

A Letter from the Yishub

By "PITPUT"

The Palestine Concert Season—Tel-Aviv Election Case—The Foreign Advocates Examination

Tel-Aviv, February 20th.

THE Palestine concert season is again in full swing, and a brilliant succession of artists is promised to us. The concert-going public is larger than ever, and the houses are sold out well in advance.

This season I am attending the concerts in Tel-Aviv, and I find it interesting to compare the conditions with those of Jerusalem. There is no doubt that the capital enjoys some advantages. It is, after all, the "Ir Habirah." It has more style, its audience is more reserved and critical, the atmosphere more sedate. Often the High Commissioner is expected with a party from Government House. Then the Civil Service dons evening clothes and sits solemnly waiting. The Jerusalem audience arrives in taxis and disperses decorously without an undue insistence on encores.

Tel-Aviv swarms to the concert on foot. The crowd is much greater, for it consists not only of ticket holders, but also of people who are going to hear the concert from outside the building, and of people who merely want to stand around "stam." The atmosphere is lively. The audience has difficulty in finding its seats, and when the seat has been located, you merely put your hat and coat on it and go visiting. Little tiffs and differences have to be straightened out by the stewards, and there is often an excited little group of people whose seats have been sold twice. The Tel-Aviv audience is easier to play to, for it is more responsive, warmer and more generous in its applause, and it is a rule in Tel-Aviv to get as much out of the artist as possible in the way of encores. If he is a great artist, it is obviously desirable to prolong the performance, and if he be a poor one, then he may always rehabilitate himself with some catchy little piece.

A Jerusalem audience is generally more in accord with the critics whose judgment appears in the press on the following day, but in Tel-Aviv there is often a wide divergence between the reception given to an artist and the critic's estimate of the performance. I do not think this is due to lack of discernment by Tel-Aviv audiences, it is due rather to the hospitality of the town and its warmth of heart.

It is interesting to notice how outspoken the critics are in Palestine. Victor Chenkin, whom many South Africans no doubt remember, is at present touring here. His programme is identical in every respect with the one given in South Africa, except that he has substituted a Hebrew bracket for the Yiddish portion. The years have not been kind to Chenkin, and his Hebrew bracket was particularly bad, for he completely failed to grasp the Chalutz atmosphere, and this must have shaken the faith of many people in the authenticity of his other representations. However, except for the Hebrew part, through which the audience sat rather gloomily, Chenkin was received very warmly, and the concert was successful enough.

But the following is part of what one of the critics wrote the next morning (in the "Davar"):

"Even if Chenkin did succeed in giving an impression of a drunken Ukrainian (with exaggerated vulgarity), or of the idiotic humour of a Caucasian peasant, surely his Palestinian songs, which he included as a gesture to Eretz Israel, must have caused the least discerning of the audience to laugh.

"One lost one's taste for the "Songs of the Jester," with their sentimentality and theatrical gesture, as far back as before the war. They bring us nothing. Such a concert would perhaps go well enough in a private house, at a birthday or other party, where the guests, after food and drink would receive any entertainment gladly. It is unreasonable to expect an audience to stand it for two hours at a concert hall. It is stuff without substance."

ANOTHER interesting decision was given by the courts in the Tel-Aviv election case. It has become usual for local elections to be fought a second time before the judges of the District Court. In the case of the Tel-Aviv Municipal Election it was indeed inevitable. There were 26 parties and 105 candidates contested 15 seats, and to make matters worse, a complicated electoral law, badly and amateurishly drafted, was being tried out for the first time. The makers of this law have sought to embody in it a modified form of proportional representation, thus rushing in rashly

where the angels might well have feared to tread. Legislation in England has always feared this ethically desirable but highly unpractical device, and the recent elections in Tel-Aviv have certainly shown it to be unsuitable for Palestine.

Actually there are no 26 opinions on the Municipal affairs of Tel-Aviv, there are perhaps no more than two or three. Broadly speaking, there are only a Labour Party and a Citizens Party. The difference in viewpoint corresponds roughly to that between the Labour Party and the Conservative Party on the London County Council. The Labour people lay a greater emphasis on social welfare and services and call for a bold financial policy. The Conservatives stand for security and cautious expenditure. There is, of course, also a difference of approach generally, and especially to taxation, and it cannot be denied too, that political feuds which really belong elsewhere do find their way into municipal affairs. There is certainly no reason in the world for 26 parties, and their unfortunate existence is due to two main causes.

We are still politically unruly and there are too many men here who would rather be the "boss" in a little party than pull their weight loyally but unostentatiously in a big one. The second reason is this proportional representation business which provides for a complicated system of allotment and pooling of votes, and for combinations of remainder votes by means of agreements between the various candidates. This puts a premium on a multiplicity of candidates and parties. Any group of people with a common interest must be tempted to put up a candidate, for their man is certain to get some votes, and these votes can be made the basis of a bargain with one or more other candidates. It speaks much for the moderation of Tel-Avivites that only 105 candidates took the field.

The President of the Jaffa District Court has described the clause in the electoral law providing for the remainder votes as "the worst drafted piece of legislation that it has ever been my misfortune to be called upon to construe." The four lawyers who appeared in the case revelled in literally dozens of technical flaws which they unearthed in the election proceedings, and especially in the

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