

CURRENT

COMMUNAL

By "Hamabit"

COMMENT

Mauritius

AN INTERESTING item in the cable news recently was the announcement of the arrival of sixteen hundred Jewish refugees at Mauritius—the beautiful island situated some seven days sea journey from Durban. These refugees are presumably those who were refused landing in Palestine.

This must surely be the first time that Mauritius has loomed large on the Jewish horizon. No Jewish community has ever been established on the island, although individual Jews from the Union have visited Mauritius from time to time on holiday bent.

I do not believe there is a single Jewish resident on the island to-day. The only Jewish name in the past that one can think of in connection with Mauritius is that of a Sephardic Jew, J. I. de Lissa Cohen, who died at Curepipe in Mauritius in May, 1879. For close on two decades, Cohen was intimately connected with journalism in Mauritius. He was the founder and editor of the "Mercantile Record and Communal Gazette," and was generally well-liked on the island.

Although I have no information on this point, I feel sure that some steps are being taken here to ascertain the conditions in which the Jewish refugees are now living and in what way they can be assisted.

A Chazan

I OFTEN wish I could listen-in to some of the excellent programmes broadcast by the Palestine radio. From reports published in the Palestine press, I notice that both the musical and the "talking" programmes are of a really high standard. One of the subjects which is regularly dealt with by the Palestine radio is that of the history of Chazanuth. These talks are given with musical illustrations and are a real treat to those like myself who have a keen interest in this ancient Jewish art.

A few months ago, for instance, the Palestine radio devoted a whole programme to Eduard Birnbaum, the well-known Koenigsberg chazan. Birnbaum died only twenty years ago, and though he was not as distinguished a singer as some of his contemporaries, he devoted himself to the study of Chazanuth and really laid the foundations of the history and science of Chazanuth. The late A. Z. Idelsohn made liberal use of Birnbaum's works for the publica-

tion of his book. His monumental collection of Chazanic music, some 15,000 manuscripts, is housed in the Hebrew Union College of Cincinnati. On several occasions it was stated that these would appear in print, but so far nothing seems to have been done in the matter.

"Owszem"

IT is an irony of fate that Palestine, which started its modern development as a haven of refuge for Jews who fled from Poland, is to-day offering refuge to Polish exiles. Numerous Polish dignitaries recently reached Palestine after having escaped from Rumania, and detachments of Polish soldiers crossed into the country from Syria after the fall of France. The Poles feel very much at home amongst the Jews of Palestine. Few of them have any knowledge of English, but they can very easily manage with Polish amongst the Palestinian Jews.

A recent arrival in Tel-Aviv is General Skladkowski, a former Polish Premier, who had fled from Rumania. Skladkowski is the notorious founder of the "Owszem"-policy in Poland. During his reign a delegation came to him to protest against pogroms and against the anti-Jewish boycott. His reply was that he was against pogroms. "Such things can not be permitted in the country," he said, "but as for the boycott, the economic fight against Jews, well . . . 'Owszem.'" Now "Owszem" is a typically Polish word meaning, "why, of course." Since then this policy has been known as the "Owszem"-policy.

I am glad to learn that the Jews of Palestine, however, bear these exiles no malice. An exile is an exile, and Jews know the taste of exile. The Poles are entertained and looked after by their Jewish countrymen, and not even in a whisper does anyone suggest that the fate of the Polish rulers is a punishment from God.

Bait for the Soldier

HERE is a delightful little story which I would like to pass on to our army chaplains, and to all others connected with the spiritual welfare of our men in uniform. In fairness to our South African Jewish lads I must add, however, that no bait is required in order to attract South African Jewish men to camp services, or to any other Jewish cultural functions.

The story was told by Dr. Margoshes, the present editor of the "Tog," of New York. During the first Great War he was attached to

the Jewish Welfare Board School, an institution which provided spiritual and social guides for Jewish men in uniform. "It was my duty," he says, "to hand over to the young men who entered my school the Jewish heritage of 3,000 years in three weeks' time! I cannot say that the results were always satisfactory. Frequent trips to the camps for inspection were necessary in order to ascertain how our graduates were working out."

One day he went on a trip of inspection to a camp in order to discover the secret of an unusual success. It appeared that one of his graduates had become a most popular welfare officer although he had no extraordinary training, no special ability, no personality. "I spent a whole day," continues Dr. Margoshes, "without finding the slightest clue to his phenomenal popularity. Finally, I asked the young officer himself about it. He grew very mysterious and led me down a flight of stairs to the cellar. Then he lit a match, and brought me face to face with an object far in the corner of the basement. It was . . . a barrel of herring surrounded by piles of "pumpernickel," or what is called Jewish bread. 'See,' he said to me, 'this is what the boys used to get at home, and what they greatly miss in the Army. And this is the secret of my success!'"

A Prodigy

A STREET has 96 buildings. Every building contains 128 windows, and every window consists of six window-panes. How many window-panes are there in the street?"

If you were asked this question you would probably have to spend a considerable time on multiplication until you reached the final figure of 73,728 panes. But not so Baruch Dreiser, a five-year-old Jewish child in the city of Bialystock, which is now under Soviet occupation. The little boy took only a few seconds to solve the above problem which was given to him by a committee of scientists. They put him to a strenuous test and were amazed at his mathematical abilities.

Friends!

ISAAC and Moses were always quarrelling. After some time, they decided to become good friends. Isaac said to Moses: "I wish you what you wish me."

"You are starting again," said Moses.

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