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### **MS-4787: Abba Hillel Silver Papers, 1902-1989.**

Series II: Harold P. Manson File (Zionism Files), 1940-1949, undated.

Sub-series A: Main Manson File, 1940-1949.

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Jewish Army in Palestine, 1942.



(C O P Y)

January 5, 1942.

Dr. Stephen S. Wise,  
40 West 68th St.,  
New York City.

My dear Dr. Wise:

I regret extremely that I shall be unable to attend the Emergency Committee Conference today, owing to the fact that I have an appointment out of town to do some "good-willing" with Dr. Clinchy and Father Donovan.

You will agree that since I am taking the place in the trinity which is usually occupied by Rabbi Lazaron, I shall be rendering a Zionist service, even though I shall be absent from the meeting of the Emergency Committee.

Your discussion will, no doubt, deal with the matter of the Jewish Army and the ad which appeared in this morning's Times. May I give you my views for whatever they may be worth.

The Jewish Army ad should serve to bring to a head our own line of action in this matter. Unfortunately, it takes us a long time to arrive at conclusions, and when we finally arrive it takes us a long time to implement them.

When Churchill came here I felt, and I still feel, that our propaganda for a Jewish Army should immediately become as intensive and as extensive as possible during Churchill's stay, and that large important sections of non-Jewish public opinion here should be stimulated to express publicly their approval of our demand for a Jewish Army. (Jewish public opinion probably will be discounted by Mr. Churchill.)

This is the time to make use of all our lists of Senators, Congressmen, University presidents, clergy, writers, etc. The Emergency Committee now has a fund of substantial proportions available. It is for just such a purpose as this that the money ought to be spent.

The New York Times ad may in one respect at least even help us, namely in that it has publicized the idea widely. Most people read the text of the ad and do not take the trouble to read the names! We may derive some benefit from their publicity, just as they derived benefit from our earlier propaganda.

The "innocents" in their list of names can be set straight by us and eventually attached to our effort. But our effort must be immediate, bold, vigorous and widespread. We must harness all our Zionists throughout the country into this effort. Our Zionists have waited for a long time for an occasion to use their energies. Unfortunately, we have lost two precious weeks since we discussed this matter in our Commodore Hotel Conference, at which it was decided by a narrow majority to continue negotiations with the Irgun Front Committee. These two weeks could have been used for pushing our own plans a few steps forward.



on S. Wise

January 5, 1942.

I agree with B.G. that the effort on behalf of the Jewish Army is the most important objective before us at the present time. Here in the United States the time was never more opportune.

If we could gear ourselves for wartime emergency action, we ought to get a barrage of telegrams sent to Mr. Churchill and to Mr. Roosevelt by Jews and non-Jews on a scale comparable to what was done in 1938 in the protests against the White Paper policy.

Here is something for Zionists throughout the country to do.

Simultaneously, a more dignified petition ought to be gotten up, signed by outstanding non-Jews with a mixture of Jews in all walks of life. A special petition ought to be gotten up by the Labor leaders in this country as a separate document because Labor, as such, carries special weight both here and in England. Another petition ought to be signed by the heads of all the national Jewish organizations, listing the size of their membership.

All this will involve a tremendous amount of effort and cannot possibly be done by the present staff of the Emergency Committee. It needs to be done forthwith. I would favor an appropriation of \$10,000 for this purpose from the funds of the Emergency Committee. The Keren Hayesod and Keren Kayemeth have authorized the budget applied for.

WRI  
Sincerely yours,

Dr. Israel Goldstein,  
President.



*Mr. Scher*

January 6, 1942.

Mr. Gabriel A. Wechsler, Secretary  
Committee for a Jewish Army  
285 Madison Avenue  
New York, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Wechsler:

On behalf of the Emergency Committee for Zionist Affairs I acknowledge with thanks receipt of your letter of yesterday's date. I had been on the point of communicating with you when your letter reached us. We look forward to receiving the more specific proposal to which you refer, and feel it may be of value to record here briefly the attitude of the Emergency Committee in the light of the conversations that have taken place.

At the last meeting held between representatives of the Jewish Army Committee and of the Emergency Committee for Zionist Affairs, respectively, several principles were proposed by the latter as forming a basis which might lead to joint activity on behalf of a Jewish Army in Palestine. These principles had been discussed at length during several meetings previously held - meetings which were prompted by our mutual desire to create a united effort, if possible, for a Jewish Army, and to direct it through the authority of a central responsible Zionist body. They may be summarized in the following four points:

1. In view of the changed conditions resulting from America's entry into the war, all negotiations re the Jewish Army are to be directed towards support of a Jewish Army based on Palestine and recruited from that country itself. To this you expressed agreement.

2. All political negotiations with the American and British Governments and with government officials in re the Jewish Army are to be left in the hands of the Emergency Committee for Zionist Affairs and the Jewish Agency. On this, too, there was unanimity of opinion.

3. The activity on behalf of the Jewish Army is to be carried forward under the aegis of the Emergency Committee for Zionist Affairs. In order to insure that the policies and activities of the Committee for a Jewish Army shall be in harmony with the policies of the Emergency Committee, the governing body of the Committee for a Jewish Army shall be constituted as a joint committee with a majority appointed by the Emergency Committee, it being understood that the group responsible for initiating and organizing the Committee for a Jewish Army shall have adequate representation.



January 6, 1942.

Mr. Gabriel A. Wechsler      - 2 -  
Committee for a Jewish Army

4. The Emergency Committee for Zionist Affairs, which represents all parties within the Zionist framework in this country, cannot relinquish its responsibility for the direction of the effort on behalf of the Jewish army, the type of propaganda, the establishment of policy, etc., since these necessarily flow from, and should be in consonance with, the tenor of political negotiations carried on with Government and the State Department.

We are confident that the interests of the Jewish Army will best be served by coordinating and unifying all activities in its behalf. Such unity, we believe, must be based on the acceptance of the fundamental principle that the program be undertaken and carried forward under Zionist direction - more specifically, under the aegis of the Emergency Committee. This is no arbitrary conclusion, but derives from our deep sense of Zionist responsibility and from the representative status and the legal constitution of the Emergency Committee.

At the meeting held on December 19, 1941, you undertook to report the discussions, and the principles which were formulated as a result of them, to your larger committee, and to inform us of the action taken by it. We shall be glad to hear from you as indicated in your letter.

Sincerely yours,

al:re

Arthur Lourie.



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AN EDITORIAL

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## A Jewish Army

The New York *Times* yesterday opposed the creation of a Jewish Army. Specifically it opposed the recent resolution in Congress asking that we urge the British to permit formation of such an army.

It opposed it on what it called the "practical" grounds that the British Foreign Office is afraid the Arabs wouldn't like it and on the "theoretical" grounds that it would lead to demands for post-war creation of a Zionist State.

PM took its stand on creation of a Jewish Army as long ago as June 10, 1941. It demanded then that the Jews of Palestine should have the elementary right to defend themselves and fight for democracy under their own banners. This is no more than we have granted to the Czechs, the Poles, the Free French and a score of other peoples who are fighting under their own flags today in the battle against Fascism.

The *Times* never once mentions a Jewish Army. It calls it a Zionist Army. The Jews have never asked for the creation of a Zionist Army. They have asked for creation of a Jewish Army to serve under British or Allied command, wherever the need may take them. It would be recruited from the Jews of Palestine and from among

those Jews who, today, are men without a country because of Hitler's anti-Semitic laws.

The Arabs wouldn't like it! That is the theory of the British Foreign Office, the same Foreign Office that wouldn't believe the Grand Mufti was anti-British until he turned up in Berlin not many months ago. Did this appeasement policy keep Iraq from betraying Britain? Did it prevent the Shah of Iran from turning Quisling? Will it keep Fascist-minded Arab leaders from helping the Fascists whenever it is to their advantage to do so? The great mass of Arabs aren't excited about it. There are 12,000 Jews in the British Army now—bearing arms and drilling before the Arabs' very eyes—without causing the slightest unrest.

What PM considers the vital issue right now is the fact that there are 50,000 Jews, passionately anti-Nazi, who are ready to fight and die to defeat Hitler. We have no right to tell them: "You can only fight Hitler if you are willing to lose your identity as Jews." With Hitler threatening the Mediterranean again and the Japanese still having much their own way in the Far East, what we and our British allies ought to say is: "Here are the arms. Go to it."—ALEXANDER UHL.



RESOLUTION PRESENTED BY JUDGE LOUIS E. LEVINTHAL AND UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED  
AT THE CARNEGIE HALL RALLY FOR A JEWISH FIGHTING FORCE IN PALESTINE,  
HELD UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE AMERICAN EMERGENCY COMMITTEE FOR  
ZIONIST AFFAIRS, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 1942.

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We, assembled in mass meeting at Carbegie Hall, fervently working and praying for the victory of America and the United Nations -- the victory of truth, justice and freedom -- express our grave concern over the continued refusal of the British Government to grant to the Jews of Palestine their rightful place and status as Allies in our common struggle. The Holy Land, whence sprang humanity's noblest ideals, has been destined to constitute one of the most vital strategic areas in humanity's gravest trial. The Jews of Palestine stand eagerly prepared to give their energies, their resources, their lives to the service of the democratic cause and for the defense of the homeland they have reclaimed by their heroic toil. Today they are being denied the opportunity of full participation in the battle for civilization.

We declare that the Jews of Palestine must be granted not only the opportunity to participate fully, but the right to participate equally. They must be admitted to the war against barbarism not grudgingly, but in the full exercise of their right and status as a free people on its own soil. They, who have been so cruelly persecuted by Nazi tyranny, they who bled for freedom, demand a place on the firing line to play their part in the defeat of Nazism in their own name, under the inspiration of the ancient emblems of the Jewish people and in the dynamic recognition of the equality and freedom of all peoples.

We therefore respectfully urge our beloved and revered President to use his good offices in conformity with the spirit and traditions of this country to help secure for the Jews of Palestine the right to organize a Jewish fighting force under British command or Allied command.

We ask such recognition for the Jews of Palestine in the name of the Jewish people who have been the victims of fascist persecution; in the name of the Homeland hallowed by Jewish sacrifices and restored by Jewish efforts; in the name of the victory all free peoples are uniting to achieve; in the name of the ideals of freedom and justice and equality to which the United Nations are dedicated in the great struggle in which we are now engaged.

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BRITISH EMBASSY  
Washington, D.C.

March 21, 1942.

My dear Judge Levinthal,

Your letter of March 13th, for which I wish to thank you, did not, of course, surprise me. It is, if I may say so, symptomatic of the difficulty which American Jews find in understanding the political problems of the Middle East that you should cite the hypothetical case of British refugees from Hong Kong being turned away from Java as an analogy to the problem of uncontrolled Jewish immigration from enemy countries into Palestine.

The situation, I admit, is something like a deadlock which can, I submit, only be broken by the destruction of the Nazis and their satellites. The security of Palestine, in the heart of the Middle Eastern theatre of war, is a vital factor in the struggle. If that security involves the denial of asylum to some hundreds of Jews from Central Europe, you may be sure that the members of His Majesty's Government regret this necessity as sincerely as yourself. But against that I would ask you to remember the greater suffering involved for humanity, and damage to the cause of free men everywhere, if by the policy pursued in the Middle East we should cause prolongation of the war, or imperil the cause for which we are fighting.

Believe me,  
My dear Judge Levinthal,  
Very sincerely yours,

HALIFAX

His Honour  
Judge Louis E. Levinthal  
Court of Common Pleas # 6  
City Hall, Philadelphia.



17th April, 1942.

Pol/54/42

Dear General Auchinleck,

I was sorry that you could not see me during my recent visit to Cairo, but I need hardly say that I fully realised how preoccupied you were at the time. I am, therefore, gladly availing myself of your kind suggestion to state my views in writing.

2. The question I intended to raise is that of Jewish participation in the defence of Palestine in the event of the country being directly threatened. Before submitting concrete proposals, I feel that I ought to stress certain general considerations of fundamental character.

3. There can be little doubt that if Palestine were over-run by the Nazis nothing less than complete annihilation would be the lot of the Jews of this country. The destruction of the Jewish race is a fundamental tenet of the Nazi doctrine. The authoritative reports recently published show that that policy is being carried out with a ruthlessness which defied description. Hundreds of thousands of Jews have perished in Poland, the Balkan countries, Rumania and the invaded provinces of Russia as a result of mass executions, forced deportations and the spread of famine and disease in ghettos and concentration camps. An even swifter destruction, it must be feared, would overtake the Jews of Palestine were they to fall under Nazi sway. By destroying the Jewish National Home, Hitler would be cutting the jugular vein of the Jewish people. Moreover, he would thereby be offering a unique prize to those Arab nationalists on whose support he counts in his scheme to secure domination of the Middle East, and who would be only too willing to assist him in that work of destruction.

4. The matter obviously has a different aspect when viewed from the angle of Jewish survival in Palestine than from the standpoint of British imperial strategy. To the British Empire the evacuation of Palestine, if it were ever to become inescapable, would mean no more than a temporary setback in a world struggle whose ultimate outcome cannot be in doubt. To the Jews of Palestine it would spell immediate extermination. In the interlude between two acts in the drama of war - the loss and reconquest of Palestine - the work of three generations of Jewish pioneers would have gone up in smoke.

5. These special circumstances invest the defence of Palestine with unparalleled gravity. The responsibility for that defence rests, of course, with the Imperial Government, but, as has been emphasised over and over again, it is of crucial importance that the Jews should be enabled to take the fullest possible part in that defence which is to them a matter of life and death. They regard that as their sacred right and believe that their contribution could be of material importance. But again, the question as to whether and to what extent they will be allowed to contribute to the country's defence is the Imperial Government's responsibility.

6. The utmost mobilisation of the Jews of Palestine would appear to be vital quite apart from the special considerations affecting the Jews as such. The British position in the Middle East, as far as the attitude of the majority of the population is concerned, can at best be described as one of unstable equilibrium. Any marked success of the enemy in Libya or his approach to the borders of Syria or Palestine is liable to upset that precarious balance. The morale even of the presumably loyal section of the majority of the population would then break down, while the other section would openly or secretly join hands with the enemy. Last year's events in Iraq may well be regarded as a portent. In such an emergency the Jews of Palestine would remain the only element who would be absolutely dependable if only because they stand to lose everything and would be fighting with their backs to the wall.

7. In recent authoritative comments on the causes of the Allied defeat in the Dutch East Indies, it was explained that in those vast possessions, stretching over an area as large as that from West of Ireland to the Persian Gulf, there was a completely dependable population of not more than a quarter of a million. The position in Palestine is, by comparison, infinitely more favourable. In a country the size of Wales there live today over half a million Jews. If these were effectively mobilised, their determination could turn this small country into a veritable Thermopylae.

8. It is in the light of these circumstances that the following proposals are submitted. They fall under two heads:

(a) enlistment into the Army;

(b) training and organisation of civilians for "home guard" duties.



April 17, 1942

9. As far as military service is concerned, it must be emphasised that no form of recruiting can produce so enthusiastic a response and so high a degree of military efficiency as the formation of a Jewish Fighting Force. The fact that this scheme has been turned down, chiefly on political grounds, has caused bitter disappointment and a sense of frustration among the Jews of Palestine. It is submitted that whatever qualms may formerly have been felt by the British authorities under this head, they should not count at a time when every loyal man is needed to help in staying off an enemy invasion of the Middle East. After two years of strenuous efforts in the cause of recruiting for various units of the British Army, it is our considered opinion that the most effective and speedy way of securing an all-round Jewish enlistment is the raising of a Jewish Force.

10. Pending a reconsideration of this fundamental question, for which we would plead again with the utmost force, immediate attention should be directed to the problem of what can be done to achieve maximum results within the existing framework of enlistment. The formation expressly designed for the defence of Palestine are the Palestine Buffs. At present there are nine Jewish Companies of the Palestine Buffs, the last of which is in the course of formation. A new all-round effort is now being sponsored by the Jewish Agency to speed up recruiting into the Army generally and into the Palestine Buffs in particular. Originally it was expected that the formation of the Palestine Buffs would give the Jews of Palestine ~~an opportunity to~~ a chance of joining real fighting units, but this hope does not seem to have materialised and the Palestine Buffs have lost a great deal of their initial popularity. The burden of the complaints which reach us from all companies is that their duties are purely static and their programme of training is stale and antiquated. The feeling is gaining ground among them that they are not at all meant to have a share in real fighting if ever the necessity for it were to arise in Palestine or on its borders. Such feeling, of course, kills the spirit of the existing units and ruins the prospects of further enlistment. It is, therefore, essential that the programme of training of the Palestine Buffs should be overhauled and reformed on up-to-date lines, that the Companies should be familiarised with modern weapons and tactics, and that, as far as practicable, periods of stationary guard duties should alternate with spells of active field training and manoeuvres.

11. The present position regarding the Buffs is a kind of vicious circle. On the one hand, we are told that the Companies are tied up with static duties and cannot be spared for higher training because they are too few in number. On the other hand, we know that recruiting into the Buffs is slack just because the existing Companies are doing only static work and do not get the training of a real fighting force. I have discussed the whole problem with General McConnell and submitted to him that efforts should be made from both ends to break the circle. The Jewish Agency will do its best to speed up recruiting into the Buffs in spite of their present unpopularity. The Army, on the other hand, should take immediate steps to enhance the value of the Buffs as a real fighting force in spite of their limited numbers.

12. A reform of training alone does not, however, fully meet the issue. So long as the Buffs retain the form of disjointed companies their value for effective infantry service must of necessity be limited. It appears to us vital that the present Companies be joined into battalions and that more of such battalions be formed. We are aware that this would require the provision of additional equipment but we find it difficult to conceive of the Army not being able to supply this. We assume that, following a recent precedent, some of the existing Jewish pioneer units could be turned into infantry and that the transport sections of the battalions could be drafted from the Jewish R.A.S.C. units. Taking into account the existing personnel and, above all, the fillip which the formation of battalions will give to further recruiting, we believe that at least ten battalions of about 1,000 men could be formed.

13. I would add that we have up to now supplied well over 11,000 men for direct military service. About 1,400 of these were taken prisoners in Greece, and the bulk of the remainder are serving with the R.A.F. and in transport and other technical units which would probably not be available for infantry duties. We also assume that recruiting into transport and technical units will continue.

14. The major problem of the use of the civilian Jewish population in the country's defence remains now to be considered. It should be borne in mind that a very considerable part of men of military age are at present fully employed in agriculture and essential industries and that the shortage of manpower for works of supreme importance to the war effort is being increasingly felt. This inevitably hampers enlistment for military service but it does not follow that the great civilian reservoir, consisting of many tens of thousands, should be wasted for purposes of defence. The very location of the Jewish settlements in Palestine places them in a favourable strategic position for rendering effective assistance against an air or sea-borne invasion. The entire coastal plain from Acre to Tel Aviv and beyond is now largely in Jewish hands. So is the Valley of Jezreel through which run the oil pipeline to Mosul and the railway line from Haifa to Damascus. So are the north-eastern and north-western frontier areas of Palestine.



Letter

To General Auchinleck from M. Shertok -3-

April 17, 1942

dotted with Jewish villages and townships, inhabited by a virile population which knows the country and has in the recent disturbances learned how to defend itself and fight guerilla bands.

15. A suitable framework for the training and organisation of Jewish civilians for home guard duties is actually available in the Jewish Settlement Police and its reserves of Special Constabulary. The formation of a proper Home Guard for Palestine on the British example might be fraught with inter-racial complications. But the Jewish Settlement Police is an organization which has been in existence for over six years and has come to be regarded, by Arabs and by Jews alike, as an integral part of the country's security system. Its expansion to meet the requirements of the present situation and the acceleration of its training programme need not, therefore, present any political difficulty, while its elasticity and adaptability should excellently serve the needs of the moment and its past experience of direct cooperation with the Army should stand it in good stead.

16. The present active strength of the Jewish Settlement Police is only about 2,600. All these are full-time personnel, paid by the Government and armed with rifles. The number of special constables is about 15,000. These are people carrying on their normal work, mostly in agricultural settlements, who are sworn in and authorised to carry rifles in times of need. The whole force is supposed to be fully trained in the use of rifles and Lewis guns but the training of special constabulary has been rather of a haphazard nature. We understand that the Jewish Settlement Police and the Special Constabulary are already regarded by the authorities as potential re-inforcements to the troops in case of a major emergency. Of late, fairly elaborate manoeuvres have been carried out by the Jewish Settlement Police in various centres with a view to training its personnel in combatting parachutists and protecting communications in the rear against attacks by air-borne forces. It is evident that just at a time when an invasion of Palestine may be attempted trouble must be expected to break out inside the country and that Jewish settlements will then be the first targets of attack. At such a time, a considerable part of the Jewish Settlement Police will be tied up in local defences but the stationary defence of the settlements and the combatting of parachutists and fifth columnists by mobile units would then form a single problem. If the Jewish Settlement Police is given the necessary training and substantially increased, it should then be a valuable adjunct to the military forces for fairly extensive operations.

17. Our proposals under this head are as follows:

- (a) The progressive expansion of the special constabulary up to 50,000.
- (b) The adoption of a large-scale programme of training, including special courses for N.C.O's and the successive drafting of batches of special constables into camps for periods of intensive training.
- (c) The placing of the whole organisation under military control and the appointment of an Army staff, versed in modern tactics to superintend its training.
- (d) The preparation of ample reserves of rifles, machine guns, trench mortars, grenades, anti-tank guns and other weapons for distribution to the force in time of need.

18. I must apologise for having addressed you at such length at a time when you are so burdened with matters of the greatest moment. But I feel sure you will appreciate the anxiety felt by us, and the grave responsibility which devolves upon those in charge of Jewish interests in these fateful times. There are a number of points on which additional details could be supplied in an oral discussion and I need hardly say that I should be happy to proceed to Cairo for that purpose should you feel that you can now see me.

Allow me to conclude this letter by emphasising once more what the defence of Palestine means to us. No other people would lose so much if this country were overrun by the enemy. No other people would fight with such determination in its defence.

Yours, sincerely,

General Sir Claude Auchinleck,  
G.C.I.E., C.B., C.S.I., D.S.O.  
Commander-in-Chief,  
Middle East, Cairo.

M. Shertok



NOTE ON THE AVAILABLE JEWISH MANPOWER  
IN PALESTINE

1. 1. The day war was declared, September 3, 1939, the Jewish Agency for Palestine (the official body representing the Jewish people under Article IV of the Palestine Mandate) issued a call to men and women between the ages of 18 and 50 to register for national service. Within a few days 136,000 persons, 86,000 men and 50,000 women registered. The Executive of the Jewish Agency announced to the British Government in Palestine and in London its readiness to enter into immediate arrangements for utilizing Jewish manpower, economic resources, technical ability, etc. for the war needs.

Under the Chamberlain government all Jewish offers remained unheeded.

2. With the Italian attack on Egypt in the summer of 1940, the British Army required as many men as it could get. The Arab allies of Great Britain in the Middle East, Egypt and Iraq, chose to remain neutral. Only Jewish Palestine was willing to provide the necessary manpower. But the Palestine Administration, pursuing a policy of appeasement toward the Mufti and his friends, saw to it that the services of the Jews should be limited to non-combatant units. When the threat of invasion to Palestine came nearer and the Jewish Agency insisted on the right of the Jews to defend their country, as well as the British positions in the Middle East, the government could hardly resist this claim; but the appeasers qualified this decision by introducing the principle of parity, which meant that only as many Jewish fighting units could be formed, as there may be Arab units. As the Palestine Arabs showed no greater eagerness to fight on the side of the United Nations than the Arabs in Egypt and Iraq, the decision to have Jewish fighting units conditioned by parity could not amount to very much. Later when the need for manpower grew greater, the principle of parity had to be relaxed in practice. Jewish infantry units were formed although no corresponding Arab companies could be recruited. But these Jewish units, contrary to all practice of military organization, were not permitted to form battalions and brigades.

3. At the end of April, 1942 the number of Jews enlisted in the various services were:

Pioneers .....	3,031	
Infantry .....	2,067	
Artillery .....	448	
Technical Services:...	4,408	
RASC, RE, RAOC, RCS, RAMC		
RAF .....	1,600	
Royal Navy .....	1,070	
Medical Officers .....	100	
Total	12,723	12,723

To this total the following must be added:

Men engaged on special duties-		
under certain military authorities,		
over 500		
Police and auxiliaries -	6,800	
	7,300	7,300
		20,023



4. The number of Jews in Palestine aged from 20-35 is 80,000. Of this age group about 8,000 are enlisted in the Army and 4,000 in the police. Of the remaining 68,000 an allowance of 15% should be made for those physically unfit. The balance of that age group, fit for military service, is thus 58,000. To this figure can be added some 45,000 men, which includes those from 18-20 and 35-45.

5. The number of Jewish men engaged in work essential for the war effort and who should not be called upon for military service is approximately 30,000.

The employers and labor organizations of Palestine are prepared to make all the necessary readjustments in order to release the maximum number of men for military service.

6. There are thus available, apart from those already serving in the army and the police, some 60,000 men for further enlistment. Almost half of this number, some 30,000 have seen military service in different countries in Europe. Among them there were nearly 1000 as commissioned officers and several thousand non-commissioned officers.

7. It is submitted that as the existing units should be organized in a single division and that by the immediate mobilization of all available manpower, three additional divisions should be enlisted, trained and equipped.

D. B. G.

New York  
June 29, 1942.



To the Members of the Office Committee:

There will be a meeting of the Office Committee on  
WEDNESDAY, JULY 15, 1942 at 4 p.m.

at 41 E. 42nd Street, New York, N.Y.

Your presence is kindly requested.

A. Lourie.

Enclosures:

Memorandum on Defense of Palestine and Jews- D. Ben-Gurion

Copy of letter from M. Shertok to Army authorities in Palestine



WAR EFFORT AND WAR POTENTIALITIES OF PALESTINIAN JEWRY

(MEMORANDUM FROM LONDON)

AUGUST 29, 1939. Dr. Weizmann, President of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, (the organisation representing World Jewry, set up under the Mandate to co-operate with H.M.G. in building up the Jewish National Home in Palestine), wrote to the Prime Minister, Mr. Chamberlain, declaring that "the Jews stand by Great Britain and will fight on the side of the democracies", and stating that "we place ourselves, in matters big and small, under the co-ordinating direction of His Majesty's Government. The Jewish Agency is ready to enter into immediate arrangements for utilising Jewish man-power, technical ability and resources, etc."

SEPT. 2, 1939. The Prime Minister in reply noted "with pleasure that Great Britain can rely upon the wholehearted co-operation of the Jewish Agency."

SEPT. 1939. Registration of Palestine Jewry organised by the Jewish Agency.

Out of a community at that time of less than half a million, 85,781 men and 50,262 women volunteered for National Service, the vast majority of men specifically mentioning their readiness to serve with the British Army.

AUTUMN 1939. Dr. Weizmann pressed on various Government departments in London the potentialities of Jewish Palestine, with its numbers of high-grade experts in science and industry, and its skilled labour. The Mediterranean route being still open, means and machinery could have been supplied for development of factories, etc. But until Lord Lloyd succeeded Mr. Malcolm MacDonald as Colonial Secretary in May 1940 Dr. Weizmann's suggestions were not taken up.

The reasons were political:

(a) Obligations incurred to the Jews might upset the policy of the White Paper of 1939.

(b) The Jewish war effort might be disliked by the Arabs.

OCTOBER and NOVEMBER, 1939. The first official call for Jews and Arabs to join British units. The numbers asked for were small, and on a strict basis of numerical parity between Jews and Arabs. Jews were enlisted as follows:

R.E.,	130	
R.A.S.C.,	300	
R.A.M.C.,	100	
R.A.O.C.,	<u>150</u>	680.

DECEMBER 1, 1939. Dr. Weizmann wrote to the C.I.G.S., General Ironside, once more offering "a Jewish Division to be recruited in Palestine and elsewhere for service with the British Forces in the present war wherever required"; the higher command position to be occupied by British officers, while the junior officers should "include a strong contingent of Palestinian Jews", as the existence of such cadres would greatly facilitate recruitment and training of the rank and file. Dr. Weizmann therefore suggested that a beginning be made with the training of such officer cadres.

DECEMBER 4, 1939. Colonel R. Macleod, G.S., replied on behalf of General Ironside that the C.I.G.S. "agrees in principle with the raising of a Division" as suggested by Dr. Weizmann, and that he had forwarded the letter to the A.G., but that "there are other implications which will have to be taken into consideration."

The most ardent desire of the Jews was, and is, to serve as Jews under their own national flag, like every other nation. But the policy of H.M.G., so long as Mr. MacDonald was Colonial Secretary, was to transform the Jews into an anonymous minority in Palestine. The formation of units of a Jewish national character was opposed. Therefore, when the Palestine Administration decided to enlist 1,200 Jews and Arabs in two mixed "Palestinian" units of the A.M.P.C. for service in France, the Jewish Agency did not co-operate in the raising of bodies thus composed. It did, however, co-operate in raising Jewish recruits for British regiments.

MAY 12, 1940. Lord Lloyd became Colonial Secretary in Mr. Churchill's Government.



MAY 29, 1940.

Dr. Weizmann wrote to the Prime Minister as follows:

Dear Prime Minister:

Without preface I submit a suggestion for rapidly mobilising whatever resources, economic, military, political and technical, Jewry in Palestine and elsewhere can contribute to the British cause.

As a first step, I beg you immediately to appoint a small Committee with wide terms of reference to deal with this matter. Our war effort has to be undertaken in conjunction with the Colonial Office, the fighting services, the Ministry of Supply and Economic Warfare, and the Departments concerned with Intelligence and Propaganda.

Very sincerely yours,  
Chaim Weizmann.

Enclosure.

The Jewish War Effort

We can mobilise at once the economic, military, political and technical resources of the Jewish people in Palestine and elsewhere for the British cause.

1. Supply: Agriculture and industry in Palestine should be adapted and developed in accordance with war needs. We have a large number of highly skilled chemists, engineers, etc. who could undertake to manufacture explosives, motor vehicles, arms, etc. We have equipment for making shoes and clothing for the troops.
2. Economic Warfare: We can mobilise Jews all over the world - the Near East (Palestine, Turkey, Iran, the Balkans), North and South America, etc. to help Britain in her economic warfare. Among the refugees from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, there are numbers of men who were owners or managers of factories, and could supply information of economic and military importance. Their co-operation would also be valuable under (1) and (3).
3. Military Help: (a) We can raise several divisions in Palestine and elsewhere for service with the British Army. We have in Palestine about 30,000 men who have had some training either as auxiliaries to the British Forces there, or in European armies. (b) We can organise an Air Force unit (squadron). We have in Palestine a school of aviation which, with Government help, could be readily enlarged. (c) We can help with Military Intelligence.
4. Propaganda: We can intensify pro-Ally propaganda in neutral countries, especially in the Americas.

JUNE 1940. Lord Lloyd agreed to larger numbers of Jewish Palestinian recruits being enlisted, and formed into distinctive Jewish units.

Equality of numbers of Jews and Arabs were still insisted upon for the Infantry. But alongside, in discussion between Dr. Weizmann, Lord Lloyd, and some members of the War Cabinet, the idea began to take shape of raising a Jewish Fighting Force composed of Palestinians and non-Palestinians, to be trained outside Palestine.

JUNE to DEC. 1940. A total of 4,489 Palestinian Jews enlisted, as follows:

R.E., R.A.S.C., R.A.O.C.,	735	
R.A.,	87	
Pioneer Corps,	1,500	
Infantry (The Buffs)	568	
R.A.F. (Ground Services)-	1,507	4,489.

Adding the 1,577 who had previously joined, the total number of Jews in various units on 15th December 1940 was 6,066. Forty of the Jews enlisted in the Pioneer Corps were sent to officers' training camps.

AUG. 6, 1940. In view of the increasing military threat to Palestine, Dr. Weizmann wrote to the Prime Minister repeating his previous offer of a Jewish Fighting Force, and stressing the right of Palestinian Jewry to active self-defence.

SEPT. 3, 1940. Dr. Weizmann lunched with the Prime Minister and submitted to him the following proposals, which received Mr. Churchill's approval.



1. Recruitment of greatest possible number of Jews in Palestine for fighting services, to be formed into Jewish battalions or larger formations.
2. The Colonial Office insists on an approximate parity in the number of Jews and of Arabs recruited for specific Jewish and Arab units in Palestine. As Jewish recruitment in Palestine is certain to yield much larger numbers than Arab, the excess of Jews to be sent for training to Egypt or anywhere else in the Middle East.
3. Officers cadres, sufficient for a Jewish Division in the first instance, to be picked immediately from Jews from Palestine, and trained in Egypt.
4. Jewish "Desert Unit".
5. Jewish military units to be formed in England from foreign Jews in England, and volunteers from other countries, for service in the Middle East or elsewhere.

SEPT. 13, 1940. Dr. Weizmann met at the War Office the Secretary for War (Mr. Eden), Lord Lloyd and, in the absence of Lord Halifax, an official representing the Foreign Office. The Note of September 3rd formed the basis of discussion. The results were submitted to the Cabinet, after which Lord Lloyd wrote to Dr. Weizmann as follows:

17th October, 1940.

X I write to confirm what I told you at our conversation on the 14th October. It has been decided in principle that proposals on the following lines should be generally approved. You will be authorised to recruit 10,000 Jews for incorporation in Jewish units in the British Army. Not more than 3,000 of these will be drawn from Palestine. The remainder will be drawn from America or wherever else you can recruit them. Each recruit will have to produce a guarantee that he will be accepted by his country of origin after the war. These Jewish units, including their officers, will be trained in the United Kingdom, the officers being selected by yourself or your representative with the approval of the War Office. No guarantee can be given as to the theatre of war in which the force, when trained and equipped, will be employed. Equipment will be provided by His Majesty's Government as and when their resources allow. The cost of the equipment and maintenance of the force and its pay and allowances will be borne by His Majesty's Government, though it is understood that you are in hopes of obtaining gifts from the United States as a contribution towards the cost.

The measures necessary to give effect to the above decision will have to be considered further after the Presidential election in the United States. Meanwhile, no action should be taken in the matter and no announcement on the subject should be made.

The above information is communicated to you for your strictly personal and confidential information; and I shall be grateful if you will ensure that nothing is done or said about this, even after the election, without prior consultation with me.

Yours very sincerely,  
Lloyd

NOVEMBER, 1940. Brigadier A. W. Lee was appointed liaison between the War Office and the Jewish Agency.

NOVEMBER 22, 1940. Plan for the Jewish Division officially communicated by the War Office to the Jewish Agency.

DECEMBER 31, 1940. The V.C.I.G.S. (General Haining) suggested to the Jewish Agency the name of Brigadier L.A. Hawes as Commander of the Jewish Fighting Force. His appointment was welcomed, and on January 6th Dr. Weizmann and Mr. L.B. Namier met Brigadiers Lee and Hawes for a first talk.



JANUARY 2, 1941. First draft of public announcement of formation of a Jewish Fighting Force; on the lines laid down in Lord Lloyd's letter of October 17, 1940.

The only points outstanding concerned

- (a) designation (i.e. units, Division, or Jewish Fighting Force?);
- (b) degree of publicity to be given to the part assigned to the Jewish Agency;
- (c) wording and degree of publicity to be given to the limitation on the number of Palestinian Jews, and the State guarantees for foreign Jewish volunteers.

JANUARY 24, 1941. Dr. Weizmann and Mr. Namier saw Mr. Eden (now Foreign Secretary). The margin of difference was very much reduced, but final agreement was held up by Lord Lloyd's illness.

FEBRUARY 3, 1941. Dr. Weizmann saw the Secretary for War (Captain Margesson), and a compromise formula for State guarantees was adumbrated.

FEBRUARY 4, 1941. Death of Lord Lloyd.

FEBRUARY 5, 1941. Dr. Weizmann and Mr. Namier saw the C.I.G.S. (General Dill) and the last points at issue were practically settled.

JAN. FEB. 1941. Brigadier Hawes prepared, in collaboration with the Departments of the War Office and the Jewish Agency, detailed plans for the Jewish Fighting Force. This, being a new venture, involved a good many novel problems.

FEBRUARY 9, 1941. Lord Moyne became Colonial Secretary.

FEBRUARY 28, 1941. Sir John Shuckburgh of the Colonial Office wrote to Dr. Weizmann as follows:

My dear Weizmann,

Lord Moyne asks me to send you a line on the subject of the enlistment of Jews for service in the British Army. You will have gathered from your conversation with him yesterday afternoon that there are certain points still outstanding upon which some difference of opinion has arisen. As an immediate step, it has been found necessary to consult Mr. Eden who, as you know, is out of England. This is being done by telegraph, and it is hoped to have his reply with the minimum of delay; but in the meantime, as I am sure that you will understand, it is not possible to say when final decisions are likely to be taken.

Yours sincerely,  
J. E. Shuckburgh

MARCH 4, 1941. Lord Moyne to Dr. Weizmann:

My dear Dr. Weizmann,

I am very sorry to have to tell you that the raising of the Jewish contingent has to be postponed. As you know, I was anxiously considering certain details with a view to removal of minor difficulties, but the matter has now been shifted on to quite other ground and the Prime Minister has decided that owing to lack of equipment the project must for the present be put off for six months but may be reconsidered again in four months.

Matters have, of course, changed very much in the last few weeks owing to shipping and other difficulties, and I can assure you that this postponement is in no sense a reversal of the previous decision in favour of your proposal.

I need not tell you how truly sorry I am that on the first subject that we have discussed together events have made it necessary to reach a conclusion which will, I know, be so deeply disappointing to you. I shall, of course, be delighted to see you at any time but it would be raising false hopes to leave you in any expectations that this decision of the Prime Minister's can under present circumstances be reversed.

Yours sincerely,  
Moyne

MARCH 6, 1941. In replying, Dr. Weizmann wrote to Lord Moyne:



Dear Lord Moyne,

I have to thank you for your letter of March 4. The decision to postpone the formation of the Jewish Division for four to six months is, as you rightly expected, deeply disappointing to us, the more so because the difficulty of equipment has been present in our minds from the beginning and - as I said to Mr. Eden a few months ago - we would naturally have awaited our turn.

Indeed, the decision is a sore blow. For a whole year the Jewish Agency have waited for their offer of co-operation to be accepted and now for six months we have been working on the scheme, and the course of the negotiations had led us all to believe that the matter was practically settled.

Yours sincerely,  
Chaim Weizmann

MARCH 15, 1941. Dr. Weizmann left for America.

APRIL 14, 1941. Mr. Namier (acting for the Jewish Agency) submitted the following Memorandum to Lord Moyne:

JEWISH SELF-DEFENCE IN PALESTINE

1. From two sides war once more approaches Palestine; while the Iraq coup, with the ex-Mufti of Jerusalem behind it, points to a likely renewal of Arab troubles.
2. A Nazi invasion of Palestine would spell death for every Jew - man, woman, and child.
3. Palestine Jewry claims the right to self-defence. Heavy would be the responsibility were they to perish after having been refused the means of defending themselves.
4. In September 1939 some 136,000 Palestine Jews - 90,000 men and 46,000 women - registered for national service; 3,000 are now serving with the British forces in the Middle East, and much greater numbers could be obtained.
5. No rash measures, such as might hasten an Arab outbreak or serve Axis propaganda, are suggested; still, we ask that the problem of Jewish self-defence in Palestine should be envisaged immediately.
6. During the Arab troubles a Jewish "supernumerary police" was raised and received military training. Similar ways might now be found for forming Jewish units for self-defence and military service.
7. The details would have to be discussed between the British authorities in Palestine and Cairo and the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem. But the order to do so must come from London.

MAY 6, 1941. Lord Moyne informed Mr. Namier that a scheme for Jewish self-defence in Palestine had been submitted to him through the High Commissioner, and approved by him. The rule of equal numbers in enlisting Jews and Arabs for infantry formations was to be dropped; the Jewish Supernumerary Police in the settlements were to be mobilised, increased, and given intensive training; the settlements were to be developed into strong points in the defensive scheme for the country; and the Jewish Urban Militia was also to be increased.

JUNE 1941. On February 10, 1941, the number of Palestinian Jewish volunteers in the British Army had reached 7,390. Detailed figures were as follows:

R.A.F.,	1,540
A.M.P.C.	2,870
The Buffs	910
R.A.	190
R.A.S.C.	840
Stevedore Company, R.F.	290
R.M.	480
R.A.O.C.	110
R.C.S.	110
R.A.M.C.	50



By June 15th the numbers had risen to about 9,000, including 70 officers. Some of these troops have taken part in all the Middle Eastern campaigns, and over 1,000 were left as prisoners of war in Greece.

JULY, 1941. After Dr. Weizmann's return from the U.S.A. the question of the Jewish Fighting Force was taken up once more.

AUGUST 1, 1941. Lord Moyne told Dr. Weizmann that he saw no political objections to the formation of such a Force insofar as the Colonial Office was concerned.

AUGUST 19, 1941. Dr. Weizmann wrote to Lord Moyne:

Mr. Namier and I saw Brigadier Lee at the War Office on the 12th. He suggested that this time the political problems arising out of the Jewish Division should be settled before the War Office is asked to deal with the technical work of raising and training the Division. This seems to be a reasonable suggestion likely to facilitate the work.

Perhaps the best approach to the political problem will be by way of the public announcement to be made about the Division.

AUGUST 28, 1941. Lord Moyne replied:

I promised to write to you again on the question of the Jewish contingent, about which you wrote to me on the 19th August; but I fear that you will find the letter I have to send you somewhat disappointing.

The position regarding equipment is little easier than it was some months ago. The entry of Russia into the war has, of course, introduced a new and important factor....

I have consulted the Prime Minister; and, in all the circumstances, I am afraid that we can only continue to leave the matter of the Jewish contingent in cold storage for the present. The situation may change, however, and in any case we propose that the question should again be considered in three months' time.

SEPTEMBER 10, 1941. Dr. Weizmann addressed the following letter to the Prime Minister:

Dear Mr. Prime Minister:

I wish to thank you for the very kind message which you sent me through Mr. Martin. I deeply appreciate it. Still our position has become so serious (nay, critical), that I feel I must lay the facts before you by letter if I cannot do so personally.

Two years have passed since, on the outbreak of the war, I offered to His Majesty's Government, on behalf of the Jewish Agency for Palestine and the Jewish people, the fullest active support of Jews in Palestine and throughout the world. A whole year has elapsed since you gave your personal approval to our offer to recruit "the greatest possible number of Jews in Palestine for the fighting services" and to form "Jewish military units abroad for service in the Middle East or elsewhere." But during these two years our readiness to serve has earned us only rebuffs and humiliations. Even in Palestine, where the need for our services was acknowledged, our most zealous endeavours have not received a single word of public acknowledgment. Ten thousand Palestinian Jews have fought in Libya, Abyssinia, Greece, Crete and Syria. But our people are never mentioned; our name is shunned; all contact or co-operation with us is kept dark as if it were compromising.

In March last, before I left for the United States, I was given, in a letter from the Colonial Secretary, the assurance that the formation of the Jewish fighting force was reluctantly postponed - but merely postponed, at the utmost for six months. I know with what enthusiasm the announcement that it is to be formed at last would be received by our people in Palestine and throughout the world. But this is not to be, even now. Even in Palestine, our people for whom the defence of their country and of the British position in the Middle East may be literally a matter of life and death, are permitted to serve only under humiliating limitations and conditions.



Tortured by Hitler as no nation has ever been in modern times, and advertised by him as his foremost enemy, we are refused by those who fight him the chance of seeing our name and our flag appear among those arrayed against him.

I know that this exclusion is not in your own intentions or spirit. It is the work of people who were responsible for the Munich policy in Europe and for the White Paper in Palestine. We were sacrificed in order to win over the Mufti of Jerusalem and his friends who were serving Hitler in the Middle East; whereas the only thing which can secure the Arabs is British strength in the Middle East, as has been clearly shown in Iraq.

But are the Jews so utterly unimportant as the treatment meted out to them suggests? I have spent four months in America, travelling up and down the country, and closely watching the American scene. Forces over there are finely balanced; the position is uncertain. There is only one big ethnic group which is willing to stand, to a man, for Great Britain, and a policy of "all-out-aid" for her: the five million American Jews. From Secretary Morgenthau, Governor Lehman, Justice Frankfurter, down to the simplest Jewish workman or trader, they are conscious of all that this struggle against Hitler implies.

It has been repeatedly acknowledged by British statesmen that it was the Jews who, in the last war, effectively helped to tip the scales in America in favour of Great Britain. They are keen to do it - and may do it - again. But you are dealing with human beings, with flesh and blood, and the most elementary feeling of self-respect sets limits to service, however willing, if the response is nothing but rebuffs and humiliations. American Jewry waits for a word - a call from His Majesty's Government. The formation of a Jewish Fighting Force will be that signal. Equipment cannot be the determining factor: there will always be some alternative use for whatever equipment is available; and fresh recruits are all the time being called up in the British Commonwealth by their hundreds of thousands, while we are told to wait for one single Division because of lack of equipment. If the spirit of American Jewry is roused, the influence which this will exercise on America's rather sluggish production will return to you that equipment with manifold gains.

Let me feel, Mr. Prime Minister, that our friendship is not spurned on the British side, nor our name obliterated at a time when Hitler is endeavouring to obliterate our very existence.

Yours very sincerely,  
Ch. Weizmann.

OCTOBER 15, 1941. Dr. Weizmann received the following letter from Lord Moyne:

Dear Dr. Weizmann,

I very much regret the delay in sending a definite reply to the request which you made during our discussion here on the 1st of September about the proposal for the formation of Jewish contingents for the British Army. When I reported our conversation and your desire that there should be a definite decision and that you should not be left in further suspense, the Prime Minister referred the whole matter for further consideration to the Ministers concerned. The results of their examination of the problem have now been considered by the Cabinet, to whom copies of your letter to Mr. Churchill of the 10th of September had already been communicated by the Prime Minister's direction. Viewed from the standpoint of military requirements and the supply situation, it at once became apparent that the present shipping and supply situation has grown much more complicated in consequence of the undertakings of assistance on a vast scale that have recently been given to the Soviet Government, and that it would indeed entirely preclude the idea of transporting to this country recruits in considerable numbers for a Jewish force from the United States and from Palestine.

I am very sorry that this decision must be pre-announced.



disappointing to you and would much like to see you some day early next week to discuss various other possibilities.

Yours sincerely,  
Moyne.

OCTOBER 17, 1941. Dr. Weizmann received from the Prime Minister's secretary a formal acknowledgment of the letter of September 10.

OCTOBER 23, 1941. Dr. Weizmann called on Lord Moyne to discuss the "various other possibilities" hinted at in Lord Moyne's letter of October 15. He found that this expression was only meant to cover a request for scientists, technicians, etc. Dr. Weizmann replied that this was no substitute for what the Jews desired and for what the Government had promised them. Lord Moyne argued that in war-time modifications of policy had sometimes to be made.

Dr. Weizmann then raised the question of the Jews serving with the British Forces in the Middle East and asked that they should at least be given a Jewish name and badge, and a unified organization. Even this was refused by Lord Moyne.

OCTOBER 28, 1941. Dr. Weizmann wrote the following letter to Lord Moyne:

Dear Lord Moyne,

Last Thursday, October 23rd, you informed us of the final decision of His Majesty's Government cancelling their promise regarding a Jewish Fighting Force.

Absolutely convinced that this promise, emphatically re-stated in your letter of March 4th, would be carried out, the Jewish Agency has kept silence when bitterly criticised for its apparent apathy in a matter which has been eagerly pressed by the Jewish people in all free countries. I now find myself compelled to give a public explanation of our otherwise inexplicable inaction.

Yours very sincerely,  
Ch. Weizmann.

OCTOBER 29, 1941. Dr. Weizmann received the following reply:

Dear Dr. Weizmann,

Thank you for your letter of the 28th October. I am obliged to you for letting me know of your intentions.

Yours sincerely,  
Moyne.



July 2, 1942

Washington, D.C.

MEMORANDUM ON DEFENSE OF PALESTINE AND THE JEWS

The Nazis are nearing the gates of Palestine. The invasion of that country by Hitler, even temporarily, may result in the complete annihilation of the Jewish community there -- men, women and children -- and the total destruction of their work by the Nazis with the help of the Mufti. To the Jewish people throughout the world, this will mean more than the massacre of some 600,000 Jews; it will be the ruin of their Third Temple; the destruction of their Holy of Holies.

Repeated efforts and offers made since the beginning of the war by Jews of Palestine to mobilize all their resources alongside Great Britain, were, with few exceptions, frustrated. With the Italian attack on Egypt in the summer of 1940, the British army required as many men as it could get. The Arab allies of Great Britain in the Middle East, Egypt and Iraq, chose to remain neutral. Only Jewish Palestine was eager to provide the necessary manpower. But the Palestine Administration, pursuing a policy of appeasement toward the Mufti and his friends, saw to it that the services of the Jews should be limited, and confined to non-combatant units. When the threat of invasion to Palestine came nearer and the Jews there insisted on their right to defend their country, the government could hardly resist this claim, and it was decided to form Jewish fighting units. But the appeasers qualified this decision by introducing the principle of "parity," which meant that only as many Jewish fighting units could be formed, as there may be Arab units. As the Palestine Arabs showed no greater eagerness to fight on the side of the United Nations than the Egyptians and the Iraqians, the decision to have Jewish fighting units conditioned by parity could not amount to very much.

Australian soldiers in Palestine wondered why they had to be shipped from the other end of the world, when, on the spot, there were young Jews ready to fight. The official reason for the refusal to mobilize the Jews of Palestine was lack of equipment. But the Jews never requested preferential treatment. All they asked was the same measure of equipment supplied to British troops throughout the world. Another reason sometimes given was that the mobilization of Jews might upset the Arabs. What Arabs? Pro-Nazi Arabs (either because they hate the British, or believe in Hitler's victory, or sympathize with fascist ideals) cannot be bought off by sacrificing the Jews. Those Arabs who want the democracies to win must welcome an additional force fighting with the United Nations. Jewish units, which fought in Egypt and Libya, and those stationed in Palestine, upset nobody.

Jews of Palestine claim the elementary right, denied to no people in the world, to defend themselves and their country and fight the mortal enemy of their people and of humanity.

The number of Jews (men) aged from 20 - 35 is about 80,000 there are another 45,000 in the age groups between 18 and 20 and 35 to 45. About 13,000 are already enlisted in special Jewish units in various military services: infantry, artillery, air force, navy, technical. An additional 7,000 are serving in the police, which is now militarized. Some 30,000 are engaged in works essential for the war effort. Thus, after deducting the physically unfit, there are available for further enlistment in Palestine about 60,000 Jewish men, many of whom have seen military service in different countries and do not require long training. If properly organized, the present Jewish units, will constitute a single division. In addition, at least three more Jewish divisions can immediately be raised.

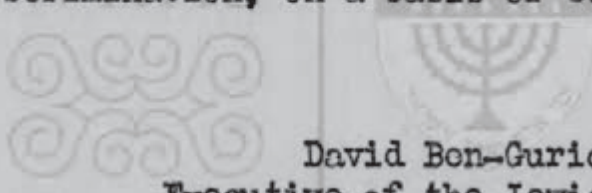


July 2, 1942

The war potential of Jewish Palestine may seem very little in the scale of this global war. But on the Palestine front it may play a not inconsiderable, and, under certain conditions, perhaps, a decisive role. A division or two may tip the scales in a crucial battle. Even if it does not assure victory, it may effect delay. And a delay of the invasion of Palestine may mean the difference between survival and destruction.

It may be that with all the Jews of Palestine fighting to the last, invasion and destruction cannot be avoided. But even then it will be a matter of supreme importance whether Jews of Palestine perish as soldiers and men fighting their enemies or are slaughtered like defenseless sheep. Should our people in Palestine be massacred, having been denied the right of self-defense by the Mandatory power, it will not only be a most tragic disaster for Jews. It will deal a fatal blow to the prestige of the British government and bring grave moral damage to the cause of the United Nations. Public opinion throughout the civilized world will be aroused against this wanton sacrifice of a people needlessly deprived of the means of self-defense.

There is no time to be lost. Only the friendly intervention of the President of the United States with his British ally can avert the catastrophe threatening Palestine. A word from the President should make possible the immediate and full mobilization of all Jewish manpower in Palestine, without preference and without discrimination, on a basis of equality with all other people.



David Ben-Gurion, Chairman  
Executive of the Jewish Agency for Palestine



Copy of letter sent by M. Shertok to the Army authorities in Palestine  
regarding Palestinian Jews at present enlisted in the armed forces.

The A.A. & Q.M.G.,  
H.Q. PALESTINE

19th May, 1942

Reference your letter No. CR/PAL/18109/5/A dated the 8th May, 1942.

2. The number of Jews in Palestine aged 20 to 35 is estimated at 80,000. It may be assumed that of this age group about 8,000 have already enlisted and 4,000 more are serving in the regular and auxiliary police. As regards the remaining 68,000 an allowance of 15% should be made for those physically unfit. The balance in that age group available for enlistment or for limited military training is thus 58,000.

3. The number of Jews in the above age group who are engaged in works essential for the war effort and who should not, therefore, be called upon for military service is estimated at 30,000 (Group A). The balance available for further enlistment in the above age groups is thus 28,000 (Group B). This figure does not exhaust the potential reservoir for enlistment among the Jews of Palestine, as this reservoir includes also men from 18 to 20 and from 35 upwards.

4. The extent to which men will actually be forthcoming for enlistment depends upon a number of factors, such as political developments, the immediate threat to Palestine and the Middle East, official good-will towards the existing Jewish units, the chances given to these units to achieve maximum military efficiency, the care for the soldiers families and dependents, the readiness of employers and of labour organizations to carry through such readjustments as may be necessary in order to release men for military service, the cooperation of civil and military authorities by not employing men of military age primarily on unskilled jobs, etc. It should be emphasized that the recruiting propaganda of the Jewish Agency aims at prevailing upon a maximum number of men to enlist in spite of all material and psychological obstacles, but the measure of success of that propaganda naturally depends on the extent to which the obstacles will be removed.

5. Nearly all the men in Group A and all of Group B so long as they do not enlist are available for limited military training within the terms of the proposals submitted by the Jewish Agency to the C. in C. Middle East and the C.O.C. Palestine. As in the case of enlistment, men under 20 and over 35 must also be considered as candidates for limited training. We suggest that plans of such training should, for the time being, be based upon a total of 40,000 men.

6. The number of Jews (men only) already enlisted in the various services of H.M. Forces (including casualties, prisoners of war and men discharged as unfit) were, at the end of April 1942, according to the data of the Jewish Agency, as follows:

Pioneers	3,031	
Bufs	2,067	
Artillery	448	
Technical Services:		
R.A.S.C., R.E., R.A.O.C., R.C.S.,		
R.A.M.C.)	4,407	
R.A.F.	1,600	
Royal Navy	1,070	
Medical Officers	100	12,723

To this total the following have to be added:

Men engaged on special duties under  
certain military authorities over 500

Recruits from Palestine into the  
Polish and Czech Armies about 1,000

Police and auxiliaries	6,800	8,300
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Grand total ..... 20,023

M. Shertok  
EXECUTIVE OF THE JEWISH ARMY



C O N F I D E N T I A L

The Right Hon. The Lord Croft, P.C.,  
War Office  
Whitehall, S.W. 1

July 15, 1942.

Dear Lord Croft:

In your letter of July 4th you informed us that all possible assistance was being given in the matter of training and equipment to the Special Constabulary, and you expressed the hope that "as many Jews as possible will join this body". You further added: "I trust that Palestinian Jews have already filled all vacancies in the establishments of the existing military forces".

We communicated this to our colleagues in Jerusalem. Here is their cabled comment:

No real training given specials, no increased equipment, no new specials sworn in in towns which is main point, except Haifa where small beginnings made on initiative of local police without this being passed by any general scheme. Hope that as many Jews as possible will join is entirely unwarranted as no framework created therefor. Regarding Palestinian Jews filling vacancies in established existing forces this can only apply to vacancies in Jewish units owing to transfer, discharges, casualties. Such vacancies gradually filled by new recruits but their total is insignificant. Otherwise army demand for recruits unlimited and there is no fixed volume which has to be filled as suggested in Lord Croft's letter. Present position is that reception arrangements at recruiting depots are inadequate cope with flow of recruits. Balance awaiting attestation is growing daily. Resulting lag is detrimental to the recruiting campaign.

2. The Secretary for War, in answering a Question in the House of Commons on July 1, stated that 23,000 Jews were serving in various police formations which perform functions analagous to those of the Home Guard in this country. We submit that this statement, though its bare figures are correct, hardly gives an accurate picture of the present position. Almost 17,000 Jews are enrolled in the Settlement Police, but only a fraction - about one-sixth - are properly armed and trained. The rest have no uniforms, are denied military status by the notice of June 4 which conferred such status on other police formations, have had very little training, and hardly any arms. If anything, even worse is the condition of some 2,500 urban special constables. In short, these men are enrolled but are not serving; they do not receive any of the training which the Home Guard receives in this country; and in an emergency most of them, through no fault of their own, would be well-nigh useless. We submit that even if there is a shortage of rifles or of guns, these men should receive intensive training, and be armed with hand grenades, mortars, and other arms, many of which could be manufactured locally.

3. As indicated in the cable from Jerusalem, the question of urban Home Guards is now the main point. The numbers of the rural Home Guards are several times larger than in the towns, although the urban Jewish population is much greater. In times of mere internal unrest rural settlements naturally require better self-defense than towns like Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa. But in the case of Axis invasion both are equally exposed. Therefore we urge immediate development of the urban Home Guards.



4. The Palestine Volunteer Force has been mentioned by Ministers as an important element in the Home Guard scheme. We believe its numbers to be negligible - about 240 in Jerusalem and 100 in Haifa. Although it is described as being open to British Jews and Arabs, it seems to be mostly made up of Civil Servants and British residents.

5. It has been repeatedly stated that almost the whole of Jewish manpower is already enrolled either in the Services, or essential work. Our information is that some 20,000 recruits are still available for the Army if they are given a proper chance.

Yours sincerely,

B. Locker.

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WAR OFFICE  
WHITEHALL, S.W.1

July 21st, 1942.

Dear Sir:

I beg to acknowledge your letter of the 15th of July 1942, in which you send me the comments of your colleagues in Jerusalem on my letter of July 8th.

I would like to assure you that the problem of making the most effective use of the enthusiasm of the Jews in Palestine to take up arms in defense of their homes is receiving the detailed attention of Lord Cranborne here, the Minister of State in Cairo, the High Commissioner in Palestine, and the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East. New measures to this end, designed to meet exactly those difficulties in the existing system to which attention is drawn in your letter, are under consideration. If these proposals are found to be a practical proposition they will go far to solve this problem, and while I am naturally not in a position to give you details, I can assure you that their consideration is being treated as a matter of utmost urgency.

In the matter of allocation of arms and the provision of full facilities for training, I am sure you will agree that the security of the Jewish communities in Palestine depends first and foremost on the Field Armies fighting today in the Western Desert, and that it would, therefore, be unwise to divert the arms required for those forces for another purpose, however, admirable, while the battle in the desert is still decided. Likewise the provision of proper training facilities involves the withdrawal of trained officers and men whose presence in the fighting zone has never been more necessary. The Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, must be left the discretion to allocate arms and trained manpower in accordance with the immediate needs of the military situation - any other course might tie his hands at the vital moment and disastrously affect the outcome of the battle now being fought. You can thus see that the problem is not an easy one, but I can assure you that a solution is being sought most earnestly at this moment.

As regards facilities for the enlistment of Palestinian Jews in the Forces, I am not entirely clear about the meaning of the second and third sentences of the cable from your colleagues in Jerusalem. There are, in fact, many Palestinian infantry companies (Buffs) which are not up to strength, and others forming which can and do provide an outlet for recruiting, apart from the unlimited demand for recruits in the many other arms of the service open to the Palestinian Jews.

Yours truly,

B. Locker, Esq.

Signed... CROFT.



AUGUST 1, 1942

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A JEWISH FORCE

THE WAR EFFORT IN PALESTINE

Sir,- You were kind enough to publish a few weeks ago a letter from me on the Jewish war effort in Palestine. Since then various answers have been given by the Government. In brief, the Government claims that:- (a) There are still vacancies in the army and Jews are invited to fill them. (b) There are 23,000 Jews serving in Home Guard formations, and it is hoped that as many more as possible will join. (c) No more Jews can be spared from industry and agriculture. (d) There is no equipment.

What are the facts? (a) Jews who want to fight are sent mainly to non-combatant units, and even in the infantry they are not given the organization, equipment, or training for fighting, but are employed on merely static duties. None the less they are coming forward in larger numbers than the recruiting offices can cope with. The tale, therefore, about vacancies becomes meaningless. (b) Of the 23,000 in the Home Guard formations, only a fraction have been given arms and training. Some 16,000 are for all practical purposes unarmed. Is it fair for Government spokesmen to pad their statistics with them? (c) The Jewish Agency contend that, given proper encouragement, they could raise the number of Palestinian Jews serving with the British Army by another 20,000 and in the Home Guard to at least 50,000. (d) As regards equipment. The Jews have asked for arms for nearly three years. The Battle of Libya has been waged for over 18 months. If the British authorities wanted to provide the arms have there been no opportunities for doing so? Moreover, some of the Home Guard equipment can be manufactured on the spot.

The war approaches Palestine for the third time. The exceptional danger which the Nazi-Mufti coalition spells for Palestine Jews has been brought before now to the attention of his Majesty's Government. Their responsibility is very great. We are put off with complacent and misleading answers which weave a curious pattern - "It has been done," "It is being done," - "It cannot be done" - but the result is always the same.

I am, sir, yours faithfully,

V.A. CAZALET

House of Commons.