

Huberman, The Idealist—How He Became a Zionist

A Jewish Music Student from South Africa gives His Impressions of a Great Violinist

By

JOSEPH SACK

BRONISLAW Huberman, the Jewish violinist whose playing is known to hundreds of thousands of music-lovers all over the world, is a man of high ideals.

When Hitler came into power he left Germany. He had been for years the favourite musician before the German public. They ranked him higher than Kreisler. He toured very extensively, but he always came back to Germany. He loved the country, and enjoyed playing there as much as the public enjoyed listening to him. But when Hitler came into power he left. He was a Jew . . .

The public wanted him back in spite of this. Furtwangler, the Nazi conductor and "State Director of Music," appealed to him to return. But he declined emphatically.

Readers of this article have no doubt read all about Huberman's noble stand for the distressed Jewish artists suffering under the Nazi régime.

He is going further than this now. He has just given three concerts in London, Birmingham and Manchester in aid of the German Refugee Assistance Fund. He played to capacity audiences each time. His London concert was at the Queen's Hall. The thousands who were there heard him play with great depth of feeling as well as with the most dazzling technical skill. The audiences in the other towns were equally large and enthusiastic. I found it difficult to get an interview with Huberman. To begin with, he was only in London for a short time, and then all his time was taken up in arranging and preparing for his concerts.

STILL, when I did meet him, all my trouble was repaid. I found him a most interesting personality, and at every point his conversation had the glow only an idealist could give to it.

While I asked him questions he ate his breakfast. We were sitting in his suite over-

"I am an ardent Zionist now," he admitted to me, "but I was not always one. Let me tell you the story. Until six years ago I was actually against Zionism. I thought that the Jew could fulfil his mission in life best by living in Europe and mingling with the other races there, giving them the benefit of a culture which goes back thousands of years. After all, was not the whole structure of European civilisation built on two main pillars, the one created by the ancient Greeks—the other by the ancient Jews?"

"The ancient Greek has vanished. The ancient Jews is still alive and fulfilling what I consider a mission."

"Six years ago, however, I visited Palestine. I went there in a sceptical frame of mind. I came back a converted man. The monuments of faith, sacrifice, and self-abnegation I saw there, made me see the greatness of Zionism. No longer did I criticise the ideal of settling the Jew in the National Home in Palestine."

Mr. Huberman paused for a while and sipped his coffee. Then he continued:

"THREE years ago I again visited Palestine, and my faith in the movement was strengthened. I marvelled to see how the most wealthy and the most humble Jews were inspired equally with the same ideals. And here was the thing that impressed me most: I saw that the chalutzim were not only developing Palestine agriculturally, but were also making amazing progress in the arts, in science and in politics. With every orange tree they planted they tried to plant a tree of thought, science and art."

I interrupted. "Is that not the difference between the colonisation in Palestine, and that which at different times has taken place in other countries?" I asked.

"Yes," said Mr. Huberman. "In other colonies, without, I think, a single exception, development has begun with the soil, and spread to art and culture many years later. In Palestine the two are developing along parallel lines."

He told me of the importance of the library of the Hebrew University.

"It is now becoming the biggest library in Asia. Dr. Magnes told me that people are already coming in considerable numbers to use it, from Europe and America."

I ASKED him about the state of music in Palestine. This, according to Mr. Huberman, is in a flourishing condition. There is, for instance, the Symphony Orchestra in Tel-Aviv. There are at present 65 players in it, but Mr. Huberman (who considers that it will soon develop into one of the best and most promising orchestras in the world), is planning to bring the membership up to 90 or 100.

On his recent visit to Palestine he gave several concerts in aid of the fund to finance the orchestra. The High Commissioner gave his official patronage, and a satisfactory sum of money was realised.

"Besides this," said Mr. Huberman, "the Government has promised a subsidy, and the Town Councils of Haifa, Tel-Aviv, and Jerusalem each contribute an annual grant to the fund. It will thus become a thoroughly National Symphony Orchestra."

Mr. Huberman is at the moment on the Continent and one of his tasks is the selection of twelve first-class wind-players and also a conductor of international repute.

There are, curiously enough, many excellent string players, but not so many in Palestine who are adept on wind instruments.

Among the younger generation there is also immense musical talent, according to Mr. Huberman.

HIS latest visit to Palestine took place early this year. He noticed that a number of Jewish refugees from Germany who were in the medical profession had taken up music as a full-time job, or to supplement

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Bronislaw Huberman studies the manuscript of a young Palestinian composer

Daniel Sieff Institute

Impressive Opening Ceremony

IMPRESSIVE scenes marked the opening of the Daniel Sieff Institute for Agricultural chemistry on April 3rd at Rehoboth, which was attended by many eminent scientists and public men. Dr. Chaim Weizmann is the head of the Institute, and he will have working in collaboration with him a staff of distinguished research chemists.

The opening of the Institute took place almost exactly a year after the laying of the foundation stone. At that function two well-known members of South African Jewry, Mrs. Ethel Hayman, of the Zionist Executive, and Mrs. Sarah Gertrude Millin, the eminent authoress, were present. A large number of the South African tourists attended the opening of the Institute.

The ceremony was simple, and very impressive. On the platform, with Dr. Weizmann, were Professor Richard Willstaetter, a former Nobel Prize-winner, and one of the greatest research chemists in the world, the High Commissioner, Sir Arthur Wauchope, the poet, Bialik, Nahum Sokolow, Mr. Harry Sacher and Mr. Simon Marks, brothers-in-law of Mr. Sieff, and other well-known personalities. Professor Willstaetter made a deep impression on the



Above: A view of the Daniel Sieff Institute. On left: Professor Willstaetter addressing the gathering.

gathering by his dignified bearing and quiet, cultured speech.

The gathering was very cosmopolitan. Mingled with eminent scientists and visitors from other countries were Jewish labourers, and many members of the Habimah, including Meshkin and Baratz.

Palestine is one of the most cosmopolitan countries in all the world, and this gathering at the opening of the Daniel Sieff Institute was typical of the new spirit pervading here.

After the speeches, which were delivered from a garlanded platform in the grounds of the building, the visitors entered the Institute, where refreshments were served. The Institute has been endowed by Mr. and Mrs. Israel Sieff, in memory of their son, and will be devoted mainly to agricultural research chemistry.



On the garlanded speakers' dais. On the extreme left are Dr. Weizmann and Sir Arthur Wauchope; on the right are Chaim Nachman Bialik and Nahum Sokolow.

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their earnings in Palestine. These doctors had been skilled amateur musicians in Germany, but until Hitler came into power they did not think they would have to take to music and give up medicine.

Still, they seem to be quickening the musical pulse of Palestine, and are happy in their new home and employment.

All these signs of musical activity are encouraging. They may lead to big things. In the opinion of the writer the development of the National Home means the development of a national music. Just as Finland has its characteristic music given to the world

through Sibelius, and France and England theirs too, so may we one day have our Jewish composers writing music which will tell of the spirit and idealism of the chalutzim of Palestine.

One point more. Before I left Mr. Huberman he commented on and deplored the ill-feeling in Palestine between the extreme Zionists and the Moderates. "That is the only cloud on the sunny impressions I have of Palestine. I don't blame the extremists for their demands. But what is deplorable is the form in which the complaints are expressed. We Jews can make our demands to the Mandate, but we must remember that Britain is the first nation to alleviate the suffering of the Jews, and the English Parliament the only one to raise its voice against Hitlerism."