

The Jewish Ship

By

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The following article is from the pen of a young German refugee who found himself among other emigrants on a boat sailing for Palestine.

ON the forepart of the ship amongst boxes, bales and heavy motor trucks which will be unloaded at Beirout and forwarded to Teheran, a few hundred people are gathered. They sprawl on the cargo, stand at the reeling, sit on the capsterns and cranes—a young boy strikes up a Hebrew song, the others catch it up, sure of word and tune:—

We came into the country
To build it up
And to live a free life.
We shall not leave the country;
We shall remain faithful to the
fatherland,
In spite of all our enemies. . . .

The tune of the partly oriental, partly European song, has hardly died away when another song follows, and still another, and still another. The melancholy murmur of men and women mingles with the symphony of the voices of young boys and girls. The stamping of the heavy engines beats to the time of all the songs on this journey, and seems to express the common, pervading, intense desire—on, on, on to Palestine.

A youngster recites in Hebrew, German, and Yiddish the prologue of the "Golem" of Lewick, a play dealing with Jewish spiritual life which has been frequently performed in Europe by the "Habimah" troupe. Messiah is bound by heavy iron chains to the seat of the Creator. He bemoans and bewails the sufferings of his deserted people. He asks whether he will be allowed soon to descend and liberate his people. But the time has not yet come. However Eliahu, the prophet, foretells that the day will come on which a young generation will arise, shake off the fetters, and then Messiah will come to earth and redeem his people. . . .

And the youngsters on the boat continue to sing: their songs resounding with joy, because they are the young generation of which the prophet sings. . . .

A fair boy of Berlin reads a saga of Baal-Shem. More songs follow, more vigilant, more vigorous—interrupted by a flute recital and a merry scene performed by a few youngsters disguised as camels, elephants and Arab drivers.

And the engines continue to thump their way, . . . to Palestine; to Jerusalem. . . .

IS this really a ship of immigrants? Ought not the faces be sorrowful, conveying a sad longing for the abandoned fatherlands, Poland and Russia, Germany and Austria?

But there is no trace of such feeling on board. In this heterogeneous company, there is really no unhappiness, no despair. Save in the case of a few old people, who are going to Palestine with the wish to die there. But these hundreds—passengers of the third class and the dim and dark middle-deck—they go to Erez Israel full of hope!

Young Jewish workers of both sexes from Germany, Austria, Holland, Poland, Lithuania, France and Canada—are going out to join the agricultural communal settlements in Palestine. The places left vacant by them in the *diaspora* will be occupied by young German Jews, who are fleeing in thousands from an "enlightened" country.

Young girls from prosperous Jewish homes in Germany, who hope to find suitable occupation in the "country of no unemployment" are walking from prow to stern, from stern to prow, dictionary in hand, learning vocabulary—studying Hebrew.

A young man, representing French concerns, proposes to film Palestinian themes, to synchronise them in French and English and to bring them to the attention of the world.

THE "centre of attraction" of the third class is Miriam. Child of Russian parents, she came to the Eretz Israel from Vienna, seven years of age, and has lived for thirteen years and is now a "Palestinian citizen." She is returning from a visit to Europe. The beauty of Miriam and her astonishingly wide experience penetrate her whole being and dazzle the travellers.

We are aware that even on board there is a strain between the Eastern and Western Jewry. There is a bridge of blood kinship between the young pioneers and assimilated German Jews on the one hand and the pious old men from Poland, on the other hand. These old men pray morning, noon and evening with faces turned to the East, avoid the *treiffer* dining room as one might avoid sin, and are studying Talmud and Mishna in all corners of the ship. The address of Dr. Feldman, a mizrachi leads to fiery controversies that the chairman of the meeting—a young Chalutz of Magdeburg—directs the debate with difficulty and shouts in vain: "Silence, silence!"

HOW can one be quiet when a people celebrates its regeneration? How can the youth be quiet when the old orthodox fellows oppose the celebration of Sabbath

with workmen's songs? How can the workers be quiet when they believe that the future life in Palestine must be national, social and vividly-pious?

Five days after leaving Trieste, we have reached our destination: Jaffa and Tel Aviv, the large double city of two different worlds; Eretz Israel—the Holy Land . . .

We are all hushed, the young and the old. We are overcome by a strong emotion. For a long time nothing is heard save the Italian captain directing and anchoring of the ship.

Finally the anchor falls with a rattling noise. . . .

An English officer comes on board to control the passports.

And gradually, in awe, we touch with our feet, gently, gently, the sacred soil of national homeland.

That moment will never be forgotten by any of us.

Zionist Work in Randfontein

VISIT BY MR. HARRY LEVIN

The first of a series of visits by Mr. Harry Levin, Organiser of the Jewish National Fund, to stimulate Zionist activity in Rand centres and for general propaganda purposes, was paid to Randfontein on Tuesday, 22nd inst.

Before a well attended meeting of the community, over 200 being present, Mr. Levin spoke of the progress in Palestine, ably indicating the advances made in the Homeland in all branches of life and endeavour.

Mr. S. Chazan, acting Chairman of the Society, presided, and thanked the speaker for his informative and interesting address.

A musical programme contributed by the Misses Alpert, Paiken, Matus, Klaas, Feigelson, and Messrs. Sher and Diner, followed the lecture. Subsequently Mr. Levin met the Committee of the Randfontein Zionist Society and discussed with them ways and means of stimulating J.N.F. work in the district.

Two J.N.F. Commissioners have been appointed, and it has been decided to hold a large-scale function for the Fund in November.

Judean Central Council of the Cape Province

The Executive has done a tremendous amount of work during the last month. Mr. L. Cooper convened a successful business conference of the Eastern Province Societies at Port Elizabeth. Messrs. J. Bobrov and S. N. Herman also convened a representative conference of all the Midlands societies at Middelburg. In the Western Province Mr. S. Friedman accompanied Mr. Alexander Lewin on a tour embracing Robertson, Worcester, Ceres and other centres. On July 30 a business conference of all Western Province societies was held at Capetown. Numerous meetings have been addressed by members of the Executive.

It has been decided to concentrate to a much greater extent on cultural work. The Library Scheme is in operation and it is hoped that Young Israelites will avail themselves of this opportunity to obtain books on almost every phase of Jewish and Zionist subjects. The Hebrew and Zionist instruction classes are not receiving the support they deserve and Young Israelites are earnestly requested to attend. The Chalutz Scheme has met with an enthusiastic response and well over £100 has already been raised. A determined attempt is being made by the Cape to augment the number of subscribers to the Menorah.