

JERUSALEM DIARY

By David Dainow

A Group

UNANNOUNCED, unexpected and uninvited I came across them—fifty splendid types of agricultural workers, men and women.

I was shown over the Agricultural Research Station at Rehoboth the other day. My guide was Mr. S. Zemach. I first met him in South Africa during his short visit some three years ago. Zemach, an expert agriculturist, is in charge of the extensive division of the School of Agriculture under the auspices of the Hebrew University and the Research Station of the Jewish Agency.

These fifty workers from the settlements had come to Rehoboth for an intensive fortnight's training in a branch of agriculture affecting their daily work. I found them a happy lot, quietly intent on the lectures given them by the finest agronomists in the country, and there are many excellent ones here.

The visitors are housed and fed in the Station during their stay. No publicity is given them or the courses, but they are of vital importance. This typifies the quiet but determined way in which the Yishuv is educating its sons and daughters to become expert agricultural workers.

A short stay with this band of enthusiasts, with a strange light in their eyes, is almost an assurance of the successful future of agricultural Palestine.

A Chalutz of Science

Do you know that there are approximately four hundred thousand dunams of waste soil in the Jordan Valley? Do you know that they have not been cultivated for thousands of years? Are you aware that in a small section of this waste land a good quality of cucumbers, tomatoes, potatoes and other vegetables now grow, and that wheat and barley can be produced?

I was at the Agricultural Research Station at Rehoboth and had a long talk with Dr. S. Ravikovitch, its soil-chemist. From him I learned that redundant salt in the soil of the Jordan Valley is being washed off through a process discovered at the Station. It is now being ploughed for the first time in centuries. I have seen photographs of the desert land before the experiment was made. Then I was shown photographs of the land after all the necessary salts had been withdrawn. I have seen the products and tasted some of them; they are excellent. It is an amazing and romantic story of a successful agricultural experiment.

What does it all mean? It means this—that a huge unpopulated area hitherto looked upon as waste land has yielded to scientific treatment, and under proper cultivation will produce abundantly in the future. A new chapter in the history of agriculture has been opened. Dr. Ravikovitch does not show any interest in the political implications of the remarkable result of his twenty years' investigation of the Jordan Valley. He keeps on experimenting—a Chalutz of Science, the highest and most unobtrusive kind.

Racing

Recently, the first horse races were held at the newly built "Hippodrome" near Tel-Aviv. There was a large number of "punters" and—lo and behold—a totalisator was in operation—the first ever seen in this country. Some folk regret the introduction of another "evil" of modern city life into Tel-Aviv. Others see in it further

evidence of the growing metropolitanism of the only all-Jewish city in the world.

There is another aspect which should not be forgotten. Horse-breeding is one of the oldest industries in Palestine. Unfortunately, as new industries and agriculture have begun to flourish, the ancient and royal industry of horse-breeding has almost faded out. There is a real danger that the famous Arab horse will die.

Some time ago, the Palestine Government imported Arab stallions from Lady Wentworth's Arabian stud at Crabbet Park, England, to lend them to local breeders to encourage a good type of Arab. As a result of the cross-breeding there is now a big demand for Arab horses, and they fetch a price six times greater than ten years ago. It is hoped by lovers of horses that the introduction of racing on proper lines will re-introduce the old art of horse-breeding in Palestine.

An "Erev" City

There are two brothers in Johannesburg. One is an eye-specialist; the other a solicitor.

The other day, I sat in the small "mayoral parlour" at Rehoboth,—really just a small office—belonging to their uncle, the Mayor of this growing town situated in the best part of Palestine's citrus belt. The Mayor is one of the old pioneers of this village of eleven thousand souls. It is about to become the third Jewish city of Eretz Israel. The first is Tel-Aviv, with an estimated all-Jewish population of two hundred thousand; then there is Petah Tikvah, which has a population of approximately twenty-five thousand. (It recently celebrated its sixty-fifth birthday).

Just fifty-three years ago, a group of Lithuanian and Polish Jews bought a part of land in this area of Rehoboth containing 9,500 dunams. I saw the original title deeds. The price was eleven franks a dunam, then worth about nine shillings. To-day, land in the centre of Rehoboth fetches £1,000 to £1,500 a dunam.

As I walked and rode around Rehoboth and its environs, observing the millions of citrus trees in this highly wooded country, I gave a thought to those hardy pioneers who bought the waste land when there was not a tree for miles around.

Clinics

Passing along Ben Yehuda Street the other day, I was struck by a notice displayed in a little shop window, "Pen Clinic." So I took in my fountain pen, which was slightly "sick," and in a few moments, and for a few piastres, it was "healed."

There is also a "Shirt Repairs Clinic." Another announcement attracting my attention is "Shoes Mended With Good Order." There is a firm which offers you "Underwear Invisibly Corrected," and there is the watch-maker from some East European centre who announces "Clocks Looked Into Monthly."

PNINA SALTZMAN ON TOUR

Pnina Saltzman, after her triumphant success in Johannesburg and the Reef, is now touring the Union. Over 12,000 people attended the local concerts.

She will give performances in Durban, Maritzburg, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, East London, Kingwilliamstown, Grahamstown, Kimberley and Bloemfontein.

FROM TOWN AND COUNTRY

Zionist Activities in Various Centres

Port Elizabeth Wizo

ONLY a year old, the Port Elizabeth Young W.I.Z.O. Group is undoubtedly a model Zionist society. It is one of the most active Zionist bodies in the Union. Formed by Dr. Anni Samuelsdorff in February, 1943, with only nine members, it has now a membership of 34. During the year the Group held 28 general meetings, five committee meetings and five public functions.

Amongst those who addressed the Group during the year were Dr. Anni Samuelsdorff, Dr. Yehuda Kaufman, the Rev. Yesorsky, Mr. I. Goss and Mr. Sidney Berg.

A large range of Zionist and general Jewish topics were dealt with at the meetings of the Group and papers were read on various Zionist notabilities.

The Group has organised Hebrew classes which are conducted by Miss Freda Redhouse. Twelve members have so far enrolled. The Group is reading the Bible and periodical programmes dealing with the Bible will be arranged.

Two parcels of garments made by members of the Group were despatched to Eretz Israel. The first parcel of 49 garments was sent in August and the second parcel, consisting of 42 garments, was sent in December. A third parcel is due to leave shortly. The Group has participated in all Zionist activities in the town, including Liberty Cavalcade, Ralfour Day Tree Drive and Keren Aliyah.

Through the exchange of correspondence, a personal contact has been established with Young W.I.Z.O. in Eretz Israel. Individual members are writing directly to Young W.I.Z.O. members in the Yishuv.

Periodicals and pamphlets are received regularly by the Group from the Youth Department in Jerusalem. These are utilised at meetings and have proved both interesting and instructive.

Young W.I.Z.O. endeavoured to contact members of the forces stationed in Port Elizabeth and two successful functions were held. Pamphlets and booklets were sent to the troops.

The first annual general meeting of the Group was held at the Emmanuel Hall, on the 17th ult., with Miss Phyllis Bergman in the chair.

Miss Bergman paid special tribute to Miss Freda Redhouse, Miss Sally Henen, Miss Gertie Porter and Miss Sylvia Budlender. On behalf of the Group she eulogised the fine services rendered to Zionism in Port Elizabeth by Mr. and Mrs. S. Berg, who are leaving for Palestine shortly. Mrs. Berg was the vice-chairman of the Group.

Mrs. Berg praised the work of the chairman, Miss Phyllis Bergman, and Mr. Berg said that the work of the Group had surpassed his expectations.

Miss Mary Redhouse rendered two violin solos. Miss C. Fainsinger was the accompanist. A feature of the meeting was the cutting of a beautiful birthday cake, to mark the Group's first birthday, and a wonderful display of garments made by members.

Miss P. Bergman was unanimously re-elected chairman. The other members of the committee are Miss Sylvia Budlender (vice-chairman), Miss Sally Henen (treasurer), Mrs. Renee Babrow (secretary), Mesdames Ester Bergman and Mildred Plessner and the Misses Cecile Bergman, Zeldia Myburg, Freda Redhouse, Phyllis Solomon, Miriam Markman and Phyllis Schneider.

Concert in Bethlehem

HUMOUR, music and singing were the features of a highly successful concert, organised by the Bethlehem Zionist Youth Society held recently. A versatile cast, hailing from many parts of the Union, participated. The concert was mainly due to the efforts and unstinting assistance of Mrs. Moshal, of Durban.

Though difficult to distinguish between the talented performers, mention must be made of young Miss Lynette Greenberg, who recently won numerous prizes in a Durban Elsteddfod, and of Charles Cohen, of Johannesburg, who provided most of the humour in addition to participating in numerous other items. Two very youthful performers also deserving praise are Miss Dulcy Dorfan and Master Peter Ditz.

A musical sketch and a one-act play were well appreciated. Characterisations of the four characters in the play were cleverly portrayed by Miss H. Kaplan, and Messrs. C. Cohen, I. Kaplan and B. Rosenberg.

The concert was officially opened by the Rev. Kur, and Mr. R. Rom conducted an American auction.

Roodepoort

THE aims and objects of the Zionist Socialist Party were ably described by Dr. Ellen Hellman at a cultural meeting of the Roodepoort Dorshei Zion Society, held recently. The meeting was held at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. M. Hockman, and Dr. Spiro presided. A vote of thanks to the speaker was proposed by Miss G. Boner, and Dr. Spiro thanked the host and hostess for their hospitality.

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