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SIMLA POPULATION PROBLEMS IN ISRAEL

By H.E. ELIAHU ELATH
(The Israel Ambassador in London)

Report of a lecture delivered to the Society on Wednesday, December 10, 1952, Sir Hugh Dow, G.C.I.E., K.C.S.I., in the chair.

The CHAIRMAN: It is my pleasant task today to introduce our lecturer, His Excellency Mr. Eliahu Elath, the Ambassador for Israel in London. He is well known to many of you, because His Excellency has been a member of this Society for no less than eighteen years and has frequently contributed papers to our Journal. The first, I think, was as long ago as 1936, when he wrote a paper on the Hauran in Syria, and he has since contributed papers on the Bedouin of what was formerly Transjordan and also on Kuwait. His membership of this Society dates, I believe, from the days when he was studying Arabic and the history of Arabian tribes.

His Excellency has, of course, a very wide knowledge of and has been closely acquainted with Palestine and all the surrounding Arab countries, and he has always taken a great interest in population problems.

I do not know on what aspect of these very wide problems he is going to dwell, and I am not one of those people who think that it is the duty of a chairman to try to anticipate what the lecturer is going to say and to say it first himself. I can only say that for my part I am looking forward to this lecture with very great interest, and not without some confidence, and hope that I shall gain something from it which will be useful to me when I have to deal with, perhaps, rather similar problems in another place.

I REGARD it as a great honour to have been asked to speak to my fellow members of the Royal Central Asian Society on the very complex problems of population in Israel. I must begin, however, by disclaiming any specialist knowledge or training on the economic, demographic or statistical side of the subject, and must ask your indulgence if, with the sociological background very present in my mind, I sometimes tend to stress the humane and psychological aspects rather more than the economic and statistical ones. If pressed by questions—as I look forward to being later on—I may perhaps take refuge in the plea that a diplomat in these days can hardly be expected to be a specialist in anything. On the contrary, the very diversity of his duties forces him to try to know “less and less about more and more.”

From which you will gather that I cannot hope to provide anything approaching a comprehensive demographic survey of the whole field. I propose, with your permission, to limit myself this afternoon to those aspects of our population problems with which I am most familiar—namely, those deriving from the absorption and integration into Israel's life, first, of a wide variety of newcomers to the country, and second, of our substantial Arab minority.

The urgency of the short-term problems—largely economic and financial—which Israel faces today has, I fear, monopolized public attention abroad to the exclusion of some no less dramatic, and in the long run certainly no less significant, social and cultural aspects of current developments. It is no light undertaking to double a country's population in four years, to transplant physically, and transform socially and economically,



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hundreds of thousands of people from the ends of the earth, bringing with them an almost incredible variety of languages, cultures, habits and traditions, and to forge them into a united, though far from uniform, national entity. True, you may say that we have had some experience: Moses had much the same sort of job. But the number and variety of our present-day tribes is very much greater than his; and for us there has been no forty years' wandering together in the wilderness to weld the disparate elements into one.

This is, of course, primarily our own internal problem, and we must solve it for ourselves. But it is, I think, also one which can hardly fail to appeal to anyone interested in the study of human relationships.

Incidentally, I might mention that this problem which we in Israel are tackling today is, in its essence, the search for a harmonious adjustment between East and West; for a means of integrating the ideas and traditions of past ages into the social and political structure of a modern society. (By "East" and "West" I mean here, of course, rather what Kipling meant than what the political leader-writer of today means!) And that problem is not ours alone. As thoughtful people everywhere are already realizing, it is a problem which also faces—though perhaps less urgently—the whole Western world, as conditions in many parts of the East continue to deteriorate. And when it has to be faced, it will be on a vastly larger scale. For us in Israel it is already a matter of urgency. We shall no doubt make a lot of mistakes in handling it in the haste that the circumstances impose on us. But it may be that, in so doing, we may serve as a pilot-plant from which those interested (including some of our neighbours) may learn something of value when the larger problem comes to be dealt with.

I think no objective observer of present conditions in Israel can fail to be struck by the great difficulty of the conditions under which we have to work. Processes whose success or failure may determine our future for generations to come, and which in other countries have been spread over centuries, have had to be speeded up in what someone has called "the pressure-cooker of Israel." Pressure-cookers have their advantages and their disadvantages, and we in Israel are finding out, by trial and error, their qualities and defects as instruments of social change. Yet we have found, too, in this social laboratory of ours, that success sometimes comes when least expected, and in defiance of every accepted canon of social and economic science. Failure can come the same way—all you can hope to do is not to make the same mistake twice.

We have no illusions—no expectation of early or easy success. Only generations to come will know how far we have succeeded in welding our diverse elements into the kind of society of which we dreamed for so many years before Israel came into being.

Here I would digress for a moment to say that we have never looked upon statehood, and do not now look upon it, as an end in itself, but rather as a scaffolding which had to be erected in order to build up the kind of community-life—not mere material livelihood—which can best provide the frame for a free and untrammelled expression of Jewish thought and tradition deriving, ultimately, from the Book of Books and

the teachings of the Prophets. Interrupted, diluted, dimmed, by two thousand years of Dispersion, that tradition has never failed completely, and to its survival the remnant of my people owe that moral and spiritual foundation which has enabled them to stand firm against the many storms which have come so near to overwhelming them.

The creation of such a society depends on our ultimate success in absorbing our new citizens, and in fusing them, together with the pioneers of Zionist settlement and the Arabs already in the country, to form a single nation, united to face the challenge of the future.

So much by way of introduction. With these few general ideas in mind, it may perhaps be easier to recognize the underlying principles and processes of the rather confused picture which Israel, in her present formative and transitional stage, must present to the outside observer.

For convenience, population problems in Israel may be considered under two main heads, at once distinct from, and complementary to, each other, and together composing the single bunch of nettles which we have to grasp.

First, as already mentioned, is the problem of absorbing and integrating our newcomers into the existing community.

Second, and no less vital, is the problem posed by our Arab minority, which we have also to find means of fusing, socially, culturally and economically, into our modern and democratic society.

And here, I am afraid, a few figures become necessary, by way of background:

The area of Israel is approximately 8,000 square miles.

The total population at the end of August, 1952, was 1,610,000, of whom 1,433,000 were Jews and 177,000 Arabs.

Half of the Jewish population—some 700,000—have come in since May, 1948, when the State of Israel was established. They came from countries as diverse as Libya and Poland, Roumania and Yemen, Canada and Iraq. About half the newcomers—mostly those who came in the first two years of Israel's existence—are from European countries. These are the survivors of the Hitler persecutions, hard-core cases from the Displaced Persons' Camps, the flotsam and jetsam of war. Some of these, especially the younger generation, had the advantage of a training period, more or less lengthy, in England or France or Scandinavia, during World War II. But very many of them had not. And though the majority of the adults had once been men and women of character and quality, with a firm background of Western culture, many of them eventually reached Israel as physical or nervous wrecks, needing long periods of treatment and rehabilitation before they could face the world as citizens of their new home.

The other half of the recent immigrants have come, mostly in the last two years, from Asian or African countries, from some of which, like Yemen and Iraq, practically the whole community has been transplanted *en masse*. You may have heard of what was called "Operation Magic Carpet," which brought some 50,000 Yemenite Jews trekking overland to Aden, whence, with the generous and timely help of the British authorities on the spot, we arranged an air-lift for them to Israel. They brought

with them ancient traditions, venerable customs, sincere religious convictions, and usually habits of frugal industry—but little technical knowledge, and no experience at all of modern social and economic patterns.

I have been told by those who were in charge of the flights from Aden that there was no difficulty whatever in persuading the Yemenites to enter the aeroplanes. They knew from Biblical prophecy that eventually the blessed were to return to the Promised Land "on the wings of eagles." But when, on arrival in Lydda airport, they were shepherded towards the waiting fleet of motor-buses, they showed great fear, and much tactful persuasion was required before they could be induced to enter them. Prophecy, unfortunately, is silent on the matter of motor-buses. . . .

The education and re-orientation of these people is clearly a very complex and delicate business. They have not only travelled 1,500 miles "on the wings of eagles"; they have come nearly as many years through time—from the Dark Ages (or, at best, the early middle ages) to the twentieth century. In common with immigrants from other oriental countries, they have brought with them the social patterns and habits of the country of their birth, of which the most conspicuous features are a high birth-rate and a total ignorance of hygiene, with a consequent incidence of preventable disease which to Western eyes was frankly appalling.

Nearly 30 per cent. of these oriental groups were children under 14 years of age; about the same proportion were elderly people. Only some 35 per cent. fell within the age-group between 19 and 39, which contains, of course, the people easiest to absorb in productive employment and to readjust to new conditions. The disease rate, particularly in trachoma and bilharzia, was very high, and Israel's medical services were strained to their limit to cope with it. But fortunately we have so far been spared any serious epidemics of infectious diseases.

The community upon which these two widely differing streams of returning exiles, from Europe and Asia, have been converging for some years, at the rate of 15,000 to 20,000 a month, is a modern democratic community. For a quarter of a century it had lived under a British Administration. (And although we may often have differed from our Mandatory Administrators, we knew that at the same time we were learning from them much of priceless value to us—as we are still learning from this country, in a different, and happier, relationship.) The Jews of Israel, then, in 1948 were a highly educated, highly organized and dynamic community, with all the traditions of a free, progressive, Western democracy (plus a few of their own, deriving from the democratic habits of Jewish communal life, with its respect for the liberty of the individual), and with modern standards of public health, education and social welfare.

And the two converging streams of newcomers, though they differed widely in practically every other respect, shared the common ideal of the Return to Zion. Not that this was precisely a new idea. Individual Jews from all the quarters of the globe had for centuries been returning to their ancient homeland. The persecutions in Russia and Roumania in the eighties of the last century brought about the beginnings of organized Jewish colonization in Palestine. The Balfour Declaration gave the Movement a new impetus and a new international meaning. The establishment

of Israel as an independent Jewish State, whose gates stood open to any Jew in need of a refuge, brought many thousands of new immigrants seeking a permanent home for themselves and their children where they might live in peace and security, preserving and developing their own traditional culture as a free and sovereign nation.

There, very briefly, you have the problem. As you see, it is a complex one, and I propose, with your permission, to deal here with its two main elements separately. In real life, of course, they act and inter-act on each other, and cannot be kept in water-tight compartments.

First, then, let us look at the new arrivals. What are we doing about them? Well, we began in 1948, with the guns of our War of Independence hardly yet silent, and uneasy armistice hardly yet in sight, with the obvious expedient of receiving our mass immigration—at that time largely European—in reception camps. These were usually either former “Immigration Camps” inherited from the Mandatory régime, or camps and barracks formerly used by the British Army. There we housed, fed, doctored and sorted out the newcomers, taught them some Hebrew, and provided professional training courses in preparation for their final settlement.

But it soon became clear that integration would take longer than we had hoped; that most of the immigrants would need to stay longer in the camps than we had expected before they could take their places in a normal community—or before there would be houses and work for them. You cannot materialize houses and farms and factories overnight. As the months passed, and Israel kept her gates wide open, the camps became unbearably crowded—at one time as many as 100,000 people were returned as living in reception camps. We realized that there would have to be some kind of intermediate stage between the reception camp and permanent settlement.

From this realization was born the system of *maabaroth*. These are transitional settlements, or workers’ villages, usually sited near to towns or to agricultural centres where work is available. And to them, after the briefest possible stay in a reception camp, we now direct those immigrant families whose heads are of working age, in order that they may complete their acclimatization.

Housing in the *maabaroth* is mostly in prefabricated bungalows (there are still some tents, but we are replacing them as quickly as we can); medical attention, education for children and adults, vocational training, and municipal services are provided, and employment is found for the head of the family in near-by towns or villages, or sometimes created by means of public works—roads, drainage schemes and so forth. Some *maabaroth* have been set up in the remoter rural areas, both because we desire to maintain and increase the proportion of our rural to our urban population, and must therefore try to accustom the newcomers to pioneering rural life as early as we can, and also because we know that the only way to make a frontier permanent and safe is to settle it.

The total *maabaroth* population in the middle of 1952 was about 228,000, about 27 per cent. having been sent to Galilee and about 18 per cent. to the Negev. At the same date—the latest for which I have returns—there were still about 17,500 people in reception camps, but these were

almost all "special cases"—chronically sick people, or social misfits of one kind or another still needing treatment. 450,000 of our 700,000 new citizens are already in permanent houses, and are gradually beginning to play their part in the country's economy.

So far we have managed to keep unemployment within manageable limits, and the daily average has not exceeded 2 per cent. of those gainfully employed. But this has entailed almost superhuman efforts in the way of public works, as well as much discomfort for the whole community through the reduction of living standards, overcrowding, shortages and general austerity conditions. We hope that the worst of all this is now over, and are looking forward to some improvement in the near future. But it is obvious that to increase a country's population by nearly 100 per cent. in four years is bound to have deeper effects on the structure and habits of the original community. Thirty-seven per cent. of our people are today of Asian or African origin.

Exactly what the effects will be it is probably still too early to say with any precision. But certain tendencies may already be noted:

(1) There has been a rise in the percentage of people employed in agriculture—from 12.6 per cent. in 1948 to 13.9 per cent. in 1951—and an even more marked rise in the rural as compared with the urban population. In 1948 only 16 per cent. of Israel's population lived in rural areas, and 84 per cent. in the towns. Today the rural population is 22.5 per cent. of the total, and the urban population only 77.5 per cent. Between 1948 and the middle of 1952, 277 new agricultural settlements were established, and as their crops begin to be harvested, these contribute to make Israel more nearly self-supporting in foodstuffs than ever before.

(2) The development of industry has not kept pace with agricultural development, largely owing to shortage of raw materials and investment capital.

(3) The proportion of persons in the liberal professions has markedly declined in the last two years.

(4) There have been slight increases in the general mortality rate and the infantile mortality rate, but both remain among the lowest in the world, and far below those of any other Middle Eastern or oriental country. The birth-rate having risen appreciably with the influx of people from oriental countries, Israel is now among the countries with the highest natural increase in the world, and the percentage of children under 14 years of age has risen rapidly, and is still rising.

(5) For the time being, we have also a higher percentage of elderly and disabled people—and the combination of these two factors means that, for some years to come, our population of working age will have to work very hard, and pay very high taxes, in order to support our large proportion of "unproductive" citizens. But this is a problem which will solve itself as the children grow up.

(6) A more obvious—and less agreeable—effect of our mass immigration is the growing social differentiation between the various classes of the Jewish community, especially in the towns. This is a development which we view with serious concern: it aggravates the difficulty of integrating the newcomers, and makes social contacts even harder to achieve than

they inevitably are by reason of differences of language and cultural background. Some idea of the linguistic difficulties may be gained from an experience of my wife's, while teaching in Israel: in one of her classes of thirty-five pupils, no fewer than seventeen different languages were in use! And that was before the latest great wave of immigration had reached its peak.

This is one reason why my Government places such great emphasis on the revival of the Hebrew language, for language is, in itself, one of the greatest unifying influences between differing groups of a people. Some Hebrew is usually known to every Jew. Though it has not been used as a spoken language outside Palestine (and in Palestine itself has been so used only for the last fifty years or so), the language of the Bible has always been the tongue used in prayer and in the religious liturgy; through all the centuries of the Dispersion, it has remained dear to the Jewish heart. Moreover, from the purely practical point of view, some *lingua franca* was essential if Israel was not to become a Tower of Babel. To this need Hebrew was the natural and inevitable answer, and its revived use symbolizes Israel's spiritual and cultural links with her people's past, as well as the fulfilment of the Zionist renaissance which laid the foundations of our new national life.

While on the subject of language, I must mention one of the most popular and effective instruments of linguistic and cultural integration for adult immigrants—namely, the *Ulpan* (literally "Academy"). This is a kind of evening school run by the Ministry of Education and Culture, where, for a nominal fee, grown-up immigrants may take intensive courses in the Hebrew language and literature, and in other subjects calculated to make them useful citizens of the State. *Ulpanim* exist in all the larger centres throughout the country, and have now about 20,000 students and some 1,000 teachers.

Here I must also pay tribute to two extremely valuable instruments—of very different character—which have also been playing leading parts in the work of integration. The first is the Israel Defence Army, which has not only been doing yeoman service in the actual organization of reception camps and *maabaroth*, but is also supplying immigrant boys and girls of military age with the nearest thing to a "universal University" and "School of Citizenship" that we can hope to give them. A very elementary University it may be—one where toothbrush drill is sometimes more urgently needed than the multiplication table. But it is none the less invaluable as a unifying influence. Here the immigrant boy or girl from Yemen or Morocco serves side by side with young people born in Galilee or Jerusalem, and the ex-wards of Youth Aliyah trained in England or France. Here they learn, while still young enough to lay aside their prejudices, to respect each other's qualities and to understand each other's points of view. There is no other equally effective solvent of social barriers.

Here, too, we have found the most potent antidote for that hostility and distrust of all authority which is so deeply rooted in the psychological make-up of large numbers of the newcomers. Bitter personal experience—whether in the ghettos of Warsaw or Baghdad, or on the roads of a war-scarred Europe—had convinced many of our new arrivals that

authority was always and everywhere against them: that the police, the army, the official, was always their enemy. It was entirely outside their experience to contemplate the possibility of a policeman being *their* policeman, of authority being well-intentioned; of a soldier being *their* friend—all of them integral parts of the same society as themselves, sharing as free citizens in the same duties and privileges. Common service in the Defence Army is among the most effective means of driving home this essential lesson.

The second institution is one that is probably known to you by name—the Children and Youth Aliyah Movement, which, for twenty years and more, has been bringing children and young people (including many orphans) to Palestine and Israel, clothing and feeding them, and giving them their first training and experience in the life of the country. Youth Aliyah's former wards—there are by now some 50,000 of them all told, from sixty countries—constitute the backbone of our younger generation of immigrants.

I turn now to the other half of our problem—our Arabic-speaking minority. According to the latest available figures (for May, 1952) this comprised 120,000 Moslems, 35,000 Christians, and about 15,000 Druzes. 32,000 of them live in the towns; 120,000 in the villages; and we have still some 15,000 nomads—mainly Beduin, in the Negev.

A rough social classification shows about 65 per cent. as being fellahin, labourers or artisans; about 20 per cent. as small farmers or specially skilled workers; and the remaining 15 per cent. as including some white-collar employees, small merchants, substantial landlords, etc.

And here, I think, one has to bear in mind that Israel was born in the midst of a war—welcomed with shot and shell from her Arab neighbours on all sides. As she fought her assailants to a standstill, and emerged into the half-light of uneasy armistice with them, her Government found itself in a situation of bewildering complexity *vis-à-vis* its own Arab citizens. The Arabs who had remained in Israel after the conclusion of the military operations had suffered a profound psychological upheaval, as well as the dislocation of their economic and social life. Almost overnight they had found themselves transformed from a majority to a minority, and deprived of their dominant position. Most of the wealthy and educated—the big land-owners, the well-to-do peasant farmers, the influential families, the professional people—had fled, and the community was left leaderless. The whole fabric of Arab social life had disintegrated: the urban population had lost its employers and its jobs; the villagers found their accustomed markets gone and their trade connections severed.

And here—though it is not strictly within the scope of this paper—I feel I must say just a word about the Arab refugees. This is a problem which Israel has never regarded as of her making. She places responsibility for it on the Arab States who attacked her in defiance of the United Nations decision. Nevertheless, Israel fully realizes the importance, for political and humanitarian reasons alike, of securing an early and constructive solution. My Government has repeatedly affirmed its readiness to contribute its share towards such a solution. We have taken over the resettlement of the 19,000 Arab refugees whom the war left within our borders;

we have made and are making every effort to reunite a number of Arab families, separated by the war, by admitting the excluded members; and we have already committed ourselves to releasing a substantial part of the blocked Arab accounts in Israel.

Returning now to the Arabs in Israel, under the Proclamation of Independence, and the "Little Constitution" under which Israel is governed, Arabs are full and equal citizens, with complete freedom of worship, conscience, education, language and culture, as well as social and political equality. The large majority of the Arab inhabitants (some 140,000 out of the 177,000) automatically became citizens of Israel under the new Citizenship Law. The main exceptions are (a) those Arab residents who were not actually in Israel on March 1, 1952 (when the register was compiled), and thereafter until the coming into force of the Citizenship Law on July 14, 1952; and (b) any Arabs who have, since March, 1952, entered the country without permission.

The Arabs are well represented in the *Knesset* (Parliament), where they have eight members out of the 120; and at the last election (in July, 1951) 70,000 Arabs voted—about 80 per cent. of the total number on the Register of Voters. The voters included a number of women—I believe the only Arab women anywhere in the Middle East who have ever gone to the polls. Arab workers are admitted as full members of the appropriate trade unions.

As to language, though Hebrew is the State language, Arabic is also officially recognized, and is used, together with Hebrew, in the Law Courts, on coins, postage-stamps, banknotes, and in Arab schools and on public buildings. The Official Gazette appears in both languages, and quite a number of Government officials are Arabs.

But equality before the law and under the Constitution does not always mean quite the same thing as equal status in everyday life. That depends less on law than on social and educational standards and ways of life—and also, until there is a firm peace between us and our Arab neighbours, on certain security considerations which neither our Administration nor our military authorities would be justified in ignoring. (These explain certain temporary regulations limiting the free movement of Arabs in a few specified areas, where special permits are required for travel.)

But in general it is the declared ambition of my Government to raise the standards of our Arab citizens up to the level obtaining among the Jews, as the first and most decisive step towards full practical equality between all Israel's citizens, irrespective of race, creed or language. We have ourselves suffered too much and too long from the evils of minority status and discrimination ever to wish to inflict them on anybody else—quite apart from the fact that history goes to show that a policy of discrimination does, if possible, even worse harm to the discriminators than to the discriminated-against, and ultimately saps the moral foundations of any State unwise enough to adopt it.

Our main instrument in our levelling-up policy is education. Education is the essential prerequisite for bridging the gap between Jew and Arab, and for ensuring the real and practical integration of the Arabs into the democratic political structure of our State. We fully realize that

democracy is no mere matter of mechanics, and that democracy in the Western sense can be maintained with difficulty—if at all—while large numbers of a population remain illiterate and a prey to disease and degradation. This explains my Government's insistence from the outset on the introduction of free and universal education and free public health services, even though these must obviously consume what looks, in present conditions, an unduly high proportion of our limited resources. But we regard them as essential, in order to foster in all our citizens, Jew and Arab alike, the sense that they have a vital personal stake in the country's well-being.

The compulsory Education Act in force in Israel applies to Arab as well as Jewish children, girls and boys alike, and I am glad to be able to say that it is no dead letter. Indeed, one of the most remarkable developments of the past four years has been the enormous growth of the Arab school system. In 1949 there were in Israel 10,000 Arab pupils and 250 teachers. There are today some 27,150 pupils and 750 teachers (about a quarter of them women), for a population which has shown no very marked increase in the interval. The change is most noticeable in the village schools (there were always, of course, a number of quite large Arab schools in the towns). But one village in Lower Galilee had in 1948 a school consisting of a single room and a single teacher, attended by forty-five children. Now it has a school of seven rooms, 400 pupils, and eleven teachers—working in two shifts. The compulsory Education Act plays its part, of course, in this remarkable increase. But it would not be difficult to evade it, since the village schools are largely the responsibility, under the Ministry of Education, of the local councils. But the truth is that nobody wants to evade it, and that there is a new spirit abroad among Arab parents and children alike. The new schools are filled to capacity because everyone wants to learn.

This seems to me to be one of the most hopeful features about our relations with our Arab citizens. Another is the increasing study of Hebrew as a second language in the Arab village schools. With the parallel teaching of Arabic in Jewish schools, this should facilitate better understanding between all sections of the population as the younger generation grows up. There is at present a great shortage of teachers—both Jewish and Arab—which we are doing our utmost to make good.

In a few years' time we should be seeing the results of this upsurge of the desire for schooling among our Arab citizens, and shall, I hope, be some stages farther along our road. And here I would emphasize that the goal is not anything like an imposed assimilation, but rather the further integration of an Arab community preserving its own distinctive character.

All the same, I would not wish to leave you with the impression that we have already reached the decisive stage in the integration of our Arab minority. Still less would I wish to encourage the inference that we have already achieved full harmony in solving the initial difficulties which faced the remnants of the Arab population in Israel. We are taking what practical steps we can, but time alone can bring complete healing of some of the wounds suffered by both communities during the years of bitter strife from which they have so recently emerged. Time—and a firm peace with

our Arab neighbours, which will undoubtedly make an important and lasting contribution to the solving of this problem.

I have said nothing so far about one particular group of Arabs—one in which I am myself specially interested—namely, the Beduin. We have still about 14,000 Beduin within our borders in the Negev. Nearly all of them are of the *Tayaha*, but there are also a few of the *Tarabin* and *Azazma* tribes. Partly because their movements are now restricted by the more rigid character of the frontier, and by regulations designed to control nomadic incursions into cultivated areas, a number of them are now turning to settled agriculture, and this the authorities welcome and encourage, both for economic and for security reasons. The general development and irrigation in progress in many parts of the Negev also make life easier for the tribes in seasons of drought, and they are gradually discovering the advantages of co-operation with the Jewish settlers, who are glad to draw on the local knowledge and experience of the Beduin, in exchange for technical know-how and the loan of implements. Beduin-bred sheep and goats find a ready market in a country as short of meat as Israel now is, and this rural industry is a thriving one. And work on the roads, water supplies, etc., is becoming a popular and profitable source of income for many former tribesmen, though some of their sheikhs still tend to frown upon it as interfering with the traditional tribal ways of life, and also with their interests as land-owners in keeping their tribesmen working on their own lands.

Following its general policy, my Government has been supplying medical and educational facilities, and other advantages—such as the use of the improved water supplies—to all Beduin in the area, whether they prefer to keep to their nomadic way of life or to settle down. But we are taking as much care as we can not to interfere with tribal customs, and in particular are maintaining the old system of Beduin courts, where the sheikhs themselves sit as judges, with a representative of the district court as chairman. These courts can impose fines up to 200 Israel pounds, and terms of imprisonment of up to three months. As in the past, they usually try to arrange for major disputes to be settled by agreement, and this system continues to work well, even in serious tribal or inter-tribal disputes.

I must add a word—in case I be accused of talking all the time as though Israel were an island in the middle of the Pacific, with no relation to its surroundings—to make it clear that we regard ourselves, and wish to be regarded, as an integral part of the Middle East, as deeply rooted in its history and civilization, and as firmly established there, as any other of its peoples.

This fact has its relevance not only to the security, economic and political aspects of our existence, but also to the problems with which I have just been dealing, and it may, therefore, not be inappropriate if I conclude with a brief reference to our long-term attitude to our neighbours.

We have a longing for peace in our own part of the world—such a peace as will transform the present animosities and rivalries into co-operation and good neighbourly relations. For we know well that, without friendly

understanding between the various countries of the Middle East, there can be little prospect of progress or prosperity for the area as a whole or for any of its peoples.

A common effort by the countries of the Middle East is the only way to restore the ancient fertility of the region, and to ensure the development of its great natural resources for the good of all its inhabitants.

When I speak of the resources of the region, I am thinking not only, or even mainly, of oil; but first and foremost of the enormous agricultural potentialities of the Middle East—once the granary of the ancient world and the hub of great civilizations. Only the restoration of the area's agriculture—through rational use of its water resources, and the introduction of the vitally necessary reforms—can lead to that social and economic progress which is the foundation of political stability.

We live in times when, without social and economic security, there can be no security at all. It is thus in our own interest, as well as in that of our neighbours, that we desire to see, and are anxious to promote so far as we can, the general progress and development of these countries.

We earnestly hope that, once our Arab neighbours have become reconciled to the existence of an independent Israel, and have shown themselves ready for a just and honourable settlement, we shall be able, with them, to pursue our common aims and interests to our common advantage. Properly organized and directed, the great potentialities of the Middle East have much to contribute to the peace and prosperity of the world at large.

The CHAIRMAN: We were told that something like 78 per cent. of the Israelis now live in towns, and 22 per cent. in rural areas. I do not know what is the exact distinction between a town and a rural area. When does a village cease to be a rural area and become a town? Is there any sort of fixed size which is taken into consideration when these statistics are gathered together?

Secondly, our lecturer seems very confident that although at present Israel has a very large proportion of young children and old people, this would right itself as the children grew up. I am not quite so sure of that, unless he looks forward to the present lot of children being very much less productive than their parents. As the old people die out, the present middle-aged people will become old, and this vast number of children will presumably have grown up and be producing children at the same rate.

Mr. ELATH: I am afraid it is rather difficult to be precise about the exact distinction, in Israel, between rural and urban areas. The figures I have given are for the administrative areas classed respectively as "rural" and "urban," and I doubt if they can be regarded as reflecting precisely the social, cultural or even economic lines of demarcation. Israel is living through a period of rapid transformation; rural and urban development are taking place all over the country, side by side, and often overlapping. It would be premature to try and foretell how a "social distribution map" (if there is such a thing) will look in ten or even five years' time. For example, the Negev is now being rapidly developed as an agricultural

Government entertain of gathering those Jews who are at present living behind the Iron Curtain?

Mr. ELATH: A good part of the newcomers to Israel since 1948 have in fact come from Eastern Europe—from Poland, Roumania, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. They have proved themselves good and useful citizens of Israel and are contributing much to its progress and development. We have done, and shall continue to do, all we can to facilitate the immigration of Jews from these countries, and if there is a possibility of further substantial immigration, with the consent of the respective Governments, I can only say that it will be as welcome to us in Israel as were the earlier arrivals from Eastern Europe. But about the prospects of consent from the Governments concerned I am in no position to prophesy.

The CHAIRMAN: I am sorry that the clock informs me that the limits which we usually set to our discussions have been more than reached.

I was asked by Sir John Shea, our President, to express his regrets to your Excellency that he was not able to be present. I am quite sure that when he learns what an extremely interesting and informative lecture we have had, he will be more than ever sorry that he has missed it. I am sure that he would wish me, on behalf of everyone present, to thank His Excellency for coming to speak to us this afternoon.

The vote of thanks was carried with acclamation, and the meeting concluded.



