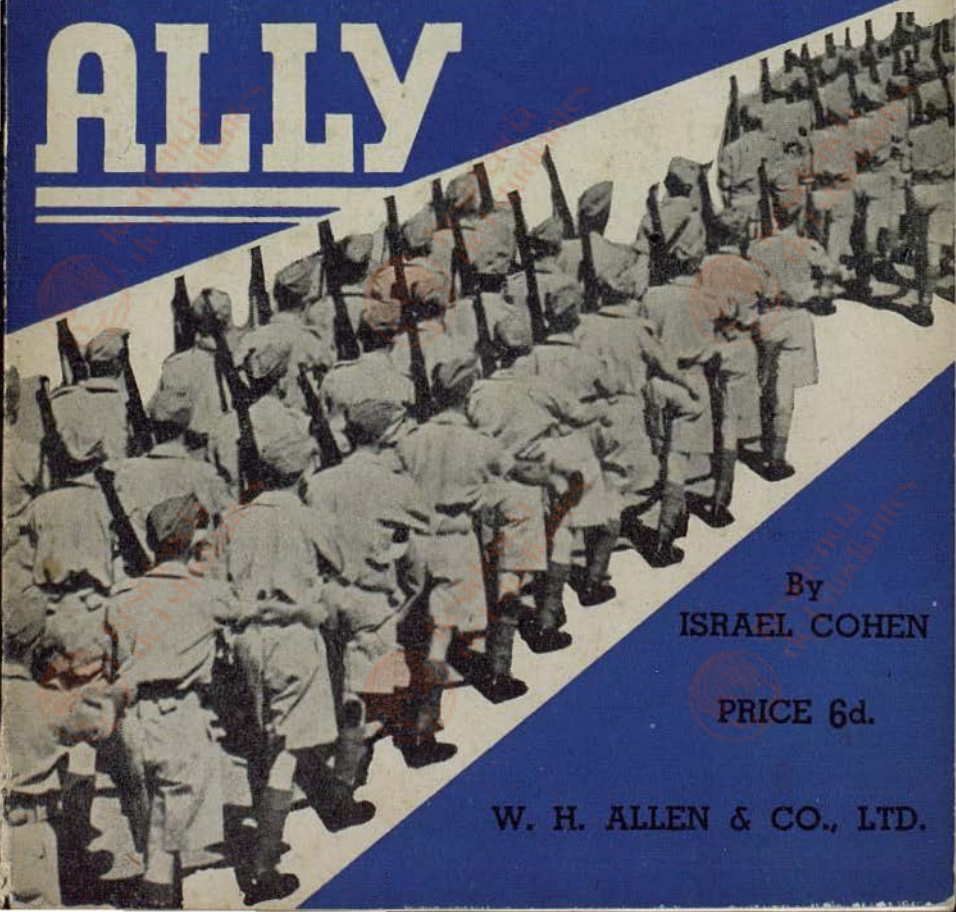


BRITAIN'S NAMELESS ALLY



By
ISRAEL COHEN

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de Estudiantes



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HAIFA. Seaport and Naval Base. Terminal of the Oil Pipeline from Iraq.
A view of the City from Mount Carmel

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BRITAIN'S NAMELESS ALLY

By

ISRAEL COHEN,

Author of "Jewish Life in Modern Times,"

"The Journal of a Jewish Traveller,"

"The Jews in the War," etc.

REVISED EDITION.

W. H. ALLEN & CO., LTD., PUBLISHERS,
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1942.

"I send a message of good cheer to the Jewish people in this and other lands. No one has suffered more cruelly than the Jews from the unspeakable evils wrought on the bodies and spirits of men by Hitler and his vile régime. The Jew bore the brunt of the Nazi's first onslaught upon the citadels of freedom and human dignity. He has borne and continued to bear a burden that might have seemed to be beyond endurance. He has not allowed it to break his spirit; he has never lost the will to resist. Assuredly in the day of victory the Jew's sufferings and his part in the struggle will not be forgotten. Once again, at the appointed time, he will see vindicated those principles of righteousness which it was the glory of his fathers to proclaim to the world. Once again it will be shown that, though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small.

WINSTON CHURCHILL,

Prime Minister,

November, 1941.

The above message was addressed to the "Jewish Chronicle" on the occasion of its centennial anniversary.

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FOREWORD.

For the first time in the history of modern wars all Jewish sympathies are on one side. This is only natural, as the other side is the most powerful and most ruthless enemy the Jewish people has ever had throughout the thousands of years of its recorded history. In Great Britain and all other parts of the British Empire, as well as in America and Soviet Russia, the Jews are contributing their full share to the Allied war-effort both in the military field and in every other sphere. They are also to be found in all the other Allied Forces—among the Poles, the Free French, the Belgians, the Dutch, the Czechoslovaks, the Yugoslavs, and the Greeks. But above and beyond their contributions as conscripts in the great struggle for the overthrow of Nazism, they are anxious to raise a large Jewish Fighting Force of volunteers to help in the defence of Palestine and the support of the Imperial troops in the Middle East, and likewise to fight wherever they might be required in other regions.

This desire was expressed in a formal offer made at the very beginning of the war by the Jewish Agency to his Majesty's Government. It is true that the Jews of Palestine have been allowed to join the British Army, but they have been accepted only in strictly limited numbers, although they have fought gallantly in every sector in which they have been engaged. The offer to raise a Jewish Force to fight wherever it might be needed was at first agreed to by the Government, but some months later, in October, 1941, it was definitely rejected. The disappointing story of this frustrated attempt to create a military contingent under the Jewish flag, and the impressive record of the manifold services rendered by Palestinian Jewry to the war-effort, are set forth here as inter-related aspects of a question of cardinal importance that should appeal to the sympathies of a wide public.

I. C.

March, 1942.

CHAPTER 1.

THE JEWISH PEOPLE'S OFFER.

Tragic Irony. The advance into Syria by the British and Allied Forces—the first imaginative step taken by the British authorities in the Middle East since war began—was the subject of a striking broadcast by Mr. Arthur Hale over the Mutual Radio network. Mr. Hale is a noted American broadcaster on current affairs and is well informed. This is what he said:—

“There’s an ironic and previously untold story behind the speed with which British troops pushed into Syria. When the plans for the invasion were being made, one of the difficulties of the British High Command was a lack of intimate knowledge of the terrain across the Palestine border . . . but a few days before the British advance, a selected group of fifty young Palestine Jewish volunteers was sent across the border to reconnoitre and report. Each man understood that capture by the enemy meant certain death. These men, picked from the Jewish agricultural settlements along the Syrian and the Trans-jordan boundaries, had an excellent knowledge of the country. They could speak Arabic fluently and could easily pass as natives. Disguised and unarmed, they crossed into Syria in small groups, spent 24 hours investigating the roads, ascertaining the strength of the opposing forces and noting points of danger. They returned to Palestine and reported to the British General Staff.

“The next three days were occupied with poring over and marking maps for the invasion spearheads. When the signal for the general advance was given, the fifty Jewish scouts went along with the advance units of the first Australian troops to enter Syria. Because the

Jewish scouts had mapped the advance, the British forces moved into Syria so rapidly that there was no opportunity for either the Vichy French or Nazi resistance.

"The ironic part of the story comes in the fact that the leader of the Jewish scouting party was Moshe Dayan, from the Jewish settlement of Nahalal. Dayan was seriously wounded in the advance into Syria and lost an eye. The British General Staff credits him with making the speedy invasion possible. Yet two years ago—in November, 1939—Dayan was one of the 43 Jewish youths who were arrested and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment by the British authorities in Palestine. The charge? Well, it seems that Dayan and his 42 friends were engaged in secret training for scouting work. Dayan was sentenced to a term of 10 years' imprisonment, although he told the Court—and the Court knew—that the Jewish youths were training to combat Axis-subsidised mercenaries—terrorists who were crossing into Palestine from Syria and Iraq.

"After eighteen months, Dayan and his friends were released and volunteered for service, with the British Army. Now their secret training—for which the British sent them to gaol—is proving of incalculable value to the British!"

Does this Syrian patrol story surprise you? You had never heard of Palestine Jewry's military contribution. You did not know that Jews from Palestine had fought with courage and valour on almost every front in which the forces of democracy have faced the enemy—in France, Libya, Cyrenaica, Greece, Crete, Eritrea, Abyssinia, Syria and Iraq.

Does the irony amaze you—Jews who sought only to sacrifice their lives in the common cause being gaoled by British Administrators? You will hear more. For the story of the part played by the Jews of Palestine is already an epic. It could be much greater. It will be—before this war is over. But up to now it is a story crossed by frustration, a tale of a people seeking the privilege, enjoyed by every Briton, of defending their homeland and dying for Great Britain, being shuffled off with evasions and excuses, permitted only a limited sacrifice.

Has there ever been a great war in which volunteers, young, healthy, zealous, courageous, trained and experienced, have been turned down, their services refused, compelled to remain idle non-combatants, forced off the stage of history into the auditorium?

Dr. Weizmann's Historic Offer. Four days before war broke out, Dr. Chaim Weizmann, President of the Jewish Agency for Palestine and of the World Zionist Organisation, sent the following letter to the then Prime Minister of Great Britain, Mr. Neville Chamberlain:—

“Dear Mr. Prime Minister,—In this hour of supreme crisis the consciousness that the Jews have a contribution to make to the defence of sacred values impels me to write this letter. I wish to confirm, in the most explicit manner, the declarations which I and my colleagues have made during the last months, and especially in the last week: that the Jews ‘stand by Great Britain and will fight on the side of the democracies.’

Our urgent desire is to give effect to these declarations. We wish to do so in a way entirely consonant with the general scheme of British action, and therefore would 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, resources, etc.

The Jewish Agency has recently had differences in the political field with the Mandatory Power. We would like these differences to give way before the greater and more pressing necessities of the times. We ask you to accept this declaration in the spirit in which it is made.”

The Prime Minister replied on September 2, 1939:—

“Dear Dr. Weizmann,—I should like to express my appreciation of the contents of your letter of August 29th and of the spirit which prompted it. It is true that differences of opinion exist between the Mandatory Power and the Jewish Agency as regards policy in Palestine, but I fully accept the assurance contained in your letter. I note with pleasure that in this time of supreme emergency, when those things which we hold dear are at stake,

Britain can rely upon the whole-hearted co-operation of the Jewish Agency. You will not expect me to say more at this stage than that your public-spirited assurances are welcome and will be kept in mind."

Dr. Weizmann followed up this exchange of letters by urging upon the Government the desirability of raising a Jewish Fighting Force, which would fight side by side with the British forces and under British command. The Jews, he urged, were the first people to be attacked by Hitler. They were exposed to Nazi assaults all over the world. It was only natural, therefore, that they wished to have the opportunity of fighting as Jews and making their own specific contribution to the overthrow of the enemy. But Dr. Weizmann's public-spirited offer fell upon deaf ears.

The Offer of 40,000 Men. In Palestine the plea for an organised Jewish participation in the military effort was pressed with great insistence. As the safety of the Jewish

National Home might be endangered, it was felt only right that its citizens should be allowed to make their own corporate contribution towards its defence. The Executive of the Jewish Agency therefore approached the General Officer Commanding the British troops in Palestine, on the eve of the outbreak of the war, and offered to provide 40,000 young Jews, who were willing to enlist immediately in the British Army, in Jewish units, to fight in defence of Palestine. They also offered to place at the disposal of the authorities all the industrial resources of the Jewish community and to adapt their industrial machinery to the military requirements. They furthermore offered the services of all the scientists and experts of the Hebrew University. All these offers were courteously acknowledged. But many weeks elapsed before the authorities took the first steps towards accepting any Jewish aid.

National Voluntary Registration. Without waiting for any prompting on the part of the Palestine Government, and with a view to stimulating the authorities to enlist Jewish co-operation, the Jewish National Council, early in September, 1939, organised a registration of volunteers for national service. The registration was limited to men and women between the ages of 18 and 50,

Within five days no fewer than 136,043 volunteers had enrolled. They consisted of 85,781 men—71 per cent. of those eligible in this age group, and 50,262 women—42 per cent. of the eligibles. In its limited way, this must be a world record for volunteer recruitment!

This voluntary enlistment by the Palestine Jews did in fact help to spur the authorities to utilise their services—though it was not until October 12, 1939, that the first call on the volunteers was made. But we shall see later how limited was this call.

For the moment bear in mind the atmosphere at the outbreak of war. The issue is joined between Democracy and Tyranny. At any moment Britain might be locked in fearful combat with the devil. A people steeped in democratic tradition, and the historic bait of many tyrants, offers its services. For remember that Dr. Weizmann made clear that in addition to the Jews of Palestine, tens of thousands of Jews from the United States and the neutral countries, apart from the Jews of Britain, waited anxiously to swell the ranks of a Jewish Fighting Force, marching into battle against Nazism, as one of Britain's Allies. And the offer was turned down.

To this day, that offer has never been accepted, though it has been repeated frequently and still stands. Instead, whenever there was an immediate need in a Middle East war front, recruiting into the British forces was undertaken, the required amounts being filled by Jews immediately. The details of this recruitment are given later. For the moment it is sufficient to state only that some 12,000 Palestinian Jews have now joined up, and the majority have seen service on every front of the Middle East. They are the nucleus of the fighting force of Britain's—as yet—nameless and unrecognised ally. How did this nucleus emerge?

CHAPTER II.

THE RALLYING OF JEWISH VOLUNTEERS.

Suppressing
the Jewish
Name.

Six weeks after the Jews made their fighting offer, it became clear how a reluctant Palestine Administration intended to act. Man-power and military supplies were obvious and urgent Middle East needs. The Jews could supply both. How to accept that help and at the same time eliminate any credit attaching to the Jews was the problem which the Administration set itself. It took six weeks to find the solution. It was too easy. The simple plan they adopted was that of calling for volunteers for various service corps. The volunteers were to be called by the term "Palestinians," they were to serve in units of the British army, and there was to be parity between the numbers of Jews and Arabs to be absorbed. The number of Jews accepted was governed solely by the number of Arabs who volunteered. Of course, the Jewish volunteers filled their quota within a few days, and as after some weeks there were still deficiencies in the Arab quota, the rule about parity had to be relaxed so as to allow Jews to fill the vacancies.

The Administration's plan fooled no one. Its implication was as clear as the Palestinian sky. When it came to allowing Jewish immigrants—even political refugees from Nazi oppression—to enter Palestine, the authorities calmly turned to the law which limited the immigration of "Jews." And in the bulk of the country, "Arabs" are forbidden to sell land—even waste land—to "Jews." No such term as "Palestinian" is then recognised. But when it comes to any possible credit which Jews might gain by fighting with Britain, then the term "Palestinian" is brought out and the Jews forced to fight under an anonymous banner. Why, even within the British forces, we are allowed to thrill

daily to the exploits of "New Zealanders," "Australians," "South Africans" and "Canadians." But in Palestine, where in all civil and political affairs the authorities are always careful to distinguish between "Jews" and "Arabs," a new term is created, "Palestinian," to hide the valour and self-sacrifice with which the Jews may distinguish themselves.

All this was realised by the Jews of Palestine. But so eager were they to play their part in the great struggle for freedom that no amount of humiliation could damp their ardour.

The Mixed Units. They responded to the call. On October 12, 1939 the Government asked for 1360 men, between the ages of 20 and 32, for the various service corps, Royal Engineers, Royal Army Service Corps, Royal Army Medical Corps, and Royal Army Ordnance Corps. The Jews included about 500 motor transport drivers, among them the very best of the chauffeurs and mechanics in the country. There was formed the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps. The first batch, 700 men, arrived at a French port on February 28, 1940. They were immediately despatched to the front. Of this batch 75 per cent. were Jews. They were drawn from a variety of occupations, born in nineteen countries and speaking twenty-two different languages. But all had one homeland—Palestine, and all spoke one language—Hebrew. They were mainly engaged on repair and maintenance work, construction and portage duties, both as skilled and unskilled labourers. They handled material from ships and trains; they loaded lorries with supplies, erected tents, extended railway lines, prepared munition dumps. Many had fought under General Allenby in the last war as members of the Jewish regiments which served with such distinction. Some had their sons with them. All alike worked with enthusiasm. A special correspondent of "The Times," in a long article (April 8, 1940), wrote:—

"The Palestinian volunteers are settling down well and their willingness to undertake heavy work belies the the common fallacy that the Semitic race is suited only to commerce and exchange. The men in these Palestinian

camps represent an astonishing variety of social backgrounds: Austrian doctors, Rumanian lawyers, builders' labourers from the industrial proletariat of Tel-Aviv, and Arab tillers of the soil, shout rhythmically in their own languages as they heave a section of railway track into position along the sleepers. . . Throughout the German unit hatred of the Nazi regime is intense. Many, especially the Jews, who form the majority, are looking towards Palestine for the future and trying to forget the land in which they were born. . . their only quarrel with the Administration is that they have not been provided with a field gun and 100 rounds."

Fighting in Flanders and France. After a few weeks, however, this first unit of the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps was equipped with rifles and turned into a defence corps. Its members distinguished themselves during the great battle of Flanders and Northern France, took part in covering the retreat of the Second British Expeditionary Force from St. Malo, and were among the last to go on board the last ship for England. Describing their exploits in a speech at a gathering of the Overseas League in London, Field-Marshal Lord Milne said: "They were told they would have to give up their rifles. 'Nothing doing—we're going to fight the Germans,' they said. To-day they are fighting the Germans in the Middle East."*

Manning Aerodromes in Egypt. It was not until the end of September, 1940, that the first unit had returned to Palestine. By then considerable progress had been made in the participation of Palestinian Jews in the fighting forces. A second company of the A.M.P.C. had received orders to proceed to the front, but owing to the collapse in France it was compelled to remain in the Near East. As a result, the Jews of Palestine were able to render a service of great value when most of the ground personnel of the Royal Air Force in Egypt had to be transferred to England to guard against the expected German invasion. It was essential to fill the gap thus created in Egypt, and it was intended to send out recruits from England. But Italy chose that moment to enter

* *The Times*, April 9, 1941.

the war and this course had to be abandoned. An urgent appeal was thereupon made to the Jewish Agency to fill the vacancy. They were asked to find 1,200 mechanics and specialists able to perform all technical jobs. The Jewish Agency immediately promised the necessary men. From Jewish towns and villages, volunteers poured into the vacancies and the number the R.A.F. obtained was not 1,200 but 1,500. There was a previous occasion when the Jews came to the help of the authorities in an emergency. When the Army first began to grow in size, it became necessary to construct barracks and camps for 18,000 men. The military command approached the Jewish Agency and enquired whether they could undertake and complete the job within 2 months. The Jewish Agency said they would. They employed 8,000 men on day and night shifts, and the job was finished in 6 weeks.

Joining the R.A.F. While entrance into the Army was narrowly restricted there were openings in the Royal Air Force, of which many young Jews gladly availed themselves. Aviation had, indeed, long been popular with the Jewish youth in the country, although the scope was limited. There were already before the war three aviation clubs supported by the Jewish Agency and the Jewish National Council, and an aviation school belonging to the latter which had eleven aeroplanes and five gliders. Scores of pilots, including several young women, had graduated, and all had received the Government licence. Accordingly, when the R.A.F., at the end of June, 1940, announced for the first time that it was willing to recruit Palestinians or citizens of Allied countries, between the ages of 18 and 45, for service in any place in which Great Britain was engaged in war, but mainly in the Mediterranean region, there was an eager response. Men were wanted in over thirty-six trades, principally as mechanics. Doctors, too, were needed. The first two Jewish volunteers were engineering students of British Universities, who had already had some flying experience; they were sent to England for further training. The recruits were described in a bulletin of the Air Ministry News Service (October 23, 1940) as "a keen set of fellows of good physique and extremely eager to get going with the units of the R.A.F., to which they have been posted." All the anti-aircraft stations in Palestine are now largely manned by Jews.

More Volunteers for Service Units.

The call for volunteers for the R.A.F. was immediately followed by a call for recruits for four Palestinian units of the British Army: the first unit for the Royal Engineers, the second for the Signal Corps, and the third and fourth mechanised transport companies—one Jewish and the other Arab—for the Royal Army Service Corps. Volunteers to form additional corps of the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps were also required. The Jewish Agency immediately issued an appeal to Jewish young men qualified for enlistment to volunteer for service. They also took steps, in co-operation with various trade organisations, to ensure that men with the requisite qualifications should be released for service, and organised large recruiting rallies. The Jewish Labour Federation (*Histadruth*) likewise addressed an appeal to its members to accelerate recruiting, and a special committee secured quotas of volunteers from 150 Jewish settlements, mostly skilled workers, including the sons of many who had fought in the first Great War. The Jewish Motor Transport Corporation unanimously decided to provide immediately a proportionate number of volunteers from the various transport services. The recruits, headed by massed bands, marched through the streets of Tel Aviv with British and Zionist flags flying. More than 1,000 Jewish volunteers joined the R.A.F. and the British Army within the first two days. The Jewish Motor Transport Company of the R.A.S.C. comprised 500 drivers and other skilled workers for service in Palestine and the neighbouring countries. The new Jewish company of the A.M.P.C. consisted of 660 men.

Jewish Combatant Units.

So gratified were the military authorities with the result of their appeal that General Philip Neame, the G.O.C., in a broadcast on September 4, 1940, congratulated the "Palestinians" on their prompt response to volunteer for the various service units and the R.A.F. A week later it was officially announced that separate Jewish and Arab Companies would be enlisted as combatant units of the British Army, to form part of the infantry arm for defence duties in Palestine or, if necessary, in neighbouring countries. Thus, after a year of war, the people of Palestine were at last invited to join the fighting forces. Again

the Jewish Agency and the Jewish National Council rallied to the support of the military authorities by issuing a call to Palestinian Jewry to volunteer for these combatant units and emphasising that since the outbreak of the war they had proclaimed their readiness to fight shoulder to shoulder with Britain against the enemies of democracy and the foes of the Jewish people. There was a first call for 400 Jews and 400 Arabs to form separate garrison guard companies as part of the Buffs (Royal East Kent Regiment). The Jewish companies were completed within a few days. Those for the Arab recruits were still open. A little later it was decided to raise two more companies, one Arab and one Jewish, for the Buffs Regiment, and also to raise a second Palestinian unit of the Royal Engineers, comprising bricklayers, carpenters, clerks, masons, electricians, painters, plumbers, and drivers.

When the recruiting was continued early in 1941, the request for further volunteers was accompanied by official praise of those who had already done service. A statement issued by the military command, on February 22, 1941, announcing that more volunteers were wanted to bring up the strength of the Palestinians in the Buffs to 1,000 and also for the various service corps, declared: "The Palestinian Companies of the Pioneer Corps, who have already proven their worth in the Libyan operations, can now accept a further unlimited number of new recruits." Many of the Jewish settlements vied with one another in providing a record proportion of volunteers: thus, of the 36 settlers in the tiny village of Kfar Sieff, 23 joined up. There was again a march of Jewish soldiers through the principal streets of Tel Aviv, with the display of the Union Jack and the Zionist flag, and great enthusiasm was aroused when a Jerusalem mother, Mrs. Rachel Weinberg, whose two sons were in the fighting forces, marched in the ranks with the soldiers.

In answer to various questions in the House of Commons on the subject, an official statement on the recruiting position in Palestine was issued by the Colonial Office for the first time on February 28, 1941, as follows:—

"Recruiting of Jewish and Arab units is being steadily and satisfactorily maintained. Since the outbreak of war, many Jews and Arabs have enlisted in technical units, such as the R.A.S.C., the Royal Engineers, and the Royal Corps

of Signals; and the Pioneer Corps of mixed Jewish and Arab composition has done good work. Many Palestinians have also joined the R.A.F.

"Some time ago the wish was expressed by both Jews and Arabs to be allowed to enlist in fighting units. It was decided to form 14 military companies: seven Jewish and seven Arab. The recruitment of these units has been on a basis of rigid equality of numbers, and already five Jewish and five Arab companies have been formed.

"Approximately 6,000 Jews and 3,000 Arabs are now serving with the British Army in the Middle East."

The Executive of the Jewish Agency supplemented this statement by pointing out that these figures did not include 1,500 Palestinian Jews serving with the Royal Air Force. Since then the total number of Palestinian Jews in the British Army has risen to some 12,000, including many officers. They include a Jewish company of 400 stevedores, lightermen and dock-workers, brawny men whose experience at the Tel Aviv port (and in the case of many, previously at Salonika) has proved very valuable in helping to handle army supplies in many North African ports. The official title of this unit is "Port Operations Company Royal Engineers." There are also over 80 Jewish doctors in the Army—half of them stationed in Palestine, and the rest in other parts of the Near Eastern front—apart, of course, from many doctors attached as volunteers to the Civil Defence Medical Services. A number of cadets from the Jewish nautical training camps at Haifa and Tel-Aviv were drafted into the Navy and are rendering useful service, and many other Jewish boys are being trained at these centres for similar duties.

**Stimulating
the Recruit-
ing Campaign.**

The revolt in Iraq early in May, 1941, fomented by Rashid Ali with the help of Haj Amin el-Husseini, ex-Mufti of Jerusalem, caused a profound stir among the Jews in Palestine and gave a further enthusiastic stimulus to recruiting. The Executive of the Jewish Agency and of the Jewish National Council issued a proclamation calling upon all unmarried Jews between the ages of 20 and 30 to join the British forces immediately, and stating that enlistment must be regarded by Jews in all walks of life within those age

Jewish Settlement Police
on the Parade Ground



Jewish Battalion of the Buffs
setting up a Field Telephone

Jewish Volunteers with
the Buffs, training in
Palestine





Cement Pipes Manufactured in a Jewish Factory in
Emek Zebulun



Potash Works on the Dead Sea

limits as a duty. They opened recruiting stations all over the country, and the number of Jews who presented themselves before the appointed date (May 4) exceeded all expectations. The Executives of all Jewish national institutions eagerly co-operated in calling upon their employees to volunteer immediately. The Council of the Jewish Labour Party passed a resolution calling for the "obligatory enlistment" of all members between the ages of 20 and 35, and the Municipality of Tel Aviv decided that the positions of all its employees who enlisted would be reserved for them until after the war, and that half of their salaries would be paid to their dependents during the interval. The Jewish Students' Association in Jerusalem likewise co-operated in the recruiting drive, and by June, 1941, a total of 370 students of the Hebrew University and of the Haifa Technical Institute had registered with its recruiting committee.

Many Jewish families were able to show a particularly fine record of war service. A widow named Nathaniel had all of her five sons in the Army: they were all born in Tiflis and had been brought to Palestine at an early age. Two of them were posted as "missing" in Greece and a third was wounded. Nor was the martial spirit confined to the younger generation. Benzion Israeli, veteran pioneer, who took part in the founding of the agricultural settlement at Kinnereth thirty years ago, and who served in the last war, joined up together with his sons. A sixty-year old author, Abraham Schwadron, likewise put on battle-dress. They symbolised the united desire of Palestinian Jewry to take their place in the front line. And so they clutched at any opportunity—no matter how grudgingly presented—which would take them into battle.

These various corps units of the Army and the R.A.F. went out anonymously to fight on the Middle Eastern front. But the exploits of some—which indicate the spirit of all—were too distinguished to remain unproclaimed. And in many cases their commanding officers paid tribute to their valour.

Let us take a trip round the battle-fronts of the Middle East and listen to their stories.

CHAPTER III.

AT THE BATTLE-FRONT.

In the Western Desert. The first Palestinian company of the A.M.P.C., which had previously served in France and England, was, after returning to Palestine, sent to undertake an important job in the Western Desert. During the initial advance from Sidi Barrani in December, 1940, this company was with the forward troops the whole way as far as Benghazi. Another unit of the A.M.P.C., under a Scottish officer, was in charge of the laying of a water pipe-line on high ground and exposed during this work to frequent enemy air-raids. All along the route from Sollum to Benghazi they rendered valuable services as auxiliary and service units. Lieutenant-General Sir Richard O'Connor subsequently stated in despatches that the capture of Tobruk would not have been possible without the great help of the Pioneers at Sollum, the first base of the British advance into Libya. According to Raoul Aglion, formerly a member of the French Legation at Cairo, entire Jewish contingents, led by Jewish officers and fighting under the Zionist flag, went into action for the first time in the war during the British campaign in North Africa. A number of Jewish stevedores, mainly from the Tel-Aviv port, were instrumental in capturing various ports in North Africa. The Jews attached to the R.A.F. in the Western Desert also acquired a reputation as hard and willing workers even in the most difficult conditions. They were found on all the desert stations. Familiar with and hardened to the local climatic peculiarities, and having the additional advantage of knowing the language, they rendered splendid service in countless tasks that brought the R.A.F. into contact with the Arabs of the Desert.

Heroism at Tobruk. There were two particular instances of Jewish heroism in the fighting in and near Tobruk. A number of soldiers were wounded and thrown overboard when some supply ships foundered. A Jewish soldier, although wounded himself, jumped to the rescue of a wounded Australian who was in danger of drowning and brought him safely ashore despite the heavy seas. In the other case, the hero, Private Joseph Breitman, met his death in action. During the attack on Tobruk, Breitman was among the troops that led a foray through a barbed-wire entanglement strewn with land-mines. Though badly wounded in the stomach, he silenced an enemy machine-gun nest with two well despatched hand-grenades, and enabled the other troops in his platoon to surge forward. Breitman, who was twenty-four years of age and a native of Poland, had been in Palestine only two years and had served as a supernumary constable in the settlement of Be'er Yaakov.

Tributes from General Wavell. The courage and efficiency displayed by the Palestinians in the various operations in Libya evoked the generous appreciation of General Sir Archibald Wavell, formerly G.O.C., Middle East, who said that they "performed fine work, prominently at Sidi Barrani, Sollum, Fort Capuzzo, Bardia, and Tobruk. Despite frequent bombing, their morale is excellent, and they are eager to help in the overthrow of the dictators." In the special Passover issue of the Cairo journal, *La Tribune Juive* (April 11, 1941), there were several messages of praise for the Jewish units, including one from General Wavell, who wrote: "The Palestinians did fine work. They showed remarkable courage and a splendid spirit of self-sacrifice." The British Major in command of these units wrote: "Never in my life have I seen such gallant and keen soldiers. I am proud of them." The "magnificent courage" displayed by a young Palestinian member of the R.A.F. during a heavy raid on an advance aerodrome in Libya was praised in an Air Ministry Bulletin (April 20, 1941). This official report stated that the Palestinian, while machine-bullets were tearing up the ground around him, and clothed only in a great-coat and pyjamas, repeatedly extinguished small incendiary bombs. Using his great-coat to muffle the flames, he put out a fire that had started near a heavy

bomber, and also saved another medium bomber which had caught fire.

In Eritrea. During the British advance in Eritrea the Palestinian units, under a British Colonel, played a vital part. They operated over most difficult ground, in constant danger of being outflanked by the enemy. Each section carried its own food and supplies. Their task was to pick up individual enemy posts and machine-gun nests and to take prisoners. Their living conditions and methods of progress were naturally more difficult and trying than those of the main forces. Their casualties had to be transported by camel to clearing-stations ten miles in the rear, but fortunately the majority of the casualties were slight. On reaching the Mogarreh Valley the Palestinian units had the duty of covering the left flank of the advance to Keren, and the cutting off of the Italians on a ridge to the left of the main attacking force, thus helping to take 2,000 prisoners and bringing to a successful conclusion an extremely tough and courageous action. Their bravery and fighting spirit were commended by the General Officer in Command in the warmest terms.

The "Suicide Squads." Even more notable was the part played by the Palestinians in Abyssinia. There were some 300 of them (three-fifths Jews and the rest Arabs), operating in "Suicide Squads," as they were called, for which they were specially chosen on account of their toughness, daring, and mobility. They had all joined the British Army at the outbreak of war as volunteers. Many of the Jews were originally refugees from the Nazi terror, who had reached Palestine only after being tossed about in a small vessel on the high seas and were then interned for several months as "illegal immigrants." Before transferring for service in Eritrea and Abyssinia, for which they volunteered, they had already fought in Flanders and France. They had also been among the first to enter Bardia, where they had destroyed enemy positions and returned to their advance formations without loss. The valour of these men became known throughout the Imperial Forces in North Africa. In Eritrea and Abyssinia, armed with tommy guns and a weapon that is a combination of knuckle-duster and steel dagger, they spread terror among

the Italian lines of communication and played an important part in the operations that led to the Duke of Aosta's surrender. Under a British officer they penetrated and demolished enemy fortifications night after night, bringing back valuable information.

Heroes of Keren. During the seven weeks' battle for Keren they lost only four men, although they were in the forefront of the hottest fighting. One of them, Shmaryahu Weinstein, was the hero of a particularly daring exploit, in which he saved a whole unit by sacrificing his own life. He was in charge of a machine-gun, and it was largely his valour which resulted in his unit's capturing one of the hills from the Italians. Another example of individual valour was that of David Raziel, who had for some years been active in Jewish defence against Arab attacks in Palestine before the war. He had many of his former comrades fighting with Britain in many perilous places in Abyssinia and Eritrea. They became experts in guerilla warfare under conditions requiring fortitude and skill, and they bore up astonishingly well under the burning African sun. A number of Jews were killed in the fighting in the Amba-Algai area.

Valiant Service in Greece. In Greece there were many Palestinians with the R.A.F., the Royal Engineers, and the Pioneer Corps, and they likewise acquitted themselves with distinction. Air Marshal D'Albiac praised the bravery of the men who had served under his command in that country. Sir Henry Maitland Wilson, G.O.C., Palestine, in a letter to the Chairman of the Jewish National Council of Palestine, quoted a statement by General Wavell that "the Palestinians worked well in Greece. They stood up in a satisfactory manner to the large-scale air attacks to which they were subjected. Their severe losses are a matter of great regret." Several hundreds of Palestinians were with the last 2,000 R.A.F. men to leave Greece after successfully covering the retreat in the fighting in the final days of the evacuation. Many of them subsequently fought in Crete. The New Zealand Premier, Mr. Peter Fraser, describing his impressions of a visit to the Middle East, in an interview with a representative of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency (August 28, 1941), stated

that "the Palestinians fought admirably in Greece and Crete, shoulder to shoulder with the New Zealanders and Australians. And we are all grateful for the way in which the Australian and New Zealand soldiers were received by the Palestinian

The spirit that animated the Jewish units in Greece was movingly expressed by a Jewish officer, a prominent member of the Labour Federation in Palestine, who is now believed to be a prisoner of war. In an open letter that was received in Jerusalem, he wrote:

"Although I do not know if this letter will ever reach you, or where we shall be if it should, I feel a deep need to communicate with you all and to say 'Good-bye.' It may yet be, however, that we shall see each other one day. We have not lost hope and know that the fight will go on. . . I pray that the battle will not reach our gates, but if it does, stand firm, man, woman, and child, against the enemy. We shall yet live to see happy days if we fight fearlessly. Some of us are already in the front ranks, and the others are working for them behind the front. Let there be no panic or sorrow. Fight!"

population."

The Retreat from Greece.

After the retreat from Greece there were many instances of individual heroism and resource, which were related to eager listeners in the towns and villages of the Holy Land. A number of Palestinians, after making their way from Thrace to Athens under heavy bombing attacks, arrived to find that their unit had been evacuated. With their senior officer and 80 other men they travelled along the south coast of Greece—300 in all—and embarked on a small vessel by which they reach an island. The vessel was bombed and set on fire by a Nazi plane. A few days later they were joined by 300 other troops and were saved by a British destroyer.

In recounting another story of escape from Greece, a sergeant in the Pioneer Corps said: "When things seemed darkest we sang 'Hatikvah.' ('Song of Hope,' the Jewish National Anthem.)" Together with him, in a motor boat, there were a captain, a sergeant-major, seven other Palestinian Jews,

four Australians, and a Chinaman. The presence of the last-named was never explained. "We sang the second verse only," he said, "to make it all-embracing and to include the others, to whom we translated the words." Just before dusk they sighted a destroyer on the horizon, attracted its attention by igniting a shirt soaked in petrol, and were soon rescued.

Unfortunately 1,444 Palestinians were among the 10,000 prisoners captured by the Germans in Greece and Crete, and of that total 1,023 were Jews and the rest Arabs.

The Syrian Campaign. The campaign in Syria affected the Jews of Palestine more immediately than the fighting on any other sector in the Near and Middle East, as a great number of Jewish settlements in Galilee were on the very front line of the advancing Allied troops. It was consequently necessary, as a measure of precaution, to evacuate the children and a number of women to a safe area during the period of hostilities. But the settlers ineligible to fight continued their work in the fields unperturbed. One of the oldest settlements in Upper Galilee is Metullah, which was heavily shelled by Vichy troops. It is only 200 yards from the Lebanon border, and part of its land even extends into Syrian territory. The Jewish settlers were able to show the authorities that the proximity of their settlements to the scene of military operations was of considerable advantage to the Imperial forces, as they possessed an intimate knowledge of the locality. A group of Jewish pioneers was specially chosen to serve with the Australian troops, and their work as guides, scouts and patrols behind the enemy lines has been widely praised. Two of these young men were the first casualties of Britain's Syrian campaign, and one was Moshe Dayan mentioned at the beginning of the first chapter. The Jewish contingent helped the Allied forces in recapturing Kuneitra, the key position on the main road from Safad to Damascus, and there were a large number of Jews among the officers and men of the Free French troops who advanced into Syrian territory. After the capitulation of the Vichy Commander, General Dentz, the "Agudath Israel" sent a message of congratulation to General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson, who replied that he "much appreciated the assistance rendered by the Jews in this campaign."

**Services
at
Sea**

Palestinian Jews have also rendered valuable services at sea. The youths who were being trained by the various Jewish maritime institutions at Tel-Aviv and Haifa were among the first to volunteer for service when motor-boat crews were raised for the R.A.F., and they are serving at R.A.F. Marine Stations all over the Middle East. A number of young Jewish skilled mechanics have joined the British Navy, and their skill, devotion and diligence have evoked the highest praise from their commanding officers.

Some Palestinian Jewish sailors have already distinguished themselves in action. When the S.S. *El Fath* caught fire as a result of an enemy air attack near Famagusta on August 21, 1941, four Jewish maritime officers succeeded in saving the freighter. Their action was brought to the notice of Admiral Andrew B. Cunningham, Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean Fleet, who wrote a letter to the Zebulun Society, in which he referred to the "considerable presence of mind and courage . . . exhibited by the above officers," and added: "I should be glad if you would inform them that their good services have been noted by me with much satisfaction."

**The Jewish
A.T.S.**

The Jewish women have also eagerly responded to the call of duty. As soon as the Government, in December, 1941, authorised enrolment of women in Palestine for the Auxiliary Territorial Service, with the object of releasing men from certain duties for active service, the Jewish Agency and the Jewish National Council issued an appeal pointing out that Jewish women, from the outbreak of war, had asked to be allowed to take part in the struggle against the common foe, and that they were now given the opportunity. In the ranks of all nations fighting for freedom the women stood by the side of the men, and Jewish women would surely not lag behind in this fateful conflict. A similar appeal was issued by the Council of Jewish Women's Organisations in Palestine, which immediately entered into active co-operation with the Chief Commandant, Mrs. Chitty, an A.T.S. Officer, on her arrival from Great Britain. The recruiting offices of the Jewish Agency were opened for registration of women between the

ages of 20 and 45, to be employed in hospitals, as motor drivers, clerks, orderlies, store women, and cooks. A staff of A.T.S. officers and non-commissioned officers arrived from England to assist in the training of 60 suitable candidates as officers and N.C.O.'s, and enthusiastic rallies were held in Tel-Aviv and other centres in furtherance of the movement. Within a very short time over 1,200 Jewish women and girls had joined up, and after the requisite training many were appointed officers and N.C.O.'s.

**Jews in the
Czechoslovak
and other
Armies.**

Moreover, there were some thousands of Jews in Palestine who joined the national army of the country to which they owed allegiance. Thus, as early as November, 1939, 1,200 Czechoslovak Jews (and about 40 Christians) presented themselves to the Czechoslovak Consul-General in Jerusalem and volunteered to fight in France. The majority were lawyers, engineers, doctors, and teachers, and they included many former officers. Jewish volunteers for the Czechoslovak army also came from China, the Dutch East Indies, and other remote parts. When the Consul-General, M. Joseph Kadlec, on January 15, 1940, addressed a parade of the second unit of these volunteers before leaving for France, he paid a tribute to their patriotism. Handing them the national flag, he said that the Czechoslovak Jews had reason to be proud of their record, as they formed the majority of the volunteers in the Czechoslovak army. "Be sure," he declared, "that your loyalty to our State will not be forgotten." The voluntary enlistment of these Jews, it should be noted, took place some months before the general mobilisation of all Czechoslovak citizens of military age, for this was not ordered by the Czechoslovak National Committee in London and Paris until April 8, 1940.

In November, 1940, Greeks of military age in Palestine were required to register at the Consulates for service in the Greek army. About 8,000 Greek subjects responded, of whom the majority were Jews, mostly from Salonika. Similarly, numbers of Polish Jews enlisted in the Polish Legion and Jews of Dutch nationality have joined the Free Dutch Forces.

**Service in
the Police
Force.**

Apart from the contribution of the Jews to the military forces, they are also well represented in Palestine's special police force, which has been enlarged and reorganised to meet the requirements of the war situation. In Tel-Aviv alone there is now a Jewish special constabulary of 1,000 volunteers, formed under the command of the District Superintendent of Police. They have all received special training, and they assist the regular police in cases of emergency. In the whole of the country there are over 20,000 Jews on the list of supernumary police. The Palestine Government, after negotiations with the Jewish Agency, have taken measures for strengthening the defence of the Jewish settlements by greatly increasing the Jewish police force. Twenty-three centres have been established in various parts of the country where young Jews are undergoing a thorough training for the police service.

The Jewish police who are guarding the Jewish settlements are by no means behind their brethren in the army in steadfastness and courage. When the British officer in command of the police inspected a number of these settlements, especially those situated near the Syrian frontier, he expressed the fullest satisfaction with the Jewish "Specials," or "Notrim," as they are called in Hebrew. Accompanied by a representative of the Jewish Agency, he inspected in particular the settlements of Hanita, Kfar Giladi, and Metullah, and paid an especially warm tribute to the courageous stand displayed during the fighting on the Syrian frontier by the "Notrim" of Metullah, who remained at their posts during the most critical days of the operations.

**An Instructive
Comparison.**

The foregoing account provides a bare, brief sketch of what the Jews of Palestine have already contributed in man-power and courage to the battle for democracy. It shows something of the spirit which moves the people. It reveals all that has been offered and the limited quota of sacrifice they have been permitted to bring.

Palestine is not a large country. The Jewish sector is infinitesimal in extent—though significant in resource. The total Jewish population is over 500,000 souls. The eligible

man-power they have to offer is about 50,000 front line soldiers and 35,000 older men for home defence. And there are 55,000 women volunteers for auxiliary military services and home-front duties who have, as recorded above, registered for service.

These figures may appear to you small, compared with the millions of modern armies. But ponder a moment over the contributions of man-power made by the great Dominions and by our Allies in exile. Recollect that the British force in Greece numbered about 30,000 souls. Remember Mr. Churchill's statement in the Commons that during the Libyan campaign: "We have never had in action more than 45,000 men." Remember, too, that a small, highly mobile, skilled, and trained force, well used to the terrain and conditions of the Middle East, may tilt the balance at a critical moment in large-scale fighting, may even do much in a campaign on its own, particularly when there is fire and spirit behind its determination. Remember also that a formidable force of tens of thousands of Jewish troops on the spot in the Middle East would save that number of British troops the long hazardous journey round the Cape, with all the costly accompaniments of a large expeditionary reinforcement.

Remember all these things. For those in authority do not regard their potential contribution insignificant. Ponder a moment over a comparison that almost screamed at the public a short time ago.

The Mediterranean island nearest to the Palestinian coast is Cyprus. The British public had heard little of the Cypriot war effort. Then on November 6, 1941, a report of the "Cypriots' fine war record" appeared in *The Times* together with an editorial headed "Cyprus at War." Here are the relevant extracts from that important leader:—

"In a message which is published on another page our Correspondent at Nicosia draws attention to the excellent record of a new unit of the British Army. The formation of the Cyprus Regiment was approved by the King a few months after the outbreak of war. It was an experiment. . . The experiment has succeeded beyond all expectation. In spite of much German wireless propaganda, which at one time had some effect on the higher Greek clergy, recruit-

ing for the regiment has been brisk from the first. Over 19,000 Cypriots, Turks as well as Greeks, have actually volunteered for service, and while many have been rejected on medical grounds a remarkably high percentage of the male population of the island is now in uniform, either in the infantry, transport, and pioneer units of the regiment or in the recently formed Home Guard."

It is no part of the purpose of this comparison to belittle the Cypriot record. It is a magnificent effort, and the Cypriots are to be praised for their fine spirit, courage and sacrifice. Their land is small, their population is small. Their contribution in terms of their resources is great indeed, and it is rightly appraised by Britain, so much so that a Cypriot fighting unit has been raised and Britain rightly enthuses over its exploits. The Jews of Palestine are also a comparatively small community, though their man-power offer is considerably greater than that of their neighbour. Why not do the same with their men who wish to serve?

The Times correspondent records on another page that "the official list of casualties in the Cyprus Regiment, totaling 2,420 killed, wounded, missing, and prisoners of war on all fronts, is an indication of the vigorous part these islanders have been playing in the war beyond their shores." And *The Times* leader, commenting, declares, "... their losses have been heavy."

Of the 12,000 Palestinian Jews as distinct from the tens of thousands of British Jews serving—and dying—on all fronts, who have served in all the campaigns, the losses also total more than 2,000. These losses, too, are heavy. The Cypriots can claim their dead. They can draw some comfort from the knowledge and public recognition of their sacrifice. The Palestinian Jews who fell in action are the unknown warriors of the war. They were not allowed to fight under their own name and banner. In the official records they are buried in an anonymous grave, but they cannot be buried in history. Their families know, and their brethren in all lands remember their sacrifice. And despite official reluctance, their comrades and brothers wish to take up arms and follow their example of sacrifice to crush Nazi tyranny out of the world.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION.

The Jews in Palestine did not confine their offer of military help to man-power. They offered all the fruits of their achievements in agriculture, industry, technical skill and the inventive genius of their scientists to assist Britain. Fortunately, although there was much needless restriction even in this sphere at first, much that the Jews had to give was accepted by the Military authorities. The only present restriction is the political ban which prevents Jews from settling and developing a large part of Palestine—a legacy of the period when policy was dictated by the desire to appease the Arabs by curbing Jewish progress.

The Jewish Agency realised from the first that it was essential to place Palestine's economy on a war footing. They therefore set up an Economic Council to plan and mobilise fresh resources for agricultural and industrial developments. A sum of about £2,000,000 was spent mainly on these developments during the first two years of the war, so as to increase the food production of the country and expand industry useful for war needs.

Agricultural Expansion. The Jewish National Fund acquired at great cost in the past two years another 22,000 acres, a part of which was immediately put under intensive cultivation. Large scale reclamation and drainage work was carried out in the Haifa Bay, the Beisan Valley, and the Huleh area. Wells were bored and water supplies installed in several settlements in the Haifa Bay district. Since the war, some fifteen new Jewish agricultural settlements have been created and old established settlements have been extended. They are already firmly plotted on the food producing map. New cultures have been introduced, such as

soya beans, ground nuts, Australian and Moroccan soft wheat. The irrigated area devoted to mixed farming has been considerably increased. Sheep-breeding has been expanded; and the output of milk, eggs, vegetables, and other agricultural products has also risen substantially. The Imperial and Allied Forces stationed in or based on Palestine have been supplied with a great deal of their food requirements from the soil of Palestine. The bulk of this has been grown on Jewish farmsteads by Jewish hands. There are now 7,000 more workers in agriculture than before the war, and there was also a notable increase in live-stock, by 11,000 head of cattle, 4,000 sheep, and 55,000 poultry in the first year of the war. There was, further, a 50 per cent. increase in the local supply of fish.

Progress in Industry. An even more impressive picture is presented in the field of industry. There are 2,000 factories owned by Jews in Palestine, a large number of which are engaged in the manufacture of war materials. Many have been expanded, and 400 new factories built—largely by refugees from Germany and the other Nazi-oppressed countries in 1941. These refugees have brought with them their technical experience and knowledge of patent processes. Many have brought also their own mechanical equipment. Both the number and variety of these manufacturing concerns offer an astonishing contrast to the position before Jewish settlement began.

There are 250 establishments in the metal industry: 20 are foundries, 20 iron construction works, 14 produce iron bars, and 100 are machine-tools and mechanical workshops. The electrical industry comprises 30 firms, which produce various electrical parts and fixtures. There are 130 wood-working factories, 90 textile works and 12 cement and brick works. Three spinning-mills work night and day to manufacture cotton drill for military uniforms. A leather industry turns out 135,000 pairs of footwear a month, much of which to supply the armed forces. Even the military authorities have cause to be pleased with the existence of the Clauson Steel Smelting Works in Haifa and a wool-spinning factory at Ramat Gan. In many cases there has been a rapid transition from peace-time to war production: a factory, for

example, that formerly produced bath-tubs, is now producing steel helmets for the forces. It is obviously of great value to the military command to have such industrial machinery at its disposal immediately behind the front, and also to have available reserves of highly skilled labour for such special jobs as the repair of a destroyer at Haifa or for work on optical and other precision instruments for the Army. Moreover, there is a large food industry which furnishes all kinds of supplies for the Army, and also a pharmaceutical industry which has grown tremendously since war broke out. Palestine's synthetic drugs, sera and vaccines are available for the medicine chest of Britain's Army of the Middle East. Jewish manufacturers had already carried out orders for the Imperial Army to the value of £1,000,000 by the end of 1940 and for £3,500,000 in 1941.

Electricity and Potash.

Palestine has two industrial concerns of particularly vital importance to the Army, which owe their creation to Jewish initiative and technical ingenuity. They are the hydro-electrical enterprise and the Dead Sea Potash industry. The Palestine Electrical Corporation provides the power which drives Palestine's war industry, and a glance at the comparative figures of power supplied before and after the war will provide a useful index of Palestine's industrial expansion to supply Britain's war needs. In 1939 the Palestine Electric Corporation alone supplied 25,100,000 kilowatts to industry; in 1940 the figure rose to 35,260,000 kwh. Since the war over 1,700 new electrical power installations have been completed in the southern district of the country.

The Dead Sea is being brought to life and its valuable mineral deposits exploited for the British war effort. The Dead Sea Potash Works provide the principal source of potash in the British Empire. They also yield bromine, chlorine, caustic potash, and magnesium salts, and can provide magnesium metal, ethylene di-bromide, caustic soda, and many other chemical products valuable both in war and peace. Bromine, which can be produced in substantial quantities, is essential to the Air Force: it is indispensable in the preparation of high grades of petrol. A mixture of aluminium with magnesium produces magnelium, a light

and strong substance in great demand for aircraft construction. There are now 2,000 men working 1,300 feet below sea-level on the extraction of these vital chemical deposits. The Palestine Potash Company, which has greatly increased its production in the past two years, has made arrangements with the British Ministry of Supply, whereby the bulk of its output has been placed at the disposal of the Ministry. The plant, especially the bromine factory, has been enlarged, and the construction of additional plants for the manufacture of new chemical products is in progress.

Delhi Conference Surprises.

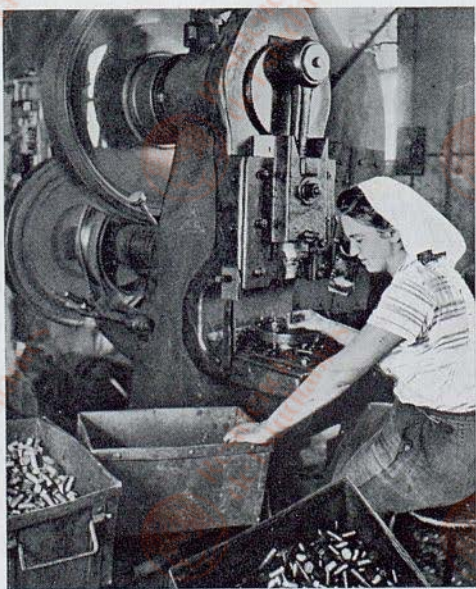
The extensive range and high value of Palestine's economic resources, thanks to Jewish enterprise and capacity, have proved a revelation on two recent occasions. The first was the Eastern Group Conference, which was held at Delhi in December, 1940, to survey and pool the economic resources of the Eastern countries of the Empire for the war-effort. The Jewish Agency, which has been co-operating with the War Supply Board in Palestine, prepared a great deal of material and statistical data for the Conference; and in the course of the discussion it was found that among the victims of Nazi oppression who had sought refuge in Palestine there were highly trained experts of the utmost value—one of Germany's greatest authorities on optics, Mr. Eliyahu Goldberg (formerly manager of the Zeiss Works), and several Bren gun experts who were needed for the manufacture of munitions in India. It was at the special request of the British authorities that Mr. Goldberg joined the Palestine delegation to the Conference. After the Delhi Conference, Brigadier-General B. H. Penn, of the Ministry of Supply's mission to the Conference, visited Palestine at the request of the Palestine Government in order to investigate the actual and potential capacity of the country for the production of war supplies other than arms and ammunition.

Cairo Palestinian Exhibition.

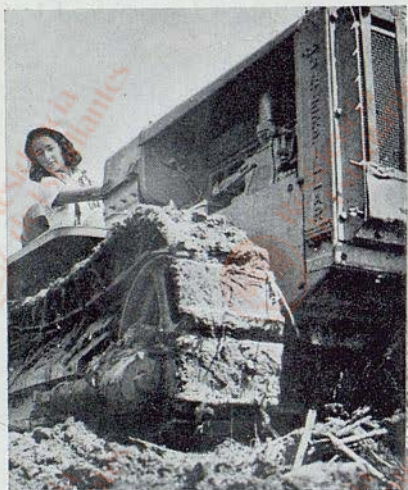
The other occasion was the Palestine Industrial Exhibition, which was held in Cairo last August, and at which 360 exhibitors from Palestine were represented, including the Hebrew University and its affiliated institutions, the Hadassah Medical



Packing Department of a Marmalade Factory



The Jewish Women of Palestine in the War Industries



Jewish Girls as
Tractor Drivers



Jewish Women Drivers
of Heavy Lorries in
Palestine

Organisation, many Jewish agricultural settlements, and all the important Jewish and Arab factories in the country. General Auchinleck, Commander-in-Chief of the British Forces in the Middle East, who inspected the Exhibition, exclaimed: "It is surprising. These are things about which I knew nothing. It is an impressive discovery." Mr. Oliver Lyttelton, Minister of State in the Middle East, who was also present at the opening, replied: "It is not new to me. But it is very good and very useful to the war-effort." M. Sirry Pasha, then Prime Minister of Egypt, who praised the exhibition to representatives of the Palestinian press, said: "You have created a tremendous industry in Palestine. We shall learn from your experience."

Transport and Public Works. Transport and public works are other spheres in which the Jews have rendered considerable help. The military operations in Egypt and Syria called for vehicles of all descriptions, and the Jewish community of Palestine responded energetically. During the three months April-July, 1941, the Transport Committee of the Jewish Agency had secured and placed at the disposal of the Army 500 cars and other vehicles together with their drivers. A large number of additional drivers were also enlisted to help in the military transport services, quite apart from the volunteers for the Special Army Transport units.

Builders of Fortifications. The concentration in Palestine of large forces and the need for military preparations called for very extensive public works, the construction of camps, hospitals, fortifications, and roads. These had to be constructed at very short notice and completed in double-quick time. The large Jewish labour force, skilled in building and constructional work, and organised in a special contracting corporation—the "Solel Boneh"—was on the spot and able to carry out the most exacting tasks to the complete satisfaction of the military authorities. Solel Boneh, it will be recalled, had the task of constructing the celebrated "Tegart Wall" along the Palestine-Syrian frontier during the Arab disorders. Instead of the estimated 8 months, Solel Boneh had this skilled and

hazardous task completed in 10 weeks. The fortification works in the north of Palestine prior to the advance into Syria kept 8,000 to 10,000 Jewish workers busily employed day and night. The provision of this contingent, together with the necessary staff of engineers, technicians, and foremen, at a time when thousands of Jews were already serving in the Army, revealed efficient organisation. It also showed something of the spirit behind the Jewish workers of Palestine.

CHAPTER V.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

It has been truly said that this modern war is a war of science and technological skill. Something has been shown in previous chapters of the man-power and resources which the Jews of Palestine are able to provide for Democracy's war machine. In agriculture, as we have seen, no country in the Middle East has anything that approaches the intensive cultivation which Jewish settlements have introduced throughout the land. There is not a single country from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf, from the Caucasus to the Red Sea, which can boast the industrial development achieved by the Jews in Palestine. Similarly in the realm of scientific knowledge and technical skill, Palestine is unique in the Middle East, and already her scientific contribution to the war has been significant.

Hebrew University's Services. Immediately after war broke out, the Hebrew University offered the services of its scientific and medical staff and the use of its well-equipped laboratories for any purposes for which they might be needed. Before the Delhi Conference, the University sent the British authorities a list of its scientists, many of them men of international repute, who were engaged in research work in chemistry, physics and medicine, and a report of the nature and stage reached of their research. All were ready to contribute their special gifts to further the war effort.

Lecturing to Army Doctors. The University arranged courses under Professor Saul Adler, famed throughout the scientific world as parasitologist and expert in tropical medicine, for the medical officers of the British and Australian Forces. His Parasitology Department has

supplied the medical authorities of the Australian Forces, as well as the Polish contingent, with sera for the prevention and cure of typhoid and other tropical diseases. A group of scientists of the University, mainly German Jewish refugees, have perfected a new and more economical technique for fighting typhus, and have offered it to the British Government for use in the Middle East where anti-typhus precautions are necessary. The University in conjunction with the Hadassah Hospital and Medical Centre also arranged courses in war surgery and camp sanitation for military physicians. A detailed plan for immediate medical aid in the event of attack from the air has been worked out by the Hadassah Hospital, and dressing stations have been set up for the immediate examination of the injured. In the Botanical Department local herbs have been discovered for pharmaceutical needs to replace some formerly imported from Europe. An example of the authoritative position occupied by the Hebrew University in the Near East in the field of medicine was revealed by the action of the Director of the Turkish Central Institute for Hygiene, in Ankara, who sent a bacteriologist to the University to study the technique employed in the manufacture of anti-typhus vaccines and the general methods of typhus prevention and treatment.

Air Data and Chemical Products. The Meteorological Laboratory of the University has supplied the military authorities with air data for weather reports covering the entire area between the Caucasus mountains and Lower Egypt. The Laboratory of Physiology has, since the outbreak of war, been engaged on the production of vitamins and hormones for local pharmaceutical firms to satisfy the needs both of the civilian population and the troops. The Department of Physical Chemistry has acted as advisory committee to the Jewish Agency in questions concerning chemical industry.

Testing Materials and Repairs. The Jewish Technical Institute in Haifa has been co-operating, since the beginning of the war, with the Royal Engineers in the Northern District of Palestine in the testing of building and constructional material, and also in discovering

suitable local substitutes for materials which could not be imported owing to the war. The laboratories of the Institute have also carried out technical research work for the Army. The electrical laboratories prepare and repair instruments and motors for the Army and Navy as well as for industries supplying war materials.

**Synthetic
Pharmaceutical
Products.**

The Daniel Sieff Research Institute at Rehobot was founded by Dr. Chaim Weizmann in order to lay the scientific foundations of an organic chemical industry in Palestine. Some of the Institute's research work is now finding its practical application. The production of acetone and butyl alcohol by fermentation (the famous process discovered by Dr. Weizmann in the last war) is now being applied to a part of the unexported citrus crop. Both acetone and butyl alcohol are important war chemicals. Another local raw material lending itself to the manufacture of important chemicals is Iraq petroleum (brought by pipe-line to Haifa), and the research done in this direction is now assuming great importance. Another branch of the organic chemical industry is the production of pharmaceuticals, which, before the war, was virtually a monopoly of German industry. On the basis of its past research work, the Sieff Institute has established a pharmaceutical factory for the production of certain badly-needed drugs, such as synthetic anti-malarials and hypnotics. The absence of quinine (formerly obtained from the Dutch East Indies) increases the demand for such synthetic anti-malarials, which are urgently needed alike by the Armies of the Middle East and by the civilian population. A synthetic vitamin C preparation, the manufacture of which is now being undertaken in Palestine, may become almost equally important.

CHAPTER VI.

THE GOVERNMENT AND THE JEWISH OFFER.

This account of Palestine Jewry's desire to serve in this war was begun with the observation that it was a story of frustration and disappointment. Let us complete the narrative by bringing it up to date.

Official Discouragement.

In the negotiations carried on by Dr. Weizmann as head of the Jewish Agency for Palestine and the World Zionist Organisation, with the British Government, there was at no stage a firm refusal of Jewish offers of help. For how could Britain in time of war, when every ounce of help was needed and being demanded, turn down so important an offer of manpower and resources? But the Government's reply was always politely evasive, and the matter was always postponed, first for six months, then for three months. "Difficulties of equipment" often featured prominently as a cause for delay, though the Jewish Agency produced an excellent plan for overcoming the difficulty. When Lord Lloyd was Colonial Secretary, the scheme of a Jewish Fighting Force was practically "in the bag" and there was much rejoicing in Jewish circles. Then Lord Lloyd died, and his death was made another excuse for delay. His successor, Lord Moyne, claimed that he would have to consider so important a project more carefully before giving it his seal. There is strong evidence in support of Lord Wedgwood's accusation that it is not the Government that was to blame, but certain officials in the Colonial Office and in the Palestine Administration whose hostility to Zionism leads them to advise the Government—even at the cost of sacrificing British interests in the Middle East—against accepting any Jewish help, for fear that a bill will have to be paid after

the war. True or not, as Lord (then Colonel) Wedgwood pointed out in an important House of Commons speech (November 25, 1941):—

“It is said that we should be committed if we gave the Jews an opportunity of forming themselves into a fighting force—that we should be committed in gratitude or in honour at a Peace conference and that that commitment might be inconvenient. But we are committed in the same way to the Free French, Belgians, Dutch, Norwegians and to all those free forces who will have fought by our side, when the Peace conference comes along. What they have fought for will be considered. So we are already committed over and over again to the Jews. We were committed to them in the last war, and this war does not increase our commitments. When terms come to be considered, who shall say how far even the most honourable Power will be able to achieve all that it has fought for?”

Months and months had elapsed, and still the Government showed no signs of accepting the Jewish offer. Dr. Weizmann was finally driven to ask the Colonial Office for a definite answer. The answer was “No.”

Dr. Weizmann's Statement. This is the statement issued by Dr. Weizmann on November 9, 1941. Read it

as if you, a Briton, were refused permission to raise a British Army to strike against a vicious enemy who has declared war on you and whose treatment of your comrades made the barbarians of the Middle Ages look like angels by comparison. And then marvel at his conclusion of hope, and his appeal to Jewry to allow no snub or humiliation to prevent their fullest war effort within the restricted scope of official opportunity:—

“In the war against Hitler the Jewish nation claims a place among the fighters in the forefront, and moreover its right to fight under its own name and flag.

“The Twenty-first Zionist Congress, which met at Geneva in August, 1939, commissioned me to express to the British Government our desire to co-operate. I did so in a letter to Mr. Chamberlain dated August 29. I re-

ceived a courteous but non-committal reply. We had to fight a political battle before Palestinian Jews were permitted to bear arms, and this battle is not over even now.

"There are two aspects to the Jewish war effort: in Palestine and the Middle East, and beyond. With regard to Palestine, we have from the beginning pressed for the recruitment of the maximum number of Jews in Jewish units within the British Army, both for the defence of the country and in support of the British Forces in the Middle East. We further offered a Jewish Division to be formed in the West for service wherever required, consisting of Jewish volunteers from all free countries with a leavening of Palestinian Jews.

"Mobilisation of Jews in Palestine became a most vital and urgent question when, in June 1940, Italy entered the war; and still more so after the Germans reached the Eastern Mediterranean in force, in the spring of this year. The Palestinian Jews are prepared to die fighting, but not willing to let themselves be slaughtered like sheep in a shambles—co-operation is an offer, but self-defence is a claim. Certain steps for local defence have been taken by the Government, and this is the most satisfactory point of my Report.

"I pass to the enlistment of Palestinian Jews for military service in the Middle East.

"At first the main thing offered by H.M. Government was service in two mixed 'Palestinian' units of the Pioneers, who are non-combatants. But this was not what the Jews asked for. When at last it was decided to enlist Palestinians for combatant service, numerical parity between Jews and Arabs was insisted upon. And as the keenness of the Palestinian Arabs was not equal to the occasion, this rule restricted Jewish numbers to a mere fraction of what the total would otherwise have been. Since the parity rule has been relaxed new Jewish Companies have been added to The Buffs. Together with more than 1,500 in the R.A.F. Ground Forces and various auxiliary units, the Palestinian Jews have supplied by now some 10,000 men to the British Forces, and recruitment continues.

"There is, however, one supremely important aspect on which, so far, we have been refused any satisfaction. Like all nations, the Jews desire to serve under their own national name and flag, doing honour to their national badge, the Shield of David, which the Nazis try to convert into a mark of shame.

"But the name of 'Jew' seems to be shunned as much by those who accept our services, as it is flaunted by our enemies. The Palestinian Jews have done honourable service in France, Libya, Eritrea, Abyssinia, Greece, Crete and Syria. But have any of us ever been allowed the pleasure of seeing their service acknowledged? At the utmost some mention is made of 'Palestinians,' so that the public does not know whether these are Jews or Arabs.

"I now pass to my last chapter. Here I have nothing to record except disappointment and frustration. For a long time past there has been a pressing demand among all the free Jewries of the world for a Jewish Fighting Force in which any Jew could enlist as a Jew, for service with the British Forces, fighting under the name and flag of his race. All this time the Executive of the Jewish Agency has preserved silence. But this was not the silence of indifference or inaction.

"On December 1, 1939, I made, on behalf of the Agency, an offer of a Jewish Division for service wherever required. But under the Chamberlain-MacDonald regime nothing could come of it. In the summer of 1940, under the new Government, our offer was pressed once more, and in a more detailed form. In September 1940 it received the explicit approval of H.M. Government. Discussion of detail and preparations for carrying out the scheme followed, and reached a point at which none of us in the Agency doubted that the Jewish Fighting Force would shortly come into being. Naturally we could not join in a public agitation for something for which we held a definite promise.

"Then, like a bolt from the blue, came a letter from the Colonial Secretary on March 4th, informing me that owing to lack of equipment the project must be put off for six months, but might be reconsidered again in four months. To this was added an emphatic assurance that

this postponement was in no sense a reversal of the previous decision in favour of our proposal.

"The original scheme was to bring the recruits for the Jewish Fighting Force to England for training, and while the framework was to be supplied by Jews seasoned in the Middle Eastern campaigns, we counted on obtaining the bulk of our recruits from across the Atlantic. Even before the postponement of March 4th the difficulties of the shipping position were apparent, and therefore the idea of training part, or the whole, of the Force, in the West Indies or Canada was discussed. This necessity had become even more obvious when we raised the question once more towards the end of the six months' period.

"On August 28, however, I received a further letter from Lord Moyne informing me that because of new technical difficulties the matter of the Jewish contingent would have to continue in cold storage for the present, but proposing again to consider the question in three months' time. I now felt that the moment would never come when there were no technical difficulties, and I pressed for a definite decision. On October 15, I received an answer from the Colonial Secretary which in substance goes back on the promise of September, 1940, and the reassurance of March, 1941.

"I have now given you the broad outlines of the work and the endeavours of the Jewish Agency, and the disappointments which they have suffered. We Jews are being penalised for our loyalty and devotion. There is obviously the feeling that we require no encouragement, and we are refused the rights of every nation to its name and flag. It is bitter for me to have to say this. But we do not lose hope, nor do we renounce our claim to a Jewish Fighting Force serving under its own standard. And even now I say, addressing myself especially to the Palestinian Jews: Enlist in ever growing numbers! Work and fight, even if nameless! You are working and fighting for a great cause. And whatever others may do to us, we must not default in our duty to the common cause."

Dr. Weizmann's hope was not idle. The day his state-

ment was published, Monday, November 10, saw the stirring of Britain's conscience. *The Times* published this leader:—

JEWRY AND THE WAR.

“In a speech to representatives of Zionist organizations yesterday, Dr. Weizmann gave his account of a long series of transactions with the Government. His story can be briefly summarized. Since the early days of the war two Jewish proposals, one for the formation of Jewish units raised in Palestine for military service in the Middle East and the other for the formation elsewhere of a Jewish Fighting Force for service wherever required, have been pressed upon the War Cabinet. The first encountered many difficulties. In spite of Lord Lloyd's assistance the authorities long insisted on parity of numbers between Jews and Arabs, a condition which artificially restricted Jewish recruitment. Incidentally the units raised were described as Palestinians—a geographical designation unknown outside official publications. The second proposal received the explicit approval of the Government in September of last year. After Lord Lloyd's death its execution was deferred, but the Jews received an assurance that the deferment was only temporary. It was again deferred in August and when Dr. Weizmann asked for a decision he received a reply from Lord Moyne which seemed to go back on the promise of last autumn—apparently on the plea of shipping difficulties.

“Valid military reasons against accepting all help that the Jews are prepared to give in Palestine or elsewhere are not easily found. Shipping difficulties are not necessarily permanent, and in any case military considerations come first in the apportionment of shipping space. The Jews have shown themselves most willing to join in defending the free world against the Nazi onslaught. There are millions of them in the western hemisphere. There are at least half a million in Palestine, where, in spite of restrictions, over 10,000 have already joined the Imperial forces, and thousands more are anxious to give their services. At Keren, in Greece and Crete, in Libya and Syria the ‘Palestinians’ have done good service. Why should their aid be declined? There seems to be

little logic in denying such Jewish units as exist already the right to wear badges and describe themselves as Jews. It was not so denied in the last War. The real fear no doubt behind the official attitude towards the Jewish troops in Palestine and the official rejection of the offer of a Jewish fighting force is that of stirring up Arab suspicions at a time when it is well that relations with the Arab States should rest on mutual confidence. But at no time yet has evidence been forthcoming that this objection could apply to the raising of a Jewish force oversea."

The *Manchester Guardian*, that staunch champion of freedom and all human liberties and of Britain's noble traditions, declared editorially :—

"It is a disturbing story that Dr. Weizmann, the Zionist leader, had to tell to a representative Zionist gathering in London yesterday. The Jews wanted to make a military contribution of their own to the winning of the war. In Palestine they desired to be organised to defend themselves should the Germans come. This, to an extent which cannot be stated, they have been allowed. The Palestine Jews desired also to serve as Jewish units, 'doing honour to their national badge, the Shield of David,' in the Middle East. The Government at first offered only non-combatant service for 'Palestinian' units. Then, when combatant service was allowed, Jews and Arabs were only to be admitted in equal numbers. This meant that zeal among the Jews was to be limited by the lack of it among the Arabs. Finally the rule of equal numbers was relaxed. By now the Palestinian Jews have furnished some 10,000 recruits, but they are not allowed to have their own flag or name, and, if referred to at all, are called vaguely 'Palestinians.' Besides this the Jews not only of Palestine but in all the free countries desired to contribute a Jewish Fighting Force for service anywhere.

"The idea of a Jewish Division was formally approved by the British Government in September, 1940. On March 4 of this year the proposal was postponed for six months with an assurance that this was 'in no sense a reversal' of the policy. It had been intended that the recruits should be trained in England, but, since there

might obviously be difficulties of shipping and since the bulk of the recruits were to come from the United States, it was suggested that training should take place on the other side of the Atlantic. At the end of August, however, the Colonial Secretary said that 'because of new technical difficulties' the project must be postponed for another three months. Dr. Weizmann, aware that the day when there will be no 'technical' difficulties will never come, asked for a decision, and received an answer 'which in substance goes back on the promise of September, 1940, and the reassurance of March, 1941.' If one considers the way in which, since the war began, we have handled the whole question of Jewish aid, it is difficult to believe that technical questions are the real obstacle. We need man-power so badly for the Army that we are stripping industry with great severity. We ought to welcome Jewish troops, of whom, did we welcome them, the present 10,000 would only be a part. But, it is said, they would need shipping. So do the troops whom we bring to the war from the farthest parts of the earth, and yet we bring them. Do we sit so easily in our seats that we can afford to reject a Jewish division which would be the nucleus of a larger force? Yes, but they want to serve as Jews, with a Jewish flag in addition to the British. Has it not, then, been the policy of the British Government, reaffirmed by successive Ministries, and only recently by Mr. Churchill, to establish in Palestine a Jewish National Home? And, if so, with what justice can we refuse to let the Jews help us with their national 'Fighting Force'?"

**The
Government's
Reply.**

In a speech that Lord Moyne, then Colonial Secretary and Leader of the House of Lords, made in that House on November 25, 1941, at the first available opportunity after Dr. Weizmann's statement, he said that "negotiations never reached the final stage, and they were put off from time to time owing to military reasons." It is, to say the least, difficult to reconcile these words with the explicit approval expressed by the Government in September, 1940, and with the emphatic assurance given by the Colonial Secretary in March, 1941, that the further postponement was in no sense

a reversal of the previous decision in favour of the proposal.

The Changed Situation. Conditions have changed very much and very seriously during the last few months. The entire situation in the Far East, owing to Japan's entry in the war, has become much worse than even the most pessimistic prophets would have dared to foretell. The safety of India is now threatened. The battle in Libya is far from having been decided and bristles with difficulties. There will be a concerted spring offensive in which Hitler will make the most desperate efforts to effect a drive both against the Suez Canal and the Caucasus in order to retrieve the reverses he has suffered on the Russian front. In these circumstances it becomes more necessary than ever that the safety of Palestine, which occupies such an important focal point in the Near East, should be effectively secured beyond the peradventure of any risk, and towards this end it is vital that the whole of the Jewish man-power of the country should be mobilised without delay. The bravery that the Jewish soldiers have already displayed on other battle-fronts would be even surpassed on the soil of their ancient homeland if it should become necessary to defend it.

The Jews' Rightful Place. History knows of no previous case of the inhabitants of a country being denied the opportunity of defending it to the utmost of their capacity, or of their offer to do so being refused, nor does history know of any war on such a world-wide scale or one in which such vital and far-reaching issues were at stake. The end is still a long way off, and before the enemies of civilisation are beaten there will be a great deal more blood shed and all liberty-loving peoples will have to make greater sacrifices. The Jews have already made and continue to make whatever contributions they can to the Allied war-effort. But their sense of right and of their national duty requires that they shall also be permitted to have their own fighting force within the British Army, and that they should battle beside all the other defenders of freedom under their own flag. They are not content to remain Britain's nameless ally. They seek and deserve recognition, and they will continue to press their offer until they are allowed their rightful place in the struggle for victory.

ANNEXE.

Appeal by the Jewish Agency Executive.

On June 30, 1942, the Executive of the Jewish Agency for Palestine issued the following :—

“In view of the present situation in the Middle East and the danger to Palestine, the Jewish Agency for Palestine calls attention to the efforts made by Palestine Jewry for more complete mobilisation of Jewish manpower in the country, and to their desire to be used to the utmost in the fighting services and in a Home Guard. It is urged that the 12,000 Palestinian Jews already serving with the British Forces in the Middle East should be unified, and supplemented by a further 20,000 in a Jewish Fighting Force within the British Army; and that a further 40,000 to 50,000 Palestinian Jews should be embodied in a Home Guard for the defence of the country.

“The Jewish people everywhere looks to His Majesty's Government to give the Jews of Palestine full opportunity to participate in this great struggle, and to defend their families and their National Home.”

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