

# Max Spitz Reports On His Visit To Italy And Europe

## Meeting of J.W.A. National Council

A FIRST-HAND account of the position of the Jews in Italy and Europe was given by Mr. Max J. Spitz when he addressed a meeting of the National Council of the S.A. Jewish War Appeal at the Coronation Hall on Sunday last. Mr. Spitz had undertaken a special mission on behalf of the War Appeal and had visited Italy as well as many centres and camps in Germany and Czechoslovakia.

Delegates from all the provinces attended the meeting at which Mr. Leo Feit, chairman of the Council, presided. The launching of the new J.W.A. campaign was announced and all present pledged their utmost support to ensure the success of the campaign commensurate with the urgent needs.



MR. MAX J. SPITZ

are more favourable than in the north. Outwardly most of them have a healthy and tanned appearance. For all that a large number of them are TB cases.

### Hachsharah Centres

"In the Hachsharot the refugees receive an agricultural and industrial training. There is a shortage of ground, and often there is a lot of idleness after equipment has been installed through lack of raw material, but all round there is quite a healthy atmosphere about the hachsharot. There is the spirit of the collective. It cannot be described as being ideal, but it is quite good.

"In the cities there is the problem of the D.P's and the indigenous Italian Jews. UNRRA is not inter-

ested in doing any relief work in the cities although they give some help. There is little fraternisation between the refugees and the indigenous Italian Jews. The UNRRA and the JDC are doing all they can. UNRRA provides 2,800 calories as the standard. This may appear as adequate, but the trouble is that there is no variety and hence the food is not sufficiently appetising. 1,700 of the calories is made up of potatoes and bread. The JDC issues a supplementary ration to pregnant women and children. Special care is taken of the babies. They are regarded as the most precious treasure left to the Jews. They do not nearly receive enough for their elementary needs."

### Godmother's Scheme

At this stage Mr. Spitz suggested that consideration be given to a plan of godmothers in South Africa for adopting children from overseas.

Mr. Spitz complimented the leaders of the JDC who were doing a grand job of work. They worked from 12 to 15 hours a day for seven days a week. There were very few in South Africa, he said, who could measure up to their standard of self-sacrifice. The JDC made recommendations to UNRRA in regard to training, and an Ort expert had arrived to give the necessary guidance.

Mr. Spitz reported that Mr. Elias Gordin, who had gone to Europe from Pretoria with the team of relief workers, was now in Rome working in a TB institution for Jews. All the other members of the relief team from South Africa had made a very good impression.

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## CANTOR BACKON IN IDELSON COMPOSITIONS



Cantor S. Backon and Mr. Jerry Idelson's Trio were the main performers at a concert arranged by the Bnai Brith Lodge at the H.O.D. Hall on Thursday, August 15.

The programme was very well chosen and consisted of items from various composers. The trio was warmly applauded for its items and special recognition is due to the soloists, Miss Anne Sacks (violin) and Miss Betty Pack (cello).

Cantor Backon delighted the audience with his melodious rendering of several groups of songs. In addition to songs from Schubert and from "Rigoletto," Cantor Backon rendered two songs for which the music was composed by Mr. Jerry Idelson. One of the songs was by N. Pines and the other by Kamson, who, it will be recalled, stayed in South Africa until the end of the war. Both the composer, Mr. Idelson, and the performer, Cantor Backon, interpreted the songs with remarkable skill and understanding.

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"I must frankly tell you that the position is discouraging and depressing. The one ray of hope is the vitality and fortitude of our people," declared Mr. Spitz in his opening remarks.

Mr. Spitz dealt at length with the Italian scene, which he described as "the happiest place for the refugees." There was the psychological advantage that Italy was near to Palestine, thus offering much better prospects of getting there. Both the Italian Government and the Italian people were friendly. He warned, however, that there was the possibility of a deterioration through economic pressure as there were 2,000,000 unemployed in Italy, and the numbers were growing.

Another gratifying feature about the Italian position was the splendid work and leadership of UNRRA, which was humane and considerate in its dealings with the refugees. The JDC in Italy had a very good Director at the head of affairs in Mr. I. Traub. Its relationship with UNRRA was good. A large number of villas had been commandeered for the Jewish refugees.

The refugees in Italy can be divided into three categories: (a) those in the camps; (b) those in the Hachsharot; and (c) those in the cities. The camps could again be sub-divided into the transient camps, where there was a good deal of congestion on account of the rapid influx of immigrants, and the permanent camps which consist mainly of military barracks.

Continuing, Mr. Spitz said: "In the south conditions for the refugees