WITH THE JEWISH BRIGADE

BY

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Formerly Senior Chaplain to the Brigade

With an Introductory Note by
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2022

LONDON
EDWARD GOLDSTON
18 GRAPE STREET, W.C.2
1947

MT

FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1947

To

MARIE NAHUM

WHOSE GENEROUS IDEALISM HAS INSPIRED SO MANY JEWISH CAUSES AND CONTRIBUTED SO MUCH TO THE UPBUILDING OF MODERN JUDEA

Made in Great Britain. Printed at the St Ann's Press
Timperley, Altrincham

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

I AM very pleased to hear that Rev. B. M. Casper is writing a book to record the work of the Jewish Infantry Brigade Group. He was the senior chaplain of the Brigade from its formation until he returned to civil life at the end of 1945, so that he is well qualified to recount the Brigade's activities.

The great importance of the chaplaincy service in the army is universally recognized and every Commander largely relies upon his chaplains to keep him in touch with the state of morale in his unit or formation. I was very fortunate in having Rev. Casper as my senior chaplain and I always had complete confidence in his judgment and advice. He lived with Brigade Headquarters and paid constant visits to every unit in the Brigade, and he thus had an unrivalled knowledge of what the officers and men were doing and thinking.

The Jewish Infantry Brigade Group was not formed until a comparatively late date in the war, but it completed training in time to take part in the last battle in Italy. I can say with confidence that, for enthusiasm and the will to fight, it was not surpassed by any other formation of any army. This is not, perhaps, surprising when it is realized that practically every individual member of the Brigade

had a very personal reason for wanting to get to grips with the enemy and share in the responsibility for his final overthrow.

E. F. BENJAMIN

formerly Brigadier,

Commander, Jewish Infantry Brigade Group.

24th March, 1947.

THE JEWISH BRIGADE CEMETERY AT MEZZANO

About two miles north of Ravenna in Italy

Dedicated

TO THE EVERLASTING MEMORY AND GLORY OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL

Who Fell in Action While Serving with the Jewish Brigade

Isaac Kurzrock
Nahum Jaacobi
Michael Wieshbinsky
Isaac Ryzy
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PREFACE

ON my return to this country in February 1946, after a year and a half of service with the Jewish Brigade Group, I received innumerable requests from Jewish and non-Jewish societies to address them on the subject of the first Jewish fighting force since the ruthless Roman conquest of Judea. The enthusiasm of the audiences was so great that many of my friends urged me to make the story available in printed form so that it should reach a wider circle. Thanks to the generosity of a noble-hearted worker for Israel's return to Zion, this has now been made possible, and the heroic and zealous career of the Jewish Brigade is thus put on record to be added, as I fervently hope, as another noble line in the never-ending story of our people.

It is not my intention to give here a full detailed account of each day's many events and occurrences. This book is merely a selection, mainly from notes, letters and other documents still in my possession, intended to re-create for the reader a picture of the life and purpose, the problems and achievements, the frustration and abiding idealism, all of which characterized the Brigade and from which it derived the power and the right to carry the Badge of Honour to its stricken people in the heart of Europe.

B. M. C.

Manchester, Chanukah 5707
December 1946

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	FULFILMENT	13
II.	BURG EL ARAB	20
III.	ON THE THRESHOLD	26
IV.	FACING THE ENEMY	39
V.	"I SEEK MY BROTHERS"	51
VI.	PIMPERNELS	62
VII.	THE BADGE OF HONOUR	91
VIII.	RELIGION AND CULTURE	107
	APPENDIX	112
	GLOSSARY OF TERMS	125

ILLUSTRATIONS

The Author	*Frontispiece*
	FACING PAGE
The Jewish Brigade Cemetery at Mezzano	7
The original Headquarters' Staff of the Brigade	20
Interior of Brigade Synagogue, Fiuggi	32
Passover in the Front Line	46
A group of Brigade men from England	55
Alexander Hakim	56
Field Marshal Lord Alexander at Jewish Brigade	64
Jewish Displaced Persons at Landsberg Camp, Bavaria	96

CHAPTER I

FULFILMENT

ON the 20th September, 1944, the British War Office issued an announcement which thrilled and excited the entire Jewish people. The announcement, which was broadcast to the world by the B.B.C. on the same evening, said:

> H.M. Government have decided to accede to the request of the Jewish Agency for Palestine that a Jewish Brigade Group should be formed to take part in active operations.
>
> The Infantry Brigade will be based on the Jewish Battalions of the Palestine Regiment, and the necessary concentration for training is now taking place before despatch to a theatre of war.
>
> Supporting and ancillary units to complete the Group, based on existing Palestinian units, are being prepared, and will join the Infantry Brigade as soon as practicable. The details of the scheme are being discussed with the Jewish Agency which has been invited to co-operate in its realisation.

A week later, in a speech in the House of Commons on the 28th September, Mr. Winston Churchill, then Prime Minister, referred to the statement, as follows:

> The British Army in Italy [he said] includes also Palestinian units; and here I would mention the

announcement, which hon. Members may have read, and which I think will be appreciated and approved, that the Government have decided to accede to the request of the Jewish Agency for Palestine that a Jewish Brigade Group should be formed to take part in active operations. I know there are vast numbers of Jews serving with our Forces and the American Forces throughout all the armies. But it seems to me indeed appropriate that a special Jewish unit, a special unit of that race which has suffered indescribable torments from the Nazis, should be represented as a distinct formation amongst the forces gathered for their final overthrow, and I have no doubt they will not only take part in the struggle, but also in the occupation which will follow.

That announcement sent a thrill of pride into the hearts of the Jewries of England and America and the other lands of freedom. It also reached the agonised Jews in Hitler's gehenna, in the ghettos of Warsaw and Kovno, in the undergrounds of most countries of Europe; and while instilling into them new courage and a new sense of their self-respect and human dignity, it even, somehow, as we learned later, compensated them in some small measure for the inhuman sufferings they had already endured.

But above all, it simply electrified the Yishuv and its sons, the soldiers of Judea, who had been longing since 1939 for an opportunity to fight Hitler's men on equal terms, *as Jews*. Many thousands of Jews, it is true, were already serving in all the Allied forces; a host of them had made

the supreme sacrifice in the Allied cause. But they had fought and died, so far as the world was concerned, as Englishmen or Americans or Czechs. The world was unaware of the part which Jews were playing, *qua* Jews, in the war. History would have had to record that the one people who had failed to rise against their oppressor, the worst enemy they had known in all their long and difficult history, was the Jewish people.

This position was felt especially keenly in Palestine, where right from the outset of the war in 1939 a registration had been made by the Jewish Agency of over one hundred thousand Jews and Jewesses who volunteered for war service. For the first few years of the war the Yishuv felt that its offer of man power was being deliberately spurned by Great Britain. Yet in spite of all set-backs, in spite of all the artificial restrictions introduced by the Government, by the time of Alamein there were over twenty thousand Palestinian Jews, the bulk of whom were in purely Jewish units, serving in the Middle East. Rabbi Rabinowitz, in his book, *Soldiers from Judea*, writes of these men: "They had seen service in France, England, Greece, Crete, Abyssinia, Libya, Cyprus, Iraq and Palestine. Five complete units had been captured in Greece and Crete, one was among the immortal heroes of the siege of Tobruk." Later they were to distinguish themselves in the Navy, Army and Air Force, right through from Alamein to Tunis

and then in the landings on Sicily and Italy and in the subsequent Italian campaign. Right from Habbaniyeh in Iraq to the North of Italy the trail is dotted with their graves, bearing the sign of the Magen David. The whole history of these Palestinian units is one long record of an attempt to bring out their Jewish character, but the lack of official recognition was throughout a source of bitterness and frustration.

The creation of the Palestine Regiment with its three Jewish battalions brought new hope to Palestine Jewry that at last its sacrifices and its efforts were to be acknowledged. At last the dream of the young soldiers of Judea to go to the front line and fight as infantry face to face with the murderers of their people seemed on the point of realisation. There was great rejoicing in Palestine and throughout all its soldiers. The cream of Palestine youth flocked to the colours. But once again they were to be disappointed. For three years their work was confined to guard duties. Important though this work was, it was seriously demoralising for this band of idealistic, ardent youth. During this period they guarded prisoner of war camps and aerodromes, ammunition dumps and filling factories, stores and docks, big ordnance production and storing garrisons, day on and day off, night on and night off, with no action, no adventure, nothing to relieve the monotony. Only the strongest sense of self-discipline could have

kept them continually at it. They stuck it because they hoped that the time might yet come when they would be allowed to get to grips with the enemy.

I was stationed with the First (Jewish) Battalion, Palestine Regiment, in the Egyptian desert at the time of the formation of the Jewish Brigade. I remember it well. It was the morning after Rosh Hashanah, and as I came out of my tent I could sense that something unusual had occurred. There was obviously great excitement among the men. Groups of them were collected together at various points and discussing something with obvious heat. I went over to one of these groups and immediately I was asked: "Have you heard the news? Is it true? Yitzchak says that the B.B.C has announced from London that we are going to be formed into a Jewish Brigade! It's impossible. It must be some political hoax."

After the years of weary waiting, of frustration, of spit-and-polish, of being kept at base depots far in the rear of action, in the hot deserts of Egypt, they found it hard to believe that at last their dream was so suddenly to be realised. No more pseudonyms; no more camouflage under alien names; no longer the bitter reminders of unsympathetic C.O.s that their flag was not regulation and could not be hoisted. Now it seemed to them too good to be true. Why, they argued, should the British Government, after five years of

refusal to form a Jewish Fighting Force, announce its intention of doing so at this late stage in the war? Perhaps it was after all to be merely a sop to Jewish national feeling, a sentimental gesture; perhaps even this Brigade Group would never see action.

But after, during the same day, the C.O. had confirmed the report and the men had learnt that they were to prepare to move within a few days, all this cynicism was blown away and spirits ran higher than for years past. Excitement grew during the day as visits were received from Jewish A.T.S. and other troops stationed nearby at Tel el Kebir, who enviously gave us their congratulations; and late into the night we sang songs of the "Moledeth" and danced the inevitable Hora to exhaustion.

Next day, I was called to G.H.Q. and told that I was to be the Brigade's Senior Chaplain. The following week I spent in Palestine consulting on some problems with the Chief Rabbi, the Jewish Agency, and the "Vaad Lemaan Hachayal", the "Jewish Soldiers' Welfare Association", which later proved itself of such tremendous help to the boys overseas. The Jewish Brigade was of course the most popular subject of conversation in every section of the Yishuv, and the reception I had, because of my connection with the Brigade, was overwhelming. But the biggest thrill I experienced was on Shabbat. I had gone for the Sabbath

morning service to the Yeshurun Synagogue in the new quarter of Jerusalem, and when I was called to the reading of the Torah, the entire huge congregation rose and stood in silence as the Chazan recited a special "Mi Sheberach", blessing "Chayalenu—Our Soldiers, the men of the Jewish Fighting Force." Afterwards, I received, on behalf of the Brigade, a Sepher Torah which was to accompany us on all our journeyings, as the Ark of the Lord went with the Israelitish armies in the days of the Judges.

Big nations or empires may regard one brigade, even a brigade group, as a small, almost insignificant affair. But to the Jewish people this formation represented a vent for all our pent-up feelings since our agony at the hands of Hitler began in April 1933. It meant the fulfilment of our burning desire to stand up and fight back like a normal self-respecting people in the eyes of all the world. It represented a new big landmark in the Jewish struggle and longing for the universal recognition of the Jewish national place in the sun. For this every man in the Brigade had volunteered. There was not one among us who did not have the conviction that he was making history.

CHAPTER II

BURG EL ARAB

At the beginning of October the units of the Brigade began to assemble at a point on the road running between Alexandria and the historic battlefield of Alamein. Within a couple of weeks a vast tented camp sprawled over the flat desert sands at Burg el Arab, testifying to the presence of three Jewish battalions, a Jewish Artillery Battery, and a Jewish Brigade Headquarters with the Brigadier's flag fluttering proudly at top-mast—a triangular blue flag with a golden Magen David in the centre. The other units were to join us later in Italy; but already there was the feeling of having "arrived"—the feeling of being "home" in our own Jewish formation. Oh, we had, certainly, some British non-Jewish officers and a few other ranks, but here they were the odd men. The tables had turned; we had come into our own at last.

One of the first big exciting moments was the arrival of our new Brigade Commander, Brigadier E. F. Benjamin, R.E. There had indeed been some speculation among the men as to how he was going to "fit in". Here was a Canadian-born Jew, brought up in a completely British environment and tradition, with a record of twenty-five years' distin-

THE ORIGINAL HEADQUARTERS' STAFF OF THE BRIGADE

Left to right (*sitting*): Capt. K. T. Pearn, Major C. Jackson, Brigadier E. F. Benjamin, R.E. (Commander), Capt. Harvey. (*Standing*): Capt R. Hesse Capt. G. Kalk, Chaplain B. M. Casper, Lieut. David, Capt. C. Goodman

guished soldiering, coming to command a formation whose language was Hebrew, which was almost entirely Palestinian, and whose personnel hailed originally from almost every country *but* Britain. Former refugees from Germany; men who had run away from Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, for fear of the descending Nazis; early pioneers who had "gone up" to "build the land" twenty and thirty years ago from Russia and Poland; romantic-looking, dark-skinned Yemenite Jews, and black Falashas from Abyssinia. These were the bulk of the fifty-four countries which were represented in the Brigade, but which were now all welded into the new Palestinian spirit and tradition. It is a tribute both to the adaptability of these men and to the leadership of Brigadier Benjamin that he was soon assimilated into this amalgam and taught his men to know and respect his military tradition. It was not long before every man recognised the pride he felt at being Commander of the first Jewish official fighting force since the fall of Judea.

No sooner had he come than everybody fell-to, preparing for the first Brigadier's parade. Can you imagine the feelings with which the men greeted this parade? As one man said to me: "Till now we had cleaned up for ceremonial parades hoping that the visiting General would not stay too long or look too closely. But this was for our very own Jewish Commander! Every man wanted to be noticed! We wanted him to feel the pride that *we*

felt! We polished and 'blancoed' as we'd never done before." Yes, and never before had there been a prouder body of troops than these as they marched past the saluting base that memorable day.

Soon the equipment began to arrive, and every fresh convoy of new vehicles or guns brought another wave of wild enthusiasm. Men used to line the desert road that ran through our camp and cheer "Hedad" and break into singing "Am Yisrael Chai" to the accompaniment of the usual "Hora", the constant expression of spontaneous joy.

Those few weeks at Burg el Arab were full of this spirit of wild excitement. War correspondents and photographers who visited us were all amazed at the morale and eagerness that was everywhere apparent. They were the first to remark on what we ourselves had failed to notice, for we took it so much for granted. What marvellous human material Europe had cast out of its midst! Men who had been doctors, lawyers, artists, engineers, men of learning and skill had been driven from the lands of their adoption by mad Jew-hatred, and were now turning all their thoughts and energies to the task of destroying the spirit of Amalek, the spirit of Pharaoh, Haman and Hitler. Not one man among them would have missed this opportunity. I well remember the case of Ben Zion Yisraeli and Motke

Chadash. If the real truth had been told, both these men were over sixty. In the Army records they were put down as fifty. One day I received a call to go and see them. They had begun a hunger-strike because they had been told they were too old to be sent overseas with a fighting unit. Their indignation would have been amusing if it had not been so sincere. *They*, who had called on their comrades in the Kibbutzim to follow their lead and join up in the early days of recruiting, were now to be left behind! What could I do in the face of such justice? I interceded on their behalf with the Commander, who felt with them immediately. Both these men were later joined by their sons, and all did duty together throughout our entire front-line experience.

Before we left Egypt we were given a specially touching send-off by the Yishuv. The Palestine Symphony Orchestra came out to us in the desert to give us the blessings of the Moledeth in music. Hurriedly trestle tables were collapsed and placed in position on the sand to form a "stage", and three-ton trucks were formed up in the shape of three sides of a rectangle. The concert hall was complete. Men sat almost on top of each other, crowding the sandy amphitheatre, clustering, many of them, on the roofs of the trucks, listening in wrapt attention to "Kol Nidrei" and the "Unfinished" Symphony. What mixed feelings of longing, of homesickness, of fear and pride,

welled up from deep in our hearts can never be told.

And now we are on the move. On Tuesday morning, 31st October, we embarked at Alexandria for Europe. Even the Senior Service was to be invaded with our Hebraism, for the ship which carried us was suddenly converted into a Jewish domain, with the crew of the Royal Navy politely looking on at the process of conversion and leaving everything, but their own immediate jobs of piloting the ship and keeping it going, to us. In no time, all the notices have been transformed into Hebrew; the loud speakers are giving out orders and news-summaries in Hebrew; the ship's orderly room has been taken over by our clerks and Ship's Daily Routine Orders are issued in Hebrew. Even the N.A.A.F.I. shop and the ship's barber's saloon have been handed over to our men for this trip. I reach my cabin to find a huge notice on the door, painted on a block of wood, "RAV TZ'VAI". Evidently my batman has beaten me to it; the sea voyage is to be no holiday for me.

That night after supper, as we lay out in the harbour waters some distance away from land, we began to gather on the quarter-deck. Little was spoken; soon a song broke on someone's lips, and in a few minutes a thousand men had joined in the chorus. The singing grew in volume as we squeezed up into a massed, rough but harmonious choir. The songs seemed never-ending. For hours

we must thus have given freedom to our hearts and voices. It was now quite dark; the ship was completely blacked-out; the blue Mediterranean was now visible only as a black, shiny surface. But we were thinking of Lake Kineret, of the waters off Tel-Aviv beach; of the Emek lying beneath just such a starry sky. The Song of the Emek rose again and again in our concert—"Ba'a Menuchah Layagea", "Rest has come to the weary"; "Numa Emek, Eretz Tifereth, Anu Lecha Mishmereth", "Rest peacefully, O Emek, O you beautiful Land; we are guarding you."

The order comes for bed. "Clear the decks!" We stand, as one man, to attention (though nobody has said a word about it), and sing "Hatikvah". We are on the way to the ghettos and camps of Europe with our message of hope.

CHAPTER III

ON THE THRESHOLD

THE place which was assigned to us by Allied Force Headquarters in Italy was a small village, high up in the mountains, about eighty miles inland from Rome, called Fiuggi. This was to be our home for the next four months, and although at first conditions were hard, especially for the Sabras and Yemenite Jews who were experiencing for the first time the rigours and thrills of an Italian mountain white winter, it was amazing to see how quickly the men settled down and turned this remote village into an outpost of Judea. To the visitor, our presence was announced from far off by the signposts in Hebrew and English, with our sign, the golden Magen David upon the blue and white background. Our Military Police section, under their officer, Captain "Danny" Lifshitz, took special pride in making and displaying these signs, and they certainly succeeded in making all troops in our sector conscious of the presence of the Jewish Brigade.

The prime purpose of our being there was, of course, military training. Though these men had been in infantry units for three or four years, they had so far been denied, for political reasons, full

training with up-to-date fighting weapons. Now, however, that they were brigaded, and were destined to become part of the immortal 8th Army, it seemed as if the authorities were determined to give us everything we needed to fit us as a front-line force. The men rose to the occasion. Their one fear was that Allied victory might come too soon, before they were ready to strike their blow against the hated enemy. They worked at their military exercises with almost feverish intensity. Visitors were amazed at the speed of their progress. Route marches, shooting on the ranges, learning the intricacies of the Bren carrier, of mortar bombs and six-pounders, mastering the art of signalling and decoding messages; these were some of the things which crowded the days of these men of Judea. Pride in their engines-of-war was a first consideration, and, if nothing else, the Magen David on the mudguard ensured that every vehicle was kept clean. Like all soldiers, our drivers also thought of home and all its associations, and soon every truck had been "named", in Hebrew, of course, "Tel Aviv", "Sarah", "Miryam", and so on. Even the Brigadier's flagged staff car had "Metullah" proudly printed on its bonnet in Hebrew, for that was the settlement from which the driver came.

It would be a mistake, however, to give the impression that military training was the only factor in the life of our men at this time. They

were, after all, not only soldiers. They were Jews first and foremost, and they could no more be divorced of their Jewish way of life than could a fish of its natural element, the sea. Within a very short time after our arrival in Fiuggi, therefore, the village began to take on outwardly a distinctly Jewish character. The Jewish flag flew over our Brigade H.Q. Every unit, every officers' and sergeants' mess, the men's dining rooms and billets, all were marked with our Hebrew signs and Magen David. Wherever one went one heard Hebrew spoken, so that even the Italian peasants and their bambini came in a short time to greet us with "Shalom!" And, of course, Palestinians do nothing without singing, and the sound of Hebrew songs was ever present. One had almost the feeling that one was in a Kibbutz or a Jewish village in Eretz. It can be imagined, then, how such a community was affected as the rumour spread that our Brigadier was seriously learning Hebrew. Every day without fail I went to his office to give him his lesson. To the men under his command this was more than a mere linguistic interest. By this, in their eyes, he was identifying himself with them, with the Jewish nation, with the sentiment at the bottom of the creation of the Jewish Brigade. And I remember well how, when we opened our Brigade Club and Canteen on the first night of Chanukah 5705/1944 and the Brigadier concluded his speech with

a couple of sentences in "Irvit", a thrill as of an electric current seemed to run through the mass of men who crowded the hall. The cheering was terrific, and for a moment it seemed as if the Brigadier was in real danger of being lifted bodily and flung into the air for very joy and excitement.

Any expression of "Tarbuth", Hebrew culture, was greeted with a similarly exaggerated emotion. It was a reaction, no doubt, after the long struggle they had had for the recognition of their self-expression in Hebrew. After all the attempted suppression of what was distinctly Jewish that had been their familiar lot in the "Palestinian" units for so long, every additional manifestation that here at last they really were being recognised publicly and officially as Jewish troops with a Hebrew culture was marvellously satisfying. The publication of Orders in Hebrew, the use of that language not only as the vernacular but for the word of command in training and later on the battlefield, the Jewish flag, the Magen David everywhere, the publication of our own Hebrew magazines and newspaper, the automatic observance of Jewish Holy Days; all these formed the atmosphere in which we lived, and evoked the deep, though never spoken, pride and gratitude of every man among us.

One of the highlights of this period, from the point of view of Tarbuth, was the visit we

received of the Palestinian Hebrew Ensa Party. This concert party consisted of men and a few A.T.S. who had formerly belonged themselves to Palestinian Jewish Units, and who, in any case, were children of the settlements like so many of our men. They all knew each other perfectly, and there was an immediate intimacy between players and audience. There was nothing professional about this group, although some of them were certainly artists to a high degree, and one or two had trained, in private life, with the "Ohel" and "Habimah" companies. When the huge Hebrew posters appeared on every building in Fiuggi announcing their programme, the setting was complete. For a week even the prospect of fighting the Germans took second place.

Shabbath in the Brigade deserves a special reference. When I discussed with the Brigadier, soon after his arrival, my side of the work, it was agreed that as we were a Jewish formation, the day "off", in so far as it would be possible to have a day off, would always be Saturday. And as soon as we settled down in Fiuggi, orders were given that official training and all work would cease at mid-day on Friday till Sunday morning. Friday afternoon was devoted to cleaning-up and preparing to receive the "Sabbath Bride". If you took a walk through the main street at this time, you would hear, as you passed the shower-baths, a regular choral recital of Sabbath songs, Zemiroth,

and even one or two more liturgically-minded individuals trying their hands, or rather their voices, at a "Hashkivenu" or "Lecha Dodi". In every mess and dining-hall, cooks and fatigue-orderlies would be busy preparing something special for the evening meal and laying the tables for the evening "Mesibah". As the day began to draw in, a stillness fell upon Fiuggi, and only a few special orderly-clerks, operators and sentries could be seen on duty. The Synagogue Service over, it was my privilege to repair to one of the men's messes to recite Kiddush and open the Mesibah. What a rich sight this event always was! A few hundred men, clean and neat-looking, seated at the long tables covered with white table-cloths (if sheets weren't available, there was always paper) and bedecked with the choicest fruit and nuts that could be obtained from local produce; and on each table burned two Sabbath candles with tin helmets doing service for candlesticks. Invariably the walls were specially decorated, too; a map of Palestine, a photograph of Herzl or Weizmann, one or two Biblical verses printed in huge letters by the unit artist. These and the Jewish flag were enough to create the desired atmosphere. The assembly would rise to hear the Kiddush, and then a chapter from the Bible—frequently the week's Haftorah—would be read. A lecture, a satire or feuillton, a review of the week's Jewish news, songs, and excellent refreshments made up a rich

programme. Never was there a shortage of material. Units vied with each other in producing the best programme and the most enjoyable Mesibah. Each one had its own Tarbuth Committee which slaved continuously, evening after evening, after the day's normal work, to plan the next Friday evening party down to the last detail. In almost every unit you could find at least one poet or writer of some standing, and the lectures were sometimes of amazingly high standard. The singing always went on to a late hour, and the songs grew ever sadder and more serious and nostalgic in character; and still the men would sit on, loth to leave the beautiful Shabbat atmosphere. One sensed at all these Neshafim the "extra soul" which our sages poetically said came down into the world for the Shabbat. "Shalom Aleichem Malachei Hashalom", they sang in accordance with ancient tradition; "Welcome, peace be unto you, ye ministering angels of peace."

Our stay in Fiuggi managed to include two very picturesque festivals, Chanukah and Purim. The former will certainly be long remembered and understood by the local Italian population for many miles around. For, in addition to all the many candles that were lit during the festival-week in every mess, recreation-room and club-room in the camp area, our pioneers fashioned a huge *menorah* out of stout tree-branches and fixed it up on the roof of the highest building

INTERIOR OF BRIGADE SYNAGOGUE, FIUGGI

in the village, so that its lights, which were kindled by electricity every night, were visible for certainly twenty miles on the road to Rome. Rivalry between the units for producing the most original form of Menorah was intense, and some of the results should have been exhibition show-pieces. I remember one in particular, which I saw in the Sergeants' Mess of the First Battalion when I came to kindle the lights one evening. It was made out of four rifles crossing at the centre, with bayonets fixed on to the barrels so that the big candles could be stuck on to them. Thus, to them, it represented the force of the guns ascending and merging into the light of peace and freedom; and they had it standing against a back-cloth of the Jewish flag with the well-known Chanukah motto, taken from the fourth chapter of Zechariah, "Not by might, nor by strength, but by My Spirit," inscribed above.

Purim unfortunately fell on the day we left our training area en route for the Front. Full celebrations were therefore not possible. The convoy had to assemble in time to move off at 05.30 hours, and the whole of the previous day everybody was feverishly busy packing kit, loading the trucks, filling up with petrol and making sure that everything was ready for the move. The men were utterly tired out; yet I couldn't allow the occasion to pass without a reminder of Purim. So I sent word round that at 7 o'clock that evening, Purim Eve,

in my already dismantled Synagogue, we should read the Megillah. It was fortunate that all the chairs and forms had been removed, for the room was packed to capacity. Hundreds of men squeezed into that room to hear again the Biblical account of how Haman of old was defeated in his design to destroy our people. Had they come to take courage for the fight they were to embark on against the Haman of to-day? Most of those men, let it be said frankly, were not in the habit of going to Synagogue, but they were as devout as the most pious Jew in the world when they repeated hopefully, for the future, the conclusion of the Megillah-story: "Unto the Jews there came light and gladness, joy and honour." This was what they were going to fight for. No body of men ever fulfilled the trust and the charge of their nation more faithfully than did these men of the Jewish Brigade. The Brigade's name in Hebrew is "Chativah Yehudith Lochemeth"—Jewish Fighting Force—but it soon became known popularly by the smaller name, formed from the initial letters of those three, "Chayil", *Valour*. They certainly lived and fought with the highest valour on behalf of the Jewish people and the ideal of Jewish living.

A few weeks before the end of our training, a magazine appeared, produced by the men of our First Battalion. I have my copy before me now as I write. Its name is "Al Hasaf", "On the

threshold"; and in my message which I was asked to write by way of foreword I tried to sum up the spirit or motif of the Brigade up to that point. "The thoughts," I wrote, "which find expression in this magazine are the thoughts of the soldiers of the Jewish nation standing upon the threshold, on the eve of joining the battle, on the eve of the final overthrow of the Nazi tyranny, on the eve of our meeting with the remnant of Israel in Europe. . . . Many of you have already been pioneers in the great and sacred work of reviving our land; now a new pioneering task faces you—to bring hope, life and new idealism to the dry, scattered bones of Israel . . ."

Most of the articles in this magazine refer to this double mission of ours: to fight the Germans as soldiers and to rescue Jews as brothers. Of this work, of the fulfilment of this two-fold, self-imposed task, I shall write in the following chapters. Here I want to mention only the great tradition that had already been built up by other Palestinian units who had preceded us in Europe, and in particular by those who had been in the Italian campaign since the landings at Anzio and Salerno. These were chiefly R.A.S.C. (Transport) and R.E. Companies, and the oldest of them, 178 Pal. Coy., R.A.S.C., commanded by Major Wellesley Aaron (who was later awarded the M.B.E. for his services) became one of the units of the Brigade as soon as we began our training. This was a com-

pany of real veterans. They had been right through the Middle East campaign from Alamein to Tunis, thence to Malta and on to Italy. They had won fine praise from Field-Marshal Montgomery; but they had also a glorious record of work on behalf of the Jewish Communities wherever they had come into contact with them.

When we came, therefore, to the Rome area, we found that much had already been done to reorganise and revive Jewish life there. These Palestinian troops had a fantastic sense of social responsibility. It was amazing what a few companies, each with only about 300 men, had built up. But the strain was extremely heavy upon them, and it was a heaven-sent relief when the entire Jewish Brigade was stationed in this vital area. Some 9,000 Jews were still left in Rome. Most of them were without means and desperately in need of even the most elementary necessities of life. The American Joint Distribution Committee was set up there, but with all its enormous funds it was hampered by lack of staff, by too rigid an adherence to rules and regulations, by an assimilationist directorate; in short, by a hopeless lack of personal, intimate contact with and understanding of the people who needed help most, and of the urgency of their situation. On the other hand, the Brigade and the other Palestinian units had transport in abundance and a few thousand men, every one of whom was burning

to do something for his brother-Jews. We reopened the former Community Jewish Schools and staffed them with teachers in uniform. The hundreds of children who flocked to us there received not only some schooling, but a knowledge of Hebrew and an understanding that Mother-Home was calling to them (orphans they were in so many cases) from Palestine. And perhaps most important of all, they received some good hot meals. The ration they received from the Community, through the bounty of the "Joint", was hopelessly inadequate; so food had also to be provided by our units. Every one of our cooks knew that he had to feed his men seven days a week on six days' rations; the seventh part was transferred to our special "Quartermaster's Store", our secret hoard used for the maintenance of our "subsidiary institutions". Chocolate rations, which we got from the N.A.A.F.I. were rarely distributed among us. They were for "the children". Incredible sums of money were collected from these men, from the meanest private to the highest ranking officers. Money had no value to them as compared with a little human happiness and hope they were able to bestow. One evening an informal concert was arranged in one of our artillery batteries. Quite unexpectedly in the middle of the proceedings the cook produced a most terrific, gorgeous cake. "Uga Lipletim"—"A Cake for Refugees"! The Sergeant-Major (a professor at the Hebrew Uni-

versity, Jerusalem, in private life) took charge at this point, and as a result of the "American auction" which ensued, the sale of the cake finally realised £150. "You bet I ate my five-guinea slice of cake b—— slowly," the O.C. commented to me afterwards.

Thus we kept four schools and three "Hachsharah" centres going in Rome and Bari. The military authorities must have guessed at what we were doing, but perhaps they were pleased that we at least did not sell Army supplies on the flourishing Black Market. Whatever the motive, they allowed us to pursue our mission in peace.

And now, try to picture the good-bye's when we left for the Front. As our enormous convoy passed through Rome—the Jewish Brigade on the way to face the enemy—thousands of Jews lined the route for hours, cheering and waving us on with their blessings. "Shalom, Lehitraot Be Artzenu!" we shouted back, those of us who were not quite overcome by the lump in the throat.

CHAPTER IV

FACING THE ENEMY

ON Sunday, 25th March, the news was released to the world by the B.B.C. that the Jewish Brigade was in action in Italy as part of the 8th Army.

Here is the text of the B.B.C. news bulletin:

> It is announced to-day that a Jewish Infantry Brigade has been in action with the Eighth Army in Italy. Although over a million Jews are estimated to be serving or have served in the Allied armies since the war began, this is the first all-Jewish fighting unit to take part. Recruiting for the Brigade is confined to Palestinians, Jewish refugees in England, and a small sprinkling from Mauritius. There have also been some voluntary transfers of officers to it from United Kingdom and Dominion units.
>
> The Brigade went into the line early this month under the command of Brigadier Benjamin, of the Royal Engineers. It has already taken a number of prisoners.

That same day, General Mark Clark, 15th Army Group Commander, had given the news in a special announcement from his H.Q. This, too, was quickly flashed round the world. "We are delighted to have the Jewish Brigade operating with our Forces on the Italian front, and I wish the men of the Brigade all the luck and success,"

said the General. "I am greatly satisfied that the Jewish people who suffered so terribly at the hands of the Nazis should now be directly represented by this front-line fighting force. They will be given every opportunity of proving their worth alongside the troops of the other nations, and of bringing honour to Jewry."

What a red-letter day that Sunday was in the life of the men of the Brigade! Actually we had been in the line for nearly a month; but that day, the 25th of March, we had been moved to a new sector, Brissighela, north of Faenza. The new positions we were to occupy (we were taking over from Ghurka troops) were on a ridge of hills sloping down to the south bank of the river Senio. The north bank of this very narrow river was held entirely by the Germans, which meant that all of our new positions were under clear observation by daylight. We could not therefore go up to our new positions till after dark, and all that afternoon and evening our columns encamped on the patch of grassy plain behind the hills. It was a glorious day; the sun was blazing, and the spirit of the men was terrifically high. As the rumour spread that the news of our being in the line had been broadcast officially, a thrill of excitement swept through the camp. Hurriedly the Signals Sections got to work, and I can still see before me the groups of men lying on the grass, clustered round the small field wireless sets, gazing into them

as if with a passionate love, and waiting thus patiently from bulletin to bulletin on all the wavelengths to hear the magic words over and over again. Once more, this time clearly and before all the world, the stigma of the anonymity of the soldiers of the Jewish people had been swept away.

That night our infantry columns moved up to their forward positions by foot, much of the material supplies being brought up the narrow paths of the steep inclines on the backs of mules. There was hardly any sleep for anyone that night, and fortunately the enemy seemed not to have detected the change-over in troops, for there was no activity from their side at all. As for me, I went up with the M.O. of the First Battalion (I had arranged for a chaplain to stay with each Battalion) and did what I could to help him and his excellently-trained orderlies set up his R.A.P. The "doc" was a jovial, good-natured man of Hungarian birth who had emigrated to Palestine a few years before the war. His Hebrew was a long way from perfect, but his natural resourcefulness taught him to make the best of this shortcoming, too. He could not say very much to his patients, but after a week at the front his cool, quick, methodical treatment of his cases became an important factor in keeping up the high morale of the men. I remember one man who was brought in with a foot blown up by a land-mine.

The M.O. looked at the injury and said his stock party piece: "Atah Beseder Gamur." Even the patient couldn't help laughing.

Our entry upon this sector of the Senio river happened to be almost the eve of the Passover Festival. We had exactly forty-eight hours to make our arrangements and preparations for Pesach in the line. I had some fears that the arrangements I had made for Matzos and wine would not be able to work after all, but the quartermasters and our R.A.S.C. were so well organised that throughout the whole week of the festival every man in the Brigade was supplied with Matzo instead of the normal ration of bread, while for the first night wine from Rishon le Zion and Haggadahs were sent up for all, even to the men in the most forward sections.

So far from hindering our celebration or enjoyment of the festival, our being actively engaged as fighters in the front line gave to it an extra zest and meaning.

The Brigadier seemed to sense the feeling and gave expression to it in a special Passover Message which he gave to the Press for the Yishuv. I quote the message in full:

> As in the days of Pharaoh our people is once again showing its will to be free and its preparedness to fight for this ideal side by side with the soldiers of other freedom-loving nations. I want Jewry to know that the men of the Brigade are standing up to the present test

with courage and strength. I know that by their efforts and sacrifices they will bring honour to our people. No soldiers have a better reason to be here in the front line facing the Nazi enemy than the men of this Brigade. Their spirit could not be higher, and should be an inspiration to all who make sure that our ranks are kept completely filled until the enemy is finally routed. Then, in poetic justice, and as a matter of national honour, we must play our part in any task which may be entrusted to us.

May this Passover usher in the dawn of real freedom for Israel and all mankind.

The big problem on the chaplaincy side was the arrangement of sufficient Seder Services for the maximum number of men who could attend. The Brigade was quite a big affair in its way, and its units were spread of necessity over a large area. It will give the reader an idea of how substantial was our formation if I give here a list of the Brigade Units:

Brigade Headquarters and Camp Staff.
1st (Jewish) Battalion Palestine Regiment.
2nd (Jewish) Battalion Palestine Regiment.
3rd (Jewish) Battalion Palestine Regiment.
200 Jewish Field Regiment, R.A. (with 3 Batteries).
178 Palestine Company, R.A.S.C.
643 Company, R.E.
Jewish Brigade Group Workshops, R.E.M.E.
Jewish Brigade Signals, R.C.S.
140 Field Ambulance, R.A.M.C.
(predominantly *not* a Jewish unit.)
Ordnance Field Park Unit, R.A.O.C.

Normally, Palestinian Jews observe only one Seder, on the first night of Passover. But this time they had to fall in with the tradition of the Galuth, so that some could attend the first Seder, while others, who had to be on duty the first night, could come to the second.

Thus on the first evening I conducted three separate Sedarim. My first was with an artillery battery of our Jewish Field Regiment, R.A. in the open air, in the field in which, a hundred yards away from us, the guns were ready to be manned and fired at a moment's notice. We sat round in a semi-circle in the early evening, with the sun still shining brightly in a blue Italian sky, and thus we commenced the recital of the age-old story. "Mah Nishtanah . . . ?"—"Why is this night different . . .?" It was not only different from the rest of the year; this Seder seemed different from all other Sedarim, and every man among us felt it. "In every generation the Jew must look upon himself as if he personally had gone out of Egypt." Yes, this time we weren't merely re-telling the words of an ancient story; on this Festival of Freedom we were actually fighting for the freedom of our people. We were throwing off our taskmasters and ending this "Avadim Hayinu"—"We have been slaves." The thought put extra heart into us; the atmosphere was charged with tension as we reflected on the fortune that had allowed us to fight as Jews and

not anonymously, as we thanked God for making us the bringers of the message of freedom and hope to our brothers in Europe. And as aeroplanes flew over us and in the near distance we heard and saw the reports of Jewish guns going into action, we recounted the marvellous deeds of old and sang "Dayyenu" with the spirit of free men.

And can you imagine our surprise and delight when our cooks produced a first-class hot Kosher meal including delicious "Matzo-Kneidlach"? Truly, miracles never cease. . . .

Late that night I arrived at a very forward position for my Seder with some of the front-line infantrymen of our First Battalion. Our meeting-place was a rather small room in an old deserted farmhouse on the top of a hill about four or five hundred yards from the Germans. About sixty or seventy men crowded into this room which presented a most festive appearance. Narrow boards of wood had been fixed up as tables, and blankets served as table-cloths. Twigs, branches of trees and greenery of all kinds had been gathered by the men during the day to decorate the walls and tables. Candles lit up our Seder palace and tin helmets were the candlesticks. To complete the setting, upon the main wall was hung a huge outline map of Egypt and Palestine showing the route taken by our fathers from slavery to freedom; and above this was the Brigade flag—our Jewish flag—

in honour of the Festival of the Birth of the Jewish People.

After we had recited the traditional Haggadah, with comments and interpretations and songs by the way, one of the chaverim gave us a talk on the modern slavery of Israel with appropriate quotations from Hebrew literature, and then another chaver read us extracts from letters he had received from his Kibbutz telling of the preparations they had made for their Pesach celebrations. And then all this company of men, with rifles in hand and helmets on their heads, stood to attention, and in subdued voices (lest the enemy detect our position) but with loud-beating hearts, sang our national song of hope and faith, HATIKVAH.

One of those men was killed at his post during that night, one of the mighty heroes of Jewish history who was ready to march into the Red Sea of struggle and sacrifice his all for the honour and freedom of our people. Would that we all had some of his spirit; we might then be worthy again of the miracle that once parted the waters of the Red Sea and let our fathers march right through to safety and home.

* * * * *

The highlight of this festival week—indeed, perhaps it might be called the climax of the history of the Brigade—was a special ceremony which took place at Brigade H.Q. on

PASSOVER IN THE FRONT LINE

The author conducting a Seder Service on the banks of the River Senio

Tuesday, 3rd April. It was the ceremony of the formal presentation of our colours; the presentation of the authorised flag of the Jewish Brigade, which was in fact the flag of the Jewish people. Mr. Moshe Shertok, head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency, had come from Jerusalem to present the flag, and, indeed, as the Brigadier said in his speech, no man was more worthy of this privilege because no one had persisted so doggedly and so valiantly in the struggle to secure the formation of the Jewish Fighting Force and recognition for the Jewish contribution to the Allied cause. In other circumstances the whole Brigade would no doubt have been assembled for this event. But only a very few men of the forward units could be spared from the more pressing tasks, and altogether the parade which formed up at Brigade H.Q. was not more than two or three hundred strong, a mere token parade representing all units of the formation.

The ceremony was short, but the air was charged with emotion as the flag was run up the mast and the buglers sounded "Reveille". For five years, since the beginning of the war, we had dreamed and waited and fought for this moment. The feelings of those men on parade, all of us, can best be conveyed to the reader if I translate here the speech of Mr. Shertok.

Brigadier Benjamin, Officers, N.C.O.s and Men! This is a great moment in the history of our recruiting

movement. It is a great moment in the life of every single one of us—wherein we have attained the privilege of hoisting the flag of the Jewish people, the flag of the Zionist Movement of freedom, in the front line of the battle for the freeing of Europe, in this world war against the oppressor of the Jewish people, against the troubler of the world; in *our* war for the revival of Israel.

Everyone, in volunteering for the Army, carried in his heart the dream and the longing to see this flag flying over him, accompanying him into battle. Every one of you during the five years of this war saluted morally and spiritually *this* flag which you visualised fluttering on high. For all of us this flag is stained with the blood of millions of Jews who were led like lambs to the slaughter; it is stained with the blood of the ghetto-fighters who fought the battles of heroism and despair and who, at the last moment of despair, raised this very flag. Everyone sees in this flag the battle-standard against the foe. We all see in it a symbol of the war of our time—the soul of that great undertaking in whose name and for whose sake you in fact went forth to war—the task of renewing and re-establishing Jewish statehood on the soil of our fathers.

In the name of a million Jewish soldiers in all the Allied forces, in the name of tens of thousands of men from our homeland who volunteered for the sanctification of the millions of Jewish massacred and for the honour of our land; as a standard for the gathering of our exiles, as a call to them to go up to our land, as a symbol of tidings of freedom and regeneration, as a sign of our vow not to lay down our arms until Israel shall return and redeem his barren, forsaken soil—we are to-day hoisting this flag that has been specially sent by the World Zionist Movement and the Yishuv. Long

live the Standard of Israel's war on the battlefield! Long live the Standard of Israel's war in the undertaking for regeneration and freedom!

After a short prayer which I had composed for the occasion, the Hatikvah concluded this historic occasion in the annals of the Jewish people.

* * * * *

So far I have spoken only of the bright side of our front-line period. But I must not, cannot, forget those of our comrades who paid the supreme sacrifice in their people's cause and who cannot share with us, in this world at least, the glorious memories and the satisfaction of achievement seen in retrospect. In general it can be said without the slightest exaggeration that no body of troops could have fought with higher spirit and with less regard for self in the face of danger. The terrain in which our infantry operated was most difficult. There was little place for digging in, every position could be seen by the enemy, and every inch of ground, even in the river-beds, was mined. Most of our casualties were the result of mine explosions and mortar-bombs. Yet, whenever a platoon was ordered to send out a night-patrol into enemy territory, every man would volunteer to go, and more than once I watched an officer pacifying with difficulty those who had been turned down for that particular "job".

That week of Pesach was our worst for casualties. Every day of that week I had to per-

form the most heartrending of duties, the burial of a comrade. I had been able to arrange for all our dead to be buried in one place, a plot of ground marked off as our Jewish military cemetery at Mezzano, a small village two miles north of Ravenna, where we saw our first month of action before being moved to Brissighela. Anyone who goes there to pay homage to those brave sons of the Maccabees will find thirty-five neatly-kept graves, each one marked with a Magen David inscribed with the man's particulars. May they find eternal rest and peace in the shelter of the Almighty!

"Lovely and pleasant in their lives,
Even in their death they were not divided."

CHAPTER V

"I SEEK MY BROTHERS"

OUR military task at Brissighela was to clear our side of the Senio river entirely of Germans or of possible enemy infiltration. This was part of the overall scheme of the Allied Command's preparation for the big final push which was to lead to the complete collapse of the enemy in Italy. Later the Brigade was highly complimented by General Mark Clark for the efficiency with which it fulfilled its assigned task.

On the D-day of this final assault in Italy, we were given the order to advance in accordance with the carefully worked-out plan. By this time we had been in the line for nearly two months, and the strain of such a long stretch for relatively untried troops was beginning to be felt. Night after night of patrols, little sleep or rest, anxious waiting and watching—all had had an effect, and our infantry were getting rather tired. But the thrill of advancing against the hated enemy, or transporting back hundreds of prisoners of the vaunted "master race", was a terrific spur. By the time, however, of the fall of Imola, south of Bologna, our rôle was complete and we were withdrawn to rest and conjecture among ourselves as to what

was to be the task of the Brigade after the cessation of hostilities.

Bologna was the first big town to be freed in the phenomenal advance, and immediately we embarked on our second mission which, from the first, we had voluntarily assumed for ourselves. While we had yet been at the front and in action, we had, some of us at least, given some thought to preparing for the day when we would, please God, meet brother Jews who would have survived in the regions freed by the Allied advance. A Brigade Refugee Committee had been set up with the approval of the Commander, and collections of food, clothing and money had been stored up in readiness for possible eventualities. These steps had been taken on the initiative of Major Wellesley Aaron and his Company (178 Pal. Coy., R.A.S.C.), who had had experience of this sort of work in Tripoli, Benghazi, Bari and Rome. Quite substantial supplies were stored up in our special "quartermaster's store".

Though only the most essential traffic was allowed on the roads into Bologna and M.P.s checked every vehicle, I managed to get into the city within a few hours after we heard of its capture. "You chaplains get away with murder," grinned the M.P. who passed me in. The town was bedecked with flags and great crowds thronged the streets and squares, all dressed in their best. There was an unmistakably gay, holiday

atmosphere. People hugged each other in the open streets, and the cafés along the boulevards were doing a roaring trade; while American loud-speaker vans shouted the news in Italian to the thousands who thirsted for it.

I went up to a civilian policeman and, in my limited vocabulary of broken Italian, asked the way to the Synagogue. The place I was led to was not the proper Synagogue; that had been bombed and destroyed, and all that remained were two outer walls. To judge by the size of the ground, it must have been a fine big Synagogue in its day. But now I was led into two semi-dark rooms, adjoining the original building, in one of which lived an Italian family, while the other was cluttered up with prayer-books, papers, forms and desks and other material which must have been saved from the wreckage of the Synagogue. This room gave the appearance of having been once used as a "Beth Midrash" or, perhaps, the office of the Community. There was indeed a reading-desk and an Ark, but no Sifrei Torah; there was also a beautiful brass Chanukah Menorah standing about six feet high; while in a cupboard we found several files and records which appeared to be the Community archives, and some familiar blue and white J.N.F. boxes! The windows were blocked with wood, and thick dust smothered everything we touched.

As far as Jews were concerned, everybody I

asked assured me there weren't any. "Tedesci, Tedesci," they murmured, shaking their heads; "the Germans, the terrible Germans!" I could not believe, however, that there could be no survivors at all out of a Community that had once numbered 1,200 souls. I went to the "Municipio" which was already being taken over by A.M.G. officials; I went to the police-station, asked in shops, stopped dozens of people in the streets, and finally went to a local priest. But everywhere I received the same answer; the Jews had been carried off by the Germans or had fled to the South, to Forli, Florence and Rome. Almost about to give up, I suddenly saw my driver (one Mordechai Gastwirth of London) running towards me. He had found someone who said he could take us to the only Jew he knew to be left alive in Bologna. We were conducted to a café in a back street from which, after two or three minutes, emerged a dwarf-like, wizened old man who laughed and cried at once to be greeted with "Shalom!" by two men with the Magen David badge on their arms. His name was Alexander Hakim, and, though born in Turkey, had lived in Bologna for thirty years. He, too, at first said he knew of no other Jews in the place, but finally promised to try and find some and gather them together to meet me the following week-end.

I came back to camp late that night, but next

A GROUP OF BRIGADE MEN FROM ENGLAND

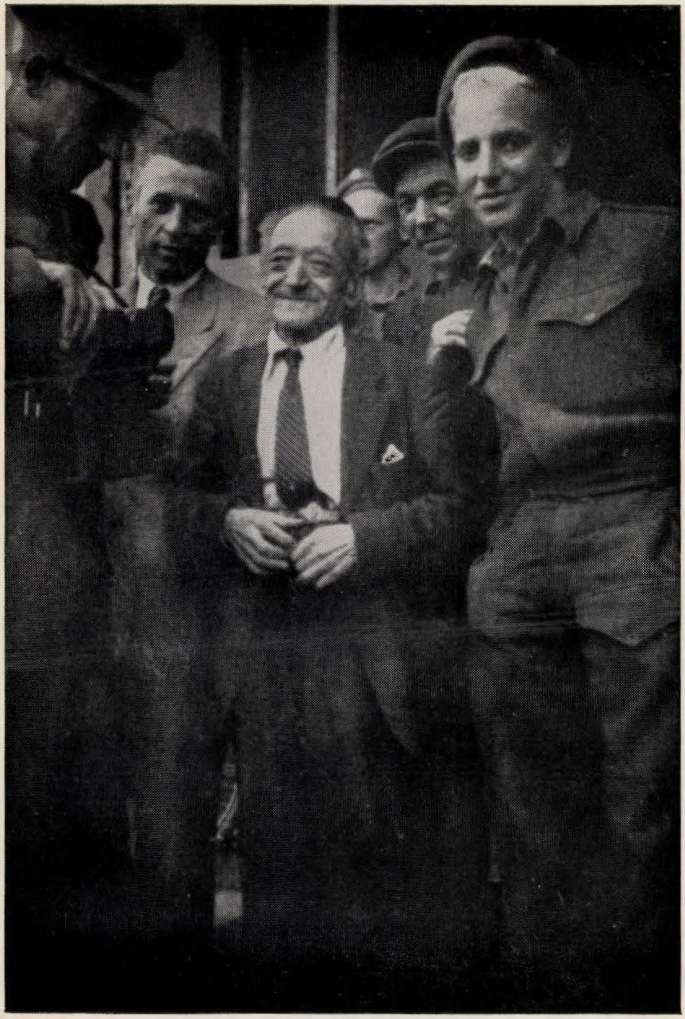
Taken with Rabbi I. Brodie, Sen. Jewish Chaplain, H.M. Forces, during his visit to Brigade H.Q.

morning, after a conference with Major Aaron and some few other "key workers", we returned to Bologna, this time in force, some half-dozen of us, with a plan of action. We printed huge posters in Hebrew and Italian announcing that the Synagogue would be re-consecrated at a special service early the following Friday evening; that the usual Sabbath services would be held there during the Sabbath; and that a special "Oneg Shabbath" would take place in the Synagogue rooms on the Sabbath afternoon. All Jews in the city were invited not only to come to these Sabbath functions, but also before that, during the week, to come to the Synagogue and register their names as members of the Community. We managed to get the American military loud-speaker vans to broadcast this announcement all over the city every day; while, at the same time, our men set to work and cleaned up the rooms, installed or repaired the electricity, and transformed them quickly into a neat Synagogue with an outer office, divided from each other by folding doors. We left one man in charge to do the registration, and—the miracle happened! By the end of the week three hundred Jews had their names put down! They had lived like mice in their holes during the occupation, never daring to approach anyone they weren't really sure of. I remember how, for instance, two women met when they came to register and receive some rations we had

brought up. They had both originally come to Italy as refugees from Budapest, and for the past eighteen months had lived in the same building, yet neither had known that the other was Jewish until that moment.

I have said that we found no Sifrei Torah in the Ark. But two days after our announcement had appeared in Bologna, a local citizen, a Catholic, came to the office and asked for me. He was told I was back at camp fifty miles away, but he insisted he had something of great importance and that he would declare it only to the Chaplain in person. I was notified, accordingly, and the following day this man led me to his house and handed me five sacred, bare scrolls of the Torah. They were denuded of all coverings or ornaments and were wrapped in brown paper parcels. For three years he had hidden them in a secret cupboard in his house, and now, he said, he was pleased to hand them back to me, and, through me, to the Community, in time for the re-consecration of the Synagogue. In return for his great act, he asked only if he might be permitted to attend the Service. Such acts of kindness and fellow-feeling towards the Jews were by no means rare among the Italians. Many there were to whom the dictum of our sages applied: "The righteous ones of all the nations have their equal places in the world to come."

The Service that Friday evening was the most



ALEXANDER HAKIM

The first Jew discovered in liberated Bologna
On his left is Driver M. Gastwirth, of London

touching I have ever known. The Synagogue was crowded, the congregation including a large number of our troops whose presence was a source of pride and dignity for the local people. And when the Ark was opened and I got some of the elders to take a scroll each and we held up these bare parchment rolls towards the congregation, they sobbed the "Shema Yisrael" till I thought their hearts would break. Even some of the most hardened of our own veterans had tears on their cheeks. It was more than a service of consecration; this was an occasion for real thanksgiving for deliverance as well as of mourning for hundreds of their own community, of the nearest in every family, who were no longer in the land of the living.

Having performed this sacred duty, we turned to the next: of welcoming, in traditional manner, the Shabbat. One of the congregation was found to be able to read the Service—and thus began again the functioning of the normal life of the Bologna Jewish Community.

That Shabbat was a memorable one from many points of view. It was a gala holiday for those Jews. This small Synagogue became at once the centre and hub of their lives, and the narrow street in which it was situated was crowded with young and old the entire day. Bologna, generally, was by this time invaded by men of the Brigade, and the effect of these men upon the local Jews was electric. Here they beheld real Jewish trained,

disciplined soldiers; men from Eretz Yisrael, who held their heads high, who spoke and sang and danced in Hebrew without thinking or caring whether anyone noticed their Jewishness. Here were Jews who were *men,* healthy, normal, upright, dignified, self-respecting men. It was balm from Gilead to the wounded souls of these men and women who had lived through the reigns of Fascism and Nazism. And the badges which their heroes wore! Many were they who went up to an embarrassed soldier and kissed the Magen David on his arm. This Symbol, which they had been forced to wear as a badge of shame, was turned now into a badge of honour.

We called the Community together again on the Sunday morning, this time to elect their own Council. We were anxious that they should become self-reliant and develop a feeling of independence as soon as possible. From us they continued to receive such help as we could give: food, chocolate, and, what was most important to them, teachers who re-started schooling for their children and taught Hebrew to their youth. Two months later I had occasion to return to Bologna from the Austrian border. By now they were sufficiently well-established to help us set up transit housing facilities for hundreds of refugees whom we were daily sending southwards from Central and East Europe.

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Bologna was followed soon after by Modena, Ferrara, Venice, Milan. We were present at the rebirth of the Community in each of these places, and we continued to nurse them all so long as we remained in the C.M.F. theatre of war. The tragedy was that nowhere did we find rabbis or lay leaders who could revive their Community life on their own initiative. Milan was the only exception in this respect, and here, in a short time, we saw developed the most active and live Jewish Community in Italy. The driving force here was one Dr. Raphael Cantoni, an idealist, a Zionist, a Jew to the core, and a prominent citizen in Milan who had played a leading role in the underground resistance movement which helped in the final ousting of the Germans from Northern Italy. Here it was especially the youth and the children for whom we worked. The legend of the Jewish Brigade had already gone before us, and it was a breath of new life for them to find Palestinian soldiers who were ready to undertake the development of their institutions. The American Joint Distribution Committee was more quickly on the scene here than in most places, and it was not long before they had an office in the city and were dispensing relief. But, as everywhere else, the Committee lacked the administrative and technical staff and facilities to develop all the machinery of communal life. They gave money to the Community Council and left them the task of allocating

it and doing what was necessary with it. That was where our Brigade Refugee Committee, or "Merkaz LaGolah" as we called it, was of such tremendous importance. We were able to provide teachers to open schools and attract the children; organisers for a huge feeding centre where three hundred homeless had excellent meals three times a day; youth leaders to run hostels and "Kibbutzniks" to train groups of youngsters for Hachsharah; transport to convey food and clothing supplies; men and materials to repair and alter damaged buildings, construct beds and dormitories to house refugees who did not belong to Milan; not to speak of three-ton lorry loads of food from our savings. In a little time we had built up a Jewish school with some two hundred children attending daily. Then there was the problem of dozens of children who emerged from convents and monasteries where they had been hidden and who had neither parents nor anyone else in the world. With Dr. Cantoni's help we obtained a building and converted it into a hostel-cum-boarding-school for the first batch of these children.

Cantoni himself worked tirelessly and ceaselessly not only on behalf of his own community, but for all Jews who passed through Milan "on their way to Palestine," as they said. Indeed we all were working now with a sense of urgency. Sleep was a very secondary consideration. Every

minute mattered, every day was important in this struggle to salvage for the Jewish people and the Land of the Jewish people these "brands plucked from the fire". Thank God, we were finding some of the brothers we had come to seek.

CHAPTER VI

PIMPERNELS

V.E. DAY passed us by with hardly any jollification whatever. Brigade H.Q. made probably more of the event than all the other units. All the whisky was brought out in the Officers' Mess, and soon fires were being started and rockets let off by the men outside. But it is significant that a large proportion of the personnel at H.Q. were Jews of England. The other units took the occasion more soberly. Indeed, at about ten o'clock that night I drove over to two battalions and was amazed to find them in darkness and quiet. They had actually turned in and gone to bed! Here were men who had really felt this, Hitler's, war. They were thinking of how many Jews would be left, now that victory was won; yea, in many, many cases, how many fathers, mothers, sisters and brothers would still be alive. This V-day was too awful to inspire merriment and dancing. Would we be given the chance to go into Germany and find out for ourselves on the spot who remained? This became now the big question in the Brigade.

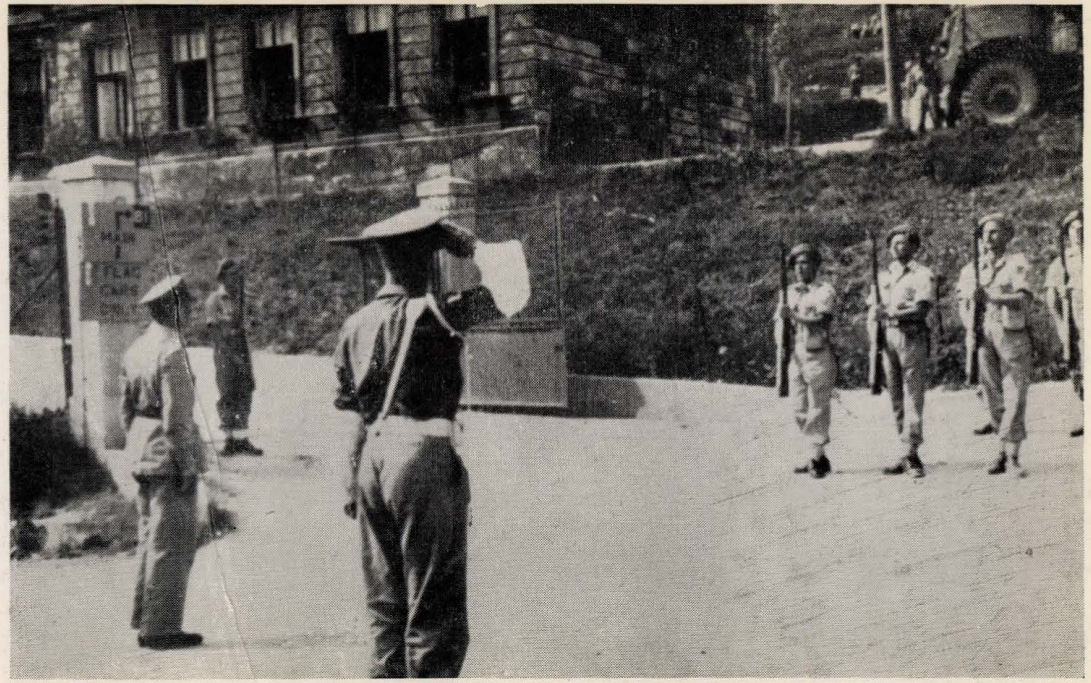
A week or so later we were moved to the Italo-Austrian-Yugoslav border, and amid enchantingly beautiful scenery we prepared to make ourselves

comfortable in the frontier village of Tarvisio. There are thousands of Jews who will never forget the name Tarvisio, for here they escaped to freedom—yes, *after* the Germans had been crushed by the Allies.

Only a week or two before our arrival Tarvisio had been still occupied by the Germans. This is one of the most delightful spots in all Italy, and the Germans had used it chiefly as a "Lazarettstadt", i.e., a Convalescent Depot for their sick and wounded. But in addition it had apparently served as a huge store and distributing centre, standing as it did on the direct line of communication with their Front. Thus one of the first tasks our men undertook here—I need hardly say, unofficially—was the appropriation of vast stores of clothing and other valuables such as soap, medicines and medical equipment. Not, heaven forbid, for personal individual gain. Oh no! It was brought in systematically and laid up in our own "refugee store-house". No man who took part in this "collection" had any qualms about what he was doing; it was part repayment, an infinitesimal part only of the wealth and belongings of the millions of Jews whom the Germans had plundered and then gassed and cremated. Now this was going to be used for any Jewish survivors we might find. It came to be used up, as the reader will see, much sooner than we dared to hope.

The day after our arrival a rumour was brought to my office that at Klagenfurt, inside Austria, there were a hundred Jews who had only just been freed from a Nazi labour camp. The report said they were living in otherwise disused and broken train-carriages in the railway-yard of Klagenfurt station. I called my driver, obtained a pass to cross the frontier (it was closed to our troops), loaded my car with as much "first-aid"—food, blankets, some clothes—as it would carry, and away we went in search of our brothers.

The scene that confronted me at Klagenfurt station filled me with horror. Straggled along the line were probably a couple of thousand men, women and children huddled into railway trucks and half-wrecked carriages. Miserable wretches they were, thin, stooping, all mixed up in their shelterless "homes" in which they slept and did all the things that the human body must do while there is life in it. In charge of this human mass was a British sergeant—just he, alone—who asked me if I could use my influence to get some rations sent up as they had eaten almost nothing for two days. My heart sank within me. I walked up and down that line looking for "my" hundred Jews. Here were Poles, Ukrainians, Latvians, Carpatho-Russians, Hungarians. After much difficulty I was able, with many signs and a little interpreting, to make out that there had been a group of Hungarian Jews among them, but that they had



FIELD MARSHAL LORD ALEXANDER

Supreme Commander, Mediterranean Theatre, inspecting the Guard on his arrival at Jewish Brigade H.Q., Tarvisio

been moved the day before. All that evening I retraced my path back towards the frontier, going from camp to camp—through all of which they were thought to have passed. I reached H.Q. late that night, tired out and disappointed at having missed them.

The following afternoon our R.E.M.E. sergeant-major burst into my office saying he had just been to Klagenfurt and seen the Jews I was looking for. They *had* been moved from the station, but only to a house in the town. Within twenty minutes we were off again, this time with the sergeant-major to guide me right there. Will I ever forget that meeting with those men and women? We were their first contact with hope—with the other world, one might almost say. Three years ago they had been torn from their families and homes in Hungary and forced to become slave-workers for the Nazis at the point of the bayonet. On learning who my friends and I were, they almost danced with excitement. Hurriedly they all came running together into their biggest room. They stroked my flash and stared up at my cap-badge with tears in their eyes. Suddenly, all were talking at once, all of them together, in great excitement, in Yiddish of course, all trying to tell me of their experiences and hardships, and of how they had kept together all through their nightmare and hoped and prayed for the day of deliverance. They told me how, only two weeks

before, they had buried some of their own comrades who had been shot at work by their German S.S. guards. And, of course, their big worry now was for their families—wives, parents, children—whom they had left behind and not heard of since. In the midst of it all, they said to me: "Let us 'davven' Minchah" (Let us pray the Afternoon Service). Nobody stood aloof from that service. Each one was inspired with his own thoughts and memories and hopes. When we had finished, the crowded room remained silent, and all eyes were turned to me. I don't know how I found the words. But I felt easier when I had finished and we had all recited together the "Birkath Shehecheyanu", the traditional blessing: "Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hast kept us in life and hast sustained us and enabled us to reach this time."

It was late when I drove back across the mountains by the Wörtersee, with a moon illuminating the most beautiful countryside, and I thought what a wonderful world this might be if we learned that man was made in the image of God.

Back at our own H.Q. the news of my "find" aroused immediate interest. First of all, many of our men originated from Hungary, and these were naturally concerned with whether they might be lucky enough to find among this Klagenfurt group of survivors some relative or friend; and we were amazed at the number of such "known

contacts" that were soon established. Lists of all the members of the group were quickly printed off and despatched to search bureaux and Jewish newspapers in Jerusalem, London and New York, as well as to the British Military Mission in Budapest for communication to families who might be there; and in the course of a few weeks my office was turned into a sort of international agency, with despairing letters pouring in from all over the world in the hope that we of the Brigade might be able to do on the spot what agencies outside had failed to accomplish. Once again we were the only ones on the scene; it was not till many months later that a Jewish relief team came up into this area. The "Joint" still had its office in Rome and kept its few workers tied up down there, 500 miles away from the scene where they were most needed. Thus on the 22nd July, as we were about to be moved to Belgium, I still had to write to the "Joint" urging them to come and take over from us the camps we had in the meantime opened, adding, "I feel very strongly that a Jewish relief team should be up here." For some reason Allied Force H.Q. were very slow and apparently reluctant to give authority for a Jewish relief team to go into Austria at that time, although it was clear to all how much vital work there was to be done among Jewish survivors. Thus in June the British Jewish Relief Unit in Rome made a special application to A.F.H.Q. to be allowed to go into Austria

and asked me to support their case, but, although every day counted as of vital importance, no authority had come through for them by the time we moved on at the beginning of August.

* * * * *

But to return to this group at Klagenfurt. I had promised them that I would come and spend the following Shabbat with them, and the few days intervening we used for making suitable arrangements for a Shabbat that was to be a memorable one. Finally on the Friday morning when I pushed off from Tarvisio I took with me a truck loaded with food consisting mainly of tinned fish, tinned fruit and chocolates, as well as other goodies, and, in particular, 200 "Chalas" specially baked for the occasion in our own cook-houses.

My kit included also my portable "Aron Kodesh" with the Sefer Torah which I always carried with me on my visits to various groups of the men; and a few other men accompanied me in order to heighten the festive atmosphere of the occasion.

The welcome we got on arrival was just overwhelming; while we for our part could not help being struck by the order and neatness with which these people had arranged their rooms. They occupied the top floor of what had been a block of flats. The rest of the building was now inhabited by other refugees from every part of Europe. But it was amazing to see the difference in the way our

brothers lived even in adversity as contrasted with the filth and slovenliness which characterised their non-Jewish neighbours, many of whom were known to have been willing Nazi workers in Hitler's machine.

We celebrated a most memorable Shabbat. On Friday evening the tables were arranged almost as for a feast, decked with white table-cloths and "Chalas". There was one woman there with her whole family, i.e., her husband, two daughters and son-in-law. This was one of the miracles, for by nothing less than a miracle had they managed to live and survive together these terrible three years. This woman "Benshed Licht" that evening for us all—for the first time in three years.

Then we welcomed in the "Sabbath Bride" with the traditional Friday Evening Service, and the atmosphere, with all the singing, rose almost to a pitch of ecstasy which one would find in a Hasidic community of Old Poland or a Halutzic group in Palestine. The Friday evening meal, though very modest in its fare, had the spirit and the appearance nevertheless of a great festival. "Zemiroth" and other songs filled the evening, and a more attentive audience to my speaking I have never experienced. They seemed to thirst for any word of encouragement and hope that a Jew from the outside might bring them.

Thus we spent the following day of Shabbat,

and it was balm from Gilead for them to be able to discuss their problems, chief among which was reunion with their families and then—farewell to Europe forever.

The following day I was just about to leave in order to return to camp when four young men came running into the house in a state of great excitement insisting that they must speak to me immediately. This incident turned out to be almost historic in its significance, and therefore I shall say a word or two about it.

In these days the biggest problem the Allies had on hand was the sorting out of the vast numbers of so-called Displaced Persons who had been brought together by Hitler from every corner of Europe and mixed up to form his huge slave army. The only thing to do with this mass of human misery was to send them back as fast as possible to their home countries. Thus it was that every day long convoys of hundreds of trucks would bring these crowds of human cargoes of Italians, Frenchmen, Greeks, Yugo-Slavs, down towards Italy for their final repatriation. Conditions en route were of course of the most primitive nature. Food was almost entirely absent, people spent the nights in open fields, and nobody could hope to keep anything like a proper check on the persons who passed through with each group. In all this confusion and turmoil these four young Jews who now presented themselves to me had

made their way under numerous guises all the way from Poland. Their average age was about twenty-five and their mission was to find a way out from Poland to Italy and thence to Palestine for some 40,000–50,000 young Jews who were organised as Haluzim in small groups throughout Poland.

These had been among the fighters of the Ghettos; many were survivors of the Warsaw Ghetto. They had fought with Partisan Groups and lived in the forests of Poland throughout the war. Now they had one aim: to get out of Europe which had become the graveyard of their fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers, and comrades by the million, and get to Jewish freedom in Eretz Yisrael.

The conditions they reported were still most dangerous and precarious in Poland. Almost every day some Jews were killed. The old anti-Semitism of the Poles was as strong as it ever had been. What the Germans had not completed at Auschwitz the Poles were now trying to finish off. These young men and women were determined that there was no future for them in Poland, and they had no trust in any other part of the world. Their one hope and their one goal was Palestine, and with that aim in view they were well organised, although most of them were still living underground.

These four who now came to me were the

"Shelichim", the emissaries, of the 40,000–50,000. Less than two weeks earlier they had set out from Cracow with the purpose of finding a possible route of migration towards Italy where they knew the Jewish Brigade was stationed. They had come through Hungary and were the first to bring us confirmed, direct news that 100,000 Jews remained still in Budapest. This was in itself wonderfully encouraging and heartening for the Jews we were now with at Klagenfurt.

These four Shelichim had wandered from one refugee camp to another, pretending to be Hungarians in one, Yugo-slavs or Russians in another, Italians in a third, and so on. They had found out where it was possible to travel by train, where one could get a lift in refugee transport, and where it was necessary to go on foot. In short they had learned by what means one could cross frontiers, and move from one Allied Zone to another without being held up or sent back.

The last part of the journey they had travelled as Italian Jews, and thus they found themselves on a convoy of trucks carrying crowds of Italian repatriates, standing squashed together like sardines, coming down through Austria to Klagenfurt. This was where the railway began, and here they were all to be transferred from their lorries to a ramshackle train which was to bring them across the frontier into Italy.

For these four Shelichim this was a very great

moment. This was to be their last lap. Imagine, then, their feelings when, after all they had gone through and all the risks they had taken in the course of this journey, and wondering how soon they would now meet the men of the Jewish Brigade, just as they are driving up to Klagenfurt railway station they see a British military vehicle with a big "Magen David" painted on the mudguard and in clear Hebrew characters the words, "RAV-TZ'VAI", "CHAPLAIN", painted over the front of the car! Here was what they had come to seek. It was as if they had arrived home. They jumped off their lorries, ran back to my car, frightened my driver out of his wits, especially when they saw his flash, and made him lead them to me.

The outcome of that meeting was that one of the four returned to Poland the same day to bring back the first batch and set the stream in motion, while the other three went down to the Brigade in Italy to help us to make arrangements for the reception of our brothers as and when they arrived.

The following day a "Beth Olim" was set up in our Brigade area, as the initial stage, and from then on a steady trickle of refugees flowed into us daily. In the first week or two the numbers were very small, as they came only from fairly local districts. Indeed refugees and Displaced Persons were being collected by all military formations in

southern Austria. Each of these formations had its own transit camps in which the refugees were housed and looked after until they could be sent on towards their home country. But whenever Jews turned up among them, the camp authorities were invariably confronted with the problem of their disposal. Allied officials seemed always to be taking the line that Jews, like all others, should be regarded as "nationals" of their countries of origin, to which they should automatically be repatriated. This would certainly have been the easiest way out so far as the officials were concerned. It would certainly have helped them to clear their camps and their zones of the Displaced Persons. But the policy was as unrealistic as it was heartless. For all these refugees came from countries which were associated in their minds forever with murder and violence, with pogroms and persecution. Frequently these Jews were the only survivors of their families, yes, even of whole communities. The countries of their origin had been turned into Jewish cemeteries. How was it possible for them to return to live in the graveyards of their people?

Local refugee camp officers, who came into direct contact with the individual refugee who came into their camps, understood the situation better than their administrative superiors. They saw the determination, the blunt refusal, of Jews from Poland and other countries to return. These

people knew only one thing—they had finished with the hell of Europe, and their future could be only Palestine.

Some of these camp commanders, knowing of the existence of the Jewish Brigade on the Italian Frontier, saw that here was the way to the solution of their difficulties; and I began to receive letters from them asking me to keep in contact with their Jewish element and, if possible, to take them off their hands. Here is a typical letter which I received from the commanding officer of one of these camps at Micheldorf:

> I have in this refugee camp several Jewesses. In nearly every case their story is too tragic and too long to write. I have done my best to give them new optimism and on the whole they are now fairly content, but I am, as yet, having no success as to their satisfactory disposal. None of them wishes to remain in Europe.
>
> I would very much appreciate a visit from you, and I know it would be very much appreciated by my Jewish contingent...

As a result of this visit the "Jewish Contingent" accompanied me back to our "Beth Olim" with the blessing and thanks of this commanding officer, a human, understanding, feeling British major.

It did not take long before we established contact with a whole network of such camps throughout the British Sector. Thus on the 10th June I

wrote to the officer commanding the Refugee Camp at Judenburg:

> The Jewish refugees which were sent on from your camp to this Brigade have arrived, and we are taking care of them. I am writing to thank you for your interest and to ask for your continued help in the same direction. If any other Jews come to your camp, I shall be grateful if you will keep them together and send them to us as soon as you are able to. Whenever it is possible one of our trucks will call at your camp, and the driver will be pleased to bring any Jews back with him . . .
>
> There is a Jewish interpreter, Private S—— D——, at ——, whom you can always get hold of if need be to help you when you have some Jewish refugees.

In this way our "Beth Olim", as we persisted in calling our Brigade Refugee Camp, was kept continually full up with about fifty people in transit through the first few weeks of its existence. This camp was maintained, of course, entirely on a voluntary basis by the men of the Brigade, and every care and luxury was lavished upon our brothers in transit. For the time being we were happy merely to get them into Italy, and from Tarvisio they were transported by various means to Milan or direct to the south, where they joined places of Hachsharah or simply stayed in the towns waiting for their turn to go on board ship for Eretz Yisrael.

We were soon to learn that the fame of the

Jewish Brigade was spreading far and wide in all directions and was acting as a charm upon Jewish refugees. On the 26th June I received a delegation of three Jews who had come, officially this time, from a big camp at Ebensee near Salzburg in the American Zone. They were Mr. Henryk Piernikarz, Mr. Adolf Smaidler, and Dr. Stefan Kwiat, and they came with a letter of introduction, dated 22nd June, from M.G.O., G.5 Office, H.Q. 11 (U.S.) Armoured Division, in whose area and under whose control the Ebensee camp was situated. This camp contained many thousands of refugees, most of them Poles, and, as usual, the American authorities here were extremely anxious to liquidate the camp as quickly as possible. But among these thousands of Poles there were 1,600 Jews whom they could not get rid of. The letter of introduction to me therefore stated the problem, pointing out that all the 1,600 wanted to go to Palestine, and asking whether we, the Jewish Brigade, could take care of them in Italy pending their ultimate movement to Palestine.

The Americans offered in this letter to move the 1,600 refugees from Ebensee to Villach in their transport and asked that we should take care of them thereafter. They asked further that I should introduce the three representatives to the American Joint Distribution Committee to enlist their aid in the project.

This incident was a bombshell. Obviously our

Brigade Commander could not agree to this proposal without some higher authority, and, above all, without knowing where he was to move the 1,600 to after they had arrived at our camp, for we had no facilities of our own for the accommodation and maintenance of such a number. The first step was therefore to interview the Military Government H.Q., but here we found British officers who were quite incapable of viewing the problem except from the angle of red tape, procedure, rules and regulations. No one was prepared to take the responsibility. Finally I was sent down to Rome to see if I could get consent for the move from Allied Control Commission. Again I was met with the old familiar arguments. These Jews, they said, came from Poland. Then why should they not go back to Poland? Again I had to go over the ground explaining what Poland meant to these Jews to officers who held the lives of thousands of these very Jews in their hands. Anyway, they argued, Italy was already full of refugees, the frontier had been closed, and in any case the 11th (U.S.) Armoured Division had no business to make a direct approach to the Jewish Brigade. They should have made their approach through the usual channels, and until that was done the matter could not be considered.

I had taken the three representatives from Ebensee with me to Rome, and their description of

the conditions for the Jews in their camp and of the importance of some positive reply coming back to them in order to keep up their morale weighed so heavily upon me, that I decided on my own initiative to try to sidetrack military authorities, and I went to the chief of the U.N.R.R.A. Italian Mission in Rome. Here at last I found a man with an understanding of the human side of the problem, and he promised ultimately to keep two U.N.R.R.A. camps near Bari for the reception of these Jews.

I returned to Tarvisio with the great news, feeling in my heart that with this precedent we had burst the dam which was holding back the thousands of Jews from streaming down into Italy en route for Palestine from the Gehenna of Central and Eastern Europe. The representatives from Ebensee were sent back to tell their comrades that real brothers waited to receive them—sons of the Yishuv itself. They carried with them the following letter from me :

Subject:
Welfare and Immigration of Jewish Residents

H.Q. Jewish Inf. Bde. Gp.
M.G.O., G–5 Office, Ch/1
H.Q. 11 (U.S.) Armd. Div. 4 July, 1945

1. Mr. Piernikarz Henryk and Mr. Smaidler Adolf, representatives of a committee of Jews in Ebensee Camp, arrived here with your letter of introduction

dated 22nd June, 1945, and they have been kept here until to-day with the approval of our Brigade Commander, while investigation was made into the possibility of transferring the 1,600 Polish Jews referred to in your letter to Italy pending their ultimate movement to Palestine. The a/n men are being returned to Ebensee Camp with an officer of this Brigade to-day.

2. The a/n were sent on to us by the Displaced Persons Officer at Villach and I was instructed by the Brigadier to take them to Rome in order to contact the American Joint Distribution Committee. A copy of a note from the J.D.C. is attached for your information. I also interviewed the Director of the U.N.R.R.A. in Italy who informed me that they have space available in their camps in the South of Italy at two places, viz., Ferramonte and Santa Maria. The conditions in those camps are very good, and it was from those camps that the previous transports to Palestine have been largely made up. All the residents in these camps are Jewish.

3. I need hardly add that everything that the Jewish Brigade can do in the way of receiving our brother Jews, caring for them and transferring them to the more permanent camps where they shall be properly looked after, we are only too ready and eager to do as speedily as possible.

SENIOR CHAPLAIN,
Jewish Inf. Bde. Gp.

It was now clear to us beyond question that, with or without permission, in the course of a few days many hundreds of refugees would descend upon us, and we had to set about making preparations for their reception and care. The zeal and devotion with which our men toiled to complete

the necessary arrangements should be inscribed in the annals of Jewish history in letters of gold. They worked as only those can work who have been fired in a sacred cause. For the next five days hundreds of men laboured at each of two sites from dawn to dark, erecting camps. There were at these two villages, Valbruna and Pontebba, some shells of old, broken and disused wooden huts. These were now taken over, and, with the reinforcement of a veritable mountain of cut timber which the Germans had not managed to carry off from this wooded timber district, two excellent hutted camps, capable of holding, between them, up to seven or eight hundred persons, were completed in this superhuman effort within the five days; and when the pilgrims began to arrive they found not only a roof, but beds, medical facilities, hot food, clothing of various kinds, and even specially constructed mobile shower-baths! For weeks all our troops lived on short rations, and when we left Italy at the beginning of August there was hardly a man among us who carried any spare kit. The men gave away all but the shirts on their backs.

The feverish intensity of that period cannot adequately be described; the excitement of each new batch of arrivals, the thrill of meeting them, the recording of their names and places of origin, the evening open-air gatherings and sing-songs, the farewells to each group as they passed on to the

next stage where another Palestinian Unit was waiting to take care of them and shepherd them yet another stage further on the southward road.

The stream grew and swelled from day to day. They were coming now from the camps of Austria and Bavaria on the one hand, and from Poland on the other: men, women and children travelling sometimes for days on foot in their determination to get to us. Many were the heart-breaking, pathetic scenes we witnessed. Soldiers found brothers, sisters, uncles; one even his wife! Often a cousin or an uncle would turn up with the news that he was the sole survivor of an entire family, and bring details of the death of the others. Is it any wonder that we all felt that we were all members of one huge family? Can one blame the dozens of our men who went off to all parts of Europe, in the face of all risks and dangers, in the hope of bringing back, if not actual relatives, at least members of the Jewish family in fear and peril and suffering? What was the risk of court-martial compared with this filial urge and longing and duty?

The plain fact was that the Jewish remnant in Europe was on the march. We were witnessing the beginning of a new exodus, an exodus from Europe. It was not a case of outside organisations inspiring or creating the exodus. It was the other way about. The only "organisation" on the

scene was the Jewish Brigade; and so determined and strong was the exodus from its sources that we had to strain all our efforts to cope with those who flocked to us, and that in spite of closed frontiers and the risks and rigours of the road. We did not need to tell them that they should go to Palestine. They told us! Their one cry was: How soon can we get there? We were merely their rallying point, their standard-bearers, their badge of honour, their sign that Israel lived yet and would live on. The Brigade was the symbol of hope to these otherwise bereft, ruined and despairing beings. Is it any wonder that they came to cling to us?

It has now been revealed in the report of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry on Palestine and European Jewry (20th April, 1946, Cmd. 6808, p. 48) that the Jewish Brigade was ultimately moved from C.M.F. to Belgium because of its activities in this field. The Committee, however, has made a gross underestimate in assessing the total number of Jews who came into Italy this way at only 3,000. Some 8,000 passed through our lines during the approximately seven weeks of this uncontrollable work. On the day prior to our move from Italy, fearing that these immigrants might be ignored by the authorities who were opposed to their entry, and knowing that at some points in Italy they were already living in frightful conditions, I

decided to make the position known officially to all the interested parties as, in any case, I knew the refugees could never, unless dragged in chains, be forced to go back into the heart of Europe from which they had fled. On July 26th, I therefore addressed the following letter to the American Joint Distribution Committee, and sent copies of it to U.N.R.R.A. H.Q. in Rome, to the Inter-Governmental Committee for Refugees, to the Jewish Agency and to the Senior Jewish Chaplain in Rome:

I feel it my duty to inform you, in case you are not already aware of it, that we have been contacted in various ways by large numbers of Jewish refugees scattered in groups in various parts of Italy. As far as I understand they are all—or nearly all—stateless, and all want to get to Palestine as soon as possible.

I have knowledge of groups of them distributed roughly as follows in Refugee Camps:

Modena	3,500
Santa Maria	2,000
Ferramonte	1,000
Cina Citta (Nr. Rome) ...	1,000

There are also various small groups in Milan and Bologna and some other places, and altogether their number is probably in the region of 10,000–12,000.

These people will certainly require a great deal of care, especially as the conditions in some of the a/n camps are far from good. Our Bde. is moving to B.L.A., and we shall therefore not be in a position to help them.

We hope that you, in conjunction with U.N.R.R.A. and other organisations dealing with these problems, will see that these refugees are adequately cared for during the time that they are in Italy, and will take what steps are necessary to press the urgency of the problem of their "homelessness" with the proper authorities so as to obtain Certificates of Immigration to Palestine for them as soon as possible.

I am convinced that there is no other solution to their plight but immigration to Palestine, where they will be welcomed as brothers and be able to start life anew in a healthy normal manner. It is obviously quite impossible for them to be rehabilitated in Europe, and I know from personal contact with them that they will on no account consent to return to their countries of origin, where they have lost and suffered so much. Most of them, as you know, are half-broken people, and the sooner they get *really* home, to Palestine, the sooner they will begin to be healed. Surely this much compensation is due to them after all they have been through.

With all good wishes for your sacred work.

If anyone should question the rightness of our cause, of our sending, unofficially and without authority, officers and men into various countries of Europe and, in particular, into the camps of Germany, we can point, in justification, to the appalling conditions under which Jews were still being allowed to live after liberation and to the thirsting of those Jews for some contact with the outside Jewish world—a message, a word of brotherhood and cheer and solidarity. That is what our coming meant to them, above all else.

It gave them the assurance that they were not alone, not entirely forgotten and left to be the flotsam and jetsam of Europe. I have before me, as I write, a copy of a report submitted by an American Jewish Chaplain of the 7th U.S. Army seven weeks after "Liberation"—on 24th June. Some extracts from it will show the problem as we saw it at that time; and it was many months before there was any appreciable improvement in many camps. The report refers to Dachau and several other camps in Bavaria. It says:

V. CAMP CONDITIONS

At best, each of the camps are sub-standard. At Turkheim, 450 Jews continue to live in the double barbed-wire enclosure which still retains the deadly electric apparatus that kept the ambitious from escaping to life. The camp is literally a cess pool. By any standards, the site would be condemned. At Buchberg, 1,000 Jews live in a once active powder factory. Built in barracks style, the dilapidated structures are overcrowded with individuals. Such items as soap, tooth brushes, linens, laundry facilities are out of the question. Plumbing, where found, is not capable of serving the number housed.

At the better camps, rooms house more than is desirable. Many must sleep on the floor and the cellars are used as dormitories.

The hospitals are well organised and well supervised.

Food

The food situation is in keeping with the general camp complexion. At Mittenwald two meals were

served per day. The morning meal consisted of a piece of bread and coffee. The second meal included soup and beans. An attempted riot on the part of the liberated was quelled. The caloric content per day, according to the physician on the grounds, was 900 to 1,000 calories.

Here is the daily menu at Garmisch :

Breakfast :	Bread (300–350 grammes daily), Butter or Margarine—Ounce twice per week. Coffee.
Dinner :	Bean soup (daily). Horse meat ($\frac{1}{2}$-oz. per person). At times canned meat.
Supper :	$1\frac{1}{2}$ litres of soup.

This menu is typical with variations in such instances where the camp director is bent on helping people in his charge. Often the charge is made—" More food was given in the concentration camp."

Clothing

The greater percentage of the liberated are still imprisoned in the striped uniform forced upon them by the oppressor. U.N.R.R.A., supposedly the organisation to assist in this matter, has thus far done nothing; the Red Cross has helped a bit, but hardly enough that the job is being done. At Dachau, the store-house supplied some clothes for a limited number of the liberated.

Supervision

There seems to be no set plan for the supervision of these camps. Feldafing is commanded by Military Government. Munich Staging Area is under the control of Dachau, which has an elaborate T/O for the

maintenance of its camps. Buchberg is commanded by a F.A. unit. In most instances, the officers in command have had no training or preparation for the job. At two of the camps visited the C.O.s were operating under directives unknown to G-5. U.N.R.R.A. teams were on hand at a few of the camps but are unable to justify their office. At Turkheim the C.O. is not on the grounds, but operates the unit from the City. At —— the C.O. of the airport forced sixty Jews to vacate the property requisitioned by M.G. with no further concern than—"let them go find another place." With the exception of the Dachau organisation the camps are somewhat on their own. Where the C.O. is conscious of his responsibilities, the liberated find their lot somewhat better.

VI. PROBLEMS OF THE JEW

The Jew, in being singled out for destruction, finds himself in a strange situation. He does not want to return to the scene of the infamy perpetrated against him, yet he wants to make sure that he has pursued every path that may lead to a limb of his once possessed family. His problem:

Where is my Family?

He is not recognised as a Jew. Even though of his original number a handful remain, he is counted among his persecutors. The Hungarian Jew (some few thousand remaining out of 1,000,000) is an Hungarian and as such a member of an enemy nation. He is subject to forced labour when Hungarian Nationals are called out for this purpose. Polish Jews (not a single Polish Jewish child under the age of fourteen has as yet been found alive in this area) are to date considered

Polish Nationals and are subject to all directives bearing upon that people.

The Jew does not want to return to his former home. He seeks a new place for the rebuilding of his new life. His problem is:

Where Shall I Go?

From one to six years, the liberated suffered. The qualitative freedom given him is not without the problem:

When Shall I Go?

In the meantime he suffers from the curse of hate. Anti-Semitism continues even in the camps of the liberated. At Murnau, the Polish people (all military men) suggested the segregation of the Polish Military of Jewish descent. Reports stagger in of violence of one sort or another resulting from this disease. The exchange of words is frequent. A continuing problem to the Jew:

Liberated for What?

VII. MISSIONS AND REPRESENTATIVES

During these past weeks, Missions and Representatives of varying hues have treked through the misery of the liberated offering verbal balm for their wounds. Here and there the mission went beyond the word, but not very far. The Jew has been constantly asking most times with tears " where are *our* representatives? "

" They cannot come as yet," is our constant reply, " but they will soon arrive."

" But can they not send word to sustain us in this bitter hour? A word of reassurance? "

Here and there a Jew would speak up as a repre-

sentative, but in most cases he turned out to be a false Messiah on a picture-taking tour, or in search for an experience to give the right to say—"I was in Dachau."

The Jew still waits only because he must. The guard at the gate, the blocked roads, the tattered garb, the endlessness of the road all say—wait! But it is with little faith and less hope.

IX. CONCLUSION

Liberated, but not free—that is the paradox of the Jew. In the concentration camp his whole being was consumed with the hope of salvation. That hope was his life, for that he was willing to suffer. Saved, his hope evanesces, for no new source of hope has been given him. Suffering continues to be his badge.

In these circumstances it can be imagined what it meant to our unfortunate brothers to see men in the uniform of the Jewish Brigade. It was a manifestation to them that "the Jews need not always be the hunted and persecuted, but soldiers in the front of a great and winning cause." They would readily have followed any private soldier among us, such a magic hold did his badge have upon them. None of our emissaries ever went empty-handed; there was invariably also a truck loaded with clothes, blankets, cigarettes and chocolates. Neither did those trucks ever return empty. Our badge was fast becoming associated with the idea of a Pimpernel Brigade.

CHAPTER VII

THE BADGE OF HONOUR

THE news of our impending withdrawal from Tarvisio and move to Belgium produced mixed feelings in us. We were anxious to meet more brothers across the face of Europe, but at the same time it looked as if our work of helping the refugees in their trek into Italy would have to come to an end. The camps at Valbruna and Pontebba, however, were not closed down. That was as impossible as it was unthinkable, for refugees kept pouring in as fast as we shipped others out. But some few picked refugees had been prepared for such an eventuality, and they were now left behind to keep things going, and, in addition a few men were sent up to "take over" from other Palestinian units; while the material wherewithal was henceforward provided by the official agencies, the "Joint", U.N.R.R.A. and the Red Cross.

Our journey in convoy across Europe, from the point of view of its effect upon the Jews we met, could be made the subject of an epic story. Thousands came out to greet us again and again in the course of our progress as their first real living link with the outside free Jewish world that

had survived the war. Perhaps I may try to recapture some of the feeling of the time by quoting here the description of the trip which I sent home to my wife immediately on arrival in Belgium.

> . . . We came right through Austria, over the Brenner and into Innsbruck, and right into Germany [I wrote]. In Germany we felt that every one of us was controlling himself with very great difficulty, and we were all under a sort of tension and strain the whole time. Men who had lost their families at the hands of the Germans naturally would not feel well-disposed towards any German, and it was altogether a severe test for us all. . . . One thing which, I must confess, gave us some satisfaction, was the sight of *German* refugees—real Germans this time—trudging along the roads with packages and suitcases and handcarts, just as they made millions of others roam through Europe for years. I thought of the millions of Jews who had been crammed into the crematoria and gas-chambers in the concentration camps and whose clothes and other property had been distributed as gift parcels to the people in Germany, and I realised how little these Germans are suffering by comparison. They are at least in their own country, and though they trudge as refugees, they are at least among their own people and they are going to some sort of home. What about the Jewish survivors in Europe, the people who have been homeless for years and will continue to be so until they can get to Palestine? . . .
>
> I left the convoy from time to time in order to visit some refugee camps. Thus it was that I came to a place called Landsberg-am-Lecht, where there is a large

camp with about 4,000 Jews who have been in concentration camps. There are places deep in Bavaria where no Jewish organisations have been yet, although it is three months since V-day. I can't describe my welcome—how they fell on my car and greeted me. I told them the convoy would come through in an hour or two's time, and they immediately wanted to arrange some reception for them as liberators. I had to explain that the convoy could not stop en route, but we arranged that at least it should pass through the camp.... By the time the Brigade arrived, the refugees had swarmed round the entry gates and lined the entire route. They produced a Jewish flag and hung it over the gate with a big inscription in Hebrew, "Beruchim Haba'im" (Blessed be they who come), and one of the girls went forward to meet the Convoy Commander in the first vehicle with flowers. And then the really triumphal procession began. A choir of the refugees stood near the gate and sang Hebrew songs, while the whole convoy—hundreds of vehicles and guns—passed through the almost hysterically cheering crowds. They climbed on to every vehicle, hugged and kissed the men and threw flowers at them. Tears streamed down the faces of hundreds of them—including many of our hardened soldiers. Many just stood—and could not find words at all. The only thing they all said, every one of them, hundreds of times over, was "*This* is the day of our liberation." One woman went up to one of the vehicles and, laying her head on the "Magen David", she sobbed like a child and said, "Now I don't have to worry any more; now I feel my 'Geulah' (redemption, salvation) is here."

I stayed behind and spent that night in the camp. The Commandant is an American Jewish officer who has done a lot for the refugees there, and the conditions,

food, housing, and so on, are quite good . . . But the constant and eternal question is: "How much longer must we stay here in a camp? When shall we go to Palestine?" The fact that the doors of Palestine have not yet been opened to these remaining Jews in Europe is the most criminal hard-heartedness which is bringing utter despair to those who have, by the grace of God, lived to see the defeat of Germany. Europe is in such a muddle and mix-up and so absolutely rotten through and through that every Jew wants to get out of it and go to Palestine. We ought to issue a "Cherem" on all Europe just as we did on Spain after the Expulsion. Now I know the real meaning of the term "Immigration Certificate". Each one means a life saved! How many thousands of human tragedies—these thousands I have seen with my own eyes in the last few weeks—might have been averted if the Government had given us the necessary certificates in time!

This particular camp has some first-class material in it—men who came from Lithuania, for instance, and were steeped in Judaism and Jewish learning; who speak Hebrew as naturally as Yiddish and who worked for years for the Zionist movement. Now they have taken the initiative in organising the Jews in the camp, and they have done a magnificent job of it. The youth especially is largely Hebrew-speaking, and they have organised themselves into a strong Zionist-Youth Movement with a full programme of activities to fit themselves for work in Palestine. What they keep on asking for are Hebrew books and papers, "T'nachim" and all kinds of Jewish cultural material.... I addressed a large gathering of them in the evening which I shall not easily forget. I felt encouraged and strengthened. Here was hope and faith and youth still. I met among them a few young fellows of about twenty years of age who had

actually produced a Hebrew and Yiddish magazine while they were inside Dachau! Seven numbers of this historic magazine were produced in the notorious camp under conditions which the words "difficult" and "dangerous" can't begin to describe. . . .

Next morning, I left this Lansberg Camp with difficulty, equipped with a book, printed and compiled by themselves, containing the complete list of Jews there, and hundreds of notes of greetings for relatives in other parts of the world. For, to add to the whole story of woe, there are still, three months after the war, no postal facilities for them or any other means of communication even with other camps in Germany where—who knows?—there may be a wife or daughter or some other relative. In fact, the gates to their camps are closed and guarded by American soldiers, and no refugee is allowed out without a special pass.

. . . It was a relief when we crossed the border and entered France. We felt we had left a defiled, unclean place, and it was good to feel the clean air of France and get the friendly greetings of the French peasants and children. . . . When I came to Valenciennes I found the fame of the Brigade had preceded it, and I was made to pull up by people shouting "Shalom!" after us. In a minute my car was besieged—they climbed in and on it, insisted on my coming to one of the houses for lunch, and before I knew where I was all the forty Jewish families who remain in the township seemed to have gathered to see me, and especially, of course, my flash and my car with the Hebrew lettering on it "Rav Tz'vai" (Chaplain). The excitement was indescribable, and I was only able to get away after nearly three hours when I had assured them that soon

the whole convoy of the Brigade would come through. Thereupon they all went and stood on the highway to give the Brigade a rousing welcome when they arrived. . . .

I have tried [I concluded] to give some tiny idea of what the Jewish Brigade means to the Jews of Europe. It is the symbol of their freedom and the only hope for their future. They have heard of us all over Poland and even in Russia. You remember the talk for a Jewish Fighting Force at the beginning of the war? Well, events have more than justified it.

In Belgium and Holland, where our units now had assigned to them guard-duties on the Lines of Communication with the occupation forces in Germany, we soon found enormous demands being made upon us. We helped in the reopening of the famous Jewish "Tachkemoni" school in Antwerp by giving them Hebrew material and loaning them trained teachers from among our men; we helped to organise and run places of "Hachsharah" by giving them ideal leaders, men with years of experience of Kibbutz life. But, above all, it may be said that the very presence of the Brigade in these countries raised the morale of the Jewish communities there.

The problem which preoccupied us more and more at this time was that of tracing surviving relatives of our men all over Europe. Already in Italy my office had undertaken a registration of the personnel concerned and their inquiries, but the official organisations dealing with such in-

JEWISH DISPLACED PERSONS

At Landsberg Camp, Bavaria, welcoming convoy of Jewish Brigade

quiries were extremely slow in helping us. The "Joint" did their best for us, but their achievements in this field, so far as we were concerned at any rate, were negligible; while the Red Cross was quite incapable of tackling our difficulties. Consequently, a good many of our men took the law into their own hands and went off themselves in search of whoever might be left of their families. Such personal visits, to Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Rumania, even Carpatho-Russia, invariably attained the best results, for, being on the spot and speaking the local language, the man was nearly always able to obtain much information from former neighbours or acquaintances which never reached an impersonal search bureau. Fearing, therefore, that the practice might spread, with obvious dangers to discipline, application was made to B.A.O.R. H.Q. for permission to send organised teams of our men to the various countries concerned. The problem was most pressing from the point of view of our morale, for it affected directly some 1,500 of our men, as the table on the next page, drawn up by me in August 1945, will show.

Nevertheless, the authorities refused to accede to our proposal, except in the case of Czechoslovakia, where we were finally permitted to send a team *in October!* Another team was later authorised (in December) for Poland, but as soon as our group arrived in Warsaw they found that

JEWISH INFANTRY BRIGADE GROUP

15 August, 1945

Analysis of Inquiries for Relatives

Country	Relationship: Wife and Children	Relationship: Father Mother Brother Sister	Relationship: All Others	Total
1. Austria	—	88	31	119
2. Belgium	—	10	14	24
3. Bulgaria	—	4	—	4
4. Czechoslovakia	—	139	23	162
5. Denmark	—	1	—	1
6. England	4	43	12	59
7. France	1	28	61	90
8. Greece	—	3	1	4
9. Germany	1	193	78	272
10. Hungary	1	71	9	81
11. Holland	—	28	19	47
12. Italy	—	1	—	1
13. Japan	—	1	—	1
14. Liechtenstein	—	—	1	1
15. Norway	—	—	1	1
16. Poland	6	342	64	412
17. Roumania	—	80	10	90
18. Switzerland	—	6	5	11
19. Sweden	—	7	1	8
20. Turkey	—	1	—	1
21. U.S.S.R.	1	38	9	48
22. Yugoslavia	—	5	2	7
Total	14	1089	341	1444

the authorisation had in the meantime been countermanded, and they were ordered to return at once! One other practical step was taken by H.Q. 21st Army Group in response to our representations. We were allowed to provide five search teams (three men in each) to take part in the general search for all displaced persons and prisoners of war (German and others) in the British Zone only of Germany. But our teams had been at work for only a few weeks when one day, suddenly, without any warning, they were told to report at once to the Search-Bureau H.Q. There, politely and with many expressions of regret after the excellent and conscientious work they had put in, they were told their services were being immediately dispensed with on the orders of "higher authority", who thought they might have the wrong psychological effect upon any Jewish D.P.s they might come into contact with in the camps.

In the face of such a negative attitude to their problem, more and more of our men began to defy the rules of discipline and the risk of punishment, and soon men of the Jewish Brigade could be seen in most of the camps of Germany and in the streets of Prague, Warsaw, Cracow, Bucharest, Budapest, in fact throughout the greater part of Europe. Sometimes they found isolated relatives of their own, to whom they appeared as heaven-sent Messiahs; always they met some Jews

TOURO COLLEGE LIBRARY

who attached themselves and refused to be left behind in their countries so haunted by cruelty and misery. Some few, but very few, were brought back to Belgium or France. But the bulk were helped into Germany and put on the road to Italy. Bitter and hostile statements have since been made by political and military authorities about these activities of men of the Jewish Brigade. All this movement through Europe has been represented as the inspired work of an unscrupulous "organisation" caring nothing for the human side of the problem but working cold-bloodedly for purely political ends. The truth is that whatever "organisation" grew up in the course of time, its work was to help those who had already themselves decided on treking and taken to the roads. The impetus to set off on such a trek was simply the misery and peril and murder which filled their memory and which still stared them in the face on all sides. What otherwise could have induced thousands upon thousands of Jews from Poland and other Balkan countries to leave their homes and work or relief-maintenance from some trusted organisation and set out to face the rigours and dangers of illegal movement through a cold, unfriendly Europe, on a road with an uncertain end? Authorities, whom this movement has not suited, have magnified the element of the "organisation" bogey to about 99 per cent while reducing the misery to only 1 per cent. The reverse is the

truth so far as the basis of the movement is concerned. Men from the Brigade who went in search of relatives of whom they had had no information or news for perhaps six or seven years very often found some cousins, an uncle, a sister or brother, perhaps a mother or father. Could such a meeting be a sort of afternoon-tea visit? Obviously the men felt it was their solemn duty to do something to solve the problem of the future of their kith and kin. The old people were mostly too weak to undertake an illegal long hard journey; but the young folks would be given information as to how to proceed, a little money, some clothes and sometimes a battledress to make things easier.

But whatever was the result of such a "find", the motive for wanting to seek out their families, to ascertain if they were dead or alive, if they could bring them some material help—all this is surely understandable; and nothing could deflect our men from their purpose, as the following statement will show. It was made by a corporal of the Brigade R.A.S.C. Company on being charged with desertion. I give it here exactly as he wrote it without any corrections to his English mistakes, omitting only his name and number.

Subject: Statement. Pal/...Cpl....
178 Coy. Pal. R.A.S.C.
In the Field,
Nov. 19th, 1945.

To: The C.O.,
178 Coy. R.A.S.C. Pal.,
Jew. Bde. Grp.,
B.A.O.R.

SIR,

1. I herewith submit statement on my absence from Unit from 19th September, 1945, to 18th November, 1945.

2. On the 19/9/45 I have been granted 14 days' leave in order to search for my family left by me in Rumania in 1940. With the help of my friends who during these years reached Palestine I have last traced my family in Nuremberg.

3. When in Nuremberg I have been confronted with the necessity of following them through Prague and Budapest up to Bucharest where the Joint reported them repatriated.

4. I have decided on own responsibility to continue my journey to Bucharest. I have done this with Russian help, for the whole journey in a Russian leave train and reached Bucharest on the 28/9/45.

This means five days before my leave-term would have expired.

In the same morning apprehended by the British M.P. I have been helped to report to the British Mission H.Q., 22 Nicolae Berga Street, where I have fully stated my position.

5. I have been immediately received by Major Hegg of the Army Section and after few minutes by Brigadier A. Jones. To both I have expressed my desire to see my family even for a few hours and return immediately to my unit.

6. By order of the Brigadier I have been granted at once :

(*a*) 28 days' leave to be spent with my family in Bucharest,

(*b*) daily rations to be transported home for the period decided for me to stay,

(*c*) NAAFI and free rations to be drawn on the same rate and for the same period,

(*d*) clothing to be issued to me by the C.Q.M. and NOT returnable,

(*e*) without waiting for answer from the Pay Office of my Unit or other, due to my mother's desperate situation, the sum of £31 to be paid to me in three payments on A.B. 64 Part II,

(*f*) I was allowed to leave and stay in town together with my family,

(*g*) Finally and in the same day, a message has been sent to my Unit stating

1. my presence in Bucharest legalised,
2. leave granted on the spot and attached for the period to the Mission,
3. R.T.U. assured by Allied Military Commission.

Facilities without number have been made available. Medical treatment, T.T. and T.A.B. inoculations were provided for in due time.

7. I take leave to say Sir, that I was very happy and believed in a speedy return to my Unit. I was continuously in touch with the Mission and also with Lt.-Col. Kendall, the Consular Adviser, and Major Gibbons of the Army Section.

8. As an answer to the Mission's communication on my behalf a message arrived later on from my Unit, in which, I was told, I was given by my O.C. as deserter. The Mission suggested it was a misunderstanding of

the case and hastened my exit visa by the Russian authorities. It was obtained four days later.

9. During the last four days of my staying in Bucharest I have been put i/c of the seven Palestinian O.R.s, who were apprehended in Bucharest also searching for their families, and kindly allowed six hours daily leave.

10. While the necessary documents were despatched to Units, we have left Bucharest by air only on the 5th of November, because of the bad flying conditions and reached Bari in the same day. I have reported with the men to Major Grigg of the Balcan Missions, 54 Area H.Q. and was instructed to ask 197 Transit Camp for further movements. We have been issued by 197 Transit Camp with R.T.U. Movement Orders.

11. I have finally reported to O.C. 179 Coy, R.A.S.C. in Venice who is also responsible for movements of the 1 C.R.U. on the 13th of November, 1945, I was given possibility to leave. From Udino in Italy I have used own means of transportation and reached Breda five days later, 18/XI/45, after day and night travel.

From my whole family only my mother and uncle survived and they are living in misery. In the same state I have found many of the nearly one hundred soldier families I have been able to get in touch with. Through the local Joint and my own initiative, to many of them I have succeeded to be materially helpful. To all I have given news and means for correspondence with their relatives in the Forces.

I fully understand that my presence in the Balcans although by no means opposed by the Russian Authorities with whose acceptance I have also been flown back, may be a breach of the British Military Dispositions in this matter.

But I have much sorrow in stating that I have been forced to do this, as tens and tens of Palestinian soldiers from various Units everywhere did and will obviously continue to do.

I have been forced I say because after long years of Service with H.M. Forces during this war, the British Authorities in spite of various interventions and innumerable applications by the servicemen, have refused to grant leave to the Balcan Countries after hostilities ended in Europe, even in the case when the Russian Authorities have granted entry visa previously . . . (The case of Pal/46452 Spr. Stree of the 524 Survey Coy C.M.F.).

And after years of nazism and indescriptible sufferings the British Military Authorities left me, in order to see the still alive members of my family, one way only, a breach of the MILITARY law.

In the light of any true human conscience, myself and all these comrades who were forced to take the same way, will find, I believe, but complete understanding.

For it is for everybody, and how much more for a soldier, a shameful choice that we have been left with.

* * * * *

The deteriorating political situation in and concerning Palestine, raids by British soldiery against the settlements which were the homes of many of our personnel, the continuance of the Jewish refugees in the D.P. camps behind barbed wire inside Germany, and the terribly hard conditions under which those D.P.s were being forced

to prolong a wretched existence month after month without any sign of a solution to their problem—all this began inevitably to produce a feeling of frustration and disillusionment throughout the Brigade. I am sure that the chief factor which maintained the morale of the men at this period was the contact we made with the Jews in the camps, especially Bergen-Belsen, and the almost pathetic way in which those Jews grew to put their trust in us. We *had* to be in Europe for their sakes; without the Brigade their hopes would go to pieces. The truck-loads of food, of sweets and chocolates, of cigarettes, of clothes and of books that were continually sent to them were more than necessary material supplies. Each one seemed to say to them: "Hold on, we shall not leave you till you can return Home with us."

But that was not to be. The strain of the general Jewish situation grew so severe that even the highest British authorities must have decided not to test our patience and endurance much further. And in June 1946 the decision was taken to demobilise all Palestinian troops and to disband the Jewish Brigade. Thus ended another glorious chapter of Jewish history. The hope expressed in the Jewish Agency's statement at the time of the formation of the Brigade had been completely fulfilled: "May it be given to the Jewish Brigade Group to carry the Star of David in pride into the lands where it was used as a badge of shame."

CHAPTER VIII

RELIGION AND CULTURE

No account of the Jewish Brigade would be complete without reference to the spiritual side of its life.

"Tarbuth", Hebrew culture, was the passion of every unit, and the Brigade as a whole longed to give adequate expression to its thought, its progress, its reactions to the world with which it came into contact.

Starting with unit magazines, permission was finally obtained for printing one on a Brigade level. Funds were collected from the men and an entire new set of Hebrew type was purchased at a factory in Turin; and soon after our arrival at Tarvisio I got together an editorial committee, and publication began of a monthly magazine of some sixty or seventy pages, under the name of "BAMAAVAK"—"In the Struggle." Five numbers of this publication appeared, each one containing also a small section in English for the benefit of those men from England whose Hebrew was still elementary.

When the Brigade came to Italy there was already in existence a Hebrew daily newspaper called "Lachayal" ("For the Soldier"), published

unofficially in Rome by men of the Palestinian companies under the umbrella of the Jewish Chaplain there. By the time V-Day came, however, there was such a dispersal of all the Palestinian units that it became necessary to move the publication centre from Rome somewhere northwards. The obvious place was the Brigade, for here was the biggest concentration of Jewish troops. But then we were moved ourselves, and it was not till Rosh Hashanah of that year that the paper recommenced publication, in Belgium, as the Jewish Brigade daily newspaper, in changed form and under the new name of "Hachayil"—"The Jewish Brigade". From then on it appeared six days a week without interruption till the disbandment of the Brigade, the final number being that of 21st June, 1946. That was surely something of a record for such a small military formation, and the small band of devoted workers, under the editorship of Sgt. Ben Asher, Sgt. Silberthal, Pte. N. Stern, Pte. Rubin and Gnr. Glidai, slaved day and night to keep up the standard of a first-class daily newspaper.

Something has already been said in these pages about the universal readiness for singing and dancing and a general appreciation of art and music. When we were in the vicinity of Rome the men flocked to see the historical monuments and works of art, while such places as the Vatican, the Sistine Chapel and St. Peter's became regular

haunts of these Jews of Judea. Once settled in Belgium a Brigade Concert Party was formed, which not only brought entertainment to our units but even went on tour to Bergen-Belsen and won the hearts of our brethren there. One special musical highlight was the occasion of the visit of Bronislaw Huberman to Brussels and Antwerp in November 1945. Almost half the seats in the great hall in Brussels were occupied by our troops. Huberman, of course, holds a particularly warm place in the affections of all Palestinian Jews because he was more instrumental than anyone in forming the Palestine Symphony Orchestra and ensuring its success.

All Jewish Holy Days and festivals were observed with great care, though not always quite in conformity with strict orthodox practice. But nobody could fail to notice the special character and atmosphere of Shabbat and festival. No effort was spared to make them as impressive as possible. This must be stressed because of the "irreligion" that has been alleged to exist among Palestinians. In the light of my experience as an Army chaplain for nearly five years, I do not think I ever came across a body of men more religious deep down in their hearts. It must be remembered that their lives were a complete rebellion against all the forms of western civilisation which had shown itself to be, so far as the Jews were concerned at least, so superficial, hypo-

critical, cruel and heartless. And many, indeed, sought deliberately to free themselves also from the forms and practices, and even beliefs in some cases, of traditional orthodox Judaism which had been so strong in east Europe. But all this was part of an artificial ideology which, as I saw it, my men were themselves beginning to realise did not fit them altogether. They were not hard materialists. They believed in a future—in the future of the world and of the Jewish people. They believed in and longed for the resurrection of Israel in the Jewish Homeland. Human life was sacred to them, as was freedom. They did not in the main put on Tefillin every morning, as an orthodox Jew does, but they would risk every danger and sacrifice all for the honour of the name "Jew" or in fulfilling the religious precept of "Pidyon Shevuyim"—redemption of captives, rescuing and helping brother-Jews in peril. The feeling for tradition was also there as was evidenced by the lighting of candles on the eve of Shabbat and festivals, the recital of Kiddush, the reading of the weekly portion of the Torah (with first-class traditional intonation), and so on. Moreover, until the units became split up to perform extensive guard duties, each large unit always had its own Synagogue with regular daily (not only Sabbath) services; and so long as the Brigade was centralised, during our training period, I was able even to organise Kosher Kitchens in each of the

Battalions, while the "Shechita" (ritual slaughtering) was done in our butchery by a Corporal Klimofsky of our R.A.S.C. Company, who had been a Shochet for twenty years in Hungary and Palestine.

The love and knowledge of the Bible evinced by all our men never failed to amaze me. A "T'nach" was the most prized possession of everyone; and Bible study-groups were the most popular attractions of the winter evenings in Fiuggi. Several times when wounded men were brought in to our R.A.P. at the Front, I would be asked to make sure that the man's "T'nach" was sent after him to hospital with his kit; and often, when visiting sick and wounded in hospital, I have spent an interesting and profitable half-hour discussing a difficult chapter with the patient.

This, surely, if anything, is the very stuff of Judaism. And if one adds to it their spirit of heroism and idealism, of toil and self-sacrifice; their belief in the unity of the Jewish people and the brotherhood of all men; their faith in the future of Israel as taught by our prophets of old, and in the ultimate contribution which the new Judea will make, as it once made, towards the civilisation of the human family; then one can find in the history of the Jewish Brigade renewed faith in the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah: "For out of Zion shall Torah go forth, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."

APPENDIX

I

Dr. Weizmann to the Prime Minister:

29th August, 1939.

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 utilizing 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 time.

We ask you to accept this declaration in the spirit in which it is made.

I am, dear Mr. Prime Minister,

Yours sincerely,

CH. WEIZMANN.

The Prime Minister to Dr. Weizmann:

2nd September, 1939.

DEAR DR. WEIZMANN,

I should like to express my warm appreciation of the contents of your letter of 29th August, 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 gladly 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.

Yours sincerely,

NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN.

II

STATEMENT BY THE EXECUTIVE OF THE JEWISH AGENCY

His Majesty's Government has to-day declared war against the Germany of Hitler.

At this fateful moment, the Jewish community has a three-fold concern: the protection of the Jewish homeland, the welfare of the Jewish people, the victory of the British Empire.

The White Paper of May 1939 was a grave blow to us. As heretofore, we shall defend to the utmost of our ability the right of the Jewish people in its National Home. Our opposition to the White Paper was, however, never directed against Great Britain or the British Empire.

The war which has now been forced upon Great Britain by Nazi Germany is our war, and all the assistance that we shall be able and permitted to give to the British Army and to the British People we shall render wholeheartedly.

We do not know what will be in store for our country in this war. Our first duty is to ensure the survival and the welfare of the Jewish community, to strengthen it materially and morally and to prepare it for the great and difficult task which Jewish history has assigned to it.

We have to maintain and strengthen the positions and creative achievements built up by two generations of Jewish pioneers in our Homeland. During two generations we have devoted our forces to constructive effort. If need be, we shall now show our strength in war also.

Let us close our ranks, let us unite in a spirit of responsibility and mutual help, discipline, and national devotion, and let us be prepared. Jerusalem, *3rd Sept.*, 1939.

III

REGISTRATION FOR NATIONAL SERVICE

A joint meeting of the Executive of the Jewish Agency and of the General Council of Palestine Jews (Vaad Leumi) was held yesterday (3rd September, 1939) at the offices of the Jewish Agency.

The meeting dealt with the emergency created by the declaration of war. Among other matters, it was decided to carry out a registration of volunteers (men and women) for national service during the period of the emergency. Volunteers will be registered :

(*a*) to serve the needs of the Jewish community as regards security, economic life, and other public requirements.

(*b*) to be at the disposal of the British military authorities in Palestine for such services as they may require.

All men and women between the ages of 18 and 50, who register for such voluntary service, will be required to furnish details of their technical qualifications and special experience, and to indicate the tasks in which they are prepared to serve the Jewish community or the British Army in Palestine.

It was further resolved to set up, under the auspices of the Jewish Agency, an Economic Council composed of prominent members of the Jewish community whose function will be to deal with the requirements of the Jewish economy in Palestine, in the fields of agriculture, industry, labour, supplies, credit, transport, import, export, etc.

The committees previously established by the Jewish Agency for dealing with the question of supply, banking, and transport will continue to function in co-operation with the central Economic Council now to be set up.

(*Palestine Post*, 4th September, 1939.)

* * * * *

AN ANALYSIS of the final figures of 136,000 Jewish men and women who registered for voluntary national service is of considerable interest. The relevant figures were:

Men	85,781	63 per cent
Women	50,262	37 per cent
	136,043	100 per cent

The registrations comprised 71 per cent of the men in the total age group eligible for service and 42 per cent of the women.

The enrolments encompassed all males and females between the ages of 18 and 50 years, divided into two age-groups, the second over 35 years. Most of the volunteers were given a thorough medical examination on the lines given to recruits joining the army, and the relevant particulars were noted on their application forms. There are to be three categories:

(1) Men aged 18 to 35 who are capable of active service;

(2) Men over 35, who will be put into a reserve or for passive defence services;

(3) Women.

(*The New Judaea*, October 1939.)

IV

THE FORMATION OF THE JEWISH BRIGADE GROUP

The War Office made this announcement on Wednesday, 20th September, 1944:

H.M. Government have decided to accede to the request of the Jewish Agency for Palestine that a Jewish Brigade Group should be formed to take part in active operations.

The Infantry Brigade will be based on the Jewish Battalions of the Palestine Regiment, and the necessary concentration for training is now taking place before despatch to a theatre of war.

Supporting and ancillary units to complete the Group, based on existing Palestinian units, are being prepared, and will join the Infantry Brigade as soon as practicable. The details of the scheme are being discussed with the Jewish Agency, which has been invited to co-operate in its realisation.

APPENDIX

V

STATEMENT BY THE JEWISH AGENCY FOR PALESTINE

Following the War Office announcement, the Executive of the Jewish Agency made this statement:

The Jewish Agency for Palestine was deeply gratified by the decision of H.M. Government that a Jewish Brigade Group should be formed to take part in active operations. Jews throughout the world, enslaved and free, will welcome the announcement with great satisfaction. The entry of a Jewish Fighting Force into battle against the enemy of the Jewish people and of mankind's freedom will symbolise the status of Israel in the fight for a better world. The composition of the Force will give concrete expression both to Jewish unity and to the central place of Palestine in Jewish life.

Ever since August 1939 the Jewish Agency has voiced the desire of the Jews for a Fighting Force of their own. In the meantime the Jews did their duty. About one million are fighting in the armies of the United Nations; over 30,000 Palestinian Jews have volunteered for armed service in discharge of their national responsibility. Their units, which served in many a campaign, have remained scattered and anonymous. The formation of the Jewish Brigade Group comes at a late stage of the war. It is an acknowledgment of services rendered, and takes account of the Jewish desire for national recognition. May it be given to the Jewish Brigade Group to carry the Star of David in pride into the lands where it was used as a badge of shame, and to bring to the Jewish survivors of the horror the message of hope from Zion.

APPENDIX

VI

THE BRITISH PRESS ON THE JEWISH BRIGADE GROUP

The Times wrote:

The War Cabinet have agreed that a Jewish force should serve in the field against the common enemy. Their decision fufils the long-cherished desire of that representative Jewish body, the Jewish Agency for Palestine, for the formation of a distinctively Jewish force to take part as such in operations against Germany. Two proposals embodying this desire were laid before the War Cabinet early in the war. One aimed at the formation of Jewish units raised in Palestine for the defence of the Middle East; the other at the formation elsewhere of a Jewish fighting force for general service. The first proposal encountered much opposition, chiefly on account of internal conditions in Palestine. The execution of the second proposal, which the Government explicitly approved in September 1940, was shelved a year later owing to shipping difficulties, real then but not necessarily permanent.

As the agreed statements issued by the War Office and the Zionist Agency show, a Jewish Brigade group, composed of infantry and supporting and auxiliary services and based upon the Jewish units of the Palestine Regiment, is being prepared for the front. The concession is an acknowledgment of the fine response of the Jews of Palestine to the call for volunteers and to those multitudes of Jews in the armies of the United Nations. It is also a symbolic recognition of the importance of the struggle to

a community which has suffered more horribly than any other from the calculated barbarity, unexampled in Europe since the dawn of history, of its Nazi persecutors. The Star of David, the blue and white flash of the Brigade, mean much to the men who wear these emblems of a great tradition. They will mean even more to the survivors of massacre and deportation who have endured a crueller dispersion than ever Nebuchadnezzar devised, and a more ruthless persecution than ever Torquemada planned.

The *Manchester Guardian* wrote:

The announcement that a Jewish Brigade Group has been formed to take part in "active operations" as part of the British Army is no less welcome for being five years late. Even so, one cannot quite dismiss regrets that the British Government should have been so slow to seize a great opportunity—and to fulfil a generous promise. For it was so long ago as August 1939 that the Jewish Agency for Palestine first offered to co-operate with the British Government by raising a Jewish fighting force (it was, of course, rejected) and as long ago as September 1940 that the present Government, in very different circumstances, approved a renewed offer of a Jewish Division for service with the British Army. Much has happened since then, but there has been no change in the spirit of the Jewish people. Thousands of Jews who might have helped to form that original Jewish Division and others like it have joined the British and American armies, where they fight to-day; only the Jews in Palestine are left to form a separate Jewish force, and they too have not waited idly

for the call. In the face of official discouragement by the Administration, about 30,000 Jews volunteered for what service they could get—as pioneers, guard battalions, anything, indeed, but the one thing they wanted—to fight against the Germans.

A brigade group is about 5,000 or 6,000 men. It may seem a small thing beside the great armies now deployed by the Allies, but it is not a small thing for the Jews. To them more than to any other people this is a war of principle with life itself at stake. A German victory would have meant the end of the Jewish people in Europe and the end of the Jewish Home in Palestine; the defeat of Germany should mean (one cannot unfortunately say more) the end of anti-Semitism in Europe and the safe future of the National Home. No wonder that the Jews were keen to play their part. Why, then, was the British Government reluctant to accept? The reason is not far to seek. The Government and, still more, the Palestine Administration, feared that to allow the Jews of Palestine to serve as Jews with a Jewish flag in their own units would be to acknowledge their right to nationhood and would annoy the Arabs. Since it is the declared policy of the British Government, reaffirmed by successive Ministries and maintained by Mr. Churchill, to establish a Jewish National Home in Palestine, this fear does not seem reasonable, but it arose from our mishandling of the Palestine question in the years before the war. So Jewish enthusiasm was sacrificed for political stupidity and a great chance was lost. For a Jewish Division would have been more than a useful reinforcement in the dark days of 1941 and 1942; it would have been an encouragement to active Jewish resistance throughout Europe. But not

quite lost. The Jewish Brigade Group may yet prove to the world that the Jews need not always be the hunted and persecuted, but soldiers in the front of a great and winning cause.

The New Statesman and Nation wrote:

Early in 1940 the leaders of the Zionist movement won Mr. Churchill's assent in principle to the creation of a Jewish Army. At that time it would have been formed largely from American volunteers and European refugees. The commander whom the Jews had in mind was General (then only Captain) Wingate. For four years the policy of appeasing the Arabs stood in the way, though volunteer units of Palestinian Jews fought well in North Africa and Italy. This week comes the announcement that the idea is to be realised at last in an attenuated form, as the war in Europe nears its end. The Jewish Brigade Group, with its own artillery and auxiliary troops, will be formed chiefly from Palestinian units and will have the Star of David as its badge. Late though it comes, we welcome this victory over anti-Semitic prejudice.

Time and Tide wrote:

The War Office announcement of the Government's decision in favour of the formation of a Jewish Brigade Group is a matter for profound satisfaction, long overdue though it is. It crowns almost five years of persistent effort to overcome frustration and obstruction, technical and

political, of the Jewish determination to put a force of their own into the field against the common enemy, the tragically particular enemy of the Jews.

As long ago as December 1939 Dr. Weizmann's proposal for the formation of a Jewish Fighting Force was accepted in principle, but the project was delayed, postponed and finally shelved. Since then the Jews have had to struggle for each step—for the formation first of Jewish units, then of Jewish battalions, and now at long last of a Jewish Brigade Group.

The formation of the Jewish Brigade Group "to take part in active operations" will lift the spirits of Jews all over the world. For the Jews have of all peoples in the world the most reason to unite against Nazidom and the most bitter martyrdom to avenge. As the Jewish Agency official statement says: "May it be given to the Jewish Brigade Group to carry the Star of David in pride into the lands where it was used as a badge of shame."

APPENDIX

VII

GENERAL MARK CLARK TO COMMANDER, JEWISH BRIGADE GROUP

The following letter from General Mark W. Clark, General Commanding 15th Army Group in Italy, was received by the Brigade Commander:

25th May, 1945.

MY DEAR BRIGADIER BENJAMIN,

The victory in Italy over the German forces was won by a coalition of military forces in the 15th Army Group, which are as diverse in origin, perhaps, as in any group of armies ever to take the field. The victory means, above all, in my opinion, that devotion to freedom and conviction of righteous purpose are sufficient to weld together combat troops, supporting arms and supply services from many different countries and of many different tongues and customs.

I address this letter to you as the Commander of the Palestinian Forces to ask you to thank all ranks, for me, for the splendid co-operation which you gave in the offensive which forced the Germans into unconditional surrender.

Your operations around Lake Comacchio and south of Route 9 were of great importance in the actions leading to the surrender. It was a privilege to have had you with the 15th Army Group.

Good luck to all of you.

Sincerely,

(Sgd) MARK W. CLARK,
General, U.S.A., Commanding

GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND SOME EXPLANATORY NOTES

American Joint Distribution Committee. The premier American Jewish relief organisation recognised by the U.S. Government and military authorities. Commonly referred to as " The Joint " or as the A.J.D.C.

" Am Yisrael Chai ". " The People of Israel Lives! "

" Atah Beseder Gamur ". " You are perfectly in order—you are alright."

" Benshed Licht ". " Blessed the lights ", i.e., lit the candles and pronounced the blessing over them welcoming in the Sabbath.

Beth Olim. Lit. " House of Immigrants ", i.e., immigrants' hostel. Here, really, a euphemism for " refugee camp ".

" Challas ", or Challoth. Plural of " Challah ". The loaves of bread used for the main meals on Sabbaths and Festivals.

Chanukah. Feast of Dedication. The Maccabean Festival in commemoration of the deliverance of the Jews in Palestine, under the Maccabean leadership, from the aggression of the Greco-Syrians in the Second Century, B.C.E. The festival lasts eight days and is a great national occasion.

Cherem. A ban, or excommunication.

" Dayyenu ". Popular prayer song in Seder Service. *See* " Seder ".

Eretz Yisrael. The Land of Israel.

Galuth. Jewish dispersion. Exile. Diaspora.

Graves. Altogether there were forty-four men killed or died of wounds, but only thirty-five were buried in the

Jewish Brigade Cemetery at Mezzano. The others died in base hospitals a great distance from Mezzano, and because of battle conditions had to be buried near those hospitals. Their graves are, of course, known and properly marked as Jewish graves.

Habimah. The name of a well-known Hebrew theatre and theatrical company in Palestine.

Hachsharah. Lit. Training, preparation. The term applied to-day to farms and schools where young Jews and Jewesses are trained for work as pioneers in Palestine.

Haftorah. Portion of the Prophetic Books of the Bible read in Synagogue after the reading from the Scroll of the Torah itself on Sabbaths and Holy days.

Haggadah. Lit. "the Narrative". The prayer-book containing the story of the Exodus from Egypt, which is read in each family in each Jewish home on the eve of Passover.

Halutzic. The Halutzim are the Jewish pioneers of the upbuilding of modern Palestine. They are young men and women fired with idealism and enthusiasm in their task of transforming the desert into a garden.

Hashkivenu. A prayer of the Jewish evening service: "Cause us to lie down, O Lord our God, in peace . . ."

Hasidic. Adjective pertaining to "Hassidism". A sort of revivalist religious movement which arose among Polish Jews in the Eighteenth Century and which won over almost half the Jewish masses. It emphasised the sentiment and the emotion of faith and tried to lead its adherents to religious ecstasy.

Hatikvah. "The Hope." Name of Jewish National Anthem.

Hedad. Hurrah!

Hora. Dance very popular among Jews in Palestine.

Ivrit. Hebrew.

Kibbutz. Jewish communal settlement of the type common in Palestine.

Kiddush. Lit. " Sanctification ". The prayer of sanctification of the Sabbath or Festival recited at the family table after the Synagogue service.

Lechah Dodi. Prayer of the Friday evening service. Poem written in the form of an acrostic on the name of the author, R. Shelomo Halevi (Alkabetz), who lived in Safed in the Sixteenth Century. The refrain is: " Come, my friend, to meet the bride; let us welcome the Sabbath." *See* note on " Sabbath Bride ".

" Lehitraot Be'Artzenu ". Lit. " Here's to our meeting again in Palestine! " Common form of farewell. Even more common among Palestinian Jews, is " Lehitraot ", meaning simply " Au revoir ".

Magen David. Shield of David. Jewish national sign.

Matzos. Unleavened bread eaten by Jews on the Passover.

Megillah. The Book of Esther, read before the congregation on Purim every year.

Menorah. Candelabrum used for the kindling of the lights each night of Chanukah.

Merkaz Lagolah. Lit. " Centre for the Diaspora ", i.e., committee for the affairs of the Jews in the dispersion.

Mesibah. " Soirée ", party, gathering. From the root meaning " to sit round ". A popular social and cultural institution in modern Palestine.

Mi Sheberach. " He who blessed our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, may He bless . . . and keep them from all ill . . ." A prayer of blessing in the Jewish liturgy recited at the reading of the Torah on special occasions.

Moledeth. Lit. " Native country ". The Jewish homeland.

Municipio. Town Hall.

Ohel. Well-known Hebrew theatre and theatrical company in Palestine.

Purim. " Lots ". Annual Jewish festival in commemoration of the events of the story of the Book of Esther.

R.A.P. Regimental Aid Post. The medical station of the unit M.O. closest to the actual front-line fighting. This is where the wounded man gets his first medical assistance.

Rav-Tz'vai. Hebrew for "Chaplain".

Sabbath Bride. The term commonly used for the Sabbath in Rabbinic and poetic Jewish literature. The Jew welcomes and receives the Sabbath with the same eagerness, joy and elation as a man welcomes his bride.

Sabra. A prickly, outwardly repellent plant with pleasing, sweet interior. Nickname commonly applied to Palestinian-born Jews as descriptive of their character and temperament.

Seder. Lit. "Order", i.e., Order of Service. The special service and feast in every Jewish home on Passover Eve.

Shalom. Peace. The normal greeting between Jews in Hebrew. Short for "Shalom Aleichem"—Peace be upon you!

Shochet. One specially qualified to perform the ritual slaughtering of animals in accordance with Jewish religious requirement.

Sifrei Torah. Scrolls of the Law in which are written the five Books of Moses.

Tefillin. Phylacteries; religious symbols used by an orthodox Jew at his prayers every morning.

T'nach. Hebrew Bible.

Zemiroth. Lit. songs. Semi-liturgical table-songs sung by the family circle at Sabbath or Festival meals.

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