

Occupation Forces . . .

Restoring Normal Life

By Alfred Friendly

NABLUS, Israeli-occupied Jordan—About 12 miles south of here on the road to Jerusalem, the Israel army has discovered five gigantic caves crammed with goods from America.

Four of them were filled with munitions. Almost every carton also

bore the famous American insignia, the red, white and blue shield and hands clasped across the sea.

"Aren't you grateful to us?" an American reporter asked an Israeli soldier in a crew hauling the supplies out, "for sending you all these nice and useful things?"

"Yes," he said after some meditation, "but you might have chosen a more direct way to do it."

TWENTY huge trucks, loaded and waiting for the last two or three to join them, were on the main road, about to haul the stuff in convoy to Jerusalem.

A slight young soldier in shorts, toting an U21 automatic—halfway between a pistol and a rifle—acted as guide.

Speaking in pure cockney he pointed to the crews unloading the caves and said "they have been schlepping (hauling) this stuff for two days, night and day, and they're not finished yet. Must have been 200 lorry loads so far."

The soldier, who left his job as a cook in London four years ago and ended up as cook of a unit in Israel's army, took reporters to his mess tent to show some of the material taken from the fifth cave.

There were hundreds of cartons of peas and canned milk from Belgium, cheddar cheese from Holland and corned beef from Nigeria.

"But imagine," he said, "in the middle of a war, and with the lousy food we're getting, we're not allowed to use this meat," he held up a can of the beef, "because it's not kosher.

"We can, however, give it out unofficially to anyone who wants it." He indicated there are quite a few unofficials in the army.

MILITARY OCCUPATION of an alien people is not a pleasant phenomenon, and Israel's occupation of the lands west of the Jordan River is no exception.

The chief of the Israeli military occupation troops in the area claims that the Israelis are trying to restore normal life as soon as possible. The supply of food and water in the towns, as well as sanitation, has been solved, and in most places some or all of the electric power has been restored.

The curfew has been eased day by day, and the hope is to allow free movement, soon, from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.

But meantime, to drive through a town like Ramallah at 4 p.m. in hot bright daylight and find absolutely no one on the streets produces a weird and unpleasant feeling.

But sniping has continued and the Israeli armed forces are being cautious.

In Nablus, the military commander has asked that all weapons issued by Jordan to its citizens be turned in. Quite a few have come in.

A reporter asked the deputy commandant in Nablus, a genial captain, if it would go badly for a homeowner if arms were found in his house after the grace period was over.

"What would you think?" he asked grimly.

"WE HAVE no food, no water," cried the young man in a refugee camp near the old Jerusalem airfield.

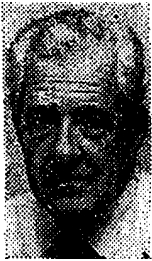
On one side of the road

plodded a young girl, a tray of freshly baked bread on her head. On the other came a donkey, overloaded as is the lot of all Middle East donkeys, with flour. But, for the time being, water was indeed a problem, although there was a supply at Ramallah, a couple of miles away.

The refugees have been in this camp, which resembles dozens of others throughout the Arab world, since 1949, a few with jobs. The rest live on the dole that the United Nations Work Agency for Palestinian Refugees passes out.

"Now, after this war, will you leave and go to find work in some Arab country like Kuwait or Iraq that is underpopulated?" the young man was asked.

"But my family is here," he protested.



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