

Zionist Conversazione.

ADDRESS BY MR. J. HERBSTEIN, K.C.

A Zionist Conversazione under the auspices of the Dorshei Zion Association was held at the Synagogue Hall, Marais Road, Sea Point, on Tuesday night. Mr. M. Joffe was in the chair.

Mr. J. Herbstein, K.C., in an address on "False Beliefs," said that among Jews in South Africa there was a lack of thought on the Jewish question, a refusal to face facts; they were deluding themselves to-day just as they had done in the past. There was a feeling of sympathy with fellow Jews in Europe which found expression in generous contributions to relief funds, but Jews here did not ask themselves what would be the effects after the war of fifteen years of intense anti-Jewish propaganda and of the ideological struggle between the ideals of Nazism and Fascism and Communism. Would the peoples of the world revert to the old order of things or look for leadership to a triumphant Russia? The natural reaction to the years of war and persecution would be a desire to return to normalcy. In how far would the Jewish people be able to take advantage of this? There was no doubt that the great powers of the world would treat the Jews like human beings; but no laws could be passed in advance of public opinion, and it was doubtful whether the post-war population of Europe would be prepared to accept the Jews as equals and without this there could be no security.

In so far as Jewish life was concerned, said Mr. Herbstein, there could be no doubt that it would survive; there was some divine purpose in the existence of the Jewish people. But he did not believe that Jews could build their lives on sure foundations or could find security in the Galuth. The liquidation of the Galuth might take generations but was essential. The doctrine of emancipation had proved a snare and a delusion. Territorialism had been tried by Baron Hirsch in South America and had proved no solution. Communism, which some believed could solve all problems, was no more than a new theory of economics. If freedom meant anything it meant the right to live the type of life the individual wanted to live according to his own standards and traditions. There was no such possibility under Communism. No economic change could bring to the Jewish people the opportunity of living a full Jewish life.

Zionism was the only attempt to try and re-establish Jewish life in all its purity and on the basis of its own traditions. In South Africa Jews were guilty of a grave sin with regard to Zionism—they believed they could sit in safety and security and leave it to others to do the active work of upbuilding the National Home. Zionism in South Africa was a charitable movement for settling other Jews on the soil of Palestine.

Hebrew culture was neglected by South African Jews, who saved their conscience by contributing to the various funds. The centres of Jewish life of the past had been destroyed; religion was debilitated. All that remained of Judaism was a feeling of kinship based on the common fear of a common enemy—something negative, not positive. If Jewish life was to continue for the Jewish people, all those still living in free countries must learn the lesson that not by false beliefs and a philosophy of escapism, but through the fundamental truths enunciated by Herzl will Jewish life be sustained and the Jewish tradition be handed on to future generations.

A discussion followed in which Messrs. J. O. Markovitz, I. Frank, M. Aronson and Hermann Cohen participated. Mr. Herbstein replied.

During the evening Mr. Boris Rome rendered several songs and Mr. G. Laden gave a humorous reading.

The Late Mrs. Sarah L. Cohen.

An Appreciation.

By J. Gitlin.

One day in the year 1908, a young, frail-looking girl, who was strange to us, the then workers in the Zionist cause, came to the Zionist Hall accompanied by Miss Ray Morrison, who was shortly to give up the secretaryship of the Bnoth Zion Association on account of her approaching marriage to Mr. Bernard Segal, who was at that time Hon. Secretary of the Dorshei Zion Association. In answer to my question, Miss Morrison told me that this young lady was Miss Penchansky who was going to take over the honorary position of Secretary of the Bnoth Zion Association. When I expressed doubt as to whether a person who had never taken part in the work before could be suitable as Secretary, she assured me that in a very short time we would be very thankful to her for bringing Sarah L. to our ranks; and so it was. It was not very long before Miss Penchansky became not only the very



Mrs. Sarah L. Cohen.

active Secretary of the Bnoth Zion Association but also my right hand in all the work of Zionist endeavour at that time.

The Zionist organisation in Cape Town then had no special office, no paid officials or staff, and everything was done voluntarily. Immediately the house of the Penchanskys became the centre of Zionist activity. Not a day passed without my spending a couple of hours in this house for Zionist work, whether it was for publicity purposes, such as letters and articles for the general press, of which we made much use at that time, or whether for organising a shekel collection (which then was much more difficult than now, as Zionism was far from popular), or whether for arranging mass meetings, public lectures, or debates, which were much more frequent and better attended than now. Every day of the week there was some Zionist work to be done, and Sarah L. Penchansky always did it with pleasure and devotion. But the height of her ability and energy was shown during the two visits of the first Zionist emissary from Eretz Israel, Mr. Kretzmar Israely, in 1913 and 1914 (after the visit of Madame Pevsner); the first visit was in the interests of the Agudat Netaim, and the purpose of the second visit was to collect money to assist the then champions for the

Hebrew language in Eretz Israel in their fight against the "Hilfsverein der Deutsche Juden" the members of which wanted the German language to be the language of the Technicum in Haifa, over which they had the control, as they were the main contributors and wardens of the Technicum. All the teachers of the Hilfsverein schools in Palestine went out on strike and emissaries were sent to the Jewish world to appeal for funds to release the Palestine schools from German influence. Kretzmar Israely's mission to South Africa was a great success, and for this success in Cape Town Sarah L. Penchansky was largely responsible. At that time she had already given up her original position as typist to a local firm of attorneys, and she threw herself heart and soul into Zionist work; she influenced her younger sisters, who also became Zionist workers. Her sister Milly, now Mrs. Levy (wife of Mr. Abraham Levy, the very capable manager of the "Binyan" in Eretz Israel), was a pillar of strength to the Junior Zionist Society, and afterwards became its Chairlady.

In later years, after the issue of the Balfour Declaration, when Zionist activity became more widespread, Sarah L., as the wife of Mr. Max Cohen, participated in every branch of our work. In several of the campaigns she acted as secretary or assistant secretary. But her greatest achievement, perhaps, was the result of her work for a few years as hon. secretary of the Board of Jewish Education. In 1932 when the Board was re-formed and Mrs. Cohen became its secretary, she threw herself into the work, and the success of the local Board is in no small measure due to her labours. The meetings of the Board were held in her house and many times they ended only after midnight; but in spite of this the next morning the minutes were typed and the correspondence attended to. She carried through the school census for the Board with great success, and was in constant touch with all affiliated bodies to the Board.

Mrs. Cohen did not divide her energies; when she undertook a job of work she put her heart and soul and all her being into it, whether it was purely Zionist work or educational work. As Chairlady of the Bnoth Zion Hebrew Kindergartens, as a member of the Committee of the Gardens Hebrew Congregation, and in any task she undertook, she worked "bechol leiv venefesh" with devotion and self-denial. When the building of the United Hebrew Schools was erected, Mrs. Cohen gave up a great deal of her time to collecting funds for its furnishing, and she succeeded magnificently.

When war broke out, Mrs. Cohen, with her strong temperament, deep feeling and understanding, immediately realised that the existence of Jewry depended on the outcome, and in spite of being a mother of four grown-up children, she joined the forces and influenced her children to do likewise. She served in the cause of the struggle for freedom up till a few months before her untimely death when she obtained her discharge from the army.

Sarah L. Cohen died young in years, and my sincere sympathy goes out to her bereaved husband and children, mother, father, brothers and sisters; they have sustained an irreparable loss, but they can derive consolation from the fact that she lived a fruitful life, a life full of activity for the well-being of her People. "Thei nishmat zruah bitzror hachayim . . ."

Phone 2-5164

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