

New Ort Yearbook

By Nathan Ziprin
Past Ed., 7 Arts Feature Synd.

Facts speak for themselves. - What is more important is the tale behind the recitation. As I write this, I have before me the 1976 ORT Yearbook, an impressive recounting of programs and accomplishments during one of the most critical of recent years, of the mounting needs of ORT at a time of crisis for Israel and of economic dislocation throughout the world. In the face of such hurdles, this Yearbook describes ORT's plunge into the future -- its plans for Israel no less than for an array of communities other than Israel. When the figures are totaled - 70,000 students last year in 24 countries - they testify not only to a monumental effort but to a vision in leadership that is truly remarkable.

What lingers after reading the Yearbook is the image of an organization that is dedicated to providing the skills to become productive human beings. In the burgeoning Israeli society, the Yearbook spells out ORT's contribution to its economic, manpower and educational advance. What it comes down to is that ORT is fulfilling

LAS VEGAS ISRAELITE

the dedication of its early founders of almost one hundred years ago to remold the economic structure of Jewish communities through training in productive work. That is, of necessity, the foremost priority for an Israel that must be modern to compete and succeed in the modern world.

The founders, if they were alive today, would say that by developing into a major instrument for promoting systematic Jewish vocational education, ORT had become one of the most significant factors in Jewish life, both in its revival of our traditional work ethic and in its practical pursuit of livelihood.

What strikes the reader of the organization's reports over the years is ORT's remarkable ability to adjust itself, either by incorporating new techniques in keeping with the changing times, adjusting to the vicissitudes history has imposed on the Jews, or to the drama of fluid movement in Jewish geography.

Thus it was when the first clouds of war lifted over Europe, revealing a devastation feared to go beyond rehabilitation, despite which ORT, along with J.D.C. and others, proved the contrary. Thus it was that when Israel emerged, ORT knew its direction and geared itself toward new efforts in the new state. Thus it was, and is, when hundreds of thousands of uprooted Jews began trekking to Israel from North Africa and other areas of the world, including the Soviet Union.

When it was founded, ORT aimed at ameliorating the economic conditions of the Jewish masses through training them in skills that would enable them to make a living. That is what it is doing today, except that it has extended its horizons to the limits of modern technology. There is hardly a Jewish community today that has not felt the impact of ORT's technical and educational programs. Over 1,250,000 Jewish lives have felt the impact of ORT training.

The thread that connects all aspects of its programs derives from "its deep roots in the lives of the community it serves," says the Yearbook, and this in an accurate assessment.

Its schools draw on every segment of the Jewish population, from the affluent to the poor, from the religious to the secular, from the

brightest to the educationally or culturally deprived, from Tel Aviv to Bombay.

Above all, it is a tale of recognition that the Jewish future rests in the labor of our hands. Nowhere is this more evident than in ORT's work in Israel.

NEW YORK (WNS) -- The United Synagogue of America plans to establish the first agricultural settlement in Israel under the auspices of the Conservative movement.

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