

Letters to the EDITOR

Defence Of "Ashkenazith"

Rabbi Chigier's letter left a powerful impression on me. Our six million martyrs in Europe have suffered, prayed and spoken in the Ashkenazith. They were singing "Ani Maamin" in this Hebrew when they were taken to the crematoria, and here comes a Jew who speaks so disdainfully of the old-fashioned, obsolete, Galuth dialect. What is more, they even were, according to him, "unpatriotic" in their education. It is, I think, an insult to their sacred memory to speak in this strain. Even if the Rabbi's arguments were right, which they are not, he should not have touched them in such language.

In general, I must say, I am rather puzzled by the sudden outburst of "Sephardic consciousness", which flared up in our community in recent weeks. In Europe, up to the very end, the accepted dialect was the Ashkenazith one. In America the position is the same. All functions organised by the Histadruth Ivrit of the U.S.A., are conducted in Ashkenazith. The late Chief Rabbi of Eretz Israel, Rabbi Kook, who was revered for the beauty of his Hebrew style, never spoke anything else but Ashkenazith. In the cities of Eretz Israel the services in most Synagogues are still conducted in Ashkenazith. Many leading Hebrew educationalists, like the late Dr. Charno, the Director of the Hebrew Teachers' Seminary in Vilno, were opposed to Sephardic or scientific methods. For the United Hebrew Congregations of Johannesburg and Pretoria to aspire now to give a lead to the rest of world Jewry, seems a bit boastful and smacks of cheap publicity.

The argument used, that the Orphanage has already adopted Sephardic, is ridiculous. The Orphanage, with all due respect for the good work done by it, can hardly serve as a model of Jewish or Hebrew education. I still have to see the scholars produced by that institution. As for the Teachers' Seminary—it is yet in its swaddling-clothes and has still to prove itself.

I quite appreciate the need of bringing the Hebrew of the Diaspora into line with that spoken in Eretz Israel. But it ought to be a gradual, evolutionary process, with particular attention to the conditions prevailing in each place. Abrupt, revolutionary changes will cause more harm than good. An old Russian proverb says: "The slower you go, the farther you come."

Yours etc.,
A HEBREW TEACHER,
Johannesburg.

Was Not A Rabbi

Sir,—I noticed in one of your recent issues of the "Zionist Record" Mr. Rybko in his History of Natal referring to the birth of the New Hebrew Congregation saying that Mr. S. Goldberg was the first Minister of that Congregation.

No doubt Mr. Rybko's intention was to honour me, but I do not like to wear a cloth that does not belong to me and I therefore decline the title.

If Mr. Rybko had said that I performed ministerial duties in my capacity as a private member of the Congregation I would have had no complaint, but to put on me a "rabbinical garb" and call me a Minister after the knowledge I have gained since of some of the Ministers (even those in the highest ranks), I certainly take objection to be counted as one of them.

I hope that you or Mr. Rybko will rectify the error, thus removing the wrong impression.

Yours, etc.,
S. GOLDBERG,
25 Albermarle Court,
Durban.

Weddings In Jewish Centre

Sir,—Last week both the Jewish press and the "Star" featured a large advertisement inserted by the Jewish Centre. Bold lettering made it known that beautiful and dignified weddings could be consecrated in the Jewish Centre. Who is their Rabbi? Who has come on the scene to compete with the existing Synagogues? At one stage of his career their Rabbi planned to hold Rosh Hashona and Yom Kippur Services in the Carlton ballroom! If a Jew is sincere enough he will pray and be married in an established Synagogue and not have to be lured into a place which is really making a mockery of the Jewish religion.

Yours, etc.,
I. DAVIDOW,
Maxie Street,
Fairwood,
Johannesburg.

Disregarding Neutral Findings

Sir,—Although I am strongly opposed to Dr. Rabinowitz's Zionist politics I consider the attack by "B.B." as unkind and unwarranted. The Rabbi did not state that he was going on behalf of the community. He went at the present dangerous time in order to see things for himself. He is entitled to do so and should be commended for his action, if only in order to enlighten himself as well as the Revisionist Party here.

That the leaders of the Revisionist Party mislead their followers is obvious from the fact that the Revisionist organ did not publish a word of the findings of the independent commission appointed to investigate the disaster at the Haifa refineries. Instead of this, they published a verbatim account given by the Irgun Zvai!

It has puzzled me how a body that belongs to the Zionist organisation should disregard a report given by an authoritative body of lawyers and other prominent personalities.

Yours, etc.,
DAVID LEVIN,
Cape Town.

Too Many Choirs

Sir,—While there is an abundance of students of music in our community, it will be agreed that we are not blessed with an abundance of talent. This is inevitable since genius cannot be picked up from every tree.

It therefore seems surprising to me that we have a duplication of musical organisations. The Musical Institute has founded an orchestra, and now the Cantor's Association is forming a new Hazamir choir. Earlier attempts to establish a choir have started off well, but failed in the end. Is this not due to the forces? Could they not combine?

Yours, etc.,
MUSIC LOVER.

MR. AND MRS PINCUS

Mr. and Mrs. L. A. Pincus have sent the following message: "We wish to thank our many friends who have sent us good wishes on the eve of our departure for Palestine. It is impossible for us to write to each one of you individually, but we will treasure sincere good wishes in our new life."

FRIENDS OF PALESTINE ORCHESTRA AND HABIMAH

AT the annual general meeting of the S.A. Friends of Palestine Orchestra and Habimah Theatre, held at the home of Mrs. N. E. Rosenberg on February 22, the old Committee with Mr. S. Yellin as chairman and Mrs. W. Senior as vice-chairman, was re-elected.

Mr. S. Yellin in his presidential address stressed the necessity of strengthening the Orchestra, the Habimah and the Ohel. Apart from their cultural value, these institutions are doing important work in keeping up public morale by their performances and by their specific wartime activities. They are encouraging and uniting the Yishuv during the present emergency period.

Most of their members have joined up for national service, except those who have been requested to continue their work for the public benefit. But they will not be able to continue without help and support from friends who appreciate the importance of urgent additional aid in these critical times.

Mr. David Dainow, the guest-speaker, gave an interesting talk on the achievements of these institutions. The Palestine Orchestra has the potentiality of becoming one of the best Orchestras of the world. So long as the Orchestra is playing, the Yishuv will live. It is a part of their lives, they love it as their dearest child. In the present crisis the support of these cultural organisations is more necessary than ever before.

Mrs. F. Weinbren reported on the cultural activities of the "Friends" during the past year.

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SISTERHOOD SABBATH AT TEMPLE ISRAEL

SISTERHOOD Sabbath was observed in conjunction with Women's World Day of Prayer, at a Service at Temple Israel recently.

The Service, which was fully choral, was conducted by the Chief Minister, Rabbi Dr. M. C. Weiler, assisted by the Reverend Isaac Richards and Rabbi Dr. R. Brasch.

The choir was under the direction of Mr. Jerry Idelson.

A social followed the Service, and Mrs. S. Fischgrund, the chairman of the United Sisterhood, had the opportunity of welcoming Rabbi Dr. Brasch and the representatives of various organisations. Among these were: Mrs. Manisty, Dr. McPherson, Dr. Miller and about 60 members of the S.A. Red Cross, a detachment of St. John's Ambulance, and members of the Magen David Adom.

Dr. F. Sichel represented the Wit. Jewish Welfare Council, and the Jewish Women's Benevolent and Welfare Society; Mrs. N. Silverman, the Union of Jewish Women; Mrs. Scandrett, the Save the Children Fund, and Mr. C. Kaplan, the S.A. Jewish Board of Deputies.

Each of the representatives brought greetings from their organisations and stressed the importance of combined worship of Jew and non-Jew.

Mrs. J. Mitchell-Hunter, president of the National Council of Women (Johannesburg), in a letter expressing her regret at her unavoidable absence from the Service, said: "It is only when we ALL begin to realise that ALL the women of the world are or ought to be a "United Sisterhood" that we shall make our influence felt."

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