

# EPISODE IN EUROPE

By L. Weissberger

THE "mixed transport" returned. Men, women and children in a seemingly endless row of flat, open trucks, gaily adorned with fresh twigs and flowers. There was an air of false gaiety about the transport, strangely contrasting with the occupants of the trucks. Men, women and children, dressed in what appeared at first sight to be fancy-dress, clutching a few empty tins, wooden boxes, suitcases fastened with string bundles. The men's faces were unshaven, eyes red with sleeplessness, profound fatigue marked each movement.

The mixed transport returned. They may have been singing when they left; now they were too exhausted even to simulate any kind of cheerfulness. The twigs and flowers were strangely out of place—gaiety planted on misery and sorrow.

Their sharpened senses brought them to the alert. From the trucks, came inquiring shouts in different languages: "Malta"—"Ceski"—"Hellenika"—in the hope of attracting the attention of a countryman. Only from the last few trucks there came no shouts. No country was named. The men maintained a stubborn silence or talked among themselves in whispers. Uneasiness lurked in the corners of their eyes—those big, tragic eyes, more expressive than the loudest of shouts. There were a few women, one or two children.

"These must be ours," David said.

We addressed them in Yiddish: "Are you Jewish?"

"Jewish, yes. We are Jewish. Shalom Aleichem."

Word went around. Men surrounded us, looked at us incredulously yet were reticent. Few ventured conversation.

There were nearly 400 of them, mostly men, of surprisingly good physique, tough, deliberate. They might have been taken for a gang of rogues, were it not for their eyes. Suffering, fear, despair, savage determination—all that looked out from their bloodshot eyes, men and the few women alike. An elderly man was sitting on a box, stripped to the waist. One wore a red shirt with the top-boots of a German infantryman. Some had overcoats made from blankets roughly sewn together. A woman was sitting in a nightgown. Nearly all had some sort of headgear, varying from military caps of all the United Nations to straw hats.

"We left the camp three days ago," the elderly man said. "Jewish soldiers gave us some food and clothing."

"Where are you bound for?"

"For Bari. We are going to Palestine."

It was all so unreal, untrue. These were the men who came from "over there." They are going to Palestine. These are our brethren.

The man in the striped dress turned round: a Magen David was painted in yellow on his back. A Magen David decorated our uniforms. These are our brethren.

"Where do you come from?" we asked the elderly man.

"From Bendin, Poland."

There are many others from Poland. There are some from Hungary, from Czechoslovakia, from Rumania, from all over the world.

It was impossible to make real contact with them. They were unreal, phantoms. It wouldn't help to strip naked and give them all our clothing. It would not help to shed tears. They were not real. Yet—

Their initial interest seemed to have spent itself. Slowly they returned to their former silence.

"We haven't food for all of you, but we can get up a meal for a few." Our voices had a strange ring of guilt.

The anticipated rush did not materialise. The hungry ones did not stir, but obviously there was complete agreement as to who should get the food. The ones who had had some food pointed out the less fortunate.

We also had a few items of clothing kept for such an emergency. The ones in obvious need of protection from exposure found themselves in possession of what they needed most. Only—everybody needed something most ur-

## LIVES OF OUR TIMES

AMERICA GAVE ANOTHER ACCOLADE IN JUNE, 1947, TO ITS OUTSTANDING COMPOSER OF SERIOUS MUSIC, WHEN THE MUSIC CRITICS CIRCLE PRESENTED ITS CHAMBER MUSIC AWARD TO THE ARTIST WHO ONCE SAID HIS WORKS WERE INTENDED TO EXPRESS A "JEWISH SOUL."



## ERNEST BLOCH

FOR THE NEXT FEW YEARS HE TRAVELLED FROM BRUSSELS TO GERMANY, TO MUNICH AND PARIS, STUDYING UNDER VARIOUS MASTERS, AND IN 1901 HE COMPLETED HIS "FIRST SYMPHONY."



BORN IN GENEVA IN 1880, THE SON OF A SWISS CLOCK MERCHANT, ERNEST WAS INTERESTED IN MUSIC AND ITS SOURCES FROM CHILDHOOD. AT THE AGE OF 16, AFTER TWO YEARS OF STUDY, HE PRODUCED HIS FIRST WORK—"ORIENTAL SYMPHONY."



UNABLE TO HAVE HIS SYMPHONY PLAYED IN FRANCE OR GERMANY, HE RETURNED TO GENEVA WHERE HE ENTERED HIS FATHER'S BUSINESS AS A BOOKKEEPER. HE FOUND TIME, HOWEVER, TO LECTURE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF GENEVA—AND HE DEVOTED HIS NIGHTS TO HIS BELOVED MUSIC.



IN 1909, HE FINISHED "MACBETH," AN OPERA WHICH WAS PERFORMED AT THE PARIS OPERA HOUSE. "MACBETH" AROUSED SUCH ENTHUSIASM THAT ONE CRITIC, ROMAIN ROLLAND TRAVELLED TO GENEVA TO SEE THIS 30-YEAR OLD GENIUS FOR HIMSELF.



ROLLAND APPROVED BLOCH'S FIRST SYMPHONY SO HEARTILY THAT IT WAS GIVEN ITS PREMIERE IN 1915 UNDER THE COMPOSER'S DIRECTION. VERY SUCCESSFUL, IT WAS CALLED "ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT WORKS OF THE MODERN SCHOOL."



DURING THIS PERIOD BLOCH DECLARED HIS PRIDE IN BEING A JEWISH COMPOSER SAYING, "I WRITE JEWISH MUSIC... BECAUSE IT IS THE ONLY WAY I CAN PRODUCE MUSIC OF VITALITY." WITHIN THE NEXT TEN YEARS HE COMPOSED "TWO PSALMS," "SCHELOMO" AND "ISRAEL SYMPHONY." ARRIVING IN THE U.S. IN 1916 AS AN ESTABLISHED MUSICIAN, HE CONDUCTED THE BOSTON AND NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRAS.



THREE YEARS LATER, HE WON THE COOLIDGE PRIZE OF \$1,000 FOR HIS "SUITE FOR VIOLIN AND ORCHESTRA." IN 1920, HE BECAME DIRECTOR OF THE CLEVELAND INSTITUTE OF MUSIC WHERE HE REMAINED FOR FIVE YEARS. DURING THIS TIME HE COMPOSED "BAAL-SHEM SUITE," "QUARTET PIECES" AND IN 1925, THE "PIANO QUINTET."



TWO YEARS LATER, HIS SYMPHONY "AMERICA" WON FIRST PRIZE OF \$3,000 GIVEN BY MUSICAL AMERICA. IN SWITZERLAND, HE LATER COMPLETED THE FAMED "SACRED SERVICE"—A SONG OF FAITH FOR ALL HUMANITY. THIS IS THE MAN WHOSE MUSIC OF UN-EARTHLY BEAUTY UPLIFTS AND ENNOBLES ALL WHO LISTEN. THIS IS — ERNEST BLOCH!



gently. If we had stayed much longer we would have stripped naked.

The situation was getting unbearable. Here we were, the two of us, facing these living examples of misery and suffering. They were our brethren. It seemed wrong that there should be such a gap between us. They made us feel guilty of being replete, well clad and cared for. Weren't they, rather than we, entitled to all that? Was their guilt greater than ours? Now that victory has come, was their misery to continue, their suffering to be forgotten?

We felt guilty, for we were unable to help them. We could not help them. A meal, an

odd item of clothing could not be likened even to the proverbial drop in this ocean of misery.

"We are going to Palestine," the elderly man repeated stubbornly. May be that was what kept them alive.

At the side of the road there was a group of about ten refugees, seated beside their meagre belongings—all they owned on God's earth. An old man and his son, another youth, three girls and a few young men. They had left the train.

"We haven't got the strength to travel any more," the father of the boy explained apologetically.

(Continued on page 23)