

A LETTER FROM ERETZ ISRAEL

(From Our Own Correspondent).

Jerusalem, January 16, 1937.

The Arabs Appear.

After it had dragged its course intermittently for nearly two months, Dr. Weizmann summed up the Jewish case before the Royal Commission at the end of last week. A short breathing space followed, during which the Commissioners visited Transjordan and heard what Emir Abdullah thought about the situation, and then the Arab case was launched.

There was no ceremony about the Arab appearance. It was as though they had been in frequent attendance at the Commission's sessions, and this was just a new sitting. Lord Peel opened the session by asking informally: "You are the members of the Arab Supreme Committee? What is this Committee and how is it constituted?" And then the evidence began. What did differentiate this session from former sessions, however, was the large number of red turbans that enlivened the journalists' and guests' rows. For the first time since the Commission arrived Arabs attended the hearings, and, in fact, were in the majority.

The whole membership of the Arab Committee was massed behind the Mufti, who opened the Arab case, and a number of them actively co-operated with him by proffering whispered suggestions as to what he should reply to some of the more awkward questions. The Mufti's declarations and grievances were not new. We have heard them repeatedly during the past year, and should have been foolish to have expected anything other than the same intransigent attitude. But those who may have thought that he would take the opportunity of trying to win the Commissioners over to his side by addressing himself to the task they have in hand were disillusioned. He knew perfectly well that the Commission is not empowered to consider whether the Mandate should be abolished or not, whether a national Arab Government can or cannot be introduced in Palestine, that it is not their concern to discuss whether the Jewish National Home is to be established, but only how it may be established in the light of the Arab problem. Yet his whole address was a negation of the basic objects of the Commission, and the latter might reasonably have been expected to tell him so, and to tell him further that he was wasting theirs and his own time. Instead, they listened patiently to his full-throated demand for national independence and the abandonment of the Jewish National Home experiment.

The truth of the matter, however, has little to do with the Commission. The Mufti knows full well that his demand cannot be fulfilled, neither by the Commission nor by the British Government. But he was speaking over the heads of the Commissioners to his own constituency, to his Arab followers. It was they whom he wanted to hear his vigorous demand for independence, it was to them that his ostensible fears for the Moslem and Christian Holy Places were addressed, and it was for them that his claim that Turkish sovereignty was preferable to the British mandated administration was intended. The Commission session was, in short, hardly more than another platform, one far more powerful than usual, from which the Mufti could address those whose counsel he pursues or whose allegiance he commands.

As far as the Commission itself was concerned, neither he nor the other Arab witnesses who have hitherto appeared can have much impressed its members. The frequent inaccuracies of figures and other data of which they have been guilty and on which the Commissioners pulled them up cannot have inspired respect in the latter. On the matter of grievances many of their claims were nullified because of their completely false premises—which the Commission have not been slow to reveal—and in the matter of their fears for the Holy Places, and their preference for the old Turkish sovereignty to the present British, the Commissioners openly showed that they did not believe them.

Only the blindest optimist will believe that the Arabs have done themselves any good by testifying as they have done until now. But whether the Arab failure to impress will be our gain is another question.

Two Delegations.

There are two delegations in Palestine at the present time, both of them of some importance, though in different ways, to the future of the country. The first consists of six leaders of organised Jewish labour in America. The Unions and Organisations under their influence hold a combined membership of over half-a-million, and the vast majority of them, as the larger number of the present delegation, have, until recently, been indifferent to Jewish endeavours in Palestine. Their absorbing interests were confined hitherto to the purely local problems of the Jewish worker in America and the cauldron of international politics. It was only in the past three years that they have begun to take a close interest in Palestinian developments, but now that interest is wholehearted.

The delegates, who have been in the country now for no more than a week, are filled with the deepest enthusiasm for what they have seen. Everything has exceeded their wildest expectations, and that so much of what has been achieved is the work of the labour element is a particular source of pride. Their conversion to Zionism is now complete, and, as one indication thereof, they have undertaken on behalf of the organisations they represent to raise \$100,000 for the Keren Kayemeth in the course of the coming year. In itself, this sum may not represent a tremendous effort, but compared with the complete inactivity of former years it is an eloquent symbol of their new-found allegiance.

The second delegation, also Labour, is that of the British Independent Labour Party, and comprises two of the four M.P.'s who represent this Party in the House of Commons. Their object is to report to their Party to enable the latter to elaborate a Socialist policy for Palestine. Recently the I.L.P.

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composed a report on Palestine before any of its members had officially visited the country. That report made an attempt to squeeze Zionist reality into the framework of an orthodox Socialist theory. While willing to recognise the Jewish workers' right to a "place in the sun," they were prepared to look for it not only in Palestine, but also in Biro-Bidjan. At the same time they could not accept "the religious and traditional basis of a Jewish National Home in Palestine." Their conclusion was that Jewish and Arab workers must unite with the purpose of overthrowing British Imperialism, Arab feudalism, and Jewish and Arab Capitalism, and of establishing a Socialist Republic. It will be of interest to observe how the realities of Palestine and the grim urgency of the Jewish world situation will affect their investigators' present conclusions.

The Travelling Musician

The followers of a dozen callings travel up and down the country intent on getting something from or giving something to the settlers of the Jewish villages. There are private business men of different varieties, peddlers, journalists, dieticians sent out by Hadassah and W.I.Z.O., dentists, veterinary surgeons, booksellers, photographers, Zionist and Government officials, agricultural and irrigation experts, actors, Rabbis, and tramps. From village to village they make their way, by motor-car, train, donkey or a succession of lifts in whatever vehicles offer, and most of them are welcome, whatever the nature of their mission.

To their number has recently been added a lecturer in music. Her name is Mrs. Alice Jacob-Loewenson, and she travels through the country laden always with two cases; one holds a gramophone, the other a collection of 600 records. Her mission is to teach the history of music, particularly Jewish music, and her task is one of love. She never tires of talking of her subject, and when she packs up her two cases and winds up her talk in any village, it is only to start all over again elsewhere.

For many years Frau Jacob-Loewenson taught music in "The School for Jewish Youth" in Berlin. As a subsidiary occupation she collaborated with Franz Beidler, a grandson of Richard Wagner, in supervising the work of the Kestenberg Archives of German Music Organisations. Her work, however, was not confined to Berlin. She travelled through many communities of Europe, and broadcast from wireless stations in several countries, dispensing widely from her great store of erudition to the pleasure and instruction of hundreds of thousands, if not millions of listeners.

The first wave of Jewish immigration from Germany after the rise of Hitler brought Mrs. Jacob-Loewenson to Palestine with her store of 600 precious records. The work she did formerly in Europe she now does for her own people in Palestine, if on a far more modest scale. But it is appreciated by them no less, and possibly more.

An evening's entertainment-instruction might begin with the playing of Spaniolish (Judeo-Spanish jargon) folk-songs, and be followed by "piyutim" from Bokhara, Bagdad, Eastern Europe and elsewhere. The lecturer will trace the characteristic Jewish quality of each, and compare it with similar themes in the music of other nations. Her object is not merely to reveal the nature of so-called Jewish music, but to create an understanding of music in general, and, where it already exists, to intensify it, among younger people in particular. If the measure of the eagerness with which Mrs. Jacob-Loewenson is welcomed wherever she arrives is any indication, then she has progressed a long way already towards attaining her object.

Tel Amal.

Beth Alpha is the eastern extremity of Emek Jezreel and stands at the mouth of another Emek, Emek Beisan. A vast area deploys here between the Jordan and the Lower Galilean hills, narrow at the south and widening on the north. Most of it is rich, empty soil, dotted merely with the transitory encampments of Beduin tribes. To the north are the Jiftlik lands which Sir Herbert Samuel's Administration obligingly gave away to Arabs in immense tracts that they were unable and unwilling to work. It is some of this land that the National Fund has been buying, in the teeth of the Government's opposition, and of which, if it can, it will continue to buy more, paying for it heavily, and in cash, as the Government's proteges demand.

At the entrance of the Beisan Valley, shortly after leaving Beth Alpha, the traveller will now come upon an infant Jewish

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settlement, the first in this region; its name is Tal Amal, and its settlers all young men and women, some hardly out of their 'teens, and all of them Palestinians. After two years of agricultural training on the old site of Ain Harod they were granted this land for a settlement of their own. No sooner had they occupied the land, however, than they were obliged to vacate it again, for it was just at the commencement of the recent disturbances.

But now they have gone back, pioneers of a new district in Jewish settlement, of virgin soil. South Africa has a special interest in them, for part of the means for their settlement is being provided out of the proceeds of the recent Keren Hayesod campaign in South Africa; and one of the settlers is the daughter of a veteran South African Zionist, Mr. M. Genussow, formerly of Kimberley.