

Glimpses of Eretz Israel

By "PITPUT"

Special Correspondence to the "Zionist Record."

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THE Yishub has hardly recovered from its grief at Bialik's death, and now it is again weighed down with sorrow. The news came on Friday night that Baron Edmond de Rothschild died and plunged the Yishub into deep mourning. Here was a loss to the nation that was indeed staggering.

Sunday did not open with the usual work-a-day bustle. Offices of public and national institutions closed early, and all the schools, after short services of mourning, closed for the day. It is peculiar how it is apparent from the faces of the people, and from the very atmosphere of the streets and shops and cafes, whether Palestine is in mourning, or is feeling pleased, or is merely normal. Joy and sorrow are shared here and evinced to a much greater extent than in other lands, and in spite of its growing numbers, the Yishub is still in a sense one large family. This sense of common family bereavement is felt particularly in this case of the death of the "great benefactor," the "guardian of the Yishub, and its father." More pronounced than that of the younger generation, is the grief of the older men, they of the old guard, the pioneers of the movement, who collected in pennies, and dreamt fantastic dreams. They know how to appraise the devotion and bigness of the man who built Rishon-le-Zion, and who poured his millions into Palestine.

The great memorial meeting held in the hall of the Jewish Agency was sad and impressive beyond description. Many hundreds of people were unable to enter the crowded hall, and remained standing quietly outside. It has become hackneyed to compare a great Jewish speaker with the ancient prophets, but one had to hear Mr. Nahum Sokolow pay his heart-broken tribute to an old friend and colleague, to realise how truly like that of the ancient prophets that voice rang. He spoke in that rich and incredibly beautiful Hebrew, which, now that Bialik is dead, no one else can equal, and he spoke in a lofty poetic way, which only sounds real in classic Hebrew and on our ancient soil. "Vayehi Biyeshurun Melech," he said, repeating the great cry uttered on Rosh Hashona in a solemn moment, "and there was a King in Israel, for the orphaned people whom the nations trample down. . . . Why not a king in Israel, in that very nation which raised kings thousands of years ago, and whose names are imprinted on the history of mankind for generations and generations? Why may we not enthrone him who was indeed a King? For to him was indeed a crown, the "Keter Shem Tov," the only true crown there is. So there arose a king in Israel, and it is our King that we mourn to-day.

"And on this great meeting in Jerusalem,



THE YISHUB MOURNS EDMOND DE ROTHSCHILD.

Mr. Menachem Ussishkin addressing the gathering at the Jewish Agency memorial meeting in Jerusalem. This photograph was sent specially by air mail to the "Zionist Record"

the capital city of the Kingdom of David, in the heart of the city for which he, who died, strove so hard and dreamt so many dreams, I say that this is not in reality a gathering of mourning, even though we are weighed down with sorrow at the sight of our dead lying before us. This gathering is a 'Mikrah Kodesh,' a holy convocation; for we have come together to honour the genius of our people for immortality."

Towards Arab-Jewish Friendship

WILL Jews and Arabs, by coming together socially, get to know and understand one another better? Will it bring about friendship, and will all this help to solve the so-called Arab-Jewish problem of Palestine? There are many people who would say yes to all these questions, and among them is Dr. Emmanuel Olsvanger, well known to South Africa for his fine mind and his brilliant oratory. He has just put into practice a long-cherished idea, and inaugurated on Sunday evening the first Jewish-Arab Society. The idea is to have an informal and loosely organised society to arrange mixed social gatherings, teas, lectures, and other occasions, at which ideas may be exchanged, and amity and understanding fostered. Dr. Olsvanger and his friends realise that the beginning must be attempted in a small way, but they hope that even from such humble origins the wish for amity may spread.

The first "Social" took place in the home of Dr. Levin-Epstein. I went there with something of a thrill, as to a novel and rather risky adventure. When I arrived, there were from forty to fifty guests

seated stiffly round the room, and I looked round eagerly for the Arabs. I do not know how many had been invited, but some ten to twelve had turned up. Some of them were wearing their red fezzes. They were sitting in three rather forlorn little groups, and the Jews nearest to them were exchanging with them polite remarks. Although I did not exactly expect the Mufti of Jerusalem to be present, I couldn't help feeling some disappointment with these ten representatives of our teeming neighbours. There were no women amongst them, another round for disappointment, for Arabs one gets to know in plenty, but one may live in Palestine for years and never meet an Arab woman.

Dr. Olsvanger broke the ice with a little speech, and a very enjoyable musical programme was carried out. Arab music is rather puzzling, and its monotones and half tones fall strangely on European ears. The common medium of conversation was naturally English, but there was one Arab gentleman present who spoke excellent Hebrew, and he helped a great deal towards eliminating the third official language. He rendered the words of the Arab songs into Hebrew, and translated a few of the Chalutz songs into Arabic for the guests. Conversation came more freely over tea, and I was interested to hear what the people spoke about. Rather a large number of subjects ruled themselves out, and the common social interests of Jew and Arab are still very few. However, everyone seemed to enjoy themselves in a quiet way.

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RED DAISY TEA is delicious and refreshing. Try it.

Home is not solely for Jews already in Palestine, but also for the millions of Jews in the Diaspora. All the Jews in the world are in principle prospective citizens of the National Home. And if democracy really means domination of the national will, then the destiny of the country may not be decided without the consent of Jews all over the world.

A Land in a State of Flux.

NOR is true democracy at present possible in Palestine. Upon what basis will it be instituted? Upon the statistics which exist to-day? Upon figures which change daily? The population of Palestine is not static, but fluctuating. Immigrant boats arrive weekly, and the administration issues new immigration schedules every six months. Thus the numerical diversity between the two sections of the population is continually changing. A constitution based upon present-day statistics would, therefore, in six months become inaccurate and untrustworthy. How can anything stable be built if everything is in such a constant state of flux?

Nor can we derive any comfort from the argument that the powers of the contemplated Legislative Council will in any event be somewhat circumscribed. We are told that its voice in affairs of the state will be very small, and the main items of legislation will be dealt with by the administration itself. The administration, too, will have the right of veto

in all measures passed by the Council. In order to reassure us further we are told that the two principal elements of the "National Home" will be placed entirely outside of the powers of the Council, and we shall in future still have to deal direct with the administration in this connection.

If these arguments are to be accepted, then the resultant conception of popular government is no less than a chimera. It is pertinent to demand why is it necessary? Whom will it benefit? It can have one meaning only—that a platform is being provided for organised and legal opposition to the Jews and their national home. Who requires this? On the other hand, both in world politics and in the history of British administration of dominions, colonies and protectorates, there are sufficient examples which go to show that the danger is far greater than merely organised and legalised propaganda and agitation.

Legislative institutions tend ever towards greater consolidation and increase of their sphere of influence. The practice of governments—be they ever so autocratic—is to pay ever greater attention to the opinions of such institutions, and the day must come when a conflict must arise between the two—the autocratic government and the tribune with limited powers. No one can predict the results of such a conflict.

Two things we cannot allow to happen. Firstly, that we shall be placed to-

day in the position of a minority (which we are not, and will not be, and the possibility of which is excluded by the Mandate); secondly, that we should allow ourselves to become open to the danger of the unforeseen results of an inevitable conflict.

Not a Minority Status.

EVEN if the dynamic character of our position, the steady stream of immigration and our political status according to the Mandate, are not taken into consideration, we still are to-day no longer a minority in Palestine in a true conception of democracy, because of our productive, cultural, economic activity, and because of our contribution to the revenue of the country, we cannot be called a minority, and the future should certainly not find us branded as such. Our status in Palestine is *sui generis*.

Nevertheless, we shall not take separate and exclusive rights peculiar to ourselves. Our motto is "Not to rule others, and not to be ruled by others." We intend to base our present and future relationship with the Arab population of Palestine upon this principle.

Regardless of whether it is because the time has not yet arrived, or because of the lack of understanding on both sides, we cannot accept the plans for the establishment of a Legislative Council as originally intended by the Mandatory Power. We appeal to the Mandatory to realise that the idea is as yet utterly premature.

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I doubt if any valuable ideas had been exchanged, but it is safe to say that some contacts were established. One had a pleasant sense of doing the sensible, civilized thing. Dr. Olsvanger was very pleased with his first evening, and it is a pity he is leaving Palestine soon on one of his tours. He is arranging for the experiment to be continued. I see that the Johannesburg Palestine Club, which he founded, recently celebrated its 100th meeting. It is to be hoped that the Arab-Jewish Club will have at least an equally long life.

Pioneers of Transport.

THE manager of one of the Jewish co-operative transport companies made a very striking remark some time ago, while discussing transport in Palestine. "Take motor buses off the roads of Palestine," he said, "and the country will lie paralysed before you. An uncanny silence will descend on the country, and the distances between the towns and villages will suddenly be multiplied a hundredfold." Nor is this graphic picture in the least exaggerated, for the country knows no other transport. The railways are in many ways a dead letter here. Perhaps if the report of the Railway Commission is carried out completely the Railways will come into their own—at present, for thousands of the inhabitants the railways do not exist. I have never been in a Palestine train yet, for to

no place where I have ever wished to go has the train connection been anywhere as convenient as the buses are or as reliable.

It is the Jewish transport companies, with their pluck and enterprise and brilliant organisation which have opened up the country. Their buses go everywhere, they whine up hills and churn through mud and sand, and hardly is a new settlement opened, and the first few straggling houses built, before the "auto" starts calling there, getting there somehow, and somehow getting back.

If you want to get to know the people of Palestine, travel in the buses. The twenty or thirty passengers are members of the same family. You can talk to your neighbour, and sleep on his shoulder, and you must not mind the babies and parcels and fowls and other livestock, for they are all indispensable requisites of travel.

There is no more romantic story than that of the Egged Co-operative. A few drivers put together all their worldly possessions and bought a vehicle. They drove and repaired it themselves, and after they had bought another, disaster overtook them, and all their rolling stock was destroyed by fire. Nothing daunted, they started again, and to-day the Egged has a capital of close to £100,000. It paid £17,500 last year in wages to its drivers, and its buses fill the roads and tracks of the country. It is still run on the same co-operative basis. Its drivers are driver-owners. Every man is a shareholder and has a specific task. Some

drive, some inspect, some do the repair work, but they are all equal in status and remuneration. They work absolutely unsparingly, and are content with eight to ten pounds per month. The balance of the earnings are devoted to improving the service. In spite of many obstacles, high taxation, bad roads and low profits (Palestine has one of the cheapest bus services in the world), the flood of the country's prosperity has permeated to Egged. I am told that to join the co-operative a premium is now required—a premium as high as three hundred pounds. Applicants are submitted to a severe test. They must be able to do many things with a lumbering bus, and they must be able to diagnose engine trouble and repair it.

The total figures for the transport industry as a whole were recently mentioned by Mr. Razili, the manager of Egged, at a meeting of press representatives. They tell an amazing story. The number of drivers (Jews and Arabs) in Palestine to-day is 5,000, and to them must be added another 5,000 persons engaged in related occupations. There are thus 10,000 families gaining their livelihood from this industry. The total wages paid by the industry per year are computed as close to a million. According to Mr. Razili's figures, government taxation is wellnigh crushing. It takes 20 per cent. of the gross income in customs duty alone. The total Government income from the industry is a half-million, and Government tax on petrol raises the price by one hundred per cent.

CUTHBERT'S FOR GOLF SHOES