

Photo courtesy of Teddy Nahmias



The marriage of Doris Nahmias to Sabino Gesua at the Alexandria Hanabi Synagogue of Eliahou Hanabi in 1941. Teddy Nahmias (see article below) is the little boy in his father's arms in the third row, near the right of the picture. The rabbi (with the white beard) is Haham Maimon Benatar

## A LEAVENED PASSOVER

TEDDY NAHMIAS

Following the unfortunate events of 1956 and the Suez Canal Crisis, hundreds of Jewish families packed their belongings and left Egypt, most boarding ships sailing from Alexandria, bound for European Mediterranean ports.

My family chose Italy, my father's dream land. As a Corfiot he felt Venice was his cultural home, so we were on our way to Venice and Trieste. The vessel was the *M/S Enotria* a smaller version of the famous *M/S Esperia* of Adriatica fame, those white luxury liners that rode the Mediterranean with the Lion of Venice watching over from the yellow chimneys.

We took the lift down from our fifth floor flat in Mazarita for the last time. Some of our neighbours opened their front doors and stood in silence on the landings to watch us go. Muhammed, our imposing Sudanese *bawab* (porter) was sobbing like a child. There was no coming back. The emotion was high and my mother could not stop her tears. Dad became tense as we went through

customs and police clearance, but felt more comfortable as he walked the steps to the deck. After all, he was already on Italian soil. As for myself, I was in a daze, feeling that something irreversible was taking place, but too young to realize the implications. I was probably hoping to find another group of youngsters at the other end that would recreate the rock and roll fun-loving crowd I had left behind.

As the ship started to move away from the dock and head for the high seas, we all waved goodbye, and slowly turned our heads from the land that we were not to see again for perhaps half a century.

I noticed a few young people around my age and naturally was drawn to them. My parents by now were in conversation with other Jews who were on their way to Canada. Others were due to catch a ship from Trieste to Australia.

Suddenly, someone said "but tomorrow night is *Pesach*, it's the first *Seder* night. Shouldn't we mark the occasion somehow?" A charming and understanding officer decided we could use a section of the dining room, and I recall about 25 of us sitting around a number of tables assembled to form one big long table. To top it all, as a gift from the Captain, a beautiful cake was placed in the centre of the table with the compliments of the Chef, the crew and the officers. How embarrassing; no *matzah*, no *harosset*, no *maror*, but instead

a massive *chametz* torta to celebrate the festival of the unleavened bread. I remember my father laughing and I also remember a discussion on who would officiate. A *Haggadah* was found. I cannot remember whether or not the cake was eaten. We were Jews leaving Egypt, celebrating Jews leaving Egypt. Had we fallen into a mysterious time warp? Although not realizing it at the time, we had gone through a unique experience never to be repeated. This time the bread had risen. ■

After leaving Egypt Teddy Nahmias lived with his family in Italy and France. In 1971 he came to England where he has worked in the textile industry



Another 1956 emigrant, Mark Cohen, who now lives in New York

Photo courtesy of Historical Society of Jews from Egypt