

ZIONIST CONVERSAZIONE.

Report on Deputies' Congress.

At the fortnightly Conversazione which took place at the Zionist Hall on Tuesday night, reports on the Thirteenth Congress of the S.A. Jewish Board of Deputies recently held in Johannesburg were given by several local delegates.

Mr. M. Alexander, K.C., M.P., was in the chair. There was an element of earnestness about the Congress, he said, a feeling among all the delegates that they were meeting in the face of grim realities. If ever there was a time when the Board vindicated its claims to be the mouthpiece of South African Jewry it was at Congress. The question of the war so dominated the Congress that Rabbi Kossowsky, representing the orthodox section of the community, made a statement to the effect that it was the duty of Jews to join the forces even though it might be impossible for them to observe all the ritual and religious requirements; it was a case of "Pikuach Nefesh" (the saving of life) which was the supreme consideration.

The arrangements and organisation at Congress were excellent and everything went smoothly from beginning to end.

Mr. Alexander referred briefly to the various resolutions in connection with the war, the Jewish National Home, the work of enlightenment, vocational problems, the Employment Enquiry Bureau, the Board and the community, subscribing membership, regional conferences, the question of Shechita, and so on.

It was a most successful conference, he said, and showed that South African Jewry were united in this great crisis with the single-minded purpose of serving the community. There was one word that roused the delegates to enthusiasm time after time and that was the name of Smuts which was like an electric thrill through Congress. No one was actuated by the desire of self-interest or personal aggrandisement but only by the desire to look after the interests of the community. No one could show that the Board had not done all that was possible to combat anti-semitism. The community must have faith in those they had elected; they could be certain they would look after their interests and act as their trustees.

Mr. L. Segal was unable to be present but had sent in his report, which was read by Mr. Alexander. In this he stated that never in the history of the Board had Congress met in an atmosphere so charged with tenseness and earnestness as at this

Congress. Dominating the proceedings was the debate on the world struggle between the forces of brutal Nazism and civilisation as represented by the democracies. Stark realities affecting Western civilisation were brought to the notice of delegates by successive speakers and the obligation of Jewry to fight against the evil forces oppressing the world were stressed again and again. Solemn affirmations of the readiness of Jews to take their part in the fight for victory were adopted. Successive speakers approached the war problem from a variety of angles and a number of war resolutions were passed. It was pointed out that Jews were as ready and willing as non-Jews to make sacrifices for the common cause. One thing that emerged from the discussion on the war position was that Jewry was fully prepared and had in fact thrown their whole-hearted support, physical as well as otherwise, on the side of the Allies. In numbers the Jewish youth had responded to the call gratifyingly and the Jewish community was prepared for all sacrifices.

As regards anti-Jewish propaganda, it appeared from discussion at Congress that it was important that there should be no slackening off in the methods of combating the violent anti-semitic campaign. Anti-semitism was the spearhead of Nazism in South Africa. He emphasised that Jews had a real and genuine approach to Afrikaans culture and cultural problems. In this connection it was stressed that able and well-informed bilingual speakers should tour the platteland on a campaign of enlightenment.

A point raised was the urgent necessity of the Jewish public being properly informed on matters affecting the interests and welfare of the community and methods of establishing closer contact with all sections of the Jewish community will be explored by the newly elected Executive.

Among the many subjects brought up was that of the Jewish National Home and a resolution by the Executive Council reaffirmed the loyalty of S.A. Jewry to this ideal.

Many other important matters were faithfully dealt with by the delegates and Congress concluded after a momentous and far-reaching debate on a variety of vital matters. The final note was one of belief in the ultimate victory of righteousness over the hordes of wickedness and evil.

Mr. L. Gradner said he felt that all the other items on the agenda of Congress could have been left to the Executive and Congress should have confined itself to the war discussion. The proceedings could have been curtailed; there was too much latitude in discussion.

Referring to the proposed War Victims' Fund, Mr. Gradner said that all must make sacrifices and those who could not join the forces themselves must help the dependants of those who had gone to the front.

As regards the financial position of the Board, he felt a scheme could be evolved by which members of the community could contribute a fixed amount. Since 1933 the Board had been confronted with a colossal task. All should be happy to contribute to the Board which was looking after the interests of South African Jewry. If they could not altogether stem the flood of anti-semitism they certainly prevented it from going faster. The Board consisted of a body of men capable and sincere who were doing a great task for the community. Our destiny was safe in their hands.

Mr. A. Z. Berman said the Congress was the most representative in the history of South African Jewry. They had assembled at the most momentous moment in the world's history. The message of Congress was: Be of strong heart, of strong conviction and of good cheer. This was not a time for speculation and anxiety; it was a time for action and determination on the part of men and women everywhere in the British Empire. He (Mr. Berman) had foreseen all that had happened and yet he felt this was no time for gloom and despondency. There was a deep and strong resolve at Congress that we cannot and will not lose the war. No great Empire had ever lost a war if they had not really wanted to. France would not have lost if those at the helm had been determined to fight it out. The man who fights knows he must and will win—only the onlooker doubts. We can only fight with one conviction—to win. This conviction permeated all the delegates at Congress. They realised that the war had been brought to the borders of South Africa and that Jews will play a large part in it. He (Mr. Berman) felt that we as Jews, apart from our numbers, had a specific contribution to make. There was something the Jews could give a lead in—in sacrifice and martyrdom, Kiddush Hashem (giving up life for a cause), which was part of their accumulated tradition of thousands of years.

At the conclusion of Congress when the Hatikvah was sung it had a significance few there and then realised. At the most crucial hour in the history of humanity

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Jews sang "Our hope is not yet lost." We had the greatest reason for saying this now than at any moment for the last two thousand years. We had allies on our side who stood to lose as much as we and were permeated with the same resolve. There had never been witnessed such determination and resolve to sacrifice all as at Congress, which met when things began to look black. Congress accepted the responsibility for Jews to play their part to the utmost extent. There was no need to stress what we are up against or what the stakes are. Congress asked that each Jew should look upon the war as his own personal affair.

There was a strange atmosphere at Congress of history repeating itself. It was the war of Rome and Judea all over again. The part we played would affect the issue. Every man, gun and plane would be a direct help to prevent Judea being overrun again. We could not have hoped for a better opportunity of actively protecting the Jewish National Home than is offered us to-day. The future of Jewry is intimately bound up with the issue of the war and we must strain every nerve to secure success for the Allies. The chances of winning to-day were such that no people could wish for better. We could not be in a better position for defence. It would mean great sacrifice, but there was no doubt in the mind of Jewish leaders here that we would win.

The prevailing feeling at Congress was that we Jews in South Africa had a job to do and would do it. Many would not see the end, but our duty was to put in every ounce of strength for the collective effort. We as individuals had only one life to live, one death to die. There was no nation so permeated with the spirit of collectivism—the K'lal—as the Jews. Each one must accept that the ultimate outcome of the war on which the fate of humanity hangs, depends on him. None is too old or too poor to do his or her share. In the past Jews had supplied refugees, orphans and destitute to the world; to-day they had the opportunity of supplying the fighting forces and the sinews of war. The Jewish soldier knew what he was fighting for—all our entire available strength must go forward.

There was unique unanimity at Congress about the war effort. We were determined to do our duty willingly and wholeheartedly. The Jews went forward in obedience to the orders not of kings and empires but of the whole mass of Jewry. They would sacrifice life itself in order that the struggle be won, as it would be won, if we made up our minds to win.

Miss L. Faktor rendered a pianoforte solo.

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Cape Jewish Orphanage.

Annual General Meeting.

The Twenty-ninth Annual General Meeting of subscribers and donors to the Cape Jewish Orphanage took place in the Dining Hall of the Orphanage on Sunday morning.

Mr. J. M. WEINREICH was in the chair and at the outset asked those present to rise as a mark of respect to members and relatives of members who had passed away during the year.

He welcomed those present and referred to the fact that this was the first time they were meeting in the new building. He thanked all those who had helped to make the past year such a successful one. The children were excellently cared for physically and mentally. In their secular education they were greatly assisted by the Isaac Ochberg Higher Education Fund. In Hebrew education the children were making outstanding progress as all reports testified.

Mr. Weinreich paid a tribute to the After-care Committee, who kept an eye on the children until they reached an age when they were able to look after themselves.

There were seventeen boys on active service and it was the intention of the Committee to record their names in a panel in the building.

The financial position was not so satisfactory. The new building was not yet paid for and most of the contributions had come from the country. He appealed for more contributions, an increase in membership, and the resuscitation of the Clothing Guild. He urged members to come into closer contact with the Institution and to visit the Home regularly. In conclusion, he thanked the Trustees, Rabbi I Abrahams and Mr. M. Alexander, K.C., M.P., the members of the Committee and the Secretary, Mr. Kloot, for their help and co-operation. He moved the adoption of the Report and Balance Sheet.

Mr. M. BERMAN seconded the adoption of the Report and Balance Sheet and stressed the need for greater support. In spite of the many war funds, local charities must not be neglected. There was a deficit for the year of £250 12s. 9d., the largest for ten years. Every possibility was explored for cutting costs. He appealed to members to increase their subscriptions and to enrol new subscribers. He thanked Mrs. H. Wolff who did a country tour with splendid results, and the Hon. Auditors, Messrs. Alex. Thal & Co.

RABBI I. ABRAHAMS congratulated the Executive and Committee on the excellent report. It was a relief to tear oneself away from the grim realities of the present and to find peace and progress in the Orphanage. The children were excellently cared for. Their religious and Hebrew education as he knew from personal contact with them, left nothing to be desired. It was a real spiritual pleasure to be in their company on Sabbaths and festivals. He appealed for more adequate support for the Orphanage.

Mr. M. ALEXANDER, K.C., M.P., supported the adoption of the Report and Financial Statement. The Institution was

a model one in every respect; the only weak spot was the financial position and he urged all to do their utmost to improve the situation in this respect.

Mr. L. SEGAL congratulated the Committee on behalf of the Cape Jewish Board of Guardians, and suggested ways and means of improving the financial position.

Mr. J. HERBSTEIN stressed the very critical times in which they were meeting and said that to talk of increasing subscriptions to one institution was a short-sighted view. The Jewish community must put its own house in order. The Orphanage was only one of many institutions in Cape Town. The present time demanded a statesmanlike attitude to the whole situation. Charitable work and war work must be co-ordinated. He suggested that the leaders of the community immediately take steps to call together all institutions as part of one organisation. It might be that for the sake of overseas needs expenditure of local institutions would have to be reduced; they would have to work on a war budget.

As regards evacuee children he thought this was not a matter only for the Orphanage but for the whole community. Time called for greater sacrifices and these sacrifices must be put to the best use.

Messrs. A. M. Jackson, A. Abrahams and L. Gradner also participated in the discussion, to which Mr. Weinreich replied.

The Report and Balance Sheet were carried unanimously.

Motions.

The following motions were carried:—

"That in view of the regrettable but unavoidable delay in the issue of the 1939 Report and the holding of this year's Annual Meeting, this meeting agrees that no further Report be issued or Annual Meeting be held until March, 1942."

"To seek authority for the incoming Committee to act as they deem fit in regard to Jewish children who may be brought to this country from the war-stricken countries."

Elections.

The following Executive and Committee were elected: President, Mr. B. A. Crasnow; Vice-President, Mr. J. Weinreich; Hon. Life Chairlady, Mrs. H. Stodel; Chairlady, Mrs. N. Hirschsohn; Vice-Chairlady, Mrs. A. Jacob; Treasurer, Mr. Michael Berman. Committee: Messrs. H. Stodel, J. Kadish, L. Gradner, J. Zadjik, H. P. Beck, S. Schrire, A. Sacks, I. Friedlander, A. Jacob, M. Bobrov, Max Raphaely, J. Cohen, L. Hirschsohn, H. Kossick, M. Shnaps, Hermann Cohen, A. Abrahams, R. Obowitz. Mesdames H. Stodel, L. Gradner, B. Jacobson, M. Alexander, I. Abrahams, J. Heneck, S. R. Levy, B. Roy, J. Abraham, R. Sonnenberg, R. Leibowitz, M. Raphaely, H. Wolff, J. Weinreich.