

CHAPTER THREE

The German Jews Conquer Tel Aviv

INTRODUCTION

From 1929 to 1939, the period of the fifth Aliya (the fifth “wave” of immigration of Jews to Palestine), some 220,000 Jews immigrated to Mandatory Palestine, thereby increasing the Jewish population from 175,000 to more than 400,000. Of those immigrants, 55,000–60,000 came from Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia. During the peak years of 1932 to 1935 some 30,000 immigrants (approximately one-fifth of the 150,000 immigrants during these years) came from Germany.

After the rise to power of the Nazi party in Germany in 1933, German Jews were forced out of the economic, cultural, scientific, political, and social life of the country in which their families had lived for centuries. Indeed, many Jews had seen themselves as Germans “of the Mosaic faith.” The loss of businesses, possessions, and employment led many to emigrate. The refusal of a number of Western countries (the United States, Great Britain, France, and others) to accept Jewish-German emigrants led many to immigrate to Mandatory Palestine.

The immigrants from Central Europe came from countries that were culturally and economically modern and developed. Most of the immigrants had lived in big cities; many were business people, practitioners of the free professions, and well educated. As might be expected,

on arriving in Palestine, they tended to settle in cities. The population of Tel Aviv thus grew from some 40,000 in 1931 to 135,000 in 1934. The economic, cultural, and human resources that they brought with them enabled the immigrants to greatly influence the growth of Tel Aviv, leading the city to become Mandatory Palestine's center of business, industry, trade (Tel Aviv Port was built), as well as culture and entertainment. The Israel Philharmonic Orchestra was founded in Tel Aviv, and the Habima and Ha'Matateh theaters were also active. A thriving nightlife, centered in restaurants and cafés, developed.

For Dorothy Bar-Adon, this economic blossoming, fueled as it was by a highly motivated, hardworking immigrant population, contrasted starkly with the America of the Great Depression that she had left. Bar-Adon wrote extensively about these immigrants and their struggles to build new lives for themselves, after leaving countries where they and their families had historic and cultural roots and leaving their immediate physical and cultural surroundings and sources of income.

Simultaneously Bar-Adon wrote about the contributions made by this immigrant population to the development of Tel Aviv in particular and the Yishuv as a whole. Today the headlines of some of her articles sound ironically surreal, even bordering on poor taste: "Hitler's Gift to Palestine," "The German Jews Conquer Tel Aviv," and "What Hitler Has Done to Tel Aviv." At the time, of course, nobody could have known the fate awaiting those millions of Jews who were unable or unwilling to leave Europe in the 1930s.

SAUSAGES AND BEER

Zif Zif, pp. 100–103

Unpublished manuscript from Bar-Adon's personal archive

Earlier version in *The Palestine Post*, "What Hitler Has Done to Tel Aviv," August 4, 1933

Kahn describes the transformation of Tel Aviv in August 1933 as a result of the influx of Jewish immigrants from Germany. Despite not speaking Hebrew, and often not able to work at the professions for which they had trained, the immigrants found work and began the process of integrating into the local Jewish communities. These immigrants brought with them high levels of medicine, culture, music, theater, dance, and architecture and left their marks on Tel Aviv.

The streets of Tel Aviv have been transformed by Herr Hitler. In fact they are no longer streets. They have become "Strassen." Tel Aviv can change her color as quickly as a chameleon, responding to the whims of a Russian czar, a brown shirt chancellor, or Wall Street quotations in America. Once Little Odessa, then Little Warsaw, now Little Berlin. The shops that display strings of fat and red sausages, varying in size and shape, are doing a rushing business, and schnitzel has leaped into the limelight. The wind, which carries the froth from beer steins, carries also the germs of new ideas—new enterprises—perhaps new culture.

In cafés and restaurants one is always conscious of the solidarity, which goes hand-in-hand with tweed caps and shorn heads, and of the substantiality, which distinguished the German frau from her more frilly sisters.

Word comes from America that Molly Picon [an American Jewish actress of stage, screen and television, as well as a lyricist and a star in the Yiddish theater], the comedienne, since her return from this country, is talking much of Palestine as the new "melting pot." Now while the German immigrants are still poised on the rim of the pot, we can witness the melting process. We see those who are preparing to leap in headfirst; those who are walking mincingly about the edge while eyeing the contents critically through thick glasses; those who are smacking their lips over the possibility of changing the flavor of the brew.

You cannot walk ten paces down any street in Tel Aviv without rubbing elbows with some German who arrived three months ago or three hours ago. How they will affect the Palestinian picture is a matter for speculation. However, today it is enough to sit back and watch them pouring into the city on every ship; milling about the streets; discarding tourist knickerbockers for linen shorts; surviving the consistently poor service in Tel Aviv restaurants; twisting good German into poor jargon, when necessary; attending night classes in Hebrew; and developing an appetite for Eskimo pies.

Numerous casual meetings with Germans in buses, restaurants and cafés, and sausage emporiums makes one believe that even while being melted the Deutsch are not to be caught off guard. While many are bewildered, the majority is processing with characteristic Teuton precision and exactitude.

This precision is apparently being shipped into Tel Aviv, along with the large packing crates that, these days, are making the port of Jaffa take on the aspect of a miniature New York harbor. It has even seeped into

the bones of some of the more lackadaisical Tel Aviv merchants who are stocked up with a wide selection of German books.

A search during the past week for a Hebrew grammar in English was a complete failure. Book venders seemed amazed that an American could not learn Hebrew from a phrase book or an illustrated children's primer. Of course, if you would like a German-Hebrew grammar, you will be well accommodated. I wore out two pairs of sandals and a perfectly good temper while explaining in at least ten bookshops that if you couldn't read German, you couldn't find much light in a German grammar. Yes, the Germans are going about this business of learning Hebrew in a wholesale manner.

One newcomer was heard to remark, "We don't learn Hebrew as quickly as other people who come to Palestine but we will learn it more correctly."

Some of the immigrants seem to be exercising this same efficiency in locating themselves. Many of us require at least a fortnight to become what we term "adjusted" to physical Palestine. We remain in hotels fretting over the complications involved in searching for a room in a strange city where you don't know the language. Recently a young German girl shared a hotel room with me on the first night of her arrival. Late the following afternoon she returned to pack her luggage. Without speaking Hebrew, she had secured a clerical position and a room with a terrace and private entrance for one pound thirty piasters (although the rest of us are paying three and four pounds for a room because of the shortage said to be caused by the new immigration).

And so the melting continues—merrily for some, sadly for others. This week at a banquet I met a cinema photographer who wants to make pictures here à la Berlin, an orchestra conductor who is visiting symphonies in all cities and hamlets, and a woman dentist who would continue her specialty of straightening protruding teeth and also establish a branch of the Soroptimist (an international professional women's club).

There was the pretty blond girl who, over a glass of tea in an Allenby Street coffeehouse, confided in her limited English vocabulary that she has a position as a "propagandist" for a drug company. And in Germany, she had been studying medicine. Where is she living? In a room on Rothschild Boulevard "where the water runs always hot" for a few pounds a month. How long has she been in the country? Five days and a half.

There was the German boy who offered his assistance when I was haggling with an Arab over the purchase of a couple of red birds.

He completed the bargain and volunteered to carry the cage. What is he doing? Painting signs. And in Germany? He was an artist. He produces several interesting studies from the inside pocket of his dirty overalls, invites us to come to his studio-to-be for a sitting and departs with the most formal of continental bows ever achieved in a pair of overalls.

It is seven o'clock in the morning and a capable young person is solidly digging into cucumber salad. She tells us that she must hurry in order to be to her work in half an hour. She is working as a housemaid to augment the wages of her husband who was trying his hand as a plasterer. It is all rather an adventure. She is eighteen and he but a year older. The Hitler exodus brought about a hurried marriage and now they are honeymooning in Tel Aviv.

And so the pot is boiling—with much comedy as well as tragedy in the bubbles.

BY THE WATERS

Zif Zif, pp. 94–95

Unpublished manuscript from Bar-Adon's personal archive

Earlier version published in *The Palestine Post*, "By the Waters of Tel Aviv,"

August 15, 1933

Kahn shares a personal impression of the mixture of old and new, traditional and modern on the beach in Tel Aviv. Pioneers and tourists, children and caravans of camels, action, smells and moods, all are described vividly, enabling the reader to feel that he or she is experiencing the event.

"Rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief, doctor, lawyer, Arab chief." They're on the beach—all of them. The girl in the exaggerated suntan bathing suit who would be at home on the beaches of Miami or Lido is rubbing shoulders with two Muslim women who have daringly lifted their veils for a moment to glimpse the sea. A substantial looking real estate dealer from Brooklyn applies olive oil to a newly acquired sunburn while an Arab in the neighboring chair gathers his purple silk robe about his feet and settles down to enjoy "the big parade" for a few hours.

"This beach is just like Atlantic City," is the comment usually heard from newly arrived Americans. But one wonders if anywhere else in the

world there is the conglomeration of yesterdays and tomorrows that is to be found on the Tel Aviv beach.

A bearded Jew who might have been walking along his seashore many, many centuries ago is almost sent sprawling by a bronzed *chalutz* [male pioneer] on a bicycle. An Arab girl whose face is partially hidden from view by jingling silver ornaments is surreptitiously eyed by a smart New Yorker garbed in mandarin pajamas. A party of about thirty scantily attired men and women who are sprinting down the beach in single file must break ranks to make way for a caravan of camels which is carrying sand from the Auja [Arabic for the Yarkon river]. A group of children, under the guidance of a teacher, are playing ball near the water's edge, completely nude, because science has proved the value of the sun's rays. Another group bathes nearby, completely nude, because they haven't any bathing suits.

No one need go hungry on the beach. One wonders what new product will be offered tomorrow, by some ingenious soul. "Eskimo Pies cold" and "Corn on the cob warm" are sung out in every key of the scale. Of course, there is enough soda in which to drown the entire population. Rolls are vended in a small way by boys carrying trays on their heads and on a big scale by those who "set up shop" in the middle of the sand. You have just begun to doze when some enterprising young tradesman begins calling out the virtues of his cakes. The next moment an Arab fisherman waves a string of small fish under your nose and lets you know that they can be purchased for a song. You politely tell him that, as far as you are concerned, he can take them back to the sea and drown them. He persists in exhibiting his catch which is now dangling on your knee.

Sophistication is slowly slipping into the Tel Aviv strand, you learn from one of the chair tenders, who tells you that all the smart bathing attire is a product of the last few years. He remembers when old shirts and petticoats comprised the average bathing costume.

And so the panorama is in action. There is a tourist being photographed atop a cardboard camel to give the folks at home a taste of the Orient. And a prime miss of three, nude except for a large string of blue crystal beads that is wetting her toes. A flat contraption, which is piloted by revolving oars, heads to the sea. A fat man in horn-rimmed spectacles is collecting shells in a cardboard box, and an Arab child follows in his tracks, picking up cigarette butts.

The Tel Aviv beach has many moods. The sun is setting now and the vendors have disbanded for dinner. In the distance is Jaffa and beyond, the

outline of white vessels in the harbor. A handsome Arab in a flowing black robe rides into the last of the sunrays. The beach is bathed in a satisfying peace and quiet.

Unlike other beaches, the "Tel Aviv" beach does not have a "lockup" time. In a few hours it will be wide awake again with young people who will remain talking, singing and whispering until midnight and beyond.

A "POTATORIAN"

Zif Zif, pp. 81–83

Unpublished manuscript from Bar-Adon's personal archive

Earlier version in *The Palestine Post*, "On Tel Aviv Restaurants," August 17, 1933

During her first month in Tel Aviv, Kahn has to eat all her meals in restaurants; she witnesses the shortage of eating places for the hungry newcomers from all over the world. Her humoristic description and the advice she gives potential diners give a picture of the booming city.

After a month of eating three meals a day in the restaurants of Tel Aviv one begins to wonder if a visit to Tel Aviv drove Gandhi [Mahatma Gandhi, preeminent leader of Indian independence movement] to his goat milk diet.

Anyone with a head for figures soon concludes that the most economically solid plan would be to rent a locker and a table in some restaurant, thereby dispensing with a room in which you can in any case spend very little time if you want three (or even two) square meals a day.

Much of life in Tel Aviv centers around the restaurants which have sprung up like mushrooms. However, with the continual influx of new arrivals, it is little wonder that the restaurateurs never seem to quite catch up with the hungry throng.

The newcomer who has normal curiosity happily seizes the opportunity to devote five and sometimes six hour of his day during his first fortnight to the process of being fed. In the dairy, vegetable, sausage and other miscellaneous eating places to be found in cellars, private parlors, roofs and every other conceivable spot, he is able to have a bird's eye view of life in Tel Aviv.

Youth from all parts of the world break bread (literally because usually during rush hours, the quarter loaves are not sliced). Everything from the depression in America to Bialik's poetry is discussed over beet salad or fruit soup. Newcomers sit down, utter with strangers, and before paying the

bill, have decided to share a room. Girls come to dinner wondering how they will spend the evening and, after the second cup of tea, have accepted the invitation from someone at their table who was wondering the same thing. Camaraderie quickly replaces discretion and the following questions are often asked and answered over an order of cucumbers. "When did you come? Where are you from? Have you a job? How much is your salary? What do you pay for your room?"

Yes, living in restaurants for a fortnight is an education, making you feel that you have placed your finger on the pulse of bustling, laughing, pushing, growing, hungry Tel Aviv.

Then something happens. Like the *One-Hoss Shay* [a poem by Oliver Wendell Holmes], your curiosity, digestion (which is now indigestion) and your patience go to pieces at the same time. You seem to have left your sense of humor in some restaurant between the Yarkon and the sea.

The restaurant proprietors have no regard for the law of supply and demand. This correspondent counted on one occasion that fifty persons were being served (or harbored hopes of being served) by a solitary waiter. This waiter and his many confreres throughout the city are extremists. They either sublimely disregard the fact that you have been screaming *bassar* (meat) like a cannibal for the last hour, or they rush about in such a state of sustained haste that they bring *gefилte* fish instead. And you eat and give thanks for all small blessings. Due, perhaps, to the fact that the population is supposed to increase between the morning and evening hours, the most popular byword is, "There is no more." And the supply of everything on hand always seems to give out when the person at your table is demolishing a plate of everything for which you asked. This, however, has its advantages. You feel that you are at home and raiding the icebox when you say, "Well then, fry up a couple of eggs and bring me anything else that's handy."

During the fifth week, you are liable to develop peculiar symptoms. You will leave three of four restaurants in disgust, after waiting to be served a half hour in each place. At the fifth restaurant you realize that you would be better off to have waited the hour and a half in one place. Or you disdainfully order three portions of potatoes to prove to the proprietor that his poor service has reduced you to the state of not caring what becomes of you. Your gesture is in vain. The proprietor isn't impressed and decides that you are a potatopian. Ships are bringing stranger things that into Tel Aviv.

The most excruciating anguish suffered by the non-Hebrew speaking diner is that he can only express his chagrin in distorted facial expressions

to which nobody pays attention. If only you could slam down your napkin and shout with gusto, “Don’t bring my order at all. Do you think I’ve got all night to spend in this place?”

And so the process of feeding Tel Aviv goes on with the haphazardness and nonchalance that is sublime.

HEDER [ROOM]

Written in the first months in Tel Aviv, 1933

Zif Zif, pp. 66–68

Unpublished manuscript from Bar-Adon’s personal archive

Renting a room in Tel Aviv in 1933 is a challenging and frustrating task that requires the ability to trek all over the city, and it demands complicated negotiation skills. Kahn is introduced to a variety of landlords and neighborhoods.

Tel Aviv is living through a boom, with a capital B, if room rents are to be taken as a criterion. Since the excessive demands of the landlords must be a sign of overwhelming progress, three cheers for Tel Aviv. But woe unto the newly arrived tourist in quest of a place to lay his head.

After wandering through the highways and byways of Tel Aviv for two days in search of the phantom room that it is said one can secure for three pounds a month, you have a speaking acquaintance with every apartment house owner in the city and have patted all their children on the head at least twice (once coming in and once going out).

When you are newly arrived in the country, you take the first room at hand, believing that high rents are “just an old Spanish custom” in Palestine. In a month or so, worse luck, you meet some old time Tel Avivians or Jerusalemites who completely demoralize you by relating yarns about the rooms, gardens, terraces and whatnots that their friends have procured for a couple of pounds. At first you don’t pay much attention to their...but since rooms and room rents are a favorite and consuming topic of conversation in Tel Aviv, and the tales keep dripping into your ears like water on a rock, you must eventually succumb.

So then you start out on your room hunt which, as an outdoor and indoor sport, is highly recommended for those who, at eventide like to feel tired but invigorated. You don’t admit it even to yourself, but as you

are drinking your morning coffee, you are playing with the idea that you may happen across a little nook overlooking a garden. By the time you are drinking your evening tea, you would be happy to find a barn overlooking a junk pile.

You have trudged up and down streets, paved and unpaved. You have penetrated into “rural” sections that you never knew existed in Tel Aviv. You have followed the trail of “Heder” (room) signs until you could almost smell them before you saw them. You have related your needs to women in every state of dress and undress from satin gowns to Turkish towels. You have seen more pretty Yemenite servant girls than you thought existed in all Yemen.

You have tried with great trial and tribulation to carry on a conversation in Hebrew only to find, at your departure, that you were addressing an English woman. Another woman argues with you for fifteen minutes over the price of the room before she tells you that her husband would only rent the room to a man. As you are leaving, your prospective landlady tells you, incidentally, that it’s really only half a room because two other people will be sleeping in it. You have seen a man look you straight in the face and ask you six pounds for a very average room.

In the meantime you have become acquainted with each and every neighborhood pharmacy and grocery store because it is here that the “to let” signs are to be seen.

It is evening and you try to believe that tomorrow you will find the evasive room. Meantime you ponder on two things: why people in Tel Aviv merely place a “Room to let” sign on the front of an apartment house making you climb three flights of stairs and ring nine doorbells until you find the vacancy, and, what is the price of a houseboat on the Yarkon River.

THIRD DEGREE

End of 1933

Zif Zif, pp. 69–70

Unpublished manuscript from Bar-Adon’s personal archive

“Third degree” questioning of newcomers to Tel Aviv by veteran residents is a common phenomenon, and newcomers soon get into the spirit and readily “strip their souls bare.”

There is a fraternity in Tel Aviv that is doubtless the most unique of its kind in the world. It is known as the N.C., has no officers, demands no dues, the maximum extent of membership is two months, and it is most democratic in its policy.

The moment you put foot on Palestine soil you automatically become a member of the "newcomers" fraternity. This means that you are the recipient of favors of various descriptions. It seems that nowhere else is there such an overwhelming interest in new arrivals, and one wonders how the native Tel Avivians retain their enthusiasm in the face of the constant stream of newcomers.

Of course it means also that you relinquish many personal liberties and find yourself with as little privacy as the proverbial goldfish. At first you may become a little flustered when policemen, soda water vendors, bus drivers and anyone else with whom you have any dealings ask you, "When did you come? Are you here alone? Have you a job? How much do you make? Do you like it here? Where is your family? What is their business?"

But after you have gone through this third degree questioning several times, you get into the spirit of the thing. You can strip your soul bare with little reticence. You begin to quote the answers to the questions as mechanically as you used to quote Shakespeare in the classroom. The only difficulty is that you say, "I've been here a month" so often that you find yourself still saying it after you've been here a month and a half. And your liable to forget that you earned a pound more this week than last, thereby giving the "market quotation" most incorrectly.

The innermost corners of the life of an N.C. are pried into even to the extent of discussing what hour you rise in the morning and why. On one occasion I returned an alarm clock that I had purchased the previous day. Despite having been "guaranteed" in several languages, it proved to have a typically Oriental idea of time. The shopkeeper, unable to understand the complaint, waylaid an English-speaking policeman who explained to him in Hebrew that the timepiece must be repaired immediately for use early in the next morning. This, it seems, was impossible. Thereupon I became mildly hysterical, which had no effect on the shopkeeper who phlegmatically continued to pore over a piece of jewelry. The policeman, however, took the matter to heart. After learning how long I had been here, why I needed to rise so early, and if I intended to remain in Palestine, he announced, "Give me your address and at six o'clock tomorrow morning I will knock on your window."

On another day I went in search of a carpenter shop to have a surfboard made. Finding four men engaged in construction of a house, I made known my need. Work on the house was postponed while a surfboard was constructed that would do honor to the Mediterranean. After asking how long I had been here, one of the men proclaimed, “We are from Vienna. I have been here a month and eight days. He has been here four days. Those two have each been here a month.” Whereupon one of the men rushed out for beer and seated on woodpiles, we celebrated the fact that we were all member of the N.C.

SIMCHAT TORAH

1935

Zif Zif, pp. 91–93

Unpublished manuscript from Bar-Adon's personal archive

Kahn compares the celebration of Simchat Torah in 1933 (a few months after her arrival in Palestine) to the celebration in 1935. Whether due to the fears engendered by the rise of Fascist regimes in Europe, or because of the rising standard of living in Tel Aviv, the celebrations in 1935 are less spontaneous and more structured and “cultured.”

Some said it was because there are so many British policemen stationed in Tel Aviv this year. Some say it was because the Italian–Ethiopian conflict [a war that started in October 1935 and ended in May 1936, resulting in the Italian military occupation of Ethiopia] had a depressing effect. Some newcomers to Palestine didn't even know the difference.

But there was a difference between the Simchat Torah of 1935 and the Simchat Torah of 1934; and a vast difference between the Simchat Torah of 1935 and of 1933.

In two short years a festival of a distinctly Jewish and distinctly Palestinian character has been transformed into a mere festival. A day of ecstatic joy and exultation has become, to many, merely a day when one is released from work and eats bigger meals.

If the change is due to policemen or foreign conflict, then we may hope for a spirited revival of Simchat Torah next year. I, for one, cannot believe that external circumstances had anything to do with the matter. I believe that the joy-intoxicated celebration of three years ago would

have had the British policemen dancing hora and the polka with them; and if they could not have danced Friday night, they would have danced Saturday night.

I believe that the form of the celebration this year was a physical expression of the intangible spiritual changes that Tel Aviv has been undergoing; and that this year marked the end of an epoch in Palestine's urban life. Those who reveled in the spirit of former Simchat Torahs may look back upon them with nostalgia, for it is improbable that they will witness another. Men grow away from simplicity—they seldom return to it.

This year I dined on Simchat Torah night (celebrated on Saturday) in a German open-air restaurant on Allenby Road. A five-piece orchestra played concert music, unusual in Palestine where even the more ambitious restaurants boast no more than a gramophone or a radio. The music was excellent, one tuneful operetta following another. Passersby stopped on the street to listen. The steak was well served and tasty. The waiter was pleasant and efficient (another innovation in Palestine). The ice cream was tempting and showed evidences of having been made from milk rather than water (also an innovation). Well-dressed women brushed by one's table perfectly groomed from the patent leather tips of their shoes to the kid tips of their gloves.

The air was exceedingly warm for October. The street promenade, as always in Tel Aviv, was fascinating. Neon electric signs blinked down on the endless jostling crowds. Young people were pushing their way into the Opera Mograbi across the street. The line of traffic—buses and automobiles—was unbroken.

While sipping wine after a satisfying meal, one was inclined to lean back in one's chair and watch this little Jewish world passing by with an immense sense of gratification. Music—well-dressed women—thousands of people going somewhere. Ah—this was a city complete. One might be sitting in Berlin or New York. The Jew has nothing for which to apologize. He has concert music and ice cream and neon electric signs in his city. And he has people—less people of course than in New York but people going somewhere.

Then, perhaps merely from perverse sentimentality, my mind traveled back to 1933 when, on this night people were going nowhere. It was a madly joyous night and I remember it in chaotic patches. The old men danced in the synagogues, as they still do, with Torahs in their arms. But the young men—the young men danced in streets and coffeehouses with beer

bottles in their arms—with chairs—with tables. And yet in their dancing was the same exultation of the more obviously pious. They had taken an ancient rite and fashioned it to suit their needs and none with eyes to see could say that it was not good.

Large circles of hora dancers stretched down Allenby Road to the sea. Blue-bloused youths swayed to the tune of their own singing—then others joined the circle—middle-aged women—old men—tourists. The circles broke up. New ones formed. Nearby a vast crowd was gathered around a young couple who were executing a lively hora. Hasidic melodies [music that originated in Jewish mystical sects] intermingled with pioneer songs. Joy of the evening seemed to infuse the dancers with a strength beyond themselves. No one was drunk but everyone was intoxicated. Midnight came. One o'clock. Two o'clock. Festivities went on.

At five o'clock, I remember, dawn was breaking over the Mediterranean. Groups of youths still sat at long tables singing. I was tired. I could no longer distinguish between the Hasidic and the new pioneer melodies. How did I want to? They were one.

This was not a festivity that could have been staged in Berlin, or New York, or Paris. It was a festival of Palestine.

It was these chaotic patches that come back to me this year. But I fought against giving myself over to nostalgia—I left the garden restaurant in pursuit of the “celebration.”

The Tarshish Café near the sea now has a roof garden and an orchestra. It was jammed with people. The jazz music was peppy. More well-dressed women—more good ice cream. I moved on. The Sapphire Café was using four rooms for dancing as well as the terrace. The jazz music was peppy. More well-dressed women—more good ice cream. I tried to dance but it was as crowded as a New York nightclub. I was wearing sandals and people stepped on my toes. It was hot and stuffy. I moved on.

I met a friend of mine and asked, “Aren't there horas?” He answered, “There was one about an hour ago near the sea but a policeman stopped it.”

It was midnight. Everyone was still going somewhere. After all, it was a holiday night. It might have been the Fourth of July in America or the Bank Holiday in England. People were gay and on the move. Everybody was going somewhere. I wanted badly to go nowhere. To dance in circles and go nowhere. In lieu of which I went home.

There is too much that is real and vital and honest in Tel Aviv today to allow ourselves to indulge in backward glances or sickly sentimentalities.

Changes come and we cannot stem the tide. It is too soon yet to know where we would stem it if we could.

So this is not commentary. It is merely a record that New Palestine's first interpretation of Simchat Torah seems to have passed.

HITLER'S GIFT TO PALESTINE

1935

Zif Zif, pp. 174–176

Unpublished manuscript from Bar-Adon's personal archive

Kahn asks herself what Palestine can give to Jewish refugees from Germany and what the German refugees can give to Palestine. Most impressive is the connection of the young refugees—immigrants from Germany—to the soil, as seen in the rural settlements (kibbutzim and moshavim); one example is the Ramot HaShavim moshav where doctors from Germany became farmers. Kahn sees the children from Germany as “Hitler’s gift to Palestine” who will bridge the gap from past to future.

What will Palestine do for the German refugee? What will the German refugee do for Palestine? As far as the adult refugee is concerned, it is too soon to judge for we are still in the midst of the drama. Almost daily, new boatloads of these uprooted men and women land in Jaffa or Haifa. There are those who come strong in courage and hope; there are those who come leaden-eyed like mere bodies, their souls still lingering in the Germany that they and their fathers have known and loved.

What can Palestine give to these men past fifty who have neither the strength nor the desire to begin life anew? Perhaps the vitality of the Jewish National Homeland, which is still an unknown land to many of these Germans, will in time revive their strength and their desire. Perhaps Palestine will never be more to them than a haven where they may relive their past in safety and peace. They gamble with their future. So does Palestine.

But in the children of these refugees there is no element of chance, no gamble. We need not wait for time to deliver up the answer of what they will give to Palestine or of what Palestine will give to them. The answer streams from the lips of every German child whom one hears babbling Hebrew in the streets of the cities and the roads of the colonies.

The genius of all children is their capacity for living in the present so completely. Despite the harrowing experiences through which some of these young victims have passed, their memory is short. Soon after their arrival they are living with zest in the present and this present to them means Palestine.

Whether in city or in settlement, these children seem to pick up Hebrew from thin air. They have to pick it up or they can't play with the little boy next door. The guttural sounds that label their father's halting "German Hebrew" is not to be found in their easy flow.

But in the colonies one is conscious of a change more vital than the mere change of language. For here the victims of Hitler's spleen are being bound to the soil of Palestine as though they themselves were the young orange saplings that they are so skillfully grafting. Miss Henrietta Szold [an American who founded Hadassah in 1912, immigrated to Palestine in 1918, and was the first woman on the Zionist executive committee], who, two years ago, at the age of seventy-three assumed the gigantic task of settling these children and whom I recently heard referred to by a pioneer from Ein Harod [the first kibbutz established in the Jezreel Valley in 1921; it took in the first group of youth from Germany in 1934] as "the belle of the Emek" [the Jezreel Valley], believes that the number of these children who later will abandon the soil is negligible. For these children are not only becoming Palestinians—but more important still—Palestinian farmers.

I remember seeing these same youths, with others from Kibbutz Tel Joseph, Degania [the first kibbutz—founded in 1909] and neighboring colonies studying the ruins of the old synagogue in Capernaum. Tourists walked about gingerly, Baedekers [guidebooks] in hand, according the broken stones the awe and respect earned by antiquity. But these blue-bloused Germans did not behave as though they were in a museum. They had been brought here in wagons with their teachers for a history and geography lesson. Soberly they moved from one broken capitol to the next, listening intently to what the teacher had to say of the history and significance of these monuments. Now and again they took notes as though they were in a lecture hall. To these youths there is no demarcation where the new Palestine in which they are planting vineyards and the ancient Palestine of these ruins begins. Past and present are submerged. They are not surprised that Palestine should have had a past because all countries had a past. And that Palestine should have a present and a future is as normal and as simple to these earnest youths. For a long time I watched these blue-blouses

against the white ruins, studying Jewish history at its fountainhead. Here was death and life again, just as there is always life again for the Jew.

In Ramot HaShavim [a collective village established in 1933 by immigrants from Germany] near Petah Tikva [one of the first colonies established by Jews from Jerusalem in 1878], which is called the “egg colony” [because its main source of income was eggs], I found thirty-six German families, of which eighteen of the men had been doctors in Germany, devoting themselves to poultry. Rural life is difficult, but they are making a noble attempt at readjustment. “We have brought over our own furniture. If we could not come home at night to that touch of the west, we could not bear the life here,” said my guide. Then he told me that they had just celebrated the birth of the colony’s first baby. This baby is Hitler’s gift to Palestine, for unlike his father there will be nothing for him to bear. His eyes saw the plains of Judea before they saw anything else.

One night I sat in a room crowded with pioneers who were celebrating the finding of water. In speeches and with song they eulogized water. On a wooden bench in front of me sat a stout German hausfrau with ear cupped. Her little daughter was patiently translating for her, word by word, the Hebrew that was being spoken on the platform.

And so it is from one end of the land to another, these children, Hitler’s gift to Palestine, are bridging the gap from the hopeless past to the hopeful future.

THERE IS NO GERMANY

1935

Zif Zif, pp. 172–173

Unpublished manuscript from Bar-Adon’s personal archive

Earlier version published in *The Palestine Post*, “Mr. Arnold Zweig in Jerusalem,

Author To Become a Palestinian Citizen,” June 21, 1935

In this article Kahn describes a meeting with Arnold Zweig, internationally known Jewish-German writer and antiwar activist who had decided to renounce his German citizenship and become a Palestinian, because as he said, “there is no Germany.” Hitler’s regime had not only forced Jewish writers into exile, it had also silenced gentile writers and stifled the close connections between the two groups.

The Palestine Post had a visitor yesterday morning in the person of Mr. Arnold Zweig [internationally-known Jewish-German writer and antiwar activist], the well-known German author now living in Haifa. In deference to the hot morning he had doffed his coat, but it was plain to see from his profuse apology that the author of *The Case of Sergeant Grischa* is not yet a real Palestinian. However, coat or no coat, he will be a Palestinian after April of next year (1936) for he has made application for the return of his German passport to Herr Hitler and for Palestinian citizenship.

Mr. Zweig denies that he is undergoing any sentimental misgivings at his impending change in his national status. His explanation is that under the present regime, "there is no Germany."

Relinquishing one's citizenship in Germany, which "is not," is not painful, as it has nothing to do with one's feelings toward the real Germany.

Mr. Zweig told of the dispersal of Germany's literary and spiritual life. The fourteen years of the Republic, prior to Hitler, formed perhaps one of the richest epochs that Germany has ever known. Berlin was fairly seething with creative energy and expression. But the thunderclap of the Fuehrer has dispersed not only the Jews, but also the gentiles. The gentile writers, those still in Germany, have become dumb. He told of several instances of well-known writers who, overpowered by Hitler's blow to liberal thought, have taken refuge in complete seclusion. In sad disillusionment, they watch the changing scene but cannot write.

As for the Jewish writers, they are completely scattered. From his stronghold on the top of the Carmel, Mr. Zweig writes many letters. Some go to Switzerland, many to Paris, a few to America. In the pre-Hitler days, Mr. Zweig was close to Thomas Mann and others. "We had a rich spiritual intercourse," said Mr. Zweig in recounting that so-and-so lived but twenty minutes away from his home and so-and-so lived around the corner. The literary folk, who awakened after the political explosion to find themselves separated by thousands of miles, are trying to make their letters a substitute for the intimate flow of conversation they once enjoyed. Mr. Zweig does not always receive the letters. If the sender does not mark the route specifically on the envelope so as to exclude Germany, the letters are usually confiscated.

"Art Be Hanged"

The uprooting has not stifled Mr. Zweig's work. Indeed, he has found stimulation in Palestine. He mentioned, particularly, a play that he has written

concerning Napoleon in Acre. He retains sufficient sense of humor to laugh at, rather than revolt against, the present reign of nationalism, which seems to be saying in no uncertain terms, “Art be hanged.” Theatrical production in Germany is impossible, and he has learned from France that producers there would be afraid to let themselves be on speaking terms with anyone writing on Napoleon—because nowadays in France one dare not speak of war. So he is expecting to have his Napoleon produced in America—“I think they are far enough away to risk it,” he says.

TEL AVIV: APRIL 22, 1936

Dorothy Kahn
Jerusalem

The Palestine Post

An article from Bar-Adon's personal archive

Kahn describes the atmosphere in Tel Aviv during the Arab Revolt against the British. Ten defenseless Jews were murdered over a period of three days. The people of Tel Aviv, dressed in their everyday work clothes, honored the funeral procession in almost complete silence as it passed through the streets. Amazingly, despite their grief and anger, the young refrained from taking revenge.

Tel Aviv, April 22: Tel Aviv is the youngest city of its size in the world. In times of peace and joy, this extreme youth is revealed in enthusiasm, exuberance, energy and periodic misbehavior. Should a police officer tell a Tel Avivian to desist from crossing the street on his head, he would probably be asked “why.” Therefore, Tel Avivians have acquired the reputation of being noisy, pushy, argumentative, opinionated and sometimes incorrigible. Perhaps they are. It is a sign of youthful well-being and healthy, adolescent growing pains.

But in times of disturbance [a term used by Jews to refer to the Arab Revolt against the British, 1936–1939] and deep sorrow, such as we are experiencing now, a new Tel Aviv reveals itself. Lovers of Tel Aviv say, “I told you so,” and are proud; harsh critics of the city are a bit shame-faced. For Tel Aviv is dignified with all the calm mellowness and understanding of an old man who has seen much and learned from seeing. At the same time, it retains the vital courage and hardihood of its youth. A strange combination. A strange city. An admirable city.

The facts of the happenings during the past few days were reported in news cables. On Friday, Israel Khazan, who was brutally murdered by Arab brigands, was buried in the Old Cemetery in Tel Aviv. On Saturday indignation still rankled in the breasts of the population and a few hot-headed youths prevented Arab bootblacks and carriage drivers of Jaffa from entering Tel Aviv. On Sunday morning Tel Aviv settled down to routine jobs. Between nine and ten o'clock the murderous onslaughts began in Jaffa. Before nightfall, nine defenseless Jews had been slaughtered and over forty injured.

These are the facts. But the spirit of the city cannot be expressed so concisely. Those who lived through this period feel that they had never before really known or understood the hidden resources of strength and self-control buried in the city under a guise of effervescent youth.

On Monday morning at about dawn, Tel Aviv's population rose to bury its dead. It was grey, damp, drizzly. The length of Allenby Road was a sea of packed humanity. Pallid faces were pressed against windowpanes. Little groups herded together on balconies. Solemn-eyed youngsters sat on rooftops or in tree branches.

The cortege passed slowly from Hadassah Hospital to the Municipality on Bialik Street. The bodies were carried in simple orthodox manner, on wooden stretchers. The white shrouds were tightly tied around the necks and ankles of the corpses. No one, not even the families, dare glimpse these bodies mutilated until the flesh hung in ribbons. One white shroud followed another down Allenby Road. Only nine in all. But the procession of sacrifices seemed endless. There might have been ninety or nine hundred, so long did it seem in passing.

Jews are reputed to be hysterical. And yet in the face of this starkly tragic procession, scarcely a sound was uttered in the entire mourning city. There was not a dry eye. But there was not a sound. The drama of this complete silence in the early morning grayness was not to be described. It was only to be felt and wondered at. Tens of thousands of Jews bereft (and in Tel Aviv such loss is a personal bereavement) and yet not a sound, only deep silence.

Eulogies were delivered from the balcony of the Municipality. Still silence, except for the sobs from bereaved mothers and fathers who came to Palestine too late in life to learn how new Palestine bears its losses.

The pathetic procession moved on to the cemetery. What an odd funeral procession. Young men and women wearing shorts and blouses.

No top hats. No gloves. No mourning suits. No black veils. No flowers. No trappings and trimmings of any kind.

Just working people in working clothes carrying their nine dead, tied up like white sacks, to the most honored section of the cemetery. Tears on the cheeks of the seventeen- and eighteen-year-old youths who formed the cordon separating the procession from the crowds. Tears on the cheeks of young working women who wore red bandannas on their heads. For Tel Aviv needed no trappings to emphasize or dignify its grief.

On Tuesday the procession was repeated. Six more laid in graves adjoining the graves dug yesterday. Again Tel Aviv rose early. Again there was this awing silence. Deepened since yesterday.

Those who know the dignity of death only when it is intensified by black coats and veils do not know the dignity of death at all. Here was death linked to life without cessation. Pallbearers in working clothes. Pallbearers who stopped work to bury their dead and went back to work.

But the story of Tel Aviv's dignity did not end with the funerals. Only those who know the strength and courage of Tel Aviv's youth can measure the self-control need to refrain from taking an eye for an eye.

Comrades had been butchered. Retaliation is the expected reply of normal, red-blooded youth. And Tel Aviv's youth is normal and red-blooded. But they had been told to hold themselves in check. They did. A British officer was overheard telling a group of young Jews, "The reason why there are no Arab casualties is because you haven't got the guts to fight back." Others thought the same thing. It wasn't true. Tel Aviv's youth swallowed it because the city was behaving like an old man who has seen much and learned from seeing. Nothing to be gained in the long run by slaughter. Better to be told you have no guts when you know you have.

The air in Tel Aviv was tense—still is. Disturbing traffic moving along Allenby Road. A lorry bringing in a load of Yemenite refugees from Jaffa. A fire engine. An ambulance rounding the Hadassah Hospital corner.

Hundreds of young people milling around the new Beit Brenner of the Histadrut [the location of the workers' center on Brenner street in Tel Aviv]. They exchange opinions. Read the latest edition of the Hebrew newspapers. At the least grinding of a brake on Allenby, the building is deserted. Then, having satisfied themselves that it is nothing, they pour back to the building.

Knots of people on every corner. Watching. Waiting. Restless. Resentful. Reading the late bulletins posted on hoardings. Seven thousand

Yemenite refugees distributed throughout the city, some in synagogues and others in clubs and empty flats. Still others on the streets with their belongings.

But there is no undue noise. No hysteria. Tel Aviv waits with dignity and does its best to go about its routine business.

At seven o'clock the chase for last-minute newspaper editions and the chatter in cafés is suddenly silenced. Curfew is enforced. There are few violators of the law. All are content to stay within their four walls or to sit in family groups on their doorsteps. Gone is the youthful bravado and misbehavior. And in its place is this strange mellowness and dignity—this magnificent dignity that so many people fail to associate with this new baby city of the Jewish nation.

"INNOCENT ABROAD"

An article from Bar-Adon's personal archive

Kahn travels abroad to Poland, Romania, and Turkey and is dismayed by the sentiments she hears from common people that reflect a transformation of positive feelings of patriotism to destructive feelings of nationalism that exclude and demonize the "other." In Poland, she is impressed by the ardor of the youth who are rebuilding the country after the destruction caused by Russia, but she is disturbed by the anti-Semitism they demonstrate. Bar-Adon returns to Palestine on March 7, 1937.

Toward the end of September, I sailed from Haifa. The port area was crowded with troops arriving from England. The imposition of martial law was imminent. The "disturbances" were almost six months old. The country was extremely weary. When viewed from a few miles out at sea, it seemed a pathetic little waif, crouching against the horizon. One watched the hills disappear from sight with the question, "To what will I return?" The possibility that one might return to an unchanged situation, except for heightened weariness, was not entertaining.

A fortnight ago, when the Polonia docked in Haifa, a British constable who boarded the ship told us that the North was terrorized and Jerusalem under curfew. In a sentence, he had answered the question, "To what will I return?" A disheartening answer. And yet, as the small launch neared the

harbor, Palestine seemed less a waif and more a potential tower of strength than it had when departing.

A Jew, returning home, refreshed (?) by contacts with the outside world, sees Palestine in a new light. He may not feel anything new. But the things he felt day in and day out—such as the imperative need for opening the doors of Palestine to persecuted Jews—he feels more deeply. His perspective may be said to have deepened rather than broadened.

With this deepened perspective, he sees this waif of a land, torn and mauled though it may be, as one of the few—and perhaps the sole bulwark between the Jewish people and a nameless abyss.

We repeat that for a Palestinian, this is hardly a new sentiment. It is as much a formula as “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” is to the American. But the “innocent abroad” necessarily return in this spirit of rededication, realizing anew that the fate of Palestine can no longer rest on the outcome of a squabble between the Jews, Arabs and British and realizing that the passing of each day makes it more of an international concern that, sooner or later, must be recognized as such by the world at large.

This is because the world at large today is a distinctly unpleasant place and, as usual, the Jews are bearing the brunt of this unpleasantness. One need not, of course, leave the shores of Palestine to be aware of this unpleasantness that is brought to us from every direction in newspapers and periodicals.

Yet, it is by rubbing shoulders and exchanging pleasantries on ships and on trains with stray, unimportant and therefore representative members of the world’s population, that one feels the more personal and hence more crushing impact of this unpleasantness.

Perhaps “unpleasant” is hardly the word. Perplexed, bewildered, or frightened might more justly describe the sentiments that have congealed into nationalisms, more terrifying and disheartening when you meet them in simple, fundamentally kind folk than when you meet them in newsprint. People are thoughtlessly braying, “My Country ’Tis of Thee” with an ardor that has nothing to do with harmless, sentimental patriotism and everything to do with harmful, destructive nationalism.

My first view of Poland was from the upper deck of the SS Batory as we neared the port of Gdynia. The ten-year-old wonder port of Poland stretched before us like a festoon of lights draped over a Christmas tree. A young Pole at my elbow became ecstatic. “Can you imagine that ten years ago there was nothing here but a few fishermen’s huts?” he asked. Could I believe my ears, or was it an enthusiastic Palestinian speaking of Tel Aviv?

That night, traveling from Gdynia to Warsaw, there was much talk in the crowded compartment. One young Pole told us of the Chopin festivities to be staged that week. We were urged not to miss seeing, in Lazienki Park, the impressive monument of Chopin listening to the melodies of the wind. Someday, there will be another Chopin in Poland, we were assured.

Another youth told us of the Four Year Plan and implored us not to judge Warsaw by what we would see today. The National Museum was not yet completed. They were still repairing the ravages of the Russians. We must return in five years.

Such brave young talk, this talk about Gdynia, Chopin and the National Museum. Few people, least of all a Palestinian Jew, could fail to understand this passion for rebuilding an old-new land. Yes, this might have been a Palestinian train, except for the endless stretches of snow through which we were passing.

But, there is talk in Poland that has nothing to do with Chopin, talk of "Poland for the Poles." And, of course, Jews are not Poles, they will tell you. When you press these young people further into intricacies of nationalism, they will talk of their fear of Germany and Russia, of over-population, of poverty, of their need to band together for strength. Sometimes what they say makes sense, sometimes nonsense.

The Polish picture is large and complex. One leaves with many impressions. But of one impression there can be no doubt. The family is drawing about the hearthside closely to reinforce themselves against outsiders. The Jew is not considered one of the family. You will be told—and have every reason to believe—that the Pole is as poor as the Jew. But as long as there is bread, the Pole may look forward to sharing it; the Jew may look forward to nothing.

There are rumblings in Romania.

And even when we were homeward bound and nearing Istanbul, a young Turk delivered himself as follows, "Turkey is for the Turks. In these troublous days, we have to be strong. If the Jew will assimilate and become a Turk, he can stay. Otherwise we will have to kick him out as Hitler did in Germany."

Was this a flea or a body of men whom my friend disposed of so lightly but categorically, over his glass of cognac? It would be useless to remind him that the Jews had been ousted from Germany because they had assimilated too well. It would be useless to reply to all because he spoke not as an individual but from the depth of the malignant fever of nationalism.

It is useless to rationalize with this fever, bred of fear, suspicion and hatred. One knows only that the symptoms are everywhere, in the most calm and lovely spots, be it the vigor of the North Sea or the languor of the Bosporus.

The “Innocent Abroad” may return to Haifa with a thousand and one jumbled impressions. But one impression stands out as clear as Mt. Carmel. The nations of the world are drawing to their own hearthside. The wrongness, rightness, stupidity, or insanity of this sweeping passion is beside the point. What is not beside the point is that place must be made at his own hearthside for the Jew who has no other.

NEW PORT OF TEL AVIV

1938

An article from Bar-Adon's personal archive

On her return trip to Palestine on the SS Polonia, the passengers are informed that they will dock in Tel Aviv, the world's youngest port. When land is finally sighted, the passengers crowd the deck, singing Hatikvah. Small launches ferry them to land, where they go through customs in this newest of ports.

It was about four o'clock on Sunday afternoon that the wireless operator of the *Polonia* received the instructions that the vessel was to dock in the port of Tel Aviv. By word of mouth the news spread like wildfire among the passengers. Returning Palestinians made individual excursions to the wireless cabin to see the telegram with their own eyes before they could believe the glad tidings. Then, convinced, they gathered in knots to chatter and sing the popular songs dedicated to the port.

On another corner of the deck, old men gathered for special sunset prayers. They and the rest of the passengers were conscious that the ship had already changed her direction and pointed her prow toward Tel Aviv.

But the majority of the passengers were bewildered. They were tourists from Poland and Romania, coming for an eight-day Passover excursion. Whether they landed in Tel Aviv or Haifa was of little import. And besides, they were a bit disconcerted at the thought of arriving in a “half-finished” port.

In the evening there were a few sporadic attempts to sing Palestinian songs. But the foxtrot and the rumba proved more popular with the tourists, and the Palestinian residents had to content themselves with sitting

in corners and conjecturing on the preparations that were being made in Tel Aviv to receive passenger ships.

But by noontime next day, one was conscious of a tension spreading throughout the vessel. Textile manufacturers from Lodz and bankers from Romania were beginning to feel excited at the prospect of landing in the world's youngest port. At about two o'clock came the usual false cry of "land." The bow filled up with passengers. Then, for several hours, they remained standing and straining their eyes to the deep blue horizon which seemed to be deliberately withholding the white dot for which they waited. Telescopes were used, but no device could produce anything except a glass-like sea met by a cloudless sky.

Then someone noticed that three members of the crew were standing on the bridge, also peering intently through glasses. Again the cry of "land" went up. And this time it was true. Slowly white specks began to stand out on the horizon. But it was an hour or more before the specks began to take shape and another hour before one could discern clearly the minarets of Jaffa at one end of the shore and the Rutenberg works at the other.

Then came the cry, "The flag!" The blue and white flag slowly made its way up the mast. For a few seconds it was caught in the rope. Then, in the face of the breeze it unfurled. The passengers sang *Hatikva* [Israel's national anthem] and, by now, Tel Aviv was stretched before us, a white city [Tel Aviv's nickname because of its white houses], except for the "Red House" [a house stood on the beach used by the Tel Aviv workers' union and its youth movement; the name was taken from its color and political orientation; today the Sheraton Hotel stands on this spot] on the seafront.

Now came the whirl of wings overhead. Since the cable arrived, we had had a longing to feel the pulse of Tel Aviv. These welcoming planes were the first signs. The passengers waved frantically and were overjoyed to be able to see clearly the answering wave of the pilot. Now there was little distinction between the passengers who came from Warsaw for a holiday and those who were returning home. It was as though drums were beating in the engines of the plane. Tel Aviv is not as imposing as the Haifa skyline. But one and all were intoxicated by the beauty of the white city, bordering the blue sea like a silken fringe. The planes circled again and dipped down. The pilots waved and the passengers answered.

The anchor was cast. We left the upper decks and hugged the rails on the lower decks. The inspectors were coming on board. The sea was rough and the distance between the ship and the shore was great. The small

launches bobbed up and down like corks. Gradually they approached the side of the ship. On the canvas roof of the launch stood a young boatman poised like a dancer, despite the tossing of the sea, and holding a grappling hook. But before he used the hook for more practical purposes, he waved it in the air like a baton, and broke into Hebrew song. The other boatmen joined in and so did the passengers. There were few passengers now who did not understand all this ado about landing in Tel Aviv.

The boatmen came aboard, fourteen of them, husky Jewish youths from Germany, Yugoslavia, Poland, Yemen and other parts of the world. It had been a hard pull out to the *Polonia*, but they were exhilarated rather than weary. This was the first time that they had come to bring hundreds of passengers to Tel Aviv. They could have gone five times the distance.

It was too late to disembark. Everyone remained on board. But there was little serious sleeping. Although breakfast was to be served at five o'clock, bearded old men could be seen hovering near the rails long after midnight. With Tel Aviv almost at arm's distance, sleep was difficult.

As arranged, the first passengers embarked at six o'clock in the morning. The motor launch seemed like a small yacht, with its carpeted floor, comfortable seats, and brass-railing stairway. Everything shone, as new and bright as the morning into which we were pushing. Again the boatmen broke into song. Two smaller boats escorted the launch on either side. Other small boats bobbed up from nowhere. And two large cargo boats, ribboned with red bands, added to the impression of a real port. "Shaloms" were called across the water by porters seated atop loads of lumber. And already we could hear cheers from the waiting crowds.

The customs house was as crisp and fresh as a month-old baby should be. It seemed a shame to place one's baggage on the brand new counters for customs inspection. And how dare one sit on the new, white benches? Even the pads of the inspectors seemed too new to be used.

And the personnel in the customs house were as new as the benches and the counters. The young woman, who examined you for the control, had been a clerk in a pharmacist's shop until yesterday. She takes her new duties seriously. When you tell her that this section of your pocketbook contains only cosmetics, she demands that you open your powder case. She stares intently at the puff; satisfies herself that it is harmless; and prepares to mark your pocketbook with white chalk. But what is the "okay" mark in the Tel Aviv port? She is not sure. She dashes out, obtains the information, and efficiently gives you the chalk mark.

The porters are also new and enthusiastic. They have never handled baggage before. A group of them come from a communal settlement in Ra'anana. One of them, however, proudly admits to having received his training in the harbor of Hamburg.

So you make out a new customs slip, and a new porter helps you out the new door of the new port of Tel Aviv.

REMINISCENCE OF TEL AVIV

1938

An article from Bar-Adon's personal archive

Bar-Adon looks back on her first five years in the country. She recalls the informal meetings between Jews and Arabs, meetings so prevalent in 1933, that had all but disappeared. With delightful humor, she describes her first living arrangements, starting with a room let by a journalist and an English teacher, who introduced her to concerts in Dizengoff's house and a "furnished" room containing only two chairs and a picture. She fled an overly regimented German rental and finally settled with a Russian woman where she set the house on fire. How trivial and yet human all this seems to her compared to the fear and depression prevalent in 1938.

In slow moving countries, it requires half a century before one can reminisce. But in Palestine, half a decade suffices to reveal many changes. For one who lives like a bedouin, wandering from room to room, a review of the landlords and landladies during the past five years is a barometer of social, economic and political situations.

By a lucky quirk, the first "room to let" sign I happened across when I arrived in Tel Aviv in 1933 was in the apartment of a Hebrew journalist whose wife was an English schoolteacher. The rent was eighteen dollars a month without service, which I was told was exorbitant. But this was 1933—Palestine was boasted to be the only country in world not suffering from depression or unemployment. It was a privilege to have a room at all and one did not quibble over the price.

My landlord kindly inducted me into the chief recreation of that era—attending informal concerts at the home of Meir Dizengoff [first mayor of Tel Aviv] and visiting Nahim Bialik on Friday evenings. There

was excellent conversation in many languages to be heard at both homes. But the two men and the peace of the “pre-disturbance” days, which fostered the conversation, have passed.

Among my outstanding memories of that summer are being awakened in the early morning by the shrill but oftentimes melodious cries of the Arab hucksters—now extinct in Tel Aviv. A favorite pastime was walking along the beach to Jaffa; stopping to chat with the Arab fishermen, boat menders, and cameleers who came to the sea to shave their animals; and ending up with a Turkish coffee in a Jaffa coffeehouse. And in those distant days the effendis [respected men] still strolled down to Tel Aviv for a glimpse of the Jewish girls in their low-cut bathing costumes, although from the dignified look on their faces one might have supposed that they were discussing the price of Damascus silk or the political situation in Iraq. But nowadays, one walks in the opposite direction from Jaffa and, if in quest of diversion, watches the Jewish boatmenders in the Tel Aviv port.

My next move was to a furnished room with a Polish family where two chairs and a picture on the wall comprised the furniture. The bed, table, closet and other accessories were to be supplied next day. For four nights I slept on a broken army cot in the dining room. No action seemed to be taken in the matter of my furniture. Early on the fifth morning I fled. My landlady made no protest. Prosperity and the room shortage had now reached a dizzy height and she would have no difficulty in finding someone who would be grateful for a furnished room without furniture. Since that time prices have fallen and rooms have been had for the asking. But within the past few months, owing to the influx of immigrants, rooms are again becoming scarce and agitations for “rent restrictions” are beginning.

In desperation, I tumbled into a tumbledown room in a tumbledown house along the seafront, the like of which no longer exists in this section of the city. Again, the furniture was sparse. My landlady—a Russian woman—agreed that I might have some shelves made. I started out in question of a carpenter. But in the merry days of 1933 there was no carpenter to be had for love or money. The idea of having a shelf put up in less than a fortnight was ludicrous.

I decided—like thousands of others in Tel Aviv—that I was lucky to have a bed, and my waking hours could be spent in the streets. Despite the fact that we had no common language (or maybe because of it) my Russian landlady developed an affection for me, and my last memory of her is standing on the balcony with streaming eyes when I left, bag and

baggage in a horse and carriage. Carriages have also become extinct in Tel Aviv—Jews drive taxis and Arab carriage drivers may not enter.

And now the scene shifts to Himmelfarb's hotel in Jerusalem where so many newcomers passed a few weeks until they settled permanently. The pipes from Ras el Ein had not been laid and Jerusalemites budgeted their shower baths and watered their plants with dishwater. But Mr. Himmelfarb was obliging and ingenious. He would supply you with a bottle of soda water, to wash away the soapsuds when the water supply was turned off, before you had finished your shower.

While at Himmelfarb's, I was turning out copious copy about the bandit, Abu Jilda [a highway robber who killed a policeman and was sentenced to death in 1934]. The fact that he held up, robbed, and even murdered a few people was frontpage news for some time and numerous editorials were written against the laxity of government in failing to apprehend the criminal. How dim and distant and rosy seem those days when a single Arab bandit was news!

My next move was to the house of a German family. German immigrants were now arriving in large numbers, and importing their much-beloved "order." What a delightful contrast was this room to the unfurnished "furnished" room of the Polish family! I settled down to enjoy this thing called "German order." But I soon discovered that it is not as pleasant as American efficiency. It sometimes borders on Prussian regimentation. If breakfast is served at 8:00 you may not have it at 8:15. I have a blurred memory of bolting from the house of my German landlady in a few days, without even stopping to pack my belongings; handbags and skirts were haphazardly strewn along the garden path, as I made a record dash for freedom. A favorite purple handkerchief was never retrieved—my tribute to "German order." I was convinced that their order would be a boon to our inefficient country—but I would be content in future to watch it functioning from a distance.

And so I gratefully took refuge in a room in the bosom of a Russian family—and reveled in the disorder of the easy-going household where 8:00 breakfast is served punctually at 9:15. It was here that I contrived to set the house on fire by washing clothes in benzene near an open fire. In those distant days—four years ago—there was not a fire engine in all of Jerusalem. I called the police. A British constable arrived on a bicycle, saw the flames shooting from the windows and agreed that there was a fire. The only question was what to do about it. He stood, leaning on his cycle and

looking quite dejected as the flames were obviously spreading. "It's moving to the next room," he reported. It was one o'clock in the morning. We roused some of the neighbors. They would be only too glad to help but there was no more than a few bucketsful of water to be obtained in the entire neighborhood. The fire was eventually extinguished by suffocation combined with a few cups of water.

Then came April 19, 1936 [the beginning of the Arab Revolt with the murder of two Jews who were on their way to Nablus]. Water shortages and Abu Jilda were no longer topics for conversation. The clip of machine guns were heard from Mt. Scopus every night. Ambulances passed our door on the way to Hadassah Hospital. There was curfew; my Russian landlord could no longer go to play chess in the café in the evening. A new period in Palestine's history had begun.

NEW PALESTINE

1938–1939

An article from Bar-Adon's personal archive

Kahn reflects soberly on the atmosphere in the urban centers of Palestine as live concerts, cafés, lectures, hairdressers, flirtations, a Jewish satirical theater, bridge games, and a new zoo (although, due to the high cost of feeding, the gift of an elephant was regretfully declined) goes on against the background of the ongoing shootings, bombings, and violence.

It is five o'clock on Friday afternoon. This hour, after the week's work is finished and before the Sabbath has begun, is popular in Tel Aviv for sitting in cafés or strolling along Allenby Road. The crowds move as though on an electric belt. Children draw their tongues lingeringly over pink ice cream cones. The little Yemenite shoelace vendor is doing a heavier business than usual and his ebony side-curls bob against his cheeks as he pushes through the milling crowd. There is an abundance of perambulators, wheeled by fathers as well as by mothers and monopolizing much of the sidewalks. Watch out for your shins!

We are sitting in the Shlosa Cushim, one of the popular cafés this summer. The silver-colored walls are dotted with drawings of Sudanese waiters in crimson coats. The orchestra is playing Bei Mir Bist Du Shon. A handsome blonde Viennese in mauve linen frock foxtrots by our table

in the arms of a longhaired Russian. The waiter brings our fruit juice in a tall frosted glass, tinkling with ice cubes. "Bei mir bist du schon." So kiss me and say you understand—croons the orchestra in Germanized English. The Viennese and the Russian pass by again; they are carrying on a mild flirtation in broken Hebrew.

Suddenly a dull thud rises over the traffic and the baby perambulators and the syncopation in the Shlosa Cushim. It comes from the direction of the Tel Aviv-Jaffa border. It is a muffled sound. A newcomer to the country might not have noticed it. But to us, the sound is not unfamiliar. It was a bomb.

Word filters about among the tables. A bomb exploded on the border! There is great concern. Were there casualties? Who? How many? A few journalists at the next table make a dive for the telephone booth. A lorry of British soldiers with machine guns lumbers down Allenby Road. The orchestra begins to play I Kiss Your Hand, Madame. The Viennese and the Russian waltz by our table. The flirtation is obviously progressing.

And thus life goes on from day to day in Palestine. Soon it will be two and a half years since the nightmare began. At times one wonders how the Jews have maintained their sanity during these nine hundred days of uncertainty, death, destruction, and horror. The answer is the scene in Shlosa Cushim. The abnormalities of living are not allowed, insofar as possible, to penetrate the normalities.

In the towns the women go to the hairdresser to be given the latest mode in hair rolls. And crimson nail polish too, if it suits their fancy. Last night there was a reception in Haifa for a visiting American. In the middle, a few of the local guests quietly departed. Six Jews had been killed in ambush a few miles away. Tonight Dr. So-and-So gives a lecture in Jerusalem on the latest archeological finds in Iraq. In Tel Aviv a troupe of Yemenite dancers hold a recital.

The Mateteh ["broom" in Hebrew—a satiric Israeli theater of the time] had a premiere this week in the Beit Ha'am [community center] in Tel Aviv. There was S.R.O. [Standing Room Only]. There were new songs and wisecracks which soon will be known in every corner of the country. The audience rocks with laughter when, in one skit, a guide explains to tourists, "This is Jerusalem, the seat of the government during the day. At night, the government moves to Tulkarm."

Jews here know that they must laugh. If they stopped laughing the "government" at Tulkarm might prevail. So they laugh and try to go about

the normal business of living. They go to see mystery films and Mickey Mouse. In Rehavia and Talpith, they give “stuffed-shirt” dinner parties. They play bridge. At nine o’clock the game is interrupted to listen to the news broadcast. “The High Commissioner deeply regrets the death of Lieutenant So-and-So of the such-and-such regiment who was killed in action near Nablus...” And then the appalling list of Jews and Arabs whose death occasions less official “regrets.”

Afterward the bridge players may indulge in political discussions. Or they may not. “I bid two clubs.” The game goes on. Refreshments are served. There is a sharp “ping” in the distance. Shooting from the direction of Beit Hakerem [a neighborhood in West Jerusalem]. Or shooting from the Ahuza quarter. Or shooting on the Jaffa-Tel Aviv border. Ping. Ping. They follow in quick succession. Sometimes it seems as though the shots are whizzing by the house. “Won’t you have another piece of cheesecake? I baked it myself.” Ping. Ping. Ping.

Five new schools were opened in Tel Aviv this week. The municipal engineer showed us about. He is as pleased as punch with his yellow-tiled corridors, his parquet-floored gymnasium and his assembly hall in the Mizrachi School, which can be converted into a proper synagogue. Ping. Ping on the border. But when you are with the municipal engineer it would seem that Tel Aviv had nothing else to worry about except the comfort and enlightenment of little Tel Avivians.

This week the animals were moved from temporary quarters to the first Palestinian zoo. At six o’clock in the morning the lorry arrived to transport the leopards, the hyenas and the parrots. The founder of the zoo is Rabbi Schornstein, formerly Chief Rabbi of Copenhagen. He’ll tell you that a love for animals must be inculcated in the young generation. Ping. Ping on the border. But Rabi Schornstein’s chief worry is that an Indian maharajah has offered him the gift of an elephant which he can’t accept because it costs five dollars a day to feed an elephant. And the children of Tel Aviv ought to have an elephant!

You board a taxi going to Jerusalem. If the passengers allowed themselves to think, they might wonder what were their chances for arriving safely. But they do not follow thoughts to logical conclusions. Several passengers do keep their eyes glued to the road and regard nervously the Arabs who are mending a road or loitering in front of an orange grove. But one passenger sleeps—and after awhile snores rhythmically. Another reads *The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze*. And two young women knit.

“Do I knit two and purl three or knit three and purl two?” Her companion ponders over the pattern. The taxi nears the danger zone of Ramleh. “You knit two and purl three.”

In the agricultural settlements...but this is a story in itself. There are no Mickey Mouses or bridge games or dinner parties. Watching and working. Working and watching.

So this is life in urban Palestine day by day. Folks sip grapefruit juice under parasols in the garden of the San Remo Hotel. And directly across the street, armed guards patrol one of the entrances to the city. Housewives read the black-bordered morning newspapers with hearts that would break if hearts broke. And then they have an argument with the vegetable seller for over-charging them two mils for pomegranates. Rabbi Shornstein worries about the elephant. The municipal engineer rejoices over his schools. The Viennese blonde flirts with the longhaired Russian. Ping. Ping on the border. And the Mateteh laughs at the whole shooting match.

“TRAPPED!” OR, “THEY WHO ARE TO LOSE THEIR PASSPORTS”

An article from Bar-Adon's personal archive

Another version published in *The Palestine Post*, April 8, 1938

Kahn accompanies a group of Jewish tourists from Germany in Palestine and reports the thoughts and feelings of one of those tourist, a widow of a painter, who, like the other tourists, can't take money out of Germany. She, like the others, is terrified to start life in a new country virtually penniless. Despite the Arab Revolt and its consequences, they sense the freedom in comparison to the terrible conditions for the Jews in Nazi Germany and feel trapped.

“This street is as fine as any in Berlin—just as fine.” The woman who shared my seat in the bus looked out on the main thoroughfare of a new settlement bordering on the south of Tel Aviv. Her nose was pressed against the windowpane. A few houses, a stretch of sand dune and rows of meager saplings characterized the street which is “as fine as any in Berlin.”

This was her first visit to Tel Aviv. She has been in Palestine two weeks. In another two weeks she will be on her way back to her home in Bavaria. En route to Tel Aviv we had stopped at Rehovot, Ayanoth, and other settlements. But even as she stood in the settlements she seemed to be viewing

everything as unreal, unattainable, the “Promised Land” to be viewed from Mount Sinai but never to be actually reached.

The passengers in the bus were a party of German tourists. For many of them, like my companion, Palestine is unattainable, the “Paradise Lost.” They are past middle age, and they cannot take money out of Germany; to start life again in a strange country virtually penniless is terrifying. This situation has existed for several years. But the new note of horror that has been added within the past month is making them pay hurried visits to Palestine.

With the increasing rise to power of Hitler, like an unleashed behemoth on rampage, they fear that their passports may be confiscated and they may never be permitted to leave Germany again. They come here to see children and relatives. It is a “Hail and Farewell” to—who knows what?

And so they come on their tours. They travel hurriedly from Tiberias to Tel Aviv in buses. They spend a night here and a night there. They gather blurred impressions of settlements and villages. They try desperately hard to remember whether Safad or Tiberias was the seat of the kabbalists, to learn the difference between a *kibbutz* [larger collective settlement] and a *kvutza* [smaller collective settlement] and a *moshav ovidim* [partially collective settlement]. But in the end they retain only a confused impression of tents and chickens and grapevines. They refer to their notebooks to see if it was Ein Harod or Ein Geb that they visited yesterday—they know it was “Ein something.” They are rushed from Ayanoth to Mikveh Israel in a space of half an hour while a tourist guide shouts facts, figures and explanations. It is all vague, muddled, but “wunderbar.”

The Lesser Evil

The only clear impression they have is of freedom. Even when they are told that four Jews were killed on the road to Safad they feel the freedom in the air. What blessed freedom to be ambushed when Jews in other parts of the world slink off to commit suicide if they have the courage and wish they had the courage if they remain alive.

But we have digressed from my companion who is sitting with her nose pressed against the windowpane talking in disconnected sentences. She is more than middle aged. She is the widow of a Bavarian painter. He did landscapes in watercolors. They had lived for a while in Italy, and in other places, where he found inspiration for his work. She speaks three or four languages freely. She has a quick wit and the zest for life of one

who has become so accustomed to enjoying the world in spite of itself that even tragedy cannot break her of the habit. She has come to Palestine now because it might be her last chance.

“When I go back, my passport will be confiscated and I will never get it back again. I had planned to go to America for the Exhibition next year. But that depends on whether one can get a passport. To get a passport or not to get a passport. That is the question!” She likes her little parody and laughs.

Then she presses her nose against the windowpane again. “Oh, to stay here. The freedom! It is terrible over there. Terrible. Terrible. You can’t pick up a paper without seeing a caricature of Jews with long noses. I have never seen Jews that look like that. It is terrible. Oh, to stay here.”

Then she talks on about Italy and her husband’s watercolors. In those days you could go anywhere. Imagine, being able to go to Italy just because you wanted to paint watercolors? What do watercolors matter nowadays? Now you have to just be quiet and watch your step. She lowers her voice to a whisper and leans close to my ear as though even here she might be overheard by a Nazi agent, “Be quiet and watch your step.” Wasn’t that the correct American expression, “Watch your step?”

Messenger Duties

She would be busy the first day in Tel Aviv. She had brought so many greetings and presents from mothers to their children. In Haifa she had already given kisses and candy to the young people who eagerly awaited her at the harbor. Her duties as messenger were robbing her of precious time. But still—“Poor mothers. You see they may never get out of the country if their passports are not renewed this year. And their children may never get in again. I may be the last one to bring these personal messages. So I’ll be busy in Tel Aviv tomorrow. To get a passport or not—that is the question.”

SATURDAY NIGHT IN TEL AVIV

Dorothy Kahn

Tel Aviv

Palestine Review, March 4, 1938

Bar-Adon compares Tel Aviv’s Saturday night to other big cities in the West and emphasizes the change in the city in the last couple of years.

A few years earlier, very limited entertainment options were available on Saturday nights, and now multiple types of entertainment have developed. She describes the new possibilities to demonstrate the rapid progress of the city.

In most parts of the world, Saturday night is distinguished from other nights of the week. It marks the end of the week and precedes the day of rest. People feel in the mood for celebration. It is not a matter of masses and classes. The masses may go to a cinema or dancehall and the classes to the opera or a nightclub. But Saturday night is set aside for going somewhere.

In cities the choice of entertainment is wide. In towns and villages, it may be limited to a soda fountain or saloon, as in America. However, one may presume that wherever a calendar is introduced, the desire for a "spree" on Saturday night is introduced with it.

Palestine's "metropolis," Tel Aviv, is no exception. The only difference is that Saturday night marks the beginning of the week instead of the end and follows rather than precedes the day of rest. After the quiet of the Sabbath, the population seeks entertainment.

Only a few years ago, Saturday night merry-making in Tel Aviv was impromptu. Outside of a cinema or two, the population created its own entertainment. The question, "Where shall we go tonight?" did not arise. One went unquestioningly to Allenby Road or the seashore for a stroll. One jostled with the crowd, greeted one's friends, and finished off the evening with tea and pastry.

But within the past year or two, Saturday night in Tel Aviv has begun to resemble Saturday night in any other large city. The traditional question, "Where shall we go tonight?" becomes as pertinent in Tel Aviv as in London—a choice of five places can be as difficult as a choice of fifty.

For instance, let us consider last Saturday night in Tel Aviv. First and foremost was the concert of the Palestine Orchestra. In view of the fact that this was its hundredth appearance, the event took on an added interest. During the day one gathered the impression that all Tel Aviv would be packed into the grounds of the Levant Fair when the baton was lifted. But actually the several thousands who attended the concert did not make a dent in the teeming throng of entertainment seekers. A large number went to see a Spanish dancer. Before six o'clock all tickets had been sold out for the film, *The Life of Emile Zola*. Long queues were trying to obtain tickets for *Captain Courageous*, and other cinemas were packed. On Nachmani

Street, one found hundreds milling around the Club Hapoel. When you asked what was taking place, you were told “box,” which is Hebrew-English for a boxing bout and is pronounced something like “bux.”

But neither the concert, Emile Zola, the Spanish dancer, “bux” nor the hundred and one other things which are in progress in other parts of the city affect the Saturday night street throngs. From seven o’clock till long after midnight the highways and byways are electric. Even the street throngs of Tel Aviv have changed within the past few years. One rarely meets one’s friends now, except by appointment.

The promenade is no longer bounded by Allenby Road and the seashore. There are areas, such as the upper end of Pinsker Street and Dizengoff Circle, that have a lay of their own, complete with shops, restaurants and cafés. They are smaller and quieter replicas of the heart of the city. They have taken on the air of the business section or the residential section of a large city. The American might be reminded of West Philadelphia or Jackson Heights.

The center of movement is still Allenby Road. Cars speed up and down and as many as a dozen buses collect at the seafront terminal at one time. The illuminated shops are inviting enough to make window-shopping a worthwhile pastime. There are restaurants and cafés galore to suit the tastes of all and sundry. There are special shops for pastry and for coffee, for sausages, and for vegetable dishes. A cosmopolitan note is supplied by the girl who stands in a window frying *latkes* in the same way that hotcakes are made in the New York “Childs.”

The fact that Tel Aviv is developing “districts” like any metropolis is most evident on Saturday nights. The shoddiness of the seafront becomes more and more apparent as the rest of the city assumes a more attractive and sedate face. The carnival “Blackpool” atmosphere of the seafront cafés, with their blaring radios and gramophones, is conspicuous enough to set this area aside from the rest of the city. Thrown into relief by a glaring electric bulb is the wan, weary face of the hot-corn vendor. O. Henry would have made her the heroine of a pathetic story.

About ten thirty there is a lull in the streets. The after-dinner strollers and café sitters have gone home. But a half-hour later the streets take another long breath. The concert and the cinemas are over. People are dropping into cafés for a cup of coffee and a late snack. Saturday night has still a few hours to go.