

BRITISH AND PALESTINIAN JEWS IN WORLD WAR II

By ISRAEL BRODIE¹

THE story of the participation of British Jews² in World War II provides a record of proud sharing in the total national effort of the peoples of the British Isles to resist to the last the menace of invasion, to defeat the enemy on land, on the sea and in the air, to strike a triumphant blow for freedom and justice. In factory and on the field of battle, in the grim hours of blitz, flying bombs and rockets, in the willing acceptance of restrictions and sacrifice, the Jews of Britain stood side by side with their fellow citizens. They displayed the same high patriotism, the virtues of mutual help and selflessness, as well as the characteristic humor and the 'we-can-take-it' attitude, which reflected the spirit of Britain and were justly admired by the world when Britain stood alone. Added to their determination to give everything for the safety and well-being of the realm, was the impelling motive to fight the barbarism and tyranny that had

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² This article does not pretend to give a complete account of British Jewry's participation in the War. It deals mainly with the Jewish effort in the Armed Forces. The data herein furnished have been collated from the records in the Senior Jewish Chaplain's Office and from the pages of the *Jewish Chronicle*.

A word must be said on the title of the article. It here includes Jewish men and women who enlisted in the British Armed Forces, as follows: (1) men and women born or naturalized in this country and the colonies; (2) men and women technically 'aliens' volunteered or were liable for service and (3) the men and women from Eretz Yisroel who volunteered for service in the British Army, Royal Air Force and Royal Navy. Excluded are the large numbers of Jews and Jewesses who served in the Dominion Forces of Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand; their contribution will be the subject of separate articles.

Thanks are due to Brigadier E. F. Benjamin, C. B. E., Commanding Officer of the Jewish Infantry Brigade Group, and Major David Spector, former Staff Major of the Brigade, for valuable data on the formation and history of the Jewish Brigade; to Mr. Gershon Hirsch of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, for supplementary particulars relating to Palestinian Units; and to Captain L. Kuh (formerly Second-in-Command of one of the Alien Pioneer Companies, who took a leading part in the organization of these Companies) for supplying me with an account of the part played by Jewish Refugees in the War Effort.

bled Israel, annihilated whole communities in Europe, and would not have spared old and young had the enemy reached the British Isles.

Military Records

From the outset, the need and importance of keeping accurate records of all Jews serving in H. M. Forces was recognized, and comprehensive details have been maintained throughout the whole period of the war.

Whilst it was impossible, for obvious reasons, to have complete records of every Jew and Jewess in H. M. Forces, it can be said with truth that the Jews of the United Kingdom made a notable contribution to the war effort. This can be substantiated when one considers the total estimated Jewish population of the United Kingdom, which is given at 400,000, for prior to demobilization something like 60,000 Jewish men and women were serving in the British Armed Forces, of whom more than 14,000 were in the Royal Air Force and 1,500 in the Royal Navy. It should be noted that the figures given are those of men and women actually contacted by Jewish chaplains or whose names have appeared in authentic and checked nominal rolls. They do not include the large numbers of Jewish people who did yeoman service in the Civil Defense Organizations, such as the A. R. P. (Air Raid Precautions), A. F. S. (Auxiliary Fire Service), N. F. S. (National Fire Service), Nursing and Medical Services, etc. Nor do they include Dominion personnel or the 30,000 men and women who voluntarily enlisted in the British Forces from Palestine. Here reference may be made to the statement in August 1942, of the then Secretary of State for War (Sir James Grigg), who, in referring to the liability of Jews of British nationality to serve in the British Forces, said that "this was an obligation which they had carried out very fully and faithfully," and that "honour was due to them."

Casualties and Honors

British Jews did their full duty as loyal citizens and stood side by side with other subjects of the King in the hour of crisis. As lovers of freedom and democracy, they upheld

the cause of England against her enemies in a spirit of loyalty and self-sacrifice, and bore their full share in the war in every quarter of the globe in the operations on sea, on land, and in the air. This can be confirmed by the fact that, according to the records in the Office of the Senior Jewish Chaplain to H. M. Forces, approximately 1,150 British Jews paid the supreme sacrifice. The casualties and awards, as known up to the date of this article,¹ are as follows:

Killed in action:

Royal Navy.....	19	
Army.....	365	
Royal Air Force.....	234	618
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Killed on Active Service

Royal Navy.....	12	
Army.....	199	
Royal Air Force.....	134	345
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Died on Active Service

Royal Navy.....	3		
Army.....	137		
Royal Air Force.....	47	187	1,150
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Missing:

Royal Navy.....	10	
Army.....	103	
Royal Air Force.....	66	179
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Awards:

Companion of the Bath.....	2
Companion of the British Empire.....	5
Order of the British Empire.....	27
Member of the British Empire.....	52
Distinguished Service Order.....	9
Distinguished Service Cross.....	9

Bar to Distinguished Service Cross.....	3
Military Cross.....	59
Bar to Military Cross.....	1
Distinguished Flying Cross.....	56
Bar to Distinguished Flying Cross.....	8
Distinguished Conduct Medal.....	5
Distinguished Service Medal.....	2
Military Medal.....	41
Bar to Military Medal.....	1
Distinguished Flying Medal.....	30
Territorial Decoration.....	10
Air Force Cross.....	4
Territorial Medal.....	1
George Medal.....	2
British Empire Medal.....	28
Mentioned in Despatches.....	213
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	568

There were a considerable number of battle casualties but the wounded have not been listed; nor does the above list include Dominion or Palestinian personnel.

Citations

It will be noticed that the number of awards is substantially large, and provides proof of the gallantry and devotion to duty of Jewish troops. The citation in practically every case makes most interesting and thrilling reading, but it would be impossible to quote them all in this article. It might, however, be of interest to readers to have a few examples.

Unique is the case of Wing Commander Lionel Cohen, D. S. O., M. C., of the Royal Air Force, who was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross in consequence of his service as an air-gunner on active operational service at the remarkable age of 68. The citation which accompanied his award stated that "he had set a magnificent example to all by his untiring energy and courage. This officer, who flew in 45 operational missions, also participated in the attack on the Scharnhorst and Gneisenau when they were lying at Brest in 1941."

Another example of gallantry, courage and resource is that of Captain David S. Barnett of the Royal Marines, who was awarded the Military Cross. An extract from the citation reads:

Captain Barnett, commanding the left forward troop in an attack in Italy, had an extremely hazardous task, as the advance was made across the front of two enemy company localities under heavy fire. So successfully did he personally lead the troops that they were able to infiltrate past the leading locality and, led by Captain Barnett, charged a rear locality. Captain Barnett's personal example to his men was so great that they had soon cleared the locality and were in a position to give covering fire to the troops doing the assault crossing.

Conspicuous gallantry was stressed in the case of Sgt. Hazard of the Royal Air Force. A fiercely burning bomber, set on fire by its own load of incendiaries, was safely brought back over 1000 miles by its pilot and crew, and all of them have won awards for their gallantry. The pilot, Sgt. Hazard, and four other sergeants, are the first members of the Royal Air Force to be awarded the "Conspicuous Gallantry Medal," given for "gallantry in air operations against the enemy." Over the target area the bomber was attacked at close range. The burning incendiaries failed to release and the fuselage burst into a mass of flames. Ammunition exploded in all directions, but, with the flames roaring round his turret, one of the gunners shot down the attacker and then went through the fire to help the wounded rear-gunner. Sgt. Hazard, as captain of the plane, ordered the crew to bale out, but on hearing that the rear-gunner was wounded and helpless, he decided—in spite of the grave risk—to attempt a forced landing. Eventually he regained height and reached home safely, with only two minutes' petrol left. The citation accompanying the award refers to the "appalling situation" in which the crew found themselves, and goes on: "In circumstances of the greatest danger, this aircraft crew—of which Sgt. Hazard was captain—displayed courage, fortitude and devotion to duty in keeping with the highest tradition of the Royal Air Force."

Another case is that of L/Cpl. Sydney Burnard of the

Royal Sussex Regiment, who was awarded the Military Medal in recognition of gallant and distinguished services in the Middle East. L/Cpl. Burnard was with his squadron when it became separated from the main party and found itself under murderous enemy fire. According to the citation, Burnard led his men in a dash through the enemy lines " . . . driving with one hand and firing his tommy gun with the other."

A Merchant Navy Officer, already holding the Distinguished Service Cross, was awarded the M. B. E. for gallantry and devotion to duty when his ship was subjected to heavy air attacks while at anchorage. He is Junior Engineer Officer Henry Sless, a native of Scotland. The citation refers to the fact that his ship was hit by enemy action and fire broke out. "The magazine was a mass of flames, and five men were killed. Throughout the attack, Mr. Sless remained at his post in the engine-room, and when the magazine was hit, the third engineer-officer joined him in speeding up the fire pumps and shutting off steam from the burst pipes."

An unusual honor is the award of the B. E. M. (British Empire Medal) to Sgt. Lillie Davies of the Auxiliary Territorial Service. Her citation, which makes most interesting reading, is given in full and reads as follows:

On Sergeant Davies, as Sergeant-Clerk at Headquarters, rested the responsibility of establishing the office organization, maintaining the essential accuracy of the daily detail and ensuring the security of the many confidential papers. In addition, there being but one officer, she was called upon in all matters to accept responsibility far in excess of that demanded of her rank. In all this, performed with such ability and initiative, she has shown meticulous care, matchless attention to detail, a remarkable incisive appreciation of the many problems, together with a ready and unfailing assistance to all other formations and units. Her high sense of duty and great industry are indicative of her appreciation of her position of exceptional trust and responsibility. She has rendered outstanding service to this Headquarters.

It would be difficult in this article, to give examples of

the courage and fortitude displayed by those who paid the supreme sacrifice, but this article would not be complete without mention being made of two famous members of the Jewish Community who gave their lives in the common cause. One is Brigadier Frederick H. Kisch, C. B., D. S. O., Chief Engineer of the Eighth Army, who was killed by a mine early in 1943. His loss was a blow, not only to the British Army, but to the entire Jewish community, in whose affairs he took an active interest. Tributes to the gallant Brigadier were received from Mr. Winston Churchill, and Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, under whom he served. The other prominent member of the community to fall in battle was Major Lionel Wigram of the Royal Fusiliers, who was killed while leading a detachment of Italian irregulars on the Eighth Army Front. He will be remembered as an outstanding pioneer of the new system of battle drill that is now accepted as an essential part of British infantry training. In reporting the death, the *London Times* wrote as follows: "It is given to few war-time soldiers to exert such a widespread influence on tactical teaching. Inspired by a paper on tactics written by Field Marshal Alexander, he found an outlet for his imagination and organizing ability as Commandant of the First Divisional Battle School to be instituted." In the Jewish community, the late Major Wigram took a keen interest in charitable organizations and, before the war, was instrumental in starting a hostel for refugee Jewish children.

Tributes to Jewish personnel from their non-Jewish comrades have poured into Jewish families and the chaplains' offices throughout the war.

A typical example is the tribute paid by a rear-gunner, who was the only surviving member of the crew of a plane which crashed over North-West Europe, to the Jewish officer (Flying Officer Raymond Rosen) who piloted the plane. An extract from the letter written by him to the officer's father reads as follows:

Raymond was a credit to the Jews, and a friend loved dearly by all who knew him. I, sir, am proud to say that I was the rear-gunner of F/O Rosen and was with him and his brave crew at the finish. When we were hit and set on fire by enemy anti-aircraft, Raymond ex-

celled himself by flying on into the target against great odds and we of his crew had such confidence in him that we were with him tooth and nail backing him up with all we had in us.

Keeping cool, calm and deliberate, Raymond ordered "abandon aircraft" seven times before I did so. How the other boys did not get out is beyond me.

All this time Raymond sat at the controls awaiting a death which must surely come, only considering his crew, and when we were attacked by a fighter he carried out my evasive instructions perfectly and by that I drove off the damaged enemy aircraft. In the explosion that followed, Raymond was blown out of his seat and his parachute caught on to the tailplane. I think, however, that Raymond was dead before this happened.

To me, sir, I have lost six pals and I really do miss their good company. Your heart's desire along with mine lies at Amiens where they are all buried . . .

Chaplaincy Services

At the outbreak of war, only two commissioned Jewish chaplains were serving, viz., Rabbi Dayan M. Gollop (as Senior Jewish Chaplain) and Rabbi Dr. L. Rabinowitz. Accordingly, immediate steps had to be taken to ensure that the religious welfare of the large numbers of Jewish men and women who were being embodied in the Fighting Services was adequately safeguarded, and the Jewish War-Services Committee was brought into being by the late Chief Rabbi, Dr. J. H. Hertz, C.H., primarily for the purpose of nominating suitable ministers of religion as chaplains to the forces. Within a short while, the War Office had approved the appointment of several Jewish chaplains, who immediately set about their important tasks wherever Jewish service personnel were to be found. There were no separate chaplains for the three branches of the Fighting Services (Navy, Army and Air Force), and the chaplains who were commissioned by the War Office included the other Services in their

ministrations. Subsequently further appointments, including Jewish chaplains for duty in the Royal Air Force, were made and, until the beginning of demobilization, an establishment of 40 Army and 5 Royal Air Force chaplains was maintained.

The commissioned Jewish chaplains were assisted in their work by "officiating" chaplains, i. e., Jewish ministers who, whilst not able to undertake the full-time duties of a commissioned chaplain, found it possible to visit military camps, hospitals, etc., within their respective areas, for the purpose of ministering to the religious needs of the personnel concerned. At one time, as many as 40 officiating chaplains were operating throughout the United Kingdom, whilst several were appointed in overseas theatres of war. There is no doubt that the ready response of the officiating chaplains at home to the call made upon them considerably alleviated the burdens placed upon the shoulders of the commissioned chaplains and helped to release some of the latter from their service in the Home Commands in order that they might take up duty in centers abroad.

Among the multifarious duties undertaken by the chaplains overseas was the vital and important task of ministering to the needs of displaced persons in the concentration camps. The plight of these unfortunate victims of Nazi tyranny and persecution was indeed pitiful, and chaplains were able, by their ministrations, to bring them some solace and comfort. No time was lost by the chaplains, immediately an area was liberated, to seek out their brethren and take every possible step to alleviate their sufferings and distress, and to organize religious and welfare services for them. Where necessary, direct approaches were made by chaplains to the military and civil authorities on behalf of these remnants of the various Jewish communities in Europe. It can well be imagined with what relief the chaplains were met. They appeared as a ray of light and hope in the turmoil and chaos of shattered Europe, and contributed in no small measure towards obliterating the feeling of despair and despondency among the displaced personnel.

As the numbers of Jewish personnel in H. M. Forces continued to increase during the course of the war, and having regard to the fact that they were to be found in every theatre of war, the Jewish chaplaincy service was glad to

avail itself of the facilities provided by the service authorities to appoint, from among officers and men, lay-readers and preachers who, by their training, were well qualified to conduct services and perform other chaplaincy ministrations.

Rabbi Dayan M. Gollop, whose magnificent work before and during the war was largely responsible for the efficiency and prestige of the chaplaincy service, was—on account of ill-health—compelled to resign his appointment as Senior Jewish Chaplain in March 1944. He was succeeded in this office by Rabbi I. Brodie, then the Senior Jewish Chaplain to the Royal Air Force in the Middle East.

Four distinctions have been won by Jewish chaplains. The Rev. M. Berman, Senior Jewish Chaplain in the Central Mediterranean Force, was awarded the M. B. E. (Member of the British Empire) for gallant and distinguished services in Italy; while Rabbi I. Brodie (Senior Jewish Chaplain to H. M. Forces), Rev. B. M. Casper (Senior Chaplain of the Jewish Infantry Brigade Group) and Rev. A. Myerson (one of the Jewish chaplains serving in Belgium) were all "Mentioned in Despatches."

Jewish chaplains—no less than the men to whom they ministered—played their full part in the struggle for freedom and democracy, and it is with deep regret that the death of three of them, whilst on active service, has to be recorded, viz., the Rev. W. Morein, B.A., Minister of the North London Synagogue; the Rev. H. Bornstein, B.A., Minister of the Hampstead Garden Suburb Synagogue; and the Rev. S. Hooker, B.A., Minister of the Harrow, Kenton and District Affiliated Synagogue.

The chaplains, along with the servicemen, were the first members of the community to contact Jewish survivors of Nazi occupation and to prepare the way for the civilian relief work which was to follow. As the lands occupied by the Nazis were liberated, the thoughts of the fortunate Jews of the British Isles, miraculously saved, turned with anxiety and hope to the possible remnant that might yet have escaped the diabolical destruction decreed against Israel. As far back as January 1943, a Jewish Committee for Relief and Rehabilitation was formed, to be ready with material help and brotherly comfort when the hour of liberation arrived. A moving and not inglorious chapter has

been added to the history of our people by the activities — selfless and varied — performed on behalf of the remnant of Jewry by our chaplains and servicemen. They gave their brothers practical assistance and moral support, and induced a will to live among those who had despaired of life. “These bones shall live” is the title of this chapter of history.

Welfare and Religious Activities

Until the outbreak of war, H. M. Forces Committee which was a sub-Committee of the Visitation Committee of the London Jewish Community, was officially recognized by the War Office as the authority in matters relating to Jewish members of H. M. Forces. As mentioned previously, the late Chief Rabbi, in September 1939, arranged for the formation of the Jewish War-Services Committee. Its main functions were to act as the officially recognized nominating body for the appointment of commissioned chaplains; to work in close conjunction with the administrative side of the Senior Jewish Chaplain's Office; to make itself responsible for the distribution of religious and devotional literature to the troops; and to encourage the provision of welfare facilities for Jewish personnel, particularly when on leave in the metropolis. The committee, which represented all sections of the Jewish community, performed a vital service throughout the war period, and is, in fact, still continuing and extending its functions, having regard to the large number of Jewish men and women still in H. M. Forces.

Hospital Visitation

One of the important functions undertaken by the Jewish War-Services Committee, in collaboration with the Senior Jewish Chaplain, was the systematic visitation of sick and wounded members of the Forces in military and other hospitals. In addition to Chaplains and Officiating Chaplains, lay visitors (who were officially recognized by the military authorities) were appointed and, in this way, the spiritual and physical welfare of Jewish servicemen in hospitals was assured.

Hospitality and Welfare

One of the objects of the Jewish War-Services Committee was to arrange for facilities to be afforded to Jewish members of H. M. and Allied Forces, when on leave, to receive hospitality from their co-religionists in London and the Provinces. Accordingly, at the suggestion of the Jewish War-Services Committee, a separate organization, known as the Jewish Hospitality Committee, was formed under the chairmanship of Lord Nathan of Churt (now Under-Secretary of State for War). The objects of this Committee, which also represented the Jewish Welfare Board of America, were:

- (1) To promote and encourage Home and Communal Hospitality to Jewish members of the British and Allied forces at centers and camps in the United Kingdom and overseas.
- (2) To co-operate with local Jewish communities in the initiation and running of service clubs and canteens open to forces of all faiths.
- (3) To organize, in conjunction with Chaplains of the Forces in the United Kingdom and overseas, the provision of hospitality contingent upon religious services.

As the war progressed and different fronts were opened, the Jewish Hospitality Committee was instrumental in establishing and maintaining Service Clubs and Canteens in many parts of the world, including Belgium, Italy, Germany, Greece, Malta, Gibraltar, India and Burma. In addition, the committee co-ordinated the welfare and hospitality activities of the centers and canteens which were opened in all parts of the United Kingdom. It also assumed the responsibility of providing Jewish service personnel with religious appurtenances, making large grants for the provision of matzoh, wine, and other amenities for special occasion in the Jewish Calendar, such as Passover, the High Holydays and Chanukah.

Similar functions were undertaken by the Chief Rabbi's Religious Emergency Council in respect of individual service-

men and women, and one of its most useful and valuable tasks was the sending of Kosher Food Parcels to observant Jewish members of H.M. and Allied Forces.

Moral Leadership Courses

In 1944, the Air Ministry instituted Courses of Instruction in Moral Leadership, to be held under the auspices of certain religious denominations. The object of these courses was to further the development of ideals of leadership, not only in religious faith and practice, but in morale, discipline and fighting spirit. Those selected had to be especially recommended by the Chaplains and approved by their commanding officers, and were to be men and women likely to exercise an uplifting influence on their comrades in their daily life and especially in times of danger.

The Senior Jewish Chaplain, in conjunction with the Jewish War-Services Committee and the Jewish Hospitality Committee, took advantage of the opportunity provided by the Air Ministry to institute a series of courses at which the Jewish candidates selected were to be instructed, not only on the lines suggested by the Air Ministry, but also in the history and traditions of the Jewish people, and to be trained for ultimate leadership in communal endeavor in the United Kingdom.

These courses proved an outstanding success, and were afterwards extended to include personnel from the army. A number of these courses have been held in London, Manchester, Brussels, Venice, Rangoon and Rehovoth (Palestine).

Over 1,000 officers and other ranks have attended these courses, and an appreciation of their worth, value and stimulus is provided by an extract from a letter written by a student of one of these courses who, writing to the Senior Jewish Chaplain, says:-

“ . . . The Moral Leadership Course which I attended recently certainly achieved its aim as far as I am concerned. I wanted to find out more about my religion, its tradition, what it has done for humanity, and most of all, I wondered what a week of Jewish learning would do to me. As I write, Sir, I have a kind of feeling inside

me which makes me say 'Thank God I was born a Jew.' Maybe that was the object of the course. I do sincerely hope these courses will not be discontinued, but rather each of us should have the opportunity of attending at least once a year, thereby learning to understand our religion and one another better than we do. In this way, I think the Jews will gain the respect of all peoples."

It is hoped that the Anglo-Jewish Community will fill the ranks of future communal leadership from among those selected men and women who have attended these courses. In the opinion of the writer, the Courses have provided an abiding gain from the experience of war.

Religious and Devotional Literature

In World War I, an abridged Prayer Book, prepared by the late Rev. Michael Adler (the then Senior Jewish Chaplain to H. M. Forces), was distributed among Jewish service personnel. In addition, the Chief Rabbi's *Book of Jewish Thoughts* was widely distributed. During World War II, these two publications were again issued to the troops, as well as various other literature, such as the Chief Rabbi's *Abridged Version of the Holy Scriptures* and his edition of the *Sayings of the Fathers*, Paul Goodman's *History of the Jews*, B. L. Q. Henriques' *Prayers for Trench and Base*, and Cecil Roth's *Jewish Contribution to Civilisation* and *Short History of the Jews*. Moreover, pamphlets and booklets known as "Defence Literature" — in which facts and figures were given about Jews and the part played by them in the two wars — were issued to Jewish personnel, for the purpose of combatting anti-Semitism in the forces. It can be said that these pamphlets in the hands of Jewish troops helped considerably to remove misunderstanding and prejudice concerning Jews and Judaism in the minds of their non-Jewish comrades.

Garrison Synagogues

At the outbreak of the War, the only permanent Military Synagogue was at Aldershot (Hampshire). Thanks to the initiative and enthusiasm of a Jewish serving officer and

some other ranks, the first Royal Air Force Station Synagogue was opened at Mildenhall (Suffolk) early in 1944. This was soon followed by the establishment of four more R.A.F. Station Synagogues at Cranwell, Lincolnshire (the famous R. A. F. Central Establishment); Henlow, Bedfordshire (which was dedicated by the late Chief Rabbi); Sealand, Lancashire; and Kirkham, Lancashire. Two Garrison Synagogues were also established at Colchester (Essex) and Catterick (Yorkshire). Moreover, temporary Garrison Synagogues were also opened overseas, among which may be mentioned Jhansi and Ranchi in India.

The Garrison Synagogues were the expression of religious keenness and enthusiasm displayed by Jewish men and women in the War. They did a great deal to maintain morale and raise Jewish prestige in the services. A tribute of gratitude is due to the Army and Air Force Authorities, who gave ready cooperation and showed active sympathy in the establishment of these synagogues. At Henlow Synagogue, for example, there is a beautifully designed Chanukah Menorah made by non-Jews. The Jewish War-Services Committee, the Jewish Hospitality Committee, the Chief Rabbi's Religious Emergency Council, and individual members of the Jewish Community, provided the Scrolls of the Law, Prayer Books, and other religious appurtenances. In some cases the religious appurtenances were actually produced by non-Jews in the workshops of their units.

Civil Defense

Many awards were conferred upon persons in the Auxiliary Civil Defense Organizations and Rescue and Medical Services, not a few of which went to Jewish men and women of the East End of London which perhaps, was the most badly-blitzed area in Great Britain. On the other hand, it can be said that, for every one who received commendation or decoration, there must have been hundreds who, by their general conduct, equally deserved them. It is difficult to quote the citations in the cases of those men and women who received awards for their devotion to duty, but mention must be made of Harry Errington, who was in the first list — only thirteen in number—for the George Cross, which was created

specifically to honor those who would, as serving soldiers, have been awarded the Victoria Cross. Errington was a member of the Auxiliary Fire Service, and an extract from his citation reads as follows:-

During a blitz he was blown across a basement and injured. Simultaneously the building was wrecked by high explosives. Dazed and injured he found that two of his colleagues were missing. They were pinned down by debris with a raging fire all round. Though the heat was almost too great to be endured, Errington, putting on a wet blanket, worked his way through the debris with his bare hands. At any moment the remainder of the building threatened to collapse. He found one of his comrades and dragged him up a narrow stone staircase, almost choked with fallen debris, into the street and then, in spite of the heat, went back into the inferno and saved the life of the second man.

In the case of another Jewish lad who was awarded the British Empire Medal for gallantry and was decorated by the King, His Majesty congratulated him on his bravery and said, "It's a job well done." One can quite definitely say that this Royal remark applies equally to other Jews and Jewesses who, whether or not they obtained recognition of the courage displayed by them in "civvy street," showed the same fearlessness, bravery, coolness in danger, and good humor, characteristic of the Londoner.

Alien Pioneer Companies

At the end of September 1939, the Marquis of Reading paid a visit to the Kitchener Camp, Richborough, which was a disused Army Camp and had been converted into a center for the thousands of refugees pouring in from Germany and Austria. There were at that time about 3,500 refugees in the camp. They were of all types, classes and professions, living and working at the camp, and he appealed to them to join the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps — a labor corps which was non-combatant but which later on turned out to be the "Maid of all Work" of the British Army. The response was magnificent. More than 1,500 men vol-

unteered immediately and on November 16, 1939, the first eighty men received their uniforms and first military instructions. Day after day, these volunteers were equipped and formed the "No. 3 Centre, A.M.P.C." under their Commanding Officer, Lt. Col. the Marquis of Reading. What it meant for these first few hundred, who, but a short time ago, had to endure the horrors of concentration camps and were despised by the majority of the German people, to wear the uniform of a country which was fighting this very evil, can readily be imagined. There was not much time in those days, and only a few week's training had to suffice. Soon the first five companies left with the British Expeditionary Force for France. They had no arms, and were supposed to work only. Their tasks of building camps, store dumps, handling various stores and ammunition, and thus forming part of the lines of communication, were carried out with great skill and energy. Nothing was too much; they knew this was *their* contribution to this great fight. And when during those dark days of Dunkirk they were suddenly given arms and on several occasions left to defend vital points, they acquitted themselves with such gallantry and skill that it was not surprising that later on non-British Units could be confidently entrusted with arms. In the meantime, many more refugees from all over the country had joined the Forces, and ultimately there were some 4,000 of them.

In 1942, after many representations had been made for greater equality between the aliens in the British Army and the British "Tommy," they were allowed to apply for transfer to all other units with the exception of a few specialized Corps. Within a short time the non-British section of the Pioneer Corps was deprived of the cream of its men. It was not unusual in those days for a very continental Jewish sounding name to appear on the nominal roll of the most famous Regiments. They were now trained alongside their English comrades as paratroopers, commandos, glider pilots, tank troops, gunners, medical orderlies, engineers, etc. It can truly be said that they were represented in all branches of the Army, Navy and Air Force. One could find them in India and Burma, others fought in Africa and Sicily, they were found in the battle for Cassino, on the beaches of Anzio

and Salerno, and many went over to the Normandy Coast on "D" Day. A considerable number received the King's commission; quite a few gained distinctions in all these actions, and not a small proportion were wounded, while some paid the supreme sacrifice on the altar of duty.

But all of them who had the fortune to live through the war, and especially those first volunteers from the Kitchener Camp who had come to England broken men (many hardly speaking a word of English), found their greatest reward when the victorious armies marched into Germany and Austria. They can be proud of having done their part in helping to destroy the greatest enemy of all mankind and to revenge the sufferings of many millions of Jews.

Palestine Participation

Recruiting of Palestinians for H. M. Forces was started haphazardly during the first year of the war. But as Italy entered the war and the scene of battle moved to the Eastern Mediterranean, the utilization of Palestinian manpower assumed increased importance. Palestinian volunteers were at first accepted into the Royal Engineers and Ordnance and Pioneer Units on a basis of strict numerical parity with Arab volunteers. Pioneer Corps units took part in the first battle of France in 1940, and were evacuated to England from Dunkirk.

At the same time, recruiting began for the Royal Air Force, and 1,700 Palestinian Jews filled gaps in the technical Units of the Air Force for which, at the time, no other personnel was readily available. At a later stage in the war, Palestinians were selected for air training, and some dozens obtained their full "wings."

The principle of numerical parity between Jews and Arabs, and the practice of having mixed Army units, were soon dropped, since it was obvious that Jews were willing to volunteer in larger numbers than others and that an all-Jewish unit could make quicker progress in technical training. Thus, Jewish and Arab separate companies were established, and these pioneers and port operating companies took part in campaigns in Greece and Crete, where 1,500 were taken prisoner.

In the year 1941, Jewish infantry and artillery companies

expanded in number, and were found stationed in all parts of Palestine. Individual Jewish commandos fought in Eritrea and Libya, and Jewish volunteers whose knowledge of the local languages was particularly useful took part in the offensive operations in Syria.

The beginning of 1942 saw the commencement of a widespread volunteering drive in the Jewish community, conducted under the auspices of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, and thousands of volunteers flocked to the colors each month. In August of that year, the formation of the Palestine Regiment with separate Jewish and Arab Companies was announced. By that time, some twenty thousand Palestinian Jews had joined the various formations of the Army. Hundreds of Palestinian Jews also joined the Royal Navy.

The Palestine A.T.S. was also created in that order, and 2,500 Palestinian Jewish girls enlisted and did excellent work in hospitals, offices, and as drivers and ordnance store-keepers. Some time later the Palestine W.A.A.F. came into existence, and over 1,000 Jewish girls performed valuable service.

Transport, Royal Engineers and other technical units were in the battle all the way from Tobruk, Benghazi and Tripoli, were present at the invasion of Sicily and Italy, and moved up as the British front moved northwards across Italy. When the Jewish Infantry Brigade Group was formed, late in 1944, a number of Palestinian units — mainly the Royal Army Service Corps (R.A.S.C.) and the Royal Army Ordnance Corps (R.A.O.C.) — not included in the Jewish Brigade, continued to serve in Italy.

Thus, the Palestinian units grew from a small number of volunteers into solid formations, numbering over fifty, all officered by Palestinian Jews, comprising thousands of persons; these units were employed in all fields of the Allied war front in the Middle East and in Europe.

Jewish Infantry Brigade Group

In spite of the important role that Jews had been playing in the Armed Forces in the common struggle, it was not until September 1944 that they were given a chance to come to grips with the enemy as Jews. The then Prime Minister, Mr. Winston Churchill, in his statement announc-

ing the formation of a Jewish Infantry Brigade Group, declared that "it seems to me indeed appropriate that a special unit of the race which has suffered indescribable treatment from the Nazis should be represented in a distinct formation among the forces gathered for their final overthrow." Thus the Brigade Group was formed in the Egyptian desert, not far from El Alamein, from among guard weary units of Palestinians who had been yearning for a combatant role. The Group moved to Italy in November 1944, and intensive combat training commenced. By February 1945, a complete Combat Group had been assembled. Commanded by Brigadier E. F. Benjamin, C. B. E. (a regular Jewish soldier), it consisted of:

- 1 (Jewish) Bn. Palestine Regiment
- 2 (Jewish) Bn. Palestine Regiment
- 3 (Jewish) Bn. Palestine Regiment
- Jewish Brigade Group Independent Signal Section
- 200 Field Regiment, Royal Artillery
- 643 (Palestinian) Field Company, Royal Engineers
- Jewish Brigade Group Postal Section, (Royal Engineers)
- 178 (Palestinian) Jewish Brigade Group Coy., RASC
- 140 (County of London) Field Ambulance, RAMC
- Jewish Brigade Group Ordnance Field Park Section, RAOC
- Jewish Brigade Group Provost Section
- Jewish Infantry Brigade Workshops, REME
- Jewish Brigade Group Light Aid Detachment, REME

Towards the end of February 1945, the Brigade Group was called forward to join the famous Eighth Army, and was committed to active operations on March 3, 1945, relieving part of the 2nd Armored Brigade. The Brigade's task was to carry out active patrolling and improve its positions as opportunity arose. The men, although inexperienced, showed great keenness and offensive spirit. Intensive patrolling was carried out. Positions in the left sector of the Brigade were advanced and improved. A successful daylight probe on March 19, 1945, resulted in the capture of prisoners and the identification of the 42nd Jaeger Division as the German Unit opposing the Brigade. On March 20th a strong demonstration was made by a company of the 3rd (Jewish) Bn. Palestine Regiment, supported by a Squadron of Church-

ill Tanks and Spitfires of the Desert Air Force. In spite of determined resistance, this was successful and the men fought with courage. The Brigade Group was relieved on March 26, and moved over to positions in the hills overlooking the River Senio, South of Faenza. It was opposed by the crack German 4th Parachute Division of Anzio and Cassino fame, and there were fierce patrol clashes with casualties on both sides, but the Brigade achieved its object and restricted enemy movements until their activity on our side of the River Senio was completely neutralized. As part of the general offensive the Brigade was ordered to establish a bridgehead across the Senio and this was successfully carried out by the 2nd (Jewish) Bn. Palestine Regiment by 0145 hours on the 10th of April. Subsequently, other units of the Brigade were passed through the bridgehead, and the 3rd (Jewish) Bn. Palestine Regiment commenced the assault of the enemy-held slopes against determined enemy rearguard opposition. Later, the Headquarters of the Brigade, together with its Signals, were called upon to take command of a force known as MACFORCE, which had been formed to defend the vital Monte Grande feature—the junction of the Fifth and Eighth Armies. This force consisted of six infantry Battalions and five artillery regiments, and was in existence until April 22. It was a unique experience for the Headquarters of the Jewish Brigade to handle so many units, and was a typical example of the International character of the Eighth Army—apart from being a compliment to the efficiency of the Brigade Headquarters. Casualties to the Brigade in period of active operations were approximately 50 killed and 200 wounded. The following honors and awards—apart from the C. B. E. awarded to Brigadier Benjamin—are indicative of the success of the Group in its initial combat with the enemy:

Military Cross.....	4
Military Medal.....	7
Order of the British Empire.....	2
Member of the British Empire.....	4
Mentioned in Despatches.....	13
(further lists still to be published)	
American awards.....	2

At the conclusion of hostilities, the Group moved up

to the Austrian-Italian frontier and, after a stay of three months, moved over by road through Austria and Germany to Belgium to join the British Army of the Rhine. Its tasks included looking after a complete German Engineering Brigade. Apart from its military duties, the Brigade has been instrumental in giving help and encouragement to the survivors of Jewry in Europe. Practical work carried out by its men included care of orphans, provision of teachers for schools and of instructors for groups desirous of going to Palestine. It has carried its badge through the length and breadth of Europe, and has shown to the world that given the opportunity the Jew as a soldier is the equal of any other man. From being a badge of shame it has transformed the Magen David in Europe to a badge of courage. Its existence has been worthwhile and has meant much to the remnants of Jewry.

Palestine Science and Industry

Palestine Jewry, quite apart from its military contribution, made a significant scientific and industrial contribution to the British war effort. The science and laboratories of the Hebrew University and Research Institutes were geared to the war effort, and the newly created Jewish industry saved valuable shipping space by producing goods for local consumption and for the army. In 1943, goods to the value of twenty-three million pounds were given to the army, which included spare parts of tanks, precision instruments, mines, and food stuffs, etc. It will suffice to quote the British Ministry of Information: "The contribution that the Jews of Palestine are making to the war effort through the remarkable achievements of Jewish agriculture and industry, has been of a critical character to the Middle East Military Command."

In this survey, it has only been possible to give a partial account of British Jewry's participation in World War II. The British born, the alien and Palestinian Jew, maintained a fine tradition and enhanced the Jewish name and reputation for gallantry and devotion to duty. They readily deserved the many tributes paid them by statesmen, war leaders and comrades-in-arms. They will deserve well of England and the people of Israel.