"H A Q I Q A T A L A M R"

Two years of publication

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The Histadrut's Arabic weekly "Haqiqat al Amr" began publication in March 1937. To mark the paper's first anniversary, a small celebration was held at which a number of itsArabic readers were present. In the course of a speech, one of them said: "The paper is now a year old. During that year, its readers, hungry for objective news, have read with interest the information provided by the paper, which is not to be found in any other Arabic paper in this country. This is the reason for the paper's wide circulation which has been achieved despite the very great obstacles which it has had to contend with and the terrorism which is rampant in Palestine. "Haqiqat al-Amr" is unique in that it gives information about the workers' movement in this and other countries and defends the rights of the workers, encouraging them to organise and unite within the framework of "el Histadrut". The paper also contains stories which give food for thought and stimulate the interest. Every thinking Arab who reads the paper cannot but be struck by the distorted information which is published about them by their enemies. The attitude of "Haqiqat al-Amr" which is intent on presenting the truth cannot but be appreciated by every honest Arab. The paper is of great value to the Jewish people serving as it does as a messenger of peace between the two peoples. It is no way slurs over Jewish aims in Palestine: on the contrary it puts them very clearly and is thus able to counteract the false conception which the enemies of the Jews are at pains to implant in the minds of the Arabs. The paper makes a point of explaining and giving information about Jewish achievements for the rehabilitation of Palestineand calls upon the Arabs to co-operate in this task of revitalising the country after long years of neglect. "Haqiqat al-Amr", which is a Jewish paper, has as its goal the creation of mutual understanding between Arabs and Jews and is primarily concerned with the interests of all the inhabitants of Palestine. - As such, the paper has my best wishes for continued success in the future."

Since that speech was made over a year has gone by. During that period the Arab terror reached its peak, gaining at times almost complete hold of the Arab masses and leaving hardly any Arab family untouched. Palestinian Arab journalists who in earlier days had been anxious to demonstrate their dog-like fidelity to the heads of the terror, were considered unreliable by them because of their past affiliations and were forced to flee the country. Their papers were then taken over by the terrorists. During the first two years of the disturbances, the Arab opposition forces were still able to make themselves heard; however, during this last year, they have been almost completely deprived of any platform from which to express their views. To-day it is not the editorial pen which calls the tune in the Arabic press, but revolvers directed from the hills of A-Zog. Every thinking Arab has been caught in the net of fear and intimidation, and anyone suspected of having opposition sympathies lays himself open to victimisation. In addition every private individual has been the object of a widespread system of spying and all his actions have been carefully scutinised. During the past year the editors received a number of letters from readers who had previously asked for the paper to be sent to them, in which they either hinted or stated openly that the fact of their receiving the paper was dangerous.

Letters of this kind were, however, the exception. During the second year of its publication the paper's circulation was reduced from 3,000 to 2,200, as a result of the cessation of contact in a number of places between Jewish settlements and the neighbouring Arab villages, as Arab labour and mixed Jewish and Arab labour by Jewish employers was discontinued. In every place where it was possible to keep in touch with the paper's readers through the post or by some other means, its circulation was not only maintained but actually increased. This did not hold good of Nazareth, the sole exception, where a thorough boycott was organised, but not with 100% success. In the case of Nablus, the paper had a very different reception. After attempts had been made by the editors to reduce the number of copies distributed in the town, a special messenger was sent from there to the editors to express the readers' dissatisfaction. As a result, the original number of copies was once again sent.

The paper is distributed in every Arab town in Palestine and in some two hundred Arab villages. This is a really large figure, especially when it is remembered that in the whole of Palestine there are no more than three hundred Arab villages which have schools and that the remaining villages are for the most part extremely poor, with a small population which is entirely an-alphabet.

The terrorists had resort to all possible means in their attempt to force the paper to cease publication. The railwaymen came in for their special attentions, since they are strongly organised and are in close contact with their Jewish fellow-workers. "Haqiqat al-Amr" can only be read surreptiously and has then to be torn up. Despite these unfavourable circumstances, a number of Jewish railwaymen regularly distribute the paper among their Arab fellow-workers. - The Arab village of Migdal-Gat, a workers' stronghold, still receives scores of copies. - Not very long ago, the editors received a letter from Kiryat Anavim, which had not long previously recommenced distributing the paper in the neighbouring rural district after a year's break. The letter contained the following interesting information: "The interest in and demand for your paper in our neighbourhood have increased considerably recently, and I could easily distribute from 20 - 25 copies a week ..... I have known this young Arab for some time now. He reads the paper regularly and makes a habit of reading it out to others." Of interest, too, is the following extract from a letter from Jebel Druze: "After reading the biassed newspapers whose purpose is to incite and inflame their readers, it is a real pleasure to read "Haqiqat al-Amr" and to read it out to others....." Not very long ago, our representative in Damascus was approached by a business-man from Saudia, the chief town in Jebel Druze, with the proposition to take over the agency for the paper, seeing that there was such great interest in it.

The constant and regular appearance of the paper, its attractive format, the purity of its style and language, which is at the same time simple and direct, the prominence given to every important occurence affecting Palestine or of general interest -- these qualities have enabled the paper to withstand all terrorist attempts to cause it to cease publication. There is no denying, however, that the alienation of the two sections of the population as a result of the prolonged bloodshed and armed antagonism, has made the task of distributing the paper an extremely difficult one. In spite of this, there are grounds for

believing that the paper is paving its way towards future stability and a settled circulation. For close on two years, the decision to silence the Jewish paper has failed miserably, except insofar as the Government was concerned (to our regret, the paper was banned by the Railway Department) and finally the attempts to prevent the paper from appearing were abandoned altogether.

With the increase of the internal Arab terror and the intensification of propaganda from A-Zog, "Haqiqat al-Amr" initiated a special new section intended to show up what was really happening in the terrorist camp and to throw into relief the reverse side of the "nationalist" medal as far as the Arab rebellion was concerned. By using extreme caution and by having recourse to information from a number of reliable sources in Palestine itself, in Syria and in the Lebanon, the paper was able to show what was happening behind the scenes among the leaders of the Arab nationalist movement. The paper's Arab readers read with amazement information of this kind which revealed to them the real aspect of the Arab rebellion and gave unhesitant expression to the spontaneous feelings which every honest-thinking man harboured in his heart. After the unsuccessful attempts to prevent the paper from appearing altogether, the rebel leaders were compelled to cancel their vow to "strike the paper into silence". At first an announcement was made denying the lying information published "by a certain source", that the bands were breaking up. Subsequently the paper described what had been going on as between the terrorist gang-leaders themselves. This resulted in the cancellation of the vow not to refer to the paper by name. Evidence that the paper succeeded in reaching a certain number of Arabs was supplied by the second denouncement of "Haqiqat al-Amr" by the terrorists. The supreme commander, Aref Abdul Razzek, writes: "I cannot understand how the Arab people does not detect the lies which are published by it and its supporters in Damascus and Beirut." (This last allusion is to the members of the opposition who had fled from Palestine). Which is as much as to say that Alef Abdul Razzek is surprised at the confidence placed by the "Arab people" in the paper.

The above announcement by the "Rebel Commander" testifies to the value of an Arabic paper and furnishes the reply to those who were doubtful both of the possibilities of publishing it at a time when relations between the two peoples were strained and of the possibility of it having any influence on its Arab readers. Certainly, the importance of the paper in general should not be exaggerated; neither should undue emphasis be placed on the influence of a paper which one people publishes for its neighbour for the purpose of propaganda in days of strained relations. On the other hand the Arab terrorists are not only fighting to impose their will on the Arabs, but to dominate them completely. With the aid of revolvers, bombs and lying propaganda they are attempting to win over the Arab masses and to form a single party to include all the Arabs in Palestine. With this end in view, they have stopped up all sources of information save their own; and as there is not a single Arab in Palestine who would dare to make a stand against this totalitarian domination, any means by which the Jewish community can get into contact with those Arabs who have remained less affected by the terrorist poison, is of special value, even though its effects may be felt among a relatively small section of the community. It should be pointed out here that there is no truth whatsoever in the insinuation made by Aref Abdul Razzek that the paper is accepted

by the Opposition Party. This hint, it would appear, is in reality intended for the terrorists, for a cry of "Shame on you" would have no affect at all on the Opposition. It is indeed an encouraging sign if the paper has succeeded in influencing the terrorist henchmen. For "Haqiqat al-Amr" has always taken a strong and uncompromising line against the terror, denouncing the abomination of the murders and other "fine deeds" perpetrated by Aref and his band (for example, the paper made a very striking case by giving a detailed account of the murder of Hassan Sidki Dajani). In addition, the paper's policy has been ruthlessly to attack the perversion of nationalism by the terrorist bands, to demand the cessation of the ruination of Palestine and its Arab inhabitants and to give every support to the desire for peace and construction. As an indication of the attitude of the paper's readers, the following case is typical: at the time when the conflict between Fakri Nashashibi and his opponents was at its height, the editors received a complaint from one of the supporters of the Husseinis in Jerusalem, to the effect that the paper had on one occasion - inadvertently, it would appear - attributed to Fakri some title which appeared to the correspondent as being inconsistent with the titles given to the Mufti in the columns of the paper. It should be mentioned that the paper always goes out of its way to preserve a strictly non-party attitude in such matters, without, of course, offending customary Arab usage.

Before concluding it is worth while mentioning a technical point which is nevertheless an important one as far as the paper's success is concerned. The actual size of the paper - its format - is too small and is, psychologically, a disadvantage. The Arab reader has been spoiled by the large sheets of the Arab press and he is inclined to judge the paper's importance by the size of its sheets. Having become used to the propadandist papers, cleverly set up to suit his taste, our own small paper is at a disadvantage, especially as it is, after all, a "small voice crying in the wilderness". Because the paper has succeeded during the two years of its publication, it is essential to increase its format at the earliest opportunity. British policy in Palestine is an other urgent reason for leaving no stone unturned in our efforts to increase the paper's circulation and to break through to the Arab masses at all costs, and by giving it a more usual outer form there is greater likelihood of its contents obtaining a hearing.