

A LETTER FROM PALESTINE

HARRY LEVIN

discusses

THE SUFFERINGS OF SAFED — LEADERLESS
TERRORISTS — A NEW CONSERVATOIRE —
JERUSALEM INDIGNANT

The Agony of Safed.

AFTER a brief and uneasy lull, the terror broke out last week afresh. In the course of a few days 10 Jews were killed in different parts of the country, and four Arabs. Six of the Jewish victims were from Safed, that lovely, old-world town high up in the hills of Galilee. Because of its isolation, the wooded nature of the countryside and the ruggedness of the surrounding hillsides, the highway from Safed to Acre has been little used in these past two years, travellers to the coast preferring the longer route through Tiberias and thence through Nazareth.

But the victims, because they were in a hurry, decided to take the risk, and travelled by the shorter road, believing that, precisely because it was so unfrequented, it would be free of terrorist attention. But they were tragically mistaken. Hardly were they clear of Safed, when they ran into a band of terrorists who riddled their car with bullets. By some miracle three of the travellers escaped unhurt.

No single town in Eretz Israel has suffered more from the terror than Safed. More murders have been perpetrated there, proportionately to its size, than anywhere else, and no other town has been reduced to penury comparable with that of Safed. Previously it subsisted on its situation, which made it a splendid summer resort and a commercial centre for the whole of Galilee, as well as for a great part of the transit traffic from Syria and the Hauran, to the coastal plain of Palestine. But as soon as the terror seized it in its grasp it was forsaken by tourists and transit travellers alike.

The Yishuv and the Jewish people have committed an unforgivable crime towards Safed, not only because they have forsaken it in its distress, but also because they permitted it to remain isolated in an Arab sea during the years that went before. Had Safed been the urban centre of a great Jewish hinterland, the vast, fertile valleys around it occupied, like the Emek Jezreel and the Sharon, by a chain of Jewish settlements, it would have ridden this storm with ease. As it is, the Jewish community of Safed, reduced by steady flight in recent years from 8,000 to 2,000, lies in the shadow of extinction.

It may be too late; Galilee, or a great part of it, may be eliminated from the proposed Jewish state whose borders the new Commission

will finally propose; or, if the proposal is ultimately rejected, the purchase of land there by Jews may be restricted. But in the meantime, the latest tragedy of Safed, if nothing else, must convince the Jewish world that "On to Galilee!" is not merely a slogan for the raising of funds. It is a last attempt to right an historic wrong.

The Terrorist Gangs.

THE terrorist organisers are in somewhat of a quandary. They cannot find a central leader for the gangs. In the last heavy engagement in the hills of Jenin a month ago, both the principal leader, Sheikh Attiyeh, a picturesque old brigand of pre-War days, and his understudy, a German adventurer who had fought as an officer in the Near East during the War, lived for some years in Damascus and Baghdad and was perfectly fluent in Arabic, were killed. Since then the Mufti and his friends have been unable to find substitutes, although they have tempted a number of candidates with princely offers.

The result has been that most of the gangs have been functioning independently of each other, which obviously reduces their cumulative effect and threatens to render increasingly difficult an ultimate re-fusion of forces when a central leadership is at last obtained.

It may be that their failure in this quest has something to do with it, coupled with the recent heavy reverses the gangs have experienced at the hands of the troops. But the fact, reported by reliable observers in Damascus, seems well established that the exiled leaders are very weary of the whole terrorist campaign. So far it has brought them no permanent benefit. The Italo-British conversations threaten to leave them, at least for a time, without the aid of their principal financial ally, Italy. The Arabs of Palestine are in the direst straits, and the Syrian Government is growing very restive at the continued activities of these distinguished guests whom it agreed to harbour.

Everything seems now to depend, therefore, on the Palestine authorities. If, knowing what they do, they demonstrate beyond any doubt that they are more determined than ever to crush the terrorist movement, they may well administer what will turn out to be the final blow to the

entire organised campaign of violence. But will they?

Music.

IT is eminently satisfactory, perhaps indeed it is one of the primary reasons for the survival of normality in the Yishuv in the face of two years of tragic abnormality, that Eretz Israel is full of men and women with "one-track" minds, who despite every discouragement, persist in pursuing their single track towards its goal. They are to be found in every sphere of life. Here a man has profound belief in the future of ducks in Palestine, and although his ducks die or are slaughtered by terrorists, he begins afresh, convinced that the destiny of the Homeland in the final resort will largely be built up on the basis of ducks.

There, another man issues an art journal. It purports to be a monthly, but it appears sometimes at monthly and sometimes at two-monthly intervals. But, in the face of every encouragement to die, it persists in living, and he, somehow, with it. Who but the veriest handful of people have the mood or the money to buy elaborate art journals; what firm has the means to advertise in it? Yet he never stops to question that the future of Eretz Israel is not, perhaps, bound up so inextricably with his journal.

In the sphere of music the Yishuv has a number of such *chassidim*, but none greater than Emil Hauser, himself a distinguished violinist who in former years was a frequent performer in some of the greatest capitals of the world. For years he applied himself single-handed to building up a Conservatoire of Music in Palestine. Of independent means, he might long ago have given up the struggle and reverted to his former role as an individual artist. Instead of which he persisted, until to-day the Conservatoire is an established fact. The announcement this week that it is about to embark on a project—for which a considerable part of the means is already available—to build a worthy home for itself is the penultimate tribute to his persistence.

Among the 250 pupils that the Conservatoire is training are Jews, Britishers, Greeks, Swedes, Americans, Maronites, Armenians, Catholics, Moslems, Samaritans, and even—whisper it not in Gath!—German Gentiles. Its rented building stands between a Jewish and an Arab quarter, and its doors are those of almost the only Jewish institution that an Arab may enter without arousing the suspicion of his compatriots.

Because its teachers—all of them distinguished musicians—hail from such varying places as Berlin and Odessa, London and Lubljana, Budapest and Paris, among other places, and most of them are comparatively recent arrivals, the language problem was a serious one, rendered all the more serious by the even greater divergence of language of its pupils. But Hauser, who himself sweats over every Hebrew word he utters, has insisted that the

medium of instruction must be Hebrew alone. German Gentiles, whose parents no doubt vote for Hitler in Germany, and the Arab others, have had to take Hebrew courses to familiarise themselves with the language. Only in one circumstance they permitted to use other languages: during examinations. Otherwise, the sure of Hebrew is relentless.

The Swastika in Jerusalem.

JERUSALEM is by no means a Jewish city, although the majority of its citizenry is Jewish. The stamp and pace of the capital are those of the West. It has grown with the Yishuv. The Yishuv has been prosperous; Jerusalem has been equally so; when the Yishuv is at a day of rest, Jerusalem may be asleep.

When Jewish Jerusalem last week, therefore, to a great swastika flag flying from the King David Hotel, the leader in the town, and, in fact, in the East, it was profoundly shocked and its indignation grew. It collected that, although under Jewish management, much of the capital that built the Holy City. The Jewish press, the English daily paper which doubt discreetly thinking of diverting revenue, launched an attack against this insult. The management declared that it would not be appalled by the flying of the flags of their enemies and on this occasion it had of several hundred distinguished German tourists, including the late Marshal Hindenburg, the press, particularly the labour press, would not be appalled. It bluntly declared that Jewish longer have anything to do with the hotel. Thoroughly upset, the management essayed further negotiations, which did not, however, bring satisfaction any nearer.

Now, however, the Government has stepped in, and is about to introduce a law forbidding the flying of national flags altogether on official buildings, a rather serious measure to eliminate causes of friction, but on the King David Hotel, at least, it is greeted with relief. For in Jewish resentment is a feeling infinitely to be reckoned with.

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