I. Energy and Movement

A whole series of preliminary impressions and tentative conclusions have come to mind about Israel. They may not explain everything, yet they seem to be central to many of the phenomena I observed.

The first has to do with the kind of society in Israel, a society which has the ability to deal with complicated, complex, and irrational appearing problems by a tremendous adaptive potential. People show an ability to cope, modify, and innovate. With this comes a certainty about long range goals (despite the fact that, to an outside observer, the goals may be unclear). They can also direct their activities in general directions to attain these long range plans without setting a fixed blueprint for them.

There is a dedication and devotion which holds people together. They cooperate quite freely. They have tremendous ties with the past. They search for and try desperately to have national identity, despite the fact that you find tremendous variety in Israel. Even though I know about the differences between black Jews of Morocco or the Sudan and the eastern European Jews, each time I see them, I am somewhat perplexed and overwhelmed.

But there is energy and movement. There is real sophistication in the art of communication of ideas. There is an ability to deal with emotions and a concern with ideals. All this seems to be going on at the same time with a constant ebb and flow and an ability to cope with, if not directly then indirectly, a whole series of problems.
A second thought has to do with their use of the kinds of techniques available to the Israelis in a way that can only bring to mind the ability and techniques of the US. I can't help but feel that in this complicated world the ability to cope is critical to solving the kinds of problems we are faced with. The techniques some people would call American—and many other things that one describes as American—are not wanted by many people here. (Americans are uncomfortable with some of it as well.) Nevertheless, they are coming, and they might just as well live with them. Israel held off television for a long time because of the cost, and yet it is coming primarily because they will have to counteract the kind of propaganda that is coming in from the Arab countries by television.

A third comment has to do with the fact that Israel is basically urban, despite its attempt to search for a kibbutz, rural, agricultural identity. Even the big kibbutzim which we visited were basically urban and not rural-agricultural. They look like industrial-urban developments in California. All this seems to be related to the rural dream of farming which somehow gets confused with the need to do some meaningful work with one's hands. I couldn't help but feel that within a relatively short time, maybe twenty years, the bulk of central Israel will be an urban world looking much like the American East Coast, or perhaps Los Angeles. Then the tremendous need will be for communication, for more roads, more transportation, more television, and more things to keep the lifelines going.

My fourth comment has to do with the notion of equality which Israelis talk about over and over again. A policy relating to equality theoretically could suggest equal opportunity or the desire to have all individuals molded into the same pattern. Israelis would like to give equal opportunity to everyone and yet at the same time there is a tremendous pressure to mold the individual into a western European model. The maintenance of other cultures is evident in the retention of oriental foods and perhaps costumes, but the modeling of the homes, the attitudes toward work, the attitudes toward education, the language, the move toward science, is very Western in all its various forms. In fact, one is almost convinced that the non-Western immigrants may have imposed upon them all the middle class Western values without any real respect for the individual differences.

The dilemma here is how to give immigrants the skills and the ability to live in Israel and be a citizen and yet maintain an identity and tie to their own past and not just to an Israeli biblical cultural one. For example, it is not equality when apartments are built for a family of 4.1 people and immigrants have families of 7 to 12. Equality is not served by including European foods in the army menu and leaving out rice and other dishes. One is struck over and over again as one eats around Israel that we are living in an eastern European culture where the big meal is at lunch; this really does not go with the hot climate where they probably should eat the big meal between 10 and 11 o'clock at night. (Such items repeatedly suggest that on a personal level—on the level of family life and child rearing and upbringing—there is a need to maintain homogeneous communities; but on the level of the city, starting at the period of high school, heterogeneity could be maintained.)

The fifth comment has to do with the simple notion of planning. Israelis are very concerned with the planning process which they see as political more than the specific blueprinting of long range developments. However, there is short range blueprinting to meet immediate needs, for example, the development of houses, new towns, and the like.

Sixth, there is a tremendous amount of individuality, and yet at the same time there is an underlying sense of communal action that is part of their democratic ideal, their social and religious beliefs.

My seventh observation is that this is a child-oriented world, probably even more than the United States, with almost everything geared to the children. This brings a rejection of the adult world and perhaps a rejection of adult culture.

The eighth point is a paradox. On one hand they have a Western, modern world; on the other, the Middle Eastern and eastern European traditions of small business. The amount of inefficiency in business operations and food distribution seems immense, and yet the efficiency in health where everything is relatively nationalized into the Histradrut is quite exciting to see.

II. Community Organization and Opposition

Community organization in Israel began at a 1954 conference in the prime minister's office on the use of social forces and the changing of human behavior. Participants included educators, psychologists, welfare and social workers. They explored whether community organization was a possible resistance to the Israeli establishment. In fact, they were asked whether community organization procedures—those programs which involved helping people to participate in planning for their own survival—would "create another government."

In 1959 other committees tried to develop a group of community projects to coordinate and conduct research on programs in community organization. It was clear from their discussion that the process of coordinating would not work. It seemed more important to teach the people how to use the available services and by these services try to force coordination of activities.

In order to meet the potential political resistance, a policy was evolved that no community organizer could work without the mayor of a town employing him or inviting him in. This raises a very interesting question about the community action programs in the US where one of the issues is whether non-governmental bodies have the right