

20th Anniversary of Balfour Declaration.

Celebration by Dorshei Zion Association.

The fortnightly Zionist *Conversazione* under the auspices of the Dorshei Zion Association, on Tuesday night, took the form of a celebration on the occasion of the 20th Anniversary of the Balfour Declaration. The Zionist (Major) Hall was packed to overflowing.

Adv. J. Herbst who was in the chair, said that they had met that evening on the 20th anniversary of the publication of the Balfour Declaration to remember in gratitude the magnanimity of the then British Government and also to pay their tribute of respect to the memory of that great-hearted supporter of Zionism whose name it bears. Much water had flowed under the bridges since that memorable day when for the first time in Jewish history a great civilised power ranged itself at the side of a sorely oppressed people and publicly declared that in the great settlement which would follow the end of the War, justice would also be done to the Jewish people. Since that day the lot of world Jewry had gone from bad to worse. Other peoples which received their freedom in the general peace settlement, celebrated their return to the comity of nations by persecuting those unfortunate enough not to be able to retaliate. In most countries the dream of political and religious emancipation had proved itself the most terrible nightmare.

Great Britain had proved the exception; there the lamp of personal freedom, of religious liberty still sheds its rays of light. And it is fitting and proper that in these dismal days we should remember that it was not only in the dreary and weary days of the Great War that that country proved its friendship for the Jewish people. It is no doubt true that the Balfour Declaration was not given to us out of purely altruistic motives; but in the days that followed, when Britain's connection with the Jewish people was being criticised, when it would have been easy for her, if she had so desired, to avoid a troublesome obligation, she stood firm. And if perchance, we criticise her for her failure absolutely to implement the Declaration in full, it is the criticism not of an enemy but of a friend and a partner in a great enterprise. On this 20th Anniversary of the Balfour Declaration and in the midst of a serious dispute with Britain about her obligations in Palestine and to the Jewish people, the Zionists nevertheless were able in no uncertain manner to express their admiration of the great British people and their gratitude to them for their continued acts of friendship. If, perchance, it should come to

pass that Great Britain cannot or will not carry out the Mandate, the Jewish people will, nevertheless, remember to her credit that she did stand by them in the blackest days; that when it seemed they had no friend to console them she proved that friend in need which is the friend indeed.

Come what may, however, said Mr. Herbst, the Jewish people would always remember with affection and gratitude the author of the Declaration—Arthur James Balfour. He rendered enormous services to his own nation, particularly during the Great War; but if Balfour himself had been asked what he considered the greatest service he had rendered the world, he would undoubtedly have answered: "The service rendered it through the Jewish people." Balfour's support of Zionism was largely motivated by his desire to help a sorely oppressed people. It was he who threw his whole weight into the scale in the days when the fate of Jewry was being decided. His interest continued to the end, and his visit to Palestine in 1925 for the opening of the Hebrew University was a momentous event.

He died full of years and glory; his spirit lives in Palestine and his memory is kept ever green there by the Balfour Forest. His great services to the Jewish people will never be forgotten.

Rabbi I. Abrahams said that in the last 20 years the Jewish people had learnt much, but had also unlearned much. It was easy to take a pessimistic view today; but looking back at the last 20 years there was no reason for pessimism. Facts justified the view that the years that had passed would never be rolled back. It had been recognised not only by the Jewish people but by other nations that the Jews had sovereign rights to one part of the world; the historical connection and deathless relation of the Jewish people with Palestine had been established in the sight of the whole world.

In 1917 it seemed as if the work of Herzl was being undone; the spadework achieved with sweat and toil seemed to be in jeopardy. But out of the welter of sorrow and disillusion, a great hope came

to fruition with the issue of the Balfour Declaration. To-day, in 1937, many again felt that much of the work done, based on the very soul of the Jewish people, was being jeopardised. But it was possible that out of all the anxiety and sorrow in the world to-day would emerge a great realisation—a Jewish State.

The issue of the Balfour Declaration while it aroused great joy in the hearts of most Jews, yet caused embarrassment to others, who were afraid to own up that as an ethnical entity the Jewish people deserved ethnical rights. The question arose as to whether Jews could be patriots of the land in which they lived and yet be Zionists; and this problem is still troubling some Jews. Zionism is not an *anti* movement, but a *pro* movement—*pro* humanity and *pro* righteousness. The Jewish State is a world necessity and must arise. Today Zionism is fashionable; but the whole mass of the Jewish people is not yet Zionist; many stand aloof. There must be a campaign to explain the ideology of Zionism; to impress on each one that it is his duty to the Jewish future and the Jewish destiny to be a Zionist. If the complete "Zionisation" of the Jewish people is to be achieved, however, it must be realised that Zionism should contain every section of thought amongst the Jewish people, and should be tolerant to all points of view.

While the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate, said Rabbi Abrahams, gave a tremendous impetus to Zionist work, it must be realised that Zionism existed long before 1917. He hoped the Mandate would never be treated as a scrap of paper and that the Declaration would never be falsified. But even should these two end, our Zionism would never end. Only by their own efforts could the Jewish people help themselves. Whatever happened in the political world, they should always abide by the great teaching of Herzl—"if you wish it, this is no dream."

Cantor S. Kugel rendered several Hebrew and Yiddish songs; Mr. Natas gave an appropriate reading in Yiddish and Miss Black rendered two violin solos.

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