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I don't suppose the name JAFFA conveys very much to most of you, except perhaps as the place where the oranges come from. Very fine oranges they are. Big, thick-skinned fellows, that divide up into nice, clean quarters.

But I want to tell you something about Jaffa, because, during the war, it was the scene of what has always seemed to me a remarkable experiment.

The town lies on the Palestine coast, about 45 miles west of Jerusalem, at the south end of the plain of Esdraelon. The road from Jerusalem drops some 3,000 feet on the journey, and the climate takes on a perceptibly hotter, more humid tinge to it. As you get near Jaffa, the orange groves line the roadway and spread out in a rich, green carpet in every direction.

I first went there in June 1942, at the time when Rommel was within a disconcertingly small distance of the Suez Canal. Up to then, I had been working in Cairo. But one memorable night, I and many others were rather ignominiously (as we thought) bundled out of Cairo, and sent our various ways.

My way led, via Jerusalem, to Jaffa. And there I joined the staff of what seemed to me at the time, and has seemed ever since, one of the most noteworthy institutions of the whole war.

By the time I arrived there, it had been a going concern for about nine months, and it was known as the Near East Arab Broadcasting Station - or in Arabic, Shag/el Adna.

The story of how it came into existence can be briefly told. In the summer of 1940, our situation in the near east was not too pleasant. The Germans had overrun Europe. Although the greater part of our army had been miraculously rescued from Dunkirk, the enemy was in possession of the Channel ports. And the invasion of England looked to be very imminent.

In the near east, it was obviously vital for us to keep the Suez Canal. Our army in North Africa was dealing the enemy some terrific strokes, but as the tide of the war flowed now this way, now that, the necessity of keeping friendly relations with the Arab countries became ever more certain.

The Arab is a realist. Moreover, he is a great admirer of military might. He knew all about the overwhelming successes of German arms in Europe - the German radio saw to that. And over that radio he was constantly being harangued by some of his own most respected religious leaders, who had made their way to Germany and thrown in their weight against us.

The situation, from our point of view, was none too bright. And at that moment the idea occurred to certain Englishmen, who knew the near East very well, of an Arab broadcasting station, situated in Palestine, which would give the Arab world solid, reliable news, entertainment and other features I will mention later.

There was plenty of room for such a station. News in Arabic was at that time given from Jerusalem, Beirut, Damascus and Cairo. But in every case, it was only a small part of a far wider service, the bulk of which was in French, English, Hebrew and so on. There was no specifically and exclusively Arab station.

Now it's one thing to say "let's start an Arab broadcasting station", but quite another to start it. Where, first of all, was the man to organise it and make it a going concern? By great good fortune, the man was on the spot. He was a New Zealander by birth, a squadron-leader in the Royal Air Force, who had been serving for a good many years in Eastern commands. He had become intensely interested in the culture and religion and ways of life of the Arabs, and had learnt their very difficult and most attractive language.

So the idea was put to him, and he saw all its immense possibilities. Being a skilled pilot, he knew something of engineering and quite a lot of wireless communication. And being a most persuasive and industrious man, he succeeded in filching from the Air Force (I think filching is the word) a rather amateurish and ramshackle transmitter. But it worked. And it had a radius of some hundred miles. It was finally set up at Jenin, in central Palestine, and began to operate in September 1941.

After a few months, the station moved to Jaffa, altogether a more convenient place. Four excellent studios were built, and owing largely to the skill and experience of an English post-office engineer, the transmitting facilities, including power, were very greatly increased. Our programmes were now audible throughout Syria, the Lebanon, Palestine, Transjordan, and even as far as Iraq.

At this stage, one naturally wonders about the staff. How and where were the men to be collected together, who had the knowledge required to run a broadcasting station?

By the time I arrived at Jaffa, the staff numbered about 120. And an admirable bunch of fellows they were. It is a vast mistake to think of the Arabs as backward or lacking in culture. This is true no doubt of the peasants, the wandering Bedouins, but completely false as to the rapidly growing middle class.

My Air-Force chief, with his knowledge of Arabic, had got together a most intelligent lot of men from all over the Arabic-speaking countries. Most of them were Moslems, but a few were Christian Arabs. I never saw the slightest sign of any differences between them. Several of them had been educated at that very remarkable offshoot of American philanthropy, Beirut University. And one at least had been up at Cambridge.

With singularly good judgment, the chief had persuaded to join him members of leading Palestinian families who had been rather suspect for alleged anti-British activities during "the troubles". We even had a nephew of the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, who was at that time broadcasting from Germany. This in itself gave the station a reputation for independence and fair-mindedness which was of immense value and which I think it never lost.

The whole object of the station was to provide the Arab world with twelve hours a day of broadcasting suited to its own tastes. The only Englishmen concerned were my chief and myself, and an R.A.F. corporal who was the star mechanic. We wanted no taint of propaganda to creep in. The only thing we insisted upon was the presentation of accurate, up-to-the-minute news bulletins, which in themselves countered most of the inflammatory stuff being poured out by German and Italian transmitters. And I wrote a daily commentary, which was designed to set the actual news of the day in a setting of the progress of the war as a whole.

Apart from this, our programmes contained four readings of the Koran each day, a very important feature. There were talks on religion, literature, art, politics and customs by many leading figures of the Arab world, notably members of the Moslem Council in Jerusalem. And there was a great deal of entertainment. We had two station orchestras of our own. We invited singers and entertainers to come from Egypt, Syria and other countries. The band of the Arab Legion from Amman, in Transjordan, was always a terrific success. At certain great Moslem festivals, such as Ramadan, we had special religious programmes, a relay perhaps of services in the great Mosques of Omar and el Aksa in Jerusalem.

As you will see any British slant to the programmes was conspicuous by its absence. And I am quite certain that most of the staff would never have lent themselves to be a mere mouthpiece of British propaganda. They were extremely proud of having their own Arab station and they looked upon it as specifically their own.

I arrived at Jaffa knowing no word of Arabic, and very little of the Arab background or point of view. Before many days, I became responsible for the editing of all news bulletins, the writing of a daily news commentary, and several talks a week usually based on the anniversary of some great world figure.

To help me, I was given a delightful young man, son of a prominent Arab journalist, who spoke excellent English and who gave me invaluable advice on how to cast the various items for which I was responsible so as to interest an Arab audience. My debt to him was, and is, unpayable. In an astonishingly short time he gave me a wonderfully clear insight into the Arab mind, its prejudices, its lack of interest in some topics as compared with others, its doubts and its aspirations. He translated all my scripts, and he was very rarely puzzled by anything I wrote.

I spent six months at Jaffa, six very happy months. It was easy to get to know the members of the staff, because they were so remarkably friendly. We were nominally in command, but there is nothing in the least subservient about the Arab. He is a proud, independent man, standing very much on his own feet. But amongst his many attractive qualities, he has the most charming manners. In no other country have I ever met with so much natural grace and courtesy as I did in Palestine and Transjordan.

All the time I was living in an Arab hotel in Jaffa, built on the very edge of the Mediterranean. The proprietor was kindness itself to me. My bedroom looked out onto the sea, only a few feet below. But I was faced with the problem that worries most hotel-dwellers - where to spend such hours of leisure as I had.

With the usual Arab hospitality, he asked me to use his own private sitting room as often as I wished. And there I went, almost every evening, to watch, but not to take part in, the nightly game of poker which he played with his cronies. They were superb gamblers; win or lose, they never raised a voice or batted an eyelid, and there was often fifty pounds or more in the kitty.

Most evenings there was also a poker or pinochle table for their wives, where the gambling was almost equally fierce, but decidedly more vociferous.

These Arabs were travelled men, and many of them had married European wives. My hotel proprietor had a Swiss wife. His great friend the bank manager was married to a Russian, and the doctor had a French wife, whom he had first met while studying at the Sorbonne.

There was one picturesque result of this inter-marriage. They were all, husbands and wives alike, great talkers. And the conversation was carried on in a most baffling mixture of Arabic, French, Russian, English and German. I did my best to follow but was soon left far behind. And suddenly, they realised my bewilderment. With their unfailing courtesy, they tried to keep themselves solely to English or French. But in a minute or two, their vivacity was too much for them, and we were back to the usual volleys of mixed languages which they took in their stride.

Jaffa is a purely Arab town. It is the Joppa - the beautiful one - of the bible, and its Arab architecture is delightful. The only discordant note is a superbly Victorian clock tower in the main square, which characteristically enough never told the right time.

At its northern end, it joins without any break the great new Jewish city of Tel-Aviv. There could hardly be a sharper contrast between two places - the one old, sleepy, rather Moorish in appearance, the other aggressively modern, busy and self-satisfied.

Between the two wars, there had been constant quarrels and brushes between Jew and Arab, but at the time I was in Jaffa, both parties had agreed to bury the hatchet, at least for the time being. It is not for me to air any views about the Palestinian question. I only wish that those who do would restrain themselves from rushing into oratory

or print until they have spent at least a year in the country. We should then be far more ready to listen to their opinions, and there would be far fewer ignorant pronouncements to fan the flames.

But this I will say. During the war, so far as I could see, both Arabs and Jews behaved with great discretion and good sense. They did nothing serious to embarrass the government, and they refrained from exacerbating one another.

It would be easy enough to talk for hours about the station programmes - and particularly about Arab music and the Koran readings. I confess I was never quite able to acquire a taste for Arab music, though I spent many hours in the studio listening to and watching the orchestras at work. Their instruments were in themselves most fascinating. But the music they played was totally different from anything in my past experience, except for a liberal dose of tango tunes, which I always thought must have descended from the time of the Moors in Spain.

Very great importance was attached to the Koran readings. Normally they were given by our own local sheikhs, but at great religious festivals, such as Ramadan, we imported some of the leading Koran readers of the day. One such came from Cairo, at a monthly salary of well over £100 and his total expenses. He was a Virtuoso. It was difficult for me to appreciate wherein he was so superior to the ordinary run, but there was no doubt about this superiority as judged on outward appearances. He was a richly clothed young man, discreetly scented, and immensely self-satisfied. I found him rather trying at times, but he was listened to with the utmost delight by our audiences.

And these audiences grew and grew. We could tell that by our fan mail. Letters used to pour in every day from all over the Arabic-speaking countries, commenting on this or that item in our programmes. If one went a journey through Syria, the Lebanon, Transjordan or Iraq, one heard loud speakers in every little village cafe, <sup>tunes in to</sup> relaying Jaffa.

No doubt about it, this was a most fascinating and adventurous project. It said a great deal for the imagination of those who first planned it, and for the accomplishments of my chief who first gave it shape. My six months at Jaffa are the most pleasant of memories, largely owing to the complete friendliness of our Arab staff and to the warm hospitality shown to me by so many people in Jaffa.

There is, I think, a real affinity between an Arab and an Englishman. On many matters they have a very similar outlook. If, as I believe, the Jaffa broadcasting station did a good deal to cement this natural bond, then it achieved its major objective - and a very admirable one too.

At Christmas time you hear the bells of Bethlehem. They ring out from the Church of the Nativity, the oldest christian church in the world, with a message of peace on earth to men of good-will.

If ever you have a chance to go to Bethlehem, go there. It is a delightful little town, five miles or so south of Jerusalem (you must go there too) some 3,000 feet above the sea, and therefore never unbearably hot even in mid-summer. The nights are cool. The stars shine out of a velvety-black sky with a brilliance such as we never see in this country.

To the east, down below the steep hill on which the church is built, is the field where shepherds watched their flocks by night. And beyond that is a series of brown, rock-strewn, grim valleys leading to that queerest and most sombre of all seas, the Dead Sea.

Town to the west, and you see another narrow valley, on the far side of which, only a mile or so away, is a hill as steep and as high as the one on which you are standing. Up its side climbs the Arab village of Beit Jala, looking rather as if it had been transported from Italy or Spain. And the top of this hill is crowned by a tall wireless mast.

It's an odd contrast, this contrast between the two voices of Bethlehem. The voice of the bells calling from a church built by the Emperor Constantine in 360 A.D. and looking much the same as at the time when he marked the site of the manger with a silver star let into the floor. And, not a mile away, the voice of the wireless mast, so completely of this day and age.

Everything seems to point the contrast, even the fashions of the ladies of Bethlehem. Many of them wear these high, pointed hats such as you see on the heads of Plantagenet ladies in pictures of the period. One's mind goes back to the Crusades, and one wonders whether the fashion was import or export. Did the crusaders bring the style to Bethlehem? Or did they find it there and carry it away with them to England? It would be interesting to know because, so far as I am aware, the fashion survives in no other town or village in Palestine.

Ancient and modern - the church bell and the wireless mast. I spent a year of the war in the close society of them both. And I believe it may interest you to know a little of how the modern rivalled the ancient in its messages to men of good-will.

At the time of which I am thinking, the crucial battle of Alamein had been fought and won. For the third time, the British army was surging forward through the deserts of Lybia and Cirenaica. This time there was to be no retreat, no backward wave with Rommel's Afrika Corps getting almost within sight of Cairo and Alexandria. The Eighth Army carried right on to Tunis and Bizerta. The German and Italian army in North Africa ceased to exist.

This was a real turning point in the fortunes of the war. I know that phrase is hackneyed, but here was an occasion when it could, and did, bear its full and proper meaning.

I was then in charge of a broadcasting station in Jerusalem, and our transmitter was that mast on the hill-top over by Bethlehem. The transmissions were aimed at south-east Europe, those Balkan countries which were still in the grip of the Nazis and the Gestapo. In these countries, we well knew, there were thousands of men and women of good-will, who bitterly hated the Germans and were thirsting for any and every fragment of news which might foreshadow their liberation.

Here at last was our great opportunity. Here was news to give them which had the ring of solid truth, news which would strengthen their hopes and feed the fires of their courage.

I tried to put myself in their position, though it was almost impossible to imagine their situation. In Rumania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Greece and Albania, a constant stream of German news and propaganda was being poured out. That was all they could listen to, although they knew it was hopelessly garbed. Dr. Goebbels had an easy job. So long as the war went the German way, he could even afford to tell a good measure of truth, concealing only the minor setbacks which the German army had up to then encountered.

We knew that the Balkan countries were listening to the B.B.C., upon which they placed their sole confidence. From this source at any rate they would get a fair picture of the course of the war. But at what unimaginable risks! The penalty for being caught listening to London was, as like as not, death - or at the least some barbarous form of torture, and imprisonment in some ghastly concentration camp.

Yes, Dr. Goebbels had an easy job - up to the end of the North African campaign. German arms were triumphant everywhere. The people of the Balkan countries had only to look out of their windows to see German troops in their streets.

Propaganda is simple enough when you are winning, and when you are in a position to prevent people from hearing any news except that which you yourself put out, save under the extremest peril to life itself.

All through the war so far, we had had little enough with which to fortify and encourage the resistance movements in these occupied countries. Vague messages of comfort are very little use to a man who constantly hears the ring of jackboots on the pavement, who shudders with terror at every knock on his door, who is liable any moment to be taken and shot without reason and without mercy. If he is to risk his life, and the lives of his family, to hear your message, you must give him something to justify the colossal danger that he runs.

In such circumstances, there is one thing, and one thing only, which you can do for that man. You can, and must, give him hard, solid facts - the bad as well as the good - and let him judge for himself that his cause is by no means lost. Pious platitudes, pep talks, exhortations to keep up his courage, were of little or no value, unless they were backed up by news of the way the war was going, news which could give the lie to the outpourings of the ubiquitous German radio.

Our chance, our first real chance, came with the final and utter defeat of the enemy in Africa. Here was something which even Dr. Goebbels would find it difficult to explain away. He did his best. He put out stories of the German army, to use his own delicious phrase "advancing westwards". He went to great lengths to show that the North African terrain was quite valueless. But why had the Germans and Italians lost so many thousand men in trying to drive us out of it? Why had they advanced to within a few miles of the Suez Canal - one of our major traffic life-lines - only to retreat so fast and so far that they could never hope to be within reach of it again?

Here were facts. Here were things that took some explaining. Here was the first news of the whole war to show that a German army had been beaten in the field. The myth of invincibility had been blown sky high. And if it had happened in Africa, could it not happen again in Europe? Were we not now poised at Tunis and Bizerta, to land at last on European shores? In Sicily, in Italy, in Southern France, in Greece, on the Dalmatian coast - the prospects seemed almost endless. And they were no longer wishful thinking. They were quite evident possibilities, based on the one incontrovertible fact of our victory in North Africa.

The powers that be decided, naturally enough, that we, with our wireless mast over near Bethlehem tuned to the Balkans, should go into action right away, and back up the B.B.C. in giving a special news service. Immediately a whole host of problems were presented to us.

It was decided that we should give news bulletins, at first twice a day, but soon to become three times, of fifteen minutes length, in no less than ten languages. These were Rumanian, Bulgarian, Serb, Croat, Slavene, Greek and Albanian, with German and Italian for the enlightenment of the occupying troops, and finally English.

Why English, when so few of our potential audience were likely to understand it? I think for rather an interesting reason. Suppose a Rumanian were to listen to our news in his own language. Accustomed as he now was to the ways of the German -controlled radio, he might well say - "Ah yes! That's the news the English give us in Rumanian. But I dare say they tell a very different story in their own bulletins!" If by any chance he could understand English, we gave him an English news bulletin to compare with his own, to check up on the facts, to show that we were consistent in giving the same news in every language. I have reason to believe that this move was a good one.

How were we to go about this complicated job? It was a pretty stiff puzzle. We had to find an adequate and competent team of persons to produce and speak news bulletins in these ten languages. We had three weeks in which to do it, and there were only two of us to assemble the teams, plus a technical officer to look after the engineering side, and an administrative officer to deal with finance, transport and so on.

Luckily we had an admirable nucleus round which to build. On our staff, we already had nationals of several Balkan countries who had escaped in time from the wrath to come and had since served the allied cause most loyally and devotedly.

Luckily also, Palestine was then a microcosm of Europe. It was full of people who had fled their countries at the approach of Hitler, and found their way to Jerusalem at great peril, with dreadful loss of property and after unbelievably sad partings from their families, of whose fate they had heard nothing in their years of exile.

We set to work to gather our supporters. One might be excused for thinking that Albanian would be a nasty hurdle. But even here we were successful. By working day and night, by visiting houses and hotels and camps all over Palestine, we were able to get together our ten teams in a fortnight.

Questions of security worried us desperately. About the good faith of many we had no doubts whatever. But the new recruits were unknown to us. And we had to admit that there were some very questionable characters among the host of emigrants whom we were trying to comb.

On all matters of security, I was alone responsible as commanding officer of the station. If a single word went out over the wireless to which exception could be taken, the blame was mine. The dangers and difficulties were so obvious that I hardly liked to dwell on them.

However, we devised what we hoped would be a cast-iron system of security. Every news bulletin in every language was minutely examined. An elaborate method was invented, by which the news announcer was compelled to stick absolutely to his script. And, so far as I am aware, there was never a single instance in which he did not.

Yes, there was alas one! I was on duty late one night, and switched on the loudspeaker by my desk which would enable me to hear the man speaking at the moment. We never had two announcers speaking at one and the same time, so that this was one of our Security checks. The speaker, as it happened, was Rumanian. As soon as I tuned in, it seemed to me that his reading was curiously indistinct. I switched him off the air right away and dashed down to the studio. He didn't know that the mike was dead, and he was still reading away, gloriously and completely drunk, with a pool of cold water dripping from his hair. The poor chap, as it turned out, had got engaged that afternoon, and had celebrated the occasion not wisely but too well. When he came to the studio, his compatriots had done their best to bring him round rather than report him to me. Hence the pathetic, and utterly ineffective, stream of cold water!

Jerusalem is not London. The collection of up-to-the-minute news in our office was not by any means so easy as it is in Fleet Street. And we had a wretchedly small and inexperienced team of news editors - three of us in all, including my second in command and myself, neither of us claiming to be anything of a journalist or to have any expert knowledge of broadcasting technique.

We managed to lay on two or three excellent news services, which reached us once or twice a day. But we had to rely largely on a Morse transmission from London, which was typed out as it arrived and telephoned then and there to our desk. Our other source of news was our own monitoring service. We listened to enemy broadcasts all over Europe, but obviously the news they put out had to be treated with the greatest reserve.

Our bulletins began at mid-day, and continued in rotation until midnight. That meant that a complete news digest had to be ready for each team by about ten thirty a.m., to be revised constantly as fresh items of news arrived. It was very hard going for us inexperienced mortals, and we were at it for eighteen hours a day.

We assembled our teams in a fortnight, and spent the next week drilling them relentlessly in the procedure. The month was July, and the heat was fairly intense, though Jerusalem is never so sticky and oppressive as Cairo. Time after time we made up practice bulletins, gave them to the teams to translate, checked the results, and hustled the announcer down to his little studio, so that the time table should be kept as perfectly as we could contrive.

Then, when we were all ready to start, there were difficulties about wavelengths. Ours had been allotted to us, but it was discovered at the last moment that we should be impinging on other transmissions. We were all worked up for the great moment, and there was rather a dismal anti-climax. The time of waiting was hard to bear, but it did give us the chance for further practice, and an opportunity to brighten up some of the points in which our procedure was a bit weak. The teams were frankly disappointed and a shade disheartened. They had worked tremendously hard to be ready on the day - and when the day came, they fell frustrated. It was hard to keep up their enthusiasm in the two or three weeks of enforced delay.

But at last the all-clear was given. On July 23rd, 1943 we went on the air. All the disappointments and delays were forgotten. Out went a series of news bulletins in the ten languages, with the earnest hope that they would find their audiences.

Almost immediately we had one great stroke of luck. On Sunday July 25th, only two days after we had started, just after midnight, a panting and excited monitor rushed into my room. In the thrill of the moment, he forgot all the English he ever knew. But at last he collected himself enough to say that he had just heard over Rome radio that Mussolini had been dismissed. The very first crack in the Axis front! This was terrific news. There were still Rumanian and Serb bulletins to go. We added to them a brief



message in English and Italian. I think we were possibly the first radio station to broadcast this news in English, and we thought it was a pretty good scoop.

Two days before, on the day we started to broadcast, there was some discussion as to what language should have the honour of opening the station. For many reasons, good ones I think, we chose English. I had to read the bulletin myself, and I shall never forget the thrill of sitting in front of the mike, watching the little light on the desk change from green to red, and saying "This is the British Mediterranean Station".

It was not entirely a personal thrill. For I was thinking of all those folk in the occupied countries who might conceivably hear my voice and get courage and faith from all that we had to tell them. If the voice from Bethlehem gave them any added strength to bear the miseries of their condition, that was reward and to spare.