

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.

The National Funds.

It was often heard to-day that the time had passed when Palestine needed idealists and chaltzim. But this argument was unfounded. Before anything else, Palestine needed the national funds, and only by furthering the Keren Hayesod and the Keren Kayemeth could we increase the number of immigrants on the land. One of the most important problems of the Congress would be to find ways and means of strengthening the national funds and of carrying out Jewish colonisation on a larger scale.

Speaking of a need for unity at the Congress, Mr. Padowich said that the Poale Zion were always anxious to have unity in Zionist ranks. But the road to coalition had to be cleared. Coalition should be effected between all those bodies who were performing concrete practical work for Eretz Israel, and those organisations who only created difficulties in the way of Zionist achievement should be dealt a death-blow. "We call upon all members of Jewry," said Mr. Padowich, "to help attain our desire to overthrow all movements which stand in the way of our work for the Jewish National Home."

Dr. H. W. ALTSCHUL, speaking on behalf of the Cape Town Zionist Revisionists, said that every Zionist Congress, at least since the War, had been described as occurring at a time of national crisis; this Eighteenth Zionist Congress was no exception. It was almost as though Jewry at large moved in waves of biennial crises. The truth was that throughout all this time Zionism had not been through a number of crises but only one continuous crisis. That crisis would continue as long as the present methods of Jewish state building persisted, for under these methods there would never be a Jewish State in Palestine. The population of the Arabs in Palestine preponderated so heavily over the Jewish population that at the present rate of Jewish immigration it was impossible for Palestine ever to be Eretz Israel. This matter had been before every Congress and the result was always more or less the same.

Throughout its history there had always been one supreme difficulty for Jewry—in every land where Jews lived it was possible for a series of circumstances to arise, as they had in Germany to-day, where they might be persecuted or murdered or ejected. To-day's crisis was not a new one. Its only solution was a Jewish State.

After Congress had time and again declared itself dissatisfied with the methods and policies of our leaders, we were still flouted by the Mandatory Government. Yet it was in this same spirit that the decisions of the Congress were ignored by its own elected Executive. He hoped, said Dr. Altschul, that the decisions of Congress would never be ignored again.

Influence of a Minority.

The Revisionists wished the Congress every success. They were not disturbed by the fact that they were a minority—they had never yet been a majority. But more work had been done by that minority than others could ever guess. As Jews we were well aware what could be the influence of a minority in the world, and as Zionists what could be the influence of a minority at Congress. "We feel secure," said Dr. Altschul, "that the principles for which we stand are right. We go directly for one aim and one goal and we feel secure that our principles will triumph."

As for coalition, the speaker before him had given the answer. Coalition was a beautiful idea to those who had not the courage of their own convictions. To them (the Revisionists) there was no difference if the enemy came from within or from without—it was the enemy and had to be fought. As wholeheartedly as all others the Zionist Revisionists wished and prayed and hoped that the Eighteenth Zionist Congress would deliberate in wisdom and would decide courageously, so that he could assure them that they in Cape Town would not fail to carry on.

Mr. HERZL ZUCKERMAN, speaking on behalf of the youth Societies, said there was little hope for unity when we saw such strong evidence of party spirit as was prevalent that evening.

The Congress had a far graver problem with which to deal than that of anti-Semitism—it was one which lay in our own midst, for until there was a Hitler there did not appear to be any national pride among Jews. The Eighteenth Zionist Congress could only command the confidence and the support of all sections of Jewry when the various parties at moments of national danger were prepared to sink all their differences. We were all aiming for one ideal, and he hoped that Congress would present a united front to world Jewry. He sincerely hoped that the spirit of party partisanship would not be prevalent at the Congress which could only be a success

if our leaders stood united against Germany, against Hitler, and against those who opposed Jewish ideals. The Congress had to be approached in a spirit of earnestness and of a genuine desire for unity. A desire for unity hypocritically expressed was not sufficient.

THE MUSICAL PROGRAMME.

The second half of the programme was then carried out. Miss Hilda Ida gave a number of recitations in Yiddish which were very charmingly rendered and which won wholehearted applause. Mr. Paul Breitman, the male lead in the Company, sang with great effect and was encored several times. Vera Kanevska, the leading artiste in the Company, showed great ability in her singing of both humorous and dramatic songs. She has a great deal of vitality and appeal, and proved a great favourite. Mr. Simon Natan, the humorist of the Company who provided a great many laughs between the various items, next gave a number of songs and recitations which were outstanding for the wit and originality which characterised them and for the excellent renderings Mr. Natan gave. Mr. Natan is a comedian who shows taste and a rare ability to "get across." The last item on the programme were several songs by Mr. Oppenheim who was very well received.

The meeting concluded with the singing of Hatikvah and God Save the King.



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