

# A LETTER from ERETZ ISRAEL

(From Our Own Correspondent).

Tel-Aviv, 15th November, 1939.

## WINTER RAINS.

People abroad are usually surprised to hear that Palestine has a heavy rainfall—on the average as heavy as England's. What is strange is that people in Palestine appear to be surprised, too. The dry summer is so long that they forget how devastating the winter rains can be. Not that there is no warning of the change. The days have been becoming noticeably shorter. But the change is announced in a peculiar fashion—by a heat wave, a dry, breathless wind from the desert, against which it is advisable to close all the doors and windows as tightly as possible. It lasts for about three days, breaking in torrential rains—and summer has passed suddenly into winter.

The immediate effects are to be seen in flooded houses, for most building in Palestine is done in summer and the thoughtless architect sometimes provides unprotected basements and always provides balconies designed, deliberately apparently, to guide the gathering water into the rooms. Rainpipes, their purpose forgotten during the summer, and allowed to become choked up, overflow and the water seeps through the flat roofs, which, again, having been built in summer, are rarely completely watertight.

From the window of the room I am writing in, overlooking the sea at Tel-Aviv, I can see the effects of the first rains and the heavy wind which always accompanies rain in Palestine. Windows have been broken, the canvas roofs of refreshment huts ripped away, huts themselves blown off their foundations, and one of the two abandoned steamers which brought illegal immigrants a few months ago has heeled over still further so that soon the pounding surf will lay it altogether on its side. The hands of a clock jutting out from a neighbouring hotel have disappeared in the wind.

Damage like this is done every year, and still the people of Palestine seem unable to remind themselves in the long, dry summer months that the winter rains are torrential and are always accompanied by destructive winds.

The rains also have a peculiar effect on the people themselves. All through the summer they talk of the heat, say they are tired of the perpetually cloudless sky, wish for the relief of a downpour. Yet when it comes at last they are miserable if it lasts longer than a few hours. I am sure that a graph of family quarrels in Palestine would show its peak on the second day of rain, remaining at that level until the clouds disappear. Continuous heat is said to make people enervated. If that is so then the so-called sub-tropical climate of Palestine is not hot enough, for nobody can say that the people of Tel-Aviv lack energy, even during the humid summer. What the climate does do is to keep up their spirit, through riots and economic distress, anxiety for Jews abroad and uncertainty of the future. The virtue, I am convinced, is in the sunshine, and this is borne out by the drop in optimism that becomes visible if rain lasts longer than a day.

## MR. PINCHAS RUTENBERG.

Pinchas Rutenberg, unanimously elected President of the Vaad Leumi, the governing body of the Yishuv, has taken on himself an unenviable task. These last few days I have had the opportunity of watching him at work. This morning, for example, he was already at work at seven o'clock, interviewing people at breakfast. He had with him a representative of the Tel-Aviv Houseowners' Association. Waiting for him were the Manager of Tel-Aviv Port, the Secretary of the Jewish Farmers' Association, and a delegation of workers. He has to induce the Yishuv to accept the newly announced "Emergency Tax"—in effect an unofficial income tax—on top of all their other financial burdens and with a Government income tax in the offing. He has to adjust the claims of the various opposing interests in the Yishuv on the proceeds of the Emergency Tax even before it has been collected. He has to persuade the teachers to remain at work even though they have not yet been paid their Sep-

tember salaries. He has to beg the organized citrus workers to suspend picketing the groves of those owners who insist on employing low-paid non-organized labour, while simultaneously begging the latter to join the general labour exchanges and the owners to use the labour exchanges. He has to treat with the Revisionists to shoulder the common burdens while enjoying the common benefits of living in the Yishuv. He has to cajole hard-headed and short-sighted Jewish importers to use Tel-Aviv Port in spite of the inducements which the—temporarily—repentant Jaffa Port is now offering. Leadership in Jewry is the hardest of tasks and whether Rutenberg succeeds or not, he is a brave man for undertaking it.

The Revisionists have so far consented to come back to the fold as to be allotted £P.500 from the Kofer Harishuv, the Defence Fund, for consolidating the defences of Tel-Zur, their settlement in the Sharon. Hitherto they have boycotted the fund. Now, although not yet paying direct contributions, they have agreed to pay the indirect contributions such as additions to bus fares, entertainment tickets, etc. As they identify themselves more closely with the burdens they will benefit more accordingly.

## DISAPPOINTMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT.

In spite of its grave immediate preoccupations, the Yishuv does not forget the main purpose of its being, to create a National Home for the Jewish people. It is therefore disappointed with the new announcement which provides for 300 immigration certificates for the coming six months, all to be allotted to non-Jews. This exclusion of Jews from the immigration schedule, for the first time since the establishment of the mandatory regime, is nonetheless disappointing for its having been foreshadowed last July by the Colonial Secretary as the Government's reply to the illegal immigration of the several months preceding the war. It is felt in the Yishuv that however justified, according to its own lights, the Government may have been then in its efforts to enforce the law, circumstances have now changed. Illegal immigration is now virtually an impossibility, and the Government is still pledged to its undertaking, given in the White Paper of last May, to recognise in Palestine a home for 75,000 more refugees. Some of these might have been allowed in under the new schedule.

Disappointment in one direction is balanced by achievement in another. Figures just published show that the Keren Kayemeth has been able to buy much more land in the year ended September than in the preceding year and nearly four times the area bought three years ago. In the year 5697 (1936/37) 13,507 dunams of land were acquired, in 1937/38 35,638 dunams, and in 1938/39 51,870 dunams, a total of 101,015 dunams in three years of serious disturbance.

It is instructive to compare the relative proportions of Jewish land in national and in private ownership. In 1914 the total area of land in Palestine owned by Jews was 418,100 dunams of which only 16,400 dunams belonged to the Keren Kayemeth, or 4%. (In these and the following figures only land held outright is considered; concession areas are excluded.) In 1927 total Jewish holdings were 864,700 dunams; Keren Kayemeth's 196,700, or 23%. In 1932 the figures rose to 1,007,500 and 296,900, the Keren Kayemeth's share being 29%. By March, 1936, this increased to 30% 364,700 out of 1,231,800 dunams. In September, 1939, Jews held altogether 1,356,200 dunams, of which the Keren Kayemeth held 471,100, or 35%. In the three and a half years between March, 1936, and September, 1939, private Jewish persons bought only 18,000 dunams, while the Keren Kayemeth redeemed 106,400 dunams.

The comparison is significant. Nobody would decry the value of private effort towards the building of the National Home. But that effort inevitably falls away in times of difficulty, whereas the national effort shows its strength just in difficult times. It is only the national funds that can be relied on as the sure basis of our work.

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# THE CAPE ELECTRIC TRAMWAYS LTD.

(Registered in England)

## Extracts from the Chairman's address at the Annual Meeting held on the 13th of December, 1939:—

Gentlemen,—Before formally moving the adoption of the report and accounts and before turning to certain aspects of your Company's business during the period under review, I feel bound to refer to general conditions overseas which have affected your Company's business—commencing with the crisis in September, 1938, and culminating in the declaration of war against Germany by the Union Government on the 6th September, 1939. It was during September last year that shipments of trackless trams commenced to be made from England. Happily nothing occurred then or in subsequent months to interfere with their delivery, and in March we received shipments of omnibuses for Port Elizabeth safely. I can assure shareholders that during that period your Directors experienced considerable anxiety. All this valuable equipment was on the high seas at a time of grave uncertainty, and it was a great relief when we were able to place our vehicles in commission. We were fortunate too that freights and war risk insurance did not rise to any appreciable extent, so that the average cost of the new vehicles under that heading was not unduly increased.

### AN EXCELLENT YEAR OF PROGRESS.

Turning briefly to the accounts before you, you will have noted that the net profit for the year was £30,423 8s. 8d., compared with £29,182 9s. 2d. last year.

The accounts reveal that the dividends received from the subsidiary companies were slightly less than those received last year. However, your Company had no expenses this year in respect of the cost of registration, etc., of the debenture issue which had to be borne last year, and the general administration expenses of your Company this year show a slight reduction.

The profits of the subsidiary companies, viz. £35,452 18s. 1d., represent the net profit for those companies after providing for debenture interest, full and adequate depreciation of assets and all other charges required by statute and by the agreement with the Municipality of Cape Town.

### VISION AND FORESIGHT.

Your Directors, as pointed out in the report, in view of the profits earned, the increasing operating difficulties arising out of the international situation, and the financial position of your undertaking, do not feel justified in recommending the payment of a higher dividend.

Speaking at the luncheon given last February to commemorate the change over from rail cars to trackless trams, which took place on the 29th January this year, His Worship the Mayor, Mr. W. C. Foster, in proposing the principal toast, stated: "While the City of Cape Town has marched with the times, has extended its boundaries and kept pace with modern developments, the Tramway Companies have not lagged behind, but have, by a vigorous policy dictated and characterised by vision and foresight, developed their undertaking hand in hand with the progress of the city they have served." He went on to say that "the arrangement entered into between the Council and the Company embodies a system of qualified municipal partnership, and achieves the maximum of reconciliation between economic soundness and protection of public interests. "It is," he went on, "a model of co-operative endeavour and it is in the best interests of those whom the Council represents, and whom the Companies, as public transport utility undertakings, serve."

I think that shareholders can congratulate themselves that such excellent relations exist between the Corporation and the Company.

### APPRECIATION AND THANKS.

In conclusion I must again refer to the excellent relations both in Cape Town and Port Elizabeth between the Companies and their employees. The Industrial Councils set up in both centres continue to function well. The Industrial Council in Cape Town is still under the chairmanship of one of your Directors, Mr. David Eadie, who from its inception has carried out his duties in that capacity very ably. Your Directors appreciate the work of your secretary, Mr. Montgomery, who has continued to act as secretary of the Industrial Council during the year.

The Board's thanks are due to Mr. A. C. Fenwick, General Manager of Cape Town and Port Elizabeth; Mr. J. L. Probit, General Manager of Charabancs Ltd., and to the respective staffs.

I now formally move that the report of the Directors together with the annexed statement of accounts as at 30 June, 1939, as submitted to shareholders, be and are hereby adopted.

## A LETTER FROM ERETZ ISRAEL—(Continued from page 919)

### THE PALESTINE ORCHESTRA.

The fourth series of concerts by the Palestine Orchestra has now taken place. It is the Yishuv's pride that its cultural activities continue in spite of all the handicaps. Brought together from all over the world by Huberman's great efforts only four years ago, the Orchestra can now be reckoned as one of the best in the world, and although for this season it will not have the benefit of playing under the batons of some of the greatest of conductors it is nevertheless being supported by the Yishuv in the determination to keep intact all that has already been created. Local conductors will have the privilege of directing the Orchestra, the first being Mr. Crawford McNair, the head of the Palestine Broadcasting Service, but Huberman himself has promised to come to Palestine specially to give concerts in each of the three towns. The Orchestra has become the passion of his life. Colonel Kisch, who was to have brought a personal greeting from Huberman to the first concert, was unable to do so as he has rejoined the Army.

### BEZALEL MUSEUM.

From time to time I have described the exhibitions organised by the Bezalel Museum in Jerusalem before each of the Holy Days of objects relating to each particular festival. The same enterprising curator has now arranged an exhibition singularly appropriate to the times. It illustrates the life of Polish Jews, their history, the part they played in the struggle for Polish liberation, their houses, their ancient wooden synagogues, the way they observed their festivals, their learning. Some of the exhibits are now rare, notably the coloured prints of over a hundred years ago and old domestic and synagogal utensils. As in Germany, many objects of great Jewish historical value have now been destroyed in Poland. It is a pity that they were short-

sightedly not sent to Palestine for preservation in institutions like the Bezalel Museum, the Tel-Aviv Art Gallery or the University and National Library in Jerusalem.

### OIL PLANT AT HAIFA.

Accelerated progress, due to the war, is reported from Haifa, where the oil plant of the Consolidated Refineries Ltd. extending over 360 acres have completed part of their construction programme a year in advance of scheduled time. Until now the crude oil has been pumped from the pipe line from Iraq straight on to tankers in Haifa harbour. Now benzine and fuel oil are to be produced here. Three thousand men, Jews and Arabs, have been working to get this part of the refineries finished. But it is a comment on the present state of employment that there were 15,000 applicants for the 3,000 jobs.

Evidence of Jewish development is also shown in recent figures for milk production. Jewish farms which produced 130,000 litres of milk in 1921 now produce 35 million litres a year. Of this 27 million litres are sold and 8 million consumed on the farms. A full two-thirds is marketed through Tnuvah, a co-operative for the sale of the products of the Labour settlements, with up-to-date pasteurization plants in Tel-Aviv, Haifa and Jerusalem.

### SHOP SIGN IN "ENGLISH."

In the old days the pleasure of walking through the streets of Tel-Aviv was always added to by the shop signs in English. It is a long time now since the fun has been improved out of existence. But yesterday I was delighted to see a restaurant announcing "Fright Liver." I wonder what it was that so upset the poor chicken.