

WIRELESS IN THE HOLY LAND

Two Years Broadcasting in Jerusalem — A Programme in Three Languages — Who are the 31,000 Listeners in Palestine?

(By Erich Gottgetreu.)

For the past two years one of the outstanding landmarks in Palestine has been the wireless masts set high on a hill about 20 kilometres to the north of the capital, immediately outside an Arab town, Ramallah, at the spot in the Holy Land where according to biblical legend, Jacob dreamt of the ladder ascending to Heaven.

Although this broadcasting station, whose studios are actually in the centre of Jerusalem, only has at its disposal a comparatively weak sending energy of 20 Kilowatts, it can not only be heard well in Palestine and the other near East countries, but in the whole of the Balkans too. The reverse also holds good as Palestine hears foreign stations remarkably clearly, above all Cairo, Budapest, Bucharest, Sofia and Rome.

The Palestine public has been extraordinarily attracted towards wireless since the day, two years ago, when it was granted its own broadcasting station by the government. The number of listeners has more than doubled itself and has, in fact, risen from 14,000 to over 31,000; even the economic crisis was unable to effect this development materially. The continuous disturbances in Palestine and the troublous times throughout the world have made people hungry for the latest news. The demand for

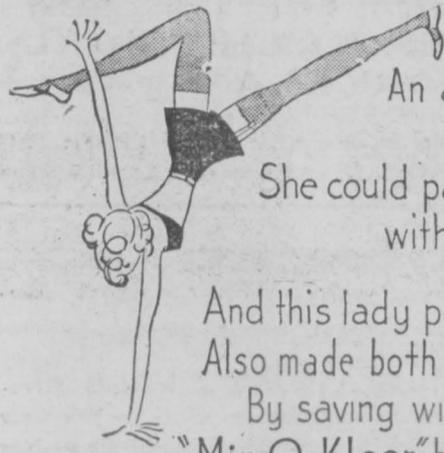
wireless sets increased particularly in Jerusalem where "Curfew" was imposed for many months consecutively, which meant that its inhabitants were forbidden to leave their houses between either 6 or 7 o'clock in the evening until 6 o'clock the next morning. But Toscanini was an even greater instigator to wireless-set buying than the curfew. When it became known last year that a concert given by the Palestine Symphonic Orchestra, conducted by Toscanini, would be broadcast, a thousand wireless sets were purchased immediately.

From a technical point of view the Palestine sending station works faultlessly. The more difficult task of transmitting from places outside the studios, including the relaying of the Christmas Service from Bethlehem twice, taken over by many American stations, has always gone off perfectly.

Curious, however, is the comparatively short broadcasting period from approximately 5.30 in the afternoon until about 10 o'clock in the evening. It is all the more remarkable as the Palestine station is destined to fulfil the requirements of three large communities. It serves the Arabs, Jews and English. If you deduct the Children's Hour from the entire programme (here Arabs, Jews and English are considered in the same way) there is only 105 minutes left for Arab listeners, 75 minutes for Jewish and 75 for English. This arrangement gives rise to very strong criticism on the part of the Jews. They point out that of the 31,000 wireless sets in Palestine 25,000 are owned by Jews and with a tax on sets of 10/- per annum, the Government draws the greatest part of its revenue from wireless from Jewish listeners.

It is true, however, that the majority of Jews listen in to the English broadcasts too, especially the musical ones, but even a programme of 180 minutes a day is not very much for the cultural and general needs of education. The Jews, however, do not wish to have their part of the programme lengthened at the cost of the Arabic one, they speak rather of a general extension of the programme from which everyone would have the benefit.

It seems specially necessary to amend the news service so as to include more current events of the day. Reuter's news given in the Arabic, Jewish and English programmes, is partly known beforehand from the evening papers.



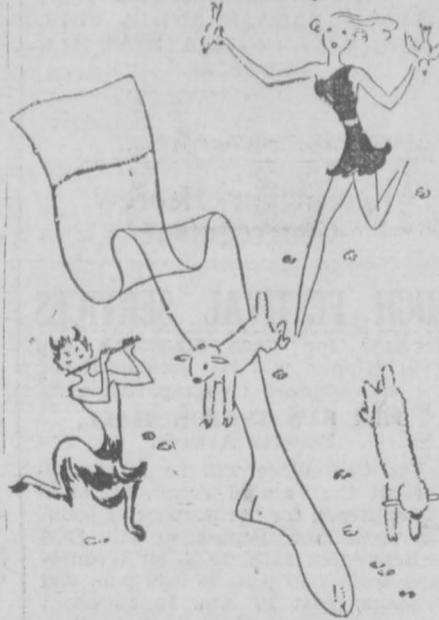
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was Rose,
She could pat her own back
with her toes.

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The entertainment and instructive programmes are usually good. In the Arabic sessions many relays from cabarets have been strikingly successful and in the Hebrew performances scenes from the satirical variety show "Matate" were well received. In the English programme a series of talks on the English language, given by an official personage, who remained anonymous, but styled as "President of the Brighter English League" attracted much attention. It was soon rumoured, however, that "Mr. President" was none other than Edwin Samuel, son of the first High Commissioner and Vice-director of the Department for Immigration of the Government of Palestine.

The musical programme at Broadcasting House is very varied. The Arabs have their own small orchestra for oriental music. The Jews and English have a mutual Chamber Orchestra, many soloists are engaged and other orchestral works are broadcast from gramophone records.

The big concert given by the very excellent Palestine Symphony Orchestra, founded by Bronislaw Hubermann, were comparatively seldom relayed. This omission is regrettable in every way and it is to be hoped that the Palestine station will be successful in the third year of its existence in obtaining the permanent co-operation of this prominent orchestra.

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