

Cape Town Celebrates the Opening of Congress.

Crowded Meeting on Sunday Night.

REPRESENTATIVES OF LOCAL SOCIETIES SPEAK.

Every available seat in the Zionist Hall was occupied and many people were compelled to stand last Sunday night when a function to celebrate the opening of the Eighteenth Zionist Congress in Prague was held. The function was held under the auspices of the combined local Zionist Societies and the first half of the programme was devoted to speeches delivered by the representatives of the latter. The second half of the programme consisted of musical items by members of the Yiddish Theatrical Company at present in Cape Town.

The evening opened after a number of vocal renderings had been given very effectively by the Zionist Socialist Party Choir.

Dr. S. E. KARK, who was in the Chair, then delivered his opening address in which he referred at the outset to the tragic position of German Jewry. The Congress, he said, was opening under the shadow and gloom of Nazism, and our brethren in Germany were gradually being strangled by murderous hands. The events in Germany were undermining not only the material existence of Jewry there but also their spiritual life. The world as a whole merely looked on at this tragic drama being enacted in Germany. With the notable exception of Great Britain, there had been little practical sympathy evinced by other nationalities. The doors to the refugees in most countries had been closed.

On looking round in despair for a hope of salvation, the Jewish people to-day were grateful that Herzl had lived and had created the first Zionist Congress. To him it was due that we had one little spot on earth where the doors were open to us and would always be open to us.

A Great Responsibility.

A great responsibility rested on the Eighteenth Zionist Congress, but it was a responsibility that rested also on Jewry of the whole world. He was certain, said Dr. Kark, that had Jewry felt this responsibility at the time the first Zionist Congress was opened, we would never have come to the pass we had to-day. If our great men had served their own people with one-tenth of the zeal with which they had served others, our position now would have been very different indeed. Congress represented only a small section of Jewry. After seventeen Congresses this one that was being opened the next day should have been a Congress of Jews of the whole world.

But if Jewry had failed in its support of Zionism, we Zionists had also to take care that we did not fail. A great responsibility rested upon us—we were entering into a life and death struggle and no Zionist had the right to put difficulties or obstacles in our path. All petty differences had to cease. There was a crying need for unity, but even in Zionist ranks there was no unity.

We could not help what had been, but this great sorrow which had lately overtaken Jewry ought to act as a lesson to us to

realise our responsibility to our people and the Zionist world, and to strive with greater energy than ever before for unity and peace.

They had all come that night with a prayer for the success of the Congress. They had at the same time to make up their minds that whatever the Congress would decide upon they would determine to uphold and to carry through in order to help the Jewish people.

Apologies for Inattendance.

Before calling on Dr. J. Mibashan to speak on behalf of the General Zionists, Dr. Kark tendered the apologies of Rev. A. P. Bender and Mr. Morris Alexander, K.C., M.P., for their inability to be present.

Dr. MIBASHAN said the Congress represented not only a festive day for the Jewish people, but a day of judgment. It was a decisive day not only for Zionists but for all the weary Jewish wanderers in the world. To-day Zionism was no longer spoken of as a party but as a movement to regenerate and redeem every part of the Jewish nation. Every Jew had reason to look hopefully to Eretz Israel which was recognised as the national homeland of the whole Jewish people.

Our national parliament was beginning its eighteenth session on almost exactly the same day as the opening of the first Zionist Congress thirty-six years ago. That first Congress had been a very daring and dangerous experiment, and had caused not only amazement among non-Jews, but anger, scepticism and derision among many Jews. Had the latter listened more attentively to Herzl and his disciples, it was likely that the tragedy of Jewish life to-day might have been averted.

No Longer a Miracle.

The Jewish Congress was no longer a miracle—it had become as natural to the Jewish people as the heart to the living man. It was the supreme and only Jewish tribune from which representatives of the Jewish nation could and did speak to the Jewish people, to humanity and to history about the numerous grievances of Israel. The Congress would have to expose to the world the racial persecution and injustice to our people which was taking place in Germany, the repression of religion in Russia where in the name of liberty all personal freedom was being destroyed; it would

have to expose the financial, spiritual, and political persecution of Jews in other countries.

In this dreary hour General Zionists wished for only one thing—unity in Zionist ranks. Only this could save us and allow us to believe that Congress had not met in vain. Great Britain and South Africa had recently pointed the way to how in times of national emergency, strife had to be met by coalition and compromise. In the history of our own people, it was civil war that had hastened on the dispersion—were we now again to strive against each other for the shadow of an idea or belief? Were we to fight about a land before we had entered it? And if we did fight with one another, what impression could we make upon Great Britain and the League of Nations, or even those who were not officially Zionists but whom we had to draw into our ranks?

Whatever the decisions of Congress, General Zionists would endeavour in every way to adhere to them because the basis of their principles were loyalty, unity and discipline.

Mr. B. PADOWICH spoke on behalf of the Poalei Zion, and at the outset referred to the late Dr. Arlosoroff whose presence, he said, would be so much missed at Congress.

Every Congress had many serious and important problems with which to deal, but perhaps never before in the whole of our Galuth history had we been in such a difficult position as we were to-day. The restraints and restrictions which encircled us were not only economic but spiritual as well. We would suffer from the blow Germany had dealt us for many hundreds of years to come.

Two Principal Problems.

The Congress that was about to take place would have two principal problems to which it would have to find some solution. The first of these was the problem of German Jewry, the second that of Zionism. We had to-day come to the stage when we realised that the only way to heal the wounds of the Jewish organism acquired in the lands of the dispersion was through Zionism.

The Congress to-day had to deal with very concrete matters. Palestine was a ray of light to the Jews of Poland, Roumania, Lithuania, Germany, etc., who were living in such dark and dreary conditions. Congress had to find a means of admitting thousands of these Jews into Eretz Israel to build a home for themselves in a country where they could live freely and unhindered.

His party—the Labour Party—were the majority at Congress, and on them therefore rested a very heavy responsibility as far as the decisions of Congress were concerned. But they had the ability to meet with their responsibilities. It was Labour that had stood in the vanguard of Jewish upbuilding in Palestine for the last thirty years, and who had largely built up Eretz Israel and whose achievements were enormous. It was these reasons that had persuaded so many Jews throughout the world to vote for the Labour Party. Eretz Israel had to be built through Labour—this was an unanswerable truism. Labour did not, however, want to drive away capital from Eretz Israel nor to make it difficult for middle-class immigrants to settle in the country. But it was labour that was preparing the way for capital, and for this middle-class settlement.

