

Return Tale

vice of modern technology is being used to make the most of available resources.

Israel is presently experiencing an unprecedented period of peace and security, and there exists an enviable condition of full employment.

NEW CHALLENGE

The creation of the State brought with it certain problems. Many functions previously performed by voluntary organizations were assumed by government agencies. Spontaneous expression of idealism has had to give way to a more highly organized, and prosaic, routine. The important collective movement especially, there is a feeling of being relegated to a less significant role. Many collective settlements are having difficulty maintaining their traditional form and ideals.

On the other hand, Israel remains in large measure in the initial stages of its development. Its continued existence is not fully assured. Economic independence is a goal for the distant future. Absorbing nearly a million immigrants, mostly of oriental origin, is a challenging task.

A major difficulty lies in the simple fact that the water supply is limited, and at the same time the country is committed to a policy of unlimited immigration.

MILITANT NATIONALISM

Many pressing problems create tension. The country is fully mobilized. Any able-bodied adult may be called on a few hours notice to participate in special military manoeuvre which are not uncommon.

Nationalism is strong. Political discussions are frequent and intense. They are also well informed, for the Israeli knows his country intimately. The farmer, for example, knows precisely how his small unit is linked to the larger economy, and he takes special pride in producing a sure export item, like the Jaffa orange.

Israel is caught in the cross-currents of the most varied social, ideological, and political forces. It is not surprising that to one inside the country world affairs can easily appear to revolve around Israel as though it were at the center of the world. To become accustomed to such a perspective was stimulating to Canadian students who were inclined, perhaps, to look on world happenings more as observers than as participants.

Kibbutzim--Unique And Essential

by Maryetta Thornton

The kibbutz (plural kibbutzim; from Hebrew kvutz meaning group) is a commune, usually agricultural, which differs from the Russian commune by being voluntary and by functioning as an individual enterprise within a non-communist national economy.

The kibbutzim have played a unique but essential role in the agricultural development of Israel. Extreme co-operation and the fanatical dedication and enthusiasm of youth have probably been necessary for the reclamation of the land after centuries of disuse, misuse and abuse. Malarial swamps had to be drained; the hazards of poisonous snakes and scorpions had to be faced; the back-breaking toil of stone and rock removal had to be endured; and the non-existence of capital for development had to be accepted.

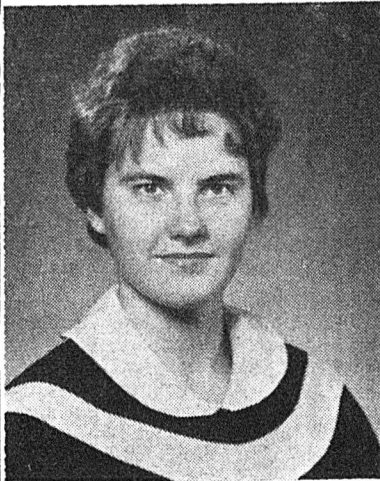
There has likely been no other country in history that has made the rapid strides that Israel has in its twelve years of statehood and the contribution of the kibbutzim has been outstanding.

The essentiality of the kibbutz to Israeli development and economy strikes the western visitor immediately, but the westerner's interest also extends to the kibbutz as a general experiment in communism. As such certain principles and lessons are already emerging but must be evaluated with care because of the present shortness of the experiment.

FAMILY UNIT IS KEY

It is not surprising to find communists among Jews, for much of their background and experience is in that direction. Judaism was born within a family-type of economic organization and continued as such for centuries. A Jewish sect, known as the Essenes, were out-and-out communists at least two millennia ago. The emphasis on the family has been prominent in Judaism throughout its history, even to today, and some believe this emphasis to have been the key to the survival of the Jews in the diaspora. Very close communal associations were forced on the Jews in the ghettos of Europe, particularly for self-protection during programs. It is, therefore, no great stretch of philosophy to expand the family concept to include a

community or even a nation. This is what was done in the early 1880's by the Biluim, a group of young Russian, Jewish revolutionists who migrated to Palestine. Although they fathered the idea of the kibbutz, the first kibbutz did not become a reality until 1909.



MARYETTA THORNTON

In 1934 a list of Jewish agricultural communities in Palestine includes seven kibbutzim. In 1949 a government listing gives 211 as the number of kibbutzim in Israel, and 230 in 1957. During this time the population on the kibbutzim increased from a total of 63,519 to 80,101. Some authors interpret these increases to mean the continuing success and permanent growth of the system. There is, however, some contrary evidence.

ZENITH REACHED

During the same period, 1949 to 1957, Israeli agricultural settlements with varying degrees of co-operative enterprise but not communistic increased from 191, with a total population of 75,566, to 375, with a total population of 198,028. The foreign observer is conscious of a general consensus that the kibbutz system has reached its zenith and is likely to decline.

There has already been widespread modification of the strict and rigid communistic principles and it is my opinion that survival of the system will depend on a further relaxation of the rigidity regarding private ownership, separation of the children from parents, substitution of the atheistic worship of physical labor for the worship of a more fundamental God, and the bare and grim asceticism of kibbutz life.

The so-called "crisis of the kibbutz" has not been precipitated by an overwhelming weakness of the system but by the overwhelming pressure of a myriad of petty aggravations and irritations that occur with daily living. These are too numerous to all be listed here but a few representative examples follow. Where physical labor is the religion, it is quickly discovered that men are not all born equal. Administration, originally held somewhat in contempt, gradually grows to be a prestige activity. Race and color discrimination is found to be not unlike that of the rest of the world. Dissatisfaction over unpleasant work assignments creep in and a longing for the privacy of a home and the privilege of congenial companions of choice assumes proportions.

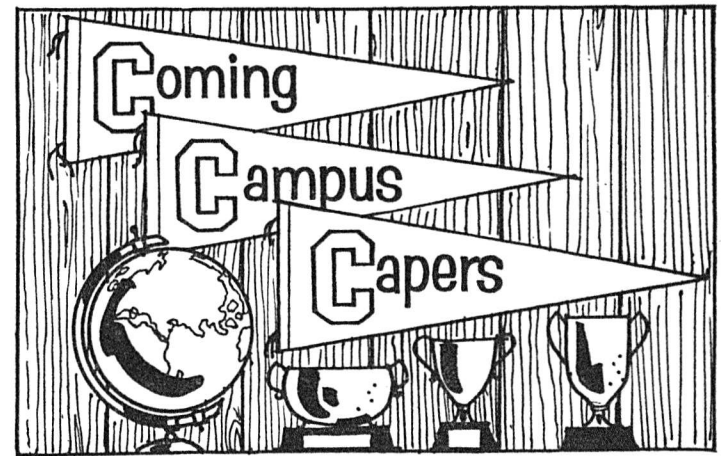
ROLE OF WOMEN PROBLEMATIC

The "problem of the women" becomes not only paramount but quite paradoxical. The communistic system was to "emancipate" the woman. In this system the woman in actuality becomes the opposite of "emancipated". In general she quickly finds herself relegated to the "menial" tasks as her entire activity and contribution, without the compensation of surrounding children, creative outlets and the dignity of homemaking. Her biological instincts are repressed and she can quickly be degraded to a position of inferiority and even indignity. The "problem of the women" more than any other single item is forcing modification of the kibbutz system

and the kibbutz ceases to be communistic in proportion to these modifications.

One cannot shed the impression; that the commune has merely substituted the community family for the blood family without any prior evidence that the tie that binds the former is any less brittle than that binding the latter; that the elevation of labor to a religion demands more artificial dogma and offers fewer spiritual satisfactions than does the discarded and old-fashioned theism; that opportunity for privacy at will is an essential of human life; that biology imposes a role on women differing from that of man, and, moreover, fits her for that role; and that prosperity and communism are not natural bed-fellows.

The kibbutz came into being as a result of a combination of stimuli such as, the extreme orthodoxy of the older generation, the restriction and oppression of the ghetto, the Eastern European programs, Marxism, poverty and the challenge of the Holy Land. The one remaining stimulus today in Israel is the reclamation of the forbidding biblical "wilderness", the southern desert known as the Negev. This land is so unattractive that its settlement and agricultural development will probably depend on the fanaticism, dedication and enthusiasm of youth. It may well be that until this is accomplished the kibbutz system, at least in a modified form, will continue.



EVENTS

March—

- 1- 3—Students' Union Elections
- 3—Chemistry Club Banquet and Dance Residence Dance
- 4—VCF Graduation Banquet
- 10-11—Varsity Varieties in Calgary
- 11—Bar None—shoe

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