

NINE YEARS IN TUNIS

Written for "The Listener" by VIRGINIA CHADRABA

Mme. Chadraha, who was interviewed recently in "The Listener," is a graduate of the University of New Zealand, and before her marriage was first a secondary school teacher and then a nurse. As she speaks French as fluently as she speaks English, she was able, from her first arrival in Tunis, to enter freely into the lives of her neighbours.

TUNIS, the capital of Tunisia, lies at the head of a long canal, which is very narrow and very shallow. The town is built partly on a hill, and as you approach the wharves you have Minarets and Mosques facing you where the native quarter "straggles" up the hills.

I lived in Tunisia for nine years and got to know all the narrow winding streets of the Arab and Jewish part of the capital. Many of these little streets have Arab names — Rue Sidi Brahim, Rue Bir el Jadja, etc. The Jewish part

of the town is known as the Hara, and before I left the French were already demolishing much of this slum and were building new, modern houses.

We in New Zealand have no idea what inconvenience one has to put up with in some parts of the world. I lived for quite a long time in an Arab house where there was no water laid on, no electricity or gas, and no sink. The Arab houses are built round a central courtyard and you have no outlook on to the street, as no Arab woman must show herself unveiled to the outside world. We also had three wells: two were "citernes," that is to say, underground tanks, which are filled by rain water



SCENE in the native quarter of Tunis. The two soldiers are typical specimens of the Senegalese infantry, which forms a large part of the French Colonial Army

from the roofs; the third was a very deep well. I don't know where the water came from, probably from a spring, as the supply was inexhaustible. There was a bucket attached to a pulley for getting the water up.

Cooking by Oil or Charcoal

I used a primus and oil stove for cooking, and there was also a charcoal stove. Coal is never used for fires as it is too dear. The Arabs bring charcoal (Continued on next page)

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