

ARABS AND JEWS ARE COOPERATING

BY HELEN WAREN

IN VIEW of the heated debates, controversies, hysteria and war over Palestine, the little village of Abu Gosh, lying sleepily in the Judean hills about six kilometers from Jerusalem becomes curiously interesting and significant. Abu Gosh, an old Arab village, is at present the site of a unique neighborliness. There are about five hundred Arab villagers. There is a French monastery connected with an old Crusader's church and all its attendant personnel of fathers, monks and nuns. There is also a headquarters camp for the Palmach, which is the striking force — guerrillas and commandos — of the Israeli Army. These three varying cultures, Moslem, Christian and Jewish, are living and working peacefully together in complete amity and cooperation.

The Arabs of Abu Gosh have always been a kind of maverick group in the intensity of their friendship for the Jews. Some of them actually joined the Jewish extremist groups in the period when these small dissident bands were carrying on terror

raids against the British. This year, when the Arab armies started to advance on the Jews, the Abu Gosh villagers were reluctant to leave their village as they were ordered to by the Transjordan Arab Legion. Also, encouraged by the Christian fathers, who admonished them not to raise a hand against their Jewish friends and neighbors, they refused altogether to enlist in the Arab armies or in any way to cooperate in the fight. They stayed in the village until the Legion started to bomb it in order to force them to leave. (The flight of innocent Arab civilians was to be used as a weapon against Israel.) Under fire the villagers finally fled, but not too far, so that when the Israeli Army should conquer that territory, which fact they never doubted, they might return easily. Their faith was justified and now over half of the original Arab inhabitants of Abu Gosh are living there, with more returning every day. They now support themselves by selling the produce of their little farms to the Jews for the markets in Jerusalem, and

HELEN WAREN is a former actress who is now devoting all her time to writing and lecturing on Palestine. She spent some time in postwar Germany, where she helped to arrange passage to Palestine for some of the Jewish displaced persons. In addition to numerous magazine articles, she has written *The Buried Are Screaming*, published recently by Beechhurst.

many of them have volunteered to serve with the Israeli Army.

Under the present circumstances Abu Gosh is unique, but actually, in the past, there was never a desire on the part of the average Arab to fight the Jews. Quite the contrary: the two peoples have a history of neighborliness and friendship. One of the most succinct expressions of the feeling of the Palestinian Arab on the "Palestine problem" was delivered to me some years back in an Arab restaurant in Jerusalem. Between mouthfuls of *humos* and *kebab* (salad and meat dishes), I discussed the possibility of partition with the Arab waiter. "Sure, I believe in partition," he said, and added quickly, "so long as I can live in the Jewish section."

In many of the cities, workers from both peoples have been laboring together side by side. They even speak each other's language. The Arabs speak Hebrew, and Arabic is taught in the Jewish schools. The Arab taxi-drivers in Jerusalem startle foreigners in Palestine by their command of the Hebrew language.

In the farm and rural areas they have been extending a helping hand to each other, like farmers all over the world. And in each of the Jewish settlements in the desert in the Negeb there would stand a guest tent at the entrance, in the best Bedouin tradition, like a welcome mat for roving Arabs in the neighborhood. There the coffee would brew and there, when the Bedouins came to call, as

they often did, the talk would be small talk, not of war and fight, but of weather and kinfolk, and how hard it is to scratch a living from desert soil.

In 1946, in the Huleh section, which lies very close to the Lebanese border, I had an illuminating conversation with the *mukhtar* (leader) of a small Arab village. He was a small, colorful-looking man, in western trousers and shirt, with a typical Arab headdress wound around his head and hanging down his back. I had been invited to pay him a visit. The traditional coffee was prepared, which always takes a long time; it is ground by being beaten in a carved wood mortar and pestle, then cooked with very special and delicate spices over a fire of camel dung. During this process I entered into a discussion with my host. His son, who was on vacation from his studies at the American University in Beyrouth, served as an interpreter for us.

"What is the actual trouble between the Jews and yourselves — will you explain it to me?" I asked him.

When the question had been translated for him a wry smile crossed his face as he answered, "There is no trouble between the Jews and ourselves. The trouble is only in 10 Downing Street." His face took on a more serious aspect as he continued, "As a matter of fact ever since the Jews have come in numbers there are no more riots between the Lebanese Arabs and ourselves. You see this

land we are on — this belongs to Lebanese landlords. They are never here. They do not work it but we cannot buy it. We have only leases. For many years — in my father's time, the same thing. Our landlords want as rent for the land a very large percentage of the produce but it has been difficult to scratch a living from this land, and we have not been able to pay such a heavy toll to them, so naturally we have tried to steal a little — one must live. As a result they have hired Lebanese Arabs to come here and beat us up to get all that they demand. Therefore we have always had trouble here, fights and riots between ourselves and the Lebanese. Since the Jews have become our neighbors we have learned so much from them about tilling the soil and getting more from the earth that we reap a much bigger harvest every year and we can steal as much as we want from our landlords — and still they are satisfied, and we are satisfied, because everyone has so much more now than before." He ended in a burst of contented laughter.

"But how would you feel if hundreds of thousands of Jews were to come into Palestine right away?"

He smiled again and shook his head at my persistence. "What are they, cannibals, these Jews, that I am supposed to feel something?" he demanded. "They are not wild men from the jungle. They are civilized people. There is plenty of room for all of us."

II

Today, despite the fact that numerous Arabs in Palestine fell prey to the scare propaganda hurled at them by the Mufti and the neighboring states, and fled Palestine, many of them left the keys to their homes as well as all their possessions in the safekeeping of close Jewish friends. Friends, like one, Ezra, who has not only served as godfather to many an Arab child and sheltered many a son who had got into a blood feud, but was often called upon by his Arab friends to serve as arbitrator of disputes among themselves. Today also, looking toward peace in the future, the Tel Aviv rotary club continues to keep its absentee Arab memberships alive and on the rolls, and today in the country the Jews are working the Arab farms and keeping strict accounts for their absent neighbors.

Often the Palestinian Arabs have done more than exhibit mere displays of friendship for their Jewish friends. They have been active collaborators against those whom they considered the common oppressors. Under the British mandate, not only did they send expressions of sympathy to Jewish settlements which had been persecuted for one reason or another, but they hid and sheltered Jewish underground leaders from the British. They would disguise these leaders as Bedouins when they were being hunted, and would keep them safely in their little villages. They also helped in the underground immigration. There was

a notorious incident in which a Jewish immigrant ship, loaded with refugees, had managed to elude the British, and a group of Arabs helped in landing the "illegals" in the Arab city of Jaffa and refused to accept any money for their service.

This fall in a little desert village near Rosh Pinah a Bedouin sheik summed up the reasons for Arab-Jewish collaboration under the mandate in the following way: "On Saturday," he began, his eyes twinkling inside the circles of blue paint he had drawn around them, "the British would promise the Jews everything. On Sunday they would promise the Arabs everything. And on Monday they would take everything for themselves."

Since the British have left Palestine there is still further collaboration on the part of those Arabs who voluntarily remained in what is now the state of Israel. During a recent trip there I visited the Jewish settlement of Maoz on the Transjordan frontier. An Israeli theatre group had come to the settlement to perform for soldiers and pioneers. It was a hot night and the stage had been set out-of-doors by laying planks of boards on bales of hay pressed tightly together. There were at least 1500 Israelis lounging about the lawn in front of the stage, absorbed in a new play about Palestine.

During the performance a soldier came and sat on my left. Unconsciously I turned to look at him and found myself staring into the smiling

face of a young Arab. I had a moment of panic as I looked at his rifle and cartridge belt, but as he made himself comfortable on the grass and prepared to enjoy the performance in Hebrew I realized that there was not going to be a riot or trouble of any sort, that this was one of the Arabs in Israel fighting with the Israeli Army.

Among the Arabs in the Israeli armed forces there are whole tribes of Druzes. The Druzes are the most literate of the Arab tribes in Palestine, and their villages are cleaner and better kept than the rest. As I went through the Druze village of Dalia, I was surprised to be hailed on all sides by children and adults with the Hebrew greeting *Shalom*, which, translated literally, means "Peace." I stopped to pick up a young man in uniform who wanted a lift to the next Druze town along the road, the town of Usfia. He spoke no English, only Hebrew or Arabic. My driver served as interpreter and I learned that he was on short leave, which he had earned on the front lines, from the Haganah, the Israeli Army, and that he was bringing greetings to his family from his two brothers, who were also volunteers with the Israeli Army. It was getting dark when we dropped him in Usfia. I saw a flash of fine white teeth in a dark face under a turban and heard a grateful *Shalom* as he turned to make his way across the hill to his father's stone hut, a Sten gun made in Israel swinging from his shoulder. In the most recent battles in Galilee the Druzes have

been fighting magnificently side by side with the Jews, and most of their fighting units use Hebrew in their orders.

III

In the Haganah also are Arabs from the north of Palestine. There are sheiks in Eastern Galilee who, infuriated by the invasion of the Syrian Arabs, went to the Israeli Army not only for protection, but also to offer their men an opportunity to fight what they consider to be a foreign attempt to deny self-determination to the Palestinian Arabs.

There are other Arabs who are collaborating with the Israelis solely from a sense of deep gratitude. In a military camp in the Negeb I was surprised to see a thirsty Arab and his camel being fortified with water by a group of Israeli fighters. They explained that he brings them information about the enemy for which he refuses any other kind of payment. He has an almost religious feeling of thankfulness for the water pipeline which was brought to the Negeb. His loyalty to the Jews springs from the fact that the pipeline was extended not only to the Jewish settlements, but that great pain was taken to open it in all the little Arab villages as well, in one of which he used to dwell before the Egyptian invasion of the Negeb.

One of the most interesting facets of the relationship between Arab and Jew is the occupation of Arab cities and villages taken by the Israeli

forces. The occupation by the Israeli Army has, on the whole, been extraordinarily lenient. However, this leniency on the part of the Israelis has only been made possible by the willing cooperation and friendliness of the occupied Arabs. The 21,000 inhabitants of Nazareth, for instance, have neither the desire nor the motive to fight the Jews. Quite peacefully, thousands of young, able-bodied men and women stream through the streets and the market place. The few Arabs from the town actively engaged in the fighting fled, and at least 6000 Arab refugees flooded the city, seeking refuge with the Jews. Nazareth is one of the few Arab cities in which there was some semblance of a democratic election for the officers of the city. Under the Israeli occupation the Arab mayor and his council of five, four businessmen and one lawyer, all of whom had been elected by the people previous to the war, have been retained for the administration of the civilian population and liaison with the army.

The mayor, in an interview with me, explained the indifference of the young people of Nazareth to the foreign Arab propaganda, while his council of varying ages and different religions, some Moslem, some Christian, sat beside him nodding agreement to his words: "Our people have no desire to fight with the Jews. Before the war most of them took a bus each day to Haifa to work together with Jews in Jewish industries. They have no purpose to take up

arms against them now. They have always been good friends with them.”

In and around Haifa there had been thousands of Arabs who had been members of the Histadrut (the Jewish Federation of Labor in Palestine). Many of the workers of Nazareth had been among these. Ties such as this one, around which so much of their lives had been built, were far too strong to be suddenly and artificially broken, and therefore we find the paradoxical spectacle in some sections of Palestine of willing and peaceful cooperation between the occupied and the “conquerors.”

IV

The Israelis who are responsible for the administration of the occupied Arab cities are carefully chosen for this task. Most often they are Jews who have not only lived in close proximity to the Arabs for many years, speak their language and generally understand them well, but who are also people from the collective settlements. This is a very important factor in their backgrounds for such a job. Through the kind of community living which exists in these settlements they are usually free of petty personal greed and selfishness. Living as they do, the amassing of private property or possessions means nothing to them. They have learned to divorce themselves from this type of vanity and conceit, so normal in other societies. They have a deep sense of social justice, also born of the cooperative way in which they live in

their settlements, and quite naturally, having a history of suffering from it, they loathe and detest oppression of any sort. Consequently, the Arabs, especially in Nazareth, Acre, Abu Gosh, etc., have not been subjected to shabby treatment, and have suffered hardly at all from looting.

They have been scrupulously taken care of. They are treated medically by staffs of Israeli doctors. Every day, in those cities and villages where it is needed there is a food convoy from Tel Aviv. It is hard to appreciate what this means unless one understands the food situation in that city. The people of Tel Aviv have no meat. They are permitted three eggs a week for children, and none at all for adults. In the streets of the city the housewives discuss interminably the problems of feeding their families. They never tire of asking one another the same question over and over again, after lining up in front of the food shops: “Were you able to get some potatoes today?”

The distribution of the food to the Arabs is carried out fairly. In Nazareth, where there had been a small food reserve when the Israeli Army came in, only a few of the influential Arabs were getting any benefit from it. Today the food is shared equally, and the allotments are carefully supervised. I watched the distribution of sacks of flour one day, and noted that there was both an Israeli soldier and an Arab civilian, standing side by side, checking on each portion.

In the economic sphere there is

strong concerted action to put the Arab civilian back on his feet. The marketplaces are busy and are run completely free from interference by the Israeli authorities. The little shops are open, and small private industries have been put back into operation and are supplying employment. I asked the council in Nazareth how they felt they were progressing economically in that community. One of the business men, who wore a bright red fez with his well cut tweed suit, answered for all of them.

"You know, two things we always need, can always use — more food and more money. But little by little we are working things out so that they are not too hard. We are working together. We have, for instance a cigarette factory here. The army helped us to reopen it and then handed it back to us altogether. We have people working there and already earning their bread for themselves once more. However, the cigarettes we produce are very expensive — there are not enough wealthy Arabs left in the country to buy them. Therefore the Israeli Army is helping us further by buying all that we can produce for the soldiers."

Another member of the council spoke enthusiastically about a water pipeline that the Israel government plans to lay in Nazareth. This would be the first one in that city. Heretofore the water has been carried by hand. Usually it is the women who go to the wells and fetch the water in large jugs for their households. One

of the most beautiful and picturesque of these wells is the legendary and haloed "Mary's Well," from which the mother of Christ is supposed to have drawn water in those ancient days. The new pipeline would be an untold blessing. Not only would there be more water, and better sanitary and hygienic conditions in the city, but the project will use large groups of workers who can become self-supporting on some decent standard of living.

In all the occupied sections of Israel there are newspapers in Arabic for the civilians. The Arab workers have been encouraged to organize new labor unions. There are no regulations against free assembly, and large crowds gather in meetings in the streets or buildings, either for idle gossip or constructive discussion, without supervision by the occupying authorities. Except for a curfew at night, and the fact that Arabs are not permitted to travel, as yet, between cities, there is very great freedom.

All the holy places, both Arab and Christian, are guarded and protected. The sacred shrines bear signs in Hebrew admonishing the soldier: "Holy place. Entrance forbidden." The Israeli Army is not taking any chances on the lay curiosity or natural souvenir-hunting of the average soldier of any nationality. Thus the Arabs have complete freedom of worship in Israel.

The general rehabilitation plans for the country include the Arab refugees now in Israel. These refugees are still

in a very bad position. They have not been really assimilated into the Arab communities into which they have come. While some buildings have been taken over for them, their conditions are very poor — crowded and foul with filth and smells. There is still no real organization amongst them. Each person looks out only for himself. In the rooms it is a case of who came first and took what he could grab. There are some refugees living with private families. However, the municipality pays for this service from these families. The reconstruction plans embrace a possible renewed birth of life for these Arabs as well as the others. There are already plans under way for rebuilding the roads, for creating new industries in the neighborhoods of the Arab cities, for reconverting old factories, and for large housing projects, all of which would supply employment for the idle labor and create real opportunities for an escape from poverty and degradation. The Arab worker will find the chance of sustaining himself with some degree of dignity and self-respect.

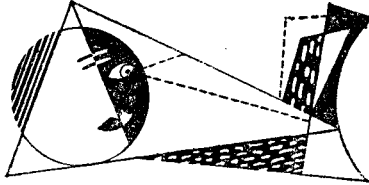
Never before in the Arab history

have they experienced what we know as the western democratic form of government, guaranteeing personal freedoms. The Arabs coming into contact with the living experience of democratic concepts for the first time in Palestine have been stimulated and impressed. The background of this war in Palestine does not lie in the average Arab's supposed antipathy for the Jew. It lies in the greed and lustful opulence of the foreign Arab lords, and their attempts to maintain the status quo, politically and economically, in the Middle East; it lies in Great Britain's desperate efforts to preserve her empire and, through the Negeb, to keep an open corridor from the Mediterranean across Africa to all her military bases on that continent. Without foreign interference, Arabs and Jews in Palestine would be at peace and could create governments friendly and cooperative to each other. One thing is certain: that, no matter what the final outcome will be in Palestine, the wealthy *effendi*, or foreign adventurer and imperialist, will find it difficult to bring the average Arab back down to the level on which he left him before this war.



THE SKEPTICS' CORNER

by BERGEN EVANS



That a fluff of cotton on the screen door will keep flies away

Mr. G. B. Shaw has remarked that there seems to be a law of the conservation of credulity; the dispelling of one illusion seems only to leave a vacuum to be filled by a new one.

Despite the fading of many an old superstition new ones seem always at hand. Two or three years ago the idea that a fluff of cotton tied on the screen door would keep flies away spread like wildfire through Ohio, southern Indiana and northern Kentucky. Perhaps it was even more widespread, but in that area fluffs of cotton were to be seen on thousands of screens. When questioned the users were vehement in their insistence that it worked — though now that it has fallen into disuse the same users are at a loss to explain why they have abandoned it. At the height of the vogue many explanations were offered: it was because the cotton looked like a spider's web or a wasp's nest and frightened the flies away; it moved when the door was opened and "they're afraid

of things that move"; it looked like snow and they thought it was winter.

Vance Randolph (in *Ozark Superstitions*) says that when bananas first began to appear in village stores in the Ozarks folks got the idea somehow that a banana stalk hung up in the chicken house would rid the whole place of chicken lice, and that one still occasionally finds one of these stalks hanging in an outbuilding.

That Florence Nightingale was the first woman to nurse wounded soldiers

Miss Nightingale made nursing respectable. She gained an accepted status for it and by her love of order started its way to its present professional state. But she probably drove more women off the battlefields than she brought to them. Soldiers used to take their wives and consorts along with them. Women — many of them virtuous, devoted wives — formed a large part of the camp followers that swarmed in the wake of earlier armies. They performed domestic services for