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Sidelights On Tel Aviv Under Siege

By J. L. Meltzer

LIKE the inhabitants of London who survived the mass Nazi air raids of 1940 and 1941, the residents of Tel Aviv had their stories to tell after the Great Siege which kept them indoors from July 29 to August 2 during the British Army's search operation.

A young Rabbi, wearing a beard, was brought to be identified at one of the "screening" tables. He had a somewhat haughty expression and his beard was neatly trimmed—sufficient to arouse suspicion among the identifying police that he might be "wearing" a disguise. His beard was felt to see if it were genuine. Then one of the officers, seeking to find what the man's political views were, asked him what he thought of the current events.

"It's all a trumpery proceeding," he declared scornfully. "I shall not even demean myself by commenting on the spectacle of Great Britain, a mighty empire, engaging in such stupid acts as these and frittering away its strength on nonsense."

"What are you gabbing about?" the officer asked impatiently.

"You can fight the Jews but you cannot fight the Torah," the young Rabbi answered. "The Torah says that Eretz Israel is ours and that Transjordan is ours, and all your sieges with tanks and starving the Jews won't avail you. Nor will you overcome the Torah. . . ."

"What party do you belong to?"

"To the party of Ribbano shel Olam."

The officer paused. "Go home," he then said.

HE was one of the twenty thousand who craved for a slice of bread and a drop of cold water. Two soldiers of the Sixth Airborne Division were stationed near his house. He tried to communicate with them, signalling through the window, but they paid no attention. If he put his head out there was danger he might be shot. But during the first two-hour break, he approached the soldiers and said he was a sick man who lived alone and could not push his way through the crowds of people waiting to buy food or a block of ice.

"All right, dad, you go home and we'll look after you," they said. They brought him bread and ice, and he made them sit down at the table, poured them out some brandy, and began conversation.

"I don't hate the British," he said, "but how can they behave in this way?"

"But we don't like the English

at all," said one of the young soldiers before their host could proceed with his argument. He looked at them in astonishment.

"We're both Irish," the soldier declared.

IN Gan Meir there were about 1,500 men and women assembled in a barbed-wire "cage" for identification, and anyone who had a complaint found a ready listener in the young Scots lieutenant, short and stocky, who was in charge. At 10 o'clock in the evening—when the people had been standing there for almost 12 hours—the releases began according to the streets in which they lived.

The first was Rashi Street. Roars of laughter came from the tired people when the young officer gave it as "Russia Street." Rehov Hamelitz became Hamlet Street, and so on. Those who lived in Bokki ben Yogli Street were very depressed.

"We'll never get home," they lamented. "How can that cherry beret officer pronounce the name?" But their turn came. He shouted it out: "Bank Balanki Street."

THE parents of a restless boy of five could not keep him away from the window during the curfew. "Don't lean out," they warned. "The soldiers will catch you with their rifles."

The child thought for a moment and then answered: "But, mother, only the Germans killed the Jews. Are the English killing us too?"

GIFTED CANTOR SEEKS POST

The "Zionist Record" has received a letter from a member of the South African relief teams in Europe, stating that he has met Cantor Joseph Edelson at a concert arranged in Italy by a group of Displaced Persons. The Cantor is 30 years of age, married, and has no children. He was educated in Warsaw and was for two years Chief Cantor of the well-known Sinai Synagogue in Warsaw. He was in a concentration camp for three years, and his ability to sing kept him alive, as the Germans rewarded his singing by giving him extra food. The South African relief worker says in his letter that he heard him at a concert and thinks that his voice is excellent. He has a fine personality and his musical ability and education are both superb.

In view of the shortage of cantors in South Africa, there should be no difficulty in obtaining a post for him. Congregations who are interested in this young cantor are requested to write to the "Zionist Record" for further details and for his photograph.

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