

CURRENT COMMUNAL COMMENT

By "Hamabit"

A Descendant

AN event which will be commemorated throughout South Africa this year, will be the 250th anniversary of the arrival of the Huguenots at the Cape. It will be recalled that the Huguenots fled from France to the Netherlands in 1685 on account of the intolerance and persecution they suffered at the hands of Louis XIV.

Few people to-day are aware that Sir John Abraham de Villiers, who was a conforming Jew and who died in London at the age of 67, was a descendant of one of the Huguenots, who settled at the Cape in 1688. Born in London in September, 1863, Sir John was the son of Jacob Hendrik de Villiers, of Prince Albert, Cape Province, who had for a while studied Christian theology at the University of Utrecht in Holland. It was at the latter place that Jacob de Villiers married a Dutch Jewess. Some years ago, Sir John, who was an intimate friend of Israel Zangwill, wrote: "Each respected the religion of the other, and the offspring of the union were brought up in the orthodox Jewish tenets, as practised fifty years ago. I have always rejoiced in this and have never found my Judaism either irksome or a hindrance in my career. On the contrary, I often felt it helping me."

Sir John, who, *inter alia*, wrote "The Dutch in South Africa" and "The Transvaal," was Deputy-Keeper and Officer in Charge of Maps at the British Museum. He was cartographical expert in the Labrador boundary arbitration in 1926, the findings of which allowed the claim of Newfoundland to 111,000 square miles.

A Nazi Spinoza

GERMAN newspapers these days are a dull lot, and it is seldom that one encounters in the German press anything in the nature of a controversy. The recent squabble between two Nazi papers concerning Spinoza must be regarded as an amusing exception.

The papers concerned are the "Voelkisher Beobachter," leading Nazi mouthpiece, and the "Schwarze Wäpfer," organ of the military élite of Prussia. The first newspaper has been publishing for some time past a "biography" of Baruch Spinoza. In this literary creation, the author tries to show that the great Jewish philosopher was "engaged in white slave traffic between Spain and Holland." The "Schwarze Wäpfer" thought otherwise and published an article defend-

ing Spinoza. It even went so far as to assert that Spinoza was a pure Aryan—a fact which was proved by the Jewish ban against him.

But in Germany one is not permitted to think differently from the "Beobachter," which purports to interpret God's own mind. And so the military paper was rapped on the knuckles. The issue containing the defence of Spinoza was confiscated as soon as it came to the notice of the authorities, and now there is again peace in German newspaperdom. Nazi scribblers are still free to slander without let or hindrance the names of the great, and to distort historical facts to their heart's desire.

Secunda

SHOLEM SECUNDA, composer of "Bei Mir Bistu Schohn," who is now celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of his musical activity, is still a young man. He started his musical career as a "Wonder-child-Chazan" on the East Side of New York and in his time was a great draw in the synagogues of the United States. Owing to his strenuous singing as a child-Chazan he lost his voice, and devoted his energy to musical study and composition.

Secunda is a self-taught musician. The only musical education which he received was at a night school for chorus singers. He has composed music for many of the most popular Yiddish operettas, some of which have been presented in this country. The music of "Bei Mir" is part of a musical comedy entitled "Men kon leben un men lozt nit," in which Lucy Levin took the leading part. In his spare moments Secunda likes to keep away from light musical comedy and devotes his time to serious composition. At the height of the sensation aroused by "Bei Mir," he composed music for Leivik's immortal song, "Mimaamakin," and was doing excellent educational work as manager of a Yiddish Radio-hour for children at which some classic Jewish songs were made popular amongst American Jewish youth.

Secunda is a devoted pupil of Goldfaden, the greatest composer of Jewish folk-music. He believes that Goldfaden's works could easily be translated into operas and has himself rewritten "Akedath Yitzchok" in opera form.

The Dachauer

A FRIEND in Palestine writes to tell me of a remarkable new society—a product of our times—which has just been formed in Tel-Aviv. The society shuns publicity and very little has been heard of it in the press. Its name is "Union of The Dachauer," and it consists of recently arrived refugees who had been confined in the Dachau concentration camp. The organiser is Dr. Nussbaum, of Vienna, and it is his intention to hold occasional reunions of the martyrs of Dachau with a view to collecting historic material for the Nazi inquisition.

With the dispersion of German Jewry to all parts of the world, there is the fear that much of the material regarding the great tragedies of the concentration camps may be lost. Whilst a number of books concerning the plight of Hitler's prisoners have been written in recent years, there is no Jewish tale of the tragedy.

A Jewish musician from Austria, who reached New York recently, stated that he had been confined in a concentration camp together with a large number of Jewish authors, musicians and composers. One day they were ordered to produce a special prison march. The Nazi chief of the prison declared that he would not use pure Aryan music for the march of the Jewish prisoners! The musicians could not help but obey. I should have liked to see this march published abroad. It surely is one of the most remarkable documents of the cynicism of contemporary Germany.

An Abundance

IN a little village of old Russia, the *Rav* decided to resign. The community felt ashamed. Was the *Rav* to desert his flock? What would the world say?

So a public meeting was called and two *balabatim* were chosen to interview the spiritual leader. Naturally, they were the two wealthiest men in the village. The *Rav* received the delegation most cordially. He said: "If there were five *balabatim* like you in the village, I would remain."

"You do us great honour," replied the delegation. "In our community there can surely be found five like us."

"Ah," murmured the *Rav*. "Unfortunately, there are a hundred of you!"

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