

# A LETTER FROM ERETZ ISRAEL

(From Our Own Correspondent).

Jerusalem, 9th January, 1937.

## Strange Behaviour from the Commission.

It may be that the Royal Commission are grown weary of hearing the Jewish case, of the hundreds of grievances and thousands of details that they have been called upon to absorb. It may also be, although the assumption is a serious one, that their frequent social contact with higher British officials, many of whom are inimical to the Jewish cause, have predisposed them against the Jews. But the fact remains that during the past few days most of them have revealed a strangely hostile attitude towards Jewish evidence, two going so far as to appear to suggest they have already solved the problem that they were appointed to investigate, and that solution is in the Jews' disfavour.

Almost from the beginning, although their attitude was fair and gentlemanly, certain members of the Commission indulged in comments and jocularities that were a trifling perplexing. Sometimes they stung, but listeners, anxious to believe that the Commission was completely unprejudiced to one side or another, put their own reaction down to Jewish hyper-sensitiveness. But now the position is different. When Sir Horace Rumbold asked challengingly whether the Government had not done a great deal of work to develop the practically barren and desert country under extremely difficult conditions further complicated by "the injection of an alien race into the body politic" (meaning the Jews) he left little doubt as to his attitude. Nor did Sir Harold Morris, when he tried consistently to trip up Mr. Leonard Stein during the latter's evidence on "Interpretations of the Mandate." Not only was he gratuitously rude, and gave the impression of a public prosecutor cross-examining an accused against whom the evidence was very black, but by means of innuendos and the old trick of putting half a question to the witness and demanding a whole "Yes" or "No," left a profoundly depressing impression on all the Jews who heard him. And although, at one stage, Lord Peel felt it necessary to reprove Mr. Stein, who had justifiably become irritated at Sir Harold's tactics, it seemed evident that the Chairman himself was not over-happy at his colleague's method. Sir Laurie Hammond, who has never appeared very friendly, caused added surprise this week during the evidence of Mr. David Yellin on the Hebrew language and the discrimination of the Government against it, when he sarcastically, and foolishly, suggested that Jews seemed content with English when it came to sending their oranges for sale in England.

All in all, the Yishuv's indignation to-day is not by any means the result of hyper-sensitiveness. The Commission at first courteous and impartial, is now showing quite different colours. There are some who wish to believe that this attitude is due to the Commission's desire that the Arabs also appear, and that to encourage the latter it is endeavouring to convince them that it is, at least, not prejudiced in the Jews' favour. That would be comforting, but hardly seems likely. Within two or three weeks the Commission will have ended its work, and its report, on parts of which it is already working, will no doubt appear before very long. Until then the Yishuv will continue to hope that justice will be done. But in the meantime it is feeling depressed.

## Toscanini Conquers.

Seldom, if ever before can a whole community have evinced so deep an enthusiasm over the visit of a foreign musical conductor as have the Jews of Palestine over the visit of Arturo Toscanini. For weeks before his arrival to inaugurate the musical season and the new Palestine Orchestra of seventy leading Jewish players from all countries of the world, the event was awaited with profound excitement. The membership list of the new Orchestra grew by hundreds daily, until by the time the inaugural date arrived it was eight thousand higher proportionately than in any other community in the world.

The concerts, of which that in Jerusalem was broadcast and specially relayed to America, provided an unforgettable experience.

The exquisite music was cause enough for joy. The knowledge that the orchestra was entirely composed of Jews, most of them cast out of Germany or forced out of Poland, who were contributing their art now for the pleasure of their own people, in their own Homeland, was added cause for joy. But the cause of that peak of joy that suffused the concert halls and enveloped even people for whom music means little, was Toscanini. The fact that he, the greatest conductor of our time and one of the greatest of all time, a Gentile, should have offered without accepting a fee, to visit Palestine and launch the Jewish Orchestra, when almost all the world will have none of the Jew, only tolerating, where not hating and calumniating him—it was that gesture of friendship that earned for him the abiding gratitude of the Yishuv and rendered his concerts so memorable. Toscanini has earned the gratitude of millions all over the world for his incomparable art. But in Palestine he has earned a gratitude infinitely more profound. And that he values it is evident in his glistening eyes as he stands on the stage at the end of a performance clasping his hands repeatedly above his head while the applause thunders through the hall as though it will never end.

## Progress on Mount Scopus.

Despite the obvious setbacks during the recent six months' disturbances, during which a distinguished lecturer and five students lost their lives, the Hebrew University continued to make noteworthy progress in the year just ended. The most important new development is the beginning of the construction of the new

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University-Hadassah Hospital and Institute of Medical Research. Other developments are the creation of chairs of Modern Jewish History, Applied Pedagogics and Agrarian Economics. A Department of Physical Chemistry has been opened and the Department of Physics expanded. The new Department of Education has been enlarged by the establishment of a model school, and is to be further extended by the creation of a chair of Theoretical Pedagogy, to be financed by the Palestine "Friends of the Hebrew University." A long and urgent need for staff and students has been met by the construction of a University Club House, while an additional building has been erected for the Chemical Institute, and another for the Bio-Climatological Department.

The problems of development with which the University has to struggle are in part due to the fact that it is the only institution of its kind in the country, and in part to the absence of any substantial measure of State support and its consequent dependence on voluntary contributions and endowments. The financial problem, in particular, is often acute, the University authorities usually adopting a budget only part of which is assured at the time of its adoption. £P.80,000 was spent by the University last year. For the present year its budget is £P.87,000.

A number of augmentations are planned for the coming twelve months. A closer system of co-ordination and centralisation is intended, particularly in regard to research activities. The existing scope of the Faculty of Humanities will be enlarged, new chairs being one in *Halacha* (Jewish religion and secular law), and another, to be named after Sir Moses Montefiore on the fiftieth anniversary of his death, in "English Language and Institutions."

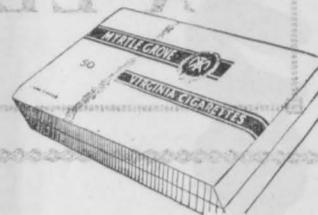
## Jerusalem's Amenities.

It was a resident of Jerusalem who declared in an age long past that "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick." The hearts of the modern residents of Jerusalem have long been sick. Ever since the war hopes of Jerusalem becoming a better and pleasanter place to live in have been whetted at frequent intervals, but with only modest results. Most Jerusalemites have accordingly long since become hardened sceptics when improvements are promised their city. Yet from time to time amenities do come into being, strangely, unexpectedly, and with enormous effort. Thus, for instance, it was with our water supply. For years it was talked about, for years it was promised, for months it was imminent any day, almost any hour; and then, one day, it happened. Unbelievably there was water in the pipes for seven days a week. The long-spun tale that its cost would be reduced by half struck Jerusalemites' ears as another municipal romance. But one day, in between reports of municipal cat-and-dog debates, appeared the welcome decision that water in future could be used with only half an eye on the bill. But the price of electricity still remains to be reduced by half, as so long promised, pavements are still to be forbidden in front of houses, the raucous unmannerly din that assails our ears and nerves is still to be reduced by law.

And now comes a promise (the first vague suggestion was made a year ago) that the Old and New Cities of Jerusalem are to be surrounded by a specious avenue, luxuriously planted and with room even for pedestrians; it is to push its way from the Greek Colony on the west to Mount Scopus on the east, returning by way of Government House. It is an inspiring idea, and its fulfilment is to cost, we do not know how many hundreds of thousands of pounds; nor do we know where the money is to come from. We read, and sigh, and suppose we shall soon forget—until again the promise is renewed, when we shall sigh once more. And then one day, in the dim future, when we least expect it, the road will probably begin to pursue its way overnight.

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