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By GENE CURRIVANSpecial to THE NEW YORK TIMES
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Except When Battles Rage the People Continue Hard at Their Work

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TEL AVIV, May 29—The State of Israel is probably the world's strangest shaped country. In fact, on the map it appears to be three states connected by an isthmus up in the Galilee area and another one down in the Gaza district. Section one juts up to the Lebanon border with Syria and Trans-Jordan on the east; section two or the coastal part runs from Acre down to the Gaza region, and section three, which resembles a crude Indian spearhead, sticks down through the desert of the Negeb to a sharp point at the Gulf of Aqaba. With the exception of a sort of Arab Danzig Corridor in the north above Nazareth and the lower coastal strip, the rest of the Arab portion appears to be embraced by the State of Israel as though it were a huge harbor. In this area is the so-called neutral zone of Jerusalem-Bethlehem, looking like an island but at the moment a volcanic island in eruption.

Much of the country appears normal and life is going on as usual but you do not travel far without seeing signs of war and the destruction which always follows it. What were once peaceful little Arab villages are now shambles caused in some cases by heavy fighting and in others by deliberate sabotage. Houses have been blasted, factories wrecked and roads torn apart by trenches or exploding mines. On the outskirts there are deserted orange groves—fresh, beautifully scented and intact. The last crops have gone and so have the Arabs.

Tensior in Sarafand

There are road blocks everywhere, some manned and others discarded because that particular territory is now considered safe. Out at Sarafand, about twelve miles southeast of Tel Aviv, there is a certain amount of tension because this camp, recently occupied by the British, is still under Arab fire. Ramle, the nearest Arab village outside Israel's boundaries, is under siege and the closest Arab positions are just over the hill from the camp's southern boundaries.

This military base, recently captured by Haganah, was the largest British headquarters in Palestine. The Jews purchased it from the British and were to have occupied it on May 15, but there was a slip-up. The British left before schedule and the Arabs promptly moved in. This meant that Haganah had to fight for it.

They took it over, lock, stock and barrel, and now have a full complement there, including families. It seems incongruous to see women and children roaming about the streets of the camp with the enemy but a short distance away, but that is one of the unexplainable things that happen in war.

Sarafand has had some fairly heavy attacks but nothing of a serious nature. Last Tuesday night this correspondent was there when the cease-fire was supposed to have been observed, but rifle bullets came in from over the hill and there were a few tracers. Haganah gunners did not even bother to reply. They had orders to hold their fire unless there was a serious attack.

Ramle and near-by Lydda, site of what was Palestine's main airport, are but two miles away. Neither is in the State of Israel but they are strongholds which Haganah believes constitute a serious threat to the state. Since attacks have come from both places, Haganah and its commando arm, Irgun Zvai Leumi, have taken up the challenge.

The most interesting parts of the state today are the Jewish settlements spread all through the country. Some are in clusters and can defend themselves against any normal assault, but many are isolated with meager arms and are being strained to the limit to defend themselves. Some have already held off regular army units of the Egyptian, Syrian and Lebanese armies with only temporary disruption of normal life.

When an attack is over, these settlers put away their guns and pick up their plows as though nothing had happened. The smoke of battle is hardly cleared when they are discussing mushrooms, eggs, a new breed of cattle or the latest chemical fertilizer developed in their laboratories.

Jaffa Virtually Deserted

The State of Israel has already acquired, absorbed or annexed two Arab cities not included in the partition. They are Acre, fortress town of the Crusaders which even Napoleon could not conquer, and the Arab seaport of Jaffa adjoining Tel Aviv. Jaffa was the largest Arab city in Palestine, but it could not hold out against the Jewish forces which surrounded it, leaving only an exit by the sea.

Today Jaffa, which had 40,000 Arabs, is virtually deserted. All but about 500 fled to lower Palestine or Egypt. It resembles a ghost town, with hardly any life but stray cats and hungry dogs. No longer does the muezzin call the faithful to prayer from the minarets. Instead the Star of David flag flies from those sacred heights, which the Jews assert were used as sniper posts.

Haifa is fairly normal, although large parts of the Arab districts are abandoned. It was estimated that 6,000 of the original 40,000 Arabs are all that are left, although many are coming back.

Meanwhile Tel Aviv, capital of Israel, is under almost daily air bombardment, but life continues in a normal way, except at night, when it is difficult to get around in the complete blackout. There is hardly a whisper on the streets after sundown, but in the cafés, coffee houses and hotels people stifle behind blackout curtains, closed doors and windows.

Many of those dancing, drinking and dining spent a good part of their day filling sand bags for windows and doorways, or making some other similar contribution to the defense against the bombings. It seems that everyone except the very young and the very old has been conscripted for a part in this war and no one is complaining.

During the day the sidewalks are filled with bustling crowds; the streets are congested with buses, motor cars, bicycles and motorcycles and the promenades along the seafront have the normal amount of strollers. Bathers watch enemy planes go over and apparently think nothing of it. Children romp on the beach while their parents sun themselves in beach chairs near by. There is a war going on, but only occasionally do you realize it here.

Men in Service

One wonders sometimes why there are so many able-bodied men about who seem to have no part in the war effort, but inquiry shows that most of them are contributing in some way or other. Some have been conscripted and are awaiting call, others are doing part-time military work while keeping the wheels of industry moving and still another category are actually part of the armed forces but have not received or do not require uniforms.

Take the typical example of Joshua Marash, who is TWA district manager here. He works at the TWA office all day, keeping the records straight and the agents happy, hoping that planes will fly again soon. And then at night he gets into uniform to perform his duties with the air force.

There are many such cases here. So far there have been no draft dodgers. Israel has a relatively small team but everyone wants to get on it and be placed in the line.

Interest in news reports seems to overshadow everything else. Everyone seems to know the exact time of the news broadcasts and in what languages, and he would rather miss a meal than a broadcast.

The Palestine Broadcasting System program from Jerusalem used to be the popular one, ranking second probably to the BBC, but that hasn't been on the air for two weeks, or since the Jerusalem siege became serious.

The Haganah broadcast with its prelude of martial music always stirs its audience with descriptions of the valiant efforts of Israel fighters, and Irgun Zvai Leumi makes similar contributions, both of them in Hebrew.

One of the reasons for this magnetic attraction of any news is the absence of newspapers from the outside. There are seven morning and five afternoon papers in Tel Aviv but all are in languages other than English — mostly Hebrew and German. For a few days the Palestine Post appeared on the streets with a two-page paper in English. It was so popular that the demand could not be met. Its publisher, Gershon Agronsky, has published the paper in Jerusalem continuously since 1932; he could not be stopped even when enemies blew up his plant in February.

Paper Finally Blocked

The very night the plant was blasted by a truckload of dynamite left outside, he and his staff moved up the street and published the paper in a makeshift printing establishment. Then in March, when regular deliveries to Tel Aviv were interrupted by fighting along the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv road, people here started to grumble because their Post wasn't arriving. Agronsky somehow got the paper through a few times a week. But since the most recent phase in the lifeline fighting and especially since the Arabs blocked the road with a landslide, nothing has come through from Jerusalem.

To look at this city it's difficult to believe that foreign armies are massing and fighting less than twenty miles away. Imagine any large beach resort in midsummer during the war and you have Tel Aviv. There are soldiers everywhere and military lorries pounding down streets, but there are also men, women and children by the hundreds enjoying sea breezes, basking in the sun or paddling about in the blue Mediterranean.

Tel Aviv these days is more or less in the position of Paris during the second World War. The people know that a war is going on and are preparing to meet any emergency but they are not greatly affected by it. In Jerusalem war has struck with its full fury, leaving the people homeless, hungry and terror-stricken. Jerusalem is ordinarily only an hour-and-a-half drive from here, but now the two cities might as well be oceans apart.

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