

The story of Caspi

INCIDENTS

ous that the Festival would find us still then being nearly a of the Jewish faith ship began to make to the possibility of der from the very it was met with 'om the ship's officers. tended me especially tem knowledge of the in Passover shown Chl Purser and the d. In my asking the t it told me that ne catered for ary requirements, and ve Jewish cook on ey I even engaged s part voyage, but turn up on the ap- 'Are you any Jews crew asked. "Yes," d reply. "I'm sure lease. I think he d. Do not keep a e man of the crew, tbt no steward will e shut of my cabin o my inquiries, but ew and I did not further. All mas not my busi-

and its Midrash; and having completed these I turned to the lighter side and began to read an article in the periodical.

It was a very hot day and I felt thirsty. In my cabin was ice water and a bottle of lime juice. I distinctly remember sandwiching the paper between the two heavier books before I went down to quench my thirst. I had a chat with a friend on the way; and when I returned some fifteen minutes later to resume my reading, the periodical was nowhere to be seen. The Bible and Midrash lay where I had placed them, but of the journal there was not a sign. It was impossible for the wind to have dislodged it. There was hardly a breeze in that corner on the aft part of the deck under a roof. The paper had disappeared as though swallowed up.

The only clue I could find was a notice on the wall of my cabin couched in that peculiar graceless English which custom and habit prescribe and reserve for official railway and shipping notices. "Passengers are entreated not to leave binoculars, rugs or articles of clothing on deck when they go below. . . . It is extremely difficult to trace thieves on board ship, and it is only by the Passengers themselves looking after their Property and realising that it may be stolen, that thefts can be avoided." But even that seemed absurd. One could not seriously refer to the "theft" of a six-weeks-old Hebrew newspaper. I considered various possibilities only to reject them, and consoled myself with the thought that it would probably turn up in the most unexpected place. It did!

AN INVITATION

The third incident will appear meaningless until one comes to the end of this account of my extraordinary meeting with Jacob Silverberg. We arrived at a port in South Africa where we were given a few days' shore leave. On the second day I received a telephone message from a certain Mr. Austrater, whose name was strange to me. He was a diamond merchant from Palestine, a distant connection by marriage of my father-in-law, the Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv. He had secured a coveted seat on the aeroplane which would leave for Palestine in a few days, and in view of the uncertainty and delay in the mails, he would be pleased to take a message for me. I thanked him and agreed to come around to his hotel the following evening. He was staying at the only Jewish hotel in the town. I arrived before the appointed time, but the proprietress of the hotel, a Mrs. Black, welcomed me and urged me to give her the honour of dining with her. Having already been invited elsewhere, I was forced to decline. She told me that she had also extended an invitation to a Jewish sailor from one of the ships in our convoy whom she had met. As her own son, an officer in the Navy, was now somewhere in England, she felt it would be a nice gesture to repay the hospitality which her son was no doubt enjoying in England.

Meanwhile Mr. Austrater arrived and claimed my attention. We remained in conversation in the lounge for over an hour, and when I left him to keep my dinner engagement it was already late. The dinner-gong in the hotel had sounded some twenty minutes before, and residents and guests were already at dinner. On the following morning the convoy sailed.

(Continued next week)

Serious and Otherwise

by ben dor

More About Zolli

I RECEIVED some interesting clippings from Italian newspapers giving their comment on the conversion of Professor Zolli. It is noteworthy that the non-Jewish papers speak with contempt about Zolli's action. Thus "L'Epoca":

"When a Rabbi gets converted it is a fact not to be criticised, as it is grown in the mystery of his soul. But, personally, we prefer those who remain the sons of their fathers and do not change either religion or nationality. We believe that there never will be space enough to write about the millions of killed Jews—so why waste it on a converted Rabbi. . . ."

"CONVENTED"

And the "Avanti" (Communist organ) speaks in a similar strain: "Eugenio Zolli, ex-Israel Zoller, ex-Rabbi and ex-Fascist cannot expect us to applaud his action. Our sympathy for 'exes' in general is sparse. But we counsel the Jews not to regret too much the loss of their Rabbi. During the tragic nine months while true Jews were being raided, deported and shot, Zolli remained safely corked up in a convent. We abhor ridiculing tragic things, otherwise we might have said that the Rabbi is a 'convented' Jew. . . ."

The Rome Jewish newspaper "Israel" thunders in genuine wrath: "The Jewish community is indignant about it. Between the end of his term as Chief Rabbi on January 31 and the baptism on February 13, there is too short an interval to allow for a crisis of conscience and the sincere conversion of a man of high culture and science. And if there was a crisis before, Zolli should have resigned at once, and not occupied a position which his true feelings no longer permitted him to occupy.

NO MORENU

"There are certain people, however, who were not too greatly surprised at Zolli's conversion. For a long time already they had not seen in him their 'Morenu.' He lacked the qualities of heart and character necessary for a leader in Israel, and consequently the community separated from him.

"Further it is a fact that in the last assembly of the community, Zolli was declared to have lost his position. That decision was cancelled by the Military Governor. It is certain, however, that if the military regime had ended on October 22 of last year, as it was supposed to, Zolli would not have been appointed as Chief Rabbi when the elections for a regular Council of the Community took place.

AN OFFENCE

"It is not the loss of their spiritual leader, nor the man that the Jews are deploring; it is the fact itself, made more tragic by the untimely moment in which it occurred. The defection is an offence to the countless martyrs of Jewry, who in spite of their untold suffering, never for a moment denounced their Judaism.

"Those of us who still consider Zolli to be a leader will do the seven days of 'aveluth,' and will mourn for him like for a dead one. The rest—and there are many—will do even less. . . ."

Menuhin Keeps a Date

YEHUDI MENUHIN made a date with General Charles de Gaulle last year to play in Paris as soon as the French capital was liberated.

A few months ago he kept that date, and the people of Paris were treated to the rare sight and sound of a distinguished Jewish musician playing the work of a great Jewish composer, the violin concerto of Felix Mendelssohn.

It marked the first time in more than four years that a Jew had appeared on a concert stage in France or that music by a Jewish composer had been heard in a Paris concert hall.

"There were not many Jews in the audience that attended the concert," Menuhin said in an interview with Melvin Salzman, a Chicago reporter. "So many have disappeared. I could find no traces of many of my friends."

"I spoke to the young violinist," says Salzman, "a few days after he had returned by plane from Europe, following a tour of Paris, Brussels and Antwerp.

"Seated in a dressing room in Carnegie Hall, where he was practising for a performance of the Mendelssohn concerto he was to give that night with the New York Philharmonic, Menuhin tried to answer my questions as to what well-known Jewish musicians remained in France and Belgium, but he found great difficulty. Most of them have disappeared—either killed, deported or just coming out of hiding."

The few that remain, Menuhin said, are amazed at their good fortune in surviving the German terror. A well-known Belgian-Jewish pianist, De Vrees, was so anxious to get back onto a concert stage—in any fashion—that he volunteered to turn pages during Menuhin's concert in Antwerp.

Everywhere he went, Menuhin said, people grabbed him by the hand and told him, "You don't know what it means to hear music once again." The fact of liberation was still so new when he was in France and Belgium that the people appeared to be a bit dazed by their new freedom.

Although there were no Jewish musicians performing publicly, the Jewish and non-Jewish population clung to music for the spiritual solace it afforded them and as a link with their pre-war cultural life, Menuhin was told. Throughout the occupation, concerts were given regularly.

Those few Jews in the musical world who were not immediately molested by the Germans refused to accept any favours. Lazar Lavy, who taught piano at the Paris Conservatoire, left his post voluntarily when the Germans came, and they were able to secure no replacement for him, although there were collaborationists among the French musicians.

Men like Pablo Casals, the cellist, and Jacques Thibaud, the violinist, did not submit to the Nazi blandishments and were still in the good graces of the French people.

Besides his concert in Paris, which was arranged by the Government for the benefit of war refugees, and his concert in Antwerp, Menuhin played in Brussels and gave two concerts near Versailles for American troops. The Antwerp concert, he revealed, took place about three miles from the battle lines.

His entire trip took only five days, which kept him scurrying, he said, but he hopes to return to Europe in the near future, when the situation is more stabilised, for a more leisurely tour.

Meanwhile, he expects to fill a busy concert schedule this season, at the same time sandwiching in performances for troops stationed here.



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