

SHE ADMIRERD THE JEWS BUT LOVED THE ARABS

"THE first difficulty about going to Palestine as a civilian," said Mrs. Douglas Richardson, in an interview with *The Listener*, "is getting there. The second is getting away again. We left New Zealand in January of last year and we did not arrive in Palestine until the following May—and I took nearly as long coming back. The other point of importance is that everyone, even wives of officials who are allowed to go with their husbands into the country, is expected to work. I did a whole series of jobs while I was there. I taught in a boarding school for Arab boys; I was librarian to a military hospital in Nazareth; for some months I ran lectures and social afternoons for the Arab women of Nazareth on behalf of the British Council; and for the last months while I was waiting to get back to New Zealand, I was matron to the British Community School in Jerusalem. I enjoyed all my jobs. They gave me a better idea of the country and the people than I might otherwise have had. The Arab boys were perhaps the best fun, and the Arab ladies the stiffest. The British Council is very active in Palestine, and one of its main functions is to promote good relations between Britain and the native inhabitants."

Mrs. Richardson's husband is a surveyor, and following his escape from Malaya after the Japanese invasion, he was sent to Palestine to take part in a survey.

"The Government is anxious to have a complete survey so that they can have

a clear picture of what is Arabian land and what is Jewish, or otherwise owned," said Mrs. Richardson. "It is not nearly as simple as it sounds, however, as the Arab peasant cultivator does not own his land. In addition, he cultivates it in strips, and does not cultivate the same strip year after year. One purpose of the survey is to keep each peasant to his strip so that his claims can be fairly easily sized up. Much of the trouble in the past has been that the land owner, who is frequently wealthy and equally frequently a rogue, while he has been among the first to denounce the Jewish colonists for taking the country from the Arabs, has also in the same breath, or rather under the same breath, sold his land to the Jews, and for a nice tidy price, too. Those who have suffered have been the Arab peasants, who have rented their land for generations and who now are forced to leave. The desolate ruins of these former Arab villages are to be seen all over the more fertile districts of Palestine, and very pathetic spectacles they are. It is little wonder that this has helped to foster the bitterness that exists between the Jews and the Arabs."

"But the new Jewish settlements are an improvement on the old Arab villages?"

"You might as well compare Birmingham with an African native village. The Jewish communal settlements that I saw were neat, efficient and productive. Things ran according to plan. Everyone worked earnestly and looked serious. The children were cared for on a community scale in modern creches.

Arab villages are careless and carefree. The children are dirty, but quite happy as they play with knuckle bones on the street. The women laugh and gossip and quarrel. The men shout and sing as they work. The tools are those used by Abraham, I should say. But the villages are picturesque: little domed huts; women with long dresses embroidered with fine cross-stitch in many colours; the children laughing and scampering and rolling in the dust. They may be a doomed race in Palestine, but they are free from the burden of having a mission to fulfil."

"But you saw the new world the Zionists are building?"

"You cannot fail to see it. The Zionists have brought in capital with which to farm the deserts and drain the swamps. They have brought electricity to towns and villages, and they have built cities. Their Hadassah hospital is one of the most modern in the world. Their scientists have succeeded in eradicating some of the diseases that have afflicted Palestine for centuries. It is thanks to the Zionists, too, that we have the wonderful concerts in the great open-air amphitheatres on the Mount of Olives."

"Then why hanker after the care-free days of darkness?"

"It is foolish, I know, but life can be too efficient. I admire the Zionists. They have done far more than anyone could imagine who has not been to Palestine. But I love the Arabs."

"Well, to forget politics. How did you live in Palestine. Could you buy food and other necessities?"



MRS. DOUGLAS RICHARDSON

"Everything was very expensive and food was very short. We could get fruit and vegetables as a rule, but meat and butter were prohibitively dear, and sugar very strictly rationed. Friends of mine living in the towns would frequently sit down to a dinner of beans only. Living in the country we were luckier. The Arabs felt the shortage of sugar and rice, though on the whole, they tend to lay in their supplies for long periods. But they had to go short on the lovely sweetmeats and cakes made with honey and nuts which they normally consume so freely."

"Would you like to go back?"

"Yes, but to a peaceful and settled Palestine. It is a fascinating country, and I wish I knew the solution to its present problem."

ON THE SPOT

Records Made Far From The Studio

"Is there a power point handy?"

"Yes, but it doesn't work very well."

"Then we'll have to find another one."

And so about 350 feet of line were run to a point in another part of the Children's Health Camp at Otaki, so that recordings could be made by the NBS of the formal opening ceremony performed by Their Excellencies Sir Cyril and Lady Newall.

Broadcasting and making records in the field instead of the studio have been reduced to a simple process. The recording apparatus is compact and, although on occasions a good many hundred feet of line have to be run to the nearest efficient power point, the set-up is ready in a remarkably short time.

At Otaki, wide-eyed children clustered round the NBS staff while tests were being made in the buildings recently handed over by the hospital authorities to the Health Camp movement. Small boys bombarded the technicians with questions, some showing a more than casual knowledge of broadcasting.

Adult visitors as well as youngsters watched producer, technicians and an-

nouncer at work. Questions ranged from queries about the life of the sapphire cutters used in cutting "discs" to what the technician was doing with his little brush on the record. The information that records were composed of aluminium and cellulose nitrate was solemnly received, but the thrill came when, after the children had sung a few songs, the recordings were played back to them.

During the afternoon the recording set was taken to the boys' dormitory where, owing to the importance of the occasion, there was a most unusual hush and air of expectancy as Their Excellencies came in and the turntable began to revolve.

Songs My Momma Taught Me

Later, in the dining-room, where the air was pungent with cut oranges, the children were asked to sing. What were their favourites? Some voted for the ultra-sophisticated "Paper Doll," of which they knew every word; others for "Coming In on a Wing and a Prayer," and "Pistol-Packin' Momma." Gently guided by the announcer, they piped up

with the more suitable "Maori Battalion" and "Coming In on a Wing and a Prayer."

In the open-air porch attached to the main building, the recording apparatus was set up to make "cuts" on the spot of brief speeches by notable visitors and later, in the office of the matron (Miss M. Hodges) records were made by Lady Newall and the matron herself, and played back for approval.

There were 108 children in camp, all looking very healthy, and obviously

thoroughly enjoying the change. Many of the smaller ones wondered what it was all about, but it was explained to them that the recordings were being made for broadcasting from 2ZB, with the object of assisting the health stamp campaign, which is the financial support of the Health Camp organisation.

Lady Newall made two records, in which she stressed the value of the movement to young New Zealanders, and expressed the hope that it would receive the utmost support.



The Matron (Miss M. Hodges) makes a recording with Rex Walden looking on.