This special edition of WIZO Review is comprised of material from historical WIZO publications.
Dear Chaverot

This is a different WIZO Review and a very special one.

We are taking you on a journey – from the establishment of the Women’s International Zionist Organization (WIZO) in London in 1920, through the dark years of the 1930s and 1940s and ending in 1948 when the State of Israel was established. You will see how our leaders throughout all these years planned and adapted WIZO’s activities according to the needs of the country, from agricultural and home economics courses, care for abandoned babies, assistance with new immigrants and having a woman’s voice in parliament.

For some time I had known that there were some old WIZO magazines in the National Library on the Hebrew University Campus in Jerusalem.

Recently, Assistant Editor David Sarna Galdi and I went on a mission to find what was there. Our quest took four visits of many hours each time.

With advances in technology, over the years, the library website has been upgraded with the result that we could do some searches on-line, order what we wanted to see, and the relevant materials were brought up ‘from the dungeons’ and were waiting for us in a designated reading room.

And what treasures we found! In this issue, we present you with extracts from some of these publications; some are the original scans we did, some we have shortened and re-typed.

The articles are taken from: Pioneers & Helpers, Palestine WIZO Newsletter, WIZO Readers Digest and WIZO Review, spanning years from 1932 to 1950.

How heartbreaking it is to read accounts of events in Germany and Eastern Europe in the 1930s, leading up to the Holocaust – how Poland was our biggest and most vibrant federation with 10,000 members across the country. You will read heartbreaking stories from the Second World War, including one of a young WIZO woman who escaped the Nazi inferno.

But after World War II, WIZO regenerated - starting in the Displaced Persons Camps in post-war Europe. It is indeed amazing and inspirational to read accounts how, after all their suffering and family losses, WIZO women found each other in the DP camps, and came together in the WIZO spirit to help each other and other survivors.

And here in Eretz Yisrael, both during the war and immediately afterwards, WIZO women were prominent in helping the refugees to start a new life.

We must take a step back and look from afar… how WIZO grew so rapidly from its inception in 1920. Without the technology we have today, those devoted, committed women with a mission – created and developed a world movement in a comparatively short time.

Ingrid Rockberger
Editor

WIZO Around the World is not included in this magazine; it will be issued as a supplement on-line.
Dear Friends,

One of WIZO’s greatest strengths lies in its ability to carry out its daily work, while continuously evolving, developing and adapting itself to the national pulse and addressing the needs of the hour. We owe this strength to our founding mothers, their vision and aspirations. They looked way beyond the horizon and considering the times they lived in – what they achieved was miraculous.

They had no representation in Parliament or Government, no social laws to support equality or women’s rights in general, no State of Israel, no technology…

They did not have the freedoms we sometimes take for granted. In a male dominated society, they were brought up to be the perfect wife and mother - no more. Higher studying, a profession, or an occupation was not the norm - only women of the lower classes left the house to work. Their husbands may have encouraged them to join reading clubs or similar, but were probably somewhat embarrassed by their aspirations and later actions.

We may see Rebecca Sieff, Dr. Vera Weizmann, Edith Eder, Romana Goodman and others as pioneers and heroines, but back then – we may see them as visionaries, and continue in the pioneering spirit as we strengthen WIZO that built the foundations of a nation lives on and today, in 2017, it continues on that very same path that Herzl envisaged. We can all take pride that we walk that path in the steps of great visionaries, and continue in the pioneering spirit as we strengthen the citizens of the State of Israel for a better tomorrow.

Warm regards.

Esther Mor
President, World WIZO

World WIZO Executive Presidents or Chairpersons of Federations

- Argentina: Nicole Kovalyver
- Australia: Paulette Cherry
- Austria: Dr. Hava Bugajer
- Belgium & Luxembourg: Varda Cywiel, Nathalie MIDOUNKIN
- Bolivia: Liliana Swerszscharf
- Brazil: Silene Balassiano
- Bulgaria: Marina Nanjova
- Canada: Debbie Eisenberg
- Chile: Agnes Mannheim
- Colombia: Deborah Sternberg
- Costa Rica: Ana Ligator
- Curaçao: Yael Ackerman
- Czech Republic: Eva Kosakova
- Denmark: Dorrit Raiter
- Estonia: Revekka Blumberg
- Finland: Ann Wardi
- France: Joelle Lezmi
- Germany: Simone Graumann
- Gibraltar: Julie Massias
- Greece: Gratziela Bourla Konstandnis
- Guatemala: Ruth Sibony Azulay
- Holland: Joyce Y. Numann - Durlacher
- Honduras: Yaeli Zylberman
- Hong Kong: Shani Brownstein, Marissa Raccah
- Hungary: Kate Köves
- India: Yael Jhirad
- Italy: Ester (Silvana) Israel
- Jamaica: Jennifer (McAdam) Lim
- Japan: Sarah Hyams
- Latvia: Hana Finkelstein
- Lithuania: Rachel Kostanian
- Mexico: Alegría Smeke
- New Zealand: Lorna Orbell
- Norway: Janne Jaffe Heistvold
- Panama: Betty Btesh
- Paraguay: Rosana Barán
- Peru: Michelle Lumbroso
- Portugal: Liliana Lemor
- Singapore: S. J. Khafi
- South Africa: Monyeen Castle
- Spain: Astrid Mizrachi
- Sweden: Susanne Sznajderman-Rytz
- Switzerland: Eva Wyler
- United Kingdom: Michele Pollock
- United States: Jana Falic
- Uruguay: Sara Laks Trachtenberg
- Venezuela: Ena Rotkopf

Dear Chaverot,

The greatest Zionist visionary, Theodor Herzl wrote in 1901, “What is the role of women in Zionism? I will not say ‘nothing’ but what could it be, what should it be? Perhaps everything. And if we follow the right path towards this aim, it will be.”

We proudly look back at the truly life-saving work of WIZO’s founders whose vision precluded the glorious imprint of the creation of the State of Israel as we know it. In WIZO’s infancy, in the years from 1921 to 1933, our pioneering foremothers rolled up their sleeves and mobilized out of sheer necessity for the women and children of Palestine who were living under the most horrendous conditions. Malnutrition, disease and stillbirth were rife, and mothers were encouraged to give birth to babies in hospitals under the supervision of doctors. The Tipat Chalav’ (drop of milk) childcare clinics, with trained nurses to take care of the mothers and babies, attracted large numbers of mothers and mothers-to-be who received fresh pasteurized milk. At these centers, the women of Palestine also received training in mothercraft, childcare, cleanliness and hygiene.

In 1923, WIZO opened an agricultural school at Nahalal, the very first in Palestine, where women were taught how to grow their own vegetables and fruit so that they could put food on the table. It is impossible for us to even begin to imagine the hardships faced by our sisters in pre-state Palestine but the pioneering spirit of WIZO that built the foundations of a nation lives on and today, in 2017, it continues on that very same path that Herzl envisaged. We can all take pride that we walk that path in the steps of great visionaries, and continue in the pioneering spirit as we strengthen the citizens of the State of Israel for a better tomorrow.

With warmest wishes,

Prof. Rivka Lazovsky
Chairperson, World WIZO Executive
Historical background

WIZO: The Beginning

The growth of the movement, rather than linear, was a convergence of leaders and groups resolved to empower women in a Jewish state

Before there was WIZO, there were several women’s Zionist groups in 19th century England aimed at supporting the Jewish community in Palestine and spreading Zionism, which had gained support in the wake of the pogroms that swept Jewish communities in Russia in the 1880s. By 1890, some 30 such groups existed in England and when Theodor Herzl called the first Zionist Congress in 1897 women were represented by several delegates.

Rebecca Marks, born in 1890 to the wealthy Marks family (founders of the British retail giant Marks & Spencer) attended Manchester University, where she met her future husband, Israel Sieff, who she married in 1910.

In 1904, Dr. Chaim Weizmann accompanied by his (future) wife Vera, took a job as a lecturer at Manchester University. Manchester, where there was already an organized Jewish Zionist community, became a center of the Zionist movement and Weizmann acquired a circle of local supporters, including Harry Sacher, Simon Marks and Israel Sieff. Meeting socially, the wives of these men became part of the debates and activities and conceived of their own role in the sculpting of Jewish history.

A “ladies committee” established within the framework of the British Zionist Federation included the future founders of WIZO - Rebecca Sieff, Vera Weizmann, and Romana Goodman. These women, unsatisfied, petitioned the federation arguing that women of the future Jewish state must be provided “with equality of opportunity in action and in decision making” and that only a separate organisation of Zionist women could awaken women to their national Jewish consciousness.

Rebecca Sieff envisioned a much greater role for women in the newborn movement. In 1918, the year after the Balfour Declaration (1917), she enlisted the help of women like Vera Weizmann, Edith Eder, and Lady Samuel, “remarkable wives of remarkable men,” to create the FWZ (Federation of Women Zionists).

When the Zionist Commission, headed by Chaim Weizmann, Dr. David Eder and Israel Sieff, accompanied by their wives, travelled to Palestine in 1918, the Yishuv consisted of religious Jews, mostly impoverished, living off of charitable contributions, known as “Halukah Jews.” There were also young Zionist pioneers from Europe. There was a desperate need for trained, skilled women in the home and on agricultural settlements. Rebecca Sieff was determined, back in England, to expand the unique role of women in the Zionist effort.

In April 1920, Rebecca Sieff was also present in San Remo when the Balfour Declaration was made into international law and the Mandate for Palestine was given to Great Britain. Immensely moved and spurred on by the power of the momentous event, and having realized that England would now be the focus and ground zero of the
Zionist struggle, Sieff made great efforts to convene what would be the founding conference of the Women’s International Zionist Movement on July 11th 1920, at the Russell Hotel in London.

In attendance at the meeting were women from Germany, Holland, Poland, South Africa, American Hadassah, Russia and Palestine. At this conference it was decided that the new organization should promote the wellbeing of women and children in Palestine, that it should be extra-political and should be a part of the Zionist Organization. That same year, Henrietta Szold, the founder of American Hadassah, met with a group of women in Jerusalem to organize assistance to poor mothers and children in Palestine. Out of that group was born the HNI (Histadrut Nashim Ivriot), which operated independently for more than a decade but would, after several incarnations, became the “Palestine Federation of WIZO” and later, WIZO Israel. The HNI was responsible for the practical welfare work and institutions, infant welfare stations, agricultural schools and neighborhood centers, that would eventually become the backbone of WIZO’s work in Palestine. The HNI established a network of “infant welfare stations” under the management of Dr. Helena Kagan, the “tipat halav” (drop of milk) initiative, by which fresh, hygienic milk for babies was distributed around Jerusalem, a home for abandoned babies in 1925, and an agricultural school for girls in 1924.

The first official World WIZO conference took place in Karlsbad, Germany, in September 1921, attended by 31 delegates from 13 countries. At that conference, Hannah Maisel-Shochat, a pioneer in the training of young Jewish women in agriculture, proposed that WIZO take on the establishment of a women’s training farm. The goal was only realized after enough funds were raised and The JNF gave WIZO 500 dunams of land at the settlement of Nahalal. Thus, in 1923, WIZO founded its first agricultural school. During the 1920s more training farms sprouted at Nachlat Yehuda (1922), Petach Tikvah (1923) and Afula (1926), which was the first to benefit from WIZO direct funding.

The development of WIZO’s federations is no less remarkable than its own growth from a core group of British women. Jewish women in Vienna had organized as early as 1903. In 1921, they participated in the first WIZO conference in and shortly after were incorporated as the WIZO Austria Federation. The French federation of WIZO was founded in 1924. After the Nazi invasion in June 1940, WIZO France went underground and created a clandestine service for the placement of children, a heroic effort to save the lives of Jewish children being deported. The German WIZO Federation came into being in 1929 and continued until 1933, when Hitler came to power, only reconvening in 1960. WIZO federations were established in Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Panama in 1926. In Mexico, in 1938, a group of Jewish Sephardic women established a Zionist Women’s Committee, shortly followed by a sister WIZO group of Ashkenazi women. The Hadassah-WIZO organization of Canada was founded in 1917. Other federations sprouted in places as unexpected as Barbados, Jamaica, Gibraltar, Trinidad, Kenya, Zimbabwe and Hong Kong.

The 8th WIZO conference in 1935, was the first to be held in Palestine. The last pre-war WIZO conference, in August 1939, took place in Geneva. There were no WIZO conferences during the Second World War, just as there were no Zionist Congresses. The 11th WIZO conference, held in Basel in 1946, featured a memorial to all the WIZO women who had perished. The biggest issue of the day was Jewish refugees in DP camps and the most significant resolution to emerge from this meeting was a decision on Aliyah, stressing that every effort be made to absorb, educate and train immigrant women in Palestine by the expansion of existing WIZO programs and institutions.

There was no WIZO conference in 1948, when Israeli independence was declared, but a special World WIZO Executive meeting was held in February 1949 to celebrate the historic moment. At this meeting, the decision was made to move the headquarters of World WIZO from London to Tel Aviv and Rebecca Sieff herself settled in Israel soon after.

WIZO’s next conference, held in 1951, would be its first in a Jewish state, a realization of its greatest dream.
APPEAL

IF you wish our women in Palestine to become self-supporting.
IF you wish our children in Palestine to have a good start in life.
IF you wish to help many of our women coming from countries of misery and despair.
IF you wish to participate in the great work of rebuilding the Jewish National Home.

SEND YOUR DONATION
to the Hon. Treasurers of the WIZO:

On behalf of the Executive of the WIZO:

Dr. Vera Weinmann
Romana Goodman
Chairman

Lady (Herbert) Samuel
Hon. President

Henrietta Irwell
G. Olga Alman
Hon. Treasurers

NO JEWISH WOMEN
DARE REFUSE!
The Power of the Idea

by Edith Eder

*From a speech by Mrs. Eder at the Inaugural gathering of members and friends of the F.W.Z., London Dec. 12, 1933

"We have met here tonight at a bitter moment for the Jewish people. In the German tragedy, we Zionists looked to Palestine; and in Palestine it is a tragedy the immigration is at the moment so restricted... It is now for us Zionist women to take stock of the Zionist position for ourselves.

"Even in the face of all difficulties, Palestine remains for all Jews, and more particularly for Zionists, the one place of hope in this world, the one spot to which we can look with confidence, open for Jewish immigration, and adequate still for a very large increase in population. I would remind you of one salient aspect: in 1919, shortly after the close of the War, there were roughly about 56,000 Jews in Palestine; today there are nearly 250,000 Jews in Palestine...

"We Zionists have held from the beginning that Palestine is the place where the Jew might develop his own values and possess his own soul; might stand erect and declare that his mistakes and his triumphs are his own and not derived from the nation amongst whom he happens to live. He has the chance of working out new and modern values, in accordance not with the peoples amongst whom he happens to settle, but in accordance with his own inherent capacities.

"If that is true, I ask myself: what is the business of us women Zionists?

"It is often felt by us women: 'We do the practical work, and we leave the ideas to the men!' But as far as my knowledge of Jewish history goes, that has never been the role of the Jewish woman...I think of the countless generations of ordinary women in whose hands that traditions of her people have been cherished, in whose guardianship has been the faithful keeping of the Jewish spirit...

"The main business of the Zionist woman today is thus to make herself mistress of the Zionist idea and ideal, and the way in which these can be worked out in Palestine, and to communicate that idea. It is false to think that unless members are on an Executive or engaged in collecting money, there is nothing for Zionist women to do. The most important work of all is to get together and re-interpret to one another this modern Zionist ideal, to study Palestine and to find out what values we desire to cultivate there and what we do not want, and to develop a full, conscious sense of Zionism.

"Let us give ourselves the duty, those of us who cannot raise big sums, of studying the Jewish position today, Palestine in all its aspects, the whole ideal and the idea of what Zionism means to us, so that no week passes without a deepening of the idea, a strengthening of our own small section of the organisation. We must ensure a renaissance of the Zionist ideal. I remember the words of Israel Zangwill – 'The real tragedy of the Jewish people would be, to be persecuted for 2,000 years for an idea, and at the end of that time to prove unworthy of the idea.'
The WIZO Pavilion at the Levant Fair, Tel Aviv

by Nadia Stein

One of the most attractive of all the really beautiful structures that graced the Levant fair this year was the WIZO pavilion.

As a motto for the pavilion [WIZO] chose the following: “Domestic Work: a House That is Practically Equipped is Easy to Run.” On a table fixed to and running around the walls of the pavilion were set out a number of most useful articles for running a modern house, most of which were but little known or used previously in the country. These ranged from cleaning materials, brushes and chemicals to rational cooking utensils and cookery. The manufacture of many of these articles has only recently been started in the country, and thanks to the recommendations made in this way by the WIZO, many visitors became acquainted with these new objects of tozereth haaretz and their use…

A good deal of the restricted space was devoted to the crucial points of the Palestinian kitchen – the problem of the replacement of the ordinary oil-cooker, by up-to-date model gas-cookers or electrical stoves and equipment…The method of advertising anti-fly measures which is a real nuisance in many of the agricultural settlements, was one of [WIZO’s] most original ideas… All kinds of useful household hints were demonstrated at a veritable magician’s table.

The laundry demonstration attracted a great number of people, especially the electrical washing machine displayed by a Czecho-Slovakian firm. This machine can turn out with a most excellent finish in less than an hour, 8-10 kilos of linen – soaking, washing, boiling, rinsing, bluing, drying and ironing with only a very little assistance on the part of the laundress and at very little cost…

1934 Levant Fair

The Levant Fair began as a series of modest commercial fairs held for the first time in 1914, in various locations around Tel Aviv, meant to draw attention to the industry and produce of the Yishuv in Palestine. As the fair grew in size and attendance, the British Mandate saw fit to allocate for it 10 dunams on the Yarkon River in the North of Tel Aviv. The 1934 fair housed 1,225 exhibitors and was visited by 600,000 people. Its buildings were masterpieces of modernist design, reflecting the European and contemporary origins and sensibilities of the Jews immigrating to Palestine.

In the canvas roofed children’s corner of the WIZO Pavilion, furnished with miniature furniture, straw mats and dainty and useful toys, tiny children whose mothers wished to visit the exhibition were looked after at the cost of a few piasters by kindergarten instructresses. This is in itself an illustration of one of the foremost principles of the WIZO – to assist the working mother to look after her children and to leave her free to follow new ideas and to become more and more progressive.

Women’s Day at the Tel Aviv Fair

On the 31st of May, the Levant Fair was given over to the women. The Palestine WIZO fixed this date as a (Hebrew) women’s day and drew up a full programme for the day.

The day began early in the forenoon with demonstrations and lectures in household management given in the WIZO Pavilion. At five o’clock there was a public meeting in the Exhibition amphitheatre which was attended by large numbers of women from the outlying groups. Lady Samuel, who was warmly acclaimed, was the first to address the gathering. She referred with a warm satisfaction to the progress of the work of the upbuilding, especially in regard to the work of the WIZO, which she had seen during her travels through the country.
A Glimpse into our Infant

The services carried to the Palestinian woman by the WIZO through its system of agricultural and domestic training are complete in the duties of motherhood. Three Infant Welfare Stations (founded by WIZO friends in Australia and New Zealand) and a through a gift by Mrs. Nathan of New Zealand and its maintenance provided by the WIZO French Federation, offer to young visiting nurses carry guidance and modern methods of hygiene to their homes. A Day Creche in Tel Aviv for the children of infants lacking maternal care, have during the last three years been maintained in cooperation with the Hist. Nashim Ivrioth, the now amalgamated with the WIZO. The training of nursery nurses in these institutions constitutes another branch of the work included in its programme. Through the Union of the H.N.I. and the Hist, Arzith under the name of Haadruth Nashim Z activity has broadened considerably. It comprises now also the Infant Welfare work of the H.N.Z.; milk distribution centre the communal social service. The funds for these activities are raised in the country itself. At the WIZO Centres during 11, seen, 60,000 home visits were paid and 222 nursery nurses were trained.
Welfare Work

By the institutions it has established for educating mothers in a "Mothercraft Training School" in Tel Aviv, the building erected provides expert advice in the care and feeding of babies, for working mothers and a Baby Home in Jerusalem for institutional education of the Palestinian woman, which WIZO has. In the Autumn of 1932, the WIZO field of social activity included nurseries, kindergartens and youth departments of which 10,000 cases were treated, 250,000 patients were
The Polish Kibbutzim

by Romana Goodman

My recent visit with Mrs Sieff to Poland has afforded me the opportunity of examining the conditions of the girls and boys in the Kibbutzim at first hand. I was able to see three centres in the district of Cracow, two in Lemberg [Lvov], four in Warsaw and three in Lodz. The history of Hachsharah in Poland is, on account of its long and varied experiences, one of considerable interest. In view of the fact that Poland has remained the greatest reservoir of Halutzoth, these Polish Kibbutzim are of exceptional importance.

The object to reproduce in these settlements the conditions under which the pioneers will be expected to live in Palestine, is carried out by the young people themselves in that spirit of self-sacrifice which we are wont to expect of Halutzim and Halutzoth. To those who have not seen these settlements it is hard to realise the severe conditions under which these young people – many of them sons and daughters of middle-class parents – submit in a high-spirited way to a daily routine of long hours, while badly housed and badly fed.

A simple building accommodates them all, and the work is done jointly. In so far as the girls are concerned, they do their work not only in factories, laundries and dress-making establishments but, as a matter of course, attend to the cooking, clearing up, washing and mending of clothes for the Kibbutz. In the evenings, when they might be expected to be “free,” they study Hebrew, Jewish History, the geography of Palestine and discuss the various aspects and problems of the Zionist Movement.

The only reward to which they all look forward, wistfully and hopefully, is to obtain a certificate to enter Palestine – to them, indeed, the Promised Land – and thus to attain the objective for which they have labored, some of them for several years.

I have, of course, been particularly interested in the three Halutzoth groups composed entirely of girls, two of them under WIZO, auspices (Cracow and Warsaw).

In consequence, all those who are members of Hechaluz regard themselves as of one class – those who live by the work of their own hands. They are the finest manifestation of simple living and high thinking that I have ever seen. The lasting impression I have taken away with me from these groups are radiant faces and hardy hearts.

It makes one’s heart rejoice to see these young people at song and dance after an arduous day’s work, and it is also then possible to realise what extraordinarily fine human material we have at hand.

Would that the Women’s International Zionist Organisation should be able to lessen the hardships in these Kibbutzim and contribute its share to speed the aspirations of those who look forward as their highest hope to settle in Eretz Israel!
First World WIZO Conference in Eretz Israel

Over 300 delegates assemble in Tel Aviv to address current challenges and the state of world Jewry

They came from all over the world including Greece, Egypt, Syria, Lithuania, Poland, Belgium, China, Chile, Estonia, South Africa, Switzerland, England, Yugoslavia – the list goes on.

More than 350 delegates from 25 countries (including nearly 100 from Poland) converged on Tel Aviv for the 8th World WIZO Conference in March 1935. This was not only the first WIZO conference to be held in Eretz Israel but the first ever conference of any Zionist body to be held in the country.

At the time, Poland was WIZO's largest federation with over 10,000 members.

This conference had been called a year earlier than scheduled due to the deteriorating situation in Germany under the Hitler regime. One of WIZO’s main activities during this period was to set up agricultural training farms on Continental Europe and try to obtain as many immigration certificates as possible from the British Mandatory Government to enable girls to come to Eretz Israel; their preparatory training would enable them to earn a living once they arrived. The call went out to include more girls from Germany in these courses.

At the opening ceremony, in addition to WIZO Executive members, distinguished guests included David Ben Gurion and Dr. Chaim Weizmann. In his speech, Ben Gurion stated: “The Zionist movement has lifted the Jewish woman from the obscurity in which she had dwelt for so many centuries, and today has placed her side by side with her menfolk as an equal worker and factor in the upbuilding of the new land of Israel.”

“Young WIZO” delegates had held their own conference several days before the main conference – subjects discussed were: affiliating young groups in all countries with their senior WIZO groups, the amalgamation of all Young WIZO organisations into an International Young WIZO Organisation. One of the fears expressed was that if the WIZO seniors ‘did not let them in’, WIZO would go the way of other Zionist organisations i.e. would stop with its founding generation. Fortunately, it didn’t!

In her address, Vera Weizmann, who had been resident in Palestine for some months, stressed the difficulties facing the Yishuv and the problems arising between the veteran residents and newcomers. However, she marveled at “the bulk of the work which has been achieved under very difficult circumstances and through the medium of a voluntary movement without any state aid is amazing, little short of a miracle.”

In the Finance Report, difficulties were reported about receipt of quotas from some countries – caused by government regulations, monies having to be allocated for ‘maintenance of projects’ training courses etc. Another item in the report was headed "unforeseen," which also included unforeseen donations which, of course, were extremely welcome!

Re-organisation of the Executives abroad was debated at length and the subject of membership… one of the delegates from Cracow remonstrated with the ladies, “In 1929 at the 5th conference, WIZO had 45,000 members; today we have only 15,000 more, despite the intense interest in Eretz Yisrael. 60,000 members is very little.” There was a call from many federations to increase the budget for propaganda [publicity] materials to help increase membership – booklets and brochures were needed in many languages.

Other sessions included Reports of the Palestine and "Galuth" Executives, Hachashara plans for the future, especially in Germany and Poland, welfare and rights for women and children in Palestine – and the conference ended with a resounding 51 resolutions on various matters!

After the conference, sensing the black curtain which was about to descend, many of the Eastern European delegates, especially from Poland, did not return home. They were the lucky ones.
YOUTH ALIYAH WORK
OF THE WIZO IN
PALESTINE

The Youth Aliyah work of the WIZO in Palestine, which was commenced in the autumn of 1938 is to-day in full swing. All the institutions of the WIZO have accorded a hearty welcome to these new girls, aged 15-17. For their accommodation buildings were erected and the farming branches were extended, while a curriculum was drawn up to meet their special needs. So far there are 135 girls of the Youth Aliyah category in the WIZO institutions. The Domestic Science School at Nahlat Izhak has admitted 25 of these girls and Aya’anto and Nahalal 50 each. The remaining 50 have been placed in the girls’ Training Farm Nahal Yehuda which has been changed from a training farm for older girls into an Agricultural School for younger girls—a change which was essential because of the age of the girls, of whom the youngest aged between 15 and 16 have been placed there. For the Youth Aliyah groups new houses have to be built or rented.

The curriculum spreads over two years and corresponds, in all essentials, to the general curriculum drawn up for the Youth Aliyah, but which is adapted to the special character of our institutions. The girls have fewer working hours than the older girls: in Nahlat Izhak 4 and in the agricultural institutions 5. Half a day is devoted to Hebrew and subjects of general education. Each group has its own supervisor and a special teacher for certain subjects. The training of these young girls who require more supervision and guidance, has brought to the fore new and difficult problems in the institutions. The first four months, however, of adaptation and experience, hold out promise of good results for the future.

...and to sleep at night in tents while the house is being built
The White Paper
Issued by the British government on May 17th 1939, the White Paper rejected the Peel Commission's partition plan for Palestine, declaring that the future country would be neither Jewish nor Arab and that Jewish immigration and land acquisition should be limited and subject to Arab consent.

Zionist groups and leaders reacted with vocal opposition and street demonstrations.

PROTEST AGAINST THE WHITE PAPER

The demonstration of the women in Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv on the publication of the White Paper manifested the firm determination of the daughters and mothers of Israel to guard their Homeland. In their thousands they marched along the streets under the hot rays of the mid-day sun without music, in tune to the words: "We shall not submit. We demand more free immigration, we shall continue to work and to build, and if necessary bring our sacrifices to the altar of this work of reconstruction."

"Daughter and mother of Israel are guarding the Homeland.

And our children protest in their own way..."
They Came From Teheran
by Nanny Margulies-Auerbach

It is strange that certain events can still stir us to the very depths of our being, even at a time when every morning is darkened by new reports of gruesome deeds that outdo the murderous rage of war...Yet from time to time, the inconceivable happens: out of the cauldron of the European hell, a few victims manage to escape and reach the sheltering haven of Eretz Israel. And we in Palestine, privileged to be the first to offer them assistance, extend a welcoming hand to them, and wonder again and again, whether this is reality or only an evil dream.

Another group is just arriving – 1,200 human beings of whom 850 are children; they have been wandering for over three years, and now they are to stay here, no longer hunted, no longer to be packed together and sent away like a herd of animals...And very slowly, the ice that cramped their hearts begins to thaw a little, and they talk a little and they tell some of their adventures, their experiences, their visions – and we stand aghast, for these things are beyond imagination. Who can fully understand the tragic fate of these wanderers? It is hard to understand how many of them survived at all, after all that they had endured during their escape from the Nazis – starvation, years of wandering, hard labour, constant illness. During their three years of wandering, they had never slept in a bed, not even in hospital. For clothing, pieces of rags were stitched together. They had no shoes, for these had been sold to get a little milk for the children.

In Russia, they had to trudge for miles on foot, to find a railway station and to try to board a train going south; and there, many who had managed to survive the frozen steppes, succumbed to the epidemics prevalent in the warmer climate. Still, these tragic victims struggled on and succeeded in getting as far as the Persian frontier – Teheran – their first port of refuge. And here they had to stay, for over a year. More hardship, more heartrending suspense, and then scarcely a breathed hope – that the last journey which would end their suffering, the journey to Eretz Israel, would soon begin. Again their hopes were dashed; permission for transit was refused. This meant another long journey on a roundabout route, accompanied by the dangers of bombing and of a mined sea. There were insufficient transport ships, more delays, until at last, they set out on the long trek to Eretz Israel. They travelled first by boat, then by rail, reached the frontier at night and crossed the border-line into Eretz Israel, the border-line to freedom.

Their story is indescribable. It is a gruesome, ghastly "dance of death"; one compares it with Dante's Inferno, and finds Dante's imagination wholly inadequate. One man with three children lost his wife en route; a woman had to leave her husband and child behind her; there are tiny children whose parents died from hunger on the way, clinging together, taking care of each other, grown prematurely old.

Yet, these human beings have survived. Miracles, such as could never be staged in a film or play have taken place before our eyes.

The Teheran Children

After the outbreak of WWII in September 1939, hundreds of thousands of Jews fled Poland to the Soviet Union. Because of starvation, disease and Soviet arrests, many Polish Jewish refugee children were left orphaned. These children were placed in orphanages across the Soviet Union. In the summer of 1941, Britain and the Soviet Union occupied Iran, making it a pipeline for allied supplies and refugees.

Among a group of thousands of Polish refugees sent to Iran in 1942, was a group of about 1,000 Jewish children, later known as the "Teheran Children" who had travelled by train from across the USSR to Pahlavi, a port city in Iran. The Jewish Agency, upon learning about the existence of a large group of Jewish orphans, planned a special facility, sheltered, cared for and in January and August 1943, sent by ship from Iran, via Pakistan and Suez, to the Atlit refugee camp in Palestine, where they were welcomed by Jews of the Yishuv and placed in kibbutzim.
One woman, who came with her 14-year-old daughter, had found her son, whom she had thought lost, at the Persian frontier. Another had caught a glimpse of her husband, from whom she had not heard for over a year, in the carriage of a passing train. Other women had been helped in their escape by German soldiers. Their stories pierced our hearts with their intense drama and their profound tragedy. How strong is the human heart to bear all this! What great spiritual courage had those women who, in forsaken barracks in Siberia, covered the holes which served as windows with tiny bits of curtaining, found some odd bits of material to act as tablecloths and made Sabbath candles out of cotton and wood, in order to create for their loved ones a warm, human atmosphere, above the horrors of reality.

Every town, every little village in Eretz Israel is taking its share in helping to make these refugees an integral part of the constructive national life of the Yishuv. We, of the WIZO, were among the first to take a big share in the care of the arrivals. Many of the babies are now in WIZO’s Baby Home. At the Ayanoth Girls’ Training Farm, there is a large group of young girls, and many of these youngsters are guests in our hostels, or have been given hospitality in the private homes of WIZO chaveroth. Nourishing food and inexpensive luncheons are provided in WIZO kitchens, and WIZO Advisory Bureaux are already finding jobs for those able to take up work, and giving the newcomers assistance, advice and guidance.

How great is our pleasure when they tell us that it is the warmth and sisterly compassion with which we welcome them, more than even material assistance, that is helping them, encouraging them and easing their way back to life.

The greatness of our task sometimes frightens us for, although WIZO has always cared for children, trained young girls and advised middle-aged women, it has never before been called upon to restore the faith in humanity of a whole generation. Now it must heal and revive human wrecks, bring up children whose parents have been murdered, educate youngsters whose minds have been darkened and who have been physically neglected. The WIZO will have to train the young girls to earn their living, girls who, for years, have known no home, no school, who have been without clothing and without food, girls whose minds have been endangered through the sight of murder and suffering, and through contact with evil surroundings. Youthfulness and laughter must be restored to these tragic faces, grown prematurely old.

Can there be a greater task? Can women in the whole world do a more important deed, in the midst of war, than set themselves to transform these shipwrecked souls into normal human beings, to help them build, in safety, a home for themselves and for their people? Ours is indeed a giant task.

A group of the Teheran children after reaching Palestine
Presidential Address
by Mrs. I. M. Sieff at the Annual Conference of the Federation of Women Zionists

"We meet under the shadow of the terrible fate that has befallen our people in Europe; in the knowledge that our people have suffered a calamity which transcends in magnitude all those tragic events in the centuries of long-drawn-out agony of our people. The lives of millions of our brethren, men, women and children are being blotted out in the coldest, most calculating, most foul massacre that has ever blackened man's evil record. And if it is true, as we have recently been told by one who escaped the ghetto of Warsaw, that not one single Jewish child remains alive in Poland, then indeed evil has reached its apotheosis and the darkest depth of man's mind plumbed.

"We have to realize that the war which Hitler and the Nazis have declared on the Jewish People, is a war on two fronts: a war whose objects are to exterminate all of our people who come within their physical reach and to destroy the morale of our people everywhere…"

"But we can say, as often before in our history, that Hitler has failed to paralyse the will of the Jewish People, or to break its morale. For everywhere there are signs of greater spiritual resistance, or greater cohesion and unity…"

"There is, indeed, a greater awareness of the Jewish problems which face us all, a greater consciousness of what Palestine means as a focal point in their solution. And this development is taking place all over the world…"

"I am sure you will be greatly encouraged to know that the progress in the Federation is paralleled in every federation and group of the WIZO all over the world. WIZO, as you know, is a global organization, if I may use this modern term, and its federations are far-flung all over the world. The same spirit which is moving you is animating all our federations and groups the world over; for we have been able, at long last, to penetrate, especially in South and Central America, to communities which seemed almost inaccessible, not only physically but who lived in a kind of moral isolation through which one could not break."
A young woman who escaped from Poland tells her bitter story.

ESCAPE FROM THE NAZI INFERNO

by

Miriam Shir

I went to see her on the very day she arrived in Tel-Aviv; I knew her as a social worker and a member of the WIZO. She was surrounded by relatives who were asking questions about the family—a family that had lived for generations in Radom. Her answer was brief—“They are no more.”

This young woman was tall and powerfully built. She worked in a Nazi factory in Radom, sometimes without pause, for twenty hours a day. She had to work at top speed to avoid being seized by “them.” Fear? No, she was not afraid. That very night, when she escaped to the factory, she was well aware that to be caught out-of-doors at a forbidden hour meant certain death. Yet she risked it. “I felt that I was doomed to die, anyway,” she told me. “If you only knew how we came to despise death. I walked down the street for seven minutes that were like seven weeks. When I reached the factory I heaved a sigh of relief. The Gestapo men had seen me, but for some reason they had not stopped me.

“We never thought these things would happen in Radom. We hoped that the hangman would leave us alone, for were not 95 per cent. of Radom’s Jews working for him? But we were mistaken. The Jews were dragged from their homes. They were not allowed to take a single parcel with them, and those who were sent away had to leave their parcels at the railway station. They left behind their homes complete with all their possessions; in some houses the remains of an interrupted meal still stood on the table. Those of us who were left were then ordered to strip the houses, to sort the booty and put it away in storehouses. And if one dared to pick up one’s own belongings, they roared that the ‘thieves’ would be put to death.

“There were sixteen of us in a room which was completely bare. We slept on the floor and we never undressed. As there was not enough space for all of us, we put up boards along the walls to serve as beds. There were children with us, too. We could not wash them or change their clothes, and there was no food for them.

“Who will help them now that I am no longer with them? My sister, the mother of two children, was put to death for trying to barter an old tablecloth for some food which a Gentile neighbour had promised her. They imprisoned her for a month before sentencing her to death. She knew there was no hope for her, and while in prison, she wrote a long, farewell letter—a kind of prayer that her own death might redeem her family and the whole of Polish Jewry. My other sister was seized together with her children and put on a ‘death-train.’ Her husband had a worker’s card, showing that he was employed in a munition factory, and they let him go. Then he saw them dragging away his wife and children—and he tore up his card and followed to share their fate.

“No, I no longer think of the dead. My heart is with those in that hell who are still alive. Before I got away, they all surrounded me, my fellow sufferers, asking me to give one message to their people in this country: Save them, while there is still a breath of life within them—soon it
may be too late. Eretz Israel means salvation to them, and it is their only hope.

Eretz Israel has been deeply stirred by the arrival of those few people who have escaped from the Nazi inferno. Our hearts are full with sorrow and a burning desire for vengeance. All these emotions need an outlet. There is much talk of intensified enrolment for military service. But this is not enough. We must start a powerful movement of protest throughout the world. We must not confine ourselves to fasting, weeping and praying. We, the Jewish mothers, must find a way to reach the hearts of mothers all over the world. Let us rouse the English, the American, the Russian, the Czech and the Polish mothers. Let us ask them to add their voice to our bitter outcry at the inhuman treatment of the Jewish people. The protests of the women of the United Nations, supported by the threat of retaliation, may stay the hand of the assassin. Let all the women who are taking an active part in this war for right and justice, raise their voices against the deliberate massacre of a people which, after being systematically weakened by three years of hunger and suffering, is now being slaughtered like cattle.

This was the appeal that burned in the eyes of the young woman from Radom, that hung in the black banners on the day of mourning in Tel-Aviv. Let it find a response in the conscience of the world.

SAVING THE CHILDREN

The decision of the London WIZO Executive to launch an appeal for a quarter of a million pounds, in order to save five thousand infants, small children, young girls and mothers, has been warmly acclaimed in Palestine and by the Federations and Groups of the WIZO.

In its reply, the Palestine WIZO Executive announces that a new ward, consisting of two rooms with 40-50 cots, in the WIZO Baby Home in Jerusalem, has been put at the disposal of the newly formed Central Salvaging Committee (Vaadath Hakazot). There, babies and children between three and six years, who arrive with Jewish refugee transports, will receive expert care after the hardships of the long journey and will be kept under observation. Those who are found to be perfectly healthy will be transferred to the Babies’ Houses in various collective settlements, while those in need of further treatment will remain at the Home.

Both at the WIZO Baby Home in Jerusalem and at the Mothercraft Training Centre in Tel-Aviv, mothers arriving with these transports, are temporarily admitted.

Among the infants who have been placed in the Baby Home, is Aliah, the eight days’ old girl born on board ship, and an infant boy also born en route, whose Brit Milah was celebrated at the Baby Home recently.

A new room has been added at the Mothercraft Training Centre in Tel-Aviv, to accommodate infants needing special care.

In addition to these two Baby Homes, all the other Infant Welfare Institutions of the WIZO have been thrown open and will be extended to cope with this new refugee immigration.

Our Palestine women were deeply moved to recognize among the women refugees from Tehran, thirty Polish WIZO members, most of them young. A few of them had been prominent WIZO leaders. A number of refugee women and girls have been accommodated in WIZO’s Training Schools, such as Aynoth, where room has been made for them by transferring WIZO’s resident pupils to outside billets or boarding houses. For women without relatives in Palestine, hospitality has been arranged in private homes of WIZO members, mostly in Tel-Aviv, for an initial period of rest and recuperation, after the cruel fatigues of their long wanderings. This period of transition will be utilized for professional readjustment and preparations will be made to find suitable employment for them. Wherever necessary, they will receive social aid from WIZO’s productive loan fund.

The whole of the WIZO Movement in Palestine which now comprises over 18,000 members, is concentrating its energies on the task of providing a home and a future for these homeless children, girls and women, and in erasing through affectionate care, the bitter experiences through which they all had to pass.
Solidarity with Ramat HaKovesh

The search for arms undertaken by the Police at the Ramat HaKovesh kibbutz, that exposed settlement which has become a symbol of undaunted pioneering because of its heroic self-defense during the Disturbances, has been regarded by the whole Yishuv as an insufferable affront and a discriminating encroachment upon its inviolable right to self-protection. In a letter to the kibbutz the Palestine WIZO Federation joined with the declarations of solidarity from all Jewish sections and groups in this country:

“The Palestine WIZO Federation joins in the protest of the Yishuv against the action taken by the Police at Ramat HaKovesh. We are one with you, Haverim and Haveroth, in your indignation at the insult sustained by you, and in your grief at the loss of one of your best members, Shmuel Vellinetz, who died as a result of the assault.

“This attack on your settlement recalls to our minds the memory of those haverim and haveroth who fell victims to the Disturbances of 1936/39 while protecting your kibbutz and the honour of the Yishuv at large.

“As Jewish women we are proud of the Haveroth of Ramat HaKovesh who have once again defended the settlement against aggression.

“May the attitude of the Yishuv and its determination to act in the same spirit be a source of encouragement to you in this grave hour. Be strong and firm!”

The Palestine WIZO at its last delegates’ meeting also adopted the resolution to participate with a contribution of 1,000 trees in the plantation of the J.N.F. Ramat HaKovesh Forest for which a drive was launched immediately after the incident.

Ramat HaKovesh
A kibbutz in the central region of Israel, whose name means "conqueror’s hill," was founded by Polish Zionist youth movement members in 1932, but moved to its permanent and current location in 1936. The kibbutz, from its founding, suffered from ongoing attacks. On November 16th, 1943, British Mandate Authorities forcibly entered the kibbutz, searching for illegal weapons. Kibbutz members resisted the British forces, leading to a violent confrontation. One kibbutznik, Shmuel Vellinetz, was killed while several others were wounded.

Students and armed Jewish youth protecting the WIZO youth village in pre-state Afula.
WIZO WOMEN IN THE NEW PARLIAMENT OF THE YISHUV

In 1930 the Federation of Hebrew Women, an early incarnation of WIZO in Palestine, ran in the elections to the Assefat Hanivcharim, the elected assembly of the (pre-state) Jewish Yishuv, and won three seats. In the assembly's fourth elections, in 1944, WIZO ran together with the Women's League for Equal Rights and won four seats. Both times, Rachel Cohen-Kagan was WIZO's representative.

Once the State of Israel became independent, Cohen Kagan led a WIZO-related party which won one seat in the first and fifth parliaments.

third seat went to Mrs. Michal Eisenberg, Chairman for many years of the Rehobot group and prominent in the social work of her community, as a representative of our rural membership; and the fourth to Mrs. Sara Ashbel, Director of the Welfare Dept. of the Jerusalem Kehilla.

An indirect consequence of the women's list was the gratifying fact that nearly all the parties felt compelled to prove the equality of their female members by giving women a prominent place in their list of candidates, so that the total number of women in the new Elected Assembly reaches the figure of 26, i.e. 15% of the total of 171 seats, as against 7, i.e. 10% of the 71 seats of the now defunct Assembly. They represent: 14 – the Labour Party (Mapai); 4 – the WIZO and the Women’s League for Equal Rights; 3 – the dissenting United Labour Front; 2 – the New Settler’s Party (Aliyah Chadasha), and one each of the Mizrachi (Orthodox) Party, the Left Wing Bloc and the Communists.

Women’s rights can only be safeguarded by women. Give your vote to HNZ - WIZO List "N."

The elections held on the 1st of August to the Asefat Hanivcharim – the Elected Assembly of the Yishuv – was regarded by the whole Jewish community as a major event in its internal affairs. The renovation of this authoritative body which elects the Vaad Leumi – the highest self-governing body of Palestinian Jewry – had become an urgent necessity at a time when momentous issues of post-war policy, of far reaching significance for the whole population, have to be decided.

In accordance with a pre-war resolution, WIZO entered the election campaign – together with the Women’s League for Equal Rights – with a special women’s list. The four candidates elected were: Mrs. Rachel Kagan, President of the Palestine Federation and Director of the Welfare Dept. of the Haifa Kehilla who headed the list; Mrs. Sara Asaryahu, President of the League for Equal Rights, according to the agreement, second on the list; the
It is now a year since the “Battle of the Warsaw Ghetto.” The names of but a few of the heroes of this unparalleled and glorious stand for freedom and humanity are known to us; but their courage will be engrained on our hearts as is that of Massada and Tel Hal. Here is the story of one whose name will stand out among the women of Israel as a bright flame, the guardian and defender of the Ghetto in its last moments. Here is the spirit which is being emulated by the women of the WIZO in occupied Europe—in Roumania, Jugoslavia, and elsewhere, endangering their lives in pursuance of their efforts to help their people to escape the tragedy of homelessness and persecution, and build a healthy home for them in Palestine. For the rest of us WIZO women all over the world free to continue our work of reconstruction and rescue, these women must be a symbol. THEY HAVE GIVEN THEIR LIVES—WE MUST DEDICATE OUR LIVES TO THE CAUSE FOR WHICH THEY DIED.

THE FLAG ON THE GHETTO WALL

by

Marie Syrkin

The details of the struggle cannot be told now. How the arms came, how the resistance was organized remains for some future chronicler. We do not know the names of the heroes, and we cannot pin medals on their breasts—even posthumously. But here and there a figure emerges. We all know the names of Adam Czerniakow, and of Zygielbojm, who killed himself in London in protest against the indifference of the world. To these names we can now add that of Zivia Lubertikin, “The Mother.”

Zivia, “The Mother” (die name), was not old, nor did she have children of her own. She lost her life at the age of 28, as a leader of the ghetto’s final battle. Young as she was, she was the “mother” by virtue of strength and solicitude, of the crushed, the abandoned, the helpless.

Before the establishment of the ghetto, Zivia had been known only as an active and devoted member of the Hechalutz. She had lived in a Hechalutz collective. She was a good comrade and a hard worker. When the incarceration began, this simple young girl rose to heroic stature. She had the opportunity to escape—an opportunity of which men, older and better known than she, did not hesitate to avail themselves—but she chose to share the lot of that great majority who could not flee. She was conscious not of her destiny, but of her task, and her task became her destiny. She knew that one way of preventing the inner disintegration of the ghetto youth was to preserve the form of the collective as far as possible. At first, the Nazis permitted the functioning of the Hechalutz groups. After these were disbanded, Zivia and her comrades made every effort to maintain the spirit of collective action. When the youth of the ghetto was taken for slave labour, members of the same collective groups would try to go together so as to maintain bonds of unity. When the schools for the children were shut down, Zivia organized secret groups of volunteer teachers, who would go from hovel to hovel to maintain morale even at a foodless table in an unheated room. Those who had read the poems of the ghetto children months earlier knew that there was a Zivia in their midst. Someone was religiously tending the flame of the human spirit in an animal environment. Someone was consciously trying to preserve the young from ultimate corruption by the oppressor.

There was another task that Zivia set herself. There were other ghettos besides that of Warsaw scattered throughout Poland. Contact between these islands of misery had to be established, so that the doomed within should feel less helpless and forsaken. Zivia did not look Jewish.
Zivia Lubetkin, born in Poland in 1914, was a member of several Zionist movements who, after the Nazi invasion of Poland, travelled to Warsaw in order to join the underground Jewish resistance. As the only woman commander of the Jewish Combat Organization, she led and miraculously survived the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising (April 1943), only to choose to fight again in the Polish uprising in Warsaw in 1944. After the war, she worked to smuggle Jews to Palestine and immigrated herself in 1946. In Israel, she was one of the founders of the Ghetto Fighter’s Kibbutz and Museum and testified in the trial of Adolf Eichmann.
Among recent arrivals in Palestine have been several prominent WIZO members who have somehow managed to live through the horrors of the past few years. Hannah Holzmann, one of the founders of the Polish WIZO, was one of the sole survivors of the Warsaw Ghetto. She was dragged away by the Germans and put to forced labor in the death camps of Auschwitz, Maidanek and Bergen-Belsen. Her husband and her only son were killed, but, because of her wonderful moral strength, she was able to withstand the horrors of three long years and to help and encourage others.

The Zionist cultural work which was started in the camps was partly due to her efforts. Immediately after the liberation she devoted all her organizational capabilities and her motherly love to the care of orphaned children in Belsen, and to preparing them for their future life in Palestine. She herself arrived in Palestine in May, accompanying a group of these orphaned children and here was reunited with her brother, the only other surviving member of her family.

Addressing a country-wide meeting of Palestine WIZO and also other local groups, she moved all her listeners by her report of the martyrdom of the past years; within the shadow of the crematorium, she witnessed the destruction and murder of tens of thousands and was in constant expectation of a similar fate. The possibility of working now with WIZO and taking part in the upbuilding of Eretz Israel helps her to overcome her great personal sorrows.
Rebecca Sieff Spends Rosh Hashana in the DP Camps

Extracts from an interview with Mrs. Sieff

How would they greet her? Wasn’t there an abyss between those who have suffered so greatly and those who have been spared?

They did not leave her long in doubt, those Jewish men and women of the DP camps in Germany. Their welcome bridged the separation which her imagination had built in its uncertainty. Fate had dealt hardly with them, but there was none of the dreaded bitter envy in the looks and words that greeted her. On the contrary, the impression instantly conveyed was one of welcome, a spontaneous, joyous welcome that made them all feel happy.

Mrs. Sieff found [the displaced persons] well looked after by the relief teams and the Jewish Agency teams who lived inside the Bergen Belsen camp itself. To every sign of understanding, to every act of kindness, Mrs. Sieff found them most touchingly responsive. Much was being done, Mrs. Sieff found, for the people who could do so little for themselves.

The lack of privacy is one of the hardships the people in the camps find generally most difficult to bear. For the “unaccompanied children” – the orphaned and those whose parents have not been traced – Mrs. Sieff found that Jewish Agency teams have been organising separate educational centres, converting requisitioned buildings in pleasant surroundings into homes for children of different age groups…

Yet another hardship – the inactivity and tedium of camp life – is being overcome for many women by the organisation of WIZO groups in the camps. In Munich Mrs. Sieff met Rivka Weber, the Palestinian member of an UNRRA team, who started a group in Belsen with the help of former members of the Polish [WIZO] Federation. Rapid though results have been, much remains still to be done before WIZO can claim to have given the women all that it is in its power to give. Vocational training needs to be intensified and extended. Though a few Hachsharah farms have been started on some requisitioned land, Mrs. Sieff found to her surprise that no attempt has been made to grow vegetables form kitchen gardens or allotments. Apart from the food value of home-grown vegetables, work in the kitchen gardens would give the women opportunities which it is WIZO’s duty to provide them with.

There is a great need also for Yiddish-speaking teams of WIZO women from England and America to go to the camps in order to help with the organisation of WIZO groups. One young Polish WIZO woman, who could not conceal her emotion at meeting Mrs. Sieff, has had long experience in the organisational side of WIZO work and is staying behind to go on with her work in Germany, although her husband is waiting for her in Eretz Israel; and there are others like her. Undoubtedly there is far more for WIZO to do in the camps…

[The people are] “Sick of being shoved around,” as some of them express it, all long for security of some kind – conditions of life which, for better or worse, they will not always have to account for their actions to the “authorities” and be dependent upon the whims of others. They want to build up something for themselves, to have a home of their own. Sanctuary, even graciously accorded, will not satisfy them…All they have to support them is hope. And this hope they express in their private lives by building up in the camp the heart of the home life they long for.

A breath of life from the free world must sweep into the camps to stir up latent forces and turn the stagnant pond of camp existence into the living waters of Jewish life.
Palestine WIZO Newsletter October/April 1945/46

LET MY PEOPLE COME!...

An immense responsibility rests upon the men of the Inquiry Commission. The Jewry of the whole world expects of them that they will let themselves be guided by “the higher justice” — to use a variation of a Solomonic word of Dr. Weizmann. The conscience of the nations will not come to rest so long as a member of their family is exiled to the life of a pariah. The new world, for which millions have laid down their lives in the war, cannot be firmly established so long as the Charter of the Jewish nation has not been cemented into its foundations.

A year of nerve-racking uncertainty regarding its national fate, of anxiety for its surviving brothers, a year of cruel disappointments has passed over Jewry since the end of the war. With almost unbearable intensity we are waiting now for the verdict of the Commission. Yet whatever its recommendations may turn out to be, the whole Yishuv is one single Britiya. Just as recently, the habitus of this pioneer hiltun, supported by thousands of volunteers from the whole region, un-daunted by the military occupation of their settlement, undeterred by the stormy weather, drove their stakes again and again into the same soil until at last those in power bowed to their indomitable will — so the Yishuv as a whole, assisted by the Jewry of the world, will pursue its goal, with inflexible tenacity, until the justice of its moral claim prevails.

The incomparable dynamic intensity which pervades the life of the Yishuv marked also the work of WIZO in the last six months. The WIZO Federations abroad are making unparalleled efforts to raise the funds for our growing needs; with deeply moving earnestness the women in the liberated countries have reorganized themselves under the banner of WIZO; and in Eretz Israel conferences and manifestations, functions and inaugurations follow each other in quick succession. The ultimate goal of all these activities is the reception of all those who aspire to come — to build together with us a free Eretz Israel.
The 15 hunger strikers elected by the Yishuv to represent the whole community in the manifestation of its protest against the obstacles put in the way of the refugees who wanted to proceed to Eretz Israel on the “Fede” [ship renamed the “Dov Hoz”] included three women: Golda Meirson of the Executive Committee of the General Federation of Jewish Labor (Histadrut). Yehudit Simhonit of the Women Worker’s Council (Moezet Hapoaloth) and Betsy Vromen-Snapper of the Palestine WIZO Executive, formerly President of WIZO Holland, who had arrived in Palestine less than two years ago from the Belsen [DP] Camp.

During the fast held at the house of the National Council (Va’ad Leumi), the WIZO Executive and staff sent the following message to Mrs. Vromen:

“We are very proud indeed that a member of our World WIZO Executive has been chosen to represent the Yishuv on this memorable occasion.

“We are very proud indeed that a member of our World WIZO Executive has been chosen to represent the Yishuv on this memorable occasion. Please accept our warmest wishes for physical strength to stand this trying test. May your self-imposed castigation bring about the desired results so that we may soon have our persecuted brethren with us in Eretz Israel.”

After the termination of the fast, WIZO in Jerusalem arranged an assembly at the WIZO Club to pay tribute to Mrs. Vromen-Snapper.

Mrs. Vromen, for many years WIZO’s president in Holland, had barely recovered in Palestine from her exasperating ordeal in Nazi concentration camps, when she undertook a strenuous tour through South Africa for the sake of refugee aid. Only recently returned, she had now asked for the privilege to participate in the front rank in the fight for the free entry of her people into its homeland.

Illegal Immigration

For years, organized groups, some established by the Jewish leadership in Palestine, attempted to secretly facilitate the illegal immigration of hundreds of thousands of Jews from Europe to Palestine. In most cases, the British navy intercepted illegal ships and prevented passengers’ disembarkation. Many illegal immigrants arrested by the British were sent to detention camps on the island of Cyprus.

Growing international criticism of the detainment of Holocaust survivors, as well as a continuing flood of illegal immigrants reaching the shores of Mandate Palestine, led the British to put the whole regional crisis in the hands of the UN.
Mrs. Esther Kisch, Matron of the WIZO Mothercraft Training Centre in Tel-Aviv gives an account of a vital WIZO activity.

WIZO AT THE ATLITH CLEARANCE CAMP.

Refugee orphan from the "Mataroa" now at Atlith.

Our preparations for the reception of the smallest passengers landing on refugee boats consisted of the equipment of one room for the accommodation of 20 babies of an age up to two. As far as our share was concerned, the equipment was complete when the “Mataroa” transport arrived, from the clean white cots with mosquito netting, bath tubs, and treatment tables to cupboards stocked with bed-linen, diapers, suits, etc. An amount of L.P.500.- had been spent for this purpose.

The nurse entrusted with the work in the hut is a particularly capable graduate of our last course, a member of the Hulatta Kibbutz which has promised to free her for this task whenever a refugee transport is due. From the outset, it had been understood that she would be unable to cope with everything single-handed, and the idea was that she should pick a few helpers from among the arriving mothers. It was further intended that I should be present on the first day to help set things going.

But things did not work out according to plan. First of all, we had to take care not only of babies but also of bigger children up to eight years and not of 20 but of 35, for, as it happened, about half this number were sick with measles and mumps contacted on the boat, and could not be admitted to the Camp Hospital because of the contagious nature of these diseases.

Refugee woman from the "Mataroa". All her kith and kin have been butchered at Oswiecim.
diseases. An impromptu sick bay had to be provided for them and we were asked to see to the arrangements. We got a second hut ready for the sick children. Additional beds had to be procured, also for the nursing mothers who slept with their babies in the sick bay, and another nurse had to be called in at a moment’s notice to take charge. The Camp physician asked us expressly to supply a WIZO-trained girl since the first one had managed exceedingly well in the turmoil of the arrival. The one we called in was a Youth Aliyah and graduate of the last batch trained at the Mothercraft Training Centre, like the first nurse. The two girls were working day and night for a whole fortnight. They shirked no job: they scrubbed the floors, did the washing and also cooked for the sick children for whom the food from the general Camp Kitchen was altogether unsuitable. This involved the improvisation of cooking arrangements in the sick-bay. Special credit goes to the nurses for managing as well as they did under the most inadequate sanitary conditions. Their work and, in fact, the whole scheme, won the highest recognition of the medical staff of the Camp and of Dr. Yasski of the Hadassah University Hospital who came for an examination of the children. The representatives of the Jewish Agency and other important visitors, such as Chief Rabbi Herzog and Mr. Ben Zvi, Chairman of the Vaad Leumi, were no less enthusiastic about the arrangements they found.

Another most welcome and efficient helper was a young volunteer of the Magen David Adom, a Palestinian-born office girl from Haifa, who sacrificed her annual holiday to assist in the reception of this big refugee transport. It was she who carried the babies from the train, directed the mothers to the hut and lent a hand wherever necessary.

We picked two mothers who seemed to be particularly suited to the job, as assistants in the two huts. We had guessed right: they proved both extraordinarily likeable, efficient and intelligent. One was a Swiss Jewess, a teacher of languages, who had lived in France with her husband, the President of the Zionist group in Lyons, Mr. Lambert. Both she and her husband were leading figures of the Resistance Movement until the Gestapo caught them. He was shot; no less than 13 bullets were found in his body. She was tortured but afterwards released. She has come with a six months’ old baby, and intends to join a kibbutz. The other—a Gentile—is a social worker, wife of a Jewish writer from Austria and mother of two children.

With the children voicing their needs in every conceivable language the volunteer helpers from among the refugees also proved most useful as interpreters. In our regular Babies’ Hut we had 17 charges, the youngest—16 days’ old on arrival—having been born in Marseilles.
First meal for the refugee babies at the WIZO Babies’ Hut in the Adlith Clearance Camp. To the right: Mrs. L., a teacher of languages from Geneva who lived in Lyon with her husband, President of the local Zionist Organisation. Both were leading figures in the resistance movement until they were caught by the Gestapo. He was shot; she was tortured and then released. Her baby was born 6 months ago. The nurse smiling down at him is the trainee of the WIZO Mothercraft Training Centre who was put in charge of the Hut, a Youth Aliyah girl who graduated with distinction.

a few days before the departure of the boat. The “senior” of the ward was 11 months’ old. Each of the little ones had been brought in in a portable basket and had its reference card which was immediately affixed by us to the respective cot. Most of them were in need of special treatment as a result of the sea journey and the enormous heat. There were a great many cases of diarrhea and vomiting and several babies ran a temperature without any visible symptom.

There was a lot of work to be done. As a matter of course, mothers of small children not accommodated at one of the special huts also came to us for advice and assistance in all kinds of emergencies. Among other requests they asked for clothing for the children. Some of the children were in rags (as for instance, a 6-year-old boy who had been at Buchenwald for four years), and we had to improvise a clothing collection among our Haifa friends.

Many essential supplies had to be bought, as, contrary to our expectations, they were not obtainable at the camp. Intervention with the Camp authorities was necessary in many instances and much initiative and energy was needed to carry out the hundred and one arrangements which became necessary in the course of the work. The nurses had neither the time nor the authority to attend to all this and I had, therefore, to stay on for a full week.
TRAGIC EVENTS OF JUNE 29

Side view of WIZO House after the military search of the premises.

Doors, furniture and files piled up as barricade by the military.

At dawn on Shabbat morning, June 29, a military sweep was made by the Palestine Administration against the Yishuv. Members of the Executive of the Jewish Agency were arrested, together with members of the Vaad Leumi, Histadruth and other national institutions; in all, close on three thousand Jews are under arrest. The offices of the Jewish Agency were occupied by the military authorities, and settlements and many public buildings were raided. Among them was WIZO House, which was forcibly entered by British soldiers who resorted to dynamite, despite the fact that the keys were available. In this connection the following cable, dated July 3, was received from the Palestine WIZO Executive:
DEEPLY OUTRAGED MUST INFORM YOU INDESCRIBABLE DAMAGE CAUSED TO WIZO HOUSE AS RESULT OF RECENT MILITARY OPERATIONS STOP SHABBATH BEFORE DAWN MILITARY UNIT FORCED ENTRY FRONT DOOR BY EXPLOSIVES SMASHING DOORS WINDOWS SHUTTERS AND CAUSING SERIOUS STRUCTURAL DAMAGE IN FIRST AND SECOND FLOOR WHERE MANY WALLS CRACKED AND PARTLY DESTROYED AND SOME BROUGHT DOWN ALTOGETHER STOP BUILT IN STEEL SAFES BLOWN OPEN WITH EXPLOSIVES CASH OF BOTH WORLD WIZO AND PALESTINE FEDERATION AMOUNTING TO ABOUT FIVE HUNDRED POUNDS PLUS CHEQUES AND DEBIT VOUCHERS TAKEN AWAY STOP ALSO CARD INDEXES OF PALESTINE FEDERATION DONORS AND OUR ACCOUNTS VOUCHERS AND CARD INDEXES MISSING STOP ALL OTHER DOCUMENTS FILES PAPERS POINTLESSLY DAMAGED AND STREWN OVER FLOORS STOP AT TEL AVIV GROUPS PREMISES OBJECTS MISSING PREPARED FOR BAZAAR ALSO FORTY ELECTRIC FLAT IRONS AND PART OF TEXTILES FOR THEIR CHILDREN’S HOMES VALUING ABOUT THOUSAND POUNDS STOP ALSO CROCKERY THEIR TEA KITCHEN CLUB BROKEN COMPLETELY STOP MANY PIECES OF FURNITURE BROKEN AND USED TO BARRICADE DOORS AND WINDOWS STOP HOUSE OFFERS HEARTBREAKING PICTURE OF DELIBERATE AND WILFUL DESTRUCTION STOP UPON OUR DEMAND HOUSE WAS INSPECTED SUNDAY MORNING BY ASSISTANT DISTRICT COMMISSIONER AND MAYOR OF TEL AVIV DETAILED PROTOCOL TAKEN BY BOTH RESPONSIBLE GENERAL SECRETARIES IN PRESENCE OF POLICE AND LAWYER STOP OUR ENGINEER IN PRESENCE OF PUBLIC WORK DEPARTMENT NOW EXAMINING THE HOUSE FOR VALUATION OF DAMAGE CAUSED BUT THIS WILL TAKE TWO OR THREE DAYS AS DAMAGE TO WIZO HOUSE PARTICULARLY GREAT FOR UNKNOWN AND INCOMPREHENSIBLE REASONS STOP TOMORROW EXECUTIVE MEETING STOP WILL KEEP YOU INFORMED GREETINGS FROM ALL CHAVEROTH TO EVERYBODY.

HAUSER.
GENERAL SECRETARY PALESTINE WIZO EXECUTIVE.

In a statement issued immediately after the raid, the Palestine WIZO Executive, announcing their determination to continue, undeterred, with their work, declared: “No action of suppression, perpetrated in the name of law and order, can stop or curb our peaceful work of upbuilding in which we are united with the whole Jewish population of Palestine.”
The beginning of August saw the largest arrival of refugee ships during recent months. Their landing caused high excitement in the Yishuv, and for many days there resounded the names of the Jewish and non-Jewish champions of Zionism which the refugees used as symbols for their ships – Hanna Szenes, Enzo Sereni, Orde Wingate, Dov Hos, Eliahu Golomb, Chavivah Reik, Max Nordau, Josiah Wedgwood, Henrietta Szold, and others.

Our agricultural schools and training farms received many new students from among those on board these ships. More than 200 girls and boys of the Youth Aliyah have been split up into groups, they are to be seen everywhere these days, these youngsters with the tell-tale blue tattoo marks of the death camps on their arms - children who since their tenth or eleventh year have lived through all the horrors of an inferno, and who for years have been made to endure forced labour in munitions factories or in stone quarries under the lash of the Nazi overseer. Many of the youngsters were active as partisans, setting and laying mines and escaped death only by guile and breath-taking flight. The normal teaching programme has had to be altered radically to suit these youngsters; some have had hardly any schooling at all, others have a good grounding in Hebrew learnt in ‘Tarbut’ schools in pre-Hitler times, but all lack a systematic education. Although they find it strange to sit on schoolbenches again – ‘like children’ they look on any physical work given them as ‘childplay’. For them, ‘work’ has always meant something quite different – forced slave labour which only the hardiest of them could survive. Imbued with the idea of one day preparing a small plot of land for their own pioneer settlement, they usefully learn all sorts of agricultural work. By mixing with the youth of Palestine, they are helped to find their own way back to a normal existence; to this end the Friday evening festivities and holidays, amateur dramatics, music and sport all help also, while frank discussions with their group leaders and excursions about the countryside open for them a vista of a new world.

Building for the Young Immigrants
Housing the boys who have arrived on the refugee ships presents a very difficult problem in all our agricultural institutions, and the construction of accommodation for these pupils has become one of the most urgent tasks.

In the meantime, building has begun everywhere. Two new buildings are being put up at the Nahalal School, one is a house for 60 youngsters – both refugees and the sons of local settlers – with a clubhouse attached to serve as a recreation centre. The other building is the long-planned schoolhouse to be named after Lilian Freiman, the late President of the Canadian WIZO Federation.

This is being built with the aid of a special fund provided by the Canadian Hadassah.

Smaller blocks of dwelling houses are also in the course of construction at Aynoth, Nachlat Yehuda and Petach Tikvah.

The construction of three additional schoolrooms is almost complete at the Anna Jaffe Vocational School in Nachlat Yitzchak. They will be used for the sewing and weaving departments of the school, the development of which during the war was greatly hampered by the lack of space.
Mrs. Sieff’s Statement before UNSCOP

(United Nations Special Committee on Palestine)

Granted a hearing before UNSCOP, the Council of Jewish Women’s Organisations in Palestine voiced the aims and feelings of the women of the Yishuv through two great representatives, Mrs. Rebecca Sieff and Mrs. Rachel Katznelson-Rubashov.

When Mrs. Sieff took her seat before the microphone a stir went through the audience, and when she reached the climax of her concluding sentences – an impassioned appeal for the immediate transfer to Palestine of the children from the camps – there was a moment of stunned silence before the applause broke out, an occurrence unprecedented in the sessions of the committee, except for the acclamation of Dr. Weizmann’s testimony.

“In order to complete the picture drawn by my colleague of the women’s part in the upbuilding of the Jewish National Home, I should like briefly to outline the role played by women in the Zionist World Movement. The original constitution of the Zionist Organisation as adopted by the first Zionist Congress 50 years ago, gave full and equal rights to women, thus emphasizing its democratic and progressive character. In consequence, the first women Zionists were able, from the outset, to devote all their energies to the task of enrolling the Jewish woman into the movement and enabling her to make her specific contribution to the renaissance of her people. As it is a sine qua non for the modern woman to fulfill a dual role, so in addition to these specific tasks, Zionist women have also played a notable part in the raising of the great national funds.

“...These organisations sprang up under regimes with such diverse social and economic conditions as those which prevailed in Tsarist Russia, the free United States of America, liberal Great Britain, extending to all countries of Europe, to the Latin Americas, the British Commonwealth and even to the smallest Jewish communities in the Far East. The essential unity of the Jewish people is reflected with crystal clarity in this very fact that Jewish women under such diverse conditions and in the face of the special difficulties common to all women, have organised themselves for one fundamental ideal – the rebuilding and return to
their ancient homeland. Throughout all the bitter centuries of the exile, the Jewish woman has joined in the daily prayers for the return to Zion and zealously guarded those age-long religious traditions and festivals indissolubly bound up with the life and soil of the land of Israel. In the lullabies she sang to her child, the Jewish mother expressed this deep yearning and passed it on from generation to generation.

“To translate this deep-rooted faith into terms of a concrete world-wide organisation, embracing close on half a million women, has been no light task. It has indeed demanded untiring devotion and constant personal sacrifice.

“Women had to learn the significance of the woman as pioneer, to shoulder the responsibility for clearly defined tasks, of which my colleague has given you a picture, and finally, to raise the funds required for their material realisation in the land of their prayers.

“The rise of the Nazi regime, with the incredible suffering it brought in its wake for the Jewish people, demanded an immediate intensification of our efforts and a wide extension of all our institutions and services. That we were able, in no small measure, to meet the situation, was due to the basic soundness of our work and our organisation.

“It was a woman [Recha Freier] – herself a potential victim of Nazi fury – who conceived the idea of Youth Aliyah – the rescue of Jewish youth from the Fascist hell by bringing them at an early age to Palestine, the one place in the world which could compensate for these victimized children for the loss of their parental home and offer them the prospect of a full life as free human beings….It was a great woman in Israel to whom was entrusted the task of absorbing them into the life and soil of Palestine.

“Then came the war. Millions of Jews trapped in the European inferno – every avenue of escape barred and bolted! In this desperate plight, our Zionist women came to the forefront, displaying invincible courage, qualities of leadership and heroism under conditions never known before in human history. What gave them this courage? It was the strong sense of national pride and dignity which they had developed during two decades of intensive Zionist activity.

“They kept alive the cultural heritage of the Jewish people so long as there was breath in their bodies. They risked and lost their lives in that strangest of all smuggling activities, spiriting away the children over forbidden frontiers or hiding them in hospitable non-Jewish homes. Many of them went underground to find their way to the partisans, fighting by their side in the mountain and forest. In that last heroic stand of the Warsaw Ghetto, that unique battle for freedom in the world’s history, our young women fought and fell. A mere handful have survived to tell the tale.

“But whatever we have been able to achieve, what does it avail us if after the great extermination, the remnants of our people still languish in displaced persons camps and still live in daily terror of their lives in countries to which they were compelled to return, since the one way they would have chosen is barred to them? Perhaps only those who, like myself, have visited the DP camps in Germany can fully realize this bitter humiliation that the survivors of the first people outraged by the Nazis should be placed in a category lower than those who were responsible for launching this hideous war upon mankind, instead of having been made the first consideration of the victorious nations.

“Despite this, such is the attachment of our women to their ideal that even behind this barbed wire they have spontaneously re-grouped themselves under the banner of Zionism, not only trying to prepare themselves for the future, but
organising once again social and cultural service for their fellow prisoners.

“Only men and women desperate to go home and nowhere else, could muster up the strengths to break through the barriers imposed by their so-called liberators to sail the high seas in such perilous craft and under such indescribable conditions. Amongst them are large numbers of expectant mothers and women with babes in arms. Need one say more?

It takes the force of the British Navy to prevent this human flotsam and jetsam from landing in the homeland, and to escort them to the new concentration camps in Cyprus, where only yesterday the hungry proclaimed a hunger strike to protest against the degrading and foul conditions under which they are being held.

“The prolongation of this agony is a stain upon humanity which can only be effaced if the state of homelessness of the Jewish people is ended. We identify ourselves with the political demands of the Jewish Agency for free and unfettered immigration into Palestine and independent statehood through which alone this can be achieved.

“But there is one vital factor which brooks not a moment’s delay and which we as women and mothers feel our sacred duty and our moral right to place before the United Nations: that the 30,000 children surviving in the DP camps in Europe and the 2,000 now in Cyprus be given at once into the acre of the Yishuv. How can we make the world realize that almost all of these children are the sole survivors of whole families and entirely without kith and kin? Can you imagine the psychological state of such a child – after what he has survived? …Even in the games which I saw children playing in a newly established camp outside Frankfurt, there was no childish joy, nor that spontaneity which should be every child’s birthright. The Jewish woman longs to restore this birthright in so far as it is humanly possible. Where else can this be but in that vigorous life which is Jewish Palestine, together with its healthy, normal young generation?

 “…We ask you as representatives of the United Nations and as simple members of the human race to join in our demand for the immediate release of our children.

“We shall not rest, nor gentleman, shall we give you rest until we have brought our children home.”
ROUND OUR FEDERATIONS

MORE WIZO FEDERATIONS RECREATED.

There is more good news to tell; great news:

The WIZO’s in Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Norway have been revived. And as though to demonstrate the world-wide character of the WIZO Movement, a message of the revival of a WIZO Group in China has just been received by the WIZO Head Office.

BELGIUM.

Although close contact with the Belgian Jewish women has been established since the Zionist World Conference in London, it is only now that we can announce, with great joy, the establishment of WIZO Groups in Brussels and in Antwerp. We hope to be able to give further news about these groups very soon.

DENMARK.

“A small group of energetic and enthusiastic women,” the first message which has reached us from Copenhagen states, have undertaken—on their return from Sweden, where so many Jews found refuge for almost two years—to reorganise the former association of Jewish women, “Jodisk Kvindeforening” and to transform it on the initiative of Mrs. Magna Hartvig, into a regular WIZO group. As all their documents were destroyed, they have to start from scratch. An excellent working committee has already been formed with Mrs. Marcus Melchior, wife of Rabbi Melchior, as President.

FINLAND.

It is with deep joy and gratification that we officially welcome back our gallant Finnish women to the ranks of our movement for which they worked clandestinely even in the years of terror. This is the letter we have received from them:

Dear Friends,

“On the very verge of the abyss and the threat of extermination, we were compelled to leave the towns and stay in hiding in the country together with all our children, even the smallest. During all these years, we have not forgotten our duties towards WIZO, nor have we abandoned our work.”

The moment our position eased up a little, and we were able to return to our homes, we started work at once. We have continued our work according to our old programme, in the manner we did before the war.

We are able to report to you on a great number of meetings at which we collected money. We are going to keep the collected funds until we get permission for transfer from the Government.

Our former Chairman, Mrs. Ana Pergament has been ill for many years and cannot direct the work any longer.

I, as treasurer of the WIZO Organisation for the last five years, was elected Chairman, and I can inform you to my great joy that the work is now being carried on with remarkable success.

I am wishing you and ourselves fruitful work on behalf of our People, our Culture and our Country.

With warmest Zionist greetings.

SARA NEMES, Chairman.”

NORWAY.

News reached us via Sweden that a WIZO Group has been organised in Oslo, Norway, the representatives of which attended an Anniversary Meeting of our Stockholm WIZO.
The tradition of including updates from WIZO’s international federations in its magazines goes back to the early days of the movement. Known today as “WIZO Around the World,” the “Round Our Federations” featured here is one of the first published after the end of the Holocaust, which had a decimating effect on WIZO’s membership numbers in Europe, and includes touching details about survival, rebuilding and a collective, undaunted Zionist spirit.

South Africa - WIZO Month

Only workers who had raised a minimum of £10 during WIZO Month were eligible for invitations—about 900 workers were present. After the dinner, there was a tableau on the stage of four beautiful girls, dressed in white, each carrying a pennant bearing the letters W.I.Z.O.

Naturally, in order to qualify, individual members and the many branches of the Johannesburg Women’s Zionist League were busy organising functions, such as Children’s Parties, Dances at different Clubs, Games Evenings, Cake Stalls, etc.

It is my firm conviction that through WIZO Month we have succeeded in establishing, not only the name, but the ideals and work of WIZO, firmly before the South African public—men and women. The publicity and success of WIZO Month functions have done more to establish WIZO as a living entity in South African minds than all the previous campaigns.

WIZO Revival Throughout Europe.

Bulgaria.

In the short period that elapsed since its resurrection, WIZO in Bulgaria has again grown to two thousand six hundred members, organised in twenty-seven groups. This membership figure alone, set against the background of hardship, impoverishment and decimation of Bul-
garian Jewry, reflects the wonderful spirit of devotion and enthusiasm with which our hard-tried Bulgarian women set out to rebuild what was destroyed. Their all-out effort in the organisational sphere is equalled by the intensity of their drive to spread the message of Zionism and WIZO throughout the country. A large part of the material they receive from London and from Palestine is reprinted by them in the Bulgarian language.

**Czechoslovakia.**

WIZO is again established in Czechoslovakia. Two WIZO Groups are at work, one in Bratislava, the other in Kosice. The Bratislava Group works under the Presidency of Mrs. Else Blumgrund, colleague and friend of the late Mrs. Gisi Fleischmann. It was to the memory of that great Jewess, to the memory of her heroic deeds, her personal courage and spirit of self-sacrifice that the first public meeting was devoted, at which it was proposed to plant a grove in her name. The Group pledges itself to work in the spirit of that unforgettable WIZO leader who remained at her post to take a stand against the work of destruction, to save what could be saved. She had to bear the consequences of her struggle. After long months of solitary confinement she was taken to Auschwitz, where this “holy flame of love, of enthusiasm and pride” was quenched in the gas-chambers.

It is hoped that it will be possible to re-organise WIZO in Prague in the very near future.

**Denmark.**

The re-constituted Danish WIZO, with Mrs. Marcus Melchior at the head has, in the few weeks of its existence, grown to a membership of one hundred and twelve. Within the working committee every member has a practical task of its own, including the selling of WIZO “flags” which have been manufactured for this purpose; the issuing of new Danish WIZO material, conducting study circles and local refugee relief work.

The first letter received after four weeks of existence, from this re-constituted group, included a printed membership card and a WIZO Constitution in Danish, symbol of their systematic and earnest work.

**Finland.**

In addition to the official Helsinki WIZO Group, about which we reported in a previous issue, a second WIZO Group is working in this town: the remnants of the Viborg WIZO, who have settled in Helsinki and are continuing their work, separately from the Helsinki Group. On February 24th, they celebrated the 22nd anniversary of Viborg WIZO.

**Greece.**

WIZO has been finally re-constituted in Greece. A nucleus of active Zionist women, whose co-operation was badly needed in the movement, are trying to revive the WIZO Organization which existed there in pre-war days. There are very great tasks facing the new group, which is also asked to take an active part in local social welfare work, such as the running of Jewish orphanages and training homes for Jewish refugee girls, etc.

**Hungary.**

“I am happy to be able to give you news about our WIZO in Budapest after these ‘apocalyptic’ times. That we survived is a miracle. As former Vice-President, I have rallied round after these ghastly years, those of our co-workers who are still among the living.” So commences the first message we received from our resurrected Hungarian WIZO.

“The beginning is hard. All our books, Minutes, lists, all our funds were confiscated by the Germans. We are ruined, weakened by sorrow and suffering, by starvation and hard labour. The lack
of transport and telephone aggravates the situation. But our first concern is to rally round our ancient members, to make new ones and to enlarge our circles from day to day.”

Apart from their Zionist work, they are organizing assistance for those who have been repatriated after deportation. The relief work includes meeting, at the four big railway stations of Budapest, every train that arrives with the “deported” and to distribute meals among them; supervising the large (one thousand bed) Home of deported persons; visiting all the hospitals where the sick “deported persons” are accommodated.

A second message reports on the progress of work: “We have commenced to re-activate our members. To-day we have a membership of 700, which increases from day to day. Our cultural committee does excellent work. We have arranged two large-scale festivals. One inauguration function, one for Chanukah and we are preparing our Purim now. Twice monthly we have a meeting with an audience of one hundred to one hundred and twenty. We have taken up Hachshara work for one hundred young girls who have returned from deportation.”

Carried out in the face of starvation and utter ruin prevailing in Hungary and in particular amongst Hungarian Jewry, the work of WIZO women is truly heroic.

Poland.

The stirring message, the first that we received from Warsaw WIZO, is known to all our Federations and Groups amongst whom it was circulated: its spirit can be condensed in the opening words: “Although we are few in numbers, because so many of our movement were exterminated . . . yet we feel that the responsibility that falls upon every Jewish woman is graver now than it ever was before.” A second message, this time from Lodz, was handed to us through a member of the Executive of the Zionist Organisation in Poland; it reads:

I am taking the opportunity of informing you of the work of WIZO in Lodz. We have been working for about two months and now comprise more than a hundred organised women. We are working with Halucim Zairim and Bogrims and are patrons of their kibbutzim. Our members are in charge of the Children’s Homes and we supply the teachers and instructors for the children. Every Wednesday we hold meetings at which our ladies are learning Hebrew and English, in special WIZO courses. We are trying to re-organise WIZO groups all over the country.

Mrs. Felz Szyper and Mrs. Alice Keil, who are at the head of the WIZO in Lodz, are two pre-war members of the Organisation. All other chaveroth, with the exception of those who now live in Eretz, are no longer alive. Here in Lodz, we think only of joining our WIZO sisters in Palestine.

Rumania.

The A.C.F.E. (Associata Cultural A Femeilor Evree Din Domania) has re-organised twenty groups; other groups in Bucovina and a great number of small towns have expressed their desire to work for WIZO again. Sub-groups are being organised in Bukarest. In the true tradition of the ancient A.C.F.E., intense cultural and organisational work is carried out. Monday meetings are devoted to administrated work, while Saturday sees a growing number of WIZO members and guests assembled in the WIZO club for lectures on WIZO and general Zionism, and for WIZO propaganda. In addition, the A.C.F.E. actively participates in the Institution “For the protection of the Jewish woman and girls,” where refugees or repatriated Jewesses are trained in sewing.
MESSAGE OF THE HOUR

Sent out by Mrs. Rebecca Sieff on Behalf of the London WIZO Executive to the Federations and Groups of the WIZO

At long last, the United Nations Organisation, the world’s highest tribunal, has in clear and unequivocal terms endorsed the aims and aspirations of our Movement.

It has recognized both the justice and the necessity of the re-establishment of the Jewish State in Palestine, the ancient and historic home of our people, the land of its birth. This tribunal has understood the right of the Jewish people to equality among the nations, and has recognized its inherent right to deal with its own problems, and in so doing to cooperate with those peoples of the world who seek justice and progress for all.

We rejoice with full hearts in this decision, together with our fellow Jews all over the world, and above all, with the Yishuv itself and those of our people who are still held within the confines of the DP camps in Europe and the camps of Cyprus.

But we are deeply conscious of the immensity of the challenge of the hour, the manifold responsibilities which it places on the shoulders of each and every one of us in a task unprecedented in the history of mankind.

With high hearts and deep faith we face the future, and pledge ourselves to a new dedication to this task – the ending of the Golah and the redemption of our people in the re-born Jewish State.
WIZO FEDERATIONS AND GROUPS
THROUGHOUT THE WORLD
VOICE THEIR JOY

FEDERATION OF WOMEN ZIONISTS OF GT. BRITAIN AND EIRE.

WARM GREETINGS AND MAZELTOV FROM CONGRESS PWZ STOP PLEDGE REDouble LABOURS FOR PRACTICAL WORK OF WIZO IN OUR LONG-HOPED-FOR JEWISH STATE STOP OUR THOUGHTS WITH ALL OUR WIZO COLLEAGUES AT THIS MOMENT OF TRIAL STOP MAY YOU Emerge SAFELY AND STRENGTHENED FOR GREAT TASK BEFORE US ALL.

CANADA.

IT IS WITH MUCH JOY THAT I CONVEY TO YOU, ON BEHALF OF ALL MEMBERS OF CANADIAN HADASSAH, WARMEST GREETINGS IN THIS HISTORIC HOUR OF THE PROCLAMATION OF THE JEWISH STATE, WE UNITE WITH ALL OUR WIZO COLLEAGUES IN PRAYER AND THANKSGIVING FOR THIS GREAT ACHIEVEMENT.

SOUTH AFRICA.

OUR HEARTS WITH YOU ON THIS HISTORIC OCCASION DEEPLY CONSCIOUS OUR ADDED RESPONSIBILITIES AND JOYFULLY REDEDICATE SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN TO ZION AND THE JEWISH STATE.

ARGENTINE.

ARGENTINE WIZO CELEBRATES WITH EMOTION GREAT EVENT PROMISE TO DOUBLE EFFORTS FOR GREATNESS OF OUR STATE.

AUSTRIA (Salzburg D.P. Camp).

ON THE THRESHOLD OF THE FULFILMENT OF OUR MOST FERVENT HOPES WE PRAY FOR SPEEDY REALISATION OF OUR IDEALS ON THE LIBERATED SOIL OF OUR JEWISH STATE.

BOLIVIA (La Paz).

CONGRATULATIONS FOR REALISATION OF OUR AIM STOP EXPECT RECEIVE INSTRUCTIONS FUTURE WORK.

BRAZIL (Rio de Janeiro).

HAPPY ESTABLISHMENT JEWISH STATE STOP WIZO BRAZIL WILL GO AHEAD WITH DOUBLED EFFORT FOR PROGRESS AND WELFARE OF OUR PEOPLE.

BRAZIL (Sao Paulo).

IN THE HOUR OF THE ENDING OF OUR GALUTH WE JOIN IN THE REJOICING OF OUR PEOPLE AT CREATION OF JEWISH STATE GREETINGS FROM
ITALY.

ITALIES LONG YEARNING FOR STATEHOOD IS FULFILLED STOP OUR HEARTS ARE FULL OF DEVOTED THANKFULNESS TO THE FATE WHICH HAS GIVEN US THE REVIVAL OF OUR HOMELAND IN LOVE AND JOY WITH YOU.

GERMANY.

WE REJOICE WITH YOU THAT OUR AIM HAS AT LAST BEEN REACHED STOP WE WILL REDOUBLE OUR EFFORTS TO ASSIST YOU IN THE HARD BUT SPLENDID WORK WHICH IS BEFORE YOU.

CHILE.

WITH DEEP EMOTION WE CONGRATULATE THE HEROIC AND GALLANT LEADERS OF THE EXECUTIVE WHO HAVE KNOWN TO MAINTAIN ALIVE THE HOPE FOR A REALISATION OF OUR IDEALS.

FRANCE.

PARTAGEONS AVEC WIZO MONDIAL GRANDE JOIE SOLUTION UNO STOP AM ISRAEL HAI

GREECE.

REALISATION GRAND REVE BIMILLENAIRE REMPLIT JOIR DEBORDANTE FEMMES JUIVES DE GRECE SOMMES PRETES REDOUBLER EFFORTS ET UNIR NOS FORCES EN VUE CONSTRUCTION GRANDEUR NOUVEL ETAT JUIF.

GUATEMALA.

WIZO GUATEMALA GROUP OVERJOYED FINAL VICTORY PALESTINE PROBLEM.

HUNGARY.

WITH GREAT JOY AND STIRRED HEARTS SENDING OUR WARMEST GREETINGS TO LEADERS OF THE EXECUTIVE.

PARAGUAY (Asuncion).

(Translated from Spanish.)

IN THIS SPLENDID RADIANT HOUR OF THE RETURN OF THE HOMELAND ERETZ ISRAEL WIZO ASUNCION CONGRATULATES YOU ON HAVING OBTAINED THE VOTE ON BEHALF OF OUR GRAND FREE FATHERLAND.
PERU (Lima).

WE WANT TO CONGRATULATE YOU ON THE CREATION OF THE JEWISH STATE AND ON THE WORK YOU HAVE DONE TO ACHIEVE THIS AIM. WE PRAY THAT ALL OUR HOPES WILL BE FULFILLED.

POLAND (Warsaw).

FROM THE BOTTOM OF OUR HEARTS WE CONGRATULATE YOU ON THIS DAY OF VICTORY OF OUR JUST CAUSE WE JOIN YOU AT THIS HAPPY MOMENT IN THE HISTORY OF OUR SUFFERING PEOPLE STOP TOGETHER WE HOPE TO BUILD UP OUR BEAUTIFUL HOMELAND.

PORTUGAL (Lisbon).

EMUE DE LA GRANDE VICTOIRE QUE LE PEUPLE D’ISRAEL VIENT DE GAGNER, JE VOUS ENVOIE TOUS MES SOUHAITS DE BONHEUR ET DE RECONNAISSANCE POUR LA PART SI ACTIVE QUE TOUTES LES FEMMES A LONDRES ONT PRISE PENDANT DE LONGUES ANNEES. CHALOM

WE FEEL GRATEFUL TO THOSE WHO BY THEIR WORK AND PERSEVERANCE HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO GAIN THE MOST RIGHTEOUS CAUSE IN THE HISTORY OF HUMANITY AND WE HOPE THAT IN THE FUTURE EVERY MEMBER OF OUR COMMUNITY WILL FEEL CONSCIOUS OF THE INCREASING RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE WIZO. WITH A HEARTY SHALOM.

RUMANIA.

DEVENUE LA GENERATION LA PLUS HEUREUSE DES DERNIERS DEUX MILLE ANS NOUS NOUS EFFORCERONS D’ETRE A LA HAUTEUR DES EVENEMENTS STOP VIVE LES FEMMES DE LA WIZO DE PARTOUT.

SWITZERLAND (Basle).

OUR HEARTIEST MASELTOV ON DECISION LAKE SUCCESS. WE DO HOPE THAT JEWISH PEOPLE AS A WHOLE WILL GIVE ADEQUATE RESPONSE AND DO ITS DUTY TOWARDS ERETZ ISRAEL.

URUGUAY.

IN A MOMENT OF PROFOUND EMOTION FACED WITH THE REALISATION OF OUR ASPIRATIONS WE SEND OUR FELICITATIONS AND MASELTOV TO ALL COLLEAGUES AND WIZO COWORKERS ON THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE JEWISH STATE.

The above messages were received by the London WIZO Executive. Further messages have been received by the Palestine WIZO Executive
Wanderings of the Baby Home

Near November it will be twenty-five years since a small group of women living in Jerusalem, amongst them Miriam Sacher, formed a Committee for the care of abandoned and destitute children. When a short time afterwards I came to Israel, I agreed to become the matron of WIZO’s Baby Home. The rooms which were at that time at our disposal were in a poor district, were very small and were in every way completely unsuited for a baby home. I therefore rented a small house in the garden of the German Colony, where 25 children could easily be accommodated. At the same time, I started a training school for children’s nurses which we originally intended to train only members of kibbutzim. Our aim was then as it is now, to nurse poor, ill and needy children and at the same time to give young girls living in kibbutzim an opportunity to learn General and Child Welfare Nursing, without increasing the budget of the hard-pressed kibbutzim. Up to the present, approximately 1,000 nurses trained by WIZO are working in the Children’s Houses and Homes all over the country.

More and more babies

After a year in our second home, in the German Colony, the house became too small for us, and we moved to the Montefiore Quarter, where it was possible to establish a small Training School for 10-12 girls, as well as to look after 45-50 children. The number of children and the work grew apace, till in 1929, as a result of the Arab rising, we were forced to leave the Montefiore Quarter, as it was threatened by the Arabs. There were then approximately 70 children besides some of their mothers and the nurses.

For a short time we were given refuge in more or less safe areas in various parts of Central Jerusalem, until Arab risings in Hebron and Safed forced us temporarily to take in 100 children. In order to make this possible the WIZO placed its Domestic Science School at our disposal. When, as we thought, peace once more descended on the land, we moved with our children, numbering a 100, to Talpiot, where we lived in six small houses. That was the happiest time in the Baby Home’s existence. Unfortunately, in the year 1933-34, our idyll was destroyed through the events in Europe, for the large number of immigrants entering the country made so great a demand upon us that we were forced to rent a large house in an Arab quarter opposite an English army camp. We stayed there right through the period of the Arab disturbances, continually seeking a still larger house, as the unrest in Palestine at that time made the need for our work greater than ever before.

The War Brings Changes

In 1939, after having moved seven times, we eventually came to our present home, where we stayed throughout the 1948 war in spite of the terrible siege of Jerusalem, of the continual bombing and shelling and of the lack of food and water and of fuel, for we did not want under any circumstances to leave Jerusalem.

The war changed the character of our institution as a home for babies completely. Already in 1948, when the Hadassah hospital was captured by the Arabs, the top floor of our home was converted into the Hadassah Children’s Ward and this it has remained ever since.
by ROSA WOLLSTEIN

The Matron of the Jerusalem Baby Home

Ninety per cent of the children who come to us are sent from the immigrants’ camps and some of them are very ill, weak and undernourished. We have, to-day, 220 babies, including two-year-olds who are still unable to walk, and there are another 100 children in our new home in Bakka, who are also new immigrants but who are more or less normal children. And yet all that we do is but a drop in the ocean. Every day, we are forced to refuse ten to twelve applications as we have neither sufficient beds nor the room, nor the trained staff to cope with the demands made upon us.

Our training school has grown considerably during recent years, and we now have ninety pupils. Here too we are faced with the urgent need for a hostel for the girls, as Jerusalem is suffering from a severe housing shortage and the girls whom we are training cannot go to us from all over the country and 70 per cent are new immigrants who have no relatives in Israel and no home in Jerusalem.

Shalamit

A few short but typical cases illustrate my twenty-five years’ work.

Twenty-two years ago, Rabbi Kallil found a tiny new-born baby on his doorstep, and he brought it to our home. Little Shalamit’s mother, terrified lest she should be ostracised by her orthodox neighbours, had abandoned her illegitimate child a few days after its birth. It was with the greatest difficulty that we resorted to foster parents who adopted her at the age of 18 months and took her to live in their comfortable home in Tel-Aviv; she was a normal healthy baby. Two years ago, the girl came to me with her fiancé. Her foster parents had told her, as she now wished to marry, about her origin. The two young people, both of them strong, healthy and extremely good-looking, came to ask me if Shalamit’s parents had been healthy. Fortunately, we were able to give them a satisfactory answer and now they are happily married.

Lulu in 1924

Lulu was another interesting case. She was a tiny motherless infant, whom she came to us. She was brought to Palestine from Persia by her grandparents and remained in our care for four years. We were then fortunate enough to get her admitted to a children’s village, where she remained until she was 18 years of age, when she went to the WIZO Agricultural School at Natufi. After she left Natufi she married a very charming young man who unfortunately was killed during the war against the Arabs. Their baby boy, “our grandchild,” is now in our home.

Elb

The best baby about whom I want to tell you is Eli, who came to Palestine from Algiers with his parents and an older sister in 1929. His parents, decent hard-working people, were unable to find work in this country and his mother in despair committed suicide leaving a letter in which she expressed her conviction that orphans in Palestine would not be left to want. Eli’s father brought the young baby to us and took his little daughter to an orphanage. When he was four years old, we succeeded in sending him to Ben Shemen. He proved to be so intelligent that he was later granted a free place at the Kadoorie School. Now he is in the army and he visits his foster mother, Rosa, whenever he is on leave.

5,000 Babies

We have nursed innumerable numbers of twins, 16 triplets and very, very many premature infants. During the first five years of our existence, the children were mainly foundlings who soon found good homes with adopted parents or they were twins or triplets whom, after a period under our experienced care, we were able to send home. But in recent years, the type of baby entrusted to us has changed. The number of children whose mothers are suffering from tuberculosis or from a mental breakdown has greatly increased. The mothers are forced to leave their children with us, either to protect them from infection, or to cure those babies who have already contracted TB.

Although our accommodation has always been primitive and quite unsuitable, we can nevertheless be very satisfied with our achievement, as, despite all obstacles, the mortality rate amongst the 5,000 children who have passed through our hands has been less than one per cent, and now I am looking forward to what we shall achieve in a home of our own.
STUDENT NURSES

The Jerusalem Baby Home not immigrants, young girls without the need of the babies for their nurses trained in the Jerusalem

(Left) Pupil nurse watches Sister give an injection. Her family all died in Auschwitz.

(Above) Nurse training from 10 of the Pres.

(Below) Saadya, a smiling favourite of the Baby Home. Both he and the nurse came on the flying carpet from Aden.

(In Circle) A normal, happy baby. This child is a joy to all at the Baby Home. Our labours rewarded.

Sister Rosa as Teacher.
ives the lives of countless babies, but also serves as a training school for nurses. Many of them are themselves new or mother who have lost through suffering their bearings in life, and who find once more the will to live through i care. Their training finished, they go out to tend babies in every corner of the country and so it is that one finds home by Sister Rosa in the Creches in the Immigrants’ Camps, in the nurseries in towns, kibbutzim and moshavot.

(Right) With immense love and care the nurses try to make happy, normal children out of these miserable mites.

(In Circle) Although strong again physically, this little immigrant needs all loving care the nurse can give him to restore him to mental health.

(Below) A premature baby, 3 lbs. at birth, receiving its first drink from a bottle, after being fed through a tube since its birth a month previously.

Yemenite pupils make excellent nurses.