontational approach with the editors of both *The Tablet* and the *Catholic Herald* was counter-productive, and a better strategy would be to try and introduce more articles in the Catholic press by Jewish authors who were critical of Zionism (such as Emil Marmorstein, Mark Braham, Mick Ashley, Dan Gillon, Israel Shahak, General Peled, Shulamit Aloni or Amon Kapeliouk), encourage greater coverage of Arab Christian affairs in columns such as *The Tablet's* 'The Church in the World', and ensure that more space was given in these pages to discussion of Islam, either by knowledgeable Catholic writers or Muslims.

The meeting with the prelates was to prove a watershed moment in the Richmonds' work, but the fact that they had felt the need to seek their counsel and intervention at this point suggests that they had realised the flaws in their letter-writing campaign. Whatever efforts Archbishop Heim and Bishop Mahon may have exerted behind the scenes in the following months, there was little or no change in the Catholic press. In January 1975, Diana Richmond admitted in a letter to the 'The Editor's Secretary' of the *Catholic Herald*, 'I begin to think that letters on such emotive subjects as the Middle East or Ulster/Eire perhaps do more harm than good.'⁹⁵ There is no doubting the sincerity of the Richmonds, and it is hard not to admire the stamina they showed in their labours, but there is scant evidence that their efforts succeeded in changing editorial policy at either *The Tablet* or the *Catholic Herald*. Whether or not they were effective in swaying the opinion of readers is another matter: published replies in the correspondence columns ranged from critical and hostile to supportive, but often tended to come from parties whose allegiances were already well-formed.

⁹⁴ There is a large file of correspondence and other material relating to the Richmonds' visits to Bishop Mahon and Archbishop Heim, including letters to and from John Dingle and Tom Burns, and a large orange folder of materials compiled prior to the meeting that includes cuttings, correspondence with the bishops' secretary and typed notes on the Catholic press. EUL MS 115/7/7.

⁹⁵ Letter of 3 January 1975, EUL MS 115/12/1.

Identifying and defining these ‘parties’ is an issue that lies at the heart of this discussion, as the Richmonds were consistently at pains to make clear that their criticism of Zionism was emphatically disconnected from any taint of anti-Semitism. Their arguments were usually framed in a positive way, highlighting for example the achievements of Palestinian agriculture or embroidery as a counter-argument to suggestions that the Israelis had been the first to introduce such things to the region. While criticising Zionist writers on points of fact or presentation, they were strongly in favour of encouraging Jewish critics to share the field, in order to refute the idea that this was an argument between Jews and Zionists on the one side and Catholics and Arabs on the other.

Negotiating the boundaries: Zionism, antisemitism and the Richmonds

While the Richmonds were eager to defend the Palestinian cause from criticism, particularly when this was couched in sweeping generalisations, they were sometimes too quick to assume that such criticism stemmed from a pro-Zionist viewpoint. They were also well aware that their own criticisms of Zionism and Israeli conduct in the occupied territories could be, and sometimes was, assumed to stem from anti-semitism. Diana Richmond was especially forthright in dismissing personal accusations of hostility towards Judaism. She consistently pointed out that not only were not all Jews supporters of Zionism, but also not all Zionists were Jews: there were many others, such as Protestant Biblical scholars and Catholics, who were enthused by the Vatican II emphasis on Jewish-Christian dialogue. There should therefore have been little credence given to the equation of anti-Zionism with antisemitism.⁹⁶

Some of these issues arose in the final topic to be considered here: the Richmonds’ concern over the way in which Catholic-Jewish relations were portrayed in the Catholic press, with particular regard to the activities of religious communities in Palestine. This had personal significance for them, due to Ernest and John Richmond’s longstanding acquaintance with the Dominican scholars of L’École Biblique; their twin daughters had also been educated for a short while by the Sisters of Our Lady of Sion on the outskirts of Jerusalem. During the mid-1970s, both these institutions were featured on the pages of the *Catholic Herald*, provoking a flurry of correspondence

⁹⁶ On this topic, see Jonathan Freedland, ‘Is Anti-Zionism Antisemitism?’ in *Those Who Forget the Past: The Question of Anti-Semitism* ed. Ron Rosenbaum et al. (New York: Random House, 2004), 422-38, and David Cesarani, ‘Anti-Zionism in Britain, 1922-2002: Continuities and Discontinuities,’ in *Anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionism in Historical Perspective. Convergence and Divergence*, ed. Jeffrey Herf (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), 115-43.

from the Richmonds and the renewal of old acquaintances from their past in the Holy Land.

Essential to understanding this correspondence is the change brought about by the Vatican II document *Nostra aetate*, or 'Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions.' Originally envisaged as dealing exclusively with Judaism, this was amended in the light of disquiet expressed by Arab Catholic bishops and others, so that it dealt more widely with Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. Relations with the Jews were the subject of the fourth of the five sections, which condemned antisemitism and rejected the charge that the Jews bore any responsibility for the death of Christ. It did not, however, address either the Holocaust or the creation of the State of Israel, and indeed the Vatican would not extend official recognition of Israel until 1993. In the meantime, it remained ambivalent on the matter, favouring instead the internationalisation of Jerusalem and the Holy Places, if not the whole of Palestine. This was something about which Gerard Noel clearly had strong opinions, as expressed in his articles for the *Catholic Herald* in 1974: 'Israel as seen through the eyes of a Gentile' (14 June 1974), 'Why the Vatican does not recognise Israel' (21 June 1974) and 'Israel's right to exist' (28 June 1974). A substantial step forward came with the establishment of the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews in October 1974, and their publication of 'Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration *Nostra aetate* No. 4'. While the improvement in relations and the abandoning of prejudicial language was a highly positive step, and was reported widely in the Catholic press in those terms, the Richmonds were concerned that this new rapprochement might have a chilling effect on potential criticism of Israeli policies, and that Catholic recognition of the State of Israel might be used as a precondition for further progress in improving relations.⁹⁷

The modern state of Israel was not in fact mentioned in the *Guidelines*, which did draw criticism from some: *The Universe* quoted a strong protest from Yitzhak Raphael, the Israeli Minister for Religious Affairs, in a report on 17 January 1975.⁹⁸ However, Israeli policy was very much the focus of a resolution published by the UN Commission on Human Rights the following month, which addressed the 'Question of the violation of human rights in the territories occupied as a result of hostilities in the Middle East.' The document contained two sections:

⁹⁷ See the letter sent to *The Universe* by Diana Richmond on 2 February 1975, EUL MS 115/12/2.

⁹⁸ 'Israel hits at Vatican document on Jews.' Unpaginated press cutting from *The Universe*, 17 January 1975, in EUL MS 115/12/1.

A) Deploring Israel's continued grave violation, in the occupied Arab territories, of the basic norms of international law as well as its persistent defiance of the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, and its continued policy of violating the basic human rights of the inhabitants of the occupied Arab territories and B) Deploring Israel's policies and practices of desecration of Moslem and Christian shrines, disrespect and ill-treatment of religious leaders and violations of rights of worship in the Arab territories occupied by Israel and calling upon Israel to ensure freedom of worship.⁹⁹

The resolution specified numerous charges, including demolition of houses, expropriation of Arab properties, the building of illegal settlements, the ill-treatment of prisoners and religious leaders, the desecration of sites sacred to Christians and Muslims, restrictions of rights of worship, and the 'total destruction' of the Syrian village of Kuneitra (Quneitra) on the Golan Heights, following its capture by Israelis during the Yom Kippur war.¹⁰⁰ Many of these points, even if disputed, were familiar to anyone following recent history in Palestine, but debate on the topic took an interesting turn following reports of a protest against the UN Resolution that seemed to have been organised in large part by Catholic religious 'leaders' based in Israel.

The publication of this 'Protest' was reported in Gerard Noel's 'Heraldary' [sic] column in the *Catholic Herald* on 23 May 1975, which then appeared again on 20 June, with further details about it having been distributed as an 'Information Brief' by the Israeli Embassy in London. The second article listed some of the signatories as Abbot Laurentius Klein OSB of Dormition Abbey, Abbot Elie Corbisier, Fr Daniel Rufeisen of the Carmelite Monastery in Haifa, Sister Marie-Louise, Superior of the Sisters of St Joseph, Jerusalem, and Sister Caroline Young, Superior of the Sisters of Zion, along with twelve others in her community.¹⁰¹

The reports in the *Catholic Herald* both puzzled and concerned the Richmonds. In particular, the report in the 'Heraldary' article was attached to some remarks on L'École Biblique that Diana Richmond regarded as an accusation of antisemitism on the part of the Dominican scholars with whom her husband and father-in-law had worked. Her response was swift: she wrote at once to the Editor of the *Catholic Herald*, Stuart Reid, including both a letter for publication—addressing the issue of the 'Protest'—and a personal letter complaining about Gerard Noel's implication that the Dominicans at

⁹⁹ The UN Commission on Human Rights resolution 6 A (XXXI), of 21 February 1975.

¹⁰⁰ Diana Richmond had a file of material on the destruction of Quneitra, including photographs of ruined houses and smashed-open coffins, a printed account of the attack that contained allegation of looting and the desecration of the cemetery, with additional material from the Greek Orthodox priest of Quneitra, Fr. George Muhassal. EUL MS 115/9/7.

¹⁰¹ Unpaginated cuttings of Noel's 'Heraldary' (23 May 1975) and the subsequent report, headed 'UN charge on Holy Places condemned' (20 June 1975) are filed in EUL MS 115/12/1.

L'École Biblique had been antisemitic until recently.¹⁰² Her main issue was that the 'Protest' was worded in a very misleading way, addressing only three of the numerous policies condemned by the UN, and dismissing them on the grounds of a very narrow interpretation of their meaning: on the basis that no disrespect had been shown by the Israelis to the signatories or their buildings, it was somehow suggested that Israel should be absolved of all the other charges listed in the Resolution. To her surprise and pleasure, her letter was published.¹⁰³ The following week, she wrote to Père Benoit at the École Biblique, enclosing a copy of the 'Heraldary' article and pressing him for information about the 'Protest.'¹⁰⁴ She also drew up a letter for the signatories of the 'Protest', which she photocopied and sent off to the various religious communities listed in the second *Catholic Herald* article. Shortly afterwards, she received replies from Père Benoit (1906-87), Abbot Elie Corbisier of the Cistercian Abbey of Latroun and the Very Rev. Clive Handford, Dean of St George's Cathedral in Jerusalem, who were able to explain a little of what they knew. According to Handford, the impetus behind the 'Protest' had come largely from clergy and others who were 'actively engaged in Christian-Jewish Dialogue and for the most part associated with Ecumenical Research Fraternity and the Rainbow Group which exist for this purpose.'¹⁰⁵ Abbot Corbisier confirmed he had signed the document, explaining that he was only concerned with the religious accusations which—from his limited experience ['Puisque je suis moine, je ne suis pas au courant de tout ce qui se passe dans le pays']—he believed to be untrue.¹⁰⁶ Père Benoit and Père Raymond-Jacques Tournay, in contrast, had refused to sign the 'Protest', believing that there was a lack of nuance in the denials and that document was bound to be exploited for political reasons.¹⁰⁷ None of the others appear to have replied to her letter.

The Richmonds' contact with the Sisters of Sion, who had taken such a key role in the drafting and distribution of the

¹⁰² Both of these letters were written on 24 June 1975 and are filed in EUL MS 115/12/1.

¹⁰³ 'Record of Israeli guilt', *Catholic Herald*, 4 July 1975, 5. Reid's departure from the paper was announced at the end of August, and Diana wrote to him on 31 August to say 'I shall always be grateful to you for publishing' that letter.

¹⁰⁴ Pierre Benoit O.P., regarded as one of the world's leading Biblical scholars as well as an authority on the archaeology of the city, lived and taught in Jerusalem from 1934 until his death from cancer in 1987.

¹⁰⁵ Letter from Very Rev. G.C. Handford to Diana Richmond, 30 July 1975, EUL MS 151/12/2. The Jerusalem Rainbow Group for Jewish-Christian Encounter and Dialogue had been founded in 1965 in response to *Nostra Aetate*.

¹⁰⁶ Letter from Dom Elie Corbisier OCSO, who was the second Abbot of Latroun, from 1952 to 1976, to Diana Richmond, 19 July 1975, EUL MS 115/12/2. 'As I am a monk, I am not aware of everything that goes on here.' [Author's translation.]

¹⁰⁷ The letter to Lady Richmond from Père Benoit OP, 10 July 1975, contained his assurance that he remembered well both Ernest Richmond 'et de son fils John', prompting a reply from Sir John on 25 July 1975, which referred to the requiem Mass said for his father by Père Vincent in Jerusalem in 1954, which he had attended. EUL MS 115/12/2.

'Protest', would also delve deep into their personal history in Palestine. The Congregation of Our Lady of Sion was founded in 1847 by Fr. Theodore Ratisbonne, a French Catholic convert from Judaism. Although they avoided active proselytising, the Sisters welcomed Jews, Muslims and non-Catholic children to their schools and were dedicated to praying for the conversion, or salvation, of the Jewish people. Ratisbonne's brother, Fr. Marie-Alphonse Ratisbonne, established a convent for the nuns in the old city of Jerusalem in 1857, occupying a site on the Via Dolorosa that was traditionally associated with the path taken by Christ to his death. They also had a school at Katamon, on the outskirts of the city, where Sally and Emma Richmond were educated for a short while in 1946-47.¹⁰⁸ Although they had not met previously, Sister Marie Ita of Sion wrote to Lady Diana Richmond on 5 July 1975. She had been an avid reader of the Richmonds' Palestinian correspondence in the Catholic press for many years, and had been urged to get in touch with Diana by their mutual friend Kathleen Rowlands of *The Universe*.

Sister Ita had lived in Jerusalem at the Sisters of Sion convent in Via Dolorosa from 1955 to 1966, having been sent out to replace Sister Louis Gabriel (Charlotte Klein), who became widely known for her work in Jewish-Christian relations. Klein was at the vanguard of changes in the Congregation during the 1950s and 1960s, which saw them abandon the practice of praying for the conversion of Jews, and moving towards a greater emphasis on Jewish-Christian dialogue, reconciliation and education in the Jewish faith for Christian students. The Sisters had also played a significant role in the drafting of *Nostra Aetate*.¹⁰⁹ In her correspondence with Diana Richmond, Sister Ita admitted that many of the Sisters—herself included—found this radical transformation of their *raison d'être* hard to accept, seeing the shift in religious practices as part of the wider post-conciliar transformation of the Congregation that included the replacement of habits and veils with 'trouser-suits' and the dropping of religious names.¹¹⁰ Lady Richmond felt such sympathy for her that she wrote to another pro-Palestine correspondent, Barbara Hamilton-Smith, asking for advice about how she could help the nun. She had already tried to have an exchange of views with Sr Mary Kelly NDS, whose letter in *The Universe* on 2 February 1975 seemed to her to show a lack of sympathy for the Palestinians.¹¹¹ In her letters, she looked back on the 'uphill struggle' of her campaign with the Catholic press over the last few

¹⁰⁸ On the school at this time, see Mona Hajjar Halaby, 'School Days in Mandate Jerusalem at Dames de Sion', *Jerusalem Quarterly* 31 (Summer 2007), 40-71.

¹⁰⁹ See Celia Deutsch NDS, 'Journey to Dialogue: Sisters of Our Lady of Sion and the Writing of *Nostra Aetate*' *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 11, no. 1 (2016) 1-36.

¹¹⁰ Letter from Sister Ita to Diana Richmond, 17 July 1975, reply to Lady Richmond's letter of 14 July. EUL MS 115/12/3.

¹¹¹ Letters to Sr Mary Kelly, 2 February 1975, and Miss Barbara Hamilton-Smith, 23 July 1975, EUL MS 115/12/3. Sister Mary—originally Sister Theodora—worked closely with

years, admitting again her frustration with Tom Burns and Gerard Noel—a frustration reiterated by John Richmond in his letter to Père Benoit. In both their letters, husband and wife looked forwards in their hope that the Catholic press and religious communities would join them in working to advance the Palestinian cause, while at the same time constantly rooting their activities in memories and sentimental reflections from their earlier lives in Palestine.

Conclusion

Looking back on the Richmond's campaign almost fifty years later, it is depressing to acknowledge how little progress has been made in negotiating the boundaries between anti-Zionism and antisemitism. Phrases and arguments from the book by fellow CAABU members, *Publish it Not*, continue to be echoed, almost word for word, in contemporary discussions of the topic, and even efforts to provide clear definitions of these terms has led to further conflict instead of clarity.¹¹² Sister Marie Ita asked Diana Richmond if she was related to the 'E.T. Richmond, a rabid anti-Zionist' that she found referred to in a book, and a more recent monograph described her father-in-law as 'a virulent anti-Semite.'¹¹³ There is certainly little doubt that many of Ernest Richmond's statements about Zionism use language that is coloured by antisemitism, such as his essays 'England in Palestine' and 'Dictatorship in Palestine', both of which were published in the periodical *The Nineteenth Century* and link Zionist propaganda to materialism, financial and quasi-religious networks that are un-British and unchristian, 'international Jewry' and the 'Geneva Sanhedrin'.¹¹⁴

There is none of this language however, either explicit or implicit, in the Richmonds' criticism of either the Zionist movement or the conduct

Sister Charlotte Klein in London at what became the Sion Centre for Dialogue and Encounter. EUL MS 115/12/3.

¹¹² Michael Adams and Christopher Mayhew, *Publish it not: the Middle East cover-up* (London: Longman, 1975) was a carefully-argued criticism of bias in the British media regarding its coverage of events in Palestine. A new edition was published by Signal Books in 2006 with an introduction by former BBC correspondent Tim Llewellyn describing developments since the book was first published. Dave Rich, *The Left's Jewish Problem Jeremy Corbyn, Israel and Anti-Semitism* (2016) draws a connection between CAABU and the development of British left-wing attitudes towards Israel, although his neglect of Jewish critics of Zionism would not have impressed the Richmonds.

¹¹³ Letter from Sister Marie Ita of Sion to Lady Diana Richmond, 17 July 1975, referring to Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, *O Jerusalem* (Pan, 1973). The latter phrase is one of several bold claims about Richmond and his relationship with Amin al-Husseini made in David G. Dalin and John F. Rothmann, *Icon of Evil: Hitler's Mufti and the Rise of Radical Islam* (2008), although these are substantially undermined by the lack of evidence.

¹¹⁴ 'England in Palestine', *The Nineteenth Century* (July 1925), 46-51 and 'Dictatorship in Palestine', *The Nineteenth Century* (February 1938) 186-192. Some of these views are discussed in Daniel Bertrand Monk, *An Aesthetic Occupation: The Immediacy of Architecture and the Palestine Conflict* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002).

of the Israeli state.¹¹⁵ While both John and Diana Richmond clearly held Ernest in great esteem, their personal correspondence reveals a deep revulsion towards any hostility towards Judaism or Jewish people. They occasionally received antisemitic letters or published material from individuals or organisations for whom this was not the case, and who took the view that any critics of Israel would share these views. Diana Richmond did not reply to any such communications, and either destroyed the material or placed it in wax-sealed envelopes on which she wrote—with evident anger—phrases such as ‘Filth’ or ‘Correspondence: crazy, perverted or anonymous’.

One point that does emerge from a comparison of the material in the Richmond papers with their presence in print, however, is that their own methods and attitudes resembled very closely those of the supporters of Israel which they criticised. John Dingle and the Richmonds regularly commented negatively on the way in which pro-Zionists such as Terence Prittie and James Parkes appeared to co-ordinate their contributions to the press and wrote in support of one another, overlooking the fact that this was exactly what they did, even if their strategies were rendered less effective by the editorial policies of the Catholic press. The accusation that Terence Prittie and others acted as ghost-writers for *The Tablet* could be matched to Lady Richmond’s use of a pseudonym, Miss Margaret Lyle, along with a private address, in order to disguise her identity and evade reaction against appearing in print too regularly.¹¹⁶

Ultimately, however, it must be asked if any of the strategies employed by the Richmonds can be said to have succeeded in achieving their intended aims. Neither *The Tablet* nor *The Catholic Herald* altered their editorial policy on content relating to Palestine in any substantial way, even if Lady Richmond believed that by 1980—thanks to the influence of CRAG rather than her correspondence campaign—results were beginning to show in the religious

¹¹⁵ In 1974 their co-correspondent John Dingle drew up a 13-page typescript that offered a critical analysis of the ways in which the Catholic press in Britain had presented Israeli policies and claims regarding the Occupied Territories. This paper defined Zionism as ‘the political movement arising out of Theodor Herzl’s book, *Der Judenstaat*, and finding its political expression in part through the series of Zionist congresses’ and went on to emphasise that any use of the terms ‘pro-’ or ‘anti-Zionist’ could only ever be a political judgment, based on exclusively political criteria. It was acknowledged, however, that some individuals may adopt an anti-Zionist political stance as a disguise for anti-Semitism. EUL MS 115/10/2.

¹¹⁶ ‘Margaret Lyle’ was a pseudonym used by Diana Richmond for letters to *The Tablet* in the early 1970s, based on her two middle names—see her letter to John W. Adkins, 2 February 1974, EUL MS 115/10/3, and a letter to her from Christopher Walker, 11 September 1975, EUL MS 115/12/2, in which he commented ‘I’m sorry that Margaret Lyle has been eliminated, if only because it’s such a very attractive name.’ She also used the name for her translation from the French of Bianco Mirella’s biography *Gadafi: Voice from the Desert* (London: Longman, 1975), originally published as *Kadhafi, messenger du desert* (Paris: Éditions Stock, 1974)—see her letter to John Dingle, 11 May 1974, EUL MS 115/10/2.

press'.¹¹⁷ Some mellowing in attitudes might be recognised in the fact that the *Catholic Herald's* Literary Editor Frances Gumley invited Lady Richmond to review the book *Arabia through the Looking Glass* for the paper in 1979, around the same time that *The Tablet* published what the Richmonds acknowledged was 'quite a sensible article... perfectly correct and in order' on Islam, written by Professor Charles Beckingham.¹¹⁸ If such modest signs seemed like there was little to show for their work, it was certainly not from lack of effort: evidence of the Richmonds' dogged determination and prolific activity fills over forty boxes in their archive. However, there are perhaps three important conclusions that can be drawn from this article that may provide a starting point for further study.

Firstly, the dynamic labours of the Richmonds, undertaken within an extensive international network, challenges the picture of bland mediocrity that is sometimes claimed for this period of Catholicism in Britain. Their correspondence and other papers reveal the extraordinary vigour and initiative that could be exercised by Catholic laity, working independently from the hierarchy and only seeking their intervention when all other avenues seemed exhausted. Showing a remarkable degree of resilience in the face of prolonged hostility and indifference, the Richmonds continued their Catholic press campaign for well over a decade, deploying a variety of strategies, personal contacts, networks and organisations, both lay and religious, to present a faith-based perspective on what they saw as a matter of international justice. Since the 1990 Gulf War, 9/11 and the invasion of Iraq in 2003, a vast number of books and articles have been written about press coverage of the Middle East and the depiction of Arabs in western media, giving a false impression that this is a new phenomenon: the material presented here provides a forceful reminder that Catholics in Britain have long shown a keen awareness of media bias (often directed towards themselves) and—in the case of the Richmonds—were decades ahead of others (such as the Glasgow University Media Group) in addressing the question of reportage on the Palestinian question.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Letter from Diana Richmond to John Reddaway, 9 November 1980, arguing for the importance of CRAG within the scope of CAABU's activities and lamenting the lack of interest in religious affairs shown by other Committee members. EUL MS 115/21/7.

¹¹⁸ Letter from Diana Richmond to Sarah al-Jamali, 22 February 1979, EUL MS 115/19/1.

¹¹⁹ See Greg Philo and Mike Berry *Bad news from Israel* (London: Pluto, 2004) and *More Bad News from Israel* (London: Pluto, 2011), also John Richardson and Leon Barkho, 'Reporting Israel/Palestine: Ethnographic Insights into the Verbal and Visual Rhetoric of BBC Journalism,' *Journalism Studies* Vol.10: 5 (2009) (19 594-622. Journalists Peter Osborne and James Jones presented their findings for Channel 4's *Despatches* programme in 2009—see 'The Pro-Israel Lobby in Britain: Full Text.' <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/opendemocracyuk/pro-israel-lobby-in-britain-full-text/>

While Sir John's distinguished diplomatic career and knighthood might suggest links to 'the establishment', both he and his wife were resolutely middle class. They were also outsiders in relation to the aristocratic and intellectual elites of the Catholic community who continue to receive the bulk of scholarly attention, focused on a relatively small coterie of well-known Catholic novelists, artists, academics and philosophers. Although they expressed a sense of disadvantage at being converts to Catholicism, it can be argued that this actually enabled them to take a more independent line on Palestine, by having different points of reference that lay outwith the shared experiences and collective prejudices of their Catholic peers who had been born and raised in the faith. Such a contention seems borne out by evidence that converts to Catholicism proved more prescient than others in the Catholic community in recognising the dangers posed by Fascism in the 1930s for similar reasons.¹²⁰ More research remains to be done on identifying and investigating the distinctive nuances of converts' contributions to British Catholic culture.

Lastly, there was also a gendered element to the Richmonds' campaign. As previously mentioned, Lady Diana was adroit at using female friendships and mutual connections with her daughters to obtain access to influential figures within the Catholic press, partly because, as converts, she and Sir John felt they lacked the social contacts and networks of those had been raised in the faith. She was a far more prolific correspondent than her husband, and proved successful in befriending other female journalists or writers of letters to the Catholic press, such as Barbara Hamilton-Smith, Violet Barbour, Kathleen Rowland, editor of *The Universe* and Sister Marie Ita. She then used these acquaintances to ask favours or gain further introductions. In addition to engaging with organisations such as the National Council of Women and the Women's Institute, where she was invited to give talks on Palestine, Diana Richmond's correspondents included Mara Russell-Pavier of the Catholic Women's League, who in turn put her in touch with Mildred Nevile (1927-2012) of the CIIR, Islamic scholar Charis Waddy (1909-2004), Jewish author and Honorary President of the Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign Marion Woolfson (1923-2012), Sarah al-Jamali (1908-2000), wife of the former prime minister of Iraq, as well as the cultured Jerusalem socialite Katy Antonius (1891-1984), widow of Arab nationalist and author George Antonius, and their daughter Soraya, who was co-founder and Director of the Fifth of June Society, dedicated to the dissemination of information on the Palestinian cause. Letters from Katy and Soraya Antonius address Lady Richmond not only with deep affection but also with a level of respect for her campaign work that was

¹²⁰ Allitt, *Catholic Converts*, 227-229.

pointedly lacking in communications from Tom Burns, Gerard Noel and Patrick O'Donovan, all of whom were prone to treating with her an unpleasantly condescending tone that they did not use in their dealings with Sir John.¹²¹ The close-knit 'Old Boys' atmosphere of the editorial offices is paralleled by the overwhelming emphasis on male thinkers, writers and clergy in the major studies of twentieth century Catholic culture in England. While some recent writing on *Humanae Vitae* has foregrounded the voices of Catholic women, there are many others like Diana Richmond whose distinctive experiences are documented in archives but have yet to be studied.¹²² It is hoped that this examination of the Richmonds' work for Palestine will encourage further research and reassessments of others like them, whose lives and contribution to Catholic social justice campaigns have hitherto remained in the shadows.

¹²¹ Letters to Lady Richmond from Katy Antonius and her daughter, along with other papers relating to the Women's Institute and the Fifth of June Society, can be found in EUL MS 115/4/4 and 115/14/1.

¹²² For example, Harris, *The Schism of '68* and 'A Magna Carta for Marriage', as well as David Geiringer, *The Pope and the Pill: Sex, Catholicism and Women in Post-war England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019).