



THE ARABS OF PALESTINE

BY MARTHA GELLHORN

MARTHA GELLHORN, novelist, journalist, and former war correspondent, has recently returned from a journey to the Middle East, where she went to see the "Palestinian Refugee Problem" in terms of real life, real people. Here she reports how the Arab refugees and the Arab Israelis live, and what they say about themselves, their past and their future.

ACCORDING to Arab politicians and apologists, this is what happened, this is the authentic view, these are the facts. Doubt is treasonous. There can be only one truth, according to Arab politicians and apologists, and it belongs to them:

In 1948, war took place between five Arab nations of the Middle East and the Jews in Palestine. This war was caused by the United Nations, whose General Assembly resolved to partition Palestine into two states, one for the Palestinian Arabs, the other for the Jews. The Arab nations and the Palestinian Arabs would not accept this monstrous decision. They were obliged to protect themselves against it, with force. The United Nations operated as the tool of the Western Imperialists, notably Great Britain and the United States. The United Nations wanted the Jews to proclaim the upstart state of Israel. Because of the Western Imperialists, who favored Israel, the Arabs lost the war. By massacre, threatening broadcasts, pointed bayonets, and the murderous siege of cities, the Jews drove hundreds of thousands of Arabs out of their homeland. For thirteen years, these Arab refugees have languished in misery around the borders of Israel. The United Nations (Western branch) bears the blame for these events and must repair the damage. The condition of the refugees is a sore on the conscience of honorable men. The Israeli government refuses to welcome back to their homeland the refugees, now swollen to more than a million in number. This refusal demonstrates the brutality and dishonesty of Israel, an abnormal nation of aliens

who not only forced innocent people into exile but also stole their property. There is no solution to this injustice, the greatest the world has ever seen, except to repatriate all Palestinian refugees in Palestine. Palestine is an Arab country, now infamously called Israel. Israel has no right to exist, and the Arab nations will not sign peace treaties with it but will, by every means possible, maintain the state of war.

The details of the Arab case vary, depending on the political climate of the moment and the audience. However, the Palestinian refugees always remain the invaluable, central theme. The case is painted the color of blood in the Arab countries: Revenge and Return. For the Western public, tears replace blood; the Arab case rests on the plight of the refugees and is a call to conscience rather than to arms. But no Arab statesman has ever promised final peace with Israel if only the million Palestinian refugees may return to their former homes.

The best way to consider this case is close up, by looking at the Palestinian refugees themselves, not as a "problem," not as statistics, but as people. The Palestinian refugees, battered by thirteen years in the arena of international politics, have lost their shape; they appear as a lump and are spoken of as one object. They are individuals, like everyone else.

Despite the unique care and concern they have

received, despite the unique publicity which rages around them, the Arab refugees, alas, are not unique. Although no one knows exactly how many refugees are scattered everywhere over the globe, it is estimated that since World War II, and only since then, at least thirty-nine million *non-Arab* men, women, and children have become homeless refugees, through no choice of their own. Their numbers grow every year; Angolans are the latest addition to the long list. The causes for this uprooting are always different, but the result is the same: the uprooted have lost what they had and where they came from and must start life again as handicapped strangers wherever they are allowed to live.

The world could be far more generous to these unwilling wanderers, but at least the world has never thought of exploiting them. They are recognized as people, not pawns. By their own efforts, and with help from those devoted to their service, all but some six million of the thirty-nine million have made a place for themselves, found work and another chance for the future. To be a refugee is not necessarily a life sentence.

The unique misfortune of the Palestinian refugees is that they are a weapon in what seems to be a permanent war. Alarming signs, from Egypt, warn us that the Palestinian refugees may develop into more than a justification for cold war against Israel. We ignored *Mein Kampf* in its day, as the ravings of a lunatic, written for limited home consumption. We ought to have learned never to ignore dictators or their books. *Egypt's Liberation*, by Gamal Abdel Nasser, deserves careful notice. It is short, low-keyed, and tells us once again that a nation has been ordained by fate to lead — this time, to lead the Arab nations, all Africa, all Islam. The Palestinian refugees are not mentioned, and today, in the Middle East, you get a repeated sinking sensation about the Palestinian refugees: they are only a beginning, not an end. Their function is to hang around and be constantly useful as a goad. The ultimate aim is not such humane small potatoes as repatriating refugees.

THE word "refugee" is drenched in memories which stretch back over too many years and too many landscapes: Spain, Czechoslovakia, China, Finland, England, Italy, Holland, Germany. In Madrid, between artillery bombardments, children were stuffed into trucks to be taken somewhere, out of that roulette death, while their mothers clung to the tailboards of the trucks and were dragged weeping after the bewildered, weeping children. In Germany, at war's end, the whole country seemed alive with the roaming mad —

slave laborers, concentration camp survivors — who spoke the many tongues of Babel, dressed in whatever scraps they had looted, and searched for food in stalled freight cars though the very rail-yards were being bombed. From China to Finland, people like these defined the meaning of "refugee."

No one could wish to see even a pale imitation of such anguish again. In the Middle East, there would be no high explosive, no concentration camps, but the imagined, expected scene was bad enough; lice and rickets and tuberculosis, bodies rotting in the heat, the apathy of despair. Why, in 1961, did I have such a picture of the Palestinian refugees? Obviously from what I had read, as one of the average absorbent reading public; notions float in the air exactly as dust does. Nothing that I had read or heard prepared me for what I found.

What do they look like, the undifferentiated mass known as the "Palestinian Refugee Problem"? What do they think, feel, say? What do they want? How do they live, where do they live, what do they do? Who takes care of them? What future can they hope for, in terms of reality, not in terms of slogans, which are meaningless if not actually fatal, as we know.

The children are as fast as birds, irreverent as monkeys, large-eyed, ready to laugh. The young girls, trained by carrying water jars or other heavy household bundles on their heads, move like ballerinas and are shrouded in modesty and silence as if in cocoons. The young men, crudely or finely formed, have in common the hopefulness and swagger of their new manhood. The middle years seem nondescript, in both sexes. After this the women, who age quickly but not as quickly as the men, wear unpainted experience on their faces; they look patient, humorous, and strong. When the men have grown visibly old, they turn into a race of grandees. Their color, infant to patriarch, ranges from golden fair to mahogany dark, all warmed by the glaze of sun. The instinct for hospitality, the elegance of manner have not been exaggerated.

UNRWA (the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East), inheriting its role from previous caretakers, has been the splendid mother-and-father of these people for eleven years. In the course of its parenthood UNRWA has spent about \$360 million on the Arab refugees, this money having been contributed by members of the United Nations, with smaller but loving donations from private charitable organizations as well. Of the total the United States provided more than \$238 million, Great Britain over \$65 million — but spread across the years and in varying amounts, sixty-one states, including Israel and the Holy See, have helped

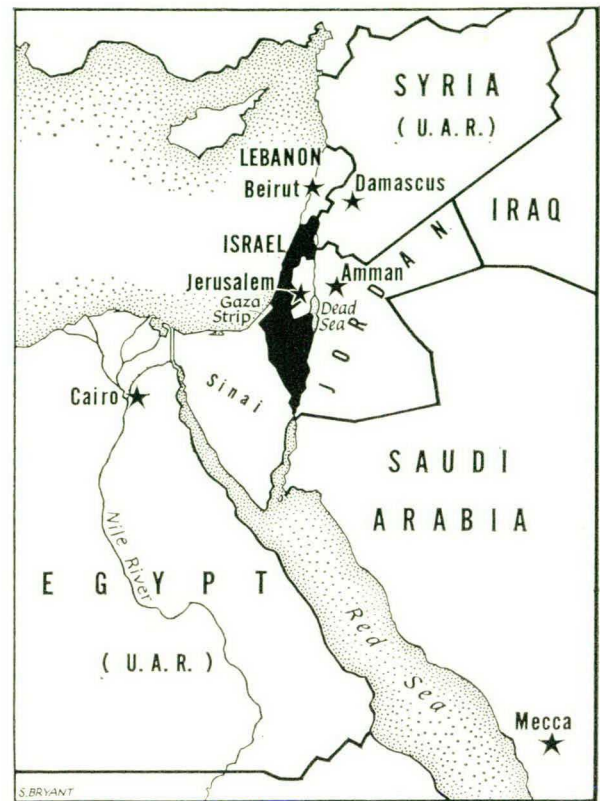
with cash. The Soviet Union has never paid one cent. This is a tiny note of malice: Arab refugees often express tender emotions for the Soviet Union, whereas most of the village orators blame the United States and England, or that bogey, "Western Imperialism," for their exile.

In the so-called "host countries," Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, and Egypt, UNRWA runs fifty-eight refugee camps. The camps in Egypt are not in Egypt but in the Gaza Strip, which is Palestine; Egypt is the *de facto* mandatory power, the land and the government of the Gaza Strip are Palestinian. The majority of camps in Jordan are also on what was the territory of Palestine, now annexed to Jordan.

UNRWA has never yet been allowed to make a total proper census of its refugee population, so statistics about the number of ex-Palestinians are nothing except the best estimate possible; UNRWA itself says this. Over half of the registered Palestinian refugees do not live in camps, but have made more or less comfortable private arrangements varying from first-class houses, at the top, to hand-built Hooverville shacks, at the bottom. UNRWA calculates that, at the end of June, 1960, 421,500 refugees were living in their camps, almost double their camp population ten years ago. The advantage of living in a camp is that life there is rent free; and for the poor, the standard of housing and sanitation in an UNRWA camp is better than that of the native population.

The international personnel of UNRWA, Americans and Western Europeans, is small; 128 men and women work in four countries. The mass of those who serve the Palestinian refugees are Palestinian refugees themselves, something over 10,000 of them. UNRWA is running a world, simply, a little welfare state. It makes villages, called camps, and keeps them clean and free of disease, feeds, educates, trains teachers and technicians and craftsmen, operates clinics and maternity centers, sends out visiting nurses, encourages small private enterprises with small loans, distributes clothing, soap, kerosene, blankets, provides hospitalization, footballs, youth clubs, mosques.

UNRWA is a kind, impartial parent; it has no favorites. However, people are all different, luckily; and though one man will arrive in exile as a destitute refugee and in time own a whopping Chevrolet and be a self-employed taxi driver, with a cozy home and a smiling wife in a flowered print dress and a gleaming refrigerator in the dining room, another will remain in whatever shelter UNRWA gave him, sitting either on his own floor or at a café table, waiting for nothing, or for divine intervention, or for the mailed, promised, delivering fist of Nasser. UNRWA did not invent the human condition.



Of UNRWA's fifty-eight camps, I visited eight — in Lebanon, the Gaza Strip, and Jordan. The plan and facilities of every UNRWA camp are alike; they differ only in size and are better or worse depending on whether they are newer or older and on the character of the people who live in them. Each camp has its clinic and school (or schools), warehouse center for distributing rations, "supplementary feeding station," where hot meals are served to those who need them, village bazaar street with small shops, market booths, cafés. The bigger the camp, the bigger the bazaar. I also went round two hospitals, two vocational training schools, and was received in two private homes, having been invited by refugees.

My guide and chaperone was an UNRWA employee, a Palestinian Arab, who served as translator when needed. My system was to say: please show me your best and your worst camp, and if time permits, let us also look at the in-between. In the camps, I knocked on any door and many. Nothing was planned. We chatted at random and went wherever I liked. In the Gaza Strip, I was accompanied for a day by a young Palestinian in a pin-striped suit; he or someone like him is a cross every foreigner has to bear. He is local Secret Service, and the refugees know this; he is an ardent Nasserite, as apparently all

Palestinian government officials in Gaza are, or must appear to be; and he is by avocation a propagandist and demagogue. At one Gaza camp, besides this young gent, I had an escort of three Palestinian cops who lent an even heavier note to the proceedings. Otherwise, my visits were uncensored. I may have seen a true cross section of the Palestinian refugee population, and I may not have. I only know that I saw real people in the flesh, and a large number of them, and I know what they said. When the word "they" appears on these pages, it means those Arabs whom I saw; it means nothing more.

BEIRUT is a lovely boom town, an entrancing mixture of Asia Minor and France, with scenery to lift the heart and glamour hotels all over the lot and more abuilding. We set off, my Palestinian guide and I, in a shiny car for an UNRWA camp in the Lebanese hills. My guide, like his colleagues who accompanied me elsewhere, was an executive, responsible for an UNRWA department, dressed in a Western business suit, a self-assured, middle-class Organization Man. The refugees are not only individuals, but they come from widely different social backgrounds. Men of the class of my guides would not be living in refugee camps; they might work in them as doctors or teachers.

This camp was inhabited exclusively by Christian Arabs. I wondered aloud at a separation by creed. My guide was a Muslim and said that Christian camps were always cleaner and superior to Muslim ones, and besides, very few Christians lived in camps; they arranged their lives better on their own.

The camp consisted of little cement or frame houses rambling over the hillside, a village of poor people, disorderly and beflowered and cheerful. School was letting out for lunch; troops of children, dressed in the pinafore uniform that small boys and girls wear in Italian schools, meandered home, shouting bye-bye at friendly, giggling length. They are Roman Catholics here, but the young teachers are refugees, not priests. They have to teach the children about Palestine, since most of them have never seen the country and even the oldest cannot remember it. The children are taught hate, the Garden of Eden stolen from them by murderers; their duty is to live for Return and Revenge.

The miniature white clinic had only one customer, a nice-looking girl of twenty-one who had brought her fourth baby for a checkup. Her husband works in Libya; she too lived there for a few years but returned. Libya is very expensive; she can live here with his parents and thus save

money for the future. The resident nurse, a buxom elderly woman, said they had no real sickness; in summer, the children got a bit of conjunctivitis and diarrhea; oh, no, trachoma is very rare, and besides, we cure it; there's some chicken pox now. My guide announced that if any refugee needed an operation he was taken in an ambulance to a hospital in Beirut where UNRWA reserved beds and paid for everything; you would have to be a rich man in Lebanon to get such good and speedy treatment. Her fourth baby, I mused, and she only twenty-one. Yes, yes, said my guide, the refugees have a higher birth rate than any other Arabs, and healthier children.

Refugees receive a monthly basic food ration of flour, pulse (dried peas, beans, lentils), sugar, rice, oils, and fats; this amounts to 1500 calories a day per person, increased in winter to 1600 calories a day, and it is not enough. The refugee must find some way to earn money to increase his diet, or keep poultry or rabbits, or grow vegetables. Many had planted tiny gardens here, but charmingly and with more enthusiasm, they also grow flowers for the joy of the thing. There is a daily milk ration for children and pregnant and nursing mothers; and hot meals are served in the "supplementary feeding station," to those who need them, on the doctor's order. In this camp, said my guide, 85 per cent of the people have work. If there are hardship cases, when no one can bring money to the family, UNRWA's Welfare Section steps in. This pattern is universal.

If you think it your duty, I said, to make everything seem better than it is, don't. I'm not on an inspection tour, I only want to get some idea of what life is really like. He stopped, offended, in the middle of the stony path and explained: here, in Lebanon, 80 per cent of the refugees are better off than they were in Palestine. Twenty per cent are not. The 20 per cent were small capitalists, and there is much rivalry with the Lebanese in business, they make obstacles. Also it is political; they do not give the refugees citizenship, you understand, because the main part of the refugees are Muslims and that would upset the balance here, where the Christians rule. I do not speak to you of the rich Palestinian refugees; they are richer than before, they are very happy.

WE WENT to pay the required *visite de politesse* to the camp leader. Every camp leader acts as an appointed village mayor; he has to keep the place running, serve as liaison officer with UNRWA local headquarters, and handle the complaints of his own people. Sitting in his neat

office, with my guide, the principal of the school (a former member of the Palestinian police), and the camp leader, I listened to the first of what became an almost daily Mad Hatter conversation.

It went like this:

"The Arab countries invaded Israel in 1948 to save the Palestine Arabs from being massacred by the Jews."

"Were there massacres? Where?"

"Oh, yes, everywhere. Terrible, terrible."

"Then you must have lost many relatives and friends."

This, being a tiresome deduction from a previous statement, is brushed aside without comment.

"Israel overran the truce lines and stole our country. We left from fear. We have a right to our property, which brings in 47 million pounds a year in income. If we had our own money, we would need nothing from UNRWA. Our own money is much more. We do not have to be grateful for the little money spent on us. We should have our own."

"Then, of course, you want to return to your property and to Israel?"

"Not to Israel. Never to Israel. To our own country, to our own part."

"But didn't the Jews accept Partition, while the Palestine Arabs and the Arab governments refused?"

"Yes, yes. And England protected the Jews. An Arab was arrested if he carried a pistol only to defend himself, but Jews could go through the streets in tanks and nothing happened to them. Also, England told the Arab states to attack Israel."

The principal of the school then spoke up. "In our school, we teach the children from their first year about their country and how it was stolen from them. I tell my son of seven. You will see: one day a man of eighty and a child so high, all, all will go home with arms in their hands and take back their country by force."

On this warlike note, we left. My guide had seemed a sober contented fellow until our little meeting, whereupon he sounded like a politician running recklessly for office. He then astonished me again.

"It can all be solved with money," he said. "Now the people have nothing in their mouths but words, so they talk. Money fills the mouth too. If every man got a thousand dollars for each member of his family, for compensation to have lost his country, and he could be a citizen in any Arab country he likes, he would not think of Palestine any more. Then he could start a new life and be rich and happy. And those who really do own something in Palestine must be paid for

what they had there. But those are not many. Most had nothing, only work."

HIGH on a mountaintop, with a down-sweeping view of orange groves and the satin blue of the Mediterranean, is a small Muslim camp named Mia Mia. Here one whole Palestinian village, amongst others, had landed; they came from a mountaintop in Galilee, a place called Meron. Their headman, or village leader, the Muktar, plied us with Coca-Cola and Turkish coffee in his exile's parlor. He is a beautiful man, perhaps sixty-five years old, lean, with exquisite manners. He wore the handsome white Arab headdress, held in place by the usual black double-corded crown; he was dressed in a well-preserved cream silk jacket, a white silk shirt, pressed gray flannel trousers, polished Italianate black shoes.

Whilst we sucked Coca-Cola through straws and studied his son's pitifully bad but lovingly executed paintings — a portrait of Nasser; Christ and the Virgin — the Muktar talked. Seventeen people of his village were massacred, which was why they fled, but an old blind woman of 104 was left behind and the Jews poured kerosene over her and burned her alive. How did they know, if they had all fled? Well, then the Jews went away and some villagers crept back and found her, and besides, the United Nations Truce Commission also found her.

My guide looked embarrassed. The Truce Commission was a shaky point. It was a strain to believe that the UN military observers, occupied with armies and frontiers, would have had time to investigate each atrocity story in the country. I wondered where the families of the massacred and the cremated were; everyone knows everyone else in a village, surely the surviving relatives were the best witnesses.

"I could tell you many such stories," said the Muktar.

"I am sure of it," said I. "But please tell me about Meron."

So I heard of Meron, their beautiful stone houses, their lovely groves, their spacious and happy life in Eden; all lost now. I could readily imagine this aristocrat living in a palace on a mountaintop and decided that I would later go and see his home; but for the moment I accepted a rose from him, and we set off to pay calls in the camp.

A woman of forty or so, with a face like the best and juiciest apple, and lively eyes, seized me and hauled me into her house. She began, with gestures, to deliver an oration. She touched the ceiling with contempt, pulling bits away; she called

upon heaven to witness her misery. Her voice soared and fell in glorious rhythms. She loved doing it and I loved watching it. In mutual delight, we smiled more and more as the tale of woe unfolded, until she could keep it up no longer, burst into roars of laughter, and kissed me copiously. My guide seemed unduly glum about all this, perhaps because this day we were three; a European UNRWA official had joined us.

"She is a big liar," said my guide, when we had left her house. "She lies as she breathes. We gave her all the material for a new roof. She sold it. She is so poor that she is going to make a pilgrimage to Mecca this year. She does not have to make a pilgrimage. Do you know what that costs? One thousand pounds."

In Lebanese money, this amounts to about \$350 — a fortune.

"Oh, she is a terrible bad one."

"I loved her," I said. "She's one of my favorite types of people in the world. A really jolly open crook. I hope she has a wonderful time at Mecca."

"But we have to fix her roof anyhow," said the UNRWA official.

In our suite of followers, I had noticed a tall boy of sixteen or seventeen, with fine intelligent eyes, a happy face, and a fresh white shirt. I spoke to him in English, and he understood; I asked whether we could visit his family. His house was no larger than any other, but clean, peaceful, and touching, with orderly furniture and picture post cards tacked to the walls. His mother was blind from cataract, and his grandmother seemed older than time, of a generation so old that she had tattoo marks on her cheeks.

The boy had graduated from high school and now worked as manager of the food distribution center in the big camp (14,000 inhabitants) on the plain below. He must have been very competent and very reliable to merit this job. He hoped to become a TV-radio engineer. He did not speak of Palestine. There was work he wanted to do, wherever a man could do such work. UNRWA is now building a vocational training school in Lebanon; it should be open in the autumn. With any luck, this boy will learn the technical skill he so desires and make his own life independent of anyone's charity.

We heard shrill painful child's crying and went toward the sound. A child of about two was tied by the ankle to a chair, howling the same word over and over. A younger child was silently trying to hold its body up, clinging to the arm of another chair. On a clean mat, on a clean little sheet, a baby twisted its body restlessly, but its legs lay still. All three were remarkably good-looking, all seemingly husky and well formed.

The camp leader carried on a short barking ex-

change with their young mother and reported: "She is twenty-five. None of the children can move their legs; the legs will not hold them. The child is tied because he can pull himself out of the house and get hurt. She says, please, will you help her?"

Speaking French to the UNRWA official, because no one else there knew the language, I said; "She can easily have five or six more children like this. It is terrible for her. The visiting nurse ought to explain about birth control."

"You don't know what you're saying. UNRWA could not touch such a thing, not even mention it. Here are these people, and the name of their country does not exist on the map any more. If we start teaching them birth control, we will be accused of trying to wipe out the people too. Besides, the men would never allow it. They want to have a lot of sons; it is a matter of pride with them. And politics enters too, as into everything; I've heard them say it. We need to have many children and grow and increase so that the world will never forget us."

"They're doing well, from what I've seen."

"About 30,000 babies a year."

The camp leader, escorting us to our car, remarked that no one here had any work. He delivered a short speech in English; he was a very nice, gentle man. "All the men do is sit in café and suffer, suffer. A young man sees time running, running, and he gets old with no years. If I did not get my land to hope for, I lose my brains."

On our way to Beirut, the UNRWA official said, "Eighty per cent of the men in that camp work. It's quite a prosperous little camp."

"Do they lie just for the fun of it?" It had been a long day.

"Well, it's natural in front of us. If they earn too much, they are taken off the ration lists. If they earn above a certain amount, they aren't eligible for the services. Free medicine and doctoring and schooling. So, obviously they don't want us to know."

"Like non-refugees with the income tax collectors?"

"That's it."

"Do you know what they are earning?"

"Not really. How could we? Of course, if anyone has regular employment, we eventually learn of it and cut down the rolls."

The refugees, in camps as well as outside of camps, do find work of some sort; otherwise, on 1500 calories a day, they would soon become and look like a severely undernourished, sickly group. UNRWA's health statistics can be relied on; they know how many refugees use their medical services and for what reason and with what results. The

standard of health is unusually high and is one of UNRWA's finest achievements.

On the plain below Mia Mia, the land is green with citrus groves, banana plantations, where nothing grew before. This is the work of refugees; someone should be very grateful to them. Refugees who were city dwellers in Palestine gravitate to city work: taxi drivers, employees, merchants. No matter what official attitudes are, all of these people tend to seek their own previous level, under the universal refugee handicap of starting from scratch, of being exploitable, and in competition with established locals. Besides, they are living in a part of the world where poverty is an endemic disease and it is hard for anyone to make a good living, unless you are born into a silver-spoon family.

Out of the blue, my guide announced: "There is no crime in the camps. No thefts, no fires, no blood feuds. It is much better than it was in Palestine. They know they are all brothers in refuge. There were a few murders some time ago; someone raping, something like that. It is natural. But no crime."

And this is true. In all the camps. Exile has taught one valuable lesson: how to live peacefully and lawfully together.

TO ENTER the Gaza Strip you require a military visa from the Egyptian government in Cairo. I had arrived in Cairo expecting to proceed like the wind directly from there to Gaza but was informed, by the local UNRWA press officer, that this permit took two or three weeks to get, and sometimes you never got it. Besides, there was only one UNEF army plane to Gaza each Saturday, and they didn't like carrying anyone except their own personnel; besides, it was now Thursday, and tomorrow was the Muslim Sunday, and indeed all looked hopeless. I foresaw bumming a jeep ride over the sandstorming desert and infiltrating into the Strip somehow; but meantime I called on the Egyptian authorities.

Because of the Muslim holy day, and the number of passport photos I needed and the number of offices I had to run between, it took about four days to get the visa, and every minute was enjoyable. The Egyptian officials could not have been kinder, and I loved seeing them, the new ruling class, who remind me, in their cheerful, inchoate, important busyness, of many new ruling classes I have observed round and about, over the years. It is difficult to believe that these pleasant young men, in shirt sleeves or uniforms, with their numerous callers, their telephones, their mounds of mimeographed forms, their empty Turkish coffee

cups, have any connection with the vainglory, the xenophobia, the anti-Semitic hatred that smear the press and pour over the air of their fascinating city.

THE Gaza Strip, from all accounts, would be a real hell hole. It is a roughly rectangular slice of land, on the southernmost Mediterranean frontier of Israel, some forty kilometers long by five to ten kilometers wide, and 365,000 people, refugees and residents, live on it. I imagined it as a sand dune, packed solid with human flesh, blazing hot, hideous, and filthy. It is none of these. The weather was so idyllic — a china-blue sky and a constant cool breeze — that I assumed this was special luck and at once asked my charming landlady about it. No, the weather in Gaza was always delightful. She had lived here for thirty years; there were two "sticky" weeks in the summer, otherwise you could not find a more benign climate. Flying over the Strip, I had noted plenty of sand, but also plenty of green. There were always citrus groves in Gaza, my landlady reported, Gaza was famous for them, but since the refugees came these had greatly increased, as had the general cultivation. Anything grows here, she said, exhibiting her blossoming garden.

Then I remarked that Gaza town was a beehive of activity, with all the UNEF soldiers, Danes, Norwegians, Indians, Canadians, Yugoslavs, who patrol the Israeli-Gaza border and spend money in the town in their free time, and the Egyptian upper crust which oversees the Palestinian officials, and UNRWA and visitors and the local residents and, indeed, the refugees. The refugees seemed to bring prosperity with them; it was most mysterious.

Not at all, said my landlady, we do not know why we are not completely bankrupt; but she was adding a third floor to her already roomy house, so great is the demand for lodgings. Sizable villas are being built in what must be the fashionable section of Gaza. The main square boasts an array of parked Mercedes, finned pastel American cars, and humbler Volkswagens. The taxis in Gaza are new. There is an imposing movie theater, in the ugly world-wide chromium-and-junk style; there are abundant cafés and numerous ill-lit dingy shops, typical of the region. An economist could surely answer this riddle: if no one has any money, what are these eccentric merchants and purveyors of services doing?

The refugee camps are much larger than those in Lebanon, small towns by Middle Eastern standards. They are by no means luxury establishments, but many people live in a nastier state in American and European slums. The poor villagers of Gaza

are not as well housed or cared for as the refugees. The Gaza Strip is not a hell hole, not a visible disaster. It is worse; it is a jail — with a magical long white sand beach, and a breeze, and devoted welfare workers (UNRWA) to look after the prisoners.

The Egyptian government is the jailer. For reasons of its own, it does not allow the refugees to move from this narrow strip of land. The refugees might not want to leave at all, or they might not want to leave for good; but anyone would become claustrophobic if penned, for thirteen years, inside 248 square kilometers. A trickle of refugees, who can prove they have jobs elsewhere, are granted exit visas. The only official number of the departed is less than three hundred, out of 255,000 registered refugees. It seems incredible. Rumor says that more refugees do manage to go away illegally, by unknown methods.

These locked-in people — far too many in far too little space — cannot find adequate work. Naturally, there is less chance of employment than in the other “host countries.” Meantime, they are exposed to the full and constant blast of Egyptian propaganda. No wonder that Gaza was the home base of the trained paramilitary bands called commandos by the Egyptians and Palestinians, and gangsters by the Israelis — the *fedayin*, whose job was to cross unnoticed into Israel and commit acts of patriotic sabotage and murder. And having been so devastatingly beaten by Israel again, in 1956, has not improved the trapped, bitter Gaza mentality; it only makes the orators more bloodthirsty.

ANOTHER Mad Hatter conversation, practically a public meeting, took place in the office of the leader of two adjacent camps, a man in charge of some 29,000 people. The camp leader, the self-appointed orator, sat behind his desk. The Secret Service youth, mentioned earlier, the quiet UNRWA Palestinian, my regular chaperone, and the three uniformed cops of highish rank completed the company.

First the camp leader told me how rich they had all been in Palestine and how miserable they were now and how much land they had all owned. I do not doubt for one minute how much land some of them owned, nor how rich some of them were, and I did not point out this subtle distinction: if *everyone* owned the land claimed, Palestine would be the size of Texas; if *everyone* had been so rich, it would have been largely populated by millionaires. To gild the past is only human, we all do it; and to gild it with solid gold is even more human if you are a refugee.

This part of his address was already so familiar that I could have recited it for him.

Then he spoke of Jaffa, his native town. The Jews surrounded the city, firing on all sides; they left one little way out, by the sea, so the Arabs would go away. Only the very old and the very poor stayed, and they were killed. Arab refugees tell many dissimilar versions of the Jaffa story, but the puzzler is: where are the relatives of those who must have perished in the fury of high explosive — the infallible witnesses? No one says he was loaded on a truck (or a boat) at gun point; no one describes being forced from his home by armed Jews; no one recalls the extra menace of enemy attacks, while in flight. The sight of the dead, the horrors of escape are exact, detailed memories never forgotten by those who had them. Surely Arabs would not forget or suppress such memories, if they, too, had them.

As for those Arabs who remained behind, they are still in Jaffa — 3000 of them — living in peace, prosperity, and discontent, with their heirs and descendants.

“The Jews are criminals,” the camp leader continued in a rising voice. “Murderers! They are the worst criminals in the whole world.”

Had he ever heard of Hitler?

He banged his table and said, “Hitler was far better than the Jews!”

“Far better murderer? He killed six million Jews as a start,” I observed.

“Oh, that is all exaggerated. He did not. Besides, the Jews bluffed Hitler. They arranged in secret that he should kill a few of them — old ones, weak ones — to make the others emigrate to Palestine.”

“Thirty-six thousand of them,” said the Secret Service man, proving the point, “came here, before the war, from Central Europe.”

“It’s amazing,” I said. “I have never before heard anywhere that the Jews arranged with Hitler for him to kill them.”

“It was a secret!” the camp leader shouted. “The documents have been found. Everyone knows. It was published. The Jews arranged it all with Hitler.”

There is a limit to the amount of Mad Hattery one can endure, so I suggested that we visit the camp. I knocked on a door at random, before the camp leader had a chance to steer me anywhere. Two young married couples lived here. In a corner by the courtyard wall stood a group of visitors, silent Arab women, in their graceful long blue dresses, slightly hiding their faces behind their white head veils. The older women wore silver coins on chains across their foreheads; this is very pretty and is also guaranteed to prevent sickness of the eyes. It was useless to try to

lure the women into talk, but one of the husbands talked freely. The Secret Service youth translated.

"It is the blame of America that this happened, because they help the Jews. We only want America to help us to get back to our land."

"How?" I asked. "By war?"

"When the Arabs are united, we will make the war."

"What do you want from us then? Arms to make this war with?"

"No, we want you to stop giving arms and money to Israel. Just now Kennedy has given Israel \$25 million for arms."

"I do not believe that the U.S. government has ever given or sold arms to Israel. What about the arms Nasser gets from Russia and Czechoslovakia?"

"That is all right. That is different. They are peace-loving nations. They only want to help the undeveloped countries."

The Secret Service man put in: "America offered us arms, but with conditions. We will not accept conditions. So we take from the Eastern countries, who give without conditions."

"What do you do?" I asked the fat young husband.

"Nothing."

"What would you like to do?"

"Be a soldier and fight Jews."

This oratory pleased the public very much.

"Do you all like Nasser?" I asked, politely.

Wide smiles. General joy.

"We do. Certainly. Oh, of course. He will unite us and make us strong. He is our leader."

FOR rest and relaxation, together with thousands of locals, I went to the School Sports Day. Fifty thousand refugee children attend school on the Gaza Strip, 98 per cent of the possible school population. In Gaza's spacious stadium, 2000 school children were gathered. They ranged from tiny tots, the Brownies, in berets and ballet-skirted orange uniforms, to boys in running shorts and muscles. They paraded past the governor of the Gaza Strip in the viewing stand, led by girls in colored outfits who formed the Palestine flag. The human flag was followed by the Brownie babies, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, girl gymnasts, and boy gymnasts. "We dressed every one of them," an English UNRWA official said. "This show costs us about two thousand dollars, but it's worth it. It gives them something to look forward to. They all love it." They loved it and their admiring families loved it and the public loved it.

The children had marched in earnest stiff-legged style. ("Like the British Army," I said.

"Like the Egyptian Army," he said.) They then lined up in formation, and a loudspeaker blared out Arabic. Three times the children shouted a unanimous, squeaky but enthusiastic reply to the loudspeaker's commanding male voice.

"What are the cheers for?"

"The first is: 'Long Live a Free Palestine.' The second is: 'Long Live the United Arab Republic.' The third is: 'Long Live Gamal Abdel Nasser.'"

I stayed to see the white-clad girl gymnasts, as graceful as a field of Isadora Duncans, doing lovely swaying motions with blue gauze handkerchiefs.

The Vocational Training School at Gaza is a freshly painted group of buildings, with well-kept lawns, flower borders, scrubbed Spartan self-respecting dormitories, and impressive workshops equipped with the complex machinery that modern life seems to depend on. The boys were on their playing field that afternoon, a holiday, marking white lines for various sporting events to come. A few of them drifted back and wanted to show off every inch of their school. Did they like it here, did they enjoy their work, were they happy? Needless to ask; the answer glowed and shone on them. The graduates of this school find good jobs for which they are trained; amongst its many other parental functions UNRWA operates a placement bureau throughout the Middle East. This is the new generation, the UNRWA graduates, and you find them everywhere in the Arab refugee world. They have not yet been crippled by exile, regret, or hate, and they may well be the brightest citizens of the Arab future. They are the source of all hope.

Two accidental conversations stick in my memory. Once, lost in the UNRWA compound of offices, I chanced on a pretty, dark secretary, who told me the kind of inside human angle of history which is more interesting than any other. In 1956, when the Israelis took the Gaza Strip, during what they call the Sinai campaign and we call Suez, for short, telephone communication was restored between the Strip and Israel, which is, after all, just across the fields. In the midst of enemy occupation, the secretary's sister-in-law rang up from the small town where she lived in Israel, to have a chat. How was everyone? The sister-in-law reported that they were fine, her husband was doing very well, they had a nice house and no trouble of any kind. The secretary, recalling this family news, said, "I think if we had all stayed where we were, nothing would have happened to us. All this would not have come about. And what is it for? My children have never seen Palestine. I tell them; and in every school, every minute, they are always told. But when they are grown? The people who knew Palestine will die, and the young ones — will they be interested?"

The second memorable talk took place at the

Sewing Center. The Sewing Center is another of UNRWA's camp inventions, and it is self-supporting. UNRWA Sewing Centers teach dress-making and new uses for traditional Palestinian embroidery — vast tablecloths and sets of napkins, blouses, skirts, which sell at good prices to local customers and to city specialty shops. Hundreds of refugee girls earn small wages and stave off boredom, while learning a trade. The Gaza center was managed by a bustling cheerful plump Palestinian refugee, who would be taken for a bustling cheerful plump young Jewess in any Western country; but, of course, Arabs and Jews are the same race, Semites. The young manageress showed me massive tablecloths (which none of us would be grand enough to own or get washed), and she praised her girls, who sat on a long porch, embroidering, flattered, giggling.

It was as clear as if she wore a sign, but I asked anyhow: "You're happy, aren't you?"

"I have a nice husband, and two children, and a comfortable house. I like my work very much; it is very interesting. Yes. We are happy." And she smiled. Such a smile. The world isn't lost, not even on the Gaza Strip.

Most of the Christian Arab refugees live scattered around Gaza in rented private houses. A few Christian families asked for free government land at the edge of a Muslim camp, the usual free allotment of building materials from UNRWA, borrowed extra money, and built their own houses with small well-tended gardens. My UNRWA guide, himself a Greek Orthodox Arab, took me to visit one of these trim, respectable self-made homes, belonging to a family he had known before in Jaffa.

The old mother was half blind; the recurrence of eye disease is a Middle Eastern, not a refugee affliction. My guide and this family had not seen each other for some time, and immediately after their first greeting, the old woman wept with incurable grief and was consoled, gently, but as if he had done so often before, by my guide. He explained: this family had suffered a great tragedy. One of the sons was killed by shellfire, in Jaffa.

I report this because it was the only family I met where an actual human being was known to be dead. Here, at last, the infallible witness testified; and here this death, thirteen years old, was mourned as if it had come upon them yesterday. My UNRWA guide behaved as if this case were unique and deserved the aching pity which everyone feels for those who have lost a loved member of the family in war.

I left Gaza, wishing that I could take all the young people with me, and not to Palestine, but out into a wider world. Their destiny should not be to go back, but to go forth. They need exactly

the opposite of what the Jews need. There is plenty of room for both needs.

OFFICIALLY, over 600,000 Palestinian refugees live in Jordan, more than in the other three "host countries" put together. But legally there is no such thing as a refugee in Jordan. The refugees are full citizens of Jordan; they have every right and privilege and opportunity that a born Jordanian has. Many of the Palestine Jordanians are contented and have made good lives, despite the limitations that a hot, barren, undeveloped country places on all its inhabitants.

Much of the barrenness and poverty could have been corrected by a scheme for the use of the waters of the Jordan River, to irrigate land now wasted. Eric Johnston, who was President Eisenhower's special representative to implement this life-giving plan, finally reported: "After two years of discussion, technical experts of Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria agreed upon every important detail of a unified Jordan plan. But in October 1955 it was rejected for political reasons at a meeting of the Arab League."

Judging by the refugees I saw in Jericho, in camps outside Jerusalem, in Jerusalem itself, the boon of citizenship fosters sanity. The emotional climate in Jordan is noticeably different from that of the Gaza Strip. A school principal stated that children are taught the history of Palestine, "without politics." Exactly what this means, I cannot say. In Jordan, a refugee's education and self-reliance showed at once in his politics. The better educated, the more able do not waste their time on thoughts of violent revenge, and give their loyalty to King Hussein. The more ignorant and less competent nourish themselves with a passion for Nasser, war, and Return.

Two men, living next door to each other in a camp outside Jerusalem, aptly illustrate this difference in personality and politics. The camp watchman, who lived in a new little UNRWA house which was already a pigsty, with empty sardine tins on the floor, a filthy yard, rags for bedding, announced, "We were evicted by force, and so we will return. Led by Nasser and Hussein and all the Arab leaders." His neighbor, an old man, had cleared the stony ground around his house and made a flourishing vegetable garden. Inside his courtyard you could hardly move for the rows of drying laundry. He did not have a word to say about war or force or Arab leaders. He said that he would rather starve to death than not give his grandchildren education. "As long as I live and can work, my grandson will go to the university."

The largest Jericho camp is run by an objectionable tyrant, yet its cleanliness was nearly Swiss. "I gave them six thousand trees," said the refugee-tyrant, speaking in his capacity of God. "Five years ago, the Mukstars [the village leaders] would not let me give the people trees; they said if they plant trees, the people will never want to go home." Now trees rise over the walls that separate the little houses, and more trees are to be distributed. An inexhaustible supply of clean water flows from twenty-one water points. Forty thousand people live here in solid dwellings, under the stern eye of their tyrant; bird-fast children play in the streets.

"How is your name? Are you well? Good-by! Good night! Hello, leddy!" The children chirped and circled; the tyrant tried roughly to shout them off. One boy, determined to have his say, presented me with a whole English sentence.

He took me to his home, four airy rooms (one lined with chairs for visiting), a neat yard, presided over by a smiling serene-faced mother, very proud of her son who could speak alone in a foreign language to a foreign guest. He told me, slowly, of his life, his family, and his ambitions. He was thirteen and had studied English here for two years, in school. He had never talked English with anyone before, except his teacher. After this encounter, I visited some English classes in another camp, to watch the miracle in the making. The boy wants to become a teacher.

"In this country?" I asked, waiting for the expected cry, "No! In my country! Palestine!"

"No, not in this country, in Jerusalem or Amman."

So finally I realized, as I should have all along, that "country" means town or village; when the Arab peasant refugees talk of their country — even if they happen to be in it, as they are here — they are talking about their own village, their birthplace. The boy's mind had gone no farther than the big cities of the only country he knows; his mind may travel much farther than that. The highest ambition of all the best students is to become a teacher or a doctor. Teachers and doctors are needed throughout the world, and the Arab world needs them intensely.

Jordan has a Vocational Training School also, as happy and hopeful as the school in Gaza. Here I forgathered with a class of budding plumbers, another set of citizens the world can well use. They were very merry in their blue work clothes and greasy hands, and full of plans for the future. One wished to go to Kuwait, one to America. One boy said he wanted to plumb in Palestine. The youngest and smallest of them, in a curiously wise voice — both bored and dismissive — said, "Oh,

all that will take a long time." None of them was interested enough to go on with it.

The only place that looked as I originally expected refugee life to look was in the Jordanian part of divided Jerusalem, in the old Ghetto. Jews had festered in those lightless rat holes, jammed among the ancient stones, for longer than one can imagine; for thirteen years, Arab refugees have endured the same hideous life. This is medieval misery and squalor; nothing like it exists in the modern world.

From a fetid passageway, a straight-backed, cleanly dressed, handsome boy bounded into the cobbled alley street. He took the arm of his teacher, who happened to be my guide that day; they were good friends. He was the star pupil of his class. Where could he possibly study? In the street, the boy said, anywhere outside. He has known no other home than a single damp room, a dungeon, where he lives with his bedridden grandfather, his parents, and a brother.

"All the boys from here are good boys," the teacher said, and his amazement showed in his voice. "And very witty." He meant "intelligent," I later discovered.

Did the UNRWA Director know of this vile slum? No, said the camp leader. I hurried off to ask why UNRWA allowed human beings to live in such revolting squalor. Whereupon I was informed that the Director had visited the Jerusalem Ghetto within two weeks of taking on his job. UNRWA had tried, at various times, to move these refugees, who refused to go because they preferred living inside the city. But now, since their birth rate had risen at such lightning speed, they were more than ready to leave, and within the year they would be settled in a new camp outside Jerusalem. There were two more dreadful refugee slums in the "host countries" — I did not see either; these were the only subhuman living conditions, and it was not UNRWA's fault they continued. They would, in time, be eradicated.

Despite all difficulties, UNRWA runs a welfare state; no other exists in the Arab Middle East. "The refugee has a net under him; the local population has none." Quote from an UNRWA official. It should be stated that the UNRWA personnel loves its Arab charges, which is not only right but essential. You cannot help those you do not cherish.

WITH my suitcases packed, and my mind overpacked with "treasonous" doubts, I set off for Israel, across the street. I had not dared tell anyone, including the Western UNRWA officials,

of this intention: to have been in Israel, to go to Israel, is enough to brand you as an enemy and, more possibly, a spy. The Arab psychosis (an ornate word but not too strong) about Israel is official, and infectious. There may be many reasonable people in the Arab countries who are able to think calmly about Israel and about Arab-Israel relations; if so, they choose safety and keep their mouths shut.

When it comes to moving from one side of Jerusalem, which is Jordan, to the other side of Jerusalem, which is Israel, the world of dream sets in. You take a taxi, through normal streets, and suddenly you arrive at a small Jordanian frontier post, also in a city street. You wait, in this little shack, while your passport is checked against the exit list. After this formality, a charming courteous young porter carries your suitcases half a block. You tip him, and he deposits them on the porch of a house which is no longer there. Artillery fire removed it, years ago. Around you are shelled houses; one side of the street is Jordan, with laughing soldiers in the shelled houses; one side of the street is Israel, with washing hung out on lines. You walk a half block further, leaving your bags behind. You are now at the Israel frontier post, another shack. Like crossing the river Styx, this is a one-way journey. When you have left Jordan for Israel, you cannot return by this road. The Arab blockade of Israel thus extends to foreign visitors. You would have to fly from Israel to neutral territory and start all over, provided the Arabs still like you, after a visit to Israel.

Since you will not be admitted to any Arab country if you have an Israeli visa on your passport, you carry your Israeli visa on a separate sheet of paper. Other nations than ours present their traveling citizens with two passports. After the Israeli border police have checked your visa, an equally charming courteous young porter, an Israeli, collects your bags from the porch of the nonexistent house in no man's land. You tip him and put the luggage in a taxi and drive a few blocks to your hotel. From your hotel in Israel you have a fine view of the beautiful wall and the Old City of Jerusalem, where you were residing three quarters of an hour ago.

There is not a war on, not by any terms we know. The object of this non-peace-non-war exercise is to destroy Israel, which remains undestroyed. I cannot see how it helps the Arab countries, but perhaps it does. Perhaps they need one enemy they can agree on, as a unifying force, as cement for their nationalism.

I wanted to visit Palestinian Arabs in Israel, the ones who stayed behind, the non-refugees. Seeing them at home, I thought I might better

understand the mentality of their brothers in exile. Some important clue was lacking, but I could not name it or define it.

The driver of my car, on the journey in Israel, was an Israeli Jew, born there, who speaks Arabic as his second mother tongue and looks so like Nasser that it is a joke. I said I wanted to visit the village of Meron, on a mountaintop in Galilee. He said that at Meron there was an ancient temple of the Jews, the grave of a famous rabbi, a synagogue, a Yeshiva (the Orthodox Jewish equivalent of a Catholic seminary), but nothing else to his knowledge. Let us go and find out, I said. So we drove north through this country, which is a monument to the obstinate, tireless will of man. In 1949, the new immigrants, like ants on the hillsides, were planting trees: their first job. It looked as if they were planting blades of grass and seemed a pitiful act of faith. Now the trees have grown.

There are countless changes in Israel, but the Arab villages along the road to Nazareth have not changed. The old adobe or field-stone houses cling to and grow from each other. They are charming, picturesque, primitive, and wretched; but not to Arab peasants. This is the way it always was; this is the way they like it and want to keep it.

We drove up the mountain. Between the synagogue and the heroic ruins of the two-thousand-year-old temple, we did indeed find Meron, the home of the aristocrat who had offered me a rose on a mountaintop in Lebanon. There were not more than twelve houses in the village. The Muktar's palace is a long narrow stone shed, with an ugly narrow porch along the front. Instead of beams, bits of rusted railway track hold up the porch. The other small houses were built of the honey-colored, rough field stone, with traditional graceful doors and windows. Inside, the houses were like stables unfit for decent animals. The rich fields and groves the Meron refugees had described were the steep slopes of the mountain behind, where the villagers cultivated tobacco and some fruit and fig trees. In their day, the village had no electric light or water; the women carried water on their heads from the wadi at the foot of the mountain. The view is a dream of beauty. Hardship for hardship, Meron is no better than their refugee camp, Mia Mia, perhaps not as good; but memory is magical, and Meron was home.

Beside these pretty stone hovels tower the remains of a great temple. The blocks of granite in the fragmented wall are as massive as those in the wall of Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem. The broken pillars are enormous, unadorned, and suddenly Samson is real and pulled down real pillars as heavy as these. Here, two thousand

years ago, the Jews were praying in a new temple, for two thousand years is not all that much in the history of the Jews or of this land. And here, with weeds around their low walls, stand the abandoned houses of the descendants of warrior strangers, the Arabs who came to this country and conquered it when the temple was some six hundred years old, doubtless already a ruin. Were the villagers of Meron happy when they lived on this mountain; did they think it Eden then? And why did they run away? The war never touched this place.

ON January 1, 1960, according to Israeli statistics, 159,236 Muslims, 48,277 Christian Arabs, and 22,351 Druses lived in Israel. These people will have increased, but that is a good enough basis to work on; roughly a quarter of a million Arabs by now. The Jewish population, coming together here from the four corners of the earth, was 1,858,841. These dissimilar people live on eight thousand square miles of quite beautiful, laboriously and lovingly reclaimed rock heap and sand dune — of which one third is irreducible desert. The Druses, a separate and secret sect, are a phenomenon; they are content. They trust and approve of the Jews; they are loyal citizens of Israel. The remaining Arabs are something else again.

On this tour, I visited a Christian Arab village near the Lebanese frontier; a Muslim Arab village on the coastal plain near Acre; two Muslim villages near the Jordanian frontier; a new Muslim settlement near Tel Aviv — the exact copy of a new Jewish settlement, built by the government; and a Roman Catholic priest, in the beautiful Crusader city of Acre.

My idea was to search out Arab schoolteachers, on the grounds that they would probably speak English, were educated men, would know the feelings of their communities, and would have thought about Arab problems. Arabs, living in their own communities, have their own schools, by their own wish, where the children are taught in Arabic, according to Arab principles. Nissim, my driver, was to serve as translator until I had found someone I could talk to; he was then to disappear. I did not want anyone to feel hampered by his alien presence. I might have spared myself anxiety. The candor of the Arabs is proof of their freedom inside the state of Israel; they are not in the least cowed.

In the Christian Arab village, the schoolteacher was an attractive lean young man, with prematurely gray hair, working in his garden in the cool of the evening. He had a good modern house, a young modern wife, and after six years of mar-

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riage, a first baby, a six-months-old girl named Mary, whom he and his wife so adored that neither of them took their eyes off the child at the same moment. He was healthy, prosperous, respected, freely doing his chosen work, loved and loving; by any standards, a fortunate man. After hours of listening to him, I had grasped the lacking clue, and felt hopeless.

"Great Britain helped the Jews," he said. "The English gave weapons to the Arab countries, and they gave weapons to us. In this village we were all armed; we all fired at the Jews, every one of us. But our bullets were no good; the English gave bad bullets to the Arabs. Four out of five of the bullets were no good. When we saw this, we ran

away to Lebanon for two weeks and then we came back."

"Were any of you killed in these battles?"

"No, no one. Yes, we refused Partition. We did not want the Jews here; we wanted the whole country for ourselves, as is right. We only lost because of the United Nations and the Western powers.

"The Ottoman Empire crushed the pride of the Arabs. The Western powers divided the Arabs into many nations, after the First World War, to keep them weak. In the 1948 war, the next village was bombed by the Jews; when we saw that, we knew we had no hope."

(Pause for breath: the Jewish Air Force at the time consisted of nineteen Piper Cubs, a nice little plane, not a bomber; the next village was a good seven or eight miles away.)

"Now we have military zones, all along the frontiers. We must ask for permission to travel or work in different places. They have taken our land which is in the military zones. Yes, they pay for it, but very cheaply."

"At the price it used to be worth in the Mandate? Before it was improved by the Jews?"

"Something like that. No, even cheaper. Just now two boys from this village were caught on the Lebanese frontier; the Lebanese police sent them back. The Israelis are holding them for interrogation. How could such boys be spies?"

"I don't know. But you do remember that the Arab countries are at war with Israel? I should think it might be hard for the Jews to know what Arabs they could trust."

"They are right not to trust 50 per cent of the Arabs in this country."

"How can they know *which* 50 per cent?"

"Oh, they know everything. They have a C.I.D. agent in every Arab village. He is a Jew, and everyone knows him."

"What's the use of having a secret policeman if everyone knows he's a secret policeman?"

"There are plenty of informers. I don't know what it is that has taught all Arabs to be spies." He said this with real despair.

"There is compulsory education in this country up to the age of fourteen. That is a very good thing. We did not have such a thing before. But the Muslims do not send their girls to school half the time and do not send the boys if they can earn. Then what? The fine for the father is only five pounds. What is five pounds to the father?"

"Do you really mean that you want the Jews to supply the schools and the law which makes education compulsory, and also to force the Arabs and Druses to send their children to school and take advantage of this education? Wouldn't that make the Jews even more unpopular?"

He admitted, with a smile, that this might be the case and went on: "Nasser buys arms from Russia because he could not get them from the West. Egypt has twenty-two million people, so it needs many more arms than the Israelis, who are only two million. But Nasser is not crazy; he will not make war. He spends as much on social reform as on arms. All children now go to school in the Arab countries."

"Have you ever visited the Arab countries? Have you been to Egypt?"

"No."

We drank more coffee; we lit more cigarettes. I braced myself for further enlightenment.

"The Arab Kings were not the true representatives of the Arab peoples when they made war against Israel. Now all the refugees should come back and we should have Partition."

At this point, I decided to make one long, determined stand to see whether there was any meeting ground of minds on a basis of mutually accepted facts and reasoning.

"Please bear with me and help me," said I. "I am a simple American, and I am trying to understand how the Arab mind works, and I am finding it very difficult. I want to put some things in order; if I have everything wrong, you will correct me. In 1947, the United Nations recommended the Partition of Palestine. I have seen the Partition map and studied it. I cannot tell, but it does not look to me as if the Arabs were being cheated of their share of good land. The idea was that this division would work, if both Jews and Arabs accepted it and lived under an Economic Union. And, of course, the Arab countries around the borders would have to be peaceful and cooperative or else nothing would work at all. The Jews accepted this Partition plan; I suppose because they felt they had to. They were outnumbered about two to one inside the country, and there were the neighboring Arab states with five regular armies and forty million or more citizens, not feeling friendly. Are we agreed so far?"

"It is right."

"The Arab governments and the Palestinian Arabs rejected Partition absolutely. You wanted the whole country. There is no secret about this. The statements of the Arab representatives in the UN are on record. The Arab governments never hid the fact that they started the war against Israel. But you, the Palestinian Arabs, agreed to this, you wanted it. And you thought, it seems to me very reasonably, that you would win and win quickly. It hardly seemed a gamble; it seemed a sure bet. You took the gamble and you lost. I can understand why you have all been searching for explanations of that defeat ever since, because it does seem incredible. I don't happen to

accept your explanations, but that is beside the point. The point is that you lost.”

“Yes.” It was too astonishing; at long last, East and West were in accord on the meaning of words.

“Now you say that you want to return to the past; you want Partition. So, in fact you say, let us forget that war we started, and the defeat, and, after all, we think Partition is a good, sensible idea. Please answer me this, which is what I must know. If the position were reversed, if the Jews had started the war and lost it, if you had *won* the war, would you now accept Partition? Would you give up part of the country and allow the 650,000 Jewish residents of Palestine — who had fled from the war — to come back?”

“Certainly not,” he said, without an instant’s hesitation. “But there would have been no Jewish refugees. They had no place to go. They would all be dead or in the sea.”

He had given me the missing clue. The fancy word we use nowadays is “empathy” — entering into the emotions of others. I had appreciated and admired individual refugees but realized I had felt no blanket empathy for the Palestinian refugees, and finally I knew why — owing to this nice, gray-haired schoolteacher. It is hard to sorrow for those who only sorrow over themselves. It is difficult to pity the pitiless. To wring the heart past all doubt, those who cry aloud for justice must be innocent. They cannot have wished for a victorious rewarding war, blame everyone else for their defeat, and remain guiltless. Some of them may be unfortunate human beings, and civilization would collapse (as it notoriously did in Nazi Germany) if most people did not naturally move to help their hurt fellow men. But a profound difference exists between victims of misfortune (there, but for the grace of God, go I) and victims of injustice. My empathy knew where it stood, thanks to the schoolteacher.

“Do you follow the Eichmann trial?” I asked. An Arabic daily paper, weeklies, and radio station thrive in Israel.

“Yes. Every day.” He wrinkled his nose with disgust.

“Do you not imagine that all the Jews in Israel believe this massacre of their people could have been prevented if the Jews had had a homeland to escape to? Don’t you think that they knew, also, what you just said: there would have been no Jewish refugees from here — they would be dead or in the sea? Doesn’t that perhaps explain them to you a little?”

He shrugged, he smiled; with these gestures he tacitly admitted the point, but it was of minor importance. “In 1948, the Arabs were not united; that is why we lost. In 1956 the Jews beat Nasser,

He will never make war. But when there are five million Jews here in Israel, the Jews will make war, because they will need more land.”

“Israel is about the size of New Jersey, a state in America. Some six million people live quite comfortably in New Jersey. Israel could become an industrial state, a very useful one.”

“No, it cannot. The Arab nations will not allow it. They will not trade with Israel. They will not let Israeli ships go through the Canal. They do not wish Israel to do these things. They will not accept Israel.”

“It is hopeless,” I said. “In my lifetime, those who threatened war sooner or later produced it. If Arab-Israel politics keep up like this, my friend, perhaps all of us, everywhere — you and your wife and Mary, and my child and my husband and I — will have the privilege of dying in the same stupid final war.”

He thought I was making a rich foreign joke. He has never seen even a corner of a real big war; he cannot imagine it. He thinks war is something that lasts a few weeks, during which you shoot off bad bullets at a remote enemy, no one is killed, you run away for a bit and then come home to your undamaged houses and lead a good life, indeed a better material life than before. None of these Arabs has suffered anything comparable to what survivors of modern war know; none can imagine such catastrophe.

THE Christian schoolteacher sent me on to a friend of his, a Muslim schoolteacher, in a village called Masra on the plain near Acre. The Muslim schoolteacher was a young black-eyed beauty, who received me in a bleak cement-walled room, scantily furnished with an ugly desk, wardrobe, straight chairs, and day bed. He wore striped pajamas, traces of shaving cream, and a princely ease of manner. We got right down to business.

Before 1948, the population of Masra was 350; now it is 200. They owned little land, they had worked on neighboring *kibbutzim* and in Acre factories. They always had good relations with the Jews. “No one here shot at Jews; and no Jews shot at us.” (Note the order of the sentence.) But now Masra had grown and swollen; 900 refugees lived here.

“Refugees?”

“Yes, people from those villages.”

He gestured out the door, across the fields.

“What? From villages nearby?”

“Yes, yes. Those villages. They are maybe seven kilometers away.”

“And you consider them refugees?”

“Of course. There was no fighting near here,

but the people are frightened, so they fled to the Druse villages, where they know they will be safe, because the Druses were always friendly with the Jews, and after, they came here. The Israeli government will not let them go back to their villages. The government offered them other land, but they will not take it. Before the war, only my father sent his sons to school from this village. Now we have a school and 240 children in it, 100 girls and 140 boys. We have a water tap at every house and electric light; never such things before. No one owned a radio; now there are 100 radios and frigidaires too. The people earn good wages."

"Then everyone must be happy."

"No. The people are not glad. They want to go back to their old houses, even if there is no light or water or money."

They knew the refugees were "living under good conditions"; he had brothers in Lebanon and Syria who were doing well. How did he know? They wrote messages to the Israel radio, which broadcast them, and the Lebanon radio sent messages back; that way they heard news of their families.

But all the refugees should return and Israel should be partitioned. I put the same proposition to him as to his Christian colleague; if the Arabs had won the war, would they accept Partition?

"No, never, of course not. We would let some few Jews live here as immigrants but not be masters, not in any part of Palestine."

"Why do you think the refugees left in the first place?"

Well, there was much fear. Then, they all knew about Dir Yassin and expected the same to happen to them. Inside Israel, the Arabs do not need or use the refugees' stories of massacres; they do not have to account for flight, since they are still at home. They know what happened around them, and their neighbors know, and such stories would be pointless. But they do speak of Dir Yassin, which was a genuine massacre and took place in the village of that name, near Jerusalem, on April 9, 1948.

Before the official Arab-Israel war started (on May 15, 1948) there had been months and months of "incidents." ("From the first week of December 1947, disorder in Palestine had begun to mount. The Arabs repeatedly asserted that they would resist partition by force. They seemed to be determined to drive that point home by assaults upon the Jewish community in Palestine."—Trygve Lie, *In the Cause of Peace*, Macmillan, 1954.) By February, 1948, aside from scattered Arab attacks on scattered Jews, and reprisals for same, the "Arab Liberation Army" had moved into Palestine from the north, and Jerusalem was

bombarded, besieged, and cut off. The Jews were trying to run food to the beleaguered Jewish population of Jerusalem. A lot of Jews were getting killed in that effort, in Jerusalem and elsewhere, and in the eyes of some Jews not enough was being done to prevent or avenge this. The state of Israel did not exist; no functioning Jewish government could control this anarchic, deadly phase of undeclared war.

Two famous illegal groups of militant Jews, the Stern Gang and the Irgun Zvai Leumi, had their own ideas on how to fight fire with fire. The British regarded them both as terrorists. The Jewish Agency and their underground army, the Haganah, which were the official Jewish authorities in Palestine, also rejected the Stern Gang and the Irgun Zvai Leumi, because of their ruthlessness. Under the circumstances that created them, these two outlawed bands do not seem very different from Resistance groups, Partisans, or Commandos, all of whom were admired as patriots, and none of whom obeyed the Queensberry rules.

The Irgun Zvai Leumi, in any case, behaved like desperate men at war, not like the millennial inheritors of a high moral code. The village of Dir Yassin lay close to besieged Jerusalem and its life-line road. According to the Irgun, Dir Yassin was a nest of snipers and armed Arabs; an effective enemy concentration. On their own, the Irgun decided to attack Dir Yassin. Their leader was killed by Arab fire from the village; the Irgun fighters then went brutally mad and shot everyone in sight. Two hundred and fifty Arabs were killed.

To this day, Israelis cannot get over their shame for Dir Yassin while failing to remind themselves, the Arabs, and the world that murder, horribly, begets murder; and they could present a longer casualty list of Jews killed by Arabs, before and after Dir Yassin, during the twilight period of terror that preceded open war.

The news of Dir Yassin spread like the tolling of a funeral bell throughout Arab Palestine. According to their own ethical code and practice of war, Dir Yassin must have seemed a natural portent of the future to the Arabs. They intended to massacre the Jews; if the Jews were victorious, obviously they would massacre the Arabs. As the beautiful schoolteacher pointed out, Dir Yassin threw the fear of death into vast numbers of the Arab population. In panic, they fled from Palestine.

Since we were talking about war, we came easily to the subject of Nasser.

"Here they love Nasser. All love him. He is Arab person. They do not believe what he says on the radio — kill the Jews, kick them into the sea. So long he says it, and nothing happens. It

will not be war. Something else will arrange, but not soon.”

The Christian Arab schoolteacher had told me of a priest in Acre whom I should see, but I could not find him. Instead, I directed myself toward the nearest church steeple, rang a doorbell beneath, and was admitted by an enormous, rotund priest in a brown cassock. He looked like an Arab but was an Italian. He had lived in this country for nearly thirty years and had learned how to survive: by laughter. He laughed at everything, and it was an awesome sight, as if a hippopotamus broke into silent mirth.

We settled on his stiff upholstered visitors' chairs, and he ruminated on the problem of the refugees. If there was the choice between a big financial compensation or return, only 50 per cent of the refugees would wish to return, and most of those who came back would not stay. “They could not endure how this country is run. The discipline. The work.” The refugees are kept thinking of Palestine by the Arab leaders, by propaganda. Why not build factories and arrange land resettlement in the Arab countries? (The Arab governments do not wish this, Father.) Give the money to the Arab governments and tell them to get on with the job and control it. (How?) By force. (But what force, Father?)

He often told Arab priests about the thirteen million refugees who came from East Germany to West Germany; they were all absorbed into West Germany and enriched the country. Why would not 800,000 Arab refugees enrich the Arab countries, which were big and underpopulated? But it is no use; Arabs have never heard of any other refugees or any other problem than their own, and they cannot think about that, in a practical way.

The whole problem is between the East and the West; the Arabs are very happy in the middle, using blackmail. This would stop if the East and the West came to terms, or if the West was united and strong and could impose its will. (But how, Father?)

Ah well, the Jews might as well let the refugees come back; the Arabs here are loyal to the state. (“The ones I’ve seen detest the Jews and the state, Father, and you know it.” I expected his laughter to make a sound, it was so violent.) Yes, yes, that is true, but they do nothing. There is no resistance, no underground. Think what they could do if they really wanted to, with the Arab countries all around as a base. (Some Arabs did for a long time, Father — until 1956, in fact; look at the countless incidents with the UN police force called out to investigate murders, thefts, sabotage.) Oh, that was nothing, nothing to what they could do if they really wanted to.

With another mute roar, he told me that the

Arabs said, First we will finish with the Sabbaths, and then with the Sundays. They never changed their ideas. They went around looking at the women and the houses they would take when they managed to get rid of the Jews and the Christians. He laughed himself into a good shake over this one.

I asked about the Eichmann trial and the reaction of his Roman Catholic parishioners. Well, his Christian Arabs thought Eichmann was right, because the Jews were the enemy of the German state. They were always the enemy of the state; the Pharaohs had to drive them out of Egypt, the Persian King tried to clear them out, Ferdinand and Isabella kicked them out of Spain. No one could live on good terms with them, so Eichmann was right. (Horrified, really horrified, I said, “Surely that is not a Christian attitude to the most appalling murders we know about?” He found it terribly funny that I should expect a Christian attitude from Arabs.)

“I do not like either Arabs or Jews,” the priest announced with great good humor, “but I serve them with my whole heart, as I must.”

He asked me at the door whether there are any Christian Arabs in refugee camps. Yes, I had seen a camp of Christians in Lebanon.

“I am surprised. There must be very few. I would have expected them to manage better. They do not dream all the time. They have more contact with reality than the Muslims.”

By now I could foretell one local Arab account of reality. First they explain that they did *not* lose the war against the Jews; various others are responsible for the defeat. Then they boast cheerfully of their present material well-being, as if they had invented prosperity. At this stage, the Israeli Jews might be wisps of smoke; they had nothing to do with building the country. However, Arabs are miserable; although they never had it so good, it is not good enough, owing, of course, to the Jews. Usually these Arabs say how much they love Nasser and in their devotion are curiously mindful of Nazi Austrians, twenty-five years ago, when they praised the handsome distant leader, Adolf, from whose hand all blessings would flow. What they believe they now want is to bring the refugees home and partition the state. They have not considered this as a practical matter, nor imagined its effects on their new-found prosperity.

I VISITED a school in a village where prosperity had broken out like a rash — new houses, shops, hospital, high school, bigger elementary schools — and the teachers harangued me as foreseen. After telling me how well off everyone was, and bragging of their growth, they told me they were all

unhappy and poor because they had owned 40,000 *dunams* of land (10,000 acres) and now only owned 10,000 *dunams*. But another Arab, who had not overheard this conversation and was employed as an agricultural inspector, explained that the 10,000 *dunams* were irrigated, which was new, and also they were scientifically farmed, and therefore produced far more than the 40,000 *dunams* had. To listen to these conversations is work for a psychiatrist, not a journalist.

I yearned for my silent hotel room in Jerusalem, but Nissim had two heart's-desires, and Nissim was such a nice man that I could not refuse him. There was a "great lady" he wanted me to meet, a Muslim. "She began a Muslim women's club all alone, she," Nissim said. "Such a thing has never been. What a brave woman. The Muslims go to a place and learn together, and hear lectures, the women. Is it not wonderful?" I could see that Nissim was by nature a suffragette. He also wanted me to visit a new village of government-built houses, which the Arab citizens buy on the installment plan by paying a low rent. Not everyone has a chance to own such fine, inexpensive houses, and Nissim — like all Jewish Israelis — is ardently proud of every improvement in his country.

First we called on the lady, who lived in a modern villa, luxurious by middle-class standards anywhere and palatial by Middle Eastern standards, very shiny and tasteless. Nissim thought it wonderful; so did she, with well-bred restraint. She was young, charming, just returned from her schoolteacher's job, bathed and dressed for the afternoon in a sleeveless red dress. She spoke of her Muslim women's club, whose members ranged in age from fifteen to sixty, and learned sewing, cooking, child care, listened to lectures, and were enthusiastic over their new venture. I am a suffragette like Nissim and was delighted. Then the predictable complaints began. The peasants, she said, have work and money and don't care about anything else. But the educated people suffer; they have all this education, and after they finish their studies, what can they do? Only the professions, and business, and a few are elected to Parliament; but they cannot get positions in the army. Her husband, a pharmacist, has to take four buses to reach his place of work, but here is this village of eight thousand people without a pharmacy; why don't the Jews open a pharmacy?

"If there is such a crying need for a pharmacy here, why doesn't your husband start one himself? This is not a Communist state; there are no laws against private enterprise. You are well-known people, full and free citizens. You could certainly raise a loan, if you need it."

You are not supposed to argue about com-

plaints; it is abominable manners. Her face closed like a lovely olive-colored trap.

"The Israelis say that they do not conscript Arabs — except the Druses, who insisted on it themselves — because the only people the Israeli Army would ever have to fight are Arabs. It seems decent to me, and it seems like reasonable military security. How would your men feel if called upon to fight fellow Arabs, who might be their blood relatives and intended to be their liberators? Do you think it is a good job for a man to join an army he cannot serve with his heart, and would sell out if the time came? That may be excellent work for spies, but not for soldiers."

She opened her closed face to say, "Yes, I see. But it is our country."

It was too hot, and too futile. Besides, I was tired of the convention which apparently requires non-Arabs to treat Arabs as if they were neurotic children, subject either to tantrums or to internal bleeding from spiritual wounds. This girl did not strike me as a pathetic weakling.

"Only by right of conquest," I said. "In the seventh century. The Jews got here first, about two thousand years ahead of you. You haven't lived as masters in your own house for a long time. Aside from the Crusaders, the Ottoman Turks bossed you for a steady four hundred years, before the British took over. Now the Jews have won back their land by right of conquest. Turn and turn about," I said, feeling as beastly minded as an Arab myself. "Fair's fair."

"How was it?" asked Nissim, who had been waiting in the car. "She is fine, isn't she? Think that she starts to teach the Muslim women. No other one did."

Israelis are the first to explain (and who can know better?) that it is painful to be a minority: the Arabs in Palestine became a minority suddenly. It is grievous (as who knows better than Israelis?) to be separated from the numerous, needed members of your family. Israelis will also explain that the Arabs in Israel are torn in two: their racial loyalty belongs to the enemies of Israel, and they are afraid; if the Arab nations make war against Israel, as is regularly promised on the radio from Cairo, Damascus, Beirut, what will be their fate? Would the outside Arabs regard them, the Arabs inside Israel, as collaborators, traitors?

The emotional position of the Israeli Arabs is tormenting (and is held in that torment by the Arab radio stations), though they are materially secure, protected by equal justice under law, and by an almost exaggerated respect for their feelings. If the Arab nations made peace with Israel, it is possible that all Israeli Arabs would relax, be happy, and wholehearted supporters of Israel. If not, not. No one, after listening to Israeli Arabs,

could believe that Palestinian refugees would be either contented or loyal citizens of Israel.

The new village, that so pleased Nissim, was rows of small plastered houses painted in pastel shades, or white with pastel-colored woodwork. They have a porch-veranda, two fairly large rooms, a kitchen, a shower-washroom, and small gardens. No working-class Arabs I saw anywhere in the Middle East possess houses like these, but the owners were not satisfied, as I knew they would not be. One boy of about fourteen could speak English; boys of this age are valuable informants — they parrot their elders without reflection.

"We are very poor," he said.

"How can you be very poor and live in these houses? You have to pay for them."

"We must to work very hard. More harder than before. Terrible work. We have no land."

"Wasn't farming hard work?"

"No. That was easy. Not like now."

"How does your family manage?"

"My brother works. In Tel Aviv. In a gasoline station. That is terrible hard work."

When we left, the pretty, healthy children ran beside the car, shouting. I waved. Nissim looked queer, something was wrong; that chronic optimist seemed sad.

"What's the matter, Nissim?"

"Nothing. What the children say."

"You mean just now, shouting?"

"Yes. They say: 'Where you going, bastard? I spit on you.'"

What for, I thought, what for, and will it never stop?

"Do you hate the Arabs, Nissim?"

"No. Of course no."

"Why not?"

"What is the good of hate?"

What indeed? Arabs gorge on hate, they roll in it, they breathe it. Jews top the hate list, but any foreigners are hateful enough. Arabs also hate each other, separately and en masse. Their politicians change the direction of their hate as they would change their shirts. Their press is vulgarly base with hate-filled cartoons; their reporting describes whatever hate is now uppermost and convenient. Their radio is a long scream of hate, a call to hate. They teach their children hate in school. They must love the taste of hate; it is their daily bread. And what good has it done them?

THERE is no future in spending UN money to breed hate. There is no future in nagging or bullying Israel to commit suicide by the admission of a fatal locust swarm of enemies. There is no future in Nasser's solution, the Holy War against Israel;

and we had better make this very clear, very quickly. Long bleak memories will recall the Sudetendeutsch and Czechoslovakia. In a new setting, Palestinian refugees assume the role of the Sudetendeutsch. Israel becomes Czechoslovakia. Propaganda prepares the war for liberation of "our brothers." Victory over a minor near enemy is planned as the essential first step on a long triumphant road of conquest. A thousand-year Muslim Reich, the African continent ruled by Egypt, may be a mad dream, but we have experience of mad dreams and mad dreamers. We cannot be too careful. The echo of Hitler's voice is heard again in the land, now speaking Arabic.

Unfortunately for us all, including the Arabs, the Middle Eastern Arab nations have been hit by independence and the twentieth century at the same time. It is a lot to handle, and they are not handling it safely or sanely. The Cold War does not help them; it encourages folly. East and West both treat the Arabs with nervous anxiety; placatory and bribing, East and West keep their eyes fixed on the geographical location of the Arab states and the immense amount of oil under their deserts. No one does or can talk practical facts about Israel to the Arabs; it would be useless. Even the soundest Arab leaders have tied their own hands tight in an official hate policy. At present, any Arab government which urged a quick, peaceful, advantageous settlement of the Palestine Refugee Problem would be mobbed. The mobs have been indoctrinated for thirteen years, as have the Arab refugees.

The Palestinian refugees could have been absorbed into the economic life of the Arab countries long ago, despite the remark of UNRWA's Director — in his 1960 report — that jobs do not exist for the refugees in the Arab countries. Of course they do not exist; if they did, the Arab standard of life would be a finer and a better thing than it is now. The jobs must be made; but the Arab countries need to have the jobs done as much as the refugees need to do them. The Director of UNRWA states, in the same report, that the majority of Palestinian refugees are unskilled peasants and there are enough or too many of those in the Arab countries already. No doubt. But unskilled peasants, all over the world, have learned to become skilled factory workers or scientific farmers, at very short notice; that ability to learn is what makes our modern industrial civilization tick. The Yemenite Jews who moved in a week from the Middle Ages to Israel, the unskilled Polish peasants operating the Nova Huta steel mills are obvious examples of this transformation. Neighboring Arabs regard the Palestinian Arabs as outstandingly intelligent.

I would think this reputation deserved. There is no reason to believe that they cannot learn as others have.

Where there's a will — and as much unused land and wasted water, mineral and oil resources, underpopulation and undeveloped industries as in the vast Arab territories — there's a way. "Western Imperialists" would have to contribute most of the cash for the way, and it would be cheap at the price. It is more expensive to maintain paupers forever than to establish free, self-supporting citizens. One outlay of capital is futile and never ends; the other is a capital investment, humane and profitable, and pays for itself. It pays in buying peace, and we don't have to argue which is the better bargain, peace or war. "Western Imperialists" should provide the way; the Arab governments would have to provide the will.

Economics are not all, and the tragedy of most refugees is not that they starve in their countries of adoption, but that their hearts and minds and souls starve. They are lonely strangers who do not speak the language of the new land, or know its customs; they are aliens. But the Palestinian refugees look, think, feel, and organize themselves socially as the Arabs of the "host countries" do. They speak the same language, they practice the same religion. The Christian minority would find fellow minority Christians in every Arab country except Lebanon, where they are on top. The Palestinian Arabs are not foreigners in the Arab world; they are members of their own family.

According to Arab politicians and apologists, the Palestinian refugees refuse to become integrated in the Arab world; it is Palestine or nothing for them. Everyone shouts for the Palestinian refugees, and at them, and about them, but no one has ever asked the refugees what they themselves want: where do you want to live; what do you want to do? My tiny personal Gallup poll unearthed plenty of refugees who were happy where they were and had no desire to return to Palestine, no matter what; and plenty of refugees who longed to emigrate to the richer Arab countries, where the future looks brighter, or out into the great non-Arab world. Except for one Christian Arab from Jaffa, who thinks Jews more honest than Arab Muslims and better people to do business with, none of them wanted to return to Israel, as Israeli citizens, and dwell in peace with their Jewish neighbors. We need a secret poll of both sexes, from the age of twelve onward, to discover the refugees' own wishes for their own lives. The poll would have to be secret because it is impossible, even perilous, for an Arab refugee openly to disclaim interest in Palestine. Such a freethinker would be marked as a traitor to the Arab cause. Man is a political animal, but he also

wants to live. Politics have offered a very dry crust to these refugees for a very long time.

Yet the Arab governments insist that the Palestinian refugees are a political problem. Once a year, formally, they brandish these waiting lives at the UN Assembly. The rest of the year, with different degrees of intensity, depending on their domestic politics, they wield these waiting lives to stir up Arab hate at home. The Arab governments say they will not accept the existence of the state of Israel, now or ever. The logical conclusion is that, when ready, they intend to burst from their cold belligerent status into hot armed conflict and terminate Israel's existence. We cannot force the Arab nations to make peace with Israel, but we have to prevent them from making actual war — for the sake of all human life, their own included. A vital preventive act would be to remove the Palestinian refugees as a justification of war.

Is it fruitless to offer terms to the Arab governments? We cannot hurry them, or threaten them. Their pride has been scarred; they are uncertain noisy adolescents in a tricky clever adult world; their nationalism is new, and they suspect insults or attacks on it, from every side; they do not live easily with themselves or with each other; and they have not yet understood that a nation is only as strong as its people — arms laid on top of disease, illiteracy, and poverty are a useless burden. But if we know our own minds, are patient, firm, and generous, in time the Arab governments might allow us to enrich their countries.

Our Western offer should be clear: UNRWA is to continue as a bridge to the future; we will pay for the bridge and the future — Palestinian refugees are gradually to become Arab citizens, earning their own livelihood on land, in industries, which our money and technical help will make available. All of this, but not another penny for a political problem. The Palestinian refugees must be taken out of politics forever and given the same chance that millions of refugees have had before them: a chance for work, private peace, and private life.

Would the Arab governments reject such an offer flatly, in pique, and turn UNRWA over to the Russians? The Arab leaders do not care for Communism at home. Russia, as parent and teacher of hundreds of thousands of young Arab refugees, would not charm them. In the ugly East-West rivalry for Arab affection (and oil and geography), we might for once risk taking a reasonable, compassionate line. We are not likely to be outbid in this field. The Arab governments do not love us, but they fear the proselytizing Communists more.

UNRWA has been a splendid mother-and-father and can serve the refugees as a guide to the

future. UNRWA's greatest gift to the refugees, to the Arab world, and, indirectly, to us all is the education and health of its charges. UNRWA should receive more money and be considered primarily an educational institution. In my opinion, UNRWA will be with us for some time, an admirable training school for young Palestinians and a kindly old folks' home for aged Palestinians. But UNRWA too must be taken out of politics. Its work should not be subject to Arab political supervision; none of its activities should be used for Arab propaganda purposes; and its Western personnel must keep themselves rigorously detached from the Arab-Israel controversy.

THE Palestinian refugees are a chain reaction. Arab politicians and apologists would have us believe that the explosion began with the Balfour Declaration to "view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a home for the Jewish people." More likely, the explosion started in the depths of time when the Romans drove the Jews from their one and only homeland, the soil that grew their history, the Bible. Nearly two thousand years

later, Hitler and his followers committed such barbarous crimes against the Jews as all Christendom and all Islam, barbarous too, had never inflicted in the centuries of the Jewish dispersion. The Nazis and the gas chambers made the state of Israel inevitable: the Palestinian Arabs and the five invading Arab armies determined the boundaries of Israel.

The Palestinian refugees are unfortunate victims of a brief moment in history. It is forgotten that Jews are also victims in the same manner, of the same moment. The Arab-Israel war and its continuous aftermath produced a two-way flight of peoples. Nearly half a million Jews, leaving behind everything they owned, escaped from the Arab countries where they lived to start life again as refugees in Israel. Within one generation, if civilization lasts, Palestinian refugees will merge into the Arab nations, because the young will insist on real lives instead of endless waiting. If we can keep the peace, however troubled, the children of Palestinian refugees will make themselves at home among their own kind, in their ancestral lands. For the Jews there is no other ancestral land than Israel.

CONRAD AIKEN

Oneiromachia

We are the necromancers who once more
magically make visible the night
recapture that obscure obscene delight
fathom its undertow and in one net
fish up foul fables we must not forget
have them alive and slippery in our hands:
what are we but divided selves that move
to find in all that glittering thrash our love?

We'll summon in one dream all motives forth
and you shall be the south and I the north
and we will speak that language of the brain
that's half of Portugal or all of Spain
or of those yet unsounded seas
that westward spawn beneath the menstrual moon:
what are we but divided souls that live
or strive to in the sundered self of love?

Splinter the light and it will dream a rainbow
loosen the rainbow it will stream in light
divide the brightness and you'll build a wall.
But we'll a twilight be, a go-between
of midnight and of daybreak, and beget
marvels and monsters we must not forget:
these are the language that love dared not speak
without which we can neither make nor break.

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