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COOPERATIVE LIVING IN PALESTINE

HENRIK F. INFELD
Executive Director
Rural Settlement Institute

THE DRYDEN PRESS, PUBLISHERS, NEW YORK

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RURAL SETTLEMENT INSTITUTE
RESEARCH SERIES ON COOPERATION

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DEDICATED TO

*Shulamith, who guided my associations
with working Palestine, and to Kathryn
Debora, our guide to the future*

FOREWORD

By HOWARD BECKER

Social planning is perhaps no longer the magical Mesopotamian word that it was ten years ago, but experts, both genuine and sleight of hand, still intone it. As an item in "scientific" ritual it manifestly has no more than ritual significance, whatever that may be. At best, the desired results would have come about anyway; at worst, unskilled bungling becomes semi-skilled bungling.

All this is nothing against planning that rests on solid knowledge. Some firmly grounded planning has been done in the past; the future should permit us to see much more. Certainly studies such as that here presented by Henrik Infield are the substance of things hoped for; when resettlement and similar postwar plans rest upon the kind of rock Infield has quarried, we need not fear the winds and the floods.

To what achievement, specifically, does this volume bear witness? A young Viennese and his wife, during the tension-laden 'thirties, set out toward Palestine, in the hope of living their way into the new world of whose shaping they had heard so much. To a Gentile like myself, nothing seems more obvious and self-respecting than such a decision, and yet it is only fair to say that if all who ventured had known the dangers and difficulties confronting them the decision might never had been made. Henrik and Mita Infield might still have affirmed their faith in action, but unquestionably there are many who would have drawn back.

Once arrived in Palestine, our pioneers soon directed their steps toward the little communities for cooperative living that were springing up both in the "stabilized" regions and along the frontier fringe. Initially working in full identification with the community of their choice, the scientific turn of mind possessed by both finally led Henrik Infield to record their observations in systematic form.

Such a task is not easy. The welter of facts remains a welter unless the observer chooses, screens, and sifts. No amount of afterthought will remedy deficiencies arising from failure to observe; unless we have been prepared to see certain things, they may go on under our noses but never really make connections with our recording equipment. An observer is not a piece of carbon paper or a mirror; he plays an active part in determining what the "hard facts" are to be in any given case. Fortunately, our observers had been properly trained; in the same way that a botanist is sensitized to botanical phenomena, so had the Infields been sensitized to social phenomena. The "frame of reference" to which Henrik Infield refers is simply the epitome of Leopold von Wiese's system of sociological observation and analysis as Infield knew it in its German guise. Thus equipped, he was able to separate relevant from irrelevant, and in the end to produce the compact analysis now before us.

Methodological awareness is always a good thing, but it is sometimes unwise to make the reader too keenly aware of what has been going on behind the scenes. With this danger in mind, our socioanalyst has cleared away all the scaffolding and given us only the end-product, clear and perhaps deceptively simple in outline. Only those experienced in social observation will be able to discern the faint methodological traces which do appear, and for the purposes of a book such as the one now before us, this is as it should be. All too frequently authors forget the audience for which they are writing, and consequently introduce matters that are of high importance in some contexts but entirely insignificant in others. For those who want to find out how the communities for cooperative living established in Palestine actually function, what the effects on the personalities of their members are, and what guidance for the future they offer, this book provides the answers. But for those who want to copy the technical apparatus used, or who revel in the mysteries of methodology regardless of the ends to be reached, or who relish esoteric terminology for its own sake rather than as a research tool, Infield has said little.

For my own part, there is no effort to deny an interest in many

of those things *not* touched on in this book. Is it not true, however, that very few of us are mastered by one interest only? When we cannot gratify all our wishes at the same time, we ordinarily set up a system of priorities. A1A in my list is the desire to know how the wheels go 'round in Palestine. If other readers share my preference—and I am sure that all but a handful of professionals do—then nothing could fill the bill better than Infield's study as we now have it.

Moreover, those who have an "also" or even an exclusive interest in questions of method and technique can fully inform themselves, if they are willing to take the trouble, about such matters by referring to studies using the same or a closely similar "frame of reference." Here one may mention first of all the researches of the Cologne school: Frisian peasant-fisherman villages, Rhineland small towns, the Amsterdam ghetto, the Russian émigré colony in Paris, and many others—all, unfortunately enough, available only to those who read German. In the United States, students at Bennington, Wisconsin, Cornell, and several other centers have done work of closely related character. But enough of this: professionals know it already, and others may be excused a justifiable yawn.

Finally, it may be said that Infield has indirectly conducted a demonstration of which the whole world stands in need. Anti-semitism has long flourished on the assumption that the Jew is a rootless wanderer living by choice as an economic parasite in those countries foolish enough to play the host. With the nonsense of such contentions, even apart from the Palestinian demonstration, we need not now concern ourselves; here we can observe the Jew in a pioneer world. We can see him working shoulder to shoulder with the Arab, albeit in less wasteful ways; we can observe the striking differences between Jews who have come to Palestine from one region as over against another; we can witness the struggle between political and religious factions of the most widely contrasting character. This evidence, and much more, will lead us to the conclusion that the Jews are a people, not a race and that, inasmuch as they are "e'en as ither men," they need be neither extolled nor condemned. This

book shows the Jews as human beings engaged in ordinary human tasks, and winning through by means of a courage which, happily enough, is the perennially amazing and inspiring resource of common men everywhere.

University of Wisconsin

March, 1944

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

FOR REASONS OUTSIDE the author's control, the publication of this study has been long delayed. When the requisite data had at last been assembled, events in Europe prevented the publication of the resulting treatise in the author's own country. The author then sought a more adequate acquaintance with the English language, and also with contemporary trends in American sociology, before essaying the completion of this study for American readers. More immediate obligations to research and teaching occupations—in Vassar College, the College of the City of New York, and Columbia University—intervened. The recent association of the author with the Rural Settlement Institute, however, offered him the valued opportunity to complete the American version of this study.

During this period of adaptation, several distinguished American social scientists gave genuine assistance.

The first of these was the late Professor Edwin R. A. Seligman, a man of the highest scholarly achievements, who kindly favored the author's efforts. Professor Seligman generously promised to write an introduction to the volume but death intervened.

The author is deeply grateful to Professor R. M. MacIver, of Columbia University, to whom he is indebted both as a sociologist and as a teacher seeking his way in a new environment.

Many others have proved helpful. The author expresses sincere appreciation to President Henry Noble MacCracken and to Professor Joseph K. Folsom, both of Vassar College, to Professor Howard Becker, of the University of Wisconsin, whose kind and wise suggestions have been most useful, to Dr. J. L. Moreno, of Beacon, New York, to Dr. Eli Ginzberg, of Columbia University, and to various other scholars.

Not least among these have been Edward A. Norman, Presi-

dent of the Rural Settlement Institute, Joseph W. Eaton, its Research Director, and Milton S. Katz, Research Associate. They have largely influenced the writing of this study in its present form. The Institute was formed by Mr. Norman explicitly for studying the theoretical and practical implications of the cooperative community.

The author is grateful for the help received from various library staffs in bringing the factual material up to date. These include the staffs of Vassar College Library, Columbia University Library, Zionist Archives, and the Library of the American Economic Committee for Palestine.

Finally, the author thanks Milton Berger, of Poughkeepsie, N. Y., for valued assistance in the preparation of this manuscript for publication, and Jean Shostak for typing the manuscript.

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