

AMERICAN JEWISH DISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE
CYPRUS

THE RUTENBERG SEMINAR

The Rutenberg Seminar (הסניף הירוק) (המס' 1017) was founded in July 1947 by the Pinhas Rutenberg Educational Trust (incorporated as a limited Company in 1945) in conjunction with the Youth Department of the Zionist Executive.

The Trust had established in Palestine a "Youth Center" (מרכז הנוער) in the former residence of the late Pinchas Rutenberg, endowed to the Trust, and in accordance with the Memorandum of Association of the Trust it was felt by the directorate of the Youth Center that a similar institute should be established in the refugee camps of Cyprus.

The objects of the Trust are, in the language of the Memorandum,

" To promote, further and assist directly or indirectly the education (including humane and technical education) in Palestine and countries outside Palestine of young persons who reside or intend to reside in Palestine ... with a view to imbuing the Jewish Youth with a spirit of goodwill, mutual understanding, collaboration and unity and raising the level of education and culture and ameliorating conditions of life in Palestine. "

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In addition to these general objects, conditions in Cyprus made it necessary from the outset to devote special attention to the education, preparation and assistance of teachers, youth-leaders etc. of the schools and youth-movements in the camps. While the main objects have always remained to teach the subjects studied and to guide to further self-study, a considerable part of the time available and of the teaching staff working for the Seminar were employed to these ends. The special qualifications of some of the teachers of the Seminar helped to extend the work of the Seminar in that direction, and besides the ordinary "school-life" in the classes, preparatory classes in methods of education and psychology, collective visits to the elementary school-classes and model lessons were conducted by these teachers, as well as special courses in Hebrew necessary to adapt old teachers to a new language of instruction. What is more, the Seminar has always urged its graduates to take up teaching in the camps, as it felt that students even after the short time allotted to one course, were the best material available to overcome the serious shortage of teachers in the ever increasing number of children of school age arriving in Cyprus.

2. So far five courses of 6 - 7 weeks duration each have taken place. Students are divided up into 3 - 4 classes, according to their knowledge of Hebrew (which is the primary qualification) and the standard of their knowledge in general and particular in Jewish subjects. Classes number anything from 30 up to 70-80 students, the average being around 50.

After the first four courses have taken place in the Winter-Camps (camps 64-68) with students coming from all these camps, it was decided to transfer the Seminar and to split it into two parts in order to enable refugees in the other camps to use the facilities of the Seminar. Accordingly, 2 classes were established in the newly built camps, 69-70, and 2 classes in the Summer-Camps (55,60-63), and as the old center still kept parts of its activities, the Seminar is now working in three centers.

Emphasis is laid on Jewish subjects, thus all courses include the following subjects: Hebrew (עברית), since a fair knowledge of Hebrew is expected of all students, this subject deals mainly with style and enlarging the vocabulary; Bible; Modern Hebrew Literature; Palestine-geography; Jewish History.

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Other Jewish subjects taught are: Jewish Philosophy, Aggadah or Mishnah, History of Zionism, Sociology of Modern Palestine, History of Settlements in Palestine.

Of the general subjects the most important are: General History, Psychology, Education, Civics and History of Political Thought, Sociology. It is a pity that so far the Seminar could not teach any of the natural Sciences, but it is hoped that for the sixth course a suitable teacher will be found.

3. Ordinarily, five lessons are given a day for six days a week, according to a fixed time table. During the first courses, special time was allowed between the lessons for self-work, but now the lessons are concentrated in the morning and early afternoon, after which the self-work starts. Conditions for study are not always up to requirements, but the Seminar has ever striven to provide as pleasant and comfortable surroundings as possible in the circumstances, whether classrooms were accommodated in barracks or in tents. While at the beginning students were sitting on the ground in front of their teacher as in days of old, the Seminar has now acquired the necessary tables, forms, blackboards and lighting, so that technical questions, as a rule, do not act as hindrances to the activities of the Seminar.

Twice or three times weekly there are general lectures for all classes and graduates on a subject not touched in the lessons or serving as an introduction to a new subject. On Saturday mornings there take place lectures in the Public Center (אגודת ציון) for the general public, spoken in Yiddish.

Now and then the ordinary course of instruction is interrupted by special study sessions, which are always devoted to a special period or topic, in which as many of the teachers participate, either in illuminating the subject each from his specific angle, or joining in a general debate at the end. These study sessions are always highlights of a course, demanding particular attention and power of concentration (8 hours of teaching a day), but are more than worth the energy as they spur the students on into new fields of study and open new visions.

4. During the first five courses some 880 students passed through the Seminar. It must be stressed that as the Seminar is no school in the ordinary sense of the word, students do not graduate from one course to another, nor do they move from one class to another. Generally, altogether new students are enrolled for each course in order to enable a maximum number of young people to enjoy the facilities provided by the Seminar, but there is of course a restricted number of students who have participated in more than one course, climbing from one class to the second in each successive course.

In the first course participated	144	pupils
" " second " "	171	"
" " third " "	183	"
" " fourth " "	154	"
" " fifth " "	225	"

The third course, for which accurate statistics are available, may serve as an example for the composition of the student body:

Class A (top class):	had	53	students,	of whom	12	were	girls
" B	"	59	"	"	19	"	"
" C	"	52	"	"	15	"	"
" D (lowest class)	"	22	"	"	9	"	"

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The classes together comprised the following age groups:

Age	No. of Students	Age	No. of Students
16	4	26	5
17	10	27	10
18	10	28	4
19	20	29	5
20	13	30	1
21	29	31	1
22	12	32	2
23	20	33	2
24	21	36	1
25	13	40	1

During the war years, the following were in internment camps for any period and at any place:

	Class A	Class B	Class C	Class D
In Camps	24	32	24	9
Free	27	31	30	15

The following was the previous education of the students:

Class:	A	B	C	D
Elementary schools (up to 8 classes) incl. Cheder only	26	41	31	13
Secondary "	28	22	23	11
Of those received matriculations certif.	9	5	6	5
University (1-6 semestres)	3	1	-	2
Yeshiva	9	5	1	1

Languages spoken by the students (including Yiddish, but excluding Hebrew):

Class:	A	B	C	D
One language only	1	4	3	-
Two languages	11	16	10	7
Three languages	26	29	26	10
Four languages	7	10	13	5
Five languages	3	3	1	2

These are the languages, according to the number of students speaking them:

Class:	A	B	C	D
Number of students	53	59	52	22
Yiddish	43	47	43	19
Polish	36	43	36	18
Russian	24	24	24	12
German	21	19	21	13
Hungarian	9	11	11	5
Slovakian	5	6	4	3
English	4	2	8	-
Ukrainian	4	4	3	-
French	3	8	-	-
Roumanian	3	4	5	1
Lithuanian	2	1	-	1
Swedish	1	3	3	1
Armenian	1	-	1	-
Spanish	-	1	-	-
Latvian	-	-	1	-

Finally, these were the countries of origin of the students:

Poland	.....	71%
G.S.R.	.....	8.5%
Hungary	.....	5.1%
Roumania	.....	5%
Germany	.....	3.4%
Lithuania	.....	2.2%
Morocco	.....	1.7%
Gr. Britain	.....	1.1%
Tunisia	.....	0.5%
Latvia	.....	0.5%
Belgium	.....	0.5%
Russia	.....	0.5%

It must be pointed out, however, that the general trend of change of the refugees in the camps transpires in the composition of the student body. While accurate statistics of the composition of the student body of the fifth course are as yet unavailable, their distribution as to countries of origin is as follows:

Roumania	.....	80%
Poland	.....	15%
Other count	.....	5%

Most of these Roumanian students are also multi-lingual, but the number of German speaking exceeds those who speak Yiddish.

The latest arrivals in Cyprus have already forecast an influx of Bulgarian elements into the sixth course. Quite a number of these Bulgarians know no other language besides their Bulgarian mother-tongue.

The late trend has, incidentally, an influence on the general level of education of the students. Again, accurate figures have not yet been collected, but the percentage of students with a secondary school education is evidently higher, as well as the number of university students.

Students for a new course are accepted and divided into the classes after a short oral entrance examination. However, the special conditions in the camps have given rise to a peculiar phenomenon, namely "illegal" students. Besides the 880 students properly enrolled after examination, at least 300-400 more have taken part in classes more or less regularly as "illegals", whom the teachers were most reluctant to send away knowing their great desire of the youth in the camps to learn and study. No wonder, therefore, that classes sometimes swell to the number of 80-100 students, which made the work of the teacher all the more difficult, especially in classes dealing with texts or lingual questions.

5. As for the teachers of the Seminar, they present a variety almost as big as the students. So far, some 25 teachers have come from Palestine for various periods from two weeks up to anything like six months, it being self-evident that persons occupying teaching positions in Palestine could remain only for shorter durations.

Among the teachers of the Seminar were the following:

Mr. B. Rubinstein M.A. - Director of the Youth Center in Palestine, who established the Seminar in Cyprus and was responsible for the dispatch of teachers and other administrative duties in Palestine. He taught Hebrew Literature during several courses.

- Mr. S. Zelmanowicz M.A. - for some 4 months director of the Seminar, A scholar at the Hebrew University and Inspector of the Jewish Scouts Movement on behalf of the Education Dept. of the Vaad Leumi. He taught Bible, Sociology and Hebrew.
- Mr. J. Kutner - teacher in the Moshav Kfar Yehoshua, taught Literature and Aggadah.
- Mr. M. Horn M.A. - teacher in the upper classes of the Hebrew Gymnasium in Jerusalem, taught Literature and Hebrew.
- Mr. Ben-Menachem M.A. - likewise a teacher in the upper classes of a Mizrahi Secondary School. Taught Bible.
- Dr. S. Werses - of the permanent staff of the Youth Center, scholar at the University, taught literature and Jewish History.
- Mr. B. Mansky - member and teacher of Kibbutz Ramath Rachel, an expert of Palestine geography, who taught that subject.
- Dr. Ch. Ormian - Lecturer in Psychology and Pedagogy in the Department of Education at the Hebrew University, taught these subjects and Political Theory.
- Miss J. Garber - Assistant to the Chair of Sociology at the University, taught that subject.
- Mr. D. Barash - of Kfar Yehoshua, one of the leading figures of the Moshavim Movement, well known expert in Palestine geography and modern literature, which subjects he taught.
- Mrs. R. Hoter-Ishay M.A. - teacher at the Seminar of the Kibbutzim at Yagur, taught Bible, Literature and Hebrew.
- Dr. J. Katz - director of a Mizrahi teachers and kindergarten teachers seminar, author of textbooks of Jewish History, taught Jewish and General History and worked chiefly in preparatory classes for teachers.
- Dr. J. Bin-Nun - teacher in the higher classes of the Reali Secondary School in Haifa, taught literature, Mishnah, Hebrew and likewise was busy preparing teachers.
- Mr. S. Shpan M.A. - inspector of Jewish secondary schools on behalf of the Vaad Leumi, an recognised authority on Greek and Hebrew literature and translator of Greek poetry into Hebrew, taught history of Jewish literature and Bible.
- Dr. Bar-Dayam (Borodeansky) - Assistant Director of the Department of Culture of the Vaad Leumi, an expert in Jewish Philosophy, taught history of Jewish thought, Bible, Hebrew and worked in preparing classes for teachers.
- Mr. M. Danzig M.A. - member and teacher at Kibbutz Maagan, taught Hebrew
- Mr. D. Brodsky - at present a student at the Hebrew University, before the war a central figure of the Hechalutz movement in Poland, taught Jewish and General history and history of Zionism.
- Mr. B. Neuman M.A. - scholar at the University, assists in editing the scientific quarterly "Zion" and prepares for publication mediaeval Jewish texts; taught Bible, Literature and Aggadah.

There were some more young teachers, most of them undergraduates of the University about to finish their studies. Those were staying for the longer stretches of time, and as such served as necessary links between one course and the next and helped to build up the tradition so valuable for institutions of this kind. They were also chiefly res-

possible for the "social events" of the Seminar, the weekly music evenings comprising community-singing, listening to gramophone records and folk-dancing, as well as for the traditional commencement exercises (תּוֹרַת הַבַּיִת).

6. From the start, the Seminar has laid great emphasis on self-study and continuation of study. This can only be achieved with the help of books, and books are really the great treasure of the Seminar.

Today there are altogether two libraries and three reading and study rooms, necessitated by the branching-out of work into three centers. The central library is in camp 65, serving all the Winter-Camps (64-70, while the other is at Camp 62, serving the Summer Camps. Only students and graduates are allowed to borrow books, but teachers in the schools and some other people working in one capacity or other in the cultural sphere are allowed the same privilege.

At the moment, the central library possesses some 5000 volumes altogether, all in Hebrew. Of these, almost 1000 are booklets, pamphlets etc, some 1500 are school books proper for all the subjects taught as well as a small number of textbooks of other subjects (Algebra, Chemistry, biology, etc). The rest are fiction and other general reading material. Almost the entire library came originally from the Youth Department of the Zionist Executive.

The library at 62 camp is as yet much smaller as it was established only two months ago, but already there are 1000 books on its shelves, of these some 300 text books, the rest fiction. A considerable part of this library was sent by the Cyprus Refugees Welfare Committee.

However, besides those two libraries there exist three reading rooms, open to the general public, but first and foremost intended for students of the Seminar. They are situated in camps 65, 70 and 62 respectively and compose about 200-300 books each, of the best available in Hebrew in their fields; Hebrew and other encyclopaedias, the standard dictionaries, the best histories of Jewish literature, as well as the principal works, introductions and commentaries to the Bible, monographs on all kinds of topics. These books are in constant use for some 12 hours daily, as these rooms are frequented to the limit of their capacity. Periodical literature and newspapers, as far as they reach the camps, are on the shelves as well.

The reading room in camp 62 was dedicated to the memory of Menachem Oren, the assistant director of the Youth Department, who was responsible for the despatch from Palestine of all the books in possession of the Seminar and who was killed recently together with Hans Beyth, director of the Youth Aliyah.

7. The Seminar has established at the very beginning an art class, which is an almost autonomous body, not subject to the rules and procedures of the rest. The course is not limited in time, study and work going on unintermittedly. The first teacher to come was a young graduate of the Bezalel art and craft school, a painter, who achieved fine results with his pupils and whose class as one body prepared an album of linoleum prints depicting life in camps, which has so far been printed in 120 copies on a specially constructed printing press. This class continues its work now under the guidance of two painters, among the refugees, one of whom is already well-known in Palestine.

For four months now Mr. Ben-Zwi is conducting a new art-class in sculpture. At first only works in gypsum were made, but now his best pupils are working at stone-sculptures and the results achieved so far surpass all expectations.

Emanuel Gutman.

March, 1948.