

CURRENT

COMMUNAL

By "Hamabit"

COMMENT

New Year

TO most South Africans, at present sweltering in a mid-summer temperature, it is probably a little strange to think that New Year's Day in many countries falls in the middle of winter—and often a severe winter at that. The extremes of both seasons are, I imagine, unpleasant to most people, and I have often thought that there could be no more delightful time for the New Year than that set by the Jewish calendar—early spring in the southern hemisphere and early autumn in the northern.

I was, therefore, interested to read an article by Edward Weeks in the "New York Herald Tribune" some time ago, in which, in expressing the view that New Year's Day should rightfully fall about the beginning of October, he unconsciously paid a tribute to the Jewish calendar. His tribute was directed to the wondrous beauty of the autumnal season.

"This date—if ever—" he wrote, "is the time of year when we are disposed to turn over a new leaf, to make fine resolutions, to be, indeed, a changed person." And he continued: "I suspect that more bills are paid in October than in any other month; more husbands are considerate of their wives, more women are intent on improving their minds; in short, more ambitions are revived—and all because of the wine-like quality of our American autumn. It is a time for good walks and open fires; a time when chestnuts, hard cider and good books are especially palatable; we say to ourselves, I'm really going to do some serious reading this fall—good literature—something like Gibbon's "Decline and Fall," only a little shorter. Of course, I don't say that everyone actually reads such heavy literature; but at least they intend to—in October."

In Greece

FROM hour to hour, says a report I received from Athens this week, the number of Jews participating in the battle of Greece is increasing. Owing to the anti-Semitic policy of the Greek rulers in the pre-Metaxas days there are not many Jewish trained officers, but the number of soldiers is estimated to be at least 20,000. Every Jewish family has one or several of its members at the battlefield. Jewish homes in Salonika have suffered from Italian bombardment, but the Jewish people are grimly holding out and are giving every assistance to the Government.

Only a short time before the war Greek Jews were making efforts to accommodate Jewish refugees from Italy. The Government was very sympathetic, and arrangements were

being made for the settlement of the refugees on various Greek islands. Soon, however, came Mussolini's attempted invasion, and the Jews at once realised that their fate might also be that of their Italian co-religionists. They mobilised every resource for the assistance of their Government.

Wanted: A Marching Song

NO army is complete without its army songs, and I have often wondered, since learning of the formation of specific Jewish fighting units in Palestine, what the Hebrew army songs would be like. As these units are infantry units, it would be natural to expect them to have marching songs, but there are few original Jewish marching songs and the martial airs of other peoples have been liberally plagiarised for Hebrew purposes.

I was, therefore, interested to read in a letter I received from Palestine last week, that a public-spirited resident of Tel-Aviv, Mr. Z. Tachentov, had brought to the newspaper "Davar" a sum of money to be awarded as the first prize for the best Hebrew marching song composed originally in Palestine. A jury consisting of Professor D. Schor, the poet, Saul Tschernichowsky, Madame Rovina, of the Habimah, a representative of the Vaad Leumi, and a Jewish military officer has been chosen to consider the entries.

It will be interesting to see the results of the competition. I sincerely hope that the eventual selection will bring to the fore a truly Hebrew melody which the men can sing while on the march.

Coughlin

NEXT to some notorious gangsters, Father Chas. E. Coughlin has for several years past enjoyed in America a great deal of undeserved popularity. Known as "The Radio anti-Semite," Coughlin made anti-Semitic history with his regular vituperative "sermons," delivered over the air from a little church in Royal Oak. Almost daily Jewish newspapers were obliged to devote much valuable space to attacking Coughlin. Jewish defence organisations and anti-defamation leagues had used up a considerable amount of ink in refuting Coughlin's regular doses of lies and infamy. Now I hear that the Father's career has almost come to an end, for he is off the air. The National Association of Broadcasters has adopted a new

code prohibiting the use of radio stations for dissemination of race hatred.

Coughlin's reputation was on the decline in any case. More than once recently, eminent representatives of the Catholic Church dissociated themselves from him, and branded his effusions as contrary to the policy promulgated by the Pope. One Church dignitary stated that Coughlin had as much to do with religion as with elementary honesty.

Panacea

MEET Mr. Salomon Cruso. He has an address and office on Broadway, New York. He is the author of "Messiah on the Horizon," and has a ready-made cure for all Jewish ailments and ills.

He has just sent out circulars to Jewish newspapers. Throughout America he had posters pasted up bearing the title, "A Proclamation to the Jews." His suggestion is a very simple one: The Jewish tragedy, he says, is due to the fact that we are a small people. Fifteen million is really nothing to speak of, and therefore, we are an easy prey for everybody and anybody. If there were five hundred million Jews we should be able to stand up for ourselves.

But how are we to get the five hundred million? Mr. Cruso has a simple remedy: convert all the Chinese to Judaism. For that purpose he has established his "Society of Hebrew Missionary Pioneers for East Asia," which as far as is known has a membership of one—himself. He hopes to send out an army of missionaries to China armed with two books, the Bible, greatest of all books, and his own "Messiah on the Horizon," the second best.

The scheme, says an American Jewish writer, is an excellent one. It will provide many Jews with that modicum of mirth of which they are so badly in need in these days of crisis and sadness.

If . . .

CHAYM was a non-smoker and despised those who had become slaves to the tobacco habit. One day old Reb Eliezer came out of the Beth Hamedrash, lit a cigarette, and smoked as he walked in leisurely fashion to his home.

"See," said Zorach to Chaym, "Reb Eliezer has been a smoker all his life and he is now eighty-five."

"Ah, indeed," said Chaym, "if our old friend had been a non-smoker all these years, he would to-day have been a hundred."

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