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## THE MIDDLE EAST

in the grip of a  
social upheaval

(See page 7)



FELUCCAS ON THE NILE  
(PHOTO : EGYPTIAN ARABICA, PARIS)

## FROM THE UNESCO NEWS ROOM...

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★ **India.** — A trade union college for Asian workers was opened at the end of last year at Calcutta by the International Federation of Free Trade Unions. Its purpose is to "help in building up the Asian trade union movement on sound, democratic lines". The college is now in full operation after overcoming initial language difficulties arising out of the different linguistic backgrounds of its students, who come from Hong Kong, India, Japan, Malaya, Pakistan and Thailand. English has been adopted as the college language.

★ **Canada.** — The Canadian wood-pulp and newsprint industry created new production records in 1951, according to the annual report of the Canadian Federal Bureau of Statistics recently issued. For the first time, the gross value of the woodpulp produced exceeded 1,000 million Canadian dollars — a 30 per cent increase over 1950 production. The record newsprint production figure was 5,561,000 tons as compared with 5,319,000 in 1950.

★ **International.** — An annual film award created by American producer David Selznik for the European films which most effectively contribute to international understanding was presented recently in Paris. First prize went to the British film "Cry, the beloved country". Other prizes were awarded to "The Heart of the World" from Germany, to the Italian film "Two cents worth of hope", "The Swindlers' Banquet" from Belgium, and to "We are all murderers", made in France.

★ **Unesco.** — The Czechoslovak Government has instructed its Ambassador in Paris to inform Unesco that Czechoslovakia no longer considers itself a member of this Organization.

★ **Austria.** — The first Children's Village to be organized in this country has just been inaugurated at Imst, in the Tyrol region. Its first eight houses already have been opened to seventy-five children. The Village was founded following the initiative of a young Austrian medical student who launched a special fund-raising committee.

★ **International.** — The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund aided more than seventeen million children in seventy two countries and territories this past year, according to an announcement from UNICEF officials. New stress was placed on child health and welfare services in rural areas, and help was extended, for the first time, to a broad section of Africa. UNICEF also announced that voluntary contributions received in 1952 totaled nearly ten million dollars. The money came from governments and individuals in twenty-eight countries.

★ **Sweden.** — A Swedish film company has produced a documentary film called "The Road to Books". The film tells the story of a little boy who finds the page of a book on the roadside, then visits the local public library in search of the book itself. The next scenes are a graphic explanation of the role of the public library in the service of the community. Unesco has distributed copies in English, French or Spanish to National Commissions in member states.

★ **Unesco.** — A new booklet entitled "Race and Society" has just been published by Unesco in its series on "The Race Question in Modern Science". Author of the study is Kenneth Little of Edinburgh University. Discussing the racial situation in South Africa, Brazil, Hawaii and Great Britain, the writer shows that history rather than race is the main factor in producing differences between the cultures and cultural attainments of the world's population. "We can look forward with some confidence", he says, "to the day race and colour distinctions will have ceased to plague mankind".

★ **Peru.** — Wall paintings have just been uncovered near Lima, that date back two thousand years. The frescoes were found on the inner wall of an ancient temple, and are in excellent condition. Archaeologists say that they show a greater range of colour and finer workmanship than any others discovered hitherto. They may reveal new evidence of the interchange of cultures that took place in South America twenty centuries ago. The temple was discovered accidentally by two American archaeologists while excavating in the region.

★ **International.** — A tuberculosis "university" has been opened in Cairo to serve students from the Arab nations. It is being sponsored by the Egyptian Ministry of Health in association with the World Health Organization. The new centre will train students in modern methods of tuberculosis control, both preventive and curative. Doctors, nurses social workers and technicians from the area will be welcomed.

★ **Austria.** — The Austrian National Commission for Unesco has awarded prizes to a number of literary works contributing to international understanding. "The World's Little Inn" by Siegfried Freiberg won the prize for a play which has already been published or performed. Friedrich

Kaufman, a hitherto unknown young dramatist, received the award for an unpublished play.

★ **International.** — Delegates from many Asian and western countries met recently at Delhi, India, for the "Asian Students Convention on the United Nations". Purpose of this convention was to interest Asian students in the work of the United Nations and Specialized Agencies, and to discuss the techniques of setting up and operating a United Nations Students Association. Unesco awarded four travel grants to enable delegates from the US, Sweden, Australia and Indonesia to attend.

★ **India.** — The Government of India has decided to establish a National Academy, with headquarters at New-Delhi, for the development of Indian Letters. The Academy — to be named "Sahitya Academy" — will develop co-operation between the literary associations, universities and cultural organizations in India and abroad.

It will also arrange translations of literary works between different Indian languages and from foreign to Indian languages and vice-versa.

## BRITISH ARE WORLD'S MOST AVID READERS

Latest available statistics covering such subjects as newsprint consumption, illiteracy, school attendance throughout the world have been published by Unesco in "Basic Facts and Figures", a compact, easy-to-read handbook (priced at \$0.50; 3/-; 150 fr.). In less than sixty pages, the publication covers national statistics on adults able to read and write, primary education, higher education, libraries, museums, book production, daily newspaper circulation, film production, cinema attendance and radio broadcasting.

According to "Basic Facts and Figures", Finland is the most literate nation in the world, with only one per cent of its population unable to read and write. However, in Africa, illiteracy rates going up as high as 99% are listed.

The island of St. Helena has the world's highest rate of primary school enrolment with 200 children out of every 1,000 population in class. Enrolment in higher education is highest in North America, with the U.S.S.R. second and the rest of Europe third. The United Kingdom leads the world with 23,759 public libraries. It is also the world's most prolific producer of new books, issuing 17,072 new titles in 1950 as compared to 11,022 in the United States and 9,993 in France. Britons also read the most newspapers. The British press sells 598 newspapers for every 1,000 population. Circulation per 1,000 people is next highest in Luxembourg, followed by Australia, Sweden, Denmark and Norway. However, Americans get the most to read, consuming an average of 79 lbs of newsprint per capita annually, with only Canada, where the rate is 50 lbs. approaching them.

The world's leading film producers are in this order, the U.S., India, Japan, the U.K. and France. The U.S. also leads in number of radio sets per 1,000 inhabitants—594. Bermuda, with 417 is second and Sweden, with 307 is third. In 1949, there were 57 sets per 1,000 inhabitants in the U.S.S.R.

In all, North American owns 52% of the world's radio sets. Europe has 29%; the U.S.S.R. 7%; Asia, 6%; South America 3%; Oceania 2%; and Africa 1%.

★ **Unesco.** — A new volume of "Study Abroad", Unesco's annual handbook on scholarships has just been published. Covering both 1952 and 1953, it lists and explains nearly nineteen hundred fellowship programmes and some forty-three thousand opportunities for foreign study. Volume one of the series, published in 1948, listed only fifteen thousand such opportunities. The increase in part reflects the real growth in international fellowship programmes in the last five years.

★ **U. S. A.** — Architectural students from all parts of the world will be given on-the-job training in American architectural offices under a programme announced by Mr. Ralph Parker, of the American Institute of Architects, an affiliate of the International Union of Architects which has consultative status with Unesco. The announcement was greeted in Paris by M. Pierre Vago, Secretary-General of the International Union, as "an effort of major importance in providing technical assistance to the countries concerned". The names and addresses of nearly a hundred architectural offices which are ready to place foreign architectural graduates on their staff have already been mailed

to architectural societies in 35 countries, so that they may notify architectural students of their opportunity. The directory also lists an equal number of offices which are ready to sponsor and advise foreign students planning to study and travel in the United States. The architects' programme will provide advanced professional training by allowing foreign students to serve practical internships in leading architectural offices. It was announced that 40 architectural offices in the United States are already training foreign graduate students.

★ **Mexico:** To help supply the huge number of teachers needed for the thousands of newly built rural schools, Mexico's Secretary of Public Education, Dr. Manuel Gual Vidal, is using a unique and rapid educational system whereby prospective teachers can earn as they learn. During the day, they are "junior", or not fully qualified teachers, in local village schools; evenings are devoted to study for their own career. Each year of this home study increases their salary by one-sixth. Thus, after completing their six-year home-training course, the "juniors" are entitled to the Diploma of a Primary School Teacher, with the standard salary this post carries. These "juniors" can carry on their double duties of teaching and studying, because they follow the special Correspondence Courses given by the Instituto de Capacitacion del Magisterio, or Teachers' Training School. Under the guidance of the Secretary of Public Education, these courses give exactly the same curriculum as the National Normal School in Mexico City. The correspondence courses are entirely free. The 1952 graduates from the Instituto were the first to complete its six-year term and provided Mexico with 4,000 new school-teachers. Recently, when its second term commenced, over 1,400 juniors enrolled during the first week.

★ **Unesco.** — An American expert is being sent by Unesco to Nigeria to try to solve one of the most perplexing problems facing educators—how to teach the ABC's to people who have no alphabets. He is Dr. Hans Wolff, and his mission was especially requested by the Nigerian government. Dr. Wolff will live in a station-wagon for a year, moving around the country and recording some of Nigeria's fifty different languages on a tape-recorder. He will seek the words and accents held in common. One thing he plans to do, for instance, is to record a storyteller in one village, and then to play back the tape in neighbouring villages to see how much is understood. Eventually, he hopes to have a phonetic basis for a written alphabet to serve all the Nigerian languages now without one.

★ **Afghanistan:** In Afghanistan, where Unesco sent an educational mission at the request of the Government in 1949, a fundamental education programme is in progress. The Government has set up an educational film library, opened 60 rural schools, established a new institute for training secondary school teachers, and has begun courses for teacher training and home economics for women. An Agricultural College has been re-organized, and an Engineering College enlarged; and in all, an entirely new aspect to the educational picture in Afghanistan has resulted.

★ **Burma:** Since Unesco sent an educational mission to Burma in 1951, the Government has more than doubled its budget on education, is planning to open a thousand new primary schools, 200 junior secondary schools, 40 senior secondary schools, and a new teacher training college.

★ **Austria.** — A comprehensive exhibition devoted to every aspect of the work and objectives of Unesco has just opened in Vienna, under the auspices of the Austrian National Commission for Unesco. The principal themes of the exhibition are devoted to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to education in the service of peace. Virtually, every aspect of educational, scientific and cultural life has been presented dramatically through pictures, music, films and lectures. The exhibition is the first of its kind to be organized by the Austrian Commission.

★ **Unesco.** — Unesco has sent its sixty-eight Member States a series of eleven recommendations on various measures they might take to promote the free flow of information. One recommendation proposes that Member States adhere to the two Unesco-sponsored international agreements abolishing import duties on educational, scientific and cultural materials. Another asks for support for Unesco's efforts to facilitate travel abroad for students, teachers and scientists. A third recommendation asks that Member States adhere to the Unesco-sponsored Universal Copyright Convention; while another of the eleven suggestions asks for reduced mailing rates for books, newspapers and educational materials. The recommendations follow a previous series circulated in 1950. At that time, many States answered by liberalizing their tariff laws and reducing postal rates on printed matter.



# NEW LAND IS CONQUERED



A dike in the making. From an artificial island (top photo) ribbonlike form of dike begins to wind its way across what was once Zuider Zee. When tugs and workers have completed their task and pumped out water, the dike will protect a new polder, and the Netherlands will have won more productive land from the sea.

by Michel SALMON

**W**HILE the full force of last February's devastating storm was still sweeping over the southern provinces of the Netherlands, a Dutch official declared: "Not one inch of flooded land will be abandoned." From the Governor of the stricken province of Zeeland also came words with a courageous ring: "New land will be conquered."

Thus, in the midst of a catastrophe in which 430,000 acres of land were inundated, the Netherlands were not only preparing to throw back the invading waters, but also to undertake new conquests against the sea.

Anyone not acquainted with the tenacious and enterprising character of the Dutch people might well judge them rash to offer once again the age-old and impudent challenge to their eternal enemy: *Deus mare, Batavus litora fecit*—"God made the sea, the Dutch made the coastline."

Since the recent floods, the distinctive, deeply indented shape of Holland's coastline has become more familiar to most people. But the extent of the disaster has surprised those who do not realize the vulnerability of this country, some parts of which are situated more than 20 feet below sea level.

If Holland's entire system of dikes, which total some 2,000 miles in length, had been breached, instead of only those in Zeeland, nearly half the country including the rich provinces in the West would have disappeared under several feet of water. Amsterdam, The Hague and Rotterdam, the most densely populated centres, would have resembled the legendary cities of Ys. Only the countryside of Drenthe and Gelderland, and the poor lands of Overijssel and Brabant would have been spared.

Today, the traveller who crosses Holland, by-passing the "zone of operations" in the south-west, cannot help being struck by the spirit of calm determination he encounters everywhere. The Dutch people go about their normal activities with perhaps even more energy than usual, but neither feverishly nor with an air of despair.

As an engineer at Dordrecht calmly remarked to me: "After all, we shall have less work this time than we did after the war, when we had to drain about 570,000 acres of land."

Later, at The Hague, another Netherlander told me: "We are filled with gratitude by the immense example of international co-operation which has been shown by countries all over the world. But we should like our friends in other countries to know that we shall recover from this tragedy by our own work, that Dutch agriculture will, except in the devastated areas, meet its commitments, that our factories will continue to turn out their products, that our workshops, shipyards and ports will continue their activities. The inundations have not reduced our export capacity. One of the most effective forms of help the world can give us is to realize this fact and act upon it."

It was also in The Hague that I was given the following advice: "Don't go away with the picture of the Zeeland devastation in your mind. All this will be just an unpleasant memory in two years or so. Go and see our polders—those around the Zuider Zee that the sea was unable to conquer."

And so, at the invitation of the "Waterstaat en Verkeer",

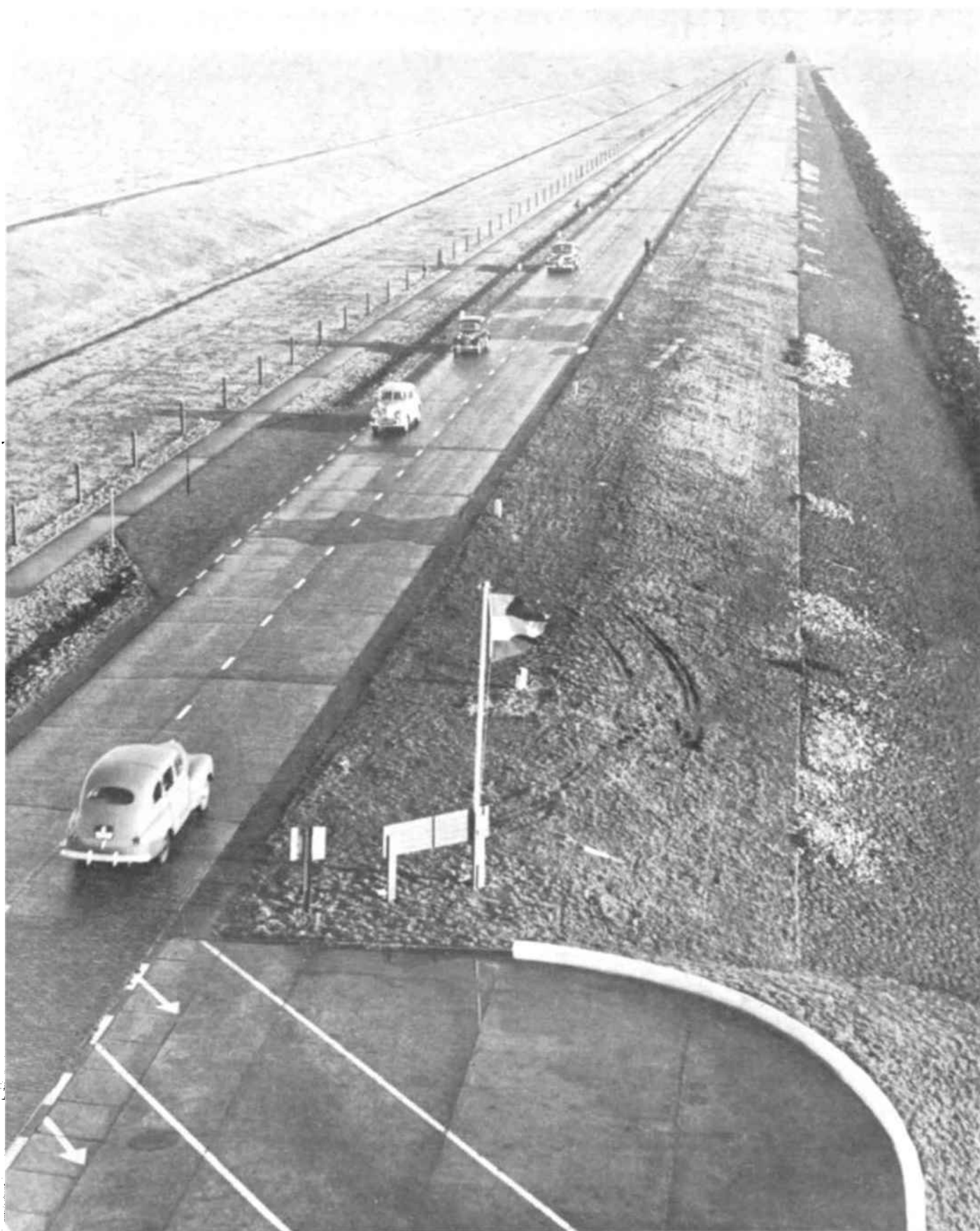
(Continued on following pages.)

# ZUIDER ZEE

protective dike which was now losing its effectiveness anyway. This prevented any more of the materials being lost in the gulf.

All the ships, floating cranes and tugs in the area were warned to stand by to assist in the work at the danger spot. After hours of superhuman effort the battle was won. All the gaps were sealed. The last opening was finally closed on May 28, 1932, at 1 p.m., as the ships gathered around sounded a salute on their sirens. The radio announced the news to a waiting nation, and as the victory was celebrated in every town and village, joyous peals of thanksgiving rang across the flat countryside from all the church towers and belfrys. And at the place where the great dike was finally closed a simple monument was placed, bearing the inscription "Een Volk dat leeft, bouwt zijn toekomst" (A people that lives, builds its future).

Thus confined, the Zuider Zee became a fresh water lake, safe from the tides, and was renamed the IJsselmeer. Divided up by smaller dikes and pumped dry through gigantic sluices emptying into the North Sea, the former Zuider Zee will, in a few decades, give the Netherlands its largest province, increasing the country's total area by some 12 per cent. So far, 168,034



The greatest dike in the world, some twenty miles long stretching from North Holland to Friesland, separates the Zuider Zee from the North Sea. It is planned to lay a double line railway track beside the present motor road and cyclists' path.

(Continued from the Netherlands Ministry responsible for the drainage of the polders and for river traffic, I went north to see the newest of these polders.

## Race with the sea

ABOVE my head, I saw a ship glide majestically past me. I spied several light-houses left high and dry among the fields; islands, with meaningless jetties, surrounded by a completely flat landscape which reminded me of the sea itself. This was the polder—a land wrested from the sea and the rivers, and proudest of all the empires won by the bold and enterprising Dutch.

It brought to my mind the vivid description of the Czech writer, Karel Capek: "Imagine a stretch of sea built round with dikes and then pumped dry, leaving behind a great beach of fine sand and a bottom rich with the deposits carried down by the rivers through the centuries. The Dutch drain this fertile soil and plant grass; they set their cows to pasture and make the cheeses which are sold at Gouda and Alkmaar..."

The story of the transformation of the Zuider Zee, once an enormous stretch of sea 1,351,400 square miles in area, concerns one of the finest achievements of our century. It began when C. Lely, an engineer whose name is as honoured in the Netherlands today as are those of Rembrandt, Vondel and Spinoza, conceived the

idea of creating a dike which was to span the twenty mile gap separating North Holland from Friesland.

At the start of the 20th century the vast bay of the Zuider Zee separated the provinces of Friesland and Overijssel from Noord Holland. However, after serious floods in 1916, the Dutch Parliament approved a project for the partial draining of this immense sheet of water.

On May 1, 1919, the work began and by 1923, engineers had started to close up the narrow stretch of sea between the coast of northern Holland and the island of Wieringen. Two years later, Wieringen was joined with the mainland and the area of reclaimed land became the first of the Zuider Zee polders, the "Wieringermeerpolder".

Work on the main dike now began to the east of Wieringen, between this former island and the Friesian coast 20 miles away, with the construction of an artificial island on which two ports with equipment and workshops were installed. These artificial ports provided shelter for floating equipment, such as giant cranes, and for dumps of construction materials.

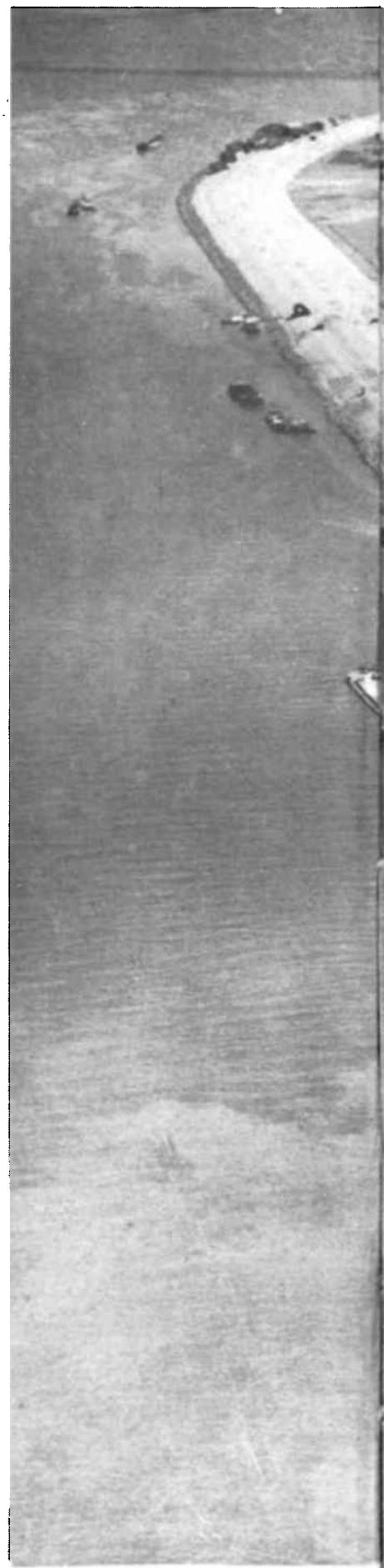
The foundations of the main causeway, which was formed of two separate dikes of clay and stones between which many tons of sand were poured, were laid in several different points at once. But almost immediately, engineers ran into difficulties because of variations in the depth of the sea bed. Channels, some of which were extremely deep, cut across the path planned for the dike, and it was foreseen that the sea currents in the

Zuider Zee, amplified by the effects of the construction work, would scour more and more sand from the beds of these channels, making them still deeper.

To counteract this, the engineers began to close the channels with underwater protective dikes, thus forcing the currents to rise off the sea bed and flow over the top of these protective works. But, as the main dike grew longer and the still open sections more narrow, the currents raced through these gaps more fiercely at each tide. Finally their force was sufficient to sweep away all the material which was being dumped in to fill the remaining openings.

Then began a dramatic race between man and sea. For a moment it seemed that the sea would win the contest. So fast were the currents that they had formed a chasm nearly 90 feet deep in front of the protective works which were in danger of being swept down into the tremendous hole. If this had happened the men working there would have irreparably lost the battle, despite all their technical knowledge. It became useless to continue dumping earth and stones in the water for the current carried everything away.

A quick decision was needed as the protective dike might have been swept away at any moment and, moreover, a storm already sweeping southern Holland was reported to be coming up the coast. The engineers decided to start work immediately at a point some 30 feet to the rear of the





# EDIKE — THE GREATEST IN THE WORLD

acres have been drained, out of 538,696 acres which are to be established. These are the "Wieringermeerpolder" whose dikes were wantonly destroyed by the Nazis in April 1945, a fortnight before they capitulated, and the North-East Polder.

## Dutch "far west"

At Kampen, a picturesque Hans-eatic town, I left the "oude land", or old country, and soon reached the North East Polder. The typical chessboard landscape, with its roads intersecting at right angles and its scattered houses unrolled slowly before me.

The Dutch sometimes speak of the Polders as their "Far West" and, in fact, this polder is a sort of Far West — prefabricated and surveyed in detail even before it emerged from the waters. Like the "new" lands of America in the 19th century, the fertile soil of the polders will soon provide land for settlers from other parts of this small country — the most densely populated in Europe (more than 770 people to the square mile).

Even the inn where I lunched, the "Het wapen van Ens" brought to mind the saloons one used to read about in one's youth. And though

the "polderjongens" — the young men working here and leading an almost monastic communal life — do not wear a cowboy's picturesque garb or go chasing outlaws over the prairie on horseback, they are engaged in one of the most thrilling adventures of modern times here on the northern borders of the Netherlands.

At the tiny village of Markness I was welcomed by the "Staat-boer", one of the government farmers. Here, everything was clean and orderly — an enormous farm kept scrupulously clean and equipped with a radio and telephone; rooms that were bright with hot-house flowers. All the outbuildings were equipped with air conditioning and in the fire-proof cow-houses, the plump Frisian cows operated their own automatic drinking water suppliers. Great sums of money have been invested in the polders and to supervise their development an elaborate administrative and social structure has been created, in which the "staat-boer" has a leading place.

When a polder is drained and the mud and peat of the sea bottom revealed, the ground is quite unfit for working and is so soft that it will not bear a man or a machine. This is where the Ministry of Works engineers take things in hand.

They dig canals — the first lines

of communication in the polder — thousands of miles of drainage trenches and ditches, and lay countless pipe-lines to carry off the water from deep down in the soil and remove the salt. As soon as the earth is dry and firm, it is analysed by other specialists. They then prepare a detailed geological map so as to determine which crops shall be allocated to different sections, while the less fertile areas are marked out as sites for towns and villages and for the planting of woodlands.

The "Waterstaat" builds farm-houses, makes motor roads (there are 310 miles of roads in the North-East polder), plants various species of trees and puts up public buildings. All this is done with the technical advice of an expert known as a "landscape architect". Only when everything is ready and the earth has produced one or two satisfactory crops, thanks to the concerted endeavours of public works, agricultural science, botany, geology, microbiology and even ar-

cheology, are the ordinary farmers called in.

But there remain other things to do before the farmers take over the land. "Land hunger" in the Netherlands is very great and the polder is too small to satisfy everyone's needs. The State therefore distributes the land by a democratic process — a competitive examination! Jan from far away Limburg, Kess from Zeeland, and Piet from Friesland, assemble in a large hall to sit for written examinations, and take an oral and a "practical" under the control of

(Continued on next page.)



Building the dike is a slow, painstaking job.



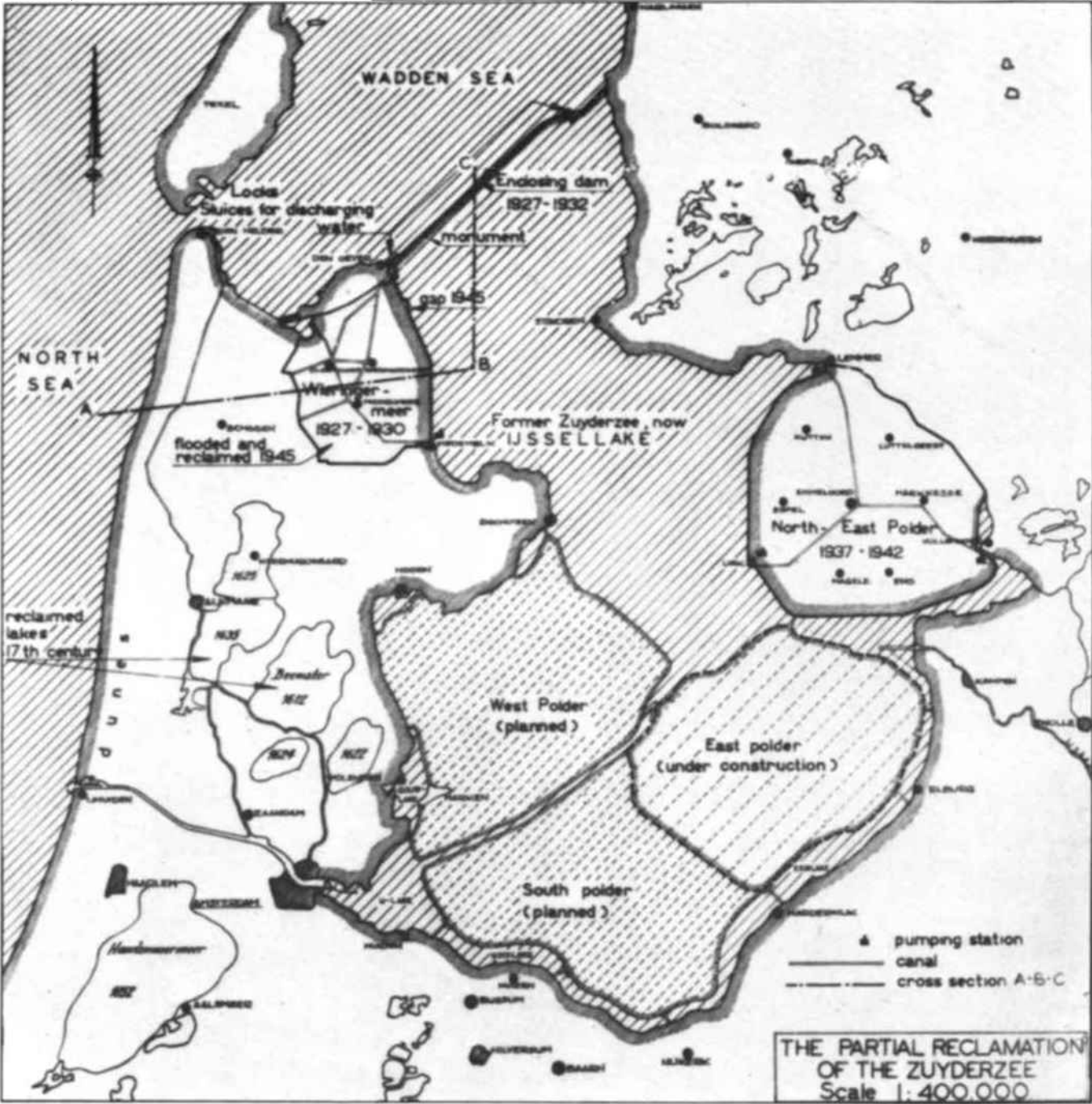
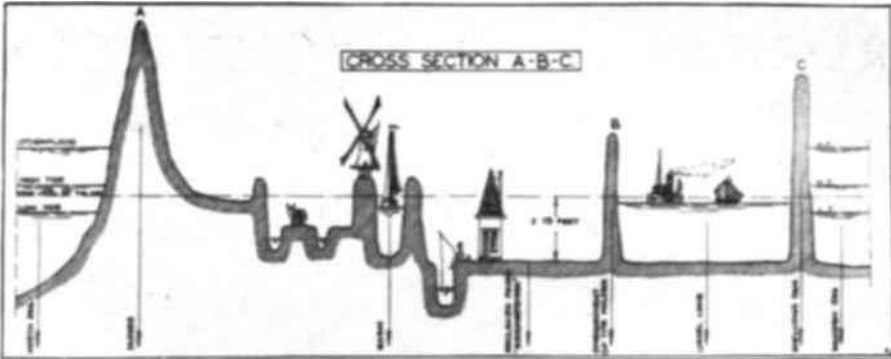
Floating cranes, lighters and dredgers dump thousands of tons of rock and clay into the sea to form the walls of the dike. The space between is filled in with sand.

# THE POLDERS WRESTED FROM THE SEA

This map of the Zuider Zee (or the IJsselmeer, as it is now called) and the cross-section of the area bounded by the letters A-B-C, shown above it, make it easy to understand why Holland is also called "The Netherlands". The map shows the sites of five polders. The Wieringermeer polder, to the northwest, was completed in 1932, but the dikes had to be repaired and the area pumped dry after war damage in 1945. Work on the North East Polder was delayed by the war, and it was only completed in recent months. Work on the East Polder is now being carried out, while the two remaining polders in the south and the west are in the planning stage. The rest of the IJsselmeer is separated from the North Sea by the great dike completed in 1932.

At the point "A" of the cross section are shown the natural sand dunes of the West coast of Holland. Their height can be measured by the fact that even the highest of the tides (the storm flood level) is well below their summits. But the area lying behind them is well below sea level. Further east, the Wieringermeer Polder (protected by the dike shown at "B") is actually 13 feet below sea level. Between the cross section "B-C" is the IJsselmeer, now a fresh water lake.

It was a combination of storm and exceptionally high tides which brought about the disastrous flooding of Zeeland (not shown in this map) on February 1. In exactly the same way, it was a mutual fury of winds and tides which crumbled the dikes protecting the fertile region to the south of Dordrecht on the night of November 19, 1491. More than 80,000 acres of fertile land were covered, 72 towns and villages disappeared under the waters and 100,000 people lost their lives in this tragedy, which was known as the St Elisabeth's Flood. This disaster and the recent inundations are the only two notable defeats suffered by the Netherlands system of dikes, and both events were due to quite exceptional circumstances.



(Continued from previous page)

agricultural experts. In 1952, there were more than 3,000 applications for the 129 farms offered. Successful candidates choose, according to their means, one of the 17 types of houses available, along with which go plots of 30, 60, 90 or 120 acres. These are let off at moderate rentals on renewable twelve-year leases. In this way, a well-balanced social and economic

structure is developed from the start. The "polder-boer" is not an entirely free agent, however; he has to grow the crops best suited to the type of soil on his holding. He can always ask for the advice and help of the "staat-boeren" or farm experts, salaried State employees who offer a practical demonstration of the rational use of land. The "polder-boer", however, is able to defend his interests in the "Polder Council", a sort of small-scale local government, representing the settlers on the new

lands in their dealings with the State. Agricultural statistics show that the North-East Polder, whose reclamation was not completed until 1949, gave the following yields (in kilogrammes per hectare) in 1951: Winter wheat : 4,280; summer wheat : 3,990; oats : 5,060; flax : 5,380; potatoes : 31,590; sugar beet : 47,310. When the whole polder is under cultivation and fully populated (about 1956, according to the official estimates) it will support some 40,000 inhabitants and will produce over 60,000,000 florins (about £6,000,000), worth of various agricultural products each year.

But agriculture is not the only aspect of future development which interests the people of the North East Polder. The Tourist Development Board at Emmeloord, chief town of the area, has published a 150-page booklet which is particularly striking because of its references to forests and towns that are today no more than building sites and new plantations. One illustration shows fine avenues lined with impressive buildings and tall trees. This is Emmeloord as it should be in 1960.

In point of fact Emmeloord is at present a sort of "mushroom" town, but one whose growth is controlled. Along its wide streets

three storey buildings stand side by side with huts and tents. One unpaved avenue lined with wooden buildings—the temporary homes of leading banks—calls to mind a Klondyke settlement during the "Gold Rush". But the permanent parts of the town—the three enormous churches (1), Catholic, Lutheran and Calvinist, the neat shops where cigar merchants preside over their fragrant merchandise, the well-kept schools and the boldly designed houses—are typically Dutch.

The tourists who already visit the North East Polder learn something of the past history of this area from a museum on the former island of Schokland where relics found at the bottom of the Zuider Zee — mammoth tusks, pottery, flint implements, fragments of caravels and old Spanish weapons corroded by salt water — are exhibited.

There is something awe-inspiring in the contrast between this "ants nest" activity around the Zuider Zee and the dreadful desolation in the province of Zeeland. But then, the Dutch have always found strength to face up to the blows of fate with a serenity which has nothing of indifference to fate or of dumb despair about it.

The progress and technical development which have made possible the "miracle" of the Zuider Zee should also prevent any repetition of the Zeeland disaster. The Dutch, who dwell like sentinels on a frontier of Europe, are convinced that they will.

(Official Netherlands govt. photos.)

(1) A white line on the base of their steeples is a reminder that the town is 13 feet below sea level.

This was once a sea bed. Trees of former island of Schokland can be seen at upper right. Before reclaimed land can be used salt must be washed away and new soil dried out.





# REGIONAL EDUCATION CENTRE FOR THE ARAB STATES : SIRS EL-LAYAN



General Mohamed Neguib, Prime Minister of Egypt, at the inauguration of the regional education centre at Sirs el-Layan, the second in a world chain of training institutions planned by Unesco to help in raising living standards by combatting ignorance, disease, poverty and illiteracy.

(Unesco photo)

**I**N a small village in the Nile Valley, the older folks were noticing with sadness that too many young people left the land to seek a better, more promising life in the big cities. The older people were sad but they didn't know what to do about it.

Then, one day, a government worker paid a visit to the village. He told the people about a government plan for building what he called a "Rural Social Centre" in their community. The programme, he said, could help them to improve their health, harvest better crops and earn more money, and learn to read and write.

The villagers were willing to do their part, and so the government sent two young social workers to help them get started. One, a young man, was a farming expert. The other was a young woman nurse. With their assistance, the new social centre was constructed. And it was a fine one.

It included a clinic, a maternity ward, a library. There was also a recreation room, public baths and laundries. The centre had classrooms, and rooms for demonstrating better farming methods, model beehives and so on.

When all was ready, the villagers set up five committees.

A health committee was made responsible for getting the village clean water, and for general sanitation and hygiene. It worked with the government nurse to make the new centre's clinic a success.

A second committee tackled problems of education and recreation. As its first task, it established a school for the village children. Then it organized evening classes for the adults. It supplied the centre's library with books, purchased a radio, and was soon bringing films to the centre.

## A changed village

**A**THIRD group worked with the young agricultural expert and with the village co-operative society. Their goal was to raise the economic level of the community. Using the centre's classrooms, they demonstrated new farming techniques. They bought and distributed better seeds and improved breeding stock. They also encouraged the peasants—or fellahin, as they are called in Egypt—to make profitable use of their spare time. They taught them how to raise bees, for example, and silk-worms—how to improve their spinning and weaving.

Two other committees rounded out the new organization. One was a conciliation committee to settle local disputes. The other was responsible for charity, and for helping widows, orphans, the sick and the aged.

The results of this new programme of fundamental education came quickly enough. Youngsters who had previously basked listlessly in the sun, with flies on their faces and sores on their eyes, were now more vigorous. The death-rate among children dropped by almost two-thirds. Families began to double their incomes. The new school was filled in the day time by the children, and at night by the adults. Before long,

the library became a favourite recreation spot. The case of this village centre is not an isolated one. Since 1946, the Fellahin Department of the Egyptian Ministry of Social Affairs has helped to establish 135 such centres.

Today, one of these villages has suddenly taken on special international importance. It is Sirs el-Layan, located about 50 miles north of Cairo, which has been chosen as the headquarters for Unesco's second regional fundamental education centre to serve the Arab world in raising standards of living through education. The first, serving Latin America, has been in operation at Patzcuaro, Mexico, since May 1951, and is now accommodating more than 100 students from 16 countries.

Sirs el-Layan is situated between two branches of the Nile, the Damietta and the Rosetta, in the centre of the Menouf district, one of Egypt's most fertile regions, with about 300,000 inhabitants.

Within this district there are now 18 social centres, 18 new type rural schools and six health units. Sirs el-Layan itself is about 3 miles from the town of Menouf, the administrative centre of the district. In 1946 it was selected as the site of a community development project of the Egyptian Government. The plan was to develop Sirs el-Layan as a model experimental area in which a combined attack on ignorance, poverty and disease was to be conducted by the Ministries of Education, Social Affairs, Health and Agriculture, with the Ministry of Trade and Industries co-operating in the development of local industries. Now it will serve as a model experimental and training centre for all the countries of the Arab world.

The Unesco centre was officially opened on 20 January 1953 by the Egyptian Premier, General Mohamed Neguib and Dr. John W. Taylor, acting Director-General of Unesco, at a ceremony attended by Egyptian officials, representatives of the Arab states and Specialized Agencies of the U.N.

Fifty trainees from six Arab States (Egypt, Hashemite Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria; in addition, a number of Palestinian Arabs have also been admitted) now make up the centre's first class, but enrolment is expected to rise to 150 by September when new dormitory facilities are to be completed, and to 200 by 1954. These "students" are not undergraduates. They were chosen because of their knowledge of the rural problems of their country, their long experience in rural education generally, and their specialist knowledge in at least one field of fundamental education. They include school directors, village welfare workers, nurses, literacy teachers, agriculturists and economists.

At Sirs el-Layan they will be trained to become the leaders and "the teachers of teachers" in fundamental education work in their own countries. Operating as teams in the various villages which constitute the Menouf district, they will be trained in the down-to-earth, practical techniques of raising social and economic conditions through education.

Specially-adapted textbooks, posters, films and

filmstrips for adult use are sorely needed throughout the Arab world; most existing educational materials in Arabic have been made primarily for children. The centre and its international team of students will develop model materials designed particularly for adults and specially adapted to meet the needs and resources of local communities.

Although each student will specialize in a single branch of fundamental education such as health, hygiene, literacy or agriculture, each will be trained to be something of an "all-rounder" in the team and to see fundamental education work not as a series of isolated tasks but as an interdependent whole, each part of which is equally essential for raising living standards.

## Teams of leaders

**O**N completing their training, the students will return to their own countries as teams, prepared to help in carrying out the education programmes which the Arab countries are now launching on an increasing scale. Some of these activities are already associated with Unesco's normal programme, some have been undertaken through U.N. technical assistance, others have been started independently by national or international organizations. The Unesco centre will co-operate with all, exchanging information, carrying out research and sending expert help where it is needed.

The Sirs el-Layan Fundamental Education Centre has been recognized as an institution of decisive significance to the educational and social welfare programmes of the Arab States.

The leaders in fundamental education trained at the Unesco centre will help to provide these masses with the health education they need to combat endemic diseases and improve sanitation and hygiene. They will be available to teach better farming methods, soil conservation and home economics; to help foster the development of rural crafts and small industries in order to create new sources of income and livelihood for village communities.

The establishment of the Unesco Fundamental Education Centre has already created keen interest everywhere in the region in fundamental education as one practical answer to the centuries-old problem of the Arab peoples. It has also stimulated interest in the other aspects of Unesco's work. Thus the centre is not only helping to provide ways of improving living conditions in the Arab world but is also helping to foster international co-operation between the peoples of a vital area of our modern world.

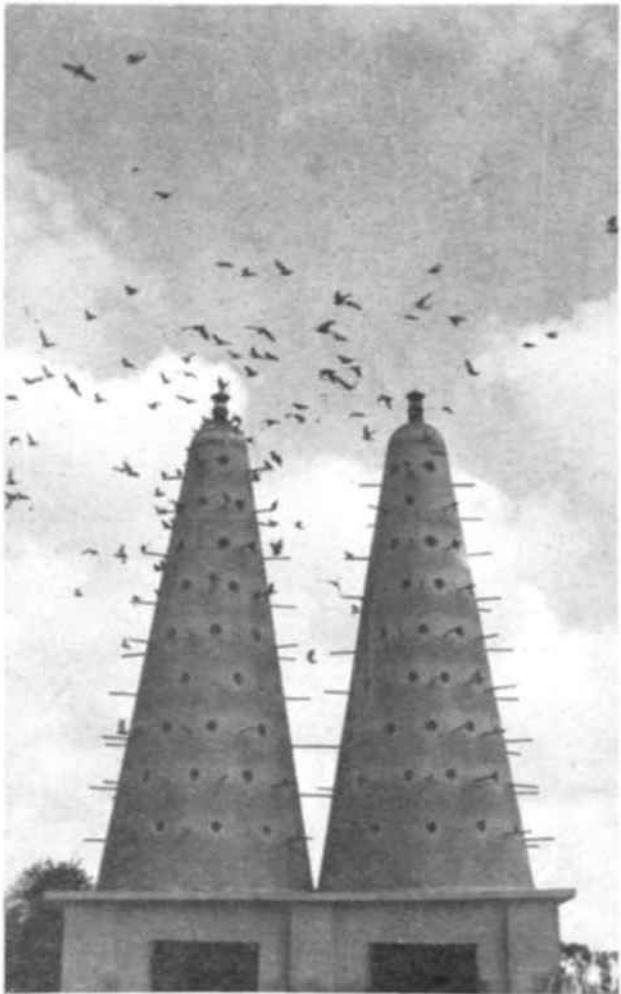
*In order that our readers may better understand the importance and the need for the Sirs el-Layan Fundamental Education Centre serving the peoples of the Arab world, we present on the following pages a report on the great social upheaval that is now taking place in the countries of the Middle East, and a picture of life in the villages of this region where fundamental education work is particularly needed. This study is taken from the "Report on the World Social Situation" prepared by the Department of Social Affairs of the United Nations.*



Saudi Arabian camels drink eagerly from water trough at the foot of a towering oil derrick. (Photo : Corsini, Esso.)



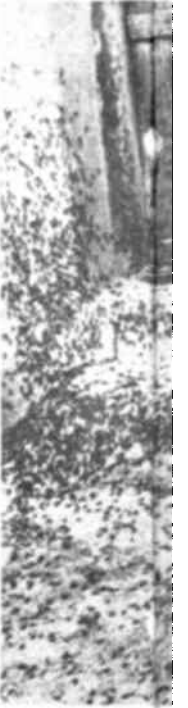
Village girl : About sixty-five per cent of all people in the Middle East are village dwellers. (Photo : Studio Apkar.)



A traditional landmark: Pigeon towers are a familiar sight in most Egyptian villages. (Egyptian Embassy Photo.)



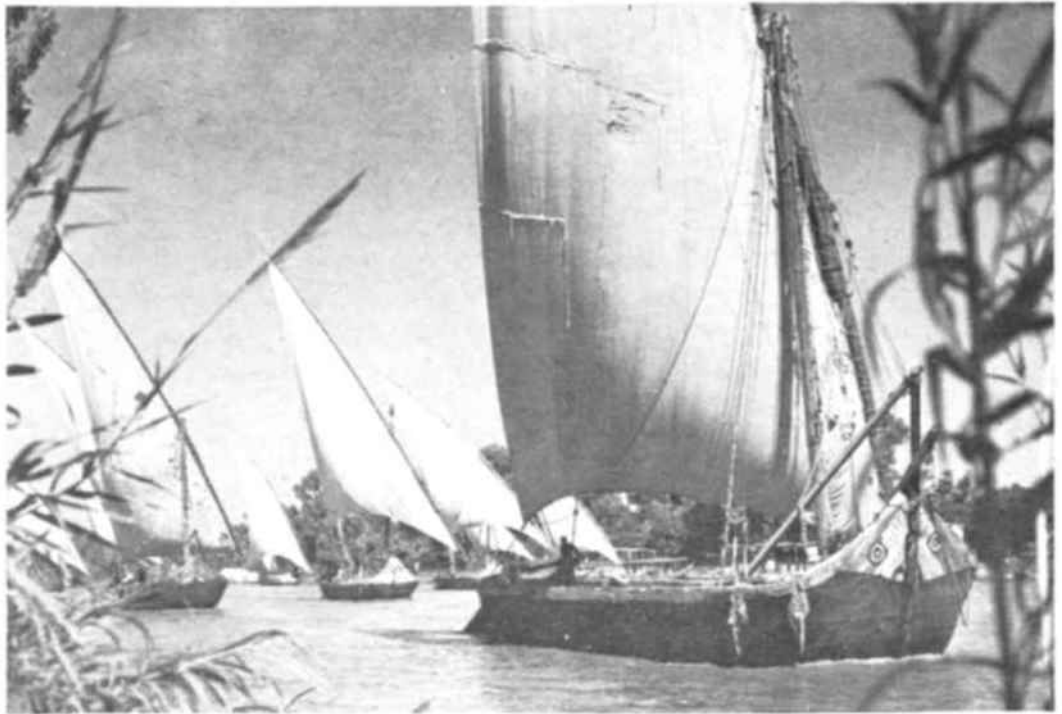
The peasants—or fellahin as they are called—and their families make up seven tenths of Egypt's population. Many of the younger fellahin seek better lives by migrating to the cities. (Unesco Photo.)



Part of last year's crops in land



AN ARAB PEASANT HEADS FOR TOWN OF TRIPOLI ON GRAVEL MOUNTAIN ROAD OVERLOOKING ONE OF THE FERTILE VALLEYS OF THE GREAT NILE



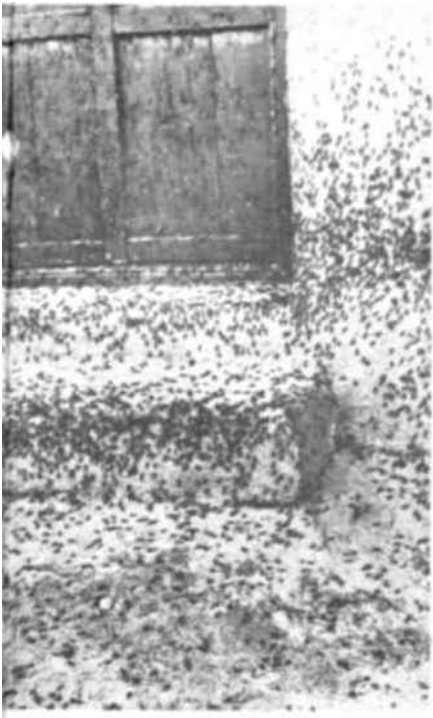
The Great Nile: Piercing the arid lands it has given Egypt a narrow strip of richly fertile ground. But beyond this stretch of cultivated land lie two immense deserts. (Egyptian Embassy Photo.)



The farmer: In many parts of Egypt, farmers are traditionally using oxen for plowing.



# THE MIDDLE EAST IN THE GRIP OF A SOCIAL UPHEAVAL



star's locust invasion which ravaged idrom North Africa to India. (U. N. Photo.)



FILE VALLEYS OF LEBANON. (Unesco Photo).



Turkey, where this photo was taken, tionally independent. (Photo " Réalités ")

FROM remotest antiquity, the Middle East (1) has served as a highway linking together the three continents, of Africa, Asia and Europe. It is the birthplace of the world's earliest recorded civilizations, of monotheistic religions, the art of writing, and many other major cultural developments without which "Western" civilization would be unthinkable.

A region with such an ancient and diversified historical background naturally exhibits important variations among its constituent parts. Yet, underlying these differences is a basic unity which is also the product of a long historical process. From earliest times, the river valleys of Egypt and Mesopotamia radiated their civilizations to neighbouring lands. Conquests, migrations and large-scale deportation of populations diffused religious and cultural patterns throughout the region. For over one thousand years, the greater part of the Middle East was politically unified, under the Persian, Macedonian and Roman empires. During the first six centuries of the Christian era, most of the region was subjected to the influence of Christianity, which gave it a greater degree of cultural unity than it had experienced before. In the course of the following two centuries Christianity was replaced by Islam, which constitutes today the main factor of cultural unity.

Approximately 90 per cent of the population are Moslems; 4 per cent are Christians (divided among several denominations); less than 2 per cent are Jews; 2 per cent (in the southern Sudan) belong to African tribal cults; most of the remainder belong to semi-Moslem sects. All the political units in the region excepting three of the smaller ones (Cyprus, Israel and Lebanon) have Moslem majorities. Together with its religious beliefs and practices, Islam brought with it a legal code, the *Sharia*, which until recently regulated almost all aspects of life of the Moslem communities and many activities of non-Moslems. It still exercises a deep influence on Middle Eastern society.

Islam also helped to unify the Middle East by diffusing the Arabic language, which for several centuries constituted the sole linguistic medium of science and literature, and until very recently was likewise the official language of religion and of the law throughout the region. Moreover, the three most widely spoken languages of the region—Arabic, Persian and Turkish—have interpenetrated each other to a marked degree and, as recently as fifty years ago, a knowledge of two or three of these languages was widespread among the educated classes.

Upon this relatively homogeneous Islamic society, the impact of modern Western civilization has been, with local variation, both marked and progressive since the end of the 18th Century. The countries in which Western influence first made itself felt, and in which it penetrated most deeply, bordered on the Mediterranean: Turkey, Egypt, Palestine and Lebanon. The countries of the Arabian peninsula on the other hand, have experienced the impact of the West only during the last two or three decades. This has introduced an important element of diversity into the region which makes generalization extremely difficult.

Moreover, Westernization has in no country affected all classes equally. Even where it has penetrated deepest, its influence tends to be much stronger in the urban areas and in the upper and middle classes.

These classes (particularly the upper class) already approximate the Western world in respect of birth and death rates, life expectancy, housing, food and clothing, medical services, education and other similar characteristics. The great majority of the population, on the other hand, and especially the three-quarters of the people who live in rural areas, still largely continue to live according to patterns that were developed in the Middle East many centuries ago. It should be borne in mind, however, that in practically all Middle Eastern countries there is a small, but rapidly increasing and very influential, segment of the population to which the statements made do not generally apply.

## Division of desert and sown

It must also be noted that Israel differs widely from the region as a whole, not only because of traditional religious-cultural differences between Moslems and Jews, but also because of the effects of recent immigration, particularly the immigration of European middle-class professional families. An outstanding and highly significant feature of other Middle Eastern countries is their lack of a professional middle-class. The resulting situation is that Israel has, for example, the largest number of physicians for the size of its population of any country in the world (one physician for every 380 inhabitants), while in other countries of the Middle East, the gravest shortages of physicians are to be found (e.g., Iran has only one doctor for every 63,000 inhabitants).

Geographically, the Middle East is characterized by a dual division between Desert and Sown. Over 90 per cent of the region is desert, or at best grazing steppe, with great extremes of temperature, almost no rain at any time of the year, and a very scanty vegetation of low grasses and drought-resistant bushes. The narrow sown tract is, generally speaking, Mediterranean in character, having long, hot, rainless summers; rainy, temperate winters; and a native vegetation ranging from grass to open forests. The transition from the Desert to the Sown, as a rule, is gradual, with the notable exceptions of the two great river zones of the Nile and the Tigris-Euphrates valleys, where it is abrupt and clearcut.

The peoples of the Middle East, in their adaptation to

their physical environment, largely conform to this basic regional dichotomy between Desert and Sown. The desert, where the only feasible mode of existence has been that of the wandering herder, has served for centuries as the home of nomadic, animal-breeding tribes, the members of which today constitute about 16 per cent of the total population of the Middle East. The Sown, with its very different physical conditions, has for at least as long been the abode of the settled cultivators, who today make up some 66 per cent of the peoples of the region. The remaining 18 per cent live in towns, some of which can boast an uninterrupted history of several thousands of years.

Living conditions vary somewhat from one nomadic tribe to another, and even more appreciably from one settled area to another; yet these differences (as between tribe and tribe, village and village, town and town) seem superficial indeed when juxtaposed to the profound differences which separate the total living conditions of each type of community from those of the others. These dissimilarities are so pronounced that demographic, social, economic, and cultural characteristics, which are expressed statistically in national or regional averages, have little meaning unless they are immediately followed by a breakdown of each figure according to the aforementioned three major population types. At present, however, statistical data from the Middle East as a whole are sporadic, inadequate and unreliable, while figures relative to any specific type of community in most cases simply do not exist.

## Poverty and endemic disease

ABOUT 20 per cent of the region as a whole is composed of urban population (definitions of "urban" vary widely), about 65 per cent is composed of settled rural population and about 15 per cent is composed of nomadic or semi-nomadic peoples. The urban population is estimated to be no more than 10 per cent in Afghanistan, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan and the Arabian Peninsula, but 40 per cent in Lebanon and 50 per cent in Israel. The nomadic and semi-nomadic population ranges from 0 per cent (Cyprus, Egypt, Lebanon) to 33 per cent in Afghanistan and the Arabian Peninsula and 40 per cent in Jordan.

The Middle East is in general an area of high birth rates; death rates while still very high, have been partially controlled, resulting in rates of population increase of 10 to 20 per thousand a year. High rates of increase are derived in part from the virtual elimination of famines and pestilential diseases, such as cholera and plague, which until very recent times periodically decimated the population; and from decreases in infant and child mortality, although rates are still very high in comparison with those of more economically developed countries. Thus, in Egypt, for example, which has more facilities for child care than most of the other Middle Eastern countries, one child out of three dies before reaching his fifth birthday.

Both general conditions and social attitudes appear to favour the continuation of high birth rates for some time to come. These conditions and attitudes include the overwhelmingly agrarian structure of society, the isolation and illiteracy found in wide parts of the region, the traditional family pattern (the extended family), the widespread desire for heirs, especially male heirs, and the absence of economic incentives to limit the number of offspring.

At the present time, the Middle East is in the grip of a social upheaval, the causes and ingredients of which are varied and complex. Chief among the factors involved are the long-standing problems of poverty and endemic disease, brought to focus by increasing contact with the West and consequent awareness of its higher standard of living; the disintegration of the traditional family pattern and the decline of patriarchal authority; the growth of national selfconsciousness and nationalist aspirations; the increasing pressure of population upon land in some areas; the expansion of cities and industries, attended by a gradual reduction of the isolated hinterland; and the increasing demand for the social and political equality of women.

The byword in many quarters is change, though there is little unanimity on what change is desirable, or how it is to be effected, or at what pace. In governmental and professional circles, thinking about the problem of social change has crystallized into two contrasting points of view: the one envisages the destiny of the Middle East as lying in the direction of a return to the pristine ideals, values, and traditions of Islam, and seeks to effect changes and reforms within that framework; the other advocates radical and sweeping innovations along Western lines, and the scrapping in large part of indigenous traditions. Yet a third view, however, takes a middle position, and considers that the basic need is for an organic development of Middle Eastern society in which desirable innovations borrowed from outside are integrated and merged with strong and wholesome forces of traditional culture. In many parts of Turkey, Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon, economic and social change is already quite far advanced; yet in other parts of these same countries, as elsewhere throughout the Middle East, such change has been slight.

Beneath the surface of the ideological divisions, however, there is a growing restlessness among the masses of the people. At the same time, the significance of the masses and the need for improving their lot are being increasingly recognized by all classes. Leaders of government have, to a greater or lesser extent, initiated or planned reforms (e.g., social welfare programmes, political suffrage, land reform, expansion and improvement of primary and secondary education). Yet the technical skills and facilities available for the implementation of these reforms are not adequate to the need—hence the crucial importance of programmes of technical assistance.

(1) Here considered as including Afghanistan, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, and Yemen, together with the smaller territories of the region.

# THE VILLAGE, PIVOT OF ARAB LIFE

THE most typical way of life throughout the Middle East is that of the agricultural village. With few exceptions, (for example, fishing villages on the coasts of Arabia; marsh villages in southern Iraq), the settled villagers are cultivators of the soil. For thousands of years, the villages have been the foundation stones of Middle Eastern life, barely supporting their own inhabitants while providing the food and luxuries consumed in big cities.

The bulk of the agricultural population lives in dire poverty and in extremely unsanitary conditions. Most of the villages are tightly packed conglomerations of buildings with no sewage system and with no more adequate water supply than a single spring or well, which is often situated at some distance from the village, and the water of which is frequently polluted. The problem of water shortage (which lies at the basis of the nomadic way of life) is a critical one for living standards in Middle Eastern villages, not only because it limits agricultural production and is conducive to disease—the wide prevalence of eye and skin diseases is attributed in good part to the lack of fresh water—but also because it may involve a serious cost affecting the peasant's real income. In some areas, water rights are owned separately from, or in addition to, the land, and the peasant share-cropper has been traditionally obliged to give up to one-fifth of his crops in return for water supplied by the landlord.

The peasant family lives in a single one- or two-room house built of the raw material available in the district (stone, mud, reeds, etc.). The need for heating facilities is felt chiefly in the more northerly latitudes and above a certain elevation; but fuel supplies are scarce and expensive. Manure, in the form of kneaded and dried dung cakes, is widely used as fuel for heating and cooking, a practice which

deprives the soil of much-needed natural fertiliser.

The typical Middle Eastern village possesses some traditional institutions which, at present, are being brought increasingly under the control, or at least the influence, of the government. The village guest-house (*madif* in Arab lands, *Koy Oodasi* in Turkey, etc.), found in many but by no means all villages, serves both as a place for the entertaining of guests and as a gathering-place for the villagers themselves. In Turkey, these guest-houses have in many instances been either replaced or supplemented by the more recently established "people's houses" (*Halk Odalari*). In the larger Middle Eastern villages, there are also usually a number of coffee-shops, and, in some cases, a communal bath.

## Family traditions

ANOTHER important traditional village institution is the mosque, or in Christian villages, the church. Most villages possess one or more mosques, and, in some cases, also a church. The mosque is under the care of a *sheykh*, or religious leader, who usually exercises considerable influence over the beliefs and attitudes of the villagers and who teaches the children attending the Koran-school housed in the mosque. In many cases, the *sheykh* owns and works land like any other peasant.

The forms of social organization in the village depend on several factors, of which the most important are the size of the village and the history of its inhabitants. Many of the smaller villages are inhabited by various families all of whose members are related to one another and regard themselves as the descendants of one common ancestor who first established the village. Larger villages may contain two or more

such family-groups, between whom there may be some rivalry.

The chief of one of these family groups is, as a rule, the village headman, whose pre-eminent position, traditionally based on his headship of a leading family, is latterly undergoing a transformation as a result of which he must now frequently be elected by the villagers and confirmed by the government, or else be appointed directly by the government. The headman is usually economically better off than the average villager and has considerable influence and prestige in the village. Assisted by a council of village elders, the headman does the administrative work in the village, has in many cases limited jurisdiction to resolve small disputes, and is the intermediary between the village and the government. On the one hand, he represents the interest of the village vis-à-vis the head of the district to which the village belongs; on the other hand, his duty is to enforce government orders, to assist the tax collector in his work, and to exercise a general responsibility for the village to the government.

The extended family, consisting of an elderly male head and all his male descendants and their wives, plus unmarried females, is the norm in the Middle East. It is most firmly established in the villages and among the nomads, although it likewise survives, in a modified form, in the cities. The extended family is the basic unit of Middle Eastern economy. In the village, it owns and works the land jointly. (In the nomadic tribe, it holds the flocks and herds in common, and in the cities, it often carries on in common a traditional industry or a commercial enterprise.)

The women marry early—usually at the onset of sexual maturity or even earlier; the number of unmarried adults, male or female, is very low. Polygamy is permitted in Islam with certain restrictions; however, not more than 5 per cent

of the married men of the region as a whole have more than one wife at a time. Although veiling is not practised in the villages, and women have traditionally worked in the fields alongside their men folk as well as in their households, segregation of the sexes remains the rule.

As long as the family lives together and earns its livelihood together, and as long as the property of the family is held and controlled by its head, paternal authority is strong, and the career of the young people is clearly cut out for them along traditional lines. Each succeeding generation continues the occupation handed down to it by its predecessor: animal husbandry in the nomadic tribe, cultivation in the village, and a trade or artcraft belonging to the "old industries" in the towns.

## Change of authority

IN traditional Middle Eastern society the family is thus the principal social structure within which the individual must fit closely and to the control of which he must submit. When this control is weakened by village-to-town migration, industrialization, employment on an individual basis, growing force of governmental control, etc., serious disturbances in social and psychological equilibrium may ensue. The replacement of family and paternal authority by more impersonal social forces (government, public opinion), and at the same time by more personal individualistic forces ("self-determination", "self-reliance"), is rarely a smooth process, and is often fraught with dangers of maladjustment.

The income of the Middle Eastern villagers is determined essentially by what they derive from the land, plus minor supplements from livestock and from some handicrafts. The actual levels of personal income and consumption of the agricultural village populations have never been systematically measured, except for a few surveys of doubtfully representative villages; but they are generally known to be extremely low. National income estimates assign per capita incomes of \$100 or less to most countries of the area (\$389 in 1949 to Israel, however, and \$125 to Lebanon and Turkey), yet these estimates do not take account of the very wide differences in income of different groups—differences, for example, between large landowners and peasants, which arise from the fact that a single landowner may receive as much as half the crops produced by a great many peasants. Some observers believe that rural living conditions have not improved, and possibly have become worse, during recent decades.

One available study on the Egyptian economy indicates that in the twenty years up to 1940, "the volume of agricultural production... only just succeeded in keeping pace with the population, in spite of much technical research and improvement in methods of cultivation". At the same time, prices of export crops declined, and there was a falling off in the national consumption of such staple articles as cereals, sugar, coffee, tea, tobacco and textiles. Studies by the Fellah Bureau in Egypt have shown that, in 181 villages, rents had risen in 1944-45 by 242.5 per cent in relation to 1938-39 rents, while income from the main crops had risen 230 per cent. The FAO estimates that, since World War II, the region as a whole has exceeded pre-war food production by about 10 per cent, but that the population has increased faster, and per capita food production has therefore decreased slightly.

Some of the causes of low per capita productivity, low income and low consumption in the Middle East are common to the region as a whole; others are peculiar to certain countries. Egypt, for example, is particularly affected by the problem of population pressure on the arable land; productivity per unit of land there is high, but productivity per person is low.

There is about ten times as much arable land in the United States per person as in Egypt, and nearly 40 times as much per person of the

Turkish farmer and son: Turkey is one Middle East country which is expanding its rural school systems. To ensure that its village training institutes produce rural teachers, it opens them only to the sons of peasants. By 1948-49 more than 12,000 had graduated, and it is hoped that by 1956, some 37,000 teachers will be ready to take jobs in the villages. (Photo Réalités)







Most of the villages of the Middle East are tightly packed conglomerations of buildings with no more adequate water supply than a single spring or well. There is a deep cleavage between town and country. The town is widely regarded as the focus of everything desirable, while the village is the symbol of backwardness. This partly explains the constant flow of migrants from village to town. This tendency was accelerated by conditions during The Second World War.

agricultural population. (This does not take into account the permanent meadows and pastures and other lands potentially cultivable in the United States, none of which exist to any great extent in Egypt). The intensive cultivation of the arable soil in Egypt by many farm workers, and the richness of this soil, produce a higher yield per hectare than is achieved through mechanized farming in the United States: nevertheless, the yield per unit of land in Egypt, would have to be 40 times greater in order to produce the same income in terms of production per person as in the United States. Also, it may be anticipated that Egypt's death rate, which is now relatively high but declining, will be significantly reduced in the near future through public health measures, and that the already dense agricultural population will become even denser, since there is no evidence that the birth rate will decline correspondingly in the near future.

Quite clearly, then, Egypt's difficulties cannot be resolved without a major attack upon the problem of land-and-population.

On the other hand, the Middle East region as a whole is not land-starved. There is, for example, a fair amount of cultivable but, as yet, unused land in Iran and Iraq; yet the rural poverty in these countries is little different from that of Egypt. According to FAO estimates, the amount of unused land that can be potentially brought under cultivation in the region as a whole is twice the amount now cultivated. In such countries as Turkey, Iraq, Syria, and Saudi Arabia, very considerable expansions of cultivated

areas have actually taken place in recent years. But the rate of expansion has not in general kept up with the rate of population growth.

Much of the land now under cultivation, moreover, has become seriously and progressively eroded (partly because of the eating habits of the many free-ranging goats in the area), and conservation and irrigation are crucial needs.

### Land share problems

**T**HE type of land tenure system prevailing in large parts of the Middle East has been widely commented upon as a reason for low productivity and low income of the agricultural villager. Much of the land is owned by a small number of wealthy families who commonly live in the towns (and who do not usually run centrally-organized estates but let out separate pieces of land to tenants or middlemen). A great many of the villagers are tenant sharecroppers, others own such small plots that they must seek additional land on a share-cropping basis or work part-time for wages on large properties, in order to maintain themselves at even a subsistence level. By tradition and law, land is subdivided amongst heirs, and this has meant more and more families on minimal plots and a growing body of landless labourers.

The unequal distribution of land, as well as the heterogeneous forms of tenure found in the Middle East, result from historical processes, some going back to the Ottoman conquest or earlier. Available statistics give

a very imperfect picture of the numbers of large landowners, smallholders and landless peasants, and the relative importance of the holdings.

In Iran, about 50 per cent of the claimed land reportedly belongs to some 100,000 large landowners; about 15 per cent is in small holdings; and 35 per cent is in State domain or religious endowments (*waqfs*). Here, and in neighbouring Iraq, which also has highly-concentrated land ownership, much of the land is leased by the owners to middlemen, usually town dwellers, for fixed rents, which the latter collect along with their own profit from the peasant who works the land.

In Syria, only 30 per cent of the agricultural workers are reported to be independent peasants. In Egypt, while most peasants possess land, only a minority can and do make a living from their own land. In 1947, 11,000 land owners with 50 feddans (21 hectares) or more owned 36.8 per cent of the cultivated area of Egypt; 143,000 owners with 5 — 50 feddans (2.1 — 21 hectares) owned 29.7 per cent; 587,000 owners with 1 — 5 feddans (.42 — 2.1 hectares) owned 20.4 per cent; and 1,921,000 owners with 1 feddan and less owned 13.1 per cent. The last-mentioned group, 70 per cent of the total number of landholders, hardly have enough land for the maintenance of a family.

It is important, however, to note that, as in the case of land shortage, inequality of land ownership does not fully explain low standards of rural income throughout the Middle East. Turkey, for example, has traditionally been a country of independent farmers, without excessive concentrations of ownership. Tur-

key, moreover, does not generally suffer land shortage (and a government Act was introduced in 1945 to help the existing landless peasants and those with undersized plots to obtain land). There is also extensive individual ownership or smallholding in Lebanon, although many large estates have arisen as a result of the chronic indebtedness of the peasants. Yet, rural incomes in these countries — while probably higher than the regional average — are extremely low, and, of course, are in no sense comparable to those in an economically developed area like England (where most of the arable land is held under tenancy, highly regulated by law).

The confusion of land titles; the prevalence of narrow, inefficient "strip" holdings; and the excessive fragmentation of land into plots consisting of as little as a fraction of an acre in consequence of the increase of farm population and of inheritance laws which encourage the subdivision of land, are among the additional obstacles standing in the way of agricultural development, especially in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria.

The poverty of the villages of the Middle East is also due to a complex of other factors — widespread disease, which cuts down productivity at critical periods; underemployment, which means that many healthy villagers find nothing to do a good part of the year; rural indebtedness, which means that the peasant cannot enjoy the surplus of good crop years because of the financial pall cast by bad crop years; illiteracy. (cont'd on next page).

## MIDDLE EAST (continued)



### GROUND TO BE BROKEN ; SLUMS TO BE RAZED

Jewish immigrants help meet great shortage of farm labour in Israel. Above, a group breaks new ground for cultivation. Below, Turkish peasants who have moved to Istanbul set up "home" in an abandoned mosque where 50 people, including 30 children, live in eleven "rooms". Government authorities are working to improve conditions in overcrowded and antiquated buildings. (Top photo : Magnum. Below : Unesco photo.



farmers, and a complex of mental attitudes which make improvements difficult to introduce from without; lack of communication among the peasants and lack of organizational means for taking common action to improve conditions; etc.

Agricultural duties call for a concentration of effort at certain times of the year, but at other times there is a vast amount of potentially productive manpower which is idle in Middle Eastern villages. Studies carried out in certain villages on the Delta in Egypt, for example, showed that the average peasant worked no more than 180 days a year. Similar underemployment has been reported for other countries in the region — Lebanon, Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. Pressure of population upon the limited land available aggravates the underemployment in Egypt and Lebanon, but Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria are not countries with a land shortage. In fact, Syria requires foreign labourers during harvesting.

Putting this idle manpower to productive work is obviously one of the basic requirements for raising standards of living in the Middle East. Among the solutions undertaken or proposed are: diversification and rotation of crops, the development of handicrafts (Egypt has used rural social centres for this purpose), the organization of effective services for distributing manpower among different occupations at different times of year (as done already in Israel), the use of spare village manpower for village improvement and development projects under a nominal incentive payment from the government ("Community Development Employment", as undertaken in Greece), and the expansion of industries.

Closely related to the problem of the maldistribution of land is that of rural indebtedness. The uncer-

tainty of the rainfall and the low income of the farmer, whether peasant proprietor or sharecropper, combine to drive him into debt, while the lack of well-organized agricultural banks—and his lack of collateral that may be required by available banks—forces him to have recourse to money lenders whose rates are extremely high, especially in years of crop failures when the demand for loans rises sharply.

In recent years, a noticeable improvement has taken place in this respect. In the first place, there has been a marked increase in agricultural credit facilities, mainly through governmental efforts, which has resulted in an appreciable reduction in interest rates. Thus, the institution in 1930 of the State-sponsored Agricultural Credit Bank of Egypt has resulted in a sharp decrease in the business of money lenders. Secondly, the growth in the co-operative movement in some countries has provided an alternative source of credit.

In Cyprus, the services of the co-operative societies cover virtually the whole rural population.

In Egypt, the number of rural credit corporations was increased from 738 in 1939 to 1,654 in 1948 and the membership from 70,021 to 527,073. They furnish their members such services as buying supplies, marketing produce, carrying out certain agricultural work and securing loans. Their activities also include the social welfare of their members through fighting illiteracy, spreading co-operative education, creating social clubs, fostering preventive health education and medical services, introducing rural and home industries and organizing local charity.

In Turkey, the number of rural credit co-operatives rose from 601 in 1940 to 879 in 1948 and their membership from 138,412 to 411,204; about one-quarter of the total num-



# TRADITION v. DESIRE FOR CHANGE

ber of villages are linked up with the co-operative credit system.

Israel is unique in that a high proportion of the rural population live in settlements organized entirely on co-operative lines; about 45 per cent of the population are covered by these and other types of co-operatives.

In Iraq, Iran, Lebanon and Syria the co-operative movement has as yet spread among rural areas only to a limited extent, in spite of the encouragement of governments. In view of the fact that the peasant who markets his products is frequently exploited by the merchant, the FAO considers that co-operative marketing societies "could do much... to secure a fair share of the price to the farmer".

The majority of Middle Eastern villages have no motorable road connection with even the nearest urban centres. Newspapers, radios and telephones are rarities (though radios are increasing).

Isolation is most extreme in the mountainous hinterland of Afghanistan and Iran; in the border region of Iran, Iraq and Turkey; in southern Arabia; and in the southern part of the Sudan.

## Educational transition

LIKE nomadic culture, village culture has been predominantly non-literate. There is, to be sure, a rich traditional body of folk stories, songs, and the like; but most villagers speak local dialects differing more or less widely from written Arabic, Persian, or Turkish, and learning to read write has meant in effect learning almost a new language. Only very recently have any efforts been made to take these difficulties into account in mass-communication media. For example, the Egyptian State Broadcasting Corporation started in 1940 and had expanded in recent years a programme of broadcasts offering subjects of special interest to the rural population and employing Egyptian colloquial Arabic rather than the literary Arabic customary for its radio programmes.

Village schools, where they have existed at all, have traditionally been religious schools, in which, as previously stated, the *sheikh* of the

village mosque taught some of the village boys to read and memorize the Koran, along with the rudiments of writing and arithmetic. Girls were rarely sent to school, and the small percentage of village boys who attended left after one or two years of study. Up to a century ago, these Koranic schools (*kuttab* or *maktab*) were almost the only schools in the Middle East, but their number is diminishing with the increase of facilities for secular education. In many villages, however, they remain the only schools available, and in some places there is still an opposition to sending children to secular schools, even though in the secular schools in most Middle Eastern countries teaching of the Koran and other religious subjects occupies a prominent place in the curriculum. Transitional phases are apparent. In Afghanistan, for example, where the development of a rural school system has only just begun, the most recent government plan states that such schools shall be housed in community mosques and taught by the community religious leaders until the government is able to construct separate school buildings and train teachers.

Rural school systems are gradually being expanded, but the goal of a school in each of the thousands of villages is still distant in most countries. In 1945, some 12,500 villages in Turkey (or 37 per cent of the total number of villages) had schools, as against 21,500 (63 per cent) villages without schools. By 1948-49 more than 12,000 teachers had graduated from 24 village institutes established for the purpose of training teachers for the rural areas. It is hoped that by 1956 approximately 37,000 village teachers will be ready to take jobs in the villages, thus providing an average of more than one additional teacher to each village.

The need of village families to utilize the labour even of young children on the land, the financial burden of building thousands of schools and paying thousands of teachers, and the difficulty of finding and training teachers willing to undergo the isolation and discomforts of village life, have prevented most Middle Eastern countries from

making rapid progress in the field of education.

Furthermore, in spite of the fact that the towns are already better off with regard to schooling than the rural areas, some governments continue to pay much greater attention to the increase of urban educational facilities rather than those of the countryside.

## Contradictory picture

A COMPLEX of mental attitudes associated with the isolation and illiteracy of the Middle Eastern villagers, as well as with their historical experiences, sometimes renders outside efforts at improvement of living standards difficult. A suspicious attitude towards everything that comes from outside, and especially from the authority of the government, is still widely reported. Until recently, changes of government usually meant little to the villagers, their only contact with government having been payment of taxes. Accustomed not to an "expanding economy" (where new wealth may add to the total wealth) but to a static economy (where increases in wealth of one person or group are apt to be at the expense of others), the villager has been rather more concerned with holding on to what little he has possessed than with pursuing ideals of progress and material improvement. Furthermore, living not too far above the bare survival level, without capital reserves, he has been loath to take risks that might prove disastrous for himself and his family. These adjustments to a situation of poverty have served to impede action against poverty.

The Middle Eastern village today presents a contradictory picture of adherence to tradition and anxious desire for change. The villager clings to the family, community, and religious institutions which have in the past contributed to his security, and is mistrustful of outside forces which threaten to weaken these institutions. At the same time, he cannot ignore these forces. In many cases, the increasing pressure of population on village landholdings prevents the villagers from maintaining their accustomed

subsistence level and weakens the ties of the extended family. Improvement of communications permits a search for alternate means of livelihood. Some villagers drift away to the city in search of wage-labour, and the idea that change may be possible and desirable trickles back to the villages. The villagers themselves are beginning to demand land reform, schools, health services and co-operatives, and the governments are beginning to meet these demands. The demands, of course, are frequently vague; the villagers know that something must be done, but are not sure what. And government measures are, in many cases, adopted without full planning, and frequently changed with changes of government.

Since the village population constitutes two-thirds of the total population of the Middle East, the problems of the village are also the problems of the whole region.

It is obvious that, because of the interdependence of the various factors affecting rural welfare, a comprehensive programme of change is desirable — involving improvements in health and sanitation, housing, education, communication, techniques of agricultural production, credit, uses of manpower, etc. An interesting experiment in comprehensive rural development projects has been undertaken in Egypt where a series of "rural social centres" has been set up, based upon the principles of: 1) co-ordination of comprehensive services involving economic, social and cultural elements; 2) co-operation of the community in the construction of the centres; and 3) simplicity and low cost in capital and recurrent expenditures. The endeavour is to promote change by concentrating on local problems, taking local attitudes into account and encouraging local leadership. The "People's Houses" in Turkey have had similar goals of comprehensive social services.

At the same time, it is also apparent that improvements in the welfare of the village communities will also depend greatly upon the overall development of the country at large, including, particularly, industrial development.

In an Arab refugee camp in the Middle East, this Palestinian farmer tends young tree seedlings in re-afforestation plantation. Trees will eventually be replanted to check soil erosion, one of the major problems of Arab agriculture. This is partly due to eating habits of many free-ranging goats in this area of the world.





THOUGH THEY TRAVEL FREQUENTLY, CHILDREN OF MINING ENGINEERS CAN KEEP UP WITH LESSONS THROUGH THE SCHOOL OF THE AIR. (Photos : COI and Australian Official)

# AUSTRALIA'S BUSH COUNTRY CHILDREN 'TALK BACK' TO THEIR TEACHERS

By L. A. BINGHAM

ONE of the greatest problems confronting parents in the lonely cattle land of the Australian outback has always been the question of how to educate their children.

Of course the children themselves, with pet horses, calves, and other animal playmates, wouldn't think that was anything to worry about.

It has always been the aim of the Australian States to carry the benefits of education into the more remote and sparsely settled districts. In that huge inland area — the Northern Territory alone has an area nearly two and a half times the size of France — the carrying out of such a worthy aim is not an easy matter.

At first, itinerant teachers went to the station homesteads and settler's cottages to instruct the children on the cattle holdings, or in the railway camps along the single-track straggling railway lines stretching out into the inland. The tremendous task these teachers undertook will be readily understood when it is remembered that in Queensland in 1927 nine itinerant teachers travelled 57,727 miles to visit 1,139 children living in the inland sheep and cattle country.

In the harsh lands of the Northern Territory during that same year, one teacher alone spent the whole year travelling to and fro over enormous distances to teach twelve children to read and write. These wandering teachers, their work well done, were replaced by Government Correspondence Schools set up to meet the needs of children out of reach of the ordinary means of education. These followed naturally as a result of the introduction by the Postal Department of regular mail services, mostly once a week, or once a fortnight in the more isolated areas.

Strangely enough, the majority of Australians, clustered as they are in the over-crowded coastal cities, know very little if anything about these excellent primary Correspondence Schools. To the outback child, however, Miss Smith, or Miss Jones, his teacher perhaps 2,000 miles away, whom he has never seen, is someone to whom he can write short letters about his pets and his life.

No child with schools close at hand could possibly realize the pleasure and excitement there is among the children on an inland station on mail days. When the mailman's lorry rattles to a standstill and the mailbag is thrown down, there is a rush to see what teacher has had to say.

Some places employ a governess to supervise the correspondence work. Where this is done the children go to school on the side verandah or out under the trees at the same hours as school children in the cities. Despite the fact that such positions are of a high standing socially, and the opportunities of marrying into well-to-do grazing families are good,

governesses in inland Australia today appear to be becoming fewer and fewer. They were plentiful during the depression years, but the return to full employment has kept girls closer to the bright lights of the cities.

Teachers may well ask whether the correspondence system is successful, particularly where only the parents are available to supervise the children's work. It has, in fact, more than lived up to the most hopeful expectations of the State educational authorities. Parents themselves have been so pleased with the results obtained that in many instances when families have moved into a district where attendance at school has been possible, they have asked for the correspondence lessons to be retained.

The Correspondence Schools are constantly being improved. Libraries are now being established in connection with some, the most successful so far being that in South Australia. This library is being heavily drawn on by parents as well as children. Because colour is now recognised as having an important appeal in education, the New South Wales Correspondence School recently introduced a duplicating machine

which turns out lessons in colour. Maps, charts, diagrams, pictures, and in particular lessons for the infant classes, are reproduced in colour on this machine.

Figures for the two largest Correspondence Schools are interesting. The Queensland School has over 8,000 boys and girls enrolled from north-west Queensland, the Northern Territory, Central Australia, New Guinea, and the New Hebrides. The New South Wales School has 178 teachers for 6,000 pupils. These Correspondence Schools have served their purpose well, and will continue to do so as long as the population of inland Australia remains small and scattered.

A recent innovation, however, gives promise of being a big improvement on the correspondence system. A short time ago the first broadcast of what is known as "The School of the Air" was given from Alice Springs in Central Australia. Broadcasts to schools are not unusual; they are being successfully used in many parts of the world. With these, however, the children only listen. The new Australian school not only broadcasts to the children, but the children may answer back and ask questions over

the radio as well. This is unique in the history of education.

Under this new method youngsters can be taught as well as if they were in the classroom with the teacher. The scheme relies for its success on the close co-operation of the now world-famous Flying Doctor Service. The Flying Doctor scheme uses specially-invented pedal wireless sets with which people in isolated places may call up the nearest Flying Doctor base at any hour.

These transceivers are radio sets which transmit as well as receive. The pedal wireless was so called because the user pushed the pedals beneath the set in the same manner as those of a bicycle to generate current for transmitting, while he or she spoke the message into a small mouthpiece. Today the pedals are only used in emergencies, as most of the transceivers are battery-operated. This set is very simple to operate, requiring no technical knowledge whatever. The Flying Doctor can speak to the caller, and the caller may in turn speak to the doctor. Knowing this, three people decided in 1945 that these pedal wireless sets could be used to teach children over the air. These people were Miss Adelaide Meitke, South

Children whose parents live in the lonely cattle lands of the Australian "outback" would have to travel hundreds of miles to attend the nearest school. Postal services and the radio are now used to bring education to the most isolated families.







Radio has taken some isolation from the lives of people living in the lonely places of the world. In Australia, for example, it has made possible a unique educational experiment. Three times a week a teacher in a Central Australian town gives lessons by radio to some 300 isolated children. Each child has a transceiver radio for question-and-answer sessions.

Australian Inspector of Schools, Mr. Graham Pitts, director of the Flying Doctor base at Alice Springs, and Mr. Les Dodd, headmaster of the Alice Springs School, and now Northern Territory Director of Education.

At the Alice Springs Higher Primary School a studio with a full transmission panel was established, and a land-line constructed from this studio to the Flying Doctor base. Every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, the head teacher at Alice

Springs speaks to 300 children seated round their pedal radios within a radius of 400 miles. Not only children, but parents and stockmen crowd round to listen. After each lesson children on stations a hundred miles apart ask the head teacher questions on the lesson, as well as on other subjects.

The scheme is as yet only in its infancy, but it is already planned to step up the lessons to five a week. When it is realized that there are

now seven other Flying Doctor bases similar to that at Alice Springs, the expansion possibilities are obvious.

With the introduction of this scheme the education of children living in the outposts of the Empire has moved forward yet another step. By lessening the problem for parents, this unique "School of the Air" is making a big contribution towards a better life for those who work and live in the isolated areas of outback Australia.

A diamond drill team investigates one of Australia's vast mineral deposits. Today, the children of these technicians are no longer deprived of lessons because they are out of reach of normal means of education. They go to school 'by radio'.



## THE AUSTRALIAN ECHIDNA AND THE KOOKABURA BIRD GO ON THE AIR

**T**HANKS to an international exchange of school broadcasts initiated by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the Toronto zoo has now added a zoological wonder—an Australian Echidna, one of the few remaining links with prehistoric life—to its collection of animals.

The Echidna, better-known as a Spiny Ant-Eater, was presented to the CBC by the Australian government to mark the beginning of a series of exchange broadcasts. For the first time, through a plan initiated by CBC, Canadian school children are hearing a series of six school broadcasts integrated with their curriculum and prepared by the Australian Broadcasting Commission. Likewise Australian children are receiving a series of six programmes prepared by the CBC, about life in Canada.

The Echidna, which plays a starring role in one of the Australian series of programmes about birds and animals of that country, arrived recently at Toronto after crossing the Pacific by air and then making another air trip across Canada from Vancouver. It was then presented to the City of Toronto at a ceremony in the CBC studios formally marking the Canada-Australia exchange of school broadcasts, which began with Australian programmes for the benefit of Ontario school-children.

### Champion digger

**R**ANKING as one of Australia's queerest creatures, the Echidna bears some resemblance to the Canadian porcupine, and is about the size of a hedgehog. Its back is covered with long, sharp, yellowish-black spines, like those of a porcupine, but any other resemblance is purely accidental. It is, however, a close relative of the famous duck-billed platypus.

The Echidna is a mammal, growing hair between its spines, and suckling its young. But it also lays eggs, which it keeps within a special pouch until they hatch. The adult Echidna is about 12 inches long, and for its size, has few rivals as a digger. Working in soft ground, it can dig itself out of sight in a few minutes, and an Echidna has been known to dig itself through a concrete-floored enclosure, if a crevice in which to start working exists.

The Toronto Zoo has a good collection of Australian animals and birds, but no Echidna, so the new arrival from Australia is a valuable addition. Echidnas normally feed on ants and small insects which they pick up with a long, sticky tongue. They also eat eggs and milk, and for that reason are easy to feed. Although Echidnas are always trying to escape, they usually live a long time in captivity.

### Exchange broadcasts

**D**ESIGNED to give children of each country a better understanding of life in the other, the school radio exchange programmes between the CBC and the Australian Broadcasting Commission have been more than one year in production. Six months were spent in a study of the varying school curricula in the Australian states and the Canadian provinces, and another six months in preparation and revision of scripts and production of the actual recordings.

The first series of six programmes from Australia deal with animals and birds—the Echidna, the Kangaroo, the Koala, the Platypus, the Kookabura Bird and the Lyre Bird. The first six programmes sent to Australia by the CBC deal with three Canadian animals—the moose, bear and the beaver—and also with different aspects of life in Canada: a visit to a British Columbian logging camp, a day in the life of a northern fur trapper, and a trip down the Great Lakes in a freighter.

# AN ISLE HIGH AND DRY



**R**ECENTLY, the world's newspapers have published many photographs of the disastrous results of the storm which in February crumbled the dikes of southwest Holland and flooded a great part of this area. Those published on this page record a victory in Holland's unending fight with the sea. They show the transformation of Schokland, which was once a real island (right), noted for its hardy fishermen, until a great dike dammed off the Zuider Zee from the North Sea, the sea water was drained out and the vast bed of the new lake filled with fresh water from its tributary rivers. The Zuider Zee became the IJsselmeer—after its main river, the IJssel. Then, as the land began to “eat” into the water, Schokland, just over a mile long and 45 feet wide at its narrowest part, ceased to be an island. Today, surrounded by a chess-board pattern of cultivated fields (above), it houses the “Zuider Zee Museum” in which relics found on the bed of the lake have been collected. On a neighbouring island, Urk, the people resisted a project to “imprison” their home in the newly reclaimed polders, and were finally left with a mile or so of coast bordering on the IJsselmeer, so that they could continue their traditional calling as (fresh water) fishermen. For story of one of these Dutch polders, see page 3. (Photos : K.L.M.)

