

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Objections to Mr. Rubik's Speech

Sir,—The daily press in Cape Town has given publicity to a speech by Mr. B. L. Rubik, in which he warned Zionists not to regard Soviet Russia as a power ready to stand behind Zionism. One wonders what prompted him to issue the warning. With the exception of Mr. Rubik, nobody here took the Leftists seriously, and it is somewhat disturbing to note that his, Mr. Rubik's trepidations, will create more mischief than good. They give the impression as if there were any substantial tendency on the part of Zionists to turn away from Great Britain. This is decidedly not the case. Even the extreme Revisionists have been speaking of a Jewish commonwealth as part of the British Empire.

Furthermore, what is one to make of Mr. Rubik's statement: "Until recently no ship containing illegal immigrants had been sent back from Palestine." Has he ever heard of the "Struma" or "Patria"? There was also quaint reasoning in his argument that "there were times when the Jews left Palestine in greater numbers than they entered." What of it? Is the present pressure due to any whim on the part of the Jew or to realities of the day? If Palestine was to be a Jewish National Home, were the Jews to come there when it suited others or when it suited themselves? Is it not the case that a home is a place where you turn to in times of distress? Has he placed himself in the position of those who try "to show the world"? Does he realise that events in Palestine are not a demonstration for show, but a tragic outburst?

Mr. Rubik owes his public an answer to these questions.

Yours, etc.,

DORESH ZION.

Cape Town.

### Traditional Machzor for the Modern Age

Sir,—To satisfy the long-felt need for making the ancient Jewish Prayers for the High Holidays meaningful and vital for the young generation, as well as the need for a revised English translation and for a uniform Machzor, the East London Hebrew Congregation has adopted the revised Traditional Machzor for the modern age to be used by all congregants on the forthcoming Rosh Hashonah and Yom-Kippur.

These needs have been long felt, particularly by Jews who—whether for reasons that come from a human desire not to hurt parents and grandparents, or for reasons of self-respect or the lash of anti-Semitism, or out of genuine love of Jewish life—do not wish to dissociate themselves from their Jewish heritage.

To meet the demand for meaningfulness and relevancy, the Reform movement has amputated the rich and colourful character of the Jewish heritage. Motivated by modern theological and political considerations, it has changed the features of the Traditional Machzor and has eliminated the personal Messianic rehabilitating the Davidic dynasty. All petitions for the restoration of the Jewish homeland, the concept of the chosen people and the distinction between Israel and the nations, and the idea of resurrection. It has not hesitated to paraphrase the Hebrew original in a manner which bears only the slightest relationship to the traditional text, a procedure Geiger had adopted and has been repeated in the Reform Prayer Book to day, a

tendency which has rapidly reduced the sacred tongue to the vanishing point.

Obviously, to the traditionally-minded Jew to repeat the Reform remedies would be the highest folly. What is actually needed is a synthesis of the old and the new, the traditional and the contemporary. The need for the revitalisation of our public worship without breaking with tradition has so far expressed itself in the Orthodox Synagogues of South Africa only by the emphasis that has been laid upon decorum in worship, the preaching of the sermon in the vernacular, the introduction of the organ for Services on weekdays, the elimination of such abuses as the selling of honours and announcing donations in the Synagogue, and the reduction of the Piyutim, etc. The real problem, however, is the understanding of the Machzor itself. Being a repository of a rich religious and national culture and written in classic Hebrew, it cannot be fully understood and appreciated by ordinary readers, only by initiated students. To most worshippers, the classic expression of traditional Judaism has become a museum-piece, more so because of the fact that while formerly the congregant was an active participant in the ritual of the Synagogue, to-day he is simply a member of a silent audience.

The English translation of the traditional Machzor commonly used in this country is not an easy book to read and is far from adequate to meet the modern needs. Its 19th century English with its numerous obscure and obsolete expressions and phrases, as well as its disconnected passages without any information of their historic background, present disheartening obstacles to a simple direct and immediate understanding of the great spiritual content of the prayers.

The revised Traditional Machzor has overcome all these shortcomings. Apart from the plain and modern English version next to the Hebrew text, it provides that minimum of background information of the prayers by which alone the prayer's spiritual meaning becomes clear and vital. By modernisation of obsolete words and phrases the prayer conveys its message about God, Israel and humanity, the spiritual insights and the inspiring spiritual beauties that lurk everywhere within the pages of Israel's masterpiece. The Masoretic Text which has been halloved through centuries could not be amended, but the English version has offered an excellent opportunity for new and better interpretation.

In the old version there are passages that are ignorant of the advanced study and understanding of the Hebrew idiom. To cite one instance out of the many: The old editors did not know that the syntax of classic Hebrew uses co-ordinate structure where the Indo-European languages would use subordinate clauses. Thus the blessing before the reading of the Torah reads in the old version: "who has chosen us from all peoples, and hast given us Thy Law." Whereas the new version reads: "who has chosen us from among the peoples by giving us the Torah." While the old version implies racial superiority, the new one excludes it categorically.

The revised Machzor also meets the need of having a uniform and continuous Prayer Book, excluding those parts which are omitted from the order of the Service in all Orthodox Synagogues of South Africa. The jumping over of those parts have, in the past, often caused confusion among the worshippers.

Above all the revised Machzor expresses our aspirations and makes the tradition relevant to the modern age by supplementing and enriching the prayers by new material drawn from our rich modern literature, such as Maimonides, Yehudah Halevi,

Zohar, Baal Shem, Dubnow, Bialik, etc.

The Traditional Machzor for the modern age will no doubt lead to a deeper understanding of our religious and national treasury, the Machzor, and will greatly contribute to the much needed revitalisation of our public worship in our Synagogues.

Yours, etc.,

(Rabbi) M. WALD.

6 Muir Street,  
East London.

### J.N.F. Week—Compliments And Criticisms

Sir,—As one who attended every function during J.N.F. Week, I should like to congratulate the Johannesburg Women's Zionist League on what was really a first-class effort. Few people can appreciate the amount of work and organisation which an effort of this nature entails. In this respect women Zionists have once again set an example which the men may do well to emulate.

I wish, however, to draw attention to certain shortcomings which to a certain extent marred the excellence of some of the functions. The success of a function in a hall depends largely on good acoustics, and this was regrettably lacking at most of the functions. People seated at the back of the hall—I was among them—often could not hear a single word of what was being said. Faulty loud-speaker arrangements deprived the majority of those present from hearing the "Living Newspaper." To spoil things completely the few sounds that were audible were drowned by the din from the stalls, which were kept going in full swing during the function. The "Editor's" appeal to close the stalls down during the proceedings fell on deaf ears.

I did not attend the final J.N.F. Week function—the Native War Dance at Balfour Park on Sunday. In my opinion the whole affair was decidedly in bad taste.

I mention these criticisms not in a destructive spirit, but in the hope that the J.W.Z.L. will be wiser next year.

Yours, etc.,

"J.N.F. WEEKER."

Johannesburg.

### NEW COMMUNAL HALL FOR PARKVIEW CONGREGATION

THE Parkview, Greenside and Districts Hebrew Congregation are making good progress with the building of their Communal Hall at Chester Road, and it is hoped that a portion will be available for the holding of the High Festival Services. The hall is expected to be one of the finest, if not the finest, of its kind in South Africa.

The Congregation is making a special Building Fund Drive and is appealing to its members for support. Particularly a Drive will be made to enrol all present members as foundation members.

All members and residents of the area are invited to visit the site at their convenience, and any information about the building will be willingly given by the Chairman of the Congregation, Mr. Max Goodman, who is also Chairman of the Building and Planning Sub-Committee; the vice-Chairman, Mr. I. Feinblum; Treasurer, Mr. M. Barsel; Hon. Secretary, Mr. P. Davis; Chairman of the Publicity and Enlightenment Sub-Committee; Mr. S. Emdin, Chairman of the Religious Services Sub-Committee; Mr. J. Brook, and other Committee members or from the offices of the Congregation, c/o Mr. H. Joseph, Annan House, Johannesburg, 'phone 33-8202.

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### TO JOIN PALESTINE ORCHESTRA

Eugene Magid Leaving South Africa



MR. EUGENE MAGID, the well-known South African violinist, has accepted an invitation from the Palestine Symphony Orchestra to join it as first violin, and will shortly be leaving for Eretz Israel. He will also be a soloist in concertos at the forthcoming season, during which the orchestra will be conducted by Eugene Ormandy, who won a great reputation for himself in America.

Mr. Magid, who studied in Hungary under the famous Professor Hubay, played as soloist in most of the great capitals on the continent. In South Africa he was a violinist with the S.A.B.C. and also leader of the Johannesburg String Quartet.

He was leader of the Johannesburg Symphony Orchestra under Joseph Traunek.

### HEBREW ADDRESS BY PROF. ROTH

Histadruth Melave Malka

Prof. Cecil Roth was the guest of the Histadruth at a well-attended "Melave Malka" held last Saturday night at the Coronation Hall.

Mr. J. Blumenthal, Chairman of the Histadruth Ivrit, in welcoming the distinguished visitor, stressed the important work done by the Histadruth in promoting Hebrew education and Hebrew culture.

Speaking in Hebrew, Prof. Roth gave an account of his travels before and during the war. He paid special tribute to the soldiers from Eretz Israel for the magnificent and self-sacrificing work done by them for the remnants of Europe.

Cantor Mandel delighted the gathering with songs. Mr. Rutstein read a humorous article written by Mr. G. Fine, and Mr. Reuveni rendered a humorous recitation. Mr. Z. Infeld proposed the vote of thanks.