

A LETTER FROM ERETZ ISRAEL

(From Our Own Correspondent).

Jerusalem, 26th December, 1936.

Moslems and Christians.

It was from Mount Carmel that in times of old a small cloud was seen rising not bigger than a man's hand, which overcast the heavens, and it is not impossible that an incident which occurred at Haifa in the shadow of Carmel a few weeks ago may prove to have been the commencement of a storm of another kind pregnant with untold issues. When the moral atmosphere is charged with electricity, it needs but a spark to produce the shock; and so it is possible that the throwing of a stone into Christian Arab shopkeeper's window by a Moslem hooligan, on the grounds that the latter had had dealings with Jews, may open up an issue liable to assume proportions of considerable magnitude and involving the most dangerous of all elements in a dispute, that of religious fanaticism.

Since that incident the tension between the two Arab communities has been growing, until one of the leading Christian Arab leaders, Yacoub Farradj, who is also a member of the Arab Higher Committee and vice-Mayor of Jerusalem, found it necessary to demand of the Mufti that he convene a special meeting yesterday of the Higher Committee to consider means of suppressing the conflict. Yet while that Committee was sitting, two further outrages occurred, the perpetrators being Moslems, and the victims, Christians. In the first case a church built on the site of Jacob's Well, outside Nablus, one of the most venerable holy sites of the Christian communities, was raided by an armed Moslem band which robbed the church of all its valuables, looted its safe, and threatened the resident priest with death if he reported the crime. The second outrage occurred in Jaffa when the President of the Jaffa Labour Association, a prominent Christian Arab, was shot from ambush and severely wounded when passing through a Moslem quarter. Both incidents, however, were merely the culmination of consistent incitement, street quarrels and scuffles, and a general vilification of Christians by Moslems during the past several weeks.

Relations between Moslem and Christian Arabs have never been friendly anywhere in the Near East. The Moslems regard their Christian countrymen as traitors to Islam, while the Christians, though despising the Moslems, have developed an inferiority complex and cunning as a shield against the dislike and periodically active persecution of the great Moslem majority. The clash between the two communities in Lebanon about a month ago, and the growing irritation between them in Egypt have now caused a similar reaction in Palestine. Another factor is the economic stress among the Arabs following the long and ruinous strike. It was not to be expected that the resumption of normal life would be unaccompanied by incidents of different kinds, and the present conflict is one such incident. The large, poverty-stricken Moslem masses, confused and wretched, needed little encouragement to harbour resentment of the small minority of relatively well-off Christians, upon whom the strike seemed to have a much less destructive effect than upon themselves. In addition, however, it appears clear that certain Moslem leaders, for their own business purposes, have found it desirable actively to fan that sentiment. The cumulative effect of all this is the present tension. In normal times the old, oft-repeated fanatical outbursts of Crescent versus Cross would probably resurge once more. But with the present struggle against the Jews as their major function, the leaders of both sides will no doubt agree to persuade their followers to bury their differences. In the meantime, however, the Christians are particularly generous in contributing to the funds of the Arab Higher Committee, and their press is more vitriolic against the Jews than ever.

Welcoming Toscanini.

For the moment the Royal Commission and cognate matters have been forgotten in the excitement of the arrival of Toscanini to conduct the newly-founded Palestine Orchestra in its maiden performance. He arrived in Palestine two days ago and the talk since then has centred round him and the forthcoming concert. People to whom a pound is a great deal of money have enrolled as members of the new Orchestra for the coming season

in order to be able to attend "The Concert." Others whose musical appreciation is of the lowest have hastened to assure themselves of seats so as not to miss "The Event." Still others whom it is usually exasperatingly difficult to bring down from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv for a week-end are flocking to that city to attend the first concert, even though a similar concert, also under the baton of Toscanini, is taking place in Jerusalem three days later. The result of all this is that the Orchestra has nearly 8,000 members, which is more proportionately than any other orchestra in the world can claim.

The history of the Orchestra dates back to the early days of the Hitler Terror in Germany. Bronislaw Huberman, considered one of the leading violinists in the world, then determined to rehabilitate in Palestine some of the best Jewish musicians of Germany. From the enormous number of applicants he selected the best, not confining his search to Germany, but extending it also to Poland and other lands where Jews are persecuted. At the same time he collected funds all over the world for his project, contributing himself the proceeds of more than a few of his own performances. Then, during a visit to Palestine, he established the Palestine Orchestra Association in Tel Aviv. His final act in the organisation of the new body was to secure Toscanini, the most famous conductor living, to start the Orchestra off on its career.

It took the great master no time to endear himself to the Yishuv. On the first evening of his arrival he attended a performance of the Habimah in Tel Aviv. The next day he visited the embryo Jewish port and some of the settlements of Judea. And in each case he was greeted with rare enthusiasm and feeling. At one stage, as he was leaving the Tel Aviv jetty, a body of workmen on a building that he passed greeted him

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Palestine Symphony Orchestra.

BRILLIANT SUCCESS OF FIRST CONCERT.

TEL AVIV.

The inaugural concert of the Palestine Symphony Orchestra took place in Tel Aviv on Saturday evening, 26th December in the presence of a brilliant gathering, which included Sir Arthur Wauchope, Dr. Weizmann, leading members of the Jewish Agency Executive, leaders of the Military and Air forces, and prominent members of the Jewish community. The hall was packed with an audience of some 2,500 people.

The concert was a brilliant triumph alike for the orchestra and for the untiring efforts of Bronislaw Huberman.

Toscanini, who conducted, and Huberman received a tremendous ovation from the audience. The programme included the famous third "Leonora" Overture by Beethoven and items by Brahms, Mendelssohn and Schubert. The next evening a repeat concert was held under the auspices of the Histadrut. Again the hall was crowded to the doors, and Huberman and

Toscanini received another great ovation.

Plans are in preparation for a considerable time ahead, and some of the greatest artists of the day are to appear as soloists in future programmes.

Toscanini's Impressions.

Toscanini, in a statement to the press, declared that he was deeply moved and impressed by the Jewish upbuilding of Palestine and by the spirit prevailing in the Jewish colonies.

In a statement to the J.T.A., Mr. Huberman asked to convey his hearty thanks to the world press for its support of the Palestine Symphony Orchestra.

Signor Toscanini, Mr. Huberman further declared, was most satisfied about the Orchestra's achievements. If such a city as Tel Aviv, he went on, could show 7,000 subscribers for tickets, it meant that New York would have proportionately subscribed 420,000 tickets, which proved the deep interest Palestine took in the Orchestra.

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with such warmth that tears came into his eyes. At his first rehearsal that evening, to which he invited thousands of Jewish workmen for whom the prices of the concerts are prohibitive, there were thousands more outside the hall. No doubt the crowds surrounding the halls on the night of the actual performance will be greater still.

ARCHITECTURAL ART.

A movement has gained ground in recent months, particularly among recently arrived architects from Europe, to take measures to put a stop to the chaotic architectural development of Palestine. Such a step is indeed long overdue, for whatever else of beauty and imaginative power the Jews have exhibited in Palestine, they have on the whole failed in the sphere of architecture.

In this branch of applied art, as in all achievements involved in the graded construction of the country, the existing examples, in the final analysis, are but the first groping essays that should accordingly be judged with indulgence. That groping, however, has been too lengthy a process. Although there

are already magnificent examples of architectural art scattered all over the country, the general standard is low, exhibiting poor taste, troubled perceptions, a propensity for separation and disorder, an eager self-assertiveness to the injury of the environment, and a blind and exaggerated loyalty to the architectural ideas of the country of the builder's origin. The average Jewish quarter presents a hotch-potch of all styles, of all peoples, gathered from all ages and from all parts of the world. Nor is the fault lack of an original "style." On the contrary, there is too much "making" of a Hebrew style. But, in effect, it is not a national style that these adherents are creating, but a conscious and superficial stylisation. If these enthusiasts could only be persuaded to leave the creation of the new national style to the mercies of the land and climate and natural growth!

Fortunately, however, there are redeeming features; influential architects and artists and a section of the public have set their faces against the architectural anarchy, and the informal discussions that have been initiated among them and among some of the newcomers promise to have a salutary effect.

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