

ERI JABOTINSKY

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ערי יבוטנסקי

הוצאת ספרים בע"מ

ירושלים, דרך עזה 39 - 2071

June 3rd, 1946.

My dear Ben Hecht,

First let me use this occasion to thank you most heartily for pulling me out of a very hot spot (at least 104 in the shade) last year. For you actually did that. I hope that you will soon get into hot spots too, and I will then have the pleasure of trying to repay my debt. Seriously, I was deeply moved by your intervention on my behalf - it was very fine of you. For various reasons I have not written to thank you before. But now I have recovered my passport and hope to pay a visit to your country soon.

I want to ask your help in the following matter:

I have undertaken to be the agent for a new book recently written here in yiddish and which I want to get published in English translation both in England and in America. The author is a young Polish Jew, veteran of the battle of the Warsaw Ghetto. The book is a novel. The Hebrew rights were taken by "Dvir", who, as you probably know, otherwise only publish classics. Mr. Heftman, president of the Pal. Journalist Association, said that it was the novel about the Jews of Europe during the years 1939-45. Everyone who read it considers it outstanding and extraordinary. I have the right to produce the novel in all possible forms, including film and radio. I want to ask you to help me by giving me advice on the best way of getting this

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thing going. I want to add that the author, Mr. Zetinsky, is a very fine fellow. He used to act as courier between the various ghettos of Poland and has real first hand knowledge of the subject. The Russians liberated ~~on~~ the eve of his proposed extermination. He called his novel "The Salamandra, by Prisoner No. 131225" and desires to remain otherwise anonymous, though he does not mind changing the name "Salamandra" to a better one. I shall be most grateful for your help in this direction.

I am also writing to Arthur Koestler in London, asking for advice from his end.

I hope you will pardon my troubling you with this matter, but I know how interested you are in the Saga of the Ghettos and this is about the most authentic piece of writing to come of there to date.

Sincerely yours,

Eri' / absolutely

P.S. reading what I have just written / see that I have failed to render the atmosphere of the book. It is primarily a novel and not a chronicle of historical events. It has a peculiar grandeur - its characters, particularly two, a man and a girl, stand out as if hewn in stone. One feels that they will remain for ever - a symbol of a destiny ordained by powers beyond our conception. The striking thing, after you have finished reading the book, is its restraint - it is far from being a tale of horrors - it is the story of flesh and blood people crushed by cosmic forces. It is non partisan. Jews are not particularly good. Jewish quislings are quislings. The Poles are not particularly bad. Not even the Germans. They just are. E. /.

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