LIFE IN A KIBBUTZ

MURRAY WEINGARTEN

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ZIONIST ORGANIZATION
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Preface

IN HEBREW KIBBUTZ MEANS GROUP. DURING THE past forty years of Jewish history, however, it has come to mean a particular kind of group, one of the voluntary collective communities established in the State of Israel, combining the realization of Zionist hopes with the creation of a society based on the principles of utopian socialism. Seventy thousand people, in nearly 250 villages and settlements, are today part of the kibbutz movement. Though this movement has by no means created a society free from imperfections, and though it is currently facing serious problems, it has nevertheless proven beyond all question that it is not a "crackpot" movement maintained by impractical social visionaries. It played a major role in the creation of the State of Israel, in the actual struggle for independence itself as well as in the molding of the country's social, cultural, and economic physiognomy. It forms the backbone of Israel's agriculture. Serious observers the world over are convinced that this movement, in its achievements to date and in the promise of its future, can teach people how to order their community so that they may live more

secure, rational, and socially just lives. In Israel particularly the creation of a national ethos truly consistent with the spirit of Jewish thought and tradition depends, in no small measure, on the extent to which this voluntary, democratic socialist movement can imprint its character on the personality of the country as a whole.

I live in a kibbutz. I have participated in its founding, shared its growing pains, suffered its problems and disappointments. I have felt the keen sense of satisfaction and accomplishment which comes with the successful establishment, *ex nihilo,* of a new community. I have seen others, who tried unsuccessfully to become part of our life, despair of being able to balance positive achievement against a feeling of failure. I have watched them retreat as reality destroyed their vision of the ideal. Though kibbutz life presents serious disadvantages as well as a challenge and an opportunity for creativeness, I and tens of thousands of people like me continue to live it.

We live in a kibbutz by choice, not from compulsion. Since I am a native American, Israel does not represent an escape from an "intolerable" way of life—the United States is far from being an unbearable place to live in. I have faith in American political and social development, and I have no fears about my ability to take my place in American society. It is because I find kibbutz life in Israel to be a challenging, interesting, and personally satisfying experience that I live there, not because I have negative attitudes toward America or American Jewish life.

Further explanation necessitates a book. It means telling the story of the kibbutz I helped found, describing the details of kibbutz organization and operation, and discussing the failings, advantages, and prospective development of kibbutz life. It means explaining something about the ideological approach of a kibbutz member to the problem of the proper organization of society the world over. It means pointing out the relationship between all these and an attachment and identification with things Jewish.

Though I am not a professional sociologist, and claim no more than a layman's insight into the underlying motivations for people's actions, it seems to me that the story of a kibbutz experiment told in this manner should be of enormous interest not only to the Zionist, not only to the Jew searching for cultural and social roots, but to all those interested in creating a community structure which will eliminate many of the ills of modern society and release man's personality for its further fulfillment.

A member of a kibbutz naturally becomes interested in other experiments of a similar nature: in Robert Owen's New Harmony, in the Transcendental Club's Brook Farm, in the French "communities of work," in religious communal settlements, even in the details of organization of the forced totalitarian *kolkhoz,* despite the radical and basic difference in spirit between this Communist Russian mockery of the utopian socialist idea and the kibbutz. The kibbutz has much in common with all these communities in organization, but it is basically different, and this difference affects

the details of kibbutz life as well as its outlook on fundamental principles. It is this difference that has influenced the pattern of development of the kibbutz movement in the past and will govern its future.

The kibbutz movement is part and parcel of the movement of Jewish national rebirth which has resulted thus far in the emergence of the State of Israel. It is rooted deeply in that movement and in a whole Jewish world of traditions and values. Any treatment of the kibbutz cannot be divorced from a discussion of Zionism, its social character, its past and its future. The kibbutz is as much an outgrowth of the needs of Zionist colonization in Israel as it is the product of a specific social point of view possessed by its builders.

Any discussion of the kibbutz, therefore, must deal with seemingly unrelated matters. It must investigate the backgrounds of the people who make up kibbutzim, learn their antecedents, and assess their motives. It must evaluate the role played by Zionist ideology as a force motivating one's belonging to a kibbutz. It must discuss the problems involved in forging a cohesive unit out of people with backgrounds of varying nationalities and different economic classes, many of whom are changing their whole way of life from one of middle-class white-collar occupation to one of manual labour—for the sake of an ideal. Especially in the case of pioneering settlers who hail from the Western countries, particularly from the United States and Canada, is it necessary to understand the problems inherent in adjusting successfully to a

whole gamut of difficulties. These range from the lower standard of living and the hard manual labour of the kibbutz to the difficulty in identifying oneself with Jews from other, often relatively primitive cultural backgrounds, as people with whom one shares a common heritage and a common future. What moves a young American Jew, despite these difficulties, to leave his home for the sake of living in a kibbutz?

The following pages present the problems as well as the satisfactions of kibbutz living, in a way which the author hopes will be devoid of propaganda. The only true picture is one which presents the petty as well as the grand, the story of disappointment as well as the story of fulfilment, allowing the reader to draw his own conclusions. Readers will arrive at their appraisals according to their own backgrounds, their own beliefs, their own personalities.

M. W.

Gesher Haziv, Israel

CHAPTER ONE

Beginnings

THE FIRST KIBBUTZ (OR KVUTZA, AS IT WAS THEN called—today the words are interchangeable) was founded by a small handful of settlers forty-five years ago, in the year 1909 on the banks of the river Jordan, some miles south of the Sea of Galilee. The Arabs called the area Um Jouni, and the settlers Hebraized the name to Degania. Their idea as it developed was a simple one: to set up a communal settlement which would be an outpost of Zionist colonization in Palestine. In addition to colonizing the land and providing a living for its members, this community would at the same time set the pattern for the future Jewish community of Israel which these settlers envisioned. No money was to be used within the community; the group as a whole was to assume responsibility for agricultural production and provide for all the community services and all the individual needs of the membership. There was to be no private property. No hired labour was to be employed. No individual was to engage in private trade. All produce was to be marketed by the group as a whole, and the group as a whole was to make all purchases. All profit,

if there was any profit, was to be ploughed back into the future of the settlement and of the Zionist cause.

Today, less than five decades after this first beginning, over 70,000 men, women, and children live in close to 250 kibbutzim scattered all over the State of Israel. Today, seventy-eight of these kibbutzim, organized in one of the several kibbutz federations—the Union of Collective Settlements —farm over 120,000 acres and own tens of thousands of cattle and sheep and close to half a million chickens. These seventy-eight kibbutzim own 530 tractors, 160 combines, 100 balers, and 280 trucks. They own factories worth millions of pounds, operate their own bank and their own construction company. They conduct their own Teachers' Training Seminary and several technical high schools, plus, of course, elementary schools and regular high schools. One of them even conducts an internationally-known annual music festival. Degania itself is today a flourishing community of well over 500 inhabitants. Its members are among the most respected people in the country, active and influential in community affairs, in politics, and in the labour movement. After half a century of continuous progress the grandchildren of the original founders are now assuming positions of responsibility in the conduct of the settlement.

What was the actual approach with which these original founders began to build their community? What were the economic realities of their environment which helped and perhaps even dictated this particular form of colonization? How did they go

about it, and what were the specific principles which they followed and developed?

Degania and the later kibbutzim were not the products of the Israel environment alone. The thought which later matured into the idea of the kibbutz originated in the schools, the clandestine meeting places, and the general cultural and political environment of thousands of Jewish young people who lived, not in Palestine, but in Czarist Russia during the first decades of the twentieth century. In order to understand Degania one must first understand them.

The Founders of the Kibbutz

The young Jewish intelligentsia of Eastern Europe was a natural recruiting ground for the social revolutionary movements of all shades and varieties which flourished in those countries at the turn of the century. Emerging from centuries of bloody persecution to a discovery of the spiritual, political, and economic promise of the new ideas of democracy, socialism and full social and political equality with all mankind, these young Jews embraced such movements with all the pent-up passion and the sacrificial zeal which had been generated by their people's history.

The revolution for them was not only a revolt against the Czarist tyrant. It was even more a personal revolution against the bleakness of their own lives, against the medievalism of the Jewish community, against all those things that are implied by the word "ghetto."

As is true of all revolutions, their zeal carried

many of these young Jewish people to extremes—in innumerable cases even to the extreme of self-abnegation. The young Jewish revolutionary was prepared to say that all of Jewish tradition, the whole of Jewish ethics, all of Jewish community organization was just so much "clerical reaction." Nothing was good about Jewish life, he felt, and he was quite willing, even eager, to accept Marx's dictum that the Jews were really just an economic class which would disappear when all became right with the world and all men were brothers. Even those who consented to conduct their revolutionary work in Yiddish rather than in Russian did so because Yiddish, as "the language of the Jewish proletariat," was a temporary expedient until this Jewish proletariat emerged from its ghetto seclusion and was able to enter the Russian-speaking revolutionary movement. In a few cases the young Jewish revolutionary, with all the fervour of the moth being burned by the flame, was even ready to justify, with the *Narodnaya Volya,* the pogrom and the murder of the Jews as "oil on the wheels of the revolution." It was a heated, passionate, and dangerous atmosphere in which these people lived with Siberian exile constantly in the offing. The contribution of these young Jewish intellectuals to the success of the Kerensky, and later of the Bolshevik, turnover in Russia was altogether out of proportion to their ratio in the population, and has yet to be properly chronicled.

Not all of them became Leninist Bolsheviks. Many who could not accept Bolshevism's dictatorial and authoritarian aspects were part of the

democratic and Menshevik opposition. Many emigrated to other countries, a great proportion of them to the United States, where some of them helped build the strong and influential Jewish trade unions, with their consequent influence on the general development of the American labour movement. A good number could not accept the basic aspects of the ideology espoused by orthodox Marxism. They believed in socialism, and they believed in the necessity for a Russian revolution, but they also believed that force was a political measure to be used only in exceptional cases in which no other course was feasible; they could not sanction its use as a deliberate daily instrument. True socialism, moreover, could not mean the forced hammering of all people throughout the world into one rigid pattern of uniformity. Socialism must mean, they felt, the right of each person to live freely in accordance with his own cultural inclinations and heritage without the threat of interference. What could be said for individuals must also be said for peoples—the Jews among them. Within the world of the future the Jews must have the right to live their own national life on the basis of their own cultural heritage and their own historical ethics in whatever way they would choose to develop it, in their own country, in the Land of Israel. Only Jewish national normalization could solve their problems—and the right to such normalization was, they felt, inalienable.

These were the first socialist Zionists. The phrase socialist Zionism was not for them a hyphenated combination of two concepts. The words were ad-

jectives of each other. Their Zionism was socialist. Their socialism was Zionist—as indivisible as a land and the men who work it.

Without understanding these basic facts about the background of the people who began to emigrate to Palestine from Eastern Europe in the first decades of this century, the people who laid the foundations for the whole structure of what was later to become the Jewish state of Israel, any understanding of how and why a small group of people founded Degania would be out of focus.

Early Efforts

Jewish colonization effort in Palestine began many years before the Degania experiment. As early as 1870 the agricultural school of Mikve Yisrael, today still one of Israel's important agricultural training centres, was founded with the help of the French Alliance Israélite Universelle, primarily with the idea of teaching the old-time religious Jewish communities of Jerusalem and Safed to venture forth from their charity-supported havens into a new life as self-supporting farmers.

In 1882 the first groups of Russian Zionist youth, mainly university students, organized in the Bilu* movement, decided to emigrate to Palestine. Contrary to the views of those who were later to be called the "charter" Zionists, these groups realized that the achievement of the Zionist ideal depended on actual colonization of the country by Jews, bit by bit, with their own labour.

* See glossary page 172

Though they originally dreamed of working only cooperatively, the Biluim, as they were called, were faced from the first with serious obstacles. They were inexperienced in farming, were ravaged by disease, and could not adequately finance their undertakings. It was only through the intervention of Baron Edmond de Rothschild of Paris, who came to their aid, that they were able to exist at all. Under the Rothschild aegis they built a one-crop economy based on grape and wine production. The Rothschild administration was philanthropic, authoritarian, and closely supervisory. All too frequently the prosperity of the colonies depended on the artificially inflated prices which the Rothschild interests were able to pay. Sporadic attempts were made to introduce other crops, principally grain, but the economic foundations of the colonies continued to be shaky. The original ideal of cooperative and personal labour which the colonists brought with them from Russia quickly disappeared and was replaced by a system of Jewish supervision of cheap Arab labour.

When the first driblets of young socialist-inspired Zionists began to arrive in Palestine in the early 1900's, they found a Jewish community which lived mostly in the cities and engaged in the traditional Jewish activities of trade and minor business enterprises. The few who remained of the original Bilu settlers owned or operated farms by exploiting cheap Arab labour. The country was barren, and its wasted land had first to be reclaimed and rehabilitated before even a meagre living could be extracted from it. All attempts to do this by per-

sonal labour and cooperation were bound to meet with the opposition of the existing community.

Here was a problem unique in the world of socialism, radically different from that faced by other socialist movements. Socialism here could not propose a programme of battling the capitalists, of organizing the workers to demand their just due, of wresting the wealth from the hands of the few and sharing it with the many. Here men had to be prevailed upon to become workers. Here capital just did not exist. Socialism had to construct a community before it could determine the principles upon which it would operate, and create wealth before it could discuss its just distribution. If this be the case, the Degania-ites thought, why not go out and build a community which from the very first, in its whole pattern of construction, would accord with a vision of a just, ethical, democratic socialist society, a society which would not have to be revised in the future but would itself be the future?

From the point of view of the practical necessities of Zionist colonization, the form of colonization proposed was indeed the only one in which such colonization could be successful. The settlers were not experienced farmers and could not hope to operate successful agricultural ventures as individuals. They were city people and, as such, accustomed to urban manifestations of "culture," physical conveniences, intellectual pursuits, and the close company of other people. Physical security, the problem of defence against Arab marauders, was an ever-present concern. These problems could

be met effectively by a group which would assume mutual responsibility for all aspects of life, from agricultural production to leisure-time cultural activity. They could not be met by an individual. Indeed, individuals would not even be willing to undertake the task were it not for the existence of such a group.

Much has been written about the initial trials of the first kibbutzim. There was much to be learned. Great areas of the country had to be reclaimed —at the cost of malarial infection, near-starvation, and many failures, those of the economy as well as those of social organization. Great numbers of the participants gave up and turned to other ways of living both in Israel and abroad. And though kibbutzim now ten years old and certainly kibbutzim twenty, thirty, and forty years old are fast approaching a standard of living comparable to that of fairly well-paid city workers, the new kibbutz in the 1950's still goes through much the same process before it succeeds in establishing itself.

Gesher Haziv

I, for example, am a member of a young kibbutz called Gesher Haziv, founded in January, 1949, in the midst of the Arab-Israel war. Our kibbutz is an amalgam of Americans and Israelis. A description of who we were, how we organized the establishment of a kibbutz, and something about our first years as a kibbutz might be in order as an illustration.

We were, to begin with, a group of some eighty Americans, most of us graduates of the American

Labour Zionist youth organization, Habonim. The majority had spent a year in agricultural training in the United States and Canada prior to coming to Israel. Though most came from intensely Jewish home environments, a significant number came from homes which were Jewish in name only. All of us were high school graduates, many had attended college for some years, and several dozen were university graduates in such diverse fields as sociology, economics, engineering, education, agriculture, and geology. Many had served in the American and Canadian armies during the second World War. In most cases our education and previous backgrounds were very different from those of a small agricultural community, even if highly developed.

Ninety per cent of the group had long planned to go to Israel; the remainder were moved by an impulse of the moment under the influence of the dramatic events then taking place. Our immediate plans for settling in Israel matured under the impact of the proclamation of the Jewish state and the war against Arab aggression which followed. An agreement was made with kibbutz Ramat Yohanan, an old-established community not far from the city of Haifa, for securing additional training there, and the members of the group went to Ramat Yohanan on their arrival. This particular kibbutz had just experienced a severe Arab attack, and many of its members were serving in the Israel army. Our arrival in the middle of the war served to bolster the kibbutz with badly needed labour power. Some of us volunteered for mili-

tary service. All the Americans who, for one reason or another, were not on active military duty worked long hours each day, and we were all subject to call for service in the district whenever circumstances required. In those abnormal times little opportunity was left for such things as the study of Hebrew, of which we were sorely in need, and for becoming familiar with the normal aspects of life in the kibbutz in particular and in Israel as a whole.

The times were exciting, and we lived in a kibbutz which was a cultural, political, and military centre. Nevertheless many of the Americans from the very first felt rootless, isolated—like an American island in a strange Israel sea. Many of us, before coming to Israel, had been very active Zionists. We were avid followers of the events in Israel which had been brought to us in considerable detail by the American press. We had been an excited part of mass meetings, political pressure activities, fund raising, and armchair strategy. In Ramat Yohanan we began to experience the first jolt which all the intellectuals preceding us had experienced in their first attempts to become kibbutz members. We found ourselves suddenly engaged in ordinary physically-tiring labour, confronted by the ordinary and uninspiring problems of group life. This was the stuff of Zionism in realization, and, despite the excitement of war, we failed to recognize in the boring and difficult details of this life the idealistic vision we had held before our eyes while still in America. Many of us had felt a greater sense of participation while reading about

Israel in *The New York Times* than we were now feeling in Ramat Yohanan.

Gradually there crystallized within the group a realization that it had to do something on its own, as a group—we must start a settlement of our own. We must strike roots and become part and parcel of the times. Otherwise there was no justification for continuing the group; its disintegration was bound to follow. In keeping with this feeling the group began to negotiate with the appropriate Israel institutions regarding a location for the new settlement. There was much heated debate about the relative merits of different parts of the country and the desirability of joining with another group in forming the new settlement. Some felt that we could not hope to start a settlement of our own, for we were new to the whole concept, and, indeed, new in Israel itself. Despite our prevailing ignorance of Hebrew, we were in some ways in the midst of things as long as we remained in Ramat Yohanan. As a settlement apart, it was feared, we could only succeed in creating a rather unsatisfactory outpost of New York. It was finally decided, therefore, to find partners for our venture, some other group that had been in the country for a while and that was also interested in establishing a new kibbutz, preferably native-born Israelis.

After a great deal of prospecting and after the rejection of one group, we finally made contact with a group of forty Israelis who had spent eight years in the kibbutz of Beit Haarava. This settlement had been destroyed during the first stages of

the war and was now in Jordan territory. Despite their misfortune the group was prepared and willing to undertake a new start. Though their average age was six or seven years older than ours and though they were experienced kibbutzniks and we were but novices, they were eager to join us. We, on our part, were doubtful, wary of the age difference, of possible rigidity of habits in people who already had eight years of kibbutz life behind them. Deciding, however, that the advantages outweighed the possible disadvantages and that this was the best available opportunity, unless we wanted to continue doing nothing, we tied the knot, and the groups were "married"—a proxy marriage, since most of the members of the two groups did not even have the opportunity of meeting each other before the day of settlement.

The problem of choosing an adequate site for settlement then became the central one for the two groups now merged into one. At just about that time the Israel defence forces had freed the Western Galilee area. According to the partition resolution of the United Nations, Western Galilee was not supposed to be part of the Jewish state. The United Nations, however, had not supposed that the combined Arab armies would openly defy the UN resolution by declaring a war against Israel with the object of destroying the whole plan for the Jewish state. The fortunes of that war were such that not only were the Arabs already on the verge of complete military defeat, "saved by the bell" of the United Nations armistice "referee," but Western Galilee had remained Jewish territory.

It is a fundamental precept of Zionist belief that a country is not yours if you own it by force of arms or even by right of purchase. It is yours if you live there, if you rehabilitate its man-made desolation, if you work it and make it yours by sweat and toil. The immediate settlement of the area with additional Jewish settlers became, therefore, the mandate of the time. Our group was one of those which was called upon to fill this responsibility, and on a January morning of 1949 we set out for our chosen settlement-site on the shores of the Mediterranean about five miles south of the Lebanese border, an old abandoned British army camp.

The great day of settlement itself was very impressive. A thousand people showed up, including all sorts of government and army dignitaries. A plane circled overhead, piloted by one of our American-Israeli air force friends. Speeches were made, an impressive ceremony was performed, and our enthusiasm was profound. Then the guests went back home from this outing, and we were left huddling in the rain in our unfinished prefabricated bungalows and our leaky tents. Zionism-and-social-idealism-in-the-abstract stopped, and real life began.

The area we were about to settle, though once fruitful, was now deserted and ravaged. The once-flowering olive groves and orange plantations were dead or dying, unworked by their fleeing owners, the empty mud-shack village of Ezeeb attesting to their precipitous flight. The low-slung wrecks of British army buildings, surrounded by their barbed

wire concertinas, were our only shelter. What water there was had to be brought by tank truck each day and sufficed only for cooking and tooth-brushing. A shower was a once-a-week luxury obtained by piling on the back of an open truck and travelling ten miles. Electricity was a distant dream. Cooking for a hundred and fifty people was miraculously and tiringly done on small kerosene camp stoves. Children could not be accommodated because of our inadequate housing and impossible sanitary facilities, and they and their mothers remained in Shavei Zion, a village some five miles away. The area itself was still dangerous; Arab infiltrators, alone and in groups, made an alert watch necessary.

Sources of income were non-existent. In order to rehabilitate the oranges which had been planted with cheap Arab labour and donkey cultivation in mind, every other row had to be torn up, intensive irrigation introduced, and extensive reclamation of the trees themselves for a period of three or four years undertaken. Houses had to be built. Cows and chickens had to be bought, and crops planted on land which had to be cleared of stones. Machinery had to be purchased. All this had to be done immediately—and with no money. A certain measure of hopelessly inadequate long-term loans was secured from the Jewish national institutions. Twenty members were sent out of the kibbutz to earn money to be used by the group as a whole. We were faced with two challenges: the physical one of making of this barren site a community—of building homes, schools, factories, and

agricultural buildings; of rehabilitating the orange and olive groves; of establishing modern agriculture; of setting up a modern kitchen, dining room, cultural facilities; of making of the entire venture an economically paying operation. The second challenge was a more subtle one: to provide satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment for the membership, keeping them and attracting others; to establish a democratic Jewish socialist society, part and parcel of Israel's renaissance, sharing its problems and contributing to their solution. Despite the immensity of the physical challenge, this second challenge was the real one.*

Growth Without Blueprint

The beginning of any kibbutz in Israel is a combination of physical hardship, the problems inherent in the colonization of any new land or territory, the needs of the Zionist movement, the political state of affairs in the country, and considerations of military security. The problems are compounded by inadequate financing and above all by the need to build an integrated social group, out of a number of heterogeneous, inexperienced students and white-collar workers who hardly know

*It is not germane to this section of the book to discuss at this point the details of how we met or did not meet this challenge. I will refer to them in the pages which discuss the specifics of kibbutz operation and belief. I have permitted myself to tell part of the story of the establishment of my own kibbutz only because it serves as a better illustration of many of the factors which obtain in the establishment of any kibbutz, more graphic than dry, mechanical description.

each other and have never done physical labour before, and to do so according to principles foreign to their previous way of life.

It would have been senseless for the Degania settlers to establish a blueprint of how the community should be constructed and governed, of how the children should be educated, and of the exact methods by which the community should own the means of production and provide its services. Lord Acton, in commenting on Plato's Republic hit on the true weakness of the whole book. Philosophers can never become kings, for as soon as they become kings they can no longer be philosophers. Kings, in turn, can become philosophers only after they abdicate. For as long as they are in power, they must act in accordance with the specific realities of their country. Power may or may not corrupt, but the actual conduct of community affairs depends on one's financial resources, on the technical decisions of architects, engineers, military men and farmers, on the political climate of the moment, and on the intelligence and character of the citizens. These are factors which often create the principles of government rather than being created by them.

Not only was it practically impossible for the kibbutz movement to establish a predetermined blueprint of community structure, but the very idea of doing this was foreign to the whole way of thinking of the kibbutz founders. Were these people scientific socialists, adherents of Marx, Engels, and their apostles, they would never have come to Palestine in the first place. What they were at-

tempting to do was in basic and violent opposition to blueprints of any sort. There existed among them a deep appreciation of the contribution to modern social thought made by Socialist thinkers, not only Marx and Engels but also Proudhon, Owen, and others, but there was at the same time an equally profound understanding that these may not even have been the principal sources of kibbutz inspiration. The inspiration owed its origin to Jewish religious tradition, biblical precept, and messianic vision. This was its environment more than any other, despite the revolt against orthodox Jewish "ghettoized" religion. In building the kibbutz it was understood that the principle of common ownership of wealth and community responsibility in the event of need of any kind would guide the mechanics of community structure. These mechanics, however, grew in accordance with practical circumstances, not in accordance with plan.

Today, of course, there is a generally accepted structural framework, the product of forty years of experimentation, which is common to all kibbutzim, though individual kibbutzim may deviate from the general practice. Changes in that framework are being discussed and made all the time in accordance with changing situations. It is in order to discuss this framework, the reasons for its existence, the way it works, its failings, and changes which may be in the offing.

CHAPTER TWO

The Structure and Authority of Government

THE BASIC INSTRUMENT OF GOVERNMENT IN THE kibbutz is a weekly meeting of the entire membership. This town-meeting determines policy, elects officers, and controls the general operation of the community. The right to vote is held by all founding members and by all those who have been accepted as members by the original settlers. Candidates for membership are generally accepted only after a year's probation. During this probationary year they are treated in all respects as full-fledged members in their work obligations as well as in the distribution of services. The only difference between them and members of the kibbutz is their inability to vote or to hold office. In new kibbutzim, such as Gesher Haziv, this period is often reduced to six months, in view of the fact that the founders of the kibbutz are themselves newcomers. Acceptance to final membership is usually dependent on a majority vote of the weekly meeting, though in some kibbutzim the rules are more stringent, requiring, in some cases, two-thirds of a secret ballot of all members.

Kibbutzim are incorporated cooperative enterprises, and individual membership liability for the debts of the kibbutz should it dissolve or go bankrupt is limited to fifty pounds. The land upon which the kibbutzim are built does not legally belong to them and is not theirs to sell or rent, being owned in nearly all cases by the Jewish National Fund* and leased to the kibbutz at a nominal fee for a renewable period of ninety-nine years. The buildings and fixed assets of the kibbutz also do not legally belong to the kibbutz. The ownership of these assets is vested in a holding company which is a subsidiary of the Histadrut, the General Federation of Labour in Israel. These are voluntary arrangements made by the originators of the kibbutz idea in order to eliminate the possibility of future generations changing the character of the community or speculating with its assets.

Members, upon joining, are expected to transfer all their wealth to the kibbutz treasury. The kibbutz then undertakes to be completely responsible for their needs. If members should decide to quit, they are allowed to take with them the personal belongings which have been provided them by the kibbutz during their stay there. This means clothing, furniture, children's toys, books, records, and similar items. Some kibbutzim also provide a small fixed cash allocation to cover initial transfer elsewhere. The kibbutz does not, however, give departing members a proportionate share of the wealth or assets which it may have amassed during the

*In some cases the land is owned by P.I.C.A., the Baron Edmond de Rothschild land agency.

period of their membership. Only in some isolated cases do kibbutzim return part of the original money that members may have brought with them. Recently a proposal was made at one of the kibbutz-movement conventions that this should become standard procedure in the future. As yet, however, it is a procedure not generally followed.

There has been some discussion of the efficacy of the weekly meeting as an instrument of government. I once had occasion to discuss this with an American foreign correspondent visiting our kibbutz, whose home is in Westport, Connecticut. A native New Englander, he was interested in the relative merits of the New England town meeting versus the kibbutz system. Such a system can only work, he said, in small undeveloped communities. Government of a New England town became in the course of time such a technical and complicated matter that the average uninitiated citizen was unable to make an intelligent decision at a town meeting. It was his contention that true democracy depended on representative government. The people must elect competent persons in accordance with general approaches and beliefs; the decisions of those elected would be much truer representations of the feeling of the electorate than the decisions of a group of uninformed people at a town meeting whose make-up varies week by week with the popular appeal of the issues under discussion, with the weather, and with personal considerations.

There is a certain amount of truth to this contention. In Gesher Haziv the biggest turnout in

my recollection took place at a meeting where the topic under discussion was one member's shooting of a dog which was a personal pet of another member. The turnout at that meeting was at least twice as large as the average turnout at a meeting where the treasurer is scheduled to give a highly technical financial report. In a kibbutz with a population of over a thousand, and there are such, it is impossible to expect the average member to be able to decide the merits of particular production plans. Just as the meeting in a New England village which is going to discuss the building of a new school is often packed with mothers who don't care a whit about the general financial picture of the village but are determined to get that school measure through, so, too, in the kibbutz particular interest groups often pressure the meeting into decisions without regard to general considerations. In many kibbutzim, therefore, the meeting is gradually beginning to limit itself to decisions on matters of general principle, leaving other decisions to the secretariat (in the larger kibbutzim to a council), or to particular committees. It is doubtful whether the system will ever be discarded in favor of one of representative government only, for it is firmly entrenched and is as much a social and cultural activity as it is a policy-making instrument.

A formal constitution and by-laws for kibbutz government have yet to be worked out. There is, however, a large body of rules and regulations which are already generally accepted and merely need formal codification. Their future depends on

the evolution of the kibbutz in other more basic fields and directions.

The Secretariat

Though the weekly membership meeting determines the broad lines of policy, it does not usually implement this policy itself. A secretariat includes a general secretary (the equivalent of mayor in more sophisticated communities), a purchasing and marketing agent, a treasurer (whose job it is to implement the broad lines of financial policy, negotiate with banks, financial institutions, and the government), a work coordinator (who assigns members to particular tasks in accordance with the needs of the community), and a production manager (whose function it is to plan and coordinate the income-producing branches of the economy). In larger kibbutzim the coordinator of the kibbutz educational system and the manager of the service branches are, also, sometimes members of the secretariat.

In most kibbutzim each of these secretaries is usually the chairman of a committee elected to aid him in dealing with his particular field. Thus, the work coordinator is chairman of a work coordination committee, the production manager of a production committee (which usually includes the managers of each particular branch), the education coordinator of a board of education, and the general secretary is in most kibbutzim chairman of the committee which deals with the personal affairs of the membership and with the matters of kibbutz principle and basic structure. A commit-

tee whose purpose it is to plan cultural and leisure-time activity is standard in every kibbutz setup.

In many cases these responsibilities are fulfilled in addition to the office-holder's normal day's work, especially in younger kibbutzim where every day's work counts. With expanding need, however, the main secretariat responsibilities usually become full daytime jobs. The treasurer and the purchasing agent, for example, spend most of their time in town, often returning home only on the weekend. The production manager rotates among the various branches keeping tabs on developments, attends regional agricultural conferences, and works closely with the treasurer and purchaser, often accompanying them into town. The work coordinator must be continuously available in order to control work efficiently, supply people for temporary tasks, coordinate the work of the tractors, trucks, and other machines, and arrange for the "plugging" of "holes" which may develop.

Though there is a prestige value to the fulfillment of important responsibilities, there is no other remuneration. A person fulfilling one of these responsibilities does not receive any additional allotment of any goods or services. As a matter of fact, most kibbutzniks hesitate to accept this type of responsibility. In the case of a treasurer or purchasing agent it means undertaking to be absent from home and family five or six days a week. In the case of the other positions it means a great deal of additional work, and in some cases heartache and aggravation, at the expense of personal and family life.

The filling of any of these positions requires a great amount of technical knowledge and managerial ability. The production manager of a farm economy must know something about scientific agriculture, farm machinery, variations in the market price of feed and produce, and the technical organization of Israel's national agricultural purchasing and marketing cooperatives. He must understand the country's foreign currency position, knowing what can or cannot be bought with Israel pounds and what can be bought with dollars. The treasurer must understand financial management (the monthly balance sheet of Gesher Haziv, a kibbutz not yet five years old, runs between forty and fifty thousand pounds), must develop a continuing personal relationship with merchants, banks and government institutions, and must possess a reasonable understanding of cost accounting.

The original idea of electing people to leadership positions on a two-year rotating basis was an attempt to prevent the formation of a managerial caste within the kibbutz, a caste which, though it would not benefit materially from its position, would nevertheless destroy the ideological basis of the community by its very existence. As the jobs became more specialized and complicated, however, most kibbutzim began to realize that the interests of intelligent management dictated the continuance of people in managerial positions for periods longer than two years. In some cases it takes people the whole two years to learn their job adequately, and it would be folly to begin the process all over with someone else when the investment

of kibbutz time, effort, and money in the incumbents is just beginning to bear fruit. In other cases there simply are no other people available who, by inclination, training, and native ability, are equipped to undertake this kind of responsibility. Today kibbutzim feel that it is necessary to pick a production manager several years beforehand, training him, and even sending him to school, with this specific purpose in mind.

In Gesher Haziv, for example, out of a membership of 140 adults, what has actually evolved is a core of some dozen people who rotate the jobs among them. These are people who have become familiar with one or another aspect of kibbutz management or with several of them. It is only under extreme pressure that these members consent to continue in consecutive terms of office. They return to office, however, after a respite of several years. There are kibbutzim in which this core is a small one, and the individuals involved are compelled to shoulder this type of leadership responsibility without letup.

Social Status in the Kibbutz

The social implications of this situation are complicated and difficult to assess. They actually belong in the section of this volume that deals with the true meaning of the word equality as it is applied in the kibbutz, with the problem of status and individual difference, and an evaluation of the optimum extent to which such concepts can actually be realized in human society. If there is a social aristocracy in the kibbutz, it is not necessarily based

on managerial position. To a much greater extent is it based on relative position in the work programme. A person must first of all prove himself as a worker, for this is a workers' community. The truly respected person is one who has mastered a trade or agricultural skill, and can assume a responsible position in any branch of the economy in which he is occupied. The experienced and hard-working orange grower, vegetable gardener, tractor driver, mechanic, carpenter, or poultry raiser is the real backbone of the kibbutz in his own mind and in the minds of his fellows. At the same time that the membership of a kibbutz will continue to force a particular person to be secretary year after year, making it impossible for him to become a skilled farmer or mechanic, it will be critical of him because he does not possess such a trade. The children in the school will respect a teacher who, they know, could have been a good tractorist had he so desired, and tend often to sneer at other teachers not so gifted. The sneering is slowly giving way to an appreciation of the fact that these responsibilities, too, are trades which require just as much training and ability for their successful fulfillment, but the underlying concentration on physical labour as the prime status-factor still remains.

National Kibbutz Federation

The kibbutz movement has also developed governmental institutions on an inter-kibbutz and national level. There are currently four major federations of kibbutzim in Israel, encompassing almost all the kibbutzim in the country. The differences

between them consist of different approaches to general political affairs and in some cases, also, of minor variations in the conduct of kibbutz life. The largest grouping, Ihud Hakvutzot Vehakibbutzim, the Union of Collective Settlements, is in a broad sense in agreement with the political philosophy of Mapai, the dominant democratic Socialist party in Israel, and of the Progressive party, the liberal centrist group.

Hakibbutz Hadati, the religious kibbutz federation, is composed of kibbutzim which conduct their communities in strict accord with the principles of orthodox Jewish religion.

Hakibbutz Haartzi of Hashomer Hatzair, the national kibbutz federation composed of graduates of the world-wide Hashomer Hatzair Zionist Movement, is the most left-wing of the kibbutz federations. It believes in the kibbutz movement not only as an end in itself but also as a potential instrument for social revolution in Israel. It enforces strict ideological discipline. It disagrees with the Soviet ban on Zionism and on Jewish emigration from Communist countries, but it is nevertheless very close to a pro-Soviet orientation in world politics.

Hakibbutz Hameuhad, the United Kibbutz federation, was once an all-inclusive kibbutz federation, the largest of the lot. In recent years, however, it too has been split on the issue of being pro-Soviet both in internal Israel and world politics. The anti-Soviet and pro-Western elements finally left Hakibbutz Hameuhad to join the Union of Collective Settlements, leaving the former considerably weakened and smaller. Since the Prague

trials, the "doctors' plot," the murder of Soviet Jewish writers, and the vicious anti-Israel attitude of the Russian regime, however, many of the members of Hakibbutz Hameuhad have begun to doubt the validity of their pro-Soviet attitude.

The kibbutz federations conduct many activities in support of and on behalf of the individual settlements. Each federation conducts a central bank which lends money to individual kibbutzim for development purposes. Agricultural planning and general advisory services, particularly for younger kibbutzim, are provided. It arranges kibbutz-movement-wide cultural activities, ranging from tours of concert artists and dramatic groups to short courses for kibbutz artists, choir and dance-group leaders. The federations conduct summer camps for kibbutz children and operate normal schools for the training of kibbutz teachers. Central purchasing and marketing services cut costs for individual kibbutzim, and special departments aid kibbutzim in financing industrial enterprises not only with their own resources but also by helping them find other investors. Above all, the kibbutz federations serve as the forum where kibbutz-movement-wide problems are discussed and solutions formulated. The problems of adequate labour supply, housing, child education, military security, and youth movement organization are varied examples of the kinds of topics which have found their way to the agenda of movement-wide discussion.

The governing body of the kibbutz federation is a large national executive elected at periodic conventions. This executive consists in the main of

people who live at home and travel to periodic meetings, and it, in turn, negotiates with individual kibbutzim for the release of key members for full time work on the central kibbutz movement secretariat, usually for a period of two years. The rule in the Union of Collective Settlements, for example, is that each kibbutz is required to furnish the movement with a number of full-time workers equivalent to six per cent of the working population of the kibbutz. This six per cent includes not only people who will be working full time in the kibbutz movement itself, but also those drafted for government and Zionist positions both in Israel and abroad, as youth educators, as social workers and teachers in new immigrant camps, as army education officers, or as executives in various sectors of the Israel labour movement. Frequently, of course, the kibbutz movement is interested in exactly the same people who are needed for the fulfillment of responsible positions within the kibbutz itself. A tug-of-war results, sometimes one side prevailing, sometimes the other. A special arbitration court, elected at the movement convention, has the right of final decision.

Social Pressure in the Kibbutz

Political scientists posit as axiomatic that government, in order to be successful, must have at its command, if not force as such, then at least the threat of force. The citizenry, in other words, must enter into a contract one of whose basic provisions is the setting up of some instrument of compulsion whereby the chosen authority of govern-

ment can enforce the keeping of the rules agreed upon and punish those who infringe on them.

The only possible punishments in the kibbutz are disenfranchisement (meaning, temporary reduction to probationary status) or expulsion. The only way of enforcing discipline and preventing anarchy short of that is social pressure. The expulsion of a member is a very rare event and occurs only when there has been a serious breaking of law—the rare occasion when something criminal has occurred or when a member consistently refuses to work at his assignment.

CHAPTER THREE

The Division of Work

WORK IN THE KIBBUTZ IS MORE THAN MERELY A method of providing for one's needs. It is a many-faceted ideology. According to socialist economic theory, value is a function of labour, and the ideal relationship between men is one wherein all receive the complete product of their labour and no man profits from the exploitation of the labour of others. The cornerstone of any utopian community must be the principle that no man will be hired on the basis that the surplus value of his work will accrue to his employer, that no man will engage in middle-man activity, but that all will engage in "primary" work, in producing value and supplying the needs of the community. Accordingly, the principle of not hiring labour, except in cases where a particular skill which was not possessed by any member of the community was required, was laid down from the very first as a basic principle of kibbutz organization. The goal of the kibbutz was the ultimate training of members of the community in all necessary skills and trades, so that even such resort to hired labour would be unnecessary.

Kibbutz Philosophy of Work

The kibbutz philosophy of work, however, was not based on general socialist theory alone. Zionism is a movement whose end-purpose is more than the creation of a formal Jewish state. Its basic purpose is to normalize the social and economic structure of the Jewish community. Ber Borochov, one of the early labour Zionist philosophers, compared the economic structure of the Jewish community to an inverted pyramid. Ordinarily, he said, the economic structure of a country can be compared to an upright pyramid, the base consisting of agricultural and industrial workers, the apex consisting of professional and business men. In the Jewish economic structure what should be the apex forms the base. Normalizing that structure, he said, necessitates the conversion of large numbers of Jewish white-collar workers and intellectuals to enlightened agricultural and industrial labourers. Nowhere was this contention more valid than in Israel, said Zionists, where there could be no economic stability whatsoever unless this was accomplished. Kibbutz members who looked upon Zionism as an ideology of personal revolution accepted this premise, and since they were not labourers to begin with, and consequently did not possess the matter-of-fact attitude towards this type of work which is the mark of the person who has been a manual worker all his life, they were compelled to make of this a holy, stubborn principle, which they would have to fight through within themselves all their lives.

Aaron David Gordon, another early labour Zion-

ist philosopher, clothed this principle with ethical and cultural significance, attempting to realize it in his own personal life. At the age of forty-eight, after having lived and worked as a bookkeeper all his adult life, he left his home and family in Russia to emigrate to Israel, joining the Degania settlement. He was a man far from the concepts of scientific socialism, writing and speaking of the dignity of man and the dignity of productive agricultural labour rather than of complicated economic theory. In a Thoreau-like manner he spoke of man's "return to nature" and of his "rejection of degenerate urban living," elevating his beliefs to the point where he spoke of labour almost as of a religion. Though his ideas were not necessarily accepted by the majority of kibbutz members, who possessed a more sophisticated approach to social theory, his personal example had, nevertheless, tremendous effect on his immediate contemporaries, and on their followers.

The Jewish ethical socialism which Gordon represented was eagerly accepted by the young people in Eastern Europe steeped in Jewish learning who had just emerged from the period of initial enlightenment, and who were searching for a meaningful social approach other than Marxism. Here was a man who spoke of modern living in biblical terms. Here was a man they could follow.

The fundamental basis of the kibbutz accounting system, therefore, became the value of the workday. Each income-producing branch of the economy computes the average value of its workday, dividing the income it has earned by the

number of workdays invested in that branch during the course of the year. The whole kibbutz, in turn, computes the average value of the workday of all members, dividing the total income for the year by the total number of workdays of all members both in the income-producing branches of the economy and in the service branches. The object of efficient kibbutz management is not only to increase the value of the income-producing workday, but also to decrease the proportion of workdays devoted to non-income-producing areas.

The differences between this and other forms of accounting should be obvious to the layman There is no allowance made for value even as a function of capable or creative management or as affected by market variations. That work in a particular field may be worth a standard sum equivalent to that which similar work is worth elsewhere in the country is not considered. Economically, socially, and psychologically the workday itself is paramount and in the final analysis no man's workday is considered to be worth more than any other man's.

The workday itself varies in length. In the older "Gordonian" kibbutzim it is a matter of conscience. People rise with the sun and work either until they have completed their task or until sunset makes it impossible to continue. In most kibbutzim, however, the workday varies in length from eight and a half to nine and a half hours, six days a week, with some time off on Friday afternoons. The goal is an eight-hour day, and to keep it in mind even a nine-hour or ten-hour day is often divided into "eights" for accounting purposes In these kibbu-

tzim, too, it is impossible to define the work hours in a categorical fashion.

Before the members of Gesher Haziv left the kibbutz in which we had been trained to begin the establishment of our own community, we held a three-day seminar about kibbutz problems, during which we invited old-time kibbutz members to speak to us. One such old-timer, an original follower of Gordon, explained to us his criterion for judging the success of a kibbutz. "When a ten-ton truck," he said, "rolls into the kibbutz about six o'clock in the evening loaded with feed, the number of people who, having completed their day's work, showered and changed, are still willing to leave their families in order to unload the truck, is an index of the successful establishment of a kibbutz community." At the time, I remember dismissing this comment as inconsequential. Several years and fifty or so truckloads later, I began to realize its validity. Since there is no such thing as overtime pay or credit in the kibbutz, and since, moreover, an individual's needs will be taken care of whether he volunteers for this type of extra work or not, it is the easiest and most natural thing in the world to be extremely reluctant to go out and unload the truck, leaving it to the work coordinator to find some sort of a solution. It requires a strong sense of community awareness not to be guilty, at one time or another, of dodging this type of responsibility.

The position of work coordinator is indeed one of the pressure points in the whole kibbutz system. It demands an extremely strong, determined, and

at the same time understanding person. It is one of the most thankless tasks in the community, for this is perhaps the major point where the interests and needs of the community as a whole and the desires and inclinations of the individual member are likely to clash. This is the one official in the community whose task is most like that of a boss, whose stated purpose it is to use people most efficiently and "get the most out of them." That he is a boss without the right to hire or fire, without the right to dock wages, and is considered an equal whose actions are open to challenge by everyone in the kibbutz, makes his task all the more difficult. In cooperation with the production manager, he works out the number of people to be assigned to particular income-producing branches. Together with the work committee, of which he is chairman, he analyses the necessary jobs and tries to match them with the work desires and inclinations of the individual members. Many times, however, he is compelled to assign members to work which they do not want to do, if it is more important and necessary than the work they desire. In cooperation with the heads of various service branches, such as the laundry, the children's houses, and the kitchen, he determines the number of people who will be working in these fields, and is often compelled to assign fewer people to these jobs than are demanded. It is he who decides whether a particular member can take his vacation or part of it at a particular time or whether he should be asked to give up his Sabbath because some emergency has arisen, promising to give him two days off instead

of one the next week. In conjunction, again, with the production manager he not only assigns personnel but also machinery: tractors, trucks, and construction equipment. It is a complicated task and a trying one.

Fitting the Job to the Man

Discontent because of inability to find satisfying work within the community on the one hand, or, on the other, because one is required to work at something which one does not like to do, in preference to something else which one does like, is probably one of the biggest single factors determining decisions to leave the kibbutz. By and large, members do end up, after a while, working at a permanent job in which they become interested, and have no need to get up early in the morning in order to search for their names on the work-assignment board. There is a certain amount of seasonal agricultural work, however, picking, spraying, and the like, which requires additional labour at certain times and there are always specific occasions when one or another branch, either income-producing or otherwise, needs temporary labour. It is one of the strong points of the kibbutz system that there is always a floating manpower pool which makes it possible to switch people from job to job as needed, that there are always people who are not specifically tied down to a permanent job, who can be moved around as unskilled labour. This does not, however, make life comfortable for the person who is being constantly moved around in such a manner.

Conflicts between a desire to work in one's trade and the needs of the community are often profound. One of the members of Gesher Haziv was a geologist by professional training, having worked in this field in Canada before coming to Israel. In joining a kibbutz, he himself was the first to realize that this meant he was giving up geology in favour of farming. He became an expert in the raising of forage crops and enjoyed his work, rising to a position of respect and responsibility to a point where he himself was elected work coordinator. The Israel government, in desperate need of geologists, asked him to work for them. The matter was discussed and it was decided by the kibbutz that he should be allowed to work as a geologist for an experimental period of six months, his salary reverting to the kibbutz. During these first six months he worked mainly in our area, leaving the kibbutz every morning in his government jeep, returning by nightfall. Having again become interested in this work, he asked the kibbutz to continue the arrangement for another six months. This time, however, his work carried him far afield and he was often away from home for days on end. In this case, from the point of view of the kibbutz we could have continued this way *ad infinitum,* for although he was needed in the farm economy, everyone was aware of the importance of his geological work to himself and to the country. After a while, however, he himself began to feel that it was pointless. He felt he was not actually a participant in the community, he saw his family too infrequently, and no matter how attached he may

have been to the idea of the kibbutz, he was not really living it. Reluctantly, despite our protests, he decided to leave.

Another member had studied milk processing in New York before coming to Israel, and his ambition was to work in a creamery. Though no kibbutz produces enough milk to justify building a creamery for its own exclusive production, there are kibbutzim in which there exist regional creameries. There was no reason, we felt, why, in the course of time, we could not establish such a regional creamery at Gesher Haziv. The case of this man need not have been similar to that of the geologist. The creamery would be part of the kibbutz operation proper. In the interim, however, this member wanted to work in a creamery in Haifa, some twenty miles away, commuting to work. The kibbutz felt it more important for him to postpone his plans and work in the kibbutz carpentry shop, then our main source of income. He agreed to do so for a year, and after the year was up he applied again for permission to proceed with his original plan. After a heated discussion it was again decided by a close vote to deny him his wish. It was then up to him to decide how important this work was to him, whether it was more important than his allegiance to the kibbutz and his continued membership in it. After a period of self-analysis, he decided against remaining and left the kibbutz. A decision to leave, of course, is compounded of many factors and often something specific, such as this case of the milk processing is only the last weight on the scales. It is not strange,

therefore, that after leaving the kibbutz, this particular member did not become a milk processor at all, but settled as a private farmer in another section of the country.

Our carpentry shop led to many similar complications in work assignments. At the very beginning, realizing that the agricultural branches of our kibbutz would not be able to support us for a good number of years, we decided to establish a small industry which could fill the gap between our income and our needs. We finally chose carpentry and millwork. We bought some machinery and contracted to make prefabricated sections for new immigrant bungalow housing, later specializing specifically in doors and windows. The project expanded to the point where we were making several thousand doors and windows monthly. It was all rather boring, straight assembly-line work, however, and the membership, while agreeing to the need for the carpentry shop, nevertheless did not want to work there. Everyone preferred to work either in agriculture or in other semi-industrial fields such as the machine shop, electricians' shop, garage, or truck-driving. "I didn't come to the kibbutz to work in a factory." After a good deal of discussion, we were forced to compel every member to work in the carpentry shop against his inclinations, in accordance with a rotating system. After a while we were forced to go further and break a hallowed kibbutz principle hiring immigrant labour from nearby camps to do the unskilled work as an alternative to giving up the whole project.

Hired Labour

Many evolutionary changes have taken place in the actual functioning of kibbutzim since the first days of Degania, and one of the most complicated and problematic of these changes has been the relatively recent introduction of hired labour, often in large numbers.

There has always been a small percentage of hired labour in the kibbutzim dictated by practical situations which overrode ideology. It is impossible to build a house without an expert plasterer or to lay a floor without a skilled tile-setter. If a kibbutz does not possess such people, it has no alternative but to hire them, either on an individual or a contract basis, paying them the prevailing union wage rate. It could, of course, pay them the workday value arrived at by the kibbutz accounting system, but what outside worker would agree to such a system? Up to ten years ago, however, such hired labour was always a very small percentage of the total, and every effort was made to keep it to a minimum. During the picking season, when large groups of temporary workers were needed, school children were often impressed into service, or use was made of nuclei of future kibbutzim, such as our own group when we were still at Ramat Yohanan, who were receiving their training at the kibbutz and were consequently not tied down to permanent jobs.

With the establishment of the Jewish State, however, the problem assumed a totally different character. Over seven hundred thousand new people

have arrived in Israel since the creation of the state. Though there is no question of the contribution which they will make to the future of the country, their absorption today presents immediate problems of an emergency nature. The great majority of these people come from feudally backward Middle Eastern or North African countries, from which they have been catapulated not only into Israel, but into the twentieth century. Many others are products of a decade of character-destroying, physique-weakening wandering on the European continent. The idealistic Zionist youth movements of Eastern Europe, which formed a reservoir for future kibbutz membership, no longer exist. The new immigrants are at present not yet citizens who can determine the character of a country or enter upon social experimentation. They are still objects of government attention rather than molders of government policy. There is an immediate need to produce food for them, find work and construct housing for them, and develop productive industry through which they can be supported and can come to support themselves.

The kibbutz movement, both ideologically, as a pragmatic socialist movement which has always placed itself at the service of the needs of the country without regard to hidebound principle, and practically, as a major source of skilled managerial and technical personnel, has perforce been swept into the work of helping solve these problems. The new immigrants, by and large, because of previous background, lack of understanding, or personal disinclination, are not ready to join kib-

butzim as members, though that, of course, is what kibbutzim would prefer. As a result, a situation has developed where, despite the surplus of labour in the country in general, kibbutzim have found themselves hopelessly undermanned in trying to carry out their plans of expansion and development in keeping with the needs of the country.

In some cases the introduction of hired labour has been on a truly large scale. The plywood factory at Afikim, one of the largest kibbutzim, employs over two hundred outside workers. Gesher Haziv, in 1953, employed as many as forty outside people as pickers in the extra large vegetable garden, which we felt ourselves obliged to plant and were urged to plant by the government. Once such a process begins, of course, it is difficult to limit it to specific branches of the economy. I believe employing hired labour in the kibbutz is necessary in this context, because the kibbutz is not an isolated exclusive community apart from the problems of Israel at large. A community such as ours cannot exist for long if it lives a life of relative plenty, while 300 yards away other people are living eight in a tent without employment. Principle in such an event can become self-defeating. Nevertheless I was shocked to find myself being served in the dining room by hired waitresses upon visiting friends in another kibbutz. The government, on its part, has seized upon this development as a method of providing work for the unemployed, and therefore further encourages the process. Our kibbutz, for example, was granted a government loan to pave a road from the main highway to the centre

of the kibbutz on the express condition that hired labour from the pool of unemployed immigrants at nearby immigrant camps would be used.

Aside from the fact that hired labour involves a breach of the ideological foundation upon which the kibbutz movement has been built, its introduction also presents serious social problems. It makes of kibbutz members a labour aristocracy—managers, foremen, executives, and supervisors of other people's labour—rather than workers on their own. It is easy for a kibbutznik to be a manager; all his intellectual background and previous training make for his taking to management like a duck to water. Personal labour has always been for him an ideal to be striven for obstinately as a result of intellectual conviction, and his most serious opponent has always been his own alter ego. His whole structure of beliefs and habits acquired with difficulty is in danger of crashing when he becomes a foreman. Not for naught has it been said that the real reason for the failure of Robert Owen's New Harmony settlement was too much prosperity. It seems much easier to maintain a communal set-up in a poorly developed, impoverished society where there is little to divide and no opportunity to become an "executive" than it is when the community begins to expand its wealth and activity.

The kibbutzim, well aware of the danger, have been making increasing attempts to deal with this problem on a movement or federation-wide basis. In the Union of Collective Settlements a number of solutions have been proposed and some have already been partially instituted.

Several movement-wide companies have been set up. One, a production and development company, determines together with each kibbutz and with the government the amount of intensive agriculture that will require outside labour in which it ought to engage. The company, rather than the kibbutz, takes over the management of this area, hiring the personnel, including the kibbutz personnel which will be working on the project. The kibbutz is then no longer the employer of these outside workers and does not benefit from the surplus value of their labour. Similarly, a federation-wide construction company has been set up which has pooled some of the skilled construction manpower of all the kibbutzim, sending them from kibbutz to kibbutz in teams, to construct housing and other buildings. When additional workers are needed who are not members of kibbutzim, the company as such hires them. The November 1953 convention of the Union of Collective Settlements decided to ban (effective immediately) the use of all outside labour in personal services and to eliminate progressively, within a period of two years, the use of all outside labour in the agricultural branches hired by the kibbutz itself rather than through the production and development company.

There has been a great deal of discussion of the use to which profit earned by these companies and also from the labour of individually hired workers in particular kibbutzim will be put. It has been decided that a central kibbutz movement accounting of the surplus value of such labour will be made. This money will be deposited in a special fund to

be administered by the Histadrut, the General Federation of Labour, for the expansion of activities geared to the welfare not of the kibbutzim alone but of all Histadrut members.

Industries in the Kibbutzim

A number of kibbutzim have developed sizeable industrial projects which can hold their own in any competitive economy. There are two plywood factories employing hundreds of workers. There are several canning factories, several large textile factories, and factories which manufacture agricultural implements. A several-million-dollar masonite plant has been established jointly by the kibbutzim in the Jordan valley and AMPAL, the American-Israeli Trading Corporation. These factories make a substantial difference in the standard of living of the kibbutz, and in recent years have so expanded that they would collapse without hired outside labour. After having gone through the toil and heartache of building and developing them, the individual kibbutzim are reluctant to give them up. There is already some discussion, however, of transferring the legal ownership of these factories from the individual kibbutzim to the kibbutz movement as a whole, as the preliminary step in creating a central company similar to the agricultural and construction companies. The general feeling is that it would be better to attack the situation piece-meal, first solving the problem as it relates to agriculture.

Another idea being advanced is the formation of regional kibbutzim. In this plan five or six kibbut-

zim in a particular area would pool their economic efforts, retaining their social and organizational identity. This would make possible the operation of regional economic projects which require more personnel than one kibbutz can supply. Regional kibbutz trucking cooperatives, for example, are already an accepted part of kibbutz activity. The plan has many implications. Why, can't we, demand its proponents, incorporate an immigrant camp or other non-kibbutz-type village in the regional kibbutz setup, allowing it to retain its internal social structure? The Yemenite immigrants, for example, who don't begin to understand what a kibbutz is all about, would thus not have to accept the features of kibbutz living to which they object, and would be able to distribute the profits of their labour within their own community in any manner they chose. Their status, however, would be radically changed. They would no longer be employees of the factory; they would be part owners. This idea, though far from being accepted, has already been incorporated as a long range objective of the movement.

Another Look at the Concept of Work

One overriding question arises out of any considered appraisal of the kibbutz work system and of the problems which have arisen in connection with it as a result both of forty years' experience and of the changing complexion of modern Israel, a question which strikes at the very roots of the spiritual ethos of the movement. Is the basic attitude towards the principle of personal, manual

labour in process of changing, notwithstanding official proclamations to the contrary? The pressure to bring about a change or at least a modification in the traditional approach is not only pragmatic, but in many quarters is also ideological.

One of my friends, a young American doctor, born and bred in the Zionist movement—his father has invested heavily in various Israel business enterprises—decided to come to Israel and try kibbutz living as a doctor. He arrived at Gesher Haziv in its beginning stages. The kibbutz made no differentiation between him and any other member, placing him in his proper place on the priority list for housing, which at that time entitled him and his wife to a concrete-floored tent minus electricity. What followed was a progressive estrangement from the kibbutz and from kibbutz life, despite the best of good-will and personal friendship on all sides. After a while his only real tie with the kibbutz became the turning over of the monthly salary cheque to the kibbutz treasury. It was simply difficult to integrate him as part of the kibbutz enterprise because of his professional status and his professional interests. The very nature of all the things we talked about and were concerned with tended towards his exclusion. What was to be expected happened. He left us and began to work for Kupat Holim, the medical insurance organization of the Federation of Labour, which assigned him as doctor in a nearby settlement. They provided him with the essentials without which no doctor can practice—a jeep, an office, and housing in the settlement in which he was working.

Should the kibbutz attempt some sort of special framework for the inclusion of such people? Today, I think, we would have a more sophisticated approach to what might be done by one kibbutz to avoid the loss of such talent.

This is perhaps an unusual example. There are a number of tasks, however, that are an integral part of kibbutz economy which demand higher professional education. An average kibbutz such as ours can use one agricultural engineer, provided he is also willing to work as a general farm production manager and possesses the character and personality for this type of responsibility. We can use several registered nurses. We can use a civil engineer, again, with the provision that he is also a construction foreman; otherwise there would not be enough work for him. We can use an accountant, teachers, a number of people with agricultural degrees. Of those who have tried, there are no more than a dozen doctors who have succeeded in their integration as members of kibbutzim through the years. There does not seem to be room for other types of professionals, be they outsiders or be they kibbutz members who would like to become professionals.

If the kibbutz is to have a determining influence on the social character of Israel in general, if its aim is to create a way of life which is practical and meaningful to anyone who is interested in its principles, if its basis to date has been a rejection of any trend leading to the creation of a limited, isolated "utopia," is it not incumbent upon it to expand its framework in such a way as successfully

to absorb such people? Is it possible to create a combination of "country" and "city" kibbutz? The possibility of further absorption of Israel's intelligentsia and the continued membership of many present-day kibbutzniks depend in no little measure on the answer.

The Kibbutz and the Intellectual

The achievement of the Jewish state demanded men of revolutionary mentality. Pioneering willpower, idealistic vision, self-sacrifice, manual labour: these were the raw materials from which the state was fashioned. In this context it was natural that the kibbutz movement should be the very distillation of Zionism. There is today, more than ever, a need in Israel for these qualities. Half the country has yet to be rehabilitated, and on this rehabilitation depends its future. Nevertheless, in a modern state a premium is placed on knowledge, on technical skill, on advanced education. The self-taught intellectual, seemingly one of the marks of a revolutionary era, is fast disappearing, not only in Israel. Perhaps as a reaction to the many years of tension and patrotic self-sacrifice, perhaps as a result of over-emphasis on the glamour of government careerism because of its very novelty, that portion of Israel youth which would be the natural future leadership of the kibbutz movement is flocking to the universities. They seem to feel, as a result, that this precludes their being kibbutz members afterwards. Interestingly enough there is no kibbutz-oriented movement in Israel's universities, as there was in Europe and even in America, where

almost all of us in the Zionist youth movements who thought of eventual kibbutz settlement were students.

It is not uncommon, as in a young Israel kibbutz several miles from Gesher Haziv, for a group of this type, having joined together at the age of eighteen to establish a settlement, to lose a third or even one-half of its membership to the university within several years after its founding. In conversation with one of these youngsters I once pointed to the large numbers of university graduates in Gesher Haziv who have nevertheless chosen to live in the kibbutz, asking him why he felt that the two were necessarily incompatible. He agreed that in the context of Gesher Haziv this was possible, since we came from a society in which we had all had an opportunity to study and had made our decision as part of the process of our intellectual growth. In the Israel youth movements, he maintained, the issue had been presented as a choice: manual labour or "rootless intellectualism." Since he felt the need to study, he had no choice but to discard the idea of the kibbutz.

The Gordonian approach to work in the kibbutz cannot hope to cope with this problem. One young kibbutz is attempting to solve it by sending many of its members to school at its own expense, allowing them to retain their membership and undertaking to cope with the problem of their specific work upon their return. Many leaders of Israel youth movements, such as the Scouts and the labour youth groups, who used to educate toward joining a kibbutz as a patriotic duty right after high

school, today suggest that their members join a kibbutz, if they should want to, after university.

As in all movements, the kibbutz, too, has its diehard element, on this issue a strong one, which opposes this trend with all its strength, maintaining that the traditional approach is the only possible one and that it is a matter of educating the public toward a return to original ideals. In accord with the history of kibbutz organization, the change in thinking is not being made at a general meeting of one kibbutz or of the kibbutz movement, but is being hammered out pragmatically on the basis of specific cases here and there, as they come up. The general pattern will emerge only in the future.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Services

THE KIBBUTZ ASSUMES COMPLETE RESPONSIBILITY for satisfying all the needs of its members, from the need for razor blades and postage stamps to that for adequate housing. Such diverse activities as buying curtains, arranging for concert tickets, providing full medical insurance, footing the bills for weddings and honeymoons and the laundering, mending, and buying of clothing are all undertaken by the kibbutz. The task of supplying these services is divided among a number of departments and committees, and any proper description of how kibbutzim operate in this sphere must also be divided accordingly.

The Dining Room and Kitchen

The prime concern of a new kibbutz is production. The purchase of equipment, the preparation of land for tillage, the provision of water for irrigation, the establishment of industrial enterprises —these are the standing items on the kibbutz agenda. Financial outlay for the provision of services is cut to the core, and the personnel necessary for their maintenance is kept at a minimum. When a

kibbutz does reach the stage where it is economically capable of improving the lot of its membership, its first concern is the provision of adequate housing in place of tents and shacks, first for children and then for the adult membership. Next in order of priority is the provision of immediate necessities such as showerhouses, laundry and tailoring services, and health facilities. This is followed by an attempt to provide the member with a minimum amount of pocket money and the opportunity of exploiting cultural facilities both in and out of the kibbutz. Improvement of the physical plant of the community dining service is one of the last on the list.

During the first days of Gesher Haziv, cooking was done for the entire kibbutz on kerosene Primus stoves. In order to boil water on such a stove the pot must be placed on it several hours in advance. None of the labour-saving devices which grace the modern American kitchen—mixers, toasters, grills, potato peelers, pressure cookers, or mechanical dishwashers—was available. Water was severely rationed. There was one cold-water faucet connected to an outside tank which required filling twice daily from a truck. The dining area was a concrete-floored cinderblock-walled room, sheltered from the elements by a corrugated tin ceiling salvaged in various-sized pieces from wrecked British army buildings in the neighbourhood. The staff consisted of several full-time cooks aided by rotating short-term help. Serving was done by members who were assigned to the kitchen for periods of a month at a time, and the whole operation was supervised

by a full-time kitchen manager. Tables for ten were made of masonite, and seating was on backless benches. In this physical setup we drank tea early in the morning before setting out for work, ate breakfast later on in the morning, lunched, had some tea with bread and jam after work, and ate our supper.

Much the same history can be reeled off by each of the 250 kibbutzim in the country. The members of Kfar Giladi, an old established kibbutz in Eastern Galilee, ate in a small converted stable for the first thirty years of the community's existence, after the kibbutz had already built lovely housing for a good number of its inhabitants, had reached a population of 800 people, was a successful financial undertaking—and long after the cows themselves had been removed to much more spacious quarters. Towards the end of this period, before the new dining room was built, the membership was compelled to eat in no less than eight shifts.

When a kibbutz is finally ready to invest in a permanent dining hall, however, it is built to serve not only as a modern and comfortable eating place, but as a cultural and community centre as well. Kfar Giladi itself, when it finally got around to building a dining hall, spent what was then the equivalent of $200,000 on a landscaped sandstone and redwood building in the very centre of the community. The large kitchen area includes separate kitchens for children, for the preparation of health and special dietetic foods, and for the regular cooking. Cooking is done in modern steam-jacketed kettles, and labour-saving devices abound;

dishes are washed mechanically; an overhead crane leads to the storage rooms which include a refrigerated cold storage locker. There are showers and washrooms for the kitchen workers, and the tables are covered with easy-to-clean formica. The dining room itself is designed in sections so as to minimize noise, and the main section contains a stage at one end enabling its conversion into a theatre, movie house, or meeting room. There is a vestibule containing cloakrooms and several committee rooms where the work coordinator and others can conduct their business in the evening. The membership has not yet accustomed itself to the new face of things, and kibbutzniks from other communities devote part of their vacation to visiting Kfar Giladi to inspect and marvel.

Similar, though less elaborate, dining halls have been built in most of the older kibbutzim. In "middle-aged" kibbutzim (a kibbutz is "old" at thirty and "middle-aged" at ten or fifteen), the tendency is to build a temporary, usually wooden, structure to replace the hovels which were the hallmark of the first years, as a forerunner of the time when it will be possible to build the truly permanent building. This is done reluctantly, since it is felt that over-investment in a temporary structure would be wasteful. We in Gesher Haziv have replaced our original dining facilities with such a temporary building, which is being raised on the future permanent site. The building stands empty, however, because we lack the money to equip the kitchen.

The quality of the food served in the kibbutz is

controlled, of course, by the general food situation in the country. Like farmers all over the world, however, kibbutz members possess the advantage over the city dweller of being able to use their own vegetable, fruit and dairy produce, before sending the bulk of it to the food-hungry cities. Meals are standard, consisting generally of two courses with the alternative, usually, of choosing between two possible main dishes. Coffee is scarce, and tea or milk is the usual beverage. Desserts are served on the Sabbath and holidays. In Gesher Haziv dessert-conscious Americans have been able to introduce dessert in the middle of the week as well—but only infrequently. For years, diners were served the main course in a deep-bowled dish which was then used as a soup bowl, the tureen being placed in the centre of the table, according to the Russian system of eating soup after the main dish. For years, too, standard seating even in older kibbuzim consisted of benches designed for eight or ten people. Gradually, however, the benches are being replaced by chairs, the long tables by smaller square ones, and meals are served in "proper Western" sequence (a personal opinion) with separate plates for different courses. In Gesher Haziv we forced the solution by ordering small deep-bowled soup plates from the States which physically could not be used for a "flat" main dish.

This dining and kitchen setup, though one of the basic marks of kibbutz organization from the very beginning, has, in recent years, come in for a great deal of criticism within the settlements. Members maintain that they are tired of the noise and hub-

bub of the dining room. They do not feel like eating with anyone whom chance has caused to be seated at the same table, be he a member, some transient who is passing through the kibbutz or a member of a youth group being trained at the kibbutz. The chief criticism is not levelled at breakfast and lunch, which are essentially "work meals." The evening meal, however, is another matter. People would like this meal to be quiet, leisurely, and partaken with personal friends. With the growth of families and family life, the institution of afternoon tea has almost disappeared from the dining halls in many kibbutzim. Members prefer to get some tea and "fixings" from the kitchen on their own and spend the hour at home with their children and an electric teakettle. In many kibbutzim a regular "take home" section has been instituted in the kitchen, enabling members to take even supper home, using kibbutz-provided covered trays and kibbutz-provided cutlery and crockery.

This development has naturally alarmed orthodox kibbutz ideologists. Can this be the first step towards the breaking-up of collective institutions? Proponents disagree. Socialism need not be dependent for its success on inconvenience and hardship, they say. Members must be provided with opportunity for some privacy. An interesting experiment, long proposed, is being planned for Afikim, a large kibbutz with a population of close to thirteen hundred people, and a dining room which looks something like Grand Central Station. Afikim is planning to build several smaller dining rooms in different living areas of the kibbutz. This will

enable members to eat in smaller, more intimate groups close to home, eliminating many of the ills of the present system.*

The dining room in the average kibbutz is not only an eating-place, however. It serves a host of auxiliary functions. It is here that the weekly meetings and other large get-togethers take place. It is here that one will find committees meeting at night, sipping tea and making plans for the next day. At adjoining tables people will be reading the newspaper and discussing its contents. Here, too, the work coordinator may hold court each evening, receiving requests by the heads of various branches and dealing with the problems of individuals. It is one of the focal points of kibbutz social and cultural activity.

Laundry and Tailoring

All kibbutz clothing is marked, either by name or number (in the early days name versus number was a subject for debate), and laundry and tailoring is combined in one department. Soiled clothing is deposited in bins at the laundry and returned at the end of the week, washed, ironed, and, if necessary, mended. In most kibbutzim the clothing shop keeps a record of the clothing possessed by each individual, and when it notices, in doing his laundry, that some of his clothing is worn out or that he does not have a sufficient quantity of a specific item, will replace it automatically, including the new clothing in his bundle when he comes

* For various reasons this idea has since been abandoned.

to pick it up on Friday afternoon. Some kibbutzim actually make their own clothing and provide custom-made shoes. Most, however, purchase their clothing ready-made.

The system is efficient and uneventful when applied to work clothing. Dress clothing, however, is another matter. Here the individual likes and dislikes of members, particularly, of course, of the women, frequently disrupt peaceful operation. When Gesher Haziv was first founded, each of the American girls had brought with her a substantial American wardrobe. The Israeli girls, who had abandoned their previous home in the midst of war, had been able to salvage only what they were wearing. The solution, we thought, was a simple one. Each American girl should be asked to share her wardrobe with the others. We quickly discovered our error. The Israelis, we found, wouldn't be caught dead in the clothing which was offered. We had to go out and buy new clothing for all of them.

Some kibbutzim have in recent years experimented with a new system of dress clothing allotment. Each member is told he has a stated sum at his disposal for clothing Within that budget he can buy whatever he pleases. Again, some "diehards" feel this to be a departure from basic kibbutz principle. The system, however, is becoming increasingly popular.

Medical Services

Every kibbutz member is insured by the kibbutz with Kupat Holim, the comprehensive medical in-

surance department of the Israel Federation of Labour. If any additional medical attention is needed, the kibbutz will pay for specialists, hospitalization, and convalescence, no matter how long it takes. Full care, medical, dental, and psychiatric, is provided for members and families. Should a person be invalided he does not lose any of his rights to provision of services and is considered the responsibility of the kibbutz for as long as necessary. A special person will be assigned by the kibbutz to help care for him, and there are special people assigned daily to care for those who may be mildly sick and are confined to their rooms.

Kibbutzim will go to great lengths to insure proper care for their membership. In my own kibbutz, in the case of a woman who contracted a serious case of polio, the kibbutz arranged for round-the-clock nursing for months on end, for air transportation to the United States, for care in the United States, and is preparing specially constructed housing which will make it easier to care for her upon her return.

Housing

The housing problem in Israel as a whole, not only in the kibbutz movement, is roughly comparable to the problem which would be faced by the United States should it decide to accept one hundred and fifty million immigrants within a period of five years. For years, tens of thousands of people all over the country lived in tents. Those who have graduated from tents live in a wide variety of slum-type areas in six by ten corrugated-aluminium

shacks, wooden huts roofed with the same aluminium sheeting, or concrete-block one-room houses without sanitary facilities. A Swedish prefabricated bungalow apartment consisting of one room roughly twelve feet square, another room half that size, with bathroom and shower being shared with the next apartment, is considered semi-permanent housing for a family with several children. A three-room modern apartment in Jerusalem, without refrigerator, stove, etc., cost a dentist friend of ours seven thousand American dollars in 1951. Today it is possible to get such apartment for significantly less, but they are still far beyond the reach of ninety per cent of the new population.

For many years the optimum type of housing aimed at by kibbutzim was one room with porch per couple, the children being housed in special children's housing. In order to merit such housing, members were rated according to an elaborate point system reminiscent of the demobilization point system of the American army in World War II. A newcomer started in a tent, and the graduation process from tent to wooden shack to permanent housing took many years. Today, however, as a corollary of the generally accelerated tempo of kibbutz expansion, demands are higher and construction is quicker. In Gesher Haziv, for example, after five years of kibbutz life, the kibbutz has completed the construction of forty modern two-room apartments with veranda and bathroom and shower which compare favourably with the best of similar construction in the cities. Members who are not entitled to this housing live in a variety of

frame bungalows ranging from the aforementioned Swedish type to a room in small two-room huts of our own design. None of the original settlers remained in a tent for more than two years—something we consider an achievement. The norm in most kibbutzim is today considered to be one and a half rooms per couple with sanitary facilities, exclusive of housing for children. This is a hoped-for norm—a goal to be aimed at. Large numbers of veteran kibbutz members have not yet attained it.

A report submitted to the recent convention of the Union of Collective Settlements recommends hopefully that no member be allowed to remain in a tent for more than a year and in a bungalow without private sanitary facilities for more than eight years.

The same report suggests the following norm for the furnishing of a kibbutz apartment: two beds, including either one which can be expanded or else a third cot which can be folded and stored, mattresses, blankets, bedspreads, a chest of drawers or closet if there is no wall closet, a bookcase, table, two chairs, an easy chair, a rug, curtains, a hanging lamp, a desk lamp, a radio, a small kerosene stove, a minimum set of kitchen utensils for the preparation and serving of tea or a snack, children's furniture, and, in particularly difficult climates, an electric fan. Somewhere between its fifth and tenth year a kibbutz should be expected to reach this minimum for all its members, says the report. Actually kibbutz furniture, when it is finally distributed, is of very high quality, but for the first several years members get along with

orange crates and home-made pieces, their beauty depending on the handiness of the individual member.

Vacation

Adequate rest and provision for the enjoyment of leisure have traditionally been among the principal aims of all workers' organizations. A workers' society, however, which is engaged in creating the wherewithal for existence, which is not in the position of struggling with management for better working conditions but is itself management, is perforce much more exacting in its work demands than trade union movements elsewhere. Israel as a whole works a six-day week, and the kibbutz, especially in view of its agricultural character, also organizes its work on this basis. Again, because of the agricultural nature of the kibbutz there is a certain amount of work, exclusive of services such as the dining room and children's houses, which must be done even on the Sabbath. This is particularly true of caring for livestock. Every kibbutz member, however, is entitled to one day off a week, whether it comes on the Sabbath itself or in the middle of the week. Due to the short-handedness of many kibbutzim, members sometimes work three or four weeks on end without a day off, ending up with having "saved" enough days for a small extended vacation. Some members do this deliberately, though the process is theoretically frowned upon for health and other reasons.

Most kibbutzim grant their members at least one week's vacation a year in addition to holidays, and

many grant two weeks. In the early days, when one of the ideological principles of the kibbutz was the creation of "one large family," and today in some kibbutzim which still adhere to the principle, there was no set sum for vacation money, or even, in some cases, a set time for vacation. When a member felt he had to go to town for any reason, he applied to the proper committee. The committee would arrange his release from the work programme and grant him a cash allotment designed to meet his specific needs. With the growth of many of the settlements, however, this system, besides being annoying to the individual member who felt it should be unnecessary for him to apply to a committee for carfare and lunch money every time he wanted to travel to town, became impracticable. As a result most kibbutzim decided upon an annual pocket-money allowance on which the individual member can draw as he pleases from the kibbutz office. In Gesher Haziv during our first several years this sum amounted to the glorious total of six pounds a year per person, plus an additional allowance for families. (An Israel pound was then worth $2.80 officially—actually less. Bus fare to Tel Aviv alone was then half a pound each way.) This money was used primarily for vacations and for occasional trips. Members who were lucky enough to have friends or relatives in town with whom they could stay were able to get by on this allowance. Others were compelled to vacation at home, visit other kibbutzim, or abbreviate their stay away from the settlement. During the days of food shortage in the cities they were able to

bring gifts of produce with them to friends in the city which would make it easier for them to impose upon them. It was only half in jest that I, who had no relatives in town, once considered placing an ad in the personal column of *The Jerusalem Post;* "Kibbutznik in need of 'relative' in city, willing to trade kibbutz hospitality during holidays, school vacations, etc."

There has been a good deal of progress made in this connection since those early days of Gesher Haziv, as today's annual allowance of twenty pounds per person will testify. We are, as a matter of fact, on the bottom rung—most kibbutzim grant as much as twice this sum. Forward-looking kibbutzim have begun to realize that mere time off is not enough, and a good number have instituted the system of sending members on kibbutz-paid vacations to various resorts. Every member of Gesher Haziv now receives a ten-day all-expenses-paid vacation in a resort every two years in addition to his normal vacation allotment. The recent convention of the Ihud Hakvutzot Vehakibbutzim recommended the institution of this system in all kibbutzim. Like so many other things, the concept of proper vacation came late to the kibbutz, a pioneering society interested first and foremost in establishing itself economically and socially. Now that it has been introduced, however, understanding of the need is developing rapidly.

Miscellaneous Services

There are a host of minor services supplied by kibbutzim to their membership which do not fall

into specific categories: the provision of soap, haircuts, toothpaste, and razor blades, the free posting of mail, free newspapers, occasional tickets to concerts and plays, a weekly movie shown in the kibbutz, the arrangement of weddings, wedding celebrations, and honeymoons, a community book and record library, the purchase of books for individual members, and contributions to the support of needy parents who live outside the kibbutz or even outside the country. These are but a random sampling. As I have tried to show in the description of several of the major services, none is distributed in accordance with a static blueprint. It is the specifics of kibbutz evolution which determine the pattern.

CHAPTER FIVE

Economic Management

THE FIRST DAYS OF GESHER HAZIV MADE IT CLEAR to us that we could not possibly expect, for a good many years, to support ourselves adequately from our agricultural efforts alone. Since the members themselves had entered the kibbutz with no personal capital at their disposal, we determined upon the erection of a small carpentry and mill workshop which could begin operation as soon as it was set up and provide us with an immediate income. The budget provided us on a long-term-loan basis by the national Zionist institutions was limited and was earmarked for specific items: agricultural expansion first of all and a minimum of housing and necessary technical installations in addition. The erection of a factory, however small, was not included in the institutional budget allocations, and the representatives of the kibbutz were not successful in convincing these Zionist institutions that such an item should be included. We did send out a group of some twenty people to work in other places; their earnings, however, were necessary for the very existence of the community and fell far short of covering these needs. The possible use of

this income for capital investment was out of the question. As a result we were forced to embark on our first venture into the field of kibbutz financing not through the Jewish national institutions, but through the credit market at large.

The Problem of Credit

Estimating the cost of purchasing the machinery and its installation at three thousand pounds, we began shopping around among private banks and financial organizations for credit. I was then secretary of the kibbutz, and it was my job, and that of the treasurer, to "entertain" several representatives of Israel's largest bank who had come to the kibbutz to determine our credit rating. It did not take them long to discover that we had no credit rating whatsoever and possessed no assets which could possibly help establish such a rating. "In other places," remarked one of them wryly, "people have cows, tractors, or trucks—if they don't pay we can attach these things and sell them—what do you have? The only possible asset you may have which other people don't have," he ruminated, "is eighty sets of parents in America." He gave us the loan, out of the goodness of his heart. There are some bankers like him here and there, perhaps, but most bankers do not bear the slightest resemblance to him. This I say from hard-won experience.

The first financial difficulty faced by any kibbutz is under-financing, and this initial handicap hounds its existence for the first ten or fifteen years. During our first two years Gesher Haziv received IL125,000 (Israel pounds) in long-term low-interest loans

from the Settlement Department of the Jewish Agency, which handles the development of new settlements on behalf of the World Zionist Organization. This was the second highest allocation granted by the Agency to the settlements which had been founded since the establishment of the Jewish state, and I, who was not treasurer or a member of the financial committee of the kibbutz, was shocked by the success of our representatives in extracting it when the total appeared in the report of that body to the World Zionist Congress. What did these IL 125,000 mean, however, in the practical area of our kibbutz development and existence? Perhaps some random figures will make this clear. The cost of an International Harvester TD-9 tractor in Israel at that time was somewhere in the neighborhood of IL 3,000 at the legal exchange rate of $2.80 to the Israel pound. This was without the implements: ploughs, disks, baler, combine, without which the tractor would have nothing to pull behind it. Our kibbutz needed at least two such tractors plus a smaller wheel tractor at the very beginning of its operation. Since the legal exchange rate was highly inflated, most things which were bought inside Israel, not through a government or other semi-official institution, cost sometimes as much as two or two-and-a-half times the official price. The official Settlement Department estimate of the cost of constructing one room of permanent housing, minus such items as wall closets, porch, or sanitary facilities, was then IL 600. Since our kibbutz, as all other kibbutzim, would refuse to build such a room and call it permanent housing, we

were compelled, perforce, to add additional funds from other sources. The room we finally planned and built cost us a minimum of IL 1,000. We needed sixty such rooms at the very outset without allowing for population increase. Building two classrooms for our children came to IL 8,000. The maintenance of the community itself—food, clothing, medical services, and incidentals for 150 adults and twenty-five children—entailed an immediate outlay of from IL 6,000 to 7,000 monthly. A "temporary dining room with minimal standards set us back IL 23,500. In addition to all this we had to build barns, chicken coops and sheds, install our own power generator, drill a well, clear fields, and set up an irrigation system.

Exclusive of the aforementioned Jewish Agency loans we succeeded in running up a debt of IL 175,000 to other financial institutions. Of this IL 70,000 were made up of loans for one or two years at high rates of interest, for things such as housing and farm building construction. No self-respecting private individual would dare do this, much less be able to do it.

Very few average kibbutz members can follow the twists and turns of this type of financial activity. At one meeting of Gesher Haziv's membership, after the treasurer had completed an unusually sobering and grim report, one of the "naive" Americans (perhaps not so naive) made the following statement: "I don't see what you're so upset about —the United States is the richest country in the world and has the biggest national debt in the world. There is a direct relationship between the

two. We ought to congratulate ourselves on the fact that people think we're such a good credit risk." Everyone laughed except the treasurer.

The practical example of Gesher Haziv should make clear to the reader how staggering the job of financing the development of a new kibbutz can become. The kibbutz movement and the Israel labour movement in general have created a number of institutions which help the kibbutz financially. Each kibbutz federation owns its own bank which is capitalized by continuous assessments of all kibbutzim in accordance with their financial strength. The marketing of kibbutz agricultural produce is conducted through Tnuva, the general marketing cooperative of the Israel Federation of Labour, and Tnuva, in turn, is usually willing to guarantee a proportion of kibbutz loans against future earnings. Similarly, Hamashbir, the labour purchasing cooperative, carries new kibbutzim on credit for a longer period than do private merchants. The central bank of the Israel Federation of Labour earmarks a certain portion of its credit for kibbutz needs.

In the main, however, kibbutzim are compelled to venture forth into the credit market and borrow from whoever is willing to carry them, no matter how difficult the terms. There have been cases where kibbutzim have been compelled to borrow for three years money for housing at what amounted to 13 per cent interest. There is a continuous rush to borrow from Peter to pay Paul; the treasurer of a kibbutz in its early years must become a financial manipulator and sometimes an artful dod-

ger, of no mean proportions. Many are the times I have seen our treasurer run off to hide when he saw an automobile, which he recognized as belonging to a creditor determined to ferret him out even on his day off, drive into the kibbutz on a Saturday afternoon. Desperate kibbutz treasurers have been known to create their own credit. This is accomplished by opening accounts in different banks in widely separated parts of the country and paying in Jerusalem with a cheque drawn on an empty account in Haifa, then covering the account in Haifa by the time the cheque reaches there with a cheque drawn on Jerusalem. At one point it was estimated that there was between two and three million pounds worth of unbacked kibbutz "credit" of this kind circulating in the country. What happens when fifty or sixty thousand pounds worth of this type of cheque rotation catches up with a particular kibbutz is called in kibbutz jargon an "explosion." Other kibbutzim rush to cover it, but it is an extremely unpleasant business while it lasts. The individual member working in the fields feels the unpleasantness in the quality of his diet, but one can hardly blame the treasurer—a young person between the ages of twenty and thirty who has forsaken a comfortable middle-class existence to undertake voluntarily a pioneering task in an undeveloped area, and who has been catapulted into a position of responsibility for the financial needs of hundreds of people.

Young kibbutzim are nursed along by the Settlement Department of the Jewish Agency for about the first five years of their existence. After this

period, however, a kibbutz is on its own. The government itself has been granting loans to kibbutzim for specific purposes tied in with its general agricultural development plan. A government-sponsored agricultural bank which makes short-term crop financing available as well as helping with some long term investment has recently begun to function.

Mixed Farming

In order not to repeat the error of early attempts at Jewish agriculture in Israel which placed all their eggs in the basket of a one-crop economy, either citrus or wine production, a fundamental concept of kibbutz management is mixed farming. Diversification is the one principle which is applied throughout, though particular kibbutzim do concentrate on one field or another, depending on climate, topography, and available skills. Dairy farming, egg production, truck gardening, and the growing of field forage and grain crops are activities of every kibbutz. Additional branches which may or may not be present are citrus fruits, vineyards, fish ponds, orchards, tobacco growing, sugar beets and other industrial crops, flower growing, and sheep breeding. To the superficial observer, this variation in agricultural production may seem wasteful at first. Economically it might be much more efficient to concentrate on one branch, saving labour, machinery and managerial personnel in the process. Long experience with the Israel market, however, has convinced kibbutzim that economic survival depends all too frequently on the in-

surance which one crop provides against low returns of another. The branches, of course, are tied in with each other, and modern techniques of crop rotation are practised. The concept is so thoroughly ingrained that one often hears the half-jesting but also half-serious comment: "We don't keep cows for the milk they produce but for the manure with which to fertilize the fields."

The first kibbutz ideologists frowned upon the establishment of any kind of industrial project within the settlement framework. This, they felt, would be a betrayal of their ethical values. The return to nature, the escape from the troubles of an industrial society was a basic part of their belief. Later kibbutz generations, however, gradually departed from this point of view. The ideal industrial project from the kibbutz point of view, when industrial projects were first sought, was a small enterprise not dependent on skilled labour and not requiring heavy physical exertion. The hope was that such an enterprise could operate primarily during the winter, when agricultural income is at its lowest, using unskilled labour, pregnant women who cannot engage in strenuous work, and so forth. In line with this approach kibbutzim operate clothespin factories, small raffia shops, small precision shops, and even diamond-polishing centres. It soon became apparent, however, that an industrial undertaking, like any other branch of the economy, demands permanent skilled personnel, cannot restrict itself to certain seasons of the year only, and has an internal dynamic of its own which begins to demand increased attention and energy. It also

became apparent to many kibbutzim that the attainment of a satisfactory standard of living through agricultural production alone takes many, many years of hard work and might even then be shaky. Practical necessity, therefore, began to dictate kibbutz ventures in industrial projects of a larger and more complex nature.

Industry in the Kibbutz

Today, though kibbutz industrial enterprise is certainly not comparable in strength to kibbutz agricultural activity—still the main focus of kibbutz life—it is nevertheless growing rapidly and is already being felt to a considerable extent in the country's industrial make-up. Afikim, a kibbutz in the Jordan valley, operates a million-dollar plywood factory, exporting its products to Europe as well as supplying the local market. The Jordan valley masonite plant, referred to earlier, uses the waste products of the plywood factory as part of its raw material. Another kibbutz, called Mishmarot, also operates a plywood factory which is fast approaching the size of Afikim's. Ashdot Yaakov, Givat Hayim, and Givat Brenner operate large canneries. One kibbutz makes pipe fittings. Another makes electric switches. A third operates a large textile factory. A fourth makes ploughs and similar agricultural machinery. Still another operates a large machine shop which custom-builds steam-jacketed kitchen equipment and washing machines.

Even Gesher Haziv's carpentry shop has expanded to the point where it has been producing five or six thousand doors and windows a month and is

currently investing close to a hundred thousand dollars in modernizing its plant.

Regional Economic Cooperation

Regional cooperation in economic undertakings, in which a number of kibbutzim in a particular area own shares, is fast becoming an accepted practice. Some thirty kibbutzim in the Upper Galilee operate a trucking cooperative which puts sixty diesel-operated trucks on the road every day. The cooperative has constructed its own garage and machine shops in the centre of the Huleh valley and does its own servicing and repairs. Similar trucking cooperatives exist in every region of the country. One kibbutz trucking cooperative has contracted to do all the trucking for the new government mining and chemical industrial undertakings in the Negev. Passenger transport in the country as a whole, outside of the government-owned railroad, is in the hands of bus-drivers' cooperatives. To assure transportation to their own kibbutz and to provide work for several of their members as drivers (a lucrative job in Israel) most kibbutzim own one or more shares in these cooperatives. The kibbutz driver usually drives his bus home to the kibbutz in the evening and leaves in the morning, thus assuring at least one bus stop at the kibbutz during the day.

Several kibbutz federations have set up investment companies whose object it is to attract outside investment on a permanent basis for kibbutz industrial enterprise. The control of these companies is vested in the hands of the kibbutz federation

and close friends of the movement. They sell shares in the industrial enterprise of the federation as a whole and also encourage specific investment in particular projects. The plywood factory in Mishmarot, for example, is partially owned by a group of Israel and American investors. The new masonite factory in the Jordan valley has attracted an investment of close to $1,500,000 from AMPAL, the American Israel Trading Corporation. Hashomer Hatzair has had its own American-incorporated investment company in the United States for many years.

Kibbutz Wealth

The complicated kibbutz accounting system makes it difficult to estimate truly the net worth of kibbutzim today. That they are a considerable factor in the economy of the entire country is obvious. They are responsible, for example, for well over one-third of the total agricultural production in Israel. Their assets run into tens of millions of pounds, and despite the difficulties inherent in under-financing and in the poor economic condition of the country, they are respected and important big business. The government itself has been turning to the movement constantly for help in undertaking new pioneering projects. One example is experimentation in the growing of cotton, a project undertaken by the Ihud Hakvutzot Vehakibbutzim in cooperation with an American investor. Experimentation has been begun also in the growing of tobacco and sugar beets. The gross income of sixty of the kibbutzim in the Union of Collec-

tive Settlements during the 1952–1953 financial year (the kibbutz financial year is figured on the basis of the Hebrew calendar) was IL 21,923,000. During the same year the central bank of this particular kibbutz federation advanced IL 6,835,000 in loans to its member kibbutzim. Its building department erected IL 1,534,000 worth of buildings in member kibbutzim.

One of the oldest kibbutzim, Kinneret, in honour of its fortieth anniversary, recently published a table comparing its fortieth year with its first. It bears reprinting.

KVUTZAT KINNERET.
COMPARATIVE TABLE 1914–1954

PART ONE

	1913/ 1914	*1923/ 1924*	*1934/ 1935*	*1938/ 1939*	*1946/ 1947*	*1952/ 1953*
Total Population	14	44	198	315	552	752
Area in dunams (one dunam=¼ acre)	900	2000	2000	3500	8000	
Irrigated dunams	60	500	1055	1850	2000	
Head of milking cattle	40	58	85	118	143	
Other cattle	20	48	60	71	111	
Chickens	270	1500	1200	5000	11000	
Sheep				230	300	
Beehives	40	100	116	170	200	
Work animals	15	13	18	23	10	
Tractors		2	2	4	21	
Combines		0.5	0.5	1.5	4	
Trucks			2	5	11	
Other automobiles					6	

	1913/ 1914	*1923/ 1924*	*1934/ 1935*	*1938/ 1939*	*1946/ 1947*	*1952/ 1953*
PRODUCTION						
Wheat in tons	8.7	18	47	60		24.5
Barley in tons				21		280
Hay in tons			10			70
Other grains in tons	10			0.4		31
Green fodder in tons	52	660	1428	2100		2400
Dried hay in tons		70	130	227		320
Feed grains in tons		1.8	1	3		2.5
Sugar beets in tons						55
Milk (in thousands of litres)	64	264	324	333.5		531
Goat's milk (in thousands of litres				18.7		21
Wool and lambs (IL.1000)				0.2		5
Bananas in tons	4	15	180	475		665
Grapes in tons		14	55	110		185
Grapefruit in tons	1.5	60	68	431		350
Dates in tons				9		40.5
Olives in tons				2.5		42
Vegetables in tons	50	110	235	492		722
Eggs (in thousands)	8	241	175	530		1708
One-day-old chicks (in thousands)		18	6	16		77.7
Meat (chicken) in tons	0.2	4	1.5	7.7		34
Fish (bred in artificial ponds) in tons				60		72
Honey in tons	0.6	1.1	3.5	3		7.5
Date saplings				130		336
Grape vines (in thousands)				10		3
Flowers (in thousands)		7	13	30		81.6

This is not an unusual report. It is a sample of what is considered normal achievement in the kibbutz movement for a kibbutz the age of Kinneret. The figures speak for themselves.

CHAPTER SIX

Education

PHYSICAL CONDITIONS IN A NEW KIBBUTZ ARE hardly those which make for the bringing up of healthy children. From the beginning, though kibbutzniks were willing to live in tents or huts lacking the most elementary sanitary facilities, they were not willing to compel their children to live under similar conditions. The very first income earned was invested immediately in adequate facilities for children, housing first and foremost, food, clothing, and educational facilities next. Though the community did not have enough money to provide each family with the kind of housing which would enable it to have its children live at home, it made every effort to provide at least one house in which children could live. The first permanent house to be built was always a children's house. The first house with running water, with a bathroom, with a shower, was the same children's house.

The Education of Children

Due to the parents' occupation in the fields or in other work during the day, the kibbutz arranges

for a nursery school setup in which special people work with the children during the daytime as their assignment on the work programme. In the evenings parents either pick up their children or their children come "home" to their parents' tents or huts to spend the evening with them, returning to the children's house at bedtime. A special children's kitchen prepares meals for the children's dining room. Members are assigned to stay in the children's houses at night, again as part of their work assignment, to minister to night-time needs.

This system, at first merely a pragmatic arrangement dictated by financial circumstance, has assumed the flesh and blood of a very definite educational philosophy. The purpose of the kibbutz is not only, say its adherents, in almost the same words that Plato uses in *The Republic,* to set up a new economic framework for society. It is to create a new man, possessed of character traits radically different from those of his forebears. This new man must be conditioned to concepts of cooperation and democratic socialism from his very infancy. Learning to live with other people is a basic part of his learning to live in general. Only as a result of such conditioning will the child end up basically different from the educational product of the competitive world in which his parents grew up. Only in this way will the attitudes and feelings which his parents had to struggle to make part of themselves be taken on by him as a matter of course. His education is, therefore, to an incomparable degree, more of a community responsibility than it was, and still is, in the society in which his

parents were raised. His whole way of life from birth onward must be shaped and formed by the community itself through responsible trained educators.

Family life in this context assumes a character different from that which it has elsewhere. The parents are relieved of the day-to-day concerns involved in raising their children, the time spent with them being pure leisure-time activity, freed of the stresses, strains, and responsibility of actual care. The mother is free to take her place in the community as an equal, working where she pleases, participating in meetings and in community affairs. In the opinion of kibbutz proponents of this theory she thus becomes truly emancipated.

The children themselves are part of an organized children's community. They live together, eat together, and study together; all are equal. They are a "kibbutz on the way," conducting their affairs democratically with the advice of their teachers. One of the "bibles" of kibbutz educators is *The Pedagogic Poem* by Makarenko, in which he describes the children's communities established by the Soviets in the early twenties for the countless orphaned waifs cast upon the waves of Russian society created by the revolutionary upheaval.

The kibbutz, though a workers' society struggling for its existence, is nevertheless easy on mothers. Pre-natal care is of the best, and the prospective mother often does not have to work at all, even to the extent of not having to prepare meals or engage in household tasks for a goodly period before giving birth. This is also the case in the six-week

period after birth when she rests and spends most of her time with her child. Again, the daily care of the child both day and night, except for feeding, is not her responsibility but that of the women working in the nursery. She sleeps at home free of the strain of awaking to her child's cries. After these first six weeks the mother's return to work is gradual, beginning with half a day and ending with a full day by the time she has finished weaning the child. Then she usually gets a week's vacation.

Children's houses are usually built as units which contain facilities for some sixteen to twenty children of a particular age level. They include sleeping quarters, four or five children to a room, play areas, dining facilities, and washrooms. Children graduate from one house to another as they advance in age until they are eighteen and ready to become full-fledged kibbutz members, and in many cases the women in charge of them graduate with them for the first two or three years. Generally speaking the table of organization calls for one adult working with each five children, with modification depending on the age of the children. Each house also has housekeeping help, and the normal service branches of the kibbutz, such as the tailoring and shoemaking shops and the kitchen management, all have special children's departments.

Buildings for children five years old and up also contain kindergarten and classroom facilities. These facilities are not separated from the sleeping quarters, for it is kibbutz belief that the teaching process must be integrated with the life and environment of the children. The kibbutz movement oper-

ates several normal schools of its own for the training of kibbutz teachers, for whom an exacting standard is set. These courses range from the handling of very young children to the teaching of higher grades and vary in length from intensive three-month seminars to full-fledged three- and four-year curricula. There is an extensive programme of short refresher courses which are continually offered to kibbutzniks working in various capacities with children. The kibbutz federations employ consulting psychologists and psychiatrists who work with disturbed children and even conduct a special school for such children. There is a deep sympathy for progressive methods of education; and song, dance, physical education, audio-visual aids, and projects are all woven into the teaching process.

Most kibbutzim have neither enough children nor the facilities for establishing their own schools for higher grades and high school studies. Elementary and especially high schools are often established, therefore, on a regional basis, drawing children from more than one kibbutz. Recently a pattern has developed of concentrating the twelfth grade of an entire kibbutz federation in one place for a year of joint study. Also, as the result of a natural emphasis on agricultural and mechanical knowledge in every kibbutz high school special inter-kibbutz agro-mechanical high schools have recently been established.

Education toward work itself is an integral part of the whole system. The eight six year-old first graders in Gesher Haziv have their own sheep and chickens. They plant their own small vegetable gar-

den and are completely responsible for its produce and for the livestock. The elementary and high school at Ramat Yohanan has its own land and conducts a full farm economy.

By and large, kibbutz children, unless specially talented, do not continue on to university. Some attend the kibbutz teachers' seminaries. Some are sent for further studies in agriculture. Academic university training as such, however, except for cases of special talent or proficiency in which kibbutzim even send children abroad for further study, is infrequent. In part, this is a result of the prohibitive financial expense which advanced education of this sort, on a wholesale basis, represents. Until the establishment of the Jewish state, elementary education in what was then Palestine was neither free nor compulsory, and even today, though the government has introduced free and compulsory education until the age of fourteen, high-school education in Israel is as yet not universal, and high-school tuition is high. The kibbutz member is thus still far ahead of the average city worker in the measure of education with which he is able to provide his children. In part, however, academic university education is of itself frowned upon by many old-timers among kibbutz members. To many of them the break with a liberal arts education represents their own personal break with the past. They are violently against their children's becoming *"luftmenschen,"* or *"lumpenproletariat,"* the "curse of Jewish diaspora society." The personal revolution which they experienced in their own lives was specifically directed against this phenome-

non; their ambition for their children is to see them grow up as patriotic kibbutz farmers—enlightened farmers certainly, alert and well informed, but farmers nevertheless.

That this attitude is evidence of the personal insecurity which the "desert generation" (the kibbutz movement is just about forty years old) still feels and should not therefore be allowed to influence the education of future kibbutz generations is gradually being recognized in many quarters. Kibbutz high-school graduates are being encouraged to continue their studies both in advanced classes within the kibbutz movement (in the Jordan valley these advanced classes are gradually assuming the character of a junior college) and outside it. It is understood that the same kind of intellectual leadership which characterized the beginnings of the kibbutz movement is necessary for its further continuance. This leadership must be based on knowledge.

Children and Parents: The Problem of Housing

Significant elements within the kibbutz movement have begun to question the system of having children sleep in separate children's houses instead of with their families. The doubts are being expressed on both an ideological and a pragmatic basis. Admittedly, Makarenko's *The Pedagogic Poem,* Father Flanagan's Boystown and Anna Freud's experiment with young children in England during the war years were successful implementations of the "children's society" idea. Were these people, however, merely making the best of a

bad situation, in which it was impossible for the children involved to live with their parents, or are their projects really examples of optimum education which should be followed even when it is possible for children to live in close contact with their parents? Is it not important psychologically for a youngster to be able to build his own personality based on the emotional and psychological security provided by the family unit before he is compelled to "share"? Does not the present system compel the child to share the satisfaction of the needs of his emotional and personality development before he is really ready to do so? Would education toward cooperation and a socialist society in a framework wherein the community owns the means of production and provides for all needs really suffer if children slept several hundred yards apart in their parents' homes rather than in a special children's house?

Interestingly enough, Degania, the "mother of the kibbutzim," never instituted the prevailing system. In Degania children live with their parents from infancy. Parents, teachers or nursery workers, or all of these, take the children to a day nursery in the morning and return them toward evening. In several other kibbutzim, including Ein Harod, an old established kibbutz, and Degania Bet, children above certain ages have been permitted, for years, to sleep with their families.

In Gesher Haziv the *lina* debate (*lina* is the Hebrew word for *sleeping*) raged for well over a year before it was finally decided. The Americans, particularly the American wives, due perhaps to

their whole previous educational background (America, theoretically and philosophically at least, is a land of concentration on the individual and his needs rather than on the group), were almost unanimously in favour of children's sleeping with their families. Proponents of the change understood that the system could not be implemented unless permanent housing was constructed in a particular fashion, allowing for the minimum possibility of combining two rooms, a porch, and a bathroom into one family unit. Despite the increase in costs which this would entail it was felt that this would be infinitely less expensive to arrange in a kibbutz which had as yet not built any permanent housing at all than in an established kibbutz which would have to change its whole existing building arrangement if it should decide to switch systems. Many of us were ready to make our remaining in the kibbutz conditional on the solution of this problem.

After listening to lectures by psychiatrists and educators on both sides, after sending investigating commissions to visit kibbutzim in which children do sleep with their families, in order to find out exactly how the system operates, and after a great deal of internal discussion, the kibbutz finally voted by a majority of 65 per cent upon this radical departure from the established way of doing things and began to implement it. After a year and a half of operation every single one of the previous opponents has been won over to the idea.

Larger kibbutzim, like Netzer, which for various reasons were building completely new sites, followed suit several years later. Additional kibbutzim

are discussing the issue, and in several others the only stumbling block to final decision is the prohibitive cost of rebuilding all the existing housing facilities. The entire kibbutz movement is now involved in the discussion.

Those who favour the continuance of the established system label any deviation as reformism, undermining the very structure of kibbutz organization. Any change in the direction of greater emphasis on the family unit is bound to lead, they feel, to the weakening of community ties, to diminishing interest and participation in community affairs, and to greater emphasis on inequalities among kibbutz members and families. The system of children's living at home, they maintain, is bound to lead to a greater emphasis on building better homes for the membership at the expense of community building and will therefore increase the costs of building considerably. It would cancel all the gains which women in general and mothers in particular have been able to score within the kibbutz framework. Instead of permitting mothers to work in the field of their choice without regard to household chores and responsibilities, the new system would force them to curtail their outside activity, allowing them to work only in fields whose hours of work conform to their children's timetable, and making it impossible for them to participate in kibbutz meetings and planning in the evening because of the problem of "baby-sitting" which then arises.

Gesher Haziv members and other supporters of the change reply that there is no authority for the

assumption that a collective society must house its children in this particular fashion or else lose sight of its basic ideals. As long as the community owns the means of production, as long as all needs are provided for by the community, and as long as no man has the opportunity to accumulate wealth, the essential character of the kibbutz is being maintained. Within the context of this essential character it is both logical and desirable to change particular institutions when they no longer serve their purpose, either because of the changing attitude of the membership or in the light of advanced knowledge and experience. It is impossible to train qualified people fast enough to keep pace with the expanding kibbutz-child population. One person as night nurse cannot possibly minister to forty or even twenty children at night. Parents with three children are compelled to run around to three different children's houses to put their children to bed, a situation in which one child or another is bound to suffer and in which parents can never eat supper together. It is impossible to put children to bed quietly or read them a story because of the continuous presence of other children and other parents in the same room. Due to the development of the service branches of the kibbutz and the increased need for people to work with children, only a few women succeed in carving out a career for themselves in fields other than the service branches in any case. Children should not be kept in the hospital-like over-protected environment which the "children's society" can become if it is blindly overemphasized. After all, the proponents

of the change maintain, kibbutz members have an overriding responsibility to raise their children in the manner which is best for them, and kibbutz patterns should be molded in accordance with this consideration rather than merely accepting as much of it as can be made to conform with the work programme.

The real determinant of whether children should or should not sleep with their families, however, is not scientific calculation but rather the social outlook and personal desires of the membership. The decision in Gesher Haziv was made, in the final analysis, on this basis.

What Are Kibbutz Children Like?

There is no conclusive scientific evidence, to my knowledge, of the superiority of one system over the other. No all-embracing scientific study has been made of kibbutz children. From a kibbutz point of view what is known about the second and third kibbutz generations is decidedly encouraging. Most of the new generation have decided to remain in the kibbutz and in many cases have already taken over actual operation of the community. Less overtly intellectual, less prone to casuistic discussion than their parents, the second generation was for a long time a disappointment to their elders. The Israel War of Independence, however, in which kibbutz children played a major role, established their position of leadership within the movement. Many of those who were killed left a rich literature of memoirs, diaries, and other writings, much to the surprise of the elders, who had not realized

that their farmer children were capable of this type of self-expression.

Educators both in and outside the movement agree that kibbutz children, as a result of the emphasis on modern educational technique and the cultural environment in general, are more alert, sensitive, and talent-conscious than the average run of farm children elsewhere. They charge, however, that they are also overprotected and spoiled as a result of the very same factors.

Kibbutz children develop a feeling that the whole community revolves about them. They receive the best housing, the best food, and the best clothing, markedly superior to the quality of such services received by their parents. They are often oblivious to the financial difficulties in which the kibbutz may be involved. In Ramat Yohanan, for example, during our stay there, there were a number of instances of eighten-year-olds revolting at graduating from the children's dining room to that of the adults. They turned their noses up at the quality of the food and service there. Though children are taught to clean their own quarters and take care of their own needs, they nevertheless live secure in the knowledge that a housekeeper has been specifically assigned by the work programme to clean up after them. The case of the kibbutz child who, when asked to clean up in the children's house, turns to the housekeeper and says, "But she's supposed to do it," is usual enough to be cited in many different kibbutzim by women who have been in such a housekeeping position.

Disciplining is difficult. If parents are to see their

children only for several hours during the day, it is only the strong parent who will risk embittering these few hours by denying the children's wishes or by disciplining them.

In common with progressive educators the world over, many kibbutz teachers have difficulty in defining the boundary between freedom and license. The aims of the teacher and those of his students are rarely the same in any system of education. It is the purpose of the teaching technique to attract the student to a set of ideals (whether national, individual or universal) by using the student's own interests as a basis for beginning the process. Kibbutz teachers, however, sometimes allow children to run away with the programme with the result that occasionally students end up ignorant of basic sections of the curriculum.

Despite these factors, however, kibbutz children turn out surprisingly independent and capable of coping with adult problems. Young children, for example, learn to feed themselves in kibbutzim at an earlier age than do children in private homes. They are not dependent on their parents, and they learn to make their own decisions. They are at home in all kinds of social situations. They are good workers. Leadership potential is spotted and developed. Alertness to group developments and awareness of other people and their problems become second nature. Childhood is a happy experience, and the loyalty to the kibbutz which is developed is not only loyalty to ideas but loyalty to a specific home of which the child feels an integral and accepted part. When the time comes,

the eighteen-year-old feels no qualms about stepping into the adult life of the community, assuming responsibility for large sections of its work. He is familiar, too, with the inner workings of the country as a whole, having experienced, ever since he can remember, the intimate relationship between his parents and the kibbutz generally and Zionist and Israel affairs.

Youth Aliya Children in the Kibbutz

No discussion of kibbutz education would be complete without mentioning the large numbers of non-kibbutz children who are the responsibility of the system. These are the children of the Youth Aliya programme conducted by kibbutzim jointly with the World Zionist Organization.

Youth Aliya was begun in the early thirties when the first groups of Jewish children began to arrive in Israel from Nazi Germany. It later became associated with one of the most magnificent and humane personalities in the history of Zionism—Henrietta Szold. In many cases these children were already orphaned; in others their families were unable to leave Germany but succeeded, nevertheless, in at least sending their children out of the country. Organized in groups of about forty, the children were temporarily adopted by chosen kibbutzim. Special housing was constructed for them, and the children were constituted as a children's society, much in the same manner that kibbutz-born children are themselves educated. The youngsters—at the beginning they were from 15 to 17 years old—worked half days, learning a particular agricultural

branch or mechanical skill, and were taught high school subjects by kibbutz teachers during the rest of the day. The kibbutz *madrich,* or educator, assigned to the group, was not only a teacher. He was in essence a foster parent. He spent his evenings with the youngsters, helped them with their personal problems, and guided them vocationally. At the end of two years, the young people decided whether they wished to continue living in the kibbutz as members or to adopt some other form of life. Many of the groups reached a decision to organize themselves as nuclei for the creation of new kibbutzim. Others joined the kibbutz in which they had studied. Some of the most successful kibbutzim in Israel today are based on Youth Aliya graduates, and thousands of people who have become part of Israel life outside the kibbutz owe their introduction to the country to this programme.

As time went on and Jewish troubles, unfortunately, multiplied, tens of thousands of Jewish children were absorbed by Youth Aliya in this fashion. As the age level of the children arriving in the country became lower, kibbutzim were induced to take groups for three- and four-year programmes. Larger kibbutzim cared for two or three groups at a time. The countries of origin changed, and children of German origin gave way to children of East European origin, then to children from North Africa, Yemen, and Iraq, and finally to children whose parents were new immigrants already in the country.

Working with children from Yemen, for ex-

ample, presents unique problems, radically different from those inherent in working with native Israelis or with children of European background. Their education begins with the teaching of elementary principles of health, sanitation, and modern living. I was detailed by the kibbutz to work with such children. One fourten-year-old, basically very intelligent and alert, was certain that the world is flat and rests upon four pillars which have serpents entwined about them. I have seen teenage Yemenite children search for the "man in the radio." Learning how to eat foods they have never seen before, learning the importance of brushing one's teeth—even these are problems with which their education must cope.

One Yemenite sixteen-year-old once came to me with the following problem. He had been in Israel a little over a year. Prior to his departure from Yemen he had never seen an electric light, never used modern plumbing, never traveled in an automobile, never learned to write. During his first year he had made tremendous progress. We had taught him elementary reading, writing, and arithmetic. He had become familiar with machines. On a month's course in an army youth-camp he had learned scouting and personal hygiene and had become a leader in his group. I had suggested to him that he continue his studies for another two years, and it was this suggestion which constituted the problem. His father earned one pound twenty a day in forestry work and was the sole support of the family.The family, therefore, was pressuring the boy to abandon his studies and go to work, thereby

doubling the family income. His cousins and friends were laughing at his desire to learn, since they were already working and earning. The boy's questions were highly practical. If he should continue his studies would he be able to become an officer in the army? Would he be able to become a director of a Yemenite camp? Would he earn more money? He was being torn by his desire to learn and his sense of family responsibility. I was torn between my desire for him to learn and my own sense of responsibility to his family. This is the kind of problem with which Youth Aliya leaders must constantly deal.

The kibbutz has succeeded in providing these groups with a trade and an introduction to modern living. This educational process involves taking these children, whether from Germany or Morocco, Bulgaria or Aden, into the homes of kibbutz members, into the dining room, into all activities, year after year in ever larger numbers. Dealing with these youngsters merely as groups is insufficient, no matter how capable, devoted, and ever-present their group-leaders are. Many kibbutzim have instituted the system, therefore, of having individual families "adopt" specific children, much in the manner of foster parents.

The Kibbutz Teacher

The position of teacher in a kibbutz is not easy. In the general community a good teacher works hard to create a relationship with parents. He is not, however, an actual part of his pupils' families. His personal relationship with parents on other

matters is not a factor within the parent-teacher association, and his educational responsibility usually ends when school is out. In the kibbutz the teacher assumes a great portion of what is normally parental responsibility, being charged with the formation of the character of his students. Unless he commands respect as a person in terms of his own life in the kibbutz, he cannot hope to influence parents, whose right to interfere is as direct as the weekly meeting in which they can exercise it. People, therefore, who might make excellent teachers in the city are often failures in the kibbutz. On the other hand the successful kibbutz teacher often assumes the position which the concept of teacher has occupied in Jewish tradition—a respected guide in matters of ethics, learning and cultural values, not only for children but for the community as a whole.

There is a Talmudic saying: "He who has not experienced the pains involved in raising children is likened unto him who has borne no children at all." I have often thought of the aptness of this saying as applied to kibbutz education. It is truly a painful process. A great deal of thought, time, energy, and strength is expended in the pursuit of an effective, honest system which will integrate the child in kibbutz life and at the same time be best for the child. If the saying is valid, then we truly have many children.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Cultural and Leisure-Time Activity

THE CHANGE OVER FROM AN ESSENTIALLY SEDENTARY way of life to one of manual labour leaves the new kibbutz member very little time or energy for the active pursuit of cultural and leisure-time activity. Though I had been prepared for this eventuality, my initial contact with this area of kibbutz life could, nevertheless, not help but be disappointing. Zionism to the contrary, New York is a more provocative and interesting cultural centre than the small agricultural village of Gesher Haziv, some twenty miles from Haifa, nearly 100 miles from Tel Aviv, and 150 miles from Jerusalem, can ever hope to become. The recreational areas of New York, its cultural and educational facilities, its symphony orchestra and legitimate theatres, its movie palaces, book stores, and synagogues cannot be matched by the cities of Israel. Civilization, it is claimed, has been cradled in cities like New York rather than in the rural areas, and some of the truth in this claim must strike the new arrival in the kibbutz who hails from such a city. It took me a considerable length of time to begin to realize that perhaps my standards for measuring and

evaluating cultural and leisure-time activity were themselves conditioned by my previous environment, and that there might perhaps be other standards, equally valid, whose application to the kibbutz might be much more favourable.

Patterns of Leisure-Time Activity

Gesher Haziv owns a movie projector and shows the films which are circulated each week by a special department of the Israel Federation of Labour. We have established a fairly good community library, and individuals as well own considerable collections of books and phonograph records. The kibbutz possesses a good record player, and many individuals have record players in their own rooms. A community choir meets regularly. Folk dancing has become a highly developed and popular pastime in the country as a whole, with more than sixty thousand people participating in national folk-dance festivals at one time. Within our own community, groups led by professional dancers have also been organized from time to time. An informal group of talented amateur actors and playwrights usually manages to present something for each holiday. In cooperation with one of our kibbutz artists and the assistance of our carpenters and electricians, they have specialized in marionette performances portraying Jewish legends and folk tales for children. They perform in other kibbutzim as well as at home. A mimeographed kibbutz newspaper appears periodically; in some kibbutzim it is printed. There is great interest in general Israel political affairs, and prominent

people in the movement or members of the Knesset (Israel's parliament) are frequently invited as speakers. The kibbutz federation contracts with concert artists and a variety of lecturers who travel the kibbutz circuit; occasionally, therefore, we have a string quartet or concert soloist performing. The kibbutz cultural committee arranges for periodic group attendance at a play or concert in the city, and individual tickets to concerts and plays are distributed among members on a rotation basis.

The large country-wide kibbutz federations are important factors in the cultural life of the individual community, frequently appearing as the advocates of cultural expenditures in time and funds which a local kibbutz would otherwise be loath to undertake. One of the federations, for example, instituted a regulation calling for "two months for the artist." A recognized amateur artist, whether musician, painter, or writer, is entitled to two months' leave from the work programme each year for the further development of his talent. Members of the federation's amateur symphony orchestra, to use a further example, receive these two months in ten-day periods spaced through the year which they use in order to rehearse and perform. Movement-wide courses and conferences are sponsored for kibbutz artists and writers.

Ein Harod, an old established kibbutz in the Jezreel Valley, has built an art museum. A cartoon printed in one of the Israel national magazines after an exhibition of modern art at this museum has become a classic in the legend of the kibbutz movement. It portrays a farmer milking a cow on

the tiled roof of a kibbutz house and is entitled "The impact of Marc Chagall on the kibbutz."

Several places have made art into a major project. Ein Gev, for example, on the shores of Lake Kinneret, conducts an annual nationally-attended week-long music festival. Urim, a kibbutz in the deep South which contains a preponderance of Americans, was at one time considering building a commercial enterprise around a group of talented artists.

The federations operate their own publishing houses, and some of the best books in Israel, not necessarily by kibbutz authors, bear their imprint. Reviews devoted to belles-lettres and political comment are also published.

Recognizing the need for advanced education in the liberal arts and feeling at the same time that the Hebrew University in Jerusalem does not meet their needs, the kibbutz federations conduct their own courses in advanced liberal arts. Each kibbutz is required to send a fixed quota of students to the course. The courses are highly intensive, including as much as six or seven hours a day of classroom work alone and emphasizing economics, sociology, labour problems, Hebrew literature, and foreign languages. The reservoir of personnel built up by these courses is an important source of movement leadership.

Recreational space within a kibbutz like Gesher Haziv is at a premium. The only possible sites for mass cultural activity are either the dining room or the out-of-doors, and the complications in the use of either are obvious. Our ambition (when we are

richer) is to build an American-style community centre with committee, game and music rooms, library, lounge, and auditorium. Some kibbutzim have already succeeded in erecting such buildings, which, though they do not include all these facilities, do include at least a library and reading room.

The very size of the community is in itself a determinant of the scope of its cultural activity. The larger the population of the kibbutz, the easier it is to arrange a varied programme, since there is more likely to be a large enough group of members interested in a particular subject to enable its organization as an activity. The kibbutzim in the Jordan Valley, situated in close proximity to each other, conduct a joint symphony orchestra, for example, and are able even to invite major theatre groups to perform.

In the main, however, the kibbutz is a rural community. Its members are six-day-a-week hard-working farmers and mechanics. Evenings they are physically tired. If they do have time and energy, it is more often than not devoted to business meetings, technical discussions, or relaxation. The most important kibbutz cultural institution is the *kaffee-klatsch,* or, to use the kibbutz term, the *kumsitz.* Small groups of people get together in private rooms, brew some tea or coffee, listen to records, or just carry on conversation; it is here that the real decisions are made, that the real social activity takes place, and that kibbutzniks relax and spend their time.

More than in New York or any other urban centre, where cultural activity is dominated by

canned mass media, the kibbutz member must rely on his own spiritual resources for the provision of a satisfying cultural life. It is impossible to turn on the television set or drop down-town for a movie. Something requiring personal effort and participation, whether reading, community singing, organizing a dance group, or playing in an orchestra, must be undertaken. The kibbutz member who is not equipped with the personal resourcefulness which this demands, or whose past cultural horizon has been limited to spectator-activity from which he cannot emancipate himself, is more than likely to find kibbutz life a life of boredom. Either the glitter of the city will pull him back to it, or he will continue to reflect upon its glory and live an empty life.

Religion

Israel, like Eastern Europe, does not recognize liberal religion. There seem to be only two alternatives in this respect: complete orthodox observance or complete antagonism to all forms of organized religious activity, in or out of the synagogue. The pioneering creativity of the Israel labour movement was not only an act of personal revolt against the objective lot of the Jews in Eastern Europe, but also an act of protest against the internal organization of the Jewish community as it then existed. Kibbutz founders considered the diaspora Jewish community a dark and medieval one, inherently opposed to the study and application of modern knowledge, in the stern and uncompromising grip of rabbi-princes and their courts. The

Jews, they felt, must become a modern secular people like all others, divorced from religious orthodoxy. Hebrew could and should be the national language, but it must be a secular, not a "holy tongue." The Jewish holidays could be their holidays, not because of their underlying religious motifs, but only because of the national historic events which they commemorate.

The normal evolution of kibbutz cultural activity, however, has compromised this original position. Holidays have been revitalized and infused with new meaning. The Passover Seder is a dramatic event in the kibbutz calendar, in which the whole kibbutz and many guests participate (we have had four hundred at a Seder in Gesher Haziv). A Haggada compiled of extracts from the traditional text, modern Hebrew poetry, biblical passages, and original kibbutz writing is read. The Haggada is approximating the traditional form more closely each year. There is a great deal of community singing at the table and audience participation in the programme.

The Passover celebration itself includes an Omer festival, a revival of the ancient Omer festival which was celebrated during the days of the Temple. The festival takes place in the fields, where the first sheaves of barley are ceremoniously offered up, in dance and song. The holidays of Shavuot and Sukkot, both originally harvest festivals, have also become an integral part of a new Jewish cultural life.

The Bible as living literature is the basic book of all Israel. Children study it not only for its own

sake but as a geography and history text. It is possible for the imaginative teacher to teach the Bible by pointing out of the window. Amateur archeologists by the scores delve fascinatedly into the existing evidence of the history and legend of the country. Children, for all the agnosticism of their elders, are familiar with the classic Hebrew poetry, possess at least a cursory understanding of the law and legend of the Talmud and are at home in Jewish history.

My own coming to Israel, as I have already stated, was not motivated by a desire to escape, either from an oppressive external environment or from a dark and medieval Jewish America. It was motivated, rather, by a search for a positive Jewish and ethical environment. I am not orthodox in belief; nor am I particularly observant of religious rituals. Nevertheless, I like Jewish liturgical music, and despite my agnosticism and non-observance, see value for myself and my children in lighting the Sabbath candles with the traditional blessing. I do not believe that creative Jewish life ended with the biblical period, and would like my children to be familiar with and to appreciate both the Talmud and the works of Sholom Aleichem. The Hebrew language for me is not merely a language; it is also the vehicle for Hebraism. The ethical overtones of Yom Kippur are as important to my being Jewish as are the national overtones of Hanukka. It is important to me that in my community there is a Sefer Torah as well as printed Bibles.

Sabbath is particularly appreciated in the kibbutzim because rest is particularly sought by people

who engage in hard physical labour six days a week. *Shabbat* is leisurely, pleasant, and festive. Only work in the "must" categories, such as caring for livestock and food preparation, is assigned. The traditional Jewish attitude towards the "Beloved Sabbath Bride," however, which transforms the life of a traditional Jew, making him a king for a day, a day reserved for study of the law, is to a large degree absent. *Shabbat* means a day of rest, and it is quite conceivable that if one works on Saturday one "takes *Shabbat* on Tuesday." As always, semantics is important as an indication of sub-conscious attitudes, and the phrase "*Shabbat* on Tuesday," rather than "free day on Tuesday," is a common one.

It would be a mistake to say, as have some American Jewish observers, that this means that kibbutz life is Israeli, but that this does not necessarily mean Jewish! Nothing could be further from the truth. Jewish awareness, the celebration of holidays, the knowledge and appreciation of Jewish cultural achievement, the day-to-day identification with Jewish creativity in all fields, the keeping of Jewish custom and tradition, are, despite the criticism I have made, on a much higher level than that of the Judaism of all but a small number of American Jews who are professionally involved in Jewish affairs—and not all of these professionals are observant Jews.

A change in basic attitude has been evident in the kibbutz movement for many years. Some kibbutzim, for example, have always had an *Oneg Shabbat* ceremony for the adult membership, but

all kibbutzim conduct such ceremonies for their children. This is only one example of many. It is becoming clear that the kibbutz movement must create a positive aesthetic and ethical core, based on the original sources of Jewish tradition, which will supplement, nourish, and buttress its social framework, for political Zionism alone cannot suffice. At no point did this become more clear to old-time kibbutz members than when they saw the astonishing ease with which some of their young people accepted the alien gods of a foreign revolution (in the Soviet Union), so inimical to the fundamental values of kibbutz living. A mechanical economic theory cannot constitute this kind of spiritual core; this has been amply proven by the last several decades of world history.

Just as American Jewish socialists, so heatedly anti-clerical in the early nineteen hundreds, have progressed from the days when they organized Yom Kippur banquets on New York's East Side, so Israelis of the same generation, after having successfully revolted against the darkness of Jewish life of the last century, have begun to permit themselves to salvage some of the light of that Jewish life as well. The specific forms which this will take are unclear. Any American familiar with the erratic history of the Jewish Reform and Conservative religious movements in the United States must know that it is a long and tortuous road. The end result will certainly differ greatly from the end result in the United States, but, whatever its form, it will be totally and positively Jewish, and the process of its creation is engrossing and challenging.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Mechanics of Equality

"ALL ANIMALS ARE EQUAL," SAYS GEORGE ORWELL in *Animal Farm,* "only some animals are more equal than others." Anyone who is simple enough to define the ideal of social and economic equality as the patterning of human beings into uniform assembly-line units, each wearing the same style and color of shirt and the same length of necktie, and jingling the same sum of small change in his pants pockets must arrive at Orwell's wry conclusion in very short order. In the voluntary society of the kibbutz, dedicated to individual freedom and predicated on an assumption of good intentions on the part of the membership, equality cannot be a mechanical formula applied with mathematical precision. It cannot be enforced by police power, investigation, and inspection. It must be a flexible concept requiring intelligent application.

One of the members of Gesher Haziv is the sole survivor of a German Jewish family. He arrived in Israel at the age of fifteen as part of the Youth Aliya programme. He has never lived anywhere in Israel but in a kibbutz and has no close friends in the city. Another member comes from a well-to-do

American family. Both members are entitled to two weeks' vacation a year and twenty pounds for vacation expenses. The American, however, took his vacation when his family was visiting the country. He joined them in a sightseeing tour of the country, stayed with them in hotels, was treated by them to meals, concerts, and plays, and was able to return to the kibbutz after having had an enjoyable time with a good part of his twenty pounds still intact.

His fellow kibbutz member, had he ventured forth to tour the country by public transportation, paying for meals, lodging, and recreation on a minimal basis, would not have been able to last four days. He was compelled to limit his vacation to hitch-hiking, visits to other kibbutzim, and modest entertainment in the nearby town.

All of us lived at first in very uncomfortable, small, two-man tents for long periods of time. There was one handy semi-artist among us, who discovered a patch of wild bamboo-like reeds in one of the neighboring wadis. He split the reeds with great care and patience, and he built walls out of split bamboo for the inside of his tent. He built in shelves and bookcases. He framed in his bed, fashioned a door, a table, and chairs—all from reeds. He rolled up the sides of the tent to allow light to penetrate through the windows he built, and after he finished roofing the inside with reeds, he could just as well have thrown away the tent, which was now merely an outside covering. The whole affair was wrought with consummate taste and artistry, and his home was pleasant and lovely. The rest of

us, less handy, less energetic, less willing to devote the hours of spare time which such work demands, continued to live in the same tents in the same manner.

One of our members was sent on behalf of the Zionist movement on a highly confidential mission to one of the neighbouring Middle Eastern countries. His job was one which entailed a lot of travelling in Europe as well as the Middle East, high living, and free spending. Since he was going to be gone two years, his wife and family went along with him. After working tirelessly for the two years and completing his assignment, he capped his stay away from the kibbutz with a vacation in Europe, well-earned from all points of view. Returning to the kibbutz, he brought with him for his room some of the furnishings he had accumulated: a lovely inlaid coffee table, a rug, an artistic coffee set, an easy chair. His acquisition of these things was quite legitimate. Indeed, the kibbutz, theoretically, is interested in a person's bringing such gems home with him so that the economic burden of ultimately providing similar articles for all members will be reduced. Nevertheless, the kibbutz member who worked in the vegetable garden during those two years will have to wait years before the community provides him with similar furnishings, which even then will be simpler than these, and was unable to enjoy a vacation in Switzerland, no matter how well earned.

The Radio and the Teakettle

For many years, there were two items in the category of personal effects whose introduction into kibbutz life was the cause of much rancour and discussion—the radio and the teakettle. Originally kibbutz rooms were furnished with monastic asceticism. Not only was it against the custom of the kibbutz to own a private teakettle; it was a breach of principle. Social activity was supposed to be conducted in the dining room—with the whole kibbutz family—and the private drinking of tea in rooms would undermine the whole concept, leading inevitably to a return to privacy in all fields. The same held true of radios—one radio in the dining room was not only sufficient but also the optimum number.

I have been told that the first major break in the attitude towards radios came with the end of World War II. Thousands of kibbutz members had served in the British Army, many of them for as long as six years. A decision taken at the convention of one of the kibbutz federations permitted the veterans to use their gratuities to furnish their rooms, including radios and teakettles. Today, though most kibbutzim consider these articles necessities rather than luxuries, they have nevertheless been financially unable to purchase radios for all the members. What has resulted, therefore, is the receipt of radios from outside sources. Some members receive them as presents; new members are encouraged to bring radios; members who serve in the army or in other capacities within Israel or

outside bring radios back with them. In my own kibbutz, most of the Americans brought radios with them, while most of the Israelis could not. Despite the official kibbutz assurance that some day everyone will have a radio, many members find it hard to live on promises.

A similar problem concerns food packages. In Gesher Haziv, despite efforts on our part to convince our American families that we are not starving, packages and food certificates addressed to individual members arrive regularly. The packages by and large do not contain staples but are rather in the class which is known as *nasherei*—instant coffee, chocolates, ice-cream mix, cake mix, grandma's fruit cake, and similar American inventions. It makes little sense to donate a one-pound box of Barton's chocolates to the kitchen (since there will not be enough to go around anyway and the candy will in all likelihood be eaten by the kitchen crew during the ten o'clock break). The tendency is to invite one's friends into a *kumsitz* of an evening and "kill" the package. This problem of packages was a continuous matter for discussion during the first years of our existence. Solutions advanced were legion: to rotate the packages among the membership, to refuse to accept all packages, to give all packages to the kitchen. All were tried. None worked.

Young kibbutzim and kibbutzim of the extreme left are much more prone to the elevation of these matters to the level of *casus belli* than others. A friend of mine, visiting one such kibbutz, was witness to a fantastic discussion, in which sixty people

participated, on what to do about the fact that some people owned watches and others didn't. It was finally decided to rotate the watches every three months with one boy vociferously dissenting on the basis that he was more likely to take care of the watch he had received for his Bar-Mitzvah than the next fellow.

*Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes.** As with the Trojans of old, it would seem that this concept of equality forbids the kibbutz member's acceptance of gifts from any person for any reason, lest it undermine the very foundations of his existence.

Any mature approach to the subject, however, must reckon with the fact that the kibbutz is an attempt to create a socially just society of equals in an individualistic world and that it is impossible to break off one's ties with that world completely. It must reckon with the differences in ability, creativity, and energy between one member and the next. And finally, it must be able to envision the larger meaning of the term equality, providing the kibbutz member with a feeling of security within that vision, without a feeling that his life is full of petty recrimination and restriction. An American or Tel Aviv grandmother should be able to send a toy to her grandson in the kibbutz without the father's feeling that he must either hurt his mother by refusing the gift or turn it over to the kibbutz. His neighbour must be secure enough in his own position to be big enough to grant the grandmother this pleasure.

* I fear the Greeks even when they bring gifts.

Basic Needs

In the implementation of the concept of equality in the broader sense, the kibbutz, despite its drawbacks, has reached a level unmatched by any modern society. In the long run, no member of the kibbutz benefits economically from superior social or managerial position. The kibbutz ultimately provides every member with similar housing, similar furnishings, and similar opportunities for recreation. It grants all members equal education for their children, similar food, similar clothing, complete medical care, equal economic security, and similar opportunity for creative self-expression. Each and every member is entitled to the full measure of all these benefits no matter what his job in the kibbutz, how long he has been in the kibbutz, what his previous background, or what his technical skill. It is a peculiar human trait, however, that in the course of day-to-day living, the petty irritants and inequalities caused by basic individual differences and by external objective circumstances loom larger in the minds of many people than this huge background of achievement. The kibbutz is an uncomfortable place for people who lack the ability to rise above these.

It would seem, theoretically, that there are two stages of economic development in which such petty irritations and inequalities could be eliminated—a state of complete poverty in which no one has anything, and a state of complete abundance in which the kibbutz can provide everyone with everything. The mature kibbutz member, however, real-

izes that the intermediate stage is in all probability the permanent stage of development, for there is no such thing as complete abundance. He realizes, therefore, that if there are one hundred rooms in the kibbutz and only fifteen contain radios, it is ridiculous to put the fifteen radios in storage for the sake of equality until the kibbutz can purchase an additional eighty-five. He realizes, too, that particular members have an attachment to particular radios which they may have brought to the kibbutz and that it would be unnecessarily aggravating to take the radios from them and give them to fifteen others. Most kibbutzim, as kibbutzim, have arrived at the realization that it is the responsibility of the kibbutz to provide its members with a minimum standard of living as soon as possible—and that this is the only way out of the dilemma. The kibbutz member can accept the return of one of his colleagues from abroad with an easy chair, against the solid background of the basic equality inherent in the kibbutz system, if he knows that the kibbutz will, in the foreseeable future, provide him also with a comfortable easy chair, though it may not be as elaborate as the imported one. He will accept with better grace the tourist vacation of his friend with his American parents if he knows that the kibbutz provides him too with the minimum funds necessary for a decent vacation. A policy of live and let live is a prerequisite for the existence of so closely knit a community, but it depends on all sides' being provided with the means which will enable them to live—else it may well explode.

Gifts

In accordance with this realization, a system has been widely adopted of listing all the items which the kibbutz takes it upon itself to provide for its membership. If a member acquires any of these items through some other means, his name is simply crossed off the list of those who are in line to receive this article from the kibbutz. This system of norms is applied to clothing, furniture, and other personal effects, the responsibility of the kibbutz being to complete the norm for those of its members who have not yet reached it.

Occasionally, an issue will arise even within this system which will require specific decision. On a visit to America on other business, I naturally made it a point to meet and visit with the families of my fellow kibbutz members. One day, one such parent walked into my office and described to me a gift which he had just bought for his children in the kibbutz, a small mahogany-panelled office refrigerator, just large enough to make ice cubes and hold several bottles of cold drinks. The logic which had impelled him to buy it was, he thought, irrefutable. It cost no more, he said, than the radiophonographs and record collections which he had seen in a number of the rooms of Gesher Haziv. As a matter of fact, he said, it cost less than some of them. He was certain, therefore, that it would be acceptable. I grinningly advised him to write a letter about it to his children before shipping his present. His son-in-law, with tongue in cheek, I imagine, placed the matter before the proper kib-

butz authorities using the same logic. The kibbutz refused to allow him to accept the gift, refusing to recognize the argument. The answer was simple and illogical: "There are limits." The limits are not determined by logic; they are determined by environment, atmosphere, and prevailing attitude. Refrigerators are outside the limits.

There is an ancient Jewish Mishnaic saying, included in the *Pirke Avot,* the Saying of the Fathers. "There are four types of men: he who says, What is mine is mine and what is thine is thine—the common type, or, as some have it, the Sodom type; he who says, What is mine is thine and what is thine is mine—typical of the peasant or boor; he who says, What is mine is thine and what is thine is thine—characteristic of the saint; and he who says, What is thine is mine and what is mine is mine—the wicked." The saying speaks only of individual men and does not speak of the responsibility of society in its relationship to people. It applies, however, to the community as well. The kibbutz is not a society of saints but rather a community of normal people. Its responsibility is to provide its members with the optimum measure of social and economic equality, satisfying their needs. In doing so, however, it must take into account the sentiments, interests, outside ties, and differences of its individual members, applying the principle of "What is mine is thine and what is thine is mine"—without becoming "boorish." By and large, it has done so.

Social Stratification

While there is no class stratification within the kibbutz on the basis of differences in economic standing, critics point out that in reality there is, nevertheless, social stratification based on other criteria. In a group of a hundred people—and some kibbutzim contain a thousand—it is impossible to maintain a close personal relationship with each and every one of one's fellow members. There are bound to be some people whom one likes better than others, some people whom one dislikes, some people to whom one gravitates by reason of like interests and shared experience. Often a social group may develop about a particular section of the residential area, at times among people who are active politically, often among people sharing a common interest in a specific field of work.

There are people in Gesher Haziv into whose room I have never set foot. Either their friendship does not interest me, or I dislike them as a result of previous contact, or I, for various reasons, have never had an opportunity of developing a close friendship with them.

Our kibbutz happens to be an amalgam of two disparate groups, groups which spring literally from two different worlds. Not only does the American group differ in background and motivation from the composite group of native Israelis and German Youth Aliya graduates, with which we are partners, but also in age and actual kibbutz experience. To this very day, there is a tendency to speak in terms of "we" and "they" in both sec-

tors, a tendency to blame "them" for anything that goes wrong—notwithstanding the fact that individuals among the Americans may, in point of fact, have more in common with individuals of the other group than with many of their own original countrymen. It is quite possible for this difference in social grouping to assume ideological overtones, despite the fact that, were issues to be discussed purely on their merits, both groups would doubtless split up internally on them. The average member sometimes tends to follow blindly the lead of the spokesman of his nationality group. This may result in bitter and acrimonious nationality-debates on issues which are in essence technical and uncontroversial. As a reservoir of common kibbutz experience is built up, however, this ingroup-outgroup relationship becomes increasingly blurred. It can, nevertheless, still be aroused at specific moments by comments like "these Americans don't take this whole business seriously—they have come for a couple of years of adventure in the Middle East," on the one hand, or *yecke* (a term roughly equivalent to "stilted, rule-bound, humourless Prussian"), on the other.

This elementary type of social stratification exists in every kibbutz made up of groups of people hailing from different countries and backgrounds. It is not the characteristic of kibbutzim alone, as the nationality ghettos and conflicts in New York, Tel Aviv or any other centre which is a composite of such groups will attest.

With time, as the kibbutz continues to evolve, and as the membership becomes united through

constructive efforts, these differences tend to disappear. Though some of them must continue as long as people possess different mother-tongues, they gradually give way to others, which create new social groupings.

Leadership

It is the leadership of the kibbutz itself, whether it wills it or not, which is almost irresistibly impelled to become a distinct social group—and it is this evolution which may be dangerous to the system. It is natural for the treasurer, for example, to discuss financial problems with the production manager, the secretary, or the work coordinator over a cup of tea in his room of an evening rather than in the formal atmosphere of the kibbutz office. It is these people plus others who are logical candidates for these posts in the future, or who have served in these posts in the past, who are most likely to be interested in the discussion and consequently most likely to wander in to share the tea. It is these people, moreover, who are most likely to be interested in general financial or political information which the treasurer has managed to pick up during a trip to Tel Aviv; it is at their discussion over the tea that their opinions about financial or political developments may become crystallized in a direction which will ultimately commit the kibbutz. This is the group which has contact with people in similar positions in other kibbutzim, and to which information or just plain gossip about them is of more than academic interest, and these are the people in whose rooms visit-

ing dignitaries are most likely to end up after having completed their formal business.

There is a certain basic intellectual and administrative capacity which is a prerequisite for any leadership activity. When, therefore, kibbutz members are drafted for army posts, government positions, general executive work in the country's trade union movement, educational work with new immigrants, or service in the Zionist movement both in Israel and abroad, they are most likely to be drafted from this same group. People of exceptional ability sometimes become merely "card-carrying," in effect honorary, members. Their life becomes a series of active two-year periods (frequently longer) away from the kibbutz with short periods of relative quiet at home in between. On a national level, this leadership is a more or less cohesive social group, and when its members are away from home, their standard of living is higher than that of their colleagues at home.

In New York, for example (I take this as a current example, for I am most acquainted with it), two members of the Executive of the Jewish Agency, the head of the Israel Supply Mission, the head of the Israel Defence Mission, the political representative of Histadrut, the Israel Federation of Labour, the director of the Youth Department of the Jewish Agency, half a dozen educational advisors to Zionist youth movements of all political shadings, in addition, of course, to the direct economic representatives of several of the kibbutz federations themselves, are all members on leave from various kibbutzim. This is representative of

the participation of kibbutz members in Israel life itself as well as abroad. Most of the above-mentioned people have at one time or other been either secretary, treasurer, or production manager in their own kibbutz, and the chances are that upon their return, they will probably fulfill similar positions. Together with those of their friends who are currently fulfilling these positions, or who are either managers of particular branches of the kibbutz economy or potential human material for such leadership, they do form a social grouping.

It is not necessarily true, however, that the creation of such a social grouping based on leadership ability automatically undermines the basic concept of equality which the kibbutz system is striving to realize. Such an assumption is based on the same error as is made by the casual reader of *Animal Farm*. Some people *are* more equal than others, and it is impossible to build an egalitarian society without recognizing that fact. The people who are "more equal" are attracted to each other; their merger into a social grouping is almost impossible to avert. Indeed, it is even desirable from the point of view of the future well-being of the community.

The critical factor is the extent to which being a part of this social group entitles a kibbutz member to superior economic or material advantage, and to special rights and privileges which ordinary members do not possess. Above all it is important that the children of this privileged group do not inherit those privileges. In all these areas of kibbutz life, being part of the leadership group results in almost negligible advantage. The kibbutz is first

and foremost a workers' society. The devotion and energy which a man shows in his work is the final standard upon which he is judged. All work is considered of equal value, and all members benefit equally, no matter what the character of the work they do. It has become customary in many instances for the work coordinator to assign a kibbutz member who has just completed an executive task either in or out of the kibbutz, or who is home on leave, to a tour of waiting on tables in the dining room just to emphasize the point.

No matter what the standard of living of a kibbutz member on assignment outside the community, he is entitled to no more and no less than any other member in the way of housing, furnishings, vacation, or services upon his return. Though he may bring home a better-looking easy chair than the one which the kibbutz has given out, he also knows the exact point at which his fellow members will begin to lift their eyebrows if he comes home with too much.

His children receive the same educational opportunities as do all other children, and their position in their own society and in the kibbutz generally depends on their own merit. The degree to which children of able people are or are not also able is the same in the kibbutz as it is anywhere else. The criteria are ability, character, and personality—not parentage.

The penalties of being in a leadership position in the kibbutz, being away from home and family, the nervous tension, the heartache and responsibility, far outweigh any possible advantages. Kibbutz

elections are often one long series of declinations: one candidate protesting that his wife is sick, another confessing his inability to cope with the task. Elections in which candidates actively campaign for position are unknown. In Gesher Haziv, we have often spent months trying to fill positions of this sort, forcing, cajoling, promising the individuals concerned to meet all sorts of conditions.

In the mind of the average kibbutz member, the person who is doing an unheralded, devoted job as a key person in a particular branch of the economy and never moves from it is the true hero of the community—and though he will force particular people to assume executive position year after year, making it impossible for them to become workers of this type, he will, in his heart, sympathize with their plight.

CHAPTER NINE

The Individual and the Community

COMMUNITY COOPERATION IN THE CREATION OF goods and services and a framework of complete social and economic security are in themselves great advances over forms of society which sanction gross and unfair relations among men and which deprive some people of the minimum prerequisites for decent living. A modern philosophy of life, however, cannot content itself with equality and security alone. Our generation, perhaps more than all others, has witnessed the creation of chains of bondage and horror in the name of equality and economic security. An examination of the mechanics of kibbutz operation alone, therefore, offers an incomplete picture of the system, for these mechanics cannot be judged apart from the fundamental ethical and social principles which are part of kibbutz belief. This kind of dichotomy is impossible in discussing kibbutz government, work organization, education, and the system of distribution of goods and services. Particularly is it impossible in a discussion of the relationship between the individual kibbutz member and the community as a whole, and, continuing from there, of the relation-

ship between the individual kibbutz and the kibbutz movement, the State of Israel and the Zionist movement.

Early kibbutz pioneers envisioned their project as the creation of an instrument of Zionist colonization and a socially just society, the epitome of Jewish national rebirth in Palestine, and a collectivist adventure—all of these aspects being as inseparable as man and the air he breathes. The rules and regulations were pragmatic, conforming to this synthesis of aims and ideals; the aims and ideals were not tailored to fit a predetermined set of rules. In the messianic society of which they dreamed, man would be freed of concern about his economic and social security. He would be at one with nature, free to develop culturally, free to develop his own personality. Israel in its entirety would be an independent Jewish state, its cultural and social physiognomy a mirror of an ethical socialism compounded of democracy and Jewish prophecy—and the kibbutz would be the main determinant of that Israel. Men would explore their own heritage and together create new values upon its foundation. The kibbutz, a voluntary democratic socialist community, in which men would submit to law for the sake of the group, would fulfill the prophetic vision of the "end of days."

The Individual and the Historical Moment

This was and still is the vision of the kibbutz future. The exigencies of the moment, however, dictated by objective circumstance, have shaped the actual twists and turns of kibbutz evolution in

equal measure with these long-range ideals. Throughout its history the kibbutz has been dominated by the dramatic pathos and tension of the Zionist effort. There were always reasons for calling upon the individual kibbutz member to sacrifice personal comfort, individual privacy, and some aspect of his long-range kibbutz dream—supposedly temporarily—the reasons for the sacrifice being in themselves of the essence of the dream. When tens of thousands of orphans and homeless children began to arrive from Nazi-devastated Europe, it was natural for kibbutz members to give up their housing in order to make room for them. When people were needed to work with Jewish underground forces in Europe, it was self-evident that the kibbutz movement should mobilize its best people for the purpose. The organizers of Hagana, the Jewish underground army in Palestine itself, automatically based their units on the kibbutzim, drawing upon kibbutz members for leadership cadres. During World War II thousands of kibbutz members joined the British Army's Jewish Brigade, responding to David Ben Gurion's call, as he put it, to fight the British White Paper as if there were no war against Germany and to fight Germany as if there were no British Paper. For decades kibbutz members lived with a constant feeling of emergency, a constant knowledge that they might be called upon in the dead of night, any night, to guard life and property, to help bring in "illegal" refugees or repel an Arab attack.

Many kibbutzim were actually established in

places which the membership would never have chosen if the choice had been based merely on economic, agricultural, and environmental factors. They were deliberately established in places of military and strategic importance in terms of the total Zionist picture, with the full knowledge that they could not become economically independent on those sites for many years, if ever.

One natural result of this high pitch of idealistic tension was a tendency to ascribe possible failings in the kibbutz system itself to the stress and strain of the times.

"Our standard of living is low—wait until we can think in terms of economics alone and are free of other pressures." "People would like to live quiet, tumult-free lives, without the feeling of being continuously uprooted on one pretext or another—how can we think of such problems when so much needs to be done?" "*Haverim* (members) are interested in going to school, in studying arts and music, in thinking through unorthodox ideas—how can they, when all must be united every minute of the day for maximum Zionist effort?"

Actually these questions and answers never even became issues for debate. Interested members suppressed them at their own initiative. They were themselves engrossed in the common struggle and did not have to be given the answers. Responsibility for the immediate needs of the Jewish people was an overriding one, the responsibility of the kibbutz orange-picker as well as of the underground commander.

The questions themselves, however, were always

there underneath the surface. Upon the emergence of the Jewish state, though the struggle for the continued buttressing of the newly won independence continued apace, though hundreds of thousands of new immigrants began to arrive in an historic ingathering of the exiles, the drama, nevertheless, began to lose much of its tense glamour. Kibbutz members began to examine the details of their own way of life more closely.

The Self in the Kibbutz

Small towns the world over have a specific character of their own—and the kibbutz is a small town. There is no such thing as anonymity. One cannot live—as one can for decades in a New York apartment house—without being on intimate terms with one's neighbours, without knowing, as the Yiddish saying goes, what is cooking in your neighbour's pot. Every small community has its share of gossips, its share of *nudniks* (bores), its share of pettiness, all accentuated by the hothouse atmosphere sometimes generated among a small group of people which can easily stew in its own juice if it permits itself the luxury of doing so. Every normal person, however, yearns for anonymity at some time or other, has some part of himself which he does not choose to reveal to others, desires to make his own decisions in certain spheres of life, needs some time to spend alone with himself in whatever form he chooses. Aside from the kibbutz structure, the very size of many kibbutzim and their cramped housing facilities make this very difficult. It is easier to find desired anonymity in a large kibbutz than in a

smaller one. In such a community it is possible for a member to do his work and spend all his leisure time alone or with his family and close friends, never serving on a committee, never appearing at a meeting,' and rarely having anything to do with the vast majority of his fellow members. Even here there are times when he will tire of eating in a dining room with a crowd—members, visitors, transient workers, and youth-trainees—and will want to eat alone, quietly, without the strain of social amenities. Small kibbutzim have sometimes disintegrated because the same thirty-five people could no longer bear living with each other in some difficult isolated spot.

The kibbutz movement as a whole, as a result of the increasing articulation of these desires on the part of the membership, has begun to realize that it must attend to the individual member and his needs—for in the last analysis the kibbutz idea will stand or fall with the extent to which he is convinced that it is a good way of life for him personally. People who decide to live in the kibbutz collective are powerful individualists in the first place, holding strong convictions and possessing developed tastes and often a high level of education. Otherwise they would not have the strength required to leave the way of life of the majority for this kind of social experiment. If such people do not have enough room to satisfy their own individual needs within the collective framework, they leave or else build up sublimated pressures within the community, which it sometimes cannot withstand. One reason, I am convinced,

for the over-politicization of the kibbutz movement is the large number of people formerly active in politics who are seeking self-expression within the community. The momentum of this activity results in major rifts on issues which really have nothing to do with the kibbutz.

In another area one of the experiences which annoyed me most in my kibbutz was the necessity to explain personal matters to a large group of people, often including people with whom I felt no contact. The most difficult kind of kibbutz meeting is the one in which the whole group is called upon to decide whether a member's request to leave the kibbutz for a period of time in order to visit relatives in the United States (a Gesher Haziv example) or to help solve family problems, or to study at the University, should or should not be granted. There are people who would prefer to leave the community rather than submit their problems to this kind of public examination.

In the December, 1953, issue of the *Scientific American* two professors reported on a two-year study made of the mental health of the Hutterites, a small collectivist religious sect of the Western United States and Canada. The distribution of psychotic symptoms among the Hutterites was radically different from that of the general community. Although schizophrenia is the most common kind of mental illness in the community at large, the investigators found very few such cases. The proportion of manic-depressive cases, however, was unusually high, though in no case were they serious enough to be dangerous to other people. There

was much evidence of irrational guilt feeling, self-blame, and withdrawal from social relations.

These data, according to the professors, confirm the theory that manic-depressive symptoms are most often found among professionals and other intellectual people who have a strong need to live up to social expectations. "Religion is the focus of the Hutterite way of life. Their whole educational system, beginning with nursery school, orients the people to look for blame and guilt within themselves rather than others. Physical aggression is tabu." In projective tests the Hutterites showed antisocial and aggressive impulses but in their daily lives these impulses were repressed. There were no cases of murder, arson, severe physical assault, or sex crime in their history."

The context in which the Hutterite community exists is completely different from that of the kibbutz. The Hutterites are a small, tightly knit, religious grouping whose ascetic way of life is basically at variance with the ideals, mores, and way of life of the general community. It deliberately isolates itself from the outside world, and this isolation makes for its inbred character. The kibbutz, on the other hand, over seventy thousand strong, is an open community, not religiously dogmatic, very much involved in the social and political life of the country, and part of a worldwide cultural movement. Nevertheless, some of the comments in the report have brought excited exclamations of recognition from every kibbutz member who has seen it.

This is perhaps one of the key dilemmas in the

relationship between the individual and the kibbutz community. The kibbutz has successfully created an environment in which morality and ethics are the everyday standards of behavior. A case of stealing in the kibbutz is rare enough to be reported in the general press. A case of one member hitting another is rare enough to be the subject of a special meeting which will attract every single member to it in horrified concern and sensational enough to provide material for gossip among the women in the tailor shop for years. The community has succeeded in providing its membership with all-encompassing social and economic security. It does not discriminate in favour of particular people or against others. In its relationships with the individual member it is fair and considerate. In the country as a whole the movement has become synonymous with morality and social progress, actively interested in mobilization of its own resources in the development of Israel. The system in itself, however, brings with it the danger of forcing the individual to adopt compulsive behaviour patterns without providing him with a private outlet for his own personality. Some people, as a result, feel consciously or subconsciously straitjacketed and, consciously or subconsciously, chafe at this constraint, tending to self-criticism and depression. *Matzav ruah,* depression, is a very popular phrase in kibbutz circles.

Thinking kibbutz members, whatever their point of view on the specifics (and there are differences of opinion ranging from the diehards to the radical reformers), are very much aware of the problem.

The trend of discussion on principle and structure within the movement is in the direction of providing the member with a greater sense of personal freedom and privacy. The kibbutz, like the United States of two hundred years ago, is a pioneering community. The immediate task of firmly establishing and developing the community outweighs the importance of gracious living. Presumably, many a descendant of highly literate Englishmen is now a Tennessee or Ozark backwoodsman; it was only possible for the United States to turn its attention to other matters after it had established a sound foundation of wealth and development. Kibbutz members, however, are twentieth-century people of complex cosmopolitan personality, and the community must find immediate compromise between limitations set by pioneering and the personality needs of the membership. It cannot afford to ignore either. Can it be done without disturbing the essential character of the kibbutz idea? Many kibbutz members believe it can.

The Kibbutz "Bill of Rights"

The recognition of this problem is the real motivation behind the move in many kibbutzim to provide the individual with a "bill of rights," in order to assure the minima to which every member will be entitled automatically: a room to himself; a radio; an opportunity to have or to serve refreshments in his own room; books; sufficient pocket money for buying his children some toys, eating his fill of candy, or going to a concert in town without having to "request" a ticket; facilities for a

decent vacation; opportunities for self-expression in art, music, or literature; chances for self-development through study—even in subjects which have no tangible relation to immediate kibbutz needs; and even an opportunity to eat in his room occasionally if he so desires. It is this recognition too which is one of the primary motives in the drive to provide wider latitudes of choice in clothing and home furnishings and greater opportunity for more family life.

In older, more experienced kibbutzim, an attempt is made to channel personal problems to a small committee, a committee which contains respected people in the community and which possess wide powers, including the power to countermand decisions of other institutions without explaining its motives. A reservoir of precedent is built up which enables the individual member to acquire a fair idea of what the kibbutz is likely to agree to and what kind of request it is likely to refuse. Committee members, too, can then make decisions without subjecting the member and his motives to public discussion and scrutiny.

In Gesher Haziv a number of Americans requested permission to leave the kibbutz for specific periods in order to visit their families in the States. Their families were willing to cover expenses. Most of the other Americans, all of whom could see themselves in similar positions in the future, tended to agree. The non-American members, however, were vociferous in their opposition. The people could not be spared from the work programme, they maintained. If we allowed such a precedent to be

set, there was no telling how many people would be going at the same time, emptying out the kibbutz. What about all those who have no relatives abroad or whose relatives abroad are not wealthy enough? As luck would have it, several of the Israelis received similar invitations from their own relatives abroad—in America and in England. After that it was smooth sailing. Originally the committee had the right to grant a member one month's leave for whatever reason without bringing the matter to public discussion. Later this authority was expanded to three months, and now it is six months. There is some tentative discussion of making it possible for those whose families in the States do not have the means with which to finance their visit also to make similar trips. This is the way in which precedent and custom in the relationship of the individual to the group is created in many other matters as well.

Self-Criticism

One basis for measuring the maturity of a community is the degree of self-criticism and disagreement with established practice which it permits. There is perhaps no one as touchy about criticism or suggested change as former revolutionaries who have succeeded in creating a new framework for society. Many kibbutz members are no exception to this rule.

When David Maletz, a member of Kibbutz Ein Harod, wrote a novel about kibbutz life (translated into English as *Young Hearts*) which contained elements of self-criticism, he was bitterly denounc-

ed as a "renegade" and "traitor." Similar cries of "betrayal" sometimes greet proponents of reform at kibbutz gatherings or in kibbutz publications. When a member decides to leave the kibbutz, it is only the broad-minded colleague who can rise above the immediate needs of the community—to which every departure of this sort deals a blow—and consider the matter objectively. It is only the broad-minded colleague who can understand that perhaps from his own point of view his departing friend is doing the correct thing, that the kibbutz does not hold a monopoly on justice, and that there are other forms of life which are honest, just, and socially productive. The normal reaction is to feel deserted, to label the person involved a traitor to the cause, and to prefer the company of city people who have never even attempted the kibbutz to that of the former friend who did try and found that it was not for him.

Despite this touchiness, however, it would be a mistake to assume that these are the basic attitudes of the kibbutz population as a whole. They are not the majority attitudes, and the leadership is continually striving to maintain a truly free approach to ideas and to fight provincialism. This same David Maletz, for example, was elected to the steering committee of the recently held convention of the Union of Collective Settlements, and many former kibbutz members maintain cordial and intimate relationships with the communities of which they were once a part.

Politics in the Kibbutz

In the circles of the Stalinist-dominated left there exists a premise that all aspects of life are "political" and either directly advance or directly retard the cause of progress. Superficially stated, this means that a painting is either "proletarian" or "reactionary," a symphony is either written in the spirit of the revolution or is a betrayal of the revolution, and that every book, sociological study or murder mystery, is a political document. People who accept this doctrine cannot be eclectic about their beliefs. They cannot accept the "good" parts of religious belief and discard the "bad," cannot accept some aspects of Marx and reject others. Everything man does, from cracking jokes to playing bridge, must have a political overtone and is an instrument to be used in the furtherance of the cause. If this approach is to be applied to the kibbutz, then the individual is only an end in himself in the far distant future; until then he too is an instrument of the revolution. Not only does economics become collective, but thought also becomes collective; ideology too is collective.

No section of the Israel kibbutz movement identifies itself with the Communist Party. On the contrary, it took the extreme left-wing Hashomer Hatzair kibbutz federation, which is often pro-Soviet in foreign policy, 24 hours to expel 20 young members of one of its kibbutzim who had actually joined the Communist Party. They were removed bag and baggage. In Hashomer Hatzair, however, there is a tendency to speak in terms of "ideolog-

ical collectivism." Alone among the kibbutz federations Hashomer Hatzair is, formally, not only a federation of communities in a common economic and social framework, but also, as a unit, part of a political party within the Zionist movement. Individuals who belong to other political parties are tolerated only so long as they do not attempt to organize adherents. Once the movement decides on a policy, in whatever sphere, there is no room for disagreement. The movement acts monolithically. Decisions have the force of unanimity.

This is not the case in the other kibbutz federations. The danger, however, of the individual's surrendering his right to his own opinion is the extreme form of a whole gamut of similar problems which occupy every kibbutz, and presented themselves to us in Gesher Haziv as well.

Ethics in the Kibbutz

Reinhold Niebuhr in *Moral Man and Immoral Society* makes the point that moral values of individuals vary from those of groups made up of the very same individuals. On a very elementary level, it is a crime for a youngster to steal mimeograph paper from the office of a community centre for the purpose of selling it; it does not seem to be a crime to steal the paper on behalf of one of the youth groups meeting in the centre for the purpose of putting out the group newspaper. In his own life man thinks it wrong to cheat or to make a promise which he does not intend to keep. His political party, however, is free to do so, for the sake of the "cause." The same man who would

never kill anyone, for whatever personal reasons, feels, once his ego has merged with the collective ego of a group, that it is then permissible to kill in the name of the group's ideals. The core of the problem facing those who would create a better society, according to Niebuhr, is the degree to which individual ethics and standards of behavior can be transferred to society as a whole.

The kibbutz meets this challenge in real terms—for this is specifically and exactly what it sets out to do. An individual in Tel Aviv will only rarely volunteer to work in an immigrant reception camp to the detriment of his own economic position. He will find it difficult to leave home and family on a community mission for an extended period of time and will be unable to open his own home to immigrant children. In the kibbutz this happens every day. The community acts as an ethical and moral entity, is concerned about its possible exploitation of other people working with it, is committed against speculation with its own produce.

In a movement comprising seventy thousand people and several hundred independent communities, however, there are bound to be groups that have arrived at different stages of comprehension of what such a transfer of ethical standards means in practical terms, and individuals who have reached different levels of of maturity in the fulfillment of community responsibilities which have been entrusted to them.

During our first year at Gesher Haziv our treasurer once came to the secretariat with a proposal for alleviating the meat shortage. As all of

Israel, kibbutzim too are rationed in their meat consumption. He had met an Arab who lived in the hills not far from the kibbutz. Since the control of Arab activities in this connection had not yet become effective, the Arab had offered to raise cattle in the hills on a black market basis for the purpose of supplying meat to the kibbutz. This treasurer, had he been living in the city, would not have made a practice of buying on the black market. Convinced, however, of the moral superiority of the kibbutz way of life and of the positive good it was creating in the country, it seemed to him somehow that for the kibbutz there might be some moral justification in taking such measures to ensure its food supply. It took an edict from the general meeting to convince him of the opposite.

There have, indeed, been some few cases of kibbutz treasurers marketing agricultural produce on the black market. Being members of pioneering communities in wild and desolate areas where the ordinary city dweller in Israel would refuse to live no matter how important it might be for the future of the country that he do so, it was relatively easy for these treasurers to find a rationalization for their activities. Once they were discovered, however, they were tried in a movement court of honour, disbarred from holding any further office in their kibbutz, and disenfranchised within the kibbutz for a long period of time.

Upon our arrival in Gesher Haziv the war was still on and government had not yet been effectively established, especially in our area. Not far from Gesher Haziv there was an abandoned army rail-

road camp, built by the British during World War II. It was winter. We were living in tents and had no cash intake except for loans. Our enterprising work coordinator thought it would be a good idea to send a group over to pick up bricks, tiles, tin-sheeting, anything which could be of use to us; under the circumstances there was almost nothing which did not fall into this category. Five of us were sent over, including myself. An equally enterprising policeman, driving by in a jeep, informed us that this was government property and that we had no right to take it. Being a neophyte in these matters, and having a hard enough time keeping up with my companions in the physical work itself, I looked to them, all experienced kibbutz members, for guidance. They talked to the policeman a while about the possibilities of Arab infiltration (the border was only half a mile away) and about common experiences in the army, and finally he drove away. After his departure they calmly began working again. I was too tired and felt too green to question them—and too uncertain in my own mind about Israel and the kibbutz in general to assert forcefully my own opinion. Sure enough, the policeman returned, this time accompanied by a sergeant. We were all arrested, and the fifty-seven large squares of floor tile which we had salvaged for our dining room were confiscated as Exhibit A.

The prosecutor asked us to plead guilty, but for some deeply innate reason of pride none of us could agree to do that, and we insisted on a trial. The trial was postponed three times and finally took place a year later. By that time everyone was

keenly embarrassed, the police, the prosecutor, the judge, and certainly we ourselves. The judge got rid of the case as soon as he possibly could, saying that it had occurred in a twilight period when government had not yet been established.

I have often tried to estimate whether the same five people, had we been engaged in this activity as individuals, even in circumstances of poverty, would have continued our activity after that preliminary police warning. I haven't been able to give myself a satisfactory answer. One thing I know, however: after five years of kibbutz evolution, this could not happen in the Gesher Haziv of today. The crucial fact which must be understood is that in kibbutz society these two stories I have related are so rare and unusual that they bear telling as curiosities in discussing the problem. This is the kibbutz achievement.

Incentive

In private society man has a direct personal incentive for work, and it is the emphasis on this personal incentive which is the core of modern efficiency engineering, whether in capitalist America or Soviet Russia. Methods of work and time and motion analysis are only important incidentals. The real basis for efficient production is the provision of a personal goal, whether monetary or in the nature of social prestige, for each and every worker. If this is lacking, no amount of technological efficiency will help. How, it is asked, can the kibbutz conduct its work efficiently and productively if it does not provide this kind of incentive?

There are people in the kibbutz whose actions are seeming evidence of the truth of this contention. There are members who really have their heart in their work; rising early, taking little time for lunch, returning late, reading technical and scientific literature, and participating in after-hours discussion and planning. Other members merely report to work on time, go through the motions of working until the official time is up, report sick at the first opportunity, and go home from work without being in the least concerned about its effectiveness. The second category will nevertheless receive the same kind of treatment in terms of services and consideration as will the first. The system thus makes it possible for some people to live a parasitic life.

The community has substituted group incentive for individual incentive. If the kibbutz succeeds in keeping the community goals alive—the ideal of a just society, the ideal of a recreated Jewish life in Israel—then it can fire the imagination of the individual member and can be as effective in productive accomplishment as is the present competitive economy. In the main the kibbutz has succeeded in doing this, to a greater or lesser degree, depending on particular periods in its history and particular kibbutzim. In this type of society it *is* possible for a person to "goldbrick," but if he is a sensitive person, he cannot keep it up for long. The reaction of his colleagues will make it well nigh impossible for him to continue in the community.

Of greater severity is "goldbricking" in such

activities as the weekly group meeting. Some members are excellent and devoted workers who maintain, however, that they are not "politicians," or too ignorant to make decisions, or just indifferent to these meetings. In a report prepared by a committee on "Kibbutz Principle and Practice" of the Union of Collective Settlements it is stated that, of fifty-six representative kibbutzim queried, two have less than 25 per cent of the membership participating in weekly meetings, in sixteen less than half the membership participates, twenty-eight have between 51 and 75 percent average participation, and in ten only is the percentage higher than 75.

This leads to an obvious question: What actually drives the kibbutz community? Is it the weekly meeting? Is it a particular group within the community? In the last analysis it is particular people who do most of the driving and deciding, and they are often individuals who, because of the very character traits which make them the drivers, are difficult to get along with and are actively disliked by many of the rank-and-file members.

In Gesher Haziv there were for a long time two distinct groups which were very often at odds with each other, the Israelis and the Americans. Among the Americans we used to talk about the specific American contribution to Israel and about our desire for the kibbutz to have an American character. Very few people could actually spell out what they wanted. They knew only that they did not like things as they were and ascribed this to the fact that this American character was lacking. Anyone entering Gesher Haziv can tell almost im-

mediately that its membership hails in large part from the United States by the furniture in the rooms, the plaid lumberjack shirts to which even the Israelis have taken, and the clear tones of a long-playing record of *South Pacific* coming from an open window of a summer evening. Nevertheless, we were still vaguely dissatisfied. The Israelis, in turn, were also dissatisfied. Despite the imprint they were making on the way of life of the community, they also felt the same kind of group dissatisfaction.

But neither of the groups as a unit can lay claim to any kibbutz accomplishment. One person who happened to be elected secretary at a strategic moment did more towards stabilizing the community and putting it on its feet from the point of view of straightening out the problems of individuals and community structure than any group. The institution of educational reform depended on two or three energetic and talented people. The agricultural end of the kibbutz was driven by an excitable, moody, but capable and efficient production manager. Dissatisfaction with the state of affairs in any of these areas, without the fortuitous circumstance of being able to find a leader to point to positive effort, would not alone have produced anything. Some kibbutzim, consisting of many inarticulate people who happen to come from the same country of origin and have only vague ideas about what they want to see in the kibbutz, but lack leadership, disintegrate out of a feeling of purposelessness.

Women in the Kibbutz

In discussing the question of women in the kibbutz it is again important to bear in mind the atmosphere of Eastern Europe during the early decades of this century, in which the founders of the kibbutz movement received their political schooling. It was an atmosphere in which women were fighting for their elementary equality: the right to vote and to hold political office, the right to executive and administrative position in what had previously been strictly a man's world. It was the era in America and England of the women's suffrage parade and of woman sweatshop labour in the needle trades. In this context it was a revolutionary step for the kibbutz to declare that women were in all respects the equals of men in rights, privileges, and responsibility. Such equality was assumed from the first day of kibbutz organization and was carried out in practice. True emancipation of women, said kibbutz ideologists, moreover, depends on society's being so organized that women will actually be enabled to do the kind of work previously held to be man's work only, in addition to having merely the right to do it. When community services, therefore, were organized in such fashion that kitchen work, mending and washing of clothes, child care, and similar "women's work" became the responsibility of the central work coordination setup rather than of the woman of each family, this was not only hailed as a more efficient way of organizing this work but also as a step towards the emancipation of women from the

yoke of household responsibility. It was then possible for women to work in the fields if they so desired, in town, or in executive and administrative work both in the kibbutz and in the general community.

Many kibbutz women have developed skills in various branches of agriculture and in other kibbutz fields of activity. To a degree unparalleled in the outside world, where women, unless they are wealthy, are unable to participate in community affairs because of household and child care responsibilities (American women's organizations, for example, are made up mostly of middle-class rather than working women and to a large extent of women whose children are already grown-up), women in the kibbutz take an active part in all kibbutz affairs, in politics both in and out of the kibbutz, and in the life of the movement as a whole.

This philosophy is sometimes even carried to comic extremes. Hashomer Hatzair once went so far as to print a pamphlet for use in its youth movement affiliate, which later became famous in kibbutz *kaffee-klatsch* small talk, entitled *The Biological Tragedy of Woman.* The theme of the pamphlet was that the only obstacle in the way of achieving true equality of the sexes was the unfortunate physical difference between women and men.

Aside from agreeing wholeheartedly with the classic French comment, *"Vive la différence,"* present day kibbutzim are finding that the goal of freeing women from household tasks is becoming increasingly unworkable. In a young community,

where there are few children and where the accent is overwhelmingly on income-producing work to the neglect (temporary, it is hoped) of adequate food preparation, laundry, clothing, and education, it is possible to limit work in these fields to the barest minimum, thus freeing women for other activity. As the community grows older, a tremendous pressure develops to put more people to work in child care, to improve the dining room service, to provide more clothing and more adequate care of clothing, and graduate from tents to homes. The women, therefore, are pulled out one by one, often against their will, from whatever else they are doing and placed in the services.

By the time the kibbutz is fifteen or twenty years old only a small number of exceptional women are working in anything but services. As a result of the basic philosophy, however, though the work in services requires skill, training, and a sense of pride, and though no one questions its importance, there still remains among the women, and among many of the men as well, the sub-surface feeling that this work, because it is not income-producing, is inferior and is preventing women from the achievement of their true emancipation.

In this connection the movement has been facing the necessity for a considerable change in basic outlook, a change which has indeed already taken place in many kibbutzim and merely needs codification. Equality for women does not mean equal opportunity to do man's work. It means opportunity for women to do the work for which they are psychologically and constitutionally fitted and the

elevation of this work to a status of equal importance with any other kind of work. When women decide to leave the kibbutz, and in a family situation it is more often the woman than the man who makes this decision, it is precisely because they want to be housewives. Kibbutzim, therefore, are beginning to understand that it is important to grant the work in the service areas the status of a career, that it is important to enable mothers to spend some time with their children, especially with infants, during the work day itself. Even in kibbutzim which do not have children sleeping at home mothers are now encouraged to come in early in the morning to help bathe and feed the infant and to feel themselves at home to drop in at the children's houses whenever they have the opportunity.

Some critics of the kibbutz have maintained that despite the status of full equality there are very few major leaders of the movement who are women, and that it is only rarely that women are placed in positions of central executive responsibility within individual kibbutzim. Within the limits of physical possibility this is not true. Many of the leaders of the Working Women's Council of the Israel Labour Federation are kibbutz members, kibbutz women have been members of Israel's parliament, kibbutz women are very influential in the field of kibbutz education and in Israel education in general. Within my own kibbutz, for example, women have been everything from coordinator of the educational system to work coordinator, to manager of our vegetable garden, a project which employs at times as many as forty people.

As in all pioneering communities there are more men than women in the kibbutz movement as a whole. This is especially true in younger kibbutzim. As the kibbutz develops, however, the percentage difference becomes normalized as does the position of the woman in general.

CHAPTER TEN

Zionism, Politics and the Country at Large

THE LOGICAL EVIDENCE OF THE APPROACH TO overall Zionist responsibility and of the general social outlook of kibbutzniks is the deep and intense interest displayed by the kibbutzim in Israel's political life. Paying membership dues for kibbutzniks who want to belong to particular political parties is considered as routine as buying cigarettes for kibbutz smokers. Working actively during election campaigns, participating in political conferences, running for political office, whether within a particular party or of a general nature, serving in such office upon election, are all considered by kibbutzim as important facets of community life in which members are encouraged to participate. Indeed, of the 120 members of the Knesset, approximately 15 per cent are currently active members of kibbutzim, though the kibbutz population is less than five per cent of the population of the country as a whole. If one is to include Knesset members who were originally members of kibbutzim and still associate themselves with their aims but whose participation in public life has kept them away from active kibbutz residence for many years, the

percentage jumps to over 20. The same percentage holds true in every area of public activity. In areas of particular kibbutz interest such as Zionist youth education, youth immigrant training, the labour movement as a whole, and the various labour parties, the percentage is considerably higher, in some cases well over half, in some well nigh the total.

Before the emergence of the Jewish state and the consequent establishment of a permanent career group in government, when much Zionist activity was conducted on a several-years-at-a-time volunteer basis, the proportion of kibbutz participation was far greater even than it is today. I have tried elsewhere in this volume to portray the extent of that participation and the decisive role it has played in the realization of Zionist purposes. Many members of the Zionist General Council, executives of the Jewish Agency, and leaders of the various Zionist parties are still kibbutz members.

The Structure of Politics in the Kibbutz

Politically active kibbutz membership is concentrated for the most part in two of Israel's political parties: Mapai, Israel's Labour Party, and Mapam, a smaller labour party considerably to the left of Mapai. Relatively small numbers (though important in those parties) belong to the Progressive Party, a liberal centrist group, and to Hapoel Hamizrachi, the religious labour movement.

Mapai is the dominant party in Israel as a whole. It is democratic-socialist in outlook, close in approach to the labour parties in Britain and Scandinavia. It is vehemently anti-Communist and,

though critical of some aspects of American foreign policy, is outspokenly pro-Western in orientation. It is a party which today carries the burden of responsibility for the government of Israel and recognizes, therefore, that this responsibility calls sometimes for measures temporarily detrimental to the direct interests of the labour movement. Its socialist programme is pragmatic and evolutionary rather than doctrinaire. As do all Israel political groups, the party contains a large percentage of intellectuals drawing its support from urban as well as rural areas, from workers in private enterprise and members of cooperatives, from small businessmen and white-collar professionals.

Mapam, on the other hand, is a specifically Marxist group. Its members talk of the ultimate complete nationalization of everything in the country, and many still think in terms of a "temporary" dictatorship of the proletariat. The relationship of the party to Soviet Russia is somewhat ambiguous. Generally, it looks upon the Eastern bloc as the "world of tomorrow." It is opposed to Israel's identification with the West, and it fought the affiliation of the Histadrut with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. Its support of the Cominform, however, is not unconditional and is basically critical in "one respect—Israel." Mapam views Soviet policy on Zionism and the unquestionably anti-Semitic outbursts behind the Iron Curtain as a "tragic mistake." It feels that Russia must permit emigration of Jews who wish it and condemns the suppression of Jewish cultural life within the Soviet Union. Some elements in Mapam

maintain, however, that despite this issue Russia is still to be preferred to the West, and that its attitude towards Jews and Zionism will change when Israel proves itself a "people's democracy."

What Russia thinks about Mapam is another matter. It was a Mapam chief who figured in the Prague trials as a living proof of the tie between Slansky and Co. and the "Zionist western imperialists." Ironically enough, he was apprehended on his way home from a Soviet-sponsored "peace" conclave in East Berlin. His sentence to fifteen years in prison effectively shook Mapam's belief in Russian truth and justice.

In domestic politics Mapam assumes the role of extreme left opposition to the government, and has consistently remained outside the government coalition.*

Until a number of years ago the stated kibbutz ideology on the subject of political affiliations individual members was one of laissez-faire The kibbutz did not officially take political sides. The kibbutz as a broad social-economic framework permitted individual members to choose their own political affiliations, and this did not interfere with day-to-day kibbutz life. The only requirement (except for Hakibbutz Hadati) was membership in the Histadrut, Israel's general trade-union movement. Most kibbutzim prided themselves on the

* Since the first edition of this book appeared Mapam has joined a Coalition government comprising, chiefly, the labour parties. However, its ambiguous attitude towards the Soviets, though considerably modified, still persists.

existence of different political party units within the community. It was hoped that the issue of Communist affiliation which had, at one time or another, split every other free trade-union movement in the world would be avoided in Israel—since, after all, the issue had no real relevance to Israel life.

Only one kibbutz federation, that of Hashomer Hatzair, considered itself not only a social and economic framework but also a political party, assuming that every member of one of its kibbutzim was, by virtue of that membership, also a member of the Hashomer Hatzair political party. The other kibbutz federations (the majority) also had political affinities towards particular parties. Their affiliation with the particular party, however, was not a formal one, and they prided themselves on their toleration of people with different political views. They recognized that the fundamental character of the kibbutz was the direct antithesis of the forced creation of a "proletarian mind"—indeed that the degeneration of the kibbutz into this sort of system would spell the death knell of the whole movement. It was the ideal of the movement to work for the ultimate merger of all the kibbutz federations in one framework irrespective of political differences or of the minor differences in structure and principle.

East and West

It was impossible, however, for Israel to avoid the world-wide rift between East and West, and Israelis, like people throughout the world, have

been compelled to take sides. Eighty-five per cent of Israel's population have chosen the West. Less than five per cent have chosen to vote Communist, and this number includes a large number of Arabs who are not Communists but chose this method to vote against the government.

Within the kibbutz movement this struggle smashed to smithereens the ideology of allowing individuals to choose their own politics. In the United States it does not really make much difference in daily life whether one's neighbour votes Democratic or Republican. It is possible to disagree with him on election day, and yet this will not affect the hundred-and-one ties of common effort to earn a living, provide for education, and improve community services which bind people together. This is true of the differences between most of Israel's political parties in the cities. It cannot be thus in a small community where the political choice may be between democracy and adherence to the Cominform line. It is in the nature of this choice that it affects every one of those hundred-and-one ties. If a child comes home from school and announces that his teacher has told him of Stalin's virtues and of Ben-Gurion's subservience to the United States, the parent must make an immediate decision: either to get rid of the teacher or to take the child out of the school.

The result of this controversy has been the physical splitting of many kibbutzim, with many members leaving the people with whom they had worked for decades in creating a community out of wasteland and desolation, to take up residence in

kibbutzim which are closer to their way of thinking. One of the major kibbutz federations—Hakibbutz Hameuhad—was itself split down the middle with entire kibbutzim (over twenty, among them the largest in the country) leaving the federation because they felt it was dominated by Mapam. All the Mapai-centred kibbutzim and those whose members are active in the Progressive Party have combined to form one kibbutz federation—the largest of the several in existence. Mapam-centred kibbutzim have remained connected with Hakibbutz Hameuhad and with Hakibbutz Haartzi, the federation of Hashomer Hatzair.

Most of the members of the Hakibbutz Hameuhad and all of the members of Hashomer Hatzair consider themselves Marxists. It is an approach which is rooted in background, country of origin, and general attitude. Logically this is hard to understand, for whatever one's opinion of Marxist theory in general, the specifics of Marxism have little relationship spiritually or economically with the facts of kibbutz life. Marxist theory talks about the industrial working class. It states that the future of this industrial proletariat is dependent on the continued expansion and centralization of international capitalism, an expansion and centralization which Marx considers inevitable. This development will force the middle class into the expanding industrial proletariat—and the only solution, therefore, is centralized rule by that proletariat. Not one of these concepts, not one of these assumptions has any logical bearing upon the reality of the kibbutz movement. Not only is there no room for the idea

of the positive value of continuing the Jewish people as a people in this scheme of things (Lenin and Stalin, despite their articles on the "national" question, never found such room, either), but there is no room for a closed economic grouping such as a kibbutz. Marx himself spoke out sarcastically against the "utopians." Hashomer Hatzair itself does not believe in an open proletarian community when it comes down to actual practice. It carefully picks its members, preferring those who have been through the educational mill of its own youth movement—a youth movement which draws its membership mostly from students of middle class origin. Its problems are as relevant to those of the industrial proletariat "as last year's snow."

Ironically, one year after the split in Hakibbutz Hameuhad, the Cominform staged the Prague trials. Had the trials taken place two years earlier there is a good chance that the split would never have occurred. It has taken many members of Hakibbutz Hameuhad several years longer than it has liberals elsewhere in the world to realize that the era of good feeling which followed the Second World War was camouflage, and that nothing ever really changed within Soviet Russia. Today many of them regret the split and almost all of them are gradually swinging back to their original democratic position. Within Mapam* they form a right wing fac-

*During the time that this manuscript was being prepared for the printer, it was reported from Israel that the Mapam party split. Therefore, what is now called Mapam in Israel is Hakibbutz Haartzi-Hashomer Hatzair and its followers in the cities and towns. The right wing has formed a party of its own and is called Ahdut Avodah-

tion which is continually threatening to split the party on this issue, and they have succeeded in eliminating the outspokenly pro-Communist elements. If elections were to be held today there is no question that significant numbers within the Mapam-oriented kibbutz federations would feel unable to vote Mapam and would cast their votes in opposition.

With the resignation of David Ben Gurion, Moshe Sharett made a serious attempt to induce Mapam to join a new coalition cabinet with himself as prime minister. Forty-seven per cent of Mapam, made up mainly of the members of Hakibbutz Hameuhad, were in favour of joining the government. Leaders of Hashomer Hatzair, which in accordance with its principle of ideological collectivism voted *en bloc* to form the other fifty-three per cent, reported privately that they too, as individuals, were now in favour of joining the government despite its Western orientation. Many of them abstained from the final vote.

This position of sterile opposition into which a good part of the kibbutz movement has been driven because of its confusion on the issue of East and West has struck at the very roots of the kibbutz approach to Israel's political life. During the past five years more has been accomplished in terms of constructive achievement in Israel than in the previous five decades. In this saga of accomplishment people in the Mapam-oriented section of the movement, whose principal reason for living in the kib-

Poale Zion, based primarily on Hakibbutz Hameuhad and its followers in the cities and towns.

butz was its participation in the forefront of this work of construction, have since placed themselves outside its pale. As a member of the Mapai-oriented Union of Collective Settlements, the Ihud Hakvutzot Vehakibbutzim, I believe that the split was a necessary and, even, a productive occurrence. It has released the energies of the builders of the kibbutz movement, in large part the builders of modern Israel, for constructive work, instead of dissipating them in paralysing and fruitless polemic. The newly federated movement has turned energetically to the practical work of solving the problems of hired labour, of the individual's position in the community, of raising the agricultural productive capacity of the country, of the fusion of the masses of new immigrants into one dynamic society. It is strengthening itself economically. The extent to which the kibbutz movement as a whole will again be able to find its soul will mark the extent to which it gradually becomes part of this effort or remains a group of sterile sectarian villages. The goal is still the unification of the movement on the basis of permitting a wide range of political differences.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Promise of the Future

SINCE GESHER HAZIV IS ONE OF THE FEW KIBBUTZIM in Israel with a large English-speaking population, it has become somewhat of a showroom model for many visitors who know no Hebrew and want to learn what the kibbutz is all about. We have, consequently, played host to wandering Fulbright scholars, sociology professors, prominent Zionists, and foreign correspondents, as well as to opulent, sometimes boorish, American tourists. Like all people in similar positions we have sometimes felt like the monkey in the cage who turned to his fellow chimpanzee with the comment, "Ain't those people out there queer ones, though." We can sit and tell tourist stories for hours. There was the lady from New York who was being shown the kibbutz. Inquiring about the framework of an uncompleted building near the carpentry shop she was told that it was an outhouse. The kibbutz guide didn't think it necessary to add that it was uncompleted—it seemed rather obvious to him. The lady wheeled to her companion with the cry, "Let's get out of here. Not only do they sit on the floor but they don't even have walls!"

I entertained a national board member of one of the American Zionist organizations who whispered confidentially, "Tell me, you can tell *me,* do you like it here, do you *really* like it here?" I replied rather dryly that if I didn't like it I would have left, whereupon she remarked with some surprise, "Oh, you can leave, can you?"

An internationally known foreign correspondent is known in Gesher Haziv chiefly for the fact that he repeated the same question every fifteen minutes during a six-hour visit. "Tell me, what's the relationship between men and women here?" His host couldn't stand it any more, and finally asked him with a straight face, "Do you want us to arrange to fix you up?" The man was insulted and left in a huff. He is probably still wondering if he should have stayed.

Most visitors, especially from the United States, cannot understand why Americans from fairly well-to-do middle-class homes in a country which has attained a standard of living unparalleled in the history of the world should prefer to leave all that to live in what seems to them to be a totally incomprehensible kind of community. I still remember the Washington woman who spent a whole day with us. She was tremendously impressed, but could not, nevertheless, resist one parting question. "It's wonderful, but why do *you* stay here?" This is the real question, the question which was being alluded to in all the previous stories. It is asked, albeit in more refined terms, by everyone who comes. I admit that there are times when I cannot understand it myself.

The Attraction of the Kibbutz

In assessing my own motivations it is impossible for me to say that the social framework itself, though I admire it despite its shortcomings as a bold new and positive pattern of life, is enough to keep me in the kibbutz. Millions of people the world over do not live in such communities and are honest, socially productive people. The prospect of living in my own house and conducting my own life as I please is an attractive one, and I know that it would be relatively simple for me to achieve a decent life on this basis on Long Island or even in Jerusalem.

One of my kibbutz jobs has been to drive a tractor. As a matter of fact I got the same sort of a thrill from it at first as I got from driving that Chevvy when I first earned my New York driver's license. But as the General Motors people will probably be proud to confirm, "any dumb cluck can drive a Chevvy." With due apologies to some of my fellow kibbutz members, some of whom know tractors inside out and know all about seed beds and crop rotation, most dumb clucks can also drive tractors. I, for one, am not particularly enthused about doing it for the rest of my life. Aaron David Gordon to the contrary, I see nothing socially wrong in being a white-collar worker. When I dreamt of a future career during high school and college, the idea of turning out to be a farmer was furthest from my thoughts.

Why then do I stay?

If the answer is to be found in objective reason-

ing at all,* it is to be found more than anywhere else in the connection between the kibbutz and the future of the Jewish people as a whole.

I live in a kibbutz because it seems to me to be the most positive and satisfying way of life which I can lead, not only as a human being but specifically as a Jewish human being. I have no quarrel with those of my friends who, for all sorts of reasons, are striving to erase all marks of their origin in favour of a neutral, amorphous "Americanism." I take issue with them, however, on the merits of their case, feeling that they have missed the point of the American vision itself, just as the Negro who tries to "pass white" is missing it. The average American, it seems to me, respects the Jew who is affirmatively Jewish. He understands the Jew who is formally affiliated with Jewish life, and he is more often than not confused and irritated by the Jew who is trying to escape from himself. The affirmation of a noble heritage is part of the true meaning of democracy.

I certainly have no quarrel with those of my friends who are positively Jewish and continue to live in America. I believe that the American Jewish community has a great cultural future. It has created already, and is continuing to create, great institutions of Jewish learning which have produced and will produce important Jewish scholarship.

*I am well aware of the psychiatric contention that real motivations for actions are deep-seated personality traits and accept that contention as partially valid—though only partially, else all concepts of "good" and "bad" then become merely matters of Oedipus complexes, parent-substitutions, and subconscious anxieties.

Jewish religious institutions are growing apace and a specific indigenously American Jewish way of life is but in its infancy.

Nevertheless, the big beautiful Jewish community buildings seem to me empty of content. Most people seem to be content with expressing their Jewish affiliation vicariously through participation in paying the salary of the "professional Jew," whether rabbi or social worker. The Jewish commutiny seems to me to be becoming "protestantized," occasional attendance at Sabbath service, the fall fashion parade at High Holy Day Services, matzot on Passover, the Hanukka gifts, the confirmation, and the Sunday School being the sum total of Jewish participation. I have the greatest respect for those who, despite all this, live positive Jewish lives as American Jews, consciously proud of their heritage and continuing to mold its future. I have no doubt that with a minority of American Jews they will continue to succeed, and I do not have to be told of the period in Moorish Spain which marked the greatest previous wave of assimilation in Jewish history but also marked an era which came to be known as the Golden Age of Jewish literature, or of the previous period of Hellenistic assimilation, which witnessed at the same time the production of the Mishna and the Talmud. Neither do I have to be told that there might be no Israel if not for the enthusiastic support of the American Jewish community.

It seems to me, however, that the movement in Jewish life which has done most to preserve and revitalize the meaning of being Jewish during the

past fifty years has been modern Zionism, and that the focal point for the rejuvenation of the Jewish heritage in modern times is, and can only be, Israel. It is Israel which is the culmination of the four thousand years of Jewish history. It is the sovereign State of Israel which provides the opportunity for full and unhampered Jewish creativity which can at best enjoy only partial opportunity in the United States or elsewhere. Here is the historic chance to combine Isaiah and Yehuda Halevi, the Sayings of the Fathers and a modern cooperative movement, Hassidism and modern science, the Jew of still-feudal Yemen and the Jew of Baghdad, London, or New York, the philosophy of Maimonides and that of the kibbutz, in an atmosphere free of persecution or the threat of persecution. All this is being undertaken in a country which itself is being physically renewed after thousands of years of man-made desolation, providing permanent haven and home for hundreds of thousands of people of many lands and varying civilizations. Personal participation in this enterprise seems to me to be one of the most rewarding experiences which our generation may be privileged to share.

In meeting this challenge it seems natural to me that I should try to live in a kibbutz—the crest of the wave of Jewish renascence in Israel.

It is this kind of thinking, varying in forms with country of origin and social background, which is the essential feature of the attraction that the kibbutz movement holds for its members. This gives meaning to agricultural labour, even if agriculture is not one's primary personal interest.

I have often wondered, for example, why the kibbutz has succeeded where Brook Farm, for all its Emersonian ethic, Robert Owen's New Harmony, for all its socialist idealism, and the various religious collectives in North America, ranging from the Shakers to the Ephrata and Amana communities, all disintegrated. The unusual aspect of collective living is, of course, the internal structure of the community, the communal aspect of property and consumption. All other things are dependent on this structure. This is a sharing of life as in a family. It means voluntarily giving up a great deal of one's individual authority to a group with which one's ties are incomparably more tenuous than in a family. The centrifugal forces militating for the disintegration of such a community are powerful, and none of these communities seems to have been able to withstand them. There must be an overpowering reason, a reason which can become personal, which will make a person be willing to live his way with people with whom he has had no previous intimate relationship.

In the kibbutz it is the Zionist vision of the Jewish future which has supplied this reason.

Why Some People Leave

During our first four-and-a-half years approximately 200 Americans have gone through Gesher Haziv, including the 80 with whom we began. The number of Americans in the kibbutz is today still in the neighbourhood of 80 though about half this number were not part of the original group. Of the more than one hundred who did not remain

in the kibbutz (and this number includes the many who came without serious intention in the first place) somewhat more than half have returned to the United States and the rest have found their places in other areas of Israel life—in other kibbutzim, in the moshavim, and in the cities.

In analyzing the reasons for success or failure in the kibbutz one is generally faced with two sets of arguments: those advanced by the individuals in question, and the others, perhaps more important, which are left unsaid—often not even recognized or fully understood by the people themselves. The reasons for leaving Gesher Haziv which were most frequently stated by the people who themselves were leaving were many and varied. In the case of married couples, they felt that the kibbutz did not provide opportunity for the kind of family life which they desired—the opportunity for the wife to keep her own house, raise her children by herself, and provide for her husband's personal needs. In the kibbutz, they felt, this work was dull and uninteresting; it had meaning only if it was done in one's own home. The women of the family feel this difference most keenly; husbands, too, long for what they feel to be the stability of private family life.

The kibbutz, moreover, say those who are leaving, is not the idyllic equalitarian society which they originally pictured it as being. There are members who are more privileged, some who have better personal living conditions, and there are many minor inequities which can be extremely irritating in the process of everyday living.

Some feel that the kibbutz does not have that deep identification with Jewish history and tradition and with the renascent Jewish culture which was their dream. The forms in which the kibbutz is attempting to channel this identification do not satisfy them.

A lack of satisfaction with the particular work one is doing in the kibbutz and a desire to engage in a profession or trade which cannot be practised within its framework is another reason for leaving.

"A bad marriage" was consummated, is the complaint of still others, who leave because they do not like their colleagues in this particular kibbutz.

The unstated reasons are harder to get at. In general, on the basis of my own personal experience (for a year I was secretary of the kibbutz and therefore the person to whom people turned when they had decided to leave), it seems that those who possessed a strong Jewish background, those who had received a Hebrew education, and those who came from Zionist families had a better chance of integrating. This was a much more important factor than previous technical or agricultural training or nominal membership in a Zionist youth movement. The basic decision was one of choosing the standard of living described in this volume (which will continue for many years before reaching even a lower-middle-class American Jewish level). Zionism and ideology weigh on one side of the scale. The degree of Zionist conviction, the degree to which the member is willing to let it outbalance the lower standard of living, is often the deciding factor.

To live in Israel one must not only be able to identify oneself with its ideals in the abstract; one must also learn to identify oneself and one's future with Yemenite, Iraqi or Rumanian Jews, people who are much further removed from an American Jew's whole way of life than Irish, Swedish, or Italian non-Jews in New York. The ability to do this must spring from a profound emotional attachment to one's Jewish identity, the product of home and education. The knowledge of Hebrew itself is the key to the most elementary identification with the country. Americans with high cultural demands for plays, music, literature, politics, organizational activity, were, because of ignorance of the language, completely blocked from participation in the cultural life of the country. Isolated from Israel in this fashion they remembered their cultural life back in the States with longing and nostalgia. They considered their present life empty. They were unable to feel the kibbutz as a spiritual force and incapable of evaluating correctly its merits and failings. They missed *The New York Times* reports on Israel.

Some people sought in the kibbutz a solution to their personal psychological problems and difficulties. Here, they felt, was a society they could lean upon, a form of collective group life into which they could merge and within which they could minimize their personal maladjustments. They soon found that a kibbutz is like any other aggregate of people. One can find in it a certain amount of emotional support, losing one's own personality in it up to a certain point, but personal psychological

problems continue to haunt the individual wherever he goes.

Many people leave the kibbutz simply because they feel that, though the kibbutz is a wonderful idea and a good system, it is simply not for them. This does not entail a negative assessment of the kibbutz, it merely assumes that the kibbutz system requires of its membership a specific type of personality, a specific type of family life, and a willingness to work at specific trades. Consequently, if one does not happen to fit into these categories, there is no room within the kibbutz framework.

This last reason, of course, is the hardest for the kibbutz members who remain to accept. The "diehards" refuse to admit that the kibbutz is not all-inclusive. To many of them there is only one "truth," and those who desert it are traitors. In today's Israel, however, this kind of reason for leaving is legitimate and is not open to a blanket accusation of being "less idealistic" than uncompromising attachment to kibbutz ideology. The kibbutz does not hold a monopoly of productive, ethical social living. It can, perhaps, be one of the goals of the kibbutz movement to broaden its framework so as to include ever larger proportions of the idealistic elements in the country.

Very few cases, however, can be ascribed to any one reason; they are, rather, an amalgam of several or all the above reasons, both the kind the person himself chooses to articulate and the kind left for the observer to determine.

The kibbutz is not only a new society; it is physically a new community, a new home for people. In

this respect it is subject to the same instability with regard to permanent population that accompanied, for example, the settlement of the American West. The older the kibbutz, the smaller the number of people leaving. The greatest turnover is in the newly-established colony, made up of young people, as yet mostly unmarried and unsettled.

Has the Kibbutz a Future?

It is a characteristic of modern social science that even those who are not Marxists seem to believe that faith and ethics, of themselves, cannot accomplish much. Behaviour, they feel, is a matter of environmental circumstance. Proper analysis of a social grouping, however, must also take into account such unmeasurable factors as the personality and character of the people involved in the group and their own plans for the future.

Ever since the establishment of the State of Israel the kibbutzim have been subject to pressures that have effected profound changes in their structure and operation. Do these changes mean that the kibbutz is a passing phenomenon incidental to the early colonization stages of the country and destined to disappear within the foreseeable future? Or, on the other hand, are these changes a sign of the vitality of the kibbutzim and their capacity to make a creative adjustment to new conditions while nevertheless retaining their essential character?

I do not know the answer. A case can be made for either side. Belief in the future of the kibbutz

probably depends in the final analysis on one's own general attitudes.

In outlining some of the factors which are likely to affect that future one must first consider the social attitudes of the population of the new Israel itself. Israel today consists of two separate and distinct communities: the 700,000 people who have arrived since the creation of the Jewish state, and the 600,000 who were in Israel prior to its establishment. The problems inherent in properly absorbing the new arrivals can best be pictured, perhaps, by several anecdotes from my own experience.

Near Gesher Haziv there was established a camp for Yemenite immigrants, a community of several hundred newly arrived families, living eight to a room in cement-block houses and employed by the Jewish National Fund in forestry work. Our kibbutz was asked to assume some of the responsibility for the education of the children in this camp, and it was my task to help set up the school. One Friday afternoon I met a grey-bearded, middle-aged Yemenite Jew striding toward the bus stop. He was dressed in a heavy American winter coat, the gift, probably, of the Joint Distribution Committee in Aden. In one hand he carried a cardboard suitcase and in the other, the ring slung on his forefinger, he proudly swung a huge kitchen alarm clock. His young, "Israelized" fifteen-year-old daughter was walking alongside, remonstrating with him: "But, father, in Nahariya there are clocks *everywhere*!" I know this man well. He is devout, a good worker, eager to learn, intelligent, and a genuine asset to the country. But his wife

is illiterate and cannot add or subtract much even in Arabic. At thirty-five she is the mother of eight children, and her daughter was married at the age of twelve to a fourteen-year-old boy. These children will receive in Israel an incomparably more complete education than they would have received in Yemen. With the exception of those few who may continue on to a trade school, their education, however, will of necessity be limited to an elementary one. This family has been transplanted from the middle ages to modernity with the force of a sudden blast, and it will take a long time and a great deal of help before it makes the adjustment.

In the same community I was chairman of the election board. Many people voted there from the whole surrounding area. One of the voters was a fifty-year-old newly arrived Rumanian Jew. After he had cast his ballot we discussed the election informally. He told me that he had voted against the government. "Look at me! Should I be forced to earn my living at road building?" he asked. "What did you do in Rumania?" I questioned. "In Rumania I owned a factory. If the government would help me open a factory I could employ forty people, live the way I should live, and then I would vote for it." "What kind of factory did you operate?" was my next question. "I made Persian lamb coats." "But this is a hot country. What would we do with Persian lamb coats?" "We could export them," was his prompt reply. "Where would we get the fur?" "We would import it! What do Jews all over the world make a living from?—import, export, that's what I would do!" It was easy to

understand him. He was not a Zionist. He came to Israel, after years of oppression, because it was the only place ready to accept him.

These two stories are not necessarily typical of all the new arrivals. But, in the main, they illustrate this fact: the 700,000 new immigrants are potentially a great asset to the country, economically and culturally. At this stage, however, they are people for whom a country must be built, rather than people who can themselves build one. They do not as yet possess the profound understanding of Zionist purpose which was characteristic of many of the previous waves of Jewish immigration to Israel. They are not yet equal partners in the work of construction.

The other half of the community are the veteran Israelis. For several decades they lived on an extraordinary level of idealistic tension and activity. Everyone was personally involved. Everyone was in the illegal army—in addition to his full time occupation. A person living on the coast knew that, should several hundred illegal immigrants be landed on the beach during the night, *his* door would be knocked upon, and *he* would be asked to house several people. Taxes were voluntarily assessed and voluntarily paid. The British were everywhere, and their very presence was a daily reminder of the struggle. Great masses of people can continue such idealism for only a limited period of time. After Valley Forge, the tattered Continentals went home to build their farms, businesses, and families, though the infant republic had by no means weathered all its storms. An Israeli citizen now fulfills his mili-

tary obligations by serving one month's reserve duty annually. There is no Hagana. Immigrants have arrived in the hundreds of thousands and are handled by bureaucratic agencies; their arrival no longer affects the average person. He is preoccupied with getting a well-paying job with social prestige, an apartment, adequate food and clothing and with becoming part of Israel's burgeoning middle class. These are his prime concerns. Idealism comes afterwards.

And yet, despite all these internal difficulties, more has been accomplished in the building of the country at a feverishly accelerated tempo since the State was founded than in the whole fifty years of Zionist endeavour prior to May, 1948.

It is against this background that the present-day problems of the kibbutz movement must be examined. Until the emergence of the State, the kibbutz movement was the very distillation of Zionist idealism. Personal realization of the Zionist ideal, Jewish self-defence, the absorption of immigrants, and a high degree of idealism in social relations were placed above all other interests. The Hagana was based on the settlements, and, until the crystallization of the army, the kibbutzim were the bastions of Jewish Palestine's defence. Emissaries of the kibbutz abroad were the organizers of illegal immigration, leaders of the Jewish underground, the educators and leaders of vast Jewish youth organizations. Even the leadership of workers' organization in the cities was borrowed from kibbutzim. It was considered a matter of course for the kibbutz member to volunteer for every nation-

al Jewish effort. The individual kibbutznik, digging potatoes in the fields, felt that he was not merely digging potatoes. By his efforts he was not only creating a new society—a unique accomplishment in itself; he was shouldering the burden of responsibility for the future of the whole Jewish people. Even hard-core reactionaries, opposed to the basic principles of kibbutz organization, were compelled to recognize and value this national idealism. Hebrew-school children in the United States sang songs about Ein Harod and Hanita, not merely as centres of the kibbutz movement, but as symbols of Jewish national revival.

It is a fact that, temporarily, at least, the kibbutz has lost much of this moral grandeur. The reasons for the decline are varied. The nature of the new immigration to Israel, that mainly flows from backward areas and brings a flood of humanity alien to the social premises upon which the kibbutz is based, is one of the primary reasons. The Yemenite of the story, lacking an elementary acquaintance with Western civilization, can hardly be expected to identify himself with the ultra-modern kibbutz society. The powerful European *halutz* movements, which were the backbone of Zionist endeavour and which were the reservoirs of kibbutz membership and strength, no longer exist. The Rumanian of the anecdote is not a candidate for kibbutz membership.

The kibbutz is the kind of society which must continually attract new people to its banner, for the sake of its economic health and in order for it to be able to keep itself within the main stream of

Israel's life. This is its major problem and from it stem in large part the many social problems of its organization. Its ability to draw new people depends not only on the inherent attraction of the kibbutz but on the stature of the kibbutz idea in the eyes of the country as a whole. The general decline in moral tension within Israel and within the Zionist movement abroad after the peak of idealism that was attained in 1948 has made Zionist social idealism as exemplified in kibbutz life no longer as primary in the thinking of Israelis as it once was.

The role of the kibbutz in the life of Israel continues to change. With Israel's emergence as a state, the kibbutz as such is no longer the main defence of the Jewish community. This is—and should be—the responsibility of a professional army. Emissaries of the kibbutz abroad are no longer the organizers of immigration. Some kibbutz members are involved in this—but as parts of a continually stabilizing machinery established for this purpose. The movement, moreover, rent by ideological conflicts brought about by the deterioration of world conditions, is in a period of transition. It is just beginning to reorient itself and to direct its creative energies to new objectives.

Evolutionary changes are taking place within the kibbutz itself. Kibbutzim have played an important role in the feverish economic and physical expansion of the country within the past five years and shortage of labour power, brought about by that expansion, have led, as we have seen, to the introduction of hired labour within the collectives.

The government and to some extent even the kibbutzim themselves have encouraged this process—anxious to provide employment for the newcomers. It is inevitable that the moral stature of the kibbutzim, based on the principles of personal labour and non-exploitation, should suffer from this introduction of hired labour. At the same time, there has been a general trend toward allowing individual members to own more personal possessions, furniture, children's toys, books and records, etc. People want to spend more time with their families and less with the "group," and want their children to live at home with them rather than in the children's houses. The kibbutz is not the idyllic egalitarian society which romantic propaganda once pictured it as being—and which indeed it never was. Some people *are* "more equal than others." Some do have more interesting work than others, and some do have nicer rooms and even a bit more spending money.

All these problems, and they are serious, are the problems, however, of a movement very much alive, not those of a dead or dying society. The overwhelming majority of kibbutzniks are firmly convinced of the validity of their way of life, and whether new people join them or not, whether new kibbutzim are created or not, their communities will continue to exist. The kibbutzim account for a large portion of the agricultural production of the country. Any scheme for increased agriculture or for the training of new immigrant labour, either independently, in partnership with kibbutzim, or as hired labourers, depends on the kib-

butz movement as the primary pool of skilled technical and managerial personnel. The balance sheet of even a new five-year-old kibbutz such as Gesher Haziv deals with assets over the million-pound mark and the more established kibbutzim such as Afikim, Kfar Giladi, or Geva are large and successful economic enterprises.

Thousands of Youth Aliya youngsters are continuously being absorbed, and preparations are actively under way to increase the number. Hundreds of kibbutz members are serving as teachers, social workers, and agricultural instructors without regard to whether their charges will or will not end up in kibbutzim. Kibbutz members are still sent abroad to work with potential immigrants in Iran or Morocco and to help direct youth movements in Latin America and in the English-speaking countries.

There are still deserts to be conquered in Israel, and kibbutzim still feel responsible for conquering them. Kibbutzim as far north as the Lebanese and Syrian borders send teams down to the southern Negev for months at a time to cultivate land allotted to them there by the government. Groups of youngsters, fresh out of the Israel army, are establishing new kibbutzim in dangerous, deserted areas, determined to make of them the fruitful gardens which their predecessors have succeeded in creating in other parts of the country.

Upon entering the dining room of a kibbutz such as Afikim, which serves meals to 1,500 people, one can meet people of all types and descriptions: veterans of thirty years and kibbutz-bred

"sabras";* dark-skinned Indians and also Americans. At the table one will hear discussion of the new multi-million dollar factory being built by all the kibbutzim of the Jordan valley. On the bulletin board one may note the list of thirty members of Afikim on movement assignment outside the kibbutz. On the same board may be posted the timetable of cultural events: lectures, choir rehearsals, the Jordan valley orchestra, a visit by the Habima theatre group, as well as reports of the progress of what Americans would call a projected Jordan Valley Junior College.

Despite improvements which can be made, such as more extended higher education, the kibbutz movement, as a whole, is satisfied with its second generation, a generation which in many of the older kibbutzim has already taken over *de facto* operation of the community.

The kibbutz movement is strong and vital and is prospering, adapting itself to the times. The critical problem in the movement is whether it will be true to the destiny it has set itself; whether it will be more than merely a successful social experiment which in the end will have turned out to be a sideshow in the drama of Israel's emergence; whether it can regain its moral position in the Zionist renascence, stamping its character upon Israel society. To do this more is required than mere normal existence and prosperity.

The principal tasks facing the movement, therefore, are how, without disturbing the basic econo-

*A nickname for Israeli-born youngsters—a sabra is a prickly-pear, "thorny on the outside and sweet inside."

mic principles of the community, to order its life so that the individual member will feel and be less pressured and freer; how to meet the pioneering problems confronting Israel today; how to increase production and absorb new immigrants; how to mobilize its membership once again in the service of the Zionist ideal.

The underlying principles of all kibbutzim are the communal ownership of the means of production, communal responsibility for the social and economic needs of the membership, and the elimination of private property other than personal effects. Within this general framework there are and always have been differences in the detailed structure of various kibbutzim. Degania, the "mother" of the kibbutzim, has always had children living at home rather than in children's houses. So has Ein Harod, which lists among its members some of the chief ideological leaders of "left-wing" kibbutzim. Is it a breach of socialist principle not to live in tents or to be able to send one's members on a decent vacation, or to provide a woman with the possibility of buying what she thinks is a becoming dress? This question, as has been noted, has already been answered within kibbutzim. There are other questions, however, which strike much more deeply at the very roots of the kibbutz framework, but which may make the difference between happy people, who will attract others, and a pressured community erupting in all directions. Are socialism and greater family cohesion incompatible? What are the inalienable rights of the individual in a cooperative community? What about the care and

education of children? What about the dining-hall?

The problem of hired labour might be overcome with: (a) the organization of regional kibbutzim which could include, in addition to kibbutz units, immigrant groups maintaining their own internal social structure; (b) the continued establishment of country-wide companies which would do the hiring of outside labour when necessary and assure the use of the profits for the benefit of those hired; and (c) the attraction of new members. Any "exploited labourer" would still be welcome, whenever he would so desire, to join the kibbutz as a member, becoming a full partner in the community.

A decision in the Union of Collective Settlements calls for the drafting of six per cent of the working population of every kibbutz for movement work. This was defined as work with new immigrants, educational activity in the army, responsibility in various institutions of the Histadrut and the government, educational missions both in Israel and abroad. The implementation of this policy has already begun, but has run into great difficulties owing to the acute shortage of manpower throughout the movement. By present-day standards this percentage is very large, and its successful mobilization would make a serious difference in the country's personnel picture.

What is the real meaning of the emergence of the State of Israel for interested Jews the world over, and what kind of country do they want it to be? Do external trappings make a state? Israel's

defence demands a professionally trained army. Israel's foreign affairs call for skilled career diplomats, and the conduct of Israel's government necessitates the creation of a permanent corps of capable bureaucrats. There is a danger, however, that a people deprived of these external manifestations of independence for over two thousand years will allow its head to be turned by them.

Swaggering generals (and sooner or later all generals, even Jewish ones, swagger just a little) and striped-pants diplomats will have meaning if they are the civil servants (accent on servants) of a people which has an egalitarian character. Otherwise, especially in view of the almost overwhelming task of assimilating the hundreds of thousands of new immigrants, Israel may well become a small Levantine orange-and-banana republic. Israel may then even disappear physically, for only the fact that it is not such a country has enabled it to contend successfully with its surrounding enemies. Whether it does or not, the possibility of lending new meaning to Jewish life not only in Israel but throughout the world will certainly disappear.

The kibbutz movement is dedicated to the creation of a peasantry in Israel. It is an unusual kind of peasantry, with completely different connotations to the word than are ordinarily drawn in the modern world. The goal is the creation of the kind of peasantry which once existed in Israel and which produced the moral and ethical code that has become a standard for half the population of the world. It is the kind of project which requires character, intelligence, and perseverance to no

lesser degree, certainly, than any scientific, professional, or social challenge in the world today. Even a worldly-wise university-educated American can aspire to be such a peasant—the kind of peasant who inspired the following passages, among others:

I the Lord have called thee in righteousness,
And have taken hold of thy hand,
And kept thee, and set thee for a covenant of the people
For a light of the nations;
To open the blind eyes,
To bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,
And them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.

The poor and needy seek water and there is none,
And their tongue faileth for thirst;
I, the Lord will answer them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.
I will make the wilderness a pool of water,
And the dry lands springs of water.
I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the acacia tree,
And the myrtle, and the oil tree;
I will set in the desert the cypress, the plane tree, and the larch together,
That they may see, and know,
And consider, and understand together,
That the hand of the Lord hath done this,
And the Holy One of Israel hath created it.

ISAIAH 42:6–8, 41:17–20

The kibbutz movement responds to the call of the prophet with his own words:

And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying:
Whom shall I send,
And who will go for us?
Then I said:
Here am I; send me.

ISAIAH 6:8

GLOSSARY OF IMPORTANT HEBREW TERMS USED IN THIS BOOK

BILU—An early group of Zionists who emigrated from Russia to Palestine in the 1880's. The name is derived from the first letter of each Hebrew word of their slogan, "O House of Jacob, come, let us go". (Isaiah 2:6.)

HAKIBBUTZ HAARTZI—the federation of kibbutzim made up of graduates of the Hashomer Hatzair movement.

HAKIBBUTZ HADATI—the federation of orthodox religious settlements.

HAKIBBUTZ HAMEUHAD—United Kibbutz Movement, a federation of kibbutzim advocating large, open collective settlement, based upon agriculture, industry and outside employment. The Mapai elements of this movement left the organization in order to join the Ihud Hakvutzot Vehakibbutzim.

HALUTZ—literally "armed vanguard" (cf. "let the armed men pass on before the ark of the Lord". Joshua 6, et al.) This term is applied to those who have pioneered Israel organization.

HAGANA—the Israel underground army before the emergence of the State.

HAVER—a member.

HISTADRUT—short for *Hahistadrut Haklalit shel Ha'ovdim Ha'ivrim Be'yisrael*—the General Federation of Jewish Labour in Israel.

IHUD HAKVUTZOT VEHAKIBBUTZIM—the Union of Collective Settlements, the largest federation of kibbutzim in Israel, oriented to the Mapai (Democrat-Socialist) and Progressive (liberal-centre) parties.

KVUTZA, KIBBUTZ—a collective settlement in Israel of the type described in this volume.

KIBBUTZNIK—a member of a kibbutz.

MAPAI—Israel Labour Party, democratic-socialist in outlook and the dominant party in the government.

MAPAM—left-wing Israel labour party, sometimes pro-Soviet in foreign policy, in opposition to government.

MOSHAV—a smallholder's settlement less completely cooperative than is the kibbutz.

MAZKIRUT—the secretariat or central administrative body in a kibbutz.