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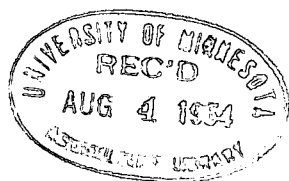
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**Land Settlement:
The Making of
New Farms**



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COLLECTIVE LAND SETTLEMENT IN ISRAEL

Introduction

THE Zionist movement, aiming at the restoration of nationhood to the Jewish People, has contained from its beginning the elements of a return to the land as the logical corollary to the return to the country of Israel. The start of both movements goes back to the end of the nineteenth century; from that time also dates the search for suitable social and economic forms to translate the return to the land into practical farming. The motivation of the movement was mixed. It included political aspirations as well as the romanticism of Tolstoy and his followers, sociological theory on the occupational structure of a population as well as the immediate economic needs of the early immigrants.

The early history of Jewish land settlement in Palestine is treated by Bein (ref. 1) and it must suffice here to mention that no clear-cut conceptions were at hand in the early days concerning the most effective way of carrying out land settlement. Various methods were explored simultaneously. Ranging from conventional capitalist farming through all shades of co-operation, they have included collective types since 1911, when the first collective group settlement was founded in Daganía. All the various types have been coexistent since then and all have had their successes and their failures. Experience during the last forty years has not proved the superiority of any one type under all circumstances. Land-settlement activities as a whole have had peaks and troughs closely correlated with the changing rate of immigration. The emphasis laid upon various types of settlement at various periods has depended primarily upon the social aspirations and economic means of the settlers themselves and only to a secondary degree upon the policies of various public and national settlement agencies.

The special interest of the collective movement does not lie in its having provided any universal formula with which to overcome settlement difficulties; no such claim has been made on its behalf. But it has been at least as successful as any other type and its attraction lies in the fact that it is the most unconventional of all the types tried;

that it includes a large number of novel elements, both socially and economically; and that it had to contend with the greatest scepticism in its early days, owing to the failure of Utopian experiments elsewhere in the world.

The emergence of the collective settlement

Dagania, the first collective settlement, was founded near the southern shores of Lake Tiberias in 1911 by a group of fifteen immigrants driven from Czarist Russia by the pogroms. Many of them came from the universities, imbued with the ideals of Utopian socialism and with the desire to settle on the land, but without means. They endeavoured to find agricultural work as day labourers but could not compete with the services of the Arab fellah without descending to his level of abject poverty. Whatever they did manage to earn they shared out equally among themselves, maintaining a joint household in order to reduce expenditure to a minimum and in order to help each other over periods of unemployment.

About the same time, the Zionist Organization started its first experiments in land settlement, having begun to buy land a few years previously and being anxious to explore new methods of settlement. As the new immigrants had no means of their own the organization was not willing to extend credit to them, but it was prepared to enter into a contract with the group whereby they were to work a tract of land owned by the organization on the basis of a fixed wage plus half the profits. According to the contract the group was to be autonomous in making internal arrangements, provided the interests of the organization were not affected. The initial contract was for three years and when it was successfully completed the organization agreed to hand the land to the group on a long lease, granting them complete autonomy.

Other candidates were available about the same time for this type of settlement, with similar origins and motivated by similar ideas. Dagania having proved successful, the Organization was prepared to extend the experiment and a number of other settlements of the collective type were established. These first groups evolved the social and economic pattern that has served as the blueprint for the collective settlements as they are known today.

But before describing some of the chief principles upon which this pattern is based, it should be pointed out that no written enunciation of principles has ever become permanently binding, either as a 'con-

stitution' or as a credo. Whilst all changes have been accomplished by widespread discussion of the principle involved, and whilst the resulting literature has often borne a dogmatic character, no unified and permanent body of dogma has emerged. The economic and social principles to be mentioned have existed in one form or another from the beginning of the movement. But the interpretation put upon them at various times has changed so much as to make it difficult at times to reconcile interpretations with principle.

A second characteristic has been the inherent realism of the collective movement in its development. The absence of dogma has allowed it to take account of the changing realities of life which have transformed the Palestine of thirty years ago into the Israel of today. The movement has largely adapted itself and its principles to those changes, not only to the political but also to the social and economic ones. This process of adaptation has not always been a conscious one, nor has it always been openly admitted. In many cases, changes that had become desirable or even imperative through the force of economic circumstances took place by degrees and subsequently received the blessing of the movement's theoreticians, or at least were not censured.

The evolutionary and adaptable character of the movement has been both its strength and its weakness. By being adaptable it has succeeded in remaining open to newcomers, in remaining an integral part of the Jewish community as a whole, and in becoming a strong force inside that community, both economically and spiritually. It has avoided the danger of becoming an exclusive group of select and eccentric idealists, divorced from the life surrounding them. At the same time, its very adaptability has led it to depart in important details from the rules adhered to in the early period. The question may well be asked whether these departures from collective practice will not become so significant as to alter the fundamental character of the movement and deprive it of its collective foundations.

Principles and practice of the collective movement

A. Economic organization. The collective settlement is a workers' settlement; it derives its income from the work of its members. Originally, agriculture was the only source of livelihood, and although this is no longer so, it is still the mainstay of its existence and enterprises other than agriculture take a subsidiary and supplementary place.

Land tenure is collective. The land is not owned by the settlement but is held on a long lease; for legal purposes the settlement is registered as a co-operative society which is the lessee. Ownership of the land is vested usually in the Jewish National Fund, a public corporation established by the Zionist Organization to hold land in trust for the Jewish nation.

All land held by the settlement is worked as one unit, i.e. as one large farm. The size of this holding depends chiefly on the extent to which it can be irrigated. On fully irrigated land an area of 2.5 ha. is considered adequate per family. On this basis, a settlement consisting of a hundred families would work a holding of 250 ha. On un-irrigated or partially irrigated land the area would be increased. The basis of calculation is that it should provide full employment and a reasonable income to the community.

The type of farming is mixed, combining a number of field crops with several branches of livestock production. The chief livestock branches are dairying and poultry farming. The cash crops vary according to region but usually include one or more kinds of tree fruit, vegetables, and cereals.

Ultimately, authority over the farm, as over all other aspects of the settlement's activities, is vested in the General Assembly, consisting of all members of the collective. Actual day-to-day management is vested in an elected committee comprising a general farm manager and a number of farm branch managers responsible for the running of the respective departments of the farm.

Work is allocated on the basis of a fixed working day (eight or nine hours) obligatory for all members, with suitable arrangements for holidays, sickness, and leave. Overtime is compensated by additional holidays. No wages are paid, all income derived from the farm being paid into a pool out of which all necessities of life (food, clothing, housing, health, education) are provided, as well as such luxuries as the community can afford (recreation, culture, sports, &c.). No sanctions exist to enforce the liability to work, except the one ultimate sanction of expulsion from the community by vote of the general assembly. This is applied extremely rarely.

Many collective settlements combine farming with other economic enterprises. Among them are light industries, transport (road haulage), sea or lake fisheries, tourist industry (rest homes), and many others. In essence, these enterprises are organized and managed on lines similar to those applying to farming.

The principles underlying the work of collective settlers may be summarized as follows:

Work is not only a necessity to sustain life but also a desirable aim in that it gives full expression to the personality of the worker and serves the good of the community and of the nation. Morally, all work is of the same value—a woman washing dishes, a man digging a ditch, or one managing the farm; a skilled nurse looking after children or a driver at the wheel of his lorry—all contribute their share of work according to their ability. Provided each gives to the full of his ability and his effort, their respective contributions are equally esteemed. The community cares for each worker and provides him with necessities and such luxuries as are possible, not according to the economic value of his output of work, but according to his needs, both physical and spiritual.

In the early stages of its development, a collective settlement based on these principles is a more efficient economic unit than any other settlement comprising a comparable number of settlers. The advantages accrue from four main sources:

(a) All economic enterprises, and in particular farming, derive the advantages of being carried out on a larger scale than would be otherwise possible.

(b) The settlement is run as one large 'household' with a communal kitchen, laundry, and other services, and therefore a greater proportion of its labour force (male and female) can be directed to productive—understood to mean income-earning—work than would be possible on individual holdings.

(c) The pioneering spirit of collective settlers allows the settlement to spend a minimum of its income on consumption, allowing a larger portion to be ploughed back into the farm than is possible elsewhere.

(d) The collective settlement is a better security to the credit institutions than the individual small farmer.

After a collective settlement has been fully developed and has been in existence for a number of years, the picture tends to change in several important respects:

(a) Not all farm branches derive equal benefit from large-scale operation. In the early years of any settlement, and before full intensification of farming has been carried out, the more extensive branches such as cereal growing must provide a considerable part of the income. These are at the same time the ones where the greatest benefits are derived from large-scale operation. As intensive irrigated

crops and livestock increase in importance, the advantages of the large holding become far less pronounced. The individual attention which the small independent farmer bestows on his dairy cattle may bring him increased returns which are well balanced against the collective settlement's advantage in mechanized milking, mechanized dung-handling, &c. Similar considerations apply to poultry and to many types of vegetable and fruit growing.

(b) Like any household, that of the collective community becomes more complex through the need to provide for children. In course of time the proportion of the labour force occupied in income-earning works tends to decrease, and in old-established settlements it is sometimes less than 40 per cent. The provision of resident nurseries and of boarding-school education, as well as the complex administration of farm and household, are not economical of manpower if good standards of education and welfare are to be maintained. A strict comparison with an individual village is not easy, since the collective is a self-contained community providing out of its resources many services that are elsewhere obtained from the outside and paid for in cash. But it seems to be clear that collective work and living are subject to their own law of diminishing returns, which sets a limit to the economic benefits that can be derived from collectivization.

(c) As a settlement becomes well established, its members begin to show a very understandable desire to benefit from the fruits of their labours in terms of higher standards of comforts. Whilst the settlers subordinate their personal comforts to the ideal of up-building in a spirit of pioneering austerity, this has been accepted only as a necessity and has never been elevated to a principle of the movement. As the farm prospers the settlers want to replace their early austerity by a standard of living comparable to that prevailing elsewhere in the country.

(d) The comparative ease with which credits are obtained has operated as a delaying factor in the accumulation of capital by the settlements. Even well-established, well-run, and profitable ones tend to rely for much of their capital—both fixed and working—on credits of various kinds. This is not only a result of the ease of obtaining credit caused by the general inflationary conditions prevalent in the country during the last few years. It is also partly a matter of ideology: the collective considers itself to be a 'workers' society' as opposed to a 'capitalist society'. In accordance with its economic theories, it is averse to the accumulation of capital out of profits. This tendency is

most strikingly illustrated by a comparison of the capitalization of collective and smallholders' settlements. Both types of settlements are registered with the Registrar of Co-operative Societies. In 1949 the combined balance-sheet of the collective settlements showed 'own' capital as 6.5 per cent. of the total, whilst the smallholders' settlements showed 18 per cent. 'own' capital. At the same time, it may be pointed out that these figures do not present a balanced picture. In order to prevent inflationary paper profits from appearing in the balance sheets, the collective settlements do not normally list their assets at market valuation. Their real financial position is therefore very much stronger than the figures would suggest. Nevertheless, the comparison with smallholders' co-operatives is probably a fairly accurate indication of their relative position as far as capital accumulation is concerned.

(e) One of the economic advantages of large-scale enterprise is the possibility it affords of a far-going division of labour with its attendant high productivity. During their earlier years the collective settlements deprived themselves of this advantage by rejecting the specialization of labour skills. On the assumption that, socially, all work is of equal value provided it has needed equal effort, the collectives tended to neglect differential aptitude, skill, and experience. As it was considered unimportant whether a member was washing dishes or driving a tractor it was in fact considered desirable that the tractor driver should change jobs with the dish-washer after a time. This was the easier as long as skill and experience were conspicuously absent in all the settlers. So long as all were equally unskilled in tractor-driving, it was only fair that each member should drive the tractor in turn.

In recent years, however, a considerable shift has taken place towards specialization, and the skilled operations of the farm are carried out by members trained for the jobs and experienced in them, although, in theory at least, the fiction of interchangeability of jobs is maintained. Each night the labour force is allocated to the various tasks to be carried out the next day. In theory, the shepherd may be sent to work in the orchard and the nurseryman in the dairy. In practice, shifting is restricted to the minimum required by the exigencies of seasonal work, very much as it is on any other large farm.

What has been said about technical skills applies with even greater force to managerial skills. All managerial positions are elective and are supposed to rotate annually. But in fact there is a strong tendency to leave responsibility in tried hands rather than to effect changes for the sake of principles of equality and at the expense of efficiency. As

yet, it cannot be said that a 'managerial class' has clearly emerged, but the continuous turnover of jobs has disappeared as each man's skill and aptitude has been established through the years of experience.

The collective settlement pays no wages to its members. In practice this is reflected in the method of book-keeping in the following way: Each department of the farm keeps a record of its cash expenditure and of the cash income for its products. It adds to the expenditure the cost-valuation of supplies obtained from other departments of the farm, depreciations, &c.; to the cash income it adds produce consumed at home, at market valuation.

Side by side with this normal accounting, each department keeps a careful record of its use of labour, expressed in work-days. At the end of the year it divides the surplus of money income over money expenditure by the number of work-days expended and thus arrives at the value of each day's work in that department. The profitability of each branch of the farm is judged by the value obtained in it for each work-day.

It would take too much space to describe the system of accounting in detail, or to analyse its advantages and disadvantages. But it may be noted that it makes no provision for profit. All value added is put to the account of the work expended. There being no profits there is also no provision for capital accumulation out of profits.

All consumption expenditure of the community is carefully accounted for. When the total of this expenditure is divided by the total of all work-days on the farm and in other economic enterprise, a figure is obtained which gives the minimum income per work-day required to break even. A branch of the farm obtaining less than this is considered to work at a loss, whilst a branch obtaining more is considered to have made a profit.

B. Social organization. The aim of the collective implies not only or chiefly the functioning of the collective settlement and its economic enterprises, but also collective living by its members. Human relationships are held to find their highest level in a community based on complete equality. In addition to equality, the absence of individual material cares and of economic relationships between members are considered prerequisites for the success of the community. Within the framework of its rules and principles, the community aims at giving its members the fullest opportunity for self-expression, not only through work but also through recreational and cultural activities.

In addition to these 'internal' aims of the collective community, it

has set itself a number of purposes in its relations with the outside world. All branches of the movement support the furtherance of the fundamental aims of the Zionist movement: The establishment and development of the State of Israel, the up-building of the country, and the ingathering and absorption of the exiles.

With the exception of a small group of ultra-religious settlements and of a group of middle-class settlers, all branches of the collective movement are committed to the interests of the working class and to the advancement of socialism. The definition of this aim varies greatly between the various branches of the movement and is in fact the cause of the major divisions within it.

One branch that has gained in importance during recent years has added to these principles the observance of the Jewish religion in its orthodox forms. In these religious collectives, all members comply with the religious observances and the pattern of communal life is also determined by them.

In order to achieve its social aims, the collective movement has developed ways of life which give them practical expression. Apart from collective work with its joint responsibilities members also share most other activities. To give a few of the more obvious instances, all meals are provided by a communal kitchen and are taken in a communal dining-hall; children are brought up to the collective way of living by spending most of their time in groups of their own age. Each group eats and sleeps together, it learns and plays together, and it lives in its own quarters under the supervision of trained nurses and teachers.

The life of the community is governed by democratically elected committees, dealing with problems ranging from the running of the farm, through the allocation of housing, to the management of the communal library. As many members as possible are associated with the work of these committees and a framework for a great variety of communal activities is provided. Recreation and sports too form the background for a full and close social life which knits the community closely together.

For fulfilling its 'external' aims, in connexion with the Zionist and Socialist movements, the settlements employ two methods. In the first place, each settlement as a whole undertakes tasks which further these aims, for instance by establishing the settlement under pioneering conditions and undertaking reclamation work, thus helping in the building up of the country. In the second place, the settlement puts

its membership at the disposal of the state, of the Zionist movement, or the Socialist movement, for such duties outside the collective settlements as the needs of the hour may demand. Before the establishment of the state this may have been service in the underground defence organization; lately, aid to new immigrants has taken a large place, and considerable numbers have entered state service as civil servants, Members of Parliament, diplomats, &c. Formally, members on 'outside service' retain membership of their respective settlements and very often they return to ordinary farm work after a spell of special service.

The collective movement today

An almost permanent shortage of foodstuffs has prevailed in the country since the World War, leading to an assured market for agricultural produce. This tendency has been accentuated by a phenomenal increase in population since the establishment of the state. Imports are severely restricted because of the prevalent lack of foreign currency and no external competition need be feared. Whilst the general price level has until recently been subject to an almost continual inflationary rise, the advance of agricultural prices has been more than in keeping with it and has led to considerable prosperity in the settlements. In addition, ample land resources have been available since 1948 and large amounts of public funds have been invested in agricultural development. The collective settlements have fully shared in this prosperity, of course, and they enjoy today a standard of living which compares favourably with other sections of the community.

Similar conditions of scarcity have prevailed for manufactured goods. This has enabled the settlements to extend the principle of economic diversification to include light industries of great range and variety. Originally these were established for the sake of self-supply and self-sufficiency, but they have now gone over to production for the market. Farm carpentry shops started to make furniture, first for home use and later for sale; metal shops started to turn out household appliances and farm utensils; and subsequently factories were established designed from the start to produce for the market.

This process of industrialization was accompanied by considerable discussion on its ideological and economic justification. One section of the movement rejected it and still continues to be based exclusively upon agriculture. Today, most of these industries are soundly estab-

lished despite all predictions of their failure. Indeed, those settlements that have gone farthest in industrialization enjoy today the highest standard of living. It would be beyond the scope of this discussion to endeavour a prediction of prospects under different economic conditions in Israel.

Both by membership and by numbers of settlements, the collective movement had a slow and steady growth up to the War of Independence. From 1940 to 1947 the number of settlements increased from 79 to 126 and the population from 22,000 to 39,000. Up to the forties, members were recruited almost entirely from immigrants, but from then onwards native-born youngsters began to take their place, both as reinforcements in existing settlements and in new settlement groups. Of whatever origin, the recruits to the collective movement were distinguished by a long period of preparation prior to settlement on the land. This preparation was begun in the Zionist youth movements, both in Israel and abroad, and was followed by a long period of training in agriculture. By the time a new member actually joined a settlement he had been thoroughly indoctrinated with collective ideology, had been well trained in hard physical labour, and had probably some experience of collective living in one or other of the training groups which were run on lines resembling a collective community. The new member had thus had an opportunity to familiarize himself with this way of life and its implications over a number of years. Most of those not suited to this way of living had already dropped out long before they ever joined a settlement. The long novitiate was partly a matter of deliberate policy, though it was due also to the force of external circumstances. In the first place, the land-sale restrictions of the government of Palestine severely limited the amount of land that could be made available for new settlements each year. This limitation, together with the shortage of funds for equipping the land, set a very slow pace for new settlements. Moreover, during this period there was a strict limitation on the immigration quota. The result was that prospective members of collective settlements had to wait for years until they could come to the country at all and for long additional periods until they could establish a settlement.

On the conclusion of the War of Independence, land was available in what seemed to be unlimited quantities and immigration became unlimited under the 'Law of the Return'. For a time, the collective movement expanded vigorously. From all over the world groups of settlers came who had been eagerly awaiting this opportunity. At the

beginning of 1950 the number of settlements had increased to 205 and the population had reached 61,000. But soon the stream of candidates began to dwindle. During 1950 only seven new settlements were added and during 1951 only one. By the beginning of 1952 there were 213 in existence with a total population of 68,000. Those who had been 'queuing' were absorbed in new and existing settlements and a search started for new recruits.

Now it was found that the long novitiate, involuntary as it was to a large extent, had been a vital factor for the success of the movement. It had served as a severe selection test, permitting only the best to pass into the settlements. When new settlements were founded by men and women who had only passed this preparatory stage in a much abbreviated form, it was found that the turnover in membership became much greater, introducing an element of instability which reflected both upon the material progress of the settlement and upon its social coherence.

Apart from this qualitative factor, numerical considerations began to play a part. Earlier, the collective movement recruited most of its membership among the Jews of eastern and central Europe. The extermination of the Jewish communities in Europe caused a considerable shift in the composition of the post-war immigration. An ever-increasing proportion came from the backward countries of the Middle East and North Africa, where both the Jewish and the non-Jewish environment were untouched by any social progress whatever. In these countries Zionism took the form of a religious longing, reinforced by the threat of persecution, but devoid of any social or political motives. Those coming under such circumstances were far removed from any 'back-to-the-land' ideology and even further from collectivism. If any of them could be persuaded to settle on the land at all, it was on individual holdings and not in collective settlements.

Those of the post-war immigrants who came from Europe had fresh in their memories the experiences of concentration camps, Displaced Persons camps, forced labour camps, army camps, &c. They rejected most strongly any form of communal living which might even remotely remind them of the past. They wished for privacy, for comfort, and for security, and were not imbued with any idealism either for hard physical labour or for pioneering agriculture, or for idealist socialism.

It must be emphatically pointed out that at no time has any pressure been exercised to direct immigrants into collective settlements against

their free will. Pressure would have been diametrically opposed to the very idea of the collective community, which is a voluntary association of free men, living without any apparatus for the enforcement of rules except the free will of members. Nor has any settler needed to remain in a collective settlement after ceasing to be satisfied with its way of life. The tendencies that have evolved are therefore entirely the result of the free interplay of social and economic forces.

At present the movement is still expanding; but its rate of expansion is falling far behind the growth of the population as a whole and equally behind the rate of growth of agricultural settlement.

One of the important conclusions of recent experience is that the movement is by its nature a select movement, and that its scope is limited by the availability of men possessing a high level of education and social consciousness, of selflessness, and idealism. Persecution, backwardness, poverty, and ignorance do not in themselves produce such men. In this connexion it is interesting to note the background of collective settlers, especially of those born in this country. Many of them are from good middle-class homes, graduates of the best secondary schools of the country and sons and daughters of successful professional and business men. The lowest strata of urban society are poorly represented. Indeed, for secondary school graduates the choice is often between the university and the collective settlement, and many consider it both fashionable and honourable to join a collective settlement for a few years before entering the universities.

In view of the need to expand agricultural output as rapidly as possible, and in view of the impossibility of obtaining sufficient new members, some of the settlements have reluctantly agreed to employ hired labour as a temporary expedient. This, of course, is the antithesis of the collective ideal, the very foundation of which is the absence of master and man, employer and employee. On principle, fierce opposition has been voiced against it. This is more than a controversy of dogma against economics. The permanent acceptance of hired labour may well undermine the entire social foundation of the collective settlement, possibly leading to its disintegration. The problem has been partly overcome by restricting the employment of hired labour to the industrial enterprises, thus freeing the member-labour force for agricultural work. At the same time, the status of ownership of the factories has been altered so as to go into partnership with outside investors. The factory is thereby placed outside the collective settlement while, inside, collective principles are maintained.

The outlook for the movement

In 1946 the Jewish community in mandatory Palestine was in the throes of its fiercest political struggle. The World War had just ended and had left in its wake the appalling problem of Displaced Persons. Palestine Jewry demanded the right of admission for Jewish Displaced Persons as well as the right to purchase land for their settlement. Both demands were opposed by the mandatory government and in consequence a political struggle of great bitterness ensued. The collective settlements were in the vanguard of this struggle and took a leading part in organizing illegal immigration, in the underground defence organization, and in every type of political action. They were subjected to considerable pressure and had to endure searches, mass arrests, curfews, and expulsions. Great demands were made on the moral and physical courage of the settlers. These were not only met in full, but it may even be said that the tension of the struggle brought out the best qualities in the settlers. This tension was carried over from the political struggle to the military struggle of the War of Independence in which the collective settlements played a part incommensurate with their numbers. The climax of achievement was reached when at the conclusion of the armistice of 1949 the state of Israel was firmly established.

Today, the days of heroism are over. The most difficult task of the pioneer, the establishment of the state, has been fulfilled. Today's tasks, the integration of mass immigration and the stabilization of the economy, are no longer capable of solution by the settlement pioneer. But whilst the collective settlements no longer occupy the central and leading position they previously held in the community, the community itself continues to change and to grow at a more rapid rate than ever before.

These new conditions have led to strains and stresses in the structure of the collective movement which will have a decisive influence on its future development.

Materially, the position of the collective settlements is better than ever. But the very increase in prosperity has made it difficult to maintain the principle of equality. Comparative luxuries such as radio sets, books, and electric kettles have made their appearance as private property. Clearly, it is much easier to share alike in the basic necessities of life than in the comparative luxuries that have now become possible. At the same time the increasing opportunity for

individual recreations and the relative comfort of accommodation have led to an increasing desire for privacy. Probably this tendency is also connected with the change in the age composition of the older settlements. These now include a broad group of middle-aged people who are less eager for the constant company of each other and for the various joint cultural and recreational activities available. To some extent this has led to a narrowing of the concept of collective living as understood fifteen years ago.

The result of these tendencies is that the collective community is no longer so close-knit and homogeneous as it used to be. Where the settlement has greatly increased its membership, this is particularly noticeable. The largest settlements are generally the most prosperous and best able to withstand changing economic conditions because of their broad economic base of diversified farming, supplemented by various industrial enterprises. But these same settlements are socially most heterogeneous and therefore most vulnerable.

This has become painfully obvious during the recent past. During the last two years a political controversy of great severity has gripped parts of the collective movement. Briefly, the controversy is one between the adherents of the moderate Labour Party and those of the more extreme socialists of the United Workers' Party. The focal issue is that the latter support the Eastern bloc in the cold war, whereas the former support Western ideology. It is notable that the clash is on questions of Israel's foreign policy. Whilst differences between the two parties on domestic matters are not unreconcilable, it is in the international field that an unbridgable gap seems to separate them.

This controversy has been carried into those collective settlements where both parties are strongly represented, but it is an issue which in itself has nothing to do with the present-day problems of the collective movement. The settlements affected belong to that section of the movement which has in the past advocated large settlements, and full industrialization, and has extended membership to people of varied background and outlook. Other parts of the movement, with settlements more narrowly based by restricting membership to those adhering to a particular brand of socialism, or by deliberately keeping the community small and purely agricultural, have not been touched by this issue.

In the settlements involved, a complete split has taken place between the rival factions. Where one party holds a clear majority, the

minority has left, under a scheme for 'exchange of population', leaving the settlements politically pure in their adherence to one party or the other. Where the forces are more or less evenly balanced, a bitter struggle for control has been waged, with inconclusive results. It has been decided, therefore, to split the property and possessions of these settlements. One party will remain in possession paying the other compensation under an arbitration award. The party which leaves will found a new settlement elsewhere.

This solution will probably bring the controversy to an end, so far as the collective movement is concerned, but it has been accompanied by bitter recriminations which have left outsiders and many of those directly concerned in a state of bewilderment. Families were divided against themselves and friendships founded on a lifetime's shared hardships and achievements have foundered. Even instances of violence have occurred in some places and the police have had to be called into settlements where for the thirty or more years of their existence no sanction of the law was ever needed to maintain the peace and where brotherly love had perhaps come nearer to being practised than anywhere else in the world.

It should be mentioned that at the time of writing nothing can be said yet about the influence of recent political developments in Eastern Europe upon the controversy, but it seems strange that a controversial issue so remote from the daily life of the settlers as cold-war ideology should bring to pass such results. No complete and satisfactory explanation can be given at the present time. But it appears that the increasing heterogeneity of the affected settlements is partly to blame. Where the collective community becomes too large and too loose-knit, even extraneous influences such as world politics can sever the bond. The common material basis of the collective settlement being insufficient to sustain the collective way of living, apparently the collective community must have members with a collective ideology embracing all aspects of their outlook and thinking, and the community must be based upon political uniformity, in order to be successful.

Whether this principle is of universal applicability is doubtful. It is not at all clear whether it would apply to a collective community not consisting of Jews, with their great propensity for arguing moral issues. Moreover, it has arisen at a time when the political ideals of national revival, which previously held the movement together, have come close to fulfilment and no longer engage the minds and energies of its

members to the full. The settlements have therefore been particularly open to disrupting forces which would not otherwise have been of more than secondary importance.

The collective movement is going through a crisis. It is impossible to foretell how it will emerge or what part it will play in the future development of the country. The resilience it has shown in the past justifies the hope that it will continue to make an important contribution to the social and economic fabric of Israel as well as pointing new ways towards the solution of some of the universal problems of rural communities.

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