ASSORTED ITEMS ABOUT PEOPLE AND PICTURES
By A.H. WEILER
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Exodus of European Jews to Palestine Recorded in 'The Illegals'—Addenda

THE first pictorial record of the exodus of Jews from Europe to Palestine via the underground railway entitled "The Illegals," is evidence that a feature film can be turned out for $25,000 and that filming is not necessarily a prosaic procedure, according to its writer-director-producer, Meyer Levin. "The Illegals," which was made for Americans for Haganah and which will open at the Ambassador around July 15, was a labor of love for Levin, his two non-professional actors and the thousands of refugees who comprise the "cast," he was saying the other day. All volunteered their services with the exception of the camera man, film editor and the composer.

After taking three months to convince Haganah of the validity of the project, Levin, his technical crew and leads (there is a fictional story paralleling the documentary story) began shooting in Poland last October. Traveling over the secret route of the underground with various emigrant groups the Levin contingent covered 18,000 miles through Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary, Germany, France and Italy before reaching their ultimate destination, the Haganah ship, Unafraid, around Christmas. Aboard were 850 refugees, among them "about 100 pregnant women and 125 children under three years of age."

Haganah helped Levin outwit the British by smuggling to safety the footage shot aboard ship, including British boarding activities, after the Unafraid was captured outside Haifa. The procedure by which Levin outsmarted the English C. I. D. men was simple—he secreted his exposed films among unexposed rolls. With the 40,000 feet of film shot from October through March, Levin left for Paris where English dialogue was dubbed in over the many continental tongues recorded on the hegira. Recording charges, he added, were "$60 a day as compared with the $60 an hour in this country." The cost of composing an original score was $130.

How was Haganah convinced by Levin? "I asked them if they would have refused to allow filming of Moses' flight from Egypt, if cameras had been invented then, and they saw the light."

SET TO MUSIC: Giovanni Boccaccio, raconteur and member of the auctorial hit parade these 600 years, may finally spin his yarns (with music) for the movies. Ilse Lahn, literary editor of the Paul Kohner agency on the West Coast, and Director Edgar Ulmer have written a screen musical comedy titled simply, "Boccaccio's Decameron." Unlike the noted hundred tales, Boccaccio is the central character in the projected film and he himself experiences episodes from the Decameron. The episodes chosen by the pair eliminate, Miss Lahn said, the anticlericalism and the sexual ribaldry of the Decameron, but Boccaccio does go through a variety of romance.

Although nothing has been set definitely, Miss Lahn hopes the film will be made in Italy this autumn by a recently formed Italian company, Ariete Productions. If the project crystallizes, Ulmer will direct and Eugene Shaftan (he designed "The Dark Mirror") will produce and design the picture. Ariete, adds Miss Lahn, has the necessary Italian capital to go ahead with filming and they'd like to get a mixed American and European cast. As for the music, that would be coming from two operettas, both titled "Boccaccio," one by Johann Strauss and the other by Karl Milloecker. Both, not so incidentally, are in the public domain. And, since it is all in the planning stage, wouldn't Orson Welles, now on the Continent, be a likely candidate for the role of the man who held the mirror up to the Middle Ages?

REMODELING: Broadway will be losing one of its movie showcases about July 15 when the Victoria Theatre will be shut down for a complete refurbishing. Said refurbishing will include, according to Robert Dowling of the City Investing Company, owners of the house, the addition of some 400 seats, bringing the capacity up to about 1,100, painting and other alterations. The job should take at least two months and will cost, he estimates, "about $300,000." Reasons for the move, he added, were simple. "It's quality we're after. We plan to raise the standards of the house as we raise its seating capacity." At the moment, he added, no picture has been set for the house when it reopens.

BAD TIMING: The Twentieth Century-Fox publicity department was caught with its enthusiasm dangling in connection with the televising of the Louis-Walcott fight at the Fox Theatre in Philadelphia. A blurb hailing the success of the experiment was sent out to trade papers on the afternoon of June 24, several hours before the scheduled time of the fight, which, as everyone knows now, had to be postponed on account of rain.

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