

While Ordered Life Proceeds

By HARRY LEVIN

In this illuminating survey of the past year in the Yishuv the writer shows how in spite of riot and outrage the normal pattern of life in Palestine continued.



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FOR two and a half years the whole of the Yishuv has had to contend with organised hostility, with a constant threat to life and property. Thousands of attacks were made on Jewish villages and urban quarters, on omnibuses and cars travelling along the highways. Hardly a day passed but the Hebrew press of the country carried black-bordered reports of Jews who were murdered or died from causes directly connected with the Terror.

Filled with anguish at this heavy loss of life and property, the Jews of Palestine yet continued the normal pattern of their lives. In a number of spheres the disturbances, and still more the political uncertainty gravely interfered with the ordered functioning of progressive forces. But they did not stop the momentum of the Yishuv's life, nor did they arrest the development of the National Home. Heavy extra precautions had to be taken, the national and individual purses shrank, tens of thousands of men and women worked by day and had to be alert by night, travel was dangerous. But the Jews of Eretz Israel did not sit down and wait for the terrorism to be suppressed. They defended themselves, and worked harder than before.

Spurred on by the vital force, which always emerges supreme, they rose daily, went to their fields, factories and offices, in their leisure time pursued cultural and artistic interests and relaxed each in his own way. And remembering always that they are the vanguard of the Jewish people, pioneers not for themselves alone but for the millions still waiting in the Diaspora, they continued to establish new settlements and urban quarters, created new industrial, commercial and transport undertakings, constructed new public projects, wrote and published new books and journals, fashioned new works of art. They carried on, in short, as if nothing untoward were happening.

Apart from economic developments, what has been the record of progress in Palestine in the past twelve months?

As in the foregoing year the most notable single achievement has been the founding of over a dozen new Jewish settlements. Some, like Tel Itzhak in the Sharon, were established in reasonably secure districts. But the overwhelming majority, like Hanita and Maale Hahamisha, came into being on lonely mountain slopes or valleys, far from Jewish zones of settlement. Their purpose was dual: to add further links in the long chain of Jewish villages, and to plant Jewish stakes in regions where none existed before. Last year the Vale of Beisan was the principal region of such settlement. This year Galilee, Beisan and the south all witnessed the overnight blossoming of Jewish *nekudoth* in soils hitherto desolate of all growth.

It may well be that the second purpose, the last-minute attempt, before the political future of the country is finally determined, to stake out practical claims in districts that threaten to be cut off from the Jewish sphere, may fail. In the recommendations of the Partition Commission, Galilee, for instance, or a great part of it, may be omitted from the proposed Jewish area. The fault will lie primarily with the Jewish world that enabled the construction of only a few Hanitas and not scores of them. But those that have been established will persist, centres of Jewish life and development in the present and beacons for the future.

Hanita.

OUTSTANDING of all the new settlements of the year was Hanita itself, whose fame spread throughout the Jewish world. There was nothing quite like it before, and nothing quite like it has been created since. Its isolation is complete. It lies on the northern and loneliest frontier of the country. Because it was so remote and inaccessible it became a principal passage for the traffic of terrorists and illegal arms from Lebanon and Syria to Palestine. Police never ventured there, and scientists and others whose business it is to study every region of the land passed it by.

The Jews who established Hanita were under no illusion as to the danger of their task. Yet there were so many applicants that the number of available places had to be carefully distributed between all the settlement groups in the country. And so Hanita is really an emanation of

the entire halutz movement: skull-capped members of the Hapoel Hamizrachi share the honour of its establishment with members of the radical Hashomer Hatzair.

The story of Hanita's 'baptism of fire' on its first night is well known. Even before its first solid house had been erected, graves had to be dug. But to-day Hanita is a veritable little fortress, and terrorists who had hoped to crush it out of existence on its first night, now avoid it.

Among the other settlements founded this year were a number by German Jews, three of them consisting of middle-class immigrants. One, Shavei Zion, constitutes an interesting experiment. Its members all lived in the same little community of Rexingen in Germany; many were connected by blood relationship or marriage. Instead of rooting themselves up individually, the community immigrated as a whole. A few changed their occupations on arriving in their new home. But many continued to pursue their former callings: the doctor remained a doctor, serving the same patients; the craftsman retained his work and all his Jewish customers. In Rexingen a number had been farmers; in Shavei Zion, of course, they remained farmers, and to their number were added others who gave up their former callings. Nor was this the only interesting aspect of the community's transfer. For, to enable the transfer, the richer people and poorer of Rexingen formed a partnership: the former provided the means to establish Shavei Zion, the latter the work.

The Jewish Self-Defence.

IN assessing the achievements of the past year in Palestine one development of incalculable significance looms up. The nucleus has been created of a well-trained and tested Jewish self-defence corps. Because of the exemplary behaviour of the Yishuv in the face of every kind of provocation during the first year of the disturbances the authorities could not but accede at last to the persistent demand of the Jews to form a legal body of armed Jewish defenders. The future of this corps of many thousands need not now be discussed. With the end of the disturbances it may be disbanded, or part of it absorbed within the police force. But the training, experience and organisation of this little army is an asset that will remain.

And in the present the corps is acquitting itself with extraordinary credit. It does not need the plaudits of the British officers in charge to convince us of its sterling quality. The defence of settlements protected by a handful of ghaffirs against hundreds of attacking terrorists is an episode that has been repeated daily in the past twelve months. That not one of even the most exposed of the settlements was evacuated for a single day is due to the determined defence of their Jewish protectors. At first these supernumeraries were permitted by the authorities only to defend a settlement on its own territory. Later they were permitted to form mobile units travelling constantly over a given area. And finally they were allowed to carry the battle into the enemy's camp. With the co-operation of small groups of British troops numbers of them have been tracking down or ambushing terrorist bands. For politic reasons the results have not always been made public; but to those who are aware of them they are impressive.

Tel Aviv's Port.

ALMOST the last official act of Sir Arthur Wauchope as High Commissioner for Palestine was the opening to passenger traffic of the Tel Aviv port at the end of February. Try as it did, the Palestine Administration could no longer block this development, and henceforth Tel Aviv was not only a landing ground for goods, but a real port, or, rather, the nucleus of a real port. For although the quantity of goods it handles increases almost monthly and the number of passengers that has passed through it in one day has reached the level of 1,000, the Yishuv is yet not blind to its limitations. Much faulty organisation still remains to be repaired and influences intent upon carving out for themselves spheres of supreme power in the port's affairs have to be checked, more funds are still required and a far greater degree of co-operation from the Administration; but the port of Tel Aviv is to-day an established fact of primary importance that cannot be blinked.

The Cultural and Spiritual Spheres.

AESTHETICALLY the greatest Jewish achievement of recent years in Palestine, the Symphony Orchestra, continued its pheno-

menal record in the past year. Like the Tel Aviv Port it encountered difficulties not all of which were foreseen. Some of its leading players were successfully wooed by great orchestras in America which offered them salaries three and four times higher than those which the Palestine Orchestra could afford. (The maximum is £16 per month). Their permanent conductor, Steinberg, was also attracted to America. Some of the individual members of the Orchestra found difficulty in integrating themselves into the life of the Yishuv, and the Orchestra authorities apparently failed to encourage them in this direction. But despite certain criticism to which these conditions gave rise, the Orchestra continued to be the object of an extraordinary love and devotion on the part of the public, and the demand for tickets during the winter season was so great that additional concerts had to be arranged. Furthermore, a series of summer concerts was held. Nor was the Orchestra's popularity confined to Palestine; both in Egypt, to which it paid two visits, and Beirut, it was warmly acclaimed. This year again, Hübnerman, who fathered it, and Tubescanini, who brilliantly started it on its career, visited Palestine and appeared with it. So, too, did the great British conductor, Malcolm Sargent, and others.

Another musical development of profound interest, and one that may reverberate in due course throughout the world was the establishment in Palestine of the World Centre for Jewish Music, the fruit of long years of planning by prominent Jewish musicians and critics gathered here from all parts of the world. Under its auspices research is being encouraged, special musical programmes are being performed and a journal published in several languages.

Music, though the principal, is not the only living art of Palestine. One of the striking new buildings being constructed in Tel Aviv is the theatre of the Habima, which is due to be completed in a few months. It rises on a knoll in the midst of what

is to be the civic centre of the city. The Habima Company was away from Palestine during a great part of the year, touring the capitals of Europe to make the money required to complete the building. During this time, the second principal theatrical company, the Ohel, was notably active, and performed a number of new plays of outstanding merit. A third company, composed primarily of former German actors, continued to stage occasional translated plays.

For years the Yishuv, partly out of a misplaced sense of patriotism, accepted the artistic pabulum offered it without much criticism of its intrinsic merit. Gradually, and principally during the past year, this attitude has been undergoing a healthy change. More expert criticism is now being offered. The press gives greater space to artistic and cultural problems and the people who fill it are recognised authorities in those branches. Many of them are German immigrants who have hitherto been silent for lack of knowledge of Hebrew. But it reflects not only the growth of a sound body of critics, but also maturity on the part of the public which recognises that the time has passed when every creation or production must be applauded because it is Hebrew art, irrespective of its real worth.

Education and Sport.

IN addition to music and the drama continued cultural progress was indicated during the year in eight exhibitions by Palestine artists, in the publication of new Hebrew books in all branches of science, art, politics, and fiction, in the reprint of classical works of Jewish scholarship in a Hebrew Book Exhibition, in the extension of the Tel Aviv art museum, and in the enlargement of the New Bezalel School of Art and Crafts in Jerusalem.

In May of this year the education controversy reached its peak: whether, and if so to what extent, the Palestine educational system was to be controlled by political parties. It was a bitter argument, and has not yet been settled. Yet that was not the only contribution

to educational progress. Four new schools were opened, including a technical school and a farm school for orthodox children from Germany, a section in Agricultural Mechanics was opened at the Haifa Technical Institute, the foundation stone of a new wing was laid in the faculty of Jewish Studies at the Hebrew University, the great Medical School of the University was brought within a stage of completion, evening courses for adults and working youth in a variety of subjects were continued and extended in all the cities, 22 graduates obtained their Master or Doctorate degrees at the Hebrew University.

In face of the difficult prevailing conditions, it would not have been surprising had some of the numerous Hebrew newspapers in Palestine been forced to close down. Yet not only did that not happen, but another daily was added to the existing three, namely, Hazofe, the organ of the Mizrahi Party. Recalling the distinguished history of the Hebrew press in Palestine, the 75th anniversary of the appearance of the first Hebrew paper — *Halevanon* — was celebrated during the year with an exhibition that traced the growth of the press from its infancy. During this year, too, *Haaretz*, one of the best and most respected of the Hebrew organs, observed its twentieth anniversary.

Sporting events of interest also marked this year. The international Maccabiad could not be held, but an outstanding local Maccabee rally was held, the champion Hakoah Football Club toured Palestine — a few weeks before catastrophe overtook Austrian Jewry — Greek football and swimming teams visited Palestine, and a Palestine swimming team toured Egypt. Yachting was given a fillip in Tel Aviv with the increasing "sea-consciousness" of Tel Aviv Jewry, and a new Jewish Yacht Club was founded in Haifa.



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Finally the Jewish Maritime League blossomed out from a body of a few thousand strong into one of over 12,000 members, while the pioneer Zebulun Seafaring Society added more boats and more trainees to its fine record of activity.

Life is stronger than death; and in Palestine life is not only a matter of the present, it is an unshakeable confidence also in the future. That is why terrorism and outrage, tragic and heartbreaking as they are, cannot dam the normal flow of life nor bar the road to progress.

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