

Galilee pioneers

by Hadassah Bat Haim

THE PIONEERING SPIRIT is still alive and well in Israel. Small settlements are springing up everywhere, and the Galilee, which has large, uninhabited tracts of land, is now home to a growing number of families which are prepared to sacrifice comfort now for stability in the future.

Apart from a sizable minority of native-born Israelis who are seeking to escape city life, the new residents have recently come from affluent, sophisticated societies, mainly English-speaking. And they have brought with them skills and talents which are turning those once-barren hills into prosperous and stable communities.

Around the small town of Segev, an innovative policy has been implemented which will serve as a model in other areas. The geographical principle is that of a wheel. Segev itself acts as the hub of the wheel, and radiating from it, like the spokes, are 21 new settlements, some actually working and flourishing, others still in the planning stage.

The number of settlements has been increased to 21 from the original 14. Three of these settlements are kibbutzim, the rest are villages which are collectives only in certain areas of administration.

WHAT IS IT that induces people to leave their comfortable lives and come to this sparsely populated part of Israel to start all over again? It is, according to one South African immigrant, a chance that few people get, to stop and evaluate their way of life and to avoid mistakes that were made earlier in the race for affluence.

City life is happily forsaken. The large houses, the servants and the neckties are renounced, along with the tensions of competition, the anxieties of urban pressures and the alienation of youngsters. Here, businesses tend to involve the whole family. Wives and kids pitch in on busy days. Problems are



Young settler in the Galilee

shared and neighbors are supportive.

Some official help is available for the building of houses, or initial capital for the establishment of business, but most of these newcomers try to manage without outside help. Few are in their youth and have had property or assets to sell before coming.

To live for a while without electricity or with a mud path to the front door does not seem too high a price to pay for an investment in the future and a sense of achievement when the bare walls eventually become home.

INDIVIDUAL ENTERPRISE is the key. Manof, for example, a moshav founded by South Africans, has a butchery that now supplies hundreds of homes and restaurants in the area. The moshav also manufactures and sells artificial diamonds in artistic, original settings through their own sale rooms.

Next door, at Shechenia, there is a similar plant and hot-house flowers are grown for export.

At Moreshet, *mezuzot* are made and some members are trained as scribes for writing out marriage contracts (*ketubot*) in beautifully ornate calligraphy. Moreshet, unlike most of the other settlements, is strictly Orthodox, and some of its members work outside as teachers. Moreshet will soon open a glatt kosher hotel.

Hararit will also have a hotel. This moshav has a different appeal — all members are practitioners of Transcendental Meditation. Guests will be able to take part in courses and to observe the gathering of herbs for making natural dyes. Mushrooms, daffodil and iris bulbs, contact lenses, stuffed toys, electrical repairs, English lessons, medical instruments and photo processing are some of the other projects developed in this complex. Only 30 minutes from Haifa — and less from Acre and Nahariya — markets are on their doorsteps.

So far, public transport is somewhat limited, but commercial vehicles come and go and everyone is friendly.

Enough people to be able to choose one's friends but not so many as to form a crush. Breathtaking views, clean air and home-grown vegetables are a pleasing contrast to apartment blocks and smog. Gardens bloom, and slowly the stony, grim face of the landscape is changing.

There is plenty of room for everyone, and the expansion and development of this region is of benefit to the whole country.