

A LETTER *from* ERETZ ISRAEL

(From Our Own Correspondent).

Jerusalem, 21st September, 1937.

HA'AZINU LEKOL YERUSHALAIM.

"Give ear to the voice of Jerusalem." The classical phrase is a much better opening for the Hebrew part of the Palestine broadcasting programme than the controversial "Eretz Israel calling." It is a great pity that the broadcasting station at Ramallah, near Jerusalem, is not powerful enough for long distance reception, for there is probably not a single country in the world in which there are not Jews who would eagerly listen in to "the voice of Jerusalem." The Palestine programmes have always to be divided into three distinct entities, Hebrew, Arabic and English. Apart from the news, which is given in all the three languages, the rest of the time might be allotted to three different countries, so distinct are the programmes. And even the news is not always given in the same form in the three languages. The proceedings of the Zurich Congress, for example, were given in much greater detail in Hebrew than in Arabic or English.

The Hebrew programme, which we are here concerned with, raises a very interesting problem. On Friday nights the week's Haftorah is given at 7.55 p.m., that is after Sabbath is already in. The reading is usually rendered by Dr. Itzhak Epstein, in his accurate and beautiful accent, and it is listened to by thousands who otherwise would not hear the Haftorah read from one year's end to the other. Yet, according to the strictly orthodox, one may not switch on the radio on Sabbath. I have put the question to many orthodox Jews—is not the transgression of small account when compared with the good done, from the orthodox point of view, by having the Haftorah heard by so many who never even enter a synagogue? My question has never been squarely faced. The Din is quoted to me, but . . . and the "but" trails away into silence.

This week's programme, owing to the High Festivals, has been particularly interesting. On Friday, apart from the usual Bible reading, there was a reading of Hebrew poetry. On Saturday a series of cantoral songs by Ephraim Abileah, with the composer himself at the piano, followed by a selection of Oriental Hebrew music by Ezra Aharon and his group, who have made themselves specialists in this subject. This Oriental Hebrew music approximates to other Oriental music in that rhythm rather than melody is stressed. Persons qualified to judge say that nevertheless there are great differences between the Hebrew music and the other Oriental music, and they expect Palestine one day to produce a synthesis between the latter and Western music. On Sunday the programme opened with a children's hour in Hebrew. Then, as it was Erev Yom Tov, Dr. Epstein gave a reading from the Tannach appropriate to the occasion, and this was followed by a Chazan and choir rendering (from records) R'tze Bimnuhateinu, Kvodo Malei Olam and Adon Olam. In addition a reading of Hebrew poetry was given. On Monday a special arrangement was given of Chassidic Succoth melodies. To-night (Tuesday) the ordinary musical programme is given to items of Jewish interest—song fragments from The Song of Solomon, by G. Hamburg, and Hebrew Melody No. 2 by Joachim. To-morrow there will be a selection of popular Hebrew tunes and Ashkenazic Succoth melodies as well as a talk on Hebrew Poets in America. On Thursday, which ends our broadcasting week, there will be given book reviews in Hebrew and a newly composed song by Ephraim Goldstein.

With all this and more (for in addition there are sports talks in Hebrew) in one-third of the hours between 5.30 p.m. and 11 p.m. during which Palestine is on the air, one may speculate on the possibilities of the exclusively Jewish broadcasting station which without a doubt will be set up in a Jewish State. The subject, however, is too large for treatment here. People are nevertheless thinking about it, and I may return to it in a future letter.

POSITION OF AGRICULTURAL COLONISATION.

The Report of the Jewish Agency to the recent Congress on agricultural colonisation for the years 1935-37 has just been released in Jerusalem. Its dedication is in itself a history of the work and struggle of two generations:—

To the First Ploughmen—the "Bilu" Pioneers on the Fiftieth Anniversary of their Settlement.

The Colonisers of the Jordan Wastes and Those Who Converted the Wilderness into Goodly Meadows on their Twenty-Fifth Anniversary.

The Men Who Reclaimed and Settled the Harod Swamps on Completing their Fifteenth Year.

The Settlers of the Kishon Area on their Tenth Anniversary.

The Men Who are Reviving Emek Hefer, Beisan and the Shores of the Yarmuk, the Yokneam Hills and Emek Zebulun on Settling in a Year of Bloodshed and Stress.

Courage and Fraternal Greetings!

The Report commences by recording the destruction of 100,000 citrus trees, 70,000 fruit trees and 75,000 forest trees and the firing of 20,000 dunams of cereals. But—the Agricultural Census for 1936 shows that of a total Jewish population then of 404,000, there were 98,303 persons, or 24 per cent. of the total Yishuv, resident in 203 rural centres, as compared with 30,329 in 120 rural centres out of a total Jewish population of 150,000, or 20 per cent., in 1927.

The most urgent task in the period under review has been the occupation of remote areas in the Beisan and Jordan Valleys previously acquired but for various reasons not settled. To ensure speedy occupation only nucleus groups took up holdings, at Tel Amal, Kibbutz Hassadeh and Beit Yoseph. For these £P.38,500 was budgetted for 1936 and 1937, of which one-third was contributed by the Keren Kayemeth, the remainder to be

(Continued on next page.)

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smoke?"

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LETTER FROM ERETZ ISRAEL.

(Continued from Previous Page).

given from funds collected by the Keren Hayesod in South Africa. In this connection the Report adds:—

"To our friends and supporters in South Africa, and those of them who are now in Eretz Israel, who showed such great awareness of the situation and assisted in financing the occupation of the Beisan area, a great part of this undertaking, we offer our profound gratitude, and express the hope that in joy they shall reap that which was sowed in a period of difficulty and stress."

In an appendix the Report gives a complete list of the agricultural settlements with the date of their establishment and the number of their inhabitants at the end of 1936. The oldest of them all is Mikveh Israel, the agricultural school founded as long ago as 1870; it now has a population of 474. There is then a gap of eight years, after which Petah Tikva, now the largest of the settlements, with 15,000 inhabitants, was founded. Four years later came Rishon-le-Zion (5,461 inhabitants), Nes Ziona (1,438), Zikhron Yacob (1,080 with its daughter settlements), and Rosh Pinah (381). In the following two years three more were founded, then a further gap of five years, after which seven colonies were established in the space of four years. One of these, however, Ein Zeitim in Upper Galilee is now uninhabited, while a second, Kfar Saba, at first failed and had to be resettled in 1909. It is now flourishing, with a population of over 3,000. In each of the years 1894, '5 and '6 one colony was founded, among them being Metullah, the northernmost of the Jewish settlements, whose position is responsible for the inclusion within the Palestine boundaries of the long spur running into Syria. Beer Tuvia, founded in 1896, was destroyed in the riots of 1929, but rebuilt the following year. The last of the colonies to be established in the nineteenth century was Ilania (Sejera), in Lower Galilee, which suffered frequent attacks in the riots of 1936.

The new century saw three new settlements in 1902, one in 1904 and one in 1907. Then there was a burst of activity, with twenty new places in the years 1908-13. These include Ben Shemen (which at first failed and was re-established in 1921), Hulda (the site of the Herzl Forest), Ruhama (the southernmost settlement, but now abandoned), Karkur (the only agricultural settlement of English Jews) and Dagania A (the forerunner of all the kvutzoth, the communal settlements). And a gap in time, and then, at first slowly, soon with accelerating tempo, unceasing activity. In the years 1918-20 three new villages appeared, in 1921 five, in 1922 twelve. Four in 1933, six in 1934, twelve again in 1935. The maximum was reached in the years 1932 and 1933, when 45 new points of settlement were occupied. Even the 1936 revolt could not hold up development. In that year eight new colonies were founded, while 1937 has given its answer with eleven so far.

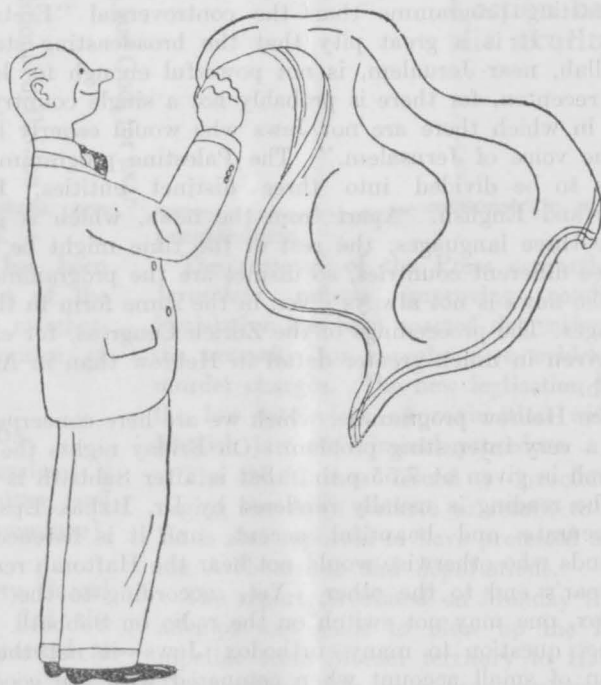
MARKING TIME.

Palestine in general is marking time. This is why a full half of the week's letter can be devoted to such a quiet subject as broadcasting, and almost all the second half to an account of the *past* of Jewish agricultural settlement. Unfortunately, it appears as if we shall have to mark time for a long period. Until the fate of the country is settled—and this depends for the time being on forces outside Palestine—no important schemes of development are being put in hand. Meanwhile we are reading first the summaries, then as they arrive the complete reports of the debates at Geneva and the various official publications. The very latest to arrive is the volume containing the minutes of evidence heard at the public sessions of the Royal Commission. The volume, published by His Majesty's Stationery Office in London at £1 15s., has only this afternoon reached Palestine. It contains 400 foolscap pages of close print. It is impossible here and now to give any adequate picture of its contents, except to mention that it gives a verbatim report of the evidence

submitted (apart from that given in camera) by Government officials, representatives of the Jewish Agency, Vaad Leumi, Agudath Israel, and other Jewish bodies, representatives of the Arabs, and (given in London) by Mr. Jabotinsky and Colonel Josiah Wedgwood, and of the cross examination of the witnesses by the members of the Commission.

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