

Echoes

Jewish Soldiers Use Vatican Press

JERUSALEM, Friday.—Palestinian Jewish troops who found that the Nazis had destroyed the only Hebrew commercial printing-works in Rome were permitted by the Papal authorities to make use of the Vatican Hebrew printing-press, states a report received here. The soldiers wanted to print Hebrew text-books for teaching the language to refugees and the Vatican willingly undertook the job.

A second Hebrew press has been found in an ancient Catholic monastery in Rome, and the Palestinian Jewish servicemen in Italy are now able to produce their paper, "La. Hayal" (For the Soldier), at this work.

★
PAUL A. SMITH, Negro tenor, will direct and sing the major role in Verdi's opera, "Othello," which will shortly be produced in Tel-Aviv.

There were furious rivalries between various dynasties, each competing for the others' following. Chassidic zealots were jealous of the reputations of their rabbis. Fantastic stories were told of the intercessory influence of the rabbis and of their miraculous powers. And it may be said that the superstitions attaching to the Chassidic leaders outweighed in Sholom Aleichem's world the total volume of superstition attaching to every other aspect of Jewish life.

Sholom Aleichem's father, Nohum Vevik Rabinovitch, was himself a follower of the famous Rebbe of Tolne. And yet Nohum Vevik was, by the standards of that time, an enlightened man. We may recall that he ridiculed his relative Lifschitz for believing in a poltergeist. He was a man of considerable reading, a chess-player, and a convert to modern education.

The great Chassidic rabbis of Europe, their courts and organizations, their following and their political power, are no more. They existed, down to the beginning of the Second World War, in Poland and in certain parts of Austria and Rumania. Their hold on Sholom Aleichem's world, in Russia, was destroyed by the Bolshevik revolution. To-day, with the crushing of Jewish life in Poland, the last of their European citadels have crumbled; and even if some sort of Jewish life is restored in a liberated Europe, it is altogether improbable that the Chassidic courts will be part of it.

Remnant Survives in U.S.A.

But it is one of the curiosities of Jewish history that the last remnants of the Chassidic organism should survive in — of all places — the United States. In the Jewish sections of New York and Chicago, and perhaps of one or two other towns, the vestigial forms of the Chassidic courts still maintain an obscure and disintegrating existence. Mighty names of dynasties which once made millions of Jews tremble now attach to queer little groups of fanatics, or sentimentalists, in delapidated apartment houses in the slums. In the mass migration to America, the transference of half of Sholom Aleichem's world across three thousand miles of ocean, there were involved fragments of "Weltanschauungen."

Serious and Otherwise

* — by ben dor — *

Hope Springs Eternal . . .

THIS is a story culled from the columns of "The Palestine Post."

The first air-mail postcard from liberated Italy to reach "The Palestine Post" has come from a refugee woman.

In battered Salerno someone had given her a month-old copy of the newspaper and she read it slowly and thoughtfully. The language was foreign, and life in a Fascist country for many years had made the world outside alien to her as well. There were references and connotations difficult for her to grasp. So her eyes shifted down the page towards the advertisements. Among all the bold lettering one word became much bolder, invested with a sudden powerful vitality.

"Ram"—but that was her own name. "Ram cleans everything," the legend read. Surely that must be her brother, her brother Richard Ram of whom she had lost trace years ago. He had probably managed to escape to Palestine, had gone into business. Now she would find him, of course. The newspaper had not come to her by chance, that was clear enough. The more she contemplated it, the more she was convinced, and her excited imagination planned their meeting, the first words . . .

And so she wrote a hopeful and laborious postcard to the newspaper asking for her brother's address, and the newspaper contacted the manufacturer of Ram, only to be told there was no family connection, that the name of the product bore a Hebrew name meaning "lofty," and intended to describe its quality.

Arab Magistrate who Spoke Yiddish

A Jewish tradeswoman who spoke only Yiddish and who was summoned for a breach of sanitary regulations in her store, came before an Arab magistrate, Ahmed eff Keoud, at Haifa recently. When she spoke Yiddish to the Jewish prosecutor (for the Government), he told her she must address His Worship on the Bench. She did not know how to proceed and hesitated. Thereupon the Arab judge gravely said: "Ihr kennt reden Yiddish ob Ihr villt." (You can speak Yiddish if you like.)

There were many smiles in Court in surprise. The smiles broadened when the magistrate continued to conduct the case, hearing the arguments and answering, in fluent Yiddish. He later explained he had grown up in an orthodox Jewish neighbourhood.

Pre-Fabricated Houses

REMARKABLE results have been reported in the manufacture of pre-fabricated houses in the United States and Great Britain, where millions of these dwellings are to be built, and similar experiments are now proceeding in Eretz Israel so that the present-day acute housing shortage may be the more expeditiously tackled after the war.

Timber cannot be used on a large scale in house-construction in Palestine, if the intention is to build cheaply, firstly, because it has to be imported at a relatively high cost and, secondly, because it is not impervious to the inroads of insects, ants, etc., is inflammable and unsuited to a hot climate, and cannot withstand bullets. Con-

sequently builders here are experimenting with slabs of pre-fabricated concrete which can be fitted or joined together.

Mr. M. Kesselman, an engineer, has developed a new system for pouring concrete cell-blocks. He has hit upon the novel idea of using cactus plants: between two layers of thinly-poured concrete a thicker layer of concrete is placed after being mixed with cactus material. When the water from the cactus paste is absorbed by the concrete, it seals the tiny interstices and makes them air-tight. This system saves on material and the weight is much lighter than unalloyed concrete.

Standard production of these slabs is planned, together with the corollary pillars and girders, so that large or small houses may be put up without much difficulty. Each slab weighs 40 kilograms (88 lbs.), a pillar is 60 kgs., and the skeleton roof is not more than 120 kgs. The system of pre-fabrication assures first-class insulation.

The experiments were assisted by the Histadruth and by the Tel Aviv City Engineer, Mr. Y. Shiffman, Chairman of the Engineers' and Architects' Association, and Mr. I. Arnstein, Principal of the Materials Testing Institute. A model room has been put up in Tel Aviv, and engineers have expressed their satisfaction with this new method of building.

"Father of Chazanut"

HAILED as the "Father of Cantorial Music" in Palestine, Mr. S. Z. Rivlin, Jerusalem-born Principal of the "Shirat Israel" Institute and Choir, observed his 60th birthday during August.

For 43 years Mr. Rivlin, who comes of a well-known Jerusalem family that has lived in this city for several generations, has taught cantorial music and singing, theory of singing, voice culture, reading from the Law, and choral singing, to hundreds of students, many of whom are now teachers in Palestine or Chazanim in the United States, Great Britain and South Africa, and who have taken their Hebrew education to enlighten wider circles.

Mr. Rivlin maintains a special synagogue, Shirat Israel, as a kind of practical centre for religious cantorial and choir singing. The Shirat Israel choir has been known throughout the country since Turkish times, and has sung with Kwartin, Rosenblatt, Hirschman, Sirota, Kossevitzky, and other famous cantors when they visited Palestine.

Mr. S. Z. Rivlin, who was born in Jerusalem on the 15th day of Ab, 1884, was the son of the well-known communal worker, the late Joseph Rivlin, who was a pioneer in building the first suburbs of the new Jerusalem outside the walled Old City last century.

They Made Him Governor of Ethiopia!

SPENDING a leave of absence in Jerusalem this August, Mr. Nathan Marein, a Jewish lawyer, was sitting in a friend's house when they happened to switch in to the German wireless station. Imagine their surprise and amusement on hearing the Berlin announcer complain of how the Jews had gained control of Ethiopia, adding: "At this moment the Governor-General of Ethiopia, Marein, is touring the country on an Imperialistic mission." Mr. Marein is a High Court judge at Addis Ababa.

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