

from **NEAR and FAR**
BY BEN DOR

Gertrude Agranat Exhibition



ties that a layman does not think about when he goes to a gallery and sees the pictures. An artist paints a large number of pictures and then spends some time selecting what he considers the best. They have to be suitably framed, some time usually being spent in choosing the frames, the catalogue has to be drawn up and the pictures named, and then they have to be hung in such a way that they flow neatly together without clashing. Arrangements have to be made with the gallery, which charges a specified rental and so much commission on any pictures sold.

Mrs. Agranat is the daughter of Mr. Leo Feit, well-known Johannesburg communal worker.

Was La Guardia a Jew?

A READER asks: "Is it true that La Guardia was a Jew?" The answer is: "No."

He was only partly of Jewish origin and had no official bonds with the Jewish community. His mother was Jewish, and Jewish law might therefore have regarded him as a Jew. His mother's maiden name was Irene Luzzatto Coen and the certificate of her marriage at Trieste to Achille La Guardia described her as being of "the Israelite religion."

His mother died in Budapest and was buried in the Jewish cemetery. His sister was married to a Jew.

During the early days of his career La Guardia worked as interpreter in the American Consulate at Budapest and later as Consular Agent at Trieste. He thus acquired many foreign languages, including Yiddish, which he used with great proficiency in the East End during his electioneering campaigns.

La Guardia was an out-and-out enemy of the Nazis. In 1935 he made the world smile when he detailed a squad of policemen consisting entirely of Jews to protect a group of Nazi diplomats. In 1937 it was suggested that the New York World's Fair should have a Temple of Liberty. La Guardia said: "With that temple dedicated to the progress of world freedom, I would have a 'Chamber of Horrors' and, as a climax, I would have in it the figure of that brown-shirted fanatic who is now menacing the peace of the world."

The Nazis did not like it. They called him "New York's chief Jew" and used many unprintable epithets in connection with his name. The printable ones included "crook, gorilla, gangster and blackmailer."

Thousands Flock to Hear New Cantor

IT is a long time since Johannesburg worshippers displayed such enthusiasm for "chazanuth" as is the case with Cantor J. Eidelson who is now officiating at the Yeoville synagogue. Not only during the High Festivals but throughout the Succoth services the synagogue was crowded to capacity. Many who could not gain entrance to the premises of the synagogue

took seats in the women's gallery. For Yom Kippur the committee of the congregation was obliged to announce that only seat-holders would be admitted!

The new cantor is still a very young man. He was born in Warsaw 31 years ago, and became an accomplished chazan at a very young age. As a youth of 20 he was appointed "Shtot-Chazan" of Vilna. In 1939 he paid a visit to Palestine and was highly praised by experts on chazanuth. He went back to Vilna two weeks before the outbreak of the war and was later caught by the Nazi advance. Confined to the Ghetto he could not officiate in his synagogue because it was outside the borders of the Jewish area.

It is indeed a miracle that despite his suffering Cantor Eidelson retained his beautiful tenor voice. Throughout the Nazi occupation he was doing forced labour. In an interview with the "Zionist Record" he described how on one Yom Kippur he and his friends rose at dawn to pray in an improvised ghetto synagogue, and after prayers reported to work. In the evening, after work, they came back to the improvised house of prayer and he rendered the Neilah



CANTOR EIDELSON

service. When the Ghetto was liquidated he was taken to a concentration camp in Riga and from Riga to another concentration camp at Stutthof. Everywhere his singing helped him out. The Nazi sadists, the S.S. men, took a delight in listening to his singing of "Eili Eili" and of arias from operas. German political internees, who were better treated than Jews and had bigger rations, would invite him to give concerts on Sundays. They would pay him with their rations. After liberation the cantor reached Rome, where he spent the last two years, studying music and improving his voice. His teacher was a well-known professor, Alberto Volonino. In Rome, too, he was a member of the Hebrew Art Circle consisting of refugee artists.

The cantor will appear at a concert on Sunday night, and all lovers of music will be looking forward to hearing him in a modern repertoire of classic songs in Hebrew and Yiddish.

"If ever I go overseas, it will rather be to the United States and Mexico than to Paris, revolutionary as this may sound," Gertrude Agranat, who is having an exhibition of her pastels at Herbert Evans Galleries, told a "Zionist Record" reporter. This young artist, whose exhibition is her first "one-man" show, believes that too many young South African artists come back from Paris with their identities blunted or lost unless they have very strong personalities, and that this is likely to happen to anyone in Paris. She feels, too, that the art of Paris and of Europe generally has become rather decadent, as a result of war-time turbulence, whereas the United States has a most productive atmosphere, a combination of European culture and native American alertness, pulsating with energy.

Mrs. Agranat has lived up to her belief in the ubiquitous beauty and richness of the South African scene. Her pictures range from sketches of African slum life, colourful and arresting in their very human admixtures of modern European and primitive African as seen in the medicine man's shop stacked with modern medicine bottles containing outlandish concoctions and strange herbs. (No. 13) and the general dealer's store with a range of goods varying from the latest style in American frocks to the calabash and horn; to portraits of Zulu women, an Indian child and a Chinese maiden, mostly with austere plain backgrounds that emphasise the subject; from the tropical mistiness of the Natal and Zululand countryside to the clean, clear woodiness of the Knysna forest scene. Throughout one senses her thrilling to the strange and beautiful to be met with all about her, and to her capture of what is yet essentially human and universal.

Mrs. Agranat described the amount of effort that has to be put into an exhibition, all the activi-

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